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Sara Buekens and Julien Defraeye, eds., *Animal et Animalité: Stratégies de représentation dans les littératures d'expression française*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2022. 329 pp. Index and bibliography. €74.00. (hb). ISBN 9782406128649; €35.00. (pb). ISBN 9782406128632.

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The current moment in literary studies is saturated with questions of the animal, discussions of which are now central to more than just philosophy and literary studies, but rather to the Humanities proper and beyond. Many of the central tenets of contemporary animal studies, such as Derrida's infamous neologism *animot*, or Deleuze and Guattari's *devenir-animal*, derive from French and francophone contexts and have found a comfortable home in anglophone discourse on the subject. Approaches to animals in literature, and in particular the birth of *zoopoétique*, have been pioneered by French scholars such as Anne Simon^[1] and have witnessed an explosion of interest in recent decades, as scholars from different geographical, linguistic, cultural, and social contexts examine the animal and animality in light of the Anthropocene. Indeed, one of the key axes stimulating criticism in this field is how literature, acts of reading, or art in general can take audiences "par l'imagination de l'autre côté de la barrière anthropozoologique" (p. 11).

This is the approach taken by the volume of essays edited by Sara Buekens and Julien Defraeye, *Animal et animalité: Stratégies de représentation dans les littératures d'expression française*, essays which began life at a workshop organised through the Association des Professeur.e.s de Français des Universités et Collèges Canadiens. The essays are organised into four sections, which cluster the contributions thematically according to the literary strategies and ideas under review. The collection's main title foreshadows the focus of the intellectual enquiry in these pages, which is the various strategies employed by authors of literary texts written in French to represent animals and convey ideas of animality, especially animals' interior worlds or *umwelt*.^[2] One key example that infuses many of the essays is the concept of *zoopoéthique*, which is about more than literary and poetic representations of animals, now commonly discussed under the umbrella term *zoopoétique* in French contexts. Rather, *zoopoéthique* considers literature as a way of expressing species contact, violence, and care when it asks what the world would have been like without the fifth and sixth days of Creation before the creation of Man. Alongside these ideas, this volume presents an enlightening array of literary techniques used by modern authors to represent animality, including those that seek to convey animal points of view and perspectives (interiority and *umwelt*) and those that give voice, or sometimes language (invented or corrected), to nonhuman life.

The first section in this collection, “Humanisme, Anthropocentrisme et Considérations Éthiques,” investigates the productive tensions at work in responses to *logos*, *zoopoétique*, and real and fictional ethical enquiry. The first essay, by Anne-Sophie Donnarieix, examines a humanity in crisis as animals, hybrids, monsters, and composites resist traditional humanist distinctions between human and animal in works by Sylvie Germain, Marie Darrieussecq, Antoine Volodine, and Éric Chevillard. In the following essay, Sara Buekens analyses how animals take on metaliterary dimensions in Romain Gary’s *Les Racines du Ciel*, revealing a wider ethical project for a new Humanism in Gary’s work. Buekens emphasises play with literary form as an essential component for creating new visions of reality involving animals in ecological novels, despite the ways that some literary styles mystify ecological ideologies. The third essay in this section, by Marie Vigy, looks at pessimist anthropology in the work of Pierre Bergounioux by examining the lost Edenic age of infancy and its aftermath. The Fall of Adam, Vigy explains, is at the heart of the rupture between human and animal, but nevertheless Bergounioux finds ways to present the surprise of animal encounters, which open up cartesian dualities and temporalities. Analysing impressionist and pre-symbolic styles alongside a refusal of poetic metaphor as therapeutic practice, this essay asks whether writing can be a substitute for real encounter.

