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# (De)Facing the Animals

## Zooësis and Performance

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*How can an animal look you in the face? That will be one of our concerns.*

—Jacques Derrida (2002:377)

*Did your food have a face?*

—*People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals poster (2001)*

As my two epigraphs suggest, the burgeoning field of animal studies encompasses a vast cultural territory, ranging—contentiously<sup>1</sup>—from philosophy to activism, and including anthropology, sociology, history, psychology, art history, cinema, and literary studies. This special issue of *TDR* extends an exploration, begun several years ago (see Read 2000), of the intersections of this new field with performance studies.<sup>2</sup> In proposing the term “zooësis” (Chaudhuri 2003) to designate the activity at these intersections, I am conscious of indulging a neologistic impulse that has become a characteristic of animal studies; a symptom, perhaps, of its desire to intervene radically in established discourses and their terms of art. Coinages like “zoontologies” (Wolfe 2003), “zoopolis” (Wolch 1998), “petropolis,” (Olson

and Hulser 2003) “carno-phallogocentrism,” (Derrida 1991), even “zooanthropology” and “anthrozology” run the gamut of disciplines and suggest a shared program of creative disciplinary disturbance.

To speak of zooësis is, at the very least, to index the history of animal representation that stretches, in the Western literary tradition, from Aesop’s Fables to Will Self’s *Great Apes* (1998); in the Western dramatic tradition, from Aristophanes’ *The Frogs* (405 BCE) to Edward Albee’s *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?* (2000); in film, from Eadward Muybridge’s “zoogyroscope” in 1879<sup>3</sup> to Werner Herzog’s *Grizzly Man* (2005); in popular culture, from Mickey Mouse to the Animal Planet TV channel; and in popular performance from gladiatorial contests to the Las Vegas duo Siegfried and Roy. Beyond that, to speak of zooësis is to acknowledge the manifold performances engendered by such ubiquitous or isolated cultural animal practices as pet keeping, dog shows, equestrian displays, rodeos, bullfighting, animal sacrifice, scientific experimentation, species preservation, taxidermy, hunting, fur wearing, meat eating—each with its own archive and repertory, its own spatialities and temporalities, its own performers and spectators.<sup>4</sup> Finally, to posit a phenomenon distinct enough to name—zooësis—is also to invite discussion and debate about that phenomenon, and that is the essential ambition of this special issue of *TDR*.

The neologisms that frantically signal the need to “take animals seriously” (DeGrazia 1996) reflect a new pressure on what an influential recent anthology calls “The Question of the Animal” (Wolfe 2003). The double meaning of this phrase is important for my understanding of zooësis: the question of the animal is raised *in* and *by* philosophy *for us* (with increasing contentiousness since Descartes’ pronouncement that animals were nothing more than machines), but it is also a question *put to us*—individuals and disciplines—*by* animals, with increasing urgency as their disappearance from modern life and extinction from the planet accelerates beyond denial.

The ethical value and urgent need for an approach to animals that is imbued with the traits of performance—embodiment, presence, expressive encounters in shared time-space—is suggested by one of the contemporary classics of animal studies, J.M. Coetzee’s *The Lives of Animals* (1999), a work that adds generic distortion to the disciplinary disturbances

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1. Richard Kahn (2005) gives a lucid account of the fundamental ideological split—between political advocacy and postmodern cultural studies, between activism and ideological analysis—that became painfully apparent during the now-notorious “Representing Animals” conference (Kahn calls it “a minor scandal”) that was held at the Center for 20th-Century Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee in 2000.
  2. *Performance Research* featured a special issue, “On Animals,” guest edited by Alan Read, in 2000 [5, 2].
  3. The importance of animals in the development of early film technique has been documented by Jonathan Burt (2000) and compellingly theorized by Akira Lippit (2000).
  4. A number of these practices have been the subject of recent studies that pay attention to their performative aspects: pet keeping (Kete 2000), hunting (Marvin 2000), spectacle (Davis 1997, Desmond 1999), rodeos (Lawrence 1990), taxidermy (Desmond 2002), and zoos (Malamud 1998; Mullan and Marvin 1999; Hanson 2002; Rothfels 2002).

