

Palgrave Studies in Animals and Literature

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Before the 2000s the humanities and social sciences paid little attention to the participation of non-human animals in human cultures. The entrenched idea of the human as a unique kind of being nourished a presumption that *Homo sapiens* should be the proper object of study for these fields, to the exclusion of lives beyond the human. Against this background, various academic disciplines can now be found in the process of executing an ‘animal turn’, questioning the ethical and philosophical grounds of human exceptionalism by taking seriously the animal presences that haunt the margins of history, anthropology, philosophy, sociology and literary studies. Instances of such work are grouped under the umbrella term ‘animal studies’, having largely developed in relation to a series of broad, cross-disciplinary questions. How might we rethink and problematise the separation of the human from other animals? What are the ethical and political stakes of our relationships with other species? How might we locate and understand the agency of animals in human cultures? While debates around these themes continue to develop across academic disciplines, this series will publish work that looks, more specifically, at the implications of the ‘animal turn’ for the field of English Studies. Language is often thought of as the key marker of humanity’s difference from other species; animals may have codes, calls or songs, but humans have a mode of communication of a wholly other order. Literature, as the apogee of linguistic expression in its complexity and subtlety, may therefore seem a point at which ‘the human’ seems farthest removed from the world of ‘the animal’. Our primary motivation is to muddy this assumption and to animalise the canons of English Literature by rethinking representations of animals and interspecies encounter. Whereas animals are conventionally read as objects of fable, allegory or metaphor (that is, as signs of specifically human concerns), this series significantly extends the new insights of interdisciplinary animal studies by tracing the engagement of such figuration with the material lives of animals. The series will encourage the examination of textual cultures as variously embodying a debt to or an intimacy with non-human animal and advance understanding of how the aesthetic engagements of literary arts have always done more than simply illustrate natural history. Consequently, we will publish studies of the representation of animals in literary texts across the chronological range of English studies from the Middle Ages to the present and with reference to the discipline’s key thematic concerns, genres and critical methods. This will be the first series to explore animal studies within the context of literary studies; together, the volumes (comprising monographs, edited collections of essays and some shorter studies in the Palgrave Pivot format) will constitute a uniquely rich and thorough scholarly resource on the involvement of animals in literature. The series will focus on literary prose and poetry, while also accommodating related discussion of the full range of materials and texts and contexts (from theatre and film to fine art, journalism, the law, popular writing and other cultural ephemera) with which English studies now engages.

More information about this series at
<http://www.springer.com/series/14649>

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Other Animals
in Twenty-First
Century Fiction

