



Éric Baratay: Animal biographies: toward a history of individuals

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The relationship between humans and animals has been varied and complex throughout history, living both in harmony and conflict. In this book, historian Éric Baratay highlights the evolution of perceptions and usage of animals throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The book is divided into four sections with the first focusing on restoring existence to the animals' lives by adapting a new view separate from historical documents. The second places emphasis on having the reader experience what the animals are sensing in the moment, bridging a psychological connection. The third section highlights the sentiment of humans and their view on animals, noting unique conditions of each era. The final section elaborates on animal social generations and how varying human involvement shaped viewpoints of the time. Specific famous historical animal figures are chosen to fit within these sections such as a giraffe (*Giraffa* sp.), a horse (*Equus caballus*), chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*), and others. The bibliographies have been modified from original historical documentation of the animals' lives by including direct quotes from newspaper accounts, journal entries, or published novels. Each bibliography is an immersive glimpse into journeys of highs and lows that the animals

experience. I particularly enjoyed the story of Modestine, a donkey (*Equus asinus*). Although brief, the 12-day glance into her life was rich in detail and displayed her resilience despite challenging conditions. Baratay notes that humans have overshadowed animals in their historical accounts and breathes new life into the bibliographies of these animals, giving reasoning for their instinctive behaviors. Comparing present day to sentiment in this book from past centuries suggests a possible paradigm shift in both society and the scientific community. This may be because ecologists have a better awareness of animal behavior, intelligence, and individuality, ultimately decreasing our notions of anthropocentrism. This increases the balance of value among humans and animals, especially regarding conserving biodiversity in the face of climate change. This book is a wholesome blend of history, ethology, and sociology. It is fitting for behavioral ecologists, conservation biologists, applied ecologists and especially ecologists interested in ethical issues of human–animal relationships.

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