

Figuring the Animal Autobiography: Animals and Landscapes in Daniel Naudé's Exhibition "African Scenery & Animals"

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Summary

Daniel Naudé's exhibition of photographic artworks, "African Scenery & Animals", is discussed in this article, to consider the ways in which images of animal beings are mostly received as figurative vehicles for anthropocentric narratives. Naudé's particularised portraits of AfriCanis dogs and other domestic creatures are considered in relation to figurative anthropocentric analysis of the artworks that the artist's gallery and other reviewers have undertaken. I argue that Naudé's oeuvre is more in line with J.M. Coetzee's fictional character Elizabeth Costello's notion of imaginative empathy, proposing the capacity of human beings to imagine what it might be like to be an(other) (Coetzee 2004: 79), and that Naudé's portraits of animal beings provoke imaginative empathetic (Coetzee 2004: 79) transposition in the viewer. I recount my imaginative empathetic encounters (Coetzee 2004: 79) with particular artworks from the "African Scenery & Animals" series, and consider the imperial legacy of the landscape genre and the photographic medium employed by Naudé in relation to the artist's use of destabilising formal and contextual devices.

Opsomming

In hierdie artikel bespreek ek Daniel Naudé se uitstalling van fotografiese kunswerke, "African Scenery & Animals", om die maniere waarop beelde van dierewesens meestal as figuurlike mediums van antroposentriese narratiewe beskou word, in oënskou te neem. Ek kyk na Naudé se verbesonderde portrette van AfriCanis-honde en ander huisdiere met betrekking tot die figuurlike antroposentriese ontleding van die kunswerke wat die kunstenaar se galery en ander resensente onderneem het. Ek voer aan dat Naudé se oeuvre verband hou met J.M. Coetzee se fiktiewe karakter (Elizabeth Costello) se idee van verbeeldingryke empatie, waarvolgens mense die vermoë het om voor te stel hoe dit sal wees om 'n ander te wees (Coetzee 2004: 79). Ek voer verder aan dat Naudé se portrette van dierewesens verbeeldingryke empatiese transposisie in die kyker ontlok (Coetzee 2004: 79). Ek vertel van my verbeeldingryke empatiese blootstelling aan bepaalde kunswerke uit die reeks "African Scenery & Animals", en oorweeg die imperiale erfenis van die landskapgenre en die fotografiese medium wat Naudé gebruik met betrekking tot die kunstenaar se aanwending van destabiliserende formele en kontekstuele middels.

Recently I encountered Colin Renfrew's book *Figuring It Out* (2003), about the parallel vision of artists and archaeologists. The phrase "figuring it out" (2003) is employed by Renfrew as an indicator of the often figurative content of the work of both artists and archaeologists; and is a reference to the rhetorical significance of these figurations; and an answer to the ontological questions posed by Paul Gauguin in his Tahitian painting "Testament" (1897) – a visual allegory of the human condition, upon which the artist wrote questions that Renfrew proposes are those that fundamentally occupy artists and archaeologists: "Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?" (Renfrew 2003: 11). In his discussion of contemporary artists, Renfrew intriguingly states that

[t]he world of visual arts today is made up of tens of thousands of individuals, most of them doing their own thing. Among them are creative thinkers and workers who are nibbling away, all the time, at what we think we know about the world, at our assumptions, at our preconceptions. Moreover, the insights they offer are not in heavy texts. They come to us through the eyes and sometimes the other senses, offering us direct perceptions from which we may sometimes come to share their insights.

(Renfrew 2003: 7)

I am struck by Renfrew's use of the word "nibbling" in this discussion of the ontological enquiry undertaken by contemporary artists – or what I like to call "visual authors" – pointing as it does to a word employed by humans to describe a delicate but determined mode of eating characteristic of rodents, but also related to the mastication methods of horses, bovids, and sheep, amongst others (Renfrew 2003: 7). It is certainly (in my mind) a fitting metaphor for the often slow, grinding and intrepid work of the studio (and the written form); but there is a further significance to this "*l'animal autobiographique*" [animal autobiography] – a neologistic term formulated by Jacques Derrida to describe the reflexive application of the human conception of the animal to the formulation of human identity – the "infinite appropriation" of a "paradisiac bestiary" "[I]n me, for me, like me" – pointing to the rhetorical action of this ubiquitous phenomenon (Derrida 2002: 371, 405). Derrida links this notion of an *animal haunting* in human experience to linguistic forms by way of a discussion of the bestiary of metaphoric presences that populate his written work – "a horde of animals within the forest of my own signs and the memoirs of my memory" (Derrida 2002: 405). Derrida also notes the "anthropomorphic taming" and "moralising subjection" of animal beings that are characteristic of narrative oral and linguistic forms: allegories and idioms, fables and myths – narrative modes of metaphoric cognition (Derrida 2002: 405-406).

Akira Mizuta Lippit employs the term "animetaphor" in alliance with Derrida's notion of the animal autobiography and in relation to Freud's proposed connection between the animal, the metaphor, and the expression

of the human unconscious, stating that “in each case the animal becomes intertwined in the trope, serving as its vehicle and substance” (Lippit 1998: 1112). In this vein, Lippit surmises that the animal functions in language as a foreign presence – a living phenomenon collapsed into a rhetorical figure in the experience of human apprehension, speaking and dreaming (p. 1113). Lippit abridges the nature of this sentient redundancy very aptly in stating: “Indeed the *animetaphor* may also be seen as the unconscious of language” (p. 1113).

In Renfrew’s application of the word “nibbling” (Renfrew 2003: 1112) – an “animetaphor” (Lippit: 1998: 1112-1113) that can also be described as an “animal autobiography” (Derrida 2002: 405) – to consider the critical work of contemporary artists, he draws close to a set of critical-humanist questions (further to those of Gauguin’s): a) How has humanity *distinguished* itself in binary opposition to the other creatures we share this earth with? b) As we *are animals*, what ethical, environmental and metaphysical conundrums has this instrumental delineation wrought? c) Where is this Faustian trajectory taking us all (both humans and animals)? His article responds in minutiae to these vast conundrums “nibbling away at” the *figuring* (rhetorical and iconographic) of animals through a discussion of one extraordinary contemporary South African art instance: Daniel Naudé’s first solo exhibition entitled “African Scenery & Animals”. This exhibition ran from 26 January to 13 February 2010 at the Brodie/ Stevenson Gallery in Johannesburg, showcasing a body of art photography that proclaimed him as an artist with his finger on the pulse of current cultural discourses on human identity and its reliance on the animal.¹ Naudé’s photographic portraits (figures) of domestic animals (mules, AfriCanis² dogs, and bulls) are subject to the colonising action of figurative anthropocentric rhetoric – “animal autobiography” (Derrida 2002: 405) and “animetaphor” (Lippit: 1998: 1112-1113) actions – powerfully realised in the viewer’s perception and reception of animal representation. South African artist and art critic, Jacki McInnes, discussed Daniel Naudé’s photographs of AfriCanis dogs pointing to an allegorical dimension in the reception of these images, stating that “the dogs seem to stand in for the indigenous black population; constantly pushed down, suppressed and dispossessed during the colonial and apartheid eras” (McInnes 2009: 56). That is undoubtedly a way in which many viewers may perceive the animals represented in the photographs – *as vehicles for socio-political notions*. I,

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1. Matthew Calarco (2008: 2) concisely describes animal studies as comprising “a wide range of disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, biological and cognitive sciences” addressing the ontology of animal beings, and the human-animal delineation.
 2. I employ the spelling employed by the AfriCanis Society of Southern Africa (The AfriCanis Society 2012).

however, find that Naudé's idiosyncratic non-human figures bely this reductive metaphoric reception, provoking in the viewer what I refer to in this article as *imaginative empathy* and *transposition*, a responsive encounter with a non-human "Other" where the individuation of the human self shifts.³

