
Review: Two by Two: Bringing Animals into American History

Reviewed Work(s): *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America* by Virginia DeJohn Anderson; *A Dog's History of America: How Our Best Friend Explored, Conquered, and Settled a Continent* by Mark Derr; *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* by Donna Haraway; *Rats: Observations on the History and Habitat of the City's Most Unwanted Inhabitants* by Robert Sullivan

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TWO BY TWO: BRINGING ANIMALS INTO AMERICAN HISTORY

Jon T. Coleman

Virginia Dejohn Anderson. *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. 322 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, index. \$37.50.

Mark Derr. *A Dog's History of America: How Our Best Friend Explored, Conquered, and Settled a Continent.* New York: North Point Press, 2004. 400 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$25.00 (cloth); \$15.00 (paper).

Donna Haraway. *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness.* Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003. 100 pp. \$10.00.

Robert Sullivan. *Rats: Observations on the History and Habitat of the City's Most Unwanted Inhabitants.* New York: Bloomsbury, 2004. 242 pp. Notes. \$23.95 (cloth); \$14.95 (paper).

On October 12, 1730, three hundred people from Mount Holly, New Jersey, gathered together to perform experiments on four of their neighbors. Two of the four, a married couple, stood accused of witchcraft. The other pair, also married, was among the loudest of the accusers. They agreed to serve as the day's ringers, to undergo the same trials as the prisoners in the hopes that the contrasting results would damn the witch and warlock. The indicted couple had not hexed anyone, flown on broomsticks, or consorted with the devil. They were charged with "making their Neighbours Sheep dance in an uncommon Manner, and with causing Hogs to speak, and sing Psalms, &cs."¹ For these crimes, they would be weighed against the Bible and thrown hands and feet bound into a mill pond. If the Bible proved heavier than the accused or the trussed necromancers managed to stay afloat, then they might die for causing rams to jig and sows to croon.

I first met the singing, speaking, and dancing livestock of Mount Holly in the question and answer period following a job talk—my own job talk. No one erected a scaffold for me, but like the drenched and weighed New Jerseyans I could thank that herd of uncommonly expressive and agile

domestic beasts for an ordeal. "As a proponent and practitioner of animal history," my inquisitors began, "how would you interpret dancing sheep and talking pigs differently than, say, a cultural or social historian? Moreover, how does including animals in American history alter our understanding of the past? Are animals the same as other previously ignored groups? Do sheep and pigs deserve the same attention as African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos and Latinas, Asian Americans, women, workers, and homosexuals?"

Witnesses say I spoke and gestured. I have to trust their reports. I've repressed all memory of the event. Apparently someone uttered something intelligible. They offered me the position, but my performance still leaves me cheerless. The questions were good and weird; they deserved a better response. Luckily, the publication of several American animal histories over the past of couple years has given me a chance to revisit the psalm-singing swine and the waltzing sheep in order to try to answer the query again: what happens to American history when the beasts wander in?

Animals, all the books under review here make clear, invaded the American past long ago and never left. They are already "in"—in the town records, in the journals, in the Bible, in the newspapers, in the folktales, and in the correspondence. Hounds preoccupied George Washington as much as the Constitution. Pigs and cows ignited devastating conflicts in colonial Virginia and New England. Rats disrupted New York City politics in the 1960s, giving rent-strikers a powerful symbol to wave before landlords and television cameras. Famous beasts dot the nation's past. Lassie, Mrs. O'Leary's Cow, Seaman, Trigger, Silver, Bambi, Mighty Mouse, Traveler, Fala, Sox, Rin Tin Tin, and Seabiscuit captured as much or more attention as their human handlers. Rural people depended on animals for food, clothing, companionship, and sport throughout American history, while at the turn of the millennium urban-, suburban-, and exurbanites continue to wrangle with pests and dote on pets. When a coyote eats a cherished housecat, a pigeon nails a pedestrian with a dollop of excrement, or a white-tailed doe nibbles a flower garden to stems, the citizens of the most powerful and technologically advanced country on the planet rediscover the ubiquity and autonomy of their animal neighbors.

