

[*The Rise of Critical Animal Studies: From the Margins to the Centre*](#) (London and New York: Routledge, 2014) is an important new collection featuring critical animal studies scholars who are working within the discipline of Sociology. In this interview, [Dinesh Wadiwel](#) asks editors [Nik Taylor](#) and [Richard Twine](#) to talk more about the volume and contribution it makes – August 2014.

Dinesh Wadiwel (DW): *I would like to start with a more personal question about the relationship of this important new book to your own research trajectories. As sociologists, what has drawn you to Critical Animal Studies (CAS)?*

Nik Taylor (NT): I have always had an interest in how humans treat animals and linked to that an interest in understanding how power, oppression and ideology legitimate violence toward disenfranchised others. While I think my discipline of Sociology is a strong one for examining these issues, it hasn't always accepted the study of nonhuman animals. In fact, I'd say there were (and possibly still are) many in Sociology specifically, and the Social Sciences generally, who still see it as a marginal topic. The fact that CAS scholars prioritise and centralise power and oppression and do so in investigating human relations with animals is what most appeals to me about it. Added to this, I think – as we argued in the introduction to the book – that CAS owes an intellectual debt to ecofeminism as well as other critical fields like Marxism and anarchism. I locate myself intellectually somewhere between ecofeminism and Marxism so CAS is a natural home for me in many ways. Within CAS, the problematising of capitalist asymmetrical relations of power and refusal to accept or condone the way we treat animals in our cultures is powerful and personally very appealing. I don't think it's possible to think about human relations with nonhuman animals without acknowledging that we treat them dreadfully and that we do so within a hegemonic framework which entirely normalises this. CAS's location among, and reliance upon, other theories like ecofeminism which highlight the intersectionality of oppressions and their systemic nature speaks very loudly to me.

Richard Twine (RT): I was drawn to CAS as an intersectional space that traverses academia and social movements for provoking, contesting and transforming the routinised status quo of animal use. As we make clear in the book CAS existed in various senses prior to its explicit naming. My personal path to CAS was via the 1990s writings of intersectional ecofeminists so I was, firstly, an ecofeminist, and sociologist in training during that time and then, at the start of this century, as I moved into academic jobs, came to inhabit the space of CAS with that biography. I know a lot of CAS people foreground anarchist philosophy, and that is important, but it has not been personally important to my trajectory. I am still very much writing in those other spaces like ecofeminism. I think it's important that ecofeminism continues to grow and outlives the largely unfair reception it received from academic feminism in the 1980s and 1990s.

Sociology is a very special discipline for academia given its recursivity with social movements. It is not surprising that within CAS Sociology has an important and wide reaching role (I write more on this in my Introduction to my first book, *Animals as Biotechnology*). Sociology, by keeping open a pathway from social movements into academia, and hopefully policy is important for societal reflexivity, for the continued questioning of normative practice. CAS inflects Sociology and other disciplines with the necessary urgency and approaches to question the status quo of human/animal relations and their intersection with a myriad of social problems.

DW: *As a tendency within Animal Studies, CAS is now at least a decade old. From your perspective, how has CAS developed over this period, and how might *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies* contribute further to its development?*

RT: I think it has developed impressively in the sense of infrastructure, especially conferences. It has probably had less success so far in terms of University teaching and recognition within the academy:

which is not surprising since it clashes head on with the hegemonic humanism of the academy. That resistance needs to crumble fast and I think we still need incredible disciplinary re-organisation of the academy that pretentious and often meaningless nods to interdisciplinarity do not even get close to. I hope *Rise of* makes a contribution. I think the way we have set the book out speaks to important areas that have been stressed by the group of scholars that explicitly coined the term. Moreover sections such as methodology are areas we thought needed more reflection upon within CAS. I think going with a well-known publisher is a double edged sword, on the one hand it is prestigious and raises the profile of CAS; but, on the other hand, we have a volume that is regrettably more expensive than we are comfortable with. I hope it finds its way to readers not yet familiar with CAS.

