

# ARCTOS

ACTA PHILOLOGICA FENNICA

VOL. XLVI

HELSINKI 2012

## INDEX

LUIGI ARATA	<i>Erbe leporine nella medicina greca antica</i>	9
CHRISTER BRUUN	<i>New Prosopographical Data Derived from Roman Lead Pipe Inscriptions</i>	19
ROBERT CONNAL	<i>Rational Mutiny in the Year of Four Emperors</i>	33
ULRIKE EHMIG & RUDOLF HAENSCH	<i>Harmonia mundi – Eine indigene Gottheit, griechische Mythologie und römische Übernahme</i>	53
MIKA KAJAVA	<i>wa-no (KN Ch 5724)</i>	59
TUA KORHONEN	<i>On Human-Animal Sexual Relationships in Aelian's Natura Animalium</i>	65
MIIKA KUHA	<i>Note intorno alla tradizione manoscritta di Chronica Venetiarum di Benintendi de' Ravagnani</i>	79
CHRISTIAN LAES	<i>Latin Inscriptions and the Life Course. Regio III (Bruttium and Lucania ) as a Test Case</i>	95
MIKA RISSANEN	<i>The Hirpi Sorani and the Wolf Cults of Central Italy</i>	115
OLLI SALOMIES	<i>The Nomina of the Samnites. A Checklist</i>	137
FEDERICO SANTANGELO	<i>Sullanus and Sullani</i>	187
HEIKKI SOLIN	<i>Analecta epigraphica CCLXXII-CCLXXXV</i>	193
MARGARITA SOTIRIOU	<i>Bacchylides Behind His Metamorphoses: The Poetic Identity of a Lyric Narrator in the late 5th century BC</i>	239
	<i>De novis libris iudicia</i>	253
	<i>Index librorum in hoc volumine recensorum</i>	345
	<i>Libri nobis missi</i>	351
	<i>Index scriptorum</i>	361

## ON HUMAN-ANIMAL SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS IN AELIAN'S *DE NATURA ANIMALIUM*

TUA KORHONEN

In the course of history, the phenomenon of humans having sexual intercourse with animals has been called, for example, bestiality, buggery, sodomy, zooerasty, zoosexuality and zoophilia. At the beginning of the modern era, this kind of intercourse was considered to be a felony and a crime against nature, which, according to the Mosaic Law (*Le* 20:15–16), meant a death penalty for both the human and the animal.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, it has been argued that Greek and Roman literature and art provide numerous references to human-animal sexual relations seemingly devoid of moral judgment.<sup>2</sup> The categories of erotic experience and sexuality in the Graeco-Roman world were, of course, somewhat different from ours,<sup>3</sup> but is

---

\* The first draft of this paper ("The notorious kind of *zoophilia* in Antiquity") was presented at the Minding Animals Conference (Utrecht, July 3–6, 2012). I am grateful to the commentators in the session, especially to Judith C. Adams for the discussion of the terminology later on, and the anonymous referees for their comments – as well as to Robert Whiting for comments and language revision.

<sup>1</sup> See also *Ex* 22:19, *De* 27:21. On these passages in the Mosaic Law, see P. Beirne, "On the Sexual assault of Animals: A Sociological View", in A. N. H. Creager – W. C. Jordan (eds.) *The Animal/Human Boundary: Historical Perspectives*, Rochester (NY) 2007, 197–9. On the criminalization of bestiality in the early modern period, see John M. Murrin, "Things Fearful to Name: Bestiality in Early America", in Creager – Jordan (op. cit.), 115–57; P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, "*Wild, filthie, execrabil, detestabil, and unnatural sin*": *Bestiality in early modern Scotland*, Manchester 2002; E. Fudge, "Monstrous Acts: Bestiality in Early Modern England", *History Today* 8 (2000) 20–5.

<sup>2</sup> Beirne (above n. 1), 199; Fudge (above n. 1), 21.

<sup>3</sup> M. B. Skinner, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture*, Oxford 2005, 3–10; D. M. Halperin – J. J. Winkler, – F. I. Zeitlin, *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, Princeton (NJ) 1990. See also J. Davidson, *The Greeks and Greek Love*, London 2007, 101–21.

it plausible that the ancients were more tolerant of this kind of sexual behaviour – or should we say, animal abuse?

