

ANIMA: Visual Art as a Vehicle for Exploring Other Modes of Relatedness
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Dedication

I could not have created ANIMA or written this thesis without my family members, human and nonhuman. I dedicate this work, and all that comes after it, to these unique companions. I am so lucky to belong to you.

Abstract

Human animals have several very specific modes of relating with nonhuman animals. ANIMA, a body of work incorporating photographic and sculptural works, situates the viewer in two modes of relating: scientific and sympathetic. The photographs, which take on the mantle of the scientific, call into question the efficacy of rational, distanced and supposedly objective approaches to nonhuman animals. The very singular, interspecies creatures depicted, however, disrupt the solidity of this perspective on knowing. Three vulnerable and fantastical ‘deerhounds’ comprise the sculptural works. These absurdly plaintive creatures are embodiments of the consequences of a relating to nonhuman animals through infantilization and a dissolving of otherness. Through these works, and their relation to each other, the artist gestures to the possibility of alternate, ethical modes of relating.

This thesis examines the limits of human language as a vehicle for apprehending nonhuman animals. It suggests that art, because of its often instinctive, provisional and affective relating, is a parallel and useful method to approaching animality. It proposes sustained and attentive relationships with individual animals as an avenue for moving beyond relationships of ‘massification’. Referencing writings from biologists, theorists, musicians and authors of fiction, as well as interspersing the text with short poetic vignettes, the author attempts to build an interdisciplinary approach to questioning what is ‘animal’, and why it has been defined as antithetical to ‘human’. ‘Heteroaffection’, ‘telepoiesis’, critical anthropomorphism and sympathetic imagination are proposed as catalysts for an ethical way to be with, and to represent that being with, another animal.

Introduction to Visual Works

My photographs give the initial impression of scientific fetal specimens, appealing to distanced, rational contemplation. This cursory reading, however, is subverted by the singularity and indeterminacy of the creatures depicted, by their resistance to our knowing. Printed on 16x20" silver gelatin fiber paper, these images provide two inverse views of the nonhuman fetal sculptures I have created. Predominately white images show an overhead view of a single figure's form, whereas the mainly black ones are 'fetal-grams', photographs created by placing a wax figure directly onto light sensitive paper and exposing it in the darkroom. I have given these works quasi-Latin names to further gesture towards the scientific tradition. The names, however, do not satisfy; do not encompass the figures they refer to. Photography, with its connotations of distanced objectivity, lends to the reading of these images as empirical documents. The viewer's gaze, directed by the camera lens, falls on these figures in the antiseptic void of a laboratory field or what could be the black of an x-ray or a telescopic view of a galaxy. In these images the animal is objectified, presented as one would a sample of genus and species. I have, however, deliberately made these creatures strange and vulnerable individuals, in order to disrupt their massification¹.

My sculptures are meant to appeal viscerally through affect. Ideally we have an embodied reaction to them and respond empathetically, "demonstrating, not only that art engages a disembodied 'free play of imagination'" (Weil 42). Or in other words as something that takes place solely in the mind. But also, as Keri Weil points out, "that such play takes place in and

¹ "Objects referred to by mass terms have no individuality, no uniqueness, no specificity, no particularity. When humans turn a nonhuman into 'meat', someone who has a very particular, situated life, a unique being is converted into something that has no individuality, no uniqueness, no specificity...their 'massification' allows our release from empathy...The 'massification of beings permits the dilution, the diminution of our attention... animals are killed because they are false mass terms, but they die as individuals... Each suffers his or her own death, and this death matters a great deal to the one who is dying. (Adams "The War on Compassion" 23-26).

through a body's involuntary perceptions"(42). I have created three 'deerhound' sculptures, ceramic and wax works that depict a single interspecies character. The first deerhound is nestled between two legs; he is missing a limb and has a prosthetic ear. The second figure is trying to pick up a fully-grown antler, but he is so underdeveloped that the weight is lifting his back end off the ground. And finally, the third is offering so much of himself that his guts are spilling out and lifting him off his feet. He is literally turning himself out for you. I have placed the figures in these predicaments to allude to the absurdity of human expectations of unconditional love, dependency and vulnerability. These creatures have gestures and expressions that appeal to the viewer affectively. But what costs do their twisted limbs, exposed flesh and proffered insides allude to? What are the consequences of living in a culture where love for other species is corrupted by infantilization "and a refusal to honor difference" (Haraway *Companion Species Manifesto* 39)?

Both the photographs and sculptures in this series focalize² the viewer through naturalized, mediated perspectives, while subversively questioning how these perspectives instrumentalize animals, assigning value based on their availability to us. By contrasting each other's focalization, the photographs and sculptures point to the efficacy and failings of rational and sympathetic approaches. These variable modes of reading, at times scientific, at times emotive, are used for rhetorical purposes to gesture to a political horizon where other means of relatedness may be negotiated.

In the many pages that follow I am not explaining what my sculptures and photographs 'are about'. I fear limiting what happens in the face of the work with my words. As I see it, explaining the intentions of this work would be akin to a dictionary-like translation of the gestures of dogs. I feel that books which offer such simplifications refute and reduce the

² Focalization refers to the specific "perspective through which a narrative is presented" ("Focalization").

individual and subjective relating that happens through embodied communication. Such translations are symptoms of our attempts to literalize a dialect that is intuitive, to again centralize human language and filter all experience through it. I produce visual art because it, like animal communication, is a vessel for provisional, affective relating. I feel there is a parallel to be found between the ineffable communication of animals and what is beyond language when we encounter art with resonance. In the following pages I similarly argue the dangers of considering being-animal and being-with animals, solely through human language. And yet I use words to argue for attentiveness to animal being, and simultaneously for expanding on what is contained in my visual works. Why this contradiction? Continuing this discourse on animal being is imperative because the conversation has an ethical purchase on what happens in the lived realm. Equally important is acknowledging the unique role visual art can have in considering our relationships with nonhuman animals. The experiential and resonant nature of art facilitates an engaging in further methods of communicating. I need our shared language, however, to draw attention to and validate the symbiosis between what is beyond conscious language in the gallery and with other animals. Art, because it parallels the non-literal, communicative possibilities of animal language, offers a way around our constant demands to understand animality through the language-based mind. Through art we create a space where what we cannot put words to is valued. I endeavor, through sculpture, photo and this text to offer entry points to other modes of relatedness. The following sections of this text, instead of directly addressing what this body of work is doing, act as another mode of access to the possibilities presented by the visual works.

