Becoming-Animate: On the Performed Limits of "Human"

Jennifer Parker-Starbuck

→ For additional information about this article
https://muse.jhu.edu/article/208648

Becoming-Animate: On the Performed Limits of "Human"

Jennifer Parker-Starbuck

> In our culture man has always been the result of a simultaneous division and articulation of the animal and the human, in which one of the two terms of the operation was also what was at stake. To render inoperative the machine that governs our conception of man will therefore mean no longer to seek new—more effective or more authentic—articulations, but rather to show the central emptiness, the hiatus that—within man—separates man and animal, and to risk ourselves in this emptiness: the suspension of the suspension, Shabbat of both animal and man.
>
> —Giorgio Agamben, *The Open* [1]

From an intertwined, cyborgean dance between one lithe dancer and pools of saturated light projections emerges the form of a large, red, animated gorilla. The two figures appear face-to-face on the stage at New York's Dance Theatre Workshop. As they encounter each other there is a pause, a hiatus between them. A moment passes and we contemplate this massive figure that has emerged from the pools of light. In this pause, when technology has produced the image of an animal, I think about the electrified relationship humans have to animals. How does this glowing, technologized figure stand in for a living animal? What can this representation mean?

While cyborgean forms—intersections and mergings of live performance with film, video, internet connections, and other technologies—are familiar in performance contexts, they rarely involve the figure of the animal, whose intersection with technology is ironically the basis of the scientific formation of the cyborg.[2] Too often in the triangulation of animal, human, and machine, the animal drops from sight. The now near-ubiquitous relationship humans have with technologies is made strange by this unexpected animal form. I am interested in these moments of suspension between humans and machines and animals that often emerge from cyborgean ontology—the contemporary, and largely unquestioned, integrated relationship humans have with

Jennifer Parker-Starbuck is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Drama, Theatre, and Performance Studies at Roehampton University, London.

[1] Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 92.

[2] Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 151. "A Cyborg Manifesto" was originally published as "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the 1980s," in *Socialist Review* 80 (1985): 65–107. I discuss Haraway's ideas at greater length below.

technology in the West. I want to examine these moments that have slowed down my frenetic pace of life enough to allow a pause, a space in which to view not only technology, but animality. These moments expand the performed limits of the human and expose a becoming-animate, a condition of sensory attunement—palpable and vibrant—that reveals the interrelationships and traces left between animal, human, and machine.

In *The Open*, Giorgio Agamben defines the ongoing teleological relationship between humanity and animality as an "anthropological machine," through which we have redefined ourselves as human. The example of the dancer and gorilla (about which more later) might provide a brief hiatus, an interruption, as described in the above epigraph, in which to stall or suspend Agamben's anthropological machine and just, for a moment, see the figure of the animal. Through a variety of "sightings" Agamben explores how this machine propels humanity through time, but always with a divide. Humanity progresses through the concept of animality; the anthropological machine is "an optical machine constructed of a series of mirrors in which man, looking at himself, sees his own image always already deformed in the features of an ape."[3] His sweeping study reads like a series of snapshots that provide insights into the pre-modern and modern versions of the anthropological machine, based on notions of how humans define themselves—in art, philosophy, zoology, anthropology—both through inclusion and exclusion. In the pre-modern anthropological machine, "man" defined the inhuman or nonhuman in society through humanizing the animal: the "animalistic"—human in the form of animal—was produced and controlled in this way. In the modern version of the machine, the opposite holds true—the inhuman is produced by animalizing the human and excluding this person from being part of humanity.[4] In both cases, the animal stands in or outside of humanity as the measure by which the human is defined. The anthropological machine provides an apt metaphor for the way in which progress, and with it destruction, has manifested itself throughout history and continues to be a driving force of the world. Human progress has occurred through its relationship(s) with animality to produce a kind of forward-moving, scientific, and now also political, machine.

Both the cyborg and the anthropological machine arise in times of great change. Donna Haraway's cyborg emerged in the 1980s when new technologies were coming out faster than they could be assimilated; Agamben's anthropological machine emerged in the early twenty-first century out of the frustration of a warring world changed by global terrorism and Western imperialism. Both constructs address the rapidity of change in Western societies, and both engage with technology to provide models for the humanities to question new technologies and their relationship to the "nonhuman" in times of drastic change. Becoming-animate also emerges from the inside-out, from within the machine—here not "anthropological" as in Agamben, but instead the screened images within performance—film, television, and projections—become a starting point for seeing the animal anew, not for what it can do for or make

[3] Agamben, *The Open*, 26–27.
[4] Agamben uses this construction of the anthropological machine to explain the problematic ongoing process in which humanity is in opposition to the not (fully) human through the shape of the animal. His examples show how, in the pre-modern version of the machine, the idea of the slave or foreigner gets created as the animal in human form, while in the modern version the human in animal form takes the shape of the Jew or the comatose, for example; see ibid., 33–38.

of humanity and not in opposition to or as something to master, but for just what it is: an interrelated component of the world we share.

In this essay, I do not propose solutions or answers, but frame a space to reflect on how rapidly we move, how little we see on a daily basis, and how much of our lives are spent producing, driving, consuming. Agamben's attempts to "render inoperative" the anthropological machine is like Jon McKenzie's call to resist the driving demand "perform or else!" through "destratification" and "perfumance," "a gathering arrangement of forces, an emergent folding of the outside inside, one that generates new forms of being and history—and emerging patterns of becoming."[5] Both scholars, in their resistant challenges to the rate of globalization,[6] are influenced by reading Heidegger—early work for Agamben (1929–1930 lectures at the University of Freiburg that would become volumes 29 and 30 of *Gesamtausgabe*) and later for McKenzie ("The Question Concerning Technology," especially his concept of "challenging forth")—and convincingly paint a world driven forward, compelled to transform what *is* into what *must be*. In this essay, I want to slow down these machines enough to examine their contents and think about Agamben's question, "In what way can man let the animal, upon whose suspension the world is held open, be?"[7] I explore a becoming in which, as on the stage of New York's Dance Theatre Workshop, there is a sighting, a moment to stop and reflect upon what is before us: the encounter with the animal in and through technology. From this pause might follow alternative methods to rethink becomings as interrelationships rather than masteries.

Performance is itself a becoming, a laboratory, *pace* Grotowski, in which to explore. Never fully fixed, open to new alliances, and mutually dependent upon its components, performance is an obvious arena for experiencing and exploring becomings. Time passes and performance leaves traces of its interactions as we walk back out into our daily lives. Becomings are provocative; they offer a challenge for us to be something new, something beyond skin, beyond a fixed sense of self. The field of interactive media is one such becoming in performance, and investigations such as David Saltz's research on live media, Gabriella Giannachi's on virtual theatres, my own on cyborg theatre,[8] and others have drawn post-Haraway-ian cyborg and digital theory into theatrical modes. These theorizations of corporeal intersections with multimedia could be considered becomings-cyborg, or becomings-technologized as they strive to push beyond aesthetically driven uses of film, television, and projections on stage and emphasize and question the relationships between the technology and the live. These projects are fruitful explorations toward the shifting relationship that humanity has with technology.

The work emerging on these integrative forms of multimedia performance often remains thoroughly "human-centric" by focusing primarily on the possibilities of subjectivity, identity, ability, and political agency of the human in the human-technological

---

[5] Jon McKenzie, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (London: Routledge, 2001), 193–204.

