Animal Domestication in Geographic Perspective

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What, exactly, makes humans human? A close look at nonhuman animal domestication practices reveals how people came to view their own uniqueness in western cultural process. The study of domestication across time shows the multiple human impulses underlying acts of animal enclosure and domestication. Animals can be beloved companions or eaten for a meal. These impulses involve contradictory moralities—a rich subject for inquiries into the dynamics of power and possession, at scales ranging from local to global.

Writings on human-nonhuman animal relations in western societies commonly observe that animals are our ultimate Others (Birke & Hubbard, 1995). In the moral order of self-other distinctions, where each socially constructed identity depends on its opposite for meaning, animality is said to be a pivotal condition existing not only against, but beneath humanity (Ingold, 1994). Animality is the final site of savagery and instinct, and animals are said to be its living embodiment. We eat them, we harness their labor, we cage them, we turn them into spectacles, we use them to reference the "beastly" humans we despise. And yet we also incorporate certain of them into our households as honorary family members, perhaps attracted to the wildness we have long since domesticated, even within ourselves.

The ambivalences run deep (Humphrey, 1995; Arluke & Sanders, 1996), upsetting neat models of mastery and oppression in human-animal relations. Humans and animals have become habituated to close coexistence. From companion animals to animals living on farms, domestication has entailed sentiments ranging from affection to domination. These diverse impulses are the focus of this article, whose ultimate intention is to release the study of domestication from its moorings in evolutionist-functionalist models and supply glimpses of its workings across diverse times and scales.

Animal Domestication: Comments From the Urban Zoo

Animal domestication is a complex practice that can be conceived narrowly, in a technical sense, and broadly, in a metaphorical sense. Elsewhere I developed the argument that urban zoos are supremely domesticated social products that craft the
means for the popular experience of nature (Anderson, 1995; Mullan & Marvin, 1987; Hoage & Deiss, 1996). Zoos are spaces through which "nature" is transformed into "culture." Zoos are acts of enclosure encoding what Haraway (1988) has called the "partial perspective" of humans. However, the story of metropolitan zoos in western societies, such as Australia, is not one of absolute human control and coercion. Inside the walls of the zoo, there are a range of experiences and representations of human-animal relations, from interspecies proximity (in the petting or children’s zoo) as well as distance (inscribed by iron bars). Many people, and not only children, visit zoos to experience being “closer to animals.” Domestication of the nonhuman other is no simple act of appropriation – it is filled with ambiguity and tension.

Technically speaking, most zoo animals are not domesticated. Individual animals such as elephants and monkeys can be tamed, but only a species bred in captivity for many generations can be considered domesticated in the strict sense of the term. These are the farm animals in the children’s corner of zoos such as goats, sheep, cows, horses, pigs and rabbits. Along with the other major domesticated species of chickens, dogs, cats, mice, rats, camels, turkeys, bees, and silkworms, they are the descendants of once wild species bred for characteristics valued by humans and whose subsistence cycles have for millennia been socially regulated. Over generations, the evolution of such creatures was reorganized so that their "natural" state became one of coexistence with humans. They are living artifacts – hybrids of culture and nature – that have been brought into socially embodied form.

If only some of the zoo’s inhabitants are domesticated in the technical sense, all the zoo’s inhabitants are arguably domesticated broadly speaking. This domestication process draws the non-human into a nexus of human concern where animals and humans become mutually accustomed to conditions and terms laid out by humans; where that which is culturally defined as nature’s “wildness” is brought in and nurtured in some guises, exploited in other senses, mythologized and aestheticized in still other forms of this complex cultural activity.

The intriguing mix of human impulses that reside within the process of animal domestication recently prompted me to survey the wide-ranging literatures on the subject. Those bodies of scholarship, including those contributed by geographers, are overwhelmingly devoted to the study of technical domestication. The political and cultural inflections within the process beyond the brute facts of breeding suggest, however, the need to explore how animal domestication has been culturally understood in western traditions. How was the turn to breeding and harvesting entire species conceived in early writings on domestication? What might the
answers to such questions reveal about the dynamics not only of certain human-animal interactions, but also of the social will to power?

**Animal Domestication: A View from Geography**

The interspecies association known as domestication has been the focus of long and enduring study by zoologists, biologists, archaeologists, pre-historians, anthropologists, and geographers (Clutton-Brock, 1981, 1989; Hemmer, 1990; Harris, 1996; Ucko & Dimbleby, 1969; Wilson, 1988; Zeuner, 1963). As a pivotal event in the development of food production, the domestication of animals has figured prominently in histories of human settlement and livelihood, as well as regional demographies of population growth and migration. Natural scientists, on the other hand, have been more concerned with matters of species and behavioral change under practices of social selection. The impact of domestication on the world's physical environments has also been a major focus for scientific analysis.

