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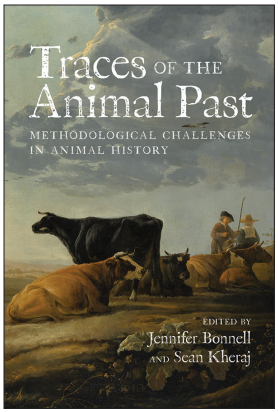

TRACES OF THE ANIMAL PAST: METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES IN ANIMAL HISTORY

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Animal Cruelty, Metaphoric Narrative, and the Hudson's Bay Company, 1919–1939[1]

George Colpitts

For the first time in its centuries-old history, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) had to confront the issue of cruelty to animals in the fur trade. In 1929, B. J. Davis, a shareholder, wrote a short letter to the HBC's executive secretary, attaching an article clipped from the *Daily Telegram*. The London newspaper had printed a report of fur-bearing animals suffering horrid deaths in steel leghold traps in Canada's north and seals being skinned alive by Newfoundland sealers. Deeply concerned, Davis asked, "whether the Hudson's Bay Company inflicts great pain on animals."[2]

HBC managers were aware of an anti-fur movement developing in the first decades of the twentieth century. As early as 1911, the *New York Times* reported that HBC and other traders in Canada's north were defending themselves from "'don't trap' propaganda . . . from certain sources in this country."[3] Protest gained more momentum just after World War I, when British and American animal protectors organized fur boycotts and high profile demonstrations, and joined anti-steel trap leagues to put an end to cruelty in the fur trade.[4]

But how do we reply to Davis' seemingly simple question? As a fur buyer in North America, the HBC had little say over the activities and

methods of independent trappers. At the same time, the HBC delivered trappers' furs to London wholesalers, and they in turn supplied dressers, furriers, and finally consumers. Surely all parties involved in fur trade and fashion shared some responsibility for the ways animals suffered in traps. In this modern dilemma, both the fur industry and its critics turned to metaphoric language to speak on behalf of animals. They did what humans do best: tell stories. Their animal stories served a clear purpose in the modern age when, as John Berger argues, urban life and industrialization obscured an understanding of the fundamental duality and interconnection between human and non-human animals. A tradition of anthropomorphic animal storytelling that had been "integral to the relation between man and animal and was an expression of their proximity" declined too.[5] Such storytelling has continued in the present era, but for "most modern, 'educated' readers," the moral qualities, intentionality, and individual personalities attributed to animals are read skeptically and make readers "uneasy."[6]

Both animal humanitarians and fur industry promoters nevertheless used metaphoric language very effectively to tell stories in the 1920s. They presented two different understandings of fur-bearers in nature to build an "oppositional argument," which Kathryn Olson and Thomas Goodnight have pointed out at play in the later anti-fur campaigns of the 1990s. Already in the 1920s, anti-cruelty advocates spoke "on behalf of beings" that were voiceless by "inventing and deploying oppositional arguments to block accepted opinions" about the fur industry.[7] In turn, the fur industry, including the HBC, advanced its own oppositional discourse, one offering quite a different understanding of animals.

If industry promoters and protesters shared common ground, it was in their audience. Both used modern communications media to present animals to consumers making purchasing decisions.[8] It is worth examining, then, as Joanna Dean suggests in this volume, just how much animals really figure in the record, the ways their realities were made invisible in archives, and, in this case, what form they ended up taking as story subjects. As Nigel Rothfels has suggested of "captured animals" in zoos, taxidermy collections, and picture books in the modern era, these wild animals communicated "very *un*natural histories" specifically to consumers.[9] In the oppositional discourse developing in the context of the anti-cruelty

movement in the 1920s, fur industry protesters and promoters dramatized animals in nature and ascribed temperaments and morality to them that, in the end, resonated in the "quotidian terrain" of the commercialized city.[10]