In the following, I will discuss this question from the point of view of Aelian or Claudius Aelianus (c. 175–235), who in his popular natural history reports about twenty cases of ardent human-animal affectionate relationships,<sup>4</sup> thus referring to this phenomenon more often than any other ancient writer known to us.<sup>5</sup> Aelian mentions some cases only in passing, some more elaborately.<sup>6</sup> Although we can interpret some of them as instances of imprinting (geese in love with humans), there remain other cases to puzzle over. In the following, I will discuss whether Aelian distinguishes the erotic "love affairs" from mere devotion and what can be said about his attitude to the human-animal sexual relationships.<sup>7</sup> I will start with the sexual terminology in antiquity.

### ***Philia, erôs and zoophilia***

Judith C. Adams and her colleagues, who have studied human-animal sexual relations as a present-day phenomenon, have suggested that one should distinguish between bestiality, zoosexuality, and zoophilia. According to these scholars, we may define *bestiality* as an activity or practice performed by individuals whose sexual orientation is usually towards other humans, while *zoosexuality* denotes a

---

<sup>4</sup> The animals include dogs, a seal, geese and other birds, and especially snakes and dolphins. A dog (or a ram or a goose – Aelian mentions the different versions) fell in love with Glauce the harpist (1,6; 5,29; 8,11), a dog fell in love with a boy named Xenophon (1,6), a female snake with an Egyptian boy (4,56), a male snake with an Arcadian boy and with a boy named Aleuas (6,63 and 8,10), a male snake with a Jewish girl and with the daughter of Sybaris (6,17; 12,36), a seal with a diver (4,58), a goose with a boy named Amphilocheus (5,29), a cockerel named Centaurus with a royal cup-bearer (12,34), a jackdaw with a boy (1,6; 12,34), an elephant with a flower-seller (7,39), and various dolphins with various humans (2,6; 6,15; 8,10; 12,45 [a hymn attributed to Arion]). In addition to these passages, there are the tales of the groom desiring the mare (4,9) and the goatherd the she-goat (6,42), and the cases that report animals assaulting women (dogs 7,19; baboons or apes 7,19 and 15,14). In addition, Aelian refers to Pindar (see below n. 10) concerning the case of a goat having intercourse with a woman. About the numbering of the new edition of *NA* I have used, see below n. 17.

<sup>5</sup> For lists of the best-known cases in Graeco-Roman literature and iconography, see J. G. Younger, *Sex in the ancient world from A to Z*, London – New York 2005 ("bestiality") and G. Vorberg, *Glossarium Eroticum*, Stuttgart 1932 (*coitus cum brutis animalibus* and *sodomia*).

<sup>6</sup> The more elaborate tales are 2,6; 6,15; 6,42; 6,63 and 7,39.

<sup>7</sup> For example, of dogs' devotion to their masters (6,25).

precise sexual orientation of a person towards animals. The same scholars suggest that *zoophilia*, which nowadays is in clinical use to refer both to the practice and to the orientation, should be restricted to mean mainly the non-sexual love of animals. However, they argue that zoophilia also includes those occurrences where an individual experiences a transition from a loving attachment to sexual attraction, for example, to his companion animal.<sup>8</sup>

It goes without saying that most of the cases of human-animal sexual acts happen without the consent of the non-human part, so that sexual intercourse with animals can be more often understood as an *interspecies sexual assault*, as Piers Beirne has put it.<sup>9</sup> Therefore it can be compared to paedophilia, the attraction to and exploitation of children as sexual objects by adults. The Greek social custom of pederasty accepted the exploitation of young boys as sexual objects within certain norms and restraints and a vocabulary was created around it.

By contrast, for human-animal sexual relations there were no exact words, which suggests that the cases were either very rare or were not discussed because (for example) of embarrassment or of indifference. Herodotus, who is the first to clearly describe such an act, reports on the intercourse between a goat and a woman that occurred in a public space, "openly" (ἀναφανδόν), in Mendes, Egypt (2,46,4). He uses the common verb denoting sexual intercourse, "mixing" (μίγνυμι). Herodotus expresses his astonishment by calling the act strange or monstrously strange (τοῦτο τὸ τέρας), although he can contextualize the incident as belonging to the sphere of exotic religious practice, to the cult of the god that the Greeks identified as Pan, the hybrid god of shepherds and herdsmen.<sup>10</sup>

In Theocritus' *Idylls* (1,87–88), a goatherd is described as envying his billy goat that he sees mounting a she-goat and cursing that he himself is "not born a goat". This is, however, rather an expression of acknowledging the all-pervasive character of sexual passion and of the boundaries between the species. In real life, young boys were usually responsible for herding farm animals, which involved

---

<sup>8</sup> J. C. Adams – E. A. McBride – K. Cernelley – A. Carr, "Human animal sexual interactions: a predictive model to differentiate between zoophilia, zoosexuality and bestiality", *Proceedings of the International Society of Anthrozoology Congress in Tokyo 2007 "The Power of Animals"* (not published, see poster number 40 [http://www.jaha.or.jp/iahaio2007/pdf/abstract\\_4.pdf](http://www.jaha.or.jp/iahaio2007/pdf/abstract_4.pdf)). Bestiality seems to be a specifically politically incorrect term for an act in which the agency is usually not on the part of the *beast*.