*Figure 1. (facing page) Damien Hirst, A Thousand Years, 1990, steel, glass, flies, maggots, MDF, insect-o-utor, cow’s head, sugar, water, 83.9 x 168.1 x 83.9 in (213 x 427 x 213 cm) DHS1814. Installation view, Gagosian Gallery, London, June 2006. (Photo by Rodger Wooldridge)*

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characteristic of this field. Having begun its life as the 1997/98 Tanner Lectures at Princeton, the novel thematizes and fictionalizes its origins: it is a narrative about two lectures delivered at an American college by Coetzee's intriguing creation, the novelist Elizabeth Costello. The first of these lectures is the subject of a chapter entitled "The Philosophers and the Animals"; the second one entitled "The Poets and the Animals." The disciplinary trajectory thus encapsulated begins with an attempt to tackle "the question of the animal" with the instruments of reason—an attempt Costello deems necessary but that ultimately proves to be fruitless—and progresses to the effort to discover and enlist other faculties, notably the poetic imagination, in this endeavor.

The novel itself seems pessimistic about Costello's quest for a renewed relation between humans and animals: it ends on a note of exhaustion and disappointment, with the aging novelist reduced to tears, trembling in her grown son's arms. But while Elizabeth herself may feel tired and hopeless, one achievement of her effort is quietly recorded in the titles of the chapters and of the novel itself: the insistence on the plural form of all the key ideas—poets, philosophers, lives, animals—anticipates a crucial admonition in Jacques Derrida's exclamation upon the human arrogance of the use of the singular noun to refer to the myriad living beings and species with whom we share this planet: "The Animal," says Derrida, "What a word!" In this word Derrida locates the origins of logocentric humanism:

*Animal* is a word that men have given themselves the right to give [...] at the same time according themselves, reserving for them, for humans, the right to the word, the name, the verb, the attribute, to a language of words, in short to the very things that the others in question would be deprived of, those that are corralled within the grand territory of the beasts: the Animal. (2002:400)

In pluralizing the words in his title *The Lives of Animals*, Coetzee hands Costello a victory she herself despairs of: the plural marks her lectures as a step in the long journey it will take to face the consequences of the gigantic gap between our singular insensitivity to animals and the vast numbers of different species and individuals upon which that insensitivity has been wreaking havoc, now almost to the point of extinction.

Yet numbers do crop up regularly in contemporary discourse on animals: stunning, numbing numbers, often in a citational form I think of as "cows per hour, chickens per minute." Besides sheer quantities, discussion of contemporary animal practices uses statistics regarding proportions and distribution in ways that invariably mark this subject as one that lies well below the threshold of cultural awareness. For example, most people would be surprised to know that 98 percent of all animals with whom humans interact in any way, even including pets and zoo and circus animals, are farmed animals—that is, bred for human use (Wolfson and Sullivan 2004:206). An amazing statistic indeed: not only does it tell us that we eat animals much more than we do anything else with them; it should also help us to recognize that the self-identification as animal lovers that we perform every day in our homes (and on Sundays when we drag the kids around the zoo) is part of a paper-thin but rock-hard veneer on an animalculture<sup>5</sup> of staggering violence and exploitation.

Whether approached with the tools of rationality or those of imagination—both of which Costello deploys—the lives of animals as currently configured generally resist meaningful cultural visitation on any significant scale. The search is therefore on, in the arts and the humanities, to identify new means of seeing, showing, and knowing the animals. The trajectory Costello follows is not just from philosophy to poetry but also from one kind of poetry to another. Contrasting two famous animal poems—Rainer Maria Rilke's *The Panther* (1902) and Ted Hughes's *The Jaguar* (1957)—she identifies embodiment as the principle of

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5. I derive the term animalcultures from Donna Haraway's inspired term "naturecultures" (2003), itself derived on analogy with the ubiquitous "technoculture."

a potentially meaningful human-animal discourse. Unlike Rilke's panther, which is presented for our gaze, Hughes's jaguar, she says, is given to us as an organism, alive in muscle, breath, and sinew like our own, a living stage for human-animal encounters of a deeper kind. Costello's distinction between the seen animal and the somatically shared one provides an obvious invitation to performance and performance studies—with their emphasis on the body, on presence, and on shared experience—an invitation to join her quest for a reawakened animalculture.

