"Bats Who Harm" and "Bats Who May Be Harmed": The Interspecies Politics of Virus Sampling

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Abstract:

The 2013–2016 Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa galvanized a quest for more knowledge with regards to the ecology of the disease. In its immediate aftermath, research initiatives, at the junction of biosecurity and One Health, were mounted to elucidate the circulation of the Ebola virus and other emergent pathogens through sampling local wildlife, in particular bats. The article investigates the knowledge, affects, and practices mitigating care and risk in encounters between human animals and potentially contaminated nonhuman animals. Grounded in an ethnography of the labor of wildlife sampling by Guinean veterinarians, it adopts an interspecies perspective on the One Health laboratory, a place where relations between animals and humans are inflected by a postcolonial, gendered, and anthropocentric imbalance of power. It argues that, rather than blurring interspecies boundaries, scientific care for sampled bats may cement hierarchies, with consequences for samplers and animals.

Keywords:

Postcolonial; One Health; Laboratory; Zoonosis; Hierarchy; Entanglements; Sentinel; Biosecurity

Introduction

The 2013–2016 Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa galvanized a quest for more knowledge about the ecology of the disease. In its aftermath, the United States and European countries mounted scientific initiatives to elucidate the circulation of the virus and other pathogens in wildlife. These endeavors build on the post-Cold War concern for population biosecurity and the global health concern for disease outbreak preparedness that have prevailed since the 2003 SARS epidemic. But they also invoke the newer rhetoric of "One Health," a framework for action based on the idea that the health of the environment, human and nonhuman animals is interconnected. This article investigates knowledge, affects, and practices at this junction of biosecurity and One Health, in encounters between human and potentially contaminated nonhuman animals. It is grounded in an ethnography of wildlife sampling by West African veterinarians, and sketches the choreographies of care of vulnerable professionals for vulnerable beings. Sampling for zoonotic disease surveillance presupposes that the frontiers between species are permeable, and samplers do tinker with the border between humans and wild animals. But I argue that rather than blurring boundaries between species, scientific care for sampled bats cements hierarchies between species in postcolonial settings.

The origins of the West African Ebola epidemic, the first one recorded in the region, have not been clarified to date, although the scientific consensus points to human contact with insectivorous bats in Guinea as the likeliest source of infection (Sáez et al., 2014). Many unknowns persist concerning the wildlife dynamics of the Ebola virus

disease, including its animal reservoir: Hypothetically, one or several bat species would harbor the virus without symptoms and transmit it to other hosts (Ohimain, 2016). Since the first outbreak in 1976, disease ecologists have sampled several thousand animals to make inferences about the reservoir status of certain species from testing a portion of their population. Sampling efforts have concentrated on bats since 2005 and the finding of Ebola virus RNA in one species of fruit bat. Trapped or purchased animals were euthanized and dissected until the 2000s (Olson et al., 2012), but scientists have started sampling bats on a much larger scale since 2015, and increasingly take what they conceptualize as "animal welfare" into account. As evidence of that concern, in 2011, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) published a manual on "balancing ecology, conservation and public health interest" in emerging zoonoses investigations on bats (FAO, 2011). The guidelines recommend the use of "non-destructive sampling methods" when possible, yet "scientists capturing bats for disease surveillance must consider the safety of both the field personnel and the bats being sampled" (p. 51).

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the role of bats as zoonotic disease reservoirs to global attention. Bats have been framed as first-class epidemic "rogues" (Fairhead, 2018) in spite of lacunas in knowledge about the ecology of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Depicted as "harmful" to humans, they become animals against whom harm is justifiable, through ad hoc or state-mandated culling operations, for example. But in parallel, the media present these harmful encounters as revealing of the dangers of the Anthropocene, as bats are particularly vulnerable to anthropogenic pressures on their

habitat and need protection. This article analyzes the tense equilibrium between what it conceptualizes as different ontologies, laid bare by scientific work with these animals.