<sup>9</sup> Beirne (above n. 1), 193–227.

<sup>10</sup> See also Strabo 17,1,19 and Ael. *NA* 7,19, who both refer to Pindar (fr. 201 *incert.*, ed. Maehler). Sexual intercourse could be combined with cultic practices in antiquity; on temple prostitution, see, e.g., Younger (above n. 5), 109–10.

close relations with them and also offered knowledge of sexual relations between animals.<sup>11</sup> The epigram from the first century BCE attributed to Meleager (*AP* 12,41) suggests that sexual encounters between young goatherds and she-goats were supposed to be adolescent sexual experimentation, as if a passing phase in their sexuality. However, the language of this epigram was obviously meant to be shocking or, at least, crude.

Although all living beings were thought to share the sexual drive – a cause for both joy and anxiety – the physical part of any kind of sexual intercourse was usually described with neutral terms like "associating", "being close", "being with" and "mixing with",<sup>12</sup> as is the case in the incident related by Herodotus, but also much later on, in Aelian's tales of human-animal intercourse. Therefore, although the lecherous scenes in Graeco-Roman erotic art or in some epigrams may give a picture of sexual unrestrainedness, moderation and euphemisms without clear obscenities were the norm of the genres of higher literature (except, of course, for Aristophanes' comedy).<sup>13</sup>

The restrained sexual register pertains especially to the descriptions of pederasty, which was combined with uplifting ideas. In Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, a beautiful adolescent boy exemplifies universal beauty, which conducts the lover, the adult male, to the Idea of Beauty. The pederastic relationship was formulated as edification both for the lover (*erastês*) and the beloved one (*erômenos*) and valued as the noblest form of *erôs*. Although Socrates specifically states in the *Phaedrus* that this relationship is not *philia*, but *erôs* (255c–e), many scholars have commented about the ambiguity of these terms in Greek erotic discussion in general.<sup>14</sup> While *philia* usually meant mainly friendship and other non-erotic forms of love, it also stood for strong affection, a fond intimacy. But then again, while *erôs*, as the more specific form of erotic affection, could mean obsessive forms of affection, it was sometimes used quite neutrally, as a

<sup>11</sup> L. Calder, *Cruelty and Sentimentality*, Oxford 2011, 30. Beirne (above n. 1), 214–5. Cf. also *Daphnis and Chloe* 3,15,7.

<sup>12</sup> Vorberg (above n. 5), s.v.; Davidson (above n. 3), 119.

<sup>13</sup> Skinner (above n. 3), 196 and S. Halliwell, *Greek Laughter*, Cambridge 2008, 219–25. According to G. Sissa, the Greeks understood *erôs* not as "a repertoire of possible acts", but as "the body's insistent desire", see Sissa, *Sex and Sensuality in the Ancient World*, New Haven – London 2008, 6.

<sup>14</sup> On the interchangeability of the words *philia* and *erôs* in Greek thought, see Halperin *et al.* (above n. 3), 268–270; Davidson (above n. 3), 32–4. On the vocabulary of sexual passion (*himeros*, *pothos*, and others), see Davidson (above n. 3), 11–67.

synonym for *philia*.<sup>15</sup> This is reflected in the very class of words of pederasty (παιδεραστία). While the substantive *paidophilia* is lacking, the compound adjectives παιδοφίλης and παιδεραστής were sometimes used as synonyms (cf. Thgn. 1357).<sup>16</sup>

Thus, there was a scale of intensity of the words *philia* and *erôs*, but also a kind of convertibility of them. Aelian uses both ἵππεραστής and φίλιππος in the same tale as synonyms referring to the lover of horses, but in this case quite clearly referring to non-erotic love (*NA* 2,28).<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if Aelian employs the verb ἔρασθαι as such more often than φιλεῖν in his tales about human-animal love – and he certainly does – the verb is not evidence of an erotic relationship between human and non-human.