[6] Ibid., 261.

[7] Agamben, *The Open*, 91.

[8] See David Saltz, "Live Media: Interactive Technology and Theatre," *Theatre Topics* 11 (September 2001): 107–30; Gabriella Giannachi, *Virtual Theatres: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2004); Jennifer Parker-Starbuck, "Cyborg Theatre: Corporeal / Technological Intersections in Multimedia" (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 2003), abstract in *Dissertation Abstracts International,* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilm), no. 3083699.

coupling and has rarely returned to the origins of the cyborg—the animal-technological coupling. However, there is a recent interest in the relationship between humanity and animality in philosophy and theory, and the questions this relationship raises may be a response to increasing bio-political controls, the growing limitation of "freedoms" emanating from the US military involvement in Iraq, the push for national ID cards, or the treatment of immigration in a "terrorist" era. Is placing animality in opposition to humanity, as Agamben would have it, the driving force of history, the relationship through which humanity has played out domination and degradation of bare life? Is it time to look for more porous boundaries and examine how humanity might, as Deleuze and Guattari write, become-animal? If becoming-cyborg in performance can foreground and reconceptualize the human body's relationship to technology with more awareness and understanding, rather than through a technologically determinist agenda, becoming-animate might expand these affinities to reconsider the impact, coexistence, and interdependency between technologies, humans, and animals. Through this exploration, a non-fixed becoming of sorts, I rely on performance—cyborgean, filmic, theatrical—as a site within which the three terms, human, animal, and technology, interrelate imaginatively and rehearse some of the ethical, practical, and philosophical possibilities of their integration.[9] This essay is structured in sections—"Becomings," "Becoming-Cyborg," "Becoming-Animal," and "Becoming-Animate"—not to articulate these entities as discrete or oppositional, but rather the opposite: to identify the possibilities and problems of their fluidity and to explore the permeability between human and machine and animal that finally culminates in the examples of such mergings.

Becomings . . . (Legacies and Futures)

Today, in the early twenty-first century, the assimilation of machines into all aspects of life is accepted and ubiquitous though arrived at through the expense of the animal-human relationship rather than becoming through it.[10] In fact, if a (First World) hierarchy of commodities could be drawn, the technological tools and systems—computers, telecommunication devices, televisions, iPods, and the like—would place higher on a scale of value than animals; consequently, the human-technological coupling has had perhaps a greater potential than that of the human-animal to resonate thematically, whether positively or negatively, in the age of capital and commodity. As W. J. T. Mitchell remarks in the introduction to Cary Wolfe's book *Animal Rites*, "[T]he rights of things are already much better established than those of plants or animals, and have been for a very long time."[11] Attempts to rethink issues of the nonhuman over the past decades have been overshadowed by the process of globalization and the growth of

---

[9] Animal issues, rights, concerns, and / or questions have become an increasing exploration in academic / artistic venues; see, for example, *Performance Research* 5, no. 2 (2000), special issue "On Animals." See also Peter Atterton, Matthew Calarco, and Peter Atkin, ed., *Animal Philosophy: Ethics and Identity* (New York: Continuum, 2004); Steve Baker, *The Postmodern Animal* (London: Reaktion, 2000); Cary Wolfe, *Animal Rites: American Culture, and Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) and Cary Wolfe, ed., *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003). For a theatrical example of an attempt at "becoming-animal" see Una Chaudhuri and Shonni Enelow, "Animalizing Performance, Becoming-Theatre: Inside Zooësis with The Animal Project at NYU," *Theatre Topics* 16 (March 2006): 1–17.

[10] Clearly there are humans who have also suffered at the expense of globalization and / or for whom the human-technological integration is destructive. My interrogation of the animal is not intended to ignore these populations, which are a different focus from this essay.

[11] W. J. T. Mitchell, "Foreword," in Wolfe, *Animal Rites*, xi.

technology, which have little room for anything that is not human-centric. In examining some of the sites of performing animals today such as circuses, zoos, horse and dog shows, and racing, it is worth noting that many of the shifts in these practices over the previous few decades (such as the quality and architecture of zoos, for example) have been driven as much by public pressure and ticket sales as by a reevaluation of the status of the animal. Attempts are being made to re-theorize the nonhuman animal, but the prevalence of vast material problems facing large portions of humanity has tended to shift these attempts offstage. While these problems are necessary concerns, they tend to bracket off an awareness of the condition of animality as a potential root of these injustices.[12]

Just over twenty years ago, two radical theories emerged to challenge the assumptions of totalizing humanist positions: Donna Haraway's "cyborg manifesto," and Deleuze and Guattari's becoming-animal. Although both theories might be criticized for being nonspecific, widely interpretable, or utopic, it is worth briefly rehearsing them here to recoup the flexible strategies of affinity both have towards the nonhuman that has made possible much of the subsequent theorization of animality. Unlike the distinctions between human and animal that Agamben draws, these ideas propose a fluidity and openness that, if rethought, could unsettle the anthropological machine. Both ideas challenge a stasis, a fixed position of what it means to be human, and provocatively breach boundaries between humans and nonhumans. Although in "A Cyborg Manifesto" Haraway contended that in "the late twentieth century in United States scientific culture, the boundary between human and animal is thoroughly breached,"[13] her cyborg has not lived up to its full potential. Writing during the conservative Reagan era in the US, Haraway attempted to break exclusionary boundaries separating women so as to produce radical feminist affinities. The cyborg, however, is perhaps too seductive in its fusion with technologies, and its potential as an empowering political tool for feminists has fallen short of Haraway's call. In that historical moment, which was ripe for slowing down Agamben's machine through ideas of integration rather than exclusion, a different urgency—identity politics—was raised, rendering the cyborg too slippery a concept to prove effective. Deleuze and Guattari's becoming-animal similarly explored radical re-assignations of what it means to be human. Their proposed becoming is, among many things, not a filial connection linking humans and animals in an evolutionary relationship, but an alliance. Becoming, they explain, "is certainly not imitating, or identifying with something; neither is it regressing-progressing . . . neither is it producing."[14] Their attempt to transform traditional and anthropomorphic understandings of animals and "other" elements of the world and shift the human-centric perspective of the world towards a more integrated worldview has been problematic as well, entering the stream of consciousness alongside AIDS as a real fear of contagion.

Deleuze and Guattari's complex concept of becoming-animal is only one of many becomings explored in *A Thousand Plateaus*: becoming-molecular, -woman, -child, -intense, and others that also veer from the individual towards a multiplicity. Their becomings acknowledge the world as an interrelated complex of reliant systems from

[12] See Wolfe's *Animal Rites* for a history of this debate.
[13] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 151.
[14] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 239.

which humans cannot afford to bracket themselves off, yet nonetheless continue to, as environmentalists have increasingly pointed out. While potentially too pre-scient and / or philosophical to provide a foothold for political change at the time, and perhaps still too nonspecific to address the problematic bio-political controls that have rigidly bound humans and nonhumans alike under the name of democracy and free-market capitalism, these integrations and becomings retain provocative openings and resonances for the possibility of reintegrating with the nonhuman elements of the world around us.

