



ECOCENE

CAPPADOCIA JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL HUMANITIES



Volume 6/ Issue 2/December 2025

The COVID-19 Pandemic: An Environmental Humanities Perspective



COVID-19 at the Zoo: Racial Capitalism, Immunity, and the Zoo

Ishaan Selby

Concordia University, Canada

i_selby@live.concordia.ca

ORCID: 0009-0004-6242-8456

Selby, Ishaan. 2025. "COVID-19 at the Zoo: Racial Capitalism, Immunity, and the Zoo." *Ecocene: Cappadocia Journal of Environmental Humanities* 6, no. 2 (December): 189–200. <https://doi.org/10.46863/ecocene.136>.

Research Article / Received: 25.07.2023 / Accepted: 16.12.2024

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.



COVID-19 at the Zoo: Racial Capitalism, Immunity, and the Zoo

by Ishaan Selby



Abstract

Zoos are a feature of modern life and contemporary culture. They are one of the few places where humans interact with animals especially in post-industrial economies. And yet the zoo is rarely attended to in critical social theory and cultural studies. This paper argues that the zoo is deeply enmeshed within racial capitalism and modes of biopolitical regulation beyond the species line. Specifically, this paper situates the immunization of zoo animals from COVID-19 within a longer history and broader conceptualization of the zoo as a biopolitical site of control over animals enmeshed within racial capitalism, anthropocentrism, and the biopolitics of immunity and confinement. The article traces the history of the contemporary zoo alongside the formation of a discourse of immunity from the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries and the history of racial capitalism. The article then concludes with a call to rethink human-animal relationships through an abolitionist lens: a framework dedicated to abolishing property.

Keywords: zoos, COVID-19, racial capitalism, animals



About the Author

Ishaan Selby is a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Postdoctoral Fellow at Concordia University in the Department of English. He holds a PhD in English and Cultural Studies from McMaster University where he also completed his MA in Cultural Studies and Critical Theory. His primary research sits at the intersection of animal studies, critical theories of race, critical theories of gender and sexuality, and the critique of capitalism. His work has appeared in *English Studies in Canada* and the edited collection *Lost Kingdom* (Vernon Press, 2024). He divides his time between Montreal and Toronto.



Acknowledgments

This article is part of the special issue “The COVID-19 Pandemic: An Environmental Humanities Perspective,” co-edited by Tatiana Konrad and Savannah Schaufler. This special issue emerges from the ongoing research on air in the context of the “Air and Environmental Health in the (Post-)COVID-19 World” project funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), and specifically from the 2023 conference *The Coronavirus Pandemic: An Environmental Humanities Perspective* at the University of Vienna. For more on the project, including the various research activities generated in its context, see the project website: <https://airproject.univie.ac.at/>.

COVID-19 at the Zoo:

Racial Capitalism, Immunity, and the Zoo

Ishaan Selby

In April of 2022, the Toronto Zoo announced plans to vaccinate their animals against COVID-19 (“Toronto Zoo” 2022). Such an episode might be met with something like anthropocentric outrage: how dare vaccines be wasted on animals, especially animals that are relatively “useless” in terms of their potential as commercial resources for the agricultural industry. This incident, in fact, was ignored, buried under a general amnesia in the Canadian news cycle about the pandemic. The neglect of this event serves as a metonym for the broader societal relationship with zoos, which are often remembered fondly as a childhood activity and otherwise assumed to be generally beneficial for both humans and animals—if considered at all. Indeed, outside of zoo studies and some scholars under the big umbrella of animal studies, zoos receive little critical attention.

As Daniel Vandersommers and Tracy McDonald (2019) remind us, the zoo is one of the most naturalized institutions of modern life (4). Due to a tacit humanism that has pervaded biopolitical critique and leftist political culture in general, the zoo is not commonly seen as an institution in need of critique, even though, as zoo studies scholar Irus Braverman points out, “an expansion of existing notions of governance to include the governance of nonhuman populations contributes to an understanding of what it means to be human” and such an understanding is manifested and negotiated in the space of the zoo (Braverman 2013, 19). This article examines the zoo through the Black radical tradition, particularly its critique of ownership. It builds on critical theorist Che Gossett’s (2015) suggestive remarks that the zoo is “a biopolitical apparatus, a carceral space undergirded by an anthropomorphic cultural imaginary” (para 15). In general, this article follows the recent turn toward the question of the animal in Black studies from scholars like Bénédicte Boisseron, Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, and Joshua Bennett. Summarizing this work, Neel Ahuja (2021) writes that these texts “engage with ‘animality’ as a relation of embodied existence and representation that configures ideas about both social difference and the human relationship to the natural world” (250). The

