Posthumanist Animals in Art: France and Belgium, 1972-87

Arnaud Gerspacher

The Graduate Center, City University of New York

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POSTHUMANIST ANIMALS IN ART: FRANCE AND BELGIUM, 1972-87

by

ARNAUD GERSPACHER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2017
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Arnaud Gerspacher

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
This dissertation traces the changing role and increased importance of nonhuman animals in art of the 1970s and 80s. Focused largely on artists in France and Belgium, this period stands at the head of a wide-ranging re-conceptualization of animality that continues to unfold today. Pivotal moments in ecology (beginning with the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm), animal ethics and ethology (such as the Universal Declaration of Animal Rights proclaimed in 1978), and philosophy (specifically the biopolitical and deconstructive currents critiquing the centrality of the humanist subject), all converge as stress points along long held anthropocentric conceptions of culture, nature, and history. In simplest terms, the resulting visual cultural shift *qua* the animal can be described as follows: hegemonic forms of representation based on humanist iconography and symbolism began to weaken in the face of a politics of nonhuman representation—including, crucially enough, *self-*representation via indexical mediation or *in situ* installation and performance. I contend that this radical shift presents a challenge to art historical research—since it is diffuse and cannot be localized in any one movement or group—and opens pathways for assessing the ways in which art making can pry open obdurately static conceptions of animality (consequently making nonhumans sensible in culture and politics). Accordingly, my research comprises four disparate case studies: Chris Marker’s ethologically inflected
work of the 1970s and 80s; a history of exhibitions from the mid-1980s demonstrating the enmeshment of posthumanist, transhumanist, biopolitical, and ecological forms of thinking; Marcel Broodthaers’s interwoven treatment of animals, poems, and the readymade; and eco-feminist strategies of identifying (or over-identifying) with animality as resistance to violent, andro-humanist historical forces. This dissertation thus provides a multi-faceted historical genealogy of the now widespread incorporation of nonhuman animals in contemporary art and underscores the productive convergence of art history with the posthumanities and critical animal studies.
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0.1 INTRODUCTION—POSTHUMANIST ANIMALS

This dissertation focuses on the increased importance and changing role of nonhuman animals in art of the 1970s and 80s. Focusing largely on artists in France and Belgium (with the occasional discussion of other Western European artists to underscore the heuristic value of this study), I argue that this period in art and culture reflects a wide-ranging re-conceptualization of animality. While my analyses are centered on specific case studies—Chris Marker’s ethologically inflected work, three exhibitions in the eighties that variously question the human-animal line, animals in Marcel Broodthaers’s visual art and poetics, and the eco-feminist sensibilities of Louis Bourgeois, Annette Messager, and VALIE EXPORT—this dissertation should not be understood as diachronic but rather as thematic. This theme is singular—the nonhuman animal—yet it tends towards multiple expressions: a recognition of nonhuman animal interiority (such as sentience, emotion, and cognition); an interest in highlighting the existential and environmental overlaps between human and nonhuman animals (which can be both liberating and oppressive for all involved); appraising the consequences of treating the animal as a readymade object (in art or otherwise); and lastly, identifying (or over-identifying) with animality as a critical strategy.

Focusing on the animal necessarily conjoins a multi-disciplinary set of influences and discourses, many of which germinate in precisely the same period, that is, the 1970s and 80s. These include: ecology and a thinking of systems and relations, cognitive ethology wherein the human-animal line is manifestly porous, biopolitics with its understanding of sovereignty as control over the biological functioning of the human-nonhuman-animal, modern animal ethics discourse arguing for nonhuman welfare or
rights, and *eco-feminism* with its critical attention to the imbricated forms of violence on women and animals. How artists choose to deal with these discourses is largely dependent on their chosen form and medium, which offers both opportunities and constraints—from indexical images in which nonhumans appear with a modicum of autonomy (photography and film), to the use of animal bodies in object-making (the animal readymade), to installation and site-specific works in which nonhuman agency is creatively harnessed, to human performances that model themselves on animality, or directly collaborate with nonhuman participants.¹

0.2 WHY POSTHUMANIST?

Steve Baker’s *The Postmodern Animal* is one of the first art historical studies to examine the role of animals in contemporary Western art practices.² He analyzes what he calls the “postmodern animal” in art, which he places within a historical context of the nineties and onward in Europe and the U.S. Baker distinguishes between two types of uses of this postmodern animal. One lineage is “animal-sceptical art,” exemplified by the U.S. artist Mark Dion. In this mode, the artist tries to estrange the animal by laying bare, often through the distancing effect of irony, its cultural construction as a sign. By doing so, the postmodern animal is shown to be an illusory simulacrum. The other lineage is “animal-endorsing art,” represented by the British artists Olly and Suzi. In this mode, the artist heads straight into the wild for a direct interaction with the animal as an index of the real. Rather than dwelling on cultural constructs, this strategy represents a meeting place between artist and nature. Baker models his postmodern history of the animal after the stages of contemporary art as theorized by Hal Foster: a first phase in the seventies

¹ These are the most recurring forms in this study, though not the only ones. Moreover, they are not discrete approaches as certain media may very well be mixed in certain artistic practices discussed.
and eighties preoccupied with semiotics and simulacra, and a second phase in the nineties involving a “return to the real.”³

Baker’s account hinges on the premise that while postmodernity was newly able to deal with the animal, modernism, on the other hand, could not: “The animal is the very first thing to be ruled out of modernism’s bounds…there was no modern animal, no ‘modernist’ animal.”⁴ In other words, animals are beings of pre-modernity, and in the canon of art historical modernism, they are occluded. While initially persuasive, this overly broad premise contains certain problems. For one, it presumes that modernism and avant-gardism were one and the same.⁵ A corrective is needed here: of the historical avant-gardes Der Blaue Reiter, Dada, Fauvism and Surrealism all represent disparate engagements with animals and animality.⁶ Even Futurism, the movement that most embraced techno-modernity, had its share of nonhuman inputs; Marinetti’s 1909 “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism” alone reveals a surprisingly recurrent recourse to animals and animistic energies. In the more restrictive legacy of Greenberg’s theory of modernism as abstraction and pure opticality, represented animals are predictably absent, as is all mimetic figuration. Yet even in certain corners of formalist painting a sublimated (or desublimated) animality can be found: for instance, in Rosalind Krauss’s reading of

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³ Baker cites Hal Foster, *The Return of The Real: The Avant-Garde at The End of The Century* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1996), 165. Baker’s bifurcation of the postmodern animal leads to a theoretical knot that has more recently come into focus in Continental thought, which can be distilled thusly: while the poststructuralist legacy of textuality and the nexus of power-knowledge has a problem accessing or making claims about real (an objectivist or non-correlationist reality), returns to the real risk re-entering into a naïve positivism that does not consider the way reality itself is constructed and conditioned.

⁴ Baker, 20.

⁵ There is a slippage in Baker’s text between ‘modern,’ ‘avant-garde,’ and ‘modernist criticism.’ While it is true that formalist art critics were not interested in animals, it does not follow that animals disappeared completely from the historical avant-gardes (or even formalist abstraction). Ibid., 20-1.

⁶ Baker does mentions John Heartfield’s photomontages as possible counter-examples to his argument. He also describes Surrealism as “proto-postmodern,” which only serves to pluck the avant-garde out of modernity in a circular affirmation of his postmodernist thesis.
Jackson Pollock’s drip paintings and their horizontal points of departure that allude to a primordial moment of hominization before vertical uprightness—in other words, as painterly restitutions of human animality.7

Beyond art historical questions over the animal’s presence or absence in avant-gardism and modernism, it can be argued there was (and continues to be) a modern animal within a wider political economy (a comprehensive history of factory farming in the US and Europe still waits to be written). I do not doubt that animals were increasingly depopulated from both canvas and countryside over the course of the twentieth century.8 Nevertheless, they did not disappear altogether. The modern animal is a return of the repressed, coming back in packaged pieces and reappearing in dissimulated form inside the advertising imaginaries of commodity culture. I argue that the modern animal is the readymade animal—controlled, commodified, and techno-domesticated in limitless reproduction. In other words, the animal is turned into a cultural and technological object (though never purely so, as even the most domesticated animals stubbornly remain hybrids). Within this political economy, the pre-modern, agrarian animal largely disappeared, only to reappear as resolutely disposable and reified on a scale that has re-conceptualized (certain) nonhuman animals as readymade objects like any other. While its reappearance in society invariably came repackaged with advertising fantasies of the bucolic and natural, this fundamentally altered material history of the animal in

7 Krauss opens a way to such an analysis of the drip paintings via Sigmund Freud’s Civilization and Its Discontents (1930), which famously posits the becoming of “man” in his evolutionary assumption of vertical uprightness. If Pollock’s paintings reorient the viewer back to a horizontal vantage point on all fours, then they demonstrate that the animal in art need not appear figuratively to be present. Rosalind E. Krauss, The Optical Unconscious (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993), 247.
8 There is arguably a cultural connection between the heights of painterly abstraction and the advent of the modern factory farm in the 1950s. After all, both abstract from the natural world in their own material ways.
developed societies could not be completely ignored for long. The increased interest in animals in art and culture since the 1970s is symptomatic of this return.

The modern animal is thus stuck in an unsublatable impasse between tradition and modernity. Certain traditions are no longer possible in the face of mass culture and industry, while the industrial protocols that replace these traditions do not represent unequivocal progress (far from it, as they can be ethically and environmentally pernicious). As the French social anthropologist Noëlie Vialles has documented in her remarkable ethnographic study of modern French abattoirs, the move from traditional slaughtering by skilled craftsmen to modern and mindless assembly line killing was all but complete by the mid-eighties.\(^9\) An analogy can be made with this political economy of animal bodies and art history, since the advent of industrial hyper-domestication, which increasingly rendered bodies out of sight, posed a parallel challenge to traditionally skillful renderings of animalier, natural history, or landscape artists. If Marcel Duchamp’s celebrated humbling in front of a propeller at the 1912 Salon de la Locomotion Aérienne, for him, called into question painting’s relevance in the early twentieth century, the factory farm poses a similar challenge to any bucolic or “natural” representations of animals whose subjects have themselves been propelled into an industrial efficiency of serialization on a scale heretofore unimaginable. So, if traditional relations with the animal have largely given way to modern forms of anti-relation, and if returning to the former amounts to escapist nostalgia (or as inherently micro-level critiques of a barbaric modernity), what is the alternative?

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Clearly this question exceeds the parameters of an art historical study.

Nevertheless, I argue that the way out of the binary dead ends of tradition-modernity can be provided by tracing the vectors of posthumanism in certain artistic practices and exhibitions from the seventies onward—vectors that may be both latent and manifest in practice or display. What both tradition and modernity have in common is a humanistic relation to the animal (and to nature in general). It is founded in human need, which increasingly becomes demand over the course of Western history, and dictates both pre-modern and modern uses of the animal. By contrast, a posthumanist relationship to the animal, which would be newly aware of the various needs, demands, and capacities of nonhuman life, would point to an escape from the undialectible tension of tradition and modernity.

In *What is Posthumanism?* (2008) the philosopher Cary Wolfe offers the most advanced articulation of posthumanism, one to which this dissertation is manifestly indebted. The term is often understood as having application for a diverse set of discourses—a plasticity that may render the posthumanities overly broad and pliable.\(^\text{10}\) Since there are a number of ways of unbecoming discretely human (or of demonstrating how we have never been human, in Donna Haraway’s appropriation of Bruno Latour), perhaps a wide application of the term is only fitting.\(^\text{11}\) Nonetheless, Wolfe supplies a helpful genealogy of posthumanist thought in order to disarticulate it from simple

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\(^{10}\) The philosopher Alice Crary recently observes that “self-avowed posthumanists” may agree on their negative claims in respect to humanism, yet their positive claims for posthumanist departures vary widely. As Crary cites in a footnote, this definitional plasticity runs the danger of falling into intellectual platitude (as, I would add, was the fate of Existentialism, Structuralism, Postmodernism, Deconstruction, and any number of twentieth century neologisms when having garnered popular attention). Alice Crary, *Inside Ethics: On the Demands of Moral Thought* (Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England: Harvard University Press, 2016), 192.

\(^{11}\) See Donna Jeanne Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).
anthropism (misanthropy) or transhumanism (the bio-techno dream of escaping the fleshy finitude of the embodied human altogether).

“Posthumanism” was first used in the humanities and social sciences in the 1990s, but its theoretical roots can be found in a longer, dual intellectual trajectory. In one lineage beginning in the 1950s, cybernetics and first-order systems theory (including Gregory Bateson and Norbert Wiener) scrutinized the centrality of “man” as sole maker of meaning. Information, communication, and cognition could no longer be deemed anthroproprietary. In another lineage, beginning in the 1960s, poststructuralist theorists like Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, not only displaced “man” from epistemic centrality, but also its contours as a transcendental subject (which was dissolved into so many “ends”—of man, of philosophy, of history). In both systems theory and poststructuralism, ahuman and nonhuman processes began to throw into question the dogmatic pretensions of humanist purity.

Wolfe finds a splintered field in more recent lines of thought stemming from this dual lineage: some thinkers have taken the end of humanism as challenge for overcoming animality altogether through the cyborgian ambitions of “transhumanism.” Somewhat confusingly, this transhumanism is also concomitant with the “posthuman: a futurological human subject who has synthetically and digitally unfettered itself from the dictates of nerve-ended finitude.” This is not the line of thinking that interests Wolfe, however, nor

13 Cary Wolfe, What is Posthumanism? (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xii.
14 The distinction between “posthuman” and “posthumanist” is crucial for Wolfe: the first betrays an ambition to escape and exceed the human; the second betrays an ambition to overcome humanism and humanist dogmatics, but not the human as a species being. In this way, posthumanism comes before and after humanism, and does not amount to an occlusion of the human; on the contrary, coming to terms with
my study (for the most part). Largely in opposition to transhumanism, the driving force of posthumanist critique reveals the many ways humans are inextricably bound to animality, how the human species co-evolved with nonhuman species of all sorts, and that we share existential capacities for being-in-the-world: emotion, communication, adaptability, and finitude. In the broadest sense, posthumanist theory demonstrates that the nonhuman is always already in the human, and that transcendental humanism (and transhumanism, for that matter) is a forgetting or disavowal our nonhumanity. These insights allow for a reconsideration of animals and animality, not only in difference with us humans, but also in affinity. Terms such as “theriocentric,” “humanimal,” and “more-than-human world” are all manifestations of a posthumanist de-anthropocentricization of knowledge and existence and reflect nonhuman inclusiveness.

From this brief synopsis of posthumanism it should be evident how it relates to animal studies. This relatively new academic field has galvanized across humanities and social sciences disciplines over the last two decades. Animal studies (like posthumanism) has its foundations in those philosophers who became newly attentive to questions of nonhuman animality (especially Jacques Derrida and Giorgio Agamben), though its roots can also be found in literary criticism, history, anthropology, sociology, animal ethics, and media studies.¹⁵ Only recently has animal studies entered critical art writing, though this literature is focused by-and-large on contemporary practices and neglects deeper

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historical questions, which this dissertation begins to fill out. Matthew Calarco’s recent introduction to critical animal studies—which is often described as more activist in its ambitions than the more academically neutral tone of human-animal studies—presents a useful three-tiered categorization of approaches in the field: an “identity” approach wherein human and nonhuman animals are given equal consideration or rights when pertaining to shared existential capacities, such as personhood or sentience; a “difference” approach wherein the nonhuman is understood in contradistinction to the human, resulting in a method that is attentive to alterity and singularity; and an “indistinction” approach that underscores the ways in which homo sapiens fail to meet the criteria of humanist ideals, just as nonhuman species do, thereby deemphasizing human superiority. Alongside a historical method that finds the figure of the animal to be operative in art, my method employs a mix of all three of these approaches, when appropriate.

Over the course of this study I argue for and attempt to uncover a fledgling posthumanist impulse that produces (or, more modestly, is conjoined with) a historical shift in the understanding of the animal across the 1970s and 1980s. By-and-large I focus my attention on French and Belgian practices. In part, this is for logistical reasons of manageability; a comparative study of the animal in Europe exceeds the ambitions of a dissertation (for this one would certainly mention the advent of modern animal rights in

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17 While Calarco’s categories are useful, it should be noted that many thinkers straddle two if not all three approaches, something the author readily admits. Matthew Calarco, *Thinking Through Animals: Identity, Difference, Indistinction* (Stanford, California: Stanford California Press, 2015).

18 Such a posthumanist shift can also be found in Italian, German, and Dutch art of the same period, which points to a subsequent and larger comparative study of the animal in recent art history.
Anglo discourse, notably Peter Singer and Tom Regan). Yet limiting the scope to Francophone practices is not an arbitrary whim. Since both posthumanist theory and animal studies developed in large part from the seismic shifts in French thought vis-à-vis humanism beginning in the 1950s, the artist practices I examine run in tandem with this philosophical trajectory, and, in many cases, are prescient of (and contribute towards) an articulation of posthumanism and the animal several decades later.

In its simplest terms, this cultural shift *qua* the animal can be described as follows: traditional forms of representation based on iconography and symbolism, which subordinate and dissimulate the animal behind human demands and projections, gradually began to change in favor of a politics of representation, including living self-representation, which presents the animal in its own existence and for its own interests. The latter also critiques the servitude of the animal as image (in tradition) and as a commodified material resource (in modernity), often dissimulating and justifying its violence via the former. This critique is necessarily posthumanist. In this sense, I hold an affinity with Baker’s analysis of the animal as a simulacral construct, though unlike his analysis, I reposition the discussion away from the surface level meanings to focus on the material impact these constructs have on animal bodies. This should not be confused with a simple re-engagement with the real animal in affirmative or shocking relations with its body. All too often, these strategies fall into either patronizing relationships or end up relegating the animal once more to some type of totemic object in artistic performance. Rather, I focus on artists who, through their practices, manifest what human and nonhuman animals share epistemologically and ontologically: what makes them *both*
posthumanist. It is important to note that what conjoins them are not only certain internal capacities but also space and the world itself. It is for this reason that ecology, the study of eco-systems and the environment, is such an important discipline for this dissertation. Arguably, once environmental crises developed on a planetary scale beginning in the seventies, the projective needs and desires of “man” began to be redirected towards that of ecology. In the rising ecological consciousness of the seventies, the human became one node, albeit an important one, in a much larger environmental setup. So, in its own way, ecology is arguably itself posthumanist.

0.3 Animals have a history

The more rarified confines of art history were not immune to this shift from a human to nonhuman animal. In 1955, Marcel Brion wrote one of the first book-length studies of the animal in art called Les animaux, un grand thème de l’art (translated into English as simply Animals in Art). Brion was an essayist and historian whose long career begins in the late twenties and spans a prodigious number of topics within art history and literature. His survey begins with Prehistoric cave paintings and moves chronologically through history to Pablo Picasso, covering all the major eras in Western art in between. In keeping with the structuralist climate of French thought in the fifties, Brion’s methods cull from anthropology. The animal is presented as one of the central myths that structured not only early pictorial production, but also the very basis of social organization: “What is certain is that at the very root and origin of art, springing perhaps from the chance graffiti in which man found that he could imitate the shape of an animal, and from that dance which was, we think, the first form of imitation, there was a belief


19 I will sometimes refer to “human animals” simply as “human” and to “nonhuman animals” simply as “animals,” keeping in mind, however, that this does not revive the unworkable divide between “animals and men.”
that in imitating a creature man could, by following a specified ritual, gain power over that creature.\textsuperscript{20} Not only is the animal credited with being the impetus for artful imitation, but the practice itself converges with “man’s” relationship to his environment, which, until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, was predominately determined by natural forces outside his control. In many ways, Brion’s interpretation of the animal in history has an affinity with the German art historian Wilhelm Worringer’s well-known method analyzing empathy and abstraction.\textsuperscript{21} In both cases, what determines cultural production is any one civilization’s rapport with, and understanding of, its natural environment – a method that is structural, if not ecological, in its framing of art.

The fact Brion turned his attention to the animal at this point in art history also signals the newfound fascination with Paleolithic art beginning in the late forties in postwar Europe. The cave paintings in Lascaux were discovered in 1940, and the rogue Surrealist Georges Bataille would lavish great attention on these cave paintings and the animal in his later writings.\textsuperscript{22} In advanced art, as well, a return to the origins of civilization became a place to start from scratch after the devastation of World War II. This return to origins sought to recover the latent “primitive” energies inhibited by the long historical veneer of European sophistication and culture. From artists associated with Cobra to the \textit{informel} painting of Wols or Jean Fautrier to the \textit{art brut} of Jean Dubuffet, the utter collapse of history and culture encouraged a return to prehistory, and,

\textsuperscript{20} Marcel Brion, \textit{Animals in Art}, trans., Frances Hogarth-Gaute (New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1959), 22.
\textsuperscript{21} Wilhelm Worringer, \textit{Abstraktion und Einfühlung: ein Beitrag zur Stilpsychologie} (München: R. Piper, 1911).
in part, a return to the importance of the animal (albeit often a naïve and dogmatic conception of animality).

This zero degree of the immediate post war situation led to a revaluation of aesthetic principles. A notable example is Dubuffet’s essay, published in his 1946 “Mirobolus” exhibition catalog, which inaugurates his project of reassessing Western notions of beauty that he traces back to its Greek foundations: “In the name of what – except perhaps the coefficient of rarity – does man adorn himself with necklaces of shells and not spiders’ webs, with fox fur and not fox innards?”23 The fact that Dubuffet implicates the animal is significant because this revaluation represents nothing less than a wholesale excavation of the human, an archeological project that can only bring to light what has been excluded from the historical narrative of liberal humanism: the nonwestern, children, the mentally ill, and the nonhuman.

In this regard, Dubuffet’s remarkable speech “Anticultural Positions” from 1951 anticipates posthumanist sensibility in the twentieth century by stepping outside of the Western humanist tradition in order to critique it. Dubuffet begins by stating with confidence: “I have the impression that a complete liquidation of all the ways of thinking, whose sum constituted what has been called humanism and has been fundamental for our culture since the Renaissance, is now taking place, or, at least, going to take place soon.”24 He continues by describing this humanist dissolution as predicated on a changing understanding of nature. Already with a nod to a posthumanist ecology (wherein the human is simply one node within a wide network of environments and eco-systems),

Dubuffet laments Western man as having contempt for nature and a drive for its domination. Purportedly “primitive” cultures, by contrast, understand themselves to be in a fluid continuum with nature: “Those primitive societies have surely much more respect than Western man for every being of the world; they have a feeling that the man is not the owner of beings, but only one of them among the others.”25 One might read this statement as the timeworn primitivization of the nonwestern as holistically closer to nature and animality. Yet Dubuffet’s line of thought may also be credited with turning primitivism on its head: perhaps all along it has been the ecological sensibilities of nonwestern cultures that have been more advanced, and the only truly barbaric relation to the more-than-human world has been undertaken by the steely humanist subject of Western modernity (demonstrating that what is modern and what is advanced can also part ways).26 The further we enter into environmental crisis from the 1970s onwards—which in large part has resulted from the instrumentalization of nonhumans—the more this primitivist reversal is intuitively compelling. In short, the Western subject now has to admit certain lessons learned from her nonwestern other, a reconsideration reflected in (though not restricted to) recent studies in cultural anthropology.27

25 Ibid. 193-4.
26 In the domain of gender politics, Hal Foster has pointed out a similar reversal in positive identification with nonwestern cultures: the primitivist avant-garde (beginning with Paul Gauguin) “was also ambivalently critical: its partial identification with the primitive, however imaged problematically as dark, feminine, and perverse, remained a partial disassociation from white, patriarchal, bourgeois society, and this disassociation should not be dismissed as insignificant.” Hal Foster, Prosthetic Gods (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: MIT Press, 2004), 8.
27 Undoubtedly, this primitivist reversal is also founded on a myth or fantasy, one that cannot reflect reality in all cases (i.e. that the nonwestern other can be more trusted with the environment); and yet, key studies in cultural anthropology (not to mention Claude Lévi-Strauss’s pioneering work) demonstrate that this can, in fact, be the case. See Eduardo Kohn, How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2013); Philippe Descola, Par-delà nature et culture (Paris: Gallimard, 2005).
Dubuffet goes on to critique the Western illusion of autonomy from nature, its over fondness for reason and analysis, and its excess of confidence in language, especially written language. He decries the scientific method of analyzing phenomena in the world out of its context: “If there is a tree in the country, I don’t bring it into my laboratory to look at it under my microscope, because I think the wind which blows through its leaves is absolutely necessary for the knowledge of the tree and cannot be separated from it. Also the birds which are in the branches, and even the song of these birds.” There is a striking coincidence here between Dubuffet’s holism and the contemporaneous emergence of ethology, which called for studying animals in their native habits rather than in the lab or on the dissection table. In more theoretical terms, Dubuffet also points towards the most damning critique of humanist presumptions, namely, that human consciousness is a sovereign mirror of the world: “Western man believes that the things he thinks exist outside exactly in the same way he thinks of them. He is convinced that the shape of the world is the same shape as his reason.” Here, as Dubuffet points out, human reason eats its own tail and according to its own rules falls into circular reasoning: just because human consciousness correlates with the world does not mean that this is the only way the world can be correlated.

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28 In his distrust of written language and his relative privileging of speech in his text, Dubuffet shows his inability to fully extricate himself from the humanism he critiques. One of the key insights I work with in this dissertation is that speech is a subset of writing (what Derrida called arché-writing) and that language is itself nonhuman (in the sense of the evolutionary development of communication, but also in the sense that language, written or spoken, is a system that envelops, mediates, and constrains the human subject.  
30 Biology and zoology were indoor professions in the nineteenth century, and the animal specimen under question was always dead or vivisected. The turn to studying animal behavior in its natural habitat is a twentieth century development. See Richard W. Burkhardt, Patterns of Behavior: Konrad Lorenz, Niko Tinbergen, and the Founding of Ethology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 1-2.  
This short detour into Dubuffet’s critique of humanism shows a convergence between advanced art in postwar France and a relatively more conservative art historiography. In both cases, the human began to relinquish its pride of place at the center of meaning and history. Granted, Brion’s early study of the animal’s role in cultural production remains thoroughly subordinate to human needs and projections. Nevertheless, like Dubuffet’s speech, the very gesture of devoting time and energy to the animal within art history opens onto the question of the animal in its own right. By the seventies and eighties, the number of texts dealing with the animal in art history undergoes a conspicuous increase. In a similar vein as Brion’s early study, the art historians Kenneth Clark and Jacques Millet both published histories centered on the animal, respectively in 1977 and 1984. In both cases, the animal becomes a subject of interest, yet remains within the iconographic parameters of projective signs and symbols. In keeping with the postwar trend of a return to animal origins, this period also sees a proliferation of historical exhibitions with its central theme as the animal in art, most notably, L'animal de Lascaux à Picasso in 1976 and Bestiaire contemporaine à Paris in 1985. This is also the moment where one finds textual studies in pure history devoted to the animal—notably, Robert Delort’s Les animaux ont une histoire (1984), an ambitious pan cultural iconographic study of animals in art and visual culture, and Maurice Agulhon’s “Le sang des bêtes: le problème de la protection des animaux en France au

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XIXème siècle” (1981), a foundational essay on the history of animal protection laws in France.34

A watershed moment in the literature was John Berger’s essay “Why Look at Animals?” from 1977. Dedicated to Gilles Aillaud, and illustrated by the French artist’s zoological paintings, Berger’s text is the one of the first to critique the subordination of the animal within Western cultural production. His account is in keeping with a tradition of Marxist materialism, which has not generally been sympathetic to the animal’s perspective. Berger’s central argument is that because of industrial capitalism beginning in the nineteenth century, the animal has disappeared from view. The traditions that used to bind humanity and nature together have been broken. Man’s rationalistic viewpoint dominates and excludes nonhuman life, and increasingly self-immunizes himself from the environments outside him that have nevertheless always sustained him. As such, the animal has been relegated to a mere commodity for consumption.

Berger’s relatively short essay spans a long history and range of ideas, from Aristotle and Descartes (occluding the Middle Ages), to the eighteenth century naturalist Buffon, Grandville’s human-animal caricatures, and Walt Disney cartoons. Like Brion, Clarke, and Millet, Berger stresses the anthropological importance of the animal in both material and cultural history. Along with providing food, clothing, and utility, the animal was the earliest subject in art, the first medium of paint (blood), and the original metaphor.35 What separates Berger’s account from previous studies of the animal in

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35 Berger agrees with Rousseau’s conception of language in his Essay on the Origins of Languages (1781). Rousseau argued that the inception of language was founded through reason, but through figuration and emotional resonance with the world. Only later did these figurative tropes and metaphors solidify into units
culture is his repositioning of the discussion from the point of view of “man” to that of the animal. This repositioning is sensitive to and finds meaning in the animal’s gaze, which is simultaneously knowable and unknowable to humans. It holds our attention and seems familiar; yet it also entails secrecy in its purported muteness and lack of language. It is this capacity to look back, or, as Derrida will later elaborate, the capacity to respond that has been forgotten and disavowed over the course of the past two centuries.36 As Berger puts it: “The fact that they can observe us has lost all significance.”37 This loss has had far-reaching and often tragic implications.

“Why Look at Animals?” ends with an analysis of zoos. For Berger, the zoo stands for the melancholic reappearance of the animal in culture. For different reasons, the zoo is a recurring motif in this dissertation—not only as a physical place, but also as a biopolitical typology of containment that tends to implicate art objects, as well as humans and nonhumans.38 Although they represent two distinct art historical discourses, Berger’s analysis of zoos can readily be analogized with Peter Bürger’s analysis of the culture industry and the avant-garde from 1974.39 Berger describes the origin of zoos along the lines of the public museum: “[L]ike every other nineteenth century public institution, the zoo, however supportive of the ideology of imperialism, had to claim an independent civic function,” i.e. public enlightenment.40 Thus, if the institutionalization of the animal

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37 Berger, 16.
38 This preoccupation with zoos will be found in Chris Marker, Marcel Broodthaers, Gilles Deleuze, Jean-François Lyotard, and Peter Sloterdijk.
39 Peter Bürger, Theorie der Avantgarde (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974).
40 Berger, 21.
rips it out of its life world, then the ostensibly living politics of the historical avant-gardes for which Bürger is nostalgic have been deadened and domestication within modern cultural institutions in much the same way. Bürger’s argument can be distilled to a process of domestication and taming. In both cases there is an institutional de-contextualization of something living that was once immersed in a much larger ecosystem of meaning and importance – and in both cases their reappearance in the 1960s serves as a compensatory gesture for a history that is either lost or compromised by the economic pressures of the present. These histories are connected, and, as I argue more fully below, the turn to animals in the seventies and eighties is not a coincidence: if the bridging of art and life so central to the historical avant-gardes was no longer possible in the form previously took, then turning to the animal and ecological concerns was a way of reintroducing life into art without simply repeating history as farce.

Berger’s essay is germinal for animal studies. The fact that he has, for the most part, been marginalized within art history is telling. One of the reasons art history resists querying the animal is that the discipline remains deeply humanist. People make history, and critics and artists are the hermeneutical keys to the art. Art history also continues to be haunted by connoisseurship and matters of taste. There is a demand for politics in art, and sometimes ethics, but all-too often these must remain subservient to formal interests and the social distinction of having the qualifications to identify them. Since the sixties—and likely since its inception in the nineteenth century—art history has been implicated in a cultural market predicated on taste and autonomous pleasures, while also professionalized in an academic market that sets limits on proper or improper subjects for research. This is why art history has remained largely inadequate in coming to terms with
the animal and posthumanist themes, which, as I demonstrate in this study, increased exponentially from the seventies and eighties up to today’s ubiquitous use of animals in artistic practices in ways both critical and uncritical.

**0.4 Chapter Breakdowns**

Chapter one traces Chris Marker’s commitment to ethology and environmental politics in polemical works calling for nonviolence and recognition of animal sentience and interiority. Marker offers a theory of animality that is not only attuned to ecological crises, but also to the ways in which animality is foundational for human culture; as such, he augurs today’s ethological and philosophical considerations of nonlinguistic forms of communication and culture. Chapter two is a comparative study of three exhibitions in the mid-80s that challenge the humanist subject. These displays posit two ways of reappraising the human—either through *transhumanism*, whereby the human is overcome by bio-technological enhancements, or through *posthumanism*, whereby the human is shown to be inextricably entangled with animality. In both cases, it is a nonhuman that destabilizes the security and dominance of the humanist subject—and by proxy the long-held delimitation of the human-nonhuman line. Chapter three is a case study of Marcel Broodthaer’s mythoclastic use of animals in his work—including his many allusions to zoology, natural history, and the animal fables of La Fontaine. Ultimately, his work calls for an analogy between the Duchampian readymade and the animal: both are shown to be contingent on the power of naming, the subject formation that this power gives rise to, and the ability to be industrially reproduced. However, unlike the readymade art object, Broodthaes’s work reveals that when it comes to reducing the animal to a readymade, there is always a surplus and singular form of being that exceeds its nomination and objectification in mass production. Finally, chapter four locates eco-feminist impulses in
the works of Louis Bourgeois, Annette Messager, and VALIE EXPORT. These impulses arrive in two modes: either as a strategy of *identification* with animality, in which the artist self-identifies with a nonhuman position in order to escape or resist androcentric power, or as a strategy of *overidentification*, in which the artist embraces a pejorative association of woman-as-animal to such parodic degrees that she travesties and calls for a revaluation of this androcentric power. Bringing attention to these disparate issues involved in artistic practices from the 1970s and 80s, my dissertation contextualizes recent disciplinary advances in the posthumanities and animal studies within art historical research, and offers a much-needed genealogy for the prolific use of animals in contemporary art today.

1.1 INTRODUCTION: POST-HISTORICAL ANIMALS

A morbid, apocalyptic echo can be traced between the last lines of Chris Marker’s most celebrated film, *La Jetée*, 1962, to the last lines of *Vive la baleine!*, 1972, one of his lesser-known works. By now the finale of *La Jetée* is well-known: the dénouement of the film centers around a protagonist haunted by a memory from childhood, which at film’s end is revealed to be the paradoxically future image-memory of “the moment of his own death.”¹ A decade later in his aesthetico-multicultural history of whale hunting *Vive la baleine!*, Marker leaves the viewer with parallel dread: “each whale who dies leaves us like a prophecy with an image of our own death.”² This echo suggests a comparison of two films that at first blush seem like an unusual pairing. Yet the more these works are placed side-by-side the more affinities coalesce: both *La jetée* and *Vive la baleine!* are concerned with issues of human-animal entanglement and apocalyptic planetary scenarios—the former as a Cold War cautionary tale of nuclear fall-out (whereupon nearly all animals become figures of ancestrality and loss), the latter as a warning of impending environmental catastrophe (implicating humans and nonhumans). Both *La Jetée* and *Vive la baleine!* underscore the complicit role of human activity in ecological depletion—one by mutual destruction in war, the other by mutual destruction in ravaging earth as a limited resource. In this way, a formal and thematic symmetry exists between these two short films that typify Marker’s *ciné-roman* style of moving-still images.

Remaining true to the etymology of apocalypse as disclosure, both films reveal a terrible

truth about humanity’s self-perceived omniscience and the impact it has on both the human and more-than-human world.

These sobering themes are in keeping with an apocalyptic tone in culture, especially in France, which from the mid-1960s to the 1980s became increasingly preoccupied with a number of “ends”: of “philosophy,” of “man,” and of “history.” The genealogy of this discourse, which resurfaces in post-Cold War garb in the 1990s, should be traced back to the immediate postwar period. The concept of “posthistory” specifically—commonly taken as accounting for the hegemonic success of liberal market capitalism following WWII and the totalitarian collapse of really existing socialisms—dates back to at least the 1940s and ‘50s. Positioning Hegel at the philosophical beginnings of the end of history, Alexandre Kojève’s lectures on the *Phenomenology of Spirit* catalyzed this posthistorical questioning. As a young philosophy student in 1930s Paris during Kojève’s fame—possibly as a student of Jean-Paul Sartre, though Marker’s pre-war activities remain largely unknown—Marker would have been familiar with the

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5 While Kojève’s lectures were given in the 1930s, the publication of his notes was in 1947. For a history of postwar French thought through the lens of Hegel and the end of history, see Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, trans., L. Scott-Fox and J.M. Harding (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

6 “Lore has it that Marker was a student of Sartre’s in the 1930s when the former studied at the Lycée Pasteur, located in the upper-middle-class Neuilly-sure-Seine suburb of Paris.” Nora M. Alter, *Chris Marker* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 3.
concept of posthistory. Just after the war, he contributed an essay for a special issue of *Esprit* on apocalypticism and the atomic age.\(^7\)

The role the animal in this discourse of posthistory is the subject of this chapter. I claim Marker’s understanding of animals in his work can be taken, in part, as an oblique response to Kojève’s understanding of posthistory, which itself relies on animal-being for its theoretical foundations (Kojève’s reading of Hegel is anthropological, which first and foremost differentiates the desiring human with the merely surviving animal). As such, it is first necessary to offer a brief history of “animality” in the discourse surrounding the end of history in Kojève, but also in the writings of Giorgio Agamben and Jacques Derrida, two thinkers who are central to the rethinking of animality in philosophy. From these theories, I turn to Marker’s quite different understanding of the posthistorical animal in *Vive la baleine!* and other works during this period, most especially, his *Si j’avais quatre dromadaires* from 1967 (though only released in 1974).

Kojève’s concept of the posthistorical animal is found in two elliptical footnotes in his courses on Hegel’s *Phenomenology* from 1938-39. The first footnote was inserted for the 1946 edition. In his unorthodox reading of Hegel, Kojève describes the end of history as necessarily coinciding with the end of “man” proper. He claims, however, that this end should not be deemed a “catastrophe.” In fact, this end of history is man’s happy sublation into harmony with nature (which “remains what it has been from all eternity”): “Man remains alive as animal in harmony with Nature and given Being.” What this end entails is not only the end of man, but also of “Action,” of the patient work of dialectical

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\(^7\) Chris Marker, "Till The End of Time," *Esprit Nouvelle série*, 129, no. 1 (1947). See also Emmanuel Mourner’s “Pour un temps d’Apocalypse” from the same issue.
philosophy, and of the violent struggle for recognition. What remains is only what makes man happy: “art, love, play, etc.”

The second footnote, in which Kojève rightly deems the first to have been “ambiguous,” appears in an addendum to the first footnote on the occasion of the second edition in 1968. Therein he elaborates on man’s happiness in “art, love, play, etc.” Kojève reappraises the term “happy” as still too human, and he revises the word in favor of “content.” The birds that build their nests, the spiders that spin their webs, and the sounds of frogs and cicadas do not make them happy per se, but it does make them content. Similarly, “[o]ne would have to say that posthistorical animals of the species Homo sapiens (which will live amidst abundance and complete security) will be content as a result of their artistic, erotic and playful behavior, inasmuch as, by definition, they will be contented with it.” Not only does contentment reign as the posthistorical sentiment for man-turned-animal, it even makes “wisdom” and “discourse” obsolete: in posthistory “the species Homo sapiens would react by conditioned reflexes to vocal signals or sign “language,” and thus their so-called “discourses” would be akin to the language of “bees.” This vision of posthistory (which Vilém Flusser takes up in similar fashion in the seventies) refashions man into a pre-programmed, instinctual form of life. In other words, posthistorical man-turned-animal is predicated on an understanding of the animal as pure, reactive immanence (like Kojève’s student Georges Bataille’s definition

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9 Ibid., 159.
10 Ibid., 160.
of the animal as “water in water”).\textsuperscript{12} It is this conception of the animal that serves as a model for the postwar consumer subject as happy and dumb in eternal presentness.\textsuperscript{13}

These enigmatic footnotes have been much commented on. Recently, Giorgio Agamben takes them up in \textit{The Open} (2002). In his chapter titled “Acephalus,” which discusses the debate between Kojève and Bataille on posthistorical man-animality, Agamben shifts the discussion towards his own conception of posthistory as man reduced to bare life. He cites a 1939 declaration by the Collège de Sociologie denouncing a war in which men are turned into “conscious sheep resigned to the slaughterhouse.”\textsuperscript{14} Agamben thus moves the debate away from the eternally present contentment of man-turned-animal towards a post-historicity that turns humans into mere objects of extermination and domination: “[t]hough in a sense different from the one Kojève had in mind, men had now truly become animals again.”\textsuperscript{15} While Kojève’s original footnotes on posthistorical animality should be read in an ironic register, from which they assume a critique of postwar consumer life, Agamben’s return to Kojève gives the latter a darker, more biopolitical—or better, thanatopolitical—reading, even though both Kojève and


\textsuperscript{13} Most surprisingly in this second footnote, Kojève maintains that this posthistorical future had already happened in the United States and Japan. Kojève recalls initially concluding that the “American way of life” had most actualized this “eternal present” condition of human-animal contentment. Subsequently, Kojève changed his mind after visiting Japan. He concludes that it is the Japanese who have gone furthest down this posthistorical path. In contrast to the peoples of the United States, however, the Japanese had mitigated a complete collapse into animality with recourse to what Kojève calls their cultural “snobbery.” Since “no animal can be a snob,” Japanese posthistorical man thus maintains a certain remnant of being-human, or of being-superior to animals. It is tempting to understand Marker as agreeing here, to some degree, as he was so often fascinated by Japanese ceremonies and cultural practices – the whale hunt in \textit{Vive la baleine!} being the salient example for this chapter. See Kojève, 161.

\textsuperscript{14} Quoted in Giorgio Agamben, \textit{The Open: Man and Animal}, trans., Kevin Attell (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2004), 8.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
Agamben understand this historical process as one of mass de-politicization.\(^{16}\) If for Kojève the animal can only be thought of as a form of dumb immanence, for Agamben, the “animal” and “animalization” similarly point in one vertical direction, though with more dire consequences: downwards towards debasement and violence.

In *Specters of Marx* (1993), Jacques Derrida has also discussed this posthistorical turn to animality in Kojève via his critical assessment of Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), a text beholden to Kojève’s reading of Hegel. One of Derrida’s central criticisms directed at Fukuyama’s thesis is its reliance on a metaphysical, trans-historical conception of man, which is simply presupposed as an unproblematic, natural given: “To define this supposedly natural entity, this man as Man whom he talks about so blithely, Fukuyama claims to come back to what he calls “the first man,” that is, to “natural man.”\(^ {17}\) Derrida shows how this figure of “natural man” has already been thoroughly problematized by the very thinkers Fukuyama relies on for his argument: Marx, Stirner, Husserl, Heidegger, Nietzsche, and Hegel himself. In order to move beyond such a metaphysically constrained concept of history or the end of history, Derrida calls for putting “to work in a more demanding fashion the two moments of the Kojèvian postscript on posthistory and posthistorical animals.”\(^ {18}\)

Derrida’s main claim against what he calls Fukuyama’s “gospel” or “good news” is that this purported arrival of liberal democracy as posthistorical fulfillment, predicated

\(^{16}\) In a subsequent section from *The Open*, titled “Animalization,” Agamben describes the conjunction between animality and depoliticization in clear Foucauldian terms: “…man has now reached his historical *telos* and, for a humanity that has become animal again, there is nothing left but the depoliticization of human societies by means of the unconditioned unfolding of the *oikonomia*, or the taking on of biological life itself as the supreme political (or rather impolitical) task.” Ibid., 76.


\(^{18}\) Ibid., 88.
on a dubious conception of “man as man,” has nevertheless brought about violence and
misery on a scale that matches that of the totalitarian regimes of Communism:

For it must be cried out, at a time when some have the audacity to neo-evangelize
in the name of the ideal of a liberal democracy that has finally realized itself as
the ideal of human history: never have violence, inequality, exclusion, famine,
and thus economic oppression affected as many human beings in the history of
the earth and humanity.¹⁹

Derrida continues this bold caution against lionizing the progresses of liberal market
capitalism by including a parenthetical emphasis on nonhuman animals in this purported
posthistorical juncture:

[N]ever have so many men, women, and children been subjugated, starved, or
exterminated on earth (And provisionally, but with regret, we must leave aside
here the nevertheless indissociable question of what is becoming of so-called
“animal” life, the life and existence of “animals” in this history. This question has
always been a serious one, but it will become massively unavoidable.)²⁰

Derrida does not undertake a thorough analysis of the question of “so-called” animal life,
but his later philosophical work on the animal can be understood as a belated though
robust response to this initial call in Specters of Marx.²¹ Nevertheless, already here
special attention should be paid to what this brief parenthetical entails: it splits the
“animal” in two. The ‘so-called animal’ life Derrida alludes to here is not the same as the

¹⁹ Ibid., 106.
²⁰ Ibid.
²¹ While a backwards glance at Derrida’s corpus reveals a panoply of engagement with nonhuman animals
(which he lists at the beginning of The Animal That Therefore I Am), his latest works make this interest
manifest. See Jacques Derrida, The Beast and the Sovereign, trans., Geoffrey Bennington, vol. 2 (Chicago:
University of Chicago Press; University Presses Marketing, 2011); Jacques Derrida, The beast and the
sovereign, trans., Geoffrey Bennington, vol. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009); Derrida, The
Animal That Therefore I Am.
Kojèvian animal (or Bataille’s obliviously immanent animal, or even Agamben’s zoē-animal as mere biological existence). If the ‘animal’ is ‘so-called,’ then it denotes a nonhuman form of life that eludes the totalizing effects the term ‘animal,’ especially in its pejorative connotations.\textsuperscript{22} To understand the animal as pure presentness, as these other thinkers do – as limited to having desires that simply fulfill organic needs, or as mindless, apolitical life – is to be in direct conflict with the ethological findings that contradict such a limited notion of the animal. What Derrida points to in this passage is the life of the animal as implicated by history, as a potential recipient of violence, and as increasingly unavoidable. This is to say that Derrida points to the “really-existing” animal beyond the “so-called” animal.

It follows that this doubling of the animal gives rise to two different ways of understanding posthistory as it pertains to animality. The first is a posthistory predicated on the animal as a stand-in for eternal presentness, dumb contentment, or exploitable bare life; this first version of posthistory remains humanist, since it is founded on a pejorative misrecognition of the animal as a differential myth supporting human supremacy, which again—through ethics and cognitive ethology—we today understand is not life as pure, immanent contentment.\textsuperscript{23} By contrast, the second version of posthistory, which reflects a profound epistemological shift, becomes attentive to the many ethological advancements since the 1970s that reveal animal-being and situatedness in the world in its greater complexity. This would be a posthumanist version of posthistory, which shows the

\textsuperscript{22} To emphasize the force of language on the multitude of nonhuman animal lives, Derrida coins the term \textit{animot} to highlight the constructed nature of the word “animals.” Derrida’s neologism is a homonym for \textit{animaux} (or the plural “animals”) and—since \textit{animot} contains the French word for “word” (\textit{mot})—it also underscores its textual condition as a far too broad textual umbrella. Derrida, \textit{The Animal That Therefore I Am}, 41.

\textsuperscript{23} In other words, in this humanist posthistory the animal remains a fable and a metaphor. This does not mean, however, that this metaphor does not have material effects when exploited by institutional powers that take recourse to it for the reification and extermination of life, both human and animal.
animal to be anything but dumb and content. In this version of posthistorical animality, the animal becomes (and, in fact, always already was) the basis for understanding what made being human possible in the first place i.e. communication, joy, pain, sociability, and culture. The human has always been and always will be an animal, albeit one with high cognitive abilities, and in a posthumanist posthistory this is no longer a bad thing, but provides the very basis for what makes living, breathing, and thinking theriocentrically unique to human and (many) nonhuman animals.24 In this second version of post-historicity, it is not history that comes to an end, but a specific version of history that remains irremediably humanist, anthropocentric, and supported by pejorative associations of “animality” as a semantic, epistemological pivot for justifying violence and entitlement.25

The central claim of this chapter is that Marker’s work points towards such a posthumanist posthistory as an eco-politics of anthrozoological cooperation and mutual well-being. As I argue, Marker understands the animal to be a sentient agent with the capacity to make claims on a human viewer i.e., that nonhumans are demonstrably entangled with human history, culture, and environmental well-being. Moreover, the ethological dimensions of Marker’s œuvre open the way for an understanding of the animal as properly posthumanist and political. Since my analysis of Marker’s work

24 Admittedly, understanding the animal in this way is difficult, since it goes against the long-held humanist reflex to deem animals as inferior beings; nevertheless, this inferiority can only be defined against the superiority of being human, and if one remains vigilant, this inferiority can thus only be understood as formulated on a patently circular, autopoietic logic, since it is always imposed by the superior “human” side of the equation.

25 As such, undercutting the debasing valences of the words “animals,” “animality,” or even “animalization” amounts to undercutting their instrumentalization as terms for the dubious justification of violence towards both humans and nonhumans. It is in this sense that Agamben’s claim in The Open that “[t]he total humanization of the animal coincides with a total animalization of man,” while historical true, can never amount to a timeless, inherent assertion for the simple fact that the animal, once seen in the posthumanist light of dignity and differential capacity, can no longer serve as a tenable semantic placeholder for exploitability. Agamben, 77.
demonstrates that the animal has its own capacity for culture and for making claims on the world (in the domains of communication, solidarity, protection, joy, expression, aggression, and so on), it poses a significant challenge to humanist history as both unique and sovereign in these domains. In this way, the developments I trace necessitate a re-thinking of history itself, towards a posthistory that now includes nonhuman sentience and agency. It is in this sense of posthistorical that Marker’s work presented in this chapter should be understood as posthumanist and why his concern with nonhuman animal interiority is so historically important and novel.

1.2 Bestiaries Videos and Marker’s Ethological Impulse

From the mid-80s to the early 90s, Marker made a number of brief video works that can be described as ethological in their single-minded focus on animal behavior. There are his three Bestiaries videos—Chat écoutant la musique, An Owl Is an Owl is an Owl, and Zoo Piece (1985-90), as well as the stand alone Slon Tango (1993), and Bullfight/Okinawa (1994). Each of these brief video works attest to different affective states of animality—comfort, lethargy, play, and in the case of Bullfight/Okinawa, aggression through human provocation. Zoo piece shows animals in various states of boredom in zoological confinement completely displaced from their eco-systems in the wild. A listless gorilla, a languorous cheetah, kangaroos, curious emus, pacing wolf, and any number of poking snouts and peering eyes look out imploringly behind cage bars. [ill. 1.1] The video is an innocent experience if the viewer is ignorant of animal sentience and cognitive abilities; for the viewer who, like Marker, is not unaware of the psychosomatic

26 While not original intended as a series, these five works are sometimes shown together as Bestiaire and the dates often vary slightly for each piece.
27 A sick or sleeping rhinoceros, laying down in a cement and tiled holding cell, uncannily recalls Gilles Aillaud’s zoological paintings of the 1970s.
complications of nonhuman confinement it is excruciating. In this regard, the music Marker chooses for *Zoo piece*—a bluesy instrumental rendition of “My Funny Valentine”—lends an affectionate yet melancholic air to the work. This walk through a zoo may very well blur the lines between the affective states of various animals (whose interiorities really experience and emote these states) and the affective states of the human viewers that are triggered as an emotive surplus by the moving music and image (which may reside solely in the viewer and displaced onto the zoological denizens). In other words, the dividing line between theoricentricity and anthropocentricity is complicated and perhaps undecidable.

*If Zoo piece* evokes nonhuman despondency and boredom, *Slon Tango* documents the performance of a large, dancing elephant in his pen in a more playful key. [ill. 1.2] The video was shot on one of Marker’s trips to Russia, ‘slon’ being Russian for ‘elephant.’ Like *Zoo piece*, Marker’s use of music underscores the mood, in this case through Igor Stravinsky’s fittingly plodding yet jocular *Tango* (1940). While housed in a large pen that nonetheless precludes the peripatetic distances normally covered by pachyderms, the large mammal executes what appears to be a dancing pattern that is well accounted for in its species behavior: rhythmic intervals of stepping forwards and backwards, wagging tail and flapping ears, complete with intermittent curtsies of both front and hind legs and the occasional tossing of dirt into the air with trunk. The capacity for nonhuman play, such as dance, becomes a central concern for Marker, especially in his extended consideration of animals in *Dromadaires*, as it was for the dancer Simone Forti, whose visits to the Rome zoo and its confined animals in the sixties served as an
affective model for her choreography, notably her *Sleepwalkers*, 1968 as inspired by this exact elephant dance.  

In *An owl is an owl is an owl*, Marker comically alludes to the Cartesian understanding of the animal as a mindless automaton. The short video shows close-ups of an array of different owl species, each turning their heads and blinking their eyes in ways that seem robotic. The swiveling of their feathered heads and necks are impossibly well oiled and smooth, while their eyelids close from the sides rather than from top and bottom. [ill. 1.3] *An owl is an owl is an owl* uses robotic speech-sounds throughout—repeating the work’s title over and over, nearly indecipherably—as if the viewer is witnessing strange beings of alien life or artificial intelligence (this owl-as-machine finds a contemporaneous companion in Ridley Scott’s film *Blade Runner*, 1982 and its ‘fake’ owl, played in the film by a ‘real’ owl). It is equally important to note that Marker’s title, originally in English, alludes to owls as having pure equivalent exchange value, as if the animal could be a readymade commodity (that an owl is an owl is an owl, ad infinitum). The varieties of owls shown on screen belie this conception of animal equivalency, and ultimately this brief video serves as a critique of the economic flattening of animal life.

Perhaps the most celebrated of the *Bestiaire* videos is *Chat écoutant la musique* featuring Guillaume-en-Égypte, Marker’s beloved cat. Shot in Marker’s home studio, the gray, striped tabby is sprawled on two synthesizer keyboards while a calm and serene piano plays over large speakers (Federico Mompou’s “Pajaro Triste,” from “Impresiones Intimas,” 1911). Matching the music’s tranquil mood, the cat embodies a liminal state between sleep and wakefulness, intermittently stretching his front paws (seemingly

28 For a compelling account of the nonhuman influences on Forti’s work, including the specific case of this elephant dance as model for her *Sleepwalkers*, see Julia Bryan-Wilson, "Simone Forti Goes to the Zoo," *October* 152, no. 1 (2015): 40.
pressing down on some of the keys), eyes opening and closing, and pricking his ears in sync with certain impressionistic accents in the music. The languid cat breaks his peaceful spell only twice: at the end, when he turns his body around only to lie back down, and in the middle, when something just behind and off camera suddenly grabs his wide-eyed attention. [ill. 1.4]

Initially, this three-minute video seems nothing more than a curiosity (as do perhaps all of Marker’s short animal videos, though this view hinges on the belief that animals are nothing more than curiosities). However, there is an important embodied relay to account for in Chat écoutant la musique, which sets up a relationship of shared interiority between the nonhuman subject and the human viewer in an affective overlap through Mompou’s piano piece. The music provides a mediating extra-lingual thread that ties together the inaccessible interior life of the cat and the equally inaccessible interior life of the viewer. In both cases, what is manifest are only the inferences or traces of interiority, which can never be communicated directly from feline to human. Marker intermittently turns the camera to the digital equalizer on the sound equipment, which lights up in sync with the dynamics of the music. In addition, the camera repeatedly focuses in close-up on the cat’s ears. Both these recurrent details emphasize that the music is diegetically present in the studio with Guillaume-en-Égypte. The result is a quasi-secret relation between hearing, perception, and affective response to music by nonhuman and human faculties and receptors. In other words, Marker’s work allows for a transversal sharing of auditory capacity between (at least) two sets of ears: the cat’s and

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29 Nor, for that matter, human-to-human, even in speech; in the wake of the deconstruction of the logocentric metaphysics of presence as voice, speech can no longer be understood as a one-to-one correspondence with interiority, nor the only access to consciousness. I return to these historically concurrent philosophical developments in the context of Marker’s work at the end of this chapter.
the viewer’s. While the quality of this shared affect remains largely indeterminate, it is reasonable to think that the contemplative and calming tonality of the piece resonates similarly in both feline and human embodiment. The mediating music thus thematizes a spatio-temporal envelope inhabited by a multi-species audience with the capacity to be immersed in a shared reception of sounds, however unable to fully communicate this experience and affect to each other.

1.3 Tous les chiens tous les chats (1970), and L’animal en question (1970)

By the time of his Bestiaries videos in the mid-late 1980s, the sixty-plus year-old Marker had already made numerous works that offer multi-faceted meditations on a whole array of animals—giraffes, wolves, gorillas, mammoths, ducks, raccoons, reindeer, and whales, to name a few. In fact, Sans Soleil (1983), often considered one of the filmmaker’s most important works along with La Jetée, dwells on the nonhuman animal as much as its human counterpart. Nevertheless, there has been very little serious discussion of the various roles animals play in this film or others by Marker. This is understandable, as he represents a chameleonic figure of prodigious scope. Marker was a writer, filmmaker, and visual artist working in photography, the moving image, and new media with a range of themes of more obvious interest to disciplines like art history and film studies: political history, science fiction, sociology, ethnography, and documentarianism. When the literature on Marker does treat his interest in animals—usually his love of cats and owls—it serves as an opportunity to fill out a notoriously

30 Although studies have shown that most human forms of music are unsuitable for nonhuman ears, leaving them indifferent, researchers have begun devising species-specific forms of music for nonhuman frequencies and dynamic preferences; nevertheless, similarly calm music as Mompou’s piece has begun to be used as animal therapy. See Charles T. Teie David Snowdon, “Affective responses in tamarins elicited by species-specific music,” Biology letters., no. 1 (2010): 30. For an example of species-music therapy see http://www.interspecies.com/.
incomplete biography. More often than not, the animal functions as a surrogate or alter ego for the filmmaker himself.\(^{31}\) By contrast, I propose to take very seriously what Marker says about the animal and how animals appear across the whole of his work, where one finds remarkable nonhuman cameos from beginning to end.

In this regard, the early seventies are especially crucial for Marker, when he undertakes various projects dealing directly with the animal. Although this was a pre-existing interest dating back at least to Marker’s writings in the journal *Esprit* in the late forties and fifties the early seventies consolidate the animal as a central concern and theme in his work. Under pseudonym Boris Villeneuve, Marker translated Konrad Lorenz’s *So kam dem Mensch auf den Hund* from 1949 for its first appears in French in 1970.\(^{32}\) Marker translated this early text of popular ethology not as *Comment l’homme a rencontré le chien*, as would be expected in French, but as *Tous les chiens, tous les chats*.