Revisiting the expansiveness of these theories today provides a useful point of reflection on the processes of becoming since these essays were written. Although for Haraway, "the cyborg appears in myth precisely where the boundary between human and animal is transgressed,"[15] this breached boundary between animal and human in the twenty-first century remains critically neglected in practical areas such as the treatment of the animals society elects to "process" as food, clothing, and medi-cal testers. The identification of this breach as a gesture toward an affinity between animals and humans, which Haraway hoped would lead to "fruitful couplings," has instead continued as a staging ground for its opposite. Through extensive animal testing and experimentation, animals and their usage—the incorporation into human life of pig heart valves, vaccines, and stem-cell transplants—have become the tools by which humans have been able to become-cyborgean and merge with the nonhuman. The controlled use and mastery of animals creates an Agambenian "animalization" of humanity, allowing similar disregard for those considered not fully human. "For a humanity that has become animal again," Agamben asserts, "there is nothing left but the depoliticization of human societies by means of the unconditional unfolding of *oikonomia*, or the taking on of biological life itself as the supreme political (or rather impolitical) task."[16] Agamben's concern is not to protect the animal per se, but to expose humanist traditions and politics that have sought to control and regulate forms of life as "animalistic" so as to retain the privileged status of (selected forms of) humanity.

Within humanist tradition, philosophical debate has often sought to determine / rel-egate the animal's position vis-à-vis the human from a hierarchical standpoint through issues of language and communication.[17] While this traditional, subject-centered exami-nation leaves animals lower on the ladder, ongoing studies of language acquisition in great apes and the complexity of animal communication are creating a sea change in our understanding of nonhuman animals. New knowledge, understanding, and expo-sure to the realities of the processing of animals (in considerations of both the humane and inhumane) used for food, clothing, and science requires a reexamination of the "ethical" relationship to animals, as explained by Cary Wolfe in his lucid introduction to the collection *Zoontologies*. Wolfe writes: "The modes of communication involved in building and sustaining relations with each other [both between humans and between animals and humans], out of which the ethical relationship grows, need not be verbal or linguistic at all, but instead involve a myriad of other forms of connection."[18] These

[15] Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," 152.

[16] Agamben, *The Open*, 76.

[17] Although I will not rehash the arguments here, see Atterton et al., Baker, and Wolfe for philosophi-cal explorations of the animal.

[18] Wolfe, *Zoontologies*, xix.

connections might foreground ontological rhizomatic links over linguistic / verbal hierarchies that can redefine borders and boundaries separating humans and animals.[19] In this contemporary, technologically driven moment, certain boundaries have become ever-important concepts and are currently guarded "like hawks," while others are elided, taken for granted, and overlooked. Looking more carefully at why distinctions are made and by whom is a starting point toward forging alternate affinities between organic and non-organic life. Currently, in Western societies, these affiliations are not especially equal ones, and instead of interdependent components of a whole, animals have largely been relegated to objects used in a technologized food-processing system, a scientific-experimentation process, and as sentimentalized subjects for television and film, resulting in a blind spot when the lives of animals are at stake. The violent and sentimentalized cinematic / televisual representations of animals, for example, tend to co-opt an "understanding" of animals for a large population of children, serving to forestall other varied possibilities for an animal alliance. If such co-optings between humans and animals can be exposed, questioned, and explored more imaginatively, the distinctions between the human and the animal can be decided upon more carefully and perhaps even be linked together rather than held in opposition.

The anthropological machine will only be stalled from the inside. The driving force that produced humanity in relationship to the animal is now driven more literally by machines. The interrelationship between the body and technology is deeply historical; humanity has harnessed technology as it did the animal. Augmenting some bodies and controlling others, this interrelationship has proven both destructive and utopic, yet its potentials are still open. From within these integrations, impressions are made and senses are shifted; one's alienated relationship with, for example, a first computer suddenly changes, and the computer becomes something impossible to imagine living without. I want to explore how things nonhuman might begin to get "under our skin," while foregrounding how firmly both animals and machines are literally already under our skin. Breached boundaries, then, in this posthuman moment, produce the figure of the cyborg—an interdependent human / nonhuman merging; but it is crucial to undo the seductions of the human-techno cyborg and return to its origin: a rat connected to an osmotic pump. Retracing this animal-technological cyborg, itself a cog in the anthropological machine through to its appropriation by the human, leads back to the question of the animal and how it might be reassimilated into a becoming-animate.

Becoming-Cyborg

The field of cyborg studies now extends to topics as diverse as cyberpunk, wearable computers, reproductive technologies, and, as both Giannachi and I have defined it, even cyborg theatres. While this proliferation of all-things-cyborg post-Haraway has focused on the integration between humans and machines, it has often overlooked Haraway's arguments for political affiliations and feminist strategies, and the animal possibilities of the cyborg have been largely ignored. As a whole, however, as Chris Hables Gray has observed, the concept of the cyborg need not rely on the human: "Cyborgs do not have to be part human, for any organism / system that mixes the evolved and the made, the living and the inanimate, is technically a cyborg."[20] However,

---

[19] Wolfe is referring to the work of Alphonso Lingis, whose essay "Animal Body, Inhuman Face" appears in *Zoontologies.*

[20] Chris Hables Gray, *Cyborg Citizen: Politics in the Posthuman Age* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 2.

the techno-human cyborg has been a more seductive application in a posthuman time obsessed with machinic subjectivity. If the anthropological machine has functioned through humanity's distinction from the animal, it has been propelled forward by the allure of technology. The techno-human cyborg is everywhere: in the arts; in the reproductive and medical sciences; in the technologies of cinema, war, and beyond. Its fictional potentials and militaristic applications have thus far exceeded its critical possibilities, but it is a concept that bears revisiting as it begins to shift from fiction to more literal applications.[21]

The first cyborgs were, in fact, animal-based, created because humans wanted to become more like certain animals and adapt to environments that human bodies were not capable of surviving:

> The concept of the cyborg was to allow man to optimize his internal regulation to suit the environment he may seek. The point was exemplified by a fish who might wish to live on land: would such a fish take a bowl of water with him, encapsulate himself in that bowl, so that he would live as a fish on land, or would he not prefer to redesign his gills to breathe air as a lung could do, if he had the intelligence?[22]

While the fish is not consciously intelligent enough to redesign her anatomy (outside of a strict Darwinian worldview), humans attempt to do so by using animals. The first human-made cyborg was a white lab rat with an osmotic pump attached to its tail. The device, the Rose osmotic pump, was designed "for continuous slow injections of biochemically active substances at a biological rate."[23] Laboratory animals tend to be the first to have new devices tried out on them; yet as these devices and others (artificial hearts, prosthetic limbs, contact lenses) become safe and accepted for humans, humans turn into literal cyborgs, leaving the animal-cyborg in the laboratory as a site of human domination and experimentation. The animal is the litmus test for our successes.

As a metaphoric figure in the cinematic / televisual cultural imagination, the cyborg is well known and over-exposed. This cyborg has not only left the animal behind, but has often been predominately and problematically male, with militaristic tendencies: *The Six Million Dollar Man* (1974–78), *The Terminator* series (1984–2003), the *RoboCop* series (1987–93), and *I, Robot* (2004) are only a few examples of the male playing out utopic and / or dystopic fantasies.[24] Especially in commercial and popular film and fiction, the more literal and fixed representations of the cyborg leave little room for transformation or interrelation:

> The dominant representation of cyborgs reinserts us into dominant ideology by reaffirming bourgeois notions of human, machine, and femininity. In fact, what look like provocative

---

[21] A brain implant called BrainGate has recently been tested, which allows people who are paralyzed to operate electronic devices such as a computer mouse simply by thought. The device, a neuromotor prosthesis, is implanted into the brain. See *The Guardian*, 13 July 2006, http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/story/0,,1819178,00.html.

