

# Thinking with animals: An exploration of the animal turn through art making and metaphor.

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Dissertation presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Visual Arts  
at the University of Stellenbosch



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March 2017

# Declaration

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March 2017

# Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the following people:

Professor Elizabeth Gunter, who as my supervisor dealt with my stuttering attempts to articulate my thoughts with sympathy and a lightness of touch and in so doing nursed my words into coherence. Katja Abbott for being my eyes and my hands. As the editor of this text and helpmate in the studio my gratitude for her support has been beyond my means to express. The department of Visual Arts of the University of Stellenbosch, under the leadership of Professor Stella Viljoen for providing the nurturing support for postgraduate students in the annual PhD colloquia. Finally and most importantly, John, for simply being there.

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A visual documentation of *Six impossible things before breakfast* - a powerpoint presentation (PDF)

The Alice Manifesto: A catalogue for two exhibitions from *The Alice Sequence* (PDF)

# Preface

Writing is the passage way, the entrance, the exit, the dwelling place of the other in me - the other that I am and am not, that I don't know how to be, but that I feel passing, that makes me live, that tears me apart, disturbs me, changes me.... (Cixous cited in Sellers 1994:42).

Animals have always featured large in my life. From my dog, Lulu, given to me on my ninth birthday, to my first horse that I had from age eleven, I have seldom not been in the company of dogs and horses. Working and training with the animals is an abiding interest, which has extended into all aspects of my life including this formalised study of the human-animal interface.

In the sixties as a young student when I was majoring in psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, my interest in animals found a home in a study of primate behaviour; the grooming behaviour of Bushbabies (*Galago Senegalensis*) and the sexual behaviour of Vervet Monkeys (*Chlorocebus Pygerythrus*) respectively. These two empirical studies were conducted within the influence of the dominating doctrine of behaviourism that was taught with almost evangelical fervour at Witwatersrand University at that time. Specifically, behaviourism claimed a rational and objective view of animal behaviour filtered through the lens of conditioning - either Pavlovian (reflexive) or Skinnerian (learned). In terms of this doctrine it was regarded as "unscientific" to impute thinking or emotion to an animal, a mode of thought that smacked of sloppy "anthropomorphism", a word that became a swear word in the then lexicon of the psychology department.

Behaviourism served to reinforce a mechanistic view of animal behaviour, approached almost exclusively in terms of stimulus and response<sup>1</sup>. Within this circumscribing system of thought, imputing any kind of emotion or reason to the animal was regarded as a major flaw in research practice. In the field of psychology my ideas (and feelings) about animals were suppressed, only surfacing decades later, in the iconography of my art.

Although animals featured early on in my artistic oeuvre, notably in an early solo exhibition, *Portrait of my Friends and Other Animals* (1987)<sup>2</sup>, it was in 2007 that my ideas on animal human interface were first clearly articulated. The exhibition, *Cocks Asses &: I Can't Hear*, (2007-2009)<sup>3</sup>, was based on the premise of the inadequacy of language as a means of communication between ourselves as human beings and between humans and the other sentient beings that inhabit our planet. Through life-size ceramic figures, prints and the pages of *The 100 Page Diary*<sup>4</sup>, I explored humankind's inability to listen to each other, the environment and the other inhabitants of the world. *The 100 Page Diary* was central to the exhibition. It acted as a parallel text to the other art works. In the pages of the diary I explored ideas through phrases, aphorisms, questions and erasures thereby documenting the halting progress of writing meaning into the visual objects (Fig 0.1).

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1 Added into the mix were the then new ideas of Konrad Lorenz in the embryonic field of Ethology, who wrote inter alia about the imperatives of instinct. In addition, influential at the time, were the philosophical ideas of the Logical Positivists whose rejection of psychoanalysis, (and therefore the unconscious) reinforced a materialist, rationalist view of psychology as a branch of science.

2 *Portrait of my friends and other animals* (1987). Beuster-Skolimowski Gallery, Pretoria, 2 - 14 August.

3 *Cocks, Asses &...(I can't hear)*, University of Johannesburg Art Gallery 7 - 28 November 2007; Kizo Art Gallery, Durban, 20 June - 28 July 2008; White River Art Gallery March - April 2009; Oliewenhuis Art Museum (Reservoir), Bloemfontein, 7 July - 16 August 2009; iArt Gallery, Cape Town, 9 November - 11 December 2009.

4 *The 100 Page Diary*

2006 - 2007

Pen and ink with various media

100 A3 pages



Fig 0.1 Wilma Cruise *The 100 Page Diary* installation view, Kizo Art Gallery Durban 2008.

That I chose Lewis Carroll's two texts, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871)<sup>5</sup>, as a conduit for my research needs some explanation<sup>6</sup>. *Alice in Wonderland* was the first book I read, or could remember reading. Thus it has been a part of me since the inception of my conscious self. However, the chief reason for using it as a "meta-metaphor" for my visual research is that the animals in "Alice" have the knowledge, the language and the (albeit upside down) reason, as to how Wonderland works. The White Rabbit, much like a modern corporate executive, is forever rushing off somewhere lamenting his lateness. "Oh my paws and whiskers", he cries as he rushes past the bewildered Alice. His task is urgent, but it is never made clear to Alice or to us, her sympathetic co-journeymen, what this urgent business is. Likewise, the Cheshire Cat appears and disappears, sometimes leaving only his enigmatic smile behind. He knows, but just what he knows remains unclear. Like Derrida's cat, before whom<sup>7</sup> [sic] the philosopher stood naked and ashamed (Derrida 2008:7), the

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<sup>5</sup> All the excerpts in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871), were taken from the 1982 edition of *The Complete Illustrated works of Lewis Carroll*. I have used the punctuation that appears in this edition. The punctuation might thereby appear antiquated to the contemporary reader.

<sup>6</sup> In the text I often use an abbreviated form of the titles: "Alice in Wonderland" and "Through the Looking Glass".

<sup>7</sup> I deliberately use personal pronouns usually reserved for humans to refer to the other animals to include them in the realm of personhood.

Cheshire Cat has the power to unsettle certainty. His god-like presence and his ironic smile confuse more than they elucidate. In the upside down rabbit-hole world, all sense of who Alice is falls away. She is not even sure of her size. "Who are you?" asks the haughty caterpillar and a little later, the pigeon, who thinks she just might be a serpent, asks, "What are you?" Alice does not have the answer to either question. The caterpillar's question is significant. Who is Alice and, by extrapolation, who are we? Are we right to presume our position of superiority in relation to the animals? Do we really deserve our place on top of the Cartesian pile? Carroll's creatures pose these questions and others of an ontological and logical nature. As Tully remarks, "...Carroll's speaking animals exhibit an unusually keen force of their own, that resists the customary outcome of the anthropomorphic representation (in word and image) of animal beings, namely to *figuratively reference human attributes and circumstances*" (Tully 2012:8).

That Lewis Carroll's writings provide such a fecund metaphor for a discussion on the question of the animal is echoed by Derrida, who said about his seminal seminar on the animal, which was later formalised into the text *The Animal Therefore I am*, "Although I don't have the time to do so, I would have liked to inscribe my whole talk within a reading of Lewis Carroll. In fact you can't be certain that I am not doing that..." (Derrida 2008:7). Referring to the hedgehogs in "The Queen's Croquet Ground" (2008:7) he said,

Alice wanted to give the hedgehog a blow with the head of the flamingo she held under her arm, and it would "twist itself round and look up in her face" until she burst our laughing" (2008:7).

Derrida goes on to ask: "How can an animal look you in the face?" (2008:7). This is not only the core of Derrida's question on the animal but also embodies the central tenet of this research - what happens in the "space-between" the animal's look and one's perception of it? What knowledge is conveyed at that moment when the animal looks back at its observer; is this knowledge reciprocal? Is the non-human animal aware of its interlocutor as ashamed and naked as Derrida was, or clothed and curious as this researcher is?

# Introduction

... 'tis an unweeded garden that grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature possess it... (*Hamlet* Act I, Scene II).

The field of animal studies is becoming an increasingly important multidisciplinary area of investigation. As the world tries to come to terms with a looming environmental crisis more and more intellectuals across diverse fields of endeavour are questioning the traditional relationship between humankind and the non-human animal. From literary figures such as JM Coetzee, to continental philosophers such as Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari and animal right activists like Peter Singer, there is a notion gaining traction that the Cartesian view<sup>8</sup> demands a radical re-orientation of thinking about animals. Entrenched humanist, logocentric patterns of thought are no longer adequate. In a posthumanist world a solution to the question of the animal has become of paramount importance. As Matthew Calarco has noted, we need to think unheard of thoughts about animals, "...we need new languages, new artworks, new histories even new sciences and philosophies" (Calarco 2008:6). Heeding Calarco's call to arms, I investigate the question of the animal through the metaphoric and metonymic means of the art object. In *Thinking with animals: An exploration of the animal turn through art making and metaphor*<sup>9</sup> and a series of exhibitions entitled *The Alice Sequence* (2011-2016)<sup>10</sup> I examine the issue of the animal. I specifically focus on the "space-

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8 René Descartes (1596-1650) perception of animals as automata or soul(less) beings confirmed the biblical dualistic divide between humans and other living beings implicit in the injunction to, "...have dominion over the fish of the sea, and the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:28).

9 Turning away from entrenched humanist views and turning towards the animal, opens the possibility of new ways of seeing and interacting with other animals. "The turn to animals, in art as in theory, is an attempt to envision a different understanding of what we humans are and consequently to enlarge or change the possibilities for what we can think and what we can do in the world" (Weil 2010:10).

10 The sequence opened in July 2011 with an exhibition entitled *The Animals in Alice* at The Wembley Square branch of iArt Gallery in Cape Town. The second exhibition in the sequence was held at the University of the North West in October of the same year. Entitled *Alice and the Animals*, it expanded the theme both in the inclusion of other sculptures and the introduction of further ideas. In July 2012 the third exhibition in the sequence, *The Alice Diaries*, opened at Circa

between" the animal's look and one's perception of it. I ask the possibly unanswerable question, "What knowledge is conveyed at that moment when the animal looks back at its observer?" This is a key question. The traditional view is for the human subject to view the animal as an object. But if one were to invert the subject/object positions the viewpoint changes. As, Jacques Derrida suggests, Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871) could be regarded as a type of mirror stage in which case questions about the animal could be asked from the other side, that is from *the point of view of the animal* (2008:8). What is required is a shift from a humanist anthropocentric point of view to one that is more inclusive of all animal kind. In dealing with this question, Derrida falls back on the word. "The question of the animal response often has as its stake the letter, the literality of a word, sometimes what the word *word* means literally" (2008:8).

Derrida's dependence on the word points to the central conundrum of this thesis. How do you speak about that which is beyond language without using language? Irigaray phrases it thus: "How can we talk about them? How can we talk to them?" (Irigaray cited in Atterton and Calarco 2011:xxiv). This begs the question: How do we begin to challenge the human/self, animal/other divide and (as a corollary) how do we do this without resorting to that all too human faculty of language? As Kari Weil phrases it,

the turn to animals can be seen as responding to a desire for a way out of this 'prison-house of language.' It responds to a desire to know that there are beings or objects with ways of knowing and being that resist our flawed systems of language and who may know us and themselves in ways we can never discern... . The difficulty, of course, is discovering how and where to cite what is outside of our language. In fact, animal studies may be seen as both a culmination and turning away from poststructuralism's insistence that there is no outside of language (Weil 2010:10).

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on Jellico in Johannesburg. A catalogue accompanied this exhibition with two scholarly essays by Gavin Younge and Ann-Marie Tully. During 2013 - 2014 *Will you, won't you, will you join the dance?* was shown at the National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, 27 June to 7 July and at Oliewenhuis Museum, Bloemfontein July - August 2014. *Menagerie at Tokara*, curated by Ilse Schemers, and accompanied by a catalogue, was held at the sculpture garden at Tokara Wine Estate, 16 March - October 2014. Two small solo exhibitions, *Advice from a Caterpillar* (David Krut Projects, Johannesburg, June - July 2015 and Cape Town 2015) and *Red Queen to Play* (Rust en Vrede Gallery, Durbanville, August - September) provided a testing site for ideas for the final exhibitions, *Six Impossible Things to do Before Breakfast* and *The 8<sup>th</sup> Square* (Gallery University Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch and Cavalli Gallery on the Cavalli Wine Estate near Stellenbosch) in 2016.

Bluntly put, how do we speak to the animals and how do we speak about the animals? What precisely is (or should be) the nature of our ethical interface? How do we begin to make sense of the animal world without imposing our anthropocentric views? How do we communicate across the space between human and animal? Theorising this gap in order to bridge it, is the aim of this artistic enterprise.

In the manner of creative praxis research, I address the problem of the space-between in two ways. I explore the inchoate gap between human and animal in a series of exhibitions in which I employ the slippage of language and the implied nonsense of Lewis Carroll's texts, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871) as an overarching metaphor - a meta-metaphor as it were. In so doing, I produce a series of sculptures, paintings, drawings and prints. These art works are neither illustrations nor explanations of Lewis Carroll's texts. Instead they are inspired by the problems implicit in the tales, specifically those around the question of animal, which I read metaphorically and retrospectively into the texts.

Secondly, in spite of the inherent contradiction of using visual and symbolic language to analyse that which is beyond language, I subject my artworks to a verbal analysis in which I explore the issues surrounding the question of the animal. I filter concepts through the conceptual lens provided by contemporary discourses on the question of the animal in a number of diverse fields. Thus, this study is multi-disciplinary, relying on research in the areas of literature, philosophy and the behavioural sciences as integral to the core domain of study within which I work, namely the visual arts. In keeping with the multi-disciplinary nature of the field, my theoretical research methodology is of a qualitative nature - open-ended rather than closed, fluid rather than fixed and creatively expansive rather than analytically reductive. Deleuze and Guattari's image of a rhizome provides a useful construct in describing the way the research was conducted. Eschewing a preplanned structure, both the theoretical and practical research follows a winding pattern. Sometimes the path leads in contradictory ways; other times it runs into dead ends and I backtrack. But, always the core question provides the focus: the urgent need to understand the gulf of incomprehensibility between the human and the animal other - a need to break the silence of the animals. In this manner I follow the pattern of animal

studies that range across disciplines searching for a multivalent solution to the broader question of the animal.

Ron Broglio offers the intriguing suggestion that it is (contemporary) artists rather than philosophers who are likely to offer new insights into the question of the animal. As philosophy is delimited by language and reason “(including the limits of reason)”, artists are able to address the question free from rational constraints in a material and engaged way. This is achieved not in the sense of

...mimesis or representing animals in a natural history tradition or kitsch assimilation of animals into our world as tamed or cute or defeated; rather these artists have unmoored themselves, even ever so slightly, from the cultural grounding of meaning and the solidification of being over becoming.... In other words these artists take seriously the problem of animal phenomenology (Broglio 2011:xx).

Using the argument that the Cartesian view has denied the animal a phenomenology, thereby reducing animal lives to the surface (Broglio 2011:xvi), Broglio suggests that because contemporary artists are experienced in negotiating optical and material surfaces they are able to exploit this surface “fault”. Artists are thus able to develop (visual) languages that permit new insights into animal encounters. Admitting to the impossibility of an answer to the question “What is animal phenomenology?”, he nevertheless suggests that the open ended nature of the problem permits new modes of thought and creates new possibilities for thinking about the animal other (Broglio 2011:xxi).

Thinking in a similar optical and material way guides my studio praxis, which is led as much by the imperative of the material as it is durationally by the act of making rather than by pre-planned action. Since knowledge generated by the embodied act of making art cannot be known with any clarity before the act takes place, my research *modus operandi* challenges the conventional model of academic research that depends in large part on articulating a proposition and then proving or disproving the hypothesis. In art praxis it is the “doing” that generates *new* knowledge, becoming a non-linguistic knowing that itself is embedded in the act. In this respect I depend on the theoretical formulations of Graeme Sullivan who says, “The process of making insightful decisions when carrying out

visual arts research is not predicated on the assumption that there is a prescribed body of knowledge one learns and then applies" (Sullivan 2010:111). It is in the act, through the action of making, using the body of the artist, that meaning is sought. As Elizabeth Costello, so passionately articulated, truth does not only reside in the reasoning, thinking being - it is felt by the body - in the body - it is embodied!

To thinking, cogitation, I oppose fullness, embodiedness, the sensation of being - not a consciousness of yourself as a kind of ghostly reasoning machine thinking thoughts, but on the contrary the sensation - a heavily affective sensation - of being a body with limbs that have extension in space, of being alive to the world. This fullness contrasts starkly with Descartes' key state, which has an empty feel to it: the feel of a pea rattling around in its shell (Coetzee 1999: 78).

Embodiment *is* the key. It is through the act of moving one's body in the process of creation that meaning is achieved<sup>11</sup>. Ironically my art praxis can be said to imitate the interaction that occurs between human and animal, one that I proposed occurs between two bodies in which the "space-between" is articulated. In other words, I perceive myself to utter or literally enact the human/animal relationship in my art where it can acquire material form. Thus, I suggest that knowing the end result of the art process cannot precede the praxis of it, but grows out of it. It is a process of imbrication - layering meaning on meaning through the act of doing. This is not to deny the theoretical or linguistic aspects, rather these are dependent and logically follow on the discoveries made through the art process. Implied in this approach is the presence of the artist as part of the construction of meaning. Sullivan has termed this "visual knowing" *transcognition*: that which involves a wider set of embodied cognitive and contextual factors (2010:133). Since the insights gained through, and by the act of creation are as unfathomable as the slippages of language and (non)communication between animals and humans, the resultant findings are *a priori* unknown. What lies beyond is a *terra incognita*.

Deleuze and Guattari provide an analogy. In their essay *Becoming Animal* they claim that there is no "*preformed* logical order to becomings..." (cited in Kalof and Fitzgerald 2007:47), although there are *criteria* "and the important thing is that they not be used

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11 Referring to Elizabeth Costello in *The Lives of Animals*, Selbach suggests that her capacity for sympathetic imagination depends on a resistance to the language of philosophy and relies instead on somatic projections (Selbach 2012:313).

after the fact, that they be applied in the course of events, that they be sufficient to guide us through the dangers" (2007:47 emphasis mine).

The structure of the argument developed throughout the dissertation owes something to another metaphor by Deleuze and Guattari. The rhizome is a figure they use to oppose the structuralist image of the tree with its genealogical implications. They claim to have written *A Thousand Plateaus* like a rhizome, thereby giving their book "a circular form" (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:22). "Each plateau can be read starting anywhere and can be related to another plateau" (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:22). Their approach provides a model for the shape of the chapters that are represented by "plateaus" made up of images, discussion around the artworks, metaphors from the Alice tales and theoretical argument. Thus, while the dissertation as a whole may have a logical (arborescent) structure, each chapter will be rhizomatic in the inclusion of these equally weighted elements.

In the matrix supplied by my investigation into the liminal in-between-space between human and the other animal, certain key ideas are embedded. These are intimately intertwined one with the other, but for the sake of analysis they are teased out into chapters. Each chapter focuses on a core idea. The discussion in the chapters is pinned to one or two of the exhibitions in *The Alice Sequence*; the artworks adding not so much clarity as a complicating factor to the discussion. Lewis Carroll's tales provide a fecund metaphor for the exploration. Thus, each chapter has a tripartite structure - theory, art and metaphor. While the theoretical points of departure are teased out into chapters for the sake of convenience, they overlap and intertwine. For example, animal subjectivity is inextricably linked to language. Even though there is a great degree of correspondence, for the sake of clarity, they are dealt with in two separate chapters. Key issues discussed in the dissertation include the meaning of the word "animal" and its relation to human; the role of language in and around the question of the animal; the problem of anthropomorphism and sentimentality; the artists' ethical conundrum; animal subjectivity, and finally, and most problematically, the interpretation of the artworks in the context of the above ideas.

At the beginning of this research the assumption was that the finished artworks would provide insight into the inchoate ideas that drove their creation. This proved not to be so. The artworks often remained mute. They failed to offer clear directions as to their meaning. However, taking my lead from Steve Baker, who in his book *Artist/Animal*, says that the function of a work of art is to disrupt (2013:90), I have come to accept that it is art's role to complicate and not necessarily to explain. Nevertheless, since it is the nature of this enterprise to decode the artworks, I do attempt to interpret my visual production with an awareness that there is a possibility of other readings. The task is not without problems. To interpret my own artworks raises the spectre of intentional fallacy. The notion of intentional fallacy was first articulated by Wimsatt and Beardsley in 1946 (*The Penguin dictionary of critical theory 2000. Sv. 'intentional fallacy'*). They maintain that critical criteria must be perceptible in the work of itself and the author's intention is external to the fact (Blocker 1979:246). This has been interpreted as the death of the author/artist. It is as if the artwork arose unbidden in a vacuum. Yet it is something of a sophistry, to pretend that the artist's intention has absolutely no bearing on the meaning of the artwork. While the end result is seldom envisaged there is always an initial idea - that which Steve Baker calls "a clear sense of purpose". But, he asks, how is that actually manifested in the work artists make? (Baker 2013:90). His answer is not simple. He acknowledges the artist's intention, which he interprets as a kind of *initiating forward momentum* [emphasis mine]. Yet, he maintains that meaning resides not in the psychology of the artist but in the object of the artwork. The object is the place where the work gets done. "[I]t is both the site of the work getting-done and the thing that shapes the works getting-done" (Baker 2013:91). Quoting Guattari, Baker says, "The work of art, for those who use it, is an activity of unframing, of rupturing things" (Baker 2013:90). In my experience the work itself grows and attains meaning through the process of creation. Meaning is not *a priori* to the artwork but grows through the pushes and pulls of its creation. The medium dictates as the game proceeds; setting new problems and finding new solutions. If I were to evoke an overall intention to my work, that aspect that initiates the creativity, it would be to have a sense of what animal means in relation to human. This manifests itself in *The Alice Sequence* in the form of sculptured dogs, pigs, rabbits, cats, rats, sheep, baboons and humans.

But, the problem of *post hoc* interpretation remains. How do I interpret my own artwork beyond describing the process? Since interpretation always involves more than the artist, by including the viewers, I attempt to resolve the problem by becoming another viewer. That is, in regard to the interpretation of the artworks in this dissertation, I maintain a position of being outside of myself observing myself making art – and interpreting it. As I wrote in the preface to *The Alice Diaries*, the catalogue that accompanied the eponymous exhibition:

Much as an outsider would carefully watch the behaviour of another I note changes in my thought patterns and ideas. This act of watching finds concrete form in diaries – A3 size pages in which I draw, scribble and muse. The pages document the progress of not so much linear time as the stuttering backwards and forwards motion of my ideas. This way I fill diary pages with sketches, annotations and exhortations to myself. A number of these framed pages are exhibited at Circa as *The Alice Diaries*. But in a sense the exhibition as a whole can be read in the same way as the diary, only this time it is writ large in the form of sculptures, paintings and an installation of multiple ceramic forms (Cruise 2012:3).

In this sense this research is unashamedly autobiographical and self-reflexive. Taking my cue from Derrida who began his exposition *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, on an autobiographical experience with his cat, my research emanates from the specificity of the works in my studio. From the particulars of the artworks, to the larger question of the animal, I circle the problem of the space-between like a lion circling its prey, or like a rhizome growing in multiple directions.

I begin this exposition, in Chapter 1, *The Space-Between*, by developing thematic concerns implicit in my earlier exhibitions<sup>12</sup>, the dominant theme of which is the inadequacy of spoken language in communicating between humans and non-human animals. Through visual articulations in the form of sculptures, prints, and drawings I employ visual strategies to point out humankind's inability to listen to one another, and to other non-human animals. My core problem is articulated in an aphorism I wrote in 2007

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12 In particular *Cocks, Asses &...(I can't hear)*, University of Johannesburg Art Gallery 7 to 28 November 2007; Kizo Art Gallery, Durban, 20 June to 28 July 2008; White River Art Gallery March to April 2009; Oliewenhuis Art Museum (Reservoir), Bloemfontein, 7 July to 16 August 2009; iArt Gallery, Cape Town, 9 November to 11 December 2009.

and which stands here a cipher for my (re)search: “We have shut our ears to their primal screams, their rumbles, hisses, purrs...” (Cruise cited in Schmahmann 2007:n.pag.).

The metaphor of willful deafness points to a state of ignorance and arrogance on the part of humankind; a refusal to entertain the notion of the animal as an(other) being worthy of full attention. Formalising this metaphor into a statement of intent, I propose that this gulf of silence creates a “space-between” humankind and other sentient beings. I interpret this metaphoric space as a liminal border state between the human “I” and the animal “other”. The visual and theoretical analysis of this divide provides the focus of the research that is an attempt to restore the sense of the animal as a worthy and equal An/other. But not only do I provide the historical context of my art, I also look at the work of contemporary artists who deal with the animal in various ways. I question the role of the artist in the ethical conundrums thrown up by the use of animals in art, and in so doing I suggest that the artist has to negotiate the moral terrain free from any absolutist moral positions. I depend on Steve Baker whose book *Artist/Animal* investigates in depth what happens in the alignment and juxtaposition of the terms “artist” and “animal” (Baker 2013:3).

In Chapter 2, I consider the concept of “the animal”, an idea that has been debated in recent years by, amongst others, Jacques Derrida. Derrida, succumbing to the knowing gaze of his cat, presents questions about the fundamental concept of “animal”, a word that circumscribes all the living entities on the other side of the human divide. Raising questions about the linguistic and institutional forces around the distinction between human and animal exposes not only what it is to be animal, but also what it is to be human. He interrogates the concept of “animal” as an essentialised reductive entity. He nevertheless does not suggest a Darwinian continuity between human and animal. Instead he argues for the complication of the “abyssal rupture” (Derrida 2008:12) - an acknowledgment of the difference between human and animal, and animal and other animals. In this way, he multiplies the differences found among and between human beings and animals. His exposition is based on the singular autobiographical recognition of the Other, in this case his own little cat. Calarco has labeled Derrida’s stance a “difference” [sic] theory: “Difference theorists open the way to an animal ethics that is based on singularity and that allows us to appreciate the richly differentiated modes of

existence found among animals" (2015:50). In Derrida's philosophy, the human is decentred as the measure of all things. Human essence and exceptionalism is challenged and hegemonic ideas about animal and animality are interrogated (Calarco 2015:34).

Other continental philosophers<sup>13</sup> such as Deleuze and Guattari engage with the ontological nature of the human-animal divide by collapsing the binary terms into a single concept, "becoming-animal". They go a step further than Derrida and offer a radical dissolution of the opposites human and animal (Deleuze & Guattari 2004:94). In this way, they challenge the "insuperable boundaries typically posited between human beings and animals by dominant intellectual and cultural traditions" (Calarco 2015:49). By displacing the human, they dispel any lingering anthropocentrism from ethical reflection (Calarco 2015:50). It is a radical approach that not only dehumanises the human, but also challenges all hierarchical structures. This allows human beings to take into consideration "various minor, non-dominant, modes of existence that are commonly viewed as being the 'other' of the human" (Calarco 2015: 57). To this end, their concept of the rhizome, a metaphor that opposes the kind of arborescent structures usually associated with the discourse on the animal particularly those on the Darwinian phylogenetic model, is useful. I discuss their central concept "becoming-animal" in relation to its embodiment in art and, in so doing, suggest that becoming raises problems for the artist. In spite of this, I propose that their idea of "writing like a rat" is a useful metaphor in describing the artistic process.

In contrast to the Continental philosophers, I consider the utilitarian approach of Peter Singer and those of the animal-rights proponents Tom Regan and Gary Francione. These philosophers are less interested in the ontological significance of the concept "animal" than in the welfare of animals and their rights. These "identity theorists", "seek to establish an egalitarian ethics based on ethically relevant similarities among human beings and animals" (Calarco 2015:48). Their ethics are dictated by the closeness of the animal to the human. They tend to extend human traits to animals - to compare the two and accord equality of consideration and rights on that basis. This still leaves human beings at the

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13 The continental approach to philosophy is characterised by, amongst other things, its commitment to existential, ethical and socio political issues.... (Calarco 2008: 2).

centre of the moral universe. Nevertheless, useful concepts such as “equal consideration” (Singer), “subject of a life” (Regan) and “moral emotion” (Scruton) allow for a practical ethics of care.

But the question of the animal goes beyond the formal canon of philosophy and is investigated by “techno-scientists” such as Donna Haraway (2007, 2008). Haraway offers a critique of both Derrida and Deleuze and Guattari on the basis that they do not engage with the actual animal. She accuses Derrida of failing to read his cat’s semiotics and, as such, did not get to know what his cat was actually saying beyond the abstractions of philosophy. Haraway is equally scornful of Deleuze and Guattari’s “fantasy wolf-pack theory”, accusing them of a profound absence of curiosity about actual animals (Haraway 2008:27). In Haraway’s approach, (ironically like Deleuze and Guattari’s), the difference between human and animal is completely collapsed so that all distinctions are erased. Calarco calls this “indistinction theory” (Calarco 2015:51). “Instead of stressing abyssal differences, many indistinction theorists instead emphasise and affirm ‘the pleasure of connection of human and other living creatures’” (Calarco 2015:51-52). It is the living, breathing creature with all its co-entanglements with the human that an indistinction theorist like Haraway is interested in.

The analysis of some of the theories underpinning human/animal studies is only one of the plateaus considered in Chapter 2. The tales of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* continue to be a rich supply of metaphor including Alice’s display of speciesism in the *Pig and Pepper* chapter (Carroll 1982:56-65) when Alice, favouring the human baby’s life over the pig’s, demonstrated the 19th century prejudice of its author - a bias still manifest in the 21st century. The third plateau is provided by the analysis of my own artworks. Acting as parallel texts to the thoughts expressed on paper, the artworks function on the edge of language. In this sense, they act more as affective grace notes than explanatory or illustrative images.

John Berger’s lament over the loss of real animals in contemporary life suggests that we have lost the sacred connection to the animal (Berger 2007:252). In order to regain it, humankind has to suspend reason and the comfort of thought. The implication is that we

have to unknow in order to reconnect with the animal other. In Chapter 3, *We're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad*, I consider the role of the artist as sorcerer and shaman and suggest that, in order to unknow, one has to enter the space between reason and affect, animal and human. This is the place where there is no certainty and where symbolic language fails in its structured discourse. Much like in dreamland there is no guidance as where to go or how to go. All appears to be nonsense. This stumbling around dreamland mimics the practice of making art that initially, at least, is directionless and inchoate. The hand is the organ that has the intelligence. It appears to be guided more by affect than reason, which, like the interchange between human and animal, is only known by its emotional resonances.

I consider various metaphoric models to describe this process. Deleuze and Guattari's figure of "writing like a rat" aptly describes the scampering forward imperative of the creative act, one which is demonstrated by Nicolene Swanepoel in her ceramic sculptures. The "Little Creatures" are made rapidly and without conscious pre-conception. The figures that emerge from her studio are neither animal nor human but uniquely themselves. Deleuze and Guattari's central concept of "becoming-animal" is also a useful allegory in describing the suspension of self that occurs in the creative act. I consider this process in terms of the animal drawings of Elizabeth Gunter in which a meditative muteness, one that is not without meaning, connects her to her own animality. Following Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the sorcerer I consider the artist's role in the animal turn in terms of shamanism. The idea of the artist as a sorcerer is not a new one as Joseph Beuys demonstrated in the 20th century. I argue that this metaphor should be approached cautiously since the artist works within the realm of material reality. The psychological disconnect of shamanistic trance states, often aided by psychogenic drugs, is inimical to the act of creation. As always Lewis Carroll's texts provide a fecund source of metaphor. The Cheshire cat perched on his lofty branch declared, "we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad" (Carroll 1982:64). The cat's madness is of a knowing kind which challenges the ordered, rational, humanist view as represented by Alice.

In *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There*, Alice was confronted by a giant game of chess. Her task was to negotiate herself towards the eighth square where her status as white pawn would be changed to that of Queen, a position that she aspired

to. Her journey across the chequered landscape did not subscribe to the rules of chess but followed its own "mad" narrative. Along the way she meets a number of characters including the Red and White Queens, the White Knight, Tweedledum and Tweedledee and Humpty Dumpty. The story begins and ends with the black kitten transmogrifying into the Red Queen and back again. "Now, Kitty!" [Alice] cried, clapping her hands triumphantly. "Confess that was what you turned into!" (Carroll 1982:231). The Red Queen provided inspiration for the penultimate exhibition in *The Alice Sequence*. Entitled *Red Queen to Play*<sup>14</sup> it exploited the nonsense inherent in Lewis Carroll's tale by alluding to the animal question while not supplying any one-to-one correspondence or necessary explanation. The basic tenet of the exhibition was illustrated in an aphorism I fixed to the gallery wall, "You know you are not real"! This phrase is echoed in Elizabeth Gunter's query: "What then, is real ...? Could it be that both reality and realism are mere constructs in equal measure?" (E Gunter, personal correspondence, 2016). Gunter's drawings refer to another realism, which is neither physical or metaphysical, but affective and felt. It is a knowledge that depends on belief and intuition. As the Unicorn said to Alice, "Well, now we *have* seen each other, if you believe in me, I'll believe in you. Is that a bargain?" (Carroll 1982:197).

In Chapter 4, *Language: The wound without a name*, I consider the role of language both as one of the traditional defining features of humanity and the way it has been used as a tool to mark the difference between human and the other animals, thereby confirming the essentialist assumption of the superiority of humankind. Derrida noted language as the pre-eminent marker of difference between humankind and animals.

...the essence of animality ...is a mute stupor, stupefaction, or daze. ... in order to attenuate somewhat euphemistically the potential violence of this qualification but also in order to render the sense of a type of encircling (Umring) within which the animal, as a logon, finds itself, according to Heidegger, deprived of access in its very opening to the being of the entity as such, to being as such, to the "as such" of what is. It is true that, according to Benjamin, the sadness, mourning, a melancholy (Traurigkeit) of nature and of animality are born out of this muteness (Stummheit, Sprachlosigkeit), but also out of and by means of the wound without a name: that of having been given a name. Finding oneself deprived of language, one loses the power to name, to name oneself, indeed to respond to one's name (2002:388).

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14 Rust en Vrede Gallery, Durbanville, August to September 2015.

Deprived of a name and the power to name, the animal is rendered mute and in that there is great sadness. Alice discusses the significance of naming with a small insect that she meets in the railway carriage. Asserting the human-centred 19th-century view of the world, she observes that naming is useful to humans but not to the animals:

What's the use of their having names," the Gnat says, "if they won't answer to them?" "No use to *them*," said Alice; "but its useful to the people that name them, I suppose. If not, why do things have names at all?" (Carroll 1982:150).

Naming also forms part of Alice's conversation with Humpty Dumpty, in which he pompously assigns a meaning to his name while simultaneously claiming that Alice's name is "stupid" "[M]y name means the shape I am and a good handsome shape it is too" (Carroll 1982:180). Humpty Dumpty arbitrarily ascribes meaning to words, sometimes restricting them to the literal or denotative, at other times releasing them from any fixed meaning at all (Dunn and McDonald 2010: 3). While Humpty Dumpty demonstrates a form of intolerable logic to Alice's considerable frustration, his conversation with Alice nevertheless provides a useful metaphor to demonstrate both the arbitrary nature of language and its power to control and obfuscate.

That language has the capacity to govern perceptions was highlighted by the feminist movement in which it was shown that language was used to perpetuate a patriarchal system through its gendered construction. The feminists' activism effectively changed the way we speak. Words were released from their gender specific, and often pejorative, roles. As an example words such as "sculptor" became gender-neutral, and the word "sculptress" fell into disuse. Similarly, the language we use to address animals governs the way we perceive them. This is most apparent in the use of the personal pronoun. Traditionally animals have been referred to as "it's" never as "who's". Changing the use of pronouns for animals to those used with reference to humans, changes their status from object to subject, thereby suggesting a relationship based on intersubjectivity instead of one based on power implied by the subject-object relationship.

Metaphors are powerful tools that can be used to diminish or enhance. Evoking animality in phrases such as, "He eats like a pig." "He died like a dog." "They behave like

monkeys"<sup>15</sup> raises the spectre of *Homo monstrosus* in which "animality" is constructed in opposition to "humanity" (Hurn 2012:19). That is, every attribute that humans have, the animal is said to lack. "Animal" is thus negatively constituted by the sum of these deficiencies (Ingold cited in Hurn 2012:14). These metaphors are not only an insult to the human, but do the other animals a great disservice by corralling them into rigid categories and forever foreclosing perception of them as worthy others.

The fictional Elizabeth Costello via her author JM Coetzee, and Jacques Derrida have used the metaphor of the Holocaust to argue for the rights of animals used and abused in contemporary factory farming practices. In this sense, the phrase that "They were led like animals to the slaughter", in which the abattoir is compared to the gas chambers of the WWII genocide of the Jews, becomes a literal description of modern farming practices. Elizabeth Costello is taken to task for such an extreme use of metaphor by Abraham Stern, an appalled attendee of her lecture (Coetzee 2003:94).

While language can be powerful, in other respects it fails. Carl Safina, for example points out that language collapses in the face of interpretation from animal to human language. He points out that there is a limited range of words to describe the various sounds, vocalisations and gestures that animals use to communicate with each other. Humankind's failure to translate from their languages to ours, forecloses understanding. He points out, that in spite of traditional views to the contrary, current ethological studies (chiefly of primates, elephants and cetaceans) show that other than human animals in fact do have the capacity for learned language, as well as having the demonstrable ability to use syntax to convey specific meanings (2015:87).

In the context of these ideas, I pursued my inquiry through the visual means of sculptures and words in the exhibition *Will you, won't you, will you join the dance?* (2013)<sup>16</sup>. In *Will you, won't you, will you join the dance?* (2013), I particularly focus on the character of

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15 This phrase is particularly relevant in the South African context. In 2016 Penny Sparrow was charged and convicted of hate speech because she compared the behaviour of "black" people to monkeys. The phrase caused great offense.

16 National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, 27 June to 7 July and Oliewenhuis Museum, Bloemfontein July to August 2014.

Humpty Dumpty, as he is the one character in Lewis Carroll's tales who appears most concerned with the meaning of words - even though he frequently shifts their meanings to suit his own purposes. In the act of creating him in three-dimensional form I found myself conflating him with a mythic character from my childhood - Arnoldus. My mother invented Arnoldus to personify and externalise my childhood tantrums. He was said to sit on my shoulder and whisper "naughty" deeds into my ear. Arnoldus merged with Humpty Dumpty to become HD Arnoldus, a pompous, ridiculous character whom I depicted in most forms as balanced precariously on skinny legs and shod in a pair of ballet pumps. As always Lewis Carroll's texts provide a rich source of metaphoric comparison. No more so than The Walrus and The Carpenter who in *Through the Looking Glass* trick the oysters into becoming part of their feast. This scene demonstrates what Derrida would call "carno-phallogocentrism"<sup>17</sup>. The assumption being that humankind, exemplified by The Walrus and The Carpenter, assigns itself the right to eat other animals, and in the process tricks them into being complicit in their own demise.

Language is further implicated in the discussion in Chapter 5, *Take a Bow*, on the subject of anthropomorphism. Anthropomorphism is the late mid 20th century flowering of the extreme Cartesian view of animals as automata, beings that respond in a prescribed way to pre-determined stimuli. In *Take a Bow*, I argue that fear of the accusation of anthropomorphism precluded empathetic identification with other animals. Under the guidance of "scientific" objectivity it permitted the emotional distancing that opened the door for forms of abuse such as factory farming and medical experimentation. I illustrate this contention with reference to the Nim Project, in which a chimpanzee named Nim Chimsky was taught American Sign Language (ASL) under controlled experimental conditions. The experiment was considered a failure when Nim failed to produce the required level of competence in ASL. However, I argue that Nim was communicating with these experimenters affectively using bodily semiotics, a fact they chose to ignore to the detriment of the animal. While anthropomorphism is now cautiously permitted in the discourse on the animal, it has to be appropriate. To this end I propose the concept of

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17 Phallogocentrism: "[T]he term, exacts not only criticism of male dominance within Western society, but also suggests this dominance is supported by the values instituted and articulated through Western philosophy" (Richards 2008:101).

relational epistemologies (Woodward 2008:3) in which species-specific points of view need to be taken into account. Such an example of canine communication is the play bow. I investigate the play bow through an artwork entitled, *Take a Bow* in which two sculptures of dogs are placed in relational proximity to each other. The space-between becomes activated by the communication from one dog to the other signalled by the bow, which translated means, "come play with me".

In Chapter 6, *Wittgenstein's Lion and Heidegger's Hand*, I return to the question whether animals can reason, feel, talk, manipulate and take decisions. That is, whether they have an interior life. Based on Wittgenstein's statement "If a lion could talk, we could not understand him" (Wittgenstein cited in Wolfe 2003:44), I follow Wolfe in raising questions about relations between language, species and the question of the subject and in so doing raise doubts as to whether the ontological difference between human and animal should be constituted by human symbolic language. I query whether language alters the question of the difference between a human and animal (Wolfe 2003:47).

The literature on ethological and laboratory studies reveals that most researchers are still in the thrall of behaviourism and empiricism, exposing a tendency to use human logocentric language as the rod against which to measure other animal languages. This anthropocentric approach is fraught with complications. Jacob Beck offers three reasons as to why this should be (Beck 2013). Initially, as Wittgenstein suggested, it is because we lack the epistemic knowledge to know what the other animal is thinking, in Wittgenstein's case the lion. Because the lion's thought processes are so different from ours there is no way to access them. Secondly, if one acknowledges animal cognition, our language is inadequate in dealing with the contents of the cognitive processes. And thirdly, it is entirely possible that animals think in a different format from human natural language, a difference as marked as that between analogue and digital forms (Beck 2013:254)<sup>18</sup>. Nevertheless, since we do understand a lot of animal communication, he suggests we share an evolutionary "core cognition", one that permits cross-species mutuality (Beck 2013:255). In this context, Carl Safina proposes the concept of prosody (2015:202). These

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<sup>18</sup> Beck uses the analogue/digital opposition to emphasise his point that animals' thinking processes are markedly different from the logos dependent human practices.

are sounds that are based on nonlinguistic communication that significantly is understood across species.