Despite the volume of literature on animal domestication, however, debate continues to this day about its origins. There is argument about whether domestication must be understood as a rational decision of humans, or is best modelled as part of evolution. The conventional wisdom that domestication was wholly directed by humans has recently been criticized by neo-Darwinist scholars wishing to conceptualize the relationship between humans and (nonhuman) animals in more mutual, consensual terms. Budiansky (1995), for example, has claimed that certain animals chose domestication in the interests of species survival, while in a similar vein, others note that humans do not have a monopoly on domesticatory relations. Ants, for example, "domesticate" aphids (O'Connor, 1997). Evolutionary challenges to approaches that privilege human agency are thus mounting.

**Cultural Geography and Domestication**

Animal domestication has received a somewhat different treatment and theorization within the literature of cultural geography. Beginning with the pioneering work of Carl Sauer and his Berkeley school students in the 1950s, geographers situated the Neolithic turn to animal propagation within a trajectory of cultural evolution (rather than the above-mentioned organic evolution). In this endeavor, Sauer (1952/1969) drew on the work of Darwin's contemporaries, including geologist Shaler, whose influential 1896 publication was titled, *Domesticated Animals: Their Relation to Man and His Advancement in Civilisation*. Given its influence on later geographic work, it is worthy of some attention here.
Shaler (1896) argued that domestication of “forms of wilderness” marked the moment of human beings’ transition beyond “the threshold of barbarism.” It was an advance of culture, he claimed, that separated people from animals. After all, the process of domestication did not lie only with functional need on the part of humans. Rather it derived from “aesthetic values” and inclinations to bring “other beings into association with our own lives.” Here Shaler echoed the views of Darwin’s cousin, Galton (1865), who claimed that the major animal domesticates had been initially bred in protective relationships as pets. The “caretaking soil-tiller,” in Shaler’s words, had also acquired “sympathetic tendencies” in the task of “husbanding” animals. It followed for Shaler, then, that domestication was the work to which “perhaps more than ... any other cause, we must attribute the civilizable and the civilized state of mind” (1896, p. 222).

Related narrative assumptions structured Shaler’s analysis. For him, domestication was not only a mark of culture (conceived as a civilizing attribute), it was the practice through which culture had arisen. This enabled him to script the relations of man and animal within a frame of culture’s ascendancy and evolution through stages. And yet, in a rather remarkable contradiction, Shaler claimed that such “humanizing influences due to the care of animals” were not universally shared by people. The distinction between wild and tame was meaningless, he observed, to “the savage.” The work of domestication has “in the main,” Shaler stated, “been effected by our own Aryan race” (1896, p. 220). In the continent of Africa, excepting the “lands about the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, the native peoples have never attained the stage of culture in which men become inclined to subjugate wild animals” (1896, p. 247). Such men had themselves, therefore, remained savage (Livingstone, 1984). So just as creatures acquired a “tone of civilization” when they “abandon[ed] those ancient habits of fear and rage which were essential to their life in the wilderness” (Shaler, 1896, p. 226), savage people could only be brought into a “higher state of perfection” under civilizing regimes.

**Cultural Evolutionism**

In 1955, an international symposium was convened under the chair of Sauer of the University of California, Berkeley, to review the impact on the earth’s surface of “man’s evolutionary dominance” (Thomas, 1956, p. viii). The meeting grew out of concern about the environmental impacts that were said to have transpired since man “supplemented organic evolution with a new method of change – the development of culture.” Sauer had previously written about the origins and dispersal of agriculture and was convener of the conference’s retrospective focus.
For Sauer (1952/1969), the evolution of culture in man had given rise to innovations that – in an intellectual context of economic and environmental determinism in the discipline of geography in the 1950s – he wished to highlight. Echoing Shaler, Sauer stated, “Man alone ate of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge and thereby began to acquire and transmit learning, or culture” (cited in Thomas, 1956, p. 2). In this sense, as for Shaler, culture was conceived normatively and temporally as an attribute that had arisen in conjunction with the development of man’s rational capacities. Unlike Shaler, however, Sauer saw no variation in the capacity of races to select and harvest particular animals (and plants). Certainly, he tolerated no assertions about the special ability of Aryans to domesticate nonhuman species. Sauer’s theoretical objective, after all, was to vindicate culture (above ecological factors) as the decisive force transforming the earth’s surface. Culture was a universal capacity, he insisted, of “even the most primitive people,” including “the obtuse Tasmanians” (Thomas, 1956, p. 11).

