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Introduction

Melissa Boyde

In 2006 a clip was posted on YouTube which was to become a worldwide sensation. The clip showed footage of an emotional reunion between two men and a lion edited from a film made in 1971. A few years later another version of the clip was posted on YouTube, this time overdubbed with an audio track of Whitney Houston singing the hit song ‘I will always love you’ and with captions at the bottom of the screen which told the story of how the two young men in the clip bought a lion cub in Harrods, kept him as a pet, then, eventually, rehomed him in Kenya on conservationist George Adamson’s Kora Reserve. The clip ends with the caption: ‘Love knows no limits and true friendships last a lifetime. Get back in touch with someone today. You’ll be glad you did.’ This multi-media experience went viral, and has by now captured the attention of more than 100 million viewers.

Key themes of Captured: The Animal within Culture are encapsulated in the story of Christian the lion’s journey from Harrods ‘Zoo’ to Kenya: the physical captivity of animals in relation to the ways in which they are caught in the dynamics of human–animal relations – whether as commodities trafficked for profit or spectacle, as subjects of scientific or artistic endeavour, or pressed into metaphoric reflections of various human conditions. What are the implications for the lived reality of animals when they are all but erased in cultural representations and interpretations which figure them as ‘the animal’ and in service of human subjectivity?

As Jacques Derrida points out human language can imprison with a word:

Animal is a word that men have given themselves the right to give. These humans are found giving it to themselves, this word, but as if
they had received it as an inheritance. They have given themselves the word in order to corral a large number of living beings within a single concept... at the same time according themselves, reserving for them, for humans, the right to the word, the naming noun, the verb, the attribute, to a language of words, in short to the very thing that the others in question would be deprived of, those that are corralled within the grand territory of the beasts: The Animal. (Derrida 32)

The essays in Captured reveal implications for animals of the cultural elision of ‘The Animal’ caught within the limits of human discourses.

Many Western countries trade on images and words of social equality and freedom yet have the containment of animals at their heart – the captivity of animals is an accepted part of the landscape both figuratively and literally. Fencing, for example, demarcates not just property ownership but also the pervasive practices of keeping animals captive. Whether wild or captive, indigenous or introduced, animals are subject to human control. In Australia the infamous Rabbit Proof Fence, completed in 1907, crosses the continent from north to south. Its purpose was to keep rabbits and other so-called agricultural pests out of Western Australia, until the deadly myxomatosis virus was introduced in the 1950s to take its place. Meanwhile, strung along beaches in places such as South Africa, Australia and Hong Kong, nets shield humans from sharks. The large mesh size of the nets is designed so that sharks are caught and eventually drowned. An acknowledged ‘downside’ is the so-called by-catch of many other large marine animals including dolphins, sea turtles and dugongs. Marine animals are subject to an enormous capture in recreational and commercial fishing globally which seriously depletes fish populations as well as abalone, lobsters, squid and prawns. Research into long-line fishing shows that hundreds of thousands of albatrosses and other sea birds die each year as a result of drowning after attempting to eat the baits on long-line hooks.

Throughout the world, animals are captured by humans for pleasure and profit. When not wanted by humans, domestic dogs and cats are euthanased in their millions.1 Millions more animals are kept captive as test subjects in research laboratories – estimated annual figures worldwide on animal use in toxicity testing, biomedical research and education amounts to more than 58 million ‘living non-human vertebrates’ (De Boo and Knight). Twenty-first century practices of intensive farming have reached new lows for animals held captive such as dairy cows, pigs and chickens – the conditions of their lives of confinement, their suffering and deaths, are widely documented by scholars and
animal activists but continue nevertheless. Yet despite these kinds of realities for animals who are captured in a multiplicity of ways, humans most often turn a blind eye. The refusal to witness and the pretence of not knowing occurs even when the human gaze is directly focused on the captive animal. Film footage taken of Christian the lion’s mother at the now defunct Ilfracombe zoo shows her relentlessly pacing, back and forth, in the cage in which she was forced to live. Like Christian’s mother, there are all kinds of animals who live and die in zoos and who endure, ‘whether or not someone happens to be watching... the constant servility of the subject under surveillance’ (Malamud 222). Captured in practice, captured in culture: how these aspects of capture operate and interact in human–animal relations is a focus of the essays in this book.