The historian readily perceives modernist consumerism, grounded in the urban marketplace, significantly influencing views of wild animals in the twentieth century. As buying behaviours expanded up and down social classes with mail-order catalogue or department store purchases, Bettina Liverant argues that a new "consumer consciousness" emerged in twentieth-century urban, industrialized economies.[11] Fashion marketers and advertisers targeted women especially to shape their expectations and aspirations in a widening marketplace.[12] That animal protectors raised fur in consumer consciousness is not surprising. Conditions in cities had inspired new sensibilities toward work and animals, domesticated and wild.[13] As legislation in the nineteenth century began protecting animals as both common property and "sentient beings with a right to protection from suffering and neglect," urban animal protectors extended the "gospel of kindness" to animals in colonial settings, the countryside, and "wilderness" itself.[14]

Animal protectors took up the cause of wild fur-bearers in the spectacular take-off of fur fashion. From the 1890s onwards, consumers around the globe overtly and lavishly wore fur garments, hats, scarves, and boas. With a glut of industrially mass-dressed pelts to work with and new chemical dyes available, furriers produced goods for broad segments of the population, with cheaper furs within reach of mail-order catalogue shoppers.[15] Currents in fashion raised fur-bearing animals to spectacular visibility in urban spaces. Furriers offering the "Empire Figure" coat in the first decade of the century draped recognizable furs from a woman's shoulders.[16] More garishly, they wrapped the popular "animal style" stole, tippet, or scarf around a woman's neck with its animal head, paws, and tail intact. Consumers also wore furs year-round. By the end of World War I, designers used lighter furs to introduce the summer fur coat and accessory. Ironically, the modernist city, otherwise seen as separate from nature, was visually overrun by wild fur-bearers in coats, muffs, and stoles, both in winter and summer. In 1919, the American animal protector Alice Jean Cleator had seen enough. Women wore wild animals on "drab city

street" and "on jostling, automobile-lined avenue." Fur appeared at the opera, social clubs, theatres, and churches. As Cleator pointed out, almost all these furs came from animals that suffered cruel deaths in steel leghold traps.[17]

But animal protectors had difficulty describing the natures and behaviours of animals in their welfare work. They joined a movement largely borne in the modernist city and, from a distance, could only imagine the emotion, psychology, and sensations of animals killed in traplines. As David Matlass has observed in post–World War II Britain, sport hunters, fishers, and agriculturalists might still have shared something of a "visceral" perception of animals in their use for "pleasure, profit or food." Visitors to natural areas influenced by "new naturalism," meanwhile, perceived animals from afar, worked to preserve them in nature without human interference and interaction, and came to know them in abstract ways, often in home science reading, bird watching, or naturalist observation during day hikes.[18]

It was across such geographic and imaginative distances that one of the first urban newspaper stories criticizing trappers and fur consumers appeared in 1899. The story ran in the *Chicago Tribune* to be carried in wire services to other papers. The writer felt that women now preferring to wear a seal, marten, or beaver pelt "to that of the sheep" were responsible for a rapid global disappearance of animals. It was "not highly unlikely" that a new form of the Audubon Society would organize to publicize "the agonizing cruelty which attended the capture of many of the wild mammals in order that woman may be warmly clad."[19] Most of the writer's criticisms fell on Canadian trappers, especially northern Indigenous hunters "scattered all over the immense British-American territory." These hunters earned a pittance by killing all manner of animals and selling pelts to the HBC so "that some far-off woman may wrap herself in furs when she does her Christmas shopping." Animals suffered accordingly. The writer recounted the story of "an old trapper named Noyes" who for thirty-seven years had not been south of the "town of Edmonton." Noyes estimated that every tenth pelt he had trapped "had but three feet," the animal having had to chew off a leg previously to escape from another trap. [20]