NT: That's an interesting question as it pre-supposes a distinct cleavage between AS and CAS and I think it's far muddier than that. Sure, we can point to areas of difference (e.g. CAS's clear anti capitalist stance, or some of the AS scholars unwillingness to address activism) but I think there's actually a lot of people who work – with a greater or lesser degree of comfort – across both sides. In which case CAS is much older. I'd also argue that much ecofeminist work pre-figured CAS and in fact can be seen as CAS in orientation itself. What I think has happened in the last ten years with the field is that it has started to coalesce – many of these divergent strands have come together and it feels more coherent as an intellectual and political movement.

Given the rampant neo-liberal age we live in, and the seemingly endless swing back to the political right that is occurring in much of the western world, I think CAS's political stance is more valuable than ever, and I think the coalescing of the field I referred to above gives scholars and activists a safe place to consider their views and to disseminate them. While that safety might not be a priority for all within the field, having seen (and having been on the end of, at times) brutal dismissal of those whose animal related politics don't fit the mainstream, at conferences and so on, I think this safe space is terrifically important in terms of intellectual development. The fact that mainstream publishers like Routledge are willing to publish volumes like this also speaks somewhat to an increasing acceptance of the once perceived as radical ideas within CAS. Of course, I recognise the irony here – and it is in fact this irony that sparked the first conversations Richard and I had about the book – that there is a chance if CAS becomes too mainstreamed it loses the very thing that draws us to it and we value about it. This did actually give us a lot to think about when we were deciding on which publisher to approach for the book. And while I think mainstreaming is a real risk to CAS, and should be fought in many ways, I also think its increasing acceptance is indicative of more and more voices wanting to demand change for animals, and this can only be a good thing.

DW: Arguably much of the critical engagement on questions of our relationships with animals have emerged from the disciplines of philosophy and ethics. What does sociology as a discipline have to offer in understanding and challenging human domination of other animals?

RT: I think these disciplines need each other. Philosophy and the specialism of ethics have developed not as empirical disciplines. This is unfortunate because it often leaves the analysis of ethics acontextual and the broader discipline of Philosophy as lacking in a theory of social change. Sociological research can provide this. The focus on ethics also tends to be translated individualistically which is unhelpful because I don't actually think that the crisis in human/animal relations is the result of faulty individual ethical frameworks as such but of shared meanings, norms and practices all infused with relations of power. So, simply put, Sociology offers different valuable framings. I would say also that no discipline is monolithic and none should necessarily dominate within CAS.

NT: I'd go back to some of my first answer for this. To me, the beauty of sociology is, and always has been, its fascination with power. While other disciplines engage with power as a concept, of course, I think it permeates all of sociology from the ground up. There is no real sociology of power because there doesn't need to be – analysing the way power works in any situation/topic is endemic to

sociology. I also think there's an open mindedness among many (not all!) sociologists that comes from a fundamental curiosity about the world in which we live. As soon as you point out that animals are a part of social life and social systems, even the most animal-disinterested sociologist will still talk about animals because this curiosity about social life is what drew them to sociology in the first place, and because it's easy to see the workings of power in human relations with nonhuman others.

On a more personal note, I think the strong links between sociology and feminism are important in understanding our relations with animals too. While feminist perspectives are relevant to many disciplines, an analysis of gender is seen as one of the holy trinity of analytical concepts (gender, class, ethnicity) for sociologists, so intersectional perspectives in CAS fit well with this too.

