Finding the Human Animal:
Embodiment in the Work of Laurie Anderson and Melanie Bonajo.

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Abstract

This thesis, rooted within the scholarship of Animal Studies, aims to find new links between embodiment, the animal, and art. The animal is brought into culture and framed by humans, often violently. Most of the ways in which we perceive animals are 'for human use'. How can we move beyond a relationship built on this violence and toward significant otherness, as coined by Donna Haraway? This thesis explores how theories on looking at art that shift our focus from vision toward the other senses of the body, can help us undo a human subjectivity that is based on a hierarchy of species. *Zooësis* is this project, formulated by Una Chaudhuri, of rethinking the nonhuman animal vs. the human animal in art. The work of artists Melanie Bonajo (*The Death of Melanie Bonajo: How to Unmodernize Yourself and Become and Elf in 12 Steps*) and Laurie Anderson (*Heart of a Dog*) respectively address the exploitation and empowerment of women's bodies in capitalized society, and the loving relationship between Laurie and her dog Lolabelle. By discussing their work in relation to the concept of *sensation* from Gilles Deleuze and *abjection* from Julia Kristeva, as well as keeping one eye on the animal, this thesis aims to understand how art can help us create a more inclusive subjectivity. Perhaps, finding new connections with our own (animal) bodies, can help us move towards a new way of *being-in-the-world*, at once exposed and vulnerable, just like all other species.

Introduction

In 1977 John Berger wrote an influential essay that marked the beginning of what is now known as the interdisciplinary field of animal studies. The essay *Why Look at Animals?* traces the origins of 'looking at animals' and of the spaces where this activity takes place, i.e. the modern zoo and the widespread distribution of animal imagery amongst other in children's toys, books and television programs.[1] In his essay, Berger draws a definite and convincing link between the history of art and the parallel histories of animals and humans: "the first subject matter of painting was animal. Probably the first paint was animal blood. Prior to that, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the first metaphor was animal."[2]

Human- and non-human animals[3] used to live in close proximity to one another, but throughout the 20th century, the lives of animals began to be removed from the cities where humans dwelled. In our current time, "98 percent of all animals with whom humans interact in any way, even including pets, zoo- and circus animals, are farmed animals, that is, bred for human use."[4] This number reveals the truly oppressive and cruel nature of the relationship with some of our companion species, against the idea that humans and animals live in peaceful cohabitation together. Within this real "animalculture of staggering violence and exploitation," the hope for "new means of seeing, showing, and knowing the animals," says animal scholar Una Chaudhuri, is upon the arts.[5]

In this thesis, I hope to find new ways of perceiving the nonhuman as well as human animal, in order to redraw the discursive limits of both 'animal' and 'human' and the relation between them. Therefore, this thesis is an attempt to join the project of *Zooësis*. Zooësis, a

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[1] John Berger, "Why Look at Animals," in *About Looking* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) .
[2] Ibid., 7.
[3] Throughout this thesis I will use the terms human and non-human animals. These terms are frequently used by animal studies scholars to rethink the binary opposition between "human" and "animal" and challenge human exceptionalism.
[4] Una Chaudhuri, *The Stage Lives of Animals: Zooësis and Performance* (Oxon: Routledge, 2007), 10.
[5] Ibid.

neologism coined by Chaudhuri, is the project, at once descriptive and ideological, that aims to lay out "the ways the animal is put into discourse, constructed, represented, understood and misunderstood" in the West, while at the same time contribute to "new modes of thinking and writing that would valorize the animal and bring a heightened attention to human-animal relationships."[6] Zooësis is a term brought to life in order to answer the "Question of the Animal."[7] This question, both ethical and theoretical, aims to resituate nonhuman subjectivities as well as indicate the urgency and seriousness of the matter. This thesis is written from this perspective: that the consideration of animals, their wellbeing and rights, is something extremely pressing. This thesis is not a manifesto, or an activist pamphlet, even though I wish those will be written at the same time and that activists will undertake actions that force governments to take matters in their hands. Yet, I do hope this thesis will bring about a heightened attention to the dilemma and turn the attention towards the arts as an important and impactful player within this societal debate.

At the heart of Zooësis lies to attempt to give the animal a face, "to perform the animal *out of* facelessness."[8] This description of Zooësis brings me to the content and form of this thesis. Since the animal is brought into discourse as a body solely, a body without a subjectivity, without a face (the face being a marker of identity), how do we give the animal a face, without giving in to anthropomorphic tendencies? To give animals a face, is the attempt to give them a "place in the moral universe," a soul. [9] The animal is so threatening to humans, because he/she does not have a singular faciality. Animals are immersed in groups or packs of similar bodies and this multiplicity is threatening to our individuality. Put differently, the question is, how do we attribute subjectivity to the animal, without reinforcing the idea that

[6] Chaudhuri, *The Stage Lives*, 10.
[7] Cary Wolfe, *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 5.
[8] Chaudhuri, *The Stage Lives*, 16.
[9] Ibid., 15.

human subjectivity is the only subjectivity? As an answer to this question, Chaudhuri proposes that an important part of Zooësis is not the humanization of the animal, but the animalization of the animal. My proposal is that another important part of Zooësis should be the animalization of humanity or put differently the 'dehumanization of humanity'.

One way to deconstruct and animalize human subjectivity, is to take our attention away from the human face, from identity, and move it towards the human body and its embodiment. This is the project I am undertaking in this thesis. Scholarship on the link between embodiment and the animal is on the rise, but I feel that existing theory on art, deeply embedded outside the field of animal studies, such as Julia Kristeva's canonical *The Powers of Horror* (1980), could provide us, in relation to the animal, with more insights than have been made thus far. This thesis then, will tie together theory from different fields, in order to search for new links between the concepts of embodiment, the animal, and art.

The work of Melanie Bonajo (Heerlen, 1987) and Laurie Anderson (Illinois, 1947), lends itself well to be looked at through the lens of Zooësis. Both these artists can be said to engage the human body in a different way vis-à-vis the nonhuman. The work of Melanie Bonajo was exhibited in the Bonnefantenmuseum in Maastricht until the end of October 2018. The exhibition, *The Death of Melanie Bonajo: How to Unmodernize Yourself and Become an Elf in 12 Steps*, contains several video-installations that feature stories concerned with the female body and sexuality, life in our current capitalist and consumer society, drugs and spirituality and our relationship to nature and animals.[10] *Heart of a Dog* (2015), a film by Laurie Anderson, is a personal, philosophical and spiritual account of Anderson's loss of her dog Lolabelle. The movie uses animation, music and film from her family archive along with Anderson's own compositions, to sketch the intimate relationship between her and her dog.

[10] "The Death of Melanie Bonajo: How to Unmodernize Yourself and Become an Elf in 12 Steps", accessed October 4, 2018, https://www.bonnefanten.nl/nl/tentoonstellingen/programma_2018/melanie_bonajo

To understand the effects of looking at these artworks I will examine Gilles Deleuze's term *sensation* as a direct fleshly form of experience and couple this with Julia Kristeva's *abjection* as a technique in art to probe the human. With these concepts, I will try to sketch a New-Materialist understanding of art that invites the nonhuman to participate in the creation and formation of our life-world through relations that Donna Haraway calls "significant other."[11] For Haraway, significant otherness is a "mode of attention," an approach to answer questions related to the ways in which we co-habit this earth with "non-harmonious agencies."[12] Significant otherness signifies the quality of the relations that we choose as a point of investigation (in this case between human and non-human animals), connections in which the individuals that take part in them are neither "wholes nor parts."[13] How can theories on looking at art help us to look at animals differently? How can a return to our own body and embodiment encourage us to engage with the nonhuman. How does art bring about embodiment? In what ways does the central position of *vision* in our society impact our ideas on knowledge? And finally, what does an animal way of *being-in-the-world* entail and how can we move towards it? These are the most important questions that I will address in this thesis.

[11] Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003), 3.
[12] Ibid., 24, 7.
[13] Ibid., 7.

Methodology

This thesis is based on literary and case study analysis. Literature drawing on connections between the disciplinary fields of animal studies, philosophy (poststructuralism, new-materialism and psychoanalysis) and art theory will be used in order to gain insights and draw conclusions that are cross- and inter-disciplinary. By exploring a broad variety of texts, this study aims to understand the various ways in which art can help us rethink the human/nonhuman distinction to move towards a new way of living together with our nonhuman animal others.

Two case studies occupy a central position in this thesis: *Heart of a Dog* (2015) by Laurie Anderson and the solo-exhibition *The Death of Melanie Bonajo: How to Unmodernize Yourself and Become and Elf in 12 Steps* by Melanie Bonajo. The solo-exhibition was taking place in the period in which I was writing this thesis, and this gave me the opportunity to conduct observational research at the museum. I visited the exhibition twice over a span of several weeks and took extensive notes.

This thesis takes a rather experimental form and uses unconventional means to bring across the story/point/argument. Logbooks are an important part of this thesis. These logbooks, part of every chapter, document personal and theoretical insights concerning the link between my own embodiment and the animal as well as general feelings and ideas about my own body that I had whilst writing and engaging with the scholarship concerning the body and the animal. These pensive and autobiographical notes are interwoven with the theoretical analysis in a way that deliberately eschews the standard expository prose style of most academic inquiry and that aims instead for a more poetic rumination on the subject matter. Drawing new discursive lines around subjectivity and the nonhuman, in my view, necessitates a simultaneous evaluation of our use of language in universities and other institutions and how this may perpetuate a hegemony of ‘rationality’ over ‘embodiment’. We can see this

hegemony for example, by evaluating how we look at academic texts versus 'poetic' texts: we attribute considerably less knowledge to the latter. With the logbooks I explicitly aim to subvert the boundaries that keep these genres (fields of knowledge) separate. Furthermore, the personal within the academic is still considered controversial, even though many disciplines are now actively working on including personal experience, for example, anthropology. The intimate details of your own body as an academic writer are often still left out of the final product, because they are seen as either irrelevant or too 'private' for the university repositories. These dichotomies are closely tied with the dichotomies between mind and body, human and animal, which form the subject matter of this thesis.

This thesis aims to make an argument about bodily responses and embodiment through art. I consider my argument incomplete when I do not consider my own personal experience as, first and foremost, a body writing a text. In this way, the *textual body* of the thesis will be consciously connected to my *physical, material body*. I intend for my body to have an active presence in this thesis with its own wits and wills, thereby being an important factor in the reader's experience of reading. In short, the logbooks' purpose is to force the reader to shift his/her mode of reading and digesting text and information in order to rethink the connection between embodiment and the animal from various perspectives and firmly root this thesis in daily life.

Chapter one: Looking at Animals

Where do we see the animal? Today I saw an animal on a key ring, an animal on a jumper and an animal on a sticker somewhere on a lantern. I saw an animal on Facebook and one on YouTube, I saw several animals in the supermarket. I saw some animals in the street, somewhere at the height of my feet.[14] Which ones of those were real? Which of the animals that I saw today were 'actual' and not a representation? This is one of the questions that Randy Malamud is concerned with in *Introduction to Animals and Visual Culture.*[15] He argues that even if we supposedly see a 'real' animal such as an elephant in the zoo, or a dead chicken in the supermarket, these animals are "more unreal than real."[16] When is the animal real then? When do we really see him/her? And why do we even look at the animal? Most animals that we encounter in daily life are framed, decontextualized, and "rendered literally or figuratively inanimate."[17]

The animal is (violently) brought into culture for humans to understand and attach cultural meanings to his/her body. The body of the animal is a site that we use for our consumption or purpose. Their bodies feed us, amuse us, accompany us, obey us, decorate us, and complement us as human beings. In this chapter I will discuss four ways in which the animal/animality is shown and/or seen by humans most commonly in Western society. In Chapter two, I will begin to examine how theories on looking at art can help us establish new ways of looking at animals. The Animal is 1) a marker of difference, the ultimate Other through which we compose categories of the subaltern, or more relevantly phrased for this study, "the underdog." 2) As an allegory of our human selves: our actions and identities. 3) As products to be consumed in which their value becomes monetized and 4) as significant others

[14] This is an exercise proposed by Randy Malamud in *Introduction to Animals and Visual Culture* (2012), where he stimulates you to count and evaluate all the animals that you see in an hour, or a day. Randy Malamud, *Introduction to Visual Culture* (Palgrave Macmillan: London, 2012), 7.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.

as proposed by Donna Haraway in the *Companion Species Manifesto*. With this last point, we can begin to move towards a future of coexistence with nonhuman and human animals.

Animal Other

When someone transgresses a behavioral norm, either violently or sexually, we might say someone "is a beast" or that s/he "behaves like an animal." In most languages, animals are used as insults, such as "jackass." When we insult someone's dietary habits, we may call someone a "pig". When we say "bitch" we indicate that a woman is particularly mean. Racist language has, throughout time, compared different ethnic groups to animals and finally sexist language uses "bestial" terms for women's transgressive sexual behavior such as "cougar," "vixen," or "tiger."[18] All of these animal representations in our language are part of what is called *speciesism* or the "discrimination against another based solely on a generic characteristic – in this case species" and is seen as another vector within intersectional feminism and the battle against all forms of oppressions that are part of the imperialist, capitalist, white supremacist, heteronormative, ableist patriarchy. [19] Philosophers such as Jacques Derrida, John Berger, and Giorgio Agamben amongst others, argue that animality is the penultimate marker of difference and that the discourse on animal also largely informs the "rhetoric of race, class, and gender."[20]

The animal is where we come from. The animal is what we have left behind to become cultured. The animal is what we have transcended, and thus animality is a state to which

[18] C.N. Tipler & J. B. Rusher, "Dehumanizing representations of women: the shaping of hostile sexist attitudes through animalistic metaphors," *Journal of Gender Studies* 28:1 (2019): 110.
[19] Wolfe, *Animal Rites*, 1.
[20] Jacques Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)," *Critical Inquiry* vol. 28, no. 2 (2002): 369-418; Berger, *About Looking*; Giorgio Agamben, *The Open*: *Man and Animal* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); Kay Anderson, "The Beast Within: Race, Humanity, and Animality," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* vol. 18 (2000): 310.

certain categories of humans can be referred back[21]. In Derrida's words: "*being-after-it*" in which "the animal … comes before me, earlier than me" regarding it.[22] This is how development theory operates and how the Western world has justified its violent exercise of power towards indigenous populations in colonized areas as well as how the West defined and made sense of itself *vis à vis* the non-western populations. The trajectory towards modernity was envisioned as linear and the West saw itself as further ahead on this trajectory.