In 1904, a British newspaper reprinted a report denouncing the "Cruelties of Fashion," describing the fate of fur seals used in fashion

coats: "Gangs of men on the beach entice the seals from the water, and drive them inland, panting and helpless. Then when the end of their journey is reached, the poor creatures are formed into long columns, three or four abreast, and made to pass between men armed with heavy clubs." Seal hunters as "inconceivable savages" and "the scum of the earth" did their work ultimately for the fur market: "Such is the price of vanity."[21] Such stories prompted leading women in Manchester in 1907 to convene an anti-fur fashion show "to demonstrate that without using fur, feathers, or leather women can dress smartly and economically."[22] Lady Clare Annesley, an organizer, admitted that urging women "to wear humane clothing" instead of fur was difficult "because the suffering caused seemed so removed."[23] In the same decade, a woman's fashion compendium referred readers to the efforts of E. Alexander Powell, of the Royal Geographical Society. An "intercessor" working on behalf of fur-bearing animals, Powell protested the use of leghold traps, telling his audiences at public talks: "If only those furs which you wear so becomingly and so carelessly could talk, dear lady, what tales they would unfold." [24]

When the American SPCA (ASPCA) printed its "Cruelties of Fashion" pamphlet at the turn of the twentieth century, excerpts of its most sensational claims ran in both American and British newspapers. In 1912, a *New York Times* article reprinted the ASPCA's descriptions of seal hunters tormenting animals. It reported hunters killing weasels not with traps but with large pieces of iron coated with grease. In cold winter temperatures, these animals "lick the grease, and then this intense cold of the iron causes the tongue to freeze fast to it. From this there is no escape except by pulling out the tongue by the roots." Marten hunters were using dogs to tree animals and beat them down "with long poles into nets beneath."[25] The reports made a terrific impact. "Winifred," a fashion authority, even included the information in one of her 1913 "Fashion Fancies" columns in an English weekly newspaper. After discussing straw hats in fashion that year, she reprinted the ASPCA's information in stark bullet points, adding that "many members of the most exclusive circles of American Society are wearing no furs this winter, on account of the recent disclosures regarding the cruel practices on the animals that yield the valuable pelts."[26]

Protesters focused most of their concerns on the leghold trap. The leghold, or gin trap, was already criticized in the English countryside

where it was used for rabbit hunting. In the fur trade, hunters could use relatively cheap legholds to kill animals more efficiently to produce far more pelts, which were rising in price in the last decades of the century. By the 1920s, about fifteen manufacturers mass-produced some eight to nine million leghold traps annually for the fur trade.[27] In their pamphlets, news reports, and other publications, activists used text and images, often photographs, to graphically present the leghold and develop key ideas about wild animals, their environments, and humans in nature. Many of their depictions capitalized on a contemporary idealized understanding of nature as wilderness.[28] Protectors drew inspiration from a narrative technique already developed at the turn of the century in animal stories written by Ernest Thompson Seton, G. D. Roberts, and William J. Long. Adopting a wild animal's perspective, these stories individualized the animal subject and attributed human emotions and intentionality to it. Immensely popular among the urban middle classes, these stories helped urbanites understand "wilderness" as a curative space to redress the problems of modernity.[29]

Fur protestors wrote animal stories in the flagship monthly of the Massachusetts SPCA, *Our Dumb Animals*, just after WWI. By then, fur fashion rebounded to new heights and year-round use. In 1919, the *New York Times* reported that the American Blue Cross Society and the New York Women's League for Animals were campaigning against the leghold trap and "the summer fur craze."[30] American actor Minnie Fiske, a prominent animal protector, mounted boycotts against fur purchases.[31] Major Edward Breck began speaking tours to urge legislation to ban steel traps across North America. He asked all like-minded societies to join his "Anti-Steel Trap League."[32]

After 1919, almost every issue of *Our Dumb Animals* drew attention to the leghold. Alongside photographs of a trapped bear, fox, or other animal, contributors typically wrote poetry to recount from an animal's perspective its life and death in a trap. Ellen Master's "Trapped," for instance, told the story of an animal as "he trod the pathless forest wild, with easy stealth and grace, nor dreamed there lurked a deadly foe in such familiar place."[33] Henry Flury's poem "Lady in Furs" gave a voice to the fox that made up a woman's garment: "You look fine in your furs, my lady; if you only knew what they cost. . . . All night long, freezing in the snow with my

