

Carnalization
Secured in the Flesh

Rietveld Academie – BA Thesis Fine Arts

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Year: 2021

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Introduction

This thesis studies the transformation between human and animal, with themes suffering of the body and character of the head. The inspiration for the topic has been a number of events that I experienced, which slowly connected and formed the topic of Human Becoming Animal.

One such experience was when I encountered a five centimetre big spider in the middle of its spider web last summer. At first it seemed to be a wasp stuck in a spider web, but it turned out to be a spider that was disguised as a hornet. A hornet is the most dangerous and painful wasp. The spider looked very much like a hornet, as it was same size and the same yellow coloured stripes. The spider made me confused about his appearance as a hornet. The spider did not match the expected appearance of a spider, the idea of which I found surprisingly appealing.

A second experience was when I did a seal excursion by boat in the north of Germany, where we passed by uninhabited islands where only groups of peaceful seals occupied the beaches. Afterwards we visited a historical island museum, where I crossed upon a picture hanging above a seal coat and harpoons. In the picture, a number of figures laid on a beach that after closer inspection turned out to be seals. However, not only seals, because in between the seals there were man covered in seal fur mimicking the seals in posture. Until fifty years ago man dressed up as seals to integrate in the herd to be able to get really close to the seals, so they could harpoon them carefully to death.

I felt empathy for the seals and shame about the hunters.

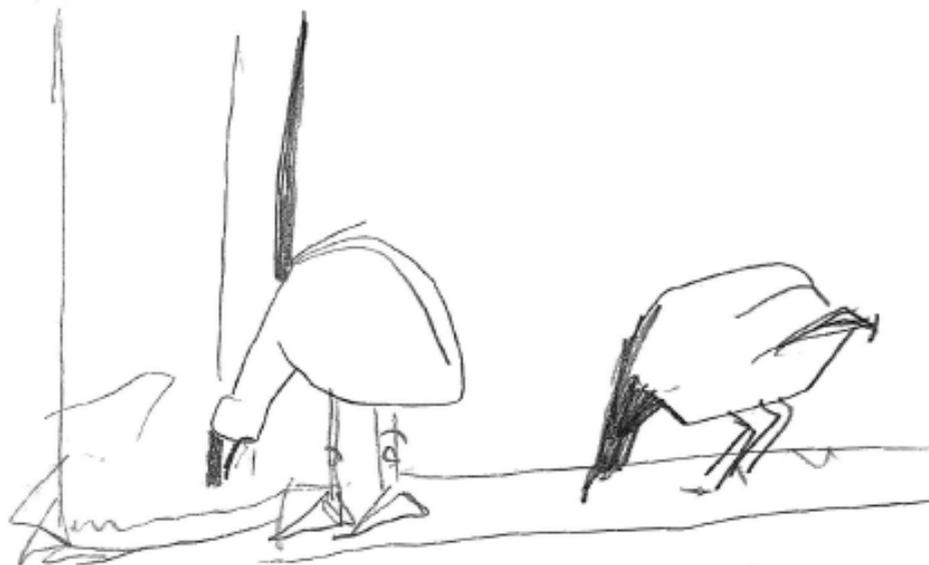
In these two situations human and animal get fooled by each other. Imitating and integrating in a group of animals was also interesting and made we wonder: when does human become animal? When are you as a human seen as an animal?

These questions again came to me when I visited my friend, who lives in a remote area within nature and has a two year old child, who expresses primitive behaviour towards other beings (humans, animals). Every time the toddler approaches something and wants to interact with it, he will instead of gently stroke, be very rough and use his fist. When this happens his parents will correct him immediately. This struck me as the child getting socialized by his parents: the taming of his primitive drifts and cultivation towards a civilized human with our norms and manners. Children fascinate and surprise me the most because of this uninhibited nature, with the behaviour that still looks a lot like those of an animal. Ignorant and unaware of any guilt, in contrast with the human who limit and constrain themselves by adhering to the code of conduct. How do humans communicate with animalistic humans and how do humans communicate with animals without understanding each other language? How can we start learning to communicate?

By the thesis research I opened up my eyes and learned that animal communication enlarges your awareness and the scope of your relationships towards the world.

