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Bodily Encounter, Bearing Witness and the Engaged Activism of the Global Save Movement

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Abstract
The global Save Movement, alongside other animal rights organisations and practices, has since 2010 sought to bring the experiences of nonhuman farmed animals into the public domain from privatized, usually hidden spaces of industrial procedure and slaughter. One key mechanism used is to conduct vigils held outside slaughterhouses, where activists gather to bear witness to the passing of nonhuman animals in trucks, and to raise awareness of the suffering of animals to passers-by. Central to the practice are the roles played by emotional engagement and bodily encounter with the nonhuman animals; the movement is founded on a self-styled 'love-based' compassion for other living beings. In 2014, I joined the Save Movement in Toronto for a number of vigils, engaging in an autoethnographic study of the means by which activists employ emotional labour, bearing witness and bodily encounter in foregrounding the realities of life for industrially farmed nonhuman animals. This article argues that the Save Movement represents a new moment (although not wholly without precedent) in the practices of animal rights activism. Working from the intellectual standpoint of Critical Animal Studies, the structure of the paper employs this autoethnographic and emotionally-affected personal account of taking part as a researcher-activist in the vigils, to offer access to experiences of how emotion, activism and empathy overlap in 'coming to care' for nonhuman others in public settings. The article seeks to elucidate the Save Movement's emphasis on bodily encounter and the making visible of already existing embodied entanglements with farmed nonhuman animals, and suggests this form of engaged witnessing offers opportunity for radically reimagining our species' existing relationships with those species we currently identity as food.

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Bodily Encounter, Bearing Witness and the Engaged Activism of the Global Save Movement

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Abstract: *The global Save Movement, alongside other animal rights organisations and practices, has since 2010 sought to bring the experiences of nonhuman farmed animals into the public domain from privatized, usually hidden spaces of industrial procedure and slaughter. One key mechanism used is to conduct vigils held outside slaughterhouses, where activists gather to bear witness to the passing of nonhuman animals in trucks, and to raise awareness of the suffering of animals to passers-by. Central to the practice are the roles played by emotional engagement and bodily encounter with the nonhuman animals; the movement is founded on a self-styled 'love-based' compassion for other living beings. In 2014, I joined the Save Movement in Toronto for a number of vigils, engaging in an autoethnographic study of the means by which activists employ emotional labour, bearing witness and bodily encounter in foregrounding the realities of life for industrially farmed nonhuman animals. This article argues that the Save Movement represents a new moment (although not wholly without precedent) in the practices of animal rights activism. Working from the intellectual standpoint of Critical Animal Studies, the structure of the paper employs this autoethnographic and emotionally-affected personal account of taking part as a researcher-activist in the vigils, to offer access to experiences of how emotion, activism and empathy overlap in 'coming to care' for nonhuman others in public settings. The article seeks to elucidate the Save Movement's emphasis on bodily encounter and the making visible of already existing embodied entanglements with farmed nonhuman animals, and suggests this form of engaged witnessing offers opportunity for radically reimagining our species' existing relationships with those species we currently identity as food.*

Keywords: *The Save Movement, empathy, entanglement, pigs, animal agriculture, bearing witness*

Introduction

Biographical and autoethnographic accounts can tell us much about our relations with other beings, and are useful for studying the ways we articulate how we come to know and care for nonhuman animals. These accounts often capture the embodied nature of people's experiences in encountering others, and can be explored for ways of understanding the role played by the body and its affects in advocating for change in our relationships with nonhuman animal species.

This attention given to the body is part of a growing corpus that privileges embodiment in research. As Despret puts it, 'bodies are actively being involved' (51) in research in ever more foregrounded ways. Much of this focus has originated from the social sciences with a growing awareness that our bodies are the source of how society is structured. For Shilling, 'It is the properties and capacities of embodied humans that provide the corporeal basis on which identities and social relations are consolidated and changed' (256). It is never only our 'disembodied' intellectual evaluations that guide action, but always thoughts entangled with bodily reactions that become knowable and nameable as emotions: joy, disgust, anger, fear, etc.

Although its roots have not always been engaged with species relations – indeed, the history of sociology and philosophy have left us with the feeling that other bodies are barely relevant to the creation of social life – such study has brought the nonhuman and inanimate into the field of affecting and affected bodies with which we are entangled. The dominant (male, white) view of social life focusing on abstract, Universalist processes while excluding particular bodies within those processes is being challenged. The beings who make our social world work are not only human. To pay these other individuals consideration is to give what Walker has called an 'attention to the particular' (166) grounded in the feminist ethic-of-care tradition that rejects hierarchical Cartesian objectivism. Such a rationalist ethic is at the heart of speciesism, the ideological practice – ideologies are always dynamic practices – that arbitrarily separates our species from others.