[ill. 1.5] While other translations remained faithful to the original German title (e.g. *Man Meets Dog* or *E l’uomo incontrò il cane*) Marker took creative license by making titular room for his beloved felines. While Lorenz’s text does include discussions of cats

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\(^{31}\) See the two major studies of Marker’s œuvre in English for this form of feline biographism: Alter; Catherine Lupton, *Chris Marker: Memories of the Future* (London: Reaktion Books, 2005). One essay in a recent French anthology devoted to the role of the gaze in his work represents a rare instance of dealing directly with the nonhuman animal, if not the nonhuman’s own capacity for gazing back. See Barbara Laborde, "Du mémorial au mémoriel: hommages et tombeaux dans l’œuvre de Chris Marker," in *Chris Marker et l'imprimerie du regard*, ed. André Habib et Viva Paci (Paris: Harmattan, 2008). The only study thus far to consider the animal gaze seriously in the Marker literature is Kieran Argent Horner recent essay in the journal *Film-Philosophy*, and is generally symptomatic of the incorporation of animal studies into the field: Kierran Argent Horner, "The Equality of the Gaze: The Animal Stares Back in Chris Marker's Films," *Film-Philosophy* 20, no. 2-3 (2016).

\(^{32}\) “Chris Marker” itself being a pseudonym, “Boris Villeneuve” is a partial reference to his birth name “Christian François Bouche-Villeneuve.” Konrad Lorenz, *Tous les chiens, tous les chats*, trans., Villeneuve Boris (Paris: Flammarion, 1970). Lorenz is not an unproblematic figure in history. His ethological theories lent themselves to notorious National Socialist ideologies of race and species difference. Like Jakob von Uexküll, another important figure of incipient ethology and the study of animal behavior, Lorenz became willingly involved with the Nazi regime. At the same time, Lorenz remains widely considered as a progenitor of modern ethology and animal behaviorism (who, alongside Nikolaas Tinbergen and Karl von Frisch, jointly won the 1973 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for his work on the animal). See Burkhardt.
(mainly to differentiate their less than fully domesticated status within human spheres of evolutionary development), on the whole, it is a study of canine behavior and a speculative mediation on the origins and evolution of their domestication within human societies. As translator, Marker became well acquainted with these emerging theories of animal cognition, the animal’s evolutionary role in hominization, and above all, the challenge nonhuman agency poses for a simple dichotomy of nature/culture (domestication being only the most obvious instance of such overlap). Above all, this work on Lorenz opens up for Marker the possibility of thinking of nonhuman agency as having a place in history. Moreover, if history has been pushed along not only by human agency, but by nonhuman agency as well, then this more complex notion of history should be understood as posthumanist (and even as a form of posthistory, if by history one still speaks of the process as driven solely by human action). This theme of nonhuman agency is central to Marker’s incorporation of animals in his work.

While translating Lorenz, Marker also worked on a documentary film dedicated to the Surrealist poet Jacques Prévert called *L’Animal en question* (1970), a collaboration between Marker and the publisher and writer André Pozner. Interspersed with straightforward interviews between Pozner and Prévert, along with the poet’s photographer friend Robert Doisneau, Marker inserts footage of a roaming raccoon against a neutral blue backdrop. It becomes clear that the “animal in question” is not only Marker’s mute, restless raccoon before the camera, but the poet himself. In the final scene of *L’Animal en question*, we find Prévert outdoors coming face-to-face with a
living, caged raccoon.\textsuperscript{33} \textbf{[ill. 1.6]} The poet enters into dialogue with the animal. This melancholic moment does not come across as irreverent but as a sincere inter-species meeting:

What are we made of, the two of us? Well! Tell me what you’re thinking, raccoon. What you think of cages, what you think of a lot of things. What do you think of the bomb? What do you think of the war in Vietnam, raccoon, you who’s in a cage? What do you think of all the prisons?...You don’t seem very happy, raccoon. Are you looking for freedom? You know what it is, but you don’t have the words to explain. Man explains it, and imprisons you.\textsuperscript{34}

These final words of \textit{L’Animal en question} encapsulate many of themes important to Marker’s work in this chapter: an emphasis on a non-linguistic form of interiority, a shared affect between human and nonhuman, and a critique of anthropocentric power over the animal (‘You know what [freedom] is, but you don’t have the words to explain. Man explains it, and imprisons you’). Prévert treats the animal as an instance of living interiority that can know freedom by experiencing it, along with its opposite, namely, imprisonment. While a distant war and nuclear power is meaningless for the raccoon, this animal may have something to communicate about prisons in her ability to not only react, but also respond to the situation. Prévert leaves this possibility open by discerning a

\textsuperscript{33} On of the reasons why this meeting is arranged, which also explains the film’s title, is that one of Prévert most celebrated poems involves a raccoon: See “Inventaire” in Jacques Prévert, \textit{Paroles} (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), 208-10.

\textsuperscript{34} “De quoi on est faits, tous les deux? Hé! Dis-moi ce que tu penses, raton laveur. Ce que tu penses des cages, ce qu tu pense d’un tas de choses. Qu’est-ce que tu penses de la bombe? Qu’est-ce que tu penses de la guerre du Viêt-nam, raton laveur, tu qui es en cage? Qu’est-ce que tu penses de toute les prisons?...T’as pas l’air heureux, raton laveur. Tu cherches la liberté? Tu sais ce que c’est, mais tu n’as pas de mots pour l’expliquer. Les hommes l’expliquent, et t’enferment.” Jacques Prévert and André Pozner, \textit{Hebdromadaires} (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), 184-5. Here and elsewhere, translations from the French are mine, unless otherwise noted.
thinking and gesturing embodiment that points to indifference, listlessness, and dolefulness behind the bars: ‘You don’t seem very happy, raccoon.’

Judging from the poet’s prodigious oeuvre, which preoccupies itself so often with animals, if there is a posthumanist poet avant la lettre it is certainly Prévert. Throughout his poetry and interviews, Prévert often insists on a certain continuity between human and nonhuman animals.\(^{35}\) *Hebdromadaires* (1982), a book of interviews resulting from Pozner and Marker’s film *L’Animal en question*, substantiates this form of continuist thinking between human and nonhuman animals. In one interview, Prévert challenges the notion of humanist forms of thought directly, using language that unequivocally points to the circular reasoning involved in the autopoietic formation of the human: “The word human is itself human! I understood only recently what this Humanism entails. Because in the end, Humanism, like human sacrifices, is human, and why should I give a damn?”\(^{36}\) The poet describes Humanism as tautological by definition. In his proto-posthumanist mindset, Prévert mirrors his current intellectual moment in France preoccupied with the “ends of man,” which developed out of structuralist and poststructuralist philosophy through the late sixties and early seventies in France.\(^{37}\) It is Michel Foucault’s work that

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\(^{35}\) Poems like “Les Animaux ont des ennuis” from his collected *Histoires* (1964) or his long prose poem in *Des bêtes...* (1950), a collaborative photobook with the popular animal photographer Ylla, attest to Prévert’s interest in animals as not simply character types for poetic fables, but as having certain capacities and interests in common with humans. See Jacques Prévert, "Les animaux ont des ennuis," in *Histoires* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), 131-2. Jacques Prévert and Ylla, *Des bêtes...* (Paris: Gallimard, 1950). In the latter, Prévert notes at the outset that the human is the animal that calls itself human. Throughout this long text (which I do not have space to analyze here), Prévert’s discourse is a preliminary uncovering of the animal behind fabulist representation and one that seems to incorporate ethological insights about animal behavior at variance with their historical use. Ylla’s zoological photographs and animal portraiture work in tandem with the text as a sentimental yet frank representation of the various animals discussed in Prévert’s accompanying prose poem.

\(^{36}\) “Le mot humain est humain! Un humanisme, j’ai appris très tard ce que c’était. Parce qu’au fond, l’humanisme, comme les sacrifices humains, c’est humain, et qu’est-ce que vous voulez que ça me foute?” Prévert and Pozner, 78.

\(^{37}\) This posthumanist and anti-anthropological intellectual moment can be accounted for in Derrida’s lecture on “The Ends of Man.” After describing the immediate postwar situation of Existentialism as essentially
hangs most heavily on this intellectual moment, notably his surprise 1966 bestseller *The Order of Things* and its archeology of ‘man’ as an epistemic construction nearing its end.38 Prévert’s emphatic declaration that “Humanism” is *itself* a human concept and invention is thus in keeping with the current discourse troubling the once a priori understanding of “man” as a given concept, rather than as one formed by an auto referential humanist history. Evacuating the human subject from unquestioned historical self-evidence opens onto a different understanding of the human, which becomes unmoored from its former metaphysical distinction and security—not unlike Derrida’s deconstruction of Fukuyama’s conception of ‘man.’

1.4 *Vive la baleine* (1972)

Two years after translating *Tous les chiens, tous les chats* and co-directing *l’Animal en question*, Marker offered one of his most sustained works on the nonhuman animal in *Vive la baleine!* (1972). On the surface, this short film – which is almost totally ignored in the critical literature on Marker – is a history of international whale hunting.39 Yet embedded within its scope is an examination of the animal in relation to a number of wider themes. Following an analysis of the film’s structure and strategies, I open up the discussion towards two wider themes, namely: the way the animal functions in relation to death and to ecology. In this subsequent section (1.5) I examine other moments in his work involving the animal in order to form a more complete picture of how Marker moves the paradigm of animal representation away from humanist presuppositions.

humanist, Derrida relates the present moment of the late 1960s as preoccupied with a “critique of humanism and anthropologism,” which reflects “one of the dominant and guiding motifs of current French thought.” This text was first given as a lecture in 1968 and subsequently published in *Marges de la philosophie* (1972). Derrida, “The Ends of Man,” 118-19.

38 Emphasizing Foucault’s importance, Derrida uses an epigram from *The Order of Things* in his “The Ends of Man.” Ibid., 111.

39 In the three major studies on Markers work (Lupton, Alter, and Cooper) there is only passing mention of *Vive la baleine!*.
Titled *Three Cheers for the Whale* in English, *Vive la baleine!* represents a second collaboration between Marker and the documentary filmmaker Mario Ruspoli. Sixteen years prior, Ruspoli and Marker had worked together on Ruspoli’s film *Les Hommes de la baleine* (1956). On this first outing, Ruspoli is credited as director and Marker as commentator (under the pseudonym Jacopo Berenzi). Ruspoli’s ethnological interest in whaling focuses on the human side of this history and the social traditions surrounding the hunt. The documentary film centers on a small whaling village in the Azores, which the film describes as one of the few places in the world at the time that continued to whale according to the earliest traditions (it is claimed due to necessity, in what may be reactionary pastoralism, as whaling represents the Azoreans only means of providing for themselves economically). *Les Hommes de la baleine*’s narrative account of the quotidian existence of these Azorean villagers culminates in a dramatic first-hand account of a hunt aboard one of their small whaling vessels. The last half of the film documents the specific techniques, dangers, and maneuvers involved on the high seas in a hunt that can lasts for upwards of seven hours before the last blows of the harpoon bleed the whale enough for the whalers to place their flag atop its body.

Marker’s commentary in this first film hints at a denunciation of the daily massacres involved in the modern industrial history of whaling, which by the time of *Les Hommes de la baleine* had already overwhelmed the traditional techniques still implemented in the Azores. Although never shown on screen, the exploding harpoon gun is mentioned as leading to the greed of large-scale industrial whaling. Marker’s commentary also cites Prévert and the human-animal affinities between the hunter and

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the hunted: on the eve of the whale hunt, Ruspoli’s camera shows the villagers coming together to play music and card games. Marker’s commentary suggests that “both man and sperm whale...live their lives in parallel,” whereby they nurse their young, follow similar kinship units, and even “play games in their own fashion.” These sentiments, already present in Les Hommes de la baleine, are developed more fully in Vive la baleine!, though in far darker tones.

While Ruspoli’s Les Hommes de la baleine is a straightforward documentary, the same cannot be said of Marker’s Vive la baleine!, which is at once more eco-politically charged and technically adventurous. Despite both films being collaborations, it is clear that the first film belongs more to Ruspoli, and the latter more to Marker. With a running time of just under seventeen minutes, the film’s structure is four-fold: 1) the opening credits; 2) a narrative duel between a male voice and a female voice over taxonomic representations of marine life; 3) a nation-by-nation genealogical history of whaling; and 4) a condemnation of the modern technologies involved with the whale hunt as it becomes industrialized in the present day. The film uses narration, still and moving images, and disparate media (drawings, prints, paintings, photographs, and film).

From the opening credits, the viewer is presented with a formal disjunction, one that is operative throughout Vive la baleine!: on screen a cartoon whale—drawn with eyes closed, a wide smile, and a heart shape emerging from its blow hole—appears as a fabulist, childlike representation. [ill. 1.7] This is the first of a number of drawn whales shown during the opening credits by the French animator Timour Lam (son of the surrealist painter Wilfredo Lam). Meanwhile, the audio submerges the viewer in a

41 “En attendant le moment de leur rencontre, man and whale...mènent des vies sensiblement parallèles...[p]eut-être les cachalots jouent-ils, à leur façon.” Ibid., 50.
nebulous underwater world – a deep rumbling with layers of creaking noise, as if a ship is
docked just above among buoys that mark nautical space. Composed by Lalan (who also
scored Marker’s Dromadaires), this otherworldly audio drones persistently throughout
the film with its electronic effects and what sounds like a Cagean prepared piano.
Between the visual and the audial, then, the disjunction is set between two versions of
being-whale: on the one hand, a fantastic, simulacral representation that disembodies the
whale as image; on the other, an immersion into nonhuman affect and embodiment that
approximates being-whale itself.

Immediately following the credits, this disjunction between exteriority and
interiority is echoed by two voices—one male, one female—in a narrative duel of which
only the female voice is all knowing. The male speaker goes first by launching into a
lecture on cetaceans. The tone and booming reverberation of his voice brings to mind an
authoritative speaker in a university lecture hall or natural history museum (in the credits,
he is described as the voix magistrale or “master voice”). As visual accompaniment,
Marker’s camera roves slowly over a book of taxonomic representations of various
species of whale and marine life (panning slowly right and left, up and down the pages of
the book). [ill. 1.8] From the Sei Whale, to the Narwhal Whale, the Gray Whale, the
Sperm Whale, and the Giant Squid, each marine species is shown in suspended animation
and in full profile illustrating the male narrator’s largely dispassionate lecture recounting
the dwindling population of whales, the technologies that are formed around the hunt,
along with the likelihood of extinction of certain species. As if sitting back all the while,
the female voice suddenly intrudes overlapping with the male voice, with no reverb
whatsoever. The effect is one of proximity and intimacy (in the credits, she is described
as the *voix intérieure* or “interior voice”). This female voice, whose whisperings register as surreptitious asides to the viewer-turned-fellow student in a lecture hall, undercuts the authorial and didactic male voice. She continually chides the oblivious male speaker with wordplay and irony, engendering a clear contrast between the dry, disaffected voice of the humanist marine naturalist, and an emotive, affective voice of inter-species recognition.\(^{42}\)

The female narrator’s first aside are not Marker’s words but rather lines from Prévert’s “La pêche à la baleine” (“The Whale Hunt”): “a beautiful whale with blue eyes, not your everyday beast…”\(^{43}\) This poem tells the story of Prosper, a son who refuses to go whale hunting with his father, and who represents an unsuccessful pacific critique of needless violence (Prévert’s tale was written expressly for the avant-garde theatre group Octobre’s anti-fascist performances in the 1930s, cautioning against the auto-destruction of war through a missed empathic encounter between human and nonhuman).\(^{44}\) Despite Prosper’s protestations that whales never bothered him and should be left alone, a species war ensues between father and whale, whose respective blue eyes are noted as uncannily similar, leading to mutual harm (the father is killed; the whale is haunted by imminent

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\(^{42}\) The narrator chides the detached discussion of marine populations and demographics: “Population! Imagine a city of whales. They go to work, they visit each other, park in parking lots…” She hints at the impending violence on the animal body: “Guess how this one got its hump.” In the original French, she wordplays between “la jubarte,” the humpback whale, and the philosopher “Roland Barthes.” And, through the figure of the cuckoo bird, she equates the market with madness: “The squid sellers call mingles with the voice of the cuckoo.” All quotes and times from the 2007 English version, unless otherwise noted. While remaining attentive to variations, since Marker worked on the English version himself, I have not seen it as necessary to translate the original French version. Marker and Ruspoli. [1:24, 1:39, 1:13]

\(^{43}\) Ibid. [1:08]

retaliation). While not entirely outside the tradition of fabulist morality tales from Aesop to La Fontaine, “La pêche à la baleine” does thematize the interaction between human and nonhuman species in their shared capacity to suffer, as well as the theme of mutual destruction, auguring Vive la baleine!’s finale and its attention to environmental crisis.

If in Prévert’s poem, only the son Prosper sees the eye color that both father and whale share, then in Vive la baleine!, only the female narrator sees the ways in which humans connected to nonhumans—not only in certain existential capacities, but on a shared ecological scale: “Because you’re fading out, whales, like big lamps; and if you’re no longer there to light our way, you and the other animals, do you think we’ll see in the dark?”45 Thus from the beginning, the narrator stresses the way in which human agency is contingent on and imbricated with nonhuman agency (and not only the whale, but also “other animals”). This is an important theme running throughout this film and Marker’s œuvre. After the male narrator declares that for centuries man and whale fought without questioning nature’s equilibrium, and begins to account for the various iconographies that developed in art history, his voice drops out, never to return. It is as if both the “natural” equilibrium and the symbolic impositions on the animal he speaks of have been interrupted – a historical intervention the film proceeds to undertake, now solely through the female voice once this narrative duel, lasting just over one and a half minutes, comes to a close.

The following section of Vive la baleine! is a genealogy of the economic history of whaling, which at over eight minutes is the longest. The narrator tells a nation-by-nation account of its evolution, from its beginnings among the Basques and the Inuit to

45 Marker and Ruspoli. [1:48]
the gradual industrialization of the practice – most notably by Japan, Holland, and the United States. Accompanying this history are disparate representations of whaling across cultures: ethnographic documentary photographs of Eskimo hunts, Japanese woodblock prints, Dutch and American paintings of romantic seascapes and hunting adventures. Marker’s multi-cultural, multi-national archive of art and visual culture can, in part, be found in a now rare agenda—a diaristic calendar—produced by Ruspoli in association with La Compagnie maritime des chargeurs réunis and La Compagnie fabre. Like Vive la baleine!, the calendar’s year is 1972. Part story book part diaristic calendar, Ruspoli supplied the imagery and text for that year’s theme of “la chasse à la baleine.” The images include photographs and film stills culled from the aformention film Les Hommes de la baleine (1956), along with drawings, prints, and paintings sourced from whaling museum collections and library archives in the United States and Europe. While not limited to images from this calendar’s archive, Vive la baleine!’s imagery overlaps a great deal with Ruspoli’s “agenda” in its appropriative visual culture.

Making use of this visual inventory in its genealogy of whaling economies, Vive la baleine! offers a protean history moving from the use-value of the animal body (a near immediately usable good for food, clothing, etc.) to pure exchange-value (the valorization of a natural material towards ends beyond immediate use-value). The narrator recounts

47 Each page of the personal calendar shows an art work or photograph associated with whaling and offers information about whaling history, creating a narrative that the owner of the calendar could follow throughout the year.
48 These museums and libraries include: Bibliothèque National, Paris; Bibliothèque du Muséum d’Histoire Naturelle, Paris; National Scheepvaartmuseum, Anver; The Museum of City of New York, New York; and the Kendal Whaling Museum, Sharon, Massachusetts, now housed in the Whaling Museum in New Bedford, Massachusetts, which is also cited as a consulted institution.
49 It is largely due to this calendar that one is able to identify the uncredited and uncaptioned original source materials in the film. A copy of Ruspoli’s calendar is housed in the Bibliothèque du Muséum d’Histoire Naturelle in Paris.
that the animal was initially harvested simply for consumption and out of necessity for human survival among the Basque and the Inuit: “Kill you, eat you. You were not yet a natural resource, you were vitamins and protein. Is it much less gratifying for self-pride to be a protein than to be a natural resource?”50 The answer implied by her sardonic tone is that whatever reason there might be for the whale hunt, it makes little difference to the nonhuman mammal involved who is being addressed directly. The photographs accompanying this sequence bear witness to this one-sidedness: ethnographic visual documentation that predominately shows the hunters – sharpening tools, rowing canoes, pulling in their catch onto the shore – rather than the hunted, who simply appear dead and floating ready for use. [ill. 1.10-11]

The narrator’s quip of “not yet a natural resource” moves the narrative history of whaling down its industrial path from use-value in pre-modern economies to the expanded processes of exchange-value, laying the foundation for modern, capitalist economies. In this regard, the narrator first turns her attention to Japan. Endlessly fascinated by the Japanese throughout his work, Marker credits the nation with industriousness vis-à-vis the whale hunt. He does so, however, with similar critical irony audible in the narrator’s intonation: “They got out of you what they could, minus transistors…[w]hat they found in you is unbelievable. You were food. You became industry. Like film. No big deal for you either.”51 Her words point to a perversion of industrial efficiency, which like the film industry drains its products for all it can. In this way, with the example of the Japanese, the whale hunt moves from a “natural” or “simple”

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50 This rhetorical irony comes through in both the French and English film commentary. In the English version of the film, however, this line has been partially mistranslated – specifically, “vous n’étiez pas encore un ressource naturel.” as “you were no longer a natural resource.” I have corrected this mistranslation above. Marker and Ruspoli. [3:05]
51 Ibid. [3:37/3:57]
ecological relation of hunter/hunted to an additional economic relation of producer/object; from a source of nutrition and environmental human supplement, to a value-added national resource for industry and profit.

Providing this incipient industrial shift, Marker’s camera dwells on three different woodblock prints depicting the early traditions of the Japanese whale hunt. Based on a Japanese picture scroll from 1773, these color prints come from a set of five images by the Taiyo Fishing Company given as gifts to delegates from the International Whaling Commission in 1954.\textsuperscript{52} This relay of imagery – from a pre-modern to a modern period, in both form and content – is an important historical displacement to keep in mind, since a central ambition of Vive la baleine! is to uncover the dissimulation of violence behind historical imagery and heritage. Marker chose to show the second, fourth, and fifth prints in the series – “Killing,” “Flensing,” and “Oil Factory”.\textsuperscript{53}

“Killing” shows eight speeding “beater boats,” or small and streamlined vessels traditionally manned with two standing harpooners in the front and eight rowers in the back.\textsuperscript{54} [ill. 1.12] The boats surround a whale whose massive head has been trapped by a net. The whale’s body, bloodied and pierced by a number of hand harpoons, breaks the surface of the water with its head and tail, creates decorative foam waves (in keeping with the Japanese woodcut style) and shoots out a pneumatic stream of water and air from its blowhole. The following print, “Flensing,” so named after the technical practice of stripping away of whale blubber with various implements, finds the hunters having returned to shore with their catch resting dead on the beach next to two other recently

\textsuperscript{52} Elizabeth Ingalls, Whaling prints in the Francis B. Lothrop Collection (Salem, Mass.: Peabody Museum of Salem, 1987), 181.

\textsuperscript{53} This set of woodblock prints show the different phases of the traditional hunting process and are named after them in succession: “Chasing,” “Killing,” “Towing,” “Flensing,” and “Oil Factory.”

\textsuperscript{54} Ingalls, 183.
caught specimen. [ill. 1.13] Workers man turnstiles installed on the beach, coiling the wires necessary to hoist the marine bodies in place. As for the whales, they are at various stages of being flensed: one in the middle has only begun to be processed and remains largely intact on the water’s edge; one on the left has had its dorsal and pectoral fins shaved and half of its body flayed open; and one on the right barely resemble a whale anymore, appearing as an abstracted red mass with nary a stitch of skin or fat. In each case, the dark skin is peeled away like a large fruit by men standing atop the massive carcasses.

Towards the top of the “Flensing” print are buildings in which the workers carry the totality of parts from the disassembled whales. The last print shown in the sequence, “Oil Factory,” is a look inside these buildings. [ill. 1.14] Traditionally, each part of the animal was used for goods, and each building would be responsible for the production of one of these goods – as the narrator lists sardonically: “food products, printing ink, dyes, fats, perfumes, souvenirs from Tokyo.” What is striking about this scene is that it already points towards the efficient organization of an industrial Fordist assembly line. It is not by accident that Marker wryly alludes to “transistors” as the only product not pulled out of the whale. The camera initially shows the print portion by portion: first, the long line of seated workers processing the cuts of whale fat into wooden barrels; second, the refining of this fat atop wood-burning fires; and third, the initial job of slicing off the whale skin from its fatty flesh, with massive piles of cubed whale pieces looking more like coconut sections with their hard black exteriors and a clean white interiors. These

55 Marker and Ruspoli. [3:41]
56 Recall that Ford was inspired by the organized disassembly of animals, specifically, the cattle in the Chicago Slaughterhouses. See Siegfried Giedion, Mechanization Takes Command, A Contribution to Anonymous History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948).
flaps of flesh will return for the very final shot of *Vive la baleine!*, but already here they point to the animal as a potential readymade object—as a life form wholly abstracted and dispossessed from its singular, bodily integrity turned into an interchangeable commodity.\(^57\)

Following this attention given to the early history of Japanese whaling, *Vive la baleine!* turns to the role played by the European colonial powers beginning in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Like Japan, Holland whaled for oil. The female narrator underscores how its nautical endeavors involved a value-added show of cultural capital, distinction, and “glory” in the form of paintings:

Do you know that the rich ship owners brought painters on to their boats to capture live the hunting scenes that would later decorate their living rooms? There your image survives, whales, in the unchanging light of the emerging bourgeoisie; this eternal light they invented as the tangible sign of eternity they took for granted.\(^58\)

Before the mobility of photography and its indexical capacity for representation, the whale hunt was first inscribed by drawing and painting via Western norms of pictorial representation: seascapes, maritime naturalism, above all an aesthetics of the sublime. The film shows a number of examples. [ill. 1.15] Invariably in this genre, massive ships are stationed in cold northern waters as icebergs float by. With Dutch national flags flying atop each mast, these large-scale whaling ships symbolize control over the elements, which are depicted as sublime yet demonstrably navigable. Unlike the Japanese

\(^{57}\) Marker first signals his critique of animals as industrial commodities in his *Lettres de siberie* (1957); specifically, the quasi-Situationist and parodic commercial break in the film advertising “horn flakes,” a breakfast cereal made from reindeers.

\(^{58}\) Marker and Ruspoli. [4:25]
visual examples, the whales are diminutive in comparison to the scale of human marine activity. The mother ships dwarf the animal, who is outnumbered and often seen floating in a pool of its own blood with two perfectly geometric arcs of air and water streaming upward from its blowholes. The more examples Marker shows onscreen, the more these painterly tropes coalesce into an eco-colonialist vision of the whale and its environment.

What these Dutch examples all serve to show is that the original moment of depicting whaling was already coupled with (and mediated by) certain ways of seeing the outside, the natural, and the animal (not only the whale, but also polar bears or seals in various states of capture). The pictorial “truth” of these scenes was also mediated from the start by a desire to bring images home, to savor their ‘glory,’ and to consolidate the whale’s value-added cultural capital in the form of paintings. It is by adorning the homes of the ‘emerging bourgeoisie,’ the female narrative affirms, that the whales survive in the form of an image. Home is brought to the ocean and the ocean is brought back home. In Peter Sloterdijk’s history of the “terrestrial globalization” of capitalism, in which seafaring exploration plays the pivotal role of world discovery, the German philosopher underscores this becoming-home of the ship as human container. He writes that the figure of the ship “balances out the diametrically opposing strivings towards habitation and adventure. It makes symbiotic relationships possible – and yet it can be experienced like a projectile striking the unheard-of.”\(^59\) This explains the need for sublime imagery that nevertheless cohabits with human navigability and safety in striking distance.\(^60\)


\(^{60}\) This bringing home of painted scenes mediating a foreign natural world also played a role in the formation of a picture of a humanist world. In this sense, the history Marker traces in *Vive la baleine!* of global oceanic mobility through the whale hunt also played a role in mobilizing science, knowledge, and the truth-of-nature itself, as the gradual imaging of the world as a result of exploration and capture.
similar way, *Vive la baleine!* chronicles this projection onto the high seas striking a balance between adventure and danger on one side, with control and domestication (in the doubled sense of taming and making-home) on the other.\textsuperscript{51}

Marker’s emphasis on the “unchanging light” of this whale-as-image harkens to an ideology of the whale as a “tangible sign of eternity” and permanence. His narrator draws attention to an encoding process of timelessness at work (and thus naturalization) in such cultural forms of bourgeois representation. This encoding process also dissimulates other historical possibilities in relation to the whale, and inculcates an unquestioned domination of nature as a space of human sovereignty. It performs this in three related ways: in the normalization of the hunt and its necessary role in the economic well-being of the nation; in the naturalness of the whale’s subordinate role in these human affairs – most especially, in the visual inuring of its watery death and suffering as only natural; and, in the broadest sense, in the understanding of nature and the outside as a space to be had, consumed, and conquered as a quasi-right of human history and progress. Emphasizing the painting’s work of making timeless, the narrator describes a feedback loop engendered by images showing the naturalized intersection between nature and economy: “These boats floated forever, this big beached whale was beached forever, and the reign of the merchant bourgeoisie, whether it traded in money or whales, was there forever.”\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{51} Sloterdijk makes this pictorial dimension of global conquest clear as well: “Hence the ‘Age of Discovery’ encompasses the campaign driven along by the pioneers of terrestrial globalization to replace the previous non-images with images, or chimeras with ‘recordings’; consequently, all acquisitions of land, sea and world began with pictures.” Ibid., 96.
\textsuperscript{61} Sloterdijk also reminds us that the term “revenue,” as a general marker of value and profit, has its literal etymological beginnings in the safe “coming home” of ships holding profitable goods, both in the form of raw materials and testimonial images. Ibid., 84.
\textsuperscript{62} Marker and Ruspoli.[4:47]
Vive la baleine!’s economic history of whaling then takes a multi-national turn. Be it Great Britain, Germany, or Russia, each empire “exacted from the whale people a corresponding portion of its power.”63 In quick succession, the camera displays photographs, paintings, and prints focused on these imperial oceanic industries: ports lined up with whaling vessels, docks stacked with a sea of oil barrels, and workers loading the barrels while taking stock and inventory. [ill. 1.16] The focus quickly turns to the Unites States, which the narrator describes as the most imperialist of all (in keeping with Marker’s consistently critical stance towards US foreign policy). For all these nations, the whale is both an object of violence, capture, and death, while also a symbol of power, glory, and bourgeois progress. The animal is physically debased yet conceptually valorized. It is with the whaling industries of the United States in the nineteenth century; however, that this contradictions treatment of the animal is most fully consolidated. Maintaining direct communication with the whales, the narrator stresses this point: “while the Americans reduced you to the status of a commodity on the Stock Exchange, it was an American who would celebrate you as no one had ever before: Herman Melville.”64 The whale became a pure, readymade commodity to be traded and invested, yet it also became the subject of one of the great works of U.S. literature, *Moby Dick; or, the Whale* (1851). This example uncovers a paradoxical and perverse relationship between the human and nonhuman animal—the latter as object of exploitation and subject of fascination for the former. More generally, this co-existence of literary lionization and commodity reduction reveals an incipient schizoid conflict that increases exponentially in late capitalism and its commodification of animal life—a

63 Ibid. [6:00]
64 Ibid. [6:46]
pathological condition Sloterdijk already finds to be operative in an earlier age of
European exploration: “Every ship on the open sea embodies a psychosis that has set sail,
and each is also a real floating capital.”65

_Vive la baleine!_ turns to its final section of present day whaling technology, and
this moment is signaled by a shift in representational medium. For the first time, a filmic
moving image is introduced, ripping through the two-dimensional pictorial world hitherto.
The moving image is a brief glimpse of a long pectoral fin breaking the surface of the
ocean. [ill. 1.17] Up to this point, the film uses only various static media—photography,
printmaking, drawing, and painting—but now the visual inventory becomes time based,
which serves as a jolt to the viewer. Accompanying this visual jolt is another first: the
sound of the whale itself. To the human ear it is a forlorn moaning. One might
characterize this description as anthropomorphizing, i.e. lending human qualities to a
nonhuman entity. However, once certain ethological advances are taken into account, it
can be maintained that a marine mammal also emotes vibrations that link back to an
interior forlorn affect, even if the whale does not have ability to speak the experience
through the word “forlorn” (like Prévert’s caged raccoon who cannot _speak_ ‘confinement’
but can _know_ it experientially). After all, it is during the late 1960s that cognitive
ethology begins to account for marine intelligence, and specifically, whale forms of

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65 Sloterdijk, 83. To further illustrate this psychosis, Marker points out two other obscure (if not
contradictory) dimensions of the whaling industry. Citing the writer Jules Verne, the female narrator
underscores the fact that it was none other than the whale who helped men navigate unknown global
waterways during the age of exploration; in other words, was nonhuman marine agency that played a vital
role in the mapping out of the world. The implication here is that their subsequent industrial massacre is a
historical betrayal, one based on their very own nautical energies and know-how. If animal agency is an
important feature of Marker’s work, so too is the human agency in history that disavows and betrays what
has depended on for success. In a similarly perverse relation between man and whale, the narrator describes
a hypothetical scene of bureaucratic transaction: the whale oil illuminating the lamps at night and inside sea
vessels that plotted the course of the company. In this instance, the very fluids of the animal’s body are
used against itself to further develop and expand the industry that tracks it down in the ocean.
communication and singing.\textsuperscript{66} We can therefore speak of posthumanist affect and the ability to emote bodily interiority in a theriocentric conception of affective states. \textit{Vive la baleine!} offers a reassessment of facile charges of anthropomorphization for any interior state other than the human animal, since emotions like forlornment have never been anthroproprietary.

Another way to describe this crucial moment of the moving image’s sudden intrusion within the static, pictorial archive of \textit{Vive la baleine!} is to say that the film moves from the imaginary (images mediated by the imagination) and the symbolic (narratives mediated by discursive constraints) to the register of the real (for Lacan, that which resides beyond imaginary and symbolic structures mediating the human experience of the world). It performs this both visually and audibly. In terms of the visual, the move is from iconic and mimetic forms of representation coded by human history, knowledge, and desire, to indexical-photographic forms of representation that allow for a (partly) un-coded subject to emerge from the depths of the surface of the image. The pectoral fin both manifests and represents \textit{itself} as it slices through the water, which is then manifested and registered on the filmic apparatus. Unlike painting or drawing, indexical film touches the real in a relationship that echoes the exterior-interior relation of sentient consciousness to its environment—including other forms of sentient life (the real is never represented directly, only its effects/affects). In terms of the audible, the move is

\textsuperscript{66} In 1967 the American biologist and environmentalist Roger Payne (along with Scott McVay) first documented the songs of the humpback whale, which were even released as an LP in 1970; Joan McIntyre’s \textit{Mind in the Waters: A Book to Celebrate the Consciousness of Whales and Dolphins}, a large compiliation of stories, research, and poems on whale intelligence, appeared in 1975; and perhaps in the forefront of the popular imagination, the aquatic films of the French marine biologist Jacques Cousteau in the late sixties into the seventies were crucial in lending cultural visibility to the whale. For a compelling history of the development of scientific knowledge on cetaceans and the attendant cultural changes over their well-being, see D. Graham Burnett, \textit{The Sounding of the Whale: Science & Cetaceans in the Twentieth Century} (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2012).
similarly from a score that mimics and represents the nebulous sounds of the ocean through electronics and prepared pianos, to the indexical registration of the actual sounds of the ocean and its inhabitants on magnetic tape. It is not coincidental that this move is also from non-diegetic to diegetic sound i.e. from exterior sounds that come outside of the image to interior sounds that emanate from what is imaged. In short, when Marker introduces moving indexical images for the first time in the film, the animal arrives with the capacity to represent itself rather than simply being represented in symbolic and imaginary registers across human visual and discursive media.

Here Derrida’s powerful critique of the Cartesian ego as having the proprietary ability to manifest an interior state of speech by saying “I” should enter the discussion. With specific reference to another form of marine animal life, namely, an ink-producing octopod, Derrida posits a nonhuman subject as a gestural and pre-lingual arché-cogito, which is more fundamental than the human speaking Cartesian ego:

I have the impression that I am myself trying to gain – as though wrestling, fishing, or hunting – a sufficient expert of knowledgeable purchase [prise] on what might touch the nervous system of a single animal body. A little like someone who would claim to know which way to take hold of a cuttlefish or octopus, without hurting it too much, and especially without killing it, keeping it at a distance long enough to let it expel its ink. In order to displace its powers without doing anybody too much harm. Its ink or power would here be the “I,” not necessarily the power to say “I” but the ipseity of being able to be or able to do “I,” even before any auto referential utterance in language.67

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This crucial moment of the whale as the ripping forth of the real—in embodiment and voice—is another example of an animal having the power to *show* its “I” or *to do* “I” as the more fundamental existential mode of existing and making exterior impressions through an interior nervous system. Marker’s use of the indexical image as a non-violent form of capture (which he theorized explicitly in *Dromadaires*, discussed below) is such an example of holding an animal at a distance without killing or harming it, yet allowing it to displace its powers and manifest its nonhuman being through an embodied interior “I.” In this sense, every indexical image of the whale in *Vive la baleine!* holds the potential for communicating and manifesting this subjective power via the apparatus of film/photography.

*Vive la baleine!* then turns to the most traumatic moment in its technical whaling history, which, with the introduction of the exploding grenade harpoon, can now be properly called modern. Devoid of irony, the narrator describes this decisive moment:

> It was a gun that morphed the small-scale fishing into industrial extermination aboard factory ships. The exploding harpoon gun was invented in 1860 by the Norwegian Svend Foyn. Intending to humanize the war against whales, he created their atomic bomb.\(^{68}\)

This technological innovation no longer made it necessary to venture out on small beater boats, thereby risking human lives by getting close to the whale, as necessitated by traditional hand harpoons. With the advent of the exploding harpoon gun, which becomes a fixed staple atop massive “floating factory” ships, the killing of the whale becomes mediated by safe distances—in short, the hunt had become fully asymmetric in favor of

\(^{68}\) Marker and Ruspoli. [12:13]
humans.\textsuperscript{69} [ill. 1.18] Foyn’s impulse for human immunity (protecting the hunter in order to “humanize the war against whales”) turns into a form of autoimmunity when his invention leads to the “extermination” of a number of species of whale and ultimately an environmental crisis of shared eco-systems (or the start of the sixth extinction with \textit{anthropos} as its cause).

Once \textit{Vive la baleine!} introduces Foyn’s invention, the film leaves behind all media other than the moving image—no prints, drawings, or paintings—for the simple reason that the desire to inscribe these moments of chase and death becomes historically moot. The efficiency, scale, and removal of any real existential meeting place between man and whale leave no room for “glory” and the usual sublime aesthetics of awe face-to-face with natural forces. All that remains is technological and industrial officiousness. Painting heroic scenes within such a modern context could only be ironic; instead, documentation of industrial whaling practices is culled from eco-activist forms of witnessing and uncovering, or internal company archival footage, and Marker turns to both in these final scenes of \textit{Vive la baleine!}. This archival footage shows massive factory ships many times larger than the earth’s largest animals who are harpooned and towed into the hull through an open door like a great maw. [ill. 1.19] After twisting about in the water and emitting a prodigious amount of blood, the whales slide directly into the factory ship, whereupon they are ready for immediate processing aboard the ship in order to make room for the next. There are no streaming jets of air and water, no beautiful

\textsuperscript{69} The evolution of the exploding harpoon gun is more complicated than Marker accounts for here. Initially, it was held over the shoulder like a hand-held rocket launcher. Later in the nineteenth century, Norwegian wind powered ships were the first to install harpoon guns on deck. Subsequently, other nations followed the model of Foyn’s invention, and by the early twentieth century the exploding grenade harpoon was a staple on the fully modern, steam powered factory ships witnessed at the end of \textit{Vive la baleine!}. For an in depth history of these modern whaling developments, see Richard Ellis, \textit{Men and whales} (New York: Knopf : Distributed by Random House, Inc., 1991).
waves, no peeling away of skin cleanly like fruit, only the living animal represented
indexically on film laying waste to these pictorial conventions—and on a scale that
dwarfs the traditional hunt documented in *Les Hommes de la baleine*.

The Taiyo Fishing Company makes a tacit reappearance in this archival footage.
Recall its corporate gifts to the International Whaling Commission of the Japanese prints
in 1954. Now Marker shows the extent to which these prints depicting pre-modern
Japanese hunting amount to mystification. The company’s identity is given away by
name of the factory ship onscreen: the *Nisshin Maru*. [ill. 1.20] This factory ship was part
of the industrial fleet run by the Taiyo Fishing Company, which the historian Richard
Ellis has described as the largest and most “insatiable” corporate entity in the modern
whaling business. The story of this factory ship, and modern Japanese whaling in
general, is tied to US intervention. Immediately following WWII and the total destruction
of their pre-war whaling factory ships as a result of the war, General Douglas MacArthur
assisted and encouraged Japan to accelerate commercial whaling in order to feed its
people and economy. As Ellis points out, however, “[t]his arrangement was not as
altruistic as it appears on its face; while the Japanese got the meat, the Americans were to
get the whale oil.”

With the introduction of these factory ships and the exploding harpoon, *Vive la
baleine!* offers its second rip through the real. If the first was indexical through image and
sound (a pectoral fin breaking the surface of the water, accompanied whale vocalizations),

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70 Ibid., 452. There were a number of different versions of the *Nisshin Maru*—the first having been built in
1936, with newer ships taking its name and place in the fleet in the following decades and up to the present
day. It proves difficult to pinpoint which version of the ship *Vive la baleine!* depicts, since it was refitted
and renamed a number of times. For a partisan yet thorough account of the different versions of the *Nisshin
Ships,” *Bulletin of the Faculty of Fisheries Hokkaido University* 31, no. 2 (1980).

71 Ellis, 405.
then the second is a material interruption of the representational apparatus of the film itself. Synchronized with the moving image of a sailor firing Foyn’s exploding harpoon at a whale, the film’s non-diegetic sound screeches to a halt. The effect is akin to the sound of a needle scratching the surface of a vinyl record, or a short burst of film stock being rewound. In both cases, the material intrusion interrupts the capacity to emit any mimetic sound. As a direct causal link to the exploding harpoon piercing skin off in the water, a whale scream breaks through from this momentary representational caesura. Far less ambiguous in its directness than the forlorn moaning emitted before, the scream represents another instance of an animal having the power to show its “I” or to do “I” in affective response to its outside surroundings and circumstances. The scream is an indexical trace of embodiment, ambulation, and neuronal function—an affective capacity shared by human viewer and nonhuman viewed via the former’s firsthand knowledge of the fragility of having a body, skin, and nerve endings. As such, the wound not only opens up flesh and blood on screen; it also opens up shared interiority from one mammal to another—albeit through a filmic delay that creates an alliance between a past moment of suffering in the real with a transcoded yet linked real of the moving image.

Immediately following this second irruption of the real, the narrator makes her final, most prophetic statement with industrial scenes of carnage as backdrop. This statement at once deconstructs the opposition of nature and culture, while also auguring theories of the Anthropocene as a geological first in which humanity has become an agent on a planetary scale:

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72 Once more, the effect is a sudden shift from non-diegetic sound (the momentarily suspended soundtrack and narration) to diegetic sound (the screaming of the whale being impaled on-screen).
For centuries men and whales belonged to two enemy camps that confronted one another on neutral ground – nature. Today nature is no longer neutral. The borders have changed. The confrontation occurs between those defending themselves by defending nature and those who, destroying it, destroy themselves. This time, men and whales are in the same camp, and each whale who dies leaves us like a prophecy with an image of our own death.\footnote{Marker and Ruspoli. [14:40]}

These final lines of the film describe a prior conception of “nature” as an eco-Hobbesian meeting place between species, which heretofore have been kept separate from each other on “neutral ground.” Today this natural meeting place has lost its neutrality. It is not simply that one of the species (the human) has over-immunized itself from nature through technological advancements, i.e. that “men” have availed themselves of natural resources for their own ecologically imbalanced human advantage. The reason Marker gives is more posthumanist than this, for as this final prophetic statement makes clear the opposition of nature/culture has become blurred (or revealed as never having been separate). No longer do men and whales face each other discretely on the open seas (as so much of the film’s traditional visual culture would have it). Instead, this postnatural relationship is between “those” who defend themselves/nature and “those” who would destroy others/nature. From the way this final sentence is structured, it is clear that these two “those” do not point to the same kind of subject position. The latter “those” who destroy can only be human(ist), specifically, those on screen committing acts of violence and those off-screen who are complicit. By contrast, the former “those” who defend points to both human and nonhuman subject positions – to those eco-politically-aware
humans “who defend nature” and to the whales who do the same by “protecting themselves.” This second “those” is posthumanist, since it allows for both human and nonhuman animal agency to co-inhabit in solidarity and shared struggle—or in what Vinciane Despret has called agencement or “interagency.”74 This is the full implication of what it means for “men and whales [to be] in the same camp” in shared obligation, suffering, death, and being-in-the-world.

With all non-diegetic sounds falling away, the very last images of Vive la baleine! transmit only the voices of the whale as images of their massive bodies are hoisted inside the front maw of the factory ship (like large warheads being put into place on a military freighter, whose Cold War implications I analyze momentarily). In the very last shot, two Japanese workers shovel a flap of whale skin down a black hole from the deck, presumably into a material stockpile below. [ill. 1.21] This is no clean coconut half, but a quivering piece of detached skin that momentarily hangs at the mouth of the hole in the tensed vibration of its only remaining fibrous and cellular integrity. It is pure abstraction— even a form of abstract art in the original sense of the term, i.e. reducing an impression of the world to its essential quality independent from its original context or natural attachments. It is here where the modern animal is truly found, which in contrast to the ample examples of animals in traditional visual practices—fabulist or naturalist—that are often considered to be simply absent in modernism.75 This also means that the modern animal is necessarily a reified and readymade object: if the Duchampian strategy of the readymade in art is a retaliatory outcome of economic and institutional developments in art and culture (for example, as the technological advancement of a propeller is seen to

74 See Vinciane Despret, "From Secret Agents to Interagency," History and Theory 52, no. 4 (2013).
lay waste to traditional media no longer available to the artist, as Duchamp famously quipped to Brancusi at the Salon de la Locomotion Aérienne in Paris in 1912), then *Vive la baleine!* analogously traces the economic and institutional developments that lay waste not only to traditional forms of media, but also to the living animal subjects of these traditional representations now reducible to manipulable objects.\(^\text{76}\)

The historical backdrop to *Vive la baleine!* concerns a number of ecological advances of the period. In 1968, a seminal publishing event in France was Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962) which became a bestseller as *Printemp silencieux*, an influential work on the industrial pollution of eco-systems. Following this, 1972 saw two additional major events in environmental politics: first, the appearance of the Club of Rome’s commissioned study *The Limits to Growth*, which offered an early and important diagnostic environmental model positing the earth as a finite resource. The study cautioned that economic activities will inevitably have to confront ecological constraints.\(^\text{77}\) The second and more far-reaching event of 1972 was the United Nations Conference on the Environment, convening in Stockholm, which lead to the creation of United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP). This conference was the first international meeting to address environmental issues on a global scale. While the multi-national dialogue of the Stockholm Conference focused on a host of issues—from raising awareness and fighting pollution to the more contentious debate of developing countries having to abide by newfound environmental economic constraints—the well-being of

\(^\text{76}\) This scenario of the animal as readymade, which is only hinted at here but already points to certain paradoxes and logical dissonance inherent to this coupling of “animal” and “readymade,” is discussed in my third chapter.

\(^\text{77}\) There have been numerous updates to this first prognostic in 1972, each time with more dire warnings. See Donella H. Randers Jørgen Meadows Dennis L. Meadows, *The Limits to Growth: The 30-Year Update* (White River Junction, Vt: Chelsea Green Pub. Co., 2004).
wildlife played a considerable role in the proceedings’ mandate. This is especially true for the whale, which was one of the conference’s success stories in calling for a 10-year hunting moratorium. This proposed moratorium would be the first of many to go unheeded, as the updated English version of Vive la baleine! in 2007 confirms, referencing the subsequent 1986 IWC moratorium: “Enthusiastically endorsed by Switzerland and Bolivia, this resolution was clearly ignored by the countries monopolizing industrial fishing, particularly Norway and Japan.” Nevertheless, the international “Save the Whale” movement remains one of the most successful outcomes of this moment of animal activism. A pertinent example is the founding of the French branch of Friends of the Earth—Les Amis de la Terre—in 1971 by the political activist Brice Lalonde; it began publishing the eco-activist journal La Baleine in 1972. Following these seminal events in environmental thought, in 1978, The Universal Declaration of Animal Rights was proclaimed in Paris at the UNESCO headquarters. All these examples serve to show a steady confluence of ecological issues concerning animals, which account for Marker’s polemical Vive la baleine! in 1972, along with the

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78 For an overview of the Stockholm conference and an appraisal of its successes and failures ten years later, see Robin Clarke and Lloyd Timberlake, Stockholm Plus Ten: Promises, Promises?: The Decade Since the 1972 UN Environment Conference (London: International Institute for Environment and Development: [Obtained from Earthscan], 1982).
79 Marker and Ruspoli.
80 In his study on cetacean being, the media theorist John Durham Peters wittily describes the epistemic shift involved with this successful activism: “[w]ithin the course of a decade, from about 1965 to 1975, the dominant conceptions of whales and dolphins changed from long animate barrels of animal feed and lubricants to sea gurus soulfully singing of cosmic peace and harmony, showing humans the higher path of intelligence and coexistence like age-old Yodas.” See “Chapter 2 Of Cetaceans and Ships; or, The Moorings of Our Being” in John Durham Peters, The Marvelous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 69.
industrial changes that had taken place since the earlier, less eco-politically charged *Les Hommes de la baleine* from 1956.

The less historically calculable conjunction between *Vive la baleine!* and environmental thought is its prescience in relation to the Anthropocene. Though originating as early as the 1980s, the term was first officially proposed in 2000 and has been debated ever since. When Marker describes nature as a “neutral ground” on which “men and whales belonged to two enemy camps,” he describes the epoch of the Holocene, a geological epoch of relative calm and stability providing a backdrop for the flourishing of ecosystems on one side, and human societies on the other. When he then proclaims that today “nature is no longer neutral”—that now the two camps are represented by “those [who defend] themselves by defending nature and those who, destroying it, destroy themselves”—Marker posits to an understanding of nature as now affected by human agency with the capacity to harm the environment (and themselves in the process). This loss of nature as a neutral meeting place is also the end of the classical definition of “culture,” which is commonly defined as the stepping forth from nature/animality through manipulation and technics. Now culture is contingent on and embedded within a nature that subsumes, monitors, and is thoroughly imbricated with culture. This is the outcome of today’s discourse on the Anthropocene, which Marker presciently points out

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83 The term was coined by the ecologist Eugene F. Stoermer and the atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen. The Anthropocene discourse claims that the epoch of the Holocene has been supplanted by a new epoch in which, for the first time, human agency has become a factor on a geological scale (the current scientific consensus finds the advent of the Anthropocene in the industrial revolution and its exponential influence on technological progress and the consumption of natural resources). As the environmental sociologist Bronislaw Szerszynski explains, evidence for the Anthropocene can be found along four different geophysical “signals”: the “lithostratigraphic signal” (novel rock formations), the “chemostratigraphic signal” (the accumulation of chemical pollution), the “biostratigraphic signal” (altered biological ecosystems), and the “stratigraphic signal” (rise in sea levels). See Bronislaw Szerszynski, "The End of the End of Nature: The Anthropocene and the Fate of the Human," *Oxford Lit Review* *Oxford Literary Review* 34, no. 2 (2012).
in 1972. Living in the Anthropocene also means that, in turn, ecological constraints affect human activity, not to mention nonhuman activity, in an environmental feedback loop. Nature is no longer on the other side of culture and human history, but is inserted at the heart of culture itself as its very supplement and foundation. More recently, the term “Capitalocene” has been offered as a nominal corrective to the Anthropocene; rather than positing the collective hubris of all humanity as a detrimental geological force, the Capitalocene discourse homes in specifically on those involved in the rapacious resource grabs of capitalism.84 Since Vive la baleine! is, in part, a history of capital on the high seas, describing the film as an indictment of the Capitalocene is equally fitting.

If “each whale who dies leaves us like a prophecy with an image of our own death,” then the whale can be seen as a biostratigraphic signal of the Anthropocene/Capitalocene in which the technological and industrial immunitary supplements of man harnessed in relation to the world has taken a turn for the autoimmune. These final lines serve to show that today the ecological entanglements and complicities between human and nonhuman species can lead to a form of auto-destruction in which destroying the other is tantamount to destroying oneself. This entanglement of wellbeing also maps onto the Cold War logic of mutually assured destruction. Recall in Vive la baleine! that Foyn’s exploding grenade harpoon is described as the whales’ very own “atomic bomb.” Recall as well the massive whale bodies being hoisted inside the front maw of the factory ships, which give them the uncanny appearance of large warheads being held in place on a military freighter. [ill. 1.22] As a figure of mutual destruction, the whale-turned-warhead would both metaphorically harbor Cold War doom, while also metonymically point to

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ecological catastrophe as a really existing irreplaceable body in eco-system wellbeing. It is here that Vive la baleine! should be understood as a companion piece to Marker’s Le Jetée. The setting of La Jetée is a post-apocalyptic Earth that has become unlivable after nuclear fallout. Beneath the Louvre, German scientists use prisoners as guinea pigs for a time travel experiment that, it is hoped, will allow communication with a superior race of humans in the future for assistance. During the time travels of the protagonist (the only prisoner to survive the stress of these experiments), living animals recur as biostratigraphic signals of ecological health of an idyllic past, as do the preserved animals in the extended scenes in the natural history museum. [ill. 1.23] While these pre-historical animals are privileged figures of ancestrality from a pre-apocalyptic era in La Jetée, the whales in Vive la baleine! are privileged figures of an impending post-apocalyptic ecological scenario, whereby they will become (along with humans who share planetary space) figures of ancestrality themselves.

Albeit from different directions, La Jetée and Vive la baleine! both end with the harbinger “images of our own death” and ultimately raise the question of what can only be the darkest version of posthistory—namely, a future of mass planetary extinction. This returns us to the discussion of posthistory that began this chapter. In relation to Vive la baleine!, both versions of posthistory I discussed at the head of this chapter are at work. If a humanist posthistory describes man-animal as simply content in perpetual art, love, and play, this figure stands in for the oblivious, happy consumer of postwar society. Far from reaching harmony with nature, the social history of this figure is the very basis for the endless consumption of a finite planet. He turns out to be the detrivore of the

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85 Alter’s account is that while La Jetée is “evidently a product of the cold war raging in the early 1960s,” the devastated images of Paris (and the fact that the doctors speak German) recall the neo-realist films of Wolfgang Staudte, Günther Lamprecht, and Roberto Rosellini. Alter, 93.
Anthropocene/Capitalocene. On the other hand, a *posthumanist* posthistory entails a social landscape of human and nonhuman animals in mutual ethical and ecological recognition, wherein the humanist conception of the debased animal is relegated to the dustbin of ideas. In *Vive la baleine!*, the humanist lineage of posthistory is reflected in the technological efficiency of the whale hunt and the human agent as insatiable consumer of marine life. The whale is relegated to a mere object within industrial and economic forms of thought limited to material and causal concerns. As *Vive la baleine!‘s* whaling history moves forward in time, the preoccupation is how man captures and reifies the whale through industry, rather than the more fundamental why and its implications for the whale and the environment. In its tracing of a technical history, the hunt becomes increasingly pre-programmed, in the sense that little is left to chance. By the time of the floating factory ships, their only inhibitions come from international laws and moratoriums, which are often ignored, or from quotas that are settled by the ecological pre-programming of natural resources.

It is also helpful to return once more to Sloterdijk’s history of terrestrial globalization. The history and eventual posthistory traced by *Vive la baleine!* is a perfect example of the process of the globalization of capitalism, which began with the oceanic age of exploration and represents the historical progression of a “crime that can only be committed once.” Sloterdijk’s view of posthistory is that terrestrial globalization is a historical event that comes to an end once all geographic powers have settled into their modern formations; once this happens, following the two world wars, Sloterdijk describes a move towards a subsequent temporality as the “added time” of posthistory.

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86 Sloterdijk, 119.
All that remains is a de-politicized economic landscape of regulation and protectionism, and the posthistorical “turn of the world system towards authoritarian capitalism.” In short, all that remains is the efficiency of economic considerations, which in the case of *Vive la baleine!* usurp all posthistorical urgings of moratoriums, quotas, and divergence from paths not already pre-programmed in the world system of marine exploitation. This is why modern industrial forms of whaling have no need for conventional media and art making; they hold neither glory, discovery, nor progress, but only the efficient execution of a pre-existing system that exploits through a conception of the animal as endlessly commodifiable.

1.5 Nonhuman Mortality and the Indexical Image

Mortality hangs over *Vive la baleine!* The precarious life and existence of the whale at the hands of advanced industrial techniques is explored in relation to the animal qua animal (in its capacity to scream, feel pain, and experience dying) but also in relation to the animal qua ecology (as an environmental marker in which humanist auto-destruction is complicit). This preoccupation with animal death is not limited to *Vive la baleine!*, even if this film is without a doubt Marker’s most directly eco-political work. In fact, scenes of dying animals recur throughout Marker’s œuvre. Below, I briefly discuss three of the more notable instances of animal death in his work, and their relationship to Marker’s theory of the photographic and indexical image, which is itself colored by hunting and death.

In one of Marker’s earliest films, *Les Statues meurent aussi* (1952), co-directed with Alain Resnais as a critical denunciation of French colonialism and its Afrophile

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87 Ibid., 166.
tendencies, the camera shows the moment of death of a large gorilla. Visibly disemboweled, the primate falls flat on its back and hits the ground in a lifeless heap with lower organs exposed. [ill. 1.24] The inclusion of this scene in Les Statues meurent aussi inspects the role of death in African visual culture, but also goes deeper by integrating the experience of animal death as access to death itself. Historically, from Descartes to Heidegger, death has been understood as something inaccessible to animals; at most, nonhuman life can only perish or expire. Here, however, the animal is presented directly as dying. The film unequivocally shows the affinities between the human and nonhuman animal entailed by this scene: following the gorilla’s lifeless collapse, the camera zooms in on a human hand prying open the dead primate’s hand. [ill. 1.25] This meeting of human and nonhuman hands shows the morphological similarities between the two – fingers, nails, palms, and creases in skin. Over this shot, the narrator declares: “Here is the death of an animal. Where did the energy that once inhabited this hand go? It is now free, it roams, it will torment the living until we gather it in its ancient appearance.” The death of this gorilla is thus understood as offering an example of the passing away of an interior force. Following this declaration, the film montage shifts quickly from the image of the dead gorilla’s face to the image of a gorilla face sculpted in stone. This is the “ancient appearance” that provides distance and dissimulation from reality. It is as if, to deal with the trauma of death (which here can only be understood as a shared passage for human and nonhuman life), the animal has to be reified, distantiated, and encased in a medium. In the literature on Marker, his critique of the impulse for distance through image making and the cultural death of African objects via Western museum display has

been well accounted for. What I want to underscore here is the privileged moment of animal death as a point of access to death itself, which offers the human a glimpse of her own fate through the fate of a nonhuman animal other.

