

Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & maythe han

JVN [00:00:00] Welcome to Getting Curious—or bienvenidos a Getting Curious! I'm Jonathan Van Ness and every week I sit down for a gorgeous conversation with a brilliant expert to learn all about something that makes me curious. On today's episode, I'm joined by maythe han, where I ask her, why are we so obsessed with dogs? Especially my three. Because they're so perfect! Welcome to Getting Curious. I'm so excited for today's episode because it is about one of my very favorite topics in the world. [FRANK BARKS] Dogs! It's perfect. Literally dogs. I was about to say, and not Michelle Kwan. It is about dogs, honey. I have a household full of cats and dogs, five cats, three dogs. And if you know anything about me, you know that it's: I have just an unconditional love and obsession with kittens and puppies. I've learned so much about them from our episodes on cat and dog behavior and, like, animal cognition. But we've never fully explored the relationship between humans and dogs and Getting Curious. So today we're getting curious about that story and the science behind human canine kinship. And there is no one better in the world to tell us about that than Dr. maythe han, who is an anthrozoologist researching more than human kinship between dogs and their humans, with a focus on ethnographic storytelling. Her Ph.D. documented the experiences and implications of human canine kinship. She is also an artist, and her illustrations—which are so beautiful and, like, gripping, I just am such a fan—are an extension of her academic work. They explore non-textual ways in which our kinship can be understood and communicated. And can I also just say maythe, it's giving, like, modern David Hockney. I don't know if anyone's said that, but it's, like, it's it really chic? How are you? Welcome to Getting Curious. Thank you for coming on our show!

MAYTHE HAN [00:01:53] Thank you so much for having me. And oh, my God, what a—, what a praise! Thank you.

JVN [00:01:59] I have to catch our listeners up on what happened in our tech check right before we started. So maythe was telling us that she is in Edinburgh. And then it really triggered me for my time that I spent in Edinburgh because my sister got married in St. Andrew's and then I got to go to Edinburgh a little bit when I was, like, 17 and, like, fell in love with it when I was like 17. But then of course, J.K. fucking Rowling became a transphobe in, like, 2018, and now I can't even mind my own business and watch, like, Harry Potter in peace. And then we went on this whole thing about a lot of stuff. But, like, we just are obsessed with maythe, we're obsessed with Edinburgh. Also sidebar, I'm going to not do this any more because it's been two days in a row but I don't know what Erica and Zahra's problem are that they keep booking me people with, like, distractingly beautiful, like, eyebrows and facial structure.

MAYTHE HAN [00:02:42] Thank you!

JVN [00:02:42] Maybe you should do a tutorial on, like, your TikTok or Instagram about it because the brows are really browning. We're really loving it. But now we have to talk about dog and human kinship. So you use ethnographic storytelling in your work. So I thought we could start by, like, talking about personal stories about our dogs, but also "ethnographic," darling. I know I've done over 300 episodes of Getting Curious and I've learned a lot of words. And I know what ethnographic means. But for our listeners who maybe don't, including myself, what does ethnographic actually mean?

MAYTHE HAN [00:03:15] I think of it as more of an approach to writing than a genre of writing, it's something that puts an emphasis on storytelling, it's something that's more about our mundane, everyday life rather than grand theories that you know how the world works. So it's an approach that allows me to look at nitty gritty details of daily life that we share with our dogs and try to understand larger concepts such as kinship or race or queerness, things like that through those details.

JVN [00:03:49] Ah! Thank god, okay, great. Yay. We did it! Okay so the first story that I thought about having kinship with my first childhood dog, who was this yellow lab named Ginny. It was my first thought that I had but it's, like, kind of an embarrassing story. And I was, like, "I don't know." And it's also, like, as Michelle Buteau would say, like, low-lying comedic fruit because it is about a fart. But I will just say that—, I guess I will just share that story first. So I'm minding my own business. I'm seven years old, I'm pretty sure I was eating Cinnamon Toast Crunch at the kitchen table and it was, like, before school and I was eating my cereal and our yellow lab Ginny was sitting next to me and I didn't know that it was going to happen, but I emitted, which, like, of all time for me, it was, like, the highest pitch fart I've ever had. And the wooden chair that I was sitting on made it even, like, higher pitched. Like, just, like, the angles were all in such a way that it literally was, like, [SCREECHES]! Like, this really high pitch. And also was like the longest duration of power I think I've ever had my entire life, like, it took, like, 20 seconds. And Ginny, as the fart continued, as it progressed, first her head was, like, you know, parallel to the ground. But as the fart happened, she was going, like, like, her head kept turning because she was, like, "What is that noise and why is it so high pitched?"

So by the end of the fart, her head had turned basically like, you know, 90 degrees so that her eyes were, like, perpendicular to the ground and her ears were, like, totally, like, perked up because she was, like, "What the hell is that noise?" And then when the fart stopped, she immediately, like, righted her head so that it was, like, back parallel to the ground and her ears, like, went even more perked up and her eyes, like, got huge. And she looked at me and then she, like, shook her head and she was like, "How did you just turn into, like, a human dog whistle." Like, she did not—, and I didn't even understand cause I was, like, that was so, like, high pitched and long-lasting. Like, I mean, no one was there to witness it besides her. So, and I just felt like we both were, like, equally shocked. So that's my story of my first kinship with, like, me and my childhood dog. But I do have, like, other more recent ones, like, all my dogs right now are puppies. Like, my oldest dog is like two-and-a-half. And just when they recall, like, just when they come back, when I tell them to, especially Rose, who is, like, the most

beautiful, big-headed, like, adorable, like, pitbull, Pyrenees Mountain Dog, like German Shepherd, Australian Cattle Dog because I got there Embark DNA done mix. So she's, like, a big, like, you know, waist height, gorgeous bounding girl who's like nine months old and went from like nine pounds to like sixty-five pounds in, like, nine months, like, she is our girl. And then we have Georgie, who's only, like, four months old and he's so cute.

I have still a dog who is, like, still my baby, Pablo. But we had to rehome him because he did have, like, biting incidents. And it was, like, the worst thing of all time. And, like, he just was, like, five when we got him. But, you know, there was so much, like, moments of, like, because we worked so hard with him for so long and he just couldn't, he just could not *not* bite. And he would be, like, "Fuck, I didn't mean to like, I'm sorry," I like it. But like, yeah, it was just like we were like, not the right home. He was like, way too busy, way too much hustle and bustle. He needs, like, he lived, like, he didn't, like, go to, like, an air farm. He, like, actually lives in a farm who, like, was our dog trainer who still does, like, do our dog training. But it's, like, a farm with these, like two nice teenagers who work there. It's the same people with the same dogs at the same times at the same day. Like, he needs consistency. Poor little baby Pablo does. But they're all just babies. And so it's, like, they don't really, like, understand everything because they're babies, but they're my babies and I love them so much.

MAYTHE HAN [00:07:14] Of course.

JVN [00:07:15] Yeah.

MAYTHE HAN [00:07:16] As you should!