Creatures are everywhere in American history, but does omnipresence signify importance? Michael Derr and Robert Sullivan think so. In *A Dog's History of America* and *Rats*, Derr and Sullivan expose the writhing masses that pant and scamper beyond our attention. Rats and dogs have infiltrated every corner of American society, finding homes in the blind spots where pervasive but invisible objects like Tupperware yogurt makers, maverick knee socks, and lawn gnomes collect. Always around yet rarely noticed, they fade from awareness, laying the groundwork for a surprise return. Derr and Sullivan, both non-academic historians, stage these comebacks: packs of mutts and

piles of rodents appear as if from nowhere, and the results are shocking, at first.

Derr wants his rediscovery of the history of American dogs to engender feelings of gratitude and kinship. His animals are old friends, companions whose constancy has made them easy to ignore. Colonization and modernization serve as the backdrop for this enduring canine and human partnership. European mastiffs storm American beaches, terrorizing the Natives and their semi-domesticated wolf-dogs. Colonists imported spaniels, greyhounds, and more mastiffs to help them hunt, fight, and safeguard their possessions. On plantations, dogs helped police human property. They intimidated slaves and chased down runaways. Dogs belonged to the crowd of beings Euro-American men of property tried to master, but their status as animals excused them from the contests and negotiations that marred patriarchs' domination of women, children, Indians, servants, wage laborers, and African slaves.

Dogs act in history: they fight, terrify, and stalk people and fauna. But their actions—and thus Derr's take on American colonization—have no moral consequence. Hairy creatures lacking reason, language, philosophy, and religion cannot be held to the same ethical standards as human beings. A dog's history of frontier America, therefore, is amoral, leading to odd literary moments like the subtitle: "how our best friends explored, conquered, and settled a continent." Derr not only assumes that his readers already like dogs but that this affection nullifies any qualms they may have about Euro-Americans reconnoitering, seizing, and populating someone else's land mass.

Derr's argument shifts as the frontier ends. Dogs lose their status as historical actors and become the victims of consumer branding and over breeding. American mutts, he argues, participated in the manifest destiny of Euro-Americans to overspread and possess the North American continent, and at conquest's end they struggled along with other frontiersmen and outdoor-types to stay vigorous and free in an increasingly urban and industrial society. Defined by their jobs rather than their bloodlines, fiests (small dogs that caught rabbits and battled vermin) and curs (large dogs used for chasing and treeing raccoons and bears) flourished as competent and content mutts in unsettled regions, but as farms replaced forests, and cities swallowed farms, mixed-heritage canines lost their natural habitat and their status as good dogs.

Class-conscious urbanites altered American dogs' meaning. The animals became proxies in an industrializing nation's racial and social stratification. With the rise of scientific racism and social Darwinism, middle- and upper-class dog owners began to worry about the purity of their companions' blood. Well-bred dogs, they asserted, were smarter, better looking, and more sagacious than mongrels. A pedigreed dog signaled its owner's mastery over

reproduction, and wealthy Americans paid thousands of dollars for dogs that embodied their power over nature as well as their social and racial superiority.

Derr champions mutts. He says Americans have overestimated the significance of pedigrees. Dogs' behavior and health vary within breeds, and the mass production of popular breeds has damaged canines instead of improving them. The pedigree issue concludes the book, and Derr argues his case convincingly: mongrels can be as smart, loving, and courageous as show dogs; Americans should purchase more of them. But this discussion leaves the question of why contemporary Americans prefer pure blood dogs unanswered. At the start of the twentieth century, pedigreed dogs were expensive novelties, explaining their value as status symbols. Following World War II, puppy mills lowered the price of blooded dogs at the same time as rising wages and education levels increased the purchasing power of many Americans. The population of the American middle class and the numbers of purebreds rose together. Why did people abandon their mutts, those plucky icons of the American frontier spirit, when they changed their class? Why not bring them along to enliven suburban backyards with their unsupervised fornication and rebel morphology? A critical history of dogs, as opposed to this survey of their ubiquity, could reveal a great deal about American class formation and identity. If purebreds embody, as Derr suggests, the dominant group's eugenic desires for reproductive control and racial purity, then the current members of American middle class, with all their Labs, have some explaining to do.

