

To Whom It May Concern,

What follows is my application for an edited volume/collection of essays written by German Studies and Animal Studies scholars working on German language aesthetic production for publication in 2025 or 2026.

**Abstract/concept:**

From Grimm's fairy tales to the Town Musicians of Bremen, E.T.A Hoffmann's Tomcat Murr to Kafka's beetle, Kastner's Konferenz der Tiere to Jan Böhmermann's 2024 mini-series 'Grundgesetz der Tiere', animal narratives have been prevalent in the German imaginary for as long as authors and critics alike have endeavoured to work through challenges of nation, identity, emotion, justice and climate - and this just to scratch the surface. But why write animals? What do we stand to gain from engaging with the non-human within aesthetic production? What lessons have been learned and what is left to discover?

The book would work at the intersection of German and Animal Studies, bringing together scholars from all over the world - Australia, USA. Over several chapters, each focussing on a different theme, the book would outline the specificity of animals' place in German imaginary and what we stand to learn from how they are used - what 'animal lessons' are there to be found when looking at how authors and creators use them to tackle issues around justice, war, emotions, ecocriticism etc.

The aims of the book would be as follows (this is not exhaustive and I would be very happy to hear from Camden House about their thoughts on these...):

To show how aesthetic production intersects with both German and Animal Studies and examine what is particular about a German imagining of animals (do certain themes appear that relate to German history, thought, nationhood, culture - something uniquely German? Is looking at animals a levelling experience that points more towards what it means to be human? What conclusions can be drawn where animals appear in German aesthetics?)

To demonstrate that animals are an excellent point of engagement for German studies and literature - these stories/writings of animals, their lives and how they intersect and interplay with human lives, often inspire and capture the imagination while being an important conduit for discussion about a range of often difficult or challenging topics. Animal stories are didactic, diverse and dynamic, reaching an audience of varying demographics.

To examine how looking at animals exposes practices around narrative, nation building, founding mythology and more, suggesting this lens as an alternative to look at accepted and dominant ideas. Engaging with non-human subjects, whether is first person narrators or driving plot devices can help lead to revelations about how we structure our human lives - what are our points of reference? How do these change when looking at animals?

A further endeavour of the book could be to question whether using animals is useful/ethical? At what point is the line crossed between entertainment and co-opting the voices of those who can't speak for themselves? This could perhaps be a question running through the book - an important element to consider when thinking about using animals to comment on human exceptionalism, as is the case with many of the texts.

### **USP:**

Aside from showcasing research from the current field (acting as a study of German X Animal Studies for the present), I would like the book to also feature interviews/reflective pieces from contemporary German language authors and creators who use animals, explaining why they chose animals in particular to convey their message and why the animal narrative helps to make these messages stand out. This dialogue between academics and authors/creators will give the book a self-reflexive element as it considers not only the fact that animals are utilised - but why and what special considerations are taken when electing to do so. A unique mixture of academic analysis alongside reflection on the creative process and how animal narratives shape this. The interviews would be in German and translated into English to remain true to the author's words but reach a wider audience both of academic researchers and those interested more broadly in popular culture and aesthetic production.

### **Reasoning and fit for Camden House:**

Camden House currently does not have a section on Animal Studies and does not have a publication on animals in literature. This would be a perfect opportunity for Camden House to join a conversation currently happening in literary scholarship. This topic is not just 'trendy' but indicative of a wider shift towards acknowledging and working closely with alternative perspectives. The rising popularity of posthumanism and ecocriticism is an example of the appetite for this kind of work.

The book would be a point of departure for anyone wishing to engage with animal narratives more broadly and having direct reflection from authors would make it a valuable resource - demonstrating both the history and tradition of animal narratives in the German imaginary and the state of the field for contemporary contributions. The specificity of the topic coupled with its potential for wider application and intervention into other topics is in fitting with Camden House's previous publications and what makes it an excellent fit as an exciting niche with potential to make a wider impact.

### **Prize money/plan:**

I would use the £300 as a starting point from which to run a symposium on animals in the German imaginary - the papers from the symposium would then be collated into an edited volume for publication, along with essays from eminent scholars at the intersection of German and Animal Studies (I had thought about for example, Frederike Middelhof or Bernhard Malkmus).

### **Proposed titles:**

"Why Write Animals? Creaturely Lessons from the German Imaginary"

"Tiere schreiben: Creaturely Lessons in the German Imaginary"

"Animal Lessons in German Aesthetic Production"

"Animal Aesthetics in the German Imaginary: What Can We Learn from Writing Animals?"

Something to this effect - though we would work with the publisher at every stage of the process to make sure the title is as engaging as possible.

### **Chapter topic suggestions**

These depend on what comes out of the symposium - colleagues have written on the following topics but this list is not exhaustive:

Justice

Emotions  
War and genocide  
Identity  
Ecologies and the environment  
Utopia and dystopia

I would suggest a chapter structure that is thematic rather than chronological as this further serves to demonstrate the potential of animal narratives in German aesthetics (older examples could be compared with new to show the trajectory and development of looking at animals, for example).

My contribution would either be a comparative piece on Ulla Hahn's *Tage in Vitopia* (2022) and Dietmar Dath's *Abschaffung der Arten* (2008) - an expose of how, in these two examples of German fiction (one climate fiction and one speculative science fiction) visions of the future are mediated through an animal gaze and narrated by more-than-human narrators or a piece on Marie Gamillscheg's *Aufbruch der Meerestiere* (2022) around the theme of identity and emotion as it intersects with scientific research of the animal world. Both of these concepts arise from research I am undertaking as part of my PhD thesis on the topic of empathy, extraction and evolution in German and comparative animal fiction.

### **Why work with me?**

My personal profile as a comparative researcher with a base in German Studies means I am well positioned to call upon colleagues from a range of research areas who are equally passionate about the potential for animal narratives in various areas of aesthetic production within the German imaginary and about creating impact in German Studies, reaching new and diverse audiences. I am strongly convinced of and committed to the capacity of academic writing to intersect with public interest and engage both established and emerging researchers. As a collaborator, I am reliable and enthusiastic (I have been successful in organising collaborative projects across German Studies together with various institutions such as the ILCS in London and the DAAD). I am able to draw connections innovatively and successfully, bringing together themes and topics to offer valuable contributions to academic discourse and pedagogy surrounding literature and culture. My position in my second year of the PhD means I will be able to commit both the time and effort required to successfully pull together an edited volume for publication in 2025 or 2026 while ensuring that I have the experience as a researcher to edit and write my own contribution, as well as organising the related symposium at my institution or online.

Please email me at [keu24@cam.ac.uk](mailto:keu24@cam.ac.uk) for any queries or to hear more about any aspect of this application and I look forward to hearing the outcome from the selection committee at your earliest convenience.