yoking together of Blackness and animality is contingent upon an imaginary and institution of ownership in anti-Black social formations, where the dominant relationship to animal life is one of ownership. Even in her very self-consciously neutral study of zoos, Braverman (2013) acknowledges that ownership is “the dominant language of formal communications between zoos,” and, ultimately, zoo animals are enmeshed with in the apparatus of private property (11). Given that ideologies and infrastructures of ownership are shaped by the afterlives of enslavement and settler colonialism within a global racial capitalist order, the owning of animals is shaped by a profound racial logic as part of broader ownership structures and ideologies. This article then engages the Black radical abolitionist project of rethinking the centrality of ownership to political, social, and psychic life, including our (human) relationships to the non-human world wherein the goal is to abolish property and instate “new social and economic relations that will allow us to live better together” (Walcott 2021, 88). The potential of the zoo to rethink and re-form the architecture of the (anthropocentric) gaze—where humans are positioned as central and superior in relation to other species—is limited by its existence within a system of private appropriation that perpetuates and reinforces racialized hierarchies of difference.

This article also builds on the critique of capitalism foundational to work in critical animal studies which sees animal exploitation within a system of global appropriation and oppression such as in the work of sociologist John Sorenson (2014). However, it further emphasizes the centrality of racialization to thinking about animals in distinct ways from the Anglo-American tradition of animal rights activism and animal studies.

The article explores how the Black radical tradition addresses the animal question as a particular critique of property and the naturalization of ownership. It traces the history of the zoo through histories of imperialism and enslavement. This framework allows us to examine the zoo through the mutually reinforcing biopolitical modes of management between species and race. The discussion then shifts toward the racialized uses of immunity within a social formation shaped by the afterlives of enslavement, drawing on the historian Kathryn Olivarius’ (2019) concept of “immunocapital.” Finally, the article concludes with a consideration of *wildness* as a guiding concept for establishing a *new zoo* that would involve a radical restructuring of systems of animal ownership.

The Black Radical Tradition and the Question of the Animal

Engaging with the concepts of racialization in general, and Blackness in specific, in such proximity to non-human animals takes several risks. One significant risk is the potential to draw false or offensive equivalence between Black people and animals, as demonstrated by certain activism, such as that of groups like PETA that exemplifies “a

recent discourse that has served the animal cause by using race as a leverage point” (Boisseron 2018, xiv). The other set of risks comes from an erasure of the human-animal divide as a technology of power as such an elision “reduces nonhuman animals to instruments for measuring degrees of anti-Blackness” (Kim 2015, 286). As Gossett (2015) and others have pointed out, a shared condition of relation to property has motivated Black thinkers to be attentive to the question of the animal on both similar and different grounds to the dominant traditions of animal liberation politics. Frederick Douglass, for instance, incorporated animals into his political thought, although marginally, drawing comparisons between himself and the oxen: “I now saw in my situation, several points of similarity with that of the oxen. They were property, so was I; they were to be broken, so was I” (qtd. in Gossett 2015, 4). Scholar and poet Joshua Bennett (2020) explores a canon of twentieth and twenty-first century Black writing that engages more ethical relations of human and non-human being through a mutual exclusion from full personhood.

This article contends that exploring the connections and mutual (if differentiated) imbrications with questions of property and ownership in relation to Blackness and animality shows their isometric connection and suggests a radical abolitionist political project. It ultimately argues that doing justice to all forms of life necessitates the abolition of the property-form as a central political and theoretical project. By applying these insights from work at the intersection(s) of Black studies and animal studies to work in zoo studies with a strong focus on the property-relation, a deeper understanding can be attained of the history and politics of zoos—institutions that often appear as innocent in their contributions to conservation and other such modes of animal protection. This article will examine the zoo in terms of racial capitalism. In their book *Histories of Racial Capitalism*, historians and racial inequality scholars Destin Jenkins and Justin Leroy (2021) explain that “racial capitalism is the process by which the key dynamics of capitalism—accumulation/dispossession, credit/debt, production/surplus, capitalist/worker, developed/underdeveloped, contract/coercion, and others—become articulated through race. In other words, capital has not historically accumulated without previously existing relations of racial inequality” (2021, 3). The zoo, in so far as it exists at the intersection of visual culture, labor, land, and the human-animal distinction, exists within the milieu of the relations that shape life under conditions of racial capitalism. The shift toward understanding zoos through this analytic is a shift toward thinking the question of the animal in materialist terms, i.e. a way attentive to the structural and historical logics of the zoo and its construction of the animal according to historically sedimented investments in anthropocentrism. The zoo is a space of preservation as well as confinement, reproducing a logic that secures a particular