JVN [00:07:17] I need a gorgeous story of you and your puppies. Please!

MAYTHE HAN [00:07:20] Sure. So Frank is my current dog, and he's my first dog that's like my own dog rather than a family dog. Well, a few years ago, I actually went through a really, really horrible breakup. The person that I got Frank with left us quite abruptly and said that, you know, the dog was the main reason why he was leaving. Yeah, I know, right? [LAUGHS] The look on your face right now, I'm just, like, "Yeah." And when he moved out, when, like, all of his stuff was gone, Frank went around looking for him in the flat. He just like, sniffed in every corner, checked every room. But the way that he, like, looked at me and whimpered, like, he was just, like, "I don't understand what's going on." Like, "Where is this person?" He was so very clearly confused about this, like, sudden change. Yeah, it really kind of broke my heart doubly. We were both heartbroken. We were both grieving. And he never used to be a really snuggly dog, but something really changed, I think, when we grieved together. I was never out of his sight, and a part of his body was always touching a part of mine, like, whether it was his tail on my foot or his paw on my hand, his head on my lap. He just followed me everywhere. He was attuned to, like, the tiniest movement that I made. He learned how to open all the doors in the flat so he could be, you know, just watching me at all times. Like, he learned how to open the bathroom door so that he could watch me pee! But he was just always there. And

he was just so patient with me. And I've, I've always loved dogs, but I never felt this kind of love with anyone but Frank. And I knew then that we were, you know, we were in it for life.

JVN [00:09:08] Oh, my God, that's so cute. I did see this comedian the other day on Instagram, which I have to say I completely agree with. She was, like, "You know, dog people. I love dogs and I also love cats, like, because I'm not a monster and I love both. But I don't understand why dog people are so specific about, like, 'Oh, I love dogs,' and then, like, you bring up a cat and they're, like, 'Ah, I'm not a cat person.'" She was, like, saying that, like, dog people are the ones who are trying to, like, make all these definitions about it, which I was, like, "I do think that's true as someone who is, like, you know, is a cat woman." I do have five cats and I also love dogs but I didn't get dogs until later in life. But I will just say this: since I've went from 1 to 3 dogs in the last two years, I literally have people who I can tell judged me my entire twenties and thirties for having multiple cats. And now that I have dogs, they're, like, "Oh, thank God, like, I knew you were one of us." And I was, like, "Ah! Weirdo. I've always been one of you fucking, weirdo. Like, I love all of them." You're not a dog person who, like, secretly hates on cats, right? No.

MAYTHE HAN [00:10:06] My first, like, "adulthood" pet was actually a cat.

JVN [00:10:09] Ah, so you love them, too.

MAYTHE HAN [00:10:10] I love cats!

JVN [00:10:11] Yeah. Yeah, you have a great heart. I knew that you did. I knew that our production team vetted you correctly. I knew that, I love that so much. But speaking to our love of dogs and the stories that we've shared, maybe not the farting one as much, but what do you think these stories capture about human-canine kinship?

MAYTHE HAN [00:10:27] I think maybe that, like, not only is kinship made up of, like, fun and warm and joyful experiences, but it's also made of moments of sorrow and pain and grief. The, you know, the not so fun stuff. And I think it taught me so much about what it means to love somebody, how it's not just about the good times, but also—and maybe especially—about the bad times. So Frank and I weathered a lot of tough things together, and it certainly made our kinship stronger. And I think it taught me that love is inherently unconditional and that it endures when—even when—relationships might falter.

JVN [00:11:06] Yes. And I also think, like, and this is part of what I'm so excited for our episode about: for whatever reason, like, it doesn't matter, like, age, race, gender. Every type of human, like, so many humans have these, like, really special, unexplainably close bonds, like, with their canine kin, like, their family. And it's, like, I've lost a cat unexpectedly. I've had to rehome Pablo. And, like, my heart bleeds for Pablo. Like, when I see pictures of him still, like, it literally feels like someone ripped out my spleen, like, with no anesthesia. Like, I still cry about it. I just think it's beautiful that so many of us humans have this, like, love for our pets

and specifically canines. I just think that's so special. And if only we could, like, treat each other well. If we could treat each other sometimes as well as some people treat their dogs because some people are asshole to dogs and those people should [BLEEPED OUT]. Anyway, how do you approach dogs as an anthrozoologist? And when were you just, like, minding your business and then you're, like, "Anthrozoology. I think I'm going to do that."

MAYTHE HAN [00:12:13] It's all thanks to Frank, actually. Yeah, he's truly an inspiration to me. To us all.

JVN [00:12:22] We love Frank.

MAYTHE HAN [00:12:23] He's just lying down next to me on the floor.

JVN [00:12:28] Hi, Frank! He's so cute.

MAYTHE HAN [00:12:30] Yeah. He's such a good boy. I got him in Toronto where, where I'm from. And we moved here together to Edinburgh, and it was, it was so scary! Like, I didn't know anyone here. I'm just, like, "I guess I'm moving there to do a PhD. Like, I don't really know where my life is going, but at least I'm not doing it alone." Edinburgh is possibly one of the most dog friendly places that I've ever lived. I can bring him to pubs, bars, restaurants, basically anywhere that's not, like, the library or the grocery store, I can kind of bring him in. And no one really bats an eye. It's amazing.

JVN [00:13:10] I went to Edinburgh on tour last year and we brought Elton. They had, like, a dog bed in our hotel and, like, little Elton treats, like, Elton was feeling special in Edinburgh. It is, it's, like, such a great city for puppies. But so, so you moved there and then did you know that you were going to get into anthrozoology then, like, before you moved to Edinburgh?

MAYTHE HAN [00:13:33] No. I think the combination of, you know, having Frank and having Frank, like, in this city specifically led me to, "Oh my God, like, people relate to dogs in very different ways here." Because in Toronto or anywhere in Canada, it's very difficult to take your dog places because, like, by law, you are not allowed to have, you know, dogs coming in if you're serving food or drinks. So it's very much demarcated quite harshly where dog friendly spaces are and aren't. Whereas here it doesn't really seem that way. Like, dogs are seen as more of, like, "Well, of course we bring our dogs. Like they're, they're our kin. They're my family."

JVN [00:14:16] Ah! I love that. Are we all moving to Edinburgh? Is that what I'm learning from today? So, so, you get into, like, the track of, like, anthrozoologist when you get to Edinburgh. So, and now you are an anthrozoologist. So, like, what questions are you asking about human-canine kinship?

MAYTHE HAN [00:14:37] The question that I'm most invested in, is I think the broadest question I grapple with. It's, "How can we live a good life together?" Because I think ultimately kinship speaks to the ways in which we navigate the troubles of life, which there are many. And from this broad question, I kind of branch into more capillary questions like, "How do we get to know our dogs?" "And why does it matter that we sometimes treat our dogs like children?" Or, "What kinds of economies and ecologies are at play in more-than-human kinship with dogs?" How do dogs figure into experiences of—and responses to—loneliness? How can we form new perspectives and frameworks for understanding our entanglements better?

