

# **The Silent Animals.**

## **Loving and Staging Animals in Jean Baudrillard's Thought**

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In this paper, George P. Pefanis discusses the presence of animals on stage from the perspective of French philosopher Jean Baudrillard. Baudrillard examines animality in relation to reason and the division between humans and non-humans. He presents four broad categories based on their relationship to humans. This article analyses the Baudrillardian concept of 'somatisation', which includes both the corporeality and physical vulnerability of animals, as well as certain psychic traits. The article explores the sentimentality projected onto animals and the implied superiority of humans in such sentimentality. Additionally, it enquires how the principles of 'love for animals' can be integrated into a performance featuring animals on stage from an ethical and ontological perspective. To support this discussion, the paper examines two examples of performances: 'Embracing Animal' by American artist Kathy High and 'The Other' by American artist Rachel Rosenthal.

Keywords: performance, Kathy High, Rachel Rosenthal, animality, somatisation, simulation, appropriation, territory, anthropomorphism

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## Loving and Staging Animals in Jean Baudrillard's Thought

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Jean Baudrillard's work has had a significant influence on contemporary performance theories<sup>1</sup>; however, his thought on animals have not been fully explored in philosophical interpretations of animality<sup>2</sup>, or theories of animal performance<sup>3</sup>. This paper presents an initial approach to his essay *Animals, Territory, and Metamorphoses* from his book *Simulacra and Simulation*, where he discusses vital issues of animality from a radical perspective. In this essay, Jean Baudrillard places reason at the core of his thinking, particularly, the principle of objectivity «of which science is never certain, which it secretly despairs»<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See indicatively P. Auslander, *Liveness. Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, Routledge, London-New York 1999, Id., *Theory for Performance Studies*, Routledge, London-New York 2008, R. G. Smith, *Lights, Camera, Action: Baudrillard and the Performance of Representations*, in "International Journal of Baudrillard Studies", 2/1, 2005, available at: <https://baudrillardstudies.ubishops.ca/lights-camera-action-baudrillard-and-the-performance-of-representations>.

<sup>2</sup> It makes one wonder why Elisabeth de Fontenay in her otherwise very comprehensive book *Le silence des Bêtes. La philosophie à l'épreuve de l'animalité*, Fayard, Paris 1998, does not even refer to Baudrillard. The same also happens with relevant books such as: C. Wolfe (ed.), *Zoontologies. The Question of the Animal*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis-London: University 2003, M. Calarco and P. Atterton (eds), *Animal Philosophy. Essential Readings in Continental Thought*, Continuum, London-New York 2004, E. Aaltola, *Animal Suffering: Philosophy and Culture*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire 2012, E. Aaltola and J. Hadley (eds), *Animal Ethics and Philosophy. Questioning the Orthodoxy*, Rowman & Littlefield International, London-Lanham, Maryland 2015, and P. Cavalieri (ed.), *Philosophy and the Politics of Animal Liberation*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire 2016. Finally, it is remarkable that "International Journal of Baudrillard Studies" does not feature in any of its issues any paper on the "zoological" thought of the philosopher.

<sup>3</sup> For further developments in this area and for the relevant bibliography see G. P. Pefanis, *Theatre Bestiaria. Theatrical and philosophical stages of animality*, Papazisis Publications, Athens 2018 – translated from the Greek edition).

<sup>4</sup> J. Baudrillard, *Les Bêtes. Territoires et métamorphoses*, in *Simulacres et Simulation*, Galilée, Paris 1981, pp. 187-204, at p. 187, pp. 197-213, at p. 197) and S. Faria Glaser, *The Animals: Territory and Metamorphoses*, in J. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, transl. by S. Faria Glaser, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 1995, pp. 84-92, at p. 84.

In pre-modern societies, the principle of objectivity was not yet established, and instead, the principle of the theological cause was used to define evil as the reason for deviation and destruction, as exemplified by the Inquisition. However, in modern and postmodern societies, science has become the determining factor in identifying causes and effects, normalities and diversions from them, and structural factors and their consequences. Scientific reasoning sets the rules and laws, order and norm, structure and system, and it should incorporate anything that appears to deny it as radical strangeness or deviate from it to maintain its power and status. Baudrillard's paradigm is animals and their extradited animality, which he examines in scientific experimentation. The term "animality" is used to reflect characteristics of animal behaviour that can be identified to humans and animals alike. As long as animality brings to the forefront savagery that lies beyond any cultural reference and rational coherence, as radical otherness, namely heterogeneity, science should demonstrate that the savage, the strange, and the alien, elements that non-human animals bring to human thought, can still be explained within the scientific principle of objectivity using physiological mechanisms, cerebral connections and so forth. Classical science, since Descartes, has introduced a single world that comprises all living species hierarchically ordered from the most elementary forms up to the higher organisms, with humans at the top of the hierarchy, the only being who could constitute a scientific, *stricto sensu*, reason. The interweaving of science with the sovereign position of humans in the ontological hierarchy aligns with the need for science to maintain a relevant position between cognitive fields and social practices.

