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Bison, Bears, and Borders: Animals and the Performance of National Communities

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for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Drama and Theatre

by

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University of California San Diego
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2020

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memories of my mother, Cheryl Ruggiero, and my grandfather, Carmine Ruggiero, both of whom contributed to my love of animals and the outdoors. Whenever I walk in the woods, I feel them with me.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Bison, Bears, and Borders: Animals and the Performance of National Communities

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Drama and Theatre

University of California San Diego, 2020
University of California Irvine, 2020

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According to Benedict Anderson, nations exist as an imagined community, tethered to geographic features but primarily existing in human minds, facilitating the development of human collectives. Throughout these processes, non-human animals have participated in this imagining from its earliest beginnings but have been largely unacknowledged. The labor these creatures do occurs in several spheres, from physical labor and becoming food, to symbolic use, providing a shared image around which human members of a nation may rally. But there is also another key form of work that is critical to understanding national bodies. This labor is performative in nature, operating in an affective space bounded by engagement with human spectators and collaborators,

and involves the actual presence of animal bodies. Within this site, animals function in multiple registers- sometimes generating connection and inspiring empathy, sometimes provoking terror and participating in state-sponsored acts of aggression.

The present work considers ways in which animals have contributed performatively to the construction, maintenance, and disruption of national communities. By considering a range of texts, including film and television, myths and stories, internet materials, and works of performance art, I explore the implications of the human-animal relationship with a focus on how it has influenced national imagined communities. Drawing on the theoretical work of scholars including Benedict Anderson, Duncan Bell, Patrick Wolfe, and Karen Barad, and building on the work of scholars in Animal Geography and Animal Performance Studies, I illustrate the ways in which non-human animals have demonstrated sovereignty and have served as active subjects in the construction and maintenance of national communities, as combatants, and as sacrificial beings. The project contains chapters on settler-colonial expansion during the 19th Century that resulted in the near-extinction of the Sioux and bison populations, the differences in the perception of police dogs and horses, an exploration of military animals and empathy, and consideration of how wildlife can disrupt the concept of a geographically-bound national identity.

Introduction: Symbiotic Communities

This is a story about symbiosis. In biological terms, the word is used to describe relationships, typically between individuals of different species. Most people assume that those relationships are positive ones, but that is not necessarily the case. There are different kinds of symbioses. There is mutualism, in which both individuals benefit. There is commensalism, in which one species benefits while the other is neither helped nor harmed. And there is parasitism, in which one species is helped while the other is harmed. These are useful categories but I would argue that interspecies relationships, like human-human relationships, are often more nuanced and less easily described than these classifications would suggest. Depending on the species and the individuals, a single relationship might be all of these things, as well as a few others that defy description entirely. This is especially true when the relationship in question is between a human and a non-human animal.

The human-animal relationship is lengthy, existing well before our species had evolved to our present form thousands of years ago. In their earliest days, our predecessors hunted animals for food before eventually building early relationships with other species which laid the foundation for what we would now recognize as domestication. Dogs were first, followed by horses and other livestock, and their presence would ultimately become permanently entwined with the development of human civilizations. The relationship between humanity and other species grew into symbioses, as each species changed to accommodate the presence of the other(s). For example, in return for their service protecting human settlements, dogs (*Canis domesticus*) gained access to a steady supply of food (a mutualist relationship).

At the same time we were building relationships with other species, humanity was also engaged in the early development of communities. We are, after all, animals too. More specifically,

humans are herd animals. As a species, we evidence a consistent desire to aggregate. We do so for a wide variety of reasons- for personal protection or to share resources, for example. Working as collectives helps humanity make sense of the world around them. While the idea of a herd is more closely associated with non-human animals such as starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*), fish such as herring (*Clupea pallasii*), and sheep (*Ovis ares*), the desire to connect with others is one quality that humanity shares with other members of the Animal Kingdom. Herding manifests in a variety of ways in human behavior, including in economic and financial spheres, as well as a tendency towards mob activity.[1] One of the key venues in which human herd behavior becomes visible is in the desire to form and "perform" nations.

With so much of the media attention of the last few years focused on maintaining American borders, it is difficult to avoid thinking about the various ways in which nationalist identities are constructed. If contemporary media rhetoric is to be believed, it suggests that there is something inherently geographic about the concept, although the idea that geographies refer only to land and not the people who inhabit (or would like to inhabit) them is perhaps overly simplistic. The prevailing popular view implies that borders are somehow disconnected from the people that worry about them, that they are objective and eternal. Except, of course, when they aren't. Borders are free to be expanded when a group of sufficiently strong people decide that more land or resources are required. They can be contracted with similar speed, should the impetus to do so arise. The tasks associated with constructing, maintaining, and reinforcing national identities and borders have consistently and necessarily deployed performative elements. To exist, borders must be visible. To be defended, there must be a visible show of presence (often accompanied by shows of force). The individuals populating an area must perform their allegiance to the nation/collective in

[1] Raafat 2009

visible legible ways, lest they be ejected from the herd. And consistently, whether those borders are being enlarged, strengthened, or shrunken, the process and its performative tasks have always involved human bodies working alongside non-human animals.

In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson indicates that nationality, nation-ness, and nationalism "are cultural artefacts of a particular kind."[2] These concepts are characterized in part by a certain flexibility- while being difficult to define for a number of reasons, all of humanity is expected to be identifiable through a nation of origin in much the same way that each individual is expected to be identifiable by gender.[3] He thus defines nation as "an imagined political community."[4] The imagined aspect comes as a result of the fact that individuals may feel a powerful connection to other members of the same nation despite having never actually met them. Yet, these individuals share certain features that make them recognizable to other members of the group. Further, regardless of the geographic size of a nation and the elasticity of its boundaries, those boundaries always exist, marking some individuals as in-group, while others remain out-group.

Performance seems integral to the way in which Anderson understands how nationalist identities are constructed. Anderson suggests that the use of common languages is important in establishing and demonstrating in-group status relative to national identity.[5] By reading, writing, and speaking in a particular language, one can reaffirm belonging to a particular in-group by demonstrating a skill set required by that group. As a boundary, language remains relatively porous (it is possible to speak the language and still not be acknowledged as in-group, for example), but language use remains one highly visible means of determining national identity. Anderson also

[2] Anderson 4
[3] Ibid. 5
[4] Ibid. 6
[5] Ibid. 37-46, 67-82

describes national festivals,[6] which function as a performative ritual of nationalist identity. By coming together in a shared space at the same time while undertaking specific activities associated with that particular event and culture, an individual can demonstrate in-group identity. For example, attending a July 4th barbecue, eating hamburgers and apple pie, and wearing an American flag T-shirt would function as part of demonstrating American identity through a communal celebration of US independence.[7] Anderson's text also draws attention to cultural artifacts such as poetry, music, and other celebratory arts[8] in his discussion of patriotism and racism, which further reinforces the notion of nationalism as a performative space. The way in which singing the national anthem creates a visible and vocal community serves as a valuable exemplar of the relational work enacted by these rituals.[9] He also includes here dying for one's country, a martyrdom that retains performative characteristics.

Anderson's consideration of memory relative to national identity is further explored in productive ways by Duncan Bell, whose concept of the "mythscape"[10] offers a fruitful area of exploration. Bell draws a distinction between memory, which requires presence at an event, and myth, where the narrative associated with a particular historical event can be held, recalled, and transmitted by individuals who were not in attendance. He describes the ways in which these national myths contribute to national identity construction in important ways,[11] as well as how

[6] Ibid. 117
[7] All of these behaviors can and should, of course, be problematized in a number of registers. Yet, when taken together, they demonstrate the performative quality of nationalist identity (justified or not) that I'm describing here.
[8] Ibid. 141-154
[9] Ibid. 145
[10] Bell 74
[11] 9/11 as a marker of American identity comes to mind, in that there continue to be demonstrations of mourning, fear, and anger relative to the event, performed by those who were thousands of miles away from New York at the time the Towers fell.

memory can be useful as a tool of political resistance.[12] His discussion of myth indicates that the national narratives can become flattened and oversimplified.[13]

Both Anderson's and Bell's contributions are important theoretical elements of the present work. I argue that non-human animals occupy a quasi-liminal position relative to national identity, in that they simultaneously are and are not part of the imagined community but are consistently present in national memory and contribute significantly to national mythologies. While there are aspects of animal labor that have literally participated in the construction of the United States, in the past and continuing into the present day, animals contribute to the performance of American identity while never quite being assigned a nation of their own. This gap allows animals to participate in the creation of spaces that allow for reflection on the nature of national identity, as well as opportunities for resistance to the settler-colonial ideals that are so deeply enmeshed with American nationalism.

That animals contribute to the construction of identity is not a novel concept. Scholars Jody Emel, Chris Wilbert, and Jennifer Wolch[14] trace the early stages of what they refer to as "animal geographies" to the mid-1990s. This area of study developed as a new area of interdisciplinary research, drawing scholars in the natural sciences, political economics, social theory, geography, and cultural studies, among other disciplines. Emel, Wilbert, and Wolch explain that "the focus was animals' role in the social construction of culture and individual human subjects, the nature of animal subjectivity, and agency itself."[15] They go on to specify that animal geography concerns itself with "the role of animals in the formation of heterogeneous identities—individual and

[12] Ibid. 66
[13] Ibid. 75
[14] 2002
[15] Emel, Wilbert, and Wolch 408

collective—that people adopt or have ascribed to them," noting that these identities may be in national, racial/ethnic, cultural, or gendered terms.[16]

The present work builds on preexisting scholarship in animal geographies by exploring similar concerns through lenses more commonly associated with performance studies. Una Chaudhuri began the work of putting performance in conversation with animal studies, in a 2003 article aptly titled "Animal Geographies: Zooësis and the Space of Modern Drama." Her work acknowledged that animals would facilitate "new analyses of the many contexts in which animality has been deployed rhetorically to oppress human groups, members of different 'races,' nations, ethnicities, classes, and genders,"[17] but thus far, animal performance studies has focused on what Chaudhuri describes as "cultural animal practices." She references both literary and dramatic representations of animals, as well as performances in traditional venues such as the stage, circuses, and sports arenas.

Karen Barad's "posthuman performativity" offers another useful venue for exploration in considering animals and performance. Barad uses diffraction, an optical concept borrowed from physics, to explain how performance can defy representationalist restrictions. She explains the utility of this way of thinking thus:

> What often appears as separate entities (and separate sets of concerns) with sharp edges does not actually entail a relation of absolute exteriority at all. Like the diffraction patterns illuminating the indefinite nature of boundaries—displaying shadows in 'light' regions and bright spots in 'dark' regions—the relation of the social and the scientific is a relation of 'exteriority within.'[18]

Barad goes on to explain that these "light" and "dark" areas are not static, but rather exist in a processual state of change, allowing alternate views at different experiential moments. This way

[16] Ibid. 408-409
[17] Chaudhuri 647
[18] Barad 803

of thinking allows for an exploration of sites of differentiation while still allowing for moments of intersection and overlap and suggests that performance occurs essentially in the functional space of a prism—the performance space is where diffraction takes place and it is through a performative view that alternate elements of any given analysand become visible.

Barad's work becomes useful in considering animals as beings capable of diffractive performance, such that by engaging with those animals, it becomes possible to see the surrounding contexts in new light, rather than simply seeing the animals as referents for some other predetermined, flattened concept. Further, Barad insists that performance offers a productive alternative to linguistic representation.[19] Given that access to language has long been a sticking point in evaluating the capabilities of non-human animals,[20] it seems particularly productive to engage with a theoretical lens that recognizes ways in which animals might be able to provide insights without a reliance on linguistic means. That said, naturally, this project will nevertheless seek to render its findings within the space of written text, even while relying heavily on the embodied labor of animals and the humans that work with them.

Jacques Derrida's "The Animal that Therefore I am (More to Follow)"[21] also contributes significantly to Animal Performance Studies, in that Derrida draws attention to the gaze, creating a key linkage to performance in his consideration of animals as both beings who gaze and who are gazed upon. By situating animals as both performers and spectators, Derrida signals a form of performative ambiguity. He also reminds the reader, as do a number of other Animal Performance Studies scholars, to consider John Berger's "Why Look at Animals?,"[22] which considers zoos as sites of marginalization, performance, and display. Berger also reminds us that animals make

[19] Ibid. 807
[20] Language will be discussed more fully in short order.
[21] Derrida 2002
[22] Berger 1980

possible a form of self-gazing in humanity and that, in the process of a shared gaze with an animal, humans see their own similarity and difference simultaneously. However, despite the available literature in animal performance studies, consideration of non-human animal performance in the specific context of American national identity remains largely unexplored, and it is this lacuna this text seeks to fill.

In many cases, non-human animals are deployed in a nationalist context purely symbolically. This can be done in positive ways, such as the selection in 1782 of the bald eagle as an icon representative of American strength and freedom.[23] Animals have also been used symbolically to denigrate populations defined by their nation of origin- one might recall the appearance in works of caricature in which the French are figured as frogs, the Irish as apes or pigs in the British publication PUNCH, the Spaniards as wolves, and the Japanese as monkeys.[24] And since the 19th Century, American political parties have been symbolized by the Republican elephant and the Democratic donkey, with these representations deployed in both positive and negative contexts. While this symbolic work has certainly taken place in the past and continues in the present, it is far from a complete description of the labor undertaken by animal bodies relative to nationalist concerns. It is worth remembering that the construction of a nation requires the acquisition and holding of territory and for as long as humans have been claiming and retaining land, they have done so in the company of animals. Animal bodies have been consumed as a food source throughout human history. Animal labor has been responsible for transport from place to place, for acquisition of building materials, for construction of structures, and for defense of

[23] This example is a rather funny one, given Benjamin Franklin's tongue-in-cheek discussion of a preference for the turkey to be selected for this role, described in an unpublished 1784 letter to his daughter (http://franklinpapers.org/franklin/framedVolumes.jsp?vol=41&page=281). Franklin felt that the turkey was a far more respectable bird.
[24] Curtis 1997

territory. These tasks have included performative elements that contribute to how national identity is constructed and maintained, incorporating elements of animal symbolism but relying on the literal presence of actual animal bodies to complete their geographic work.

A Note About Language

Before continuing further, it is valuable to discuss the use of the term "animal." This problematic term has been a consistent thorn in the side of Animal Studies from the discipline's inception. As a result, discourse regarding language use appears in nearly every monograph on the subject and a discussion on language use acts as a sort of prerequisite for any commentary within or regarding the discipline. The appearance of the subject here is thus seemingly unavoidable.

The issue of the term "animal" stems from several causes. The first of these is the sheer fact that this document is being created through the use of written words – a medium which (as far as we presently know) exists as the exclusive provenance of humanity – and thus negates the inclusion of the non-human animal in its production and critique. According to Derrida, the use of words as the location of discourse empowers humanity in a particular way, as it provides the capacity to *name*. He comments at length on this power, noting that "[t]he 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." [25] He goes on to describe the consequences of lacking language—a position attributed to non-human animals—indicating that "[f]inding oneself deprived of language, one loses the power to name, to name oneself, indeed to *respond* to one's name."[26] Here, the extent to which one possesses language is indicated as a defining characteristic of humanity or non-humanity, and it is worth recalling that language is similarly deployed in the

[25] Derrida 2002 392. It is worth noting here that since Derrida's writing, it has become apparent that humans are not the only animals with the capacity to name. Dolphins have been observed naming themselves (http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2006/05/060508_dolphins.html. Retrieved 16Mar2016).
[26] Ibid. 388

construction of Anderson's national imagined communities. In Derrida's case, the distinction is along species lines, whereas Anderson's usage is along cultural boundaries. Nevertheless, in both cases, language is central to both the process of othering and subsequently to the development of hierarchies that are critical to maintenance of the communities that perform this process.

This othering that occurs between humans and "those who cannot name" serves to designate these two units as discrete entities, destined to remain eternally separate. In order for this process to occur, the creation of these two distinct categories requires a degree of severance which cannot help but leave behind a wound, which Derrida describes as an "abyss."[27] Joy and Weitzenfeld describe the violence done by this splitting as four distinct types of wound[28], each of which applies to the actual human-animal dichotomy as well as the linguistic. The first is the severing of the human from the non-human which alienates humans from the animal elements within themselves, such as embodied experience, as well as from the rest of the living world. I would add to Joy and Weitzenfeld that, in addition to losing sight of the characteristics that connect humanity with the rest of the Animal Kingdom, the other side of this coin is the difficulty often seen in recognizing and appreciating the profound differences in the experiences of other species. This is articulated in part by the need to develop a hierarchy of abilities that places embodied experience and other skills we share with other species below an ever-changing list of what are presumed to be exclusively human abilities.

The extent to which each designation includes a multitude of subsets which may or may not be appropriately described within these two terms is the second concern. By dichotomizing life in this way, there is a significant flattening of the diversity that both of these categories contain. "Human" does little to reflect the physical, social, or cultural distinctions within our single species.

[27] Ibid. 399
[28] Joy and Weitzenfeld 8

"Animal" here manages to fail even more dramatically, negating not only differences between individuals, families, or groups within a single species but simultaneously erasing variance between species. A dog (*Canis domesticus*) is not a duck (such as *Anas platyrhynchos*) and neither of these are earthworms (*Lumbricus terrestris*) or tuna (such as *Thunnus thynnus*) or sea star (*Pycnopodia helianthoides*, for example) but all of these are "animals" within the human-animal binary.

The third concern references the concept of *zoë* as described by Agamben.[29] In Joy and Weitzenfeld's discussion, Agamben's discourse regarding "bare life" is deployed to suggest that by creating a distinction between the human and non-human, the distinction between *zoë* and *bios* is simultaneously created, relegating the non-human animal to *zoë*. In doing so, the animal becomes an object to be manipulated for economic and political ends in the same way that a human who has been dehumanized would be. This objectification leads to the fourth and last violence described by Joy and Weitzenfeld, which entails institutionalization of noncriminal treatment towards the objectified being in the service of the state and the economy.

The expansion of the term "animal" into "non-human animal" does little to ameliorate any of these concerns. Yet, attempting to adequately reflect the diversity present within these terms quickly becomes unwieldy. As such, this work will continue to utilize the terms "human" and "humanity" to refer to members of the species *Homo sapiens sapiens*, even as the discourse focuses primarily (albeit not entirely) on Western theoretical constructions of what being human means. Similarly, the term "animal" will be used to describe those beings who are not identified as *Homo sapiens sapiens*, while recognizing that the capabilities, experiences, and desires (among other things) of a domestic cat (*Felis domesticus*) may vary from those of an Orb-weaver (members of

[29] 1995

the family *Araneidae*) and that the experiences and capabilities of a single individual within either of these groupings can and do vary from those of other members.

In acknowledging these issues that attend to the use of the term "animal," it is also worth recognizing that there is an inherent tension in the use of verbal language in considering animals at all. Again, as far as we know, humanity is exclusive in its use of written text, although David Abram reminds us that this technological advance occurred relatively recently in human history. He explains:

> We two-legged have long been creatures of language, of course, but verbal language lived first in the shaped breath of utterance, it laughed and stuttered on the tongue long before it lay down on the page, and longer still before it arrayed itself in rows across the glowing screen.[30]

Nevertheless, there is evidence that other species are capable of learning words. Dogs are not only able to learn words but also exhibit "fast mapping,"[31] the process by which human children hypothesize about the meaning of a new word. Beyond this most basic linguistic capability, there is evidence that animals exhibit the capacity for learning more sophisticated language, including syntax and grammar. Perhaps the best-known example is Alex, an African Gray Parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*), whose life and learning were documented by animal cognitive scientist Irene Pepperberg and subsequently analyzed specifically as language by Jennifer Hudin.[32] As more research is done, there is an ever-increasing body of work documenting that the linguistic capabilities of animals substantially surpass previous expectations. Nevertheless, at this time, there is still a dearth of documentation that animals can write and the use of verbal language seems largely used primarily as a way of communicating with us by necessity, rather than preference.

[30] Abram 27
[31] Kaminski, Call and Fischer 2004
[32] Pepperberg 2008, Hudin 2009

Instead, communication with animals tends to be predominantly non-verbal, at least when the human in the conversation is on the receiving end. As a result, in attempting to explore animal agency and sovereignty (more on this shortly) in the context of this project, I find myself bumping up against the problem of speaking *for* rather than speaking *with*. While there is no shortage of human authors I can cite in this work, there is a definite absence of animal authors published, which complicates their inclusion. What does speaking *with* look like in this context? I believe the best that can be hoped for, at least at this stage, is to acknowledge that this work is one that contains a considerable amount of translation. And as with any act of translation, it is worth recognizing that the work is being done in good faith and with an attempt to convey as much meaning as possible while accepting that there will certainly be some slippage or loss in the process.

Finally, there remains a linguistic concern regarding the use of pronouns. The use of "it" is common when describing animals, despite the fact that most species are typically sexed (even if that sex may switch from time to time). Given the sex/gender fluidity observed across species, the use of either gendered pronoun may also be problematized. However, in English, "it" typically signifies neutral objects, and in the context of the present work, animals are anything but neutral objects. The subjecthood of animals in the performative labor to be explored is critical. As such, I will make use of "he/him/his/she/her/hers" as a textual acknowledgement of animal agency.

Agency, Sovereignty, and Fraught Intimacies

As previously noted, much of the existing animal studies literature regarding the relationship between animals and national identity (as well as animal performance in general) has centered on representations of animals. These symbolic aspects do a great deal of work in contributing to how animals are construed, but also typically serve to objectify the animal. Philo and Wilbert describe this process, noting that if analytical focus is concentrated exclusively on

animal representation, "the impression is that animals are merely passive surfaces on to which human groups inscribe imaginings and orderings of all kinds."[33] This is similarly true in cultural animal practices, such as those typically examined within Animal Performance Studies, even when actual animal bodies come into play. In these circumstances, the animals are often treated as little more than props at worst and at best, are considered with a level of paternalism that denies any real sense of agency on the part of the animal.

The extent to which animals exhibit agency remains a key focus of animal behavior research, as it has for centuries. The Ancient Greeks varied in their approaches to animals. Aristotle[34] argued that humans were ranked well above non-human animals in the Great Chain of Being, since animals lacked *logos* (reason), *logismos* (reasoning), *dianoia* (thought), or *doxa* (belief). Pythagoras[35] argued on the side of animals, urging respect, benevolence, and charity. René Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*[36], first published in 1641, suggested that animals were simply machines, with no minds, no souls, and no access to reason. Descartes' perspective subsequently permeated Western thought, providing support for preexisting hierarchies of being that allowed for indifference to a wide range of cruelty to animals. Subsequent philosophers including John Locke[37] opposed cruelty to animals, but their positions were due primarily to a sense that cruelty to animals would lead to cruelty towards other human beings. In 1789, Jeremy Bentham[38] raised the question of whether or not animals were capable of suffering, framing this capacity as the most important element of ethical human-animal relations.

[33] Philo and Wilbert 5
[34] Barker 1977
[35] Wynne-Tyson 260
[36] Moriarty 2008
[37] Locke 151
[38] Bentham 1789

These philosophical and ethical debates provided valuable groundwork in considering the animal mind and formed the groundwork for ethological research from the 19th century onwards. However, while recognizing that animals may suffer is a key initial step in acknowledging theory of mind, there remains a significant gap between this preliminary work and full recognition of animal agency. Agency in general is typically construed at its most basic level as what Philo and Wilbert describe as "conscious intentionality," which they define as "self-consciousness and the facility for acting on intentions with a view to converting plans into outcomes."[39] Historically in the West, this capability (like so many others) has been subject to human exceptionalism, marked as both oppositional and hierarchically superior to more obviously shared qualities such as instinct.

It is worth noting that the idea that there is even a question of animal agency is a Western cultural product. In non-Western cultures, animal agency is considered obvious. In her discussion of human-animal relationships in Indigenous oral literature, Indigenous scholar and activist Melissa Nelson (Anishinaabe/Métis/Norwegian) explains that:

> In many tribal creation stories, these different species connect, converse, fight, and get together as commonly as humans do. In fact, they are considered 'people' with their own individual and species sovereignty, yet they are all interrelated through creation or what ecologists call 'ecosystem dynamics' or 'food webs': eventually, everything eats everything.[40]

Here, Nelson draws attention to intentional actions performed by animals that extend beyond the reflexive or instinctual. In particular, her reference to the ability of animals to converse, to speak, contributes to their inclusion in personhood, something historically prohibited in Western thought. Perhaps it is the relationship between personhood and agency that has made the territory so fraught in Western philosophy, as personhood has historically been similarly delimited so as to privilege white male voices. In any case, there has been steady progress within both animal behavioral

[39] Philo and Wilbert 14
[40] Nelson 239

studies and other animal-related disciplines such as ecocriticism and animal performance studies towards the recognition of animals as agential beings. For the purpose of this project, I work from the assumption that animals exhibit agency as described by Philo and Wilbert – they experience consciousness and are able to make choices with intention.

This capability is of particular importance in terms of how animals are able to perform in the nationalist context I describe. British Geographer Tim Cresswell considers the distinction between what he terms "transgression" and "resistance."[41] In his formulation, "transgression" occurs when there has been some kind of boundary breach, be it geographical or sociocultural, noting that transgression "means to have been judged to have crossed some line that was not meant to be crossed."[42] Cresswell explains the value of transgression in that "we may have to experience some geographical transgression before we realize that a boundary even existed."[43] He goes on to articulate what he sees as the distinction between "transgression" and "resistance," which Cresswell situates with intentionality. In his formulation, resistance requires intentionality and is defined as "purposeful action directed against some disliked entity with the intention of changing it or lessening its effect."[44] By contrast, transgression "does not, by definition, rest on the intentions of actors but on the *results*—on the 'being noticed' of a particular action."[45] These two forms of action are not mutually exclusive. It is possible for an intentional transgression to be an act of resistance. The primary distinction, in other words, is that the extent to which an action is resistance is determined by the intention of the actor while the extent to which an action is transgression is decided by those who react or respond to that action.

[41] 1996
[42] Cresswell 23
[43] Ibid 22
[44] Ibid 22
[45] Ibid 23

It seems clear that animals are capable of transgression. We can certainly find them in places we did not expect or in situations that are inconvenient or even hazardous. Whether or not animals can resist is the more significant question. If we accept the possibility that animals can operate agentially, then they are capable of intentional action. If they are capable of intentional action, it becomes possible for them to perform acts of resistance. The sticking point, however, is that we lack a common language that could be used for the purpose of determining their intentions. In considering animal geographies, Philo and Wilbert suggest that, whether an animal's intention is known or not, by "transgressing, perhaps even resisting, the human placement of them," they create "their own 'beastly places' reflective of their own 'beastly' ways, ends, doings, joys and sufferings."[46] We may be able to allow the opportunity for animals to resist, although we cannot know the specifics of their intentions (or at least, not yet). In doing so, a space is created for what might be considered animal sovereignty.

The concept of sovereignty appears prominently in the work of Indigenous scholars such as Vine Deloria, Jr. and Robert Warrior. Deloria's work on sovereignty articulates the position that a group is considered sovereign when that group's right to be different is acknowledged by the prevailing hegemonic powers[47] and furthermore, that that group is "foreign and autonomous, whether it actually is or not."[48] The sovereignty of a group, then, is determined in part by distinct recognition by an alternate and empowered group, which may use that distinction for a variety of purposes including but not limited to oppression. Warrior extends Deloria's analysis to include intellectual sovereignty, which can be understood as a way of thinking and analyzing that acknowledges influences from a variety of sources but that is not limited or defined by those

[46] Philo and Wilbert 13
[47] Deloria 117
[48] Ibid 118

external sources.[49] In considering the work of several Native poets, Warrior explains that the writers exhibit intellectual sovereignty in that they "are acutely aware of the influences (or lack thereof) on their lives from oral tradition, from the non-Native poets from whom they have learned, and from the particularity of their own experiences."[50] This awareness allows for the creation of a space by the Native poet that is knowingly and intentionally distinct from the intellectual space occupied by thinkers from other communities.

If sovereignty is considered in these terms, an extension to animal communities is not unreasonable. The idea is reminiscent of "niches," an ecological concept that refers to both the geographic place in which a species belongs, as well as the role that animal plays within the larger ecological community in which it exists. Niches are largely understood as specific to a given species, although it is possible for an introduced species to compete and ultimately supplant a preexisting species in a given niche. Nevertheless, the concept of a niche is consistent with a form of sovereignty, in which the distinctive character of a species is acknowledged. It should also be clear by now that humanity has made a point of remarking throughout history on the divide between itself and other species of animal, which further reinforces the extent to which animals are different. Despite periodic attempts at anthropomorphism (dressing small dogs in sweaters comes to mind), there is rarely much confusion in terms of species identification. And, species-based distinction has certainly been used historically as an excuse for the oppression and abuse of animals in Western societies.

Recognition of animal sovereignty is important to this project for several reasons. First, it acknowledges the presence of autonomous animal communities; while these groups may sometimes behave in ways that are consistent with how humans would like them to, they do not

[49] Warrior 117
[50] Ibid 117

always do so. In fact, animal communities can and do transgress and may also at times resist. Second, particularly in terms of domestic species, there is a clear influence on animal behavior due to the presence of humans but that influence is not negated by the inherent community behaviors one might expect of that species. In other words, while horses can and do learn what equestrians typically consider "manners,"[51] they remain horses and even the best-trained horse will still sometimes spook or step on a handler's foot. No matter how much anthropomorphism occurs, animals continue to behave in ways that are consistent with their own species and that may be thoroughly inscrutable to their human companions.

Further support for animal sovereignty arrives in Donna Haraway's *The Companion Species Manifesto,*[52] in which Haraway considers relationality, focusing on her relationship with her dogs as the titular "companion species." One additional contribution that Haraway makes is in her statement that "[dogs] are not a projection, nor the realization of an intention, nor the telos of anything. They are dogs, i.e., a species in obligatory, constitutive, historical, protean relationship with human beings."[53] What is noteworthy here is the reminder that while animals can and do exist in the space of the human symbolic register, they remain always exactly what they are, outside of the layers of projection laid upon them by humanity.

While sovereignty provides a way of conceptualizing the autonomy and profound distinction of other animal species, one must also remember that our own species has developed in a state of significant proximity to other animals. These relationships are highly emotional, provoking affective and physical responses in both beings involved. Melissa Nelson describes our relationships to the natural world and to animals in particular as "intimate," a way of becoming

[51] These might include walking politely beside a human, allowing themselves to be caught in the field, and not biting, among other things.
[52] Haraway 2003
[53] Ibid. 103

fully alive through connection to something outside of ourselves.[54] Nelson's work centers on stories of coupling between women and animals in Indigenous oral literature, but makes clear that intimacies can and do occur in more mundane quotidian activities. They happen in moments of vulnerability and emotional need, and I would extend her thinking to include times of shared experience such as labor or play, in times of stress and times of rest.

Certainly, Nelson's description of intimacy calls to mind Deleuze and Guattari's notion of "becoming."[55] This form of relating has seemingly become extremely important in the literature of Animal Studies in general and Animal Performance Studies in particular, due in part to what may be an overromanticization by some authors of what exactly constitutes becoming and what that experience might entail,[56] but in a number of other cases, authors engage with an intimate construction of multiplicity that seems more consistent with what Deleuze and Guattari intended. Their work is perhaps most useful to the current project in its consideration of the decentered network or "rhizome"[57] and the productive ways in which interrelated but distinct beings relate to each other, requiring the presence of a larger whole to fully actuate as individuals. There is an opportunity through Deleuze to consider the ways in which animal beings operate as part of a larger shared human-animal community while continuing to be, as Haraway notes, still very much themselves.

Chapter Outlines

Chapter 1 considers the relationship between the bison and the Sioux people, from the parallel tracks of these populations during the period of territorial expansion in the American West

[54] Nelson 230
[55] Deleuze and Guattari 233
[56] The term appears in several articles, particularly in reference to horses, and seems to be used in these cases to represent a form of "oneness" between horse and rider that I'm not sure is quite what Deleuze and Guattari had in mind.
[57] Ibid. 6

during the 19th Century to the appearance of the bison at the site of the Standing Rock protests of 2016. The bison provide an opportunity to examine Wolfe's notion of the logic of elimination[58], demonstrating the ways in which the bison operated both as weapons against and surrogates for the Indigenous population, ultimately meeting a similar fate of mass destruction, incorporation into the imaginary of the American West, and containment in national parks and on reservations. The appropriation of the bison's image into advertising for one of the oldest brands of bourbon, America's only "native" drink, serves as a demonstration of the attempt to erase the near extinction of the bison from the US national origin story, while the presence of the bison at Standing Rock offers a performance of reemergence and survival in the face of continued settler-colonial aggression.

