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The Animal Curator – Duchamp's Inframince and Animality

Introduction

Let's start with the title – “The animal curator”. Usually this indication refers to the activity of someone who “curates” animals. Earlier this person would be referred to as someone working in a zoo, but since the terminology of curating has been much more widely appropriated and organising one's clothes or books is nowadays already referred to as curating, one can thus also curate animals (Doove, 2017, pp. 25-26). This paper however looks at the behaviour of certain animals that could be described as having a form of curatorial behaviour. In doing so it is both tempting and dangerous to project a so-called human quality on these animals. But what if this quality is actually animal and the human curator thus an animal curator? Within the context of *making* the posthuman in a landscape of art theory and practice this paper therefore wants to explore the “human” activity of curating as animal, placing the human more explicitly on an animal level and not the other way around. It is thus not so much a question of “becoming-animal”, as a recognition of “being-animal”.

Where Serres' *The Parasite* and Wolfe's introduction to its English translation (2007), specifically its discussion of noise in relation to cybernetics, was earlier used to stress the necessity of “becoming minor” or “animal” in a curatorial context (Doove, 2017), this paper will further unpack this connection in a reading of Wolfe's and Derrida's observations on the posthuman in the anthology *Zoontologies* (2003). Before introducing Duchamp's *inframince*, with its interest for minor differences and potentialities as a potential operational tool and opening an unexpected connection between Duchamp and animality, the paper will then make a link to both Donna Haraway's *Staying with the Trouble* (2016) and the recent publication *Fictioning* by David Burrows and Simon O'Sullivan (2019) that seem to provide a further solution.

The posthuman turn is in essence a lesson in humility. Recognizing the inherent animality of the curatorial through a connection with Duchamp's minute *inframince* allows for its overdue extension within the humanities that Wolfe alludes to.

Curating in the nonhuman world

In her essay *The Exhibition as Collective* von Bismarck (2012) indicates the importance of the nonhuman figure when she relates the arrangement of a (group) exhibition to Latour's *actant*. The *actant* is a nonhuman entity that is in a position to activate subjects, and as such is a reading of Serres' concepts of "quasi-subject" and "quasi-object". As von Bismarck explains

By means of delegation ... those who were involved as objects or subjects in the artifact in question are perhaps absent at the actual moment in time but are present in the quasi-subject. Because of this presence, the artifact that exists as an actant possesses qualities that are otherwise attributed only to subjects. In the delegation, Latour explains, it is "that an action, long past, of an actor, long disappeared, is still active here, today, on me. I live in the midst of technical delegates; I am folded into nonhumans" (Latour cited in von Bismarck, 2012, p. 296).

Where Latour "argu[es] for the agency of all manner of non-human actors" (Burrows and O'Sullivan, 2019, 183), it is useful to point out that curating does not seem to be restricted to the human world but can also be found in the nonhuman, more specifically animal world. Most recently, a "new" kind of pufferfish attracted for instance attention through the intricate circular patterns it develops for its spawning nest whereas octopuses have an intriguing preference for shiny objects or unfamiliar objects that they will arrange aka "curate" around their caves, in so-called gardens which inspired Ringo Starr to write "Octopus Garden".¹

But it is especially birds that demonstrate activities that come extremely close to what can be called a curating activity. In several of his documentaries, amongst others the *Planet Earth II* series (2016), David Attenborough, has demonstrated this behaviour. Wilson's Bird of Paradise thus turns out not only to clean a patch of jungle ground of dead leaves and other debris to attract a mate, but also picks fresh green leaves from bushes around it that it seems to consider as being competitive to

¹ See <https://www.thedodo.com/meet-4-of-natures-most-elabora-447749966.html> that brings together several of these references.