relationship between the spectator and the object—one that operates within racialized terms, premised on the exoticization and devaluation of Black and other racialized forms of life. The devaluation of racialized life is contingent upon what interdisciplinary scholar Lisa Lowe (2015) calls the “intimacies of four continents,” i.e. “the often obscured connections between the emergence of European liberalism, settler colonialism in the Americas, the transatlantic African slave trade, and the East Indies and China trades in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries” (1). The aim of this article is to apply Lowe’s analysis of these connections as a conjunctural relation that subtends the emergence and reproduction of the modern zoo. Therefore, the article will focus on the legacies of the transatlantic slave trade as this is the site at which questions of ownership and animalization are most vivid.

Zoo Histories and Racial Capitalism

Understanding the zoo as a component of culture—comprising a set of relations and institutions such as literature and theater—reveals that it is sustained by relationships of imperial and colonial appropriation. This perspective aligns with cultural studies scholar Randy Malamud’s (1998) work in thinking about the relation between culture and imperialism at the zoo (58). Tracing the history of the zoo reveals its deep investment in global racial capitalism, as highlighted by critical theorist Brenna Bhandar’s concept of “racial regimes of ownership” (2018, 6). This critical account of zoos challenges the *new zoo* narrative, which posits the idea that the modern zoo is solely devoted to conservation and preservation of animal life. This elides the ways zoos’ “concerns for conservation of wildlife overlapped with concerns about the conservation and reproduction of normative civic life that they concomitantly espoused” in the context of challenges to the white supremacist racial order (Uddin 2015, 3). The collection of animals for display has long been a symbol of power and prestige connected to imperial modes of statecraft.

In late seventeenth century London, “citizens . . . could visit the numerous exotic animal displays that mirrored the spread of British commercial influence throughout the globe” (Ritvo 1987, 206). The modern zoo emerged from the zoological garden in the eighteenth century, themselves supplied with animals from private imperial menageries such as the Vienna Zoo and the Jardin des Plantes in Paris (Braverman 2013, 26). In a much more critical and polemical register, Malamud (1998) argues that over the past two centuries that “zoos . . . have played a vital role in the rhetoric of empire, and in the consequent sustenance of a prevalent imperial ethos” (26). This understanding positions the zoo as more than an innocent investment in the classification of life and instead as an institution profoundly determined by the imperial world-system. The eighteenth century marks out “the establishment and growth of the slave trade; and a widespread

popular enthusiasm for global projects involving the control of territories and, along with this impulse, the accumulation of information about the geography, the botany, and the nonhuman and human inhabitants of the world” (Brown 2011, 67). The modern zoo then exists within this broader context of the development of racial regimes of ownership and global racial capitalism.

The imbrication of the zoo within global racial capitalism is perhaps best exemplified by the London Zoo, starting in the nineteenth century, a time when the British Empire was the hegemonic power in the world. The founder of the Zoological Society of London, Sir Stamford Raffles was both a naturalist and a colonial administrator, as environmental historian Harriet Ritvo (1987) puts it, his “activities as a naturalist echoed his concerns as a colonial administrator: he made discoveries, imposed order, and carried off whatever seemed particularly valuable or interesting” (206). The co-production of zoological classification and colonial administration speaks to the way zoos and other modes of animal classification were ultimately imperial projects within a system of global capitalist accumulation.

In the US the zoo emerged in the 1860s, typified by Central Park Zoo in the transition “from a rural and agricultural nation to an urban one” (Braverman 2013, 26). The transition from a rural and agricultural nation to an urban one was typified by an alienation of humans and animals. As literary critic Philip Armstrong (2008) explains, techniques of industrial farming “were absolving farmers from close proximity to their livestock; assembly-line specialization of tasks was beginning, alienating workers from the material being processed; geographical and psychological gaps were widening between an increasingly urbanized human populace and most other species” (100). The mid-nineteenth century also saw what historians term the *Compromise of 1850* between the opponents and proponents of enslavement that would eventually break down in the United States Civil War. Braverman (2013) explains that American zoos “were also products of the movement to create public parks on the outskirts of cities, a trend tied to late nineteenth-century anxiety about urban moral and social decay” (27). Such an anxiety can be read not in terms of a free-floating affect but instead as deeply imbricated within the racial (and sexual) politics of mid-nineteenth century America, as urban historians have explored (see Chauncey 1994).

