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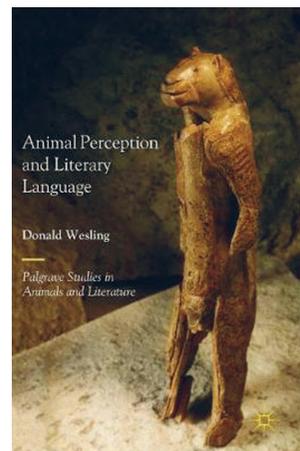
Uniwersytet Śląski w Katowicach

Wydział Filologiczny

Donald Wesling: *Animal Perception and Literary Language*. Palgrave Studies in Animals and Literature.
Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. 286 pp.

In *Animal Perception and Literary Language*, a monographic study published in the series Palgrave Studies in Animal and Literature, Donald Wesling argues that with time literary scholarship will become animal studies. In the “Preface: Animalist Perception and Interpretation” he states that he intends to trace “the literary animal of movements and perceptions” (p. x). He writes about the category humAnimal, since animals are only animals because we say we are them. He refers to the “animal inside us” (p. xv).

In the chapter “Imbroglios of Humans and Nonhumans” Wesling invokes Merleau-Ponty’s rehabilitation of perception, which was achieved by tracing the animal movement of the human body. Wesling links creativity with perception, perception with cognition, and the above with emotion, hence life. In Derridean terms he writes about what he calls the “master terms,” *animalist, perception, interpretation* (p. 8). Derrida was one of the philosophers who discussed the imbroglio by trying to put *human* and *animal* on the same level. Gilles Deleuze, Giorgio Agamben, Jacques Derrida, Donna Haraway and Kalpana Rahita Seshandri all



refuse to use the term “animal.” Wesling argues that the human-animal ambiguity should be looked for in sentences, since “what if the animal inside us thinks and speaks?” (20). He supports this idea with interpretations of Kim Stanley Robinson and László Krasznahorkai’s poetry.

In “Perception, Cognition, Writing” Wesling claims that a sentence expresses human-animal relationships. For him perception means both *physical senses* and *intellectual/emotional understanding* (p. 50). He then discusses senses from the point of view of philosophy (Michel Serres), natural history (Diane Ackerman), literature (Susan Stewart), and visual arts and neurophysiology (Barbara Maria Stafford). He gives examples from the literary texts by Paul Dutton, Maggie O’Sullivan, and Ted Hughes, who all experimented with animalist language.

The chapter “Attributes of Animalist Thinking” indicates Bakhtin as “the thinker with some of the best definitions of creativity and embodiment, partly through [his] concept of dialogism” (p. 90). Wesling distinguishes between creativity and creativeness, discusses Foucault’s and Brian Massumi’s ideas of embodiment, and proceeds to analysing dialogism, understanding it as the modern context for rationality, heteroglossia, boundary, monologism (official language), intonation, and inner speech. Then he writes about amplification of affect in Annie Dillard’s essay on the weasel.

In “Animalist Thinking from Lucretius to Temple Grandin” Wesley evokes Stacy O’Brien’s, Helen MacDonald’s, and Charles Foster’s personal narratives of living with animals. He quotes from Derrida’s lectures, where the proper of the human is to be redefined, ethics is that which should be redirected to human-animal boundary, and defeat of thought in the encounter with a wild animal is diagnosed. In *De Rerum Natura* Lucretius states that humans and animals are close, and this can be seen also in Michel de Montaigne’s *Apology for Raymond Sebond*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s poetry, and John Muir’s nature writing. Also the work of Alfonso Lingis, Laurie Shannon, Brian Massumi, and Temple Grandin can be seen in the light of animalist language and perspective.

The chapter “Perception and Expectation in Literature” exemplifies the above theories with poetry, prose, and theatrical plays. It is followed by “Afterword: Alphabet for Animalists”. The “Afterword” starts with *animalist* and *animal* and ends with *zygote*.