In Chapter 2, I explore how "casting" contributes to the ways in which two different species of animal (dogs and horses) generate responses from civilians when they are put to work as police animals. The police operate as quasi-military arms of state and local governments for the purpose of managing the internal population, making them a useful site of exploration in the context of American national identity. At the same time, the species of the animal partner has a significant effect on how a police unit affects the civilians with whom they interact. By and large, police dogs escalate the potential for violence, while police horses encourage de-escalation. Case studies within this chapter consider the use of the fear-inducing aspect of police dogs by protesters to raise sympathy (such as in Bill Hudson's 1963 NY Times photograph of a police dog attacking Walter Gadsden during the Birmingham Children's March) and Tania Bruguera's 2008 performance art work *Tatlin's Whisper #5*, which encouraged spectators to interact with two mounted officers patrolling the Turbine Hall of the Tate Modern in London.

[58] 2006

Chapter 3 furthers the consideration of animals in an American context, focusing on military animals and the ways in which the image of the animal is used to inspire empathy for the military in a public with highly disparate views. This chapter provides a contrast to the use of the dogs in policing by examining the image of the military working dog, who, in this case, is deployed in film and social media to encourage empathy with soldiers even when the spectator is otherwise unsympathetic to American military actions and personnel. This chapter uses an array of analysands, including two recent films (*Max*[59] and *Megan Leavey*[60]) as well as other examples, such as recently constructed war-dog memorials and internet memes.

Thus far, this text has focused on the ways in which animals participate in the construction, maintenance, and occasional disruption of national identities. In particular, the animal species concerned have been those typically considered "domestic," signaling their position as working alongside humans in their labor. Chapter 4 expands the species being considered to include those who are more readily categorized as "wildlife." More specifically, I consider the ways in which wild animals (with special attention to butterflies) facilitate consideration of the fragility of national borders. While there is a resonance with the text of Chapter 1, there is an important distinction between the bison (who were also wildlife) and the species represented here. Put simply, following their near-extinction, the bison were subsequently appropriated into American self-conceptions of the frontier, survival, and perseverance. By contrast, the species I describe in this chapter have not (as of yet) been incorporated into the American imaginary. Beginning with an examination of how the concept of "wilderness" (the home of wildlife) is produced by American settler-colonial ideals, the chapter subsequently considers the tension between the National

[59] 2015
[60] 2017

Butterfly Center and the Trump Administration surrounding the construction of a 30 ft. tall border wall adjacent to the Center's property.

Conclusion

This project serves as an entry point to consider the performative ways in which animals contribute to American national identity. In some cases, their interventions are constructive, reinforcing and supporting the development of a cogent national mythology, while in others, their presence draws attention to the imagined quality of the American community. Central to this exploration are questions of power, oppression, and affective response. How do different animal bodies contribute to mythscape construction? How does a Western perspective (particularly Western imperialism) on the human-animal relationship inform the roles animals play in various national contexts? How does consideration of non-Western perspectives alter our understanding of animals in these contexts? What happens when animals approach personhood? And what can we learn from the presence of non-human bodies as they migrate in and out of our communities? These questions inform the boundaries of this project's geography, mapping some initial roadways from which we might consider our known landscapes through new eyes.

Chapter 1

Buffalo Traces and the Outlines of Indigenous Erasure

Introduction

In the midst of the chaos ensuing as law enforcement began an operation to clear the blockades and camp at the Dakota Access Pipeline protests at Standing Rock on October 28, 2016, documentary filmmaker and professor Myron Dewey began recording a video interview with an unidentified protester.[1] In the video's opening frame, neither Dewey nor the protester is seen; rather, two-thirds of the image is taken up by dried grasses and shrubs typical of autumn in South Dakota, while the remaining third foregrounds the upper body of an Anoka County Sheriff's Deputy. Most prominent in the frame is the officer's baton, standing markedly available from its holster on his left hip, and his face shield, blocking a clear view of his eyes. Behind the Deputy stands another figure in uniform, although it isn't until a moment later in the video that the word "POLICE" becomes clearly seen emblazoned across the second officer's chest. By this point, additional law enforcement personnel, also sporting various levels of riot gear can also be seen, and the original Sheriff's Deputy is observed holding a large bottle of pepper spray. Two other people are visible at a distance – one is perhaps a reporter or press photographer, while the other is unidentifiable. From the very first moment, the sense of imminent threat, of occupation by US legal forces, is clear.

The camera quickly wheels to the left, bringing its focus to a protestor standing on the near side of a barbed wire fence that separates him from the police. The protester describes feeling hurt that the officers couldn't understand the significance of the land to the Standing Rock Sioux. Dewey asks what the land means to the protester, who replies that "the land means everything." And just then, the protester directs attention off camera, raises his arm and points, shouting "All

[1] https://vimeo.com/189299392

the buffalo! Look at all the buffalo!" As more protesters in the crowd catch sight of the bison[2] herd coming over the hill in the distance, there is a great cry as more and more people add their voices in surprise and joy. Some protesters can be heard shouting "Tatanka," the Lakota word for buffalo. The herd is visibly large, seeming to contain hundreds of animals moving at considerable speed. At the end of the video, protesters can be seen standing on top of a bus, raising their fists towards the air in a gesture of defiance.

The video was quickly shared and spread like wildfire through social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter. Other videos of the event also emerged, such as that shared by Holly Young[3], who can be heard tearfully saying "Look at the Tatanka running…I know, babe, look! They're coming to help us!" Young's video is accompanied by the caption "Tatanka Oyate (Buffalo Nation) coming over the hill. <3 please share that our ancestors love us so much they send us signs."[4] The original video has since been viewed at least 2.7 million times, while Young's received over 670,000 views, more than 8700 responses (a mix of "like," "love," and "wow"), and 21,608 shares. Media outlets such as the Huffington Post picked up the story, further spreading the news of the bison's arrival at Sacred Stone Camp.[5]

The serendipitous arrival of the bison at the NoDAPL protests may or may not have been random. Subsequent reports indicated that the bison may have been herded towards the protest site

[2] At this point, I have used the terms "buffalo" and "bison" interchangeably, although these terms technically refer to different species. This is due primarily to the fact that in the US, these two terms are treated as synonyms for *Bison bison*, the American Bison. This species is not a "true buffalo" such as the water buffalo or African buffalo, although all of these animals are part of the Bovidae family. The term "buffalo" was applied to the bison in the early days of European colonization of North America, when Samuel de Champlain misidentified bison skins as belonging to buffalo ("…il y a quantité de grands animaux, dont i'ay veu plusieurs peaux, & eux m'ayant figure la forme d'iceux, i'ay iugé ester des buffles." – (sic) de Champlain 105). As the terms are consistently used interchangeably in American literature, I will continue to do so here.
[3] https://www.facebook.com/holly.young.946/videos/10157632759585333/
[4] The "<3" in the center of this caption may be cause for confusion. It is a way of drawing a heart using ASCII characters in social media, or alternately a way of typing an "emoji" of a heart to symbolize love.
[5] Hanson

and that the herd was split by Morton County police helicopters in their attempts to drive the herd away from the protests. There has been confusion about whether the bison were wild or privately owned. Some have suggested that the animals were ultimately destined for slaughter and it is unclear what became of them after their appearance at Sacred Stone Camp. What is salient here is not whether or not the bison arrived as a result of the urging of the Spirit Riders, protestors who had been attempting to protect the crowd from police while on horseback. Rather, the key feature of this moment and its preservation on video and subsequently on social media was the significance to the protestors of the arrival of the buffalo, immediately recognized as historic allies and as complicit assistance in their resistance against US forces. While it is worth noting that, in the wild, bison generally avoid noise and the humans that produce it (wildlife biologist and historian Valerius Geist notes that "modern bison are remarkably shy of humans and readily take flight, and there are no records of other cattle species being goaded into running over cliffs and abysses as were bison"[6]), in this case, the significant crowds gathered at Sacred Stone Camp were not a deterrent to the buffalo's arrival. Instead, they appeared (urged by riders or not) at a key moment in the protests, at a time when their historic allies were under assault and needed them most. In that moment, the buffalo participated in a significant transgression, occupying an unexpected and (for the US Government Forces, thoroughly inconvenient) space. In doing so, they added their presence to the Standing Rock Sioux's resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline construction.

The history of the bison parallels that of Indigenous Americans relative to settler-colonial forces, demonstrating both the literal (seen in the animals' near-extinction in the late 19th Century, contemporary with US governmental efforts to subdue Native American people, and the relocation of both populations) and the figurative (in the subsequent assimilation of the bison and Indian

[6] Geist 35

images as symbols of the American West). Through this mutual experience of what Patrick Wolfe[7] describes as the "logic of elimination," these populations become more closely tied to each other through the shared experience of cultural trauma, having participated in and continuing to endure events which result in "indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways."[8] These parallels continue into the present day, in which these nations coexist and reinforce each other in an intimate relationship as figures of resistance against continued attempts to subdue them. Even as the images of the bison and the Native American people have been appropriated into the American imaginary, those images serve as reminders that the bison and the Native continue to exist, refusing to slip into what Jodi Byrd (Chickasaw) calls the fictive hybridity in which Indigenous people can only ever be situated as victims or as aggressors[9].

In a particularly salient example of the assimilative aspect of elimination at work, the image of the buffalo presently finds itself tethered to an unlikely yet quintessentially American product: bourbon. Due to the lengthy and significant relationship between many tribes of Indigenous Americans[10] and the bison, the use of the buffalo in the name and marketing materials of Buffalo Trace offers an opportunity to observe the logic of elimination in action, providing a valuable point of entry into a consideration of the intersections between the eliminatory experiences of distinctly different but deeply interconnected nations, between Indigenous erasure, image appropriation, and the construction and maintenance of a specific form of nationalist American identity formation. Since the introduction of distilled spirits to North America, these beverages have participated in

[7] 2006
[8] Alexander 1
[9] 2011 xxxiv
[10] The Sioux stand out in particular, but many other tribes including but not limited to the Assiniboine, Arapaho, Osage, Crow, Cheyenne, and Blackfeet also have had long-standing historic relationships to the bison.

settler-colonial efforts to erase Indigenous people throughout the continent. Europeans arrived in the Americas accompanied by an extended history of alcohol consumption and quickly began deliberately deploying alcoholic beverages as a means of manipulating trade negotiations, and subsequently weaponizing the libations to subdue and ultimately murder pre-existing peoples, the effects of which continue into the present day. In the case of Buffalo Trace, the bison's image on the bottle tethers an object of cultural production to the memory of the animal's near erasure and subsequent recovery (assisted in no small measure by the efforts of Sioux wildlife management). The bourbon within the bottle recalls the effects of alcohol on Indigenous populations but also offers a site of resistance, an opportunity to remember not just the damage done by whiskey but also the prolific work done by Native people in fighting against what "some tribal leaders [have] denounced…as one more white inspired plague, akin to disease and war, steadily tearing away at Indian cultural integrity."[11]

But while Buffalo Trace offers a site of reflection on less-than-savory elements of the intertwined history of Native people and the bison, the emergence of the bison herd at Standing Rock provides a counterpoint, a reminder of the ways in which visible presence serves to reinforce critical notions of sovereignty. In the midst of a chaotic environment in which Standing Rock Sioux protesters and individuals from a number of other allied organizations faced off against representatives of a private security firm hired by the Dakota Access Pipeline, as well as members of local, state, and federal law enforcement, the buffalo herd's unexpected arrival, emerging in the distance as ghosts, not unlike Derrida's spectres, offered a surprise reemergence that resisted easy categorization in an important moment of solidarity and revelation. That moment and the Sioux response to the bison's arrival offered a productive opportunity to make visible peaceful resistance

[11] Lender and Martin 26

undertaken in part simply by presence. The video, which drew significant social media attention, served as a visible reminder of both nations' refusal to be eliminated.

Buffalo Trace, Bourbon Basics, and the Pioneer Ethos

Since 1773, whiskey has been produced on the present-day Kentucky site of the Buffalo Trace Bourbon Whiskey distillery. While Buffalo Trace itself has only existed as a brand since the late 1990s, marketing materials on the Buffalo Trace website indicate a strong engagement with the distillery's geographic locus and the history of that specific site. The name itself contains a site-specific reference— "buffalo trace" is the moniker given to the pathways used by buffalo during migration. In the case of the Buffalo Trace distillery, the facility is located on a site adjacent to the Kentucky River where the buffalo would historically cross. The website indicates the brand's name and formula as having been crafted "[i]n tribute to the mighty buffalo and the rugged, independent spirit of the pioneers who followed them westward."[12] The pioneer ethos is strongly connected to bourbon in general (and Buffalo Trace in particular) in multiple registers. Bourbon whiskey sits comfortably within the space of the cultural imaginary of the American West, offering an experiential entry into Duncan Bell's "mythscape,"[13] the communal imagined site of nationalist quasihistorical shared narrative. And, in addition to the cultural association of whiskey with strength, independence, masculinity, and a sense of wildness or lawlessness, bourbon has been (and continues to be) an active participant in the politics of erasure commensurate with the pioneer spirit of settler-colonialism.

Consistent with a desire to participate in the settler-constructed narrative of the founding of America, a discussion of Buffalo Trace always seems to begin with a history lesson. The

[12] Buffalo Trace Bourbon- Home
[13] Bell 2003

distillery clearly takes great pride in its geography and sense of longevity, as is made immediately plain upon arrival to the brand's website[14] (Figure 1.1). The aesthetic of the index page is rustic, offering the image of rough-hewn wooden boards (part of a log cabin, perhaps, or the kind of bar or shelf one might find in the saloons commonly seen in 1950s Hollywood Western films) set against a black background. Multiple bison faces stare out at the viewer from sepia-toned photos, looking fierce and sturdy but grizzled. Drawing attention in the center of the off-white text frame is the bold phrase "STAND STRONG," preceding a brief retelling of the pioneer narrative, notifying the viewer that the founders of this distillery were rugged and independent explorers. The viewer is invited to "START THE JOURNEY," to follow in the footsteps of the original distillery founders carving a path through unknown ground.



Figure 1.1: The Buffalo Trace homepage, retrieved 09 Aug 2017.

[14] http://www.buffalotrace.com/index.html

Clicking on "START THE JOURNEY" brings the viewer to the next page, which includes a 55-second YouTube video on the history of Buffalo Trace.[15] The video begins with bluegrass strings in a minor key backing the image of the distillery, rosy with the light of sunset. The combined auditory and visual image operates as simultaneously timeless and contemporary. At 0:13 seconds, green trees and the sound of drums brings the viewer firmly into the present. Harlen Wheatley, Buffalo Trace's Master Distiller, offers both a welcome and a guided tour of the distillery's history. Industrial footage of smokestacks and rolling barrels gives way to curated black-and-white photos from the distillery's early days while Wheatley describes the Leestown Settlement, where "the first thing they did was put up a distillery" (0:29). The photos yield to drawn images and paintings as Wheatley explains the origin of the bourbon's name, noting that "[t]he reason we call it Buffalo Trace is because the buffalo crossed the Kentucky River here at the site of the original settlement and the pioneers followed behind, so we call it Buffalo Trace in honor of that original heritage" (0:38).

The emphasis on Buffalo Trace's pioneer heritage is unsurprising given the history of bourbon itself and the extent to which bourbon is figured as a quintessentially American beverage. To fully situate bourbon, it is necessary to begin in the seventeenth century with the arrival of European colonists in North America. There is extant (if limited) evidence indicating that some tribes of Indigenous people in North America had exposure to weak alcoholic beverages prior to the arrival of the colonists. Particularly in the Southwest, some groups prepared fermented beverages, primarily for ritual use.[16] That said, in most of what would become the US and Canada,

[15] (http://www.buffalotrace.com/our-bourbon.html; "Buffalo Trace History- Master Distiller Series")
[16] Frank et al. 345

"there were no significant traditions of fermented or distilled beverages before European contact."[17] Instead, alcohol largely arrived in North America with European colonists.

The general sense at the time was that alcohol was much safer than water in Europe. This is described by Lender and Martin in their history of drinking in America. They state that "[w]ater had a bad reputation in seventeenth-century Europe, where much of it was polluted, and many colonists expected a similar situation in America."[18] While the local water was considerably cleaner than that which had been left behind in Europe, the colonists were disinclined to turn their backs on their traditions of alcohol consumption. Instead, former European practices were reevaluated and adjusted to fit their new environment.

> Initially duplicating traditional European beverages, the early colonists ultimately introduced a host of new drinks using American ingredients and methods. Equally important, they also developed a range of drinking patterns and attitudes to match all of which reflected the environment and resources of their New World homes. This took time, of course, and new habits emerged in different places on different schedules. Yet they did emerge—and over the years between the founding of Plymouth and the close of the eighteenth century, the colonists integrated alcohol into their evolving American culture in ways that were distinctively their own. In fact, this formative period saw what amounted to the Americanization of European drinking practices.[19]

Among the new drinks introduced during the colonial era were distilled beverages produced from locally-available materials. While the settlers did spend limited time working on planting grapes for wine and hops for beer, these either required too much time or were of excessively inconsistent quality to be useful. Instead, hard liquors distilled from local grains and fruits were easier to produce from a technical perspective and were of a more consistent higher quality.[20] The roads through the mountains at the time were difficult to traverse, making the transportation of liquors

[17] Ibid. 345
[18] Lender and Martin 2
[19] Ibid. 4
[20] Ibid. 7

such as rum or gin produced on the coast or overseas excessively unwieldy. Instead, the settlers began to use corn, rye, and barley, among other grains, as the foundation for the "mash" used to produce whiskey. The two other components used to make whiskey were also readily available in this area – wood such as oak, required to construct the barrels in which the whiskey would be aged, and water. Clearly, then, from the earliest days of production, there was a deep connection between the materials required to make these beverages and the land on which they were being produced.

Kentucky is considered a natural place for the manufacture of whiskey due to the presence of limestone-filtered water in the streams. The presence of the limestone adjusts the pH of the mash, promoting more efficient fermentation. The limestone also adds minerals such as calcium, which contribute to the ultimate taste. The filtration process removes iron deposits, creating a cleaner flavor profile that allows more of the grain and wood flavors to manifest. Kentucky's soils are rich enough to offer an ideal place to grow the required grains. Furthermore, Kentucky is known for hot summers which build up pressure in the aging barrels, forcing the liquid within the barrels into the charred wood. The cold winters reverse that process, bringing the liquid back into the barrel's interior. Because bourbon is so closely associated with flavors such as sweetness (from the high percentage of corn in the mash) and charred wood (from the interface of the whiskey and the barrel interior during the aging process), it is evident that bourbon's identity is closely associated with the geography and climate of Kentucky. Lender and Martin reinforce the relationship between bourbon and Kentucky:

> Bourbon was born in Kentucky, taking its name from Bourbon County, where it was first produced in 1789. Allegedly, the original distiller was the Reverend Elijah Craig, and Kentuckians quickly took a liking to his innovation. By the early nineteenth century, bourbon had become an important regional industry, and the renown of the liquor became such that, as much as any single beverage could, it

> assumed the mantle of the indigenous American national drink. Kentucky still retains a special place in America's heart for its bourbon.[21]

Their description of bourbon as "the indigenous American national drink" is particularly noteworthy, if deeply ironic.

Like origin control systems such as the *Denominazione di origine controllata* (DOC) of Italy or France's *Appellation d'origine controlée* (AOC), the United States has federal regulations that define specific American products, referred to as the Federal Standards of Identity. According to these rules[22], bourbon is defined as a substance produced using a grain mixture that is at least 51% corn, aged in new, charred oak containers, distilled to no more than 160 proof (80% alcohol by volume), entered into the aging barrel at no more than 125 proof (62.5% alcohol by volume), and botted at 80 proof or more (40% alcohol by volume). Furthermore, these rules indicate that whiskeys such as bourbon are "distinctive products of the United States." This same regulation goes on to separate bourbon from other whiskies produced in the US such as rye but indicating that "the word 'bourbon' shall not be used to describe any whiskey or whiskey-based distilled spirits not produced in the United States."[23]

Bourbon's position as a specifically American beverage was also evidenced in Simple Congressional Resolution 19, passed on May 4, 1964. The "Whereas" statements of the resolution identify several examples of distinctive products of other nations (Scotch Whisky[24] as a product of Scotland, Canadian Whiskey as Canadian, Cognac as French) and subsequently identify bourbon as "a distinctive product of the United States." The resolution further indicates that

[21] Ibid. 33
[22] 27 C.F.R. §5
[23] 27 C.F.R §5.22.I.1 2017
[24] You may notice a different spelling here. "Whisky" is reserved for products of Scotland, while "Whiskey" is used for Irish and American products.

"Bourbon whiskey has achieved recognition and acceptance throughout the world as a distinctive product of the United States." Finally, the "Resolved" statement directs the appropriate government agencies to "take appropriate action to prohibit the importation into the United States of whiskey designated as 'Bourbon whiskey'." This recognition of Bourbon as distinctly American continues to appear since the Simple Resolution, including an appearance in trade negotiations under the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP Agreement), evidenced by Vu Huy Hoang's letter to US Ambassador Froman dated February 4, 2016. In the letter, Hoang confirms that Vietnam will recognize bourbon as distinctly American and will prohibit sales of any substance labeled as "bourbon" produced outside the US. In fact, to this day, bourbon remains the only spirit that enjoys such domestic and international recognition by the United States.

Further recognition of bourbon as distinctly American occurred in Simple Congressional Resolution 294[25], designating September 2007 as "National Bourbon Heritage Month." The "Whereas" statements once again concern bourbon but in this case, the focus is entirely on examining bourbon in a domestic context rather than an international one. The first "Whereas" statement misquotes S.Res. 19, suggesting that Congress at that time declared bourbon as "America's Native Spirit," another ironic turn of phrase. The second statement describes the history of bourbon production as "interwoven with the history of the United States, from the first settlers of Kentucky in the 1700s." Additional statements describe bourbon's place in the Kentucky economy, demonstrated through agriculture and tourism, before leading to the final two "Whereas" statements, both of which address bourbon consumption. The first of these two states that "people who enjoy bourbon should do so responsibly and in moderation," while the second indicates that "members of the beverage alcohol industry should continue efforts to promote responsible

[25] 2007

consumption and to eliminate drunk driving and underage drinking." Three "Resolved" statements follow, designating September 2007 as "National Bourbon Heritage Month," recognizing bourbon as "America's Native Spirit" and acknowledging bourbon's heritage, tradition, and place in US history, and finally recognizing the contributions of Kentucky to the culture of the United States.

Buffalo Trace, Bison Imagery, and the Politics of Erasure

Buffalo Trace takes bourbon's American identity one step further by tethering the product in name and image to a mascot—the buffalo itself. The distillery is by no means the first to associate the bison with an American ethos. The 1873 standard American song "Home on the Range" references "a home where the buffalo roam" in reference to the American West. In designing the US Buffalo Nickel in 1913[26], James Earle Fraser noted that his "first objective was to produce a coin which was truly American, and that could not be confused with the currency of any other country… in my search for symbols, I found no motif within the boundaries of the United States so distinctive as the American buffalo."[27] And yet, in both these and other similar examples, the choice of the bison as a symbol of the American West is perhaps a dubious one. In his examination of the history of North American bison, Geist briefly describes the 19th Century US governmental position on these large mammals:

> In the mid-1800s, the fledgling United States waged war on the buffalo. The U.S. government and its army sought to exterminate the bison as part of an effort to push the Indians onto reservations and open the Wild West to settlers. With buffalo hunters as its right hand, the army aimed to destroy the buffalo as a source of food and spiritual power to the Native Americans. By 1883, the war was 'won.'[28]

[26] It is worth noting that the image on the opposite side of this coin is the profile of a fictional Native American, drawn by Fraser as a general type rather than a portrait of a specific person.
[27] Geist 8
[28] Ibid. 8

This suggests that it is less the buffalo itself and more the attempted annihilation of that species, followed by its subsequent incarceration in designated parklands, that should rightfully be tethered to a notion of American identity. If these experiences sound familiar, it is perhaps their resonance with those of Indigenous people that make them so. It should also be clear that this connection was not by accident, but rather by design, given that the targeting of bison populations was conducted as a specific strategic measure undertaken by US forces in their persecution of Native people. In any case, it would seem that an accurate representation of American identity would be more appropriately served by an image of a mountain of buffalo skulls intended for use as fertilizer (Figure 1.2) than by the suggestion of bison roaming their home.

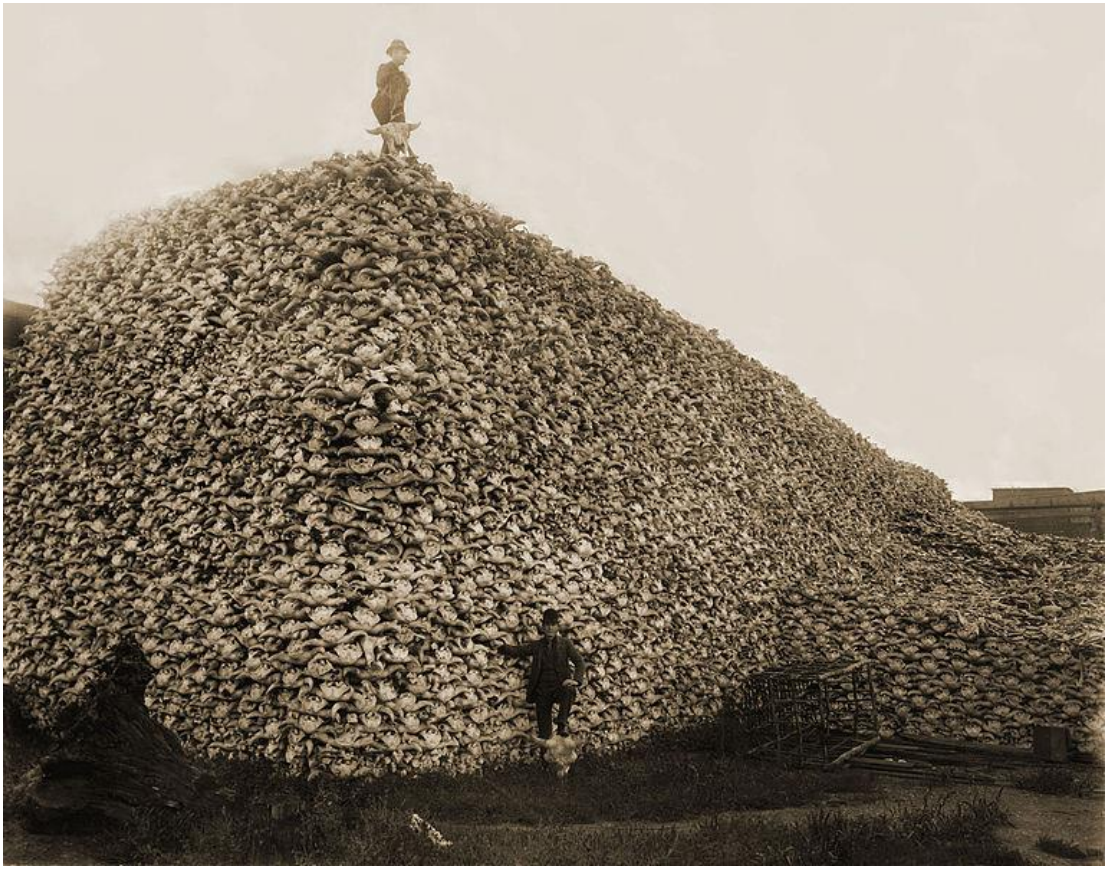


Figure 1.2: Circa 1892 Photograph of a pile of American bison skulls waiting to be ground for fertilizer, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library, Retrieved 13 Jun 2019.

In Buffalo Trace's case, the presence (at least at one time) of the buffalo is acknowledged while the contemporaneous presence of Indigenous people is ignored. Richard Taylor, a descendent of the Buffalo Trace distillery's founders, wrote a book exploring the history of the distillery. The text begins thus:

> Imagine a ribbon of green winding through a river valley, flanked by wooded slopes that rise from an extensive flood plain. Close by the water is a sandy beach and shelves of limestone through which the currents work miniscule but steady etchings along the embankments, a process that began long before a species existed that could witness and record it other than through their own fossilized remains embedded in the rock itself... Near the narrow beach where the water riffles are shoals that form a natural ford. And on each shore is a trail about a hundred feet wide with dust several inches deep. The surface is pocked with funnel-shaped indentations from thousands of hooves, but there are no wheel ruts, not a single footprint. As the trail cuts to the water, it forms a groove or trough worn over the centuries by the friction of scuffling hooves... Nowhere in this landscape is there a straight line or any other sign of measured symmetry. Nowhere is there evidence of humans—no structures, no felled trees, no cultivated ground. On the eve of the American Revolution in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, all of this was to change both rapidly and irrevocably.[29]

In this text, emphasis on the land and its natural features reinforces the notion of the American frontier as a verdant virgin wilderness, eager and waiting for the masculine presence of the pioneer. There is a clear resonance here with the ethos of Buffalo Trace's website, with its rustic aesthetic. Taylor engages multiple senses, creating the opportunity for an embodied response to the imagery; the reader is invited to hear the trickling of water, to smell the fresh aroma of the creek, to imagine the coolness of shade on skin, all being experienced for the first time. Taylor situates the bison at the water crossing, noting the "indentations from thousands of hooves" but erases any possibility of prior human presence, indicating that "there are no wheel ruts, not a single footprint," before further reinforcing the pristine nature of the site— "nowhere is there evidence

[29] Taylor 1-2

of humans"— and clearly temporally situating his narrative— "on the eve of the American Revolution."

Taylor's description should immediately register as a settler-colonial fantasy, given that Indigenous people had been present in the area where the Buffalo Trace distillery is located for approximately 11,000 years. At various times, people of the Cherokee, Shawnee, and Osage Nations and the Haudenosauneega Confederacy[30] had inhabited that stretch of the Kentucky River. There should have been an ample supply of human footprints on Taylor's beach, well before and contemporaneous with the arrival of the distillery's founders. Yet, those footprints and the bodies that produced them are nowhere to be seen in Taylor's narrative. While it might be said that this neglect is simply an oversight, the erasure of these specific bodies is consistent with Wolfe's "logic of elimination"[31], in which Indigenous beings are removed to make way for settlers' access to land in perpetuity.

Wolfe's notion of the "logic of elimination" does not require genocide, although he notes that the two may coincide. He suggests that "though the two have converged—which is to say, the settler-colonial logic of elimination has manifested as genocidal—they should be distinguished. Settler colonialism is inherently eliminatory but not invariably genocidal."[32] Instead, Wolfe describes elimination as "an organizing principal of settler-colonial society rather than a one-off (and superseded) occurrence"[33] and suggests an array of possible methods of erasure including (but not limited to) "officially encouraged miscegenation, the breaking-down of native title into alienable individual freeholds, native citizenship, child abduction, religious conversion,

[30] https://native-land.ca/#
[31] 2006
[32] Ibid. 387
[33] Ibid. 388

resocialization in total institutions such as missions or boarding schools, and a whole range of cognate biocultural assimilations,"[34] in addition to actual homicide. Wolfe indicates that geography plays a critical role in settler-colonialism in general and in the logic of elimination in particular. "Territoriality is settler colonialism's specific irreducible element,"[35] states Wolfe, reinforcing that continued settler presence in a geographic location is settler-colonialism's ultimate aim. Any form of presence that impedes that of the settler thus becomes a challenge to the settler-colonial mission. However, driving the Indigenous population to extinction is also not the goal. The settler-colonial project requires a literal reduction in Indigenous numbers while simultaneously requiring symbolic appropriation of any remaining Native presence. Wolfe suggests that this recuperation of indigeneity occurs "in order to express [the settler-colonial presence's] difference—and, accordingly, its independence—from the mother country."[36] It is in this dual nature of the logic of elimination that Wolfe's theory and the narrative of bourbon coincide.