This turn to the body and embodiment has brought about a redefinition of what the body is. Blackman writes that bodies are best defined as 'processes that extend into and are immersed in worlds. That is, rather than talk of bodies, we might instead talk of brain–body–world entanglements, and where, how and whether we should attempt to draw boundaries between the human and nonhuman, self and other' (1). She suggests that if we understand our

experiences as 'brain–body–world entanglements,' we come much closer to sensory reality and our corporeal embeddedness in relations. As with other areas of lived practice, scholarship also only begins to make sense when we take account of our 'brain–body–world entanglements' with the subjects of our curiosity and criticality. When this is applied to (or rather, 'felt into') the ways in which the lives of nonhuman animals can be made more visible, the work finds itself at home in the field of Critical Animal Studies (CAS). For Taylor and Twine, CAS 'is concerned with the nexus of activism, academia and animal suffering and maltreatment' (2). CAS scholars do not stand outside of their study; rather, the task is to engage and attempt to change the conditions or circumstances in which nonhuman animals are currently exploited.

Autoethnographic and autobiographical reflexivity are essential to the field's pursuit of moving the lives of nonhuman animals to the centre of scholarship and social debate. Autoethnography, according to Ellis, is an attempt to produce work that seeks to describe personal experience in order to understand cultural experience. Such an approach aims to produce aesthetic and evocative writing (or audio-visual recordings) that is made possible by being part of a culture, by inhabiting and exploring particular cultural identities. For the autoethnographer, combining autobiography and ethnography, the genre is, as Ellis suggests, an invitation to write in a way that moves back and forth between personal introspection and academic reflection, methods that are simultaneously social and psychological.

In using autoethnography to pay attention to nonhumans,

> this reflexive approach, that is central to writing for animals, brings the lives of the writers of CAS to centre-stage (for example in disclosures about personal veganism, animal advocacy and activism) and in this way CAS writers are not indistinct figures; rather, through autobiographical disclosures, they move from the margins to the centre of their work. (Peggs 46)

In this research, I have utilized the narrative methods of autoethnography, referring to texts in the form of stories and vignettes that incorporate my experiences into the ethnographic descriptions of others. My narrative intersects with the analysis of patterns and processes in animal rights activism, drawing on my own writing about those experiences to reflect upon and make experiential sense of the detail of how emerging forms of nonhuman advocacy are bound up with concepts of embodiment and cultural practices. I give particular attention to advocacy

work done by the Save Movement, an open collective of animal activists based in various cities across (mainly) Western democracies, who have prioritized emotional and empathetic bodily encounter with the nonhuman farmed animal. My curiosity was drawn to these activists because of their desire to come closer to the bodies of those nonhuman others – that is, to the *living* bodies, before they are turned into food, clothing and supplementary products for human (and companion animal) use. My ongoing engagement with the Save Movement (in Canada and the UK) is not only a means to study activist practice, but, as Taylor and Twine exhort, a process of enmeshment to aid scholarly clarity:

> professionalisation should not presume a detachment from the rich diversity of civil society and protest. Critical researchers then can (and in fact, must) study such social movements, advise them and critically analyze those obdurate social institutions and practices that serve to curtail progressive social change. (5)

Such practice ensures that theory remains 'relevant to understanding and changing the material conditions of animals, and to historicizing the still normative concepts that have been largely successful in shielding human–animal relations from critical scrutiny' (6).

This article is an exploration of the practices of the Save Movement; specifically time I spent with Toronto Pig Save. I hope to articulate the ways in which emotions, empathy and activism intersect in their ongoing practice, and how the Save Movement's emphasis on bodily encounter and the making visible of *already existing* embodied entanglements with farmed nonhuman animals, suggests a form of 'active witnessing' that offers opportunity for radically reimagined relationships with those species we identity as food. This is not a purely cognitive process. It begins in the body with an emotional readiness to encounter the other, and is based on new foundations for feeling.

The Save Movement, Empathy and Activism

The Save Movement began in Toronto in 2010 when feminist and activist Anita Kranjc responded to being confronted on her daily morning walk with her dog companion by trucks full of pigs on their way to slaughter. Kranjc knew about the Quality Meat Packers slaughterhouse near where she lived in downtown Toronto. But coming close to the pigs every day forced her

to take action. Shukin argues that standard farming practices meet only the very basic needs of animals, and these only to satisfy profit motives, and *never* the animals' 'wants'. Intensive processing rests upon what she calls a 'breaking' and a 'denial of "becomings"'. Although already vegan, Kranjc had not previously had such close bodily encounter with farmed animals within this 'limbo economy of interminable survival' where 'coping is all' (Shukin 39). So in December 2010, Kranjc founded Toronto Pig Save. The mission was to metaphorically give slaughterhouses glass walls by showing those outside what went on inside. Much of her community organizing is driven by a desire for social justice and equality through a 'love-based' approach inspired by Tolstoy and Gandhi. Kranjc and fellow activists collected donated art, photographs, and illustrations that depicted the slaughter of pigs. In July 2011, they began weekly vigils outside the slaughterhouse. The vigils comprised of two main actions: first, they printed leaflets and placards and stood where the trucks passed and stopped at red lights long enough for the activists to give the pigs water, watermelon, and take photographs. Second, they began to speak to the drivers of the cars idling at those red lights to spread knowledge and information about the characteristics of nonhuman animals and their perceived wrongful slaughter.

