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JOHN HARTIGAN Jr.:
 Shaving the Beasts: Wild Horses and Ritual in Spain
 Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020, 272 p.

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Hartigan's book tackles one of the central problems of multispecies anthropology – how to open up the science that was founded upon *anthropos* to more-than-human worlds. To this extent, the book follows a post-humanist line of thought. In *Shaving*

the Beasts, Hartigan observes a Galician ritual happening at least since the 16th century called *rapa das bestas*. Wild Galician horses are violently rounded up each year by local *besteiros*, the formal owners of these wild horses, who then violently shave their tails and manes. Most of them are released back; some of them are sold for meat (Hartigan, 2020: 4). Many villages in Galicia participate in this ritual, with varied levels of violence towards horses. Hartigan focuses on a village called Sabucedo where *rapa das bestas* has become a tourist attraction, a spectacle, and thus violence between stallions, and in their consequent taming by *besteiros*, is desirable (Hartigan, 2020: 6).

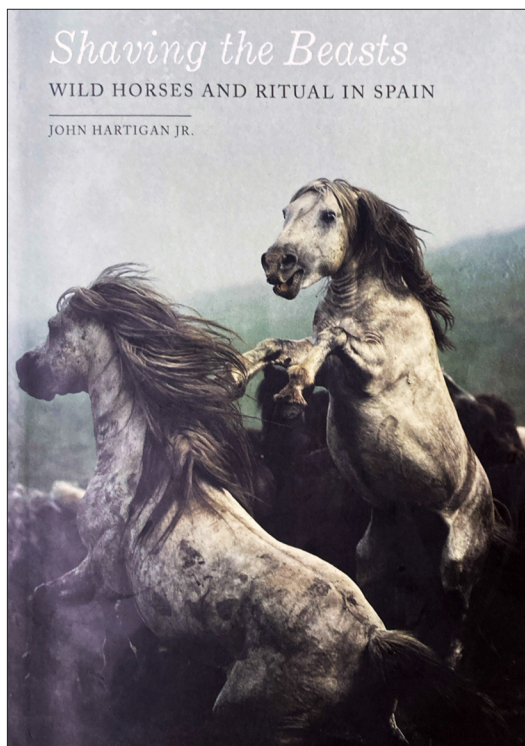
While the ritual allows a multispecies perspective, Hartigan's first-person study focuses on horses and how the ritual disrupts their everyday sociality within established bands. Hartigan's research to some extent includes the perspectives of the *besteiros*, and ethologists who worked alongside him, but his focus always circles back to horses, minutely observing their positionality and behaviour, and offering interpretations with the recognition that their veritability is relatively low. At its base lies the premise that horses have sociality, which is supported by the sociological concepts of Erving Goffman (Hartigan, 2020: 11), ethological research of Frans De Waal (Hartigan, 2020: 13), but also by identifying a broader shift in understanding more-than-human beings as relational agents (Hartigan, 2020: 17). General behaviours of horses such as keeping personal space, and using space relationally to their band mates, or engaging the face and gaze "in ongoing interpretative work in understanding, reproducing, and contesting their relationships" (Hartigan, 2020: 12) certainly hint at the possible presence of sociality within horse bands.

Faced with the challenge of analysing another mammal with a semi-familiar biology and sociality, Hartigan understandably included ethology into the methodological framework of his work, primarily to gain knowledge about typical behaviours of horses and their semiotic significance. Conversely, the orientation towards ethology is paralleled in another precedent, and prominent research involving horse sociality. In *Living with Herds: Human-Animal Coexistence in Mongolia* (2011) Natasha Fijn adopts the interdisciplinary term *etho-ethnography* in order to establish a methodology for studying human/animal communities in Mongolia: "*Living with Herds* focuses on human-animal relations (or more precisely, human-other animal relations) from a cross-cultural perspective. These relations can be approached from many angles, but I have chosen two obvious perspectives, those of the other animal (ethology) and those of the other human (ethnography)." (Fijn, 2011: 37) Fijn's concept paraphrases the term *etho-ethnology*, which originated in the paper of Lestel, Brunois and Guanet (2006), who use it along with its mirror term, *ethno-ethology* to underscore the importance of ethnological research into the entanglements between animals in human/animal cultures, without reducing the non-human animals to their (human) attributed symbolism. All of the mentioned methods recognize that culture has been superficially withheld from more-than-human agents and put special emphasis on more-than-human sociality. However, unlike Hartigan, the etho-ethnologic paradigm of Lestel et al. and Fijn is primarily concer-