[22] Manfred E. Clynes, "Sentic Space Travel," in *The Cyborg Handbook,* ed. Chris Hables Gray (New York: Routledge, 1995), 35. The term was coined by Manfred Clynes and Nathan Kline.

[23] Manfred E. Cynes and Nathan Kline, "Cyborgs and Space," in *The Cyborg Handbook,* 31.

[24] The animal was not left entirely behind in the *Six Million Dollar Man* series. In the third season of its spin-off *The Bionic Woman* (episode 45), a bionic dog named Max was introduced. I point out that in an act of compassion, bionic Jaime Sommers saves Max from being put to sleep when his bionics begin to fail.

notions of human identity, are not; they reassert a distinct identity between machine and human in a post-technological world.[25]

Far from the cyborg Haraway envisioned, but emerging out of the same technological explosion, these filmic representations rehearse some of the conflicts arising as the human (male) and machine become increasingly assimilated as they reassert dominant patriarchal structures. Pre- and post-Haraway feminist cyborgs test and stretch some of these dominant boundaries, as Anne Balsamo has noted, thereby producing resistant and provocative examples that attempt to subvert (even if they do not always succeed in subverting) traditional gender, racial, able-bodied stereotypes. *The Bionic Woman* (1975–78), *Blade Runner* (1982), *Dark Angel* (2000–2002), and *Star Trek: Voyager* (1995–2001) are a few examples within film and television that have produced characters who defy traditional gender roles (Jaime Sommers of *Bionic Woman*), resist the masculinist appropriations of technology (Max of *Dark Angel*), and trouble sexuality (as *Star Trek: Voyager's* Seven of Nine almost did). Although these latter cyborg examples work to reduce the problematic reinscription of dominant masculinity, the literalness of the screened representation (an ontological case of being rather than becoming) and continued cultural anxiety over the possibility of such literal conjoinings have tended to minimize that impact.

Although it cannot easily rely on special effects to create bodies that exceed human capabilities, the cyborg model of live performance has been an increasingly productive site for exploring issues of posthuman identities.[26] Theatre's incorporating, for example, film's literal qualities and special effects or the different dimensionalities of computer projections into a live environment can tease out exposures and experiments between the multiple ontologies of the various components. While the live cyborgean model in performance is not reliant on a literal merging between human and machine (i.e., it is difficult in live performance to convincingly tear flesh open to reveal an electronic arm beneath), an imaginative and metaphoric integration in front of an audience allows for reciprocal response strategies. The cyborg performance space necessitates a face-to-face exchange between performers and audience, which can be instrumental in creating an ethical space—an open and visible space in which to stop and see what is before you.

A striking feature of cyborg performance is how figures are formed through the integration of the live and technology: fractured and split, enmeshed in technology, framed by screened representations that may themselves be transgressed, transformed, and expanded through these explorations. The Wooster Group's frequent use of fragmented bodies—parts on screen, parts live—provides one example of this exploration. I have previously commented in reference to their piece *To You, the Birdie!* that "by 'embodying' the technology, that is, by situating it in a cyborgean relation to the two live actors interacting with it, [director Elizabeth] LeCompte lets the composite images gaze back, empowering a dialogue, or a give and take with the bodies imaged."[27]

[25] Anne Balsamo, "Reading Cyborgs Writing Feminism," in *The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader*, ed. Gill Kirkup (London: Routledge, 2000), 156.

[26] For alternate explorations of the concept of the cyborg, see Anne Balsamo, *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996); Gray, *The Cyborg Handbook*; as well as chapters in Giannachi, *Virtual Theatres*; Kirkup, *The Gendered Cyborg*; and Petra Kuppers, *Disability and Contemporary Performance: Bodies on Edge* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

[27] Jennifer Parker-Starbuck, "Framing the Fragments: The Wooster Group's Use of Technology," in *The Wooster Group and Its Traditions*, ed. Johan Callens (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2005), 223.

Because the composite images—in this case, live upper bodies merged with projected, and exposed, lower halves of the two men sitting on stage—produce a direct encounter with the audience, the live actors are able to act in dialogue with static filmed or print images and engage the audience in a questioning of how bodies, especially exposed ones, might be presented and viewed through theatre, film, or this merging of both.

The human body's relationship to framed and screened technologies is a frequent trope of cyborg- and multimedia-performance practices. Often it is a function of the nature of the square frames inherent in film, television, and projector screens, and more frequently it is a challenge to both forms, as in the stunning visual images of the New York–based company Big Art Group, which has interrogated how filmmaking practices can be incorporated into live action.[28] Their piece *House of No More* exemplifies what they call "Real Time Film," juxtaposing precise live-action choreography with simultaneous film of what is being enacted live. In one clever scene, two actors are filmed at opposite sides of the long horizontal space while their images are mixed into a kiss on screen, not only forcing the spectators to choose between the live and screened images, but also cleverly exposing the mechanism of the magic to reclaim the ingenuity of the live stage. In another form of "Live Movies," as developed by Kirby Malone and Gail Scott White's Cyburbia Productions, live bodies are inserted into highly saturated filmic environments, often disappearing within the frame and creating a trompe l'oeil effect, making it difficult to distinguish between the live and the technologically produced, foregrounding the potential loss of the live form to film while creating a new and vibrant hybrid of the two.[29] These are but a few examples of some of the more innovative explorations into multimedia performance, but in each case, the becoming-cyborg of these stages offers provocations beyond gimmick.[30] By referring to and using the strategies of screen(ing) bodies—closeups, animation, airbrushing, Photoshopping—in juxtaposition with live, sweaty, fleshy bodies, both the techniques used in film as well as the bodies themselves can be exposed so that they might be reincorporated in new ways.

In the case of New York–based dancer / videographer Cathy Weis, who choreographs bodies and both live and prerecorded images into a unified "dance," the merging of live bodies and technologies is also a pragmatic function of gradually losing control over her own body. Weis, who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1989, blurs the boundaries between live bodies and projected ones, refusing to let her body be pushed aside or rendered invisible as her disease progresses. For example, in her piece *Show Me*, performed at the Kitchen in New York, Weis becomes a "sideshow cyborg" in the segment "Dunking Booth." Her body is a composite of her live upper torso merging with a large screen upon which her prerecorded lower half is visible, immersed in water filled with filmed sharks that have been superimposed within the film. Her

[28] See http://www.bigartgroup.com/ for more information on this company.

[29] See http://www.cyburbiaproductions.com/ for more information on this company. This company has also recently published a volume as part of the Documenting Multimedia Performance Studio's New Stage Technology Project at George Mason University; see *Live Movies: A Field Guide to New Media for the Performing Arts*, ed. Kirby Malone and Gail Scott White (Fairfax, VA: Multimedia Performance Studio, 2006). My essay in that volume develops some of the concepts alluded to briefly here.