its own bright colours, or, as Attenborough observes, to lighten up his “stage”. The family of the bowerbird is possibly even more intriguing in that it first builds a structure, the so-called bower, out of branches and then decorates it with all kinds of colourful materials, not hesitating to include human waste materials such as plastics if at hand. In the *Planet Earth*-documentary mentioned above it turned out to have a particular preference for the colour red. An older documentary by Attenborough, *Bowerbirds: The Art of Seduction* (2000), shows several kinds of bowerbirds that all have a specific predilection for certain natural or manmade materials, depending on where they live, with which to “decorate” their bowers, arranged in a very particular and precise way. In his documentaries Attenborough on several occasions changes the arrangement around the Bird of Paradise’s “arena” or the bowerbird’s arrangement around his bower slightly which the birds in question immediately come to correct. What is of interest in connection to this paper’s argument is that Attenborough quite explicitly uses art-related terminology to describe the birds’ activity and that he sees their work as a kind of art form that can be easily compared with that of human artists. In relation to the Bird of Paradise, he further talks of them as “displaying birds”. What is especially intriguing in the bowerbird’s behaviour is the combination of display and performance which leads Attenborough even to refer to it as multi-media art. And then there is the occurrence of the collective of “artists” – an older bowerbird and its apprentices as an animal version of Rembrandt’s studio, or as this paper argues, possibly the other way around.

Looking and observing

How does this looking at and observing of the behaviour of bowerbirds fit into a discussion of the posthuman, and more explicitly within the *making* of the posthuman in the context of art theory and practice? To answer this question, I will first look at Cary Wolfe because of his observation in his introduction to *Zoologies* that “the pressing relevance of the animal has been generated in contemporary culture more outside the humanities than within” (Wolfe, 2003, p.x). This remark follows after including an impressive list of the various theoreticians that have dealt with the question of the animal over the past three decades before the publication of the book in 2003, ranging from Kristeva, Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari, Lacan, Bataille to Haraway (Wolfe, 2003, pp. ix-x). Since its publication in 2003 obviously much more has been published on the subject, of which Haraway’s *Staying with the Trouble* (2016) is especially poignant for the discussion in this paper in its link to the arts. Publications as *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet* (2017) to which Haraway also

contributed are equally important and one could of course also point to the writing of Timothy Morton, especially his *Humankind – Solidarity with Nonhuman People* (2017). To which can be added Michel Serres who in an interview with Hans-Ulrich Obrist, answering whether it's possible to link art to ecological justice, has stated that “It could very well be today's fundamental evolution of art, which means coming back to an inspiration that was quite a traditional one, but also anew – to open oneself up to living species, to open up to life and to nature” (Obrist, 2014).

Zoologies predominantly focuses on ethical questions concerning the relation between the human and nonhuman but it nevertheless forms an interesting starting point for my argument. In his introduction Wolfe recognizes a new turn in “the place of the animal as the repressed Other” in the combination of “two primary factors [that] enable an archaeology and mapping of this problematic that was unavailable for contemporaries of Freud, Sartre, or Nietzsche” (Wolfe, 2003, p. x). The first is the crisis of humanism in critical theory with its questioning of the hegemony of the human by structuralism and poststructuralism, or as Wolfe puts it, “the interrogation of the human as the constitutive (...) stuff of history and the social” (Wolfe, 2003, pp. x-xi). To this Wolfe adds “the new transdisciplinary theoretical paradigms that poured into the human sciences” such as cybernetics and systems theory or chaos theory “that have had little use and little need for the figure of the human as either foundation or explanatory principle” (Wolfe, 2003, p. xi). One could however question this statement as both factors are entwined. It is especially the second factor that Wolfe mentions which in the context of this paper is more important, namely that of the radically changed place of the animal outside of the humanities in fields such as cognitive ethology and field ecology. This factor really questions whether we are still able to separate ourselves from animals and has “more or less permanently eroded the tidy divisions between the human and the nonhuman.” (Wolfe, 2003, p. xi)

A further significant observation by Wolfe is that he sees a promising factor

in the liberal philosophical tradition for the prospect of thinking the question of the animal was its emptying of the category of the subject, its insistence that subjectivity-and with it freedom no longer depended on possession of any single identifiable attribute, such as membership in a certain race or gender. (Wolfe, 2003, p. xii)

Of the contributions to *Zoologies* I will thus mainly be looking at Wolfe's own contribution “In the Shadow of Wittgenstein's Lion: Language, Ethics, and the Question of the Animal” and Derrida's “And Say

the Animal Responded” as these discuss the problematic of language and what could be constituted as a language or the capacity for language in a way which is of interest for this paper’s argument. In general, the fact that the whole anthology is animated by the question on “the relationship between (...) the discourse of animality – the use of that constellation of signifiers to structure how we address others of whatever sort (not just nonhuman animals) – and the living and breathing creatures who fall outside the taxonomy of *Homo sapiens*” (Wolfe, 2003, p. xx) is another reason to take this publication as a starting point. Although the idea of “no language, no subjectivity” is discussed by Wolfe and others within this anthology mainly within an ethical context in terms of the ability to “respond”, I will thus leave the ethical aspect, however important it is, aside in favour of a broadening of what can be seen as language.