The animal was the first Other, says Derrida. The Other through which mankind defined himself and detached from the otherness surrounding him. In *time before time* or time before original sin Ish (Adam) receives the instruction from God to name all the animals, "these animals that are older and younger than him, these living things that came into the world before him but were named after him, on his initiative."[23] According to Derrida, man is *after the animal* in a sense that is not *in time*, but constitutes "the very genesis of time."[24] Derrida thus argues that time itself emerged from the moment that Ish named the animals. From this moment arises the possibility to be, to be after, to follow, to lead. A possibility for consequence, trajectory, linearity and thus also hierarchy emerges, of being *before* or *behind* another. This is of importance because the animal gives man all his "sovereignty and his loneliness" as a species and our ideas of what humankind is *follow* from the moment we named all nonhuman animals in the singular noun: "animal," to which Derrida responds with: "What a word!"[25] Since animal is the first Other, we cannot see him/her. Between our gaze and the gaze of an animal lies an "abyss of non-comprehension," an unbridgeable gap. [26] "Looking at each animal, the unaccompanied zoo visitor is alone. As for the crowds, they

[21] Anderson, "The Beast Within," 310.
[22] Derrida, *The Animal*, 380.
[23] Ibid., 386.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.; Ibid., 392.
[26] Berger, *About Looking*, 3.

belong to a species which has at last been isolated."[27] Giorgio Agamben calls Homo Sapiens the place and result of "ceaseless visions and caesurae," and "a machine or device for producing the recognition of the human."[28] This machine is an optical one, "a series of mirrors in which man, looking at himself sees his own image always already deformed in the features of an ape."[29] Man must recognize himself in non-man, and look at him constantly, in order to become human.

Animals as Allegory

"Animality stands in for all that is repressed by culture," argues Una Chaudhuri. [30] She means to say that a large number of animal imagery today stands in for, or represents an aspect of human behavior, behavior that is deemed taboo in our culture. Frequently when we see an animal in a play, a theatre piece, a movie or a painting, the animal does not really represent him- or herself. The piece is not really about the animal, it is not really the animal we see, but something about ourselves. Chaudhuri mentions the example of a play called *The Goat* (2002) written and directed by Edward Albee, in which a man falls in love with a goat. In *The Goat*, Martin a successful architect at the "pinnacle of his success" married and with a 16-year old son admits to having an affair with 'Sylvia'. His wife can only laugh hysterically when he tells her that Sylvia is a goat. Martin tries to explain to her what happened when he first met Sylvia: it was a moment of 'epiphany'. He explains that, while looking her in the eyes, he had an encounter with her from soul to soul. Yet to the bystanders her face and therefore subjectivity keeps being denied. As Chaudhuri argues, her face is " almost entirely

[27] Berger, *About Looking*, 26.
[28] Agamben, *The Open*, 16.; Ibid., 27.
[29] Ibid., 26-27.
[30] Una Chaudhuri, *The Stage Lives*, 3.

effaced by her sexually forbidden body."[31] The play is about the transgression of sexual activity of humans, and Sylvia as the literal "scapegoat" represents this sexual transgression. It is quite common, Chaudhuri says, to hear that *The Goat* is not really about *a man falling in love with a goat* , but about homosexuality.[32] This interpretation of animal presences on stage testifies to the widespread perception that animals stand in for human behavior, and that their presence is merely a symbol and mirror for human transgressions.

Animals are brought into our culture to tell us something about who *we* are, why *we* behave the way we do and expose the pettiness and absurdity of human societies. In the Netherlands, a television program for children featured on national television each day from 1968 until 1974, called *De Fabeltjeskrant* (The Fables Paper) in which *Meneer de Uil* (Mister Owl) reads to the viewers the "Fables Paper" about the animals in *Het Grote Dierenbos* (The Big Animal Forest) in *Fabeltjesland* (Fables Land). The first few episodes of the program were based on the classic fables from Jean de La Fontaine, but later they proceeded to engage more with the national news. *De Fabeltjeskrant* entertained millions of people every day, both adults and children, with stories of the animals from 'The Big Animal Forest'. This program is an excellent example of the ways in which, Malamud says, we use animals "in the service of our own cultural drives, desires, fantasies and obsessions."[33] Mister Owl has human characteristics and so have all the other animals: they have first and last names such as *Greta Bontekoe* (Greta Spotted Cow), hold jobs, and can be either townspeople or farmers. There are numerous examples of programs across the world that use a similar anthropomorphism to entertain children or adults. To mention just a few examples of books and series of this genre of stories in which animals are dressed and/or act as humans: *Sesame Street* (1969), *Wind in The Willows* (1908) by Kenneth Grahame, *Animal Farm* (1954) by George Orwell, *Maus*

[31] Chaudhuri, *The Stage Lives*, 17.
[32] Ibid., 3.
[33] Malamud, *Introduction to Visual Culture*, 33.

(1997) by Art Spiegelman, *My Little Pony* (1886, 1992 and 2010), *The Muppets* (1976) and *Hello Kitty* (2006). [34] Underlying these examples is an anthropocentric assumption, defined by the Encyclopedia Brittanica as the belief that "human beings are the central and most significant entities in the world" and that they are "separate from and superior to nature" meaning that thus all other living beings "may justifiably be exploited for the benefit of humankind." Anthropocentrism has existed for centuries and is cross-cultural and widespread.

Fig. 1 Use of anthropomorphism in *MAUS,* Art Spiegelman, Pantheon Books.

[34] Juliet Kellogg Markowsky, "Why Anthropomorphism in Children's literature," *Elementary English* vol. 52, no.4 (April 1975): 460-462, 466.

Fig. 2 Animals from The Big Animal Forest in *De Fabeltjeskrant*, NTR.

Anthropomorphism can be found in many depictions of animals even when we do not expect it. Animal Rights organization PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) once led a campaign against meat-eating with the following quote: "Does your food have a face?"[35] This quote was accompanied by a picture of the carcass of a cow without eyes and skin. In first instance, Chaudhuri argues that this campaign seems to be about *the missing face* of the animal, "aptly representing the disappeared animal of the modern meat industry, which invests hugely in suppressing such images," but if we continue to look at this campaign in the contemporary field of Zooësis, the case is more complicated. [36] In order to get humans to empathize with animals, they attribute "human" characteristics to the animal, in this case the "face", as if to say that animals deserve to be treated as humans because they resemble us. The campaign employs anthropomorphic discourse for a very different purpose then for example, *De Fabeltjeskrant*. Anthropomorphism is often used to improve human behavior

[35] Chaudhuri, *The Stage Lives*, 19
[36] Ibid.

towards animals. We do not have to attribute value to these depictions and say they are either right or wrong. Perhaps this campaign is very effective and it might affect humans in their meat eating habits. Yet, it is worth noticing that the anthropomorphic trend exists widespread and across genres and that, to some extent, they seem to imply that "animals are celebrated for … the extent to which they affirm an anthropocentric ethos: the unassailable conviction that it is all about us."[37]

Fig. 3"Did Your Food Have A Face?" Campaign from animal rights organization *PETA*.

[37] Malamud, *Introduction to Visual Culture*, 75.

Animal as Consuming Unit

Most animals we see in the supermarket are dead. We do not even call them animals any more: "the animal is absent from 'meat', both in name and in form…an 'absent referent'."[38] A name to forget and obliterate the animal that once was. Certain animals are more valuable than other animals. Animal parts are in most of the products we buy. Geese and ducks are good for their down that keeps us warm. Cows provide us with milk to make cheese, yoghurt, etc. Elephants are slaughtered for their ivory tusks to turn them into small valuable sculptures which decorate windowsills. Cow's and pig's skin are used to make leather which we use to dress ourselves and unfortunately there are still many people who see fur as a luxury product. The meat of wild animals is more expensive and only available in good restaurants, while pig, cow and chicken are available in most restaurants. Furthermore, there are certain animals that we see as 'noble animals'. In the Dutch language noble animals have a "hoofd" (face) instead of a "kop" (head), they have "benen" (legs) instead of "poten" (paws). We create a hierarchy of animals to the extent to which they can serve human beings. Horses are, for a large part, domesticated and are used in sports competitions as a measure for human achievement. Wikipedia says that race horse 'The Green Monkey' was sold for sixteen million euros. Dogs, horses, cats and many more domesticated animals are bred with the goal of creating purebreds or to optimize their "genetic value." Hunting is still allowed in the Netherlands during hunting season (jachtseizoen). In the Netherlands, you may hunt on hare, wild duck, rabbits, wood pigeon and pheasant.[39] Last, as I mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, most animals that we encounter in daily life are farmed for human use.

These are only some of the countless examples in which animals are nothing more than products whose value is equated with their monetary profit. As products, animals have completely lost their face, they have become faceless, silent. This "reduction of the animal",

[38] E.R. Meijer, "Political Animal Voices" (PhD diss., Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2017), 124.
[39] "Jacht in Nederland." Alles over jagen. http://www.allesoverjagen.nl/ (accessed January 27, 2019)

runs parallel to the reduction of mankind, Berger argues. He says that this defacing of the animal's body "is part of the same process as that by which men have been reduced to isolated productive and consuming units."[40] The history of animals is always intimately coupled with the history of humankind and the way we treat animal bodies testifies to a discourse more broadly on bodies: the ways in which we dominate and control them.

Ecofeminism, emerging in the 1960s as a worldwide movement, has also been of great influence on the "intersectionality" within feminism which tries to understand how different forms of oppression that emerge from various forms of social stratification such as race, class, sexual orientation, gender, disability, religion, etc. are interwoven. Ecofeminists have made new connections between the domination of certain human bodies (amongst others those of women, people of color and queers) and nature. Carol J. Adams, Author of *The Sexual Politics of Meat* argues for example that meat-eating and the construction of masculinity are closely tied, and that the visual feminization of nature and animalization of women testify to the ways in which structures of power and domination of different minorities are linked.[41] Adams argues, for example, that the violence against animals is gendered, since for most animal products such as milk we have to exploit mostly female animals by for example chaining them to milking machines and separating the calves from their spouse. Drinking a glass of milk therefore contains more grief than eating a piece of meat, since milk is feminized protein and contains a mother's grief.[42] Furthermore, ecofeminists argue that ecological destruction is gendered, because it affects women across the world in entirely different and harder ways than men. Furthermore, patriarchal societies rely for their success

[40] Berger, *About Looking*, 13.
[41] Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (Continuum: New York, 2010)
[42] Ibid.

on the exploitation and colonization of women and indigenous populations as well as their land/nature.[43]

Foucault has coined the term bio-power (*bio-pouvoir*) by which he indicates the techniques through which bodies were inserted "into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes."[44] With bio-power the life of human species entered the sphere of knowledge and power and was used to optimize economic development. For the first time in history "power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate dominion was death, but with living beings."[45] Politics took responsibility and charge over life and was so able to control the body. Foucault, in his description of bio-power does not refer to this process as cross-species, and thereby implies that it only affects human animals. However, philosopher Cora Diamond argues that the violence of "conceptualizing animals…as mere stuff" runs parallel and is dependent upon "a comparable horror at human relentlessness and pitilessness in the exercise of power" towards other human beings.[46] If we want to look at how the histories and stories of human beings and nonhuman beings intertwine, we have to question what the effects are of bio-power on nonhuman species. Donna Haraway aims to "narrate this co-history" and wants to explore "how to inherit the consequences of co-evolution in natureculture," indicating that nature and culture are fluid concepts and that the life-worlds of species interact and are not separate from each other. [47] She proposes a new way of looking at animals as significant others. The last part of this chapter will be dedicated to this view.

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[43] Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, *Ecofeminism* (London: Zed Books, 1993).
[44] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (New York: Random House Inc., 1978), 141.
[45] Ibid., 143.
[46] Cora Diamond, "Injustice and Animals" in *Slow Cures and Bad Philosophers: Essays on Wittgenstein, Medicine, and Bioethics*, ed. by Carl Elliot. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), 136.
[47]Haraway, *The Species Companion Manifesto*, 12.

Logbook Body 19-10-2018

I'm hungry. I walk to the kitchen to get some food and then return and try to pick up from the thread of thinking where I left of. I make a grocery list in my notebook, next to some quotes I made about Giorgio Agamben. I write down: hummus, rice, coconut milk, mushrooms, etc. It's very hard to think about anything else when I am hungry. The supermarket feels too far away and I do not want to leave my thesis just yet in this state. I need to finish a chapter or otherwise I'll run past my own set deadline. Embodiment is a major theme in my life at the moment. This is also why I chose to write about it. I am processing, thinking, and ruminating about embodiment a large chunk of the day. I am currently in 'Haptotherapy' which is a form of therapy that uses touch in order to make the patient reconnect to their body and needs. In my surroundings I often hear that people do not 'feel' the needs of their bodies anymore. They have ignored their body for so long that they have unlearned how to listen to it. This attitude and discourse surrounding the body shows at once a sort of disgust towards the body, an idea of its inferiority, while on the other hand the prevailing idea that the body is supposed to be docile to the brain and its will. At the same time, I see a resurgence of practices around me that promote a spiritual, embodied way of being such as yoga, Tai-Chi and Haptotherapy. It is cool or trendy to be in sync with your body. You are the ultimate successful person if you can keep your mind and body healthy and in control. Perhaps this is one of the ways in which bio-power manifests itself: the state not only expects us to work and do our job well, but also to take care of ourselves, to nurture our bodies in order to remain strong and independent workers. It is interesting how in this case a return to embodiment is not a move towards the animal, a plea for redefining the human subject, but a perpetuation of the idea that humans are superior, because they are able to control their nature, while animals are their bodies and coincide with their nature completely.