The growth of the Save Movement and the means by which it sets out to achieve its aims is an exciting development for those sympathetic toward or striving for animal liberation, and simultaneously a rich area for study. Of course, advocacy on behalf of nonhuman animals is not new, and has organized precedents going back at least two hundred years, especially to reduce the suffering of animals from vivisection and the worst abuses of meat production (Kean). However, the problems of the industrialization and massification of farmed animal production were first brought to the public's attention by Ruth Harrison's *Animal Machines* in 1964, and Brigid Brophy's *Sunday Times* article in 1965 (in the UK at least). This laid the ground for a range of organizations to emerge and reshape the social movement for improvements in animal welfare beyond conservation, and, with the publication of work by authors such as Carol J. Adams, Peter Singer and Tom Regan, to move toward claims for animal rights. As McAllister Groves noted in his study of an American animal rights organization, 'the people that the activists most respect rarely talk about pets. They talk about philosophy. The philosophers are the high priests of the animal rights movement. They write books. They teach at universities' (222-223).

The Save Movement is a new and exciting progression in the field of animal rights activism for a number of reasons, and as distinct from other established and emerging practices focused on either animal protection, advocacy or liberation, it makes a claim on researchers to understand its motivations, practices, effects and affects. Despite the name, Save activists do not primarily focus on 'saving' or directly rescuing the incomprehensible number of animals sent to slaughter each day (although at many vigils a tiny number of animals have been kept from their deaths). The core practices of Save Movement vigils are:

1. collective witnessing of the passage of animals to slaughter
2. providing momentary solace and succour, including with water and fruit, to the animals
3. making visible the spaces where killing takes place and the structural means by which consumer cultures aid and abet that killing (through for example the placing of traffic lights and management to aid the efficient passage of animal-laden trucks)
4. to share audio and visual recordings from the vigils via social media to broader audiences

For example, I was drawn to the videos and images shared by the activists on social media and went to take part in the vigils; these videos also played a large part in my transition from a vegetarian to a vegan diet. These vigil practices offer up many points of contact for study.

Donaldson and Kymlicka have argued that farmed animal sanctuaries, a 'rapidly expanding' aspect of the animal rights movement, launched by the establishment of Farm Sanctuary in Watkins Glen, New York, in 1986, occupy a central role in nonhuman advocacy. These sanctuaries, now worldwide, are places to which individual previously farmed animals come, after escape or rescue, to live out the rest of their lives free from harm or exploitation, with considerable time and money spent on their wellbeing and care. They are also education and advocacy centers, and known for their zoocentric policies such as there being no meat, leather or wool allowed on the premises. The forms of activism and advocacy provided in these spaces are often transformational for those working there and for visitors, in coming to know the individual characteristics and personalities of previously farmed animals.

However, the embodied relations in these spaces are vitally different from those experienced between human and nonhuman outside the gates of slaughterhouses, where, for perhaps only a few moments, the activists present are able to collectively witness the passage

toward death of the animals, while coming close to the physical and outstandingly vulnerable bodies (Pick) of the pigs, sheep, cows and chickens. This 'ordinary – yet extraordinary – encounter' with the soon-to-be-dead animals 'discloses the presence of a crisis' (Pick 11) in our understanding of our own, as well as the nonhuman's, essential materiality *as* bodies, which is thankfully absent in the sanctuary setting. What the Save Movement vigils then offer is a unique example of what Pick calls

> a creaturely ethics [whose] source lies in the recognition of the materiality and vulnerability of all living bodies, whether human or not, and in the absolute primacy of obligations over rights. A creaturely ethics, which recognizes in animals an exemplary case of worldly suffering, does not ask, What are the limits of rights? but, What are the limits of attention? (193)

My proposal is that the Save Movement vigils are a unique site of 'creaturely ethics' that demands our attention, as the (extra)ordinary encounters between human and animal become made visible both in situ and across social media.

What follows are extracts from writings recalling the experiences and emotions of attending the vigils. They are, I hope, a form of what Gergen calls 'poetic activism' based on the appreciation of 'the power of language to make new and different things possible and important – an appreciation which becomes possible only when one's aim becomes an expanding repertoire of alternative descriptions' (63).