Strong scientific reasoning and sovereign human species thus form a solid conceptual pair, not to be questioned except in liminal cases. One such case is animality, and Baudrillard focuses on the way it is handled by scientific research in experimentation. In this context, animal experiments are essentially viewed as experiments of rational causality on animality; attempts to negate animality as total strangeness towards reason. As was once the case with unknown diseases or madness, animality is, to science, nothing but a provisional crack in the transparency of causality. This crack should be negated each time in a performative way, as repetitive performance validates the dominance of scientific reason over animality, or gradually and cumulatively strips animality off from anything that seems inexplicable or uncertain, dangerous, savage, or

strange, in short: animalistic. The non-human animal that loses its animality in such a way becomes simply a tool, a thing, a Cartesian live machine at the service of causal rationality. This complete ongoing subjugation of non-human animals also depicts, according to Baudrillard, the subjugation of human animals: «All the aspects of the modern treatment of animals retrace the vicissitudes of the manipulation of humans, from experimentation to industrial pressure in breeding»<sup>5</sup>.

Within the contemporary political economy, the analogy between human and non-human animals follows a more functional reason: rationality corresponds to the vicissitudes of profitability and syllogisms correspond to assembly-line factories. Animal-worker and human-worker are commensurate in the context set by the surplus value and the surplus production: animal-workers sicken due to surplus value, while human-workers sicken due to industrial concentration and the scientific organisation of work. Capitalist “breeders” have invented some concepts and procedures for both types of workers, such as the quality of work, task enrichment, and the enlargement of living and production space, and have discovered the ‘human’ sciences and the ‘psycho-sociological’ dimension of the factory. The only resonant difference lies in the fact that animal-workers reach the peak of their productivity through their death, offering their body as food or as raw material for experimentation.

In Baudrillard’s parallel between the human-worker and the subjugated animal, the prisoner is also reasonably introduced, especially considering the psyche of all three subjects. The animal, the worker, and the prisoner all need some degree of freedom, to endure their labour or detention, of sexuality and of “normality”, to continue living in the breeding, industrial or judicial/corrective system to which they belong. The psyche of both human and non-human animals signified the starting point for the discovery of psychology, and Baudrillard will later add the insane, (thus referring to Foucault’s positions on animality, that overlap with those of madness, threatening humanity)<sup>6</sup>, the dead, the children and the savage; four categories that converge on the common ground of heterogeneity and deviation from the empire of meaning.

What is essential is that nothing escapes the empire of meaning, the sharing of meaning. Certainly, behind all that, nothing speaks to us, neither the mad, nor the dead, nor children, nor savages, and fundamentally,

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<sup>5</sup> J. Baudrillard, *Simulacres et Simulation*, cit., p. 188 (*Simulacra and Simulation*, cit., p. 84).

<sup>6</sup> M. Foucault, *History of madness in the classical era*, Kalendis Publications, Athens 2007, p. 209.

we know nothing of them, but what is essential is that Reason save face, and that everything escapes silence<sup>7</sup>.

According to Baudrillard, non-human animals were only demoted to the status of inhumanity as reason and humanism progressed. They began to lose their “non-human” status when human animals placed themselves at the centre of the world and the top of its ontological scale; then they simply become “animals”. Sovereign reason, originating from both Christianity (which holds that humans are radically different from all other animals) and rational humanism, has established the belief that while other animals pass their lives unaware – being born, seeking mates, foraging for food, and dying, human animals are conscious and defined by their consciousness, selfhood, and free will and, therefore, rise above all other creatures<sup>8</sup>.

Baudrillard points out that in primitive societies, animals held a more sacred, almost divine character than humans. For this reason, the animal order was the reference order for a long time, and only animals were worthy of being sacrificed, as quasi-Gods, while men were defined only through their affiliation to the animals. Ultimately, men and animals were part of a cycle that excluded any differentiation into species and any oppositional distinction inherited from Claude Lévi-Strauss’ structuralism onwards<sup>9</sup>. Differentiations relegate animals into the non-human, while the circle represents a symbolic dimension in which oppositional distinction are dissolved in a reversible sequence. From this perspective, man *is* animal, and, in this symbolic dimension, Deleuze’s and Guattari’s thought on becoming-animal (*devenir-animal*), could be better understood. Humans are fascinated by the multitudes that surround them (the fascination for the outside), as well as by the diversifications that occur within them (the fascination «related to a multiplicity dwelling already within us»). It is in that sense that humans *are also* animals.<sup>10</sup>

Baudrillard presents four broad categories of animals, according to their relationship to humans: a. labour animals (*bêtes de somme*), b. summoned animals (*bêtes de*

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<sup>7</sup> J. Baudrillard, *Simulacres et Simulation*, cit., p. 198 (*Simulacra and Simulation*, cit., p. 89).

<sup>8</sup> J. Gray, *Straw Dogs. Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals*, Granta Publications, London 2002, p. 38, (Greek transl. *Straw Dogs. Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals*, Octo Publications, Athens 2012, p. 60).

<sup>9</sup> J. Baudrillard, *Simulacres et Simulation*, cit., pp. 193-194 (*Simulacra and Simulation*, cit., p. 87).

<sup>10</sup> G. Deleuze-F. Guattari, *Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2. Mille plateaux*, Minuit, Paris 1980, p. 293 (Greek transl. *Capitalism and schizophrenia 2. A thousand plateaus*, Plethron Publications, Athens 2017, p. 295).

sommation) «that are summoned to respond to the evolution of science», c. consumption animals (*bêtes de consommation*) that «end up as industrial meat», and d. somatisation animals (*bêtes de somatisation*). The latter is of particular interest to the topic at hand. The meaning of somatisation in the context of *Les Bêtes. Territoires et métamorphoses* is not univocal. At times, all cramped up in one footnote, it denotes the corporeality and the vulnerability of animals<sup>11</sup>, – characteristics related to Bentham’s renowned highlight on pain as the common ground of men and animals<sup>12</sup>, and, at other times, it refers to the psychological projections on them: «Beasts of somatisation, they are now made to speak the “psy” language, to answer for their psychic life and the misdeeds of their unconscious»<sup>13</sup>. The “psy language” is the language of psychology, namely human reason that aims to analyse and describe human soul, introducing explanatory laws of understanding and directives on behaviour.