JVN [00:15:22] Okay, so, like, what research and archives do you draw on in your work as an anthrozoologist?

MAYTHE HAN [00:15:28] Because I'm trained in qualitative ethnographic research stories from our everyday life. My main archive for primary data. I basically collect dog stories from dog people, much like what you're doing with me! And some other sources, especially for secondary data, range from, you know, things like YouTube videos made by dog trainers, blog posts, Facebook comments, encyclopedia, podcasts. But ultimately, ethnographers are often not really concerned with big theories, but rather with mundane details that provide, I guess, surprising insights into our existence. It's all about finding the extraordinary in the ordinary.

JVN [00:16:12] I love that. So what's the scope of your work then? Like, scientifically, historically, and, like, culturally with, like, how you approach it now?

MAYTHE HAN [00:16:22] I do ground my research on different theories and thoughts surrounding domestication broadly, but I think I'm more interested in the cultural implications or the "so what" of it. So I try to understand why it matters that we have been mutually domesticated with dogs, why we should care about more-than-human kinship at all.

JVN [00:16:42] So how do we define that, like, more-than-human kinship?

MAYTHE HAN [00:16:46] I think it's a kind of persevering relatedness that goes beyond the species boundary. And I think it also expands this notion of kinship, which historically speaking, it's something that's been quite human-centric and also in the anthropological understanding of it. But there are also other terms that people use, like, "beyond human kinship" or "multispecies kinship." But I think I prefer "more-than-human kinship" because it acknowledges that where we're starting from is our humanity, which as much as we can try, we can't really shed. It also attends for, for more. "More than human," even if it's technically impossible. And I think it matters that we try.

JVN [00:17:29] My cat, Genevieve, Baby G, is actually a princess trapped in this cat's body. She is, like, so regal. I don't know where she was from. I don't know what happened, but I know that she is royalty and she is, like, not your basic cat. Like, she is very smart. She's very

extremely baby and she is very, extremely cuddle, loves people, but specifically not just anybody, like, me, my husband, Patty, like, loves us so much, like, she is a baby and she is also a princess baby. Beep beep. So I do know that she is more than human because she is perfect in every way. And in fact, I have a song for her and Matilda. And it goes a little something like this. [CLEARING THROAT, SINGING] "You are the love of my life. You're so perfect and cute. In every single way. You know that it's true. You're the love of..." It's like that, you know what I'm saying? And then it goes up and up until you can't sing out of range. So that's really interesting. I think it's hilarious that I thought I could get through, like, a science episode about dogs and cats and then not show you what, like, this is what I, like, devolve into when I go home like, like, like, I only call Larry my oldest cat, "Lawwwy." I lose it. I lose my marbles, and I'm not afraid of it. So I'm just embracing that. And that's, that's what's happening. So what makes this cross-species relationship so unique?

MAYTHE HAN [00:19:02] One of the most influential people in my research, his name is Jakob von Uexküll, who used this concept of "umwelt," to understand how our perspectives are specific to the species that we are because we're given the body that is specific to the species that we are. So this umwelt refers to the world as it is experienced by different organisms as members of their species, which is something that's particular to our bodies and mechanisms as dictated by the physiological limits. And I think what makes our kinship with dogs unique is that human umwelt and canine umwelt, which are quite different, happen to work really well together to bring us to where we are. And it works well enough to go beyond just the functional relationships that we see in, you know, other relationships that we have with, for example, farm animals and this contemporary pet culture, like, the one that you've just described to me as, you know, your baby, your your cats, you baby your dogs. That's only actually growing and changing in really cultivating ways.

JVN [00:20:10] Ah! Yeah. I started to get defensive for Genevieve, though, because I was, like, "She's actually Princess, baby. She's not, like, some basic baby. Like, she's Princess Baby. So, like, she's actually, like, quite refined." So which leads me to my next question. I think you should be pretty clear right now that I'm, like, borderline psychotic catwoman. So as I ask you this, I want to make sure that you, like, don't step the fuck out of line. Okay. You know what I'm saying?

MAYTHE HAN [00:20:37] Fair enough!

JVN [00:20:38] So, like, I don't want to, like, harness your academia, but, like, don't say some shit that's going to end our interview early, okay? Which, it couldn't happen, because I love you so much, but I just want to make sure that we're on the same page going at this question. How does it compare to, say, like, human-feline kinship? And before we get it too binary, there are obviously cats that are much more dog-like in personality, such as all of my cats. Who are, like, way more outgoing, especially Laawyy. Bug The First, my screensaver, he, like, slept under covers. It's, like, he literally slept under covers, like, didn't like to be over the covers, like, needed to be, like, could not physically be close enough to you, like, loved—but not just

anybody more me but so, yeah. So but, like, you also think that, like, cats also have, like, gorgeous umwelt, who love humans and, like, humans love their cats and it's, like, not even a competition. So... it's not even a competition.

MAYTHE HAN [00:21:30] That's exactly it! Yeah, I don't think any kind of kinship can really be compared. Even within the same species. Right. So, for instance, even among dog people, we see all the time that they have different relationships with their dogs. But, of course, to bring in umwelt again, cats and dogs perceive and experience the world quite differently in many ways.

JVN [00:21:52] Oh, like what! Like what!

MAYTHE HAN [00:21:42] I mean, I think about, you know how cats have, like, vertical pupils?

JVN [00:21:59] Yes.

MAYTHE HAN [00:21:59] And dogs don't.

JVN [00:22:01] Yes.

MAYTHE HAN [00:22:01] So that's an evolutionary trait that, you know, big, big cats also have. So like jaguars and pumas and whatnot. And it's because they can see, you know, vertically quite high. Whereas goats, for example, have horizontal pupils so that they can see more broadly because that's the kind of environment that they live in. So how we perceive the world is, like, visually quite different. [LAUGHING] You're just looking at me, like, "What?!"

JVN [00:22:30] Oh yeah! So what else, so their pupils? And then because cats can like, jump higher?

MAYTHE HAN [00:22:37] Yeah, they live in height. Right.

JVN [00:22:39] Okay. When I'm holding one of my cats or dogs really close to my face, like, not kissing its nose 15,000 times, I sometimes wonder, like, when I see the reflection of my face looking all weird in their pupil. I'm, like, "Is that how I look to them?" Like, is it, like, like, is that like what they're seeing? Like that? You know who you can kind of see a reflection in, like, their eyes when you're like, like, kissing their little noses. Like I do, I do like. Is that like, do they just think I have, like, this weird ass face that, like, just always kisses their nose? But that's like, not really a question. But do you ever wonder that?

MAYTHE HAN [00:23:13] I do wonder that. I do wonder how Frank sees me. I do wonder how other dogs that I, you know, come across perceive me.

JVN [00:23:20] And do they only like us for food, or do you think they love us anyway?

MAYTHE HAN [00:23:24] I think they love us anyway. I know they love us anyway.

JVN [00:23:28] But mostly for food.

MAYTHE HAN [00:23:30] It doesn't hurt, right?

JVN [00:23:31] Yeah. Because we, like, feed them and they love their food.

