Animal Acts

PERFORMING SPECIES TODAY

EDITED BY

Una Chaudhuri and Holly Hughes

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The University of Michigan Press ANN ARBOR

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Ah, whom can we ever turn to in our need?
Not angels, not humans, and already the knowing animals are aware
that we are not really at home in our interpreted world.
. . .
Fling the emptiness out of your arms into the spaces we breathe;
perhaps the birds will feel the expanded air with more passionate flying.

—RAINER MARIA RILKE, *DUINO ELEGIES*

For my father, Wazirzada Sardar Baljit Singh,
and for my friend Fritz Ertl:
birder brothers across continents and centuries.

—UNA CHAUDHURI

and

For the many canines and felines
with whom I've shared my life, and for the humans who've helped our multispecies household thrive. Thank you, Frankie Joiris, Raissa Hinman, Denise Tarby, and of course Esther Newton.

—HOLLY HUGHES

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Contents

Animal Acts for Changing Times, 2.0: A Field Guide to Interspecies Performance
Introduction by Una Chaudhuri 1

The Dog and Pony Show (bring your own pony) by Holly Hughes 13
Commentary by Donna Haraway: Agility Is Performance Art

Stay! by Vicky Ryder, Lisa Asagi, and Stacy Makishi 37
Commentary by Marla Carlson: What Happened to the Black Dog?

Cat Lady by Joseph Keckler 55
Commentary by Erika Rundle: Theatre of the Cat Lady Who Is Not

With What Ass Does the Cockroach Sit? / *¿Con Qué Culo Se Sienta la Cucaracha?* by Carmelita Tropicana (aka Alina Troyano) 69
Commentary by Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes: Martina, Catalina, Elián, and the Old Man: Queer Tales of a Transnational Cuban Cockroach

No Bees for Bridgeport: A Fable from the Age of Daley by Kestutis Nakas 93
Commentary by Joshua Takano Chambers-Letson: A New Fable of the Bees

Horseback Views: A Queer Hippological Performance by Kim Marra 111
Commentary by Jane C. Desmond: Kinesthetic Intimacies

MONKEY by Deke Weaver 141
Commentary by Cary Wolfe: Apes like Us

Excerpts from *ELEPHANT* by Deke Weaver 163
Commentary by Nigel Rothfels: A Hero's Death

Excerpt from *Everything I've Got* by Jess Dobkin 189
Commentary by Jill Dolan: The Great Refusal and the Greater Hope

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Excerpts from *As the Globe Warms: An American Soap Opera in Twelve Acts* by Heather Woodbury 197
Commentary by Ann Pellegrini: Zooglossia: The Unknown Tongues of Heather Woodbury

The Others by Rachel Rosenthal 217

Contributors 239

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by Una Chaudhuri

Introduction: Animal Acts for Changing Times, 2.0: A Field Guide to Interspecies Performance

Things are moving fast in the human-animal world. So much so that an upgrade seems warranted on my earlier take on it, or rather my take on that part of it that intersects with the world of performance, theatre, and performance studies. Version 1.0 of this bulletin appeared in *American Theatre* magazine a few years ago,[1] and the double meaning lurking in its title has proved to be prophetic. The interspecies performances that are going on in our changing times, both onstage and off, are also good for *producing* change, not only in the ways we live with animals and the ways we think about them but also by transforming our values more broadly, resetting our priorities, rebooting our sense of what it might mean to be human: "animal acts," in short, are a powerful way to change the world.

In the past few years, a spate of conferences, scholarly monographs, critical anthologies, book series, college courses, new journals, and special issues of journals have variously registered "the animal turn" in the humanities and social sciences.[2] This academic burgeoning reflects a rapidly dawning "animal consciousness" in the culture at large, recorded in countless recent works of fiction, art, film, and popular culture. The impetus for this heightened attention to animals (or, as we've now learned to say: to *the other* animals) is, of course, varied and complex, but its link to both the animal rights movement and to the accelerating environmental crisis of our times is undeniable. The former, a centuries-old discourse whose current and extremely forceful phase was launched by the publication, in 1975, of Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation,* has reached deep into both social and legal practice, transforming the fields of scientific animal experimentation and animal farming. Numerous horrifying exposés of the latter have resulted not only

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in major changes in the way so-called food animals are raised and killed but also in a growing army of vegetarians, silently performing a daily refusal of meat culture. While no one working on behalf of animals feels the end of animal exploitation is near, many of us have come to hope that it is possible.

In recent decades, attention to the plight of the other animals has come from a source that tends to be more compelling for most people than concern about animal suffering: human self-preservation. The increasing ravages of climate change have registered most dramatically on certain animal species, including, for example, one of the most beloved of the "charismatic mega-fauna" (a phrase from zoo jargon) who are responsible for bringing in the big Sunday crowds: the polar bear. As the forlorn gazes of these and other "poster animals" of climate-change-extinction peer at us from *Time* magazine covers and Times Square billboards, we begin to acknowledge what we've always known and also carefully "not-known":[3] their lives are contingent, exactly as ours are, on the delicate ecology of the planet we share with them. Now, we have to be concerned about the other animals not only for their sakes but also for ours.[4]

As ecological thought itself moves into a sophisticated new phase, eschewing the conceptually crippling binaries—especially the one that so disastrously divided "nature" from "culture," making the one into a distant spectacle or recreational escape and the latter into a thing of pure, unconstrained artifice—the cultural conception of species is being transformed as well.[5] Increasingly, it is the continuities and connections between species that are emphasized rather than the differences. At the same time, the crude dualism that put the human species on one side and all others—the millions upon millions of others—on another side, separated by a Great Wall of human exceptionalism, is breaking down. The multitudes of other species that we have so lazily and offensively corralled into one single word—"The animal! What a word!" as Jacques Derrida famously exclaimed[6]—are now roaming across the vast territories of sameness and difference that make each one unique while each one is also multiply enmeshed in the web of all planetary life.

Be it in the work of animal rights, in the texts of animal studies, in the myriad animal practices found in every human culture, or in the vast field of animal representation, "animal acts" of all kinds are changing us, are changing our times, and will change the future of our species. The performances and commentaries in this book invoke all these realms while also contributing to them. They reveal the shaping force of animal discourse in every significant cultural category: gender, class, race, nation, age, profession, sexual orientation, marital status, and, of course, species. Their scope

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and extension tempt me to resort to one of the characteristic methodologies of traditional natural history: the taxonomy. I am tempted, for example, to identify the many ways that *class* mediates the human relationship to animals, ranging from the upper-class traditions of equestrianism discussed in Kim Marra's piece to the desperate survival tactics employed by Sawong, the mahout who teaches Deke Weaver to ride an elephant in Thailand. I'm tempted to classify the many ways human *gender and sexuality* are policed through animal practices, ranging from the way Marra's mother struggles to get her "out of the barn and into a dress," to the biblical animals whom Jess Dobkin's unicorn will gloriously challenge: "You know this part: They pair up. Check, check. Two, two. Two, two. Ladies and Gentlemen, dogs and frogs, step right up. They comply. They obey."

These taxonomic temptations could launch a thousand college papers or journal articles. But it quickly becomes evident that it is not only the standard sociological categories that are being reshaped and inundated with animal effects here but other, more surprising ones as well, mocking the taxonomic impulse with their sheer strangeness. For example, is my originally serious schema going to survive intact if I include *décor* as one of the categories remade by animal acts? Yet how could I ignore it? In fact, how could I not give it pride of place, when I read that Joseph Keckler's cat lady is "the Dr. Moreau of interior decorating"? Or when I read this: in order to accommodate their growing family of dogs, Holly Hughes's lover suggests they buy a sectional sofa, a moment at which, reports Hughes, "A part of me dies."

Clothing is a close second in frivolity to home decor, and it also turns out to be an unexpectedly busy arena for animal input. But perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that animals—whom we have long believed to differ from us in their inability to be naked and hence to feel shame—should make us think about how much we signify ourselves through our costumes and adornments. No dog would ever need to wear a t-shirt like the one Hughes finds herself in, that says "This is what a feminist looks like"; yet the chains that Jojo the elephant, in Weaver's piece, must not only wear but also carry to his captors might have something in common with those outfits worn by women at agility trials, the ones that say, according to Hughes, "I just give up!"

If the range, variety, and strangeness of animal effects causes the taxonomizing impulse to shrivel and die, the task of selecting works for this collection proved equally resistant to system and method. The usual categories for guaranteeing diversity and inclusion—gender, race, ethnicity, nation—quickly proved to be irrelevant. A briefly indulged fantasy of selection by species soon appeared equally nonsensical. We decided simply to include pieces we loved and admired for the freshness they brought to the animal

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subject (pun intended). Limitations of place made us leave out many works that fit that description and to excerpt others. We would have loved to include more than one work by some of our artists, but in the end we limited that impulse to the one exception of Deke Weaver, whose lifelong project, *The Unreliable Bestiary,* seemed—in its focus, dedication, and methodology—to warrant representation by more than one piece.

The process of pairing the performance scripts with scholars to comment on them was guided by a desire to engage a variety of important voices from the fields of animal studies and performance studies. Our request to the scholars was for responses to the scripts rather than introductions to them, with the assurance that we were open to whatever approach—theoretical, analytical, personal, historical, and so on—they felt would work best for them in the unfortunately short space we had available. Our wish was to create as open and generative an arena as we possibly could for a conversation that we felt was long overdue, among the fields of performance, performance studies, and animal studies, in a way that would be pedagogically useful as well as theoretically interesting. Both these goals were challenged by the difficult fact (so familiar to scholars and teachers of theatre and performance) that we were encountering these words on the page—as silent, linear, one-dimensional text—rather than in the eventful three-dimensional space of performance for which they are intended. Some of the commentators had the opportunity to see a performance of the piece they were writing on; most didn't. They did what we urge our students to do: to read *for* performance, to extrapolate live effects from textual clues, to see and hear the piece in the mind's eye and ear. Readers of the book—and the students and teachers who we hope will use it to study this new disciplinary intersection—will have to do the same, but they will also have some help from the video excerpts of most of the performances on the University of Michigan Press's website: http://www.press.umich.edu/p/animal-acts. The taste of live performance these excerpts provide will, we are confident, combine with the close reading that printed scripts make possible, and with the insights of our commentators, to offer a fertile meeting ground for the fields of animal studies and performance studies.

The many shifts recorded in the pages that follow are bookended by two statements that express a pair of fundamental principles of interspecies performance. In the book's first script, Holly Hughes begins her performance by declaring that it's *really* about dogs: for her, *animals are not a metaphor.* In the book's last script, Rachel Rosenthal ends her performance by telling us that all the animals who participated in the performance of *The Others* were adopted. Thus the first article of faith of interspecies performance

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is that we are *trying hard* to talk about actual animals now, even when (as very often, including very often in the works that follow) we cannot help but also see them as symbols for our ideas and metaphors for human dramas. One sure way of determining that a piece belongs to the category we are defining here—interspecies performance, the new kind of "animal act"—is that, whatever else animals may come to mean in the piece (and they will undoubtedly mean many things), we will be reminded—or we will want to remind ourselves—of their real existence, their actual being as members of a biological species with a specific morphology, geography, and history. And this will be so, I want to assert paradoxically, even when the animal being discussed belongs to an imaginary species, like the unicorn in Jess Dobkin's piece, whose difference proves to be a sharp new lens, as Jill Dolan shows, for gaging the baneful effect of dualistic thinking on all species.

The geographies of most animals today are vastly diasporic, their histories surprisingly intertwined with those of humans; charting these dispersals and tracing these stories are a major interest of interspecies artists. A primary mode of interspecies performance, then, is *literalization,* a steady focus on—or regular return to—the animal or animals around whom the performance revolves. Notwithstanding sporadic—or even regular—manifestations of those flights of symbolism and those tides of anthropomorphism that have long characterized animal discourse—before Aesop and since—the animal acts being forged today are committed to never forgetting the animal and to always asking: "Where are the real animals in all this?" This is no easy task, because the realities of animals' lives have for so long been submerged in the ugly feelings that attend cruelty to others, making them hard to see clearly. As Rosenthal says, "The sewers of the human psyche are clogged with the corpses of children, animals, women, animals, slaves, animals, prisoners, animals, animals, animals . . ." Animals are and have always been powerful metaphors; they have been not only "good to think with," as Claude Levi-Strauss famously said, but even better to imagine with, to make poetic sense of our lives with. John Berger writes that just as "the first subject matter for painting was animal" and that probably "the first paint was animal blood, it is not unreasonable to support that the first metaphor was animal."[7] The reason for this powerful metaphoricity is, however, rooted in the specifics of animal lives: in their shapes, colors, patterns, movements, sounds, behaviors, habits, and habitats. The animal acts of our changing times are interested in these specifics as much as in the vital human meanings they produce.

This is probably the place to make a crucial distinction between the kind of interspecies performance presented in this collection and the kind many

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people think of when they hear that word: namely, performances that involve actual animals doing things alongside human performers. The circus is the classic site of that kind of interspecies performance, and its history and stories are endlessly fascinating to the artists and scholars in this book. On occasion, that kind of interspecies performance has spilled out of circus and into theatre, performance art, and dance. When it has, it has brought with it many of the questions that arise in the study of circus, about the ethics of training, captivity, and the commercial use of animals. Those questions are often intensified around the category of art practice that Meiling Cheng has called "animalworks" and defined as "performances and installations that use animals as either materials or performers."[8] I have long argued that the figure of the animal requires a more capacious concept and have proposed the term "zooësis" to refer to the vast field of cultural animal discourse and representation. The neologism is inspired partly by Platonic "poïesis" and Aristotelian "mimesis," but it also owes a debt to early feminist theorist Alice Jardine's concept of "gynesis," which she defined as "the putting into discourse of 'woman' as [. . .] intrinsic to the condition of modernity; indeed, the valorization of the feminine, woman, and her obligatory, that is, historical connotations, as somehow intrinsic to new and necessary modes of thinking, writing, speaking."[9] Obviously, I want this term, zooësis, to mark the ways the animal is put into discourse, but I also share Jardine's progressive hope that it will contribute to the *valorization* of animals and teach us that they are "intrinsic to new and necessary modes of thinking, writing, speaking."

The performances in this book, with one notable exception, do *not* bring real, living, nonhuman animals onstage. Rather, they are records of and reflections on the relationships—real and imagined—between human and nonhuman animals. Their claim to the adjective "interspecies" derives from their keen interest in the lives and meanings of the other animals. It derives too from their commitment to letting the experience of those lives mold and deepen and change the ways we understand our own—human-animal—lives.

The one work here that includes actual living animals is the last one in the book, placed there—without accompanying commentary[10]—because it seems to offer a multifaceted coda to the "argument" of this book, which is, in short, that animal acts *can* change the times. Rosenthal was far ahead of her time in knowing this, and *The Others* invoked many of the topics and questions and discourses that animate contemporary animal studies. It also managed to do so without raising any of the ethical questions that surround trained animal performers[11] (simply because it used domesticated animals

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rather than trained animal performers). At the same time, it adumbrated a key principle of interspecies performance by dedicating itself to actual change.

Thus the second article of faith of interspecies performance is that, in addition to talking about real animals, *we act on behalf* of those animals. The two meanings of the verb "to act"—"to represent mimetically" and "to do"—afford enormous ethical and political potential to interspecies performance (as they do to other activist performance). In the pieces that follow, the human artists who play the roles of other animals, or who talk about their interactions with other animals, do so with the consciousness that when animals are used by humans to make meaning—be it in art, philosophy, or everyday life—that discursive use of them inevitably shapes and impacts the real lives of the actual animals in question. As Cary Wolfe brilliantly puts it in an early classic of animal studies, "even though the *discourse* of animality and species difference may theoretically be applied to an other of whatever type, the consequences of that discourse, in *institutional terms,* fall overwhelmingly on nonhuman animals, in our taken-for granted practices of using and exploiting them."[12] Whatever is said or implied by cultural performances about the other animals will inevitably—however circuitously—affect the way those animals are treated by humans out in the real world. Few performances will have as immediate an effect as *The Others* did—each performance producing a new interspecies family!—but the animal acts of today unfold within an ethical awareness that deepens and complicates the experiences they invite us to share in. Thus even though all the performances that follow—except *The Others*—do not bring live animals on stage,[13] many of them allude to other performances that did involve live animals (Hughes's adventures in agility trials, for instance, or Marra's horse-riding), suggesting that animal presence—in performance as in cultural life—is a *continuum* rather than an absolute. The relative distance of that presence in the scripts that follow is not intended in any way to signal any programmatic opposition, on our part, to performing (with) live animals. Rather, that distance is a reflection of the current (and, indeed, traditional) conjuncture of animality with theatricality, an effect of various characteristics of this genre that are not shared by other performance genres (like dance) and other art forms (like sculpture, film, and photography) but that *do not* therefore shut down the genre's interest in animals or limit its potential for making valuable contributions to the current reimagining of animals and of the human-animal relationship.

A hallmark of interspecies performance today is something I would call "epistemological crisis." Animal acts bring us face to face with our assump-

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tions about what we know and how we know it. They loosen the tightly bound categories into which we've packed our knowledge about the other animals—separately packaged for ease of transportation and convenient stowing—and they reorder the hierarchies about what counts as relevant fact and reliable truth.

The great gift that the other animals have always offered to the human species is the gift of their radical otherness, their ultimate unknowability. They have always faced us, as John Berger wrote in his classic essay "Why Look at Animals?," across "a narrow abyss of non-comprehension."[14] Since the early modern era if not before, their enigma is a gift we have preferred to reject, choosing instead to launch at animals the full force of Enlightenment inquiry—in the form of collections, dissections, taxonomies, illustrations, definitions, classifications, natural history museums, zoos. The "scientific facts" about animals now commingle promiscuously with mythological remnants, old wives' tales, superstitions, rumors, saws, and Internet hoaxes. Do elephants really never forget (as Weaver's elephant asserts)? Are bees really vengeful serial stingers (as Kestutis Nakas's piece fantasizes)? And on what ass *does* the cockroach—Carmelita Tropicana's cockroach or any other—sit?

As several of the commentators in this volume point out, animals are the privileged site of both human knowledge and human gullibility. And as all the performance pieces demonstrate, humans' interactions with animals are mediated by slews of misinformation, prejudice, and ignorance. That's one reason that animals make such good metaphors for immigrants: we relate to ethnic and national others, as we do to animals, as much on the basis of what we *don't* know about them as what we do. No wonder, then, that Carmelita Tropicana's cockroach adopts Manu Chao's "Clandestino" to sing of her own experience. At the same time, as the speaker's neighbors in Nakas's "No Bees for Bridgeport" make clear, the cultural differences that divide humans from each other are just as dangerous to animals, threatening their very existence.

Interspecies performance wades deep into the epistemological morass to which we humans have exiled the other animals. In doing so it recognizes both the cultural variety and the historical longevity of animal meaning. Animals mean all sorts of contradictory things to different people. In the Power Pointbased regimes of contemporary information, the monkey is (as Weaver slyly shows) both "almost entirely arboreal, the loudest animal in the New World," and "an incarnation of Shiva, . . . a magic monkey who could make himself smaller than a mouse lemur and thousands of times larger and stronger than the biggest gorilla." In the ecologically correct present, as we learn in Nakas's piece, a "beekeeping hobby craze is sweeping the country.

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Michelle Obama has even installed a hive in back of the White House and tends to it with her children and secret service detail"; yet Nakas's working-class emigrant neighbors shout in unison: "NO BEES FOR BRIDGEPORT!"

So varied and contradictory are human accounts of animals that any survey of them, including as informal a one as the works here represent, reveals that the real meaning of animals is that they always escape the systems of meaning we construct for them. Their infinite variety and mystery are such that the best taxonomy remains the one that inspired Michel Foucault's seminal critique of the Enlightenment:

> This book first arose out of a passage in Borges, out of the laughter that shattered, as I read the passage, all the familiar landmarks of my thought—our thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography—breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things, and continuing long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinction between the Same and the Other. This passage quotes a "certain Chinese encyclopedia" in which it is written that "animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (1) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies." In the wonderment of this taxonomy, the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that.*[15]

What Foucault calls the "wonderment" of this taxonomy is exactly the response that the interspecies performances in this book strive toward: many moments of astonishment and wonder, leading to a hope-filled embrace of the impossible.

Ironically, the way out of the epistemological crisis of interspecies performance is often through entrance into specialized knowledges and arcane mysteries. "Beekeepers," Nakas tells us, "good ones, have a special kind of knowledge. A sense of ease that allows us to draw near the hive without arousing fear or anger. It might be a gift." At the opposite pragmatic extreme, Kim Marra remarks that although "riding is at the center of what you do with the horse, [. . .] it occupies a relatively small portion of the time spent on a daily basis. You also must feed and groom the horse, clean all the

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tack, learn how each piece of equipment works and needs to fit, muck the stall, keep the barn clean, monitor the pasture for hazards, hold your horse for the vet and blacksmith." Sometimes, animal knowledge must proceed by constructing whole new disciplines—like Marra's hippology, or "horse science." At other times it proceeds by deconstructing sense itself, as when Keckler's mother, otherwise a "militant grammarian," repeats the baby-talk words "Cubs don't do 'rithmatic! No. Him don't do no *'rithmatic*" over and over again, until, as Keckler says, "As Warhol dissolved the aura of celebrity through his serial representation of famous faces, as the Marquis de Sade used his characters' repetition of criminal and perverse acts to purge the acts of their meaning, so my mother, through repetition, flushed all the logic out of the fact that a cat can't do math."

Animals show us how much we still need to know, not only about them but also about ourselves. At the same time, they show us how very hard it is going to be to attain that knowledge, especially if we cling to our old habits of inquiry, our old reliance on "ocular proof" and disembodied ideas. Much of the new knowledge gained through animal acts comes from going way past the limits of logic and book learning, and accepting instruction, instead, from the life of bodies. This is, of course, why performance offers more to animal knowledge than any other cultural form: its reliance on physicality, materiality, and embodiment makes it especially useful for venturing into areas where language is absent. For example, Weaver finds out that there "are a couple of ways to get on and off an elephant," and all of them involve novel uses of human and animal body parts. If you follow your mahout's instructions, even the ones that make no sense, and if the elephant

> doesn't wrap its trunk around your torso and tear you in half, well, here's what happens: you [. . .] put your hands over your head. With your right hand you grab the top of his right ear. You put your left hand on the gray-wrinkly wall and grab a handful of elephant skin (it's like heavy padded canvas). The elephant lifts his right foot. You put your foot on the raised right knee. One! Two! Three! HUP! You push down with your right leg, your elephant boosts you up, you pull on his right ear and his right shoulder and swing your left leg up and over his neck.

Sometimes, the connection between animal knowledge and the human body is simple and direct: "The key to good riding is a good seat," Marra tells us. At other times, as Hughes reminds us, learning about animals requires that "first you have to struggle into your body."

Animal acts convey new knowledges through new bodily experiences in space and time. They invite us to explore new habitats, where we might prac-

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tice more imaginative and ethical ways of life. They encourage us to develop new habits of heart and mind so that we can return again, however sporadically, to live in that long-ago poem that Hughes talks about, in which "we rhymed with all the other animals."

This book is after other kinds of rhyming as well: between theory and practice, performance and analysis, animal acts and animal studies, animal acts and performance studies. We come to animals, as Steve Baker has said, "as a reminder of the limits of human understanding, and also of the value of working *at those limits.*"[16] If one creative solution to the epistemological crisis that animals precipitate is embodiment, another is dialogue, especially dialogue across traditional boundaries of knowledge. We are immensely grateful to all the artists and scholars who collaborated with each other and with us on creating the dialogue-performance that is this book.

NOTES

1. Una Chaudhuri, "Animal Acts for Changing Times," *American Theatre* (Oct. 2004).

2. Book series on animal studies are being published by the University of Chicago Press, Columbia University Press, Rodopi Press, Brill, Penn State Press, the Johns Hopkins University Press, and Reaktion Books. Minding Animals International is a major multidisciplinary conference, held on different continents every two years. Journals in animal studies include *Society and Animals,* the *Journal for Critical Animal Studies, Antennae: The Journal of Nature in Visual Culture, Humanimalia: A Journal of Human-Animal Interface Studies,* and the *Animal Studies Journal* (Australia). The following journals have recently had special issues devoted to animal studies: *TDR: The Journal of Performance Studies* 51, no. 1 (Spring 2007), *PMLA* 124, no. 2 (Mar. 2009); *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 27, no. 3 (Summer 2012).

3. In J. M. Coetzee's contemporary classic of animal studies *The Lives of the Animals* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), his protagonist Elizabeth Costello famously (or notoriously) compares the modern denial of animal practices to the denial of ordinary Germans in Nazi Germany, characterizing both as a "willed ignorance," a nonknowing "in that special sense" (20–21).

4. For a discussion of recent performances on this theme, see Una Chaudhuri, "The Silence of the Polar Bears: Performing (Climate) Change in the Theatre of Species," in Wendy Arons and Theresa May, eds., *Readings in Performance and Ecology* (Palgrave, 2012), 45–58.

5. For a brief discussion of how changing accounts of evolution in biology are affecting ecological thought and what these changes offer to the fields of ecocriticism and animal studies, see Timothy Morton, "Guest Column: Queer Ecology" *PMLA* 125, no. 2 (Mar. 2010): 273–82.

6. Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am,* ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 23.

7. John Berger, "Why Look at Animals?" in *About Looking. New York, Pantheon, 1980. 3-28*

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8. Meiling Cheng, "Animal Works in China," in *TDR: The Journal of Performance Studies,* special issue, *Animals and Performance,* guest ed. Una Chaudhuri, 51, no. 1 (Spring 2007) 63–91.

9. Alice A. Jardine, *Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 25

10. I have, however, written at length about this work elsewhere, in terms that explain why I regard it as seminal and paradigmatic: "In formal terms as well as in substance and subject, *The Others* is encyclopedic. Every medium and every channel of performance, every element of the theatrical apparatus is pressed into service to deliver a mountain of information and an ocean of feeling on the subject of animals. Using dialogue, monologue, song, music, dance, movement, slides, voice-overs, video, physical movement, stage architecture, technological devices and—yes— forty-two live animals, Rosenthal embarks upon an epic missionary performance on behalf of animals. The range of discourses she manages to incorporate makes the work a solid introduction to the major tenets of the animal rights movement." See Una Chaudhuri, "Animal Rites: Performing Beyond the Human," in Joseph Roach and Janelle Reinelt, eds., *Critical Theory and Performance,* rev. ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007). 506-520

11. For a discussion of this issue, see Una Chaudhuri, "Animals in the Performing Arts." in *The Encyclopedia of Animal Rights and Animal Welfare* (Westport, CT., Greenwood Publishing Group, 2010).

12. Cary Wolfe, "Introduction," in Cary Wolfe, ed., *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), xx.

13. *Dead* animals are, of course, always present on every stage and in every scene of human life, in the form of the many corporeal "by-products" that saturate contemporary material lives. See, for example, a recent article in the *Daily Beast:* "Animal Products. http://www.thedailybeast.com/galleries/2010/05/22/animal-products.html#slide1. Accessed July 2012.

14. Berger, *About Looking,* 5. New York, Pantheon, 1980. 3-28.

15. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Senses.* New York, Vintage, 1994.

16. Steve Baker, *The Postmodern Animal* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), 16.

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by Holly Hughes

The Dog and Pony Show (bring your own pony)

1.

This is just about dogs. I want to warn you. The title is not a metaphor. When I say this is about dogs I mean: *this is about dogs, period.* Some of my friends got excited when I said that I was writing about the dogs. They thought that was just the beginning of the first sentence, and I would take them on a journey. I would lead them through some woods, the dogs all around, but there was a path that led to a house I had been building and I would take them inside and leave the dogs outside. They would stick around: if you introduce a literary device at the top of the show it has to come back. The house would be full of dark wood and deep meaning, and it would have a nice view of the human condition.

But this is not about the human condition. A lot's been said about it. I have nothing original to add.

I was in such a house once, and it didn't go well. I was invited to the house of a rich art collector, as opposed to the homes of all the impoverished collectors . . . See, those kinds of snide remarks are a sign that I should perhaps have declined the invitation, but no, I went.

The house was so beautiful, you almost didn't know it was a house; it was so well situated in nature. This show isn't about nature either. But the house

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was crouched behind the garden and popped out at the last minute. Glass. How do you get inside?

Someone opened the door I thought was a window and let me in. Drinks appeared and I drank them and we talked about art, and we talked about art and we talked about . . . art.

Then it was time to leave. I was shown to the door, but the hostess was not very specific. I just took a guess, and I made a bad guess and ran into a wall. I left the beautiful house and rushed back to my battered-up lesbian Toyota and proceeded to bleed all over it.

See, that's another thing this show is about. It's about my compulsion to insert the word "lesbian" into any sentence; it's what I do. I have lesbian Tourette syndrome. I am like the compulsive stenciler who sees any vertical surface as an excuse to do some more stencils.

And I also come from another place and time. Let me set the scene for you. I come from the place and time where vaginas roamed the earth. Not like it is today in your culture when the vaginas stay underground until one day in February when they all pop out to see if they catch their own shadow.

Of course that is a figure of speech. Vaginas don't have eyes. You know that. That's why we have the clitoris, which is the eyes and ears of the vagina, and watches over the vagina like a shepherd over a flock.

I come from the place where what I just said makes sense. Feminism is on the radio; you can dance to it, everyone does. In this time, there is no lgbtqa-what-am-I-leaving-out community; we all lie down under the tattered pink canopy.

But this is not a utopia. There are deep divisions. There are the cat lesbians. There are the dog lesbians; there are the lesbians who go both ways and the asthmatics. If you don't align yourself with one of these groups, you have false consciousness. Take your patriarchy and get out of here. You don't need an actual dog or cat or even an inhaler, you just need to say where you stand. "I stand with the dogs!" Or: "I stand with the cats!" Or: "I go both ways!" And: "I can't breathe!"

II.

The word "pet" is rickety and old. The door won't close. The animal noses out and asks for a new word. Who is she now? Who are we to each other?

"Guardian" is the PC term. I hate it like I hate the word "partner." They both reek of manila envelopes.

I'm the *owner.* I pull out the checkbook at the vet's office, the groomer's, the pet supply store, and the dog show. *Guardian?* It's not like she's going to

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Holly Hughes in "The Dog and Pony Show" at Dixon Place.
Photo by Lisa Guido.

grow up and pay for these things herself when she hits eighteen. It's not like she's going to hit eighteen.

I look at the leash in my hand. It's a leash, and it's something else. What?

Esther and I decide we need a bigger couch, a *sectional.* A part of me dies. But we want to be able to get all nine animals on the couch with us. It's a cushioned boat; we drop anchor in front of Rachel Maddow. I don't really know what Rachel Maddow looks like because the fifty-pound poodle has decided he's a lap dog.

Ready, the Norfolk terrier, is perched like a whiskered parrot on the back. We're pirates together. Lilo, Ready's sister, is wedged between my thigh and the armrest, giving me the look that says: "*I'd like to crawl inside your hoody, burrow up so my head came out of same hole as yours.*"

But the cat got there first. I'd like to walk around all the time like this, with a cat down the front of my shirt.

My nose is healing nicely, thank you.

There was an altercation in bed last week. About who got to sleep next to my face.

And my nose got in the way. Makeup makes it worse, so I tell the class

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Charlie Manson jokes. I consider the Norfolk terrier breed standard. And decide it applies to owners as well: *"Honourable scars from fair wear and tear shall not count against."*

Esther is also carpeted with poodles and a dollop of terrier. We are close but not touching. Presto, her standard poodle, is lying between us, touching us both. Occasionally Presto will growl at one of the dogs. Or even us, suggesting we all get off his couch. Esther won't have it. "It's not your choice, buddy." She's not angry, she's Jack Webb. She collars him and puts him into one of the four dog crates in our living room.

Our name for this is "family time."

But this is our name. Esther warns me about the pet people: you can't trust them.

These are the people who have animals but always insist that their pet is "just a dog." Or "just a cat." We're not pet people. We're dog people. Gradually the people without animals have faded into the background.

Be careful when you talk about the dogs. Good advice. But I'm a careless person. I get introduced as the "crazy dog lady" at parties where I stand around like the Sarah Palin supporter at the antiwar rally.

I do it to myself. I can't resist telling a beloved former student that I'm very excited about a "new canine exchange student" arriving. She explodes: "You can't have more animals! Your life is out of control." She just finished house-sitting, so she knows what she's talking about.

It's not like it's a new thing. My life is a composition only in a John Cage sense of the word. Determined by chance and lacking music. But full of sound and silences that I decide to call "music." Like we decide to call this "family time." With or without the dogs we are no kind of family. Do we even want to be a family? We don't know. The word makes us dizzy. For the moment, we are held together by the dark crescent of a poodle.

III.

Growing up. Michigan. The sixties into the seventies.

If you wanted to see a bunch of animals you had to get in a car. Sometimes you would even have to pay or get a note from home. Outside of town was a petting zoo that used to be a working farm. It was creepy. Like some Ye Olde Timey Shoppe where they made candles. What if the bus left without you?

Seeing deer was a special event. Something we saved for warm Saturday nights.

All of us quiet in the Buick. But not our usual Hughes quiet, no faint odor

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of disappointment. It was a good Sunday-best quiet. The one intended for church.

But my family spent their prayers on deer. When one of us whispered, "There's one," we'd stop and look to see the others. Even if we couldn't make them out we knew the deer were never alone.

I asked my parents for a horse, and they gave me a piano. Then said I had to share with my sister. Now what? I thought my family didn't believe in music. The next year I asked for a pony. Just a small one I could keep under the bed. My parents sent us to Christian leadership camp. Which is nothing like a pony. Even my poor sister had figured out not to ask for anything.

What did I know? I didn't know anything. I didn't know who we were. We always had enough, we had more than enough. But we were just middle class. A horse was too much. A horse was so much more than a piano.

A horse is so much more demanding than Jesus.

I heard rumors of bears. But no one I knew ever saw one. But I knew people who knew someone who had a brother who saw a bear.

You can measure the history of last two hundred years by the growing distance between us and other animals. You can measure it by noticing that I have to stop and remember to say "other" animals. The animals that disappeared forever.

The animals that worked for us, replaced by machines. Of course this is a small piece of history, barely enough to keep you warm at night. The history of the industrial north.

If you look beyond that, you see our story is punctuated by theirs. Their tracks, their bones, their nests, their scat. All of it a kind of creole. At once familiar and foreign.

The point is our story is so knotted and tangled with theirs. If you want to talk about history, you're going to have to talk about animals.

Is it my imagination or is the distance shrinking?

Animals keep slipping into extinction, but others are coming back. When I drive to work in the morning I evict the deer from my parking space. I remember when Canadian geese were beautiful. And temporary. Now they are everywhere, laughing at us. Black bears waddle through backyards like they're one big salad bar, all they can eat. Last year, rumors of a coyote sighted at Central Park. Then confirmed sightings at Columbia University. How did a coyote get to Manhattan? When last I checked, it was still an island. On NPR someone says he took the GWB. Says it like with an air of boredom as though it were obvious. I can see it, a coyote pretending to be shepherd mix. Trotting just behind a jogger so that the drivers imagine a leash.

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All my friends want to be farmers. I threaten Esther with goats. An article about raising chickens in the *New Yorker* gets everyone worked up. Chickens are cool.

Chickens are the new black.

IV.

So why a Norfolk terrier?

I wanted a piece of my childhood to take with me, something portable and nontoxic.

And a cairn terrier might not fit under the seat. I needed something just a little bit smaller; I turned to the smallest of the working terriers, the Norfolk terrier.

My mother decides we're going to get a cairn terrier, announces it one day, already a fact, like it's a fact that the "yellow race" have their sights set on Saginaw, Michigan. And are about to take us over.

I'm ten, and three other dogs have already bit the dust in our house. One got hit by a car. Two went to "farms" owned by close family friends we had never met.

My family loved animals. But love went to waste in our house. It was the milk we forgot to put away at night. In the morning we drank it. We pretended it was still good.

We were ashamed of our love for animals; our love was big, and they were so small.

And we were supposed to love each other. But we didn't. So every once in a while we'd kick the cat.

What chance did a small dog have in this house?

The Wizard of Oz was on all the time in the background. I didn't really like it.

It was too scary and too boring at the same time. But you couldn't escape it. It got stuck in your head, this idea that once upon a time there was a girl who did something. We're not talking about marrying a rich man. We're talking changing the world. And she doesn't do it by herself; she does it with the help of her cairn terrier. Toto.

We all know Toto. He isn't a companion, a prop. She saves herself by saving Toto, and they take turns from then on, saving each other.

She learns you can survive a loveless childhood if you have great shoes.

And the other thing you know is that there is no Dorothy, there is only Judy Garland.

A dark complicated young woman strapped into the role of a girl. She

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knows they really wanted Shirley Temple. She knows they might cut "Somewhere Over the Rainbow."

But she makes it out of Kansas. She makes it into color, into a world of people who recognize her: "Hey, that's Judy Garland!" She gets to the Emerald City with a trio of drag queens and her little dog too. Then the movie takes a turn. What's scary is not the monkeys or the witches. What's scary is that Judy goes back. She makes it to the Emerald City, but they make her go back to Kansas! Judy Garland had no business ever being in Kansas.

How do they get her to go back? They guilt trip her. "Oh, your aunt is sick." Your aunt?

You mean the woman who never loved you, that woman? You mean the woman who collaborated with Miss Gulch in the attempted extermination of Toto, that aunt? Fuck your aunt, Judy.

She doesn't listen. She loses the shoes. She wakes up in black and white. Insisting that she is really Judy Garland and that there is another world. But no one believes her. In the last frames, Toto jumps up on the bed. She gets to keep Toto. We get to keep our terrier.

She somehow manages to survive being loved by us.

v.

"THIS IS WHAT A FEMINIST LOOKS LIKE."

Says my t-shirt. The label says: "Made in Mexico by Jerzees. 50% polyester and 47% cotton."

Do they think we won't notice that doesn't add up? Do they think we won't call them on it? Hey, Jerzees, I want my 3 percent!

This style is what I would call your basic t-shirt: it could fit anyone, comfortably. And no one stylishly. But anything could happen in this t-shirt. It's not tight, it doesn't bind, you can really move in this t-shirt.

I think that's the selling point, that's what I would push. So many people think that feminism is really constricting, it rides up, gets stuck in your crack, but I would point out that this is "active wear"!

You could also sleep in this t-shirt. I like to sleep in t-shirts. I like a longer cut.

I like something that covers the pubes. I don't like the thought of getting out of bed and seeing myself in a t-shirt that says this is what a feminist looks like and then . . . pubic hair. That's just me.

I got the t-shirt when I gave the keynote address at an annual feminist conference. I was honored to be invited. One of the organizers gave it to me and I put it on, over what I was wearing. Of course I did.

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Then I gave the speech. And as I was talking, I noticed that I was the only one wearing the t-shirt. This was the conference t-shirt. What was up with that?

Let's face it: it's an ugly shirt. It's unnecessarily ugly. This shirt is to graphic design what FEMA was to Katrina, making a bad situation worse. Let's discuss the font for a moment. It's a blocky, san-serif mess that suggests a cement factory. The lettering is dark navy blue on a dark heather grey. No contrast. It's illegible. It's like you're giving a rousing speech in the middle of nowhere. It's not heather, it's fog. It's not a call to arms, it's a cry for help, you are lost in the fog: "Help, help, help! I'm a feminist, nist nist nist! And I'm all alone!"

So there's a talk back. The first question I'm asked is by an organizer of the conference. She says that feminists have such a bad image, and younger women think that you have to be a lesbian to be a feminist and you have to be dowdy, and that is why she asked me, she hoped I would do something to disrupt that image, but I have only reinforced it.

This is the woman who gave me the t-shirt. And she is also a lesbian.

I'm remembering the Wow Café in the in the early eighties. How we called ourselves "a home for wayward girls." How we joked that we were feminists who had been kicked out of other feminist organizations for having the wrong haircut. How it wasn't a joke.

Listen, I don't remember what I said, but I do remember what I wore. But that is what we say. That is all people listen to when women speak, what you wear. That's my takeaway from the last two years of watching Michelle and Hillary and Sarah: she's got arms, she's got ankles, you can't wear yellow, you can't wear blue, those aren't her clothes, that's not her hair, look at that ass, look at those boobs, she's too tall!

So I wore a nice outfit—I got a cut and color, I got all the hair ripped off my face and then I painted my face back on, I went to Weight Watchers and I hit my goal weight! You knew that I was a lesbian, that's all I am, a goddamn lesbian with eyeliner. I stand up in front of a bunch of people and say: "I'm a lesbian!" That's what I do, that's it, that's my shtick. I say a couple of other obvious things, but the kinds of things I can only say because I'm leaving the next day! I'm not yelling. I'm not! Well, maybe I am yelling. You paid me to yell at you, to get up here and say what you couldn't: this is what a feminist looks like!

VI.

Esther and I aren't the first lesbian couple to postpone reproduction till the eleventh hour. I'd been on Esther's case about it for a while, but she wasn't

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buying it, always muttering something about breeders and how she wasn't one. But then someone she really respected, Helen or Sassie or Cathi, I forget, said it would be irresponsible NOT to do it. And the doctor said, well, what are you waiting for? Like many of you, we knew we'd have to rely on technology.

In our case, we'd need technology because we wanted to breed a male dog. Our black standard poodle, Presto. The only place in the world where females are more valuable than males is in animal husbandry. Females sell for more than males; most males are neutered and, depending on the species, eaten. Before I wanted to breed Presto I had really wanted to cut his balls off. The last male poodle we'd had, Errol Flynn, had been neutered late and was a problem in the dog run. He had preferences, not about sex, but he had a look, he liked a zaftig, slow-moving yellow dog. I thought I had it under control until I overheard a woman warning others as I approached the run: "Here comes the clueless lesbian with the poodle rapist!"

The balls didn't come off, because he was Esther's; I took him for walks and took pictures of him in sunglasses. Esther thought the testosterone gave him more pizzazz in agility. Plus, she liked the look of them.

Esther, who proudly wears the label "butch," and who has given up correcting people who call her "sir," who winces when she remembers attempts at heterosexuality, says: "I just like to look at them." I, on the other hand, the femme, with a checkered lesbian history, was . . . well, I guess I was the castrating bitch.

I did some research online and discovered that you can buy prosthetic testicles, called "nueticals."

"You'll never know the difference!"

Then I fell in love with Presto, he was a fast car Esther was learning to drive, and I fell in love with agility, and Presto was such a sensible dog. The good dad neither of us had, respected by the others, but never getting into schemes involving the cat.

An opportunity arose. The Capital City Cluster, held every Thanksgiving weekend at Michigan State University, in the livestock pavilion. They have conformation, aka a "beauty contest," as well as agility and obedience. They also have clinics, which offer low-cost examinations. Eye exams, heart exams.

When it came to breeding, Esther and I considered ourselves green but didn't realize we were completely clueless. We knew enough to not call the procedure the vet would perform a "hand job," but rather, "collection." We had a vague notion of what would transpire: there would be a female in heat, called a "teaser bitch," and Presto would meet her long enough to become

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aroused but not long enough to mate or, as we say, "cover the bitch." The sperm would be frozen and stored in vials called straws.

We decided to put off the collection till the end of the day after Presto had finished his agility runs. All the dogs get treats of their favorite food after runs, called jackpots. This would be the ultimate jackpot. Plus, if he wanted to smoke and go to sleep, he could.

In retrospect I see we were like so many other lesbian parents of boys—we were working overtime to compensate, to prove we could nurture a healthy sense of his masculinity. Even though we know that dogs have sex, but not sexuality or gender.

Presto is not my son.

Nevertheless, I am very excited. So all day I'm telling him, this is your big day, buddy! Boy, are you really going to have fun! I'm taking my son to the whore with a heart of gold, and I'm really happy about it, we'll pay through the nose, she won't get anything out of it, but I want to buy everyone in Lansing, Michigan, a drink.

Time comes, there's a line, like the cafeteria line at school. Bored looks on all, animal and human. The romance starts to evaporate, even the romance of the idealized whorehouse. Presto seems . . . not bored; anxious, excited? We bring him in, and a vet tech shoves the business end of a cocker spaniel in Presto's face as the vet grabs his penis, remarking: "Not a very impressive erection."

This is my son! I'm enraged. Too angry to speak. "Let's see what you got! Impress me! Think it's going to be easy because I'm a grizzled old dyke, you got another think coming! I was locked in an elevator with the photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe for ten years, and it's going to take a lot to impress me, Bud!"

Presto makes a sound, not a sound of lust or even a bark. He looks at Esther: get me out of here. The vet barks, "This dog has a job to do and you are not helping."

We can't look at each other in the hall. We're idiots. We're the feminists who took their son to a whorehouse and the pimp gets all the money. We're the failed breeders. We're called back into the room, where, once more, aspersions are cast on Presto's virility. We are told that the sperm count is good, the sperm seem healthy, but there isn't a lot of ejaculate.

Esther says if we came to the vet's office, would Presto have more time with the bitch. "I think he wanted to get to know her, he felt rushed," she says.

"This is the way it's done, ladies." The vet called us "ladies."

A couple of weeks later we are called. The sperm died when they were

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frozen. No, we won't be getting our money back; no, we won't get a free do-over. It takes a while to face our dog friends. When we do, we are bombarded by questions: How did they die? Well, sure it makes a difference! You didn't ask? Did they shrivel? Did the heads come off?

I didn't know there were so many ways for sperm to die.

"What kind of extender did they use? " Apparently sperm is like the vodka splashed into a glass and mixed with cranberry juice, or orange juice or tonic. Sperm by itself is not a party . . . Some sperm are allergic to certain extenders . . . What was used? There is so much I don't know. Like the fact that sperm could have allergies.

There is more that we don't know. We visit a dog breeder friend in the hospital, where she is recuperating from heart surgery. Her half of the room is crowded with dog people, all breeders. Full of advice. Carol, who's just had surgery, says you have to train the dogs to be collected.

"How do we do that?"

"Bring them to our place, there's always someone in heat there. And I am very good at it," she says.

"Actually, I'm better," pipes up her partner in dog crimes, Ann.

"You're a little rough."

"Some of them prefer that."

Let me remind you, this is a semiprivate room. A thin polyester sheet divides it in half. There is another bed, another woman; I don't know what's happened to her, something worse than open-heart surgery. At which point Carol ups the ante. She describes a Christmas at her house, with dog friends and a few dogs. One of them sees Carol sitting in a chair with a cup of egg-nog in her hand. Dog does the math, comes over to Carol and ejaculates into the cup.

Says Carol: "That's a trained dog. That's what you are shooting for!"

VII.

In his book *The New Work of Dogs,* Jon Katz says dogs work as much as they ever did. But it's a new kind of work. The work of loving us. We are the sheep that drift toward the unmapped darkness at the edge. Dogs bring us back to the meadow. We take the road less traveled and find it hasn't been well maintained. Potholes and ruts. And no Starbucks. We are not Robert Frost after all. Dogs lead us back to a place where we can sit for a moment. Catch our breath. They wait till we're ready to go on.

We wake up early to seize the day. By eleven a.m., the day has soured. Everything is hard.

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The phone rings. That is hard. Or it doesn't ring and that's also hard. Esther is not here and it's hard. Or she's next to me and that is also hard. We love each other but it's work. And sometimes we just don't feel like working.

I don't just want to kill time, I want to take time out back and blow its goddamn head off. Throwing your life away seems like the best idea you've had. But your dog will bring it back, to your hand. Or try to turn the whole thing into a game.

On Wednesday, November 3, 2004, I went to the woods with the dogs. George W Bush had just been reelected. Assuming you think he was elected in the first place. Antigay initiatives had passed in several states. Including Michigan. And now gay people were being blamed for the election.

I walked by trees whose names I didn't know. I walked by the river I had walked by hundreds of times before. Without knowing where the river started or where it emptied into Lake Huron. The night before a friend had called and said she knew I felt bad about everything. But I lived in neighborhood that was full of owls and bats.

Another friend sneered: "Is that what we are supposed to do? Escape into nature?"

I picked a park where the dogs must be leashed. Esther has a reoccurring dream where the dogs are lost. She is also lost but that's not a problem. If she finds the dogs she won't be lost anymore.

I wanted to see if the world was still a place I wanted to be. If I close my eyes, I can see the planes flying into the buildings. Now this. The story keeps taking turns for the worse. And a big part of me just wants it to end.

The river ran by me the way it always does. The peonies never woke up. The trees did not introduce themselves.

I stopped by the river and could not imagine standing up again. The dogs were waiting for me to tell them what happens next. But I could imagine that I was at a dog show, fighting the panic before I enter the ring, a friend's advice in my ear: "Forget about the course, don't run the course. Try to feel your feet."

I don't think I've ever felt my feet. But I could see them. I could see the place they touched the main road.

And drew no conclusions.

VIII.

At the agility trial, you get a map. It's different every time. Same obstacles, different order. I had no idea what I was getting into when I started. It was just for fun. I stayed after it got hard.

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It's a world of women, a few men, but mostly it's women who look like the women my mother was afraid of: the women who "let themselves go." Or the kind of lesbians I didn't want to be: the ones who sat in the woods in circles with guitars.

Most of the women are menopausal. Like me. They put their eggs in one basket, and the eggs are gone. And somebody swiped the basket when they weren't looking.

It's only seven but we have been up for hours, there is so much to do on the morning of the show. First you have to struggle into your body. If it were up to us, we wouldn't have bodies, but it's like the truck, it's needed to haul shit around. Except we love trucks. Not everyone has one, I don't have one, but everyone in this room wants one.

The bodies are tossed into clothes that say: "I just give up." But they don't give up.

These are the women who wanted horses. These are the women who were horses, when their friends were becoming girls.

We're wearing t-shirts that say things like: "Dog needs younger handler." Or: "My border collie is smarter than your honor student." You will see a religious t-shirt occasionally. But I never see anything political. I wouldn't wear my "this is what a feminist looks like" t-shirt in here.

But this is the first generation of women to earn a little money of their own, not a lot, but enough to do this. No one is wearing a skirt. I remember when they first let us wear pants. High school. I remember asking permission to wear pants.

They are hauling in stuff, setting up. Heavy stuff pulled from vans and trucks. Some of the women are bent with age, some of them can barely walk, none of them ask for help. They haul in: every variety of dog containment system, as well as bags full of I don't know what all. But I know what you won't find: No chocolate because chocolate is bad for dogs. No raisins because raisins are bad for dogs. No Advil or Tylenol because that can kill dogs.

The judge is talking to us, telling us to remember, "No matter what happens today, the reason we are here is to have fun!"

What unbelievable horseshit.

Who hauls themselves out of bed at four a.m. on a weekend to have *fun*? No one. These women are like most of the artists I know. Working hard at something that most other people will ignore. They love it but it's work. There's a pleasure in it, but not the primary colors suggested by the word "fun."

"Fun" is what you say to your family, your friends.

Your job is what happens when you are not with your dog.

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Your family, if you have one, recedes into the background. Herded into a small corner of your heart to make room for the big one: you and your dog.

IX.

Dogs live in the present tense. They have memories, good memories. You drive around a corner and the car slows down. They know it's the lake. You haven't been to the lake in two years. How do they know?

They also have a sense of the future. Or at least they know when it's dinnertime.

But mostly they live in the present. Their vocabulary is heavy on verbs, some nouns.

No modifiers. Unfortunately, they are overly fond of the exclamation mark: "Chicken! Snow! Squirrel! Squirrel! Squirrel!"

How can every squirrel be as thrilling as the last?

And then there's: "You! You! You!"

I find it difficult to be in the moment. Oh sure, I have been there a few times.

But I don't see what's so great about it! I think the place I was last night was better.

I think if we kept going we could find a better place. Why settle for the moment?

Dogs live in the moment, and I watch them. I get the gist.

Raissa's on the phone. She's in Ann Arbor and I'm in New York. I tell her, "It's so amazing to be in New York! You go out of the house, something always happens! Comic, tragic, absurd, but something always happens."

Raissa laughs. "Holly, that's just life. That happens everywhere."

"In Ann Arbor?"

In Ann Arbor, I go to City Hall to get dog licenses. And I also have to get a variance to own dogs. That are not Labradors or golden retrievers. I fill out a questionnaire that asks: "Why didn't you get a real dog?" "Don't you know how many dogs there are at the shelter?" "What do you do in bed?"

That is a lie, a big fat lie. Which is a crucial part of any autobiographical monologue.

Why tell your life story if you can't improve on it in some way? That's just lazy, where's the art in that? Or as Tim Miller says: "Everything I'm going to tell you is true. And some of it even happened."

And what I said about Ann Arbor is untrue, another lie. You can have any breed of dog you want. Ann Arbor is a tolerant place. They practice toler-

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ance there without getting really good at it. They will tolerate you having a purebred dog. But not without making that "icky" face they make when they drive by a BP station. And you will practice tolerance, too. When you go to the party and the word gets out you have purebred dogs. And the jokes start in about "eugenics," then about "mutants," and "racism," ending with the "holocaust." You'll laugh along. Otherwise you will have no friends, and you will be tempted to get even more poodles.

x.

My best friend, Raissa, is on the phone. Her voice jagged. Sister, her twelve-and-a-half-year-old malamute, has cancer. It's a slow-growing, nonaggressive tumor. But if they don't take it out, it will take her. That's the word we use. "Take" her.

It could be removed and Sister could have another good year or two. Or even three, why not? Cody made it to fifteen. Or not. Something else could get her next month.

Twelve and a half is old for a big heavy-boned dog like a malamute.

Then there's the money. Thirty-five hundred bucks for the surgery. George is laid off as of last Friday. Again. Raissa's dog training doesn't bring in much. She could put the money together somehow. Some on a card, some from the emergency fund. But what if something else goes wrong? When George was laid off the last time he fell and tore his rotator cuff. Her son comes home with Ds and slams the door. Music. She could put it together, but should she?

Some think the answer is clear, the grief misplaced.

But there's no right answer to this question, just a bunch of hard choices.

Raissa, who grew up with four brothers, named this dog "Sister." Sister led her into a new life in dogs. She cruises around Ann Arbor in the winter, a big sled strapped to the roof of her blue Ford truck, praying for snow. Driving alone for fifteen hours straight is nothing if it has to do with the dogs. Last month she went to northern Minnesota to race with other teams on the frozen Crow River. The bumper sticker on the back brags: "I survived Mushing Boot Camp." Sister has won more championships than I can name and is the beginning of the line that runs through Raissa's other four dogs. Raissa once spun Sister's hair into yarn then knitted a sweater. It must weigh twenty pounds. She says it's never cold enough in Ann Arbor to wear it.

I remember the moment I thought of Raissa as my best friend. It was another phone call. She was telling me how much she likes Brokeback Mountain. She said it's her story, of a taboo love in a harsh landscape. The story

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of her love affair with her lead dog Atka, Sister's son. Atka is big and full of himself. He's too much for a town with so many seminars and stained-glass windows. I think she told me she watched the movie and cried.

And when she said that a hope sprang up inside me: I wanted her always in my life.

Impossible, sentimental. To think that just because you love someone you will always have them in your life.

Don't the dogs teach us this? Dogs bring death into the house. Every week they drop some half-eaten thing at your feet. So happy, proud: "Look what I got for you! Look! Why are you not looking! I saved you the best parts!"

They watch as you pick it up and throw it away.

XI.

Dogs are what happened when we stopped.

When we stayed in one place. A space opened up beside us. And dogs are what happened.

Before this we lived inside a poem. It wasn't like the poems we know today. There were no images to follow that would lead you outside the poem. You were inside the poem or you were not.

The poem was a series of actions. We rhymed with all the other animals. We were there for the same reason the wolves were there. This is what we did. We did the work of wolves.

We stepped outside the poem; for a moment there was a hole where we used to be.

But the poem went on without us and all around us.

We sat down. We had no intention of moving. Like the place belonged us. It's too early to use the word "home." But not too early to say the word "mine."

For one night we were naked and meaningless under the stars. But we couldn't live like that, could we?

We crawled inside another poem, which was more like a story. Prickly with points of view, thick with plots, resistant to any rhyme.

We could call it history if you'd like. The first line of history: "Everything we do makes a mess."

Our first words shatter the night into bright heaps. Our first thoughts are sharp and quick. I know I belong in history, I know I am a predator. I see the bones around my bed.

All of these things are actions. The wolves that can see a squirrel change her mind a mile away see the stopping, the thinking, the breaking, and the knowing. The wolves close in.

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Lucky for us the definition of wolf is the marriage of hunger to fear. But the hunger walks on four long and silver legs, one leg for each letter of the word "fear."

So when a wolf trots out of the poem, comes toward us, instead of running away, she is, by definition, not a wolf, but a dog.

Forget what you heard, we did not make dogs out of wolves. Dogs made us.

A dog sees our stopped, naked lives, sees the mess we are making, and chooses us.

One day she shows up with something in her mouth. She lets us take it from her.

Which no wolf would ever do. She hangs around as we break open the world.

Mouth open, tongue out, and let's call it a smile. Look what she's brought us. The word "home."

She begins to invent us.

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Donna Haraway

Commentary: Agility Is Performance Art

Holly threatens Esther with goats; I threaten Rusten with miniature donkeys. The donkeys remain a fantasy, or at best a few research interviews with miniature donkey people and a stolen moment of eye and hand touch with a silky sorrel jennet or a brown and white spotted wooly jack at the county fair in Sonoma County each summer for the last decade. Maybe these particular brushes of *Homo sapiens* skin and *Equus assinus* coat are mutually companionate, but I doubt it. These diminutive donkeys, whose ancestors hail from Sicily or Sardinia, have no relationship with me, no work in common, no patterns of play, no routines as individuals response-able to me. The donkeys at the county fair are working for a living; they are laborers in the weekend affection-providing and entertainment industry. I respect them and their people for this service, but we do not know each other.

Holly doesn't tell us anything more about the goats. Maybe she has made good on her threats, and goats with dubious dietary habits are capering through her life, munching with her gratitude on that unnecessarily ugly "This is what a feminist looks like" t-shirt. Certainly, I have to agree with her that "a horse is so much more demanding than Jesus,"[1] and goats would do even more to smash the American conventional delusion that sacred and secular are easy to tell apart—or should be teased apart.[2]

But the things Holly and I and our human lovers know in the flesh are the crescent curves of dogs on the couch that fit beings in the household to each other, the flash of dogs running well on an agility course, the pungent smell of dogs splashing in muddy water, the queer pull of dogs into big demanding worlds contained by no home and no family, and the keening agony of loss for dogs dying too soon. It is all of this and more that lands me with Holly in

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the Dog and Pony Show—the show called by its citizens "a life in dogs." The naturalcultural edges and ecotones we live in are called dogland. "We're not pet people. We're dog people. Gradually the people without animals have faded into the background. . . . Dogs made us." Or, as a bumper sticker at one of Cayenne Dog's and my agility trials read, "Back Sunday; feed the kids."

Wanting dogs not children, I kept all my human eggs carefully haploid; but still, that is some joke! Holly and Esther would understand; they left reproduction to the eleventh hour, and Presto the Poodle could have performed with dignity and gusto only if the teaser bitch and vet tech had retired and the hand of a good dog woman held out an inviting cup at a Christmas party. Then, Presto's ejaculate would have been equal to that magic canine fluid sought for his dog Queenie by J. K. Ackerley, the gay British writer who dedicated himself for years to the dog-defined satisfaction of his bitchy Alsatian.[3]

Holly writes like Joanna Russ, and *The Female Man* is one of my favorite books. The four Js in Russ's story could have lived a life in dogs. For example, Russ's delegate to the present from future perfect Whileaway showed up like dogs do in our lives; "Janet Evason appeared on Broadway at two o'clock in the afternoon in her underwear. She didn't lose her head."[4] The world will never be the same again. As Holly wrote, "I also come from another place and time. . . . I come from the place and time where vaginas roamed the earth." This is SF—speculative fabulation, speculative feminism, science fiction. In Holly's tale, the clitoris even gets to play the role of a good herding dog, playing "the eyes and ears of the vagina." Holly tells us that "I come from the place where what I just said makes sense." SF readers in dogland recognize that fact, and my Australian shepherd Cayenne perked up as soon as she heard me read from Holly's text that vaginas are sheep. If that were the case, then I had her permission to read and write rather than go for a good run. In the real-time lavender multispecies Whileaway, "we all lay down under the tattered pink canopy."