It relies on a detailed ethnographic study of an invisibilized group of One Health workers: wildlife samplers. I conducted 16 months of doctoral fieldwork with a group of them, all Guinean professionals in veterinary medicine, biology, or forestry; mostly men, employed for capturing and sampling more than 4,000 bats and rodents. In 2017–2019, after gaining the authorization of their field managers, I actively participated in their activities, repeatedly interviewed them on and off the record, and developed interpersonal bonds during and beyond fieldwork. Being funded by a research grant from my home university in the United Kingdom, I was able to orient my questioning independently from the foreign institutions steering such projects: I was primarily committed to the samplers' perspective and hypothesized that their work transformed their relationship with bats. I found out, in fact, that they develop a conflicting relationship, fraught with species and racial inequality, with two intertwined bat figures, whom I call the "bat who harms" and the "bat who is harmed." I use these insights to question the consequences, both for workers and for animals, of operationalizing the One Health discourse in postcolonial contexts, an endeavor bound to expand following the COVID-19 epidemic.

On Interspecies Boundaries in the One Health Laboratory

Considerations for the wellbeing of collected bats stems from concerns for animals used in experimental settings, which arose in mid-19th-century Britain, and the more recent focus of veterinarians on the pain of wild animals. But they are even more directly indebted to the One Health agenda, endorsed by most contemporary large-scale sampling projects such as the ones discussed here. One Health is a conceptual approach to zoonotic disease emergence that advocates collaborations across the sectors of human, animal, and environmental health to prepare for epidemic outbreaks (Bardosh, 2016). The concept, genealogically related to veterinary epidemiology, was rebranded at a 2004 symposium hosted by the US Wildlife Conservation Society as a model in itself, generating countless publications, platforms and initiatives across the world. In 2005, the global spread of the epidemic of H5N1 avian influenza acted to accelerate the endorsement of this rhetoric by donors, governments, and United Nations agencies. After experiencing epidemics of avian origin, in the 2000s, China and Southeast Asia initiated major reforms to their systems of zoonotic disease surveillance and control to integrate actions across the human-animal-environment interface (Keck, 2015). In Africa, the advent of similar sociotechnical dispositives in the 2010s rather came as a response to outbreaks of diseases originating in mammals and not birds, such as the Ebola virus disease. Surveillance through data collection, zoonosis research, and epidemic investigations in Africa have thus primarily focused on primates, rodents, and bats.

Social scientists have acknowledged the shift, with One Health, from a focus on "human-animal contact" to the recognition of porous boundaries between human and animals,

and the social relations that mediate them (MacGregor & Waldman, 2017). The concept forges alliances between biosecurity, where human health benefits from animal health, and biodiversity, where animal health matters in itself. However, in spite of One Health's insistence on inclusivity and interconnections (Craddock & Hinchliffe, 2015), the agenda tends to emphasize the role of animals, in particular those categorized as "wild," as transmitters of disease (Cassidy, 2018). For animals such as bats, primates, and pangolins, One Health holds care in a balance with risk.

One Health field research on emergent zoonoses produces a particular kind of laboratory. For social scientists, a laboratory is a fact factory where scientists can manipulate objects in standardized ways and produce knowledge through practice. In animal research labs, as emphasized by feminist scholarship, animals are not passively submitted to the objectifying gaze of laboratory scientists (Davies et al., 2018). Animal research is a place of ethical encounters, where care practices interlace moralities, regulations, and technologies. In her ethnography of lab science in the United States, anthropologist Sharp (2018) underscores the power of animals, especially mammals, to "reshape moral worlds" through their intimacy with lab workers (p. 3). In the One Health lab where I conducted research, however, people caring for animals who are not bred and are only detained for up to a few hours do not accrue long-term responsibilities toward bats: The latter are very much reduced to instrumental calculations (Weisberg, 2009). Ultimately, boundaries between humans and animals – i.e., their difference and embedded hierarchy – are not only tested by lab work, but they may also be reinforced.

The One Health laboratory investigated by this research is situated in a Global South of supposedly high interspecies intimacy (Hinchliffe, 2015), where resource extraction has historically dominated exchanges. It is a site of postcolonial power struggles, where geopolitical inequities, the legacies of racism, and material scarcity configure the desirability of certain human-animal entanglements. Such a political emphasis is encapsulated by Livingston and Puar's (2011) concept of "interspecies." In several biopolitical processes such as pest control or taxonomy decisions, the authors contend, the rights of some humans are elevated above those of nonhuman animals. Taking an "interspecies" perspective on One Health lab work with animals thus means being attentive to the ways in which biopolitics suffuse the redrawing of inter-species boundaries through experimentation and care. By diffracting the animal sampled within a One Health context, I underscore their dual ontology and emphasize the agency of singular bats in enacting these relations: Bats are a risk to human health ("bat who harms"), while their health is also endangered by human activities ("bat who is harmed").