Before I explore Naudé's transpositional animal representation, I begin my *ruminatio*n on the figurative and figural representation of animal beings with an obscure but illustrative example of the interchangeability of figural and figurative (metaphoric) modes in the human reception of animal representation. In Moscow's Revolution Square underground station, famous for its iconic bronze sculptural friezes of Soviet-era workers/ revolutionaries, stands the figure of a frontier guard with [his]⁴ dog (Ploshchad Revolyutsii ... 2012). Moscow commuters believe that rubbing the nose of this dog figure brings them good luck (Ploshchad Revolyutsii ... 2012).⁵ The veracity of this belief in the sympathetic magical properties of this polished bronze hound is certainly grounded in the widespread human perception of dog beings as protective human companions, rendering the sculpture a representational "animetaphor" (Lippit 1998: 1112). James George Frazer, British social anthropologist, proposed the two generating principles of sympathetic magic as homeopathic magic (the Law of Similarity), and contagious magic (the Law of Contact) (Frazer [1890]1955: 114). Homeopathic magic is imitative and performed, mimicking the desired outcome, while contagious magic involves direct contact with the target (p. 115). Both notions of homeopathic and contagious magic (p. 115) are evident in the transfiguring of the bronze dog's nose: the rewarding gesture of patting the dog on the nose mimics the outcome that many commuters would desire – *to be rewarded by life* (homeopathic), while direct contact with a dog sculpture that is perceived to be lucky indicates a confidence in contagious magic. Through the action of contemporary secular acceptance

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3. This article developed from a review I wrote of Daniel Naudé's exhibition "African Scenery & Animals", published in *de arte* 83 in 2011.
 4. As a form of protest against the linguistic derision of non-human beings I employ square parenthesis as a "containing device", arresting grammars arising from my own writing, paraphrasing and citation that represent animals as objects or possessions. I also "capture" words that are marked as grammatical errors by the word processing system because I have assigned animated prepositions to an animal subject that should in grammatical reasoning be *figured* as an object.
 5. In the Cape Town hamlet of Simonstown the bronze sculpture of the famous Great Dane, Able Seaman Just Nuisance, shows similar signs of the human perception of the creature's figurative significance impacting on its figural form. The patting of the dog's nose by locals and tourists, which begins to alter the bronze form, is aligned with human behaviours relating to rewarding a "good dog".

of sympathetic magic and “animetaphor” (Lippit: 1998: 1112-1113) rhetoric the bronze dog’s nose is quite literally being rubbed off – a gesture that echoes the erasure of the real figure of the dog that may have been a model for this sculpture, and the human reduction of non-human creatures to the level of anthropocentric device. This altering of figural-dog-form points to a synergy between figuration and figurative modes of cognition, and reveals the vulnerability of figural animal representation to the pervasive action of the “animetaphor” (Lippit: 1998: 1112-1113).

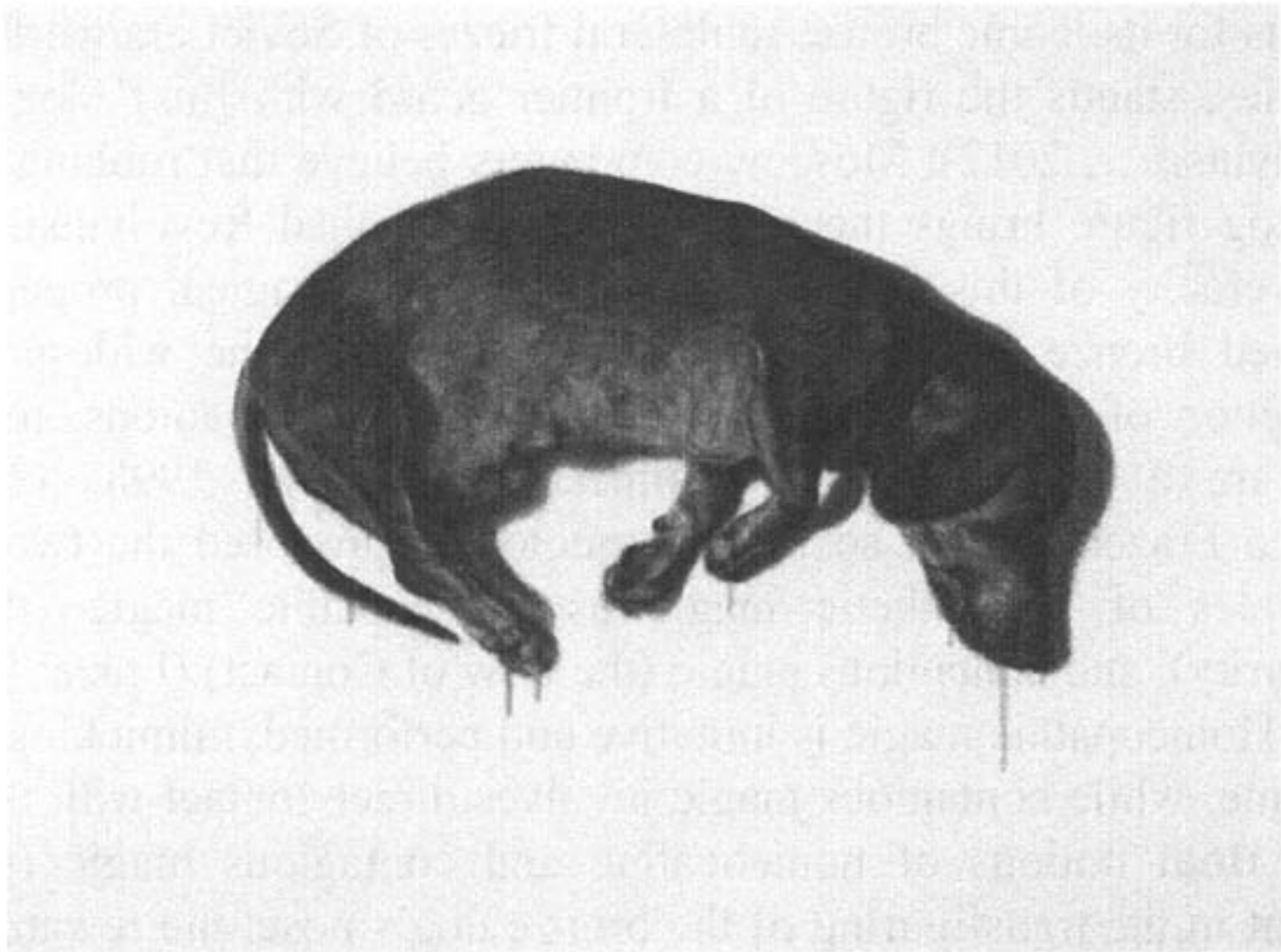


Fig. 1: Ann-Marie Tully, *Let Sleeping Dogs Lie — George*, 2011. Oil paint on cotton Fabriano article. 70 x 100 cm. Johannesburg Art Gallery collection. Reproduced by permission of the artist.

