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BOOK REVIEW

Animaladies: Gender, Animals, and Madness

Lori Gruen and Fiona Probyn-Rapsey (editors). New York: Bloomsbury, 2018 (ISBN 978-1-50134215-8)

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Emerging from a conference and exhibit with the same name, *Animaladies* collects the writing of an international and interdisciplinary group of scholars and artists, each doing exemplary intersectional work at some of the crossroads of gender, species, ability, race, and sexuality. The title, *Animaladies*, is a neologism coined by co-editor Fiona Probyn-Rapsey, which can be pronounced either "animal-ladies" or "ani-maladies." This single word thus invokes the three main threads of the volume, listed in the subtitle: gender, animals, and madness. In the editors' introduction, "Distillations," Lori Gruen and Probyn-Rapsey write of the "dis-ease of current human–animal relationships" and the fact that these relationships are "damaged" (1). Ironically, those who try to heal, escape, or transform these relationships are not only feminized but are themselves viewed as ill within a speciesist society. As they observe, the pathologization and feminization of animal activists not only discourages people from expressing care for animals, but also "distracts attention from broader social disorder regarding human exploitation of animal life" (2). Rather than attending to the harm to which animal activists are objecting, attention is diverted toward the activists themselves in the form of pathologization. As Gruen and Probyn-Rapsey also emphasize in their introduction, the simultaneous pathologization and feminization of animal activists is but one manifestation of the longstanding hystericizing of women, and activists who embrace the madness of caring for animals are part of a feminist tradition of taking up hysteria as resistance to patriarchal and speciesist power. Gruen and Probyn-Rapsey argue that the pathologization and feminization of concern for animals has not only served to dismiss, trivialize, and pathologize animal activists but also critical animal studies (CAS) scholars within the academy. As they aptly write, the animal liberation movement is not so much the "orphan of the left," as Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka have described it, as it is the left's "crazy aunt" (4–5).

Animaladies is divided into three sections—"Dismember," "Disability," and "Dysfunction"—and in their introduction the editors reflect on the resonances of each word. Most interestingly, they observe that "dismember" speaks not only to the ways the bodies of animals are rent to become our food, but also to how animals are separated from one another—and particularly from their offspring—and their suffering is not re-membered. More often than not, animal oppression is invisibilized, forgotten, or never born witness to at all. As Probyn-Rapsey and Gruen argue, animal activists and CAS scholars resist this dismembering not only by struggling to prevent the deaths and divisions of animals, but also by remembering the lives and deaths of animals; in so

doing, they dwell with rather than evade the emotions to which such witnessing gives rise.

The "Dismember" section of *Animaladies* opens with a chapter by Gruen that analyzes the troubling history of psychosurgeries performed on humans and chimpanzees. Gruen situates this history of lobotomies as an extreme episode in an ongoing war against affect—a war embedded in sexist and speciesist values. Like ovariectomies and hysterectomies, lobotomies were performed to "correct" women's behavior and make them socially compliant. Gruen compares such literal lobotomies to "ideological" lobotomies (15) or "cognitive alienation" (16), in which we are coerced to shut off our emotions. She gives a number of examples of ideological lobotomies, including coercion to perform "rationality" and the dismissal of interspecies empathy as anthropomorphizing. Gruen concludes her chapter by returning to the concept of "entangled empathy"—theorized in her 2015 monograph of that title—as a way out of cognitive alienation.

Gruen's concept of entangled empathy is taken up anew in the following chapter, "Making and Unmaking Mammalian Bodies: Sculptural Practice as Traumatic Testimony," by lynn mowson. Here, mowson describes her empathic and entangled relationship to the exploited and dismembered bodies of cows and calves, and how she has used sculpture to remember these animals. Whereas mowson describes the trauma of bearing witness to violence against animals, the next chapter considers ways in which such recognition is avoided.