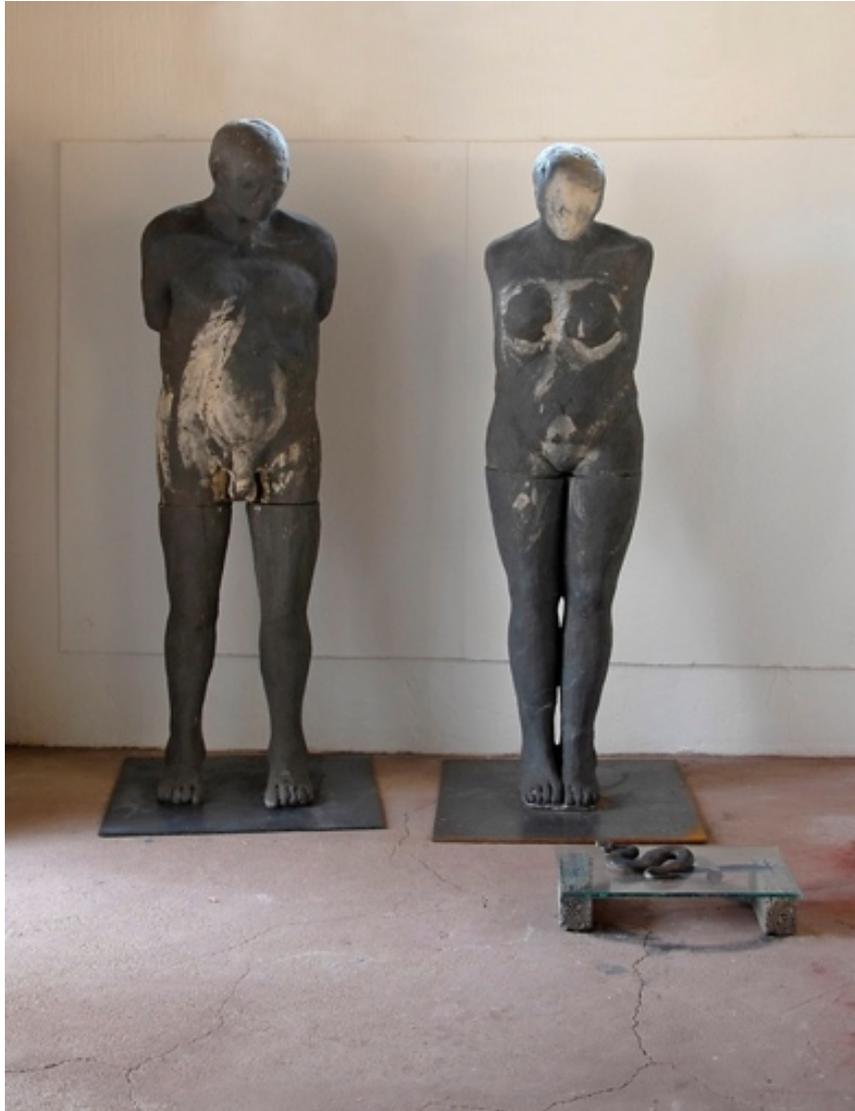
In Chapter 6 I consider Derrida's critique of Lacan and Heidegger in *The animal therefore I am*, in which he accuses them of a "quite literally Cartesian" response to the animal question (Derrida 2008:123). In Lacan's case, he inculpates him of entrapping the animal in the realm of the imaginary, thereby forever denying it access to the symbolic - that which makes us human (Derrida 2008:120). Moreover, he takes Lacan to task for proclaiming on flimsy evidence, that animals are incapable of second order pretense - pretense of pretense. That is, they are unable to pretend that they are practicing deception (Derrida 2008:120). Heidegger, like Lacan, asserts a discontinuity between humans and other animals. He does this in spite of his attempts to approach the distinction between human and animal in a new non-anthropocentric way. His tripartite thesis that the stone is "worldless", the animal is "poor in world", and man is "world-forming" (Heidegger cited in Atterton & Calarco 2004:170) served only to reaffirm the discontinuity between human and other animals. To all intents and purposes he confirmed the Cartesian model. That is, in spite of his anti-Cartesian initiative, he essentially emphasised the ontotheological view of human exceptionalism (Atterton & Calarco 2004:24). Yet Heidegger made one observation that, in terms of this project, is significant. He distinguished between the human hand and the animals' paw, claw or talon. The human hand is capable of giving, while apes, for example, have extremities that can only grasp. That is, the hand is one extra attribute that Heidegger grants exclusively to the human. Moreover it is a thinking hand! As noted by Baker and confirmed by my own artistic practice, the hand has a will-to-form that appears to bypass rational control. Yet, while acknowledging the hand's imperative, I reject Heidegger's implication that the human hand is distinct *in kind* from the animal's paw - a point I make in a sculpture entitled *Heidegger's Hand* in which the animal's hands are iconographically conflated with those of the artist's.

In the conclusion I attempt to summarise my theoretical position in relation to the animal turn. I align myself with theorists such as Jacques Derrida and Donna Haraway, and in so doing, I rely on Calarco's analysis of the philosophical terrain on the animal question,

which he groups into three different categories: "identity", "difference" and "indistinct" (Calarco 2015:3-4). I pay a passing nod to the irony that I depend on the word in my art praxis, while simultaneously critiquing the central role played by language in separating humans from the other animals. I draw attention to the tension between reason and affect in both art practice and animal-human communication. I also emphasise the embodied nature of creative activity and animal-human interchange. Finally, I follow Elizabeth Costello, who says that it is via the poets (and poetics) that understanding with the animals might be reached, "thereby returning the living being to language" (Coetzee 2004:111); I end with Rainer Maria Rilke's *The 8<sup>th</sup> Duino Elegy*, which poetically summarises my position.

## CHAPTER 1

# The Space-Between



**Fig 1.1** Wilma Cruise *Adam and Eve Before the Fall* (2006–2007). Ceramic on steel base, Adam 187 cm, Eve 180 cm. (Photographed by Carla Crafford).

In the question that suspends and defers clear answers, we learn the intrigue of thought (Broglio 2011:xxi).

## Exhibitions

*Portrait of my friends and other animals* (1987)

*The Dolly Suite* (2003–2006)

*Cocks Asses &... (I can't hear)* (2007–2009)<sup>19</sup>

That the animal question should be addressed by artists is no surprise, since artists from time immemorial have acted as reflectors of their society. But just how art addresses the problem is an area of contestation. In this chapter I address the efficacy of art in dealing with the ethical question of the human animal interface. I look at the work of contemporary artists who deal with the animal in various ways and test their approach against Steve Baker's dualistic division – art that is “animal-endorsing” and art that is “animal-skeptical”. I investigate earlier work from my 1987 exhibition *Portrait of my friends and other animals* through to *The Dolly Suite* (2003–2006) and *Cocks Asses &... (I can't hear)* (2007–2009) and trace the use of animal imagery and in so doing I introduce the core concept of my argument which I have named “the space-between”. I identify this space as the rupture between language and experience, and the gap of silence that occurs between two relating, experiencing subjects including human and other sentient beings.

The binary opposition of human and the (other) animal is based on the possession or lack of the *logos*, which in ontotheological humanism has become an ingrained mode of thought. This view has been extolled by philosophers through the ages. The separation of human and the (other) animal and the superiority of one above the other is entrenched in the Judeo-Christian system of belief as expressed in God's injunction in Genesis that (hu)man should “have dominion over the fish of the sea, and the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Genesis 1:28)<sup>20</sup>. From Aristotle's *zōon logon eschon*, the rational animal, to Descartes' mechanistic version of animals as unreasoning automata, and further to “Heidegger... Kant, Levinas and Lacan” (Derrida 2008:27) the anthropocentric view has seldom been challenged. Little has changed to upset the implicit notion that humankind is above and separate from the (other) animals.

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<sup>19</sup> *Portrait of my friends and other animals* (1987) Beuster-Skolimowski Gallery, Pretoria, 2–14 August 1987.

*The Dolly Suite* is an ongoing project that centres on the being of a sheep as a point of departure. *Cocks Asses &... (I can't hear)* University of Johannesburg Art Gallery 7–28 November 2007; Kizo Art Gallery, Durban, 20 June to 28 July 2008; White River Art Gallery March to April 2009; Oliewenhuis Art Museum (Reservoir), Bloemfontein, 7 July to 16 August 2009.

<sup>20</sup> “*Dominion*” can be interpreted in two ways: humankind has dominance over the animals or is in a position of caring stewardship (Regan 2006:9).

Derrida maintains that this is “an immense disavowal ...[that] traverses the whole history of humanity” (Derrida 2008:14).

The binaries of human and animal suggest a chasm of difference – that which Derrida calls the “abyssal” rupture (2008:12) and which I refer to as the “space-between”. Theorising this space in an attempt to bridge the gap between humans and other animals is the aim of this thesis, in both written and practical forms. I articulate the theoretical space-between with sculptures, prints, drawings and paintings. Via the materiality of art making and the act of doing I attempt to make visible the invisible. Functioning in the space of the subliminal and the subconscious, I use the human and animal bodies as the framing text. In so doing, I offer the proposition that (logocentric) language and prescriptive art making fail to capture realities that function beneath the surface of conscious apprehension. I propose that artistic knowledge is achieved by and through the embodied act of doing. Similarly, I argue that the kind of knowledge arrived through human-animal interactions is an embodied and affective one.



**Fig 1.2.** Wilma Cruise *Blue Doris* (1988). Ceramic, 55 x 90 cm.  
(Photographed by the artist)

My earliest sculptures, circa the late eighties, showed an incipient interest in the human animal equation in which I combined human and animal in a single therianthrope form. Two such examples are *Blue Doris* (1988) (Fig 1.2) and *Dog with Options* (1987). *Blue Doris* is a blue ursine form with a humanoid face. It is a (psychical) portrait of the artist Doris Bloom. Although Bloom is female *Blue Doris* sports male genitalia. The sculpture is constructed in two parts that slot one into the other. The male aspect is shaped like an enlarged penis but is hidden when the form is assembled. Thus, bear-like Doris is twice blessed with a phallus, which is an indication of the desire for the power represented by the physical organ. As I wrote, "It is the signified not the sign that provokes envy" (Cruise 1997:17). The phallus was an ironic tribute to Bloom's power as a female artist. In this respect *Blue Doris'* animal being was used as a cipher for an essentially human concern, feminism, and had little to do with the animal as such. Berger terms this use of the animal "a moral metaphor", one that serves human ends and which has little to do with the animal as such (Berger 2007:258).

In his 1980 essay published in *About Looking* (1980) and reproduced in Kalof and Fitzgerald (2007), Berger laments the loss of real animals in contemporary human life. Identifying the rupture from the time of Descartes to its apogee in modern times, he maintains we, as humankind, have isolated ourselves from other species. By marginalising animals in zoos<sup>21</sup>, exploiting them as bio-commodities, reproducing their images - not symbolically but realistically and thereby reducing the animal to its sign - we have effectively pushed the animal into a "receding past" (Berger 2007:255). "Therein lies the ultimate consequence of their marginalisation. That look between animal and man...has been extinguished" (Berger 2007:261).

In a posthumanist world the assumption is that humankind is no longer the central being - the single experiencing subject around which the world revolves in a kind of pre-Copernican manner<sup>22</sup>. In contrast to the posthumanist assumption, the humanist

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21 As in his earlier thesis on the male gaze in which women were the recipients of the voyeuristic gaze, Berger maintains that zoo animals are the observed never the observer (Berger 2007:251).

22 I use Copernicus as a metaphor because before Copernicus discovered the heliocentric universe, humans thought that the universe revolved around the earth.

enterprise, founded in the enlightenment, foregrounds reason, rational discourse, and language. The animal in this scenario is relegated to the margins; its lack of language rendering it, according to Heidegger, "poor in world" (Derrida 2008:80,155). In post humanism the humanist assumptions are challenged, not necessarily to reject the human but to render it with "greater specificity once we have removed meaning from the ontologically closed domain of consciousness, reasons, reflection and so on" (Wolfe 2010:xxv)<sup>23</sup>. The human animal thereby becomes at one with the evolutionary continuum of animal life. By opening the pathways philosophically, humans can once more connect practically and spiritually with animals in a way that, according to Berger, we have lost. In this way posthumanism is also pre-humanism, referring to a time in pre-history when we (humans and animals) were embedded in a biological continuum (Wolfe 2010:xv).

In the present (posthumanist/postmodernist) era, as the question of the animal becomes more urgent in the face of the environmental crisis, the critical task is then to re-imagine the animals not as absent referents (Adams 2015), (such as the pig in roast pork), as symbolic cut-outs, or as metaphors for human characteristics, such as *Blue Doris*, but as living partners in a shared world. It is a return to a possibly idealised age when man and animal co-existed as partners in an environmentally balanced world.

...the respectful representation of the animal as an individual and the avoidance of using the animal as symbol or signifier is a matter of great importance to be heeded by artists and curators, lest the animals be exploited as beasts of burden forced to carry inappropriate conceptual agendas... (Watt 2011:62).

The question begs itself, just how do we return the animal to its rightful place in a shared universe? Elizabeth Fontenay observes that in sacred societies it was the mystics and artists that had the right to pray for animals (cited in Salaud 2011:123). Like Berger she laments the transformation of "the talkative animal into inert meat", without awareness of the sentience of the once living being. Her desire is to create a language that "shatters the

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23 The foundational ontological question in philosophy has always been the nature of being: "Who am I?" But it is an exclusively anthropocentric question, which can essentially be transcribed as "what is it to be human?" However, as exclusive as this question insists on being, it must always rely on a direct comparison with everything that is *not* human. This means the foundational ontological question always comes with a rider attached, namely: What makes humans different from (other) animals? (Cruise A. 2014:50).

silence of animals" (cited in Salaud 2011:123). Elizabeth Costello says that it is via the poets (and poetics) that understanding with the animals might be reached, thereby returning the living being to language (Coetzee 2004:111).

Assuming that artists have a role to play, problematical questions arise as to the nature of the message. Should it be evangelistic and didactic? Does the artist who uses animal imagery have a moral responsibility to proselytize for animal rights as Tom Regan argues (Gigolotti 2011:48), or, is the artist one who stands outside the discourse using the indirect tools of metaphor, metonymy and irony? This latter position is favoured by Broglio, who says understanding is achieved not by "...mimesis or representing animals in a natural history tradition or kitsch assimilation of animals into our world as tamed or cute or defeated; rather these artists have unmoored themselves, even ever so slightly, from the cultural grounding of meaning and the solidification of being over becoming..." (Broglio 2011:xx).

In inclination and praxis Broglio's view is one I support. It underpins my thesis that it is possible via affective, metaphorical and metonymic means to access the lost connection to the animals. In this way the rupture between human and animal can be closed - the space-between can be bridged. The underlying assumption of my argument is that art and artists can play a role in bridging the chasm, thereby returning the animal to a significant spiritual place in the posthumanist enterprise. But, rather than acting as evangelists, I suggest that artists can (and perhaps should), enact and perform their equality with animals.

However, the utilitarian philosopher, Peter Singer disagrees. He is dismissive of the role of the artist claiming that no contemporary work of art has done very much to change our attitudes to animals (cited in Aloï 2011:13). He goes so far as to say, "the energy used by ... the air-conditioned art galleries in which we view art contributes to climate change (cited in Baker 2011:5), which, as Steve Baker notes, is a criticism that apparently does not extend to "the air-conditioned lecture theatres in which philosophers present their ideas" (Baker 2011:5).

Humorous spats aside, Baker, in his discussion of *What is the Postmodern Animal?* in 2007, favours a distinction between art that is “animal-endorsing” and art that is “animal-skeptical” (Baker 2007:278), which elsewhere he articulates as “putting ethics before art or art before ethics” (Baker 2013). He thereby suggests that there are only two positions artists can adopt in relation to the animal question, a position he retracts in 2013 when it becomes clear it is an oversimplification. But in 2007 it seemed to be a useful distinction. The advocacy position aligned itself with the animal rights activists while the non-advocacy one was more likely to question the cultural construction of the term “animal” and its meaning *vis-à-vis* “human”. In this sense the division paralleled the split between the Anglo-American philosophers and those of the Continental school, in which the former adopt an activists’ position while the latter tend to deconstruct the terms of the debate (Calarco 2008:2). By adopting Baker’s distinction one can investigate contemporary artists who centralise the animal in their work and assess their ethical positions.

The artist, Sue Coe, adopts a conscious advocacy approach (Gigliotti 2011:48) (Fig 1.3). Her graphic images of animal slaughter are intended to shock and in so doing are designed to effect changes in the attitude and behaviour of the viewers. Amongst others, her works depict the interior of slaughterhouses, the de-finning of hammerhead sharks, the mass gassing of pigs and views of dying fish on fishmongers’ slabs (Aloi & Bennison 2011:106). She says, “My work is used in fundraisers all the time by animal protection groups. So firstly, it provides money to save animals, it educates and makes aware, and unlike much of my other social political work, the viewer gets the message. Then rather than feeling helpless, that same viewer can do something about this immediately: becoming a vegan, and avoid all animal products, including the wearing of their skins, and the eating of their bodies” (cited in Aloi & Bennison 2011:107).



**Fig 1.3.** Sue Coe *Finning* (2011)  
(Aloi & Bennison 2011: 110 - *Antennae* Issue 19).

But while her proselytising intention is clear there are those, like Donald Kuspit, who question her artistic integrity.

Coe, I think, is torn between a wish to communicate instantaneously to as large an audience as possible, and thus to use a public and invariably clichéd language, and a desire to make “high art,” that is, art so dense with visual substance that it cannot be exhausted at first sight. When she manages to balance these impulses, she takes her place among the Expressionist masters, but when she makes images for ‘the cause,’ her works dwindle to militant cartoons, lacking even the saving grace of Daumier’s wit (Watt 2011:30).

A consideration of Coe's work raises the spectre of political art. Just how engaged should artists be in proselytising for change? As Watt noted, there is a general avoidance of the politics of animal representation in the visual arts, which is at odds with other disciplines where ethical and political issues are foregrounded (Watt 2011:70). Her argument is based on a belief that it is important to question artists’ intentions and ethical stance *vis-à-vis* the animal.

Nevertheless the answer to the question of ethical intention is not always clear as it is in the case of Coe. The Australian sculptor, Patricia Piccinini, for instance, works on the human and animal figure in a representational yet more nuanced way. Piccinini creates mutant creatures that have human features such as pink flesh and human hair. She terms her hybrid animals “mechanical fauna”, thereby drawing attention to the interface between nature and technology (Orgaz & Piccinini 2007). Such a work is *The Young Family* (2002) (Fig 1.4) in which a half pig, half human is depicted suckling her young mutant offspring.



**Fig 1.4.** Patricia Piccinini *The Young Family* (2002). Silicone, polyurethane, leather, plywood, human hair, 80 x 150 x 110 cm. Photograph by Graham Baring, Courtesy of the artist and Haunch of Venison ([file://localhost/\(http://weirdfictionreview.com:2012:09:patricia-piccininis-mythic-imagination:\)](file://localhost/(http://weirdfictionreview.com:2012:09:patricia-piccininis-mythic-imagination:)))

*The Young Family* evokes feelings of revulsion raising the spectre of *Homo monstrosus* – monstrous humans or human-animal hybrids in which “animality” is constructed in opposition to “humanity” (Hurn 2012). “[E]very attribute that is claimed we [humans] uniquely have, the animal is consequently supposed to lack; thus the generic concept of ‘animal’ is negatively constituted by the sum of these deficiencies” (Ingold cited in Hurn

2012). Yet strangely and contradictorily, the scene of the mother tenderly suckling her young evokes feelings of compassion, suggesting that we share our humanity and animality. Piccinini deliberately blurs the binaries of nature, culture and technology and in so doing refuses to adopt an obvious didactic or condemnatory position. As Piccinini herself admits, her approach is not dissimilar to the cautionary tales embodied in Greek myths.

[I]t is not really science itself that I am interested in, as much as how it impacts on people. I think my creatures are actually more mythological than scientific. They are chimeras that I construct in order to tell stories that explain the world that I live in but cannot totally understand or control. Like most myths they are often cautionary tales, but they are also often celebrations of these extraordinary beasts. You need to remember that the gods of the ancient myths had great power but also very human motivations. They followed their own interests, with very little feeling for the effects they might have on normal people (Orgaz & Piccinini 2007:2).

Piccinini argues her position from an essentially anthropocentric point of view. That is, her work, functioning as a moral metaphor, has less to do with animals than the human dilemma that is caused by the ethical interface with animals. Yet, her work is not didactic in the way Sue Coe's is, and simply to label her an animal or environmental activist would do a disservice to the complexity of her ethical stance.

Equally ambiguous and problematical in an ethical sense, is Damien Hirst's work. A large and significant part of his oeuvre is devoted to animals, specifically his practice of preserving animal bodies in formaldehyde as in his *Natural History* series. For example, in *Mother and child (Divided)* (1993)<sup>24</sup> (Fig 1.5)

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<sup>24</sup> *Mother and Child (Divided)* was first exhibited as part of the 'Aperto 93' Venice Biennale exhibition. (<http://www.damienhirst.com/mother-and-child-divided-1>).



**Fig 1.5.** Damien Hirst *Mother and child (Divided)* (1993). Glass, stainless steel, Perspex, acrylic paint, cow, calf and formaldehyde solution, 2 parts: 2086 x 3225 x 1092 mm, 2086 x 3225 x 1092 mm, 2 parts: 1136 x 1689 x 622 mm, 1136 x 1689 x 622 mm. (<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hirst-mother-and-child-divided-t12751>)

Hirst places a separated and bisected cow and calf in four vitrines of formaldehyde. Hirst exposes the process from living animal to meat (or an object of contemplation) and in so doing he lays bare the interiority of the animals for human inspection (Broglia 2011:3-8). He explains.

It's kind of odd to take meat and give it back a personality in some way or make it a metaphorical carrier or something like that. People don't like faces on meat. But also for it to be dead in a tragic way. For you to have some sort of understanding or to feel its pain or tragedy (Hirst cited in Obrist 2008).

While it appears on the surface that Hirst's primary intention is to shock, one cannot ignore protest implicit in statements like the one above or his claim that he has created a "zoo of dead animals as an alternative to having living ones pacing around in misery" (Hirst n.d.) Protest is also implicit in the title of the installation *Out of Sight Out of Mind* (1991)<sup>25</sup>, in which four skinned cow heads in formaldehyde solution remind the viewers that there was a living animal prior to the delivery of meat to their plates.

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<sup>25</sup> Damien Hirst *Out of Sight. Out of Mind*. 1991. Glass, painted steel, silicone, cows' heads and formaldehyde solution. Two parts, each: 406 x 838 x 457 mm | 16 x 33 x 18 (<http://www.damienhirst.com/out-of-sight-out-of-mind>).



**Fig 1.6.** Damien Hirst *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* (1991). Glass, painted steel, silicone, monofilament, shark and formaldehyde solution, 217 x 542 x 180 cm. (<http://www.damienhirst.com/the-physical-impossibility-of>)

Whether Hirst is using an ironist position to draw attention to the plight of animals, thereby taking an animal-advocacy stance, or whether he displays an emotional disconnection, is questionable. As Kerstetter argues, "The animals are typically from slaughterhouses. They were either corpses when Hirst got them, or soon would be. Then there are the sharks, animals he paid to have killed solely for the purpose of artworks" (Kerstetter 2009:n.pag.). In *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* (1991) (Fig 1.6.) Hirst suspended a dead shark in formaldehyde.

When this shark began to disintegrate due to imperfect preservation, Hirst rejected the alternative of sharkskin stretched over an armature (Broglia 2011:17). Instead he commissioned (and caused the death) of other sharks to replace the first. According to Broglia the integrity of the invisible interior of the shark was important to preserve not only for the interior of the animal but for the viewer's own interiority as well (Broglia 2011:17). "The animal insides... mark a unique space, a space that we will never know - a space that death has inhabited in this animal" (Broglia 2011:17). But did making this point warrant the unnecessary killing of a large, presumably sentient, animal? This places Hirst in a position of both drawing attention to the needless killing of animals and being complicit in that killing.

Hirst's use of animals in his work raises a distinction in animal art. There are those who use animals as their subject matter (Coe) and those that use animals as their medium (Hirst).

From Joseph Beuys' coyote<sup>26</sup> (Fig 1.7) and dead hare to Marco Evaristti's goldfish in blenders<sup>27</sup> and most notably Kim Jones's burning rats<sup>28</sup>, artists have used animals both dead and alive or about to be dead, as actual subjects in their art.



**Fig 1.7.** Joseph Beuys. *I like America and America likes me* (1974). Coyote, felt blankets, walking stick, gloves, *Wall Street Journal*. Performance at Rene Block Gallery, New York. Photograph by Caroline Tisdall.

This raises an important ethical question about the fates of the animals. What for example happened to Beuys' coyote both before and after its encounter with the artist? Was the coyote wild to begin with and where did it go afterwards? What happened to it in the sixteen hours that Beuys was not in the room with it? Was it left alone without companionship either human or coyote? To Beuys this appeared to be irrelevant to the meaning of his performance, which was his role as a shaman and his connection to the totem animal of Native Americans. It seemed that the animal's fate was ignored in favour of the larger egotistical enterprise of the artist.

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26 Joseph Beuys. *I like America and America likes me*. (1974). Performance, New York (Baker 2013:8).

27 Marco Evaristti. *Helena & el Pescadore*. (2000). 10 Moulinex blenders with live Goldfish. Trapholt Art Museum, Denmark (Baker 2013:2-13).

28 Kim Jones. *Rat Piece*. (1976). Union Gallery at California State University, Los Angeles. (Baker 2013:12-13).

*In How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*<sup>29</sup> his ethical stance is more ambiguous. In this work he adopts an advocacy position by pleading for more ecological awareness. He argues that the animal is an extension of the human as necessary as a lung or a liver. Tenderly cradling the dead hare as the representative of the animal kingdom, he "explains" the pictures to it - a gesture intended to close the gap between human and animal (Youtube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mo47lqk\\_QH0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mo47lqk_QH0)). The question is, was the hare killed for the purpose of the performance? And if so is this justifiable?

Even more disturbing is Kim Jones' performance in which he set three rats alight in the gallery and watched their extreme suffering as he poured lighter fluid on them to ensure their deaths as they ran around the wire cage screaming in pain and terror (Baker 2013:4-5). By failing to interfere and stop the deaths of the rats, the audience became complicit in the cruelty. As one commentator noted, "We were Romans cheering on the lions. We were Christians torching a Salem witch. We were a southern mob lynching a black man. We were the Gestapo gassing Jews" (cited in Baker 2013:10-11)!

In *Helena & el Pescadore* Marco Evaristti similarly involved the audience by suggesting that they could, by a flick of a switch, end the fishes lives as they swam around in the Moulinex blenders. However, in spite of the implied callousness, there was a moral point to be made, which was to demonstrate the ease with which humans are able to terminate animals' lives.

However, not all agree with such tactics. Yvette Watt says, "From an animal right's point of view, causing an animal to suffer or die in the name of art is always unjustifiable, regardless of the artist's intentions, in the same way that causing death or suffering to an unwilling human would also be unethical and unacceptable" (Watt 2011:66).

Watt takes a clear intentioned moral position. This is in contrast to the later Baker, who in 2013 in *Artist/Animal*, takes a more nuanced stance on the role of the animal in art, one

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<sup>29</sup> *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*. (1965)

Gold leaf, honey, dead hare, felt pad, iron, fir tree, miscellaneous drawings and clothing items. Performance at Galerie Schmela, Dresden, Germany, 26 November 1965.

that reaches beyond the simple opposition of advocacy and non-advocacy, that he articulated in 2007. Quoting Deleuze and Guattari he says that art “has the power of affirming chaos” (Baker 2013:116). Citing the work of Mary Britton Clouse, as an example, Baker points out how her photographic portraits of herself with her rescue chickens held close in front of her face so that human and bird eye merge, violated her own passionately held view of not using live animals in art (Fig 1.8).



**Fig 1.8.** Mary Britton Clouse. *Nemo - Portrait/Self Portrait* (2005). Digital pigment print on Sekishu paper. (<http://www.upc-online.org/thinking/framed-clouse.html>)

The photographs (with live chickens) disrupted human-animal distinctions and hierarchies in a way other forms of representation could not achieve (Baker 2013:116). As Baker says, the photographs evoked an unintended “awe not remotely ‘caught’ by the language and the well-judged arguments of animal advocacy” (2013:116). Her images speak “on the other side of words” (Baker 2013:116).

The danger of taking a simple moralistic position, as suggested by Watt, is illustrated in a work by Guillermo Vargas, a Costa Rican artist also known as “Habacuc”. In *You are what you read* (*Eres lo que lees*), exhibited in Managua, Nicaragua in 2007, an emaciated street dog was tied to the wall of the gallery with a short rope (Fig 1.9). Written in dog food on a gallery wall was the statement, “Eres lo que lees,” (You are what you read). It caused an uproar resulting in a petition that garnered four million signatures calling for the artist to be boycotted from the Central American Biennial, Honduras 2008 and for criminal

charges to be filed against the artist. But what was before the viewers' eyes was not the actuality. The dog was fed daily and was free to roam other than for the three hours it was tied up. It later escaped the gallery and was never found! (Yanez 2010). The point of the artist's exercise was not only to note the hypocrisy of the audience, who seemingly overlooked the plight of actual street dogs, while expressing outrage at the "starvation" of the gallery dog, but to observe the power of social media as a rumour mongerer. As Yanez noted, "Take a dog off the streets and put it into a gallery and it becomes an ethical phenomenon, while stray dogs and most real human suffering are ignored or given minimal attention" (Yanez 2010).



**Fig 1.9.** Guillermo Habacuc Vargas. *You Are What You Read (Eres lo que lees)* (2007).  
Installation: dog, dog food, rope. Gallery of Managua,  
(Nicaragua.<http://fractalenlightenment.com/633/artwork/you-are-what-you-read> |  
FractalEnlightenment.com.)

Therefore, however tempting it would be to state an unequivocal moral point like Watt, I, like Baker, adhere to the position that art's role is to find new potentials, to disrupt, and to destabilise without predetermination of the outcome. Thus, although I am unlikely to order the killing of a great white shark, nor tie up an emaciated homeless dog, I do not hold to a prescribed moral position. While keeping an eye on the principle of equal consideration, I still allow for the potential for new discoveries in a belief that the artist must negotiate her ethical stance. This accords with my general existentialist inclinations in which moral decisions should be a matter of free choice, achieved without recourse to an ultimate authority. Sartre expressed it as follows:

From the moment of my emergence into being, I carry the weight of the world on my own, without anything or anybody being able to lighten the burden... (in Blackham 1961:137).

This essentially atheistic position marked by the "wild grief that God is dead" (Blackham 1961:155) leads to an existential sense of loss. "Humankind is alone in the world that is mute as to its meaning. Reality, which is permanently in question, provides no answers. The cosmos remains enigmatically silent" (Cruise 1997:41).

While the advocacy versus non-advocacy debate may be a fruitful way of looking at how artists deal with the question of the animal, it is ultimately an oversimplification as artists like Guillermo Vargas demonstrate. I would prefer to return to the question of the gaze, not as in feminist theory, but as Derrida posed it when he asked what happened when his cat saw him naked. My focus thereby turns to the space between human and animal and the nature of the mutual gaze. It is when the animal looks back that the space-between is breached, where the silence is filled with meaning.

The encounter with his cat is a key moment in Derrida's exposition of *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. It is important to note that Derrida did not pose a philosophical question to his audience in the vacuum of abstract thought. Instead he based his query on a real experience. His encounter with his little cat was in the bathroom when she saw him naked. She was neither a generic animal nor a generic cat. Derrida's investigation is thus not merely the machinations of a philosopher but a particular autobiographical experience.

No, no, my cat, the cat that looks at me in my bedroom or bathroom, this cat that is perhaps not "my cat" my "pussycat," does not appear here to represent, like an ambassador the immense symbolic responsibility with which our culture has always charged the feline race. If I say, "it is a real cat" that sees me naked, this is in order to mark its unsubstitutable singularity (Derrida 2008:9).

Like Carroll's upside down world in which the animals adopt a position of superiority in relation to Alice as the exemplar of the human race, Derrida inverts the human-centred position in his long inquiry. It is not what the human sees, when he or she looks, or acts, or decides upon the animal, but what the animal sees, or does, or acts upon. Derrida is

scornful of advocacy positions. "Their discourses [may be] sound and profound, but everything in them goes on as if they themselves had never been looked at and especially not naked, by an animal that addressed them" (2008:14). This willingness to engage the animal qua animal in its full specificity and singularity seems to be a useful way to look at art involving the animal.

One artist who does attempt to see and return the look of the animal is the South African photographer Daniel Naudé. He creates images of feral dogs in a way that focuses as much on the animal being as on the human on the other side of the gaze. The impetus for his collection of animal photographs in *Animal Farm* (Naudé 2012) was inspired by the look of a feral *Africanis* dog, which for "a split second looked back at him" before slinking off leaving him "speechless and full of emotion". The intensity of that shared glimpse made Naudé determined to depict the dogs in a way that captured their presence and their experience (Naudé 2012:7). Like Derrida's cat, Naudé's dog was singular and particular to that moment. What exactly was communicated during that fleeting exchange however remains "unfathomable, unexplained and yet incredibly potent..." (Naudé 2012:9). Naudé has identified the problematic of the space-between, which implies the key question of what happens in this space. What is communicated? Who is this being doing the communicating? Broglio identifies this space as "the contact zone" (2011:xxiii). Echoing Naudé's report of the unfathomability of the exchange between human and animal he says, "the human-animal contact zone becomes a contact without contact, a relation of nonrelations and communication whose language would be under erasure" (Broglio 2011:xxiv).

I first became interested in the space-between as a place beyond language in 2003. My initial investigation was in the space between two human figures that is not mediated by language. I recognised that this is a zone weighted with the unspoken, often only signalled by the slightest inflection of the body. By manipulating the space between my sculptures I recreated situations in which the sculptures were close enough to each other to create a tension and to suggest that communication was taking place beyond the spoken word. Such were the figures that made up the life size sculptures *Homo Erectus*, *Homo Robustus* (Fig 1.10), *Lucy* and *Paranthropus*.



**Fig 1.10.** Wilma Cruise. *Homo Erectus* and *Homo Robustus* (1999-2000). Ceramic, 183 cm each. (Photographed by the artist).

They were exhibited on *RapRack* at the Goodman Gallery in 2000<sup>30</sup>. I wrote the following contemporaneously: "...there is a memory of being somewhere in the shadow area on the edge of consciousness" (Cruise 2000). *Homo Erectus*, *Homo Robustus*, *Lucy* and *Paranthropus* are armless and without facial features. They are stripped of the usual means of speech, mouths to articulate, and arms to gesture. It is only their bodies that signify a state of being that alludes to experience on the other side of appearance. It is, as Blackham has suggested, "a queer vestigial quiver of meaning forever out of reach" (1961:113).

My propensity to deny my figures facial features and arms had its origin in Kendell Geers' critique of my 1990 Goodman Gallery exhibition, *Untitled (everlasting nothingness made visible)*. Writing in *The Star* newspaper with reference to a bronze bust entitled *Nicholas I*, he noted the "cliché" of the "silent gaping mouth" (Geers 1990:10) (Fig 1.11).

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<sup>30</sup> *Homo Erectus* (1999-2000), *Homo Robustus* (1999-2000) and *Lucy* and *Paranthropus* (1999-2000) refer to paleo-anthropological discoveries made in Africa. They are allusions to "unearthing", excavating and digging up the past, not from the buried tunnels of earth, but from the depths of the psyche.



**Fig 1.11.** Wilma Cruise *Nicholas I* (1990-1993). Bronze (edition 3), 30 x 43 x 33 cm.  
(Photographed by Doreen Hemp)

His criticism stung, not only for its perceived negativity, but also for its validity. Since WWII we have been bombarded by visions of the awful. From graphic images of the dead during the Nazi holocaust to bodies flying through the air to thump audibly on the pavement below the twin towers in New York, we have been swamped with apocalyptic images of such excess that the scream is rendered superfluous. As Geers suggests, it has become a cliché. The only way that artists can compete with such representations is to retreat into silence. It is within the realm of the interior, in the place of the unspoken, that the battle for meaning and relevance takes place. Thus, my sculptures deny their own agency by withdrawing the means to express themselves. Their ability to speak or gesture is denied by refusing them mouths or arms. At the most elemental level, arms are not only unnecessary; they actively interfere with the message. They create a visual noise - a distraction - they are indeed impediments. Because it is the condition of muteness that I want to convey - a silence, an existential pause, as if hovering on the edge of the world.

Working through the body with the unspoken and unsaid, is a position that concurs with Hélène Cixous' *écriture féminine*. Cixous, the French literary theorist, suggests

reformulating the relationship between language and the body. She rejects what she terms “critiques that persist in a logocentric Cartesian discourse that posits the mind as the source of writing” (Dobson in Simons 2004: 130). *Écriture féminine* she maintains “...is impossible [to define] ... except through subjects that break automatic functions, border runners never subjugated by any authority” (Dobson in Simons 2004:127). *Écriture féminine* is not to be confused with a “female language” rather it is an attempt to access those verities that lie beyond language. The body is the text but the message functions in the area of the subliminal and the pre-conscious. In order to do this I strip my figures of the means of speech. Thus the disjunction between a logocentric reading of my work and an affective one effectively drove a wedge between the word and the image that has since become a cipher for the non-verbal communication that occurs between animal and some humans - those who wish to hear “their rumbles hisses and purrs” (Cruise 2007).

In 2003 I consciously articulated Descartes’ core ontological question in relation to animals. “Do they think?” As Derrida observed, this question has plagued philosophers from Aristotle and beyond to Heidegger, Levinas, and Lacan (2008:27). The underlying assumption is that because animals are lacking the power of speech they have no capacity to reason. “Does a sheep know?” I asked in one of two digital prints that form part of the *Dolly Suite* (2003-2006) (Fig. 1.12).



**Fig 1.12.** Wilma Cruise *Does a Sheep Know* and *I Think Therefore I Am* (2004). Digital prints 61 x 82 cm each.

In the second print I query whether a sheep “think” and if she does not, is the inverse of *Cogito ergo sum* true? That is, if she does not think, is she not – a negation. By this I query whether the sheep, Dolly or her cipher, is an absent being – a mechanomorphic object to be used and abused at human will?

With the *Dolly Suite* my concerns appeared to have shifted from the animal as metaphor in my early works to the question of animal ethics. It took, however, my 2007 exhibition *Cocks Asses & ... (I can't hear)* for me to become conscious of the precise locus of my current research, which I articulate as the “space-between”. Stimulated by the threat of annihilation through environmental degradation, my thesis in *Cocks, Asses &... (I can't hear)*, was that we are no longer in tune with the natural world. As the subtitle suggests we are no longer listening to the animals.

The exhibition’s tenet was the failure of language in articulating the unspoken. Although this had in the past focused on the interaction between humans, in *Cocks, Asses &... (I can't hear)* it was extrapolated to include animals such as a cat, a dog, a cockerel and the two eponymous asses. *Chanticleer* (Fig 1.13) was one of the first works I made for the exhibition.



**Fig 1.13.** Wilma Cruise *Chanticleer* (2007). Ceramic, 150 x 170 cm. (Photographed by Carla Crafford).

It consists of a life-size autobiographical figure lying on the ground. A dog perches on her breast, his paws pressing into her flesh. On top of the dog stands a large cockerel. The title of the work alludes to the Grimm brothers' tale, *The Bremen Town Musicians*, in which a donkey, a dog, a cat and a cockerel chase off a band of robbers from a cottage in a forest (Grimm 1918/2014). They do this by standing one on top of the other and creating a cacophony of their combined voices. When one of the robbers attempts to retake the cottage, the cat scratches him, the donkey kicks him, the dog bites him and the cockerel shrieks at him. In the perception of the robbers the animals appear variously as a witch or a giant. The animals in this laudable venture gain access to the cottage where they live happily ever after.

*Chanticleer* is not a literal interpretation, rather it was driven by a dimly conscious memory of the childhood story. The idea was also inspired by the iconic image of one animal standing on top of the other. Most importantly it was informed by my acquaintanceship with a feisty Boston terrier, named Phoebe, whom I had met in New York in 2007. The gaze between the female form and the dog, Phoebe, suggests communication that is neither necessarily friendly nor affectionate. Yet, the look implies a reciprocal recognition of the being of the other.

Central to the exhibition was the installation entitled *Adam and Eve Before the Fall* (see Fig 1.1). In this work I allude to the space between human and animal that was articulated in its most primal form in the Garden of Eden in the encounter between Adam and Eve and the serpent. Adam and Eve gaze dumbly at a small snake at their feet. Their incomprehension as to its significance does not so much signify their fall from grace in a biblical sense, but the rupture in their relationship with the animal kingdom<sup>31</sup>. The snake's arrival shatters the peace and harmony of paradise and signals the rift between man and the natural order. The destruction of the harmonious continuum between human and animal created a seemingly unbridgeable chasm of difference. This rift, "the space-between", is largely a gulf of incomprehension, one that is bridged, on occasion, by the mute gaze of the other as in Derrida's cat and Naude's dog.

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31 Derrida also reinterprets the genesis myth abrogating the snake for the cause of the fall (Derrida 2002:372).