In terms of the need for land, the relationship between bourbon and the terroir of Kentucky has already been described. The beverage is manufactured from crops that thrive in Kentucky's climate and aged in barrels grown from Kentucky's trees. The limestone-saturated water is critical to the flavor and filtration of the mash. That these elements combine to produce something new and different is evident in the willingness of the US to designate bourbon as a distinctive product. And the need for removal of beings already present should also be clear – as noted earlier, bison typically avoid places that are crowded or noisy. Where the buffalo (and, no doubt, members of the Haudenosauneega Confederacy, Cherokee, Shawnee, and Osage Nations) had crossed the

[34] Ibid. 388
[35] Ibid. 388
[36] Ibid. 389

Kentucky River for thousands of years, Buffalo Trace built their original distillery complex, setting up a permanent occupation that would force a shift in those migration patterns.

Furthermore, as previously noted, when the first Europeans arrived in North America, the inhabitants had little to no exposure to alcoholic beverages. As a result, there was no preexisting culture in place to offer insight on how such substances could be safely or appropriately consumed.[37] Recently arrived and somewhat liberated from community strictures that regulated alcohol consumption in Europe, early settlers became enthusiastic consumers of beer, cider, and distilled beverages. In their study of substance use and abuse in Native Americans, epidemiologists Patricia Mail and Saundra Johnson describe the ways in which European colonists introduced alcohol to Indigenous people, explaining that "[e]arly historical accounts indicate that the European was very insistent that the Indian drink with him to seal agreements and mark ceremonial occasions. In some accounts, the Indian declined, indicating a distaste for liquor. But the European insisted...."[38] Additionally, simply drinking with Europeans was insufficient. White explorers and soldiers, both groups of individuals who engaged in frequent contact with Indigenous people along the frontier, developed patterns of heavy drinking, up to and including what would presently be considered binge-drinking.[39] This was the culture in which alcohol was introduced to Indigenous people and that would subsequently influence how alcohol became part of the Indigenous-Settler-colonial landscape. Canadian social epidemiologist John Frank and his colleagues Roland Moore and Genevieve Ames explain the effects of these frontiersmen and their habits on local Native populations indicating that:

> … Indians were exposed to persistent modeling of antisocial behavior associated with frequent high-dose drinking by soldiers, *coureurs des bois* (fur traders), and

[37] Frank et. al 347
[38] Mail and Johnson 16
[39] Frank et al. 348

> subsequently cowboys and miners—notably, all self-selected communities of men, away from their families and from the reach of alcohol policies and other forms of social control.[40]

Lender and Martin second this assertion,[41] suggesting that early modeling of binge-drinking behavior by frontiersmen was responsible for the belief that Native people seemed to succumb to the effects of alcohol faster than Europeans and the subsequent "firewater myth." This belief held enough sway during the colonial era that unscrupulous white traders would deliberately intoxicate Indigenous people prior to business negotiations in an attempt to secure better deals for themselves.[42]

While in some cases there were attempts by early colonial governments to regulate or prohibit these practices, the same officials charged with enforcing these regulations would break them when it came time to get treaties signed. Lender and Martin describe the signing of the Treaty of Easton in 1758, during which "the colonial negotiators kept [Indigenous people] supplied from beginning to end with as much as they could drink" while those individuals relinquished their claim to sizeable parcels of land. Further, "local governments openly told their licensed trading agents to get the Indians as drunk as possible in order to wring the most out of them, especially when dealing for furs or lands."[43] Mail and Johnson reinforce this settler-colonial practice, stating:

> The European, who quickly recognized that too much imbibing can lead to stupor, saw this as a good time to secure signatures on agreements to which the Indian was not wholly partner. In many respects, liquor was one of the earliest chemical warfare agents used against Indians by Europeans and later fur traders and settlers to disable Native intelligence and begin the feeding frenzy on land that the European saw as his innate destiny to possess—never mind that the land was held to belong to all for the collective good and that it could not be 'owned.' Indian

[40] Ibid. 348
[41] Lender and Martin 23
[42] Ibid. 24
[43] Ibid. 25-26

> peoples believed that the land was a common resource for all who needed it. This was a fact that Europeans could neither understand nor accept.[44]

What is particularly salient here is the connection between both Lender and Martin's and Mail and Johnson's analyses and the logic of elimination. Here, whiskey served as a tactical exercise in land acquisition. Alcohol, along with other commonly abused substances, has continued to participate in the subjugation and erasure of Native people ever since. Mail and Johnson indicate that, as of 1993, alcohol plays a role in "the top 10 leading causes of death in Indians between the ages of 15 and 44" and that "misuse hastens or underlies death from such conditions as heart disease, unintentional injuries (or 'accidents'), cancers, diabetes, pneumonia, homicide, and suicide."[45] They draw additional attention to the role that drugs and alcohol play in the prevalence of other forms of violence in Native populations, including domestic violence and battery, producing death rates up to six times higher than the contemporary US average.[46] These are perhaps the most dramatic cases and Mail and Johnson note that more research is required to understand the subtler effects of alcohol use in Indigenous people, explaining that "within Indian communities, the disability, economic and emotional losses, secondary infections, demands on medical and social services, costs for police efforts related to alcohol, and overall cost in human suffering are not well measured."[47] The effects of the introduction of alcohol to North America have continued since the earliest days of colonization, participating in the erasure of Indigenous people through widespread death, but also in the development of conditions that facilitate the removal of children under the auspices of protection from child endangerment, loss of memory and culture, and the perpetuation of narratives such as the "firewater myth" that entered into the

[44] Mail and Johnson 16
[45] Ibid. 2
[46] Ibid. 3
[47] Ibid. 3

colonial American imaginary, figuring Indigenous people as uncivilized inebriated savages that require saving from themselves through incarceration and reeducation. This would seem to signal that the appellation of bourbon as "the indigenous American national drink" is a double-entendre, intended by those who initially offered the phrase as an indication of bourbon's connection to American land through the use of Kentucky's limestone-filtered water, ample supply of wood, and corn, but also as a signifier for the beverage's role in subduing Indigenous people in order to obtain and secure the rights to the land needed for settler-colonial expansion.

Buffalo Trace takes bourbon's role in the logic of elimination one step further through its use of the bison in its marketing materials, which serves as a useful exemplar of the kind of symbolic recuperation Wolfe describes. As indicated earlier, Native Americans had coexisted with bison in North America for thousands of years prior to the arrival of European settlers. Their relationship has existed for so long that the bison were incorporated into the creation myths of many different Indigenous tribal groups. In his exploration of Native American efforts to restore the bison populations, historian Ken Zontek depicts this deep connection:

> Nonetheless, for Native people, the history of human-bison interaction extends back to time immemorial, to creation itself. In other words, the collective memory of many Natives recalls an existence in which there were always bison. Traditions of tribes historically identified with buffalo and descended from prehistoric bison hunters speak of the presence of the bison, or the buffalo nation, when humans first set foot on earth.[48]

For Indigenous North Americans, the buffalo carried economic, spiritual, and physical significance. The connection has been described as almost familial, with the bison serving as spiritual "brothers" to the Native people. Lakota holy man John Fire Lame Deer describes the relationship by stating:

[48] Zontek 3

> The buffalo was part of us, his flesh and blood being absorbed by us until it became our own flesh and blood. Our clothing, our tipis, everything we needed for life came from the buffalo's body. It was hard to say where the animal ended and the man began.[49]

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz considers the role of the bison in her historical text, *An Indigenous People's History of the United States*.[50] When describing the inhabitants of North America prior to the arrival of European colonists, she mentions the bison alongside the people of the central North American prairies.[51] Dunbar-Ortiz also provides the perspective of Old Lady Horse of the Kiowa Nation, who explains that:

> Everything the Kiowas had came from the buffalo…. Most of all, the buffalo was part of the Kiowa religion. A white buffalo calf must be sacrificed in the Sun Dance. The priests used parts of the buffalo to make their prayers when they healed people or when they sang to the powers above.[52]

It should come as no surprise, then, that, for Indigenous people, the bison also served as visible symbols of territorial presence and claim. For thousands of years, Native people moved their encampments to travel with bison migrations, sharing a spiritual, material, and geographic connection. Zontek astutely indicates that "Native Americans established a virtually unprecedented human-animal relationship with the bison, in which buffalo country became Indian Country."[53] The association for Native people and the presence of the bison on their shared land was so strong that language describing it was included in several treaties written to establish reservation land. For example, Article 11 of the Treaty of 1868, crafted to establish the Great Sioux Reservation surrounded by what is now South Dakota and Nebraska, and which includes the present-day Standing Rock Reservation, states that:

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[49] Qtd, in Geist 37
[50] Dunbar-Ortiz 2014
[51] Ibid. 24
[52] Qtd. in Dunbar-Ortiz 143
[53] Zontek xiv

> …the tribes who are parties to this agreement hereby stipulate that they will relinquish all right to occupy permanently the territory outside their reservation as herein defined, but yet reserve the right to hunt on any lands north of North Platte, and on the Republican Fork of the Smoky Hill River, *so long as the buffalo may range thereon in such numbers as to justify the chase*.[54]

Such a powerful connection did not go unnoticed by the European pioneers. Indeed, both Indigenous people and the bison proved problematic for Western expansion.

> By the mid-1800s, Native Americans and bison were seen by European settlers as standing in the way of 'civilization.' Even before the Civil War, cattle herds were driven from Texas through Kansas and came to grief upon meeting herds of bison; thus bison were viewed as an impediment to cattle ranching.[55]

Old Lady Horse explains this disruption of colonial progress in a different way, indicating that, in their relationship with the Kiowa Nation, the bison defended the Kiowa and their land. She tells us:

> So, when the white men wanted to build railroads, or when they wanted to farm or raise cattle, the buffalo still protected the Kiowas. They tore up the railroad tracks and the gardens. They chased the cattle off the ranges. The buffalo loved their people as much as the Kiowas loved them.[56]

While efforts had been underway to remove the Indigenous presence since European arrival on the continent, the drive to eliminate the Native population accelerated following the American Revolution, reaching a fever pitch in the mid-19th Century. This period, like the years that preceded it, saw a range of tactics deployed by the American settler population, including the construction of boarding schools and the relocation of entire tribes to reservation lands. However, one significant departure from earlier methods of the total war waged against Indigenous people was the widespread annihilation of the buffalo herds.

[54] Geist 85, emphasis added
[55] Ibid. 75
[56] Qtd. in Dunbar-Ortiz 143

In 1873, US Secretary of the Interior Columbus Delano succinctly stated the American settlers' perspective on the matter: "The civilization of the Indian is impossible while the buffalo remains upon the plains."[57] By this time, two facts had become evident. First, despite the best efforts of the US Army, the Native American presence had been impossible to subdue.[58] Second, this same population had a deep spiritual tie to, and economic reliance on, the bison herds that roamed the American West. This relationship was seen as a liability, because, as Geist explains, "[w]hen an enemy is not readily defeatable in battle, however, one can still subdue it by destroying its basis of operations, its supplies, its economic lifeline."[59] Thus, "[e]xtermination of the bison would mean the economic end for Indian people of the Great Plains. So the bison was slated for extermination."[60] This choice on the part of Secretary Delano serves as a clear indication of the intimacy between the Indigenous people of the plains and the bison, recognizing the deep ties between these two populations and the extent to which each contributed to the survival of the other.

Once the decision was made to eradicate the buffalo, the process was swift. The number of buffalo that ranged the continent prior to the 1800s was never properly catalogued, but estimates suggest that there may have been up to 75 million animals at that time.[61] It is difficult to conceive of such a tremendous quantity of animals, particularly animals of such enormous physical size. Attempting to do so puts Geist's description of the speed and efficiency of US government buffalo hunters in perspective.

> It took from about 1868 to 1883, or some fifteen years, to kill off the buffalo. Market hunting destroyed the southern herds by 1875; plains bison were virtually exterminated in the wild by early 1883. The last commercial shipment of hides was in 1889. By 1894, the only free-living bison remaining in the United States were

[57] Geist 69
[58] Ibid. 81
[59] Ibid. 81
[60] Ibid. 84
[61] United States Fish & Wildlife Service 1

> found in Yellowstone National Park. Six years later, by 1902, this last wild herd was reduced by poachers to twenty-three animals.[62]

It is worth acknowledging here that several sources refer to the assault on the buffalo as a "war,"[63] an appropriate moniker given the degree of violence and the fact that the call for the bison's elimination came through official American governmental channels. Dunbar-Ortiz explains that "[i]n an effort to create Indigenous economic dependency and compliance in land transfers, the US policy directed the army to destroy the basic economic base of the Plains Nations—the buffalo,"[64] drawing attention to the fact that, while there were private commercial buffalo hunters, the decimation of the herds was also carried out in part by the US military themselves. This is noteworthy in part because, until the modern era, wars were only declared and fought against other nation states and, intentionally or not, the use of the term here elevates the bison to a form of nationhood, situating them as a parallel nation alongside those of the Indigenous people against whom the US government was also fighting for land and resources. This terminology is consistent with the Sioux phrasing "Tatanka Oyate," referenced in Holly Young's Facebook video from the Sacred Stone Camp, which verbally confers nationhood on the bison and suggests that, for tribes such as the Sioux, this status is not a novel or accidental construct but one granted with intent and with the staying power to last for centuries.

The decimation of the bison population ultimately heralded the dominance of the settler presence in the United States and Canada. Old Lady Horse explained the events of the period as follows:

> Then the white men hired hunters to do nothing but kill the buffalo. Up and down the plains those men ranged, shooting sometimes as many as a hundred buffalo a day. Behind them came the skinners with their wagons. They piled the hides and

[62] Geist 91
[63] Geist; Old Lady Horse qtd. in Dunbar-Ortiz
[64] Dunbar-Ortiz 142

> bones into the wagons until they were full, and then took their loads to the new railroad stations that were being built, to be shipped east to the market. Sometimes there would be a pile of bones as high as a man, stretching a mile along the railroad track. The buffalo saw that their day was over. They could protect their people no longer.[65]

Old Lady Horse's description should recall Figure 1.2, although the pyramid in that image was closer in height to that of 6 men. And if it is possible to empathize with Old Lady Horse and the extent to which the bison were considered kindred souls by the Kiowa, the quantity of skulls in the photographed pile alone can only begin to convey the depth of the devastation experienced by the plains tribes as they saw the buffalo driven towards extinction.

In her exploration of the history of the Great Plains, Frances Kaye succinctly summarizes the effects of White pioneers in the late 19th Century:

> The quarter century between 1865 and 1890 saw the completion of transcontinental railways in both the United States and Canada, the slaughter of the buffalo herds, and the nearly complete disruption of the golden age of the horse-buffalo-Sun Dance culture that had begun only two centuries before.[66]

The speed, intensity, and effectiveness of the annihilation of the buffalo herds has rarely been rivaled and the effects of that destruction were felt throughout the Plains Nations. Hunkpapa Sioux Chief Sitting Bull described the effects, saying "[a] cold wind blew across the prairie when the last buffalo fell… a death-wind for my people."[67] Left without a critical economic resource and traumatized by damage to their sense of security and spiritual integrity, the people of the Plains Nations were subsequently subdued and relocated to reservations on land selected by the US government for that purpose.

[65] qtd. in Dunbar-Ortiz 143
[66] Kaye 79
[67] qtd. in Geist 101

Having contained the Indigenous people on reservations, White Americans could turn their attention to other matters of Western expansion. Accompanying the change in focus, the early 20th Century saw a shift in the buffalo's perception by the American Government. Where the animals had previously been considered not only expendable but a form of active threat to American identity, they suddenly became a locus of nostalgia. In 1905, then-US President Theodore Roosevelt verbalized the increasingly widespread interest in bison conservation:

> The most characteristic animal of the western plains was the great shaggy-maned wild ox, the bison, commonly known as buffalo. Small fragments of herds exist in a domesticated state, here and there, a few of them in the Yellowstone Park. Such a herd as that on the Flathead reservation should not be allowed to go out of existence. Either on some reservation or on some forest reserve like the Wichita reserve or some refuge, provision should be made for the preservation of such a herd.[68]

Roosevelt's statement offers a number of useful insights. While his position is unsurprising given Roosevelt's reputation as both a hunter and a conservationist, it is noteworthy that a sitting American president was willing to claim the bison as "the most characteristic animal of the western plains" so recently after active governmental efforts to eliminate them. While there had been earlier conservation efforts (both houses of the US Congress passed legislation to protect the buffalo on June 23, 1874 but it was never implemented due to then-US President Ulysses S. Grant's refusal to sign it[69]), these had all failed until the tide turned and Roosevelt voiced an interest in the bison's continued survival. That said, the relationship to Indigenous people remained present—Roosevelt's desire to prevent the extinction of the buffalo came with the suggestion that, like Native Americans, they should be preserved in geographic areas specifically set aside for them.

[68] qtd. in Geist 102
[69] Geist 75

Roosevelt followed through with his notion of protected lands for bison, signing legislation allocating federal funds for the purchase of these reservations in 1908.

In Roosevelt's statement, then, multiple aspects of the logic of elimination become visible. The buffalo here act as surrogates for the Indigenous presence. Having experienced being literally driven to near-extinction, the remaining individuals are positioned geographically in areas where the settler-colonial presence is able to exert full control over numbers and access to resources. Simultaneously, the image of the bison is recuperated and assimilated. Rather than being associated with the Native presence, in the early 20th Century, the bison is developed into an ambassador for "Americanness," particularly vis-à-vis European Whites. The acquisition of the bison as an element of the American symbolic is evidenced in the disposition of federal funds for their protection, the presence of the buffalo on American currency starting in 1901, the appearance of the bison on the US Department of the Interior's official seal in 1917 (that the Bureau of Indian Affairs is part of the US Department of the Interior is worth remembering here), and continuing up until the present era with US President Barack Obama's signing of the National Bison Legacy Act, which designated the bison as the national mammal of the United States. Each of these examples continues to reaffirm the bison's position as allied to the American settler-colonial presence and imaginary by tethering the animal to the federal government that once sought its annihilation.

Spectres of Resistance

The story of the shared history of the Buffalo Nation and the Indigenous people of North America does not end buried in a combined tale of cultural trauma. While the three basic settler-colonial strategies described by Wolfe (1994)—confrontation, carceration, and assimilation—were all deployed, none proved to be entirely effective. Instead, while the settler-colonial presence

may have attempted to forget the violence enacted in the creation of the American nation-state, Indigenous people have retained their memories and have remained present and vocal, thwarting attempts to elide earlier eras and refusing to stay quietly within the boundaries of the reservation. The narrative has continued into the present, despite the mass killings and incarceration of the 19th Century and the cultural assimilation of the 20th Century, with a consistent undercurrent of resistance, fostered in part by continued visible presence.

In terms of their intersection with the bison, it is worth noting that the majority of efforts to preserve and manage buffalo herds have been undertaken by Native groups on reservation land. Zontek suggests that "one constant for a significant number of Indian people has been the desire for a landscape where the buffalo can roam. In the roaming of the bison, dreams could also then materialize for Native people to retain their cultural autonomy."[70] Perhaps because of this sense of connection, Native voices have been the first raised in defense of the bison when they have periodically come under attack. For example, when 1100 members of the buffalo herd in Yellowstone National Park were shot or sent to slaughter by the Montana State Department of Livestock in the winter of 1997, Lakota elders embarked on a grassroots campaign, encouraging the public to contact legislators and other individuals associated with the slaughter to avert similar actions in the future.[71] Protection and rehabilitation efforts transcend tribal boundaries, as herds of more than twenty thousand buffalo continue to be managed by "American Indians from more than sixty tribes in the United States and Canada."[72]

A place in the American imaginary notwithstanding, the survival of the buffalo has depended on Indigenous intervention. As such, the bison's image in any venue cannot help but

[70] Zontek xiii
[71] Buffalo Nations 1997
[72] Zontek 1

recall Native people. The connection between the two populations is certainly romanticized in the American myth of the West, with the miniseries "Into the West" offering a useful example. The opening credits of the miniseries begin with the image of a galaxy spinning until it morphs into a wagon wheel, clearly seen over a faint medicine wheel that gradually comes more and more into focus, accompanied by the sound of Native American music. This is followed immediately by footage of tribal paintings on an animal hide, which fades into the sight of a herd of bison running towards the camera. The first character introduced in the opening credits carries the name "Loved by the Buffalo." Within this mediatized space, the relationship between Indigenous people and the bison is reaffirmed, even while relying heavily on a romantic White perspective to do so. What is useful is that, while the relationship is presented and reinforced within the space of a White-curated myth of the frontier, enough truth of the intimate connection between the buffalo and Indigenous people remains that when bison are presented in other venues, it becomes a challenge not to perceive the presence of Native people alongside them. In other words, even in spaces where the image of the bison is deployed in the absence of Indigenous people, such as that found on American coinage or those presented in Buffalo Trace's marketing materials and packaging, the connection between the two populations resists the act of erasure.

This relationship between visibility and resistance, and between Native people and the bison, is what marks the surprising appearance of the buffalo in October 2016 during the Dakota Access Pipeline protests at Standing Rock so noteworthy. The conflict surrounded the construction of Energy Transfer Partner's underground oil pipeline that stretches from North Dakota through South Dakota and Iowa, finally ending in Illinois. The pipeline route intersects with 380 sites recognized for their historic and cultural importance to the Upper Sioux and Standing Rock

Sioux.[73] When the US Fish and Wildlife Service issued a permit for construction in March 2016, concerns were immediately raised that the pipeline constituted an excessive threat to the Standing Rock water supply and to several ancient burial grounds. In protest of the pipeline and while a court case seeking an injunction was pending in the US District Court for the District of Columbia, a camp was erected in April 2016 by Standing Rock Sioux elder and Historic Preservation Officer LaDonna Brave Bull Allard. In the months that followed, increasing numbers of Standing Rock Sioux accompanied by a wide range of allies gathered at Sacred Stone Camp, occupying the site and drawing increasing attention to the conflict.

By September 2016, thousands of people were inhabiting Sacred Stone Camp and several adjacent sites and a private security team had been hired to continue to protect the contractors engaged in the preparation work for the pipeline. On September 3, 2016, unarmed protesters entered an area of sacred ground that had recently been cleared by bulldozers, and were met by the security forces, who used attack dogs to repel them, causing injury to a number of individuals, as well as one horse. Other protesters were pepper-sprayed. By October 5, 2016, 135 protestors had been arrested and law enforcement personnel had started wearing anti-riot gear, a clear indication of the steady increase in violence. By mid-October, reports were emerging that arrested individuals were being strip-searched in freezing conditions and often in front of multiple officers.[74] Protestors reported being marked with numbers and held in "dog kennels," as authorities used pepper spray, rubber bullets, bean bag rounds, and high-pitched noise cannons in attempts to disperse the crowds.[75]

[73] Allard
[74] Democracy Now
[75] Hawkins

It was in the midst of this mayhem that Myron Dewey's video was shot and into which the bison herd arrived on October 28. The significance of their appearance cannot be understated, reinforced by the sound of the protesters upon sighting them. In considering the work undertaken by the buffalo herd in this moment, it is helpful to consider the nature of agency and resistance. In articles that followed the video's release, the question of how or why the bison appeared was consistently raised. While their presence alone was sufficient to support the claim that the bison were guilty of transgression, the extent to which their behavior had enough intention to warrant the claim of "resistance" was a point of contention. The Huffington Post's Hilary Hanson was quick to broach the issue, explaining that "[s]ome outlets have characterized the bison as coming out of 'nowhere,'" while journalist Ryan Redhawk and Sacheen Seitcham of the Westcoast Women Warrior Society both articulated that the bison's movements had been facilitated by human intervention.[76] The seeming fixation on the extent to which humans were involved in the bison's arrival functions well as an attempt to discredit the bison themselves, a move towards stripping the bison of any agency regarding their own movements at the time the video was shot. By drawing attention to the degree to which protestors may have opened gates or encouraged the bison to run, Hanson effectively works to undercut the spiritual significance of their arrival and the labor performed by their presence.

Instead, I would argue that the bison acted agentially, regardless of whether or not they were assisted or encouraged by Spirit Riders or other protestors. The bison's emergence registered to the Sioux protesters in much the same way that the arrival of any ally in battle might, bolstering their spirits against increasingly hostile conditions. Whether or not a messenger had been sent to dispatch that ally does not negate the importance of the ally's arrival to those already engaged in

[76] Hanson 2016

the fight. Furthermore, the form the bison's act of resistance took in this situation served to reinforce the actions already being undertaken by the protestors. In the video, there is no clear interaction seen between the bison and the police or security forces. The bison did not summarily trample the riot police or otherwise engage in behavior that would fit with the ways in which active resistance is typically construed, nor did they serve to support the prevailing narrative being offered by the security forces engaged at Standing Rock, who claimed that the Water Protectors were more appropriately labeled as "bad actors" (Hanson 2016). Instead, their resistance mirrored that of the Water Protectors- their act of resistance was to take up space, to exist, to be seen. The bison's labor necessarily functions performatively here, in that their visibility (particularly in front of a camera) served to reinforce the idea that presence alone on land where that presence is unwelcome functions to thwart settler-colonial attempts to claim space. And, insofar as the claim of intention is required for an act to be considered "resistance," the statements made in both Dewey and Young's videos make it clear that, to the protestors, the bison had come of their own volition for the express purpose of supporting the Water Protectors' struggle. To the protestors, the bison herd's intention was clear.

The subsequent media attention assisted in raising awareness of the protests even more widely, due in part to the bison's double-legibility as a palimpsest for both Native and American identity. Distant viewers who watched the video from their couches far from Standing Rock observed that the buffalo were not where they were "supposed to be," instead offering an image reconstituted from memory of great herds moving across the plains in defiance of US military might. Their appearance alongside the presence of the Standing Rock Sioux and their allies at Sacred Stone Camp offered valuable reinforcement in a publicly visible site of resistance.

Conclusion

In Buffalo Trace's marketing materials, it would seem that the connection between the distillery and the bison that once crossed the Kentucky River at its location has been present since the distillery's initial founding. In fact, the incorporation of the buffalo into the distillery's name and branding only occurred at the close of the 20th Century, well after the bison had been recuperated into a specific pioneer-based notion of American identity. The image of the bison as an integral element of the American West, incorporated into a frontier aesthetic, has been a relatively recent development and came about only after the decimation of the buffalo population as part of a concerted effort by the US government to provoke the capitulation of American Indigenous people. Despite thousands of years roaming the North American continent and the contemporary relationship with Indigenous people who shared that geography, the bison were appropriated by the settler-colonial presence. Seemingly, then, and consistent with Wolfe's logic of elimination, it was both the assault by White settlers resulting in the relegation to reservation land and attempts at absorption into the wider American imaginary that was shared between these two populations. By connecting the image of the buffalo to bourbon, America's quintessential beverage, Buffalo Trace demonstrates the culmination of centuries of Indigenous erasure. The image of the bison as a figure of American pioneer dominance is reaffirmed by stitching it to a beverage similarly associated with both the rugged ethos of the frontier. The absence of Indigenous bodies is present in the marketing materials of Buffalo Trace, mirroring the bodies of the thousands of bison that once crossed the Kentucky River at the distillery's location. Those animal bodies were slaughtered alongside those of the Indigenous people that had once populated the same land, all subject to violence perpetrated by the same pioneers.

In the case of Buffalo Trace, however, and due to a number of media-based reminders of the Buffalo Nation's alliance with Indigenous people, the bison has reemerged as a double symbol, retaining the residue of early 20th Century attempts to recuperate the buffalo's image into that of Americanness while continuing to occupy an important site as an ally in Native American acts of resistance. The continued labor of Indigenous people to preserve the bison coupled with moments such as the arrival of the bison at the Dakota Access Pipeline protests demonstrate a continued refusal to comply with attempts at elimination.

Chapter 2:

Beasts in Blue: Police Animals and Enactments of Power

Introduction

In 2008, Cuban artist Tania Bruguera presented a "behavior art" work titled *Tatlin's Whisper #5*. Bruguera's artist's statement describes the piece as concerned with the ways in which the populace develops into compliant political citizens.[1] In the *Tatlin's Whisper* series, Bruguera uses mass media images as starting points for her pieces. In the case of *Tatlin's Whisper #5*, the provocation developed from multiple images of police mounted units actively engaged in crowd control (Figure 2.1). Initially staged in the Turbine Hall of the Tate Modern in London, the work involves the museum visitors entering the space to find two mounted policemen patrolling the area.



Figure 2.1: *Tatlin's Whisper #5*, © Tania Bruguera, 2008, Tate Modern. Photo © Tate.

The policemen direct the movements of the crowd, separating them into smaller groups, occasionally averting their egress by blocking the door, or corralling them into a particular area of the Turbine Hall. Bruguera was adamant in the documentation for the work that there should be

[1] Bruguera 2008

no signage or press that would prefigure the piece, as part of her intent was to engage a naïve audience with police action in a decontextualized space.

In considering Bruguera's work, André Lepecki[2] notes that the spectators were eventually, if not immediately, entirely compliant with the demands of the officers. He describes the policemen's directions as "choreographic"[3], raising the question of the relationship between "political demonstrations as expressions of freedom, and police counter-moves as implementations of obedience"[4], and indicates his concern that "the police always succeed" in their demands.[5] Lepecki relates the story of one spectator, described as "clearly annoyed"[6], who initially resists moving where directed but finally succumbs to the pressure of horse and rider on the spectator's physical space. Throughout Lepecki's analysis, it becomes clear that he is dismayed by the lack of resistance on the part of the museum visitors, that their compliance signals an ovine willingness to obey police commands. He posits possible modes of opposition:

> Among the possible audience reactions to this 'little experience with power' it is conceivable that someone among the audience might also have wanted to experiment with another 'historically recurrent' image: the image of public revolt against mounted anti-riot police. It is conceivable that someone might have wanted to use the safe context of art, the safety of the museum, of the Tate Modern, of representation, to experiment with enacting rebellion or protest against the mounted police. It is conceivable that someone might have wanted to play with the police.[7]

And yet, despite these possibilities, there were no such moments of resistance. Everyone complied eventually, if not immediately. Lepecki goes on to suggest that, in "real life," the reactions of the populace to mounted police are more varied and include "acts of violence, resistance, and attack."[8]

[2] 2013
[3] Ibid. 16
[4] Ibid. 16
[5] Ibid. 17
[6] Ibid. 17
[7] Ibid. 18
[8] Ibid. 18

As noted above, Lepecki suggests that images of resistance to mounted units are 'historically recurrent,' but this assertion appears to be overstated. Were such images as prevalent as claimed, they should have been easy to locate but internet image searches in June 2017, August 2019, and January 2020 failed to produce even a single image of protestor opposition directed towards a mounted unit. In fact, while resistance against police units in general is common and readily located through common image searches, opposition specifically to mounted units is comparatively quite rare. This raises a question: given the presumed technical difficulties of bringing horses into the Tate Modern, why use mounted units? When asked this query in a personal communication[9], Bruguera's studio manager Alessandra Saviotti indicated that the mounted units were the only police units involved in crowd control and this led to their selection for the work. However, while mounted units are indeed among the *most effective* units for crowd control, they are not the only units that engage in this form of work. If Bruguera's interest were purely in creating an opportunity for police to manipulate the bodies of the citizenry, she might have used any policing unit. Patrol officers on foot and in uniform move crowds in cities on a daily basis and policemen in riot gear have certainly been effective in confronting large masses of people. Canine units have similarly been used in clashes with crowds (the images from the Birmingham Children's March in the 1960s, and to which I will return shortly, come to mind) and offer a useful counterpoint, as these units also consist of a human officer partnered with a non-human animal officer.

The reactions to these other units, however, are significantly different. Foot patrols, riot police, and canine units are far more likely to be met with hostility and resistance than mounted units. This suggests that, when non-human animal officers are included, there is an element of

[9] June 2017

casting that takes place, and that the casting choice creates highly divergent responses on the part of spectators. In contrast to canine units, the equine body contributes to an alternate performance of policing that deescalates an interaction, rather than driving towards confrontation. I suggest that Brugera's choice to deploy mounted units in *Tatlin's Whisper #5* rather than any other police unit (including a K9 option) contributed to the complicity observed by Lepecki. The remaining question, then, is why? When the species of a non-human officer marks the most significant difference between two human/animal-partnered units, why does one species result in escalation of police violence, while the other encourages de-escalation? When both canines and equines are capable of being weaponized, why are canines more fear-inducing? What work does the equine body do in the performance of policing that encourages non-violent compliance?