right paw in a cruel trap." The fox tells the woman that it was the "father" of six cubs, "the cutest babies you ever saw, but you envied my hide so now, they will starve."[34] Similarly, a 1919 issue of *Our Dumb Animals* ran an illustration showing a woman, in sweltering summer temperatures, wearing a wolf stole in animal style. The woman finds the wolf's ghost trapped in a leghold at her feet, imploring her not to wear summer furs. A poem accompanying the image, "The Kind Lady's Furs," tells the story of a weasel (or ermine) living in nature, away from humans. After successfully evading a pack of wolves, the weasel steps into a trapper's leghold. "A white man came ere the wolves might come, and he carried that ermine's peltry home. Milady she wears it with joy and pride, not caring a whit how the ermine died!"[35]

Another very different counter-narrative developed to support the fur industry as it grew in scale in the late nineteenth century. Naturalists, hunters, and conservationists had taken umbrage with the sentimental portrayal of animal stories. In the "nature faker" controversy of the early twentieth century, John Burroughs and later Teddy Roosevelt publicly denounced animal sentimentalists and argued that "ruthless competition, survival of the fittest and instinct" dominated "Nature."[36] Burroughs, taking exception to "natural history romancers" who ascribed "almost the entire human psychology" to animals reminded his readers that animal intelligence, or "wit," was largely unknowable and likely attributed to primal emotions, "fear, love and hunger," which, in some animals, prompted subtle, bloodthirsty, and even cruel behaviours.[37]

Fur industry supporters capitalized on this understanding of nature as a competitive and violent place to create their own moralized stories. These stories, written in a more objective voice, were often framed in scientific observations of animals. For instance, author Mabel Osgood Wright in 1898 wrote a children's book about a family spending a season on a farm where the children learn about animal life, the differences between domesticated and wild animals, and how animals in their classification divide between their kingdoms, classes, families, and species. But Wright took license to ascribe morality to the animals she depicted. When the children visit a trapper's cabin in the woods, they learn about the animals that provide furs for urban fashion. The trapper teaches them that weasels "are the most malicious, blood-thirsty, and wasteful of all our

fourfoots," adding that they killed "merely for the pleasure of it . . . only taking a suck of blood here and a bite of flesh there" among its victims. In nature, the mink nearly equalled the weasel in its "steady-goin' mischief." The children are surprised by what they learn: "It seems very queer that mother's [mink] muff once went sneaking and tramping all over the country," one exclaims. If their mother knew "how savage they are, I'm sure she would be afraid of her little tippet with the head and claws."[38] The trapper also describes the cruel nature of pine martens: "If those martins ain't got tempers!" the trapper explains, "And don't they just fight fierce when once they start! I saw one kill a Rabbit; it wasn't satisfied with killin' it, but went on and tore and clawed it all to bits."[39]

That animals were themselves cruel with one another could justify their use in fashion, a point underlined by Agnes C. Laut. In 1921, the Canadian-born journalist and popular writer of numerous fur trade histories, wrote a book about the modern fur industry. She included chapters on the wonders of industrialized fur dressing, and others providing women with information to make informed choices when they purchased furs from stores. The first sentence of her book *The Fur Trade of America* asks, "Is fur trading founded on cruelty?"[40] She pointed out that, "For the past few years, there has been a campaign waged in the United States, which almost charges any one wearing a piece of fur with murder." Laut provided the rejoinder: "And I answer unhesitatingly—it is not." [41]

Laut pointed out the economic reasons why trappers killed animals quickly and without suffering since a trapped animal's trauma and struggle devalued its fur when sold.[42] But she defended fur consumerism more explicitly on the basis of how fur-bearers acted with one another: "However cruel trapping may seem to the tender-hearted city dweller, who knows wild life only from books and not from direct contact, trapping is kindness itself compared to the sufferings and deaths of fur animals in wild life."[43] Laut stressed that "you have to go to the wilds and go only once to realize natural life is crueler by far than the most careless, thoughtless fur hunter." In a world where there "is no such thing as a natural death in the wilds," a rabbit fell prey to the weasel, the weasel to the wolf or bear. "Each creature in the animal world preys on the creature one degree smaller or weaker than itself. That failing they eat their own young like rats, or disembowel their mates as the wolves and minks do." Laut drew