Dogs are everywhere, yet few Americans, and fewer American historians, notice or ponder their ubiquity. Rats share dogs' pervasiveness and invisibility. They too are a companion species. Millions of Americans lie down with both. Dogs curl up in or at the feet of human beds; rats often build their nests under the floorboards. Both rats and dogs depend on people for food and shelter. Their populations boom and shrink in response to human activities. A commercial or a sitcom turns a dog actor into a television star, and viewers across the country flood breeders with requests for pets that look just like Spuds or Eddie. Entertainment can alter canine genetics. The same holds true for geopolitics and rats. When religious fanatics waylaid two airliners and crashed them into the Twin Towers, the aftershocks ripped through the entire city, vermin included. Fearing an outbreak of pestilence, New York City officials ordered a massive poisoning campaign in the neighborhoods surrounding the wreckage. The rats who bled to death after swallowing grain tainted with anticoagulants knew nothing of Islam, American foreign policy, oil, or terrorism, but their existence foundered on them nonetheless.

The September 11 attacks and the pest control efforts that followed emptied Robert Sullivan's rat observatory. Sullivan, a New Yorker, author of the popular urban natural history *The Meadowlands*, watched rats in a back

alley near Wall Street and the World Trade Center for over a year. This Jane Goodallian setup, complete with an “I-came-to-study-the-animals-in-their-wild-habitat, but-wound-up-learning-about-myself-and-my-kind” conclusion, frames ruminations on rat biology, urban history, pest eradication, and human and rodent relations. The history sections of the book are fascinating and superficial. Sullivan dips back in time when it suits his narrative, which resembles a romantic comedy. New Yorkers and rats start out as rivals, antipodal species that tend to freak each other out. They end up together, uneasy survivors destined to rebuild and replenish their island home. Chronology pays the price for this dénouement. In an early chapter, Norwegian brown rats arrive and overrun the native black rats, inspiring the city’s first extermination campaigns. Middle chapters offer historical vignettes: the 1930 rat hunt on infested Riker’s Island; the nineteenth-century class war waged between Henry Bergh, wealthy founder of Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and Kit Burns, immigrant saloon owner and rat pit operator; and the 1964 Harlem tenant strike that featured the rat-waving protestors. The final historical section leaps back to the Revolution to tell the story of Isaac Sears, leader of New York City’s Sons of Liberty, whom Sullivan likens to a king rat. Charismatic and dangerous, Sears inspired his followers just as the fattest rat in Sullivan’s alley influenced his pack.

The Sears episode sets the stage for *Rats* collapse. The book does not conclude so much as surrender to a weak metaphor. In the end, Sullivan suggests, the residents of New York City resemble the animals they despise, and their contradictions mark the species as quintessentially American. They are rude, fecund, and nervous; resourceful, brave, and defiant. They adore pasta Alfredo. Both have grown large and numerous ingesting simple carbohydrates and saturated fats.

Sullivan emphasizes shared personality traits, indomitable spirits, and dietary predilections because he writes in a genre—the animal book—built on trans-species common grounds.² Mark Derr plays to this genre as well when he declares dogs “our best friends” on the cover of his book. Fans of animal books buy them to feel close to animals and they want the authors to know the beasts they discuss personally as well as intellectually. Firsthand experience pierces the misconceptions that surround notorious, threatening, and charismatic creatures. People think they know dogs, cats, horses, wolves, elephants, tigers, bats, killer bees, or grizzly bears, but most of their information comes from folklore, myths, and popular culture. Urban legends depict rats as filthy invaders. They infest the sewers beneath cities, and sometimes, as the most prominent story in rat lore goes, an enterprising one will follow a line back to its point of origin. The image of a slick, beady-eyed rodent emerging from a toilet bowl has prompted more than one apartment dweller to consider using their plungers as bludgeons as well as flood protection.