Language and writing was as much the focus of the exhibition as animals, and was foregrounded in the diary pages of *The 100 Page Diary*. These notes consisting of aphorisms, embryonic ideas and observations are an attempt to write meaning into the ideas underpinning the exhibition. As Schmahmann observed, "These are not, then, indicators of a process of arriving at a 'resolution' but are instead evocations of the impossibility of ever giving voice to the scattered and unknowable drives that underpin conscious thought" (Schmahmann 2007:1). The diary pages evolved from private notes and sketches, the kind that most artists use in their praxis. I decided to expose these notations in public at the exhibitions in an attempt to reveal my thought processes. However, the danger existed that the thought of a "finished" work would pre-empt the stream of consciousness that accompanies private thought. Therefore, while the diary pages are not finished works neither are they blueprints for the sculptures. Instead they often evolve from the sculptures. They are attempts to find meaning in the figures that emerge out of the inchoate process of working with clay. They are arguments with myself about the precise meaning of the works. They are also notes about the impossibility of finding meaning.

Meaning is elusive. Eschewing a didactic message allows the artist to discover new concepts, ones that might float up in the act of making art. Thus, without the surety of a fixed moral position nor a focused message, I support Baker's view that "contemporary art's distinctive contribution to understandings of human-animal relations will be recognized only if artists' practices - flawed and provisional as they may be - are taken seriously" (Baker 2013:3). Putting ethics before art, limits the potential for new discoveries. "At the very least, [it] risks failing to take [art] practices seriously" (Baker 2013:3). It is the artist's role to venture into *terra incognita*, to uncover and discover without the surety of a moral map. The ethical morass has to be negotiated without pre-emptive guidelines, using the act of making to offer new insights.

## CHAPTER 2

# The animal - what a word!

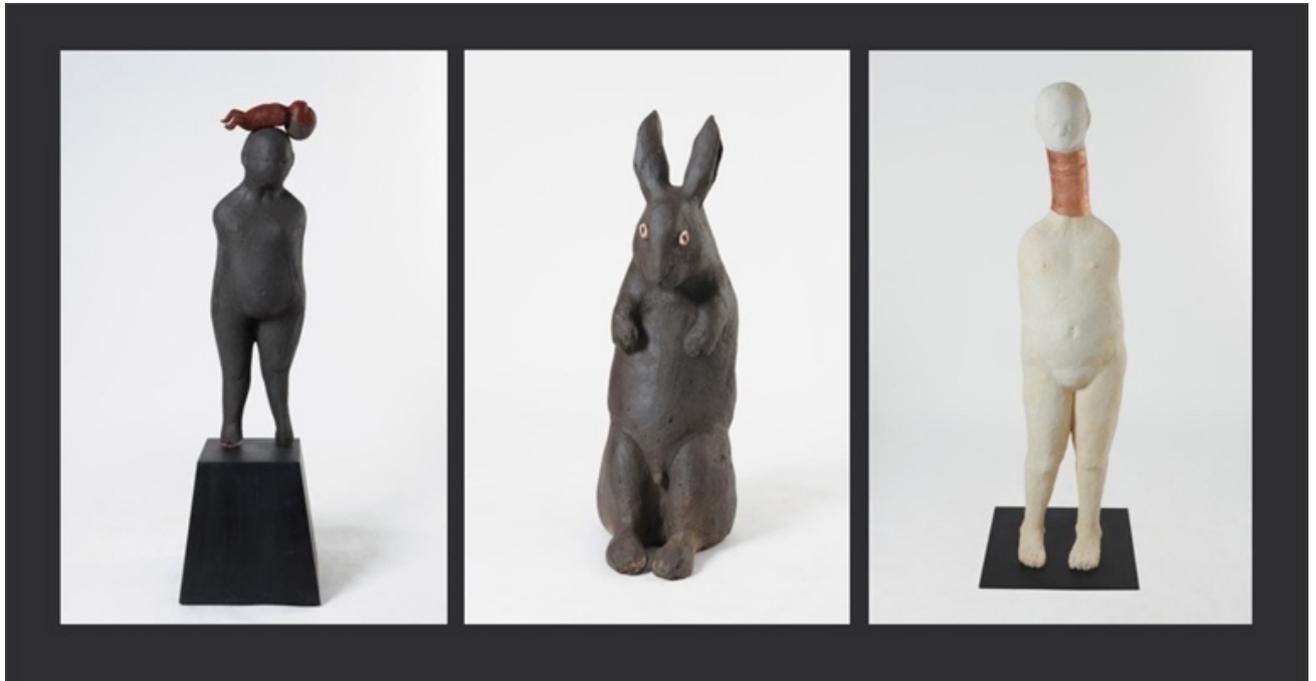


Fig 2.1 Wilma Cruise *The Animals in Alice* (2011)

Since time therefore

Since so long ago, we can say the animal has been looking at us? What animal? The other? (Derrida 2008:3).

## Exhibitions

*The Animals in Alice* (2011)

*Alice and the Animals* (2011)

*The Alice Diaries* (2012)<sup>32</sup>

In this chapter I interrogate the meaning of the word “animal” with reference to Derrida and Deleuze and Guattari. I also survey a range of ethical opinions in an attempt to locate both my ethics and praxis on a continuum of thinking on the question of the animal. In so doing I survey the writings of the Anglo-American philosophers such as Peter Singer, Tom Regan and Gary Francione, who argue for animal rights based on the application of practical ethics. I compare their ethical position to that of Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari, and Cixous. In this context I consider Haraway’s critical response to Derrida and Deleuze and Guattari in which she introduces the concept of “companion species” (2008). I indicate how my investigation in the animal turn takes place through my creative practice. As always Alice’s tales in Wonderland provide a useful metaphor.

The entrenchment of the ontotheological dualism between human and animal has been debated in recent years by, amongst others, Jacques Derrida who interrogates the concept of “animal” as an essentialised reductive category. In his long meditation, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida investigates the nature of the being, “animal” as the absolute an(other) standing in an oppositional relationship to “human”. Humans, with the ability to speak, stand on one side of the chasm of difference, while the animal in all its variations and permutations stands on the other side, deprived, in the Cartesian lexicon, of the power of reason. But, what is animal? It appears to be a category that includes all living forms other than human and plants. This corralling of all creatures into a single class is, according to Derrida, nothing short of a crime.

The confusion of all nonhuman living creatures within the general and common category of animal is not simply a sin against rigorous thinking, vigilance, lucidity, or empirical authority, it is also a crime. Not a crime against animality, precisely, but a crime of the first order against the animals, against animals (Derrida 2008:48).

Notably, Derrida does not deny the distinction between humankind and the other animals. Unlike philosophers such as Singer, he does not argue for Darwinian continuity

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<sup>32</sup> *The Animals in Alice*: Iart Gallery Wembley Square, Cape Town, 15 June to 13 July 2011.

*Alice and the Animals*: Northwest University Gallery, Potchefstroom October 2011.

*The Alice Diaries*: Circa on Jellicoe, Johannesburg 24<sup>th</sup> July to 25<sup>th</sup> August 2012.

between human and animals. He said it would be "asinine" to do so (Derrida 2008:30). Acknowledging the difference between human and animal he maintains that it is not a single indivisible line. "Beyond the edge of so-called human, beyond it but by no means on a single opposing side... there is already a heterogeneous multiplicity of the living..." (Derrida 2008:31). Derrida's approach to the human-animal question is based on the concept of difference, not just the disparity between human and animal but between animal and other animals. He challenges the humanist assumption of the exceptionalism of humankind - of humans as the rational centre of the world having "some inner core of subjectivity untouched by history" (Calarco 2015:30). Instead as Calarco maintains the human emerges from a matrix of sociohistorical and cultural relations (Calarco 2015:30). In this latter configuration the human being no longer has a profound essence but is reconfigured as "a unique node in a network of relations, an irreplaceable being-in-becoming - a *singular Other*" (Calarco 2015:30). As such the other Other/s, including animals, are grouped "into repeatable categories thereby neutralizing their singularity and domesticating their strangeness" (Calarco 2015:31). But on occasion, the uniqueness of the singular Other can provoke a sense of the uncanny leading to profound shifts in understanding (Calarco 2015:32). This is what occurred to Derrida when the gaze of his cat probed his naked humanity. For Derrida it is not only the gaze of the animal that unsettles him - it was the sense that the object and subject positions have been inverted, a situation that un-nerves him and causes him to query the nature of this being animal/cat. Later in his meditation he imports a mirror into the scene with his naked self and his observing cat. By evoking Lacan's mirror phase he further complicates the encounter with his cat (Derrida 2008:58-59). Now the cat seeing him and he seeing the cat is reflected back to them both, prompting Derrida to ask, "Is there animal narcissism?", or, and this is the more significant question, is the cat "deep within her eyes my primary mirror?" (2008:51).

In 2011, I made three large mixed media drawings, *The Cat*, *The Dog* and *The Hare* (2011) (Fig 2.2), in an attempt to depict animals, not only as objects of the gaze, but as beings that are capable of returning the look and perhaps functioning as a primary mirror.



**Fig 2.2** Wilma Cruise *The Cat*, *The Dog* and *The Hare* (2011). Beeswax, wax crayon, charcoal and oil stick on paper, 135 x 138 cm each.

By returning the look of the viewer, I assumed a bridge would be created across the gulf of “the space-between”. In these drawings I attempted to give the animals agency, not as objects of the look, but as subjects in themselves, or to use Tom Regan’s phrase, a sense of themselves as “subjects-of-a-life” (Regan 2006:17-18). But on revisiting the images in 2016 I questioned the veracity of this interpretation. *The Cat*, *The Dog* and *The Hare* (2011) return the gaze but see beyond the perceiving eye. Like Derrida’s cat the look remains inscrutable. It would be tempting to say that by looking back at us, animals assert their subjecthood. But in the drawings I discovered that what I had depicted was the thousand-yard stare. As Berger would have it, “the animal’s gaze flickers and passes on. They look sideways. They look blindly beyond” (cited in Weil 2012:39). Further, by focusing on the gaze I prioritise the faculty of vision. By ignoring the possibilities of communication in other contact zones, such as, say the sense of smell in canids, I effectively foreclosed other possible avenues of inter-species communication. It is entirely possible that the animals “see” us in ways that we cannot know. My prioritising the gaze in these animal portraits might just be another example of anthropocentric hubris.

*The Pig* (2011) (Fig 2.3) in this suite of four drawings lies outside of the ambit of the other three animal images.



**Fig 2.3.** Wilma Cruise *The Pig* (2011). Beeswax, wax crayon, charcoal and oil stick on paper, 135 x 138 cm.

While she does not engage (visually) with the viewer, she seems aware of his/her presence. She smirks as if complicit in some hidden joke. It appears as if I have accorded this pig special status. She is the outsider who knowingly observes. Like a trickster, she stands outside of events, yet seems able to control them, or, at least to predict their outcome. "Tricksters invariably muddy the waters of the sacred as much as they today push back against the boundary that separates the numinous of the supernatural from the 'cold and dispassionate' materialities of science" (Carstens 2016). As such *The Pig* straddles opposing worlds - the human and the animal, the rational and affective, nature and culture, and carries her knowledge with her across the liminal space.

In 2015, the drawing of *The Pig* was echoed in a small dry point etching, *The All-Knowing Pig* (Fig 2.4).



**Fig 2.4.** Wilma Cruise. *The All-Knowing Pig* (2015). Drypoint and chine-collé (edition 15), 43.7 x 45 cm.

Like the trickster pig in the larger drawing, this pig has a knowing look and a smile that rivals that of the Cheshire Cat in its inscrutability. Thus while the gaze is not returned, the pig nevertheless suggests subjecthood – she has a subjectivity – even though as Carstens suggests, it is a “radically decentred Deleuzogauattarian subjectivity that includes a host of 'other' subjectivities both human and animal” (Carstens 2016)<sup>33</sup>.

Unlike Derrida, who still perceived a rupture between human and animal, albeit a complicating one, Deleuze and Guattari collapse the ineluctable opposition of human and animal into a central concept “animal-becoming”. The binary terms merge into an expansive concept, which they liken to a rhizome – a complication of meanings growing in many directions. In their metaphorical terms a rhizome exists as a multiplicity. It is not classificatory or genealogical like a tree structure (Deleuze & Guattari 2004:88). That is, its rhizomatic equality stands opposed to “arborescence” which is Deleuze and Guattari's term for “philosophies that assume the primacy of and valorize identity, essence, origin, end, etc.” (Urpeth 2004:104). As if to compound the definition of the noun, rhizome, Deleuze and Guattari define it as a verb (Urpeth 2004:104), an enactment in which “[all]

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<sup>33</sup> Carstens implies a multiplicity of “knowing” with the further implication that we cannot access in any real sense the nature of that knowledge (see Chapter Six *Wittgenstein's Lion and Heidegger's Hand*).

forms come undone, as do all significations, signifiers and signifieds" (Deleuze & Guattari 2004: 96)<sup>34</sup>.

Deleuze and Guattari insist that animal-becoming is not defined by the points it connects (2011:91), rather that it runs perpendicular to them and is always in the middle, a point that has resonance with my concept of the space-between. Nevertheless, it is a concept that is difficult to pin down in real space or time. They explicitly maintain that

[n]o art is imitative, no art can be imitative or figurative ...imitation self-destructs.... The painter and the musician do not imitate the animal they become animal at the same time as the animal becomes what they willed, at the deepest level of their concord with Nature (Deleuze & Guattari 2004:94-95).

If art is not imitative or figurative, what is the physical manifestation of animal becoming? Simply put, what does animal becoming look like? Who becomes and what is become? Steve Baker (2002) suggests that instead of a fixed representation, animal becoming lies within the process of creation. He notes that becoming is an act that Deleuze and Guattari call "writing like a rat"<sup>35</sup>. This moment of creation happens in the intensity of the creative moment when the artist forgets him/herself as human. It is as if she has become something other. "To write like a rat" then is a figure for a process of operating other-than-in-identity (Baker 2002:67, 77). Becoming-animal is an action that sweeps us up and makes us something other (Baker 2002:74).

Yet while acknowledging that becoming-animal is a process, a nagging question lingers: What is the embodiment of becoming? Baker's question (and ours) remains largely unanswered. It is a conundrum that Deleuze and Guattari themselves fail to resolve. For example, they are not above discussing becoming-animal with reference to the embodiment - the actual corporeal body - of Gregor Samsa, the protagonist in Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (1996), Gregor Samsa wakes up one morning to find that overnight he has turned into a large insect. Without doubt, at this point he has a fixed

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34 Ron Broglio likens the "concept of becoming-animal as a pack" as a "minor art". By this he means that the centrality of the individual is replaced by the imperative of the community (2011:113). Minor art disrupts from the outside by "undermining metaphor [which] becomes the revolutionary gesture" (Broglio 2011:106).

35 For a further description of this process in terms of my own work see Chapter 3.

identity, (he has become). He represents "the momentary stabilization of a set of structures, [which] allow[s] an image to be recognised..." (Richards 2008:134). Now a despised an(other) in the form of a cockroach and locked in his room out of sight of the lodgers, his verminous presence terrifies and horrifies his family. The tale is told from the perspective of Gregor, erstwhile brother and son, now a cockroach, whose perceptions of the world are governed by his awkward carapace and feeble insect legs. At every turn his attempts to communicate are foiled and misunderstood. The subjective position belongs entirely to the animal as he peers uncomprehendingly at the humans beyond his room. If subjectivity were becoming, Gregor surely is a perfect example. But, becoming is more than that, as Deleuze and Guattari explain in their critique of the psychoanalytical interpretations usually offered as explanations of *Metamorphosis*.

Gregor becomes a cockroach not to flee his father but rather to find an escape where his father knows where to find one, in order to flee the director, the business, and the bureaucrats, to reach the region where the voice no longer does anything but hum: "Did you hear him? It was an animal's voice," said the chief clerk (Deleuze & Guattari 2004:97).

It was the animal's incomprehensibility, his inability to be heard that becomes the central motif recalling my scribbling that initiated this research: "We have shut our ears to their primal screams, their rumbles, hisses, purrs" (Cruise 2007). Gregor, as a metamorphosed insect, is deprived of the word. He cannot make himself understood - he can only hum. The refusal of his family to listen to, or attempt to interpret his incomprehensible mutterings, condemned him to isolation and certain death. With no language he becomes the absolute despised (wordless) Other.

Donna Haraway is scornful of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of animal becoming calling it a "fantasy wolf-pack" theory.

...here I find little but the two writers' scorn for all that is mundane and ordinary and the profound absence of curiosity about or respect for and with actual animals, even as immeasurable references to diverse animals are invoked to figure the authors' anti-Oedipal and anti-capitalist project. Derrida's actual little cat is decidedly not invited... (Haraway 2008:27).

She asks, "How is becoming with a practice of becoming worldly?" (Haraway 2008:35). Although she uses the term "becoming" Haraway explicitly rejects Deleuze and Guattari's position citing their astonishing claim that "*Anyone who likes dogs or cats is a fool*" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:240). It appears then, in this debate on the animal, the animal has got lost, especially the animal that occupies the liminal position of companion species. *Cum panis*, to break bread, is the figure that Haraway uses in her attempts to get down and dirty with her "messmates, to look and to look back, to have truck with..." (Haraway 2008:32). Haraway's *cum panis*, a messy coshaping, rejects the ethical dualism that frames the question in either/or terms. She claims that the question is incorrectly framed rooted as it is in "the dualisms and the misplaced concreteness of religious and secular humanism" (Haraway 2008:89). In this respect Haraway's ideas resonate sympathetically with those of Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray, who reject "secular humanism" in lieu of a spiritual connection with animals (Irigaray 2004:201). Cixous' critique of a patriarchal ordered system of writing implies a less structured more affective (and perhaps more messy) relationship with animals. Her concept of *écriture féminine* in turn echoes Deleuze and Guattari's concept of animal-becoming. Both are fluid states of being where identity is transcended. The concept of suspension of self, implied by "writing like a rat" resonates sympathetically with her "libidinal feminine writing" (Dobson 2004:127), in which the process is a utopian ideal rather than a static state. Nevertheless, in spite of a certain affinity with Cixous, it appears that Haraway is more interested in the actuality of human animal encounters than the spiritual realm.

...we are in a knot of species coshaping one another in layers of reciprocating complexity all the way down. Response and respect are possible only in those knots, with actual animals and people looking back at each other, sticky with all their muddled histories (Haraway 2008:42).

In this context Haraway takes Derrida to task. She says what he, and most other theorists on the animal question lack is a fundamental engagement with the animal. She takes issue with Derrida for not really engaging with his cat. In failing to take account of the semiotics of cat behaviour, he missed an opportunity to "meet species" with all the messy entanglements such a relationship implies. Prompted by Bentham's query, "Can they

suffer?" Derrida allowed pity not curiosity to dominate his discourse. "Shame trumped curiosity" (Haraway 2008:22).

Even if the cat did not become a symbol for all cats, the naked man's shame quickly became a figure for the shame of philosophy before all animals. The figure generated an important essay.... But whatever else the cat might have been doing, Derrida's full human male frontal nudity before an Other, which was of such interest in his philosophical tradition, was of no consequence to her... (Haraway 2008: 23).

As a result, Derrida knew no more about his cat "at the end of the morning than he knew at the beginning" (Haraway 2008:22). Although, Haraway concedes, Derrida did not fall into the trap of making "the subaltern speak", neither did he engage with other potential methods of responding, "one that risked knowing something more about cats and how to *look back*, perhaps even scientifically, biologically, and *therefore* also philosophically and intimately" (Haraway 2008:20). She says that he failed that particular cat in all her singularity by not engaging with her as companion species. What was she "doing, feeling, thinking or perhaps making available to him in looking back at him that morning?" (Haraway 2008:20). Haraway prefers to phrase the question differently: "Whom and what do I touch when I touch my dog?" She is referring to the warm, living, breathing animal, which is neither an abstract nor abstracted entity.

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While the continental philosophers might concern themselves with the nature of language and the ontological significance of "animal", utilitarian philosophers such as Peter Singer are concerned chiefly with the ethics of animal rights. Less interested in the philosophical significance of the animal in the lexicon, they focus on the practicalities of animal welfare. Singer's central concept, which he labels "speciesism", is discrimination against animals, a prejudice that Singer equates with racism and sexism (Singer 1989:n.pag.). "A 'speciesist' is someone who *a priori* (literally, 'before experience') prejudicially favors the interests of human over nonhuman animals, such that humans always count more by sheer virtue of their species membership as *Homo sapiens*" (Best n.d.). As Best phrases it, "[S]peciesists in effect argue that humans count more because they are humans and animals count less

because they are animals. From their prejudicial standpoint, they fail to ask and answer the real question of why a being's species membership is valorized over its existential nature" (Best n.d.).

Singer's central idea, "equal consideration" (Kalof & Fitzgerald 2007:14-22), is a moral position that assumes that any being that is sentient has an interest in not being harmed and therefore should receive the same ethical attention as all other sentient beings. All beings that *have consciousness* deserve equality in protecting their interests - starkly phrased, "All animals are equal". Singer's view is based on the Darwinian idea of phylogenetic continuity. That is human and animal are not binarily distinct but belong on the same continuum. As such, animals deserve equal consideration as humans. It is "treating likes, alike" (Francione cited in Calarco 2015:13). However, in "identity based theories", like Singer's continuity approach, comparisons tend to be uni-directional comparing the animal in terms of his/her similarity to the human and not the other way round. In this way, it is an essentially humanist approach (Calarco 2015: 27), which still leaves the human at the centre of the moral universe with concentric levels of interest radiating out depending on the animal's perceived similarity to the human. As Adam Cruise (2012) argues, a kitten would get more consideration than a rat, since the former has a face more in sympathy with human perceptions. This observation is borne out by the fact that in the USA The Animal Welfare Act, which aims to protect animals, explicitly excludes "...rats of the genus *Rattus* and mice of the genus *Mus* bred for use in research..." (Herzog 2010:224)<sup>36</sup>. The implication is that these species do not qualify as "animal". They are not only less than human; they are less than other animals.

This speciesist prejudice against certain animals is illustrated in an online publication in which a case was made for using some primates and not others in medical research (Vidyasagar 2016). Vidyasagar argued that it was fundamentally wrong to use the great apes in research, since they have "a cognitive capacity similar to humans", but it was justified to use "lesser" primates such as monkeys (Vidyasagar 2016). The assumption

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<sup>36</sup> Many countries, including South Africa, do not keep statistics at all and in addition some official figures are likely to be underestimates (Pickover 2008:5).

being that the latter are sufficiently phylogenetically removed from humans to be subjects of incarceration and experimentation.

Down the rabbit hole these questions of phylogenetic/hierarchical status do not apply. It seems that the Caterpillar is equal to the White Rabbit and the White Rabbit to the Mouse. Animals can talk, and even talk back to the human, as represented by the child, Alice. This is evident in Alice's encounter with the mouse whom she encounters swimming in a pool of her own tears. Alice, not sure of the proper way to address such a creature, remembers seeing a Latin declension in her sister's schoolbook: "A mouse - of a mouse - to a mouse...." (Carroll 1982:29). "O Mouse!" she says, but gets no response. Wracking her brains, Alice remembers a French phrase from her schoolbook. "Où est ma Chatte" (Where is my cat?). To Alice's distress, the poor mouse nearly levitates. "Would you like cats if you were me?" he squeaks. Alice, failing to understand the mouse's point of view, compounds the error by saying, "...don't be angry about it. And yet I wish I could show you our cat Dinah. I think you'd take a fancy to cats if only you could see her. She is such a dear quiet thing" (Carroll 1982:29-30). Alice shows sensitivity to the mouse even though it is misplaced. By understanding his feelings, if not his point of view, she acknowledges his sentience.

However, she shows less understanding and scant sympathy to the piglet in the *Pig and Pepper* chapter of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Finding herself in a smoky kitchen, Alice is confronted by a bad tempered Duchess. She is nursing a baby who is screaming its lungs out while the cook hurls all manner of missiles around the kitchen. At a certain point in the conversation, the Duchess accuses Alice of not knowing much (Carroll 1982:59), and then later, after yelling to nobody in particular to "chop off her head!" (Carroll 1982:60), she flings the baby at Alice. "Here you may nurse it a bit, if you like!" (Carroll 1982:60). Alice caught the baby, determined to care for it. "If I don't take this child with me," thought Alice, "they're sure to kill it in a day or two. Wouldn't it be murder to leave it behind?" (Carroll 1982:62). At which point the baby grunted and Alice discovered to her horror that it was turning into a pig. "'If you're going to turn into a pig my dear,'" Alice said seriously, "I'll have nothing more to do with you'" (Carroll 1982:62). But there

was no mistake the baby was a pig. Alice, now no longer concerned whether it would be killed or not, set it down, whereupon it trotted away.

Was the baby that Alice held human or animal? This matters since it dictated Alice's response to the creature. In Alice's world the care of the one trumps the other - the child is more important than the pig. But should it be? Peter Singer, would label Alice's discriminatory response as "speciesism". Alice demonstrated her species prejudice by wanting to save the human baby, but was less interested when it turned into a pig. Alice knew the baby would be hurt if she did not care for it, but was quite happy for the piglet to run away to its certain fate. According to Singer, Alice's (and by extension Lewis Carroll's) nineteenth century species prejudice is a viewpoint still held by some contemporary moral philosophers. He cites Stanley Benn who maintains it would be "monstrous sentimentality" to grant animals equal consideration. Benn says if one had to feed a hungry baby or a hungry dog (or in the case of Alice, a pig), choosing the latter would be "morally defective" (cited in Singer 1989).

In 2011 I created a sculpture based on this scene in the *Pig and Pepper* chapter (Carroll 1982:56-65). Derived from Alice's exhortation to the pig it is entitled, *If you turn into a pig I will have nothing more to do with you* (2011) (Fig 2.5). In this sculpture, an armless baby balances precariously on top of a larger armless figure. The connection of the figures to each other is tenuous. It appears that if the standing figure moves, or takes a step, the baby will fall. It cannot be caught because the larger figure has no arms. The suggestion is that care of an(other) is a moral balancing act. One step either way, and the smaller being will tumble to the ground. Curiously, there is no pig in the sculpture nor does the larger figure depict the little girl, Alice. Neither is there a distinction between human and animal. In keeping with my position of avoiding a proselytising stance, the title is the only thing that hints towards a (moral) interpretation.



**Fig. 2.5.** Wilma Cruise *If you turn into a pig I will have nothing more to do with you* (2012). Ceramic on steel base, 112 x 44 x 44 cm. (Photographed by Ant Strack).

One of the key features of utilitarianism is that moral choices are guided by the principle of the greater good. In these terms the killing of animals is *sometimes* justified. The animal rights activist, Tom Regan takes issue with this view.

...Utilitarianism may seem to be a congenial theory for those who utilize nonhuman animals in animal-model research. The most common justification of such research consists in appealing to the improvements in human health and longevity to which this research allegedly has led, and while researchers may recognize the need to look for alternatives to the animal model, lest these animals be used unnecessarily, it seems clear the moral justification they offer is Utilitarian (Regan 2006:15).

Utilitarianism balances human needs against the welfare of the animal. It is a question of weighing the costs to the animal against the benefits to the human. However, Gary Francione, arguing from an animal rights position, offers a critique of what he terms the "humane principle" encoded in this kind of utilitarian welfarist balancing act. The humane

principle aims to reduce the misery of animals and to manage their welfare in situations in which they sometimes, of necessity, have to be used for the greater good, as for example in medical research. In contrast to the welfare approach, animal rights activists such as Regan and Francione, argue for the total abolition of medical experimentation and factory farming.

It is not just refinement or reduction that is called for, not just larger, cleaner cages, not just more generous use of anaesthetic or the elimination of multiple surgery, not just tidying up the system. It is complete replacement. The best we can do when it comes to using animals in science is - not to use them. That is where our duty lies, according to the rights view (Regan 1985).

Regan makes a case for the rights of animals derived from Kantian principles. Immanuel Kant's position is fundamental. He argued that humanity exists as an "end in itself" (Regan 2006:12). Extrapolating this view to animals, Regan maintains that animals are "subjects of a life" and exist not as possible means towards the greater good, as the utilitarians maintain, but simply because it is morally right to do so (Regan 2006:17-18). Like Kant's "end in itself" the respect due to animals is a basic postulate in Regan's ethic what he calls a "reflective sense". There is no need to appeal to any other concept other than the intuitive knowing that harming animals is wrong. Regan argues his case from a rational point of view, as would Kant. But, he says, and this is significant, reason is not enough to motivate an ethic of animal rights.

It is our hearts, not just our heads, that call for an end to it all, that demand of us that we overcome, for them, the habits and forces behind their systematic oppression (Regan 1985).

Regan proposes the concept of care, an emotion beyond reason and a necessary prerequisite for an ethic of animal rights. He argues that in the (inevitably rational) utilitarian calculation, it is the animal that comes off the worst. Since humans take the decisions, human needs trump animal needs. That is, since animals are the property of humans, the owner is legally entitled to use the animal at will, albeit within the constraints of the welfare laws. Drawing an analogy with the ownership of humans during the chattel slave period, when owners could do what they liked with their human property, (and sometimes could be kind within the system), Francione maintains that the ownership of

animals undermines any equality of consideration (2000:129). In other words, the humane principle does not do what it is set out to do – viz. to protect animals from exploitation (Francione 2000:129). Badiou sums it up: “[A]t the core of the mastery internal to ethics is always the power to decide who dies and who does not” (cited in Baker 2013:6). His contention is illustrated in a furore that arose in the social media in 2016 over the killing of a gorilla in the Cincinnati Zoo. Harambe, a 17-year-old silverback, was shot ostensibly to save the life of a child, who had fallen into his cage. This event raised the old conundrum of the “burning house dilemma”. The dilemma is phrased thus: “If you were caught in a burning house, were running out the door to save your life, and only had time enough to save a dog in one room and a human being in another, which would you choose?” (Best n.d.). As Best phrased it, “damned if you do and damned if you don’t” – that is, if you chose the human above the dog you were speciesist and/or hypocritical and if you chose the dog above the human you were “vilified as a miscreant and deviant misanthrope with warped values” (Best n.d). However, as Best points out, the “burning house dilemma” is something of a red herring. In such a (real) situation one’s choice would be governed by other factors such as “existential proximity and personhood” (Best n.d). However, “personhood” as a basis for moral decisions is inherently flawed. It depends on the definition of the term and whether “personhood” is confined exclusively to *Homo Sapiens*, a view that is being challenged recently with ethological studies of the great apes. Clearly views are polarized: “[W]hen there is human suffering on a scale as large as we currently experience, I have no tears left to cry over a gorilla’s life lost” (Kolhatkar 2016). The opposing view was equally vehement: “I would also choose a member of an endangered species (such as a Florida Panther, Black Rhino, or silverback Gorilla) over any human stranger(s), unless, again, this person was so important to the planet s/he could do dramatic things to help it. For anyone quick to uncover more evidence of “egocentric masquerading” here, I would gladly give my own life to save an endangered species” (Best n.d). Either way, for or against, it is the human who has that power to decide who lives and who dies. In the Harambe incident it was the human life that was chosen above the animal one. That is, having dominion and ownership of animals still enables modern humans to (legally) use animals at their will while paying lip service to humanitarian principles. In this sense modern animals, exploited as bio-commodities, are

not too different from Descartes' unreasoning, unthinking, animal machines. They are instrumentalised beings to be used and disposed of as necessity dictates.

Roger Scruton, however, takes issue with the ethical position of the animal rights perspective with its implication of personhood. Based on, the possibly erroneous assumption, that granting animals rights assumes that they then have obligations and duties, he says animals are not moral beings who can exercise these duties and obligations. He argues that if all animals were accorded the same rights as humans, the fox would have the moral obligation to respect the rights of the chicken (2011:25), a view that is patently absurd.

By ascribing rights to animals, and so promoting them to full membership of the moral community, we tie them in obligations that they can neither fulfil nor comprehend. Not only is this senseless cruelty in itself, it effectively destroys all possibility of cordial and beneficial relations between us and them (Scruton 2011:25).

He justifies his position by saying that animals "lack the distinguishing features of the moral being - rationality, self-consciousness, personality, [personhood] and so on" (2011:25). It seems as if Scruton's position is the traditional Cartesian one in which animals lack reason and subjectivity - a position that ensures the insuperable divide between human and other animals. Yet, he is not indifferent to the plight of animals as his appeal to moral *emotion* rather than moral law demonstrates.

Sympathy and piety are indispensable motives in the moral being, and their voices cannot be silenced by a mere calculation. Someone who was indifferent to the sight of pigs confined in batteries, who did not feel some instinctive need to pull down these walls and barriers and let in light and air, would have lost sight of what it is to be a living animal (Scruton 2011:31).

Scruton distinguishes between different kinds of (human) moral obligations to different classes of animals, pets, animals bred for food, those kept in zoos, used for sport and entertainment and the animals in the wild. It appears that his moral position is a negotiated one rather than absolutist. He maintains that this is necessary to reflect "not only the social function of moral judgment, but also the mental reality of the animals themselves" (Scruton 2011:37). His position is based on a solid foundation of moral

emotion. He appeals to three bases of moral feeling – sympathy, piety and virtue (Scruton 2011:37). In this sense he echoes Regan's appeal to the concept of care – an ethic that reaches beyond reason and appeals to an emotional sense of what is right.

The animal as an instrumentalised being informed the sculpture, *Poor Horace: Watching The Hours* (2009) (Fig 2.6).



**Fig. 2.6.** Wilma Cruise *Poor Horace: Watching The Hours* (2009). Acrylic resin and mixed media, 267 x 155 x 80 cm. (Photographed by Anne-Marie Tully).

*Poor Horace* was originally made from clay. The forms provided the model for casts in synthetic fibre and bronze. Like many of my equine sculptures, *Poor Horace* subverts the artistic equine tradition in which the nobility and grace of the animal is celebrated. *Poor Horace* is lumpen and anchored. The materiality of the clay in its wet, inert form is retained in the finished sculpture. Horace is depicted twice: his doppelgänger is suspended and hung upside down besides his standing form. Transporting a horse into a ship necessitates it being slung under the torso and hoisted by a crane as if it were an inanimate object. In the sculpture, the inverse of this image overturns Horace and depicts another method of transportation; that of an anaesthetised horse being hauled into

surgery suspended by the fetlocks. Up or down, Horace is rendered immobile. This effect is enhanced by his placement on a wheeled trolley, implying that his movement is dependent on an outside agency. His defining equine characteristic, movement, has been stolen. He neither bellows nor protests his condition of immobility. Thus, while his body is whole, the essence of his equine being is truncated and fragmented. He is silenced.

There is a sense of irony in the use of the (literal) inversion of the equine image. In the traditional equestrian monument, the power and beauty of the horse is foregrounded usually in the service of man's aggrandisement. The horse and rider are usually placed above the viewers' heads (to remind the viewers of their insignificance?). The monuments are patriarchal, colonial and phallic. In this genre the horse is both literally and metaphorically an instrument for humankind's ambitions. Further, in the contemporary sports of racing, showjumping and eventing the horse is used as a vehicle for their owners' competitive ambitions. In these scenarios little attention seems to be paid to each animal's uniqueness - its personality or emotional needs. Humankind has appeared to have lost the potential relationship with the horse-as-a-being in itself.

While Derrida is not an activist like Singer and Regan et al., he nevertheless appears to occupy an ideological position similar to that of the animal welfare and animal rights proponents. He maintains that it is our duty and obligation to declare a war against those who not only violate animal life, but those who challenge the sentiment of compassion (Derrida 2008:29). Moving beyond the debate on the *logos*, towards an ethical stance he refers to the famous Bentham question of whether animals can suffer. "Can they suffer?" leaves no room for doubt" (Derrida 2008:28). There is also no reservation about his attitude to the modern subjection of the animal as he evokes the spectre of genocide<sup>37</sup>. "Such a subjection...can be called violence in the most morally neutral sense of the term..." (Derrida 2008:25).

One should neither abuse the figure of genocide nor consider it explained away. For it gets more complicated here: the annihilation of certain species is indeed in process,

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37 Others have used the figure of genocide. Elizabeth Costello in JM Coetzee's eponymous book compares the abattoir to the gas chambers of WWII and the death of the animals to the genocide of the Jews (Coetzee 2004:63).

but it is occurring through the organization and exploitation of an artificial, infernal, virtually interminable survival, in conditions that previous generations would have judged monstrous, outside of every supposed norm of a life proper to animals that are thus exterminated by means of their continued existence or even their overpopulation. As if, for example, instead of throwing people into ovens or gas chambers (let's say Nazi) doctors and geneticists had decided to organize the overproduction and overgeneration of Jews, gypsies, and homosexuals by means of artificial insemination, so that, being more numerous and better fed, they could be destined in always increasing numbers for the same hell, that of the imposition of genetic experimentation or extermination by gas or by fire (Derrida 2008:26).

Having aligned himself ideologically with the animal rights proponents Derrida is nevertheless critical of them calling their protest "minority, weak, marginalised" (2008:26). Further he questions their "unstated" assumption of a "biologicistic continuism" (Derrida 2008:30) between the human and the non-human animal. He argues instead that the evidence of an abyssal rupture between man and animal is overwhelming. Moreover, he says that since his whole philosophical position is to reject the "homogenous and the continuous" he cannot support the continuity theory (Derrida 2008:30). In this respect he departs not only from the likes of Singer but also Deleuze and Guattari. While Deleuze and Guattari do not argue for Darwinian continuism, their analogy of the rhizome does imply equality between the terms, human and animal<sup>38</sup>. By emphasising animal-becoming as a point between, Deleuze and Guattari forgo the privileged humanist position of seeing things from the top<sup>39</sup>. By emphasising the middle point, questions of hierarchy fall away. "It's not easy to see things from the middle, rather than looking down at them from above or up at or from left to right and right to left: try it you'll see that everything changes" (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:23). Lost in the midst of an assemblage with no beginning or end, the human as superior being is lost. In the middle, all is of equal value and meaning. The point in the middle thus implies an ethical stance, one in which the distinction between subject and object, human and animal, become irrelevant.

Calarco identifies approaches such as Deleuze and Guattari's as an example of "indistinction theory".

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38 In contrast to the animal rights and animal welfare continuity theorists Deleuze and Guattari do not use the human as the measure of all things.

39 "A becoming is neither one nor two, nor the relation of the two; it is the in between..." (Deleuze & Guattari in Atterton & Calarco 2004:94).

[I]ndistinction theorists attempt to develop ways of thinking about human beings, animals, and ethics in a manner that radically displaces human beings from the centre of ethical reflection and that avoids many of the exclusions associated with the lingering forms of anthropocentrism (2015:50).

Calarco maintains that the trouble with indistinction theories is that in breaking down the human/animal distinction, the field of beings collapses into “an undifferentiated mass beyond conceptual understanding” (2015:54). It is a “night.... in which all cows are black”! (Calarco 2015:55). When there is no categorisation and no differentiation are we not reduced to silence? But perhaps this is the point. The animal world is not dependent on the word. Our task as humans is to deal with the animal question on the edge of language.

Yet whatever the message, the ethical categories and preferences, the underpinning question on the animal is the final reductive one; the point at which all discussions on the animal seem to stall: “Should we kill them to eat them?” Is this not an example of *argumentum ad absurdum*? Not according to Singer.

For the great majority of human beings, especially in urban, industrialized societies, the most direct form of contact with members of other species is at mealtimes: we eat them. In doing so we treat them purely as means to our ends. We regard their life and well being as subordinate to our taste for a particular kind of delicacy. Let us say “taste” deliberately – this is purely a matter of pleasing our palate. There can be no defence of eating flesh in terms of satisfying nutritional needs... (Singer 1989).

Eating the flesh of animals is an issue that I explored in a number of diary pages that accompanied the exhibition, *The Alice Diaries* at Circa Gallery in Johannesburg in 2012 (Fig 2.7). The diary acted as a parallel text to the visual information provided by the sculptures and paintings. I devoted several pages to the eating of animals including numerous drawings of pigs onto which I scrawled the following excerpt from *Dissertation upon a Roast Pig* by Charles Lamb (1775–1834).

I remember an hypothesis, argued upon by the young students, when I was at St. Omer's, and maintained with much learning and pleasantry on both sides, “Whether, supposing that the flavour of a pig who obtained his death by whipping (per *flagellationem extremam*) superadded a pleasure upon the palate of a man more

intense than any possible suffering we can conceive in the animal, is man justified in using that method of putting the animal to death?" I forget the decision (Lamb 2011).

The horror implicit in this tale seems to be ignored by the amusing tone and the lack of interest in the torture of the living creature. Although this was written in the eighteenth century, an internet search shows that a contemporary publication of *Dissertation upon a Roast Pig* is to be found in Penguin's *Great Food Series* in which Charles Lamb's rapturous prose on the taste and aroma of pork crackling is emphasised, while, as always, the pig (arguably a sentient being) is the "absent referent" (Adams 2015). His/her life is ignored in the pursuit of human pleasure.



**Fig 2.7.** Wilma Cruise *The Alice Diaries* (2013). A3 folios, mixed media on paper, 42 x 30 cm.

While I do not adopt an activist's approach like Regan's and Singer's and am not (yet) vegan or vegetarian, the issue of killing and eating sentient animals does worry me and I pursue it, albeit obliquely, in sculptural form. In a painted, ceramic sculpture entitled *The Caucus Pig* (Fig 2.8) I depict a smiling pig.



**Fig 2.8.** Wilma Cruise *The Caucus - Pig* (2012). Painted ceramic, 44 x 45 x 30 cm.  
(Photographed by Ant Strack).

Her eyes are squeezed closed in mirth. Like the pig in the suite of drawings discussed above, I appear to have accorded this pig special status. It is as if she is smiling at a hidden joke. I suggest that she “knows”. But what is it that she knows? Might it be that the flesh of the pig provides the site of the greatest contestation and she realizes that in the end the tables will be turned and the joke will be on those of us who wrestle with the killing and eating of roast pig? Ours will be a moral pain.