In what may appear as a paradox, the invisibility of animal capture and the suffering it invariably brings takes place in the context of a proliferation of representations of animals in all aspects of human culture, indicating, among other things, intense human fascination with ‘The Animal’. As Elizabeth Grosz points out, the word fascination has at its heart dual and opposite meanings: ‘to attract, irresistibly enchant, charm’; or ‘to deprive a victim of the powers of escape or resistance by look or presence’ (Grosz 6). The human fascination with animals evokes both of these meanings; it may well be what Grosz describes as a ‘consequence of an imaginary identification in which the self strives to incorporate the other in an act that is as aggressive as it is loving’ (Grosz 6–7). The cultural capture of animals in media such as writing, performance and the visual arts is, as in all representation, at best partial, at worst not only misleading or obscuring but also a subsumption of all who are not human. To complicate this further, ‘the lives of animals as currently configured generally resist meaningful cultural visitation on any significant scale’ (Chaudhuri 10).

This collection of essays is framed with a word – captured – often used to suggest that a cultural representation of the real has been achieved. The violence inherent in the term captured – derived from the practices of capturing, experiences of being caught and living in captivity – is embedded in the phrases which simultaneously conceal it: capturing a likeness, captured on film, captured in a photograph. When used in relation to animals the word capture loses its potential to masquerade as benign and its other meanings become evident. The hidden lives of animals, taken captive through the violence of representation and in reality, emerge – even if initially only as shadowy presences.

In Chapter 1 Wendy Woodward writes about vulnerability and animal bodies, specifically giraffes who were forced from their African
homelands and taken to Europe. In her discussion of the puppet play *Tall Horse*, about a giraffe sent as a royal tribute to post-revolutionary France, and J. M. Ledgard’s novel *Giraffe*, which tells the story of a herd of giraffes taken from Kenya to Soviet-defined Czechoslovakia in the 1970s in order to breed a new species, Woodward discerns an emphasis on the vulnerable giraffe body and ‘embodied, vertiginous relationships between human and nonhuman’. The life-size giraffe puppet body in performances of *Tall Horse* functions as a reminder of the ‘real’ animal, and her vulnerable status as an exiled captive in Paris. In the novel, which culminates in the gratuitous slaughter of the herd, the textual insistence on the individual giraffe as a knowing subject forces an apprehension of embodied violence wrought on animals, even though ‘the discourses of captivity disembodied them’. These works, Woodward suggests, present ethical possibilities of reading and experiencing narratives of animal capture that can contribute to breaking down species boundaries.

The rise of commodity culture in the nineteenth century was long foreshadowed by the trading of animals across continents and oceans. Traffic in animals was common in the Roman Empire, for example, when thousands of animals from Asia and Africa were captured and transported by ship to be killed in bloody spectacles in the Colosseum or used for the entertainment of the wealthy. In Chapter 2 John Simons documents the extent of the trade in exotic animals in Victorian England, finding that from the early decades of the nineteenth century vast numbers of animals, including elephants and lions, were captured in places such as Africa and India and shipped to England. On arrival they were displayed in shops in cities such as London and Liverpool and sold for considerable sums of money. His work shows that well before commodity became entrenched as a defining social attribute, the ownership of exotic animals had been established as a symbol of status and wealth and contributed to the ideology of Empire. Simons’s research reveals the cost to individual animals caught in the trade, such as koalas and wombats, many of whom died on the long boat journeys or were killed in their homelands and sold for their skins which ‘were much prized as carriage rugs or hearth rugs’.

In Chapter 3 Ace Bourke, one of the young men who purchased Christian in Harrods, discusses the story in an interview which ranges from its origins in the commodity culture of London in the late 1960s – when as a lion cub Christian was displayed for sale as an exotic animal in a department store – to the twenty-first century media frenzy that erupted following the reunion’s mass exposure via
YouTube. Interwoven with this narrative about human–animal relations and its emotional reception is another narrative which Melissa Boyde's interview with Bourke brings out: one which considers the physical experience of an individual lion, born in captivity, offered for sale as part of the ‘exotic’ animal trade, kept as a pet and, unusually, released into the wild; and the movement for wild animal protection that facilitated this outcome.