The contemporary zoo is a product of the increased alienation brought about by industrial capitalism and its incessant logics of accumulation. The influence of the environmental movement and reformers of the zoo here reworked zoos’ *raison d’être* as one of conservation. Art historian John Berger’s (1980) essay “Why Look at Animals” is concerned with the disappearance of non-human animals from public life, which

prefigures the reduction of humans “to isolated productive and consuming units” under regimes of labor discipline in twentieth century industrial capitalism (11). This discipline was shaped by Taylorism, a management technique emphasizing efficiency through the standardization of tasks and the scientific management of labor, which gained prominence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Berger also examines the impacts of marginalization and forms of confinement on those who are marginalized. He ends this line of inquiry with a striking observation: “All sites of enforced marginalization—ghettoes, shanty towns, prisons, madhouses, concentration camps—have something in common with zoos” (Berger 1980, 26).

Berger’s essay has become the key reference in a specific type of zoo critique, exemplifying what Uddin (2015) describes as “bad zoo feelings”—a particular affective orientation toward the zoo and toward looking at animals under capitalism (2). In response to these “bad zoo feelings,” such as those raised by Berger, the concept of the *new zoo* began to be formulated. The new zoo aimed to create a more “natural” environment for animals, though its “central paradox was the reconstruction . . . through increasingly sophisticated architectures and forms of animal science” (Uddin 2015, 3). Summarizing this shift, Braverman (2013) explains “zoos have taken upon themselves (and have been publicly entrusted with) the responsibility of caring for animals and of educating the public to care” (28). The new zoo today remains the paradigm of the enclosure that simulates the “natural environment” of the animals, one that represents the disciplining of the natural environment precisely through its inclusion as an object of the human gaze. As Uddin (2015) argues, the new zoo narrative “echoed and made newly relevant long-standing investments in the civilizing promise of the nonhuman world amid the double weight of species depletion and urban crisis” (8). The new zoo then drew on a discourse of urban social decay and anxieties around industrialization and biodiversity loss to make its claims.

The early twentieth century also saw the debut of the bar-less zoo generally attributed to German animal dealer and zoo director Carl Hagenbeck who opened the first of these types of zoos in 1907. As Braverman (2013) explains, Hagenbeck “attempted to make all apparatuses and attempts at classification . . . vanish in favor of seeing the animals themselves” (26). This kind of immersion in the habitat of the animals remains influential today. If Hagenbeck is generally remembered as the pioneer of this type of animal display, he is less remembered as playing a crucial role in the human zoo in the modern period, exhibiting Samoan and Sami people in 1874 (Braverman 2013, 73).

In the US, the Bronx Zoo “exhibited Ota Benga, an Mbuti pygmy from central Africa, as an example of an emblematic savage from a primitive race” (Braverman 2013, 73). These

displays of colonized people in zoos presented “animalized humans,” marking both their proximity and distance from normative (white) humanity (Braverman 2013, 73). In this way, the zoo functions as what Black studies scholar Alexander G. Weheliye (2014) calls a racializing assemblage, “a set of sociopolitical processes that discipline humanity into full humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans” (4). The way that a colonized person such as Ota Benga is available for display, *as* spectacle is contingent upon an existing reality of colonial accumulation that resulted in the dependence of colonized people and nations upon imperial power. Benga was purchased from slave traders loyal to Belgian King Leopold who was the colonial ruler of Congo, a vivid example of the dynamics of racial capitalism and the politics of display in the capitalist world system. The placing of the human zoo as foundational to zoo history means thinking about the zoo as a technology of racialization as part and parcel of its mission to classify and preserve certain forms of life within a broad racial spectacular infrastructure. We can see the human zoo as exemplifying “how for blackness the human/animal binary is not only collapsed but is in fact mutually reinforcing through the violence inherent in the racial-colonial grammar of animalization—how black people have been historically seen as beasts” (Gossett 2015, para. 14) The optic of bestialization, seeing Black people as beasts, continues to legitimate ongoing anti-black violence including through racialized modes of perception.