Pigs are possibly the most cruelly exploited animals in factory farming (Lockwood 2016). The industry notoriously refuses to accord sentience to the animals that they breed and slaughter. As Regan would phrase it, factory farming methods deny the pigs a “subject of a life”. In the process from slaughter to packaged meat, pigs have become de-animalised. They have become things. Their moment of being as living creatures is unknown, as is their deaths, which are hidden from sight in abattoirs on the fringes of cities. The pig is not *seeable* (Lockwood 2016) except as a product on the plate. It has been denied an opportunity to look back at us - it has no occasion to be seen, and to be seen looking back. Regan says, “...the undeserved pain animals feel is not the only morally relevant consideration; that they are killed must also be taken into account. So, yes, Pain [and] suffering are important; but so are death [and] destruction” (Regan cited in Gigliotti 2011:44).

A sculpture entitled, *Hybrid Piglet* (Fig 2.9) continued the theme of pig agency.



**Fig 2.9.** Wilma Cruise *Hybrid Piglet* (2011). Ceramic on steel base, 105 cm.  
(Photographed by the artist).

*Hybrid Piglet* featured in most of the exhibitions in *The Alice Sequence* in which she was always positioned outside the group of figures looking in. Unlike most of my sculptures she has arms and a mouth opened in laughter. In this manifestation *Hybrid Piglet* is not just a creature destined for slaughter, she is a living being, a particular and particularised personality, who laughs and engages with the comic tragedy that unfolds before her in the exhibition space. I have not only given her the agency of arms, but also put her in a bipedal position suggesting her closeness to the human animal. Thus, while she belongs to the generalised category “pig” she transcends it by asserting her individuality. She is, like Derrida’s (real) cat, a singular, unsubstitutable being – one that needs to be seen seeing.

As I wrestled with these ideas of an ethical nature I proceeded with the creation of works for *The Alice Diaries*, the third exhibition in *The Alice Sequence*. Gavin Younge in his essay that accompanied the exhibition summed up the core idea of the exhibition. *The Alice Diaries* “underline the rawness of human incomprehension, both between ourselves and between humanity and the sentient beings which [sic] share our planet” (Younge 2012:11). The gulf of silence between human and animal is what Derrida calls “the abyssal rupture” (Derrida 2008:12) and what I refer to more prosaically as “the space-between”. In trying to bridge the gap between human and animal I attempt to “talk” to the animals through the act of making art. This is possibly a ludicrous wish but, as Alice said when she found herself swimming in the pool of her own tears with a mouse, “Would it be of any use now ... to speak to this mouse? Everything is out-of-the-way down here, that I should think very likely it can talk: at any rate, *there is no harm in trying*” (Carroll 1982:28 Emphasis mine). Taking a cue from Alice's optimism and from the Dodo who said, “the best way to explain it is to do it” (Carroll 1982:32) I investigate the human animal connection through the sculptures, prints and drawings.

Alice's conversation with the mouse provides the key to reading the exhibition, *The Alice Diaries* (2012). The creatures in Wonderland are on equal terms with the girl child. They are thinking speaking beings with distinct personalities. They do not masquerade as figures for human attributes. Neither are they moral metaphors, nor cute creations intended to evoke sentimental feedings. They are not therianthropic figures representing the beast in man or the man in beast. They might be human and they might be animal or they might be half way between - their categorisation is not important - their equality is. Neither are the works illustrations of an idea nor a didactic manifesto. They do not invite a simplified reading. As Anne-Marie Tully suggested, the viewer should approach the work in *The Alice Diaries* “playfully, with childish belief, stumbling on ‘truths’ along the way” (Tully 2012:15). This is how readers usually engage with the texts, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*<sup>40</sup>. It is possible that my visual texts can be read in the same way, uncovering truths of a more logical and analytical nature.

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40 It is well known that Lewis Carroll's tales can also be read, (by their adult readers), philosophically, mathematically and logically, adding another dimension to their playfulness.

The use of text was not only confined to the diary pages like those used to explore the eating of pork/pig. It continued in the form of excerpts from the Lewis Carroll tales scrawled in charcoal on the walls of the gallery. These decontextualised phrases and aphorisms serve the purpose of metonymically drawing attention to the failure of language in addressing the animal turn. Relying on the visual text to provide a parallel language that does not necessarily correspond with a logocentric one and, further preferring the tools of metaphor and metonymy, I am not always able to access “truths” buried in the visual text. It is a point that Anne-Marie Tully highlights with reference to *Alice: Self-portrait II* (Fig 2.10) in which a pair of cats is attached to the chest of the puzzled Alice.

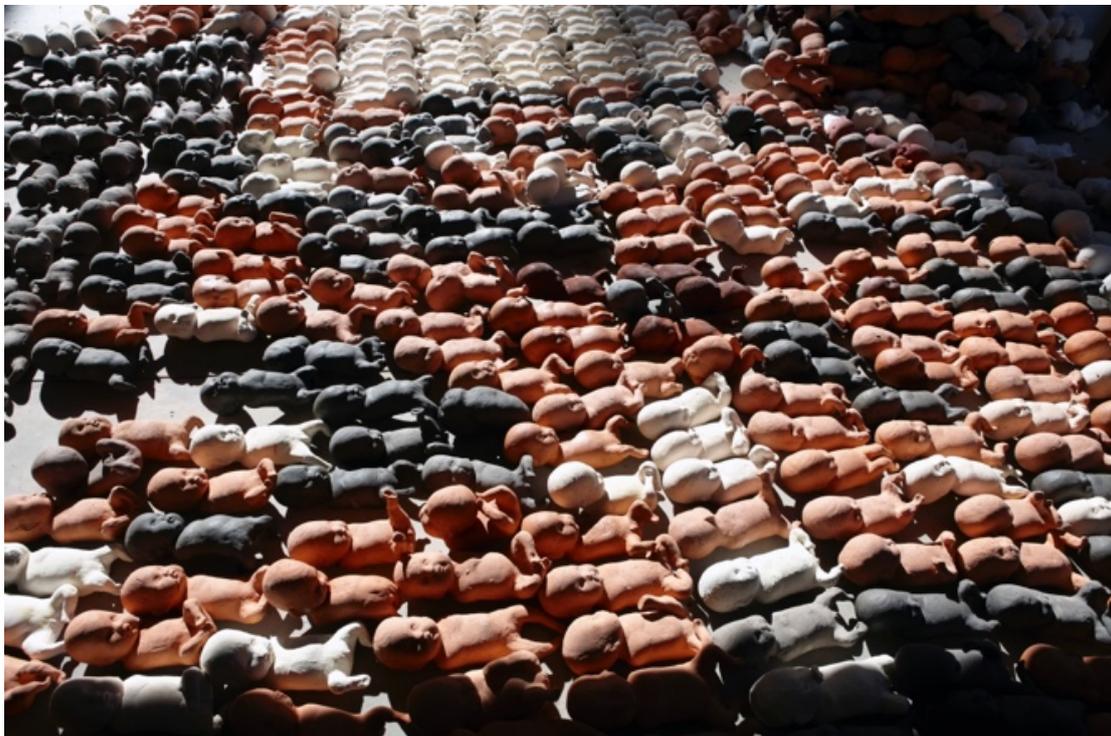
Most important to note in this scenario is that the notion of inter-species dialogue is heralded as inherently physical and non-linguistic. This is a distinctly anti-Cartesian figure that undermines the human conceit of symbolic language by stressing the physical interactivity of human and animal bodily forms and gestures (Tully 2012:28).

That is, the phrases do not describe, explain or illustrate the works in the middle of the gallery. Instead they emphasise the nonsensical nature of dream and nightmare. “I ca’n’t explain *myself*, I’m afraid, Sir,” said Alice, “because I’m not myself, you see.” says Alice to the caterpillar (Carroll 1982:47). Is it that we as humankind are not ourselves? Could we be something other? In the exhibition I do not necessarily provide the answer to these existential questions.

Although the “diary” stretched over all rooms, the main installation took place in the larger oval-shaped space of the gallery upstairs. The installation, *Cradle* (Fig 2.11), consisted of a number of ceramic forms including over one thousand armless doll-like forms spread across the floor of the gallery. The conceptual underpinning of *Cradle* was informed by the awareness of overpopulation by the human species over which we have no control. Each doll was cast from a mother mould and each was particularised by the placement of head and legs. The heads were tilted at different angles. The legs, freely modelled, take on attitudes of repose or activity. The surfaces of the babies were variously treated with non-fired coloured oxides, sand, paint, sealant or cementitious materials, giving a range of hues from the deepest black to white and all ranges of pink, brown and yellow in between.



**Fig 2.10.** Wilma Cruise Alice: *Self Portrait II* (2011), mixed media on paper, 200 x 100 cm.



**Fig 2.11** Wilma Cruise *Cradle* (2011–2012). 1000+ ceramic forms, approximately 30 cm each. (Photographed by Ant Strack).

The babies share a common origin, but much like in real life, each is individualised. All the babies are armless, signifying a universal helplessness. They have no control over their existence. Having arrived each is nevertheless entitled to be subject of a life even though each human adds to the unbearable weight on the planet. Strangely, and perhaps significantly, some of the babies' pert, doll-like mouths morph into snouts and other animal-like features giving an Orwellian sense of dislocation - but also suggesting the closeness of the human species to the animal (Fig. 2.12).



**Fig 2.12.** Wilma Cruise *Cradle* (2011-2012) detail. (Photographed by the artist).

god and the absence of god  
 light and the absence of light  
 a dialectic  
 like silence and  
 a scream  
 if there is hell must heaven exist? (Cruise 2000).

Surrounding the river of babies in the upstairs gallery, were a number of animal-like figures (Fig 2.13). I refer to these onlookers as *The Caucus*. This is a reference to the caucus race in *Alice in Wonderland*, in which the animals run round and round the pool of tears with no apparent purpose. There is no beginning and no end to the race; no winners and no prizes other than what Alice had in her pocket - some "comfits" and a thimble. No doubt Lewis Carroll intended this as a gentle satire on the purposelessness of meetings and conferences. My focus on the other hand was to have the animals sit in judgment. Precisely on who and why the creatures are adjudicating, like the caucus race in *Alice*, I deliberately leave for the viewer to decide.



**Fig 2.13.** Wilma Cruise *The Alice Diaries* (2012). Installation view. (Photographed by Anthea Pokroy).

The main body of *The Caucus* was made up of a number of ceramic figures. Like the babies making up *Cradle* these were cast from a mother mould. The original not unsurprisingly was entitled *The Mother* (Fig 2.14).



**Fig 2.14.** Wilma Cruise *The Mother* (2011). Ceramic on steel base, 120 x 50 x 50 cm. (Photographed by Anthea Pokroy).

These figures, although amorphous in shape and without features, are undoubtedly human. The second figure in the Caucus series was called *Mother Other* (Fig 2.15). Although formally the same shape as *The Mother*, this figure had, as an addition, a steel structure that masked her face. A cone-shaped beak was added to the next one in the series to create *The Bird* (Fig 2.16). The human figure was thus transmogrified through the series into animal form. From the additions of the steel mask and the inverted cone covering the faces of the figures, the forms became other than human<sup>41</sup>. The lack of features and the addition of masks emphasised the silence of the animals (and human beings) in the face the complication of the animal/human interface. These figures were joined in the installation by a number of animal forms - a couple of baboons, a giant rabbit (*The Caucus - Rabbit*) (Fig. 2.17) and a laughing piglet, (*Hybrid Piglet*), thereby creating "an autarky that guards the cradle" (Younge 2012:9).



**Fig 2.15.** Wilma Cruise *Mother Other* (2011). Ceramic on steel base, 108 cm.  
(Photographed by Anthea Pokroy).

**Fig 2.16.** Wilma Cruise *The Bird* (2012). Ceramic and steel on steel base, 105 x 101 x 50 cm. (Photographed by Ant Strack).

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<sup>41</sup> The final figure in the caucus was made out to friable terra-cotta clay. In the process of making the figure disintegrated leaving a partial torso. This figure fittingly marked the end of the caucus.

*The Caucus – Rabbit* is in the words of Gavin Young, “self-inscribed with an ill-fitting robe of verisimilitude” (Young 2012:9). As he argues, we all “know” the idea of “rabbit” not only through lived experience, but also through childhood tales like *Alice in Wonderland*. “Seeing Cruise’s re-envisioned rabbit entails a loss of the real and a correlative augmentation of our sense of body, since it is the body that renders perception possible” (Young 2012:9-11). The sense of bodily dislocation is emphasised by the nearly human life-size form of the rabbit. As Alice finds in dreamland, size and scale are illogical contributing to a sense of unreality.



**Fig 2.17.** Wilma Cruise *The Caucus – Rabbit* (2012). Ceramic, 105 x 45 x 55 cm.  
(Photographed by Ant Strack).

Scale also informed the three figures that were central to the installation entitled *Big, Bigger, Biggest (Alice)* (Fig 2.18).



**Fig 2.18.** Wilma Cruise *Big, Bigger, Biggest (Alice)* 2012). Ceramic on steel base, *Biggest (Alice)* 180 x 60 x 80 cm, *Bigger (Alice)* 121 x 32 x 32 cm, *Big (Alice)* 90 x 20 x 28 cm. (Photographed by Anthea Pokroy).

These three armless forms allude to Alice's confusion as to her real size. The elongation of her disproportionately long neck confused the poor pigeon who thought she might just be a serpent, prompting Alice to question her identity. In this manifestation, Alice, as an exemplar of the human species, is an unstable referent. She is neither large nor small; human nor serpent. Her place, and ours, in the moral universe, is no longer ensured. In

the inverted dream world of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*, humankind's position on top of the Cartesian pile is questioned.

The exhibition, *The Alice Diaries* was an inchoate, pre-linguistic exploration on the question of the animal. Through material means of clay, paint and charcoal I felt my way through the morass of ideas on the animal turn. The resultant objects and images are less illustrations than markers of this process. The decoding of the works only suggests rather than explains. Nevertheless, as I moved through the process of making towards articulating my moral position, I was attracted towards an affective approach – one not directed by reason, nor the calculus of the utilitarian approach, but one of an appeal to pity (Derrida), an ingrained piety (Scruton) or care (Regan)<sup>42</sup>. Further, I agree with Donna Haraway, that emotion does not exist in a vacuum. One has to get down and dirty in messy co-entanglements with the animal and not only rely on theoretical abstractions. One has to break bread with the Other. Questions have to be asked, not in the abstract realm of reason, but in the knotty personal specificity of the problem posed by a particular animal. Further as I argue, it is in the entanglements with the materials of art that the main battle with meaning takes place. It is in the messy confines of the studio, and through the process of making, that thinking occurs. In the next chapter I consider my art making in terms of the preconscious drives, shamanistic influences and the metaphor provided by Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of writing like a rat and animal-becoming.

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<sup>42</sup> This will be explored more fully in Chapter Five when I discuss the concept of imaginative empathy.

## CHAPTER 3

# We're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad.



**Fig 3.1.** Wilma Cruise *The Queen* (2015). Drypoint and chine collé (Edition 15), 43 x 43.7 cm.

[I]f reason is what sets me apart from the veal calf, then thank you but no thank you, I'll talk to someone else (Coetzee 2004:112).

## Exhibitions

*Advice from a Caterpillar* (2015)

*Red Queen to Play* (2015)<sup>43</sup>

In this chapter I argue that the reconnection with the animal other is made possible through means other than rational discourse. I suggest that this role falls on artists, shamans and sorcerers – those who work on the interface of the physical and the metaphysical. Using inchoate and not fully understood means, they find themselves in a position to make Berger's lost sacred connection with the animal. Making thereby implies that rational thought is bypassed and the unconscious or pre-conscious dominates. In this chapter, I invoke the metaphor of "madness" as Lewis Carroll articulated in Alice's conversation with the Cheshire Cat. I briefly discuss various models of the unconscious including the Freudian and shamanistic. I consider Cixous' *écriture féminine* and Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of animal-becoming and writing like a rat as useful metaphors for the creative process. In this context I investigate the work of Elizabeth Gunter, Joseph Beuys and Nicolene Swanepoel as well as my own works from *Advice from a Caterpillar* and *Red Queen to Play*.

Elizabeth Costello says that it is via poetics that understanding with the animals might be reached (Coetzee 2004:111). Costello's implication is that it is through affect rather than reason that we get closer to the animal other. It is through such means that modern humankind can regain "the sacred connection to the animal" (Berger 2007:253-255). Taking my lead from her, I argue that since the artist works on the interface of the physical and metaphysical, she is one, amongst others, who has a conduit to the animal world. Thinking with animals, through art, allows one to access truths that are closed to rational discourse.

That the artist is one who has the means to strike a blow for meaning in a meaningless world is signalled by an early work in my oeuvre, *Self Portrait* (1992) (Fig 3.2).

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43 *Advice From a Caterpillar* David Krut, Maboneng Gallery, Johannesburg, May and June 2015.

*Red Queen to Play* Rust en Vrede Gallery, Durbanville, August to September 2015.



**Fig 3.2.** Wilma Cruise *Self Portrait* (1992), Ceramic on concrete base. 173 x 62 x 45 cm.  
(Photographed by Doreen Hemp)

Since most of my sculptures are armless, this self-portrait with arms suggests a particular agency. A short poem written contemporaneously suggests a reading.

the artist has power  
she has arms  
she controls  
she is god  
(for a small while)  
but like god  
she confronts evil  
only in a place where  
chaos reigns  
(Cruise 2000).

The implication is that the artist has powers to act upon the world in a way that is not of the usual order of things. These involve procedures that bypass cerebral control. They are

neither philosophical nor scientific, practical nor necessarily rational. That is, the artistic journey has no clear end in sight. What insights are gained en route are as mute as the slippages of language and (non)communication between animals and humans. The resultant findings of the artistic process are *a priori* unknown. What lies beyond is a *terra incognita*.

This conundrum of having no definite end point to the artistic journey was captured in a scene in *Alice in Wonderland*. In conversation with the Cheshire Cat Alice asked,

"Would you tell me, please, which way I want to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where –" said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.

"– so long as I get *somewhere*" Alice added as an explanation.

"Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat. "If you only walk long enough" (Carroll 1982:62-64).

The voyage of creativity is justified by the journey itself; an elusive destination is of not much concern as long as it is *somewhere* and that the journey continues. The markers of the journey are governed by preconscious/unconscious impulses<sup>44</sup> – inchoate directions governed as much by the imperative of the hand as of the head. Not knowing where one is going, but going nevertheless, is an irrational action. I propose a metaphor of "madness". This is not insanity of the clinical order, but of the knowing kind suggested by the Cheshire Cat when he said to Alice from his lofty perch, "we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad" (Carroll 1982:64). It is a kind of madness that alludes to the unhinging of words and things from their normal contexts. As Alice found in her dream world, the inversion of the normal order allows access to new territories and permits new insights and new knowledges.

When Derrida encountered his little cat in the bathroom in the scene of non-knowing, his exposure to the gaze of the other animal is according to Calarco, "somewhat akin to

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44 Burgin (1991:215) suggests term "preconscious" instead of "unconscious", since unconscious denotes that which is unavailable to conscious thought except in coded form. In this exposition the terms "preconscious" and "unconscious" are used relatively interchangeably. Due note has been taken of their more precise definition.

madness, which is why Derrida calls it 'a deranged theatrics'" (2008:125). Approaching the question of the animal in a similar "deranged" way and without precise analytical intent, allows the artist to find and to make semiotic changes of signification that may lead in many directions. Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor of the rhizome is apt here (1987:7). The rhizomatic idea allows for a multiplication of meanings with not one being prioritised above the other (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:7). This clearly opens the door for the possibility of "languages" that are non-linguistic, mimetic, gestural and affective. In other words, it permits the argument for animal languages that do not mimic the human logocentric one.

In their meditation, *Memories of a Sorcerer* (1987:239-252) Deleuze and Guattari liken the writer and philosopher (and presumably the artist) to a sorcerer. One who occupies a liminal position as contradictorily, being both part of the pack and having an anomalous position in the pack (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:239 & 243). "Sorcerers have always held the anomalous position, at the edge of fields or woods. They haunt the fringes. They are at the borderline of the village, or *between* villages" (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:246). In pure Deleuzian rhetoric, Deleuze and Guattari list what the anomalous individual is not - it [sic] is not a unique specimen, nor a perfection of a type, nor the eminent term of a series, nor an individual, nor a species. It only has affects that teem, swell and seethe! (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:244-245). A sorcerer is a "phenomenon of bordering" (1987:245) with becoming-animal being "an affair of sorcery" (1987:247). Further a sorcerer is one who responds to the injunction to "write like a rat". The imperative is to either stop writing, or write like rat in which case writing becomes an act of becoming and "all becomings are written like sorcerer's drawings" (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:251).

In spite of a certain circularity in the argument, this description has merits since the role of the sorcerer is not one of fixed identity, rather it is a series of becomings never reaching an end point. Nevertheless, Steve Baker suggests that Deleuze and Guattari's use of the word "sorcerer" is metaphoric.

Yes, the sorcerer. It does seem to be an extraordinary word to introduce. But I think it's partly used tongue-in-cheek—"we sorcerers," they call themselves—and partly a means of avoiding or minimizing the use of other more contemporary but equally loaded

terms, such as "artist." Language does a peculiar but particular kind of work for them. It's to be taken seriously but not always literally, addressing a "reality" but often in deliberately arcane terms (Baker cited in Williams 2001).

It seems as if Deleuze and Guattari dig below the surface meaning of the words to access another kind of truth hidden by factual interpretations. It is a useful approach since if one were to interpret "sorcerer" literally, one would come to an impasse. "Shaman/sorcerer" means one who enters a state of trance during ritual ceremonies<sup>45</sup> and since making art involves considered, rational actions, trance conditions are inimical to the act of creation. Yet, and in spite of, the need for rational action, the artist works in an area of the unknown, a place close to madness, acting as a conduit between the world known and the world yet to be known. As Deleuze and Guattari articulate it, "you don't know what you can make a rhizome with, you don't know which subterranean stem is effectively going to make a rhizome, or enter a becoming" (1987:251). In my case, theorising the space between human and animal and rejecting Cartesian dualism does bring me close to a shamanistic or animist position<sup>46</sup> in which no differentiation is made between the physical and metaphysical. I do attempt to "breathe life" into the animals I make from inert material.

Bruce Chatwin, in his essay, *The Nomadic Alternative* surveys shamanistic practice and history throughout the world finding commonalities in the practice of shamanism. The shaman is perceived as an outsider. He [sic] is, "set aside from the 'normal' life of the tribe, he remains the hub of its creative activity, its culture hero" (Chatwin 1997:96). The shaman forsakes his human condition and frequently identifies himself with a helping spirit usually an animal or bird. Notably Hélène Cixous and her compatriot, Luce Irigaray claim a spiritual connection with animals, one that is akin to that of "angels and of gods who agree to accompany us in a course towards the accomplishment of our humanity" (Irigaray 2004:201). In Atterton and Calarco's collection of essays on animal philosophy, both Cixous and Irigaray chose to write poetically preferring this mode to analytical and deductive reasoning. Both philosophers chose the figure of birds as the means by which

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45 Sorcerers emerge "with the power real or assumed of passing at will into a state of mental disassociation" (Chatwin 1997:96)

46 Animism - a doctrine that the vital principle of organic development is immaterial spirit; attribution of conscious life to objects in and phenomena of nature or to inanimate objects; belief in the existence of spirits separable from bodies (Merriman-Webster. Sv. 'animism'.)

to articulate their thoughts. Cixous used birds as a synonym for women and writing, while for Irigaray birds, as well as rabbits and cats, act as divine and mysterious assistants who “intervene with mediations other than those we use as means of communication considered appropriate for human beings” (Irigaray 2004:199).

Cixous’ *écriture féminine*, was a response to the perceived dominance of patriarchal, “phallogocentric”<sup>47</sup> writing with its rational mode of discourse. *Écriture féminine* became the site of a political struggle of resistance to “the restricted and marginalized position of the female subject” (Dobson 2004:125). It also became an affirmative mode that is “inherently suited to the embrace of the other” (Dobson 2004:125) including that of animals. Cixous’ female writing echoes Deleuze and Guattari’s affective feeling of writing like a rat.

Writing is the passage way, the entrance, the exit, the dwelling of the other in me – the other that I am and am not, that I don’t know how to be, but that I feel passing, that makes me live, that tears me apart, disturbs me, changes me.... (Cixous cited in Sellers 1994:42).

Writing affectively, playing with words, inventing new ones and approaching topics indirectly, Cixous aims to obliquely access a kind of truth. As Derrida would have it, her writing “is a place crawling with secrets which give way to thought” (Derrida cited in Sellers 1994:15). Significantly, for the purposes of the argument here put forward, she appears interested in the gap between the “I” and “the other” as the *raison d’être* of her writing.

There is, “No I without you ever or more precisely no I’s without-you’s” (Cixous cited in Sellers 1994)<sup>48</sup>. Like Cixous, I focus on the space between the “I” and the other animal “you’s”. My aim is to make communication in the “space-between” in some way visible.

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47 “Phallogocentrism” is a word coined by Derrida “to describe how Lacan perpetuates the traditional philosophical view that the word or *logos* is the site of truth making the phallus the key signifier that both governs access to the Symbolic, or language, and determines sexual difference” (Macey 2000:296).

48 Derrida in his preface to Seller’s collection of Cixous’ writings opens his discourse with reference to Cixous’ “First Days of the Year” by referring to the in-between – the space between the two protagonists and the space created by the tension between Separation and Reparation (Derrida cited in Sellers 1994:15).

Using a visual text that is neither direct, logocentric, nor phallogocentric, (to borrow Derrida's neologism), I create an indirect parallel reality. I reach beyond words.

The South African artist, Elizabeth Gunter, is known for her large-scale detailed animal drawings - dogs, but also more unusual representations, such as rhino fetuses and horse foals about to be born, or already dead (Fig 3.3).



**Fig 3.3** Elizabeth Gunter *Last, last One* (2015). Charcoal dust on paper, 180 x 140 cm.

Her animals seem to occupy the liminal position between life and death. They hang in space between two states of being. Contradictorily, considering the darkness of this liminal place, the images elicit a great tenderness. I am loathe to use the word "hyper realism" to describe the almost photographic detail of the charcoal dust drawings. Her works go beyond realism reaching into the realm of the metaphysical. Surprisingly, given the detail in the works, the artist does not rely on a model, neither a physical one nor a photographic representation (E Gunter, personal correspondence, June 2016). She says,

I am fascinated by ideas of realism, realist, real, and reality. None of the animals that I have drawn exist in reality or ever had existed in reality before. They were never alive and also never dead - they are inventions, new animals in another sphere of existence - that of illusion, of imagery - yet interfacing between audience and artist. The drawings seem realist, in some places even dense with detail, in others not, but what reality dictated their tenets and from what reality do the animals hail? What then, is real and what is realism? Could it be that both reality and realism are mere constructs in equal measure? (E Gunter, personal correspondence, June 2016).



**Fig 3.4** Elizabeth Gunter #4000 (2015). Charcoal dust on paper, 190 x 145 cm.

Gunter recalls a childhood memory of imagining herself as a small animal without knowledge of self. She had been told by her father that animals were without speech, reason or self awareness. Imagining herself as animal lost in the world, and lost to the world, was strangely comforting.

"I ... became aware of a wordless centre, a muteness that is not without meaning. It is that muteness that I try to mark, because to my mind it is where I find mutuality with animals, or where I feel my own animality. Some idea of what non-human animals feel like - the same as what I feel/experience when I draw: mute meaning." (E Gunter, personal correspondence, June 2016).

Her animal images appear as if unbidden on the paper during the act of drawing. She is in a place beyond words. In that moment she “becomes animal!” (E Gunter, personal interview, Cape Town, June 2016). Like Cixous and Irigaray, her “realism” is an affective one depending on emotional resonances of the images. In becoming-animal, Gunter paradoxically leads us to the heart of the animal-human question, letting us “...experience the animals as the only population to which [we] are responsible in principle” (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:240).

Joseph Beuys’ performances are familiar examples of shamanic art practices in which he uses materials such as felt, fat and honey, which have been imbued with mythical properties. He has evolved a system of complex ideas including the notion of “Anti-Art”, a concept directed against “the stagnation of the mind” (Meyer 1970). Anti-Art involves an expansion of consciousness that transcends humankind’s physical nature. “His unorthodox techniques yield a symbol rather than a drawing; not abstractions, but revelations of a private mythology” (Meyer 1970). In *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (Fig 3.5), Beuys covered his head with honey and gold-leaf and cradled the dead hare in his arms.



**Fig 3.5.** Joseph Beuys *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*. (1965). Gold leaf, honey, dead hare, felt pad, iron, fir tree, miscellaneous drawings and clothing items, Galerie Schmela, Dresden, Germany.

(<http://uk.phaidon.com/agenda/art/articles/2014/march/03/why-joseph-beuys-and-his-dead-hare-live-on/>)

[I] took it to the pictures and I explained to him everything that was to be seen. I let him touch pictures with his paws and meanwhile talked to him about them... . I explained them to him because I do not really like explaining them to people. Of course there is a shadow of truth in this. A hare comprehends more than many human beings with their stubborn rationalism... . I told him that he needed only to scan the picture to understand what is really important about it. The hare probably knows better than man that directions are important (Beuys cited in Meyer 1970).

By rejecting “stubborn rationalism” it is feasible to perceive the role of other artists in a similar Beuysian way. For example, Baker, citing Tucker, uses the example of Antoni Tàpies who wished to breathe “life back into humble but essential things of the world.... Tàpies functions like a shaman ... redirecting attention... to an animistic integration of self and world” (Tucker cited in Baker 2013). The idea of giving life to inert material is precisely what artists do.

Ceramic sculptor, Nicolene Swanepoel, is an artist that can fruitfully be discussed in terms of shamanistic practices. As a white African, Swanepoel became interested in indigenous knowledges. Since cattle are significant cultural markers in South Africa, it was natural for her to turn to the study of their importance, not only in terms of native cosmologies, but also in terms of colonial and postcolonial interpretations<sup>49</sup>. In her master’s dissertation at the University of Johannesburg, she examined the topic through word and object. Entitled *Representations of Cattle as Cultural Markers: Towards South African Identities*, it explored both the historical and contemporary role of cattle in the spiritual and metaphoric life of the nation.

Cattle have been a crucial axis in African history. From the first gingerly steps of colonial feet on southern African shores, locals relented and exchanged a beast or two for exotic objects. Transactions soon soured and cattle then became the steeds on which to chase the invaders back to their ships... . As cattle provided sustenance, transport, symbolic wealth and to many provided a channel of communication with revered ancestors, understandably, they were highly valued. Sometimes traded, but mostly battled over, they are so interwoven in our culture that they have become powerful symbols of South African identity. Ever popular in contemporary culture, depictions of and objects relating to cattle abound (Swanepoel cited in Cruise 2011:50-53).

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49 The following discussion is extracted from my article *Hybrid Herds* published in *Ceramics: Art and Perception* No. 86, 2011.



**Fig 3.6.** Nicolene Swanepoel, ceramic, data unknown.

Her argument centred on the concept of hybridity using the indigenous breed of cattle as symbolic reference. In 2007, the first ceramic sculptures of Swanepoel's hybrid herd manifested themselves (Fig 3.6). She exhibited seventy head of cattle on her degree exhibition. Subsequently, the "herd" grew as Swanepoel continued to explore the rich topic of cattle in South African life. Since "cattle" have been central to the traditional cosmology of Sub-Saharan African peoples, they have been entwined with South African history since the first arrival of the Bantu-speaking tribes from northeast Africa around 590-700 AD. It has also been an area of contestation. From the first encounters of colonisers and Khoi c.1652 to the 19th century "border" wars and into the apartheid years, cattle and their significance have been fought over. But there has been a change in attitude since the liberation of South Africa. It has resulted in a multi-faceted view of the cultural complexities of South Africa, where hybridity is the hallmark. But, in spite of a recent willingness to embrace the beauty of the indigenous Nguni hides, "cattle" remains an area of contestation. The ritual killing of bulls by bare-handed young men still takes place, often in sophisticated urban areas where the loud bellows of the suffering bulls, (a requirement of the practice), disturb finer sensibilities and divide the population along lines of cultural rights versus cruelty to animals (Woodward 2008:9-10). As Woodward has pointed out, differences in cultural practices as to the slaughter of animals, provoked

heated arguments. "Tradition became a pugilistic adversarial identity..." (Woodward 2008:11). In this scenario the subjectivity (and suffering) of the animal was lost in the debate.

After her degree Swanepoel pursued the ever-growing expansion of her hybrid herd. Using a plaster mould she press-moulded the cattle heads. The head was formed, joined while leather hard, and the mould was used over and over again. While the skull of the animal was a constant, the placement and size of the horns was not. Varying from large to small and angled differently, the horns individualised each head, as did the placement of the ears and the details of the eyes in their sockets. Like a real herd of cows, genetic similarities were marked by individual characteristics that allowed for infinite variations. But it was in the surface treatment of the cow heads that Swanepoel most fully explored her concept of hybridity. Like the hides of the native Nguni cattle, the variations of colour, pattern and texture on the ceramic heads allow for a symbolic reading. In images, drawings and transfers, Swanepoel intertwined history and nature, the natural and artifice, animal and culture. By so doing she resurrected valuable but forgotten and displaced animal symbols. She wished to redirect awareness and re-establish a sense of meaning, belonging, and agency in a world that is increasingly alienated and dehumanised (Swanepoel in Cruise 2011:50-53).

Her interest in other cosmologies extended beyond cattle to include other symbolic objects such as dogs. A case in point are the spirit guardians, a group of small ceramic dogs inspired by canine *Nkisi* or power figures from the Democratic Republic of Congo. She playfully called her figures my *NikkiNkisi* (Fig 3.7). She saw the *Nkisi* as "symbolic protectors of our souls, not against actual malevolence, but the terror of living with fear about something which might happen... Ultimately, the spirit guards symbolised the common desire for a peaceful and spiritually prosperous life. In bearing tokens of protection, hope and healing, they are *vessels of meaning*, vehicles to celebrate the universal bond between human and dog, the instinctive friendship between dog and dog, and the original kinship between human and human..." (Swanepoel 2005:66-69).



**Fig 3.7.** Nicolene Swanepoel *NikkiNkisi* (n.d.) ceramic, size unknown.

In making these works Swanepoel had to suspend conscious control over the process. This was dictated by the necessity of having to produce hundreds of versions of the same form. Invoking the notion of Yanagi's "unknown craftsman" she set about rapidly producing the forms in an unthinking, repetitive and ultimately meditative process.

Completing one hundred sculptures in a relatively short period of time forced me to work fast. This reminded me of the "unknown craftsman" of Yanagi, who, by throwing hundreds of tea bowls in rapid succession, developed an economy of work, which in turn developed an unparalleled fluency of expression. Though I hardly aspire to be such a master, I did enter a compulsive, trance-like state, almost automatically moulding then modelling another and yet another piece. The clay expressed an internal force of its own. The spontaneous gestures of the clay gave birth to expressive qualities impossible to achieve by slow, conscious, meticulous labour (Swanepoel 2005:66-69).

Like a sorcerer, her studio practice appears to bypass rational control, a process that also finds resonance with Cixous' *écriture féminine*. By breaking "borders subjugated by authority" (Dobson cited in Simons 2004:127), Swanepoel becomes something other (than human). In the words of Deleuze and Guattari, she becomes animal.

Although Swanepoel said that she was not familiar with the writings of Deleuze and Guattari, this focus appeared to inform her 2014 exhibition at the Irma Stern Museum in Cape Town, South Africa entitled, *Little Creatures/Without Pedestals Another Time, Same Place: The Re-Evolution of Animals*. In this exhibition, she seemed to have evoked the central concept of animal-becoming in which the ineluctable opposition of human and animal is collapsed. She described her process of creation thus.

Lumps of clay have transmogrified into animals of various kinds. They are not made to comply with a planned design, but grow according to the whim of the clay. Each little figurine emerges into its own individual being. Most look different to anything we have yet encountered, neither animal nor human. A few may suggest (but do not represent) existing animals - equine, feline, bovine, hominid, not only the latter, but *all* uniquely *sapient* [meaning wise]" (N Swanepoel, personal correspondence, 2014) (Fig 3.8).



**Fig 3.8.** Nicolene Swanepoel *Little Creature* (2014). Ceramic, size unknown.

Following Deleuze and Guattari, Ron Broglio likens the "concept of becoming-animal as a pack" to a "minor art". By this he means that the centrality of the individual is replaced by the imperative of the community (2011:113). Minor art disrupts from the outside by "undermining metaphor [which] becomes the revolutionary gesture" (Broglio 2011:106). Swanepoel's praxis fits neatly into this interpretation. Not only are her metaphoric animals revolutionary gestures, but her choice of material challenges hegemonic practices in

contemporary art. Ceramics is traditionally regarded as a decorative art/craft<sup>50</sup>. Attacking from a position of left of field as it were, Swanepoel disrupts expectations of the ornamental object by using it to subversively address the question of the animal and humankind's ethical relationship to it.

"Writing like a rat" is an apt metaphor for Swanepoel's praxis. In the artist's words a cornucopia of creatures emerged from "the primeval mess" of her studio. Her creatures poured forth from a creative well almost of their own volition. They are neither animal with human features nor human with animal features, nor a hybrid, but a newly developed animal, a hypothetical being that evolved according to circumstantial conditions. With an intensity bordering on the obsessive these creatures sprung seemingly unbidden from their creator's fingers. They were modelled with urgency. The artist used the tip of her (supposedly uniquely and superiorly human) opposable thumbs to make marks for eyes, mouths, and ears and, although she never explicitly said so, it appears her hands did the thinking. It is as if that very entity that defines us as human - the upper cortex, the rational brain was in suspension. The final form of the clay animal embodied the urgency of the unconscious impulse, which achieved its physical form through the malleable clay. The sculpted forms are not only visual manifestations of the process, but they are also tactile. The desire is to lift the figures, fingers are lured to handle the forms, even to lift and touch them with lips.

Swanepoel heightened our awareness of the uniqueness of all sentient creatures. She drew attention to each one's own set of well-developed abilities. A superior sense of smell is suggested, for instance, by an elongated "head", abstracted into a long multi-tubed appendage (neck-head-snout, perhaps reminiscent of the nose of an aardvark). Prominent ears have superior hearing. A domed head might indicate a more developed sense of intellect. But not one of these qualities elevates one creature above the other - they are all uniquely *specified*. These creatures stand or sit, lie in dorsal or sternal recumbence, crawl or stand. They stand apart or interlock, they play alone or dance with each other. They

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50 The practice of ceramics in South Africa has largely been influenced by a studio pottery tradition that has emphasised technique above concept and truth to material above experimentation.

display all the behaviours of sentient social beings, including humans (N Swanepoel, personal correspondence, 2014).

The same sense of urgency that informed the creation of these beings, governed the selection of pedestals (Fig 3.9).



**Fig 3.9.** Nicolene Swanepoel *Little Creature* (2014). Ceramic and found objects, size unknown.

Like much of her praxis the choice of pedestals was a planned strategy and driven by a contradictory urgency governed by pre-rational impulses. The pedestals were not manufactured nor designed. They are found objects that came mostly from the farming environment of Swanepoel's hometown, Grabouw. Many are from her small farm - a rusted table, a log of wood or a discarded chair. These quotidian objects indicate that no creature is *special* (or "specie-al") in any hierarchical sense. None is to be placed above another. It is exactly this that makes them approachable, touchable, sense-able and intimate.

This democratising impulse is what informed the exhibition. If all creatures are equal surely humans as (other) animals are to be included. Swanepoel said,

... perhaps we can step back and evaluate the damage we have wreaked on our environment and the creatures dependant on it due to our assumed 'superiority' and attempted control of power over everything on earth. Once we appreciate that we are but a small part of our universe ... and respect all other elements in it, we might begin to try to undo and repair our destructions (N Swanepoel, personal correspondence, 2014).

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Raised in the mid-20th century and cognisant of the Freudian psychoanalytical ethos, I have long been aware of the function of the unconscious in my work, which can be said to operate in "the space-between". This gap can be articulated as a Lacanian rupture between word and image. It is a place where the unconscious is made manifest<sup>51</sup>. It is also arguably the place where non-verbal communication between human and animal takes place. The dominant model for the unconscious lies in the psychoanalysis of Jung and Freud. It is a concept with which I engaged in my research in 1997, *Artist as Subject: Subject as Object* (Cruise 1997). As I then argued, art and dreams share similar properties, which allow unconscious, barely felt ideas to find form within images that permit decoding of their manifest content.

The connection between the creative process and dreams has, in terms of my experience, a sense of "fit". I may start the sculpture with a formal problem as its initial premise. At that stage, the content of the work is only apprehended subliminally, if at all. But during the working process I allow barely apprehended ideas to dictate form and content. The preconscious is allowed reign... The sculpture reveals its meaning only after completion, a process which may take months or years. Its content is that not only made visible to that abstract entity, the viewer, but most importantly, to me the artist. The work, like dream, provides encoded information that informs me of my subconscious fears, thoughts and desires. That is, using similar tools of metaphor,

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51 Jacques Lacan, the French psychoanalyst, reformulated Freudian doctrine in the terms of Saussurian linguistics (Selden in Selden and Widdowson 1993:139). Lacan broke the link between the signifier and the signified; a link, which De Saussure had suggested, was immutable (Wright 1984:109). Into this break he inserted the functioning of the unconscious. The result was that words are no longer secure in their meaning; things are not as they appear and meaning shifts according to sub-conscious precepts. This is a received wisdom in psychoanalysis. By linking this knowledge to language, Lacan shifted the emphasis from a neurosis-based theory to one of normative functioning (Cruise 1997:8).

metonymy and displacement both art and dream work permit access to the unconscious. However, the earliest Freudian model, viewed art and dream as a manifestation of neurosis<sup>52</sup>. This view was modified by Rycroft who maintained that art making is not only the function of the unconscious but works in conjunction with the secondary processes of the ego (1975:304). Since the actual act of making art requires conscious gestures such as mixing pigment, cleaning brushes or sharpening sticks it requires a conscious functioning individual to perform these actions. The two, id and ego, madness and sanity, work hand in hand in the creation of art. In this sense art making moves for the Freudian understanding of art as the outpourings of a neurotic to one of normative functioning (Cruise 1997:65).