Animal as Companion Species

This section will perhaps more *propose* a new way of looking at animals than *reflect* on the ways we *see* animals at this moment. Within animals studies many scholars are looking for new ways of seeing the animal and Donna Haraway's vision in her much-acclaimed *Companion Species Manifesto* is perhaps one of the most celebrated and revolutionary accounts within the scholarship available. Haraway starts off with a story from *Notes of a Sports Writer's Daughter*, in which she poses the following question: "how would we sort

things out?"[48] She then begins with a long enumeration of *resemblances* between her and her dog. Starting every sentence with "one of us." "One of us, product of a vast genetic mixture, is called "pure-bred." One of us, equally a product of a vast mixture, is called "white.""[49] How would we sort things out? "Canid, hominid; pet, professor; butch, woman; animal, human; athlete, handler."[50]

Haraway sketches a new image of the relationships between humans and nonhuman beings with a focus on what is signified in our flesh. Our bodies move in a shared sphere of influence that she terms 'naturecultures'. These naturecultures encompass our co-history as well as the consequences of co-evolution. The term at once undoes the fixation on the dividing line between nature and culture as well as clarifies how the worlds we operate in are inhabited by many species and their "symbiogenetic" constitutions.[51] It describes a world of *relatings*, rather than fixed and autonomous subjects. Relatings through which, Haraway says, we become who we are, and without which we are nothing: "subjects, objects, kinds, races, species, genres and genders are the products of their relating."[52] According to her the relation (and not the individual) is the "smallest unit of analysis."[53] It is through the lens of relations of significant otherness that we should approach the issue of the co-habitations of species.

Significant otherness stands in opposition to anthropomorphism. It does not fall into the trap of seeing "furry humans in animal bodies and measures their worth in scales of similarity to the rights-bearing humanist subject of Western philosophy and political theory."[54] Rather, it acknowledges animal individuals in their specificity and with sensibility. The focus of 'significant otherness' thus not only requires a revision of animals, but also of

[48] Haraway, *The Species Companion Manifesto*, 2.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., 1.
[51] Ibid., 32.
[52] Ibid., 7.
[53] Ibid., 24.
[54] Ibid., 51.

human beings. To step away from the position of superiority that we have ascribed to our own species and move towards an idea of homo sapiens as 'fellow creatures' or 'companions' to other species. This requires perhaps a shift in thinking not only about the lines between nature and culture, animal and human, but also body and mind, or the Cartesian Dualism. This dualism perpetuates traditional markers of difference and superiority of humanity as well as alienates us from our bodies. It is within the body that we share a mortality and vulnerability with other species that, if realized, could move us towards a world of companion species and more ethical consideration for our fellow creatures.

I started this chapter with an exercise of seeing. The framer (humans) frames the framed (animal) and through this frame we exercise control over the animal, through looking at the animal we dominate him/her, name him/her and deny him/her existence. We employ discourse on the animal to render groups of human other, use animals as allegories for human behavior, and represent animals as objects, or stuff to be consumed. Another way proposed by animal scholars such as Donna Haraway is to move away from these visions, and vision in general and shift focus to our shared *embodied* existence on this planet, the way we "make each other up, in the flesh."[55] Cary Wolfe in *Animal Rites*: *American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* argues that "the figure of vision is indeed ineluctably tied to the specifically human."[56] It is up to animal studies and art then, not to abandon vision altogether, but to reorient it away from the idea that we can gaze, and represent, while at the same time escape representation ourselves. Cary Wolfe thinks that we can achieve this by situating vision as only one sense among other senses, within a bodily, but not necessarily human- sensorium.[57] In the next chapter I will discuss some theories that aim to do just this; including the experience of the body, and the other senses when we encounter art works.

[55] Haraway, *The Species Companion Manifesto*, 2.
[56] Wolfe, *American Rites*, 3.
[57] Ibid., 3

Embodiment as a radical way of envisioning the human as material, at once fragile and involved in constant evolving relations.

Chapter two: Looking at Animals through Art

In *Animal Rites* (2003), Cary Wolfe argues that in Western society and philosophy 'vision' has been considered the most important and central sense to humanity. It runs through philosophy from Sartre's gaze through which the subject is objectified (hell is other people), to Foucault whose panoptical gaze signals "power's omnipresence."[58] The first two chapters in this thesis are titled 'Looking at Animals' and 'Looking at Animals through Art'. My aim is to analyze the way we look (at art and animals) as well as deconstruct the central position that vision has in relation to knowledge and experience. It is in vision, in framing, that the animal is controlled and in order to unpack the discourse around nonhuman animals we must look critically at the ways we have looked at them in the past and continue to look at them in the present moment. In this chapter I aim to propose a new way of approaching art that focuses on experience rather than visual information, in order to deconstruct the central position that vision and language (discourse) occupy in our conception of art.

After a short recollection of some of the most important terms concerning 'looking' that find their origin within psychoanalysis, but have had a major influence on film theory, I will continue this chapter by discussing the concepts of *sensation* by Gilles Deleuze and *the abject* as formulated by Kristeva. These ideas or 'visions' (ironically) can be seen as New-Materialist approaches to conceiving art. New Materialism is a way of understanding reality that developed in 21st century thought and that has left its marks in philosophy, feminism, science studies and the arts. Its starting point is a "return to matter", to move agency beyond the human: "it is not just humans who do things."[59] Through New Materialism we can envision a "reconfiguration of human/non-human relationships."[60] According to New Materialist thinkers, art has been rid of its vivid materiality and its existence in the world as a

[58] Wolfe, *American Rites*, 3.
[59] Barbara Bolt, "Toward a 'New Materialism' through the Arts," in *Carnal Knowledge: Towards a 'New Materialism' through the Arts*, ed. by Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2012), 3.
[60] Ibid.

material object. It has been colonized by cultural theory and social constructivism that imagines art as the "textual, the linguistic and the discursive."[61] New-Materialist thinkers resist the idea that art is constructed through language solely and that discourse prescribes what can be thought and represented in all art media.

A Short History of Looking at Art

One of the most influential and important terms to mention in film theory concerning 'vision' is 'the male gaze' from Laura Mulvey, coined in 1975. In her famous essay *Visual pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, Mulvey builds forth on Sigmund Freud's and Jacques Lacan's ideas about the gaze and applies these to cinema. The male gaze is the perspective (of a movie) in which men "are the controllers of the look."[62] Through the male gaze the woman signifies the "castration threat."[63] A woman (through the male gaze) can only exist in relation to this castration and there is no possibility for her to transcend this.[64] The male gaze therefore positions the woman as an (sexual) object or an object of fascination for men and not as an active subject that has the ability to look back, to gaze back. Many film critics since have explored movies that supposedly 'return the gaze' –i.e., movies written from other perspectives that subvert the traditional objectifying male gaze. The work of Bonajo amongst others, is an example of video-art that "reverts the gaze." The male gaze emerges from the term *scopophilia*. In his "Three Essays on Sexuality" written in 1905, Sigmund Freud coins this term. Literally translated, it means "the pleasure of looking." In Freud's theory, scopophilia is an essential part of the development of sexual instinct and the ego. Children

[61] Bolt, Towards a 'New Materialism,' 4.
[62] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Feminism and Film Theory*, ed. by Constance Penley (New York: Routledge,1988), 64.
[63] The way 'woman' is used here is obsolete, since woman in no way means 'without a penis'. This use of woman is transphobic and perpetuates the idea that sex and gender are indistinguishable.
[64] Mulvey, "Visual pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 68.

already take pleasure in looking at the 'private' and 'forbidden' parts of the body, the genitals.[65] According to Jacques Lacan, the mirror phase, in which the child starts recognizing him/herself in the mirror functions as a crucial part in the development of the ego. In her essay, Mulvey explicates on Lacan's mirror phase. Viewing a film, she argues, is a moment defined by scopophilia, since the audience can freely enjoy a private world that is portrayed in the movie and so fall back into voyeuristic tendencies. Furthermore, Mulvey argues, the experience of watching a film resembles, to some extent, the time/place before the mirror stage. Film thus has the capacity to bring about a "temporary loss of ego" and bring the 'looker' to a moment that reminds us nostalgically of the moment before we became whom we recognize as ourselves. [66]

Sensation in the Work of Francis Bacon

In *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* Deleuze argues that the work of Francis Bacon is not illustrative and does not 'represent' a part of reality. In fact, his work resists representation.[67] His figures can be said to affect the viewer and the world on a different *level*, beyond the realm of the story that representation tells, beyond knowledge. In fact, Deleuze attributes a certain autonomy to art, one that social constructivism has denied it, by looking at art as just another (cultural) object that falls within discourses of production and depends solely on social, economic and political context.[68] Art is something more. "It harbors within it an excess, a rapture": an aesthetic.[69] Art is part of the world, but also stands apart from it. Art can be theorized, but with a different vocabulary than is used by social constructivists.

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[65] Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema."
[66] Ibid., 61.
[67] Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*.
[68] Simon O'Sullivan, "THE AESTHETICS OF AFFECT: Thinking art beyond representation," *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities* vol. 6, no. 3 (2010): 125-135.
[69] Ibid., 125.

What we gain from art, according to Deleuze, is not knowledge of the world, but experience, *sensation*. Sensation here meaning more than the dictionary definition: "a physical feeling or perception resulting from something that happens to or comes into contact with the body."[70] Deleuze's *sensation* "acts immediately upon the nervous system" and does not leave the subject whole, unharmed, intact.[71] The receiver of sensation does not stay the same: "at one and the same time I *become* in the sensation and something happens through the sensation."[72] Through this mechanism the body becomes giver and receiver, subject and object at once. Sensation "has one face turned toward the subject… and one face turned toward the object."[73] It is through this that the deformation of Bacon's Figures takes place and we can begin to see how art in Deleuze's theory works at the fringes of the human subject. Sensation operates not on the level of ideas, but on the level of molecules, the level of matter. It so speaks to us beyond "the spectacles of subjectivity."[74]

Bacon's Multisensible Figure

According to Deleuze, Bacon is the "the master of deformations."[75] He specifically says deformation and not transformation, since the latter is induced with a kind of idealism. In his work one Figure already shows different levels and orders of sensation. There is movement, but not through space. Movement visible in Bacon's Figures is more like a spasm, "in-place", it shows the "action of invisible forces on the body" or what we may call instinct.[76] *Sensation* induced by the Figure already consists out of different sensations,

[70] "Sensation, Definition of Sensation in English by Oxford Dictionaries." Oxford Dictionaries, English. Accessed February 12, 2019. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/sensation.
[71] Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 34.
[72] Ibid., 35.
[73] Ibid., 34.
[74] O'Sullivan, "THE AESTHETICS OF AFFECT," 128.
[75] Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 36.
[76] Ibid., 41.

different domains of sensation. Deleuze argues that each domain refers to a different sense organ and thus Bacon makes "visible a kind of original unity of the senses and would make a multisensible Figure appear visually."[77] When I look at Bacon's paintings, it is almost like I am watching a short piece of a film, or a GIF. Multiple moments seem to occur at the same time in the painting. Thereby destabilizing my eyes and producing a shaky feeling, as if I am tipsy. This sensation forces me to connect to my body to remain balanced. Even if we define painting as a visual form of the arts, Deleuze thus formulates a hypothesis that rethinks the function of the eye in painting and situates painting as a more bodily and material form of art. Painting, Deleuze says, treats the eye as a shifting and not as a fixed organ: "it liberates lines and colors from their representative function, but at the same time it also liberates the eye from its adherence to the organism, from its character as a fixed and qualified organ."[78] When we look at the work of Laurie Anderson later, we might see that Anderson's film has a similar quality and effect on the eye and vision. Painting "gives us eyes all over: in the ear, in the stomach, in the lungs."[79]

[77] Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 42.
[78] Ibid., 52.
[79] Ibid.

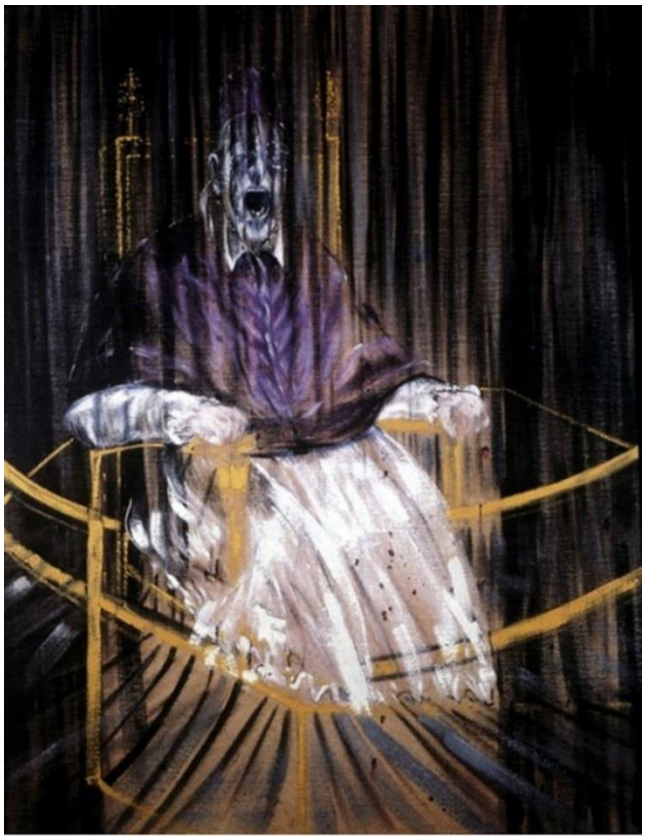

Fig. 4 A multi-sensible figure. *Study after Velázquez's portrait of Pope Innocent X*, Francis Bacon, 1953.

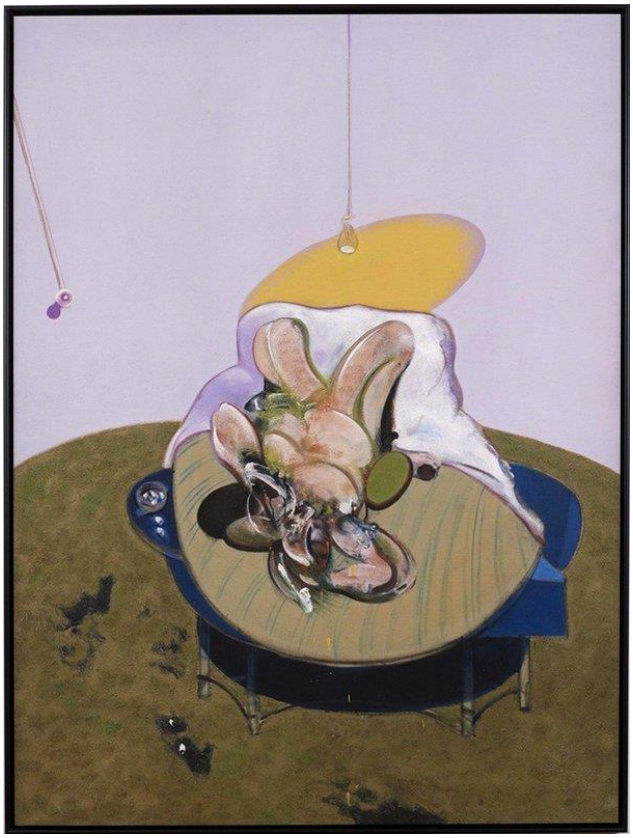

Fig. 5 Seeing invisible forces upon the body. *Lying Figure*, Francis Bacon, 1969.