ned with merging their human and more-than-human subjects, and the respective disciplines of ethology and anthropology. Hartigan, on the other hand, combines ethology and ethnography in order to study subjects of one species and maintains a less permeable distinction between the two disciplines.

One of the aims of Hartigan's research into Galician horses is to prove the legitimacy of analysing more-than-human subjects within the discipline of sociocultural anthropology, and importantly, the methodological advantages of ethnographic observation in comparison with ethological observation. While the works of anthropologists, and philosophers such as Isabell Stengers (2000 [1993]), Tim Ingold (2000), and Bruno Latour (1993 [1991]) tackle the ramifications of the long prevailing dichotomy between nature and culture in sciences – specifically, the division between natural sciences and humanities – Hartigan's main contribution is in applying the theory in field work. Upon noticing gaps and structural biases in ethology, he recognizes ethnography's set of methodological tools as a quick and effective solution for filling some of the gaps and correcting certain misapprehensions in observing more-than-human subjects.

Perhaps the most far-reaching claim of ethological bias identified in *Shaving the Beasts* lies in its tendency for generalisation. Hartigan argues that “[w]hen ethologists observe animals, they think and write in terms of “species-typical behaviours.” This framework highlights the uniform characteristics of a species – observable and verifiable in any setting where its members may be encountered. These characteristics result from evolutionary processes and a species' interactions with particular environments, and they are largely construed as fixed behavioural dynamics. But if recent theorizing on animal cultures is to advance, it will need to attend to the more variable, diverse, and contingent aspects of social behaviour: exactly what is meant by “cultural”. I characterize my approach here as a “species-local” account of horse sociality, formulated through an ethnographic attention to how horses responded to disruptive and unsettling situations.” (Hartigan, 2020: 253) Upon witnessing an unintelligible interaction between four stallions, Hartigan furthermore ponders about his own epistemic con-



fusion, concluding that while ethology would in this case search for a knowledge claim, ethnography opens the possibility of speculative thinking (Hartigan, 2020: 90).

Within the discourse of multispecies anthropology, it is no doubt crucial to speculate, for there aren't straightforward pathways to incorporating perspectives of more-than-human beings into disciplines that were founded on anthropocentric dichotomies. Hartigan's cautious speculations, embodied approach, engaging first-person writing, his awareness regarding the limits and shortcomings in his field work, and the combination of methodologies form an important contribution to multispecies anthropology. Its achievements were also institutionally recognised in 2021 when *Shaving the Beasts* received an Honorary Mention in the Victor Turner Prize in Ethnographic Writing. Still, despite Hartigan's schooling in equine ethology, several of his remarks and interpretations were founded upon insufficient knowledge of horse anatomy and behaviour. In one instance, Hartigan assumes that a feral domestic horse, which Hartigan previously thought to be a gelding, is a stallion, because he copulated with a mare. However, continued reproductive behaviour of geldings is well documented in both wild and domestic populations (King, Schoenecker, Cole, 2022: 20). While this comment might be bordering on nit-picking, it nevertheless opens the question of the level of proficiency in species-specific behaviours, and ways of life that is needed to conduct a relevant ethnographic research on more-than-human sociality.

Conclusively, the strength of the book lies in its potential to become an exemplary study of post-human ethnographic methodology. Much has been written on the dichotomy between nature and culture, and the need to overcome this distinction in sciences over the last half a century, but it is still somewhat pioneering to successfully apply those theories in empirical research.

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