[30] See also The Builders Association, Forkbeard Fantasy (UK); Stationhouse Opera (UK); La Fura dels Baus (Spain); Laurie Anderson, Ridge Theatre (New York); and George Coates Performance Works, 4D Art (Canada).

split-screen body comments ironically on freak-show treatment of the disabled, which she subverts by also becoming the barker and loudly hawking at the crowd to come on up and throw a ball to dunk her into the pool, but also offers a hint at a becoming-animate: the live upper body united with technologized lower legs that are "fearlessly" immersed (and superimposed) in a filmed shark tank. Weis has experimented with human–technological mergings that foreground fractured, composite, and humorous images of these unions. By creating an assemblage of bodies and body parts, she refigures traditional ways of seeing bodies, especially those framed by mediatized representations of the "able-bodied."

Weis's work exemplifies the use of conceptual cyborgean unions to reshape complex notions of identity and push through "able-bodied" boundaries. Although driven by the live body, in Weis's cyborgean performance the technologies carry equal focus on stage. In cyborgean performance, technology must be considered a subject on stage; in well-executed technological performance, the live and the technological can be focused on simultaneously as they merge into one.

From this understanding I introduce the animal into the equation. If the technology itself becomes a subject on stage, then when it assumes the form of an animal, it provides a focus on the idea of the animal in a way that acting with a live animal could not. For, with few exceptions, when a live animal enters the performance arena, it remains within the anthropological machine, placed there by humans in order to affirm something about the distinction between man and animal; it is rarely about the animal appearing of its own accord.[31] In "Dunking Booth," as in Weis's "Painting and Stripping," which I discuss in the Becoming-Animate section below, the technology shifts from the abstract to the concrete, suddenly becoming representative of a discrete form: a large, red, animated gorilla. This concrete move to a representational figure evokes the strategies of more-static filmic representation and interrupts the boundary-blurring in process to foreground the figure of the animal.

Becoming-Animal

"Becoming-animal is a human being's creative opportunity to think themselves [sic] other-than-in-identity," writes Steve Baker, who formulates his ideas of the postmodern animal around Deleuze and Guattari's concept.[32] Baker differentiates the concept of becoming-animal from a literal cyborg:

> In contrast to some recent theoretical work on cyborgs, hybrids, and monsters, it [becoming-animal] describes an experience of the world which does not *dissolve* bodily identity, but which means that identity is not the thing to which the participants in the alliance of becoming-animal attend. Separate bodies enter into alliances *in order to do things*, but are not undone by it.[33]

The cyborg is a versatile concept that can, as Baker suggests, fictionally transform into an entity unlike either of its components. In practice, despite advances that can be considered "cyborgean" in medicine, prosthetics, computer intelligence and war technology, the human has remained human, the rat is still a rat. As a metaphor—and perhaps

---

[31] For insights into the live animal on stage, see "The Animal on Stage," in Nicholas Ridout, *Stage Fright, Animals and Other Theatrical Problems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[32] Baker, *The Postmodern Animal*, 125.

[33] Ibid., 132–33 (italics in original).

the cyborg is most useful as a metaphor—the way its couplings propose to eliminate difference and dissolve identities can be a troubling and complex prospect.[34]

In a historical moment shaped in large part by identity politics, the idea of blurring boundaries seems counter to much of the localized political work done by grassroots organizations. However, like Baker, I am intrigued by the possibilities of trying to think in ways outside of identity, and I contend that the alliances forged between human and machine through the theoretical idea of the cyborg might provide the broad strokes necessary to begin to shift the strict notion of what it means to be human in relation to animals. Although these various alliances—human-technological, human-animal, human-techno-animal—may temporarily blur and even dissolve boundaries among different forms at times, moments of hiatus occur, pauses stop us in our tracks, and traces of one entity may be left upon the other, providing lingering alterations to seemingly fixed categories. A cyborgean integration may begin only as an awareness of potential becomings between humans and nonhumans; one integration may point to another, and so on until a redefined sense of alliance can shift the stronghold of identity thinking. As Ursula Heise remarks in the collection *Zoontologies*, "the fusion of human and machine also has important repercussions for other conceptual distinctions such as that between human and animal."[35] These alliances suggest interdependent trails, leaving traces of each in the other in a state of becoming. The awareness of the traces left among human, animal, and machine potentially expand awarenesses of the interconnectedness of multiple life-forms.

In many sections or "memories"—of a Moviegoer, of a Sorcerer, of a Spinozist, of a Molecule, with many others in between—Deleuze and Guattari's essay on becoming-animal in *A Thousand Plateaus* is an assemblage of becoming, often understood by what it is not: a correspondence between relations, imaginary, based on filiations, identificatory, an evolution. Deleuze and Guattari present these alliances as multiplicities, building from an "involution" of heterogeneous terms rather than an evolution of family descent. If the alliances experienced in becomings are multiplicities, then the self of a becoming is, perhaps like Agamben's hiatus, the suspension-between in which the alliances are able to be formed; the self is "a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities. . . . A fiber stretches from a human to an animal, from a human or an animal to molecules, from molecules to particles, and so on to the imperceptible."[36] The crucial alliances formed in becoming-animal are not with a specific animal; in fact, the pet, or Oedipal animal, is thoroughly eschewed in the concept of becoming-animal, as are animals used for characteristics or classifications such as mythological or "state" animals. Rather, the animal sought in becoming-animal belongs to a pack or multiplicity of animals; it is a "demonic" or "anomalous" animal, standing in as the leader or exceptional individual of the pack through which a becoming-animal takes place.

[34] Jennifer González uses the term "e-race-sure" to critique the underdeveloped and fraught issue of race in the literature of the cyborg. She writes: "Some see cyborgs and cyberspace as a convenient site for the erasure of questions of racial identity" (277). Jennifer González, "Envisioning Cyborg Bodies: Notes from Current Research," in *The Cyborg Handbook*, 277.

[35] Ursula K. Heise, "From Extinction to Electronics: Dead Frogs, Live Dinosaurs, and Electric Sheep," in *Zoontologies*, 59. In this collection, Heise begins to unpack some of the other possibilities of Haraway's cyborg, such as the relationship between human-made animals and the extinction of real animals.

[36] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 249.

The alliance formed in becoming-animal is based not on hereditary or identificatory factors, but by "contagion," epidemic, or affect, as in the age of bird flu in which the threat is not the flu that produces anxiety, but the concept of becoming-bird. The idea of becoming through contagion is for me one of the most provocative ideas of Deleuze and Guattari's essay. They ask, via this concept, whether humans can imagine a productive shift in "being" through an outside force—a force so powerful as to shift the nature of our humanness. This is a becoming from the outside in; like a contagion, perhaps the animal can seep through the skin, infecting rather than being seen as a separate construction from our identities. However, the reverse—namely, humans penetrating the skins of animals to expose them to contagions or genetic manipulations—is more frequently the case.

