

As a field, tourism supports anthropocentrism and speciesism by neglecting the conditions and interest of animals made to work for us in the pursuit of our own personal interest. If responsible tourism is about how to amend power imbalances between the haves and have-nots, should it not have inter-species relevance in the same way it works to minimize intra-species disparities? Promoting knowledge on animal ethics in tourism can contribute to creating a frame of reference that is more inclusive and protective of those beings who, by virtue of their involvement as workers (unwilling as they may be), are an important part of the tourism industry.

– David A. Fennell

Hide and exhibit the (in)corporeal ethics of the arctic Anthropocene

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INTRODUCTION

A pressing challenge within the science communications concerns the possibility of science exhibition methods to engage people into an ethical encounter with the phenomenon known as the Anthropocene. The term Anthropocene was established by Paul Crutzen, and it stands for a time when humans are the driving agents of geological change, in a scale and depth that includes atmosphere, landscape and oceans, inevitably affecting the biodiversity of the planet (see for example Williams, Zalasiewicz & Waters, 2017: 16). The analysis in this paper focuses on one of the 'Arctic in Change' exhibition pieces located in the Arktikum Science Centre in Rovaniemi, Finland. A diorama presenting a polar bear in its habitat is interpreted by applying the idea of corporeal ethics as a ground for establishing a connection between the human embodiment and what is traditionally considered as the exhibition object, inanimate,



post-mortem, manufacture showpiece. The afterlife of the anonymous female polar bear had multiple phases starting from the year 1976 when the corpse was sent to the conservation unit of the Natural History Museum of Finland. The project "Iso Vaalee" (i.e. 'the big blonde' in English, which possibly originates from a film with the same title launched by Veikko Kerttula in 1983) started in 1991, and through various processes of colouring the hide, building a skeleton, making casts out of clay, and so on, and using, for example, the bones, wood, iron, paint, and glass fiber in the making process, the work was finished in 1992 (Natural History Muse-

um, 1992), and the bear was finally sent to the Arktikum Science Centre. It later became a part of the permanent exhibition which presents “the conditions, nature, cultures and adaptation to extreme circumstances that occur in the far north as well as showcases multidisciplinary Arctic research in an interactive way that appeals to the general public.” Furthermore, “the exhibition highlights the developments, such as climate change and the status of indigenous peoples in an evolving world that affect the North” (Arktikum, 2017.) The difference with the classical museum settings is that in the science exhibitions, the goal is to enable the visitors to learn by using text and audiovisual material, but also by encouraging them to interact with most of the exhibition objects by pulling, touching, moving, placing, choosing and so forth, to use all the senses and motoric abilities of the body.

The Big Blonde has proved to be a famous attraction among the visitors of the science exhibition, which has also become the biggest threat to its maintenance for the future. Through the years, thousands of visitors have visited the spot where the bear stands, and since in its current setting, there is no protective fence around it, and posing and taking photographs with the bear is made easy (photographing is allowed in the science centre), the visitors could not have resisted their desire to touch the polar bear’s nose. This desire has become visible in the bear’s nose, since touching it has consumed the white fur off revealing the dark brown skin beneath. Furthermore, the pins piercing the nose to keep the taxidermied bear’s hide in its place have started to shine through the skin. Not only is the consumed fur and skin signifying the willingness, motivation or desire of the visitors towards the polar bear, but the revealed pins also show the taxidermy process, and the desire to either hunt down or capture and maintain a living bear. It shows truly a de- and reconstructive relation between the human and the bear. A question remains, whether this activity should be limited, encouraged or denied, or more importantly, what we can learn from it. How to critically evaluate the organisation of a science centre in its attempt to communicate human-environmental relations and societal impacts? Furthermore, what kinds of ethical engagements are present in this scientific discursive material setting, and how the sense and sensibility of things may co-exist. Has the most iconic arctic figure representing the climate change turned, in a very concrete way, into a proof of the beginning of the post-modern age of man, the embodiment of the Anthropocene?

AESTHETICS AND ETHICS

According to Alison Pullen and Carl Rhodes, the rational model for ethics is disembodied (2014: 160). These problematics, I believe, are emergent in the multiple discourses which circle around the term ‘Arctic’, and which I have argued to enfold a *bodily preposition*, which therefore draws also a geographical and historical standpoint to the word, making it both a highly political and an ethical issue (Vola, 2016). What also seems to evident is that this connection has been strongly distanced from the current uprising of the term in the field of International Relations and is not recognised as embodied, and furthermore, from the moment of the establishment of the word, has disembodied the bodies which live in and from the area which it signifies. I will explain my argument more carefully by starting from the formation of knowledge manifested in aesthetics and further revealing its connection to ethics.

