

Making Animals Real

Review of: Donna Haraway, *When species meet*. University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

Sarah Franklin, *Dolly mixtures: The remaking of genealogy*. Duke University Press, 2007.

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We are frequently told that animals are good to think with. That they can be hard to write about is mentioned less often. One reason for this may be that there is voluminous evidence to the contrary: a steadily increasing stream of academic books and articles about animals, and even an emergent field called ‘animal studies’. Like many labels, however, this one is an umbrella, convenient rather than definitive. The nature of the animals (or, more abstractly, ‘the animal’) discussed in the work it subsumes is extremely varied. At least potentially, it conflates all non-human kinds, from ants to zebras. (This generous, homogenizing embrace produces its own limitations, of course, and it is still more likely to submerge the experiences of individual animals.) Since such work is normally produced by scholars in the humanities and social sciences, rather than by zoologists or veterinarians, it describes or engages a range of human relationships with other creatures.

One relationship, however, is oddly absent—or perhaps not so oddly, in view of the conventional constraints on academic prose. As Donna Haraway points out in *When species meet*, people in general are extremely likely to own companion animals. In 2006, about 63 percent of American households had pets, including 73.9 million dogs and 90.5 million

cats, among many other kinds of animals (p. 47). It is probably safe to assume (based on anecdote and observation, rather than statistics) that scholars who choose other animals or human–animal relationships as their research area are even more likely to live with domesticated animals than are other members of their society. Perhaps—to speculate more extravagantly—they are more likely to volunteer at humane societies and zoos, or to go birding or otherwise seek out wild animals on their own turf. But this concrete experience with animals seldom surfaces in their scholarship, although it may underlie and inform it. And the personality and experience of their animal subjects tends to be similarly elusive.

In both Haraway’s *When species meet* (along with some of her earlier work) and Sarah Franklin’s *Dolly mixtures: The remaking of genealogy*, on the contrary, members of their touchstone species are insistently present. The books themselves are very different, although each author is appreciatively aware of the other’s work. Haraway takes the acknowledgment of animal presence as her subject and her mission in *When species meet*, beginning with the question ‘Whom and what do I touch when I touch my dog?’ then declaring that ‘I think we learn to be worldly from grappling with, rather than generalizing from the ordinary’ (p. 3). Franklin’s ovine subjects emerge in her discussion more obliquely. Her opening questions are less tactile, more conventionally abstract and academic: for example, she asks ‘how we can position a shape-shifting sheep within a broader discussion about kind and type, species and breed, sex and nation, empire and colony, capital and livestock?’ (p. 4). And of course, dogs and sheep are very different creatures, both intrinsically and in their relation to humans, although some of them have a long shared history. It is also significant that the individual animal who anchors Haraway’s narrative is her own beloved companion Cayenne Pepper, who would have no public profile if she did not live with a distinguished scholar, while the individual animal who anchors Franklin’s narrative was an international celebrity, who was reported to enjoy the human attention that attended her fame while she

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lived, and who has subsequently been installed as a marquee exhibit in the National Museum of Scotland.

It would, therefore, be easy to understand Dolly as merely if powerfully iconic. For both scientists and the general public, the circumstances of her conception and birth signified the possibility of exciting advances in basic understanding as well as in biomedical technology. Otherwise, there was little to distinguish her from the millions of other sheep who continue to populate British pastures and uplands, many of whom belong, as did Dolly's surrogate mother, to the Scottish Blackface breed. (The choice of sheep as subjects for this experimental enterprise reflected their ready availability, as much as any special appropriateness.) The set of special meanings that Dolly carried was also, of course, what attracted Franklin's scholarly attention. The first chapter of *Dolly mixtures* focuses on Dolly's production by cloning (or, as Franklin explains, a version of cloning) at the Roslin Institute near Edinburgh. Even in that context, she was primarily important as a harbinger of copies to come, as she was herself a copy of the Dorset ewe whose mammary cell had (with a great deal of technical assistance) given her life. Indeed, the theme of repetition dominated the reception of the news about her birth. Although the cloned lamb was hailed a triumph for the scientific team led by Ian Wilmut, the scale of the triumph would depend on the replicability of their elaborate process. Franklin explains the science and technology that resulted in Dolly in the context of a series of related experiments at Roslin, which produced other bioengineered lambs.

