HUNTOLOGY

ONTOLOGICAL PURSUITS AND STILL LIVES

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Now the hunter steps aside . . . and the naturalist comes forward.
— Richard Rhodes, *John James Audubon*

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At the beginning of the nineteenth century in Western Europe and North America, one hunt ended and another began. A form of pursuit long associated with the acquisition of knowledge,[1] hunting became all the more prevalent as a cultural and epistemological logic when technological advances secured the dominance of the human and made it no longer necessary to ensure the gain or defense of territory against animals. No longer a threat to humans, animals became objects of study and exhibition.

While the analogy makes little sense today, in the mid-eighteenth century, hunting was often described as a form of war. Diderot's *Encyclopédie* defines hunting as "all the sorts of wars that we wage against animals" (toutes les sortes de guerres que nous faisons aux animaux). J. M. Coetzee's 2003 novel *Elizabeth Costello* further explores this analogy. The title character describes a time when humans were still at war with the animals: "We had a war once against the animals, which we called hunting, though in fact war and hunting are the same thing (Aristotle saw it clearly)," Costello explains. "That war went on for millions of years. We won it definitively only a few hundred years ago, when we invented guns. It is only since victory became absolute that we have been able to afford to cultivate compassion."[2] The very possibility for humans and animals to be at war with each other implies a relative symmetry and supposes that they share a common political territory. Costello proposes a history in which they cease to cohabit by imagining the conditions under which the humans' victory became "absolute." She nevertheless states that some animals remain unaware that the war is over (rats, we are told, have not surrendered). The problem that Costello raises is not so much that the hunt is a war but that this war is thought to be over. And that we are at peace. The supposedly absolute victory of the hunt resulted in a "distribution of the sensible" that demands to be reassessed.[3]

What has this fantasized victory effected in the West, both for (what we call) humans and (what we call) animals?[4] The human's exceptional status proves but a recent development and one that emerges out of a predatory relation to other animals. Costello provocatively suggests that the introduction of guns had a profound impact on how the human's status as überpredator has been naturalized to the point of invisibility.[5] How and when has it been it possible for some humans to envision their victory as "absolute"? With technological progress, the dominance of the human over (other) animals became more pronounced, almost self-evident. Before this apparent victory, the war of the species could be perceived as ongoing, and even interminable.[6]

This essay argues that this "event" took place at the turn of the nineteenth century, when the human-animal relation underwent a profound transformation in the West. The hunt offers a compelling paradigm for reading this transformation. A certain epistemophilia that emerged during this period—as evidenced by Buffon's colossal *Histoire naturelle*,[7] Cuvier's enterprise of systematic classification, and Darwin's 1831 zoological expedition on the Beagle (named after a hunting dog)[8]—can be seen as the continuation of the hunt by other means. The shifting valence of the hunt from martial to episte-

Figure 1.
John James Audubon,
GOLDEN EAGLE
(AQUILA CHRYSAETOS), 1833.
Watercolor, pastel, graphite, and
selective glazing, 38 x 25 1/2 in.

Collection of The New-York Historical
Society. Digital image created by
Oppenheimer Editions.

Figure 2.
Walton Ford,
DELIRIUM, 2004.
Watercolor, gouache, ink, and pencil on paper, 62 5/8 x 43 1/8 in.; 159.1 x 109.5 cm.

Courtesy the artist and Paul Kasmin Gallery

mological finds a burgeoning archive in the emergence of natural history museums and science institutions, which depended on the products of the hunt for their specimen collections. No individual is more representative of this shift than John James Audubon.

Audubon created scientific documents and works of art at a moment when the United States was eager to define and promulgate its intellectual identity as an emergent nation.[9] The famed naturalist and artist was above all a hunter: "Audubon engaged birds with the intensity (and sometimes the ferocity) of a hunter because hunting was the cultural frame out of which his encounter with birds emerged," writes Richard Rhodes. "In early nineteenth-century America, when wild game was still extensively harvested for food, observation for hunting had not yet disconnected from observation for scientific knowledge."[10] Hunting emerges as the "cultural frame" of Audubon's artistic and scientific practice. It is in this frame that the gaze of the artist-scientist is shown to be inextricable from that of the hunter.