The question that occupies me as an artist cognisant of the right of animals to individual recognition and significance is how to represent or figure animal beings without “slipping down the slope” of metaphorical, allegorical or idiomatic (figurative) “animal autobiography” (Derrida 2002: 405). The answer as I encounter it, is that it is not possible to separate out these synergetic modes. Rather self-reflexive and transparent material gestures are required to “unveil” the ever-present “animal autobiography” (Derrida 2002: 405) that resides in every animal representation, whether or not the artist desired it, and most often through the viewer’s reception and authorship of the artwork. My awareness of this troubling reduction of non-human sentience informed a series of portrait paintings of my dog companions, the first being a post-mortem portrait of my beloved dachshund George. This painting titled “*Let Sleeping Dogs Lie – George*” (2011) (Fig. 1), spurred on the “*Let Sleeping Dogs Lie*” series (2011-2014) of paintings that also include dog companions who are currently alive. Amongst the self-reflexive devices that I employed in rendering this image was the decision to

employ the omniscient perspective of a human looking down at a sleeping dog (a physical reality in most cases, and a charged figurative notion implying judgement – in this instance referring to the human conception of the animal as a “lesser” form of life). In counterpoint to this problematic physical and metaphoric stance, great effort went into the layered and considered painterly rendering of the dog (George), stressing the creature’s sentience and character, asserting the agency of individual animal beings. Beginning with my observation of the sleeping ambiguity of George’s death pose, the sleeping postures of living dogs depicted at the time of the making of this series also ambiguously represent a death-pose-to-be. This “figuring” of corporeal frailty is indicative of my love for these animal companions and the anxiety around mortality that is the undertow of all relationships, rendered especially poignant by the disjuncture between the shorter life spans of animals, compared with human life expectancy. The visible drips emanating from the figure of the dog – in formal terms drips from an underpaint layer – reference the notion of death, suggesting the excretion of corporeal fluids. In a formalist sense they also unhinge the continuity of the representation revealing the construction of the painted illusion – gesturing to the human construction of *the animal*. In an ironic undertow to this sincerity, the idiomatic title of these works suggests the reduction of animal character to the service of human narrative or “animal autobiography” (Derrida 2002: 405). The animals depicted in this series of paintings are removed from recognisable spaces to disrupt the dominant trope of animal representation, where the non-human creature is frequently reduced to an object within a narrative. The resulting *floating* figuration enacts the “floating” character of animal beings as endlessly mobile and mutable signs in human cognition. This reflexive material and thematic structure ebbing between individual character and metaphoric reduction is revisited in numerous works on my solo exhibition “Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing” (2013-2015).⁶

6. The exhibition “Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing” (2013-2015) is a visual body of work concerned with the anthropological use of non-human beings as metaphoric and physical vehicles of human expression. The artworks comprising oil paintings, textiles and ceramics, debuted at NIROXprojects, Arts on Main, Johannesburg, in June 2013; travelling to the North-West University Botanical Garden Gallery in March 2014. The exhibition culminates in an exhibition at the Oliewenhuis Museum in Bloemfontein in February 2015. Online catalogues with further information and images from the exhibition can be found at the following links:

<issuu.com/ann-marie.tully/docs/wolfinshpeepsclathing_nirox?e=8275276/2576301>

<http://issuu.com/ann-marie.tully/docs/ann-marie_tully_-_a_wolf_in_sheep_s/3?e=8275276/7237262>

J.M. Coetzee's fictional character Elizabeth Costello is an irascible aging Australian writer, polemically invested in the moral status of animals and the invisible horrors that abound due to their Cartesian reduction in relation to the human subject (animal experimentation in scientific research, abattoirs and the meat industry) (Coetzee 2004: 79). During her guest lecture (diatribe) at the fictional Appleton College (much to the distaste of her philosophically schooled, meat-eating daughter-in-law) Costello equates the horrors of the Holocaust and the disaffection of the Nazis to contemporary culture's consumption and obfuscation of the animal (Coetzee 2004: 79). Costello argues against binary demarcations, noting that the question is not whether we are like or unlike animals, noting also that the difference found in this comparative method then entitles humans "to treat them [animals] as we like, imprisoning them, killing them, dishonoring their corpses" (Coetzee's 2004: 79). Costello argues that the horror that we must consider in relation to the question of the animal's role and perception in human society is that the Nazi killers refused to imagine themselves into the place of their victims: "[T]hey did not say, 'How would it be if it were I in that cattle car?' ... 'How would it be if I were burning?' They did not say, 'I am burning, I am falling in ash'" (Coetzee 2004: 79). Taking this further, Costello concludes that there are three kinds of people: people with the capacity to imagine themselves as someone else; people who have no such capacity (noting that in extreme cases we refer to these people as psychopaths); and people who have the capacity for imaginative empathy but who choose to ignore it (Coetzee 2004: 79).

Relating Costello's taxonomy of the human capacity for imaginative empathy (Coetzee 2004: 79) to my "Let Sleeping Dogs Lie" series of paintings and Naudé's photographic portraits, it could be said that the "Let Sleeping Dogs Lie" series fits loosely into the latter definition: people who have the capacity for imaginative empathy but who choose to ignore it (Coetzee 2004: 79). While I sanguinely credit myself with the capacity for imaginative empathy (Coetzee 2004: 79), this series of artworks is not strictly an exercise in human-to-animal transposition. Rather these paintings enact through viewership the ideological and phenomenological separation of human and animal beings. That said, I would also assert that the possibility for imaginative empathy is not ignored or psychopathically absent (Coetzee 2004: 79) in these artworks. As documents of my own empathetic exchanges with my dog companions (some of which are imaginative – considering how they might feel, what they might desire and need) there is an element of Costello's first and ethically more desirable category: people with the capacity to imagine themselves as someone else (Coetzee 2004: 79). The viewer's encounter with the representation of a sleeping and vulnerable non-human form may also provoke imaginative empathy through the contemplation of actual relations they might (or might not) have had with a non-human being, and the empathy and transposition

that might have accompanied that experience. There might even be some viewers who might imagine who this individual creature is/was.

Present in Naudé's photographic portraits of non-human creatures is a far more replete realisation of Costello's hopeful principle of people with the capacity to imagine themselves as someone else (Coetzee 2004: 79). Naudé's photographs of animal subjects contain the possibility for (and the inception of) an imagined empathetic (Coetzee 2004: 79) and transpositional encounter: a transgressive shape shifting, not trope or allegorical speaking – "animal autobiography" (Derrida 2002: 405) or "animetaphor" (Lippit: 1998: 1112-1113) – an encounter that Costello would approve of.

I am mindful of a certain degree of anthropomorphic arrogance in the notion of imaginative empathy (Coetzee 2004: 79), or transposition. This concern relates to Heidegger's differentiation of animal *Dasein* from human *Dasein* (Calarco 2008: 25). For Heidegger, animal *Dasein* exists within the relational structures of their lives, but differs from human *Dasein* in that only humans can consciously relate to the nature of the being of another creature, referring to this as a phenomenological transposition (Calarco 2008: 25). The order of objectifying hierarchical anthropocentric binary differentiation to which this premise belongs is increasingly imploding through a wide range of postmodern, postcolonial, posthuman and animal-centred academic research as well as through the work of animal activists, artists, and the "shifting sands" of socio-political and cultural zeitgeists. An example of an argument that debunks Heidegger's argument that only humans can phenomenologically transpose (Calarco 2008: 25) is Matthew Calarco's contention that points to the ways in which companion animals willingly adjust themselves to our lives as evidence of specific difference and varying animal expression of phenomenological transposition (Calarco 2008: 26-27).⁷ Also of particular interest is Donna Haraway's *The Companion Species Manifesto* (2003), which goes a long way to particularising and collapsing taxonomic approaches to the question of species. Haraway (cyborg/animal/biologist/philosopher) addresses exchanges between animals and humans through recounting and analysing personal experiences and narratives, noting that "we exist with each other in the flesh in ways not exhausted by our ideologies. Stories are much bigger than ideologies. In that is our hope" (Haraway 2003: 17). It is in this experiential sense that I employ the terms "imaginative empathy" and "transposition", as recognition of *mutual alliance in significant otherness*,

7. This is not a new theme. The early work of Michel de Montaigne notes the capacity of animal beings to exchange signs and respond to signs (Montaigne in Derrida 2002: 375). In thinking about his games with his cat, Montaigne considers the exchange of signs during play, and wonders, "[W]hen I play with my cat, who knows if I am not a pastime to her more than she is to me? ... We entertain each other with reciprocal monkey tricks. If I have my time to begin or to refuse, so has she hers" (de Montaigne in Derrida 2002: 375).

rather than abyssal, anthropocentric difference. Transposition in this sense is a flawed but hopeful exercise resistant to the “animal-autobiographic” (Derrida 2002: 405) character of human language. It is more aligned with Freud’s conception of the foreconscious: psychological receptivity and responsiveness stemming from and resulting in actions, objects and subjects (not words) in the world (Freud 1999: 2581) – a modality more suited to the morphology of image-making and viewing.