At the Vigil

We count fourteen trucks this morning. Anita keeps a record of every vigil in her notebook. There are two hundred pigs in each truck. Those bearing witness know that Fearman's Pork Inc. slaughters up to ten thousand pigs a day. Fearman's! You couldn't make it up.

A woman with blonde hair and sunglasses drives the first truck we see. Anita and another activist, Hannah, have seen her before. Sometimes she stops at the entrance so volunteers can hurry to the sides of the truck and through the air holes give the pigs watermelon or water or a pat on the snout. An apology. Anita and Hannah discuss whether the driver might

be sympathetic, since her behavior contrasts with that of the drivers of the other trucks: men wearing black T-shirts, beards, and caps, who wheel around the corners without slowing. The activists take a risk of being hit by the edges of these vast metal containers to get their photos and their last touches of the pigs who in only a few minutes will be slaughtered.

It is part and parcel of the contemporary rhetoric of industrial animal agriculture that the language of efficiency and productivity is striated with that of welfare and sustainability. In recent comparisons of pig raising, indoor production has been touted as the most beneficial and practical, assuming 'both indoor and outdoor systems are well designed and operated' (McGlone 403). Animal scientist John J. McGlone claims that we have only two choices 'as we develop more sustainable systems; either change the systems we have or build new systems' (404). For McGlone, gassing ten thousand pigs a day is a positive step in the sustainability of pork production, because not only *must* we eat pigs but we also must find ways to *kill more* of them. The option of not doing either is inadmissible for this man funded by the U.S. National Pork Board.

It's true that a swift death would be a mercy for these pigs, who have most likely spent the entirety of their short lives – around six months to 'finishing' weight – without breathing fresh air, before they are crammed onto the trucks. During the journey, many will collapse on the floor of the trucks, dead or dying. At the height of summer, Save members have seen the pigs frothing at the mouth because of the heat; in winter their bodies may be frozen to the metal sides of the trucks. Whatever the season, their bodies are often bruised and bitten, scratched and covered in feces. These pigs don't have the option of an open-topped truck to leap from, like some others in less developed parts of the world.

Standing alongside the volunteers as the trucks roll up, I can see that there are as many different emotions in the pigs' eyes as there are eyes looking at us. Some are numb or blank or without hope. Some seem to dissociate themselves from the conditions. Unbelievably, some still appear hopeful and inquisitive and forgiving, as the animals shuffle over, take our water and watermelon, and sniff our fingers with the snouts they poke through the air vents. I like to think they welcome us for our witnessing. We literally touch the pigs, too. Seeing them in the trucks, tickling their snouts, not knowing, as a novice, if they would try to bite me or not, I feel their fear and the curiosity. They are advocates all, calling us to their aid, and they suffer our hearts.

That is: witnessing is painful, but the pigs *suffer* us in the other sense of the word – they bear us; seeing them makes it possible for us to continue with our advocacy, to make it bearable.

The Feeling Body in Animal Activism

Embodiment as entangled process leads to many kinds of behavior, what Probyn calls 'bodily orientations, ingrained ways of embodying the world, which, while they may change, are truly our history forged in the flesh, taste, and memory' (291). Viewing experience *as* entanglement opens us to the reality of individual others affecting us. The activists on the vigil, including myself, were *moved* emotionally, and *moved* to action. This movement came about, perhaps because of the inability of the pigs to have any control over their own bodies. This fact is one of the most pressing and affective at the vigils. The pigs, often covered in bites and wounds because of the tightly packed conditions, have no control over their own bodies in these traumatic spaces.

This relationship between movement and emotion has been recognized as critically important in providing thicker analyses of how social movements, which include animal rights movements, operate within broader cultural contexts. Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta and Gould have led the charge for a greater attention to the study of emotions in social movements, not merely as strategic tools to be utilized in movement goals, but as messily felt experiences that shape and are shaped by lived activist practice outside of a political opportunities framework. As Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta have argued, 'Shifts in "emotion cultures" can create new motivations for, and targets of, protest' (17). These emotion cultures are the ways in which expectations form around cultural experiences, including what it might mean to protest outside slaughterhouses against the killing of farmed animals; as such, it is important to gather together the emotional threads of any narrative from such activist practice for a full and rich understanding of meaning. For Polletta and Amenta:

> the conditions under which people protest … are likely to be cultural as much as structural, to include distinctive ways of seeing the world as much as formal rules and resources. […] They include also beliefs about who is likely to experience what kinds of emotions, how emotions affect behaviour, how emotions are repressed or expressed or