In *Sans Soleil* (1983), Marker uses a similar tactic of stark contrasts in what is possibly his most violent scene of animal death. In one of its many observations of Japanese society, the film documents a ceremony of mourning at the Ueno Zoo for all the animals that died that year. Like *Vive la baleine!*, the film’s narrator is female; in this instance she reads the travel letters by one Sandor Krasna, a pseudonym of Marker himself. When describing this ceremony, Krasna is “pleased that the same chrysanthemums appeared in funerals for men and for animals.” She notes the Japanese mentality towards death differs from that of the West (in this same scene, we are told that the recent death of a Panda is more widely mourned than the concurrent death of the prime minister). In accounting for this difference, Krasna quotes an unnamed Japanese source: “The partition that separates life from death does not appear so thick to us as it does to a Westerner.” As with *Vive la baleine!’s preoccupation with blurred human/animal boundaries, here Marker focuses on the social process of mourning as blurring the lines between human and nonhuman death. Over moving images of children laying out flowers during the ceremony, Marker finds their disposition towards death as one of simple curiosity, “as if they were trying – in order to understand the death of the animal – to stare through the partition” separating life from death. As with the gorilla in *Les Statues meurent aussi*, Marker presents animal death as the point of access for trying to understand death itself.

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89 See Alter, 57-61.
Immediately following this scene at the Ueno zoo, as if to lift this partition, or at least make it less “thick,” Sans Soleil turns to moving images of a giraffe being hunted down in the African wild. The animal is shot multiple times as it attempts to flee. [ill. 1.26] Still standing but mortally wounded by bullets through its long neck, vivid jets of red blood spew from either side. Eventually no longer able to stand, its tall and slender body falls into the grass. The camera moves close and pans out from the giraffe’s face lying still and motionless; although it appears that the animal is finally dead, the giraffe suddenly jerks once more in futile resistance. From close range, we see the hunter unload one last bullet into the giraffe’s brain. Buzzards follow and circle down to make their own work of the body, pecking out its large black eyes first. This scene is easily one of the most graphic moments in Marker’s work. It is important to note that unlike the preceding scene of mourning at the Ueno zoo, the giraffe’s death is presented devoid of narration. To a certain degree, there is a snuff-film quality in witnessing this moment of death—one from which Marker almost certainly sought to distance himself by not speaking over it through narration. The silence during this sequence also underscores the shocking disparity between this violent moment and the more serene and ceremonial mood of animal mourning just moments before in the Ueno Zoo. The chrysanthemums that serve to mourn a dead panda reappear just after the safari kill sequence, to further emphasize the cognitively dissonant treatment of one species as opposed to another.

Another key moment of animal death in Marker’s work comes at the end of his extended film on the global demise of leftist politics in the 1970s, Le fond de l’air est rouge (1977). Marker gives the animal a privileged place in this film as the last body in motion: the final scene shows wolves being shot down in an open field from a helicopter.
Both bullets and footage are shot from this vehicle, and the latter derives from a military exercise testing out new weaponry on a living, moving target. In mid-stride on their death runs, the wolves look up at the helicopters. These are moments of recognition: the barking wolf coming face-to-face with a flying object that seems to threaten her bodily integrity. In a split second, the wolves’ four-legged velocity is abruptly interrupted in a plume of smoke as they splay out on the ground in death spasms. Like the giraffe in Sans Soleil, these ballistic scenes of animal death are graphic. Moreover, considering the film’s exhaustive documentation of the enervation of leftist global politics in the 1970s, the death of the wolves at the end of Le fond de l’air est rouge takes on a certain symbolic function (though as I explain in a moment, they are never simply symbolic). In the sense in which Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari articulate “becoming-animal” three years later in Milles Plateaux (1980), the wolf serves as a figurative surrogate for the revolutionary pack that striates the normative socio-political climate, which now bears down on it with full military force. As is often the case in Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of “becoming-animal,” the dog represents servile domesticity, while the wolf represents wild revolutionary transgression.

While it is certainly true that these wolves function symbolically, if one is attentive to Marker’s ethological impulses, it would be interpretatively premature to leave it at that. This final scene in Le fond de l’air est rouge interests Marker not only for its symbolism, but also for the potential of empathy between a human viewer and a nonhuman subject onscreen (like Guillaume-en-Égypte, the whales, the gorilla, the giraffe, and many more besides). In this sense, there are two distinct deaths involved

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91 It is unclear whether or not Deleuze and Guattari saw Marker’s film. For a critique of Deleuze and Guattari’s “becoming-animal” as inattentive to the really-existing animal as companion species, see Haraway, 27-42.
here: a symbolic death (of leftist politics through the figure of the dying wolf) and a really existing death (of this very wolf indexically captured dying on screen). In her discussion of the gorilla in Les Statues meurent aussi, the film scholar Nora Alter points out a similar couplet in death, namely, between the figurative death of the animal-turned-image (like the painted or drawn whales in Vive la baleine!) and the literal death of the really-existing animal captured by the index: “To film the slaying of an animal doubles the mortification process. On the one hand there is the aesthetic and symbolic death that occurs when life is fixed in filmic images, and on the other there is the literal death captured, replayed, and relived filmically.”92

In addition to Alter’s couplet, an additional symbolic death might be introduced, namely, the symbolic death of the animal when it becomes a figurative surrogate for a human position. Or, in other words, of the animal being lost in a parable of “becoming-human.” In general terms, this symbolic death can extend to any animal that is employed as a metaphor, parable, or fable for human qualities as a humanist character or invention. It should be stressed, however, that the animal-as-parable is always secretly facilitated by a steadfast partition between the symbolic animal and the literal animal, albeit one that is never steadfast enough. Why? Because the animal can function only as a symbolic surrogate when it already literally shares certain overlapping human qualities (and vice versa): the ability to be aware of its surroundings, to flee from power, to be tracked down, to have its flesh penetrated and body compromised, to stop breathing and to die. All of these affective states are shared by a majority of both human and nonhuman subject positions, and supplement any analogies made between them. In the present case, the

92 Alter, 59.
wolf can symbolically stand in for the human revolutionary only because there is an embodied overlap in simply being what one is in relation to an outside force – be it in the body of a wolf or a leftist revolutionary. In this way, symbolic and metaphoric projections onto the animal are always predicated on a literal understanding of the human and nonhuman in their shared abilities (for instance, the crow’s cunning as akin to human cunning, the pig’s digestive system as stand-in for human gluttony, the eagle’s surveillance high above as symbol of political control, the sheep’s trusting personality as the long-held metaphor for the docile body, and so on). Possibly all figurative uses of the animal in art history and visual culture are predicated on this disavowed affinity.

Along with the extended scenes of whale death in Vive la baleine!, these three examples of the gorilla, the giraffe, and the wolves serve to show Marker’s attention to animal suffering and death. In each instance, there is a co-existence of two key factors: the blurring of human-animal capacity for suffering and response, and the indexical image as a means of communicating this shared moment of death. Marker’s understanding of the indexical image has a positive dimension. As a melancholic antidote to these actual deaths, the indexical image offers a way for these animals to continue emoting and to eventually make certain claims on subsequent viewers. To elaborate this redemptive understanding of indexical imagery, one must to turn to Si J’avais quatre dromadaires (1966), Marker’s most extended ruminations on the medium of photography. The film is an international photo-travel log narrated by three different voices—one female (Catherine Le Couey) and two male (Pierre Vanek and Nicolas Yumatov)—over photographs taken in various countries: the Soviet Union, Cuba, Chile, Korea, to name a few. The film begins with a quote from Apollinaire’s Le Bestiaire ou Cortège d’Orphée
(1911) – specifically, the lines from his poem “Le Dromadaire,” from which the film gets its title: “With his four dromedaries, Don Pedro d’Alfaroubeira travels the world in admiration. He does what I would like to do, if I had four dromedaries.” 93 Following Apollinaire’s bestiary poem, the film begins by offering its definition of photography, which (in lieu of having four dromedaries) becomes the means of transport to distant places: “Photography is the hunt, it is the instinct of the hunt without the urge to kill. It is the hunt of angles. We track down, we aim, we fire and – bang! Instead of killing, we make an immortal.” 94 Marker’s theory of the photographic and indexical image is thus understood as a non-violent form of intervention and capture.

This theory of the indexical image as a form of non-violent capture, which nevertheless entails the temporal capacity to transmit a past subject into an “eternal” present, precedes by fourteen years Roland Barthes’ Camera Lucida (1980). Barthes’ well-known understanding of photography as an image of living-death is also a non-violent perpetual touching of apparatus and referent:

It is as if the Photography always carries its referent with itself, both affected by the same amorous or funereal immobility, at the very heart of the moving world: they are glued together, limb by limb, like the condemned man and the corpse in

93 “Avec ses quatre dromadaires
Don Pedro d’Alfaroubeira
Courut le monde et l’admira.
Il fit ce que je voudrais faire
Si j’avais quatre dromadaires.”
This poem has a specific typographical layout, and Marker matches the original text by Apollinaire except for the final line, which is excised as a title bleed for this film’s commentary. See Chris Marker, Commentaires 2 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967), 83-5. My emphasis.
94 “Le photo, c’est la chasse, c’est l’instinct de chasse sans l’envie de tuer. C’est la chasse des anges… On traque, on vise, on tire et – clac! Au lieu d’un mort, on fait un éternel.” Ibid., 87.
certain tortures; or even like those pairs of fish (sharks, I think, according to Michelet) which navigate in convoy, as though united by eternal coitus.\footnote{Roland Barthes, 	extit{Camera Lucida Reflections on Photography}, trans., Howard Richard (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), 5-6.}

It is not coincidental that Barthes’s sexualized and amorous analogy incorporates both mammalian and ichthyic metaphors, since they provide both symbolic and literal capacities for touching and contact. Moreover, if “[e]very photograph is a certificate of presence,” then this indexical presence not only has the capacity to stay alive in death, but it can also make certain claims on its viewer.\footnote{Ibid., 87.} Marker and Barthes are equally fascinated by the insistent demands of the photographic gaze and its ability to stare back. This theme of the returned gaze recurs throughout the photo-travels in 	extit{Dromadaires}, as it does at the beginning of 	extit{Camera Lucida}, when Barthes, while looking a photograph of Napoleon’s younger brother, is astonished to see the very “eyes that looked at the Emperor.”\footnote{Ibid., 3.}

These theories of indexical absent-presence are the ontological basis for the theorist Ariella Azoulay’s study 	extit{The Civil Contract of Photography} (2008). Azoulay’s argument—which could equally describe Marker’s in 	extit{Dromadaires}—is that the circulation of indexical imagery participates in the circulation of human rights discourse through its inherent ability to make claims on other humans: “When and where the subject of the photograph is a person who has suffered some form of injury, a viewing of the photograph that reconstructs the photographic situation and allows a reading of the injury inflicted on others becomes a civic skill…”\footnote{Ariella Azoulay, 	extit{The civil contract of photography} (New York; Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books ; Distributed by the MIT Press, 2008), 14}
injury and death, Marker’s work begs for a retroactive expansion of Azoulay’s theory (which remains humanist limiting its concerns to human injuries); we can also extend this ability to make eco-civic claims across the photographic apparatus on behalf of nonhuman bodies as well (even if unknowingly).

In returning to the closing lines of Vive la baleine!, it can now be acknowledged that it is precisely through the photographic image that the whale makes a claim on the viewer—a claim that is entangled with the viewer’s own well-being: “...each whale who dies leaves us like a prophecy with an image of our own death.” The film’s really-existing whale as a body ripping through representation allows for a (partially) un-coded subject to emerge from the depths of the surface of the image. As I have argued, this photographic registration allows the animal to represent herself (if only obliquely and in temporal delay), even if this capacity is unknown to the animal (since, for the most part, animals cannot know their being “I” or doing “I” is being fixed in film): the claims it makes in situ by delimitating its own movements, sounds, and interiority in relation to the outside world, can be communicated post hoc for a civic understanding of photography. This civic mode of photography would thus be posthumanist, in that it considers both human and nonhuman agents in the shared capacity to have harm or injury done to them, and the shared ability to communicate this harm or injury via indexical representation.

1.6 Si J’avais Quatre Dromadaires and Animality as Arché-Culture

Si J’avais quatre dromadaires reflects a theory of photography predicated on nonviolence. It also argues for the animal to be understood as the fundamental precondition for culture, communication, and empathy. At the beginning of the film’s

99 Marker and Ruspoli. [14:40] My emphasis.
second act, the three photo-traveling narrators – Catherine, Pierre, and Nicolas – make their way to Russia. An elephant appears on screen and we are told the photograph is of “Dourov’s corner” in Moscow. As Marker’s online archive Immemory recounts, this “little oasis of animal peace in sixties Moscow” was “founded in the early part of this century by V.I. Dourov, a clown by trade, and the inventor of a gentle method of training that won him the gratitude of cats, elephants, and raccoons.” Pierre calls Dourov a “genius who discovered that the bond between species can be had through trust.” The image shown on screen is that between a young girl and raccoon in a cage together gaining each other’s confidence (not unlike Prévert’s encounter with his raccoon in L’Animal en question, though here from inside the bars). [ill. 1.28] Catherine presumes that the raccoon’s ability to trust humans will allow the animal to enter into the young girl’s family, but Pierre explains instead that their bond only leads to entertainment and spectacle. Immediately following this image is another photograph of a raccoon (or possibly the same raccoon) performing its French namesake on stage for human consumption: standing on hind legs holding a wet piece of clothing over a wash basin, the raton laver (“washing rat”) has learned to wash laundry on stage. [ill. 1.29] This is more complicated than it might seem. The raccoon is learning to perform the misrecognition inscribed in the human etymology of its name. Essentially, it is the “really-existing” animal performing the humanist misunderstanding of the “so-called” animal, while also

100 http://gorgomancy.net/ImmemoryEnglish/index.html Accessed 8/19/16
101 “Dourvo était un génie qui avait découvert que les rapports entre les espèces peuvent passer par la confiance.” Marker, Commentaires 2, 137.
ironically showing its capacity for learned intelligence. Here, once more, Marker emphasizes a certain amount of human betrayal vis-à-vis the animals around him. In what at first blush could serve as a reference to Kojève’s conception of posthistorical animality, this performing raccoon as worker-player leads Pierre to claim that “work has become another form of play.” Over his claim, images of various animals in states of amusement appear onscreen: next to a hobby horse a cat lies on its back; a young horse and then a seal do the same, followed by photographs of human children playing basketball and soccer. [ill. 1.30-1] These examples do not, however, represent the immanent and content figure of animality in a Kojèvian conception of posthistory. Marker is not making a parallel between work and play in order to critique the postwar consumer society of eternal presentness and pleasure. In these scenes, he is genuinely fascinated by the human and nonhuman capacity for play. These photographs may more plausibly serve as a reference to Johan Huizinga’s Homo Ludens (1944), which by this period had already directly influenced the Surrealist Andre Breton and the Situationists Guy Debord and Constant. Much like the early ethological work of Lorenz, Huizinga’s research uncovers the surprising shared capacities of nonhuman agency in human history. The opening lines of Homo Ludens make this clear by giving priority to animal play in the formation of human culture:

Play is older than culture, for culture, however inadequately defined, always presupposes human society, and animals have not waited for man to teach them

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102 Immemory maintains that the “Durov house still exists, but in the form of a circus with caged animals who seem nostalgic about old times. Like other Muscovites – but the animals have good reason.” http://gorgomancy.net/ImmemoryEnglish/index.html. Accessed 8/19/16

103 “Le travaile est devenu une autre façon de jouer.” Marker, Commentaires 2, 137.

their playing. We can safely assert, even, that human civilization has added no essential feature to the general idea of play. Animals play just like Men.\(^{105}\)

There are two important features to stress here: The first is Huizinga’s emphasis on animal “play” as preceding culture, forming one of its bases.\(^{106}\) If culture can be rudimentarily defined as action that “transcends the immediate needs of life and imparts meaning to the action,” as Huizinga does, then animal proclivity for play is always already culture – if not yet human culture. This reading is reinforced by Huizinga’s caveat that culture is always “inadequately defined” as presupposing “human society.” It thus also follows that animal agency can never simply be thought of as purely instinctual or reactively immanent, as the Kojèveian lineage would have it (I return to this below).

Huizinga makes this evident by defining the animal as somewhere between “instinct” and “will”: “If we call the active principle that makes up the essence of play, “instinct”, we explain nothing; if we call it mind or “will” we say too much.”\(^{107}\) In this way, the animal is posited as a liminal figure that is neither pure reactive impulse nor pure responsive mind.\(^{108}\) These observations lead to the second important feature: the entanglement of human-animal. Animals and men converge in their capacity as playful beings – “Animals play just like Men”—and therefore the two cannot be kept in strict separation from each other.


\(^{107}\) Huizinga, 1.

\(^{108}\) Note the similarly liminal position of the “animal-poor-in-the-world” in Heidegger, which posits the animal to be ambiguously placed between stones as “having-no-world” and humans who are “world-forming.” Derrida exploits this ambiguous space that troubles Heidegger’s thinking on the animal. See Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans., Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).
If Marker intersperses both human and nonhuman animals at play in *Dromadaires*, he similarly argues for human-animal convergence in play. However, Marker goes further than Huizinga. Pierre makes certain parallels between the “dressage” or “training” of animals and the development of human children and their socialization. While shuffling through photographs of mothers and children, and in response to Pierre’s discussion of children, animals, and training, Catherine tries to sum up his view in the following way: “So if I understand you correctly, you are for the gentle training of children? You think that through trust we can succeed in forming model washer-citizens [citoyens laveurs] as refined as baby rats [*ratons*]?”¹⁰⁹ In doing so, she herself plays on the French word *ratons laveur* by comparing the trusting raccoon who learns to perform on stage with the formation of the model human citizen.

This approach could be a dangerous one: a cursory reading of this passage might very well find Marker simply endorsing the “total humanization of the animal [that] coincides with a total animalization of man,” as Agamben cautioned. After all, this is an eventuality that Marker had already warned against; towards the end of *Les Statues meurent aussi*, he and Resnais make a clear visual parallel between laboratory mice in various glass jars and the biopolitical power relation between colonizer and colonized.¹¹⁰ Above all, the danger in this “animalization of man” lies in unwittingly promoting the most extreme forms of violence and the traumas that result in order to justify confinement and extermination, which Resnais and Marker document with such directness and force.

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¹⁰⁹ “Donc si je te suis bien, tu es pour le dressage des enfants en douceur? Tu penses que par la confiance on peut obtenir des citoyens laveurs aussi parfait que les ratons?” Marker, *Commentaires* 2, 137.

¹¹⁰ During this sequence in *Les Statues meurent aussi*, Marker claims in critical irony that “Africa is a marvelous laboratory where the good white man dreams up and patiently concocts the good negro, even if a few of the latter get bloody.” “L’Afrique est un merveilleux laboratoire où ce préfabrique patiemment, en dépit de quelques saignées, le type de bon nègre rêve le bon blanc.” Marker, *Commentaires*, 21.
in *Night and Fog* (1955). In fact, this parallel between human subject formation and breeding, training, and domestication continues to be disturbing today (see the controversy and media fallout surrounding Sloterdijk’s “Human Zoo” essay in 2009).111

However, Marker does not use the figure of the animal as a trope of debasement in *Dromadaires*. Instead, he disturbs this humanist trope all together. In order to do so, he employs an oppositional set of laws that are operative throughout the film: the laws of *le Château* and those of *le Jardin* (the “Castle” and the “Garden”). The very structure of the film operates through this binary, with the “castle” as its first act and the “garden” as its second. It is crucial to understand how Marker defines these terms, and ultimately how they side step the humanist separation of both culture and nature, and man and animal. Nora Alter defines this binary as follows: “The [castle] stands for those structures of power that exclude the disenfranchised poor; the [garden] represents the utopian space where various possibilities of social justice can be imagined.”112 Marker’s choice of “castle” is probably a reference to Franz Kafka’s 1926 novel of the same name, the literary epitome of indiscriminate power over the less powerful. In the final moments of *Dromadaires*’s first act, Catherine offers a description of this blind and silent political force over photographs of children of various nationalities and ethnicities in the street: “We live in the castle. There is worse than tyranny, there is silence. The distance between those who have power and those who do not. The impossibility of communication. The

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111 For the original speech, see Peter Sloterdijk, "Rules for the Human Zoo: a Response to the Letter on Humanism," *Environment and Planning D: Society & Space* 27, no. 1 (2009). For a discussion of the controversy that played out in the media (largely having to do with Sloterdijk’s use of the words “breeding” and “selection”), see Peter Sloterdijk and Hans-Jürgen Heinrichs, *Neither Sun Nor Death*, trans., Steve Corcoran (Cambridge, Mass; London: Semiotext(e), 2011), 45-86.

112 Alter, 100.
only boundary separating species. This is the castle. The poor live under its shadow.”113 It is important to note here that nothing about her description of the castle limits it to relations of human power or social inequality.114 A number of moments in the film make it clear that animals are also implicated by this indiscriminate power precluding any communication with it, which serves as the “only boundary separating species.”115

In contrast to the incommunicative, indiscriminate, and confining power of the “castle,” the “garden” represents the opening of communication between the more and less powerful, which admits relations between humans and animals (as the many examples at the beginning of the second act serve to attest). In one of the few instances of a film scholar underscoring the human-animal entanglement implied here, Sarah Cooper defines this side of Marker’s binary as a model place of anthrozoological conviviality, “in which animals and humans, especially children, build a relation of trust with each other.”116 It is crucial to note that in the discussion above over the issue of dressage or “training” in animals and children, with its _ratons laveur_ as model citizen, the narrators

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113 “Nous vivons dans le Château. Il ya pire que le tyrannie, il y a la silence. La distance entre ceux qui ont le pouvoir et ceux qui ne l’ont pas. L’impossibilité de communiquer. La seule frontière des races. C’est le Château. Les pauvres vivres à son ombre.” Marker, _Commentaires 2_, 133.

114 While the first act of _Dromadaires_ is predominately focused on the human struggle in relation to this biopolitical castle, Marker also makes room for the representation of animal subordination under its power. The photo-travelers find themselves at the “Exposition industrielle” in Moscow, with its Soviet space program displays, and in the “Musée de l’air à Meudon,” with its own technological displays as the French cold war counterpoint. Rather than highlighting technological advancements in space travel, Marker focuses on the curatorial presentation of animals and statues that replicate the nonhuman role in this history: we see an owl next to a small model of a lander, and a number of astronaut dogs made of plaster sitting obediently inside their capsules. In their history as nonhuman participants turned sacrificial test subjects, they are deemed similar enough to the human in the hopes of giving the latter usable information about space flight (not unlike the whales’ leading role in the discovery of global waterways during the age of exploration). Coming on the heels of these scenes are images from a marché des animaux, again in Moscow, showing various animals being bought and sold at market. As the camera dwells on the confinement and sale of various animals – from dogs, rabbits, turtles and fish, Catherine asks her fellow narrators: “Is this where the cosmonauts buy their dogs?” Ibid.

115 After all, in contrast to English, which holds the terms “race” and “species” in strict separation, the French terms for “race” and “species” are irrevocably conjoined: “espèce” and “race” can be used to designate both different human races and nonhuman species.

116 Sarah Cooper, _Chris Marker_ (Manchester; New York; New York: Manchester University Press; Distributed exclusively in the USA by Palgrave, 2008), 63.
only agree by taking recourse to this terminology of the castle and garden. In response to Catherine’s query “if I understand you correctly, you are for the gentle training of children?,” Pierre promptly changes the terms of the discussion. He frames the issue according to these more fundamental laws of the castle/garden, which always already implicate both humans and animals: “I think we saw our own legs off with the law of the Jungle, and that there is also a law of the Garden. The Jungle is the Castle of the animals, but their garden…” Here his words cut off, as Catherine interrupts him in order to complete his sentence in agreement: “…could equally serve us as a model, right?”

In this way, the harmonious relations between humans, animals, and children are the natural outcome of the garden. This is Marker at his most utopian: In opposition to the indiscriminate violence and power of the castle (for humans) or of the jungle (for animals), there is the political and cultural space of the garden that supplies them both with immunity and protection from their respective domains of violence and power.

Recalling Huizinga’s definition of culture as action that “transcends the immediate needs of life and imparts meaning to the action,” here the opposition of nature and culture is completely scrambled, for human and nonhuman animals are implicated on both sides of the equation: they are entangled in the violent laws of the castle/jungle as well as the shared, ameliorative laws of the garden. Therefore, inherent to this conception of culture-as-garden, the terms of the debate shift to include all earthlings on both sides (much like the entangled ecological scenario emphasized at the end of Vive la baleine!). In other words, this garden, which is described as a space that can serve as a “model” and as something to be discovered, necessarily admits the posthumanist animal. If the

117 “Je pense qu’on nous scie les pieds avec le loi de la Jungle, et qu’il y a aussi la loi du Jardin. La Jungle est le Chateaus des bêtes, mais leur jardin……pourrait également nous servir de modèle, c’est ça?” Marker, Commentaires 2, 139.
posthumanist modality of posthistory understands culture as not intrinsically human, but as a process of immunization from the precariousness of existence that both human and nonhuman agents participate, then *Dromadaires*, just like *Vive la baleine!*, argues for a definition of culture as a potential space of protection from the harmful forces that entangle human well-being with nonhuman animal well-being.

The visual dimension of the film makes the possibility of a posthumanist garden clear. Over this discussion of the castle/jungle/garden, the film toggles back and forth between photographs of children smiling directly at the camera and photographs of animals in various states of rest or play, themselves often addressing the camera.\footnote{118} Included among these images of children and animals are photographs of advertisements dealing with the integration of animals within human society and signage that already makes room for them in an urban setting: a billboard for the Provence town of Marnas as the “First village for bêtes heureuse (or “happy animals”), a sign for the “Ligue Française pour la protection des oiseaux – Refuge pour les oiseaux – Loi du 3 Mai 1844,” which offers legal protection to bird nests, and a street advertisement for veterinary services in Havana, Cuba. [ill. 1.32-4] Here the emphasize is on the garden as something that, in part, may have already arrived.

Through these photographs of human and animal play, along with the preliminary integration of the nonhuman into human law and cultural refuge, Marker demonstrates what the human always already shares with his other in animal. As I have argued, this

\footnote{118 These include: a seal bobbing in the water, a lioness on her back looking through cage bars, two groundhogs standing on their hind legs, a weasel cleaning herself, two squirrels perched on opposite sides of a tree trunk, a muzzled German Shepherd, a rabbit being fed food or medicine from a dropper, two ponies and then a reindeer being pet by young girls, a white companion cat in the arms of a child and lastly, a boy dragging his now dead cat on a string through the street (as if to emphasize that the garden is still yet to come).}
proposes a conception of the posthumanist animal newly attentive to its really-existing situatedness, moving beyond the humanist animal as metaphor for stupidity or degradation. And again, in a posthistory where the posthumanist animal comes to be revealed, the “animal” or “animality” is no longer automatically a bad thing, but provides the very basis for what makes living, breathing, thinking – and in this case, the cultural inclination for play and learning—theriocentrically unique to human and (many) nonhuman animals.

This posthumanist scenario in which both human and nonhuman animals share cultured well-being-in-the-world runs even deeper in the Dromadaires’s three-minute coda. In a sense, Marker concludes this work with what could be described as the arché-animal form of communication and culture. The coda begins with an indecipherable mix of people talking. Different languages softly collide in either murmurs or quotidian volumes in confusion and non-sense. Their overlap and mixing largely negates our ability to understand their meanings. One of these voices then begins to lower in pitch and speed, as if the audio track is being manipulated into lower frequencies; this voice, which happens to be male, eventually comes to a slurring halt. From the subsiding mix of this speech, a new voice begins to roil – namely, that of a primate, possibly a chimpanzee. Gradually, this non-human voice gets more and more agitated. What begins as a few cautious sounds develops into full-blown yelling and screaming. Although the urgency in this nonhuman voice makes it possibly more affective than the mélange of human voices (the chimpanzee could equally be overjoyed at something or in the throes of pain),

119 Though it is unclear where Marker read Derrida’s breakthrough works of 1967 (Of Grammatology, Writing and Difference, and Speech and Phenomena) I propose keeping in mind the latter’s concurrent theorization of arché-writing and the trace as pertinent to the former’s treatment of arché-communication in Dromadaires. Both go beyond logos-as-full-speech reducible and limited to human consciousness.
neither the confusion of speech nor the emotive cries of the animal give the viewer any secure sense or meaning. They both attest to a living interiority, but discerning its qualities proves difficult.

Over this succession of human and nonhuman voices, Marker shows various views of Parisian streets and visual culture. In rhythm with the chimp’s exclamations, the film lingers on various pasted paper advertisements from commodity culture or political propaganda. In one case, a suited portrait of what appears to be President De Gaulle has his face violently scratched out. In another, a tear rips the image of Muhammad Ali up his right cheek and through his nose. In these instances, it is difficult to locate exactly the anonymous décollagist’s specific intentions. In certain other instances, however, the pasted paper is defaced in ways that seem more purposeful: in one example, an advertisement showing the torso of a female model has been torn away to reveal the words *au profit* (“for profit”) underneath; in another, a similar model’s face is defaced revealing the words *l’agression Américaine, Agissons dans l’union* (“American aggression, let us react in unity”); in yet another, which is for a travel agency or vacation destination, a smiling woman’s eyes have been carved out, ironically altering the meaning below the image in the advertisement urging the public to *voir et connaitre* (“see and know”). [ill. 1.35-7] In these instances, the anonymous intention (or Marker’s noticing of their coincidental meanings, should they be chance) is more or less clear. They are a public send up of political power and commodity culture, which the Nouveaux Réalistes *décollagistes*, such as Raymond Hains and Jacques Villeglé, had begun appropriating a decade beforehand.\(^{120}\)

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\(^{120}\) See Hannah Feldman, "Of the Public Born: Raymond Hains and *La France déchirée*", *October* 1, no. 108 (2004).
Marker wants the viewer to remain attentive to the difference between the voice on the one hand, human or nonhuman, and the indexical traces of an anonymous public, on the other. While the superimposed voices only lead to confusion, the visual traces that intervene in commodity or political culture seem to betray more secure intentions. It is as if Marker is arguing that the trace is more secure in meaning than the voice, even though, in contrast to the voice, the trace is inherently predicated on an absent conscious embodiment (much like the photographic and indexical image). The trace is also underscored in Marker’s choice of including city walls defaced by writing itself in the very next sequence of images. These are Brassaï-like photographs of graffiti with innumerable scratches, and two scrawled walls in particular that grab the attention of the photo-travelers: On one wall is written simply and despondently, *j’aime personne* (“I love no one”). On another, one or more anonymous multi-lingual writers have written *la vie est moche* (“life is ugly”) in French, German, and Swedish. In noticing these somber scrawls, Nicolas bemoans that “we are now a bit far from the garden.” In response, Pierre reassures him that “what is important is not that it is far away, but that it exists. And that it exists along the most irrefutable part of ourselves, *our animal side*.”

Over this assertion that the “most irrefutable part of ourselves” is our animality, the film shifts from its urban visual culture to idyllic photographs of human and nonhuman animals in various states of conviviality: a man and his large white dog companion in a field, a young horse nursing, another image of a horse’s head and mane in mid-stride, two smiling monkeys leaning on each other through a wire cage, a field of sheep, and then two ground hogs embracing each other. Interspersed with these images

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121 Marker, *Commentaires* 2, 165. My emphasis.
are photographs of humans holding hands, arms over shoulders, or being equally tender and affectionate towards each other. From these images of shared conviviality, Pierre suggests that this irrefutable part of ourselves as shared animality amounts to the zero-degree gesture of communication and empathy that can develop in the garden: “It is undeniable that the Law of the Garden exists, and it expresses itself in very simple gestures, in the *most* simple of gestures.”\(^{122}\) Be it gestures of human or nonhuman affection, they are the “most irrefutable” and the most simple, which encompass all forms of life with the capacity to perform them. In this way, Marker points to an interiority of camaraderie and empathy that is shared between human and nonhuman animals.

Following Pierre’s claim of irrefutably simple gestures, *Dromadaïres* ends with the observation of an even more entangled scenario between humans and animals. This is similar to *Vive la baleine!’*s closing claim of human-animal bonds. In this instance, however, it is not an image of shared ecological well-being, but animality as the arché-culture and gestural life that is always already within the human:

> It is true, when we look around, there is horror, there is madness, there are monsters…but there is always already…within us, beside ourselves, thanks to us, when we have…[grace] that announces the survival of the most loved, for who knows how long?\(^{123}\)

This “survival of the most loved,” which can only be obtained through the laws of the garden, has been established as both human and nonhuman. Additionally, it is presented

\(^{122}\) “L’important n’est pas tellement qu’il soit loin, c’est qu’il existe. Et qu’il existe a traver notre part la plus irrefutable, notre part animale. Ce n’est pas un refuge, c’est la, c’est en nous, c’est aussi vrai que la cruauté, ou la volonté de vivre. Il y a bien un Loi du Jardin, qui s’exprime par des gestes tres simple, par les gestes les plus simples.” Ibid., 167. My emphasis.

\(^{123}\) “C’est vrai que, quand on regarde autour de soi, c’est l’horreur, c’est la folie, c’est les monstres…Mais il y a déjà…à travers de nous, malgré nous, grâce à nous, quand nos avons la…[grace] et qui annonce, pour on ne sait pas quand, la survivance des plus aimés?” Ibid., 168.
here as a moment of grace that serves to protect those from “horror” and “madness.” This shared moment of grace as the survival the “most loved” could be yet another definition for culture itself, entailing a life-saving set of gestures that transcend “the immediate needs of life.” In paraphrasing Huizinga, through these closing scenes of *Dromadaires*, Marker may very well be saying: *animals have not waited for man to teach them their affections.* Such a rewording of Huizinga is made more likely by the very final image of *Dromadaires*, which leaves the viewer with a photograph of an adult monkey caressing the head of a younger monkey in her lap, presumably in kinship, along with a sundry of animal voices off in the distance. [ill. 1.38]

1.7 CONCLUSION

How do we reconcile these final scenes of *Dromadaires*, which bring together the seemingly disparate examples of *décollage* and textual wall graffiti with Marker’s understanding of arché-culture as fundamentally based on human-animal gestures? The answer may be found in realizing that all these examples are predicated on the law of the trace: *décollage*, graffiti, and human-animal gestures are all indexical signs that point to interior intentional states. This conception of interiority has been operative throughout this chapter—from Marker’s video bestiary to the whales in *Vive la baleine!* to these final scenes of *Dromadaires*. It should also be clear that this interiority is never a pure interiority. As any trace structure, it is conditioned by liminality, a porousness of inside to outside, and a form of agency that is always an inter-agency whose possibilities are delimited by intrinsic and extrinsic openings and closures. Here is where Marker is most timely as an ethological artist. Not only do the 1970s represent a paradigmatic shift in ethology—from theories of aggression to a more expansive recognition of emotive
range—but this is also the moment when, largely through Tinbergen’s work, the discipline moved beyond its reductive assumptions of pure behavioral instinct towards an attentiveness to ecological variations that take into account the ways nonhumans adapt in super-instinctual ways; or, as Massumi has brilliantly analyzed, how nonhumans can never adaptive through instinct alone, but must necessarily rely on a creative and improvisational mode of “supernormality” in relation to environmental comfort or stress. In other words, interiority is always a situated form of mark making, to various degrees and effects.

While dated 1966, *Dromadaires* was only released in 1974, two years after *Vive la baleine!*. In both, Marker formulates a posthumanist animal being-in-the-world that forms the very basis for culture, communication, ethics, and ecology. *Vive la baleine!*’s strategies show the really existing whale as having the power to *show* its “I” or *to do* “I,” as the more fundamental existential mode of existing and making exterior impressions through an interior nervous system. Marker’s use of the indexical image as a non-violent form of capture allows the whale to displace its powers and manifest its nonhuman ipseity through an embodied interior “I.” Thus, the indexical image holds the potential for communicating a nonhuman subjective power via the apparatus of the work and its viewers. Similarly, all the photographed animals in *Dromadaires* make claims through the indexical apparatus of photography and film. In their capacity for play, trust, and communication, these animals attest to an arché form of communication through the simplest gestures that signal a complex interiority shared by human and nonhuman alike.

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CHAPTER TWO—POSTHUMANIST EXHIBITIONS: FROM ECOLOGY TO BIOPOLITICS

1.1 THE INHUMANS

Guillaume Apollinaire’s 1913 essay “Pure Painting” contains a line that would have a long life. It runs as follows: “More than anything, artists are men who want to become inhuman.”¹ When this passage is read in its original context, one sees that Apollinaire pits becoming “inhuman” against “the merely animal,” as a potential state of human creativity and transcendence. This transformation into the inhuman is an overcoming of animality that leads to a form of becoming “found nowhere in nature.”²

The inhuman is a superhuman state divorced from the dictates of naturalness and animality, which augurs the transhumanist position, i.e. that futurological conception of the posthuman as overcoming the essential frailty and finitude of the human animal.

Oddly enough (unbeknownst to Apollinaire), his concept of the “inhuman” could serve equally well to define Western humanism’s human tout court, since it too is metaphysical subject position built above and beyond animality – or what Giorgio Agamben has theorized as a historical procession of the “anthropological machine” relentlessly separating human wheat from animal chaff.³ This slippage demonstrates that there is a certain continuity between the humanist and transhumanist subject.

In Apollinaire’s 1911 collection Le Bestiaire ou Cortège d’Orphée, the “inhuman” makes an earlier appearance, though in a way quite different from “Pure Painting.” Le Bestiaire ou Cortège d’Orphée comprises of a number of poems accompanied by woodcut plates by Raoul Dufy, each poem titled after and featuring a different animal. In

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² Ibid.
³ See Agamben.
these poems, Apollinaire’s first conjuring of the inhuman takes the form of an octopus [ill. 2.1]:

Throwing its ink towards the heavens,
Sucking the blood of those it loves
And finding it delicious
This inhuman monster, is none other than myself.4

This meaning of this earlier appearance of the inhuman seems diametrically opposed to its subsequent articulation in 1913. Rather than overcoming animality, this inhuman is a radical embrace of animality as a form that always-already embodies the poet—and, by extension, the human. It is the realization that the animal clings to the human, complicating any immunological transhumanist (or humanist) pretensions to transcend animality. This is the posthumanist version of the inhuman, which does not seek to shed animality like some historico-evolutionary booster rocket, but instead challenges the long history of anthropocentric exceptionalism by demonstrating how human and nonhuman animal beings are inextricably bound. Admittedly, in Apollinaire’s poetic bestiary, this re-internalization of animality remains largely symbolic (in this instance, the bloodthirsty cephalopod becomes a symbol for destructive libidinal energies). Nevertheless, in excavating the ambiguities in Apollinaire’s initial uses of the term—one in 1911, the other in 1913—I point towards the multi-faceted features of the inhuman.

Jean-François Lyotard’s more fully-fledged theory of the inhuman, especially in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time* (1988), also addresses a split conception of the

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4 “Jetant son encre vers les cieux/Suçant le sang de ce qu’il aime/Et le trouvant délicieux/Ce monstre inhumain, c’est moi-même.” Guillaume Apollinaire and Raoul Dufy, *Le Bestiaire ou Cortège d’Orphée* (Paris: Deplanche, 1911), np
inhuman.\(^5\) The art historian Kiff Bamford analyses Lyotard’s “two inhumans”: on the one hand, the inhuman is found in “technoscience where the flesh is replaced,” while on the other, the inhuman is a transgressive state prior to humanist “education and other means of subjectivization.”\(^6\) In other words, the inhuman takes the form of invasive biotechnological supports, which are resisted by that other inhuman, namely, the ontologically pre-human stage of what Lyotard calls the *infans* (sounding like *enfant* or “infant” in French) whose perceptual wonder has something to teach us subsequent to our initiation within humanist culture and history.\(^7\) Although Lyotard would not have employed these terms, one can readily map the transhumanist and posthumanist subject onto this split concept of his inhuman.

Recently, the philosopher Cary Wolfe has more fully theorized the difference between transhumanist and posthumanist thought in order to further disarticulate one from the other. For Wolfe, the human in *transhumanism* “is achieved by escaping or repressing not just its animal origins in nature, the biological, and the evolutionary, but more generally by transcending the bonds of materiality and embodiment altogether.”\(^8\) The purported outcome of the transhumanist position is transferable cognition, which can be supported by various material platforms, transcending the death and perishability


\(^{7}\) One might think Lyotard’s theory of the *infans* would have led him reconsider that other being who becomes dissimulated upon entrance to humanist culture, namely, the animal. While there are passages in his philosophy where he comes close to doing so, he nevertheless pulls back. For an analysis of Lyotard’s relationship to animals, see Cary Wolfe, “In the Shadow of Wittgenstein's Lion: Language, Ethics, and the Question of the Animal,” in *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal*, ed. Cary Wolfe (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 11-19.

\(^{8}\) Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?*, xv.
through bio-technical channels. In contrast to this transhumanist subject, the human in *posthumanism*

forces us to rethink our taken-for-granted modes of human experience, including the normal perceptual modes and affective states of Homo sapiens itself, by recontextualizing them in terms of the entire sensorium of other living beings and their own autopoietic ways of ‘bringing forth a world’—ways that are, since we ourselves are human animals, part of the evolutionary history and behavioral and psychological repertoire of the human itself.⁹

In other words, while transhumanism reinforces a sovereign position well-trodden by humanist histories, a position of control and mastery over nonhumans, posthumanism relinquishes this anthropropriety power. Instead of disavowing what the human shares with the nonhuman animal—from language (which since Derrida cannot be understood as reducible to phonetic *speech*), to empathy, sociability, community, and the nerve-ended delimitation of life worlds—posthumanism embraces the ontological overlaps produced by evolutionary immanence.

If I begin with this serpentine genealogy of the inhuman from Apollinaire to Lyotard, it is not only to contextualize transhumanist and posthumanist thematics as they pertain to the human. I also introduce this history to emphasize the concept’s far-reaching implications for nonhuman animals. After all, the epistemological formation of animality is itself constructed by a humanist history of projections both mythical and scientific (the obsolescence of this humanist history vis-à-vis animals points towards the *postanimal*, something Animal Studies and cognitive ethology is forcing us to address). This

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⁹ Ibid., xxv.
humanist history treats nonhuman animals as both consumable—symbolically and literally—as well as increasingly technical modes of instrumentalization. It is also understood that the anthropological history of hominization—which can be understood as the earliest stage of the human animal distinguishing itself from species peers, as if the inhuman can already be found and overcome here—was unthinkable without nonhuman help of all kinds. This all points to the fact that nonhuman animals are not passive in this history of the human, inhuman, transhumanism, and posthumanism.10

This interlacing of humans, inhumans, and nonhumans is of manifest concern in three exhibitions during the mid-1980s: *De L’animal et du végétal dans l’art Belge contemporain* (1985) at Atelier 340 in Brussels, *Les Immatériaux* (1985) at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and *Animal Art* (1987) at Steirischer Herbst in Graz.11 These three exhibitions augur today’s discourse on transhumanism and posthumanism (in both their possibilities and limitations for art practices). *De l’animal* in Brussels evinces a fledgling posthumanist space where ecological issues are privileged and the humanist subject is de-centered from its sovereign position in both nature and culture.12 In the case of *Les Immatériaux* in Paris, I argue that the exhibition’s transhumanist dimensions posit a biopolitical collapse of the human and nonhuman animal, from which only two futures remain: either an embracing of transhumanism (Lyotard’s bad inhuman of biotechnical invasiveness) or its contestation through posthumanism (Lyotard’s good inhuman as

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10 There are transnonhumans, too: horses and dogs supplemented with gasmasks in war, dogs and primates fitted with astronautical supports for tests in advance of human spaceflight, and all those billions of animals found in factory farms and laboratories today whose very genetic coding has *detourned* their bodies into certain desirable outcomes (at least, for humans). For a history written around the agency of the nonhuman, see Éric Baratay, *Le Point de vue animal Une autre version de l’histoire* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2012).

11 While this study is largely preoccupied with France and Belgium, the ostensible universality of the animal is nevertheless inherently cross-cultural and international. As such, in this more macro-historical chapter my research will allow itself to occasionally cross-national boundaries.

12 And as the exhibition title signals, the epistemological separation between nature and culture, not to mention human-animal-vegetal, has become porous.
infans resistance, which, I propose, necessitates a reconsideration of animality as much as puerility). Animal Art in Graz, which can be called the first major exhibition dealing specifically with nonhuman animals in advanced art, reflects a synthesis of De l’Animal’s posthumanist sensibilities and Les Immatériaux’s transhumanist thematics: on the one hand, situated on the cusp of scientific breakthroughs in gene technology and cloning, Animal Art lays claim to a transhumanist fascination with manipulating animal life, whereby the essential make-up of organic life is decoded and purportedly mastered through bio-technical innovations (an eventuality with lasting influences on contemporary bio artists, as well as the broader understanding of human biology as therefore malleable). On the other hand, the exhibition’s prolific instances of installations featuring nonhuman animal performances, processes, capacities for creativity, culture, and community, as well as occasional considerations of animal ethics, Animal Art is overwhelmingly posthumanist in its ambitions and scope. That this exhibition is a mix of transhumanism and posthumanism ultimately demonstrates that these sensibilities, while largely oppositional are nevertheless, conjoined.

A preliminary note concerning my methodological approach to these exhibition case studies should be made clear from the start: while I discuss certain aspects of curatorial and exhibition strategies, I privilege the catalogs as telling statements concerning the inclusion of animal life in art during this period. Accordingly, I place greater emphasis on the textual afterlife of these exhibitions and key works, rather than issues of presentation or curatorial decision-making. Additionally, while my understanding of “biopolitics” will be defined over the course of this chapter, I situate my understanding of ecology at the outset: by “ecological” I mean something more than
simply environmentalism, i.e. a preoccupation with the health of natural eco-systems. Rather, I follow Isabelle Stengers’s understanding of ecology as “the science of multiplicities, disparate causalities, and unintentional creations of meaning” that exceed environmentalism per se to include the cultural, political, and scientific. Stengers also emphasizes the role of “relation” in ecological thought, including the fundamental entanglements between human and nonhuman beings: “[T]here is hardly an ecological situation on Earth where the values attributed by humans to different ‘products’ of nature haven’t already contributed to the construction of relationships among nonhuman living beings.” This “ecological situation” becomes more and more manifest across the 1970s and 80s (as does the concept of relationality). This chapter thus offers a genealogical history of the changes and creations of new meanings vis-à-vis animal life in politics and culture as a biohistory that continues to inform the present.

This biohistory is not a clear-cut narrative of progressive enlightenment towards animals. Nor do artists and curators in the 1970s and ‘80s come to incorporate animal life unambiguously, with critical care, and in such a way that addresses ethical or ecological issues with clear effectiveness. In short, the emphasis on human/nonhuman relationality and ecological thought in the 1970s does not give rise to conditions or results that are automatically favorable. It is for this reason that my title’s subheading alludes to a space between ecology and biopolitics: on the one hand, the incorporation of animals in art can elicit environmental care, ethical relatedness, and a positive collaboration between human

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14 Ibid., 33.
and nonhumans (ultimately, the posthumanist position). On the other, the animal can equally be reduced to a readymade, manipulable object from which the artist or curator becomes the biopolitical agent of control over his nonhuman other (or in the case of Les Immatériaux, over the human museum-goer). Both sides of this biopolitical/ecological coin manifest themselves throughout this chapter, and this imbrication of ecology and biopolitics is distilled in three exhibitions of the 1980s.

2.2 *De l’animal et du végétal dans l’art belge contemporain*

I begin with the exhibition *De L’animal et du végétal dans l’art Belge contemporain* at Atelier 340 in Brussels in 1985.16 This large group exhibition of some forty artists was a survey of Belgian practices reflecting a newfound interest in environmental issues from the late 1960s onwards. The exhibition also represented one of the first displays of advanced contemporary art whose theme, in part, focused explicitly on the animal. *De L’animal* is thus symptomatic of a fledgling posthumanist history: animals are accorded a pride of place in advanced art practices, nonhuman biology becomes a key issue for artists working through an environmental lens, and a space is opened for the artistic avowal of the more-than-human world.

*De l’animal* was organized by the Belgian curators Wodek Majewski and Marc Renwart. Focusing mainly on materiality and form, they grouped the artists and their work into seven sections according to morphology and material: “Use of animal and vegetal elements,” “Use of animal elements,” “Assemblage with animal elements,” “Assemblage with mixed elements,” “Assemblage with vegetal elements,” “Plants,” and “Animals.” With an ambition to survey the recent trends of incorporating various organic elements...

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materials in recent Belgian art practices, this organization makes sense. Its limitations, however, are clear—most notably its inability to explain why such a trend was underway. As will also become apparent, the curatorial approach falls into the trap of fetishizing “nature,” leaving the exhibition largely unable to analyze how the nonhuman world has never been discretely on the other side of culture (nor how the “natural” is an anthropocentric construction and dreamscape of untrammeled wildness, which by the 1980s smacks as environmentally naïve). In what follows, I reorganize this exhibition according to specific themes and cultural registers that go beyond mere morphology and material. This restructuring of an exhibition with little to no afterlife lends it a certain amount of relevance for the near-history of animality in art—not only in the ways in which the exhibition succeeds in making nascent posthumanist sensibilities visible, but also in the ways in which some of its artists fail to adequately meet the demands of the exhibition’s ambitious scope. The catalog is a crucial resource here: since the organizers asked each artist to supply a text explaining their rationale for using animal and/or vegetal materials, the various responses offer an archival testament to their understanding of nonhuman life at this moment. All but five contributors to De l’Animal responded.

As Renwart’s “Note Historique” in the catalog listing all possible twentieth century influences on Belgian art clarifies, the Surrealist legacy is a prominent precursor to the work in the exhibition (a legacy that lingers especially in the older generation of artists in De l’Animal).17 Andre Breton, Andre Masson, Joan Miro, Salvador Dalí, Meret Oppenheim are all mentioned with a brief description of how they involve materials, as well as a discussion of the 1936 “Surrealist Exhibition of Objects” at the Galerie Charles

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Ratton, Paris and the 1938 “International Exhibition of Surrealism” at the Galerie Beaux-Arts, Paris (that Magritte is absent from this long list of influences shows the emphasis to be on the direct incorporation of biological material in art rather than its representation).\textsuperscript{18} However, the catalog also goes beyond the confines of Surrealism in its taxonomy of historical influences. Duchamp is a key figure for his readymades, as is Cubism for being the first to introduce everyday objects into art.\textsuperscript{19} More recent influences are acknowledged as well: Fluxus, Robert Rauschenberg’s combines, Joseph Beuys, Vienna Aktionism, Arte Povera, Hans Haacke, and Marcel Broodthaers. This wide-netted collapse of avant-garde and neo-avant-garde practices incorporating living or dead biological materials is certainly over deterministic as a set of influences on the 1980s. Nonetheless, the inclusion of this “Note Historique” demonstrates that the exhibition organizers were aware of this historical genealogy and acknowledged their contemporary situation as extending it towards different, largely environmental ends (more in keeping with Beuys, Haacke, and Arte Povera, whose influences are most apparent on the Belgian artists in the exhibition).

Majewski’s brief introductory essay to the catalog explains the exhibition’s theme as arising out of recent developments in Belgian art – specifically, the inclusion of unadulterated, organic materials into object-making and installations. He describes the exhibition’s concept as having had originated with “land art,” but ultimately moving away from monumental earthwork strategies of manipulating nature towards an aesthetics

\textsuperscript{18} It can be argued that Surrealism represents a proto-Posthumanist practice in their attention to the more-than-human world—not only in individual works of art and poetry, but in their exhibition strategies. For a reading of Surrealism along these nonhuman lines, see the introduction to an issue of the journal \textit{Symposium} devoted to this topic: Katharine Conley, "Surrealism, Ethnography, and the Animal-Human," \textit{Symposium: A Quarterly Journal in Modern Literatures} 67, no. 1 (2013): 1-5.

\textsuperscript{19} Before Dubuffet’s butterfly collages from the fifties, Picasso embedded a butterfly in one of his canvases in 1933, which impressed Breton. Renwart, 19.
of *naturalité*, or “wildness,” in the sense of using unadulterated elements from the environment; the emphasis was no longer on fabrication, but on the integration of natural materials for their own intrinsic qualities and creative processes (which truthfully can only be a quasi-wildness). From this, Majewski asserts, the “insertion of the animal” was a “natural” outcome in Belgian art practice. This allusion to “open air” points towards the environmental inflection of many of the artists involved. In keeping with the exhibition’s emphasis on organic matter and its aesthetics of minimal fabrication, Majewski additionally emphasizes a sense of ethical responsibility elicited by this engagement with organic matter. He underscores the ecological entanglements imposed on humanity as a form of material obligation: “[Matter] teaches and astonishes us in its historical constructions, by its process of becoming and the perpetual confrontations it forces upon us.” The importance of ecological relationality and care is evident, even if Majewski’s epistemological collapse of natural, vegetal, and animal matter leads to a flattened ontology largely unable to account for the differences involved between nonhuman animals and other forms of organic life and processes.

The Surrealist interest in the *informe* and hybrid objects that lingers in *De l’animal* is often due to the older generation of Belgian artists, though not always. One of Marcel Marien’s contributions, *Le Chant de la forêt* (Forest Song) 1972, is simply a deer antler protruding like a flower from a clay pot. The work plays with the morphological similarities between animal and plant matter (at first glance, the antler looks like dry

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22 A difficulty that remains today in certain contemporary art practices, and to a certain degree, in the neo-materialisms of speculative realism or object-oriented ontology in in recent continental philosophy.
wood). Pierre Alechinsky’s *Jésus-lapin* (Jesus-Rabbit) 1950, the bones of a rabbit laid out in the form of crucifixion, with a clamshell for a head, is more disquieting. The hybridity here is between the mineral, animal, and human—as well as the carnal and the sacred. Michel Jamsin’s *Le lampadaire cruel* (The Cruel Floor Lamp) 1985 is a taxidermied falcon with a large electrical light bulb replacing its head, as if the organic life force of the bird of prey might transfer its current to the inorganic filament of electricity. [ill. 2.2]

In his response to the curatorial question as to why he is interested in animals, Jasmin describes his memory of wandering alone at the Brussels World Fair in 1958 and being struck by its exotic shows; in particular, coming upon a caged panther-woman whose legs were covered with animal-like spots. In language that seems more apt to the 1930s than the 1980s, Jasmin chronicles this experience: “Was it then that I began to love such places where wax mannequins, prehistoric skeletons, and mummies are heaped together, and where human-animal monstrosities are moulded?”

The uncanny and the monstrous: all these tropes come straight from the Surrealist canon, and demonstrate the lingering influence of international expositions and fairs.

Simon Lacour’s series of objects titled *Een nieuwe optiek* (A New Optic) 1985, are just as nostalgic for Surrealism. One is an egg sitting on a cup with an unblinking human eye staring out the top of its shell, while the other (also an egg in its shell) has fully-grown chicken’s feet shooting out a cracked side. [ill. 2.3-4] Like Marien’s, Alechinsky’s, and Jasmin’s contributions, any one of these objects could find a home in Bataille’s repertoire of the *informe* in their ontological undecidability, or alongside any number of Surrealist *objets trouvées* from the 1930s. Yet while Lacour’s work is

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particularly derivative of Surrealist precedents, his response in the catalog reflects the ecological turn of the 1970s and 80s: “You ask me why I work as I do. The sight of God’s oeuvre dying brings me an unconscious expression of deep nostalgia.” Lacour’s somewhat flimsy response evinces a theologically inflected understanding of nature, leading him towards a nostalgia not only for Surrealist forms, but also for at time before environmental crises.

Aside from Jasmin (b. 1941), Marien, Alechinsky, and Lacour were all born in the twenties (1920, 1927, 1926, respectively). For this generation, organic materials were objects of interest in the service of striking juxtapositions. For the majority of the younger artists (born during or after the World War II) who implemented equally unsettling, even abject, combinations of organic and inorganic life, their disquieting objects turned towards a more explicit critique of environmental degradation. The work of Camiel van Breedam (b. 1936), in the lineage of collage and papier collé, is paradigmatic. His Voortwarende (Dynamic), 1982, is a small diptych on paper. [ill. 2.5] The supports of the collage elements are, on the left-hand side, a yellowing page torn from a piano score, and on the right-hand side, a sheet of plain white paper. Superimposed atop both the score and the white paper is a fish carcass outlined with brown watercolor and pencil; the animal seems to break the law of the diptych by passing through the partition to straddle both sides. Its head is still draped in its now desiccated skin, and the artist has placed a red feather in its mouth. By contrast, its body has been picked clean, leaving behind only fish bones and fins resting flush on the piano score. In his response, van Breedam is explicit about his environmental concerns: “every year

24 Ibid., 134. Translation altered for clarity.
nature—or what remains of it—brings forth plants and animals. Each year a great of these die and perish.”

This lamentable scenario nevertheless leads him to see an opportunity, namely, that this perishing offers “a nearly unlimited arsenal of collage and assemblage material.” This recognition of organic matter as proliferating material for art is a recurrent theme in many of the artists’ responses for *De l’animal*, and it produces a paradoxical and melancholic situation: the more the natural world degrades, the more raw materials it offers for inclusion and reflection in object-making—including nonhuman bodies supplied by species die-off. I refer to this feedback loop between environmental ruin and art practices using the material results of this natural ruination as “negative ecology.” This scenario reflects a key flaw in *De l’animal*’s thematization of animals and the environment, since many of its artists betray an uncritical understanding of art making as a relentless accumulation of animal life and organic matter.

In the catalog’s “Postface,” Renwart does not notice this paradoxical situation. Instead, he celebrates the infinite possibilities of a “whole universe” now available for artistic expression and liberty. Not only does his deregulated conception of art expand to include any and all of the world’s “natural” materials, but also to the incorporation of these into any [artistic] style. This ecological expansion of the readymade is reflected in the bodies, skin, bones, skulls, feathers, shells, and panoply of other organic materials littering the exhibition as pictorial elements, assemblage materials, or found objects. When deployed in the service of environmental concerns, these repetitions of avant-garde techniques—collage, readymade, objet trouvé, assemblage—raise important questions: does the use of dead animal bodies in art redouble environmental crises in a melancholic

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25 Ibid., 146.
26 Ibid.
echo of ecological crisis? Or, instead, does this reintegration of organic material represent a form of recycling and thus a gesture of sustainability (though if that is the case, how can a work of art be a form of recycling or sustainability, since whatever is sourced will inherently stick and stop with the object)? Do repeating these timeworn strategies of the historical avant-garde within a context of ecological questioning hold any promise for addressing environmental problems, in the sense of jostling a public to meet the demands of environmental crisis? Or, do they amount to a mere spectacularization of natural elements?