In spite of this shift from a pathogenic interpretation to one of healthy function, the concept of the unconscious in its Freudian interpretation became, in 2015, one with which I was increasingly loath to engage. I found theoretical support for my instinctual rejection within the pages of *A Thousand Plateaus*, in which Deleuze and Guattari explicitly question the arborescent structure of the unconscious, what they call the "dictatorial conception" (1987:17) of the hierarchy of superego, ego and id.

Rather than thinking in terms of some kind of utopia where one got away from the worst effects of identity thinking and its political consequences, [Deleuze and Guattari] are looking instead to the ways in which creative activity—which in their view is prompted by a thinking about, or an interaction with, animals—can serve to open up a model of experience that is quite other than that which the psychoanalytic model of the individual human subject would ordinarily allow. A lot of what they're doing in their exploration of becoming-animal is concerned to see how one can get at those instances, how one can prolong them, inhabit them as artist or "sorcerer," how one can in a very sober and cautious manner—and those are their words—seek to elaborate an alternative to the psychoanalytic account of what it is to be human (Baker in Williams 2001).

Preferring the centeredness of the rhizome figure, Deleuze and Guattari maintain that the issue is to "*produce the unconscious*, with its new statements, different desires..." (1987:18). As I understand it, art making is not then an oneiric function serving the purpose like dreams of making unconscious suppressed thought and desires manifest (albeit in coded form). Instead the act of art creates thoughts, not excavated from the suppressed id as Freud would have it, but produced and enacted at the moment of creation. In my experience and studio praxis I work with an alertness to instances beyond

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<sup>52</sup> Freud suggests that creating art is an act of sublimation; a defence mechanism which deals with suppressed subject matter too painful to handle in conscious thought (Cruise 1997:8).

the quotidian to “produce the unconscious”. Reason suspended, it is as if the hand does the thinking. I have learned to trust its imperative as it reaches for the brush or clay. Heidegger gives prominence to the (human) hand distinguishing it from the animals’ paw or claw. The hand gives, the paw grasps. Without asserting the human exceptionalism implied by Heidegger’s observation, experientially I support the Heideggerian claim of the “hand’s complex relation to thought” (Baker 2003:152). There is thinking that is achieved by the hand, a type of pre-cognitive action that slowly reveals thought processes in the material results of its actions.

Throughout the series of “Alice” exhibitions, Alice functioned not only as an exemplar of the human but she can also be regarded as my alter ego – that part that delves into the dark hole of the unconscious. Like Swanepoel, I make art with a sense of urgency driven by the need to express myself materially. I am seldom conscious of where the journey is going to take me. It has been suggested (W Woodward, personal correspondence, 2015) that my praxis has shamanistic<sup>53</sup> elements. This term I might have in the past rejected because of the implication of free form mysticism and a neo pagan cosmology<sup>54</sup>. However, Deleuze and Guattari’s figure of the sorcerer as the anomalous being part of the pack and yet beyond it, is one with which I am more comfortable since it implies a process rather than a being with a fixed identity. I read their meditation, *Memories of a Sorcerer* (1987: 239-252), as an elaborate metaphor of the creative process, a concept that usefully describes the progress of artistic labour by encapsulating its wild imperative, its unknowability and its occasional surprising sorcery, without having to appeal to “the arborescent structure” of the Freudian model. The inchoate thinking of the hand also finds resonance with their concept of becoming.

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53 In this context I interpret “shaman” metaphorically, since literally the term means one who enters a state of trance during ritual ceremonies. As Chatwin notes, shamans enter a state of trance from which they emerge “with the power real or assumed of passing at will into a state of mental disassociation” (Chatwin 1997:96).

54 Neo-shamanism is a general term “for a modern Western interpretation of the spiritual and medical tradition of shamanism, which draws on the use of rituals and ‘tribal’ psychology for therapy. In addition to the shamanic state of altered consciousness through rituals and psychotherapy, neo-shamanism uses such tools as flotation tanks, strobe lights, active-alert hypnosis and other devices or practices intended to alter a person’s reality sense” (medical.dictionaty.thefreedictionary.com: n.d: <http://medical-dictionaty.thefreedictionary.com/neo-shamanism>).

A suite of drypoint etchings made in January 2015 illustrates the role of the hand in the process and is literally depicted in the images. I collaborated with the master print-maker, Jillian Ross at David Krut Projects at Arts on Main in Johannesburg, to produce the suite. The exhibition, *Advice from a Caterpillar*, was the result of that collaboration. The precise images were not preconceived, other than the notion of imagining baboons combining it with the idea of “the end game”. The idea of the chess game was prompted by the enigmatic game of chess that underpins Lewis Carroll's tale of *Alice Through the Looking Glass*. It seemed logical, if illogical [sic] to pair the two concepts.

In the print, *The End Game* (Fig 3.10), I depict a pair of baboons poring over a game of chess.



**Fig 3.10.** Wilma Cruise *The End Game* (2015). Drypoint and chine-collé (Edition 15), 45 x 43,7 cm.

Their hands lie on their knees inert and heavy. They are frozen in inactivity as they contemplate the board, seemingly unable to make their moves. Metaphorically, and post hoc, I suggest that they are considering the end as they know it. As real baboons are

being squeezed out of their natural habitat by the encroaching humans, their way of life is threatened - they are without agency to change events - their endgame has been reached.

Thus with little preparation or pre-thought, rabbits, cats, pigs, dogs, puppies, baboons and armless infants in their hundreds emerge from the studio in both three dimensional and two dimensional form during the years of *The Alice Sequence*. The two drawings made early on in *The Alice Sequence*, *Alice: Self Portrait I* (Fig 3.11) and *II* (Fig 2.12, Chapter 2), illustrate the intuitive process of creation.



**Fig 3.11.** Wilma Cruise *Alice: Self Portrait I & II* (2011), mixed media drawing on paper, 200 x 100 cm.

In making these works thought was suspended and intuition or the intelligence of the hand came into being. Even though the works were made over almost a year, there was never a vision of what the final work would look like. There was much erasure, cutting out and pasting with no clear thought of the end point. Action preceded thought and became a non-linguistic knowing embedded in the act. It was only after the work was complete

that decoding was possible. Like secondary revision in the analysis of dreams, scrutiny of the meaning of the work was then made possible. It was as if images floated up from my subconscious and, like a dream that haunts one long after passing, these images eventually allowed for deciphering. However, instead of depending on a Freudian analysis, I relied upon Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor of the rhizome, a figure which permits for a multiplication of meanings, mine as well as that of the viewers. Thus, only one possibility of interpretation is that of the artist's, which should not be prioritised above any others. Therefore, in my reading of the two self-portraits, I suggest that the failure of spoken language is implied by the pursed mouths of the two Alices and the bemused, but affectionate looks they give to the animals attached to their chests. Some form of communication is taking place between the humans and the animals, the meaning of which is essentially unknown. Like Derrida's cat the animals' looks remain inscrutable.

This meditative state is also the subject of the large carborundum etching, an Edition Varie of *Harrismith* (Fig 3.12), a print originally created with print master, Jillian Ross, in 2007 and editioned in 2015.



**Fig 3.12.** Wilma Cruise *Harrismith* (2007-2015). Etching on carborundum (Edition E.V.)  
paper size: 160 x 80 cm.

*Harrismith* is a large carborundum etching depicting a human female figure around whose neck is draped a large cat. This is not so much a self-portrait as an autobiographical image. The cat both presses into the head of the figure and appears to grow out of it. The figure bows her head submitting both to the burden and the comfort of the animal. The landscape in the background refers to the Free State landscape where my maternal grandparents lived. The figure stands like a colossus in the landscape. Out of her hands sprout/pour linear forms.

In 2007, when I was working on the original plates, I was at the same time working on a life-size sculpture which similarly depicted a female figure with a cat draped round her shoulders (Fig 3.13). Both sculpture and print depict a box-like shape around the figures' heads. The addition of this form was not an iconographic decision; rather it was a solution to a formal problem. In both sculpture and print, and much at the same time, the figure and cat "looked out of balance". The decision to add the box-like forms was to add visual weight. This is not to say that an iconographic reading became superfluous, but rather it was post hoc - after the action. The box focuses the viewer's attention on the interchange between human and cat - the space-between became the point of contention.



**Fig 3.13.** Wilma Cruise Installation view *Cocks Asses &... (I can't hear)*. 2007. (Photographed by Doreen Hemp).

When considering the significance of the linear shapes that seem to pour out of “Harrismith’s” hands in the print, I immediately thought of water. In terms of Sigmund Freud’s free association principles, the first response is considered correct – its spontaneity not controlled by the forces of the superego. So it was with some surprise, that I came across an image in a rock painting in Australia in which the figures similarly sprouted linear shapes from their hands (Fig 3.14.).



**Fig 3.14.** Bradshawian rock painting, The Kimberley, North-west Australia. (Photographed by the artist 2015)

Followers of Jung would argue that this is not surprising. They would refer to the collective unconscious and the universal archetypes. The implication is that there is a well of universal knowledge that stretches across cultures and time. Jung describes the collective unconscious as a

boundless expanse, a place of unprecedented uncertainty, with apparently no inside and no outside, no above and no below, no here and no there, no mine and no thine, no good and no bad. It is the world of water, where all life floats in suspension, where the realm of the sympathetic nervous system, the soul of everything living, begins, where I am indivisibly this and that, where I experience the other in myself and the other-than-myself experiences me (Jung cited in Coward 1985:152).

While this description appropriately describes the creative process, Jung’s tendency to see animals as symbols for human foibles – metaphors for the human condition – leads me to the position of rejecting Jungian analysis. His idea that animals can act as guides in unconscious thought remains essentially anthropocentric. That is, in Jungian lexicon, animals are the signifiers not the signified. Instead, taking heed of Deleuze and Guattari’s

critique of the psychoanalytical model in which the animal as a signifier of human drives has “killed becoming animal” (2004:96) and preferring the particularity of the singular human-animal encounter like Derrida had with his cat and which Haraway describes as a messy co-entanglement - I reject the universalising impulse provided by the Jungian model.

In September 2015 the sixth exhibition in *The Alice Sequence* opened at The Clay Museum at the Rust-en-Vrede Gallery in Durbanville, Cape Town. Entitled *Red Queen to Play* it coincided with the fifth exhibition in the series, *Advice From a Caterpillar*, which was showing concurrently at the David Krut Project Space at the AVA Gallery in downtown Cape Town<sup>55</sup>. For the exhibition, *Red Queen to Play*, I created twenty-four figures informed by the shape of chess pieces (Fig 3.15.).



**Fig 3.15.** Wilma Cruise *Chess Pieces* detail (2015). Ceramic, 20–30 cm. (Photographed by Pierre van der Spuy).

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<sup>55</sup> This exhibition was previously shown at the David Krut, Maboneng Gallery in Johannesburg in May and June 2015.

These are not literal depictions of chess pieces, neither are they anthropomorphised animals but a mixture of animal and human. The heads are balanced on black and red coiled clay "bodies". As usual in my sculpted images, and like normal chess pieces, these figures are without arms and thus without agency. As one viewer noted, the figures appear puzzled as to where they are, where they are going or how they fit into the game.

*Red Queen to Play* was inspired by the chess game that underpins the narrative of *Through the Looking Glass*. In this tale Alice steps through a mirror to find a new wonderland populated by anthropomorphic red and white chessmen.

For some minutes Alice stood without speaking, looking out in all directions over the country - and a most curious country it was. There were a number of tiny little brooks running straight across it from side to side, and the ground between was divided up into squares by a number of little green hedges, that reached from brook to brook. "I declare it's marked out just like a large chess-board!" Alice said at last... . It's a great huge game of chess that's being played all over the world - if this *is* the world at all, you know. Oh, what fun it is! How I *wish* I was one of them! I wouldn't mind being a Pawn, if only I might join - though of course I should like to be a Queen, best." (Carroll 1982:142-143).

As Stamp points out, "chess wasn't just a recurring motif or symbol in Carroll's story, it was, in fact, the basis for the novel's structure" (Stamp 2013). This is clear from the beginning of the book, when the reader is confronted with a visual chess problem and the following injunction: "White Pawn (Alice) to play, and win in eleven moves" (Carroll 1982: Preface to 1896 Edition). Chess players trying to solve Carroll's chess problem soon find themselves in an impasse that perplexes them "more than the furious language of 'Jabberwocky'" (Stamp 2013). What transpires on the other side of the looking glass does not follow the logic of chess. Lewis Carroll's problem is in fact unsolvable. Stamp maintains that it "is a sort of funhouse mirror distortion of the novel (or vice versa), with eleven moves roughly corresponding to the book's twelve chapters, Carroll's notation displays a flagrant disregard for the basic rules of chess" (Stamp 2013). Yet, in the context of the story, it has its own internal logic.

The choice of the game of chess as a motif in *Through the Looking Glass* is on the face of it contradictory. In contrast to the nonsensical world of Alice's dream, the game of chess is

logical and structured, depending on strategy and rational planned moves. The pieces move according to prescribed patterns that allow for no deviation. They are given life by either being personified, as in the case of the King, Queen and Bishop or animalised as in the case of the knight, who in the classic Staunton design, is represented by a horse. The pieces are manipulated, promoted or sacrificed in the name of winning, which is achieved by capturing the opponent's king. The only hope for "redemption" is to arrive as a pawn at the eighth and final square (rank), at which stage the promotion to queen is assured with all the (relative) freedom of movement that that implies. In Alice's dream she is a white pawn, but as she so plaintively articulates, "I should like to be a Queen" (Carroll 1982:142-143). In order to achieve this, her task in *Through the Looking Glass* is to negotiate the ranks. She has to go forward in order to reach the eighth square where she will be crowned queen. Crossing six brooks, Alice encounters a variety of characters including the bad tempered Red Queen and the gentle White Knight, who keeps falling off his horse - surely unsurprising given the complicated moves assigned to the knight! The Red Queen is a recurring figure on Alice's journey. In her Queen of Hearts guise in Wonderland she is prone to shout, "Off with his/her/its head!" at the slightest provocation. As the Red Queen in *Through the Looking Glass* she is equally as haughty and imperious.

If one were to expand the metaphor that life is, as Alice said, "a great huge game of chess that's being played all over the world", the animals could be interpreted as chess pieces and omnipresent humans as the players. These (represented) creatures have no agency, they are pawns [sic] to be moved at the will of the godlike beings playing their strategic game. In this scenario, it becomes clear that the pieces (the animals) have little say over the direction of their lives. They are moved, promoted or sacrificed according to larger strategic plans. Despite rank - queen or bishop, pawn or knight - they are powerless - they have no means to act upon the world - they do not have subject of a life (Regan 2006:17-18). By extrapolation, it includes Alice who is a white pawn in the chess game. As the exemplar of humankind, and like her fellow chess pieces the animals, she is lost and powerless in the gigantic game of chess. In this scenario humankind is both the controlling force and the victim of that force.

A similar impulse informed the installation *Cradle II* (2014–2015) (Fig 3.16), a variation of *Cradle* (2012). The conceptual underpinning of *Cradle* in both variations, was informed by the awareness of overpopulation by the human species over which human beings have no control (See Chapter 2). In *Cradle II* (2014–2015), instead of a river of forms placed upon the floor the armless babies are packed one on top of the other in two large, transparent, plexiglass boxes, each on a black, plexiglass base. The forms are lit from the interior by concealed LED lights. The boxes provide a formal alternative to the babies on the floor. Boxed and piled one on top of the other like so many discarded bodies, the figures evoke, according to Younge, apocalyptic scenarios like Dachau and the Ntarama church following the Rwandan genocide (2012:7).



**Fig 3.16.** Wilma Cruise *Cradle II* detail (2014). Ceramic forms in perspex box with stand, box: 60 x 60 x 60 cm, stand: 60 x 60 x 120 cm. (Photographed by the artist).

In making these works my intention was never that specific – I had no intention to invoke past holocausts. Neither was the decision to box the forms guided by a specific iconographic intent. Instead, the plan was directed by formal and practical considerations dictated by the spatial requirements of the gallery. The disorder of the jumble of babies in

the boxes of *Cradle II*, contradictorily confined and ordered, nevertheless offered a different reading which, in the context of the chess game suggested by the title of the exhibition, implied control (by the omnipresent artist?).

Taking the opportunity to utilise the two built-in cabinets that line the walls of the museum and which normally display small, functional ceramics, I made a series of small sculptures (Fig 3.17 & Fig 3.18).



**Fig 3.17.** Wilma Cruise *The Borogoves* (2015) detail. Ceramic, sizes various 10-17 cm.



**Fig 3.18.** Wilma Cruise *The Borogoves* (2015). Ceramic, sizes various 10-17 cm. (Photographs by Pierre van der Spuy).

In creating these sculptures, the imperative of the hand ruled. They emerged from what Swanepoel called the “primeval mess” of clay. The hand, the material, and a driving impulse saw the forms rapidly materialise without much precognition as to what animal or animal morph was going to emerge. In order to capture the impulsive nature of the making I entitled the installation, *The Borogoves*, a word derived from Carroll’s nonsense poem, *The Jabberwocky*.

Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
did gyre and gimble in the wabe:  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
and the mome raths outgrabe, etc. (Carroll 1982:134).

As Humpty Dumpty later explains to Alice in *Through the Looking Glass*: “Borogoves are thin shabby looking birds with feathers sticking out all round”. “Slithy toves”, on the other hand, are slimy, lithe creatures “like badgers or corkscrews” (Carroll 1982:185); words that better describe my clay heads. In the gallery the disembodied heads were positioned to stare out at the piles of babies. They acted as witnesses to the scene of disorder in the boxes of *Cradle II*. In both *The Borogoves* and *Cradle II* the compulsion that drove the creation of the forms, that which Baker called “its initiating momentum” (2013:91), was reined in by the formal structure of the display, suggesting a tension between chaos and control, madness and rational thought; one that ironically mimics the act of making art.

Perhaps because of the suggestion of an omnipotent presence – *Red Queen to Play*, has less to do with the animal and more to do with the human side of the equation. Unlike the other exhibitions in the series, the animal-other has been displaced to the margins. Yet, in spite of the apocalyptic scenario evoked by the notion of the end game, this exhibition like the others in the series, is not intended as a homily. Nor is it intended as an illustration of Carroll’s tales. To remind myself of this fact, I attached the following extract to the wall in vinyl letters, “You know very well you are not real” (Carroll 1982:164). Rather, it is a way of making sense of an increasingly confusing and dangerous world. Life can be a dream or a nightmare. Our task is to try to make sense of our place in it as we tumble through time, together with our co-travellers, the animals whose planet we share.

## CHAPTER 4

# Language: The wound without a name

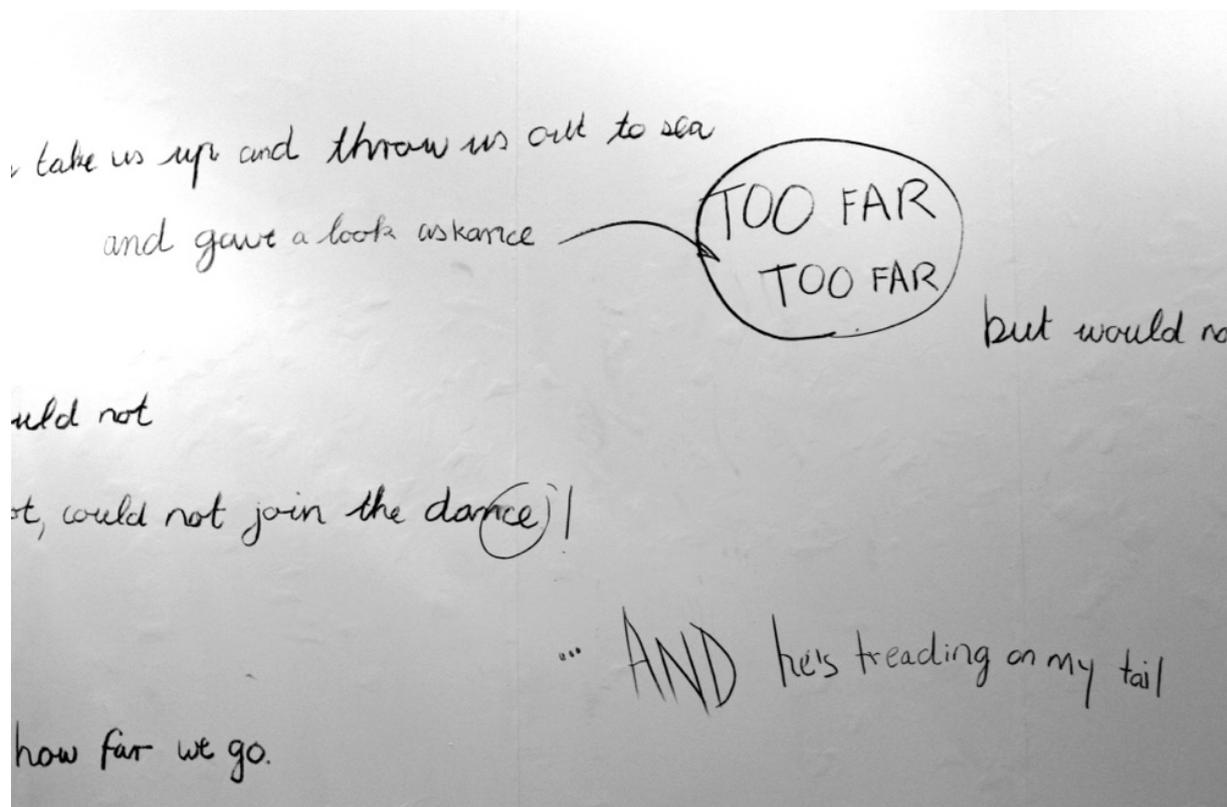


Fig 4.1. Wilma Cruise *Will you, won't you, will you join the dance?* (2013-2014). Installation view.

Words are cold muddy toads trying to understand the sprites dancing in the field (Martell 2010:88).

## Exhibition

*Will you, won't you, will you join the dance?* (2013–2014)<sup>56</sup>

Following Derrida, I investigate the use of language and how it determines our perceptions of the (other) animal. I inquire into the slippage of language and its tenuous hold on logic and meaning using Alice's encounters with the animals in *Through the Looking Glass*. Images from my 2013–2014 exhibition, *Will you, won't you, will you join the dance?* in conjunction with Carroll's texts offer a parallel meditation on the "question of the animal" and how we speak about them and how we speak to them. I suggest that the un-utterability of inter-species communication (in logocentric terms) finds resonance with *écriture féminine*. I also suggest that communication across human and the (other) animal divide is still a largely unknowable terrain.

Normal language seems to be inadequate for the task of describing the process of creativity, yet one of necessity has to rely on words, however "cold and muddy" they may be. There is an essential contradiction between the creative process of making visual art and the deductive reasoning required by the analysis of it. It is a war between affect and reason, one that uncomfortably suggests a Cartesian dualism of mind and body. However, taking cognisance of the contradiction, one continues with the task aware that language is a blunt knife.

The possession or lack of language is central to the animal question. In ontotheological humanism it has traditionally been used to define what is human and what is animal. The animals' lack of (human) language, and therefore (human) reason, makes it somehow lesser. But is the animals' lack of words a fault as traditionally supposed? In a small paragraph Derrida suggests a radical notion: namely that the animals' lack of speech might be "something other than a privation" (Derrida 2008:48). In other words, the lack of language is only perceived to be a deprivation from a human anthro-centred logos-dependant perspective. What if it were not? suggests Derrida. As usual with Derrida the question is not either or. He steps between the binaries of the perceiving subject, the "I"

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<sup>56</sup> *Will you, won't you, will you join the dance?* National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, 27 June to 7 July 2013 and Oliewenhuis Museum, Bloemfontein July to August 2014.

and the gaze of the other - in this case his cat. Conceding the facticity of *cogito ergo sum* on the part of the subject, Derrida suggests that the responding animal,

...it itself is, this aptitude to being itself, and thus the aptitude to being capable of affecting itself, of its own movement, with traces of a living self, and thus of *autobioparaphing* itself as it were. No one has ever denied the animal this capacity to track itself or retrace a path of itself. Indeed, the most difficult problem lies in the fact that it has been refused the power to transform these traces into verbal language...(2008:50)<sup>57</sup>.

In these terms, what Derrida's cat communicated in their encounter was profound. Seeing himself reflected in the gaze of his cat Derrida's subject position was upset.

The subject no longer occupies a separate, higher ground as the *source of knowledge*. As we regard Derrida standing naked and ashamed before his cat, the object of knowledge shifts from him as subject to his cat who, in turn, reflects it back, altered and re-arranged to the bewildered Derrida. This is the critical phase of deconstruction, which consistently seeks to occupy the space between the binaries. It is this constant deferral that completely undoes the logocentric forces at play between humans and (other) animals (Cruise, A. 2014:80).

"The animal that I am (following), does it speak?" asks Derrida (2002:401). Derrida's question is not only philosophical - it is also empirical. DO animals speak, albeit in different languages to the one used by humans? And if so what is the nature of this language? It is an important question, as Derrida has noted, "if one defines language in such a way that it is reserved for what we call man, *what is there to say?* But if one re-inscribes language in a network of possibilities that do not merely encompass it but mark it irreducibly from the inside, *everything changes*" (Derrida, 1995:284. Emphasis mine).

Derrida criticizes Lacan for reserving "the differentiability of signs for human language only, as opposed to animal coding" (Derrida 2008:124). That is, animals only react while humans respond (Derrida 2008:124). Reaction is noted for its fixity of signs to reality. On the other hand, in "[human] language signs take on their value from their relations to each other in the lexical distribution of semantemes as much as in the positional, or even flectional, use of morphemes...." (Lacan in Derrida 2008:123-124). Derrida says that by

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57 In Derridean terms both human and the (other) animal are autobiographical creatures on equal terms without the complicating factor of the *logos*.

denying animals the ability to respond renders the animal-as-machine and reduces their languages to a fixed system of signs (Derrida 2008:125). However, in true Derridean fashion instead of erasing the difference between reaction and response, Derrida maintains it is a matter of taking that difference into account and not “reducing this differentiated and multiple difference, in a conversely massive and homogenizing manner, to one between the human subject, on the one hand, and the nonsubject that is the animal in general, on the other...” (Derrida 2008:126). By restricting the animal to reaction forever locks it in the realm of the imaginary and denies it access to the symbolic (Derrida 2008:128), thereby denying it passage from the animal to human order (Derrida 2008:130). In Cartesian dogma it is symbolic language – the word – that separates man from animal. The animal is not only deprived of the word, but the power conferred by the word.

Derrida creates a new word “*animot*” to replace that of “animal”. The word, *animot* draws attention to the role of language by the addition of the suffix *mot*, which translates as “word”. But *animot* sounds exactly the same as the French plural for animals, *animaux*. This is a typical Derridean pun that signals the role of language in our perception of the animal with its implication of non-human generality.

Derrida questions the belief of human exceptionalism enshrined in the Genesis tale, by asking, “Who was born first, before names? Which one saw the other come to this place so long ago? Who will have been the first occupant, and therefore the master? Who the subject? Who has remained the despot for so long now?” (Derrida 2008:18). The suggestion is that it is the willingness to forgo the position of master and despot that opens possibilities of connection with (other) animals, instead of having it foreclosed by the Cartesian assumption of the superiority, and exclusivity, of the human logocentric system.

The significance of naming is illustrated in Alice’s encounter with the creatures in the railway carriage.

What's the use of their having names," the Gnat says, "if they won't answer to them?"  
 "No use to *them*," said Alice; "but its useful to the people that name them, I suppose. If not, why do things have names at all?" (Carroll 1982:150).

Admitting to the possibility of language(s) beyond the *logos* of anthropocentrism does open possibilities of communication, as Alice found out as she stumbled into the garden of live flowers in *Through the Looking Glass*:

"O Tiger-lily!" said Alice, addressing herself to one that was waving gracefully about in the wind, "I *wish* you could talk!"  
 "We *can* talk," said the Tiger-lily, "When there's anybody worth talking to" (Carroll 1982:137).

Although speaking plants are admittedly absurd (other than in dreams), Carroll suggests that the possibility of communication is opened up if only "there's somebody worth talking to", or, as I expressed in a jotting from *The 100 Page Diary*<sup>58</sup>, if we are only willing to hear.

I do not know...  
 The scream is  
 muted  
 barely heard  
 Speak up  
 Speak up!  
 SPEAK UP  
 I can't hear  
 I CAN'T HEAR  
 I can't HE(A)R (Cruise 2007).

But it is not only the languages animals may (or may not) use that are of concern, it is also the language we use to analyse the human-animal divide that colours the way we perceive the non-human other. As with feminism, so too do grammatical structures impact on perceptions and prejudices in speciesism. The use of diminutives such as girl (for woman) was an example irksome to feminists. Hélène Cixous in particular draws attention to the patriarchal nature of symbolic language, what Deleuze and Guattari would call "arborescent" order. Patriarchal language corrals experiences in a way that does not fit

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58 Wilma Cruise *The 100 Page Diary* (2006- 2007). Pen and ink with various media, 100 x A3 pages.

the subjective nature of female experience. It is also inadequate in dealing with the nature of the human-animal interface.

In speciesism, as with feminism, language plays a role as a diminishing and reductive force. This manifests itself in the use of pronouns. Pronouns such as “who”, “she”, “he”, favour the human subject, while “it” and “which” diminish and objectify the animal. Marc Bekoff points out that if one had to ask the question, “Who is for dinner?” instead of “What's for dinner?” everything changes. We become aware that the “beef” on our plates was once a living cow – a sentient being capable of feeling pain and pleasure (Bekoff 2016). “The cow who came for dinner”, causes a shift in awareness from something that is intended to satisfy our appetites to a consciousness of a once living, now dead, animal.

When Alice sat down to her inaugural queenly feast in *Through the Looking Glass* she was presented with a joint of mutton. Alice looked at it rather anxiously as she never had to carve a joint before (Carroll 1982:225).

“You look a little shy: let me introduce you to that leg of mutton,” said the Red Queen. “Alice – Mutton: Mutton – Alice.” The leg of mutton got up in the dish and made a little bow to Alice: and Alice returned the bow, not knowing whether to be frightened or amused.

“May I give you a slice?” she said, taking up the knife and fork, and looking from one Queen to the other.

“Certainly not,” the Red Queen said, very decidedly: “it isn't etiquette to cut anyone you've been introduced to. Remove the joint!” (Carroll 1982:225).

Via a polite introduction, the mutton had become a “who”. Bekoff would approve!

Jane Goodall, the chimpanzee researcher, was advised to refer to the chimpanzees as “it's” instead of “she's” or “he's” (Safina 2015:140). Her first scientific paper was returned because she named the animals rather than numbered them. By personalising the apes through naming and the use of “human” pronouns, she committed what was considered a scientific fault, one that compromised the purported objectivity of her research.

Notably in Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, when Gregor Samsa wakes up to discover that he has turned into a loathsome cockroach his family rebuff him and lock him in his room out of sight of the lodgers. It is only his sister, Grethe, who is prepared to champion his cause. But, finally, she too comes to a point when she rejects Gregor and, along with her family, she decides to get rid of the unsavoury creature. At this point in the narrative she swaps pronouns. She no longer refers to Gregor as "him" but "it" as if emphasising the absolute alterity of the insect that was once her mentor and brother. (Gregor obligingly dies before his sister can carry out her threat.)

Language not only harbours prejudice within its structure, it also controls our perception of the world in the provision of descriptive terms, the supply of which on occasions can be impoverished. As Carl Safina observes, our understanding of the animals' vocal repertoires is circumscribed by the words we use describe their utterances. For example, "bark" or "howl" is insufficient in describing the range of dog vocalisations (Safina 2015:90). A dog barking to go out of a door sounds different to the same dog barking at another dog on the other side of the door. We do not have words to describe these differences in pitch and intensity, which we clearly *do* understand and interpret correctly (Safina 2015:90). By limiting our vocabulary we limit our ability to hear the nuances of dog (and other species) language. "[W]hen it comes to other animals, we harbour no vocabulary other than the crudest words..." (Safina 2015:83).

The choice of metaphor likewise governs reception of meaning. Elizabeth Costello, noted in her first lecture on the lives of animals, that the image of the slaughterhouse is habitually evoked in descriptions of the Nazi death camps of WWII: "They went like sheep to the slaughter". "They died like animals" (Coetzee 1999:64). Costello adopts the simile to hammer home the comparison between modern abattoirs and the death camps. "Let me say it openly: we are surrounded by an enterprise of degradation, cruelty and killing which rivals anything that the Third Reich was capable of, indeed dwarfs it, in that ours is an enterprise without end, self-regenerating, bringing rabbits, poultry, live-stock ceaselessly into the world for the purpose of killing them" (Coetzee 1999:65)<sup>59</sup>. Costello is

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59 The figure of the Holocaust is a point Derrida also makes (see Chapter Two).

unapologetic about her use of such an extreme metaphor. She has chosen her language carefully even though she had at her disposal the cool rational means of philosophical discourse.

Such a language is available to me, I know. It is the language of Aristotle and Porphyry, of Augustine and Aquinas, of Descartes and Bentham, of, in our day, Mary Midgely and Tom Regan... But the fact is, if you had wanted someone to come here and discriminate for you between mortal and immortal souls, or between rights and duties, you would have called in a philosopher, not a person whose sole claim to your attention is to have written stories about made-up people (Coetzee 1999:66).

Language and logic are central to the Alice tales and the games Carroll plays with his speaking creatures form a large (and significant) part of the narratives, especially in *Through the Looking Glass*. In this story, Carroll not only demonstrates his interest in naming and the meaning of words, but he extends his enquiries (via Alice of course) into the realm of communication. Here Alice attempts to communicate with her kitten but is frustrated by her apparent lack of language. Upon waking from her dream, she finds that the Red Queen has transmogrified into Dinah's black kitten.

Your Red Majesty shouldn't purr so loud," Alice said, rubbing her eyes, and addressing the kitten respectfully, yet with some severity. "You woke me out of oh! such a nice dream; and you've been all along with me, Kitty - all through the Looking-Glass world. Did you know it dear?" It is a very inconvenient habit of kittens (Alice had once made the remark) that, whatever you say to them, they *always* purr. "If they would only purr for 'yes' and mew for 'no,' or any rule of that sort," she had said, "so that one could keep up a conversation! But how *can* one talk to a person if they *always* say the same thing?" (Carroll 1982:231).

Derrida accuses Alice of making a "very Cartesian response" to her kitten's purr. This is surely a critique of the understanding of language as a system of fixed binary oppositions in which terms are constant: "An argument will only be cogent and convincing if in each of its occurrences the word in use retains a fixed meaning with the same name and same reference frame for the same kind of object or idea" (Patten 2008). Derrida's central concept *différence* would *a priori* challenge this view and instead draw attention to the instability and constant deferment of meaning (Richards 2008:16-17). But it is in the black kitten's response that Derrida's criticism lies: She "doesn't reply, not really, not ever, that is what Alice concludes. Exactly like Descartes" (Derrida 2008:8). "...[I]sn't Alice's incredulity

rather incredible?" he asks (2008:9). Derrida's Cartesian accusation is arguably unwarranted. Apart from the historicism of his claim, Carroll's assertion that "If they would only purr for 'yes' and mew for 'no'", might merely function as an instruction to his young readers on the workings of language in a pre-deconstruction era or, (and this is more likely), is ironically intended. It all "comes down to knowing not *whether the animal speaks*, but whether one can know what *respond* means" (Derrida 1995:9. First emphasis mine). But surely that is the point. Does the animal speak (say something) within its moment of response? What Derrida's cat is saying to *him* is no clearer than the black kitten's purr is to Alice! At that moment, during the visual exchange between philosopher and animal, what was Derrida's ordinary little cat saying? As Haraway points out, Derrida failed to indulge in cat-human behavioural semiotics and thereby stepped back from the abyss of a true encounter with an(other) animal (2008:21). Not knowing anything more about his cat he retreated to the safety of his own philosophical canon. He fell back on a philosophical argument returning in a circular fashion to the word: "The question of the animal response has as its stakes the letter, the literality of a word, sometimes what the word *word* means literally" (Derrida 2008:8).

When Derrida accused Carroll (via Alice) of being "Cartesian", he failed to recognise a fellow traveler who, in spite of a separation of a century or so, shares his penchant for wordplay. Both writers investigate language through illusions, puns, word games and neologisms. Charles Dodgson, alias Lewis Carroll, is no stranger to language that has a slippery, tenuous relationship to meaning. Within the matrix of the children's tales he plays with words and logical conundrums. In the Queens' lesson in *Through the Looking Glass*, the Red and White Queens thought to instruct Alice on arithmetic. What follows leaves her bemused not least of all because the meaning of the terms, "addition", "subtraction" and "division" seem arbitrarily to shift and change. Detractors of Derrida would appreciate Alice's frustration that words do not always mean what they seem to mean, as the following extract demonstrates.

"She ca'n't do Subtraction," said the White Queen, "Can you do Division? Divide a loaf by a knife - what's the answer to *that*?"

"I suppose -" Alice was beginning, but the Red Queen answered for her. "Bread-and-butter of course. Try another Subtraction sum. Take a bone from a dog: what remains?"

Alice considered. "The bone wouldn't remain, of course, if I took it - and the dog wouldn't remain: it would come to bite me - and I am sure *I* shouldn't remain!"

"Then you think nothing would remain?" said the Red Queen.

"I think that's the answer."

"Wrong, as usual," said the Red Queen: "the dog's temper would remain."

"But I don't see how-"

"Why look here!" the Red Queen cried, "The dog would lose its temper, wouldn't it?"

"Perhaps it would," Alice replied cautiously.

"Then if the dog went away, its temper would remain!" the Queen exclaimed triumphantly.

Alice said as gravely as she could, "They might go different ways." But she couldn't help thinking to herself, "What dreadful nonsense we *are* talking!" (Carroll 1982:217-218).

The unhinging of words and objects from their normal contexts allows for a kind of madness, or in Alice's words, a "dreadful nonsense". The destabilisation of meaning makes the world a less sure place as Alice found in the upside down world of dreamland. Her encounter with the nursery rhyme character of Humpty Dumpty, a fanciful creature, half man, half egg who appears in her daydream in *Through the Looking Glass* is the quintessential example of nonsensical word play. To Alice's considerable frustration she always finds herself on the losing end of Humpty Dumpty's arguments. She has no riposte to his form of irrational logic.

"Why do you sit out here all alone?" asked Alice, not wishing to begin an argument.

"Why, because there's nobody with me!" cried Humpty Dumpty. "Did you think I didn't know the answer to *that*?" (Carroll 1982:180).

There is no answer to that!

"I don't know what you mean by 'glory'", Alice said. Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. "Of course you don't-till I tell you. I meant 'there's a nice knock-down argument for you!'"

"But 'glory' doesn't mean 'a nice knock-down argument,'" Alice objected.

"When *I* use a word ... it means just what I choose it to mean-neither more nor less".

"The question is", said Alice, "Whether you *can* make words mean so many different things".

"The question is", said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master-that's all".

Alice was too much puzzled to say anything... (Carroll 1982:184).

Humpty Dumpty veers between insisting on the literal meaning of words to claiming that they can mean anything he wants them to mean. The irony is that his haughty assertion does contain a seed of truth. Words do mean only what the master says they mean at any one time, as Derrida demonstrated nearly a century after Lewis Carroll wrote this! He said that “a never-ending chain of signifiers” prevents closure to the process of interpreting signs. The “signified... is never total, never complete” (Richards 2008:16).

Dunn and McDonald identify Humpty Dumpty’s arguments as a form of eristic logic, which they define as follows: “Eristic logic turns its back on the intellectual virtue of honest inquiry and uses thought to fend off reality and paper over facts rather than open them up for exploration” (2010:73). On the basis of these distinctions Dunn and McDonald differentiate between tolerable and intolerable logic in Wonderland. The natural universe in Wonderland and *Through the Looking Glass* seems to offer the tolerable, but the creatures themselves are intolerably illogical (2010:62). Although the physical world in Wonderland and on the other side of the looking glass, is absurd and nonsensical, it is still subject to the laws of possibility and logic. As Dunn and McDonald, quoting Hume point out, “The contrary of every matter of fact is still possible” (2010:73). If you eat one side of the mushroom you grow bigger and if you eat the other side, you shrink. That is, although things might be improbable, they are still logically possible: like a baby turning into a pig as it does in the *Pig and Pepper* chapter in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll 1982:62). But what is forever impossible and cannot be imagined is something like a square circle - (or a sensible response to Humpty Dumpty).

Taking my cue from Lewis Carroll, I too use words to illustrate the failure of words to convey truths. To date I have used the absurdities and aphorisms from *Alice in Wonderland* and *Alice through the Looking Glass* in prints, the diary pages and paintings. This extract from the poem *Jabberwocky* is the most famous example of nonsense: “Twas brillig, and the slithy toves did gyre and gimble in the wabe: All mimsy were the borogoves, and the mome raths outgrabe” (Carroll 1983:134). Carroll’s texts are littered with conundrums. “Do cats eat bats? Do bats eat cats?” (Carroll 1982:19) or “What is the difference between and flamingo and mustard?” (Both bite except mustard isn’t a bird) (Carroll 1982:84). In a discussion on arithmetic the Mock Turtle enumerates its different

branches: Ambition, Distraction, Uglification and Derision (Carroll 1982:90), which is a play on words for addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. I have also scrawled text on the walls of the galleries, providing a link between the images in the frames, the sculptures on the floor and the original tales. The words do not explain the images nor do they make (logical) sense suggesting the failure of language in the face of animal-human interaction – they make visible a threatening madness. As Alice said about *Jabberwocky*, “Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas – only I don’t exactly know what they are!” (Carroll 1982:134).

