

Book Review | *What Comes after Entanglement?:
Activism, Anthropocentrism, and an Ethics of Exclusion*,
by Eva Haifa Giraud (Duke University Press, 2019)

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An increasing number of scholars are attempting to highlight relations between peoples, worlds, knowledges, and ecologies that endure in spite of state and corporate attempts to alienate and sever. This has been particularly so in fields such as anthropology, gender and cultural studies, and environmental humanities, where a focus on creative pedagogies and practice has enabled thinkers to engage with "life on the inside of the webs and patterns of connection" (Rose 2013, 93). The recent emergence of "multispecies ethnography" (Kirksey and Helmreich 2010) is perhaps the best example of this commitment to highlighting both the enmeshment of human and more-than-human life, as well as the complex bonds of cooperation, togetherness, and shared experience between species. However, as Eva Haifa Giraud demonstrates, entanglements also come with certain exclusions and expulsions.

In *What Comes after Entanglement?* Giraud hones in on a trickier set of relations, with the author paying careful attention to the "entities, practices, and ways of being" foreclosed when "other entangled realities are materialized" (2). She highlights the paradoxical nature of relations, noting that attempts at collective encounter and scenes of assemblage are more often than not reliant on the establishment of purposeful barriers, boundary lines, and fissures—despite the initial insistence on commensurability and indiscriminate co-existence. For Giraud, deliberate acts of detachment and distancing become "ethico-political practices" (17), capable of enticing alternative visions of community, whilst also contesting liberal-humanist orderings of life. Like all non-innocent forms of doing, sometimes these exclusions deliberately destroy existing entanglements so that

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new desires, embodiments, and futurities can come into play. Ultimately, by drawing on a distinct feminist materialist lineage—think Donna Haraway (2003) and Karen Barad (2007)—the author shifts away from simply naming the practices and realities marginalized by given sociotechnical arrangements. Instead, Giraud posits that exclusion is a key site where "agency is distributed and responsibility needs to be taken" (181).

The book is structured as six chapters, moving chronologically across interrelated instances of anti-capitalist, animal, and environmental activism (from the 1980s to the present day). Starting with the McLibel trial of the mid-1990s, which saw McDonald's suing two activists, Helen Steel and Dave Morris, for distributing a detailed fact sheet critical of industry practices, Chapter 1 brings to the fore the "everyday exclusions and processes of marginalization" (25) that enable late capitalism's infrastructural arrangements to appear seamless, natural, and effortless. The chapter also traces the manner in which particular legal apparatuses, financial liabilities, and media ecologies curtail the emergence of "radical-participatory communicative tactics" (25) among activist groups—particularly as they seek a more expansive international platform. In the latter part of the chapter, Giraud attends to the difficulties that arise when movements shift from single-issue politics to more ambitious articulations of relation. As platforms interlink, slogans cross-pollinate, and stories go viral, Giraud warns of seemingly frictionless solidarities and common desires, stressing that any sort of relation, however well-intentioned and solicitous, is capable of producing asymmetries in power, representation, and agency.

It is the doubled bow of solidarity and refusal that organizes the rest of the book, as Giraud examines activist experiments with digital media technologies (Chapter 2), protest camps and free food giveaways (Chapter 3), mainstream media discourses regarding antivivisection activism (Chapter 4), as well as contemporary social media campaigns surrounding laboratory beagles (Chapter 5). Whilst each of the chapters listed contributes to the overall cohesiveness of Giraud's argument, Chapter 3 and 5 stand out as most aptly describing the quotidian practices of exclusion. Chapter 3 is particularly impressive in its ability to bring together three different examples—on critical animal studies, protest camps, and food activism—to demonstrate the way in which material-semiotic techniques of openness and pluralism prevent and foreclose particular actions, expressions, and movements. For Giraud, seemingly benevolent collective engagements, like food giveaways at protest camps, can often bring forth latent inequalities and hierarchical relations. In many ways this attests to the unpredictability of action, allowing us to recognize complexity and to move beyond arguments oriented around doing what is seemingly good and just.

Chapter 5 pursues a similar argument, though it shifts away from notions of openness, and instead considers charisma and its instrumental uses. Focusing on

social media campaigns surrounding the release of thirty beagles from Green Hill (a breeding facility in Brescia, Italy), the chapter examines the way that forms of nonhuman charisma, despite being key to internet virality and collective mobilization, also reinstall anthropocentric species hierarchies. Indeed, whilst the campaigns succeeded in rallying support, they did so by favoring certain breeds and species over others, linking the value of life to a range of desirable qualities. It is worth noting that the convivial character of the beagle, highlighted by activists, is paradoxically also the quality that has made the breed easily exploitable for research purposes. Its obedience is valued by both those attempting to “liberate” it and those allegedly oppressing it.

Through Giraud's multi-issue case studies, activism is conceived of as a constant negotiation between feel-good moments—of recruitment, community participation, mobilization, sometimes inclusion—and those that may be described as *killjoy* moments—of ambivalence, resistance, and unevenness. Much like Sara Ahmed's concept of killing joy in order to “open a life, to make room for life, to make room for possibility, for chance” (2010, 20), an ethics of exclusion has the capacity to encourage the emergence of new methods, approaches, and narratives. Giraud concludes the book by erring away from essentialist understandings of relation as either/or, taking us somewhere a little bit more fraught and uncomfortable. She references Thom van Dooren's (2016) work on Hawaiian crow conservation and the materialization of crow, reflecting on elements of distancing and exclusion that push seemingly cohesive assemblages into the realm of the uncanny. Giraud concludes that relations are often brought into being through processes that are mutually exclusive, rather than inclusive. Indeed, much like multispecies flourishing, anti-capitalist and environmental mobilization also rely upon necessary protocols, foreclosures, and frictions.

It is worth acknowledging that ethical decisions are animated by historical forces, as much as they are by future desires. There is a risk that Giraud's conceptual intervention in salvaging exclusion obfuscates the harm done by entrenched structures and systems of supremacy. It highlights the tension between projects seeking to dismantle and those that believe in the repurposing of injurious practices, institutions, and histories. At times, a deeper engagement is lacking with issues of race, colonialism, and sexuality—despite exclusions being a core tenet of hierarchized and dogmatic classifications of who/what counts as human, citizen, or even being. Additionally, it would have been welcome to see Giraud referencing the extensive work of Indigenous and anti-colonial theorists on the issue of generating decolonial futurities and relations through, and within, brokenness. Works that could prove useful in this regard might include Eve Tuck's “Suspending Damage” (2009)—an open letter that calls on researchers to reconsider the long-term impact of “damage-centered” research—and Michelle Murphy's “Alterlife and Decolonial Chemical Relations” (2017).

Whilst it is often easy to picture oneself as tangled up in an abundant world of diverse multispecies relations, Giraud's book is ultimately a reminder that the origin of the word *tangle* derives from *tagilen*, meaning "to involve in a difficult situation." In this way, the choice to entangle also means an openness to the possibility of separation, conflict, and refusal—reminding us of fraught histories, broken alliances, and the enduring consequences of violence. Indeed, to invite someone or something means that we might be responded to with a "no" or "rather not." It is this exclusion that we have to recognize as an essential component in our desire for connection, one that is the basis of political power and will. With capitalist and imperialist projects seeking absolute and unquestioned access—using relation to pillage and extract—it is becoming vital to support those who are unwilling to cooperate. To radically reimagine the terms of our engagement. Alongside asking "what comes after entanglement," we might also ask "what won't?"

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