From the wide focus of ethical projects in the first section, the second section, “Infra-Animalité et Exotisme,” zooms in to explore the types of animal embodiment shaped by discourses of exoticism in African literature and depictions of African and Asian species. This section is a noteworthy contribution to the volume with a number of essays focusing on particular animals in literary contexts, adding texture to contemporary discourse in literary animal studies, so often focused on Western European philosophy. Ninon Chavoz, Alice Desquillet, and Xavier Garnier undertake an overview of mosquitoes in African literature which, they argue, are rarely indicators of exoticism and not just representative of geographical areas. Instead, they examine how the unclear agencies of mosquitoes lead to a personification of the bite itself, rendering environments dangerous and invasive, and opening discussion to environmental justice. Alongside the bite, the buzzing of mosquitoes acts as a background noise for eco-narrators in apocalyptic stories of postcolonial ecosystems that remind us of the harsh realities behind literary representations of insects. In the second essay of this section, Éric Le Calvez explores the intertextuality of Flaubert’s elephants in *Salammbô*. The essay reveals a mosaic of descriptions of elephants from a range of sources, including natural historical works and Classical texts. This is followed by Ninon Vessier’s essay on Henri Michaux’s *Un barbare en Asie*, in which Michaux’s deep interests in gardens and zoos, coloured by colonial sentiment, permeates depictions of exhibited species. Nevertheless, Vessier argues, this text offers models for literary contact with the animal through exteriorisation, comparisons with animals as an attempt to move away from *logos*, and the difference between objective and felt reality.

The third section, “Transversalités et Épistémocritique animale,” draws our attention to the links between language, *umwelt*, and narrative styles in francophone literature with a particular emphasis on literature produced in Europe and Québec. This section begins with Riccardo Barontini’s essay on literary uses of ethology, a branch of knowledge dealing with the evolution and study of human and nonhuman behaviour. Through the works of Christine Van Acker, Tristan Garcia, and Claudie Hunzinger, Barontini examines how these authors use ethology to decentre anthropocentric perspectives, focusing on three main motifs: the deconstruction of human exceptionalism, the limits of language, and identification with the animal. This is achieved by techniques such as listing, and the juxtaposition of “poetic” and “scientific” modes to create an

anti-anthropocentrism. As with many essays in this book, Barontini usefully draws back to questions of language as a marker of what it means to be human. In the second essay of this section, Julien Defraeye explores the contemporary Québécois novel as a medium for environmental thinking, specifically in light of understandings of the shared destiny of humans and nonhumans in crisis. Defraeye examines how novels express the *sujet écologique* as a riposte to the depiction of animals as a danger in literature. Nathan Germain completes this section with an essay on Éric Plamondon's *Taqarwan*. Germain reads the text through the metaphor of the salmon returning upriver, a metaphor for temporal circularity and Indigenous cosmology in the work of Plamondon. Analysing literary techniques such as analepsis and fragmentation of narrative focus, Germain demonstrates how the past continues to inhabit the present through depictions of living ecologies in the context of North American colonialism and conflict related to salmon fishing. This essay dwells on the question of who is excluded from *logos* and incorporates environmental and Indigenous politics into discussion of literary representation.

The final section is the only one to include four essays, under the title “Carnisme, Empathie et Zoomorphisme.” Hannah Cornelus takes her cue from the concept of interconnectivity and interdependence to analyse *Sans l'orang-outan* by Éric Chevillard, focusing on representations of disappearing species in the Anthropocene. Examining how the author uses techniques such as syllepsis, a figure of speech in which a word is used in its proper and figurative senses, Cornelus re-reads the text with evolution in mind to refute anthropocentric logic. This is followed by Jasmine Martin-Marcotte's analysis of *Zoo* by Marie Darrieussecq. The essay builds on work on human *logos* and animal corporeality to focus on the ways that human narrators overcome the incomprehension of animal bodies, before moving to how the motif of empathy contributes to clearer understandings of oppression, cohabitation, and continuity between species in Darrieussecq's collection. Martin-Marcotte proposes that literature allows us to access animals when otherwise such access might be regulated by different *umwelten* or modes of sensory perception. Scott Powers adds to the discussion of bodies in this section by using ecofeminism to interpret *Le Corps des bêtes* by Audrée Wilhelmy. Seeking to shed light on women's agency in this text, this essay questions the role of animals in the development of female characters. Drawing on the concept of *devenir-animal* (Deleuze and Guattari), Powers interrogates the ways that women's bodies take on animal behaviours and revalorise nature to fight against sexual and gendered injustices. Finally, the last essay in this volume, by Alain Romestaing, examines livestock farming and slaughter in contemporary texts that interrogate the idea of eating meat. Questioning the underlying principles behind depictions of meat-eating and vegetarianism, Romestaing asks how literature can make us see this debate differently as animal points of view in the modern world take on a necessarily sombre quality, combining real and fictional narratives of violence, domination, suffering, death, and extinction.