That this invitation is also an opportunity for us to rethink certain key concepts of theatre and performance is suggested in Albee's play *The Goat: Or Who is Sylvia?*. Even before the published script of the play overdetermined the direction of critical analysis by featuring, on the title page, the parenthetical phrase, not quite a subtitle, "Notes toward a Definition of Tragedy," critics had begun to discuss the interplay of genres evoked in the title—tragedy, from the Greek word for goat, *tragos*, and pastoral comedy, evoked in the play's subtitle: "Who is Sylvia?" which appears to quote Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. There is certainly no doubt that Albee is interested here, as he has been before, in the question of modern tragedy. Early in the play, a character says "I hear a kind of...rushing sound, like a...wooooooosh! Or...wings, or something." Martin, the protagonist, jokes: "It's probably the Eumenides." His more practical friend responds: "More like the dishwasher. There; it's stopped." "Then it probably wasn't the Eumenides," says Martin, "they don't stop" (2003:22). It is one of many references to actual tragedies, ancient and modern, in the play, as well as to elements of tragic structure, including a hero at the pinnacle of his life, poised for a fall. In Martin's case this pinnacle is, like so much else in the play, literal as well as figurative, with the literal being insistently associated with animality. Twice in the play, Martin tells the story of his first encounter with Sylvia and describes driving up to the top of a hill. Both times his listeners interrupt to correct him: "crest" they say, meaning that that is the right term for the top of a hill. The second time the interruption is uncanny enough to make Martin ask, in bewilderment, "Who are you?" The question has several answers: the one supplying the correct word is not just his well-spoken wife, it is also the playwright, aspiring to tragedy, and beyond that, the conventions of a dramatic genre in which disaster befalls the hero at the crest of his fortunes. The presence of the animal, however, destabilizes those conventions and subverts those intentions.

*The Goat* is the story of Martin and Stevie, a sophisticated, successful and happy Manhattan couple whose perfect life is shattered when Martin confesses to an unthinkable transgression, his love affair with the enchanting but unfortunately nonhuman Sylvia. In the play, Sylvia is initially experienced as a smell. This sensory challenge to the ocularocentric medium of theatre acutely deploys Freud's sensory etiology of civilization, his account of the derogation of the "lower senses" (touch and smell), and the privileging of sight in the human evolution from quadruped to biped, from rooting about in the dirt to scanning the skies. So incongruous is animal odor in the space of drama (and in the sanitized, deodorized dwelling of these classy New Yorkers), that it is almost immediately displaced, and Sylvia is quickly transformed into a preposterous joke. Those to whom Martin reveals the affair invariably respond, first, by failing what people in animal studies call "the laugh test"—that initial refusal to take the subject seriously at all. Martin's friend Ross is sure he's kidding when he shows him a photograph of the person he's having an affair with, and Stevie just roars with laughter at his confession. Later, Martin's relationship to Sylvia is firmly framed as perversion, complete with calls for therapy and support groups. Martin admits to having found such a group (online, of course!) and to having attended meetings and shared stories and 12-step resolutions with other troubled animal "lovers." All these reactions to Sylvia teeter on the edge of wild hilarity, and much has already been written about Albee's astonishing feat in drawing genuine pity and fear from a subject that is referred to in the play, repeatedly and hilariously, as "goat-fucking."

This carnivalesque dimension of the play's rhetoric makes its concluding assault on the logic of tragedy all the more devastating. In the final moments of Albee's play, Stevie comes onstage, dragging behind her the slaughtered and bloody body of Sylvia. It is as shocking a stage image as the ending of Sam Shepard's masterpiece *Buried Child* (1978), when Tilden walks onstage holding the tiny, mud-covered corpse of the play's title. Like Shepard's image, this one uses literalization to exceed and expose the conventions of its putative and contested genre, modern tragedy. The actual buried child, like the actual slaughtered goat, poses a powerful threat to the self-consciously metaphoric edifice upon which modern tragedy depends. The abjected animal body intervenes in a system of equivalence that has been painstakingly established both within the play<sup>6</sup> and beyond it.<sup>7</sup> By putting the goat back in scapegoat, as it were, and by doing so in the context of a self-conscious exploration of tragedy—the play brings the animal into relationship with other key elements of the “definition of tragedy,” including recognition. Aristotelian recognition, the kind that occurs late in the action, with or without reversal, is earnestly sought by the play's characters, who embark upon a sustained investigation worthy of Oedipus himself. That kind of clarifying recognition, however, is never achieved. Perhaps it has been displaced, from the outset, by another kind of recognition, played out, in a scene twice described (haltingly, with many interruptions) by Martin about his first encounter with Sylvia:

...and it was then that I saw her. Just...looking at me [...] And there she was, looking at me with those eyes. [...] It was...it wasn't like anything I'd felt before; it was so...amazing, so extraordinary! [...] I'd never seen such an expression. It was pure...and trusting and...and innocent; so...so guileless. [...] I went over to where she was—to the fence where she was, and I knelt there, eye level...and there was a...a what!?! ...an understanding so intense, so natural... [...] that I will never forget, [...] And there was a connection there—a communication—that, well...an epiphany, I guess comes closest... (2003:42–43, 80–82)

This account stands in stark contrast to every other character's attitude toward Sylvia in the rest of the play, where the fact of her animal body utterly outstrips any interest in her face. No one shows any willingness to join Martin in pondering the meaning of his epiphany. In the play's dialectic of animal body and animal face, the latter—the face, Sylvia's face, her eyes, her gaze, the look that Martin believes they exchange—all this is almost entirely effaced by her sexually forbidden body. And yet this moment in the narrative indexes a special kind of knowledge, a non-Aristotelian recognition, which lies at the heart of contemporary zooësis.

The experience Martin describes—the face-to-face encounter with the animal—is, in fact, one that animal studies and animal art invoke compulsively. It is even enshrined in the title of one of the seminal texts of the discourse, John Berger's 1980 essay “Why Look at Animals?” which initiated many key formulations of animal studies: the animal as Other to be faced, the animal face as inscrutable mask, the animal gaze as a window on to alternative epistemologies, even ontologies. Before locating Albee's recognition scene in relation to contemporary cultural modes of “facing the animal,” it is crucial to note the fate of modernity's first sustained gaze upon the animal face. In 1872, Charles Darwin published his extraordinary study, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. The author being already well known and highly respected, the book was an instant bestseller: 9,000 copies sold in the first four months. Thereafter, however, not only did sales fall off dramatically, but, in the words of the volume's most recent editor, the book was “virtually forgotten for ninety years” (in Darwin

6. For an excellent discussion of the play's dense intertextuality, see Kuhn (2004).

7. The printed *Playbill* to the Broadway production of the play included an insert in the form of a faux newspaper named the *Goat Gazette*, in which the goat was explicitly related to the scapegoat and characterized as “symboliz[ing] the powers of procreation, the life force, the libido, and fertility” (2003). This gave the audience a convenient—and in my view, regrettable—handle for grasping the animal presence; regrettable because it handed them, as it were, the wrong end of goat—it's metaphoric end, etymologically and mythologically certified.

[1872] 1998:xxix). Among the five main factors Paul Ekman identifies in trying to understand “how could this happen to such an illustrious author, writing on an intriguing topic with such an enticing title?” is one that is particularly relevant to my inquiry here: in the eyes of modern science, says Ekman, Darwin’s conviction that animals had emotions made him “guilty of the sin of anthropomorphism” (1998:xxx). As Jeffrey Masson writes when he takes up Darwin’s topic after a century-long hiatus, “So persistent are the forces that militate against even admitting the possibility of emotions in the lives of animals that the topic seems disreputable, even taboo” (1995:1–2). Why do modern scientists actively blind themselves to a phenomenon that most lay people have no trouble accepting and that every pet owner would vigorously affirm: that animals have feelings like fear, anger, happiness, and sadness? The conversation that follows Costello’s lectures reveals much of what is at stake for various individuals and disciplines in refusing Darwin’s fundamental premise: that emotions and their expression are not unique to humans. Not only does such refusal help to sanction practices like animal slaughter and experimentation, it also maintains the human-animal boundary that fuels what Giorgio Agamben calls the “anthropological machine” of Western philosophy (2004:33).