The trade in live animal export continues into the present and affects not only so-called exotic animals but also animals marked as human food. Live animal export is currently a multi-million dollar global industry in which captive ‘farm’ animals such as sheep and cattle are shipped live to destinations where those who survive the journey will be slaughtered for food. The industry has recently been in the spotlight in Australia after footage taken by animal activists showing the brutal slaughter in an Indonesian abattoir of cattle from Australia went to air in the national news media. In Chapter 4 Boyde suggests that the live export of cattle is an instance of what Giorgio Agamben refers to as the state of exception which renders those caught within it as both insiders and outsiders. The discussion of the blockbuster film Australia reveals that although the cattle are central to the narrative and for much of the film dominate the screen they are nevertheless unnoticed; the cattle are what Steve Baker refers to as ‘the sign of that which doesn't really matter’ (Baker 174). With reference to historical, statistical, legal and fictional accounts, the chapter discusses the creation and maintenance of such cultural blindspots and offers autobiographical material as a counter-discourse.

In Chapter 5 artist Yvette Watt explores the role of the artist in relation to the ethics of human–animal relationships, in this case to ‘farm’ animals. Watt poses the question ‘Can contemporary art enact social change?’ In her series of photographs of the exterior of actual factory farms to which she travelled in several states of Australia, Watt captures on film one of the most pervasive ways in which animals within human culture are made captive and rendered invisible. The choice of photography to show the outer reality of the culturally hidden practice of intensive factory farming not only resonates with the form itself but enables exposure: ‘the photograph seems the ideal place to conceal a secret, given its confident manipulation of darkness and light. Both darkness and light rely upon each other for their existence...the photograph alone has the power to tilt the balance’ (Biber 105).

Several essays consider the limitations as well as the possibilities that arise when humans imagine and attempt to capture animal subjectivities,
lives and environments, as well as bodies, both for scientific and cultural purposes. In Chapter 6 Graham Barwell explores how cultural attitudes and representations of albatrosses were formed over the past two centuries through a variety of influences such as folklore, superstition, literature, religion, science and commercial practices. While the ethics of catching and killing these wild birds were often debated, particularly given longstanding cultural understandings of their prophetic significance, concern about the serious effects of human impacts on them did not become widespread until the twentieth century. As a result of publicity campaigns and an outpouring of accounts and representations of albatrosses in a variety of media, they became the focal point of wider concerns about the wildlife of the southern oceans, even for people who had no direct contact with the birds. Barwell asks whether the cultural imagining of the albatross has been and will be sufficiently powerful to challenge established understandings of the relationship between humans and the natural world.

In Chapter 7 Denise Russell considers particular communications of humpback whales, or whale songs, in the Pacific Ocean. Acknowledging recent research which indicates that the brain structures of Cetaceans may not only be shared with humans but also exceed human capabilities, Russell argues for the need to imagine new communicative and cognitive possibilities for whales, as well as new concepts of individual identity. While whale songs have often been aligned with sexual display, Russell contends that these are reductionist scientific accounts which should be held up to critical scrutiny and suggests that humans become more imaginative in their attempts to interpret whale communications.

The power of imagination, its Romantic affiliation with empathy and the associated capacity of a human being to imagine ‘the other’ is discussed by Anne Collett in Chapter 8. She discusses how two novels – J. M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* and Michelle de Kretser’s *The Lost Dog* – take a position on the capacity of the ‘poet’ (imaginative writer) to create a fictional world in which that which is not self, and not human – in this case, the dog – is both represented and recognised as an equal subject. Collett asks: how do these novelists narrate a story of human–dog relationships in such a way that contradicts assumed superiority of the human over the nonhuman animal? And what might it mean to position the poet as ‘chameleon’ – to take Keats’s famous phrase? The complex ethical position of the Romantic claim to ‘sympathetic imagination’, described by Coetzee’s Elizabeth Costello, is considered. Collett discusses whether such a claim is an act of colonisation that maintains the power differential of a subject/object relationship, or an ethical act,
one which is essential if animals are to be made real to humans as ‘subjects of justice’ (Nussbaum 319).

In Chapter 9 Helen Tiffin discusses how cultural representations of animals are often the major way in which humans develop a sense of familiarity with particular species. Tiffin suggests that Cephalopods, particularly octopus and giant squid, are more familiar to humans as ‘shadows in the myths and legends we have concocted about them’ than as living animals. The chapter, which traces representations of Cephalopods in a broad range of cultural material including texts such as Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*, Alfred Lord Tennyson’s poem, ‘The Kraken’, ancient Greek artefacts, Japanese imagery and in contemporary popular culture, emphasises the paradox whereby they are feared as monstrous, yet captured for both human consumption and use in medical experimentation. In contrast to our ‘unashamedly anthropocentric captures’ of octopus and squid, Tiffin puts forward the idea that the practices of anthropomorphism may facilitate human recognition of our connectedness to animals and thereby work in favour of more equitable human–animal relations.