Care as Biosecurity

Every mission day around 6pm, the agents carried heavy crates from the project's four-wheel drive to the site reconnoitered earlier as auspicious to bat populations. They planted a few poles, between which they pulled taut six-meter-wide polyester nets. As dusk set in, one bat, then two, swooped from their perch; some flew down into the net and were trapped. "Capture!" When two or three bats were caught, two agents quickly

donned personal protective equipment, before the flailing animals snarled up too tightly. One agent carefully detangled the fragile jumble of hair, bones, and claws, taking up to several minutes. As I had gained the approval of their Guinean managers to join the last sampling missions, the agents were eager to perform professionalism in front of the French student, lest I may, perhaps, make a negative report to their superiors, or worse, the US scientists overseeing the initiative. The task requires ability and gentleness for the net should neither be torn, nor the bat hurt. A bat's wings are difficult to separate as their thinly stretched skin, if perforated, would impair flight and compromise the animal's survival. The bats were inserted in cotton bags hung off a branch, "so they feel suspended" until sampling, the samplers imagined. The protocol then required that "every captured animal [be] released into its natural life habitat" after receiving fruit juice and a period of observation.

Most agents in wildlife sampling projects in Guinea are professional veterinary doctors trained at the country's *Institut Supérieur des Sciences et de Médecine Vétérinaire*, one of two veterinary schools in Francophone West Africa, founded in 2006.1 The curriculum interweaves disease control and commercial livestock production, a structuring connection for the development of veterinary medicine in the former French West Africa (Landais, 1990). During their training, in the 2000s–2010s, sampling agents did not hear about One Health, nor were they taught much about wildlife health. Wildlife only made a brief appearance in the course on infectious pathologies: They were, rather vaguely, depicted as "disease reservoirs." As it happens, in the international development of the One Health approach, veterinary epidemiology similarly overcame the concerns of

wildlife veterinarians (Cassidy, 2018). In West Africa, the veterinary profession's structuration dovetailed with veterinary predominance in One Health to influence the implementation of the agenda.

Sampling agents were trained to handle bats – whom they had hardly manipulated before – following a strict bioethical protocol in line with the One Health concern for "animal welfare." Adapted from manuals for zoo and wildlife veterinarians and approved by a university animal care and use committee and the national authorities, it prescribed "the most humane and least invasive techniques to sample wildlife while minimizing pain and distress." "Humane" care mostly amounts to technical specifications: The sampled blood quantity is limited to 1% of the animal's body mass and anesthesia is to be avoided, for overdosed anesthetics can be fatal to small bat bodies. In addition, animals should "neither be stressed nor kept for long," although no indicators for animal distress are routinely used by the samplers. The protocol also demanded that "disturbance of the social groups/colonies and their habitat" be "minimized," e.g., by releasing animals within one kilometer of the site of capture. These bioethical principles interweave two doctrines of animal health, detached from questions of individual wellbeing: Animal welfare is interested in preserving the biological life of the animal, while wildlife conservation is attentive to species ecology. The field agents collapsed both in an expression highlighting the anthropocentric character of prescriptions: "We are told to treat animals humanely."

These requirements are held in tension with those imposed by another bat figure, that of the "bat who harms." Although the protocol estimated the prevalence of rare pathogens in bats to be "between 0.01 and 1%," samplers were taught to observe biosecurity precautions, i.e., measures for protecting themselves. Once transferred to the sampling space, the bat was subjected to the taut attention of agents dressed in full-body protective equipment, seated in an area delimited by security tape. One agent took the bat weight by means of a portable scale, read through their face shield. Another took the bat out of the bag by the collar so as to prevent them from turning their head and biting. They presented the animal to a third agent who determined their sex, age, and if possible, their species, measured their forearm, and inserted cotton swabs into their mouth and anus before puncturing the brachial vein to collect a few drops of blood. While handled, the bat pants, squeaks, and squirms in an attempt to break free, their mouth open and ready to bite. The bats' sharp teeth provoked much apprehension among agents as they can easily pierce through several layers of glove. Thus, responsibility for biosecurity is not solely delegated to protective equipment. Good handling technique is key: "In certain contexts, care is precisely what enables the instrumentalization of life" (Giraud & Hollin, 2016, p. 31). The human's role of care for the "bat who is harmed" is to smooth the experimental process by ensuring the animal's compliance, not to foster a relationship wherein they try to adopt the animal's perspective.