Logbook Body 30-10-18

I wonder, is it possible to feel my whole body as one? I lay down in the bed and focus my attention towards my body. I think: toes, feet, ankles, calves, legs, thighs, belly, chest, back, shoulders, arms, wrists, hands. I think: cheeks, eyes, mouth, nose, forehead. I think soft. Then I think: body, body. Body! I feel the attention and energy flowing up and down through my veins. I am trying to remember that I am one body. That I am not composed out of arms and legs, that my head is not separate from the rest of my body. I have a hard time convincing myself.

Since last week my cat Sarah lives in the house with me. Also last week I started Haptotherapy, A form of therapy that works with the sense of touch to make you more aware of your body and reconnect you to its inner workings. The arrival of Sarah as well as my first Haptotherapy session both bring me to a completely new awareness and sensation of my body. Since Sarah is quite distressed from moving to a new place, she keeps running around and meowing anxiously. All my body movements seem to adapt to hers. I try not to make any unexpected movements, or sounds, and I keep checking where she is constantly to make sure she has not gone outside and ran away. Her presence forces me to be more aware of my own body and the way it is moving through space. When I am nervous, I can tap quite a lot with my legs, and run up and down the stairs because I forgot things upstairs all the time. I clearly go to the kitchen more often when I am unrestful to make a cup of tea. Her closeness calms me down to a certain extent and is pleasant to me. My body on the other hand is also pleasant and comforting for her, I smell familiar in this unfamiliar place and I am mostly warm and soft and a good place to sit or sleep on. She purrs and I always feel a wave of comfort going through my body when she puts her face against mine. In Haptotherapy I learn to feel the energy that emerges from another person and recognize the effect on my body. To sense if somebody is anxious, shy or good-willed. Sarah's energy towards me is of trust and openness. When I am sitting with her, I sometimes, for a moment, forget that I was trying to be one body. I just am.

Becoming Animal

The two movements, the move away from vision as a stable and central sense and the move away from the autonomous self, seem to go hand in hand. The expressions "spectacles of subjectivity" and "the eye of the mind" seem to accurately capture this link. The sense of vision is intimately tied to the construction and perpetuation of the rational "I." Haraway

defines vision as "a leap out of the marked body and into a conquering gaze from nowhere."[80] She calls our traditional 'vision on vision' as the most central sense and source of information traditionally phallic. It is through this vision that the subject is created, our subjectivity therefore inherently being dependent on the sustained species hierarchy. Moving away from vision through sensation is thus not just a move away from the human subject, but also a move towards the animal, argues Deleuze – a way of 'becoming animal'.

Bacon's Figure is a body, but not the structure of a body. Deleuze means to indicate that Bacon is not a painter of faces, of bones, because these are the part of the "spatial organization" of the body, the way *we make sense* of the body and its identity as a human subject.[81] Bacon is a painter of meat, where meat is the "common zone of man and the beast."[82] If you look at Bacon's art works, he also often literally portrays meat, or carcasses or bodies whose form lacks structure created by bones. His bodies seem on the verge of deterioration. It is worth quoting Deleuze extensively here to show how he defines Bacon as a painter of man's animal spirit:

> Bacon pursues a very peculiar project as a portrait painter: to dismantle the face, to rediscover the head or make it emerge from beneath the face…sometimes the human head is replaced by an animal…sometimes an animal, for example a real dog, is treated as the shadow of its master, or conversely, the man's shadow itself assumes an autonomous and indeterminate animal existence. The shadow escapes from the body like an animal we had been sheltering. In place of formal correspondences, what Bacon's painting constitutes is a zone of indiscernibility or undecidability between man and animal. Man becomes animal, but not without the animal becoming spirit at the same time, the spirit of man, the physical spirit of man.[83]

Deleuze describes a transcendent experience of art that is thoroughly immanent at the same time and located within the body. Painting then is a place of deformation, of

[80] Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* vol. 14, no. 3 (1988): 581.
[81] Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 20.
[82] Ibid., 22.
[83] Ibid., 20-21.

dehumanization. A place in which we have the capacity to reconnect to our carnal selves, but also a place that helps us 'return' to the 'time before time,' as Derrida says, the (timeless) moment where Ish has not yet named all the animals. Una Chaudhuri's term Zooësis, which I shortly explained in the introduction of this thesis, can take many forms and shapes, one of which is to humanize the animal. Bacon's work, as Deleuze explains, can be seen as the opposite attempt of this, an attempt to animalize the human, to "restore our lost relationship to our own carnality, to our fleshly being in a material world."[84] Sensation connects all of our senses and so speaks to the body as a "unified field" of sensory capacities. It is through art that we experience sensation, through sensation that we can find embodiment. Embodiment which can move us beyond our understanding of the world through knowledge and language and reconnects us to our species-life, our animal-life.

Affects and Abjection

Whereas Bacon is a painter of meat, where meat is the common denominator between humans and animals, the place where distinctions between them disappear, Julia Kristeva looks at meat, the corpse, the dead body and our insides in terms of *the abject*. The abject is a substance, person, or event so other to us, so alien that it must be rigorously excluded from us to remain an autonomous subject. At the same time, it is also so familiar to us, so intimate, that its closeness produces panic and disgust in the subject. The Abject is "death infecting life."[85] The abject is not what is unclean or dangerous to our health, abjection is "what disturbs identity, system, order."[86] The abject is closely related to the "uncanny" and the "unheimlich" and signifies something unfamiliar to what was once familiar before. The

[84] Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 21.
[85] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982): 4.
[86] Ibid.

primary site of the abject is the maternal body. To this body we were tied, before we became independent individuals and therefore confronts us with our dependency on the body of the mother. The corpse is the other main site of the abject, since it is in the condition of being post-subject. The condition in which we have become an object. The abject touches on all our boundaries and causes a certain "spatial ambivalence (inside/outside uncertainty)" and "ambiguity of perception (pleasure/pain)" causing all meaning to collapse.[87] Bacon's *deformation* and Kristeva's *abjection* go hand in hand. They evoke the same sensations in the body: those of horror, disgust or repulsion.

The body of the animal is closely linked to the body of the mother and therefore also *the abject*, because both remind us of our dependency on nature, our origin. It is through separating ourselves from these bodies that we become so-called rational, speaking subjects. The abject thus resides in both women and animals as well as people of color since they also have been animalized and feminized. The animal confronts us with our animal life, our fleshly life in this world and the fact that we are bound by the rules of mortality that determine all organic matter. Melanie Bonajo, as we will see in the next chapter, works a lot with the connection between animals and women. If *woman* is already animalized, the exploration of this connection that is deemed taboo, can be seen as an attempt to approach the abject, to confront it in order to redeem/reshape it.

The Abject and Art

According to Kristeva, confrontations with "sites of abjection" are necessary to sustain the functioning of subjects and societies.[88] These "sites of contestation" used to be created by religious ritual, but are now delivered by art. This then, is Kristeva's vision on art: art is a site

[87] Kristeva, *The Powers of Horror*, 62.
[88] Kristeva, *The Powers of Horror*.

where the abject is confronted *in order to* be excluded, a place where human boundaries are contested and redrawn at the same time. I want to explain the abject because it can help us understand the connection between the animal and art, because, according to Kristeva, both these encounters, with animals and art, are also an encounter with the abject. Therefore, we can perhaps find and approach one through the other.

Hal Foster, who wrote extensively on the work of Julia Kristeva, argues that the abject functions in a peculiar way in the work of many artists. The abject is seen as possessing a "special truth".[89] The depiction of abject, violated bodies, the harmed, mangled, distorted body, seems to represent an "evidentiary basis" for example in "important witnessings."[90] Foster argues that there is a danger in siting this truth in the abject, since it restricts our (political) imagination to two camps: the camp of the abjector and the camp of the abjected: "the assumption that in order not to be counted amongst sexists and racists one must become the phobic object of such subjects."[91] Artists whose work depicts the abject either aim to subvert power by 'becoming the abject' or try to visualize the abject, to lay bare its functioning within society. The way the abject is approached in art, Foster argues, is "edged with the sublime."[92] He means to say that the objection of artists to work with the abject is to purify it, to redeem the abject. We must ask ourselves whether artists that depict or work with the abject are reversing power, rebelling against the abjection of animals (and women) or whether their approach is "the fastest route for contemporary rogue-saints to grace?"[93]

Another important question that we have to ask ourselves concerning the abject and posited by Randy Malamud, is whether it is "ever acceptable or desirable to remove animals from their natural frames and resituate them within cultural frames? If so, under what

[89] Hal Foster, "Obscene, Abject, Traumatic," *October* ,vol.78 (Autumn, 1996): 123.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.,115.
[93] Ibid., 123.

circumstances? What does the animal lose, and/or gain, under these conditions? What does the human viewer loose or gain? (what pain is suffered? What enjoyment or education is reaped?)"[94] And what I might want to add to Malamud's questions: what does it mean to identify with the animal in art (for the animal)? What does it mean to purify the animal/abject inside the human? How does that leave the animal behind when we (women, queers, people of color, etc.) approach the abject to become fully symbolic members of society again? I will discuss this theme later when we look at the work of Melanie Bonajo which revolves a lot around the (sexual and traumatized) female body.

Art as a Bodily Encounter

Just like Gilles Deleuze, Julia Kristeva sees art as an experience. The confrontation with the abject in art, or the encounter for us with art induces bodily sensations or what she calls "affect." Affects are "extra-discursive and extra-textual…moments of intensity, a reaction in/on the body at the level of matter."[95] These affects are transcendent in an immanent sense, just like Deleuze's sensations. They are spiritual, where the spiritual resides in the body. The way these 'affects' touch the body can be explained through a "tripartite schema," Barrett and Bolt argue. [96] First, when someone encounters a "site of contestation," an artwork, there is an "external excitation."[97] This happens when matter touches/hits the body. Next, an "internal eroticization of the body under instinctual pressure" follows.[98] For Kristeva, a bodily encounter with art also means an 'erotic' or 'sexual' encounter implicitly. Since these affects operate on the level of matter, we are not talking about perception here.

[94] Malamud, *Introduction to Visual Culture*, 7.
[95] O'Sullivan, "THE AESTHETICS OF AFFECT," 126.
[96] Barrett and Bolt, "Toward a 'New Materialism' through the Arts," 7.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.

Whereas Deleuze's sensation connects the senses of the body to create a unified, embodied whole, Julia Kristeva seems to see affect and the abject in art as a necessary encounter. A place where boundaries of the subject are not only at stake but also redrawn. The subject is lost for a moment in affect, feels the looming proximity of his own objectivity/mortality. Art is this ritual. If art has the capacity to move or extend the fields of subjectivity, then the animal is already present in all art, whether the animal functions as a theme within the work or not. This because the confrontation with our own subject-construction immediately touches on the boundary between the discursive distinction between human and nonhuman. The animal was necessary to exclude in order to become a fully symbolic member of society, but stands waiting for us around the corner. In the one moment that we are lost, the animal hoovers over us as the 'animal shadow' in Bacon's work.

With this statement, I want to refer to John Berger who linked the histories of humans and art: "it is not unreasonable to think that the first metaphor was animal."[99] Berger, as well as Derrida, argues that between the human and the animal lays an abyss of non-comprehension. Man sees himself looking at animal and the animal looking back at him. I want to propose that looking at art is a similar encounter. (Wo)man becomes aware of him/herself looking. Matter impresses on his/her body. For a second there is no (human) story to tell. There is no language to bridge what is seen and what s/he sees. Man stands alone, but is not confirmed by anything. We feel again what Derrida calls "being-after." We follow something, yet we do not really know what it is we are following. In whose footsteps we stand, who names us, what is our name. The abject confronts us with the subjectivity of the other and our own objectivity. We are already seen by the other, we will always only follow their gaze. Art's truth then is Derrida's "truth of every gaze."[100] The truth that "allows me to see and be seen through the eyes of the other, in the seeing and not just seen eyes of the

[99] Berger, *About Looking*, 7.
[100] Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am," 381.

other."[101] Hal Foster suggests that much contemporary art, in opposition to modern art, does not aim to "tame the gaze" of the object/Other anymore.[102] It is as if abject art "wanted the gaze to shine, the object to stand, the real to exist, in all the glory (or the horror) of its pulsatile desire, or at least to evoke this sublime condition."[103]. Art has us in its grip with its gaze, and apparently, we let it happen.

In this chapter I discussed that art for Deleuze and Kristeva is something beyond representation, something that can affect us on different levels. This bodily art moves us away from an understanding that is purely visual, of the brain and of reason and language. Instead, they argue, art enables an encounter with the nonhuman. O' Sullivan says that art's function is "to reconnect us with the world." According to him, "art opens us up to the non-human universe that we are part of (…) art also operates as a fissure in representation."[104] Within this fissure of representation we encounter an artwork and, in this encounter, we are no longer fully human. We are animal beings or infected by our own animality. Deleuze and Kristeva's theories are New-Materialist to the extent that they make clear that art is a material existence in this world whose matter has impact and whose function cannot be summarized within the confines of discourse. Instead art affects the body and changes our relation to that body and our pre-conceived notions of self. Art opens up a space to negotiate identity. To re-identify. Art is thus a liminal zone, a space of indiscernibility between animal and human being. In the next chapter I will look at two case-studies and discuss these notions and ideas in relation to the work of these artists.

[101] Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am," 381.
[102] Foster, "Obscene, Abject, Traumatic," 109 .
[103] Foster, "Obscene, Abject, Traumatic," 110.
[104] O' Sullivan, "THE AESTHETICS OF AFFECT," 128.

