In much more recent times, the historical and literary genre of biography has surfaced as an approach to make the material animal with its desires and expectations visible. Through recovering biographies of animals, the individuality or even subjectivity of animals is supposed to be honoured and revealed, while animals are hoped to be made visible as self-willing entities. The aim is to highlight their individual and significant effects on cultures, communities and histories. Examples range from the sad fate of captivated rhinoceros Clara on her tour of Europe and the Alaskan and Scottish dogs Balto and Greyfriars Bobby to free-roaming animals such as South African hippopotamus Huberta.

Animal Biographies 2016 attempts to evaluate both the challenges and potentials of biographical narration for the representation of material animals in their own rights, while posing the question if and in what way animal biographies might be suited to recover the life peculiar to animals. For this task, we bring together researchers from various disciplinary backgrounds to discuss methodological as well as theoretical challenges of animal biographical writing. By asking for the consequences of scholarship on animal biographies for the genre of biography, we hope that a change of perspective and a consideration of animals might also give fruitful new insights into biographical writing and the corresponding theoretical discussion on life-writing more generally.

Venue: University of Kassel / Campus Hölledörscher Platz
Arnold-Bode-Str. 8 / Room 0113/0114 (ground floor)

Public transport:
- 20 min from Kassel Wilhelmshöhe train station with tram 1 dir. Vellmar—stop Holzfelder Strecke—stop Katzenturm/Universität
- Start Wednesday, 9 March: 14h Registration / 15h Welcome
- Conference concludes Friday, 11 March, 12h

For more information: www.animal-biographies2016.de

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Attendance is free but registration through our webpage is required due to limited space.

Prof. Dr. Mieke Roscher / Dr. André Krebber
Geschichte der Tier-Mensch-Beziehungen (Human-Animal-Studies)
Universität Kassel / FB 05
Mail: animalbio@uni-kassel.de

For more information: www.animal-biographies2016.de

IN HIS DRIVES OF ANIMALS 2007 (2), the philosopher and ethicist Hannah Arendt Reimar (1944–2016) tells a story of a Guinea monkey that was shipped off to England. “On seeing the sailors climb on the lashings and masts,” Reimar writes, the monkey “not only climbed the individual ropes, but in swinging from one rope to the other, from one mast to the other, flung himself for thirty or even fifty feet through the air, and never missed, just as if he showed that he mastered the art better.” Unfortunately we do not know anything about the monkey’s gender or fate before and after this trip. But a voyage on the ocean would have marked out his/her life as rather uniquely distinctive from that of other monkey’s gender or fate, while there seems to be a reciprocal dynamic in motion in life aboard the vessel, that points towards the animal’s somewhat reflexive engagement with such a rather unfamiliar environment.

According to Reimar, the monkey’s proficiency shown clearly innate and unconscious, and hence pre-regulated, that specific monkey’s own biography and agency in directing its behaviour. Reimar’s account thus makes visible tensions within attempts to reconcile our concept of the animal with its empirical, material presence, and the challenge for animal scholars to recover the life peculiar to animals.
WEDNESDAY, 9 MARCH 2016
14:00 – 15:00 Registration
15:30 – 17:00 1ST PANEL. ANIMAL BIOGRAPHY AS CHALLENGE
Chair: André Krebber, University of Kassel
15:50 – 16:10 There’s an Elephant in the Concert Hall: Audience and Agency Martin Ullrich, Nuremberg University of Music
16:10 – 16:30 “Birds that are Deserving of Mention”: The Search for Pigeon Selfhood in British Pigeon Fancying, c.1850–1939 Kate Whiston, University of Nottingham
17:00 – 17:30 Break
17:30 – 18:00 Unknown Parrot with Princess Mathias Antlfinger, Ute Hörner, Academy of Media Arts Cologne
18:30 – 20:00 Keynote Lecture: Topsy, An Elephant We Must Never Forget Kim Stallwood, Hastings
20:30 – 21:30 Reception
ONGOING: Exhibition by the artist couple Hörner/Antlfinger and the interspecies collective CMUK, Cologne

THURSDAY, 10 MARCH 2016
9:00 – 10:30 2ND PANEL. COLLECTIVE ANIMALS—COLLECTIVE BIOGRAPHIES?
Chair: Hilda Kean, University of Greenwich, London
9:00 – 9:20 Can the Subaltern Bark, Neigh, Growl, Howl, and Meow? The Challenges and Promise of Animal Biography Aaron Skabelund, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT
9:20 – 9:40 “We Know Them All”: Does it Make Sense to Create a Collective Biography of European Mammals? Markus Erms, Justus Liebig University Giessen
9:40 – 10:00 Biographies of Companion Species: Polish Hounds and their People Magdalena Dąbrowska, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin
10:30 – 11:00 Coffee break
11:00 – 12:30 3RD PANEL: CONSTRUCTING ANIMAL IDENTITIES
Chair: Mathias Antlfinger, Curtin University, Perth
11:00 – 11:20 The Elephant’s Rhiadfrid Skulason and the Problem of Gender in the New School, New York City, NY
11:20 – 11:40 Postscript: Posthuman: Werner Herzog’s Crocodile at the End of the World
Dominic O’Key, University of Leeds
11:40 – 12:00 Animal Biographies: A Narratological Analysis of a FeminineGBDU in the Zoo
Daniel Wolf, University of Kassel
12:30 – 14:00 Lunch break
14:00 – 15:30 4TH PANEL. ANIMAL SUBJECTIVITIES/ THE HUMAN GAZE
Chair: Aaron Skabelund, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT
14:00 – 14:20 Animal Biographies on Social Media Mango DeMello, Canisius College, Buffalo, NY, & Animals and Society Institute, Washington, D.C.
14:20 – 14:40 Animal Voices in Modernist Fiction: Empathy in Life Writings of Virginia Woolf and Thomas Mann Aleksandra Böhm, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg
14:40 – 15:00 Inscribed Narratives: Marking Animals via Marking Women in Contemporary Crime Fiction Rebekah Humphries, University of Wales Kate Watson, University of Cardiff
15:30 – 16:00 Coffee break
16:00 – 18:00 5TH PANEL: ANIMAL SELVES
Chair: Martin Ullrich, Nuremberg University of Music
16:00 – 16:20 Animal Life Stories, or, the Making of Animal Subjects in Primalogical Narratives of Fieldwork
Mira Shah, University of Berne
16:20 – 16:40 “Me, Chimpanzee: Primate Selves Between Science and Fiction
Smilla Ebeling, Michaela Koch, University of Oldenburg
16:40 – 17:00 Animal Biographies in the Zoo
Matthew Chrulew, Curtin University, Perth
17:00 – 17:20 Autozoographies—Narrating Animal Life from a First-Person Perspective Frederika Hiddemann, University of Würzburg
18:00 – 19:00 Keynote Lecture: Autozoographies: An adventure of the mind
Frederike Middelhoff, University of Würzburg
FRIDAY, 11 MARCH 2016
9:00 – 10:30 6TH PANEL. INDIVIDUALIZING ANIMALS THROUGH BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATION
Chair: Mieke Roscher, University of Kassel
Animal Biographies in Graeco-Roman Literature? Thorens Figne, Doutham
9:50 – 10:10 Topsy, An Elephant We Must Never Forget Kim Stallwood, Hastings
10:10 – 10:30 Recurrence of the Same Story: How Wilda Marc Returns to the Stage
Jean Marie Carey, University of Otago, Dunedin
10:30 – 11:00 Coffee break
11:00 – 12:00 FINAL DISCUSSION
Chair: Michael Mecklenburg, University of Kassel
Commentary by Gesine Krüger, University of Zurich