

## INTRODUCTION

This special issue of *Studia Philologia* is devoted to the relationship between literary theory and animal studies. Both literary theory and animal studies are comparatively recent fields of inquiry: in the case of animal studies, the publication of Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* (1975) is often considered as the beginning of what has since grown into a dynamic multifaceted discipline while literary theory in the sense of a practice of systematic study of literature emerged in the 1950s as a result of the influence of structural linguistics on literary studies. Texts, some of which have since come to be regarded as literary and are now both studied by literary scholars and taught in literature courses, have nevertheless preoccupied themselves with animals and their relationships with humans for thousands of years: the Ancient Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the Aztec codices, medieval bestiaries, and the Bible all prominently feature animals in their respective narratives and imbue them with an array of symbolic meaning. Instances of writers engaging in thought processes that very much anticipate what we would now consider modern theorizing about non-human animals and their connection to humans can be readily found in writings pre-dating the twentieth century. One only has to think of Michel de Montaigne's memorably facetious pondering over whether, from his pet cat's perspective, the animal is the one actually in charge when he, as its owner, is playing with it, or Jeremy Bentham's provocatively poignant query: "the question is not, can they reason? nor, can they talk? but, can they suffer?" Thinkers from across the full disciplinary spectrum 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. Literary studies have been no exception and advances in animal studies have opened up new opportunities for literary studies scholars 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.

Our special issue contributes to this effort by assembling an ambitious collection of articles by a cosmopolitan group of scholars seeking to respond to and further develop the current trends within the subfield of literary animal studies. We present 15 articles by 16 scholars based at academic institutions in 8 different countries across 3 continents, who write about literary texts and traditions from Britain, United States, Canada, Ireland, Romania, Germany, Italy,

India, Japan, and Brazil. One important quality the articles have in common, in addition to their commitment to multidisciplinary inquiry and international outlook, is an effort at making an intellectual contribution to ethically responsible scholarship that concurrently works to raise awareness and inspire positive action in relation to sustainability, environmental protection, and animal rights and welfare.

Animals feature prominently in children's literature, so it is no surprise that we have a whole group of articles in this issue that chose as its subject literature for and/or about children or young people, emphasizing the role animals play in the formative childhood years. Three of the authors focus directly on fairy tales, which, of course, provide a particularly fertile ground for investigating depictions of animals. Anita-Andreea Széll compares the different anthropomorphising strategies in the German and Swedish versions, by the Grimm Brothers and Sven Nordqvist respectively, of the well-known fairy tale figure of Puss in Boots, while Francesco Buscemi examines zoosemiotic trends in Italo Calvino's rewritings of fairy tales from different regions of Italy. Krisztina Bianca Kocsis discusses Romanian incarnations of the familiar fairy tale pattern in which a dual type of transformation occurs as characters change gender as well as shift shape between human and non-human animals. Pop Ionucu offers a detailed analysis of the interplay between folk mythology and satire in another Romanian text aimed at young readers: Ion Sîrbu's novel *Dance of the Bear*. Valeska Bopp-Filimonov looks more broadly at literature by Romanian authors written for children, focusing on how the rural character of Romanian life shaped the texts that can be considered part of an informal canon of Romanian children's literature. The only author in the issue to work with a different medium, Sutirtho Roy uses a framework combining eco-critical and postcolonial theories to analyze the representation of animals and viewer messaging, in three recent animated films which feature animal characters: *Rio*, *Delhi Safari*, and *Happy Feet*.

At the other end of the historical spectrum, the earliest historical period represented in the issue is the Renaissance, with two articles on William Shakespeare's plays. Andreea Şerban and Dana Percec discuss the patterns in the gendering of animal metaphors across seven of Shakespeare's histories from the two Henriads. Jonathan Patrick Sell traces the trope of the poet and the poetic imagination as a colour-changing chameleon, using John Keats's likening of Shakespeare to the reptile as its point of departure. Elena Ogliari takes us to the twentieth century and the so-called Irish Renaissance, with her article on the Irish author Liam O'Flaherty and the topic of continuities and discontinuities in the relationships between humans and animals in his short stories. The rest of contributors all chose texts composed in the twenty-first

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century as their primary focus. Cristina Mihaela Nistor's article nevertheless straddles the contemporary and Renaissance periods as it explores the role and symbolism of unicorns in two recent historical fiction novels, both set in the late Middle Ages: *Lady and the Unicorn* by Tracy Chevalier and *The Lady of the Rivers* by Philippa Gregory. Paul Mihai Paraschiv likewise brings together novels by two different authors, Anne Haverty's *One Day as a Tiger* and Karen Joy Fowler's *We Are Completely Besides Ourselves*, to discuss the intense relationship between human protagonists and a sheep and a chimpanzee respectively featured in each of them as a vision of eradicating speciesism. Shannon Lambert chose a more recent text by Fowler, the short story "Us", and together with Tania Hershman's short story "Grounded: God Glows" and Thalia Field's *Bird Lovers, Backyard* discusses the significance of the "multiplicity and movement" of animals in this trio of experimental prose texts. Shoshanna Ganz's article offers a trans-Pacific perspective as it considers how a single animal, the cow, assumes the role of a signifier of recent environmental crises and anxieties, in the novella *Sacred Cesium Ground* by the Japanese author Kimura Yusuke and in the poetry collection *Figuring Ground* by the Canadian author Robert Moore. Andrei-Bogdan Popa's contribution discusses the role of the concept of "animal capital" in Danielle McLaughlin's short story collection *Dinosaurs on Other Planets*. Angela Lopez-Garcia focuses on Sherri Tepper's *Grass*, an important yet critically often neglected science fiction novel, to analyze its contribution to eco-feminism. We order the articles simply alphabetically by the authors' surnames.

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