There are multiple contributing factors to the effects these casting choices produce in the spectator. Karen Barad reminds us that the materiality of actual physical bodies is "crucial to understanding the workings of power."[10] Our engagement with those physical bodies is moderated through the senses, with vision/sight/image chief among them and sound and physical presence/touch also contributing. This hierarchy of senses is perhaps unsurprising, given that, as humans, we are visual animals. Recalling that we ourselves are animals here is also productive insofar as it may serve as a reminder that, while we do not necessarily consciously categorize the animals we see based on whether they are predators or prey, they remain recognizable to us as such through the organization of their bodies and their physical features. Our recognition of these features is instinctive, residing deep within our brains, and this contributes significantly to the distinctions made when specific animal bodies are cast in these roles.

[10] Barad 2003 810

Furthermore, our innate recognition of these animals reinforces the performative nature of their work. It is the animals' physicality that drives our affective embodied responses, indicating that the animals are participating in what Barad would describe as a performative "doing,"[11] a moment of intimate connection that surpasses reliance on representation and allows for new modes of perception. Scholars Lynda Birke, Mette Bryld, and Nina Lykke support Barad's definition of performativity, suggesting that this construct is appropriate in considering "the intimate choreography of human/animal interrelationships."[12] In these interactions with police dogs and horses, the presence of the animal and our response as spectators to them opens a space of recognition, critical reflection, and the production of meaning. These exchanges remind us of our own animal nature while simultaneously provoking us to recall the presence of the state and the varying opportunities for forms of interaction with structures of power.

Both canine and equine species have a lengthy history of involvement in action intended to control populations and maintain the rule of law. While there is evidence to suggest that horses lived in the Americas prior to the arrival of Europeans who brought them on missions of exploration and conquest, their size and strength certainly contributed to the effects of the Europeans on Indigenous people. The history of canine units in the Americas is replete with narratives of extreme violence associated with colonial rule, which contributes to their recognition as instruments of terror. Expectations of functionality—how the animals are brought into the service of the state and the kind of labor expected of them—are informed by our innate understanding of the niches these animals occupy and the ways they have been used in the past, and these expectations support very different readings of canine and equine bodies, even when presented in similar scenarios. That canids are predators and equines are prey animals, and that

[11] Ibid. 802
[12] Birke et. al. 170

canines have been weaponized in police performance while horses have not been, both contribute to the disparate ways in which spectator-citizens respond to these animal officers when they are deployed.

Furthermore, I would suggest that there is one additional element that contributes to the lack of escalation observed when mounted units are used. When these units arrive on the scene, the combined image of horse and rider performs an idealized version of the relationship between citizenry and State. While the horses of the mounted unit are issued directives by their police riders, there remains an inherent reciprocity in the way that power functions between horse and rider, which, in turn, breaks down the horse/rider dichotomy, developing into a processual symbiotic 'becoming'.

A Brief History of Animals in Policing

Canine Units

We do not know precisely when the human-canine relationship was first established through some early form of domesticity. In the early 20th Century, archaeologists located the earliest known definitive evidence of domestic dogs: a single fragment of a dog's jaw buried in a double grave also housing the remains of a man and woman in Germany. Subsequent researchers called the animal the Bonn-Oberkassel Dog and used carbon dating to situate the remains as originating in approximately 12,000 BCE.[13] Dogs appear to have performed many of the same functions in the early days of our relationship as they do now. In addition to companionship, dogs warned of the approach of strangers or wildlife, protected family members, and assisted in hunting for food.[14]

[13] Benecke 31
[14] Sloane 385

It should then come as no surprise that dogs have found themselves as co-combatants throughout the history of human warfare. Police historian Charles Sloane indicates that:

> The use of dogs in theatres of war extends back many thousands of years to the very beginning of recorded history, for wall-drawings and bas-reliefs found among the tombs of Egypt, Greece, and Assyria clearly show that the Egyptians, Assyrians, and Grecians made use of dogs in repelling the enemy.[15]

Dogs have since continued to participate in human military conflict into the present day, serving functions that include detection (of both combatants and hidden weapons), apprehension of enemy personnel, deterrents to personal attack, and instruments of fear (the use of dogs to terrorize prisoners at Abu Ghraib comes to mind).[16]

The contemporary use of dogs in policing draws on this military history, although its roots are, in many ways, more directly linked to the use of dogs in hunting. Traditions involving dogs to chase and kill quarry emanate from similar geographies in antiquity and have permeated European history, including rabbit-hunting and foxhunting in Britain and Ireland and stag- and boar-hunting in France. For these sports, specially bred and trained hounds work in packs to locate the scent of the quarry. Then, at the direction of the huntsman, the hounds pursue the quarry, leading the huntsman (and in many cases, an assembled group of spectators) on a chase (which may be either mounted on horseback or carried out on foot) until the hounds finally either catch (and traditionally kill) the quarry or drive it to ground. At that point, the quarry would be dispatched by either terriers brought in to enter the animal's burrow or by the huntsman himself.

It is no accident that dogs would be selected for this purpose. Dogs are predators. This is clear in their physiology, with teeth shaped to assist in tearing flesh and crushing bone, jaws capable of providing ample pressure for these tasks, and eyes situated on the front of their heads,

[15] Ibid. 385
[16] I will attend more deeply to military working dogs in Chapter 3.

which allow for advanced depth perception. As predatory animals, dogs exhibit "prey drive"- an instinctive desire to chase and catch anything that moves past them at speed. In some breeds, this prey drive has been amplified through selective breeding, integrating the dog's powerful scenting capabilities into his ability to track prey that has already left the visual field. These are natural behaviors that have assisted in canid survival for thousands of years by allowing the animals to catch and kill other animals for consumption.

This instinctive canine predatory drive was initially put to use by humans for the purpose of hunting other animals, but easily transitioned to the search for different quarry. There is evidence to suggest that dogs were used to track criminals in 15th Century England.[17] This usage quickly spread to other colonial powers including France and Spain, and rapidly expanded to include tracking not only criminals but also escaped slaves.

The shift in the identity of the quarry here is significant, in part because of what it implies about the individuals being hunted. When a human being becomes the quarry of hunting dogs, that individual becomes prey, a body subject to death and consumption. And while humanity generally enjoys identification as a predator, our ancestors were subject to predation as well. Instinctively, deeply, we remember what it is to be prey, and that feeling is terrifying.

In her article "'You Should Give Them Blacks To Eat': Waging Inter-American Wars of Torture and Terror," Sara Johnson[18] discusses the use of trained dogs in the Caribbean in the late-18th and early-19th centuries to police the bodies of slaves by plantation owners who feared revolutions. She describes events in which slaves were chased, menaced, and publicly maimed, killed, and consumed by dogs trained for that purpose. The brutality of these events was so extreme

[17] Ibid. 388
[18] 2009

that White colonial contemporaries wrote detailed letters describing their disgust and dismay. In her analysis, Johnson draws attention to the predator/prey aspect of these attacks:

> The slave's torture served as the ultimate example of his, and by extension, all slaves' expendability. His literal conversion into an edible object was a more extreme mode of persecution and execution than other forms of torture, for example, whipping or time in the stocks. Inasmuch as one can suppose that the human species' most primal fear is being eaten alive by wild animals, the deliberate use of semidomesticated dogs as weapons made it clear that the state was a fearsome predator ready to cannibalize human flesh by proxy.[19]

In her work, Johnson goes on to suggest that the lethality of the use of dogs in the Americas was novel. I would argue that the deadly usage of canine units described by Johnson is merely an extension of traditional forms of European hunting, in which hounds were expected to kill and consume their quarry. This statement is not intended to negate the horror and torture experienced by the victims of the dogs Johnson describes; rather, I suggest that this legacy reinforces Johnson's position that slaves were being designated as nonhuman and forced to confront a marked level of primal fear easily recognized (and certainly intended) by the colonial personnel who hired the dogs and their handlers.

While the early uses of dogs in policing centered on their value as trackers, their additional skills that had been used in military work were integrated into their policing repertoire in the late 19th Century. The transition from dogs-as-trackers to dogs-as-patrolmen began in France in 1895, when French police retrained military dogs in an attempt to subdue Belle Époque gangs who had gained a foothold in Paris.[20] Their usage in patrol spread to Germany in 1896, then on to other continental European nations including Belgium, Spain, and Italy by 1899. Early attempts to bring police dogs to the United States began in 1907, with the arrival of six Belgian Shepherds in New

[19] Johnson 68-69
[20] Sloane 391

York.[21] However, due to the advent of the patrol car and many complaints by members of the communities being policed by canine units, the early American units were disbanded by 1918. Police dogs were being used in South Africa by 1911 and in Australia shortly thereafter. By the 1930s, canine units were being deployed for patrols in Britain and Canada. The Nazis made extensive use of dogs in guarding and policing concentration camps in the late 1930s and early 1940s, deploying them to terrorize, maul, and sometimes murder the prisoners.[22] Police dogs did not return to the United States until the mid-20th Century, following the use of dogs by the Allied Forces in World War II. The first modern police canine unit was established in Baltimore, MD in 1956[23], and their use rapidly spread throughout the United States, continuing into the present.

Mounted Units

Similar to dogs, horses have been used in military settings for thousands of years, although their relationships to humanity is considerably longer. Prior to domestication, early humans hunted wild horses for meat. This was not unlike any number of other predator species, as horses, like other hoofed mammals, are easily identified physically as prey animals. Their eyes are located on the sides of their heads, sacrificing depth perception for a nearly 365° view of their surroundings. Their wider range of vision serves to provide an earlier warning of a predator's advance. Their teeth are adapted to tearing grasses rather than skin, with broad grinding surfaces on their molars and large but relatively flat incisors. The horse's body is adapted for running, with strong feet and hindquarters for power and broad nostrils to facilitate the intake of oxygen. From a behavioral perspective, horses have evolved to live in herds or bands, with members of the group taking turns

[21] Handy 329
[22] Tindol 105
[23] Handy 333

keeping watch while others rest. All of these features make the horse immediately legible as a prey animal, rather than a predator.

Archaeological evidence suggests that horses were first domesticated by the Sredni Stog culture in the vicinity of the Volga river sometime between 4200-3500 BCE[24], although the history of horse domestication remains somewhat contested. Additional evidence suggests that they were put to work as draft animals pulling carts, yokes, and plows, including battle wagons such as those used by the Mesopotamians circa 2800 BCE.[25] The earliest clear representations of horses being ridden appear to have originated in Ur III, dating from 2037-2029 BCE.[26] During this period, horses were put to use in what might be considered as raids for supplies, but it was not until the Iron Age (roughly 1000 BCE) that horses became involved in what might be recognized today as organized warfare.[27] Horses were subsequently used by cultures throughout Asia and Europe, eventually making their way to the Americas, accompanying the European explorers engaged in conquest.

As the use of military units to maintain order in populated areas shifted to become the earliest forms of policing, horses similarly adjusted. Perhaps the best known example of this transition occurred once again in France, where there is a clear visible trajectory from the mounted knights of the Crusades to the 18th Century *Maréchaussée*, a military unit granted authority over the general populace and charged with maintaining order on the French roads, to the *Gendarmerie Nationale*, the present-day French police force.[28] Use of horses in this way spread rapidly, following the tracks of imperialism across the globe. Mounted units now exist in both cities and

[24] Kelekna 32
[25] Ibid. 52
[26] Ibid. 43
[27] Ibid. 44, 65
[28] Emsley 622

rural areas around the world, participating in an array of policing tasks, including but not limited to "crowd control, traffic regulation, and deterring street crime."[29]

As might be imagined, keeping horses in any context is expensive. As a benchmark, in Southern California in 2020, the approximate average annual cost to maintain[30] a horse for recreational use is approximately $8,000 USD. For working horses such as those of the mounted units, the costs rise significantly due to the need for such things as increased feed (to maintain a healthy body weight, working horses must consume more calories) and specialized items such as horseshoes designed for traction on asphalt. Given that police horses often live and work in cities, the costs to stable them are also significantly higher, in light of the property values associated with urban real estate as well as the need to transport hay and grain into the stable block and to dispose of manure and soiled bedding. As a result of the high cost of police horses, many urban jurisdictions such as Charleston, SC, Newark and Camden, NJ, San Diego, CA, and Tulsa, OK reticently disbanded their mounted units during the Great Recession. Closing the Charleston, SC mounted unit and replacing it with bicycles and electric vehicles was estimated in 2011 to save the department $250,000 per year. Other jurisdictions reduced the size of their mounted units, such as the New York Police Department, who downsized in the last decade from 130 officers and 125 horses to 60 horses and 79 officers in 2017.[31] Yet, these units have continued to receive funding, despite the significant cost. In light of consistent economic challenges facing urban police departments, one must ask why they continue to fund mounted units at all—sentimentality seems like an inadequate explanation for the units' persistence. Rather, there is widespread

[29] Lawrence 116
[30] Here, "maintenance" includes stable rental, feed, blacksmith care, and typical veterinary care. It does not include the costs associated with the acquisition or maintenance of horse-related equipment, such as saddles, halters, or lead ropes.
[31] Cooper 2011

acknowledgement of the value of mounted units, particularly for crowd control and crime deterrence. The units are perceived as so valuable that some jurisdictions who disbanded their mounted units have since begun work to raise money to revive them.[32]

'Every Dog Has His Day': Visual Impressions of Canine Policing

On May 4, 1963, a large black-and-white photo was given the space of three columns on the front page of the *New York Times*. Shot by Associated Press photographer Bill Hudson, the image depicted a scene from the Birmingham Children's March in which a Black youth is lunged at by police dogs. The image is credited with stimulating a national response to the Civil Rights Movement and has subsequently been used repeatedly as a provocative image of non-violent protest in the face of extremely violent oppression. More recently, the image appeared alongside an article titled "The Art of the Protest" by Tina Rosenberg, located in the Opinion Pages section of the *New York Times* from November 21, 2016, in the wake of the election two weeks earlier.

Consistent with Johnson's[33] analysis, Bill Hudson's image of Walter Gadsden being attacked by police dogs allows for the continual performance of particular racial and gender norms through the central casting of the animal. In the presence of the dogs, the Black body is figured as utterly abject, while the White male body is reified in its position as powerful, controlling, and authoritative. This social construction can be seen most clearly through analysis of the presence of the police dog, who occupies a central role in the image and without whom the power of the photo would be entirely compromised. It is thus the body of the dog that serves as the locus of the photo's message, acting as a focal point for the reiteration of historical violence that originates in the animal's predatory nature. It is the dog that provokes the continued life of the image through the reinforcement of specific racial and gender constructs significant to the performance of non-

[32] Ibid.
[33] 2009

violent protest. Furthermore, given the image's significance to the temporal moment in which it was produced and its subsequent continued recognizability to readers, the image offers a useful contemporary example of the ways in which the canine body contributes to policing and the extent to which the presence of a police dog provokes escalation.



Figure 2.2: "Police Dog Lunges At Demonstrator," Bill Hudson, May 1963.
© Associated Press

At first sight, the viewer's eye is immediately drawn to Officer Dick Middleton's right hand clutching Walter Gadsden's sweater. That hand is mirrored in the open jaws of Leo, Middleton's German Shepherd, and the two points form a vertex, the lines of Leo's body and Middleton's arm forming sides of a triangle completed by Middleton's tense torso. Rising beneath Leo's chest, Gadsden's knee maintains the linear form of the dog, supporting the canine shape while simultaneously opposing its forward thrust and bared teeth. On the opposite side of the triangle, Gadsden's hand is visible, clutching Middleton's bare wrist. Following Middleton's arm,

the eye is suddenly directed downwards by the stark contrast of Middleton's crisp white shirt and his black tie. The tie slides down Middleton's body but is interrupted by the coils of Leo's leash, gripped tightly in Middleton's left hand. Here, the viewer has a choice: continue the downward momentum of Middleton's tie, completing the triangle, or instead, take the direction of the leash, which returns the gaze to Leo. The leash and Leo's back form an additional arrow point, parallel to the first. Continuing outwards towards the edge of the photo, an additional triangle is seen, created by another officer, his dog's back, and the line of his arm and his dog's leash. These three angles create a series of vertices that direct focus to Leo's large head and open mouth thrust against Gadsden's belly.

This image conveys a powerful narrative of violence made manifest through the canine body, linked to the presence of hegemonic power through Middleton's grip on Gadsden's sweater. Here, State authority, race, and gender are performed in concert by the constituents of the photo as well as the photo itself. Identity categories such as these are loci of performance, described by Judith Butler.[34] She suggests that such identities are generated by strategic deployment of recognizable characteristics and behaviors that render the identities legible to others and that are not linked to any specific form of biological "fact". Butler indicates that "the existence and facticity of the material or natural dimensions of the body are not denied but reconceived as distinct from the process by which the body comes to bear cultural meanings."[35]

That Middleton represents a State presence is evident in his uniform and is reinforced by the officer standing to the right of the photo's frame. With Middleton facing the camera, several details are immediately visible. The form of his insignia is clearly visible against the dark mass of his hat, while his clean white shirt and shined shoes convey discipline and authority. His badge,

[34] 1988
[35] Butler 521

pinned to his chest, is faintly visible due to the photo's exposure but remains a ghostly reminder of his authority. His service weapon is clearly visible, suspended from his belt against his left hip. The unidentified officer on the right side of the frame shares Middleton's uniform, and in this case, attention is drawn immediately to the menacing shape of his service revolver. The decorative stripe along this officer's trousers directs attention to the gun, whose grip is in full sun even as the holster slips into shadow. Middleton's sunglasses offer a separation between the officer and the people in his immediate surroundings- noteworthy in part because this style of sunglasses has become so common as to be considered a trope but also because humans rely so heavily on eye set, shape, and structure for visual recognition of another person. Further, there is only one other figure in the photo seen wearing sunglasses—Middleton's partner, who also maintains a deliberate distance from the rest of the individuals seen. The officers both demonstrate the full male torso that would be expected of an adult male, marking a clear contrast to Gadsden's thin, adolescent frame. Additionally, the officers are the only White figures seen clearly, surrounded by the Black faces of protesters and on-lookers. This creates a distinct suggestion of a relationship between Whiteness and the State.

The uniforms make the officers legible as police but these alone do not account for the sense of power that exudes from these men. Instead, their authority is made visible through space, gaze, posture, and relationship to other bodies. Specific acts such as these are involved in a reciprocal form of construction with the overall societal conditions mediating the photo's construction and reception, a process described by Butler who states that:

> One might argue that without human beings whose various acts, largely construed, produce and maintain oppressive conditions, those conditions would fall away, but note that the relation between acts and conditions is neither unilateral nor unmediated. There are social contexts and conventions within which certain acts not only become possible but become conceivable as acts at all.[36]

[36] Ibid. 525

The acts seen in the image, then, participate in a demonstration of prevailing conditions at the time the photo was taken but continue to be re-performed through the subsequent deployment of the photo. This suggests that the original conditions of the photo remain legible in the present day.

Returning to the specifics of the image, along the center line of the photo, there is clear crowding on the sidewalks surrounding the building that houses the Jockey Boy Restaurant. But, in contrast, there is a wide berth given to Middleton, Gadsden, and the dogs. While most on-lookers were separated barely by arm's length, a perimeter several feet in width surrounds the main activity of the photo. Despite Leo's attack on Gadsden, the spectators in the photo dare not advance on the position of the officers. Instead, most viewers are seen actively moving away, avoiding intervention, while gazing over their shoulders at the action. Relinquishing space here cedes power to those who control the area – the officers and their dogs.

An additional demonstration of the extent to which the officers control space in the image is through the direction of gaze. The most proximal onlookers watch Middleton with rapt attention. There is a certain human compulsion towards eye-tracking – the desire to discover what someone else is looking at is exceedingly powerful – and here, each time the viewer's eye finds its way to another face in the image, that eye is redirected back to Middleton and the central action of the photo. Posture also reinforces the officers' authority. When considering the officer to the right of the frame, his wide stable stance demonstrates stability and control. A similar stance is visible in an officer only half-seen in the far left of the photo, his back towards the camera. Middleton's feet are less firmly rooted, but his back remains straight, shoulders squared. This provides a clear contrast to Gadsden's slumped shoulders and unstable feet. In addition, Middleton's center of gravity is directed backwards, away from the camera. He uses his weight to add leverage against both Leo and Gadsden.

The centralization of power in the image's White figures is seen most clearly in the relative positions of the officers and the other bodies present. Middleton maintains physical control of both individuals most proximal to him- Gadsden and Leo. Again, his weight is directed backwards, seemingly in an attempt to inhibit Leo's thrust, while still maintaining his grip on Gadsden's sweater. Gadsden's raised knee and hand clasped on Middleton's wrist offer sites of resistance but both figure more as defensive rather than offensive maneuvers. Both could be read as largely instinctive rather than deliberate, and so neither gesture particularly refutes Middleton's authority. Gadsden's downcast eyes may simply be directed towards the most immanent threat, but his face lacks the jaw tension or furrowed brow of someone actively engaged in resistance. Middleton's exertion of control over Leo reinforces his performance of strength, particularly given Leo's presentation as a beast. Only a powerful figure could attempt to control such a creature with any hope of success. Thus, Middleton demonstrates authority, discipline, strength, and control through his physical interactions with others. This display supports Middleton's figure as a representative of prevailing power structures but also relates to his identities as White and male.

Hudson's photo contains a clear racial element, discussed earlier in the clear visual distinction between the White officers and Black civilians. Gadsden represents the only Black individual demonstrating even the slightest resistance to White aggression, while the rest figure as passive bystanders. This is consistent with Martin Berger's[37] observation that "[w]ith great consistency, the iconic photographs of civil rights depict southern mobs and law enforcement officials inflicting bodily harm on nonthreatening Blacks."[38] In his analysis of Civil Rights Era photography "Race, Visuality, and History," Berger suggests that these depictions of race are problematic in their reinforcement of typical racial norms even as they seek to gain sympathy for

[37] 2010
[38] Berger 95

civil rights. Instead of empowering people of color, he indicates that "many Whites at the time saw the dramatic photographs of civil rights primarily as statements about White agency and citizenship, and that reception of the photographs played a role in diminishing both the symbolic and the real-world power of Blacks."[39] He further suggests that images such as Hudson's allow the viewer to ignore systemic problems in favor of a focus on discrete acts of racial violence.[40] Specifically, in reference to Hudson's photo, Martin Berger indicates that viewers of different racial identities read the image in distinct ways.

> It seems plausible that White Americans at the time simply failed to register how Gadsden acts in self-defense in the face of obvious aggression, for they had been conditioned to read Black protest in exclusionary either/or terms. Confronted with an ambiguous image, many viewers simply unconsciously edited out the visual evidence that contradicted their preferred reading of Black protest.[41]

Yet, despite sites of disagreement around figurations of race in Hudson's photo, there remains a clear indication of relative status in the photo, situated around Leo. In the center of the photo, Leo is physically located between Middleton and Gadsden, a reflection of perceived social status. While it seems that Middleton was attempting to restrain Leo, the dog was clearly performing precisely the role he was anticipated to play, exerting the power of his jaws on Gadsden's flesh. This serves as a physical reminder of a social standing that locates the Black body as expendable and abject, beneath that of the dog – a dynamic that is entirely consistent with the hegemonic norms of the time and one could argue that, in light of far too many incidents of police brutality perpetuated against Black victims in recent years, one that is still easily read in the photo.

Furthermore, the relative positioning of Leo and Gadsden in the photo is significant. That Leo's teeth are in such proximity to Gadsden's abdomen inspires fear specifically linked to notions

[39] Ibid. 94
[40] Ibid. 96
[41] Ibid. 97

of consumption. One might recall any of a host of wildlife documentaries that feature a predatory animal surrounded by the viscera of his most recent prey and covered in blood. When teeth and bellies come into contact, the results are violent and messy, a reminder of mortality and fragility. In Hudson's photo, Gadsden is recognizable as only a hair's breadth away from possibly becoming a meal.

Additionally, there is a clear through-line connecting race and gender. The Black male body has alternately been figured both as excessively masculine and as emasculated. Judith Halberstam indicates that masculinity "becomes legible as masculinity where and when it leaves the White male middle-class body."[42] In Hudson's photo, the juxtaposition of Middleton's adult White physical presence and Gadsden's youthful Black figure reinforces how the masculinity/power matrix is constructed.

The performance of a masculine identity is itself challenged by the fact that any clear notion of masculinity has proven somewhat difficult to describe. Halberstam considers this challenge:

> …although we seem to have a difficult time defining masculinity, as a society we have little trouble in recognizing it, and indeed we spend massive amounts of time and money ratifying and supporting the versions of masculinity that we enjoy and trust; many of these 'heroic masculinities' depend absolutely on the subordination of alternative masculinities.[43]

A relationship between power and figurations of masculinity has been well-documented. In "Female Masculinity," Halberstam describes this relationship, saying "[m]asculinity in this society inevitably conjures up notions of power and legitimacy and privilege; it often symbolically refers to the power of the state and to uneven distributions of wealth."[44] This perspective is similarly supported by John Berger, who notes:

[42] Halberstam 936
[43] Ibid. 935
[44] Ibid. 936

> A man's presence is dependent upon the promise of power which he embodies. If the promise is large and credible his presence is striking. If it is small or incredible, he is found to have little presence. The promised power may be moral, physical, temperamental, economic, social, sexual- but its object is always exterior to the man. A man's presence suggests what he is capable of doing to you or for you. His presence may be fabricated, in the sense that he pretends to be capable of what he is not. But the pretence is always towards a power which he exercises on others.[45]

This particular phrase – "what he is capable of doing to you or for you" – resonates specifically in terms of the displays of power in Hudson's photo. Middleton demonstrates both threat (he could draw Gadsden closer to Leo or push him further away and there is the risk of arrest or shooting) or favor (he could withdraw Leo, release Gadsden, or avoid engaging with other passers-by). Particularly given the liveness of the threat represented by Middleton's control of Leo, the body of the dog assists in reinforcing Middleton's figure as one read as masculine.

Further, the very presence of a dog furthers the reading of masculinity in the photo, particularly given Middleton's control of Leo and the foregrounded officer's control of his dog through their leashes. Sociologist Michael Ramirez has studied the relationship between dogs and their owners, specifically with attention to the role of gender in the construction of that relationship: "Much like clothing or other material possessions, owners use dogs to display gender qualities. The mere company of a dog displays manhood, as evidenced by the owners' uniform agreement that a dog is *man's* best friend."[46] He further indicates that traditional gender roles can influence the relationship between a person and his/her pet, noting that "men have historically been constructed as more agentic and active, performing instrumental tasks such as the heads of the household, breadwinners, or workplace managers."[47] This is consistent with the masculine construction of Middleton's position in Hudson's photo, due to the clear indication that Leo is both

[45] Berger 45-46
[46] Ramirez 386
[47] Ibid. 374

"agentic" and visibly a working dog, rather than a pet. Aggressive displays on the part of the animal are also associated with masculinity.[48] While Ramirez does not indicate breed choice as a gender sign, one might further his argument to suggest that the image of a large working dog such as a German Shepherd does more to support a performance of masculinity than would a smaller companion dog such as a Maltese or Cavalier King Charles Spaniel.

That the image of the dog is fundamental to the construction of race, gender, and state power in Hudson's image is also consistent with historical analyses of the Birmingham Children's March. The two central triangles of Middleton, Gadsden, Leo, and the leash filled the cropped image that was featured on the front page of the *New York Times* on May 4, 1963. It is no accident that this section of the image directs attention to Leo's presence. In fact, the presence of police dogs was part of the plan for the Birmingham Children's March that day. The incidence of the canine body is significant here, in part because the inclusion of canine units in anti-protest police activity was a deliberate choice to inspire fear in the protesters and was desired by Black protesters as a way to garner sympathy through the deployment of the canine body as a signifier for state-sponsored violence. In the spring of 1963, acts of resistance were becoming commonplace in Birmingham, Alabama. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), under the leadership of executive director Wyatt Walker, had been actively engaged for months in organizing a variety of protests with the express goal of gaining visibility and sympathy for the Civil Rights Movement. Birmingham seemed an ideal site to attract attention, particularly given the presence of T. Eugene "Bull" Connor, the city's Commissioner of Public Safety. Connor was well-known as a proponent of segregation who had already demonstrated a willingness to deploy severe tactics

[48] Ibid. 379

against protesters, having "boasted that he was prepared to use the K-9 Corps and the fire department, with their riot-dispersing fire hoses."[49]

There had been limited success in gaining attention, however, and so Walker and other SCLC leaders developed a plan to bait Bull Connor into doing precisely what he had threatened, bringing out his police dogs and fire hoses. Connor had already done so once on April 7, 1963, against a group of protesters. On that occasion, the dogs generally received more violence than they delivered, although they still managed to make Connor proud.

> Eighteen-year-old Leroy Allen, a spectator, went at a police dog, swinging a large knife, as a White *New York Times* reporter saw it. Allen was choking the dog when four cops threw him to the ground. A dog lunged at another man, who swung back with a penknife ('I don't know whether I cut him or not,' he reported, 'but I hope I did'). 'Look at that dog go,' Connor said. 'That's what we train them for—to enforce the law—just like we train our officers.'[50]

Whether or not the dogs were actively engaged in violence against the protesters, their presence alone was enough to inspire Walker: "After the reporters left the motel, Walker jumped up yelling, 'We've got a movement. We've got a movement. We had some police brutality. They brought out the dogs. They brought out the dogs. We've got a movement.'"[51] In other words, the presence of the dog was central not only to Hudson's photo but also to the events that led to its creation.

By May 3, 1963, tensions had risen further and Walker's work had gained momentum. The SCLC organized a march that included both adult protesters and children who had stayed home from school to participate in the march. It was on this day that Connor once again deployed his K-9 Corps and on which Hudson snapped his now iconic photo. This time, "the dogs and fire hoses dominated the evening news."[52]

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[49] McWhorter 339-340
[50] Ibid. 330
[51] Ibid. 331
[52] Ibid. 373

> And even so, it might have all gone away but for that news photograph of a colored boy who had stepped into the jaws of one of the German police dogs. As Eric Sevareid had said on the *CBS Evening News*, 'A snarling police dog set upon a human being is recorded in the permanent photoelectric file of every human being's brain.'[53]

The effects of Hudson's photo and others like it (most notably those of Charles Moore) provoked a widespread response. Diane McWhorter, whose text *Carry Me Home* is among the most cited in discussions of 1963 Birmingham, describes the effect of Hudson's image:

> If our history texts listed *Uncle Tom's Cabin* among the Four Major Causes of the Civil War, so had the photograph of the police dog lunging at the Black boy been a factor in the Emancipation Proclamation of the 20th Century. President John F. Kennedy went on national TV not long after the photograph was published (it had made him 'sick,' he said) and announced that he was sending to Congress a remedy for 'the events of Birmingham': the first serious civil rights legislation since Reconstruction—ultimately the Civil Rights Act of 1964—which would end legalized racism in America.[54]

McWhorter is not alone in this supposition. Spratt[55], Gunderson[56], and Eskew[57] all reinforce the critical role that the police dogs played in turning the tide of the Civil Rights Movement. Clearly, the use of the canine form in demonstrating White male power was paramount.

Society of the Centaur: Mounted Units and Shifting State Perceptions

In considering mounted units, there is no single press photo that encapsulates their use as clearly or as powerfully as Bill Hudson's photo of police dogs at work. Instead, most press images of mounted units show them standing quietly on city streets, walking quietly through city streets, or greeting children. Photos exist of mounted units facing down protestors, but these images are fewer in number and do not appear to have provoked anything close to the level of response

[53] Ibid. 22
[54] Ibid. 25
[55] 2008
[56] 2008
[57] 1997

inspired by Hudson's photograph. Perhaps the most contentious image of a mounted unit appeared in August 2019, when two White mounted officers in Galveston, TX were caught on film leading Donald Neely, a 43-year-old African American man arrested for criminal trespassing.[58]



Figure 2.3: Mounted officers lead Donald Neeley in Galveston, TX, Aug 3, 2019.