Fig. 2: Daniel Naudé, *White Mule*. Mlungwana, Eastern Cape, 20 October 2009. C-print, 110 x 110 cm, edition of 7. Reproduced by permission of Brodie/Stevenson Gallery.

Emmanuel Levinas, writing of his experience in a Nazi camp, described a dog called Bobby who recognised the Jewish prisoners as men when their captors saw only apes; he also warned against the desire to anthropomorphise Bobby – to perceive him as more human than the camp guards (Levinas in Fudge 2002: 7). This view on anthropomorphism – a dangerous and reductive projection of human characteristics onto animal subjects – proposes that to humanise animals is a colonising gesture, which superficially appears to close the species divide while it further clouds the ability to see animals as and for themselves; and allows in reversal for the merciless

animalisation of humans (Levinas in Fudge 2002: 7). Since I am inclined towards this argument, my first caution in seeking transpositional character in Daniel Naudé's artworks is to look for and consider signs of anthropomorphism. An extract from the gallery blurb on the exhibition "African Scenery & Animals" reveals a romantic tone strongly indicative of anthropocentrism, and some anthropomorphism attending these images. The blurb makes particular reference to Fig. 2, "White Mule" (2009):

[A] white mule almost turns into a unicorn. The hills and veld that Naudé invites us to traverse are filled with wonderful creatures, each more proud, perfect, and present than the next. But small details in the photographs reveal that Naudé's world is, in fact, our own The unicorn-like mule wears red rope, a wire collar.

(Naudé 2010)

The equation of the mule to the mythic unicorn is manifestly anthropocentric, anthropomorphic and problematic in my view. I base this assessment on the fact that unicorns are figures of the human imagination – a bricolage of perceived animal characteristics and physiologies that serve human symbolic interests. The positioning of the single horn of the rhinoceros (a fibrous keratin formation, not really a horn) growing on the creature's forehead between the eyes may have influenced the positioning of the fabled unicorn's horn (Schoenberger 1951: 284). It is impossible to know conclusively if the rhinoceros horn influenced the mythic formulation of the unicorn physique, but, it is known that the connection between the unicorn horn and the rhinoceros horn was first made in China as early as 400 AD, proposing the magical efficacy of both (Schoenberger 1951: 284). Considering the present-day voracious black market demand for rhinoceros horns for medicinal purposes, a trade that is leading to the merciless extinction of the species, I am inclined to view the comparison of Naudé's photograph of the white mule with a unicorn as in poor taste; and as fancifully and uncritically related to the subject of the photograph by the writer of the blurb.

Further to the anthropocentrism inherent in the imagined physiological construction of the unicorn, the symbolism of the unicorn is also tacitly anthropocentric. Unicorn symbolism can be traced back to at least Hellenic times (Ackerman 1935: 36). The Greek physician Ctesias (400 BC) espoused the magical curative powers of ground and ingested unicorn horn (Schoenberger 1951: 284). This belief, in addition to the widespread numinous associations of horned creatures in various world cultures, owing to the "rebirthing" ability of horns (Paine 1998: 152), explains the significance of the horn in the formulation of the unicorn. These early mystic associations formalised into early Christian interpretations of the unicorn as a symbol of Christ, and the horn as a symbol of Christ's death on the cross

and reincarnation (Schoenberger 1951: 284).⁸ As a result of the universal spiritual significance of the unicorn, exotic horns and horn-like forms of foreign or mysterious provenance were frequently assigned unicorn origins: tusks (in fact teeth, not horns) from creatures such as walrus and narwhal, and horns (fibrous outcrops, not horns in the bovid sense) from Indian rhinoceros were all abridged into the mythic taxonomy of unicorn horns (Schoenberger 1951: 284-285).⁹ This disregard for the actual provenance of the horn – for the creature to whom it once belonged – is reminiscent of the *erasure* (subtractive figuring) of the “lucky” dog’s nose in Moscow’s Revolution Square underground station (Ploshchad Revolyutsii ... 2012). The creature to [whom] the horn was once attached is erased and reconfigured in his or her artefactual state (the horn) as a fiction. Considering how many beings (of various species) have lost their identities and their lives (in many cases) in service of the human obsession with numinous horn talismans, it can be argued that the formulation of the mythic unicorn only serves human symbolic interests and is thus a distinctly anthropocentric phenomenon, not suited to Naudé’s visual oeuvre where animals take “centre stage”.

Furthermore, the inclusion of the horse figure in the formulation of the unicorn can be understood as an anthropomorphic feature. Horses are often characterised in “animal autobiography” (Derrida 2002: 405) and anthropomorphic terms: as benevolent, hard-working creatures. George Orwell’s overworked plough horse character, Boxer, in his allegorical novella *Animal Farm* (1945) whose dictum, “I will work harder”, exemplifies the assignment of human character to animal beings (Orwell 1996: 25).¹⁰ This

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8. Scholars have proposed that the famed “Lady and the Unicorn” series of tapestries (late 15th century), conflate the Christian tradition of the Virgin Mary with the worship of the Mother Goddess in early cults and religions (Ackerman 1935: 36).
 9. Finds of fossilised bone or mammoth tusks were also erroneously assigned this mystic origin (Schoenberger 1951: 284).
 10. The plough horse, Boxer, serves as a metaphoric vehicle for Orwell’s Marxist critique of the oppressive and alienating dimensions of capitalist enterprises (Orwell 1996: 25) and is also an empathetic figure that promotes the conception of horses as kindly. While this is a problematic reduction of the complexity of horse being it is also a good example of how anthropomorphism can serve as a “necessary evil” in terms of positively socialising human attitudes to non-human creatures – a counterpoint to Levinas’s warning against the dangers of anthropomorphism (Levinas in Fudge 2002: 7). Through the transference of human behavioural patterns onto an animal subject, human beings are narcissistically more capable of empathising with animal beings – without the alacrity required for a

anthropomorphic assignment of benevolence to the character of the horse could attest for the selection of a horse to *figure* the benevolent character of the unicorn.

Naudé's exhibition blurb (issued by the Brodie Stevenson Gallery) in the reference to the unicorn is ensnared in both an anthropomorphic and an anthropocentric trope. However, I am not convinced that the photographic artworks share this investment. On seeing Naudé's "White Mule" I was not struck by any similarity to a unicorn, nor did I glean any iconographic or indexical references to horns in the image. Rather, I was impressed by the redolence of the "posing" mule, and perceived a visual invitation to imagine oneself into the life of the mule (Coetzee 2004: 79). The impulse to effect a phenomenological transposition (Calarco 2008: 25) outstripped in my viewing experience the impulse to reduce the mule figure to a reductive figurative signifier of human circumstances:¹¹

Arranged centrally in this sublime setting is the statuesque figure of a whitish-grey mule. Framed at a high angle by the photographer, the mule's grubby coat, mud flecked and tousled, only seems to add to the creature's considerable presence. Her gaze fixed on the photographer and then the viewer, she appears proud, even confrontational, challenging her human viewer to perceive her prowess over this, *her world* (there is undoubtedly some anthropomorphic gesture in this, which perhaps aids the transpositional viewing experience). As the gallery blurb correctly notes, this image wavers awkwardly between a sense of romantic wonder and menace (Naudé 2010). The red collar on the mule disrupts the quixotic spectre, a sharp reminder of the real conditions of a domestic animal being (a slave); and an antithetical device that dispels some of the anthropomorphic aura of this mule (*humule*). Even so, the invitation to empathetically imagine (Coetzee

phenomenological transposition (Calarco 2008: 25), or an imagined empathetic encounter (Coetzee 2004: 79).

