lationality" (117) – an idea of comparison as relational rather than based on the solid identity of the subject of comparison and/or the objects compared. Through a daring intertextual journey that takes her readers from Troung's novel to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* via Gertrude Stein's *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Chuh argues that "these texts in their interarticulation submit that the universal in global history is coloniality" (114).

Starting from this awareness, we are called to "mis-take the university and […] enjoinders to expertise and compartmentalized knowledge" (121). It must be noted, however, that an affirmative project for a different university is never laid out *as such*: "an illiberal university must remain a question, a marker for striving for the realization of a radically different world" (121). We are left with the impression that it is mostly a matter of tuning in an already existing alternative: "other humanities […] have long existed and percolate institutionally largely with and through minoritized discourses" (2). Chuh's effort appears to be one of a spokesperson attempting to channel discourse on behalf of an expanding community: "Who are we after Man? […] We are entangled particles; we are matter; we matter" (125-126).

Several questions remain open. For instance: how encompassing – or effective – can Chuh's "we" be, if we keep in mind that, in any struggle for justice, conflicting views and interests may, and indeed often, arise? Or, how would all this play out at the institutional level – due to the fact that the university is and will be, in the immediate future, an institution with a structure and a hierarchy? Yet this book does not shy away from the questions it provokes. Its author bravely takes up the challenge to dwell in complexity and imagine alternatives.

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Jopi Nyman, *Equine Fictions. Human-Horse Relationships in Twenty-First-Century Writing*. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019. 164 pages. ISBN: 978-1-52753226-7.

As the title indicates, *Equine Fictions. Human-Horse Relationships in the Twenty-First-Century Writing* is concerned with narratives that center on horses, or rather on relationships between horses and humans. As the

subtitle suggests, Jopi Nyman includes readings not only of fiction in the stricter sense but also of genres such as autobiography and travel writing. In fact, the distinction between autobiographical narratives and fictional ones structure the book. Following an introductory chapter, the book falls into two parts, "Autobiographical Perspectives" and "Representing Humans and Horses in Fiction." These two parts each contain three chapters, case studies, analyzing different texts and genres, but all with a focus on the roles that horses play in the texts discussed. (The "fiction" of the main title could be read to suggest that whatever the generic status of the text, horses generally function as fictions.) The introductory chapter places the study in the context of human-animal studies generally, in particular emphasizing Donna Haraway's notion of companion species and her suggestion that humans "become with" these species (4-5). The introduction then looks more specifically at studies of horses in culture and literature. As Nyman points out, literary studies of horses are still relatively rare, even though the last few years has seen an increase in this area. Nyman's study, then, certainly constitutes a welcome contribution in that it adds to our understanding of how horses figure in contemporary English language culture.

Chapter Two, the first case study, is a discussion of Susan Richards's *Chosen by a Horse: How a Broken Horse Fixed a Broken Heart* (2006). It explores human-horse relationships in the context of trauma and affect. Nyman finds that the text is part of a "contemporary popular US therapeutic discourse" (37) and that even though he sees the text as affirming the significance of horses and conveying a Harawayan sense of "becoming with" this therapeutic discourse ultimately renders the narrative anthropocentric, with horses gaining meaning only in relation to the human protagonist. The focus on trauma and affect continues in the third chapter. Here the generic context is not only autobiography but also travel writing. Rupert Isacson's *The Horse Boy: A Memoir of Healing* (2009) is the story of the narrator's journey with his autistic son Rowan on horseback through Mongolia in the search of healing for both of them through leaving Western modernity behind. In his analysis, Nyman focuses on several aspects of the text: autism as a state of liminality, a New Age-inspired critique of modern science and embrace of shamanism, the generic properties of travel writing and Isacson's own need to work through trauma. Horses play a role in relation to all of these and Nyman describes the narrative as "telling of the importance of the strong human-animal bonds in late modern culture" (54). The final (auto)biographical narratives include Dan M. "Buck" Brannaman's

The Faraway Horses: The Adventures and Wisdom of an American Horse Whisperer (2001), co-written with William Reynolds, and Cindy Meehl's documentary film *Buck* (2012). The analysis puts these narratives in a specifically American context, showing how Brannaman's "natural horsemanship," as the movement has come to be known, draws on the mythology of the West to critique contemporary ways of life in the US. In this discussion, Nyman draws on sociologist Anthony Giddens's concept of trust, highlighting how Brannaman attempts to merge traditional masculinity with "softer" characteristics such as caring and empathy.