The photo was originally posted in the Galveston Island Crime Watch Facebook group and was quickly shared via both Facebook and Twitter, provoking wide outrage. Social media users acknowledged that the image immediately evoked memories of slavery, and of mounted posses policing Black bodies. In an interview with *New York Times* reporter Neil Vigdor, Leon Phillips,

[58] An August 6, 2019 *New York Times* article by Neil Vigdor indicates that the photographer wished to remain anonymous.

president of the Galveston Coalition for Justice, described the image as "raw". He went on to say that "[e]very Black person that's over the age of 30 years old will have a thought of what it used to be like," adding that he "get[s] emotional because I came from a segregated time, and people said and did whatever they wanted to."[59] The response to the image came as no surprise, even to the officers involved. In body camera footage, officer Patrick Brosch can be heard repeatedly remarking that "This is going to look really bad."[60]

In the image, the viewer's eye is directed to Neely via the rope held in Officer Amanda Smith's hand, despite his off-center position. Brosch's right forearm similarly points to Neely. In contrast to Hudson's photo, this one contains a sense of distance between Neely and the officers, although the horses on either side of Neely create an impression of containment, particularly through Brosch's upright torso aligned with his horse's white facial blaze. Several of the same markers of state power from Hudson's photo are visible- the uniforms (although this time, the officers wear cowboy hats and body protectors) and sunglasses. Weapons are less apparent here, although this is perhaps due to the fact that the image was captured on a cellphone, rather than a professional camera, resulting in a loss of definition. The racial difference between the officers and Neely is clearly marked, and the rope leading to Neely's handcuffed hands actively articulates a threat of violence. It is worth noting that that threat was subsequently made all the more real in Smith's body cam footage, when she is heard telling Neely that he had better stay next to her, "'cause I'm going to drag you if not."[61] However, in the image itself, there is no active attack in progress. Instead, the violence is more subtle, leading to humiliation and memories of historical trauma in the mythscape rather than bruising or bloodshed.

[59] Vigdor 2019
[60] Bates 2019
[61] Ibid.

The presence of the horses in the photo are significant in cementing the remembrance of historic violence, but they play a very different role here than Leo did in Hudson's photo. Rather than being weaponized or engaging directly and physically with Neely, the horses quietly convey the officers back to their truck and trailer, which had been parked nearby. The horses contribute to a height differential between the officers and Neely, participating in a signification of power, but they are not seen in the process of enacting that power on the body of the prisoner they are escorting. They participate in controlling Neely through their size, rather than through the inspiration of fear of physical harm.

While the photo provoked a wide response on social media, including retweets by former US Presidential candidate Beto O'Rourke and US House candidate Adrienne Bell, and while the story was carried by news outlets including the BBC and the *New York Times* into October 2019, the ultimate effect of the image seems to have been brief. Galveston's police chief, Vernon L. Hale III offered an apology and promises to find more appropriate methods for mounted officers to move prisoners[62], but otherwise, the image seems to have quietly disappeared. Despite both this image and Hudson's photo from the Birmingham Children's March articulating state violence enacted on Black bodies, only one had a lasting impact, seemingly due to the graphic nature of the assault on Gadsden by Leo. The dog's action in Hudson's photo provoked an escalation in action by the image's viewers that led to legislation, whereas the sight of Neely being led by mounted officers inspired only a brief flurry of digital indignation by no real calls for change.

The response to the photo of Neely should not be construed as evidence that mounted units are ineffective. In fact, they are among the most useful units for crowd control for a variety of reasons. The most commonly cited explanation for the efficacity of mounted units is their

[62] Vigdor 2019

visibility. In his 2011 article for the *New York Times*, Michael Cooper refers to this feature, noting that mounted patrol supporters have suggested that a single mounted unit is equally as effective as 7-10 foot officers. Similarly, in an extended study of an urban mounted unit, Elizabeth Atwood Lawrence indicates that "the horse/rider unit is said to possess high *visibility*—the most important and most frequently cited advantage of the mounted force."[63] She describes the police horse as "[a] standout amongst the trappings of civilization—buildings, cars, trucks, and buses, elevated railways, blowing paper, screeching sirens, and the shouts and tramping of the masses of people whose realm the city is"[64] and suggests that the result of this conspicuousness "is felt both by the would-be criminal who is contemplating a street crime and is deterred by his presence, and by the masses of people whom the law seeks to protect."[65] Lawrence suggests that the mounted unit's visibility stems in part from the presence of a horse in a geographic location where he is unexpected (in a city rather than a rural area) as well as from the simple physical aspect of the horse's size. Horses are generally large animals but come in a range of sizes from 15 hands[66] (typical of small riding horses) to 23 hands (horses typically used for draft work such as pulling carriages or plows). Regulations regarding mounted unit horses indicate that they should be on the larger side, generally specifying that the horses should be at least 15.2 hands with 16 hands or greater preferred.[67] Given the position of the rider on the horse's back, the head of a mounted policeman might therefore find itself 8-10 feet above the ground. Due to this significant difference in height, the mounted officer is more clearly seen by individuals standing on the ground and can also obtain a wider view of

[63] Lawrence 117
[64] Ibid. 116
[65] Ibid. 117-118
[66] A "hand" is the standard unit of measure for horse height and is equal to 4 inches. Height is measured at the horse's wither- the location where the neck meets the back and which remains at the same height whether the horse's head is lifted up or down. When a decimal is present, it indicates the number of inches beyond the "hand" size- in other words, a horse that is 16.1 hands would be 16 hands plus one inch (for a total of 65 inches).
[67] Ibid. 134

his/her surroundings. Thus, the officer is both more visible and more able to participate in surveillance activities (clearly bringing to mind Jeremy Bentham and Michel Foucault). Returning to *Tatlin's Whisper #5*, one can imagine how striking the height of the mounted unit would be in the enclosed space of the museum, despite the Turbine Hall's ceiling height of 115 feet.[68]

From a physical perspective, it seems that much of the mounted unit's effectiveness then stems from a citizen's fear of being injured by such a large animal combined with the effects of more capable surveillance from significant height. While these features offer some explanation as to why mounted units are particularly successful at manipulating the movement of bodies in space, it does little to explain the distinction in response between mounted units and other police units that are capable of taking up space or causing physical damage. Lawrence suggests one distinctive particular physical element that contributes to a sense of community-building with the general populace—the sound of hoofbeats. She states that "the perception of police horses is mediated through the symbolism of sound. City people routinely speak of the 'clippity-clop' of the horses' hooves, saying that the sound brings them a deep sense of comfort and well-being, particularly when they hear it at night."[69] Lawrence speculates on why the aural presence of horses has a calming effect, linking it to the marking of time[70], which in turn "binds large groups of people together as a society"[71] and connects the rhythm of hoofbeats to the historic cultural use of drumming as a community-building activity.[72]

In addition to being more visible and more capable of seeing than other police units, the magnitude of the horse's body contributes to the unit's ability to move people. Police horses are

[68] Tate Modern
[69] Lawrence 144
[70] Ibid. 146
[71] Ibid. 147
[72] Ibid. 151, 159

typically approximately 8 feet in length from nose to tail and weigh a minimum of 1100 lbs., with closer to 2000 lbs. being common. The combination of significant physical space and weight contributes to the extent to which individuals will relocate of the path of a horse. There is an inherent fear of being stepped on that encourages people to move.[73] In an article examining the economic implications of the horse-human relationship, business scholar Susan Keaveney remarks on the effect of the horse's magnitude, indicating that the "sheer size of the horse is a constant reminder of the tremendous power that can be unleashed in a split second. Though generally docile creatures, horses can be extremely dangerous to humans on or off the ground."[74] Lawrence cites an anonymous officer from her study who stated that "'[p]eople instinctively back up and give ground for a horse, whereas they will not do so for policemen on foot, on a bike, or in a car.'"[75]

In addition, because it is considered common knowledge that horses are both large and slightly unpredictable, there is greater latitude for mounted officers to work proximally with protesters. Another anonymous officer interviewed by Lawrence explains:

> '…in hostile, adversary demonstrations, people know that the police won't drive a motorcycle or a cruiser into the crowd, because of injuries which might result. Mounted police won't be criticized by the media or other agency if they physically push the crowd back. If someone is stepped on, that's unfortunate, but it's fair game.'[76]

The sense of unpredictability is a further key feature of the physical aspects of mounted unit work. Horses are understood as prey animals and therefore have the potential to be frightened by loud or surprising sounds or sudden movements, regardless of their level of training. "Beneath the surface of reliable and expected behavior, there is always the chance, though it may be minimal, that the animals will throw off the accustomed yoke of subservience and demonstrate wild and

[73] Ibid. 131
[74] Keaveney 445
[75] Lawrence 131
[76] Ibid. 131

'uncivilized' behavior."[77] This similarly encourages among bystanders a level of healthy respect for the equine partner in a mounted unit, as the horses are seen as simultaneously domesticated and wild, a contradiction that is sometimes deliberately deployed.

> Mounted officers do, in fact, utilize people's perceptions of the complex and contradictory nature of the horse—the wild versus the tame—to increase the effectiveness with which they carry out their work. An officer may willingly allow or encourage the horse to go out of control, or rather to give the impression of being out of control, in order to make use of people's reactions to this wilder, fear-inducing element of the horse's nature.[78]

Despite their imposing physical presence, the distinction in effectiveness and perception of mounted units does not reside solely in the horse's physical size. The relationship between horse and rider, particularly in the context of the mounted unit, houses several relevant semiotic concepts that contribute to how the unit is read by spectators. The sight of a rider in the saddle recalls the classical Greek image of the centaur, a single being, half man and half horse. They were the children of Ixion, king of the Lapiths of Thessaly, and had a reputation of wild behavior and lawlessness. At the same time, the best known of the centaurs was Chiron, famous for his wisdom, who served as a teacher for many of the Greek heroes. Given the Greeks' profound appreciation for horses, it is perhaps unsurprising that their mythology would contain beings that articulate the intimacy between horse and rider so clearly.

[77] Ibid. 121
[78] Ibid. 132



Figure 2.4: Metope of a Centaur and Lapith, from Athens, Greece 447-438 BCE. © Trustees of the British Museum.

The horse/rider couplet performs dynamics of power in several registers, including through concepts of gender. In terms of policing, despite the presence of female officers and the fact that most recreational horse riders are women, professional riders (both in athletic and policing contexts) are typically assumed as male. Birke and Brandt discuss the performance of gender relative to equestrian pursuits and suggest that the figuration of horses and riders as male may be due in part to the historical use of horses in military contexts, creating a linkage to the traditionally physically male bodies of the soldiers as well as the perceived masculinity of imperial land

acquisition.[79] This is further embodied in sculptural depictions of soldiers (generally officers rather than infantry, which provides an additional reading of masculine power and dominance) on horseback, in which the horse is presented almost universally as male.[80] Lawrence similarly draws attention to the extent to which gender becomes relevant in mounted units, noting that police horses are required to be geldings[81] because "[t]o the men, riding a mare for their job is unthinkable."[82] This is due in part to prejudices against female horses— "mares are widely thought to be fickle and unpredictable, while males – at least castrated males – are thought to be more reliable."[83] The size and strength of the horse also often contributes to the horses themselves being figured as male, creating in the horse/rider a unit that projects hypermasculinity. The physicality required to work with and around horses also demands what are commonly considered to be masculine traits.[84]

At the same time, the horses perform elements of femininity, regardless of their actual physical sex. Birke and Brandt suggest that "at the same time as they symbolize great feats of conquest, those feats depend upon the horse becoming tamed, its wildness contained by domestication—and so implicitly feminized."[85] That horses are prey animals also contributes to a gendered reading, as they "become figured at least partly as feminine, as needing help to think through their emotional flight response."[86] This suggests that the horse in a horse/rider pairing simultaneously represents both the male and female. "Horses and their bodies become highly socially differentiated cultural artifacts, bearing layers of (often ambiguous and contradictory) meaning and symbolism."[87]

[79] Birke and Brandt 190
[80] Ibid. 193
[81] Geldings are castrated male horses.
[82] Lawrence 139
[83] Birke and Brandt 193
[84] Ibid. 195
[85] Ibid. 193
[86] Ibid. 194
[87] Ibid. 193

Gendered notions of power inform only one aspect of the symbolic elements of police horses and riders. Lawrence describes the semiotic potential of the police horse in terms of constructions of orderliness, linking the clean, polished appearance of horse and rider once again with images of imperial conquest.

> Beyond any possible doubt, the horse has been conquered, subjected to the restraints of civilization, which are blatantly symbolized by gear, accoutrements, and uniformed rider wearing badges and insignia. Authority, with generations of war and conquering behind it, springs from horse to rider, and again from rider to horse. A dynamic dimension from human history, laden with the charges of a thousand cavalries, adds to the aura and image of conquest and control which are transmitted to the viewer.[88]

Lawrence here suggests an implicit relationship between the quasi-military uniform of the officer and the seeming domination in the officer's control of the horse. She sees an image of passive subjugation, likening the horse/rider relationship to a typical societal power structure of State control.

> The horse, most particularly the city horse—ridden, checked, and reined—generally carries out with apparent acquiescence that which society decrees to be its proper role. Meeting human expectations, it can usually be counted upon to be obedient, orderly, and nonaggressive. Under normal circumstances, then, it can be thought of as a kind of *gauge* of the existing state of order. If all goes well, it behaves and completes its expected rounds without serious interruption.[89]

That the horse/rider relationship can function as an analog to that of the citizenry/State is a key feature of the present argument. However, while Lawrence hints at the extent to which there is something more complex at work between policeman and horse, she does not link that relationship to the metaphoric citizen/State she describes here. It is precisely this confluence of Lawrence's vision of horse/rider as citizen/State and a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between

[88] Lawrence 119
[89] Ibid. 120

horse and rider that is key to comprehending how the presence of a mounted unit contributes to de-escalation rather than an increase in violence.

The relationship between humans and non-humans has been the subject of considerable study, particularly when those relationships occur due to continued close proximity. Birke, Bryld, and Lykke describe a critical element of these relationships – animal agency, demonstrated through "mutual decision-making."[90] In the case of horse and rider, animal agency becomes visible in the extent to which both parties participate in a form of Deleuzian becoming, in which each organism is effectively deconstructed and reassembled into a form of hybrid organism defined by mutual corporeality.[91] Birke, Bryld, and Lykke describe the need for animals to "learn to participate in a conjoint world, to work with and to recreate it, just as the human must learn to participate in the same conjoint world."[92] They further stress that the material hybrid result of that conjoint is inherently performative in a manner that differentiates the human-plus-non-human from either human or non-human.[93]

Philosopher of Science Vinciane Despret describes this form of conjunction, referring to it as *anthropo-zoo-genesis*. She specifically examines the relationship between humans and horses, demonstrating the level of hybridity in several contexts. She begins with a discussion of Clever Hans, a horse who was at first believed to be able to solve mathematics problems. Subsequently, it became clear that Hans was not, in fact, solving the calculations. Instead, he was taking unintentional cues from the humans in the room. When Hans got close to signaling the correct answer, the human who had asked the question would shift their body in ways barely perceptible to the other people in the room. Thus, the humans were being informed by Hans who then

[90] Birke et al. 174
[91] Deleuze 4
[92] Birke et al. 175
[93] Ibid. 175

interpreted the humans' signals. "Indeed, the horse could not count, but he could do something more interesting: not only could he read bodies, but he could make human bodies be moved and be affected, and move and affect other beings and perform things without their owners' knowledge."[94]

This capacity for inadvertent physical reciprocity is referred to by Despret as *isopraxis* and demonstrates an incredibly powerful physical and empathetic connection between horse and rider. A common statement by riders is that their horse seems to know what they are thinking, that the horse can anticipate the rider's need or desire before the rider signals it. She provides the following description of isopraxis in the context of a rider requesting a specific movement:

> A careful analysis of these unintentional movements made by the human body has shown that these movements, in fact, are exactly the same as the ones the horse performs. The human's right hand imitates (and anticipates) what the horse's right front leg will do, the bottom of the back of the rider makes a jerk which is exactly the movement the horse will do to begin to canter, and so on.[95]

In other words, the rider performs a series of unintentional movements that simulate what the horse's body must do to comply with the demand the rider has yet to articulate. The horse then senses these movements on the part of the rider and complies with the unstated request. There is a clear cycle of communication traveling silently through the connected bodies of horse and rider.

Social scientist Ann Game similarly describes the process of creating what she refers to as the *centaur*. She notes the need for the rider to surrender to the rhythm of the horse, which then supports the horse's ability to establish his rhythm. Describing the feeling of constructing the centaur, she explains that:

> There is an unmistakable moment in the process of finding-creating the rhythm when 'it comes together'. And in that moment of recognition, when I say 'that's it, this feels just right', there is no sense of a point of origin. 'I am riding well, she is

[94] Despret 113
[95] Ibid. 115

> moving well' come together; we both get it simultaneously. In that moment I am *with* the horse.[96]

This sense of implicit communication becomes highly relevant in the context of mounted units. Officers are typically responsible for caring for their mounts on the ground, in addition to spending their entire shift together. Lawrence notes that, in the course of her study, many patrolmen described the reciprocity of their relationships with their horses.[97] A relationship of empathy and shared embodiment thus becomes the basis for differences in how mounted units are perceived by the general populace. Lawrence suggests that "[b]ecause of his relationship to his horse, people view the mounted officer as 'patient.'"[98] She specifies that "[l]ooking beneath the surface, it is the implicit communication between horse and rider that sets the stage for the free flow of communication which exists between people on the street and the mounted officer."[99]

Here, then, is the key observation. In the relationship between the officer and his horse, there is an example for reciprocal communication and respect between two mutually dependent individuals. Extending Lawrence's notion of the police mounted unit as a metaphor for the State and its citizens, it would seem possible that what is actually perceived in the bodies of the officer and horse is not the all-powerful fear-inducing mechanism of authority and control ordering a docile population. The domineering State authority is what is seen in other police bodies, those often met with resistance and those that were expected by Lepecki. Instead, the mounted unit performs a relationship of availability rather than docility. Despret marks this distinction, asking "[h]ow may we assume that a setting is designed to perform docility rather than availability? I think we can draw the difference from the possibility of 'resistance' that each of the settings offers

[96] Game 8
[97] Lawrence 127
[98] Ibid. 127
[99] Ibid. 126

to the one it addresses."[100] In the case of horse and rider, the horses always exist in a state with the potential for resistance. In fact, to some extent, given their nature as prey animals, resistance is periodically expected, no matter the level of training. And, despite the likelihood of resistance, the officers mount up each day anyway. The officers develop an intimate relationship with their horses, listen to their horses, respond to their horses, experience becoming with their horses. To some extent, resistance becomes unnecessary because the horses are being heard by their riders.

This represents an idealized version of the relationship between citizenry and State, one in which the population accepts some modicum of State control (and indeed, I would suggest that the majority of the populace are not anarchists and prefer the presence of some form of State authority) but that control is administered by an organism that recognizes the fact that its own existence is predicated on the presence of the citizenry. In this idealized form, the State and citizenry mutually inform each other and the population is allowed to be itself. The State demonstrates patience and vulnerability, even when sporting the trappings of order and discipline.

Conclusion

One can only imagine what *Tatlin's Whisper #5* might have looked like if Bruguera had opted to use canine units rather than mounted units. Presumably, the officers would still have been effective in moving visitors to the Tate Modern around the Turbine Hall, although the reduced visibility of the officers might have made the work more challenging. Instead of the clip-clop of hooves, the spectators might have heard barking, which may have produced alarm rather than wonder, particularly if the spectator was unable to see the police dog from their particular vantage point. There may have been a similar degree of anxiety surrounding the unpredictable nature of the animals, but the specific nature of that concern would likely have leaned more towards fear of

[100] Despret 123

consumption rather than fear of being inadvertently stepped-on. The space of the museum may have been sufficient to limit open displays of violence, but history suggests that the threat of police aggression via the weaponization of their dogs may have inspired more of the active resistance Lepecki had so missed. It seems clear, however, that the presence of horses in policing serves a distinctly different function than that served by police dogs. Attending to this distinction might allow for more effective deployment of animal units by police forces in the future.

Chapter 3:

Letting Loose the Dogs of War: Military Animals and Affective Response

"War therefore is an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our will."—Carl von Clausewitz, 1832

To consider military animals, it is useful to begin by contemplating war. In his text *On War*, Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz describes the centrality of violence in the pursuit of political goals. War, he claimed, is predicated on the enactment of hostile intentions[1] through the subjugation of the enemy, causing the opponent sufficient damage to provoke their capitulation while simultaneously attempting to minimize harm to one's own side.[2] Clausewitz acknowledges that bloodshed and suffering are central components of warfare. His sentiments are echoed several decades later by Union General William Tecumseh Sherman in his September 1864 Letter to the City of Atlanta. He writes, "War is cruelty, and you cannot refine it."[3]

The centrality of death and suffering in warfare may not be surprising, but it contributes significantly to affective responses to war, particularly in light of its theatricality. We speak of "theatres of war," an image that reflects an awareness of the constructed and performative nature of military action. Troops assemble in "staging areas." There is a clear sense of heightened stakes, articulated through the drive towards achieving a particular political goal, coupled with an awareness of extreme risk. With stakes like these, the action that takes place on the battlefield lends itself to the construction of particular narratives, centered on notions of courage,[4] bravery,

[1] Clausewitz 102
[2] Ibid. 104, 128, 135
[3] Given the level of cruelty Sherman dispensed both in the US Civil War and in the subsequent Indian Wars, it would seem that Sherman knew what he was talking about.
[4] Ibid. 116

and sacrifice, although like the *hamartia*[5] of the Greeks, the presentation of these values is not without some degree of irony.

These two components of warfare—the propensity for extreme suffering and death and the drive towards the expression of qualities such as courage—contribute significantly to the ways in which animal bodies are read when they find themselves embroiled in human conflict zones. Many different species of animal have participated in human conflict throughout our shared history. Horses are perhaps the first to come to mind, with the earliest known images of their use pulling chariots dating back to 2000 BCE. Dogs have fought alongside human soldiers for thousands of years, using their scenting and hearing abilities for detection and their speed and strength for defense.[6] Other species have similarly served in wartime, including moths and canaries for poison gas detection, bees as forms of attack, pigeons for carrying messages, elephants and camels for transportation, and dolphins for underwater mine detection.[7]

Nevertheless, domesticated animals such as horses and dogs have been the most omnipresent in human warfare and it is the intimacy of our relationships with them during peacetime that contributes to the ways in which we respond to them in periods of military conflict. While horses are now rarely used in war,[8] military working dogs remain in regular use. The dogs have become reservoirs for sentiment by both the soldiers that work with them and the civilians who follow their stories, situating the animals as simultaneously virtuous and fragile. They enact a "doing," using Barad's terminology, which provokes a heightened affective response, creating a

[5] *Hamartia* is typically translated as "tragic flaw," the inner quality of the hero that ultimately leads to his downfall.
[6] Sloane 385
[7] Alger and Alger 2013
[8] In an article for *The Daily Telegraph*, Troy Lennon reported that, following 9/11, American Green Berets used horses for travel through Afghanistan in the early days of the war. It was the first time American troops had ridden horses in war since 1942.

marked distinction from the ways in which dogs are read in other nationalist contexts, such as policing.

The use of dogs in policing was a somewhat natural outgrowth of their use in military contexts. It is believed that the earliest use of dogs for police work occurred in 14th Century France, when dogs were used in St. Malo to guard naval military installations and docks.[9] Many of the tasks carried out by military working dogs are similar to those performed by police dogs: detection, alerting their human handlers to the approach of other beings, personal protection against physical attack, and the ability to chase, track, catch, and restrain individuals until their human handler can arrive. In fact, in some cases, military working dogs are adopted out to Law Enforcement Agencies when their tours of duty end, resulting in the same animal working in both environments.[10]

The primary distinction between police dogs and military working dogs, then, does not lie in the species of animal being used or in the labor they perform, but rather in the setting. Charles Sloane suggests that there is no difference at all, stating that "there is but little difference between fighting an enemy in a declared war and fighting an enemy, the criminal, at home on the crime front."[11] I am inclined to disagree with Sloane, primarily in the suggestion of equivalency between enemies in wartime and domestic criminal behavior. Sloane's position is contingent on significant assumptions, not the least of which are the presumptions of moral superiority and community integrity inherent in the unification of a singular domestic group that fights enemies abroad and criminals at home. I would argue that, in fact, the separation between the domestic arena, in which policing occurs, and theatres of war abroad, where military action takes place, is deeply internalized by the citizenry. While police units may see the two contexts as roughly equivalent,

[9] Handy, Harrington, & Pittman 328.
[10] Alger and Alger 90
[11] Sloane 388

the average citizen perceives a significant difference, given that military action is directed away from them and towards an external threat, whereas police action is directed towards them, to maintain State power at home. As a result, the same animal takes on a significantly different role when the object of that animal's aggressive action is outward-facing, rather than inward. The perception of the canine body as predatory and hostile holds when it is directed internally, towards American citizens; when those same behaviors are alternately pointed towards bodies deemed as military enemies,[12] the dog is instead read as courageous and self-sacrificing.

Granted, in the history of military animals, non-human combatants have been and, in some ways, continue to be considered as property, rather than as soldiers.[13] The loss of a dog or horse or bird would be considered unfortunate but is expected to produce no greater sense of loss than total damage to a tank or the destruction of a building. Indeed, the expendability of military animals has been demonstrated repeatedly through a host of examples. In World War I, most horses who survived the war itself were not reunited with their former families. Instead, they were left behind to starve or be eaten by starving people, leaving the horses' hides to be made into leather. Military working dogs were considered for use as suicide bombers in World War II,[14] and they were left behind following the US military withdrawal from the Vietnam War. The positioning of working dogs as pieces of equipment has persisted up into the present, in terms of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In an interview with *National Geographic* reporter Michael Paterniti,[15] Marine Corporal Jose Armenta describes his relationship with his military working dog Zenit, a German

[12] The identity of a "military enemy" has become increasingly murky in recent years, as wars are no longer exclusively staged between nations but have expanded to be waged against smaller collectives, such as "terrorist organizations."
[13] This is also an interesting distinction between military animals and police animals. Police horses and dogs are recognized as officers (kicking a police dog, for example, can result in a charge of "assaulting an officer"). The positioning of military animals is considerably more fluid, as they remain property from a rhetorical perspective in terms of how they are described to their handlers, but their actual training and treatment would suggest otherwise.
[14] Alger and Alger 82
[15] Paterniti 2014

Shepherd, as "strictly professional," articulating his understanding that "a military dog was an instrument he had to master, just as a technician had to understand sonar on a submarine or a drone operator had to learn to control a Predator." Armenta explained that, in the event of Zenit's death in battle, he anticipated feeling unmoved and would simply be assigned a new dog. Situating military animals as equivalent to instrumentation remains what Paterniti described as "the party line."

It is perhaps unsurprising that military animals would be positioned as property. Animals in general have often been situated as what Agamben terms *zoë*.[16] *Zoë* represents bare life—the act of living, separate from life within a body politick or society. The position of the animal as *zoë* should seem somewhat obvious, given that animals are generally prohibited from participation in civic activities such as voting.[17] National origin or identity is also not conferred or expected with animals. Breed designations such as "French Bulldog" might be suggested as a counterpoint here, although these titles do not seem to similarly confer any of the sociocultural expectations the same moniker might, were it applied to a human (there is no anticipation, for example, that a French Bulldog would have been born in France, would understand the French language, or [leaning into the stereotypes] would have a particular appreciation for wine and cheese). Animals are exempted from inclusion within the citizenry of a nation, even as military animals are subject to the same risks of dismemberment and death that might befall a human soldier fighting in the same conflict.

In further describing bare life, Agamben explains that the Western political sphere defines itself through contradistinction with bare life,[18] in much the same way that humanity defines itself against the non-human. The most direct definition of bare life offered by Agamben is that of an

[16] 1995
[17] If the Roman historian Suetonius is to be believed, one could argue that the near appointment of Incitatus, Caligula's horse, as a Consul was almost the exception that proves the rule.
[18] Agamben 11

individual "who *may be killed and yet not sacrificed.*"[19] This is the principle that allows for the extreme cruelty observed in industrialized farming of animals for the production of meat, the use of animals as objects in scientific testing, and industrialized breeding facilities such as puppy mills, as well as other abuses. The central feature of *zoë*, then, is the ability to die without meaning or significance.

And yet, the identification of military animals (or animals in general) as nothing more than equipment, as *zoë*, should register as an oversimplification. While there are certainly cases in which this particular shoe might fit, and while animals have functioned in and out of wartime as sources of labor, as food, and as material, they have also been recognized as compatriots, friends, and family members. Ryan Hediger remarks that:

> …[e]ven when animals are brutally forced to participate in human wars, the human desire and need for this extra-species assistance testifies to human dependence…Often, the terrible conditions of conflict have intensified human bonds with other animals, reminding us how essential these more positive elements of the relationships have been to people and to animals.[20]

As one example from antiquity, if the classical story is to be believed, Alexander the Great was inseparable from his beloved horse Bucephalus ("ox-head", possibly a reference to the horse's stubborn behavior or to the white markings on his nose), riding the horse both recreationally as well as into battle after taming the animal in an apocryphal story. Alexander was so bereft at the death of Bucephalus that he named a city for him when the horse died,[21] and there is no shortage of more recent stories of appreciation. Close contacts with domestic species[22] allow the animals to be imbued with characteristics traditionally associated primarily with valorized humanity (loyalty,

[19] Ibid. 12
[20] Hediger 2-3
[21] Cartledge 12
[22] Here, I'm referring to those species with whom humans are likely to cohabitate. In American culture, these would primarily include dogs, cats, and horses, rather than species more frequently deemed livestock, such as cows or sheep.

for example, and courage, open-mindedness, and unconditional love). At the same time, there is recognition of the capacity for animals to suffer and, naturally, to die. Our intimate relationships with these animals inform how we respond to the possibility of their injury, suffering, or death in conflict situations, in part because their identification as military animals indicates that their presence on the battlefield is not neutral.

Rather, they find themselves in such precarious circumstances on our behalf, fighting and dying for a cause that belongs to us, rather than them. That the wars in which these animals fight are not *their* wars reinforces the perspective that military animals have not knowingly chosen to participate, whereas human combatants are expected to have consented to their own involvement.[23] Instead, these creatures submit to the cruelty of war, clothed in innocence that appears to further reinforce their altruism. In other words, military animals become sacrificial, expanding their position beyond the bounds of *zoë*, their deaths deeply imbued with meaning capable of provoking a strong emotional response in both the soldiers who serve with them and the civilians who become aware of their stories. Kim Marra provides a useful example of this practice, specifically regarding animals performing in media that addresses war themes. She notes that the "innocence and generosity of non-human animals caught in combat compel a level of empathy often foreclosed towards other humans who are presumed capable of choice and are often demonized to justify war."[24] Her choice of words here simultaneously indicates both virtue ("innocence and generosity") and victimization (positioning animals against the "humans presumed capable of choice", thus indicating the passive sacrificial role of the animal).

[23] This is clearly based on an American context in which there is presently no draft for military personnel and American civilians do not live in fear of attack at home by invading military forces.
[24] Marra 118

Narratives such as that of Alexander and Bucephalus draw attention to the profound intimacy that develops between soldiers and the animals who live, work, and die alongside them in situations of profound conflict and trauma. Consideration of the affective here is often represented as a turn towards the overly sentimental, and yet, the proliferation of representations of military animals and their relationships with the people with whom they serve would indicate that the emotions provoked by these images are no less real. These representations in both physical and digital memorials, literature, social media posts, film, and even in material goods such as postage stamps, demonstrate the significance of the human-animal relationship in military contexts, as well as the lived consequences of those bonds. Furthermore, as military working dogs serve as conduits for emotion, they provide a space for critique of the military-industrial complex that continues to treat them as mere property.

Relationships on the Front Lines

The human-animal relationship in wartime is perhaps at its most intimate and intense between military animals and their handlers. Alger and Alger describe the modern process of training military working dogs, in which the relationship between the dog and handler is paramount. The bond between them is built through frequent regular interactions based on positive training methods[25] designed to encourage trust. The handler is fully responsible for the dog during training, including feeding and playtime. Consistent with positive reinforcement training methods, the dogs are rewarded when they behave appropriately during a training set, with verbal praise, play with a toy, a food reward, or physical petting.[26] The reward used depends on the individual dog's preferences, which requires the handler to pay close attention to their animal and to think of

[25] According to Alger and Alger, the shift away from aversive training methods and towards positive reinforcement for military animals followed a shift towards these methods in the civilian sector beginning in the 1980s (89).
[26] Alger and Alger 89

the dog as an individual. The dogs learn to see their handlers as trustworthy family members, establishing a powerful bond between them. The training period takes months, providing a significant span of time to establish a strong trusting relationship before the dog and handler are deployed.