The Zoo and the Biopolitics of Race

The shift to the *new zoo* in the 1960s and 70s was a biopolitical operation, contingent upon the management of life. Such a management of life in the post-war period was part of a broader optimization of the body enacted through medical science and the “coordinated breeding of select rare and endangered species” (Uddin 2015, 2–3). The biopolitical imperative to make live is exemplified by these techniques of health preservation as well as reproductive technologies. Under conditions of racial capitalism, the management over life is deeply imbricated within racial hierarchy, leading scholars like Jasbir Puar and Weheliye to apply the insights of biopolitical critique to racial formations (see Puar 2017, Weheliye 2014). The will to preserve “white” animals such as white tigers and white rhinoceroses exists within a particular logic of preservation and racial hierarchy that itself is contingent upon a logic of racialized perception that marks whiteness as a *hypervisibility* for wild animals. As scholar Andrea Ringer (2024) notes people “have wondered aloud for more than a century if white tigers are best kept in captivity because the wild is perhaps too dangerous for them” (240)—bespeaking the intertwined logics of preservation and racialized schema of perception. Feminist studies scholar Fiona Probyn-Rapsey (2013) explores the way whiteness attaches to animal bodies in certain

contexts making them invisible or hyper-visible within different infrastructures of captivity (241). The way certain animals are marked for death and others for preservation has long been a concern of animal studies as part of the different ways animal capital can “fetishise death” as well as protect vulnerable species from the wild based on capitalism’s shifting valorization requirements and a naturalization of racial hierarchy (Probyn-Rapsey 2013, 245).

The zoo is a privileged site to explore the life-preserving functions of biopolitics alongside the operations of whiteness in visual mass culture. Braverman (2013) uses (and reworks) Foucault’s notion of pastoral power to think about the power exerted by zoos over animals. For her, this power is the “power of care” under the panoptic gaze and so “fundamentally a beneficent power” (Braverman 2013, 20–21). Ultimately, she sees the conflict between zoos and animal rights activists as the conflict over pastoral power (Braverman 2013, 23). While this analysis highlights how such a power of care can act as a form of capture and confinement for animal life, the conflict over pastoral power—who is the better pastor—animates the politics of human-animal relations, simply because animals cannot communicate in human-recognizable language. However, the imaginary of the pastor may be limiting when considering the possibility of multispecies coexistence outside of the regime of property and ownership. A more critical relation to the biopolitics of the zoo, including the idea of immunity discussed below, necessitates an exploration of the gaze and identification with animal alterity produced by the zoo environment.

Philosopher Brian Massumi (2014) argues that the zoo is a site of biopolitical regulation, contingent on the operations of identification while still reproducing the architecture of the gaze. As he writes, the “zoo is not simply a place of confinement . . . The fuzzy outlines of this emotional mutual inclusion does not replace the hard-edged exclusion constitutive of human politics” (Massumi 2014, 72). That is, such a relation of projection or attachment to the object of the gaze reproduces rather than challenges a material and structural exclusion inherent to the zoo itself in a social formation where the dominant relationship to animal life is one of ownership. In the next section, the question of immunity as a mode of biopolitical life preservation within racial capitalism will be addressed.

Immunity, the Zoo, and Racial Immunocapitalism

It is in this same moment that the modern zoo emerges out of imperial technologies and infrastructures of classification as well as a biological discourse of immunity, naturalized from early modern politics. As the theorist Ed Cohen (2009) puts it, immunity “incarnates ideas about human being culled from modern politics, economics, law,

philosophy, and science, which then belatedly achieve scientific status” and get ideologically reproduced as the hegemonic conception of the body and of health (8). The work of such a conception is to restrict conceptions of health to the level of the individual and within a logic of possessive individualism, constructing the boundaries of the self and other in atomized ways. Thus, such a conception inherits, naturalizes, and reproduces the idea of the body as private property and the possessive individual as the central political unit in public health “precisely by legitimating the idea that because your body is your property, then you obviously must defend it if it’s being attacked . . . But also, it presupposes that the disease dynamic is one of attack and defense at the level of the individual” (Cohen et al. 2022, 397). The history of immunity in colonial societies is shaped by the afterlives of slavery. The historian Kathryn Olivarius (2019) coins the term *immunocapital* to describe the way white men in antebellum New Orleans would use spurious claims of immunity against yellow fever to accrue various kinds of social and political advantage and reproduce the social order of enslavement. Immunocapital broke down along the color line with whiteness earning the privileges of immunity while immunity was imputed to Black slaves in order to extract labor. In other words, enslavement was ideologically reproduced through immunity just as enfranchisement for white people was based on claims of being immune. As Olivarius (2019) explains, “Black people could . . . possess immunity but not immunocapital, an expedient feint of logic that whites used to enrich themselves and reinforce their social and political dominance over blacks” (429). The ideological figure of immunity then works to reinforce social hierarchies along racial lines and reproduced ideologies of white supremacy in the ultimate service of the labor regime of enslavement. In a contemporary register, looking at the responses of the American Right to COVID-19, Olivarius (2020) explains that “American politicians are arguing that viral immunity could be mobilized for economic benefit.” Given that people of color were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, the mobilization of immunity as economic productivity is also one that envisions racialized populations as able to be sacrificed.

