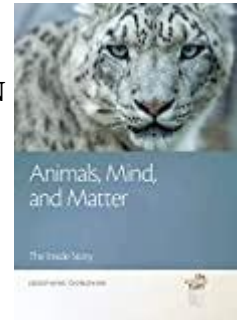




**Josephine Donovan.** *Animals, Mind, and Matter: The Inside Story.* The Animal Turn Series. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2022. 148 pp. \$39.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-61186-437-3.



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The field of critical animal studies (CAS) has welcomed a substantial number of works in recent years. Monographs like Susan McHugh's *Love in a Time of Slaughters: Human-Animal Stories against Genocide and Extinction* (2019), Claire Parkinson's *Animals, Anthropomorphism and Mediated Encounters* (2019), Austin McQuinn's *Becoming Audible: Sounding Animality in Performance* (2020), and Nayanika Mathur's *Crooked Cats: Beastly Encounters in the Anthropocene* (2021) have expanded the field in new and exciting ways. Likewise, edited collections that include Kelly Struthers Montford and Chloë Taylor's *Colonialism and Animality: Anti-Colonial Perspectives in Critical Animal Studies* (2020), Stephanie Jenkins, Struthers Montford, and Taylor's *Disability and Animality: Crip Perspectives in Critical Animal Studies* (2020), Natalie Khazaal and Núria Almiron's *Like an Animal: Critical Animal Studies Approaches to Borders, Displacement, and Othering* (2021), Amber E. George's *Gender and Sexuality in Critical Animal Studies* (2021), Susan McHugh, Robert McKay, and John Miller's *The Pal-*

*grave Handbook of Animals and Literature* (2021), and Sune Borkfelt and Matthias Stephan's *Literary Animal Studies and the Climate Crisis* (2022), as well as pedagogically focused volumes like *Critical Terms for Animals Studies* (2018), edited by Lori Gruen, and Matthew R. Calarco's *Animal Studies: The Key Concepts* (2021), have confirmed CAS as a thriving field and invigorated conversations between CAS and other disciplines. Moreover, such interest has driven the emergence of book series exclusively devoted to CAS (Brill's Human-Animal Studies series, Palgrave Studies in Animals and Literature, Pennsylvania State University Press's Animalibus, Routledge Human-Animal Studies series, Lexington Books' Critical Animal Studies and Theory, and the University of Chicago Press's Animal Lives), creating spaces for the continuous and future growth of the field. Josephine Donovan's *Animals, Mind, and Matter: The Inside Story* appears as part of this wave and is one of the latest additions to Michigan State University Press's remarkable series The Animal Turn, which also includes Sarat Colling's *Animal Resistance in*

*the Global Capitalist Era* (2020), Malcolm Smith's *Hats: A Very Unnatural History* (2020), and the collections *Spanish Thinking about Animals* (2020), edited by Margarita Carretero-González, and *Animals and Race* (2023), edited by Jonathan W. Thurston-Torres, to name a few.

Donovan is professor emerita of English at the University of Maine. Her work in CAS is long standing and extensive, bringing together feminist criticism and animal ethics. Since her earlier work, Donovan has stressed the connections between the ethical treatment of animals and feminist thought through caring. For instance, in “Animal Rights and Feminist Theory”—an article published in 1990—she argues that “the basis for a feminist ethic for the treatment of animals” emerges out of the “relational culture of caring” of feminist work.[1] *Animals, Mind, and Matter* owns its theoretical foundations to Donovan's decades-long engagement with feminist ethics of care and CAS, including the now classic *Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations* (co-edited with Carol J. Adams, 1995) and her more recent *The Aesthetics of Care: On the Literary Treatment of Animals* (2016). Furthermore, as she announces in the preface, *Animals, Mind, and Matter* is composed of previously published articles that have been revised and expanded along with new chapters.

*Animals, Mind, and Matter* is, above all, an interrogation of animal subjectivity through the lens of feminist care theory with the goal of challenging enduring constructions of animals as objects in official discourses. Donovan highlights three in particular: law (animals as property), commerce (animals as commodities), and science (animals as soulless bodies). In nine short chapters plus an introduction and conclusion, the author develops the central argument announced in the title: “animals have minds; they do mind; and they matter” (p. xvi).

Chapter 1 is devoted to laying down the principles of care theory and interspecies dialogue.