Russ would have understood lesbian Tourette syndrome; she practically invented it, probably with Whileaway's genetic technology, and the four Js communicated this unruly speech pattern to my community and its companion species. Holly is raucously infectious. No wonder *The Dog and Pony Show* is actually, relentlessly about dogs and definitely not about nature or culture or alibis or lessons or something else. No one will show up except the "new canine exchange student." Live and die with that. Yes! "Dogs are what happened when we stopped / When we stayed in one place / A space opened up beside us / And dogs are what happened."

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But this is not easy living. A space opening up grinds and cracks everybody who falls into it. A human woman's learning to perform, learning to run, *with* a flesh-and-blood canine partner in the mundane sport of agility makes that clear. Space opening up is not about control or command, but about something harder—response—and perhaps something I'd call obedience to each other if the word "obedience" were not so corrupted. In addition to everybody's getting up before dawn to get to the trial site, a good run requires stopping, tuning, emptying, receiving, offering. *Becoming-with* each other across species-defining difference, partners do not preexist the run. Cartoonist James Liddle, who trains for agility with shelties, got it right. In one of his cartoons, faced with the breakdowns and failures that agility players of both species know all too well, a frustrated inelegant human and a puzzled dog stare at each other across a rule book, while the human intones, "See? Right here! . . . 'The dog and handler form a team.' A TEAM!!!"[5] In your dreams. And then, somehow, in waking reality, just for a moment. Just for time-out-of-time in the space we call open.

Heedlessly, Holly and I both started in the sport of agility for fun; but something else happened to us and to our dogs, something life-changing, something for which dogs and their people train for thousands of hours but cannot make happen, something for which there is no t-shirt, no brand, no formula, no teleology. But there is art, performance art, running not for the cure, not for the goal, but for each other, with each other, dog and human, with skill natural to neither, but skill performed in the flesh, on the course, here, now, inventing these coupled partners, in this run, in this ordinary SF time and place. In a good run, Cayenne shone with what can only be called joy, and so did I. I see Holly and her Norfolk terriers shining that way. I see it when I Google them, running with each other, on YouTube.[6] Joy is not fun; joy knows suffering, bearing, action and passion, failing and risking, pleasure and terror, foolishness and skill, holding and receiving, injury and daring. Holly knows: "It was just for fun. I stayed after it got hard. . . . These women are like most of the artists I know. Working hard at something that most other people will ignore." But that they—we—need.

Holly notices that agility players' bodies and clothes tell anyone who looks that "these are the women who were horses, when their friends were becoming girls." Agility invites transspecies investment, literally. I have lots of t-shirts and sweat shirts that I've worn at agility trails and classes, but I'd hide only two of them from Holly's and Esther's soon-to-arrive hungry goats and my miniature donkeys. Maybe these shirts are political, but the polis is dogland.

The first is a sweatshirt worn by Cayenne's and my team in the US Dog

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Agility Association trial at Santa Rosa, California, in late December of 2009. The sweatshirt is emblazoned with a red and black contemporary Danish anarcho-syndicalist flag, rooted in a late nineteenth-century Italian anarchist banner. A sketch of Emma Goldman looks out on the agility trial from inside a red star. The words "Anarcha Aussies" pulsate in large block print. Our team is six critters of the female persuasion, three canine and three hominid. The dogs, Australian shepherds with a heritage of noninnocent multispecies labor on ranches and in rodeos, are black and white (Ariel), red merle (Cayenne), and red and white (Rubi Rocket); together, they are red and black. With the humans all named some variant of Mary—Mary Schultz, Donna Highstreet, and Donna Haraway—we needed a counter to suffocating signs of Christian virginity, especially in December. Who better than Jewish atheist Emma Goldman to carry our red and black banner to calm our souls with her call for free love, free expression, community, birth control, women's rights, antiwar activism, an end to prisons, and labor solidarity? The banner on our shirt proclaims Emma's credo: "Everyone's right to beautiful, radiant things." Red Emma did not speak lesbian or dog, but she would have learned how from *The Dog and Pony Show*. She needed a tattered pink canopy to set up her crates and treats for the ongoing freedom struggles.

Our Red and Black Emma runs with dogs. In that spirit, Anarcha Aussies run today with contemporary Chilean artist-activists in the working-class area called la Pintana on the edge of Santiago, who have occupied the former town killing-ground for dogs, creating La Perrera Center for Experimental Art. The artists mount an annual festival called Pintacanes for and with street dogs and street people.[7] On streets and on agility fields, dogs are so much more demanding than Jesus.

I got my other goat-proscribed t-shirt from a sociological gerontology association conference, and it has a bold black bar-graph design with the label "broken down by age and sex." The shirt is mouse-eaten, with holes gnawed by a doe who made a nest for her pups in my drawer. Holy and not, this t-shirt has (barely) covered me many times as Cayenne flames over jumps and into weaves. The shirt is a joke, just like "back Sunday, feed the kids." And just like that other quip, the gerontologists' joke appropriated for a good run ricochets into the kind of truth told in dogland. We are indeed broken down by age and sex, full of mouse holes, chewed soft to make a nest for those of whatever species yet to come. They will not be us; we do not reproduce; if we are very lucky, we live and die in humanimal grace.

Cayenne is now almost thirteen years old, and I am sixty-seven, recently equipped by the surgeon with a snazzy new hip. By the time I heal, even if

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the surgeon says I can run again (Question Obedience!), Cayenne will be nearly fourteen. With a murmuring heart, she has mitral valve disease. The canine cardiologist says the MVD is not progressing, but time is murmuring and mice are gnawing. Can miniature donkeys replace a good run? No, joy is not about replacement; joy is about presence, and so it is about that cracking space that multispecies worlds open up. We fall in.

Because "dogs made us," we get to become-with them under multihued tattered canopies. Finite, vulnerable, opportunistic, vivid—terra is full of critters who are not (only) us. This is the only land worthy of love and passion; requiring response-ability, this is the only land where humanimals can have a good run. Holly artfully performed this truth: "Don't the dogs teach us this? Dogs bring death into the house . . . 'Look what I got for you! Look! Why are you not looking! I saved you the best parts!'"

Companion species, with bread, at table together, messmates: "A dog sees our stopped, naked lives / sees the mess we are making / and chooses us." "yes I said yes I will Yes."[8] Presto!

NOTES

1. Quoted passages without endnotes are all from Holly Hughes, *The Dog and Pony Show (bring your own pony).*

2. Suzy McKee Charnas wrote the feminist science fiction that ecstatically and reproductively coupled the freedom-inventing Riding Women of the Grassslands and horses in ways Jesus (and horses) might have found alarming, but Holly and I might both have taught. I did. Divisions in feministland break down on humanimal lines. My feminist theory graduate seminars in the early1980s divided into factions over women-horse loves, even literary ones. See Suzy McKee Charnas, *Motherlines* (New York: Berkeley Books, 1979).

3. J. R. Ackerley, *My Dog Tulip* (1956; New York: New York Review of Books Classics, 1999) is one of the funniest stories of sex and reproduction in English literature. It is also very moving, as is Presto's adventure in late-life assisted sex. Sixteen-year companionships are like that.

4. Joanna Russ, *The Female Man* (New York: Bantum, 1975), 4.

5. James Liddle, *Agility Trials and Tribulations* (Franklin, NY: Howln Moon Press, 2000).

6. Holly and Ready at the Companion Dog Training Club, May 30, 2010, running in Excellent B class, standard run, four-inch jump height. They got a coveted "Q"; that is, a qualifying score. See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxA9F6Z5bMw (accessed June 11, 2012).

7. See http://perrerarte.blogspot.com/2008/06/pintacanes.html (accessed June 11, 2012). Artist and scholar Lissette Olivares introduced me to Pintacanes and the Mapuche indigenous word "quiltro" for a mixed breed of small furry dogs. Connoting racial and species mongrel hybridity, the term "kiltro" is applied today disparag-

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ingly to street dogs, street people, and mixed-race or indigenous people. In response, in la Pintana's world of Pintacanes, kiltros of both species and all genders now work with feminists, anarchists, and artists for a good run at freedom and reinvented kinship. See Lissette Olivares and Cheto Castellano, *Kiltr@*, DVD, 25 min., for dOCUMENTA (13) (Sin Kabeza Productions, 2012).

8. With barking thanks to James Joyce for Molly Bloom's soliloquy in *Ulysses* (New York: Egoist Press, 1922). Molly's "Yes" is the last word in this incomparable novel. Except for the period at the end of Molly/Penelope's enormous sentence, there is no punctuation in Molly's rhythmic embrace of life and death. Presto earned an exclamation point, but only at midnight at a lesbian Christmas party.

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Stacy Makishi in *Stay!*.
Photo by Vicky Ryder.

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by Vicky Ryder, Lisa Asagi, and Stacy Makishi

Stay!

A dog is barking. The set is comprised of a long dinner table with two chairs on either side. The table has a bed sheet spread onto it like a tablecloth. There are two feather pillows placed on opposite sides of the table lengthwise. On each pillow there is one of a pair of black leather gloves and a large butcher's knife. Stage right there is a ladder with two pairs of shoes on the "feet" of the ladder. One pair of shoes belongs to George; the other pair belongs to Liz. Preset down center stage are two red boot-cleaning brushes.

George and Liz are on stage.

LIZ: What a dump!

She drops her handbag.

GEORGE: What now?

LIZ: I'm Elizabeth Taylor doing Bette Davis. From that film, you know the one?

GEORGE: No, I don't know.

LIZ *(snaps her fingers at George):* Down.

George goes down on hands and knees. Liz sits on George's back and removes her boots.

LIZ: You do know. We've watched it together. Come on, think!

GEORGE: What's that smell? Smells like chicken.

Dog barking fades out.

LIZ: What happened to the black dog?

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Liz kneels down and places both hands into the boots.

GEORGE: I don't know what happened.

George stands up and takes the two knives that are on the table. She begins to sharpen the knives. George places the sharpened knives onto the pillows.

"That's Me without You" by Al Bowlly fades in. George picks up the script to read the monologue. Liz, still on her hands and knees with the boots worn up to her elbows, begins to slowly assume the pose of a dog.

GEORGE *(reading as though reading a police report):* At 3:37 a.m. police were called to a residence on Black Dog Lane. A neighbor had reported hearing shouting and hysterical screaming. When officers arrived at the crime scene, the house was in complete disarray. The record player was playing "That's Me without You." There were wine bottles piled up to the ceiling and dog feces shaped into obscure structures. Feathers were strewn everywhere. Kitchen knives were scattered throughout the house. On the table, there was a drawing in charcoal of a black dog. There appeared to have been a struggle. The window was broken. In the corner of the room the television was playing the Elizabeth Taylor film *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

Music: "That's Me without You" fades out.

GEORGE: A wolf?

LIZ: No, a dog.

GEORGE: Whatever happened to the black dog?

George picks up a boot brush and begins to brush her shoe.

LIZ: I used to live across the street from the meanest dog in town. His owner called him Charlie, but everyone knew him as Manson. Some people said he was the devil himself, but not me. No, I believed that deep down inside all dogs were good. All they needed was the right master. All they needed was a top dog!

Liz raises her arm with the boot and slams it back down, then scratches the boot with the brush like a scratching dog.

LIZ: So, one day I went over there with a packet of baloney. As I walked down the darkened lane, I heard a menacing growl behind me. It was him, it was Manson. I turned around and chucked a slab of baloney at him. He gobbled it up and inched closer to me. I held up another slab *(she begins to raise the boot again),* but this time, I made him wait. *(She motions "stop" with the boot on her hand.)* I made him look at me.

Then, I dropped it at my foot *(she slams the boot on the floor and grabs the boot brush)* and commanded, "Leave!"*(She appears to want to scratch the boot with the brush but "leaves.")* "Leave!" *(She still wants to scratch the boot with the boot but resists—"leaves.")* The next command I taught him

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was to stay. *(She puts the brush down.)* And before you know it, that dog would Leave! and Stay! on my command. I trained him good. He was a good dog. My good dog. Well, it was getting dark and I needed to go home. But when I stood to leave, Manson growled, "Stay." *(She places the boot onto the chair leg.)* So I sat. *(She sits.)* And I stayed. And I stayed. And I stayed.

GEORGE *(clicks her fingers as if Liz is a dog):* Hey! Now, listen to me. I've got all day.

George takes the boot from Liz's arm and places it on the leg of her own chair and sits.

And we're going to stay right here until you tell me what happened to the black dog.

During this section, film noirstyle music is playing while Liz performs in a "film noir manner," as though she's Elizabeth Taylor playing Bette Davis.

LIZ: That's right, I collared her. Like a mutt in a cage. But don't get me wrong, she knows her part in all this. She was there for the taking. Like the little doggie in the window, the one with the waggly tail. Well, she was wagging, all right. She was asking for it. She wanted me to take her: to take the lead. I could have killed her in the beginning. She fell in love with me in the end. I can hear her listening; she always looks like she's listening. But she's not.

George is clipping her fingernails.

Darling, if you're listening, make me a drink. And make it dry. You know I'm under the weather.

Liz sits and rests her head on the pillow.

GEORGE: She's under the weather. Underwater. Born under the sign of water. Pisces the fish or Aquarius the water bearer, but she can't bear water. She has hydrophobia, a morbid fear of water. It's raining outside and that's why we can't leave the house.

Drink, darling?

LIZ: Make it dry, darling?

George puts on her black glove (the left side) and brings out a martini set. She mixes the martini and pours it over her gloved hand into the glass.

LIZ: I'm dry. Dry and yearning . . . yearning to get wet. Yearning for someone to take me, take the lead. Outside it's raining, oh, it's drenched, but inside I'm a desert. I'm goddamn Tucson, Arizona. And no one's going anywhere. And I mean nowhere, until this rain lets up!

GEORGE *(places olives in glass):* Olive, darling? One or two?

LIZ: Two.

She makes the number two with her fingers and then pretends it's a cigarette.

LIZ: That's right, just the two of us. A couple of doggone fools. Locked up in this cage for seventeen years. What is that in dog years? That's . . . seventeen

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times seven, carry the four. *(She begins to count on her all her fingers.)* What does she do when I'm asleep? Does she leave or does she stay?

GEORGE *(dog command):* Stay!

LIZ: Good dog. Faithful to the end. I could have killed her in the beginning. She fell in love with me in the end. We met at the dance. I took her home, to this house. Then came the rain. Day after day. Raining cats and dogs. No cats! Just dogs. *(Liz moves to the ladder.)* She followed me up the stairs and into my bed. She made an impression in the mattress that only her body could fill. And then came the black dog.

Liz howls. The sound of dogs howling fades in. Film noir music fades out.)

GEORGE: Come on now, you're too old to be doing this. Let's have a drink. You look very dry.

George gives her a martini. They drink.

LIZ: I want a double. I mean, a body double. All the Hollywood stars had body doubles. I bet Elizabeth Taylor had a body double.

GEORGE: Yeah, but I bet she drank all of her own drinks.

Liz reaches into her handbag and finds a chicken drumstick. She eats and gesticulates with the drumstick like Elizabeth Taylor in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

LIZ: Hold on, I think I've got it. Wasn't Elizabeth Taylor in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and *Lassie Come Home*?

GEORGE: Yes, I think Lassie was her first film.

LIZ: George, I think I'm on to something . . . Wasn't Elizabeth Taylor also a dual citizen, just like me?

GEORGE: Yes, I believe she was.

LIZ *(eating chicken):* And she was a Pisces, just like me!

GEORGE: Where exactly is this going?

LIZ *(still eating):* Was Lassie a Pisces?

GEORGE: Oh, dear God . . . take me now.

LIZ: Was he American?

GEORGE: Actually, he was a she. And she was Scottish.

LIZ: No, he wasn't a Scottie, he was a collie.

GEORGE: I said, he was a she. You know, a Scottish lass. Lassie *(pauses to drink).* Hey, did you know that they actually used a boy dog to play her?

LIZ: What? That's disgusting. Lassie had a body double? I want a double!

GEORGE: Another double with two olives!

LIZ: Nobody in performance art has a body double. Do they? I wonder if Split Britches have body doubles? But that would be a body double divided in half . . .

GEORGE *(interrupts):* I could have killed her in the beginning. I fell in love

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with her in the end. I can hear her listening; she always looks like she's listening, but she's not.

Liz holds her chicken bone in her mouth as she pours Cheerios into tin bowls.

GEORGE: She's under the weather. I can tell she is under the weather because she keeps telling me that I look under the weather. She'll tell you that I'm the one that's ill, but really it's her. It's always her. It's always about her. She's the sun in the sky and the moon on the water. I keep telling her to go . . . Leave me and have a life, but she won't leave me. The last time I told her to go, she brought down her suitcase and unpacked it. Me—I don't even own a suitcase. The only one I had was the one I bought for that Mexican cruise that ended like the *Titanic.* And let me tell you, we felt lucky to make it out of there alive. And now, a century later, we're still here. Ruled by time. Her time. My lists. Day after day. And now she's telling me that she doesn't know where the black dog is. I don't know where it is. All I know is that she is the sun in the sky. The moon on the water.

LIZ: Dinner!

Liz slams down two plates filled with Cheerios onto the table. Liz and George sit at the further ends of the dinner table. They fixate on the food. They stare suspiciously at each other as if they are locked into in a strange game for the food.

GEORGE: What did you do today?

LIZ: I wrote in my diary.

GEORGE: I wrote in my diary.

LIZ: I wrote my to-do list.

GEORGE: I wrote my to-do list.

LIZ: I looked out the window, sharpened knives, and put on a black glove.

Liz quickly puts on her black leather glove. She wears the right side. George is already wearing the left.

GEORGE: I put on a black glove.

George is satisfied as she tops Liz.

LIZ: I mopped up water.

GEORGE: I poured water.

LIZ: I walked to the window and drew the curtains . . .

GEORGE: Did you see anything?

LIZ: No, not a sign.

GEORGE: I thought I heard something.

LIZ: I heard something.

GEORGE: You did?

LIZ *(draws her George in):* Definitely.

GEORGE: I don't believe you.

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A pause. George doesn't fall for Liz's trick.

LIZ: I watched the dance contest on TV.

GEORGE: I signed us up for the dance contest.

George quickly makes a grab for the knife on the pillow. Liz grabs her knife, threatening George to drop the knife.

LIZ: Leave! Leave!

George places her knife under her pillow. George begins to crawl onto the table, keeping an eye on both Liz and the Cheerios.

LIZ: Stay. Stay.

Liz crawls onto the table, and when they are both just hovering over the plates Liz continues.

LIZ: Okay. Go!

Liz and George are on the table eating their food like two savage dogs. Liz muscles her way onto George's plate and begins to eat George's food. She even tries to eat the food from George's mouth. They keep trying to vie for "top dog" position till Liz tops George, her neck locked over George's to establish dominance. Liz pushes George backward off the table.

LIZ: Aren't you going to finish that, dear?

GEORGE: No, I'm not very hungry.

George submits while Liz eats hungrily off both plates. She licks the plates like a dog. George watches her in disgust. George reaches under her pillow. It appears that she's going for the knife, but instead she takes out her diary.

GEORGE: Dear Diary, We met at the boarding gate for a Mexican cruise. I was organizing the movement of luggage onto the ship. It wasn't my job, I just couldn't help myself. She had mislaid a suitcase, and I organized its golden retrieval. I knew that my life would never be the same after that. I knew that she would never have to concern herself with the movement of luggage again.

LIZ: Dear Diary, How I wish we could go back to the days of that Mexican cruise. Now, I don't remember whether I jumped or she pushed. All I know is that I fell overboard for her. Man overboard!

GEORGE: When the ship ran aground in the middle of the night, in all the chaos and confusion, she jumped into the water and started swimming north; at least I think it was north. I can't be sure of those details.

LIZ: Man overboard. In high seas. In high season. A dog in season. I'm in season. Follow my scent. Take me doggy style. Take me like a great dame. Liz Taylor.

Dog on a hot tin roof. Ruff.

GEORGE: In the black ink of ocean and sky I heard my voice ring out . . .

LIZ: "Man overboard!"

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GEORGE: It bounced over the waves until it reached her. "Wait!" I said. "There is no cause for alarm." She turned in the water and swam toward my voice. She swam toward me. All the while knowing that true north was in the opposite direction.

LIZ: Overboard! It's over. We're bored.

George is angry with Liz. Liz gets off the table and picks up the ukulele. She attempts to sing the first few lines of "That's Me without You." Her gloved hand can only strum. The left hand can't "fret" the chords. Her voice keeps trying to find the pitch, but the ukulele's sound never changes. It's apparent that her gloved hand can only strum. She looks to George, who is still angry and ignores her. She can't find the tune.

LIZ *(singing the first line of "That's Me without You": she still can't find the pitch):* "Think of a flower without any rain . . ." George?

GEORGE *(still angry):* Yes.

LIZ *(seems to be suggesting a game):* Is it time yet?

GEORGE: No, not yet.

Liz places the ukulele under the table and seems to be titillated by a strange ritual.

LIZ: Is it time for the dance contest?

GEORGE: Stay. Stay. Stay. Okay, go.

LIZ: Hot dog!

Honky-tonk-style music plays. Liz and George dance toward the ladder like two dogs with their hands out like paws. George then pulls the ladder backward, which makes the shoes under the "feet" of the ladder judder up and down. George dances up the ladder with a jug of martinis. Liz places a martini glass at the foot of the ladder. Liz freezes in a dance pose. Honky-tonk music cuts out. George begins to pour from the top of the ladder, the entire jug of martinis, slowly into the martini glass on the floor.

GEORGE: The dance contest. I made it up. Please don't tell her. It's my way of having her near me, moon on my water, sun in my sky.

Romantic instrumental music begins to play.

GEORGE: I'll do anything I can to keep her near me, and I mean anything . . . even closing my eyes, even telling her to leave.

When I was eight years old, I almost drowned . . . in a glass of water, in the middle of Christmas dinner. She loves to hear that story. It makes her toes curl. It makes her look at me. And when the story is over, we feel so happy, so happy to be alive.

George assumes a high-dive position as if to dive into the martini glass below. As she's just about to jump, we go to blackout, and we hear the sound of the bounce off the diving board and the splash into the glass. Blackout. Ominous

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music called "Black Dog" begins to play. George crosses left to her chair in the dark. She takes the boot from the chair leg, sits, and breathes into the boot like an oxygen mask. Liz stands at the ladder and drinks the martini that George has poured from on top of the ladder. Liz walks to George and snatches the boot from her face and throws it behind the table. Liz takes the pulse on George's neck.

LIZ: It's nursing time.

George assumes a position from Paula Rego's painting The Family. *Her head is tossed back with her eyes in a trance. Liz takes her pulse.*

LIZ: She's under the weather. She's under my weather. She says I'm like a weather system. A natural disaster. A cyclone, a cyclops, a hurricane. But really I'm Mother Theresa.

Liz pushes George's legs apart. She stands in between George's legs, then pushes George's chair back onto two legs.

LIZ: And here I am in the middle of Calcutta. *(Liz raises George's trouser leg up and pushes her fist into George's trouser leg.)* Calcutta. I could a.*With her fist still up George's trouser legs, Liz begins to hump George's leg fast like a dog.*

LIZ: I could have been somebody if I didn't like to nurse. I could have been somebody if I didn't like to mop the floors. I could have been somebody if I didn't like to rub you down. I could have been somebody if I didn't like to spoon-feed.

Liz falls to the ground on all fours in the manner of the Paula Rego painting Bad Dog. *She twists her body, like a dog lifting its leg to urinate, on George.*

GEORGE *(after a long pause):* She likes to take her pleasure silently, like some kind of insect: like a flea or a mosquito, but she only leaves behind the smallest mark of visitation. She doesn't like to give what's asked for, so I always close my eyes, for her, and sometimes when I wake up, I itch around the ankles.

Liz holds this pissing pose for a long time. They wait in silence.

LIZ: George?

GEORGE: Yes?

LIZ: Is it time yet?

GEORGE: No, not yet.

LIZ: Is it time for the dance contest?

GEORGE: No. Hold it. Stay. Stay. Stay. Okay, go.

Honky-tonk music plays.

LIZ: Hot dog!

Liz and George dance once again toward the ladder like two dogs, with their hands held out like paws.

LIZ *(yells to audience):* If you think that's great, wait till you see this!

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Liz puts on a swim cap. George gets a jug of martinis and dances up the ladder. Liz lies down at the foot of the ladder. She yells up to George, who is at the top of the ladder with the jug.

LIZ: Make it dry, baby! As dry as you can!

George waves down to Liz. Honky-tonk music cuts out. Liz begins to sing "That's Me without You" as George pours the martini into her mouth from the top of the ladder. Liz tries to sing and drink at the same time. It sounds like a gargle.

LIZ *(singing):* "Picture a flower without any rain. And picture a songbird without a refrain. Think of a lifetime of living in vain . . . That's me without you!"

Liz continues to sing as the entire jug is poured into her mouth. She finishes the song. Liz sits up from the floor and dries herself. George climbs down the ladder and notices that the floor is wet with a huge mess. She points at the mess and reprimands Liz as if she were a dog who made a mess.

GEORGE: Who did this? Who did this? Who did this? Who did this? Who did this? Who did this?

The questioning becomes bullying. Liz is on her hands and knees, embarrassed, tail between her legs. George crosses left to her chair. Liz falls to the ground and pants like the dog in Paula Rego's painting Sleeper *throughout George's monologue. George reads from her diary, which is tucked under her pillow.*

GEORGE: Dear Diary, I'm still here. It's storming inside. A flash flood, wiping all of civilization away. And we're trapped inside, running out of gin and tonic, ale and air. We're coal miners in a collapsed relationship. The canary is dead and no one knows we're here anymore. Not even us.

LIZ: And, it's all your fault!

Liz throws her swimming cap off her head. She crosses left to George. Music "Black Dog" begins to play. George assumes a reclining pose, as in Paula Rego's painting Bride. *Liz takes out a tray with towels and shaving cream.*

LIZ: Now, I told you that I was under the weather . . .

Liz places a black barber's cape over George.

LIZ: And now look what I've done.

Liz sprays a very large amount of shaving cream onto her gloved hand.

LIZ: But it wasn't my fault. It was the black dog.

"Black Dog" fades out. Liz puts shaving cream all over George's face.

LIZ: It started off as a silly game. A game of chance with blindfolds and sharpened knives. But now, I've gone too far. Far. A long, long way to run.

Liz crosses downstage right and sees a dog in the distance. She begins to act like she's Elizabeth Taylor in Lassie Come Home.

LIZ: Lassie, come home! Come home to Mama!

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Liz looks over at George and is suddenly terrified at what she's about to do.
LIZ: Oh my God!
She covers her mouth with her gloved hand. Foreboding film noir Music plays. The gloved hand chokes her neck as though it is threatening her.
LIZ: Do nothing and everything will be done? But the deed was done. Before I even did it!
The gloved hand reaches under the pillow and takes hold of the knife.
LIZ: Well done, like a steak turned to charcoal.
She clenches the sharp blade and runs it through her hand.
LIZ: The table with the black dog drawn in charcoal! I drew it!
She picks up the feather pillow and begins to sharpen the knife on the pillow, as in the Paula Rego painting The Soldier's Daughter. *She then holds the pillow as though it were a hostage.*
LIZ: Draw! With my own hand!
She threatens the audience down center.
LIZ: Draw! Finger to the trigger.
She threatens the audience down left.
LIZ: Draw! The curtains to the window!
She threatens the audience down right.
LIZ: Turn away! Lock the door! Pull the trigger!
Liz slits the feather pillow with the knife.
LIZ: Call the cops! *(She drops the knife.)* No. Shut up. Go over your lines.
Liz crosses right to left stage with the feather pillow. Feathers fall.
LIZ: Hello, Officer, something terrible has happened. You see, I've been under the weather lately. I just couldn't see straight. I've been seeing double. That's right! It was my body double. Yeah, she broke into my house and has done a terrible, terrible thing! Get a grip. Take a pill. Take a pillow.
She takes hold of the pillow and approaches George.
LIZ: Now, take a deep breath.
George sees that she is about to be smothered. Liz smothers George with the gutted pillow. The pillow completely envelops George's head. George struggles, but Liz overpowers her until she appears dead. Liz takes the pillow off George's head, and the white feathers stick to the shaving cream. Her entire head is feathered. George looks like a giant fluffy white poodle. The film noir music is coming to a climax as Liz takes out George's knife. Liz grabs George by the hair and exposes her neck. Her hand is shaking as it appears that she is about to slit George's throat. Instead she begins to tenderly shave the feathers off George with the knife. Foreboding film noir music slowly fades out. Liz shaves George and is in a constant battle with herself in the monologue.

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LIZ *(shaves George with the knife):* The black dog, I made it up, please don't tell her. It's my way of keeping her close to me. I want her close to me, but out of my way. It's my way or the highway. So hit the road . . . Come back! Back off! Give me space, but don't be distant. And after a lifetime of the same old housebroken-broken-record rituals, here we are . . . She's the sun in my sky, moon on my water.

Sad instrumental fade-in. Liz moves to center. She attempts and pushes herself to cry real tears. She tries to perform Elizabeth Taylor's last scene in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

LIZ: Lassie, come home, girl. Now whenever you look at me there is no Lassie left in your eyes. Lassie, come back. Long for me. Want me. Wag for me. Beg for me. Speak for me. Jump for me. Fetch for me. Leave. Stay! Heel for me . . . no, don't heal, stay sick. Go on, play dead. Roll over into the next life. No, I didn't mean that. Oh my God, I think I've gone too far. Oh, I didn't mean to . . . why, oh why . . .

Why did you have to?

Liz's cry turns into a tantrum.

LIZ *(to the audience):* I know what you're all thinking. You're thinking, "Oh my, she's not a very good actor." Well, I may not be a good actor, but I'm a great performance artist! That's right, an Artist, baby!

George begins to wipe the feathers off her face. She cleans her glasses and begins to pour herself a martini. Liz continues to have a huge tantrum, crying and kicking her legs.

LIZ: It's not fair! All I wanted was a goddamn body double, somebody cute who could take the blame.

George walks over to Liz with an empty martini glass and a full jug. George stands over the crying Liz and looks as though she's about to offer to fill Liz's glass but instead empties the entire jug onto Liz's head.

GEORGE *(gestures a toast to the audience):* To your very good health.

Liz is soaked. She sits on the floor staring out the window.

LIZ: Hey, George . . .

GEORGE: Yes.

LIZ: I think the rain's stopped.

George takes out the ukulele. Her gloved hand can only fret the chords, she doesn't strum. She begins to sing "That's Me without You." George sings.

GEORGE: "Think of a flower without any rain and picture the songbird without a refrain . . . Picture a lifetime of living in vain . . . That's me without you."

George pauses to see if Liz will join her. Liz gets up slowly and walks over to

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George. George's glove frets the chords while Liz's gloved hand strums. They play the ukulele and sing one more verse, together.

"Think of a flower without any rain and picture the songbird without a refrain . . . Picture a lifetime of living in vain . . . That's me without you."

Blackout. The end.

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Marla Carlson

Commentary: What Happened to the Black Dog?

There comes a time near the ending or not-ending of a long-term relationship, a time after both partners have settled into routines that bore them, when at least one partner wonders whether she will resign to the inertia or go on to something else, whether the wish to stay derives from love, fear, or laziness. *Stay!* likens such partners to "coal miners in a collapsed relationship," and its two performers rehearse the ways in which some of us rehearse love: through the formulas of doggy obedience training and film noir. Who's the master? Who takes the lead? Is a relationship more than habit—or, perhaps, is habit both enough for and essential to a happy life? The piece's pastiche of Elizabeth Taylor's films and Paula Rego's paintings puts its sources' animal metaphors not only into play but also into productive conversation. Rather than simply creating and living out a new binary (master versus dog), these two women shift around, alternating in the roles of human and dog. At other times they become dogs together: on hands and knees atop the table, faces ravening in cereal bowls.

Stay!'s opening scene plays with the boot polishing depicted in Paula Rego's painting *The Policeman's Daughter* (1987). As John McEwen writes, in Rego's painting, "the jack-boot strikes forward as if caught up in a march; the raking street-light is as pitiless as a searchlight. [. . .] The girl polishes the phallic boot. Her arm is rammed into it almost up to her shoulder. The window is open, but it offers no means of escape. The view from it is as empty, and as hopeless, as the interior."[1] A stage direction in *Stay!* says that Liz *"scratches the boot with the brush like a scratching dog."* And in a video of the performance, Liz (Stacy Makishi) and George (Jack Russell) can be seen kneeling together, each with an arm inside a boot, raising and then slam-

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ming down the pair in unison.[2] Observing that the submissive domestic task of boot cleaning (if not quite licking) also features the girl's "violating hand" and "muscular arm . . . brutally rammed" into the boot, which is "all that remains of the man in this enclosed space," Maria Manuel Lisboa analyzes the image in relation to the authoritarian Portuguese culture in which Rego spent her early years: "The submissive daughter, busily going about the domestic activities which sustain the father's career, becomes the raping demoness who breaks every last taboo, and who, disturbingly, does so while paradoxically continuing to fill the role of angel in the house."[3] McEwen, though, draws attention to the animal in this painting: "The confined girl's predicament is symbolized by the cat: the outside world of the night calls, but the cat cannot respond; it, too, is trapped."[4] I take as emblematic *Stay!*'s erasure of that particular animal. Liz and George could leave if they wished to, either through the open window or more conventionally through a door. But as Liz says, "Then came the rain. Day after day. Raining cats and dogs. No cats! Just dogs." These two are not cats confined to the house but tussling dogs who choose to stay. The image accompanying the script in this collection (see fig. 1) mimics *Girl Lifting Her Skirt to a Dog* (1986), in which McEwen sees the "frustration and anger that often smoulders within relationships based on dependency of one sort or another. The dog looks blank, the girl is angry; she is, at one and the same time, willing the dog to react and jeering at him for his inability to do so."[5] Photographer Vick Ryder has switched around the painting's viewpoint. Rather than seeing a dog's profile and the girl's angry face, we view Makishi's back as she lifts her skirt to a menagerie of taxidermy specimens—all of them hoofed species of prey.

Liz intermittently channels Elizabeth Taylor, through whom she plays with both the George of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and the eponymous collie of *Lassie Come Home.* Note that the character designation is not Richard (Burton): "George" serves as a placeholder for whoever "Liz" needs her to be, at some times making her a dog- surrogate. The *Woolf* material in *Stay!* initially conjures for me an image of Albee's George as the dog in that relationship, patient and well trained, barely yelping as he endures Martha's teasing and abuse. Poor George, tail tucked between his legs, biding his time as Martha seduces one of the puppies they've brought home (Nick), with the Honey-puppy cast as the runt, dominated and shut out of the game. Upon further reflection, though, George appears to be controlling Martha as she goes through *her* tricks: *Roll over, Martha. Play bitch. Fetch the daddy stories, fetch our made-up son—let's play catch with that one, it's the most fun. But we don't play with it when there are puppies in the house!* George obliterates this

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favored toy because Martha doesn't play by the rules. He teaches his bad dog a lesson.

Like Albee's Martha, Liz also channels Bette Davis. This persona draws *Stay!* into a film noir ambience, turning George into a detective. She describes a crime scene in Black Dog Lane, wreckage that might be the cumulative aftermath of Rego's paintings. Seemingly unable to resist the scenario, Liz reenacts this domestic violence. She begins with *The Family* (1988), which Mick Brown describes well: "A man in a suit sits on the edge of a bed. A woman . . . is holding up his arm and apparently taking his pulse, while her other arm appears to be smothering his mouth and nose; a girl . . . stands in front of him between his splayed legs."[6] I first read this confusing and disturbing image as an inversion of child sexual abuse, perhaps a vision of justified revenge. The violence is typical of Rego's "girls," although critics do not always sympathize with them. Lisboa observes that Rego's "serially violent young female protagonists progress from attacks on dogs to crimes against humans, in particular in the family."[7] I'll have more to say about this image later, but note here that *Stay!*'s version is from the start less malignant because George is not a man and Liz is not a girl. Moreover, although I see a mordant humor in Rego's work, *Stay!* is funny outright. As George slumps in a chair, inert, Liz moves through the active positions that *The Family* depicts. A pulse check gives way to a stance between splayed legs. Liz extends this moment into doglike leg humping, her fist up George's trouser leg, while she verbalizes her frustrated ambitions. The final complaint, "I could have been somebody if I didn't like to spoon-feed," brings her to the floor in Rego's *Bad Dog* (1994) position. As she lifts her leg on George, though, the tables turn. Instead of being degraded, George revives to deliver a kind of non sequitur punch line that equates habitual sexual violation by Liz to an insect bite: "She likes to take her pleasure silently, like some kind of insect: like a flea or a mosquito, but she only leaves behind the smallest mark of visitation. She doesn't like to give what's asked for, so I always close my eyes, for her, and sometimes when I wake up, I itch around the ankles." Liz "holds this pissing pose for a long time," responding to George's commands to "Stay. Stay. Stay. Okay, go."

When the piece returns to Rego's images later, Liz gives in to her noir compulsion and slathers George's face with shaving cream. She then sharpens her big kitchen knife on a pillow, slits the pillow rather than the goose held by *The Soldier's Daughter* (1987), and finally shoves the pillow onto George's face. What begins as smothering turns to shaving, with feathers as whiskers and the knife doing the razor's work from Rego's *Untitled* (1984).

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Lisboa notes "the dog's gritted teeth" and the uncertainty as to whether the girl is shaving the dog or cutting his throat.[8] McEwen reads the shaving as "the clue, if any were needed, that this is no baby but an invalid, a man in the guise of a dog."[9] Indeed, Rego has said that these six pastels from 1984 are "about" her husband, who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1966. She explains that "you have to hurt the dog in order to give him his medicine," and "there's often a violence in trying to help people. I even dressed one little girl up as a little fascist girl. I did like doing them very much indeed."[10] Rego painted *The Family* in the year that her husband died, and her original title, *The Raising of Lazarus,* points to her own interpretation of the scene depicted: "the woman is, in fact, dressing the man; the girl standing between his legs is rubbing herself against him, trying to excite him sexually in the hope it might bring him to life." Rego ends by noting that "of course, it didn't" and considers this a "shame."[11]

Although for Rego these images refer to her life with the painter Victor Willing, a biographical explanation does not exhaust their resonance. They also speak to her experience more broadly conceived: as a woman, as a citizen, as a human being. As she puts it, "I can only understand ideas in terms of human relationships—I don't understand political abstractions."[12] The aspects of human relationship that she depicts have political significance and are capable of translation into forms other than the experiences that she happens to have lived through. *Stay!* performs just this sort of translation. Its shaving scene leads into a revision of Taylor's final scene in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?,* but she addresses her weepy monologue to Lassie rather than to George or the imaginary son that George has killed off. The child was imagined in order to fill the void at the heart of this marriage and perhaps within each of the partners. One can hardly help thinking that they might have been better off with a collie. George and Martha are not actual people but dramatic figures, of course, which facilitates *Stay!*'s smooth slide from one phantasm to the next.

The impulse toward biographical explanation turns human as well as nonhuman characters into easy-to-read (if not very satisfying) metaphors. George and Martha's alcoholic, abusive, wit-ridden marriage has often been understood as a barely disguised representation of a gay male relationship—an interpretation that Albee not only rejects as overly reductive but expressly forbids in the casting for productions. Una Chaudhuri notes that audiences and critics find comfort in reading the extramarital love affair in Albee's more recent *The Goat; or, Who is Sylvia* (2000) as a stand-in for homosexuality, enabling them to elide the storyline's explicit reference to interspecies sex.[13] Whatever else may be going on, the goat Sylvia offers to

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Albee's protagonist Martin an emotional fulfillment not available in his human relationships. Like Martha's imaginary son, Martin's goat compensates for a lack. That Albee centers each of these plays on a dysfunctional heterosexual marriage may represent his comment on the inadequacy of such arrangements, but that comment does not exhaust the plays' meanings any more than Paula Rego's biography provides a fully adequate explanation for her paintings.

The two women of *Stay!* are trapped within a sexual economy that they might have expected to have little to do with their relationship. The structures of heterosexuality have formed the imaginary from which they draw their sources, but at the same time they—and their sources—push back against all the edges of those structures. I think of Paula Rego's endless drawing, begun as a child trapped within the polite structures of a very "proper" upper-class Portuguese household, itself trapped within a police state. Playing with the structures provides a sort of escape without the necessity of leaving. I would propose that *Stay!*'s conversation between Elizabeth Taylor's film roles and Rego's dog-women (as well as dog-nurturing girls) brings us new and more varied models for relationship. *Stay!* moves toward a doggy aesthetic, beyond the butch-femme aesthetic exemplified for Sue-Ellen Case by the work of these performers' mentors, Peggy Shaw and Lois Weaver.[14]

The question remains, what does any of this have to do with animals? Rego's dogs function metaphorically, although I note for her at least one Lassie-type experience (in 1963, their dog ran home to alert Paula that her husband had suffered a heart attack), and her early collage *Stray Dogs (The Dogs of Barcelona)* (1965) makes reference to actual cruelty to actual dogs while also commenting on the authoritarian governments in Portugal and Spain.[15] Chaudhuri notes that by "refusing the animal its radical otherness by ceaselessly troping it and rendering it a metaphor for humanity, modernity erases the animal even as it makes it discursively ubiquitous."[16] The dogs of *Stay!* are not dogs, although they have likely learned some parts of being human from dogs.[17]

So: whatever happened to the black dog? After nursing my own black dog, Oso, through liver failure in a month of 2008, I had to make the decision to end his life. As I was writing this essay, my niece Lisa called to talk through the same situation with her black dog, Ruby. These decisions bring into sharp relief our absolute responsibility for our companion animals, our unbearable power to make such choices. We rehearse love and loss, and each relationship is a rehearsal for the next—whether that relationship is with another human or another species of creature. The first time that I watched the video of *Stay!*, my nonblack dog Hercules was roused by the sound of

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barking. Usually he pays no attention to those sounds when I'm watching a movie. But he came running to investigate. When his nose overruled his ears and informed him that there was nothing doing, he resorted to his usual way of enjoying video entertainment with me: he brought me his big nylon bone, and I held one end while he chewed the other. For the first thirty minutes, that is. Then he lay down in a patch of sunlight on the floor near my computer, and I wiped the dog drool off my chair.

NOTES

Stay! was inspired by the films *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and *Lassie Come Home,* and the paintings of Paula Rego. Thanks to Peggy Shaw, Lois Weaver, Joshua Sofaer, Angie Bual, Nikki Tomlinson, and Sue Baynton.

1. John McEwen, *Paula Rego* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), 167.
2. Stacy Makishi, Lisa Asagi, and Vick Ryder developed *Stay!* collaboratively at the Lyric Hammersmith, London. "Jack Russell" is the name by which the performer wishes to be credited. In addition to the script, this essay refers to the performance video available on *Vimeo* at http://vimeo.com/39421351 (accessed Apr. 30, 2012).
3. Maria Manuel Lisboa, *Paula Rego's Map of Memory: National and Sexual Politics* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2003), 86.
4. McEwen, *Paula Rego,* 167.
5. Ibid., 145.
6. Mick Brown, "Paula Rego Interview," *Telegraph,* Nov. 4, 2009, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/6469383/Paula-Rego-interview.html.
7. Lisboa, *Paula Rego's Map of Memory,* 64.
8. Ibid., 61.
9. McEwen, *Paula Rego,* 145.
10. Rego, quoted in Brown, "Paula Rego Interview."
11. Brown, "Paula Rego Interview."
12. Paula Rego, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: Camden Arts Center, 1984), 45 (exhibition catalog), quoted in McEwen, *Paula Rego,* 45.
13. Una Chaudhuri, "Animal Acts for Changing Times," *American Theatre* 21, no. 8 (2004): 37.
14. See Sue-Ellen Case, "Toward a Butch-Femme Aesthetic," in Fabio Cleto, ed., *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject: A Reader* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 185–99; originally pubished in *Discourse* 11, no. 1 (1988–89).
15. McEwen, *Paula Rego,* 67, 76–77.
16. Una Chaudhuri, "Animal Geographies: Zooësis and the Space of Modern Drama," *Modern Drama* 46.4 (2003): 648.
17. For a development of this idea, see Alphonso Lingis, "Animal Body, Inhuman Face," in Cary Wolfe, ed., *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 165–82.

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Joseph Keckler

Cat Lady

"I am *not* a cat lady," my mother declares, a bag of Whiskas under her arm and a Maine coon at her feet. She marches through the laundry room to answer the lament of a portly calico who is kept locked in the pantry. "No, you stay out here, Don Diego," she cautions the Maine coon. "Mrs. Gummidge has yet to reconcile herself to other cats. Thus she remains in self-imposed exile here in the pantry." My mother manages to slip into Gummidge's chamber without Don Diego. "Well, Gummidge. You didn't finish your white albacore. Why didn't Gummidge finish her white albacore, pray tell?" She directs the question to the calico, while referring to her in the third person—the way, in *Batman,* that Alfred speaks to Bruce Wayne. *Master Wayne wishes not to entertain any guests this evening?* "Gummidge desires that I take this tiresome tuna away and present her, in its stead, with some fresh Whiskas—or perhaps some Science Diet? Yes, Gummidge needs a new snackie." She moves from butler talk to baby talk. "Gummidge finished with dat tunie. She done."

My mother emerges from pantry, the china plate of abandoned albacore in one hand, the now slightly lighter package of Whiskas in the other. She is wearing a calf-length pink cotton skirt and a discarded t-shirt of my brother's that bears, down the front, the word "paranoia" six times. Her hair hangs

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down to the middle of her back. Though it is gradually becoming more and more white, for years it was a deep copper, with just two silver streaks that framed her face. The streaks had been a lineament of her icon in my childhood; several of my classmates had believed her to be a witch, citing the strange strands of silver, symbols of age that stood in contrast to her still-youthful face. My mother has some wrinkles now, but her lips remain overly full, defiantly young. Only months ago, a Walmart one-hour photo clerk mistook her for my wife. She is an age chameleon.

"Sit down, Carol," she says to my aunt, the sister of my father, who waits for her in the kitchen. "I'm just going to run upstairs and quickly change."

"Take your time," Carol calls. My mother is usually an obsessive hostess, assaulting guests with hot chocolate and pillows, items of sustenance and comfort. But Carol comes over almost every day now. She is slender, with recently bleached blond hair and red lipstick. She had once embarked on a Broadway career, but aborted it, opting to marry and raise a family. Still, she is revered by community theatregoers throughout the greater Kalamazoo area. Her husband, Jerry, recently had an affair with an amateur country-western singer named Debbie. He is now divorcing Carol. She has taken to self-medication, frequently preparing cocktails of vodka and various anti-anxiety pills.

My mother returns in a purple skirt with intricate black designs, a luminous gold short-sleeved shirt, and alligator boots. "Want to visit Gummidge?" she asks.

"Oh, not right now, Kit," Carol replies. "In a bit, though. I'll see plenty of her." Carol has agreed to help my mother take Mrs. Gummidge to the vet's this afternoon.

"She's awfully forlorn, you know."

A one-time filmmaker, poet, mixed-media artist, and high school English teacher, my mother has not created work since our house burned down in 1986, destroying her reels, assemblages, and manuscripts. Since that time, she has, however, devoted herself to the twenty-four-hour-a-day interactive performance/installation of caring for, integrating herself into, taking over and dramatizing the lives of cats. While critics, historians, neighbors, and the mailman all classify this piece as quintessential Theatre of the Cat Lady, my mother often entitles it *I Am Not a Cat Lady.* This could be understood as a surrealist strategy, akin to that which Magritte employed in his painting of a pipe, accompanied by a caption that reads, "This Is Not a Pipe." Or perhaps I am Not a Cat Lady is in line with the philosopho-religious texts of Simone Weil, who asserted that contradiction is the test of reality. My mother, the cat lady who is not, wishes to keep her relationship to the cats unexplained,

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Promotional image for performances of *Cat Lady* and *Human Jukebox.* Image by John Moran and Hank Hivnor.

to create a void, a momentary evacuation of meaning where something unpredictable might happen. A vacancy might be created and God might show up to fill it. Who knows?

Similarly, my mother summons the void in her baby talk to cats. A militant grammarian, she is prone to suddenly deny her understanding of subject/object and past/present, affect a speech impediment, and recite Elmer

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Fuddian incantations. I remember once doing my middle school algebra assignment at the kitchen table, in the company of my mother and our cat Cubby, a former stray with one ear who bore a remarkable resemblance to a baby bear cub and who had taught himself to sit up and beg and wave for treats, play fetch, and a variety of other circus bear tricks. As Cubby blankly watched my pencil in the erratic movement of equation solving, my mother announced, in baby talk, "Cubs don't do 'rithmatic! No. Him don't do no '*rithmatic*." She pushed her lips out in a half pout, half kiss, tensing her mouth. She spoke in spite of the tension. "Himm dona doo'*riffmatick*," she repeated insistently. She chanted the phrase over and over, distorting the words more and more each time, pursing her lips more intensely; she spoke as if she simultaneously wanted to *be* Cubby, make out with him, and eat him. *Just gobble him up.* She would have cuddled with him if she could have been sure she wouldn't have let herself go in a moment of Lenny-like overexuberance. Instead, she cuddled, morbidly, with language itself. As Warhol dissolved the aura of celebrity through his serial representation of famous faces, as the Marquis de Sade used his characters' repetition of criminal and perverse acts to purge those acts of their meaning, so my mother, through repetition, flushed all the logic out of the fact that a cat can't do math.

"Don Diego is named after Zorro's alter ego, a dandyish fellow that nobody ever suspects of being Zorro," my mother begins to explain to Carol, apropos of nothing in particular. "Why, no one would imagine, while watching *our* Don Diego in the pantry, daintily nibbling on his Fancy Feast, that when he ventures into the yard, he becomes a virile and mysterious hero. Mrs. Gummidge is named after the widow in David Copperfield. Our Gummidge also weeps, perpetually, in her own plaintive mew."

The Dr. Moreau of interior decorating, my mother sits among strange mixtures of animal prints, in her dark laboratory of excess. Zebra print pillows populate the sofa, a deep orange leopard rug spreads across the living room floor, and peacock feathers peak out from the ceramic Chinese umbrella holder. The alligator boots my mother has put on her feet are the variable in today's experiment in hybridity. She strokes Cleopatra, the chubby Siamese who sits next to her, on one of the five luxurious cat beds that have been set up for Cleopatra in the living room.

My mother continues to psychoanalyze the cats before Carol, who nods quietly and smiles her actress's smile, the corners of her mouth rising up, only to turn slightly downward at the last moment, like a firework, streaking up to the sky, and failing to explode.

Carol is afflicted with Sjogren's syndrome, a rare condition that makes one unable to produce tears. When she cries, she must squeeze drops of

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saline solution into her eyes. In life and on the stage, Carol is an actress incapable of summoning tears. She often arrives on the porch, Visine in hand, coming to present my mother with a new plot to sabotage Jerry—or win him back. "Kit, I've got it. We can plant a camera in his apartment, and catch him. *In the act*. . . Or maybe I should just write him a long letter, tell him that I love him. What do you think?"

Carol brings plans to my mother like densely tangled knots. My mother carefully unties each one. While my mother frequently talks Carol out of her outrageous plans, she sometimes trumps Carol with cabals of her own. Several weeks ago, enacting a plan of my mother's, the two broke into Jerry's office in the middle of the night to steal financial documents.

On Carol's more manic days, she greets my mother on a sustained pitch, at the top of her rich mezzo-soprano voice, and the two women exchange operatic dialogue for a few moments, before Carol inevitably goes careening into an aria about the tawdriness of Jerry's mistress. "That Debbie is a sluuuuuut!" she shrieks.

Carol talks about the divorce obsessively. She refers, in a histrionic southern accent, to the upcoming hearing as *mah trah-uhl*. "Aw, Kit, you gotta come tuh mah trah-uhl and testifah! You can say, 'Mistuh Jerry and Miss Debbie? Wha yee-uhs, ah saw them two—togethah!'"

Today, though, Carol is subdued—not despondent and not at peace, just still. Well acquainted with the pantheon of pussies that people my mother's mythologies, Carol does not mind listening to the stream of anecdotes.

"I don't know what to do with Gummidge," my mother sighs, rising from the sofa. She walks to the antique cabinet across the room. It is an heirloom, one of few that survived, having been in storage at the time of the fire. "She's sick. Moaning all the time. I think we're making the right decision, taking her out to the vet's," she says.

"Yes," affirms Carol. My mother draws a silver Jacobsen's Department Store box from the cabinet. She sits back down and opens it. It is filled with photographs of cats. My mother is not a linear person, and the images are not organized chronologically.

My mother shows Carol pictures of Little Fox, the cat to whom she used to sing her original lullaby, "Cuddle Cats," in retaliation to my father's saying he abhorred the word "cuddle."

We're just a couple of cuddle cats, cuddling all day long
We're just a couple of cuddle cats, that's why I'm singing this song
Cuddling, cuddling, cuddling all day long

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Singing, singing, singing our cuddle cat song
(Repeat indefinitely)

My mother shuffles past a black-and-white photograph of a cat that catches Carol's eye. "Which one is that?" Carol asks.

"Hmm?" my mother hums.

"The gray one," Carol says. The cat appears to be gray, but as the picture was taken in black and white, the cat could have been, in real life, orange, deep cream, or pale brown.

"I don't want to talk about that one," my mother says, abandoning her gentle, nostalgic tone.

"Why not? What's his name?" asks Carol. My mother speaks a Z-word name that Carol forgets immediately. Then she pauses, and inhales slowly through her nose.

"My second husband was a painter and a drunk. His temper was ungovernable. He used to come home and throw his paints against the wall. One night he came home and threw that cat against the wall."

"*He killed it,*" Carol gasps. My mother silently returns Carol's gaze.

"There have been three people I haven't been able to save. That cat was one of them. The first two were my best friends. David Grant. We were best friends in high school. Then we both went to the University of Michigan. He was an art major. He had an original Andy Warhol print in his apartment. And Patricia Alexander. We sang 'The House of the Rising Sun' together for the high school talent show. She went to school out of state. Each of them got married shortly after college. And I lost them."

"To marriage?" asks Carol.

"David was gay, but he was in denial. He left his wife and moved out to San Francisco. But he couldn't deal with his sexuality. He jumped off the Golden Gate Bridge. And Patricia. One night her husband found her. Hanged in the shower. A suicide, but I've never believed it. She wasn't the type. For years, I've had dreams about her being trapped under the stairs, trying to escape, and me not being able to save her. Sometimes in the dreams I am inside her body, trapped inside her body, and trapped under the stairs, trying to make noise, trying to call out, and not being able to . . ." she pauses. "I think Patricia was murdered by her husband.

"I'm the one who lost myself to marriage. But I saved myself. I fell in love with Laurence way too young. At eighteen. But he was handsome and very well read. He started beating me as soon as we married, especially in the abdomen. It's a miracle Evan wasn't miscarried. Laurence broke my hands and my nose. He beat me until I was unrecognizable. One time Laurence made

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me a sandwich. I thought *how uncharacteristic.* Braunschweiger. He had hidden an enormous amount of LSD inside. For hours I saw only red and green. I stepped into the bathroom, looked in the mirror, and saw a reptile staring back. One morning I packed up some things, whisked up Evan, and got out. I became unrecognizable on my terms. I changed my name from Elizabeth Hartsorn to Clare de Lanvallei, the name of an English ancestor of mine who was among the signers of the Magna Carta. Then after the second husband I finally married Rick. Then I had Joseph, *fourteen years* after having Evan. When I married Rick I just threw all my old names together. My legal name is Clare Christina Elizabeth Christine Hartsorn de Lanvallei McKay." My mother chuckles at her many names.

Carol feels the urge to cry, and begins to root, nervously, through her purse full of medications. She pulls out her Visine drops and drowns her eyes in saline.

"The hour approaches, Carol," my mother says.

"Let's *do it,*" Carol says, dabbing at her Visine tears with a tissue. Carol waits on the porch, as my mother has instructed. She smokes an extra-long Marlboro Light as my mother singlehandedly wrestles Gummidge into a cat carrier at the back of the house, and loads her into the silver station wagon. My mother pulls up the car.

When my father, a lanky man with a few wisps of black hair remaining on his mostly bare head, arrives home, no one else is there. He is coming from the grocery store that he manages. He places a carton of milk, a package of sliced turkey breast, and a bag of apples into the refrigerator and exhaustedly sits down at the kitchen table, a sea of the last two weeks' newspapers. He begins idly reading one of them through his square framed glasses. He remains there for thirty minutes before my mother and Carol come bursting through the door, cat carrier in hand.

"Roxy has an announcement to make!" my mother shouts.

"Who's Roxy?" my father asks.

"Roxy is a cat," she informs him.

"You got another cat?" he asks, his expression moving from puzzled to perturbed.

"Yes," my mother says, proudly.

"Jesus," he says.

"Would you like to meet her?" she asks.

"S'pose so," he answers. My mother opens the wire door and a calico scampers out. "That's Mrs. Gummidge!" my father exclaims.

"It was determined today, at the veterinarian's, that the-cat-known-as-Mrs. Gummidge was not eight years of age, as previously imagined, but is,

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in fact, a sprightly one-year-old. It was also determined, at the veterinarian's, that the-cat-known-as-Mrs. Gummidge had a nasty sliver lodged in her side, causing her to cry and act generally like a curmudgeon. As this cat's age has been clarified, and her troubles assuaged, she wishes to put forth a new image, and asks, now, to be known only as *Roxy*!"

"Roxy is moving out of her *cell* and into my house!" Carol announces. She had once toyed with the idea of adopting Mrs. Gummidge, figuring that two sad women might make one another happy. *The way two rawngs make a rah-at.* Now that Roxy has appeared, she seems to have revised her logic: a happy cat might cheer her up. She places Roxy in the passenger seat of her car and lights a cigarette. The two drive, coolly, away.

At 9:30 p.m., my father retreats to bed, as he always does. Soon thereafter, Cleopatra rises languorously from a living room nest, and saunters up to join my father in the king-sized bed. As always, my mother remains in the kitchen, indefinitely, reading mystery novels and sipping flavored decaf, well into the deep sleep of Cleopatra and my father.

My mother sets her book aside and creeps out to revel in the new space of the pantry: the erstwhile home of a cat who suddenly switched lives and names. New discoveries have thrown the cat's former persona into a liminal zone between past reality and fiction. *Who lived here?* my mother asks herself. *Who was this . . . "Mrs. Gummidge"?*

Mrs. Gummidge was a being with several names and a being with no name. She was a Z-word that was hard to remember, with a face rendered gray by a limited and artful memory. My mother swoops up the bag of Whiskas, nearly empty now at the end of the day. She shakes it like a gigantic maraca, humming a syncopated version of "Cuddle Cats." Drawn by the sound of food—or perhaps by the Latin rhythm—Don Diego appears at her feet. My mother does not finish the song but pours all the rhythm, the remaining morsels of Whiskas, into a Blue Willow bowl.

My mother turns, and begins to walk to bed. Mounting the stairs, she pauses, thinking that she hears the distant cry of a love-hungry feline. She continues on her way. The stairs are loud and creaky, and she barely hears the subtle noise of her own soul, trapped and shifting beneath them.

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Erika Rundle

Commentary: Theatre of the Cat Lady Who Is Not

Joseph Keckler's autobiographical fiction, *Cat Lady,* begins with a categorical denial—"I am *not* a cat lady"—spoken by the narrator's mother as she tends to the creatures who flourish under her attentive supervision. In Keckler's theatrical adaptation of his story, which he performs alone on stage, the declaration seems, at first glance, demonstrably true. The author, however lithe and appealingly prim, is neither a lady nor a cat—though his delineation of the many human characters featured in this tale of trauma and transformation is as precise and fanciful as his mother's feline dramaturgy. Under the persuasive force of her dramatic storytelling—nested within Keckler's own melodious monologue—housecats past and present (Don Diego, Cleopatra, Cubby, and Little Fox) are themselves double cast in the vivid roles of undercover pulp hero, legendary queen, circus bear, and ginger baby.

