Jody Emel,[1] Chris Wilbert, and Jennifer Wolch

Animal Geographies

Animals other than human have been an enduring and significant focus of geographers (Wolch, Emel, & Wilbert, in press). Through the first half of the twentieth century, two approaches to the field—zoögeographical and cultural—were clearly articulated, reflecting the breadth of the discipline. Zoögeographers, typically affiliated with physical geography, focused on geographic distributions of animals. An identifiable branch known as "animal geography" was actively researched, at least since Newbigin (1913). The ambition was to establish general laws of how animals arranged themselves across the earth's surface or, at smaller scales, to establish patterns of spatial co-variation between animals and other environmental factors.

A cultural animal geography arose in the early 1960s involving studies of how humans influence animal "numbers and distributions," echoing zoögeography's emphasis on space and spatial distributions (Bennett, 1960). These studies dovetailed with cultural ecology, which focused on the origins of animal domestication and—while concerned with distributions and diffusions of domesticates—was

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characterized by attention to place, region, and above all, landscape. Sauer's (1952) pioneering text documented the role of animal domestication in the conversion of "natural landscapes" into "cultural landscapes."

Rethinking Culture, Nature, and Subjectivity

For a number of reasons, the term, "animal geography" had vanished from geographic discourse by the last quarter of the twentieth century. In the 1990s, however, interest revived, inspired by the encounter between human geography and social theory, cultural studies, selected natural sciences, and environmental ethics. In the United States, Wolch and Emel (1995, 1998), discovered some isolated, albeit prescient and intriguing, attempts to address the animal question and took up efforts to "bring the animals back in." Tuan (1984) who traced inherently unequal and "paternalist" power relations entailed in keeping companion animals ("pets") was perhaps the best example. Philo and Wilbert (2000) wondered what might develop if concepts of the "new" cultural geography were applied to human-animal relations.

The emergence of new research in social theory and cultural studies led to a profound rethinking of culture and especially a rethinking of subjectivity. Along with many natural scientists, geographers from various intellectual traditions—political economy, post-structuralism, feminism, and science studies—began arguing for animal subjectivity and the need to unpack the "black box" of Nature to enliven understandings of the world. In particular, the focus was animals' role in the social construction of culture and individual human subjects, the nature of animal subjectivity, and agency itself. Topics for animal geographers included the human-animal divide, especially how and why this line shifts over time and space and links between animals and human identities—namely, the ways in which ideas and representations of animals shape personal and collective identity (Anderson, 1997; Elder, Wolch, & Emel, 1998).

Stimulating new considerations of human as well as animal representations and identities, critical race and postcolonial theorists highlighted connections between race and representations of "animality," while feminists and others working on sexuality and body emphasized the importance of animals in body part coding. Animal geographers expanded on these insights, focusing on the role of animals in the formation of heterogeneous identities—individual and collective—that people adopt or have ascribed to them. These identities may be linked to particular eras, places, and nations and racial/ethnic, cultural, or gendered identities (Emel, 1995; Howell, 2000).

The recognition of animal subjectivity led to questions of animal agency *per se* and what it might mean for both everyday human and animal lives. Geographers using Actor Network Theory argued that analytically there was no *a priori* distinction to be made between humans and nonhumans, that dividing lines between people, machines, or animals are subject to change and negotiation (Whatmore & Thorne, 1998). Wilbert (2000) questioned whether conscious intentionality was necessary for acknowledging the agency of nonhumans.

Debates about the social construction of landscapes and places led animal geographers to explore how animals and the networks in which they are enmeshed leave imprints on particular places, regions, and landscapes over time, prompting studies of animals and place. The places considered include specific sites such as zoos, "borderland" communities in which humans and free animals share space, and places in the grip of powerful forces of economic or social change affecting both people and animals—especially those caught up in the worldwide trade in captive or domesticated animals (Anderson, 1995; Davies, 2000; Gruffudd, 2000).

Domesticated animals are powerful symbols of places and ways of life and livelihood. Place-specific breeds intimately connect to the histories and cultures of places and regions. Recent shifts in capitalist agriculture stimulated both rural decline and efforts to reinvigorate the countryside through agrotourism and to alter the rural landscape for preservation of its rural character (Ufkes, 1995; Yarwood & Evans, 2000). Thus, family farms became theme parks starring old, rare, and endangered livestock breeds—now powerful and fungible symbols of cultural heritage.

Geographers have done a number of studies on the inclusion and exclusion of certain animals from particular types of places, including the urban (Philo, 1995; Gaynor, 1999; Griffiths, Poulter, & Sibley, 2000). Urban-wildlands border zones of metropolitan regions remain stubbornly permeable to both people and animals. Despite routine exterminations, even inner cities host "a shadow population of non-humans spanning the phylogenetic scale" (Wolch, West & Gaines, 1995). Seeing animals as subjects suggests that creation of a "zoöpolis"—a place in which people and animals coexist—might help reestablish networks of care between people and animals (Wolch, 1996).

Arguments about animal subjectivity led some geographers toward environmental ethics and especially a rethinking of animals in the moral landscape (Matless, 1994). Justice for both people and animals is paramount for many animal geographers. Lynn (1998) developed the concept of "geographical community" to encompass ethical questions involving people, animals, and nature. Seeking to adapt Levinas's ethics of the encounter to human-animal interactions, Jones (2000) argued that all encounters between humans and animals are ethically charged. Elder et al. (1998) recommended a "*pratique sauvage*" or radical democracy encompassing not only subaltern people but animals too.

The Future of Animal Geography

Geography, as a discipline, has provided significant leadership in explicating the history and cultural construction of human and nonhuman animal relations, as well as their gendered and racialized character and their economic embeddedness. This work must continue. There are wide areas of barely touched terrain in comparative cultural analyses, economies of animal bodies, and the geographical history of human-animal relations that need articulation and examination. The struggles between groups to create their "places," livelihoods, and future visions also will be struggles to impose particular narratives and representations as the correct interpretation. The historical and everyday construction of these disparate narratives and representations needs considerably more attention from scholars for people to "see" that they do not derive from natural law, a deistic nationalism, traditionalism, or some other source of mysticism.

* Jody Emel, Clark University

Note

[1] Correspondence should be addressed to Jody Emel, Department of Geography, Director of Women's Studies, Clark University, 950 Main Street, Worcester, MA 01610. E-mail: jemel@clarku.edu

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