Once they are in the field, there is much about the dog-handler relationship that remains the same. The handler continues to feed and care for the dog, integrating training sessions and playtime with shifts of active duty. This routine was described by Marine Corporal Armenta in his interview with Paterniti,[27] referring to his deployment with Zenit at Patrol Base Alcatraz, located in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. The pair had trained together for two years, three months of which had been in Afghanistan. The article describes their lives together, remarking on the work undertaken by Armenta in caring for Zenit, feeding him, taking him out, training, and patrolling. Paterniti describes a training session in August 2011 in which Armenta would bury a toy and would then signal Zenit to find it, practicing for the next day's patrol. Zenit was trained to locate improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which have proven to be among the most effective weapons deployed against American troops in the Afghanistan War.

When they went out to patrol the next day, August 28, Armenta and Zenit were charged with clearing a path for a platoon of troops, as part of a larger operation to secure the Kajaki Dam in Sangin. The wadi outside the town had been filled with hidden IEDs the night before, and it wasn't long before the pair began locating cached explosives, reporting each one to their commanders. Armenta sent Zenit to search the far bank, following behind, watching the dog for signs of an IED, before opting to change direction and head up a rise away from the main path. At that point, Zenit was roughly 20 feet away from Armenta, who only managed a couple of steps

[27] 2014

before activating an IED, which immediately detonated without warning. Zenit was far enough away that he was uninjured, but he quickly arrived at Armenta's side, laying beside him while waiting for a helicopter to transport Armenta to a hospital. Ultimately, Armenta had both legs amputated above the knee, following 12 operations. He experienced extreme nightmares and described waking and calling out for Zenit.

It was around that time that Armenta discovered Zenit had been reassigned to a new handler. He was desperate for the return of the dog, saying "He was like my worn-out shield. Every scratch tells a story. And nothing felt right without him." Armenta began an extensive process of trying to recover Zenit, which was finally successful in June 2012. Armenta described his reunion with Zenit as "the beginning to this new life." In speaking about the dog, he says:

> He's like my quiet partner. He bridges three worlds: the person I was before Afghanistan, the one I was there, and the one I became after. I joke that when he dies, I'll get him stuffed and put him by the bed. But really I can't imagine it. I don't know what I'll do then.[28]

In Armenta's story, the bond between dog and handler is strong and deeply imbued with meaning. Zenit's presence formed a critical aspect of Armenta's recovery, and from Armenta's statements, it is evident that the suggestions that Zenit was merely property and that Armenta would be able to just move on in the event of his death or injury were both overly simplistic.

These bonds are important and underacknowledged by the larger military structures, who continue to treat military animals ambiguously. They provide for protective equipment, including "doggles"—goggles designed to protect the animals' eyes from blowing sand and debris—and cooling vests,[29] as well as veterinary care. In 2006, a veterinary urgent care ward was organized in Baghdad to provide faster assistance to injured military working dogs.[30] This suggests that there

[28] Paterniti
[29] Alger and Alger 94
[30] Ibid. 95

is some recognition of the value of these animals' lives and safety, as the US military demonstrates a willingness to offer funds to support and maintain them. However, despite the work of military animals, in which their labor saves lives often at the cost of their own, the US military has no process to recognize military working dogs through commendations such as medals. Alger and Alger note that there are field commanders who have ignored the rules on this subject and have awarded Bronze Stars and Purple Hearts to some of the dogs for their service, and the larger military establishment has ignored this breach of protocol.[31] The implication, then, is that the people who actually work closely with these animals see them as more than property, which the larger Armed Forces tacitly recognize but are unwilling to formally acknowledge.

In Armenta's case, only the handler was injured. There are a multitude of other similar narratives, in which only the dog or both dog and handler are wounded or killed. These stories similarly serve to reinforce the strength of the bond between human and military animal, and in some cases, the degree of shared suffering is sufficient to gain broader attention. In one such example, the story of US Marine Corporal Megan Leavey and her military working dog Rex garnered sufficient interest to be made into a film in 2017. In doing so, the affective aspects of the dog-handler relationship relocate outside the bounds of the battalion and into the public domain, serving as a conduit for affective engagement between civilians and military personnel.

Megan Leavey (2017) begins in Valley Cottage, NY in 2001, commencing prior to Megan's enlistment with an illustration of her difficulties forming meaningful relationships with people. Megan, played by Kate Mara, is seen sitting aimlessly on a bench waiting for a bus, reflecting on how she has been unable to hold a job, and has instead been living at home with her mother (played by Edie Falco), with whom she continually fights. After a failed attempt at providing entertainment

[31] Ibid. 97

for children's birthday parties, her employer remarks that "Megan, it's just you don't really connect with people very well."[32] It is at that moment that Megan sees two Marines entering a recruiting station, marked by a sign offering the opportunity to "GET AWAY." Megan joins the US Marine Corps as a means of escape. A montage follows of Megan making her way through basic training, suffering through perpetual screaming and a range of physical exercises. She graduates from basic training, appearing to have developed a new level of discipline, although she remains alone as the rest of her classmates celebrate their graduation together. She is subsequently assigned to Camp Pendleton.

Yet, even as a recruit, Megan is intermittently resistant to authority and continues to struggle with discipline. Shortly after arriving at Camp Pendleton, she finds herself assigned to clean the kennels as a result of a night of drunken misbehavior. While doing so, she encounters Rex, a German Shepherd with a particularly difficult temperament and a penchant for biting. When Megan first sees him, he is sitting quietly in his kennel, but as she approaches, he launches forward, barking with teeth bared. Megan observes the handlers working with their dogs in the training yard and asks her commanding officer what it would take to become a handler herself. He explains that she would need to "stop screwing up,"[33] in addition to high exam scores and an expert rifle score. With a clear goal, Megan begins training harder to improve her reputation and achieve scores high enough to enter training as a dog handler. She achieves the appropriate rank and is allowed to begin training, first with a can, before eventually being assigned a dog.

When Rex bites his original handler, the Gunnery Sergeant assigns him to Megan, beginning their process of becoming a cohesive working partnership. The process is not an easy one. During their early work, it appears that both Megan and Rex experience considerable

[32] *Megan Leavey* 1:31
[33] Ibid. 16:03

frustration, as they struggle to communicate with each other. Following a test in which Megan struggles at first to keep Rex's attention on his job and then fails to listen to Rex when he tries to signal, Megan is pulled aside by her instructor, US Marine Sergeant Andrew Dean (played by Tom Felton). He provides some guidance and ultimately Rex is successful in locating the sample explosive. Megan is late in praising the dog. This prompts Sgt. Dean to offer some advice:

> DEAN: Okay, this is a good detection dog. There is nothing wrong with him, so it must be you. What are you doing wrong? Everything you feel goes down leash, okay? Everything. If you're not confident, then he's not confident. I could train the heck out of you, Leavey, but I can't teach you how to bond, okay?[34]

Megan begins to spend even more time with Rex, working on building trust. She practices bandaging his foot, a procedure he clearly dislikes, but she talks to him throughout the process and he allows her to continue, demonstrating a willingness to work with her. The day before they ship out together, Megan brings Rex to her room and explains her anxiety about doing their jobs well together. On the way to their first deployment, Megan sits with Rex at the door of his kennel to comfort him.

Together, they serve in Fallujah in 2005 and Ramadi in 2006, ultimately completing over 100 missions together. In her first month in Fallujah, Megan and Rex are paired with Lance Corporal Matt Morales (played by Ramón Rodriguez) and his dog Chico. On their way to a checkpoint where they will be working for the day, Morales offers Megan some information on where she will be working that day.

> MORALES: Remember, Iraqis, they don't like dogs. It's in their religious teachings and they damn sure don't like ours. There's a bounty on canine handlers and an even bigger bounty on female canine handlers, which means they'll probably want to kill you. Or actually, unless they want to bone you. Or they might want to bone you and then kill you. And if one of them pulls out a cellphone, boom, you're dead.[35]

[34] Ibid. 26:14
[35] Ibid. 39:38

This moment marks a significant moment in the course of the film. For the first 40 minutes, the focus has been on background and watching the bond develop between Megan and Rex. The assumption here is that the average American viewer will understand and identify with their relationship, particularly as Rex transitions from being seen as aggressive and dangerous to playful and compliant. Morales' speech marks the first time Iraqi citizens are identified as the enemy against whom Megan and Rex will be fighting. The mention of their national origin is the first step in driving a wedge between them and the viewer. The second is in the remark that they do not like dogs, situating the Iraqis as emotionally distant from the viewers, who, at this point, have invested in Megan and Rex's relationship and who are assumed to appreciate the dogs. The dog here, through the opportunity he creates for connection and empathy, is operating specifically as a mechanism to distance the viewer from the Iraqi people seen on screen. This work is furthered in the mention of their religion as the culprit for their distaste, reinforcing that Morales and Megan, who represent the US here, do not subscribe to the same faith, given that they not only like their dogs, but actively work with them and rely on them for their safety.

Morales goes a step further in villainizing the Iraqi people, when he genders his commentary, marking Megan not only for potential death but also sexual assault. As the central character of the narrative, Megan occupies the primary position for empathetic connection to the viewer. Morales first suggests that she and Rex are equally hated by the Iraqi citizens, before suggesting that she would be subject for even further degradation than Rex would be. Gender dynamics have been made visible throughout the film, in that Megan is given private quarters upon her arrival at Camp Ramadi,[36] or when a sign outside the shower tent subtly suggests the numerical difference of genders represented within the camp, indicating that "males" have access to the

[36] Ibid. 33.56

showers from 0530-0900hrs and 1730-1100 hrs, while "females" would have access from 0900-0930hrs and 1700-1730hrs.[37] Men, then, are granted access to this resource for nine hours per day, while women would have access for only one hour. Megan is ogled by a group of male soldiers[38] and her commander explains that the last female handler "got her panties in a pretzel 'cause we don't allow girls on missions, just checkpoints,"[39] asking if this would similarly be a problem for Megan. However, her interactions with US male soldiers fails to articulate the level of sexual violence of which Morales suggests the Iraqis are capable.[40] The indication that Megan is at risk of multiple forms of violence, in part due to her relationship with Rex, serves to strengthen the viewer's empathetic bond with her, while simultaneously further distancing the Iraqi people.

Megan and Rex subsequently accrue a significant number of successes, both at checkpoints and on missions. While walking towards a stopped car on a reconnaissance mission, the pair trigger a buried IED and both are thrown through the air. Megan quickly regains consciousness and immediately searches for Rex, finding him lying on his side nearby, motionless and bleeding from the nose. We see them shortly thereafter, quietly walking back to their vehicles. The soldiers find evidence that the IED was buried too deeply for a pressure trigger and instead had been detonated remotely by insurgents hiding in some nearby structures. Despite their injuries, Megan and Rex go back to work, clearing the field between the vehicles and the structures. As they clear a former school with several other soldiers, the team are fired upon again, with Rex coming to the aid of another soldier, pulling him out of harm's way. This scene represents the first canine injuries seen in the film and the first significant action sequence, where the risk of injury becomes actualized

[37] Ibid. 35:54
[38] Ibid. 35:59
[39] Ibid. 37.37
[40] Morales' comment seems ironic in the face of data that indicates the high numbers of sexual assault experienced by female soldiers deployed overseas, perpetrated by their fellow soldiers and commanders. It would seem that Megan was at much higher risk of assault within the walls of Camp Ramadi than outside among the Iraqi people.

and visible. Megan's injuries are sufficiently severe that she is evacuated by helicopter, forced to leave Rex behind in the care of Morales. As the helicopter lifts off, Rex is visibly distressed at being separated from Megan.

While hospitalized with ruptured eardrums, Megan tearfully asks for Rex and is told that she will be reunited with him when she returns to Camp Pendleton after three weeks of leave. During her stay at home, Megan repeatedly calls, checking for updates on when Rex will be returned to the US, but fails to obtain any information. Upon her return to Camp Pendleton, Megan immediately heads to the kennels to collect Rex, who arrives immediately after her, with his leg bandaged. He runs towards her, clearly visibly happy to have been reunited. He receives veterinary care and they return to training. Their brief separation functions as a primer, a smaller version of the separation to come, setting up the viewer for a stronger response later in the film.

Shortly thereafter, we see Megan and Rex at a memorial service for their old instructor, Andrew Dean, reinforcing the risk of death a return to duty entails. Dean's dog Bruno survived the suicide bomb, and the viewer hears that "they found Bruno lying on top of [Dean]."[41] As the sun sets, a new handler attempts to work with Bruno while Megan and Rex watch together. Her commanding officer US Marine Gunnery Sergeant Martin (played by Common) tells Megan that "he's looking for him. He'll never stop. Sometimes we don't realize as much as they're our family, we're theirs too."[42] The sense of loss is palpable as Megan tries to encourage Rex to go back to work. He remains reticent, however, offering a subtle suggestion that dogs are as susceptible to battle-induced trauma as their human counterparts.

Megan opts not to reenlist and begins the process of trying to adopt Rex, but Rex is returned to service with a new handler. He is designated as unadoptable, as he is deemed too aggressive for

[41] Ibid. 1:17:27
[42] Ibid. 1:17: 56

a transition to civilian life. What is noteworthy here is that the fracture of Megan and Rex's bond does not occur as a result of enemy violence, per se, but rather due to domestic bureaucracy. Where the viewer was perhaps already steadying themselves for the possibility of death within the field of battle, instead, they find that the real enemy of Megan and Rex's relationship is at home, in a place of ostensible safety. The rupture lacks the cathartic energy of an action sequence, instead slipping into a morose ennui. Megan has the opportunity to see Rex one more time before he deploys, in a moment of quiet, before she whispers that she is sorry and drives away.

Following her return to New York, Megan lapses into a deep depression. Her mother attempts to ease her pain by bringing her a new puppy, explaining that "you can't let your whole life fall apart over some dog."[43] This prompts a shift in Megan's housing, as she moves in with her father. She continues to slide into apathy, responding to the trauma of her own experience overseas as well as her separation from her dog. She attempts to gain information on Rex but to no avail. One year later, she is in group therapy and suggests that she finds human interaction impossible. Megan mentions that Rex is the focus of her dreams. The therapist asks what Megan would say to Rex, if he were there, and Megan cries in silence for a moment before gathering herself and replying that "I'd probably, um…I'd thank him for trying to teach me what love is."[44] After reflecting on this realization, Megan speaks with her father, who acknowledges her profound loss and encourages her to determine how to make her life worth living again. Megan explains that Rex would serve that purpose, and her father makes a compelling argument that Megan must do whatever it takes, she must fight to reclaim Rex. He says, "Baby, all you've got to do is fight. And you know how to fight. You're a freakin' Marine."[45]

[43] Ibid. 1:28:51
[44] Ibid. 1:33:57
[45] Ibid. 1:36:51

Having been given a purpose, Megan finds new energy, embarking on a lengthy process to make her way through military bureaucracy in order to adopt Rex. She makes a multitude of phone calls and discovers that Rex is finally being retired. Megan hopes to adopt him but is told that he is still listed as unadoptable. Furthermore, she discovers that Rex is sick and she will need to hurry if she has any hope of adopting him before it is too late. It requires a significant public campaign, including petition campaigns, media appearances, and the intervention of Senator Chuck Schumer to reunite the pair. Megan attends Rex's retirement ceremony, where she finally learns that she will be able to adopt him. As the retiring dogs make their way out onto the field, one of whom limps along having lost a leg, Megan spots Rex and calls his name. His handler is unable to restrain him, relinquishing his hold on the leash as Rex sprints, tail wagging in large circles, towards Megan, her eyes filled with tears. When he reaches her, she embraces him, and we see them passing through the kennel gates together as the sun sets. They appear together at Yankee Stadium in honor of Veterans' Appreciation Day, greeted by thousands of cheering fans and several Marines appearing on the video screen from Camp Leatherneck, including Morales. Following this reinforcement of Megan and Rex's positioning as the embodiment of American perseverance and courage, there is a title screen, informing the viewer that Rex remained with Megan until he died in December of 2012. In the final moments of the film, just before the credits roll, there is video footage of the real Rex in his retirement with the real Megan.

The focus of the film lies in the bond that develops between Megan and Rex, suggesting that Megan's ability to form relationships with others develops because of her love for Rex. Their intimate bond is made visible in the ways in which both parties are changed through interaction with each other. The viewer can clearly perceive the extent to which their communication becomes seamless and easy, despite the fact that much of that communication occurs in silence. While

Megan does speak verbally to Rex, one must wonder about the extent to which that was done for the benefit of the viewer, who does not have access to physical contact through skin and fur or transmitted "down leash," or smells, or the subtle gestures that make up the non-verbal communication so readily legible to our non-human companions. If, as Benedict Anderson suggests, shared language is a key component of nation-building, then through the course of the film, the viewer observes Megan and Rex developing into a nation of two.

This intimate connection, in turn, makes her distress at his absence all the more palpable to the audience. Megan's struggle indicates the degree to which her relationship to an animal who is considered military property exacerbates her experience of post-traumatic stress upon her return from the battlefield. Her relationship to Rex forms the key inroad through which the viewer develops an empathetic connection to Megan. Effectively, Rex engages the spectator's capacity to bond, to build relationships, in much the same way that he did for Megan.

The story of Megan Leavey and Rex provides insight into the relationship between handler and dog, as well as offering evidence of the tension inherent in the positioning of military animals as quasi-property. The expectation is that the handler and dog will bond; indeed, it is critical to their successful work together, but there remain limited avenues available for keeping those relationships intact when it is time for one or both parties to be discharged.

Nevertheless, despite the glacial pace of the military in addressing military working dogs as soldiers and compatriots during their lifetimes, there has been and continues to be a willingness to acknowledge their service after death, readily seen in the construction and maintenance of war memorials. In her analysis of memorials to military animals, Hilda Kean[46] focuses on statues in a range of locations. These include a pet cemetery in Hartsdale, New York, a large sculptural mixed-

[46] 2017

media work in London's Park Lane, several water troughs in Surrey, England and Port Elizabeth, South Africa, and several statues in Australia. In examining these monuments, Kean draws attention to several features. Her preliminary argument suggests that the language associated with these memorials (and with memorials, in general) situates the labor of military animals as something in the past, with Kean stating that "the figures on the Park Lane memorial do not bring to mind recent animal involvement…but suggest that this is part of a former practice that no longer continues."[47] It is perhaps this situating of military animal labor as historical that contributes to Kean's more central focus. The works Kean considers are physical monuments and a significant aspect of Kean's analysis considers the placement of these memorials. By and large, they are found in locations with limited foot traffic, in spaces not traditionally associated with other war memorials. Describing the "Animals in War" memorial in Park Lane, Kean notes that "[i]t is in a very 'public' place and therefore able to be seen but not in a location that encourages either looking or remembering."[48]

This site of tension – that the memorials exist in public spaces but ones that lend themselves to being disregarded – is central to Kean's intervention but also raises a useful question. How can spectator engagement be measured in these cases? Examples are offered of protests and enactments of remembrance, in which people gather at the memorial and occasionally leave tributes such as flowers. Regarding the statue of "Simpson and his Donkey" in Canberra, Australia, Kean describes an actual physical alteration to the work, because the "representation has been treated affectionately by children who have stroked his nose so extensively that it has been worn smooth."[49] In a more quotidian sense, though, the impact of the physical memorials Kean describes

[47] Kean 240-241
[48] Ibid. 243
[49] Ibid. 253

is somewhat difficult to quantify or characterize. How many children does it take to smooth the nose of a bronze donkey? Once smooth, is it possible to determine whether children continue(d) to pet the donkey's nose? If the average passerby on an average day pauses to consider a physical memorial, to what extent can we suppose that passerby's response?

Kean's work examines only a handful of examples, of which there are many more. However, in recent years, memorials to military animals have cropped up in a different kind of public location – social media. The use of digital media offers a site of analysis that builds upon the work done by Kean. By and large, social media sites like Facebook are accessible from anywhere (as mobile phone use for browsing has increased, access to social media is now determined only by whether or not one has a cell phone and, if so, whether or not that phone has a signal). Instead of physical pathways like sidewalks through parks or roadside roundabouts, social media is curated by algorithms that consider what the user is most likely to respond to, based on prior behavior. Users are exposed to images and videos that have been posted or "liked" by friends or that are suggested by Facebook (often because the poster has paid for the post to be "boosted"). While this curation indicates that users are unlikely to inadvertently stumble on a memorial image (although this is still possible), social media offers opportunities for different forms of viewer engagement with those memorials through the capacity to like, comment, and share. Each of these engagements provides a way for users to leave a trace of their presence as a spectator of the post, making it possible to actively consider the affective ways in which animal memorials impact viewers.

The mechanisms of Facebook allow one to consider a significant range of engagements from members of the public. Having located the post, users are given multiple options for interaction that vary from the brief and largely impersonal to the more time-consuming and

thorough. Perhaps the simplest form of interaction Facebook offers is the ability to "like" or otherwise respond to a post through a simple click. In recent years, Facebook has provided a series of emojis to choose from, providing users with the ability to indicate their response to the media being seen. These include six different options: "like," the original option signified by a thumbs-up; "love," signified by a heart; "haha," a laughing face; "wow," a face with an open mouth; "sad," a crying face; and "angry," an orange face that shakes its head. In addition to these six quick options, users also have the option of making a comment, which can take the form of text or the inclusion of an image (often a meme). Writing a comment allows for a more personalized response to a post but also requires marginally more time. Finally, the third possibility entails the user sharing the original post, which places the post on the user's timeline and increases the possibility that friends of the user will see it. The user can also add their own commentary on the post during a share. This option is not necessarily more time-consuming than a comment but because the post will subsequently appear on the user's timeline, suggests that the user is taking somewhat more ownership of the original post. It is worth noting here that, while these indicators of user response are widely accessible to the casual user (it is possible to see how many click-responses, comments, or shares a post has received), Facebook offers far more metrics to the moderators of pages and their own internal data includes considerably more information, including the amount of time users spend looking at a given post, and engagements sorted by user gender, age, and geographic location. This data has the potential to offer a considerable amount of insight into who responds to a given post but provides less clarity on the nature of those responses. Instead, consideration of qualitative responses in the form of comments opens the possibility of a greater understanding of viewer response.

On March 27, 2017, the Facebook page "Military Working Dogs" posted an image with a lengthy caption that begins "Rest easy, Hopski". The image depicts a geriatric German Shepherd atop a bed of fleece and crocheted blankets, lying beneath a folded American flag. He is accompanied by a camouflage collar imprinted with "U.S. Navy," a black rubber Kong toy, and a second collar of the type typically used on military working dogs during their working years. A badge leans against this second collar. In the background, two pairs of camouflage-wearing human legs can be seen, making it clear that Hopski was not alone. Blue, patterned disposable bandage is wrapped around his foreleg, presumably the site of an IV catheter used to deliver medication, fluids, and possibly pentobarbital, the barbiturate used for veterinary euthanasia. It is unclear whether the animal in the image is already deceased or simply too sick or tired to respond to the items scattered around him. The photo has an internal caption that reads "America lost a Hero. MWD HOPSKI K008 end of watch 1058 am Mar272017 (sic)," marking the image as a memorial to a former military working dog.



Figure 3.1: Facebook image of MWD Hopski, March 27, 2017 "Military Working Dogs" Facebook page.

The photo's accompanying caption provides more detail: Hopski had served as an explosive-detection dog with the US Navy and had been deployed in Afghanistan. He had been retired for three years, spending the first two with his handler Justin. Hopski was too old and infirm to accompany Justin when he was ordered to move, and so Hopski spent his last year with a new human companion, Scyler. The caption indicates that Hopski ultimately succumbed to cancer.

The original post was marked as "public" in its security settings, making it possible for anyone who stumbled upon it to interact with the post. Hopski's image accrued 15,397 click-responses, 1,775 comments, and the post was shared 14,542 times. The range of click-responses indicates that most people responded to the photo in ways that might be easily anticipated, with "sad" being the most common (8,337), followed by "like" (5,535), and "love" (1,482). The remaining three options were selected with much lower frequency: 17 "angry," 15 "wow," and 10 "haha." The nature of this type of interaction makes it difficult, if not impossible, to determine why a user might have selected these less-obvious reactions (my own sense of humor does not accommodate finding this particular post funny, for example). It is possible that some of these responses occurred by accident, as the response feature, particularly in Facebook's mobile app, can be occasionally less responsive than might be preferred, and this can result in an inadvertent "haha" when "love" was intended (the emojis are next to each other in the interface). In any case, it would seem that the 42 users who selected less obvious click-responses still had a sufficient response to the post to warrant responding at all.

The quantifiable nature of this data suggests considerable opportunity for metric analysis. The page on which the original post is found would have access to information regarding the gender, age, and location of those who responded, as well as the number of Facebook users who saw the post and opted to "hide" it, removing it permanently from their newsfeeds. However, this

data is restricted from the general public and its inaccessibility makes it beyond the scope of the present analysis. This suggests that a move beyond the quantifiable and towards the qualitative is warranted. Thus, we turn to the comments on the original post.

There are several patterns that immediately emerge. Many commenters expressed sympathy with Hopski's owners/handlers and suggested that Hopski would meet their own deceased pets in Heaven (or after crossing the Rainbow Bridge). Many commenters expressed gratitude for Hospki's service and extended that service to all returned veterans. The majority of these comments were left as one-offs, with no replies from other users. However, several comment threads evoked a longer discussion. One lengthy thread debated whether or not military working dogs were exposed to carcinogens at higher rates than dogs kept as pets. A second thread, and perhaps the more noteworthy of the two, began when user Erich S. commented "I know its (sic) not popular. I know I'm gonna get crap…but the U.S. Flag is not supposed to be used as a blanket. We need to be consistent. Disrespect is disrespect." Erich's comment provoked both outrage and gentle attempts to convince Erich that covering Hopski in a flag was no different than the draping of a soldier or police officer's coffin and that, as Hopski had also served, he was as entitled to that honor as any other soldier.

Hopski's photo and the responses to it offer several useful counterpoints to Kean's analysis of physical memorials. Kean suggests that "…even when animals are included within imperial memorials of war these tend to be ignored as images of 'real' animals even when individual rather than generic animals are portrayed."[50] This is perhaps due to the shift in media, the transition from fur and flesh to bronze or stone. With Hopski's photo, the actual animal is visualized, serving as a reminder of an actual formerly living creature. The effectiveness of this strategy is seen in part by

[50] Kean 238

the extent to which commenters made connections to the animals either presently or formerly in their own lives. This "personalization" allows for an empathetic connection to Hopski that is perhaps less likely to occur when met with a sculpture, rather than a photographic image.

At the same time that Hopski's canine-ness is made visible and acknowledged by the users, much of the rhetoric applied to him situates him on some form of equal footing. This is perhaps best seen in the comment thread regarding the use of the flag to drape his body, indicating a similarity with one of Kean's critiques, namely that that while "memorialization acknowledges animal presence, an effect of this particular type of anthropomorphism is to detract from questioning the role of humans in bringing animals into war."[51] The suggestion here, then, is that Hopski has become a diffractive site, in Barad's usage. Like Rex in *Megan Leavey*, his image exists in a state of "doing," in which he actively reminds the viewer that he is not just a dog, but one that has served in a military capacity. At the same time, there is a blurring of the human/non-human animal boundary, exhibited in the demand for something at least resembling equal honors after death.

Hopski's ability to create connections to the users and their own experiences of loss through the death of their pets challenges the distancing that Kean describes. And yet, while it is clear that the users empathize with Hopski's handlers and voice the superimposition of their own pets onto his body, there is no particular indication in the comments that this experience inspires the users to consider the presence of animals in war more deeply. Hopski's first handler, David Ramos, was tagged in a comment and subsequently replied, saying "I'm heart broken [sic] to see this. I find myself thinking about Hopski all the time. Thank you for helping me through Iraq Hopski. You will never be forgotton [sic]. Sleep well. Love and miss you."

[51] Ibid. 241

Ramos, at least, is able to articulate the importance of Hopski's companionship, particularly in a stressful situation; Ramos makes it clear that they served together in Iraq. The rest of the comments, however, acknowledge Hopski's status as a veteran but never seem to actively place him or imagine him in a combat zone. The horrors of war remain distant and undescribed, similar to the kind of general nationalist commentary often seen attached to images of human veterans. As a result, there was a missed opportunity in Hopski's post to inspire a critique of the military-industrial complex that endangered both him and his handler. However, the empathetic bond between viewers and depictions of military working dogs is still laden with the possibility of developing a space of critical analysis, using the fragile and sacrificial perception of the animals as an opportunity.

Such an opportunity arises in a surprising place—the 2015 film, *Max.* In the film, the dog-handler relationship is severed early, when the eponymous dog's handler Kyle Wincott (played by Robbie Amell) is shot and killed, and Max, a Belgian Malinois, is injured by an explosive. While this scenario has a certain ring of truth to it, the ease with which Max is adopted out to Kyle's family with no need to wade through years of bureaucracy lacks the verisimilitude of *Megan Leavey*. Instead, Max is placed in the care of Kyle's younger brother Justin (played by Josh Wiggins), who is initially resistant to being charged with him. Gradually, though, and not unlike Megan and Rex's relationship, Justin comes to love Max and they work together to fight off a weapons-dealing drug cartel and corrupt animal control officers, in an additional departure from any semblance of reality.

I should say at the outset that the film is not what might generally be considered good. It currently has a 38% critics rating on Rotten Tomatoes,[52] although the Audience Score is

[52] https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/max_2016

significantly and surprisingly higher, at 70%. Additionally, *Max* is not obviously figured as a critique of the military-industrial complex. On its face, the film is presented as a family film about a boy and his dog (the weapons, drug-running, and surprising and unnecessary levels of violence notwithstanding) and appears to be marketed to an audience that is sympathetic to the American military apparatus. However, what is most noteworthy in *Max* is the degree to which the film relies on the body of the dog as a conduit to explore post-traumatic stress and the challenges of reintegration for veterans.

Like *Megan Leavey*, *Max* prioritizes depiction of the relationship between handler and dog. Early in the film, as family and friends are assembled for Kyle's funeral, two Marines enter with Max, visibly straining on his leash and audibly crying. As they approach Kyle's flag-covered casket, they release Max, who runs forward, leaping up to place his front paws on the coffin. His whines are louder than the choir heard softly singing throughout the scene. The image switches back to Kyle's family, where Kyle's mother Pamela (played by Lauren Graham) begins to weep. The suggestion is one of shared grief and the recognition by Pamela that Max, too, is overcome with sadness at Kyle's death. While this moment goes undiscussed in *Max*, there is a resonance with the commentary on Bruno's distress and continued seeking for Andrew Dean in *Megan Leavey*; instead of verbalizing the family bond, *Max* relies instead on the implication that there is parity in the grief experienced by Max and Kyle's family. As the scene ends, Max lays down by Kyle's coffin, enacting a poignant depiction of mourning. If this image seems familiar, it should. A recent and readily seen version appeared following the death of Former President George H.W. Bush, when his service dog Sully was photographed laying by Bush's flag-draped coffin in the Capitol Rotunda. Various versions of the photo exist and were carried by numerous news outlets, similarly deploying the dog as a vessel of loyalty, companionship, love, and grief.

As the film proceeds, Max fails to function successfully as a typical companion animal. He is difficult to manage, unpredictably aggressive, and clearly out of sorts in a civilian environment. There is a repeated suggestion that he is too violent to be allowed to continue to live in a civilian home, with euthanasia as the only real alternative. There is the implication that placing a muzzle on Max and putting him in a travel crate to take him back to Lackland Air Force Base following the funeral results in bodily injury to the Marines working with him. He takes a toy roughly from Justin when the Wincotts go to the kennels to collect him. When he arrives at the Wincott home, Kyle's father Ray (played by Thomas Haden Church) places a spike in the family's lawn, with the intention of tying Max to keep him confined. Pamela asks if this is really necessary, to which Ray replies "He's too unstable to stay in the house with us and I can't have him running around loose out here."[53] In his first night at home, Max howls and barks relentlessly until Justin comes outside to sit with him. As a result, Ray installs a crate in the yard, hoping that this will help prevent Max from disturbing the neighbors all night.