from the works of contemporary scientific authorities to describe animals and their temperaments this way. For instance, William T. Hornaday described the mink as a "wanton murderer" and the weasel as a "courageous and aggressive" animal that sometimes killed "purely to gratify its murderous disposition."[44] Laut characterized weasels as "blood-suckers and blood-drunkards," the mink as a "murderer" hunting "for the sheer deviltry of killing."[45] In respect to the latter, "my sympathies don't run out to the mink," she wrote, "when he is transformed into fur."[46] As for protests against the seal hunt, Laut used the naturalist observations of Henry Wood Elliott to describe how cruel Pacific hair seals were one with another: males fought other males for rights to "harems" of females in "the cruelest thing in all the cruelties of fur life." She wished that "sentimentalists who rail against fur" would see that male seals would "kill thousands of mothers and thousands of pups" if many of them were not themselves killed fighting each other.[47]

Separated through commodity chains from animals in nature, metropolitan fur buyers, like the HBC, London wholesalers and furriers initially remained aloof from the protest. The HBC's new Development Department, which formed in 1925, only briefly inquired into the possibility of developing a new trap for the industry. Animal protectors in the US had already started sponsoring annual contests among inventors of box or instant kill "humane" traps that might replace legholds in the trade, none proving successful in that regard.[48] The HBC's development department was well-positioned to take up the same research, having been formed to apply science and technology to improve and market HBC-branded products.[49] Its new director, Charles Townsend, who had run a similar department at the global soap giant, Lever Soap company, wrote a memo to the HBC's governor in 1926 to point out that, "as you probably know, there is often a good deal of agitation regarding the method by which furs are obtained." Animals caught in the "iron jaws" of leghold traps "die very slowly and in great anguish with hunger and cold."[50] Townsend believed it would be "comparatively easy" to devise a trap with an explosive charge to kill an animal instantly. He admitted that such a device had to be "foolproof" since any explosive mechanism might pose threats to children "in the native tent or hut."[51] Townsend then wondered "whether it would be possible to contrive a trap which on being sprung would release some

kind of anaesthetic? Probably a wild idea."[52] There is no archival evidence that the HBC's governor, Charles Sale, bothered replying to Townsend's far-fetched ideas. British humanitarians did send the company several alternative trap prototypes in the hopes that the Canadian fur trade would adopt them for use. The London office, in turn, sent some for examination by its Winnipeg-based Canadian Committee. Given that many were designed in the English countryside, they were deemed unsuitable and impractical for the climate, habitat, and animals of Northern Canada. [53]

In the meanwhile, the HBC avoided engaging with the protest even when urged to do so, such as in 1929 when one of its city wholesalers, concerned by anti-trapping pamphlets (singling out the cruelty of the fur trade in Canada), implored the company's governor to issue a "reassuring statement" to the newspapers. The company's secretary thought it would be unwise to do so, "as we think such a reply could not put to rest the exaggerated accounts which appear from time to time."[54] Like the London Fur Trade Association in 1930, the HBC resisted going to newspapers with its own damage control when a British Labour MP proposed, unsuccessfully, a ban on fur imports "on the grounds that their procuring involves cruelty and the fact that cheaper warm fabrics, known as artificial furs, can now be obtained."[55]

But in 1929 the company did need to respond to shareholders writing letters to the governor after they grew concerned by assertions made by a London anti-cruelty campaigner. Major Charles C. Van Der Byl had been circulating his own pamphlets against fur fashions by the mid-1920s and publishing letters in prominent London dailies. He even visited the HBC's London offices to ask pointed questions about trapping in Canada. When the company received B. J. Davis' letter in 1929, himself troubled by Van Der Byl's report in the *Daily Telegram*, J. Chadwick Brooks arranged a meeting with the shareholder. Brooks believed that Van Der Byl's reports were "obviously highly coloured and incorrect as to facts in several instances," having gone over Van Der Byl's published pamphlets to highlight hearsay "sensational" reports made in them. These included the claim that hunters were using frozen iron bars to trap martens by their tongues, and the "popular fallacy" being reported that sealers were killing mothers for their fetuses.[56] In their meeting, Brooks explained to Davis the reality of Canadian trapping as he understood it. In a follow-up letter, he reiterated

