

Andil Gosine, *Nature's Wild: Love, Sex, and Law in the Caribbean*. Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2021. 178 pp. (Paper US\$ 24.95)

The Caribbean has seen increasing work in queer, gender, and sexuality studies in recent years. While ecocritical approaches are not new to the field, a sharper focus on animal studies is now gaining attention. Andil Gosine's *Nature's Wild: Love, Sex, and Law in the Caribbean* is, to my knowledge, the first in the field that puts queer studies, animality discourse, legal arguments, memoir, and artistic production in dialogue with each other from a multiethnic perspective. Gosine's interdisciplinary methodology and multifaceted analyses of history, politics, and art stimulatingly engage with Caribbean subject formations from the colonial to the postcolonial period. The book discusses Columbian constructions of the Kalinago/Carib natives as cannibals, sodomizers, and bestial savages; Victorian laws against sodomy and homosexuality that would affect all British colonies; and the contemporary legacy of anti-LGBTQI+ attitudes in the Caribbean, including Trinidad, the author's birthplace. This wide timeframe allows Gosine to present an intersectional continuum of dehumanizing practices while simultaneously historicizing and nuancing a complex spectrum of public responses to queer communities within the Caribbean and its diasporas.

Some of the theory goes over familiar ground (posthumanism and critical race theory via Sylvia Wynter, legal contexts of Caribbean antisodomy laws via Tracy Robinson, critiques of homonationalism and metropolitan queer studies via Jasbir Puar). However, the specific contexts of children's (particularly boys') sexuality, respectability politics, colonial education, and religious doctrine (Chapter 1, "*Puhngah!*"), racialized colonial sumptuary laws and gendered, sexualized, disciplinary regimes of bodily dress and decorum in the postcolony (Chapter 2, "*Clothes Make the Man*"), local queer rights activism in Trinidad (Chapter 3, "*The Father, a Godfather, and the Specter of Beasts Old and New*"), art by the Guadeloupean artist Kelly Sinnaph Mary (Chapter 4, "*Desir Cannibale*"), the author's own art exhibits (Chapter 5, "*Natures' Wild*"), the inclusion of Indo-Caribbean queer subjects, and the insistence on the agency and specificity of Caribbean communities add unique insights.

The book's title and that of the final chapter are borrowed from Kelly Sinnaph Mary, whose *Nature's Wild* is also the cover art for the book. The colonial discourse of animality as less than human is a running thread throughout, but not really explored from an animal studies orientation. The animal, a generalized construct that was imposed on Caribbean populations as a degrading marker of inferiority and is now embraced by them in a liberating, relational manner according to Gosine, operates in the book mostly as a metaphor for the non- or sub-human (read non-White), which limits what constitutes ani-

mals as specific categories and subjects in their own right. Nature, wildness, and the animal therefore continue to function as opposing categories of culture, civilization, and the human, even as Gosine attempts to complicate and overturn these colonial binaries.

While the book occasionally acknowledges the inconsistencies, paradoxes, and contradictions of discourses of animality, sodomy, transvestism, transgender, gay and lesbian identities or their more indeterminate Caribbean counterparts, the animal often stands in for what is unruly, nonnormative, and queer rather than for distinct sexual or other behaviors in varied animal lives not easily transposed to generalized human terms. The history of cannibalism, sodomy, gender trouble, and same-sex desire within Britain, for instance, does not really account for why natives in the Caribbean, then and now, are the ones who are generally perceived as uncivilized animals. The shifting grounds of sexual rights in the Western world undergo an equally simple reversal but without accounting for animal rights discourse: non-White, heterosexual homophobes now figure as the “new” “Beasts” (p. 71), and queer White people become more human in this progress narrative where they must “save” non-White queers from local oppression and battle for their liberation as more enlightened subjects. One is not always sure just why the animal is the directing logic of the book. Toward the conclusion, Gosine asserts a somewhat unevenly maintained “alliance” with animals and raises the challenge: “*We are animal. So what?*” (p. 132, emphasis in text), only to switch back to asserting the significance of reclaiming humanity.

The concluding discussion of how animals and other nonhumans figured into antislavery and antiracist discourses by people such as Frederick Douglass, Angela Davis, and José Esteban Muñoz, and the critique of privileged, White, male behavior that validates violence against women and other minorities are timely, but the continued interpretation of such violent behavior as animal-like reinscribes the colonial script. Despite the reductive reading of the animal in these instances, the book is an important addition to queer studies in the Caribbean.

*Supriya M. Nair*

Department of English, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor MI, U.S.A.

*smnair@umich.edu*