DW: *Nik, I want to pick up this question of the relationship of CAS to feminism, particularly ecofeminism. Earlier in this interview you raised the link between CAS and ecofeminism, and I am aware that lots of CAS scholars are deeply influenced by ecofeminist approaches (you and Richard have both described yourself as sharing this intellectual legacy). I am curious: do you think CAS is offering a new space for a kind of intersectional ecofeminism?*

NT: That's certainly an intriguing possibility and it would be great if that were the case. As I think I have stressed throughout the interview – and the book itself has a section related to this – I think we need to put some work into our methods: how do we do research that is ecofeminist and intersectional at the same time? This is both a methodological and theoretical issue though – how, and when do we acknowledge that what we are doing is intersectionality in practice and is it always ecofeminist? I don't think it is necessarily ecofeminist in many instances and perhaps CAS is a space where we can outline our reasons why it must be. The danger, to my mind, is that intersectional theories grew from post-modernism and its stress on difference and fragmentation and while there are some strands of ecofeminism that mirror this, I think it's unacceptable for CAS scholars. This is because these kind of theories, that stress individual difference, or identity, or fragmentation, are incapable of grappling with structurally embedded inequality. And for animals (as well as other oppressed/disenfranchised groups) it is the structurally embedded ideologies that lead to institutionally approved abuses that are precisely the problem. It is profoundly important, then, that we address precisely how structural oppressions intersect with each other to produce normative experiences and frameworks that allow and encourage animal oppression. While I think the majority of CAS scholars are mindful of this, one of our challenges will be to think through, explicitly, how ecofeminism and intersectional theories can contribute to this without their tensions pulling them away from each other.

DW: *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies includes a refreshing discussion of a range of methodological practices and approaches that are highly relevant to CAS, including, for example, reflexivity, ethnography and auto-ethnography, relationality and ethno-mimesis. Many of these described approaches are innovative adaptations of existing methods within sociology. I am curious: are we witnessing CAS scholars developing new methods that might in turn shape sociology as a discipline?*

RT: I think so yes. Since my PhD work in the late 1990s I have understood the emergence of the 'animal' in Sociology in a similar manner to the emergence (or the remembering) of the body, of gender, affect, the private sphere and so on. Thus I have understood Sociology historically as working from an ontology that is inflected with dualism and advances a rather partial account of the 'human'. Bringing these areas back in (in my PhD I called these the 'new' sociologies) cannot help but destabilise the centre and change Sociology, as well as other disciplines. It is not surprising that ontological shifts would also have methodological impacts. I think the book contains some very important methodological discussion that asks questions of CAS, social science and the role of the academic. These 'new' sociologies all redefine the social and what CAS does is question human exceptionalism. For example, as I asked in *Animals as Biotechnology*: when we do the 'sociology of the body' are we seriously narrowing that down to the body of humans? For this *has* been the

assumption. Obviously I think that is a very limited and ideological narrowing. Animals are everywhere in society, so they should be everywhere in Sociology.

NT: Oh I do hope so. As a self-confessed methods nerd, I really hope this happens – and in fact not just at the level of methods but across broad parameters epistemologically speaking. I think the inclusion of animals in our intellectual and epistemological frameworks has profound consequences. The anthropocentric nature of our relations with other animals, the ‘natural’ world and to a degree each other, becomes hideously clear and with that clarity comes the realisation that it simply isn’t a sustainable paradigm. Once I started to think like this the damage such a view does became irrefutable and I started to see its evidence all around us. Once you fully accept this, there’s no going back – you can’t un-know it and so you have to do something about it.