The anxiety over lives being genetically altered across species is exemplified in the complex debates over Eduardo Kac's "transgenic" GFP (Green Fluorescent Protein) bunny art project, in which an albino rabbit embryo was implanted with enhanced genes from a species of jellyfish. Because this rabbit's skin has no pigment, she glows green when placed under an ultraviolet / blue light. The problematic ethics of creating a transgenic art project with a living animal is complicated by Kac's seeming love for the animal. Ethicists were appalled that this animal was created not for a laboratory—for genetic research—but for an art project. Although inhumane experimentation on animals and nonethical bio-experimentation are what should be troubled (and perhaps Kac tried to raise these issues through his experiment), the project was largely criticized because it was art. Transgenic experimentation and other genetic manipulations raise troubling human-centric issues about eugenics and population controls, but this vein of research has also developed significant medical breakthroughs. Kac is merely taking this research into another realm. I cannot fully justify Kac's creation of this "chimeric" animal (which he stresses takes place through a harmless process), but through this art project he brings into light the fact that animals are used in a variety of transgenic-research practices and experimentations. What intrigues me as well is that the language with which he describes the process implies a contagion or affect between the rabbit and himself, as these quotations from his website attest: "The question is not to make the bunny meet specific requirements or whims, but to enjoy her company as an individual (all bunnies are different), appreciated for her own intrinsic virtues, in dialogical interaction." For Kac, the dialogic interaction is a crucial component to the project, and he supports his work with reference to Emmanuel Levinas:

> Our proximity to the other demands a response, and that the interpersonal contact with others is the unique relation of ethical responsibility. I create my works to accept and incorporate the reactions and decisions made by the participants, be they eukaryotes or prokaryotes. This is what I call the human-plant-bird-mammal-robot-insect-bacteria interface.[37]

Perhaps in trying to alter and "seep into" the life of this animal, Kac, in turn, was surprisingly altered.[38] He fought to have the rabbit returned to his home from the

---

[37] See http://www.ekac.org/gfpbunny.html#gfpbunnyanchor and Eduardo Kac, *Telepresence and Bio Art—Networking Humans, Rabbits, and Robots* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

[38] Kac's website contains almost hyperbolic language expressing deep love for the rabbit, indicating perhaps that the rabbit has had a greater impact on him than intended: "I will never forget the moment when I first held her in my arms, in Jouy-en-Josas, France, on April 29, 2000. My apprehensive anticipation was replaced by joy and excitement. Alba—the name given her by my wife, my daughter, and I [*sic*]—was lovable and affectionate and an absolute delight to play with. As I cradled her, she playfully

lab; whether or not due to the public debate that ensued around this project, he has articulated that there was no harm done to the rabbit and that, in fact, the process is not at all new within the field of molecular biology. (Nor for that matter is this process very removed from the selective breeding for the aesthetic qualities of purebred animals.) Transgenic art might provide a pause to reveal some of the real problems surrounding transgenic experimentation, and if, instead of a one-way "contagion" from human to animal, the reverse also happens, it might provide the possibility for humans to become-animal.

An assemblage of becoming serves to shake the human from the human in an attempt to understand the many alternate alliances in the world. The question remains, however: how are the alliances to be understood and taken on? Deleuze and Guattari's examples—werewolves, vampires, the film *Willard*, Moby Dick and Captain Ahab—reflect the imagination; these are alliances based on external forces, infection, bites, blood-flow, death.

The question of alliance in a theatrical becoming-animal is perhaps most clear in the work of Théâtre Zingaro, a French equestrian-performance company led by Bartabas.[39] The performances are thoroughly conceived between the riders and horses, with an equal balance between them. In the air of a Zingaro show is a palpable sense of mutual respect between horses and humans. In an article in *Performance Research*'s special issue "On Animals," David Williams writes that

> for Bartabas, human-horse interactions represent the possibility of a conjunction of two very different ontologies and epistemologies—one sensory–motor / perceptual, the other intellectual—and, in riding, the temporary creation of a third composite assemblage much greater than the sum of its parts: equestrianism as a becoming-centaur for both rider and horse.[40]

When I saw this company I was riveted by the intensities of interaction between horse and human, and the many moments of silence, stillness—a hiatus between them. This production challenged my own notions of whether live animals could perform of their own accord, and I sensed that both humans and animals shared a world in which each has a role, one not defined by hierarchies but coming together in mutuality. This becoming-animal clearly leaves an imprint upon the spectators, and a lingering trace remains of this alliance between animal and human.

The beauty of Deleuze and Guattari's idea is that it shimmers and shape-shifts, becoming different things to different people, but I suspect that it often leaves an animal imprint on its reader and provokes animal recollections as well as a desire to make practical this becoming. The power of their concept, becoming-animal, is that it immediately links its reader to a new mode of thinking-animal. As I reflect on my own becomings-animal, I am aware of moments of hiatus, gaps in which traces and imprints were left in and on me in my childhood by the assortment of animals surrounding me. I recall the look of a horse; the smells of the barn: hay, manure, dust, sweat; the shared

---

tucked her head between my body and my left arm, finding at last a comfortable position to rest and enjoy my gentle strokes. She immediately awoke in me a strong and urgent sense of responsibility for her well-being" (http://www.ekac.org/gfpbunny.html#gfpbunnyanchor).

39 See http://www.theatre-zingaro.com/ for more information about this company.

40 David Williams, "The Right Horse, the Animal Eye—Bartabas and Théâtre Zingaro," in "On Animals,"ed. Alan Read, special issue, *Performance Research* 5 (2000): 33.

silence between myself and a horse. I remember hundreds of books in which animals played a central part in my imagination, but mostly Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials trilogy in which a world of humans are physically connected to "daemons," their animal counterparts in life, animals that during childhood shape-shift to be any animal and only in adulthood settle into a form that represents the union of the two beings.[41] The daemons are multiple, through the mood or environment needed, changing into, for example, a moth to fly and spy outside the boundaries of a hideaway cupboard, a large fierce cat when threatened, a mouse to hide in an anorak for a long journey. The bond between the character and daemon was the emptiness between them, written as a physical pull, painful when too far apart and deadly when cut. An attempt to shift from an imaginative becoming located within a personal memory space to an external space of practice is exemplified for me through the production of *His Dark Materials*, a two-part epic that ran at London's National Theatre from 2003–2005. *His Dark Materials* had a successful run and brought much of the trilogy to life theatrically. But for me, the evocation of the concept of becoming-animal carried less weight on stage than in my imagination. In the production, the daemons were innovatively conceived as translucent, individually operated puppets, and while magnificently operated by actors (separate from the character / actor they were attached to in the narrative), the physical separation lost some of its power on stage.

Once recognized, the intersection or merging between the human and the animal seems to be a crucial component of the becoming-animal or becoming-cyborg. Perhaps it is through these sensations of merging, whether physical or metaphoric, that an ethic can be developed in relationship to animals. A sensation, a trace, a trail—these are all problematic terms in a reciprocal relationship between humans and animals or machines because they are often uni-directional, "taken in" by humans. (Is not an eaten animal a trace? Isn't a pacemaker even more than a trace?) The prospect of xenotransplantation (transplants using non-human donor organs) is currently an actively researched area, and while the aortic valve of a pig would certainly be considered a trace within the human body, I would be wary of advocating this as a way to become-pig without a reciprocal becoming. Perhaps through a mode of becoming-animate, a slow shift in the cultural imagination might be enacted, performed to illuminate a shared and reciprocal space among humans and animals and machines.