Logbook Body 5-11-2019

Yesterday during one of the theatre classes that I take, the workshop instructor, Connor Schumacher, a dancer in residence at the Rotterdam Dansateliers, was telling us about the theoretical sources of inspiration that underlie his theatre practice. One of those was the idea developed in psychology of 'embodied cognition'. Embodied cognition, he said, goes against the idea that your consciousness is located only in one part of the body: the brain. Instead, consciousness is what comes out of the contact of all parts of the body with the world. Consciousness, memory and experience reside in the body, turning the body literally into a living archive. In Psychology Today, I read that it is a radical view within traditional psychology which argues that consciousness emerges from "the real-time interaction between a nervous system in a body with particular capabilities and an environment that offers opportunities for behavior and information about those opportunities."[105] *This view on cognition impacts our perception of the role of the brain. According to scientists who believe in the idea of embodied cognition, the brain does not have to "represent knowledge about the world," but is part of a larger system that also actively employs perception and action to find a solution to a problem an organism is confronted with.* [106] *Embodied Cognition is a psychological term, but in my head it seems to fit perfectly within the project of Zooësis. If humankind can understand their cognition as residing within the body, and not as positioned in an objective, rational brain that is unique to humankind, we can begin to look at ourselves as bodily presences in the world, alongside our nonhuman siblings. Another practice that inspires Connor's artwork is dynamic meditation, a form of meditation developed in the 1970s by Osho. In this form of meditation, stillness or mindfulness is achieved through cathartic movements, dancing. In the movement or the dance, you can begin to lose yourself and become one with the dance. Leave yourself behind. In the workshop, this is exactly what we had to do. We began by using our bodies as metaphors, we opened and closed our bodies. We softened our bodies and hardened them. We straightened our bodies and bent them. We moved through space and interacted with each other's bodies without speaking. And through this practice it felt like together we were reaching some sort of ecstasy, or as Emile Durkheim would say: a collective effervescence. The feeling that we moved and felt as one. Dancing, or embodied movement, therefore, can undo the differences and spaces between us and connect us on a deeper, bodily level. Perhaps I want to be so bold to say that dancing is a spiritual activity that connects us to our animal bodies. "If I can't dance it is not my revolution," said Emma Goldman, but perhaps, Emma, it is more accurate to say that "If we don't dance, there won't be an (animal) revolution."*

[105] "Embodied Cognition: What It Is & Why It's Important," Psychology Today, accessed February 13, 2019, https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/beyond-words/201202/embodied-cognition-what-it-is-why-its-important.
[106] Ibid.

Chapter three: Case-studies

In the previous chapters I discussed the representation of animals today and the multiple meanings that we attach to their bodies. Furthermore, the idea that art can function as an embodying machine, a site through which we can undo established subject-object relations and reconnect to our animal selves. In *Embodied Cognition and Cinema,* Peter Kravanja and Maarten Coëgnarts define embodiment as a mediator of signification, a mechanism in film that guides "the audience's attention toward particular visual events (…) to trigger a myriad of bodily states."[107] Metaphoric thought in film helps us "to understand abstract phenomena in terms of concrete embodied experiences."[108] In *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*, Vivian Sobchack defines embodiment as "a radically material condition of human being that necessarily entails both the body and consciousness, objectivity and subjectivity, in an irreducible ensemble."[109] Both the work of Laurie Anderson and Melanie Bonajo is composed of film or video material. Anderson's film is a compilation of videos, narrative fragments of her voice and existing imagery. Melanie Bonajo makes video installations that are composed of various film materials. Her videos are also supported by narration that, just like in Anderson's work, reports on issues/themes that do not always directly relate to the imagery visible. This stimulates the imaginative and associative efforts of the viewer. Both Bonajo's and Anderson's work tells various stories at once and this gives their work a fragmented and poetic feel. In this chapter I want to analyze the different ways in which the artists approach 'embodiment' as well as in what ways this helps us rethink the human-animal divide. How does 'animality' and the 'animal' feature in their work? In what way does their work engage the senses? What narratives cross into each other and how does

[107] Juan Chattah, "Film Music as Embodiment," in *Embodied Cognition and Cinema*, ed. by Peter Kravanja and Maarten Coëgnarts (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2015): 81.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Los Angeles: California University Press, 2004): 4.

fragmentation operate as destabilizing and embodying mechanism in their work? These are some of the questions that I will discuss in this chapter.

Heart of a Dog: Journey of the Senses

Heart of a Dog is a loving account of the life and death of Laurie Anderson's dog, Lolabelle. In the first scene of *Heart of a Dog*, we hear an electronic melancholic track and see black drawings on pink paper. We see words scattered over the paper, wild, quickly sketched lines. We see a running dog, the words: "things on all the tin roofs." The camera zooms in and out, moves to a different image of a woman diving, something breaking like a volcano erupting. The music becomes heavier, slower. We see a dog with a helicopter, hear the propellers. A hand letting go. A whirlwind. People floating up to the sky. Then the music stops and we see the drawing of a woman, Laurie Anderson herself, the drawing starts moving and talking to us. She says: "this is my dream body, the one I use to walk around in my dreams."

Fig. 6 Animation from the first scene of Heart of a Dog by Laurie Anderson, 2015.

Fig. 7 Animation from the first scene of *Heart of a Dog* by Laurie Anderson, 2015.

Fig. 8“This is my dream body.” Film Still from *Heart of a Dog* by Laurie Anderson, 2015.

Anderson then starts describing “this dream” to us using animation. In this dream she lies in a hospital bed. The doctors hand her a pink bundle. “It’s a girl,” the doctor says, “isn’t she beautiful?” And he hands her the bundle. In the bundle is her dog Lolabelle. Nobody says anything like that is not a human baby. She holds the bundle and puts her face to Lolabelle’s head. It is almost a perfect moment except that the joy she feels is mixed with quite a lot of guilt. Because the truth was that she had engineered this whole thing. She had arranged that Lolabelle was sown into her stomach, so that she could then give birth to her. This was not an easy job because Lolabelle wasn’t a pup, but a full-grown dog. And she had struggled and tried to get out. But they pushed her back in to sow things up. It was really a mess and she felt very bad about it. But “it was just the way, you know, it had to be.” Anyway, she kissed her on the head and said: “hello little bone-head. I love you forever.”

Fig. 9 “The dream scene.” Film still from *Heart of a Dog* by Laurie Anderson, 2015.

Fig. 10 “The dream scene.” Film still from *Heart of a Dog* by Laurie Anderson, 2015.

Fig. 11 “The dream scene.” Film still from *Heart of a Dog* by Laurie Anderson, 2015.

Following this anecdote, the music changes, we see the image of trains moving, black and white pictures. Anderson tells us about a memory. She says: “I was standing in the room where she was dying”, her mother. And she is talking in a whole new voice. She says: “why are there so many animals on the ceiling?” Anderson asks us: “what are the very last things you say in your life?” Her mother was talking to the animals that had gathered on the ceiling. “She spoke to them tenderly.” “All you animals”, she said, “tell the animals.” Her last words, all scattered, different destinations she always wanted to go. “Is it a pilgrimage, towards what? Which way do we face? Thank you so much for having me.”

After this story she moves to her childhood. We see an image of a blue sky. Anderson tells us she grew up as a kind of sky worshipper. The skies were endless, half of the world. While the music becomes more Celtic and dreamier Anderson asks: “what are days for? And she answers: “to wake us up. To put between the endless nights. What are nights for? To fall through time into another world.”

Fig. 12 “The endless skies.” Film still from *Heart of a Dog* by Laurie Anderson, 2015.

Fig. 13 “Places she always wanted to go.” Film Still from *Heart of a Dog* by Laurie Anderson, 2015.

From here the visuals move to a helicopter in the sky and from there to urban scenery: the pier in New York along the West Side High Way. Anderson tells us about the atmosphere in the city in the days following nine eleven. FBI speed boats began to dock out at the pier. It was the beginning of a time when cameras began to appear everywhere. The city was so loud that Anderson tried to get out as much as possible. So, she took a trip to the Californian mountains with her dog Lolabelle. We see visuals from this trip. Anderson tells us about the intent of the trip: she wanted to learn to talk with Lolabelle. Rat Terriers can understand up to five hundred words. What happened, Anderson says, is that “beauty got in the way of the experiment” and she forgot about the whole project. In the vast skies above the mountains, hawks would circle. Every day, Anderson and Lolabelle would walk to the sea on a several hour-long walk. Lolabelle would trot in front of Anderson, always busy, since rat terriers are bred to protect borders. On one morning Anderson sees the hawks spiraling down right in front of her, and then swooping up again. The hawks had thought from the sky that Lolabelle

was a white fluffy bunny, but realized up close that she was too big to take in their claws. Lolabelle looks up, Anderson says, “with a brand-new expression” . “First was the realization that she was prey and that these birds had come to kill her. And second was a whole new thought. It was the realization that they could come from the air.” *I mean I never thought of that. A whole hundred and eighty more degrees that I am now responsible for.* Anderson imitates the voice of Lolabelle for these last two sentences. The whole trip Lolabelle kept looking up at the sky like there was something wrong with the air. Anderson says: “where have I seen this look before?” And then she realized, it was the same look as her neighbors in New York had in the days after nine eleven when they realized they could come from the air and second that it would be that way from now on. “And we had passed through a door and we would never be going back.”

Logbook Body 20-10-2018

Sometimes when I can’t read academic texts anymore and feel like I am losing focus while writing, I take a piece of poetry and read it. Poetry seems a mechanism for me to move away from my rational oriented approach to text and brings me more toward sensation. It demands a different kind of focus. Poetry speaks to a different part of me: like music it has rhythm and it leaves space for my body to remember other instances than the present moment. Poetry is a less normative way of using language, it ‘queers’ language you could say, like other senses ‘queer’ vision. The words in poetry have a different cadence which resides in the body, moves the body. Also, while writing poetry this seems to happen. The poem needs to stir the body, otherwise it is not a good poem. Sometimes poetry literally emerges from a physical sensation. The body writes. The following pieces of poetry are from “All we Saw” by Canadian Poet Anne Michaels. This passage makes me understand Anderson’s words in Heart of a Dog better. Michaels’ “moment desire is forcibly renamed grief” resonates with Anderson’s saying that: “Death is the release of love.” In the poem, Michaels describes the scene in a hospital bed, a loved one of the protagonist who is passing away, dying. In the poem Michaels questions what the subject is: the body itself or the longing, the desire, the love of others that holds the body into place, shapes it. The

body is becoming mute, still, like the earth. What happens in this moment? What is the space between two words?

"you had one subject
the body
others draw
what the body is, how it endures
pleasure
but
your flesh
speaks something else
every line an outline
of that dark matter that is
not even the self staring from a face,
not the longing to be seen,
not what desires –
even our scorn a form
of desire –
not the pooling of belly and arm
as if the weight of flesh
bends the air
but rather
what self, longing, flesh
are shaped by
what the body proves
(…)
I sat next to the bed
I told you how the bison woke
the earth
I knew you were listening
perhaps
you heard

life can become so still

the iv drip
before it falls
earth of the body
where a life grows

the stillness between silence
and muteness

the moment desire forcibly
is renamed
grief
the precise space between
those two words."[110]

Fig. 14 Film still from Heart of a Dog by Laurie Anderson, 2015.

Fig. 15 Film still from Heart of a Dog by Laurie Anderson, 2015.

[110] Michaels, Anne. "Two Poems." *Granta Magazine*, 6 Oct. 2017, granta.com/two-poems-anne-michaels/.

Fig. 16 Lolabelle and Anderson in the Californian mountains. Film still from *Heart of a Dog* by Laurie Anderson, 2015.

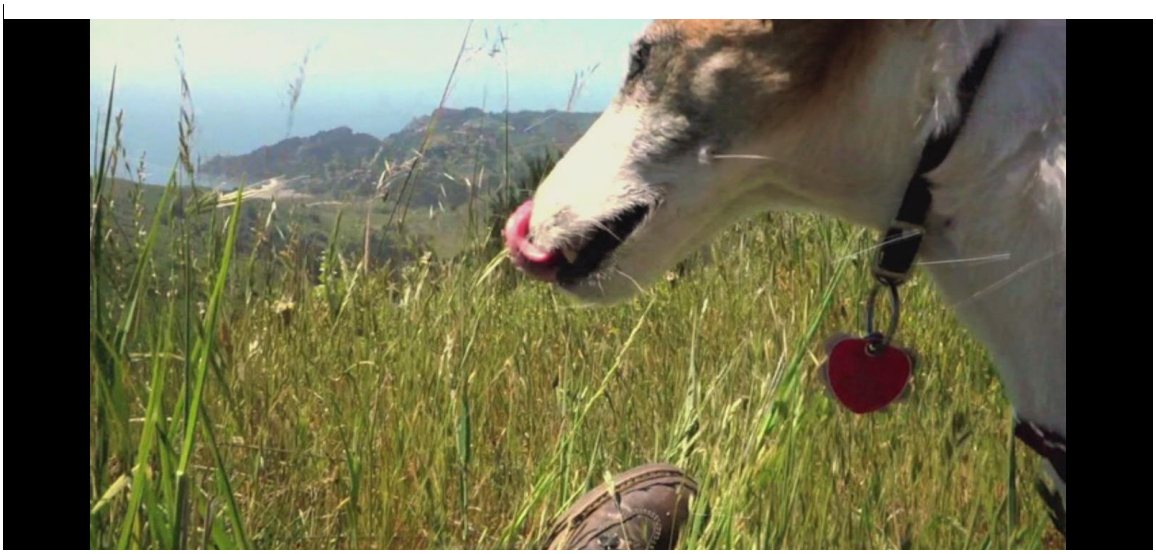

Fig. 17 Lolabelle and Anderson in the Californian mountains. Film still from *Heart of a Dog* by Laurie Anderson, 2015.

Fig. 18 Hawks circling down. Film still from *Heart of a Dog* by Laurie Anderson, 2015.

Loss of the Speaking Self

Through an associative, visual journey, Anderson guides us through many layers of meaning. One way in which she does this is by shifting the ways in which 'the story' is told. Sometimes we hear a clear anecdote, a memory that is told almost exact, graspable. At other times Anderson just poses questions. In some parts of the movie, flashes of words appear on the screen that are not narrated verbally. They move on and off the screen so fast that you can only just read them, but have no time to digest them. In an interview, Anderson says the following about these passages: "language that is not voiced is really kind of directed towards the part of you that never speaks. That is this kind of witness person behind the structure you have made for you and walks around for you, is someone back there. Often I find someone critical of what is going on."[111] Anderson directs a part of the movie towards the part of us "that never speaks." A mute part, an animal part that reminds me of "becoming-animal", the effect Deleuze describes when observing Bacon's art work. The way that art silences us, connects us to our pre-subject position, somewhere where we are not fully human yet.