The second part of the book begins with a reading of Australian writer Gillian Mears's *Foal's Bread*. In Nyman's perceptive reading of the novel, we find recurring concerns from the case studies on autobiographical narratives, both in the focus on genre, in this case the post(colonial) pastoral, and in the centrality of trauma. Here, however, the traumatic events are discussed in terms of (post)colonial violence and abuse, emphasizing a specifically Australian rewriting of the pastoral space as anything but idyllic. Nyman concludes that the novel "is a contemporary counter-pastoral aiming to challenge the anthropocentric and hierarchical divisions between humans, animals and nature" (95). The second case study dealing with fiction looks at a very different kind of text. Here, Nyman reads *Follyfoot* fanfiction, that is, fiction written by fans of the 1970s British television series *Follyfoot*, based on the works of the writer Monica Dickens, and published on a website dedicated to the show. Since the series is set on a rescue farm where old or abused horses are given refuge, horses are a central part of the storylines. While fanfiction is often seen as a progressive or radical form of writing, Nyman shows that the *Follyfoot* variety is rather traditional, focusing on heterosexual human romantic relationships. Drawing on "Svetlana Boym's work on the functions of nostalgia," Nyman convincingly argues that this fanfiction "is in many respects oriented nostalgically towards the past and the familiar" (97). Not unlike the argument he makes about Buck Brannaman, Nyman claims that it is a specifically national past that is evoked, a traditional Englishness evoked partially through intimate, caring human-horse relationships. The final chapter of *Equine Fictions* looks at Jane Smiley's *Horse Heaven*. Here, Nyman introduces a new term: horsescapes. These are "sites where equines are involved in action and where the various human-animal encounters occur; that is, they are sites for enacting and transforming human-animal relations" (125). His readings of the novel discuss these encounters both at a macro and a micro level and locate

them in a specifically transnational American context, where non-human animals, as Nyman argues, are "inseparable from Americanness" (17).

As the brief summary of the six case studies shows, *Equine Fictions* engages with an impressing breadth of materials, both in terms of cultural or national contexts and in terms of generic ones. Theoretically, the book is similarly characterized by breadth and diversity but Haraway's phrase "becoming with" is used in four of the six case studies, perhaps in its most developed form in the concluding chapter on *Horse Heaven,* and to some extent forms a theoretical through line. To a certain extent, the different readings of these diverse texts are clearly coherent, taking on related concerns of genre, of trauma and affect, as well as of nostalgia/memory/tradition within national frameworks. However, as a whole, the book comes across as a collection of loosely connected individual readings rather than as a tightly knit or evolving argument. This is understandable, given the fact that the book comprises pieces previously published separately, but it is nevertheless at times frustrating, given the clear potential that exists for developing such a sustained argument based on the readings performed. As for expectations of a challenge to anthropocentrism that the book's position within human-animal studies possibly raises, the promise is present but unfulfilled. Rather than being a shortcoming of *Equine Fictions* specifically, however, this points to the difficulty of the fields of literary and cultural studies, anthropocentric endeavors at the core, to find modes of analysis that can challenge the centrality of the human inner and outer world in transformative ways.

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John Wills, *Gamer Nation: Video Games & American Culture*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019. 296 pages. ISBN: 978-1-4214-2870-3.

In *Gamer Nation: Video Games & American Culture*, John Wills sets out with a clear and, he argues, potentially ground-breaking thesis: namely that "America *is* a gamer nation" (3). Following in the footsteps of other influential studies with similar agendas of proving a specific commodity central to the recent development of the US, like Erik Schlosser's influential