MAYTHE HAN [00:23:33] It never hurts.

JVN [00:23:34] So do you think it's true that, like, a person can be a dog's best friend? Like I know that they're ours and that we, like, love them more than anything of all time, but do you think that they really think that we're their best friendly? Do they love us a lot?

MAYTHE HAN [00:23:46] So when we think about, you know, human, human kinship, when we love somebody, that doesn't mean that we never act out against. It doesn't mean that, you know, we never make mistakes with them. Right. And I think what shows love and friendship and real companionship is how we get through it and how we choose to understand each other when, when those mistakes happen.

JVN [00:24:08] Yes, totally. So what do we, like, mischaracterize when we anthropomorphize dogs? Anth-ro-po-morphize size dogs.

MAYTHE HAN [00:24:19] Anthropomorphize.

JVN [00:24:20] Yes! Thank you.

MAYTHE HAN [00:24:22] Yeah. Basically I think anthropomorphizing dogs ignores that they are fundamentally different animals from us. Their bodies and senses work quite differently and there's no way—as of now—for humans to experience the world that dogs do.

JVN [00:24:38] Ah! I hate that.

MAYTHE HAN [00:24:40] I know!

JVN [00:24:40] Yeah. I want to know what it sounds like and stuff! And what does Princess Beep Beep think? Dogs, cats, I wanna know both, I'm so curious, but anyway.

MAYTHE HAN [00:24:47] Yeah, we just have no idea what they're really thinking or what they're really feeling.

JVN [00:24:51] Did you hear the thing about the prairie dogs, though, about how, like, they speak their language so intensely that they can be, like, "That's, like, a six-foot-tall guy and that's, like, a five-foot, like lady who's wearing, like, a pink shirt." They literally, like, tell each other. Ah!

MAYTHE HAN [00:25:05] Mhm. But can we know that for sure?

JVN [00:25:07] I'm really tangenting my life today. So but when we do anthropomorphize dogs, we do miss that, like, they are not actually human babies, no matter how much we know to the contrary, in fact that they *are* human babies, but really they aren't.

MAYTHE HAN [00:25:24] Yeah, and I suppose, like, in all fairness, we can't ever really know what other people are thinking or feeling either. But when we anthropomorphize non-human animals, I think we are choosing to see them really quite conveniently through our human lenses, to think of them as just like us. And I think we really miss a lot of opportunities there to understand dogs as who they are rather than what might make easier sense to us.

JVN [00:25:53] Yes, because Rosie Posey, she wants to go out and run. She has a lot of energy to burn. So it's, like, not about her being like a calm little girl, like, she's got a lot of energy. So I got to make sure she runs. Like that?

MAYTHE HAN [00:26:04] Yeah.

JVN [00:26:05] So have humans and dogs always been snuggled up on a couch together? Like, if not, when do we think that we started to become best friends with dogs, historically?

MAYTHE HAN [00:26:17] So, I mean, even for my personal life and I'm 29, so it's not that, you know, historically long ago, I can tell you that that wasn't the case and we weren't always snuggled up on the couch together. I grew up in Seoul and my grandparents had a bunch of dogs who were strictly outdoor working dogs. And they guarded the grounds, they chased away pests, and they got fed to do their jobs. And this is not to say that, like, my grandparents didn't love their dogs or care for their dogs, but rather that the relationship that people have with their dogs is temporally, spatially, historically and culturally contingent. The story of domestication generally or pet keeping is, I think, multiple stories, all of which are kind of uncertain because how can we ever know for sure? No one is alive to tell us how it started, but it's theorized to have started maybe somewhere between 12 and 14,000 years ago. But what we do know is that it's not, like, a neat and linear progression that took dogs from wild wolves to tame dogs as we know today.

JVN [00:27:23] Why do we think 12 to 14000 years ago? Like, what evidence do we have? Like, why did they think that? They see, like, an old foundation and there's, like, dog bones real close to human bones or something, and they're, like, "Oh, they must've been best

friends” or, like, “They must have been important enough that they were like, you know, either buried closely or like, stuff like that.”

MAYTHE HAN [00:27:41] Yeah. And, you know, there have also been records showing that dogs were used as food. So we would see, you know, dog bones or dog DNA of some sort in, like, human fecal matter.

JVN [00:27:51] Oh, fuck.

MAYTHE HAN [00:27:52] Yeah.

JVN [00:27:53] Ah! Yes! I would have not. I would not Elton Belton or Georgie Porgie or Rosie. Yeah. So but it's not linear and it was, like, different based on how that relationship evolved? Or like, it was different based on where you were, like, over the last 14,000 years.

MAYTHE HAN [00:28:07] Yeah. And that's, you know, across the globe, various different environments and cultures. Pet keeping, as we know today, at least in this part of the world where I do my research, probably started in the 19th century Victorian England, when pedigree dog breeding increasingly became this, like, middle class hobby in Britain. It was based off of, like, horse and cattle breeding and they kind of adapted that practice to the dog, which was more affordable basically for the middle class to participate in.

JVN [00:28:39] So that's, like, 1800s? We've also learned on the podcast about, like, Francis Galton and, like, his whole, like, eugenics and, like, he was, like, Darwin's first cousin and that was, like, around the 1790s that he started, like, doing a lot of that pseudoscience. And I just think it's interesting the ways that we also can sometimes kind of, like, like, telegraph, that sort of thing, like on to humans in terms of like, you know, “If a woman doesn't do this” or, “If a man doesn't do that,” like, just, it's interesting that a lot of those theories start around this time, like, the 1790s, 1800s. So prior to this, do you think that the human-canine interactions were, more like, farm, like, maybe chase away the rats, like, but maybe there were some offshoots of like, you know, dog and human best friend where, like, “Oh my God. Like, that one was really sweet.”

MAYTHE HAN [00:29:28] Yeah. Dog's probably served, you know, multiple functions. They could have helped with hunting, farming, like protection of the grounds. And yeah, there are also records that show that they were food. But again, the stories of dogs and humans are not linear. So for example, while there are a lot of pet dogs today who get to, like, luxuriate in the warmth of a home, there are still working dogs that live outdoors who are perfectly well adapted to that life. And there are also places that still eat dogs. So how we relate to dogs is not only about our species, but also our diverse contemporary cultures.

JVN [00:30:04] Totes. Jackson Galaxy, who we love, cat expert. He briefly explained to us that humans co-evolved with dogs. Like, can you break down, like, more of that idea of co-evolution for us and how he went from 14,000 years ago to now.

MAYTHE HAN [00:30:19] Yeah. So co-evolution refers to this process of, like, reciprocal changes that happen as a result of interactions between different species. So, for example, certain plants and insects might co-evolve to make pollination more efficient and effective. I think dogs and humans are a really great and interesting example of co-evolution, because it's, it's clear in dog breeding practices, the kind of evolutionary pressures that humans exert on dogs. It's almost a complete control if we're talking about, like, pedigree dogs who are, like, registered with Kennel Club and their breeding is very, very tightly controlled. And humans breed pedigree dogs to look a certain way. And they would even cull puppies that don't conform to the breed standards. But recently I actually started thinking about what kind of selection pressures dogs might exert on humans and got really interested in how people use their—or even somebody else's—dogs on dating apps! I do it, too! Like, Frank features on my dating profile and being a dog person is a selection pressure here in a way.