In Chapter 10 Peta Tait explores how representations of kangaroo identities in modernist popular culture reveal contradictory attitudes towards animals that have been habituated by body-based phenomenologies. The extent to which an animal species’ identity is distorted – polarised to either endear or demonise – within human society becomes particularly apparent in entertainment, not only across species but also within species. Tait’s approach shows how human attitudes to nonhuman animal species are accentuated by performance practices with captive animals. In an extreme example of the staging of kangaroos as human, kangaroos were coached from the 1890s through to the 1970s to perform live. Costumed as a boxer, the kangaroo in the circus appeared human-like, even though the act used the animal’s repertoire of playful fighting movements in its staging of animality. The popular Australian TV series *Skippy*, filmed in a natural bush setting, showed the kangaroo as human friend and saviour. While the idea of the kangaroo was elevated through the training and use of captive individual kangaroos, the living wild animals were ignored, denigrated or culled. Tait discusses how emotional resonances that accompany or are created by the development of emotionally evocative symbolic shapes blind humans to living animals and allow schismatic values to arise in relation to the treatment of animal bodies.

The essays in this collection reveal and interrogate the intertwining concepts of capture, both in representation and in practice. In the process they provide ethical glimpses into the lives of animals who are
enduring subjects of human fascination, including: tigers, elephants, koalas, wombats, kangaroos, dogs, cattle, chickens, whales, cephalopods, albatrosses, one particular lion and a giraffe who walked to Paris.

Notes


2. For example see Animal Studies Group, Killing Animals; Kalof and Fitzgerald, The Animals Reader.

Works cited


Giraffes, with their beauty and charisma, have always been vulnerable to capture. Caught young, giraffes, or at least the females, can become tractable, even domesticated. No wonder then that Mehmet Ali, the Ottoman envoy in Egypt, wishing in 1826 to gain the support of Charles X of France in the Greek War of Independence decided to send an Ethiopian giraffe as a tribute and a highly desirable addition to the king’s planned menagerie (Allin 64, 67). No wonder also that Czechoslovakian scientists and politicians in the 1970s committed to transforming and manipulating nature in order to glorify Communism set in motion a scheme to capture giraffes in Kenya and transport them to the Dvur Kralove zoo where they would breed a new species. In these histories of capture, the giraffes were made to perform their vertical identities. They were always already spectacle – to the French full of admiration for the single female giraffe made to walk from Marseilles to Paris, to the Czechs who marvelled at the giraffe herd in their local zoo, but as African animals exiled from their native environments, they were vulnerable to foreign climates and diseases and to the whims and schemes of their captors. The single giraffe was displayed in the first municipal zoo in early nineteenth-century France – a royal, exclusive menagerie no longer politically feasible in post-Napoleonic France – the herd in communist Eastern Europe was deployed for research as well as display.
The narratives of the Ethiopian giraffe and the Kenyan giraffes appear in two texts respectively: the puppet play *Tall Horse* (2006) and the novel *Giraffe* (2007) by J. M. Ledgard. *Tall Horse* tells initially of the trajectory of two young giraffes destined to be royal tributes, who were captured in the Ethiopian Highlands and then shipped to Marseilles. The more fragile giraffe was sent to the English king while the other was placed under the guardianship of one Hassan and the slave Atir. The illustrious scientist Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire came to ensure the safe passage of the giraffe who walked 7000 kilometres to Paris. This extraordinary journey inspired the South-African based Handspring Puppet Company in collaboration with the Sogolon Marionette Troup of Mali to bring to the stage the giraffe’s story – an African animal who had enchanted all of France. Now, roughly a hundred and seventy years later (2004–2005), two African puppet companies could beguile international audiences with this play, which featured a life-sized giraffe puppet and only two human actors alongside many other puppets and puppeteers.