Sauer (1952/1969) followed the tradition of the German geographer, Eduard Hahn, in his forays into the origins of pastoralism and agriculture. Animals became domesticated, he argued, less to supply food to growing populations (ecological and economic factors), than to serve in the religious ceremonies of more or less sedentary populations (cultural factors). Herd animals, Sauer speculated, would have first been brought into gentle protection and reared like children. Only subsequently would people have experimented with breeding. Other animals became part of people’s households as pets, giving (again following Shaler and Galton) aesthetic satisfaction to humans. Nor were today’s chickens initially domesticated for functional (egg-laying and meat-producing) qualities, Sauer argued. Such characteristics were selected for later, at least in Malaysia and India. Where originally animals were domesticated for ritual reenactments of divine combat, as in cock-fighting. His extensive empirical investigations of the religious bases of domestication thus led Sauer to theorize the process as a “cultural advance achieved only where people of special inclination ... gave peculiar and sustained attention to the care and propagation of certain plants and animals” (Sauer, 1952/1969, p. vii).

Unlike Shaler (who ended his book with an appeal for more breeding experiments), Sauer was no uncritical advocate of the process. Despite seeing domestication as an innovation associated with the rise of man to ecological dominance, he recognized in his paper for the 1955 symposium that flocks and herds were progressively causing attrition of vegetative cover and surface soils. It was time to “take stock” – Sauer wrote in words that again connected back to Shaler – of the “responsibilities and hazards of our prospects as lords of creation” (Sauer, 1952/1969, p. vii).
1969, p. 104). Armed with culture, man had singularly decoupled himself from nature and thus been set on a path to civilization. He was now duty-bound to heed the negative consequences for his environments.

Other geographers carried forward Sauer’s line of work on animal domestication. Notable were the Simoonses (1968) who wrote a book about the ceremonial uses of the ox in India (Simoons, 1974), and Isaac, who in 1970, published *Geography of Domestication* (Donkin, 1989; Palmieri, 1972). Isaac developed the linkage between the domestication of cattle and religious ideas with a view to unsettling reigning materialist interpretations. After outlining a wealth of evidence of the sacred status of bovine species in certain societies, he concluded that domestication occurred in conjunction with “a religious world picture” (Isaac, 1970, p. 110). It was a view that enabled Isaac to (so he claimed) “reverse the popular Marxist axiom that religion and science are superstructures. For in this case, technology [domestication] was a superstructure on ... religious knowledge” (1970, p. 110). This idealist position on the origins of domestication persists in key human geography texts up to the present day (Rubenstein, 1989; Fellman, Getis, & Getis, 1990).

**Cultural Evolutionism under Challenge**

Recently, however, there have been dissenting views among geographers. For example, Rodrigue (1992) refuted on empirical grounds the Sauerian theory of animal domestication. She tested the theory that the earliest animal domestinations were brought about through ritual sacrifice, using data from Near Eastern sites for periods spanning the transition from Upper Palaeolithic to Neolithic times. Her data led her to argue that ritual sacrifice occurred in societies already possessing domestic animals, as well as stored and traded food. She thus claimed that “fragile, destabilizing human ecosystems” impelled decisions to settle and to elevate long-domesticated stock into spiritual herds (Rodrigue, 1992, p. 428). In so doing, she rejected the emphasis of Sauerian geographers on “the causal power of the human mind” (1992, p. 427).

Philosophical idealism in the work of the Berkeley school has been subject to other, quite different, critiques by geographers in recent years. Calling themselves “new cultural geographers,” they have sought to break with Sauerian frameworks of domestication and, more generally, of landscape form and change.

The leading exponent of this critique has been Duncan (1980) who challenged the Sauerian model of culture and elaborated the grounds for a revised view. The
details of Duncan's critique cannot be treated here (Jackson, 1989; Anderson & Gale, 1992), but it is useful to note their specific implications for Sauerian views of animal domestication. Not least relevant is the causal power that Sauer gave to culture for the so-called innovation of domestication. Certainly, there is a strong sense running through Sauer's richly detailed work on pastoralism and agriculture that culture is an entity functioning independently of individuals. Such a superorganic concept was consistent with his objective behind theorizing the origins of animal husbandry: to unseat materialist perspectives in favor of those that emphasized the force of culture in imprinting the face of the earth. For Sauer, culture was an evolutionary attribute uniquely acquired by man – recall that he "alone ate of... the Tree of Knowledge" (Thomas, 1956, p. 2). Only humans possessed a rational soul, as testified by their inclination to use animals for nonfunctional purposes as pets and symbolic bodies in acts of ritual sacrifice.