JVN [00:31:26] Yeah! If you're allergic to dogs and cats, like, it's a nonstarter for me. Like, it would just never work.

MAYTHE HAN [00:31:30] That's exactly it. Yeah. Like being a “dog person” is something that dog people prioritize quite highly in looking for a mate. So yeah, that's kind of a future research avenue that I'm really interested in.

JVN [00:31:44] I love that. So it's, like, Georgian England is the time historically, though, where, like, pet keeping becomes more, like, common across, like, class and, like, just socially? Like, is that the first, like, society where, like, in the, like, stuff that you've researched and, like, it starts to become more of the norm as we know it, like, in Western cultures.

MAYTHE HAN [00:32:13] Mhm. Victorian England.

JVN [00:32:15] Victorian England. Have we seen, like, an evolution, like, since then or, like, a continued more, like, contemporary evolution?

MAYTHE HAN [00:32:22] I would probably not call it “evolution” because it has a certain, like, a biological tone to it where it happens, like, on a genetic level and, maybe we could call it—

JVN [00:32:36] Cultural.

MAYTHE HAN [00:32:36] A cultural change or new phenomena that arise. Yeah, and I think thinking about dogs as children is actually a pretty new cultural phenomenon that we see with our pet dogs.

JVN [00:32:49] Yeah, because it's, like, I just think I don't really ever want to have human children. And so to me, like, this feels. And also, like, for people who do have kids, like, I don't like when they'll be, like, "Yeah, I know you, like, think you love your animals. But, like, when you have, like, you know, your human baby. It's, like, just this other totally, like, other thing." And I'm like, "Mmmm. I don't know, like, I've cleaned up a lot of shit and barf, like, from all sorts of carpets. And when you have five cats and three dogs, like, granted, they don't, like, speak in a language that's, like, so it's, like, maybe, like, not that much emotional labor, but as far as like, the physical labor of, like, "I got to go home and let their fucking asses out. I gotta, like," it's a lot of work! Like, I feel like my husband and I spend, like, hours, hours, like.... you know? Like. So I feel like it is—, again, not that it's a competition, but it's, like, it ain't nothing, you know? And I do love the fuck out of them. I could walk in front of a bus for them, you know?

MAYTHE HAN [00:33:43] I would, too.

JVN [00:33:45] Yeah. So I do think that, like, one thing I'm picking up on is that, like, as our relationship has progressed, like, our human-canine, like, kinship, it does seem like it's different, you know, globally, like, cultures. But: why? Like, why is that evolution so different and so widespread?

MAYTHE HAN [00:34:05] You know, this evolution didn't all happen at the same time and not in the same way across different cultures because organisms adapt to their environments. And across the globe there are so many different kinds of environments, like, different climates, different terrains, different ecosystems. So it makes sense that humans and dogs also co-evolved differently in different places through the ages. Brian Hare and Vanessa Woods, who I think are married, but they work together and they study dog cognition. They put out this theory that maybe it wasn't really, like, the "survival of the fittest," which is a phrase that gets thrown a lot, a lot in evolutionary biology. But rather the "survival of the friendliest" on the dogs' part. So the friendly, you know, less cautious, more outgoing wolves, effectively, kind of inched their ways into human lives, maybe for food, for warmth, for shelter. And then the rest is history.

JVN [00:35:09] So are all of our contemporary dogs, like, literally evolved from wolves?

MAYTHE HAN [00:35:15] [FRANK GROWLING] As far as we know, yes.

JVN [00:35:20] That's cuckoo! Wow, that's really interest. So basically, like, if we were to categorize, like, the different types of dogs, like, it feels like there's, like you're more like outdoor working dogs, farm dogs, then there's, like, our, like, kind of home dogs and then there's, like, food dogs still, like, dogs that we eat or whatever, like, in certain places. Has there been any place where you were, like, "Oh, that's different!" Or, like, "Interest! That's cool." Like they do, like, Christmas dinner, like at a table for dogs, like, like, what's, like, the most interesting ass shit you've found, researching this.

MAYTHE HAN [00:36:55] Something that I'm really fascinated by is actually this, like, emerging pet culture in Korea. I'm Korean by, you know, my ethnicity. And whenever I go back, I would see, like, tiny, fluffy white dogs that are, like, groomed to perfection being pushed around in a pram! It's just, like, this is—, it's something that I, I can't really wrap my head around, mainly because I have a border collie who is a working dog. One of my friends, one of my good friends, who also has a tiny lap dog named Snoopy. He is precious and he's very catlike. But yeah, my friend Kitty says, you know, the grip that these crusty white dogs have on Asian women! And I think about that a lot. That, like, there's these weird typologies of what kinds of people seem to, like, like what kinds of dogs.

JVN [00:36:55] Yeah. I struggle with, like, and I do love all dogs, but I will say that I struggle with, like, a secret that's so secret cause I talk about it a lot, but, like, I do kind of secretly judge people who have, like, really expensive, like, designer dogs and cats just because, like, I've come into all of mine, like, not that I'm, like, better. I just, I prefer the narrative of like a rescue pup. I just prefer the narrative. And I also like, think that all dogs are, like, so fucking cute. But what does that mean? Is that just me being like, a judgmental bitch or, like, is that something that we study? Like, why people may want one type over another or, like, you know, rescue or puppy-based mill, like, whatever. Like, what do we think about that?

MAYTHE HAN [00:37:39] So I used to be very much like, you know, "I would rather always adopt than, than shop." But I actually, quite recently, when I finished my research, changed my mind on it, because I've seen a lot of people who, like you said, it's a narrative of rescue. This, "I am adopting this dog who is in need, but that's not always the right thing to do for your circumstance." So rescue dogs often get rehomed again and again and again because people bring in these dogs thinking, "Oh, like, I will be the rescuer to this dog who is in need," without really realizing, "What kind of need might this dog have?"

JVN [00:38:24] Yes.

MAYTHE HAN [00:38:25] And like you said, with Pablo, living on a farm with a routine schedule is a better life for him than living in the hustle and bustle of city life.

JVN [00:38:34] Yes, because I definitely imparted, like, my needs, like, I was, like, like, Mark and I were, like, "We want a dog." And then it was, like, at the height of COVID and, like, all the dogs are like, in, like, fosters, like, in homes, so, like, the shelter, there was only, like, four dogs and like, there is a bonded pair of, like, 13-year-old sisters. And then the other one just, like, clearly didn't love us, but Pablo was, like, love! But, like, he really, like once we lived with him for two years, like, it was, like, a struggle. Like, it was hard. I mean, it was, like, three weeks of, like, pink cloud, but then after about three weeks, like, if there was any change in schedule or, like, an extra person or, like, we tried to take him to New York because we, like, left Texas and went to New York for a few weeks, and that, like, Manhattan, almost sent him off, like, he was just, like, literally, like, shaking all the time. So scared by the noises, too many

dogs and also, like, only having the one eye, like, like, his no eye side had to be closest to, like, the wall, like, that you were walking, the buildings that you were walking. And if someone cut him on that side, like, if someone tried to, like, pass us to the right, he would literally, like, go into, like, fight or flight protection mode, like, so, like, when people would approach me for a selfie. And he's, like, you've just, I'm actually getting chills talking about it.