Silence plays an important role within the field of animal studies. Silencing has been used as a way of repressing animality, animals and nature. Silence is attributed to nature, as a way of saying that nature does not speak. In *Political Animal Voices*, animal scholar Eva Meijer, researches animal languages and the ways in which we can learn to understand/communicate with them better in the public and private domain. She says: "in order to create a meaningful dialogue, we need to ask other animals questions and respond to them, not just look at them looking at us."[112] What is interesting about Anderson's choice to speak to the silence inside ourselves is that this silence has been animalized, rendered to the non-human animal. Silence is dehumanized. By addressing this silence, Anderson rethinks

[111] Laurie Anderson, "*Heart of a Dog* Interview," interview by Anne Thompson, YouTube, November 17, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSh2nUBye5k&t=634s.
[112] Meijer, *Political Animal Voices*, 39.

and reshapes the mechanisms of exclusion and silencing that are omnipresent and constitutive of the relationship we have with non-human animals today. By decentering and destabilizing speech in human individuals, we might find new ties between the repression of human and non-human animals. Or to put it differently: by speaking to this non-speaking self, Anderson's film then is an attempt to speak to the animal self. The part that is not allowed to "speak" in human society, the part that is not representative of our human endeavors. In this way *Heart of a Dog* is a project within Zooësis, in which we aim to resituate the animal, by re-animalizing the human.

Great Liberation Through Hearing

In Chapter two, I discussed the central position that 'seeing' or 'vision' occupies in the creation of the subject. *Heart of a Dog* destabilizes the centrality of this sense in multiple ways. One way in which the central position of vision is challenged is through sharing passages of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, whose subtitle is the "Great Liberation through Hearing." The Tibetans believe that hearing is the last sense to go when you die. In the film, Anderson describes a scene from the deathbed of her friend Gordon Matta Clark, an artist that turned his death into a social happening. Next to his bed are two spiritual leaders who, when he stopped breathing, shouted instructions in his ears from the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*: "after the heart stops and your brain flat lines and the eyes go dark. The hammers in the ears are still working." These Tibetans shouted instructions for life after death, the way he has to go. Not the eyes, but the ears are the senses that guide us in the right direction in life after death. When you are in the Bardo, the place where human souls dwell until they reincarnate, everything your eyes register is an optical illusion. In the movie, the Bardo is visualized in fragmented scenes of fast-moving images, things that Lolabelle might see after she dies: faces

that she knows, things she wanted to do, places she wanted to visit. We see them speeding up, playing backwards. We hear bells ringing. Anderson's movie operates, just like Bacon's paintings, on the fringes of what is familiar. Dreams, death, love, these are all things in which we lose 'sight' of what we know, who we think we are. This unknown is visualized in the film as a place of confusion, a place where individuals lose their normal (visual) sense of orientation. They cannot trust their own eyes, ideas and reason, and have to let go, humans and animals alike.

An Idiosyncratic Inter-Species Love Story

In the film, Anderson keeps weaving together different stories and story lines**.** One of these is the particular story of one dog, Lolabelle, and the relationship Anderson has with her. Lolabelle does not stand in for other dogs in the world, Lolabelle is herself, a "real dog," such as Derrida's "real cat" in *the Animal that therefore I am*, where he introduces his cat with the following words: "the cat I am talking about is a real cat, truly, believe me, a *little cat*. It isn't the *figure* of a cat. It doesn't silently enter the bedroom as an allegory for all the cats on this earth, the felines that traverse our myths and religions, literature and fables."[113] Lolabelle is not like other dogs, because she is unique. We might say, in Malamud's words, that the Lolabelle we see is a 'real animal' that, throughout the film, we get to know quite a bit through the stories that Anderson tells of her. Anderson sometimes also speaks *for* Lolabelle by changing her voice and talking from her vantage point: "Uhmm is it going to be fun, because if it's not going to be fun, I just don't feel like it." Sometimes Anderson tries to explain Lolabelle's behavior by telling us something about her breed. "Rat terriers can

[113] Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 374.

understand up to 500 words," "rat terriers are bred to protect borders," "rat terriers enjoy fun things."

In her *Companion Species Manifesto*, Donna Haraway states that she wants to "tell stories about relating in significant otherness, through which the partners come to be who (they) are in flesh and sign."[114] Stories that are "idiosyncratic and indicative rather than systematic, tendentious more than judicious, and rooted in contingent foundations rather than clear and distinct premises."[115] *Heart of a Dog* can be seen as one of Haraway's idiosyncratic accounts, an inter-species love story whose relating is one of significant otherness. Both Haraway and Anderson are concerned with 'telling the story right,' narrating the co-history of humans and other species the way it is "obligatory, constitutive, historical, protean…full of waste, cruelty, indifference, ignorance, and loss, as well as of joy, invention, labor, intelligence, and play."[116] *Heart of a Dog* narrates one history, this parallel story, a story not of Lolabelle or of Laurie herself but a story of their kinship. The way they make each other up (in the flesh).

Another story that Anderson narrates in the film is a larger, overarching story – a post nine eleven United States that starts changing its security policy. Anderson talks about the effects these changes have on the way that we look at our (life) stories. Stories are more and more collected and stored in data. This makes it dangerously easy to mix stories up. Anderson questions what person arrives from the fragmented data, the conversations that are collected of you? Through data, our story is constructed backwards, but argues Anderson with reference to philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, life can only be lived forwards.

The larger, overarching story of the security policy in the US keeps being woven into Lolabelle's story as if the line between stories is porous and permeable. At one point in the

[114] Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto*, 25.
[115] Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto*, 21.
[116] Ibid., 12.

movie we follow Lolabelle's perspective, while she is walking through the city. The camera moves closely over the ground, in the way that Lolabelle would perceive the world, and we hear Anderson explain to us that dogs mostly orientate themselves with their nose and that humans have lost that ability, since we came to walk upright. Dogs do have vision, but it is blurry and mostly consists of green and blue colors. The camera than moves up, to the position and height of a security camera in the streets, and we see time being counted in the left upper corner, just so, as it might be on security camera footage. By doing this, she ties Lolabelle's life to the developments in 'human' society. She makes poetic, rather than rational associations, which allows us to make new connections between these human and dog stories.

Fig. 19 Lolabelle's perspective. Film still from *Heart of a Dog* by Laurie Anderson, 2015.

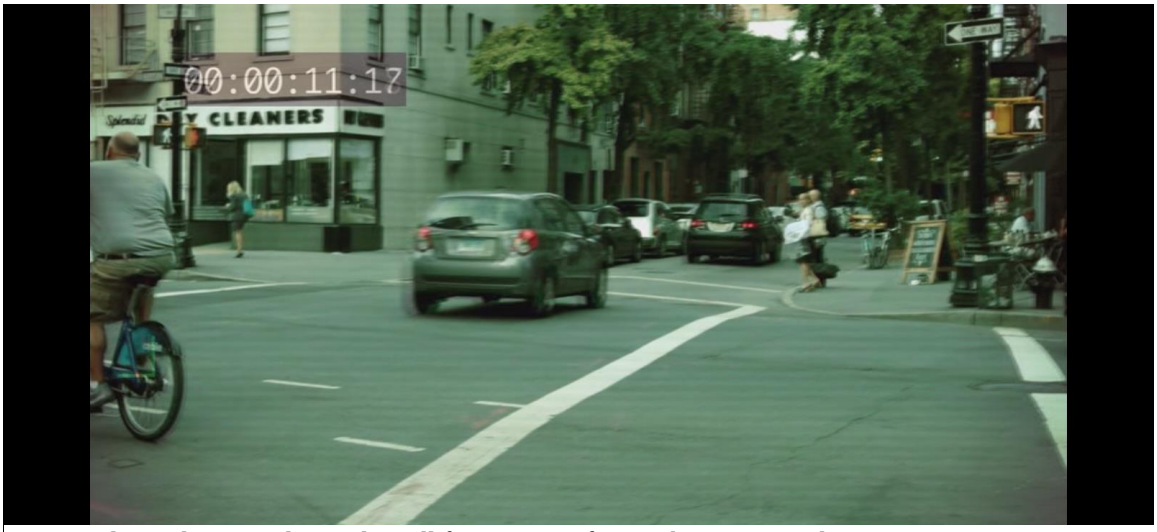

Fig. 20 Blue and green colors. Film still from *Heart of a Dog* by Laurie Anderson, 2015.

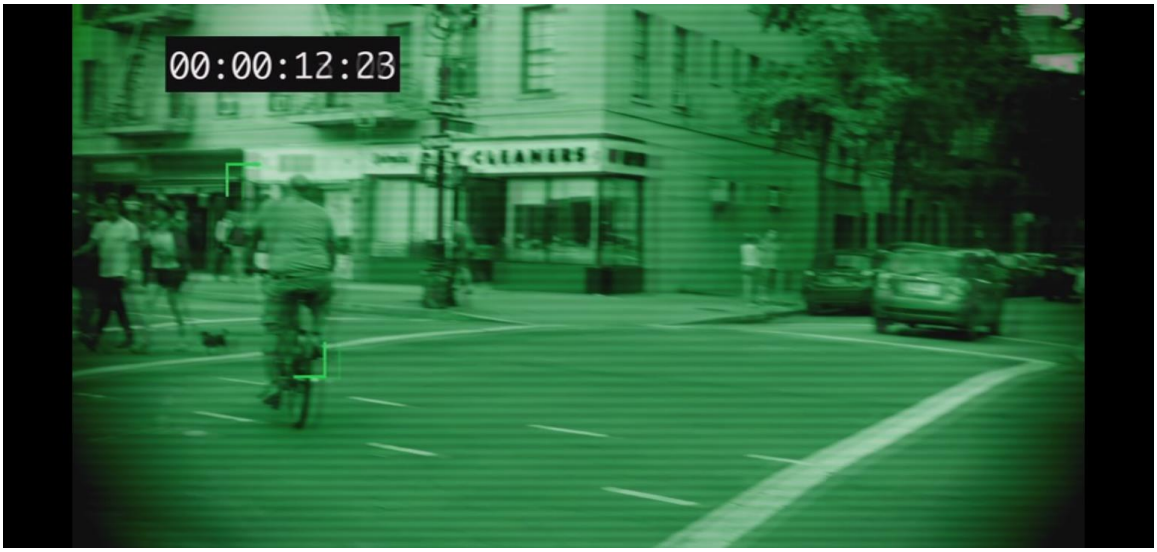

Fig. 21 The perspective of a security camera. Film still from *Heart of a Dog* by Laurie Anderson, 2015.

Another large story that is told through the film is a story of loss. The particular story of Anderson's loss of Lolabelle ties in with other losses. The loss of safety, the loss of innocence, the loss of loved ones. The exposure to loss, ties together the stories of human and nonhuman individuals in *Heart of a Dog*. When Lolabelle passes away, Anderson realizes that death is not about guilt or shame, not about the person who is still alive and wishes he/she had

done things differently. No, "death is the release of love." Her Buddhist teacher advises her to give something away each time she thinks of Lolabelle. "But," she says, "then I would be giving away things non-stop" and her teacher asks her: "so?" The first scene of the film, where Anderson dreams of giving birth to Lolabelle, is her visual explanation of what it means to love someone (human of nonhuman), to relate in significant otherness: we literally give life/birth to them. We are in debt to these relations. We are situated and determined by our love for our companion species. This is one of the messages that Anderson seems to give, that this is at the root of every life. No matter who you are, what species. One way of respecting that love, of honoring that love, is by letting it go, letting someone die without numbing their or your pain and hardship while departing. Anderson tells us that each creature spends forty-nine days in the Bardo after they die. Only to wake up again in a different body, a different life, a different species. Who knows who we might have been in another life? Who we might become. Whom we loved, whom we will love. It is this relationship literally "in the flesh" that is portrayed in *Heart of a Dog*. A cross-species, post-humanist account of love, life and death.

> **Logbook Body 12-11-2018**
> *What happens when I lose something: my sense of direction, my sanity, my way? I am forced to pay close attention to what is going on around me, it stimulates other parts of my brain, other senses. I am out of the slumber and routine that I am normally in when I am within a comfortable zone. This question is addressed in the book Becoming Animal (called after Deleuze's term)in which David Abram argues that getting lost is a way of becoming animal. He says: "I generally enjoy being lost – it being the quickest way I know of to rouse my creaturely sense from their slumber and coax an entry into that elixir-like state of mind called wilderness."*[117] *When you are lost, Abram says, your other senses are stimulated and your objective, distant view from the world evaporates. We must be in the world in an active, animal kind of way*

[117] Abram, "BECOMING ANIMAL," 13.

to orientate ourselves. When I sit in a room staring at a screen, like whilst I am writing this thesis, my 'creaturely sense' is numbed. I am staring at a two-dimensional version of the world that I control. Get away from your screens, is Abram's message and look at depth, the world beyond the horizon and realize that you are part of it, that you are amidst of it, and have no idea what is out there, happening at this very moment. Another book I just recently finished reading is Rebecca Solnit's A Field Guide to Getting Lost in which she asks the following question: "what is the message wild animals bring, the message that seems to say everything and nothing? What is this message that is wordless, that is nothing more or less than the animals themselves?" She answers: "that the world is wild, that life is unpredictable in its goodness and its danger, that the world is larger than your imagination."[118] *Anderson, in her film, seems to answer in the same direction. She portrays life and death as journeys without much guidance. A wild world that shapes us, undoes us, ties us to the things and (non-)human individuals we love. A world that we are not 'objectively' looking at from the outside, but that, as animals, we inhabit and where we must rely on all the senses to navigate ourselves. And still then, we have no idea where we are going, what all of it means, what will come our way until we, finally die.*

Melanie Bonajo: Being Reborn as Post-Human

Melanie Bonajo (Heerlen, 1978) is an artist from the Netherlands whose main media range from photographs, videos to installation and music. The exhibition *The Death of Melanie Bonajo: How to Unmodernize Yourself and Become an Elf in 12 steps* contains five video-installations that in one way or another explore, through the voices of women, alternative (anti-capitalist) ways of living. By exploring these alternative, often ritualistic practices, Bonajo reflects on the current state of the world that stands in stark contradiction to the practices shown. Bonajo addresses progress vs. regress, the influence of technological development, the role of sex and sex work, the relationship between humans and animals and between humans and nature/land. The exhibition consists of two bodies of work. One is the *Night Soil Trilogy* that consists of three video-installations in which people and their

[118] Rebecca Solnit, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* (New York: Penguin Group, 2005): 132.

alternative lifestyles occupy a central position. The other body of work, the *Progress* series, contains two video-installations that address the issue of progress versus regress in relation to technology and the effects these developments have on identity.