For Sullivan's book to conform to the animal book genre, his personal encounters with rats should dispel some of these wrong-headed notions. The rats scouring for leftovers in his alley should have little in common with the rats that scamper through peoples' imaginations. But Sullivan reports that rats have crawled up sewer pipes and entered apartments through commodes. New Yorkers have beaten them to death with plungers. Rats do spread disease, kill infants, and attack pedestrians in swarms. While they may not be malevolent (they are social parasites glommed to a species that tosses them calories), rats remain startlingly un-human. Unlike dogs, they flaunt their otherness. They are icky, and as such they militate against the animal genre. To know a rat is not to love one.

Though he does not intend to, Sullivan raises some tough questions about animal books and history. What if animal knowledge leads to revulsion instead of affinity? What if the distance between species proves too wide for even sympathetic writers to cross? What if the animals prove less like us than we imagined? What if these differences prevent bringing animals into American history like previous subaltern groups?

Virginia Anderson moves animal history onto this uncertain terrain in *Creatures of Empire*. Unlike Derr or Sullivan, she claims no special affinity for or personal knowledge of the domestic beasts she discusses. Instead, she tells the story of a group of people convinced that they know animals and how this certitude leads to tragedy rather than enlightenment.

In seventeenth-century New England and Virginia, domestic animals, principally cows and pigs, mediated the relationship between English colonists and their Algonquian Indian neighbors. After an initial starving period in Jamestown and Plymouth, colonists imported livestock in greater numbers until the animals reached a reproductive takeoff point and began to replenish and expand their ranks on their own. Thousands of pigs and cows rummaged through the countryside, devouring oysters, native grasses, and the Natives' corn. Livestock drove colonization. They invaded territory and converted it into marketable flesh, and as their populations grew the chances that the English and the Algonquians might coexist peacefully diminished.

Environmental historians have long recognized European domestic animals as instruments of conquest.³ They belonged to a company of biological actors with microorganisms and "weedy" vegetation that transformed North American habitats, often outside the control or understanding of the affected humans. One of the bio-geographical advantages that underwrote the success of European colonial ventures, livestock help explain why the Indians lost territory and political authority and why the colonists won them.

Anderson travels this familiar route with one critical difference: humans continue to play a part in her drama. Their ignorance of biological processes does not shunt them off the stage. Indeed, humans' fantasies and

misperceptions about livestock combine with the animals' actual behavior to determine the outcome of colonial struggles.

As thinking, mobile beings, livestock possessed the ability to surprise. They upset plans and thwarted desires. As soon as they arrived in America, cows, pigs, horses, sheep, and goats wandered away. Since clearing land for tobacco and corn occupied most of the English workforce, few herders stood in their way. The Algonquians, therefore, first met European domesticated animals out of context. Anderson relates a story of a group of Norwotuck Indians running into an unaccompanied cow along the Connecticut River in the 1630s (p. 15). The hunting party left the half-frozen animal in the snow and returned with their sachem, Chickwallop, to view and interpret the creature. This wariness, she argues, signaled animals' place in the Algonquians' religion. Some beasts wielded spiritual power, and humans needed to respect this power if they wanted to stay safe and prosperous. The Algonquians did not worship European animals; they saw all animals as potential allies or enemies. Animals were metaphysically unpredictable, and the Algonquians anticipated and tried to defend against the surprises they held in store for them.