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I approached the 2013/14 exhibition, *Will you, won't you, will you join the dance?* with these issues as a basis for my visual explorations. But it is important to re-iterate that the artworks are not illustrations of the concepts nor are they meant as didactic representations. Much like the recognition that the languages we use to communicate with animals are not logocentric and reasoned, so too does my visual language occupy a parallel universe. In my art, my aim is to make the inchoate and barely apprehended in some way visible.

The title of the exhibition, *Will you, won't you, will you join the dance?* is a phrase gleaned from the Lobster Quadrille.

“Will you walk a little faster?” said a whiting to a snail,  
 “There’s a porpoise close behind us, and his treading on my tail  
 See how eagerly the lobsters and turtles all advance!  
 They are waiting on the shingle – will you come and join the dance?  
 Will you, wo’n’t you, will you, wo’n’t you, will you join the dance?  
 Will you, wo’n’t you, will you, wo’n’t you, wo’n’t you join the dance? (Carroll 1982:93).

The invitation to dance is an implicit encouragement to the viewers of the exhibition to join the game. They are invited to unravel the conundrums and the absurdities contained within Carroll’s tales and re-interpreted in the artworks of *The Alice Sequence*. It is up to the viewer to make the connection between thinking, speaking humankind, as

exemplified by Alice, and the non-speaking other – even if it is, as in the case of Humpty Dumpty, an imaginary (speaking) anthropomorphic egg!

In *Will you, won't you, will you join the dance?* I explore in three-dimensional form the character of Humpty Dumpty. In this series of artworks, Humpty Dumpty's bad tempered persona is roughly modelled into a bulbous ceramic shape. Named H.D. Arnoldus, he is half the absurd anthropomorphic egg of the nursery rhyme and half the mischievous imp that was said to sit on my shoulder as a child (Figs 4.2 & 4.3).



**Fig 4.2.** Wilma Cruise *H.D. Arnoldus (Dancing 2)* (2013), Ceramic, 103 cm.

**Fig 4.3.** Wilma Cruise *H.D. Arnoldus (seated)* (2013), Ceramic on found object, 87 cm.  
(Photographed by Adam Cruise).

He is depicted in corporeal form perched on a log, legs crossed. Elsewhere he is upside down, or dancing, his spherical form precariously balanced on his underdeveloped legs. As an indicator of his vanity, he is shod in a pair of bright red ballet slippers. He also appears in two dimensions in a number of diary pages, in which I explore the role of words and language in the game implied by the invitation to join the dance. The

sculptures were produced in 2013. In 2016, nearly three years later, they were the inspiration for a suite of collaged drawings, entitled *The HD Series* (Figs 4.4 and 4.5).



**Fig 4.4.** Wilma Cruise *A Mouth Full of Teeth* (2016). Collage, 120 x 87 cm.



**Fig 4.5.** Wilma Cruise *Chit Chat* (2016). Collage, 87 x 120 cm.

Modeled on the conflation of Humpty Dumpty and the mythic Arnoldus, they evolved a personality reminiscent of Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi*. *Ubu Roi*, written in 1888, is "a satirical and grotesque expression of the way in which arbitrary power engenders madness" (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:18). Although Alfred Jarry was satirising a political situation, I am more inclined to see HD's madness as of the kind that William Kentridge used in his first manifestation of Ubu<sup>60</sup>, that is an interpretation free from any "predefined ideological position" (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:119). Thus, HD does not represent any outrage *vis à vis* speciesism for example. Instead, his madness is of the confused nonsensical sort, expressed by the eponymous Humpty Dumpty in Lewis Carroll's tale. In most of the 2016 drawings HD is represented in the company of rats. They run over his feet, peer into his mouth, or sit on his head (Figs 4.6 and 4.7). In one drawing HD exclaims, "Oh my word!" (Fig 4.7.). This phrase not only describes HD's state of mind, but indicates the importance of the word, literally the word, (and its failure), that I emphasise in my research into the animal question.



**Fig 4.6.** Wilma Cruise *Rattus Rattus* (2016). Collage, 70 x 100 cm.

**Fig 4.7** Wilma Cruise *Oh My Word!* (2016). Collage, 70 x 100 cm.

<sup>60</sup> The animated film *Ubu tells the Truth* (1997) is less polemical than the subsequent theatre production *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (1997) (Christov-Bakargiev 1998:118).

The rats can be read as a cipher for animal kind in general. As one of the most maligned species on the planet they are not even accorded animal-rights protection under USA legal system. They are bred specifically for laboratory experimentation where they can be abused beyond the reach of the law. Outside the laboratory, and, barring a few household pets, rats are perceived as harbingers of death and pestilence. Their threatened, misunderstood status stands for animal kind in general - and Humpty Dumpty, armless and therefore lacking agency, represents confused humankind. But this interpretation is of necessity post hoc and does not describe the playfulness that defined the studio practice of creating the persona of HD. In 2016, late in the Alice series, I created the last figure in the suite of sculptural HD's. Painted blue and balanced on a pair of silver ballet slippers, this absurd figure refuses to reveal its meaning. His clumsy form is neither human nor animal, nor does it even suggest, like Swanepoel's "Little Creatures", a conflation of the two. Instead I offer the interpretation that *HD Dennis* (Fig 4.8.) is a physical manifestation of my attempts to unravel the animal question. As such the figure gives material form to an inchoate but frustrated desire for clarity and resolution.



**Fig 4.8.** Wilma Cruise *H.D. Dennis* (2016), Ceramic and steel, 228 cm. (Photographed by Pierre van der Spuy).

That the Alice tales provide a fecund metaphor for a post-humanist reading on the question of eating animals can be illustrated with reference to the tale of the Walrus and the Carpenter. This poem, recited by Tweedledee, becomes a fable about the human animal's greed and duplicity when it comes to eating (other) animals. The protagonists in the poem, the anthropomorphised Walrus and his human companion, the Carpenter, trick a group of young oysters to come for a walk along the "briny beach". They are invited to feast.

'Now if you're ready, Oysters dear,  
We can begin to feed'.

'But not on us!'  
The oysters cried,  
Turning a little blue.  
'After such kindness, that would be  
A dismal thing to do!'  
'The night is fine,' the Walrus said. 'Do you admire the view?'

'It was so kind of you to come!  
And you are very nice!'  
The Carpenter said nothing but  
'Cut us another slice.  
I wish you were not quite so deaf -  
I've had to ask you twice!'

'It seems a shame,' the Walrus said,  
'To play them such a trick.  
After we've brought them out so far,  
And made them trot so quick!'  
The Carpenter said nothing but  
'The butter's spread too thick!'

'I weep for you,' the Walrus said:  
'I deeply sympathize.'  
With sobs and tears he sorted out  
Those of the largest size,  
Holding his pocket-handkerchief  
Before his streaming eyes.

'O Oysters,' said the Carpenter,  
'You've had a pleasant run!  
Shall we be trotting home again?'  
But answer came there none -

And this is scarcely odd, because  
They'd eaten every one (Carroll 1982:161-62).

The Walrus can easily be seen as a personification of the hypocrisy of the couch activist who complains about animal abuse and argues for animal rights, yet, unthinkingly eats pork for dinner!

In *Will you, won't you, will you join the dance?* (2014) the framed A4 size diary pages were hung sequentially, functioning as a dada rail along the walls of the galleries (Fig 4.9).



**Fig 4.9.** Wilma Cruise *Will you, won't you, will you join the dance?* (2014) Installation view.

Viewers were invited to partake in the games suggested by the juxtaposition of drawings, extracts and my notes. One such conversation depicted in a number of diary pages, was Alice's discussion with Humpty Dumpty. "When I make a word do a lot of work like that...I pay it extra... . You see it's like a portmanteau – there are two meanings packed up into one word" (Carroll 1982: 184-185). As Dunn and McDonald note, "[T]he arguments that go on in these curious worlds are something [Alice] never can win – because the creatures are constantly asserting, in one form or another, that two and one equals something other than three!" (Dunn and McDonald 2010:67). This is aptly illustrated in Alice's conversation with Humpty Dumpty, about naming.

"It's very provoking to be called an egg..."

"My name is Alice..."

"It's a stupid name... what does it mean?"

"Must a name mean something?"

"Of course it must – my name means the shape I am and a good handsome shape it is too" (Carroll 1982:180).

Claiming that his name means a “good handsome shape” is patently absurd. As post-structuralist thinkers have pointed out, the signifier and the signified are not intricately, nor necessarily, interdependent. Yet, ironically, the name, “Humpty Dumpty”, if not handsome, *has* some hundred and fifty years later, come to mean a round egg-like body along with all the implications of pomposity and absurdity. Thus do the meanings of words shift and change. A note juxtaposed with a drawing of Humpty Dumpty reads: “A postmodern Humpty”, and then: “Meet HD Arnoldus”, thereby drawing attention to the conflation of Humpty Dumpty with the personification of my childhood temper. In this way Humpty Dumpty becomes part of my personal ontology.

But it is not only in the diary pages that I explore the word and its implications. I also exploit ambiguity and *double entendre* in a suite of large mixed media drawings entitled *Decline a Mouse I, II and III* (Fig 4.10) made for *Will you, won't you, will you join the dance?*



**Fig 4.10.** Wilma Cruise *Decline a Mouse I, II & III* (2013). Mixed media on paper, 155 x 90 cm each.

I based these drawings on Alice’s encounter with the mouse in the pool of tears. Swimming around with the creature she is confused as to the proper way in which to address it. Remembering a Latin declension in her sister’s schoolbook, “A mouse - of a

mouse - to a mouse..." She addresses him thus: "O Mouse!" she says but gets no response (Carroll 1982:29). I play on the idea of declension in *Decline a Mouse I, II and III*; the pun suggesting that we have refused the mouse. I suggest that what we have denied it is Singer's notion of equal moral consideration, or, if one prefers a Derridean approach, the possibility of the mouse, (specifically Alice's mouse), of being a singular unsubstitutable creature that deserves respect beyond the condemnation of the generalised and ultimately reductive term, "animal".

The figure of Alice in three sculptural manifestations is central to the exhibition, *Will you, won't you, will you join the dance?* (Fig. 4.11 see also Fig 2.18 in Chapter 2).



**Fig 4.11.** Wilma Cruise *Biggest Alice* (2012). Ceramic on steel base, 182 cm.  
(Photographed by Ant Strack).

The "Alice's" stand apart and isolated from the other figures - the dancing HD Arnoldus's - as if emphasising the isolation and aloneness Alice felt in her dream world peopled by

strange and incomprehensible others. The Alice's are armless. Neither do they have facial features other than small scratches to indicate the position of the eyes. Their bodies are simplified, their size distorted and their necks elongated. The shift in scale and proportion indicates the illogicality of the world Alice finds herself in down the rabbit hole. The subtitle of the works indicates her conundrum - *Big, Bigger, Biggest*. It might just as easily have been *Small, Smaller, Smallest*. In her dream world, the meaning of "big" and "small" has ceased to have relevance.

Like Lewis Carroll and Derrida, I use a (visual) language that allows for a multiplicity of readings which mimic animal-human communication in its knowing unknowability. My works, like Cixous' writing are made affectively. "Crawling with secrets" (Derrida 1994), the viewer, and I as the artist-as-viewer, have to decipher them. My sculptures lack the usual means to communicate either orally or gesturally. Like the creatures in the carriage they can only "think" their thoughts and hope to find an echo in the viewers. I offer no single definitive interpretation, but invite layers of response, taking due note that the language used to describe the response is of necessity imperfect in capturing the reality. Meaning is relative and depends on who is using the words. In our world as well as the upside down world of dreamland, words, (or artworks), do not always mean what they are meant to as Humpty Dumpty claims. But this does not necessarily follow that animals and humans cannot communicate. In the next chapter, I offer a suggestion that communication between human and animal, and animal and animal, is of a material semiotic nature, one that has been largely ignored by human hubris.

## CHAPTER 5

# Take a Bow



**Fig 5.1.** Wilma Cruise Take a Bow *The Caucus - Puppy* (2011- 2012). Bronze (Edition 10), 45 x 84 x 33 cm. *Pup - Zara* (2013 - 2014). Bronze (Edition 10), 75 x 63 x 48 cm. (Photographed by Nicolene Swanepoel).

Those who insisted that language is unique to humans, ...simply raised the bar on what counted as language (Singer 2011).

## Exhibitions

*Menagerie at Tokara: Musings* (2014)<sup>61</sup>

In this chapter I look at behaviourism and its rejection of imaginative empathy or anthropomorphism, a stance which served to advance the Cartesian model of the separation of human and animal with the concomitant distancing that allowed for animal abuse in the form of factory farming and experimentation. I question the language experiments conducted on chimpanzees in the USA in the early '70's and argue that the failure of these experiments was due to the refusal to impute (at least experimentally) an emotional life to the animals. After Donna Haraway, I offer a suggestion that communication between human and animal and animal and animal is of a material semiotic nature. Such is the mock bow used in dog play. As is my wont, I address the problem via the art object relying on the work exhibited on *Menagerie at Tokara: Musings*, near Cape Town, South Africa in 2014.

The question of whether animals can speak was largely deferred when Jeremy Bentham asked, "...the question is not can they reason? Nor can they talk? But, Can they suffer?" (Bentham 2007:8). His query drew attention away from language and the interior life of animals and focused it instead on the question of suffering. Just what suffering is, is left to the human to decide; a debate, which forms a large part of the discourse in the animal rights movement. As Adam Cruise has noted "suffering" revolved around defining the meaning of the word in relation to a variety of species of animal. Does a fly suffer in the same way as an elephant, for example?

Vulnerability, or sentience for want of a better noun, as an ethical consideration sends us careering down the wrong path toward a ceaseless debate as to nature, extent, and moral weight of what suffering *is*. This has led to an entire field of inquiry focused on determining whether animals *can* suffer and to what extent this can be confirmed *empirically*. What such a question merely highlights is that empirical, biological and ontological findings on sentience only lure animal theorists to continue to redraw the same insuperable line between those beings included and those excluded from an ethic (Cruise A. 2012:2).

But what happens if we were to return to the unanswered part of Bentham's quote, the questions that Descartes so famously answered in the negative: "Can they reason?" "Can

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<sup>61</sup> *Menagerie at Tokara: Musings*. The sculpture garden at Tokara Wine Estate, 16 March to October. Curated by Ilse Schemers.

they talk?". These questions have been banned by scientific and philosophical discourse up until recently, when the burgeoning interest in the "animal question" re-opened the debate. Previously, under the accusation of "anthropomorphism", any investigation into the interiority of the animal mind, consciousness and awareness of self, was prohibited<sup>62</sup>.

Arguably the Cartesian, mechanistic view, reached its apogee in the behaviourist movement of the mid twentieth century. Behaviourism was, *inter alia* a reaction to the psychoanalytical models of psychology of Freud and Jung, specifically claiming that the id, the ego and the collective unconscious, were not identifiable and measurable in empirical terms and therefore the effects, even existence, of these entities was in question. Behaviourism had a philosophical underpinning in the theories of logical positivism, an approach associated chiefly with philosophers of the Vienna School (Macey 2000:232). Logical positivists rejected the metaphysics of traditional philosophy and based their thinking on pragmatic principles of science and logic. In these terms philosophy's task was "to reduce statements to their empirical components and to verify their truth claims" (Macey 2000:232). Behaviourism and associate "sciences" were anchored in the real world where cause and effect were verifiable and measurable. The research methodology was based on the operational definition<sup>63</sup> of behaviour defined by the observable (and measurable) elements of stimulus and response in managed experimental conditions.

The stimulus/response model of behaviour was initially demonstrated by Pavlov in his experiments with classical conditioning<sup>64</sup>. This was followed in mid century with B.F. Skinner's experiments with rats in a "Skinner box"<sup>65</sup> that demonstrated the principles of

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62 In 1993 *Time* magazine announced that anthropomorphism is no longer a sin, that it's okay now to say that animals think, hope, are puzzled, have expectations, are disappointed, even, for some, make their own little plans in a time scheme of their own (Hearne 2007).

63 Like logical positivism, operationalism emphasises close contact with experiment as necessary to objective discourse, but focuses on concepts rather than statements, seeking to safeguard them against meaninglessness by defining them solely with reference to precisely defined experimental operations (Honderich 1995:635).

64 Pavlov found that a dog, his experimental subject, would spontaneously salivate in reaction to the stimulus of a bell once bell and food had been paired a few times.

65 Developed by B. F. Skinner, a Skinner box is a chamber that contains a bar or key that an animal can press or manipulate in order to obtain food or water as a type of reinforcement. The Skinner

“operant conditioning”. Bracketed by these iconic examples, the behaviourist approach was to view behaviours in reductive terms without any need to impute interior processes, either physiological or mental to the behaving subject. Skinner’s demonstration of the principles of operant conditioning became applicable in a variety of different spheres including the treatment of phobias, education and specifically the training of animals in which manifestation it is still operant [sic!]. Donna Haraway, for one, acknowledges a contemporary place for behaviourism in the training of dogs and other animals. She says,

“Throughout my academic life... I had looked on behaviourism as a vapid science at best, hardly biology at all, and an ideological, determinist discourse at heart... . All of a sudden Cayenne [her dog] and I became subject to a knowledge practice I had despised. I had to understand that behaviourism is not my caricature of a mechanistic pseudoscience ... but a flawed, historically situated, and fruitful approach to material semiotic questions in the fleshy world” (Haraway 2008: 223).

In terms of the radical behaviourism of Skinner, behaviours are broken down into molecular components. Each unit of behaviour can then be governed by a system of rewards (reinforcements) and less frequently punishments. (Punishment is usually a case of withholding rewards to *decrease* the occurrence of behaviour and is to be distinguished from negative reinforcement<sup>66</sup>). Once each unit of behaviour is identified, its frequency and strength of occurrence, or disappearance, can be controlled by external stimuli.

This extreme determinist view of (animal) behaviour perversely confirmed the Cartesian view of animal-as-machine, a point of view supported by Lacan who also claimed that the animal is only capable of *reaction* while the human *responds* (Derrida 2008:120). Lacan’s differentiation effectively places animal and human in opposition to each other. That is, in the behaviourist model, animals are biological subjects, subjected to pre-determined stimuli to which they react in predictable and pre-determined ways. What this meant for the study of animals is that the animal was reduced to a bio-automaton.

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box also had a device that recorded each response provided by the animal as well as the unique schedule of reinforcement that the animal was assigned (Cherry n.d.).

<sup>66</sup> In negative reinforcement, a response or behavior is strengthened by stopping, removing, or avoiding a negative outcome or aversive stimulus (Cherry n.d.).

Added into this mix were the then new ideas of Konrad Lorenz in the embryonic field of Ethology<sup>67</sup>. Lorenz wrote *inter alia* about the imperatives of instinct. Using an example of imprinting in geese, he demonstrated that an animal's reaction to specific stimuli at specific time of its life was genetically coded and thus pre-determined (Lorenz n.d).

Does the animal speak? Does it think? What is the nature of its thought? These are the conundrums that the behaviourists refused to face. By raising the spectre of anthropomorphism, they drew ever further away from engaging in a meaningful sense with (other) animals. But, as Berger says, it was anthropomorphism with its projection of imaginative empathy that connected us to the animals and kept us in (empathetic) proximity to them (Berger 2007:254). Derrida concurs. Although he refused to (over) interpret what his cat was saying to him, he nevertheless rejected the "asinine" alternative of not trying to imagine the world from her point of view, a position that would have foreclosed sympathy and compassion.

Forbidding myself thus to assign, interpret or project... that which would consist in suspending one's compassion and in depriving the animal of every power of manifestation, of the desire to manifest to *me* anything at all, and even to manifest to me in some way *its* experience of *my* language of my words and of *my* nudity (Derrida 2008:18).

Engaging with his cat Derrida felt himself looking deep into the eyes of God. "I hear the cat or God ask itself, ask *me*: Is he going to call me, is he going to address me?" The cat did this without "breathing a word" (Derrida 2008:118). Thus deprived of language, the animal is rendered mute and in its muteness there is a great sadness. OR as Derrida suggests in a classical deconstructive reversal, its sadness renders it mute (Derrida 2008:19). Yet in spite of its silence, its lack of *logos*, Derrida admits to the possibility that the animal thinks. "The animal looks at us, and we are naked before it. Thinking perhaps begins there" (Derrida 2008:29). Thinking about the animal's thinking is the point. It is a leap into the territory banned from the Cartesians' and behaviourists' lexicon.

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<sup>67</sup> Konrad Lorenz along with Nikolaas Tinbergen is regarded as the founder of modern Ethology. *Man Meets Dog* was first published in English in 1954.

In spite of the degree of engagement Derrida had with his cat, Haraway accuses him of not getting down and dirty with her. She says that he avoided the messy co-entanglements of the semiotics of cat behaviour. Baldly put, he did not listen to what his cat was saying or how she was saying it, if at all. Yet as if anticipating this kind of criticism, Derrida says that it would be too easy to be “overinterpreting what the cat might be thus saying to me, in its own way, what it might be suggesting or simply signifying in a language of mute traces, that is *to say without words*” (Derrida 2008:18. Emphasis mine). Thus while Derrida points to the imperfection of communication between species, he acknowledges that a non-linguistic exchange occurred and even if he did not know the precise nature of it, some information was transferred between man and animal. In spite of Haraway's criticism, something was communicated between him and his cat, but just what it was defies the structure and order of symbolic language.

Carroll explored the notion of nonverbal communication in *Through the Looking Glass*. In the railway carriage, Alice decides that “there’s no use in speaking” to her fellow animal travellers, since the animals all echoed her unspoken thoughts with their own. “They all *thought in chorus*,” notes Carroll. Carroll almost immediately retracts this radical notion of the transference of information other than by the spoken word, by saying, “(I hope you understand what *thinking in chorus* means - for I confess that *I don't*)”. Retreating to his previous Cartesian position he asserts the centrality of symbolic language by saying, via Alice of course, “Language is worth a thousand pounds a word!” (Carroll 1982:147).

Ann-Marie Tully calls this kind of mute knowing, “imaginative empathetic transposition” (Tully 2014:108). She derives this notion from Elizabeth Costello’s idea of sympathetic imagination, which is the ability to imagine yourself in the place of the other, even if the other is a non-human animal (Coetzee 1999:80). Costello proposes that sympathy, a faculty derived from the heart, allows one to imagine the being of another. She asks with reference to Nagel, “if we are capable of thinking our own death, why on earth should we not be capable of thinking our own way into the life of a bat?” (Coetzee 1999:79). This ability has everything to do with the subject and little to do with the object, “as we see at once when we think of the object not as a bat... but as another human being” (Coetzee 1999:79). There are no limits, she maintains, to sympathetic imagining. “If I think my way

into the existence of a being that never existed, then I can think my way into the existence of a bat or a chimpanzee or an oyster, any being with whom I share the substrate of life" (Coetzee 1999:80).

But what Costello is talking about is still communication from the human transposed and imagined onto the animal. It is a one-way street as it were. Where is the responding living animal in the abstract scenarios that Costello evokes? Haraway draws comparisons between Costello and another of Coetzee's fictional characters, Bev Shaw, the volunteer animal caretaker in *Disgrace*, whose task is to euthanase condemned dogs. This duty she does with respect and regard for her charges, getting down and dirty with the sad business of killing them. In contrast, Costello seems to be locked into the abstractions of her lectures without engaging with actual animals in messy co-entanglements (Haraway 2008:81). But Haraway's accusation might also be, arguably, a touch unfair. Costello herself objects to the cold reason of the philosophers preferring the company of those who engage with the animals. "[I]f reason is what sets me part from the veal calf, then thank you but no thank you, I'll talk to someone else" (Coetzee 1999:112). Nevertheless, Haraway's criticism points towards the necessity of multi-directional relationships between humans and (other) animals. Conceding the asymmetry of such relationships she advocates a response/response-ability, post humanist (non-humanist) way of interacting in which "a relationship is crafted in intra-action through which entities, subjects and objects, come into being... . If this structure of material-semiotic relating breaks down or is not permitted to be reborn, then nothing but objectification and oppression remains" (Haraway 2008:71). However, conceding emotional lives to animals comes with a caveat: anthropomorphism must be appropriate. In this respect Wendy Woodward's concept of "relational epistemologies" is relevant (Woodward 2008:3).

The concept of "relational epistemologies" is illustrated in the scene in *Alice in Wonderland* in which she encounters the mouse swimming in the pool of her own tears. Striking up a conversation with him, she suggests introducing him to her cat Dinah. She is completely puzzled by his terrified response. "Would you like cats if you were me?" he squeaks. The disjunction between two species-specific points of view encompasses Woodward's concept of "relational epistemologies" in which a human's concept of "cat" is

clearly different to that of a mouse's. By acknowledging the difference in epistemologies, it opens the doors to an appropriate response to the reality of the other-animal. It allows for the projection of imaginative empathy into the mind of a mouse or even, as Elizabeth Costello maintains, into the mind of a bat (Coetzee 1999:79).

Still the danger exists that empathy might be misplaced. Empathetic projection opens the trap for misplaced emotion, which Scruton describes as "the vice of sentimentality" (Scruton 2011:38). It is easy to impute human emotions onto animals, especially pets, but these sentimental feelings often arise out of a narcissistic engagement with the human-self - the animal functioning as a convenient mirror.

[S]entimentality ... consumes our finite emotional energies in self-regarding ways and numbs us to realities. It atrophies our sympathies, by guiding them into worn and easy channels, and so destroys not only our ability to feel, but also our ability to help where help is needed and to take risks on behalf of higher things... . Sentimentalists turn a blind eye to unpleasant facts and their feelings skate rapidly over the rabbits, pheasants and chickens who must die at the fox's behest. Besides, if they were in charge, the fox would be gently dissuaded from its habits, in return for a bowl of canned meat, delivered each morning by some official manager of the countryside, wearing the uniform of the RSPCA (Scruton 2011:38).

But, just how does one steer a course through empathy and sentimentality? It is a task worthy of Scylla and Charybdis. Kari Weil suggests using a "critical anthropomorphism", one which is based not merely on an empathy with the other, but an empathy that recognises the irreducible, different and often inaccessible being of the other (Weil 2012:220). In other words, humans might be able to imagine pain or pleasure in other animals, but cannot know their experience in any (human) meaningful terms. In this sense, Weil is not too different from Woodward in acknowledging the unique experience of the Other without having to project a self-centred human interpretation.

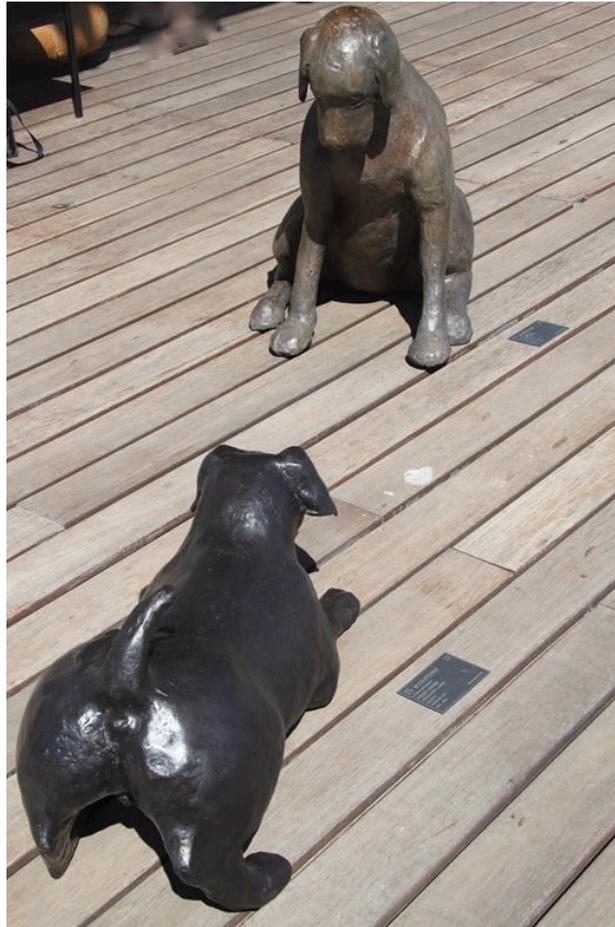
Post behaviourist thinkers, such as Arluke and Sanders (2007:63-71), also suggest a middle ground between an outright condemnation of theorists who use anthropomorphic descriptions of behaviour and those (such as pet owners) who routinely make use of anthropomorphism *for* making sense of their animal's behaviour. They see anthropomorphism as a useful tool, what they term a "heuristic device" (Arluke & Sanders

2007:67). Arguing that the privileging of language is overrated as the primary vehicle of cognition, they too advocate a critical anthropomorphism based on introspection, reasoning by analogy, interpretative analysis and intuition (Burghardt in Arluke and Sanders 2007:67).

Similarly, Marc Bekoff, a cognitive ethologist, argues for a biocentrically anthropomorphic position (Bekoff 2007:72). Like Woodward, he maintains that it is necessary to approach animal behaviour from a species' specific point of view. Thus, if studying dogs it is necessary to be "dog-o-centrist" (Bekoff 2007:74) and similarly for chimpanzees and so on. Bekoff has inter alia studied the evolution of morality in a variety of species particularly those that function in groups. Observing canids at play he has documented the operation of justice and fairness, concepts that can be inferred from a number of discrete behaviour patterns including "the bow". The bow is a frequent behaviour in dog games - a behaviour I depicted in an installation which was exhibited on the exhibition *Menagerie at Tokara: Musings* in 2014 (Fig 5.3). The installation, *Take a Bow*, included two sculptures made two years apart - *The Caucus - Puppy* (2011-2012) and *Pup Zara* (2013-2014). *The Caucus - Puppy* is based on John Tenniel's original illustration in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Fig 5.2).



**Fig 5.2.** John Tenniel "Puppy" (Carroll 1982:45).



**Fig 5.3.** Wilma Cruise *The Caucus - Puppy* (2011-2012). Bronze (Edition 10), 45 x 84 x 33 cm, *Pup - Zara* (2013-2014). Bronze (Edition 10), 75 x 63 x 48 cm. (Photographed by Nicolene Swanepoel).

In the book the puppy's playful stance is an exhortation to Alice to join in a game of catch. But Alice has shrunk to a fraction of her normal size. She is terrified of the giant, rambunctious puppy and hides under a thistle bush. In spite of her terror, Alice recognizes that the puppy is only doing what puppies are meant to do. "And yet what a dear little puppy it was!" she says while planning her escape (Carroll 1983:46). Alice quite correctly reads the semiotics of the dog's stance with its implicit invitation to play. At the exhibition at Tokara in 2014, the puppy similarly invites the other pup, Zara<sup>68</sup>, to play by assuming the position of a mock bow. Bemused, Zara watches his antics. It is just an instant before she leaps in to join the game - a moment that any observers of dog play will

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<sup>68</sup> Pup-Zara is a portrait of a neighbour's dog. It is less a realistic portrait than an attempt to capture the essence of a singular, gentle canine being.

recognize<sup>69</sup>. The placement of the two dogs occurred by chance. The two sculptures were in fact made some time apart but, once put in relational juxtaposition, the gap between became a conduit for communication and thereby became the *raison d'être* of the installation.

Two key principles arise out of the placement of the two sculptures in close proximity. Firstly, that communication occurs between two subjects. This is so self evident as to be all but invisible. It leapt into startling view when the two animals were placed close to each other. The space between them was bridged and they entered into a communicative relationship. Secondly, the key to understanding communication between humans and other animals is grounded primarily in body and behaviour and not dependent on spoken language. As a concomitant to the other concepts, the embodied semiotics of the two dogs playing is not only understood by the dogs themselves but is also readable by other species such as humans. "Any dog who goes into a play bow is inviting *you*, understanding that *you* might engage... . Dogs and others don't play-bow to trees, chairs or other inanimate objects" (Safina 2015:248. Emphasis mine).

Matthew Calarco, following Brian Massumi, suggests that "creativity and play may immanent to an animality itself" (Calarco 2015:62). "Play constitutes a zone in which the anthropological difference [between human and animal] is replaced by a more complex set of identities and differences" (Calarco 2015:62). Play thus becomes an activity in which human animal distinctions collapse and is probably the reason why human beings can read semiotics of animal games.

A similar interaction was revealed in a work made contemporaneously with *Pup Zara: Oracia - Watching the Hours* (2013 - 2014) which, when placed in proximity with an earlier work, *The Caucus - Rabbit* (2012) (Fig 5.4) became an installation, which offered a different reading.

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<sup>69</sup> I am aware of my conflation of the sculptures of dogs with real dogs, but for the purposes of the argument the depiction of the real and the real are the same thing.



**Fig 5.4.** Wilma Cruise Oracia - *Watching the Hours* (2013-2014). Ceramic. 176 cm. *The Caucus - Rabbit* (2012). Ceramic. 105 cm. (Photographed by Gavin Younge).

Again the construction of the sculptures occurred over a year apart but once put in proximity with each other the mutual gaze became charged with unspoken communication. The rabbit's eye is focused intently on featureless Oracia, who returns the look indicated only by the angle of her head. Both pairs of sculptures point to the embodiment of communication, ones that are not only species specific, but cross the species' divide.

Thus, if one has to regard language as more than the one spoken (to such good effect) by humans, the possibility exists of a multiplicity of species languages. Following Bekoff there would be, for example, "Dog" and "Horse", two languages I am reasonably familiar with. But here is the caveat. Before we can assign language to animals it behooves us to define the term, for the blatant fact remains that logocentric language in all its ability for

infinite permutations and abstractions remains a uniquely human phenomenon. Noam Chomsky proposed the concept of an innate human ability for language – a hardwiring of what he calls a Universal Grammar. Chomsky's colleague, Marc Hauser, phrases it thus:

As we and many other language scientists see it, the core competence for language is a biological capacity shared by all humans and distinguished by the central feature of discrete infinity—the capacity for unbounded composition of various linguistic objects into complex structures (Hauser et al. 2014).

Basically this claim re-asserts human exceptionalism along the traditional divide of language – humans speak, animals are dumb<sup>70</sup>. In order to refute Chomsky's claim, attempts were made in the mid twentieth century to establish whether other non-human animals were able to use language in a way that moved beyond the simple use of signs. The most notable of these was the Nim Project<sup>71</sup> in which a chimpanzee named Nim Chimsky was removed from his mother and brought up as a human infant on the assumption that on being exposed to the right environment he would pick up the rudiments of language. His name was a pun on “Noam Chomsky” and the experiment was intended to challenge Chomsky's belief in the innate human ability to use language in all its infinite permutations. The chief experimenter, Herbert Terrace, had been trained by Skinner and, as a confirmed behaviourist, he hoped to prove that language, rather than being an inherent faculty, was learned (Hess 2008). Nim was clothed, fed from a bottle, potty trained and socialised like his young human siblings. Recognising the physiological limits of his ability to actually articulate speech, the experimenters trained Nim in American Sign Language (ASL). This physiological limitation is, in light of later events, strangely the only concession to species-otherness that the experimenters made. For all other intents and purposes Nim was treated as a human. Nim learned a long list of words and rudimentary sentences. In the process he bonded with his human mothers and his subsequent handlers, nearly all of whom developed an emotional attachment to him. In the long process of “humanising” him (my word), his emotional connection to his human handlers was overlooked by Terrace in favour of the rigours of data collecting for the

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70 It is important to note that Chomsky, Hauser et al. later changed their minds about the uniqueness of human language, arguing for a much stronger continuity between animals and humans with respect to speech than previously believed (Haraway 2008:235).

71 This discussion is based on a film *Project Nim* (2011) directed by James Marsh.

language experiment. Although Nim did learn ASL, Terrace, later claimed that Nim was only making conditioned responses to his teachers' subtle and unconscious stimuli. This was - the Clever Hans effect in operation<sup>72</sup>. In other words, his language acquisition was a result of behaviourist-like conditioning and could not be compared to the acquisition of language in a human child who was presumably hardwired to learn language. But this observation was made only after the experiment had been terminated and not for reasons to do with the language experiment itself, but because Nim started behaving like the wild chimpanzee he actually was and on occasions bit his handlers severely enough to cause hospitalisation. What happened to Nim next was disastrous. Having decided that he was not fit for life as a speaking human after all, he was relegated to a caged existence, including for a time as a subject for medical experiments. He predictably descended into a depressive state. The terms of the experimental model that Herbert Terrace was operating under, precluded him from seeing what was before his eyes, namely that the communication that actually occurred between Nim and his handlers was an affective one based on bodily semiotics. Language was being spoken but not the logocentric one that Terrace focused on.

We all wished that he could have learned. But it didn't happen because it couldn't happen, despite his and his relatives' genetic similarity to humans and the aberrational tendency of some animal rights advocates to anthropomorphize simians as humans (Terrace 2011).

The betrayal of Nim was profound since the experimenters refused to acknowledge his chimpanzeeness and his failure to learn language was blamed on his conditioned (unthinking) reaction to a range of stimuli. "...Nim Chimpsky, the chimpanzee that produced the only public corpus of data in all animal language studies, produced signs considerably below the expected degree of combinatorial diversity seen in two-year old children" (Yang, 2013), and with no understanding of syntactic structure or semantic

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72 The Clever Hans effect is a form of involuntary and unconscious cuing. The term refers to a horse (Kluge Hans, referred to in the literature as "Clever Hans") who responded to questions requiring mathematical calculations by tapping his hoof. "The horse was simply a channel through which the information the questioner unwittingly put into the situation was fed back to the questioner. The fallacy involved treating the horse as the source of the message rather than as a channel through which the questioner's own message is reflected back" (Hyman 1989:425) (see also Wynne and Udell 2013:11-14).

interpretation" (Hauser et al. 2014). This is an outright condemnation of Nim who bore the burden of the failed experiment when it should have been the experimental model that was questioned. The experimenters ignored (at least experimentally) the profound emotional communication that was actually occurring. Nim was speaking to his handlers but not in the symbolic language that they were used to. They chose to ignore the bodily/embodyed semiotics he was using. He was signing to them but not in ASL as they had expected. Donna Haraway's concept of material semiotic co-entanglements is a useful description of what was happening, one that the experimenters chose to ignore.

Haraway says continuity between humans and other animals, should not imply a single line nor a single "chasm of difference" (Haraway 2008:235). In a remarkable echo of Derrida she says that this oversimplified figure of difference between human and animal be rejected as a disaggregate of singulars to be replaced by "fields ... with many geometries of system and subsystem architecture and junctions and disjunctions of properties and capacities, whether at scales of different species or of the brain organization of a single critter" (Haraway 2008:235). Arguing for complexity of the communicative space between human and animal, she suggests that the continuity theory should serve the status of a null hypothesis before any claims to uniqueness of the human species can be validated. Her observations imply that the question, "Do animals speak?" might just be the incorrect one, especially if it is argued from an anthropocentric, logocentric perspective. The communicative space between humans and other animals is far more complex than can be encapsulated in, or by, human symbolic language.

Marc Bekoff rightly points out that it is in the realm of emotion that the most vehement accusation of anthropomorphism occurs. Granting animals emotional lives is the last frontier as it were. Behavioural specialists are conditioned to record and analyse happiness and sadness in terms of "as if" in phrases such as, "They look *as if* they are happy/sad/ grieving". It is as if researchers are wary of imputing human emotions to animals in case they are accused of the sin of anthropomorphism. However, in his book *The Emotional Lives of Animals*, Marc Bekoff records that there might be a physiological basis for anthropomorphism or empathetic recognition. He notes the discovery of "mirror neurons" by Vittorio Gallese and Giacomo Rizzolatti and colleagues at the University of

Parma in Italy, who suggest a “neurobiological basis for sharing intentions which they discovered on Macaque monkeys” (Bekoff 2007:128). Research on these neurons, supports the notion that individuals can reflect the feelings of others, and then mentally project themselves into the other individual’s shoes. It has been demonstrated that rhesus monkeys will not accept food if another monkey suffers, when they do so, and mice react more strongly to painful stimuli after observing other mice in pain (Bekoff n.d). Bekoff states that while much research needs to be done the evolutionary continuity between species points to the reasonable conclusion that it is highly likely that mirror neurons exist in many different species other than human (2007:130). Thus rather than signifying foolish sloppiness in experimental work, imaginative empathy – the mirroring of other’s feelings – may well be an evolutionary response to the pain or joy of others.

The concept of sympathetic imagination is a problem with which I engaged in a series of works exhibited on *Menagerie at Tokara: Musings* in 2014 (Fig 5.5).



**Fig 5.5.** Figures for *Menagerie* at Renzo Vignali Foundry, Pretoria. (Photograph by Carla Crafford).

The exhibition was sited in a sculpture garden on a wine estate. The title was intended as a gentle, ironic invitation to contemplate the “curiosity” of a collection of (sculpted) animals<sup>73</sup>. However, in my menagerie, the bronze and clay animals – sheep, dogs, a bird and baboons – are inert and lifeless. Yet, contradictorily I tried to breathe life into their static material forms. Relying on Derrida’s emphasis on the specificity of his cat’s look, I attempted in the animal sculptures to capture the distinctiveness of the individual animal’s experience, and to evoke in the viewer an awareness of the emotion of the *unique* being. In other words, to acknowledge the subjectivity of the other-than-human-animal and in so doing bridge the divide between human and animal. In the catalogue I included a statement of intent which encapsulated the desire to bridge “the gap between”; a wish that can be extrapolated to the whole of *The Alice Series*: “Animals have entered the space of my being-in-the world. They form part of the (auto)biography that is both part of my life and inseparable from it” (Cruise 2012). I interpreted the word, “inseparable”, not only metaphorically but also literally in a sculpture, entitled *After Harrismith* (Fig 5.6).