> transformed, beliefs about the dynamics of emotional 'contagion', about the effects of emotional 'repression' or 'denial,' about the relationship between affect and biology, etc. (308-309)

There has been little attention paid to this full range of conditions present within animal rights movement protests. As Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta make clear, the ways in which 'the emotions displayed in protest reshape broader emotional cultures as well as the emotional repertoires available to later movements' have meant that 'animal rights activists' struggles to be taken seriously as political challengers reflect a still dominant view of animal rights activists as unintimidating "animal lovers"', illustrating that 'protestors' political impact may be limited by the emotional attachments attributed to them' (22). McAllister Groves has explored the emotional content of animal rights movements, but found that while 'the animal rights movement is not just a movement about cruelty to animals. It is a debate about the place of emotions in public life' (228), in his admittedly limited study, 'those who derisively criticize individuals, protests, and strategies for being emotional in the animal rights movement are usually those who feel the most vulnerable about being discredited outside the movement for the same reason' (226). However, new work emerging from the fields of CAS and of Critical Animal Geographies, such as the autoethnographic accounts of dairy farming and animal auctions by Gillespie and Collard, are opening up expressive means to engage in embodied ways with the lived experiences of nonhuman others, as well as the bodily entanglements between them and their advocates or researchers (who are sometimes both).

What close bodily encounter with industrially farmed animals provides, which other forms of activist encounter do not, is this understanding of the lived materiality of their bodies. If we see our bodies on a continuum with other species and entangled, we *should* find it harder to exploit them. That is, as Cudworth has suggested, other species are a form of social power that alters worldviews from the abstract and impersonal to the particular and personal, from private to public. Such a shift is at the heart of the Save Movement's strategy. The participants' hypothesis is that the most effective advocacy places our own affective bodies into the encounter. As Latimer puts it, 'we body forth our relations and substantiate our identities' when we actively place our bodies in 'brain–body–world entanglements' with others (78). Behavioral change, then – in how we as a species relate to other species – comes not through 'coming to know' the other but through what Probyn has called a 'coming to care' (291). This is an

important concept for animal advocacy, a return to embodied compassionate care that 'the dominant, meat eating culture breeds out of us as we become "mature" adults' (Joy 142).

When we 'come to care' which is also *coming* to a specific place, such as outside a slaughterhouse or to a famed animal sanctuary, to explicitly show care, it changes our capacities for action, a fact clearly relevant for those working in animal advocacy. As Shilling says:

> Social change does not happen automatically, and nor does it occur simply as a result of purely intellectually motivated actions. Instead, people's experiences of, and responses to, social structures are shaped significantly by their sensory and sensual selves. These variables are important as they can exert an important impact on whether people feel at ease with, and tend to reproduce the 'structures', 'rules', 'resources' or 'social fields' they are most familiar with, or emotionally experience these structures as unpleasant, undesirable and worthy of transformation. (256)

Probyn has asked, 'What forms of care are most effective for changing our behavior? How do we come to care? And which types of care have the desired effects?' (296). Lack of attention to bodily entanglements with others has given us a social world built upon the exploitation of other species. Taking part in the vigils outside the slaughterhouses could be read as an attempt to engage with this 'coming to care' through embodied knowledge borne of close encounter.

A simple term for this might be *empathy*, an emotion that Gruen thinks of as 'a particular type of attention … a kind of moral perception' (39). For Gruen empathy is 'the ability to blend emotion and cognition to understand the situation of the other' (51). However, for Despret and Porcher empathy is too narrow a term: 'Empathy allows us to talk about what it is to be (like) the other, but does not raise the question "what is it to be 'with' the other"' (128). Acampora also veers away from both empathy and sympathy, suggesting they are 'more airy, psychic' notions that do not provide a satisfactory sense of dense physical experience (78). What Acampora wishes to avoid is to employ empathy as 'an ontology that grants the presence already of subject/object division and subject/subject separation' (78). Instead, he suggests 'it is time, as it were, to put the body back into moral sense'(73) and his attempt to do so is to work with the concept of 'symphysis' as an 'experiential principle of conviviality' (78) between bodies, and which places much more emphasis on the corporal component of how we sense and make sense of others. Symphysis is much more useful and responsible a concept than empathy, in

Acampora's argument, for exploring interspecies compassion and how we encounter and form relations at the somatic level: through bodily engagement.