The late-breaking star of this variety theatre is Mrs. Gummidge, a bereft calico with a mysterious past who audibly performs her sorrow for the benefit of the household. Ailing, and sequestered in a pantry, she is delivered to an (offstage) veterinarian and reintroduced, at story's end, as Roxy, a cat who is magically younger and full of promise. She finds a new home with Carol, the narrator's melodramatic aunt, whose recent abandonment by her cheating husband, Jerry, provides a Williams-esque subplot of intrigue, alcohol, and regret. Though she gave up the New York stage for a husband and family in the suburbs of Kalamazoo, Carol faces her marital woes with a theatrical imagination nothing short of operatic. The scenes of suffering and triumph she recounts are both deeply felt and manufactured—like the artificial tears she must apply in order to weep.

Every woman in Keckler's story—even Debbie, the "amateur country-

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western singer" with whom Jerry has taken up—is a skillful performer, altering her image, or environment, in order to survive. Those who can't do so, like the cat lady's two childhood friends, are lost. Marriage, with its traditionally enforced gender roles, claimed one, a closeted artist, by suicide; the other, a talented singer, is framed as a suicide by a plotting spouse. These losses are compounded by the murder of a family pet at the enraged hands of the cat lady's second husband, a temperamental painter. Beyond his first initial, Z, and the misty contours of a snapshot retrieved from an old box, we know little about this poor cat, yet his fate calls attention to the painful history of a woman whose changing names make her difficult to identify. Referenced solely as "my mother" in her son's possessive narration, she is called "Kit" in dialogue with her sister-in-law, though in the context of their exploits, Carol's friendly salutation takes on the aura of a nom de guerre. As part of her escape from an abusive first husband, whose assaults leave her unrecognizable, the cat lady devises an alias. Her third (and current) marriage to the agreeably skeptical Rick produces a sentence-length hodgepodge of ancestral and adopted monikers, some of which (Christina *and* Christine?) are puzzlingly similar. When pronounced, her name functions less as a legal designation and more like a magic charm against the effacing power of patronymics.

As the cat lady's various guises, set into motion at the outset by her self-canceling claim, break through the conventions of family drama, her status as wife and mother gives way to an alter ego her students had long suspected—that feral predecessor to the domestic cat lady: the witch. Clad in purple, with a preternatural youthfulness that causes her to be mistaken for her son's wife by a photo clerk, her promiscuous self-naming evolves from dramatic pretense to present-tense transformation, an illocutionary act set free from its theatrical anchor like a flying broomstick. A "militant grammarian" in civilian life, the cat lady rejects the rules of syntax and pronunciation in favor of incantatory phrases that invoke an alternate reality, where her unnerving desires for intimacy with the ursine Cubby, her canny familiar, can be satisfied. As the effects of her repetitive chanting slowly erode the logic of representation necessary for reading, writing, and arithmetic, the airy, abstract motions of the pencil held by her young son, hard at work on his math homework, are transformed into the cursive afterimages of a magician's conjuring wand.

Once an unwitting accomplice to his mother's spells, Keckler is now her apprentice. His wry, sympathetic prose—freed from its literary repose and released into the embodied space of theatre—resembles nothing more, in fact, than his mother's own bewitching ventriloquism. On the restorative

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stage of Keckler's memory theatre, new life is available even to the long dead. Here, the aesthetics of black-and-white photography that fix the shadowy "Z—" in a graying past are reengineered into colorful potential; he emerges from the family archive reanimated, a cat whose abbreviated name, a marker of his violent death, is extended with an open dash of possibility.

In *Cat Lady,* and elsewhere in Keckler's growing body of work, characterization itself is spellbinding. The six songs on his debut EP, *Featured Creatures* (2010), feel like an interspecies séance, in which he gives himself over to the plaintive ruminations of iguana, parrot, mermaid, and tailypo, relinquishing once and for all his human status: "I am not a man, but a talking beast." This assertion, more sincere than strategic, is backed up by Keckler's prodigious vocal range, which moves from a silverback baritone to the nasal regions of birdsong. The music that emanates from his animal soul makes even the most polished crooners seem comparably dull and predictably human. In his monologues and videos, two of which share the title *Talking Beast,* species drag is everywhere the norm. In one, Keckler-as-cat appears, Cheshire-like, from a dim chamber, his fully lit face fashioned into a disapproving grin as he ticks off a list of demands. In another, we find him, at Christmas, clad in a whimsical dog costume, leaving his sleeping master at home and seeking out fellow animals to carouse in pagan revelry around a decorated tree. One can't help but sense that this kind of furry showmanship is hereditary—a next-generation elaboration of "Cuddle Cats," his mother's signature (and serially rendered) composition.

Cat Lady, performed with its sequel, *Human Jukebox,* at LaMama in 2009, after a showcase at Dixon Place and a turn at the Dublin Fringe Festival, is driven by Keckler's changeable, leonine presence, mischievous and knowing. He channels the cat lady—who is not—with seductive intonations and calm complexity, drawing us away from the clichés upon which the stereotype is built and leading us into a terrain that is richer, and more philosophically inflected, than we might expect. A perceptive in-house critic, Keckler offers a number of interpretive lenses through which his mother's "twenty-four-hour-a-day interactive performance/installation," cleverly entitled *I Am Not a Cat Lady,* may be read.

The first of these is a "surrealist strategy" akin to that in Magritte's 1929 script painting, *The Treachery of Images,* where a realistic-looking pipe is placed above the sentence "Ceci n'est pas une pipe," drafted in the uniform hand of a schoolteacher. "What lends the figure its strangeness is not the 'contradiction' between image and text," writes Foucault in his 1973 monograph *This Is Not a Pipe,* "since it is quite apparent that the drawing representing the pipe is not the pipe itself."[1] Nor do the signifiers that comprise

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the sentence have any relation, beyond the arbitrary, to their signifieds. And yet, in order to create a stable meaning, the conventions of language, and painting (the field, incidentally, in which Keckler received his degree), rely on the reader's or viewer's recognition of, and faith in, a referent. Without this, we are confronted with "the impossibility of defining a perspective that would let us say that the assertion is true, false, or contradictory." For Foucault, this is authorship as "sorcery," its formula "a calligram that Magritte has secretly constructed, then carefully unraveled,"[2] like the "densely tangled knots" of Carol's sabotage plots, which her sister-in-law "carefully unties"—and then "trumps."

It is this dramatic indeterminacy that the cat lady seeks to preserve:

> My mother, the Cat Lady who is not, wishes to keep her relationship to the cats unexplained, to create a void—a momentary evacuation of meaning where something unpredictable might happen. A vacancy might be created and God might show up to fill it. Who knows.

The spiritual opening created by a "contradiction experienced to the very depths of being" makes room for something Simone Weil (another philosopher invoked by Keckler) calls "supernatural grace."[3] But does the title *I Am Not a Cat Lady* actually signal a contradiction? Does denial hinge, in this case, on a simple opposition (cat lady/not cat lady) that retains its premise, or does it operate more elliptically, as the crossing of a threshold to a new identity, borne from the paradoxical artistry Foucault associates with witchcraft?

The double nominative of the "cat lady" epithet—each word standing in balanced modification to the other—is a linguistic chimera, an analogue to Magritte's later, overtly theatrical paintings, which "pivoted on the process of transition or transformation."[4] Those metamorphic images of animal, vegetable, and mineral in performative flux—superscribed by lush, suspended curtains or emergent proscenia—betrayed the ordered categories through which the visible world was presumed to function. And yet, as the cat lady ponders Mrs. Gummidge's quick-fire change from a "lone, lorn creetur" (as Dickens wrote) to the renegade showcat Roxy, she fails to recognize herself as the powerful agent of this sorcery. She retreats from the pantheistic counternarratives of the witch to the theatrical ironies of the cat lady. Unlike her famous forbear Lolly Willowes, who quits the family home, she remains trapped and silent under its stairs, even as she haltingly ascends.

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NOTES

1. Michel Foucault, *This Is Not a Pipe,* trans. and ed. James Harkness (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 19.

2. Ibid., 20.

3. Simone Weil, "Contradiction," trans. Emma Craufurd, in *Simone Weil: An Anthology,* ed. and intro. Siân Miles (New York: Grove Press, 1986), 239, 241.

4. Siegfried Gohr, *Magritte,* trans. John William Gabriel (New York: Harry Abrams, 2000), 20.

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Carmelita Tropicana onstage in *With What Ass Does the Cockroach Sit?* Photo by Ela Troyano.

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Carmelita Tropicana (aka Alina Troyano)

With What Ass Does the Cockroach Sit? / ¿Con Qué Culo Se Sienta la Cucaracha?

[Note: A few scenes have been omitted here, for reasons of space; the events that occur in them are summarized in brackets.]

The Old Man's apartment in Havana, where Catalina, a parrot, and Martina, a roach, reside. We hear sound on a radio—the Cuban national anthem—as the Radio Announcer gives the time and weather and music comes on.

RADIO ANNOUNCER: Nueve de la mañana en La Habana Cuba. La temperatura 37 grados y ahora la música . . . (*music on*).

Small spotlight on the face of Martina, a roach, who clings to the leg of an oversized chair on the back of the stage.

MARTINA: Quick hide, quick hide. That should be my name, not Martina. That's what they should put in my tombstone. Here lies quick hide.

Martina runs to front of stage and addresses the audience.

The life of a cucaracha is tough. Everyone thinks roaches are dirty. But what do they expec when we gotta hide all the time. Inside a greasy stove, underneath a dresser with a dust bunny the size of a bullfrog. And only if you are lucky behind a can of Planters peanuts that's been opened so you can lick the salt. We suffer so much anxiety. You gotta have eyes on the back of your head. You never know where the danger is coming from. But I shouldn't complain. This is a good family situation for me. The Old Man is eighty years old and slow as molasses. That's good. And Catalina is a very generous parrot but bossy. I have to do all her legwork cause I have six

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legs and can run, and she has two and has to be inside her cage. Every day at nine I gotta come into her Old Man's bedroom to see if he's packing his suitcases for a trip. She is so afraid he is going to leave her. She don't know how to relax. She is so strick with me. We have to have vocabulary lessons at twelve before lunch, and then at three café con leche, but not just regular café con leche. Café con leche with a discussion. And she gets upset if I say somepin she don't want to hear. My grandfather used to say: Al Rey no se le dice lo que no quiere oír. You don't tell the king what he don't want to hear.

Lights change as Catalina, a parrot in her cage, is fluffing her feathers and vocalizing like an opera singer. She addresses the audience.

CATALINA: Cu cu ru cu cu. Cu cu ru cu cu. Cu cu ru. Practice makes perfect. Virgen Santísima, I almost forgot the time. Where is Martina? I have never met a cucaracha more resistant. Any kind of intellectual stimulation is a punishment. How many times have I told her we must feed our brains, our souls as well as our body. To think I was once like her—a wild savage, una salvaje. I was not born in Havana, though some call me La Señorona de la Habana Vieja. No, this grande dame of colonial Havana was born in the jungle and taken by a man who took Cuban parrots to sell in the black market. That's how my brother Francisco, now Harry, ended up in Chicago and I ended up with my Old Man, the Grammy-winning singer of the Nueva Vista Social Club. Mi guapo, so handsome, big bags under his eyes and magic fingers that can pluck a guitar and massage my cranium. My Old Man sings Cu cu ru cu cu, and he is going to do a duet on a CD with me. That's why I work hard to elevate myself. I try to learn a new vocabulary word every day. Yesterday's word was succinct. And then I teach Martina. She should be grateful. How many roaches are there that learn vocabulary and live in such splendor—a cage that's the exact replica of the Palace of Versailles, the mirrors, the Louis Quatorze chair, and my divan. Most people are hungry in Cuba but I am like Marie Antoinette. I say let them eat cake o pastelito de guayaba. Martina, Martina *(screeching)*. ¿Dónde te metiste? My Old Man left an hour ago. I'm assuming there is nothing to report, no suitcases?

MARTINA: No, no suitcases, no packing going on.

CATALINA: Good. Now let's get on with our vocabulary lesson. Today's word is petit pois. That's French for peas. Repeat after me. Petit pois. Again, again. Now a sentence.

MARTINA: I love my petit pois.

CATALINA: Is that it? My, you are in a hurry. Aren't you going to stay to hear the Animal Internet's reporter Bertha the bee "Keep on buzzing Bertha!" What, you think she's dry? Don't you mean succinct? Yes, I know you liked

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Lumumba the lizard, but you must admit Lumumba's reporting is not what it used to be. He's old. You should give Bertha a chance. She comes from one of the most reputable families in Atlanta: Los Macabees. Yes, you can go meet Lumumba. But remember café con leche is at three, and our discussion is going to be a good one. All about . . . Ygh, esta cucaracha.

Martina leaves the old man's apartment and goes to meet Lumumba the lizard, in the apartment below, where she used to live before she met Catalina.

MARTINA: Lumumba? Lumumba. Poor guy his legs don't have good suction no more. To think I used to live in this apartment with maladjusted twelve-year-old twin boys and their mother Olga. This was a very bad family situation for me. A lotta danger with those twin boys and no food. One week I was on a strick diet of hair. Hair is bad for digestion. Somebody's at this door.

Sound of door opening mixed with low background chatter. Martina leans to look at who's come in. She looks up as if tracking people coming in.

It's Olga's best friend and her five-year-old boy, the mama's boy. Now that is a good best friend always bringing food to eat. She's gotta tell Olga somepin important, in the kitchen. The twins go play with the boy. I smell ham and pork. They're eating? ¿Y yo que con la boca cuadrá? Olga's best friend has a secret. Olga closes the curtains so the neighbors don't see them, and she puts the radio on so the neighbors don't hear them.

The best friend asks, "Do you believe in love at first sight?" Olga did, but that was before her husband left her. Well I believe in the sandwich in sight, right there I think I can get it . . . no.

Martina takes a step toward the sandwich but cannot make it and steps back.

The best friend says she has a boyfriend with a boat and has gone to Miami but he missed her so much, he came back to get her, and wants to take her again by boat to Miami. Olga says it's dangerous. And the best friend says love is tough and cries. This is great cause she dropped the sandwich. Now it's my turn. Now this is what I call a sandwich. The best. That's why they call it the Cuban sandwich. The mustard always gives me gas, but I don't complain. What's that I hear the twins yelling they are going outside to play. With a belly full of Cuban sandwich and the twins outside, life is good. Estoy que reviento. I can't run I'm so full.

As she moves across the stage, a large shadow appears. She is pinned down, and we hear a little kid's giggles.

A shadow all around—what—oh my antenna, hey kid your finger on my antenna is killing me, what you're a good boy so you gotta kill me because no one likes roaches in the house? Roaches are dirty, who told you that? That's a lie. You're a good boy you don't lie and you play with the tour-

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ist children in the hotel where your father works. The tourist children have bigger better toys than your Power Rangers and SUVs. But you got a rock and a stick and they are magic because they can fly—what a smart boy, and you like to help your daddy wash his car, so bye-bye dirty roach, I kill you! Noooh no, kid, I'm clean so clean I'm friends with the queen. What queen you ax? What's your name? Elian Gonzalez. Eliancito. The queen of Spain. Did you see the queen on TV? You love TV, me too. Take your finger off and I tell you about the queen, no, I won't run.

Elian lifts his finger off Martina's antenna, and she straightens up.

What, the twins made you pee in the balcony? You didn't want to, but then they said it was for a contest? Yeah well, I was in a contest too. And I won the cucaracha flamenco-dancing contest. I was the best flamenco-dancing cucaracha in Cuba, and that's how I got to be a roach in waiting for the queen of Spain. Sit down, I'll tell you all about it.

Martina moves and starts to dance flamenco when the music comes on.

And I got to wear a mantilla on my head when I was dancing. Yes, that's right, they cut two little holes in the mantilla so my antennas could stick out. And when we went to eat—Elian, what do queens usually have when they eat? A crown. Yes, but she doesn't want to wear one because she wants to eat with the people and be more democratic, no more communist. Oh, the politics got me confused. Queens have banquets. Tremendo banquetazo. The problem is that the banquet was in a restaurant and there is nothing that restaurant owners hate more than us roaches. So I jump on the queen's dress and hang on to the back of the dress and the restaurant owner stares at me with such hate, but I stare back because he can't do a thing. If he whacks me, he whacks the queen. I went down the stairs on the back of the queen's dress waving just like the queen. Come on, try the royal wave.

She shows him how royalty waves.

That's it. I made the headline in the A.I., that's the Animal Internet, where we get the news. La cucarachita Martina dines with the queen of Spain. You want to kiss me so I turn into a princess—no, niño, that's what happens in fairy tales. If you kiss me I'll be a roach, but a roach in waiting to the queen of Spain—it's the twins—what did you say—quick hide, quick hide—thanks, kid. Cuidate, niño. Look at that, he's waving at me.

Martina runs to hide and runs into Lumumba the lizard.

Lumumba, what happen? You're all wet.

LUMUMBA: Malditos niños, those kids were peeing all over me. This old lizard can't get any respect.

Martina goes into the Old Man's apartment, where Catalina has been waiting to have their three p.m. café con leche.

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CATALINA: Martina, how could you? You missed Bertha and our café con leche.

MARTINA: Catalina. Sorry. I couldn't find Lumumba and then this five-year-old boy almost yanked my antennas. But I told him a story and he wanted to kiss me. Isn't that somepin?

CATALINA: You and your excuses. We were going to have a great discussion. All about Spain becoming the biggest investor in the Cuban economy. But you missed Bertha's broadcast.

Sounds of footsteps, keys. Door opens. It is the Old Man. Catalina fluffs her feathers excitedly.

There's my Old Man, quick hide. Hide under the sunflower seeds *(composing herself).* Hola, guapo guapo.

Lights up on microphone in the back. Music comes on, underscoring his speech.

OLD MAN: Catalina, how is the flower of my existence? I am so tired my hair hurts. But now that I see you, my princess, all my pains disappear. This is what I treasure coming home to you, mi cotorra del alma. You my rum and cigar—this is heaven. You, Catalina, are my confidante, I can tell you my deepest secrets. When I was a kid, I had another confidante, my cousin, mi prima.

Catalina flies away.

CATALINA: No *(screeches jealously).*

The Old Man follows her, trying to catch her.

OLD MAN: No, darling. You don't have to be jealous. Come, I show you a photo.

CATALINA: Photo?

She flies further off; the Old Man follows her, and finally she perches on his hand.

OLD MAN: See, that's prima. We were teenagers. I was serenading her with my guitar. I tried to loosen her up. I know you won't believe me, but I had a wild streak back then, I was la candela. Prima calmed me down. Even when she left and went to Miami she was taking care of this Old Man. Thank god to those who leave who send dollars to those who stay. Catalina, you never had it so bad, but back then we were the only ones in our building that didn't have to fry grapefruit rind and call it steak. Poor prima. When she was six she got appendicitis, she walked doubled over, shuffling, kids called her the Old Lady. She cried. They called me palitroque, breadstick. But anything with a stick is good for a guy. Last time I saw prima was at Christmas, back when we celebrated Christmas, but who knows? With the pope coming maybe we celebrate Christmas again. It's good to believe in Santi Claus, the Three Kings, or Miami.

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Darling, I have to tell you something very important. Very hush-hush. I'm going on a singing tour to Miami and Tokyo . . .

Lights change. Catalina flies off terrified and hides high up.

CATALINA: Miami! No Miami, no Miami.

OLD MAN: Catalina—come down from there. Darling, these separations hurt me as much as you. But Papi has to sing for a living. Look at your beautiful cage. And all the food you have, Papi has to work for that. We all have to make sacrifices. Should I get up on a chair? I could fall and die. I'm an Old Man and then who's going to take care of you? I don't have many years left.

He fakes a heart attack, and she flies down to him. She lands on his shoulder.

OLD MAN: That's a good girl. You're the flower of my existence. You know what would cheer us both up? Your singing. Come on, sing our song, just for Papi.

CATALINA: Cu cu ru Cu Cu *(screeching off-key).*

OLD MAN: What a voice! Our duet is going to be something. Our CD will get us a Grammy. Please, darling, say you'll let me go. It means a lot, and you know I will get to see prima, who I haven't seen in forty years and that's too long. I made a deal with the officer from the Minister of Culture to let me see her, and I have to give him CD player, Walkman, telephone answering machine. But it's worth it. And you know I have always wanted to play Miami.

In the fifties I heard of Frank Sinatra, the Fountainbleu. I remember a movie poster of a girl with shorts looking up at the moon. *Moon over Miami.* Well, I want to see that moon for myself. So now we have to give a bon voyage party to celebrate the tour, and you will be my hostess.

CATALINA: Oh, Papi *(sexily).*

OLD MAN: But you have to watch your mouth. You don't want Papi to get into trouble. You can say: buenas noches. You can repeat what they tell you. Pero ni se te ocurra mencionar Clinton, Gore, or Bush.

CATALINA: No Hillary? *(coyly)*

OLD MAN: No Hillary, tampoco. And no questions. You ask questions, people get suspicious. They think you work for this side, that side. Now, mi amor, when I go my friend the taxi driver will be taking care of you. I know how you fluff your feathers when he calls you señorona. But be a good girl, no biting. ¿How about some cariñito? Let's get a cushion for my lap so your claws don't damage my equipment. Is mademoiselle ready for her massage?

CATALINA *(screeching sexily as if about to come):* Ay, sí, Papi, dámelo, dámelo. dámelo, Papi. Give it to me.

MARTINA *(disapprovingly addressing the audience):* An old man and a parrot. Mira, if you ax me, that relationship is not healthy. Qué va. But life is good

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for me here. All I gotta do is keep my mouth shut. Like my grandfather says: El que sabe hablar sabe callar. He who knows when to talk, knows when to shut up. I could use a little contemplating.

Martina runs to the chair and climbs on it. She lies on her back with legs twitching as she contemplates.

I'm getting good at climbing the Old Man's dresser where he keeps the postcards. I don't try to read them cause I never know what the Old Man means. I tried to read one postcard once, it don't make sense. I ax Catalina and she says: Papi has to write in a secret code so he doesn't get into trouble. Who cares, I like the photos. Ah, this is my favorite: "Rio de Janeiro. Where Yemalla the Goddess of the sea has her feast day." I am devoted to Yemalla because she respec roaches. Thank you Yemalla for not letting Elian believe I was a dirty, dumb, disgusting roach. Ah . . . there is nothing more relaxing than lying on a postcard. I never been to the beach, but I can imagine the sound of the ocean.

Sound effect of toilet flushing, and then music comes on.

We roaches like to contemplate. The bees and the ants are the workaholics. We roaches are the bon vivants: eat, drink, and be merry for the exterminator cometh. Sometimes I don't understand why people hate us. People think dinosaurs are great. Well, we been in this planet since the day of the dinosaur. Before humans. We are not extinct. Why? Cause we are easygoing, we outsmart people. How many times they hit us with a broom and they go to find a pan or a newspaper to pick the cadaver up and surprise, and then they yell: "Coño, where did that maldita cucaracha go?" We know how to play dead.

We roaches are not extinct cause we are survivors. We can take anything. We roaches live, even if our lives are full of insult.

[When Martina tells Catalina the Old Man was unfaithful, an enraged Catalina slaps Martina so hard she accidentally falls into the Old Man's suitcase, bound for Miami. We also learn that Elian survived the shipwreck at sea, which took his mother's life; two dolphins that delivered him safely to Miami saved him.]

The Old Man arrives in Miami with Martina in his suitcase. The stage is dark when the following announcement comes on.

VOICE O/S: Welcome to Miami International Airport. Bienvenidos al aeropuerto internacional de Miami.

Martina has a little flashlight around her neck that illuminates only her face as she speaks.

MARTINA: Miami. It's so dark inside this suitcase. I can't even see any of my legs. Buried in photos. I feel trapped like in a tunnel. Tunnel—mine—

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mine—shaft—air—canary! No, I'm a roach, a survivor of brooms, chancletazos, and toilet bowl flushes. Viejo, where are you? Damn that Johnny Walker, one instant and my whole life is ruined.

Martina moves from one side of stage to other as if being carried in suitcase.

We're moving. Where are we going? I hear the Old Man saying: Aqui. Cousin—prima. Forty years, forty years. They sob and sob and sob. You look the same, no, you look the same. They catch up on their life. He's got hypertension, diabetes. She's got arthritis, cataracts, triple bypass. I don't care who takes Lipitor, prednisone, or Synthroid.

She stops moving.

Yemalla, why did I open my mouth? I have lost everything. Catalina, her food, the palace of Versailles, the peanut I used to sit on when she told me the news. Why didn't I listen? What do I know about Miami: old Jews, loud Cubans, Raid? Cuba, my paradise lost.

Sounds of a car, traffic, and a car engine off, as if a car has stopped.

MARTINA: The car stops. The Old Lady says: "llegamos." We are at her house. I better pull myself together. I have to go back to Havana with the Old Man. There are only three people going into the house: the Old Man, the Old Lady Cousin, and her Granddaughter, who carries me in the suitcase. Inside the house the Old Lady puts the radio on so loud it hurts my antennas.

A radio commercial comes on, and Martina holds on to her antennas as if in pain from the loudness.

RADIO ANNOUNCER: Is that a bird? A rocket? A UFO? No. It's a flying saucer sandwich that's out of this world. La Sandwichera platillos voladores jamón queso puerco pollo planchaítos a tu gusto echa un patín y vuela a La Sandwichera. La Sandwichera opens tonight—buy one flying saucer sandwich and get one free—La Sandwichera te espera.

During the scene, when Martina speaks, the stage turns dark and we see her face illuminated by a little flashlight. When others speak, there is light on stage.

MARTINA: Coño. I'm all tangled in the silver hairbrush the Old Man didn't clean. When I'm hair free, I'm gonna run for my life into that Old Man's guayabera pocket, ooh, I can almost taste the lint. Old Man, I never heard you so quiet say something. All I can hear is the Old Lady talks, talks, talks . . .

OLD LADY/COUSIN: That ad on the radio will be playing all day today. For the grand opening of my son-in-law's sandwich shop, La Sandwichera. That's why my son-in-law won't be with us today. It will just be the three of us. My granddaughter es mi paño de lágrimas, the handkerchief that picks up all my tears. Since I got sick.

I haven't been the same. You ask me how I am. What can I say: jodida pero contenta.

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MARTINA: All messed up but happy? Que eso vieja.

She mimes going to the Old Man, taking him by the hand, and sitting him down.

OLD LADY/COUSIN: To have you here after these years . . . I have all your CDs, and I listen to them on the Walkman my granddaughter gave me. With the headphones on she says I look muy hip-hoppy. Sometimes I go to sleep listening to you singing "Lágrimas Negras."

MARTINA: Yeah, the Old Man's singing puts me to sleep too.

The Old Lady mimes getting a glass of water to serve the Old Man.

OLD LADY COUSIN: Pero viejo, at your age, your success—is a miracle, a miracle bigger than the Immaculate Conception. And I tell you something no hay mal que por bien no venga. When you wrote you had an eye infection and couldn't buy medicine I got a job so I could send you money. I worked in a factory making gift boxes. The kind with red felt lining. Muy fancy.

MARTINA: A red felt box, hmm, a nice place for a siesta.

OLD LADY COUSIN: One day I remember I got scared, I blew my nose and saw red. I thought it was blood, but no, it was dust from the red felt. Remember when they used to call you bread stick and I got called Old Lady? You never called me that. Ah, here comes my beauty queen. Wait till you taste her flying saucer sandwiches. And she made café con leche just for you.

MARTINA: Café con leche. It must be three o'clock. And soon I'm gonna have some back in Cuba cause now I'm hair free. Old Man, don't you want to open the suitcase and show the Old Lady all the photos you got in the suitcase. Come on . . . open up.

Sound of car door slamming and dog barking.

OLD LADY/COUSIN: Oh, Virgen Santísima, my son-in-law. Why is he here? He was supposed to be at the sandwich shop for the opening. We have to go. Niña, go get the car keys.

MARTINA: Go? Car keys? The Son-in-Law?

Lights up on a microphone in the back. The Son-in-Law appears.

SON-IN-LAW: Niña, ayúdame, I have a truckload. Carlitos, stop barking. Did you hear the news?

Immigration officials want to send the boy back. I had to cancel the opening of the shop. Did you hear me?

The Son-in-Law comes into the living room where they all are, and when he sees the Old Man, he is shocked. This speech is done with a microphone in hand. The sound is loud and there is reverb, so when the Son-in-Law is screaming, sometimes it's not understood, but the rage is clear.

¡Qué! I don't believe it. I can't believe this is happening in my house, I hope no one saw you come in. Thank God the curtains are closed so people can't see in. How could you? How could you? I am speechless. I can't talk.

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Your cousin who gives concerts and has his picture taken with a dictator who has killed millions, ruined a country, and destroyed us. You bring him into my house? What, you're leaving, Old Man? You can't take hearing the truth? Are you a traitor, or worse, an opportunist who believes in nothing? Go, vete coño. Go back to Cuba where you cannot say what you think. You want to see freedom, mira—listen to me, coño: se van todos pal carajo: Clinton, Castro, Janet Reno, fuck you fuck you fuck fuck fuck you all.

Sound of door slamming and dog barking. The stage is once again dark, and Martina with the little flashlight appears.

MARTINA: Coño! This is not a good family situation for me. Waiting is an eternity. But I know one thing, I gotta get outta here. The Old Lady's back. She's dragging the suitcase. She opens it: wow, the light is blinding. I jump and run through the shag rug, my adrenalin is pumping. The tile floor is easy, I'm almost at the front door. Damn, a dog.

When Carlitos the dog barks, underscoring his speech are sounds of marching foot soldiers chanting.

CARLITOS *(growling, barking):* Halt. Who goes there? Hands up in the air. Name, rank, and serial number.

MARTINA: Martina, la cucarachita.

CARLITOS: A cucaracha? How can that be? We've exterminated all roaches. Hey, you are not a traitor roach, are you? Did you come with the Old Man, the communist who was here?

MARTINA: Noo. I'm Puerto Rican from Ponce. My cousins are all from Jamaica. Man *(Jamaican accent),* I love reggae. Do you?

CARLITOS: No, we listen to Olga Guillot and Gloria Estefan and JLo. That's what soldiers listen to. I'm Carlos Manuel de Cespedes, named after the Cuban patriot. You know the Grito de Yara? Huh? That's the cry for independence from Spain in Cuba's Ten Years War. My master showed me *(howling).* I'm in the Infantry Division under the General. The General is from Cuba, the good Cuba, not the bad Cuba under the dictator. There things are bad, so bad. You and me, we couldn't be Cuban. Why? There are no animals, no pets, no insects left. Cubans ate them all. They had to. My master told me. Our command post is in the yard. The lawn chair with the Cuban and American flag—that's our central command post. My master is informed. He knows what the enemy is thinking from the communist newspapers—*Granma* from Cuba and the *New York Times* from New York. He reads them, I pee on them. We believe in freedom. You know what freedom means, roach? Freedom means having balls. Check mine out.

He lifts his legs to show her.

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MARTINA: Pretty.

CARLITOS: In Cuba only one man can have balls, but here even a bulldog like me can have them. No one is going to take that freedom away. Not even CNN, those communists. They report from Cuba the bad one *(confused)* and the good one. Oh, I hear and see the General. I let you go this time, roach, but don't you ever come back here, and watch out, cause I'm on patrol, one false move and it's *(threatening)* Guantanamo for you. There are big demonstrations planned as part of OSE—Operation Save Elian, the little boy next door. This is not going to be another Bay of Pigs. No sir. Freedom for Elian is freedom for all.

Carlitos leaves, howling.

MARTINA: Elian is the boy next door. I need air. I'm a little nervous, I never been outside before.

Lights change. A beautiful melody with birds chirping comes on. Martina walks on grass.

Wow! The great outdoors. A lawn, awesome. Hey, I'm already speaking like a native. It's hard to walk on grass. I'm gonna use a blade like a trampoline—y voy como un cañón, six, seven inches at a time. Look at that moon, so big. But the moon in Cuba is bigger. That's a nice bottle cap. Well, it's not a peanut or a divan. Wow, qué pasa, who be shoving me back and forth? Woh, it's a cat.

Cassandra, a cat, meows as she slowly approaches Martina.

CASSANDRA: Where are you going, roach? You're not afraid of a cat's paw, are you? You are not from around here. The nose knows *(smelling her).* Café con leche, parrot feathers, Cuban tobacco—you're a Cuban national.

MARTINA: Is that okay? Sorry.

CASSANDRA: Relax, roach.

Music comes on.

I'm here to welcome you to America: Land of the Free. Fat free, smoke free, pest free. My name's Cassandra. That was my pet name. My owner didn't know I was male. She never got to see me fully developed. I hit the road Jack when I was just a kitten. And that's how my story goes. We're alike, roach, you and I, independents. Mucho simpatico. Hey, I could help you relocate here. We got job openings. We're testing a new affirmative action program, trying to give insects like you an opportunity. We're looking for fast, tough bugs, bugs who've been around for centuries, nocturnal bugs who can work the night shift. That's when passion stirs most in animal and human kind *(meowing loudly).* Sweet smoking roach, you're smack in the middle of the biggest news story ever: Elian.

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MARTINA: Elian?

CASSANDRA: Yeah, Elian. I have a nose for news. I'll teach you the ropes. I'll make you a lead reporter in the A.I.

MARTINA: Ah, no thanks, Cassandra. It's a lot of work, pressure. I saw what it did to Bertha the bee, her stinger is sagging down to her kneecap, está acabá.

CASSANDRA: You should consider my offer, roach. There are a lot of dangers out here, you dig? Have you ever heard of a roach motel?

MARTINA: No, are they in South Beach?

CASSANDRA: Cucaracha, you gotta get with it. Enter a roach motel, and you die a painful, slow, sticky death. Then there's that dog next door, the bulldog with the Chihuahua head, he's a mean mutt.

If he knows you're a Cuban national, meoooow. He won't touch you if you're with me. Working for the A.I. Come on, I can show you to your quarters, a deluxe Coca-Cola bottle under the shade of a palm tree. How about a Kentucky Fried Chicken wing?

MARTINA: A chicken wing? Okay. I'm in. And on, on in five. But my chicken wing?

A ding sound. Martina goes to report the news to the back, where there is a microphone. She speaks into the mic. She mimes being on headphones and hearing someone telling her where to go.

Where do I go? Here? I'm on. This is Martina from A.I. with the roach report. Janet Reno—said that Elian's grandmothers are in Miami but the government will let the families decide where the two families will visit with the boy.

She moves across the stage as if directed by a voice on headphones, and a green light appears on the floor.

I am standing outside Elian's house. The green you see is all the lawn in front of the house. Marisleysis, Elian's cousin, just walked in very upset. She made paella for the grandmothers, but they don't want to eat her paella. And I hear the Miami Cubans are calling the Cubans from the island cowards. And the Cubans from the island are calling the people from Miami the Cuban Mafia. The mud is flying. And now people are coming and chanting: "Clinton Cobarde, Miami está que arde." Clinton, you coward, Miami is burning. Oh, what—

Martina touches her headphones as if she's getting a special report.

Oh, this is a special report.

She moves to another side of the stage.

Tico the tick who was covering Janet Reno's conference was found in a reporter's hairpiece plucked with a tweezer and burnt. Oh, it's dangerous

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out there. What can I say, I . . . I offer my *(pronouncing the word slowly and deliberately)* condolences to Tico's family. This is Martina reporting with A.I.

Martina walks off and has to continue coverage.

What? I have to go on again, cause Tico is gone? But my chicken wing?

Moving to another side of stage. A yellow light comes on the floor. She points to the sidewalk.

This is Martina with the roach report. As you can see on the sidewalk, that yellow is melted cheese from a flying saucer sandwich that the Fox reporter was eating. He's a lucky guy who got the sandwich after reporting that Elian is happy with his family in Miami. The Cuban people in Miami are strong, united, and fighting for the freedom of a little boy.

She moves to another spot on the sidewalk where there is a red light.

But over here on the sidewalk, that red scuff mark is from the shoe of the CNN reporter, who fell as she was running away from a mob of angry Cubans who were calling her communist. And that way over there in the back is the silver metal leg from the walker of the old lady who tripped her. And the old lady is trying to get a van big enough to fit two walkers and a wheelchair because she wants to go and join the demonstrations that will close the port of Miami. She says in Cuba people have to make a line to get food, here people will make a line to get arrested. And she will get arrested *(to herself).* Where's the food line?

Martina goes back to where the mic stand is, puts the mic down.

All I can ask is: is ten p.m. Do you know where is your grandmother? This is Martina reporting for A.I.

A ding sound. Lights change.

CASSANDRA *(clapping):* Fabulous, kid. You're a natural. What a pro. But I tell you what we need. We need to get to the source. Elian—your own interview up close and personal.

MARTINA: Oh no, Cassandra. Everybody wants a piece of the kid. When I met him in Cuba he . . .

CASSANDRA: Whoa! Back up, roach. You met this kid, you know Elian, and you've been holding out on me? Diane Sawyer beat us to the interview! I just can't believe that. This is how you treat a friend who gave you everything? Are you that ungrateful?

MARTINA: Don't say that. I hate that word. I'm very grateful. I work a lot, I can't remember when was the last time I contemplated. I haven't even had my chicken wing. Coño, como se trabaja en este país, all you do is this country is work, work, work. How I wish I was back in Cuba with Catalina having some café con leche.

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[Here the action moves back to Cuba, where Catalina loudly laments her loneliness.]

Back in Miami Martina goes to Elian's house to interview him. She stands in front of the microphone. (It coincides with the day the SWAT team was sent in to take him to his father so they can return to Cuba.)

MARTINA: This is Martina reporting live from A.I. I am going into Elian's bedroom.

Sound of child crying.

He's crying. Eliancito, look over here, the window. It's me, la cucarachita Martina. Remember I showed you how to wave like the queen of Spain? Yeah. You're big boy. Estás muy grande. Why are you crying? ¿Qué te pasa, niño? Tell me.

Elian has his back to the audience and is crying.

ELIAN: I don't want to go to Cuba. Don't send me to Cuba. I don't want to be alone in the water on a tube. Please, I promise to be a capitalist, communist, communist, capitalist. No tube, please. No tube.

MARTINA: Eliancito, come down, I'm gonna tell you something. You are not going to Cuba on a life preserver tube, no, you are gonna go by plane. You are going to fly.

ELIAN: Really? Fly?

As he turns around to face the audience, a strong single light in the back has Elian in a shadow, and we see his gestures in silhouette.

You are smart. You know what? I told my pretty cousin Marisleysis about how you dance flamenco with a mantilla on your head, the two little holes so your antennae could stick out, but she don't believe me. But I know you're real, like my dolphin friends Dolores and Dominique. They can echolocate. And you know what, my cousin Marisleysis teach me to talk on TV. She tells me to say like this (*wagging his finger no):* No, Papi. I don't wanna go to Cuba. No. I go on the radio and say tomorrow I get my citizenship. I got Nintendo. I can watch TV all day. I'm here, here *(jumping)* and on TV, here and on TV. You want me to show you how I draw?

Elian mimes getting a big piece of chalk and drawing on the floor. First he draws a big circle and then a small one.

This is Cuba *(drawing it very big).* And this is the United States of Miami *(drawing it small).* In Cuba we sit in chairs in school. Here you can lie on the floor. But I don't like to cause I get my Fubu jeans messed up. I don't like to get messed up. I never go outside without my hair gel. You gotta have good image if you are balsero, raft boy like me. Is important for balsero to have good hair. I'm the gangsta of love. Jennifer and Shaquanna and Desiree all wanna be my girlfriends, but I like girls with big breasts

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like Marisleysis. She's so fine, when she fainted I went to give her mouth to mouth resusci . . . resusci stuff. My papi he's going to come and marry Marisleysis so I can sleep in the bed with her. I like that. Sometimes I pretend I'm sleepy so I can put my head on her pillow breasts. My papi says I'm on vacation, but this vacation is so long. I got a brother Hianny, he's a baby. He should go on vacation far, far away. My uncle Lazaro got upset wid me because he say: Elian show the people outside what I teach you and I do this *(he gives the finger)* and I gotta do this *(he gives a victory sign)* but I get confuse. This is what the twin boys in Cuba teach me. They are bad boys and I suppose to do this. And Uncle Lazaro say that if I misbehave the people with the cameras are not gonna like me no more. But my grandmothers, mis abuelitas, they like me. That's why they come on vacation with me. And my abuelita say: "Eliancito, how big you grow, show it to me."

He looks down at his crotch.

I say, Abuelita, no. Only hillbilly hicks do that. You could get arrested for child abuse and I could sue you cause I got seven lawyers. Everybody sue each other here. No, I'm kidding, Abuelita. Besito, besito. But if you get arrested, Abuelita, is okay, because my uncles got DWI and two cousins got felonies.

He sits down.

I'm sad because my puppy got taken away. Because he make doodoo on a letter to la bruja who shake all the time. La bruja, the witch Reno, she wants to send me to Cuba on a tube. But I don't have to go to Cuba on a tube. I can go by plane. And my mami is in the sky, en el cielo, and she got that sickness where you forget so she got lost. First she had to go down, down into the ocean, so she could jump up high into the sky, so I'm gonna pick her up on the plane. Oh, I think I hear a plane outside. I'm gonna go outside and yell: Hey plane take me back to my papi Juan Miguel Gonzalez.

Sound of helicopters, sound of cars, and theme song from TV show action sequence, cars, sirens.

MARTINA: That's not a plane, that's a helicopter, kid. This is Martina with . . . quick hide, SWAT team coming in, SWAT team, Elian, I'm jumping into you sneaker, don't be scared.

Lights change. She mimes going into a sneaker and, flying off, strikes a pose.

[In the final scene Martina returns to Cuba to the one family member she has, her best friend, Catalina.]

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Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes

Commentary: Martina, Catalina, Elián, and the Old Man: Queer Tales of a Transnational Cuban Cockroach

Alina Troyano's bilingual one-woman play *With What Ass Does the Cockroach Sit?/¿Con qué culo se sienta la cucaracha?* (2004) is a fascinating, highly politicized contemporary rewriting of the Hispanic Caribbean folktale "La cucarachita Martina" (Martina the cockroach), with close affinities to Pura Belpré's retelling in her classic children's book *Pérez and Martina* (1932), but in the context of Cuban exile politics and the Elián González international crisis of 1999–2000.[1] The specific historical circumstances that motivate the play include the long-standing, post-1959 tension between Cuban nationals and the Cuban exile community in Florida; the Cuban economic crisis of the 1990s; Elián González's departure from Cuba in November 1999 with his mother, Elisabet Broton Rodríguez, who died at sea;[2] the boy's rescue by two fishermen (here portrayed as dolphins); the Janet Reno-authorized SWAT invasion of the home of his paternal granduncle Lázaro González and cousin Marisleysis in Little Havana on April 22, 2000; and his return to Cuba in June of that year with his father, Juan Miguel González. In her rewriting, the New York-based Cuban American Troyano (better known as Carmelita Tropicana) follows the model she established in earlier works such as *The Conquest of Mexico as Seen through the Eyes of Hernán Cortés's Horse* (cowritten with Uzi Parnes in 1991) and *Milk of Amnesia/Leche de amnesia* (1994), in which Troyano portrays animal and human characters as a way to engage social and historical contexts; as she has stated, "I have a niche; I'm the performance artist who does animals."[3]

In *With What Ass?* the classic folktale of a beautiful cockroach who is courted by many animals and ultimately marries Pérez the Mouse is transformed into an incisive allegory about contemporary life in Havana and

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Miami. Here, instead of finding (and losing) a husband, Martina develops a close friendship with a parrot, or cotorra, named Catalina (better known as "La Señorona de la Habana Vieja," or the Grand Dame of Old Havana), who has a melodramatic attachment to her owner, the Old Man, an eighty-year-old singer with whom both live. Martina goes on to meet the five-year-old Elián González in the apartment downstairs, accidentally embarks on a transnational voyage from Havana to Florida with the Old Man, engages Elián in Miami, and returns home in his sneaker with the goal of reuniting with Catalina. The performance offers rich descriptions of daily life in Havana, including the conditions of scarcity, censorship, corruption, and foreign investment that have characterized the Special Period, which is to say, the period of profound economic crisis that began in 1990 after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the disappearance of Russian and Eastern European subsidies, a topic that Troyano explores at length in *Milk of Amnesia*.[4] *With What Ass?* also shows the solidarity that exists among some elderly Cubans across the Florida straits (particularly the Old Man and the Old Lady/Cousin), the profound animosity between Cubans in Havana and Miami (most dramatically articulated in aggressive speeches by the Son-in-Law and Carlitos the bulldog), and the particulars of a small boy's personal experiences (not only do we hear about Elián's saga; we also see Troyano embody him and talk directly about his life). The play highlights queer (same-sex) bonds between animals and queer animal/human pairings and explores questions of animal subjectivity. Ultimately, it serves to reframe very delicate and painful political discussions through humor, as having animals and humans represent these contemporary social tensions on stage attempts to bridge an almost unsurpassable gap between divided communities.[5]

Giving a twist to Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915), Troyano uses the cockroach or cucaracha as a symbol of subaltern, persecuted minorities, particularly of undocumented, poor transnational migrants. In a passage not included in this book's version, Martina identifies with the downtrodden, speaks frequently about her condition, and sings Manu Chao's immigrant-themed "Clandestino" (1998), replacing the word "marihuana" with "cucaracha" (perhaps an oblique reference to the herb, if we think of "roach" as code for a joint, but more clearly an embrace of the alterity of diasporic migrants).

MARTINA: That song ["Clandestino"] is like the cucaracha national anthem. I'm a line in the ocean, a ghost in the city, my life is forbidden, that's what the police say, I got no papers, I go to a city in the north looking for a job. But I gotta run and hide cause I got no papers, peruano clandestino, argelino clandestino, cucaracha ilegal.

Martina's articulation of a subaltern position (an understanding of life in

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the shadows, in hiding, at risk, outside of the law, in a similar predicament to undocumented Peruvian and Algerian immigrants) continues later in the longer version of the play when she drunkenly sings and dances to Lila Downs's version of the classic Mexican folk corrido "La cucaracha" (2004), again refraining from any mention of marihuana (the verse about how la cucaracha can no longer walk because she has no marihuana to smoke) and exchanging it for "the forbidden drink," American liquor, specifically whiskey (Johnny Walker Black), which has been spilled on the ground by the Old Man, most likely as an offering to the orishas of Santería.

She goes back to the cage drunk, Lila Downs' version of "La cucaracha" comes on and Martina translates as she drunkenly dances.

MARTINA (CONT'D): Who's singing to me? Lila? Where are you? There's nobody left in the communist party because they all left, they want to make millions, everybody wants to make a million dollars, where's my million. Oh I better go back before Catalina wakes up.

In her interpretation of this corrido (which dates to the Mexican Revolution of 1910), Lila Downs criticizes governmental corruption, militarism, lack of democracy, the perceived failure of the Left in Latin America, and the drug trade; Downs ends with a description of the cockroach's funeral, carried by four vultures and accompanied by a sexton who is a mouse (an inversion of the traditional folktale, in which Pérez the Mouse dies while Martina the Cockroach survives). In Troyano's version, Martina's drunken reverie leads her to loosen up her six legs and freely criticize the crisis or failure of communism in Cuba; she also romantically believes that the very attractive Mexican singer is singing to her. Most significantly, she does not die.

Music is used very effectively in *With What Ass?* as an integral diegetic (plot) element: the Old Man is a Grammy-winning singer of the Nueva Vista Social Club, a clear allusion to the Buena Vista Social Club, associated in the play with the Cuban singer Ibrahim Ferrer (1927–2005) through the use of his recorded songs; the Old Man plans to tour the United States and Japan and record a duet with Paloma, an American woman whom Catalina contemptuously describes in the longer version of the play as a "one hit wonder who can hit one note. With a cheap dye job." (Troyano's bilingual pun entails an inversion in which the human is called Paloma [pigeon or dove in Spanish] while the parrot is called Catalina.) Music is also used to complement and expand characterizations and thematic developments; for example, Catalina is frequently accompanied onstage by Sarita Montiel's Spanish-language rendition of Édith Piaf's "La vie en rose," a song of profound romantic fulfillment. Catalina also dreams of recording a version of "Cucurrucucú cotorra" (parrot) with the Old Man, a funny reenvisioning of Tomás Méndez's classic

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huapango "Cucurrucucú paloma," greatly popularized by Caetano Veloso, particularly in Pedro Almodóvar's 2002 film *Talk to Her;* this song describes the lament of a man who has lost his female lover and is visited by a pigeon (an embodiment of her soul) who sings to console his pain.

In a 2005 interview, Troyano indicated that she only had the vaguest recollection of the original folktale of "La cucarachita Martina":

> There is a very popular folktale throughout Latin America that uses the character of La Cucarachita Martina. I remembered some elements of the story but not many. I thought using a character in a fairytale that Latinos had associations with was good, and for an American audience it is appropriate because it was a story surrounding a child.[6]

As I mentioned earlier, Troyano's and Pura Belpré's retellings of this folktale share many elements: both feature the central character of Martina, a bilingual Hispanic Caribbean cockroach that has a penchant for everything Spanish, including wearing mantillas and doing Spanish dances; a plotline centered on interactions with diverse animals; a focus on labor, communications, and food; the centrality of music and song (in Belpré's version, Pérez the Mouse sings as he is wooing Martina, and the cockroach sings after her husband's untimely death); and a history of performance (*Pérez and Martina* was frequently presented as a puppet show). These coincidences indicate the importance of further exploring the early text, particularly given the strong New York Hispanic connection between the two authors and the centrality of bilingualism, cultural translation, and education to both texts, as both are clearly attempting to convey and translate Hispanic Caribbean culture and politics to non–Spanish speaking audiences in the United States at the same time that they address Latina/o constituencies.[7]

Pura Teresa Belpré (1899–1982) was the first Hispanic children's librarian at the New York Public Library and was a pioneer in the documentation of Hispanic Caribbean folktales in New York City. Born and raised in Puerto Rico, the folklorist and storyteller moved to New York with her family in 1920 and began working at the library in 1921 or 1922.[8] *Pérez and Martina* was the first of her many books, all of which were written with the explicit goal of educating children (and teachers and librarians) and mediating racial, ethnic, and linguistic tensions between Hispanic Caribbean migrants (particularly Puerto Ricans) and other communities in New York City.[9]

In Belpré's *Pérez and Martina,* as in many retellings of this story,[10] Martina is a highly feminized cockroach of Spanish descent, who takes great care of her personal appearance, cleans her home, finds a coin (a *peseta*)

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with which she purchases face powder, dresses up, talks to many male animal suitors (in some versions a cat, a dog, a rooster, a cricket, a goat, a frog, a pig, and a firefly), asking them how they would talk to her in the future (at night), and turns all away, finally marrying Pérez the Mouse.[11] Some versions of the story end here. In Belpré's retelling, Martina wears a lace mantilla, dances flamenco for Pérez after she accepts his hand in marriage, goes on to cook Christmastime *arroz con dulce* (candied coconut rice), and becomes a widow after the curious mouse falls in the boiling pot in pursuit of an almond; Martina goes on to dress in black lace and to lament her deceased husband by crying and singing sad songs. In other versions, Martina cooks soup instead of *arroz con dulce,* and Pérez dies struggling for a piece of onion. In some versions, Martina goes on to remarry. In all of these versions, it can be argued that Martina is presented as an empowered subject, with the freedom to choose her own husband, but also destined to experience emotional pain. At the same time, her labor is strongly gendered (cleaning, cooking, looking for a partner), and a high premium is placed on her pleasant appearance, which entails wearing nice clothes and cosmetics (face powder, perhaps a whitening agent, as Lisa Sánchez-González has observed, which can only be purchased with currency found but not necessarily generated by labor).[12] Males' foibles (their annoying sounds and practices) bother Martina, leading her to reject all of her suitors but one; in some versions, the mouse's curiosity spells doom, and Martina is either condemned to widowhood or has to remarry and be more careful with the pot's lid to avoid her new husband's untimely demise. Whether this widowhood is ultimately a bad fate is debatable, as Martina has clearly demonstrated her low tolerance for annoying habits, and meddling in the kitchen might be one of these, as leading Puerto Rican feminist writer Rosario Ferré suggests in her 1989 rewriting of this story.[13]

Troyano's retelling adds a contemporary Cuban and queer twist, presenting a different life narrative for Martina, one that does not end with solitude and that shows her as an empowered (autonomous) yet still subaltern subject with a profound self-understanding of her situation (a beneficiary of *concientización* or consciousness-raising, a process humorously alluded to in the roach's practice of "contemplating") and with a much more critical attitude toward work. Here, the plot focuses on a different set of tasks and adventures, including multiple conversations with Catalina and with other animals and people in Havana, such as Lumumba the lizard (a retired Animal Internet reporter, whose name can be seen as a reference to the famous slain Congolese independence leader Patrice Lumumba and to post-1959 Cuban military involvement in Africa) and Elián, who in fact, tries to kill Martina

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when they first meet; she saves her life by dancing flamenco and telling him the fictitious story of wearing a mantilla and being a cockroach in waiting for the queen of Spain. Martina learns about Elián's saga at sea and miraculous rescue by Dolores and Dominique (two non-American football-playing Miami dolphins) as told by Bertha the bee; unexpectedly travels to Miami when Catalina pushes her into the Old Man's suitcase; meets the rabidly anti-Castro Carlos Manuel de Céspedes ("the bulldog with the Chihuahua head" named after a nineteenth-century Cuban revolutionary hero, who belongs to the Son-in-Law), as well as Cassandra the transgender cat, who conscripts Martina to work as a reporter for the Animal Internet in Miami; and finally, engages with Elián in Little Havana and travels back to Cuba in his sneaker, so that she can reunite with Catalina. Many of these events are accompanied by bilingual translation, in which Martina draws on popular Cuban Spanish-language sayings, which she reproduces and renders into English as a means to underscore her experiences and analysis of the situations she encounters. The very title (*¿Con qué culo se sienta la cucaracha?*) is one such example, albeit one that is not actually explained in the play; it is an Afro-Cuban saying registered by Lydia Cabrera, which, as Tropicana explains, is said "when referring to people who aspire to do something that is not within their means" (for example, Catalina wishes to sing and record a song with the Old Man in spite of her horrible singing voice).[14]

Love and labor are the two motors that motivate Martina in Belpré's and Troyano's retellings: affective relationships between individuals (be they family members, a cockroach and a mouse, a cockroach and a parrot, or a parrot and an old man) and work (be it housekeeping, foraging for food, or reporting for the Animal Internet). Troyano wishes to locate Elián's story (usually seen in the context of politics and family) in the broader context of global migrations, particularly that of Third World labor migrants to the Global North. Martina criticizes labor exploitation when she is conscripted by Cassandra to be a reporter for the Animal Internet:

MARTINA: I work a lot, I can't remember when was the last time I contemplated. I haven't even had my chicken wing. Coño, como se trabaja en este país, all you do is this country is work, work, work. How I wish I was back in Cuba with Catalina having some café con leche.

This desire for reunification with Catalina is fulfilled. Returning to Cuba (for Elián and for Martina) brings closure to their dangerous voyages, and reestablishes the initial status quo of the play: one full of contradictions and challenges, but one that some people (and animals) might freely prefer to the alternative of life in the United States.

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NOTES

1. See Hernández, review, and Jefferson, "On the Home Front," for reviews of the performance; see Allatson, "*With What Ass,*" for an in-depth scholarly analysis. Interviews with Troyano regarding this piece include Morowitz, "Crossing Borders"; and Young, "Interview with Alina Troyano." I wish to thank Paul Allatson for providing me with a copy of Young's interview. I saw a performance of this piece on Apr. 4, 2006, at the Duderstadt Center, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

2. Her name is frequently misspelled as Elizabet [*sic*] or Elizabeth [*sic*] Brotons [*sic*].

3. See Morowitz, "Crossing Borders," 163. Scripts for *The Conquest of Mexico* and *Milk of Amnesia* appear in Troyano, *I, Carmelita Tropicana,* 52–71, 173–76. Allatson, "*With What Ass,*" offers extensive analysis of Troyano's animal embodiments.

4. See Troyano, *I Carmelita Tropicana,* 52–71.

5. See Parikh, "Passion," on the irreconcilable tensions of the Elián González case.

6. See Morowitz, "Crossing Borders," 163.

7. See Sánchez-González, *Boricua Literature,* for an anticolonial reading of *Pérez and Martina.*

8. See Sánchez-González, "Pura Belpré," 149–50.

9. See Sánchez-González, *Boricua Literature;* Sánchez-González, "Pura Belpré"; Sánchez-González, *The Stories I Read to the Children.*

10. Other versions include Ricardo Alegría's "Pérez and Martina"; Rosario Ferré's "La cucarachita Martina" and *La cucarachita Martina;* and Carmen Agra Deedy's *Martina, the Beautiful Cockroach.*

11. See "La Cucarachita Martina," Sabelotodo.org, http://sabelotodo.org/literatura/infantil/cucarachitamartina.html (accessed May 13, 2012).

12. See Sánchez-González, "Pura Belpré," 86–88.

13. Solá offers a feminist analysis of Ferré's version; see *Aquí cuentan las mujeres,* 40–42.

14. For a discussion of the title see Morowitz, "Crossing Borders," 161–62.

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Kestutis does his bees.
Photo by Audre Budrys Nakas.

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by Kestutis Nakas

No Bees for Bridgeport: A Fable from the Age of Daley

Lights up on Kestutis, a man.

And so, ladies and gentlemen, that concludes my talk on how I saved the honeybees. Are there any questions? Have I ever been stung? Well, yes. Quite badly, in fact. I was attacked by angry bees and stung repeatedly in and around my eyes. In fact, the eyes you see in my head right now aren't really mine. My son donated them. Don't worry. He's alive and well. He's home in Chicago, probably listening to the radio, waiting for my return so he can have his eyes back.

Maybe I better explain, let me take you back, way back. All the way back to the age of Daley the Second, over three summers ago.

K spins around to indicate a change of time.

Well, I'm fifty-five years old and I'm finally happy. Maybe it's just some sort of delusion, but I don't care. I'm fat, fifty-five, and finished. I can basically screw around now because all my masterpieces are done.

Don't worry. You've never heard of them. Works of true genius are only discovered by later generations. I'm resigned to that. But even when they do discover my work, that's not really immortality. Nothing lasts. Even Shakespeare will die when the planet self-destructs. Who cares? Immortality's for suckers. The spiritually weak. It's just the frightened trembling ego that

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craves it. See, in human consciousness, the ego is the last actor to leave the stage. What forces him off? Silence.

Silence.

I've had plenty of that. But now, the last actor has left the stage, leaving only an egoless, deep soul consciousness. That's the real, essential self: the universal soul in relaxed, attentive concentration. And it's that concentrated awareness that I direct toward my beehive.

Beekeepers, good ones, have a special kind of knowledge. A sense of ease that allows us to draw near the hive without arousing fear or anger. It might be a gift. But I think it's something we develop over time. Lots of time. Did I mention that I was fifty-five? Oh, I said that. Right. Fat, fifty-five, and finished. Did I say that? Sorry. So when I become one with the hive, the hive tells me what to do. I'm no longer in charge. See, that's what's wrong with this world. Certain people trying to control everything. Like some of those hate mongers in the media. They really tick me off. That ain't the way it oughta be. Love, that's where it's at.

Acceptance plus gratitude, that's happiness. Let go. Live in the moment. You'll find your desires melting away, along with whatever's bothering you. Like my job. YOU DON'T FIRE ME, I FIRE YOU! I FIRE YOU! Stop adjusting reality to suit YOU. Bloom where you're planted.

I'm planted on the South Side of Chicago, in the Bridgeport neighborhood. I live there with my wife and four-year-old son, Lukas. And I've got a beehive in my backyard. Did I tell you I was a beekeeper? I am. With my own hive.

The hive came in the mail as a build-it-yourself kit. It was hard to nail those frames together. Nails would keep splitting the flimsy wood. Shit. Give me the right-sized nails and clear instructions and I'll do fine.