My practice does not come primarily out of philosophical musings on animality. The figures that populate my oeuvre are born out of living body-to-body, heart-to-heart, with my

nonhuman companions, past and present. Our fleshy and vulnerable undersides exposed to one another, eyes asking, “Can you feel me?” I see a material; plasticine, clay, wax, soft downy roving and they combine in my mind with my thoughts and fears, the books I’ve read, and Scooter’s³ gestures and glances that tug on my insides. The outcome of my making is intuitive, but in no way mindless, and the affective power of these creatures remains beyond the grasp of my words, the means of my rational language. I was recently reading Donna Haraway’s *Companion Species Manifesto* and her words had the most uncanny resonance with my work. She wrote that she didn’t look to her multispecies family for child surrogates, but she did have the feeling “that if [she] turned up pregnant, [she] wanted the being in [her] womb to be a member of another species; Maybe that turns out to be the general condition. It’s not just mutts [...] who seek a category of one’s own significant otherness” (96). The deerhounds and fetuses I generate “dwell in those spaces of betweenness or indeterminacy out of which such distinctions between animal and human, as between life and death, are produced” (Weil 43). We want to pull them into us to comfort, but are uncertain of their raw flesh. They are art objects and affective interlocutors appealing to us with their gaze.

Perhaps the most important research which informs this body of work, are my attentive relationships with other animals. The deerhound figures document, in a fantastical way, the communicative gestures that pass between non-human family members and myself. The vignettes which intersperse this text document a life lived in relation to individual animals. While I acknowledge the integral presence of the living animal in these works, I am compelled to continue to work representationally. I have made this decision because using individual animals,

³ Who is a dog, but I hesitate to say my dog, as I am his as much as he is mine.

even relationally, is an extension of the instrumentalizing of animal lives that I oppose.⁴ Putting an animal in an art context to fulfill my ends, even if my goals are altruistic, is still an acting out of the anthropocentric mindset. In these works I focus the viewer through well-intentioned, yet ultimately selfish perspectives, in order to emphasize the perversity of naturalizing a proprietary vantage point on the living world. Because I am using creatures of my own creation I can do so from outside the system of exploitation. I am not colonizing an individual, his/her body or existence. Sculpture offers an embodied relationship without the harm of utilizing actual animals for artistic needs. The decision to work sculpturally and photographically is an attempt to avoid “centering the human subject” and “objectifying the image of the animal” (Baker 232). Through this medium I generate representations that are “awkward, problematic and provisional” (Baker 232). Donna Haraway wrote “[Fiction is] liable to showing something we do not yet know to be true, but will know” (*Companion Species Manifesto* 20). Through the sculptures and photographs in my thesis work - ANIMA- I am attempting this act of showing. “Living with animals, inhabiting their/our stories, trying to tell the truth about our relationship, co-habiting an active history: that is the work of companion species” (Haraway *Companion Species Manifesto* 20).

Sculptors Berlinde de Bruyckere and Beth Cavener Strichter have influenced my production, but they also illuminate what I want to avoid. de Bruyckere literally utilizes an animal’s body, working with horse corpses and deer antlers. Cavener works with animal forms representationally, and yet I find her practice similarly problematic in its unquestioning instrumentalization of the animal form. Strichter uses the animal body to create human portraits and express specifically human emotional states. Unfortunately, my figures have been at times

⁴ Kathy High developed a work in which she cared for three transgenic rats, genetically engineered to have autoimmune deficiencies, with holistically treatments. Berlinde de Bruyckere uses the remains of horses to create intensely powerful work. While both these artists fascinate me, their work utilizes individuals and their bodies in ways that I cannot abide in my own work.

confused with this type of very candid anthropomorphism. I am distressed by the vanity which presumes that communicative gestures are solely the territory of humanity, and that we are so divided from our fellow animals that any recognition of language or emotional states in other animals are considered mere acts of projection. I fear de Bruyckere and Strichter's works perpetuate the centering of the human, and continue the tradition of co-opting the animal body for human ends. In my own work I am looking at animal gestures and conveying them through an animal of my own creation. To dismiss my figure's expressive qualities as anthropomorphism, is to close one's eyes to the shared communicative gestures of another being, and the openings they may offer.

Language

The limits of:

The language of animals, which we human animals may access through attentiveness, is embodied, affective and intuitive. The anthropocentric prioritizing of words, of demanding communication on human terms, blinds us not only to what is being conveyed by other animals, but even more basically, that something is being conveyed. The animals are not silent. Why have we spent so long convincing ourselves otherwise? The strictures and hierarchies imposed by language work against efforts to bridge nonhuman animal and human-animal existence. That is why Meeka Walsh advocated for art which negates the boundaries imposed by language in her essay "On Being and Becoming", saying "it is to all this artists are responding with their post modern animals, with cyborgs and hybrids, with their attempts to reconnect the line, to get out of their own skins and into the insides of other beings – recognizing that skins aren't barriers but only permeable, osmotic borders" (Walsh 8).

I have been producing work which conveys what is beyond me to fully say, and thus reflects my communicative relationships with other animals. When we look at this work we are responding, in part, “to the sheer animal vulnerability” of the figures, the vulnerability we share with these creatures (Weil 118). We are in relation to these figures, whose “exposure and vulnerability” make a “primary ethical claim upon us” (Butler 31). This vulnerability causes unease because “we cannot put into words either what it is exactly that affects us so, or how to respond to it” (Weil 118). Cora Diamond calls this “difficult reality”; a reality that is “resistant to our thinking it, or painful in its inexplicability” (qtd in Weil 118). That is not to say that it is beyond understanding, but that this experience is founded in an understanding beyond human rationality. The experience of “difficult reality” lives within the realm of affective experience, which is twinned in my mind with animal experience. Dwelling in this experience of difficulty, however, “must be the foundation of any ethics” (Weil 118).

My work stands upon shifting sands of understanding. This understanding stems from countless books, dissertations and lectures on the ineffable connection between animals; human and otherwise. These eloquent and insightful works inch us closer to apprehending the heteroaffectio⁵ that transpires between animals, but they do not fully satisfy experience. I feel this lacking can be attributed to the authors (and my own) continued reliance on the naturalized prioritizing of human language and experience. Perhaps words, our words, get in the way of “hear[ing] and acknowledg[ing] what it may be impossible to say” (Weil 7). In Franz Kafka’s “A Report for an Academy”, the talking Ape Red Peter states, “Nowadays of course I can portray those ape-like feelings only with human words, and, as a result, I misrepresent them” (83). Red Peter now has *only* human words and they similarly fall short of conveying the nonhuman

⁵ A term introduced by Derrida, meaning “the way that the self is touched or moved by an other, [which] takes on a particular valence when he uses it in relation to animals” (Weil xvii).