the same assertions Laut had made in her book: a trapper had every economic incentive to visit his traps regularly and kill animals quickly before they suffered; Indigenous people depended on trapping income and they would become a burden on the state without it; and, finally, that it was "doubtful" that a trapper "is more cruel than nature itself." Davis pointed out "the pain which must follow to an animal seized by another as its prey, and to the practice of certain animals of playing with a wounded victim before killing it."[57]

Throughout the 1930s, the HBC responded in the same manner to a growing number of letters from shareholders and then the British public. These included a writer who had "worked with animals all [his] life and love[d] them" expressing his wonder that such cruelties existed in the fur trade. "What use are our churches, I ask?"[58] Another challenged, "your own women folk or your shareholders to be present at your inevitable holocausts [on the trapline] and not come away revolted and sworn not to use wraps or adornment so bloodily procured."[59] Yet another had been shown "photographs of the methods employed by Canadian trappers" and demanded assurance that HBC furs "were not taken in such a manner."[60] Others wanted the company to sell only farmed furs, and to sew labels in them certifying that they were "humane."[61] By the end of the 1930s, the HBC was contending with Canadian animal humanitarians in Toronto, Ottawa, and Halifax who joined the protest against leghold traps, promoted the purchase of "humane" furs from farms, and encouraged humane trap development. In 1939, the Toronto Humane Society announced that the Duchess of Hamilton and Brandon was sending her coronation robes made of fake fur to crown that year's humane fur display at the Canadian National Exhibition.[62]

Few letters appear in the company archives dated during and after World War II, coinciding with a general decline in anti-trapping literature and attempted legislative action to ban legholds across North America.[63] Animal protectors nevertheless continued to sponsor humane trap designs. Though alternative traps were invented and marketed, it was really the work sponsored by Victoria, BC, animal protectors that led Canadian trapper Frank Conibear to perfect a practical and relatively cheap device that could replace the leghold. His collapsing "body-grip" box design killed rather than held an animal. The "conibear" proving successful in

field tests in the early 1950s, the industry now had its "humane" trap.[64] Though it took decades for the conibear to replace legholds in traplines, the HBC could point to its existence to respond to a revived anti-cruelty protest and letter campaign in the 1960s.[65]

But as early as the 1950s and certainly by the 1970s, anti-fur discourse began changing from a moral to an ethical campaign.[66] John Gentile suggests that this later anti-trapping campaign, coinciding with a return to fashion of visually bulky, long-haired fur-bearers (fox, coyote, and racoon), was marked by more sophisticated professional lobbying, less sentimentalism, and more scientific research and evidence on both sides of the protest. More fundamentally, anti-trapping campaigns were now informed by animal rights as a philosophy.[67] Protesters reasoned that wild animals should not be killed for fashion at all, a position advanced in 1970s anti-seal hunt campaigns and more broadly in 1980s anti-fur campaigns.[68] The expanded North American urban base, with populations moving into secondary and tertiary economic sectors, proved receptive to this campaigning. As one study of the growing support for anti-trapping in the 1980s suggested, "most Americans know relatively little about animals. Most see wild animals only on television or in zoos, and most interactions with animals are with pets."[69] At present, many urbanites gain understandings of wild animals through the Internet, films, mall nature stores, and the discourse of animal rights organizations still problematizing consumer purchases with evocative images and metaphoric descriptions of animals. Animal rights groups count as a major triumph a recent fur ban occurring in California and major US retail chains now choosing not to carry fur products. In these successes, the anti-fur campaign has removed choice, at least in fur products, from modern consumer consciousness altogether.[70]