A New Look at Animal Domestication

It follows from these critical observations about the Berkeley concept of culture that Sauer left unproblematized the learning surrounding animal selection and breeding. Explanation for human intervention in other species' reproduction and disposition was implicitly handed over to forces that had put them at the apex of life. In being content to explain or, more precisely, explain away, animal sacrifice and breeding within a pre-given evolutionary trajectory that bestowed culture on man, Sauer lost the opportunity of contextualizing domestication within a politics of premises surrounding human uniqueness.

If Sauer's school of domestication obscured the politics of species alteration, so too has a growing body of neo-Darwinian research. This work theorizes domestication within the frame of organic evolution, one in which humans do not have privileged status as Sauer would suggest, but rather are conceptualized continuously with nonhuman animals in seeking to maximize their species fitness. According to such work, domestication functions to bring humans and other species into "co-evolutionary relationships" that, in species-terms, are mutually beneficial (Jackson, 1996). In contrast both to scientists for whom animal domestication operated in tandem with organic evolutionary forces, and cultural evolutionists like Sauer, for whom it followed naturally from some higher stage of evolution called culture, is an alternative perspective again. Newer models of domestication are possible that problematize animal containment strategies by humans within a cultural and political context. More particularly, animal domes-
Domesticating the Wild as Narrative Triumph

The practice of selectively breeding animals was rooted in the remote past, but the term “domestication” did not enter the English language until the 1500s. The verb “to domesticate” appears to be a technical term – deriving from the French “domestiquer” which in medieval times became attached to a concept that had been circulating for centuries. We know that in the Greek classical era, however, from approximately 500 BCE, to the Roman period, 100 to 300 CE, domesticated animals were the reference point for a split in thought between nature that was said to be tame, in Cicero’s words, that “we make,” and nature that was said to be “indomitable” (1894).

Characterizing the thought of any era is fraught with problems of overgeneralization, but it is reasonable to conclude that the opposition between made and unmade nature was no neutral distinction for the ancients. From at least the time of Hesiod’s *Works and Days* in the 8th century BCE, human history was conceived by many Greek scholars as a journey from the age when people lived in (what was said to be) a “state of nature” (Glacken, 1967, pp. 132-133). For some authors, not least Hesiod, who deplored the toils endured by farmers, the journey effectively amounted to a fall from a golden age. By and large, however, the practice of recasting life-forms for food, energy, warmth, sport, company, and so on, came to be narrated positively as a process of cultivating nature. To cultivate nature was to draw it into a moral order where it became “civilized.” Indeed, it was the practice that signified culture itself, a term, which, in its earliest European use, meant to cultivate or tend something – usually crops and animals (Williams, 1983, p. 87).

Inversely, nature beyond the orbit of cultivation came to signify a space of danger, death, and distance (Cosgrove, 1995). Recall the walled city (*polis*) of the classical era that was designed to keep out wildness (especially animals) and secure the establishment of the ideal moral community (Pagden, 1982, pp. 18-19). Such enclosures represented a systematic effort to definitively segregate civility and wildness, both in thought and practice. Later on, biblical stories invoked still more negative notions of wilderness beyond the reach of cultivation and civilization (Cronon, 1995).
The social archaeologist, Hodder (1990), provides a model that historicizes still further these ancient concepts of civility and wildness. He locates the cultural distinctions even more remotely – in the Neolithic era – when humans were experimenting with the breeding of bulls, sheep, and goats in diverse parts of Europe. People were also erecting more stable homes, settlements were becoming more definitively delimited, and the dead (both human and nonhuman) were being buried and segregated, all in ways, Hodder argues, that more securely bounded the domestic from the wild. While acknowledging that the full range of meanings within Neolithic symbolic systems cannot be recovered, Hodder argued that space in many archaeological sites throughout Europe in that period was structured around the dramatic templates of domus (where life-sources such as plants, animals, and clay were brought in and transformed) and agrios (where danger and death were found). Hodder held that, underlying such practices, were human impulses of both fear and attraction to that which loosely bore the label of “wild.”