The concept of arctic is established from a very distant standpoint when it comes to the terrain, waters and atmosphere which it refers to, or which it draws upon. The etymology of the word 'arctic' refers to 'arcticus', literally meaning 'from the bear' (Online Etymology Dictionary A, 2017), to be understood as something beyond the known reference point, a region behind the borders of the known and perceivable world. The bear is the star system, the celestial body of Ursa Major. The marginalisation of the region as something 'from' the known reference point continues when we think of how this point is approachable and perceivable. Firstly, only by vision, only from a distance, and only in the night time, when the sky is dark but clear. So even the reference to the unknown hides and escapes from the scope of our direct bodily experience. Secondly, the body which perceives and which pronounces the word 'arcticus' can be traced back to the Mediterranean ground, guiding navigators in the sea. Therefore, the body which speaks and draws the 'Arctic' is not physically in the arctic or perceiving the arctic, but perceiving the outer spaces and then gazing down to the horizon to orientate oneself in relation to the world. Later, this process of gathering distant and therefore marginal features within the same figure, either stars in the sky with the imaginary or "ghostly lines" between them (see Ingold, 2007: 49), or land areas around the North Pole, drawn within a circle, led to the formulation of the northern regions into a certain corpus of knowledge. To return to Pullen and Rhodes' work, more than disembodied, it is a masculine form of embodiment (2014: 160) in the case of the figuration of the arctic, since the bodies of the sailors, navigators and explorers were male bodies and recognised as such (see for example Lainemaa & Nurminen, 2001; Sale, 2008: 115-225).

More than being a literal process, the arctic has emerged in the field of aesthetics, for example in cartography (see for example Mercator [1569], "Septentrionalium Terrarum description"), before any of the bodies speaking of the arctic, had set foot on its terrain. From Immanuel Kant's approach, aesthetics is understood in a very organic sense: 'to perceive; to feel', or as the "science which treats of the conditions of sensuous perception" including all the sensory perceptions. This differs from Alexander Baumgarten's 'criticism of taste' as a normative process of correct evaluation of perceptions (Dictionary.com, 2017; Online Etymology Dictionary B, 2017). The Kantian interpretation resembles the "pre-reflexive" state (Pérezts, Fay & Picard 2014: 220). The etymological connection between the 'aesthetics' and 'audience' (Dictionary.com, 2017) reveals one more way to approach the term, as a phenomenon enabled by the presence of the collective. Since the senses, norms, and a human collective are present in the aesthetics, it leads to the hypotheses where the body via senses is an inseparable part of the aestheticised phenomenon. Therefore, this deep connection of aesthetics to the world withholds the capacity for both care and harm, bringing into existence as well as exterminating; making it a highly ethical issue rather than a purely intellectual or experiential one.

BEING OR A THING UNDER THE SKIN?

The analysis within this work follows what Karen Dale and Yvonne Latham call the "ethical implications of the entanglement of embodiment and non-human materialities", enabling the recognition ethical and political position, drawing of boundaries and non-human Others (Dale & Latham, 2014: 166). Dale and Latham present critical remarks for the two classes of

the body, classically divided by Jean-Baptiste Lamarck in the *Philosophie zoologique* into the inorganic and the organic body. Dale and Latham resist the western academic categorisation that creates the cut between beings and things (Dale & Latham, 2014: 167). The division can be further criticised in relation to the case study presented in this paper, not by the molecular structure of the organic and inorganic matter, but by the two other defining characters, 1) (in)animate and 2) reproduction.

Firstly, the representations, especially filmographic and virtual ones, are not necessarily carbon-based compounds, but nevertheless have the appearance and aesthetics of living beings, or animate beings, when the animate is first and foremost understood as something that has the attribute of movement. In the case of the taxidermied animals, it is not the movement of the animal that creates the aesthetic appeal of a living being, but the posture and positioning of the body (considered here as a body, since it lacks the abject nature of a dead animal or corps with repulsive smell and decomposing appearance), and the impression of “reflexivity” with the environment in a very concrete way in the shiny mirroring eyes of the taxidermied animal. Since the world is in the animal, the animal is in the world as a perceiving being. Furthermore, we can see its perception of the world and us.