### **Aelian, the storyteller**

Aelian's *De Natura Animalium* is a mixture of information collected from more or less sober natural histories and entertaining paradoxographies.<sup>18</sup> Sometimes Aelian mentions his source; sometimes he speaks only of a story or stories he had heard. Telling these stories of human-animal affectionate relationships, Aelian can refer, for example, to Theophrastus (5,29) and to Eudemus the natural his-

<sup>15</sup> Davidson (above n. 3), 32–4.

<sup>16</sup> If we compare this with the words used to describe the love for animals, we note that the substantives *zoophilia* and *zoerastia* are absent as well as the corresponding adjectives, but there are the rare adjectival compound ἵππεραστής and the compounds with the prefix *phil-*, like φίλορνις, φιλοκύων, and φίλιππος. The word φίλόζωος ("loving animals") existed, although it was extremely rare. In the most notable occurrences, it is a feature of the gods (*Xen. Mem.* 1,4,7; see also *Philo* 2,305). The adjective φίλόζωον "loving life" could also be pejorative. Furthermore, λυκοφιλία means "wolf's friendship" (that is, a false friendship), and φιλόθηριον "loving predators" because they are good to hunt. *LSJ*, s.v.

<sup>17</sup> I am using the recent Teubner edition of *NA* (2009), and utilize the English translation by A. F. Scholfield in the Loeb series (1958), sometimes a bit modified. There are some differences in the numbering between Teubner 2009 and Loeb 1958, see *Tabula comparationis* in the new Teubner edition, pp. 436–8.

<sup>18</sup> Such as Eudemos, Pliny the Elder, and Plutarch. To some extent, all were using more or less the same cluster of tales from lost natural histories. On Aelian's sources, see, J. F. Kindstrand, "Claudius Aelianus und sein Werk", in *ANRW* 34, 4 (1998) 2973–5 and R. French, *Ancient Natural History*, London 1994, 262–3. See also M. García Valdés "Ciencia y Moral: Eliano desde Aristóteles y a la luz del estoicismo y la 'zoofilia' moderna", *Emerita* 71 (2003) 42. García Valdés uses the word "zoofilia" for non-erotic love of animals.

torian (4,56), but it is obvious that these tales owe more of their style to paradoxography than to the natural histories. The place and the name of the human, sometimes even of the animal are mostly mentioned, but the date is referred to only vaguely (for example, in 5,29). One obvious purpose of these tales of affairs with non-humans is thus to startle the reader, but also to make him or her believe these stories.

One source for these tales was philosophical, especially Peripatetic writings on love and sexuality. This becomes evident from the 13<sup>th</sup> book of the *Deipnosophistae*, where Athenaeus refers to Theophrastus' and Clearchus' lost essays on love, mentioning seven cases of affection between animals and humans (13, 606b–f). It is noteworthy that Athenaeus reports only cases of animals falling in love with humans. Aelian has the same stories except the one about the female elephant and a boy, which, however, tells of parental love, the elephant behaving like a surrogate mother.

It may be argued that, although Aelian represents animals in a humanized and sentimental way, he nevertheless reflects a genuine consideration for them. This is curious in view of his being some kind of Stoic, because the Stoics were famous for their ostensibly dismissive statements on non-human animals.<sup>19</sup> However, Aelian declares in his prologue that his topic is the characteristics of different animals, which, according to him, possess some virtues and some outstanding human (ἄνθρωπινος) qualities by nature. Aelian's point of view is anthropocentric, but it refers to the tendency to see animals and animal life as models for humans – as a life of natural, inherent morality.<sup>20</sup> Animal issues in a more modern sense had been discussed more extensively already a century earlier by Plutarch, one possible source for Aelian.<sup>21</sup>

Although Aelian's style also owes something to the Milesian erotic tales in some few cases, his vocabulary seems usually to refer to an ardent admiration and attachment, which he sometimes describes as clearly mutual. Once Aelian even stresses the "pure" form of the passion using the phrase ὑπέρσεμνος ἀντέρως ("super-reverent mutual love") between a dolphin and a boy (2,6,67). However,

<sup>19</sup> García Valdés (above n. 18), especially 46. Kindstrand (above n. 18), 2965. Concerning Aelian's Stoic attitude to animals, see *NA* 7,10.

<sup>20</sup> French (above n. 18), 264, Kindstrand (above n. 18), 2965. The initial source for the interest in animal issues could have been the Neo-Pythagorean movement, as Ingvild Sælid Gilhus has suggested; see Gilhus, *Animals, Gods, and Humans*, Oxford 2006, 41, 272 n. 1. See also García Valdés 2003 (above n. 18), 13.