In terms of methods, I think CAS concerns here – as represented throughout this current collection – add to the great body of work from various places such as feminism and post-colonial studies, which highlight the damage positivism has done. And again, once you start to realise this, it’s very hard to go back. I am compelled to think about how we might do things differently precisely because I am aware of just how limiting current orthodoxies are. In terms of the material lives of animals, so much of the damage and abuse we do to them is justified through a reliance on a positivist framework – so much so that I don’t actually think we have the language to ‘think differently’ about them and we sorely need it. All of the contributors to the section on methods reflect this view to a degree. Lorde’s wonderful point that ‘The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House’ always spring to mind whenever I discuss methodological approaches to studying human-nonhuman animal relations: we can’t expect real systemic change if we keep using the tools that are a legacy of that system and that have been instructive in maintaining it for so long. I’m also motivated to keep thinking and writing about this topic from a purely practical point of view: the work of ethologists and biologists who are now more free to break disciplinary conventions and study topics such as animal empathy and emotions make it so very clear that until now we have missed important and poignant parts of ‘nature’ and nonhuman animal lives. Our methodological, positivist blinkers are to blame for much of this in my opinion. Just imagine what we might know about other animals if the last 300 years or so of investigations had not been shackled by post-enlightenment belief systems. Let’s not let that happen for the next 300 years.

DW: *Arguably CAS comes with its own theory of knowledge, and its own distinct and politicised approach to questions of method. For example, many CAS scholars would be critical, or reject outright, empirical evidence gained through animal testing, particularly where this use of animals constitutes suffering or death. Does the CAS approach imply its own epistemology (or epistemologies)?*

RT: I think this question is to an extent addressed in the chapter by Lynda Birke. Ultimately it comes down to whether CAS can accept some instances of ‘working with’ animals that is progressive and liberatory for animals and non-invasive. Examples could be naturalistic observation or indeed a recent TV documentary showed an elaborate study monitoring the movement and behaviour of domesticated cats. This seemed useful for understanding their impact upon other animals in the neighbourhood and did not have any impacts on the cats themselves. I think also that CAS can and does ask deeper questions about the anthropocentrism of ‘knowledge’ and the partiality of human perspective.

NT: To a degree I think it does. I certainly think it should (and does) reject any research that comes from animal oppression but this doesn’t necessarily mean it has its own epistemology Yet. I add the yet as I think that’s perhaps because the field is young, and I think this may develop over time. Of course, one of the difficulties with this will be – as the book clearly showcases – the multi-disciplinary nature of CAS scholarship; it’s hard to envisage a one size fits all epistemology. That said, I still think we need to keep asking these questions as the spirit of open minded debate is one way in which we

can hopefully 'see' things differently and contribute to making a material and political difference for nonhuman animals – which is one of the drivers for this book too.

DW: *One of the achievements of the collection is in a sustained critique of capitalism. This includes essays that I believe substantially and positively build upon classic work in animals studies – such as from Ted Benton and Barbara Noske – which use Marxist theory to understand the situation of animals. Can you say more on the usefulness of Marx for a sociological understanding of animals within the context of capitalism?*

NT: I think Marxism is a useful starting point for CAS. The implicit humanism – that Benton has written so eloquently on – makes a wholesale adoption of Marx difficult for CAS but I think it's too valuable to abandon altogether and I think the two chapters (Clark and Kowalczyk) that address Marx directly in this volume demonstrate that so very well. Concepts of power and ideology are fundamental to understanding how and why we treat nonhuman animals the way we do, and here Marxism is particularly strong. Beyond that, though, I think the anti-capitalist stance taken by CAS scholars (whether from Marx directly, or other sources) is a key one given the dependence we have on animals under capitalism. It's too simplistic to say that without capitalism there would be no animal abuse, but I do think we can point out that without capitalism's endless drive for profit the systematised and institutionalised abuses of animals *might* be non-existent and might well be (at least) statistically less dumbfounding. Beyond this material concern though, I think we can also start to use concepts like hegemony and ideology to understand how it is that such large scale institutionally justified abuses of animals occur. Again, Marxism lays the foundations for us here and gives us something to work with as we try to puzzle out how animal abuse is legitimated with a view to challenging it to prevent it.