In discussing Steve Baker’s contribution to *Zoologies* Wolfe points to the importance of the distinction between visual and textual representation of the animal “and to ask ourselves what modes of thinking the animal other are possible in what Derrida has called the “spatial arts” that may too readily be foreclosed in the domain of language” (Wolfe, 2003, p. xv). Wolfe here clearly has a written or spoken human language in mind, but obviously we can also talk about a visual language and then this would open up a possibility to include curating into this mode of thinking that he asks for. As Attenborough demonstrates, the bowerbirds clearly make choices and have preferences for the materials they include and the way they position these. Although thus seemingly lacking a language (in the sense of how this is usually defined) they move far beyond what used to be seen “as more or less automated “reactions” (...) a set of preprogrammed and instinctive routines and subroutines, so that they are really more like machines than people, more like objects than subjects” (Wolfe, 2003, p.xvi). Instead the bowerbirds demonstrate a clear subjectivity.²

Via Derrida Wolfe proposes a different strategy in that

rather than extending the ability of “linguaging” outward, beyond the human sphere, one can instead move in the opposite direction and erode that notion

² In her book *Animal Musicalities – Birds, Beasts, and Evolutionary Listening* (2018), Rachel Mundy mentions the psychologist and zoologist Wallace Craig who recognised that birds actually have something like an acquired taste. In the case of wood peckers he discovered that some, rather than choosing the classic hollow wood, would go for iron roofing and produce a clearly different sound (Mundy, 2018, p.144) Further on in the book, in a different context, Mundy refers to Levi-Strauss as having recognised “that birdsong, like language, can be called a product of (...) culture” (Mundy, 2018, p. 156). She does however not fully unpack the possible consequences of this connection. See my review in *Leonardo Reviews*, June 2019.

of language from the inside out to show that if animals never quite possessed it, neither do we, with the result that language, rather than simplifying the question of ethics by securing the boundary between the human and the rest of creation, instead now reopens it -permanently, as it were- by embedding us in a world to which the human *is subject* (Wolfe, 2003, p. xviii).

The question of language

Wolfe's essay, "In the Shadow of Wittgenstein's Lion: Language, Ethics, and the Question of the Animal" equally largely evolves around ethics as its title suggests but is of interest for my argument in its discussion of language. Starting with Wittgenstein's famous declaration that "If a lion could talk, we could not understand him", Wolfe develops a discourse on language as a form of life based on Wittgenstein's statement that "To imagine a language is to imagine a form of life" which Wolfe feels complicates the first statement. This, I would say, completely depends on how language is defined. If, as Wolfe seems to do, it is mainly seen from a human kind of perspective in the sense that it needs to be *spoken*, then we certainly encounter a problem. But even the content and meaning of *to speak* can of course be questioned or *deconstructed* with all implications and connotations of that later terminology. We could take *to speak* just as well "at its word" and just content with the fact that animals do speak. In this way we can thus also assert that they do have language. Within animal studies the concept of animal language is usually related to human language as being a form of non-human communication with similarities to human language. I would suggest to content with an animal language per se that is appreciated on its own accords.

Fictioning

In their recent discussion of the work of the Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, David Burrows and Simon O'Sullivan seem to touch on a possible solution by extinguishing the distinction between human and nonhuman:

Viveiros affirms what is well known, namely that while Europeans make classifications of life by distinguishing between the human and the non-human, Amerindians make no such distinction, counting both the human and the non-human as agents or persons. In this, Viveiros suggests that nature is not turned into culture; rather, nature is made strange through culture. ... More importantly, according to Viveiros, if non-humans – such as jaguars and tapirs – are persons, then this also means, following Descola, that the dif-

ferent relations between humans and non-humans are always already social (Burrows and O'Sullivan, 2019, p. 185).