Secondly, the question of reproduction, as a biological quality of flora and fauna, as sexual and asexual reproduction, is another boundary to be broken when it comes to blueprints, prototypes, cast and mass production. Joining of the cast and “raw material” to which the information of the structure of a ‘being’ or a ‘thing’ is decoded from the gene/blueprint, is similar to asexual production, as long as the product resemblance to the original prototype does not drastically differ from its form. One could say that this is an inaccurate description of the state of affairs since the biological reproduction is independent of assembly lines or other components of the process. But then again, this claim would mean that the biological reproduction, sexual or asexual would be independent of the environment, which is not the case taking into consideration the being turned into nutrition, and the different metabolic and biophysical processes in the body affected directly by the environment and its components. Therefore, the argument that problematises the organic/inorganic nature of the taxidermied polar bear can move the exhibition object beyond the being/thing division and establish it as a body of a non-human Other, even though this non-human might be more humane than one would think at first sight when it comes to the co-constitution of ethics via the embodiments.

In common language, the “Big Blonde” would translate from Finnish to English as ‘stuffed animal’, which then again in English is a toy. The logic of the expression is to reveal that the insides of the animal (or animal hide) have been replaced with some material that does not easily decompose (glass fibre in the case of the Big Blonde). Therefore, the taxidermy is clearly more precise, professionally accurate expression, which raised the question: to what does the word actually refer? According to the etymology dictionary (Online Etymology Dictionary C, 2017) ‘taxidermy’ (n.) goes back to 1820, coming from Greek *taxis*, meaning “arrangement, an arranging, the order or disposition of an army, battle array; order, regularity”. This definition truly opens up when it is seen in its linguistic relativity with the word ‘tactics.’ As Jacques Lacan pointed out in 1972, the fact that words have several meanings (Evers, 2010), *taxis* emerges as the technique to arrange the skin (‘derma’) with needles around the artificial body, but it

can also be interpreted as a tactic to create impression, affects and reactions, in arranging the viewers/visitors body in the exhibition.

I find the criticism presented by Karen Dale and Yvonne Latham towards the Actor Network Theory for treating the body, embodiment and non-human materiality as mere things, even though recognising them as actors and actants (Dale & Latham, 2014: 168), is a crucial point. Due to my own impressions, to form a network, it recognises its components only in a singular meaning in a fixed position, that differs again from the Lacanian understanding of language with many hidden meanings, altering according to and dependent on their context. The skin, or in the case of an animal, the hide, has at least a triple meaning as well: it is a synonym for the skin, but simultaneously it refers to hiding something or containing something. This seems obvious when it comes to the fact that it covers, and therefore hides, the layers of the body under the skin, but also indicates that the hide can alter the assumptions concerning the rest of the body (by, for example, making the animal look larger than it actually is without the fur). This play of wordings is crucial when we ought to look deeper into which components, bodies and parts are present in the interplay of ethics emerging around the being with a symbolic status within the discourse of the Anthropocene and Arctic change.

I AND US IN THE OTHER

Subject and object are not entities, but rather roles, masks that indicate the direction or the flow of actions. The split should be understood in a very profound way, not as something that is done between the human and the world, animals and items, but as something which takes place in experiencing one's own body, in representative technologies (mirror, photography, voice recorder), and in language and mathematics (for example, "*I see myself* belonging to *us*"; $1/2=0,5$). In the encounters with the Big Blonde, the human and non-human features have become fluid. We are visible in the bear's eyes, and we have left a mark on its nose. This resembles the concept of *objet petit a* (object little-a, where the letter 'a' stands for *autre*, 'other') developed by Jacques Lacan to describe the object of desire sought in the other. He explains that "the interest the subject takes in his own split is bound up with that which determines it [...] the object a." (Lacan, 1977 [1973]: 83). Therefore, the trace of the other, *objet petit a*, the cut that has happened in our becoming 'I', is the valuable and missing piece which we are seeking from the bear, that is not in ourselves, and that the driving desire, the gaze of ours is imprinted in the skin of the bear, and our vision has become visible. Therefore, we who are the other for the bear, are now a small part of the bear's figuration, the *objet petit a*.

