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# Theorizing Literary Animals

Special Issue 2/2022

*Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai Philologia*

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Animal studies as an academic field of inquiry's starting point is often identified with the publication of Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* in 1975. The foundations nevertheless began to be laid down long before recent scientific insights into animal cognition and communication were available. Animals have been depicted in writing for thousands of years: the Ancient Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the Aztec codices, and medieval bestiaries all teem with animals and the Bible alone mentions around 120 different animal species. In the sixteenth century, Michel de Montaigne famously mused, "When I am playing with my cat, how do I know that she is not playing with me?" and, in the late eighteenth century, Jeremy Bentham asked, "the question is not, can they reason? nor, can they talk? but, can they suffer?"

Numerous thinkers from diverse disciplines have continued along this trajectory, working to complicate, challenge, and ultimately supersede traditional anthropocentric and anthropomorphic approaches to animals by finding alternatives to the hard binary and/or implicit hierarchy through which human-animal relations have often been conceptualised. Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer* envisages a more fluid "indistinction" between animal and human life. Cary Wolfe in *Animal Rites* explores theoretical avenues for freeing discourses about continuities and differences between species from the anthropocentric tendencies of speciesism. *Animacies* by Mel Y. Chen seeks to break down boundaries further, not only between human and non-human animals, but also between animate and inanimate entities and organic and inorganic matter. Donna Haraway's recent work offers bleak visions of humans and animals alike clinging to survival in the degraded worlds of the Plantationocene and Capitalocene. David Herman's *Narratology Beyond the Human* repurposes the methodologies of narratology to craft a new animal-centric approach to narratives dealing with animal-human relations. Advances in animal studies have opened up new opportunities for scholars working in literary studies to apply and create theories and methodologies based on understanding the relationship between humans and non-human animals as a complex and constantly evolving multidirectional dynamic.

This special issue seeks essays in English that engage with as well as challenge existing work in animal studies in relation to literary texts and/or theories from across different genres, historical periods, and linguistic and national traditions. Topics for possible essays include the following:

- relationship between animal studies and literary theory and/or history
- theorizing human-animal hybridities and continuities in literary texts
- alternatives to anthropocentrism and/or anthropomorphism in literary criticism and theory
- intersectionality and animal studies
- triangulating between animal studies, ecocriticism and literary theory/studies
- animals and translation theory
- impact of the animal rights movement on literature
- pedagogical approaches to combining animal and literary studies

### **Indicative Bibliography:**

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BJORKDAHL, Kristian, and PARRISH, Alex. *Rhetorical Animals: Boundaries of the Human in the Study of Persuasion*. Lanham: Lexington Press, 2017.

BROWN, Laura. *Homeless Dogs and Melancholy Apes: Humans and Other Animals in Modern Literary Imagination*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010.

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HARAWAY, Donna. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016.

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### **Timeline:**

- 15 November 2021 – proposal submission deadline (200-word abstract, 7 keywords, 5 theoretical references, 150-word author's bio-note)
- 1 December 2021 – notification about acceptance
- 1 February 2022 – submission of full papers (Instructions for authors regarding formatting rules and style sheets can be found on the journal's webpage: [http://studia.ubbcluj.ro/serii/philologia/pdf/Instructions\\_En.pdf](http://studia.ubbcluj.ro/serii/philologia/pdf/Instructions_En.pdf))
- 30 June 2022 – publication of the special-themed issue

Please send your abstracts and papers to both email addresses:

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