

## Bookreview: Dolly Mixtures: The Remaking of Genealogy Sarah Franklin. Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2007. 253 pp. ISBN 13 978—0-8223—3903—8 (pbk). US\$22.95

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## *Book review*

### ***Dolly Mixtures: The Remaking of Genealogy***

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Contemporary power relations implicate animals in complex ways, which have yet to be fully appreciated by sociocultural theorists. Like the popular British candy after which the book is named, Franklin approaches Dolly the cloned sheep as a novel mixture: at once a living creature, a rich cultural symbol, a viable example of recombinant biotechnology, a commodity, a cyborg, and the outcome of intersecting lineages. With *Dolly Mixtures*, an ethnographic monograph instantiating the “animal turn” in social studies of health science, Franklin makes a watershed contribution.

*Dolly Mixtures* is a public ethnography, for several key informants have published influential scientific papers, some of these scientists have become public figures, and cloning is hotly debated in academic fields such as bioethics as well in the mass media. Against this backdrop, Franklin must have faced some daunting challenges in carrying out this project, from negotiating access through to writing up. The very public status of Dolly and of the topic of cloning certainly forces Franklin to specify her contribution. She addresses, head-on in the introduction and discreetly throughout in her referencing practices, the role of science writing by sociocultural scholars. Ultimately, *Dolly Mixtures* exemplifies a sort of science writing that sociocultural scholars can and arguably should aim to do. Perhaps one of the Franklin’s most important contributions is the deceptively simple conversational style in which she has written *Dolly Mixtures*. Deeper dialogue, versus dogmatic debate, is sorely needed to come to grips with shifts in the range of roles played by animals in human lives.

Franklin (pp. 9–10) ardently defends society and culture as objects to be analyzed through material refractions, Dolly being a case in point. Thus, she explicitly rejects several influential scholars’ directives on how to approach nonhuman entities. She is chiefly concerned with elucidating and demonstrating how, in the course of exerting control over the lives of sheep, people impose or otherwise bring about order in their own lives and in the lives of other people. That is why she adopts “the in some ways very conservative idiom of genealogy” (p.10).

Drawing from cultural studies, anthropology, gender and kinship theory, science studies, postcolonial criticism, the history of agriculture, and the history of biology, Franklin foregrounds Dolly so as to investigate

the intersection between the materiality and representation. Although scholarly attention to such entwinings of 'nature / culture' has a long history, Franklin's analysis offers a novel perspective in that she deftly illuminates how Dolly stems from but also disrupts lineages of capital, nation, empire, and science. In accounting for Dolly's life and times, Franklin considers the just-past alongside the *longue durée* and the emerging present. For while Dolly herself was cloned into existence, domesticated sheep attained their various bodily forms in relation to people's desires for something warm to wear and for something good to eat, and in relation to imperial desires too. Nowadays, the frontiers straddled by animals akin to Dolly include science and aspirations for longevity. Ultimately, Franklin's attention to genealogy in context is what makes her analysis so textured, dynamic, and interesting.

Franklin does not offer a problem-and-solution analysis, whether on moral, political, or economic grounds; rather, similar to Donna Haraway's contributions to critical theory, she aims to create new critical sensibilities that allow us to make sense of Dolly's coming into being, and of her passing. Although somatic cell nuclear transfer, the technology central to the Dolly technique, is both inefficient and expensive, Dolly nonetheless represented an innovation. Franklin shows that animals animate health politics not only as disease models, but also as sources of food and therapeutics. The use of animals and animal parts to produce therapeutics intended to enter human bodies is sometimes called pharming, and indeed the products derived from animals include pharmaceuticals. For example, most insulin products used to treat human diabetics still derive from porcine insulin. As Franklin (p. 195) points out, Dolly was used not as livestock but as livestock; in other words, Dolly was not necessarily a viable agricultural commodity but was a principle or base biotechnology that helped inaugurate a postgenomic future/present rooted in stem cell science and tissue engineering. These technologies carry transformative implications for agriculture, medical research, and embodiment. These implications are why, Franklin argues, we desperately need new critical language to make sense of Dolly, not to celebrate 'Dollymania' nor to condemn emergent biotechnologies but to understand what such ovine-machines imply for future human/nonhuman associations and collectivities.

*Dolly Mixtures* comprises an introduction followed by five chapters and conclusion bearing titles made up of a single word: "Origins," "Sex," "Capital," "Nation," "Colony," "Death," and "Breeds." One way to read *Dolly Mixtures* is as an analytic reflection on how meanings and practices have shifted since Raymond Williams's (1983 [1976]) *Keywords* was last revised. Franklin expressly pays homage to Williams: "The ability of the rural farm animal to evoke what Raymond Williams calls 'whole ways of life and whole ways of struggle' captures one of the most important sources of emotional attachment to sheep as embodiments of human labor, industry, and accomplishment" (p. 193). Later, Franklin turns to Williams for an epigraph on "production and reproduction" in the concluding

chapter entitled, “Breeds” (p. 195) *Keywords* contains entries on “Sex,” “Capitalism,” “Nationalist,” and “Imperialism,” but not on origins or on death. The absence of entries on “origins” or on “death” or, for that matter, on “life” in *Keywords* may imply that, over the past 25 years or so, cultural politics has come to be more about efforts bent on exerting control over cells, organisms, and entire populations. But if so, Franklin’s focus on Dolly gives pause, for Dolly’s body was a nonhuman one, even if created and shaped in relation to human desires.

Not one monograph can ever be said to wholly complete, and as we have already noted, one of the main contributions that Franklin makes is to invite rather than foreclose further research, theorizing, and commentary. Franklin (p. 9–10, 15–16) “sheepishly” owns up to a number of limitations, including this telling comment: “As an astute reader of noted of its meandering path and stupefying accumulation of ovine detail, the problem with following sheep around is that they get everywhere” (p. 8–9).

Yet one place Franklin does not tread is scrapie, a disease caused by an infectious protein (or prion) that afflicts sheep. Her inattention to this ovine prion disease is somewhat unfortunate as connections have been drawn between scrapie, BSE, and cases of Creutzfeldt Jacob disease in people. (Not long ago, brain and spinal tissue from sheep routinely entered cattle feed. This practice is now banned in the United Kingdom and in many other jurisdictions, on the grounds of preventing BSE.) Foot-and-mouth disease, however, is nicely covered in *Dolly Mixtures*. Indeed, the “Death” chapter could be read alongside research documenting the recent impact of foot-and-mouth disease (e.g., Mort et al., 2005). As Franklin helps to show, just because a disease cannot spread from animals to people does not mean it cannot affect people.

Franklin’s approachable language makes this text suitable for upper-level undergraduate and graduate-level analysis. She provides much ‘fodder’ for thought, opening avenues for empirically grounded and theoretically astute discourses to help make sense of contemporary human-animal relations. Following on from some of the pathways that Franklin has highlighted or opened up, we look forward to reading new work on the importance of animals for human bodies and for people’s lives.

## References

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