And to this day with my other dogs, if someone approaches one of my other dogs, like, I still have that part of me that's, like, "[GASP] Don't touch!" Like, "You can't! He's not!" But then, like, all these three dogs, like we've had them since they were teeny tiny puppies and they just aren't scared and people like that. But, like, Pablo had this whole history that, like, we didn't really understand and it just, it really was, like, such—, I feel like I learned so much, but I kind of felt similarly about the idea of, like, rehoming. Like, I learned a lot from that about Pablo. Cause I remember, we had this trainer. She was, like, "I know you probably got this dogs like, go on brunch and, like, take it out to brunch, and, like, take your dog to New York and, like, you know, have photo shoots." And I was, like, "I actually didn't, like, I just really wanted to adopt a dog. And I'm willing to do anything to be the home for him." But now it's, like, I kind of get it because it is, like, a two-way street. Like, you have to be the right fit for that dog. And it takes a minute. With what I was saying about, like, rehoming, like, thoughts, feelings, as someone who studies this all the time, like, like, not that it's, like, right and wrong, black and white, but, like, what do you think?

MAYTHE HAN [00:40:48] I don't think it's wrong to rehome dogs. I think it's an incredibly difficult thing to do because even if your kinship with a dog that's, like, not meshing well with your life. Even if it's not going great, you develop feelings for them. You care for them. You want it to go well. But, I don't know, even with, like, human relationships, I'm realizing you can't, you can't keep dragging something out in the hopes that things will change. You have to love them for who they are and be able to provide them with what they need now in front of you.

JVN [00:41:23] I still pay for all of his vet stuff, and I pay for his food, and I, like, I basically just pay his rent and he really loves his, like, new fraaamily and—, but I still am, like, sad—, clearly not processed. So we briefly discussed with Eliot Schrefer that some of us can actually enjoy being compared to an animal for others. That comparison can be a weapon. How do we see this reality play out with human-canine kinship?

MAYTHE HAN [00:41:47] So I have this memory of what I was, like, a young teenager and I was growing up in suburban Toronto. And it was Labor Day. A white Canadian politician went on TV to criticize Asian convenience store owners for keeping their businesses open on Labor Day by saying, "Asians work like dogs," on national television. And it's literally dehumanizing, right? Like, it turns Asian people into a non-human animal. And I think that was actually my first experience of being compared to an animal in a, like, a really insulting way and meant to be in an insulting way.

JVN [00:42:25] "Fuck that guy."

MAYTHE HAN [00:42:27] Indeed.

JVN [00:42:29] Yeah. The worst. So what does that dynamic reveal about how humans see other humans?

MAYTHE HAN [00:42:37] I think it shows, like, the way of the world, as envisioned by a lot of people in power. I guess we could call it, like, the "normative" view of the world where non-human animals are seen as somehow lesser than humans, and some humans are seen as lesser than other humans. It's, like, a supremacist and hierarchical way of looking at the world and the beings that inhabit it.

JVN [00:43:03] And also, like, reduces all of those beings to, like, either their ability to work or reproduce. And if you fall outside of those, then you must be, like, fundamentally or, like, you know, genetically, at your core, like, wrong. And even needs to be, like, done away with or sorted out or something. It's, like, really super, like, inhumane. It really reveals, like, this, like, complete lack of empathy or compassion.

MAYTHE HAN [00:43:35] Mm hmm. Yeah. It has very little tolerance for any kind of difference.

JVN [00:43:39] So during the 2020 uprisings for racial justice, you observed people weaponizing their love for dogs against protesters, specifically protesters of color. Can you share more of your insights here?

MAYTHE HAN [00:43:52] So there were some incidents in the UK with, like, riot police animals and protesters during the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020. And this, like, wasn't the first time there was an altercation between police animals and protesters, of course. But particularly during lockdown, when I was doing some digital ethnographic fieldwork, I came across a lot of people on social media platforms who used this violence against police animals as justification to then dehumanize the protesters. And really interestingly, by calling them "animals," it took a while for me to wrap my head around this because they were people who claimed to love animals and were fighting to protect these police animals. But then to flip it around and say, "Oh, like, you are the real animals." So I was, like, "Well, what's that about?"

JVN [00:44:44] Wait, I need to understand that. So in that protest of 2020, tell me one more time.

MAYTHE HAN [00:44:48] There were some incidents, I believe, of, like, a horse, like, a police horse that got spooked and, like, the policewoman, like, fell off the horse and the protesters were seen as, like, the, the people who, like, instigated the horse to be spooked. Yeah.

JVN [00:44:05] And so then they were, like, "You hurt an animal, you're the real animals." And then you were, like, "Actually, you're, like, brutalizing people who are, like, standing up for, like, human life." So how do breeds come into play with human dog kinship? I think one of the things that I learned in our previous episodes, there could have been an article that I read since our previous episodes that we've done and our cognition and, like, dog stuff. But it's, like, that whole idea that, like, you know, "Labs are good at this and poodles are really smart and these dogs are good at that." Like, that was, like, debunked by this piece because it was saying that, like, every dog breed has, like, an entire spectrum within it. So, like, yeah, some collies might be really good at herding sheep, but some probably fucking suck at it and some are probably super energetic and some probably, like, aren't having that much energy. And, like, some poodles are probably really clever and other poodles, like, don't know how they got where the door is! Every breed has a spectrum. And, like, and you can't really say that, like, you know, this breed is more aggressive. They are, like, this breed is more docile. Like there's a spectrum within every single breed. That's true, right?

MAYTHE HAN [00:46:04] Yeah, totally. I know the article that you're talking about, the recent study that showed that about, like, 9% of canine behavior can be attributed to the breed genetics on average. But breed is, like, such a pervasive concept that people used to look at and understand dogs, right? And as an anthropologist and not a geneticist, it's really interesting to me that people really latch on to this idea of breed as quite, like, a deterministic factor in how they learn about dogs. Like, I'm not above this, right, like, I'm a border collie person.

JVN [00:46:39] Ever since I got the embark DNA, I know them all by heart. Like, I literally know what their results are by heart. But then when I started to get more curious about it was like when I read that article and then reading their Embark, it's like all that stuff that they've typed out about, you know, "Collies are known for this and they're, like..." It's true, but it's only, like, 9% true in determining what their behavior will be. So it's, like, don't attach too much to, like, it doesn't really totally matter unless it's like, you know, you have a teeny house. So you want, you know, like, size, range, like, those sorts of things. But like, as far as, like, behavior, it's not really like an accurate predictor.