11. From this point onwards, the indented and single-spaced passages indicate imaginative empathetic (Coetzee 2004: 79) transpositional analyses – accounts of my viewing experience and thoughts. These accounts are less logically structured than other arguments and analysis sections of the article as they represent the free flow of association that takes place when viewing a work and having an experience of phenomenological transposition (Calarco 2008: 25). I am also intrigued by the idea that formally less constrained associative thinking brings the human subject closer to her/his "animal self", the foreconscious (Freud 1999: 2581) being that prefigures the ideological and discursive margins of species delineation. I am also interested in employing the associative flow of foreconscious thinking in academic written contexts, traditionally the arena of feted [needs a kappie on the first 'e']human reasoning and logic.

2004: 79) the sentience of this mule figure remains compelling and unaltered by the ominous red collar: *I think, I imagine: the wind feels brisk on my furry legs in this high place. I feel the collar, I see the man and the shiny snout, and I am troubled.*

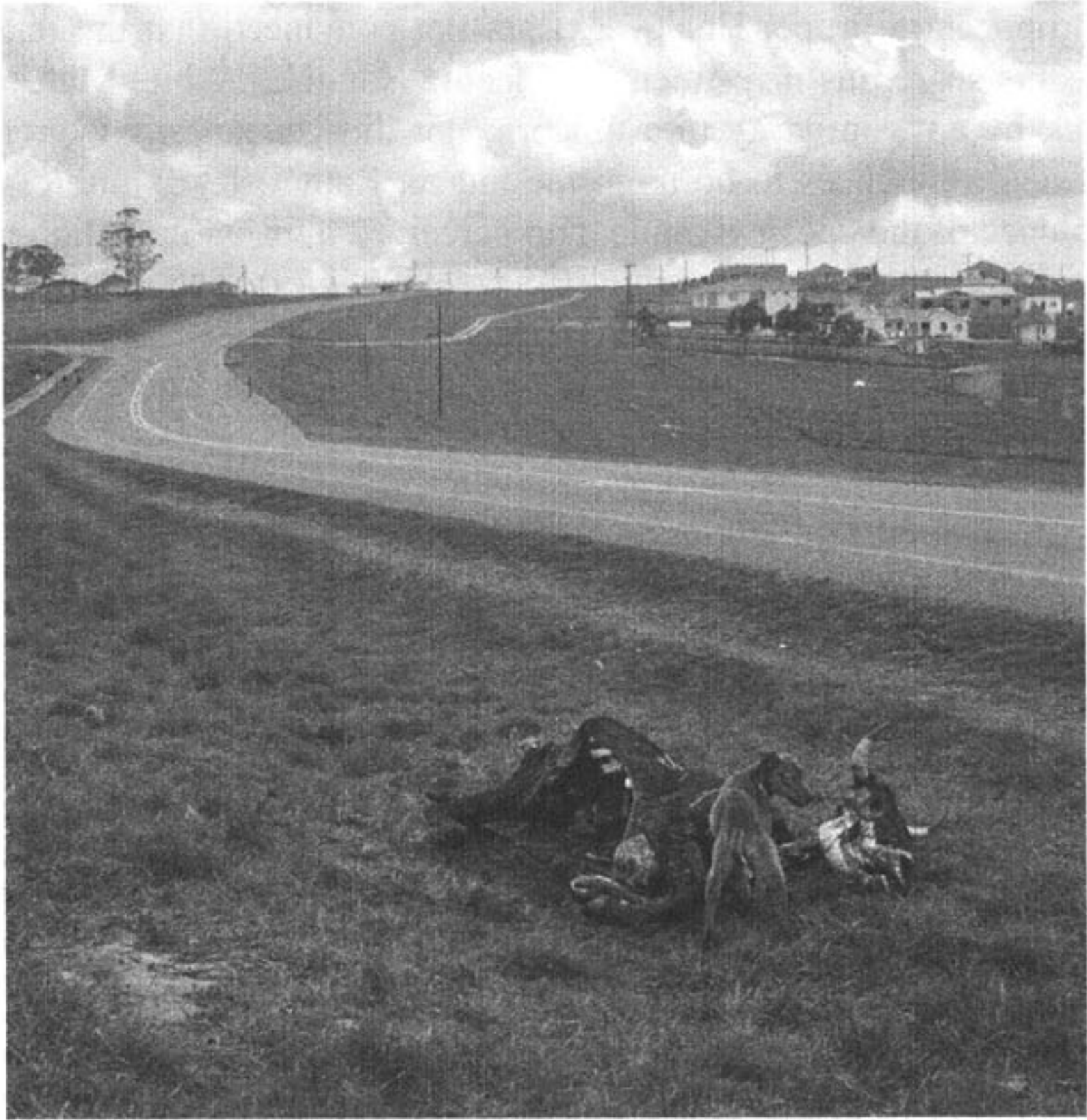


Fig. 3: Daniel Naudé, *Dead Nguni beside the Road Outside Umtata*, 21 October 2009. C-print (part of a diptych), 110 x 110 cm, edition of 7. Reproduced by permission of Brodie/Stevenson Gallery.

Fig. 3, “*Dead Nguni beside the Road Outside Umtata*” (2009), has by its morbid character far less claim to an anthropomorphic trope. The image depicts the putrefying disembowelled corpse [carcass] of a Nguni cow, formally composed on the other side of the road from a typical townhouse-style development in the background. This pictorial divide calls into mind a metaphor of species separation, and compositionally beckons the viewer to identify with the unclean foreground, rendering alien the familiar and dull buildings across the road. In terms of a transpositional encounter, this artwork is not as “inviting” as the “*White Mule*”. The figure of the decomposing cow (a dead thing) precludes knowability. It figures only as an “animal autobiography” (Derrida 2002: 405), a signifier of mortality. The gallery blurb picks up on this ontological “animetaphor” (Lippit: 1998: 1112-1113) in relation to another photograph of a dead sheep: “The image

suggests that it is precisely our mortality, and the fleeting nature of human and animal existence that binds [sic] us together” (Naudé 2010). This is an accurate, but a reductive analogy, deceptively suggesting that there is a point where the animal/human divide collides. Practically though, this is not the case. Even in death there is a difference between the construction of animal and human spheres. While we are buried or cremated with the customary respects being paid, our animal counterparts are in most cases discarded and incinerated without ceremony – a theme “figured” by J.M. Coetzee in his novel *Disgrace* (1999) – or butchered, packaged and eaten.¹² What is important to glean from the gallery’s reading of this image as a metaphor for the common end of all beings is that this interpretation is not a transpositional encounter. It also does not “figure” in a strictly metaphoric manner. Rather, this comparison demonstrates a similaic action – a judgement of likeness; and further to every animal simile in human language (for example “he died like a dog”) is the primacy of the human subject, to which the animal characteristic “figures” as a vehicle.¹³ My experience of this image was markedly different, involving an imaginative empathetic (Coetzee 2004: 79) crossing into non-human difference:

The awkward and genderless little dog whose eye flickers ominously as it is caught whipping its head around to mark the photographer, is the transpositional “figure” (shaman) in this scene, *transporting* the viewer across the simulacral screen; *to taste a sweet and putrid repast at the edge of annihilation.*

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12. The differences do not end in the physical treatment of dead human and animal bodies. I recall as a child attending catechism classes and being appalled by the doctrinal assertion that animals do not possess immortal souls.
13. That notwithstanding, the action of “animal for human” similes, metaphors, and allegories remains a powerful and irrevocable tool for artistic expression of the human condition. The “animal autobiography” (Derrida 2002: 405) that attends Naudé’s “Dead Nguni beside the Road Outside Umtata” (a scene of animal survival and death) describes the dire, exposed, and resilient lives of any number of poverty-stricken human settlements on the edge of passages of indifferent transition.