The English who traveled to North America expected to meet shocking creatures too. Early European accounts filled the continent with unfamiliar and fantastic species. By the time the English launched their colonies, the New World bestiary included beavers, moose, deer, wolves, bears, lions, sea serpents, mermaids, giants, and Cyclopes. Yet, while their reading stretched their animal thinking to nightmarish proportions, the English colonists' erected strict mental boundaries around their own creatures. Cattle and pigs were anti-monstrosities, fully known entities that acted as comfort items as well as property. They epitomized English civility, and cows carried an especially heavy symbolic load.

English farmers learned how to be industrious and masterly through their cows. A well-managed herd required constant attention, forcing their human caretakers to adhere to a schedule (milking every morning), to look out for the health and welfare of others (predator eradication, ministering to sick animals), and to maintain and maximize the efficiency of their farms (fence mending, pasture rotation). Cows rewarded good masters with fertility, docility, and gratitude. They were the perfect servants, obeying and never talking back. They confirmed their master's power as well as the benevolence of his dictatorship.

In 1656, the Virginia House of Burgesses honored cows as civilizers. They passed a wolf eradication law that granted Indian hunters one cow for every eight wolf heads they brought in (p. 107). As Anderson notes, this bill was both the ultimate colonial pacification scheme and the quintessence of colonial ironies. The Indians would rid the countryside of wild predators, and

then the cows would drain the wildness from the Indians. The plan might have worked too, if Virginia cows and pigs looked and behaved like docile English farm creatures. Left without human oversight, however, cows and pigs went wild in the New World. Over generations, evolution reshaped their bodies to suit their new environment. Pigs grew longer legs and sprouted tusks; cows lost weight and acquired larger horns. By the end of the seventeenth century, livestock in New England and Virginia threatened to break away from domesticity.

But English animals remained property, and farmers in Virginia and New England expected them to pay off in meat and reproductive increase as if they were bred in the manicured pastures of Lancashire or Surrey. None of the costs, all of the profits: they wanted their cows and to eat them too. From the colonists' perspective, the only drawback to this herding system was the political violence it engendered. English farmers set their animals loose to discover their own food supply. But these calories were never free; Indians claimed them. When pigs dug up corn caches and pillaged clam beds, when cows trampled crops and set off deer traps, Indians paid the price for the colonists' unwatched animals. In the middle decades of the century, the Algonquians and the English tried to find ways to settle animal disputes through diplomacy, fencing laws, and herding restrictions. Natives even included livestock in their agriculture, but the kind of animals they adopted revealed the limits of acculturation. Given the opportunity, most Algonquians chose to raise pigs. They suited the Indians' transient farming practices, and as independent scavengers, pigs resembled dogs, the only domestic creatures the Algonquians knew. Yet, while profitable, hogs did not redeem their owners. Cows civilized; pigs wallowed in their own feces.

The history of domestic beasts in Virginia and New England shows these colonies as sites of biological and cultural innovation. Cows and pigs changed shape and behavior. English farmers abandoned their role as animal caretakers, a job that defined their civility back home. The Algonquians acquired pigs, and they also found room for the invading creatures in their spirituality. Given all these changes, the rigidity of the English commitment to their categories of species stands out as unusual. The colonists gave up control of actual animals, but they clung to their static assumptions about them, even when circumstances turned these understandings into delusions.

The English insisted upon the domesticity of their animals for two reasons: to safeguard their wealth and to protect their self-perceptions. The English saw themselves as stellar additions to North America. They brought not only cows, pigs, and wheat to a vast wilderness but also law, government, and God. By going feral, livestock challenged the righteousness of the colonial venture. They bred chaos instead of order. Colonists refused to tinker with the cultural categories that segregated wild animals from tame ones, savage

beasts from peaceable creatures. These dichotomies upheld English decency as the colonists and their herds engaged in actions that looked less like the bestowal of civilization and more like trespass, theft, and murder.