The first thing that I encounter while visiting the Bonnefantenmuseum in Maastricht, is a wall full of elf wings. One can go through the museum with these wings on and become an elf. I see mostly children do it, but some grown-ups are tempted and give themselves a pair. The entry/introduction text about the exhibition that is written on the wall that I pass on the right, explains what the figure of the elf symbolizes in the exhibition:

> There are no elves in the exhibition (as far as I know), but the elf stands as a symbol of difference as you walk through the show. Although this mythological creature appears in stories and folk tales, science and progress inform us that the elf never existed. However, I think many of us can find some comfort in the elf, as a familiar concept or as a link to another self and to the world beyond the modern. An elf-self.

The Elf functions as a fantasy figure that resists the modern urge to be rational, scientific and 'real.' Elf could also easily be replaced by non-self or one-self, group-self. It is an indication of something beyond the self. Mythical creatures also feature in some of the video-installations. For example, in *Night Soil: Fake Paradise* we see a mermaid lying in a bath. In fact, it is clearly a man dressed as a mermaid/drag queen. In the same video we see a woman with painted blue ears and a painted face stroke a goat with an iPad. In *Progress vs. Regress*, humans dressed as robots (with painted carton boxes as faces) visit elderly homes and massage the inhabitants. This playful transformation of humans into machines, mythical creatures and animals, is a recurring factor in Bonajo's work. We do not see good imitations of machines, creatures and animals, but people *dressing up*, performatively, in the way that children might dress up for fun. Becoming somebody or something else is a playful activity that the people in Bonajo's films actively explore. This playfulness is also closely tied to dying (of the self), one of the central themes of Bonajo's exhibition.

Geir Haraldseth, guest curator of the exhibition in the Bonnefantenmuseum, explains in the introduction text that "the apocalyptic title of the show, *The Death of Melanie Bonajo*, may sound dramatic, but in the light of this opportunity of looking back, you need to die in order to be reborn. And in being reborn, you can rethink and recast yourself." For Bonajo, transformation and change are a certain kind of death, a metaphorical death. Death of the known path, of an older part of yourself. In *Heart of a Dog*, death also functioned as the main theme and was portrayed as a disruptive, yet also promising event. A site of possibility and metamorphosis. In *Heart of Dog* death is a hallucinatory experience that confronts us with our perceived and constructed reality and with our 'relations of significant otherness.' Death in Bonajo's work, gives us the opportunity to cleanse ourselves of the way in which are bodies and life-styles are capitalized, and to de-hierarchize the human subject.

In an interview about the exhibition, Bonajo says the following about the people ey[119] work with: "In my work I often portray people who work in the shades of the law, and that invent new systems away from capitalism. Usually they try to take risks but in a very positive and socially engaged way. I usually find their road very inspiring." Through exploring these ways of living, Bonajo's work follows what O' Sullivan in *The Aesthetics of Affect* defines as one of art's functions. Art, he says, is not involved in making sense of life, but in exploring all the possibilities within life, of life, the possibilities of being and becoming, of transformation. And finally, "less involved in shielding us from death, but indeed precisely involved in actualizing the possibilities of life."[120]

The films in the exhibition are shown within a 3d installation, that is in some way or another always an extension of the film. People who visit the exhibition are encouraged, through the installations, to use their bodies in a different way vis-à-vis the environment and

[119] In the introduction text of the exhibition, Geir Haraldseth uses gender-neutral pronouns for Melanie Bonajo. These pronouns are non-existent and made up. I will continue to use these pronouns when I refer to Bonajo in this thesis. It is one means of unsettling identity.
[120] O'Sullivan, "THE AESTHETICS OF AFFECT,"130.

other bodies. People are encouraged to sit close to each other, to take a different position, to have a different perspective. For example, the installation surrounding the film *Night Soil: Fake Paradise*, which discusses the modern ritual of taking Ayahuasca, a hallucinatory drug originally from South America, is a large tent in which people sit on the floor or on pillows. This tent immediately creates an intimate and different setting than the museum walls. Bonajo's work is not only about the exploitation of our bodies in capitalist societies, but also confronts us with the materiality of our own bodies by emerging them in the exhibition's landscape.

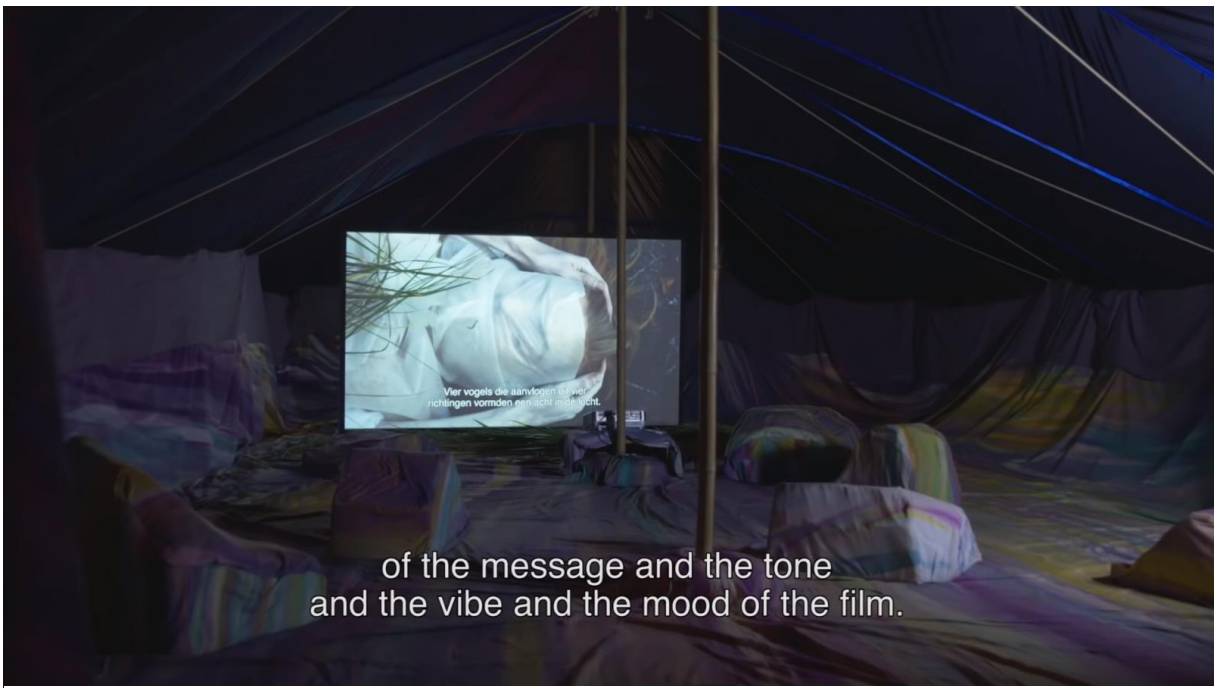

Fig. 22 The installation around *Night Soil: Fake Paradise* in the exhibition *The Death of Melanie Bonajo* in the Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht.

Night Soil: Fake Paradise

The video opens with Melanie Bonajo, dressed in rags and a t-shirt depicting Lindsey Lohan, blindfolded walking the streets of, presumably, New York. She is barefoot and searches her way around with her hands. Sometimes she grabs a fistful of air or her hands find a wall, a container, another person walking past. We hear a voice-over from Bonajo's voice

telling us about her first experience with Ayahuasca. Once she arrived at the ceremony, she felt resistance and questioned why she had decided to do this. Yet, there was a voice inside her head that reminded her of the hundred and seventy euros that she had paid. Then a gate appeared before her eyes and she stepped through it. She went through and never came back. Ayahuasca, Bonajo tells us, has the wonderful ability to make you feel safe in an unknown environment. Safety just disappears as an illusion. You literally cannot believe your own eyes anymore. “Ayahuasca is not a theory, not a belief, it is an experience.”

Fig. 23 A blindfolded Melanie Bonajo. Film still from *Night Soil: Fake Paradise* by Melanie Bonajo, 2014.

Then we see a woman on a film set, dressed as the goddess Athena, hitting a drum and singing: “my long arms are rolling through consciousness.” We hear another story while the images shift again. This time we see a woman swimming in an indoor swimming pool. The pool is built inside a villa. The woman is swimming naked and sometimes she holds a picture of a tropical sea on a big canvas in front of her naked upper body. The picture of, on the one hand, the two-dimensional tropical scenery next to three-dimensional luxurious indoor swimming pool with artificial, natural elements has an interesting effect. We hear a woman

talking to us about her experience while taking Ayahuasca. She is sitting on the floor inside a tent and drinks the tea. There is a group of men sitting around her and she just does not feel anything. She is getting more and more annoyed and angry about all these men and thinks that they are taking the piss out of her. A man comes by and lays his hand upon her head and tells her: "Sister, you have to choose love." She just keeps thinking "fuck you, fuck all these men." After some time, she just screams out: "I need my sisters, where are my sisters?" Then a woman comes in and starts playing music and suddenly, she feels like she is completely calm and trusting again. Another image that keeps returning in *Night Soil: Fake Paradise* is of humans and goats somewhere in a forest. The humans have painted faces and wear elf ears. It looks like a made-up ritual. The humans carry an iPad that they move over the bodies of the goats as a scanner. Sometimes, the camera is on selfie mode, which makes it look like a mirror moving. The humans hug the goats. One girl puts plants in her clothing and starts dancing with the tree in an erotic way while the goat eats the plants that stick out from underneath her clothes.

Fig. 24 Woman in a swimming pool. Film still from *Night Soil: Fake Paradise* by Melanie Bonajo, 2014.

Fig. 25 Humans, goat and iPads. Film still from *Night Soil: Fake Paradise* by Melanie Bonajo, 2014.

Fig. 26 Humans, goats and iPads. Film still from *Night Soil: Fake Paradise* by Melanie Bonajo, 2014.

The women that share their experience with Ayahuasca, describe it as passing through a gate: initially distrustful, but in the end surrendering to the embodiment that Ayahuasca stimulates. According to Stephan Beyer, "Ayahuasca's healing power lies precisely in its connection with the earth, the body, with suffering, passion and mess."[121] Many Westerners engage in the ceremony with the idea it is going to bring them insight, 'vision,' transformative experiences, that would confirm to our idea that "human beings somehow exist outside the hierarchy of the cosmos."[122] Ayahuasca, however, emphasizes the body's materiality. In the ceremony, the body becomes 'grotesque.' The experiences the women have are physical, not spiritual, as in 'out-of-the-body': nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, sucking, gagging, spitting out, coughing up. Ayahuasca is a ritual that approaches the abject of the body, where the limits of the human body are literally contested in a cleansing ritual. Bonajo's focus on women's stories of the ceremony emphasizes the 'abject' in her work. The woman's body is already perceived as dangerous and animalized, constantly traversing its boundaries. These women do not shy away from this contestation, from their bodies, from their nudity, from this 'perceived' animality. What we see on the screen is women claiming their own bodies, including its messiness, sexuality, etc. for themselves, for their sisters.

Night Soil: Economy of Love

In *Night Soil: Economy of Love* the stories are also centralized around women's (sexually) traumatized bodies. The movie follows several sex workers in Brooklyn, New York. Some of them work in Tantra temples or are involved in other 'healing' sex work. The first image I see when I sit down on the large pillow object in front of the screen where the

[121] Stephan Beyer, "Ayahuasca and the Grotesque Body," *MAPS bulletin* vol.21, no. 1 (2011): 47.
[122] Ibid.

video is playing is a woman's hand caressing all kinds of vegetables. In the background you hear a woman talking about exploring the anatomy of the cock. To see and find out that some vegetables have the "same potential as the cock." She just wanted to spend some time with the cock. Sex work, she says, is about healing the exploitation of all women. We then see an image of a group of people, men and women, painted in different colors of the rainbow, lying on top of each other to form one rainbow out of bodies. Then we see a naked woman lying on her back, her head is covered with an animal mask and she is caressing her body with grass plants.

We hear a woman tell us a memory of what happened one day when she was working in the Tantra temple. One day a costumer walks in, he is an older man, and he pays her a lot of money, much more than she had asked for. She starts massaging him, but at some point, he says he wants her to go lie down. He asks her to undress. This, he says, is only fair because he is also naked. The customer searches for her boundaries in every way and the woman just feels completely speechless. She is not enjoying what is going on, but is unable to voice this to him. Afterwards the man tells her: "you have issues with intimacy, right?" And she feels extremely angry and upset about this. He literally triggers everything in her. Afterwards, she retrieves a memory of sexual harassment that happened in her youth and that she had repressed until this moment. She now understands what happened. She was a five-year-old girl again in this situation lying on the bed in the Tantra temple, not a priestess. Therefore, she was unable to speak. This moment was the beginning of her awakening. For months after the incident she was wallowing in her five-year-old self, reliving the trauma, but afterwards she went back to the temple to work. Through Tantra and sex work she is healing her sexual vulnerability, learning to regain her power and control in sexual situations.

Fig. 27 Film still from *Night Soil: Economy* of Love by Melanie Bonajo, 2014.

Fig. 28 Healing sexual practices. Film still from *Night Soil: Economy of Love* by Melanie Bonajo, 2015.

Fig. 29 Installation around *Night Soil: Economy of Love* by Melanie Bonajo in the Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht.

In another part of the film we see two naked women, wearing black masks, caressing a third naked woman, who is lying in between the two of them. One woman sits at her foot end the other at the side of her head. They move their hands over her body, without touching her. We hear a woman say: “I’ve never had a woman say to me what she wanted. You can’t be dirty, you have to be white, clean, virgin lady.” She is explaining to us how she works longer if necessary, as long as is needed to make a woman come. If it takes longer, then it takes longer. Women that work with other women in Tantra, she says, are involved in healing the sacred feminine in the world, making women feel sexually safe. “Making my body feel safe on this planet, that is what I want to achieve,” she says. The women in *Night Soil: Economy of Love*, talk about the connection between the healing of female sexuality and the healing of the earth and our relation to it. We have lost touch with our own bodies and therefore also to all living things around us. One woman explains in the film how the orgasm brought her in a

psychedelic state. She explains how present she felt after her orgasm: “it lasted for days and days. It dissolved everything, this made me realize the true purpose of the pussy: to make everything bad disappear and turn it into something good. And, to experience the complete magnetism of the world, the wisdom of femininity, there is a direct highway between the heart and the clit.”