The inverse of vaccinating zoo animals is the development of COVID-19 tests for livestock animals to identify outbreaks on farms and so aid in the regulation of livestock production, i.e. the animal as resource and commodity (Hemsworth 2022). The new tests aim to prevent the mass killing of animals through culling but preserves their “right to die” through the production of animal capital as meat or other resources. In thinking about this as the inverse of vaccinating zoo animals, my claim is that animal life under a system of property exists between the right to die and letting live within a dialectic of the management over life toward the production of different kinds of value. Immunocapital is thus a racial formation and so structures the dynamics of letting live

and making die that typifies biopolitics in racial states, it also creates divisions between species in social formations where the dominant relationship to animal life is one of ownership that itself is shaped by racial capitalism and racialized modes of managing life and death.

Conclusion: A Wild Life?

The zoo is a space for the preservation of life, it enacts the power of care and life fostering over the animals within the zoo and aims to morally instruct the visitors to the zoo in their feelings about animals and the non-human world at large. Such forms of moral instruction are contingent upon a system of ownership deeply imbricated within a larger structure of racial capitalism and the management over non-human life subtended by private ownership as the dominant structural relationship humans have to animals. While the zoo, like all culture has repressive and utopic dimensions (Uddin 2015, 8), the racialized property relation in which the zoo exists is the crucial stumbling block to better relationships with animals and thus a truly new zoo.

In considering potential futures involving different relationships to animals and property, attention turns to what Rosemary-Claire Collard (2020) describes as wild life politics, characterized “by openness, possibility, a degree of choice, and self-determination, in which beings are understood to have their own familial, social, and ecological networks, their own lookouts, agendas, and needs” (131). Ultimately, a wild life “is one in which animals engage in their own life-making practices, until they die. There is no guarantee of flourishing, only the conditions of possibility for a degree of creative self-determination and community” (Collard 2020, 139). A focus on the creative life-making practices of non-human animals is in line with Rinaldo Walcott’s (2021) rethinking of forms of life beyond the property-form where a “stewardship of the commons would return human beings to our natural place as one species among others” (96).

The resurgent interest in abolitionist movements largely centering around policing and prisons as they systemically and lethally target Black life has been a welcome one, both in activism and in political social theory. Such a resurgent moment where apparently “overnight, everyone had become a police or prison abolitionist” (Chua 2020, 127) has been accompanied too by a rethinking of the fundamental categories of social and political life brought on by the interlocking crises of climate, the liberal state, and of social reproduction, including a rethinking of the way humans want to share the earth with other forms of life. The zoo can be such a place of reflection and encounter outside the cash-nexus that mediates our lives and expectations of ownership and control over the non-human world. Such a refiguration of the zoo would involve not just a critical

reflection on the history and politics of zoos as imbricated in racial capitalism but also a fundamental challenge to the property-form, moving us toward a more just social and economic arrangement for all life on this fragile planet.

