

## Kristen Guest and Monica Mattfeld

### Breed: Introduction

Breed is central to understandings of human/animal co-evolution; yet, what breed constitutes, how it functions within the modernizing framework, and how it differs between time periods and geographic locations remain under-explored questions. This special issue of *Humanimalia* builds on and contributes to ongoing critical conversation about “breed” as a product of modernity that shapes animal and human experience. Although rooted in ancient practices of selection that adapt animals for human use, “breed” is a relatively recent and distinctly modern category that knits together beliefs about processes of scientific rationalization, economic industrialization, and the control of nature by humans. Indeed, as Richard Nash argues in the article included here, breed is a crystallization of “the ideological fiction of ‘modernity’” in which “real flesh and blood animals” exist as “simultaneously non-human natural ‘other’ and nature-culture hybrid of human artifact and management.” Unthinkable in its current form without the related forces of economic globalization and standardization, “breed” shapes animal bodies and informs human understandings of identity. It is a category with its own mythologies, histories, and prejudices, with immediate connections to food production, the multi-million-dollar pet industry, and the everyday lives of animals and humans around the world.

Perhaps most centrally, breed as a post-Enlightenment concept is bound up with human fantasies of “purity” and superiority related to our formations of identity. Thus, Harriet Ritvo argues in the Roundtable that opens this issue, there is a clear and worrying “analogy between the breed-oriented rhetoric having to do with animals and questions of race having to do with humans. It is always a bit easier to let things slip out, or to say things unintentionally, when you are talking about other animals than when you are directly talking about people.” Echoing and influencing notions of race, racism, and eugenics at various points throughout history, “purity” is a concept that also inflects issues of global survival. To think about animal breed is to think about human society and its structure, its labeling, and its ongoing struggles over identity, class, race and belonging. It is also, as Donna Haraway points out in the Roundtable, to confront head-on “questions about who lives and who dies.” “For both animals and people,” Haraway insists, “you cannot separate these issues of political struggle.”

Working to examine and interrogate the assumptions that underpin the discourse of breed, the Roundtable and essays included here attend to the paradox central to breed

as a category of identity: that it works to exclude or marginalize the mixed other, but is also always hybrid. If it is grounded in fantasies of purity, then, breed also demonstrates the disastrous consequences of closed gene pools; if it is rooted in ideas about progress and scientific advancement, it is also unsettled by the escalating capabilities of genetic science and technology. Taking in a range of perspectives, from historical explorations of breed development to the ways current technology is revising our understanding of what it means to be a breed, the scholarship included in this issue considers what is at stake when we name, shape, and standardize animal bodies for human ends.

The issue begins with a Roundtable in which we asked scholars who have contributed significantly to the existing scholarship of “breed” to reflect on their own work, the current state of the field, and future directions for study. Harriet Ritvo, Donna Landry, Sandra Swart, Margaret Derry, and Donna Haraway generously agreed to meet with us by Skype last August, and the resulting discussion, transcribed here in its entirety, offers tantalizing insights into the institutional, political, and personal effects of “breed” around the world. As these scholars variously suggest, breed is never only about animals. Instead, breed and breeding are connected with local, national, and international history; commercial trade networks; land use, aboriginal rights, and community belonging; and individual and national identity.

Investigating some of these wider ramifications of breed as a form of human intervention in animal bodies and lives, the five essays that follow delve deeper into the historical and contemporary effects of breed. In the opening essay Richard Nash, whose work on the Thoroughbred has contributed significantly to the scholarship of breed, considers the history and ongoing impact of one particular breeding practice, “nicking,” in the Thoroughbred industry. Centrally, Nash argues that “the real flesh and blood animals pawing the turf today are inextricably intertwined with the cultural phantasms of purity, hybridity, racialized breed identity, registries, and those cultural apparatuses and inscription practices that police, promote, protect, and valorize certain formulations of modern identity formation.” In other words, Thoroughbred horses are always intertwined with attempts to preserve some form of “pure” lineage, while also looking to alter bloodlines to maximize profit and prestige.

Taking up the conflicting political, institutional, and economic forces associated with the Jack Russell Terrier, Michael Worboys extends his important work on the history of dog breeds. Exploring the paradox of the Jack Russell Terrier, a comparatively old British dog breed that has only recently been recognized by the British Kennel Club,

Worboys investigates the contested history of a popular and now globalized breed. In doing so, he shows how culturally fluid and historically contingent seemingly immutable breed standards are, how influential naming practices have proven to be, and how these conflicts have had ramifications for individual dog lives.

Shifting the focus from histories of breed and breeding to contemporary agricultural practices, Scout Calvert considers the influence of technological innovation in the modern dairy industry and its ethical implications for our co-being with animals. Looking to the controversial bovine milk industry, Calvert suggests how Haraway's feminist theories of the cyborg allow for "breeching bovine-human boundaries as well as bovine-machine boundaries" in a way that results in a reworking of familiar categories and epistemologies associated with gender, the family, animal breed, and feminist practice. For Calvert, the bodies of dairy cattle — or "cowborgs" increasingly bred to enhance their compatibility with technology — must be understood in the context of gendered labor. Even as cows evidence exploitation "through gender made and unmade by capital," she contends, we must take seriously the agential alliances made possible as by-products of "the social relations of science and technology."

Also investigating breed alongside emergent forms of technology, Jeanette Vaught examines the fraught connections between reproductive control, breakthroughs in genetics, and the need for protected animal lineage in the American Quarter Horse industry. Following ongoing debates about cloning associated with this breed, Vaught argues that "the web of kin relations that cloning enters into invites a host of questions related to sex, species, gender, performance, capital, and culture — and, as the AQHA's response reveals, cloning challenges what it means to sexually reproduce." In other words, disputes about cloning horses mirror wider national concerns about heteronormative vs. queer reproduction, with the American Quarter Horse Association emerging as a gatekeeper of "American" values and genetic capital.

The final article in this issue touches upon the major subjects of the previous papers, while bringing discussions about identity, naming, breed organizations, technology, and gender into the realm of the personal. Via a "situated multispecies art practice," Karin Bolender considers how the breed identity of the American Spotted Ass inflects her kin relationship with a member of that breed. Sifting the problematic ethics and the personal affections involved with breeding and naming a non-human other, Bolender systematically examines the hidden histories and discursive underpinnings that inform human predilection for particular kinds of animal bodies. In doing so, she thinks through the convoluted articulations of agency, self, and labels intertwined between ass, human, and capitalist culture that drives the breeding industry.

Taken together, the scholarship collected here suggests the diverse ways in which “breed” is a word, an enactment, and a becoming that connects human and animal. Inseparable from scholarly understanding of domestic animals and their complex histories, it equally cannot be separated from human history. In other words, as Jenny Davidson has shown, “The word *breeding* sets a place for nature at culture’s table.”\* Similarly, the word *breed* invites the natural, biological into our understanding of culture insofar as it is inscribed on the bodies of animals whose being indelibly alters the world, the technology, the behavior, and the people, caught up in its multi-species search for the perfect being.

\* Jenny Davidson, *Breeding: A Partial History of the Eighteenth Century* (Columbia University Press, 2009), 1.