Somatisation in animals refers both to the vulnerability of their bodies and the finitude of their lives – which places animals in the same category as human animals; being mortal and living – the possibility of demonstrating the same psychological substrate, the same psychic mechanisms as humans. In the first case, somatisation allows us to feel the deep-rooted connection between humans and animals, to experience the apportionment and law of mortality that, as Derrida notes, belongs to the very finitude of life of living beings, to experience com-*passion*, the anguish of this vulnerability, and the vulnerability of this anguish<sup>14</sup>. In the second case, somatisation refers to the big tradition of anthropomorphism, attributing human traits, mainly of the person and of speech, to non-human animals<sup>15</sup>. Baudrillard focuses on psychic attributes, but it is evident that these relate to moral positions and social behaviours. An animal, to which human psychic traits are attributed, is somewhat included in this zone of anthropomorphic animality, which, together with the corresponding zone of animal

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<sup>11</sup> «Animals somatize! Extraordinary discovery! Cancers, gastric ulcers, myocardial infarction in mice, pigs, chickens!», J. Baudrillard, *Simulacres et Simulation*, cit., p. 190 (*Simulacra and Simulation*, cit., p. 85).

<sup>12</sup> J. Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1789, pp. 310-311, note. 1: «What else is it that should trace the insuperable line? [...] The question is not “Can they reason?” nor, “Can they talk?” but, “Can they suffer?” ».

<sup>13</sup> See J. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, cit., p. 86.

<sup>14</sup> J. Derrida, *L’animal que donc je suis*, Galilée, Paris 2006, p. 49.

<sup>15</sup> For a Shakespearean scope of application of this sense see B. Boehrer, *Shakespeare among the Animals: Nature and Society in the Drama of Early Modern England*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2002, p. 27 ff.

humanity, forms an intermediate field of doubt, ambiguity, confusion, and uncertainty between the human and animal world<sup>16</sup>. As is known, both zones were particularly active on popular European stages during the seventeenth and eighteenth century, featuring shows and entertainment spectacles of dancing bears, drumming rabbits, and card-playing dogs and monkeys in human attire<sup>17</sup>. Equally popular were the performances that presented giants and dwarves, bearded ladies, or albinos.

However, anthropomorphic animality, – and here is where the concept is more closely related to Baudrillard’s somatisation in animals – reveals the sense of superiority that humans have over animals and the power they exert over them, especially through their oppressive inclusion in entertainment spectacles, performative displays, and even conventional theatre shows, as it happens ad nauseam in nineteenth-century dog dramas and the popular hippodramas<sup>18</sup>. Therefore, the animal somatises the human psyche with its “slips of the unconscious” and, through this initial somatisation, the curtain to anthropomorphic animality is lifted, including all the ways in which humans appropriate animality on stage.

An animal that behaves like a human, approaches and at the same time distances itself from the human. This “as if they were human” behaviour always functions ambivalently as a connection and separation, as appropriation and estrangement, as simulation and differentiation – or more precisely, differentiation through simulation: “see how much it looks like me”, hence “see our radical difference”. In this process, the first stage of connection, appropriation, and simulation, is nothing but a preparation and introduction to the second stage of separation, estrangement, and differentiation. This introduction, which culminates in the animal’s somatisation, is the imposition of human power over it, and the performative repetition of human superiority.

Anthropomorphic animality and somatisation in animals are two complementary stages of the same theatre of arrogant anthropocentrism, which places man at the ontological, evaluative, ethical, and cognitive centre of the world<sup>19</sup>. Jean Baudrillard

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<sup>16</sup> G. P. Pefanis, *Theatre Bestiaria*, cit., p. 119.

<sup>17</sup> E. Baratay and E. Hardouin-Fugier, *Zoo. A History of Zoological Gardens in the West*, Reaktion, London 2002, p. 60.

<sup>18</sup> Regarding the dog drama see M. Dobson, *A Dog at all Things. The Transformation of the Onstage Canine 1550-1850*, in “Performance Research”, 5/2, 2000, pp. 116-124 and regarding the hippodramas G. P. Pefanis, *Theatre Bestiaria*, cit., pp. 166-172 with the relevant bibliography.

<sup>19</sup> D. Roden, *Posthuman Life Philosophy at the Edge of the Human*, Routledge, New York 2015, pp. 10-13.

uses the example of *King Kong*, the 1933 film by Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, to illustrate this point. The film is notable for its portrayal of a supernatural gorilla on an island in the Pacific, where is captured by a film crew and transported to New York to be exhibited as the *Eighth Miracle of Humanity*. Whether as a “spectacular monstrosity”, or spectacularisation of the monstrous, as an exoticism of fear, or a music-hall star, King Kong somatises the inversion of the traditional cultural scenario: the hero, an emblem of humanity representing the good and the creative power, annihilates the dragon, a mythical emblem of animality, and from its spilled blood plants, men, and culture are born. However, in *King Kong*, the dragon of industrial and post-industrial imagination, the inversion occurs when he acquires human qualities, while humans can only display beastliness and inhumanity. The film’s charm is right here: «all humanity has gone over to the side of captive bestiality», towards the mutual seduction of animal and woman. Baudrillard argues that «Kong dies for having renewed, through seduction, this possibility of the metamorphosis of one reign into another, this incestuous promiscuity between beasts and men»<sup>20</sup>.