Creatures of Empire is an unsettling animal book. A diligent scholar, Virginia Anderson handles time with care. She gives livestock autonomy by eschewing anachronism. Unlike the authors of so many animal treatises, she does not assert a special relationship with animals that transcends history and species boundaries. She is not a pig whisperer. All the creatures in her study stay in the seventeenth century. Therefore, Anderson holds no privileged insights into animals that allow her to cast judgments on misguided people or institutions; *Creatures of Empire* has a different payoff. Rather than uncovering affinities, the book excavates missed opportunities. The 1600s did not have to end with the English military conquest of the native Algonquians. The English, the Indians, and their livestock displayed a talent for adaptation. The colonists, however, held fiercely to their notions of domestic animals, and they used this privileged information to indict those ignorant of the true nature of hogs and heifers. Their animal knowledge brought destruction instead of understanding.

Unlike humans, animals leave no written accounts, no folklore, no probate records, and no material culture. Their motives, sensations, and observations die with them. Of course, live animals often present as few clues to their inner thoughts and feelings as dead ones. People study animals; they work, relax, and cavort with them, but their animal knowledge is always secondhand, always an interpretation. What happens to American history when the beasts come in? When done well, animal history uncovers the joined architecture of knowledge and power.

Humans project their fears, dreams, and emotions onto beasts. Animals can rattle these projections, but they are not historical actors in the human sense. No other oppressed group can match their subordination. Humans frequently rob, slaughter, and denigrate one another, but so far the species has resisted the urge to grind up the flesh of its own and serve it to millions on a bun. People and animals experience the world differently, they enjoy divergent life spans, and they place radically dissimilar expectations on existence. Animals do not belong on the list of historical subalterns.

If American history resembled an ark, then beasts could enter behind women, blacks, Native Americans, workers, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and homosexuals and enrich our understanding of the past through their inclusion. Animals and humans, however, travel on parallel ships. They can see each other singing and dancing on the decks, but an ocean of biological and cultural variances keeps them on separate courses. This situation might disappoint the fans of animal books who want to hold creatures near. But admitting the distance between humans and animals opens historical sightlines

even as it dashes the possibility of entering animal minds or recovering their voices.

Welcoming beasts into American history reveals the human politics of animal knowledge. It highlights the contests people wage to assert their definitions and categories. When viewed as a struggle over knowledge, for example, the 1730 witchcraft trial in Mount Holly, New Jersey, begins to make more sense. The key player in the episode was neither the witches, nor their persecutors, nor the singing, talking, and dancing livestock. The pivotal figure was Benjamin Franklin, the man who wrote the account of the trial for the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. He reported the pigs and sheep dancing and singing in an "uncommon manner," and he latched onto this detail for a reason. He found the entire scene funny. Nabobs building scaffolds for supernatural experiments and stripping each other down for truth-revealing dunks, tickled his Liberal sensibilities. A man of science, Franklin knew sheep and pigs did not dance and sing. The Mount Hollyites' belief that their livestock could bellow psalms, speak, and execute dance steps exposed them as hayseeds. The witch-hunt made the Philadelphia newspapers because it confirmed the superior intelligence of Franklin and his readers. Franklin consigned his rural neighbors to a benighted past of superstition and barbaric violence; at the same time he claimed an enlightened future for himself and people who thought like him. Basking in the glory of their reason, urbane Philadelphians moved their history and their status upward on the backs of animals.

Reorienting animal history around knowledge and power disrupts rather than confirms the logic of the animal book genre. Learning more about nonhuman creatures does not necessarily bring people and beasts closer together. Indeed, by exposing past assertions of trans-species affinity as human power plays, animal history should prompt authors of all stripes to examine their intentions before they claim a privileged understanding of moles or wildebeests, especially if this knowledge comes from personal experience.

