

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 Holländischer 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 Holländischer Platz/Universität
trams 3 or 7 dir. Ihringshäuser Straße—stop Katzensprung/Universität

Start Wednesday, 9 March: 14h Registration / 15h Welcome
Conference concludes Friday, 11 March, 12h

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

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For more information: www.animal-biographies2016.de

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**International
Conference**

ANIMAL BIOGRAPHIES
Recovering Animal Selfhood
through Interdisciplinary
Narration?

9–11 March 2016

Start: Wednesday, 14h

University of Kassel

IN HIS DRIVES OF ANIMALS (1760/2), the philosopher and ethologist Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768) retells a story of a Guinean monkey that is shipped off to England. “On seeing the sailors climb on the lashings and masts,” Reimarus 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 to show that he mastered the art better.” Unfortunately we do not know anything about the acrobat’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 monkeys, 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 Reimarus, the monkey’s proficiency shows how deeply innate and unconscious, and hence pre-regulated the behaviour of animals is, but his retelling of the account in fact points towards a very different element of the animal: that specific monkey’s own biography and agency in directing its behaviour. Reimarus’ 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.

meow

grunt

howl

growl

baah

moo

WEDNESDAY, 9 MARCH 2016

- 14:00 – 15:00** Registration
15:00 – 15:30 Introduction, Mieke Roscher and André Krebber
- 15:30 – 17:00** **1ST PANEL: ANIMAL BIOGRAPHY AS CHALLENGE**
Chair: André Krebber, University of Kassel
- 15:30 – 15:50** Finding a Man and His Horse in the Archive: The Failure of an Historian's Dream?
Hilda Kean, University of Greenwich, London
- 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 Colognee
- 18:30 – 20:00** Keynote Lecture:
Taxidermy's Biography
Susan McHugh, University of New England, Portland, ME
Venue: Gießhaus of the Universität Kassel, Mönchebergstr. 5

Reception

ONGOING: Exhibition by the artist couple Hörner/Antlfinger and the interspecies collective CMUK, Cologne

neigh
bark

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 Bison?
Markus Krzoska, 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: Matthew Chrulew, Curtin University, Perth
- 11:00 – 11:20** The Elephant's I
Radhika Subramaniam, Parsons School of Design/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: Cesar—A Fictional Biography of a Humanimalistic Creature
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
Margo 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
Alexandra Böhm, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg
- 14:40 – 15:00** Inscribed Narratives: Marking Animals via Marking Women in Contemporary Crime Fiction
Rebekah Humphreys, 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 Primatological 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
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
- 9:00 – 9:20** Animal Biographies in Graeco-Roman Literature?
Thorsten Fögen, Durham University
- 9:20 – 9:40** Topsy, An Elephant We Must Never Forget
Kim Stallwood, Hastings
- 9:40 – 10:00** Recurrence of the Same Thing: How Russi Marc Returns
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

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