conversational and high-falutin’, McKay adopts a witty yet restrained voice in over thirty pages of what should go down as an important contribution to the Canadian essay. That is not to say the tone itself is restrained: he begins by listing candidates for iconic Canadian images to place beside such classics as “Wordsworth in the stolen boat on Windermere” and “Sylvia Plath at full gallop on Ariel.” The list is as impressive as the seemingly un-Canadian suggestion that a photograph of “Duncan Campbell Scott at a portage on the height of land between Lake Superior and Hudson Bay watersheds” and “Daphne Marlatt in conversation with Steveston fisherman” qualify for similarly iconic status. In six sections, McKay traces a history of Canadian nature poetry, one that posits such poets as D.C. Scott and Charles G.D. Roberts against the pure Romantics with whom they are often aligned (and compared to whom, much maligned); that suggests the “soupçon of terror” necessary for sublime experience becomes, in early Canada’s “unmitigated wilderness, an overdose”; that celebrates the species specificity and acuity of Archibald Lampman and Ethelwyn Wetherald; that recalls the problematic influence of Atwood’s *Survival* and the George Grant inflected post-colonial civil elegies of Dennis Lee; that recognizes nature poetry that engages with history (Atwood, Kroetsch), science (Dewdney, Dickinson), culture (Bringhurst, Marlatt), philosophy (Lilburn, Zwicky); and that, finally, offers an alternate guide or set of challenges to scholars, students, and poets to carry on the project of exploring Canadian nature poems. Holmes has taken up this project in a significant and provocative way with the expansive *Open Wide a Wilderness*. It’s up to members of ALECC, as scholars and teachers of Canadian environments and literatures, to grab some gear and continue on the portage.

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**ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS** edited by **TOM TYLER** and **MANUELA ROSSINI**

Brill Academic Publishers, 2009 $117USD

**Reviewed** by **TAMMY ARMSTRONG**

The sixth title in the Brill Human-Animal Studies Series, *Animal Encounters* is an exemplary entry-level and springboard essay collection for those interested in Animal Studies. Organized around six “encounters”: Potential, Mediate, Experimental, Corporeal, Domestic, and Libidinal, these essays crosshatch multiple disciplines and ethical positions, emphasizing the interconnectivity between diverse scholars, writers and activists. In his introduction, co-editor Tom Tyler cites Foucault’s differentiation between antagonism and agonism in that the former is “a standoff” and the latter is “‘mutual incitement.’” Though many of the twelve essays are polemical forays into this burgeoning field, the introduction sets the tone for these “encounters,” encouraging a discourse that does not attempt to reconcile alterities but treats them as essential bridges between disciplines.

Tyler acknowledges that the ambiguous term Animal Studies makes for “an open, contested field, with no clear canon, [thus] Animal Studies is a meeting point where different species of researcher gather.” He maintains, “[t]hese varying, even conflicting approaches that characterize the field are a strength rather than a weakness.” As the collection of essays exhibits, it is these varying approaches and bricolages that assert diversity and creative potential in such a “fast-growing field.” The strength
of this collection is in its inter-referentiality, which rather than creating a collection that feels
constrictive and erudite, establishes a gathering of cultural workers who are mutually concerned with
the ramifications of how humans look at nonhumans. Contemporary in scope, Animal Encounters
explores haute-couture fashion, David Lynch, PETA pinups, zoophilia, rat art, and pet photography,
among other subjects. The impact of posthumanist discourse clearly filters through these pieces,
bringing human and nonhuman borders under scrutiny while widening the field and furthering
questions for others regarding empathy and exploitation. This collection is well balanced and due to
length constraints, I will touch on some of the essays that were conspicuous in their scope and
research.

Randy Malamud, for instance, highlights the ironic nature of some of America’s cultural pursuits that
“contribute to the anthropocentric hegemony that keeps animals subaltern.” Malamud’s examples
run the gamut from animal parts in art exhibits, Dior suits for elephants, fashion ad campaigns with
animal props, to our ability to still maintain that charismatic mega-fauna enjoy this sort of
interaction. The damage, Malamud contends, is that these portrayals propagate disposability and
commodification; “human ingenuity and violence against animals are complementary facets of the
same sensibility.”