MAYTHE HAN [00:47:13] Yeah, exactly. And like, even if they do happen to exhibit certain behavior, we don't really know if it's because of their breed or something else. It's, like, you know, the classic, like nature versus nurture that plays into this as well. And, you know, like, a lot of people say things, like, "I'm like, I'm a spaniel person, I'm a golden retriever person." And I think what's interesting to me here is, like, dog breeds become somebody's identity like that. It's not just about, like, preferences either, because dog people would also describe themselves in terms of dog breeds according to, like, their personality. I think there's, like, a Parks and Recreation episode where they talk about, like, what kind of dog everyone is, like, working in that government office. And, like, Leslie turns out to be a border collie because she's a workaholic and yeah, like, things like that. So people do that all the time. And I think it's a fun thing to do, but almost, like, it's really similar to me in my head somehow as, like,

astrology. Like, "Oh, like, I'm like this because I'm a Pisces. It's because my, you know, rising is in whatever."

JVN [00:48:22] Yes, a hundred percent. So it is also just, like, interesting how much we talk about that. I think one thing we already kind of touched on was, like, the "Adopt Don't Shop" thing and our shifting feelings on that. But how can seeing someone's dog affect how we see them? I know for me, like, people, like, I tend to judge them in my head even when I try not to. We see that a lot with, like, small dogs, like, if a grown man has a small dog, like, he's seen as, like, more effeminate. How else does seeing someone's dog affect how we see them?

MAYTHE HAN [00:48:49] I think it does present us with a certain kind of bias. Like you said, you know, a grown man with a small dog or, you know, there's racial elements to that as well. So, like, Black people, Black men specifically with, like, pit bulls are seen as more aggressive. People assume that they're involved in things like dogfighting. But, you know, for example, there are also people who flaunt, like, status dogs or use dogs to, like, intimidate others. And of course, like, breed plays a huge role in this. But I think what really affects how we see people, or at least for me, is how they actually interact with their dogs, how they treat their dogs. It doesn't necessarily have to come with, like, overtly positive or negative connotations, but I think it does tell us a lot about what kind of person they are. I think a lot about how some people would, like, absolutely refuse to give their dogs, like, any human food or, like, let them on any furniture. And there's nothing, like, inherently wrong with it. But I personally think that dogs, like, don't live long enough to enjoy everything that they deserve. So I tend to spoil them a little bit. I indulge my dog. So Frank gets his, like, pizza crust and little bits of hot dog, steak or, like, whatever that I'm having, as long as it's not going to be, like, fatally toxic. And he gets to be on my bed, when I play the piano for him, my audience of one. And I think that says a lot about what kind of person I am, too. You know what I mean?

JVN [00:50:16] Oh, my God, that's really cute. Yeah, I am much more of, like, a dog bed person or, like, a "get in my bed" person. But then our dog trainer says it. Sometimes it makes them a little, like, elevation is, like, a thing. So then we, like, try to have boundaries, but, like, I just kind of want to cuddle with them all the time. But it's, like, whatever. You've also written about the COVID 19 pandemic and what it revealed about human dog kinship. One of the papers you wrote involved loneliness. Can you tell us what is the story around proximal loneliness?

MAYTHE HAN [00:50:43] So it's my own theory, if I may.

JVN [00:50:48] Yes.

MAYTHE HAN [00:50:49] It refers to a kind of loneliness that stems from this lack of, like, close or proximal presence or contact. So it's different from other kinds of loneliness that have been theorized, for example, like, personal loneliness, social loneliness, or cultural loneliness that stems from lack of belonging or lack of, like, what you have in, like, family or friends or

community. But I think what's different about proximal loneliness is that you can still feel proximately lonely, even when you do have a good sense of belonging with family and friends and community. Because it is really about, like, sensorial needs of being close to another living thing. And maybe it's, like, perhaps even more cruel that, like, you can have the family, friends and community, but you can't really engage them in, like, sensorial significant ways. So during the pandemic, like, here in Scotland, with the social distancing measures, I've had a lot of experiences where Frank and I like ran into friends on the street going for a walk, but we had to kind of like stand two meters apart and basically, like scream at each other, like, you know, in the Scottish wind, like, we can't really hear anything. It's pouring and we couldn't hug, we couldn't hang out. We couldn't like, do anything, really. And I couldn't, you know, see my mom, who lives in Seoul for years because of travel restrictions. So we once had a dinner together over FaceTime, and that was like a moment that I just felt so lonely. It was, like, I saw all of this food on the family dinner table and I could see it. I could hear them, like, eating and chatting. But I realized, like, I couldn't smell the food. I couldn't taste the food. Like there were missing senses. And yeah, that just made me feel so lonely.

JVN [00:52:37] Is that loneliness, do you feel, or have you observed, like, unique to humans or do dogs experience that, too?

MAYTHE HAN [00:52:43] I think dogs do experience it. Even if it manifests maybe in different ways or maybe, like, we can't perfectly understand loneliness as it works in dogs. But, you know, like, separation anxiety, I think, is one of the symptoms of their loneliness. Like, a lot of trainers and behaviorists, for example, warned people about lockdown puppies who will, like, develop severe separation anxiety issues because people would be working from home for months, if not years. But then all of a sudden they were going back to the office, going back to work, and the dogs have known nothing else in their life. Right. So they, they cry. They, they shred things in the home. I've seen a dog literally tear a hole in the wall, like, just...

JVN [00:53:30] Georgie is our newest baby and he has, like, the most naturally occurring separation anxiety of any dog we've had. He will, like, thump his body and take either side of the kennel, like, if you like, put him in the kennel to, like, eat his breakfast or whatever. Like, he, he's fine if he's around you, but if he's not, he just shits his pants. But we're having to work through that because we don't want him to be like that, obviously. So, like, he has gotten a lot better, but I've just never had a dog who was like, born with it. But he was, like, like, usually, like, Elton and Rose are, like, "Thank God, like, an hour away from these fuckers." And they, like, love their kennel. They're like, "Yay, I get, like, a little bit of downtime." They like, they like, they run in there and, "Give me my little bone in 30 minutes, like, I need a nap." George is, like, "Please don't. I don't ever want to go in there," like, he hates it, but he's, like, yeah, you know, but we're working on it. He's but he is like our naturally most needy baby. So, you note that care is, quote, "not just nice things we do, but also practices that are vital to the relationships that make up the very fibers of our lives." How is this care essential to human-dog kinship?

MAYTHE HAN [00:54:34] Well, some of the things that we do, like, in order to care for our dogs aren't really pretty, right. Like, the everyday act of picking up their poop, or like, clipping. So for Frank, it's like clipping their nails. And you know how some dogs just, like, yelp, even before the nail clipper touches their nails? That's Frank. He's just, like, "Eep!" I'm, like, "Stop! You're breaking my heart." But yeah, like, the, the everyday that accumulate to make up our kinship, like, isn't always unicorns and rainbows. But I don't know, like, what do they say again? What's the phrase? Like, "There's no rainbows without the rain," like, this, like, seemingly unpleasant things can make for really necessary conditions for wonderful things to flourish. And I think a lot of these, like, gross aspects of our kinship lead to a thriving kinship.