Those greedy thieves at the beekeeping supplies company want to send the new hobbyist the cheapest shit they can get away with, just to hold on to a few pennies. Such clever minds out there thinking up ways to screw me. That's bad karma. After all, I'm just trying to get ahead.

Once I get my hive built, my buddy Chip and I make a special trip out to Indiana to pick up a young bee colony, a nucleus colony, or "nuc." I figure the bees ought to be easier to handle than building that stupid hive was. After all, they're part of nature, like me, so we'll understand each other. Sticks and nails are not part of nature.

My buddy Chip is about the nicest guy in Chicago. He's from California. He takes the frames, which are full of bees, out of the nuc and sets them gently into the hive. Soon the bees have settled into their home and are out foraging. Lukas is staying far away from the bees, but I'm trying to teach him to be less afraid.

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Lukas and I love to get on YouTube and watch "Honey Land," an old cartoon about bees. A boy and girl bee fall in love. When the girl bee is abducted by a spider, the boy bee comes to her rescue. He stings the spider repeatedly, but it is not enough, so he sounds an alarm, and a squad of fighter bees in military formation hone in on the hapless spider who, after all, is only trying to live his predatory life. The bees sting and sting and sting and sting till the spider runs away. The boy and girl bees are reunited, and there is happiness again in Honey Land.

But that cartoon lies. Really, boy bees—or *drones*—don't even have a stinger. And a bee can sting only once, then she dies. She leaves her stinger in her victim, and as she pulls away she in effect disembowels herself. Some of her guts stay attached to the stinger. Those guts are her venom sack, a kind of natural syringe full of bee venom. Even when the bee is gone and off dying somewhere, the sack still pulsates, injecting venom through the hollow, barbed needle of the stinger.

Also, boy bees—or *drones*—don't live happily ever after. A drone's penis is ripped out of his body after mating, staying inside the female while he drops away and dies. So the cartoon distorts the truth, but it helps Lukas love the bees.

One of our neighbors loves the bees, too. He's a kind old Chinese man. Every time I see him in his garden, he gives me a big, beaming smile and nods approvingly as he points to the hive. He knows those bees are pollinating his plants and they will bring him a bumper crop of weird Chinese vegetables.

The neighbors on the other side of my backyard are a little less enthusiastic.

"A BEEHIVE!?!?" That's Angie, the renter on the bottom floor. She's a lifer in our working-class neighborhood. Her dad was a cop in the machine days of Daley the First. She hates to think about life next door to our bees. I reassure her as delicately as I can. "These are Italian bees, very gentle. They almost never sting, only if you really hassle them." Since she considers herself Italian, the ethnicity of the bees calms her down just a little. Vickie, the single mom who lives on the upper floor, doesn't care for the bees, either. Vickie has a Lithuanian last name and can still name some of the starchy Lithuanian foods. She doesn't like it when her Chinese or Mexican neighbors don't speak English. "This is supposed to be America, isn't it?" Vicki looks at the new hive very suspiciously and says, "I just don't want my little Johnny to get stung."

The kids of the neighborhood start coming up to me as I sit out on my front steps. "You have a BEEHIVE! If we get stung it's going to be YOUR FAULT." The neighbors on the block stop saying hello to us as they walk by.

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My wife is disturbed. But I insist that everything is going to be okay. I enjoy watching my bees fly out from the hive. They generally head southwest, in the direction of the old stockyards. Maybe that's where the nectar is.

One evening, after we've had the bees about a week, I get a phone call. It's our alderman, Duke Ballser. "You got dose bees over dere. I wanna see you 'bout dat. At your convenience, of course. Be here tomorrow at one o'clock."

I'm there on time.

"Sit down, Mr. Kestutis."

"Actually it's Mr. Nakas, Kestutis is my first name. It's a Lithuanian name."

"I know a Lugan name when I see it. I like Lugans. I even married one, ha ha ha. Dere used to be a lot of Lugans in Bridgeport."

"Yes, I know. Halstead to Morgan was all Lithuanian at one time."

"AND DEY'RE GOOD PEOPLE TOO, Mr. Kestutis. Hardly no fights or nuttin'. You been over dere on Union tree years, right?"

"Almost four."

"Don't correct me, Mr. Kestutis. I see you been votin'. Dat's good. Registered Democrat. Good . . . And I'm looking . . . You don't pay a whole lot of property taxes over dere on Union. Dat's a nice house you got, too. I had one of my guys take a picture. Dis your house? "

"Yes, sir."

"Mr. Kestutis, let me ask you dis: You like it here in Bridgeport?"

"Yes, sir."

"You need anyting done?"

"Like what?

"Oh, you know, street light fixed, stop sign, zoning variance, building permit, extra parking permits, White Sox tickets, anyting along dose lines?"

"No, sir. I think I'm fine."

"If you do you'll let me know, all right?"

"All right."

"ALL RIGHT! Shake, brudder. Oh. Dere's one more ting I wanna get straight witchou. Okay? Dis is Bridgeport. We don't like no bees over here. Understand? You wanna have bees or anyting like dat dere you go up over dere ta da Nort Side and live over dere."

"I can't afford that. And, with all due respect, Alderman, Mayor Daley is encour . . ."

"Don't Mayor Daley me. I'll Mayor Daley YOU. Not vice versa."

"But the green initiative. 'City in a Garden.' There are hives on top of City Hall."

"Dat's got nothing to do wit Bridgeport. I'm the alderman here. And folks is pissed, Mr. Kestutis, if you'll pardon my language. I'm getting calls. All it

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takes is for one kid to get stung and have an allergic reaction and then I got real trouble over here. What's da green initiative gonna do wid dat?"

"The city is zoned for bees. I got a right, Alderman."

"Don't treaten me, Mr. Kestutis. I've handled Lugans fatter than you. Bridgeport's a nice neighborhood. But you know sometimes bad things happen here. And even to good citizens like yourself . . ."

"Alderman Ballser, you asked me if I needed anything. Can we have a neighborhood meeting with whoever's complaining? Give me a chance to explain how wonderful bees are."

"Neighborhood meeting? We never had nothing like dat dere . . ."

After a lot of haggling he agrees to a meeting the following week. Some beekeepers from other Chicago neighborhoods agree to come and talk about the joy of bees.

If only I knew someone with influence or "clout" in South Side politics! Then I bump into Arunas Rastkauskas walking his dog down Morgan. Arunas is from Vilnius, but he lives in Bridgeport now, working for the Lithuanian consulate in Chicago. I tell him all my bee troubles and about how I could use some "clout" and so on. He nods his head. "Tomorrow I vill be at reception vit Senatoras Durbinas." Dick Durbin's mom was Lithuanian, so Durbin likes us. Durbin even has a big round Lithuanian head. "If I get chance to talk vit him, maybe I vill mention this. But I cannot promise this . . ." Okay. I know. Forget it.

I can already hear the buzzing of the angry community residents as I approach Eleventh Ward headquarters. I open the door to the meeting room, and someone yells, "Dere's da bee man! BOO!" Ballser raps his gavel.

"Dat's enough. Mr. Kestutis lives over here too. I know you want we should get rid of dat beehive, but I made a promise he could talk to you. So please, just for dese few minutes, hear da man out. DEN we get rid of dat beehive. Go ahead, Mr. Kestutis."

"It's Mr. Nakas."

"A Lugan is a Lugan. I told ya da floor is yours. Or don'tcha want it now?"

I get up in front of the hostile crowd. Of all my bee buddies, only young Chip has come.

"Thanks, neighbors. I really appreciate this chance to talk to you about the wonderful hobby of beekeeping."

"IF DOSE BEES STING MY KIDS YER A DEAD MAN! I'LL COME OVER DERE AND KILL YA MYSELF."

"I don't think my bees will be stinging anybody. These are Italian bees. Are there any Italians out there?" A few hands go up. "Then I don't need to tell you about your gentle disposition or the easy, relaxed ways of your rela-

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tives. Italian bees are just the same. Gentle. And they only sting when you mess with them. Just wait till you see the way they pollinate all your flowers and vegetables. And when you taste my delicious Bridgeport honey, you'll want a hive of your own."

"NO BEES IN BRIDGEPORT! NO BEES IN BRIDGEPORT! NO BEES IN BRIDGEPORT!" The crowd is starting to rise to its feet as Ballser bangs his gavel.

"All right, all right. Sit down. Is that it fer da pro-bee faction?"

My last friend, Chip, bounds to the front in his Californian, hemp-rope sandals. He looks at the crowd with his friendly, stoner eyes, puts his hand on his heart and declares, "Bees are really, really cool." Chip sits down, certain that he has persuaded them.

"NO BEES! NO BEES! NO BEES!"

Again, Ballser pounds his gavel. "All right, all right! We're just about trough wid da whole ting. I tink we all heard ya and we're ready ta make up my mind." Just then the door flies open and in comes Arunas Rastkauskas, followed by Senator Dick Durbin himself, who declares: "All rise for the mayor." Hizzoner Mayor Richard Daley enters, walks to the front, and stands above Alderman Ballser.

"We're gonna have bees in Bridgeport, and I don't wanna hear no more about it. Dere's too much at stake. I can't afford no subterfuge from da peanut galley over dese so-called green initiatives I got workin'. Alderman Ballser, you're a good man. Don't change dat. So da bees stay. And I don't wanna hear a peep outa any of you." He points his finger into the crowd. "You owe me. Let me know, Alderman, if there's anything at all I can do for you. See ya at da ball park." He winks at Durbin and walks out. Durbin winks at Arunas and follows the mayor out. Arunas winks at me and walks out.

The crowd is silent, heads bowed. But with the big shots safely gone, they start to lowly boo and hiss. Ballser barks, "Dat's enough. You heard da mayor. We're votin' for da bees."

He raps his gavel, ends the meeting. Democracy wins again!

Something stinks as I round the corner onto Union. I get to my house and see broken eggshells on my stoop and sidewalk. Someone has thrown rotten eggs all over the house. One of our fine old windows is broken. Inside my wife is crying. There is a brick on the floor with a note attached: "For Da Bee Lover. Bzzz."

My fists clench in pain and rage. It's hard to pick up the phone with clenched fists, but I manage to make a call. Within an hour, a police cruiser arrives to watch the house around the clock.

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But everything is not okay. Every time my wife, son, or I go into CVS or Freddie's Italian Beef or Pancho Pistolas we hear people making buzzing sounds. None of the Bridgeport glaziers will fix the window, so we have to pay a North Side price for a new one. Little Stan, the eight-year-old up the block, manages to get stung while swinging at a bee with his baseball bat. I get in a shouting match with his dad, and our police guard has to step out of his cruiser to send the guy away. A petition to recall the mayor begins circulating in the neighborhood.

Then the phone rings. It's the mayor. "Mr. Kestutis?"

"It's Nakas."

"Sure. I know dat. How are dose bees doin'?"

"Okay, I guess."

"How you doin'?"

"Well, life has gotten a little tense down here."

"Look, Mr. Kestutis, you support the green initiative, right?"

"Of course."

"Well I have a wonderful idea, and I wanna call on a South Side guy like yourself. Dere's a whole lot of wildflowers over dere on dat acreage where da stockyards used to be. How about you move your hive down dere. I can get da city to move it for ya. We'll take some pictures of you keeping dose bees down dere like it's a green initiative ting. And just tink, your neighbors will tank both of us for it."

"Mr. Mayor, the whole point of this was to have a backyard hive. I thought you supported that."

"Oh I do, I do, believe me. I support da backyard hive. It's just dat, you know, da city is having a hard time economically speaking, and da police commissioner's tellin' me he ain't got no more budget for a police guard over dere just so ya can have your little beehive."

Out my window I see the police cruiser pulling away.

"So whadya say? Dis is your chance to be a green hero! And when we get dat hive out dere in da yards, we'll take a lot of pictures with Durbin in dere and you and me and dat Lugan friend a yours, what's his name?"

"Arunas."

"Whatever. So it's a deal. We'll have someone over dere to move dat hive in about five minutes . . ."

Okay. I guess I'm licked. That's life in the big city. It's not so far to the stockyards. I can work my hive over dere. I mean, over there. I go back to the kitchen window to take one last look out at my hive. It's sweet, really: bees buzzing around in the afternoon sun. Outside Lukas playing with his Tonka

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dump truck, smashing it down onto his Power Rangers action figures. He's making explosion sounds. He bangs the big metal truck against the fence, then the concrete steps, then the beehive.

"NO! Lukas, NO!" He can't hear me, even though I am banging against the back window. He's so absorbed in his truck banging, he forgot he could disturb the bees. I better get my ass out there. I open the back door and see Lukas toss the truck at the hive. It lands on the metal hive cover with a huge crash. Oh shit. I fly down the back stairs as alarmed, enraged bees fly out of the hive to attack. They are already landing on his face as I pick him up. But I forgot how heavy he's getting, and as I swing him up to me, I slip, trip, and fall against the hive, knocking it over completely. The whole colony flies out and covers Lukas and me. They sting and sting and sting. The bees' instincts tell them to go for the eyes, mouth, and face. The last thing I see before my eyes swell shut is the city bee-removal crew running toward us in their bee suits.

When I wake up I can't tell if my eyes are open or closed, but they hurt like nothing has ever hurt. I can't see. My body feels like it's on fire. I try to speak but my tongue is swollen inside my mouth. "Helloaagh . . ."

"Daddy?" It's Lukas.

"We're right here. We're all right here." It's my wife, Ona. "You're in the hospital. Lukas almost died, but he's alive. Right now he can only see out of one eye, but the swelling in his face has gone way, way down."

"Lukath . . . I'm tho thoarry."

"Okay."

"Am I blind?"

"You took a lot of bee stings in your eyes, ears, nose, throat. Also in your lips, tongue, neck, shoulder, Adam's apple . . ."

"All righth . . ."

"Your tits, underarms, belly button . . ."

"All righth, I get . . ."

"Your dick, your balls, your anus . . ."

"Okay! Okay! I got shtuaung aeveryhwheahre, okay, okay! Where're da bees?"

"That's the weird part. The bee-removal crew got so busy saving you that they didn't even start to move the bees till the ambulances left. When they got to the hive, the bees were gone."

"Ghaone? Where?"

"Nobody knows. Someone said they saw a whole swarming mass flying southwest."

"The stockyards!"

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As Lukas and I begin to recover from our attack we hear glowing reports in the news of the success of the stockyard bees. The colony that left my hive took up residence in the hollowed-out insulation of an abandoned refrigerated rail car. That colony discovered the bounty of flowers growing where all of America's meat was once slaughtered. Under that ground lie layers and layers of animal manure. But not just that. A lot of blood was spilled in those yards. And that seeped into the ground. In all the slaughter and butchery, a lot of animal parts got strewn around. Human parts, too, some say. The wildflowers growing there have a darkened, almost greasy brilliance. There's nothing like it anywhere else.

Chicago Public Radio, WBEZ, starts to broadcast wonderful stories about the "miracle of the bees" on the South Side. When bee colonies get crowded, they make a new queen and split in two. Half of them take the old queen and swarm away to live in a new hive they have found. The old stockyards are full of potential hive sites: hollow trees, empty sheds, old buildings, abandoned cars and trucks. Soon these places are full of new hives. The increased pollination around the old yards makes the flowers even healthier and more plentiful. The city beekeepers have found ways of harvesting the wild honey, and the city is making a fortune selling its own "Bridgeport" brand of stockyard honey.

Pretty soon all the media outlets have picked up the story. Daley, Durbin, and even Alderman Ballser are getting their picture taken down at the "Bee Yards" almost every week. The beekeeping hobby craze is sweeping the country. Michelle Obama has even installed a hive in back of the White House and tends to it with her children and secret service detail. They look pretty funny in their beekeeping outfits. This makes good press and leads to a significant uptick in Obama's popularity. It's needed now more than ever since the financial crisis has created such turmoil. Mobs of bankers and financiers have started roaming the country, looting and pillaging abandoned, foreclosed properties for appliances and copper tubing. They say that if they can't get bonuses for their role in wrecking the economy, they will TAKE them. Reports come in that a good-sized army of vengeful, marauding financial industry brigands are headed toward south Chicago to wreak havoc on the president's hometown.

Lukas and I keep getting better. But he's changed. Even with one good eye he's a much sadder boy. He doesn't trust me anymore. Why should he? I keep hoping my blindness is temporary, so I haven't yet learned Braille or any of that blind-person stuff. And I've gotten obsessed with restoring the sight in my son's bad eye. We've traveled all over the Midwest and tried every kooky cure we could find. Finally we drove south to Kentucky for treatments by a

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mystic healer at Cumberland Falls, under the famous but almost unknown "moonbow" that appears in the mists by the falls. What? You don't know what a moonbow is? You're kidding. That's a rainbow you can only see at night, under the light of a full moon.

At Cumberland Falls you can see the one and only moonbow in the western hemisphere. The healer tapes Lukas's good eye shut and puts him at the edge of the pool formed by the falls, facing the moonbow.

"Look, Daddy, a rainbow!"

"That's a moonbow, Lukas, I've told you a hundredwhat?"

His mom is crying. Lukas's good eye is still covered. He's seeing out of the blind one! He can see! Why can't I? The healer breaks his trance. He puts his hand on my shoulder and says: "Sometimes children respond better than old people."

Once we're home again, my old bee buddy Chip comes over to take away my empty hive. He's going to fill it with a nuc of his own. We go into the backyard, and I lay my hands on it one last time.

The sound of a police siren is heard.

"It's a cop, coming down the alley!" Chip tells me. The cop turns on his loudspeaker.

"All able-bodied men report to Eleventh Ward headquarters." The army of marauding financial experts is marching on the South Side. They've already looted Back of the Yards, and they're marching toward Bridgeport.

"Get moving, bee man."

"But I'm blind."

"I thought you was cured."

"No, just my son."

"Den bring your son. He can do the seeing for the both of ya."

Chip, Lukas, and I are among the last to arrive at the front lines, which have marched out from ward headquarters and are now smack dab in the middle of the stockyards.

"What do you see, Lukas?"

"All I can see is legs. I'm short, remember?"

"What do you see, Chip?"

"The money men are up ahead. They got copper tubes and chunks of metal. And they look like they're gonna use them. There's a fat man in front and he's yelling his head off."

It's Rush Limbaugh himself, hectoring the ragged torn army to advance. But the defenders don't seem to care about that so much anymore. Instead they focus on me. "Well look who's here! Da bee man, come to defend Bridgeport with the rest of us. Bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz."

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They're buzzing their old harassing buzz. They still haven't forgiven me. Even though I'm blind, I haven't suffered enough for them. Their buzzing sound spreads through the ranks of the defenders. Meanwhile, the money terrorists are almost upon us.

The buzzing gets louder. But it's not just my Bridgeport neighbors anymore. No. The bees have emerged from their hives en masse. Their flight pattern is showing us how angry they are.

But not at us. They descend on the marauders. Covering each one. And especially the fat man in front. We're talking millions, maybe billions of bees, and they're stinging more ferociously than ever.

But they're only attacking the invaders. Why not us?

Is it because of the Bridgeporters' angry buzzing sounds? Or maybe it's because we're South Siders, children of stockyards, just like them. Breathing the pungent air, we've ranged through the manure and beef tallow too. To this new breed of bee, we are kin. Unlike its gentle Italian ancestor, *Apis stockyardas* is a fighter. When you threaten her home and hive, you're going to get stung and stung bad.

Some of the invaders die. Most limp away, the few still-sighted ones leading long lines of blinded financial experts and bankers. "Hey, bee man! Look what your bees did. Let's hear it for da bee man! Hip-hip hooray!" They lift me, Lukas, and Chip on their shoulders and carry us downtown, buzzing all the way.

It's a big day at the mayor's office. Durbin, Ballser, and Arunas are all there as I am awarded the key to the city for having brought a new race of bees into being. Of course, I know I shouldn't take credit for that, but what the hell. Even my old Chinese neighbor is here. He just points at me, smiles, and nods approvingly.

That wasn't so long ago. Now the International Bee Society has invited me here to give the keynote. I'm both honored and humbled. After all, I'm not the engineer of all these advances in apiary culture, just a blind witness. But you know that. So thanks. And now, if you don't mind, I have to get back to Chicago. There's a little boy that needs his eyes back.

Please don't fret about me. Living in the dark is not that bad. Anyway, I'm still hoping for a cure. New studies show that a treatment made from bee venom, propolis, and honey might cure damaged eyes. With any luck I'll "BEE SEEING" you long after we're dead! So thanks again, and goodnight!

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Joshua Takano Chambers-Letson

Commentary: A New Fable of the Bees

In 1705 Bernard Mandeville published "The Grumbling Hive: or, Knaves Turned Honest," a short poem about "a Spacious Hive well stocked with Bees" that transforms from a society of vice, political corruption, and economic inequality to an egalitarian order of communal virtue.[1] Among the bees are lawyers, bankers, and soldiers, and Mandeville leaves little doubt that the colony is an allegory for British social structure: "These Insects lived like Men, and all / Our Actions they performe'd in small."[2] In the old order, "every Part was full of Vice / Yet the whole Mass a paradice."[3] A moral revolution replaces this "paradice" with egalitarian virtue, however, which leads to a colorless culture, weak and incapable of surviving "th' Insults of numerous Foes."[4] The colony collapses, leaving the reader with Mandeville's instructive maxim, an eighteenth-century Gordon Gekko turn: "Fools only strive / To make a Great an honest Hive . . . / So Vice is beneficial found, / When it's by Justice lopt, and bound."[5] Two decades later, Mandeville affixed the poem to the front of his controversial polemic *The Fable of the Bees,* advocating a culture of vice so long as it is structured by a guiding hand (making it simultaneously more extreme and more constrained than the liberalism of Adam Smith). In the era of the global financial crisis and the subsequent technocratic rule of the banking class, Mandeville's Spacious Hive seems all too familiar.

With the bee as its central object of intrigue, and the subtitle "A Fable from the Age of Daley," Kestutis Nakas's *No Bees for Bridgeport* subtly gestures to Mandeville's magnum opus. But if it is a fable, what precisely is the lesson at hand, and how does the bee figure within it? In this reflection, I suggest that Nakas's swarm, the "*Apis stockyardas,*" can be understood as the

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spontaneous political power of mass insurgency. In other words, it is a representative of the political activation of the multitude. Paolo Virno theorizes the multitude as the political being of the many as they exist in their plurality.[6] This "mode of being . . . is ambivalent . . . it contains within itself both loss and salvation, acquiescence and conflict, servility and freedom."[7] The political activation of this multitude as an insurgent, spontaneous mass of constituent power is what shatters this ambivalence. The insurgency of the multitude creates the conditions in which we might pursue freedom from the foreclosure of politics in this era of the Spacious Hive, characterized by the domination of the liberal, capitalist, international order. In Nakas's fable, the political exigency of this type of being, the swarm-as-multitude, occurs against a mythic backdrop that could only be fictional if it were not devastatingly true: an era of machine politics and finance-capital brigandry. But in order to come to this conclusion, we must first trace the cultivation of Nakas's swarm.

Standing before a tightly packed audience in the cozy, second-floor performance space of Chicago's Links Hall, Kestutis (the character) is an unassuming, middle-aged man, dressed in casual clothing. At first, *No Bees for Bridgeport* gives us every reason to register as fiction, or fable, the next forty-five minutes of the monologue. The combination of a self-consciously theatrical frame (a lecture at the International Bee Society) and science-fiction eye transplants suggest a world that is not to be believed. But he quickly transitions into a performance mode characterized by a charmingly earnest, convincing air of disclosure. The Links Hall audience is coaxed into identifying with the character, as his story is set close to home, "planted on the South Side of Chicago, in the Bridgeport neighborhood." Indeed, Chicago insinuates itself into the performance as the red line "el" train repeatedly interrupts the monologue, barreling by with metallic screeches and a rumbling din. It is easy to get lost in his story of urban beekeeping, and somewhere within the first few minutes, we forget all about transgenerational ocular transplants, or that we are listening to a "lecture on how [he] saved the honeybees." It is precisely by way of this induction into Nakas's convincing narrative that its power as a political fable is established and that the significance of the bee is made clear.

Fables use the anthropomorphized animal as a means of imparting a morally determinate lesson. Mandeville's fable only thinly disguises the bee as a stand-in for British social culture, and there is nothing really beelike about his Spacious/Grumbling Hive. In other words, the fable is not interested in the animal, on its own terms: the animal becomes a screen upon which we—the readers and writers of fables—can project the exigencies of

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human political and social being. As such, the animal within the classic fable is exemplary of what Giorgio Agamben describes as humanity's conception of itself as "the articulation and conjunction of a body and a soul, of a living thing and a *logos,* of a natural (or animal) element and a supernatural or social or divine element."[8] For Agamben, it is within and by means of this distinction that humanity emerges as a unique, political being.

Where human opprobrium and revulsion is cast upon most phyla of insects, the bee has been given a unique place of reverence within Western thought. Political theory, from antiquity to the present, has called upon the bee colony as representative of human industriousness and social organization; it is a screen onto which we both project the ideals of humanity and understand its limitations. In Semonides's typology of women, for example, women are described (unflatteringly) as ten different animal-beings, with the bee (or *melissa*) set aside as the one, ideal form for the wife.[9] But the *melissa* is articulated at the precise moment of its foreclosure because, as Nicole Loraux reminds us, "perhaps she is an ideal figure, and we know that perfection is not of this world."[10] Semonides's bee is thus deployed to impose a patriarchal and impossible ideal upon women. This impossibility tautologically justifies the exclusion of women from politics.

If Semonides describes the *melissa* as an impossible ideal in order to mark the political foreclosure of women, others have painted portraits of the bee as the ideal laborer in order to illuminate the political nature of humankind. In Marx, for example, the bee makes visible the difference between the labor of man and animal: "A bee would put many a human architect to shame by the construction of its honeycomb cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax."[11] It does not matter that the bee's product may be formally ideal, because it is the imaginative capacity, unique to humankind, that elevates the value of human labor. Marx's bee is the figure through which what Agamben calls the "political mystery of separation" is clarified. Unlike the bee, humanity is not limited by human nature; instead humanity is defined by its very ability to imagine, transform, and construct alternatives to that nature.

At first, Nakas's monologue deploys the bee as a screen for human ideals and as the point at which humanity divides from the animal. In one moment the bee reflects the cruel violence of a natural world in which a bee, in stinging a human, "disembowels herself." In the context of a "Fable from the Era of Daley," this image might neatly represent the ethos of Chicago politics, as the specter of a figure like Rod Blagojevich, tearing himself apart while injecting venom into the political bloodstream, surges into conscious-

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ness. Later, the bee oscillates between a cartoonish portrait of heteronormative romance in "Honey Land" and the less ideal mating ritual in which a "drone's penis is ripped out of his body after mating, staying inside the female while he drops away and dies." With shades of Semonides, here Nakas's bee might first be understood as a receptacle for patriarchal anxieties about both the castrating woman and the impossible "good wife." But Nakas does not develop this sentiment further, and while the character of Kestutis's wife remains peripheral to the narrative, she is hardly a castrating harbinger of death. If anything, this anecdote serves to remind us of the radically nonhuman nature of the bee. It also introduces us to the trope of foreignness.

The penis, now lodged inside the mate's body, is not the only foreign object that gives rise to anxiety; now the bee—as that which Kestutis has identified as different from and foreign to human life—comes to represent a foreign presence among the human beings of Bridgeport. Historically, Bridgeport has been a largely segregated, ethnically white neighborhood on Chicago's South Side. In recent years, racial tensions have increased with demographic shifts introducing significant Latino/a and Asian American populations to the neighborhood. The presence of the swarm draws the xenophobic, racist, anti-immigrant sentiment that has long structured civic life in the United States into Nakas's narrative. First, he aligns the bees with the figure of the "old Chinese man," the only neighbor who "loves the bees" alongside Kestutis. Kestutis's fellow assimilated ethnic-Lithuanian neighbor, in turn, resents the bees in a fashion similar to her dislike of "when her Chinese or Mexican neighbors don't speak English." Her resentment reflects the racist characterization of Asian Americans and Latinos/as as perpetually foreign, abject figures who are shuttled between the interior and exterior of the community of the nation.[12] Indeed, much of the anti-bee rhetoric shouted during the town hall meeting is reminiscent of the anti-immigrant sentiments common to political discourse today. The "beaming smile" and approving "nods" of the "old Chinese man" might thus signify a subtle solidarity between two beings who are cast as a foreign and threatening presence that is "lodged" in the body politic.

The mythic nature of the fable comes late to *No Bees for Bridgeport*. If we are, at first, seduced into believing Kestutis's story, this is in part because its anxieties about neighbors and domestic harmony are all too familiar. Even as the story enters the twisted world of Chicago politics, we are inclined to endorse the overall believability of the narrative because Chicago politics are nothing if not mythical. For the audience in Links Hall, Nakas's stylized embellishments (his caricatures of aldermen and mayors) don't detract from what is ultimately an entirely possible story. As elected representatives barge

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in on town hall meetings to *dictate* to constituents the outcome of their democratic process, we are all the more inclined to believe the story *because* its outrageousness confirms the daily parade of unbelievables that characterize the Chicago machine. Or perhaps, even beyond the confines of this specific polity, Nakas's story seems acceptable because the unbearable truth is that US democracy in the twenty-first century has finally admitted that it was rigged against the people to begin with. "You heard da mayor. We're votin' for da bees," seems an appropriate summary of the democratic process. In the era of *Bush v. Gore* and *Citizens United v. F.E.C.*, power mandates the people's will, rather than the other way around.[13] "Democracy wins again!"

But the story finally explodes into the not-to-be-believed domain familiar to the genre of the fable. The bees attack Kestutis and his son before installing themselves in the stockyards. Lukas, the hero's son, loses his sight in the attack only to have it restored beneath a Kentucky "moonbow." "Mobs of bankers and financiers," the true children of Mandeville's vice-ridden hive, wreak havoc on a country that they've already destroyed once. And the political machine that should—according to reactionary apologists from Mandeville to Eduard Bernstein to Larry Summers—keep the destructive force of Capital in check fails to protect the people of Bridgeport. Here, then, the political significance of Nakas's fable of the bees makes itself known.

The people come together in the form of a spontaneous insurgency. But this insurgency realizes itself as powerful insofar as it occurs beyond the limits of the contemporary political imagination. In this moment, the bee as that which is counter to (or politically and mystically separated from) humanity signifies the radical possibility of a political uprising that is, to use the prescient language of Rosa Luxemburg, "outside of and beyond the present society."[14] This South Side insurgency is articulated outside of language in the form of a "buzzing sound." It emanates from the people, first, but grows into the fierce fighting anthem of the bees. The swarm emerges from (or at least signifies) the insurgent rage of Kestutis's mob. The bees deftly demonstrate the power of the multitude, once activated, as they "descend on the marauders" en masse. The swarm eviscerates the "long lines of blinded financial experts and bankers" that are always already blind to the power of the multitude that they terrorize. In one spontaneous uprising, the bees remind us of the potency of the masses once they are politically activated. This is a power that can only emerge from the plurality of the many.

Today, the left finds itself facing the seemingly insurmountable obstacle of global capitalism and its partner, US American imperialism. As Gopal Balakrishnan observes, "At best, the alternative to surrender or self-delusion

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has seemed to be a combative but clear-eyed pessimism, orienting the mind for a Long March against the new scheme of things."[15] For Balakrishnan, philosophical affirmations of the multitude offer a "spectacular break" from this tradition, one that posits the possibility "for another world."[16] But this project can only be "politically effective" if it is grounded in the "realities of this one."[17] Nakas's fable affirms the power of the politically activated multitude, in the form of the swarm, but does so by grounding it first in the realities of Kestutis's South Side world. His fable is not a blueprint *for* an emancipatory politics. Rather, it is a powerful affirmation of political possibilities that seem otherwise impossible in the long era of the Spacious Hive. In achieving this affirmation, Nakas demonstrates the potential for performance to be a lab in which we can imagine—and to some extent activate—the horizon of a coming politics, one that is finally and definitively geared toward the realization of freedom for the many.

NOTES

1. Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees* (1724; New York/London: Penguin, 1970), 63.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 69.
4. Ibid., 75.
5. Ibid., 76.
6. Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life,* trans. Isabella Bertoletti, James Cascaito, and Andrea Casson (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004).
7. Ibid., 26.
8. Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal,* trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 16.
9. Semonides, "Women," by Semonides of Amorgos (Poem 7), trans.Diane Arnson Svarlien,1995, http://www.stoa.org/diotima/anthology/sem_7.shtml, 1995 (accessed May 26, 2012).
10. Nicole Loraux, *The Children of Athena: Athenian Ideas About Citizenship and the Division between the Sexes,* trans. Caroline Levine (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 103.
11. Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume 1*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1990), 284.
12. See Karen Shimakawa, *National Abjection: The Asian American Body Onstage* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).
13. See: *Bush v. Gore,* 531 U.S. 98 (2000); *Citizens United v. F.E.C.*, 588 U.S. 50 (2010).

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14. Rosa Luxemburg, "Social Reform or Revolution" (1899), in *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader,* ed. Peter Hudis and Kevin B. Anderson (New York: Monthly Review Books, 2004), 165.

15. Gopal Balakrishnan, *Antagonistics: Capitalism and Power in an Age of War* (London: Verso, 2009). 22.

16. Ibid., 31.

17. Ibid. Balakrishnan's argument is articulated as both a celebration and a critique of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire.* See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

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Kim Marra

Horseback Views: A Queer Hippological Performance

(Stage right stands an academic podium. A tote bag and a coiled white line hang within reach on an overhead hook. Stage left stands a life-sized facsimile horse wearing a yellow horse blanket bordered in black and inscribed with the monogram "GWF." A wooden box of brushes for horse grooming sits on the floor nearby. Upstage center is a large projection screen for PowerPoint slides. Only a few of the images can be reproduced here.)

Enter dressed to ride carrying saddle, place saddle on horse, turn to audience, riding crop in hand.

In academia, I have found it easier to come out as a lesbian than as an equestrian. Lesbian in arts and humanities circles, at least in the last twenty-five years, is politically cool, especially when harnessed to materialist feminism. Lesbian is subversive; it's at the margins; its salient stories are ones of coming up from oppression—or, as we are always more specifically and usefully reminded, up from interlocking oppressions of race, class, gender, and sexuality. A number of the leading theorists in theatre and performance studies write from an avowedly lesbian position. Lesbian has considerable academic cachet.

Equestrian mobilizes quite a different set of connotations, especially when it is tied, as it is in my case, to being born and raised into a family

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that bred, raced, and showed thoroughbred horses. For me, coming out as an equestrian means owning up to being raised with a lot of money gained through the sort of capitalist wheeling and dealing that our Marxist-inflected profession of theatre and performance studies has been bent on critiquing. And it means owning up to my family's WASP cultural aspirations and preoccupation with displays of Anglophilic blue-bloodedness that went along with economic upward mobility. These are uncomfortable subjects—not just because they are politically outré but because they magnify that fear that many academics harbor regardless of background, that we will be found out, exposed as frauds who don't really know what we're talking about and aren't as smart as we seem. When you grow up with the kind of wealth and privilege that affords thoroughbred horses, the specter of doubt that you really earned your accomplishments grins most ghoulishly from among the skeletons in the closet.

So, even though these expensive, form-fitting English riding clothes are in many ways my "native" garb, I feel quite naked standing up here wearing them in an academic setting. Now, if I were really being true to my Anglophilic blue-blooded roots, I would have the good taste not to mention these topics at all, for I was raised with the dictum that it was crass to *talk* about money even though one's lifestyle exuded it. But then again I'm half Italian, and people on that side of the family will talk about anything—money, sex, food, bowel status . . . More to the point, I'm compelled to raise these issues because lesbian and equestrian, while in some ways at opposite poles in terms of academic political and intellectual cachet, are dynamically interconnected—in performance history, as I'm discovering with increasing intrigue, and in my personal experience. Hearing of my mother's struggles to get me out of the barn and into a dress, her society friends would invoke the Freudian saw: "Don't worry, dear, she'll outgrow horses and turn to boys." Well, it didn't work out that way for me, in part because my mother herself didn't really follow that script, and neither, in fact, did generations of women before or since.

(Cross to podium, remove helmet and gloves. Riding crop becomes a pointer.) As a lesbian academic now trained, or at least practiced, in queer studies and feminist theatre historiography who still rides a thoroughbred horse, albeit on a much reduced scale from what I used to do, I'm looking back at my years of equestrian training and experience and finding a rich resource for historical research. That's the connotation of my title today, "Horseback Views," views literally and figuratively from the saddle, back, through horses, into my own past and the wider Anglo-American equestrian tradition. What has been an avocation for me, a recreation separate

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from my professional work as a scholar, has now moved into the center as the source of my *hippology,* or "horse science." I am writing a book on the subject, tentatively titled "Fashioning the Thoroughbred Ideal," about women and horses on and off the stage in various theatrical and social arenas mainly in New York from 1865 to 1930. When people think about horses and American culture, if they think about horses at all, they think of the West and the cowboy tradition. Part of the intervention I want to make is that English-style riding and English-derived horses, namely thoroughbreds, also had a profound effect in shaping dominant American culture, especially, I want to argue, where women are concerned.

In the United States, it is in the decades following the Civil War that white middle- and upper-class American women start entering the sport of riding in large numbers. By the 1880s, the numbers are substantial enough—indeed, horseback riding has become the favorite female exercise amid a burgeoning physical culture movement—to occasion the publication of the first riding manual by and for American women, *The American Horsewoman* (1884). Its author, Elizabeth Karr, strongly advocated the British model of mothers cultivating the art of riding in their daughters, noting that when "a young English lady" is mounted on a "well-trained and spirited horse, . . . each look, each motion, awakes a new born grace," as well as promotes physical health and a sense of confidence and boldness about going forward into the world (1–3). Those first generations of women who took up riding en masse mothered the turn-of-the-century generations of women who entered college and professions in large numbers, successfully advocated for suffrage, and, in the theatre world, gained unprecedented levels of respectability as well as stardom. I want to investigate what horses and riding did for these women in order to understand the operations of equestrianism as a historical force shaping their lives and actions. In an era of rising immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe and attendant racism and xenophobia, the thoroughbred was the saddle horse of choice, as the bourgeoisie strove to perform Anglo-Americanness. Women proved to be especially well suited to thoroughbreds; hence that particular human-equine relationship is keenly at issue here.

(Cross to horse.) On stage with me are a number of objects that bear echoes of my history with thoroughbreds—and not just echoes, but actual material traces of bodies in action. A key property of leather is that it absorbs skin oils and sweat, stretches and gives with use. Leather horse-riding equipment needs to be "broken in"; it gains value with age. This is the girth that goes around my horse's belly to hold the saddle in place. It needs to be cleaned after each use and over the years has acquired a gorgeous patina

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from sweat and saddle soap. It feels and smells wonderful. I'll pass it around so you can all feel a bit of the sensuousness of fine, horse-worn leather. This saddle and this bridle are decades old; they came to me from my mother and bear the imprint of our communion with numerous horses that graced our lives. *(Mount horse.)* Sitting in this saddle, holding these reins, taking the position to ride, there's an intense feeling of familiarity, a profound sense of coming "home," and an awareness of reenacting something that's very here and now but also very old.

Notably absent on this stage with me is the living horse itself, although I'm quite fond of this facsimile. As amazing as it would be to have a real horse here, I can use its absence to invoke the historiographical absence my project addresses. Horses were replete in the social and cultural landscape before 1930, yet most historians who aren't horse people (which is most historians) look right past them, perhaps dismissing them as part of the background. But they carried people—women—into the foreground and enduringly and transformatively marked their lives. So, absent the physical animal, we'll conjure it imaginatively and look at some of the traces it left in the print and pictorial records, in this equipment, and in me. *(Dismount, cross to podium.)*

Let me begin with this 1965 canvas by Lionel Hamilton-Renwick (1917–2003), a famous painter of thoroughbred horses from Newmarket, England, who included several of Queen Elizabeth II's racers among his commissions (fig. 1). Composed in the venerable tradition of British sporting art showing men of means admiring their prize horseflesh in training, the painting depicts my equestrian progenitors. The horse in the foreground is named Meadow Court, shown at the height of his career as a three-year-old on a break from his training gallop on Ireland's Curragh, where he won the Irish Sweeps Derby, the first leg of the European Triple Crown. His exercise lad holds the reins, while his trainer watches mounted on the other horse. The trainer is Paddy Prendergast, one of Ireland's leading trainers at the time and a close friend and associate of the gray-haired man standing on the ground next to him, Meadow Court's owner, with whom he has been conferring about the horse's progress. That man is my grandfather, Max Bell, who lived in Calgary, Canada. My mother was the oldest of his six children and stepchildren, and I'm his oldest grandchild, the one who knew him the longest before he died a horrible premature death from a brain tumor at age fifty-nine. When I was born some eight years before this was painted, he was only forty-five and considered himself too young to be called Grand-dad, so I and my brother after me simply called him Max.

Max Bell (1912–72) was a self-made captain of industry who built a for-

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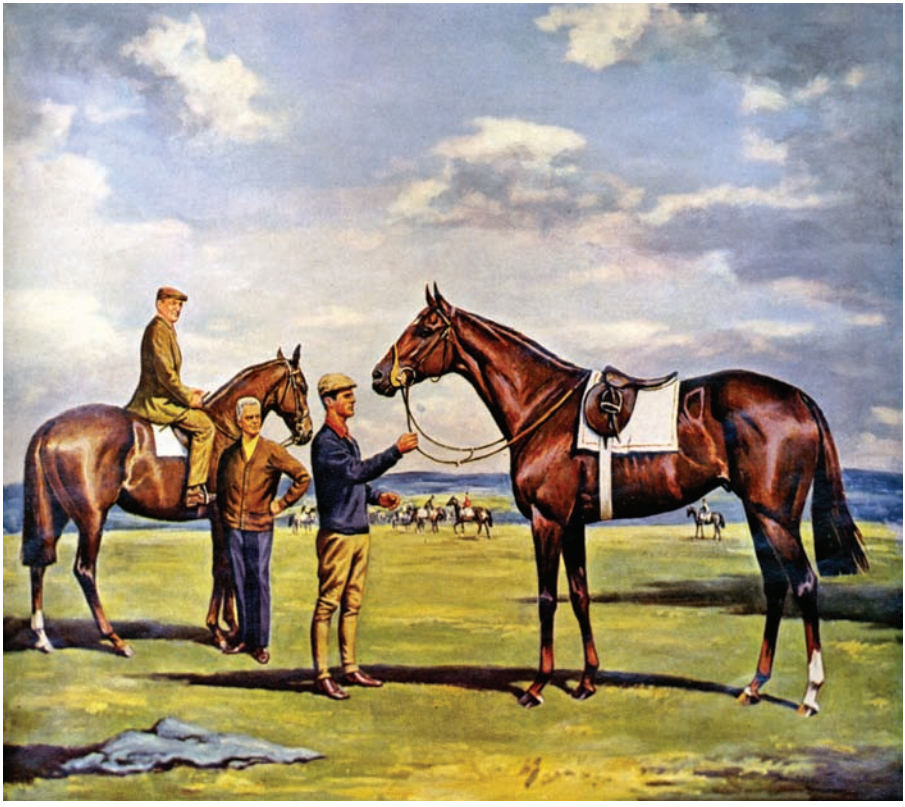

Figure 1. Meadow Court, by Lionel Hamilton-Renwick, 1965.

tune in railroad, oil, and newspaper investments from the 1930s to the 1960s. The year he bought Meadow Court as a yearling, 1963, was the year he became the largest shareholder and director of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and 1965, when Meadow Court reached his racing peak, was the year Max's conglomerate, Federated Paper Publications, capped its holdings with the *Toronto Globe and Mail* and became the largest newspaper syndicate in Canada. The horse and the painting were among the prize trophies of his success. With Meadow Court, he realized his social aspirations as well, for after winning the Irish Derby, he went on to Ascot and a win in the King George and Queen Elizabeth Stakes, considered the highest-quality race in the UK and a real coup for a Western Canadian horse owner. From there Max and Meadow Court traveled to Paris for the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe run at Longchamps in the Bois de Boulogne. Meadow Court started as the

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favorite, but he ended up losing to the French-owned horse Seabird (the story was that the French blacksmith sabotaged him by putting shoes on him that were too small before the race). Nevertheless, he was famous and beautiful enough that the Parisian boutique Hermès put him on one of their champion scarves. Max also had the pattern transferred onto tote bags for the ladies. I don't have one of the scarves, but I found one of the tote bags among my mother's things after she passed away. *(Take tote from hook.)* She used it as a carryall for her pet Chihuahua—that's who was with her when she died. Tucked inside the pocket is still one of his wee dog biscuits. My partner, Meredith, thinks I should have thrown the dog biscuit out long ago; "Mum," as she always preferred to be called—that's British Canadian for "Mom"—has been gone eleven years now. But I've kept the biscuit in the tote right where she left it. Mum did always call me a pack rat; now I can say I'm preserving the material archive. At any rate, the extravagance of having one's Hermès-patterned thoroughbred quilted onto a tote bag was all part of the family horse culture. And the bamboo handles—very sixties, very Jackie O. *(Replace tote on hook.)*

As much as Max prized his horses, he never had any interest in riding. Though a dedicated athlete who had had a brief career as a professional ice hockey player and remained a lifelong fitness buff, he related to horses always from the ground as an owner, breeder, and avid racegoer. The people who became serious riders in the immediate family were the women, which is partly what's moving me to key into the historical theme of mothers handing on the equestrian passion to their daughters. I don't know whether riding gave the women in my family physical grace, as Karr would have it (though I dare say I have more grace in the saddle than on the ground), but riding gave us strong thighs and straight backs and so much else. Through horses, we acquired both deep bodily scars and the power to overcome them. That scarring empowerment resounds through three generations. Max's first wife, Suzanne, my grandmother, whom he married when she was just fifteen years old and he twenty-one, rode in ladies' races. She claimed her memory loss that began in middle age resulted from head injuries incurred in falls from horses. Still, she took her children and grandchildren on summer trail rides into the Rocky Mountains with her little black book and a pencil for jotting down reminders stashed in her pocket. She would say that the jogging horse helped "jog" her memory. She said it in jest, but the more I delve into the embodied repertoire, the record of repeated physical practices that we carry in our bodies, the more I think she was seriously onto something.

The most horse-crazy of Max and Suzanne's children, my mother, Diane, at the age of nine was out riding with a group when her horse spooked

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and took off at a mad gallop. Unable to stop him, she jumped off. A well-intentioned adult riding with the group tried to help her stand up, not knowing that she had broken her leg very badly below the knee. When she put her weight on it, the broken bone tore through nerves and muscles. She spent the better part of the next two years at the Mayo Clinic undergoing multiple surgeries and skin grafts. The procedures saved her leg, but she was left with little feeling from the knee down, a frozen ankle joint, and arrested growth of the lower leg and foot, causing her to walk with a hitch in her gait that was exaggerated by fatigue and, later, alcohol.

The leg and how to manage it and compensate for the perceived deformity became defining facts of her life. With limited feeling and poor circulation, the leg was always at risk for ulcers and frostbite. After the stint at Mayo she was told she couldn't return home permanently to Calgary because of the harsh winters and had to go away to school from age eleven, first in Vancouver and then in Toronto. Her letters home speak poignantly about her social exclusion because of her physical difference and her continuing passion for horses in spite of her injury: "Dear Mummy and Daddy . . . the girls here are so mean. . . . Miss Markham said I could go riding this week again . . . [but first] I have to take my [leg] brace to be bent out" (October 11, 1945). Her school years were a cycle of good days punctuated by a relapse while an ulcer healed or she endured more physical therapy. The careers of Max's horses were major topics of their correspondence and sources of excitement amid her struggles.

By the time my mother was married and I and my brother came along, Max had acquired a large tract of land in Okotoks outside of Calgary on which he built his own thoroughbred breeding operation, called Golden West Farms. Every June when school was out, my mother would pack us up and head west for the summer from our Philadelphia home where my father's construction business was then based. This thoroughbred breeding farm was quite literally my childhood summer playground. My brother did not inherit the same level of family horse passion that I did, so he went off to boys' camp in the Rocky Mountains, while I happily whiled away my days and hours with the horses and stable lads. I was too young to have actually seen horses like Meadow Court race except in the photographs and paintings that lined the farmhouse walls; I knew them in the flesh when they came back to the farm to stand as stallions. They were my rock stars. To get to the horses from the farmhouse, I hiked down a steep hill, coming first to the half-mile training track built to train the two-year-olds before they were sold or sent to the races. The grassy oval inside the track was divided into quadrants by double rows of white board fencing. Those were the stallion

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paddocks. The stallions had to be kept separate because they would fight. I would fearlessly venture into each paddock in turn and visit my heroes, stroking the satiny coats that stretched over rippling muscles, pulling up clumps of grass to feed them so I could feel their velvet noses and smell their warm breath, watching in wonder as their majestic heads would come up to keen attention at something in the distance, and thrilling with excitement when they would engage each other in competitive snorting, prancing, and galloping along the fence lines.

Having made those rounds, I would pass by the breeding shed where I learned some impressive lessons about the mechanics if not the romance of procreation. Then it was on to the training barn where the lads were saddling up the two-year-olds for their daily workouts on the track. A bodily fact of horses working is that they sweat profusely through their skins over their whole bodies, just like humans do. After their exercise, these youngsters would be hosed down, sponged with a liniment wash, and walked out under wool cooling blankets in the black and yellow stable colors and monogram of Golden West Farms. *(Cross to horse.)* This is one of those blankets, now more than sixty years old. My earliest memories of riding entail being lifted onto the backs of these fiery but usually compliant steeds and sitting on top of the wool cooler, which to me was like sitting on top of the world, while they were led around the stable yard. I loved feeling the springy power of their stride, even at the walk, and drinking in the hot, steamy odor of wet hide and wintergreen. Whether the colors meant black for the black Alberta soil and yellow for prairie wheat, or black for oil and yellow for the gold that resulted from it, I relish the coincidence that at the University of Iowa, where I have taught for the last twenty-three years, black and yellow are the school colors, and the letters GWF mean Gay White Female.

(Cross to podium.) Well before I could ride on my own and experience it for myself, I had an inkling of what horses could do for women because of my mother. In my favorite snapshot of her (it's in this tiny brass oval frame that she kept on her dresser), she is riding Meadow Court around the training track at Max's farm. This blazing race horse and trumpeting stallion was extremely well mannered when she rode him, willingly going along at an easy trot on a loose rein in a snaffle bridle. It took her a while to get ready to ride, as she had to wrap her leg with an Ace bandage, dress the often open sores on her toes, tape the toes together so they wouldn't rub, and pack the foot of her boot with lamb's wool. But once she was in the saddle with the horse moving under her, the physical problems disappeared, as did whatever depressive thoughts were eating her, and her spirit soared.

Along with enhancing one's sense of self-confidence and beauty, as

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Meadow Court certainly did for my mother, a major part of the appeal of horses is the relationship one can have with them. Horses compel a fully embodied connection and a sense of partnership with another living creature that is unique. As women moved into riding in large numbers in the late nineteenth century, commercial illustrators frequently portrayed them in affectional poses with the animal, wrapping their arms around the horse's head or neck, kissing or stroking its nose, smiling with unabashed adoration as it softly nibbles a treat from the palm of the hand. Rarely are men in civilian life portrayed in similar postures. While this echoes familiar historical constructions of women as nurturers, it also might partly explain some striking statistics, at least in the culture of English-style riding (the world of rodeo is different). Membership in the United States Pony Club, the major national organization made up of state and local chapters teaching grade schoolers to ride English, is more than 80 percent female. On the horse show circuit, except in the upper-level jumper classes, the overwhelming majority of competitors are female. In schools where riding is offered as a varsity sport, team membership is almost exclusively female. Long after the internal combustion engine provided other vehicles for speed and excitement, many more women than men in the United States opt for horses for recreation, at least in English riding.

My first in-depth relationship with a horse came with the pony Max bought me for my tenth birthday, an adorable Irish Connemara pony named Irish Coffee. This pony was my constant companion outside of school for two years. It was with him that I started through the ranks of Pony Club and began my indoctrination into the rules of the British Horse Society, learning the *Manual of Horsemanship,* which reiterates Elizabeth Karr's admonition of 125 years ago that even "ladies of refinement occupying the highest positions in the civilized and fashionable world" should personally attend to their horses and not leave all the ground work to grooms if they wish to cultivate the best equestrian performances. Accordingly, riding is at the center of what you do with the horse, but it occupies a relatively small portion of the time spent on a daily basis. You also must feed and groom the horse, clean all the tack, learn how each piece of equipment works and needs to fit, muck the stall, keep the barn clean, monitor the pasture for hazards, hold your horse for the vet and blacksmith. Keeping horses properly is hard work that must be done on a regular schedule. Along with the joy of being around my pony, I learned a work ethic and a level of discipline and responsibility that in retrospect I believe carried over into schoolwork and other areas of life. Working around horses is also a tomboy's paradise—wearing jeans or breeches all the time, engaging in hard manual labor, sweating, getting

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dirty, learning how to use tools (wheelbarrows, pitchforks, hammers, saws, drills and screwdrivers for hanging buckets and fixing fences), and of course, those rough-and-tumble wild times when the routine work is done, and you wrestle with your tomboy friends in the hayloft or, best of all, climb on your ponies bareback in the pasture and, well, pony around.

(Cross to horse.) The intimacy of caretaking helps prepare you and the horse for the intimacy of riding. *(Mount up.)* In no way are you just sitting up here along for the ride with the horse doing all the work, though that is the impression some nonriders have. The key to good riding is a good seat. You maintain your seat mainly through balance, and to stay balanced, your core and pelvic muscles must be fully engaged and moving with the horse. The worst thing you can do is to try to stay on by gripping with your legs, which stiffens your whole body and causes your seat to come up out of the saddle, a detriment because your weight through your seat is itself a powerful means of communication with the horse. Your limbs need to be supple and free to administer the aids, the subtle signals you convey mainly via your inner lower leg on your horse's sides and your hands through the reins to the horse's mouth. At the end of an hour's ride working your core, staying supple and balanced, applying the aids, going through the paces of whatever training routine you are involved in, you and the horse will be drenched in sweat. When you dismount, you'll have the feeling that every fiber of your body has been exercised, and you are quite spent.

Imagine the power of that exercise for the first generations of white middle- and upper-class Victorian women who entered the sport of riding (fig. 2). These were women for whom that amount and intensity of physical activity and movement, especially of the lower body, was expressly forbidden. On horseback, they could vigorously agitate the thighs, pelvis, and buttocks while maintaining a ladylike silhouette. This movement was possible even when Victorian women were enjoined to ride sidesaddle, which remained de rigueur for respectable ladies until about 1915. Riding sidesaddle, you only have your left leg on the horse. *(Cross right leg over saddle.)* You compensate somewhat for the absence of your right leg with a crop. As asymmetrical and challenging as sidesaddle seems, there were some significant advantages that enabled women quickly to equal and even surpass men in equestrian abilities. As Figure 2 shows, crossing that right leg over puts the length of your right thigh bottom in the saddle. This magnifies the seat as a vital point of contact and aid in communicating with the horse. Riding sidesaddle you have to learn to use your seat properly.

Moreover, because lady riders aside lacked a major means of control with only one leg on the horse, they had to be ultra-attuned to what the horse was

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Figure 2. "Entrance of Saddle Horses," drawn by Max F. Klepper, *Harper's Bazaar* XXXV: 1822 (November 21, 1891): cover.

doing and even more willing than riders astride to go with rather than force the horse's movements. From men's perspective, women seemed mysteriously able to meld with horses and get them to do their bidding even absent the right leg. In this caricature from *Puck* (fig. 3), the illustrator draws the logical, if ironic and wonderfully queer, extension of women's apparently extraordinary communion with the horse. This is a communion achieved

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Figure 3. From "Fashion's Fillies—A Fancy for Horse Show Week," drawn by C.J. Taylor, *Puck,* November 18, 1901.

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through that most ladylike of riding styles—sidesaddle—yet the result, in effect, is gender inversion, as her lower body becomes one with the horse, and she turns into a centaur in her man-tailored riding habit, literally assuming the horse's phallic power.

All these aspects of relationship and intimacy with the horse—the need to be attuned, the willingness to give as well as take—are especially critical when dealing with thoroughbreds because of their special characteristics. They combine speed with endurance and agility. Temperamentally, like their Arabian progenitors, they are the most spirited, sensitive, and responsive of breeds. Well-seated women riding sidesaddle proved to be particularly well suited to these animals, so much so that the attributes of the thoroughbred horse and an ideal female type, the thoroughbred lady, were constellated in tandem in the horse show and fashion worlds.

(Dismount, cross to podium.) As much as I adored my pony, by the time I was twelve and entering puberty, I didn't care so much about boys, but I yearned for a big horse, a thoroughbred of my own. That was 1970, and by that point, Max was seriously ill, having been diagnosed with a brain tumor and undergone a series of debilitating operations. Although mostly confined to a wheelchair, he could still use the phone and took delight in arranging for me to go to Ireland to stay with his trainer friend Paddy Prendergast, gallop on the turf where Meadow Court had run, and find a horse.

I came back from Ireland with a big strapping Irish thoroughbred named Rossmore. Figure 4 shows me riding him with my mother in a Pony Club mother/daughter class, she on her thoroughbred, I on mine—a snapshot of female equestrian passion and knowledge being transmitted across generations. The class challenged us to go through the gaits in unison, which required us to sync our body movements and use of the aids. Note that our horses' legs are perfectly aligned here at the walk, ready to strike off simultaneously from the same hind foot into the canter. This moment of mother-daughter harmony was fleeting, however; the following year, I took Rossmore with me to the Madeira School, a girl's boarding school outside Washington, DC, which had a riding program. The father of one of my classmates happened to be Major General Jack Burton, who was affiliated with the US Equestrian Team. Attending one of our school horse shows, he saw in Rossmore a prospect for one of the team riders, an Olympic veteran named Michael Plumb, then based in Chesapeake City, Maryland. General Burton set up a meeting, and we arranged an exchange: Mike would take Rossmore, and I would take a smaller thoroughbred mare he had in training who was actually better suited to me in size. This also opened up the opportunity for me to begin training with Mike.

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Figure 4. Mother/Daughter Horse Show Class, Bridlewild Pony Club, Gladwyne, Pennsylvania, 1970.

Both Pony Club and the riding program at Madeira were geared toward three-day eventing because it is considered the complete test of horse and rider, but working with Mike took my riding, my understanding of the relationship with horses, and the conditioning of horses as equine athletes to much more advanced levels. In three-day eventing, you need a horse who is obedient enough to do the dressage test, requiring precision and suppleness in a small arena on the first day, yet fit and brave enough to gallop for miles of cross-country jumping over imposing obstacles on the second day, and still sound enough to clear a course of show jumps in an arena on the third day. With origins in cavalry training, the sport was still male dominated in the 1970s, but that was changing. In the Olympic Games, equestrian sports are one of the very few where men and women compete on equal footing in the same events, as do male and female horses. Even before I had had much intellectual exposure to feminism, I was entering a world where women quite literally were doing what men could do, even physically, and often doing it better. And that knowledge of equality was coming through the body.

I worked with Mike during the summers until I graduated from high

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school, deferred college matriculation for a year to ride and compete, attended college for two quarters, and then took a leave for another two and half years to train with him full-time with the National Velvet dream of making the 1980 Olympic team. When Max died in 1972, at the beginning of that odyssey, most of his fortune went into a foundation dedicated to various Canadian causes, but my mother inherited enough to keep a smaller-scale thoroughbred breeding operation going in Pennsylvania for about fifteen years and to buy several top event horse prospects for me and Mike to ride.

(Remove eyeglasses, cross to brush box by horse.) During the two and a half years I was training full time, it was total immersion. I was one of three working students. We worked for Mike in the mornings, mucking out the barn, grooming the eight or nine horses he had in training before and after he rode them each day. I still use this trophy brush box that I won at a show for the job I did taking care of one of the horses assigned to me. In exchange, he gave us lessons on our own horses, whom we also took care of, in the afternoons and evenings. The schedule was grueling. We started at 5:00 a.m. and often weren't finished putting away our own horses until 9:00 at night. We worked seven days a week; there are no days off with horses.