In the frame of the play Jean-Michel, a young Frenchman, enters the museum at Bamako, Mali in search of Atir his ancestor, and is magically drawn into the past as he transforms into Atir himself via a journey through the Special Collections. The play is not plot-driven but foregrounds a kind of pageantry as it depicts the responsiveness of the French and Atir to the young giraffe. The script is based on Michael Allin’s account *Zarafa* (an Arabic word for gentleness and the etymological basis for the word giraffe), subtitled *The true story of a giraffe’s journey from the plains of Africa to the heart of post-Napoleonic France* (1998). The historical giraffe Sogo Jan (her name in the play) lived in Paris for eighteen years. Atir, who accompanied her on much of her journey, remained her keeper for the rest of her life. Even if this could suggest a ‘happy’ story of a kind, or at least one of some stability and longevity for an African animal in Europe, the near-solitary captivity of a herd animal accustomed to unlimited space is a tragic diminishing of her life.

Like *Tall Horse*, the novel *Giraffe* is a dramatically effective and extraordinary story. The more recent giraffe narrative is one of tragedy, violence and state secrecy. When J. M. Ledgard, *The Economist* correspondent, was stationed in Eastern Europe in the 1980s, he was apprised of the silenced history of a herd of giraffes captured in Kenya in 1973 and transported to the Dvur Kralove zoo in the CSSR. The motivation behind acquiring these African animals (ironically they did not constitute a natural herd as they consisted of different strains) was to breed a new species for the glory of Communism. The breeding programme was
highly successful until the night of April 30 and the early morning of 1 May 1975 when the herd was massacred by orders from the Politburo. As Ledgard puts it in a postscript to his novel, *Giraffe*:

>The Dvur Kralove Zoo is still awaiting an official acknowledgement and explanation of the liquidation of its forty-nine giraffes...It was the largest captive herd in the world. Twenty-three of them are thought to have been pregnant. (327)

In the Acknowledgements, Ledgard thanks all his interviewees who remain anonymous – the scientists, the veterinarian, ‘the sharpshooting forester Mr P, who still has nightmares about pulling the trigger’ (327–8) – but he stresses that the truth remains hidden. The records of the professors have disappeared; a giraffe tongue dispatched to the University of Brno has never been located, nor have the containers of giraffe blood ‘collected by a Security Service operative on the night of the shooting’ (328).

Set initially in 1973, just five years after the Soviet Union had quashed Dubček’s attempts at liberalisation in the CSSR and invaded the country, the novel is imbued with the stifling rigidities of communism and the characters’ fears of Soviet surveillance during the Cold War. The narrative itself is polyphonic and begins with the point of view of Snehurka (or Snow White because of her unusually pale chest and underbelly) as she is being born, then her experience of her subsequent seizure and the start of the journey. Emil (rather heavy-handedly named) Freymann, the haemodynamicist, who travels with the giraffes from Hamburg to the zoo in the CSSR, studies ‘the flow of blood in vertical creatures’ (Ledgard 27). He interacts mainly with Snehurka, the most confident giraffe on the barge. He provides a sense of history of other diasporic animals, as he reiterates his ideological rejection of ‘the communist moment’ (19 and passim). Once the giraffes reach the zoo, the principal narrative voice is that of Amina, a young orphaned worker in a dangerously pollutive factory. The giraffes wake her from her somnambulism, both literal and metaphoric, of the sleepwalking life she leads and it is she who embodies some calm and love for them as they are massacred. This final, traumatic event is repetitively represented, told through the points of view of the witnesses and participants.

While the novel is a tragedy interlaced with stringent political critique of a heartless communist state and its effects on both human and nonhuman, the play is a social comedy replete with mostly gentle satire as it critiques the colonial narrative of Atir and Sogo Jan and celebrates
the advent and reception of the giraffe in France. My concern in this chapter is the recurring element in both play and novel, the vulnerability of the giraffe body, and the concomitant embodied, vertiginous relationships between human and nonhuman. The life-size giraffe puppet body in *Tall Horse* serves as a reminder of the live animal presence behind its construction, thus suggesting a way of reading both the play and the novel which incorporates animal ethics. This body is not a symbolic body, in the way that animal bodies have been made to stand for human character traits. Instead the puppet body approximates that of the ‘real’ giraffe being. As Basil Jones stresses, ‘the primary work of the puppet is the *performance* of life’ (254) as it ‘striv[es] to depict and embody life’ (255). This dramatic figuration of the animal body does not imagine the giraffe as a mere play of surfaces; on the contrary, the animal’s interiority or subjectivity is undeniable.