Contrary to Rhodes, I argue that observation for hunting and observation for knowledge did not then get "disconnected." Instead, at the moment when science is said to have become "objective," hunting recedes from overt consciousness, only to infiltrate further what could be called the *epistemological unconscious*. It is this very moment when the labor of the hunter ostensibly gets detached from epistemological pursuits that demands critical attention.

How can we account for the convergence of the artistic and the scientific that Audubon's practice represents as one of *capture*? What consequences, epistemological and ontological, do the predatory pursuits have, both for the hunted "object" and for the hunting "subject"? This essay elucidates the mechanism from which the figure of "modern man" emerges in a dynamic relationship to the animal. I will call this dialectical mechanism of capture and exclusion *huntology*.

>> The Execution of the Subject

. . . all hunters look alike.
— Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

In the foreground, almost too large to be contained by the painting, the eagle soars into the air, threatening to exceed the limits of the canvas. In the background, almost imperceptible on the immaculate coat of snow, the hunter is dwarfed by the majesty of the surrounding massifs. Audubon's *Golden Eagle* (1833), from the celebrated 1838 volume of etchings, *The Birds of America*, shows the imposing bird holding a dead or dying rabbit in its clenched talon (fig. 1). The French-American naturalist's painting is nearly identical to contemporary American artist Walton Ford's *Delirium* (2004) (fig. 2). The images, were they not separated by more than 170 years, might have formed a diptych.

The eagle is a hunter, a fierce predator that lives off the flesh of other animals. Audubon's aim was to offer a faithful representation of the (then) exotic feathered fauna of the New Continent. The depiction of the eagle is informed by his careful scrutiny of the animal, and yet, despite its patent realism, the scene is imbued with an unnatural qual-

ity. The composition is elaborate. The impeccable whiteness of the prey reinforces the fierceness of the eagle, the totemic animal par excellence. For Audubon, however, the Golden Eagle is not an allegory; he valued the bird for its ornithological singularity and uniqueness.

Figure 3.
Jacques-Louis David, BONAPARTE FRANCHISSANT LE GRAND-SAINT-BERNARD, 1800. Oil on canvas, 259 × 221 cm.

Photo: Gérard Blot. Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY. Châteaux de Malmaison et Bois-Préau, Rueil-Malmaison, France (left).

Audubon, *Golden Eagle* (right).

And yet its allegorical dimension is undeniable. The eagle seems to have been recruited as a mascot for the American colonial project. In Audubon's painting, the bird is soaring westward, charting the course of the American empire's Manifest Destiny. As the art historian Theodore Stebbins has noted, *Golden Eagle* appears to be modeled after Jacques-Louis David's painting, *Bonaparte Crossing the Alps at Grand-Saint-Bernard* (1800).[11] If Ford's *Delirium* can be said to be a descendent of Audubon's *Golden Eagle*, then David's *Bonaparte Crossing the Alps* is its ancestor (see fig. 3). Rhodes has noted the commonalities between the two, namely their mirroring color schemes, the pointing gesture of Bonaparte's hand as reproduced in the eagle's beak, and the upward trajectory of their nearly identical landscapes:

> His triple-peaked, snow-covered mountains are borrowed from the distant far right of *Bonaparte*, moved forward and centered behind his dark, rocky landscape to mirror-image the colors and forms of the white hare and the dark eagle. Light flooding into both pictures from the upper left illuminates the eagle and its white prey as it illuminates Napoleon and his white horse. The drop of blood sweating from the hare's torn eye duplicates a red touch of embroidery at Napoleon's waist. But the conqueror and his rearing white horse combine in the eagle into one magnificent raptor, urging upward: the eagle's beating wings duplicate Napoleon's golden, wind-swirled cape, while the eagle's open-beaked cry is the horse's open-mouthed whinny and the eagle's glare of defiance is the horse's bulging wild eye.[12]

While the eagle gets conflated with Napoleon (and his white horse), Audubon seems to position himself as a simple soldier. Despite this seeming modesty, as Rhodes suggests, Audubon has already climbed the mountain, contrary to his heroic model, and is "shinnying down the chasm with his prize."[13] Moreover, if Napoleon *is* the eagle, then what are we to understand of the dead eagle on the hunter's shoulder? This relation invites a closer look at the place of Audubon's oeuvre in the representation and dissemination of the US imperial project.[14] The predator literally *replaces* the imperial figure of Napoleon, and colonization thereby becomes naturalized through the motif of hunting.