**Fig 5.6.** Wilma Cruise *After Harrismith* (2014). Ceramic on steel base, 157 cm.  
(Photographed by the artist).

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73 Menagerie: a collection of [wild] animals kept in captivity for the curiosity and entertainment of the public... a diverse, exotic or peculiar group of...things (merriam-webster.com. Sv. “menagerie”).

*After Harrismith*, (2014) as the name implies, is modelled on the 2007 sculpture and print, and, like the earlier works, it depicts a human female figure around whose neck is draped a large cat. The cat presses into the head of the figure, becoming inseparable from it. The figure bows her head submitting to the burden of the self-satisfied cat. In my menagerie I have granted cats the same status as pigs, that of knowing outsiders. Cats more than any other creatures have the ability to stare down the human gaze. Derrida's cat shamed him. The philosopher Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) was not sure whether he was playing with his cat or whether she was toying with him (De Montaigne cited in Kalof & Fitzgerald 2007:57). What do they know? both philosophers pondered. Faced with the inquiring stare of his cat, Derrida came to the conclusion that animals, like humans, are specific, particular and sapient beings. The cats have a consciousness - a subjectivity and recognition of us as the other. The tables are turned and the habitually observed becomes the observer. The object gazing back is an uncomfortable feeling, as Derrida discovered. Certainly, the cat in *After Harrismith*, is more the subject, the one in charge and knowing, than the human object who submits to her presence.

In a shed adjacent to the sculpture garden I exhibited the two horses that make up the sculpture, *Poor Horace - Watching The Hours* (2009) (Fig 5.7, see also Fig 2.6.).



**Fig 5.7.** Wilma Cruise *Poor Horace: Watching the Hours* foundry view (2009). Acrylic resin and mixed media, 267 x 155 x 80 cm. (Photographed by Carlo Gamberini.)

In the version at Tokara the two sculptures stand apart. One sculpture was placed on a trolley; the other straddled two wooden boxes. Both the movable stand and the immovable one emphasised Horace's static stance - head down and feet squarely planted. The height of the shed and the shadows suggested a large stable, which added a theatrical component, one enhanced by the ghostly white of the forms. If one were to permit the projection of empathy, the installation can be read as a dramatisation of Horace's plight as an instrumentalised being, one who has no ability to direct his destiny or have any say over his life's journey.

Three baboon sculptures entitled *Small Baboon on Steel Bench* x 2 (2012) (Fig 5.8) and *The Caucus - Baboon on found object* (2012 - 2013) (Fig 5.9) were also exhibited.



**Fig 5.8.** Wilma Cruise *Small Baboon on Steel Bench* (2012). Bronze (Edition 10), 51 x 43 x 24 cm.

**Fig 5.9.** Wilma Cruise *The Caucus - Baboon* (2012-2013). Bronze and found object (Edition 10), 69 x 63 x 43 cm. (Photographed by Nicolene Swanepoel.)

Although my interest in primates and primate behaviour dates from my years as a young student when I embarked on undergraduate studies in primatology, my recent interest in baboons was sparked by the crisis faced by the local baboon population in the Western Cape of South Africa. Here man and animal compete for space and resources. The “wars” are hot and fierce with passions running high amongst the divided humans. There are those who want the baboons euthanased or at best removed and those who wish to live in harmony with them. It is a microcosm of human/animal conflict in which the individual animal is often forgotten. It appears that the question about the effects of death and translocation on the emotional well being of the remaining baboons is seldom raised.

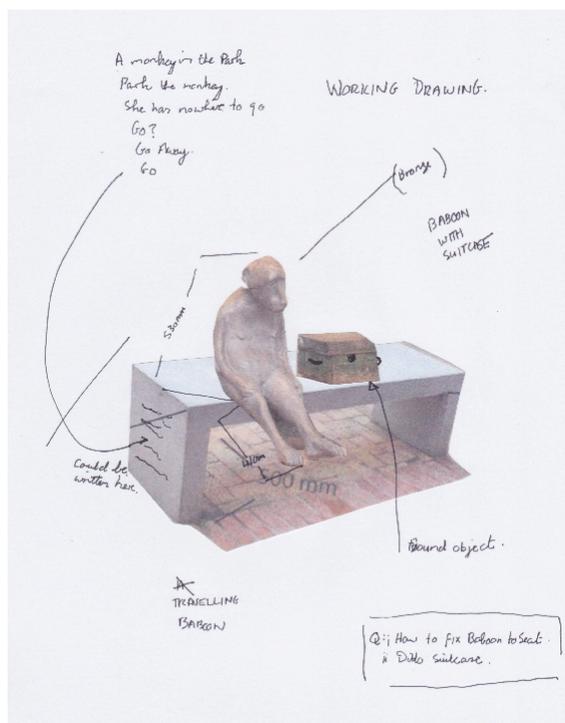
I was not so much interested in depicting the animals realistically, nor was I willing to engage in a proselytizing conversation; rather I attempted to capture the essence of what I read as “babooness”. I focused on the individual trying to imagine his/her experience of being in a world shared by uncooperative humans. I did not consciously attempt to anthropomorphise the baboons, but instead I tried to evoke an “imaginative empathy” – recognition of the emotional similarity between species. Ashley Pryor calls this approach “kindness”, which he defines as a mind-set that extends beyond a “subjective and volitional attitude of cheerful solicitude or tender hearted sympathy for our animal ‘others’ and names a more fundamental relationship” (Pryor 2012:290). This relationship can be defined as a phenomenological one of lived experience that “disrupts the primacy of the detached and objective point of view” (Pryor 2012:291). In these terms, kindness is something other than anthropomorphism or the projection of misplaced sentimentality. It also implies that the artist does not stand outside as an objective observer, but is intimately and emotionally involved. Notably, the concept of “kindness” is not dissimilar to Costello’s idea of “sympathetic imagination”, Derrida’s concept of “pity”, Regan’s notion of “care” or Scrutons’ idea of “piety”. All these thinkers and writers share a fundamental need to cross the divide between human and the other animal recognising the affective nature of the interchange.

In a variation of the original, *The Caucus - Baboon*, I installed the baboon, her suitcase beside her, on a park bench on a busy street corner in the centre of the university town of Stellenbosch, (Fig 5.10).



**Fig 5.10.** Wilma Cruise *Kom Sit: Travelling Baboon (The Caucus - Baboon)* (2012-2014). Bronze with found object (Edition 10), height from bench 53 cm.

My motivation was encapsulated in my artist's statement and accompanying sketch (Fig 5.11).

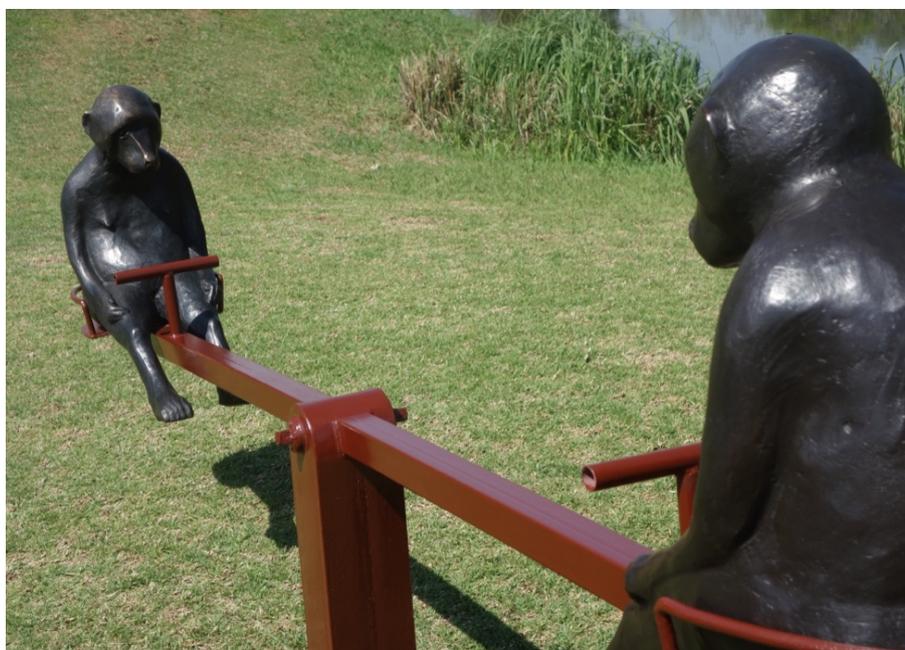


**Fig 5.11.** Wilma Cruise Working drawing for *Kom Sit: Travelling Baboon* (2014).

*Kom Sit: Travelling Baboon* is lost. The encroaching humans who have inhabited her territory have displaced her. Finding herself in 'Bossies' [Stellenbosch] she is waiting for someone - or something - to arrive to take her away. Her baggage is contained in one small suitcase (Artist's statement 2014).

In depicting the baboon in a human setting, one in which she would never appear, I skirt dangerously close to sentimental anthropomorphism. However, relying on Elizabeth Costello's injunction to imagine the mind of the animal other, I argue that my depiction of the baboon invites empathetic recognition of her plight. The implication is that the baboon's emotional experience of translocation is not too dissimilar to the one experienced by humans. And indeed a decision has been taken to remove all the peninsula troops to a sanctuary (J Trethowan of Baboon Matters Trust, personal interview, Cape Town, June 2015). Problem solved? Or is one of the last connections to wildness to be torn from our sense of being human?

A similar concept of redeploying the same image in different settings, was employed in a work entitled *Monkey Business* (Fig 5.12).



**Fig 5.12.** Wilma Cruise *Monkey Business* (2014). Bronze (baboons) and mild steel (seesaw). 135 x 270 cm. (Photographed by the artist).

In this work, two images of *The Caucus Baboon* were placed on either end of a seesaw frozen in perpetual motion. In setting up *Monkey Business* I found there was a critical

distance between the baboons that implied a communicative relationship – a tension that speaks of the space-between that holds the key to their communication. The contradiction between emphasizing each individual animal’s singular experience and the use of the multiple, as in *Monkey Business*, requires explanation. It appears as if, by repeating a single form, I am symbolically negating the very individuality that I am trying to emphasise. But, this ambiguity has as much to do with my studio practice as with its conceptual underpinnings. The multiple in my work has a number of sources – most obviously the studio tradition of clay manufacture in which repetition of the same form is standard practice<sup>74</sup>. But mainly my source of inspiration came from Rodin’s *Gates of Hell* in which *The Three Shadows* on top of the gate are in fact the same figure re-orientated (Story 1951:plate 12).

The use of the same image duplicated in varied settings raises new questions. For example, I asked whether there was significance in the employment of the multiple that refers to the Deleuze and Guattarian notion of the aggregate of the pack, which I interpret as a democratizing impulse even while it harbours the anomalous individual in its midst. Certainly a new dialogue was set up when multiples of *Little Baboon on Cast Suitcase* were photographed with an edition of *The Caucus Baboon*.



**Fig 5.13.** Wilma Cruise *The School Room* (2015) *The Caucus Baboon* with multiples of *Small Baboon on Cast Suitcase*. (Photographed by the artist).

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74 In “fine” art, as opposed to the craft of ceramics, the use of the multiple has a different etiology – a critique on the production process itself.

The image of the little baboons in front of the larger one immediately evoked the notion of a *school* in which the “classroom” of younger pliant animals face their elder (Fig 5.13).

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Anthropomorphism is a dangerous territory. Implementing interpretations of animal behaviour in terms of emotional projection, opens the doors for sentimentality. But by denying sympathy and the projection of empathetic feeling onto the animal other, leads to more acute consequences than the danger of misplaced sentiment. As I tried to demonstrate with the animals on *Menagerie*, emotion is conveyed by bodily means, which invite semiotic engagement of a material nature. Under the guise of a scientific method that dominated social science research in the mid-20th century, anthropomorphism allowed an emotional distancing that opened the space for the use and abuse of the other animal for the benefit of humankind. In this ideology, animals were denied emotional lives. But as I have argued in relation to Nim Chimpsky, emotion and affect can be the primary means of communication between human and the other animal, one which was so profoundly ignored during the Nim project. While most experimenters admitted to feeling affection for Nim, they failed to read the significance of his reciprocal gestures, nor did they allow this to influence their perceptions of the experimental results. Ironically, Herbert Terrace, the chief experimenter, who had announced the failure of the Nim experiment, pointed in the direction of the next problem in the larger question of the animal, when he said, “In a nutshell, simians lack what is called a ‘*theory of mind*’—the ability to perceive what another simian is thinking” (Terrace 2011. Emphasis mine). As Donna Haraway has noted a “theory of mind” is the ability to “know other beings have the same or similar sorts of motives and ideas that oneself has” (2008:236). In other words, do other animals have a consciousness of themselves as separate individuals? If animals do have a theory of mind, the next logical question is what is the nature of that mind? What do animals think and feel? What is the nature of their subjectivity? What is their being? This will be dealt with in the next chapter - more to follow.

## CHAPTER 6

# Wittgenstein's Lion and Heidegger's Hand



**Fig 6.1.** Wilma Cruise *Heidegger's Hand* (2016). Bronze 1/1, 60 x 35 x 55 cm.  
(Photographed by Pierre van der Spuy).

Does it cry? Does it grieve? Does it get bored? Does it lie? (Derrida 2008:63).

...and no truth appears to me more evident than that beasts are endowed with thought and reason as well as man. The arguments are in this case so obvious, that they never escape the most stupid and ignorant (Hume 1888:176).

## Exhibition

*Advice from a Caterpillar* (2015)<sup>75</sup>

In this chapter, I return to the question whether animals can reason, as well as feel, talk, manipulate and take decisions. Based on Wittgenstein's statement "If a lion could talk, we could not understand him" (cited in Wolfe 2003:44), I follow Wolfe in raising questions about relations between language, species and the question of the subject and, in so doing, present doubts as to whether the ontological difference between human and animal should be constituted by human symbolic language. I analyse this question in terms of a number of experimental models in which I broach questions about the analysis of the results and conclude that mid 20th century scientific notions of rigour hamper interpretation of the results. I look at Derrida's critique of both Lacan and Heidegger, in which he accuses them of dogmatic Cartesianism. I note the irony in Heidegger's notion of the human exceptionalism of the (thinking) hand particularly in view of the hand's significance in my own work.

In May 2015 the fifth exhibition in *The Alice Sequence*, *Advice From a Caterpillar*, opened at The David Krut Project Space in the Maboneng precinct in downtown Johannesburg<sup>76</sup>. The title of the exhibition, *Advice from a Caterpillar*, was inspired by Alice's encounter with the hookah smoking Caterpillar. She enters into a conversation with him, which revolves around ontological questions.

"You!" said the Caterpillar contemptuously. "Who are *you*?"

Which brought them back again to the beginning of the conversation. Alice felt a little irritated at the caterpillar's making such *very* short remarks, and she drew herself up and said, very gravely, "I think you ought to tell me who you are first".

"Why?" said the Caterpillar (Carroll 1982:47).

Indeed why. It is the usual human position not to question whether animals have a sense of self and the knowledge of who they are. Since the mid-20th century, observers of animal behaviour, ever wary of the accusation of anthropomorphism, have shied away from the problem. As Carl Safina puts it, "Permissible questions [about other animals] are "it" questions: about where it lives, what it eats, what it does when danger threatens, how it breeds. But *always* forbidden is the one question that might open the door: Who?"

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<sup>75</sup> *Advice From a Caterpillar* David Krut, Maboneng Gallery, Johannesburg, May and June 2015. See also Chapter 3.

<sup>76</sup> *Advice From a Caterpillar* was also exhibited at the David Krut Project Space at the AVA Gallery in Cape Town in September 2015.

(Safina 2015:1-2). Who are the other creatures that we are with? What kinds of other minds share our world? What do they know?<sup>77</sup>

But can we know what animals know? Wittgenstein observed enigmatically, "If a lion could talk, we could not understand him" (cited in Wolfe 2003:1). As Wolfe articulates it, "What can it mean to imagine a language we cannot understand, spoken by a being who cannot speak - ?" (Wolfe 2003:44). The assumption underlying Wittgenstein's declaration is that the lion's world view is so different from ours, that even if he could speak he would have nothing to say that we could understand. The contents of the lion's cognitive representations are so different from our own that we lack the capacity to grasp or express them. The humans with their uniquely human inter-subjectivity stand on one side of the divide with the beast, mute and silent on the other. In other words, the lion's consciousness is beyond our reach - for all practical purposes it does not exist. This seems to affirm the behaviourists' position of a denial of the existence of unobservable entities - thought, reason, feeling - and indeed Wittgenstein has been associated with the Logical Positivists of the Vienna School. Vicki Hearne, the philosopher and animal trainer, however rejects Wittgenstein's proposition saying that he made a "mistake". There are conditions in which a lion *can* speak to a human depending on the context, as, for example, in the training situation in which a lion tamer communicates with his lion and vice versa (Wolfe 2003:2). Hearne reads Wittgenstein's "mistake" as not whether the lion has consciousness, but rather that the lion's reticence emphasises the contrast between the human and the mute beast. "The lovely thing about Wittgenstein's lion is that Wittgenstein does not leap to say that his lion is languageless only that he is not talking... the reticence of the lion is not the reticence of absence, absence of consciousness, say, or knowledge, but rather of tremendous presence..." (Hearne cited in Wolfe 2003:3). The animal's muteness provokes "a sceptical terror" of the existence of other minds (Wolfe 2003:3). In this way, the question to be asked is not whether Wittgenstein's lion (and other animals), have consciousness, but how we as human beings confront that consciousness. This shifts the

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<sup>77</sup> Safina distinguishes the concepts of consciousness, sentience, thought and cognition. Consciousness is "the thing that feels like something"; sentience is the ability to feel sensations and, thought is the process of considering something that's been perceived. Cognition refers to the capacity to perceive and acquire knowledge and understanding (Safina 2015:20).

problem back to the human and, like Derrida observed with his cat, her sense of self reflected from her to him - from the object to the subject - inverts the hierarchical binaries between human and animal (Derrida 2008:50-51). The lions' consciousness becomes a decidedly human problem.

The conundrum of animal consciousness was echoed in 2007 in a note I made contemporaneously with the digital print *The All Knowing Ass* (Fig 6.2):



**Fig 6.2.** Wilma Cruise *The All Knowing Ass* (2007). Digital Print, 160 x 80cm, Edition 7.

The all-knowing ass  
knows  
she does  
know  
in her knowing  
she is  
known (Cruise 2007).

Like Wittgenstein's lion, *The All Knowing Ass* holds her secrets close. It is not that she cannot speak – it is that she withholds the information. That she has a consciousness, is revealed by her knowing smile and the listening angle of her ears. She knows what she knows and is self-satisfied in the knowledge she chooses to withhold. This view is echoed by Rilke in his eighth Duino elegy.

With their whole gaze the creatures behold what is. Only our eyes  
are as though reversed, and set like traps around themselves,  
keeping us inside. That there is something out there  
we know only from the animals' countenance... (Rilke 1923).

This is an inversion of the normal order of things. The animal is in a privileged position of seeing, and the human is in the position usually reserved for that of the animal – of the animal barred by his so-called lack from access to knowledge. As Calarco would phrase it, Rilke reverses the “human epistemic privilege” (Calarco 2008:36).

But not everyone grants animals an interior life. After the failure of the Nim Project, Herbert Terrace said, “In a nutshell, simians lack what is called a ‘theory of mind’ – the ability to perceive what another simian is thinking. Unlike human language, which is conversational, an ape’s only expectation when signing is a reward” (Terrace 2011). But, just what is theory of mind? Ever since Premack and Woodruff (1978) asked “Does the chimpanzee have a theory of mind?” this question has dominated the study of social behaviour in nonhuman primates (Heyes 1998). Heyes defined the concept: “An animal with a theory of mind believes that mental states play a causal role in generating behavior and infers the presence of mental states in others by observing their appearance and behavior under various circumstances” (Heyes 1998:102). More simply, theory of mind is “knowing that another can have thoughts that differ from yours” (Chedd cited in Safina 2015:243).

In her comprehensive analysis of the experimental studies on theory of mind, Heyes reviews the, up to then, body of experimental evidence on theory of mind. She notes that in “common experience”, “People spontaneously speak, not only of other primates, but of nearly all other living things, as *if* they had mental states and a theory of mind” (Heyes

1998:114. Emphasis mine). Yet, Heyes dismisses “common experience” as a basis for theory of mind. Her critique is aimed chiefly at the design of the experimental models. Thus, while she does not *a priori* deny the existence of theory of mind, she is skeptical of its existence without a sound scientific base for its proposition<sup>78</sup>.

Heyes’ dependence on the scientific model demonstrates a phobia of anthropomorphism – a skepticism based on the fear of asking “who” the animal is instead of how it behaves. The study of animal behaviour is a young science based on strict rules of observation and, as noted in Chapter 5, imputing cognition to an animal is frowned upon within the prescribed scientific practice. There have been historic exceptions to this view of denying animals interior lives. The naturalist, Eugene Marais, who was a researcher of baboon behaviour in the Waterberg in the north of South Africa during the 1930s, observed that it was impossible not to gain an impression that baboons could talk (Marais 1971:55). Noting the complex structure of baboon society, Marais said that the leader “seldom or never makes a noise without a definite purpose” (Marais 1971:55). In one case he noted that the leader consulted with other elders about which route to navigate: “...there was a hushed ‘talking’ and ‘whispering’ coupled with hesitant movements. It was all so completely human that it was impossible not to gain the impression that, ... they were, as became wise and authoritative old gentlemen, busy discussing the matter from all angles” (Marais 1971:55). Eight decades later, Don Pinnock writing on the behaviour of Chacma baboons in the Okavango Delta comments on the research of Cheney and Seyfarth who, much like Marais, observed that baboons spend much time “gossiping and eavesdropping” (Pinnock 2014:30). Pinnock suggested that baboons might have an embryonic language of the mind. They “have a sense of self and of ... separation from the others and the world” (Pinnock 2014:30). As Pinnock noted, they have a demonstrable ability to “work out complex problems”. He suggests that baboons have a preliterate but

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<sup>78</sup> It is now generally accepted that animals have consciousness as the Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness demonstrated in 2012: “We declare the following: ‘The absence of a neocortex does not appear to preclude an organism from experiencing affective states. Convergent evidence indicates that non-human animals have the neuroanatomical, neurochemical, and neurophysiological substrates of conscious states along with the capacity to exhibit intentional behaviors. Consequently, the weight of evidence indicates that humans are not unique in possessing the neurological substrates that generate consciousness. Non- human animals, including all mammals and birds, and many other creatures, including octopuses, also possess these neurological substrates.’” (Low 2012).

ordered conceptual language but it remains utterly un-utterable. "It must be very frustrating not to be able to say what they can clearly think" (Pinnock 2014:31)<sup>79</sup>.

The theory of mind raises the question as to the ability of other animals to use symbolic language, thereby raising the old Cartesian conundrum - do animals speak and reason? It is generally assumed that animals are capable of "only a coded message or of a meaning that is narrowly indicative ..., strictly constrained; one that is fixed in its programming" (Derrida 2008:119-120). As Derrida points out in his critique of Jacques Lacan, in *And say the animal responded?*, Lacan's claim that the animal is only capable of *reaction* while the human *responds*, "forever immobilised the animal, ... within the snare of the imaginary, thus depriving it any access to the symbolic that is to say, to the law and to what ever is held to be proper to the human" (Derrida 2008:120). Lacan's differentiation places animal and human in opposition to each other. Derrida rejects Lacan's distinction between *reaction* and *response* - saying that his claim is "quite literally Cartesian" (Derrida 2008:123). Derrida argues not so much for the recognition of animal consciousness or subjectivity (Derrida 2008:125), but criticises the "massive homogenizing" manner to which the topic has been reduced to simple binaries (Derrida 2008:122). Critically, Derrida suggests that it is not just a matter of refusing the animal powers such as

(speech, reason, experience of death, mourning, culture, institutions, technics, clothing, lying, pretence of pretence, covering of tracks, gift, laughter, crying, respect, etc. - the list is necessarily without limit, and the most powerful philosophical tradition in which we live has refused the "animal" *all of that*). It *also* means asking whether what holds itself human has the right rigorously to attribute to man, which means therefore to attribute to himself, what he refuses the animal... (Derrida 2008:135).

Working on the basis that we have no right to refuse the animal attributes usually assigned to the human, opens the possibility of animal consciousness. Rather than assuming that animals do not have consciousness it behoves us to try and understand that consciousness, as Hearne suggests *pace* Wittgenstein's lion. Even if they are without language, and cannot speak, if we are only willing to listen and hear, we may discover other forms of communication in other animals.

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<sup>79</sup> Pinnock falls into the anthropocentric trap. Of course baboons can speak, only they speak "baboon" not "human".

In his book, *Beyond Words: What Animals Think and Feel*, Carl Safina notes that ethologists and biologists who study animals in the wild, have demonstrated patterns of complex communication, problem-solving, as well as demonstrable displays of emotion like grief and joy. For example, Vervet monkeys in the Amboseli reserve in Kenya have a range of calls with distinct meanings. They can identify specific threats such as “unfamiliar human”, “Martial eagle” or “snake” and communicate them to their fellow monkeys. Like humans these “words” are learned and passed on from generation to generation (Safina 2015:87). In other words, the monkeys have words! Detractors will argue that this can still be interpreted as the use of signing, a system learned by operant conditioning, and not the use of symbolic language, which is identified by the complex use of syntax. But research is showing that some species are able to demonstrate a syntactical use of their calls, modifying their warning calls adjectivally according to the perceived seriousness of the threat (Safina 2015:88). Moreover, as Safina argues, “If syntax is about where the words appear in relation to one another, then context itself is a kind of syntax... . When your dog is scratching the door, she doesn’t need to give the soliloquy on desire, you just need to know which side of the door she's on” (Safina 2015:90). Further, additional information is passed along through the order of the calls, not just the individual components. This has been demonstrated in Campbell's monkeys who use their sequence of calls “in a syntax-like way, where order changes meaning – to announce whether they actually see or just hear a predator” (Safina 2015:87). In this way and across species, researchers have demonstrated that in many species the use of specific calls have precise meanings and that the combination of calls demonstrate a form of syntax. Having observed the behaviour of elephants, wolves, dolphins and whales in their natural habitats, Safina concludes that “Animals know who they are; they know who their family and friends are. They know their enemies. They make strategic alliances and cope with chronic rivalries. They aspire to higher rank and wait for the chance to challenge the existing order. Their status affects their offspring's prospects. Their life follows the arc of a career. Personal relationships define them” (Safina 2015:2). In this sense they are human-like – like humans<sup>80</sup> an observation that echoes those of Marais and Pinnock.

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80 Using this argument, Safina supports the continuity thesis. “All life is one... Each is a distinction on a continuum like notes on a violin’s fingerboard” (Safina 2015:34).

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Alice had no trouble in speaking to the animals in the world on the other side of the mirror and down the rabbit hole. The animals and Alice shared a language even if it was at times illogical. “[T]hat’s because the nonsense is only provisional, only on the surface, beneath which a diligent investigator like Alice is able to discover perfectly intelligible, albeit unexpected, laws of cause and effect. ‘One side will make you grow taller, and the other side will make you grow shorter,’ remarks the caterpillar about the rule that governs mushroom ingestion in Wonderland” (Dunn and McDonald 2010:65). Nevertheless, sharing a language and partaking in a conversation does not necessarily mean that the Caterpillar and Alice understand each other, as her frustrating conversation with the irascible creature shows. In reply to his question “Who are *you*?” Alice says,

“I – I hardly know, Sir, just at present – at least who I *was* was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.”

“What do you mean by that?” said the Caterpillar sternly. “Explain yourself!”

“I ca’n’t explain *myself*, I’m afraid, Sir,” said Alice, “because I’m not myself you see.”

“I don’t see,” said the Caterpillar.

“I’m afraid I ca’n’t put it more clearly,” Alice replied very politely, “for I ca’n’t understand it myself to begin with and being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing.”

“It isn’t,” said the Caterpillar.

“Well, perhaps you haven’t found it so yet,” said Alice; “but when you have to turn into a chrysalis – you will someday, you know – and then after that into a butterfly, I should think you feel it a little queer, wo’n’t you?”

“Not a bit,” said the Caterpillar.

“Well, perhaps *your* feelings may be different,” said Alice; “all I know is, it would feel very queer to *me*” (Carroll 1982:47).

When Vicky Hearne said that Wittgenstein’s lion could be understood under certain conditions (Hearne cited in Wolfe 2003:3) she might’ve been referring to Alice. It seems as if Alice, when she shrunk to the Caterpillar’s size, was able to bridge the difference between human and insect ontologies. Only three inches high, she could chat to the small creature and, even though their understanding of each other was imperfect, she was able to find out something about the Caterpillar’s being. Although she encountered a world view different from hers, she broke through the barrier thrown up by Wittgenstein when he said that even if the lion could speak we could not understand him.

In the biological sciences, the establishment of theory of mind is made on the basis of a number of criteria, one of the most interesting being the power to dissimulate and deceive. It is a topic picked up on by Lacan and debated at length by Derrida in *And say the animal responded?*. Lacan claims that while the animal can pretend (deceive), it is incapable of a second order of pretending to pretend, a position that Derrida rejects for amongst other reasons, that it seems difficult to identify and conceptually determine the limit of pretense and pretense of pretense (Derrida 2008:120). Moreover, he questions whether the statement that animals are incapable of pretending to pretend can apply to all animals – animals in general – and, finally and tellingly, he says Lacan does not have “any ethological knowledge... or any experience, observation or personal attestation that would be worthy of credence. The status of the affirmation that refuses the pretense of pretense to the animal is that of simple dogma” (Derrida 2008:133). Safina has noted equally dogmatic positions from researchers who work in the field. He says, while some ethologists grant the ability to project into the mind of the other to higher order mammals, most reject it for other species, even when the evidence is there. For example, researchers observing spotted hyenas, were able to watch the deceptive behaviour of a lower ranked hyena, who fooled his companions as to the position of a kill. Deception as an indication that an animal can foresee that his behaviour would affect that of another, is an indicator of theory of mind. Yet, as Safina observed, these researchers “incredibly” claimed that, “spotted hyenas appear to show no understanding of the thoughts or beliefs of others” (Safina 2015:264).

It appears that the demand for the existence of theory of mind, consciousness, or cognitive capacity in the animal, needs to be “proved” preferably in the laboratory under controlled experimental conditions or in the field under strict observational principles. In a substantive review, Stanford University investigated a range of experiments investigating areas of animal cognition such as communication, mind reading or theory of mind, metacognition and moral practice (Andrews 2016). While the results of these experiments were variable, as was their interpretation, it seems that most of the researchers were in the grip of the old behaviourist dictum, namely that it is not correct to impute interiority to the animal if a simpler behavioural explanation is available. This is known as Morgan’s canon which reads: “In no case is an animal activity to be interpreted in terms of higher

psychological processes, if it can be fairly interpreted in terms of processes which stand lower in the scale of psychological evolution and development" (Morgan 1903 cited in Andrews 2016).

One such case revealed the difficulty in designing a reliable and valid experimental model. This is the mirror self-recognition test (MSR). The test was developed by Gordon Gallup in 1970. An animal is marked on a part of its body with ink. If the animal on viewing itself in a mirror tries to wipe the spot off its own body, it is said to demonstrate self recognition. Gallup argues that this is evidence of self-concept (Gallup cited in Wynne and Udell 2013:190). The number of species that pass the mirror self-recognition test is quite limited and seems to be confined to the great apes. It excludes dogs. Does one then conclude that dogs do not have self recognition? This deduction is challenged by amongst others, the cognitive ethologist, Marc Bekoff, who in his classical "yellow snow" experiment, demonstrated that dogs have self recognition based on a *sense of smell*. After compiling and statistically analysing the data, Bekoff found that Jethro, his own dog and the subject of the experiment, paid significantly less attention to his own displaced urine than he did to the displaced urine of other dogs (Bekoff 2001). In his paper Bekoff did not specifically claim that this proves that dogs have self-awareness, but the question is raised as to whether there is a fundamental difference between an animal recognising its own image in a mirror and one recognising its own scent in yellow snow? As dogs prioritise smell above vision, it is entirely logical that they would ignore the visual cues in the mirror when not accompanied by identifying smells. Smell and sight involve different cognitive processes. Bekoff himself has suggested that the yellow snow test may be more indicative of a sense of "mine-ness" in dogs than of a sense of "I-ness". However, his final point is pertinent and offers a critique of MSR experiments and those like it: "At a minimum...the yellow snow test stands as a useful warning that we humans need to be careful not to make quick judgments about animal intelligence or cognitive capacity (or lack thereof) based on tests that are well-suited to humans, but that fail to match the skills and abilities of the particular animal" (Bekoff 2001).

Laboratory studies and field research tend to focus on animal vocalisation and the similarity of animals' communication systems to the symbolic language of humans. Hence

the endless debate on the use, or nonuse, of syntax in other species. This in large part ignores the gestural communication that animals use – that which Donna Haraway calls bodily semiotics. The importance of gestural communication is emphasised by some researchers who go as far as to suggest “that human language evolved from body movements such as gesture, miming, and dance” (Corballis 1992, 2002 and Donald 1991 cited in Andrews 2016). The gestural theory of language acquisition suggests other models of research and other ways of thinking of animal languages. One such idea is to abandon the model of anthropocentric symbolic language against which other animal languages are tested. In this context, Safina has proposed the concept of “prosody” (2015:202). Prosody, the patterns of rhythm and sound used in poetry (Oxford dictionary n.d. Sv. ‘prosody’). constitutes paralinguistic features of song, tempo and tone, which convey meaning without words. While a dog is incapable of using words, it is nevertheless able to communicate via bodily semiotics and sounds which, crossing species’ barriers, human beings are able to understand. For example, we are able to interpret our dog’s whine even though we are not a dog. We know that a growl means something different from a bark; and that a cat’s hiss differs from her purr. It is not as the Cheshire cat suggests, “madness” that we know the difference between a dog growling when he is angry, and wagging his tail when it is pleased, and the cat growling when she is pleased and wagging her tail when she is angry (Carroll 1982:64). We are quite capable of interpreting such situations correctly and acting upon them in the appropriate manner. Prosody enables us to distinguish a lullaby from a scream in humans, or a short upward call indicating alarm from a soothing downward one in other animals. That is, sound, without words, carries emotion and meaning and notably this occurs across species. Prosody links us to other animals. It might be that which re-establishes the sacred connection to other animals. Yet, hampered by “scientific rigour”, researchers are reluctant to translate these sounds. With reference to Joyce Poole’s work with the African elephant, Safina notes that while she takes meticulous recordings of the elephants’ vocalisations, using measurable scientific means such as the frequency and amplitude of the sounds, other than noting the context in which they are made, she fails to interpret their vocalisations. She does not translate from elephants’ language to human language. In this way her experimental methodology, and others like it, does not reach beyond description. In other words, we know that the animals are communicating, but not what

they are saying. Safina accuses these researchers of ignoring the obvious. "At its simplest if the animal behaves joyously in a joyous situation, it would be the most uncomplicated and direct to interpret the emotion of joy" (Safina 2015: 29). Our inability, or refusal, to translate renders us tone deaf to their utterances.

Jacob Beck offers some interesting insights on the conundrum of the untranslate-ability from animal to human language. On surveying the empirical literature, he notes that, while animal researchers are learning a lot about the cognitive representations of animals, they are not making serious progress in interpreting these representations (Beck 2013:534). He reiterates Wittgenstein's query: "If animals really have cognitive representations with determinate contents, why can't anybody say what those contents are?" (Beck 2013:520-521). He offers a number of suggestions as to why this should be, chief of which is that there is no precise linguistic analogue for animal cognition. He said that we cannot say what an animal thinks because animals think in a nonlinguistic format, that is, they may have content but it is not expressible in "natural" language. He draws an analogy with art - a painting may have content without it necessarily being (directly) translatable in "natural" language (Andrews 2016). As Safina points out, while translation is required from one form to another, inevitably things get lost in translation! But that does not explain why we *do* understand so much of animal cognition. Beck says that in evolutionary terms humans and animals share a large number of cognitive systems. Citing Carey (2009) he calls these shared systems "core cognition," and contrasts them with "linguistically encoded conceptual representations" (Carey cited in Beck 2013:534). That is, there is a sense in which human beings are perfectly capable of understanding some of the animals' cognitive contents and "by thinking with the more primitive aspects of our minds" (Beck 2013:535), we can use core cognition processes whether or not we can "precisely characterise them in language" (Beck 2013:535).

In fact, many philosophers have rejected the hegemony of linguistic content by arguing that there exists an important class of contents—nonconceptual contents—that by their very nature are not linguistically expressible (Beck 2013: 254).

I explored this concept of non-linguistic communication in 2015 when I placed two sculptures in opposition to each other (Fig 6.3).



**Fig 6.3** Wilma Cruise *Louis' Baboon with Role Over* foundry view (2015). *Role Over* (2015). Bronze (Edition 12), 140 x 80 cm. (Photographed by the artist).

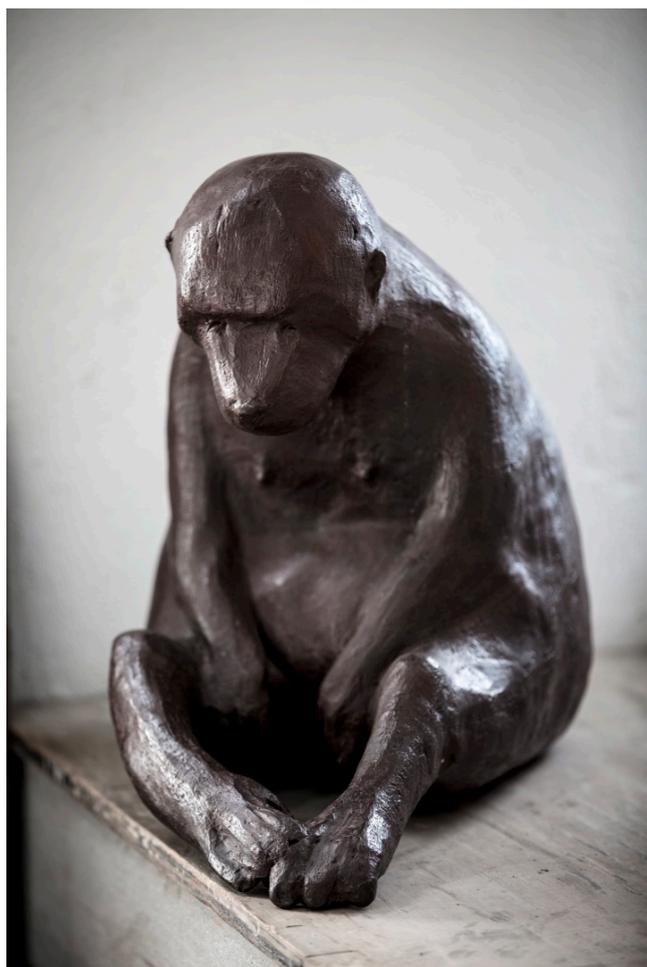
One depicted the human in life-size format. This figure (*Role Over*) was made in 2002–2003 and cast into bronze in 2016. It was placed in conjunction with the depiction of a life-size baboon – *Louis' Baboon* (2015). A communicative gap was created by the intersecting gaze between the human and the animal. The space-between became charged with the unspoken. What is being conveyed in that space cannot be known in any precise sense – the communication is felt rather than articulated. Does the need to understand matter more to the human than the animal? It seems as if the figure reaches out appealingly to the baboon who stares bemusedly back across the species divide. Their exchange is a frustrating exercise in (in)comprehension, one that mimics the real life interchange between human and other animals in its unknowability. As Beck noted, “[P]lace Wittgenstein, if God gave a lion the gift of the gab, we could know precisely what it was thinking. But without that gift, our evidence is simply too impoverished to allow us to pin down animals’ cognitive contents” (Beck 2013:530). In this regard, I fall back on Jacob Beck’s assertion that animal language has no analogue in human symbolic language. “The problem is not one of impoverished methods or epistemic limitations. Rather, the format of animal cognition makes its contents impossible to translate into natural language. Even God couldn’t tell us precisely what a lion is thinking” (Beck 2013:522).

It is a point I made in the exhibition of *Louis' Baboon* at the David Krut Project Space in Johannesburg in which the animal was placed on a stand two metres above the heads of

the viewers (Fig 6.1). The viewers have to look up at the baboon – not directly at, or down on – as is the case with the other baboon sculptures. He is positioned like the Cheshire Cat, who appears in the branches of the trees above Alice’s head in Wonderland from where he proceeds to give Alice lessons on madness, bodily semiotics and language.

“Now I growl when I am pleased, and wag my tail when I’m angry. Therefore I’m mad.”  
“I call it purring, not growling,” said Alice.  
“Call it what you like,” said the Cat (Carroll 1982:64).

At which point he vanishes leaving Alice with the enigma of his smile but none the wiser as to the meaning of their exchange. Nevertheless, in *Louis’ Baboon*, I suggest that we can read her mood signalled by her body posture – the slump of her shoulders, the steadiness of her gaze and the stillness of her hands. Like the wagging tail of a dog, her body is the means of communication (Fig 6.4.).



**Fig 6.4.** Wilma Cruise *Louis’ Baboon* (2015). Bronze (Edition 10), 47 x 31 x 55 cm.  
(Photographed by Pierre van der Spuy).