In "Tactics of Evasion within Narratives of Violence," Nekeisha Alayna Alexis compares narratives of supposedly "humane" agriculture and "do-it-yourself slaughter" to plantation romances. Much as plantation romances emerged in response to mounting pressure from abolitionists, so have prescriptive accounts of "knowing your dinner" proliferated in response to the vegan movement. By surveying examples of each genre, Alexis demonstrates that romanticizing accounts of "conscious omnivorism" function to justify an oppressive institution in many of the same ways as the earlier plantation romances. In each case, legitimization of violence is accomplished through pastoral storytelling that focuses on the appropriate feelings of the oppressors rather than the morality of oppression, steering clear of facts about power and harm. Alexis emphasizes that she is not collapsing slavery and carnism by comparing the writerly tactics that uphold each institution, but her essay also considers the interlocking of racial and species oppression, or "the mutually reinforcing relationship between blackness and animality" (56).

Alexis's chapter is followed by another study of literature: Hayley Singer's reading of Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*. As Singer shows, Han's Man Booker Prize-winning novel crystallizes the conjunction of gender oppression, speciesism, and madness that are the themes of *Animaladies*. Although she is pathologized within the novel, Han's protagonist is not mad, Singer insists, and her silence is not catatonia but resistance. Indeed, far from Han's vegan character being insane, Singer argues that pathology lies in the speciesism that she silently resists. Unfortunately, this type of retaliatory argument—"we vegans aren't crazy, you meat-eaters are"—perpetuates sanism, and is challenged by Guy Scotton's chapter later in the book.

The final chapter in the "Dismember" section is Kathryn Gillespie's "The Loneliness and Madness of Witnessing: Reflections from a Vegan Feminist Killjoy." Gillespie opens the chapter with an impactful account of breaking into tears in a classroom, and crying for a long time. Her tears were provoked by a student's question: *how do you cope?* Finally, Gillespie could only answer that she had not been coping for a long time. Her research has entailed fieldwork at animal auctions, where Gillespie witnessed

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mother cows torn from their calves, cows and calves crying to each other across the auction yard, cows collapsed from exhaustion and being left for dead or beaten back onto their feet to be sold at bargain prices. For Gillespie, this witnessing was not only heartbreaking but lonely, for "you notice that no one around you is having this experience: they are laughing, bidding, snacking, chatting with friends and family" (80). Recounting another moment of profound loneliness, Gillespie draws on Sara Ahmed to describe being on the job market with the product of this fieldwork, and realizing the unlikeliness of finding employment when her scholarship kills the joy of those who would hire her. Remembering the animals from the auction is not only a lonely and joy-killing task, but, she recounts, also maddening, in part because of the scale. When you witness an individual animal needlessly suffering and can do nothing, this is hard enough to bear. When you realize that this is but one of fifty billion land animals who will die in the same industry in a single year, and that every year this repeats itself, it can feel surreal.

In concluding her chapter, Gillespie acknowledges that she has been permanently wounded by her sustained witnessing of animal suffering; however, she writes that she would not go back and unsee what she has seen, or will herself to have seen what she saw and remain unscathed. As she writes, she would not "restore" herself to the person she was before, for she values the perspective her witnessing has given her. In making this point, Gillespie draws on critical disability studies scholar Eli Clare. As she explains, Clare insists that disability is not something that people experiencing it necessarily want to be cured of, but is, on the contrary, a way of being in the world that many disabled people value. In invoking this point, Gillespie's chapter segues into Part II of *Animaladies*, "Disability."

Part II opens with a chapter by Hannah Monroe, "Ableism, Speciesism, Animals, and Autism: the Devaluation of Interspecies Friendships." In this chapter Monroe observes that autistic people are frequently described as having empathetic bonds with nonhuman animals. The most widely known example is Temple Grandin, although, since she designs and defends slaughterhouses, it is absurd to say Grandin empathizes with them. What is even more curious, however, is that despite their oft-mentioned bonds with animals, autistic people continue to be seen as lacking empathy. Indeed, Monroe observes that the bonds of nonneurotypical people with nonhuman animals is not considered proof of their ability to empathize, but as a mere means to the end of empathizing with humans. For Monroe, this demonstrates the trivialization of interspecies relationships within a speciesist society.