The lack of realism in Audubon's painting is not only conveyed by the symbolic reading that it invites, but also by the rigid quality of the animals portrayed. The eagle and

the rabbit appear as if they have just escaped from a taxidermist's workshop. Instead of the intended lifelike impression of the bird of prey, Audubon presents us with something more closely resembling a *nature morte*, or still life.

And as it happens, it *was* a still life, as Audubon's process is brought to light by Ford's painting. With its smoking beak, its claw caught in a leghold trap, and the small metal spear piercing its heart, Ford's raptor appears at first glance to have been taken from a book of fables. In a way, *Delirium* is far more historically accurate than Audubon's original, from which it draws its inspiration. Ford, who specializes in large-scale animal watercolors, exposes the fabricatedness of Audubon's hunting scene.

Audubon had been asked by Columbian Museum (Boston) proprietor Ethan Allen Greenwood to identify a live eagle that Greenwood had purchased from a man who hunted fox with spring-traps in New Hampshire's White Mountains. He explains in his 1835 *Ornithological Biography* that Greenwood agreed to sell him the coveted animal. Having brought it home, Audubon confesses a fascination with the bird:

> I must acknowledge that as I watched his eye, and observed his looks of proud disdain, I felt towards him not so generously as I ought to have done. At times I was half inclined to restore to him his freedom, that he might return to his native mountains; nay, I several times thought how pleasing it would be to see him spread out his broad wings and sail away towards the rocks of his wild haunts; but then, reader, some one seemed to whisper that I ought to take the portrait of the magnificent bird; and I abandoned the more generous design of setting him at liberty, for the express purpose of shewing you his semblance.[15]

The "little voice" that tells him to execute the animal might not be just that of his scientific instinct, but also Audubon's uneasiness and fascination with the gaze of the animal, which seems to observe the naturalist in return (the execution acquires the quality of a sacrifice). Audubon's rendition of the eagle's "face," compared to that of Ford, is distinctly anthropomorphic. Finding it too challenging to draw it alive, Audubon considered electrocuting the animal but decided to asphyxiate the bird by shutting it in a small room with a pot of burning charcoal. "I waited, expecting every moment to hear him fall down from his perch," he writes, "but after listening for *hours*, I opened the door, raised the blankets, and peeped under them amidst a mass of suffocating fumes. There stood the Eagle on his perch, with his bright unflinching eye turned towards me, and as lively and vigorous as ever!" Audubon repeated the operation several times but the animal refused to die:

There stood the Eagle on his perch, with his bright unflinching eye turned towards me, and as lively and vigorous as ever!

> We were nearly driven from our home in a few hours by the stifling vapours, while the noble bird continued to stand erect, and to look defiance at us whenever we approached his post of martyrdom. His fierce demeanour precluded all internal application, and at last I was compelled to resort to a method always used as the last expedient, and a most effectual one. I

> thrust a long pointed piece of steel through his heart, when my proud prisoner instantly fell dead, without even ruffling a feather.[16]

It is this invisible violence that Ford exploits as he satirizes the artificiality of Audubon's composition by not only mirroring it but also distorting the mirrored image. Ford capitalizes on the irony that made Audubon kill the bird only to reintroduce it afterwards, pictorially, in its natural habitat. "It's that backstory," Greg Cook observes, "that tale of conquest and colonization and accumulated injuries against nature, that is at the heart of Walton Ford's allegories."[17] Ford explains that he became interested in using watercolor because he wanted "things to look like Audubons." He describes his paintings as "fake Audubons." "I twisted the subject matter a bit and got inside [Audubon's] head and tried to paint as if it was really his tortured soul portrayed," Ford says, "as if his hand betrayed him and painted what he didn't want to expose about himself. And it was very important to me to make them look like . . . he painted them, but that they escaped out of him."[18]

Figure 4.
Film still from John James Audubon: Drawn from Nature, 2007. Artist Walton Ford demonstrates Audubon's technique of "posing" the dead animal on a grid in order to draw it. The cage-like grid will then be obliterated by the landscape painted over it.