Michael Henry's notion on the organic body experience as the grounding for the ethics in embodied life itself as well as the possibility for an individual experience grow at a shared level (Pérezts, Fay and Picard, 2014: 218–219) potentiality is exposed in the case of the Big Blonde. In the bear, the experience is not individual anymore, but a collective one, and the Anthropocene emerges in the bear's hide only via the collective of bodies, as is the Anthropocene an outcome of humanity, not of one individual, even though it takes into count each and everyone. As Philip Hancock suggests, the corporeal ethics is not achieved by actions of isolated subjectivities but by mutual recognition and generosity towards the other (Hancock, 2008: 1371). Wendelin Küpert's work strikingly emphasises the phenomenon which takes place in

the taxidermied polar bear. It enables more than offering “a condition for social living bonds of communication [...] across the gestures of other bodies”, (Küpers, 2015: 33) by providing a medium transformation between the modalities, as in this case, from direct vision to kinaesthetic, where the touch becomes visible, and this visibility captures the eye.

GENEROSITY OF THE BEAR

The artificial moment with the post-mortem bear (since the post-being is an inaccurate description of the state of affairs), rather than creating deception, enables an impossible encounter in a natural environment where the predatory relations would most likely emerge as dominant. This is not because of the inevitable nature of things, but because this is the repeated form of the encounter in the current world by both parties. This peaceful moment of coexistence, where the sensuous sphere of touch and sight take over enables us to approach the bear unable to harm us, and without the signs of fear and aggression towards us. Now only the softness of the fur and the mirroring vision of the bear are there, at present.

Mar Pérezts, Eric Faÿ and Sébastien Picard refer to Hancock’s work (2008) following Merleau-Ponty’s and Diprose’s writings “the pre-reflexive body is the site of perception, power and recognition and therefore of mundane inter-subjectivity”, enabling it to be “the locus of moral behaviors such as generosity and responsibility” (Pérezts, Faÿ & Picard, 2014: 220). Whether this is what takes place in the encounter with the bear is a question that remains unsolved. Since the bear does not address “do not touch”, but pushes its nose towards the audience, it shows its vulnerability, offers itself, with strong posture but with lowered head, it therefore shows the signs of generosity by being open. The act of touching could be a very primal instinct, an echo from the societies where the encounters with bears took place in different circumstances, and this could be interpreted as a pre-reflexive state, before the norms of museum (but not the science centre) of not touching takes place and restraints the body from corporeal intra-action (for intra-action, see for example Barad, 2007). On the other hand, the ethics towards the bear is something that most likely emerges after the physical endangering encounter with the bear, consuming and compromising its existence. But whatever the driver for this physical encounter would be, it acknowledges the being of the bear and enables generosity towards its species, and therefore the post-life of the bear has been given a utilitarian purpose.

Kate Kenny and Marianna Fotaki raise the concept of self-fragilization by Bracha L. Ettingers. In the process of fragilizing, one becomes open and therefore vulnerable, but capable of encountering the other and contact the vulnerability in the other. The self-fragilization forms an important counter-concept for Donna Haraway’s figuration (Haraway, 2008: 4) as a form of re-figuration via the moment of fragilization (Kenny & Fotaki, 2014: 189). To fully understand the depth of the figurations, I would go even further from Merleau-Ponty’s notion in that the body belongs to the order of things (Dale & Latham, 2014: 169) by stating that *the body is the ordering of things*. This, in my understanding, shares a similar standpoint to which Ajneesh Prasad refers in suggesting that instead of studying body in relation to culture, it should be studied as the subject of culture or the existential ground of culture (Prasad, 2014: 528). By combining both Merleau-Ponty’s flesh-of-the-world (Dale & Latham, 2014: 170) and Ettinger’s fragilization, the birth or emergence of ‘I’ or ‘individual’ is a trauma, a cut, in the worldly flesh.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this paper has been to see the possibility of corporeal ethics, and to some extent for corporeal ethics of generosity, to emerge between the so-called member of the audience/visitor and the exhibition object/artefact. To do so, following the corporeal ethics literature and other intersecting scientific sources, both the human body as 'being' and the object as 'thing' has been disrupted and re-figured to break the boundary between subject and object, where the corporeal encounter, from which the ethics can potentially emerge, could take place across the boundaries of authentic/artificial, life/death, present/absent, human/animal, viewer/viewed and sight/touch. The human actions and effect consume the polar bear territory and starve its vivid body to a hollow hide. When we see the connectedness of our own living material body and the post-body of the polar bear, there is a possibility of embodied ethics to emerge via our sensuous interconnectedness with the world that it stands for, with its four legs.

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