experience. Red Peter was attempting to legitimize the experience of ape-being to the academy, but in gaining the ability to do so he lost the power to access those ape thoughts and emotions. We want to know the mind and being of another, but we are brought up to believe that can only be achieved through words. Vicki Hearne describes acknowledging the other's consciousness, desiring to know it through language, and the others inevitable impenetrability, as the "tragedy of language" (Weil 9). So how do we escape the anthropocentrism inherent in the "tragedy of language"? How do we slip into another mode of acquiring knowledge of the other, a knowledge beyond words? Kari Weil suggests in *Thinking Animals, Why Animal Studies Now?* that "it may be possible if not to retrieve, then to imagine a fullness of vision in poetry⁶ or through the eyes of those who are removed from 'normal' sociolinguistic behavior, whether nonhuman animals or persons with certain linguistic and cognitive disabilities" (120). One such "interpreter of an important patois" is Dawn Prince (Prince "The Silence Between"). Prince, an author and primatologist who lives with autism, spent years homeless and marginalized. She began visiting Seattle's Woodland Park Zoo as a young adult and credits the gorillas she first met there with returning her to a language of wholeness and a regaining of personhood (Wikipedia contributors "Dawn Prince-Hughes"; Prince "The Silence Between"). She describes the language they taught her as a "different flavor of speaking and knowing"(Prince "The Silence Between"). Later, as Prince joined the world of academia she encountered difficulty translating her experience within the limits of academic parlance. She "couldn't capture what had happened in terse and distant language. Even the subject itself was taboo as 'anthropomorphism' "(Prince "The Silence Between").⁷ How then, do those who value encountering other animals with their

⁶ Visual art also has the potential to approach this "fullness of vision".

⁷ I share Prince's frustration with the limits of normative language, and academic language in particular, that is why I have dispersed within this text narrative vignettes, which attempt to poetically feel outwards towards the edges what my visual works do.

own animal beings validate their work? Perhaps it is less a question of what we say, and more about how we listen, connected to one another “with ear and spirit”, because what is often forgotten is that “listening is the superior half of speaking” (Prince “The Silence Between”).

As I write this, I sit propped up in my bed, with my notes and quotations papering the walls all around me. Scooter is curled up cradled between my legs, head resting on my shin. The sun pours in the window and despite its winter feebleness warms our skin. From this position we respond to each other’s slightest shifts. Sometimes I pause to watch him twitching in his dreams, listening to the suckling sounds he makes. Elroy⁸ occasionally interrupts me with his aural and physical demands, fitting his slender body in the space between my stomach and whatever I am writing on, sharing my warmth. This place, this microcosm, gives me the heart to live with the hypocrisy of writing what I don’t think can be written, or necessarily should be written. To slog through what sometimes makes me feel sodden with futility. To use my human language and human rationality to express what exists here, in the indeterminacy between us.

I am 15 and I have devoured books, videos and even attended a seminar by Monty Roberts, ‘the real horse whisperer’. He started working with horses at the age of 3, “before the age of reason”.

For the first time I am aware of what my hands, my arms, the curve of my spine is communicating to my horse, a yearling barely touched by human hands, brought in from the fields and handed to me.

I felt the weight of that responsibility; I feel it still.

We enter into a round pen, and enter into a dance that lasts years.
 Eyes on eyes, square body, pushing away into a controlled flight response...
 Until her passivity is expressed, head lowered, lips licked.
 Then I welcome her, I round my body, lower my eyes, turn my back.

And then what I am to her shifts and she comes to me,
 We join up and I stroke her.
 She follows at my shoulder and becomes my willing partner; accepts my touch, my body, my instruction.

⁸ Whom I could not call “my cat” because I belong to him much more than he belongs to me.

It is insufficient to say we are responsive to one another.
That touch, my touch will always be with her.

Inadequate are the words I have now,
For the relationship I let go,
What I have lost,
The responsibility I betrayed.

It returns to me sometimes though, in dreams

The Failure of Words to Define “What is Animal?”:

How does one even begin talking about “the animal”? Everyone who gives this topic serious attention enters into a semantic juggling act, trying to discover words that adequately include all living creatures, and yet still delimit animal and human when required. I have tried all manner of variations; “human” and “nonhuman animals”, “other animals”, “creatures”, “companion species” and “persons”. Most writers cannot even begin their dissertations without a disclaimer explaining that they are about to use the terms “human” and “animal”, but only reluctantly and out of necessity. This excerpt from Jeff McMahan’s “The Wrongness of Killing and the Badness of Death” is an excellent example of such a proviso. This is not even a treatise on animals in particular; yet look at the hoops McMahan must jump through before he has even begun:

How might we seek to deepen our understanding of the morality of killing? One approach is to compare the killing of persons with the killing of animals. (Recall by “persons” I mean individuals who are self-conscious, irrespective of species. By “animals” I mean nonhuman animals. In general, I will use the word “people” as the plural of “person” rather than as the plural of “human being”. Thus “people” could conceivably include some nonhuman individuals. But in general I will treat people and animals as categories that do not overlap. Thus, in most of what follows, one should assume that “animals” refers to animals that are not only nonhuman but also not persons. For simplicity, I will put aside, for the time being, the questions that are raised by the possibility that there are nonhuman animals that – or who – are persons. (7-8)

All this defining and justifying can be attributed to one mistake in our language; that human and animal are used to define each other through a dichotomy of exclusion. If we pick apart the common definitions of “human” and “animal” they overlap in both prosaic and metaphysical ways. There are animals who possess the capacities which we use to define human, while some humans, because of age, infirmity or mental state, do not (ie. language, sentience, consciousness). And humans are not merely semantically ‘animals’; I think we retain some animality. But what is animality? Is it only a void or an inversion of “humanity”? No, that does not satisfy. Is animality, as some would maintain, the absence of rationality? Does this suppose that all animals are irrational? Most would argue that animals are indeed capable of learning, observing behavior in others and modifying their own in response, as well as planning actions, all of which implies forethought. Do these sound like the behaviors of irrational beings, or actions that are solely the result of uncalculated reactions? Derrida recognized that the question of the animal, its cognizance and capacity for language, comes down to “knowing not whether the animal speaks but whether one can know what *respond* means, and how to distinguish a response from a reaction” (Derrida *The Animal That Therefore I Am* 377).