Both Despret and Acampora offer useful reappraisals of the concept of empathy. However, the Save Movement activists employ the concepts of empathy and compassion as reasonably understood. The activist Hannah runs the 'Sympathy at Slaughter' Instagram account. Hannah and Anita discuss the empathy of the female driver. Between us, we offer each other empathy for what we commonly experience. Indeed, Despret continues to employ empathy too:

> I choose to keep it, but only as a tool, in order to give it other meanings, to complicate the situations where this word may be evoked. Empathy becomes multiple, as are bodies, as are encounters, as are animals who are the living actors of these encounters. Embodied empathy [...] shifts its meanings from one situation to the other. And it gains different meanings, and different outcomes, according to different stakes of the practices. (69)

For the Save Movement activists, empathy is a real, felt and embodied experience, a 'thinking through the body' as Blackman calls it, essential for reimagining the frameworks that organize our experiences, such as the relationships between the individual/social, structure/agency, mind/body. Only then is what we might be as a species be a 'becoming-with the nonhuman' (Wright) and a true reflection of our existing material relations.

Back on the Vigil

We leave them as the trucks pull away as the lights change. We walk away as their advocates. We call others to their aid – the people who pass by in pickups and cars: some ignore us; others 'honk for humanity' and wave; some take our leaflets and literature; others roll up their windows as we get close and turn up their radios so they cannot hear us ask them to think of the pigs.

After the first truck leaves, I look at the photographs I've taken through the holes in the side of the truck. One pig's eye has a ring of blood around the black pupil. The eye does not,

however, look at me. Instead, it focuses to his left, as if the eye is unable to bear me bearing witness to his suffering. I detect a sad bewilderment in the eye of the pig, almost shame in his powerlessness, a wish that his creaturely exposure be taken away – as if *he* has done something wrong, as if the shame is *his* and not mine. I imagine that, if it could, his spirit would levitate out of this hog truck, detach from the fate that is destined for their bodies.

When the truck has gone and with it the pigs, three of us remain on the small island in the middle of the street. I don't quite cry. What kind of tears would I shed? Grief at what I see? Frustration at my powerlessness? Relief at doing *something*, at least? A mixture of all three? I don't quite know what to do. I want to imagine my way into the mind of that pig who would not look me in the eye, yet worry that if I do I'll break down. Hannah is tearful. She tells me how much she admires Anita's work in establishing the Save Movement. Hannah is fearless in approaching people and handing over literature, even when they want to disengage. Compassion is her driving motive – for the pigs and the people in their cars. For Hannah, as for Anita and others, bearing witness to the endless slaughter of nonhuman animals is their calling. Christine, a teacher at a school down the road, runs over to get more leaflets to hand out to the drivers. I stand between the two of them not knowing how to think. I'm not quite ready to leaflet. Like many new activists, I am anxious about confronting others with my beliefs, especially those who may not feel the same way. Because I don't know what to think about what I'm seeing, I can't draw myself into conversation with passers-by. I can't, if I'm telling the truth, look *them* in the eye. I know, deep down, that I'm ashamed: of these drivers *seeing me*; of not yet fully bearing witness; of not yet letting go of the need and desire to be part of the 'normal,' meat-eating, animal-exploiting world; of needing *to be like* everyone else and liked *by* them. I have not yet the bravery or reassurances that everything will be okay, to fully let that identity go.

Yet here I am, bearing witness.

And being witnessed is a little more bearable than before.

Bearing Witness: Witnessing as Feeling the Unspeakable

Witnessing is a strange act, what Felman and Laub have called a 'nonhabitual, estranged conceptual prism' through which we apprehend and make available to the imagination of others the events that are seen (xv). Felman and Laub's work arises out of the witnessing and testimony of Holocaust survivors, where the task of witnessing is to account for 'the scale of what has happened in contemporary history' (xv). To bear witness is to apprehend, whether one wishes to or not (consider the bystander witness), the truth of what is happening during an event. It is to open one's eyes to what is taking place, but not only one's eyes. My initiation into the world of nonhuman animal suffering was made through bearing witness (first, online) to scenes of animals being put through the processes of exploitation and slaughter. Now at the vigils I was bearing witness, and bearing witness to others bearing witness too.

What is the value of bearing witness? Nussbaum puts forward the idea that 'good societies' should cultivate in their citizens particular emotions, such as compassion; this provides for stable and motivated societies. One of the main ways to foster compassion in society, argues Nussbaum, is through the concept of 'tragic spectatorship.' She states this was a beneficial aspect of ancient society, especially in Greece, where the spectatorship of 'tragic' Greek theatre dramatized the psychological and embodied suffering and tragic choices faced by its citizens, and, says McQueen, 'thereby [allowed] the spectator to imaginatively enter into the world of others' and consider those difficult choices for himself (caveat: the audience would have been almost exclusively male) (654). Such tragic spectatorship, argues Nussbaum, contains powerful narrative content that educates the body emotionally as well as the mind politically.

McQueen is critical of Nussbaum's argument. She suggests that Nussbaum does not make the case strongly enough – that Nussbaum 'avoids the more difficult task of demonstrating that "tragedy undermines exclusion"'(654) and, as McQueen goes on to say, 'this argument about the political effects of tragedy is, at best, suggestive' (654).