Burrows and O'Sullivan discuss Viveiros' work in the context of their analysis of what they call "fictioning" or the myth-functions of contemporary art and philosophy. They therefore "venture that there is a fictioning of a kind involved here, too, in that Amerindians can be said to find "extrahuman subjectivities" in all things (Burrows and O'Sullivan, 2019, p. 185). Describing the bowerbird or pufferfish as curators can thus be seen as a form of fictioning that has the potential to solve the possibly weird connection between human and animal curators. But weirdness is actually not the problem as Burrows and O'Sullivan make clear when they discuss Donna Haraway's work on making kin within the context of science fiction. Within the context of earlier research, I have already referred to Haraway to state that although her book is written in view of "spiralling ecological devastation" (Haraway, 2016, backflap) her "Staying with the Trouble" is also a form of explicitly seeking the trouble or being open to what is unexpected, unusual or seemingly useless and nevertheless needs to be addressed (Doove, 2017, p.186). Or as Haraway phrases it right at the beginning of her introduction:

Trouble is an interesting word. It derives from a thirteenth-century French verb meaning "to stir up", "to make cloudy", "to disturb". We – all of us on Terra – live in disturbing times, mixed-up times, troubling and turbid times. The task is to become capable, with each other in all of our bumptious kinds, of response. ... Our task is to make trouble, to stir up potent response to devastating events, as well as to settle troubled waters and rebuild quiet places. ... staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings (Haraway, 2016, p. 1).

And in the note connected to this quote she explains that "critters" in her book "refers promiscuously to microbes, plants, animals, humans and nonhumans, and sometimes even to machines" (Haraway, 2016, p. 169, note 1) with which to make kin. As Burrows and O'Sullivan indicate, it is this keenness to develop multispecies, or what she calls companion species, that moves Haraway away from the human and the posthuman (Burrows and O'Sullivan, 2019, 267). In an interview with Nicholas Gate, Haraway is very explicit in her opinion about posthumanism and it is worthwhile including it here as she also comments on Wolfe's *Zoologies* in it. Being asked what she makes of the term "post-human", Haraway answers:

I've stopped using it. I did use it for a while, including in the "Manifesto". I think it's a bit impossible not to use it sometimes, but I'm trying not to use it. Kate Hayles writes this smart, wonderful book *How We Became Posthuman*. She locates herself in that book at the right interface – the place where people meet IT apparatuses, where worlds get reconstructed as information. I am in strong alliance with her insistence in that book, namely getting at the materialities of information. Not letting anyone think for a minute that this is immateriality rather than getting at its specific materialities. That I'm with, that sense of "how we became posthumanist". Still, human/posthuman is much too easily appropriated by the blissed-out, "Let's all be posthumanists and find our next teleological evolutionary stage in some kind of transhumanist technoenhancement." Posthumanism is too easily appropriated to those kinds of projects for my taste. Lots of people doing posthumanist thinking, though, don't do it that way. The reason I go to companion species is to get away from posthumanism. Companion species is my effort to be in alliance and in tension with posthumanist projects because I think species is in question. In that way I'm with Derrida more than others, and with Cary Wolfe's reading of Derrida (see, for example, Wolfe, 2003). I'm with Zoontologies more than posthumanism because I think that species is in question here big time and species is one of those wonderful words that is internally oxymoronic. This approach insists on its Darwinist meanings, including considering people as *Homo sapiens*. "Companion species" thinking inquires into the projects that construct us as a species, philosophical or otherwise. "Species" is about category work. The term is simultaneously about several strands of meaning – logical type, taxa characterized through evolutionary biology, and the relentless specificity of meanings. You also can't think species without being inside science fiction. Some of the most interesting species stuff is done through both literary and non-literary science fiction projects – art projects of various kinds. Posthuman is way too restrictive. So I go to companion species, although it has been over-coded as meaning dogs and cats. I set myself up by writing about dogs first. But I think of the "Cyborg Manifesto" and *Companion Species Manifesto* (2003) as bookends around an interrogation of relationalities where species are in question and where posthuman is misleading (Gane, 2006, p.140).