By and large, many of these artists in De l’animal (and subsequent contemporary practices today) do, in fact, redouble ecological violence by using dead animals. They remain predicated on a humanist conception of the animal as a manipulable object towards human ends, often resulting in an aesthetics of negative ecology and morbidity. Many of the decaying and object-heavy works in the exhibition seem to be either contradictory (using materials from the more-than-human world the artist is hoping to protect or advocate) or, in hindsight, ineffectively focused on natural materials limited to issues of form and artistic liberty (as Renwart’s text for the catalog demonstrates). For these reasons, the few art practices (all by the younger generation of artists) in the exhibition that incorporate living animal life in more process based and participatory modes—which do not dead-end in simple object-making—appear to be more successful instances of ecological thought in action.

2.2.2 Ecology and “Relationality”

28 Of course, attention should be paid to the differences in procuring animal bodies for art practices: market farmed, hunted, or roadkilled bodies each have their own ethical and ecological implications. In each case, however, when inserting sentient nonhumans as lifeless artistic material, there is an aesthetic inurement to the violence and bodily violation inherent to its sourcing (which is overwhelmingly problematic ethically, and often environmentally deleterious).
With its incorporation of bones, teeth, and skin, Jacques Lennep’s contribution to *de l’Animal, Le Talus*, 1978, remains within a mode of negative ecology. [ill. 2.6] It is a mixed media work in two parts: a vitrine comprising a number of objects displayed in a taxonomic aesthetic of natural history and a kitschy oil painting of a forest landscape with a walled-in stream of water in the foreground. In his response for the catalog, Lennep lists some of the objects from *Le Talus*’s vitrine: “rabbit’s skin, an acorn, a rubber pipe, a bike reflector, barbed wire, a cuttlefish’s bone, a sheep’s tooth, a jay’s feather…”29 This enigmatic gathering of materials comes from his practice of excursions in nature: “I gathered shells on the seashore, I made off with some birds’ eggs from a nest, I skinned a hare, I picked up a frog flattened under a tyre, I looked for snails. Then, methodically like an entomologist, I brought these remains of natural history face to face with our daily life and its old photos and anecdotes. And I painted in memorial.”30 Since atavistic hunting-gathering is coupled with the modernity of road kill, there is a hint of absurdity or incongruence to this list. It is also presented as scientific field research, as if Lennep is studying and assembling the natural history of a littered forest, in both its natural flora and fauna along with the remnants of human, manufactured objects. In short, it is a hybrid ecology of natural and techno-cultural objects in which naturalité has become impossible to find.

This preoccupation with human imposition on nature and pollution is a defining feature of Belgian artists in the 1970s and 80s who, like Lennep, became increasingly occupied with environmental questions. As the art historian Johan Pas points out, a number of Belgian artists and collectives in the 1970s and 80s began interrogating the

29 Atelier 340, 171.
30 Ibid.
destructive effects of the urban industrial landscape on the environment. Pas offers a number of examples: Roger Raveel’s outdoor happenings and performances, including riding on a raft with fake geese along the canals of Bruges; the plan put forth by the Vrijie Aktie Groep Antwerpen (VAGA) to cease all car circulation in Antwerp and set up greenery instead; Mass Moving’s collective work (which I discuss below); Luc Deleu’s Orbaniste Manifesto from 1980, which envisions a form of architecture more in tune with ecology and sustainability (which often includes projects for nonhuman animal life in urban spaces); and, in general, the rise of readymade and assemblage techniques (so evident in de l’Animal) as forms of recycling.31

Pas also mentions Lennep’s group exhibition of French and Belgian artists from 1977 titled Le Jardin. Lectures et Relations and the founding of his own Group CAP (Cercle d’Art Prospectif) in 1972 (a collective that includes the artists Pierre Cortois, Pierre Hubert, and Jacques Lizène, who all appear in de l’Animal) as important precedents. In 1981, Lennep and Group CAP published a collection of essays stemming from these activities—with contributions from artists, scientists, philosophers, and specialists in various fields—all focusing on the concept of relationality: Relation and relation: a contribution to the idea and attitude of the relational.32 This collection of texts precedes the curator Nicholas Bourriaud’s well-known theorizing of relational aesthetics in the nineties, who himself credits the ecosophical theories of Félix Guattari as a key influence.33 Published by Yellow Now, a gallery turned cinema journal and early champion of the Group CAP artists, Relation and relation wears its ecological

perspective on its sleeve (for example, the opening essay is a short history of ecology by the scientist Pascal Acot), but includes a multidisciplinary presentation on the concept of relation in art, biology, philosophy, and theories of communication.  

In his introduction to Relation and relation (taking the form of a letter to the editor) Lennep references a number of contemporaneous thinkers who point towards a conception of art as relation, including Claude Lévi Strauss, Michel Serres, and Jean-François Lyotard. Lennep draws on these theories of relationality that posit the artwork less as a static, individuated object, but more as a network of elements open to change and susceptible to mutual modification within a dynamic structure. Umberto Eco’s theory of the “open work” is especially important in this regard, as Lennep writes: “As principle of creation, it implies the intervention of the spectator, an interaction between the work and the subject that perceives it – in short, appealing to the environment that implicates zones of indetermination.” This primacy of relationality is made unambiguously clear as it pertains to the changing role of the artist and the work: “As a consequence, the phenomena of participation is intensified, the status of the artist is modified towards the transdisciplinary, and his work now embraces the environment (in its broadest sense that includes the sociological and even technologies heretofore unspecified).”

Two features of Lennep’s understanding of relationality in art should be emphasized: the role of the spectator as direct participant, and the role of the work as

34 Yellow Now was founded in 1969 in Liège by Guy Jungblut, with Jacques Lizène was the first artist exhibited. Later shows included the work Annette Messager, Ben, Jacques Charlier, and number of contemporary Belgian and French artists. Yellow Now was also a publishing house for artist books, and in the late 1980s, turned its attention to cinema.
35 “Comme principe de création, elle implique une intervention du spectateur, un interaction entre l’œuvre et le sujet qui perçoit - bref un recours à l’environement qui implique des zones d’indétermination.” Lennep, 10.
36 “En consequence, le phénomène de participation s’est intensifié, le statut de l’artiste s’est modifié jusqu’à devenir transdisciplinaire, son œuvre a englobé l’environnement (dans son sens le plus large qu’il s’agisse du milieu social ou même de technique qui jusqu’ici n’étaient pas spécifiques).” Ibid., 11.
encompassing the environment in its broadest sense (akin to Stengers’s expanded notion of ecology). While his own contribution to de l’Animal does not completely fit these criteria, certain works documented in the exhibition do demonstrate an interest in ecological relation in more performative terms, which evince Lennep’s notion of relationality more fully; not only through the “indeterminate zones” of viewer participation, but in the indeterminacy of the animals often included whose processes and agencies are central features of the work.

In order to bring out the complexities and implications of relational works involving animals I will discuss the five most pertinent examples from De l’Animal, beginning with Philippe de Luyck’s Création d’un territoire pour 4 serpents au moyen d’un champ calorifique, 1974. [ill. 2.7] The work comprises four snakes set free in a designated area filled with sand under four heating lamps. As the serpents move sideways across the sand, curved lines are produced as a result of their bodily movements (photographs of this installation document these movements). In the catalogue, de Luyck quotes Wassily Kandinsky: “Each type of line seeks an appropriate means to allow its own realization and that, according to a basic economy: a minimum of effort for a maximum result.”37 By outsourcing and inducing movement through temperature, the artists draws a parallel between the painterly human line and the line-making of nonhumans, making visible a commonality between human and nonhuman for making their mark on the world.

In more ecologically open terms, Daniel Dutriuex’s L’inestimable toit se cache, ailée l’éclipse (The Incalculable Roof Hides Itself, Winged Eclipse, 1984) has the artist

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37 Atelier 340, 251.
photographing 20 turtles on top of the Solwaster Dolmen in Belgium—a large, horizontal slab of stone thought to be a Neolithic grave marker. [ill. 2.8] In *L’uniforme point s’écarte sévère le temps* (The Uniform Dot Moves Away Strict Time, 1984), Dutriuex performed a similar operation in the cemetery at Malmédy (also in Belgium) though this time with 23 snails. [ill. 2.9] In both instances, the animals have been arranged to “spell” out their species name in braille code (amounting either to redundancy, since a blind person would only need to pick up one of the turtles or snails to know what it is, or to futility, since the photograph documenting their coded arrangement can only be seen). These works can be related to Dutriuex’s *Chien de Vue*, 1979, a 12-minute video work that follows a blind man being led through city streets (most likely those of Liege, Belgium) by his service dog.38 The intersubjective tandem of human and nonhuman safely navigate pedestrian crossings and traffic with the cacophonous din of works in the background. So in Dutrieux’s work, blindness or a de-privileging of sight rests on a privileging of senses and relations more commonly associated with animality, such as touching and hearing, or on a surrogate nonhuman vision.

Jean-Marie Gheerardyn’s work takes a different approach. In 1980, he began breeding common houseflies, an experiment that culminated in his *Tableau Experimental*, 1982-84. [ill. 2.10-11] The work is two-fold: the first component is the animal breeding, as documented by photographs showing beakers of various sizes filled with black masses of living and/or dead flies in the artist’s studio. The second component is the “tableau,” a flat pictorial surface of “1.40 m by 1 with dead flies stuck one next to another.”39 The resulting “painting” has a similar appearance to Broodthaers’ more celebrated mussel

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38 Surprisingly, this video work was not included in *De l’Animal*.
39 Atelier 340, 259.
paintings: a dark, teeming, encrusted field of jumbled textures and wings protruding from the pictorial surface in all directions. In this respect, rather than incorporate the auto-movements of animals directly in a work, Gheerardyn exploits the auto-generating process of insects in order to re-produce the bare medium for a pictorial practice (a practice that remains in a mode of negative ecology, since it lets live simply in order to use the flies as raw material).

The contributions to de l’Animal by Jacques Lizène and the artist collective Mass Moving’s are perhaps most in keeping with Lennep’s definition of relationality. Lizène’s installation Pièce pour un eventual visituer de l’espece canine (Piece for an Eventual Visitor to a Space for Canines), 1974-75 was first proposed for Galerie Lucien Bilinelli, Brussels [ill. 2.12] The catalog reproduces the purposely crude schematic drawing plans detailing the installation: the cross-section of a gallery space shows a dog entering from the left and coming upon audio equipment on the floor—a speaker, a cassette recorder, and amplifier, and a microphone. The floor moldings along the base of the walls have been painted to look like bricks using paint specified to simulate the odor of “dog shit.” Lizène’s description of his installation’s elements and operations emphasize the relational characteristics of the work as dependent on human and nonhuman animal interaction:

The work is complete only when several dog visitors are present, and only when the smell of the shit paint prompts them to defecate on the sand, and when they gnaw on the bone, provoked by the sound of gnawing, an accompanying sound

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40 This is like Dubuffet and much latter Damien Hirst, though in Gheerardyn the breeding and course of the life of his insects are part of the work.
41 Lizène realized such paintings using actual fecal painted bricks a number of times in the 1970s, including Mur à la crotte de chien, 1977.
piece of music (imitating inopportune barking over an electronic rhythm) pre-recorded on a cassette player.\textsuperscript{42}

Lizène’s proposed installation intended to immerse the human visitor in an environment more fit for the phenomenological capacity of a dog, albeit as a cheeky gesture or ironic instigation. In all likelihood, Lizène’s reasons for such a work has more to do with mocking the conventions of the art world and its art critics (a recurrent preoccupation in his œuvre).\textsuperscript{43} Nonetheless, if taken seriously, \textit{Pièce pour un eventual visituer de l’espece canine} presents a posthumanist space that privileges nonhuman over human being, forcing the latter to negotiate a space whose sounds, smells, and spatial orientation are more attuned to the former.

Mass Moving’s collective work offers a more sincere and socially engaged approach, one explicitly aligned with environmental politics. Active from 1969 to 1976 (whereupon the collective disbanded and ordered the destruction of its archives), Mass Moving was an association of artists working in tandem on various “concepts,” “projects,” and “actions.” Their ideas and strategies were often repeated across multiple site-reactive iterations.\textsuperscript{44} In her study of the collective’s activities, the Belgian art historian Catherine Leclercq describes Mass Moving as a “living cell,” situating itself outside institutional

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\textsuperscript{42} “L’œuvre n’est pas complète que si un ou plusieurs chines sont présents, et qu’l’odeur de la peinture à la crotte les incide à déféquer sur le sable, et qu’ils rongent l’os, provoquant par le bruit de rongement, un accompagnement sonore à la pièce musicale (imitation d’aboiements intempestifs sur rythme électronique) pré-enregistré sur un lecteur de cassette.” Atelier 340, 265.
\textsuperscript{43} In the catalog for \textit{De l’Animal}, Lizène includes a mock review positioning himself as an art critic evaluating his own work. In this text, the artist hails the mediocrity of “Jacques Lizène” as a necessary and humorous critique of the serious conventions of art history. In this sense, Lizène is almost certainly influenced by Broodthaers’s sense of humor, especially the latter’s self-professed desire to make work that is insincere.
\textsuperscript{44} In this regard, Mass Moving is an interesting precursor to the Danish collective Superflex, who similarly conceive their collaborative works as recurring, site-specific projects they designate as “tools.”
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norms, and above all privileging restless movement and non-identity.\textsuperscript{45} LecClercq positions the group within a post-68 discourse of political and ecological engagement with a revolutionary sensibility of collectivity and guerilla-style provocation that solicits spontaneous participation.\textsuperscript{46}

Among the group’s more visible “actions” was its \textit{Butterfly Project} from 1972, realized in two locations: Venice and Tokyo. For Venice (as part of the Belgian contribution to that year’s Biennale), Mass Moving built a large incubator in the Piazza San Marco so to breed some 10,000 \textit{Pieris brassicae} on site—otherwise known as the cabbage butterfly. This large, white butterfly with dark-tipped wings is pictured on the pamphlets disseminated by the group to the public in order to explain the project. [\textit{ill. 2.13}] The incubator appeared as a massive cocoon made of polyurethane in the shape of an irregular peanut shell seven meters high, possessing a dominating presence in the open square (as seen in the surviving archival materials documenting the project as a contribution in \textit{De l’Animal}). [\textit{ill. 2.14}] Fitted with temperature controls, along with photometric and hydrometric measurements, the incubator featured a closed-circuit live video feed on its outside from which the outside spectator could see inside its controlled environment. Once the gestation period reached a certain point of development, the incubator was opened releasing a mass of butterflies into the square—and ultimately, into the environs of Venice. For the concurrent action in Tokyo, three “butterfly bombs” were constructed and “detonated” across three different locations: outside a bank, a metro station, and inside a busy commercial center. For this iteration in Japan, the breeding was

\textsuperscript{45} While the collective worked largely anonymously, today we know a number of its group members, including Raphaël Opstaele, a graphic artist, Helen Pink, a theatre performer, and Jef De Groote, an architect. See Catherine Leclercq and Devillez Virginie, \textit{Mass Moving: un aspect de l’art contemporain en Belgique} (Bruxelles: Éditions Labor : Dexia, 2004), 14-21.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 18.
done in collaboration with a local population residing in the Chiba prefecture just outside Tokyo, and ultimately transferred into the makeshift boxes timed to open up on all sides so to release the butterflies inside unharmed. [ill. 2.15] As an eco-terrorist subversion of violent explosions, these “bombs” emitted delicate winged creatures instead of shrapnel or radiation.

Mass Moving’s *Butterfly Project* holds certain affinities with Gheeradyn’s *Tableau Experimental*, since both involve the breeding of insects as process and medium. Both problematize the distinction between nature and culture: an insect’s reproductive system and capacity for auto-movement and flight are natural insofar as they are not man-made, yet the controlled aspect of this process in breeding and the displacement of its results can more properly be called cultural (not to mention biopolitical, since the artists maintain the right to preside over these life processes). However, there remains a crucial difference at the level of the system of delivery: whereas Gheeradyn fixed his insects onto a traditional pictorial plane, Mass Moving released their butterflies within a much larger and more ecologically open setting where they could thrive and integrate themselves into the environment. In this regard, the *Butterfly Project* in Venice caused a four-fold reaction from various disciplinary domains: it was denounced as a disfigurement of the historic architecture along the Piazza San Marco (and indeed a number of photographs attest to an aesthetics of infestation); it became a question of public hygiene for the police; it was challenged by animal protectionist leagues concerned with the well-being of the butterflies; and lastly, it caught the attention of ecologists who warned of harmful consequences to natural eco-systems of Venice and its
surroundings.\(^{47}\) In short, the *Butterfly Project* became imbricated within four different and sometimes mutually exclusive discourses: aesthetic, socio-political, ethical, and ecological. As an environmental gesture and provocation, the *Butterfly Project* manifests quite perfectly Stengers’s expanded notion of ecology a site of multiplicity, disparate causalities, and unintentional creations of meaning that are never simply natural.

Standing back from these five examples in *De l’animal*, some claims can be made concerning the incorporation of animal life as a performative strategy: 1) there is a recourse to nonhuman agency that reacts to a given situation in auto-movement; 2) this nonhuman agency is privileged, whether aesthetically, phenomenologically, ecologically, or otherwise; 3) the animal is outsourced as mode of creation whereby its living traces or bio-reproductive capacities are modes of process art; and 4) there is a staging of points one, two, and three within a given ecological context from which the artist only has partial control over the results. In Mass Moving’s *Butterfly Project* in Venice, for example, when the incubator in the Piazza San Marco was finally opened, many of the butterflies initially opted to remain in the coolness of its inside rather than venture out into the Venetian summer heat. Unlike the chance operations found in the historical avant-garde (like Surrealist automatism), such an unforeseen eventuality is not purely aleatory, but in fact only quasi-aleatory. Inherent to incorporating animals and their auto-movements in an installation is a certain degree of calculation on the part of the animal—be it conscious and mindful, or instinctual and reactive—that remains only partially unpredictable or unforeseeable. The cold-blooded embodiment of four snakes will dictate their movements on sand under heat lamps; a grouping of turtles or snails will be

\(^{47}\) In response to this last charge, during their project Mass Moving consulted with entomologists and experts who deemed the butterflies to be anodyne in relation to the Venetian eco-system. See ibid., 112.
determined by the social behavior of their species; the life span of the common house fly, along with its reproductive capacity and bodily size, partially dictate the feasibility and limitations of its use as a pictorial medium; the phenomenological capacity of a dog will allow for certain engagements in a space prepared for its being and not others; and the collective preferences of a kaleidoscope of butterflies will dictate their auto-movements and reactions to a foreign, urban setting. In short, pure chance is undercut by animal behavior, volition, and agency so central to these strategies—amounting not to an erosion of human authorship, but to a displacement of intent onto nonhuman agency (which, as man of the practices demonstrates, falls into a danger of reducing the human-nonhuman relation to biopolitical control).

Like much of the body and performance art practices of the 1960s and 70s, these works involving nonhuman performers are mediated and exhibited by secondary archival and photographic documentation in *De l’animal*. The animals in these works cannot be thought of as found objects, but must be understood as materials in a process that features the development, preferences, and inclinations of a lived body. In all these instances, the artist’s body does not appear and plays a role only behind-the-scenes as stager of situations. For this reason, it is helpful to think of these nonhuman performances as a precursor to the art historian Claire Bishop’s theorization of “delegated performances.”

According to Bishop’s analysis of delegated performances, which begins in the 1990s, an artist will often hire a non-professional actor or specialist who gives their consent to

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*48 As with so much human activity, the nonhuman test subject often sets a precedent for human trials. In this respect, it is telling that Mass Moving’s *Butterfly Project* leads directly to the collective’s subsequent participatory actions titled *Human Incubation*, 1972-4, which involved cocooning human by-standers in a web of plastic string for a duration left open to the participants’ will. See chapter 8 “Delegated Performance: Outsourcing Authenticity” in Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London; New York: Verso Books, 2012), 219-40. I argue that the nonhuman animal performer is a missing part of this genealogy of delegated performances.*
inhabit a prescribed situation set out by the artist. In many cases, the situation hopes to make manifest the enlisted performer’s socio-economic category in order to critique its conventionally devalued position in social politics. These two aspects of a delegated human performance—consent and performing a socio-economic category—are ostensibly not applicable to nonhuman precedents.49

Nonetheless, there are fundamental ways in which delegated human and nonhuman performances coincide. While a nonhuman cannot be a specialist in a designated field, nothing bars an animal from being a non-professional actor in a cultural setting. This precedent has already been set in the history of photography and film—Eadweard Muybridge’s anonymous nonhumans in *Animal Locomotion* (1872-85) or the donkey in Robert Bresson’s *Au Hazard Balthazar* (1966) being two of many salient examples—not to mention in the long histories of zoological gardens and colonial exhibitions. These nonhuman delegated performances equally entail an unremunerated actor, one who may not be aware that it acts him or herself in an art context, but who performs nonetheless to varying degrees of direction, coercion, and framing.50 If in Bishop’s first typology of delegated performances “artists are exhibiting and exploiting other subjects,” it would only be natural that the exploitation of animal subjects, to whatever degree, offers a precedent for art that can be found much further back in social

49 While Mass Moving involved entomologists in their *Butterfly Projects*, these specialists remain outside the frame of the performance. The contracted nature of delegated human performances seems to preclude the animal as well, since any clear consent between human artist and nonhuman performer entails a far more complex intersubjective situation. Additionally, while certain animal species are patently devalued in the same way certain socio-economic classes or genders are, nonhuman animals cannot perform their category in the same way as, for example, a homeless person, an immigrant, or a prostitute can. In these three instances, to compare a human and nonhuman delegated performance appears imperfect.

50 Perhaps the first use of a delegated nonhuman in avant-garde practice was Roland Dorgelès prank of attaching a paintbrush to a donkey’s tale and submitting the painting to the Salon des Indépendants in 1910. This would inspire Francis Picabia’s ultimately unsuccessful attempt to simply display a living animal (a monkey) as a work of art. See George Baker, *The Artwork Caught by the Tail: Francis Picabia and Dada in Paris* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2007), 98-9.
history (alongside the exploitation of labor, women, and the ethnic other).\textsuperscript{51} This first typology of delegation is often after an “authentic” subject, one who certifies both the artist and the performed situation as credible, genuine, and real.\textsuperscript{52} If non-professional actors lend the artist and the performance a level of “authenticity” the artist could never embody on her own, then using nonhuman bodies similarly lends a level of authenticity or rawness.\textsuperscript{53} This is true for whatever the impulse or desired effect, but most especially when the animal performer is meant to be metonymic of an environmental issue. In this way, a nonhuman animal does perform its socio-ecological category—and one might even argue a socio-economic category after all, since animals can be seen to perform the base commodification of life common to human and nonhuman subjects alike, arriving at “species” as the baseline biopolitical category of instrumentalization.

Installations that delegate the creative energies of nonhuman life hold the possibility for a positive ecology: rather than the negative ecology of understanding animal life as endangered and exploited and simply redoubling this endangerment and exploitation, a positive ecology troubles this categorical understanding of animals by allowing for the performance of surprising traits, habits, attitudes, and relations outside the norm. Clearly, the ideas stemming from this meeting place between the theorization of delegated performance and the animals incorporated in \textit{De l’animal} holds heuristic value for any use of living animals in contemporary art contexts today. It also begins to explain the correlation between the concept of relationality in the 1970s and ‘80s and those artists initially associated with relational aesthetics in the ‘90s—most especially

\textsuperscript{51} Bishop, 223. \\
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 237. \\
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
Pierre Huyghe and Carsten Höller, who quite consciously incorporate the animal in novel ways in their respective works.54

In hindsight, *De l’animal*’s interest in animality is double and paradoxical: while the organizers maintain the concept of *naturalité* as a morphological figure—as unadulterated materiality in art—many of the artists incorporating the lived animal understand this naturalness as not only simple matter, but as a process, and in some instances, as a nonhuman agency at work that undercutsthe ideologically “natural” understanding of animal life to begin with. This is the most posthumanist dimension of *De l’animal*: as an exhibition taking its cue from prior inclusions of live animals in art (especially in Beuys, Haacke, and Arte Povera) it represents a shift away from an anthropocentric view of movement, process, agency, and creativity in art, and a form of de-authoring that allows animal life to take over. This de-naturalization of animals as ecological collaborators or co-producers would be far from natural, ironically enough in light of the curatorial emphasis on wildness. This is further paradoxical in the examples that clearly scramble the codes of nature/culture—including the work of Marcel Broodthaers, Yves de Smet, and Dominique Ampe who each in their own manner go beyond any steadfast division between *naturalité* and human endeavors.55 [ill. 2.16-7] I now turn to an exhibition that thematized a similar form of nonhuman agency, though from the opposite direction of biotechnology and artificial intelligence. However, this too

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54 Pierre Huyghe has often incorporated nonhuman animals in his various undertakings (dogs and bees at dOCUMENTA 13 in 2012, for example). Carsten Holler and Rosemarie Trockel’s installation *A House for Pigs and People* at dOCUMENTA 10 in 1997 is another salient example.

55 *De l’Animal* exhibited a number of Broodthaers’s works—from his eggshell constructions and mussel paintings to his male femur bone. I examine his work in the following chapter. Yves de Smet contributed animal hides onto which the words ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ have been either printed or branded. The work of Dominique Ampe, like that of Panamarenko, involves a mix of organic, animal elements fixed to technological, kinetic constructions (most recurrently, pairs of bird feathers attached to battery power by wire conduit).
will bring us back to the nonhuman animal—not as paradigm of natural process, but as the purported bareness and controllability of life itself.

2.3 Les Immatériaux

If *De l’Animal* at Atelier 345 privileged wildness and the environment, then *Les Immatériaux* at the Centre Georges Pompidou from the same year seemed to privilege their opposites: artificality, technoscience, and the immateriality of the postindustrial urban condition. This now canonical exhibition was a collective undertaking spearheaded by the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard and the design historian Thierry Chaput. While *De l’Animal* has had almost no critical afterlife, *Les Immatériaux* enjoys a lasting presence in contemporary art history, even if little visual documentation remains. The initial reception, as reflected in reviews by art historian John Rajchman, among others, focuses on its status as a postmodern exhibition relishing the simulacra, the death of the author, the scrambling of high/low and art/non-art, and the heterotopic and multi-narrative condition of a postmodernity that today has largely fallen away from critical attention. More recently, *Les Immatériaux* has been linked to relational aesthetics as an important precursor and influence, as well as to the advent of new media in an institutional setting and the rise of the curator as a central figure in contemporary art.

In what follows I shift the discussion towards two different frames: first, I place *Les Immatériaux* within the recent philosophical trajectory of biopolitical thought. While Lyotard is not commonly associated with biopolitics, his exhibition at the Pompidou can

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56 *Les Immatériaux* was held at the Pompidou from March 28 to July 15, 1985.
57 The continuing interest in this exhibition is reflected in the conference *Landmark Exhibitions: Contemporary Art Shows Since 1968* at Tate Modern in October 2008, in which a revisiting of *Les Immatériaux* was prominent. The conference presentations were published in *Tate Papers* no.12, Autumn 2009.
58 In his novel reading of *Les Immatériaux*, which analyses the viewer’s bodily experience of the exhibition, Kiff Bamford maintains that hitherto the “interest in the exhibition relates mainly to the display of new technologies and the rise of the curator’s importance.” Bamford, 77.
be understood today as a technocratic biopolitician’s dream. *Les Immatériaux* is an exhibition that exerted a great amount of control on the body of its audience, all while displaying various objects, machines, and innovations that themselves aid in the management of bodies—even if this control was not immediately apparent in the general confusion of the exhibition’s open-ended layout (various “zones” made up of sixty-one different “sites”). Understanding this novel form of biopolitical control will be central to my reconsideration of *Les Immatériaux*. In so doing, I not only enlist Deleuze’s late essay “Postscript on the Societies of Control” from 1990, which holds striking parallels with Lyotard’s exhibition, but also a subset of biopolitical thought that interrogates the role of immunology on the social body.

Secondly, my discussion shifts to Lyotard’s concept of the “inhuman” so central to the exhibition’s display (as already signaled in the introduction to this chapter). In the exhibition, the inhuman arrives in the form of the bio-technosciences that invade and dissolve the integrity and identity of the human body and ego. In an accelerationist key, *Les Immatériaux* exacerbated and pushed this technoscientific inhumanism on the visitor to its fullest (or, at least, to what was then technologically possible). Yet there is another side of the inhuman at work in Lyotard’s writings, one that serves as antidote to its controlling, technocratic doppelganger without returning to an unwanted, naïve humanism. This antidote comes in the form of the *infans* or child who predates the human before falling under the formative control of technology, language, and law. For Lyotard, this inhuman is aligned with a number of terms: the “figural,” the “incommensurable,” the “affect-phrase,” or the “differend.” In each case, this *infans* is an excess that cannot be sufficiently contained by symbolic language and humanist paradigms.
As recent developments in animal studies demonstrates, this version of the inhuman as transgressive *infans* cannot be easily divorced from that other nonhuman entity that clings to the human before its subsumption into humanist subjectivization – namely, the human as animal. Although Lyotard considered and ultimately resisted the nonhuman animal as an inhuman instance of the figural, the incommensurable, the affective, or the differend, I contend that nonhuman animal life haunts *Les Immatériaux* in a number of ways. This is true not only in its by-and-large absence from the exhibition’s technoscientific display, which ultimately serves to show how much biotechnoscience works to replace the animal body. But it is also true in the ways in which *Les Immatériaux*’s biopolitical control over the audience is predicated on the human as animal, as an organism fit for immunological supports and extensions, genetic decoding, and as that which is always already present as a libidinal basis for the subject’s subordination to control. This position is in keeping with Foucault’s oft-cited formulation from 1976, which has become the point of departure for biopolitical discourse today:

“For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question.”

In short, if the animal returns from its banishment in an immaterial post-industrial landscape, it returns largely through what the nonhuman shares with the human animal as an ambulating, sentient subject in a shared ecological space of control whose politics places its *bios* at its center.

In discussing *Les Immatériaux* it has become a rhetorical trope to mention Lyotard’s formative experiences on United States highways as an ecological inspiration for the display—both the postmodernist nebula of driving around Los Angeles and the changing radio frequencies that mark space and time along its Eastern seaboard. This new geographical given is a postindustrial smooth space of disorientation and overexposure.\(^6\) Kim Bamford finds the impetus for the inclusion of headphones and short-wave radio signals in Lyotard’s exhibition in these highway origin stories.\(^6\) These headphones were offered (for a small, non-optional fee) to the viewer before entering into the space. They did not so much help the visitor navigate *Les Immatériaux*’s zones, however, so much as supply an overabundance of information and seemingly unrelated audio content. Additionally, unlike the liberal agency entailed by today’s audio headpieces in museums (where one can pause or skip ahead), the visitors’ experiences were at the whim and locational trigger of the infrared signals of the exhibition space.\(^6\)

The performative aspect of the audience in headphones in a space of endless adjustments beyond the audience’s full agency recalls Deleuze’s near-contemporaneous essay “Postscript on the Societies of Control.” Taking his cue from Foucault’s history of disciplinary societies, Deleuze posits an updated paradigm of social organization. Disciplinary societies entail enclosures, which Deleuze analogizes with the digging of a mole. Societies of control, on the other hand, operate via open spaces of modulation, which Deleuze analogizes with the recursive and elusive movements of a snake. If

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\(^6\) Bamford highlights this difference: “There is a significant conceptual difference between constructing the system of communication as a web into which the visitor enters, rather than one which the visitor has the appearance of controlling.” Bamford, 79.
\(^6\) Ibid.
disciplinary societies subordinate the body through demarcations and barriers, then societies of control envelop the body “like a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other, or like a sieve whose mesh will transmute from point to point.” ⁶³ Experiencing Les Immatériaux must have felt less like the disciplinary space of a traditional (modern) museum, and more like the nebulous ecology of Deleuze’s more open form of social control. Lyotard describes this expectation in a 1985 interview:

[w]e wanted to…discover a more fluid and immaterial system for the organization of space. So, instead of walls, we’ll have a system of webbings that will be stretched from floor to ceiling, and the ways in which they’re lighted will permit us to vary the distances that the eye can cover and to modulate the indications that ought to be followed, but without being prescriptive, since many of the sites we’ll be building will be in the form of intersections that allow one then to go off in any number of directions. ⁶⁴

By-and-large unbeknownst to the visitor, her body became imbricated within this fluid system of sensors that tracked position, fed content through headphones, and generally held the visitor in modulated control from point to point. Each visitor was given a magnetic card that kept track the sequence of zones visited; visitors were also encouraged to provide feedback on their experience of the exhibition at computer terminals in situ (one of the few lasting images of Les Immatériaux is a middle-aged man in a trench coat at one of these terminals with Nam June Paik’s TV Buddha in the background [ill. 2.18])

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So, while the space invited a certain amount of aleatory involvement on the part of the viewer, this had the effect of dissimulating the power of the space and its more diaphanous forms of control. In his review, Rajchman presciently understood this aspect of *Les Immatériaux*, noting that “[o]ne could not ‘participate’ in this theater because one was already part of it.” So immersed in her triggered surroundings, no gap or distance was available to the viewer for more purposive and autonomous engagement. In this way, Lyotard’s exhibition is an exemplary instance of these newer forms of control Deleuze presciently warnings against.

Many of the novel bio-technoscientific developments outlined in Deleuze’s essay from 1990 were already on display in the Pompidou in 1985. From advanced pharmaceuticals, to molecular engineering, genetic manipulation, and digital computing—all of these inhuman immaterials are well represented in *Les Immatériaux*. The “Inventaire,” one of the components of *Les Immatériaux*’s non-traditional catalog that archives multiple visual and textual components, is a set of album leaves in a box assembling and reproducing all the “zones” of the exhibition, which themselves comprised multiple “sites.” As Lyotard makes clear in his curatorial text related to the exhibition (though not included in its unorthodox catalog), these immaterials not only challenge the sovereign position of “man” as “master and possessor of nature,” but these

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67 Lyotard emphasizes this loss of autonomy and meaningful engagement, and makes clear that the crucial question to ask is what “do we do if we no longer have the prospect of emancipation? What sort of line of resistance can we have?” He sees a “despotic” mediascape as responsible for this condition, and at his most melancholic (via his reading of Adorno) maintains, “intellectuals are no longer capable of any kind of real intervention.” Perhaps this sort of resignation Lyotard attempted to induce in the viewer at the Pompidou. Lyotard and Blistène, ”Les Immatériaux: A Conversation with Jean-François Lyotard,” 34.
inhuman dispositifs alter the a priori nature and identity of the human itself. 68 This loss of mastery over the environment is redoubled in the viewer’s experience of the exhibition space: in perpetual neuronal engagement while continually controlled by an enveloping technoscientific display.

Les Immatériaux, then, was a bio-techno eco-system that completely immersed the viewer and problematized any clear distinction between human subject and inhuman apparatus. If I read a certain affinity between the accelerationist tendencies of Lyotard’s exhibition as implementing an array of techniques that augur what Deleuze diagnosed as a society of control, then Les Immatériaux is not an emancipatory project but in fact its opposite: a project of enclosure whereby the medium of control and containment becomes hidden or is misunderstood as progress and choice. Lyotard’s many cautions about the dangers of technoscience and the limits of enlightenment as emancipation bolsters this reading of his exhibition. It is telling that, if Les Immatériaux represents a society of control in miniature, then its subjects can move about freely in modulation all without being any less confined. It is striking to contextualize this strategy within the history of zoological displays across the twentieth century, which makes great effort to mask or erase any signs of containment, enclosure, and the separation between humans and nonhumans. 69 In fact, throughout the “Postscript,” Deleuze makes a number of allusions to animals, domestication, and breeding. In language that describes Les Immatériaux and modern zoological gardens equally well, he critiques their capacity for

69 The first of these modern zoological gardens was Hagenbeck’s Tierpark, which became the model for the zoological garden of the 1931 Colonial Exhibition in Paris and zoos today. For an excellent critical history of Hagenbeck’s innovations, see Nigel Rothfels, Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).
dissimulated control in human-animal terms: “The conception of a control mechanism, giving the position of any element within an open environment at any given instant (whether animal in a reserve or human in a corporation, as with an electronic collar), is not necessarily one of science fiction.” Rajchman’s incisive observation that one could not participate in the exhibition because one was already in it now takes on a slightly different air: like an animal in an integrated techno-zoological environment, one can only perform either unintentionally or without choice. In this sense, the ostensibly participatory aspects of Les Immatériaux are not so much a marker of progress and innovation as much as the generalization of a bio-zoologic mechanism of control that covers its own tracks in its own experience.

2.3.3 BIOPOLITICS OF IMMUNITY IN LES IMMATÉRIAUX

One of the consequences of being a site of control is that Les Immatériaux can equally be interpreted as a site of protection and security. The positive obverse of the zoological and biopolitical is the lure of being subject to the pampered spaces of immunity, which keeps its inhabitants alive and thriving through various techniques. Natalie Heinrich’s sociological research into audience reception is telling in this regard. After conducting a sample demographic survey of visitors to Les Immatériaux in real-time, Heinrich concluded that those visitors who were able to properly navigate the exhibition’s technological makeup (including being able to pay for headphones) felt “at home” in the space, while those who were unable to, had to “rely on the cryptic references provided to navigate the exhibition space, [and] experienced a sense of unease,

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70 Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," 7. While Les Immatériaux did not (yet) have the ability to literally track its audience through advanced GPS, its display did hold a certain amount of power and control over its audience through technocratic solutions.

71 In this regard, Les Immatériaux can be understood as a pre-history of Silicon Valley and contemporary neo-liberal techno-utopias.
of loss, and occasionally felt threatened or even deceived.” If, as Deleuze claims, societies of control are predicated on code words and passwords that keep some flowing while others barred, Heinrich’s survey elicits a similar sort of social situatedness in *Les Immatériaux*.

This sense of feeling “at home” in an exhibition recalls Surrealist theories of architecture, specifically, Tristan Tzara’s uncanny paradigm of intra-uterine or wombic comfort. Lyotard was particularly influenced by Duchamp for *Les Immatériaux*’s ambience, most notably by the latter’s room design for the 1938 International Surrealist Exhibition [ill. 2.19]. Lyotard’s inclusion of olfactory emissions (emanating from several displays featuring artificial comestibles, along from the catalog itself, also infused with an odor) were a conscious nod to Duchamp’s installation of a multitude of hanging coal sacks and the presence of coffee and dead leaves in the gallery space. In turn, Duchamp was influenced by one of the few Surrealist documents contending directly with architectural space – namely, Tzara’s “D’un certain Automatisme du Goût” in the journal *Minotaure*. After Tzara, the Surrealist sense of space was radicalized in opposition to the hygienic cleanliness of modernist architecture, preferring an ambience of organic and uncanny womble Dwelling. As might already be indicated by Tzara’s fascination with the vulva (pictured in *Minotaure* by the indent on the head of a men’s brimmed hat), his architectural paradigm was one of becoming-maternal, or even, becoming-mammal, in a

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73 See Bamford, 90-1.

74 In *Minotaure*, 3-4, December 1933,
pre-natal zone of organic immunity and protection from the geometric severity of modernist space.

The architectural historian Anthony Vidler describes Tzara’s Surrealist intra-uterine spaces as “dark, tactile and soft,” and as imitating the “self-constructed shelters of childhood.” Lyotard’s interest in the subversive, pre-formative stage of childhood resonates with this pre-natal architectural theories. In affinity for these architectural ideas, the entryway vestibule of Les Immatériaux operated as such an intra-uterine space. Even before entering the display’s sixty-one sites, the visitor was initially enveloped by the darkness of a corridor. By walking through this entryway, from which sounds of heart pumping and blood rushing was heard all around in the corridor, the visitor was born into the space in mammalian propulsion.

If I find a Surrealist correspondence between Tzara, Duchamp, and Lyotard, their different intentions are nevertheless historically distinct. Vidler describes Tzara’s privileging of the womb as functioning through a double intention: “On the one hand, the return to archetypal forms marks an identification with the origins of civilization and an explicit critique of its technological results, human and material; on the other, the notion of womb as origin, displays a familiarity with Freudian explanations of desire and the repressed or displaced routes of homesickness.” Tzara, then, is fundamentally atavistic and nostalgic for a Neolithic maternalism that is updated by an uncanny pre-Oedipal

76 If the exhibition is an organism of beating blood in utero it can only be mammal; for Lyotard and posthumanist attention, it would be inadequate to simply call it “human.”
77 Vidler, "Surrealism fantasy, the uncanny and surrealist theories of architecture," 8.
stage of psychoanalysis. In Lyotard and Chaput’s treatment, his recourse to intra-uterine experience is similarly regressive and embodied, yet this body has now become partially ironic: if Surrealist architecture was a pushback against the hygienic sterility of modernist architecture, then Lyotard détourns this legacy in order to offer a womblike experience that opens onto the patently cyborg landscape of Les Immatériaux. Whereas Tzara’s inter-uterine experience is a form of uterine escape, Lyotard’s treatment funnels the spectator into a disorienting phenomenological space of bio-digital hybridity.

In the middle of this historical correspondence is Duchamp: if his 1938 room culls from the productive energies of the industrial revolution (caffeine and coal), then Lyotard’s environment culls from specifically post-industrial bio-technical innovations. In all three cases the concept of immunity is operative: Tzara’s space is a primitivist and protective space of immunity, and is essentially pre-industrial; Duchamp’s immunological space is buffered by modernity, in both brew and energy source, and is essentially industrial; Lyotard’s Les Immatériaux offers its form of immunity through bio-technical supplements and bionic engagements through information and code, and is essentially post-industrial. It is clear, however, that only Duchamp and Lyotard understand the double-edged nature of their immunological spaces in historical terms.

The supplements of industry and post-industry keep society running in perpetual progress, yet while their techniques may be life-extending and protective, they can also be stifling, controlling, and ultimately deleterious to health. If Tzara theorizes an architectural theory...

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79 It should be noted that Duchamp’s coffee, brazier, and coal bags were the exception; many of the works and environments in the 1938 International Surrealist Exhibition connoted the natural and the organic. See Lewis Kachur, Displaying the Marvelous: Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dali, and Surrealist Exhibition Installations (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), 68-88.
to combat technological modernity through atavistic escape, Duchamp—and even more so, Lyotard—engage their respective industrial and postindustrial situations through a critical embrace and acceleration of even those deleterious affects on their exhibition’s inhabitants.

These observations on the double-edged nature of bio-social immunity map onto what the philosopher Roberto Esposito diagnoses as the central enigma of biopolitics as both giver and taker of life: “Either biopolitics produces subjectivity or it produces death. Either it makes the subject its own object or it decisively objectifies it. Either it is a politics of life or a politics over life.” As Esposito lays out, this biopolitical discourse has its beginnings in the 1930s, especially in early biological and ethological writings in Germany: the biopolitical nexus of subjectivization/death finds its ultimate and darkest realization in the Nazi ideology of biology and species-race difference. This “thanatopolitics” (what Esposito calls the deathly obverse of biopolitics) is alluded to starkly in Les Immatériaux. Rajchman recalls the morbid juxtaposition of Muybridge’s photographs from Animal Locomotion (1887) alongside a film of Nazi anatomical dissection as part of human extermination. The Inventaire reproduces four photographs from Animal Locomotion—two of a naked man first standing straight before a brick wall and then contrapposto, and two of a woman looking down and walking naked towards the camera [ill. 2.20]. In addition to the film (Jospeh Losey’s Monseuir Klein from 1976), an image of WWII deportation was shown alongside Muybridge’s photographs, near twelve asexual mannequins. Lyotard titled this site Nu Vain, possibly playing on en vain (or “in

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80 Roberto Esposito, Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy, trans., Timothy Campbell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 32.
81 Ibid., 13-24.
vain”), and writes the following: “The body dépouillé [‘rendered bare’]. Nudity as the limit of sense, as an absurd presence. Flesh is replaced by neutral, measurable, multipliable, de-codeable material.” Keeping in mind that the term “dépouillé” holds a number of perturbing polyvalent meanings in this context—denuding, stripping, dissecting, counting, and the removing fat by way of cooking—this site proves to be the most sobering in Les Immatériaux, a manifestation of the process of devaluation through a humanimal collapse. The immunological paradigm of thanatopolitics—of a power that exposes some to death in order to preserve the lives of others—could not be more apparent. As one of the few critics who understood this biopolitical dimension of Les Immatériaux, Rajchman asserts that in the exhibition, “life and death [were] subject to technoscientific intervention and redefinition,” an observation that unavoidably conjoins a dark biopolitical past with a to-be-determined biopolitical present.

If early biopolitical discourse in Germany presumed a stable, a priori essence of the human as species in biology (as bellicose by nature, as inherently vitalist, as dominator, and so on), then Foucault’s key contribution to biopolitical thought was to change the terms of the human itself as a contingent historical construction (in keeping with his anti-humanist or posthumanist leanings going back to his The Order of Things). No longer immutable or simply given, the human in Foucauldian biopolitics is a genealogical concept accreted by a “biohistory” that shapes the epistemologies of life across multiple disciplines (and I add the “animal” as an entangled historico-epistemological concept similarly accreted by humanist history). Esposito defines this

hybrid movement of biohistory in the following manner: “History and nature, life and politics cross, propel, and violate each other according to a rhythm that makes one simultaneously the matrix and the provisional outcome of the other.” This notion of biohistory is also operative in all the processes in Lyotard’s Les Immatériaux where the human comes to be re-defined by its bio-technoscientific environment and supplements.

If Les Immatériaux offers an immunological social setting in miniature that produces the human as inhuman, then it is notable that the exhibition no longer functions through the logic of the nation-state, but through a post-national, technocratic apparatus of multi-national economic and scientific innovations rearticulating the identity of time, space, and life itself. In other words, Lyotard’s viewer becomes the subject of neoliberal immunology. Nowhere is this individualistic immune design attested to better than in the single sleeping cells transplanted from Japan into the Pompidou. Replete with radio, television, air conditioning, and telephone, each cell holds enough room for only one occupant stacked in isolation on top of the others (the “Inventaire” reproduces this serial organization, which look like temporary storage units). Lyotard describes these “compartments” as purely functional prosthetic environments for the human body, which fundamentally alter traditional notions of dwelling or rootedness.

In this regard, it is interesting to note how much Les Immatériaux concerned itself with issues of the human diet—a fact that has gone uninspected in the literature. Often turning his attention to foodstuffs in cans and plastic packaging, Lyotard underscores the

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85 Esposito, 30. This is akin to Stengers’s notion of ecology and describes the forces that altered and de-naturalized the non-human animal I trace in this chapter.

86 Peter Sloterdijk is the central theorist of this social evolution in advanced capitalism from national belonging to neoliberal self-protectionism: “[w]e are now experiencing what is probably the irreversible transformation of political security collectives in groups with individualistic immune designs.” Sloterdijk, In the World Interior of Capital: For a Philosophical Theory of Globalization, 153.
dietary shift from a natural relationship between society and nature, to a pragmatically engineered diet for optimal nutrition, metabolism, and the proper consistency of fats, proteins, and sugar. For example, the site *Toutes les copies* showed a photocopied piece of cheese in profile looking less like a food and more like a microscopic or scientific image [ill. 2.22]; *Ration alimentaire* displayed food rations for space travel [ill. 2.23]; *Manger pressé* displayed “fast foods” that cut time and raised efficiency at the price of the cultural traditions and rituals of traditional cuisine [ill. 2.24]; in *Précuisinié-Préparlé* there is a similar gesture, though here the attention is on prepackaged, prepared units of cuisine that the consumer simply consumes as is. [ill. 2.25] Lyotard underscores the affinities between readymade language and food: “Food in cooking, replying in conversation, both happen to you as readymade” 87; and finally, in *arôme simulé*, holographic images of fruits where projected in the space that was diffused with the chemical smells as simulacrual olfactory substitutes for actual fruit. [ill. 2.26] All these dietary examples point to a fundamentally changed relationship between human consumption and nature—from a purportedly traditional history of food to a conception of comestibles as fabricated, engineered, and calculated in an increasingly de-naturalized, synthetic, and efficient manner as diet fit for inhumans. All of these gustatory examples either dissimulate the material rendering of any nonhuman who may have been implicated in the readymade food, or amount to hyper-real comestible replacements of animal material altogether (though certainly an earlier history of market dissimulation can be found in novel forms of food packaging and labeling in the twentieth century). 88

87 Pompidou, n.p.
88 This loss of a natural connection between humans and their culinary traditions holds emancipatory potential for those nonhumans who heretofore find themselves culturally coded as food.
It is for these reasons that understanding the exhibition as an immunological space is so important, for *Les Immatériaux* was a biopolitical container that subjectivizes its inhabitants variously through inclusion or exclusion, engagement or alienation, and comfort or unease. Consequently, placing *Les Immatériaux* within in this immunological biohistory, ultimately evinces its techno-liberal subject position. After all, visitors paid for headphones that kept them shut in a solitary mental space and in unilateral engagement with the exhibition components, even in a public setting. The more collectively minded would have had to forego payment and the space’s open-ended programming, which, according to Heinrich, ran the risk of being disoriented and barred from access to the display’s full effect. This aspect of Lyotard’s exhibition (akin to what Deleuze calls “dividuation,” an operation that fuses the mass/individual binary) does away with both singularity (since all viewers trigger the same information over radio waves) as well as collectivity (since the headphones keep each visitor embedded in a pseudo-solitary state). The price of *Les Immatériaux*’s immunity was at the cost of the individual and the community as traditionally defined.

2.3.4 INHUMAN, NONHUMAN, POSTHUMANIST?

This chapter began by recalling Apollinaire’s unstable uses of the term inhuman, which points toward the Janus-faced conception of Lyotard’s more fully-fledged theory of the inhuman: on the one hand, the inhuman as “technoscience where the flesh is replaced,” and on the other, the inhuman as transgressive state prior to humanist “education and other means of subjectivization.” I have argued that these two inhumans are entangled in *Les Immatériaux*—at the level of biopolitical control and through an

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89 Bamford, 98.
aesthetics of immunology. In both instances, the inhuman as animal supplies the underlying material and agential conditions for the inhuman technocratic control and preservation of biological life (in other words, Lyotard’s bad inhuman needs the good inhuman as host). Yet the fact remains that however much *Les Immatériaux* seems to undo any connection to nature and animality through its futurist techniques, the human as animal remains its biological preconditions and substance. In other words, the repression of animality always returns.

It is not through any previous conception of humanism that the human can be outfitted with new skin (see “deuxième peau” [ill. 2.27]), can be contained in separate life-supporting cubicles, can have its senses artificially triggered, or can be managed as neutral, measurable, multipliable, de-codeable material. Instead, this inhumanism is predicated on the human as a managed, domesticated, and automated process contingent with its environment and fleshy finitude. *Les Immatériaux*, for all its transhumanist accelerationism, also offered a posthumanist demonstration that the human is not to be found in language, reason, or culture, but in the affective, immunitary spaces allowing one to breath and function with biological integrity. Foucault’s foundational insight for biopolitics, namely, that “modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question,”⁹⁰ is taken, at the Pompidou, as it can go by alluding directly to an understanding life as a codeable at the molecular level. In the site titled *Corps éclaté* (or “exploded body”) images of the body, its organs, tissues, and cells, were displayed together as a universal “language” of the molecular. [ill. 2.28] In a related site, *Langue vivante* (or “living language”), images of calf and rabbit embryos taken at the genetic

scale were projected in the space, alongside images of human DNA proteins. [ill. 2.29] In explaining this site, Lyotard asserts that today’s task is to “understand and interpret the fundamental processes of life in terms of communication and cybernetics at the molecular level.”

In both cases, any humanist repression of evolutionary co-determination between human and nonhuman animals is no longer maintainable—be it rabbit, calf, or human. At the level of biological integrity and its most fundamental, scientific basis of genetic sequencing, the human-animal relationship remains inescapable. Whereas Apollinaire conceived this entanglement in a metaphoric fashion of a bloodthirsty animal inside the human, Lyotard’s humanimal entanglement is evinced at the biological, scientific level.

The outcome of this entanglement can also arrive at an opposing insight. If so many of Les Immatériaux’s displays allude to the human as a biopolitical animal, then the long humanist shadow of understanding animals as machines or automatons simply displaces this onto the human as technological or mechanistic. This too is the other side of humanism: an anti-metaphysical understanding of life as reducible to a purely functional unit of processes (an argument first put forth in Julien Offray de La Mettrie’s scandalous treatise L’homme machine in the eighteenth century). If biology can be reduced to code, if diets can be managed as bits of information fed into a system, if sleeping cells can be fitted to the life support functions of an organism, if natural skin can be replaced with artificial skin, then both human and nonhuman life becomes a site of devaluation or optimization, depending on the desired effect. For Lyotard this outcome is the bad inhuman—the technoscientific subjectivization of life. The question then remains,

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91 “...de comprendre et d’interpréter les processus fondamentaux de la vie, en termes de communication et de cyrnétiques appliquées l’échelle des molécules.” Pompidou, n.p.

92 La Mettrie’s L’Homme machine (Man a Machine), published in 1747, is a work of radically materialist philosophy that applied Descartes’s theory of animal machines to humans.
does the philosopher offer a way out of this bad inhumanism? Does he offer a different path or antidote that does not return to an un-tenable humanist position? To conclude this section, I analyze this crucial question surrounding *Les Immatériaux* demonstrating how the nonhuman animal is implicated within the good inhuman Lyotard offers as antidote. If neither this technocratic inhumanism nor a naïve return to humanism is possible, the option that remains is an inhuman (or nonhuman) point-of-view that challenges them both.

What was largely overlooked, in 1985 but also since then, is that the fundamental question of *Les Immatériaux* is man’s changing relationship to nature. Yet Lyotard is explicit about this being of central concern. His curatorial statement makes clear that the inhuman “new materials” on display in the exhibition put in question one of the central tenants of Cartesian modernity, that is, man as “master and possessor of nature.” By challenging this humanist mastery, Lyotard posits a de-anthropocentric view of both culture and nature: “the human subject does not have exclusive rights in the situation of creator-author-sender; no longer are all messages addressed to him. His task: to devote the marvel of his nervous organization to the collection, acquisition and restitution of unknown messages.” What are these heretofore unrecognized or unknown messages that elude the humanist frame? One of these nonhuman points-of-view in *Les Immatériaux* came in the form of information that exceeds the perceptual capacities of the human—be it molecular imaging that would otherwise go unseen by the human eye alone, or mathematical systems that make complexity of the material world

94 Ibid., 166.
understandable through non-phenomenological abstractions and calculations. The nonhuman or inhuman viewpoint Lyotard privileges above all, however, is the affective, the figural, the differend, or the *infans*—in sum, an aesthetic dimension of sentient being that cannot be mediated, reduced to, or commensurate with the rules of humanist discourse. If the bad inhuman can reduce life to language or code as a matter of biopolitical control, then the good inhuman manifests a form of resistance, of surplus, and of excess. In this agonistic relationship, Lyotard makes it clear that he privileges inhuman affect over inhuman control: “what else remains as ‘politics’ except resistance to inhumanism? And what else is left to resist with but the debt which each soul has contracted with the miserable and admirable indetermination from which it was born and does not cease to be born? – which is to say, with the other inhuman?”

In his curatorial statement, Lyotard describes this affective state as becoming-infant in ceaseless modulation, as a de-privileging of sight (the sense of modernity and enlightenment *par excellence*), and as a de-centering of “Man” as the only identity with the capacity for “experience, memory, work, autonomy (or liberty), even ‘creation.’” These challenges to “Man” and to humanist thought are produced by a technoscientific inhumanism, which can take over these processes. Yet Lyotard cautions that a simple embrace of this inhuman is misguided; instead, he argues for a way out of the confines and limitations of both humanism and technoscientific inhumanism. How so? In answering this question, it is useful to return to the opening vestibule in the exhibition.

After being propelled through its intrauterine experience, the first site a museumgoer

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95 See the sites titled *Surface introuvable, Indiscernables, Materiaux dématérialisé, Petits invisibles* and *Irrepresentables.*
encountered was the Théâtre du non-corps (“The Theater of Nonbody”). The gallery displayed five theatre set dioramas by Jean-Claude Fall, Samuel Beckett’s set designer—each one showing a theatrical stage as a body or protagonist in its own right. As Rajchman recounts, over the headphones “played a fragment from Beckett’s The Unnameable, which narrates the predicament of an “I” who cannot speak yet cannot remain silent.”

This opening gesture of Les Immatériaux is crucial: this affective state before the discursive institution of an “I” is not the technoscientific inhuman, but a para-ontology that always runs parallel to the human being even upon entrance to the confines of humanist discourse and law. Like Apollinaire’s octopod, this inhuman always clings to the humanist subject. As Bamford’s analysis of the body in Les Immatériaux argues, this opening gesture is described as a call to the inhuman through the sound of pumping blood which is there not to reassure us of our individual physical containers but to draw attention to that inhuman which persists despite the teachings of humanism, through the unarticulated phrases which, because they have no addressee, are reduced to mutism and banished from articulate argumentation – from logos.

It should now be clear why this moment in Les Immatériaux is crucial for the trajectory of this chapter. While Lyotard was primarily interested in the capacity to reconnect with a pre-egoic infantile state as a mode of political resistance, today his theorizing of this critical inhumanism, as it was originally for Apollinaire, seems to be inextricably bound with animality. Since they are both infans, infant and nonhuman animal exist within a predicament of an “I” that cannot speak but cannot stay silent

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99 Bamford, 81.
either; both are affective states that engage with their environment, often with sight as a secondary sense; and both can be repressed by the human animal upon entering the metaphysical constructs of “Man” in humanist thought.\(^{100}\) If the animal haunts *Les Immatériaux* through its absence, it returns via the human spectator whose affective capacities may resist the calculated, technoscientific immersion of its zones, sites, and displays. In short, within Lyotard’s conception of the inhuman clings a posthumanist point of view that challenges the ideological parameters of humanism, not only through the *infans*, but also animality (though it should be noted that such a critical distance was not likely attained by very many spectators; nor is it clear how, within the enveloping context of the display, becoming *infans* or nonhuman is not simply falling into ontological precarity).