(Sitting on the edge of the stage close to the audience.) It was in the middle of this intensity that, like my mother and grandmother before me, I had my own scarring, life-altering experience of the dangers of working around horses. Over the years I had had several falls—those come with the territory; fortunately, I had never been seriously hurt. The ethic was, when you fall off, you get right back on and keep going. This injury happened not while riding but while working in the barn. It was August 1, 1977, three weeks before my twentieth birthday. A new horse had come in for Mike to train. He was big and gray and very dirty. In the crunch of the morning's routine, we were trying to get him into the wash stall to clean him up for Mike to ride, and he wouldn't go in, so I prodded him from behind to try to move him forward. He kicked out with his hind legs, and I didn't get out of the way fast enough. The force of his hind foot hit me in the face, opening my skull, crushing my nose, left cheekbone, brow, and eye, and knocking out several teeth. I lost consciousness and was helicoptered to the nearest trauma center, which was at the University of Maryland Hospital in Baltimore, where I underwent extensive neurological testing and many hours of surgery. When I woke up, the doctors told me they had pieced my bone structure back together with metal plates and wire, but that I had lost my left eye and that it would be many months before I was healed enough to be fitted with a prosthesis. Meanwhile *(standing)*, I could wear this cool eyepatch. *(Remove patch from pocket and put it on.)* The doctors added that I had also lost two tablespoons of gray

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matter, which they quickly assured me were expendable. But who knows? Maybe there went rocket science and ballroom dancing . . . maybe there went heterosexuality . . . *(Cross to podium.)*

I was in the hospital for almost three weeks, a forced time-out from what had been a thrilling but hugely unbalanced lifestyle with little time for reflection or contemplation or even reading. At no point did I waver from wanting to continue riding and pursuing my Olympic dream. I had lots of encouragement from family and fellow riders. But whereas before the injury, I had toyed with not going back to college and making my life in horses, I resolved to take the riding as far as I could toward my goal and then return to school. So while it's true that I nearly died from this injury, if it hadn't happened, I wouldn't be here, in this place, in this academic life.

Waiting for me at Mike's when I was released from the hospital was the best horse I ever rode, an amazing mare named Poltroon. We had bought her in Kentucky just two weeks before I was hurt. The daughter of a thoroughbred sire and pinto pony dam, she had inherited her mother's small size and spotted coloring, but she was built like her father and had the thoroughbred's elegance and sensitive, fiery temperament. When we got her, she was a bold, athletic jumper, but she lacked dressage training, which is considered foundational, as it builds muscles and supples the body for optimal performance in all the disciplines. So that's what we focused on. This turned out to be not only what she needed but what I needed during my recovery as I adjusted from binocular to monocular vision, a process that according to the next manual in my education, *The Art of Seeing with One Eye,* could take several months to a year. Since the mechanics of binocular vision are a major part of how we find our balance and orient ourselves in space, regaining that equilibrium with one eye requires a reprogramming of the brain.

Never having met this challenge before, Mike intuited that we should go back to basics with a training tool called a longe line *(remove from hook, cross to horse, attach to bit)*, which enabled him to direct the horse as she moved around him in a circle so I wouldn't have to worry about controlling her while I relearned how to ride. *(Mount up.)* He had me work without stirrups, an exercise that compels balancing and deepening the seat. Unsteady at first, I clutched at her mane even at the walk and nearly bounced off with the rapid two-beat thrust of the trot. Mike kept calling out those all-important riderly reminders: "Sit up! Look up!" "Sit up! Look up!" I was barely hanging on, but we persisted. Somehow he intuited that it might be easier at the canter. Sure enough, within just a few strides of feeling that three-beat rocking motion, I was able to start righting myself. Before long, I could take my hands off of her neck. Frustration melted into elation: "Hey, I can do this, I'm staying up here! It's a miracle!" What was supposed to take months to a

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year was really happening in a matter of days. Soon I had to take the patch off as well—it just got way too wet in there with all the sweat and the tears. In just a couple of days, I took Poltroon off the longe line, stuffed the patch in my pocket, and began working the dressage exercises that made her more supple while she made me whole. Feeling each other's intentions through our bodies, we became so attuned that I barely had to form a thought about what was next, and she was right there with me, whether in the dressage ring or over jumps.

The recovery was so rapid that I was actually able to compete in the events of that fall's competition season. I entered Poltroon and an older mare, Bristol, whom I had campaigned before. Determined to overcome my injury, I rode better than ever. Dressage is the only phase of the three-day event where the judging is partly subjective, based on aesthetics as well as execution, so I wore an eyepatch with my formal riding attire, which definitely added a distinctive touch to the ensemble. In the rougher cross-country phases, I could go patchless. As my mother would often say about everything from a stain on a shirt to a missing eye, "Who's going to see it on a galloping horse?" Bristol was steady and good, but Poltroon was spectacular on the cross-country course, bounding over imposing obstacles she had never seen before and never putting a foot wrong. There were moments—like this one captured in Figure 5 of us jumping over a gaping ditch with a big drop on the other side—where it truly felt like we were flying.

That sensation of bestriding such a powerful, athletic, and willing creature is more than an adrenaline rush; it truly transforms your sense of what you are capable of. Having recovered on horseback from losing an eye, I understand another key aspect of how those women rode sidesaddle: the horse rights asymmetries. Whether it's a missing eye or a missing leg, the horse fills in for what your body lacks. So I connect with those women a century ago, the legions leaping over jumps in the hunting field, like the lady in Figure 6, being carried beyond whatever physical and emotional limitations they had known before. No wonder the reigning icon of the woman suffrage campaign, in the United States as in England, was the iron-jawed angel on horseback who led a phalanx of women in man-tailored riding habits, all practiced in sidesaddle but parading in the nation's capitol mounted resolutely astride. No wonder so many women's colleges founded in the early twentieth century had riding programs, and no wonder many still do.

With Poltroon, I both found new capacities and realized my limits as an equestrian competitor. We trained through the winter and had some successes in the spring of 1978, but when the time came to move up to the next level, my confidence began to slip away. Looking back, I think it was a combination of the increased demands of the sport and a need to emerge from

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Figure 5. On Poltroon on the cross-country course at the Radnor Horse Trials, 1977.

Figure 6. Lady jumping side saddle, c. 1900. The Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia.

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that immersive lifestyle that was still bound up with my mother's influence. I wasn't fully aware of it, but some unconscious instinct was telling me I needed to forge my own life; I was, after all, twenty-one years old. What I was fully aware of was that galloping down to a cross-country jump, Poltroon started to back off, something she had never done before. Being so attuned to each other, I knew it wasn't her, it was me. Rather than try to make her go over the jump, I pulled her up, dismounted *(dismount, lift the reins over the horse's head)*, and led her off the course. That was it for me. *(Pause; a difficult letting go of the reins, cross to podium.)* I loaned her to another, more talented rider working under Mike's tutelage, Torrance Watkins. They formed a brilliant partnership, placing in the top ranks of international competition in 1979, winning two of the three Olympic selection trials in 1980, and winning the individual bronze medal at the alternate Equestrian Games in Fontainebleau, France, after the Western boycott of the Moscow Olympics. Poltroon was then retired and had five babies.

(Replace eyeglasses.) Meanwhile, I returned to college in January of 1979, found theatre history and American studies, and became a full-time academic. For twenty-two years, I hardly rode at all. In academia, I also found a more liberal environment where it was possible to live an unconventional life. As much as horses trouble sexual and gender categories and men and women compete as equals, the world of equestrian sport has been politically conservative, a legacy of its class associations. It has only been very recently that top gay riders have started coming out of the closet. While proud of my scholarly accomplishments, my mother was never really comfortable with the lesbian I became as an academic. Adept at the social graces, she would appear to be accepting but then pointedly relate her belief to me and Meredith that when the father of one of Mike's closeted Olympic teammates learned his son was gay, he had a fatal heart attack.

In the summer of 2001, the desire to ride that I had suppressed for so many years amid the rigors of graduate school and tenure track overwhelmed me. Meredith and I found a wonderful stable, Wyndtree Farm, with very well-kept school horses near where we live in Iowa, and Meredith gamely joined me in taking lessons. It turns out that there are several women riding at the stable who, like me, rode very seriously in their youth, gave it up while they built their careers, and are now compelled to return to it in middle age. Some are doing it with their young daughters, continuing the cycle. This, too, is part of the larger historical scenario of women and horses. Hearing I was riding again, an old event rider friend, Mary Hazzard, to whom my mother had given Poltroon's last baby, a colt named My Turn, born in 1989, was ready to retire him from competition and offered to give him back to us. My mother's farm, horses, and almost all of her money were

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long gone, but she helped arrange for him to come to Iowa. He arrived over Thanksgiving of 2002.

Mum died very suddenly in her home three weeks later—of a heart attack, more from smoking, alcoholism, and anorexia than from any old news about my sexuality. The timing was such that I felt like it was her dying wish that I have this horse. Lest I become too sentimental, the stable owner and trainer Teresa Mulhausen, who has become a dear friend as well as my riding teacher, revealed some months later that the week the horse came she had received one of my mother's infamous boozy late-night phone calls. Mum confided to Teresa her wish that this horse, this son of Poltroon, would somehow rival Meredith for my affection, and I would "turn straight" again. Maybe she was hopeful after hearing about the British survey taken in the 1990s, which found that three-quarters of married horse-owning women would as soon give up their husbands as their horses (cited in Melissa Holbrook Pierson, *Dark Horses and Black Beauties,* 86). Maybe it was more twisting of Freud: that instead of giving up horses and turning to boys, in her mind I gave up horses and turned to women, so now, in turning back to horses, I would turn back to men, or at least to that time in my life when heterosexuality was assumed. Whatever her logic was, it's been eleven years since Poltroon's son arrived, and I still have the horse and the woman, now even legally, thanks to the 2009 Iowa Supreme Court ruling authorizing same-sex marriage. So, back at ya, Mum! . . . and your little dog, too!

(Put on helmet and gloves.) Friday morning is the time I reserve for me and my horse. Meredith stopped riding with me six years ago after some nasty falls. Having come to riding late in life, she doesn't have the muscle memories or instincts in the saddle that I do. *(Cross to horse.)* So now it's just me going to the stable on a regular basis. We jokingly call it my "infidelity." Poltroon's son—we call him Mylo, short for his registered name, My Turn—is bigger and not quite as elegant as his mother, and he presents charms and challenges all his own. But there are also stirring similarities. The soft nose that I can't resist is identical in shape to hers. When I get him groomed *(lift reins back over the horse's head, mount up),* climb into the saddle, and start with a few of the same suppling warm-up exercises I used with her, some of that old restorative sense of communion comes back. I have no desire to compete anymore. I'm not as fit or as finely skilled as I once was, but then again neither is he; twenty-four is getting on in horse years. So, we recreate—re-create—together, here and now, the sweating rhythms of a long, confounding history. I hear my teacher calling: "Sit up! Look up!"

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Jane C. Desmond

Commentary: Kinesthetic Intimacies

When I was ten years old, I had my first horse-riding lesson at a summer camp in northern Virginia. My strongest memory of it: being bucked off a horse, suddenly flying through the air, and landing hard on the bare ground. I don't blame the horse. He had to stand there to be mounted by what were doubtless a bunch of noisy and novice young girls . . . a procession of youthful incompetence. I do remember landing sharply on the dirt, dusting off my shorts, and getting back on to try again. No long-term trauma, but nonetheless, an image etched unforgettably in my memory. Horses were big, powerful, potentially dangerous, and part of being a girl, at least for my middle-class, Euro-American, East Coast, northern Virginia cohort in the 1960s.

My second-strongest memory of horseback riding came from my early twenties, when, having joined the dance faculty at Cornell University, I discovered they had horses right on the campus. I signed up for riding lessons, joining a small, mainly female group. All was going well until we got to lesson number three, when we were taught to move from a walk to a trot. I vividly remember the horse starting to trot, losing my balance, and grabbing onto my horse's neck while slipping to the side of his body, right leg still looped over the saddle, left under his belly, and cantering around the ring like an Annie Oakley stunt rider. As I hurtled wildly through space, it occurred to me that, since I was a dancer, maybe riding was not such a good idea. Once again my short-lived riding experience reminded me that horses are big, powerful, potentially dangerous, and associated with females. I gave up my equestrian dreams and quit taking riding lessons.

But why did I have those dreams in the first place? Looking back, as Kim Marra does, into my cache of equine memories, I find a long-standing pas-

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sion . . . one that I believe I shared with many young girls of my age and class. Whereas Marra sketches the closely braided lines of elite class status and horse owning and riding for women, my own suburban experiences and passions were more middle class, involving rare contact with living horses and certainly no horse of my own, but yet, and still, a passion for horses that revealed itself in my childhood in several ways and survived in various personal archives: material, kinesthetic, and emotional.

I came across part of that material archive when I sold my mother's home in suburban Washington, DC, in 2002, keeping only a few boxes of mementos. Among those treasured objects was a collection of knickknacks I'd had as a child: four tiny ceramic mice, for example. But to my surprise the majority of the figurines were of horses: big, small, plastic, ceramic, realistically painted in blacks and whites, or coated in fake gold (a prize won at a carnival long forgotten.) Apparently I, like so many middle- (and upper-) class girls, had gone through a "horse phase," despite the fact that actual horses were only rarely present in my life.

My favorite toy of all was a plastic palomino horse standing ten inches tall. He was honey colored, with a tawny mane and tail and white socks on his lower legs. He came complete with a removable brown plastic saddle and a gold chain "bridle." Holding that figure in my hands again as a middle-aged adult brought back remembrance of hours of play, of taking the saddle on and off, of trotting him around on my bedroom floor, pretending he was alive. This golden-colored talisman suddenly, like Proust's madeleine, brought back intense memories of kinesthetic and emotional involvement in a world I had created from my imagination. I want to come back to these themes of kinesthetic imagination later, because they are essential to the power of Marra's performance piece.

But, as I child, I didn't just play with horses in the form of figurines. I invested myself in "becoming horse" in a much more physically involved way. I played, and moved, through the suburban backyards of my youth *as if I were the horse, not the rider*! Holding the palomino plastic horse in my hands, I recalled the Palomino Club that I formed prior to age twelve with some neighbor girls (as the founder, I also appointed myself president!). Membership in the club was by invitation only, and it involved hanging out and generally running around in a cantering mode across the green, grassy, backyards that connected our houses. (Perhaps it was not total happenstance that two of us later became professional modern dancers—perhaps that boldness of movement and sense of running freedom even paved the way for our future professions.)

We leapt too, our legs fully extended with youthful fervor over the planted

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beds of flower gardens, trying to stretch out our own kinesthetic abilities to match those of the imagined magnificence we associated with horses. We were the leaping horses, not the riders, and such imaginings fed a sense of power, speed, and almost reckless freedom for our preadolescent female bodies that would soon face the challenges of restriction and discipline in dress/fashion, "ladylikeness," or sexualization as objects of desire. "Becoming horse" at age twelve—with the sense of power and physical freedom that that enabled—provided a lived counterpart to the relentless class-shaped pressures to "become heterosexual female" that would engulf us just a few years later, as puberty hit.[1] In our own way, we were echoing the nineteenth-century women who sailed free over tall fences, sidesaddle.

Where did we, as young girls, get this impetus to pretend to "be" the horse? What cultural imaginaries of that time and place in the United States fed our creative play? Cowboy westerns of the late-1950s movies and television of our youth, full of racing horses? The teary and stirring story of *National Velvet,* with a very young yet determined Elizabeth Taylor (as we were young soon-to-be very determined women), starring in the popular horse-racing movie about England's Grand National Steeplechase, melding girl and horse into an impossible triumph of racing and winning against the odds? Were horses going to be our route to an impossible triumph in a world that would see our femaleness as a marker of limitation? These types of questions link philosophy, ideology, and social history with the lived experience of gendering and social class and do so by examining our relationships to living animals and to our concepts of animality.

Why and how is a horse-girl relationship so important—whether in the (horse)-flesh or in the imaginary realm, for so many generations, in so many parts of the country, across many class lines? Only further research, and perhaps other performance pieces too, can help us understand the experiences of multiple female communities and their similarities and differences. My point here is that while watching Marra's performance, with its laserlike examination of upper-class relations to horses and its visual documentation of the historical past of this relationship across generations in her own family (caught most strikingly in the photo projection of a teenaged Marra and her mother riding in tandem at a "mother-daughter" Pony Club show), we are also necessarily reminded that the lived or imaginary encounter with horses can be a powerful facilitator for female social development beyond the elite classes too—whether any living horses are present or not. Indeed, the cultural imaginary of being, or being with, horses for young females provides an important realm of possibility in the development of a female sense of self and of empowerment.

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PART 2: BEING WITH HORSES

Even if Marra's piece invites us to think back to our own horse dreams, horse play, and encounters (however sporadic) with live horses, it also zeros in on the extraordinary intimacy between rider and horse that riding daily can bring. Here is where the wealth of Marra's grandfather Max Bell, as a Canadian "captain of industry" during the first part of the twentieth century, set the stage for her family's ready access to horses—and not just any horses, but "thoroughbreds," bred to run and jump as world-class athletes.

So intense was this physical relationship that Marra pursued a dream of Olympic competition and trained with an Olympic veteran coach, even through a devastating accident. Horses were the cause of the accident, but they also became the mode of rehabilitation. Throughout the piece, traced across the narrative of her family's story, Marra details the bodily entwinement of girl/woman and horse. Her serious injury was the third in three generations of horsewomen, reminding us of the physical size, power, and potential danger of working with horses, a danger that, it is important to note, *girls* are allowed to take on.

Despite the dramatically violent intimacies of these riding-related accidents, the daily intimacy of riding was challenging and pleasurable as both horse and rider learned together how to accomplish athletic feats of delicacy in dressage, of grandeur in cross-country jumping, and of precision in arena jumping, all parts of the "three-day eventing" world in which Marra moved. Riding gave us "strong thighs and straight backs and so much else," says Marra. The "so much else" refers to the link between physical mastery and the experience of courage. This courage, Marra suggests, went beyond the riding ring and spilled out into the political and social arenas, whether for the early suffragettes who rode on horseback in their protest parades or for Marra herself, who associates it with both her "coming out" as a lesbian and her later "coming out" as a member of the economic and social elite, a potentially uncomfortable identity for a humanities professor committed to social justice.

As an academic, Marra draws on her highly trained ability to analyze the social meanings of everyday practices and multiple worlds, like the world of riding, in devising this presentation. In her performance Marra alternates between the professorial mode of scholarly slide lecturer, adept with the clicker and the podium, and her role in depicting a woman riding, adept as an athlete, astride the surprisingly effective three-dimensional model of a horse, draped with a historically evocative gold-colored horse blanket from her grandfather's stable. Then, through the familial artifacts of saddle, bri-

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dle, and curry comb, she goes back to the physical experiences she had with specific horses she rode over the years, inviting us to understand the cross-species intimacy of riding. "A major part of the appeal of horses," she says, "is the relationship one can have with them. Horses *compel* a fully embodied connection and a sense of partnership with another living creature that is unique" (my emphasis).

One of the strongest signals of that physical intimacy in the performance comes about through the evocation of absence. Early on, Marra holds up a leather girth, a piece that runs under the horse's belly to cinch a saddle onto its back. This leather, she tells us, is made supple through years of use, careful application of saddle soap, and the soaking up of the horses' sweat. Passing it around the audience, she says, "Don't worry—it's clean!" and invites us to smell it . . . to inhale the horse scent that still lingers. We all do, the jingle of the buckle rattling across the aisles as the leather is passed from hand to hand. The bodily traces of the horses that wore that girth are suddenly present in the room—evoking huge living, breathing, sweating animals.

Throughout the piece Marra delves into the intimacy that riding well both demands and enables. She uses her technical knowledge as an equestrian to unpack the power of sidesaddle riding for elite women in the last century. How did they stay on, she asks, and why did they outshine so many men in their riding while seemingly encumbered with the "modesty" demands of sidesaddle? The secret, she tells us, like so much else in riding, is in the "seat." With more surface area of the lower body in contact with the horse, side-seated women gained greater communication through touch, and the horse adjusted to correct the imbalanced position of the legs.

I wanted to test this "seatedness" out for myself, so while writing this response I signed up for a lesson. This time I didn't fall off. Hanging out at the barn for the evening, I watched the easy camaraderie among the women there, smelled the scent of hay and manure, watched the sun set over the fields criss-crossed by paddocks, and felt just a bit of the workaday world of a working horse farm. Dirt, sweat, and labor. Freedom, ease, and deft movements emanated from the experienced riders—all female and all ages—who came for lessons that night. Aside from the smell of manure, it was very much like a dance studio: a largely female space of effort, sweat, and deft competence.

Astride my horse Major, a ten-year-old chestnut, I felt his easy responsiveness to the slightest movements of the reins and his urge to run, invigorated by the cool evening breezes. My teacher reminded me to "relax my seat," and in those few moments when I could stop tensing my legs in a deathgrip, I could feel the melding of my pelvis and the swaying of the horse's rocking

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gait, large movements even at the walk. When his hips moved, my spine did too, swaying gently through the gait. Watching other riders and their horses take their lessons, I saw that the horse has to learn how to move with a rider on her, something that had never occurred to me before. In other words, riding lessons are for the *horse* as much as for the rider. The horse's balance and rhythm are subtly changed by the addition of a top-heavy weight (a person) on its back. The mutuality of this learning, the proposition of moving together, suddenly became clear. Marra calls this riding requirement "the need to be attuned, the willingness to give as well as take."

New work in animal studies is exploring this horse-rider dyad through multiple scholarly lenses, including those of theories of nonverbal communication and theories of phenomenology, embodiment, and multisensory engagement. In the work of Traci Warkentin and of Gala Argent, exploring human-animal relations with, respectively, whales and horses, what emerges is a commitment to embracing the challenges of understanding interspecies communication.[2] To do so, as scholars, or as performers, we must bring the animal's modes of being in the world into the text, onto the stage, or into the scholarly analysis. Obviously, this can only be an approximate translation; ultimately we are doomed to fail, but we are, I believe, morally and intellectually obligated to try.

Otherwise whatever we write, or perform, will only really be about us—the human animals. The nonhuman animals—the horse or any other animal being invoked or represented—will be but a means to the end of telling our own story. We see this all the time in cartoons: animated fables dressed up in animals' clothing. But Marra demonstrates another way of telling our story: one that is based in relationships.

In her piece, she shines a light on the familial and social/class relations that had such a profound effect on her life and on the lives of elite female riders before her, whom she revivifies through her rich historical research. But she additionally tells the story of her emotional and physical relations with horses, particular horses, across many decades: Poltroon, My Turn (now affectionately known as Mylo), and her pony Irish Coffee, horses with whom she shared moments of exhilaration flying over jumps and relationships that punctuated different parts of her life history. This is the interspecies relationship, and at least in Marra's words and in her life, it is surely as important to her as any intraspecies ones.

Marra's relationship with the magnificent (mostly) thoroughbred Poltroon demonstrates this relationship and its two-way flow, where an extraordinary physical intimacy can reach into an emotional one too. Think of the moment during an elite eventing competition when Marra's horse Poltroon

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refuses a huge jump not because it exceeds her own abilities, but because, as Marra senses, Poltroon senses Marra's fear. The horse seems to know that the jump exceeds her rider's abilities, so she refuses her rider's commands to go over it. At that moment of cross-species communication, Marra knew she had reached the limit of what she, as a rider, could do in competition but that Poltroon had not yet reached her equine athlete limit. While Poltroon went on to win international titles, Marra made the difficult decision to retire from the sport of eventing.

For girls, and for women in past generations too, this development of intimate communication. resulting in shared action in the world, is one of the deeply empowering axes of that relationship between women/girls and horses. It is not about the potential for sexual stimulation that comes from riding in the astride position or about the opportunity for a woman to exert domination over a much more powerful being; rather, it is about being heard and listened to and about listening back, through what animal studies scholar Gala Argent terms "a co-created and understood embodied language" (116).

The other half of this cocreator dyad is, of course, the horse. We can never know the horse's experience of being in the world. But we can know and come to understand, through long-term attentiveness, some of her or his responses to being in the world. As scholars and as performers, we have to have the courage to take on this challenge of trying to understand and to articulate cross-species communication when it happens through something like riding. We should not be deterred by easily cast charges of "anthropomorphism" when we try to encounter the horse as an individual being with a specific life history and a sense of agency.

Anthropomorphism, when it refers not to the simplistic attribution of human characteristics to nonhuman animals but to understanding the world through a human lens, is, after all, all that we can really do. To know otherwise is impossible. But to *imagine* otherwise is not. Perhaps this is what I was trying to do leaping over flowerbeds in the Palomino Club. And this is where performance and performance studies can intersect so profoundly with animal studies. Acts of the imagination—that at which artists excel—can render to some slight degree a sense of what animal worlds might be.

Marra's performance excavates the development of this type of shared kinesthesis—what some call entrainment—a shared synthesis of movement together. Serious and successful riders and horses develop this union into exquisite fluency. To bring this process to the fore, to make it visible, to take it apart and put it back together again: this is what performance excels at, and this is perhaps the ultimate gift that Marra's performance gives us: a

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deeply personal investigation and narration of one girl's life with horses, from childhood to the rejuvenation of that passion in middle age, seen as a social reverberation across multiple generations and profoundly shaped by and shaping social class and gender. Affect, embodiment, and communication are the links that unite the horse and rider, the girl and how she comes to act on the world, and the performance that brings it to us as the audience. These are trenchant lessons to take from the stable to the studio to the stage and from the stage back out into the world we share with animals.

NOTES

Horseback Views was first developed as a workshop for "Past Imperfect," the 2009 Summer Institute in Performance Studies led by Tracy C. Davis at Northwestern University. Since Marra is a scholar by trade and not a performer, she did not set out to create a performance per se. But adding the dimensionality of objects, movement, and embodied experience to standard paper presentation to tell the story quickly led to wearing riding clothes—a costume—and creating a stage horse—a set, and soon she was performing. Davis then invited her to stage the piece for a "Shift" she chaired at "Performing Publics," the 2010 Performance Studies International Conference in Toronto. In April 2011, the piece was restaged at Marra's home institution, the University of Iowa, for the national American Studies/Sport Studies symposium "Performing Ethnicities through Sport." Marra next performed the piece in "Standing Heat," a series of performances about animals that Holly Hughes curated for Chicago's Links Hall in May 2012, which marked the professional debut of *Horseback Views.* Sustaining the type of interdisciplinary, intergenre research that *Horseback Views* represents would not have been possible without the ongoing institutional and personal support of Teresa Mangum, Director of the Obermann Center for Advanced Studies at the University of Iowa. Among its other enabling gifts over the last three years, the Obermann Center, along with Matthew Biro and the University of Michigan Department of Art and Art History, funded Marra's participation in the "Animal Acts: Beasts of the Northern Wild Performance Festival and Symposium" at the University of Michigan in March 2013. Throughout the entire journey of creating and performing *Horseback Views,* Marra has benefitted invaluably from the deep moral support and inspired stage direction of her spouse and colleague on the University of Iowa Theatre Arts faculty, Meredith Alexander.

1. My "becoming horse" is emphatically not the same as the "becoming animal" theorized by Giles Deleuze and Felix Gauttari in *A Thousand Plateaus.* While these writers explicitly distance their concept from mimesis and metaphor, pointing instead toward a relation of disjunction and displacement, my kinesthetic enactment of "horseness" was specifically and joyously mimetic, albeit animated by an ideological association of horses (palominos, at least) with the freedom I desired as a young girl on the cusp of adolescence, in the specific time and place of my youth.

2. Gala Argent, "Toward a Privileging of the Nonverbal: Communication, Corporeal Synchrony, and Transcendence in Humans and Horses," in Julie Smith and Robert Mitchell, eds., *Experiencing Animal Minds: An Anthropology of Animal-*

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Human Encounters (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012): 111–28 (hereafter cited in the text); and Traci Warkentin, "Thinking like a Whale: Interdisciplinary Methods for the Study of Human-Animal Interactions," in Smith and Mitchell, *Experiencing Animal Minds,* 129–40.

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Jennifer Allen as the Monkey-Woman in Deke Weaver's *MONKEY*.
Photo by Valerie Oliveiro.

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Deke Weaver

MONKEY

Monkey-Man/Storyteller/Husband: Deke Weaver
Monkey-Woman: Jennifer Allen

Audience members buy tickets from box office workers who wear half-monkey masks, cut so the lower jaw is the human face. The house opens twenty minutes before the hour. An audio jungle loop plays low. The sounds include monkeys, apes, lions, wolves, whales, cows, chickens, pigs, crickets—the audio montage builds absurd combinations of creatures that would never occur in the wild.

Stage right is a huge old television (seventies or eighties) on a black cart decorated with jungle kitsch. The television screen rolls slowly with static. A sparkly silver floor sweeps to the ceiling upstage. Two old-fashioned blackboards (the kind that can be flipped over to write on both sides) sit end-to-end, parallel to the audience at center stage. Stage left of the chalkboards is a MONKEY-WOMAN (the same half-monkey mask as the box office workers, brown corduroy pants, brown sweater, brown Vans shoes). She plays a monkey in a zoo, in a confined space, watched by an audience. Her behavior ranges from boredom to rage.

A MONKEY-MAN (the same half-monkey mask, "gorilla paw" gloves, oversized "ape" slippers, brown corduroy pants, brown sweater) carries and studies a clipboard in front of the two chalkboards. One at a time, the MONKEY-

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MAN writes the names of primate species on the chalkboards. After each primate is listed, an educational voice reads the name that was just written over the PA. Periodically, the MONKEY-MAN looks the chalkboards over, picks up an eraser, and erases one of the species (the most critically endangered primates). A bell sounds with each erasure.

Bonobo
Chinese white-cheeked Gibbon
Mandrill
~~Horton Plains Slender Loris~~
Putty-nosed Monkey
Hairy-eared Dwarf Lemur
Night Monkey
~~Sumatran Orangutan~~
Northern Needle-clawed Bush Baby
Moustached Monkey
Dusky Titi
~~Yellow-tailed Woolly Monkey~~
Broad-nose Gentle Lemur
Golden-mantled Saddleback Tamarin
White-faced Saki
Formosan Rock Common squirrel Monkey
Hamadryas Baboon
~~Pig-tailed Langur~~
Purple-faced Leaf Monkey
Golden Monkey
Slow Loris
~~Cross River Gorilla~~
Lesser Mouse Lemur
Buffy Tufted-eared Marmoset
Guatemalan Howler Monkey
~~Western Hoolock Gibbon~~
Long-Haired Spider Monkey
Long-tailed Macaque
Macaque
Bearded Saki
Monk Waki
~~Miss Waldron's Red~~ Owl-faced monkey
Allen's Swamp Monkey
~~Tonkin Snub-Nosed Monkey~~
Probosis Monkey
Zanzibar Bush Baby
Japanese Macaque
~~Ebo Gorilla~~
Masked Titi
Grizzled Leaf Monkey
~~Greater Bamboo Lemur~~
Pygmy marmoset
Aye-aye
Spectacled Leaf Monkey
Red-bellied Monkey
Mongoose Lemur
Red-Backed Squirrel Monkey
~~Eastern Black Gibbon~~
~~Colobus~~
Potto
Fork-marked Dwarf Lemur

BOOTH TECH A *(on microphone):* Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Station Theatre. Please turn off your cell phones and anything that beeps. In the unlikely event of a fire—step away from the fire. Thank you for coming. And now we will start MONKEY.: Go.

MONKEY-MAN *(in monkey outfit/mask, behind old television/rolling cart/lectern):* Good evening. Tonight you're going to hear some stories. They're all a little bit different but they're all a little bit the same. I guess you could say they're related. Let's start with some pictures. *(A blackboard is flipped by the MONKEY-WOMAN, images projected on the flipped blackboard. MONKEY-MAN gives PowerPoint lecture)*

- The mouse lemur from Madagascar: possibly the smallest of all the primates—fits in the palm of your hand.
- Human being, *Homo sapiens:* five-foot-eleven, weighs 185 pounds, we don't know when he'll die, but on average he'll live to be about seventy-five.

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- Gorilla: this one weighs nine hundred pounds, and, as you can see, it takes twenty-one men to carry him.
- Howler monkey: almost entirely arboreal, the loudest animal in the New World.
- Hanuman: an incarnation of Shiva, Hanuman was a magic monkey who could make himself smaller than a mouse lemur and thousands of times larger and stronger than the biggest gorilla.
- The Monkey King: born out of rock. Trapped under a mountain for five hundred years. Able to transform himself into seventy-two different creatures. Traveled with a monk, a pig, and a sea monster into the West.
- Many primates learn by watching and imitating. Monkey see, monkey do. A network of tiny electrodes was implanted into the motor cortex of a monkey's brain. With the monkey's own arms restrained, the monkey was able to control a robotic arm and feed himself. Monkey think, monkey do.
- Tools can be thought of as extensions of the body. Tools make you stronger. Tools make you faster. Early humans used complex tools made of stone, bone, antler, and ivory. They wore personal ornaments. They buried their dead with rituals. They played bird-bone flutes. They were avid hunters who could take down large and dangerous game.
- Sometimes humans used monkeys AS tools. During the Southern Song Dynasty, in a battle between rebels and the Chinese Imperial Army, monkeys were clothed with straw, dipped in oil, set on fire, and released into the enemy's camp. The panicked monkeys, burning alive, set tents ablaze and drove the camp into chaos.
- "See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil." The three wise monkeys are Mizaru, who sees no evil; Kikazaru, who hears no evil; and Iwazaru, who speaks no evil. Sometimes a fourth monkey is depicted with the three others. Shizaru does no evil. He is shown covering his crotch.
- During the era of the big warships, the days of sails, cannons, and scurvy, they had to find a way to stack their cannonballs so they wouldn't roll overboard. A device known as a "monkey" was invented. The monkey was a flat, square tray made of brass, set right into the deck of the ship. Indentations held the balls, which were stacked in a pyramid. At times, naval strategy required the ships to sail through arctic waters. At forty, fifty, sixty below zero the world changes. Trees steam. Spit freezes. Everything is white. And metal

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contracts—some metals more than others; the brass of the monkey would contract more than the cannonballs and the balls would roll overboard. And the sailors would say to each other, "Arrrrrrr. Shiver me timbers, it's cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey." *(End PowerPoint. MONKEY-MAN steps out from behind television/lectern.)*

How about another story? Here's a story about traps. There are all kinds of traps. Booby traps. Deadfall traps. Mouse traps. Sand traps. Speed traps. Welfare traps. Sometimes you don't even know you're in a trap. And then, if you finally figure it out—it's probably too late. How about a monkey trap? Here's the basic idea: a hunter digs a hole. The hunter puts something delicious in the hole. Something the monkey can't resist. Monkey smells the delicious thing. Finds the hole. Knows the irresistible treat is in the hole. Reaches into the hole and grabs the treat. But here's the deal: when the monkey tries to pull his fist out of the hole—he can't. The hole is too small, his fist is too big. So the monkey has to make a choice.

Wherever you find monkeys you find this sort of trap. All over the world. You got the South Indian monkey trap, the Malaysian monkey trap, monkey traps on the Congo River, monkey traps on the Amazon River. The treat in the trap might be sweet rice, fruit, a nut, something shiny. The trap itself might be a hole in the ground, a gourd, or a wooden box. The monkey might be a spider monkey, a howler, or a macaque.

But that's just monkeys, right? I mean, sure, as far as animals go, they're pretty smart. Opposable thumbs. Some have prehensile tails. Kids hang out with the moms for a long time. But they're not apes. Now, apes . . . Apes are smart. With apes you got gorillas, orangutans, bonobos, and chimpanzees. You and I—us humans?—we share 99 percent of our genetic material with chimpanzees. Apes can learn language. Apes can use tools. Apes are really smart compared to monkeys. Apes are supermonkeys. And humans are superapes. And gods are superhuman.

I like to think that most of us aspire to the superhuman end of the scale, but everybody's got their monkey moments, and this is why the monkey-trap metaphor is used all over the world. The person using the metaphor might be an investment banker, a priest, a shrink, a military analyst, or a philosopher. The moral of this story, this story told all over the world, this story with its interchangeable but basically similar components—the moral of the story is this: Don't be greedy. Open your hand. Let go of the treasure. You can't have it all.

VIDEO ON OLD TV *(*Wild Kingdom *opening, followed by Marlin Perkins play-*

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ing with chimpanzee on a desk): "Hello, welcome to *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom.* The ways of the wild may seem strange to us because we've never seen them before, or because we don't understand them, or because they're so odd that we can scarcely believe them. Now, would you believe, for example, that a chimpanzee such as Mr. Moke, star performer of the chimpanzee show here at the St. Louis Zoo, is, uh, ticklish? And will laugh out loud?"

*VIDEO continues, Marlin tickling the chimp. It goes on too long, hard to tell if it's painful or if chimp enjoys it. MONKEY-WOMAN flips the second blackboard, the back of both blackboards becoming projection screens for video. PROJECTED VIDEO of Marlin tickling/torturing the chimp starts to come up on both blackboard-projection screens. The image on the old television fades to black. PROJECTED VIDEO continues into a sequence of chimps becoming very upset, attacking each other, the audio increasing to chaotic, frantic chimp screams, then a rapid sequence of historic pop-culture monkeys/apes (*Planet of the Apes, The Wizard of Oz, The Land That Time Forgot, *etc.), the sound becoming a haunting audiomontage of howler monkeys. The video images shift back and forth between SCREEN A and SCREEN B. Finally, Kong on his volcano island, Kong being attacked—in three different movies—on various buildings. Then it turns to shots of chimps being trained for space travel, a cartoon sixties rocket launch, then . . .*

VIDEO SCREEN B: *Space/NASA shot of Earth. Ejected circular rocket stage flames toward Earth.*

VIDEO SCREEN A *(graphic text):* "It was Joseph and Etienne Montgolfier who stumbled on the fact that hot air rises and produced the first true flying device—a hot-air balloon. The first public flight famously carried a sheep, cockerel, and duck in September 1783. The Montgolfiers immediately saw military potential. Joseph supposedly claimed that the hot-air balloon experiments might lead to an aerial assault on Gibraltar being possible."

From John Buckley's *Air Power in the Age of Total War*

VIDEO SCREEN A: *Fades to black.*

VIDEO SCREEN B: *The falling, flaming circular rocket stage becomes an animated circle that hovers over the Earth below. The circle fills with images/symbols—British/US/Iraqi flags, maps, dates, silhouettes, satellite photographs—illustrating recorded voiceover:*

AUDIO VOICEOVER: Once upon a time, there was an army of monkeys. They were known as the Barbary apes, but in truth, they were macaques, a type of monkey. Their faces are pink. Their fur is brown. They live to the age of twenty-two. They make their home in Morocco, the Atlas Mountains of Algeria, and Gibraltar. Like Gibraltar, these monkeys exist between worlds,

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balanced on the cusp of the East, the West, and Africa. Legend has it that as long as the Barbary apes roam the Rock of Gibraltar, the territory will remain safely under British rule. In 1944, with British morale battered by the war and the rRock's monkey population dwindling, Churchill took no chances. He ordered a shipment of Barbary apes from Morocco, a short hop across the strait.

In 2003, Britain, the United States, and a coalition of nations were poised to invade Iraq. The Kingdom of Morocco allegedly supported the coalition by offering two thousand Barbary apes trained to defuse landmines. These fearless monkeys . . . dwelling between night and day at the edge of the world, the stuff of prophecy . . . an elite army of magic monkeys. And magic they must be—only two thousand Barbary apes remain on our planet, yet every single one of them volunteered to serve in this primate army. Where does their power come from? Who is their leader? *(Video of white dot/satellite slowly orbiting Earth continues through next section.)*

MONKEY-WOMAN enters without her mask, wearing silver space wig (part monkey, part space-prophet, part woman-from-the-next-section). Dance/movement. Sound is repetitive, electronic (from Fripp and Eno's Swastika Girls). PROJECTED VIDEO image of white dot/satellite orbiting the Earth. During MONKEY-WOMAN dance, MONKEY-MAN changes costume to STORYTELLER, stage left. End dance/movement/video. MONKEY-WOMAN takes seat just off stage right. Puts on mask. Reenters midmonologue, punctuating the story with small toys, movement, etc.

STORYTELLER: Once upon a time there was a woman. She would see amazing things on television. Some things seemed strange to her because she'd never seen them before or because she didn't understand them or because they were so odd that she could scarcely believe them. She would read about incredible things in books. She was boundlessly curious. Fascinated by anything and everything. She read about the North Pole. She went there. She read about pear tarts. She made some. She read about existentialism. She went there. She prepared a syllabus and taught a class. She arranged lectures, debates, panel discussions, and symposia. She questioned, she doubted, she prodded, she poked. She wanted to know. She wanted to be clear. And she saw things, everyday things that took her breath away. She loved the world.

One day she read about orangutans. The word "orangutan" means "old man in the forest." They weigh around one hundred pounds; the big ones get up to three hundred pounds. They are shaggy. They are orange. They

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are incredibly strong. In the wild they live in special jungle preserves on two Indonesian islands—Borneo and Sumatra. As far as homes go, that's it for the orangutans. She decided she wanted to see a wild orangutan before they disappeared. She flew to Borneo. She hired a guide. They trekked into the jungle. Every night, they would set up camp. The guide would smoke and she would go on short hikes by herself. The jungle was hot, so humid that she felt like she was swimming in the air. The trees were thick, old, enormous, covered with hanging moss and vines. The leaves were huge. There was water everywhere. Everything was green. Well, they'd been out for a week and they still hadn't seen an orangutan. Finally, it was their last day. She was trying not to be disappointed. They made camp. Her guide smoked. She hiked. She came to a stop. It was very quiet. And then, something picked her up and lifted her into the tree.

The next thing she knew she had been gently plunked down on a branch—right next to an orangutan. The orangutan had lifted her up like a ragdoll. The shaggy three-hundred-pound ape gazed at her, its eyes like deep brown lakes. She stared back. They were both perfectly still. The two of them sat in the tree for a very long time.

On the flight home she was so excited she couldn't sleep. She'd begun to form the idea that the world was not comprised of a random series of events. She KNEW that everything fit together. Sure, maybe it wasn't obvious at first. Actually, it probably wasn't obvious at all—in the larger scheme of things, who knew why she was lifted into THAT tree by THAT orangutan on THAT day. But she was convinced that everything had a purpose. That there was a reason—even in the face of horror and violence—a reason for warmth. A reason for sympathy and empathy and care and kindness. She knew that there was a reason for love.

One day she got married. Not because she loved the guy or anything. She got married because she read about it and . . . well . . . the idea of the thing seemed so good to her. Not the government part or the religious part but . . . well, the part where you rub his feet, he rubs yours. You surprise each other. You trust each other. You take care of each other. You watch bad movies and hold hands. This sort of thing. It just seemed so hopeful. Not that she had a lot of NEED for hope. She wasn't against hope. But she was so immersed in the fire of the moment that she never felt the NEED for hope. She had a job—a good one. She had food on the table. She had an education, so she didn't feel trapped. She felt like there was meaning in the world and in her life. She'd even been lifted into a tree by an orangutan. She thought that hope seemed to be about something that wasn't there. Hope was about another place and another time.

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She read about the Holocaust. She read about Cambodia. She read about all the battles in World War One. Then she read about World War Two: Stalingrad. Leningrad, Dresden, Tokyo, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki. She read about Rwanda, the Congo, and the American West. She read about the Lost Boys in Sudan. Now, there was a great place for hope. She read about long lines of eight-, nine-, ten-year-old boys walking in the desert through the bush. She read about them walking hundreds of miles. Naked. In the desert. To get to safety. Because they were being hunted. They heard that they needed to find and cross the river. Then they would be in Ethiopia. They would be safe in Ethiopia. She read about men on horses and jeeps. The men had guns and machetes. The men were trying to kill the little boys. But these men were just one of the boys' problems. Sometimes a lion would eat a couple of the little boys. Just snatch them right out of the line. So, you'd be walking along and—your best friend—eaten by a lion—right in front of your eyes. Eaten by a lion.

Finally the boys came to the river. But they could SEE the crocodiles push off the riverbank and slip beneath the brown water. They could SEE the men on horseback with the machetes. They could SEE the men in the jeeps with the mounted machine guns. There were lions, machetes, machine guns—all on their side of the river. There were crocodiles IN the river. And, maybe, safety on the other side of the river. So . . . what did they do? They swam. Or they tried to swim. These boys grew up in the desert. They didn't know how to swim. So. Some drowned. Some boys were eaten by crocodiles. Some boys made it to the other side of the river.

The woman read about this. This happened in this world. This world that you and I are sitting in—right here—this world. She thought to herself that if she lived there, with the machetes and the crocodiles, the lions . . . hope would be a good thing to have. Nobody wants to live in fear. Nobody wants to worry about getting eaten or chopped to bits by machetes. Of course you want to be in a better place. A better time. Of course you would.

Well, okay, if everything has a purpose, how about suffering? What's the reason for these boys to wander through the desert? Or torture—a reason for torture? Really?

Did it help to use a broader, wider lens? Don't look at a month or a year or even a decade. Don't look at lifetimes or generations. Look bigger, step back, look at the ocean and the planet in its orbit. Don't even look at one hundred years or two thousand years—look at ten, twenty, fifty thousand years—a million, two million, look at the life of the planet: 4.6 billion years. Look at the solar system. The galaxy. The stars. Light years—how many miles can light travel in a year?

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But . . . still. C'mon . . . why torture? Why suffering? A loving God? Where? How? A just god? For who? You? Or you? For some people? Were there two active forces—the Devil and God? Or was it one force—the two faces of one coin? And the challenge is to hold the contradictions in your hands and see if you're strong enough to understand that this "just god" allows suffering. Or maybe there is no god? Free will. Cause and effect. Our lives determined by chemistry and held together by ethics. If a butterfly flapping its wings in the Sudan can cause a hurricane in Florida—killing fourteen elderly croquet players—what about the pillage, rape, murder of one, two, three, four, five, six million? What kind of hurricane is genocide? What kind of butterfly starts that kind of hurricane?

Action. Reaction? Mary. Jesus. Lakshmi. Allah. Diana. Buddha. Divine Watchmaker. Karma. Whatever. She'd get to a certain point and realize the complexity. Vast. So many layers, reflecting off of each other. It was disturbing. So upsetting that some nights she couldn't sleep. Like she couldn't turn off her head. Other people must have this thing. Maybe somebody knew what to do. So, she started reading. She read that some people called this thing "monkey mind." Some nights were really bad, and the sun was coming up. Damn, where did the night go? She read that when it was really bad people described it as if their mind was a drunk monkey, playing with a loaded pistol, being stung by a bee. It felt kind of, uh, you know, dangerous. What do you do about this? Somebody had to know. She read about monks and mystics and gurus in caves. Maybe they knew. And . . . they did. She learned how to calm down. And one day, as she sat, watching her breath, a question popped into her head—a little voice—"Do you see?"

"Yes," she said to herself. "Yes. I see. I don't understand, but I see." And then the voice said, "Lift yourself up."

The swirling cream in your coffee causing an avalanche in the Himalayas. It's not a joke. No. Everything is connected. But . . . what about the other way? Practice random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty. A bumper sticker? Would she give up her life for a bumper sticker?

She decided she would. Why not? She would be a butterfly. She would intend her actions to be kind. She would do very basic things. She would comfort people. She would feed people. She would listen to people. That's what she would do. She wouldn't think about the butterfly effect or the cream in the coffee or the ripples, the unfathomable ripples echoing out of her body, from every move she made, every step, every flex of a joint, tightening of the jaw, blink of the eye. Every single tiny thing she did affecting the world in ways that she had absolutely no control over—god . . . no. She wasn't going to think about it. She would stop talking. She would smile.

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She would try to be a good person. It sounds simplistic, but seriously, c'mon: what else are you supposed to do? *(STORYTELLER and MONKEY-WOMAN start simple semisynchronized choreographed movements.)*

One day her husband came home. He'd been away for a week. She kissed him on the cheek. She went to bed. And when she woke up, she was floating two feet above the mattress. She wasn't not surprised to be floating two feet above the mattress. When she got down, she needed to jump. A little hop down to the floor. Not a big deal. But for her husband—it was a big deal. He was upset. He didn't know what to do. He was especially upset when she didn't say anything. She smiled, she kissed him, she walked out the door.

She walked down to the corner to catch the bus. She saw a beagle walking into the street. And, as she watched this little dog, something shifted. The world slowed down. The sun got brighter. The leaves got greener. She smelled everything. She heard everything. The moment crystallized. She decided she would pay attention. She watched the blue car turn the corner. She watched the beagle look in the other direction. She watched the beagle go under the blue car. She watched the blue car drive away. She saw the dog lying in the street. She saw the pool of blood. She heard the dog howling.

And she knew what to do.

She knelt next to the dog. She put a hand on the dog's side, the other hand cradled its head. The dog calmed down. She held the dog. The dog stopped howling. She breathed in through her nose and out through her mouth. The dog breathed easier. The bleeding stopped. The bones that were broken were healed. And then, the beagle got up and trotted away.

As she watched the dog, the woman began to grow. She thought to herself, "I think I'm getting taller." The woman decided she wouldn't go into work that day. *(Blackout with sharp, loud recorded drumming.)*

PROJECTED VIDEO starts with male figures running into the distance, stark contrast image of running on the beach toward the ocean. Drumming ends. Recorded voiceover begins.

AUDIO VOICEOVER: They ran . . . and ran . . . and ran. For months they ran. They looked everywhere. They searched the forests, the mountains, down to the rivers and the deserts. And finally an old eagle told them that she had been taken over the sea to an island hundreds of miles away. The king of the bears, the army of magic monkeys—they stood on the beach, staring at the edge of the world. What could they do?

Yeah. Of course. I know, I know. They were magic monkeys. But this was too much.

A few of them could leap the hundreds of miles over the sea. But who

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among them could jump the sea, find the princess, and jump BACK to safety? Only one of them could do such a thing. One of the magic monkeys was the Son of the Wind. He could do it. When he was two days old, this young monkey jumped a million miles into the sky and swallowed the sun—like it was an orange. The world went dark. Completely powerful, completely confident, this little monkey could do anything.

Well, the gods were angry. They didn't like the darkness. They didn't like some little monkey swallowing the sun. So they cursed this young monkey to forget his strength. They cursed him with doubt. They cursed him to forget his name. And now, when he was needed most, he couldn't remember who he was. He sat on a rock, hanging his head, while the army polished their boots, stared out to sea, and wondered if the Son of the Wind could get it together and be who he was supposed to be.

The king of the bears slowly stroked the back of the young monkey's head. The bear whispered into the magic monkey's ear, "My fearless, wonderful friend . . . it's all true. I'm going to tell you your name."

As the bear spoke, the monkey began to lift his head. He remembered. He remembered his name. He smiled. And then . . . something happened. He began to grow. Ten, twenty, thirty . . . one hundred . . . five hundred feet tall. He grew into the sky. Fangs bared. Unbelievably strong. Roaring. The army of magic monkeys trembled with fear and hope. At last! Here was the Son of the Wind! He would jump the ocean. He would find her. He would strike the demon down. He was the invincible one. He could do anything. With clouds at his shoulders, the sun as his mane, a mountain under each foot, the colossus swayed in his father's happy gusts. And slowly, the titanic monkey crouched, readying himself to leap across the deep dark sea. *(End video, business with the screens/blackboards.)*

HUSBAND: I'm at the airport. I'm traveling. I'm in sales. I used to work the desk. Answer the phone. Make the coffee. Now I travel. Big whoop. I watch the game. Get drunk. Get laid. Pretty much whatever I want. But then, right behind every little thing I do is this voice, "Hey buddy, what's it all about? What's it mean, asshole? Figure it out. How much time you got?" Like. Jesus. Who's saying this stuff?

Did I already say I'm at the airport? I'm at the airport. My flight's delayed. What a surprise. Killing time. Watching all these folks with their hats and their special shoes. What are they thinking? Like, these get-ups are . . . I dunno . . . makin' 'em appear adventurous? C'mon, what do we got here? Batman? Superman? Indiana Jones? Gimme a break. These idiots with all this shit strapped on their belts. They got phones. Here's some guy

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from the dark ages—he's got a pager. Some cameras. What else we got, special ropes with anchors on 'em so they can climb up the sides a buildings or something? Dildos? Never know, right? Dental floss? Toothbrush or something? Listen, please, somebody shoot me if I start carrying a bunch of crap on my belt. Seriously. You know what I'm saying? I mean, I got other things on my mind. Anything. Like plumbing. Or pilot lights! Jesus. Scary, right? Pilot light goes out in the oven. There's gas. You can smell it. You know? Is it a big deal or a small deal? Do you relight it yourself or get out of the house and evacuate the neighborhood? Run for your life! It's a pilot light!

So I come home. Long day, right? Peck on the cheek, "G'night honey," and that's it. Pretty normal. I mean, I love her. Actually, truth be told I would be lost without her. Fucking l-o-s-t. Very much. But I guess it's just pretty comfortable. So we don't need to say too much. Like, uh, you know, it's understood. She gets it. I get it.

So. She's out like a light. But me? I can't sleep. I'm tossing. I'm turning. Ach. I get up. Make myself a sandwich. Watch Animal Planet. I like it. It's good. You know? Chimpanzees. Bonobos. They call the bonobos "the left bank chimp." Figger they're gonna be wearing berets and talking all frenchy and shit. But no, they're not. They say the chimpanzees are like us. They got murder. They got robbery. They got murder. They get gangs together and go to war on each other. They're just like us, yeah, we should be so proud, right? Chimpanzees resolve sexual issues with power. But the bonobos—matriarchal society, right?—the bonobo resolves power issues with sex . . .

Very interesting.

Huh. And the chimps and the bonobos are apes. They don't got tails. This got me thinking . . . like, just for instance . . . what if I had a prehensile dick? You know, so I could control it . . . and, uh, make it go around. And then, what if I had like . . . uh, I don't know, like a . . . a nose penis. And then, like, penises growing out of my palms. And then, what if my sweetie had extra vaginas, like one in her forehead and in her palms and . . . but, uh . . . the prehensile penis can pretty much go anywhere, so . . . And we could you know do it with the nose penis and the forehead vagina and . . . then . . . ah Christ. The sun was coming up.

So, I go upstairs. And—see this is where everything changed. My wife. She's asleep. But she's not in bed. She's, uh . . . floating. Above the bed. In the air. Two feet above the mattress. *Ghostbusters,* or, uh, *The Exorcist,* or some shit. Sigourney Weaver, right? But, see here? She is not evil. She is good. It's like, uh, GOOD levitating. Like a happy Jesus or some wise maharishi, bodhisattva sort of return from the brink of nirvana to help the rest of

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us poor fucks. That kind of levitating. Like she's levitating for peace. Ah Christ, I know, that sounds cheesy, but I don't know how else to describe it.

I'm not taking it at face value. I do some wake-up checks. I'm slapping. I'm pinching. I'm awake. I'm not dreaming. I mean, besides the floating everything is pretty normal—no glowing light, no unearthly breeze. Regular. Sort of. Then she wakes up. I say, Careful honey . . . you're floating. She looks around real slow. She smiles. And she's acting like it's no big thing. I say, You okay? She just smiles. Doesn't say a word. She does this little hop down to the floor. She walks downstairs. I say, Honey? Nothing. I . . . Honey? Hey, sweetie? Can we . . . can we talk about this? But she's not saying anything. She pours a bowl of cereal. Eats a piece a toast. I'm . . . uh . . . you know . . . getting a little . . . "Sweetie? C'mon now. Don't do this. Could you . . . just say something? Please?" She smiled, she kissed me on the cheek. She walked out the door. *(Walk to stage left. MONKEY-WOMAN hands HUSBAND hot cup of coffee.)*

She'll be back. I . . . she loves me. She's fine *(drinking coffee)*. It's my day off. I make some breakfast. Figure I'll watch a little TV. Hope that, uh, by paying attention to the, to the . . . to the TV . . . that, like, you know, everything's gonna be okay. And by "okay" I mean everything is going to be like IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE. NORMAL. REGULAR.

But apparently, this is not going to be a normal day. They interrupt the programming. This just in. Breaking news. All that shit. I hate it when they do that. It's hard to understand what's on the screen. I mean, there's the usual reporter with the usual microphone, but, see, here she's got this big smile on her face and it's not one of those fake TV smiles. It's a real smile. And she's at an old folks home. But . . . they're not acting like old people. They're singing. They're dancing. They're laughing. They're crying. Did I say they're singing? They're singing. There are empty wheelchairs, nobody's using their walkers. And the reporter keeps using words like MIRACLE, and, uh, she keeps talking about some, uh, giant woman.

Then they got footage of some giant woman! She's eight, nine, ten feet tall walking down the street. It's like some crappy camera-phone footage of a lady yeti. An old man's shouting, "She touched me!" An old lady's choking on tears, "She told me to lift myself up." And . . . and they're so happy. Like, they can barely speak.

Then it's a hospital. The reporter's talking about a fifteen-foot-tall woman. He's using words like HEALER and SAINT. Doctors and nurses hugging each other. Terminal cancer patients skipping out the door. The TV people don't know what to do. They're stammering. They're getting weepy. They can't properly cut to a commercial, and I'm like Jesus fucking Christ.

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I can't take it. I turn off the TV. The doorbell rings. I answer the door. Nobody there. I shut the door. Doorbell rings again. "What!"

"Yes, excuse me. Down here. Good afternoon. Is your wife in?"

I . . . I don't know what to say . . . it's a beagle. Talking. Speaking English. With its mouth. And I'm listening. "Sorry to disturb you, old chap. I thought I'd pop by to wish her the very best of luck. She saved my life! I must say, I'm rather grateful. Please do remember to pass along my thoughts to her. Cheerio!"

Dogs? Now it's talking dogs? This is how it's gonna be? Ringing the bell and talking? What do you do when dogs start talking? I paced. I paced in the living room. I made some lunch. Tried to, uh, take care of some paperwork. You know, not too much, cause it's my day off and all. Check some email. Regular. Normal. Right? Wrong. The earth is moving. Earthquake? Here? Really? Then it stops moving. What the fuck? There's a knock on the door. And I'm nervous, cause, you know, what if it's a cat this time.

But it's not a cat. It's her. She's twenty-five feet tall. I say, "Can you come inside?" She smiles no. I say, "Please? Honey?" She touches my cheek. And that's when I see the people. Hundreds of people. On the lawn. In the driveway. Down the street. Hushed. Smiling. Watching her. I'm like, "Come inside," even though, you know, even I know she can't fit in the house. She walks to the park. Everyone follows her. She lies down. She falls asleep in the park. The crowd watches her sleep. They're watching her breath. These people look all peaceful and hopeful, you know? But, fuck! Why did she have to get so big? Why couldn't she just come inside and . . . and . . . you know . . . sleep in the house? I mean, I slept in the house.

Just before dawn, I went out to the park. She was fifty feet tall. I lay down next to her nose and touched her lips. I could feel her smile. She whispered to me. She says, "Honey, are you going to keep me all tight in your fist? Or are you going to let me go?"

I say, "Will you take me with you?"

And she says, "Of course, my sweet husband."

She picked me up and put me on her shoulder. The sun was coming up. I rested in her hair, behind her ear. She was one hundred feet tall. I watched the people, I saw their faces. They just seemed so, I don't know, like, relieved. Like they'd been scared for a long time and now they knew everything was going to be okay. Every step she took was half a city block. I looked down on the tops of trees. Hawks circled her head. She strode out of town into the fields. The people tried to follow, but she was picking up speed. She had made a decision. She was moving with purpose. She broke into a jog.

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As we passed out of the flatlands into the rolling hills she got even bigger. By the time we got to the Mississippi she was two hundred feet tall. She stepped into the river and headed south. Now, I'm not sure how to explain this . . . it's just a feeling I got, but when she stepped into that muddy water I felt like she'd stepped straight into the bloodstream of . . . I don't know, like . . . you know . . . the bloodstream of the whole planet or something. She breathed in—the world breathed in. She breathed out—the world breathed out. By lunchtime, we were in Memphis. She was three hundred feet tall. She kept walking. All afternoon. The banks of the river were lined with people. Nobody made a sound. All the way down to New Orleans. She was five hundred feet tall. She was colossal. She grew into the sky.