Giorgio Agamben has come to call the distinction between man and animal, nature and culture, the “anthropological machine” (Weil 33). A distinction that “cannot be made without recourse to an oppositional and anthropocentric thinking that essentializes both animal and human while ignoring the space of overlap between them” (Weil 33). The naturalized human/animal binary, a binary of kin and other, is “routinely used to legitimize animal abuse” (Adams “Introduction” 12). Derrida elaborated on the power of this imprecise word, ‘animal’, by saying that relegating all nonhuman living things into one subjugated category is “theoretically ridiculous, and partakes in the very real violence that humans exercise towards

animals, that leads to... their industrial treatment, their consumption. All this violence towards animals is engendered in this conceptual simplification, which allows one to say animals” (Derrida "Jacques Derrida and the Question of "The Animal" *YouTube*). These categories do a disservice to our understanding of the self and other. They must be deconstructed.

Words have the power to assign mentality, singularity and being; consider ‘person’, ‘human’, ‘man’, ‘woman’, ‘child’. Now compare what the words ‘animal’, ‘livestock’, and ‘game’ conjure. These words have a more sinister function, they do more than separate human animal from nonhuman animal. They turn specific individuals into an unquantifiable mass term; a process Carol Adams calls “massification”.

Through use-based names “animals come to be seen as voids”, objects with no purpose other than being instrumentalized by humans (Luke 114). Now let's consider the legal definition of captive animals as property. This status denies individual determination and purposefully fails to acknowledge animals as more than objects. Nor does it describe the mutual dependence and responsibility that arises from reciprocal belonging to.

The term ‘animal’ has the ability to unite, but its most common use is to divide. Splitting us from within into ‘human/rational’ and ‘animal’ selves, and externally from the other beings we share experience with. ‘Animal’ divides amongst humans as well. Contemplate its power when wielded against those considered outsiders. As long as the term animal has existed, there have been groups of humans who were categorized under it, and thus afforded only rights and treatment equal to the station of animal. Carol Adams has written, “as long as we treat animals as animals, as long as we accept that there is the category ‘animals’, both the treatment and the concept will legitimize the treatment of humans like animals” (“The War on Compassion” 34). The most obvious historical examples can be found in the language and actions of Nazis and

slave owners⁹, but perhaps more uncomfortably we should look at the speech still used to justify violence against those who are feared and hated.¹⁰

Have you ever been wracked by deep, body aching sobs,
 And had a cat,
 Who never gave a damn about anyone,
 Come and sit on your chest?
 Her throaty, resonating purrs, massaging the hurt.

What constitutes language?:

In *The Lives of Animals* J.M. Coetzee states, through his protagonist Elizabeth Costello, that animals refuse to speak and that there is a dignity in their silence. This anthropocentric view, while attempting to valorize ‘the animal’, allows for a very narrow view of communication. In her response to Coetzee’s text Wendy Doniger eloquently points out that other animals do “speak, and we refuse to grant them the dignity of *listening* to them” (105). Through training and/or prolonged, attentive observation, humans and other animals can learn to listen and speak through words, gestures, touch, pressure and tone (Weil 10). “We are training each other in acts of communication we barely understand,” writes Donna Haraway, in her *Companion Species Manifesto* (62). We are almost able to explain to ourselves, to grasp these acts of communication, to present them to the world. And yet, they remain just beyond apprehension. All the while maintaining a resonance that makes sense. For Haraway “the task is to become coherent enough in an incoherent world to engage in a joint dance of being that breeds respect and response in the

⁹ “During the Holocaust, Nazis referred to Jews as rats. Hutus involved in the Rwanda genocide called Tutsis cockroaches. Slave owners throughout history considered slaves subhuman animals” (Conan, Neal " 'Less Than Human': The Psychology Of Cruelty").

¹⁰ For example a recent National Post article titled: “Jihadi John’s father calls his son a ‘dog, an animal and a terrorist’ who should die, colleague says” (Tait). Or this quote from a Palestinian shopkeeper living under Israeli control; “All we want is to live a decent life, but we are treated like animals by Jewish settlers” (“Al-Khalil: A City on the Edge.”)

flesh... and then remember how to live like that at every scale, with all partners” (*Companion Species Manifesto* 62).

Attributing language to other animals not only opens our lives to entanglements with them, it also opens us to the concept of nonhuman personhood. Once copresence¹¹ is recognized in another animal, compassion and consideration are more likely to expand to encompass them.

Doniger recognizes the power of communication to activate compassion when she writes:

Language is, I think, the place from which compassion springs... this language need not be even the signing of chimps, let alone the whistles of dolphins (or the body language of primates Barbara Smuts learns to read); it may be no more than the silent language of the eyes... This is the language that we must learn to read, and the language that is denied by people who defend the right to treat animals as things, though a self serving tautology. (104).

Doniger is asking us to recognize by “attending to [...] behavioral and expressive signs” that animals have a “grammar of expressions” (Donovan 177). Through this grammar, this metacommunication¹², we can begin to understand their experience; emotionally, intuitively and intellectually. Biopsychologist Barbara Smuts, who has studied and written extensively about her experiences with baboons, chimpanzees, gorillas and dogs, maintains that interspecies communication is possible for the attentive and committed. While observing a troop of baboons in Kenya, Smuts found that the baboons insisted that she was “like them, a social subject vulnerable to the demands and rewards of relationship” (*The lives of Animals* 110). After a few months of observing the baboons, moving closer inch by inch, day-by-day, she was able to get close enough to recognize their faces, and they could make out hers. Eventually she dropped the dictates of the scientific detached observer. If one of the baboons addressed her, typically with a

¹¹ Copresence is defined by Barbra Smuts as an animal having a face and identity, being a subject as well as an object (Haraway *When Species Meet* 76).

¹² Used by Brian Massumi to refer to the nonverbal cues that form a language formed through relation. Massumi is particularly interested in the metalinguistic qualities of animal play (Massumi 8).

series of grunts and lip smacking, she would respond in kind (Smuts “The Shy Baboon). As she immersed herself in their society, Smuts began to “share the being of a baboon... [she] stopped thinking about what to do and instead simply surrendered to instinct, not as mindless, reflexive action, but rather as action rooted in an ancient primate legacy of an embodied knowledge” (Smuts *The Lives of Animals* 110). One might say she developed a fluency in the language of these relationships. I feel compelled to note that the philosophers, primatologists and ethnologists who practice these open and empathetic interpretations of language are predominately women, and that their work has been refuted by some as irrational, emotional and anthropomorphizing. I will go on to challenge these labels in later sections, but now I must ask; why have so many gone to such lengths to deny what Smuts and her compatriots have long known, that other animals do in fact speak, and if we listen they will speak to us? I would answer, as Dawn Prince does, that this denial is convenient. Convenient because the disavowal of language shuts down compassion and relegates other animals to the role of things. Someone with a voice is singular, with needs of his or her own. Prince sees a correlation in the perceived silence of the “autistic child, the ape in the zoo or laboratory, the homeless, the dogs in cages” (Prince “The Silence Between”). Their silence is taken to mean that these individuals lack language and consciousness. This perception is convenient because it preserves the status quo: that the rational human mind, its perspective and language are the only state of being that truly matters. Prince ends her text “The Silence Between” optimistically, noting that the denials of sentience are becoming harder to maintain and are “sounding thin and high pitched, like a bomb as it whistles to earth”.