Mankind drew a line between humans and animals. However, it did not only have the aim of making us feel good about ourselves by uncovering our superiority in species. It also helped us not to feel bad about ourselves when we hunted, ate, domesticated, mistreated and exterminated the other creatures of earth.

In this thesis I studied when human becomes animal. During the past year I have made art and held



expositions that study when the line between human and animal becomes unclear. If a human could transform into animal and vice versa, would we understand and treat each other better? In chapter 1 Animal-Human body, I describe what is an Animal, Human body and its functions. In chapter 2 Decaying Meat, I describe the deformation of body of Francis Bacons paintings and my research on how a human becomes animal by Berlinde de Bruyckere. Chapter 3: Animal body with human spirit, is about the paintings of Shao Fan, which are the opposite of Berlinde and Bacon. Finally, chapter 4: Subcutaneous Cohesion Slot, focuses on the conclusion of my research.



Animal-Human Body

The difference between human and animal is that human distinguish themselves by ranking higher in knowledge. Humans shaped the world to suit our needs. The animal can show the human how not to be a centred subject, but how to operate other-than-in-individual identity. Maybe man shaped the world to fit our unfitting body. I have to say that not all the animals are able to show the human not to be subject, but some do.

Animals can be categorized based on their three different animal situations, which I will explain. Deleuze and Guattari's talk about three similar categories as well. The first are individual animals, such as family pets. These are domesticated animals that have been tamed like children. They get punished when they misbehave and are kept to fulfil the emotional needs of the owner. The owner wants the pet to be reliable for the their needs, they have to bring joy, happiness and should not disappoint us by walking away.

The second category are animals with characteristics or attributes that are useful as seen by human society and serve a specific purpose. Or animals kept for cultural rituals and entertainment where they symbolize the human stereotypical image of the animal. Think of an aggressive bull, or a goat on a children farm. Also think about animals kept for their meat and milk. The owner doesn't have a deep emotional connection to them, cause they're kept for an industry, which means their fate is to be slaughtered or their strength will be used up one day. These animals are fenced in as well, but often live with animal company. These animals are for generations in human industry and became silenced in their body. They are quite work forces, who follow and fill the need that is asked. I call them quite because they lost their expressive will completely, sometimes they are in such a sad situation or life, that their feelings are closed off.

The third are the only kind that can undergo transformations; these are more demonic animals. These are free animals, with an open mind. Being able to response to their will, heart and instinct. Not being bound or hindered by captivity. Freedom in habitat and agency over their own body. And thus are able to develop their selves.



Decaying Meat

In his book on Francis Bacon: *The Logic of Sensation*, Deleuze writes that the body is the material of the figure, which should not be confused with the structure. (Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 1981) The figure does not have a face, but does have a head because it is an integral part of the body. The figure can get reduced to the head.

Bacon is a painter of heads, not faces. The difference is that a face is a spatial construct that conceals the head, whereas the head is dependent on the body. The head has a spirit in bodily form, a vital breath, it is the animal spirit of man; a horse- spirit, a rabbit- spirit, an ostrich- spirit, a baboon- spirit, a bat- spirit. Bacon dismantles the face, to rediscover the head, or make it emerge from beneath the face.

In Bacon's paintings the deformation of the body are animal characteristics of the head. Bacon makes the face lose its form by rubbing technique so the animal spirit that haunt the head can take his place. For example, sometimes a real dog is treated as the shadow of its master. Or conversely, the shadow of the man himself assumes an autonomous animal existence. The shadow escapes from the body like a sheltered animal. Bacon creates in his painting a zone of invisible or undecidability between human and animal. Man becomes animal, animal becomes spirit at the same time. It is never a combination of forms, but the fact of man and animal. The most isolated figure is already a coupled figure, coupled with his animal like a latent bullfight.

The entire body, from flesh and meat is the objective zone of undecidability. Bone is only its spatial structure. The body can only stand because of bone, while flesh covers the bone. Bone can be seen as the material structure of the body, and the flesh as the bodily material of the Figure. The tension between flesh and bone must be achieved, to paint meat, through the splendour of its colours. Meat confronts flesh and bone locally. The same is true for the mouth and teeth. Meat comes from the bone, while bone rises up from flesh. An interpretation of Bacon's body, is the taste for painting a figure who raises a bone, so the drowsy flesh descends from it. The interest in 'fall' and 'crucifixions' is the descent, and the inverted head that reveals the flesh descending from bone.