Many chapters in this volume describe and decry the ways that animal activists are pathologized, but in "Metaphors and Maladies: Against Psychologizing Speciesism," Guy Scotton demonstrates that animal advocates are also guilty of pathologizing their opponents, displaying a strong "diagnostic tendency" (102). Sometimes animal ethicists deploy metaphors of physical disabilities, describing a "moral blindness" to animal suffering. In other cases, the malady invoked is psychological, as in Gary Francione's influential phrase "moral schizophrenia" to describe our differential treatment of similar animals (loving dogs, eating pigs). Scotton also cites cases where speciesism is described as "autism," with nonneurotypicality characterized in highly negative terms. Scotton believes that social and moral psychology may be useful in understanding human–animal relations, and some animal ethicists have productively explored psychological concepts (denial, repression) to understand human treatment of other animals. Nonetheless, he argues that the pathologization of meat-eating and other forms of animal exploitation is ableist and sanist, since it relies on and perpetuates the stigmatization of mental illness. In addition to this critical argument, Scotton's chapter performs

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two significant constructive tasks. First, Scotton extends Charles Mills's concept of epistemologies of racist ignorance to consider epistemologies of speciesist ignorance, thus providing a critical psychological explanation of animal oppression that is not pathologizing. Second, Scotton begins to develop an interspecies understanding of neurodiversity, taking up the concepts of "neurodiversity" and "neuro-equality" that were developed in the autistic community, and extending them to include other animals' minds (110).

In the following chapter, "The Horrific History of Comparisons between Cognitive Disability and Animality (And How to Move Past It)," Alice Crary intervenes in the debate between Peter Singer and Eva Kittay concerning comparisons between cognitively disabled people and nonhuman animals in moral philosophy. As is widely known, Singer controversially argues that cognitively disabled people are due less moral consideration than neurotypical humans *and* neurotypical nonhuman animals, whereas Kittay has vehemently denounced such comparisons as philosophically unsound, denigrating to cognitively disabled people, and ignorant of the lives of cognitively disabled people. Singer's utilitarian argument is based on his view that species membership alone is not what determines the moral consideration one is owed. Rather, what matters is one's capacity for pleasure and pain, and he believes that a neurotypical dog has a greater capacity to enjoy life than a cognitively disabled human. Singer is the most high-profile philosopher to critique speciesism in this way, but comparisons between cognitively disabled humans and nonhuman animals are common in analytic ethics, and are ableist more often than not. This, along with the role such comparisons played in Nazi eugenics, has raised the question of whether such comparisons should *ever* be made. Although Kittay's outrage at the frequent ableism of such comparisons is justified, her categorical refusal of such comparisons is unfortunately speciesist, reasserting the superiority of humans—*all* humans—over other animals. A number of scholars who are sympathetic to both disability and animal rights have since intervened in the discussion, and Crary's chapter contributes to this body of work. As Donaldson and Kymlicka, Kelly Oliver, and Sunaura Taylor have each demonstrated, cognitive ableism need not be the cost of animal ethics; disabled humans and nonhuman animals can be compared in nonoffensive and ethico-politically productive ways; and disability and animal rights movements can be in alliance rather than at odds (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011; Oliver 2016; Taylor 2017). Building on this work, Crary's chapter traces the history of comparisons between cognitively disabled humans and nonhuman animals, providing accounts of, and weighing in on, the philosophical traditions in which Singer's and Kittay's arguments are grounded and make sense.

In the following chapter, "The Personal is Political: Orthorexia Nervosa, the Pathogenization of Veganism, and Grief as a Political Act," fraternal CAS scholars Vasile and James Stanescu critique a recent manifestation of the conflation of animal advocacy with a feminine malady: the (unofficial) diagnosis of orthorexia nervosa. The Stanescus demonstrate that the raison d'être of this pseudo-diagnosis is to pathologize vegetarianism and veganism. It thus comes as no surprise that all vegans meet the criteria for this would-be mental illness, which include "eliminating entire food groups from one's diet." Indeed, the Stanescus point out that Dr. Steve Bratman, who invented the pseudo-diagnosis, never applies it to any meat-eating diets and even endorses the paleo diet, despite it being highly restrictive and meeting his criteria for orthorexia. As the Stanescus document, orthorexia has been feminized through its association with anorexia, and has been associated primarily with young women and girls, whose ethical veganism is described by Bratman in condescending and sexist ways.