In the field lab, techniques for bat containment are not consecrated requirements, but objects of negotiations that consider the vulnerabilities of sampling agents and bats, who

may both harm and be harmed in their meeting or as a result of it. For example, while handling fruit bats, robust gloves made of yet another animal body part – leather – are worn over nitrile gloves to prevent exposure to bites. A flipside of this protocol is that it diminishes the sampler's sensitivity, increasing the risk of harm to the bat. Some samplers judge that their handling skills suffice to handle the animal without incurring or inflicting pain, and most importantly, to enable the procedure to which bats are subjected. This is part of the workers' tacit knowledge: Attunement to animal bodies may lead to eluding procedures and "tinkering'" with socio-technical infrastructures (Law, 2010). This process is notably facilitated by the commodification of cow skin in the form of leather gloves, making the "harmability" of yet another animal a protection for pathogenic interspecies contact.

Social scientists looking at care for animals targeted by biosecurity systems portray zoonotic disease management as a form of biopolitical contest between two visions of a "good death" for animals on farms (Porter, 2013). This form of care, although it still relies on animals' inequality with humans, evades the biopower of state-mandated culling and takes place "despite biosecurity." What Guinean samplers perform, however, is less akin to "care despite biosecurity" than to "care as biosecurity." In fact, within the One Health paradigm, bats are cared for because of the risk of cross-species infection and their operation as "sentinel devices" in the words of anthropologist Keck (2015). "Disease sentinels" are technologies of biosecurity surveillance which track the circulation of pathogens in and among their spatial reservoir(s). Keck (2015) moves away from a biopolitical framework to cast the relations between power, care, and nature as an

exchange of perspectives, whereby "letting live" sentinel birds "becomes a way to make [humanity] live" (p. 229). The wellbeing of the animal, their very freedom, grants their future capacity to mingle with fellow nonhuman and human animals, and to send humans further signs of an impending epidemic through sampling. Consequently, the vulnerabilities of bats and humans are not negotiated as a by-product of sampling, or the interference of an alternative model of care: The very ethical configuration of One Health sampling, its mode of "caring as biosecurity," forces samplers to both care for and protect themselves from "bats who harm" and "are harmed."

Interspecies Encounters and Hierarchy

In West Africa, bats can hardly be said to possess the "nonhuman charisma" of big mammals of interest to international conservation programs, such as elephants. Geographer Lorimer (2015) proposes that animal charisma is shaped by embodied encounters, ecological and aesthetic, and their valuation in a given political economy. Thinking with this concept, bats have, overwhelmingly in Guinea, a "negative charisma." Considered a rare delicacy, the meat of fruit bats is hard to find in local markets. All in all, few people corporeally interact with them – except for fruit bat hunters and children who like to capture and play with insect bats. In 2019, no bats were on the list of protected species established by decree in Guinea, and bat hunting was not legally banned. Ecologically, bats are the object of a "pestilence discourse" (Knight, 2000). Insect bats roosting under house roofs are a source of noise pollution, and their

droppings and urine leave a foul smell and dark marks. Their nocturnal habits, which trouble people's sleep, give way to beliefs that they may be metamorphosed witches. People have developed techniques to force them out of roofs or seal separations. As for fruit bats, they damage crops and are kept at bay through hunting. Finally, bats' liminal anatomy, half-bird half-mouse, is the topic of a few origin myths, which present it as the outcome of a sociomoral fault which earned them the status of outcasts.

Bat samplers shared these negative feelings towards bats, although they were among the few to interact with them alive. They constantly described them as "unsightly" and "cunning," and bats were the target of dark humor while on the sampling table. Female vets did not participate in restraining the bats, an exclusion which naturalizes women's vulnerability to "wild" animals. This gendered division of labor may also explain the nature of bat jokes, which pivoted around their corporeal affordances for human consumption ("Keep this one for my soup after sampling!"). By extension, the male agents I knew fantasized being chased by the women living in sampling sites, whom they assimilated to bats. The metaphor, overlapping animals and women as absent referents, gave fodder for many puns involving spreading out one's "nets" in local bars to catch and "thump fat bats," etc. This misogynous banter naturalizes the social order and subordination of rural women to middle-class male vets.