Such a reading is underpinned by a number of theorists in Animal Studies who consider a focus on the body of the animal and the human an ethical, posthumanist strategy. Rosi Braidotti suggests a ‘neoliberal approach’ which eschews the metaphorisation of animals for an approach in which ‘the other…needs to be taken on its own terms’ (528). Following Deleuze and Guattari, she argues for ‘an ethical appreciation of what bodies (human, animal, other) can do’ proposing that:

The animal…is rather taken in its radical immanence as a body that can do a great deal, as a field of forces, a quantity of speed and intensity, and a cluster of capabilities. This is posthuman body materialism laying the ground for bioegalitarian ethics (528).

For Cora Diamond in ‘The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy’ humans share an embodiedness with nonhuman animals which we ‘respond to and imagine’ and which counteracts the strangeness of animals. An intense appreciation of human embodiment encourages an acknowledgment of the common embodied vulnerability which we ‘share’ with animals, as well as a heightened awareness of physical mortality, so much so that this can elicit extreme feelings like panic (74).

In Cary Wolfe’s analysis, like that of Braidotti and Diamond, posthumanism very specifically undermines anthropocentrism and speciesism, but rather than rejecting the human he recommends engaging with human particularity ‘once we have removed meaning from the ontologically closed domain of consciousness, reason, reflection, and so on’ (*Posthumanism* xxv). Thus we re-consider what we have always
accepted as ‘human experience’ by ‘recontextualizing [the normal perceptual modes and affective states of Homo sapiens itself] in terms of the entire sensorium of other living beings and their own autopoietic ways of “bringing forth a world”’ (xxv).

Anat Pick’s consideration of posthumanism echoes, to some extent, that of Wolfe. Through embodiment, she proposes, we both render ourselves “less human”… whilst seeking to grant animals a share in our world of subjectivity’ (Creaturely Poetics 6), but she is sceptical of the notion of animal subjectivity in itself, disavowing ‘interrogating and expanding the possibilities of (non-human) subjectivity’ (6). Pick prefers to ‘proceed… externally, by considering the corporeal reality of living bodies’ (2–3). Like Diamond she stresses vulnerability, analysing it through the philosophy of Simone Weil in which ‘the vulnerability of precious things is beautiful because vulnerability is a mark of existence’ (3). Pick regards this notion of beauty as always already ethical in its implication, ‘a sort of sacred recognition of life’s value as material and temporal’ (3).

While my reading of the two texts under discussion is influenced by the theorists quoted above on embodiment, representations of the interiorities of the giraffes will also be included. To do so is not to regard them as humanist subjects but to align my reading with Wolfe’s insistence on reconsidering ‘our assumptions about who the knowing subject can be’ (‘Human, All Too Human’ 571). His essay simultaneously pays attention to representations of human and nonhuman commonalities of lived embodiment, its vulnerabilities and finitude and its ethical dimensions. I will also read the giraffe body metonymically in relation to human bodies. In Animals in Film Jonathan Burt’s critique of the ubiquity of ‘rhetorical animals on screen’ which includes ‘animals as metaphors, metonyms, textual creatures to be read like words’ (31) resonates with Braidotti’s call for animals not to be metaphorised. When the human body and the animal body are made to metonymise each other reciprocally in trans-species knots, however, Braidotti’s sense of the ‘radical immanence’ of the nonhuman animal body is incorporated. Further, the human body may then be located in relation to Wolfe’s ‘entire sensorium of other living beings’. In the play and novel under discussion both humans and giraffes figure intertwining trans-species vulnerabilities while remaining, always, embodied, separate beings with their own histories and lives.

The vulnerabilities we share with animals

A puppet play and a novel, both of which centrally examine the vulnerabilities of animal bodies, demand that the audience and readers,
respectively, experience Sogo Jan and Snezhurka relationally and in ways which break down species boundaries. Peta Tait argues, in connection with circus, that ‘spectators receive a performance bodily with capacities inherent to their own species’ (183). Perhaps a play and a novel may not appear to carry the immediacy and drama of live circus acts with the sights, sounds and smells of animal performers, yet an extraordinary life-sized giraffe puppet and a vibrant narrative about giraffes can surely elicit sensory bodily responses, including emotional ones, as Tait suggests about circus (183). The capturing of the young giraffes in both *Tall Horse* and *Giraffe*, for instance, is viscerally distressing; the detailed account of the long drawn-out slaughter of the giraffe herd in the Dvur Kralove zoo is not only nauseating in its violence, but grief-inducing in the tragedy of the majestic African animals’ needless deaths. Thus the actions of the puppet Sogo Jan and the representation of Snezhurka grant us access to their interiorities, fostering what Ralph Acampora in *Corporal Compassion* terms ‘symphysis’, that is, the mediation of bodily experiences on trans-species compassion (23).