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Although they resist the association of veganism with mental illness as understood by Bratman, the Stanescus acknowledge that the loneliness of veganism can make a person (feel) insane. Like Gillespie, they describe how maddening it can be to see corpses when your friends and family see food; to witnessing suffering and violence when others are experiencing an enjoyable meal; to recognize that you are in a "hall of death" when those around you merely peruse a grocery-store aisle (147). The Stanescus observe, however, that these moments of madness are also instances of grief, and although experienced as lonely, it is in fact a collective grief felt by animal advocates everywhere. The Stanescu brothers thus conclude by urging animal advocates to take the example of movements such as ACT UP, and use our grief as a tool of political resistance.

In the next chapter, "Women, Anxiety, and Companion Animals: Toward a Feminist Animal Studies of Interspecies Care and Solidarity," Heather Fraser and Nik Taylor describe two empirical studies they conducted exploring peoples' relationships with companion animals. Nearly all the participants who volunteered to take part in the study were women, and a frequent theme in the studies' findings was that respondents' companion animals soothed their symptoms of anxiety and depression, with some respondents embracing such labels as "animal crazies" (158). Fraser and Taylor then provide an analysis of their research findings, both from feminist and CAS perspectives. In their analysis, the authors discuss the gendering of mental illness, the mental distress experienced by domesticated animals, and the ethics of using animals as palliatives for human distress.

A book on the intersections of gender, madness, and animality would not have been complete without a study of the "Crazy Cat Lady" (CCL), and part 3 of *Animaladies*: "Dysfunction," opens with a chapter on this topic by Probyn-Rapsey. Although the figure of the CCL has become humorous, Probyn-Rapsey observes that there is a long history of women who live with cats being seriously persecuted, particularly when they are older and unmarried, and this includes the witch-hunts. As she describes, the CCL also ceases to be funny when her love for felines intensifies into hoarding, and the cats whom she is "rescuing" need to be rescued from her (177). Although acknowledging the cruelty of animal-hoarding of all kinds, Probyn-Rapsey calls into question the belief that animal hoarders are predominantly older, single females, noting that this stereotype is misogynistic and likely influencing who gets identified as a hoarder. In one case she discusses, a heterosexual couple was arrested for hoarding dogs, but media attention was paid primarily to the woman; it was *she* who had failed in her gender role by caring for animals rather than children and by letting her domestic space become unruly. Rarely mentioned is the fact that the cats whom the CCL hoards were living difficult lives before, whether as ferals or in shelter cages. As Probyn-Rapsey observes, when the CCL is condemned for cruelty to animals, the desperate context in which she makes her choices is rarely scrutinized. Probyn-Rapsey also astutely interrogates why the same person who expresses outrage at the CCL, and at kitten and puppy mills, will cheerfully eat a chicken who lived in similarly cruel, cramped, and toxic conditions. The farmer who systematically hoards thousands of animals in a windowless shed is not condemned in the way the woman who "rescues" too many cats is, and his psyche is not the subject of the same speculation. Indeed, the farmer's behavior is normalized, ag-gag laws protect him from exposure, and when footage of his hoarding *is* taken, it rarely makes it onto television. The factory farmer is thus spared the gendered humiliation to which the CCL is subjected, although he commits far greater harm with worse intentions. In a final comparison, Probyn-Rapsey juxtaposes the CCL with the people who work for animal-protection organizations, who are also mostly older women. As she

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speculates, these women's work might be easy to belittle precisely because of their similarities to the CCL. Probyn-Rapsey's chapter thus demonstrates that the enduring stereotype of the CCL serves many roles: it reinforces the stigma of unmarried women and thereby compulsory heterosexuality, it distracts us from the worst cases of animal hoarding (factory farms, kitten/puppy mills), and it allows animal advocacy work to be trivialized as potentially pathological.