In Ford's watercolor, the eagle is eastbound and very much alive, despite the shackles that mark its enslavement to representation. Ford's eagle is represented with a tiny spear in its heart and thick plumes of smoke escaping its beak. In contrast, the figure of the hunter, who in Audubon's painting carries a dead eagle on his back, is instead pictured lying in the snow as if dead. Cook suggests that, "like an avenging spirit, Ford imagines Audubon as a tiny hunter in the background, stricken, collapsed into the snow at the top of a wintry hill."[19] Ford's elucidation of the circumstances surrounding the production of Audubon's painting accounts for the model's "flat" appearance, its pictorial rigor mortis (fig. 4). The eagle appears confined within the canvas, as if its frame were a kind of trap and the naturalist-cum-artist regarded nature with the eyes of a hunter.

In Audubon's original, the arrogant raptor had indeed been captured by the painter, who had included his own image in the left-hand corner dressed in hunting gear. Audubon makes an appearance in the painting as the arch-predator, the hunter's hunter. This mise en abyme is all the more intriguing because Audubon has not usually been regarded as a particularly self-reflexive artist. The naturalist's self-portrait appears comically small, almost irrelevant, and yet the whole scene is depicted from his perspective. In the painting, however, the hunter's gaze is not directed toward the bird but appears to be focused on what is in front of him. In *Golden Eagle*, Audubon's hunter/beholder presents himself as seeing the world from below, whereas, as a painter, he adopts a God's- or

bird's-eye view, typically associated with an all-encompassing perspective and betraying a fantasy of omniscience. (Ironically, however, at the very moment that our hunter adopts a bird's-eye view, his gaze is obstructed by a gigantic bird of his own making!) The painting literalizes the problem that representation poses to objective knowledge, which postulates an irreducible distance between the subject knowing and the object known.

If the hunter depicted in the margin of Audubon's painting is intended to represent the painter himself, then the scene observed both from *above and below* exposes the irreconcilable dualism of the observer. The purportedly realistic rendition is shown to be highly manufactured and hardly "natural," if by natural one means something left untouched by the hand of man. Audubon represents two versions of the same eagle, which appears to be symbolically both captured (on the hunter's shoulder) and free (as a bird). The fact that the eagle is at once *dead and alive* in the picture, not unlike Schrödinger's cat in his box, establishes a correlation between the killing of the empirical animal and its transformation into a representative specimen. Ford exposes Audubon as having a split identity: he is both the naturalist fascinated with understanding this living creature and the artist who must *execute the object* for the sake of his own artistic execution.

	JOHN JAMES AUDUBON, *Golden Eagle*, 1833	WALTON FORD, *Delirium*, 2004
Animal (Bird)	Depicted as living and free and as captured and dead on the hunter's shoulder	Depicted as dying but unfettered
	Soaring in the sky, westward	Landing and facing eastward
Human (Hunter)	Alive, straddling a tree fallen over a precipice	Dead, lying on the ground, "flattened out"
Pictorial Style	Realistic but with flat quality and slightly overwrought	Figural, more painterly but more lively
	Painting titled after the zoological category of the animal represented, with Latin name in brackets	Original title indicating that the painting does not have any objective pretension

Yoking the life and death of the animal to that of the hunter/observer, Audubon's and Ford's *tableaux de chasse* make manifest the dialectical character of the hunter'sperspective. The chart below summarizes the important differences between the two paintings. Ford's adaptation reveals the destinies of the hunter and the hunted to be deeply intertwined, suggesting that the hunter no longer has a raison d'être if the eagle breaks free. One may go so far as to perceive in Audubon's painting the hunter's unlikely "becoming bird" as he is himself perched on a fallen tree. The hunter is, furthermore, represented as under threat, balanced over a precipice, occupying a precarious position.