RT: Yes I'm sure there remains much work to do here. Whilst I don't think the exploitation of other animals is reducible to 'capitalism' neither do I think it is possible to challenge it without also contesting capitalism. If we keep in mind the very significant scale of the animal-industrial complex and the way it successfully reaches into everyday life we should begin to ask questions about the benefit to capitalism of all the captured 'labour' of nonhuman animals, and begin to better understand its intersection with the broader economy. Capitalism would not wither away without it but what would or could societies and economies look like without it? I think CAS can ultimately re-frame the critique of capitalism in much the same way as feminist critiques of Marxism have. To date much work in this vein, including two of the chapters in the specific section of the book (by Jon Clark and Agnieszka Kowalczyk), probe notions of agency, labour and resistance. Your question is also interesting because for some writers the Critical in CAS comes from 'critical theory' which of course is partly a descendent of Marxist thought. We could probably do more work with the notion of commodity fetishism and consumption that has affinities with Carol J Adams' work on the absent referent. I have wondered before if the consumption of animals might constitute some sort of paradigmatic case of commodity fetishism. We learn early on to deny the relations of 'meat' and 'dairy', perhaps this helps us do the same for most acts of consumption. In my work with the 'animal-industrial complex' concept I return to what is familiar 'critical theory' sort of thinking i.e. what they would have framed as trying to understand the relationship between the 'economic' and the 'psychological'. I frame it somewhat differently – in terms of practices, meanings and relations – but there is a shared desire to understand those interweavings of the material and symbolic that keep certain power relations in place.

DW: *Despite the ample evidence that capitalism has made life a misery for most humans and many non humans across the globe, we are arguably at a low point in terms of organised resistance to capitalism. In many countries, large scale left political movements have dissipated or have been coopted; neoliberalism has successively dismantled trade unions, and destroyed the core aspirations created by these movements (such as a shorter working day); and there appears to be an intellectual vacuum in relation to alternatives to the current system. Further to this, the left tradition has by and large failed to take seriously the domination of animals as a form of oppression. Does CAS offer some new tools for thinking about resistance to capitalism?*

RT: I think it probably offers similar tools to that of ecofeminism namely that their shared commitment to an intersectional understanding of power means that the only political struggle in town ought to be coalitionary. Unfortunately effective intersectional coalitions are rare and very difficult to get off the ground. Each struggle tends to become colonised by other relations of power. We can see this in patriarchal socialism, humanist feminism, or sexist and classist veganism. As far as the 'left' goes it is as guilty as any other social movement for its narrow thinking. You can probably understand better now my initial attraction to ecofeminism, because there is coalition there right in the term, and the same applies to eco-socialism. I think we need activism that has intersectional reflexivity from the outset. That project is as difficult as it is urgent, but I struggle to see an alternative.

NT: The intersectional approach of CAS is one of its key strengths, and I think this is highlighted throughout the current collection by all the contributors, many of whom are activist-scholars. There is a danger here though that such approaches are used anthropocentrically. For example, in the work I do on slaughterhouses I commonly hear that it's a worthwhile area of study because of the damage it does to human psyches. While that's true it's important we see the damage done to humans and animals as intersecting – not as one more important than the other. CAS scholars make this abundantly clear in the various works that seek to use, and extend, intersectional frameworks as analytical tools. I think this is an important contribution to ideas about resistance to capitalism – the stress on links between oppression of Others whether they be human or nonhuman (including 'nature' itself) has led to some great work in CAS in terms of how we might re-conceive resistance and activism.

DW: *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies includes a substantial discussion of veganism as a practice and form of resistance to human domination of animals. This analysis taps into a rich tradition within sociology of seeking to understand the relationship between personal practices and social structure. In your view, how is the practice of veganism evolving as a form of social resistance?*

NT: This is a tricky one as I think in some circles it isn't – and there's a by now well-recognised problem with lifestyle politics in that they can detract from other organised forms of demands for change. That said, within CAS veganism clearly moves beyond lifestyle politics (as it does in other places) to become a clear clarion call for the rejection of normative abuses of nonhuman animals. Precisely because veganism in the CAS context is politicised it is part and parcel of the social resistance that weaves throughout CAS approaches to nonhuman lives, liberation and well-being. Cole's chapter in the collection clearly shows that this has always been the case for many vegans: few see it as a practice that exists in isolation from wholesale analyses of institutional and systemic oppression of nonhuman animals, as well as the environment and other important issues. The CAS aim to centralise political veganism (for want of a better term) is one that clearly seeks to extend the impact of it and to see it linked to exploitation of the 'natural' world more generally.