palgrave
macmillan

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Keith
My girls
Bonnie

PREFACE

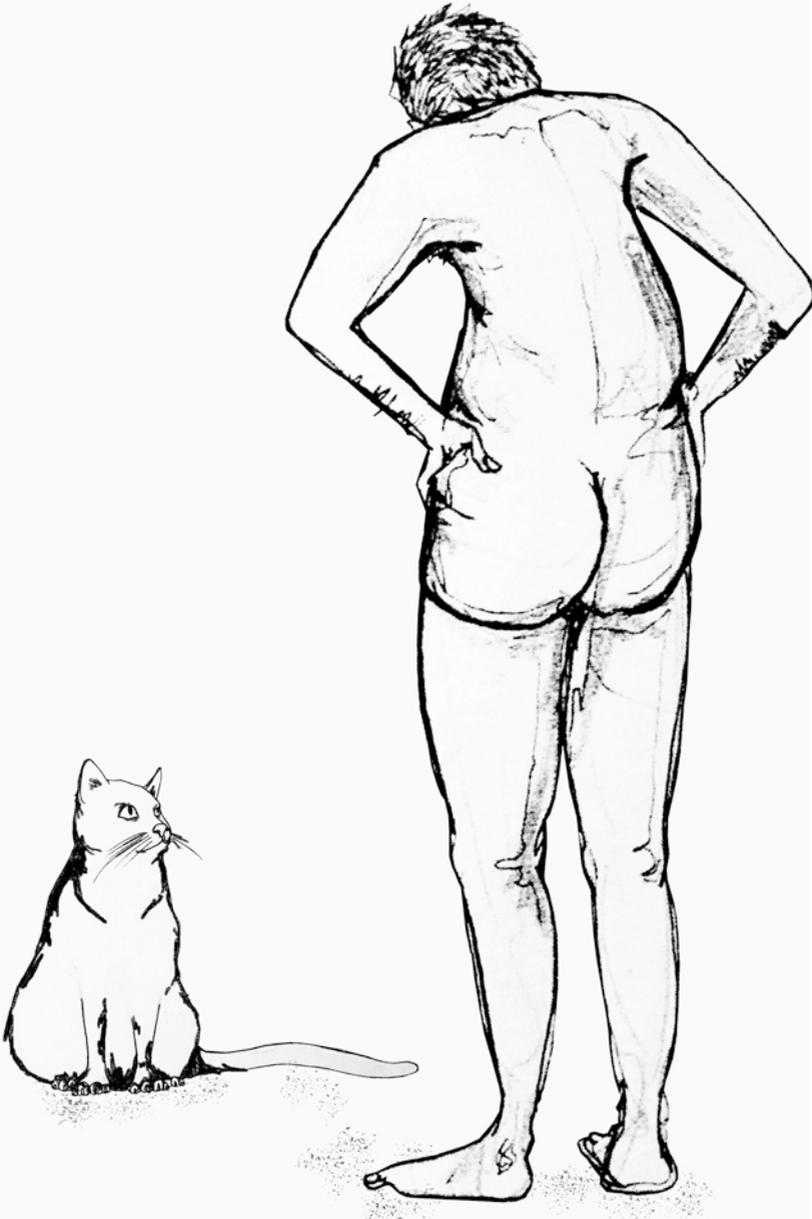
Other Animals in Twenty-First Century Fiction began its life as my doctoral thesis, a research project which was itself originally inspired by an undergraduate essay about animals in literature. Since the essay was written for a module on ecocriticism, I was, perhaps, not working inside the assignment parameters, but having complained in seminars that ecocriticism was at fault for not paying any real attention to animals, the proper scholarly response seemed to be to rectify this omission. The finished result perhaps indicated that environmentally inflected criticism and animal-focused criticism, since they are not synonymous, could not be so easily synthesised. Nevertheless, my interest in animals in literature was fixed. My theoretically naïve ecocriticism/animals essay was written in 2007, and at this point there were few scholars writing about animals and literature. By the time I began doctoral studies in 2010, literary critical interest in animals was developing rapidly, and now, only 6 years later, what has become known as literary animal studies no longer lies on the far margins of literary critical respectability. There is, though, still some scepticism in the academy about the seriousness of literary critical studies of animals, as if any work centred on human treatment of other animals lacks intellectual sophistication because it must have a political fervour that ignores matters of human social justice, as if compassion for animals deletes compassion for humans, as if literary critical work that is not about humans must be the naïve anecdotes of an ‘animal lover’. Literary

animal studies is very much in its infancy and there is undoubtedly work yet to be done, but it is not unsophisticated or misanthropic.

Other Animals is my contribution to the development of a valid critical vocabulary with which to speak of and think about the relationships between fictional narrative forms, animal and animalising representations, ethics, and the lives and bodies of the real-world creatures that precede and exceed the human literary and cultural imagination. It proceeds from personal ethical concern for other animals, and is born from my daily encounters with the many creatures whose lives have been lived with and alongside mine. *Other Animals* also attempts to negotiate a sensitive and ethical response to the predicament of those beings, human or otherwise, who are not awarded a claim to their own lives by the ‘proper’ human. If, as *Other Animals* argues, the lives of humans and other animals are inextricably entwined, then no discussion of the differences humans find between themselves and all other creatures can ignore the effects of the prevarications, hypocrisies and instabilities on both sides of the boundaries of distinction.

Some notes on structure and terminology in *Other Animals*: first, those readers already acquainted with literary animal studies may be familiar with a proportion of the theoretical summaries in Chap. 2, but those new to the field may find that these offer a useful grounding in the contemporary critical and philosophical thought about animals from which subsequent chapters in *Other Animals* make their departure; second, rather than describing animals in what I see as the negative and hierarchical configuration of ‘non-human’ or similar, I have used ‘other animals’ throughout the book, unless it would be misleading to do so, to suggest that such inclusive and positive terminology can become part of normal language usage.

A book is never the work of just one human, or even of just humans, and I would therefore like to thank my Ph.D. supervisors, Rupert Hildyard and Sian Adiseshiah at the University of Lincoln for their many years of support and guidance. I would also like to thank Richard Kerridge, Scott Brewster, Amy Culley, Michelle Poland, Robert McKay and John Miller, and Ben Doyle and Camille Davies at Palgrave Macmillan. Special thanks are owed to Hilary Savory for her comments on the manuscript. Thank you to my sister, who can talk with animals, my mother, who died unexpectedly on Boxing Day 2016 and won’t see her daughter’s book in print, and to my father and my own daughters for their patience and support, to Bonnie for her companionship, and to all the other animals whose lives insist that this project is meaningful. Most of all, thank you to Keith for making these writing years possible.



Original illustration by Amanda Parry, 2014. 'Derrida's Cat'

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