In pattrice jones and Cheryl Wylie's co-authored chapter, "The Role of Damned and Dammed Desire in Animal Exploitation and Liberation," the founders of the LGBTQ-run animal sanctuary VINE draw upon some of their experiences both in animal agriculture and animal sanctuary work to understand the affects and desires at stake in three cases of animal oppression. The first case they discuss, 4-H and FFA (Future Farmers of America) training, involves children; the second case, cockfighting, is perpetrated almost exclusively by men; and the last case, backyard hen-raising, concerns primarily women. In each case, the authors demonstrate, humans see themselves as loving the animals whom they harm, or "love them to death." In a complex argument, jones and Wylie suggest that if what is at stake in much animal oppression is love and desire, and this love and desire is thwarted within a speciesist society, much like same-sex love and desire within a heterosexist society, then loving animals is a queer love, and animal activists might learn lessons from LGBTQ activism. jones and Wylie compare people engaging in activities like 4-H, cockfighting, and hen-raising to queers, but they also see them as akin to the homophobic families of queers. That is, these are people who love animals and want to be in relationship with them, much as homophobic families often love and want to be in relationship with their queer kin. In each case, however, they do not know how to love in nonharmful ways within an oppressive society. jones and Wylie then suggest that the campaign for gay marriage transformed society as rapidly as it did because it gave the families of queer people a cause they could engage in and relate to (the heteronormative desire to be married) that enabled them to be allies to their queer kin. Similarly, they suggest, we need to provide people who want relationships with animals better options than 4-H, cockfighting, and hen-raising—options that enable these people to be friends and allies to animals rather than loving them to death. In concluding their chapter, the authors suggest a number of alternate opportunities for loving animals, including spending time at animal sanctuaries.

In "*Duck Lake Project*: Art Meets Activism in an Anti-Hide, Anti-Bloke, Antidote to Duck Shooting," Yvette Watt recounts the genesis of a feminist animal activist art intervention in the Tasmanian duck hunt. As she describes, duck shooters in Tasmania embody a white masculinity of the "Aussie bloke" variety (205), and every year their hunting is interfered with by a group of duck rescuers, including Watt, who are mostly women. The duck rescuers normally walk and kayak into the lagoon where the hunters have their hides, waving colorful windsocks to deter the ducks from the hunters' range. In 2016, however, Watt imagined countering the toxic masculinity of duck hunting with a more extravagantly feminine intervention, and ultimately created *Duck Lake Project*—performed in March of that year before an audience of hunters, media, and park wardens. In this playful but effective performance, duck rescuers, dressed in sparkling pink tutus and leggings, discouraged ducks from the hunters' hides by dancing to *Swan Lake* on a floating stage placed in the lagoon, while other duck rescuers, dressed in pink camo, spread across the lagoon waving sparkly pink flags. In her chapter, Watt documents this performance, discusses its impact, and situates it within the history of art as activism.

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In the final chapter, "On Outcast Women, Dog Love, and Abjection between Species," Liz Bowen explores the connections between dog love and queer desire. Although dog love has been sanitized as a symbol of the heteronormative family and socially sanctioned relationships, Bowen argues that human–dog relationships may also be "invigoratingly" "intense," "gross," "transgressive," and "filthy connections" (219), "perverse" (220) or, in Donna Haraway's words, "nasty," "infectious," and "aberrant" (cited on 220). Through a reading of two literary texts, J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Alice Notley's *Culture of One*, Bowen's chapter examines representations of these relationships as they arise between unwanted dogs and socially marginalized women.

The collection concludes with a brief commentary by pioneering feminist critical animal studies scholar Carol Adams. Picking up on the dis- words that the editors used to organize the book, Adams's "Discussion" meanders through concepts such as distraction, disturbance, discomfort, disembodiment, dismissal, disaffection, displacement, discourse, distortion, distress, distraught, disgust, disappearance, disavowal, disorientation, distribution, and disclosure to celebrate the preceding chapters. To echo Adams without the alliterations, *Animaladies* is a vital addition to the increasingly intersectional discipline of critical animal studies, and makes a valuable contribution to the burgeoning conversations among CAS, critical disability studies, and neurodiversity studies scholars. It should be read widely by feminist scholars, CAS scholars, and animal ethicists, and by mad studies, disability studies, and neurodiversity studies scholars.

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