<sup>21</sup> On Plutarch's influence on Aelian, see Scholfield (above n. 17), xx–xxi.



the word ἀντίερος ("return-love, love-for-love, reciprocal love") was the affection usually attributed to the beloved one in pederastic relationships (cf. Plato's *Phaedrus* 255d). Being anthropomorphizing, Aelian's tales can be put in the context of the ancient sexual, especially pederastic, vocabulary: the non-human animal is acting as the *erastês* or as the *erômenos* (*erômenê*).<sup>22</sup>

### **An animal as *erastês***

As mentioned earlier, Athenaeus reports only the cases of individual animals falling in love with specific humans. Nearly all cases in Aelian's *De Natura Animalium* are also of this sort. However, the beloved humans in Aelian's cases are mostly young – a young boy or girl with the animal being of the opposite sex, but sometimes of the same sex – and the relationship is often described as being mutual.<sup>23</sup> The reason for the preference of an animal *erastês* (animal showing fondness to human) has been explained as a reflection of the strong anthropocentrism and the cult of the man of Graeco-Roman antiquity.<sup>24</sup> However, the popular natural histories of this era usually propound the foolishness and selfishness of man, which are contrasted with the untaught virtues – for example, gratitude – of animals.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Aelian himself gives significance to the fact that he knows more tales about animals falling in love with humans than the other way round. According to him, it is one of the characteristics of many animals to fall in love with humans who have been blessed by extreme beauty (8,10). So the pulchritude of the young human being – which plays such an important part in Socratic-Platonic pederasty – allures not only humans but also non-humans as well.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Of course, pederasty was usually not thought to include the relationship between an adult male and a girl. The tale about an elephant falling in love with a flower-seller is non-erotic at first, but Aelian tells us that after the death of the girl the elephant was like a "lover (*erastês*) who had lost his loved one (*erômenê*)" (7,39).

<sup>23</sup> The gender of the animal is not always obvious.

<sup>24</sup> Gilhus (above n. 20), 72.

<sup>25</sup> This superiority of animals in moral issues was a constant theme of ancient cultural criticism – it is sometimes called theriophily or animalitarianism by modern scholars; see, e.g., S. Lilja, "Theriophily in Homer", *Arctos* 8 (1974) 71–8.

<sup>26</sup> Aelian explains the tale of the seal that fell in love with an exceptionally ugly diver (4,58) as a result of the fact that for the seal the diver appeared to be most beautiful.

Human-animal bonds can be long lasting. Aelian describes how the "super-reverent mutual love" between a dolphin and a boy mentioned above (2,6) has grown gradually because the human and the animal were brought together; they were foster-brothers (σύντροφοι). Aelian uses the same word in the tale of a snake (δράκων) that fell in love with an Arcadian boy. Their mutual affection (ἀλλήλους φιλεῖν) is based on a shared childhood (6,63,25).

The development of affection from childhood friendship to love is, of course, most famously delineated by Aelian's probable contemporary, the author of *Daphnis and Chloe*. This romantic novel also includes close encounters between humans and non-humans that seem to obscure the boundaries of humanity. Both children are foundlings and have been suckled by animals: Daphnis by a she-goat (1,3,2)<sup>27</sup> and Chloe by a sheep that is also depicted as washing her face by licking it with her tongue (1,5,2). Aelian describes the same kind of caressing between human and non-human: the snake licks the face of the cowherd Aleuas (8,11).<sup>28</sup> The settings of Aelian's human-animal tales are often pastoral too.<sup>29</sup>

Aelian's stories of human-animal affectionate bonds can thus be put not only in the niche of sublimated pederastic relationships, but also seen as reflecting the subgenre of pastoral *erotica à la Daphnis and Chloe* that flourished during the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century Second Sophistic.<sup>30</sup> However, Aelian uses mainly the language of suggestion and allusion when the animal is the active participant. The most explicit sexual vocabulary of these cases is used in the story of the girl and an enormous snake (6,17). This relationship also begins from mere companionship: the snake used to visit the girl's home, but then "slept with her like an ardent lover" (συνεκάθευδε σφόδρα ἐρωτικῶς, l. 19). With euphemistic but nevertheless quite explicit terms – a snake is the obvious phallic animal – the story continues until the girl begins to fear her "lover" and moves away. It is noteworthy that Aelian gives an account of the girl's reaction, the fear the beloved one felt. Furthermore, he tones down the drastic aspect of the intercourse not only by stressing the continuity and constant nature of the serpent's affection but also the power of passion: that "the god upon even Zeus" (that is, Eros) is first and foremost guilty for this animal's behaviour.