With her thumb and forefinger, she lifted me out from behind her ear. I lay in her palm. She held me up, took a long look at me as the sun set in the Gulf of Mexico. And as I lay there, her breath warmed my body. I felt the change. She breathed in the fear, the sadness, the death. She breathed in the hate, the sickness, the rancor of the world. She breathed out peace, love, hope, goodwill, confidence, caring, trust, happiness. It was her breath. She set me down on the beach. The moon came up. She fell asleep just off the coast—the river rose three feet all the way up to Lake Itasca. In the moonlight, I coulda sworn she was, uh, you know . . . like . . . an island lying there in the ocean. And when she died? In her sleep? The temperature dropped ten degrees. The clouds disappeared. All you could see were the stars. The moon. Then, her body split open—and, just for a moment, you could see her organs, organs covered with tumors, tumors bloated with the disease and pain of the people she'd seen and heard and touched. And then, thousands of fish fed on her cancerous body, the ocean, the fish stripped the flesh and all they left was bones. These enormous bones. And as I sat there, watching her huge bones sparkling in the moonlight, I got it. I saw. I understood.

End.

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Cary Wolfe

Commentary: Apes like Us

Deke Weaver's performance piece *MONKEY* begins with a joke. It's in the title, in fact, and is the first of many we will encounter. We don't really know it's a joke until we get to the list of primate species that MONKEY-MAN writes—and erases—on his chalkboard. Is our ignorance about the fact that apes aren't monkeys responsible in part for that erasure? No doubt. Does that mean that the problem could be solved (like a Monkey Puzzle[1]) if we got our facts straight, if the bestiary could somehow be made reliable?[2] Nope, not really. Things are a little more complicated than that, as Weaver's piece aims to show.

We all know the old saws from theology, philosophy, and anthropology about the differences between humans and animals, and many of them are on display in some form here—differences that tend to end up under maximum scrutiny in the comparison of *Homo sapiens* and other primates, especially great apes. First it was possession of a soul, then the possession of reason, then tool use, then (when that failed) tool *making,* then language, then (when that failed) the production of linguistic *novelty,* and so on and so forth. Donna Haraway nicely sums up the fate of such efforts to sort the wheat of *us* from the chaff of *everything else* in her famous "Cyborg Manifesto," when she observes:

> By the late twentieth century in United States scientific culture, the boundary between human and animal is thoroughly breached. The last beachheads of uniqueness have been polluted, if not turned into amusement parks—language, tool use, social behavior, mental events. Nothing really convincingly settles the separation of human and animal. And

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> many people no longer feel the need for such a separation. . . . Movements for animal rights are not irrational denials of human uniqueness; they are a clear-sighted recognition of connection across the discredited breach of nature and culture.[3]

It's both heartening and discouraging to realize that those words were written nearly thirty years ago, and Deke Weaver's *MONKEY* is on to why that might be the case. Would that we could leave it to science to settle, once and for all, through the mechanisms of knowledge and proof, our relations to other living creatures! Sorry, pal, ain't gonna happen (as his Husband character might say).

It ain't gonna happen for a couple of different reasons, and Weaver gives us a hint as to what one of those might be when it gradually dawns on us that we are being fed, deadpan, a cocktail of both fact and fiction, one seemingly as plausible as the other. For example, we get a story about the origins of the expression "freeze the balls off a brass monkey," immediately followed by one about "monkey traps." The uninformed reader/viewer—or even the nonspecialist informed one, for that matter—won't be able to tell you, I'll wager, which of these (if either) is true. A visit to the Internet will tell you, of course, but "tell you" should be put in scare quotes here, because Weaver has laid another monkey trap for us: when you consult the Wiki gods, as MONKEY-MAN knows you will, you will find that Weaver has cribbed his characterization of the Three Wise Monkeys from the Wikipedia entry—but with one salient difference. There, the fourth monkey, Shizaru (the one who does no evil), is said to be depicted as "crossing his arms," not covering his crotch, as MONKEY-MAN tells us. However, when you go to the entry for "Brass Monkey," you will find that cast brass depictions of the Three Wise Monkeys were a common tourist souvenir for Western visitors to China and Japan in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and when the fourth, Shizaru, was included, it was typically "with its hand covering its genitals."[4] And as for the Brass Monkey that holds cannonballs, that, as Husband might put it, is a crock of shit. But then, is this really any stranger than the phenomenon of Marlon Perkins tickling a chimpanzee who has a career in acting (the chimp, not Marlon) to the point of hysteria to show how much "like us" he is? Any weirder than *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom,* with its weekly mix of imperialist adventure narrative, scientific enlightenment, armchair cultural anthropology, and ads for Folgers coffee all rolled into one? Any more improbable—to take the craziest idea of all—than chimpanzees being trained for space travel?

What the hell is going on here? Where I grew up, it was common for

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parents who were suspicious of the accounts given by their kids to ask them, "Are you telling me a story?" So: "Tonight you're going to hear some stories. They're all a little bit different but they're all a little bit the same." You bet they are.

Somewhere along the way, in the movement from Japan to England, East to West, we get from crossed arms to covered genitals—and we get a lot more specific about the causes of doing (no) evil. But is it *shame* we're talking about, and if so, whose shame is it? Is it we Calvinist-Lutheran types who felt the need to uncross our previously "oriental" arms and cover our (now) Christian genitals, or is this one of the most familiar of all the "animal-versus-human" tropes, the stimulus-response model of the animal that Descartes codified in Western philosophy, its very paradigm the uncontrollability of sexual response? Or as scientists used to say of the animal in the heyday of Skinnerian behaviorism, "one thought for each paw: food, food, sex, and food." Or is it instead that *we* are the warring primates who have the problem in our inability to be a "left bank chimp"? Husband: "What if I had a prehensile dick?" "What if I had like . . . uh, I don't know, like a . . . a nose penis. And then, like, penises growing out of my palms." And this is just the beginning of the spin cycle into which Deke Weaver pitches many of our most familiar theories, tropes, prejudices, longings, and fantasies of animals and their kinship or difference with us.

Of course to raise the question of the covering of the genitals, and of the connection between doing (no) evil and the genitals specifically, brings us to the brink of that most central trope of all for the human in relation to nature: the human being as fallen. Original sin, whether for worse (theology) or better (existentialism and its inheritors). As Jacques Derrida notes in his rich and wonderful introductory essay in *The Animal That Therefore I Am,* philosophy has typically taken it for granted "that the property unique to animals, what in the last instance distinguishes them from man, is their being naked without knowing it"; and since they have no knowledge of their nakedness, they are thus "without consciousness of good and evil." For man, on the other hand, "it would be the opposite, and clothing derives from technics. We therefore have to think shame and technicity together, as the same 'subject.'" We are back to the tool, in other words, and "'dressing oneself' would be inseparable from all the other figures of what is 'proper to man,' even if one talks about it less than speech or reason, the *logos,* history, laughing, mourning, burial, the gift, etc." And so, "man would be the only one to have invented a garment to cover his sex. He would be a man only to the extent that he was able to be naked, that is to say, to be ashamed, to know himself to be ashamed because he is no longer naked. And knowing *himself* would mean knowing himself to be ashamed."[5]

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But precisely here, Derrida wants to activate his own spin cycle on this assured opposition of human and animal, clothing and nakedness. "Naked without knowing it," he writes, "animals would not be, in truth, naked. They wouldn't be naked because they are naked." Thus, "there is no nudity 'in nature.'" And "because it *is* naked, without *existing* in nakedness, the animal neither feels nor see itself naked. And therefore it isn't naked."[6] This sounds like something MONKEY-MAN would say. Have Deke Weaver and Jacques Derrida ever met? I doubt it, but here the dizzying cocktail of the Brass Monkey nudges us toward the second half of Weaver's piece, which takes an abrupt turn via MONKEY-WOMAN's donning of the "silver space wig (part monkey, part space-prophet, part woman-from-the-next-section)," as we are told in the stage directions": "Apes are supermonkeys. And humans are superapes. And gods are superhuman." And NASA and space exploration, we are given to understand at this point, have *always* been about cosmology, mystery, the divine—in short, the search for heaven and for the radically alien and other, all at the same time. Derrida concludes his meditation on animal nudity by saying that "man could never be naked any more because he has the sense of nakedness, that is to say, of modesty or shame." This "contretemps," he concludes, "has only just begun giving us trouble or doing us harm [*mal*] in the area of the knowledge of good and evil."[7] The second half of Weaver's piece is very much indeed about good and evil, suffering and redemption, fallenness and transcendence, but it's also about how those don't map in any "rational" way onto the human/animal relation—all of which has to do with the second reason I mentioned at the outset for why scientific knowledge will never settle our relations with other living creatures. The problem is not getting our facts straight about how much DNA we share with chimps or whether new Caledonian crows *really* use tools. The problem is what Cora Diamond calls "the difficulty of reality"—a phrase she borrows from novelist John Updike. For her—and I think for Weaver—"the difficulty of reality" means "experiences in which we take something in reality to be resistant to our thinking it, or possibly to be painful in its inexplicability, difficult in that way, or perhaps awesome and astonishing in its inexplicability."[8] And it is held (often in the form of art and literature) explicitly in contrast to what she calls "the difficulty of philosophy," to an ideal of philosophy that models itself on science: the idea that if we can just get our arguments and concepts straight, then the world will finally be domesticated, as it were, made transparent to sense, our tumultuous psychological lives *as* animals in *relation* to animals brought to heel.

In this light, Diamond writes, "'debate' as we understand it may have built into it a distancing of ourselves from our own bodily life and our capacity to respond to and to imagine the bodily lives of others," and "argumentation"

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may be seen "as a way we may make unavailable to ourselves our own sense of what it is to be a living animal."[9] Of course, there is plenty of "awesome" and "astonishing" in the second half of Weaver's piece, plenty that doesn't fit our thinking or experience, but the reason I invoke Diamond here is that a particularly vexing and even tormenting instance of "the difficulty of reality" for her is "the awareness we each have of being a living body," which "carries with it exposure to the bodily sense of vulnerability to death, sheer animal vulnerability, the vulnerability we share with them." To acknowledge that fact, "let alone as shared, is wounding," she continues; "but acknowledging it as shared with other animals, in the presence of what we do to them," is "capable of panicking us."[10]

Here, it seems to me, we are close to the core of Weaver's piece. If the first half trafficked in (and sometimes "lectured" about) some of the many scientific, philosophical, and anthropological stereotypes about the differences between humans and animals, only to playfully expose them as half knowledge, half truth, the fabric of our everyday, increasingly mediated life (through TV, through the internet)—all of which may well have nothing to do with what other creatures are really like—the second half moves quite decisively to tell a somewhat different story centered on questions of suffering, good and evil, divinity, and enlightenment. But it does so in a way that throws out the window the roles that humans and other creatures usually assume in such morality plays, much less the hierarchies between *Homo sapiens* and everything else that those roles usually sustain. We have a talking beagle. And we have a guy who just wants things to be "normal." And we have a woman who first levitates then grows to be hundreds of feet tall, then stretches out in the Gulf of Mexico and bursts open, her body devoured by the fish of the sea. Whatever is going on in the second half of Weaver's piece, the distinction between *Homo sapiens* and everything else isn't of much use in making sense of it.

At the core of the second part of Weaver's piece, I think, are exactly one phrase, one simile, and one symbol. The phrase is "lift yourself up"; the simile is the description of the orangutan as having "eyes like deep brown lakes"; and the symbol is the ending one: the "enormous bones" of the woman/princess/goddess stripped clean by the creatures of the sea. The phrase "lift yourself up" is the woman/princess's moment of enlightenment, to be sure; immediately after that she becomes a healer of the sick and dying (including the aforementioned beagle who returns from the dead to speak in a British accent, or so we are to surmise), and she gains stature commensurate with her rapidly growing powers. Eventually, hawks circle her head and she strides down the Mississippi River as you'd stroll in a creekbed. She be-

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comes, in short, a god—but a god whose powers are not predicated on her ability to transcend her embodiment. Quite the contrary, her embodiment is what allows her to take the pain and suffering of others into her body. To be a god in this instance doesn't mean being less embodied—as if she's above all that—it means being *more* embodied.

But what is crucial about that phrase "lift yourself up" is not that some version of it occurs in virtually every holy text in human history. What matters is its virtual reenactment of what I would call the *true* moment of enlightenment in her story: the moment earlier when she is lifted into the tree by the three-hundred-pound orangutan. After that, everything changes. But it is a reenactment of a central trope of enlightenment with one important difference: she doesn't "lift herself" up; she *is lifted* up, and not by some Old Testament god or other deity. She couldn't do it—she *can't* do it—alone, but neither can any of us who share the travail explored a moment ago by Cora Diamond. We don't know what the orangutan's eyes being "like deep brown lakes" really means, but one thing we *do* know is that we get here a radical literalization and inversion of what Derrida describes as the canonical "schema of elevation" or "erection" associated with the human's transcendence of the animal (and, as Weaver well notes, of the gods' transcendence of us)—one that reaches back to Freud's thesis on the origins of the human in "organic repression" in *Civilization and Its Discontents,* to cite only one well-known example.[11] But here, rather than the human elevating itself above the ground by means of its upright posture and gait, leading to the evolutionary (and eventually, aesthetic) priority of vision over smell, we find instead "the old man of the forest" in the plane of elevation, while the human gropes about for days on end on the ground, wandering, almost lost, driven by an inchoate desire for contact, waiting to be "lifted up."[12]

Meanwhile, if there is an ape—or more precisely, a *monkey*—who serves as the orangutan's other in the second half of the piece, it is surely the Husband. The orangutan says nothing, stares deeply into her eyes. Whatever happens in that tree, it takes "a very long time." Meanwhile, Husband yammers on. He's at the airport; his flight's delayed; he clothes himself in the trappings of That Which Is Most Human and wants his world to be "like IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE. NORMAL. REGULAR." But she tells him, "Are you going to keep me all tight in your fist? Or are you going to let me go?" So who's caught in the monkey trap now?

And that leaves us with her "enormous bones," these "huge bones sparkling in the moonlight"—what's left after the sea life strips her gargantuan body of its flesh, after they've eaten the tumors that have soaked up the suffering of the world. Those enormous, glistening bones form a cipher—an

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ideogram, almost, angular and geometrical, to the round, deep, brown pools of the orangutan's eyes. Husband sees the bones and says, "I got it. I saw. I understood." But does he? Do we?

NOTES

MONKEY, the first performance in *The Unreliable Bestiary,* opened on Darwin's two hundredth Birthday, February 2009, at the Station Theater, Urbana, Illinois. Written and directed by Deke Weaver; performed by Jennifer Allen and Deke Weaver; choreography by Jennifer Allen; set design by Andy Warfel; lighting design by David Swinford and Susan Summers; stage manager Valerie Oliveiro; technicians/performers Sam Gusfield and Jeff Kolar.

1. Actually, a Monkey Puzzle is not a puzzle (solved by monkeys or anyone else) but is (a) a type of South American evergreen pine tree and (b) a species of butterfly (*Rathinda amor*) that is a member of the *lycaenidae* family.

2. The larger project of which *MONKEY* is a part is Deke Weaver's *Unreliable Bestiary.* For more on the project, go to www.unreliablebestiary.org.

3. Donna J. Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1991), 151–52.

4. Specifically, here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_wise_monkeys and here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brass_monkey_(colloquial_expression).

5. Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am,* ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 4–5.

6. Ibid., 5.

7. Ibid., 5.

8. Cora Diamond, "The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy," in Stanley Cavell, Cora Diamond, John McDowell, Ian Hacking, and Cary Wolfe, eds., *Philosophy and Animal Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 45–46.

9. Ibid., 53.

10. Ibid., 74.

11. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents,* trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1991), 51–52 n1.

12. For a larger discussion of the "schema of elevation" and Freud's text, see Cary Wolfe, *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 2–3, 108–9.

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Deke Weaver

Excerpts from *ELEPHANT*

Hero/Mahout-Deke: Deke Weaver
Larry Stone/Doug Crowe/Criley Orton Voiceover: Gary Ambler
Baby-Elephant Dancers: Jennifer Allen, Jessica Cornish, Kyli Kleven, Steve May
The Musician: Chris Peck
David: David Hays
Singers: Pam Crews, Jen Gibas, Jeanine Meyer

PRESHOW

The tall west-end doors of the Stock Pavilion open twenty minutes before showtime. The audience sits in the "horseshoe" end of the pavilion. The seats are poured cement. The floor of the pavilion is woodchips. Canvas "curtain" drops block the view to the main hall. Center stage is a yellow circus-stand/table and two smaller circus-stand/chairs. A small drumkit is at stage left. Four DANCERS (part circus roustabouts, part teenage cool-kids, part five-year-olds, part baby elephants) swing on railings, quietly singing elephant jump-rope songs and Thai nursery school elephant songs. The DANCERS move through the gathering audience—tight synchronicity, bored distrac-

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tion. Video is projected on two screens. Screen one: two men constructing a fiberglass skeleton of a mammoth, interns at mammoth museum raking and stomping down earth in front of big cartoon mammoth. Screen two: slow-changing depth-of-field closeup zoom through deep green forest leaves and branches while graphic text dissolves up over the image. A sound montage of elephant rumbles and trumpets, Thai pop music, cowboy music, chains, and the Thai Elephant Conservation Center.

PRESHOW TEXT FOR VIDEO:

"When chased by an elephant, one should never run straight along the road. On even ground an elephant can sprint very fast and can easily overtake a man. Safety lies in turning to an uneven terrain and making a detour along narrow, winding foot tracks. An elephant is not fitted to negotiate such ground with ease. He becomes hampered in his movements and in the meanwhile one can get away. If the terrain is hilly, one should flee downhill. For an elephant's pace is slower downhill, while he can run faster uphill and can besides reach up with his trunk for his quarry. While fleeing downhill it is advisable to choose a course covered with rounded boulders. A man can easily hop and skip over the stones, but not so an elephant" (*Elephant: Lord of the Jungle,* 5).

Is it true that elephants are completely silent when they walk?

Yes. It is true.

Is it true that elephants have seven sets of teeth?

Yes. It is true.

Is it true that elephants are herded by infernal gods, wandering the frozen blackness of the underworld?

Yes. It is true.

"The blood of the elephant, it is said, is remarkably cold, for which reason, in the parching heats of summer, it is sought by the dragon with remarkable avidity. It lies, therefore, coiled up and concealed in the rivers, in wait for the elephants, when they come to drink, upon which it darts out, fastens itself around the trunk, and then fixes its teeth behind the ear, that being the only place which the elephant cannot protect with the trunk. . . . The dragons, it is said, are of such vast size that they can swallow the whole of the blood; consequently, the elephant, being thus drained of its blood, falls to the earth exhausted, while the dragon, intoxicated with the draught, is crushed beneath it, and so shares its fate" (Pliny the Elder, *Book on Terrestrial Animals,* book 8, chap. 12).

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Large elephant puppet walking in Deke Weaver's *ELEPHANT.* Photo by Valerie Oliveiro.

From left to right: Deke Weaver, Steve May, Kyli Kleven, Jennifer Allen, and Jessica Cornish in *ELEPHANT.* The projected elephant is Jojo from the Thai Elephant Conservation Center. Photo by Valerie Oliveiro.

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Is it true that elephants use their ears to billow intoxicating perfumes toward potential lovers?

Yes. It is true.

Is it true that elephants walk on their tiptoes, each heel cushioned by a glob of fat the size of a beachball?

Yes. It is true.

Is it true that elephants communicate telepathically?

Yes. It is true.

Is it true that elephants sense the seismic reverberations of thunderstorms, hundreds of miles away?

Yes. It is true.

"All manual and automated classification methods agreed on structural distinction of six basic call types (trumpets, squeaks, squeals, roars, rumbles, and barks), with two call types (squeaks and squeals) being highly variable" ("A Vocal Repertoire of Asian Elephants [Elephas Maximus] and Comparison of Call Classification Methods," *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America,* April 2009).

Is it true that four elephants hold up the earth while standing on a giant turtle?

Yes. It is true.

Is it true that the closest living relative of the elephant is the size of a Chihuahua?

Yes. It is true.

Is it true that elephants are cute and cuddly?

Yes. It is true.

Doors close, DANCERS take places. LARRY STONE enters, checking his notes. The MUSICIAN enters, tests his drums.

SHOW

STAGE MANAGER: Okay, Larry, we're rolling in 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, . . . , . . . *(lights-to-television-studio look).*

LARRY STONE *(in suit, tie, slightly rumpled, possibly a little drunk, very smart, has done this a thousand times):* My guest tonight is Hero, an eleven-foot-tall Asian elephant who was shot to death by a posse of bored Lutherans in 1916. He's come back from the dead to talk with us about language, the uncanny, and hope. We'll also talk about his new book, *Hero's Big Idea,* where he lays out his controversial grand unifying theory.

HERO *(barefoot, in Halloween elephant trunk/ears and beaten-up pinstriped double-breasted suit):* In the classic issues of nature/nurture, you know, in

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our understanding now, of our genetic material, because it's all been decoded, or mostly, and we really have a better understanding of how we interact with it, how it interacts with the environment, so what is the deal with nature/nurture? It turns out to be enormously complicated and really interesting, and I started to envision the genome as a kind of cloud, that is, interactive with the environment, with language, with economics, with psychology. And part of that leads me to think, I wanna do the book, to be, in a way, analogous to the genome. And the genome accumulates bits and pieces of genetic material over time. They get viruses that get incorporated, so I started incorporating a fair number of things that are just true stories that I just stick in the book.

LARRY: Hero the elephant, for the hour. Next.

ANNOUNCER TWO *(recorded, accompanied by cheesy video graphics and talk-show intro music):* Funding for Larry Stone has been provided by the following . . . the Center for Advanced Study, the University of Illinois Office of Public Engagement, the University Research Board, and the Creative Capital Fund. Additional funding for Larry Stone was also provided by these funders: the Ucross Foundation, the School of Art and Design, the Department of Animal Sciences.

And now, from the Stock Pavilion in Urbana, Illinois, this . . . is Larry Stone.

LARRY: Hero the elephant is here. He was a circus elephant that lived a short life! His most recent and only book, *Hero's Big Idea,* looks at many provocative subjects. Hero suggests that poetry is chemistry, sex is song, and economics is myth. The public knows nothing about him, hasn't had any reason to follow him, and has never heard of him. He lived to the age of twenty and died ninety-four years ago in a South Dakota farm town. I am pleased to have him in this arena. Welcome.

HERO: Thank you, Larry.

LARRY: Tell me about your big idea. How did you decide, and I must say I'm fascinated by your choice, that this was the subject you wanted to write about?

HERO: The other day I was having a cheese sandwich. Rosemary olive loaf—I love this bread. A little mustard. I like the stone-ground mustard—where you can see the flecks of . . . the mustardiness. Okay, now—cheese. I like cheddar. I don't like extra sharp, but I really don't like mild because mild is so close to American cheese which, like, in a way . . . is worthless. I like sharp cheddar cheese. I like it from Oregon—Tillamook. Or Wisconsin.

LARRY: Lands of cheese.

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HERO: Exactly. So with cheddar cheese you got mild, medium, sharp, and extra sharp. You've got versions of cheddar like colby or Monterey jack. You've got yellow cheddar, white cheddar. Sometimes they put stuff IN the cheese . . .

LARRY: Garlic, jalapeños, sun-dried tomatoes.

HERO: Yes, and personally, I'm against these things, but there they are. That's just cheddar. Hundreds of other kinds of cheese . . . and all of this is really different forms of milk—skim, whole, half-and-half. And butter—my god, it goes on forever.

LARRY: Let's recap: Cows. Milk. Cream. Cheese. Hundreds of varieties. Subtle differences. You're talking about nuance.

HERO: See, Larry, I love a good grilled cheese—love it. But, you know, all of this lactose nuance would be lost on a lot of the world.

LARRY: Of course—milk and cheese is repulsive to much of the world's population.

HERO: Right—you don't like milk so who cares if it's 2 percent or fortified—it's ALL disgusting.

LARRY: In your book you spend a whole chapter writing about snow and ice. Why?

HERO: It's like cheese. Everybody's heard about Eskimos and snow: lots of words for "snow." Makes sense. One kind of snow holds a dog sled, another throws you and your dogs into the ocean.

LARRY: You have to pay attention.

HERO: In the 1920s, Sir William Thesiger—this British guy traveling with Bedouin tribes in the great deserts of Egypt, Iraq, Oman—traveling on camels.

LARRY: Camels were important—ships of the desert.

HERO: Maybe the most important thing for the Bedouin. So important that there wasn't just one word for "camel." There were lots of names. One-year-old female camel. Female two months pregnant. Ten-year-old male—all different names.

LARRY: Interesting: subtle variations. Okay, good.

HERO: Travel further east. India. Thailand. Southeast Asia. You've got elephants. Like me. This is where I was born. They caught me and shipped me off to the States when I was four years old. You've got wild elephants. You've got working elephants. You've got mahouts, keepers of the elephants. There are very specific words—names for three-month-old elephants, forty-five-year-old bulls—again—it goes on and on.

LARRY: The devil is in the details—got it.

HERO: Yes, Larry, you have to pay attention. With things like snow or a run-

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away camel or a herd of elephants, you better pay attention, because what you don't know might kill you.

LARRY: All tangible, physical stuff—you can smell a camel, taste the cheese, get buried in snow. What else do we have in our language with subtlety and variation?

HERO: Money.

LARRY: Ah. Money. Let's roll tape:

DOUG CROWE *(video, recorded audio):* Doug Crowe. Worked as a liaison between US Fish and Wildlife, the State Department, and the government of Botswana in the early nineties. We had more concerns with poaching rhino than elephant. Rhinos are easier. Saw off one horn and they're done. Elephants take longer. In the wet season, poachers'll stash their ivory and come back for it in the dry season. We rig the stash with I.E.D.'s. Bring up the poacher mortality rate and word gets around. Let me tell you about elephants. First of all, when we're talking about African and Asian elephants, we're talking about apples and oranges. A wild Asian elephant will live and die within five miles of where it was born. African elephants need water, and they migrate vast distances to get it. It's difficult to manage animals that are wandering through three or four countries. Compound this with the fact that we spend more on Cheetos than most African countries have in their entire national budget, let alone spending it on wildlife conservation. I mean, there's no money. Period.

While video rolls LARRY goes off set; BABY-ELEPHANT DANCERS touch up HERO's makeup.

Look, elephants are dandy fundraisers. On one side you got the bunny-hugger crowd. And then . . . see, some countries down there, they're up to their asses in elephants. So, on the other side you got the Safari Club International crowd and they're saying, "You got too many elephants? Well, hell, let us shoot 'em." You try to take a moderate stance—something in the middle? You'll get the shit kicked out of you. *(End video.)*

LARRY: Money money money. Let's hear it.

HERO: Cash, check. Credit, debit.

LARRY: Thirty-year. Fifteen-year. Stocks. Bonds. We could go on and on.

HERO: But, you see, what's different here, what's different for you, is that all of this subtlety, all this variation, is, is, imaginary. It's a, it's a, like . . . communal agreement. It's not backed by gold or silver.

LARRY: That's right, Fort Knox doesn't matter now. So, what you're saying is that money is not tangible. You can't taste it. Can't eat it. It's an idea. Fine. Are these details important?

HERO: I think they are.

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LARRY: Tell us why.

HERO: Language can change the landscape. A single word can completely alter a biosphere.

LARRY: Metaphorically? Poetically? How we think about the land?

HERO: No. Physically. Toss in a little stone, it affects the whole pond.

LARRY: Walk me through it.

HERO: Elephants, we know what we need. Elephants stuck in a zoo, circus—we don't have a choice, we take what we're given, but wild elephants? They're walking pharmacist-nutritionist-mapmakers. They need calcium? They dig up the bottom of a lake for a particular kind of mud. Phosphorus? They walk forty miles and eat a special bunch of bushes. They've got their medicine cabinet spread out over their territory. Sometimes the territory is bigger than you think. Let's say there's a really bad drought. Well, maybe your grandmother takes you for a seventy-five-mile walk to a bed of sand. She digs her trunk under the sand . . . there's water down there. And the only reason she knows about it is because fifty years ago when she was a little elephant, her grandmother took her on a seventy-five-mile walk to this sand during the last very hard drought.

LARRY: Is it true that an elephant never forgets?

HERO: Sure, we remember everything.

LARRY: But the world is changing. Maybe there's a highway blocking the way to the water? Or maybe they threw up some apartment buildings over the sands?

HERO: Yes, and when your survival is based on stability—trusting that in your memory, you know what to do in the worst of times—well, when that trust is gone fear steps in. Fear changes your brain. Pervasive fear sets up a chemical imbalance. You have a hard day at the office. You come home. You need a drink. A cup of tea, whatever. Or maybe you're an elephant. You eat a certain kind of tree, take the edge off. But if the whiskey wears off, the fear's still there, you'll probably want another drink . . .

LARRY: Or eat another tree.

HERO: Yes. And if you've got a family of fifty terrified elephants, all eating a tree a day—or maybe it's a couple of families—five hundred elephants.

LARRY: Five hundred trees a day.

HERO: Terrified every day. They eat fifteen thousand trees in a month—in a national park. And, the elephants can't even go where they used to go, because, you know, the rest of the country is cities, farms, and interstates . . .

LARRY: Parking lots, subdivisions.

HERO: And fences, my god, the fences! The national park is a tiny space—it can only support so many elephants. Now you've got herds of elephants devouring the trees. Now the park looks like a war zone.

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LARRY: From fear you lose a forest. What do you do?

HERO: You "reduce the herd." With African elephants they use the word "culling."

LARRY: Tell me about this word. Now, to me—innocent ears—this word sounds like something a sunny farm girl might do in a painting by Millet, something you might do with an acre of wheat.

HERO: A single word, a phrase, can calm you down. Your fourteen-year-old lab can't hold her bladder, snapping at the kids. She's miserable. You take your sweet old dog to the vet. You "put her down."

LARRY: You "put her to sleep." So, "culling" is not picking a flower.

HERO: Ah, no no no, it is picking a flower, but it's also something else. With elephants "culling" includes machine guns, helicopters, and lots of blood. Elephants that escape live in fear for the rest of their lives.

LARRY: This is where we started. Pervasive fear. All right. Tough question: who cares? I mean, elephants. So what? Other side of the world. Whatever. Who. Cares. Let's take a break.

Video image of scorpion-tail boats, with graphic text, live drumming.

VIDEO GRAPHIC TEXT: "No. There are no more elephants in Laos, Cambodia, or Vietnam. The Americans bombed all the elephants. I fought for the Americans in 1968. Now, this is what I do. Take you down the river in the scorpion-tail boat. I'm sixty-nine years old. What else am I supposed to do?" *(End video.)*

LARRY: We're back. Now, Hero, elephants are cute, lotta personality, but bottom line: why should the soccer mom in her Suburban care about some creature in Asia? Might as well be on the moon. Help me out.

HERO: If Mother Earth is a coalmine, the elephants are one of the big canaries. There are things happening right now that have never been seen in nature.

LARRY: Name one.

HERO: In 2005 young bull elephants were raping and killing rhinoceroses.

LARRY: I'm sorry, say that again.

HERO: Elephants. Raping and killing rhinoceroses.

LARRY: Really?

HERO: Yes.

LARRY: It's unnatural.

HERO: It's true.

LARRY: The source of fear?

HERO: Turns out these young males had all watched and escaped the machine-gunning of their entire family. These teenage elephants mirrored the behavior of young men raising themselves in war zones all over the world.

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LARRY: Post-traumatic stress.

HERO: Yes, exactly. But see, Larry, believe it or not, there's hope.

LARRY: Give us hope, Hero.

HERO: You take one of these gangs of messed-up fatherless teens, you bring in a couple of adult bulls, they lay down the law. What's right, what's wrong—the kids listen. All this weird stuff clears up. Family is important.

LARRY: Now talking about all of this it's like we're talking about people. We're not. Put this in perspective, tell me about size and strength.

HERO: This was a very unusual experience for me because I had planned to do something else. And I was invited to a conference on size and strength, which was a subject not in my, you know, front burner at all, because, well, uh, it's just so obvious, living with it every day, but it was in Los Angeles, and I thought, "Well, you know, I'll go." And I went there and listened to the kinds of discussions that were taking place and I kinda went, "Oh my god. These people have no idea," and I got, I got, very upset.

LARRY: This sounds like it really hit you in the gut. Okay, tell me what made you say "Oh, my God."

HERO: All right, Larry. Well, on a basic level, us elephants are built for three things: drinking water, eating food, and making babies. We drink sixty gallons of water a day. We'll eat about seventy bales of hay in a week.

LARRY: Seventy bales of hay?

HERO: Yeah, about ten bales a day.

LARRY: Folks—remember that number—seventy bales of hay a week. And I'm driving this home because at this level we're not talking about nuance. We're talking about tonnage.

HERO: Yes. We're big. I was nearly eleven feet tall. My African cousins can get up to fourteen feet tall and weigh up to seven tons. In the wild, in one day, we'll eat six hundred pounds of grass, eight hundred if we can get it. Just our hearts, all by themselves, weigh forty-five pounds. Our trunks have fifty thousand muscles. Strong stuff. This is in Kenya, right? A lion—big lion, three hundred, four hundred, maybe five hundred pounds—this lion sees a herd of elephants coming. Lions hate elephants. Somehow the landscape has, you know, trapped the lion, it can't get out of the elephants' way, so what does it do? At the last minute the lion leaps at the lead elephant—this big female—the lion digs his claws into the elephant's shoulder and hangs there. One swoop of her trunk, the elephant reaches over the lion's body, grabs him by the tail, and rips him off. Using the tail as a handle, she slams him into the ground. Over and over. Wham wham wham! Till he's dead.

LARRY: Wow. Breathtaking physical strength.

HERO: Elephant keeper in Germany. His elephant—Stefan—is badly con-

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stipated. So this guy feeds Stefan the elephant twenty-two doses of animal laxative, bushels of berries, bushels of prunes. Nothing works. Finally, last resort, he gives poor Stefan an olive oil enema. And all of a sudden, it works—Stefan suffocates his keeper, buries him dead under two hundred pounds of dung.

LARRY: Not a pleasant way to go, although I imagine Stefan was relieved.

HERO: Larry, you have no idea.

LARRY: Tell us your story. You were alone. Your eyes have been shot out. You're running in the snow. The wind is howling. What were your thoughts on that final day? Take us back to May 15, 1916. Elkton, South Dakota.

HERO: What can I say? The guy that was supposed to look out for me was a drunk, poking me with a hook. I was young—who wants to be poked with a hook? Elephants love family—big groups. I'd been alone my whole life—that's not right. I'm running in a blizzard with my eyes shot out and an entire town shooting me with every gun they can find. Honestly, there's not much to tell. You know, I'd rather talk about . . . how 'bout . . . how 'bout . . . how my African cousins can tell it's raining one hundred miles away. Why we're so quiet when we walk. I mean, this is stuff you guys have just figured out in the last twenty-five years. And now, you're starting to build a dictionary for the language some friends of mine in the Congo are speaking. So, what about that? Dr. Doolittle? Talk to the animals? Please. What about a genuine conversation? Would it pain you that much if I actually had something to say? So, if you can, please, stop and think just for a minute about the possibility that the world is a bigger place than what you assume it is—because with each piece of information that you gather, on one level you figure things out, right? But on another level, even with all these facts, what the hell is this? The mystery deepens.

Canvas drops behind LARRY and HERO slowly start to rise, so by the end of the text the drops are head high.

LARRY: Sure, there's mystery, and then there's the historical record. 1903. Edison electrocuted an elephant named Topsy in Coney Island. 1916. Bad year for elephants in the United States. You go down in South Dakota. The good people of Erwin, Tennessee, didn't have big enough guns or enough electricity, so they lynched an elephant named Mary. Hung her with a railroad derrick. Jumbo was hit by a train. Norma Jean was struck by lightning.

HERO: Yeah, Larry, well, when you put it that way—big elephant graveyard here in the States. So, what about that, right? The whole elephant graveyard thing? Okay, big story, big myth—fine. But you've been watching us for a long time now. You've got the data: for years we'll come back to the spot where our people have died. Maybe we're paying tribute, maybe we're

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not . . . but it sure looks like we're tipping a hat to the ancestors—right?

LARRY: You're honoring your dead, remembering them. Everything we learn about you elephants points to the absolute importance of your families.

HERO: Yes, Larry, I mean, we really care about each other. Really exciting when we get together—everybody's trumpeting, running in circles, petting each other, purring. Lotta love there. And you remember the love. So where would a lone wolf, such as myself, pay tribute—far from the jungles. I mean, c'mon, there haven't been elephants on the Great Plains of North America for what, like four thousand years. But see—ah . . . yeah, see—that's the thing—we were here. My people are buried all over. We got mammoths buried from Wyoming all the way out to Pennsylvania. We used to be here. So, I was alone but maybe I got a feeling that I was with family? And maybe I was thinking, it's a good day to die.

Bright lights in the horseshoe area, loud drumming, cacophony—the west-end doors burst open. Twenty people sprint from the open west-end doors under the canvas drops. For the first time the audience is able to see the main part of the pavilion. The raised canvas drops reveal video—flying over snowy midwestern farmland—on two ninety-foot-long screens and a nine-foot-high pyramid of hay bales in the center of the pavilion's woodchip floor. Circuslike colored spotlights sweep the dark arena. Pairs of sprinters grab hay bales and run to the base of the ninety-foot-long screens, shuttling hay bales until seventy bales are dispersed to two ninety-foot-long lines. While the cacophony continues, the BABY-ELEPHANT DANCERS lead the audience onto the floor of the pavilion to sit on the newly laid hay bales/seats. The cacophony and video shift—a low drone, spare bells, images of closeup prairie grass and moonrise. A spotlit, four-foot-tall, white papier-maché elephant slowly descends from the fifty-foot-high ceiling. As the white elephant touches down, the video image shifts to a bluish desolate snowy farmscape. Animated graphic text comes up over the image.

VIDEO GRAPHIC TEXT: "During a rare May blizzard in 1916, the townspeople of Elkton, South Dakota, required nine hours and three hundred bullets to take down a lone Asian elephant named Hero. With his eyes shot out in the seventh hour, the blind elephant charged through backyards and snowy cornfields before succumbing to a large-caliber shell to the head. The brains of *Homo sapiens* contain spindle cells—often referred to as the cells that make us human because of their link to higher cognitive functions like self-awareness and linguistic expression. But now we are finding that the brains of whales and elephants also contain spindle cells—a clear example of what biologists call parallel evolution. Elephants use tools and pass on cultural information. They live in elaborately structured social groups, possess a deep sense of compassion and an ability to execute

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long-term plans of revenge. An elephant never forgets. Hero would have had memories of the warm jungle and a large family of mothers and aunts. What a strange thing to die alone, in a blizzard, on the Great Plains of North America, by the hands of a posse of bored Lutherans.

Video shifts from snowy farmscape to colorful, blurred, slowly falling lights/snow. The sound shifts from the spare bells to a composite of chains and mechanical gears. DANCERS in sparkly "showgirl" tops—one carries a sign that says SHUTTLECOCK. Two other DANCERS strut to the center of the pavilion and the white elephant. With pomp and circumstance, they undo the elephant and hoist it onto their shoulders. The SHUTTLECOCK sign and the elephant are ritually paraded before the audience. Crossing the exit of the procession is MAHOUT-DEKE—dressed in the outfit given to tourists attending the mahout training at the Thai Elephant Conservation Center—and two of the DANCERS. During the monologue of MAHOUT-DEKE the DANCERS mess around with soccer balls. The audio/video shifts to a stream of images that accompany/underlie the monologue.

MAHOUT-DEKE *(video: Elkton, South Dakota—rural townscape, hot fields, hot dirt roads; audio: elephants rumbling, dogs barking):* When I was growing up, our backyard neighbors were the Klingers. The father worked at Honeywell designing torpedoes. His name was Dick. Dick Klinger. I'm not making this up. His kids were afraid of him. If they did anything wrong they'd get spanked. If they did anything really wrong they would get . . . the Belt. Kids getting beaten with belts by torpedo designers with names like Dick Klinger might have been common in the fifties, but ideas about raising children evolve. These days? The Belt? No. Bad idea.

Video: slow-motion close-up of elephant trunk/feet walking.

My dad told me that, for him, raising kids was a lot like training golden retrievers. Today there are a couple of schools of thought about training dogs. There are the owners using the collars where the slightest tug on the leash digs three-inch spikes into the neck of the dog. Then there are the owners who read the book written by dog-training monks. All positive reinforcement. All love. Because dog backward is god.

So, I'm guessing that training an elephant is a lot like training golden retrievers. I've heard that if you chain a baby elephant to a heavy, sturdy stake, the baby is helpless. It grows up—it gets huge and strong. There aren't any stakes that could hold an elephant, but the elephant is absolutely convinced it can't do anything about the stake and the chain—because that's what it learned as a baby, and an elephant never forgets.

Video: very slow zoom from wide shot of jungle to elephant standing on a hill.

For this project I wanted to see some elephants—not in a zoo, not in a

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circus. Back in the day people would say to each other, "Did you see the elephant?" meaning, did you see whatever was the most spectacular part of whatever metaphorical circus you were visiting. But I didn't want to see metaphors. I wanted to see the elephant. There are a couple of elephant sanctuaries set up for animals that have been in zoos and circuses. One's in Tennessee, one is in California. I asked about coming to visit, coming to volunteer . . . but mostly, I wanted to see the elephants. Pretty much everybody who calls these places wants to see the elephants. But the whole point of these sanctuaries is for the elephants, not for the people to see the elephants. There's no training with spikes, no training with optimistic monks—there's no training at all. It's all elephant, all the time.

I was reading a book called *War Elephants.* The author thanked the people in his "mahout training course." And I thought, "Huh. What's that?" A "mahout" is the lifelong human companion of a working Asian elephant. In three days the Thai Elephant Conservation Center will train you to be a mahout, while you "experience the life of mahouts and elephants firsthand, in a natural environment." Okay. Sign me up.

DANCERS gather on endline, toss soccer balls, pass them back and forth.

Right from the start, the whole thing was complicated. You've got language. You've got translation. Even signing up for the course was complicated. Here's something simple: In the US, a white elephant party is when we get together and give each other white elephants—useless crap. White elephant: bad. In Southeast Asia it is a stroke of very good fortune for a king to discover and capture a white elephant during his reign. A white elephant was supposed to have impregnated the queen that gave birth to the Buddha. White elephant: good. It's tradition.

Traditional elephant training in Thailand is called phaajaan. It's golden retriever training with spikes. The elephant is beaten any time it does anything that is not commanded and rewarded every time it does something that is commanded. They're not given any possibility of making a decision, because then they might get the idea that they have some power, that they have strength. So, while the mahout provides the beatings, the mahout also provides the sweet bananas, the sugar cane, the mud, the baths—the mahout provides everything-everything-everything. Heaven and hell.

Now, if you think about it, the only reason anybody can get on any elephant at all is because they are trained. So, while the five-year-old in me was thinking, I'M ON AN ELEPHANT! the forty-six-year-old in me knew that the only reason I was on the elephant was because it had probably had the crap beaten out of it. Did I do the simple thing and simply not ride the elephant? No. The five-year-old won.

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Video: "how-to" video—getting on and off an elephant.

Here are a couple of ways to get on and off an elephant. No stirrups. No saddles. No ladders. Here we go—you stand very close to the right side of the elephant, right up next to its right shoulder. Never stand next to its left shoulder. I don't know why. But if the mahout tells me to NOT stand on the left side of the nine-foot-tall, five-ton elephant—I'll take his word for it. When you are up this close to an elephant, it's like you're face up against a gray wrinkly wall. You can't see anything else. You give the command, song sooong! If it doesn't wrap its trunk around your torso and tear you in half, well, here's what happens: you—the mahout-in-training—put your hands over your head. With your right hand you grab the top of his right ear. You put your left hand on the gray-wrinkly wall and grab a handful of elephant skin (it's like heavy padded canvas). The elephant lifts his right foot. You put your foot on the raised right knee. One! Two! Three! HUP! You push down with your right leg, your elephant boosts you up, you pull on his right ear and his right shoulder and swing your left leg up and over his neck. Congratulations! You are on an elephant.

Here are a couple of other ways to get on and off an elephant . . .

And THAT is how you get on a working elephant. How do you get on a wild elephant?

YOU DON'T!

I asked why a culture of working elephants had grown in Asia but not Africa. I was told that African elephants were too big—too aggressive. African elephants are two feet higher, two tons bigger. They have names like Vinny. They carry switchblades. Nobody wants to ride them.

MAHOUT-DEKE exits. Three of the DANCERS run out and start a soccer drill, running/passing to each other. The fourth DANCER lopes out on all fours, running like a baby elephant. She plays and runs with a soccer ball. Video shifts to hot midwestern fields. Sound is a recording of a Thai pop song being played on the street. After the soccer drills, MAHOUT-DEKE returns in a touristy Thai hat. He resumes the monologue. The DANCERS gather in a chain gang, heads down, holding the soccer balls between their ankles as they walk along the sideline. Video shifts to close-up of elephant feet in chains while the trunk swishes by with sugarcane and hay.

MAHOUT-DEKE: My elephant was named Jojo. He was twenty. He was huge. Jojo's mahout was named Sawong. The day would start early. We carried stalks of sugarcane to Jojo. "Sawadeekrap, Jojo!" Jojo would shuffle to meet us with his shackled front legs. Then Sawong would give Jojo the command to start gathering the chain. With his trunk, Jojo pulled the chain as far to the right as he could. Then he did it again. He did this over and over till all

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the chain was gathered in a pile. While Jojo ate sugarcane I gathered fistfuls of chain and heaved it over Jojo's neck. This was like shot-putting twenty pounds of chain over his nine-foot-tall neck. It took five or six heavings of chain to get it all up and over. There was a very specific protocol and I didn't have a clue. Jojo knew it. One day, as I started to gather the first handfuls of chain, Jojo unleashed gallons and gallons of urine onto the pile of chain. Well, I didn't care. See, when you leave your cat alone in the house all weekend and you return to find your pillows sopping with cat piss, it's not a coincidence—you probably deserved it. So, I happily gathered the elephant-piss chains into my lily-white hands. I heaved the elephant-piss chain onto Jojo's neck. I struggled onto his back and sat on the chains, elephant piss soaking into my skin.

Never mind that Jojo spent every night of his life shackled, hopping around like he was in maximum security—the chain thing, for me, was all about incompetence. I wanted it to come naturally. I wanted to impress Sawong with—somehow—being something other than a cadaverously white bald man from the United States buying an experience. I wanted to tap into some inner Thai cowboy who could spring on to Jojo's back from a standing position, find the snake marks in the dust, speak to animals. But this did not happen. Sawong would let me flail for a little while. Then he would say, "No, David," grab the chain, flick his wrist, and ripple the chain so it laid perfectly flat, hanging evenly on each side of Jojo's neck.

Video: old footage of cowboys, cattle, the Great Plains. Audio: harmonica, crackling fire.

All this incompetence reminded me of a summer job I had working on a dude ranch in Wyoming. The ranch had been around since the twenties. It used to run cattle. Then it ran cattle and dudes. And for the last fifty years, it's just run dudes. The ranch is sort of like a western Disneyland—you ride horses, sing around the campfire, sleep in a teepee. But see, most real cattle ranches don't even use horses anymore. They use ATVs and motorcycles. There are still cowboys out there, but the ones we have in our heads are long gone.

Video: footage from "Elephant Boy."

Like cattle and horses, elephants in Thailand are classified as livestock. In Thailand, working elephants were all about logging. Mahouts were one part cowboy, one part lumberjack. But see, in 1989 Thailand banned logging. The last straw: an illegal logging operation's cache of logs thundered down a mudslide hill and wiped out a village. Everyone died. Before working with elephants, Sawong was a lumberjack. One of these underground outfits hired Sawong to work in Cambodia. Sawong told me that parts of

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Cambodia feel like the Wild West—he said, "Anything you can't do in Thailand, you can do in Cambodia. For two hundred dollars you can shoot a rocket launcher at a cow." Sawong's boss abandoned the operation, fled the country, leaving Sawong and his mates to fend for themselves. Sawong sold all of his equipment and bribed his way over the border. He made his way to Singapore and finally came up to the Elephant Conservation Center.

Video: Jojo gathering his chain with his trunk.

So, with no more logging in Thailand, what happens to the working elephants, the mahouts, and their hundreds of years of culture? Suddenly stripped of their livelihoods, the mahouts took their elephants to work the streets of Bangkok. They tied flashlights to their tails and sold bananas to tourists to feed them. It's not cheap to feed an elephant. It's not cheap to feed a family. It's tough to make a buck. The Thai Elephant Conservation Center's mission doesn't say much about elephants. Its objectives are about sustaining careers in tourism "rather than begging or illegal logging."

Video: signs from Conservation Center—ELEPHANT FOOD—20 BAHT, ELEPHANT BATHING—9:30 a.m., etc.

See, the Elephant Center isn't about elephants. It's about people. And yeah, it's true, you've got to take care of the people if anybody's going to worry about elephants and wildlife. But is freezedrying hard ways of life into theme parks the best alternative? Well, all right, so what do you do with skills that aren't needed anymore—coal miners in Wales, cowboys in Wyoming, mahouts in Thailand? If you're forced to leave behind a life working timber, you better find something with dignity to make it stick. Watching these old mahouts with their old elephants giving rides to screaming kids and bald white men from Illinois—where's the dignity in that?

Video: point-of-view from the head of an elephant down the trunk, the trunk crashing and tearing through a bamboo forest—frustrated, violent, powerful. Audio: smashing, crunching.

Performance continues: Queen of Assyria, Muybridge Procession, songs, Anastasia Gebhard, and baby-elephant soccer-ball dance (full text at http://www.umich???). With their soccer balls in their laps, the DANCERS take off their elephant gear and watch the video screens. A stop-motion animation illustrates a letter.

LETTER FROM CRILEY ORTON *(recorded voiceover)*: In January 1916 we bought a big elephant named Hero. He was nearly eleven feet tall and weighed ten thousand pounds. He was known as the biggest elephant in captivity. The date was May 15, 1916. The show was in Elkton, South Dakota. The weather was very bad that day, cold and snowy. We always used the big elephant to pull the stakes. Generally, he was a good worker and was well trained,

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but Hero was having one of his bulling spells. You chain them down during these times. Even then they can break away and do damage. Then too animal men will feed them dope. This is done to keep them from going on a rampage. The snow seemed to help make the big elephant mean. The keeper was careless and did not dope him up, he thought he could handle him. After they got through pulling the stakes they went over to the water wagon. The elephant came up against the water wagon so hard and went down across the lot so fast that the keeper had to stop and flog him. When he tried to hook his ear, the elephant dodged and before we knew it the animal had got up on his feet and hit the keeper.

The keeper lit out thirty feet straight ahead flat on his back, his hook thirty feet out to one side. Before the keeper could get up the elephant was there sliding around in the mud trying to make a headstand on him. Hero would try to get the thick part of his trunk at about the place his tusks would be—Hero no longer had tusks—he had gored to death two ponies in this manner and then he would walk on them until they were flattened out. This was what he was trying to do to the keeper. On account of the mud and the elephant sliding around, the keeper was able to get away from him and on the other side of the water wagon. The elephant thought he was under the wagon so he run into the side of the wagon upsetting the whole thing then got up on top of it and walked all over it, breaking the wagon all to pieces.

I went into a hotel close by and got an automatic twelve-gauge shotgun and started out to meet the elephant. A young fellow name of Louie Gaston from Des Moines was with the show and he had gone up town and got a double-barrel shotgun and was over the other side of the lot. The elephant got his head against the bandwagon and pushed it to the ground, upside-down. The next was a lion den with four young lions in it but before he could push it off the flat, Louie Gaston had gotten up close behind a tree and took a shot at the elephant. He must have hit him in the eye and put it out because the elephant dropped down on his knees, got up, and left town. Louie and I started after him.

We would take a shot at his rump and then dodge around some house, and the elephant would go on. Louie got on a horse and someone handed him a 25–20 rifle. By this time the elephant had gotten out into the country. Louie rode his horse around directly in the path of the elephant about fifty yards ahead and got off his horse and kneeled down and took a good aim and shot the elephant square between the eyes, but it did not stop him, if anything he gained speed. I could see the elephant was going to get him so I hollered at Louie. "Leave that horse and run, you darn fool, run." And

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Louie did run, believe me, and the elephant was right after him reaching out to get him. Louie was running in a circle so I run to the center of the circle and took a shot at his other eye. And just as quick as I shot the elephant stopped running and started off in another direction, and today I believe that Louie Gaston can owe his life to that shot because that elephant was gaining on him all the while. The elephant was going in a circle now; both of his eyes were out. And he was going through barbed-wire and board snow fences and was running against telephone poles and knocking them over. I could follow him on the horse because he took the fences with him.

Performance continues: the final parts of ELEPHANT include a live reading of the last bit of Criley Orton's letter, a song about Hero, a monologue about Weaver's last day with Jojo in Thailand, and a twelve-foot-tall elephant puppet (a dancer supporting and moving each leg) slowly walking the length of the pavilion.

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Nigel Rothfels

Commentary: A Hero's Death

I'm trying to find ways of charming people into realizing the complexity and urgency of our situation. I want the project to turn people on instead of shutting them down with fear. *The Unreliable Bestiary* is using humor, poetics, and plain-old wonder to inspire people to live differently.

–Deke Weaver

The interviewer, Larry Stone, "rumpled, possibly a little drunk, very smart," asks Hero, the elephant, "Is it true that an elephant never forgets?" Hero responds, "Sure, we remember everything." That an elephant never forgets is a recurring notion throughout Deke Weaver's *ELEPHANT,* and it is also one of those ideas that is so embedded in our culture as to seem beyond question. In fact, however, it was not until the eighteenth-century natural historian Georges Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, proclaimed that the elephant was, with the exception of the human, the most impressive creature in the world, the animal with "more memory and intelligence than any other," that the idea of prodigious memory was first introduced into—and then became so firmly rooted in—the western conception of the elephant.[1] While earlier descriptions of the creature tended to focus on its immense strength, its powerful presence in battle, and the magical qualities of its blood, ever since the eighteenth century we have been looking into the eyes of a creature who never forgets, who acts out of a supreme sense of justice, and who, in the wild at least, lives in a society of moderation and love.

But, of course, elephants forget things all the time. It is not a philosophical error rooted in anthropomorphism to state that elephants, like every other creature we know a little bit about, remember some things and forget others and that the strength of their capacity to remember undoubtedly varies from individual to individual. In fact and in short, elephants are like us, or like dogs, or parrots, or whatever—some of them might remember certain episodes in their lives very well, but none of them remembers everything.

Hero's simple agreement that elephants never forget echoes text projected on a screen in the work's "Preshow." The text scrolls through ten questions,

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including: "Is it true that elephants are completely silent when they walk?" "Is it true that elephants have seven sets of teeth?" "Is it true that elephants are herded by infernal gods, wandering the frozen blackness of the underworld?" and even "Is it true that elephants are cute and cuddly?" To each of these and the other questions the answer is a simple, "Yes. It is true." Some of the statements, though, are clearly more true or "more verifiable" than others. Recently, I was recording sounds in an elephant barn at a North American zoological garden. In reviewing the recordings, I can easily hear the keepers talking to each other, easily hear the old hydraulic systems moving massive steel-reinforced concrete doors, easily hear the sounds of sliding water hoses and lightly thudding steel-toed work boots, easily hear the rumbles, pfffs, and other sounds of the elephants, but I can't hear the animals' footfalls as they moved around the building. But does this mean that elephants are always completely silent when they walk?

I am a historian interested in the "unnatural histories" of how we have thought about different kinds of animals, and *ELEPHANT* initially left me perplexed. On the one hand, the work purports to describe (1) the historical events surrounding the killing of an elephant in 1916, alongside (2) the artist's personal experiences attending a weeklong "mahout training program" in Thailand. This seems a straightforward enough project. And if the artist wants to relate these accounts on a mammoth scale, through a mix of video, song, dance, stop-motion animation, and an interview with a dead elephant, then I'm likely to be more intrigued than bewildered. On the other hand, throughout the work—from the "Preshow" scrolling of text about what is "true" about elephants; to the recitation as fact of a internet meme about a defecating elephant; to the reference to a "scientific" study that claims that gangs of pathological young African male elephants, suffering from PTSD, are raping rhinoceroses; to so many other statements that seem true, might be true, aren't true—Weaver confounds expectations that this work will present anything consistently truthful about the lives of elephants, let alone present accurate accounts of the killing of an elephant a century ago or a mahout training program. In a way that only an artist can, Weaver repeatedly undermines the audience's desire that what they are seeing represents, in the style of old natural-history television, "authenticated facts." Instead, the artist presents us with what he calls an "unreliable bestiary"—a work that will reclaim a spiritual connection for animals while unmooring the human observer from a world of easily collated zoological facts and taxonomies. In this topsy-turvy world, what we think we know about elephants is jumbled unevenly with science, whimsy, and farce to create an unsettling contemplation of the elephant as an animal we both might know better and will never know at all.

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There are two main heroes in this work, both performed by the artist. One is Deke Weaver himself, who, in what he describes as a sort of childish desire, wants to see, to touch, to be recognized by an elephant. Frustrated in his attempts to do so in the United States, this hero books himself for a "course" at the Elephant Conservation Center in Thailand, where, in three days, he will learn to be a mahout or at least be able to see, touch, be recognized by, and even ride an elephant. This hero learns to get on and off an elephant and learns, too, something about the care and feeding of captive elephants in Thailand. He also learns that while his presence undoubtedly supports the center, the mahouts, and the elephants, and that while the fascinations and pocketbooks of tourists will be critical to the future of captive and wild elephants in places all over the world, pretending to be a mahout will always be a disappointing experience for anyone who reflects deeply on the experience. In the end, of course, the elephant recognizes him not as a partner in an actual relationship, but as the incompetent tourist he is. All of us who have paid to experience briefly the life of another person will recognize this empty feeling of inauthenticity, even if the "five-year-old" inside us all can be ecstatic at the experience.

The other hero in the performance is an elephant named Hero, and it is around this historic animal that the whole project, according to Weaver, had its genesis. The basic elements of Hero's story are told in parts throughout the work. Using newspaper accounts, oral histories, letters, and other archival material, Weaver reconstructs the events of May 15, 1916, in Elkton, South Dakota, when the elephant attacked his handler, knocked a bandwagon off a flatcar of the Orton Brothers Circus train, and then ran into the countryside, pursued by and being shot at by townspeople and a couple of the men from the circus. Even within Weaver's telling of the events of that day there are a number of ways of understanding what took place, and additional sources don't do much to make the story clearer. In brief, though, for one reason or another, when the wagons were being loaded back up on the rail cars, Hero, who would normally push the wagons with his head, balked and attacked his trainer. The trainer escaped the elephant's assault, but then Hero made a mess of a couple of wagons, including the large bandwagon, before taking off into the countryside. After hours of pursuit, during which his eyes were shot out, Hero was eventually killed by a more powerful rifle brought to the scene.

Beyond the story of what happened that day, though, lies a long and rich story about an extraordinary family circus tradition stretching back now over 150 years. In January 1916, the Orton Brothers Circus went out on rail for the first time, traveling with thirteen cars: one advance car, five flatcars for carrying large wagons, four sleepers, and three stock cars, one of which

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was Hero's. Purchasing the railcars was a large and risky investment that both set the circus in direct competition with other regional rail circuses and took the Orton Brothers Circus out of its more flexible wagon routes where it had built up audiences over the years. Even though the Ortons were new to rail, it was nevertheless one of the most famous Midwest circus names, tracing its origins back to the Orton Badger Wagon Show that Hiram Orton took on the road in 1853, starting in Wisconsin and traveling down through Iowa, Texas, and further into the south. Hiram had four sons, the youngest of whom was R.Z., who traveled on the 1854 circus as a one-year-old. In 1916, when Hero was killed, R.Z. was in his sixties and was the principal stockholder of the Orton Brothers Circus.