Yet, I would argue, both Nussbaum and McQueen miss the point of what is valuable and effective in the idea of 'tragic spectatorship.' Both concentrate on the content of the tragic plays rather than on the active aspect – a phenomenological process of witnessing. That is, it is not only tragedy that brings us close to compassion for the other; it is the *act* of witnessing that tragedy in person and with others. If a tragedy educates its witness to the 'psychological and

bodily suffering' undergone by those actors in the tragedy, then its value is in the witness empathizing – *feeling* – those bodily traumas suffered. The witnessing is a performance in and of the body. This becomes a useful concept for thinking about the process of bearing witness at the slaughterhouse vigil. In this sense, bearing witness to the suffering of the animals whom we see for just a moment in the transport trucks on their way to slaughter are acts of 'tragic spectatorship.'

But do they educate us in forms of political emotions, such as compassion? And does this education allow 'the spectator to imaginatively enter into the world of others' and act accordingly? Bearing witness is not only about 'cultivating integration' between one's values and one's acts, as Joy expresses it. Bearing witness is about being present at conflicts where the truth of a situation requires people to be present, to hold power to account. Booth writes that those bearing witness become living reminders of a past and serve as sentinels, urging others to remember, too. To bear witness, says Blustein, is to assert the moral status of victims and their equal membership in a moral community, exercised by giving them a voice. Bearing witness to the suffering of the pigs on the way to slaughter exposes the *existing* entanglements between humans and nonhumans: they are there because we desire their bodies as flesh. As an act of *witnessing*, attending these vigils reveals our means of perception and, importantly, the way we think about how we perceive others. To consider the animal him- or herself as a participant in the witnessing – as seeing me, or being too ashamed to be seen – is a powerful means of shifting those boundaries. How we perceive others shapes what we think and feel about them, as individuals and as groups. Perception is generally thought of as a process of thought. And yet the cognitive sciences, argue Lakoff and Johnson, 'tell us that human reason is a form of animal reason, a reason inextricably tied to our bodies and the peculiarities of our brains' (17). Bearing witness is in this sense a physical process of perceiving with moral attention. As Joy puts it: 'Virtually every atrocity in the history of humankind was enabled by a populace that turned away from a reality that seemed too painful to face, while virtually every revolution for peace and justice has been made possible by a group of people who chose to bear witness and demanded that others bear witness as well' (139). Active witnessing moves the body (notably, the face) toward an emotional experience of empathy or compassion. Its opposite is disconnection. When we look away, we disconnect from the suffering of others. We do this in the physical act of not looking.

The Save Movement and other groups make witnessing not only essential to the remembering (itself an embodied expression of re-membering) of tragedy but removes the blinkers from our view of the world. Witnessing can stimulate solidarity and the strength gained by acting together in a common cause. Yet it can also untap a wellspring that can flood our bodies with grief at the unspeakable. What is so striking about these vigils is how, at their most impactful, they allow bodily knowledge to shimmer with affect, to make abundantly clear that brain–body–world entanglements exist across species boundaries. Remaining open enough to such a burden – the *bearing* of witness – can be laborious. However, as Jenni writes: 'How to bear witness is a matter of moral judgment that those who would honor the animal dead must take on. That struggle for wise judgment is itself a labor of respect.'

Joy agrees: 'collective witnessing closes the gap in social consciousness' (139). Collective witnessing is perhaps about being seen to be witnessing – seen by the animals, by the passers-by, and by other activists who support and validate the witnessing. For Collins such collective witnessing would be an example of Durkheim's 'conscience collective' with, according to Collins, three 'high ritual density ingredients':

> (1) the physical assembly of people, so there is bodily awareness and copresence.
>
> (2) A shared focus of attention. […]
>
> (3) The focus of attention becomes a mutual focus of attention. Each participant becomes aware of each other's awareness, and thus of each one's unity at this moment with each other. This is the crucial process, the shared sense of the group focusing together, that creates what Durkheim called 'conscience collective,' fusing cognitive and moral unity. (28)

The collective power of becoming aware of others' awareness in copresence of the vulnerable animal bodies gives the Save Movement its affective impact – many attendees report being profoundly moved by these moments. Derrida has brought forth a similar idea of not only seeing or of being seen, but being 'seen seen'. This concept is central to how close bodily encounters at the slaughterhouse vigils are impactful for both the activists taking place and for the wider goals of achieving animal liberation. For Derrida, to be seen by the other, and also to accept that we are 'seen seen' – that the nonhuman animal *knows that we know* we have been seen

by her/him – is at the heart of how a change in *perspective* about animals might come about. The Kantian, rationalist view of other animals is based on the denial of 'being seen' by them; that they do not have the faculties to recognize the meaning in our looking at them. Our dominant ethical relations to nonhumans are based on this ability to see them but 'without being seen seen naked by someone who, from deep within a life called animal, and not only by means of a gaze, would have obliged them to recognize, at the moment of address, that this was their affair, their lookout' (14). That is, for Derrida, most philosophy before Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* denied the animal agency and perspective – a view of a world other than a human one. For Derrida, these images of suffering animals seen only from a human perspective, as if behind smoked glass, are pathetic. But these 'pathetic' scenes 'open the immense question of pathos and the pathological, precisely, that is, of suffering, pity, and compassion' (26).