A contemporary reading of Baudrillard’s text could focus on the influence of this cinematic example, which was followed by several film versions. Alternatively, it could delve into the core of the climactic scene, where erotic connotations alternate with ironic insinuations about the Empire State Building (which had been completed in 1931, only two years before the film was shot): the building, a symbol of the *Imperial* State, the grandiose New York that had just emerged from a major economic crisis, the structure of Western tech-science, and the pride of the *empire* of human reason. King Kong’s animal power intrudes into this world and, after threatening the empire’s cultural protocol, it eventually expires. It is worth noting, the French philosopher observation about the sentimentality that humans project and attribute to animals:

In particular, our sentimentality toward animals is a sure sign of the disdain in which we hold them. It is proportional to this disdain. It is in proportion to being relegated to irresponsibility, to the inhuman, that the animal becomes worthy of the human ritual of affection and protection, just as the child does in direct proportion to being relegated to a status of innocence and childishness. Sentimentality is nothing but the infinitely degraded form of bestiality<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> J. Baudrillard, *Simulacres et Simulation*, cit., pp. 196-197 (*Simulacra and Simulation*, cit., p. 88).

<sup>21</sup> J. Baudrillard, *Simulacres et Simulation*, cit., pp. 196-197 (*Simulacra and Simulation*, cit., p. 87).



On one hand, projecting sentimentality towards animals is maybe the subtlest way to display the “generous”, good, and sensitive humanity towards the always “lovable animal”, yet it remains essentially an “animal”. On the other hand, attributing sentimentality to animals is a disguised submission of the non-human to the human animal. Human emotion functions as a kind of psychic mirror where the human subject reflects itself – almost like a primordial bipolar distinction according to which “man” reflects in “woman”<sup>22</sup>, the adult in the child, “normal” in “ab-normal”, and sane in ‘mad’. The image of the sentimental animal is an inferior version of the human sentimental world, just as the image of a woman is shaped to fall under the power of the phallic function<sup>23</sup>. If women are degraded to the lowest level of “other”<sup>24</sup>, then non-human animals, who are further degraded, fall into the “other” of the “other”.

Baudrillard’s thought leads us to a dual movement regarding the sentimentality of *animals and towards animals*, or more accurately, in a unified movement of dual direction: the quasi-sentimentality of non-human animals is a reflection of human animals upon them, a reflection that excludes them through inclusion, and the human sentimentality towards them are their disdainful gaze towards inferior beings standing before them. It is a manifestation of power as pity, compassion, and, at best, as a temporary and opportunistic sentiment of co-belonging to the order of living beings. This sentiment at times has “humanistic” or religious origins and at other times ecological origins. Both these movements meet in a suspicious anthropocentric attitude commonly called a “love for animals”, which presupposes, but also entails the inferiority of non-human to human animals. This stance is the common ground where anthropomorphic animality, somatisation attributed to animals, and sentimentality, which Baudrillard refers to as “the infinitely degraded form of bestiality”, intersect.

“Love for animals” encapsulates the best that humans have to offer to animals, whether in their behaviour or in the feelings they exhibit towards them. Animal welfare agencies, animal protection laws, animal love events, and animal lovers themselves are the best evidence of this “good self” that is expressed through love for animals. Nevertheless, this term is a starting point to demonstrate how complicated ontological

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<sup>22</sup> L. Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n’en est pas un*, Minuit, Paris 1977, p. 127.

<sup>23</sup> P. Phelan, *Unmarked. The Politics of Performance*, Routledge, London-New York 1993, p. 17.

<sup>24</sup> E. Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis*, Routledge, London-New York 1997, p. vii.

and moral questions are hidden behind the distinction between human and non-human animals<sup>25</sup>. Love for animals is this psychic disposition and attitude to life that is always expressed by the dominant human animals towards the non-human animals, silently affirming this dominance. I can be an animal lover, but my cat cannot be a humanitarian. She is bound to accept my love for animals, while I can attribute or impose anthropomorphic behaviours on her. This asymmetrical relationship is human-centric, hierarchical in other words, and covers a solid form of power enforced by humans to non-human animals under the guise of compassion, playfulness, affection, companionship, and “friendship”. Pets offer an example. We call them “companion pets”, but this is a euphemistic mellifluous epithet –if not a contemptuous gesture, as Baudrillard would put it. Firstly, because it is not *us* who keep them company, but *they* who keep us company whenever we need it, not whenever they do. Secondly, because even when we call them “family members”, we really consider them mentally disabled beings, trapped in an eternal childhood<sup>26</sup>.