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Heidegger's project on an animality began with an attempt to see the world from the animals' point of view<sup>81</sup>. "And how would we grasp this otherness?" he asked (Heidegger in Atterton & Calarco 2004:17). Heidegger's project aimed to contest the classical anthropocentric view that human beings are the centre of all creation by challenging the phylogenetic hierarchy that an animal is somehow lower or simpler than human beings (Calarco 2008:21). He proposed three "theses" that: "[1.] the stone (material object) is 'worldless'; [2.] the animal is 'poor in world'; [3.] man is 'world forming'" (Heidegger cited in Atterton & Calarco 2004:17). In Heidegger's epistemology, a stone *has* no world, an animal *is* in the world, and the human *has* world. For example, while a rock has no access to the world - it is just there - a lizard lying on the rock has a relation to the rock, to the sun and other things in its circumscribed environment, yet it cannot understand the environment or access it in the way the human can (Heidegger in Atterton & Calarco 2004:17). Being "poor in world" means that animals have no sense of Being *as such*. A dog, for example, has no *Dasein* - (Derrida 2008:158), a condition reserved exclusively for the human. The human *Dasein* "exists", the animal merely "lives", human *Dasein* "eats", the animal "feeds" and so on (Calarco 2008:26). The three tiers of being are mutually exclusive - the difference between human and animal and animal and stone being one of *kind* not of *degree* as a Darwinian would propose.

In spite of the pejorative implications of the word "poor", Heidegger insists that there is no hierarchy in his thesis that the stone is "worldless", the animal is "poor in world", and man is "world-forming". Derrida claims that this position is indefensible since "poor" does mean less rich (Derrida 2008:155). In spite of his denials to the contrary, Heidegger seems to assert the ontotheological hierarchy of human and animal based on the position that humans "have" and animals "have not" (Derrida 208:146). He draws a single insuperable line between human and animal by insisting that man alone *ek-ists* (Calarco 2008:52). The difference between human beings and animals is "a rupture that is utterly untransferable" (Calarco 2008:22). Thus, although Heidegger tries to avoid the philosophical tradition of

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81 Questions concerning human *and* nonhuman life lie at the very heart of Heidegger's philosophical project (Calarco 2008:18).

viewing animals through a human lens and finding them to be lacking, he ends up by re-asserting, quite dogmatically, the classical divide between human and animal. Nevertheless, his approach to animality “is not anthropocentric in any simple sense” (Atterton & Calarco 2004:29). By not taking it as “philosophically evident that there is a straightforward distinction to be drawn between human being and animal, or between living beings and nonliving beings” (Calarco 2008:21), Heidegger laid the foundation of a new perception of human-animal relations by admitting to the notion of “being-with” each other in a shared world (Buchanan 2012:271). This opened up a space for new human-animal interactions and allowed the entry of concepts such as “sympathetic imagination” (Selbach 2012:311). It is a point made by Derrida who says, “Heidegger, to his credit, localizes, complicates, precisely treats ‘as such’ thematically, with a breadth and rigor of analysis that I find incomparable” (Derrida 2008:145).

In spite of his admiration, in the final chapter of *The animal therefore I am*, “I don't know why we doing this?” Derrida says that Heidegger's claim that animals are “poor in world” effectively forecloses the notion of animal consciousness (Baker 2003:151). In Heideggerian terms, animals only can gaze “across the abyss not only at all that is human, but also all that is associated with thought, generosity and creativity” (Baker 2003:152). Heidegger reserves subjectivity and self-hood for the human. He says that the animal has no notion of itself in the world, which he extrapolates into no awareness of its future or own finitude. The animal's responses are limited to the level of instinct which encircles the animal restricting its access to other beings (Atterton & Calarco 2004:24). In this way animal life literally holds itself captive within the limitation of its own instincts. The lizard has no world – only humans have world. By extrapolation, humans have knowledge of death and language. “The leap from living animals to humans that speak is as large if not larger and that from the lifeless stone to the living being” (Heidegger cited in Atterton & Calarco 2004:18).

Not only do humans have consciousness, subjectivity and selfhood but they also, according to Heidegger, have the gift of hands. Humans are capable of giving, whereas in the animal the paw, talon or claw can only grasp. Derrida says this is Heidegger's “most seriously dogmatic” statement (Baker 2003:152) one that emphasises both human

exceptionalism and human's god-like power to decide who has and who has not. Heidegger chose to distinguish human from animal on this basis. He grants hands an essence - an essential attribute that is given to humans but denied animals.

The human hand is a peculiar thing. In the common view, hand is part of our bodily organism. But the hand's essence can never be determined, or explained, by its being an organ which can grasp. Apes, too, have organs that can grasp, but they do not have hands. The hand is infinitely different from all grasping organs - paws, claws or fangs - different by an abyss of essence (Heidegger cited in Atterton & Calarco 2004:19).

Ironically, this essentialist view is corroborated by Baker who emphasises the hand's role in the act of creativity. It is also one that accords with my experience. And as I have elsewhere noted, it is as if the hand does the thinking - it seems to have an independent "will-to-form". It has an imperative which even in the absence of rational explanation needs to be trusted. Citing Joseph Beuys' performance, *I like America and America likes me*, Baker noted that Beuys gave his gloves - his symbolic hands - to the animal to play with, thereby literally gifting him with that which makes him human (Baker 2003:149). Baker suggests, that when artists grant animals hands in their images, as Beuys does metaphorically with the coyote, they problematise their identity. "For many contemporary artists, the animal stands in as a new form of being, a creative postmodern being, and it emphatically does have hands" (Baker 2003:153). Steve Baker, inverted Heidegger's proposition of the exceptionalism of the human hand by asserting the presence of hands in animals as "creative postmodern beings" (Baker 2003:153). He thereby acknowledges the animals' subjectivities, their being in themselves, equal to that sense of them being human. But, animals are not humans. They are uniquely themselves with their own ontology's and epistemologies. While we cannot know in any definitive sense what they know, it is important for us to open our being to their being - to listen to their rumbles, hisses and purrs. This we have to do without any preconceptions, whether of an ontotheological or scientific nature.

In my baboon series of sculptures and prints, I have granted the animals arms and hands. This runs counter to my penchant to leave figures armless and without the agency of the hand. In *Endgame* (Fig 6.5.) the twin baboons have hands hanging over their knees. It is as if they could use them at any moment to move a chess piece. By giving arms and hands

to my baboons, it could be said that I challenge Heidegger's distinction which definitively separates humans from other animals. Providing the animals with hands that go beyond the grasp, (to play a game of chess, for example) suggests that they too could be part of the human sphere and by logical extrapolation we could be part of theirs.



**Fig 6.5.** Wilma Cruise *Endgame* (2015). Clay and plaster version with ceramic chess pieces, 60 x 35 x 55 cm each. (Photographed by Pierre van der Spuy).

In the sculpture, *Heidegger's Hand* (Fig 6.6.), a single baboon figure, extracted from the installation *Endgame* sits with his hands hanging between his knees, heavy and inert<sup>82</sup>. The creation of this work coincided with onset of a debilitating tremor in my hands, which rendered them clumsy and useless. By emphasising them in *Heidegger's Hand*, both sculpturally and in the title, it is as if the human's *enabling* hand becomes the animal's *disabling* paw/claw, only this time reversed.

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<sup>82</sup> *Endgame* consists of two baboons sitting opposite each other. The figures are in fact two editions of the same sculpture.

The baboon's hands are painted red and green further emphasising their significance as the means of producing art, while at the same time alluding to the material of art.



**Fig 6.6.** Wilma Cruise *Study for Heidegger's Hand* (2016).

The inspiration for this gesture was derived from Marlene Dumas' image of her young daughter in *The Painter*<sup>83</sup> in which the child is "caught in the act" of playing with paint (Fig 6.7). Paint marks her naked torso and drips from her hands. A shroud of green surrounds her head as she stares defiantly out of the picture frame. If nothing else, *The Painter* is an image of the embodied nature of the act of painting - a fact that loops back to the point of this thesis that art, (and animal communication), are both dependent on the embodied act.

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83 *The Painter* (1994), Oil on Canvas, 200 x 100 cm. (Van den Boogerd, B Bloom & M Casadio 1999:71).



**Fig 6.7.** Marlene Dumas *The Painter* (1994). Oil on Canvas, 200 x 100 cm.  
<http://africanah.org/marlene-dumas-image-burden-tate-modern/>.

Safina said the question of theory of mind gets less interesting as the richness of, and perceptions in other animals becomes more apparent (Safina 2015:247). What he is suggesting is that we should observe and connect with animals without any preconceptions or theoretical models, such as theory of mind, to cloud our vision. In this way we open ourselves to animal worlds - and while we cannot in any definitive way know what the lion knows, we can approximate his knowledge through careful and sensitive "being with", a goal that Heidegger reached for but did not achieve.

## Conclusion



Fig 7.1. Wilma Cruise *En Passant* foundry view (2016). Ten figures in acrylic resin, 100–120 cm. (Photographed by the artist.)

Always speak the truth - think before you speak - and write it down afterwards (Carroll 1982: 216).

## Exhibitions

*The 8<sup>th</sup> Square* (2016)

*Six Impossible Things to Do Before Breakfast* (2016)<sup>84</sup>

The final shows in *The Alice Sequence*, *The 8th Square* and *Six Impossible Things to Do Before Breakfast* were presented in parallel at two different venues in Stellenbosch in November and December 2016. The exhibitions formed part of the text of this doctoral dissertation. The titles of the exhibitions metaphorically refer to Carroll's tale, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Saw There*. *The 8th Square*, references the chess game that underpins the narrative of Alice's journey on the other side of the glass. In chess, the eighth square is the ultimate goal for a pawn, who, like Alice, on reaching the last line (rank) is entitled to the status of Queen and all the freedom of movement that that implies. "[I]n the Eighth Square we shall be Queens together, and all [will be] feasting and fun!" promises the Red Queen (Carroll 1982:145). This is in fact what happens. There is "feasting and fun" at a celebratory banquet in which Alice, a newly crowned Queen, is introduced to a leg of mutton and a talking pudding. Alice finally wakes up to the reality of the hearth and the presence of the black and white kittens. Her dream has ended. The finality of the eighth square signals Alice's endgame. It also metaphorically marks the end of *The Alice Sequence*.

*The 8th Square* is twinned with *Six Impossible Things to Do Before Breakfast*. This latter exhibition is held at the Gallery of the University of Stellenbosch (GUS), in the city of Stellenbosch. The title of this exhibition is based on a conversation Alice has with the rumpled and befuddled White Queen. In discussing their respective ages, Alice rather proudly announces that she is seven and a half, "exactly", to which the White Queen replies,

"I'm just one hundred and one, five months and a day."

"I ca'n't believe that!" said Alice.

"Ca'n't you?" the Queen said in a pitying tone. "Try again: draw a long breath, in and shut your eyes."

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84 Cavalli Gallery, Cavalli Wine Estate, Stellenbosch 6 November to 4 December 2016.  
Gallery University Stellenbosch (GUS), Stellenbosch November to December.

Alice laughed. "There's no use trying," she said: "one *ca'n't* believe impossible things." "I daresay you haven't had much practice," said the Queen. "When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast" (Carroll 1982:173).

Believing in speaking animals, as Alice does in Wonderland, opens the possibility of believing the impossible - or believing the impossible allows the possibility of speaking animals! In the context of this research, allowing for the "impossible", (the possibility of the impossible), arguably opens the doors to the recognition of minds other than our own. This returns us to the phrase that initiated this research, "We have shut our ears to their primal screams, their rumbles, hisses, purrs..." (Cruise in Schmahmann 2007). By admitting to the possibility of impossibility, I invert the phrase into the imperative, "We will open our ears to their primal screams, their rumbles, hisses, purrs."

The journey across the "chequered landscape" that defined this research into the animal turn, was at times as confusing and directionless as Alice's forays into her dream worlds. It began with JM Coetzee's novels *Disgrace* and *Elizabeth Costello* and Wendy Woodward's monograph, *The Animal Gaze*, but soon led into the realms of philosophy - Derrida and Deleuze and Guattari mainly, but also, and importantly differently, the Anglo-American philosophers represented by Peter Singer and Tom Regan. I was at various stages directed to the research of cognitive ethologists and those researchers working in the laboratories and fields of animal research. I came across the writing of thinkers (and trainers) such as Donna Haraway, whose concept of *cum panis*, breaking bread, with the animal other was a defining moment. As I moved from one field of research to another, from philosophy to ethology, from biology to psychology and literature, and from one text to another, my position *vis à vis* the animal turn became clearer. I began to see a way of taking a position about the space-between, which was my chosen site of contestation. I had begun my quest with the proposition that two beings - animal and animal or human and animal - placed in relational proximity to each other create a space between them which becomes charged with unspoken communication. It is the interrogation of the nature of this communication that provided the central conundrum of this dissertation. As Wittgenstein noted, how do we know what the other animal is thinking - if it is thinking at

all? Moreover, is it speaking and if so how? The search for the answer to these questions is the subject of the previous six chapters.

It is in the nature of the enterprise that at the end of my (re)search, I state my theoretical position and in this respect I depend on Calarco's differentiation between "identity", "difference" and "indistinction" theories (Calarco 2015:3-4). To briefly summarise: "Identity" theorists acknowledge the difference between human and animal but tend to measure this difference by the similarity of animal traits to humans. They tend to extend human traits to animals - to compare the two and accord equality of consideration and rights on that basis. Their "egalitarian ethics" is thereby dictated by the closeness of the animal to the human (Calarco 2015:48). In their epistemology, human beings are still the centre of the moral universe. Theorists such as these are the utilitarian philosopher, Peter Singer and animal rights activist, Tom Regan. On the other hand, "indistinction" theorists collapse the binary terms human and animal into a single construct. Exemplars of such a theoretical approach are Deleuze and Guattari. While ideologically attractive, such theories tend to be impractical in the sense that the terms of reference are conflated making discourse difficult. Straddling the middle ground are the "difference" theorists whose approach is based on the singularity of the individual and rich differentiation of modes of existence found among animals (Calarco 2015:50). Approaches such as this are exemplified by Derrida and more recently Bekoff with his compassionate conservation approach exemplified in the aphorism: "First do no harm" in which the importance of the *individual* nonhuman animal is stressed (Bekoff 2015). "Unlike the dominant utilitarian approach to conservation, which puts the cost of reaching conservation targets squarely on the shoulders of other animals, a compassionate ethic for conservation brings empathy into decision making alongside other values. It is not a rights position but, rather, puts forward a scientific and evidence-based conceptual approach that stipulates that conservation initiatives should first do no harm" (Bekoff 2015 citing Bekoff 2010). In Derrida's and Bekoff's philosophies, the human is decentred; human essence and exceptionalism is challenged and hegemonic ideas about animal and animality are interrogated (Calarco 2015:34). The singular animal becomes the focus of attention.

While it is tempting to lean towards an indistinction theoretical position, in which no differentiation is made between human and animal, I reject it because it eliminates the terms of reference and renders meaningless the human-animal discourse. With no differentiation, all cows are black in the dark (Calarco 2015:55). I maintain that one has to recognize the complexity, difference and singularity of each individual animal - the very "otherness" of other animals - without using man as the measure of all things. As Linzey articulates it.

They are not simply "things" out there; they are not "mini humans", or even our "brothers" (understood in as humanly defined way); their very "otherness" should give us pause and excite our imagination. Of course we know that animals are in some ways highly similar - and in one way especially, namely the capacity for suffering - but we do them an injustice if we simply rush from instrumentalism to claiming that we know everything about them because they are "like us". In fact, it is their very unlikeness - and the corresponding unknowing - that should inspire, at least in part, an attitude of reverential respect" (Linzey in Regan and Linzey: 2010:xiv).

Giving animals reverential respect in, and because of, their otherness is a position I support. In this sense I follow Derrida, who complicates and multiplies the differences between human and the other animals, while at the same time not asserting human exceptionalism through reason and language. That is, Derrida's "difference theory" is based on singularity, which permits an appreciation of the rich diversity among animals (Calarco 2015:50), a position echoed in contemporary times by the compassionate conservation approach. It is the particular animal - the individual - that matters. Gazing into the eyes of his cat, Derrida saw God (and as a result generated an important essay on the nature of the animal). The dependence on the individual encounter between human and another animal, is also stressed by Donna Haraway, who in spite of being, according to Calarco, an "indistinction theorist" (Calarco 2015:51), maintains that it is necessary to get down and dirty with the individual animal. It is only in the messy co-entanglements between human and animal that insight can be reached. In this respect, I reject Deleuze and Guattari's indistinction theory, as neither Deleuze and Guattari even like cats or dogs, never mind getting into untidy entanglements with them. Nevertheless, Deleuze and Guattari provide a rich source of metaphor for re-reading the human animal relationship. Their "becoming-animal", a slippery concept that describes process more than being, effectively collapses the dominant status of human beings over other animals. This idea

along with the concept of “writing like a rat” is a useful construct in describing my artistic praxis in which reason appears to be suspended. Writing like a rat finds sympathetic resonance with the notion of the hand as a “thinking” part of the body – an idea that plays into the emphasis that Heidegger places on the importance of the (human) hand – a thought which resonates with me, while at the same time I reject the implications of human exceptionalism implied by the idea of the hand’s exclusivity to human beings.

Dependency on the hand draws attention to the other aspect of this research, which is that which took place in the studio beyond the reach of theoretical notes and linguistic conundrums of this dissertation. It is tempting to say that the studio is a place where thought is suspended. That would not be true. One has to be a rational animal in order to manipulate paint or clay and to handle an angle grinder. Rather, the thinking that takes place in the studio is of a different order than that which takes place in front of the computer. It is of a non-linguistic kind. This can be said to mimic the human animal exchange, which I, following Beck, propose is fundamentally different from human symbolic language. Thinking in the studio is through what the animal theologian the Rev. Andrew Linzey calls “imagination” – not imagination as in fantasy, but imagination as a means of “grasping truth” (Linzey in Regan and Linzey 2010: xiii). Imagination takes time, work and patience in order “to grasp the truth of what is not ourselves” (2010:xvii). What Linzey is arguing for is a kind of truth that cannot be accessed via the normal discourses of philosophy and rational debate, but through “the power of perception, the capacity for feeling and imagination” (Linzey in Regan and Linzey 2010: xvii). Imagination is the capacity to reach beyond that anthropocentric “I” to the animal “you”– something which should be done with respect and humility for the otherness of the animal. That is, a different sort of text, emerged from the confines of my studio, one that nevertheless evolved from the same impetus that drove this manuscript. It spoke a fundamentally different language to that read or spoken. It appealed to affect rather than reason; the seen and felt, instead of the logical and rational. In this sense making art begins to approximate the model of the human animal exchange and emphasises the intuitive nature of the interchange. As Ron Broglio suggested artists, freed from language and reason “(including the limits of reason)”, are the ones who are “most likely to offer new insights into the question of the animal” (Broglio 2011:xx). The dependency on the hand

stresses that the act of making art is an embodied one. Embodiedness opposes thinking with, what Elizabeth Costello calls, “fullness” and “the sensation of being” (Coetzee 1999:78). Moreover, like the communication of other animals it is through the body – the semiotics of the body – that animals communicate. As I discussed in Chapter 4, such as the bow dogs use to invite each other to play.

One of the ironies of *The Alice Sequence* is, that in spite of my critique of the hegemony of the “word”, I depend on the word, not only, and most obviously, within the pages of this dissertation, but also in the studio, a place where I argue the *logos* should be banned in favour of affect. But the word has always been central to *The Alice Sequence*, not only in the aphorisms I write on the walls of the galleries, but also in the pages of the diaries I have kept throughout the sequence. It is in this sense that Lewis Carroll's tales offer such a rich source of metaphor. Carroll's games with language and logic illustrate the slippery and evasive nature of the relationship between the signified and the signifier and as such provided an impetus for this research. In 2016 I continued with my practice of keeping a diary of notes, drawings and collages. But instead of confining myself to the usual A3 format, I used larger A0 sheets of paper in landscape format to keep a running commentary of my thoughts and actions (Fig 7.2.).



Fig 7.2. Wilma Cruise, two pages from *Diary 2016* (2016). Mixed media on paper, 70 x 100 cm.

This process implies self-reflection – a considered action – which was not the case. Instead, I allowed the hand to do “the thinking”. Without pausing to consider the consequences of my actions, rapid intuitive decisions were taken about making a note, scribbling a mark, or

pasting an image. In this way approximately sixty diary pages emerged from the paper studio to form a ribbon of images, aphorisms, statements and wishes. These represented a stuttering attempt to find meaning in the field of the animal turn, a process which acted in parallel to the creation of the sculptures and the writing of this dissertation.

Occasionally, when following the paper trail of this research, I stumbled across surprising texts. Such was the discovery late in the writing of this dissertation of *The 8th Duino Elegy* by Rainer Maria Rilke, which recalls one of the phrases that initiated my research. Made by Elizabeth Costello in the second of her lectures, she stated that it is via the poets (and poetics) that understanding with the animals might be reached: "I urge you to read the poets who return the living electric being to language" (Coetzee 2004:111). Heeding her clarion call, I quote Rilke in full. The *8th Duino Elegy* thus serves to both summarise and provide a full stop to my search.

With their whole gaze the creatures behold what is. Only our eyes  
are as though reversed, and set like traps around themselves,  
keeping us inside. That there is something out there  
we know only from the animals' countenance,  
for we turn even the young child, forcing her  
to look backwards at the shapes we make,  
not outwards into the open, which is reflected  
in the animals' eyes.

Free from death. We alone see that.  
For the animals, their death is, as it were, completed.  
What's ahead is God. And when they move,  
they move in timelessness, as fountains do.

Never, not for a single day, do we let  
the space before us be so unbounded  
that the blooming of one flower is forever.  
We are always making it into a world  
and never letting it be nothing: the pure,  
the unconstructed, which we breathe  
and endlessly know, and need not crave.  
Sometimes a child loses herself in this stillness  
and gets shaken out of it. Or a person dies  
and becomes it. For when death draws near, we look beyond it  
with an animal's wide gaze. Lovers come close  
to the open, filled with wonder,

when the beloved doesn't block the view.  
It surges up behind the other, unbidden. But it's hard  
to grasp, so it becomes again the world.

Ever turned toward what we create,  
we see only reflections of the open, overshadowed by us.  
Except when an animal mutely looks us through and through.  
This is our fate: to stand  
in our own way. Forever  
in the way.

If the confident animal, coming toward us,  
had a mind like ours,  
the change in him would stun us.  
But his own being is endless to him, undefined, and without regard  
for his condition: clear,  
like his eyes. Where we see future,  
he sees all, and himself  
in all, made whole for always.

And yet in the warm, watchful animal  
there is the weight of a great sadness.  
For what at times assaults us  
clings to him as well: the sense  
that what we strive to reach  
was once closer and more real  
and infinitely tender.  
Here all is distance -  
there it was breath.  
After that first home  
the second feels invaded, and windy.

And we: always and everywhere spectators,  
turned toward the stuff of our lives, and never outward.  
It all spills over us. We put it to order.  
It falls apart. We order it again  
and fall apart ourselves.  
Who has turned us around like this?  
Whatever we do, we are in the posture  
of one who is about to depart.  
Like a person pausing and lingering  
for a moment on the last hill  
where he can still see his whole valley -  
this is how we live, forever  
taking our leave (Rilke 1923).

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# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

## PREFACE

**Fig 0.1** Wilma Cruise *The 100 Page Diary* installation view, Kizo Art Gallery Durban 2008.

## CHAPTER 1

**Fig 1.1** Wilma Cruise, *Adam and Eve Before the Fall* (2006–2007). Ceramic on steel base, Adam 187 cm, Eve 100 cm. (Photographed by Carla Crafford). Private collection.

**Fig 1.2.** Wilma Cruise *Blue Doris* (1988). Ceramic, 55 x 90 cm. (Photographed by the artist). Private collection.

**Fig 1.3.** Sue Coe *Finning* (2011). (Aloi & Bennison 2011: 110). *Antennae* Issue 19.

**Fig 1.4.** Patricia Piccinini *The Young Family* (2002). Silicone, polyurethane, leather, plywood, human hair, 80 x 150 x 110 cm. Photograph by Graham Baring, Courtesy of the artist and Haunch of Venison

file://localhost/(http://weirdfictionreview.com:2012:09:patricia-piccininis-mythic-  
imagination:)

**Fig 1.5.** Damien Hirst *Mother and child (Divided)* (1993). Glass, stainless steel, Perspex, acrylic paint, cow, calf and formaldehyde solution, 2 parts: 2086 x 3225 x 1092 mm, 2086 x 3225 x 1092 mm, 2 parts: 1136 x 1689 x 622 mm, 1136 x 1689 x 622 mm.

(<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hirst-mother-and-child-divided-t12751>)

**Fig 1.6.** *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* (1991). Glass, painted steel, silicone, monofilament, shark and formaldehyde solution, 217 x 542 x 180 cm. (<http://www.damienhirst.com/the-physical-impossibility-of>).

**Fig 1.7.** Joseph Beuys. *I like America and America likes me*. 1974. Performance New York. Photograph by Caroline Tisdall. Available:

<https://viewfromaburrow.com/2015/07/23/joseph-beuys-i-like-america-and-america-likes-me/>

**Fig 1.8.** Mary Britton Clouse *Nemo – Portrait/Self Portrait* (2005). Digital pigment print on Sekishu paper. Available: (<http://www.upc-online.org/thinking/framed-clouse.html>).

**Fig 1.9.** Guillermo Habacuc Vargas *You Are What You Read (Eres lo que lees)* (2007).

Installation: dog, dog food, rope. Gallery of Managua, Nicaragua.

<http://fractalenlightenment.com/633/artwork/you-are-what-you-read> |

FractalEnlightenment.com.

**Fig 1.10.** *Homo Erectus* and *Homo Robustus* (1999–2000). Ceramic, 183 cm each.

(Photographed by the artist). Artist's collection.

**Fig 1.11.** Wilma Cruise *Nicholas I* (1990–1993). Bronze (edition 3), 30 x 43 x 33 cm.

(Photographed by Doreen Hemp).

**Fig 1.12.** Wilma Cruise *Does a Sheep Know and I Think Therefore I Am* (2004). Digital

prints 61 x 82 cm each.

**Fig 1.13.** *Chanticleer* (2007). Ceramic, 150 x 170 cm. Private collection. (Photographed by

Carla Crafford).

## CHAPTER 2

**Fig 2.1** Wilma Cruise *The Animals in Alice* (2011)

**Fig 2.2** Wilma Cruise *The Cat, The Dog and The Hare* (2011). Beeswax, wax crayon, charcoal and oil stick on paper, 135 x 138 cm each.

**Fig 2.3.** Wilma Cruise *The Pig* (2011). Beeswax, wax crayon, charcoal and oil stick on paper, 135 x 138 cm.

**Fig 2.4.** Wilma Cruise *The All-Knowing Pig* (2015). Drypoint and chine-collé (edition 15), 43.7 x 45 cm.

**Fig. 2.5.** Wilma Cruise *If you turn into a pig I will have nothing more to do with you* (2012). Ceramic on steel base, 112 x 44 x 44 cm. (Photographed by Ant Strack). Artist's collection.

**Fig. 2.6.** Wilma Cruise *Poor Horace: Watching The Hours* (2009). Acrylic resin and mixed media, 267 x 155 x 80 cm. (Photographed by Anne-Marie Tully). Artist's collection.

**Fig 2.7.** Wilma Cruise *The Alice Diaries* (2013). A3 folios, mixed media on paper, 42 x 30 cm.

**Fig 2.8.** Wilma Cruise *The Caucus - Pig* (2012). Painted ceramic, 44 x 45 x 30 cm. (Photographed by Ant Strack). Artist's collection.

**Fig 2.9.** Wilma Cruise *Hybrid Piglet* (2011). Ceramic on steel base, 105 cm. (Photographed by the artist). Destroyed.

**Fig 2.10.** Wilma Cruise *Alice: Self Portrait II* (2011), mixed media drawing on paper 200 x 100 cm.

**Fig 2.11.** Wilma Cruise *Cradle* (2011–2012). 1000+ ceramic forms, approximately 30 cm each. (Photographed by Ant Strack). Artist's collection.

**Fig 2.12.** Wilma Cruise *Cradle* (2011–2012) detail. (Photographed by the artist). Artist's collection.

**Fig 2.13.** Wilma Cruise *The Alice Diaries* (2012). Installation view. (Photographed by Anthea Pokroy).

**Fig 2.14.** Wilma Cruise *The Mother* (2011). Ceramic on steel base, 120 x 50 x 50 cm. (Photographed by Anthea Pokroy). Artist's collection.

**Fig 2.15.** Wilma Cruise *Mother Other* (2011). Ceramic on steel base, 108 cm. (Photographed by Anthea Pokroy). Artist's collection.

**Fig 2.16.** Wilma Cruise *The Bird* (2012). Ceramic and steel on steel base, 105 x 101 x 50 cm. (Photographed by Ant Strack). Artist's collection.

**Fig 2.17.** Wilma Cruise *The Caucus – Rabbit* (2012). Ceramic, 105 x 45 x 55 cm. (Photographed by Ant Strack). Private collection.

**Fig 2.18.** Wilma Cruise *Big, Bigger, Biggest (Alice)* (2012). Ceramic on steel base, *Biggest (Alice)* 180 x 60 x 80 cm, *Bigger (Alice)* 121 x 32 x 32 cm, *Big (Alice)* 90 x 20 x 28 cm. (Photographed by Anthea Pokroy). Artist's collection.

### CHAPTER 3

**Fig 3.1.** Wilma Cruise *The Queen* (2015). Drypoint and chine-collé (Edition 15), 43 x 43.7 cm.

**Fig 3.2.** Wilma Cruise *Self Portrait* (1992), Ceramic on concrete base. 173 x 62 x 45 cm. (Photographed by Doreen Hemp).

**Fig 3.3.** Elizabeth Gunter *Last, last One* (2015). Charcoal dust on paper, 180 x 140 cm.

**Fig 3.4.** Elizabeth Gunter *# 4000* (2015). Charcoal dust on paper, 190 x 145 cm.

**Fig 3.5.** Joseph Beuys *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*. (1965). Gold leaf, honey, dead hare, felt pad, iron, fir tree, miscellaneous drawings and clothing items, Galerie Schmela, Dresden, Germany.

(<http://uk.phaidon.com/agenda/art/articles/2014/march/03/why-joseph-beuys-and-his-dead-hare-live-on/>)

**Fig 3.6.** Nicolene Swanepoel, ceramic, data unknown.

**Fig 3.7.** Nicolene Swanepoel *NikkiNkisi* (n.d.) ceramic, size unknown.

**Fig 3.8.** Nicolene Swanepoel Little Creature (2014). Ceramic, size unknown.

**Fig 3.9.** Nicolene Swanepoel Little Creature (2014). Ceramic and found objects, size unknown.

**Fig 3.10.** Wilma Cruise *The End Game* (2015). Drypoint and chine-collé (Edition 15), 45 x 43,7 cm.

**Fig 3.11.** Wilma Cruise *Alice: Self Portrait I* (2011), mixed media drawing on paper, 200 x 100 cm.

**Fig 3.12.** Wilma Cruise *Harrismith* (2007–2015). Etching on carborudum (Edition E.V.) paper size: 160 x 80 cm.

**Fig 3.13.** Wilma Cruise Installation view *Cocks Asses &... (I can't hear)*. 2007. (Photographed by Doreen Hemp).

**Fig 3.14.** Bradshawian rock painting, The Kimberley, North-west Australia. (Photographed by Wilma Cruise 2015).

**Fig 3.15.** Wilma Cruise *Chess Pieces* detail (2015). Ceramic 20–30 cm. (Photographed by Pierre van der Spuy).

**Fig 3.16.** Wilma Cruise *Cradle II* detail (2014). Ceramic forms in perspex box with stand, box: 60 x 60 x 60 cm, stand: 60 x 60 x 120 cm. (Photographed by the artist).

**Fig 3.17.** Wilma Cruise *The Borogoves* (2015) detail. Ceramic, sizes various 10–17 cm. (Photographed by Pierre van der Spuy).

**Fig 3.18.** Wilma Cruise *The Borogoves* (2015). Ceramic, sizes various 10–17 cm. (Photographed by Pierre van der Spuy).

## CHAPTER 4

**Fig 4.1.** Wilma Cruise *Will you, won't you, will you join the dance?* (2013–2014). Installation view.

**Fig 4.2.** Wilma Cruise *H.D. Arnoldus (Dancing 2)* (2013), Ceramic, 103 cm. (Photographed by Adam Cruise). Artist's collection.

**Fig 4.3.** Wilma Cruise *H.D. Arnoldus (seated)* (2013), Ceramic on found object, 87 cm. (Photographed by Adam Cruise). Artist's collection.

**Fig 4.4.** Wilma Cruise *A Mouth Full of Teeth* (2016). Collage, 120 x 87 cm.

**Fig 4.5.** Wilma Cruise *Chit Chat* (2016). Collage, 87 x 120 cm.

**Fig 4.6.** Wilma Cruise *Rattus Rattus* (2016). Collage, 70 x 100 cm.

**Fig 4.7.** Wilma Cruise *Oh My Word!* (2016). Collage, 70 x 100 cm.

**Fig 4.8.** Wilma Cruise *H.D. Dennis* (2016), Ceramic and steel, 228 cm. (Photographed by Pierre van der Spuy).

**Fig 4.9.** Wilma Cruise *Will you, won't you, will you join the dance?* (2014) Installation view.

**Fig 4.10.** Wilma Cruise *Decline a Mouse I, II & III* (2013). Mixed media on paper, 155 x 90 cm each.

**Fig 4.11.** Wilma Cruise *Biggest Alice* (2012). Ceramic on steel base, 182 cm. (Photographed by Ant Strack). Artist's collection.

## CHAPTER 5

**Fig 5.1.** Wilma Cruise *Take a Bow: The Caucus - Puppy* (2011- 2012). Bronze (Edition 10), 45 x 84 x 33 cm. *Pup - Zara* (2013 - 2014). Bronze (Edition 10), 75 x 63 x 48 cm. (Photographed by Nicolene Swanepoel).

**Fig 5.2.** John Tenniel's puppy (Carroll 1982:45).

**Fig 5.3.** Wilma Cruise *The Caucus - Puppy* (2011-2012). Bronze (Edition 10), 45 x 84 x 33 cm, *Pup - Zara* (2013-2014). Bronze (Edition 10), 75 x 63 x 48 cm. (Photographed by Nicolene Swanepoel).

**Fig 5.4.** Wilma Cruise *Oracia - Watching the Hours* (2013-2014). Ceramic. 176 cm. Destroyed. *The Caucus - Rabbit* (2012). Ceramic. 105 cm. (Photographed by Gavin Younge). Private collection.

**Fig 5.5.** Figures for *Menagerie* at Renzo Vignali Foundry, Pretoria. (Photograph by Carla Crafford).

**Fig 5.6.** Wilma Cruise *After Harrismith* (2014). Ceramic on steel base, 157 cm.

(Photographed by the artist). Private collection.

**Fig 5.7.** Wilma Cruise *Poor Horace: Watching the Hours* foundry view (2009). Acrylic resin and mixed media, 267 x 155 x 80 cm. (Photographed by Carlo Gamberini.)

**Fig 5.8.** Wilma Cruise *Small Baboon on Steel Bench* (2012). Bronze (Edition 10), 51 x 43 x 24 cm. (Photographed by Nicolene Swanepoel).

**Fig 5.9.** Wilma Cruise *The Caucus - Baboon* (2012-2013). Bronze and found object (Edition 10), 69 x 63 x 43 cm. (Photographed by Nicolene Swanepoel.)

**Fig 5.10.** Wilma Cruise *Kom Sit: Travelling Baboon (The Caucus - Baboon)* (2012-2014). Bronze with found object (Edition 10), height from bench 53 cm. (Photographed by Nicolene Swanepoel.)

**Fig 5.11.** Wilma Cruise Working drawing for *Kom Sit: Travelling Baboon* (2014).

**Fig 5.12.** Wilma Cruise *Monkey Business* (2014). Bronze (baboons) and mild steel (seesaw). 135 x 270 cm. (Photographed by the artist).

**Fig 5.13.** Wilma Cruise *The School Room (2015) The Caucus Baboon* with multiples of *Small Baboon on Cast Suitcase*. (Photographed by the artist).

## CHAPTER 6

**Fig 6.1.** Wilma Cruise *Heidegger's Hand* (2016). Bronze 1/1, 60 x 35 x 55 cm. (Photographed by Pierre van der Spuy).

**Fig 6.2.** Wilma Cruise *The All Knowing Ass* (2007). Digital Print, 160 x 80cm, Edition 7.

**Fig 6.3** Wilma Cruise *Louis' Baboon with Role Over* foundry view (2015). *Role Over* (2015). Bronze (Edition 12), 140 x 80 cm. (Photographed by the artist).

**Fig 6.4.** Wilma Cruise *Louis' Baboon* (2015). Bronze (Edition 10), 47 x 31 x 55 cm. (Photographed by Pierre van der Spuy).

**Fig 6.5.** Wilma Cruise *Endgame* (2015). Clay and plaster version with ceramic chess pieces, 60 x 35 x 55 cm each. (Photographed by Pierre van der Spuy).

**Fig 6.6.** Wilma Cruise *Study for Heidegger's Hand* (2016).

**Fig 6.7.** Marlene Dumas *The Painter* (1994). Oil on Canvas, 200 x 100 cm.

<http://africanah.org/marlene-dumas-image-burden-tate-modern/>.

## CONCLUSION

Fig 7.1. Wilma Cruise *En Passant* foundry view (2016). Ten figures in acrylic resin, 100-120 cm. (Photographed by the artist.)

Fig 7.2. Wilma Cruise Four pages from *Diary 2016* (2016). Mixed media on paper, 70 x 100 cm.

# APPENDIX

## List of Works on Exhibition

*The 8<sup>th</sup> Square* Cavalli Gallery, 6 November - 4 December 2016



**Papio Ursinus**

2012/2016

Bronze with found object (Edition 10)

65 cm



**Louis' Baboon**

2015

Bronze (Edition 12)

47 x 31 x 55 cm



**Endgame**

2015

Bronze (Edition 4/10)

60 x 35 x 55 cm per baboon



**Heidegger's Hand**

2016

Bronze (Edition 1/1)

60 x 35 x 55 cm



**The Waiting Room**

2016

Bronze & found object (Edition 1/5)

Caucus Baboon - 65 cm + 2 x Little Papio 45 cm each)



**Role Over**

2015

Bronze (Edition 12)

140 x 80 cm



**Chanticleer**  
2016  
Bronze (Edition 5)  
150 x 170 cm



**The Caucas - Puppy** x 2  
2011/13  
Bronze (Edition 10)  
45 x 85 x 33 cm



**Pup - Zara** x 2  
2013/14  
Bronze (Edition 10)  
75 x 63 x 48 cm



**Sheep (The Dolly Suite)** x 3  
2012  
Bronze  
60 x 80 x 28 cm each



**Scribble, the Cat (the comma matters)**  
2016  
Bronze (Edition 10)  
36 x 63 x 17 cm



**Box(ed)**  
2016  
Bronze (Edition 10)  
40 x 67 x 31 cm



**Brillo**  
2016  
Bronze (Edition 10)  
53 x 63 x 30 cm



**Phoebe**  
2016  
Bronze  
Approx 60 cm height



**Hybrid Piglet**

2015

Bronze (Edition 12)

105 cm



**3 Dogs on cast Rectangular Plinth**

2015

Bronze Ed 2/10

50 x 22.5 x 5.5 cm



**H.D. Ernest**

2013-2016

Bronze

87 cm.



**Chess pieces**

2015

Ceramic

Size: various approx 15 - 35 cm



**Borogoves**

2015

Ceramic

12 - 17 cm each

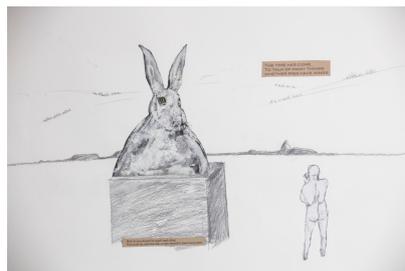


**The Caucus - Pig**

2012

Painted Ceramic

Ht. 44 cm



**Diary pages**

Collage and mixed media x 10

2016

100 x 60 cm



**Decline a Mouse I, II & III**

2013

Mixed media on paper  
155 x 90 cm each



**Will You?**

2013

Mixed media on paper  
155 x 90 cm



**Rattus Rattus**

2016

Collage and mixed media  
70 x 100 cm



**Queen**

2015

Drypoint and chine-collé (Edition 15)  
45 x 43,7 cm



**The End Game**

2015

Drypoint and chine-collé (Edition 15)  
45 x 43,7 cm



**Word**

2015

Drypoint and chine-collé (Edition 15)  
45 x 43,7 cm



**Oh My Word!**

2016

Collage and mixed media  
70 x 100 cm



**The All Knowing Pig**

2015

Drypoint and chine-collé (Edition 15)

45 x 43,7 cm



**Harrismith**

2007-2015

Etching on carborundum (Edition E.V.)

paper size: 160 x 80 cm



**Chanticleer**

2007

Spitbite, aquatint and drypoint

Image size 99 x 66cm

Paper size: 121.5 x 80 cm

Edition 15



**Rats**

2016

Oil on Canvas

200 x 200 cm



**Would you like cats if you were me?**

2012- 2016

Oil on Canvas

200 x 200 cm



**Crucible**

2016

Oil on Canvas

200 x 200 cm

## *Six impossible things before breakfast*

Gallery University Stellenbosch, 9 November - 23 December 2016



### ***Bigger (Alice)***

2012

Ceramic on steel base

121 x 32 x 32 cm

### ***Big (Alice)***

2012

Ceramic on steel base

90 x 20 x 28 cm

### ***Biggest (Alice)***

2012

Ceramic on steel base

180 x 60 x 80 cm



### ***Cradle***

2011-2012

1000+ ceramic forms

approximately 30 cm each.



### ***Chit Chat***

2016

Collage and mixed media

87 x 120 cm



### ***HD Dennis***

2016

Ceramic

134 cm



### ***Alice - Self portrait I***

2011

Mixed media drawing on paper.

Paper size +- 200 x 100 cm

