



**Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and  
Queer Affect (Perverse Modernities: A Series  
Edited by Jack Halberstam and Lisa Lowe)**

*Mel Y. Chen*

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# **Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect (Perverse Modernities: A Series Edited by Jack Halberstam and Lisa Lowe)**

*Mel Y. Chen*

## **Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect (Perverse Modernities: A Series Edited by Jack Halberstam and Lisa Lowe) Mel Y. Chen**

In *Animacies*, Mel Y. Chen draws on recent debates about sexuality, race, and affect to examine how matter that is considered insensate, immobile, or deathly animates cultural lives. Toward that end, Chen investigates the blurry division between the living and the dead, or that which is beyond the human or animal. Within the field of linguistics, animacy has been described variously as a quality of agency, awareness, mobility, sentience, or liveness. Chen turns to cognitive linguistics to stress how language habitually differentiates the animate and the inanimate. Expanding this construct, Chen argues that animacy undergirds much that is pressing and indeed volatile in contemporary culture, from animal rights debates to biosecurity concerns.

Chen's book is the first to bring the concept of animacy together with queer of color scholarship, critical animal studies, and disability theory. Through analyses of dehumanizing insults, the meanings of queerness, animal protagonists in recent Asian/American art and film, the lead in toys panic in 2007, and the social lives of environmental illness, *Animacies* illuminates a hierarchical politics infused by race, sexuality, and ability. In this groundbreaking book, Chen rethinks the criteria governing agency and receptivity, health and toxicity, productivity and stillness—and demonstrates how attention to the affective charge of matter challenges commonsense orderings of the world.

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