Both Steve Baker and Donna Haraway share concern for a wider appreciation of non-human roles in
laboratory work, as humans are healthy, in large part, due to research and animal experimentation.
Haraway contends that anthropocentric borders must be a construct of the past as, “[w]e are in the
midst of webbed existences, multiple beings in relationship, this animal, this sick child, this village,
these herds, these labs, these neighbourhoods in a city, these industries and economies, these
ecologies linking natures and cultures without end.” Artist Lucy Kimbell, in an interview with Steve
Baker, also shares this sentiment when she emphasizes that “[h]ere we are, our bodies protected
over the years by vaccinations and drugs most of which were probably tested on animals . . .” Both
writers are realistic in the complexity of this problem.

Other essays look toward still patchy areas of research, such as Jonathan Burt’s thoughtful article,
which rallies those interested in animal studies to strive towards a comprehensive 20th century body
of work on animal history as “sometimes it seems as if there’s a gap between the death of Queen
Victoria and the arrival of Peter Singer.” While Burt looks to examples of robotic-hybridity to help fill
this gap, Susan Squier’s essay takes three women from three eras and explores their involvement
with chicken farming. Over nearly one hundred years, Squier demonstrates our connections to
husbandry and the historical consequences of big business farms through these women’s journals
and diaries. Pamela Banting’s essay on reading and “writing wildly” is a fascinating piece that tracks
our literacy through nature. She looks to how nature is interpreted textually and how we must
“interpolate how animals in many ways made us human.” Her work also introduces a wider audience
to the writings of Western-Canadian writers Andy Russell and Sid Marty who “write wildly” and read
“animal rhetorics” through, and despite, our insistence on a socially constructed nature.

The most radical of the essays concern, as co-editor Manuela Rossini notes, “the fleshly
entanglement of organisms.” Monika Bakke urges “the revision of the discourse and debate on
human-animal intimacy” and looks to historical studies by sexologists. With little contemporary
research proffered, this is unbroken ground. By exposing “zoos” or the fringe group of individuals
“sexually attracted to particular species and even to a specific individual animal or group of

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individuals,” Bakke does not propose to normalize the action but to encourage work for a sincere understanding of a stigmatized fraction of society. Her article is fascinating in its inclusiveness of historical literary and artistic depictions of “zoosexual” acts found in mediums from fairy tales to pornography.

*Animal Encounters'* importance is not only that it contributes to the field of Animal Studies, but also that it offers accessible examples for promising pursuits in multiple directions. Tyler and Rossini have brought to the foreground questions and explorations that may not sit well with all who read them. The topics are contentious without being gratuitously provocative. This collection expands the field by complicating posthumanistic perceptions of difference and boundary while demonstrating the field’s social and theoretical relevance in terms that the novice and the expert may understand.

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**The Little Engine That Could...I think I can, I think I can, but can I really?**

“*Mom, Will This Chicken Give Me Man Boobs?” My Confused, Guilt-Ridden, and Stressful Struggle to Raise a Green Family* by ROBYN HARDING

Vancouver: Greystone Books 2009 $19.95

**Reviewed by STEPHANIE POSTHUMUS**

The refrain of the classic children’s book, *The Little Engine that Could*, kept running through my head as I read about Robyn Harding’s attempt to live a more environmentally friendly lifestyle. Harding’s constant “I’m trying hard, I really am” reminded me of the little engine’s “I think I can, I think I can.” But unlike the little engine, Harding never seems to reach the summit in her quest for living ecologically. Rather, she arrives at a fairly obvious, far from earth-shattering conclusion: “So maybe I hadn’t become the deep-dark green goddess I’d hoped to be. But still, I was doing my best; I was going to bother. I would bother to do all the small things I could in my own life to be low impact, sustainable, and environmentally friendly.” This refrain “I think I can do a little bit, I think I can do a little bit” hardly evokes a sense of accomplishment and the reader wonders if all the effort was worth it.

*Mom, Will This Chicken Give Me Man Boobs?* falls into the genre of non-fiction eco-memoir written generally by journalists with no real background in ecological science or environmental philosophy. Humorous anecdotes combined with a self-mocking tone are supposed to illustrate the dilemmas of choosing a more environmental lifestyle (see for example James Glave’s *Almost Green* that plays on the same metaphor of different shades of green). Unfortunately the worst examples of this genre are based on a superficial, Google-gleaned knowledge of environmental issues, leaving the reader with no real valuable resources to find more in-depth answers. For example, Harding touches on many of