Before turning to Wolfe's reading of Derrida, it is worthwhile to first return briefly to Viveiros who Haraway acknowledges to be an influence on her writing (Burrows and O'Sullivan, 2019, 288). As part of the chapter "The Camille Stories" in *Staying with the Trouble* Haraway explicitly mentions Viveiros and his remark "Animism is the only *sensible* version of materialism". She concludes that "[h]uman-animal knots do something different in this world" (Haraway, 2016, p. 165). As I have mentioned before Haraway's book is just one of many recent publications that allows for a reconnection with Whitehead's call for "something that matters" and opens it up to Latour's "matters of concern" (Doove, 2017, p. 193). From Haraway's call for trouble, it is also possible to make a direct link to Serres' parasite as the troublemaker:

The parasite invents something new. He obtains energy and pays for it in information. He obtains the roast and pays for it with stories. Two ways of writing the new contract. He establishes an unjust pact; relative to the old type of balance, he builds a new one. He speaks in a logic considered irrational up to now, a new epistemology and new theory of equilibrium. He makes the order of things as well as the states of things – solid and gas – into diagonals. He evaluates information. Even better: he discovers information in his voice and good words; he discovers the Spirit in the wind and the breath of air. He invents cybernetics (Serres, 2007, p. 36).

As Cary Wolfe states in his introduction to *The Parasite* (2007), the posthuman for Serres “precedes and subtends the human, both ontologically and epistemologically” (Serres, 2007, p. xii). Furthermore, Serres moves explicitly away from the unit or the individual and makes noise his main subject (Doove, 2017, p.134) which thus could be equaled to Haraway’s “trouble”.

Derrida’s and say the animal responded?

Returning thus to Wolfe’s reading of Derrida and his work on the animal, Wolfe refers amongst others to Derrida’s lecture and text “The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)” (1997/2002) with its amplified “rejection of “animality in general”, and of singularity and identity *in general*” (Wolfe, 2003, p.22). He quotes Derrida first for exclaiming “The animal what a word!” (Derrida, 2002, p.392), but omits in the first instance the statement that follows on that exclamation which seems equally important: “The animal is a word, it is an appellation that men have instituted, a name they have given themselves the right and the authority to give to another living creature [*a l’autre vivant*] (Derrida, 2002, p.392). Instead Wolfe quotes Derrida again abbreviated but for the sake of the argument of this paper I feel it is important to include the fuller passage here, as it is more explicit about the “immense multiplicity of other living things” (Derrida, 2002, p. 416) that Wolfe refers to further:

Confined within this catch-all concept, within this vast encampment of the animal, in this general singular, within the strict enclosure of this definite article (“the Animal” and not “animals”), as in a virgin forest, a zoo, a hunting or fishing ground, a paddock or an abattoir, a space of domestication, are all the living things that man does not recognize as his fellows, his neighbors, or his brothers. And that is so in spite of the infinite space that separates the lizard from the dog, the protozoon from the dolphin, the shark from the lamb, the parrot from the chimpanzee, the camel from the eagle, the squirrel from the tiger or the elephant from the cat, the ant from the silkworm or the hedgehog from the echidna.

As the focus within Wolfe's text is on ethics it is not surprising that he stresses the fact that Derrida returns to the question of suffering, rather than whether they can talk or reason (Wolfe, 2003, p.24). Within this context and of more importance for the purpose of this paper Wolfe however also points to Derrida's observation on the looking of animals in the same lecture/text, namely that the animal "has its point of view regarding me. The point of view of the absolute other, and nothing will have done more to make me think through this absolute alterity of the neighbour than these moments when I see myself seen naked under the gaze of a cat" (Derrida, 2002, p.380). It is this looking of the animal, and its acting upon this looking, which is at stake when we "look" at the bowerbird's curating.