<sup>27</sup> The goat even remains Daphnis' nanny after he gets human foster-parents, and, later, Daphnis and Chloe in turn give their own children to a goat and a sheep to care for.

<sup>28</sup> Aleuas was a mythical figure, a prince of Thessaly and a seer. See also 7,39 (an elephant and a flower-girl).

<sup>29</sup> See 4,56; 6,63; 8,10; 12,36.

<sup>30</sup> On the mixture of genres in *Daphnis and Chloe* (romance, pastoral, comedy), see F. I. Zeitlin, in Halperin *et al.* (above n. 3), 422–8.

In Greek mythology, the gods were thought to be sexual beings who had affairs with humans in both human and animal form. The metamorphosis happened mostly in the role of *erastês*, as in the case of Zeus seducing Leda.<sup>31</sup> In this context, the animal form was not seen as something negatively "bestial" but the mark of Zeus' potency and his cunning in love affairs. Graeco-Roman myths could describe affectionate affairs between humans and animals too, such as Cy-parissus falling in love with the holy stag.<sup>32</sup> If there is a correspondence between mythology and sexual fantasies, the imagination of the Greeks could thus be more imbued with the pictures of interspecies sexual relations than the imagination of the people of some other cultures because of their myths of gods taking animal form in their relationships with humans.<sup>33</sup> The beloved human was usually depicted as exceptionally beautiful, an aspect that was also noted during antiquity.<sup>34</sup> Although humans were often seen as helpless victims of the gods' erotic passion, the sexual relationship between a theriomorphic god and a human was not viewed with stronger moral judgment or disgust than being beloved (or raped) by a god in human form.<sup>35</sup> The power of beauty was supposed to be so strong that the *erastês* (whether an animal or a god) could be seen as a "helpless" victim of his own passion. However, a sexual encounter with the gods was seldom told from the point of view of the desired one, the human.<sup>36</sup> Instead, Aelian could also take note of the reactions of the passive partner, as in the above-mentioned tale about the huge snake and the girl with its Milesian innuendos (6,17).

Aelian also mentions briefly the possibility that dogs and apes or baboons have assaulted women (7,19). However, here his vocabulary is disapproving (καὶ κύνες δὲ γυναιξὶν ἐπιτολμῶν ἐλέχθησαν, 7,19,21–22) and in the case of baboons he even speaks of them as using force or violence (βιάζομαι).

<sup>31</sup> The goddess Thetis, in the role of the beloved one, changed her shape into various animals in order to escape the erotic pursuit of a mortal man, Peleus.

<sup>32</sup> Ovid. *met.* 10,106–42.

<sup>33</sup> At the beginning of the modern era, to have intercourse with a theriomorphic devil, that is, with the devil in animal form, was thought to be the ultimate degradation. Murrin (above note 1), 116. See Il. 20, 221–9 (Boreas as a stallion with mares).

<sup>34</sup> "[...] one cannot find any humans who have been thought worthy to associate with the gods except for those who have had beauty" says Charidemus in the dialogue *On Beauty* (7), which was attributed to Lucian (trans. by M. D. Macleod in the Loeb series of Lucian, vol. VIII, 1967).

<sup>35</sup> About gods disguised as animals, see, however, J. E. Robson, "Bestiality and bestial rape in Greek Myth", in S. Deacy – K. F. Pierce (eds.) *Rape in Antiquity*, 75.

<sup>36</sup> There are some exceptions; the most notable one is Creusa, who gives the most elaborate female point of view in Euripides' *Ion* (859–920).

### A human as an active participant

There are only two tales in Aelian's collections of interspecies love affairs where a human clearly takes the initiative and is the active partner. The beloved ones, animals, are also described in these cases as exceptionally beautiful.