More recently, the animal’s face initiated one of contemporary philosophy’s most searching explorations of animality, in an article that begins with what is surely one of the strangest scenes in philosophy—the philosopher in his bathroom, naked, watched by his cat:

The animal [can] be looked at, no doubt, but also—something that philosophy perhaps forgets, *perhaps being this calculated forgetting itself*—it can look at me. It has its point of view regarding me. The point of view of the absolute other. And nothing will have ever done more to make me think through this absolute alterity of the neighbor than these moments when I see myself seen naked under the gaze of my cat. (Derrida 2002:380)

Besides being an instance of the face-to-face encounter and look, Derrida’s bathroom scene also involves one of modernity’s most successful relationships with animals: the pet. Berger had identified the pet as one of the modern world’s two major monuments to the vanishing animal (the other being the zoo creature). Anticipating Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s notorious critique of the pet as the quintessential “oedipal animal” (1987:233), Berger locates the pet symptomatically, within a distinguishing feature of consumer societies, “that universal but personal withdrawal into the private small family unit, decorated or furnished with mementoes from the outside world”, human-made replicas of nature that narcissistically reflect “their owners’ way of life” (1991:14). From this perspective, to write about one’s cat, as Derrida does, might be to participate in the anthropomorphizing tradition that runs from ancient beast fables to Donald Duck. But of course it is precisely as a potentially unassimilable Other that Derrida is interested in his cat—a radical other sharing one’s most intimate moments and spaces. Unlike the “animal familiars” cultivated by New Age neoshamanism, Derrida’s cat belongs in a philosophical project of animal *de*-familiarization, of gradually discovering the contours of a vast and self-serving misrecognition of animals by humans. A very different kind of animal recognition is prompted by a reference to the animal face in a famous PETA poster, which asks the question that gave me my second epigraph: “Did your food have a face?” The scene being initiated by this question stages an act of violent re-recognition, an attempt to force people to “face up” to some of the realities of the one animal practice that is more widespread in contemporary culture than pet keeping: meat eating. PETA’s question, “Did your food have a face?” is accompanied by an image that complicates the question of the animal Other as much as Derrida’s cat does.

The image is not of a face at all: it is of the head of a carcass, skinned and bloody. It is an image of a *missing* face, aptly representing the disappeared animal of the modern meat industry, which invests hugely in suppressing such images, and which systematically and literally keeps its operations, its vast animal factories, hidden—and keeps us, the consumers, in the dark.



Figure 2. PETA poster from 2001. (Photo by Giuseppe Fassino; courtesy of PETA)

The apparently simple rhetoric of the PETA poster gets more complicated when it is inserted into the field of contemporary zooësis. Reading it in relation to a work of art that it resembles closely—Damien Hirst's *A Thousand Years* (1990), which also features the severed head of cow—opens another perspective on the complexities involved in facing the animal. In *A Thousand Years*, a rotting cow's head lies on one side of a glass partition; on the other side are maggots from which live flies hatch, then fly through a small hole in a glass partition to feast on the carcass. The side of the glass box that contains the severed head also has an ultraviolet insect electrocuting device, in which many of the flies are incinerated.

Like the PETA poster, *A Thousand Years* makes shock and revulsion one pole of a dialectic set off in the spectator. The other pole here, however, is not political action, but rather philosophical reflection. According to the Saatchi Gallery, where the work was displayed:

*A Thousand Years* is a universe under scrutiny. Breeding a colony of flies from scratch, maggots can be watched feeding on a severed cow's head, turning into flies, only to have their miraculous metamorphosis prematurely terminated by their inevitable contact with the insect-o-cutor. Hirst's flies are a crude parody of the life-cycle of man—a cruel joke played out in microcosm. (Saatchi Gallery)

The viewer who can endure the sight is being asked to face an allegory of life and death, a drama of chance and determinism.