From this perspective, the position of love for animals is not far removed from the anthropological machine, as described by Giorgio Agamben<sup>27</sup>. «Because there is not an exclusive trait (such as having language or a soul) that would definitively sanction the demarcation between the *humanitas* and *animalitas* of the human», the machine produces the “Human” by creating space for an articulation of the human element in relation to animal element<sup>28</sup>. The Italian philosopher distinguishes the anthropological machine into an early machine, which operates through inclusion, and a modern machine, which operates through exclusion. Love for animals requires a subject (a man) and imposes an object (an animal): it is the relationship that establishes itself through a specific production of the sense of “man”, as the subject capable of compassion or sympathy for an object, the animal, which is “worthy”, receptive to such compassion or sympathy, in order to become the recipient of such emotions and to reflect their subject. However, as I have previously demonstrated, «the two machines complement each other and can function thanks to this area of indeterminacy at their centre, where the

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<sup>25</sup> M. Calarco, *Zoographies: The Question of the Animals from Heidegger to Derrida*, Columbia University Press, New York 2008, p. 143.

<sup>26</sup> T. Ingold, *The perception of the environment. Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*, Alexandria Publications, Athens 2016 – Greek edition, p. 79.

<sup>27</sup> G. Agamben, *The Open. Man and Animal*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2004.

<sup>28</sup> C. Stefanoni, *On the Origins of the Anthropological Machine: Sacrificial Dispositif and Equality*, in “Animal Studies Journal”, 9/2, 2020, pp. 284–310, p. 285. doi:10.14453/asj/v9.i2.12.

articulation of the animalistic with the human should take place»<sup>29</sup>. This zone of indeterminacy, in which the human is already presupposed every time and love for animals is born, implies a state of exception, where «the outside [the animal] is nothing but the exclusion of an inside [the human] and the inside is in turn only the inclusion of an outside»<sup>30</sup>.

In the attitude of love for animals described by Baudrillard, with the rituals of affection and protection, as well as in the sentimentality observed towards animals and from animals, we can identify the function of the anthropological machine either in the process of animalising the human or humanising the animal. However, both processes lead to what Agamben calls “bare life”, a life at the extreme, directly exposed, at any moment, and usually without conditions to enslavement, raw violence, or death. Agamben writes explicitly: «Bare life is a product of the machine and not something that preexists it»<sup>31</sup>. In other words, the “animal”, the one in need of our love for animals, our affection and protection, the animal as a reflective surface of human superiority, is a product of the anthropological machine, and not something that precedes it.

Therefore, the animal-friendly stance is a derivative of an underlying attitude of subconscious contempt, a sense of superiority, and a mild imposition of authority. When this attitude turns into a spectacle in theatre and performance, it becomes captivatingly immediate, given the presentness, the hereness, and the live interaction of the participants in the show. The question raised here concerns the manifestation of this mild imposition of authority over non-human animals on theatrical stages. There is no debate about those performances where animals are subjected to psychological pressure, are abused, tortured, or killed<sup>32</sup>. The boundary between artistic research and ethics cannot be discussed, given that no artistic aim can override the ethical dimension of its events, not even when the use and abuse of the renowned “animal’s elusiveness on stage” is among those actions. This convenient, yet misleading concept is supposed to

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<sup>29</sup> G. P. Pefanis, *Theatre Bestiaria*, cit., p. 303.

<sup>30</sup> G. Agamben, *The Open*, cit., p. 37.

<sup>31</sup> Id., *State of Exception*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2005, pp. 87-88.

<sup>32</sup> Regarding examples from this category of shows see G. P. Pefanis, *Theatre Bestiaria*, cit., pp. 247-295.

describe the stage presence of animals, according to Fischer-Lichte, while it actually conceals the serious ethical issues raised by this very presence<sup>33</sup>.

On the contrary, Baudrillard's thought on somatisation and sentimentality from and towards animals can be interestingly linked to those performances that aim to expand human and non-human animals' relationships, by developing empathetic bonds between them, (such as the equestrian performances by Théâtre Zingaro in France<sup>34</sup> or by Sami Sälpäkivi in Finland<sup>35</sup>). Moreover, Baudrillard's thought can also be associated with performances that seek to improve the quality of animals' lives. In the following sections, I will analyse two examples.

The first example under consideration is *Embracing Animal* by American artist Kathy High, a series of performances/exhibitions between 2004 and 2006, one of which was hosted at the Museum of Modern Art in Massachusetts<sup>36</sup>. The exhibit showcased three transgenic mice of type HLAB27, whose ancestors had been injected with human DNA. They were safely placed in a specially designed housing unit, located within a lab-construction featuring glass tubes projecting images of various human and non-human transformative procedures. The mice were on display without being subject to any interaction or intervention, other than the designated daily caretaker.

The exhibition can be interpreted as an example of the somatisation of the human in the animalistic. The animal body does not simply represent or metaphorically somatise; it embodies literally the human in the animalistic. This embodiment, "in extremis" definition, presents a humanisation of the animal equivalent to the one produced by

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<sup>33</sup> E. Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance. A New Aesthetics*, Patakis Publications, Athens 2012, pp. 215-216, Id., *The Transformative Power of Performance. A New Aesthetics*, Routledge: London-New York 2008, pp. 105-106. Regarding a review on that sense see G. P. Pefanis, *Theatre Bestiaria*, cit., pp. 384-392, and Id., *Is the "Animal-Event" Possible? Animal Precariousness and Moral Indeterminacy in Performance*, in "New Theatre Quarterly (NTQ)", 34/2, 2018, pp. 176-185.

<sup>34</sup> See D. Williams, *The Right Horse, the Animal Eye. Bartabas and Théâtre Zingaro*, in "Performance Research", 5/2, 2000, pp. 29-40, mainly pp. 36-38 and L. Orozco, *Theatre and Animals*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire 2013, pp. 32-34.