Yet, while people who write about running with wildebeests or conversing with moles deserve the highest scrutiny, historians should not let healthy skepticism mutate into Franklin's smug mockery. He dismissed the singing pigs and dancing sheep as figments of unlearned minds. But the men and women of Mount Holly knew domestic animals far better than him. They watched those sheep and pigs being born; they strolled with them from barn to pasture to market; they fed, sheltered, nursed, and, eventually, ate them. They knew those animals from snout to tail, but they still left room in their understanding for surprise and magic. The reality of their beliefs mattered less than their elasticity. Whether the sheep and pigs actually danced, talked, and sung psalms mattered less than the fact that three hundred New Jerseyans entertained the possibility that they might. In an age when scien-

tists have mapped, copied, and rearranged the genetic material of nonhumans, the witch hunters' conception of animals stands out as a refreshingly open and humble alternative.

The preservation of loving bonds between humans and animals in the presence of "bioscience" and "techoscience" occupies Donna Haraway in *The Companion Species Manifesto*. Weighing in at one hundred pages, this small book shelters more feminist theory than American history, but the *Manifesto* does the best job of any other contemporary writing about animals at examining the possibility for trans-species affection and species autonomy while recognizing the awesome power people wield over their nonhuman cousins. Haraway hopes to find an animal story that "cobble together non-harmonious agencies and ways of living that are accountable to both their disparate inherited histories and to their barely possible but absolutely necessary joint futures" (p. 107). She wants to retain Franklin's critical distance while respecting the witch hunters' familiarity.

Haraway's prose style reads like a setup for the punch line: "It's English, just without the spelling, syntax, grammar, and punctuation." But historians and their students should resist the urge to drop this book because it is hard to decipher. Underneath the references to "metaplastm," "concrecences of prehension," and "relations of significant otherness" lays a smart genre piece—an animal book written by a dog lover whose scholarly training prevents her from seeing this love as free or easy.

Haraway owns dogs and runs them in agility trials. Her observations about animal autonomy and human power emerge from her personal experience living with and training her canine partners. The sport requires a sizable commitment of time and money. Dogs and owners travel to events and pay entry fees for the chance to navigate obstacle courses that test their animals' athleticism and obedience. Her hobby has immersed Haraway in the subculture of dog breeding and training. She clearly values this subculture and the close trans-species relationship it promotes, but she also owns up to "the stunning capacity that dog people like me have to lie to ourselves about the conflicting fantasies we project onto our dogs" (p. 46). She rejects the idea that dogs think like people or offer their owners unconditional love, yet she also rejects the proposition that all dog and human bonds are mere fictions or romantic fantasies. Indeed, she posits that humans and dogs cannot escape one another. Their entwined histories prevent their divorce.

The subjects of genetic, behavioral, and cosmetic manipulation for centuries, dogs are unimaginable outside of their relationships with people. Dogs mongrelize species categories, and their impurity threatens to collapse other boundaries. If dogs represent humanized animals, then the membrane separating nature and culture, flesh and technology, freedom and power might rupture as well. Yet even in the midst of the horror of the postmodern collapse

of metaplasmic ontologies, a wagging tail can rouse some optimism. Dogs have stuck with us humans despite our tendency to maltreat and misconstrue them. We continue to travel through time together, and in this enduring relationship lies the hope for change and redemption.

Students of time and change and, in our best moments, hope and redemption, American historians need to reckon with animals to comprehend the full power and permeable boundaries of our humanity. Erasing the differences between people and beasts distorts history, but so does overlooking the ties of exploitation and violence, curiosity and affection that bind all living creatures to a common past.

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1. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 22, 1730.

2. For examples of this genre, see Farley Mowat, *Never Cry Wolf: The Amazing True Story of Life Among Arctic Wolves* (1963); Peter Matthiessen, *The Snow Leopard* (1978); John Katz, *A Dog Year: Twelve Months, Four Dogs, and Me* (2002); Susan Chernak McElroy, *Animals as Guides for the Soul: Stories of Life-Changing Encounters* (1998); and Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson and Susan McCarthy, *When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Life of Animals* (1995).

3. See Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492, 30th Anniversary Edition* (2003); and Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (1986).