RT: In some of my other work not covered in this book I have been doing close research on veganism. For example in 2013 I interviewed 40 vegans about their own personal narratives of transition. I think we in the West are living through the normalisation of veganism. It's slow but it's identifiable, and of course it is being normalised in a particular way, that is, largely through the pre-existing mechanisms of capitalism. I think with a nod to the previous question it's currently very important for veganism to proceed intersectionally. This means it needs to contest its own racism, sexism and classism. It needs to resist the various modes of co-option at play and it needs to hold onto its poignancy and its vision. This includes an awareness that as one proceeds through transition what at one point seemed difficult or even unobtainable comes rather to be seen as minimal, just a starting point politically. I think discussion of veganism is quite rich at the moment and we try to reflect that in the book. I think outside the book I would highlight work by people such as Liz Cherry and James Stanescu.

DW: *Richard, I want to push you a little on the future of veganism as a strategy. As you note, the co-option of veganism by capitalism is a potential threat to its future as a form of resistance, particularly if its 'normalisation' means that it is no longer capable of marking itself out as a form of resistance. I mean, if we start seeing 'Vegan Happy Meals' in fast food chains, served alongside meat to cater for vegan consumers, then we know this strategy has reached its end, right?*

RT: Yes you're right to probe this question further, it's an important one. On the one hand, 'normalisation' is essential for social change, but the crux of the matter is 'how'? The type of scenario you outline above is predictable, and we only need to look at the emergence of vegan food labeling in mainstream UK supermarkets to see a variation of this happening. In a shallow but real and practical sense that is a 'great thing', it's enabling for the practice of the food aspects of veganism. At the same time it's completely within the frame of consumer capitalism which is typically open to the capital potential of 'alternative markets'. The mainstreaming of veganism in such spaces also tends to price out smaller wholly vegan businesses who cannot afford to sell their produce at lower prices. I guess there are ideal and non-ideal modes of change and we're witnessing the latter. In theorising veganism as a form of resistance then it is clear to me that we do more work on the 'how' of ideal vegan normalisation. What forms of vegan practice maintain its radical edge? An intersectional frame ought to provide the signposts here. By intersecting veganism with other struggles we can retain its political edge and contest its co-option. One example of this would be to intersect veganism with forms of food decommodification, since I believe that the utopian aim of food politics generally should be to remove food from the market because I don't believe that one's health should be according to one's arbitrary born-into class position. So this begs the question over what sort of social spaces might constitute moments of food decommodification. Answers to this question include the democratisation of growing, local scale fruit and vegetable production, and the issue of food waste, or even informal food sharing events such as potlucks. These potentially provide opportunities for the creative performance of veganism in meaningful and effective ways, and these of course are just a small number of examples. They depend upon political organisation, networking and careful reflexivity it goes without saying. Finally, I would add that veganism is itself insufficient. This should be obvious really since to think otherwise would be to somehow switch off our ethical reflexivity to the circumstances of a whole array of food and clothing production which whilst it may not involve the direct use of animals may either indirectly harm animals or utterly fail a broader intersectional politics.

