Lynn Turner, ed. *The Animal Question in Deconstruction*. Edinburgh University Press, 2013. 256 pp. $120.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780748683123); $39.95 USD (Paperback ISBN 9780748683130).

The Animal Question in Deconstruction, edited by Lynn Turner, collects eleven essays focused on what one author fittingly characterizes as the 'demenagerie' of deconstruction scholars writing on the animal question. This collection meets a serious scholarly gap because deconstruction—despite always already being concerned with complexities surrounding human-animal relations—was nonetheless seemingly late to consider the animal question in a sustained manner. However, such a formal consideration must have been unavoidable, considering the ancient role of this basic binary of human and animal that has been used to justify relationships determined by human power, authority and violence. As in many collections, these essays are not quite uniform in quality; some in particular, however, are extraordinarily compelling, and the collection as a whole contributes importantly to filling the need for critical work exploring how humans think about and relate to non-human animals.

Unsurprisingly, Derrida is the centre of this collection's constellation. Several essays converse with his *The Animal that Therefore I Am* (Fordham, 2008) or *The Beast and the Sovereign* (2 vols., U of Chicago Press, 2009-11). The collection enlarges Derrida's work in challenging anthro-pocentric notions of rigid human-animal boundaries through concepts such as the 'animot' that urge a rethinking of the animal and of difference beyond categories of species, thought, or language. Other essays interact with Hélène Cixous, and, indeed, chapter one is the first English translation of her text 'Un Réfugié'. The collection ends by reprinting another rather creative academic text, Nicholas Royle's 'Mole' from his book *The Uncanny* (Routledge, 2003). Other thinkers who appear include Coetzee, Descartes, Rousseau, Levinas, Lacan, Kafka, Freud, and Heidegger. Oddly, only one essay takes up Agamben's recent work despite his important contributions to the animal question in *Homo Sacer* (Stanford University Press, 1995) and *The Open: Man and Animal* (Stanford University Press, 2004).

The book benefits greatly from its striking and meaningful cover images, which are photographs of the heads and shoulders of two black birds shot from behind by New York artist Roni Horn. These come from *Bird* (1998-2007), her 2008 exhibit at Hauser & Wirth London that showcased doubled representations of various taxidermied birds from Iceland. The selection used on the cover, *Untitled, No. 1* (1998), strikes viewers as an uncanny close-up shot against a plain white background. However, the portraits show only the backs of the birds instead of their faces and eyes. Originally, these pictures were displayed side by side, and though they appear to be the same, they are in fact two different birds. This effect is altered here, as they appear to be looking directly at one another through the pages of the book. Importantly for deconstruction, the expected meeting of these avian bookends remains suspended.

Animal representations of deconstruction's main tenets continue throughout the essays. The text begins with an introduction by its editor, Lynn Turner, who explains the Horn cover illustrations and summarizes the chapters' progression, but also lays a solid groundwork for deconstruction's reading of metaphors and its metaphors of reading by pointing to the limits and pathways of cross-species communication. Turner also anticipates or replies to concerns about the politics of representation that are sometimes raised about deconstruction's tendency to read animals through allegory instead of realism. Indeed, this is an ongoing area of contention between those who advocate

real world intervention for increased interspecies justice and animal welfare and rights, and those who are inclined toward the Continental philosophical tradition and its longstanding concern with the animal as an Other—though the latter viewpoint arguably also necessitates a desire for greater empathy and community between human and non-human animals. In this regard, thinkers such as Donna Haraway, Peter Singer and Tom Regan do espouse different approaches than do Derrida, Cixous or Agamben; yet as this collection shows, deconstruction's approach is also essential to thinking through the causes, ramifications and solutions to our current animal question.

The first chapter, Hélène Cixous' 'A Refugee,' reflects on human-animal relations when a cat, the narrator's 'innocent, hairy daughter,' attempts to kill a bird. The human interferes and behaves as 'a human being with power' (9-10), which in some sense betrays the nature of the cat. In chapter two, 'Swans of Life (External Provocations and Autobiographical Flights That Teach Us How to Read)', Sarah Wood reads Derrida by linking the swan to the cygnet and beyond to signs, signatures and songs as well as to flight and flair, to speak further of the relations between language, thought, writing, and the possibility of prophecy or augury. For Wood, Derrida provides a model of practicing that which is 'strangely animal at work in reading and writing' (26) and which 'teaches us to take signs seriously—with lightness, on writing-wings' (29). Marie-Dominique Garnier's 'Love of the *Löwe*' focuses on paths of reading and writing that cross boundaries of language or species. Her analysis centres on the place of the lion in Derrida's corpus and illuminates a fascinating misreading by Derrida of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) regarding the shooting of a lion. Derrida's treatment of Defoe in *The Beast and the Sovereign* is extensive, and Garnier is alert to the implications of Derrida's reading of Crusoe relating to Xury, animals, language and power. Notably for an essay on the slipperiness of translation, Garnier's essay benefits from a native knowledge of French that is lacking in some of the other contributions. In 'Insect Asides,' Lynn Turner attends to limitrophy, the place of the ear in hearing language, and the metaphors of the earwig, of nibbling the ear of the other, of eating meat, and a Derridean typo of 'committing insect' as opposed to 'committing incest' (63-5). Laurent Milesi's original and humorous essay, 'Sponge Inc,' turns to Derrida's essay 'Force of Law' (*Acts of Religion*, Routledge, 2002), wherein Derrida makes an offhand remark about the sponge as an 'intermediate species'. Milesi dexterously rehabilitates the lowly sponge's image by highlighting its ability to soak up, absorb, interpret, mimic and cleanse.