Might one's participation in this scene eventually alter—even slightly—one's next experience of a summer backyard barbecue, burger in one hand and flyswatter in the other? Perhaps. But Hirst's intention is quite different than—maybe even the opposite of—PETA's: it is to restore our lost relationship to our own carnality, to our fleshly being in a material world. His use of the animal head is similar, it seems to me, to an idea reported by Andre Gregory in *My Dinner with Andre* (1981), about returning the real to performance:

When I was a young director, and I directed *The Bacchae* at Yale [in 1969], my impulse, when Pentheus has been killed by his mother and the Furies, and you know, [...] they rip him to shreds and I guess cut off his head—my impulse was that the thing to do was to get a head from the New Haven morgue and pass it around the audience. I wanted Agave to bring on a real head and that the head should be passed around the audience so that people somehow realize this stuff was real, see. (in Shawn and Gregory 1981:84)

For Gregory as for Hirst, the putrefying head is a way to face both our mortality and all the devices through which we deny it. Hirst is, we might say, animalizing humans,

reminding them, as his fellow British artist Francis Bacon once put it, that “we are meat, we are potential carcasses” (in Sylvester 1987:23).<sup>8</sup> If the post-Enlightenment subject is constructed through a distancing from his animality, the process Slavoj Žižek calls “desubstantialization” (1992:81), animal art like Hirst’s and Bacon’s belongs in a posthumanist program of *re*-substantialization, a task the posthumanist philosopher John Gray calls “*removing the masks from our animal faces*” (2002:38, emphasis added).

PETA, on the other hand, is in the business of *humanizing* animals, although for a very different purpose from that of the anthropomorphizing tradition regularly decried in animal studies. In seeking to give our food a face, PETA is cleverly deploying the protocols of identity politics, the politics of visibility and representation. In the introduction to her book *About Face*, Dorinne Kondo writes:

Face is our primary external, bodily locus of identity, as David Henry Hwang’s farce of mistaken racial identities, *Face Value*, suggests. For him, face as skin color literally masks a more genuine and vulnerable self. In its more liberatory senses, face signifies the construction of new, contestatory identities by people on the margins, as exemplified in Gloria Anzaldúa’s anthology, *Haciendo Caras/Making Face, Making Soul* (1990). (1997:25)

To give animals a face, as PETA tries to do, would seem to be to give them what Descartes denied them, a soul, a place in our moral universe, and the opportunity to be seen and known as our fellows.

One great obstacle to this project, however, becomes clear in the conclusion of the passage from Kondo quoted above:

Those of us on the margins are trying to “write our faces” with the tools at our disposal: theatre, design, cultural production, political organizing, academic writing. Our faces, in turn, can speak back to Orientalist hegemonies. (25)

Unlike others “on the margins,” animals cannot “speak back”—to humanist hegemonies or to anything else. To make them speak is not to write their faces; it is usually to write ours, to indulge that anthropomorphic reflex that is all too often rooted in an anthropocentric outlook.

In the sense that the animal cannot write its face (and in this sense only) the animal can be characterized as faceless. Could this facelessness also be understood, more positively, as a freedom from what Deleuze and Guattari call “faciality,” their word for the reductive individuality of modernity’s enforced conformities? The face, for Deleuze and Guattari, is a deadening social mask imposed on the modern subject: It “can cover the whole body, indeed the whole world; it is a grid, a diagram, a binary machine, and is in its very nature despotic; it takes the human animal and makes it Man; it takes the lover and makes her Citizen; it takes the animal and makes it bestial” (1987:176).<sup>9</sup> The animal is free of faciality, immersed in the very condition that makes the animal so threatening to individualistic humanism: its multiplicity, its membership in a herd or pack in which individuals are not readily distinguishable. This is the multiplicity so brilliantly and paranoically evoked in Eugène Ionesco’s *Rhinoceros* (1958); perhaps the paradigmatic antianimal work in modern drama, where the indistinguishability of one animal from another is the occasion for a derogation as easily accepted as the one based on their notorious lack of language. Another characteristic routinely used to denigrate

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8. In an analysis of the role of animality and meat in Francis Bacon’s art, Deleuze observes that Bacon “pursues a very peculiar project as a portrait painter: to dismantle the face (2002:19).

9. Alphonso Lingis’s Deleuzian account of the face also makes the connection to animality: “The face extends down the whole length of the body [...] Everything animal in the body must be covered up, with clothing that extends the face, the blank surfaces of the business suit and the tailored two-piece suit of the career woman [...]” (2003:180).

animals is appearance. It is not surprising to find that the “beauty myth” has been enlisted in speciesism as much as it has in sexism and racism. One of the great moments of unintended irony in dramatic animal representation is the spectacle of the Elephant Man, face and head shrouded, insisting—illogically but all-too-comprehensibly: “I am not an animal. I am a human being” (Lynch 1980). His disavowal of his animality bespeaks his investment in faciality and its rigid aesthetic. In a chapter entitled “Faces Unlike Ours,” nature writer David Quammen suggests that it would be by learning to look—really look, eye-to-eye—at so-called “repulsive” animals that we might begin to engage the fundamental question of “how human beings should behave towards the members of other living species” (1988:3).