The current normalized definition of language is artificially restrictive, it is defined “as only that portion of human communication that uses symbols in the form of words and syntax” (Tanner 128). This excludes the communicative power of “nods, grunts, sighs, handshakes, tears

and stares,” all of which we employ to great affect on a daily basis (Tanner 128). This is language from a singularly anthropocentric perspective. It denies that “in our total communication systems both non-verbal and verbal forms are essential” (Goodwin 128). As an artist and human animal, who is deeply concerned with the communicative power of the visual, gestural and affective, I must stretch open such an exclusive definition.

Although I see the best way to win the acceptance from this learned gathering would be for me to join myself, like a tributary stream running into a great river, to the great western discourse of man versus beast, of reason versus unreason, something in me resists, foreseeing in that step the concession of the entire battle.

(Coetzee 25)

Why Think About ‘Animals’?

My thinking about the conceptual and physical reality of animals, as well as my own animality, stems from living intimately in a multi-species family. Attentiveness to my connections, to the intuitiveness they require, and the embodied communication¹³ we practice, has become central to my life and my practice as an artist. This balance between theoretical and actual keeps my mind alive to the fact that “animals should be of concern not only as instruments of theory, not only because they affect us, but because our lives affect them” (Weil 16).

The often-unexamined relationship with the ‘animal’, without and within, is “emotionally, operationally, intellectually [and] ethically” complex, and our inattentiveness to them carries dire consequences for all involved (Haraway *Companion Species Manifesto* 281). It requires “effort, courage and discipline” to look unflinchingly and with attentiveness at our

¹³ Embodied communication uses “gaze, motion, gesture and touch” to negotiate “interaction” and “conflicting desires”. Barbra Smuts asserts that it is “a critical part of our inter-species language”, and that “all large brained social animals, including humans, possess the cognitive and emotional capacities needed to” practice embodied communication (Smuts “Embodied Communication in Non-human Animals” 137)

responsibility to each animal as an individual (Adams “Introduction” 4). Through the generation of ANIMA I have become hyper-sensitized to my interconnectedness with other animals. I now find myself constantly negotiating an uncomfortable balance between my best intentions and hypocrisy, contradictions and compromises, in short living with what Coetzee describes as “varying degrees of obscenity” (43).

The ‘Animal’ as ‘Other’:

Conceptual concern for the animal is a concern for the archetypal ‘other’, an alterity that is somehow both unknowable and at the fringes of apprehension. The ‘animal other’ resides within. It maintains a territory in the human self; an inheritance from ancestors who lived less divided, before mind/body, reason/instinct, nature/culture became dichotomies. Derrida was describing his movement within his heterogeneous self when he wrote:

I move from ‘the ends of man’, that is the confines of man to ‘the crossing of borders’ between man and animal. Crossing borders or the ends of man I come or surrender to the animal in itself, to the animal in me and the animal at unease with itself, to the man [a] yet undetermined animal, an animal lacking in itself. (372).

The ‘animal other’ brings “us to the limits of our own self-certainty and certainty about the world” (Weil 17). These types of considerations “reveal the unstable foundations and false oppositions to ‘the animal’ on which notions of the human have been built” (Weil 17). This ‘animal’ occupies territory in our self, and should not be confused with the living creature itself. The individual subject refuses to be conceptualized (Derrida *The Animal Therefore I am* 380). It is difficult to view the cat, or dog, or rat one lives with as an example of its type, as an iteration of the mass term ‘animal’ or ‘other’. Within an intimate relationship we see each other as individuals, the other animal “allows itself to be looked at”, and we feel it looking back (Derrida *The Animal Therefore I am* 380). We do not gain understanding by developing abstract models

of self and other, and then imposing them on reality, “We understand by immersing ourselves and our intelligence in [lived] complexity” (Coetzee 62).

And so I teeter, like so many other writers and theorists, between the narcissistic need to look at animals to understand my own reality, and a need to look at ‘animals’ to consider their perspective and emotions. This feels like the moment to pose the question, what is my responsibility as an artist to the animals I reference, to the animal life I claim as my content?

Kari Weil wrote in *Thinking Animals, Why Animal Studies Now?* that “the effort to attend to the ineffable is in itself an ethical act”, and I would like to think of ANIMA, which remains to me largely ineffable, as “an ethical act”, not an act of futility. I feel that this inquiry is a search for an ethical way to be with, and to represent that being with, another animal. Humans (and I won't rule out others¹⁴) have an incredible capacity for imagination. As Elizabeth Costello states in *The Lives of Animals*, “there are no bounds to the sympathetic imagination” (35). Through sympathetic imagination we begin to care about the being of another, whether they be a character in a book, an affective figure in an art gallery or the companion we share our home with, it is the “origin and basis for an ethical relating to animal others” (Weil 69). In ANIMA I have created interspecies creatures to provoke this extrapolation of sympathetic imagination. Art is an ideal catalyst for this type of thinking because it requires an open negotiating of meaning, it makes demands on our rational and embodied responses, and it often causes us to employ telepoiesis¹⁵ to imagine ourselves into either the creator or the subject depicted. It is much easier to imagine ourselves into another we can observe and respond to, but we need not stop there. The next ethical step is to extend that sympathetic imagination from those we intimately connect with, to

¹⁴ “Individuals of other species have sufficient ability of conscious projection to impute likely actions to their conspecifics. It is another step forward in consciousness to carry this out successfully in an interspecific encounter. We know that many other species, certainly other vertebrates, can correctly interpret specific emotions” (Coy 79).

¹⁵ Defined by Gayatri Spivak as, “a reaching towards the distant other by the patient power of imagination” (*Harlem* 11)

those we have indirect relationships to. A greater attentiveness to relationships with companion species can open oneself to accepting all nonhuman animals as similarly singular. Sympathetic imagination is pivotal to the ethics proposed by the Feminist Care Tradition, which I have come to recognize many of my own sentiments in. In a foundational article to the Care Tradition, Deborah Slicer writes:

While we cannot feel or care the *same* for every human being or animal, the feeling or caring that we do have for our immediate companions should extend some, via imagination and empathy, to our feeling for, our caring about, the plight of more extended others. And for those who have a rich enough moral imagination, this regard will cross species boundaries. (120).