This is a strong and theoretically sound collection of essays, with a wide reach in literary studies and beyond. The volume offers a detailed, focused exploration of animality in literature written in French, pushing at the boundaries of francophone material and filling a significant gap in studies of animals in literature. Perhaps the one weakness, from the perspective of a medievalist at least, is the framing of the approach to corpus and chronological change. The book's blurb and the introductory paragraph nod to the complex histories of animality in French and francophone literatures since the Middle Ages, but paint the last fifty years of scholarship on the subject as richer and more diverse than what was before. This is a familiar story of progress and enlightenment as zoological and scientific advances shake the boundaries of human and animal, bringing to the fore antispeciesism, vegetarianism and veganism, and animal rights. The trouble

with framing such a specialised volume in this way is that premodern thinking about animals—in fact rich in ideas of the human-nonhuman boundary, sensory approaches to interspecies relationships, and questions of what constitutes literature, and in no way divorced from “une conscience éthique et écologique” (p. 14)—is underexplored.[3] This, despite multiple authors in this volume referring to the past—to Classical rituals and practices (Le Calvez, Romestaing) and to religious concepts such as Eden or the first ages of humanity (the introduction, Vigy)—to contextualise discussions of animality. There is great value in the specificity of this volume’s approach, which adds much-needed clarity to the type of work being undertaken in literary studies. Yet, when the “lourde tâche” of literature in the twenty-first century is presented as providing a refuge for the passwords that grant us access to different species in our time of crisis (p. 21), we do such important projects a disservice by limiting ourselves to only half a century of discourse. I look forward to seeing where the productive dialogue this volume establishes could lead in future collaborations with premodern scholars and interdisciplinary studies.

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Scott Powers, “L’écoféminisme d’Audrée Wilhelmy: Le ‘devenir-animal’ de la femme dans *Le Corps des bêtes* (2017)”

Alain Romestaing, “Représentations du carnisme dans la littérature française contemporaine”

NOTES

[1] Anne Simon, *Une bête entre les lignes: Essai de zoopoétique* (Marseille: Wildproject, 2021).

[2] *Umwelt* here refers to the theory of nonhuman perspective proposed by Jacob von Uexküll in *Mondes animaux et monde humain: Suivi de la Théorie de la signification* (Paris: Agora, [1934] 2004).

[3] Medievalists in French Studies, in particular, have demonstrated the breadth of premodern thinking about animals and the natural world and have analysed the premodern precedents for thinking about animals and literary styles. For examples, see: Irène Fabry-Tehranchi, *L’Humain et l’Animal dans la France médiévale (XIIe-XVe s.) / Human and Animal in Medieval France (12th-15th c.)* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014); Miranda Griffin, *Transforming Tales: Rewriting Metamorphosis in Medieval French Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Peggy McCracken, *In the Skin of a Beast: Sovereignty and Animality in Medieval France* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017); Sarah Kay, *Animal Skins and the Reading Self in Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017); and Liam Lewis, *Animal Soundscapes in Anglo-Norman Texts* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2022).

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