Bacon: 'Pity is Meat' every man who suffers is a piece of meat. Meat is not dead flesh, it retrains the suffering and assumes all colours of living flesh. It has pain and vulnerability but also invention, colour and acrobatics. Meat is the zone of mind and the beast, their zone of indiscernibility, the state where the painter identifies with the objects of his horror and compassion. The painter is a butcher, who sees the butchershop as a church where the meat is crucified.

The fascination with a wounded animal and the losing yourself in contemplation of the beast, and the believe he experienced for an instant the type of existence of such a being. It is a deep identity, the zone of indistinguishability, the highest sentimental identification: the man who suffers is a beast, the beast that suffers is a man. This is the reality of becoming. Who did not feel as a beast and became responsible, not for the calves who died, but before the calves who died.

The bone belongs to the face, not to the head. The head is of flesh, not dead flesh. Bacon's own head is a block flesh without eye sockets. Throughout Bacon's work the relation between the head and meat runs a scale of intensity that renders it intimate. Series of heads and their identity with meat, painted in colours of meat; red and blue. Finally, the meat is the head; the head becomes the non-localized power of the meat. It is important to understand the affinity of the mouth, with meat. It is

no longer a particular organ, but the hole through which the entire body escapes, and from which the flesh descends. Bacon calls this the 'Scream', in the immense pity that the meat evokes. The most fascinating features of Bacon's paintings is the sadness of the figures toward their uncontrollable fate. The loss of control in their transformation from recognizable being to a skinned blob of meat. Bacon paints the inner struggle of figures with their bodily suppression. Answering the question "what is a human, animal body" , by seeing the body as a form made from flesh and meat who absorb all mental suffering from our daily life which is being hold up straight by our bones. All bodies suffer and decay.

A description on the Francis Bacon Painting, Fragment of a Crucifixion 1950

I see a black structure where a figure is clamping on top, in rest. But then his bottom part is dripping away into a fall, where the screaming mouth is falling through a clean white angular structure into a shady but neutral coloured background. The screaming mouth of blobs flesh and muscle. It makes me think of trying to scream out your restrictions of being in a body. However the meat and flesh blobs that are painted are not at all representations of human, but also blends of a human-animal bodily figure. So it gives me this impression of a human deforming into a chicken, or a frog head dripping into a featherless chicken, clamping on top of the T shaped cross . The T shaped cross symbolizes time . The chicken is looking out over the landscape where human figures move into the horizon. Frog with a head which is a mouth screams and shout out from his inner head, from his soul. Being: Trying to express themself in there bobby meat. The melting of your own flesh trough time. Trying to melt away. Melting your flesh into a shadow, in the human shaped world. Trying to melt your flesh, sins or negative absorptions away as a fleshy creation. Being with your soft shapes from meat. Living in an angular, shaped word, where things are rushing except from human build structures, houses, designs. The desire to melt away or scream out in this angular surrounding.

When I see the meat, flesh, boned figures or objects, they give me the thought of this uncleanness – unpureness , with which we deal as a growing human. An inner struggle with not being able to get rid of experiences the body absorbs. Part of the figure is alive and strong muscled, and a part is dead or dying flesh, dripping from the living part. Pale skinned flesh in animal shapes with human resemblances makes me able to identify with the figure, the same identifying I feel when I see a dead animal, skinned in a butchershop, in the supermarket . Cause then I also wonder if it is was human or animal the flesh, to which the meat and bone belonged to. Or I feel sorry and regret for wanting to move so fast through life, when I cross paths with a dead or dying animal who got hit by a car and has been ripped open. If I move on, more moving traffic will drive over the carcass, until it will finally be shattered around the road.

I wonder if dead meat is still the person. Or do we lose our person when our meat dies? In my experience a body loses their recognition of being when it is skinned or just a blob meat, part of flesh. Dead meat is meat unable to be part of the figure it came from. It doesn't matter anymore where the meat came from, cause all the meat looks like meat.