We could never watch our dogs or cats in the states of fear or suffering that we conveniently ignore their compatriots in, states that our appetites produce. It requires very little imagination to progress from attributing mind to our dog, to allowing that “any beings capable of caring about what happens to them, even if it is only in the simple sense of wanting pain to stop, are fully morally significant” (Adams “Introduction” 14).

I remember the day Mallory died.
 Her massive black body
 Being hoisted onto the flatbed of a truck
 A chain of enormous links wrapped around her front hooves.

Her bowels emptying as her gut was pulled over the harsh edge.
 Those knobby legs dangling,
 They always looked like a teenagers;
 Jutting and impossibly long.

Moments before she went down I saw the first boy I'd ever loved lifting his saddle onto her back,
 Then tightening the girth.
 That's when she reared up, violently and without warning.

I remember the whites of her eyes, but then again, was I close enough?
 Or am I remembering her body afterward?

I remember her going over, hard.

I remember her legs stranded in the air, and then the spasms.
It seemed like forever but of course it was just seconds.

I remember the scream that strangled in my throat.

I remember trying to throw my horse's reigns to someone, to run to him,
To her,
But there were arms stopping me.

There was blood coming from her ears. She was gone.
Brain aneurysm they would say.

He was, we were, never the same.

Living With Animals

Entanglements and Heteroaffection:

There is one world, and it is a world we share with nonhuman animals. This may seem self evident, but consider how causally we use the terms 'human world' and 'animal world'. We needed a term that denies what these words have rent asunder, so Donna Haraway gave us "naturecultures". This term describes the inseparability of the "natural and cultural, the bodily and the mind, the material and the semiotic, et cetera" (Parikka, "New Materialism: Naturecultures in Utrecht"). It is meant to communicate the depth of our entanglements at both personal and species levels. We must consider that "humans and animals are entangled with each other at the microbial and ontological levels such that each becomes what it is only by virtue of that entanglement, where what is a product of 'nature' cannot be separated from what is a product of 'culture' "(Weil 59). Being actively involved in these entanglements means being transformed by the difference we are engaged with. I am in a process of heteroaffection, who and what I am is in flux, touched and moved as I am by dog, cat, human, horse beings (Weil xvii). I cannot say with certainty that I know these other beings, or the other within my self, but Donna Haraway tells me I must continually ask "who and what is emerging in relationship", that this

questioning happens “for all true lovers, of whatever species” (*Companion Species Manifesto* 50). Being touched is not unilateral, and with heteroaffection comes the question, “what obligations ensue from the experience of entangled lives once touch has been initiated?” (Haraway *Companion Species Manifesto* 280).

Heteroaffection is not always benign, and the weight of obligation is felt most palpably when the difference of the other has been scrambled, when the touch has been invasive, when speciation has been subverted. Take for example the life of Peter. In 1965 Margaret Howe began living with Peter, a juvenile bottlenose dolphin, at neuroscientist John Lilly’s research facility in the Caribbean. An apartment, flooded with a few feet of water, was built so that Margaret and Peter could live together around the clock, six days a week. The goal of the experiment was to nurture and teach Peter to speak English, as a mother would teach her child (Riley "The Dolphin Who Loved Me: The NASA Funded Project That Went Wrong"). It was thought that the immersive situation would compel Peter to communicate with his companion on her terms. Peter and Margaret had speech lessons twice daily and a great deal of intimacy developed over the countless hours in between. Peter was fascinated with Margaret’s body, often sonaring the backs of her knees, putting his beak between her fingers and toes, or simply taking her foot in his mouth and resting at the bottom of the pool, “like a little kid just wanting to hold your hand” (Howe “Hello”). Peter, who was coming to sexual maturity often became aroused when interacting with Margaret, and instead of allowing this to become disruptive to their lessons, Margaret relieved him with her hand. She claims to have never questioned the propriety or consequences of this action. Peter and Margaret lived together for nearly nine months, growing ever more attached, until Lilly’s funding ran out. Peter was shipped to Lilly’s facility in Miami and into a smaller tank with little to no sunlight, and suddenly no Margaret. Within a few weeks

Peter was dead. He committed suicide. Rick O’Barry, founder of the Dolphin Project explains, “dolphins are not automatic breathers like we are. Every breath is a conscious effort. If life becomes too much, the dolphins just take a breath and they sink to the bottom they don’t take the next breath” (Riley "The Dolphin"). Peter’s veterinarian Andy Williamson recognized Peter’s death as an act of despair when he reflected in a 2014 interview, “Margaret could rationalize it, but when she left, could Peter? Here’s the love of his life gone” (Riley "The Dolphin"). What were the researchers’ responsibilities to Peter? When animals are considered instruments for human curiosity, then their being, fundamentally changed, is of little consideration at the close of an experiment. Researchers were trying to dissolve Peter’s otherness by asking him to conform to human language, relationships and even habitation. No one was “paying attention to the conjoined dance of face to face otherness” (Haraway *Companion Species Manifesto* 41). So much research into the language and cognition of other animals illustrates much more about the hubris and selfishness of man than the abilities of their subjects. Peter’s being was altered by his interspecific¹⁶ transgressive relationship with Margaret. His emotional and social nature was exploited, and the delicate social contract, which was so cavalierly entered into when Margaret became enmeshed in Peter’s world, was disregarded. I recount this extreme case in hopes of demonstrating that living ethically with other animals means bringing attentiveness to our entanglements and responsibility to our relationships, not as a polemic against interspecies relationships entirely. We don’t need to look to laboratories and slaughterhouses to see the negligence in our interspecies relationships; a trip to any animal shelter or hard look into our own homes demonstrates that none of us are innocent.

¹⁶ Interspecific: existing, occurring, or arising between species (Merriam Webster).

It had something to do with the rain leaching loamy dirt, and the way the back lane came alive – half moon whispered, “go”. For a while I heard you missing steps in the street, and your anger, pleading in an uncertain key, singing the sound that you found for me.

When the winter took the tips of my ears, I found this noisy home full of pigeons and places to hide, and when the voices die I emerge to watch abandoned machines waiting for their men to return. I remember the way I would wait for you to arrive with kibble and a box full of beer. How I’d scratch the empties, desperate to hear you make the sound that you found for me.

How after scrapping with the ferals and the tabby, I’d let you brush my matted fur. How I’d knead into your chest while you were sleeping. Shallow breathing made me purr. But now I can’t remember the sound that you found for me.