As she shows that Dolly's significance lay in (anticipated) mass production, however, Franklin also emphasizes Dolly's paradoxical individuality. If Dolly had been one of many, she would not have become so famous—or at least she would not have remained so famous. The contrast between her apparent ordinariness and her unique situation continued throughout her life. All these circumstances combined to form her personality. A photograph of her with her creator (should he be called her father?), which is reproduced in *Dolly mixtures* (p. 11), suggests the farmyard, or even, in its striking intimacy, the suburban garden, rather than the laboratory. One corroboration of the success of the original experiment was Dolly's ability repeatedly to conceive and give birth in the conventional way.

Despite recurrent concerns that clones would be less robust than ordinary animals, her death did not distinguish her from the rest of her ostensible kind. She was euthanized in 2003 because she had contracted a disease that is common among sheep who live together in close quarters. But she had become arthritic at an unusually early age, and analyses at several points in her life suggested that her DNA might be more fragile than that of other sheep. Nor could her distinctiveness be summarized in merely biological terms. Franklin quotes Ian Wilmut on their special relationship: 'People think . . . I could make another Dolly . . . but . . . they don't understand . . . that . . . there would never be another sheep like her' (p. 160).

Franklin also places Dolly in a series of historical and contemporary contexts. She connects the industrial possibilities implicit in cloning technologies with more traditional mass production of sheep and other livestock, and she forcefully resurrects the etymological connections between livestock and capital. (Her recurrent use of etymology is one of the many appealing cross-disciplinary features of *Dolly mixtures*.) Her account of the evolution of sheep breeds in Britain, and their consolidation through the development of pedigree and related institutions, provides an extended genealogy for the experiments at the Roslin Institute. Robert Bakewell, the celebrated eighteenth-century breeder, whose New Leicester sheep constituted one of the early triumphs of biotechnology, had no children, but Ian Wilmut may be his notional descendant, as Dolly may be the notional descendant of his valuable rams (unlike their breeder, they also produced numerous physical offspring). An alternative institutional genealogy derives from the transportation of British sheep to Australia. Franklin emphasizes their importance in the formation of its identity as a colony and a nation, noting that the Roslin Institute itself was established between the First World War and the Second World War as part of an effort to consolidate imperial agricultural relationships. She concludes with a moving discussion of the foot and mouth disease outbreak of 2001, during which Dolly was carefully quarantined to avoid the infection, to which she would otherwise have been as vulnerable as other sheep. The official response to this catastrophe, which was partly epizootic in its origins and partly economic, involved the slaughter of large numbers of sheep by military assault. The lurid photographs provoked public outrage, which demonstrated the extent to which the lives and

deaths even of sheep who possessed no individual media presence could nevertheless engage the feelings of the general public.

One of the things that makes *Dolly mixtures* such an interesting and unusual work of scholarship is the range of expertises that Franklin has combined, including anthropology, sociology, biology, veterinary medicine, history, agricultural science and politics. In most other respects, however, it conforms to genre expectations. Franklin figures only occasionally as a character, although it is clear that she has talked with many of the people whose sheep-work she discusses. Her tone maintains standard academic distance, although it is clear that she is fond of sheep. In *When species meet*, Donna Haraway is counterconventional in every possible sense. The first person is ubiquitous, and she insists that her readers be aware of her as a physical and emotional presence as well as an intellectual one. At the (literal) center of the book is an account of her relationship with her father, and of his relationship with his companion crutches and wheelchair; her partner Rusten Hogness appears frequently, as do various friends, colleagues and students. She describes her relationship with Cayenne Pepper abstractly, as love, and also very concretely: 'Her red merle Australian shepherd's quick and lithe tongue has swabbed the tissues of my tonsils, with all their eager immune system receptors' (p. 16). She repeatedly interrupts her own exposition to insert other perspectives and other genres: extended quotations, emails, cartoons, newspaper cuttings.

Haraway argues, both explicitly and by demonstration, that her subject requires such hybrid literary techniques. Her purpose, she explains, is 'to build attachment sites and tie sticky knots to bind intracting critters, including people, together in the kinds of response and regard that change the subject—and the object' (p. 287). The related metaphors of entanglement or knotting therefore recur throughout *When species meet*. Their significance extends beyond the interconnection of humans and other kinds that is the book's headline concern. Borrowing from Bruno Latour, Haraway lists a series of 'Great Divides' that she hopes to bridge: animal/human, nature/culture, organic/technical and wild/domestic. She is constantly aware of the need to address such oppositions on the pragmatic level of the everyday and ordinary, with examples drawn from familiar experience, rather than in the abstract reaches of theory, which is not, however, to say that theory is absent. She mingles references to Latour, Derrida, Freud, Darwin,

Chomsky, Merleau-Ponty, Marx and Foucault with accounts of training dogs, feeding cats and socializing around the barbecue—another Great Divide bridged.