Further important for this paper is Wolfe's quoting of Geoff Bennington that for Derrida "language is not essentially human ...; the refusal to think of language as in some way a separate domain over against the world ... implies the consequence of an essential inhumanity of language" (Wolfe, 2003, p. 29). To which he adds a quote from Derrida's essay "Eating Well" that is of equal importance in this context:

The idea according to which man is the only speaking being, in its traditional form or in its Heideggerian form, seems to me at once undisplaceable and highly problematic. Of course, if one defines language in such a way that it is reserved for what we call man, what is there to say? But if one reinscribes language in a network of possibilities that do not merely encompass it but mark it irreducibly from the inside, everything changes. I am thinking in particular of the mark in general, of the trace, of iterability, of *différance*. These possibilities or necessities, without which there would be no language, are themselves not only human And what I am proposing here should allow us to take into account scientific knowledge about the complexity of "animal languages," genetic coding, all forms of marking within which so-called human language, as original as it might be, does not allow us to "cut" once and for all where we would in general like to cut (Wolfe, 2003, p. 30).

This "reinscrib[ing] of language in a network of possibilities" namely allows Wolfe to make the connection to the matter of "responding" that Derrida discusses in "The Animal That Therefore I am". I quote here again the larger version as it gives a better context:

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: "the Animal," they say. And they have given themselves this word, at the same

time according themselves, reserving for them, for humans, the right to the word, the name, 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. All the philosophers we will investigate (from Aristotle to Lacan, and including Descartes, Kant, Heidegger, and Levinas), all of them say the same thing: the animal is without language. Or more precisely unable to respond, to respond with a response that could be precisely and rigorously distinguished from a reaction, the animal is without the right and power to “respond” and hence without many other things that would be the property of man (Derrida, 2002, p.400).

From this Derrida (and Wolfe quoting him) makes the connection to the possibility to “erase”: “Even those who, from Descartes to Lacan, have conceded to the said animal some aptitude for signs and for communication have always denied it the power to *respond* – to *pretend*, to *lie*, to *cover its tracks* or *erase* its own traces” (Derrida, 2002, p.401). In the case of the bower bird it is maybe not so much erasing, but certainly correcting a trace, which possibly comes down to the same thing.

Wolfe states thereafter in the section “Disarticulating Language, Subject, and Species: Maturana and Varela (with Bateson)” that

[a] signal advantage of Derrida’s formulation of the “trace beyond the human” is that it allows us not only to “move from the ‘ends of man: that is the confines of man, to the ‘crossing of borders’ between man and animal” (“The Animal That Therefore I Am:’ 372), but also to make an interdisciplinary crossing between philosophy and the sciences with the aim of crafting a post-humanist theory of the relations between subjectivity, species, and signification in the broadest sense” (Wolfe, 2003, p. 35).

In his essay “And Say the Animal Responded” Derrida returns to this notion of the trace, questioning whether “an ethics would be sufficient ... to remind the subject of its being-subject, its being-guest, host or hostage, that is to say its being-subjected-to-the-other, to the Wholly Other or to every single other?” which he feels is not the case, that instead “[i]t takes more than that to break with the Cartesian tradition of the animal-machine that exists without language and without the ability to respond” (Wolfe, 2003, p. 121). He continues to discuss at length Lacan’s obstinacy against allowing the animal any language, but instead rather just code. But as Derrida comments: “What [Lacan] attributes to signs that, “in a language” understood as belonging to the human order, “take on their value from their relations to each other” ... and not just from the “fixed correlation” between signs and reality, can and must be accorded

to any code, animal or human (Wolfe, 2003, p. 126). What is further important for the argument of this paper is that Derrida “problematizes ... the purity and indivisibility of a line between reaction and response, and especially the possibility of tracing such a line, between the human *in general* and the animal *in general*” (Wolfe, 2003, p. 128). In his discussion of Lacan’s notion of *dancity*, or the capacity to pretend, there seems a further opening to the bowerbird’s activity:

Dansity [sic] refers to the capacity to pretend by means of a dance, a lure, or parade, by means of the choreography of the hunt or seduction, the parade that is indulged in before it makes love ..., hence all the forms of the “I am (following)” or “I am followed” that we are tracking here (Wolfe, 2003, p. 130).

Unfortunately there’s no room here to discuss in much more detail the “balance sheet” that Derrida recognizes “separates the accounting of what has to be accorded the animal (pretense of the trace, inscription of the trace) and what has to be denied it (deception, lying, pretense of pretense, and erasing of traces)” (Wolfe, 2003, p. 131), nor “whether what calls itself human has the right to rigorously attribute to man ... what he refuses the animal” (Wolfe, 2003, p. 138), but Derrida’s discussion nevertheless opens up a possibility.