Donovan argues that animals express their “voices” through “expressed positions” (behaviors and responses to human actions) that undoubtedly indicate their opposition to mistreatment, encouraging us humans to listen ethically to what animals are telling us (p. 3). She distances herself from care theorists who engage in or enable animal-killing practices by describing their work as contradictory and defending vegetarianism. Chapter 2 expands the discussion on interspecies dialogue, emphasizing the ethical responsibility of humans to learn how to understand animals' knowledges, languages, and communications. Moreover, Donovan provides some examples and scientific evidence on animal languages and communication to conclude that once humans know we can communicate with other beings, we are ethically obligated to pay careful attention to such communications. By the end of this chapter, the author highlights the position of earth jurisprudence thinkers who advocate for a “natural law that incorporates the needs and wishes of other living creatures in its jurisprudence” (p. 19).

“The Inside Story,” the third and longest chapter in the book, critiques Cartesian objectivism and scientific reductionism, offering various animist perspectives as alternatives to thinking about animal subjectivity. Donovan's goal in this chapter is to show how epistemological approaches that incorporate other-than-human persons have been delegitimized and marginalized in Western societies but have, nonetheless, persisted. Moreover, they show us paths to “engage dialogically with voices not heard or dismissed as trivial by Cartesian objectivist science” (p. 38).

In chapter 4, Donovan revisits Tom Reagan's notion of “subject-of-a-life” and draws attention to common features between this concept and those proposed by other thinkers of the living organism, including Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, Karl Ernst von Baer, Hans Driesch, Hans Jonas, Andreas Weber, and Francisco Varela. She argues that animals, as other nonhuman living beings, are driv-

en by a “goal-directed ontological essence” that humans must respect (p. 49). This proposition becomes the basis for denouncing human actions against animal dignity and opposing the genetic engineering of animals in chapter 5. Chapter 6 returns to the need to rethink jurisprudence presented in chapter 2 and describes “radical natural law” as an approach that provides a path to recognize the dignity of other-than-human beings in the realm of law.

Donovan states significant opposition to views on nature by Donna Haraway and new materialism theorists like Karen Barad, Stacy Alaimo, and Jane Bennett in chapter 7. Her objections derive from her opposition to what she sees as new materialism’s “nullification of the ontological distinction between inert matter and living creatures” and its failure to “acknowledge or provide a place for mind, consciousness, or subjectivity in the natural world” (pp. 69, 74). Nevertheless, her most direct criticisms are directed toward the positions of some of these scholars regarding genetic engineering, who have either endorsed it or failed to denounce it unequivocally. In chapter 8, Donovan introduces panpsychism as an alternative to both new materialism and Cartesian science. The book’s last chapter describes how emergence aesthetics, a concept the author previously developed in *The Aesthetics of Care*, plays a central role in opposing the objectification of nature and liberating animal subjectivity from “human objectivist colonizing domination” (p. 96).

Donovan’s *Animals, Mind, and Matter* is a zealous, well-elaborated, compelling defense of animal subjectivity as the basis for ethical interspecies relations between human and nonhuman animals. Its structure as an assemblage of self-contained brief chapters and overall concise form makes it suitable for different types of engagements, making it particularly fit for undergraduate and graduate classrooms. However, while its conciseness and impactful statements are crucial to conveying the significance and urgency of the

matter, some readers might appreciate more nuance in some parts. For example, in the discussion on jurisprudence, one wonders how recent developments on nonhuman personhood in countries like Argentina, Colombia, or Ecuador enter the debate. More generally, one misses a more significant presence of perspectives from the Global South. In the case of the critiques of Western science, the paradox of scientists providing the knowledge to challenge the mistreatment of animals in scientific spaces (e.g., biologists’ work on animal behavior, languages, and communication) could be further examined. Similarly, the author’s reliance on reiteration as a rhetorical strategy might be perceived by some readers as being repetitive, while others will appreciate its use to emphasize Donovan’s main arguments and connect discussions across chapters.

Overall, *Animals, Mind, and Matter* consolidates Donovan as one of the leading voices in feminist CAS. Moreover, her long-standing commitment to feminist animal ethics provides a roadmap and inspiration for junior and future scholars.

#### Note

[1]. Josephine Donovan, “Animal Rights and Feminist Theory,” *Signs* 15, no. 2 (1990): 375.

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