Embodiment in Bonajo’s work is achieved by a healing of trauma through touch, finding back the connection to your own bodily state in the world. Resisting the capitalist tendency to consume time, bodies and nature, and instead search for new ways of experiencing through modern ritual. By approaching the abject, sexual, female body in her work, Bonajo aims to redeem it, to purify it. She embarks on a journey to the end of the night, a world of abjection, to purify it.[123]

Ecofeminists Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, argue that capitalism is based “on the colonization of women, nature and other peoples.”[124] According to Mies and Shiva there is a fundamental contradiction within capitalism that undoubtedly causes the destruction of nature, and the world. Both as producers and consumers within the capitalist system, people are *subjects*, but with conflicted interests. As producer, you produce not for yourself, but an anonymous population/market, and therefore what you produce is de-sensualized. The true purpose is not the direct fulfilment of needs, but the creation of surplus. As consumers, however, we want the “sensuous, concrete use-value of the things we bought.”[125] We want clean air, unpolluted products. As long as these contradictions exist in the system, we are sure to experience “economic, ecological and political/ethical/spiritual crisis.”[126] In *Night Soil: Economy of Love* the sex workers resist this tendency to produce solely for surplus value.

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[123] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*.
[124] Mies and Shiva, *Ecofeminism*, 298.
[125] Ibid., 299.
[126] Ibid.

Their work is not just a production that has no value for themselves: they work to reclaim their own bodies and sexuality as well as help heal the bodies of others/women.

In Chapter two, I examined the theories of Julia Kristeva and Gilles Deleuze that both discussed a New-Materialist understanding of the arts, in which art is a sensual experience. Instead of something that can be comprehended through discourse. These theorists argue that art is embodiment and works at the limit of what we call 'human.' *Heart of a Dog* and *The Death of Melanie Bonajo,* both have a special approach to embodiment and human/animal relationships. In the work of both artists the loss of reality as we know it, through ritual, drugs, sex or death operates as a transformative embodying experience. The Bardo, the orgasm, the ceremony of Ayahuasca, all alter our direct experience of reality and bring about a metamorphosis. However, Bonajo and Anderson seem to suggest that the reality that we know and that normally surrounds us is also an (optical/discursive) illusion, a construction: the idea that humanity has an objective view on the world and that we are innately different and better than nonhuman individuals.

In Becoming Animal, David Abram, questions what would happen if humanity starts to look at nature as something that we are part of, and not something that we are separate from:

> When we experience the world bodily, when we encounter birds, bushes, and buildings from our own animal position within their midst, then those things disclose - themselves to us only with a shy and enigmatic reticence, hiding other beings behind them, concealing their own depths. But when we conceive of nature as something separable from ourselves (as something we look at, rather than into) then the stones and the spiders seem to shed much of their obscurity.[127]

[127] Abram, "BECOMING ANIMAL," 15.

Both Bonajo and Anderson in their work portray a world that is full of mystery and non-comprehension. The creatures, human and nonhuman alike, seem to be guided by one great spirit as if "we are embodiments of universal Will, the struggling, suffering energy that animates everything in the world."[128] Life in the work of these artists is more like a dream "than the enactments of conscious selves."[129] What permeates and drives us is a kind of "mystical knowledge- or, rather, nonknowledge," intuition as you will. [130] Mysticism, that is normally seen as a force operating in nature and not in mankind, is omnipresent and a driving force of all lives (human and nonhuman) in *Heart of a Dog* and *The Death of Melanie Bonajo*.

Logbook body 14-01-2019

Yesterday during my theatre class, we had a workshop from an Aikido trainer/master. Aikido is a martial art originally from Japan and translated means "the way of bringing together of life-energy." During the workshop we did all kinds of Aikido exercises with each other to understand what Aikido means and how we can apply the knowledge of Aikido into our daily lives. Cahit, our teacher, said that your inner strength is your birth right. Another thing he told us to do is place our two hands on our chest and push, "look," he said, "you can never push yourself over. If you go, this is your own choice." We all had to laugh as a response. Aikido, he says, assumes that in every situation you have 360 options to choose between, the last two options being fighting or fleeing. These two options are used most of the times by us, while actually, we have many other possibilities of responding to a situation. Depending on what my intention is, depending on how I think, the body becomes stronger or weaker. The body is not a given, but subject to change. In Aikido, you never try to de-balance the other. The most important thing is to retain your own balance. In the exercises we did, we tried to push the other over, while he/she had different intentions in their mind. In the first instance they had to resist our push, fight against it. Almost all the time, this resistance makes you weaker as well as unable to perceive what is going on in the world around you. Resistance makes you selfish. The second time we push they had to focus on the world around them and on the contact/connection to the place where they are pushed, letting go and not resisting. Almost always, we noticed being more stable

[128] John Gray, *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals* (London: Granta Books, 2003): 41.
[129] Ibid., 38.
[130] Ibid.

and stronger when we didn't resist, when we felt the connection with the other person who is working with us. Softness, Cahit says, is our biggest strength, it allows you to access your potential, while resistance makes us blind to it. Aikido resonates with Agamben's idea of openness, a way of meeting the world in a mystical way. In Aikido you aim to approach the world and the other with trust. Trust gives you balance and enables you to encounter the other without being led by prejudice. At the same time this approach is resisting dualist tendencies: the encounter with the other is bodily, it affects your body and its strength. Aikido stands in stark contradiction to how we see and treat our bodies in the West. It therefore is like rewiring the body, unlearning its almost automatic responses in difficult situations. It helped me to feel my body in a whole new way, and see that much of its working are a mystery to me. Being so blinded by the idea that we, as humans can control our bodies, we have failed to see that our bodies live a mystical and incomprehensible life of its own.

Conclusion

What is the attraction of art? Why am I enamored when I see a monochrome from Yves Klein, the colorful pallet of De Kooning, a painting from the Belgian artist Tuymans? What does art do? How does art operate within the knowledge I have of the world, the experiences that reside in my body? How does art situate itself within the living archive of my body, its politics? How am I supposed to understand art or the effect it has on me, through discourse? Perhaps these questions drove me initially to undertake this project and write about embodiment in art. Art can be seen as a magical place that we enter when we look at an artist's work, a world. A place that we enter without explanation, without knowing the way, without rules of how to navigate within this world, without an instruction manual.

What does it mean to say that art makes us speechless, while so much is being said and written about art? Kristeva has argued that art, to some extent, has taken over the function of religious ritual in society. Is this why large cults exist around artwork and the artist? Do we attribute to them a kind of spirituality, holiness? And if art is a religious activity, what is it we encounter? Is art a confirmation of our anthropocentric notion of the world or does art challenge that conception? Can art confront us with this illusion and confront us with the animal (and vegetative) parts inside us? Anat Pick, in *Creaturely Poetics* asks whether there is a way in which, at least partially, dehumanization (of philosophy and art) can be reclaimed as something positive?[131] Animals are often portrayed as creatures of pure necessity, without free will that follow their instincts, pure bodies. Pick wonders not necessarily how we can extend the fields of subjectivity beyond the human, but how we can find ways of seeing humans as creatures of necessity, just like animals captivated by the world, instead of standing on the outside of the world, looking in. This project, I aimed to explore throughout this thesis by looking at the work of Melanie Bonajo and Laurie Anderson. I wanted to see if

[131] Anat Pick, *Creaturely Poetics: Animality and Vulnerability in Literature and Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

their work can promote "new means of seeing, showing and knowing the animals," but maybe even more new means of seeing, showing and knowing the animal inside the human.[132]

Is it almost ironic that I took film as my object of study, while the audience of film is the ultimate "scopophiliac," voyeur, the outsider looking in. We have to question whether we can undo the gaze that is so manifestly present in film. By examining theories on art that undo this gaze, can we undo the gaze that manifestly solidifies and perpetuates the distinct categories of human and nonhuman? The work of Bonajo and Anderson draw us (to some extent) out of the position of the one that gazes and into depth. The encounter with depth, according to Abram, places us amidst the palpable world, by forcing us to shift between different "sensory modalities." Depth, he argues, "implicates the whole of my animal body, situating me entirely *within* the animate landscape….whenever I acknowledge that some phenomena are crisply visible while others are obscured or concealed from my view, I affirm my bodily location in the midst of those phenomena."[133] What appears in the works of Bonajo and Anderson is the beginning of what we might call a 'wild world,' an immanent world where individuals, human and nonhuman alike, are wholly present and therefore, vulnerable. We are exposed, we might say, to one another, to affliction and suffering, subject to change and transformation. Their art introduces a mystic element in our lives, the possibility for magic. Possibilities that do not exist within the realms of reason, emerge.

Looking at animals nowadays we find, what Berger might have called "an abyss of non-comprehension" between ourselves and the Other. In looking at art we might have a similar encounter, but in this case the Other resides within ourselves as we try to grasp the meaning of the artwork, while at the same time being the object of the sensations and affects that reach our bodies. I wanted to look at animals, through looking at art, to see if this

[132] Chaudhuri, *The Stage Lives*, 10.
[133] Abram, "BECOMING ANIMAL," 12.

encounter with ourselves as Other, as body, can have a substantial effect on our relationship with animals and nature. Can art help us go undo this 'natureculture' that we have established based on exploitation and violence? Can art battle climate change and have a significant impact on the seemingly paralyzed state of the world when it comes to fighting for climate justice? Does looking at animals promote their well-being or should we, contrary to Berger's project, stop looking at animals and let them be? The inherent danger being that we keep framing the animal in ways that perpetuate our anthropocentric logic and that we hold up the "regime of alienated visuality where once there was embodied co-presence."[134] In *The Stage Lives of Animals,* Chaudhuri proposes that perhaps if our looking, our "interspecies fascination" does not just come from the wish to mirror human behavior through looking at animals, but instead emerges from a "nature-affirming need to be better connected to the earthly realities that our so-called civilization deprives us of," then artworks might actually stimulate and foster the much needed love for nature (biophilia) and the consciousness that is necessary today to bring about change. [135]

Instead of human ways of looking at art we have to promote animal ways of being. Being *in* the world. According to Agamben, an animal way of being in the world is captivation. He means to say that for the animal there is a withholding of "apprehending something as something," that beings are not revealed to the animal in their essence. [136] We would like to think that for humans this is the case, that all beings are revealed to us and through our vision stripped to their naked truth, yet there is not necessarily anything specifically animal about this captivation, this susceptibility. Humans and animals alike are bound by earthly forces. An animal way of looking, then, is one which acknowledges that

[134] Chaudhuri, *The Stage Lives of Animals*, 198.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Agamben, *The Open*, 53.

beings are not necessarily revealed to us, that the nature of things will remain to some extent a mystery.

Rebecca Solnit, in the last pages of her book, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* presents an anecdote about "the turtle man" who was also a seller of tins of candy. The turtle man would come to the San Francisco Zen Centre and sell his tins of chocolate every day. Only the turtle man could not see: he was blind. So, in order to get anywhere the turtle man would have to walk through the streets with his white cane and every time he had to cross a street, he would wait and call out for help, until somebody could help him cross. This ritual had to be repeated every day of his life. The man would not know if somebody was out there, and if somebody would help him, but every time he reached a barrier he had to stop and call for help. In fact, Solnit says, all of us have a bit of the turtle man inside us. We do not know what is going to happen tonight or tomorrow and the question is how to navigate life without becoming too frightened and stifled by this realization? Awareness, she says, is the answer.

> The practice of awareness says don't grasp it too tightly, don't be too convinced. And in that simpler way of being, it's okay to become like the Turtle Man, it's okay to sometimes experience not knowing what to do next, to run into a barrier. It's okay to realize life has a mysterious quality to it, it has an element of uncertainty, it's okay to realize that we do need help, that calling out for help is a very generous act because it allows others to help us and it allows us to be helped. Sometimes we're calling out for help. Sometimes we're offering help, and then this hostile world becomes a very different place.[137]

Perhaps saying "I don't know" is the beginning of something that can become part of the project of Zooësis. If someone allows this question in life, allows life to be guided by forces that do not emerge within us, there is a possibility for connection. If art can pose this question, dare to be awkward, or if art can make *us* formulate this question and help acknowledge that we, just like all the other animals, are subjected to outside forces, exposed in our exteriorities

[137] Solnit, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, 199-200.

to the ‘wild’ world, and vulnerable to the extreme, then perhaps we might begin to *be* in the world differently.

Zooësis should not just be a project discussed within the field of Animal Studies. Instead, the project of Zooësis should be alive and kicking within other disciplines – i.e., psychology, biology, ecology, linguistics, fine arts, etc. The discourse around the animal is present and perpetuated in all these fields, and thus in order to provoke change each field must ask itself the necessary questions. For example, more research needs to be done concerning animal languages to improve the communication between human- and other species to understand their (political) needs and interests. Furthermore, more research has to be conducted on the ways in which our bodies and brains interact, how are memory and trauma stored and where in the body do they reside? Last, more experimentation and exchange are necessary between the humanities and the arts. How can we, as academics, present our research in ways that stimulate other senses (soundscapes, visual work) and that are ‘biocentric’? This thesis was an attempt to unite art theory with the ‘question of the animal.’ Here and there, I brought up ideas outside the field of animal studies to answer this question, for example, when talking about embodied consciousness. Yet, my thesis is just an attempt to integrate these fields and many more of these attempts need to be made. The way in which we, at the current moment, categorize disciplines and knowledge at universities, testifies to an anthropocentric way of conceiving knowledge that perpetuates the distinctions between nature and culture, language and matter, ‘subjectivity’ and ‘objectivity’. I hope to see much more ‘fluid’ scholarship being created that addresses these arbitrary dichotomies in the upcoming years and that helps us in ‘becoming animal’.

Logbook Body 20-01-19

This is a poem I wrote when Sarah arrived in my house. She used to hide underneath my bed in the beginning and growl softly as if to say: what is going on? I don't like it!

Cats get used to new sounds,
other voices, growling dogs, search

for the darkest piece of a room, back
into it, bend their heads to their chest

like children learning how to somersault.
Cats don't know time, we say,

do not distinguish between what is temporary or
permanent. I wonder if they ever feel homesick,

or is it forever the changing now?
I took a cat into the house, my housemate

a boy. We take care of things, we whisper,
of things that need, scratch ourselves

behind the ears, brainstem
murmurs softly. We hear

cats purr, humans snore,
while the unknown backs away in dark corners.

We all grow fur overnight.
Something thick for winter.

Something thin enough to feel, enough
to get used to.

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