

Juliana Schiesari. *Beasts and Beauties: Animals, Gender, and Domestication in the Italian Renaissance*.

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010. xii + 158 pp. index. illus. bibl. \$45. ISBN: 978-0-8020-9922-8.

In the introduction to this trim volume, Schiesari proposes to examine the representation of domesticated animals in relation to developing notions of domestic space in early modern Italy. Within the patriarchal order of the home life most famously prescribed by the humanist Alberti, domesticated animals, like women, children, and servants, are to be trained and controlled by the male head of the household. Adopting methodologies from the fields of animal studies, gender studies, and psychoanalysis, Schiesari focuses on the role of animals in painting and literature to consider different conceptions of what constitutes the human. Using examples from the fourteenth to the early seventeenth centuries, she connects the representation of animals to the construction of various forms of otherness, including gender, race, class, and sexuality. In these examples, which foreground the relational aspects of humans and beasts, Schiesari sees the possibility of challenging fixed categories and hierarchies of human and nonhuman animals.

Chapter 1 centers on the emerging phenomenon of the lapdog, the favored pet of upper-class women. Schiesari takes the sleeping lapdog in Titian's *Venus of Urbino* as a point of departure for analyzing the painting and goes on to examine the role of the lapdog in the episode of Adonio and Argia in canto 43 of the *Orlando furioso*. In this story, Adonio is able to seduce the married Argia by presenting her with a treasure-shedding lapdog — actually the sorceress Manto — that Argia finds irresistible. Schiesari reads the erotic charge in the Argia-Manto relationship as a site for exploring non-heteronormative sexualities.

The following chapter comprises an analysis of Petrarch's Metrical Letter 3.5 to Giovanni Colonna, a missive about a dog given to Petrarch by Colonna as a gift. Schiesari provides a nuanced and detailed reading of the representation of the dog in an allegorical narrative about the complex relationship between intellectual and patron. Chapter 3, on Alberti's *De equo animante*, elucidates how Alberti's manual for training horses underscores the anthropomorphic qualities of horses and, because of their role in assisting men in the public sphere, actually provides them a status superior to that of women. In this analysis, Alberti's text is less about the practicalities of horse training than it is an extension of Alberti's humanist vision of an orderly household controlled by the *pater familias*. In the next chapter, a consideration of Della Porta's illustrated *Della fisionomia dell'uomo*, Schiesari exposes the underlying ideologies behind Della Porta's connecting physical traits that are ostensibly animal-like to the vices or virtues associated with particular animals. In Della Porta's scheme, so-called feminine and animal characteristics are inevitably negative and, for Schiesari, pose a threat to idealized manhood and the patriarchal order. While Schiesari notes that Della Porta's essentialist notions are at the core of sexist and racist ideologies, she also suggests that his foregrounding the connection between human and animal qualities implicitly challenges strict dichotomies between the two categories.

Chapter 5 takes up Freud's "missed reading" (72) of Leonardo in "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of Childhood." Schiesari examines how Freud's identification with Leonardo colors Freud's analysis, which hinges on an anachronistic dialectic between the figure of the artist and the figure of the scientist. The final chapter explores the persistent presence of the myth of Diana in Italian literary texts, in French cultural production surrounding the influential figure of Diane de Poitiers, Henri II's mistress, and in the so-called *Gospel of the Witches*. In Schiesari's reading, while the representation of Diana and her hunting dogs reinforces the negative connection between women and the world of beasts in misogynist early modern Europe, Diana's wildness allows for conceiving an alternative space for women outside of patriarchal society.

Beasts and Beauties offers compelling, energetically conveyed readings of otherness in texts and images of early modern Europe. The strength of this study, namely the variety and scope of texts and images analyzed, is perhaps also its weakness. The connection between animals, gender, and domestication promised in the title and developed in the introduction does not constitute a principal thread in all the chapters, and at times the correlations made between the chapters seem

somewhat forced. One also regrets the small but recurrent typographical errors. Nevertheless, the book is an original one, and it demonstrates effectively how an animal-centered approach to the cultural production of early modern Europe can help in understanding the construction of categories and hierarchies of humanness.

NATHALIE HESTER
University of Oregon