Bacons vision on the subject of animal and human is that he morphs the animal of human in his paintings to such an extent that the figure is not recognizable as one or the other anymore. The



human and animal without skin are meat who looks the same and the meat start to suffer in the same way as well. By the nude meat the distinction between animal and human seems to be gone.

Berlinde de Bruyckere : “Er zit schoonheid in dat lijden” “There is beauty in suffocation”

The work; Lichaam (Corpse) was made in 2006, and presented at Berlin Biennale. Lichaam is a sculpture in the shape of a horse who is laying on two metal supports. The size is 1,60 meter high and tree meter wide. The horse does not have any legs, The torso is stuffed, which forms the body of the horse. The head and neck of the horse faces down and, is sewn back together and stuffed so it has a round volume. The neck still has a mane. The face is not recognizable, and the horse does not have ears. The skin from the shoulders till the butt is not sewn back together. From the back, loose brown skin is folding down towards the ground, there you see that it is not one skin, but multiply skins piled up on top of each other. All the skin has the same colour; from light brown on the back till dark brown, with black on the ending edges.

The sculpture gives me a thought of as a horse being part of a herd, a group animal. The multiple skins on top of each other let me think of being part of a species where all individuals looks the same. Then the wiped out face lets me think of people handling the horse in a non-personal manner, or not wanting to see the character of the animal. The fact that the horse is laying on the metal supports let me think that people are still working on a project, the horse. As if the horse is placed on the supports to rest, but not laying there comfortable. Being dead, remaining in only a skin but still recognizable for our eye to see the horse it ones was.

With her sculptures Berlinde focuses on the formations and deformations of the body. By stripping the skins of full grown horses and piling so much skins on top of each other, the pile transforms into a new horse-shaped form. The recognizable figuration of one full grown horse skin, becomes a new creature by having thirty of horse skins on top of each other.

The first work I saw of Berlinde was a blanked figure. ‘aaneen-genaaid’ from 2000, A wax human body with head and torso , rolled in blanket. It was human size and gave me the creeps because of the uncomfortable pose. That pose made me think about hiding your nudeness so you have to unwind even more before you develop. Or using a dead sheep to protect yourself from dying.

The most fascinating of de Bruyckere’s art is her use of material. The real horse skin and sculptures in lifelike size impact the viewer and do answer my question about what is a body. Overwhelming reality by identifying or recognizing the material of skin. Covering up individual skin by more skin from the same species, reveals the bodily decay by life expectancy for human and animal. By seeing the covered bodies, piled up horse skins, we as humans start to question our own quantity of bodies on earth and the irreversibility of aging. De Bruyckere addressses life and death, pain and suffering and emphasizes how human existence is secured in the flesh.



Comparing Francis Bacon and Berlinde de Bruyckere

Bacon is a painter while de Bruyckere is a sculptor. In the artists I see some similarities. Berlinde works with commenting on the human and animal position. Both artists see the everyday suffering of living beings gets stored in the meat. Carnalization of the figure, human or animal. All the flesh of meat become blobs of meat. In Bacon his works the figure morphs into a blob of flesh. In the work of Bruyckere she uses stripped skin, wrapping of flesh to make a form again. She addresses life and death, secured in the flesh.

So after this explanation of the Bruyckere's ideas of the flesh I would like to know; what are the differences between Bacon and De Bruyckere? Both artist erase features in the face, for example the eyes that have disappeared. Bacon erases faces so their beings become less recognizable as a human or animal. The erasing done by De Bruyckere leads to the loss of the individual character, but also accentuates the figure just being a figure and part of a herd. By 'erasing' the horseskin material of the sculpture, it empathizes our own skin.



Animal Body with Human spirit

Every generation has their own human-animal morphing stories. In the stories there are a lot of woman transforming into cats, and I think this is interesting because the majority of humans I asked what animal they feel like, answer they feel like a cat. In the second place, people tell me they would be an ape. I want to be a rabbit.