<sup>35</sup> L. Cull, *From Homo Performans to Interspecies Collaboration Expanding the Concept of Performance to Include Animals*, in L. Orozco and J. Parker-Starbuck (eds), *Performing Animality. Animals in Performance Practices*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire 2015, pp. 19-36, at pp. 30 ff.

<sup>36</sup> Regarding the project of *Embracing Animal* and about Kathy High see <https://kathyhigh.com/projects.html> and <https://embracinganimal.com>, (last access on 18-10-2019), as well as the article by I. Aristarkhova, *Hosting the animal: the art of Kathy High*, in "Journal of Aesthetics & Culture", 2/1, 2010, on <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.3402/jac.v2i0.5888?scroll=top&needAccess=true>. Also see H. Hughes, *It's Hard to Spot the Queerness in this Image*, in L. Orozco and J. Parker-Starbuck (eds), *Performing Animality*, cit., pp. 204-217, at pp. 207 ff., and G. P. Pefanis, *Theatre Bestiaria*, cit., pp. 211-213.

Agamben's primal anthropological machine, which engulfs an external element (the human genome) in the internal element (the body of the mouse). The engulfment of the external occurred for research purposes and resulted in creating a new category of laboratory animals<sup>37</sup>. In *Embracing Animal*, the literal crossbreeding of humans and animals in their genetic code prevents the viewer from interpreting the animals' presence symbolically, forcing them to consider pragmatically, since each mouse has a name and a short individual story biologically linked to the story of certain humans, similar to what takes place in contemporary performances<sup>38</sup>. This particular somatisation of animals involves a double crossing: in the first phase, through initial genetic introjection, the human invades the animalistic, which, in the second phase, is assimilated, through the performance, into the human. In this somatisation, it is difficult to discern the boundaries between the human and the animalistic: is this a performance of the human imprint on the animal body or one of the animal substratum on human characteristics? Furthermore, do the mice's "faces", with their inflated features, deformed appearance, and 'humanised' figure, evoke a teratogenesis, or hybridisation, that allows for some empathetic identification with them?

If we take into account the fact that High purchased the mice from the lab intending to extend their lives and provide them with appropriate care, including veterinary and pharmaceutical attention, and that she suffers from autoimmune diseases, including arthritis and Crohn's disease, as well as a chronic phobia of mice, we would tend towards the second option: Baudrillardian sentimentality towards animals. It should also be noted that during the performance, the conditions for both the exhibition and housing of the mice, as well as for their observation by the audience, were very good. *Embracing Animal* has clear goals and positive ethical motivations that exceed the limits of an artistic event and relate to broader bioethical issues. Nevertheless, the intended coexistence takes place in an environment completely controlled by humans, and the animals remain subjugated, as objects of this control. Certainly, the controlled environment forms a field where humans observe animals that look back at them in

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<sup>37</sup> This strategy of laboratory production of bigenic mice and of their sale as lab animals of specialised scientific research takes place until today.

<sup>38</sup> U. Chaudhuri, *Introduction: Animal Acts for Changing Times, 2.0: A Field Guide to Interspecies Performance*, in U. Chaudhuri and H. Hughes (eds), *Animal Acts. Performing Species Today*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 2014, pp. 1-12, at p. 5.

turn<sup>39</sup> and potentially extending the gaze of both, while clearly extending the life of the mice. If we were to consider the aftermath of all these absurd experiments that cause severe mental disorders, permanent physical disabilities, and lethal diseases in animals, *Embracing Animal* could be seen as an opportunity for an apology for human cruelty, a critical performance for reckless experimentation. This is definitely a parameter that must be taken seriously into consideration; however, it does not negate the position of power that humans exhibit towards animals when they transfer them to museums, exhibitions, or artistic installations, when they feel pity and compassion for them, even when these emotions conceal guilt, which may need to be appeased.

The second example examines the performance piece, *The Others*, by American artist Rachel Rosenthal<sup>40</sup>. Rosenthal's multifaceted and extensive body of work perceives a deep correlation between phallogocentric rationalism, which upholds human superiority over nature, and speciesism, which maintains human sovereignty over the non-human world<sup>41</sup>. The performance, which was presented at the Japan American Theatre in Los Angeles on 18 December 1984 (later repeated at the University of North Carolina in Raleigh), clearly echoes the positions taken by Peter Singer in his book *Animal Liberation*, as well as those of Tom Regan in *The Case of Animal Rights*<sup>42</sup>. *The Others* is a manifesto performance for animal rights and against philosophical speciesism, which draws its origin from Descartes.

In Rosenthal's thought, here aligning with Baudrillard's, the contempt humans have towards other animal species and the display of their dominance over them when they are placed on stage cannot be ignored. The use of animals in an artistic context often reveals the human desire for control (even in an artistic manner), the ability to cause both physical and psychological harm, and even to kill non-human animals. However, Rosenthal tries to create an exception in *The Others*: she brings on stage forty-two

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<sup>39</sup> L. Orozco, *Theatre and Animals*, cit., p. 30.

<sup>40</sup> Regarding Rosenthal's work see H. P. Steeves, *Rachel Rosenthal Is an Animal*, in "Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature", 39/4, 2006, pp. 1-26. About the performance *The Others* also see G. P. Pefanis, *Theatre Bestiaria*, cit., pp. 285-295.