**Alterning Relationships**

It follows from Hodder’s analysis that the alteration of the relationship between humanity and other life-forms during the Neolithic period – called “agri-culture” – was far broader than a functional rise in the activities of herding and harvesting (Thomas, 1991). It was a simultaneously practical and symbolic process. Note particularly that the distinctions of domus and agrios, inside and outside, are not pre-given in Hodder’s analysis, but rather are under constant construction, experimentation, and negotiation as humans remake life sources and life sources remake humans. By the late 5th and 4th millennia BCE, Hodder claimed, the productive activities of cooking, feasting, and exchange were couched within an ideology of the domus where that which was figured as wild was domesticated.

By the time of Greek writing, the capacity of humans to domesticate entire species of animals had come to inform some grand, forward-thrusting narratives. Yoking the ox to the plough, for example, was being scripted as the very process out of which civilization had evolved. Indeed, the activity of domesticating animals was, for many Greek scholars (especially the Stoics), the very justification of a claim to human uniqueness (Sorabji, 1993). The logic went as follows: Whereas Man (endnote 2) could control his instincts through thought, nonhuman animals were, by contrast, locked in the tyranny of instinct, unable to “realize their potential” (cited in Pagden, 1982, pp. 17-18; Aristotle, 1976).
Of course, the animal world provided a reference point for human boundary-making efforts in a range of ancient civilizations long before experiments in breeding (Dell, in press). But breeding and harvesting were taken as decisive because (unlike hunting) such activities were said to involve the systematic use of reason. Selective breeding vindicated the telos that was inherent within humans, enabling them to gloriously transcend the primal struggle for survival. By contrast, animals were stuck. They were lodged, not only in their own nature, but in that residual sphere called "nature" that was somehow left over and behind after humans, or at least Man, had heroically detached himself.

Such was the avowed triumph of the taming of nature that, in time, the process became more widely extrapolated in Christian theorizations of human identity (Sorabji, 1993). Just as humans regulated animal savagery in the ascent to domestication, so did man become (what was said to be) civilized by raising himself above his own internal primal urges. He was released from the grip of instinct, from his own animal nature. He was never entirely free, however, and by the 18th century in England and elsewhere, the prevailing conception of human identity depicted a self split between animal and human sides (Ingold, 1994, p. 22). Here was foreshadowed the notion of "the beast within" – that metaphorical site that to this day, in western cultures, signifies all the contradictory fears and desires surrounding uninhibited behavior including sex and violence (Midgley, 1978).

European ideas of animality have had a complex history since the ancient era, not least during medieval times when premises about the integrity of the human-animal boundary became less confident. In time, however, the divide of human and animal became so taken for granted in western science and thought that the reality of species-specific diversity grew obscure. The processes embedded in the construction of Animal as a category distinct from Human became progressively lost to conscious reflection even beyond the time of the publication of Darwin's path-breaking *Origin of Species* in 1859.

The connections between practices of animal husbandry and ideas of human uniqueness are being charted here as part of a strategy of retrieval well underway in a range of human sciences (Noske, 1989; Birke, 1995; Plumwood, 1993). The activities that gave humans control over the reproduction and character of other life-forms were nested within binary and temporal rhetorics of reason and instinct. These logics pitted animals apart from and beneath humans. Selective breeding and harvesting thus assumed a wider, metaphorical dimension in Judeo-Christian thought, holding up a mirror to anxieties within human self-definition.
Changing Scale: The Wild in the City

Drawing wildness into a nexus of human concern is an inherently spatial process. It implies a physical infrastructure of enclosure practices, as well as concepts of bounding, fixing, and arranging that rely on spatialized thought. Such boundary-making efforts have been fraught with contradiction and tension, however, as a look at the narrative history of animal domestication shows. As Hodder (1990) flagged, and the notion of the “beast within” captures, humans are attracted to wildness as they engage in acts of enclosing, repressing, and recasting it. The practice of bringing wildness into the human domus has been underpinned by impulses not only of fear and control, but also of care and curiosity – by affection as well as domination (Tuan, 1984).

The ambiguities are precisely what make the representational devices at such familiar institutions as the urban zoo more complex than a series of rationalist frames of viewing. This is not to imply that some overarching continuity of domesticatory relations has flowed from Neolithic Europe into the spaces and places of contemporary cities. Nothing so transhistorical, linear, abstract, or impregnable in scope is proposed. Rather, returning to the local spaces through which domesticatory practices are articulated, registers the point that animal life is brought into close encounter with humans in diverse ways, through particular spatial arrangements, and in specific times and places. The manifestly varied faces of domestication require their own detailed geo-histories.