The face-to-face relation is central to the thinking of Emmanuel Levinas, whose insistence that alterity is fundamental to the ethical relationship appears to promise the project of animal ethics a way beyond the impasse between the Kantian and utilitarian models.<sup>10</sup> Levinas’s narrative about a poignant animal encounter has attracted a lot of attention in animal studies (see Clark 1997; Steeves 2005; and Wolfe 2003). Writing about the dog who befriended him and his fellow-inmates in a concentration camp, and whom they named Bobby, Levinas says that this dog was “the last Kantian in Nazi Germany,” because his joyful greetings reminded the prisoners of their human dignity. Yet, when questioned closely about the ethical status of nonhuman animals, Levinas is reluctant to ascribe to animals that “ethical face” which he elsewhere has called (as Martin calls Sylvia’s face) “an epiphany.” By contrast, says Levinas, the animal face is merely “biological,” incapable of demanding the ethical response (1988:57–58). Levinas denies that the dog can have a face in the ethical sense: “the phenomenon of the face is not in its purest form in the dog,” he writes. “I cannot say at what moment you have the right to be called ‘face.’ The human face is completely different and only afterwards do we discover the face of the animal.” In an article subtitled “Levinas Faces the Animal,” Peter Steeves, with gentle irony, stages another face-to-face encounter between Levinas and Bobby, asking the philosopher: “What could Bobby be missing? Is his snout too pointy to constitute a face? Is his nose too wet? Do his ears hang low, do they wobble to and fro? How can this not be a face?” (2005:24).

A pro-animal zoösis faces the following dilemma: How to perform the animal *out of* facelessness (a political necessity that organizations like PETA have responded to with hundred of images of appealing—in both senses of the word—animal faces) without burdening it with an oppressive and necessarily anthropomorphic faciality. Or: How to face the animal Other without either defacing it (as when it starts singing “I wanna walk like you, talk like you”) or entirely effacing it. This was the challenge that Costello tried to meet by journeying from philosophy to poetry and from one kind of poetry to another. Albee’s *The Goat* stages another trajectory, related to Costello’s but also in some ways its inverse: from animal face to animal body, from the face-to-face encounter and exchange of looks to the violent reduction of the animal to the condition of pure physiology. However, unlike the carcasses in the work of Hirst and Bacon, which seek to animalize the human, the animal body at the end of Albee’s play seems to animalize the animal, a maneuver made necessary by its endless figural transformations, not least in this play itself.

The urgent dialectic of the animal face and the animal body gets something of a definitive statement in *The Goat* during a particularly bizarre section of the conversation between Martin and his outraged wife Stevie on the subject of the gender of the goat he is involved with. When Martin insists it is female, like Stevie herself, she is further outraged by this strange compliment, “So long as it’s female, eh? So long as it’s got a cunt it’s all right with

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10. An excellent discussion of these positions is provided by Donald Turner, who identifies Levinas’s idea of the face as being particularly helpful in formulating an alternative to a foundational assumption shared by Immanuel Kant and Jeremy Bentham: that for another being to qualify for direct ethical consideration, it is both necessary and sufficient to identify some essential aspect of similarity between the other being and the deliberating self (2003:19).

you!” Martin roars: “A SOUL!! Don’t you know the difference!?! Not a cunt, a soul!” When Stevie whimpers, “You can’t fuck a soul,” Martin roars triumphantly: “No, and it isn’t about fucking” (2003:86). Martin’s insistence that his bond with Sylvia is more than physical returns us to their recognition scene and to the animal face, to that exchange of looks across what Berger has so memorably called “the narrow abyss of non-comprehension” ([1980] 1991:5) between human and nonhuman animals.