Lyotard himself would consider this posthumanist eventuality beyond his *infans*. In an essay from 1991, “The Affect-phrase,” the philosopher speculates on whether or not animal “affect” can be a meaningful utterance outside *logos* or speech: “Feeling is a phrase. I call it the affect-phrase.”\(^{101}\) Lyotard ultimately answers in the negative, essentially concluding that animals are the ultimate victims in that they cannot even make recognizable claims about their own victimhood.\(^{102}\) Perhaps, for all its immunological insulation, *Les Immatériaux* transfers this inability to make claims on one’s behalf (ostensibly shared by *infans* and animal) onto its visitors; in the darkest biopolitical reading of the exhibit, its immersion and controlled affective responses made aleatory

\(^{100}\) For an exploration of these nonhumanist forms of life that cannot speak yet nevertheless have thought—human infants, nonhuman animals, and early hominids—see José Luis Bermúdez, *Thinking Without Words* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).


\(^{102}\) For an analysis and critique of Lyotard’s dismissal of the animal as a humanist residue in his philosophy, see Wolfe, ”In the Shadow of Wittgenstein's Lion: Language, Ethics, and the Question of the Animal,” 11-9.
self-communication difficult, and like Deleuze’s society of control, one participated in situ without necessarily being able to communicate the quality of this participation, nor effect any necessary changes in the surroundings should it be negative.

2.4 Animal Art

The multi-site exhibition Animal Art at Steirischer Herbst in Graz from 1987, which I turn to next, can be understood as a synthesis of the two previous exhibitions in this chapter. On the one hand, like de l’Animal, the exhibition privileges animal processes and nonhuman alterity; on the other, like Les Immatériaux, Animal Art demonstrates the ways in which nonhumans have succumb to their own forms of inhuman technoscientific de-naturalization. In other words, Animal Art maintains a balancing act between a relatively open posthumanist ecology (whereby the nonhuman is collaborated with in a positive way) and a relatively closed transhumanist biopolitics (whereby the nonhuman is tested on or manipulated in some way). This exhibition thus exemplifies the ways in which posthumanism and transhumanism can be interlaced, which when synthesized becomes a mixed aesthetic like subsequent bio-art practices that both collaborate and control the nonhuman living.

Surprisingly little has been written about this exhibition, which collected major figures of ecologically inflected art practices (Joseph Beuys, Hans Haacke, Paul Kos) along with a host of lesser-known artists who, in one way or another, incorporated animal life into their works. Here, I will limit myself to two facets of this exhibition: how the

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103 Animal Art was exhibited in four galleries in Graz from September 9 to October 11, 1987 (Galerie Hanns Christian Hoshcak, Palais Attems, Atelier Körösisstraße, and Joanneum Ecksaal). The exhibition also included outdoor installation in the Schloßbergplatz.

104 It should be stressed that the difference between collaboration and control is not always evident, which in practice can become a dangerous oscillation. For a vehement critique of such bio-art practices, see Elisabeth de Fontenay, “The Pathetic Pranks of Bio-Art,” in Without Offending Humans: a Critique of Animal Rights (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).
catalog, especially its rich set of essays, demonstrates that the ideas of bio art and many of the issues involved are already in place before the wide spread of the technologies that made bio-art possible, and how the disparate art practices in the exhibition reflect the entangled impulses between transhumanist and posthumanist positions vis-à-vis nonhuman animals in art. In both cases, I make judicious selections, and by no means should my analysis of this sprawling exhibition be considered as exhaustive.

Few installation shots exist that are not already pictured in Animal Art’s voluminous catalog, making its contents a crucial piece of archival documentation.\textsuperscript{105} The catalog is composed of three sections: the first is an encyclopedic collection of art works incorporating animal life spanning the late-1960s to the mid-1980s (only some of which appear in the 1987 exhibition). The encyclopedia’s enlightenment connotations are reflected in the catalog’s design: for easy reference, the heterogeneous grouping of art works, installations, and performances are indexed alphabetically according to species by thumb cuts on the fore edge of the book, from ants to chickens, flies, pigs, sheep, and many other species in between. Each work is documented by a black and white photograph with a written explanation of its meaning or process on a facing page (often in the artists’ own words). The second section represents those artists directly involved with Animal Art. Color plates show their work, and more extended texts offer explanations (also often by the artists themselves). Lastly, the third section is a compilation of commissioned essays on various topics concerning animal life in art, culture, and science. These essays range from ethological perspectives on animal intelligence (Jasia Reichardt’s “Are Animals Intelligent”) to ethical considerations of bio-

\textsuperscript{105} In an e-mail correspondence with the archivist at Steirischer Herbst, only four installation shots not pictured in the catalog remain. These document installations by Christina Kubisch, Henning Christiansen, and Herbert Soltys. Email with the author, 11/27/2013.
genetics (Hubert Kröber’s “Possibilities and Limits of Gene Technology” and Mathias Wahl’s “Designer Genes”) to cultural studies of the concept of animality across history (Werner Fenz’s “Artist and Model or How Authentic is Art Reality?,” Georg Jappe’s “From Cojotes [sic] to Muckworms,” and Franz Wuketits’s “Animals as Beings Created by Nature and Civilization”). In sum, the catalog offers the first major offerings of a critical analysis of animals in art history and advanced art practices.

Richard Kriesche—the show’s curator and a contributing artist—sets the stage for the exhibition in his curatorial essay “Animal Huminal Digital.” The central thrust of his argument is that recent advances in genetic technology have fundamentally altered the concept of creation, and along with it, the concept of the work of art and our understanding of life itself. Kriesche diagnoses two conceptions of creation. In his first concept, a divine “organic, living work of nature [was] contrasted with man’s inorganic dead work of art, a metaphor for creative man.” This reflects the long-standing concept of art as a Platonic pale imitation of a divine template (Kriesche quotes verses from Genesis, specifically, the passage concerning the naming of animals). His second, more contemporary concept of creation calls this first creation into doubt. With the advent of genetic technology, science has allowed “man” to tinker with creation at its “informational” level, i.e. by uncovering and working with DNA coding as the purported substrate of life. In short, the “created” has taken on the mantle of “creator” in a historico-epistemological hand-off. For Kriesche, the move from the first concept of

108 Kriesche quotes the second book of Genesis where from the earth “God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto man to see what he would call them.” Ibid.
creation to the second amounts to a transfer of the creative act from a transcendent source to one that is immanent in human culture and technology.

Kriesche points to a number of consequences for the nonhuman animal in this shift. In a clear parallel with (trans)humanism, he states that in the past, culture was understood as overcoming animality—or that the evolution of culture was founded on “overcoming the beast,” echoing Apollinaire’s second form of the inhuman. By the 1980s, however, after having thoroughly expelled the animal via this exclusionary and self-negating humanist history, the “animal is regenerated in the artefacts and constructs that were construed by ‘cultural man’.” As a result, animals return as cultural, technical products—or what I would describe as transnonhumans.10 Over the course of his essay, Kriesche laments this turn of events, which he claims is a culturalization of the universe that leaves no natural process unturned. Alluding to Jeremy Rifkin, an early critic of biotech and the patenting of animals, Kriesche decries the reduction of animal life to patentable and mere technical objects of manipulation; he claims that genetic technology has thanatological effects on the living, and that it plunges the world into a flat ontology where “the differentiation between human, animal, and vegetable life is irrelevant.”11

Moreover, Kriesche argues that this flattening of all life into codeable information leads to a collapse of moral security. Effectively, this flattening reveals all life to be bare life, and “all that man is left with is his inner nature, the beast in himself.” In this sense, Kriesche is working through a cautionary tale of biopower and the biopolitical

109 Ibid.
110 This can be taken in two ways: that animals come back as inorganic technology, or that they come back as organic process now controlled and manipulated as technical things. The mouse is a privileged example for Kriesche, as he notes the rodent’s reappearance as the point-and-click computer mouse. Curiously, although the Oncomouse (a genetically modified laboratory mouse whose genetic material predisposes it for developing the cancer) was filed for patent in Europe in the mid-80s, it is never mentioned.
111 Kriesche, n.p.
112 Ibid.
ramifications of genetic technology on the concepts of creation, life, and manipulation. He also seems to point out a perverse dialectic between transhumanism and posthumanism—namely, that the further the former goes in its bio-technical endeavors, the more it relegates the human and nonhuman to a compatible state of ontological malleability, which preys on posthumanist affinities—in short, not transcending animality at all, but coming back to it in far more trenchant terms.

The catalog’s expansive essay section raises many conceptual issues that presage the bio art practices that become a reality a decade later. And yet, much of the art in the show itself cannot be properly called transgenic or biotechnological. Corroborating the notion that novel technologies in art are preceded by yearning for their capabilities before they can be realized (as with the development of photography in the nineteenth century), a number of works point towards transgenic and bio art practices without yet embodying them in practice. A number of examples hover on the threshold between animals and technology. These include Nam June Paik’s Sonatine for Goldfish, 1975, a television filled with goldfish [ill. 2.31]; Stiletto’s Flying Spots, 1984/86, another television, this time filled with flies [ill. 2.32]; and Christina Kubitsch’s outdoor sound piece The Bird’s Tree, 1987, an outdoor installation of speakers emitting electronic

113 Two other examples provide the range of essays with regard to the advent of bio-art: Hubert Kröber’s “Possibilities and Limits of Gene Technology” discusses various technical, biological vocabularies and describes attendant procedures matter-of-factly. His discussion of breeding, cloning, and transgenic processes reads like a template for the transhumanist side of bio-art. Conversely, the essay by microbiologist and immunologist Mathias Wahl augurs a posthumanist position that critiques anthropocentrism: "In general, the only importance we give animals is in relation to us. Animals are not a subject of literature, music or art except in a superficial way – as symbols of humanity, nature, or the universe...The English word “Humanities” reflects very well the fact that the “Geisteswissenschaften” are concerned with human endeavors only." Wahl not only reinforces the commonalities and affinities between human and nonhuman animals, but he also discusses the ramifications of genetic technology and the controversies it has elicited. See Mathias Wabl, "Designer Genes," in Animal art : Steirischer Herbst ’87, 19. September-11. Oktober: Galerie Hanns Christian Hoschek (Graz: Steirischer Herbst, 1987), np.
recordings of endangered species of bird in a tree. [ill. 2.33] In each case, the nonhuman is a substitute for (or is substituted by) a technical apparatus. John Billingsley’s *Micro Mouse Maze* (1985) takes this further by swapping out an organic mouse for the pre-programmed movements of a robotic mouse in a maze.\(^\text{115}\) Although Kriesche claims that “nothing is more boring than an artificialized animal,” each of these works point towards this very outcome (albeit for disparate ends).

Other artists practice a laboratory aesthetics with nonhumans. These works do not so much collapse or flatly ontologize animality and technicity, but present nonhuman processes as aestheticized forms of experimentation, conditioning, and observation. For example, the work of Argentinian artist Luis Benedit is well represented in the catalog. For the 1970 Venice Biennale, the artist constructed *Biotrom, 4000 Living Bees*, a large, artificial beehive made in collaboration with an ethologist. [ill. 2.34] Benedit installed both real and fake flowers inside the hive’s transparent glass and steel-framed construction, which allowed him to monitor the bees’ behaviors and preferences. From 1971 to 1972, Benedit worked with ants by constructing mazes in order to test their intelligence and behavior. Other works tested chicken, snail, or fish behavior in a similar vein of laboratory aesthetics within a closed system akin to the nonhuman delegated performances discussed above. Interestingly, by the time of *Animal Art*, Benedit had given up working with animals.\(^\text{116}\) He gives three reasons for abandoning the practice: the difficulties and costs involved in such installations, the lack of interest in such work on the part of scientists, and his reluctance to give the impression that his work privileges

\(^{115}\) As explained in the catalog, these micromice are entered into annual competitions, including the “Euromouse” competitions. Billingsley offers both a history of these robotic competitions as well as a how-to guide for building and engineering your own micromouse.

\(^{116}\) Kriesche et al., np.
“biology” over “art.” As such, while a nascent bio-art laboratory aesthetics seems to be underway in Benedit’s work of the early 1970s, any coupling between science and art has not yet fully arrived.

Denis Masi’s installations also tap into a laboratory aesthetics, though in a darker mode. In Barrier (1977-80), the artist sets up a two-faced mirror on a table with various geometric, conical objects on one side and two Rhesus monkeys on the other. [ill. 2.35] The monkeys push on the mirror’s surface in fear and confusion. Another work, Search (1975-7), involves a group of rats under a spotlight who are subject to a taped loop of recorded calls of their species. While Masi’s installation of sounds, barriers, lights, and living animals evokes reflects a laboratory aesthetics with various installation components, at bottom his impulse is less scientific than shamanistic. In his installation-performance Hidden Sign (1978-80) this became clear: during a six-minute performance involving tape recorded sounds, spotlights, and a dead seagull affixed to a totemic pole, Masi ritualistically sacrificed a live eel by biting through the animal. [ill. 2.36] In justifying this performance, the artist claimed that: “These animals can reveal the secrets of the future because they are thought to be receptacles for the souls of the dead.”117 Masi thus reveals an anti-scientific (anti-modern) impulse running in tandem with the fledgling transhumanist, laboratory aesthetics just mentioned.118 If those quasi-scientific practices seem to trump past notions of the “Natural Order,” artistic strategies like Masi’s evince an atavistic, religio-aesthetics that relegates the animal to more primordial conditions and beliefs (though these strategies are nearly always uncritical, escapist, and altogether humanist). Somewhat compatibly, Joseph Beuys is represented in the catalog with what

117 Ibid., n.p.
118 This atavistic impulse can also be found in the first exhibition case study in this chapter, De l’animal. See especially the works of Guido Baptist and Jonas Wille.
are still the most famous instances of a fellow animal performer: the live coyote from *I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974), and the dead hare in *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965). Even more in line with Masi’s shamanism are the sacrificial and ceremonial practices of Viennese Aktionism (also documented in the catalog), including now canonical performances like Hermann Nitsch’s *4 Aktion* (1963) and Rudolf Schwarzkogler’s *6. Aktion* (1966).

Despite these atavistic and transhumanist works, the majority of objects exhibited and cataloged in *Animal Art* are posthumanist. While the works just discussed instrumentalize animals—be it for disparate purposes and to differing degrees—most of the works open spaces at arm’s length from humanist control. In various ways, these posthumanist practices embrace animality and highlight affinities between human and nonhuman animals, challenging the long history of anthropocentric exceptionalism. I group these works into three categories: Nonhuman performance and process art, Nonhuman creativity, and Nonhuman culture-community.

If Benedi’s work involves testing animal processes through mazes, then in *Ant-Cooperative* (1969), Hans Haacke set up a less obstructed view of the social processes of ants. [ill. 2.37] The work consisted of an ant colony that, apart from being confined to sand inside a glass case, did not delimit or test the insects’ movements or collective organization. This aesthetics of relative openness is operative in many of Haacke’s works involving animals, including the following installations and performances documented through photographs in the catalog: in *Rhine-Water Treatment Plant* (1972), a water purification process allowed gold-fish to thrive in a gallery setting, which created a nonhuman space—a shallow floor-bound aquarium—partially obstructing a human
architectural setting. [ill. 2.38] In *Live Airborn System* (1965/68), the artist fed wild seagulls outdoors; the title of *Ten Turtles, Set Free* (1970) sufficiently describes another work’s gesture; *Goat in a Forest* (1970), documents a goat grazing outside in the south of France; and *Norbert, “All Systems Go”* (1970/71), was a nonhuman performance piece in which the artist attempted to teach a Myna bird named Norbert (after the first-generation systems theorist Norbert Wiener) the phrase quoted in the work’s title. [ill. 2.39] Haacke is an important progenitor of posthumanist practices that allow for nonhuman thriving within aesthetic parameters. This form of practice points towards positive rights (what animals can do) rather than negative rights (what should not be done to them), which the political theorists Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka have recently conceived as a “zoopolis” of integrated human and nonhuman cooperation privileging positive rights.¹¹⁹ A number of works in the *Animal Art* exhibition and catalog fall under a similar rubric, including Paul Kos’s installations featuring various nonhuman animals, Lili Fischer’s furniture sculpture with spiders, Werner Klotz’s drawings with snails, and Wolf Kahlen’s gallery environments oriented for canine-being. In each case, nonhuman performers and their processes dictate the aesthetic parameters of the work and the artist/viewer’s relationship to nonhuman being.

A number of artists in *Animal Art* take seriously the creative capacities of nonhuman cognition, volition, or aleatory movements. These fall roughly into two categories: the visual and the sonic. The German artist Katherina Meldner’s line drawings attest to the movements of various insects on paper. She follows the movements of an ant colony in red pencil and any other insect that would happen to traverse the paper in green.

The result is a teeming mass of lines that indexes entomological activity over a span of
time—both as a form of process art, but also as a reversal of human to nonhuman
authorial outsourcing. This reversal of authorial intent is taken to its fullest by the
Austrian painter Arnulf Rainer. In the late 1970s the artist collaborated with chimpanzees
in order to mimic their approach to painting. Rainer describes chimpanzees as having
“sovereign natures,” leading to artistic alterity akin to extra-traditional freedom of
expression in the art of children or the insane. As a human aping a chimp, Rainer would
paint in tandem and real-time seated alongside his nonhuman source of inspiration, which
resulted in double paintings of gestural abstraction (on one side Rainer’s painting in
mimicry, on the other the chimp’s original). [ill. 2.40]

Two other German artists incorporated similar aleatory movements. In Marianne
Greve’s Frog Music I—Tadpoles, 1984, the artist photographed a proliferation of frog
tadpoles on a sheet of blank staff music notation. [ill. 2.41] The tadpoles, looking like
quarter notes whose stems have come to life in unpredictable squiggles on the page,
dictate a musical composition depending on their positions on the staff when
photographed. A visual phenomenon was thus transcribed into a sonic one in becoming a
potentially performable score for piano (she also worked with shrimp in a similar fashion
in a composition for a sextet). Timm Ulrich’s sound pieces, on the other hand, work
directly with the audible capacities of certain species. In Bees, Wasps, Hornets. An
Acoustic Environment (1971), the artist inserted a live microphone into a glass container
holding the eponymous insects, in order to amplify the sounds they made. [ill. 2.42] In an
expanded insectile orchestral set up a year later, Ulrich released crickets in the State
Opera of Hamburg for Cricket Concerto (1972).
This preoccupation with music, scores, chance, and the outsourcing of authorial will reflects the ongoing influence of Fluxus. It is thus no surprise that Henning Christiansen, a key artist and composer associated with Fluxus (having collaborated with Beuys and Nam June Paik), contributed to Animal Art. Christiansen’s compositions often included animal voices and sounds; in the case of his Symphonia Natura (1985), these were recorded at the Rome zoo. In Graz, the composer staged this piece with the cooperation and collaboration of live animals, including chickens and sheep. [ill. 2.43] In each instance—Greve, Ulrich, and Christiansen—animals not only play a performative role in the work, but also a compositional one. Moreover, this nonhuman capacity is explicitly ascribed a privileged place in the biological and semiotic evolution of aesthetic pleasure. In the catalog, Greve outlines certain theories (Darwin among them) that posit animal sounds as a primary aesthetic event in nature i.e the first “music.” In a similar vein, Christiansen détourne the New Testament notion of Logos not as human but as originally nonhuman: “In the beginning was not the Word, but a chirp.”

Meldner, Rainer, Greve, and Christiansen all incorporate nonhuman creativity into a pre-existing genre of human creation (either graphic or musical). By contrast, the Dutch artist Felix Hess’s interest in frogs departs from this paradigm. He asserts that such sounds in nature are not musical, but instead represent nonhuman communication and sociability: “Music is made for people to listen to. Frog calls serve as a means of communication between frogs.” This interest in the sonic capacities of amphibian collectives led Hess to make Chirps and Silence (1986/87), which attempts to recreate a “frog chorus” by way of artificial, electronic, programmed “soundcreatures” that react

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120 Kriesche et al., n.p.
121 Ibid.
both to each other and to human presence (thereby simulating human and nonhuman
interactions outdoors). [ill. 2.44] Two impulses are at work here: a transhumanist urge to
re-create nonhuman animals, along with their abilities and relations, as well as a
posthumanist desire to recognize nonhuman capacities for communication and their
accompanying sonic worlds. This latter preoccupation is more properly posthumanist in
that it does not simply seek to incorporate nonhuman processes into human aesthetic
genres, but rather seeks to gain human access to nonhuman forms of meaning, being, and
aesthetic worlds.¹²²

Hess’s work with amphibious Mitsein already points to nonhuman forms of
culture-community. A number of works in Animal Art emphasize this being-together of
nonhumans, or being-together of humans and nonhumans. This form of work either gives
the nonhuman spatial priority, or underscores human-animal cooperation and
collaboration in certain ways. Haacke’s work already points to such features, as does
Kahlen’s gallery environment for dogs (which demonstrates that my four categories
overlap in a number of ways). Possibly the most evocative of such a zoopolitical,
communal gesture is Mark Thompson’s work with live bees. From 1974 to 1987, the
artist undertook various projects involving a bee colony. In Live-In-Hive (1976),
Thompson placed his head inside a glass beehive, which remained open to the bee
population that carried out its honeycomb construction and daily activities in relation to
his human head. [ill. 2.45] In his City Explorations (carried out in San Francisco, Los
Angeles, New York, and Graz from 1977 to 1987), the artist coordinated his urban
movements according to the activities of honeybees: “The situations & people I met were

¹²² See Cary Wolfe’s distinction between humanist posthumanism and posthumanist posthumanism in Cary
related to sources of nectar & pollen in the area. This exploration was possible by
deciphering the symbolic communication dances of the honey bees, which indicate the
distance & direction of food sources.”¹²³ The artist’s movements and relationship to the
urban environment were subordinated to nonhuman activities—and once more, the artist
was influenced by a biologist, namely, Karl von Frisch and his ethological work
deciphering the honeybee’s propensity for communicating through dance.¹²⁴ The
emphasis on nonhuman culture as a form of communication and social organization is
evident. Thompson makes it clear: “Through these explorations and a variety of projects I
have come to view the hive as a remarkable window into the larger natural world and
human communities.”¹²⁵

2.5 CONCLUSION

Jonathan Crary’s recent book 24/7 offers a fitting example for the mixing of
posthumanist and transhumanist impulses that I have tracked throughout this chapter. In
analyzing the ways in which capital hopes to make incursions on sleep (sleep being the
only moment consumers are not tapped into its flow), Crary’s opening example calls
attention to US Defense Department research on the white-crowned sparrow. This bird
has the capacity to stay awake in flight for as long as seven days during its migratory
period, leading researchers to try and find ways of transferring this superhuman feat onto
human beings (for ultra-soldiers, but possibly also workers and consumers).¹²⁶ It is
important to note how transhumanism and posthumanism are inextricably bound here: the
sparrow represents the promise of a bio-technical supplement that would allow the human

¹²³ Kriesche et al., n.p.
¹²⁴ Karl von Frisch, along with Konrad Lorenze and Niko Tinbergen, won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or
Medicine in 1973, a watershed moment for ethology.
¹²⁵ Kriesche et al., n.p.
to transcend its species finitude and limitations; and yet, such an outcome would attest to, in part, a becoming-bird that could only be possible if the bio-cognitive and enfleshed makeup of both human and nonhuman were similar in various ways. Taken as a whole, if one is to judge by number and modality of its installations, Animal Art favors the posthumanist over the transhumanist. Of course, this could be due to the fact that the biotech necessary for transhumanist (or transnonhumanist) practices was not yet available. Even so, the great benefit of revisiting Animal Art is to demonstrate how posthumanist sensibilities open up more interesting aesthetic possibilities, which often align themselves with ethical and ecological demands—like some of the more successful instances from De l’animal from two years before. Moreover, this sensibility, unlike the more technocratically inclined transhumanist approach, presents a challenge to the smooth demands of capital that overwhelmingly instrumentalizes all forms of life, in what amounts to a more promising critique or resistance to Lyotard’s bad inhuman that his accelerationist Les Immatériaux could not make room for.
CHAPTER THREE – MARCEL BROODTHAERS AND THE ANIMAL READYMADE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

A few years before becoming a visual artist, the poet Marcel Broodthaers, then working on his first book of bestiary poems, *La bête noir* (1961), visited the Antwerp Zoo. His photographs from this outing are preserved—among them, a melancholic rhinoceros and solitary crocodile [ill. 3.1-2]—as well as notes for a film using the zoo as setting. Titled “Antwerp Zoo (Screenplay),” (1961) the script gives a general indication what the film might have involved: the opening scene would show a ship entering port carrying an exotic animal. Speculating on the animal’s origins and destination, Broodthaers guesses that the animal was tracked down from Hamburg, the “world centre of animal trading,” and wonders whether the trip was a good one and if life will be bearable for the animal in new surroundings. He notes that, in the film, the history of the zoo would come under scrutiny, a history that customarily remains hidden from the majority of a public with merely “a sentimental interest in animals.” Should the film have been realized, it would have woven together three points of view: that of the zookeepers, the public, and the animals themselves “from inside the cages.” Broodthaers even had plans to interview visitors as well as various denizens of the zoo: a crocodile, a monkey, a rhinoceros, and a parrot.¹

In stark relief to Broodthaers’s reputation for opacity, play, and enigma, what is remarkable about this incipient idea for a film is the straightforwardness of its ideology critique. Broodthaers is explicit that the film should reveal the zoo’s internal machinations. This ideology critique also functions at the level of representation: the

three-fold viewpoints would disentangle “legend (fables and caricatures) and reality (up keeping and habits of the animals),” thereby de-coupling narrative fabrication from the reality it dissimulates—auguring Broodthaers’s long fascination with fables and their détourment.\(^2\) This degree of critical earnestness—the ability to clearly separate ideology from reality—soon became impossible for Broodthaers (who, like Lacan, will soon understand reality to be inevitably structured by metaphor, fantasy, and fiction).

Even so, “Antwerp Zoo (Screenplay)” contains a number of themes that evolve over the course of Broodthaers’s career. For one, his interest in Grandville’s nineteenth century send ups of social mores and bourgeois institutions through zoo-anthropomorphic caricature and satire.\(^3\) Now that the public had internalized and trivialized this tactic by reflexively sentimentalizing zoo animals with human traits, Broodthaers implies that such satire is no longer viable. Instead, the artist treats the zoo as an environment in which satire unfolds directly in real-time: “We will avoid any direct satire about the visitors by focusing rather on the amusing complicity which links certain among them to animals.”\(^4\)

This repositioning of Grandville’s critique, from a readership that sees itself as comical zoomorphic figures to an audience unwittingly performing social satire in situ, is at the core of Broodthaers’s late installations he called décors.\(^5\)

A further set of themes can be gleaned from the zoo screenplay: firstly, a preoccupation with the inability to reply in speech or to communicate fully.

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\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) The two major works by Grandville are *The Metamorphoses of the Day* (1829) and *Scenes from the Private and Public Life of Animals* (1842).

\(^4\) “Antwerp Zoo (Screenplay)” in Broodhaers, 88.

\(^5\) One might go so far to say that Broodthaers transposes a zoologic onto art installations, with its attendant themes of domestication, confinement, and objectification. Rachel Haidu argues a similar point concerning Broodthaers’s *Un Jardin d’Hiver*, 1974; namely, that this décor’s potted plants and garden chairs thematized a impulse to domesticate the public (one well-trodden by Western colonialism). Rachel Haidu, *The Absence of Work: Marcel Broodthaers, 1964-1976* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2010), 256.
Broodthaers’s planned interviews with zoo animals are presented as impossible forms of communiqué (rhetorical, gestural, absurd, or, in the case of the parrot, as simply repeating the question).\(^6\) Secondly, Broodthaers concludes “Antwerp Zoo (Screenplay)” with an ode to infancy by claiming that the zoo “belongs first and foremost to the world of childhood.”\(^7\) This interest in childhood—in its literature, its graphics, its subordination to institutional powers, and, much like Lyotard’s *infans*, its critical naiveness—recurs throughout Broodthaers’s career.\(^8\) Perhaps the most explicit example of this can be found in the poem “The Pig” from Broodthaers’s more well-known poetic bestiary, *Pense-Bête*, 1963-4: “Chops hams head porcelain scarf ears on the snout of the counter…I read in your tiny eyes a children’s book.”\(^9\)

Broodthaers’s plans for filming the Antwerp zoo also augur what has become a recurrent theme in the literature on his work—namely, the practice of institutional critique.\(^10\) If the film sought to reveal the zoo behind-the-scenes and its production of an uninformed, sentimental audience lulled by spectacle, then it sought to draw attention to the container as much as what it contains. That his analysis of institutional framing posits the “objects” on display as animals and not art leads to two crucial arguments for this chapter: 1) throughout Broodthaers’s oeuvre, the animal holds a metaphoric complicity with both the artist and the artwork (all three are framed and constrained by institutional powers that exceed or undermine them); and 2) from the get-go, Broodthaers’s practice of

\(^6\) This form of interview returns in Broodthaers’s sound recording *Interview with a Cat*, 1970, and in his film of the waxed figure of the utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham at University College, *Figures of Wax* (1974). The parrot is also a key figure in his oeuvre.

\(^7\) “Antwerp Zoo (Screenplay)” in Broodthaers, 89.

\(^8\) In this sense, like Lyotard’s *infans*, Broodthaers’s conception of childhood is as resistor to authority


\(^10\) An art practice undertaking institutional critique works to expose and analyze the cultural, political, and economic structures that are implicated in the institutional modes of its display; zoos and museums alike work to dissimulate these less than venerable aspects of their institutional conditions.
institutional critique was never limited to the museum as such. Much of the existing literature emphasizes Broodthaers’s role in creating museum fictions as a mode of critiquing official art institutions.\textsuperscript{11} However compelling such readings may be, they nevertheless immobilize Broodthaers’s work, paradoxically enough, within the confines of an art historical discourse tethered to its institutions (which are often implicated in systems of power that far exceed the museum). Yve-Alain Bois’s distinction between restricted and structural formalism might be applied to institutional critique: there are restricted forms of institutional critique, which aim their sights within museological limits, and there are (post)structural forms of institutional critique, which have an expanded view of the museum as simply one of many networked cultural and political institutions in need of investigation.\textsuperscript{12} Resolutely, Broodthaers is of the latter variety—and this opens up a space of questioning that exceeds those telegraphed by art historical discourse to date.\textsuperscript{13}

One of the ambitions of this chapter is to demonstrate how Broodthaers complicates the figure of the animal in art history and visual culture in a compatible

\textsuperscript{11} For the most detailed account of the run of the artist’s museum fictions, see Haidu, 107-224. See also Benjamin Buchloh’s important compilation of primary documents and critical essays stemming from a special 1987 issue of the journal \textit{October}, as well as Douglas Crimp’s essay on Broodthaers’s museum fictions: Marcel Broodthaers et al., \textit{Broodthaers: Writings, Interviews, Photographs}, ed. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988).

\textsuperscript{12} In Broodthaers’s short text “The Degree Zero” from 1973, he is explicit that “official presentations” include not only museums but also “other institutions (hospitals, prisons, etc).” See Broodthaers, 351. For Bois’ distinction between restricted and structural formalism, see Yve-Alain Bois, \textit{Painting as model} (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), xi-xxx.

\textsuperscript{13} The artist was adamant in critiquing not only art institutions but also its discourses as limited in scope. In “To Be a Straight Thinker or Not to Be Blind” (1975), Broodthaers diagnoses a circuitous and crass relationship between art, criticism, and commercial values: “Art is a prisoner of its fantasies and its function as magic; it hangs on our bourgeois walls as a sign of power, it flickers along the peripeteia of our history like a shadow-play—but is it artistic? To read the Byzantine writing on the subject reminds us of the sex of angels, of Rabelais, or of debates at the Sorbonne. At the moment, inopportune linguistic investigations all end in a single gloss, which its authors like to call criticism.” Even though museums and galleries have since internalized (more often than not restricted) forms of institutional critique, Broodthaers’s lament that “linguistic investigations all end in a single gloss” still rings true. Broodthaers, 469.
mode of expanded institutional critique. My genealogical method does not favor the better-known works presently comprising the Broodthaers canon. In some ways, I focus on the outliers. One of these is *Les Animaux de la ferme* from 1974 (from here on designated simply as *Les Animaux*). [ill. 3.3] This double print of multiple cows captioned by automobile names speaks volumes about the postwar animal, and throughout the rest of this chapter, it will serve as the nodal point of my interpretive constellation. While immediately recognizable, it has received little critical attention. There are two reasons for this: for one, it is not immediately clear how this work fits into the established readings of Broodthaers as purveyor of institutional critique (in the restricted sense). More decisively, *Les Animaux* concerns animals, and while these abound his work, they tend to be either occluded in the literature, or treated as unproblematic, traditional symbols (ironically enough for such a mythoclastic artist).

Another ambition is to think through the animal readymade and to demonstrate that Broodthaers’s reassessment of Duchamp’s gesture necessarily involves animals in language, taxonomy, and commodity culture. Taking *Les Animaux* as the organizing work for this chapter allows me to look at three key facets of the historical readymade, proposed by Thierry de Duve in his writings on Duchamp in the 1980s: one, its relationship to nominalism, and the force of institutional language, law, and classification; two, its relationship to subject formation as a result of these discursive powers—“subject” and *sujet* in the doubled sense of both subject matter and subjectivity; and three, its relationship to industrial objects and endlessly repeatable processes and things, which form the basis of modern industry.14 The power of naming, the subjectivity

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this gives rise to, and the industrial repeatability of things serve as my main headings situated on the left with internal sub-headings on the right. By analyzing the role of animals in Broodthaers’s work I not only examine a multi-faceted figure in his career as both poet and visual artist, but also how animals fare within the continuing historical legacy of the readymade in contemporary art practices, of which I argue the pressing need to recognize the animal readymade to be an impossible paradox.

3.2 NOMINALISM

Les Animaux is pure simplicity of image and text. On two separate color lithographed sheets of paper, five rows of three cows each are presented in an orderly, grid-like fashion. Some look at the viewer, others straightforward in profile. The print is a modified or rectified readymade whose original source material comes from the publisher Maison Deyrolle, a naturalist shop founded in 1831 in Paris that would later became a publishing house of pedagogic materials. [ill. 3.4] Broodthaers’s prints are exact replicas of the Deyrolle originals except for a surreptitious change in captioning. Instead of types of cows (Vache Picarde, Vache Comtois, Vache Flamande, etc.) the names printed underneath each figure are makes of cars (“Chevrolet,” “Cadillac,” “Chrysler,” etc.). An avid collector of such books dealing with plants, animals, and natural history, Broodthaers included their illustrations in a number of his works and installations—most notably in the Musée d’Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section des Figures (Der Adler vom Oligozän bis Heute) from 1972, and in Un Jardin d’Hiver I and II, 1974 (all exhibitions discussed in this chapter).15 Since Broodthaers has changed only the cows’ names, Les Animaux thematizes first and foremost the power of nomination—one that

15 See Michael Compton, "In Praise of the Subject," in Marcel Broodthaers (Minneapolis; New York: Walker Art Center; Rizzoli, 1989), 60.
functions through ordering via language and categorization. The encyclopedic aesthetic of the prints thus reflects a history of humanist Enlightenment, and a taxonomic procedure of naming and ordering the natural world. Before discussing how this plays out in specific works, a brief detour into Enlightenment history and the question of animals and naming is necessary.

In his essay “What is Enlightenment” (1984) Michel Foucault argues that humanism and the Enlightenment are by no means synonymous. This is due to the drive at the core of Enlightenment thinking that if left unchecked should indiscriminately root out all dogma—including any assumptions the humanist says about himself. Because both ancient and modern conceptions of humanism uphold such uncritical assumptions about the human, when finally put under the test of Enlightenment critique, the parallel trajectories of humanism and Enlightenment begin to diverge. One of humanism’s uncritical assumptions is Man’s anthropocentrism: his self-authorized rights of intelligence, morality, and emotion. This gave Man the power to name and order the world in ecological sovereignty. In the case of animals, however, their common names were received from a pre-Enlightenment worldview, one that nevertheless folded itself seamlessly and unchecked into a modern, scientific discourse (even in the Latin derived binomial naming system). From Aesop to La Fontaine, Linnaeus, Cuvier, and contemporary popular discourses, the nomination of animals as types remains unproblematized and programmatic. This habitual retention of animal names from one period into another occurred even within biology by way of the typological concept of “species.” As the philosopher of science Marc Ereshefsky points out, this is a result of the

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16 This is why one might posit a posthumanist Enlightenment, wherein “man” and “human” are no longer unproblematic forms of (self)knowledge. See Cary Wolfe’s discussion of Foucault’s essay as it relates to Wolfe’s own conception of posthumanist theory: Wolfe, What is Posthumanism?, xiv.
unchecked inheritance of Linnaean taxonomy. In the eighteenth century, Linnaeus provided streamlined rules for classifying the natural world; his system was predicated on a divine, essentialist notion of species whose meaning was derived from Judeo-Christian creationism. Yet even after the nineteenth century Darwinian turn in biology (when species came to be understood as evolving by non-essentialist and completely material chance processes) categorical aspects of the Linnaean system remain and “the vast majority of biologists use the Linnaean hierarchy and its system of nomenclature.”¹⁷ This is not a minor point, since the “Linnaean system is the backbone of biological classification and... prescribes how to name and represent taxa and, in doing so, provides the template for displaying life’s diversity.”¹⁸ In recent philosophies of science, the inadequacy of this inherited concept of species—the incongruence between pre-Darwinian essentialist categories and post-Darwinian observance of flux and diversity—is one of the key problems for re-articulating any monist definition of species, or for discarding it all-together.¹⁹

The naming of animals can come under scrutiny only if one begins to question the very foundations on which objectivity, science, and knowledge are held: human language and its systems of classification. For in truth, in the West at least, the received way of naming animals—of calling them in order to order them—has roots that go much further back than Enlightenment science. In the opening scene of Jacques Derrida’s book *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2008), the philosopher feels shame in appearing naked in the morning with his cat looking on. In pondering this nonhuman gaze, he recalls the

¹⁸ Ibid.
primal scene of naming in the biblical narrative of Genesis, which occurs in the second of two narratives where Adam comes before Eve but after the creatures around him. The detail in this narrative that interests him most is the gap of time between the creation of the animals and of Adam, and Adam being given the right to name the animals. During this abyssal gap in the Judeo-Christian text, the animals existed before they were animals (before they were seen and called “animals”). It is difficult to find a visual representation of this indeterminate moment in art history — even the normally daring Michelangelo skips over this gap on the Sistine Chapel ceiling (1508-12). Hieronymus Bosch comes close on the panel doors of *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (1503-15).  

Every time Derrida communed with this cat in the morning he saw a creature that refers, in its mute present, back to an ancestral form of life predating human-divine naming, from which the philosopher poses a deceivingly simple question: “Who was born first, before the names?”  

By asking this question, Derrida opens a space beyond or before naming from which the animal can appear as no longer reduced to the sign and its epistemological sedimentation in human history and knowledge. He calls attention to the power of naming and what this power entitles the namer over the named — a power that runs undisturbed from Genesis through the Enlightenment: “The animal is a word, it is an appellation that men have instituted, a name they have given themselves the right and the

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21 In Bosch’s painting, we can make out God on a cloud on the top left resting after his third day’s work, maybe already thinking about the next two days to come leading to the animals, and eventually to Adam on day six.

authority to give the living other.”

Be it through divine-sanction or scientific authority, this power of naming is self-given and circular; the word is put in place for the placer to find—yet ultimately found—the “animal.” That this sentence can serve equally well to define the strategy of the readymade is telling and highlights a key affinity between the readymade, the animal, and naming. Be it through “art” or “animal,” nominalism has a quasi-mystical power to transubstantiate an object. The timeworn naming of a living thing as “animal” begins to resemble the readymade strategy of calling an object “art.” Both sacralize, naturalize, and institutionalize its subjects—be it natural or art history. If Duchamp’s critical gesture is an ontological one, inviting culture to ask itself what is it that makes art art, then the readymade is as old as ontology and its resulting epistemological classifications.

In captioning his bovines as cars, Broodthaers disrupts this long history of human-divine naming. Les Animaux is a veritable object-lesson in structuralist linguistics: no longer culling from the Romantic Book of Nature where things are signs, Saussure’s theory of arbitrary or unmotivated signifiers in a differential system completes the secularization of the word’s relationship to the world. If a four-legged lactating mammal can just as easily be called a “Citroen,” then the power of pure nominalism has a newfound visibility; the history of human-divine naming is usurped by the arbitrary power of the signifier as no longer simply natural or theologically given (though the stabilizing force of custom remains strong). In this way, Les Animaux encapsulates a relationship that preoccupies Broodthaers through his career—namely, his synthesis of René Magritte’s Saussurean paintings and drawings, with their arbitrarily captioned

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23 Ibid., 23.
substitutions underneath quotidian objects, and the Duchampian readymade, which sheds light on the normally hidden cultural and institutional powers that naturalize and put an end to the unmotivated play of the sign—be it “art” or “animal.”

Broodthaers is not only offering a cheeky lesson in structuralist linguistics. *Les Animaux* also represents a discombobulation of classification itself. In effect, the prints demonstrate that both the sign and its enframing system of ordering are arbitrary (in this case, a taxonomy of automobiles works just as well as species). The frame itself is unmotivated, an insight that situates Broodthaers within a critical milieu challenging Structuralism during the late sixties and early seventies. Yet the most theoretically ambitious aspect of Broodthaers’s détournement of structuralist linguistics and histories of classification is the problematization and even loss of the world and the referent beyond language—or ‘before the names.’ Gloria Moure has observed this Wittgenstein inflection in Broodthaers’s work as characterized by an unmooring of language and the world: “In effect, if language was not a correlate of the facts it expressed and indeed could not even explain the conditions of its own application—or, in other words, possessed next to no reality content—its role was simply to validate, as far as possible, reality, rather than reality validating language.” This reveals a gap between language and the things out in the world. In short, reality is not a given reflected in language, but a readymade construction produced by nominal power and naturalized through habit, which has always been confused as essentially a straightforward mirror of the Real.

3.2.2 EAGLES

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24 For an overview of this temporal overlap from Structuralism to what U.S. academia has called Poststructuralism, see François Dosse, *History of Structuralism Volume 2: The Sign Sets, 1967-Present*, trans., Deborah Glassman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

This form of challenging language, taxonomy, and classification is exemplified in Broodthaers’s most ambitious museum fiction from 1972, the *Section des figures*.  

[ill. 3.6] As so often noted, Broodthaers used the apparatus of the museum as a readymade, assuming the mantle of museum director/curator complete with loan agreements, and brought together nearly five hundred objects relating in some way shape or form to the eagle.  

The display was a diverse collection of mass culture, fine art, natural history, printed matter, slide projectors, and various other objects on which the eagle makes its unflagging appearance—including ornate telephones, clocks, a typewriter, beer bottles, cigar packs, cartoons, and tapestries.  

[ill. 3.7] Each object was numbered and displayed with a small black plaque incised with the same phrase in one of three possible languages: “This is not a work of art,” “Ceçì n’est pas un objet d’art,” “Dies ist kein kunstwerk.” The two-volume catalog reproduces four installation shots, as well as over seventy individual objects of diverse cultural provenance.  

For instance: Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres’s drawing *Drei Adler-Studien* (Two Eagle Studies, 1819) is pictured just above an indigenous Pacific Northwest “Nootka” (today, “Nuu-chah-nulth”) Adlerkopf Mask (Eagle Head Mask) loaned from the Museum of Ethnology in Vienna; Gerhard Richter’s personally loaned painting *Adler*, 1972 faces a plaster bust of an eagle (Josef Pallenberg’s *Adlerbüste*, undated) and three *Falco fulvus* eggs.

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26 Broodthaers’s *Musée d’Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section des Figures (Der Adler vom Oligozän bis Heute)* from 1972 was installed at the Städtische Kunsthalle in Düsseldorf from May 16 to July 9, 1972.  
27 As Haïdu points out, only 266 of these five hundred objects are listed in the catalog. Haïdu, 163.  
28 DeDuve notes that objects 1 to 266 are listed in volume I of the catalog, 267 to 282 in volume II, and that Broodthaers added a few other objects to the exhibition at the last moment. Thierry de Duve, "Figure Zero," in *Marcel Broodthaers*, ed. Christophe Cherix and Manuel Borja-Villel (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2016), 38.
In light of the display’s sundry materials, a recurrent trope in the literature has been to compare the *Section des figures* with Borges’ Chinese Encyclopedia as cited by Foucault in his preface to *The Order of Things* (1966):

> [A]nimals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) *et cetera*, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies.\(^{29}\)

Douglas Crimp claims that Broodthaers’s ensemble of eagles “demonstrates the oddness of the museum’s order of knowledge by presenting us with another, “impossible” order.”\(^{30}\) Hence all these eagle objects are deemed to be heteronomous (a word that recurs repeatedly across the Broodthaers literature). Crimp assumes that this disparate group of eagle objects can only be heterotopic and “surreal,” in the lineage of Lautréamont’s sewing machine and umbrella on an operating table.\(^{31}\) This Surrealist-Borgesian analogy is invited by Foucault himself, who equates the classifying table on which Enlightenment knowledge was ordered with Lautremont’s table. With this orderly table no longer operative in post-Classical modernity, Crimp asserts that what conceals this incompatible or “impossible order” is discursive power—what Foucault called “discursive power—\(^{29}\)Foucault, *The Order of Things: an Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, xv. The Borges essay in question is *El idioma analítico de John Wilkins* (The Analytical Language of John Wilkins), which features the likely fictitious Chinese encyclopedia titled the *Emporio celestial de conocimientos benévolos* (Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge).\(^{30}\)Douglas Crimp, "This Is Not a Museum of Art," in *On the Museum’s Ruins* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993), 220.\(^{31}\)Broodthaers, however, neutralized Lautréamontian incongruity by claiming the primacy of museological classification as comparable to zoological taxonomy: “A comb, a traditional painting, a sewing machine, and umbrella, at table may find a place in the museum in different sections, depending upon their classification…Each space is in turn compartmentalized, perhaps intended to be a section—snakes, insects, fish, birds—amenable to being divided into departments—parrots, gulls, eagles.” See “Ten Thousand Francs Reward, 1974” in Broodthaers, 418.
formations”—which makes up for the loss of a stable site by forcing knowledge and history into a homogenizing container for aesthetic reference. More recently, Rachel Haidu agrees with this heterotopic and discursive reading of the Section des figures as knowledge-power, further claiming it to be a parable for the nation-state and the formation of its public: “Broodthaers’s Sections des Figures is a double-pronged approach to the question of discourse: it ties together the notion of a public to that of its history, and emphasizes its role in the construction of history by institutions such as the museum.”

Both Crimp and Haidu maintain that Broodthaers Section des figures is, like Borges’s Chinese Encyclopedia, a heterotopic ensemble that only discursive power can tie together.

However inviting this analogy between Broodthaers, Borges, and Foucault may be, some persistent questions remain. While it is true that the Section des figures thematizes the categorical power of classification, it is debatable that the Section des Figures qualifies as a heterotopia. In Foucault’s understanding, a heterotopic ensemble arises in Borges’ passage because its system of classification eludes common sense, even logic. Knowledge is disturbed by a disorder in which fragments of a large number of possible orders glitter separately in the dimension without law or geometry, of the heteroclite; and that word should be taken in its most literal, etymological sense: in such a state, things are ‘laid’, ‘placed’, ‘arranged’ in sites so very different from one another that it is impossible to find a place of residence for them, to define a common locus beneath them all.”

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32 Haidu, 207.
33 Foucault, The Order of Things: an Archaeology of the Human Sciences, xvii-xviii.
Nothing of the sort is apparent in Broodthaers’s *Section des Figures*. While its disparate objects proliferate, they do not elude logic or classification (as the physical manifestation of the exhibition alone would attest). They are of different materials, intended for different uses, and uprooted from their historical contexts, but they are all conjoined by a manifest morphological relationship to the eagle. If one were to find an analogy for Broodthaers’s *Section des Figures* in Foucault’s *Order of Things* it would not be with his concept of heterotopia, but rather with his account of the origins of biology in the classical episteme. Concurrent with Linnaean taxonomy, the rise of natural history collections in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries contributed to the formation of the concept of species.  

Whereas subsequent forms of modern biological classifications would take their categorical cues from the internal functioning of organisms, as well as their evolution over time, Enlightenment natural history was at its roots morphological and superficial. As Foucault pithily observes, “[n]atural history is nothing more than the nomination of the visible.” Since Broodthaers was a frequent visitor to the *Musée des Sciences naturelles* in Brussels, it is unsurprising that the artist would incorporate this lineage of natural history displays into his work, rendering ‘species’ and ‘art’ as companion categories exerting nominal powers over their objects through facile morphology (as Haidu recounts, the catalog was itself based on eighteenth century system of classifying art works).

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34 Dirk Stemerding offers an overview of these origins in his study on Bruno Latour and Foucault: “We have seen that from the end of the seventeenth century botanical and zoological collections increased in number and in scale and it was precisely this circumstance which created zoology, as it did in botany much earlier, the need as well as the possibility for more exact determinations of the multiplicity of forms in view of their methodical arrangement.” See Dirk Stemerding, “Plants, Animals and Formulae: Natural History in the Light of Latour’s Science in Action and Foucault's The order of things” (Dissertation, University of Twente, 1991), 35.

A deconstruction of the heterotopia (as necessarily containing some level of sameness for it to function at all) is something Crimp, Haidu, and even Foucault miss when considering Borges’ Chinese encyclopedia. For in truth, there remain two terms or *common loci* in Borges’ text that keep its entries from shimmering in separate dimensions and unconditional disorder. Both are so obvious as to be missed: firstly, it is the *alphabet* that orders and links these paralogical entries together; the familiar regularity of alphabetic classification sets the foundation for heterotopic play. Secondly (and even more fundamentally), it is the conceptual wholeness of the *animal* that prowls both inside and outside the alphabetic list. The “animals divided into” facing outside the list must be homogenous before they can be splintered into entries—be they intuitive grouping of species through visible affinities or the paralogics of Borgesian a-taxonomy. As such, the two stable entities that reside both inside and outside the Borgesian heteroclite, keeping its entries from incomprehensible play and disorder, are the alphabet and the animal.36

This analysis of Broodthaers’s *Section des figures* in light of Foucauldian applicability or inapplicability is not simply academic, for it helps to interpret his museum fiction more cautiously. The eagle, like Borges’ “animals divided into,” serves as the transcendental signified that orders the display from inside and out. In this way, the discursive formation of “eagle” and “art” function analogously. This observation fits with an approach in the literature that stressed homogeneity over heterotopia. As Rosalind Krauss has claimed, the eagle is a reductive “principle” or “emblem” for Conceptualism in the “post-medium condition.”37 Steve Baker, an art historian working through animal

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36 As I demonstrate in a later section, not only is alphabet script and animality historically conjoined, but the alphabet is a key preoccupation in Broodthaers’s work from beginning to end.
studies, agrees with this assessment that the “eagle generally functioned for [Broodthaers] as no more than an emblem for conceptual art, as Krauss acknowledges.” So the eagle is the great reducer and is itself reduced to a principle or surrogate for conceptual art, or art in general. If the analogy ‘eagle is to art as art is to eagle’ is to work smoothly, then the eagle would have to be as fictive and as thoroughly discursive as the concept of art. But can this be? I claim that for Broodthaers the answer is both yes and no. The eagle is a fictive, customary, fabulist category like art, but unlike the latter, it is also a really existing entity beyond its categorizations—or, at least, more autonomous in relation to its classification than art objects are to theirs. In other words, while the discursivity of art is human through-and-through, the eagle always remains, in part and somewhat elusively, on a nonhuman plane. While Broodthaers clearly made analogies between art and eagles, reappraising his (admittedly open-ended and vague) writings connected to the Section des figures reveals something more complex than the simple equation eagle=art.

When one takes into account Broodthaers’s fascination with animals, bestiaries, natural history, and zoology, it would be unlikely that the artist would simply reduce the eagle to a straightforward metaphor or principle for art. Broodthaers states this relatively directly in his catalog for the Section des figures in “Eagle-Ideology-Public, 1972.” In this short text the artist explains his synthesis of Duchamp and Magritte when captioning each eagle-object in the installation with the “negative inscription” declaring “this is not a work of art.” Broodthaers claims this inscription forces the public into a choice: the eagle is either deemed to be “modern art” despite the negative inscription and “becomes simply an element in a method”; or, taking the inscription at face value, the eagle reverts back to

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38 Baker, Artist/Animal, 214.
“classical principles” as disparate examples of visual culture—for example, “the eagle in art, in history, in ethnology, in folklore.” Broodthaers does not advocate one direction or the other. Instead, he concludes his text in enigmatic resignation: “I am certain that I would have just as little luck with the serpent, the lion or the bull.”

My contention is that, through this resignation, Broodthaers points to a more autonomous eagle beyond the totalizing symbolic weight of modern art and imaginary inheritance of past visual cultures.

Nearly unanimously, critics have missed this relatively more autonomous eagle. This is witnessed by a specific oversight in the literature on the Section des figures. As already noted, for Krauss the eagle is reduced to a principle. For Crimp, the display is comprised of “266 objects representing eagles.” For Thomas McEvilley, every “piece (except for three eagle eggs) involved the image of an eagle, and that category overrode all others.” Lastly, Rainer Borgemeister notes that all of the loans are “objects representing eagles.” This insistence that the Section des Figure is restricted to eagle representations is patently false, for two of the most visually well-documented objects do not represent eagles at all, but, in fact, really are eagles (albeit lifelessly stuffed). One sits calmly perched on a picturesque branch, positioned in such a way to look regal. [ill. 3.8] The other is posed as if in mid-air swooping down with exposed talons over a galloping rabbit, who is not a representation either, but the animal herself. [ill. 3.9]

40 Crimp, 218. My emphasis.
43 The eagle eggs exhibited in the Section des figures also qualify, in a sense, as really-existing rather than iconic or indexical.
Allen Poe’s purloined letter, the eagle in the open among all the two and three-dimensional representations that refer to the lost bird in this forest of symbolism.

Broodthaers’s photograph of a live eagle (from his visit to the Antwerp zoo) is the first image printed on the back side of the title page in the first *Section des figures* catalog from 1972. [ill. 3.10] The only critic to mention the really-existing animal seems to have been Michael Oppitz in the catalog: “[T]he eagles put on display all operate on the symbolic level (this is even true of the stuffed eagle, expressing as it does a certain ideology of nature), and to the extent that Broodthaers refers us to this, he connects the eagle back to a first level of natural/objective speech.” What Oppitz leaves unanswered is, what exactly this “natural/objective” level might be and how it can be attainable directly. The trajectory of my reading of the *Section des figures* has built up to this speculative question, and I maintain that whether or not this “natural/objective” level is even attainable remains a central ambiguity of Broodthaers’s museum fiction.

In certain texts on the eagle during this period (published and unpublished writings from 1971 to 1974) Broodthaers offers a rather straightforward critique of ideology critique, which remains compatible with Oppitz’s distinction between “symbolic” and “natural/objective” levels—in effect, by showing a gap between the two. In other texts, however, a more complex and subtle explication of the eagle can be found that complicates any ambition to reach the eagle on an objective plane. If previously, Broodthaers had described his process as uncovering a false or fictitious iconography, then subsequent statements invoke the disconcealment of a double-fiction. Here is

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Broodthaers from a 1972 interview with the curators of the *Section des figures* Jürgen Harten and Katharina Schmidt:

It emerges finally that the eagle is itself, from the beginning, fiction… a fiction of which the sociological and political content is increasingly difficult to understand the further back into the past you go. How can one fully explain the birth of the symbol and the myth of the eagle without the archaeological knowledge we have on this subject?46

Here Broodthaers makes an important point for any mythoclastic practice, namely, that in order to strip away the metaphors and symbols that have accrued across history, a working knowledge of what is *not* symbolic and *not* mythic is essential. In other words, of unearthing a primary or “archeological knowledge” of the subject-object-figure carbonized underneath a historical veneer of arbitrary meanings. If the eagle is, from the very beginning, a fiction, then Broodthaers is calling attention not only to the secondary myth of eagles as symbols in culture, but also the more primary myth of the eagle as reducible to a typological idea like “species,” itself a categorical assumption held together by a long history of human-divine naming—a purportedly “natural/objective” level if there ever was one.

This eagle residing beyond or subtending this double fiction can no longer be “natural” or “objective” in scientific positivism, but should more properly be described as the eagle degree zero.47 Whatever Broodthaers may have thought about its attainability, he did not think that this zero figure could be found in reality. Instead, for Broodthaers, as

46 “Interview with Marcel Broodthaers, By Jürgen Harten and Katharina Schmidt, 1972,” in ibid., 334.
47 Broodthaers himself uses the term: “It is easily obvious that I wanted to neutralize the use-value of the symbol of the Eagle and reduce it to the degree zero in order to introduce critical dimensions into the history and use of this symbol.” See “The Degree Zero, 1973” in ibid., 351.
for Lacan who he was reading (word has it that the artist read Écrits, unbelievably, in one evening48), reality seems to be a more fundamental fiction or metaphor. In one of his open letters from 1969, Broodthaers quotes the appendix to “The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious,” wherein Lacan makes this reality-fiction-metaphor a fundamental kernel of human existence: “[T]he most serious reality, and even the sole serious reality for man, if one considers its role in sustaining the metonymy of his desire, can only be retained in metaphor.”49 Broodthaers alludes to this reality-fiction-metaphor in a number of his texts. In “Section des Figures, 1972” from the catalog, Broodthaers believes that “a fictitious museum like mine allows people to get a grasp of reality as well as what it conceals.”50 In order to break with conventional habits of seeing and understanding requires not only a grasp of reality but also an awareness of what this reality dissimulates. Here it is helpful to bring in the Lacanian triad of the imaginary-symbolic-real; that the tissue of reality is composed of imaginary and symbolic structures, while the real emerges from or resides in a deeper recess of (or perhaps extreme proximity to) phenomenal existence.