<sup>41</sup> C. Rohman, *Effacing the Human. Rachel Rosenthal, Rats and Shared Creative Agency*, in L. Orozco and J. Parker-Starbuck (eds), *Performing Animality*, cit., pp. 168-186, at p. 168.

<sup>42</sup> P. Singer, *Animal Liberation* (1975), Harper Collins, New York, 2005, and T. Regan, *The Case of Animal Rights*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1983. The text of the performance *The Others* was initially published in "Performance Research", 5/2, 2000, pp. 92-107, and more recently in R. Rosenthal, *The Others*, in U. Chaudhuri and H. Hughes (eds), *Animal Acts*, cit., pp. 217-238. In many passages of this text there are clear resonances of the two philosophers, for example pp. 227-228, 229-232.

abused animals of thirty-five different species<sup>43</sup>, (Rosenthal had her own dog and cat with her as well)<sup>44</sup>, accompanied by a representative of the local animal shelter. All of them had suffered from mistreatment and their sad life stories were featured in the show's programme. At the end of the performance, the animals were presented to the audience for adoption. In the end, all dogs and cats were adopted<sup>45</sup>.

The narrative framework of *The Other* is based on the fairy-tale *The Little House in the Woods* by the Brothers Grimm<sup>46</sup>. A projector displays the Cartesian positions on animal-machines that lack any emotion, and in response, another projection of a text by Milan Kundera challenges the divine assurance of human sovereignty over all other creatures<sup>47</sup>. The performance explores various facets of speciesism, from the use of animal metaphors in sexual language<sup>48</sup> to the abhorrent killing of animals for food or in routine experimentation of science labs. The show often feels like a performance lecture and pointedly comments on the nonsensical speculation of unethical capitalism<sup>49</sup>. «What are the animals?» is answered with «They are Other, and we are stronger, and we want to exploit their bodies and their minds»<sup>50</sup>.

Rosenthal would give the same answer to the question about women, children, black people, and the mentally ill, as for anyone who deviates from the normality of modern “democracies”. Despite the accusatory tone of her work, she turns to a mysterious concept of animals, for a deeper, empathetic understanding of their place on earth<sup>51</sup>. The moments we can share with animals are endlessly exciting and «they can open our minds» to «an avenue of knowledge and experience that could teach us so much». That is why she outright rejects their exploitation: «To use and exploit them, whether for art or any other reason, is a crime»<sup>52</sup>. For this reason, she also allows the animals to move completely freely on the stage of *The Others*, even to leave, if they want to.

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<sup>43</sup> R. Rosenthal, *Animals Love Theatre*, in “The Drama Review”, 51/1, 2007, pp. 5-7, at p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> Ivi, p. 6.

<sup>45</sup> R. Rosenthal, *The Others*, cit., p. 238.

<sup>46</sup> J. L. K. Grimm-W. K. Grimm, *The little house in the forest*, in *The tales of Brothers Grimm*, vol. C, Agra Publications, Athens 1995, pp. 152-159.

<sup>47</sup> R. Rosenthal, *The Others*, cit., p. 222.

<sup>48</sup> Ivi, pp. 222-223.

<sup>49</sup> Ivi, pp. 225-226.

<sup>50</sup> Ivi, p. 236.

<sup>51</sup> M. Virginia B. Bettendorf, *Rachel Rosenthal: Performance Artist in Search of Transformation*, in “Woman's Art Journal”, 8/2, 1987-1988, pp. 33-38, at p. 38.

<sup>52</sup> R. Rosenthal, *Animals Love Theatre*, cit., p. 7.

Just like High's performance, Rosenthal's performance was also designed and prepared for the sake of animals, albeit without their consent. The result, of course, was that many of them found new companionship, which somewhat offsets the anthropocentric core of the project. Rosenthal avoids the somatisation of animals, but cannot avoid the sentimentality one expresses towards them. As Agamben's study of the anthropological machine indicates, the relationships between humans and other animals may depend more on humans themselves and less on the animals, as human mediation dominates this field in the form of politics, ethics, law, philosophy, and art, so that any thought or renegotiation of is merely a choice of humans<sup>53</sup>. Even though new companionship explored in *The Others* is a disposition of denial of the anthropological machine and a redefinition of the terms of interaction with animals, and even though Rosenthal, like Donna Haraway whom she is influenced by<sup>54</sup>, wishes to think of living beings not on the basis of simulations and differences, but in the dynamic of fluid combinations and affinities, the anthropocentric position remains strong.

Both performances examined here are indicative examples of a humane approach towards non-human animals, as both artists sought to extend and ameliorate the lives of the animals involved, and they made a conscious effort to explore the ontological intermediate zone that connects and distinguishes them from humans. Between these two antithetical tendencies, connection on one hand and distinction on the other, Baudrillard would turn towards the latter, while the two artists turn towards the former. While the distinction still exists for High and Rosenthal, they value more the exploration of the undercurrent relationships that unify rather than divide living beings. Baudrillard's position or strategy<sup>55</sup>, on the contrary, would challenge the purity of love for animals even in these performances, seeking traces of an inner contempt and feeling of sovereignty over non-human animals behind the artists' declared intentions. According to Baudrillard, performers treat animals "humanly" on stage because essentially they consider them almost worthless. The idea that animals on stage are only

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<sup>53</sup> See A. Read, *Theatre, Intimacy and Engagement. The Last Human Venue*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire 2009, p. 90.