(Samson 80)

Critical Anthropomorphism:

My description of Peter’s story will elicit cringes and cries of anthropomorphism from some. “You are attributing human emotions to an animal’s actions”, “you cannot possibly know what an animal thinks or feels” they will say. Well, I do not go in for this solipsism. There are inferences we learn to make when we live attentively enmeshed with other animals. The charge of anthropomorphism has more to do with the failure of descriptive language than with imagined human characteristics in nonhuman animals. In nearly all animals, and particularly in social animals, an attuned and patient observer can distinguish communicative gestures and emotions. In some cases, as with Barbara Smuts interactions with wild baboons, humans may develop the ability to respond in kind. Gestures and sounds communicate intentions and emotions, most can agree to that, but we have been made to feel ashamed of the words we assign to them, words that are unavoidably human¹⁷. Anthropomorphism may be necessary for it opens the minds of

¹⁷ For example Jane Goodall was criticized early in her career for simply referring to the chimpanzees she was studying as he or she. She was told they should be referred to by numbers and the pronoun “it”, to do otherwise was anthropomorphism because “humans were the only beings with personalities, minds and emotions” (“Being with Jane Goodall”). Goodall asked why, out of fear of anthropomorphism she should be denied a perfectly respectable tool? She would say to herself, “I think those two are behaving like that because that’s how I would behave if I were in that situation” (“Being with Jane Goodall”). In that statement we see where empathy and critical anthropomorphism converge. “Once you think you know why they are doing it, then you can start testing it; am I right? Is this a valid assumption or not? But it gives a groundwork for asking questions [...] only when our clever

humans to viewing nonhumans as individuals capable of experiencing “pain and pleasure”, each with his or her own “affects and capabilities” (Weil 13). But, as Donna Haraway warns we must avoid the “literalist anthropomorphism that sees furry humans in animal bodies and measures their worth in scales of similarity to rights-bearing, humanist subjects of Western philosophy and political theory” (*Companion Species Manifesto* 51). What we need to engage in, and not be shamed by, is *critical anthropomorphism*, which Keri Weil defines as:

An ethical relating to animals (whether in theory or in art) [...] that open[s] ourselves to touch and be touched by others as fellow subjects and may imagine their pain, pleasure and needs in anthropomorphic terms, but stops short of believing that we can know their experience [...] critical anthropomorphism must begin with the acknowledgment that the irreducible difference that animals may represent for us is one that is also within us and within the term human. (20)

Steve Baker coined the term ‘anthropomorphia’ to describe this “fear of being accused of uncritical sentimentality in [the] depiction or discussion of animals” (qtd Cox & Thompson 66). The charge of anthropomorphism implies that there is an empathy that is inappropriate, that clouds objectivity. It implies an emotional response to animals that is unreliable and ‘womanly’. However, many of the rigorous theorists, biologists, ethnologists and primatologists¹⁸, who have worked and lived intimately for years as enmeshed companions with other animals, would argue that being in relation to and responding to each individual is the only way to gain any understanding of other animal minds. To do so we must not shrink away from, but take up the badge of critical anthropomorphism.

There was a likeness between them. As they gazed at each other each felt: Here am I – and then each felt: But how different! [...] Broken asunder, yet made in the same mould could it be that each completed what was dormant in the other? She might have been – all that – and he – but no. Between them lay the widest gulf that can

brain and our human heart work together in harmony can we achieve our full potential” (“Being with Jane Goodall”).

¹⁸ E.g. Dawn Prince, Barbara Smuts, Sue Savage-Rumbaugh, Jane Goodall, Jacques Derrida, and Donna Haraway to name a few.

separate one being from another. She spoke, he was dumb. She was woman; he was dog. Thus closely united, thus immensely divided, they gazed at each other.

(Woolf 18-19)

Other, Yet Connected:

I feel compelled to note here that critical anthropomorphism, and the sympathetic imagination it requires, does not attempt to dissolve otherness, to claim to know the minds of other creatures. The kind of ethical relating I am attempting to describe “is knit from the silk strong thread of ongoing alertness of otherness-in-relation” and an acknowledgment that “we are not one” (Haraway *Companion Species Manifesto* 50). These relationships are a tenuous balance of seemingly contradictory states, of identifying with another creature and being alien from them, of being strangely connected to, but not in full comprehension of the self that relates to them. Being, as ecofeminist Karen Warren puts it, “two entities acknowledged as separate, different, independent yet in relationship [...] the loving eye perceiving it, responding to it, noticing it, attending to it” (qtd Slicer 108).

“And what is you want to cure mankind of?”

“John, I don’t know what I want to do, I just don’t want to sit silent.”

(Coetzee 59)

Sympathy:

It is the view of ‘animal justice theoreticians’, such as Peter Singer and Tom Regan, that animals are entitled to and must be afforded unalienable rights. These rights must be established and imposed upon society because the vast majority of people do not care about the lives of animals. Brian Luke, writing from the Feminist Care perspective, counters that “animal exploitation thrives not because people fail to care, but in spite of the fact that they do care” (134). There is a “socially constructed” disregard that causes most to fail to heed that care. This

neglecting of care is intrinsically tied up with the perception of animals as empty vessels which exist to be utilized for human needs (Luke 134). A common refrain of animal activists like Paul McCartney is, “If slaughterhouses had glass walls everyone would be a vegetarian”. It seems that the maltreatment of animals continues with great difficulty, in need of constant linguistic and symbolic slights of hand to separate the animals we love from the animals we kill. That laboratory and meat production practices must be kept so carefully shrouded from the public suggests that there is “shame or guilt [felt] over the violation of the human-animal bond” (Donovan 181). So how then can the bond be repaired, how can sympathetic imagination be fostered and extended? I suggest a move toward abandoning the hierarchy of speciesism. By engaging in attentive relationships that raise awareness about the consciousness and singularity of other animals, we will be “catalyze[d] into refusing to view animals instrumentally” (Adams “Caring About suffering” 199).

I keep returning to the question, how do caring but indifferent people *become* people who consider the ethics of their relationships with animals? That is a question that makes my chest feel leaden, because I know cannot expect to change the actions or minds of others, I can only lay out my own moral journey and the words of writers that moved my sympathies. Writing and speaking publicly about the being of other animals is unavoidable for me, but it also fills me with apprehension, my concerns are mirrored in Karen Joy Fowler’s novel *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* when her character Lowell laments; “the world runs [...] on the fuel of this endless, fathomless misery. People know it, but they don’t mind what they don’t see. Make them look and they mind, but you’re the one they hate, because you’re the one that made them look” (2853). I keep having the impulse to say sorry, but through my writing and visual works I, like Lowell, just had to make you look.

In 2004, Jacques Derrida said that change was under way. Torture damages the inflicter as well as the inflicted. It's no coincidence that one of the Abu Ghraib torturers came to the military directly from a job as a chicken processor. It might be slow, Derrida said, but eventually the spectacle of our abuse of animals will be intolerable to our sense of who we are.