The space of commentary regarding veterans and the military in this film is most clearly seen in an episode in which Max's trauma overwhelms him. In one particularly noteworthy scene, there is an evening 4th of July fireworks display. While watching the fireworks being shot from their point of origin, Justin seems to perceive that there is a similarity in sound and visual effect to artillery fire.[54] He seems to anticipate that this may be distressing to Max and takes off running. As he approaches his house, he can hear Max barking with the high-pitched tone that signals fear and distress. Even Justin's immediate presence fails to settle Max, as he continues to pace inside his crate, seeking some way to escape the sound of explosions. Justin opens the door, offering that Max could finally come inside the house for shelter, but Max is too afraid and cowers against the

[53] *Max* 18:27
[54] Ibid. 43:12

metal bars. Justin tries again to urge him into the house, leaving the crate door ajar while opening the kitchen door and calling to Max, but to no avail. It is clear that Justin senses the urgency of Max's panic, but he does not become frustrated at his failure to ease Max's fear. Instead, Justin makes one more try, climbing into the crate with Max. Meeting the dog in the emotional space he inhabits, Justin is able to comfort the animal, who places his head in Justin's lap and is quietly able to rest as Justin strokes his head.

This moment of intimacy between a boy and his dog manages to articulate several messages simultaneously. At its most simple, there is an opportunity for empathetic engagement by the viewer as they observe the growing relationship between Justin and Max. When Justin finally manages to work through the scene's conflict, the viewer is also comforted. That this interaction takes place on the 4th of July situates the events in the context of a holiday often celebrated through family events such as barbecues and picnics, while simultaneously providing an opportunity to perform American national belonging. As the viewership for the film is readily anticipated as American, the fact that these events take place in a holiday the viewers can relate to further supports relationship-building between spectator and characters.

At the same time, Max's distress allows him to act as a surrogate for the experience of returning US military veterans more broadly by relying on the collective memories of the viewers. Max returns to the United States with little attention to or acknowledgement of his grief and psychological trauma by the military establishment. He is assessed briefly at Lackland Air Force Base upon his return to the US, but his stay there appears to have been of a relatively short duration. Instead, he is sent home to a family that is largely unprepared to address his needs, instead expecting a rapid transition to behavior appropriate for a civilian pet. Ray, an Iraq War veteran himself, seems incapable of empathizing effectively with Max, despite some awareness of what

the animal may have experienced overseas. Max's behavioral outbursts are met with fear, resulting in his isolation from his family. His distress during 4th of July celebrations signals both battle-related trauma and an inability to accurately and appropriately perform elements of American national identity, despite his return home.

The parallels with the challenges human military reintegration are striking. As of 2017, studies suggest that post-traumatic stress disorder is diagnosed in approximately 27% of returning military veterans, while 87% experience chronic pain.[55] The experiences and physical injuries that occur in modern warfare result in a range of consequences including but not limited to physical, psychological, and cognitive impairment. These may include difficulties with interpersonal relationships, social participation, and sleep.[56] Families are often unprepared for the veterans' return, resulting in communication problems and the need to reconsider assumed family roles.[57] Nevertheless, veteran reintegration is considered a fluid process, impacted significantly by a wide web of family and community interactions.[58]

Max's experience on the 4th of July makes some of the challenges associated with the reintegration of veterans visible. However, because Max is a dog, his difficulties in transitioning into society are kept at a Brechtian distance, making it possible for the viewer to think through his experience while empathizing with him. As Joseph Roach reminds us, "[b]ecause collective memory works selectively, imaginatively, and often perversely, surrogation rarely if ever succeeds."[59] As a dog, it is reasonable to assume that Max is afraid of the fireworks simply because they produce loud sounds and bright flashes of light and he does not know what they are. In fact,

[55] Elnitsky et al. 114
[56] Ibid. 117
[57] Ibid. 118
[58] Ibid. 114
[59] Roach 2

many dogs evidence fears of thunder and lightning and fireworks displays are notorious as times when pets may escape from their owners and run away out of terror. However, at the same time Max is legible as a dog to the spectator, it is impossible to see him outside of his identity as a military animal, and this is clearly the intention in the scene, indicated by the visual impact of the fireworks being launched as Justin watches. The bursts of light bring to mind artillery fire through their angle and fiery intensity, with the booming sound further reinforcing the suggestion. As a result, in the scene, Max is and is not both a dog and a veteran, and like human veterans, there is a struggle to perform appropriately following the return home. Additionally, as a dog, Max is considered less responsible for his plight than a human veteran might be, as the viewer considers the wartime conflict as one not of Max's own making. This distancing from the expectation of culpability often levied upon human veterans creates a space for productive reflection on the ways in which some degree of suffering is sometimes considered an appropriate consequence for behavior, particularly in wars that are unpopular at home. Max thus creates a diffractive opportunity, demonstrating a species-based distinction between viewer and veteran, while simultaneously overlapping with a number of experiences and challenges shared by human veterans. As a result, Max operates as a conduit for viewer empathy towards veterans in general.

Conclusion

Military working dogs offer a productive space, in which their bodies and representations serve as "doings." They bear many of the same characteristics of police dogs—protective equipment, a uniformed handler, behaviors such as detection, chasing, and restraint—but rather than arriving on the scene to control the behavior of domestic citizens, their labor is directed outwards onto perceived enemies within the context of actions in the pursuit of specific political goals. As a result, instead of being legible as the predatory creatures described in Chapter 2, these

dogs simultaneously hold the affective residue of companion animals. When spectators see representations of military working dogs and their handlers, they are able to superimpose their own image, accompanied by a pet who loves them and with whom they have bonded. In the military working dog, the spectator sees a loyal, brave, loving family member willing to fight and die on their behalf. Because the stakes are so high in war, the emotional field surrounding these animals are charged with greater meaning, producing a powerful response to images of these dogs and their handlers. The effect occurs whether the animals are pictured working abroad or having returned home, and is just as profound for the handlers themselves in the event of a separation from their dogs. But, because of the positioning of military animals as quasi-property, their placement in hazardous situations provokes greater concern and emotional response than that offered to humans in similar scenarios. The importance of military animals is acknowledged in the construction of memorials, demonstrating wide recognition of their service, even as individual animals remain excluded from decoration as veterans. The ambiguity of their position contributes to the deep affect response seen in consumers of media related to narratives of military working dogs and their heroism in the field, marking a striking contradistinction to similar media addressing the work of police dogs.

Chapter 4

Beasts and Borders: Reflections on Animal Transgression

As a former New Englander and then New Yorker, it always feels like a gift to sit outside in the sun in Southern California during what we in the Northeast would consider winter months. There, grey skies, temperatures ranging from the high 40s to the low teens, and a bone-chilling dampness predominate from roughly October through mid-to-late April. On this particular day in Northern San Diego County, the sun was shining, and the temperature was in the low 70s. I had taken a break from writing to get up and go outdoors with my two dogs. I sat in a chair on the deck outside my living room, listening to the birds who were gleefully singing in a nearby oak tree. An Anna's hummingbird (*Calypte anna*) came by to drink at the small waterfall adjacent to where I was sitting but was quickly chased off by a Rufous hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*), one of the smallest but the most pugnacious of all hummingbirds. A California scrub jay (*Aphelocoma californica*) flew over from the ravine adjacent to my property to sample the birdseed in my recently refilled feeder.

The dogs continued about their business, sniffing around and looking for buried or misplaced toys. Kira, our German Shepherd, paused by one of our citrus trees and began furiously digging. I walked over to see what she had discovered and found that she'd managed to disrupt the first few inches of a gopher den, whose inhabitant- a Botta's pocket gopher (*Thomomys bottae*) had no doubt been preparing for an assault to the roots of that nearby tree. Gophers and Beechey ground squirrels (*Otospermophilus beecheyi*) had already laid waste to a wide variety of plants I'd tried to grow. Granted, I'm not much of a gardener to begin with, but things had been going fine until the gophers and ground squirrels had discovered my cherry tomatoes, zucchini, and watermelon (that one was particularly sad- the plant had only produced one melon and I had been

waiting for weeks for it to mature, only to come out in the morning to find teeth-marks surrounding a huge hole into the middle of what looked like a glorious fruit). Even the milkweed plants I'd planted to coax Monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) to my yard during their breeding season had been destroyed, their stems ripped from the ground and roots devoured in a single night. I hoped that Kira's intervention might persuade the rodents to leave what was left of my garden alone and to relocate somewhere else.

Just then, a car roared down the road past my house at a surprising rate of speed, given that the street is residential, quite winding and full of blind turns, and ultimately dead-ends at a gate marking the start of a footpath down to the Santa Margarita River. As I watched the driver zoom by, I reflected on how pleased I was that we had erected a fence around our backyard to keep our dogs safely out of the street. At roughly 6' tall and made of wood planks with no space left between them, the fence was a sufficient barrier to contain our pets, neither of whom had demonstrated any particular propensity for escape. The fence is also of the right material to make it a formidable barrier to the coyotes (*Canis latrans*) who roam our neighborhood. Often vilified in social media for predating small pets such as cats and chihuahuas, our local coyotes have also been rumored to hunt in packs, enabling them to take down dogs up to 80lbs. Our choice, then, to demarcate our property with a significant fence line was as much about keeping my dogs in as it was about keeping the coyotes out.

And yet, despite my attempts at home security, the gophers and ground squirrels had demonstrated their ability to invade my yard anyway. They were not alone in this endeavor. We'd previously seen adult Western rattlesnakes (*Crotalus oreganus*) slowly make their way through the fenced area on their way to an adjacent ravine (often after what must have been quite a meal, the bulge of their recent repast creating a marked lump in their middles). While the songbirds and

hummingbirds had entered the yard at my clear invitation, other uninvited guests also occasionally made appearances. Racoons (*Procyon lotor*), a gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*), and Merriam's kangaroo rats (*Dipodomys merriami*) had made their way across my deck and down into the yard at one time or another.

These failures of containment, or rather, my inability to control who or what can cross the border I had erected to demarcate my property, create a space of their own – one of reflection. They offer a worthy opportunity to consider whose space this really is or the degree to which "ownership" makes any kind of sense in this context. It is a reminder that the conceptions of space and property that my fence reflects are Western constructs with a lengthy history deeply tied to settler-colonial ideals. Inherent in these ideals is the need to mark a clear distinction between contained spaces that represent a world that is "civilized" and that which is beyond the marked boundaries, places that are outside the domain of control and that are inhabited by beings that are "wild." It is easy to take this separation of spheres at face value, but in those moments when the sovereign wild makes appearances within the zone of control without any seeming interest in permission, the porousness of the boundaries becomes particularly visible.

Furthermore, it is in these moments of unintended intimacies with wildlife that the extent to which constructs of land are performative becomes clear. Our understandings of space are predicated on stagings, on visual markers that make the location legible in one way or another, and once those scenes are built, wild animals take on roles that contribute to the performance. But just as when actors leave the traditional bounds of the stage, when wildlife arrives in unintended or inconvenient spaces, they encourage a distancing that creates a space of reflection on the nature of the space itself.

In the West, animals are typically sorted into groups based loosely on their relationships to humanity and delineated by where these species are typically found, where we expect them to be. These are the "animal geographies" described by Philo and Wilbert, who indicate the following categories:

> Thus, zones of human settlement ('the city') are envisaged as the province of pets or 'companion animals' (such as cats and dogs), zones of agricultural activity ('the countryside') are envisaged as the province of livestock animals (such as sheep and cows), and zones of unoccupied lands beyond the margins of settlement and agriculture ('the wilderness') are envisaged as the province of wild animals (such as wolves and lions).[1]

In many ways, there is a definitional reciprocity that occurs between these species and the geographies they inhabit. The presence of sheep (*Ovis ares*) or cows (*Bos taurus*) contributes considerably to the extent to which a particular plot of land becomes recognizable as "countryside" or "pastoral," at least as much finding these animals in green rolling fields and fenced pastures marks these species as livestock.

The presence of particular species of animal that do not lend themselves to domestication is so central to how wilderness is defined that they appear in the etymology of the term. Historian Roderick Nash describes the origin of the term from Old English, in which the term "wild-dēor" connoted "a creature not under man's control,"[2] appearing in *Beowulf* as a reference to fear-inducing forest monsters. The word evolved to refer not to the animals themselves but to the spaces they inhabit, indicating that "wilderness means the quality of being the place of wild beasts…the province, the habitat of wild creatures just as civilization is man's habitat."[3] Nash speculates on

[1] Philo and Wilbert 10-11
[2] Nash 34
[3] Ibid. 35

the effect the removal of the animals from the wilderness might have, suggesting that "although everything else remains visibly the same, the intensity of the sense of wilderness is diminished."[4]

Despite these ties between particular species and these zones of inhabitance, some animals still may occasionally find themselves in different spaces, although breed may contribute significantly to the degree that this is read as acceptable or expected. Finding a border collie in the countryside is generally legible as an appropriate placement, given the animal's likely vocation, whereas a pug would seem humorously lost. Similar breaches occur, such as pigs (*Sus scrofa*) being kept as house pets, but these are more often than not read as novelties or attempts at comedy. In these cases, the allowance for a particular animal to appear in a different location is related to the utility of the animal in that circumstance and the preference of the human who placed them there. There are also examples of wild animals finding themselves within domestic spheres (the Netflix series *Tiger King* and the unfortunate case of Travis the chimpanzee[5] (*Pan troglodytes*) comes to mind), although more often than not, these situations result in suffering and tragedy for the humans and animals involved. As species that have not evolved to exist in clear cohabitation with humans, animals such as coyotes and tigers often struggle with meeting domestic expectations, which can lead to injury or death. Like house-pigs and farm dogs, though, these geographic transitions are marked by human intentionality, in which the animals are situated in unconventional locations by humans for a variety of purposes, ranging from economic gain to entertainment.

There are also examples of animals leaving the zones in which we expect to find them. In some cases, this is of their own volition, while in others, they may be placed by humans in unusual

[4] Ibid. 35

[5] Travis was kept as a pet in North Stamford, CT. In 2009, he attacked his owner's friend and was subsequently shot and killed by a police officer who arrived on the scene to render assistance.

surroundings but demonstrate the capacity to adapt and flourish. The ponies (*Equus caballus*) that inhabit Atlantic coast barrier islands along the US East Coast may have found their way there from the holds of wrecked ships hundreds of years ago, or they may have been situated there by settlers in an attempt to avoid mainland taxes levied on livestock.[6] Either way, they have since transitioned from livestock to feral/wild, still interacting with humans from time to time, but mostly living a sovereign existence. Cats (*Felis catus*) and dogs (*Canis familiaris*) have also been known to run away from home, instead adapting to life on their own terms in cities, in borderlands, or further afield[7]. Additionally, the creatures we label as "wild animals" do not always restrict themselves to the lands humans have designated as wilderness. Instead, they demonstrate their own sovereign relations to places, working adjacent to us, with us, or sometimes against us – these are Philo and Wilbert's "beastly places." Coyotes make their way into yards in the suburbs and city parks, and bears have been known to dumpster-dive in urban areas, while cougars (*Puma concolor*) and foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*) raid chicken coops and abscond with newly born calves in farm country. These appearances may take place more out of necessity than desire, as human encroachment continues to reduce the habitats of many of these species. Nevertheless, the animals' presence in unanticipated places illustrates the porousness of the boundaries between these zones of habitation.

These animal transgressions, recalling Cresswell's[8] use of the term, draw attention to the imagined qualities of geographic zones such as "urban," "suburban," "rural," and "wild." When we see images of black bears (*Ursus americanus*) wandering the streets of a city, the sight is

[6] Britton and Hunold 2019
[7] This is not to minimize the level of danger assumed by these species when they find themselves no longer within the (predominantly) protected space of the domestic sphere. In transitioning from the geographic space of the house/home, these animals become subject to predation by native species, as well as human-produced hazards such as cars.
[8] 1996

remarkable in part because the animal bodies register to us as out of place, inconsistent with the other visual markers that serve to define the space, like sidewalks and street signs.

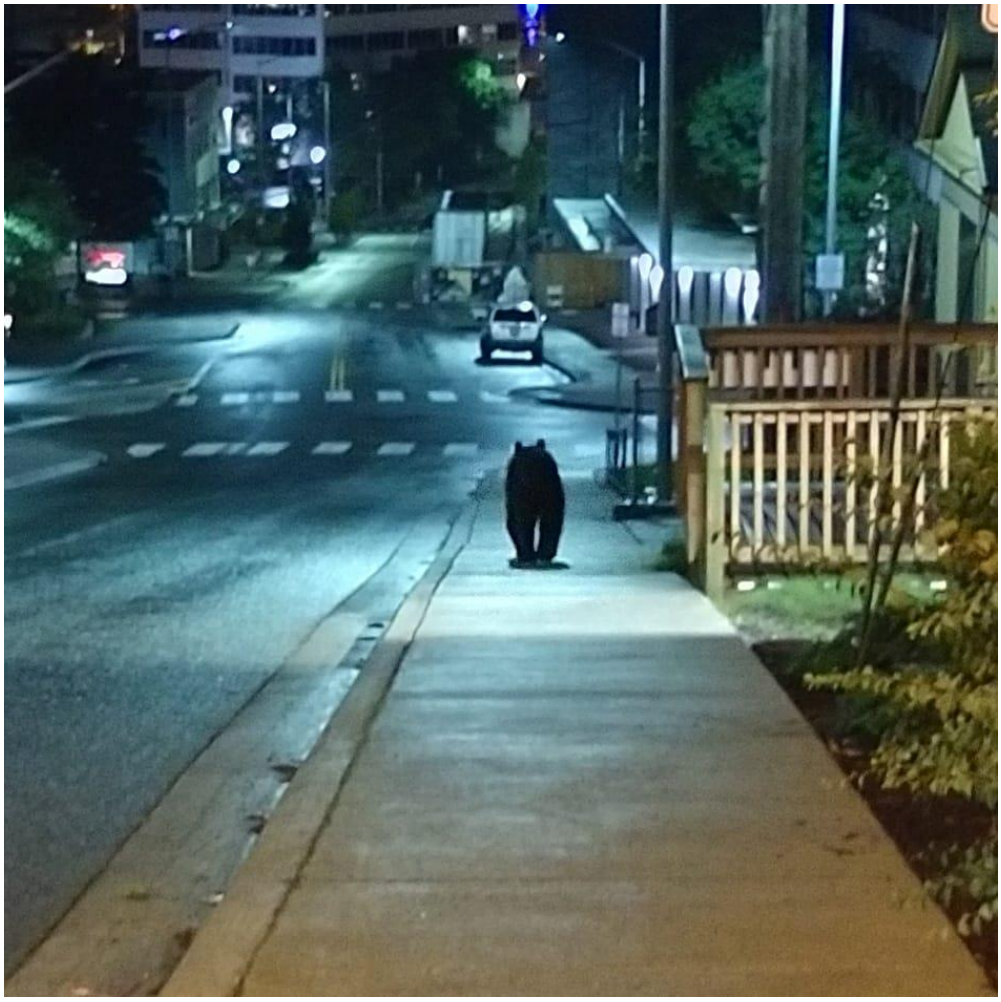


Figure 4.1: A black bear takes an evening walk through the streets of downtown Juneau, AK, 23 August 2018.

To humans, these indicators demarcate a region laden with expectations for what and who we anticipate finding there. When those expectations fail due to unanticipated animal presences, there is a "doing" that allows for the viewer to remember that human intervention plays the primary role in constructing these geographic zones. The effect of the bear's presence on a city street, the friction between a "wild" body and a "civilized" space, marks the artificiality of that asphalt and concrete, even as the bear is marked as unnatural in these surroundings. He reads as misplaced,

despite the fact that his predecessors walked the same land well before humans took the opportunity to build on it. The animals' taking of space in these contexts serves as a reminder that our presence on the land is both relatively recent and largely uninvited by the prior inhabitants.

In addition to the macrofauna who attract attention as they slip between zones, there are other species who instead continually inhabit urban, suburban, or rural areas but remain outside the realm of human control. These species initiate a level of intimacy with humanity that is largely unappreciated, having evolved to take advantage of our behavior for their benefit. I'm referring to creatures such as rats (*Rattus norvegicus*) and cockroaches (*Periplaneta americana*), who have evolved to make use of the cracks and gaps and dark spaces in the environments we construct, using them as shelters. These two species in particular are interesting cases-in-point, both having made their way to North America on European ships. Once arrived, they, like their human settler-colonial counterparts, pushed local species out of the areas selected for their own habitation, while maintaining their position adjacent to the people who had ferried them from Europe and Africa. But unlike the livestock brought from overseas with intention, these hitchhikers instead took advantage of human travel without permission. Perhaps it is their lack of obvious utility, or maybe it is their resilience in the face of attempts to remove them that contributes to the animosity with which these species are met, prompting their designation as "vermin." These are the creatures who live in close proximity to humans, but who have not been marked as sufficiently valuable to warrant an attempt at assimilation. Instead, their continued presence serves as a constant reminder that the control exercised by humanity in zones of habitation has its limits and that "the wild" is not always as far away as we might like it to be.

Finding Wilderness

If wild animals can find their way into the cities or live beneath them, where or what exactly is the wilderness? The designation "wilderness" itself is not neutral. Rather, it comes with a lengthy history tethered to specific culturally constructed ideals that have changed over time. Significantly, the ways in which the term has been defined have had a considerable affective quality. The emotions evoked by the concept of wilderness have played an important role in determining the form and frequency of interactions by settler-colonial Americans. In his essay "The Trouble with Wilderness," environmental historian William Cronon documents the trajectory of American conceptions of wilderness. He begins by acknowledging that the very idea of "wilderness" is in itself a construct, "the creation of very particular human cultures at very particular moments in human history."[9] He then charts shifts in how wilderness has been historically construed in the United States, from a place of fear to one of awe, and then on to a space set aside by humanity for a curated experience of Other-than-civilization. These various periods in the history of the term "wilderness" each continue to resonate in the present day to some extent.

Cronon's analysis begins with pre-19th Century understandings of the wilderness. By and large, the views of landscapes outside the bounds of towns and villages carried evocations of fear. These were spaces described in terms that did not inspire one to explore them. Rather, Cronon indicates that:

> To be a wilderness then was to be 'deserted,' 'savage,' 'desolate,' 'barren' – in short, a 'waste,' the word's nearest synonym. Its connotations were anything but positive, and the emotion one was most likely to feel in its presence was 'bewilderment' – or terror.[10]

[9] Cronon 69
[10] Ibid. 70

This was the Classical wilderness, a space of exile, of separation from family, community, and safety. For the Greeks, such a place was devoid of people, a vacant lifeless wasteland with nothing of use for humanity. If there were any people or animals to be found there, they would be uncontrollable and dangerous. For European settlers of North America, these images of the areas outside their settlements seemed apt, as the land was inhabited by Indigenous people and animals who failed to conform to the settlers' expectations of civilized behavior, instead representing beings to be feared or brought under control.

This perception began to change, however, due to two distinct mindsets applied to the wilderness in the 18th and 19th Centuries. The first that Cronon identifies is "the sublime."[11] In his usage, the term describes a perception of wilderness with roots in European romanticism, in which the land and the beings that inhabit it are imbued with sacred and spiritual qualities. The suggestion is one of transcendence, of landscapes so beautiful and vast that looking upon them brought the viewer closer to God. Cronon explains that "[a]lthough God might, of course, choose to show Himself anywhere, He would most often be found in those vast, powerful landscapes where one could not help feeling insignificant and being reminded of one's own mortality."[12] The God Cronon refers to here is not, however, the New Testament God, the gentle old bearded fellow perched atop a throne of clouds. This is the Old Testament God, the bringer of plagues and pillars of salt, full of wrath and vengeance. These are the kinds of landscapes that may have inspired Longinus[13] in his discussion of the sublime, the "most high," who recognized the awe-inducing power of nature, as well as its freedom from the controls of humanity, marking the wilderness as both transcendent and dangerous. This is the sublime of Artaud,[14] a place that inspires such awe

[11] Ibid. 72
[12] Ibid. 73
[13] Longinus, in Dukore 1974
[14] Artaud 1958

and terror that it fractures the self, making the viewer one with the space, somehow both larger than life and lost in the magnitude of the universe due to one's own insignificance. The sublime landscapes of North America would not stand solitary, however; rather than being scared away from their power, people began to seek them out for the profound spiritual experience they seemed to promise.

At the same time that poets and artists and other citizens seeking mystical energies and transformations were on their way to admire the American wilderness, the frontier was continuing to push westward. This is the second key element contributing to changes in the perception of wilderness in the US, which began when it became clear that some of the animal occupants of the land exterior to colonial settlements had the potential to be useful. The opportunity for some form of reclamation through domestication or conversion into commodities provided a basis for transition from wasteland to wilderness, within the space of the frontier.[15] Scholar-activist Anastasia Yarbrough describes the development of "a massive political economy surrounding wild animals' bodies in the United States"[16] during the 18th and 19th Centuries. At that time, trade in pelts, furs, feathers and bone became lucrative, creating an interest in the consumption and commercialization of wildlife at the same time that settlers were beginning to seek to distance themselves from their European origins. North America represented large swaths of seemingly unclaimed land, standing in stark contrast to the forests of Europe, which largely fell under the jurisdiction of the ruling classes. There, hunting was the exclusive provenance of the nobility, with severe consequences for common people who took animals without permission. By contrast, the American forests offered white male settlers seemingly unlimited access to animal-based resources, "an opportunity for white men to do what they wanted, a luxury most colonial migrants

[15] Ibid. 71
[16] Yarbrough 109

could not enjoy in their previous countries."[17] A productive engagement with unsettled lands (and a desire to claim them) thus became an integral part of the development of American identity, serving as a site of separation between the colonists and their European forebears.

Furthermore, as described in Chapter 1, the land, in its presentation of challenges to the white men who sought to conquer it, participated in the development of a frontier ethos that inculcated subsequent generations of men who, like their ancestors, were eager to demonstrate their masculinity through the subjugation of "virgin" wilderness. The characteristics required to bring the frontier under control—strength, independence, creativity, and vigor—were sought after as cognates to American masculine identity. Cronon explains that "[a]mong the core elements of the frontier myth was the powerful sense among certain groups of Americans that wilderness was the last baston of rugged individualism."[18] That masculinity was central to the frontier ethos is specified when Cronon articulates that "[t]he mythic frontier individualist was almost always masculine in gender: here, in the wilderness, a man could be a real man, the rugged individual he was meant to be before civilization sapped his energy and threatened his masculinity."[19] The frontier also continued to represent a zone outside the sphere of influence of the community (and the church), but rather than inspiring fear, the space now offered both a proving ground for men who wished to demonstrate their ability to exert power, and freedom from moral judgement when the behaviors necessary to their pursuits fell outside the bounds of appropriate action. This is the frontier of binge-drinking and brawling, the one described by historian Frederick Jackson Turner, where white male American colonists repeatedly confronted and subdued the savage and unkept wild through their own cleverness and fortitude as colonial encroachment continued to push

[17] Ibid. 110
[18] Cronon 77
[19] Ibid. 78

West.[20] Turner (in deeply white ethnocentric terms) describes the reciprocal effects of proximity between the wilderness and the frontiersman, stating:

> The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought. It takes him from the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe. It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin…In short, at the frontier the environment is at first too strong for the man… Little by little he transforms the wilderness… The fact is, that here is a new product that is American.[21]

The centrality of the frontier to early American identity is also described by Cronon, who explains that "wild country became a place not just of religious redemption but of national renewal, the quintessential location for experiencing what it meant to be American."[22]

The challenge of taming the wild frontier was a significant attraction but was perhaps also its most significant flaw. The available land was not infinite, and the value of commercial products made from the skins, pelts, bones, and feathers of wild animals drew more and more hunters and trappers to that land. As civilization encroached on the space and wildlife numbers began to dwindle due to habitat loss and overhunting, it became clear that there was a spatial and temporal limitation to how long the frontier ethos could continue. Cronon explains this feature, noting that "[b]uilt into the frontier myth from its very beginning was the notion that this crucible of American identity was temporary and would pass away."[23] Anxiety regarding the loss of integral features of the American West also included the Indigenous people the frontiersmen had found in their travels, developing into the myth of the "Vanishing Indian." Jodi Byrd (Chickasaw) explains that "Indians are typically spectral, implied and felt, but remain as lamentable casualties of national progress

[20] Turner 1920
[21] Ibid. 4
[22] Cronon 76
[23] Ibid. 76

who haunt the United States on the cusp of empire and are destined to disappear within the frontier itself."[24]

Furthermore, beyond concerns of loss of access to seemingly pristine landscapes, awesome vistas, lucrative wildlife, and signifiers of an earlier period in American conquest, lay apprehension regarding the loss of critical components of American masculine identity, which was evidently similarly as fragile in the face of urban life. According to Cronon, the men of the mid-to-late 19th Century United States believed that "the comforts and seductions of civilized life were especially insidious for men, who all too easily became emasculated by the feminizing tendencies of civilization."[25] Naturally, this would require a civilized life that included comforts, tethering these beliefs to the upper classes, who would have both the means and the time to consider finding ways to escape the cities in an effort to reclaim earlier forms of American masculinity. Like other myths of vanishing, of temporal fragility, the desire to somehow sequester remnants of the fading frontier would result in assimilative energies that contributed significantly to the formation of the first national parks, funded in large part by the wealthy men who were determined to find within themselves elements of the wild.

> The curious result was that frontier nostalgia became an important vehicle for expressing a peculiarly bourgeois form of antimodernism. The very men who most benefited from urban-industrial capitalism were among those who believed they must escape its debilitating effects. If the frontier was passing, then men who had the means to do so should preserve for themselves some remnant of its wild landscape so that they might enjoy the regeneration and renewal that came from sleeping under the stars, participating in blood sports, and living off the land. The frontier might be gone, but the frontier experience could still be had if only wilderness were preserved.[26]

[24] Byrd xx
[25] Cronon 78
[26] Ibid. 78

The need to set aside wild land manifested finally in 1864, when Abraham Lincoln placed Yosemite as a public trust of California with the Yosemite Grant.[27] The terms of the grant were intended to protect the area from continued commercial use and signified the first time land was set aside purely for recreation and conservation. Shortly thereafter, Yellowstone became the first American national park in 1872, and when it became clear that domestic sheep were wreaking havoc in the Yosemite Valley in 1882, environmentalists John Muir and Robert Underwood Johnson successfully lobbied for the area to be redesignated as a national park in 1890.

These spaces quickly became "the landscape of choice for elite tourists, who brought with them strikingly urban ideas of the countryside through which they traveled."[28] These visitors were not interested in an accurate experience of the frontier, which would have included, among other things, stunning quantities of alcohol-driven violence, along with the need to get messy in the process of obtaining resources from the land and the wildlife in unsettling proximity. The goal was not verisimilitude but rather the construction of a mythscape. Cronon states that:

> …wilderness came to embody the national frontier myth, standing for the wild freedom of America's past and seeming to represent a highly attractive natural alternative to the ugly artificiality of modern civilization. The irony, of course, was that in the process wilderness came to reflect the very civilization its devotees sought to escape.[29]

Instead of merely setting the lands aside, a process of significant alteration began, sculpting the wilderness to meet the expectations of the visitors who flocked to the nascent parks. Given that the idea of wilderness required a lack of habitation, it became critical to remove any inhabitants within the parks' boundaries. In other words, for the parks to function successfully in "performing wilderness," they required the presence of certain human bodies and the exclusion of others. This

[27] "Yosemite National Park Established." 2009
[28] Cronon 78
[29] Ibid. 78

included the removal of Indigenous people, who were displaced to territories considered less awe-inspiring to the urban elites heading to the parks for vacation. Yarbrough also explains that "African Americans and Latinos were not allowed access to public lands,"[30] further marking the land as spaces specifically intended for the enjoyment of white affluent Americans.

Travelers from the cities were also unfamiliar with the land and required guidance, resulting in the development of a tourist economy staffed with backcountry guides and porters to enable safe passage through the landscape.[31]

Furthermore, the presence of wildlife was key to ensuring that the image of wilderness was accurately presented, particularly insofar as the land was designated as a space for recreation that included pastimes such as hunting and fishing. To engage with frontier masculinity, men had to be able to chase and kill animals, although the numbers were carefully regulated to ensure that these sought-after macrofauna were not driven to extinction. This is the environment in which the bison found themselves placed, following the assaults on their population by the US Cavalry. The nostalgia for plains full of bison helped to prevent the species' extinction but resulted in their incarceration in federal parks where, to this day, they operate as a major draw for tourists. Yarbrough sums up the overall drive towards the construction of national parks as sites of staging, articulating that "wilderness serves as unoccupied, empty land where valued wildlife are but animated symbols, and forests the places upon which the Euro-American imagination can be exercised and can rest."[32]

Cronon goes on to explain that at the core of this staged wilderness is an erasure of its history,[33] insofar as the modern idea of wilderness requires landscapes devoid of the human

[30] Yarbrough 112
[31] Ibid. 78
[32] Ibid. 113
[33] Cronon 79

presence that inhabited that land prior to colonization, the people who were central to its clearing and construction, and those that continue to visit it still. Furthermore, the fact that land deemed "wild" has been relegated to specific bounded tracts of land denies the presence of the wilderness that abuts, surrounds, lies beneath and within the zones of human habitation we think of as rural, suburban, and urban. In doing so, there is an unspoken suggestion that the biodiversity of these places is somehow less significant, less worthy of protection, than the grand vistas and majestic animals found within the safely staged spaces of parkland. While the ragged unkempt ravine lying just beyond my fence or edges of cornfields or vacant urban lots may lack the magnificence of Yosemite's Half Dome, they are nevertheless at least as worthy of the designation "wilderness," if Nash's definition is retained. They too are places full of wildlife, albeit of a different quality.