Aelian's story of a young goatherd named Crathis falling in love with a she-goat fits well the pattern of pastoral *erotica* of the Second Sophistic. In this tale, Aelian uses the explicit vocabulary of sexual passion: ἐς ὄρμην ἀφροδίσιον ἐμπεσὼν τῇ τῶν αἰγῶν ἰδεῖν ὠραιότατη μίγνυται, καὶ τῇ ὀμιλίᾳ ἤσθη, καὶ εἴ ποτε ἐδεῖτο ἀφροδίτης ὡς αὐτὴν ἐφοίτα, καὶ εἶχεν ἐρωμένην αὐτήν (6,42,11–14).<sup>37</sup> There is, however, no account of the reactions of the beloved one: the emotions of the "prettiest of the goats" seem to be a side issue. However, the goatherd gives to his significant other various gifts as a token of his affection, which makes this relationship mirror love affairs between humans.<sup>38</sup> Crathis even prepares a "bridal" bed made of leaves for his she-goat, which detail adds to the pastoral flavour of this story. We may assume that this is also supposed to be comical too, but it is notable that Aelian emphasizes the age of the goatherd by calling him a mere boy (τὴν ἡλικίαν ἀντίπαις) already at the beginning. Thus, this story can be considered to represent the pattern of passing adolescent sexual experimentation.

The tone is quite different when Aelian tells us the tale of an adult groom having sexual intercourse with "the most beautiful" of the horses, the mare he has been employed to care for (4,9). The groom tries to restrain his passion, but at last submits to it. Aelian calls this intercourse a "strange union" and a morally wrong action: ἐπιτολμῆσαι τῷ λέχει τῷ ξένῳ καὶ ὀμιλεῖν αὐτῇ (4,9,9–10). The tale gets its Freudian flavour because the mare's foal has seen the event – and the reader sees the event from the foal's point of view as well: ὡς περ οὖν τυραννουμένης τῆς μητρὸς ὑπὸ τοῦ δεσπότη (ll. 11–12). In this case, Aelian is thus clearly condemning sexual intercourse with animals, although he did not fail to – sort of – acknowledge the physical temptation the groom is experiencing.

As mentioned earlier, Plutarch's animal essays were probably one of the sources for *De Natura Animalium*. Plutarch for his part is highly judgmental on this phenomenon in one of his essays and permissive in the other. In his *Animals are rational* (also known as *Gryllus*), Plutarch states that animals never try to have sexual intercourse with humans. Instead, many animals have been "victims

<sup>37</sup> Aelian says that the event happened in Sybaris – the city famous for its association with sensuous pleasure.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. the tales in 8,10 and 5,29, where the animal is the *erastês*.

of the violent lusts of man" (*Mor.* 990f–991a). Thus, Plutarch clearly notes that an animal never takes the active part and that there is no consent on the part of the animal as the passive partner. He views human sexual intercourse with non-humans as equivalent to abuse, to using violence (βιάζομαι) for the sake of the human's own pleasure (*Mor.* 991a). However, in his imaginative account of the dinner of the semi-mythical wise men, Plutarch reflects a more permissive mood. The Thales character in the *Dinner of the Seven Wise Men* sees this practice as adolescent experimentation in the lack of a proper partner (*Mor.* 149c–d).<sup>39</sup>

In both these dialogues, especially in *Gryllus* (991a), Plutarch refers to the possible offspring of the union between different species, although long before his time the existence of human-animal hybrids was largely denied by philosophers and other intellectuals on the grounds that they did not follow nature or that they belong to the same category as children born with deformities.<sup>40</sup> However, the conclusion reached in the *Dinner of the Seven Wise Men* is that it is more sober to think that strange hybrids *were* the outcome of interspecies sex rather than that they are portents representing some future evil (*Mor.* 149d). Travesties of natural processes of reproduction were thus better to be counted in the same class as the factual offspring of two subspecies, like mules. Of course, *lusus naturae* provoked not only fright but also curiosity and fascination,<sup>41</sup> and both Plutarch and Aelian were authors aiming at a large audience.<sup>42</sup> However, Aelian reports only one occurrence of a strange offspring of a human and non-human union. The love affair between the young goatherd Crathis and a she-goat produced a child (παίδιον) "with the legs of a goat and the face of a man" (6,42). The hybrid was then deified and worshipped as a forest god. The whole incident was thus put into the sphere of religion.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> The same kind of attitude is depicted in one of the fables of Phaedrus where there is a case involving a shepherd and a sheep (*fab.* 3,3). See also Calder (above n. 11), 27–8.

<sup>40</sup> French (above n. 18), 154–6.

<sup>41</sup> On attitudes to the *lusus naturae*, see R. Kearney, *Strangers, Gods, and Monsters*, London – New York 2004, 115–7.

<sup>42</sup> Later on, in early modern Europe, children born with deformities were usually interpreted as the result of intercourse between humans and non-humans and could then induce a prosecution for forbidden sexual practices and in many cases also the death penalty. See, e.g., Beirne (above n. 1), 199–200. It is noteworthy that the speaker in the *Gryllus* (as the former member of Odysseus' crew that Circe had changed into a swine) represents a less educated class. *The Dinner of the Seven Wise Men* is for its part set in the mythico-historical past.