Broodthaers himself differentiates between reality and the real in the 1972 interview cited above:

I think this exhibition can make it clear that the eagle and the way it is represented stem from fiction. Two fictions are going to be in conflict here, which will certainly have a provocative effect. It is vital to this exhibition for us to obtain,

48 It is the Belgian psychoanalyst Claude van Reeth who relays this story about Broodthaers’s one night reading of Lacan’s Écrits. See endnote 13 in de Duve, “Figure Zero,” 38.
thanks to this confrontation of fictions, a consciousness more vigorous than reality, than the reality of an idea, obviously.\textsuperscript{51}

In both statements, Broodthaers appears to be saying there is something deeper or more alive than not only reality but also ideation—though these are one and the same, something that comes across more clearly in the original French: “L’exposition tire sa réalité de ce que nous parvenons finalement à une conscience plus forte de la réalité – j’entends par réalité la réalité d’une idée…”\textsuperscript{52} Unlike the translation above from Broodthaers’s collected writings, which streamlines his repetitious use of the word “reality,” I find his insistence to be crucial. In fact, the translation should read: “I understand reality to be the reality of an idea.” Thus the “provocative effect” produced by this meeting of a fictitious museum and a fictitious figure of the eagle is not only a revelation of ideology and false symbols. More fundamentally, Broodthaers is suggesting a negative onticology that is fundamentally more elusive than reality, which again can be taken as the Lacanian real inhabiting beyond or underneath the “archeological knowledge” of ideology and history (in short, the big Other). This reading is compatible with Birgit Pelzer’s Lacanian reading of Broodthaers when she claims that his works’ “correlation with language leads him to the question of the subject and the loss of the real, to a concrete implementation of the notion that, to be represented, a thing must be lost.”\textsuperscript{53}

In order to transition to my next section, I return to a detail from the Section des Figures installation shot of the singular eagle perched on a branch. The bird is positioned next to a print on the wall whose genre is similar to the Deyrolle prints Broodthaers used

\textsuperscript{51} “Interview with Marcel Broodthaers, By Jürgen Harten and Katharina Schmidt, 1972,” in Broodthaers, Marcel Broodthaers: Collected Writings, 334.

\textsuperscript{52} Marcel Broodthaers et al., Marcel Broodthaers (Paris: Ed. du jeu de paume, 1991), 223.

for Les Animaux. [ill. 3.8] Rather than evoking an imperious and powerful bird of prey, the print reveals the eagle to be one of any number of animaux nuisibles or “pests” (the full title of the print is Animaux nuisibles a l’agriculture or “Animals Pests in Agriculture”). Ignobly relegated to a taxonomy of other birds, foxes, rodents, beetles, and vermin of all sorts, the eagle belies its common associations of “nobility, height, [and] imperious reach.”54 For the farmer, the eagle is a pest. For the fascist, a symbol of imperial power (the predominant reading in the literature). For the marketer of commodities, a brand. For the art critic, a metaphor for art. But where is the real eagle beyond these imaginary and symbolic human supports? It is clear that the subject, or figure, will be formed by an overdetermination of symbolic discourses and imaginary programs, without, for all that, allowing us to uncover the plenitude of eagle in the real outside these anthropocentric projections.

Animaux nuisibles a l’agriculture thus serves as a transition to the next section of this chapter, since the print is a didactic piece of visual culture that pigeonholes not only the nonhuman as subject, in this case as pest, but also inculcates the human subject who is instructed as to what is or is not a pest. This arrives at subjectivization in the human sense: like the figure of the eagle, the human subject is herself informed in similar ways. It is to this I turn to next, namely, Broodthaers’s exploration of subject formation and his excavation of language and imagery as the key constituents for historico-political subject making—something that will elucidate his interest and use of pedagogic children’s material, as well as his fascination with the alphabet.

3.3 Subject Formation (Alpha-bête)

54 In her reading of eagle-as-art, Krauss relies on these commonly held tropes without taking into account this print that appears alongside the eagle. See Krauss, 9.
In her essay “Readymade Originals,” Molly Nesbit traces Duchamp’s choices for his readymade objects back to the schoolroom. From coffee grinders to snow shovels, the archetypes for Duchamp’s breakthrough are found in the pedagogic curriculum implemented by the French school system in the nineteenth century. Nesbit recovers theses readymade originals in still extant student notebooks. These include exercises for practicing basic drawings skills, especially those that lend themselves to industrial use and modern design. Broodthaers’s *Les Animaux* print has a similar pedagogic provenance. In 1871 the naturalist shop-turned publisher Maison Deyrolle began providing classroom materials to the French state, becoming the foremost supplier of pedagogic tools— from desks to anatomical models to didactic colored plates. These latter include captioned illustrations of wild and domestic animals, mushrooms, and various botanical taxonomies, all in a similar style and genre as *Les Animaux de la ferme* or *Animaux nuisibles a l’agriculture*. A recent activity book for children by the still extant publisher, which includes a re-printing of the original *Les Animaux*, notes in its preface that Deyrolle’s plates have taught generations of French students lessons in zoology, botany, and anatomy. In this new edition, there is even added textual information telling the student how many liters of milk these cows can produce, how selective breeding has enhanced certain qualities of production, and how each cow typifies its French region.

If Duchamp’s “readymade originals” attest to an institutional shaping of common sense in the classroom, then Broodthaers’s readymade print keys in on a similar yet more

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55 By uncovering the pedagogic source material for Duchamp’s readymade, Nesbit plays with the word ‘original,’ since these school drawings provided the impetus for the readymade, yet are themselves only quasi-readymade (since, as manual drawings they are made, yet as designs for tools and products, they are destined for serialization). See Molly Nesbit, "Ready-Made Originals: The Duchamp Model," *October 37*, (1986).

ideologically elusive moment of a child’s subject formation. Rather than inculcating praxis for a more industrious workforce, illustrations like *Les Animaux* instilled a proper taxonomy of the natural world, along with normalizing the instrumentalization of nonhuman animals and their biological processes. This interest in children’s materials is not an isolated incident in Broodthaers’s oeuvre. In fact, there is a special conjunction between objects of infancy and animal life (as noted at the beginning of this chapter). In addition to his poetic bestiaries invoking fabulist, moralist traditions—including *La Bête Noire* and *Pense-bête* (1963-4)—Broodthaers incorporated blackboards, picture puzzle blocks, various toys, a panoply of references to La Fontaine, and children’s books that implement illustrations of animals as mnemonic devices or rebuses for learning. The use of these objects from material culture often point towards childhood subject formation as entangled with the animal, down to learning the individual components of Western language itself: the letters of the alphabet.

According to Nesbit, the French curriculum “began by teaching the student the straight and curved line, explaining that the entire world of appearances was built upon combinations of these two elements: they were the first letters of the alphabet.”

Education without these twenty-six phonetic letters seems unthinkable, yet it was only in the nineteenth century that historians began theorizing a modern genealogy of the alphabet (with the empirical help of archeological finds). Before then, theories of alphabetic origins fell into two camps, which Plato already identified in the *Cratylus*: the alphabet was either divine in origin, or thought to be of human invention. That the latter would win out in a modern linguistic method is part and parcel of the Enlightenment

history of the critique of religious illusions (setting the stage for an understanding of alphabetic script in evolutionary terms). According to the historian Johanna Drucker, one of the quintessential discoveries of the nineteenth century was to see alphabetic writing as the precondition and producer of history itself: “It was this link, between the creation of narratives about the history of writing and the realization that it was writing itself that created history, which was perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of nineteenth century theories about the alphabet.”58 These theories were also the first to trace alphabetic letters back to their pictorial origins, be these “hieroglyphic precedents or…the objects associated with the letternames.”59 If alphabetic writing could be traced back to a primordial human drive to preserve and record certain facts, then the formal conditions and origins of alphabet script were pictographic and mnemonic in nature.

Letters proliferate and cling to Broodthaers’s works from start to finish—on children’s stools, bricks, toy blocks and puzzles, in paintings, films, and writings, as well as across his installations, such as the dual slide projectors in “Le Privilège de l’art, 1249-197 that playfully scrambled any proper phonetic relationship between individual letters and rebuses.60 Echelle avec alphabet, 1965-71, a readymade work featuring a small child’s ladder leaning against the wall, appears to thematize childhood development into the orders of adulthood as driven by alphabetic order. [ill. 3.11] On the ladder, nonsensical words and partial alphabets are written on the small planks of wood that form its rungs. Just above the ladder, affixed to the wall at child’s eye-level, is a large painting, empty save for a half written “y” an “z” in its center and an incomprehensible word.

59 Ibid., 239.
60 “Le Privilège de l’art, 1249-1975” was installed at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford from April 26 to June 1, 1975.
scribbled on the lower left. Above this painting at adult eye-level is a painting of the alphabet written neatly in proper, lowercase writing. Mental and physical growth runs in tandem with the acquisition of typological systematization—from disorder to order and from the imaginary to the symbolic. As with so many of Broodthaers’s word games, the concept of alphabetic “order” should here be taken in both the formal and legal sense. Like Deleuze and Guattari’s diagnosis of traditional pedagogy, in which the student is always inculcated by the “order-word” from a schoolmistress who does not so much inform as command, the road to adulthood runs through an imperious alphabet. For his part, in order to détourne the order-word or order-letter, the artist even designed his own picture book for children in 1972, in which the ordering of the letters renders its alphabetic exercises unusable for orthodox learning.

With this manifest interest in the alphabet, Broodthaers coded certain poems and works with this theoretical genealogy of the alphabet, beginning with his most celebrated collection of poetry, Pense-bête (1963-4). Depending on the inclusion or exclusion of the hyphen, the word “pense-bête” has at least three meanings. Transliterally, it is “animal thinking.” Still literal but pejorative, it is a “silly thought.” Its most common usage, however, is idiomatic: a pense-bête is an aide-mémoire or a mnemonic device. The word contains its own meta-mnemonics. In order to remind the reader of its meaning via an internal semantic relation, the hyphenated word piggy-backs on the literal sense of its component parts, thereby alerting the reader to its definition: a thought (pense-) so easy to remember that even a dumb animal (-bête) could do so. Fittingly, then, Broodthaers’s

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62 Compton, 58.
*Pense-bête* is a bestiary filled with jellyfish, boas, dogs, flies, and skates, among a number of other animals.

The most important lines in *Pense-bête* for my analysis of the alpha-bête—the conjunction between animals and letters—are the poems “The Ox” and “The House.” They face each other across the gutter of the book. On the left-hand side is “The Ox,” which reads in full: “On the tongue, he plays the tightrope walker. He has succeeded.”

If read in light of the history of the alphabet, these lines key in on a crucial feature of its development. What began in early Semitic writing systems (Seirites, Caananite, Phoenecian) as the “aleph,” a pictograph representing the morphology of an ox’s head, became abstracted and shifted ninety degrees in the Greek alphabet to produce the letter “A” (so that today the ox lurks in the letter A with its horns point downwards and its snout upwards). Excavating this origin reveals a residue of mimesis in even the most stylized typography. Yet Broodthaers’s poem does not only point back to this pictographic origin of the first letter of the alphabet. For if the ox has succeeded “on the tongue,” then Broodthaers’s poem also alludes to the historical triumph of the alphabet as a *phonetic* system. In other words, the poem points to the humanist victory of signs and language as reducible to speech-sounds, and it is here where a discussion of alphabetic origins becomes more than an uncovering its hidden animal figures: the phonetic alphabet always presumes meaning to be synonymous with human speech at the occlusion of other forms of communication (a reduction that, by this chapter’s end, will be shown to implicate both art and animals)

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At the same latitude across the page from “The Ox” is “The House,” which reads in full: “On the slippery slopes where the braggart digs his abyss, the house makes its niche.” Here Broodthaers alludes to the second letter of the alphabet, the “B,” which has its pictographic roots as the “bet” or “house.” Initially a simple rectangle or frame demarcating inside from outside, this pictograph turned phonetic symbol became bifurcated and bubbled out into the second letter of the alphabet. Broodthaers once again implicates phonetic speech through the “braggart” who cannot help but speak or sing his own praises (this motif is a recurrent theme in his work, especially through the figure of La Fontaine’s vainglorious crow). Taken together, “The Ox” and “The House” poems reproduce the synechdotal etymology of the word “alphabet,” which gets its name from the fusion of its first two letters (aleph-bet, or ox-house).

With these two poems, Broodthaers places the A and the B, and by implication, the alphabet, on precarious if not abyssal grounds: the A-ox has succeeded on a tightrope (a possible reference to Nietzsche’s Zarathustra) while the B-house was built on slippery slopes over an abyss. In a contemporaneous text, De l’écriture a la typographie (1967), the novelist and typographer Jérôme Peignot describes the emergence of the alphabet similarly as a quasi-miraculous event whose letters were shaped out of chaos over the abyss of non-meaning. Peignot finds latter-day re-enactments of this materialization of the sign-letter out of nothingness in van Gogh’s painting (crows over fields doubling as primordial sign shapes), as well as the Belgian poet Henri Michaux’s formal experimentations with neo-alphabetic poems, which are written-drawn as undecidable mixtures of pictograms, ideograms, and letters. The “quest for a new alphabet,” or for

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64 “The House” from Pense-bête, 1963-4 in ibid.
unearthing the primordial event of forming symbols and signs from images and shapes, is a return to a semiotic zero degree common to van Gogh and Michaux.

The observance of this co-originary nexus between image-sign, or pictogram-symbol, is central to a more consequential text from 1967 than Peignot’s, namely, Derrida’s *Of Grammatology*. In the section titled “The Alphabet and Absolute Representation,” Derrida states that divorcing pictography or image from phonography or speech-concept is impossible outside of metaphysical dogmatics: “[P]ure pictography and pure phonography are two ideas of reason. Ideas of pure presence: in the first case, presence of the represented thing in its perfect imitation, and in the second, the self-presence of speech itself.” As such, neither speech nor painting can ever do away with their indicative function, and they are both held together by a fundamental inscriptive and graphic activity (or arché-writing). In other words, pure mimesis and pure speech are necessarily contaminated by the spatio-temporal preconditions of writing, be it in the mind or on canvas. It is no wonder that what connects Derrida’s early philosophy to Broodthaers’s work, however obliquely, is a mutual attention to Mallarmé. For the philosopher, Mallarmé opened the way for his concept of *différance*, for the material spacing and non-presence that form the unconscious preconditions for signs and meaning. For the artist, Mallarmé’s emphasize on the materiality of language was of equal importance, (as was the notion of space, Broodthaers even claiming that Mallarmé is the “source of modern art” and “invented modern space”). In fact, Broodthaers takes this material reduction of language as far as it can go in his *Un coup de dés jamais...*

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67 Derrida references Mallarmé’s *Un Coup de dés* directly in this context. Ibid., 68.
"n'abolira le hazard. Image," 1969. [ill. 3.12] The book is an appropriation of Mallarmé’s original poem, yet attempts to parse out language-writing from form-image (in contrast to Michaux’s synthetic poetics). Broodthaers reprints the poem in his “Préface” in a standard format reading left to right, with only forward slashes indicating what once was Mallarmé’s idiosyncratic spacing in the original layout. After this textual preface, the formal typographical play of the poem is preserved as black lines and blocks, whose size and placement are dictated by the original layout across 12 double pages. Text and image have been distilled and kept in separation, or as separate as possible, for it is clear that while the lines no longer reproduce phonetic letters, they make manifest the latent yet necessary spatio-temporal preconditions of arché-writing, or the sin qua non of all textuality, be it written or spoken.

Interestingly, the critic Thomas McEvilley advances such a reading of Broodthaers’s Un coup de dés by taking recourse to nonhuman perception: “By eliminating language [Broodthaers] returns a classic Modern text part of the way from culture back to nature—from acculturated human thought to thinking “like an animal,” to seeing the page as, say, a dog might.”

McEvilley’s translation of “pense-bête” in his essay as “animal thinking” may get the better of him here, yet there is some truth to his observation. Broodthaers, in affinity with Derrida, demonstrates that language and form are fundamentally inseparable; that the minimum requirement for both speech and writing is spacing and differentiation. To strip away phonetic sound-signs while keeping the formal differentiations on the page make the human and nonhuman immersed at the same level of information. This serves to show that not only speech—so often deemed to

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69 McEvilley, 82.
be anthroproprietary in humanist thought—but also writing, are supplemented by a past nonhuman foundation, which, like the *aleph*, has its animal origins dissimulated or effaced. This observance of arché-writing as pre-human or pre-phonetic is a crucial component of recent posthumanist theory. One of its key reference points comes from *Of Grammatology*, specifically, the following passage: “[s]ince ‘genetic inscription’ and the ‘short programmatic chains’ regulating the behavior of the amoeba or the annelid up to the passage beyond alphabetic writing to the orders of the logos and of a certain *homo sapiens*, the possibility of the *grammè* structures the movement of its history according to rigorously original levels, types, and rhythms.” 70 From this point of view, one might even read Broodthaers’s formal distillation of *Un coup de dés* as the grammatico-genetic sequencing of Mallarmé’s poem, of which human and nonhuman have equal perceptual access.

### 3.3.2 AUTOPOIESIS

Arising from its first two component letters, the alphabet is a tautological system of the metonymic variety. In recent posthumanist theory, this type of *sui generis* formation is described as “autopoiesis.” Originating from biology to describe an organism’s ability to self-generate, an autopoietic structure is any self-contained system arriving at fruition self-reflexively. 71 Such a structure can materialize through basic cellular multiplication or phenomenological nervous function. This structure can also be semiological, since language is what opens onto an autopoietic access to the world—the bringing forth of a world through correlating codes. The stakes of autopoiesis become evident when framed as a question of origins: if there exists such a thing as a purely

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70 Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 84.
71 The term “autopoiesis” was coined in 1972 by the Chilean biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela.
autopoietic, self-contained structure, then this structure is autonomous and contains its own origins. It is self-sufficient in the purity of a self-efficient cause. In other words, it is a natural entity not generated by culture in any human sense. If, however, such a structure only appears to be autonomously autopoietic—in that peeling back layers reveals hidden origins that have been effaced or repressed—then this structure contains a historico-political interference from outside its structure. Its ontological and epistemological origins reside partly outside itself. Duchamp’s readymades revealed art to be of the latter historico-political variety, since they disclosed the institutional and discursive mechanism outside the art object as its source (a bourgeois mechanism of power that historically erased itself by appearing to be a natural given). Like the bourgeois concept of art as autonomous, the humanist subject is a structure that portends to be a natural given.

Across a number of philosophical corners since at least the 1960s, Man-as-humanist-subject came to be understood as no longer a natural entity, but rather a self-reflexive historico-political process of consolidation that covered up the tracks of any nonhuman features or origins, including his animality and the nonphonic dimensions of his language.

Broodthaers’s treatment of the alphabet reveals it to be of the historico-political variety, since its nonphonic and pictorial origins, like the aleph and the bet, have been dissimulated through the abstraction of phonological typography. Yet Broodthaers’s autopoietic aesthetics are not limited to the alphabet. Seemingly obsessed with origins, the artist’s poetry and visual vocabulary is replete with objects verging on autopoiesis: his recurring use of mussels, eggs, coal can all be described as self-contained base units of self-generation. [ill. 3.13] From these base units in his early work, Broodthaers can be shown to expand these autopoietic concerns to a higher level of complexity by the
1970s—namely, to the equally tautological generation of human subjectivity itself.\(^{72}\) In examining how autopoiesis functions in his work, I limit myself first to the figure of the mussel; then I move to speech as the historically privileged form of recursive subject formation.

In “La Moule,” his most celebrated poem from *Pense-bête*, Broodthaers describes the mussel as having craftily avoided the mold of society. She formed herself out of herself, thereby achieving perfection. Having secreted her own shape in tautological perfection, the mollusk is an autopoietic creature. In the poem, this structure of pure containment is equated with the counter-liquidity of the “anti-sea.” In Broodthaers’s vocabulary, the anti-sea serves to describe any structure that, like the mussel, amounts to pure containment and consolidation. Conversely, any association with the “sea”—fish, water, and foam—often represents the smooth space of non-identity and the corruption of individuality or self-containment.\(^{73}\) One only has to recall another poem from *Pense-bête* to emphasize this elementary liquefying power of the sea: “Water. All it enfolds is smaller than it.”\(^{74}\) In some of his open poems, Broodthaers contests that even a priori geometrical shapes like triangles, cubes, spheres, or cylinders cannot escape this law of

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\(^{72}\) For Broodthaers’s related autopoietic understanding of nationality, consider his *Fémur d’homme belge*, 1964-5, a singular human femur bone painted the colors of the Belgian flag, and *Fémur de la femme française*, 1965, a slightly smaller femur bone painted the colors of the French flag. By painting these with their respective national stripes, Broodthaers reveals a central ambiguity concerning nationality and citizenship: if naturalization functions through blood, or through an intrinsic relationship within a geopolitical area, then nationality goes right down to the bone; if, however, naturalization is a process of interpolation and nomination through institutional and discursive power, then Broodthaers’s bones attest to a secondary myth and arbitrary process. Of course, since they literally cover up their own origins in the body via paint, Broodthaers’s bones corroborate the latter scenario in highlighting the constructed nature of national subjecthood. That we cannot tell if these bones truly belonged to a Belgian man or French woman is equally telling.

\(^{73}\) In a number of works, such as his enigmatic book *Jeter du poisson sur le marché de Cologne*, fish and their scales multiply, thereby losing the material integrity in a loss of identity. See Marcel Broodthaers, *Jeter du poisson sur le marché de Cologne* (Köln: Galerie Werner, 1973).

the sea. In this way, the oscillation between the container and that which exceeds containment—the “anti-sea” and the “sea”—reflect a fundamental binary in Broodthaers’s work. This dialectic between sea and anti-sea is comically played out in Broodthaers’s *Belgian Lion*, 1968, a found plastic toy of a lion’s face melting into shapelessness, only to be formed and contained by frying pan as frame. [ill. 3.14]

If the mussel is synonymous with the anti-sea, with pure containment, then its sister poem, “The Jellyfish,” represents the diffusive properties of the sea. Like Broodthaers’s positioning of the ox and house poems, the jellyfish floats parallel with the mussel from across the gutter of *Pense-bête*. Unlike the mussel, this ocean dweller attains perfection not through formal containment, but through pure formlessness: “She is perfect. No mould. Only body.” With no shell (*moule*-mussel) the jellyfish is diaphanous and flouts structure. As Jean-Philippe Antoine has remarked in his astute readings of these poems, “[m]ussel and medusa present the double model of perfection, since both lie beyond the grasp of the means of mechanical reproduction. The first through the invention of its own mould, and of the autonomous space the latter grants it; the second by doing without any mould whatsoever, without losing body for all that.” Antoine’s insight is important for any autopoietic reading of Broodthaers’s poetics, for if a structure can be mechanically reproduced—that is, be a result of a process outside itself (like a print is to a printing press or a car to an assembly line), then it cannot truly be autopoietic.

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75 For one of many examples in Broodthaers’ writings, see “The Academy, 1968” in ibid., 192.
76 Keeping in mind Broodthaers’ interest in Lacan, this could well serve as a humorous take on the latter’s *Hommelette*, or cross between man and omelet as the formless figure of the libido, which in Broodthaers’ twist would be a *Lionomelette*. See “Position of the Unconscious” in Lacan, 717-8.
For his 1966 exhibition *Moules Oeufs Frites Pots Charbon*, Broodthaers offered another poem featuring the mussel, “My Rhetoric.” The poem serves as a caption for the image of a glass bottle filled with mussels, and it implicates the mollusk once more as creaturely autopoiesis: [ill. 3.15]

Me I say I Me I say I
The King of Mussels Me You say You
I tautologize. I conserve. I sociologue.
I demonstrably demonstrate. As for the sea of mussels, I have lost the time lost.
I say, I, the King of Mussels, the speech of Mussels.  

Unlike the mussel from *Pense-bête*, however, the mussel of “Ma Rhetoric” is autopoietic in appearance only. His formation relies on a repetitive and seemingly overeager form of speech. This sovereign mussel has also changed genders. Male and monarchical, he sounds anxious to demonstrate his self-containment and self-generation. Moreover, if the mussel from *Pense-bête* reads as a naturally secreting formation holding off the anti-sea, then the repelling of the anti-sea ascribed to the King of Mussels is cultured, sociological, and self-preserving.

There are two elements to consider in reading this important poem. Firstly, the King of Mussels is a parody of the Cartesian cogito (“Me I say I Me I say I”), a parody that seems to uncover the circular logistics of this seminal humanist motif. If *I think therefore I am* purports to autopoietic purity, then Broodthaers shows there to be a supplemental statement of expression needed to sustain this self-reflexivity. Namely, a

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80 Though, strictly speaking, mussels are also not fully autopoietic. Their shells, while secreted from the ground up, are generated through an assimilation of protein sourced from its environment that calcifies.
speech that affirms itself through itself as the self-same basis for thought in consciousness: *Me I say I*, or *I think therefore I am the one who says what thinking is by saying I*. In other words, both the King of Mussels and the humanist subject only appear in self-authorized sovereignty—they both “demonstrably demonstrate” themselves—and the decision to equate the cogito with speech is revealed to be a historico-political decision. Secondly, the poem is about the effacement of origins from which this self-authorized autonomy sustains itself. In the original French, there is a play on words that is lost in the English: “Au niveau de mer des moules, j’ai perdu le temps perdu.” The mer of mussels can sound as homonym for both “sea” (mer) and “mother” (mère). Both the sea and the mother corrupt any claims to the anti-sea of tautological self-formation (one through Darwinian oceanic sources, the other through matrilineal origins). Embedded within this play on words is also a literary allusion, for if the King of Mussels has “lost time lost,” then he can no longer be in search of it—he cannot go in search of lost time (*À la recherche du temps perdu*). This allusion to a Proustian reflex of childhood memory and history, which the royal mussel has lost time for, can also be understood as an effacement of origins. The “King of Mussels, the speech of mussels,” is amnesiac.

Broodthaers’s fascination with autopoesis and self-affirmation through speech is inspected further by way of a parrot in two related installations in 1974. The first, *Ne dites pas que je ne l’ai pas dit—Le Perroquet* (1974), was the only new work exhibited at the Wide White Space Gallery as part of Broodthaers’s re-visiting of his 1966 exhibition *Moules Œufs Frites Pots Charbon*. Now with an amended title reflecting the bird’s

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81 This observation recalls Derrida’s deconstruction of Husserl, which demonstrates that thinking cannot be reduced to speech. See my first chapter for a discussion of this in the context of Chris Marker’s work.

82 *Ne dites pas que je ne l’ai pas dit—Le Perroquet* was installed at Wide Wide Space Gallery, Antwerp from September 19 to November 3, 1974.
inclusion, *Moules Œufs Frites Pots Charbon Perroquets*, the new installation featured a living African grey parrot enclosed in a birdcage resting on a stand, flanked on both sides by his ever-present potted palms. [ill. 3.16] As part of the opening, Broodthaers read his poem “Ma Rhetoric” from the original 1966 catalog. In overhearing the artist’s recitation, the parrot would (presumably) repeat the poem over the course of the exhibition’s run. Both artist and bird, then, attest to a living presence in the gallery, and both do so with the capacity for speech as recitation. As part of his exhibition *L’Eloge du sujet* that opened a few days later at Kunstmuseum Basel, Broodthaers would include a second version in the room titled “La Chambre du Perroquet.” [ill. 3.17] This iteration was similar to the first, except for three important changes: the parrot was no longer a living, breathing bird but a stuffed dead specimen (a red headed Amazon parrot under glass borrowed from Basel’s natural history museum); the recitation of “Ma Rhetoric” was no longer spoken live but played over a recording device; and the title of the work was changed to *Dites partout que je l’ai dit.*

Haidu persuasively interprets *Ne dites pas que je ne l’ai pas dit—Le Perroquet* as Broodthaers’s comical take on the artist retrospective. Essentially, the live bird “vacuously repeats” the artist’s words, thereby emptying out meaning through repetition akin to the re-installation inherent to the museum retrospective. This reading is certainly compelling, yet it does not take into account the call and response relationship between first and second versions. Paying attention to the subtle differences in titles manifests something more than a parody of art retrospectives. It raises important questions about

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83 A recent re-installation of *Ne dites pas que je ne l’ai pas dit—Le Perroquet* at the gallery Peter Freeman confirms (with a different Grey parrot) that while the bird remains largely silent around the public, gallery attendants attest to her speaking when the space is empty.

84 Haidu, 232.
the space of elocution and the ownership of language, as well as the subjecthood these
give rise to. In both instances, it may be assumed that the parrot is the surrogate for the
artist (and vice versa), both of whom recite “Ma Rhetoric”: “Me I say I Me I say I.” In
order to recite this poem, however, writing takes precedence, since both human and
nonhuman rely on an inscribed copy of the poem for their recitations. More precisely, the
artist’s speech relies on his text and, in turn, the parrot’s speech relies on the artist’s
speech for mimicry. Speech is therefore revealed to be a secondary and tertiary order in
respect to the primary source, writing (an irony that should not be lost on a poem whose
protagonist, as I analyzed above, privileges a tautological definition of the cogito as
reducible to speech acts). If the space from which their elocution arises is primarily
textual, or from a borrowed language outside the mind-as-speech, then the parrot
installations pose certain questions about the role of language in subject formation and
the discursive shaping of an “I” whose semantic conditions reside outside itself.

In both versions, the parrot-artist affirms that he is the one doing the speaking, yet
does so in two different ways. The first title, *Ne dites pas que je ne l’ai pas dit*, translates
to “do not say that I did not say it.” Through an imperative utterance, the parrot-artist
declares his ability to speak, that no one should speak in his place, and that he is not
simply vacuously repeating borrowed phrases (though admittedly, this could always be a
possibility no matter the utterance). He forbids anyone from speaking on his behalf, or
from saying that his words are not his own (in alliance with autopoiesis, since the parrot-
artist is declaring himself to be self-reliant in speaking his own mind). In the second
version, however, the parrot-artist is no longer so self-sufficient. The space of elocution is
no longer closed off in the shell of its own utterance. Like the first installation, its title is
an imperative utterance, yet one that necessarily amounts to a supplication or request: *Dites partout que je l’ai dit*, which translates to “tell everyone that I said it.” However demanding or forceful this request may be, it categorically relies on others’ ability to speak on its behalf. In contrast to the self-reliance entailed by the first title, whose performative structure already attests to a certain ability to speak in one’s place, this second title relies on an audience to spread the word.\(^{85}\)

These observation lead to more than simply a parodic take on the retrospective, as they attest to a questioning of the role language plays in subject formation. This is in keeping with the contemporaneous and multi-faceted de-centering of the subject in Lacanian psychoanalysis, structuralist, and poststructuralist theories: language is only borrowed by the subject and will outlive him; textuality courses through and interpellates the subject, supplying him with the coordinates for his place of locution; the subject, as with the author function, is never self-contained, but always reliant on a discourse that both pre-and-postdates him; and, pedagogically, much like a parrot, a human subject begins as a child vacuously repeating and mimicking words, signs, and gestures that ultimately congeal into an “I” over time, from the alphabet onwards. In his mock school exercise book, *Projet pour un traité de toutes les figures en trois parties*, 1972,

Broodthaers is unambiguous about this:

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\(^{85}\) Running parallel with this subtle shift from a self-reliant to reliant elocution is the move from a living presence to an absent presence in the gallery space. In the first version, the parrot is alive and, whether or not in automatic parroting or with semiological intent, has the ability to make speech sounds (as Derrida would say, even if his ability to say “I” is not as semiologically self-aware as a human saying “I,” the tropical bird has the ability to be or do I). In the second installation, a different parrot is stuffed and dead under glass. He has lost the ability to be or do I, not to mention the ability to repeat “Me I say I Me I say I.” Analogously, in the first version, the artist is present alongside the living bird, while in the second he is absent and only preserved by voice recorder. Both bird and voice are embalmed, one with formaldehyde and the other through magnetic tape. In this way, the artist mimics the parrot as first a living presence in the exhibition space, and then a petrified absent-presence.
In French, we say of someone who writes and speaks appropriately that he is a man in good possession of his tongue (language)... What if before he acquired this mastery, the tongue (language) belonged to another and was merely on loan...

My analysis of Broodthaers’s treatment of the alphabet evinces a certain skepticism towards speaking, though one could mention many examples of this in Broodthaers’s work—most notably, his recurring use of La Fontaine’s fable *Le Corbeau et le Renard* (The Crow and the Fox) with its eponymous crow whose garrulous vanity always gets the better of him. Haidu persuasively understands Broodthaers’s disengagement with the occupation of the Palais des Beaux-Art, Brussels in 1968 and his turn to writing open letters and museum fictions as a dissatisfaction with direct political speech. Broodthaers’s *Interview with a cat* (1970) may further allude to his distrust of speech. Recorded in 1970 during the iteration of his Musée d’Art Modern, Département des Aigles in Düsseldorf, the artist asks the feline, in dumb repetition, “is this a pipe?” The cat can only reply through a non-phonetic voice, one that could never meet the conditions of the interview, which coerces as certain type of speech (and even if the cat could, Magritte’s paradox is notoriously unanswerable anyway). In his recent interpretation of this recording, de Duve treats the cat as essentially stupid i.e. that the work is “hilarious” in the artist’s insistence on repeating a question the animal can never understand. Maybe, but Broodthaers seems to beg a reversal. One might very well consider the stupidity of a human—in this case the artist, who is almost certainly cheekily standing in for the art critic—insisting on using speech to interact with a nonhuman—in

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87 See chapter 3 title “Speech and Politics” in Haidu, 107-61.
88 de Duve, "Figure Zero," 31.
this case the cat, who might be a surrogate for Broodthaers himself and his skepticism towards what he understood to be the woefully reductive tendencies of art critical discourse. In other words, if there is a bêtise here it is the speaker thinking he will get a meaningful response when engaging either a painting or a nonhuman simply via speech.

3.4 INDUSTRIAL REPEATABILITY (THE ANIMAL READYMADE?)

“I don’t exhibit living creatures, men or animals.”\(^\text{89}\) This is a curious statement by Broodthaers seeing that he included a number of living animals in his work (as this chapter has begun to demonstrate). One way to understand this claim is by keying in on the word that so preoccupied Broodthaers, namely, “exhibit.” \textit{Exhibiting} and \textit{including} animals are two different things—the latter evokes a modicum of participation, while the former only reification. So when, in 1966, Broodthaers’s placed chickens in crates just outside the Galerie Gogeime, they were, strictly speaking, not objects in the show. A photograph shows the artist feeding the birds on the street, while through the windows the gallery is filled with gallery goers to his exhibition. [\textit{ill. 3.18}] Perhaps Broodthaers was drawing a parallel between gallery and cage, though whether he is the chicken, or the crowd is a flock, remains undecidable (both readings are always possible). Having used egg shells in his work for some years to this point, his inclusion of these chickens serves to partially un-alienated their labor, or at least make their contributions more visible.\(^\text{90}\)

It is here that Broodthaers most clearly complicates the postwar reception of the readymade as being tantamount to what De Duve has called the “anything-whatever.”\(^\text{91}\)

While he exhibited a slew of dead animals (eagles, snakes, mussels, or at least their


\(^{90}\) Additionally, in a deep anthropological reading, for humans the domesticated egg was the earliest readymade object, which could be produced seemingly identically and indefinitely.

\(^{91}\) de Duve, \textit{Kant after Duchamp}, 327.
shells) when Broodthaers chose to interact with living animals—be they chickens, parrots, a camel, or a cat—they are rarely presented as art objects but as catalysts, participants, or performers. When it comes to incorporating animal life into art, he complicates what for so many others—Fluxus, Beuys, Vienna Aktionism, and many contemporary artists since—are uncomplicatedly readymade forms of life.

The original context for Broodthaers’s statement is a circa 1970-5 radio interview with the Atelier de Création Radiophonique, France Culture, which included fellow artist David Lamelas; Broodthaers attempts to explain his incorporation of a really-existing camel from the Antwerp zoo in the first version of *Un Jardin d’Hiver* and in the [6 minute] film *Jardin d’Hiver (ABC)* (which was filmed during the first version of *Un Jardin d’Hiver* and subsequently played over a television monitor in the installation’s second version, *Un Jardin d’Hiver II*).92 Both documentary photographs and the film show the camel with handler and artist crossing the streets of Brussels, standing just in front of the Palais des Beaux-Arts, as well as inside the corridor of the exhibition space. [ill. 3.19] Bemused by how easy it was to loan the camel, Broodthaers explains that the animal’s presence among the palms of *Le Jardin d’Hiver* draws a “parallel between two exoticisms” – on the one hand, the exoticism of the winter garden, and on the other, the exoticism of an animal having more “to do with the desert.”93 In a contemporaneous interview, the artist claimed that his *Un Jardin d’Hiver* evokes the desert through its absence (that is, aside from the connotations of actual potted palm trees in situ). Instead

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92 *Un Jardin d’Hiver I and II* were both installed at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels—the first in a group show from January 9 to February 3, 1974, and the second as part of Broodthaers’s “Catalogue-Catalogus” exhibition from September 27 to November 3, 1974. A third version of the winter garden, this time titled “Salle Verte,” appeared in Broodthaers’s “L’Angélus de Daumier” at the Centre national d’art contemporain, Paris from October 2 to November 10, 1975.

of open air, sand, and hot sun, however, this “desert” refers to the desolation and emptiness of contemporary culture: “This desert, which is both real and symbolic, first in terms of the situation, so from an illustrative point of view, and of the current political and economic situation, but also certainly even more so the desert reigning within our society, the desert of leisure, in the end the desert of the world of art.”

Broodthaers’s “desert” is therefore symbolic and pejorative, yet for all that, still a real space. *Un Jardin d’Hiver* represents both the colonial appropriation and domestication of nonwestern forms, as well as the eventual banalization of these forms in their host culture—the emptiness and vapidity of consumer culture. The camel then, in turn, represents the desert in a doubled sense: as a symbol of its indigenous climate, which like the palms only allude to the desert obliquely, and as a really-existing form of life plucked from its surroundings and domesticated/inserted within the dryness of leisure culture (zoo), as well as within the conceptually driven art world (gallery); after all, it should not be lost that this first iteration of *Un Jardin d’Hiver* was part of a group show of conceptual artists, including Carl André, Daniel Buren, and On Kawara, whose works would certainly have seemed dry next to Broodthaers’s winter garden installation.

For all this, however, the camel is not only a symbol or surrogate for the desert. When Broodthaers led the animal from her adopted home to his gallery opening, she became a nonhuman viewer of contemporary art. In this sense, it would appear that, after all, Broodthaers made use of the Antwerp zoo script discussed at the beginning of this

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95 Haidu offers such a reading of Broodthaers’s late *Décors* as the staging of the public spaces of domestication mirroring this colonial drive as shaped by signification and its occlusion of the Real. She points to the recurring use of the potted palm tree in the several permutations of *Un Jardin d’Hiver*. Haidu notes that the palm recalls Saussure’s well-known tree diagram, which reflects one of a “range of other signifiers for ethnobotanical collecting and it impact on Western décor—namely, in forming ideas about the Western “interior”—from the 1870s forward.” Haidu, 237.
chapter. Instead of visiting and filming the zoo directly, however, Broodthaers re-creates the zoo himself (in effect, making a zoo-fiction much like his museum-fictions, complete with loan agreement). Rather than speculate on nonhuman viewpoints from inside the cages, *Un Jardin d’Hiver* brings a nonhuman to witness contemporary art and culture; rather than comparing zoo-goers to the animals on display, Broodthaers set up satirical conditions that show the institutional complicity between the zoo and the gallery as tangential spaces of spectacle, conquest, and domestication; lastly, in a species reversal, it is now the nonhuman animal that visits and gawks at the confines of human activity.

Like the eagle, however, this really-existing camel is something more than a symbol of institutional critique, or even a cheeky nonhuman museum visitor. In the same interview with Lamelas, Broodthaers disavows this somewhat facile gesture of camel as vehicle of institutional critique. What really interests the artist (like his feline interviewee) is the animal’s inability to communicate—its mute presence in a context that calls for endless discourse—as well as its beauty: “For me, the camel is about non-communication. The camel is animal beauty. I’d say that the rest doesn’t interest me, I mean, the palm, the museum.”

96 When Broodthaers asks Lamelas what he thinks of the camel, the Argentinian artist replies with an institutional question concerning the mystifying powers of the museum. Yet once more Broodthaers insists not on answering this question, but redirecting it to deal with the camel (“No, no, but what does the camel mean?”). When Lamelas answers more directly, he finds the animal’s presence to be

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96 Immediately after this statement, Broodthaers’s says: “To make things clear, ‘I’d say’ means that I’m not saying it.” This seems to disavow his original disavowal. Yet it also performs non-communication and a lack of clarity through speech, which is a recurrent thread in this chapter. “Interviews with Marcel Broodthaers at the Atelier de Création Radiophonique, 1970-5” in Broodthaers, *Marcel Broodthaers: Collected Writings*, 456.
comical, a description that strikes Broodthaers as apropos: “he’s quite right, because beauty, in the present situation, when you touch it, is something comical.”

As with Broodthaers’s outdated poetic bestiaries that no longer communicate clear-cut lessons, or have been made un-readable in plaster, this “animal beauty” is out of place in a contemporary context of primary structures, conceptual art, and the demands of the art market for commodifiable objects. Moreover, as a singular life form that cannot simply be procured from a factory or shelf, the camel cannot be a readymade in the Duchampian sense. This is so in two ways: since it is found to be beautiful, however anachronistically, it cannot fulfill the anti-aesthetic requirements of Duchampian anti-retinality (and by extension, cannot take part in the cerebral aesthetics of conceptual art), but more crucially, a camel cannot be an industrially reproduced object. Of all the historical connotations initially lost in the postwar reception of Duchamp, it is the forgetting of the readymade as a repeatable, industrial object, which was a crucial component of its critical thrust.

This latter observation—that the animal as fleshy, singular existence resists its reduction to a readymade industrial object—returns me one last time to the Les Animaux print. In fact, the relationship between industrial repeatability and nonhuman animals is the darkest feature of this work. Broodthaers’s substitution of automobile models for names of cows is not only a pithy object lesson in structuralist linguistics. Nor is it simply a détournement of pedagogic material culture and its role in subject formation. It is also a history lesson in the expansion of industrialized agriculture. Broodthaers’s nominal

97 Ibid., 457.
98 In the Section des figures catalog, Broodthaers is explicit in his postwar historical critique of the readymade: “Initially, the aim of Duchamp’s initiative was to undermine the power of juries and schools. Although faded, it dominates today, with the backing of collectors and dealers, a vast section of contemporary art.” See “Method, 1972” in ibid., 339.
substitutions alert us to the long material history of the modern Fordist assembly line as galvanized by animal production and commodification. In the animal studies literature, this genealogy is well-known: Henry Ford’s inspiration for his assembly-line found its impetus in a Chicago slaughterhouse, which by the early nineteenth century had already mechanized the mass disassembly of animal bodies. In Animal Capital, Nicole Shukin offers a compellingly conjoined material history of slaughterhouses, automobiles, and film.99 Not only was gelatin, rendered from animal bodies, a pre-condition for the making of celluloid, but the desire for a moving filmic spectacle can be traced back to the on-site public tours of slaughterhouses given by the companies themselves for publicity.100 Shukin analyses the tour books handed out after the tours, which blunt and naturalize the apparent on-site violence by a narrative mediator in the form of a child leading adults on a tour of the facilities. Here the normally hierarchy of pedagogy is reversed, for it is the child who informs the adult (for example, in one image the little girl sits on a railing pointing to dead pigs hanging on hooks, as if giving the well-dressed couple looking on the tour). Of course, behind this dissimulating reversal of the child-adult relationship are yet other adults behind the scenes who are in the business of mass slaughter, and whose pamphlet facilitates the flow of bodies, capital, and spectacle.

In the history of twentieth century art, the mechanization of the slaughterhouse has not been without its detractors, though for reasons that have more to do with aesthetics than with ethics. Bataille’s 1929 commentary in Documents on Eli Lotar’s

99 Nicole Shukin, Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 87-130.
100 Shukin argues that the industrial slaughterhouse, which become a draw for tourists as its audience, provided a foretaste for the cinematic experience in its continual movement of bodies: “[t]he lineaments of cinema can arguably be glimpsed in the animal disassembly lines of Chicago’s stockyards, where animals were not only produced as meat but also consumed as spectacle.” Ibid., 92.
photographs of a Parisian slaughterhouse already draws attention to this changing role of the animal in modern economies.\textsuperscript{101} Ever unwilling to let go of sacrifice, Bataille laments the end of ritualistic traditions involving the animal, its “orgiastic” blood-flow, and the meaning of its death within the structural fabric of culture. He redirects his nostalgia towards a critique of the meaninglessness of modern slaughter. He deplores the aseptic conditions of modern production, which turns once meaningful killing into a pathological site to be disavowed and “quarantined like a plague-ridden ship.”\textsuperscript{102} This creates the conditions for a modern subject whose increased distance from slaughter and sacrifice leads to boredom and an unhealthy obsession with cleanliness. Once this subject takes over the city, Bataille argues, we have a modern populace with the collective vitalism of mere vegetables.\textsuperscript{103}

Lotar’s photographs in \textit{Documents} partly bear out Bataille’s history of a de-sacrificial economy. On the one hand, the bloody aspect of the slaughterhouse remains visible: in one photograph, a slab of animal flesh seems to be sliding along the stone floor in its own blood like a large pad of furry butter. \textbf{[ill. 3.20]} This is the “chaotic” aspect of slaughtering that Bataille pines for. On the other hand, another photograph shows a courtyard outside of the slaughterhouse. \textbf{[ill. 3.21]} On a wall scrawled with graffiti, the workers have propped up mostly inedible (yet still useful, possibly for celluloid) remains of cow hoofs and ankles side-by-side, one after the other. Unlike the blood-soaked scene of the other photograph, here the serialized aesthetic of modernity reigns. There is no


\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 10. While Bataille no doubt goes too far in lamenting how slaughter has become bloodless, he does account for an immunological paradigm in animal production that today has taken hold to a scale and degree well beyond his imagination today.

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
blood and nothing seems out-of-joint. Only one hoof falls out of line, sliding to the side and behind the others. This aberration reads like a formal stain in the composition, for in all other respects, anti-septic modernity is on the cusp of complete victory. This photograph conditions the viewer to accept inimitable forms of life as serialized objects, which can be endlessly reproduced and lined up in a row—in other words, as animal readymades.

During the postwar period this objectification of domesticated nonhuman animals, which gave them the appearance of being industrially reproduced as readymades, would reach completion in factory farming practices that removed the animal from city and pasture into Taylorist factory systems, today called CAFO (concentrated agricultural feeding operations). In the same year Broodthaers published Pense-bête, the first major critique of this industrialization of animals appeared in Europe, Ruth Harrison’s Animal Machines (1964), and was translated into seven languages. Her study led to an amelioration of these intensive farming practices under the “European Convention for the Protection of Animals” in 1976. One can find symptoms of these historico-technical changes at the level of animal production and agriculture in contemporaneous art practices. The simulacral multiplication of identical cow heads in Warhol’s screen-printed wall paper beginning 1966, and Gerhard Richter’s photorealist painting of a dairy cow in profile, Kuh, 1964 are both well-known examples. [ill. 3.22-3] However, neither Warhol nor Richter disturbs the status of the cow as anything other than a pop commodity.

Going further towards problematizing the animal readymade through individuation is the Belgian artist Jef Geys’s Cow Passports, 1965-91. [ill. 3.24] This
series is the outcome of intermittently assisting his father-in-law, a cattle merchant, and involves a standardized protocol for cataloging the bovine inventory on an administrative card file. The top half of the inventory card includes a space for a photograph of the cow in question. The bottom half is filled out by the merchant worker and includes three boxes of equal size for inputting the animal’s date of birth, his or her gender, and a description of the animal’s coat. Below these boxes is a typological outline of a cow—the any-cow-what-so-ever—allowing the worker to draw in a formal approximation of the animal’s spot and patterns. The base, readymade units of the work therefore reflect an aesthetics of administration or the papers of agricultural bureaucracy. If filled out conventionally, the cow remains anonymous and whatever unique formal characteristics the nonhuman may display are reduced to visual markers of identification and inventory.

Geys’s *Cow Passports* intervene in this anonymity by flouting these conventions. First and foremost, instead of describing coat patterns he gives each cow a name: Amelie, Hortense, Catherine, Dinah, and so on. This nominal power is the readymade-in-reverse: rather than subsume a subject-object into a mass of undifferentiated generalization (such as species, eagle, or art), here the proper name gives the subject-object an aura of singularity (even if proper names are never purely unique, in that they are always shared among individuals\(^\text{104}\)). Rather than denominate the gender, Geys crosses out, underlines, or draws a box around either “male” or “female”—without always reflecting the actual gender of the cow—and writes his own name in the box. Lastly, rather than mimic the animal’s spots and patterns in the typological outline of a cow, Geys inserts abstract lines, colors, and shapes of all sorts, as well as photomontage, making the card file a unique art

\(^{104}\) Note that this is precisely the time Jane Goodall controversially names the chimps she works with.
object. In this way, Geys lends the powers of art as aauratic individuation to the already unique animal in order to re-emphasize his or her really existing singularity. Without this singularization (which is not given by the artist as much as revealed, since s/he is always already singular), the animal can be inserted within in an administrative aesthetics of generality. However modest, Geys work undercuts the typological powers of commodification. Broodthaers's Les Animaux does so as well, but from a different critical angle: rather than emphasize the singularity of specific, really-existing animals, Broodthaers identifies them with brand names of mass produced cars in order to show the absurdity of such a collision between singular forms of life and mechanical reproduction. One should note that Les Animaux also plays with gender, which is lost completely when the dairy cows on the left print and the bulls on the right print are flattened out by identical company names.

3.5 Conclusion

Broodthaers was no animal liberationist. This would be too direct a style, should he even have had such inclinations. If he chips away at the commodification of animal life, then it is by-and-large due to two facets of his larger critical program: 1) the animal is surrogate for the artist and the art work, both of which are equally under the objectifying and generalizing will of commodity culture; and 2) the animal is one of many subjects that attest to a failure of an unmitigated faith in technological progress. In the same way that Broodthaers distrusts the bombastic a-history inherent to certain vectors of the historical avant-gardes, he is equally distrustful of re-calibrating art practice to match the socio-technological progress of modernity. Buchloh’s canonical reading of the industrial poems is telling in this regard:
Broodthaers’s decision to identify his poems as “industrial” could not possibly be attributed to this position of the modernist artist. After all, Broodthaers no longer incorporated naively the effect of industrial modes of production upon artistic practice, and he explicitly criticized the seemingly progressive structural simplification of artistic work as the aesthetic internalization of rationalistic order and technocratic instrumentability.105

This critique of art works as sterilized via technocratic rationalism could serve equally well to describe the reification of the animal readymade. With characteristic irony and over-identification, Broodthaers seems to allude to this industrial negation in a poem from 1964: “Replace the lamb with a mechanical reaper.”106 Moreover, since poems and animals are clearly bound in Broodthaers work in a number of ways (as I have shown throughout this chapter), it is not an interpretive stretch to say that industrial poems and industrialized animals go hand-in-hand. Both are disquieting in their silence. Both are trampled on and instrumentalized by commodification.

Another way to describe this rationalistic order and technocratic instrumentability is to say that art, poems, and animals have each been subsumed in an aesthetics of administration and bureaucratic efficiency that strips them of form and content in the service of the market. Nowhere is this function more present than in what is possibly Broodthaers’s most difficult and arcane exhibition—*MTL-DTH* at the MTL Gallery in Brussels 1970. This installation, which Broodthaers deemed to be a single work, was a proliferation of notes, revisions, and re-worked poems, some of which were new and

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many were altered versions from *La bête noire* and *Pense-bête*. The exhibition was a veritable archive of his poetic process: both hand-written and typed lines, often accompanied by esoteric scribbles and drawings. The papers were compartmentalized and inventoried into four sections for display in the gallery—A, B, C, and D, of which the first three were installed open under glass and the fourth displayed concealed in a closed folder during the course of the exhibition.¹⁰⁷

As a whole, *MTL-DTH* presents a mass inventory of predominately animal poems without actually presenting the finished poems themselves.¹⁰⁸ The exhibition, which Broodthaers explicitly claimed to be commercial in orientation, seemed more interested in the minutiae of taking stock and of commodifying every last shred of consumable material—be it a scribbled drawing or a half-developed idea for a poem. This aesthetics of administration is thus shown to level out poems and animals. It performs the becoming-inventory of objects on the market and distills Marx’s definition of exchange-value by making all things subsumable to an exchange rate. If properly reified, everything, even poems and animals, can be translated into the language of commodities.¹⁰⁹ It is no wonder, then, that in his self-interview for *MTL-DTH*, Broodthaers invokes the word “capital” in one of the few instances in either his writings or visual works. The term he uses to describe capital is *l’appeau*, or a “bird call,” a vocal

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¹⁰⁸ Rorimer cites that of the “fifty-one pages of drawings and manuscripts, approximately thirty are poems by Broodthaers, most of them about living creatures. The majority of the poems refer to insects, birds, or mammals, forming within the MTL work a kind of bestiary.” Ibid., 103.
¹⁰⁹ And here, one last time, the alphabetic effect should be mentioned, since its historical success is predicated on a similar efficiency of exchange in its phonetic flexibility of mimicking any tongue whatsoever.
decoy “used in hunting to trick the hunted animal, to lure it before the hunter’s gun.”

In answering his own question to elaborate on what this might mean, Broodthaers responds: “L’Appeau. Capital nightmare. Capital itself.”

Broodthaers’s definition of capital as l’appeau not only reinforces the theme of animality and hunting the weak. It also reflects yet another instance of distrusting the speaking voice, since bird calls are predicated on a false affinity as trickery in order to lure and down an animal. In other words, the temptation of capital, like the siren, or the birdcall, is as strong as it is detrimental to the animal, the artist, the poem, and the artwork alike.

Broodthaers’s vocabulary and object making was no stranger to the leveling force of capital, though he rarely named it so directly. In this instance, rather than being a limitation, Broodthaers’s oblique sensibilities allowed him to see the flattening effects of capital from a broader horizon. It is not only monetization and currency that levels culture, but other totalizing concepts that developed in tandem with modern economies. I have already analyzed a number of them in this chapter: species, taxonomy, and the alphabet. This chapter has also attempted to demonstrated that mussels, eggs, coal, and the a priori geometrical shapes that litter Broodthaers’s poems and visual works mime the commodity fetish, which itself appears, like the anti-sea, to secrete its own value in perfect self-generation. Above all, I have sought to show that Broodthaers’s treatment of animals implicate a faltering and exhaustion of the readymade. The three key dimensions of the readymade—its power of nomination, its capacity for subject formation, and in its reliance on industrial repeatability—all breakdown or enter into paradox coming face-to-face with an inimical subject-object, being poetic or nonhuman.

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111 Ibid.
CHAPTER FOUR: KYNICAL FEMINISM—STRATEGIES OF (OVER)IDENTIFICATION WITH ANIMALITY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The 1970s and ‘80s saw a re-kindled interest in Cynical philosophy. This represented a notable intellectual shift. In his study of the ancient philosophical school, Michel Onfray notes the dearth of interest before these decades: “[T]he cynics and their methodological practice of subversion, it would seem, did not merit scholarly consideration.”¹ The watershed moment came with the publication of Léonce Paquet’s edited collection of primary sources, Cyniques grecs. Fragments et témoignages in 1975.² On the heels of Cynicism’s rehabilitation in the 70s, the subsequent decade saw two major philosophical figures entering a deep engagement with this topic—both as an object of historical scholarship and as a cultural study of their present moment. Peter Sloterdijk published Critique of Cynical Reason in 1983, which became a best seller.³ Sloterdijk’s idiosyncratic scholarship offers a profound diagnosis of modern cynicism as an enlightened yet unhappy consciousness, as well as a positive reinvigoration of a distinctly “kynical” attitude as performative antidote to modern cynicism. During that same year, largely independently, Michel Foucault’s final lectures at the Collège de France also offer an exegesis of ancient Cynicism along with suggestions for use in contemporary politics as a form of fearless truth telling (or parrhēsia). Foucault argues that art should play a pivotal role in this parrhēsia, and that artists “must establish a

³ Peter Sloterdijk, Kritik der zynischen Vernunft (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1983). Sloterdijk’s text was translated into French and English in 1987.
relation to reality which is no longer one of ornamentation, or imitation, but one of laying bare, exposure, stripping, excavation, and violent reduction of existence to its basics.”

What is missing from this account of Cynicism in the 1970s and ‘80s is the role feminist artists and theorists played in its rearticulation, an omission this chapter begins to address by analyzing works and texts that inhabit kynical terrain. Although this approach could have wide-ranging applicability to art and culture post-68, I focus specifically on feminist practices that identify—and at times over-identify—with animals or states of animality. This strategy, I argue, critiques the tightly woven historical nexus of humanist and androcentric thought. I call these practices “kynical feminism,” following Sloterdijk’s terminology of “kynicism” as sardonic parody (in contrast to the resigned detachment of the modern cynic). The body is often the central feature of this strategy, since, as Sloterdijk tells us, “kynicism discovers the animal body in the human and its gestures as arguments; it develops a pantomimic materialism.” In this way, kynical feminism not only challenges those historical power vectors of male-human supremacy (especially its carnophallogocentric kernel), but it also functions as an embodied strategy of resistance to modern cynicism and its symptomology of political resignation and defeatism.

How do feminist practices identify with animality? And how does this differ from over-identification with it? In the first instance, the artist aligns herself with a nonhuman position in order to escape or resist androcentric confines. Here, identifying with

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animality affords a positive association. In the second instance, everything is reversed.
The artist aligns herself with animality, yet does so by embracing its pejorative
connotations, i.e. the “animal” or “beast” as an ideological leverage for debasement and
inferiority in relation to the “human.” She identifies with this trope to such parodic
degrees, however, that her operation ends in performative absurdity, which often serves
to dislodge not only woman from essentialist forms of signification predicated on
naturalness, passivity, and animality in its pejorative sense, but the nonhuman animal as
well. In short, a strategy of over-identification goes so overboard in embracing
androcentric cultural estimations of so-called feminine-animal lack that this male,
humanist dogma is ridiculed and opened for re-valuation. The difference between
identification and over-identification is crucial for this chapter.\(^6\) It is important to note,
however, that this difference is spread across a spectrum, and the kynical artist is always
in danger of sliding towards the cynical.

In this chapter, examples of kynical *identification* with animality include an
engagement with nonhuman forms of communication and relatedness, a focus on the
somatic and the self-sufficient body, a contempt for authority, and a general refusal to
separate nature from political and cultural matters. Examples of kynical *over-
identification* with animality include becoming-food, or an anthropophagical sexual
politics of meat, domestication in the hands of androcentric humanist history, and the
various humanistic codes that debase and marginalize the nexus of woman-animal-nature.

\(^6\) It is also found in the earliest instances of kynical thought: when the ancient Cynic Diogenes of Sinope
preferred the company of dogs to men, he performed a critical strategy of identifying with nonhuman being. When, on the other hand, he threw a plucked chicken among Plato’s students during a lecture, thereby parodying the philosopher’s definition of man as a featherless biped, he over-identified with the very position he hoped to mock. Both forms are agonistic towards humanist ontology and epistemology, and represent the two key strategies at play in this chapter.
Along similar lines, the practices I discuss either identify with animals or animality in order to accord dignity and recognition of victimhood on both the human and non-human body (as to the latter, sometimes only incidentally), or over-identify with misogynist histories that make use of animality and nature as terms of debasement in order to demonstrate androcentric incoherence and absurdity.