In the 1920s, as the fur industry grew in scale, both its protesters and promoters developed discursive oppositional arguments about wild animals, nature, and humans in nature. On one side of the debate, protesters anthropomorphized trapped animals suffering torment in the wilderness. Industry promoters developed their own narratives to portray animals as competitive, violent, and willfully cruel toward one another in nature. These storytellers ascribed human attributes to animals and made assumptions about animal nature, psychology, and intentionality. But rather than seeing either side of the protest as presenting animals in "right" and

"wrong" ways, historians might further explore how metaphoric language for and against fur fashion served to shift the gaze of urban consumers toward wild animals. Storytellers interrogated buying behaviours in a widening consumer marketplace and forced its various consumers and suppliers, the HBC included, to conscientiously consider animal life far removed from everyday experience. Metaphoric language, then, had its merits. For this reason, David Copland Morris does not dismiss, as many literary scholars have, John Muir's 1909 anthropomorphic dog story, *Stickeen*. Muir used the story to counter a prevailing mindset of modernity, that "there is an unbridgeable chasm of difference between human and animal consciousness." Muir deftly crafted his anthropomorphic story in order to describe "the dog in a manner which tries neither to explain away human-like emotions, nor to attribute human emotions when there was no evidence for doing so."[71] In the past, anthropomorphic animal stories served as a means for humans to make sense of themselves in a changing world. Americans used such stories in the debate over whether or not to welcome the recently introduced eastern grey squirrel, which was proliferating in major urban centres by the end of the nineteenth century.[72] Metaphoric language can certainly affirm the dualism that exists between humans and their non-human counterparts and remind audiences of their significant interrelationship. Literary scholars studying children's stories have recently seen the value of anthropomorphic animal stories that were easily understood and remembered by young readers, but did not necessarily "lead children to hold unrealistic beliefs about the psychological properties of real animals and did not hinder recall of factual properties."[73] Chengcheng You suggests that anthropomorphic, rather than anthropocentric, animal stories can "contest species boundaries, revisit the animal in us humans, and encourage a nature-friendly perspective worthy of attention."[74] Such stories can serve as a "contact zone" between human and non-human animals in the reality of the Anthropocene.[75]

Historians, too, might consider the merits of anthropomorphic animal stories. Drawing on the wide variety of sources highlighted in this volume, they might, as John Muir did, use this story form to recapture the dualism and interrelationships that exist between humanity and these non-human "others." Stories are always an invention of human imagination. Historical narratives, whatever sources they draw from, ultimately

reflect in some manner human ontology and epistemology. Historians run risks in attempting to bridge legal, linguistic, religious, and cultural divides to speak on behalf of historical "others" far removed in time and place. They should take risks to tell more, not less, stories of animals in the past. The animal stories that contributed to debates over fur fashion forced modernist consumers to consciously consider the ways that buying behaviours manifestly impacted the real world, perceptions, and experiences of wild fur-bearers, however they might be understood by humans. Historians might consider more carefully the ways anthropomorphic animal stories played a role in modernity, consumerism, and urban life, and how this story form might continue to enliven our own narratives that attempt to centre animals within history, rather than on its peripheries.

NOTES

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2 Letter from B. J. Davis, June 6, 1929, A.402/557, Hudson's Bay Company Archives [hereafter HBCA].

3 "Against 'Don't Trap' Movement," *New York Times*, January 11, 1911.

4 Thomas Dunlap, *Saving America's Wildlife: Ecology and the American Mind, 1850–1990* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 93.

5 John Berger, "Why Look at Animals?," in *About Looking* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 11.

6 Berger, "Why Look at Animals?," 11.

7 "Entanglements of Consumption," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 80, no. 3 (August 1994): 253.

8 Kristoffer Archibald, "Presenting the Polar Bear: Mass Media Images, the Arctic, and the Creation of a Charismatic Species in Postwar North America" (master's thesis, Trent University, 2010), 22–23, 138–39.

9 Nigel Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 6.

10 On American consumer culture and ideas of nature that are generated in the "quotidian terrain" of the city, see Jennifer Jaye Price, "Flight Maps: Encounters with Nature in Modern American Culture" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1998), 2–5, 60, 209–17.

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