Fig. 4: Daniel Naudé, *Africanis 12*. Richmond, 4 April 2009. C-print, 110 x 110 cm, edition of 7. Reproduced by permission of Brodie/Stevenson Gallery.

Deviating briefly from the identification of transpositional character in Naudé's photographs of animal subjects, the following discussion of Naudé's "*Africanis 12*" (2009) (Fig. 4) reveals a predilection for what can only be described as feral pastoral landscapes, as settings for his animal protagonists; mostly the harsh countryside of the Karoo and the Eastern Cape. This is reinforced in the exhibition blurb which states: "Naudé reveals a sense of awe and reverence for nature that has eroded, or at least been reduced to a recreational activity, in our urban existences" (Naudé 2010). Even the title of the exhibition, "*African Scenery & Animals*", derived from an early-nineteenth-century folio by Samuel Daniell, a draughtsman appointed to an expedition to Bechuanaland, reflects this pastoral concern (Naudé 2010). The exhibition blurb also notes an interest in the conflicting concerns of the historical and colonial past evidenced in Daniell's oeuvre (Naudé 2010) – an enlightenment-inspired taxonomic documentation of the natural world, coupled with the colonial spectacle of wonder at the new and

the “Other”. Wolfram Hartmann, Patricia Hayes, and Jeremy Silvester propose that the camera was an intrinsic tool for the colonial project facilitating an “ethnographic occasion” for the ideologically tainted visual translation of actual phenomena of the time; steeped with the power relations, administrative contexts, and the dominant Western discourses of the period (Hartmann, Hayes, & Silvester 1998: 4). As a disclaimer to the problematic context of colonial landscape photography, the gallery asserts that Naudé’s scenery deviates from the colonial model in its “embrace of the complexities of Africa”, quoting the choice of maligned domestic animal subjects such as the AfriCanis dog and the abject dead cow as evidence of the artist’s more entangled postcolonial consciousness (Naudé 2010). That notwithstanding, there is a further divergent visual device. The central foregrounding of the animals in these photographs dominates the landscape backdrops. This obscuring phenomenon can be witnessed in “Africanis 12”:

Gazing through the low and flattering perspective of this photograph, my eye is drawn up the front legs of this regal dog, following the upturned tilt of his neck to his black snout and Martian-red eyes. I note his gender and then his tawny colour, striated like a landscape undulating through his coat. Only then does my eye flick up to the sky, down and across scanning the murky mountains and then abruptly back to the foreground, where it lingers for a while in the colourful and graded sharpness of the earthen elements.

Naudé’s deviation in the preferred animal subject, and the central framing of the figures disrupt the typology of colonial landscape photography in which wild animal species were generally the dominant subjects of photographs – both alive and dead (conquered). Colonial photographs of African landscapes and animals typified by the 1930s Namibian hunter, photographer and Native Commissioner of Ovamboland, Cocky Hahn, evidence a hyper-focal effect, flattening both the African landscape and animals into relatively indistinguishable two-dimensional planes of black-and-white tonality. This “sandwiched” appearance, due to the technological limitations of black-and-white film and wide lenses with small apertures (possibly also affected by the colonial intentions of the photographer’s point of view) rendered animals in the photographs as animated objects in the landscape, not as foregrounded portraits of individual subjects. Naudé’s composition of animals as foregrounded subjects in landscape environs, where the backgrounds recede into soft focus – particularly visible in “Africanis 12” and “Africanis 11” (2009) (Fig. 6) – results from advances in photographic equipment: the differentiating effect of colour imagery, and wide lenses with wide apertures that effect critical depth of field. These distinguished *portraits* of animals reveal an artistic desire to generate consequential new identities for domestic animals (stripped of agency by anthropocentric

speciesism), and AfriCanis dogs in particular, a species that has been subjected to the colonial taxonomy of *mongrel otherness*.

AfriCanis dogs have been subject to wide-ranging colonial discrimination, branded with the pejorative nomenclature of “mongrels”, also called by the deprecating names assigned by settlers to indigenous human communities in South Africa.¹⁴ Johan Gallant, writer and dog behaviourist, and archaeologist Dr Udo Küsel maintain that AfriCanis is a naturally selected aboriginal land race, the keen result of physical and mental adaptation to subequatorial African terrains (The AfriCanis Society 2012). These slender and agile medium-sized dogs with cone-shaped heads, and expressive eyes, exhibit a wide range of colour and marking variation due to the absence of human aesthetic interference in the breeding teleology (The AfriCanis Society 2012). The AfriCanis dog is deeply invested in the cultural heritage of humankind beginning their African journey 7000 years ago with the migration of Neolithic herders from the Middle East (The AfriCanis Society 2012). They are not a “mongrel”¹⁵ species.

Further to Naudé’s compositional disruption of the trope of colonial landscape photography through the portrait-style foregrounding of domestic animals in landscape settings, Naudé’s “Africanis 12” presents a striking similarity to the Western painterly genre of hunting-dog portraiture. This genre of painting spanned from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century depicting hunting dogs such as greyhounds in distinguished poses, set against pastoral landscapes. On analysis, both the composition of the painter James Henry Beard’s “Greyhound in an Undulating Landscape” (1846), and Naudé’s “Africanis 12” depict a sharply rendered dog in a distinguished pose foregrounded against a softer-rendered landscape background. Naudé’s deliberate composition of foregrounded dogs set against slightly out-of-focus landscape backgrounds suggests the possibility of historical

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14. Levinas’s argument regarding the animalisation of humans through the anthropomorphism of animals is evident in this scenario, where a pejorative name assigned to denigrate a human community is assigned to denigrate a dog species that dwelt amongst them (Levinas in Fudge 2002: 7). This interspecies transfer served to further entrench the animalisation of these communities (Levinas in Fudge 2002: 7)
 15. I am completely opposed to the denigrating attitudes that people have to mixed-breed animals, so-called “mongrels”. I have always had cross- and mixed-breed companion dogs, [who] have all proved to be remarkable and unique beings. Considering the multivalent passage of humankind (an ever-increasing revelation) it would be absolutely incorrect in my opinion to perceive human beings as anything but the product of mixed breeding. The prizing of a notion of “purity” of breeding in animals and humans (positive eugenics) is an abomination in my view.

intertextuality.¹⁶ The fact that AfriCanis dogs share a historical bond with hunters in rural and semi-rural southern African communities further suggests this connection (The AfriCanis Society 2012). Naudé's distinguished portrait photographs of AfriCanis animals resist the reductive representation of colonial photographs of African animals in landscapes, appearing more like the genre portrait paintings of celebrated hunting dogs. A further irony is present in this formal similarity: placing the maligned AfriCanis subject in a framework previously designed to celebrate the pedigreed dogs of the Western hunting tradition; paradoxically and poignantly celebrating AfriCanis dogs, through a medium that was previously employed as the instrument of colonial taxonomy and the denigration of African "Otherness" (both animal and human).