Hero was actually the second elephant in the show, but he was billed as "The Largest Elephant on Earth" and was intended to be one of the main attractions of the year. (At that point in the history of circus elephants in the United States, it wasn't enough for a show simply to have an elephant: it needed more than that to get the public's attention; hence Hero's hyperbolic moniker.) The show opened on April 29 in Glenwood, Missouri, toured for a week in Iowa in seven towns, then moved into Minnesota for a week in five more towns, before arriving in Elkton for what was to be the first stand in two weeks in the state. Typically, the show would arrive in a town, perform, and leave the same day, arriving in the next town the next morning. Every day, the train would have to be unloaded, the wagons would parade through town, the circus would be set up, the performances given, and then the whole thing taken down and packed back up on the train before the day was done. That day, however, the weather was so unpleasant that the circus was already packing back up on the train in the afternoon, without having given a performance. This was just one more day in what was shaping up to be an unfortunate season. With poor weather and high costs, the show "went to the barn" in the middle of the season, closing on July 4 in Mora, Minnesota, without having had a single winning day.[2]

Near the end of Weaver's *ELEPHANT* a stop-motion animation using clay figures projected on jumbo screens tells the story of Hero's last hours. A voiceover reads a long "Letter from Criley Orton," one of R.Z.'s sons, describing the events of that day. The sequence begins with a photograph of Hero with three men standing before a rail car. R. Z. Orton is the slight man standing in the middle of the picture at Hero's right front leg. The train car in the background is Car #1—the advance car for the circus. The photograph was produced as a postcard to advertise the show and presents the large elephant with his trunk curled up standing before three men dressed in suits. Taken in Lancaster, Missouri, where R.Z. purchased the railcars, the

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photograph was obviously meant to celebrate the launch of what looked to be a big year for the Orton family. Yet the photograph looks quite somber when viewed today—the dark suits, the rubbly road by the railroad tracks, the random wagon, and the bits of lumber strewn in the left background contribute nothing toward the sort of festive atmosphere required in such photographs even a few decades later.

Indeed, this photograph, viewed from almost a century later, can feel a bit grim, raising a historian's dilemma that is also shared by Weaver in trying to tell this story. For the artist and for most of us, I think, there is a certain disconnect surrounding a photograph like this, a disconnect likely not evident to the Ortons at the time, but that leads viewers today to a whole series of questions, such as: What led to this elephant becoming the star of this little photograph? What was he doing in South Dakota? Why was he being asked to move large circus wagons around? What caused him to turn on his trainer? Why was it necessary to shoot out his eyes? Why couldn't, as Weaver asks, they just let him go?

Before all else, I think we have to accept that the people working on this show and living in this town seemed to have had little hesitation about what to do with a self-evidently dangerous animal running loose. Like it or not, the first priority was and, in similar circumstances today, will be the safety of the people, and both those in the circus and in the town likely breathed a sigh of relief that day because no people had been killed.

Beyond this fact, however, we have to return to the central question around which the others turn: what fate brought this twenty-year-old elephant to spend the last sixteen years of his life performing in circuses in a country halfway around the world from where he was born, only to end up being slowly shot to death outside a tiny town in South Dakota? The simple answer, of course, is that Hero was the feature act of a circus traveling about the Midwest because, plainly, *he did not belong there.* This circus, like all the others, sought to present the unexpected, the unbelievable, and the impossible to an audience wanting to see and experience something beyond their daily lives. Like the lives of most heroes, this Hero's life played out as a tragedy merely by everyone doing only and exactly what each had to do in the circumstances.

At the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin, there are other photographs of the Orton circuses. One is from 1915 and shows Sarah "Babe" Orton, the youngest of R.Z.'s children, at about thirteen years old. The picture is almost a mirror image of the photograph of Hero. Here, a large white

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horse, facing to our left instead of to our right as Hero had, stands in profile before a large wagon on which one can read "Orton B"—the rest of the circus's name being obscured by the horse. Babe Orton is shown in a short black show dress, astride the rump of the horse. It is as if she were riding the horse backward and has turned her upper body to face the camera, arms outstretched, left hand holding a training wand. Mirror photographs, and yet here the feeling is light and somehow cheery, despite an equally rough dirt road and background in disarray. Why do these two quite similar photographs feel so different from each other? Is it only the contrast of the youthful energy of the smiling Babe Orton with the somber countenances of the men posing with Hero? That is undoubtedly part of the answer, but I think more of it can be found in the quite different expectations we have about elephants and horses, expectations that make people uncomfortable seeing an elephant walk on its hind legs when they would not feel that way about a horse doing the same thing; expectations that make a horse appear natural on a dirt road in front of a wagon and an elephant appear unnatural in the same location.

Perhaps, too, our knowing something about the ill-fated 1916 Orton Circus textures how we understand the photographs. Like last photographs of human heroes, the picture of Hero becomes more about the death of the elephant than about his life. And this, I think, is the final strength of Weaver's unreliable telling of this Hero's death, of his unreliable encounter with elephants more generally. When the artist says, "What a strange thing to die alone, in a blizzard, on the Great Plains of North America, by the hands of a posse of bored Lutherans," it is clear enough that he finds plenty of room to blame the humans in these tragic events. For Weaver, the tragedy is obviously the events of May 15, 1916, but it is more than that; for him, the tragedy is the vexed encounter, seen in so many places, of humans with animals. But there is also hope in this piece: that by becoming more aware, by living differently, it is possible to have less destructive relationships with animals. For me, at least, the possibility of living with and not against animals can also be found in the joy presented by Babe Orton on horseback. Some people find all training of animals to be essentially coercive and exploitative. For my part, I see in this century-old photograph the care, respect, and compassion I think rest at the heart of Weaver's profoundly compelling demands that we not take what we think we know about animals for granted and that we push beyond the errors and mysteries of our interactions with the natural world to a self-critical awareness.

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NOTES

ELEPHANT is the second chapter in Weaver's *The Unreliable Bestiary.* This lifelong project is presenting an evening-length performance for each letter of the alphabet—the letter representing a particular endangered animal or habitat. *ELEPHANT* premiered in September 2010 at the University of Illinois Stock Pavilion, a cavernous arena chosen for its associations with circuses, state fairs, and Roman amphitheatre battles.

Writer, director, video: Deke Weaver; codirector, choreographer: Jennifer Allen; composer, sound design: Chris Peck; lighting design: Valerie Oliveiro; environmental and puppet design: Andy Warfel; costume design: Jennifer Allen, Susan Becker, Kyli Kleven, Steve May, and Rose Morefield; video systems design: Damon Loren Baker; stage manager: Elina Kotlyar; associate environmental design: Grant Bowen.

1. Georges Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, *Natural History: General and Particular,* vol. 7, *History of Quadrupeds,* trans. W. Smellie (London: Cadell and Davies, 1812), 188. See also my "Elephants, Ethics, and History," in Christen Wemmer and Chatherine A. Christen, eds., *Elephants and Ethics: Toward a Morality of Coexistence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 101–19.

2. See Adrian D. Sharpe, "The Orton Circus: 78 Years of Struggles and Triumphs," *Bandwagon* 13, no. 4 (July–Aug. 1969): 4–14. See also the ongoing blog of William Woodcock Jr., grandson of R. Z. Orton and son of Babe Woodcock (née Orton), at bucklesw.blogspot.com.

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Jess Dobkin

Excerpt from *Everything I've Got*

I woke up today and thought about the world. Its land: erupting, eroding, yielding, withholding. Its waters: warm and cold, salty and fresh, rapid and still. Its inhabitants: the very few I know, the few more I will meet, the billions of others. Its activity: creation and evolution, thrust and whirl. Things are happening all the time. And when terrible things happen, people behave terribly. When people behave terribly, terrible things happen. When terrible things happen, God behaves terribly. When God behaves terribly, it rains.

The unicorn is frolicking in the rain. When I say frolicking, of course it is understood that I mean fucking. The unicorn is fucking in the rain. Look at her. Look at her size. Look at the size of her horn. You know what they say about the size of one's horn corresponding to the size of . . .

Do you know how much rain we got last year? Last decade?

When God brings on the flooding it isn't with the dramatic fury you might expect. Fury is something that slowly builds; first it is fed and then it feeds. Momentum mounts consumption. It turns out, water is not so different from fire. They are sisters, playing dangerous games, getting carried away. They cannot help themselves.

Rolling over in bed, God says, "Build an ark." For future generations to sing songs about, for children's toys to be manufactured and sold, for the religious right's favorite defense of heteronormativity. For the possibility of something to be salvaged, for a paperweight souvenir of the world that had been.

You know this part: they pair up. Check, check. Two, two. Two, two. Ladies and gentlemen, dogs and frogs, step right up. They comply. They obey. They board. Except for the unicorn.

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It would be easier to comprehend if she hadn't heard the call. To explain that she had strayed too far out of the town, into the surrounding mountains, an innocent Maria Von Trapp lost in song, miles from the convent. If the bell, then the siren, and the final, desperate, "All aboard!" had been too muted. Or if she had heard the call, only was coaxing a frightened kitten down from a perilous branch or helping a blind man navigate a busy intersection.

The other animals look upon the unicorn with disdain. The lions and antelopes bask in a sense of supremacy. The monkeys and penguins pat themselves on the back with an uneasy self-congratulatory glad-that-isn't-me. The horses look out from the deck with envy, remembering what it feels like to run free on the mountain, now unsure of their future among so many that they cannot call friends. This rocking ship is one of safety, but by no means pleasantry—the cramped quarters, the smells, the pukes, the rules. The couples on board wonder what the unicorn does with her days, now in the rain and back in the time of dry earth and sun. Maybe this is the unicorn's fault. Maybe she caused the rain to fall. Maybe she is too much. Too much thinking, too much fucking, too much dreaming, about things big and small.

This is what the animals think. Except for the dove, who circles gracefully above the unicorn's head—but the dove doesn't know how to be anything more than a symbol—a carrier of someone else's meaning.

What did you do today?—I thought about the world. And about rain. I went for a walk that felt important. I made a quiche. I looked at myself in the mirror.

The unicorn knows early that it is too late. The boat boarded, the anchor lifted. The evacuation complete.

What does it feel like to be in the rising water? Do you swim? Float? Tread?

On day three she is hopeful. Maybe it will subside. But the rain is relentless. God is determined to share this hurt, this disappointment. The unicorn scales the mountain seeking higher ground, but knows it will never be enough. Every mountain has its peak and it is never enough. While the other animals plan their futures, the families they will create on their return to dry land, the unicorn prepares for her disappearance.

She summons the virgin maidens, but none are pure enough to answer the call. She feels the water rising on her body: her hoofs, her ankles, her knees, her belly, her back—all of the work of creation, all of its details, gone. The body is gone. The voice is gone. Even the scars are gone. She looks up to the limitless sky, the only thing untouched by this wrath.

Only the horn is now visible above the climbing water. She has taken her

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Everything I've Got, Jess Dobkin, 2010.
Photo by David Hawe

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final breath. Only the horn is now visible, and she conducts an orchestra using her horn as a baton. She cannot see it because her eyes are submerged, she cannot hear it because her ears are submerged, but there is the dove, following the horn's tempo, performing a hollow song.

Life will carry on, but it will be different. They will live with the burden of history, now folklore. The, "I remember when it cost fifty cents to ride the subway. I remember how those horned creatures would frolic on the mountain. It was before your time." BF. Before flood. BFF. Before forgetting the flood. BFFF. Before forgetting to forget the flood. BFFFF. Before forgetting to forget to forget the flood.

God makes mistakes. God has regrets. We make mistakes. We have regrets. Without them, what would we sing about? What would we create if not a testament to our destruction? A title. An idea. An essence. What is it worth? Ask the unicorn, she has an answer.

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Jill Dolan

Commentary: The Great Refusal and the Greater Hope

Jess Dobkin's *Everything I've Got* is a poignant meditation on the possibilities for life and art-making in the face of an uncertain future. Moved by the untimely death of a filmmaker friend, Dobkin was prompted to write a piece that would enumerate all the ideas that remain kicking around in her head, just in case this performance (or "performance blueprint," as she calls it) might be her last. In the full-length work from which this excerpt is taken, Dobkin's lecture-demonstration moves her through various costumes and actions, all layered onto her own plangent artist-persona as she contemplates the too-quick passage of time.

Dobkin begins by decorating herself from head to toe as a mirrored ball, turning herself into the disco emblem that brilliantly refracts light. From there, she strips down literally to fuck herself with a condom-wrapped dildo, transferring the public, presumably collective pleasure of disco into a public but more intimate act of self-pleasure. Then she enacts a birthing ritual by poising the head of a mannequin named Patricia on the dildo that juts out from her crotch as she stands upside-down. After each action, Dobkin piles her props on the discarded mirror-ball suit, collecting items and images into a shrine to both possibility and endings.

Using a Visual Presenter device (a kind of overhead projector) to broadcast objects, headlines, and images to an audience she addresses directly, Dobkin runs through all her performance ideas. She imagines a press conference in which she announces a breakup with a girlfriend; audio interviews with sperm donors that address people's questions about her daughter's conception; portraits of family and strangers posed as though they're related; a coffee table book of photographs of therapists' offices; a list of objects—including clowns—she can publicly put into her vagina; photographs of people's faces

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as they're taking a shit; posters of "lost lesbians" (lost from relationships and others' lives, not lost from their own); karaoke cars on subways; and many more. This inventive, dizzying recitation and partial performance of imaginative ideas builds momentum toward a contemplation of her own death and how she might be buried or memorialized. The excerpt presented here ends the performance with Dobkin crouched underneath her stage-within-a-stage—her "presentation table"—telling the unicorn story as a puppet show projected onto the shrine and its previously arranged objects.

With the unicorn story, Dobkin reinterprets the biblical flood that prompts God to admonish Noah to build an ark, the two-by-two fairy tale in which species are saved and their future procreation insured by their coupledom. In Dobkin's retelling, the singular unicorn represents a queer resistance to such reproductive and other binaries. Missing the injunction to board the ark for salvation, the unicorn fails to obey or comply. The unicorn frolics (by which Dobkin says she means "fucks") in the rain, happily playing in the face of apocalypse. She continues to romp about the shore not, Dobkin clarifies, from any superior sense of destiny or worth; she isn't saving anyone else or purposefully neglecting the call to safety and a dubious future. She just remains.

Dobkin reports that the coupled animals watch the unicorn from the deck with "disdain" and perhaps muted envy, "remembering what it feels like to run free on the mountain." But because they've made the safe choice, they blame the unicorn for her blithe recalcitrance, deciding that maybe "she caused the rain to fall. Maybe she is too much. Too much thinking, too much fucking, too much dreaming, about things big and small." In other words, the unicorn symbolizes too much refusal to conform to gendered and sexual norms that insist on circumspection, denial, moderation, acceptance without analysis, and physical abnegation, all to perpetuate a world that may or may not regenerate into a real community. Because even as they embark, the obediently paired animals soon realize they've made common cause with "so many that they cannot call friends."

Dobkin's challenge to binaries peppers her dolorous, evocative language. A great price is levied for the singular unicorn's nonconformity; she "knows early that it is too late." She seeks higher ground, but as the disastrous rain continues, she finds herself submerged, watching from below the unaffected sky above, "performing a hollow song" that she conducts with the baton of her horn. And as the unicorn disappears, Dobkin tells us that history is written, constructing a *before* and an *after* that forever marks the process of remembering from which memory is created: "BF. Before flood. BFF. Before forgetting the flood. BFFF. Before forgetting to forget the flood. BFFFF. Before forgetting to forget to forget the flood."

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In this short excerpt from a haunting, one-hour performance, Dobkin invests the unicorn with queer subjectivity, a lesbian "she" whose disappearance marks the beginning of a memory that can barely be fathomed. As a stand-alone coda to a piece that predicts incalculable loss, the unicorn's story richly metaphorizes the radical lesbian refusal of heteronormativity, her rejection of the insistent complacency of couples, and her resistance to the domesticity the social covenant requires to guarantee a future. Dobkin's unicorn would rather disappear than board the boat as part of a procreative pair. But Dobkin doesn't valorize the metaphoric figure as a heroine; the unicorn was just living her life otherwise, proceeding as usual, when the call to board the future sounded. Her fatal disappearance isn't punishment so much as the natural state of her queer subjectivity. She's not yet freed herself from earth's gravity like the dove, who circles overheard while the unicorn drowns. The dove bears the weight of symbolism not of her own making, Dobkin remarks ruefully, a burden she won't set on the unicorn's shoulders.

But in her disappearance into history and folklore, the unicorn becomes the dividing line between then and now, a "perhaps-er," like the gender-crossed Albert Nobbs in Glenn Close's film of Simone Benmussa's play, neither here nor there but suspended in a state of desire whose only tragedy is that it can't, finally, be fulfilled. Dobkin, though, resists ending *Everything I've Got* on a tragic note, opting instead for a matter-of-fact description of the new absence of one who was so vitally present. The unicorn disappears: "All of the work of creation, all of its details, gone. The body is gone. The voice is gone. Even the scars are gone." Her loss draws the slash in binaries Dobkin has already rejected (or embraced with a difference). The unicorn lives on in the "and": "warm and cold, salty and fresh, rapid and still." The unicorn is inscribed in the in-between. She becomes memory, engraved in the interstices of opposed terms. She becomes hope in dismay, presence in absence, and vice versa. The unicorn remains in the regrets, which Dobkin calls "a testament to our destruction . . . A title. An idea. An essence"—a lingering, wistful reminder that calls for another story, another body, to carry memory.

Seeing the unicorn's story projected as a puppet show across an accumulation of objects redolent of Dobkin's past and potential (or potentially foreclosed) future enhances its aching poignancy. Watching the objects as the story is told, with Dobkin crouched under the presentation table, bespeaks already the absence of a body, the already gone unicorn. And with the figure of the lesbian/queer performer actively withdrawing from the stage, appearing to take shelter from its demands for presence, the unicorn's great refusal and the counterintuitive great hope in her absence are palpable indeed.

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Heather Woodbury as a frog in the production of her 12-part solo saga, As the Globe Warms. Photo by Caroline Spitzer

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Heather Woodbury

Excerpts from *As the Globe Warms: An American Soap Opera in Twelve Acts*

All characters, all sounds, and all animals are portrayed by one performer using a microphone.

EXCERPT 1: *LORELEI SPEAKS AT PATHWAYS TO CHRIST PENTECOSTAL CHURCH*

The wind blows.

PARISHIONERS *(singing and clapping):* Glory to Go-od! Glo-ry! Glo-ry!

PASTOR RAY: Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! That concludes our sermon today—you may place aside your Bibles. Praise the Lord.

BREATHY ERNEST FEMALE PARISHIONER: Praise the Lord!

MINNY (*speedy talking, eggy, and nasal-voiced parishioner)*: InJesus*Name*Amen!

PASTOR RAY: Oh thank you, and before we go on and call upon the Lord to bless us in his tongue, I'd like to give one big thank you—one big shout out to Jesus.

MINNY: Shout out to Jesus!

ANOTHER ENTHUSED PARISHIONER: Whoo yes!

PASTOR RAY: Shout out to Jesus, thank you, sister Minny. Thank you. Praise God. All right, we're going to give a big thank you to Jesus because there's a hot, mean, dangerous wind blowing out there this Sunday morning, isn't there? Yes there is. *(PARISHIONERS agree.)* Yes, and we want to say thank

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you Jesus, because we realize there are a lot of brothers and sisters out there on the road today, getting into accidents, not finding their way, but the Lord saw fit to make sure that everyone here at Vane Springs Pathways to Christ Pentecostal made it safely here in their cars. Yes he did! Praise the Lord!

MIDDLE-AGED RESPONSIBLE LADY PARISHIONER: Yes, Lord!

OLD-TIMER MIKE: Praise the Lord.

MINNY: InJesus*Name*Amen!

PASTOR RAY: Yes, God, this is your house!

PARISHIONERS: Amen.

PASTOR RAY: Your house! In the name of *Je*sus amen. Is anyone called today to testify?

Lord, whom do you call? Do you call anyone, Jesus? Let us know. Let us know who is called. Let us know, let them come forward to your altar, sweet dear God Jesus if they are called and *speak* in your name. Oh *Je*sus Amen.

BREATHY PARISHIONER: Oh Jesus Amen.

PASTOR RAY: Connie Rodriguez. Connie Rodriguez, are you called?

CONNIE (*shy Latina lady):* I think so.

PASTOR RAY: Don't be shy. Step forward, sister!

CONNIE (*tentative):* Abbbooooooo. Go funga prebuptualeeeevnah— *(She hesitates.)*

PASTOR RAY: Yes, sister Connie, tell us! Tell us: what *say*eth the lord?

MINNY: Testify!

LATINA NATIVE AMERICAN: Testify, sister!

BREATHY: Testify!

CONNIE raises upturned hands, rolls her eyes back, and rocks onto her tiptoes. She speaks gibberish but maintains her Spanish accent, rolling Rs, etc.

CONNIE: Thessala thessala mangifish rab moke dore jimini cricket jim crasket or mandia porquadeesh lamboko lamboko rrrrrroccabo drim drim meekerboo bram lisb lisb und rye cosboratio. *(Last section sounds Scandinavian in addition to her Spanish accent.)*

Innah neck or frum ish laaaas sa!

PASTOR RAY: Hallelujah! Testify, sister, testify! Is anyone one else—thank you, Jesus—called to testify this windy Sunday morning? Step *for*ward to the Lord if you are called!

SERIOUS BLACK MAN: Brother Brett Morrisey is called to testify.

BRETT (*lean tough cowboy steps out, raises upturned hands, rolls eyes, rocks onto tiptoes):* Preeeeeeeeeeee! Yebbba. Noss berg pwab tat om jiggy jwat

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krembalore misgot tarn prune dot in kembrn stembrok eurtght eurgth *(tonal sounds as heard in Chinese)* saaaaa liiiis rayyyy ma!

ALICIA (*fat voice):* Praise the Lord!

BREATHY: Praise the Lord!

PASTOR RAY: I see my own little daughter Lorelei Jennifer Ray stepping forth. Speak it, daughter, speak, are you called?

LORELEI: Dad!

PASTOR RAY: Are you called? Speak in the tongue, don't be afraid, Lorelei Ray.

LORELEI: Dad I—I'm hearing voices.

PASTOR RAY: Praise the Lord.

LORELEI: No, no, but Dad, it's a translation in American English words. It's—the Lord is translating to me.

BREATHY: Speak it, sister!

PASTOR RAY: Lori, be seated, child, you're not being called.

LORELEI: But Dad, I am. The Lord is translating Connie Rodriguez and Brett Morrisey for me.

OLD-TIMER MIKE (*stooped in half, on canes, trying to raise his arms and rock onto his tiptoes):* Hezz*buck*a! Whinga higget lab nase lab nasa xorta xortion amd kef!

SKEPTICAL OLD LADY: *There* he goes, Old-Timer Mike.

PASTOR RAY: Step forward, Mike, you are called.

SKEPTICAL OLD LADY: Seems like every Sundee, he's called.

HER MIDDLE-AGED FRIEND: Uh-huh. Here he goes!

LORELEI: Dad? *(OLD-TIMER MIKE interrupts her with more gibberish.)* Now God's speaking through Old-Timer Mike too. I can't! It's too many translations at once. Ahh!

PASTOR RAY: Lori, you are unwell, I don't believe you're receiving. Be seated and we will pray for you.

BREATHY: Let your daughter testify, Pastor Ray, maybe it's true maybe she's—

LORELEI: Ahhhhhhhhh! *(Her eyes roll up as she is possessed as a bat, speaking in a kind of lisping baby voice a person might use talking to a pet animal.)* Ahh! Ahhh! Silver white on my brain-brain, hangie upside-down no more. Fly fly fly, why awakey? Why why? I'se feel silver pain-pain in me spine, me wing, me throat. Bleedie blood, bleedie blood. What this silver hurtie take over me brainie? Why all these other batties fly? What happen to our long long sleeepie rest? Why why? Cave smash! Rock bash-bash. (*She enacts a bat smashing its head against wall.)* It hurt! Hit rock. Hit rock. Hurtie! Stop silver pain! Stop it! Stop! Blood bath, blood bash-bash! Big-big black heap-

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heap? What that? Oh, other dead batties like me. Oh, die on top, die-die good, die-die now, feel gooder now. Bye. Black. Offffffffffff.

"Bat" dies. LORELEI tilts her head to one side and closes her eyes.

PASTOR RAY: Lorelei, sit down, hon, you are disturbing the congregants.

LORELEI opens her eyes but is shaking and foams at the mouth.

ALICIA *(fat voice):* Um, she's foaming at the mouth. She's having a seizure!

CONNIE (*now fully carried away in tongues):* Goshob blomiga themea brimbassa neese asdffdammm asad deallnasbere terersfldmnbevoterregistration lambastion!

PASTOR RAY: Okay-dokay, Connie, you kin snap out of it now, Lori's having a seizure! This may be the devil's work. I knew I felt an evil in the wind this morning.

LORELEI *(as a bee):* Goldwingsunshine zzzzip! Whip! Dash! Sip! Nec-tar, sweeeet nectar . . . zip zip! Bizz. Buzz. Zip. Gleamlightpetalwing. Dash! Nip! Zip! Ahhh! No-thing, no Qqueen! Zip zip zip zip zip where? Nothing. No wax. No sap. Zip here? No here. Tree bark. Rest on tree bark. Greens! Blues! Reds! Die quick, zip! Hmm. Gray light.

Off now. Yes? Offffffffffffffffff. *("Bee" dies.)*

PARISHIONER: Look at Old-Timer Mike!

OLD TIMER MIKE: Booom boom nas-vi bramblishker tod.

PASTOR RAY: Old-Timer Mike, Connie Rodriguez—pipe down!! Alicia, can you take 'em to my office in back and let them carry on in the name of the Lord all they please while we get a grip on what's going on with Lori?

ALICIA (*fat voice):* Yes!

PARISHIONER: Pastor Ray? Is she going to be all right?

LORELEI *(lying in the pew, foaming and shaking):* Thirsty dry, thirsty dry, no rain, no no no no rain, no mud, where put me eggies? Where put me me eggies?

PARISHIONERS: What was she saying? A translation?

PARISHIONER: Of what? Of who? Was it the Lord or the devil speaking?

PASTOR RAY: I don't know.

NATIVE AMERICAN LADY: Call Brenda Stiller—she's a nurse and her daughter's epileptic. I have her cell.

PASTOR RAY: Okay. Good.

RESPONSIBLE MIDDLE-AGED LADY: Lay her back, keep her mouth open, make sure she's breathing, her tongue's out. There we go.

PASTOR RAY (*prays with his hand on LORELEI):* Lord, help us. Aid us in this trial, support us in understanding your mysterious ways, oh Lord, we pray.

BREATHY: Amen.

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SERIOUS BLACK MAN: Amen.
MINNY: InJesus*Name*Amen!

EXCERPT 2: *CLAUDIA AND JESSE MAKE A CHRIST TEEN MESSAGE FOR LORELEI*

Performer addresses the camera, filming herself throughout this scene with the camera in hand. Audience sees live performance and views the camera perspective on a screen.

CLAUDIA (*brimming with enthusiasm, speaking into the camera):* Hi. Miss Lorelei Ray? Hi! Oh we're just so excited to be talkin' to you out thar in the wald wald west somewhar!

JESSE: She's in Nevada, Clod, that's near Vegas?

CLAUDIA: Riiight! Well, we're flocking you with this personal message because we seen your videa on Christ dot teen dot net and we believe you are the messenger of God. We b'lieve Sweet Jesus Christ our Savior has sent you to translate words that don't make sense for us into his holy word. Hi, I'm Claudia.

JESSE: Hey and I'm her cousin Jesse. Hi.

CLAUDIA: Miss Lorelei Ray? We're over here in Clarksdale, Mississippi, and you're out thar in the wald west somewhar!

JESSE: I tole you it's Nevada, Clod.

CLAUDIA: Right. Akay, Jesse, let's take her over to Aunty Cee.

They carry the web-cam over to the bed.

JESSE: Hi, Aunty Cee-Cee!

CLAUDIA: This here is our very own Aunty Ceee-Cee who we love so very much. Say hello, Aunty Cee!

AUNTY CEE *(in an elongated croaking speech):* Ohhhhhhaawwwww, scrub me firm in the mos' livin' part, oohhhh yayy-yus!

CLAUDIA: Aunty Cee, she's ninety-seven years old—this here a web-cam, Aunty Cee!—she don't even know what a web-cam is. Here, talk to us, Aunty Cee.

AUNTY CEE: Belly dry scruple my gaiter plain. Roll me up jest a heapa rollllllls.

CLAUDIA: See that? Aunty Cee, she talks what the doctors call dement?

JESSE: Dementia they call it, Clod.

CLAUDIA: Right. They call it dementia. But we're not so sure. We love Aunty Cee-Cee so very very much and we hope you will too, Miss Lorelei Ray! We believe she is tryin' to tell us somethin'g before she passes on into to the next world and we would shure appreciate if you could translate what she was sayin' into to American like you do and flock us back on Christ dot

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teen dot net if the Lord calls you to. So we going to let Aunty Cee speak a spell now. Bless you. Say somethin', Auntie Cee!

JESSE: Amen. G'ahead, Aunty Cee!

AUNTY CEE *(pushes out her words like a constipated person trying to shit):* Blind rot, keep telling that! Feel a belly breeze comin' oh yes! Brim cup and spill it over. Over and over. That's right. Blind rot and stumble down. In the yella shade. In the yella shade . . . In the tree tree tree, squit, he skat. He sat and squit. Oh ho—don't you brang me no dipper-full now. Skip me down. Down down down. Tell Wobbly. Tell Bell. Tell Brush. And jush an' jush hush. Legs that away. I know! You know—we all know it. I said. Been a belly breeze feelin', been a sampler t'embroider that away . . . simple lak that, I say, I say. I said. Hear it? Hmmm Hmmmm.

CLAUDIA: Well, Lorelei Ray, that's it. Um, an' we're just wond'rin' keen you translate that?

JESSE: Yeah, that's what we're wond'rin' wonderin' here: keen you translate that?

CLAUDIA: Keen you translate that? Keen you translate that? *(Laughs nervously, beholden and delighted.)*

EXCERPT 3: *MEAN TWEENS INTERNET BULLY SESSION*

Three young tweens are giggling and watching LORELEI's viral video on line.

MELODY: Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha! I can't believe it's her. Lorelei Ray foaming at the mouth at that retarded church. Play it again!

KIMBER: It's buffering. Play it again, play it again, ha, ha!

CASPIAN: No, no, no, Melody, Melody, do the thing, the voice!

Giggling. MELODY puts a gauze scarf over her face jumps up and towers over web-cam.

MELODY: Okay *(speaking in exorcist voice).* Hhey, Lorelei Ray, you fat Christian Ffreak, we're glad we found you and your Christian freak friends on Christ dot teen dot net! We saw you on YouTube having your Christian freakout out at your pathetic PPPPPPP-Pentescostal church. We *love* you on YouTube, Lorelei Ray! Hey, Lorelei Ray, can you translate this? (*She spews exorcist babble; they all giggle out of control.)* Ha ha ha. Turn it off! Turn it off!

CASPIAN turns it off. MELODY jumps down from web-cam position.

CASPIAN: That was so funny, that's so funny. Oh Mmy God, let's do another one.

KIMBER: Send her another one!

MELODY: No, no, I gotta go home. I gotta check in on my little sister Nicole. Bye.

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KIMBER: Bye!

CASPIAN (*giggles):* That was so funny, so funny. How does she do that? Ha ha ha, I love how she goes: Hey, Lorelei Ray, can you translate this?

KIMBER: Can you translate this?

CASPIAN: Can you translate this? *(They collapse in giggles.)*

EXCERPT 4: *POLAR BEAR SOMNAMBULANT*

LORELEI is asleep in bed, wrapped in a white sheet.

LORELEI sits up and becomes a polar bear. She speaks in high-pitched tone with a baby-talking lisp. She thrashes, swims, and mimes the other narrated actions, wrapped in the white sheet.

LORELEI: Cubby-cubby-cubbies, swim, swim, swim! Cubby-cubbies! Where ice cakes? Where ice cakes? We make, we make! Oh. That one no-make, that one drown. Come, cubby-cubbies, swim-swim! Come, son cubby, we eat seal, we rest on icey, you see. Swim, swim, like dis: swum, swum, swum, swum. Come on, daughter cubby, what wrong wit you? You strong. I put you in my mouth, I bite-bite. *(She growls like a real animal—a protective mother—for a second.)* I drag-drag your neck, swim, swim! Other cubby, follow. Follow mama bear, swallow. Follow, swallow water, follow. Oh. Dat one die-die too. Bye-bye. Come, you last one, I save you. I save you: drag drag drag drag, come you, come you, icey soon. We rest, we rest on ice, rest. Swum swum. Oh, jaw heavy. Hey you, can you swim you? I let go jaw, you float away . . . dat one dead too. All cubbies die, all cubbies dead-dead. I survive! I survive! Swim swim, swum swum. Where ice? Need ice. Where ice? No ice. Water . . . water . . . water . . . swallow water . . . no ice . . . fur heavy . . . tired . . . where ice? Where ice? Where? No. Gray. Floaty. Down. Down. White. Water. No ice. White. Water. Offffffffffffffffff.

Bear dies. LORELEI falls out of her bed. Her dad comes to the door.

PASTOR RAY: Lorelei Ray, are you all right?

LORELEI *(wakes):* Huh? Oh yeah, Dad, I just—I was just having a dream about water. I'm all right, Dad.

PASTOR RAY: All right. Lo-li, don't you be upset about them mean little tweenagers on the online making fun of you. That's why your stepmom says the online is evil.

LORELEI: Don't worry, Dad, I'm all right, just go back to sleep. *(She falls back asleep.)*

EXCERPT 5: *A DISCUSSION ON CHRIST.TEEN.NET WEBSITE*

This is performed in front of microphone on a mike stand, as much as possible indicating run-on sentences and spelling errors through pronunciation, hold-

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ing up fingers to indicate use of numbers in place of words, as in "4ever"—hold up four fingers. Sometimes speaking aloud the especially emphatic punctuation as in "Exclamation point. Exclamation point."

SMOOTH ROBOT VOICE: Christ dot teen dot net, forward slash, Christchat, forward slash, loriraydiscussionfold.

ASHLEY (*young innocent voice):* "Ashley G." What I want to know is who posted this viral YouTube video here on vids4him, anyways? It's not a righteous video. Someone used their phone to hijack this girl at a pentecost in the desert somewheres having a eclectic fit or something and ran it up on YouTube. It's like what they did to Sarah Palin. It's totally media terroristic. I 4 1 am offended. How did this viral vid crucifying our fellow Christ teen member pass the vids4him standards?

BOY (*young voice, not changed yet):* "Kid4christ." I agree, ashleeee geee thizz izzza sposta bees sanctified website don't vids4Him have betr standards than that why is it on?

PETE (*affable southern teen boy, voice still breaking):* "Pete4BK." Hey y'all that dude Lucius Troy from Dirtbikrz4JC.org the featurrrd teen last week he talk about that viral vid in his post sayin' YouTubin' was mocking Oour faith too like they did to Sarah. But then, I admit, I am the 1 who posted it here on vids4Him b/c I fess up I watched it on YouTube and I seen this girl was not havin a eckileptis seizure at all—it seem like she said GOD is telling her to translate and it is not medical but is God talking to uzzz. I thote we need to see this and lizzten up. It is God after all people. Watch it you will see what I am sayin.

TRICIA (*upper-class Carolina accent):* "Tricia Darling Everson." I am mortified beyond the extreme that this is even being discussed seriously in a Christchat fold on a sanctified site like Christ.teen.net!! What this girl is doing there is a word for and it is apostasizing. She is either pretending—which is a denouncement of faith in the form of trickery—or the devil is speaking through her. This is not THE WORD, it is not even glossolalia, itself a questionable practice that the Pentecostals insist upon and maybe their indulgence in this regard led to this girl crossing the line even further. BTW: This video crosses the line! I demand that it be removed immediately from vids4him. Also by the way, the word is epileptic seizure. You all need to study more because you appear to be ignorant and ill-educated.

OFFICIOUS TEEN GIRL (*one of those girls with a premature matronly tone of voice):* "RitewiththeLord." Tricia, who do you think you are, Tthe Holy Spirit? How can you claim to know what is the logos? I study at Vacation Bible school and God has the last word and you betr keep that in mind. I am Pentecostal and you are stepping over my line with your prideful opin-

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ions. That girl Lorelei Ray in Nevada is not most Pentecostals, okay?!! She is just a mental ill girl and it got on YouTube.

Christ.teen.net staff need to remove it NOW and I a-mean NOW. And Pete4BK you need to be barred from this site for posting it.

CLAUDIA (*Mississippi accent):* "ClaudiainMississippi." No way. That is a sin to remove it! Did you people who are critickalizing it even witch????? She is speaking from God. Thank you, Pete4BK, the Lord called you to post that. Blessings upon ya.

CHRISTINA *(eastern European girl):* "Christina." First, I think this is waste of time discuss fold but then from curious I watch the vid of the girl Lorelei breaking out in the Pentecostal church and I heered her words loud and clear. God is speaking thru as animals din't anyone hear that? Clear as a bell rings to my ears. Bats, bees, egg-laying creatures! Wake up! The animals are dying out and Jesus wants us to see our sin and stop it. Scripture tells us to be stewards of the Planet and we are not being. He is trying to tell us.

RENA (*scratchy fun-loving party-girl voice):* "RnRRena." Hey every1 check out redhearts new song water to wine! They are panteescoastal plus super cute n fine and their musix awesome! peace out!

DEVON (*spooky, strong New Jersey accent):* "AnonymousC." I agree with ClaudiainMississippi, Lorelei is called by God to translate what the tongue speakehs are sayin'. But Christina—global warmehs are a trick by socialist atheists to stray us off ar path. God is our rock and He murmurs to us the rapture is nearby at hand. He is taking away the animals, not some science hoax that it is man-made. They are going to everlastin' life. They are innocent beasts but we are going to hell 4ever if we don't repent. God is telling us thru Lorelei that the end is nearer than we think. Get ready.

ADULT (*matronly fat voice):* "Christ dot teen dot net staff member number thirty-three." Kids, let's simmer down here. We have removed this controversial video from the vids4Him player. Everyone in this discussion fold needs to take it down a notch and appeal to the Lord for guidance. If inappropriate testimonies continue to be posted here, we may have to shut down this discussion fold. So keep on your righteous tippy-toes and mind your Christlike Ps and Qs! "The Staff"

EXCERPT 6: *LORELEI IS POSSESSED BY A FROG*

LORELEI and SELENA in the back room of Queequeg's Coffee. LORELEI is online.

SELENA: Lori, what are you doing? Get offline. Let's poke our heads outside a minute for our break!

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LORELEI: No, I can't. There's all this flack about me on Christ dot teen dot net. Now all these Christian teens think I'm fronting. As if I wanted to be all celebri-deified! Like, these weird kids in Mississippi want me to translate their old relative's, like, demented talk into God's word. They think I'm the "messenger of God."

SELENA: The what? I'm so glad I'm Catholic! But, you know, you *are* kinda like a celebrity now in your own little sick evangelical world—you are! Hey—you got to do like celebrities do. You got to issue a public statement. You got to get on that site and say you don't even remember what happened at the church that day, tell your personal point of view, put it to bed.

LORELEI: Really? Yeah, I could message those weird people in Mississippi and group flock it so that anyone could watch it.

SELENA: There you go!

LORELEI: My heart is beating real fast.

SELENA: Lori, how many glacecissmos did you do today?

LORELEI: Three.

SELENA: Oh! You're like the Lindsay Lohan of Queequeg's Coffee! You gonna need rehab!

LORELEI: No it's not—it's—it's the Lexapro from the doctors that my stepmom is making me take. Selena, I can't, I feel—

SELENA: Yes, you can. I'm telleen you, go! Do it!

LORELEI: Okay! *(She speaks into the web-cam; audience can see web-cam view on a screen.)* Hi, Jesse and Claudia in Mississippi. I'm Lorelei Jennifer Ray, the viral video girl? And, um, I just want you and everyone else who may be watching this to know that I am not "apostaying" or whatever it's called, I am not crazy or epileptic either, and I am not, I repeat *not,* translating God's word for Him. Okay? Who knows what happened? My dad is a pastor and he's praying on it and you should all pray too because it's a mystery so stop putting all this on me and just—don't expect me to translate *(gasps)* ah! My heart is beating so fast, so fast. *(She taps her chest frantically, panting; her eyes roll back. She curls her body into a frog shape and speaks in a sing-song baby-talk lisp.)* Hop! Hop! Hop! Hop! *(She flicks the air with her tongue.)* Fly! Yum-yum. Gweeen! Splash! Hop! Hop! Hop! *(She smacks her lips.)* Wateh Wateh? Wateh?

Gween-gween gwass-gwass. Wateh? Wateh? Yellow frogger! Yellow dot boy frogger! Jump me! Jump me! Ah! Ah! Ah! *(Frog mates.)* Makie eggies! Makie eggies! Makie eggies! (*Now frog is pregnant.)* Holdie eggies, holdie eggies! Lay eggs in wet mud! Wet mud! Hatchie eggie! Hatchie eggie! Hi tadpoley! Hi tadpoley! Hi! Hi! *(She sings a little song.)* Growie-growie, Poley-poley, eatie gooey, yokey-yokey, eatie yokey, gooey-gooey,

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eatie-eatie! *(She sees tadpole become a frog.)* Hi Frogger! Hi! Hi! Hi! Hop! Bend. Feed. Flick! No flies, no flies. No squeets. No wateh, where wateh? Thirsty-dry. Thirsty-dry. No rain. No no no no rain. No mud. Where put me eggies? Where-where put me eggies? Where? Where? Eggie drop in dusty-dirt, no hatch, no hatch, no hatch. *(She sees one egg hatch.)*

One hatch! One hatch! Hi tadpoley! Hi! Hi. *(She repeats little song.)* Growie-growie, eatey gooey. Gooey noey! *(She changes abruptly.)* Noey gooey! Dry. Dry-dry, die-die, bye-bye, tadpoley, bye-bye. Hop. Hop. Hop. Hop. Thirsty-dry, thirsty dry. Where fly? Where squeets? No fly, no fly. No more yellow boy. No more makie eggies. No more egg. Lie-lie, lie quiet now. No more grass. No more sway-sway. Gray rattle. No more we sound. No more we frogger. Skin hurtie, dry-dry, thirsty-dry. No breath. Lookie rockie. Lookie dusty. Dry-dry. Die-die, bye-bye, ooooooofffffffff.

Frog dies. LORI is released from her trance. She pants.

SELENA *(watching her dumbfounded, suddenly realizes this is all online):* Lori, what are you doing?

LORELEI: I don't know.

SELENA: Did you hear what you just did?

LORELEI: Yeah. Yeah, kind of. Is this still recording? Oh shit—turn it off!

Months later.

EXCERPT 7: *WHALE NET*

LORELEI (*on web-cam at Queequeg's Coffee back office):* Hi, Christ Teen Net believers! It's me, Lorelei Ray. Um, a lot of you have still been asking me to translate your words that don't make sense for you so today I chose Cole and his family. Cole, I'm sorry you got brain damage in Iraq, and Cole's family, I'm going to try to ask God to translate this into words for you, okay? God? *(Lorelei upturns her hands; her eyes roll back. Sshe jerks and becomes a Rright whale, puffing out her cheeks, her arms stretched to indicate her wide circular girth. As usual, she speaks in baby talk as the animal. Her voice is high but slow like the big mammal that inhabits her. The whale addresses the camera as it swims.)*

We move in da waters by da long-long land. We big-big, no need no fin. We swim. We swim swim swim. We swim. We swim swim swim. Me open me mouf to eat da plank -plank, da plate-plates suck dem in in in, da plate-plates suck dem in in in. Baby calflets, me suckle you eleven moons and when cold-time come, we swim swim swim.

Come swim swim swim. Come swim swim swim. Water warm. Water warm-warm. Where plank-plank? Me hungry more, where plank-plank? We hungry more-more. Open da mouf, calf-calf, to suck dem in in. Where?

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Where? Swim, swim *(sees a shark).*

Here come kill-kill, here sharp tooth! Swim-swim! Fast-fast–fast. Away, away!

(She sees a ship above.) Big thing move on top water! Swim-swim fast-fast. (*Whale gets caught in net.)* Tail smash! Tail bash-bash! Tail hurtie-hurtie. Tail hurtie. Me swim-swim. Where calf-calf? Me find, me swim-swim. Why me stop swim-swim? Pull. Pull. Me wrap-wrap, me trap-trap. Tail smash! Tail bash-bash! Tail, take uppie, take me uppie! *(bShe breaks the surface.)* Spout (*breathes out),* breathe *(breathes in*), spout (*breathes out),* breathe (*breathes in*). Tail smash-smash! Tail bash-bash! Let go, let go, let go! No-no, no-no, no-no. No let go. No let go. Sharp twine me bind-bind. Tail smash! Tail bash-bash! Let go, let go, no-no. Me trap-trap, me wrap-wrap. Tail tired. (*She floats on waves.)* Float-float up, wave go down, float-float up, wave go down. Tail move. Smash-smash! Tail no move no more. Float-float. See long-long land . . . see gull-gull fly . . . see gray-gray . . . sea gray . . . Die-die. Bye-bye. Offffffffffffff. (*Whale dies.)*

(LORELEI comes to as herself and addresses web-cam.) Okay, that's all I have time for today, I've got to go to work now. Bye, Christ teen believers! *(She switches off the web-cam, starts to cry.)* It's so sad! *(She wipes her eyes and then leaves back office to start her work shift.)*

Months later

EXCERPT 8: *BEEVANGELICAL*

LORELEI (*at the web-cam on the computer that her stepmom keeps in the garage, off-limits to her)*: Hi, Christ Teen net believers. It's me, Lorelei Ray, making another vid4him. Let's see, OMGosh, I think this is my fortieth one! Yep! I can't believe it—and the last one about pelicans got I think, like, thirty thousand and fourteen flocks? Superneat! Sooo, for those of you who never watched before, I'm Pentecostal and I grew up speaking in tongues which is neat enough but, like, five months ago at my Dad's church out here in Nevada, the Lord called me to start translating the people who were testifying into American words. At first I freaked but after a while we all saw that these words are all about animals and in the last few months we've been figuring out that all the animals the Lord brings through me are endangered, or worse! That's why some of the eco-vangelo teens I'm meeting here on Christ dot teen dot net have started to call my vids4him the Endangered Species Act? But this is for *all* godly teens. Some of you out there think this is about the rapture? Um? All I know is I'm just being called by the Lord and I can't stop. Okay, here goes. Tonight, I'm going to translate into God's words for Tina and her brother Darroch who has

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autism and only speaks in numbers? Tina, I have to say watching Darroch was superneat. I'm home-schooled so I don't know supercomplicated math? But I never heard numbers sound so beautiful. So, now the Lord is going to help me translate what Darroch said. (*She turns into a bee.)*

Petal so open / Me-me fly so nice to you / Sip dip zip where hive-hive? Fly / Color so hot, yeah / Me fly nice, no? Sick dust thick / No dip, where hive-hive? / No-no know no more

Fly to hive, fly to hive, where? / Where-where? sink-sink, wing no wink / Sink-sink, oh, oh, / Oh earth, oh, oh, soft dirt / Die-die now, where-where hive? Die-die now, die. Offffffffffffff. *(Bee dies; she comes to as herself.)* Oh! Okay! That's it tonight. I think that the Lord is telling us about bees. Pretty sad. If you look on your Haagan-Dazs ice cream cartons, they say that the bee colonies are collapsing. Does anyone know why? You can tell us on Christchat, forward slash, loriraydiscussionfold. *(She hears something.)* I gotta go. I'm in my parents' garage and it's late. Bye for now, Christ teen believers. Send me your words that don't make sense to translate into God's words and I'll do it if I'm called to. Bye! *(She turns off web-cam.)* Is anyone there? *(To her dog.)* Oh, Cheri-werie, it's just you! Good girl. Shhh! Don't tell tell on Lo-li. Parents don't know, don't know I'm using Mom's computer. Shhh!! Okay? Shhhh. I'll check my emails.

Performer morphs into the dog lying down at Lori's feet. CHERI the dog stretches and yawns.

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Ann Pellegrini

Commentary: Zooglossia: The Unknown Tongues of Heather Woodbury

As the Globe Warms is a serial performance piece that unfolded live in half-hour episodes over thirty-four weeks in 2010–11. Each performance was simultaneously webcast, multiplying the spaces of "the live." The first twenty-four episodes were staged at Echo Curio, a performance space in Los Angeles's Echo Park neighborhood; most of the final ten performances took place at the Bootleg Theatre, with one special show at WordSpace, also in Los Angeles. Heather Woodbury—the spinning talent who devised and performed this multicharacter, one-woman show—went on to curate an online serial from recordings of the live performances, releasing them in weekly installments over forty-eight weeks. She has also compressed the seventeen plus hours of the piece into a twelve-hour epic, performed in two-hour installments over six nights. It premiered at The Vortex in Austin, Texas, in October 2012.

Woodbury's "Globe" is not any one place; it is not a sealed universe. Instead, she represents a buzzing *pluri*verse of characters who traverse religious and secular spaces to bump up offline and on. On the website she created for *As the Globe Warms,* Woodbury refers to the live performances as "first drafts,"[1] a characterization that underscores both the improvisatory feel of the piece or, better, pieces and the doubled context of their live and relived performances. This is not to say that Woodbury's *As the Globe Warms* is not tightly scripted. In fact, she worked intensely each week to write and memorize that week's segment—a labor of great effort and virtuosity. Given the impossibility of memorizing everything in so compressed a time, however, Woodbury also relied on what she terms "improv embroidery"[2]—improvised physical gestures as well as verbal flourishes—to stitch character to

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written script in the moment of live performance. Is this performance as a kind of inspirited speaking in tongues?

If so, this makes the Sunset Boulevard location of Woodbury's performances at Echo Curio all the more apt: it is located a mere half mile from the Angelus Temple, the five-thousand-seat church founded, in 1923, by another woman who sure knew how to put on a show, evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson. As historian Matthew Avery Sutton neatly summarizes, McPherson—Sister Aimee to her thousands of followers and fans—brilliantly "integrated show business pizzazz with a tongues-speaking, holy-rolling faith,"[3] mixing old media and new to bring the Gospel to life. Her illustrated sermons were a hot ticket in Los Angeles, drawing in the faithful and the curious. The dramatized Bible stories combined scriptural passages and interpretation with sound effects, elaborate sets, skits, live animals, and costumes. In one well-known sermon, she dressed the part of Little Bo Peep. In another, she brought a live camel on stage to illustrate the Gospel passage from Matthew, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:24).[4] McPherson also embraced the relatively new technology of radio for its capacity to break down boundaries of space and "convert the world by radio," as she famously enthused in the pages of her monthly magazine *Bridal Call*.[5] The first woman to be granted a license by the Federal Communications Commission, McPherson launched her own Christian radio station in 1924. Shortly before her death, she had applied for a license for another emerging medium: television.[6] With her canny use of media, a publicist, and her carefully cultivated good looks, the thrice-married McPherson helped make Pentecostalism not just mainstream but even Hollywood sexy.

Two decades before McPherson's Angelus Temple became arguably the first megachurch in the United States, Los Angeles had already shown itself to be fertile territory for Pentecostalism. Travel another two miles or so from the Echo Curio performance space, and you will reach 312 Azusa Street, in what is now LA's Little Tokyo. A century ago, it was a birthplace of the modern Pentecostal movement. There, in an abandoned Methodist church, the charismatic African American preacher William J. Seymour spearheaded a vibrant interracial and cross-class ministry that drew spiritual seekers from around the country eager to experience for themselves the "'Pentecostal fire' [that] fell on Los Angeles in April 1906."[7] The "fire" took ecstatically embodied forms: hands lifted high in prayer, rhythmic swaying, jumping movements, and, above all, speaking in tongues. To nonbelievers, the scenes taking place on Azusa Street strained credulity—and abandoned all decorum. In an April 18, 1906, front-page story entitled "Weird Babel of Tongues" and

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subtitled "New Sect of Fanatics Is Breaking Loose," the *Los Angeles Times* breathlessly reported how devotees were "breathing strange utterances and mouthing a creed which it would seem no sane mortal could understand."[8] The *Times* seemed as troubled by the "wild scene" of African Americans worshipping side by side with whites as by the worship practices themselves.

The Protestant establishment was not exactly thrilled either. The Azusa Street revival broke form, theologically and ritually, with mainline Protestantism by giving life, in an embodied here and now of everyday worship and modern-day miracles, to the New Testament Book of Acts, when the apostles received the gift of tongues:

> When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:1–4)

For modern-day Pentecostals, the gifts of "various kinds of tongues" and "the interpretation of tongues" enumerated in 1 Corinthians (12:10) are not confined to the past but are available to contemporary Christians as biblically founded evidence of their baptism with the Holy Spirit. The theological claims and embodied experiences that fired the worshippers on Azusa Street and later inspired the thousands who came to hear and see "Sister Aimee" are now a global Pentecostal movement, comprising one-quarter of Christians worldwide.[9]

Speaking in tongues is the key plot point, the *deus ex lingua,* so to speak, of Woodbury's *As the Globe Warms.* During a regular Sunday service at the multiracial Pathways of Christ Pentecostal Church, where her father is the pastor, teenager Lorelei Jennifer Ray is filled with the Spirit and called forth to testify. In contrast to the other congregants who are seized by the Spirit and speak in tongues, however, Lorelei's own testimony does not take the form of tongue-speaking; instead she receives the gift of interpretation, the ability to translate the unknown tongues of those who spoke before her. (There is even an SAT-ready, Hellenized term for this: "ermeneglossia.") And so, after Connie Rodriguez and Brett Morrissey each sing-speak a symphony of syllables and wordlike sounds at the periphery of recognizable human language, almost but not quite speech, Lorelei tells her increasingly bewildered father that she is hearing voices: "a translation in American English words," she says. "It's—the Lord is translating to me." Lorelei even seems to

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share her father's bewilderment, especially after the overload of a third unknown tongue to translate, Old-Timer Mike's. But called by the Lord she is, and she duly translates.

Her translation involves a transpeciation—what I am calling "zooglossia" (from the Greek *zoion* for animal + *glossa* for tongue)—as the human Lorelei takes on the physical gestures and approximated sounds of a high-pitched bat. The stage directions call for Woodbury to speak in a lisping baby voice, the kind people often use when talking to pet animals. Here, the animals are talking back, and we—the "we" of Woodbury's characters as well as the "we" of Woodbury's live and online audiences—are called urgently to attend:

> Ahh! Ahhh! Silver white on my brain-brain, hangie upside-down no more. Fly fly fly, why awakey? Why why? I'se feel silver pain-pain in me spine, me wing, me throat. Bleedie blood, bleedie blood. What this silver hurtie take over me brainie? Why all these other batties fly? What happen to our long long sleeepie rest? Why why? Cave smash! Rock bash-bash. (*Enacts a bat smashing its head against wall.)* It hurt! Hit rock. Hit rock. Hurtie! Stop silver pain! Stop it! Stop! Blood bath, blood bash-bash! Big-big black heap-heap? What that? Oh, other dead batties like me. Oh, die on top, die- die good, die-die now, feel gooder now. Bye. Black. Offffffffffff.
>
> *"Bat" dies. LORELEI tilts her head to one side and closes her eyes.*

"Bat" dies. In quick succession in the first excerpt printed in this volume, Lorelei speaks as a bat, a bee, and a frog. These next transpeciations do not end well either. The stage directions simply note: *("Bee" dies.)*.

This is epitaph as epiphany. The biblical truth of Pentecost is revived—relived—in order to tell us a story of planetary life on the brink of extinction. Christianity's concern with eternal life and death is repurposed for Woodbury's presumptively secular audience to illuminate the toll of human arrogance in the world. Not for nothing does the fictional world of Lorelei Ray, her family, and friends unfold in Vane Springs, Nevada. Vane: a punning and witty critique of human vanity and self-absorption. Hope may spring eternal, but the wellsprings of human vanity have unleashed global warming, species extinction, the ongoing defilement of the world we humans share with other creatures.

Lorelei's testimony is immediately subject to multiple interpretations. Is it the Lord speaking through her or the devil? Or is there a more mundane explanation: a seizure? (Her stepmother, Pam, takes no chances; Lorelei

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ends up on Lexapro.) When video of Lorelei's episode goes viral on YouTube, debate over the meaning and veracity of her possession by—well, by what or whom exactly?—the Spirit, animal spirits, grows exponentially. She becomes the subject of a discussion fold on a Christian website, or, as Woodbury's Christian teens pronounce for emphasis, "Christ dot teen dot net." Fellow Christians quickly begin uploading their own videos and marking them for Lorelei ("flocking" is Woodbury's colorful term), in hopes she will interpret the tongue-speak of their nearest and dearest. "Keen you translate that? Keen you translate that?"

The attention is not all celebratory. A posse of "mean tweens," led by the angry Melody Johnson, takes to the Internet to make fun of Lorelei, her "retarded church," and her "Christian freak friends." In the excerpts published here, our sympathies are with Lorelei, not Melody—although in the larger arc of *As the Globe Warms,* we will warm to Melody, too, a bright teenager who lives in a trailer park with her recovering meth-addict mother, her family just barely getting by. Melody has lashed out at Lorelei in an attempt to take the edge off her own desperate circumstances.

Throughout *As the Globe Warms,* the sympathetic hearing the character Lorelei Ray demands for nonhuman animals is thus mirrored in the sympathetic portrait the performer Heather Woodbury offers of individuals and communities (such as Pentecostals or the working poor) who, when they do enter the dominant secular field of vision, too often do so for either exotic color or easy laughs. Certainly, I suspect that Pentecostal Christians initially seem like members of another species to Woodbury's audiences in LA's hipster performance scene or her web subscribers. At a time when antigay bullying has been much in the news, with an entire online project—the "It Gets Better" campaign—dedicated to helping LGBTQ youth, there is something bold about the inversion Woodbury offers. It is the "fat Christian freak"—dare I say: the *religiously queer* teen—who is cyberbullied. Here, I see Woodbury slyly and importantly undercutting the cultural mapping "secular" is to progressive as "religious" is to backward. Look and listen closely enough, and the world does not really sort out so easily.

There is also something delightfully meta about the frequent invocation of YouTube videos, chat rooms, and virtual communities throughout *As the Globe Warms.* Think again of the online life of Woodbury's performances. If the live performances at Echo Curio, Bootleg, and WordSpace were only "first drafts," where does the final version, the really real, take form? But, perhaps a final version is less the point than the ongoing creative meetings between Woodbury and her multiplied and multi-platform audiences. At

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minimum, the web itself becomes a central character in *As the Globe Warms,* not just a means of communicating across distance and beyond the boundary lines of supposedly fixed communities and identities but also a metaphor for the possibility of a truly worldwide web linking human and nonhuman.

"Whoo yes."

NOTES

*I am grateful to Jill Casid for her careful reading of an earlier version of this essay.

1. See http://www.heatherwoodbury.com/works_atgw.html (accessed July 2, 2012).

2. Personal communication with Heather Woodbury (June 2013).

3. Matthew Avery Sutton, "Hollywood Religion," *Historically Speaking* 9, no. 3 (Jan.–Feb. 2008): 29.

4. Hughes Oliphant Olds, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church,* vol. 7, *Our Own Time* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2010), 402.

5. See Aimee Semple McPherson, "Converting the World," *Bridal Call* 7 (July 1923); and Aimee Semple McPherson, "Help Convert the World by Radio," *Bridal Call* 7 (Aug. 1923). Both are discussed by Matthew Avery Sutton in *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

6. For an accessible and lively discussion of McPherson's use of new technologies and her broad influence on US religious culture, see the transcript of the PBS documentary *Sister Aimee* (dir. Linda Garmon, 2007), http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/sister/filmmore/pt.html (accessed July 2, 2012).

7. Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 328. The language of "Pentecostal fire" comes from *Apostolic Faith,* a monthly newspaper published by Seymour and the Azusa Street Mission. See Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions,* 429 n63.