Becoming-Animate

Is it possible to slow down the anthropological machine enough to consider the possibility of being other than we are? Can humanity first re-cognize the hiatus that separates us from the animal and then risk ourselves in this emptiness? In this emptiness, might we risk the contagion that may connect all living beings as parts of a whole? These broad questions, although unanswerable, are catalysts for reformulations of humanity's relationship with the nonhuman. Reducing these questions instance by instance to the local level—recognizing a hiatus in, for example, the moment between dancer and animated gorilla—might facilitate new forms of interconnectedness in the world. For performer, audience member, and readers, these ideas might spread like a contagion to identify multiplicities of becomings-animate.[42]

---

[41] Philip Pullman, *Northern Lights,* His Dark Materials trilogy, vol. 1 (New York: Scholastic, 1995).

[42] Shortly after writing this essay I went to see Matthew Barney and Björk's film and consecutive art gallery show in New York City, *Drawing Restraint #9*. The film, although too complex to unpack

664 / Jennifer Parker-Starbuck

While performance, a site of live human subjectivity, may seem a natural space for human becomings, it may at first seem a more problematic space to become-animal. Although there are exceptions (in addition to those I have already mentioned, the company Raffaello Sanzio should be included for its work with animals on stage), using live animals on stage often is too unpredictable or simply reasserts the hegemony of human domination over animals.[43] As well, the human figure, with few exceptions, rarely enters into a becoming-animal on stage without a crude mode of imitation, and instead reasserts its human presence on stage despite costume, makeup, and prosthetic applications. Through the interrelated union of the cyborg, as I have defined it in performance, the technology is a necessary factor and one in which the human shares agency. The cyborg here complicated the idea of the machine and / or the human because it is fully neither, but contains the affinities of both. The equal subjective weight of this technology on stage allows the avatar figure of the animal to further push the boundaries of the idea of the animal in a way that, as of yet, a real animal on stage cannot do.

I return to the work of Cathy Weis, whose constant explorations with technological images have led her to work with animator Phil Marden. Over the years Marden has created a series of computer-generated figures for her performers to interact with. Weis's 2002 piece *Electric Haiku* is comprised of seven brief segments, meditations about contemporary society, including collective memory, technology, and animality.[44] [A video excerpt of this performance is available for viewing online at http://muse .jhu.edu/journals/tj/v058/video/58.4parker-starbuck01.mov.[45]] The performance opens and closes with the escape and recapture of a bright, buzzing red light, or fly, from a contemporary "Pandora's box" (a laptop), which is pushed onto the stage on a cart by twelve-year-old dancer Zane Frazer. Weis collaborates with the design team of Marden and Ruben Puentedura to animate the technology in various shapes of cartoon-like monkeys and a gorilla to interact with the live performers. Although I focus here on one specific haiku, "Painting and Stripping," Weis precedes this segment with another that includes an animal: "Circle Dance"—a frenzied competition between dancer Frazer and an animated monkey. I mention this piece as a prelude because it develops the notion of imitation that Deleuze and Guattari specifically point to as *not* a becoming-animal, but also because it draws distinctions between the human and the techno-animal that shift once the cyborgean relationship to the technology is furthered.

within this essay, hauntingly vibrates in a becoming-animate. Throughout the film the two "guests," Barney and Björk, participate in an intricate tea ceremony onboard a Japanese whaling ship. Adorned in animal furs and bones, the ceremony ends below deck simultaneously as a giant sculpture made from petroleum jelly is finished on the upper deck. The guests solemnly culminate the ceremony by, submerged to their waists in an oily liquid, slowly reaching down to slice off each other's flesh with flensing knives. As the limbs are amputated their bones seem to transform into whale bones, and the final shot is of two whales swimming to sea.

[43] See Romeo Castellucci, "The Animal Being on Stage," and Williams, "The Right Horse, the Animal Eye," in "On Animals," *Performance Research.*

[44] For a review of this production, see Jennifer Parker-Starbuck, "The Body Electric: Cathy Weis at Dance Theatre Workshop," *PAJ: A Journal of Art and Technology* 74 (May 2003): 93–98. I have discussed other aspects of Weis's work in the chapter, "Shifting Strengths: The Cyborg Theatre of Cathy Weis," in *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance,* ed. Carrie Sandahl and Philip Auslander (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

[45] The video documents the segment "Painting and Stripping" from *Electric Haiku.* It is provided courtesy of Cathy Weis, the Dance Theatre Workshop and the Lincoln Center Archive.

Mimesis is raised directly in this piece: the space is split into two sections, with Frazer on one side in a white circle of light, and the projected image of a monkey on the screen beside her. The piece is a simple dance between the two figures, Frazer dancing with increasing fervor around the pool of light while the monkey looks on and then "apes" her actions, causing Frazer to "ape" back the monkey's movements. Although the piece is comprised of the live, the technological, and the animal, the human remains completely distinct from the techno-animal, framing it within the anthropological machine, but also within the "pre-cyborg"; they relate to each other, but are invested more in a competition and opposition than an intertwined dance. The piece draws upon tropes of mimesis, animality, and feminization while raising questions about the balance among these elements. I am reminded of Rebecca Schneider's distinction between the high-tech clone and the human-centric mimesis. "'Cloning' has long been synonymous with high tech, and high tech has signified masculinity. Mimesis, on the other hand, is no tech—primitivized, feminized, and debased (think of all the deprecations of 'primitives' as 'apers')."[46] In this formulation not only is the animal, in this distinct separation, secondary to the human and the technology in a competition, but the human figure of the young girl is also relegated to an incidental position through this binary.

Weis's haiku no. 6, "Painting and Stripping," builds from "Circle Dance." The "actors" are now a grown woman and a techno-gorilla, but the competition is no longer between human and techno(-animal). An alliance is formed, a cyborgean relationship is established, and eventually the animal is foregrounded. The piece begins as dancer Ksenia Vidyaykina walks slowly backward from the wings into a deeply saturated projection of light. As she moves, her arm seems caught by this light and is illuminated a deep, bright red. Her other arm reaches and it too is immersed in light, as her body remains in shadows. She stretches her body through the light slowly, seeming to absorb it, to breathe with it; her hands reach into the color, discovering blue and yellow, her fingers gently feel the light as if caressing it and touching it. She falls, as if losing her balance, and from the floor reaches into the colors with her feet and hands. With the blurring of the literal boundaries between them, neither body nor projection is distinguishable for the length of this section, which lasts for several minutes. During this section the dancer is fully immersed in the light, which seems to be a figure. She is joined with it, absorbing it, pulling in and out of it. On the side wall this large blurry figure hovers; at once the projection shifts to the upstage wall and the large red, animated ape comes into focus.

The recognition in this moment of pause of the discrete animal form emerging from the color-saturated lights forces the audience into the recognition of an animal as a whole. What appears as a becoming-cyborg as Vidyaykina dances with the technological images is suddenly more complex. The ghost in this machine is an animal, though ani / mate. As the animated image pulls away from the live figure and they each appear on their own, I ponder whether this split signifies that Vidyaykina had been within the animal, the technology, or had the animal been a part of her? There is a momentary sense of tension in this hiatus as we recognize the animal. Perhaps this shift is the one Baudrillard refers to in his essay "The Animals, Territory and Metamorphoses," the shift from animals acting as a sacred part of a symbolic cycle to (through their

---

[46] Rebecca Schneider, "Hello Dolly Well Hello Dolly," in *Psychoanalysis and Performance*, ed. Patrick Campbell and Adrian Kear (London: Routledge, 2001), 98.

lack of speech) becoming a divided, inhuman part of a diabolic cycle.[47] Perhaps it is the transition from Deleuze and Guattari's pack of animals to the "demonic" animal, or even a Disney-like turn toward a sudden sentimentalization. After this revealing moment when the technology has turned into the technologized animal, I suddenly remember the performance of the human body and I am momentarily distracted by recognizing how often animals are technologized on film, in laboratories, and through the "animal industry." The two figures stand apart on stage and the momentary sense of tension is released as a shot rings out.