Una Chaudhuri observes that drama is the ‘most anthropocentric of all the arts’ (522). A life-size giraffe puppet contradicts conventional theatre, of course, yet the animation of the puppet is dependent on the skill of the puppeteer who has to make the audience believe in its ‘life and credibility’ (Jones 254). The puppet may appear to be all body but its very movement denotes an inner life (Jones 266). For Jones, puppeteer and producer of *Tall Horse* and other Handspring Puppet Company plays, this ‘embodied form of thinking, of thinking incarnate’ signifies a refusal ‘to make a separation between mind and body’ (266). Thus, according to Adrian Kohler, Handspring master puppet designer and maker, the giraffe puppet has to simultaneously embody ‘some kind of strength and determination within her complete victimhood’ (Adrian Kohler qtd in Millar 232).

The aesthetic expressivity of the puppet body animated by human actors inside the puppet reminds us that the body of the giraffe is key to *trans-species* relationships between human and nonhuman in both novel and play. With this puppet body looming over the human actors and other puppets, a narcissistic identification with the animal (on the part of the players or the audience) is scarcely feasible. Instead, trans-species connections are embodied, materialist, and incorporate Weil’s sense of vulnerability which Pick discusses. Acampora’s ‘symphysis’ between humans and animals as opposed to ‘erotogenic romantic models of fusion’ (114) is useful in its suggestion that such a ‘bodily consciousness’ is both human and animal. (Even so, the term ‘con-
sciousness’ seems an odd one to use, given its connotation of ‘thinking’ and ‘cogitation’ as J. M. Coetzee has Elizabeth Costello complain [33] in another context.)

The giraffe puppet interacts with Atir, who is played by a human actor. The strongest connection between them is their common vulnerability to slavery, with the image of a slave body recurring in the intersecting embodiment of human and nonhuman. The identities of both Sogo Jan and Atir are historically framed by the horror of slavery: Mehmet Ali who masterminded sending the giraffe as a royal tribute had ‘monopolised the slave trade for fifty years’ (Allin 36). Atir served as a slave of Bernadino Drovetti, the adept plunderer and marketeer of Egyptian antiquities. Soon after Sogo Jan is captured in the hunt and her mother killed, Atir, perhaps in an attempt to expiate his culpability, confides to her his own traumatic history ‘I was once a slave like you – stolen from my village in Mali by the jonserelao’ (Burns 250). When the young giraffe demands more sustenance he acknowledges ‘Already you have made a servant of the one who captured you’ (Burns 249). Subsequently, as it becomes clear in Paris that Atir will not return to Africa, partly because he fears that his Malian home has been obliterated by the slave trade, partly because Sogo Jan has become exclusively dependent on him, he taunts the giraffe repeatedly ‘I am not your slave’ denying his attachment to her (Burns 262, 263, 276). Like Atir, the giraffe is, potentially, both slave holder and enslaved. Reciprocally, they have changed each other’s life trajectories; both are irrevocably diasporic beings, Africans in Paris with a sense of what has been lost. Sogo Jan’s narrative had been written on her very body according to Atir: her markings, her taamaki, reveal her destiny of a long journey from which she will never return.

On a lighter note, the negrophilia in Paris at the time (Millar 45) renders Atir a sexualised and highly desirable body. In the play he is seduced by Lady Clothilde Grandeville de Largemont, wife of the prefect of Marseilles, who finds him in the stable where he sleeps with Sogo Jan. In the stage directions she is ‘thrilled to be making love under the eyes of the giraffe’ (Burns 267), as though the very gaze of the giraffe contributes to Atir’s desirability. In the narrative of the play, Sogo Jan is also exoticised and eroticised. In her Africanity, her grace and beauty, her femininity, Sogo Jan fits right into the Orientalising of Parisian culture in the early nineteenth century (Root 161–5), as human embodiment mimics that of giraffes. Women attempt an exaggerated verticality performing their desire to become giraffe, by stretching their necks into high hairstyles and lowering them in décolletage, a fashion which
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