These affects and their sensory lifeworld make the demand to "treat bats humanely" utterly incongruous, even if the limited care demanded remains quite anthropocentric. The discordance was most significantly brought out by a fatal incident at the inception of

the project. The field coordinator accidentally killed a bat while handling the animal. His distress at such a breach of protocol led him to offer his condolences to the team and call the country director to report the accident. But he and the sampling agents loudly laughed when later recollecting the incident. Likewise, affectionate gestures – such as petting a bat, or blowing to warm them – were derided, though they were sometimes facetiously performed with a look in my direction. One does not bewail a bat's death, one provokes it – and the look emphasized the intentional opposition of this attitude to a supposed Western empathy for bats. Bats' negative charisma, affordances as food, and assigned inferiority naturalize their ontology as the "bat who is harmed." Laughter also channeled anxiety with regards to the precariousness of the agents' employment, seemingly subordinated to caring skills.

Nonetheless, something else happens on the margins of the One Health laboratory. Care as practiced in the field laboratory differs significantly from care in the release of sampled animals. What happens after the bat is bagged again, away from the lab's lights, is not codified by the protocol. Some agents unceremoniously shook bags open so that the bats fell flat on the ground and crawled into the darkness. But they preferred not to release animals in the vicinity of the inhabited sites where they captured them, as they feared that their gesture could be interpreted as releasing injected viruses. As a consequence, Omar, a forest warden with a professional commitment to wildlife and, as he says, a "personal affection" for bats, embarked with the bagged animals and drove a few hundred meters down a bush road. Once away from prying eyes, Omar took the bats out of the bags, one by one. If they did not immediately take flight, if they looked a

little disorientated and weak, he carefully placed them on a tree trunk. If he laid them on the ground, they could be eaten by snakes. Sometimes, when he opened the bag, he found them dead, after losing too much blood or being bagged for too long. Once, Omar had just released an animal when an eagle dived and snatched them. This death touched him deeply because he "believ[ed] in fate." "Yes, we removed them from their environment, but if we had not trapped them today, another predator would have. You may take many precautions while sampling, and release the animal in a proper place, but they had to die that day."

Omar's gesture, while being accompanied by partially caring acts, reaffirms the equality of all species in the face of death. Through his employment as a forest guard, Omar encountered many accidentally ensnared animals, such as birds. But he did not act on his overwhelming pity to convince hunters to position their traps differently or release the unfortunate beings. His interventionism bowed to what he perceived as the godly law of "fate," or as other samplers would put it, "luck." His skilled labor is in line with the logic of "care as biosecurity" and the objective of sampling which is to convert "furry animals" into data (Birke, 2011). It does not aim to defy the perceived naturalness of the mortality of all lifeforms. Likewise, US researchers working with animals subjected to experimentation contrast life in nature as brutish and short, compared to the "good life" furthered through humane treatment in laboratories (Sharp, 2018, p. 42). Omar would have certainly agreed, although bats did not dwell on his sampling table like monkeys in research labs: Animal lives have more value in the sampling setting than in the wild. Thus, liberating the bat is not returning them to a state of freedom from science but

releasing them from a space of controlled protection. Nevertheless, Omar bowed to the common finitude of bats and men, brought upon by higher forces (whether God or eagle), which do not treat bats as valuable "disease sentinels." Through reflecting on the death of singular bats, he may have taken the perspective of sin-gular bats instead of subsuming them to their species and his discourse did not essentialize humans' superiority over bats. But their superiority is used to absolve samplers from their responsibility toward individual animals (see Weisberg, 2009).

Scholarship on human-animal relationships in biosecurity and lab contexts celebrates the moral ambivalence of interspecies encounters: If killing must happen, it entails deliberations and care. However, for samplers embedded in a rural economy where bats act as a nuisance and a resource, killing them is caring for humans. Even when, outside the purview of lab ethics, samplers may be affected by bats' frailty, they naturalize their mortality as killability. The figure of the "bat who may be harmed" is inherently ambiguous: Their vulnerability to the sampling lab warrants protection from the humans who subject them to their tools, if for a short time, while it also legitimizes the harm inflicted upon them by humans and nonhumans.

Postcolonial Perspectives

If we look past the apparent ease with which samplers "tinker" with bioethical protocols, certain situations do expose them to intractable conflicts between the logics of care and

those of biosecurity. Such tensions conjure up the haunting presence of power relations of a postcolonial nature. Indeed, in Guinea, they are not experienced as intersecting various forms of inequalities, but rather as enacting the legacy of colonialism and of a world order saturated by imperialist relations superimposed over racial hierarchies. This postcolonial condition reasserts relations and hierarchies between samplers and bats. Because of them, samplers are not only caught between the two bat figures, but also threatened by their entanglement in their work.