8. For an online excerpt of this 1906 cover story and reproduction of the newspaper's front page, go to http://312azusastreet.org/extra/latimes.htm (accessed July 1, 2012).

9. There are many different ways of telling the origin tale of modern Pentecostalism. Although Azusa Street remains the dominant organizing story in the United States, in fact Pentecostalism was international and decentered from the start, with contemporaneous Pentecostal and Pentecostal-like revival movements happening in India, Wales, Korea, and Chile at the same time as the Azusa Street revival. See Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Edith Blumhofer's short essay "Azusa Street Revival," *The Christian Century* 123.5 (March 7, 2006), 20–22.

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The Others, live performance.
Photo by Basia.

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Rachel Rosenthal

The Others

MEN: Carl Miranda, Bill Hayner
CAMERAMAN: James Kent Arnold
POOPERSCOOPER: Lin Hixson
And with the participation of FORTY-TWO ANIMALS and their HUMAN COMPANIONS.
MUSIC composed and performed by Don Preston

SLIDE of an Indian miniature representing an elephant whose body is made up of countless animals.
SLIDE off. A tight SPOT picks up a mechanical toy dog walking toward downstage, periodically sitting and barking. Two MEN in ninja costumes keep the dog from straying from a straight line by pushing him with TV antennas.

ROSENTHAL*'s voice:* A poor woodcutter lived with his wife and three daughters in a little hut on the edge of the forest. One morning as he was about to go to work, he said to his wife: "Let our eldest daughter bring my dinner in the forest or I shall never get my work done." The girl set out on her way with a bowl of soup when the sun was just above the center of the forest.

Performance conceived, written, and performed by Rachel Rosenthal. Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that *The Others* by Rachel Rosenthal is subject to a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth), and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. All rights, including professional, amateur, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, and the rights of translation into foreign languages, are strictly reserved. No stock or amateur performance of the play may be given without obtaining in advance the written permission of The Rachel Rosenthal Company and paying the requisite fee. All inquiries concerning rights for readings, productions, etc., should be addressed to The Rachel Rosenthal Company 2847 S. Robertson Blvd. Los Angles, CA 90034, R2co@rachelrosenthal.org.

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But she lost her way and, when night fell, was much afraid. Through the darkness she saw a light glimmering between the trees. It was a hut. In the little hut was an old gray-haired man with a long white beard, a cock, a hen, and a brindled cow. The girl asked for shelter and the old man said: "Cook us our supper." The girl cooked a good meal, ate her fill, but had no thought of the animals. When she was through she said: "Now I am tired. Where is there a bed where I can lie down and sleep?" The animals replied: "Thou hast eaten with him, thou hast drunk with him, thou hast no thought of us. So find out for thyself where thou can'st pass the night!" The man opened a trap door and thrust the girl in the cellar.

The mechanical dog falls down into the orchestra pit and out of sight. The MEN look into the pit, at each other, then at the audience. They fold and pocket the TV antennas

SLIDE: Descartes lived from 1596 to 1650. He saw animals as "thoughtless brutes" without consciousness. Here is what a contemporary of Descartes wrote of his practices: "The scientist administered beatings to dogs with perfect indifference and made fun of those who pitied the creatures as if they felt pain. He said the animals were clocks; that the cries they emitted when struck were only the noise of little springs that had been touched, but that the whole body was without feeling. They nailed the poor animals up on boards by their four paws to vivisect them, to see the circulation of the blood, which was a great subject of controversy.

Light on the orchestra pit as it rises. The MEN stand at attention, and ROSENTHAL is discovered standing on the pit as it rises to stage level. She is carrying the mechanical dog, cradling it in her arms. She seems asleep. She is wearing a long red robe and black jogging shoes. The CAMERAMAN rises in the pit with her and goes upstage. During the following speech, ROSENTHAL is like a somnambulist, and the MEN manipulate her.

The HORSE enters upstage and is filmed and projected on the screen.

The MEN interject words (capitalized and in parenthesis) expressionlessly throughout ROSENTHAL's speech.

There are always animals in my dreams (GROWL). They are usually in jeopardy or they threaten me (ARF). I dream of stags on fire, kittens abandoned and starving in a hotel room, of rhinos charging me in a bog (HONK). Once I dreamed my mother drowned my pet rat (SQUEAK). Before I fully wake, in the moments preceding my roping in the scattered fragments of my continuity (CLUCK), I experience the thrilling and troubling sensation of having both entered a forbidden zone (OINK), atavistic and archaic (BOW-WOW), reaching back into the biological time pool, and also of having plunged into cellularity within the dark and teeming busyness of my viscera (RIBBETT) and of communing with my own flesh (MOO). In my animal dreams eter-

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nity and the now are merged (TWEET). My sleeping mind dredges up images, red in tooth and claw (HOOT), to which my entire self responds with a gamut of subtly refined emotional particularities (NEIGH). White stallions program my sexuality (CHIRP), the shadow of giant wings activates a gasping fear of death (HISS), the eyes of a big cat make me weep with an aching sense of loss (MEOW). They are there (HEEHAW). They are present (BUZZ). They are the eternal fauna of our psyche and they will not go away (HUM). Perhaps this is their revenge (COCK-A-DOODLE-DOO).
The HORSE *exits.*
ROSENTHAL turns. The MEN take the mechanical dog away from her and throw it down over her head. She walks upstage and onto a platform. The MEN follow. They face the audience in a row. A number of fish hooks on fish lines are hanging before the MEN. ROSENTHAL takes red paper hearts out of her decolletage during the next speech. With each line, she brings out a heart and hands it to one of the MEN, and they attach it to a fish hook.

I have a baboon heart
I have a chimpanzee heart
And I have a capuchin monkey heart
And even a gorilla heart
But I also have a dog heart
A cat heart
And a whale heart
And would you believe for one so big that I have a rat heart too?
I could go on for I have a million hearts and they all bleed
I am what they call a "bleeding heart humaniac," aka "little old lady in tennis shoes."
Funny that the Heart Chakra should be held in such low esteem
But the image is apt for it encompasses sexism, ageism, and speciesism.

The screen shows a closeup of the hearts. When they are all hooked, ROSENTHAL comes downstage, turns to look at them with her back to the audience, and follows them with her gaze as they fly up.
SLIDE: The laboratory dog with a steel contraption to keep its jaws open. ROSENTHAL sees the slide and bolts. One of the MEN grabs her near the left-stage exit and drags her down, holding one hand over her mouth. A woman enters with a DOG. ROSENTHAL wrests herself out of the MAN's hold and anxiously follows the woman, telling her the following. They pay no attention to her whatsoever.

I remember in the sixties, seeing a woman strolling with a child. Thirty

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paces behind them was a dog, old, mangy, and frightened. He walked in the middle of the street, anxiously watching the woman, and not advancing too fast so as to keep the thirty paces between them. I stopped her and asked if that was her dog. She said, "No, it's my husband's dog." I said, "He's scared. Why don't you call him?" She called half-heartedly and the dog crept up, gratefully. I said, "Why do you treat him like this?" She said, "Who cares? He's going to die soon anyway.'" I blurted out my outrage. Then she said, "Why do you care? It's not *your* dog!" How many times have I heard this? "It's not your dog. It's not your cat. It's not *your* elephant.'" For I often interfere . . .

ROSENTHAL is stopped short by the MEN yanking up a long rope that was lying downstage parallel to the audience. It hits her under the chin, and she grabs it with both hands as it is pulled across her neck.

SLIDE: The Korean strangled dog.

MEN: Dogs in Korea are slowly strangled because gourmets believe this improves the texture of the meat.

VIDEO of a walking dog, as the woman continues her stroll around the stage.

Help! Help! I can't speak! I can't scream! I don't defend myself. I can't even tell I'm being attacked. I am overcivilized. I don't bite. The bite has been bred out of me. I am emasculated. I am tongue-castrated. I am polite. I am courteous. I am considerate. And I want to kill!

The woman with the DOG turns around at the last words, looks at ROSENTHAL, and runs out quickly, pulling her dog behind her. The rope drops to the floor.

A number of people enter with their DOGS. They stand on the right platform, lined up and watching ROSENTHAL like a jury. She takes a couple of steps to the left, looking after the woman and DOG offstage, returns dejected, and sits on the left platform. One of the MEN sneaks up behind her as she speaks, holding a gag. The other one pulls the rope up slowly and coils it around his arm.

I couldn't reach that woman. I couldn't find the words. She left. And her heart was unchanged. I was not able to move her or improve the lot of that dog. I was so ashamed that for years I couldn't talk about the incident.

The MAN suddenly puts the gag between ROSENTHAL's teeth. She struggles. He keeps her pinned down.

SLIDE: Hexagram: "BITING THROUGH—SHIN—HO."

VOICEOVER: This hexagram represents an open mouth with an obstruction between the teeth. As a result the teeth cannot meet. To bring them together one must bite energetically through the obstacle.

ROSENTHAL breaks away and runs downstage.

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MEN: The Judgment: Biting Through has success. It is favorable to let justice be administered.

ROSENTHAL addresses the DOG PEOPLE, as if pleading her cause:

ROSENTHAL: I never spoke the pain. I didn't cry. I was a well-brought-up little girl.

SLIDE: An experimental CAT in a steel contraption.

The MEN grab ROSENTHAL, who is facing upstage. They are facing downstage.

MEN: René Descartes denied all thought, by which he meant all consciousness to animals.

The MEN drag ROSENTHAL downstage right, and she screams as they do:

ROSENTHAL: First they burn their feet and break their noses. Then they teach them the tricks that make the circus rich . . .

The MEN push ROSENTHAL onto the orchestra pit and it begins to descend. She seems to be sinking into quicksand. They hold her down with arms outstretched.

MEN:

1. Only man is rational.
2. Only man possesses language.
3. Only men are objects of moral concern.

ROSENTHAL sinks slowly down with the orchestra pit. The DOG PEOPLE come down the platform to the edge of the pit, watching her scream and sink. Other DOG PEOPLE have entered and join them.

I scream for broken spirit
I scream for isolation unto madness
I scream for the paw caught in the jaw that only death can loosen
I scream for the jail barely larger than the body
I scream for the hissing skin under the brand
I scream for the eye that burns but cannot close
I scream for daily torture with no respite and no hope
I scream for my own terror, my own madness, my own obscene silence that make me accomplice to the deed

SLIDES illustrate all the above, i.e., lab animals, farm animals, animals caught in the steel-jaw trap, cattle being branded, the eyes of rabbits after the Draize test, etc.

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The pit is lowered so that only ROSENTHAL's head protrudes.

ROSENTHAL: Oh, Goddess! Help me! How long in a life? How many repeated karmas before I can defend myself when I'm attacked?

The DOG PEOPLE exit.

The I Ching says: "The only way to strengthen the law is to make it clear and to make the penalties certain and swift."

The pit lowers all the way, ROSENTHAL's outstretched hands are the last part of her visible.

SLIDE AND VOICEOVER: "The very beginning of Genesis tells us that God created man in order to give him dominion over fish and fowl and all creatures. Of course Genesis was written by a man, not a horse. There is no certainty that God actually did grant man dominion over other creatures. What seems more likely, in fact, is that man invented God to sanctify the dominion that he had usurped over the cow and the horse."

Milan Kundera

The pit rises again. On it lie a patio umbrella, a garbage pail, and a beach blanket. Also the prone mechanical dog. The MEN set up the umbrella and unfold and lay down the blanket as for a picnic. They sit down. One MAN drinks a beer, and the other methodically opens the toy dog, removes the batteries, and tosses the dog in the garbage pail. The dog yips before the batteries are removed. The impression is one of a crude vivisection. The MAN inspects the batteries and tosses them in the pail also.

The TURKEY enters. ROSENTHAL enters upstage and walks drunkenly down on the left platform. She is wearing a red top with a bib of different fake furs, black pants, high heels, and a wig. She carries a champagne glass.

MUSIC: Stripper rhythm.

During the next passage, the MEN toot little horns every time ROSENTHAL mentions an animal expression. At the same time, SLIDES of these animals in art history are projected, coinciding with each word.

I was content to let sleeping dogs *(toot)* lie. But along came this cocksman *(toot)*. He was a wolf *(toot)* in sheep's *(toot)* clothing. He seemed real loony *(toot)* about me, and for a while we were lovebirds *(toot)* and had a whale *(toot)* of a time. He was a tiger *(toot)*. Woke up my pussy *(toot)*, and although he looked like a fat pig *(toot)*, I lost weight and no longer felt like an old cow *(toot)*. I was proud.as a peacock *(toot)* and looked so foxy *(toot)* that I turned into a regular clotheshorse *(toot)*! He swore this was the real thing and that he wasn't monkeying *(toot)* around. I was happy as a lark *(toot)*. But the skunk *(toot)* was lying. That yellow-bellied sonafabitchin' *(toot)* rat *(toot)* dumped me because he wasn't interested in passion! That

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snake *(toot)* in the grass had been bull-*(toot)*shitting me all along. I had to go off sex cold-turkey *(toot),* and he weaseled *(toot)* out of any explanation. I could have shot the ass-*(toot)*hole! I'm not usually so catty *(toot),* but that man behaved like a beast *(toot)*! Still, I was chicken *(toot).* I didn't kick his ass *(toot)* in. He was a sitting duck *(toot),* and I could have made mincemeat *(toot)* out of him. But no. I was sweet as a lamb *(toot)*! God, I'm pissed! I don't give a hoot *(toot)* about you now, you big baboon *(toot)*! There's plenty of other fish *(toot)* in the sea! But I can't forgive myself. What am I, man or mouse *(toot)*? So I decided love was for the birds *(toot)* and put the weight back on. It was just pearls *(toot)* before swine *(toot)* anyway. However, I got the lion's *(toot)* share of crap dumped on me, so I'm playing possum *(toot).* You know why? Because IT'S A JUNGLE OUT THERE!!! *(long toot).*

ROSENTHAL downs the champagne, walks shakily upstage on the platform, and exits. The TURKEY exits too. Five CHILDREN and their PETS (two DOGS, a CAT, a HAMSTER, a RABBIT) run in and greet each other. They sit on the blanket and start to talk, laugh, and play with their PETS.

VOICEOVER AND LIVE MUSIC: The woodcutter returned home and reproached his wife for leading him to hunger all day. "It is not my fault," she replied. "The girl went out with your dinner and must have got lost because she didn't return." So next day the woodcutter requested that his second daughter bring him his supper. Just like the first, the second girl lost her way, came to the hut, and was asked by the white-bearded man to cook supper for them. She too didn't concern herself with the animals. They said: "Thou hast eaten with him, thou hast drunk with him, thou hast no thought of us. So find out for yourself where thou canst pass the night." And the old man pushed her also down the cellar.

ROSENTHAL has taken off her wig and put down the glass. She enters, comes forward, and addresses the audience. The CHILDREN continue their talk and pay no attention to her.

VIDEO of the PETS, with SLIDES superimposed on the moving images. These SLIDES are timed to appear at regular intervals during ROSENTHAL's next speech. They are:

Seventy to one hundred million animals killed yearly for science in the U.S.

Four to five billion animals killed yearly for food in the U.S.

Four hundred million animals killed yearly for fur worldwide

About fifty million dogs killed yearly in pounds in the U.S. and almost as many cats

Thirty percent of all species on Earth could become extinct in the next decade

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What brings a thing into the moral arena? Surely the question of the moral status of nonhuman beings, of whether animals are direct objects of moral concern, is at least a legitimate subject of inquiry. Why do so many people ignore the question? Perhaps because of a sense of guilt mixed with fear of where the argument may lead. If animals are no longer invisible and inaudible, if they come under moral scrutiny, then we can no longer remain blind to the fact that we are living in the midst of a holocaust far exceeding anything the Nazis or any other society ever perpetrated on human beings. Furthermore we cannot plead "not guilty," because our tax dollars and our consumer dollars support this. If animals are brought under the umbrella of moral concern and deliberation, the comfortable sense of right and wrong that securely governs our everyday existence is no longer tenable, and we cannot eat, sleep, and work in the same untroubled way. In addition, two areas of our being that we are particularly attached to would be radically altered: our stomachs and our pocketbooks.

ROSENTHAL sits among the CHILDREN. They continue to ignore her. MUSIC is childlike.

You know, when I was ten, I forced my little nephew, who was then six, to jump from a small height although he was scared to, by whipping his bare legs with twigs. I can still hear the whistling of the canes in the air, and the satisfying "zing!" when they made contact with the flesh. My nephew went bawling to my mother and I felt bad. But to my surprise and uneasiness, I realized then and there that my heart melted with love for him *because* I had made him cry.

The MEN eye each other, then come and remove ROSENTHAL gently but firmly from the circle of the CHILDREN.

Much later, in the sixties, Sir Guy the Dog entered our lives. He was a top dog and did only as he pleased. After he stayed away three days and nights having a good time, I was so angry that I beat him. Again I felt the same surge of love after I had made him cry.

Sadistic acts are banal and commonplace.

The orchestra pit descends with all the CHILDREN and their PETS. R0SENTHAL plays the next sequence gradually changing character, becoming more coarse, vulgar, and redneck as the speech unfolds. Closeups of the ANIMALS are projected on the screen.

BROWNIE the RAT enters.

I am not a sadist—but . . . I'm human, aren't I?

And it's human to be curious—

to try and find out how things work, how things react, what is the effect to my cause . . .

What if I pinch the rat's tail? Will it squeak?

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ROSENTHAL pinches BROWNIE's tail.

What if I pinch a little harder?

The person with BROWNIE the RAT moves away and gives ROSENTHAL a dirty look.

I'm only curious. I'm not a sadist . . . And what if I set up a little challenge, a puzzle, something a wee bit stressful for the rat, just to see how it responds?

I'm just a curious human, and it's my nature to learn, to gain knowledge.

Besides, who's to stop me? The rat? Haw-haw. He's little, I'm big.

I can do what I like.

So I starve it a little. Electrocute it too . . .

It's for a good cause. It's for Science!

And what? It's only a rat!

Enter a person with two DOVES.

I like bird song. And it's my right to cage the bird to hear it sing for me—the one who survives the trip across the border stuffed in car upholstery or a spare tire . . . Yes, I know it's against the law. But who'll know?

Enter a person with three MONKEYS.

And look: how will I ever get to see a wild animal? I can't afford to go to Africa on one of those expensive safaris . . .

So I'm glad they shoot the mother (and sometimes the entire family), capture and import the baby, and stick it in a cage in a zoo for the rest of its life so I can gape at it on Sundays.

Enter three persons, each with a SQUIRREL.

Hey, it's getting crowded here . . .

I've got to get away from all this.

Yeah. I'll get some land somewhere, where there's no one around, chop the trees, bulldoze up a nice patch, build a house . . .

What's that? Who's living there? Wildlife? Gimme a break! That's MY land!

And don't tell ME I can't shoot them! I have a gun and you'l1 get it over my dead body!

Christ no, I'm no sadist. I'm just a sportsman. I love the outdoors.

I love killing animals. Hell, that's the only excitement left these days . . .

So I'm not a hot shot and sometimes they get away with a rifle wound . . .

Well, better luck next time!

The PYGMY GOAT enters.

Hey, now WHOA!

Don't tell ME I have to give up meat!

You say it takes twenty-one pounds of vegetable protein to produce one pound of meat to feed me? SO WHAT?

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And if we reduced our meat eating by 10 percent a year it would free enough grain to feed eighty million starving people?

Yeah?

Well . . . some people like eating rice.

I like steak.

What? Hormones? Antibiotics? I don't want to know about that.

Are you kidding? A meal without meat? Whaddaya think this is? The Third World?

Come ON! I can't give up that taste!

Just because they give up their lives?

Well, God said it's okay, didn't he?

The RABBIT enters.

Okay. NOW you've gone too far.

I NEED that fur coat.

It's warm in southern California?

Of COURSE it's warm, you yoyo.

That's not what a fur coat is ABOUT!

Don't tell me about traps and gangrene and animals gnawing their paws off . . .

I don't want to hear that shit.

I LOVE fur.

And makeup.

Yeah. I heard about the Draize test—rabbits in stocks with their eyes burned out.

So, that's why we breed them, isn't it?

Why, if we didn't breed them they wouldn't even be alive!

That gives us some right. Right?

PEOPLE with their ANIMALS have been walking through the set.

Uh-uh.

Now you're really making me mad.

You're saying you want ALL animal industries abolished?

But that's UN-AMERICAN!

You're fucking with my livelihood, my business! I have a stake in this.

Finding alternatives to animal testing COSTS MONEY!

Yes. I know animal tests aren't accurate . . .

Please don't remind me about the thalidomide fiasco. All that good research and then whammo! . . .

But that's not the point.

We've got a big investment here.

What about my multimillion-dollar sales of cages to labs, to poultry growers, to the pounds?

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And hell, my stocks in antibiotics?
Half of it goes to food animals, y'know. I'd be ruined!
What are you anyway, a COMMIE?
I'm not a sadist, for chrissakes! I'm not a bad person!
I've got mouths to feed. It's nature. It's the way things are!
They're animals, don't you see? What do you mean, So what?
So I'm human, that's what, and they're not!
Yeah. You got it.
Justice, rights, respect? What the fuck is this, some kind of animal lib?
First it's the blacks, then it's the broads, now it's the brutes?
Look. DON'T COME NEAR ME OR I'LL SHOOT!
No. I'm not a sadist. But YOU are!
I'm an American and I've got my rights!
It's a fucking free country, isn't it?

ROSENTHAL returns to being herself. The ANIMALS exit. ROSENTHAL looks down into the pit.

The sewers of the human psyche are clogged with the corpses of children, animals, women, animals, slaves, animals, prisoners, animals, animals, animals . . .

The orchestra pit rises with a surgical table covered with a sheet, a stool, and a garbage pail. On the table are a number of small toys, objects, and instruments. ROSENTHAL sits on the stool at the table and, during the next sequence, manipulates the objects as she speaks. The MEN stand one on each side of her. The MAN on her left places a different color half mask on her face before each new subject ROSENTHAL addresses, and the one on her right takes the mask off at the end of the passage and throws it into the garbage can. The CAMERAMAN films ROSENTHAL's hands and the objects she handles over her shoulder, and the activity appears magnified on the screen. After each little action, ROSENTHAL throws the involved objects into the garbage too. Some SLIDES are also projected on the screen, illustrating some of the data: farm animals, trapped animals, etc.

(Mask 1) When we are little, we are close to all life and sentience. But when we play with worms we are told we are dirty and are reprimanded. Mice are EEEK. Rats are YECH. Bats are YIPES. We are not allowed to bring the stray kitten in the house. *(There are rubber animals of each kind, manipulated according to the text.)* This dog was rescued after being dumped from a car containing adults and children. These children learned it was okay to abandon a dog *(a toy car and a small rubber dog).*

(Mask 2) Science fairs promote science "projects" for schoolchildren. These include vivisection, malnutrition, starvation, poisoning, inducement of psychosis, and other "procedures" in experiments on live animals.

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(ROSENTHAL cuts a rubber frog with scissors.) Recently a Canoga Park high school had fourteen-year-olds slaughter lambs to learn where meat came from. *(ROSENTHAL cuts rubber lambs' necks with a large kitchen knife.)* We teach our children that the best way to know an animal is to cut it up.

(Mask 3) If I want to get rid of my dog, for any reason, I can "put it down" or "put it to sleep." People execute their pets for a multitude of reasons, most often because they are a small or large inconvenience. *(ROSENTHAL winds up a toy whose tail wags. She places it in a plastic bag. The air inflates the bag. She then squeezes and manipulates the bag until all the air is gone.)*

At the "shelters," they call this killing of healthy animals (in the extremely painful decompression chamber) "euthanasia." But doesn't the term "euthanasia" refer to the mercy killing of the suffering terminally ill?

(Mask 4) Food animals are "prepared," "trussed," "cured," and "dressed." In little coats and hats, perhaps? *(Various farm animals are manipulated.)* Calves are taken from their mothers when they are four days old, immobilized so they can't even scratch or groom themselves, kept in the dark, and, although their bodies require roughage, are fed a diet of skim milk and antibiotics, purposefully deficient in iron and amino acids, in order to produce anemia. We eat sick animals. That's called "white veal."

ROSENTHAL shows a toy wooden calf that moves when you push its base. She then paints it white with a brush and some gesso.

(Mask 5) Cattle lose 9 percent of their body weight in a single trip to slaughter, due to stress, shock, and dehydration. That's called "shrinkage" *(a large toy cow and a small toy cow).* The animals are kept alive with massive doses of antibiotics of all kinds, without which, under industrial farming methods, they would get sick and die. They die anyway, in large percentages, of stress and crowding, and so, in addition to ingesting drugs at our table, we also consume the corpses of maimed, frustrated, depressed, and crazed animals. You decide if you favor this kind of nourishment. *(ROSENTHAL injects several farm animals with a toy syringe.)*

(Mask 6) Hens who are caged N1NE to an eighteen-by-twenty-four-inch cage (which means one-third of a square foot per bird) for the duration of their lifetime will go mad and peck each other to death and cannibalism. The farmers call this "vices." The "cure" for these vices? Not less crowding. That would not be cost-effective. But rather debeaking, by guillotine or hot knife, right through the quick in the horn, sometimes twice in the hen's lifetime.

(Mask 7) Lab, farm, and zoo animals, and many pets, suffer from soli-

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tary confinement, chained, caged, and alone. If you don't think that isolation and boredom are torture, why do you think we support the proliferation of multibillion-dollar entertainment industries? And animals are even more social by nature than we are. *(ROSENTHAL places the above-named kinds of animals in little individual boxes.)*

(Mask 8) Animals who compete with us in the fields (rabbits, gophers) are called "pests" and "vermin." The U.S. government incinerates coyote pups in their dens. *(ROSENTHAL lights a Bic lighter under a little animal.)* An animal who has the misfortune of getting caught in the notorious steel-jaw leghold trap (banned in sixty countries but still flourishing in the U.S.), and who is not a candidate for a fur coat—such as dogs, cats, and eagles—is called a "trash" animal by trappers. *(ROSENTHAL catches a little cat by the paw with pliers.)*

(Mask 9) If I hunt, I don't murder deer. I "harvest" them. But deer are not wheat. If I want a wolf trophy for my den, I "cull" it. Who decided there were "too many wolves"? *(ROSENTHAL is shooting toys with a gun.)*

(Mask 10) Normal, nonsadistic young psychology students are indoctrinated with bland, hygienic terminology. They don't torture with thirst, starvation, or electroshock; they use "negative stimulus" or "extinction techniques." *(ROSENTHAL twists a crying monkey.)* They don't use words like "painful" or "frightening." That's anthropomorphic (the cardinal sin). That implies feelings—like human feelings. But, if there is no correlation between rat sentience and human sentience, for example, and the rat is not studied to improve rat welfare, then why are multimillion dollars of your and my tax money used to fund freakish and ghoulish experiments on rats who, I can tell you from experience, are sensitive, affectionate, and intelligent? *(ROSENTHAL tears a little rat apart.)*

(Mask 11) When behavioral psychologists train animals to press a lever to avoid electroshock, that's called "programmed stimuli." The shocks themselves are called "trials." Perrin Cohen of the University of Pennsylvania conducted an experiment where dogs underwent from twenty-six to forty-six "sessions," each session consisting of eighty "trials," administered at one-minute intervals. *(ROSENTHAL electrocutes a toy dog with two electrodes.)*

(Mask 12) Four CATS enter during the following speech and make a semicircle around the table and p1ayers. They are held in their PEOPLE's arms. Toward the end of the cat sequence, the PEOPLE form a little group on the left, watching ROSENTHAL. Then they seem to get in a huddle, and quickly exit.

The cat, apparently, has an almost legendary reputation as a "difficult behavioral subject." But M. Loop and N. Berkley of Florida State Univer-

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sity, Tallahassee, consider the cat "an extremely interesting organism for sensory experiments." And so they devised an "improved responding apparatus" for cats. The apparatus was tested on an unstated number of cats "obtained from the local animal shelter." (Californians, incidentally, recently voted down a measure that would have prohibited the pounds from selling pets to research facilities.) The cats were starved to 80 percent of their normal body weight, then stood on a grid floor that could be electrified. Their heads were placed in Plexiglass cylinders, at the back of which was a key that they had to press to obtain food. Each animal was trained to press the key between fifteen hundred and two thousand times per hour. Although this seems like an astonishingly high frequency, Loop and Berkley asserted: "We have not encountered a cat that could not be brought to this acceptable level of performance." *(ROSENTHAL has a toy cat, which she coats with hamburger meat until it is covered with it.)*

The CAT people and the two MEN exit.

Animals are property and are viewed as "models," "tools," "receptacles," and "renewable resources."

They have no legal rights whatsoever, although children, ships, communities, and corporations do.

In the scientific community, the Cartesian view prevails: animals are not conscious, are not aware, do not feel pain or anything else. *(ROSENTHAL picks up the cat coated with meat and hugs it close to her face.)* At the same time, animals are used as models for human beings. <u>You can't have it both ways.</u> *(She throws the cat in the garbage, cleans her hands, and rises.)*

SLIDE AND VOICEOVER: "Mankind's true moral test, its fundamental test (which lies so deeply buried from view), consists of its attitude toward those who are at its mercy: animals. And, in this respect, mankind has suffered a fundamental debacle, a debacle so fundamental that all others stem from it."

Milan Kundera

ROSENTHAL goes upstage on the high left platform. The pit descends with the table and garbage pail.

During the next segment, the music is part of the Andante from J. S. Bach's D Minor Concerto, for about six minutes. Voices waft over the music and alternate with it. ROSENTHAL does a "dance" or movement sequence, portraying the suffering of animals and her own empathetic suffering, combined. The MEN, wearing translucent plastic masks over their hoods, chef hats, aprons, and a right-hand padded glove for the heat (one in the shape of a sheep's head, the other in the shape of a cow's head), are cooking hamburgers over a bar-

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becue. They have spatulas and turn the meat over. The smoke and the smell permeate the audience.

VOICEOVER: The files at the United Action for Animals contain reports on numerous experiments. The labels read: "Acceleration," "Aggression (induced)," "Asphyxiation," "Blinding," "Burning," "Centrifuge," "Compression," "Concussion," "Crowding," "Crushing," "Decompression," "Drug Tests," "Experimental Neurosis," "Freezing," "Heating," "Hemorrhage," "Hind Limb Beating," "Immobilization," "Isolation," "Multiple Injuries," "Prey Killing," "Protein Deprivation," "Punishment," "Radiation," "Starvation," "Shock," "Spinal Cord Injuries," "Stress," "Thirst," and many more.

At Princeton University, Moorecroft, Lytle, and Campbell "terminally deprived: 256 young rats of food and water. They then watched the rats die from thirst and starvation. They concluded that under conditions of fatal thirst and starvation, young rats are much more active than normal adult rats given food and water."

At Harvard University, Solomon, Kamin, and Wynne tested the effects of electric shocks on the behavior of dogs. They placed forty dogs in a device called a shuttlebox, which consists of a box divided into two compartments separated by a barrier. Initially the barrier was set at the height of the dog's back. Hundreds of intense electric shocks were delivered to the dogs' feet through a grid floor. At first the dogs could escape the shock if they learned to jump the barrier into the other compartment. In an attempt to "discourage" one dog from jumping, the experimenter forced the dog to jump into shock one hundred times. They said that as the dog jumped he gave a "sharp anticipatory yip which turned into a yelp when he landed on the electrified grid." They then blocked the passage between the compartments with a piece of plate glass and tested the same dog again. The dog "jumped forward and smashed his head against the glass." Initially dogs showed symptoms such as urination, defecation, yelping, and shrieking, trembling, attacking the apparatus, and so on. But after ten or twelve days of trials, dogs that were prevented from escaping shock ceased to resist. The experimenters reported themselves "impressed" by this and concluded that a combination of the glass barrier and the foot shock was "very effective" in eliminating jumping by dogs.

Farmers are urged by advertisements that tell them "how to make $12,000 profit sitting down," and the way to do it is to buy the "Bacon Bin," which is "not just a confinement house. It is a profit producing, pork production system." Sows are closely confined for both pregnancy and birth. While pregnant they may be housed in stalls two feet wide and six

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feet long, or scarcely bigger than the sow herself; or they may be tethered by a collar around the neck; or they may be in stalls and tethered. In any of these systems the sow can stand up or lie down, but she cannot turn around or exercise in any other way.

It takes 50 bobcats or lynx, 40 raccoons, and 150 rabbits or mink to make one coat. The trapped animals suffer broken bones and torn flesh and die of shock, starvation, and attacks from predators. Young pups starve. They also may suffer for days in excruciating pain before being clubbed or stomped to death by the trapper. Foxes are sometimes bled to death by having their tongues cut out. Leopards and lynxes are killed by having red-hot irons thrust up their anuses. Persian lambs, farmed in Russia, are skinned alive while still conscious to keep the curl in their coats. Broadtail is from Karakul sheep beaten with rods to force premature births. Kid gloves come from India where tiny goats are placed alive in boiling herbal liquids.

The "Lethal Dose 50%" or LD5O test is the amount of a toxic substance which will, in a single dose, kill half a group of test animals. To "avoid interference with results," no painkillers are administered. Five million dogs, cats, rats, monkeys, and other animals die in the LD50 tests each year in the US. The test substance is forced into the animal's stomach by tube, sometimes through a hole cut in the throat or injected under the skin, into a vein or the peritoneal lining of the abdomen, on occasion causing death by rupture from the sheer bulk of the chemical dosage; applied to the eyes, rectum, or vagina, or inhaled through a gas mask. Because all species react differently, it is impossible to accurately determine human hazards from ingested chemicals tested on other animals.

In a 1972 paper Harlow and Suomi say that because depression in humans has been characterized as embodying a state of "helplessness and hopelessness, sunken in a well of despair," they designed a device to reproduce such a "well" both physically and psychologically. They built a vertical chamber with stainless-steel sides sloping inward to form a rounded bottom and placed young monkeys in it for periods of up to forty-five days. They found that after a few days of confinement the monkeys "spend most of the time huddled in a corner of the chamber." The confinement produced "severe and peristent psychopathological behavior of a depressive nature." Even nine months after release the monkeys would sit clasping their arms around their bodies instead of moving around and exploring as other monkeys do.

During the above sequence, the orchestra pit has risen high enough to have people standing on it with only their heads protruding. Fourteen of the ANIMAL PEOPLE are standing in a row as far front of the pit as possible. They are

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all wearing large animal masks that cover their faces completely. They rise to their full height one at a time, so that the fourteen masked heads appear one at a time and slowly. When they are visible, they simply stand and scan the audience, moving their heads to take in the entire auditorium, orchestra, and balcony.

At the end of the tape, ROSENTHAL finds herself lying on her back, head downstage, on the lower right platform. The MEN exit with the barbecue, quickly take off their chef's gear offstage, and return running, without their ninja hoods and carrying microphones. They zero in on the prone ROSENTHAL and assault her with questions like reporters at the scene of a disaster. The CAMERAMAN stands behind them and over ROSENTHAL and shoots a closeup of her face, which is projected on the screen. The pit descends.

MEN:

Could you describe your ordeal? How does it feel?
Can you say something to the audience out there?
You can talk, can't you? I have a few questions . . .
Do you maintain your innocence?
If you could, would you take revenge? Why do you think this happened?
Do you think you asked for it?
I noticed you were wearing snakeskin shoes . . . an ivory bracelet . . .
you had a nice fur coat . . . your musk glands smelled good . . .
you were a gentle beagle, just right for radiation tests, for the wound lab, for concussion studies
Your horn makes us horny.
How can we take our medicine if you don't test it first?
We can't do without your breast, your thigh, your ribs . . .
We must have your feather boa . . .
Yes we must have your feather boa . . . We must have your feather boa . . .

ROSENTHAL attempts to answer each question but isn't given a chance. Finally, she grabs a mike. The MEN and CAMERAMAN recede. She rises and slowly proceeds to the left platform and speaks softly at first, almost whispering, then louder, into the mike.

The lights change to a mythic and spiritual feeling. So does the MUSIC. On the right platform stand three PERSONS. The middle one, on the highest platform, has a huge blue and gold MACKAW. The other two have a ten-foot BOA and a thirteen-foot PYTHON. They are dressed in white. The three will stand in a

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blue spot and move slowly in place so as to show off the animals. VIDEO of the ANIMALS.

We must have feather boas.
Feathers.
Boa.
The last, trivial incarnation of Quetzalcoatl.
The Plumed Serpent. Serpent and Bird.
Shamanic power. Icon. Kundalini. Caduceus. Quetzalcoatl.

SLIDES of Quetzalcoatl and of the Caduceus.
One of the MEN holds the mike for ROSENTHAL. She moves her hands and arms like serpents.

Where are we?

Midway between crawling and soaring.

The Snake and the Bird. Androgynous magic. The swan-necked, bird-headed phallic Goddess.

Earth lust. Sky power. Snake rises. Bird glides down.

The spine encases both directions. The serpent rod with its two nerve channels, the "ida" and the pingala," spiraling around the central passageway, the "sushumna" of the spinal column, the column of Osiris. Two snakes. The chthonic force. And the Bird, perched on top, the higher realm of consciousness, liberated from Earth, the Third Eye, the Superbrain. The Caduceus is the polarization of both energies. The Quetzalcoatl is the polarized energies fused, or Satori.

The Snake and the Bird. A shorthand for enlightenment!

The pit has risen, with a basket of flowers on it. More BIRDS and SNAKES enter, followed by more ANIMALS, until all the ANIMAL PEOPLE are onstage. They form groups, sitting or standing on the platforms.
ROSENTHAL comes off the left platform and walks downstage.

To be enlightened, we have need of darkness.

They, the Others, can never be enlightened, for they have never fallen from grace.

SLIDE: "No one can give anyone the gift of the idyll; only an animal can do so, because only animals were not expelled from Paradise."

Milan Kundera

They are the light. Like the lilies of the field.

Their killings are light. They are inconsequential.

Ours are full of darkness, and the endless yoke of unforgiving karma.

Where do they get off getting off so easy?

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Both MEN stand at either ends of the stage, holding the mikes. In the next sequence, they hold the mikes for individual ANIMAL PEOPLE who interject a sentence or two about their feelings for their ANIMALS, alternating with the text. ROSENTHAL sits at the downstage edge of the pit, by the basket.

How do they get away with it?

ANIMAL PERSON: What, no guilt, no angst?

(Another) ANIMAL PERSON: No pangs of conscience?

ANOTHER: No efforts to actualize?

ANOTHER: To self-realize?

ANOTHER: To be who they are?

ANOTHER: How dare they be beyond morality?

ANOTHER: Beyond the arduous apprenticeship of good and bad?

ANOTHER: Beyond the fretful reconciliation of opposites?

ANOTHER: What, no history?

ANOTHER: Who gave them permission to be whole?

Several ANIMAL PEOPLE want to speak at once. They grab the mike from each other. They all have wonderful things to say.

ROSENTHAL: We see in them who we once were. And we deny them, like immigrants who reject their language of origin. We dress them in people's clothes and force them to imitate people's ways so that, by this caricature, we may laugh at them and better measure the distance that, we hope, separates us from them.

During the next sequence, ROSENTHAL stands on the right side, and speaks. The MUSIC is moving and heroic. The PEOPLE and their ANIMALS stand or sit in groups, listening. The LIGHTS are dimmed on them because there is a sequence of SLIDES showing the beauty of animals. They are of all kinds of creatures in the wild as well as domesticated.

"Mankind has suffered a fundamental debacle. A debacle so fundamental that all others stem from it."

Because, fundamentally and at the core, it is ourselves we are rejecting: our body, our nature, our untamed sexuality, our original innocence, our Buddha mind, and our connection to the living deity breathing in us all. And so, cut off and cast off, we drift, in an ethical miasma, frantical1y grasping at straws to keep from drowning in a world which we perceive as permeated with otherness, wherein we ourselves are the most alien to ourselves. How can we save our world which is sinking in strife, division, violence, hunger, greed, pollution, and garbage, when, like a housing development built on a refuse landfill, our society's very foundation rests on the rotten basement of moral fraud? There is no justification for our persecution of the Others. We do it because we are stronger. This democracy,

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like every other human society, is erected on the fascist oppression of other sentient beings, *because they are other and we have might.*

There are no relevant differences justifying this persecution.

Not Rationality, or we should persecute children, the senile, and the insane.

Not Language, or we should persecute infants, the retarded, and the dumb.

Not Consciousness, for the Others are conscious.

Not Sentience, for the Others feel.

Not Intelligence, for some animals would fare better than some people.

No. There is no difference that is morally relevant. Although there are differences, in degree as in kind, just as there are between races, sexes, and ages within our own species, none of which are, at least ostensibly, recognized as morally relevant.

There is no justification for this abuse, but there is a reason:

The reason is: they are Other, and we are stronger, and we want to exploit their bodies and their minds.

But if "might makes right," then we have done away with morality altogether and, as a species, are morally bankrupt.

We must repair this deep and long-lived insult, and the task, far from being puerile, is central to our time.

For our own species to be revivified, this is our only hope.

MEN: "Biting through has success. It is favorable to let justice be administered."

ROSENTHAL comes to down center stage. One of the MEN kneels with his back to the audience a few steps left, holding up a mike. The other MAN crouches close to her, holding the basket and feeding her flowers, one at a time. The music wells up to a beautiful and soulful march, as all the ANIMAL PEOPLE begin to walk with their ANIMALS in a wide circle all around the set. As they pass down center, they speak their animal's name into the mike. Then they come before ROSENTHAL, who touches the ANIMAL and gives the PERSON a flower. After that "sacrament," they continue the circle and exit left. During this, a VOICEOVER is heard, and a SLIDE appears.

VOICEOVER AND SLIDE: "We need another and a wiser and perhaps more mystical concept of animals. We patronize them for their incompleteness, for their tragic fate of having taken form so far beneath ourselves. And therein we err. For the animal shall not be measured by man. In a world older and more complete than ours, they move finished and complete, gifted with extensions of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear . . . They are not underlings; they are other

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nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendor and travail of the Earth.

Harry Beston

During the above, ROSENTHAL climbs up to the highest right platform. She sits there as the MEN fetch her DOG, ZATOICHI, and her CAT, KABBALAMOBILE. (In Raleigh, North Carolina, it was two RATS, SAGE and RIDING HOOD.) They sit together and play, as the MUSIC returns to the fairy tale theme.

VOICEOVER: The third day, the youngest went to the forest. She too lost her way. When she came to the hut, the old man asked her to prepare supper. She made soup and set it on the table. Then she asked, "Am I to eat and the poor animals have nothing? I will look after them first." She stewed barley for the cock and the hen, and brought a whole armful of sweet-smelling hay for the cow. "I hope you will like this, dear animals," she said, "and you shall have a refreshing draught in case you are thirsty." After that she said: "Ought we not to go to bed?" The animals said:

"Thou hast eaten with us
Thou hast drunk with us
Thou hast had kind words for all of us
We wish thee good night."

The maiden went upstairs and lay down on one bed, the old man on the other. At midnight, the girl was awakened by a tremendous crash, as if the very roof had fallen in. Then all grew quiet and when she felt she wasn't hurt, she fell back to sleep. But the next morning, in the brilliance of sunshine, she woke, and what did she see? She was lying in a vast hall; everything around her shone in noble splendor. Three richly clad attendants came and asked for orders. And, next to her on the bed, the old man had vanished, and in his stead was a young and handsome man who sat up and said: "I am a king's son. I was bewitched and turned into an old man, and my three attendants were turned into a cock, a hen, and a brindled cow. The spell was not to be broken until a girl came to us whose heart was so good that she showed herself full of love, not only toward mankind, but toward anima1s. And that, you have done, and by you we are set free, and the old hut in the forest has become a royal palace once again."

And so they were married and lived long and happy lives. And the two mean sisters were led to the forest to live as servants to the charcoal burner until they had grown kinder and would not leave poor animals to suffer hunger.

Toward the end of the VOICEOVER, autumn leaves fall down softly over ROSENTHAL and her ANIMALS. It looks like a Hallmark card! The VIDEO

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screen has been showing closeups of ZATOICHI and KABBALAMOBILE (or the RATS). At the end, it pulls back to take in ROSENTHAL and the ANIMALS as a group. The lights fade; the MUSIC ends.
BLACKOUT.
As a curtain call, all the PEOPLE and ANIMALS circle the set once more, acknowledging the audience as they pass down center.
First performed December 18, 1984 at the Japan America Theatre in Los Angeles, as part of the "Art of Spectacle" series, cosponsored by the University of California, Los Angeles; Some Serious Business; and Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) Ga1lery. When performed at the University of North Carolina in Raleigh, all the animals were chosen because they had been abused by humans and also rescued by humans. They each had a history, and their bios were featured in the program. All the companion animals were from the local shelter. At the end of each show (there were three), they were presented to the audience for adoption. All dogs and cats were thus adopted.

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1986) and the award-winning *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama (University of Michigan Press, 1996);* the editor of *Rachel's Brain and Other Storms: The Performance Scripts of Rachel Rosenthal (Continuum, 2001);* and the coeditor, with Elinor Fuchs, of *Land/Scape/Theater (Univeristy of Michigan Press, 2003).* She was guest editor of special issues of Yale's Theater journal on "Ecology and Performance" and of *TDR: The Journal of Performance Studies* on "Animals and Performance."

Jane C. Desmond is a professor of anthropology and affiliated faculty in gender/women's studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her books include *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World* (University of Chicago Press, 1999) and the edited collections *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance* (Duke University Press, 1997) and *Dancing Desires: Choreographing Sexuality On and Off the Stage* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2002). She is currently completing a book for the University of Chicago Press on human-animal relations and the status of animal bodies in several realms of art, science, and history, with a working title of *Displaying Death/Animating Life.*

Jess Dobkin's performances, artist's talks, and workshops are presented internationally at museums, galleries, theatres, and universities and in public spaces. Her creative endeavors have received wide support and recognition, including awards from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Toronto Arts Council, and repeated funding from the Franklin Furnace Fund for Performance Art and the Astraea Foundation. Her performances receive extensive print, radio, television, and web media attention and have been the subject of recent journal articles in *Gastronomica, the Canadian Theatre Review,* and *n.paradoxa.* She was named "Best Performance Artist" by *NOW Toronto* and *X-tra Magazine,* and her "Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar" performance continues to draw international media attention and interest. She has taught as a sessional lecturer at the University of Toronto and OCAD University. She was the 2011–12 guest curator of the HATCH Residency Program at Harbourfront Centre and is currently a fellow at the Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies at the University of Toronto and a cocurator of the 7a-11d International Festival of Performance Art. For more about her work visit jessdobkin.com.

Jill Dolan is the Annan Professor in English and Theater at Princeton University, where she also directs the Program in Gender and Sexuality Stud-

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ies. She is the author of *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* (1988, reissued in a 2012 anniversary edition with a new introduction), *Utopia in Performance* (2005), *Theatre and Sexuality* (2010), and many other books and essays. She is the editor of *A Menopausal Gentleman: The Solo Performances of Peggy Shaw* (2011), which won the 2012 Lambda Literary Award for Best LGBT Drama. She won the 2011 Outstanding Teacher Award from the Association for Theatre in Higher Education and a lifetime achievement award from the Women and Theatre Program (2011). Dolan is a member of the College of Fellows of the American Theatre and of the National Theatre Conference in the United States. She writes *The Feminist Spectator* blog at www.TheFeministSpectator.com, for which she won the 2010–11 George Jean Nathan Award for dramatic criticism.

Donna Haraway is Distinguished Professor Emerita in the History of Consciousness Department at the University of California at Santa Cruz. Her work explores the string-figure knots tied by feminist theory, science and technology studies, and animal studies. She earned her PhD in biology at Yale in 1972, and she taught biology at the University of Hawaii and the history of science at the Johns Hopkins University. Her books include *When Species Meet* (University of Minnesota Press, 2008), *Crystals, Fabrics, and Fields: Metaphors that Shape Embryos* (Yale, 1976; North Atlantic Books, 2004), *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (Routledge, 1989), *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (Routledge, 1991), *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan© Meets OncoMouse™* (Routledge, 1997), *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003), and *The Haraway Reader* (Routledge, 2004). Under the title "Staying with the Trouble," her current work inhabits the relational labor and play of human and nonhuman animals in art activisms and biological sciences.

Holly Hughes is a writer and performer. She is the author of "Clit Notes: A Sapphic Sampler" and coeditor of the Lambda Book Award–winning collection "O Solo Homo: The New Queer Performance." Her work troubling the fault lines of American identity politics has won her the ire of the religious right, as well as two Village Voice OBIE awards; grants from the New York State Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, and Creative Capital's Map Fund; and a 2010 Guggenheim. Currently, she is a professor of art and design, theatre and drama, and women's studies at the University of Michigan, where she directs the BFA in interarts performance.

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Joseph Keckler is a singer, writer, musician, and interdisciplinary artist who lives in Brooklyn, NY. His work has been presented at the New Museum, SXSW, Joe's Pub, Issue Project Room, BAM Fischer, La MaMa, Performa, and many other venues. He is the author of several evening-length performance works, including *Cat Lady* and *Human Jukebox*, directed by Elizabeth Gimbel. Keckler's most recent work, *I am an Opera*, was commissioned by Dixon Place. He has been awarded fellowships at the MacDowell Colony and the Yaddo artists' community and his work has been supported through a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in Interdisciplinary Work, as well as through a grant from the Franklin Furnace Fund. *The Village Voice* has named him Best Downtown Performance Artist, 2013.

Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes is an associate professor of American culture, Romance languages and literatures, and women's studies at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, where he also directs the Latina/o Studies Program. He teaches Latina/o studies; Puerto Rican and Hispanic Caribbean studies; women's, gender, and sexuality studies; lesbian, gay, and queer studies; and theater and performance. He was born and raised in Puerto Rico and received his AB from Harvard College (1991) and his MA and PhD from Columbia University (1999). He is the author of a book of essays on migration and sexuality called *Queer Ricans: Cultures and Sexualities in the Diaspora* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009) and of two book of short stories: *Uñas pintadas de azul/Blue Fingernails* (Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingüe, Arizona, 2009) and Abolición del pato (Terranova Editores, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 2013). He was one of the coeditors of a special issue of *CENTRO: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies* on Puerto Rican queer sexualities (19, no. 1 [Spring 2007]). He is currently working on a book titled *Translocas and Transmachas: Trans Diasporic Puerto Rican Drag*.

Stacy Makishi is a Hawaii-born, London-based artist who works in a variety of media including live art, film, theatre, visual artist, and poetry. Recent works include a Fuel and Wellcome Trust Commission to create a Body Pod Cast on The Skin, With Love Roxanne a commission by Pink Fringe Brighton, Gilding the Lily performed at South Bank, Love Letters to Francis, a film made in collaboration with Nick Parish and inspired by the works of Francis Bacon, commissioned by TATE Britain and B3 Media. In 2010 Makishi was also commissioned by guest curator Martine Rouleau to create a performance inside Miroslaw Balka's epic sculptural installation How It Is at the TATE Modern. In the same year, Makishi was commissioned to make

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work for ". . . Louder than Bombs": Art, Action & Activism, curated by the Stanley Picker Gallery and Live Art Development Agency. Between 2007 and 2013, Makishi toured performance work extensively in the UK and in Austria, Denmark, Belgium, Greece, Turkey, Finland, Slovenia, Spain, Ireland, and the USA.

Kim Marra is a professor of theatre arts and American studies at the University of Iowa. She also holds a courtesy appointment in the Department of Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies. Her books include *Strange Duets: Impresarios and Actresses in American Theatre, 1865–1914* (University of Iowa Press), which won the 2008 Joe A. Callaway Prize., and three volumes from the University of Michigan Press: *Passing Performances: Queer Readings of Leading Players in American Theater History* (1998) and its sequel *Staging Desire: Queer Readings of American Theater History* (2002), both coedited with Robert A. Schanke, as well as *The Gay and Lesbian Theatrical Legacy: A Biographical Dictionary of Major Figures in American Stage History in the Pre-Stonewall Era* (2005), coedited with Schanke and the late Billy J. Harbin. Her article about how *Horseback Views* functions as historical research, "Riding, Scarring, Knowing: A Queerly Embodied Performance Historiography" (Theatre Journal, December 2012), won the Outstanding Article Award from the Association for Theatre in Higher Education and received Honorable Mention for the Oscar Brockett Essay Prize awarded by the American Society for Theatre Research.

Kestutis Nakas has presented original, live performances since 1982. His live Manhattan Cable TV show, *Your Program of Programs,* and his 1983 *Titus Andronicus,* at the Pyramid Club, showcased a new generation of performers like Steve Buscemi, Ann Magnuson, Bill Rice, and John Kelly. Venues played include the PublicTheatre/NYSF, Yale Rep, La Mama, Dixon Place, P.S. 122, St. Mark's Church in the Bowery, 8BC, the Kitchen, Anthology Film Archives, Theatre, and Highways. Works include *Railroad Backward, Remembrance of Things Pontiac, My Heart My President, Hunger and Lightning, The Andrew Carnegie Story,* and the tragicomic cycle *When Lithuania Ruled The World, Parts I, II, III. & IV*. In 1986, his *Gates of Dawn* venue presented Holly Hughes, They Might Be Giants, Yoshiko Chuma, Steve and Mark, David Cale, Deb Margolin, Jo Andres, and many others. His work has been acclaimed in the *New York Times,* the *Village Voice,* the *Drama Review,* the *Chicago Sun-Times,* the *Los Angeles Times,* and other publications. Today, Kestutis is a professor at Roosevelt University in Chi-

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cago. *No Bees for Bridgeport* was created at MacDowell Colony in March 2009 and performed at Links Hall in Chicago in May 2012. Kestutis is an avid urban beekeeper.

Ann Pellegrini is an associate professor of performance studies and religious studies at New York University and the director of NYU's Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality. Her books include *Performance Anxieties: Staging Psychoanalysis, Staging Race* (Routledge, 1997); *Love the Sin: Sexual Regulation and the Limits of Religious Tolerance,* co-authored with Janet R. Jakobsen (New York University Press, 2003; Beacon Press, 2004); and *"You Can Tell Just By Looking" And 20 Other Myths about LGBT Life and People,* co-authored with Michael Bronski and Michael Amico (Beacon, 2013). Her new book, *Excess & Enchantment: Queer Performance Between the Religious and the Secular,* is forthcoming from New York University Press.

Rachel Rosenthal, a winner of OBIE, Rockefeller, Getty, National Endowment for the Arts, and College Art Association awards, among others, is an internationally recognized pioneer in the field of feminist and ecological performance art. Her revolutionary performance technique integrates text, movement, voice, choreography, improvisation, dramatic lighting, and wildly imaginative sets into an unforgettable theatrical experience. She is currently artistic director of the Rachel Rosenthal Company's TOHUBOHU! Extreme Theatre Ensemble and at eighty-six still teaches her signature brand of improvisational theater at her studio space. The School of the Art Institute in Chicago awarded her an honorary doctorate in 1999. In the year 2000, the City of Los Angeles awarded her the title of "Living Cultural Treasure."

Nigel Rothfels is the author of a history of naturalistic displays in zoological gardens, *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), and the editor of the multidisciplinary collection *Representing Animals* (Indiana University Press, 2002). He has been the recipient of fellowships from Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies at Princeton University, the Humanities Research Centre at the Australian National University, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and the University of Oslo. He is currently writing a history of changing ideas about elephants since the eighteenth century.

Erika Rundle is a dramaturg, translator, and associate professor of theatre arts and gender studies at Mount Holyoke College. Her articles and reviews

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have been published in *TDR*, *PAJ*, *Theater*, *Theatre Journal*, and the *Eugene O'Neill Review*, as well as numerous anthologies, and her translation of Marie Ndiaye's *Hilda* has been performed off-Broadway and regionally. *Drama after Darwin* (McFarland, 2014), her study of twentieth-century "primate drag," is forthcoming, as is an essay on Carolee Schneemann's *Cat Scan*, which will appear in *Reading Contemporary Performance* (Routledge, 2014).

Vicky Ryder was born in Nuneaton, Warwickshire, in 1953 to a family of miners and light engineering workers. She lives in London, England, and has recently published a book with Wandering Star Press called *Ey Up And Away!* (2012). She is currently writing a novel, *The Glovemaker,* and cowriting a new piece with Stacy Makishi called *And the Stars Down So Close.*

Alina Troyano burst onto New York's downtown performing arts scene in the eighties with her alter ego the spitfire Carmelita Tropicana and her counterpart, archetypal Latin macho Pingalito Betancourt, followed by performances as Hernando Cortez's horse and Cucaracha Martina from her childhood fairy tales in Cuba. In Tropicana's work, humor and fantasy become subversive tools to rewrite history. Tropicana's performances, plays. and videos have been presented at venues such as the Institute of Contemporary Art in London; the Hebbel am Ufer in Berlin; the Centre de Cultura Contemporanea, Barcelona; the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York; the Mark Taper Forum's Kirk Douglas Theatre in Los Angeles; and El Museo del Barrio in New York. She is the recipient of the Anonymous Was a Woman Award, the Teddy Bear at the Berlin Film Festival, and an OBIE for sustained excellence in performance. She has collaborated with filmmakers Uzi Parnes and Ela Troyano. She became a feminist thespian at the WOW café and is working with Holly Hughes on a book documenting WOW's first decade.

Deke Weaver is a writer, performer, designer, and media artist. His interdisciplinary performances and videos have been presented in Australia, Brazil, Canada, Europe, Russia, and the United States at experimental theater, film/video, dance, and solo performance venues such as Channel 4/U.K., the Sundance Film Festival, the New York Video Festival at Lincoln Center, the Berlin Video Festival, the Museum of Contemporary Art/Los Angeles, the Moth, and many others including livestock pavilions, night clubs, backyard sheds, and living rooms. His lifelong project, *The Unreliable Bestiary*, is presenting a performance for every letter of the alphabet, each letter represented by an endangered species. He has been a resident artist at Yaddo, Isle Royale National Park, HERE, Ucross, and the MacDowell Colony. His work

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has been supported by commissions, fellowships, and grants from Creative Capital, the city of San Francisco, the states of Illinois and New York, the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign), and other public and private foundations. He is currently an associate professor at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign's School of Art and Design and Department of Theater. For more information, see unreliablebestiary.org.

Cary Wolfe holds the Bruce and Elizabeth Dunlevie Chair in English at Rice University. His books include *Critical Environments: Postmodern Theory and the Pragmatics of the "Outside"* (Minnesota, 1998), *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago, 2003), the edited volume *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal* (Minnesota, 2003), and *What Is Posthumanism?* (Minnesota, 2010). He has also participated in two multiauthored projects: *Philosophy and Animal Life,* with Cora Diamond, Stanley Cavell, John McDowell, and Ian Hacking (Columbia, 2008); and *The Death of the Animal: A Dialogue with Commentaries,* with Paola Cavalieri, Harlan Miller, Matthew Calarco, and J. M. Coetzee (Columbia, 2009). His most recent books are the coedited collection (with Branka Arsic) *The Other Emerson* (Minnesota, 2011) and *Before the Law: Humans and Other Animals in a Biopolitical Frame* (Chicago, 2012). He is founding editor of the Posthumanities series at the University of Minnesota Press.

Heather Woodbury's solo and ensemble play cycles combine the pulse of performance art with a novel's scope, and she has been described as a "standup novelist." Her ten-hour, one-hundred-character solo play, the nineties saga *What Ever: An American Odyssey,* toured extensively, from Chicago's Steppenwolf to London's Meltdown Festival. Hailed by the *New York Times* as "a masterwork of the solo form," it was published by Faber/Farrar, Straus & Giroux (2003) and was broadcast on public radio with host Ira Glass. Her ensemble play *Tale of 2Cities: An American Joyride,* for which she and six fellow actors won a 2007 OBIE, is published by SemioText(e)/MIT Press (2006). Her current work, *As the Globe Warms,* aims to evolve a new species of the ancient genus of storytelling. As changes in weather patterns and our environment are increasingly felt in our personal lives, *As the Globe Warms* frames the events of climate change as a performance art soap opera in which ordinary people live out their human stories through the extraordinary headlines of our times.

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