Perhaps this is one of the more significant distinctions between the lands popularly designated as "wilderness" and the "beastly places" that lie closer to home. By and large, the wild animals that live in fraught proximity with humanity fail to achieve the same elevated status as the macrofauna people flock to parks to see. While the bison were imperiled in the 19th Century, they were subsequently deemed worthy not only of saving, but of appropriation into the American imaginary. They are large, charismatic animals, easy to spot at a distance, making them ideal performers on the wilderness stage. By contrast, many of the animals that inhabit proximate zones are smaller, harder to spot and harder to kill, relegated to the status of "vermin," accused of being vectors for disease (which, in some cases, may be true, although this is less often than suggested), dirty, and predatory. There are exceptions, of course; those species that can demonstrate some level of utility, even if it is simply aesthetic, are less likely to be considered pests than their wild brethren. Songbirds are generally welcomed into the same yards where snakes or opossums (*Didelphis virginiana*) would be unwanted. Yet, despite human attempts to create discrete

environments for specific purposes, these animals manage to slither, sneak, and creep under, over, and through the multitude of boundaries we erect. They prove themselves significant adversaries in our claims of space in ways that frustrate and surprise us, and by thumbing their noses (figuratively, since the majority of them lack actual thumbs) at our fences, walls, doors, and windows, they enact resistance to our assumed geographic supremacy, drawing attention to the failure of our constructed borders.

Butterflies and Border Walls

Early in Donald Trump's presidential campaign, he made the promise to "build the wall" along the US-Mexico border. This isolationist theme would continue and amplify throughout his campaign and ultimately became a central rallying cry for Trump's supporters early in his presidency. While the rhetoric has changed over time, shifting from "making Mexico pay for it" to reallocating emergency funds to its construction in February 2019, the border wall has remained an integral and defining element of Trump's presidential term. The issue of border control in the United States is far from new. The earliest legislation was codified in 1798, followed by the Immigration Act in 1891, which served as the first comprehensive law regulating new arrivals to the United States.[34] Policies remained relatively relaxed until the post-9/11 era, when President Bush signed the Secure Fence Act of 2006. Despite the lack of a relationship between the attacks on the US on 9/11 and Mexico, the law authorized the construction of 700 miles of fencing along the US-Mexico border, along with an array of technological supports including video surveillance by camera, drone, and satellite.[35] In recent years, immigration reform has become a central feature of the Republican party's platform. The Trump administration expanded on the party's rhetoric, using nationalist fears of foreigners to invigorate his political base. And while the Trump

[34] Saddiki 178
[35] Ibid. 184

administration might well have anticipated resistance from Mexico, from civil rights activists, and from progressive-minded citizens, there has been one adversary who has proven surprisingly problematic: the butterfly.

The National Butterfly Center occupies 100 acres along the U.S.-Mexico border in Mission, TX. The Center was opened and is operated by the North American Butterfly Association (NABA), which was formed in 1993 in an effort to better educate the public about the ecological importance of butterflies. NABA is the only non-governmental organization that serves as part of the South Florida Endangered Butterfly Working Group. Their work includes population research that has been instrumental in preventing the extinction of several species of butterflies, educational initiatives, and the maintenance of the Center. The Center opens its trails daily to the public and offers programs specifically designed for schoolchildren. On their website, they note that the butterflies are wild and free-flying, able to enter and leave the property as they see fit, and that they are a private entity, not supported by any government agency or taxpayer funds. Their land is adjacent to the Rio Grande, housing a levee built to manage the floodwaters of the river, and provides critical habitat to not only butterflies but also dozens of species of bees.

In the past, the Center has collaborated with the National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife, planting rare grasses and wildflowers. But, when Donald Trump took office in 2017, the previously amicable relationship between the U.S. Government and the National Butterfly Center took an acrimonious turn. The Center's location sits by a section of the U.S. border that, while protected by security cameras and patrols and while difficult to cross due to the presence of the Rio Grande, has not been secured by a physical barrier such as a fence or wall. Trump's wall mandate thus placed this section of the Texas border under scrutiny as a prime location for construction.

According to Marianna Treviño-Wright, Executive Director of the National Butterfly Center, the first signs of trouble came in the summer of 2017, when U.S. Border Patrol agents stepped up enforcement efforts in the immediate surroundings of the Center.[36] These efforts included the intimidation of both employees and visitors, as well as vehicle searches and refusal of access to parts of the Center's property. In July, 2017, Treviño-Wright found workmen, identified as contractors sent on behalf of the Federal Government, in the process of clear-cutting the land between the levee and the river, where Butterfly Center personnel had recently planted over 5,000 native plants to attract Monarchs during their extensive migrations. By the time she arrived, the workers had already decimated up to 18 feet of land on either side of a road running through the property. Elsewhere on the property, Treviño-Wright found surveyor flags already in place to mark sites of imminent destruction. No notice had been provided that workmen were coming, or that eminent domain was being exercised, nor had there yet been any action by Congress to approve or fund construction of the border wall.

Shortly thereafter, on August 1, 2017, Treviño-Wright met with Manuel Padilla, former chief of the Rio Grande Valley Sector of Border Patrol, who arrived accompanied by two uniformed Border Patrol agents. Padilla confirmed that the contractors had been sent at the government's behest and that they would return accompanied by armed officers to prevent any interference with their work. He explained that the Butterfly Center would need to sacrifice roughly two-thirds of its entire property to government seizure. Treviño-Wright explains that the National Butterfly Center's land had been specifically selected:

> Padilla also told me the first border wall construction in a decade would begin at the National Butterfly Center and surrounding properties because we represented 'the path of least resistance.' He said our section of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Wildlife Conservation Corridor, which includes Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State

[36] 2019

> Park and two National Wildlife Refuge Tracts, involved the fewest private property owners, therefore the government intended to start here.[37]

Padilla's visit precipitated a series of phone calls to Congressmen, in an attempt to get more information on what exactly was being planned. At that time, it became clear that the border wall was not, in fact, being built on the border, but rather on the levees adjacent to the river. The levees are located well within US territory, meaning that land belonging to US citizens and property owners (including entire farms and residential subdivisions) would be left in a sort of no-man's land between the wall and the actual border. In the Center's case, the levee across their property was located 2 miles away from the border itself.

Treviño-Wright secured legal representation for the National Butterfly Center, and on December 9, 2017, the North American Butterfly Association filed a complaint for declaratory and injunctive relief against the Department of Homeland Security, US Customs and Border Protection, US Border Patrol, and the Rio Grande Valley Border Patrol Sector in an attempt to block the threatened land seizure and wall construction. The complaint's argument centered around the failure of these agencies to comply with both Constitutional requirements and laws including the National Environmental Policy Act[38] and the Endangered Species Act.[39]

As the complaint began winding its way through the court system, the US Congress focused its attention on President Trump's attempts to acquire border wall funding. The Consolidated Appropriations Act 2018 was finally passed with bi-partisan support in both chambers on March 23, 2018 but contained a somewhat mixed message. The legislation granted the Trump Administration $641,000,000 towards the construction of "levee fencing" in the Rio Grande Valley, but media attention claimed that Trump's border wall proposal had been defeated, as no

[37] Treviño- Wright 2019
[38] 42 U.S.C. § 4321
[39] 16 U.S.C. § 1531

funding had been specifically allocated for that purpose. For all intents and purposes, however, that "levee fencing" referred to the border wall already being planned across the National Butterfly Center's property, with the choice of vocabulary in place to make use of language found in the levee easements in the area, allowing for the seizure of private property to control flooding. In this case, however, the "levee fencing" articulated in the Consolidated Appropriations Act is under the control of the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Border Wall Program Management. Neither the department in charge of the fencing nor the actual fencing's form suggests any relationship to flood control.

In July 2018, Treviño-Wright finally gained access to documents that articulated precisely where US Customs & Border Protection planned to build, as well as the form of the behemoth itself. The wall "would be approximately 18' of concrete wall with 18' steel bollards on top,"[40] and in addition, the process would involve the construction of a "150' wide enforcement zone, the all-night lighting, the cameras, gates and new patrol road."[41] The issues with the border wall construction, then, went beyond the physical structure itself. There was, first, the removal of critical native habitat, including both plants and animals. The removal of the plants increased the possibility of erosion and flood damage. For animals that might need to cross the border zone, the wall would make that more difficult, if not impossible. Materials from the National Butterfly Center[42] specifically mention the Ferruginous Pygmy Owl (*Glaucidium brasilianum*), an endangered species whose flight capabilities are limited to approximately 6' above the ground. The wall will also limit resources on both sides, increasing competition between individuals and between species. Besides the damage to the land and the actual wall, there was the problem of the

[40] Treviño-Wright 2019
[41] Ibid. 2019
[42] "What the Border Wall will do here"

bright 24-hour lights and the road. Nocturnal wildlife would be adversely affected, and the frequency of roadkill is likely to increase due to the rise in traffic.

Events began to transpire at a much more rapid pace in the fall of 2018. In October, to expedite the building process, the Secretary of Homeland Security waived 28 federal laws, and shortly thereafter, over 5,000 troops were dispatched by President Trump to the southern border. The contract to build 5.5 miles of border wall through the National Butterfly Center was awarded to a private company in November. Surveyors arrived in December. Treviño-Wright started a GoFundMe early that month, raising over $108,000 in denominations from $5 to $3000 from over 2,600 donors to support their resistance efforts

It was in February 2019 that activity surrounding the Center and the border wall construction reached a fever pitch. Early in the month, heavy equipment began to arrive, parked on private property and in early February, the work of deforesting the property began. The next day, “No Trespassing” signs were installed on the Center’s levee. On February 13, it seemed that the Center might get a reprieve, as the border wall funding previously granted by Congress was rolled back in the 2019 Department of Homeland Security Spending Bill. But, on February 14, after months of waiting and without a single hearing, the Center’s lawsuit was summarily dismissed by US District Court Judge Richard Leon. And on February 15, the Trump Administration declared a State of Emergency, securing up to $8 billion for border wall funding. At this point, a range of international news outlets, including NPR, National Geographic, the Washington Post, CNN, Audubon.org, the New York Times, Smithsonian Magazine, and the Independent, broke the story, attracting the attention of thousands of social media users. CNN International posted a 4-minute video reporting on the Center’s fight against the border wall to their Facebook page, garnering over 492,000 views.

The assault on the National Butterfly Center's land wore on in the spring of 2019. The steel panels for the upper portion of the wall began arriving in April 2019. Treviño-Wright describes a May 14, 2019 meeting in the Oval Office between Trump, his advisors Stephen Miller and Jared Kushner, and several Senators, in which the border wall was discussed. Describing the official position on the land seizure at the National Butterfly Center, Treviño-Wright explains that:

> In response to less than favorable feedback from those present, Kushner reportedly boasted, 'We solved the butterfly thing,' referring to the administration's plan to build border wall through our property.[43]

Finally, at the end of May, Trump's use of funds from his declared state of emergency was blocked by a federal court, putting a temporary stop to construction on the National Butterfly Center's property. There have since been further altercations with a private organization called "We Build the Wall, Inc.," founded by Brian Kolfage in December 2018 through a GoFundMe fundraising campaign that raised over $25,000,000. The group began construction in May 2019 on a section of the border in New Mexico and has since continued building on private land in Texas. When We Build the Wall, Inc. started to build on a property adjacent to the National Butterfly Center, their actions prompted a lawsuit by both the federal government and the Center in an effort to halt the construction due to the increases in flood risk that would occur as a result of the private wall. A Hidalgo County judge issued an injunction in December 2019, ordering that work temporarily cease, but the order was lifted by a federal judge in January 2020 and the project was subsequently completed in February 2020.

Nevertheless, despite the construction next door, the National Butterfly Center has, to date, managed to halt the progress of Trump's border wall across their property, at least for the time being. At the very least, the Center and its wild occupants have proven to be a very public thorn in

[43] Treviño-Wright 2019

the side of the project, enough to warrant Kushner's mention at that May 2019 Oval Office meeting. While border wall construction has been ongoing at multiple sites along the United States' southern frontier and has offered similar opportunities to engage with questions of land ownership and the bounds of governmental authority, as well as environmental oversight and social justice concerns, somehow it is the butterflies that have managed to garner international attention through news sites and social media.

While there have not been any public statements from the Trump administration suggesting a deliberate attempt at butterfly eradication on the border, there has also been no sign of acknowledgement of the significance of the animals that pass through the National Butterfly Center's land. It is true that the space lacks the kind of geologic features or large mammals usually required for recognition as a wilderness zone worthy of protection, although the Trump administration has demonstrated a lack of regard even for parkland that was previously set aside by earlier administrations as worthy of defense from commercial development. Under the current executive, commercial utility supersedes everything else, including conservation ethics, recreation, or tourism. As a result, the National Butterfly Center's land fails to be recognized by the current administration as wilderness, serving only as a site to enact Trump's nationalist policy.

The butterflies, however, are as disinterested in Trump's plans as he is in theirs. Throughout the wrangling over the land, they have continued to pass through the site, exercising their own geographic sovereignty. In many ways, butterflies are the ideal foil for Donald Trump, although perhaps not the most obvious one. They are exceptionally opposite in both the actuality of their existences and in their symbolic representations through history.[44]

[44] One could perhaps argue that the main point of similarity between butterflies and Donald Trump is that they are both orange, although there are, of course, species of butterfly that feature other colors.

Trump's rise to prominence has been relatively recent, whereas butterflies have featured in mythologies for thousands of years. And yet, despite their exceedingly long presence adjacent to human culture, butterflies have stayed mostly under the proverbial radar, warranting limited attention instead of actively demanding it from all sides. From a conservation perspective, this has proven to be somewhat of a challenge, despite the butterflies' ecological significance. In a 2014 interview with legal scholar and ethnographer Irus Braverman, the Head of the Wildlife Conservation Society's Climate Change Program James Watson explained that "[t]he things which get money are birds and mammals, and the things which don't get money are butterflies and plants."[45] The perception of butterflies as largely insignificant is also key to their presence in the work of Edward Lorenz, the mathematician credited with developing what has become known as the "butterfly effect." Literary scholar Steven Connor explains Lorenz' work as follows:

> This describes the very sensitive dependence of complex systems on initial conditions, such that tiny and apparently insignificant variations can produce large-scale changes in state over time. The example always given comes from the title of a paper that Edward Lorenz gave to the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1972, in which he asked: 'Does the Flap of a Butterfly's Wings in Brazil set off a Tornado in Texas?'[46]

Lorenz' work suggested that the minute movements of the butterfly's wings could indeed produce effects much greater in magnitude than their origins would imply. Clearly, the image only functions if the people listening to Lorenz' talk began with the assumption that butterflies were insignificant.

When the "butterfly effect" is placed in contradistinction to Donald Trump, the difference is striking. Where the butterfly is charged with making small, barely perceptible movements that can effect great change, Trump has developed a reputation for self-serving grand gestures such as

[45] Braverman 31
[46] Connor 171

the construction of a 36' tall border wall that may or may not have any actual effect on immigration (documented or otherwise). If the Trump administration's true goal was to reduce immigration, the funds needed would be better allocated elsewhere. International Relations scholar Said Saddiki explains that "much of the money spent on fencing and militarizing the borders should go towards promoting comprehensive development in the countries of origin. Today, it is largely argued that the construction of walls around developed nations is not a solution to the immigration issue."[47] Instead, it would seem that the wall has more to do with performing national sovereignty, making a substantial and visible action with little tangible result on the movement of migrants.

It is also worth recognizing that, if immigration is truly the provocation for Trump's border wall, the National Butterfly Center is a rather tongue-in-cheek place to put it. One of the main species whose needs are attended to at the Center is the Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*). A significant part of the Monarch's life cycle involves a lengthy migration, over 4,000 km each year from southern Canada and the northeastern United States to central Mexico.[48] The Monarchs require very specific habitats to thrive, and so they begin their migration each fall, heading south to breed. The following spring, they embark on the trip north, which their offspring will complete, beginning the cycle again. This species of butterfly routinely stops over in the area surrounding the Rio Grande, making the National Butterfly Center's land an important place for these winged travelers, and in some ways, given Trump's xenophobic rhetoric, there is an internal continuity to his need to construct a barrier that interferes with both human and animal paths of migration. The butterflies' failure to acknowledge the US-Mexico border in the course of their travels, as well as the extent to which they produce offspring that will continue to perform the same voyage in an

[47] Saddiki 187
[48] Denny and McFadzean 2011

annual ritual, serves as a visual transgression against Trump's claims of national sovereignty in the area.

Migration is only one part of the butterfly's lifecycle. Central to the folklore and mythology surrounding the butterfly is its remarkable reproductive strategy. As members of the Lepidoptera, butterflies are holometabolous insects, which is to say that they undergo complete metamorphosis. Their lives begin first as tiny eggs, laid on the underside of plant leaves. Eventually, caterpillars hatch and grow through a series of instars, shedding each skin as they grow. Following their fifth and largest instar, the caterpillars locate a sheltered space and enter a sessile stage in a chrysalis (also called a pupa), resting immobile for anywhere from five to twenty-one days. Then, in a dramatic revelation, the newly formed butterfly ecloses from the chrysalis as a full adult. Butterflies and moths are far from the only insects to undergo this process but the final imago is so colorful, so strikingly beautiful, that these insects are typically the first thought of when dramatic transformations come to mind.

The visibility of the butterfly's metamorphosis has appeared in folklore for thousands of years as a symbol of change and rebirth. Butterflies appear in the creation myth of the Pima people, as well as those of Indigenous tribal groups in Sumatra, Madagascar, and Mexico.[49] The Minoans worshipped a butterfly goddess circa 4000 BCE,[50] a figure that also appears in the mythologies of Hawaii (as Hina, goddess of the moon) and the Hopi people of the American Southwest (as Palhik Mana, the Butterfly Maiden who is associated with the harvest).[51] The relationship here between constructions of the feminine, of birth, of harvest, and of the annual renewal of the land is evident

[49] Leach 176
[50] Eason 77
[51] Ibid. 78

in the character of these goddesses, in part due to the emergence of a living being from the pupal form, which resembles the dead in its inertness.

This leads to what is perhaps the most pervasive symbolism derived from the butterfly- that of the soul. What emerges from the chrysalis does not resemble the physical body that enters it; the grounded caterpillar is supplanted by the airborne butterfly, who, like the soul, is able to fly away from the remains of its former life. Connor describes the Classical roots of this association, noting that "[i]n Greek, the word *psyche* signifies both soul and butterfly, just as *animula* in Latin can mean both little soul and butterfly."[52] Images of butterflies in the company of the deceased on memorials and sarcophagi of Ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome articulate a relationship with souls.[53] In this symbolic landscape, the caterpillar offers a representation of mortal life through its modest and earthbound form, while the chrysalis embodies death in its stillness (further supported by *nekydallos*, the Greek word for "pupa" which is directly translated as "little corpse"[54]), and the imago as the transformed and liberated soul.

Historian and mythographer Marina Warner places the metamorphic quality of the butterfly in starkly Greek terms, observing the parallels between the lepidopteran life cycle and the hero's journey in Classical tragedy. She explains that:

> Many metamorphic tales, classical or classical by emulation, follow this pattern of arriving at anagnorisis or recognition through a series of concealments, or even disfigurements, of revealing true, inner character through a series of outer changes of shape. The traditional storytelling of a hero or heroine who journeys through numerous ordeals, through misprisions and neglect, finally to arrive at selfhood, follows this model of metamorphosis: the protagonist's true self generates itself in its proper character after undergoing several transformations; the larger transformation of their circumstances and the appearance of the person's fullness of being unfolded through several smaller transformations.[55]

[52] Connor 33
[53] Warner 90
[54] Ibid. 92-93
[55] Ibid. 85

Change is central to the connection to butterflies here, but so is integrity and the visibility of the true self following transformation. The moment of emergence is one of performance, a dramatic moment of revelation that makes visible the results of a lengthy process of transition.

Warner subsequently delves deeply into representations of butterflies, going beyond the most widely accepted aspects of butterfly symbolism, with special attention to depictions of gender. The suggestion of life emerging from hidden spaces creates an apparent tie to the feminine, acknowledged by the aforementioned butterfly goddesses, but Warner notes that:

> In ancient classical medical thought, the butterfly did not figure a feminine flitting thing but the male generative power (as depicted on a Greek vase painting of an ithyphallic satyr of the sixth century BC). A Roman gem also shows a butterfly taking wing towards a herm with an erect and flowing phallus.[56]

She explains that, for the Greeks, women provided the physical substance of a child while men contributed the vital essence that brought it to life. Insofar as butterflies were understood as the soul, they necessarily inhered, at least in part, to the masculine. Warner traces the connection through the French for "moth" – *phalène* – which seems to link "psyche" and "phallos."[57] The result of this semantic nexus is a space of gender fluidity, which makes the title of David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly* resonate even more profoundly.

The butterfly's symbolic significance as a representation of change further supports its positionality as a contrast to Donald Trump. Since the mid-20th Century, members of the Republican party typically self-describe as "conservatives," a word derived from the late Latin *conservare*, meaning "to keep" or "to preserve." Across its platforms, the Republican party articulates a desire to maintain the status quo, attempting to install policies that safeguard traditional white Christian patriarchal beliefs. Trump's 2016 campaign slogan, "Make America

[56] Ibid. 90-91
[57] Ibid. 92

Great Again," harkened back to an earlier, if unspecified, period in American history marked by economic prosperity and traditional family values, suggesting that Trump would restore specific features of the American mythscape that were seemingly eroded under progressive Presidents, such as Barack Obama. As the 2020 election looms, Trump's campaign has shifted its slogan to "Keep America Great," implying that Trump's 2016 campaign promises have been kept and that conservative principles have been restored to prominence. The use of the phrase "to make again" and "to keep" reflect the conservative values of restoration and maintenance of specific ideals, positioned in opposition to progressive political views that support growth, transformation, and change.

In the Trump era, the need to publicly perform conservative principles has manifested in a number of ways, including the construction of the border wall to guard against foreign invasion, but also in the policing of the bodies of the American citizenry through control over expression and reproduction. The butterfly's symbolism as a site of gender nonconformity stands in stark opposition to the heteronormative strategies espoused by conservative Americans and enacted by Trump's administration. As several of the more visible examples, Trump rescinded bathroom protections for transgender students in February 2017 and announced via Twitter a ban on transgender individuals serving in the US military on July 26, 2017.[58] These policies represent conservative shifts intended to reverse relatively recent moves towards inclusivity, an important tenet of progressive values. Furthermore, the public nature of the decisions, articulated through the widely viewed and shared media of Twitter, demonstrates the need for Trump's conservatism to

[58] There is also an argument to be made here as to whether or not Trump has demonstrated any evidence of having reached anagnorisis, given the butterfly's metaphoric connection to the hero's journey, but it perhaps outside the scope of this document.

be clearly visible, a marked distinction from the butterfly's process of transformation, which occurs cloaked in the chrysalis, away from public view until the work is complete.

As of December 2019, the Trump administration claimed to have completed approximately 93 miles of new border wall. The land through the National Butterfly Center marks one of the few locations where legal action has its stopped construction, in part because of the Center's intervention to protect the space and its inhabitants. One may wonder what makes the site so special, and seemingly, the primary distinction from other areas of the border is the visible presence of the butterflies, who, by continuing their habitual migratory actions through the Rio Grande corridor, enact resistance to the solidity of the United States' southern border.

Conclusion

Butterflies are far from the only animal migrants making their way across the US borders. To the south, jaguars (*Panthera once*), Mexican grey wolves (*Canis lupus baileyi*), and arroyo toads (*Anaxyrus californicus*), among others, traverse the land that forms the boundary between Mexico and the United States. To the north, the US-Canada borderlands are shared by black-footed ferrets (*Mustela nigripes*), piping plovers (*Charadrius melodus*), and grizzly bears (*Ursus arctos horribilis*). The presence of these species, given their lack of domestication, marks the land they inhabit as "wilderness," a space defined by their presence and, historically, under only marginal control by humans. The construction of national borders within the space of the human imagination, as well as in tangible forms such as fences and walls, serves as an attempt to civilize these wild zones and their inhabitants as a performance of domestic sovereignty.

But humans are not the only beings making claims on these lands, either at the border or within our national boundaries. Each of the species that inhabit these border spaces has evolved over hundreds or thousands of years to occupy a niche, a geographic place and biological role that

completes the ecosystem. They have adapted to their surroundings with surprising tenacity, and as a result, often continue to migrate back and forth through the borderlands with no regard for human attempts to manage the area. They demonstrate their own agency, as they fly over and dig under and creep through the fences and walls we use to demarcate the spaces we attempt to claim as ours. These spatial transgressions draw attention to the fragility of human territorial claims, as the animals' presence reminds us of their longevity and the extent to which we represent relatively recent newcomers to these geographies. When coyotes and ground squirrels appear uninvited, they are perceived as trespassers, but their arrival raises the question of what it means to trespass, when one's claims to the land derive from imagined cultural constructs of ownership in the first place. They invite reflection on the destabilizing effect their company produces on the nature of borders that seek to un-wild the wilderness.

Conclusion

Once again, I am sitting outside in my yard, listening to the birds and watching my dogs as they explore the sights, sounds, and smells of the animals that have passed through since yesterday. This time, however, is different, as I have been effectively confined to quarters due to the stay-at-home order issued by California Governor Gavin Newsom on March 19, 2020, resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic that has rapidly made its way around the globe. The novel coronavirus has produced widespread disruptions to daily life, travel, and global trade, providing a timely example of the "butterfly effect," in which something very small produces exceedingly large consequences. In this case, the instigator is not an animal; there is argument within the scientific community as to whether or not viruses should be considered alive, and instead, they are typically relegated to a kind of grey area between living and non-living that is not entirely understood. Like parasites, viruses cannot survive on their own, requiring a host body to replicate themselves and to transport them from place to place. Covid-19 seems to have jumped from an animal host to a human host late in 2019, and from there, rapidly began to make its way through the human population.

In light of their not-quite-alive status, it seems unsurprising that, like animals, viruses are not typically granted citizenship of any particular country. And yet, when rates of Covid-19 infection in the United States began to climb in earnest in mid-March 2020, US President Donald Trump began referring to the 'Chinese virus' in his daily White House press briefings.[1] The assignation of a nationality to an infectious disease seems to have served a strategic purpose, an opportunity to engage with anti-China rhetoric in the midst of a domestic crisis. Despite Trump's claims that "It's not racist at all, no, not at all,"[2] there was an immediate increase in violence against Asian Americans amidst widespread indignation at Trump's choice of words. The case

[1] Vazquez and Klein 2020
[2] Ibid. 2020

study is a timely one, in part because even now the pandemic continues to rage and in part because it demonstrates the flexibility with which countries of origin can be assigned when it suits a particular political goal. Often, country of origin or national status in humans is treated as something innate with profound implications and equally powerful repercussions, but the fact that it can be bestowed so casually on animals (and viruses) and removed just as quickly draws attention how imagined national communities truly are.

I cannot say whether or not viruses exhibit agency or sovereignty, but animals certainly seem to. Animal agency is at the center of the geographies this project has sought to explore, including "the extent to which we can say that animals destabilize, transgress or even resist our human orderings, including spatial ones."[3] Their ability to think and act independently has been critical to the ways in which they have participated in human action for thousands of years, from surveilling the surroundings and alerting humans to danger to training their human companions to play with them upon request. Animals have also demonstrated sovereignty, often best seen in the moments when they decline to perform as expected, by breaching fencelines or sitting on the couch without permission when their humans are out of the house.

These two aspects of animal life, agency and sovereignty, contribute significantly to the ways in which they are perceived by the humans around them. They are part of how and why animals evoke such powerful affective responses in the humans with whom they interact. The nature of that response varies considerably, depending on a number of factors. There are social and cultural components; some cultures privilege certain species over others or may pursue a different form of relationship than others. For example, the Sioux relationship to the bison has historically had very different resonances than the white American relationship to the same

[3] Philo and Wilbert 5

species. There are also aspects of human affective response to animals that result from elements of performance, including staging (the circumstances in which the animal is encountered), and casting (the differential specifics of that species in that particular situation). Dogs are a useful case in point. In some cultures, dogs are considered filthy scavengers, unworthy of attention or protection. In White American culture, broadly speaking, when we invite them to share our lives, they can evoke love and joy. When they fight alongside us in battle, we celebrate their loyalty and bravery. But when the same species and breed is situated in opposition to us as part of a state apparatus charged with policing our behavior, they become a predatory threat.

The effects here are bidirectional. The scenario affects how viewers respond to the animal, but the animal also contributes to how the setting is understood. A particular animal body placed in an unanticipated location can provoke not only expectation failure but a significant emotional, and sometimes physical, response. We expect certain species to be in particular places, and their presence contributes to how those spaces are defined, like the sight of sheep in a pasture. However, a sheep walking down a city street inspires a different emotional response, and a sheep standing in your living room uninvited would no doubt provoke a very different reaction than either of the other two scenarios. The range of responses to the same animal in a range of situations serves to articulate the reciprocity that occurs between these distinct bodies and the locations in which they appear. In addition, when they arrive in the "beastly places," where they are unwanted or unexpected, the animals participate in a "doing," a performative opportunity that creates a space for reflection on how humans interact with the same geographies.

This effect is readily visible in the context of American nationalist thinking, where animals have been significant, if underrecognized, participants in its collective imaginary development. Their subtle (and not-so-subtle) interventions have been part of the American mythscape since the

arrival of settler-colonists in the 17th Century and have continued through the present day. I'm thinking here of the horse who was part of Paul Revere's ride, which would otherwise have been a (presumably less effective) run. I'm also referring to the racoon in Davey Crockett's hat, as a representative for all of the species whose pelts contributed to the early American economy, as well as the dogs trained to police a multitude of non-white bodies and the horses and oxen whose labor facilitated Western expansion. There are the horses, hounds, and foxes who assisted in the maintenance of White relationships to Europe through a tradition of mounted hunting in the nascent United States, and the copious wildlife available for the taking that contributed to American understandings of frontier independence and freedom. And not to be forgotten are the animals that appear in the American symbolic, like the Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and the bison, whose importance marked their species as worthy of being saved when their populations were driven to the brink of extinction.

And yet, despite all of these contributions, the animals themselves are not granted the status of American citizens. They are instead exempted from both the rights and the privileges allotted to members of the domestic community. Animals cannot vote, they have no particular guarantees of life or liberty, and their military service lacks a pathway for official recognition of exemplary service (although this is often subverted by the people who actually work with them). While horses competing internationally do receive passports, these documents are administered by the *Fédération Equestre Internationale*, the international governing body for equestrian sports, rather than by the horse's country of origin or the rider or owner's nation of record, and they might be more accurately described as compact health certificates, rather than passports per se. Even native wildlife is never quite fully recognized as American.

These slippages of identity suggest that there are not only geographic "beastly places," but imaginary ones as well. These are the gaps in the mythscape that are uninhabitable by humans, who are perpetually defined by national identity,[4] leading to a host of expectations and assumptions. By contrast, our animal companions evidence a more significant mutability. In doing so, their "beastly places" become spaces in which we can reflect on the nature of our nationalist constructs. Our affective responses to animals can shift how we perceive specific situations, drawing attention to moments of injustice like the Birmingham Children's March, or encouraging emotional engagement with military personnel fighting in unpopular wars. We cannot fully enter these imagined "beastly places" but we can acknowledge them and, by thinking critically about them, it may be possible to find more productive ways of working with our animal cohabitants.

[4] I would argue that this identification holds, even in cases when an individual has lost their citizenship. In that scenario, they are defined as much by their lack of a nationality as they might be if they had one.

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