The role of the animal—its face, body, being, meaning—in the constitution and defacing of performance genres is a vast project, to which these comments are the sketchiest preface. To finish the sketch, I turn now to two animal moments from another brilliant dramatic meditation on genre, Derek Walcott’s metatheatrical comedy *Pantomime* (1980). Set in the postcolonial Caribbean, *Pantomime* stages a day in the life of an English hotel owner, Harry Trewe, and his native servant, Jackson, as they struggle over the form and content of a “light entertainment” with which Harry hopes to attract visitors to his establishment. Harry has chosen *Robinson Crusoe* as the subject of the play within the play; needless to say, the two men bring vastly different perspectives to bear on this most Eurocentric of myths, as well as on the genres available to them, which Jackson refers to, at one point, as “codemy,” and “trad-egy,” (the literary tradition defaced, as it were). For the Englishman, the story is an occasion for romantic self-dramatization. A speech he has written goes as follows:

O silent sea, o wondrous sunset that I’ve gazed on ten thousand times, who will rescue me from this complete desolation?...Adam in paradise had his woman to share his loneliness, but I miss the voice of even one consoling creature, the touch of a hand, the look of kind eyes. [...] Even Job had his family. But I am alone, alone, I am all alone. (1980:142–45)

Jackson, the Caribbean servant, listens to the speech and comments: “Touching. Very sad. But something missing. [...] The goats. You leave out the goats” (145–46). He then proceeds to act out, in excruciating pantomimic detail, Crusoe’s encounter with the animal, which covers the same path as Albee’s goat, from the exchanged gaze to the violated body of the animal:

He not sitting on his shipwrecked arse bawling out [...] “O silent sea, O wondrous sunset,” and all that shit. No. He shipwrecked. He desperate, he hungry. He look up and he see this fucking goat with its forked fucking beard and square yellow eye just like the fucking devil, standing up there... (*Pantomimes the goat and Crusoe in turn*) smiling at him, and putting out its tongue and letting go one fucking *bleeeeeeh!* And Robbie ent thinking ’bout his wife and son and O silent sea O wondrous sunset; no, Robbie is the First True Creole, so he watching the goat with his eyes narrow, narrow, and he say: “*Blebbb*, eh? You muther-fucker, I go show you *blebbb* in your goat ass, and vam, vam, next thing is Robbie and the goat, *mano a mano*, man to man, man to goat, goat to man, wrestling in the sand, and the next thing we know we hearing one last faint, feeble, *bleeeeeeeehhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh*, and Robbie is next seen walking up the beach with a goat-skin hat and a goatskin umbrella, feeling like a million dollars [...] (1980:148)

If Albee puts the goat back in scapegoat, exposing the sacrificial logic of humanism, Walcott’s “First True Creole” puts the goat, one might say, back in goat curry, and celebrates the animal as provisioner, resource, and raw material—not sacrificed to fantasies of human exceptionalism and transcendence but engaged with in a struggle for survival, yielding understanding, respect, and gratitude.

Jackson’s unsentimental celebration of Crusoe’s mastery of his world through mastery of the animal body is contrasted with Trewe’s reaction to an animal killing by Jackson himself. Throughout the play, Jackson has complained about the hotel’s resident parrot, who, he says, taunts him with racist epithets. Harry merrily denies the allegation, saying that the parrot is not insulting Jackson but only repeating the name of former owner of the hotel, a German

named Heinigger! When Jackson finally wrings the parrot's neck and throws its body into the ocean, Harry's anger leads him to make the following exceedingly unusual insult:

You people create nothing. You imitate everything. It's all been done before, you see, Jackson. The parrot. Think that's something? It's from *The Seagull*. It's from *Miss Julie*. [He might have added, its from *The Wild Duck*, its from *Trifles*—birds drop like flies in modern drama]. You can't ever be original, boy. (1980:156)

But the curse of unoriginality is upon Harry Trewe more than it is on Jackson: he is the one who compulsively reproduces Crusoe as the figure of a lonely humanism, unable to see and hear the animality in which he participates. Jackson, by contrast, seems to want to listen to the animal, take its measure, and respond to it as a being rather than a symbol. He has, in these two moments, faced the animal. The blood on his hands, like the blood on Stevie's dress at the end of Albee's play, stains the pristine surface of a desubstantialized humanism and its enabling genres.

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