Duchamp’s *inframince*

Where now does Duchamp’s *inframince* fit in all of this? His relation to “the animal” is certainly complex and ambiguous and hardly seems to allow for an inclusion in the argument of this paper. On the one hand there is his famous remark on the direction that he feels art needs to take, an intellectual one and not an animal one as he feels art is the sole form of activity in which man can manifest him (or herself) as an individual and surpass the animal stage (Sanouillet, 1973, p. 126 and 137). On the other hand, his remark on eroticism as a kind of readymade “an animal thing ... that is pleasing to use as a tube of paint” (Haralambidou, 2013, p. 194) clearly points into another direction. His interest in kinetics, cybernetics and language games certainly connects him to the posthuman, amongst other in the sense that Wolfe suggests this kind of interest can be added to the first factor that allows for an archaeology and mapping of the animal as repressed Other (see above). Here Wolfe points specifically to “the steady influence of the “hard” on the “human” sciences. One thinks here of Foucault’s interest in Canguilhem and Jacob, Lacan’s in cybernetics, Lyotard’s in chaos

theory, and so on)” (Wolfe, 2003, p. xi), actually completely surpassing the interest of artists in this matter.³ This now opens up a possibility to activate Duchamp's concept of the *inframince* as an operational tool, as I have already demonstrated extensively elsewhere (Doove, 2007). Rather than giving a definition of the *inframince*, which some argue is not a concept at all, Duchamp gave several examples of it. Most importantly he noticed it as being a possibility. In all cases it is the recognition of a small difference in our surroundings, of something that is usually overlooked. It is exactly in this quality that the *inframince* can be turned into a tool as the “non-recognizing” is key for this paper's argument to adopt Marcel Duchamp's concept.

Apart from being useful in solving a certain observed impasse within curating in general, the *inframince* can in its quality for recognizing possibilities and differences also be used to develop a more attentive way of looking and observing as part of the development of the posthuman. In making kin with the bowerbird by observing its curatorial qualities, the *inframince* thus becomes a little noisy troublemaker, an attention seeker, that points to overlooked areas of interest. Within the context of this paper it is in the capacity of recognizing the bowerbird's curating activity as (a) language that we share that it thus becomes active.

An important part of “Making the posthuman” is not only recognizing our nonhuman, animal fellows as others, but actually to recognize how we are part of that same family. Not only in the way that they live in and around us, but how their and our behaviour overlaps, even in areas (or arena's) where we don't expect this to happen. The *inframince* becomes a tool for observing minor differences that can lead to a better insight, both in our surroundings, through curating, and our fellow companions, through collaboration.

Literature

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³ Asked in an interview about the possible relation between Lacan and Duchamp, who met each other several times later in life, Bernard Marcade remarks: “Il est habituel de penser – ce sont des manies d'historiens d'art – que parce que ‘quelqu'un’ a rencontré ‘quelqu'un’, il devrait absolument se passer quelque chose d'important. Il ne se passe presque rien, mais ce qui se passe, aussi ‘inframince’ soit-il, est tout de même décisif.” <https://www.cairn.info/revue-la-cause-freudienne-2008-1-page-135.htm>

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The Animal Curator – Duchamp’s Inframince and Animality

Looking at seemingly curatorial activities by the bower bird is the starting point for this paper to explore the notion of the “animal curator”. Where Wolfe’s introduction to Serres’ *The Parasite* (2007) was earlier used to stress the necessity of “becoming minor” or “animal” in a curatorial context (Doove, 2017), this paper will further unpack this connection through a reading of Wolfe’s and Derrida’s observations on the posthuman and animal in the anthology *Zoontologies* (2003) in combination with Haraway’s *Staying with the Trouble* (2016) and Burrows’ and O’Sullivan’s *Fictioning* (2019). Finally, Duchamp’s concept of the *inframince* in connection with its interest for minor differences and potentialities is proposed as an operational tool as part of making the posthuman a possible solution to the impasse observed in this field. The *inframince* thus opens up an unexpected connection between Duchamp and animality.

KEYWORDS: animality, curating, fictioning, infra-mince, posthumanism.