<sup>43</sup> In *NA* 12,36, the union of Sybaris' daughter and a snake produces the "Snake-borns". This tale has, however, a mythical setting. See also *NA* 11,40 about *animals* born with deformities.

There was one well-known contemporary story of a human-animal sexual relationship that Aelian does not mention, probably because it was not a story, a tale, but a fictional creation by certain writers. The hazards of Lucius, transformed into a donkey, were told both in Greek (*Lucius or the Ass*) and in Latin (*Golden Ass*), but the original work is dated to the century prior to Aelian.<sup>44</sup> While Apuleius' novel is a humorous satire, a *Bildungsroman*, also giving a seemingly sympathetic account of the life of a beast of burden, *Lucius or the Ass* is an abbreviated version where the erotic aspects are more openly described. As an animal biography, the story reflects the constant threat of violence in the life of an animal, including the threat of sexual abuse through the agency of the priest of the Syrian goddess and the upper-class foreign lady. Lucius is the speaker and thus the explicit sex scene with the lady who fancied him is described exceptionally from the point of view of the desired one. In his asinine form, he is acting mostly the passive role, but is also expressing his consent. However, he definitely abhors and declines to perform the same act in the arena in public display with a female criminal who was condemned *ad bestias*. Roman gladiatorial games apparently included a few cases of this kind of humiliation put into a mythological setting.<sup>45</sup> They were, of course, crimes against the integrity of animals, too, but it is perhaps too much to expect that the creator of Lucius' story felt any sympathy for the animal victims in the arena as such. However, it is noteworthy that Lucius (in both versions) also fears the arena not only because he is afraid of being eaten by predators, but also because he is terrified by the humiliation of conducting the act in public. Not even his asinine form shelters him from the shame.

## Conclusions

Do Aelian's tales show a non-judgmental attitude to human-animal sexual relations? Yes and no. He clearly condemns the sexual assault of the mare by the adult groom (4,9) as an act of violence, but describes the affair between Crathis the young goatherd and the she-goat (6,42) with romantic flair. While he seems to

<sup>44</sup> Both borrowed the story from the same source, probably Lucian. See, for example, S. J. Harrison, *Apuleius. A Latin Sophist*, Oxford 2008, 218–9.

<sup>45</sup> All known cases depict intercourse with a victim performing the role of Queen Pasiphae. As K. M. Coleman has argued, these brutal public displays provided an opportunity not only to exact punishment, but also for humiliation and mockery of the condemned. K. M. Coleman, "Fatal charades: Roman executions staged as mythological enactments", *JRS* 80 (1990) 44–73, especially 67ff. quoting passages from Martial and Suetonius.

show tolerance of the obvious sexual assault in the story of the girl and the huge snake (6,17), he feels, however, the need to explain the conduct of the animal. Much depends on who acts with whom and how.

Therefore, Aelian seems to make a distinction between bestiality and zoophilia (according to the terminology by Adams *et al.*), between abuse (or interspecies sexual assault), which is to be condemned especially if the agent is an adult male, and long-term affection between humans and non-humans. The affairs between the boy and a dolphin (2,6) and between the boy and a snake (6,63) tell us a long-term attachment, which Aelian describes as a great source of joy, leaving the rest of the affairs in the shadows of privacy. Aelian's modest vocabulary and the inherent ambiguity of the words *philia* and *erôs* contribute to this. However, although ancient readers probably classified Aelian's tales separately from myths, it can nevertheless be said that the myths accustomed the Graeco-Roman audience to believe that beautiful humans can sexually attract not only other humans but also gods and animals alike. Yet, imagination is a safer place for transgression than real life. The mythical interspecies sex acts got their nightmarish representations in the Roman arena.

When Herodotus mentions that the act between a goat and a woman was strange, he might have meant that the strangeness consisted of three aspects besides the act itself. Firstly, of its public nature (*ἀναφανδόν*), secondly, that the human partner was a woman and not a goatherd or a young boy, and thirdly, that the goat was – or had been forced to be – the active partner in the intercourse.

When Aelian depicts the affairs in which the animal is the romantically active participant, he is not only stressing the lovability of the human. He is incidentally also stressing the agency of the animal, not reducing it to a mere object in the human world. Furthermore, most of these tales of the affairs between human and animals can be seen as expressing the idea of the general goodwill of certain animals towards humans and, therefore, as belonging to Aelian's moral stories about animals.