It is only recently that such an analogy or affinity between woman and animals has been re-appropriated as eco-politically positive. Eco-feminism, intersectionality, care theory, and posthumanist theory all point in this direction. Undoubtedly, the major reason why feminism and a concern for nonhuman animals have only recently been theorized together is that their conjunction is fraught with danger and possible misunderstanding. Human and nonhuman oppression have been, and often continue to be, a "dreaded comparison." There are those who worry that attention to nonhuman concerns demeans human politics. As the eco-feminist biologist Lynda Birke argues, this anxiety presumes humans and nonhumans to be discrete entities—that human men and women are anthropological or sociological subjects, while animals are purely biological. This ignores sexual difference in nonhumans, as well as the evident panoply of nonhuman sociability, not to mention the fact that humans are often—in at least certain respects—biologically determined species in their own right. Separating humans and

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7 A salient example is a special issue of the journal *Feminism & Psychology* from 2010. For the introduction to this special issue, see Annie Potts, "Introduction: Combating Speciesism in Psychology and Feminism," *Feminism & Psychology* 20, no. 3 (2010). For a foundational text in the field of eco-feminism, see Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (New York: Continuum, 1990).


9 The theorist Kalpana Rahita Seshadri makes a similar point in regards to racism and speciesism—namely, that race is commonly held to be an anthropological/political category, while species is a purely ontological one. Kalpana Seshadri, *HumAnimal: race, law, language* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 7.
nonhumans also maintains the division between nature and culture, a division that has long been challenged. The human community has always been entangled with nonhuman communities in mutual well-being or mutual precarity during environmental stress. For all these reasons, Birke insists that if “we are to take difference seriously, as feminist theorists insist, then we need to think more about the other beings around us.”

The kynical feminist practices that I discuss in this chapter begin to think about these “other beings” in ways that may be incipient, provisional, or even inadvertent. My approach is not chronological but offers flashpoints within feminist practices of this period that involve animality, and provides, in part, a fresh look at canonical objects, as well as heretofore-neglected works, performances, and texts.

4.2 LOUISE BOURGEOIS (SEXUAL ANTHROPOPHAGY AND THE AESTHETICS OF MEAT)

Louise Bourgeois expatriated to New York in 1938 aged 27, after an association with the Surrealist group in Paris. Her work is often discussed within a psychoanalytic framework, notably the Freudian offshoot of Melanie Klein. Bourgeois is also often understood as having employed strategies of over-identification with psychoanalysis itself. In Mignon Nixon’s monographic study on the artist, the art historian points out a fruitful contradiction within Surrealism as a point of departure for this over-identification. On the one hand, the movement’s instrumentalization of the female body reduced the latter to a site of violence, bondage, disfiguration, and entrapment. On the other hand, the Surrealist fascination with the liberating potential of the unconscious as defier of

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12 Nixon does not, however, point out that this subordination often employed codes of animal capture, especially in nets and cages.
bourgeois society—especially through the figure of the hysteric—offered women artists a means of parodically identifying with purportedly feminine neuroses, especially the neurotic “patriarchal mother,” as a way to challenge bourgeois norms. In this way Surrealism, though largely androcentric, paved the way for a critical identification with feminine tropes as a point of resistance from within the movement’s interest in Freud’s theories. The French theorist Sarah Kofman shows that Freud was aware of the eventuality that women would use his theories against him.

Bourgeois’s work also points towards a counter-Freudianism from within psychoanalysis. In this regard, by the late 1960s and 1970s, there is an (largely unnoted) affinity between her practice and Deleuze and Guattari’s far-reaching critique of traditional psychoanalysis. In their 1975 text on Kafka and minor literature, Deleuze and Guattari pinpoint two strategies of resistance that can equally be found in Bourgeois’s oeuvre. The first is a process of over-identification with the Oedipus complex, what they describe as “exaggerated Oedipus”: a parodic pantomime of the position of the father in psychoanalysis (the father and the Oedipal triangle are amplified to absurd degrees, as in Kafka’s “Letter to the Father”). The second is a process of identification with animality, or what they call “becoming-animal.”

Identifying with nonhuman animals supplies a

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13 Nixon rightly points out the dangers involved of identifying with hysteria—it was both a way out of repressive bourgeois norms, yet it also risked reinforcing a notion of femininity as essentially hysterical. Nonetheless, for women surrealists the hysteric provided a strategic resistance to the patriarchal mother as female keeper of bourgeois norms. Beginning with her Femme Maison series of the 1940s, Bourgeois would over-identify and parody this bourgeois mother, a joke that would only begin registering with feminists in the 1970s. Nixon, 32, 69-71.


15 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature, trans., Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

16 Five years later in A Thousand Plateaus (1980), Deleuze and Guattari expand their concept of becoming-animal as, among other modalities, as a form of “becoming-woman” that similarly resists the humanist, patriarchal power.
line of flight resisting patriarchal coordinates: “Inside or outside, the animal is part of the
burrow machine. The problem is not that of being free but of finding a way out, or even a
way in, another side, a hallway, an adjacency.”17 Deleuze and Guattari’s theorization of
“becoming-animals” and their mutually reinforcing strategies of identification and over-
identification can be understood as part of the kynical resurgence I account for in these
decades.

Bourgeois exaggerates Oedipus to parodic extremes and deploys her own
identification with animality. She has described her career in entomological terms, as a
Kafkaesque burrowing: “I fit into history like a bug in a rug.”18 Bourgeois evokes the
insistence of instectile boring as a parasitical femininity within a largely androcentric art
history. Here, woman-animal offers a counter-history and, over the course of Bourgeois’s
career, this insect will grow and loom in her work.19 There is an immunologically stoic
aspect to this kynical femininity that aligns itself with animality. Bourgeois makes this
clear when describing She-fox, 1985 [ill. 4.1], a black marble statue of a headless
mammal weighed down by two rows of scarred and corpusculent breasts: “People do
things to her but she can endure it, she can stand it, it doesn’t affect her, mutilated as she
is.”20 Identifying with animality can function as a mode of embracing debasement as
inoculation, protection, and armor—even though, with this strategy of identification,

17 Deleuze and Guattari, Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature, 7-8.
18 Louis Bourgeois, quoted in Christiane Meyer-Thoss, Louise Bourgeois: Konstruktionen für den freien
Fall/Designing for Free Fall (Zurich: Ammann Verlag, 1992), 139.
19 See Bourgeois’s many spiders and cells from the 1990s onward. While these arachnid sculptures are
often read through maternal tropes, they can also be interpreted as exaggerated forms of escape or revenge
through the amplification of animality. For a fine reading of these works as irreducible to a biography of
maternalism, see Mieke Bal, “Narrative Inside Out: Louise Bourgeois’ Spider as Theoretical Object,” The
20 Louise Bourgeois in Louise Bourgeois, Destruction of the Father Reconstruction of the Father: Writings
and Interviews, 1923-1997 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press in association with Violette Editions,
London, 1998), 140.
there is always the risk of sliding from the kynical to the cynical, or from mocking
gerence to internalized resignation.\textsuperscript{21} It is a dangerous gambit of embracing a position
of weak force, or, as Bourgeois claims in describing her various installations called “lairs,”
which she often defines within a thematic of animality and escape: “admitting that we
have no power, we become more than ourselves.”\textsuperscript{22} Now, if Bourgeois deploys strategies
of over-identification with the father and identification with animality in a number of her
works, there is a site in which they collapse into each other—namely, in Bourgeois’s
aesthetics of becoming-meat and anthropophagy. The animal is always in danger of being
cought and reterritorialized—in confinement, as victim, as flesh for consumption. The
animal then falls prey to carnophallogocentric power (to be defined below) of the
patriarchal subject who demands sacrifice and the tearing of flesh. Bourgeois identifies
with animality as becoming-meat and over-identifies with the anthropophagical drive of
andro-power. However successful this doubled strategy may be, in the end, it is not
without its own problems of sliding dangerously from the position of kynical mocking to
a cynical assumption of the subject position being critiqued in the first place (or the goose
simply taking on the wrongs of the gander).

One of the high points of Bourgeois’s use of over-identification—of an
“exaggerated Oedipus”—is her notorious sculpture \textit{La Fillette}, 1968, an oversized phallic
object made of plaster covered in latex. [ill. 4.2] Robert Mapplethorpe’s half-length
portrait of the artist for her 1982 retrospective at MoMA, in which she cradles \textit{La Fillette

\textsuperscript{21} In the case of Bourgeois, this part stoic, part cynical resignation can be attested by her attitude concerning
art making, for example: “That is the reason artists go on—it’s not that they get better and better, but they
are able to stand more.” Ibid., 158.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 152.
wearing “a tufted coat of monkey fur,” is arguably better known than the work itself.23 

4.3] Nixon’s analysis of La Fillette is determined largely by this photograph: she describes the sculptural phallus as a part-object send up of a phallocentric (art) history through psychoanalytic clichés: “Bourgeois’s gesture parades a panoply of Freudian tropes: fetishism, penis envy, castration anxiety, the obscene joke.”24 This psychoanalytic parody is emphatic, and crucially, cuts across gender positions. From a male perspective, any recourse to fetishistic comfort is undercut by the absurd size of La Fillette. He who would disavow his castratability has it confirmed by a patently detached member writ large. From a female perspective, the absconded penis fulfills the purported envy of feminine lack, though to equally parodic degrees, since here the baby is quite literally (and pathologically) a penis. Nixon is keen to situate this penis envy within a complex of maternal drives by reading La Fillette as an object that begs “to be mothered.”25 In other words, that a baby can compensate for phallic lack—thereby becoming a pointedly female fetish in the psychoanalytic economy—is a conflation that Bourgeois and Mapplethorpe tackle head on through a photographic repetition of a maternal posture: “Grinning at the patriarchal overvaluation of the phallus, Bourgeois travesties Freud’s theory of female sexuality, lampooning the convention of female desire for a little one.”26

The cynically dressed Bourgeois in fur, smiling for the camera, conflates penis and

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23 Nixon, 71.  
24 Ibid., 73. Falling prey to Bourgeois’s parody, MoMA decided to excise this photograph and thereby censor not only a phallic object, but female inclusion, since Bourgeois’ joke bears upon a by-and-large androcentric history of art modernism championed by the museum.  
25 Ibid.  
26 Ibid., 80.
baby—a conflation that parodies male anxiety, the (grand)maternal phallus, and penis envy all at once.  

This Freudian complex of motherhood—with its conflicted knot of competing affection and aggression—determines Nixon’s persuasive reading of *La Fillette*. Lest her reading overdetermine this object, however, other interpretive possibilities should be explored. In fact, Nixon signals that her maternal reading might not be the first to come to mind, since when exhibited “the sculpture hangs menacingly from a hook.” More accurately, *La Fillette* is pierced at its tip not with just any hook, but by an S-curve meat hook. When suspended from the ceiling, *La Fillette* unavoidably conjures an aesthetics of slaughter—as if this out-sized phallus were a flank of beef in a walk-in cooler (complete with testicles whose rounded and smooth differentiation double for femur bone protruding from torn flesh). As it happens, this meat hook is only one sign of many that leads the viewer into the domain of what Carol A. Adams has called the “sexual politics of meat.” If *La Fillette* presents the phallus as slaughtered flesh, then Bourgeois’s work goes beyond castration anxiety and penis envy; in this reading, *La Fillette* is the phallus becoming-animal-becoming-food.

In this context, the hanging sculpture must be read as a part-object, though a decidedly *male* part object. Instead of milk-filled breast, it is now the penis as consumable flesh and object of libidinal satisfaction. From a traditionally male perspective, the anxiety is not only of castration, but also of being consumed—of losing the penis twice over—first, through bodily detachment, and subsequently through

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27 There is the additional twist that, by the time of these photographs, Bourgeois is 72 years old and well beyond the age of motherhood.
28 Nixon, 73-4
29 *La Fillette*, when hung from the ceiling, has been shown in two ways: either with the meat hook piercing the tip directly, or hooking onto a ring that has been inserted into the tip.
cooking, mastication, and digestion. From a female perspective, we enter the domain of retaliatory anthropophagy and a burlesque disavowal of lack through an over-identifying incorporation of the phallus.

In an interpretation that attempts to recuperate Bourgeois as a Brancusian modernist, Rosalind Krauss compares La Fillette with Linda Benglis’s 1974 ad in the pages of Artforum in order to demonstrate that while Benglis belongs to the sexual politics of the 1970s, Bourgeois remains fixed in the 1940s and 50s. Krauss misreads the tone of Bourgeois’s work here: claiming that Bourgeois cannot be a contemporary of Benglis is to say that La Fillette cannot be a kynical object. Benglis’ parodically oiled up body clutching a prosthetic erection over-identifies with machismo so as to render it absurd, yet somehow La Fillette does not? There are two specific reasons why I find Krauss’s interpretation to be limiting. The first has to do with her canonical analysis of the necessary conditions of modernist sculpture, namely, that to secure its autonomy it has done away with the plinth. If this were the case with La Fillette, its suspension and hook would have to be incidental and not a part of the work, which diminishes its polyvalence. Any persuasive reading should maintain that the hook serves as its base and the ceiling its floor, and while not site specific, the relationship between object, hook, and ceiling is fundamental to the signifying chain of phallus-become-meat.

Secondly, Krauss assumes La Fillette is a “dildo.” Bourgeois’s object may not be a dildo at all—or, if it is, oddly enough the state of its tumescence remains equivocal. While petrified and solid as a plaster sculpture, the gristle of La Fillette’s flesh-wrapped

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30 As Nixon points out, the 1994 “Bad Girls” exhibition at MoMA invited this analogy between Benglis and Bourgeois. Nixon, 80-2.
contours is less erect than flaccid (this is especially true when hung, as gravity seems to account for its length rather than any inner libidinal force). The head of the phallus is also pointed and partially retracted, which, physiologically, signifies a loss or restriction of blood flow. At best, *La Fillette* is sexually *informe*, undecidable either on its way to tumescence or in the act of receding. Paying attention to this difference that Krauss’s reading fails to note adds meaning to Bourgeois’s work, as compatible codes of emasculation only pile up. Not only does *La Fillette* feed into anthropophagical castration anxiety, the sculpture is a perpetual goading of male impotence, for what use value might there be for a flaccid and not fully erect dildo? What sort of Medusa-effect has petrified this partially drained phallus? It can also be argued that when displayed balls hanging downward, these double as breasts and the triangular torso and head recall a human prehistory of totemic fertility objects—an art historical reference not without precedence in Bourgeois’s oeuvre.\(^{32}\) This would invert an androcentric staple of virility into a gynocentric trope of fertility (phallus becoming female form, though crucially enough, not as a phallic mother, since the figure is neither erotic nor soothing to male anxiety).

Codes of emasculation are also operative at the level of language. *Fillette* means “little girl” and the retaliatory irony is clear, since this diminutive term of patronizing endearment boomerangs back onto its male user (since the “little girl” is a phallus). Moreover, at the syntactical level of case gender, *La Fillette* also points to another form of semiotic feminization: from *le filet* (e.g. of meat) to *la fillette*. *Filet*, as the practice of processing flesh through flaying and deboning is itself already euphemized through feminization: *La Fillette*, synonymous with “little girl/daughter,” has its etymological

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origins in the word for a thread or ribbon worn in the hair. As the sociologist Noëlie Vialles has observed, the violence of the slaughterhouse is often dissimulated through the feminization and vegetalization of flesh—a point that ecofeminist theorists have also uncovered in order to demonstrate how both women and animals are feminized so to legitimize their exploitation.\textsuperscript{33}

So, hanging like a slab of beef in the cold, \textit{La Fillette} is powerless and drained of life blood, becoming not so much a part object of female desire (phallus-child), but a part object of carnivist desire (phallus-meat). This, I argue, is the most kynically radical aspect of Bourgeois’s object. It is as if \textit{La Fillette} prefigures Derrida’s neologism “carnophallogocentrism,” and does so tooth for tooth. For Derrida, “carnivorous virility” is tied to a symbolic structure and denotes “the idealizing interiorization of the phallus and the necessity of its passage through the mouth, whether it’s a matter of words or of things, of sentences, of daily bread or wine, of the tongue, the lips, or the breast of the other.”\textsuperscript{34} The potency of the father/man is predicated on both symbolic and literal consumption of the world, which includes the domination of what threatens him the most—women, children, and animals. In the end, however, this “head of state,” who accepts a sacrificial economy of blood and bone, ends up opening himself to anthropophagical precarity—he \textit{too} can be consumed.\textsuperscript{35} This is precisely what \textit{La Fillette} suggests. On the one hand, \textit{La Fillette} exaggerates Oedipus and amplifies the power of the phallus—yet on the other, this amplification only results in a bigger cut of meat hanging on a hook: emasculated, drained of vital force, and on its way to being consumed.

\textsuperscript{33} See Vialles; Adams.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
The French word for “meat” holds this contradiction in place, as the *via* of *viande* connotes life in death; recall Roland Barthes’s quasi-cannibalistic claim that eating a steak confers “bull-like strength.” Ultimately, *La Fillette* takes this sexual politics of meat to self-defeating lengths of the carnophallogocentric subject eating his own tail.

*La Fillette*’s sexual politics of anthropophagy is not an isolated incident in Bourgeois’s oeuvre. *He Disappeared Completely into Silence*, 1947, an illustrated book of mechanomorphic figures and austere architectural shapes, includes a scene of carnophallogocentric violence. As a collection, *He Disappeared Completely into Silence* evokes a sense of urban desolation, which serves as a backdrop for female loss and frustration confronted with supercilious males who like to hear themselves speak yet have problems hearing others. Each engraving is accompanying by a text, which is often irresolute or cryptic. One of these short texts for plate 7 tells of a grizzly domestic incident in which misogynist aggression finds an outlet through woman-becoming-animal-becoming-meat: [ill. 4.5]

Once a man was angry at his wife, he cut her into small pieces, made a stew of her.

Then he telephoned his friends and asked them for a cocktail-and-stew party.

Then all came and had a good time. 37

Bourgeois’s engraving illustrating this butcherous scene is enigmatic. If the deadpan text describes andropower and its a-social consumption of the wife now reduced to pieces, the image is more oblique. It shows two bio-mechanomorphic figures engaged in struggle on

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36 Here is Barthes’s structuralist analysis of wine and steak: “Steak is a part of the same sanguine mythology as wine. It is the heart of meat, it is meat in its pure state; and whoever partakes of it assimilates a bull-like strength.” Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 62.

an anonymous rooftop. The figure on the left has an intestinal tube that rounds down into
its legs, and a torso and head reminiscent of Surrealist biomorphic shapes. While the legs
and torso of this figure are contained within an obelisk-shaped architectural covering, its
strange zoo-vegetal head of bone, feather, flower, and fishbone pops out the top. The
figure on the right, whose biomorphic contours appear clitoral, is without any
architectural protection and gives the impression of being forced by the other figure into
torturuous devices—at the top, a square, guillotine-like apparatus, and at the bottom, a tree
house-like structure cordoned off by a circular railing. Both figures seem to be wound up
through mechanisms protruding from their sides, and both appear hooked up to a network
of power lines and conductors. From this visual analysis, the figure on the left seems to
be the husband and the one on the right to be the wife, though this remains far from clear.
The only sure observation would be to describe this ensemble as a sadistic machine
running a complex series of pulsations and entanglements.38

Nixon’s compelling interpretation of He Disappeared Completely into Silence,
and this seventh plate in particular, places its mechanomorphic figures alongside Marcel
Duchamp’s The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass), 1915-24.
Nixon claims Bourgeois “retools” The Large Glass, and that in her version, “the
narcissistic eroticism of the bachelors who grind their own chocolate gives way to the
explosive sadism of the husband who stews his own wife.”39 In the bride turned wife and
the bachelors turned husbands, the partition between the sexes has been lifted to grave
consequences in mutual aggression—from which the “weaker sex” certainly gets the

38 In a later edition of He Disappeared into Complete Silence from 2005, Bourgeois adds a deep red color to
this plate: in the intestinal tubing, the biomorphic fishbone head, in both winding mechanisms, and the
crate-like box of the tree house structure. This color reinforces the violence and suggests an obscure
apparatus for blood transfusions.
worst of it. The woman becomes prey to her husband’s aggression by becoming-meat for the stew, which reduces her flesh to a part object for satisfying that aggression (and like all cuts of meat as part objects, her cuts of flesh stand in for the whole while dissimulating the living complexity of the whole from which the cuts came). Twenty years later, in *La Fillette*, Bourgeois turns this around in retaliatory female aggression. It is no longer the woman who is in danger of being consumed, but the male in his most sensitive and coveted seat of power.

Bourgeois takes this anthropophagic retaliation to its natural conclusion in her 1974 installation *The Destruction of the Father*. [ill. 4.6] This installation is paradigmatic of her format of the “lair”: a cave-like room that envelopes the viewer in red light with organic protuberances made of wood and latex swelling from the floor and ceiling. In the middle of the lair is a long slab with various smaller shapes strewn about, which are vaguely reminiscent of body parts (both human and nonhuman).40 This scene of destruction is accompanied by a narrative, written by Bourgeois, of a mother and her children sitting in silence at the dinner table with their smug and garrulous father (the work is alternatively titled *The Evening Meal*). Once again, the tables are reversed, as the family, fed up with their patriarch, throws him down on the table and proceeds to devour him. Like *La Fillette*, this elaborate installation preys on the andro-anxiety of being consumed and digested: if the sculpture turns the head of androcentric subjectivity into meat, then the post-prandial installation turns the whole body of the male into a meal (as a reversal of the wife-turned-stew from *He Disappeared Completely into Silence*).

40 The installation instructions at MoMA describe many of these as animal parts.
The Surrealist interest in anthropophagy, especially the “edible beauty” of the female figure as inspired by Lautréamont’s poems The Songs of Maldoror (1868-9), was already well established by the late 1920s.\textsuperscript{41} This proclivity for cannibalizing the feminine was not restricted to male surrealists, but can be found in the work of prominent female practitioners as well. Meret Oppenheim’s Spring Banquet, 1959, a happening-like event in Bern, involved the artist and friends eating food off the body of a naked young girl lying on a table—lobster, steak tartar, mushrooms, and whipped cream and ladyfingers.\textsuperscript{42} This work—like Daniel Spoerri’s “Eat Art” in the 1960s and Arman’s contribution to the movement with a sculptural work of women’s legs sculpted in edible marzipan—is relatively light and uncritical (at least in respect to when nonhumans are involved).\textsuperscript{43} By contrast, the most patently subversive example of female “edible beauty” is Lee Miller’s 1930 photographs of a breast she secretly procured from a Parisian hospital after a mastectomy.\textsuperscript{44} [ill. 4.7] Miller arranged the cancerous breast on a plate, and placed this on a mat with knife and fork. Known as Severed Breast from Radical Surgery in a Place Setting, the pair of images shows the rounded flap of amputated skin and nipple with corpuscular fat and blood oozing on the plate, inviting the breast to be read as a rare piece of meat or slice of pie with blueberry filling. Rather than decry female objectification directly, Miller stages an over-identification with edible beauty, a ghastly pantomime


\textsuperscript{42} A photograph of Oppenheim’s Spring Banquet appears in the catalog for the 1959 Surrealist Exhibition. It was also re-staged in this last Surrealist exhibition. Also called the “cannibal feast,” the second iteration involved a female mannequin rather than a living woman.

\textsuperscript{43} See chapter four in Cecilia Novero, Antidiets of the Avant-Garde: from Futurist Cooking to Eat Art (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 145-208.

\textsuperscript{44} For an involved reading of these photographs, see Patricia Allmer, Lee Miller: Photography, Surrealism, and Beyond (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 28-58. While Allmer notes the parallel between the breast on a plate and a well-known advertisement for bacon and eggs doubling as breast, she does not make the connection between woman/animal victimhood or violation.
serving up the outcome of animalizing and sexualizing the body as object of libidinal-gustatory satisfaction (breast, part-object, meat). This is possibly the most kynical feminist work of over-identification in the pre-war period.45

There are several modalities of kynicism to unpack here. In the case of Oppenheim, the artist embraces cannibalism as a festive gesture. Yet her *Spring Banquet* simply identifies with the male surrealist affinity for edible beauty, assuming the orchestration of woman-as-food as would any male surrealist.46 In Miller’s case, the artist is more clearly over-identifying with an andro-aggressive strain of cannibalism. Miller’s still shocking photographs embrace an untenable position of woman-as-animal, woman-as-food. While presented as a food, there is simply no way (barring irremediable pathology) for *Severed Breast from Radical Surgery in a Place Setting* to be reassimilated into a naïve erotic embrace of female edible beauty. That said, Miller’s *Severed Breast* remains tied to a position of female victimhood, albeit in confrontational over-identification that sends off an affect of radical unease.

In something of a synthesis of Oppenheim and Miller’s strategies, Bourgeois over-identifies with andro-aggressive cannibalism but does so by assuming the subject position of the victimizer in retaliatory gyno-agression. Oppenheim’s work is cheeky, but easily subsumed by andropower. Miller’s photographs are kynical in their shock value, but remain fragile victims. Only Bourgeois’s work extends the role of the female kynic beyond passivity and victimhood by over-identifying with male, carnophallogocentric violence in scenarios where the gender tables have been turned. In light of this, it is not

45 As Allmer points out, Miller’s *Severed Breast* likely influenced Oppenheim’s *My Nurse, Spring Banquet*, and her interest in sexual anthropophagy. Ibid., 54-5.
46 That Oppenheim’s *Spring Banquet* would be re-staged as *Cannibal Feast* at the last Surrealist Exhibition in 1959—using a mannequin rather than live model, from which both men and women enjoyed animal flesh and fluids—shows the waning kynical edge of this gesture.
surprising that Bourgeois held her own cannibal banquet.\textsuperscript{47} Ultimately, however, even this strategy proves to have limits, for Bourgeois’s kynical instigations can easily fall into a cynical embrace of the violence and power of the other side. Perhaps one way out of this untenable impasse of victimhood-vengeance is to identify with animality and maintain that violence against both human and nonhuman bodies is untenable—which is to say, to advocate for a posthumanist paradigm.

4.3 \textsc{Annette Messager (Domesticity and Care)}

From an anthropophagical aesthetics of meat arises a more general point about woman-animal subordination, namely, the long history of domestication. Etymologically, “domestication” and “domesticity” are of course conjoined. In social history, the practice of domestication (making tame) and domesticity (of belonging to the home) were closely connected. Beginning with the Neolithic (or agricultural) revolution of over 10,000 years ago, the move from nomadic human groupings to rooted horticultural societies proved decisive: the agricultural territorialization of domesticated nature, notably herd animals, was concomitant with the herding of women in the centralized planning of a sedentary abode. This led to profound changes in social life, which, as the historian Chris Harman argues, drew a path towards the classification and stratification of society—including the demotion of women whose labor in nomadic groupings had been on equal footing with that of men: “she became simply a ‘wife’, a subordinate in a strange household. Ruling class women were increasingly treated as an ornament, a source of sexual pleasure or as a breeder of heirs.”\textsuperscript{48} Woman and animal were reduced to domestic labor and wombic

\textsuperscript{47} I am thinking of her 1978 performance-installation \textit{A Banquet/A Fashion Show of Body Parts}, in which she dressed up art historians and students in fleshy outfits that look a great deal like the “body parts” in \textit{The Destruction of the Father}.

vehicles for maternal production driven by androcentric power. It is for this reason that feminist activists could draw connections between domesticated animals and woman, and why a theorist like Luce Irigaray would devote a chapter in her *Ce Sexe qui n’en est pas un* (1977) to critiquing woman-as-commodity and as fundamental unit of socio-cultural exchange.⁴⁹

The conjoined history of woman and nonhuman animals in the history of domestication raises the question: could human civilization have developed otherwise? Part of the feminist struggle has been to demonstrate that female subordination is by no means ineluctable, but a product of long-held patriarchal historical forces. Similarly, it has gone unquestioned (until very recently) that the domestication and commodification of nonhuman animals was a prerequisite for the formation of human societies. Nathaniel Southgate Shaler, a venerated nineteenth-century paleontologist and geologist, held the view that domesticating animals led to progress in human civilization—including advances in housekeeping, agriculture, warfare, and commerce, of which all ‘set men upon their upward way’.⁵⁰ Much more recently, the sociologist David Nibert argues against this ideological precondition for the genesis of civilization, especially the notion that domestication and human progress go hand-in-hand: ‘[T]he practice of capturing and oppressing cows, sheep, pigs, horses, goats, and similar large, sociable animals for human use did not, as Shaler put it, “set men well upon their upward way.” Instead, Nibert avers that the history of nonhuman domestication set a precedent for justifying the devaluation of certain humans (women, non-whites) through similar biopolitical techniques of control.

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and debasement (so dominating nonhuman bodies did not breed progress, but yet more domination). A destabilization of the inexorable notion of domestication-domesticity would thus represent an ecofeminist strategy that seeks to undermine the historical discrimination of gender, race, and species.

In the early 1970s, Annette Messager (b. 1943) turned from painting in the style of Jean Dubuffet and Francis Bacon to a practice of using found materials in installations evoking the domestic sphere. A foundational trigger for this turn was Messager’s decision to work out of her apartment, which she bifurcated as a dual space: the bedroom for drawing and collecting, the dining room for taxidermy and studio display.51 [ill. 4.8]

From the start, studio work and domestic work are intertwined. If Bourgeois, as I have argued, tended to over-identify with male tropes, Freudian analysis, and woman-animal anthropophagical violence, then Messager’s strategy is less cohesive. At times, her work over-identifies with feminine domesticity and animality, yet this can range from a melancholic form of resistance to a more confrontational kynical edge. Her work also identifies with certain positive aspects of the domestic sphere, especially its focus on caring and comfort, as well as the more negative aspects of the domestic female condition. So while Bourgeois operates more frequently in a kynical mode of negation, Messager toggles between an over-identification with negativity (de-valuing negativity through parody) and positive forms of identification (valuing what is normally de-valued).

Messager’s Les Pensionnaires (Little Boarders) from 1971-2 inaugurates her mature work. [ill. 4.9] The origin story of Les Pensionnaires is by now well known:

51 This bifurcation was documented by Messager’s drawing included in her album that accompanies the installation Les Pensionnaires (Little Boarders), 1971-2. Messager also split her role between “collector” in the bedroom and “artist” in the studio. Annette Messager and Marie-Laure Bernadac, Annette Messager, Word for Word: Texts, Writings, and Interviews (New York: D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers in association with Les presses de réel and Violette Editions, 2006), 25.
around the time she was asked by the Galerie Germain in Paris to produce work using wool for an exhibition sponsored by Woolmark, Messager stepped on a dead sparrow in the street. This chance encounter between human and nonhuman led her in and care for the sparrow by knitting the bird a wool sweater. Messager began accumulating more dead sparrows, handing them over to a taxidermist (and studying taxidermy herself). She provided her growing collection of preserved birds with clothing and housing, made contraptions for taking them on walks (as well as separate contraptions for disciplining bad behavior), and even developed an alphabet made of feathers in order to teach them language. All of these components of Les Pensionnaires were displayed in the studio space portion of her apartment. The sparrows could be found lined up in neat rows under glass or in a cabinet (Le Repos des pensionnaires, Boarders at Rest, 1971-2), photographed strapped to their walking devices (La Promenade des pensionnaires, Boarders’ Walk, 1971-2), pinned to the wall casting a shadow (L'ombre portée sur le mur, The Shadow, 1971-2), or reproduced in Messager’s sketch book (Mes croquis d’oiseaux, My Sketches of Birds, 1972).

By-and-large, the literature on Messager’s Les Pensionnaires reads this work through a maternal lens. Sheryl Conkelton’s assertion that Messager’s “concern with the sparrows reflected traditionally female maternal and protective instincts” is representative of this critical consensus.52 Messager herself has described her aesthetic undertaking of nurturing sparrows in terms of mothering or caring for a child. And yet, Messager is also on record as saying that it “really annoyed me that people would very often ask me whether or not I wanted to have children, whereas this question was never put to boys my

It is as if the writing on Messager also presumes to ask this question about motherhood, betraying its own desire for the artist’s maternal drive to be evidenced in authorial intent or unconscious transference. Messager’s annoyance complicates this reading and questions why motherhood is an essentialized, biologically determined presumption for a woman artist. While a maternal drive does seem to be operative in Messager’s *Les Pensionnaires*, it should be recognized that the impulse to care, to nurture, and to protect far exceeds motherhood tout court. After all, one does not need to be a mother to care for another—and analogously, the title of the work points towards fostering or hospitality in general, not parenting in specific. So to limit an interpretation to maternal transference is to occlude a more general propensity for empathy in mutual existential precarity—be it human-to-human, or human-to-nonhuman.

In *Les Pensionnaires*, Bacon’s lingering influence on Messager’s post-painterly practice comes through in a thematic concern with nonhuman identification. The British painter famously identified with butchered carcasses: “If I go into a butcher shop I always think it’s surprising that I wasn’t there instead of the animal.”

Bacon not only recognized the self-consuming anthropological outcome of carnophallogocentrism—that to eat the other is to risk being eaten/eating oneself—but also confirms the shared precarity of enfleshment in humans and nonhumans. For Bacon, we are all potential flesh become meat. Deleuze describes this becoming-meat as the “zone of indiscernibility” between human and animal, which serves as the basis of Baconian pity not towards

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54 David Sylvester and Francis Bacon, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon* (New York, N.Y.: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 46. It is interesting to ponder whether or not Bacon’s family name predisposed him to this identification with meat.
animals, but towards human suffering. For her part, Messager’s identification with animality is less focused on shared bodily victimhood and more on positive affinities. In an interview from 1988, Messager affirms that “we are all human animals. There is not that much difference between me and my cat; we have a shared language.” She recognizes a shared language and a transmission of affect that exists between human and nonhuman animals.

Attentiveness to the nonhuman in Les Pensionnaires opens onto three wider interpretive possibilities. First, as a possible subject-object of care it is the sparrow who makes the maternal transference of nurturing possible in the first place. This is an important point, for it keeps Messager’s gesture from falling into pure psychosis. If the artist were babying rocks, logs, dolls, or other inanimate objects devoid of sentience, her work would beg a purely pathological reading. Since the birds were once living, breathing beings, human identification with their existential vulnerability makes sense—and anyway forms the basis for pet keeping, animal welfare, and animal rights. This fact is often missed, especially when the sparrows are interpreted as surrogates for women and children. Laurel Fredrickson’s otherwise astute reading of Les Pensionnaires makes such a claim, without extending consideration to the nonhuman. She concludes her essay by drawing a parallel between Messager’s early work and the traumatic subjects of humanist history who have been relegated to the periphery of recognition based on race,

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55 Deleuze’s argument that Bacon is a religious painter in his treatment of flesh-as-suffering means that Bacon, like the Vienna Actionists, has not extricated himself from a Judeo-Christian economy of sacrifice. See Gilles Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, trans., Daniel W. Smith (London: Continuum, 2003), 24.

56 Annette Messager, in radio interview with M.L. Bernadac “Woman Artists.”

57 The fact that the sparrows are dead lends credence to a certain pathological or melancholic dimension to the Little Boarders. Dressing the birds in sweaters, teaching them a language, and disciplining them are all point to disturbed mental transference—though its status as a work of art provides a performative gap. For someone to do the same in complete earnestness, without framing it as a performative and meaningful artistic gesture as Messager does, would be more genuinely idiosyncratic, if not pathological.
gender, and age: “As victims of violence in both physical and psychological ways, many women and children have been similarly placed outside of official discourse and their traumas have been hidden, unresolved, and unacknowledged.” Fredrickson leaves unacknowledged any consideration of species—of the panoply of nonhumans similarly “placed outside of official discourse.” Whereas the fact that the sparrows become available for the artist as largely under-valued urban denizens, whose sentience and enfleshment give them the status of potential victims-in-themselves, would suggest a transversal connection between woman-child-animal as differently yet analogously precarious in the socio-political humanist structures that traditionally devalue them.

Secondly, Messager’s Les Pensionnaires is more than a simple act of fostering. If a maternal drive is operative in her Les Pensionnaires, then it points towards a conjunction between parenting and domestication, for Messager takes in a nonhuman in order to care for it. This is a peculiar form of domestication, however, in that it is devoid of any obvious use-value. Drawing in the assistance of an animal, either forcefully or in mutual benefit, has always been done in terms of use-value. Messager’s birds, however, provide no obvious use-value outside pseudo-companionship and providing bodily material for an art installation. In this sense, Messager’s gesture thematizes the act of care

58 Fredrickson, "Memory and projection in Annette Messager's early work," 59. At the heart of Fredrickson’s reading of Messager is a consideration of trauma and posttraumatic stress syndrome.

59 A conjectural anthropological theory of canine domestication is interesting in this regard, in that it is believed to be Late Stone Age women who began the process. Those who lost their baby after birth would find abandoned wolf pups in the forest. As Heiner Mühlmann argues, this elicited an intuitive act of human-to-nonhuman transference of care: “As the women had sufficient milk in the breast after the birth of their own children which had died, they suckled the abandoned cubs in the impulse of extraspecific charity.” See Heiner Mühlmann, The Nature of Cultures: a Blueprint for a Theory of Culture Genetics, trans., Robert Payne (New York: Springer Verlag/Wein, 1996), 5-6. In this way, women were the first kynics. This anthropological theory is not without its problems, however, since it relies on a biologically determinate understanding of woman as automatically nurturing.

60 Although this is arguably no longer the case when it comes to companion species, the long-view history of domesticated pets is a story of mutual use-value between human and nonhuman (humans tolerating felines in the home so to ward off rodents, for example).
as a benevolent act of domestication. Yet bringing in this angle of domestication is highly ambivalent. On the one hand, domestication (of both women and animals) leads to pathology and boredom in its attendant forms of corporeal confinement, from the most minute to the most severe (kitchen, cage, zoo, slaughterhouse, and so on). In this way, Messager’s *Les Pensionnaires* enacts a moment of over-identification with domesticity—domestication as a perilous process. She takes care of dead birds in her domestic setting as a process of transference, obsession, or pathology. On the other hand, caring and being cared for provides protection from a threatening outside, which forms the very basis for the home in the broader political sense of *eco-*nomics. In this way, the domestication of humans and nonhumans is pharmacological—both poisonous and beneficent. The initial act of noticing the dead sparrow was an incipient moment of posthumanist recognition—a properly zoopolitical reaction to a fellow urban denizen.

Thirdly, Messager’s *Les Pensionnaires* is a gendered *détournement* of taxidermy. Historically, taxidermy has been a male preoccupation, one that reflects a drive for ecological sovereignty and andro-humani $$^1$$ st domination of nature (often as an escape from culture and industry). Normally, the animals prey to such artificial preservation and theatrical staging are exotic, rare, or dangerous specimens, often products of trophy hunts. Messager’s use of taxidermy throughout her career, though especially in the comparatively humbler *Les Pensionnaires*, subverts this traditional program. Her sparrows are some of the most quotidian and mundane urban dwellers; they are neither exotic, rare, nor dangerous. Instead, unless one takes an interest in them (as Messager does, excerpts from the ethologist Erik Sablé), they are meaningless background noise in

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$^1$ For a discussion a taxidermy and recent art practices, including its female subversion, see Aloi, 24-48.
the circulation of the cityscape. Not only caring, but preserving these sparrows lend them a certain amount of value, visibility, and dignity not normally accorded them. One also needs to make a distinction between noticing a deceased bird on a sidewalk and those artists who seek out an animal for use as material in art. The gendered difference between Messager’s humble gesture of care and (for example) Damien Hirst’s hiring of an expedition to kill a tiger shark is clear, and betrays the latter as safely tethered to—perhaps cynically so—an historically andro-humanist drive for ecological sovereignty. As a project, even before its transference onto the question of mothering or maternal pathology, Messager’s *Les Pensionnaires* is first and foremost a project foregrounding the identification of the devalued and overlooked—be it woman or bird.

Messager’s post-*Les Pensionnaires* oeuvre is replete with procedures of over-identification with domesticity (and can thus be linked to this original gesture of ambivalent care). The most pertinent examples involve the artist’s embracing of domestic rituals and home keeping. Take, for example, her collection of misogynist sayings from around the world that she embroidered onto little pieces of fabric, *Ma collection de proverbs* (My Collection of Proverbs, 1974). [ill. 4.10] She began assembling this self-described “pessimistic” archive of clichés in 1973, all of which betray a rampant projection of male fears onto the female body.⁶² Unsurprisingly, many of these sayings pivot from an analogy with animals: “a woman has nine lives like a cat,” “the world has been destroyed by women and wolves,” “woman is the most subtle creature in the animal kingdom,” “a woman has a spider’s eye,” “a woman without a man is like an untied

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⁶² The only exception, Messager notes, is the figure of the mother who is never debased in popular male wisdom. Messager and Bernadac, 234.
horse,” and “a woman, like a goat, should be kept on a leash.”63 (These sayings thus attest to Nibert’s claim that nonhuman domestication is concomitant with human debasement). Rather than critiquing these sayings directly, Messager amasses and reproduces them—an over-identification redoubled by the chosen medium of embroidery. In one of his more notoriously speculative moments, Freud claimed that the only artistic medium available to women is “plaiting and weaving,” which he claims stems from compensatory female pubic hair that serves as a matted, women covering for their shameful lack of a phallus.64 So repeating these phrases within the purported historical limits of female expression is an attempt to travesty both.

Messager’s other collections in a similar vein comprise her taxonomy of domestic chores—not unlike Chantal Ackerman’s Jeanne Dielman, 23, Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles (1975), a film that similarly presents its audience with an affect of domestic tedium. These include Messager’s Mon livre de cuisine (My Cookbook, 1972) and Mes dépense quotidiennes pendant 1 mois (My Daily Expenses Over the Course of a Month, 1973). The first is a dog-eared notebook on graph paper amassing the artist’s recipes, complete with gastronomic images cut out from magazines and organized with tabs according to food animals: fish, beef, chicken, pork, rabbit, lamb, veal, and so on. [ill. 4.11] The other is a hardback notebook/scrapbook that documents Messager’s living expenses, including trips to the laundry, the baker, the grocery store, and the butcher. [ill. 4.12]

63 Out of the 102 proverbs that make up Messager’s Ma collection de proverbs, 17 involve an explicit woman-animal analogy, and numerous others compatibly reduce woman to nature. For the complete list, see ibid., 234-9.
Both of these works present the fetishization of domestic life (the compiling of recipes, the retaining of receipts) as perhaps obsessive and certainly repetitive. In one sense, presenting what are normally understood as humble documents of daily life (and coded feminine) as artistic objects elevates this material culture as worthy of appreciation: female domestic as conceptual artist *avant la lettre*. In another sense, which was almost certainly Messager’s overriding intention, her cookbook and quotidian accounting make the tedium of artist-collector-domestic visible in parodic over-identification. However compelling either of these gestures may ultimately be, I would like to focus on the peculiarity of their ideological blind spots in relation to Messager’s original gesture of care in *Les Pensionnaires*. If, as I have argued, this foundational work was a process of identification and over-identification involving nonhumans that thematizes care, then these subsequent works using similar strategies involve a betrayal of this original moment of kindness. This is especially true of Messager’s cookbook: it is a kynical overidentification with a history of female domesticity that, simultaneously, slides into a cynical complicity with the conjoined history of domestication as widespread violence towards nonhuman animals. This amounts to a cognitive dissonance at the heart of her initial practice of care. Of course, Messager’s falling into complicity is largely ideological. The kynical critique of female domestication is a moment of enlightened false consciousness: Messager knows very well that woman should not be confined to domestic tedium, and so her artist-collector embracing of these materials is a pantomimic

65 This compromise or slackening of her original gesture of kindness in *Les Pensionnaires* is also evident in her more spectacular installations beginning in the early 1990s implementing a wide assortment of animal bodies. The demands of scale and spectacle represents a stark contrast to the humble moment of identifying with a single dead sparrow on the ground. Pertinent examples include her 1993 installation for the 2nd Lyon Biennale comprised of numerous and varied dead birds and a squirrel on pikes with masks, or more recently the massive profusion of species in taxidermy in “Them and us, Us and Them,” her installation from 2000 at the Palais des Papes, Avignon. For these (as well as other similar examples), see Annette Messager, *Annette Messager, The Messengers* (Munich; New York: Prestel, 2007), 364-5, 464-5.
instigation. When, however, this strategy of over-identification involves the unnoticed violation of a nonhuman body (who was equally dominated in bored confinement before being put to death), the work betrays an unenlightened false consciousness—or, more simply, an ideological blind spot of incoherence not yet recognized by the artist (but which has become more obvious today). For how can taking care of little birds, even when this falls on the scale of over-identification with motherly pathology, be squared with the unthinking use of other animals as simple flesh for food? Messager’s fall from kynical instigation to cynical complicity is predicated on an exacerbation of domesticity that, in turn, colludes with the unseen dangers and wrongs of its fellow traveler: the long history of nonhuman domestication that subtends the very human domesticity Messager seems to critique in her work.

4.3 VALIE EXPORT (Écriture féminine as posthumanist performance)

The most kynical feminist artist of the seventies and eighties was arguably VALIE EXPORT. Her early (and still most celebrated) performances embrace self-objectification to such degrees that they problematize the more mundane ideological manifestations of female objectification. Take Aktionshose: Genitalpanik (Action Pants: Genital Panic), 1968, an action undertaken by the artist in which she (purportedly) entered a Munich art-house cinema wearing crotch-less pants, exposing her genitals to the audience row by row, [ill. 4.13] or TAPP und TASTKINO (TAP and TOUCH CINEMA) from the same year, which found EXPORT walking around Vienna encouraging the public (usually male) to touch her bare breasts within a box-turned-mini-

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66 EXPORT’s name change alone is a form of over-identification, in two ways: with regard to the macho set of the Viennese art scene of the time (as conveyed by her use of capital letters) and with consumer culture (since “EXPORT” was a common brand of cigarettes).

67 The well-known photographs associated with this performance of EXPORT in crotch-less pants holding a gun were taken a year later in 1969.
theatre strapped to her torso. In both instances, the artist was the agent and subject of her own objectification, compelling her audience to traverse the scopic fantasy of the screen—to move from a mediated access of the female body to a more immediate one in the flesh (which inherently changes the experience of the original fantasy in various ways, often destroying it). An introductory discussion of EXPORT’s relationship to kynicism would not be complete without Aus der Mappe der Hundigkeit (From the Portfolio of Doggedness), 1968, her collaborative performance with the artist Peter Weibel who was led around town on all fours by leash. Like Diogenes, EXPORT preferred the company of canines to men (and so transformed her man into a dog). There was also a kynical reversal at work here, both in terms of power—it is now woman who wields it—and in its recourse to gender debasement via animalization—it is now man who is the inferior beast. From the Portfolio of Doggedness is in keeping with a long intellectual tradition of critiquing domestication as slavish complicity. From Aesop to La Fontaine to Deleuze and Guattari, the kynical wolf cannot accept the cynical dog’s subordination to social convention; any dog who accepts the leash is betraying his freedom for the sour cream of dependency and security. This critique had great currency during the anti-bourgeois and sexual liberation contestations of the 1960s and 1970s.

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68 In clear human-nonhuman female analogy, one of EXPORT’s drawings that accompanied this performance in the journal Film shows the box with two holes fastened to the udders of a dairy cow. See Valie Export, Valie Export: Archiv (Bregenz, Austria: Kunsthaus Bregenz, 2012), 232.

69 In one of Sloterdijk’s few accounts of female kynicism, he tells the story of Phyllis and Aristotle. The famous courtesan controls the famous philosopher in similar terms by placing Aristotle on a leash. According to Sloterdijk, this anecdote constitutes a “bridge from male kynicism to female kynicism, especially to the kynicism that can be observed in the present-day women’s movement.” Sloterdijk, Critique of Cynical Reason, 254-5.

70 The fable in question, which goes back to Aesop, is “The Dog and the Wolf.” In line with the anti-domestic sentiments of this fable, see Deleuze and Guattari on pets as oedipalized animals and their notorious claim that “anyone who likes cats or dogs is a fool.” Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, 240.
Reflecting on *Tap and Touch Cinema* in a text from 1989, EXPORT affirms that her performance captured “the violence of patriarchy through acts of *self-chosen* demonstration.”\(^{71}\) And yet, even by this point (late 1980s) she no longer fully holds to its strategy, recognizing that even if woman becomes the subject of her own reification, at the end of the day she remains an object: “In the long run…this campaign of women’s sexual self-determination, which clearly demonstrates the shift in the relationship between the sexes, occurs at the expense of the woman actionist.”\(^{72}\) This insight can be taken further. It is always possible that female self-objectification, even in kynical mockery, can double back on itself to become a source of the very pleasure it was hoping to parody. For example, male participants in *Tap and Touch Cinema* might enthusiastically embrace the pleasures of groping bare breasts in a box—naively or cynically—thereby deflating any critical impact this encounter could have held for them.\(^{73}\) Ironically, kynical gestures depend on an audience who is thereby triggered into enlightenment—or out of cynical entitlement—an outcome that is not always reliable.

EXPORT asserts that in order to go beyond this limitation, the artist must extricate herself from the arena of bodily commodification all together: “In the future, the goal of ‘getting out of the established trade as an object of exchange’ (Luce Irigaray) should be pursued much more radically.”\(^{74}\) EXPORT became increasingly aware of these strategic limitations in the early seventies. This does not mean her kynical edge abated. Instead,

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\(^{72}\) Ibid.

\(^{73}\) The same danger holds for *From the Portfolio of Doggedness*: if in being walked on a leash the man gets masochistic pleasure from said subordination and animalized debasement, then the power relation is reversed once more—and ultimately, as Deleuze has shown, the masochist holds even greater power than the sadistic “master.” See Gilles Deleuze and Leopold Sacher-Masoch, *Masochism* (New York; Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books 1989).

\(^{74}\) Export, “Aspects of Feminist Actionism,” 90.
she armed herself with theory, especially psychoanalysis, and refined her strategy of over-identification so that it could not so easily be subsumed by androcentric enjoyment.

This critical awareness—of the kynical female body becoming a source of cynical enjoyment for the male viewer— informs EXPORT’s complicated relationship to her Viennese Actionist colleagues immediately preceding her. An argument could be made that Hermann Nitsch, Otto Muehl, and Gunther Brus represent the apex of kynical instigation in performance art: masturbating in public, working with raw meat, desublimating the sexual drives of the human animal, and refusing every convention of “good” society, including the demand to work. All of these actions could equally well describe the kynical antics of Diogenes in fifth century BCE. Yet de-sublimation—coupled with a complete deregulation of what materials can be included as art—leads to certain problems. However effective this embodied kynical resistance to repressive idealist values might be, there is a grave blind spot in their artistic economy: Viennese Actionism maintained a proclivity for sacrifice that wrought violence (both simulated and real) onto both human and nonhuman bodies in order to combat stifling bourgeois conventions. And yet a minimum definition of bourgeois interests is that of a power that masks its violent effects—be it on class, gender, or species. The radical violence of the Vienna Actionists therefore uncomfortably redoubles those very forms of violence propagated by bourgeois culture, especially towards woman and animals. The only

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75 Sloterdijk goes so far as saying that Diogenes’s public masturbation was “the first Happening of our civilization.” He argues that this event began a new chapter in human sexuality, one that challenges the idealist tendencies of discourses on love: “Plebeian onanism is an affront to the aristocratic soul-to-soul game, as well as to love relationships in which individuals, for the sake of sexuality, subjugate themselves to the yoke of a relationship. The sexual kynic, from the start, counters this with a self-satisfaction unburdened by scruples.” Sloterdijk, Critique of Cynical Reason, 253.
difference is that while bourgeois culture masks or dissimulates its violent debts, the Viennese Actionist does not.\textsuperscript{76}

It is easy to see how this attempt to reveal the dark underside of human drives is an example of kynical gestures slipping into cynical complicity. This ideological collusion is nothing other than an unquestioned carnophallogocentric humanism at the heart of the Vienna Actionist program. Unsurprisingly, then, anthropophagical sexual violence is well represented in their canon of performances and writings: Muehl’s \textit{Material Action 3}, 1964, covered a naked woman with breadcrumbs, chicken soup, tomato sauce, and eggs—a comestible ensemble fit for the artist to bite into at the buttocks. [\textit{ill. 4.16}] Nitsch’s thirty-first action \textit{The Immaculate Conception}, 1969, placed a naked mock-crucified woman alongside a freshly butchered lamb carcass; in a violent syncopation of blood, splaying, and flaying, Nitsch spread open the vaginal cavity of the woman with one hand and the disgorged bodily cavity of the lamb with other (doubling down on the female sex as wound). [\textit{ill. 4.17}] The ZOCK Manifesto, written by Muehl, takes the accelerationist sensibility of Futurist manifestos to a parodic extreme, calling for the killing of all “useless” animals and plants (“useless animals on land, sea and in the air will be eliminated”), an “all-out chemical war against insects,” and the implementation of a biopolitical republic that includes the storing of blood, the forced desegregation of human breeding (“the color of future ZOCK people will be grey,” i.e. a homogenized race), and the cannibalistic extermination of post-maternal females (“every woman who has already had children will be slaughtered and eaten by the ZOCK youth

\textsuperscript{76} Even in its most orgiastic moments of religiosity that re-opened the historically sublimated practices of ritual sacrifice through desublimation, pitting the tame bourgeois against his own religiosity, Vienna Actionism necessarily redoubled these acts in a Bataillean reclaiming of violence—something that is decidedly problematic today, if not jejune.
at enormous mother’s day events”). In brief, examples of both real and fantasized carnophallogocentric violence in Vienna Actionism are not in short supply.

EXPORT emerges from this milieu with a very different, and at times eco-feminist, version of Actionism, one that counters her more androcentric compatriots. In her own work, EXPORT maintains the kynical edge of the Actionists who come before her, while remaining far more attuned to not only to the human female body, but also to the nonhuman body whose sentience and communicative abilities offer her moments of performative identification. In the rest of this chapter, I investigate this evolution of the incorporation of nonhuman life in her works: first, the short film Mann & Frau & Animal (Man & Woman & Animal), 1970-73, which interweaves a complex mix of kynical identification and over-identification in its critique of androcentrism. Second, in her collaborative performances with living birds from the mid-1970s, which offer a point of departure for posthumanist forms of embodied communication. And finally, the performance Restringierter Code (Restricted Code) from 1979, where the identification of the female with the nonhuman body resonates in mutual precarity, and a mutual struggle to “speak” as counter-writing or counter-history, is most fully realized.

77 The ZOCK manifesto is clearly a futurist parody (“ZOCK will destroy without exception all institutions that are more than one minute old”). Despite this, the fact remains that the Vienna Actionists committed similar acts of violence outlined in the manifesto, albeit on a much smaller scale. It is also telling that the extreme biopolitical power this manifesto (over)identifies with, in many ways, describes today’s reality of intensive farming (keeping useful animals alive), environmental degradation and species extinction (killing off “useless” animals), and neoliberal economic shock policies (“the famine that ZOCK will cause by ravaging the economy is a welcome event that will realize ZOCK’s most drastic aims”). See Muehl, “ZOCK Manifesto,” in Malcolm Green, Brus, Muehl, Nitsch, Schwarzkogler: Writings of the Vienna Actionists (London: Atlas Press, 1999), 99-101.

78 While the carnophallogentric violence I emphasize is undeniable, it should be acknowledged that the Vienna Actionists’s interest in masochism, androgyne, and the complicated role and complicity of the women involved in these performances, all make the movement, however compromised theoretically and ethically, a complex affair. See AMOR PSYCHE ACTION-VIENNA The Feminine in Viennese Actionism (Prague; Nuremberg: DOX PRAGUE, a.s., 2012).
Export’s nine-minute film *Mann & Frau & Animal* opens with the close-up of a chrome faucet with hand shower coiled and resting on top. The camera lingers on individual parts of mundane plumbing—hot and cold valves, coiled metal tubing, a gleaming spout that slowly drips water, the empty tub. After this methodical setting of the scene, a female hand moves in from off screen turning on the faucet. The water swirls down the drain out of sight, and the camera pans close to the drain, emphasizing its dark cavity. The female hand then unscrews the showerhead effectuating a consolidated stream of water, turning the hand shower into a spigot rather than a diffuse set of jets. The film then cuts to this same female figure seated naked in the tub with legs parted (with by a tonal shift in the film from a heretofore cool blue to warm sepia). The garter belt tattoo on her left thigh, stemming from her action *Body Sign Action* in 1970, indicates this figure to be EXPORT herself. Holding the spigot above her naked body with her right hand, the fingers of her left open the folds of her labia up and back so that the stream of water makes steady contact with her clitoris. EXPORT’s moans become increasingly more audible (the viewer never sees her upper torso or face). Her legs convulse, intermittently opening and closing; and by bringing the steady stream of water closer and closer to her body, the glans of her clitoris becomes more and more engorged and pronounced—a stimulation that the camera emphasizes by panning slowly in and out from between her legs.

Then an abrupt transition: the sound cuts out and the viewer is momentarily presented with the picture of a black equilateral triangle on a white background. Equally suddenly, a grotesque male voice begins grunting as the camera cuts back to a full-frontal view of the artist’s parted legs, now in full color. The naked woman, no longer in the tub,
now lies supine on a white bed sheet (throughout this section of the film, the camera is fixed and focused on her pelvic region). Her genitals emit an opaque off-white pus or phlegm, which could be male ejaculate. The strange male grunting changes the tone of the film. What seemed to be authentic sounds of female pleasure in the first part are replaced with comically strained vocalizations, ranging from the heaving panting of a male overly invested in orgasm, to the sort of noises one might make to scare children. All the while, the artist contracts her groin muscles, which makes it seem as if the grotesque voice is coming from her vagina, as if possessed. After increasingly frenetic grunting and straining, a cut in the film suddenly replaces the pus (or ejaculate) with smeared blood. [ill. 4.18]

The triangle reappears, signaling the last portion of the film. The male noises give way to whale song—distant oceanic reverberations that register as sentient communication but whose meaning remains hidden in alterity (the use of whale song is deeply ambiguous in this context, as I examine in a moment). Now, instead of a moving image of the female figure, a photograph of the artist’s splayed legs on the white sheet is submerged in a stop bath tray used for developing photographs. A male arm is extended over the photograph with blood dripping from its palm and onto its surface, specifically concealing the vagina with red opacity. [ill. 4.19] As blood accumulates over the image, the camera pans in as the whale songs continue to echo as soundtrack. When the camera pans back out again, the male has absconded with his bleeding hand, leaving the bloodied photograph to rest in the middle of the bath tray, and the film ends.