It is right to ask of myself and of the other activists present if we have done more for the animal than the philosophers whom Derrida attacks. Those who have 'no doubt seen, observed, analyzed, reflected on the animal' but who 'neither wanted nor had the capacity to draw any systematic consequences from the fact that an animal, could, facing them, look at them, clothed or naked, and in a word, without a word, address them' (13). These philosophers, says Derrida, 'have never been *seen seen* by the animal' (13). Are the emotions we feel – the shame, the sadness, the anger – of benefit in making changes to the material relations with farmed animal species? Do we *save* them, after all? I argue that through bearing witness at these vigils I, and the other activists, have come to an embodied knowledge of our brain–body–world entanglements in which the animal *is already present*. That is, the material relations between Western forms of consumption and the slaughtered animal body are already present but hidden; and that this activism – in the moment, and then remediated and distributed through the connections of social media – traces lines between those entanglements and makes them (at least a little more) visible. These lines are formed of embodied emotional connection. As I was bearing witness to another's experience of life, I understood that we were activists who bore witness but who were also being 'seen seen.' Active witnessing is not done from behind a screen. Active witnessing, especially in a social collective setting, offers a sense of being present and conscious to what is happening before us. Witnessing is not merely a cognitive or perceptual act. It is a felt experience, a somatic, corporeal entraining. It is, or at least can be, a 'tragic spectatorship' centered on feelings of empathy. Empathy, in turn, is the way our brains fire so that we believe

and feel what the other is experiencing. When we witness the pig's shame, fear, and bewilderment, we can experience these, too, with the right moral attention. Active witnessing of the actual animal bodies, whether in motion or immobile, is central to the sense of empowerment that activists from the Save Movement say they experience. That is, seeing the pigs in their powerlessness would make us feel powerless, save for our ability to move our own bodies. Such activism is about *movement* and *mobilization*. Both these elements in countering trauma are central to active witnessing.

Conclusion

To exclude the sensing body from advocacy work reduces its effectiveness. As Buller, quoting Springgay, puts it: '[F]arm animals offer us the potential or the promise of an affective mattering derived from "a more proximal, contingent and bodily form of thought"' and this is made up of what is mostly lacking from images: 'noises, smells, movement and shared vitality' (156). Changing our relation to other species comes through being in company with them, body to body. This is especially true of those nonhuman bodies whom we disappear into the food system. Blackman's 'thinking through the body' is critical for changing our species' relation to others.

The shame of the pig who would not look me in the eye has stayed with me. I'm not going to baulk at using such formulations, because an empathic anthropomorphism can help us change our relationship to other species, as Daston and Mitman argue. This anthropomorphism is not the one criticized by 'objective' scientists, but rather an understanding that our forms of thinking are on a continuum with nonhuman forms of thought – for instance, our terror, grief, and bewilderment are, at root, the same. *My* shame was felt as a sense of uncomfortable identification – of being *seen* in direct encounter. And this was not only being seen by the commuters, but by the pigs. I felt the power that Derrida assigns to the gaze of his cat: the look that makes us aware of 'the naked truth of every gaze, when that truth *allows me to see and be seen* through the eyes of the other, in the *seeing* and not just *seen eyes* of the other' (12, emphasis in original). It is through the other that we identify ourselves. To act differently from the rest of society – as part of a slaughterhouse vigil, for example – is an act of counter-identification. It

begins, as Pick puts it, a reversal of 'the untold labor that goes into the sustaining and upkeep of identity'(85).

Losing sight of the bodies of those animals with whom we are in 'brain–body–world entanglements' is a willful blindness that Derrida accuses us of consenting to in our refusal to be 'seen seen' by the animal. This refusal is to be complicit with the structures that distance us from the nonhuman. The Save slaughterhouse vigils allow us to re/spect the nonhuman: to look again, more closely. Such acts are able to make the lives of animals more visible, bring them back into the public domain. The very specific embodied nature of such activist encounter is central to the ways in which the emotions felt – empathy, shame, fear – can, through allowing us to be 'seen seen', help us rethink and re-perspectivize the boundary between human and nonhuman.

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