One of the most enjoyable essays is Kelly Oliver's 'Elephant Eulogy: The Exorbitant Orb of an Elephant' which reads Derrida in *The Beast and the Sovereign* reading accounts of Louis XIV observing the autopsy of an elephant from his menagerie. Certainly, this 'elephenomenelephant' is fundamental to Derrida's argument about the troubled relationship between the beast and the sovereign. Using the models of fable and autopsy, Oliver traces the 'performance of sovereignty' through the king and his scientists who dissect the elephant to acquire 'absolute knowledge', while providing a spectacle that sacrifices 'animal bodies for the sake of propping up human exceptionalism and our right to use animals' (96). These mysteries of life invoke the human desire for a 'participation in the omnipotence of the gods' and return to human 'lust' and 'longing' to master life, as does the 'transcendent God...an absolute sovereign' (94-4). In depicting the autopsy's inhumanity, Oliver describes research showing that elephants mourn, remember their dead, and are aware enough of their own identities to pass the mirror-test. These attributes that reveal the depth of elephant intelligence, culture and self-awareness are then juxtaposed by Oliver with the human lust for power and knowledge that has conversely decimated and humiliated elephant populations.

In many ways, Stephen Morton's 'Troubling Resemblances, Anthropological Machines and the Fear of Wild Animals: Following Derrida after Agamben' could have been the volume's first

essay because it provides a usefully broad approach to the main issues of deconstruction and the animal question. Morton adeptly sets out a politics of death that considers Heidegger, Kant, Spivak, and *Robinson Crusoe* but centres ultimately on the animal in Derrida's thought 'as a deconstructive figure—as a figure that raises questions about the anthropocentric foundations of the Western philosophical tradition and about political sovereignty of humanity over the world' (106). Morton interacts with Derrida's robust troubling of Agamben's concepts of bare life and the anthropological machine, which is a significant point of contention. Frankly, given Agamben's importance to contemporary thought, one might have expected him to be analyzed by other chapters also; but, Morton's is the only sustained consideration of his work or that of Coetzee.

In Chapter 8, 'Derrida, Rousseau, Cixous and Tsvetaeva: Sexual Difference and the Love of the Wolf', Judith Still offers an ethical examination of the wolf as a liminal figure outside law and polis, with particular attention to sexual difference. Still invokes Hobbes's political philosophy that 'man is a wolf to men,' the werewolves of Rousseau's *Confessions* (1782), and Cixous' conceptualization of predatory wolves and her reading of Tsvetaeva's writings on Pushkin. Marta Segarra's essay, 'Deconstructing Sexual Difference: A Myopic Reading of Hélène Cixous's Mole', links deconstruction, sexual difference and liminality. Segarra's mole provides a fruitful metaphor for reading, and she notes that it has been used by many thinkers in the deconstruction 'demenagerie' including Freud and Derrida, as well as in creative works by Cixous, Shakespeare and Kafka. Segarra discusses the mole and reading in terms of myopia, which she sees not as short-sightedness but as 'a reading which advances by ear, by touch, without foreseeing its path or looking at maps but rather losing itself in the text's tunnel' (154). Peggy Kamuf returns to the slipperiness of language in 'Your Worm', which plays on the multiple meanings of the noun and verb 'worm' on several multilingual variants stemming from the Indo-European root, *kverm*, meaning to creep, slither, or crawl, and on the terms' appearances in texts by Cixous, Shakespeare, Emily Dickinson and Milton. The collection concludes with a reprint of 'Mole' by Nicholas Royle, who shows a particular interest in Derrida and *Hamlet* in relating the underground tunnelling of a mole to the traces of a text.

As this collection demonstrates, deconstruction has a longstanding concern with questions of animality that it approaches from the Continental tradition, as opposed to a straightforward ethical standpoint. However, deconstruction's investigations into the mindset that permits factory faming, experimentation, zoos, circuses, animal sports, and animal abuse to continue arrive at a similar end of embracing and respecting the animal. For deconstruction, the animal as other is a contested site that reveals telling assumptions about interspecies borders and anthropocentric power, and one of this collection's crucial aims is to challenge these assumptions by deomonstrating how contemporary political and ethical crises can ultimately be traced to how humans think about and treat non-human animals.

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