The distinctive and engaging style and structure of *When species meet* also allows Haraway to intervene in an unusual range of serious controversies. The question of the limits of the human, or the degree to which it overlaps with or interpenetrates other animal categories, has inspired centuries of philosophical debate. On the intellectual level it remains generatively unresolved, and will probably continue in that condition for the indefinite future. But on the level of practice, much depends on the tentative answers. Even dog training, including the agility training competitions in which Haraway and Cayenne Pepper participate, can be controversial. From a strictly human perspective, Haraway herself points out that it is a luxury sport, and so subject to general critiques of consumerism and the distribution of disposal income. From a somewhat broader perspective, it is not clear whether dogs welcome this activity. Haraway thinks that they do, and she is certainly persuasive with regard to Cayenne Pepper. But sometimes her account of training sounds like a kinder, gentler version of that of the late Vicki Hearne, a poet-philosopher-animal trainer whose highly disciplined methods, although lyrically described, have been criticized as harsh or abusive. Even the decision to nurture a litter of orphaned feral cats presents difficult choices, some (although not all) of which depend on how the creatures are categorized. Feeding and protecting them after their mother was killed gives them life, but allowing or requiring them to grow up as barn cats exposes them to injury, disease and premature death.

Nor does Haraway hesitate to entangle hot-button issues in her multi-species knots. The ethics of scientific experimentation on animals, both in laboratories and in the wild (crittercams), is a recurrent concern, as is the ethics of meat production, meat eating and hunting. Her accounts of debates about these very difficult issues seem open-minded—that is, she is respectful of most points of view, whether she shares them or not. (Of course, there are notable exceptions, such as the deep ecologist who publicly suggested that rape would be an appropriate way to punish Haraway for her interest in cyborgs.) And she consistently embeds these potentially philosophical questions in the ordinary situations where the consequences of abstract commitments become concrete. For example, she

describes a department party at which the host roasted a feral pig that he had previously shot, to the dismay of vegan and vegetarian guests who felt that the conspicuous presence of this food, whether or not they ate it, was both unethical and aggressive. Haraway sympathizes with both the hunter and the critique of hunting, with the intelligent and gregarious pigs and the people who deplore their effect on the fragile ecology of coastal California, with opponents of factory farming and the need of cats to eat meat. She wonders why, on an earlier occasion, the discussion of whether it was appropriate to eat a human placenta had sparked a more thoughtful, although also impassioned, discussion.

When species meet thus represents an impressive attempt to overcome some of the barriers, or to repair some of the elisions, inherent in conventional academic discussion of animals. Most strikingly, it reintroduces the animals themselves, as feeling physical beings, not as abstractions or opposing principles. It does not necessarily provide an accessible model for others to follow. Haraway has a very original persona, and anthropology seems more flexible with regard to scholarly style than do some other disciplines. In any case, most scholars probably share Franklin's disinclination to convert themselves into their own subjects. And, as *Dolly mixtures* demonstrates, real animals can figure in humanities and social science scholarship without such explicit authorial intervention. What is mostly necessary is to remember that they exist.

Thinking, Reasoning and Writing with Animals in the Biosciences

Review of Lorraine Daston and Gregg Mitman (Eds.), *Thinking with animals: New perspectives on anthropomorphism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.

Erica Fudge, *Brutal reasoning: Animals, rationality, and human in early modern England*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006.

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Linda Birke, Arnold Arluke and Mike Michael, *The sacrifice: How scientific experiments transform animals and people*. Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2007.

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Introductory histories

It makes sense to start with some history, or rather with some histories. There are a number of relevant histories, which introduce these three texts and the use of history sets the scene for an exploration of the themes that link them.

The first of these is the history of animal studies as a sub-disciplinary site of enquiry within the contemporary humanities and social sciences. There is now a small, vibrant and growing group of scholars exploring and rethinking the place of nonhuman animals in different contexts. Many of the authors here have played a key role in the vitality of this interdisciplinary field. *The sacrifice* is written by feminist biologist Linda Birke and UK sociologist Mike Michael, working here with US sociologist Arnold Arluke. All three have written extensively in the past on contemporary relations to nonhuman animals, particularly within the biosciences. The edited collection, *Thinking with animals*, includes contributions from philosopher of science Elliott Sober, film-maker Sarita Siegel and professor of ethics James Serpell, with the greater number of essays from historians of science. Wendy Doniger, Paul White, Sandra Mitchell, Cheryce Kramer and the editors, Lorraine Daston and Gregg Mitman, present their analysis of anthropomorphism in a wide diversity of times and places, including angels in medieval writing (Daston), experimental animals