While this short film is well known, it has been very little discussed. In her monograph on the artist, Roswitha Mueller only mentions the film as “investigating
woman’s pleasure” through taboo images of “orgasmic and menstruating female genitals.”\textsuperscript{79} Since the exhibition and publication of the EXPORT’s archive in 2012, her notes for the film aid in interpretation.\textsuperscript{80} The typewritten specifications comprise three sections mirrored in the film. In part one, “section onanism,” EXPORT describes the longing to feel one’s own power through orgasm; while this power is available to men with ease, conversely, they (men) have neglected female jouissance, both physically and psychically. In part two, “section vagina-sperm-blood,” EXPORT maintains that women have too readily preoccupied themselves with fertility, even when it is not in their best interest to bear children; she implies that the desire to procreate is an all-consuming pressure. Finally, in part three, “section darkroom,” EXPORT describes an epistemological correspondence between the androcentric coding of photography and the female as the bearer of this gaze through the photographic image.\textsuperscript{81} This explains the male bleeding on the photograph, which the artist explains to be “symbolic penitence” for the appeasement of male guilt, but which cannot truly disturb the patriarchal order.\textsuperscript{82}

\textit{Mann & Frau & Animal} can be placed within the emerging discourse of “vaginal iconology” of 1970s feminism, which understood female anatomy and pleasure to be a site of political contestation.\textsuperscript{83} As a political gesture, the film’s first section, of the female body in masturbatory satiation, is fundamentally kynical, flouting bourgeois propriety in liberty from male interference. In part two, this self-sufficiency is intruded upon.

\textsuperscript{80} Export, \textit{Valie Export: Archiv}, 298.
\textsuperscript{81} This critique of photography and film as an androcentric scopic drive anticipates the film theorist Laura Mulvey’s essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975).
\textsuperscript{82} Export, \textit{Valie Export: Archiv}, 298.
\textsuperscript{83} The term “vaginal iconology” was coined by the critic Barbara Rose in 1974. See Kathleen Wentrack, "Female Sexuality in Performance and Film: Erotic, Political, Controllable? The Contested Female Body in the Work of Carolee Schneemann and VALIE EXPORT," \textit{Konsthistorisk tidskrift/Journal of Art History} 83, no. 2 (2014): 161.
EXPORT's text confirms the white pus to be seminal fluid and the blood to be menstrual, marking this intrusion not only as male but also as procreative. So, the first intrusive projection is biological and concomitant penetration and insemination, designating woman as the site of fertility and male gratification. Finally, in part three, the female body, once captured on film, becomes yet another site of projection—of both the male gaze and his guilt. This succession in *Mann & Frau & Animal* reflects a complex movement from female self-sufficiency and agency to increasing mediation and loss of volition. What begins with the authentic immanence of self-pleasure devolves twice over in a loss of control and ability to communicate one’s own body. The diegetic female sounds of pleasure give way to non-diegetic male grunting; the unity of sound and image becomes fractured, and the female body is alienated by the absurdly discordant male voice. Accompanying this change is a clear loss of agency, since active hands and body that once controlled water pressure and pleasure disappear, leaving a limbless lower body spread out on the bed (more simply, from subject of pleasure to object of projection—or vagina as part object for the male drives dissimulating the rest of her). The second moment of mediation occurs when the female form falls into photographic representation—a doubled object-hood of a photograph captured on film, and of body-as-subject becoming body-as-object, doubly objectified in photographic distance.

Special attention should be paid to the change in tone from section to section. Part one offers the viewer a sincere moment of *identification* with female jouissance—an identification that in certain respects ostracizes the male viewer (it certainly does not cater to any male coded pornotropes). By contrast, part two is a parodic moment of *over-identification* with the enemy. The male voice and his fluids are amplified to such
comical degrees that they serve to thematize his intrusion as both brutish and buffoonish. The male subject, panting and ridiculous, is reduced to absurdity. The final section is more enigmatic. The introduction of animality through whale song is at once a moment of identification and over-identification. This ambiguity rests on the fact that marine mammals—especially whales and dolphins—were at a critical historical juncture in the early 1970s (as Marker’s work can attest to in chapter one). These cetaceans were undergoing a process of reconfiguration in the human imagination (in science and in popular culture) from an archaic pejorative animality to a posthumanist animality whereby the nonhuman belies human exceptionalism.

To be sure, the trope of woman-animal-nature has a long pedigree in cultural history, and EXPORT’s use of aquatic sonority over-identifies with this trenchant essentialism. The final scene may even be read as comic—as if the female sex and whale noises were equally enigmatic and mysterious beings. It should be noted that this essentialization of woman-animal-nature underwent an update in the postwar period. Beginning with postwar military experiments in bioacoustics (on both sides of the Cold War) that dispelled any notion of the ocean as silent or uncommunicative, the 1960s and 70s saw the sea refigured as a communicative pastoral maternity. As Mette Bryld and Nina Lykke demonstrate, the trope of woman-animal-nature was displaced into the depths of the sea for this first time. They note that this refiguration came as a pair, with the newly loquacious motherly waters as the obverse of the scientific (and patently male) exploration of acoustics coming from outer space—the other extraterrestrial domain that captivated the postwar imagination:
In contrast to the image of a high-tech scientist broadcasting intelligent radio messages from the Beyond of space, the imagery that evolved around the noisy sea drew on the configurations of non-technology, Woman and Native. From this watery ‘inner space’ came not the radio waves that suggest ‘advanced’ electronics but sound waves that connect with biology…sounds that were generated by the bodies of the sea creatures and hence perceived as ‘primitive.’

This binary of sky father and sea mother places man as the techno-cultural subject, while woman and nonhuman animal are instances of primitivo-natural biology. Mann & Frau & Animal, then, can be interpreted as over-identifying with these tropes in its couplings of motherhood, cetacean, womb, and ocean in order to travesty this rigid division (as it does with Freudian tropes that similarly hinge on an essential connection between woman and animality). The final section of the film even echoes this anthro-cultural binary formally, with the procreative female figure submerged underwater (indexically captured in the developing tray enveloped by whale song) and the male arm free to abscond hovering overhead (with blood dripping in Christian penance as, in fact, the religio-symbolic origin of this father-as-sky).

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85 In my interpretation, I privilege the contemporaneous developments in marine biology and ethology. However, Mann & Frau & Animal also clearly over-identifies with a number of Freud’s theories on female sexuality, most notably: the fear of female narcissism in self-sufficiency, as equally intriguing and frightening, and likened to criminals and animals (especially cats and bird of prey), as well as the horror of the female sex, which Freud recoils in disgust at what he calls a “pus-filled cavity.” Sarah Kofman notes, referring to the well-known analysis of Irma’s injection, that it is none other Freud who projects woman with this “learned, malignant, male solution” of pus. The vagina as lack, as pus-filled, as self-sufficient and enigmatic as animal life, it is all there in kynical instigation in EXPORT’s film. Kofman, 47.
86 Bryld and Lykke emphasize the role of Christianity played in the historical formation of this cultural binary: “Due to her wet and primordial nature, the ocean has often been cast as motherly womb, while the Euro-American cosmos, due to a strong influence from Christianity, has for centuries been identified as the realm of the white Fathergod, notwithstanding that many pagan and occultist thought systems constructed the sky as a mother.” Bryld and Lykke, 163.
If *Mann & Frau & Animal* were to be interpreted exclusively as mocking the tropes of woman as reducible to nature, enigma, and irrationality, it would miss the scientific and cultural developments surround the whale in the early 1970s that were arguably more impactful than the sky father-mother sea binary. For it was at this very moment that whale vocalizations mediated a change in the existential fate of these marine mammals and reconfigured their being in the popular imagination. In fact, it was a specific recording—*Songs of the Humpback Whale* (1970)—that elicited an immediate empathic recognition of nonhuman emotion and intelligence. [ill. 4.20] Cetacean vocalizations found their way into popular music and film, as well as congressional hearings and meetings of the International Whaling Commission (they were catalytic for the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972).87 As D. Graham Burnett puts it in his defining history of the science of whales in the twentieth century: “It would be difficult to overstate the significance of this work for the campaign to end whaling…[s]uddenly, improbably, it was as if anyone with a radio could hear these most mysterious of animals sounding their own dirge.”88 With this eco-history in mind, EXPORT’s use of whale song in *Mann & Frau & Animal* can be understood as identifying with an alterity that makes claims for itself and belies humanist dogmas about nonhuman being. For in a cynical rebuttal of Heidegger, how can an animal be poor in the world if it can sing and feel joy?

The ecofeminist parallel is clear when articulated in terms of a shared struggle across the 1970s: both animal liberation and women’s liberation forced a reconsideration of andro-humanist domination and its illusory exclusivity of various ontological

87 Burnett, 628-38.
88 Ibid., 629, 631. The recording, which is still the best selling natural history record ever, accompanied the article “Songs of Humpback Whales” by Roger S. Payne and Scott McVay in the prestigious journal *Science*. 
capacities. It is as if EXPORT channels the nonhuman voice as an affective witness in solidarity with her own plight as a purportedly inferior being in a long patriarchal-speciesist history. In this way, the final scenes of Mann & Frau & Animal might not simply be parodic; in distinct yet mutual alterity, woman and whale make reinforcing claims on the viewer for recognition (that they be not simply bearers of children or oil). The recurring triangle in Mann & Frau & Animal, then, does not represent the discrete subject positions of the Oedipal triangle as it may initially be thought (with the adult male in power), but a transversal and secularized trinity as emphasized by the ampersands in the film’s title. This amounts to an ontology that is radically posthumanist, as it not only scrambles gender determinism, but also re-introduces animality into the conception of the human. It also evokes one of the critical advances of eco-feminist thinking, namely, that both commonality and difference should be taken into account when considering the various human and nonhuman beings of the world.

There is an additional eco-feminist affinity that should be underscored: both whale vocalizations and the contemporaneous theories of écriture feminine emphasize the language of the body as a form of non-phonetic meaning that resists androcentric speech in idealized logos. As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, this embodied resistance is a fundamental aspect of the kynic’s deployment of the body as a pantomimic argument. I turn to these contemporaneous developments next as a way to introduce EXPORT’s performances with nonhumans that offer a point of departure for posthumanist forms of embodied communication in a mutual struggle to “speak” as counter-writing or counter-history to andro-humanism.

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89 EXPORT’s script positions this triangle as a secularized, Darwinian version of the Christian Trinity—not of father, son, and holy spirit, but of man, woman, and animal. See Export, Valie Export: Archiv, 298.
Les Cahiers de GRIF (the acronym stands for Le groupe de recherche et d’information féministes) was a Belgian journal that ran from 1973 to 1982 and assembled a number of feminist theorists, artists, and filmmakers (including, among many others, Messager and EXPORT). In the editorial of its first issue, the journal emphasizes its open-ended and pluralistic approach, its international scope, as well as an understanding of feminism as a problem not only for women but for all of society, men included. Closing out this first editorial is a phrase that underscores the aptness of its acronym: “A warning scratch [griffe], without underestimating the touch of a velvet paw.”90 This closing play on words emphasizes the insistent work of the mark, scratch, talon, and claw as an interspecies identification of resistance through writing and animality.91

If humanism, as Sloterdijk has described it, is a history of men sending each other letters, the embodied precarity and communicative potential of those humans and nonhumans that fall outside the sanctioned confines of androcentric expression represent a counter-writing and a counter-history that is posthumanist.92 One form of counter-writing is écriture féminine, which at times aligns itself with nonhuman mark making, and represents one of the conditions of possibility for eco-feminist thought, and for solidarity between gender and species liberation. Writing in Les Cahiers de GRIF, Françoise d’Eaubonne, the French writer who first coined the term “eco-feminisme,” argues for an irrevocable link between writing, the body, and feminist revolutionary

91 This acronymic play on words harkens back to a long history of the feminization and felines. It also connotes woman as bird of prey, notably the vulture, a recurring trope of femininity as fearful in Freud. See Kofman, 53-4.
politics—a link gleaned in her kynically titled: Mémoires Précoces: Chiennes de jeunesse (Precocious Memoirs: Young Bitch, 1965). On more theoretical terrain, a number of feminist thinkers proposed a similarly somatic notion of writing, which might take recourse to a kynical identification with nonhuman animals. Hélène Cixous’s celebrated text “The Laugh of the Medusa” is one such example. Not only does she invoke the mythological figure of Medusa, an animalized female with snakes instead of hair and the power to provoke castration anxiety, but throughout her manifesto, Cixous braids the physiologically charged female body, writing, and nonhuman alterity together as a dynamic insurgency resisting the limitations of androcentric speech, reason, and idealism: “She doesn’t ‘speak,’ she throws her trembling body forward; she lets go of herself, she flies; all of her passes into her voice, and it’s with her body that she supports the ‘logic’ of her speech. Her flesh speaks true.” Here, speech is supplemented by embodied writing, and the animal in woman, which is far more productive than mere bare life or zoe, is never far away. In kynical, embodied laughter, “woman un-thinks the unifying, regulating history that homogenizes and channels forces, herding contradictions into a single battlefield.” And instead of being corralled by the bellicosity of history— in which “gynocide” and exploited “species off whose back the history of men has made its gold” are of a piece—it is only natural for Cixous that “women take after birds.”

Like Cixous’s call for a corporeal écriture feminine whose semiotic range far exceeds the restricted code of male, humanist speech, in EXPORT’S work birds provide

94 I elaborate on Hélène Cixous’ work, though Sarah Kofman’s Autobiogrippures (1984) might also be mentioned, as well as Irigaray’s work (already quoted by EXPORT), especially “Women on the Market” in This Sex Which Is Not One (1977).
95 Ibid., 887-8.
a parallel agency and embodiment with the female body. EXPORT’s own writings trace
an evolution towards an expanded field of semiotic corporeality. In “Women’s Art: A
Manifesto” from 1972, she calls out art history and mediatic culture as fully androcentric,
and sends out the command to “let women speak.”98 In subsequent texts, however, simply
taking the mantle of speech is seen as doomed to failure, as it remains within the confines
of history as male logos. In “Aspects of Feminist Actionism” from 1989, EXPORT lays
out the difficulty of using words for emancipation: “It was not possible to ‘find one's own
words,’ because words belong to men.” Further complicating matters, turning towards
bodily forms of communication came with its own obstacle: “Nor was it easy to find
one's words in body language, because it too was mainly occupied by male fantasies.”99
The “mute language of the body” thus had to find modes of expression that could explode
the confines of male, humanist history and expectations. One way in which EXPORT
sought to achieve this resistance was by bringing other counter-humanist bodies into her
performances—namely, nonhuman animals who provide both positive and negative
forms of identification.100

*Mann & Frau & Animal* is one of the first instances of EXPORT incorporating
animality in her work. But if the film’s use of whale song can be understood as both
identification (nonhuman alterity that challenges androcentric humanism) and over-
identification (a mocking embrace of woman=nature), then a number of performances
involving birds offer a more clear-cut instance of nonhuman identification. *Asemie - die*

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98 Valie Export, "Woman's Art: A Manifesto," in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A
Sourcebook of Artists' Writings*, ed. Kristine Stiles and Peter Howard Selz (Berkeley: University of
100 EXPORT’s use of animals is only one of many strategies for creating this new embodied language. The
use of new media, film, and her solitary body in performance are others.
Unfähigkeit, sich durch Mienenspiel ausdrücken zu können (Asemia - The Inability to Express Oneself Through Facial Expression), 1973 comprised the artist in her studio, a bird, a table, a palate knife, and hot wax in a pan. [ill. 4.21] The video of the performance opens with the following phrase written directly on the floor in chalk just in front of the table: “the inability to express oneself though facial expression.” These words define the pathological condition lending the performance its title—“asemia” being a hyperaphasic condition whereby a subject is unable to either express or receive signs and symbols. Around these words, EXPORT hammers nails into the floor at equidistant intervals. The film documenting the performance then cuts to the artist on all fours, naked atop the table that has been prepared with a white tablecloth. She holds a little pouch, from which she reveals a living parakeet whose wings flutter in an attempt to fly away (and nearly does). Gently, EXPORT ties a string around one of the bird’s legs, keeping the feathered biped tethered to the table. After another cut excising an unspecified amount of time, what appears to be a different bird lies lifelessly on the same spot where the previous bird was just tied. This bird is coated in hot wax with matted wings splayed out on the table. EXPORT proceeds to poor hot wax onto her feet and hands—fixing her own appendages to the table (for her remaining hand, the artist is forced to use her teeth to clumsily poor wax from the pan, which eventually falls over to the side). Once self-immobilized by the cooling wax, the artist picks up the palate knife resting just in front of the bird with her teeth. Slowly, she extricates herself from the congealing wax

101 Asemie - die Unfähigkeit, sich durch Mienenspiel ausdrücken zu können (Asemia - The Inability to Express Oneself Through Facial Expression), 1973.
102 Roswitha Mueller maintains that “the bird is already dead before the performance.” Mueller, 44. In the Animal Art ’87 catalog, EXPORT specifies that a dead bird was used for this performance. However, the relationship between the living and dead bird, and whether or not they are one and the same, remains unclear.
by cutting away the outlines of her hands and feet. *Asemie* closes with EXPORT, having freed herself, peeling off the wax coated palm and footprints and placing them on the corresponding imprints left on the table by her hands and feet.

_Asemie_ was included in the *Animal Art* exhibition catalog enumerating recent work involving animal life, discussed in chapter two. In her text accompanying this piece, EXPORT explains that formal quality of wax connotes the embalming and killing of expressive potential. She notes that traditionally, wax is a medium that captures expression (as in a mask). Here, however, wax is used to impede it. Since both birds and hands have the capacity for embodied gestures in communication, immobilizing these corporeal forms of language entails a loss. The embalming wax is analogized with the social conventions that dictate these bodily expressions to be outside the purview of true communication. The more these conventional codes take over, the more inter-personal communication becomes constrained, lost, and repressed, and the more woman and bird become asemic.

Two other works by EXPORT from the mid-seventies incorporate birds. In *Brechbare Regeln meiner Kraft. Ein poetischer Flugversuch* (Breakable Rules of My Strength: A Poetic Attempt to Fly), 1975, performed in Copenhagen, EXPORT was tied up in string on a platform alongside a bird whose leg, like that of *Asemie*, was affixed to a string tied to a nail on a board. A film of the performance shows the artist struggling while bound and using her teeth to free the nail from the board—thereby freeing the bird.\(^\text{103}\) Like *Asemie*, there is a direct, embodied affinity between human and nonhuman (though in this instance it is the bird who goes free). Along similar lines, *Implementation*,

\(^\text{103}\) Ibid., fn. 29 228.
(Implementation, 1974-75) is a closed-circuit video installation involving a bird tied to a makeshift perch standing just in front of a projector screen. [ill. 4.22] The screen is divided into twenty squares of equal size and measure (numbering 1-20 at the top left of each square). The directions for the installation dictate that each square “sector” of the screen is to be “scanned by the camera and transmitted to the monitor.” From this closed circuit set up—of a live feed from video to monitor—whenever the bird attempts to fly away (in futility) she has the chance of momentarily being captured on the monitor—effectively captured twice over: once in actuality by being tied down, once in moving image reproduction. This would only happen serendipitously, i.e. when the “scanned square is coincident with the square of the bird’s movement.”¹⁰⁴ This work is related to another performance using the same installation set-up, namely, Movement Imagination No. 5 (1974/75). For this iteration, however, EXPORT takes the place of the bird. It is now the artist who jumps or attempts to fly in front of the screen so to be fleetingly captured in the closed video loop.

In all these cases involving avian life, EXPORT identifies with and makes an embodied analogy with her own body and that of a bird. Both are in various states of confinement, of being held back, of being captured or liberated. In each case, EXPORT sets up the conditions of possibility (or impossibility) from which both she and her nonhuman collaborator have varying degrees of success or failure. Following Pamela Lee’s interpretation of EXPORT’s work, these processes of identification replicate the conditions of “bare life”—of existing under biopolitical controls that dictate value, life,

and disposability.\textsuperscript{105} This species-mutual incapacitation can be found in numerous drawings by the artist, most notably, HANDVOGEL, 1974. [ill. 4.23] The sketch shows two birds from above—one approximately twice the size as the other, both sprouting human hands instead of feathered wings. The work is a striking premonition of Vilèm Flusser’s observation (in 1979) that it is only our hands that allow us to apprehend three-dimensionality, something birds can do anytime in flight: “[t]o fly like birds is to be able to use the whole body as if it were a hand, to be able to move oneself entirely within...space.”\textsuperscript{106} Yet EXPORT’s fusion of human hand-bird body enacts a mutual negation of capacity: it is as hard to image these hands reaching out in space as primate utility as it is for them to be serviceable wings for avian flight.

It is important, however, to emphasize the kynical positivity of these gestures. While they identify with certain negative constraints, they nevertheless invite the viewer to recognize certain positive capabilities of communication, resistance, and empathy—should the viewer be compelled to do so. In other words, these performances identify with bare life in order to undercut biopolitical control by witnessing that even animality—the purported zero degree of bare life as \textit{zoe}—is replete with positive values shared by human and nonhuman alike in mutual resistance.

EXPORT’s most elaborate work involving animals, \textit{Restringierter Code} (Restricted Code), 1979, reflects a prolonged chance for inter-species identification. \textit{Restringierter Code} was performed twice—first at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, then for

the *Performance ’79* exhibition in Munich.\(^{107}\) It is a theatre performance using new media components, a human baby, a dog, a hamster, a parakeet, and the artist herself. [ill. 4.24] Three television monitors frame each side of the on-stage installation. Stage right, EXPO is seated at a table with comestibles and a single monitor on the floor, all inside a large wire cage—effectively, a domestic room without walls.\(^{108}\) Moving from stage right to left the audience was presented with: two clear tanks on top of each other separately housing the hamster and parakeet; one larger open top clear cube, into which the large brown dog is placed; and finally, a crib in which the human infant is placed. As bodies are being arranged for the performance, the atmosphere in the theatre is one of levity. Numerous audience members chuckle, especially at the bemused baby who is immediately drawn to the puzzled dog. Once everyone is in place, *Restringierter Code* plays with the mix of live and mediated bodies of both human and nonhuman through a closed circuit live video feed: the three monitors on stage right next to the artist relayed her movements, while the three monitors on stage left (as well as the single monitor inside the artist’s cage), relayed the movements of hamster, bird, baby, and (more often than not) dog.

EXPO scripted *Restringierter Code* in three parts, which she follows closely in performance.\(^{109}\) In part one she eats at the table while her fellow performers are also fed (aside from the baby, who stands silently and is clearly entranced by the dog just next to his crib). After some time, EXPO moves from socially conventional ways of eating

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\(^{107}\) *Performance ’79* was an exhibition at the Städische Galerie Lenbachhaus on January 1, 1979. The Pompidou performance, on February 8th, 1979, was part of an “interdisciplinary day of body art and performance.” Only the Münich performance was documented. Sylvia Szely and Valie Export, *Export Lexikon: Chronologie der bewegten Bilder bei Valie Export* (Wien: Sonderzahl, 2007), 96.

\(^{108}\) *Restringierter Code* is thus related to *Hyperbulia* (1973), a performance in which EXPORT is naked on all fours in a similar cage. The wiring was electrically charged by being hooked up to a live battery.

\(^{109}\) See transcript in Szely and Export, 96-7.
towards more unconventional methods—for example, by using her fingers to take in food and making various noises. Part two begins with the artist cleaning herself in post-prandial gestures that clearly mimic animal grooming. She cleans her face and head by licking her hands in order to transfer saliva (presumably how the hamster is also cleaning him or herself, though the vantage point of the filmic documentation does not allow the viewer to see the movements of the relatively smaller creatures on stage). Human to nonhuman mimicry then takes off. EXPORT is seen crawling, panting, barking, roaming on all fours, and holding her hands over the lip of the wire structure holding her captive as the dog does with paws over top edges of his clear cube. Over the course of the 30-minute film documentation, the artist takes turns mimicking the sage though curious baby, then the increasingly agitated dog whose whimpers morph into imploring barks. Yet the reverse is also apparent, as the baby comes to mimic the dog and the dog comes to mimic the artist in a feedback loop. The third part of the script dictates that the increasingly frenetic transmission of affect from humans to nonhumans should lead to a trance-like state or intoxication. Restringierter Code closes with EXPORT lying on the ground, rhythmically moving her arms on and off the floor in loud thumps, and finally, with her writhing convulsingly from inside her domestic cage with dog and baby looking on.

EXPORT’s patented interest in mimicry in her work’s titles and in their performative logic might conjure Roger Caillois’s entomological theories, which were so influential to the Surrealists. In the 1930s, Caillois argued that the phenomenon of animal mimicry—of morphing into the shape of another animal or simulating the appearance of inanimate matter—was a process of depersonalized automation of

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110 Ibid., 97.
111 See Caillois’s “La mante religieuse. De la biologie à la psychanalyse” (1934) and “Mimétisme et la psychasthénie légendaire” (1935), both in the Surrealist journal Minotaure (issues 5 and 7, respectively)
boundary breaking infusion with the environment. As the art historian Joyce Cheng writes in her study of mimicry in Surrealism, “[a]utomatism...is taken to a radical level by Caillois, whose impetuous remedy against human subjectivity is to dispense with the human altogether and to look into the insect and animal world for models of alterity.”\footnote{Joyce Cheng, "Mask, Mimicry, Metamorphosis: Roger Caillois, Walter Benjamin and Surrealism in the 1930s," \textit{Modernity/Modernity} 16, no. 1 (2008): 72.}

With EXPORT’s emphasis on trance and ecstasy, as well as the obvious connection of performance as mimicry, it is tempting to read \textit{Restringierter Code} along the lines of Caillois’s early theories.

By the postwar period, however, Caillois had come to disavow his youthful theories on animal mimicry. In his \textit{Man, Play, and Games} from 1959, mimicry is updated as a form of play in similitude.\footnote{See the section titled “Mimicry” as well as the endnote stemming from this section where Caillois explains his move away from his theories of the 1930s. Roger Caillois, \textit{Man, Play, and Games}, trans., Meyer Barash (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 19-23, 177-80.} Leaving aside the complex differences and similarities between humans and nonhumans in their varied capacities of mimicry (or, in related fashion, for \textit{imprinting}), Caillois’s reworking of the concept, in its most general sense and for varied ends, is a recourse of passing for another in masquerade. Caillois still holds insects as his privileged figures, yet notes a difference in relation when analogizing them to human mimicry: “…mimetism of insects immediately affords an extraordinary parallel to man’s penchant for disguising himself, wearing a mask, or playing a part—except that in the insect’s case the mask or guise becomes part of the body instead of a contrived accessory.”\footnote{Ibid., 20.} Moreover, while animal mimicry is often used to frighten for self-

\footnote{113 See the section titled “Mimicry” as well as the endnote stemming from this section where Caillois explains his move away from his theories of the 1930s. Roger Caillois, \textit{Man, Play, and Games}, trans., Meyer Barash (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 19-23, 177-80.}
\footnote{114 Ibid., 20.}
preservation, in the case of humans and their games, mimicry is described as a pleasurable activity and a type of identification with the strongest.115

*Restringierter Code* does find EXPORT undergoing a process of depersonalization through mimicry or imprinting, but not simply as a way of dissolving into her environment. She quite clearly imitates her fellow nonhumans as a becoming-animal other in mutual affective relays on stage. Yet this is mimicry as identification for escaping the rigid confines of human sociability. Where EXPORT departs from Caillois’s theory of mimetic identification in human masquerade is that she is clearly not identifying with the stronger, but with the weakest (along with women, animals and infants have historical resided outside the human domain of full rights and reason). *Restringierter Code* is thus the opposite of Deleuze and Guattari’s contemporaneous theory of depersonalization, which equally sought to explode Oedipal rigidity in smooth space, namely, their becoming-animal. EXPORT’s becoming-animal is a becoming constrained, for if there is a subject position in striated space, it is the animal who becomes pathologically unhinged in containment. In this sense, what begins as playful identification morphs into paralyzing over-identification at the conclusion of the performance. EXPORT’s kynicism is thus twofold: it mimes a nonhuman position (or not yet fully reasoned human, in the case of the baby) as a form of escape from normative sociability, as well as a headlong embrace of animality in order to make bodily containment manifest. Like many of the other examples in this chapter, then, this performance is a complex mix of empathy and identification that, due to historical and

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115 “Identification with the champion in itself constitutes *mimicry* related to that of the reader with the hero of the novel and that of the moviegoer with the film star.” Ibid., 22.
cultural power constraints, must also be interpreted as a moment of over-identification in order to embody resistance from within patriarchal and specieist vectors of power.

As an artistic contribution to the history of animals in philosophy, *Restringierter Code* ultimately serves to critique any notion of pre-existing ontological poverty, as the Heideggerian view of animality would have it: the animal is not intrinsically poor in the world (a poverty that, in the first place, can only be claimed in relativity with the human by the human in the *sui generis* of circular reasoning).\(^{116}\) Instead, the animal is poor in the world due to the “restricted codes” placed on its being (or its body is a restricted code in relation to the system of dominance it finds itself, which amounts to the same thing). As I have argued in respect to EXPORT’s *Mann & Frau & Animal*, analogizing this to the female condition is a central feature of eco-feminist critique. Like the nonhuman, woman is not inherently inferior to man, but is often relegated as such by a historical system that is as patriarchal as it is speciesist (a system that, once again, can only be maintained by androhumanist power in groundless self-affirmation). EXPORT is explicit about this parallel in her notes for *Restringierter Code*: “Using the body as a means of expression is a restricted code, since society exercises control over the body...The distinction between animal and human bodily expression is thus ideological.”\(^{117}\) EXPORT describes this restricted code of the body in such a way that scrambles the ideological division of the animal and human, as well as the more general division of nature and culture. The body “sings” and “sounds” in “trance” and “ecstasy”—and is accordingly punished if it moves

\(^{116}\) This is a problematic compromise and humanist regression in Heidegger’s conception of Dasein. For a protracted critique of Heidegger’s Dasein along these lines, see Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*.

outside what is socially sanctioned.\textsuperscript{118} If, for EXPORT, the body is a restricted code, its constraints come only from androhumanist impositions that arbitrarily curtail the bodies and capacities of certain humans and nonhumans alike.

4.4 Conclusion

Towards the end of EXPORT’s feature film, \textit{Invisible Adversaries} (1977), the central female protagonist (“Anna”, played by Susanne Widl) sits in an office speaking to her male psychotherapist. Throughout the film—which functions loosely as a retrospective of EXPORT’s work to that point, including a reprisal of the photograph and grunting noises from \textit{Mann & Frau & Animal}—Anna is increasingly convinced that humanity is being taken over by the Hyksos, a mysterious race of alien entities that take host in people. Akin to \textit{Invasion of the Body Snatchers} (1956), this science fiction premise is allusive of the social mechanism of ideology—of being interpellated by the state, capitalism, and the media, resulting in subjects who remain ideologically blind to these forces, or, for those who become aware of them, resigned in cynical realism. Anna attempts to confide her suspicions of these nefarious invisible adversaries to her psychotherapist, but he only responds with pragmatic clinicism and diagnoses her as a schizophrenic—an update of the female hysteric who cannot deal with the realisms of existing society. It is during this scene that she calmly claims: “I am alone in my search for human beings.”\textsuperscript{119}

This statement unavoidably recalls one of the more well-known stories associated with Diogenes of Sinope, who, when walking around the streets of ancient Athens in broad daylight holding a lantern, responded to his perplexed fellow citizens in kind: “I

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
am in the search for human beings.”120 With these statements echoing each other from two different cynical ages, both Diogenes and EXPORT express the same desire for a sovereign, authentic self who is not beholden to ideological forces that warp social behavior. Or, as Sloterdijk puts it when recalling this story of the lantern in daytime, “[i]f true human beings are those who remain in control of their desires and live rationally in harmony with nature, it is obvious that urbanized, social human beings behave irrationally and inhumanely.”121 In this chapter I have argued that certain feminist practices in the 1970s and 80s can be interpreted in these performatively kynical terms. I have also argued that these strategies, in various ways, involve an identification or over-identification with animality. Invisible Adversaries offers yet another example of this when scenes of Anna grooming herself (trimming pubic hair, washing, shaving, etc.) are purposely syncopated with those of a fish being prepared for cooking (salting, de-scaling, fileting, etc.).122 [ill. 4.25-6] Clearly, EXPORT is exemplary of this kynical feminism, but Bourgeois and Messager also hold these affinities.

I conclude, however, with a caveat about the limitations of such a strategy (something I have alluded to over the course of this chapter in various instances). One of the issues surrounding kynicism is that it often remains at the level of diagnostic. A kynical artist will resist the enemy by becoming the enemy in viral overidentification. This may certainly serve to make manifest certain wrongs or absurdities in ways that unimpassioned forms of ideology critique cannot; nonetheless, the action does not

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120 The statement associated with this anecdote has several permutations, though they result in the same sentiment: “I am looking for an honest man,” or “I am looking for people.”
121 Sloterdijk, Critique of Cynical Reason, 162.
122 EXPORT emphasizes this woman-animal analogy by showing both female and fish bodies swimming in a bathtub filled with water in quick succession just before the syncopation of grooming/cooking. Export, Invisible Adversaries=Unsichtbare Gegner. [1:13:52-1:14:25]
necessarily offer a way out (or, at least, it needs to be supplemented by a positive moment of ideological critique or illumination for changing the enemy’s mind). More problematically, this kynical endeavor of pantomimic critique necessarily redoubles the very injustices of the critiqued. One parasites the host, but can end up redoubling the wrongs of the host. When these wrongs are irreversible, especially in violence and death, the moment of over-identification is outweighed by the gravity of its effects. In other words, the strategic sacrifice is not worth the moment of kynical illumination.

Perhaps the most dangerous limitation of such kynical strategies is that they are precariously dependent on the enlightenment or un-cynicization of the subject in power (in this sense, kynical strategies are, at base, very far from cynicism in their hopefulness or belief of critique by other means). When Bourgeois identifies with a mutilated she-fox, or Messager with little fragile sparrows, or EXPORT with a dog or bird, each artist is assuming the position of a weak force—or a subject position whose very existential fragility becomes a source of power or protection, at least when recognized as such by those who would formerly disavow precarious existences. The eminent danger, of course, is that this avowal is not always assured. The subject in power—in the present case, the androhumanist—even when presented with his wrongs or absurdities in kynical over-identification may ultimately resist a change of heart. As history has shown, maintaining power via an enlightened false consciousness is often all too appetizing—a cynicism for which the kynic is no match.
CONCLUSION: TOWARDS THE POST-ANIMAL IN CONTEMPORARY ART

This dissertation has focused on the 1970s and 80s in France and Belgium, in part to provide a historical genealogy of the incorporation of nonhuman animals in contemporary art. These pivotal decades orient modern ecological movements, animal ethics and posthumanist theory. Prior to this, nonhuman animal life was over-determined as a cultural symbol or exploitable natural resource—usually in mutual reinforcement within art and visual culture. While this also remains by-and-large the case today, points of resistance are increasingly being felt, so much so that Peter Sloterdijk (certainly no bleeding-heart eco-leftist) predicts a “growing unease among the populations of the great hothouse in the coming century through an internationalized animal rights movement, already almost fully developed, that will emphasize the unbreakable connection between human rights and animal suffering.”¹ Through increased visibility of animal issues in popular culture and the groundswell of academic interest in critical animal studies, what was germinal in the 1970s and 80s is on the cusp of full bloom today—though it should be said that progress has been incipient and partial; the history of human supremacy is tenaciously strong, even in the often utopian-minded denizens of the art world.

In keeping with this critical momentum, my case studies have sought to pry loose the obdurate humanist over-determination of what “animals” are understood to be (or not be), providing an expanded field of posthumanist recognition: the animal as ethological subject demanding ethical consideration, informing environmental well-being on a planetary scale (Chris Marker’s ethological work of the 1970s and 80s); the animal as nonhuman agent that sends the differential structure of the “human”—and thus humanism

in all its guises—into crisis (posthumanist exhibitions in the 80s); the animal as a singular form of life that complicates the relationship between the universality of language and the particularity of the real, sending the nominal powers of the readymade into paradox when applied to animals (Marcel Broodthaers and the animal readymade); and the animal as a state of being-in-the-world that resist violent, andro-humanist historical forces (eco-feminist strategies of identifying with animality).

While other reconceptualizations of the animal can be found in the 1970s and 80s, contemporary art’s engagement with animal life has since expanded exponentially, as can be seen in three recent exhibitions that reflect this proliferation: Animism (2012), Beastly/Tierisch (2015), and The Beast and is the Sovereign (2015). As is often the case in contemporary thematic exhibitions, a discipline outside art history provides theoretical ballast (respectively: cultural anthropology, visual media studies, and Derridean biopolitics). All three are symptomatic of a posthumanist or nonhuman turn across art and its disciplines; all three are compelling curatorial deployments of animality in art. Yet the most recognizable exhibition that lent visibility to issues surrounding animals (albeit far more obliquely than the three just mentioned) was documenta (13), curated by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev. A number of installations incorporated animal life, including Kristina Buch’s The Lover, 2013, an open-air butterfly garden, and Pierre Huyghe’s Untitled, 2013, an outdoor installation that included a bee colony swarming a reclining

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2 Some of these I have mentioned in my dissertation, such as Joseph Beuys, Arte Povera, and Fluxus. Others remain less well-known, yet also manifest the changing conception of animals in art: Rose Finn-Kelcey’s performances, the Polish poet and conceptual artist Andrej Partum’s 1980 Animal Manifesto, and Bill Viola’s early video work, for example.

female statue and a dog running free with a fluorescent pink leg.\textsuperscript{4} [\textbf{ill. 5.1-2}] Interestingly, in many respects these works are contemporary repetitions of installations from the 1970s and 80s (notably, Mass Moving’s breading of butterflies, Mark Thompson’s performance with beehives, and Jacques Lizène gallery environment for dogs). I would need more space to account for the meaning behind this repetition, and why the earlier works with nonhumans would probably remain neglected were it not for their more contemporary (and possibly more fashionable) echoes. Yet it is safe to say that the ecological crisis, which since the 1970s has forebodingly accelerated into today’s widespread acceptance of anthropogenic climate change, in many ways has sanctioned the animal (along with all other markers of the more-than-human world) as a seriously minded concern for contemporary art.

Seriously minded concerns, however, are not always met with sufficient rigor in contemporary art. Julian Stallabrass’s damning review of \textit{documenta} (13) argues that the exhibition is symptomatic of an art world that has a long way to when it comes to both a sound articulation of its concepts and their manifestation in environmental viability. Stallabrass takes issue with an “overbearing theoretical frame” that amounted to a farrago of “phenomenology, quantum theory, feminist thinking and psychoanalysis, [which pushed] the centre of human cultural concerns away from subject–object oppositions towards a perspective that would include the viewpoints of all entities,

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{4} It is for this reason that \textit{documenta} (13) quickly received the nickname “dog-umenta.” This included the Thai artist Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook’s \textit{Village and Elsewhere: In this circumstance the sole object of attention should be the treachery of the moon} (2012), which involved her living in a house in Kassel’s public Karlsaue park with her dog. Yet less domestic animals were present. For example, in Allora & Calzadilla’s video \textit{Raptor’s Raptor}, 2012, the Turkish artists Füsun Onur’s \textit{Dance of the Crows}, 2012, and the Australian artist Fiona Hall’s taxidermy.
organic and inorganic.” He then points out the cognitive dissonance at the heart of international exhibition-making that, on the one hand, takes up issues of environmentalism while, on the other, materially contributes to its degradation: “There is nothing green about any of this [i.e. the infrastructure of documenta (13) in the broadest, systemic sense], and the curatorial moves to evoke environmental issues, like the green hue of the BP logo, are an insulting camouflage.” Ultimately, Stallabrass claims these two failings fed into each other when “the aesthetic performance of a curator armoured with an elaborate theoretical mysticism is supposed to allow viewers to glide over the deep contradictions between art’s ethos and its business model.”

What Stallabrass diagnoses is a deep contradiction at the heart of the contemporary art world vis-à-vis ecology: the conditions of possibility for its display and traffic are often at odds with the ways in which its institutions and cultured pleasures are deleterious to the material sanctity of the more-than-human (art) world. I run through this argument because we find an analogous situation with the related question of animals in art. Bucher’s work with butterflies and Huyghe’s with dogs supply an art world fix for novelty, amusement, and living décor, without leading to deeper ecological, political, and ethical engagement with nonhuman animals. In ways that are as nebulous as

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6 Ibid., 132.
7 Ibid., 133.
8 Perhaps, recalling Michael Bess’s phrase, we should call this the light-greening of contemporary art.
9 The contemporary art world often finds aesthetic ambiguity more interesting than clear-cut ethico-political knowledge, and this pressure to resist resolution sways some artists, who might otherwise be amendable to taking nonhumans seriously in ethical and political thinking. As Stallabrass says of Christov-Bakargiev’s curatorial rhetoric, this lack of commitment amounts to a fear of closure, which he found to be at play relentlessly at documenta (13). It also remains debatable whether or not closure is necessarily opposed to aesthetic interest.
environmental impact (though in many ways more concrete), cultural institutions continue to associate with an animal industrial complex that renders nonhumans as mere objects for pleasure (aesthetic, gustatory, sartorial, and so on). The more the animal becomes a central concern for artists, curators, and attendant disciplines, the more this contradiction will become acute—ideally, one day soon, to the point of being unbearable.

What grounds this re-articulation of animality in the recent contemporary exhibitions I have just mentioned is a historical development whose implications cannot be overstated—even if it is not yet avowed by the much of the (art) world: the advent of the animal as potential victim. This historical process of recognition has heretofore been reserved for human-to-human self-recognition in the other, yet increasingly what counts today as appreciable inter-facing far exceeds the jealous rearguard anthroproprietors of humanist history. As cognitively complex social beings with various degrees of affinities with humans, nonhuman animals have become potentially “grievable life,” to use Judith Butler’s term. Or as François Laruelle has conjectured, “crimes against animality” will begin to preoccupy twenty-first century thinking. Tracing this historical progression of nonhuman recognition that began in the nineteenth century to its acceleration today would be the work of another dissertation, but here I offer the example of two well-known elephants—one at the beginning of the twentieth century, the other at the twenty-first, as micro-emblematic of these historical changes.

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Thomas Edison’s film production *Electrocuting an Elephant* (1903) documents Topsy the elephant being killed by electricity on Coney Island; it is one of the earliest experiments in film. [ill. 5.3] In keeping with a well-established tradition of criminalizing nonhumans, the elephant was originally to be hanged in public (unwanted and unsellable, Topsy had a reputation for retaliating against her handlers and a sometimes abusive public). After protests from the American Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Edison was brought in to euthanize the large mammal with his DC current instead. Part spectacle, part snuff film, the footage begins with Topsy being led to her execution, chained to the spot, and subject to a lethal electrical current that courses through her massive frame; Topsy becomes rigid, plumes of smoke emit from under her feet, and she falls dead off to one side.

Exactly one century later Topsy’s fallen body finds a companion in Douglas Gordon’s *Play Dead: Real Time* (2003), a three-channel video installation featuring another elephant, this time filmed performing in Gagosian Gallery, NY. [ill. 5.4] The moving images are projected across both sides of two obliquely hung projection screens, as well as screened on a television monitor on the floor. Gordon has described this installation as part nature film, part scientific study. The driving question was whether or not elephants can lie down, a position in which they are rarely seen.\(^\text{12}\) While there is an ethological dimension to this work (its focus on a single subject, documenting details and behaviors in the relatively controlled environment of the gallery space), there is also an affective dimension that exceeds neutral observation. The camera angles are consistently horizontal and track from a low vantage point (as if the spectator is on all fours or has

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become-mouse). The camera also whirls around the subject in 360 degrees, creating a feeling that both the filmed floor of the projected image and the floor of the gallery space in which it is viewed are moving. The nonhuman viewpoint, coupled with the sensation of co-movement, gives rise to an embodied and affective relationship between human viewer and nonhuman performer. This human-nonhuman interfacing is driven home by close ups of the elephant’s eyes, blinking, scanning the space, and opening up a mediated recognition from one viewing mammal to another.

Placed alongside Electrocuting an Elephant, the differences could not be starker: the elephant is alive, relatively free to move about free from pain and in accordance with her abilities, and is given attention for her vital being-in-the-world rather than for her demise. In this way, advances in cognitive ethology mirror the technological advances from film to video between 1903 to 2003. The fact that an elephant can “play dead” (as alluded to by Gordon’s title) is of great consequence, since such behavior reflects complex cognitive interiority, and an ability to communicate, play, and pretend. Such sociability, self-awareness, and intellectual sophistication complicate the use of an elephant as mere property in various forms of forced performance. Comparing the two films gives rise to a dark, ironic echo from one elephant to another—one that is perpetually dying on film and the other perpetually playing dead on video, but both with the ability to play dead.13

An agonistic field of parallel developments in art and culture informs this near history of the changing attitudes towards animals. On the one hand, the general expansion

13 However, ethical problems persist in Gordon’s video: what ties these two elephants together is the circus that provided their bodies, albeit for different purposes (one disposal, the other performance). While the elephant is afforded a temporary visibility and wondrous presence on film, she came from and went back to an institutional structure that keeps her in unfreedom. Since Douglas’s work in 2003, Barnum and Bailey circus has expedited the retirement of its elephants.
of the readymade in art since the sixties has meant the world at large and all within it has become fair game for art making, including nonhuman animals—even while the readymade gesture lost all critical institutional thrust in the process. Lambs, chickens, pigs, goats, horses, and many more were used simply as props for human initiatives. Alive or dead, animals provided just one more material in an expanded field of art practices, be it combine, assemblage, installation, action, performance, or moving image. Recall Allan Kaprow’s ontologically flat list for possible objects in happenings, which includes a dog alongside inanimate objects: “paint, chairs, food, electric and neon lights, smoke, water, old socks, a dog, movies, a thousand other things that will be discovered by the present generation of artists. 14 On the other hand, our expanded knowledge of the lives of animals during this same period has forced a reconsideration of their use as generalizable objects (more recently, during the writing of this dissertation the French parliament ruled that nonhuman animals are no longer the legal equivalent of furniture but, in fact, sentient beings). These competing moments of deregulation are both aesthetic—a deregulation of what counts as an art object—and politico-ethical—a deregulation of what counts as a form of life with value beyond the anthroproprietary. One prioritizes aesthetic liberation, the other eco-social justice.

Grafted onto art since 1960, the amplifications of artistic and institutional freedom appear diametrically opposed to issues of eco-social justice, which, by comparison, seem restrictive to aesthetic enterprise. This dual agonistic field mirrors Luc Boltanski’s and Eve Chiapello’s analysis of the post-’68 vicissitudes of the “artistic critiques” and the

14 Allan Kaprow, “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock,” in Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life, ed. Jeff Kelley (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2003), 9. This does not mean that contemporary artists today no longer incorporate animals in similarly uncritical ways; a number of artists continue to use nonhumans for mere novelty—Maurizio Cattelan and once more Damien Hirst come to mind.
“social critiques” of capitalism. The success of one seems proportionate to a distancing of the other, and the relative ease of capitalism’s co-option of the artistic has meant the occlusion of the social (which I argue should include nonhuman eco-sociability).¹⁵ Historically, we may be at the point where the readymade has become a reactionary process—and that, peculiarly enough, deregulating art is now a conservative maneuver. The aesthetic freedom to use anything whatsoever often satisfies the pampered demands of art world trends or quirkiness (or simply an experience out of the ordinary). This fetishization of freedom of materials lends very little to the progressive eco-social demands of the twenty-first century. This does not mean calling for censorship or bureaucratic regulation; the hope would simply be that instrumentalizing nonhumans in art production (and humans, for that matter) would simply become both uninteresting and intuitively untenable in an increasingly precarious world. This discussion is reminiscent of Franco “Bifo” Berardi’s discussion of poetry and finance when he reminds us that the term deregulation “was first proposed by the poet Arthur Rimbaud, and later recycled as a metaphor by neoliberal ideologues.”¹⁶ As with financial markets, the more progressive eco-social direction for art is not one with ever more novel configurations and expansions, but one that privileges thoughtfulness, coherent nonviolence, responsibility, and an openness to alterity rather than its blind assimilation or domination. In short, a posthumanist direction.

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[ill. 1.3] Chris Marker, *An Owl Is an Owl is an Owl* (1985-90)


[ill. 1.7] Chris Marker, Vive la baleine!, 1972 (cartoon whale)

[ill. 1.8] Chris Marker, Vive la baleine!, 1972 (cetacean book)
[ill. 1.9] La Compagnie Maritime Des Chargeurs Reunis et La Compagnie Fabre, Agenda 1972

[ill. 1.12] Chris Marker, *Vive la baleine!*, 1972 (Taiyo Fishing Company “killing”)

[ill. 1.13] Chris Marker, *Vive la baleine!*, 1972 (Taiyo Fishing Company “flensing”)

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[ill. 1.14] Chris Marker, *Vive la baleine!*, 1972 (Taiyo Fishing Company “oil factory”)

[ill. 1.15] Chris Marker, *Vive la baleine!*, 1972 (Dutch sea painting)
[ill. 1.16] Chris Marker, *Vive la baleine!*, 1972 (photograph of U.S. port with oil barrels)

[ill. 1.17] Chris Marker, *Vive la baleine!*, 1972 (pectoral film (first moving image))
[ill. 1.18] Chris Marker, *Vive la baleine!*, 1972 (Foyn)

[ill. 1.19] Chris Marker, *Vive la baleine!*, 1972 (maw of floating factory ship)
[ill. 1.20] Chris Marker, Vive la baleine!, 1972 (Nisshin Miru)

[ill. 1.21] Chris Marker, Vive la baleine!, 1972 (final shot, flap of skin)
[ill. 1.22] Chris Marker, *Vive la baleine!*, 1972 (whale-bomb)

[ill. 1.23] Chris Marker, *La Jetée* 1962 (natural history museum scene)


[ill. 1.27] Chris Marker, *Le fond de l’air est rouge* (1977) (shooting wolves)
[ill. 1.28] Chris Marker, *Si J’avais quatre dromadaires* (1966/74) (girl with racoon in cage)

[ill. 1.29] Chris Marker, *Si J’avais quatre dromadaires* (1966/74) (racoon washing on stage)
[ill. 1.38] Chris Marker, *Si J’avais quatre dromadaires* (1966/74) (final shot monkeys)
CHAPTER TWO—POSTHUMANIST EXHIBITIONS: FROM ECOLOGY TO BIOPOLITICS

[ill. 2.1]: Raoul Dufy Le Pouple (Octopus) in Guillaume Apollinaire’s Le Bestiaire ou Cortège d’Orphée, 1911

Jetant son encre vers les cieux,
Suçant le sang de ce qu’il aime
Et le trouvant délicieux,
Ce monstre inhumain, c’est moi-même.

[ill. 2.3-4] Simon Lacour, *Een nieuwe optiek* (A New Optic), 1985
[ill. 2.5] Camiel van Breedam, *Voortvarende* (Dynamic), 1982

[ill. 2.7] Philippe de Luyck, Création d’un territoire pour 4 serpents au moyen d’un champ calorifique, (Creation of a territory for 4 snakes by means of a heated site), 1974
[ill. 2.8] Daniel Dutriuex, *L’inestimable toit se cache, ailée l’éclipse* (The Incalculable Roof Hides Itself, Winged Eclipse), 1984

[ill. 2.9] Daniel Dutriuex, *L’uniforme point s’ecarte sévère le temps* (The Uniform Dot Moves Away Strict Time), 1984

[ill. 2.16] Yves de Smet, SKIN II-PERMANENTLY, 1978-9

[ill. 2.17] Dominique Ampe, Vibrerende kippepluimen (Vibrating Chicken Feathers), 1984
[ill. 2.18] Les Immatériaux (Paik)

[ill. 2.19] Duchamp’s installation for the 1938 International Surrealist Exhibition
[ill. 2.20] Les Immatériaux Inventaire (*Nu vain*)

Le corps dépouillé. La nudité comme limite du sens, comme présence absurde. La chair remplacée par le matériau neutre, mesureable, démultipliant, immatriculable.

[ill. 2.21] Les Immatériaux Inventaire (*Habitacle*)

Déclin de l’habitat comme lieu d’identification et de jouissance, apparition d’environnements calculés sur les fonctions organiques pertinentes ? Un habitat prothèse d’un corps privé de toute autre dimension que fonctionnelle ?
toutes les copies


ration alimentaire

Le code alimentaire assurait en général la régulation des rapports de la société avec elle-même et avec la nature. Il tend aujourd’hui à se régler sur l’optimisation des fonctions de nutrition. Multiples expressions de cet optimum. La seule identification permise dans ces conditions : avoir un « bon » métabolisme.

Un réfrigérateur ouvert, des petits tas de constituants nutritifs alimentaires : lipides, protéines, glucides. Sur une table de cuisine, un micro-ordinateur avec des programmes diététiques.
mangeur pressé

Les coutumes et les rituels alimentaires perdent de leur présence au contact des modes de vie fonctionnalistes. Ils y gagnent en valeur de nostalgie. Manger n’est plus guère une mise en scène du culturel quand l’essentiel est de gagner du temps et de l’énergie, tout seul.

[ill. 2.24] Les Immatériaux Inventaire (*Manger pressé*)

précuisonné - préparlé

Dans des domaines comme l’alimentation ou le langage, qui est à l’origine du sens lorsque celui-ci est préprogrammé par machine ? La nourriture dans la cuisine, la réplique dans la conversation, vous arrivent toutes faites. Vous croyez-vous encore le maître des mets et des mots ?

[ill. 2.25] Les Immatériaux Inventaire (*Précuisonné-Préparlé*)
[ill. 2.26] Les Immatériaux Inventaire (Arôme simulé)

arôme simulé

Question des simulacres olfactifs. Comment identifier ce que sent notre nez si la chimie produit des équivalents presque parfaits (ou plus que parfaits) des émanations « naturelles » ? Déstabilisation des repérages dans le monde des odeurs.

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Des dispositifs (hyposensibles, hétéroscopiques, capteur olfactif) créent des circuits d'olfaction avec différents ordres de fruits. Le raisonnement d'identifier. En toile de fond, projection d'une couche de fruits en images de synthèse.

[ill. 2.27] Les Immatériaux Inventaire (Deuxième peau)

deuxième peau

La peau naturelle considérée comme premier vêtement. Enveloppe protégeant le corps de l'extérieur, elle instaure l'opposition dedans/dehors. Les prothèses de peau déplacent la limite. Où commence le dehors ?

Des incisions sous plastiques présentent différents types de peau :
- greffe de peau provisoire : peau de porc, fil de collagène, polystyrene synthétique, polystyrene bio-synthétique.
- autogreffe et combiné : greffe totale, peau expérimentée, combiné de peau homogreffe, autogreffe.
- peau artificielle : peau de synthèse.

Sous/contre : culture de peau (derme équivalent et épidermisation).

En contrepoinçant une combinaison d'astronomie et un cockpit de privation sensorielle, enveloppes artificielles permettant de repérer les limites de la peau.

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[ill. 2.28] Les Immatériaux Inventaire (Coup éclaté)

corps éclaté
De l’individu humain à la molécule anonyme, approche d’une constitution universelle du vivant. À mesure que l’on démonte l’organisme le plus complexe, on trouve les mêmes éléments que dans le plus simple.

[ill. 2.29] Les Immatériaux Inventaire (Langue vivante)

langue vivante
Au cœur des cellules apparaissent la variété et la complexité des organes moléculaires : messages, codes-récepteurs, réseaux de communication, stockages de l’information, qui permettent les reconnaissances et les interactions biochimiques. Il s’agit aujourd’hui de comprendre et d’interpréter les processus fondamentaux de la vie, en termes de communication et de cybermétrie appliquées à l’échelle des molécules.
[ill. 2.30] Les Immatériaux Inventaire (Theatre du non corp)


Chaque salle introduit de façon symbolique (et l’une des cinquante qui commandent le concept de l’exposition) un corps matériel, un autre matériel, un autre matériel, un autre matériel, un autre matériel.

Cette salle suggère la résistance du corps (matière, matière) à la dématérialisation de ses contextes dans la vie médicamenteuse.

[Nam June Paik, Sonatine for Goldfish, 1975]
[ill. 2.32] Stiletto, *Flying Spots*, 1984/86

[ill. 2.33] Christina Kubitsch, *The Bird’s Tree*, 1987
[ill. 2.34] Luis Benedict, *Biotrom, 4000 Living Bees*, from the 1970 Venice Beinnale
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[ill. 2.38] Hans Haacke, *Rhine-Water Treatment Plant* (1972)

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[ill. 2.41] Marianne Greve’s *Frog Music I—Tadpoles*, 1984

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[ill. 3.5] Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, 1503-15

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[ill. 3.7] Marcel Broodthaers, the *Section des figures*, 1972, detail (beer bottles, corks)

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[ill. 3.10] Marcel Broodthaers photograph, Antwerp Zoo, Eagle (From *Section des figures* catalog, 1972)


Ma Rhétorique

Moi Je dis Je Moi Je dis Je
Le Roi des Moules Moi Tu dis Tu
Je manifeste manifestement. Au niveau de
mer des moules, j’ai perdu le temps perdu.
Je dis, je, le Roi des Moules, la parole
des Moules.
[ill. 3.16] Marcel Broodthaers, *Ne dites pas que je ne l'ai pas dit—Le Perroquet*, 1974

[ill. 3.17] Marcel Broodthaers, *Dites partout que je l'ai dit*, 1974
[ill. 3.18] Marcel Broodthaers feeding chickens outside gallery, 1966

[ill. 3.19] Marcel Broodthaers with camel, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1974
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[ill. 4.1] Louise Bourgeois, She-fox, 1985
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[ill. 4.6] Louise Bourgeois, *Destruction of the Father*, 1974

[ill. 4.7] Lee Miller, *Severed Breast from Radical Surgery in a Place Setting*, 1930
[ill. 4.8] Annette Messager’s studio schematic

L‘EAU POUR LES BÊTES,
LE VIN POUR LES HOMMES,
LE BÂTON POUR LES FEMMES
[ill. 4.11] Annette Messager, *Mon livre de cuisine* (My Cookbook), 1972


[ill. 4.14] VALIE EXPORT, *TAPP und TASTKINO (TAP and TOUCH CINEMA)*, 1968
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[ill. 4.18] VALIE EXPORT, Mann & Frau & Animal (Man & Woman & Animal), 1970-73 (detail)

[ill. 4.20] Songs of the Humpback Whale (1970)

[ill. 4.21] VALIE EXPORT, Asemie - die Unfähigkeit, sich durch Mienenspiel ausdrücken zu können (Asemia - The Inability to Express Oneself Through Facial Expression), 1973
[ill. 4.22] VALIE EXPORT, Implementation (Implementation), 1974-75

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