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Cary Wolfe, *Art and Posthumanism, Essays, Encounters, Conversations* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2021), 226 pp.

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In *Art and Posthumanism, Essays, Encounters, Conversations*, Cary Wolfe gathers most of his essays from 2004 to 2020 together with an artist's interview. A Publication History is included at the end of the collection, clarifying which of these writings are combinations or portions of chapters adapted from previous works. Thus brought together, these fragments "resonate with and enhance each other" (vii) to highlight the author's approach to posthumanism, braiding theory and analyses of specific artworks. As a result, this book sheds light on visual art using seminal works by German systems theory thinker Niklas Luhmann, French philosophers Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault as well as Italian biopolitics philosopher Giorgio Agamben to name but a few.

The collection includes twelve contributions, organized in three parts. The opening of the book, titled "In Lieu of an Introduction: A Conversation with Giovanni Aloi," consists of an interview that effectively lays the foundations of the book. Wolfe here introduces his key concepts and the works of the visual artists under study in the various chapters. This unusual introduction tightly knits together the collection of originally scattered writings. The following parts are composed of three or four sections each, with each individual section focusing on works by a single artist. Images in black and white are inserted throughout, offering precious glimpses of the works discussed. In addition, high-quality color plates included in the last pages invite readers to create further connections beyond words.

Under the heading "Systems: Social, Biological, Ecological," Part One focuses on how art is perceived, how it can trigger new ways of relating to the living world, and how experiencing art may change our thinking. First, the study of Ricardo Scofidio and Elizabeth Diller's project, *Blur* (2002) allows the author to discuss the issues of representation, imitation, and visibility in art. The second chapter demonstrates how Koolhaas and Mau's *Tree City* (2000) offers an immersive experience of openness through the mix of "green and gray ecologies" (43). This landscape architecture functions as a part of a larger social system and questions spatial and temporal boundaries that are later analyzed by the posthumanist approach. In the last section, Wolfe refers to Bateson and Derrida to explain the "queasiness" (55) brought about by Philip Beesley's *Hylozoic*

*Ground* (2010). Indeed, this installation produces an immersive environment where boundaries are unsettled. It explores an in-between space that challenges dichotomies such as human/nonhuman, or life/death.

Part Two deals with “The Animal” in four sections. The first chapter invites readers to rethink their relationships with nonhuman animals through philosophy and artistic representationalism. Here, the author decides to abandon the “message” of an artwork and rather focuses on the “formal strategies” (68) that reveal what does not appear at first sight. Referring to Derrida’s “carnophallogocentrism”, Wolfe first explores the power of Sue Coe’s paintings dealing with slaughterhouses. He explains that their impact on viewers does not come from their visual violence but from their composition implying fragmentation and repetition. Wolfe then scrutinizes Eduardo Kac’s installations that rely on transgenic life-forms revealing “an autopoietic becoming” (86) and casting light on another aspect of what posthumanism can be. In the next chapter, the author moves from the birth and spread of human exceptionalism to Derrida’s and Haraway’s groundbreaking works on that matter. Wolfe shows how Deke Weaver’s performance piece *Monkey* (2009) invites us to envision a different history where the first humans did come into being by themselves but as they relied on nonhuman animals. To enhance this shift in the writing of history, the author looks into Mark Wilson and Bryndís H. Snæbjörnsdóttir exhibition *Trout Fishing in America and Other Stories* (2014). This third section moves from photographs showing extinct California condors to a study on the roles of archives. These numbered dead nonhuman animals appear as archives of our common history: they are dead because of the world we created. The last chapter takes up the concepts studied in the three first parts. Michael Pestel’s installation, *Martha’s Peel* (2014) allows the author to revisit the issue of invisibility through the disappearance of the last passenger pigeon, to denounce the toxic impact of anthropocentrism, and to deal with the importance of rewriting our common history. Faced with the pigeon Martha’s death, viewers understand that their *oikos* is connected with the one Martha used to inhabit, spurring them to rethink their mode of dwelling. In the end, this questions the process of “de-extinction” made possible by manipulating the genetic code of the vanished bird. It shows the limits of trying to re-create beings separated from their original habitat.

To open Part Three, “The Biopolitical,” the author retraces the various issues debated in the literature on biopolitics before he moves on to a more specific discussion on bioart examined through the lens of biopolitical theory. The author illumines how bioart can be political in unveiling what is hidden in social systems the better to challenge them. Connecting Eduardo Kac or Anthony-Noel Kelly’s controversial artworks with Luhmann’s ideas, the author affirms that art is intertwined with political. The next essay invites us to explore Eija-Liisa Ahtila’s artworks in the light of the following question: “what do domestic space, immigration and colonialism, sexuality, gender and animality have in common?” (151). Space turns out to be a key element at the heart of these notions built on dichotomies (outside/inside, animals/humans) that are questioned by Esposito and Derrida’s “auto-immunitary logic.” Tying in with these matters, the third section consists of an email interview between Wolfe and the Finnish filmmaker. It reaffirms the artist’s will to work respectfully with multiple spaces in order to resist a univocal and

anthropocentric world. The last part deals with “The Biopolitical Drama of Joseph Beuys”. This essay gives a retrospective take onto the artist’s career. The author situates the artist’s early works by providing biographical elements. In particular, he broaches the WWII episode which led the artist to experience a “zone of indistinction” (191) that is reflected in his performance *I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974). Tackling the widespread understanding that Beuys is mostly casting a shaman in this performance, Wolfe demonstrates that the artist further questions political bodies.

This must-read book for students and scholars involved in interdisciplinary research does not come to a close with a traditional conclusion. Abiding by what happens in real-life experiences of art, it remains for the reader to ponder the various strands of thought that will be drawn together into meaningful conclusions. Indeed, this important book provides readers with fascinating, crisscrossing paths into Wolfe’s entanglement of contemporary art world and posthumanist theory.