So often, technologically animated figures of animals, whether filmed as cartoons or live animals able to talk, are representative of Deleuze and Guattari's second type of animal, that which characterizes and is representative of symbolic ideas, the anthropomorphized animal. Disney is famous for using technology to create animals that soften human stories—we can watch and weep as Bambi's mother is shot in the cartoon—and represent stereotypical human types in animal form. Through the films of Disney, and now Pixar, DreamWorks, and others, the sentimentalization of animated animals is fully expected. There are several layers to the technologized animal in film and television: from *Madagascar*-type movie animation to *Babe*, the talking pig; from animal "bloopers" to animal "reality" shows; from emergency vets to my childhood favorite, the *National Geographic* special. From the entertaining to the educational, this trajectory of animal representations ranging from the stereotypical cartoon to the hunting habits of animals in the wild always place animals at a distance to be laughed at, educated by, or held in awe. Rarely do these representations get "under the skin" or create a sensation of alliance. Pity, fear, awe, sadness, yes—but not alliance.

One striking exception is the treatment of animals in Chris Marker's remarkable film *Sans Soleil*. The film (which itself warrants an essay dedicated to its animals) is a narrated journey that juxtaposes cultures in Africa and Japan quite broadly, creating an assemblage of extremes and differences, but ultimately creating a complex symbiotic relationship among the extremes through the richness of the images. Within the film a spectrum of animals emerges, from a sequence at a Japanese temple to cats where a couple grieve over their missing "Tora," to images of desiccated carcasses of work animals strewn through empty watering holes in starving communities of Africa. Traversing the various forms of animals from pet to demon as outlined in Deleuze and Guattari's becoming, the images are filmed with a tacit understanding of difference and coexistence on the planet in what is perhaps an effort to mark the traces and intersections, similar or different, across the world. Between these two treatments comes a jarringly different moment; in the film, this moment serves as an Agambenian hiatus, in which everything pauses and risk and change become possible. However, in my first viewing of the film I was incapable of reading this risk as I watched the footage of a giraffe being killed. I heard the loud noise of a gun and saw the giraffe stagger. Out of its neck flowed two long, what looked to me like, red ribbons—Kabuki ribbons—fluttering from the giraffe to the ground. In mere seconds, as I watched the giraffe slowly collapse, its long gangly legs crumpling beneath it, I rationalized that these were, in fact, ribbons, which had to be attached to tranquilizer darts. The next frame reveals the hunter, who puts a gun to the giraffe's head and shoots. Those were

[47] Jean Baudrillard, "The Animals, Territory and Metamorphoses" in *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 133.

not tranquilizer darts; the giraffe was killed, even murdered. I was at first unable to see, to recognize the act for what it was and might easily have moved on, blind to the real, violent action that had taken place. So often treated to the sentimentalization of the animal on film, this particular segment clarified the meaning of what Deleuze and Guattari meant by "affect" in their text,

> [T]he affect is not a personal feeling, nor is it a characteristic; it is the effectuation of a power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel. Who has not known the violence of these animal sequences, which uproot one from humanity, if only for an instant?[48]

Watching it again, I was jolted into this moment—on *National Geographic* they always used tranquilizer guns—as the rest of the animals in the film came into focus anew, attuning me to the becomings-animal within the world of this particular film. The recognition of this violent act at the center of the film made me aware of the multiplicity of animals in the film; the death from this perspective was culturally embedded and in juxtaposition with a multitude of cultural alliances. I remained shocked and disgusted by the violence of the act, but only in seeing it, these alliances were brought into focus.

The shot that rings out in Weis's piece also came as a surprise to me. After watching the intensity of the integration between the dancer and the images that would become techno-gorilla, I waited in anticipation for the duet to come. From a cyborgean relationship in which the dancer explores the technology that could be the animal pack into the becoming-animal when she finds the one anomalous animal, they dance a new alliance together. Yet, before the possibility of a new alliance, the old ones must be destroyed. The shot broke the silence at the moment of their separation and startled me, as had the realization that the giraffe had been shot with a gun. Unlike the film, in the live performance I am placed in a face-to-face relationship with the human-animal-technology, becoming allied with their movement and invested in the outcome. A flutter, like the sound of bird's wings, is heard before the shot. In silence, Vidyaykina rips a sleeve off her costume as an arm disappears from the gorilla. The gorilla sends a confused look of alarm toward the dancer as another shot rings out and the ape loses a leg. The dancer rips off another part of her clothing. This is a mimesis of a different sort. The animal and human are not, as in "Circle Dance," in competition here, but are unified through their actions. The alliances formed, the becoming-animate in the room is not forged upon imitation, but perhaps because of it. By the third shot the gorilla has lost its head and Vidyaykina is wearing nothing but underwear. In the shared silence they both are—we all are—stripped of life, dignity, clothing in a shared but also distinct act of violation. The gorilla is eventually reduced to a few bright red shapes that shift back to alight on Vidyaykina's bare flesh. Their individual shapes remain etched in the viewer's eyes, but they once more come together, sharing and bound by their alliance that is their becoming-ani / mate.

"For if becoming animal does not consist in playing animal or imitating an animal, it is clear that the human being does not 'really' become an animal any more then the animal 'really' becomes anything else. Becoming produces nothing other than itself."[49] Deleuze and Guattari here, like Agamben, propose only a haunting echo of

---

[48] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 240.
[49] Ibid., 238.

humanity's reverberation upon animality. Becoming does not produce, it resonates. Although Agamben answers his question "In what way can man let the animal . . . be?"[50] by allowing the animal to be outside of a human conception of being, it is more difficult to actuate this sentiment. To recognize the hiatus in the emptiness between human and animal, humanity has to become attuned to these sightings. The cyborg appears, resonating connectively though its integrations, at the moments in which the anthropological machine might be open to such hiatuses and become something other—become "outside of being." This prospect is a risk, for it would mean rethinking humanity's relationship to animals and, in turn, the shape of the world ahead.

At least in the present moment, becoming-animate's "life" perhaps produces nothing other than itself. In the ani / mate of the animal, the risk can be rehearsed without harm to the animal. The dancer walks away from the theatre alone. The audience exits. The "gorilla" returns to a machine awaiting the next performance. In the becoming ani / mate in the moment of performance we all become-animal, sharing the alliances in the room with each other, with the technology, with the animal. Encountering the animal through a becoming-animate in performance may not yet grant more respect to animals held in laboratories and slaughterhouses, but in the risk and in the exposure to these ideas, it can challenge, rethink, and reform the alliances within its parameters. It can suggest new methods of integration with the world outside so that the animal might just "be."

[50] Agamben, *The Open*, 91.