<sup>54</sup> See the relevant observation by L. Orozco, *Theatre and Animals*, cit., pp. 52-53. One can compare the books by D. Haraway, *Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*, Prickly Paradigm, Chicago 2003 and *Modest\_Witness@Second\_Millennium.FemaleMan©\_Meets\_OncoMouse™*, Routledge, New York 1997.

<sup>55</sup> In an interview Baudrillard had stated: «I don't have any doctrines to defend. I have one strategy, that's all». See M. Gane (ed.), *Baudrillard Live. Selected Interviews*, Routledge, London-New York 2003, p. 82. 318



worthy of our protection, affection, and social charity simply because they are not deserving of human justice, as we have reduced them to a racially inferior world, does not do justice to the intentions of these artists or the positive result of their work (and every similar work) for the animals.

Taking a step further, we could also examine this position through the lens of *Simulacres et simulation* and consider the on-stage manifestation of love for animals as a simulation of love for animals itself; as a second scene of love for animals that is inscribed in the original frame-scene and undermines it. How does this happen? It would suffice to distinguish simulation from dissimulation: «To dissimulate», Baudrillard points out from the beginning, «is to pretend not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have what one doesn't have. One implies a presence, the other an absence»<sup>56</sup>. Therefore, the simulation of a “love for animals” performance, such as *Embracing Animal* or *The Others*, pretends to possess the core of love for animals, even though it does not, and in doing so, distorts the concept of love for animals, ascribing it to the level of a stage exhibition, a performance. According to Baudrillard, simulation does not refer to reality (in this instance: the reality of love for animals) nor does it pretend to imitate it, but rather it constructs this reality<sup>57</sup>. Unlike dissimulation and pretense, which leave the principle of reality intact, simulation undermines it, inasmuch as it «threatens the difference between the “true” and the “false”, the “real” and the “imaginary”»,<sup>58</sup> and constructs a simulated reality. From this clearly Baudrillardian perspective, the stage-frame of works like *Embracing Animal* or *The Others* offers an excellent opportunity or alibi to present the second scene of simulated love for animals as a performance of that love for animals. In this case, the content or the technique of the performance is secondary to the performance itself, as it serves to affirm and validate the love for animals. The notion of the stage is not coincidental here: Baudrillard observes the world as a theatrical presentation, «he sees a world so intensely theatrical that theatre has passed over into itself» and we can no longer distinguish theatre from reality<sup>59</sup>. However, unlike the four successive phases of the image outlined by Baudrillard, High and Rosenthal's work only relates to the first phase – the

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<sup>56</sup> J. Baudrillard, *Simulacres et simulation*, cit., p. 12 (*Simulacra and Simulation*, cit., p. 3).

<sup>57</sup> P. Auslander, *Theory for Performance Studies*, cit., p. 58.

<sup>58</sup> J. Baudrillard, *Simulacres et simulation*, cit., p. 12 (*Simulacra and Simulation*, cit., p. 3).

<sup>59</sup> E. Fuchs, *The Death of Character*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1996, p. 151.

presentation of the intense reality of the unspeakable violence against non-human animals<sup>60</sup>.

Baudrillard nostalgically refers to the silence of animals as a reminder, as he perceives in their lack of speech their fundamental connection to a territory (*territoire*), which humans have long since lost. This territory cannot be expressed but only apprehended intuitively through the silence of animals. This is why philosophers often become ensnared in their silent gaze. In the animal territory, there is no room for instinct, need, and freedom, the unconscious or *wild nature*, which was invented by humans to define the otherness of the *human*<sup>61</sup>. Several years after *Simulacres et simulation*, John Gray will consider the silence of animals as an object of envy on the part of humans. Seeking to dismantle the Heideggerian argument regarding the “poor world” of animals and their simple and passive existence in the world<sup>62</sup>, Gray argues that every sensory creature creates their own world, their self-world. There is the floating world of the hawk as well as the landlocked world of the human<sup>63</sup>. If we could embrace the existence of these parallel worlds, then we could also accept that perhaps «the eyes of other creatures may be brighter»<sup>64</sup>, as the human perspective of the world is decisively shaped by language. Nevertheless, this requires a turning away from ourselves, towards the birds and animals and the ever-evolving places in which they live, and entails a knowledge beyond words, a knowledge that cannot be spoken, but only experienced the presence of the animal’s gaze and the sound of its silence. Despite the sharpness of his positions, or perhaps because of them, Baudrillard turns towards this silence<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> The four successive phases of the image that Baudrillard points out are: a. the reflection of a profound reality; b. dissimulation and denaturation of profound reality; c. dissimulation of the absence of a profound reality; d. the image has no relation to any reality whatsoever; it is its own pure simulacrum. *Simulacres et simulation*, cit., p. 17 (*Simulacra and Simulation*, cit., p. 5).

<sup>61</sup> J. Baudrillard, *Simulacres et simulation*, cit., pp. 201-204, at pp. 211-213 (*Simulacra and Simulation*, cit., pp. 90-91).

<sup>62</sup> M. Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics. World, Finitude, Solitude*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington-Indianapolis 1995) pp. 184, 194, and *Letter about humanism*, Roes Publications, Athens 1987 – Greek edition, p. 77.

<sup>63</sup> J. Gray, *The silence of the animals. On progress and other modern myths*, Octo Publications, Athens 2013, p. 159.

<sup>64</sup> Ivi, p. 160.

<sup>65</sup> Ivi, p. 161.