

# Humanities Research

*New Zealand Centre for Human-Animal Studies*

*By Annie Potts, Co-Director, NZ Centre for Human-Animal Studies*



These researchers are the following:

- exploring how notions of animality are fundamental to a range of concepts that play an important ideological and intellectual role in modern Western thought: for example ‘nature’, ‘culture’, ‘society’, ‘civilization’, ‘the human’, ‘the native’, ‘the exotic’, ‘the primitive’;
- examining the place, treatment and actions of animals in science, farming, industry, tourism and other human practices;
- analyzing the representation of animals in literature, film, television, the visual arts, and other cultural forms;
- researching the history of humans’ changing attitudes towards and treatment of animals;
- developing new paradigms in philosophy, the arts and the sciences for thinking about animals and their relationship to humans.

The New Zealand Centre for Human-Animal Studies (NZCHAS) brings together scholars from the Humanities and Social Sciences whose research is concerned with the conceptual and material treatment of nonhuman animals in culture, society and history. The Centre’s UC members include Co-Directors Philip Armstrong and Annie Potts (English), Jennifer Clement (English), Alison Loveridge (Sociology), Piers Locke (Anthropology), Nikki Evans (Social Work), and Henrietta Mondry (Russian). NZCHAS also works closely with its national associates who have expertise in cultural studies, gender studies, law, literary studies, political science, sociology, architecture, the visual arts and Māori studies. Our international members include many scholars recognized as world leaders in Human-Animal Studies, including Donna Haraway, Marc Bekoff, Carol J Adams, Alphonso Lingis, Randy Malamud and Helen Tiffin. The Centre also has links with the primary overseas institutions and networks in this field; and fosters connections with contemporary local and international artists dealing with human-animal relations in their works (such as Angela Singer, Yvette Watt, Mary Britton Clouse and Sue Coe).

Fundamental to NZCHAS research and scholarship is a belief in the responsibility of HAS scholars to challenge anthropocentrism and to account for the interests, agency and welfare of nonhuman animals. Current projects of NZCHAS members include historical analyses of vegetarianism, pet-keeping, and pest control in New Zealand; representations of cetaceans in local literature; New Zealand rural/farming narratives; the kiwi fascination with moa; the natural and cultural history of chickens; the place of animals in the work of early modern writers such as Thomas Tryon; and representations of animals and animality in American horror film.

Graduate scholars affiliated with NZCHAS include MA thesis students Jovian Parry (the recipient of a joint NZCHAS/Humane Society of the United States Scholarship, whose thesis analyzes the New Carnivore movement and slaughter narratives in popular gastronomy shows), Annie Finnie (awarded the first NZCHAS Masters Scholarship, for her research on animal narratives in the writing of Janet Frame), Sharon Biddington (animal imagery in Holocaust literature); and Hadassa Prattley (zoo stories in the contemporary novel). Tanja Schwalm has just graduated with a PhD in English, having written her thesis on animals in magic realist fiction; while Andre Krebber, an international student from Germany, is undertaking a doctoral thesis on the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, as applied to early modern natural history.

NZCHAS is also associated with the Marsden funded project “Kararehe: Animals in New Zealand Art, Writing and Everyday Life” (to be published in book form by Auckland University Press, 2011). Publications of NZCHAS members include Philip Armstrong’s monograph *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity* (Routledge, 2008); Annie Potts’s guest-edited volume of *Feminism & Psychology* on ‘Feminism, Gender and Nonhuman Animals’ (forthcoming August, 2010); ‘Vegan sexuality: Challenging heteronormative masculinity through meat-free sex’ (co-authored by Annie Potts and Jovian Parry, *Feminism & Psychology*, 2010, 20, 1, 1-20), and Alison Loveridge’s ‘Farm children’s understanding of animals in changing times: Autobiographies and farming culture’ (*Australian Zoologist*, 35, 1, 28-38).

Research at NZCHAS also has close links to UC teaching, with several courses offered in Human-Animal Studies across the College of Arts. One course, ‘From Bambi to Kong: Animals in American Popular Culture’ (co-taught by Annie Potts and Philip Armstrong) won the Humane Society of the United States Established Course

Award in 2008, and is the focus of a chapter in *Teaching the Animal* (New York, Lantern, 2010), the first volume of its kind on the place of HAS in contemporary tertiary institutions.

For more information, visit:

<http://www.nzchas.canterbury.ac.nz/>