DW: *CAS scholars frequently are supportive of radical means, such as direct action, to challenge human domination of animals. These tactics have increasingly been criminalised by the State, often as a result of intense lobbying by animal exploiting industries. Arguably, as we see industrialised containment, breeding, slaughter and experimentation continue to expand, we are likely to see this situation involving the criminalisation of protest get worse. What challenges does this pose for CAS scholars in relation to their own work?*

NT: I know many CAS scholars face practical difficulties within academic settings – limited job opportunities; problems getting tenure and promotion which is linked to limited grant and publication opportunities, as well as carefully made decisions not to seek money and/or publish at times. It's difficult to manage the contradictions inherent in working within mainstream academia and the politics of CAS and, for me, it leads to a lot of soul searching and the occasional compromise. Beyond that, of course, there are larger considerations than life within the academy – how to reach others with your message (are expensive book collections useful for example?); how to write on topics that may lead to criminalisation and in rarer instances, prosecution; how much to divulge about your personal activism and so on. Back to the academy there are also concerns around teaching – just how far should we push our beliefs onto our students? How do we present some of the terribly disturbing issues to students in such a way that we don't damage or alienate them? To some degree these are decisions individuals have to make for themselves but I think a useful future project for CAS would be to get students, activists, and scholars (not suggesting these are discrete categories!) together to discuss these challenges.

RT: I think it poses considerable challenges. I think it is always a challenge for social scientists and others to research those in positions of power because they tend to operate secretly and outside any naïve sense of democratic accountability. I think Jess Gröling's chapter is very valuable to thinking through this question. If, as I have previously argued, the concept of the animal-industrial complex should be a central focus of attention for CAS scholars, then it seems that if we are to grasp all its dimensions there has to be some degree of covert research. I think the recourse to legal protectionism by the animal industries will eventually unravel as their environmental consequences come into sharper more proximal focus. We see this legal protectionism in other areas too, in attempts to halt the opposition to fracking, in attempts to oppose the arms trade. It says something about a society when its most caring and forward thinking citizens are reduced to criminals.

DW: It is sometimes difficult to remain optimistic about the realistic prospect of dismantling the 'animal-industrial complex.' Do you remain optimistic about CAS as a project?

RT: I think it's important for me personally to be honest and say no I am not optimistic. This is partly informed by my reading of climate science and our increasingly slim chances of avoiding serious climate change of which human/animal relations figure as both partly cause and effect. However this lack of optimism doesn't have to engender political paralysis. It doesn't in me. I just think that personally for me to project a sense of false optimism would not really equate with what I observe around me. Maybe CAS is destined to be an epitaph, I am not presently optimistic about the challenges of the Century ahead. There are too many vested interests in retaining the status quo even though that status quo is probably ultimately suicidal.

CAS is a small bridge between activists and academics mostly existing in largely privileged locations. As much as it is an important moment in the influence of one social movement upon the academy it is unlikely in and of itself to precipitate social change. This is not to negate its contribution or to see it as not worthwhile. However I personally think that if we see a dismantling, or moves toward it, it will come from policies related to resource pressures and climate change. I would like to see it come from a revolutionary change in the way humans see themselves and their relations with other animals but it is more likely to emerge, if it does, at least initially I think, out of a particular crisis situation.

NT: For the most part, yes, I am optimistic. I think CAS has a lot to offer and I think times are very slowly changing in terms of people's attitudes to nonhuman animals. And while the changes aren't nearly deep enough, or quick enough, they are broad and that gives us something to work with. While it is only a starting point I think there is increased acceptance of many of the arguments of most CAS scholars, often in a diluted form, such as general opposition to Ag-gag laws and the secrecy of animal agriculture. This means there is at least a superficial acceptance of many of the ideas of CAS and this can draw people in which is what I think we have already seen in some instances. The main thing I think we need to guard against is political in-fighting. I don't think we should avoid points of difference as they are often important and worthy of discussion, but I do see the beginnings of internal cleavages which are highly problematic and I think we need to guard against going down a road where we start to think in terms of one 'groups' moral superiority over the other, or where we start to label some as 'in' and some as 'out' – as much as we can while staying true to the beliefs that underpin CAS. I actually think this is the biggest threat to the field and it would be a shame if we let individual hubris ruin a potentially very strong movement for change.