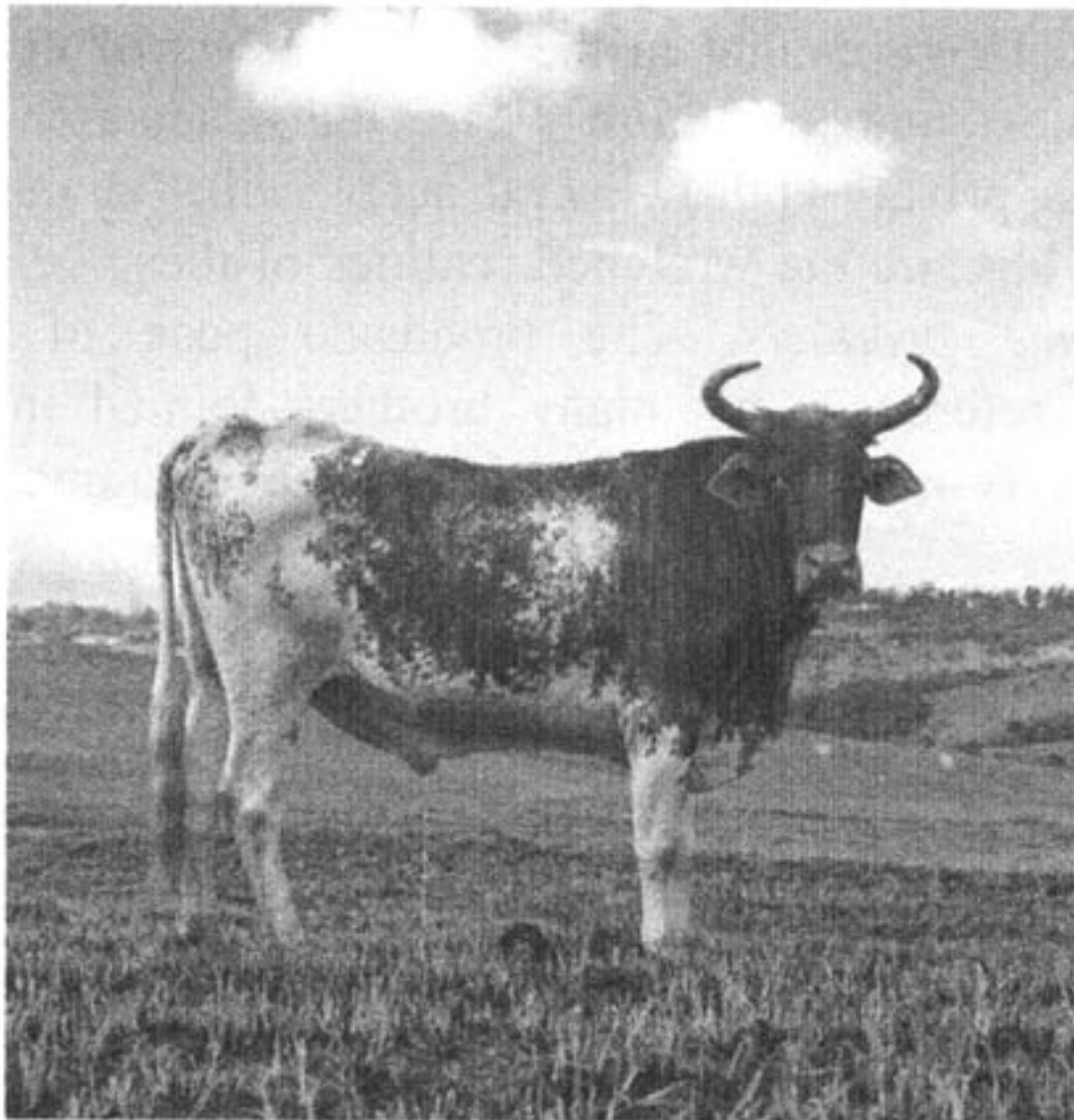


Fig. 5: Daniel Naudé, Nguni Bull. Kei River, Eastern Cape, 19 October 2009. C-print, 110 x 110 cm, edition of 7. Reproduced by permission of Brodie/Stevenson Gallery.

In my view, Naudé's photographic series, "African Scenery & Animals" sets up an antithetical argument with painterly and visual art animal genres throughout the body of work. His photograph of a meagre mule is juxtaposed in rhetorical irony with the prize horses of the painter George Stubbs (1724-1806), while the wiry and erratically marked Nguni cattle incongruously replace the plump and patched Jersey cows of English

16. In linking Naudé's photographic essay to this painterly genre I am neither confirming nor denying that the artist does or does not consider these visual art histories in his process. The similarities to these genres are, however, striking and do suggest conceptual intertextuality.

pastoral paintings. The robust pedigreed greyhounds and whippets of the hunting-genre paintings are assertively substituted with AfriCanis dogs. These once shunned subjects are assertively positioned within artistic tropes concerned with idyllic cultural narratives of breeding and valour. In doing so, these maligned creatures are offered a unique force in a culture that would sooner not see them than discard and consume them. The ironic choice of subject and use of ominous and disruptive elements such as the signs of bondage in the “White Mule”, and the urinating bull in “Nguni Bull” (2009) (Fig. 5) undermine and question these romantic visual tropes of animal representation, and the role of such images in a global culture that is consuming animals and nature with frenzied voraciousness. Daniel Naudé’s photographs of animals give and take away. While giving unique force to the disregarded bull (the origin of reified beef products), the stoically portrayed bull figure caught in the unfettered act of urinating in the open (reviled by most human culture where the evacuation of bodily fluid is perceived as a private and awkward act), baulks at the romantic pastoral fantasies that obscure the wretched realities of these beings – *workers who die to become products*. The broadside pose of this spirited bull intertextually references his many brothers framed in similar broadside (object) positions in innumerable agricultural publications.