If the menageries of ancient Greece and Egypt saw efforts to technically domesticate new species of animals (Hoage, Roskell & Mansour, 1996), the zoo of the modern era is an exercise in metaphorical domestication. Inside the walls of those institutions that call themselves zoos after Regent’s Park in London in 1840, select animals are brought into encounter with humans as objects of curiosity, education, and entertainment – as resources within a nature aesthetic for urban consumption.

Adelaide Zoo

In the case of the colonial institution of Adelaide Zoo in South Australia, the decisions of the officers of the Royal Zoological Society regarding animal composition and display hold up a window to such representational strategies. The decisive influences included an imperial network of animal trading that, for the first 40 years of the zoo’s career, saw exotic icons of colonial mastery brought from
abroad. Also instrumental in shaping the zoo’s design philosophy was the mix of late 19th-century ideas surrounding race, gender, and empire, such that the likes of Lilian, the elephant (and her long line of female successors) stood doubly as racialized subjects and mother figures for children. The animals were also recast as exhibits according to the dictates of consumer capitalism over the 20th century that brought circuses and other entertainments inside the walls of Adelaide Zoo.

Science too had a role in transforming the animals into spectacles. From the era of Linnean taxonomy (with displays accompanied by maps of the global distribution of species) to contemporary biodiversity discourses of loss and extinction, animal bodies have been interpreted through the lens of scientific knowledges. The rise of nationalism saw the addition of an “Australiana” exhibit in the 1960s. (Earlier in the century, there had been a flow of koalas, kangaroos, wombats, and other national icons to overseas zoos). Finally, shifting design languages in western society at large—from modernist iron bars to the postmodern “World of Primates” where wildness has been invented from scratch—have conditioned the form of the wildness aesthetic at the heart of the city of Adelaide.

Figure 1. Lilian, symbol of human mastery and mother figure, leading children through the grounds, 1934
Figure 2. Lord and Lady Nelson entering the chimp circus during their visit. 1932

Enclosing the Other

The changing visual technologies at the Adelaide Zoo, from menagerie-style caging to the ecological theaters of the present day, reveal that institution’s nesting within contexts of empire, consumer capitalism, and nationalism (among others). It does not necessarily follow, however, that the story of that zoo can be read as a tidy tale of human (and British colonial) dominion. In bringing in wildness, zoos replay a will to control the Other, at the same time as there is an attraction to it. At Adelaide, in the 1930s, children came into close contact with animal bodies when they took rides on Lilian’s back, while they (and their parents) laughed at the antics of monkeys in the demeaning chimpanzee circus (Figures 1 and 2). In this sense, the zoo is a microcosm of the complex modalities of power and allure within the more general process of domestication.
Conclusion

One of the most persistent themes within western thought has been the concern with what makes us human – an impulse that has seen numerous efforts to specify how we are different from animals. Animal domestication has figured prominently among such efforts – a claim substantiated here by historicizing domestication practices within a narrative politics of ideas about human uniqueness, wildness, and civility. Such a review presents a more activated model of domestication than has existed in past and present functionalist-evolutionist theorizations. The multiple human impulses that underlie acts of animal enclosure involve not only a politics of difference, however. They also contain contradictory moralities, making animal domestication a rich subject for inquiries into the dynamics of power and possession, at scales ranging from local to global.

Notes

1. All correspondence should be sent to Kay Anderson, School of Geography & Oceanography, University College, University of New South Wales, Canberra, Australia 2600.

2. In this article, I resist the temptation to correct the male voice because the falsely universalist premises of the time – of man as culture and reason – were logically crucial to the narratives I am interrogating. Such a manoeuvre on my part is only possible given the persuasive feminist and antiracist critiques of universalist truth-claims, subject positions, and subjectivities (see Rose, 1993; Plumwood, 1993). Where the term “man” was granted especially transcendent inflections by Shaler and other authors, I capitalize it, along with its corollaries Culture, Reason, and Progress.

3. Although domestication reshaped the biology and disposition of animals, and doubtless contributed to the species fitness of humans by affording them food, I resist the tendency to impute a necessity and inevitability to the process (e.g., Aborigines did not domesticate other species prior to European settlement in Australia). My difficulties with evolutionary theories have to do with their non-falsifiability, as well as their invocation of forces that collapse human agency into an explanatory scheme that, in effect, depoliticizes it.

References


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