The double bind exposes them to even more excruciating dilemmas when it concerns animals who excite deeper moral feelings, such as lactating and pregnant bats with their pups, who are usually spared the dark humor and treated with compassion. When finding out that he had to sample a lactating bat, sampling agent Cissé, a vet working in the state administration, urged everyone to proceed quickly so as to limit the separation between mother and pup. But a dreadful shriek pierced the air. The bat had bitten Cissé, who shook his hand to have her let go. The mother soon took off, leaving her pup behind, and a dispute arose around responsibilities for the accident and the sad fate promised to the bat pup, accompanied by comments on motherly neglect. But Cissé, who went to disinfect his hand, plainly said: "My health comes first. I don't have any insurance if I get sick." Cissé likely spoke out because he worked with French vet students, whom he assumed would be evacuated for treatment if dangerously ill, as happened during the 2013–2016 Ebola outbreak. Although the Guinean agents had been vaccinated against rabies, and their work contract mentioned an insurance covering 80% of their health costs, they paid their health bills out of their own pockets.

They rarely openly considered the risk of an Ebola infection, but tiring nighttime labor increased their chances of making biosecurity mistakes, and the nine-day-long missions, in poor housing conditions, exposed them to snake bites and other parasitic diseases.

Instances when fieldworkers are bitten, i.e., "bioaccidents," are not rare. They trigger an anxious search for a tear in the glove, and a long wait for symptoms of contamination to potentially occur. Equally apprehended is the reaction of superiors, who must be notified and could very well terminate the contract of blunderers. In these encounters, the bat has sharp teeth before she has milk and a pup. The "bat who harms" obliterates the "bat who is harmed." This process is facilitated by the ambiguous figure of the "bat who is harmed," whose gendered vulnerability justifies protection as well as destruction. Other agents, agreeing with Cissé and hoping that I would act as a go-between, told me, "We are told to treat bats humanely, but us too! It is good to save other species, but when your own species is endangered …," hinting at a fraught competition between nonhuman and certain human animals for survival, skewed by the conservation priorities of former imperial powers. Consequently, agents opted not to give fruit juice to bats in spite of the bioethics protocol's recommendation, as they were not offered beverages themselves, despite the biosecurity protocol's recommendation against dehydration. They perceived that they – not their local, and even less their foreign managers, based in the US or France – bore the costs of the One Health dual concern for "bats who harm" and "bats who are harmed." Thereby, the potential for blurring boundaries between species through care, claimed by certain lab studies, yields to another power frontier, of a postcolonial (and gendered) nature.

Conclusion

The 2013–2016 Ebola outbreak prompted more research into the emerging zoonoses carried by bats and a call for their conservation, given their beneficial role for environmental and human health as they disperse seeds, pollinate, and control insect populations. One Health is a vision mediated by technologies such as the sampling laboratory, on which the possibility of humans encountering elusive bat worlds depends (Fairhead, 2018). This article aimed to expand the list of One Health technologies to protective equipment and the professional skills enabling safe investigations on bats.

This article conceptualizes wildlife sampling as a productive process which may transform perspectives despite power differentials. The bat, both "harmed" and "harming," enacts limited caring and biosecurity practices in the One Health laboratory. Frictions between the two perspectives are handled with expertise and the lab provides a space of exception in which to reflect on hierarchies between species. But the animal's negative charisma makes one perspective prevail – the "bat who is harmed" – especially as "the bat who harms" seems to threaten the lives of postcolonial workers.

Despite the claimed universality of threats to interspecies health – industrial farming, microbial resistances, etc. – the ability to recognize and respond to risk events is unequally distributed, all the more as risks themselves are differentially spread

(Craddock & Hinchliffe, 2015). This piece builds upon that critique to show that One Health itself legitimizes entanglements which do not make for concomitant multispecies thriving. One Health produces pathogenic entanglements at the same time as it places the responsibility to care for disease sentinels on certain human beings. These workers are not the universal-minded, caring, and careful humans postulated by One Health (Hinchliffe, 2015), but vulnerable bodies inscribed in settings where they have low access to healthcare and little or no social protection. At stake are the effects of the intersection between postcolonial inequalities and gendered and anthropocentric hierarchies for workers and the animals they subordinate.

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