Animals with a human soul are represented in the paintings of the Chinese artist Shao Fan. I went to his exhibition 'Between Truth and Illusion' in Den Bosch. He mostly paints rabbits and apes. The paintings are of human size which makes the animals impressive. When I see his work I wonder if I am in front of a human with a rabbit soul or a rabbit who was a human. The animal is positioned in the middle of the canvas which gives it an air of wisdom. The staring of the eyes into yours, the rabbit eyes look straight forward, which is unusual for rabbits, cause in nature they can't. In some of Shao's paintings he even forms the rabbit in a human pose, cross armed, but for me this is a bit over acted. The way he paints is with ink and with great delicacy. Very clean, considered lines, almost design. In interviews Shao Fan says that he strives for the highest form, which he thinks is aesthetic. After he said this I started to see his paintings different, he confirmed the longing for harmony through cleanliness and it weakened the mystery around the paintings. The non-texture and softness made me want to see more animalistic drift. In the way of painting but also in the character of the animal.

Shao Fan's paintings are important for me because he creates large windows through his painting in which we can see the seriousness of the animal. The figures are majestic and gain an exalted appearance, almost god-like, looking down on the small human in front of them. The imposing omniscience and luminance the animal naturally has, and which we humans strive for. I am talking about the natural glow of serene peace and perfect harmonized balance animals have over them. The implication seems to be that in the 'wild' animal world, movement is unclumsy, and elegantly aesthetic. Only in the unnatural setting of the modern human world is art necessary as a poor approximation to this: an approximation which is echoed in the unfitting, dislocated and anomalous form of the artist's (Drugged, imprisoned or monstrous) body. The Paintings of Shao Fan answer my question and illustrate what happens when an animal becomes human. The animal will overlook people with omniscience and be in a pure ascetic peace, like a god.

The rabbits in Shao Fan's paintings don't have any suffering in their meat or fleshly body. They are depicted as pure, holy virgins in complete harmony with life. It is this balance of perfection we long for as humans, but will never achieve until we're enlightened. The holiness hope of Shao Fan and his strive that aesthetics is perfection is a contradict with Bacon and De Bruyckere who visualize all suffering in the flesh.

But all three of these artist emphathize the question how human existence is secured in the flesh. The same flesh between human and animal in Bacons painting, the gestures and skin empathie in Berlinde de Bruyckeres sculptures and the aesthetic serene of Shao Fan's works were there is an figurative animal painted but we want to be that animal by its pure essence.



Subcutaneous Cohesion Slot

When does human become animal? How can we start learning to communicate?

In general I learned that becoming is never imitating. Imitating an animal in art may nevertheless be a starting point to becoming animal. Open up your mind to receive external input which enlarges your scope of awareness.

Everyday experience. As described by Adam Phillips: "Only by absolutely losing something, "an image that you will never retrieve" as Bacon says, do you get the surprising thing". (Bron: Steve Baker, *The Postmodern Animal*, p. 140, 2000)

If a human could transform into animal and vice versa, would we understand and treat each other better?

I learned from Bacon that the difference between human and animal is nihil, seen in bare flesh. By deformation of the body in his paintings; flesh is meat and humans and animals are made of meat. The figure does not have a face, but does have a head because the head is an integral part of the body. Bacon dismantles the face to rediscover the head and reveal the animal characteristics of the head.

Shao Fan is doing the opposite and rediscovers the animal head by revealing human characteristics.

When are you as a human seen as an animal?

"The man who suffers is a beast, the beast that suffers is a man" Bacon. Berlinde de Bruyckere comments on human animal relation by carnalization of both bodies.

When a human is seen as an animal is a matter of perspective on what is an human, because after researching, all humans have similarities in expressions and characteristics being lead back to animals. Also humans and animals beings are build up from the same material which makes me see animals and humans created from the same substance. Bone as the material structure of the body and the flesh as bodily material of the figure.

How do humans communicate with animalistic humans?

"There is beauty in suffocation." says Berlinde de Bruyckere.

"Every suffering body is a piece of meat. Pity is meat" says Bacon.

The similarity of the atrabilious dark view on the world by existing in a body made from flesh. Which suffers by its decay.

A part of the figure is alive, a part is dead flesh, dripping from the alive part. Bacon paints the inner struggle of figures with their bodily suppression. All bodies suffer and decay show Berlinde and Bacon. By the paintings of Shao Fan we learn how to communicate between species with respect and harmony. You don't have to be the same to understand each other. By valuing the atmosphere we reach knowledge and peace in life.

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