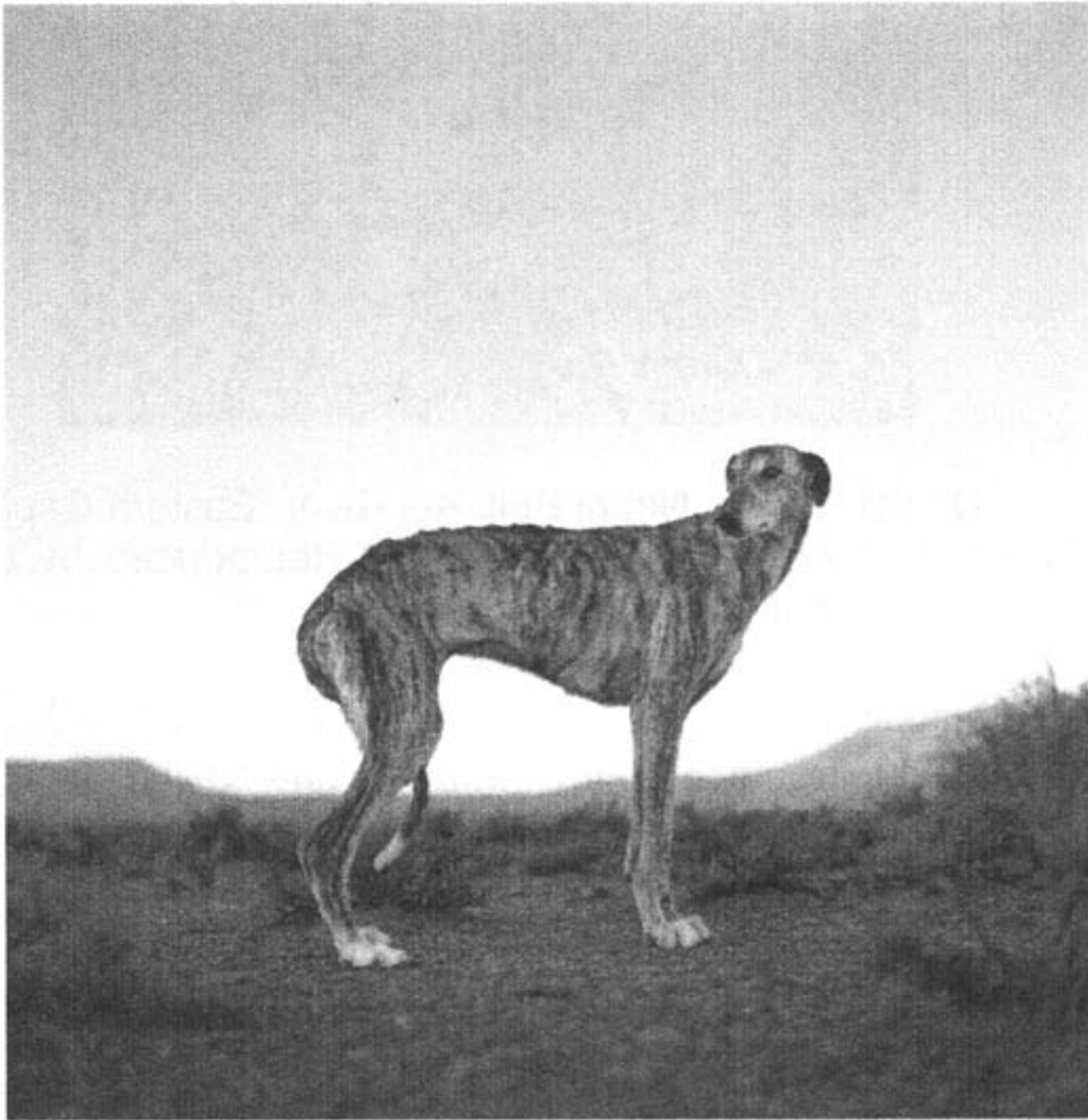


Fig. 6: Daniel Naudé, Africanis 11. Murraysburg, 4 February 2009. C-print, 110 x 110 cm, edition of 7. Reproduced by permission of Brodie/Stevenson Gallery.

A cautious approach to the landscape settings of the animals in Naudés oeuvre should attend the viewer who aspires to an empathetic transposition. W.J.T. Mitchell argues that “[l]andscape is a medium ... most radically, for communicating between the Human and the non-Human. Landscape mediates the cultural and the natural” (Mitchell 1994: 15).¹⁷ In saying this, Mitchell draws attention to the role of landscape as a semiotic cultural practice, a set dressing for dominant cultural discourse of the human domination of nature: master narratives which position the “Other” as animal, and animal beings as submissive to human beings (Mitchell 1994: 15). In this vein Jay Appleton put forward the predatory nature of landscape painting, proposing the viewer’s position as similar to that of a predator surveying his terrain and prey from a shaded position of safety (Appleton in Mitchell 1994: 16). This predacious gaze blights colonial hunting photography of African scenery and animals: the conquering gaze of the hunter/photographer, and the dispassionate gaze of the viewer, implicated through spectatorship in the commercial and imperial histories of the camera, and the ideological representation of landscape and animals. Naudé’s artworks grapple with the predacious legacy of the landscape genre and photography, forging a new path towards portraying animal agency. Through the title of the exhibition, and the pastoral scenery of the images, Naudé calls the viewer’s attention to a critical crossing with the imperial trope of landscape. The hunting genre, reminiscent of framing the animal figures in the compositions, leads inextricably to associations with hunting and ideal pastoral animal representation, which Naudé undermines effectively through devices of dissent such as the red collar in “White Mule”, the urinating bull in “Nguni Bull”, and the choice of maligned domestic animals as subjects. But nowhere is Naudé’s capacity as a contemporary animal-centric visual author more evident than in his critical and commanding treatment of the photographic medium. In many of his photographs, Naudé suspends disbelief momentarily in his own fictions. Fig. 6, “Africanis 11”, exemplifies this device. The out-of-focus foreground combined with the optical illusion of a slightly curved bottom edge reveals photographic aberration and the troublesome presence of the camera. The photographic landscape vista with its imperial legacy is also disrupted by this divisive use of an optical aberration. It occurs to me that this self-consciousness is perhaps too small a gesture to set against the grinding

17. Although the literature pertaining to imperial landscapes is, as Mitchell (1994: 31) notes, “as vast as the phenomenon itself”. This edited volume serves as a pertinent introduction to more recent thinking on the matter, redressing previous approaches that in many cases merely tease out political and economic messages from within the images (1994: 31). This more discursive approach is exemplified by a willingness to explore the details of culture and power in relation to the medium of landscape representation as a commodity fetish encoded with its own set of cultural values (1994: 31).

machinery of humanity's hegemonic domination of nature. But Naudé knows that photography is a euphemistic medium. To unravel a photograph too hyperbolically is to risk the loss of force and conviction in the frozen moment that offers mostly a fiction, but often a fact unseen – in this case, the indelible *being* of non-human creatures.

I return to the notion of imaginative empathetic (Coetzee 2004: 79) transposition. During the course of this article I have invoked and at times imagined how it might feel to be the animals in Naudé's poignant portraits: being a docile mule; or a sacrificial bull; but not without running into an aporia. If, as Appleton has it, there is a predatory dimension to the encounter with representational landscapes, human beings are outside of the possibility of imaginative empathy in an encounter with a landscape scene depicting domestic creatures such as mules and bulls (Appleton in Mitchell 1994: 16). Being human predators, more persistent than lions, more cunning than jackals, and more ruthless than hyenas – “animetaphors” (Lippit 1998: 1112-1113) – we are as viewers their consumers and destroyers. The AfriCanis dogs depicted in Naudé's photographs present a less difficult scenario for a transpositional encounter. In their liminal state, both domestic and wild (The AfriCanis Society 2012), predator and companion animal, these creatures bridge the ideological divide of animal and human, providing the viewer with a far less improbable subject for imagined empathetic exchange (Coetzee 2004: 79). But what of the impossible conundrum of a predacious human being imagining himself or herself as the prey animal? In speaking of the philosopher Thomas Nagel's contemplation of what it might feel like to be a bat – an absolutely alien being – Elizabeth Costello notes that when pressed, human beings can imagine what it might feel like to be dead (Coetzee 2004: 76-77). This stretch of the imagination evokes the terrifying existential contradiction of being conscious of the most unknown point of one's life: the cessation of life, the end of consciousness. In her way of alarming connections Costello concludes: “Now I ask: if we are capable of thinking our own death, why on earth should we not be capable of thinking our way into the life of a bat?” (Coetzee 2004: 77). In this mode of fictional and actual confluences and disparate connections, it seems only natural to me that a predator can and must imagine *being* prey. In my encounter with Naudé's “African Scenery & Animals” series of artworks I can attest to several such imaginative exchanges, and will close with an account of two:

While looking at “Nguni Bull” (Fig. 5). I focused on the bull's rampart form, so alien to my flimsy human (female) structure. I realised that it is this innate difference that makes it all too easy to reduce this being to beef. I imagine the strength of this creature rippling through my bones, testosterone flashing through my brain. I am caught somewhere between rage and the serene warmth of urine

streaming down my leg. *I wonder who this man is? What is this shining eye? Can it see me? I see it.*

My first impression of Naudé's "Africanis 11" (Fig. 7) is the bumpy line of the dog's spine. My thoughts follow along this gnarled course, along the curving tail to the effortless white paws spreading comfortably on the rough ground. I think, this is a resilient creature, a survivor in this arid place. I see a lump on the dog's chest that tells me she is a female – like me. I feel closer to her. The dog's head looks to the side and beyond the photographer. I imagine what she sees: her beloved human companions? A movement in the distance? *A scent draws my attention, grass, bush, dust and carrion on the wind. I want to go, but I must stand.*

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