References

- Ahuja, Neel. 2021. "The Analogy of Race and Species in Animal Studies." *Prism* 18 (1): 244–55. <https://doi.org/10.1215/25783491-8922265>.
- Armstrong, Philip. 2008. *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity*. New York: Routledge.
- Bennett, Joshua. 2020. *Being Property Once Myself: Blackness and the End of Man*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674245495>.
- Berger, John. 1980. *About Looking*. London: Writers and Readers Publ. Cooperative.
- Bhandar, Brenna. 2018. *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land, and Racial Regimes of Ownership*. Durham: Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822371571>.
- Boisseron, Bénédicte. 2018. *Afro-Dog: Blackness and the Animal Question*. New York: Columbia University Press. <https://doi.org/10.7312/bois18664>.
- Braverman, Irus. 2013. *Zooland: The Institution of Captivity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Brown, Laura. 2011. *Homeless Dogs and Melancholy Apes: Humans and Other Animals in the Modern Literary Imagination*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1086/659810>.
- Chauncey, George. 1994. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. New York: Basic Books.
- Chua, Charmaine. 2020. "Abolition Is A Constant Struggle: Five Lessons from Minneapolis." *Theory & Event* 23 (4): 127–47. <https://doi.org/10.1353/tae.2020.0072>.
- Cohen, Ed. 2009. *A Body Worth Defending: Immunity, Biopolitics, and the Apotheosis of the Modern Body*. Durham: Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822391111>.
- . Megan Boler, and Elizabeth Davis. 2022. "The Biopolitics of Pandemics: Interview with Ed Cohen." *Cultural Studies* 36 (3): 396–409. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2022.2041682>.
- Collard, Rosemary-Claire. 2020. *Animal Traffic: Lively Capital in the Global Exotic Pet Trade*. Durham: Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781478012467>.
- Gossett, Che. 2015. "Blackness, Animality, and the Unsovereign." *Verso*. Accessed April 17, 2023. <https://www.versobooks.com/en-ca/blogs/news/2228-che-gossett-blackness-animality-and-the-unsovereign>.
- Hemsworth, Wade. 2022. "Stopping the Spread: McMaster Researchers Create Rapid Test for Deadly Infections in Livestock, Starting with Pigs." *Brighter World*, June 10. <https://brighterworld.mcmaster.ca/articles/stopping-the-spread-mcmaster-researchers-create-rapid-test-for-deadly-infections-in-livestock-starting-with-pigs/>
- Jenkins, Destin and Justin Leroy. 2021. *Histories of Racial Capitalism*. New York: Columbia University Press. <https://doi.org/10.5070/LP62155397>.
- Kim, Claire Jean. 2015. *Dangerous Crossings: Race, Species, and Nature in a Multicultural Age*. New York: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107045392>.

- Lowe, Lisa. 2015. *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Durham: Duke University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1lcw8zh>.
- Malamud, Randy. 1998. *Reading Zoos: Representations of Animals and Captivity*. New York: New York University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230376403>.
- Massumi, Brian. 2014. *What Animals Teach Us about Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822376057>.
- Olivarius, Kathryn. 2020. "The Dangerous History of Immunoprivilege." *The New York Times*, April 12. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/12/opinion/coronavirus-immunity-passports.html>.
- . 2019. "Immunity, Capital, and Power in Antebellum New Orleans." *American Historical Review* 124 (2): 425–55. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/rhz176>.
- Probyn-Rapsey, Fiona. 2013. "Nothing to See—Something to See: White Animals and Exceptional Life/Death." In *Animal Death*, edited by Jay Johnston and Fiona Probyn-Rapsey, 239–52. Sydney: Sydney University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1gxxpvf>.
- Puar, Jasbir K. 2017. *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11314kc.9>.
- Ringer, Andrea. 2024. "Extinct in the Wild: The History of Global Displays and Representations of White Tigers as a Nearly Extinct Species." In *Lost Kingdom Animal Death in the Anthropocene*, edited by Wendy A. Wiseman and Burak Kesgin, 239–67. Wilmington: Vernon Press.
- Ritvo, Harriet. 1987. *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Sorenson, John. 2014. "Introduction: Thinking the Unthinkable." In *Critical Animal Studies: Thinking the Unthinkable*. Toronto, Canada: Canadian Scholars.
- "Toronto Zoo to Begin Vaccinating about 120 Animals against COVID-19." 2022. CBC, April 21. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-zoo-covid-vaccinations-zoetis-1.6425780>.
- Uddin, Lisa. 2015. *Zoo Renewal: White Flight and the Animal Ghetto*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. <https://doi.org/10.5749/minnesota/9780816679119.001.0001>.
- Vandersommers, Daniel and Tracy McDonald. 2019. "Introduction: Towards a New Humanities." In *Zoo Studies: A New Humanities*, edited by Tracy McDonald and Daniel Vandersommers, 3–19. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9780773558151>.
- Walcott, Rinaldo. 2021. *On Property*. Windsor, Ontario: Biblioasis.
- Weheliye, Alexander G. 2014. *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*. Durham: Duke University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822376491>.