(Fowler 2939)

Ethics:

For Derrida “to be ethical is to weigh incompatible needs and inevitable sufferings and to come to a least bad solution” (Weil 23). He felt the difficulty of ethical response was that we are demanded to make ‘yes or no’ responses to singular situations, and in every case there are “contradictory imperatives” (Derrida & Roudinesco 76). And so in the face of the “incalculable” or “undecidable” an action must be taken, and every situation must be considered anew, “otherwise, ethics would not be a response at all, but the application of a rule or mathematical equation” (Weil 118). There is a difference between a reaction and a response, with only the later being an act of responsibility. Most of us avoid acknowledging our acts as ethical decisions in the first place, merely accepting them as normative conditions of life. I know that this is easier, less complicated and less emotionally taxing, but I cannot return to this state. My research and practice, which place me in close communion with nonhuman animals, compel me to constantly consider the ethics of being with animals. This process has made me hyper sensitive to my choices and the choices of those around me. My sympathetic imagination is on high alert.

Rights cannot be thought of as inalienable preexisting conditions, but exist within, and are constitutive of, attentive relationships. Donna Haraway views rights arrived at through relationship as “rooted in reciprocal possession”, such rights “turn out to be hard to dissolve; and the demands they make are life changing for all partners” (*Companion Species Manifesto* 53).

These rights are responsive to connections and are dependent on a prioritizing of sympathy. Sympathy as an approach to ethics is deceptively complex; it is a sensible “exercise of moral imagination, an intense attentiveness to another’s reality, which requires strong powers of observation and concentration, as well as faculties of evaluation and judgment” (Donovan 179-180). Truly practicing sympathy calls on both our cognitive and emotional faculties. Through sympathy we can imagine ourselves into the being of another. As German phenomenologist Max Scheler wrote, “we can extend this sympathy throughout the entire animal universe [...] The mortal terror of a bird, its sprightly or dispirited moods, are intelligible to us and awaken our fellow feelings” (qtd Donovan 177).

According to Singer and Regan, the ‘animal justice theoreticians’ mentioned at the beginning of the sympathy section, emotions do not, and should not factor into an approach to animal ethics. They argue, as Kant did, that emotions are volatile and that sympathy can be unequally dispersed and impossible to universalize (Donovan 175). Kant imagined “that emotional experience ‘necessarily obliterates rational thinking’” (Donovan 176). This sentiment survives in the writings of Tom Regan who accuses ethic-of-care feminists of “abjuring the use of reason” (Donovan 176). It seems absurd to me, as it does to Carol Adams, that love and connections are disallowed from the discourse on animal ethics “since the exclusion of the emotional response is a major reason why animal abuse and exploitation continue, it seems contradictory for animal defense advocates to claim [...] that feelings are an inappropriate basis for ethical treatment” (“Introduction” 6). This rejection of emotions seems highly gendered, and the theories it stems from certainly were. The justice based strain of animal ethics evolved from Kant’s rational ethics, which “were developed for an elite of white property holding males. Kant himself excluded women [along with animals] from the moral community of rights holders”

(Donovan 187). The masculinized idea of justice persists; personal, contextual and emotional factors are all moot in the dominant contemporary strain of ethics. I cannot make sense of how one can conceive of ethical relationships with animals without the personal, contextual and emotional. These are what our entanglements are built on; they are what allow us to see the singular being, not simply the abstracted term ‘animal’. An emotional and imaginatively sympathetic response to relationships with others is necessary, however such a response is not without complications and pitfalls, particularly when the response obscures reason and assimilates the ‘other’. I see these dialectical ethical perspectives, rational/justice and emotional/sympathetic, emerging in my work. Both are being presented, questioned and subverted by my photographic and sculptural works respectively. The proximity of works which embody these ethical modes, underscore each other’s disparities, compelling me to yearn for a way forward, toward an alternate ethical mode of relating.

I am grooming my horse in the charged quiet of a sleepy barn, full of horses waiting for the first feed of the day.

I can’t remember if I noticed she was in trouble,
 I don’t think I did.
 I think I just heard a *whoosh*.
 Unbelievable, I know, but it sounded just like a wave breaking.

I remember making frantic phone calls, but no one came.
 I was alone and 14 when Rose delivered twin still born foals,
 Their eyes unopened, blue white under tissue thin skin.
 The thinnest layer of downy pale hair covering perfectly formed bodies.

She seemed stunned, she didn’t panic, they said later she was in shock.

After the babies had come another woman arrived, Faye, she said we had to get them out of the stall before the Rose realized what had happened.
 So we pulled a wheelbarrow into the stall, we laid in it two empty brown paper feed bags. I held the bags open and Faye slipped them in, one in each.

It was hours before the shaking stopped.

The babies went into a dumpster. I remember being furious about that, I was teased for it. To others it made me naïve and weak.

This was my first direct experience with birth and death, and it was both rolled into one.

Conclusion

I work intuitively, but not mindlessly and in this practice I see a symbiosis with the relating to animal beings Barbara Smuts describes. This production is rooted in knowledge gained from years of communicating visually and bodily as an artist. It also emerges from the concerns outlined in this thesis; the failure and limits of human language, our entanglements and heteroaffections with nonhuman animals an interpreting of animal language without facile anthropomorphism, as well as the limits of rational and sympathy based ethics. But perhaps more importantly, this work unfolds from the legacy of embodied knowledge gained from living among companion species. The figures in ANIMA borrow their language from my nonhuman family, and my use of this language is an attempt to propagate metacommunication. I endeavor to stretch open the anthropocentric, normative definition of language to include the visual, gestural and affective. Living animals are intimately connected to this work, because the animal world cannot be simply instrumentalized as a catalyst of theory. Theory, however, can affect our perspective on the world. For example, rational and justice based approaches to the nonhuman can create false distinctions of exclusion. My photographs seek to disrupt this perspective by presenting, through a seemingly objective lens, strange and vulnerable individuals. Relationships of sympathy and care present an alternative approach, but one that is not always benign. The sculptural figures in ANIMA gesture toward the negative implications of such an approach. They

are fantastical embodiments of the consequences of human expectations of unconditional love, dependency and availability. By contrasting each other's focalization, the photographs and sculptures in ANIMA point to the efficacy and failings of rational and sympathetic approaches. These variable modes of reading, at times scientific, at times emotive, are used for rhetorical purposes to gesture to a political horizon where other means of relatedness may be negotiated. This gesture, this apprehending, will never be complete. And so I will continue to use my art practice to provoke telepoiesis, to sympathetically and imaginatively approach the being of another. These are all methods for grasping toward apprehension of an animal other, and their use in my research has, and will, lead me toward more meaningful forms of ethical relating.

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