JVN [00:55:27] And so it's, like, almost taking that and extending that to humans, to other humans and to ourselves that, like, my therapist always says, like, relationships often grow through disruption or, like, relationships grow through disruption. It's not always rainbows and butterflies. Sometimes things do get messy and they can be disruptive, but it's like if you can stay compassionate, resilient in yourself, you know, calm enough to know that that is part of the beauty that makes up, you know, the cornucopia of emotions that inform our kinship with each other.

MAYTHE HAN [00:56:01] Absolutely. And I think once we realize that we are caught in this, like, inextricable circuit of care and response, that isn't going to be perfect all the time, we realize that we are bound to each other to try anyway again and again and again.

JVN [00:56:18] So I think it's fascinating that you approach your work from this, obviously, like, academic, very informed, like, research-oriented space, but you're also a visual artist. Like, your artwork is incredible. It is beautiful.

MAYTHE HAN [00:56:32] Thank you!

JVN [00:56:33] It is giving David Hockney on 2023 is just amazing. It's just it's so amazing. I was like, really need to commission a piece with all of my babies and, like, some cool, like, I really what? When? If you're taking commissions, I'm just putting it out there.

MAYTHE HAN [00:56:47] I am!

JVN [00:56:48] So, like, please, like, sign me up. I need it. And like, the bigger, the better. How are you exploring human-canine kinship through your visual art? Because I feel like I noticed a lot of Frank cameos in your work.

MAYTHE HAN [00:56:58] Indeed! I first started using visual art as a means to explore this kinship because of a huge writer's block that I had, I just, like, couldn't write. And I just, like, felt so frustrated in my writing. The words weren't coming out right. My thinking felt really dull. My theoretical framing felt really stodgy, so I don't really know what compelled me, but I just, like, started drawing Frank in what I call my "domestic fantasy settings." Like, one of my

favorite things to do is like, go on Pinterest and look at beautiful homes that I would love to live in and just, like, draw something similarly. And one of my thematic interests in my research is the role of imagination in more-than-human kinship. And what I'm doing through these imaginary illustrations is using this, like, speculative thinking not just as an analytical tool to understand dogs academically, but as a practice. So I draw my like, fantasy living room filled with houseplants, art, like, my favorite kind of furniture, and Frank and his stuff feature very prominently even in these imaginary contexts. And I think art has basically helped me practice what I preach as an ethnographer.

JVN [00:58:13] Ah! That's really cool. It's, like, really heady and it's really cool. So is it almost, like, like, as compared to your anthrozoology work, is it almost, like, manifesting. Is it giving, like, manifest, like, "Let me draw out my best life." Because you're going to do, like, ten bestselling books on this and, like, yes. And, like, you will be in that house. Like, that will be your house. And Frank is going to be, like, living that high dog life on, like, a boucle furniture that is, like—

MAYTHE HAN [00:58:47] Oh my God, yes.

JVN [00:58:48] Yes, I love that.

MAYTHE HAN [00:58:49] I love boucle furniture, it's my favorite.

JVN [00:58:50] That is spoken by someone who does not have cats because they just unless you have these, like really poor things that I have, which are these, like, scratching post you can put on the corners of your couches so they fuck up that, and I just say they really work, like, I have saved, like, two couches that would have otherwise been murdered years and years and years ago. Like because of these, like, it has, like, a wedge that you, like, put under the, like, leg of the couch so it, like, holds it, you know, then it's, like, a 90-degree angle of like scratching post. It goes on like the corner. If you're a cat person and you've seen those on, like, your Instagram or whatever, it is not a gimmick. Get into it, it will save your couches and then you could have a boucle couch and not be sad. What have you learned about human dog kinship from your art practice?

MAYTHE HAN [00:59:35] I think my anthropology work and my practice are quite closely connected. I mean, as you can see, but I, I think I've learned not to, like, discount the importance of just trying and practicing and keeping up with it, whether things are going well or badly, being patient with yourself first and foremost, and showing yourself some grace when you fall and extending this patience and grace to your kin. Whether it's a human can or a non-human kin, it's really more about, like, feeling and embodying than it is about thinking and intellectualizing. And I think this, I learned more from playing the piano, actually, I've been playing since I was a little kid and it's something that I've kept up all my life, but I really came back to it more seriously since I started the Ph.D. But I, like approached my art with the same kind of attitude that like it's something that allows me to develop and express my perspectives

more wholly and not just in thoughts and words. Something that makes me feel things, makes other people feel things. And it draws me into being really present in the time that I'm never going to get back once it passes.

JVN [01:00:46] I almost feel like that about Getting Curious, like, it's where I come to do my art and process and learn and stay engaged and present and there's, like, nothing else I would rather do. That is so cool. I love that. So where can we follow you? What's next for you in your work? Like where can the fan club for maythe han gather. Where can we keep following you?

MAYTHE HAN [01:01:09] My illustration work. You can follow me at @OdetoDogs, it's "o-d-e-t-o-dogs" on Instagram. And yeah, like, I think I really want to keep expanding my repertoire and both my research and my art through whichever kind of opportunities that present themselves. I would like to publish my writing and artwork in a book. So I am looking for a literary agent who might be interested in a series of ethnographic essays and illustrations about dogs. If anyone's listening and interested, let me know.

JVN [01:01:42] We're getting published. We're going to keep our illustrations, and we're following at Ode To Dogs.

MAYTHE HAN [01:02:48] Yeah. And my music is something that I would also, like, to explore more in conjunction with my research. I'm always, like, writing songs about Frank, so maybe I'll try to compile in an album at some point. I love to teach, whether it's in a university classroom or through a podcast like this. And I just, like, I just have to say, like, thank you so much for having me on the show because, like, if somebody told me at the beginning of my PhD that, like, I was going to be talking to Jonathan Van Ness about dogs, like, I would be, like, "You're crazy, like, don't... no!"

JVN [01:02:21] Aww! No, thank you so much for sharing your scholarship and you're working with us. It's incredible. I love how your brain thinks, moves, processes. Thank you so much for sharing it with us. Like, just really incredible. Thank you. So, so, so, so, so much.

MAYTHE HAN [01:02:35] Thank you.

JVN [01:02:37] Yes! You've been listening to Getting Curious with me, Jonathan Van Ness. My guest this week was maythe han. You'll find links to her work in the episode description of whatever you're listening to the show on. Our theme music is "Freak" by Quiñ [SINGING ALONG WITH THEME] - thanks to her so much for letting us use it. If you enjoyed our show, please introduce a friend and show them how to subscribe. Follow us on Instagram & Twitter @CuriousWithJVN. Our editor is Andrew Carson. Getting Curious is produced by me, Erica Getto, and Zahra Crim. [REPLAY OF SINGING FROM EPISODE] "You are the love of my life. You're so perfect and cute. In every single way. You know that it's true."