The dynamic of the hunt is presented as not merely a question of the hunted but also, *essentially*, one of the hunter. Audubon's painting indexes the problematic representation of the animal as informed by a preconception of the human as a hunter. With huntology, I argue that our Western conception of the human is contingent upon such predatory representations of the animal.

>> Ontological Pursuits

Then wouldn't that man do this most purely who approaches each thing as far as possible with thought itself, and who neither puts any sight into this thinking nor drags in any other sense along

with his reasoning; but instead, using unadulterated thought itself all by itself, he attempts to hunt down each of the beings (*thēreuein tōn ontōn*) that's unadulterated and itself all by itself, and once he's freed himself as far as possible from eyes and ears and, so to speak, from his whole body, because it shakes the soul up and doesn't let her attain truth and thoughtfulness when the body communes with her—isn't this the man, Simmias, if anyone, who will hit upon what *is*?
—Plato, *Phaedo*

Michel Foucault's study of Diego Velásquez's 1656 painting, *Las Meninas*, opening *The Order of Things*, offers a reading of classical perspectivalism founded on an irreducible invisibility. Of the epistemic model presented by Velásquez, Foucault observes that "the profound invisibility of what one sees is inseparable from the invisibility of the person seeing—despite all mirrors, reflections, imitations, and portraits." He argues that something (the author, the beholder, or the subject) is always left *out of the frame*: "the function of that reflection is to draw into the interior of the picture what is intimately foreign to it: the gaze which has organized it and the gaze for which it is displayed."[20]

If the entire world were captured in the representation, it would not be a representation but the world itself (or the world would be pure representation). This impossible coincidence between the subject and its representation heralds the emancipation of the human subject from the world it represents. Velásquez insists on this representational divide, but, as Foucault suggests, the separation is also an *elision* of the subject, which he suggests will only be fully emancipated from its object in the nineteenth century. The human subject, quite fundamentally, creates itself by extracting itself from the world that it seeks to describe. To paraphrase Cary Wolfe, the human gains knowledge of itself as a knowing subject only to lose the world: by excepting himself from the picture, he has accidentally drawn the contours of its own image. Nature is thus born out of man's dissociation from it.[21]

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Audubon's animal representations are exemplary of the transition to the epistemological regime on which the modern ordering of things is grounded. In *Objectivity*, Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison situate Audubon in a time before "mechanical objectivity" became the predominant epistemic virtue. Of his depiction of the Crested Titmouse, they write: "Audubon's bird drawings were printed on double elephant folio paper in order to approximate life size as closely as possible. Yet Audubon's insistence that birds be depicted in natural habitats and poses, observed first-hand by the artist-naturalist, did not preclude mannered compositions . . . or anthropomorphic stances and descriptions." [22]They remind us of the extent to which Audubon's paintings were "criticized by some contemporary naturalists as falsifications of nature" whereas similar artistic method had won English naturalist George Edwards the Royal Society of London's Copley Medal in 1750.[23] Ann Shelby Blum agrees that the "ethos of objectivity,

expressed in the technical language of systematic description of generic and specific types, was deeply at odds with Audubon's celebration of the observer as participant and his recording of singular events whose actors were individual creatures."[24]

The ambition of the "truth-to-nature" regime in which Daston and Galison situate Audubon is to reveal "the one and only ur-form of a plant, animal, or crystal," while the mechanical objective paradigm wishes to remove entirely the knowing subject from the known object.[25] Audubon embodies the pivot between these epistemic regimes because, on the one hand, he highlights the labor (as an artist, hunter, and scientist) needed to produce his object, and, on the other hand, he hopes to render a lifelike image of the bird *as it really is*. In the "mechanical objectivity" model, however, the self qua self is identified as the source of error and thus must be eliminated. This drive toward objectivity may explain why, when *The Birds of America* was published, the hunter had disappeared from the background: "Whether on his own or on Audubon's instruction, [the printer] Robert Havell removed the little woodsman from the plate he made of the *Golden Eagle*, Plate 181 of *The Birds of America*, removing along with it a level of meaning that only the original watercolor has sustained."[26]

It is this very effacement that gives birth to what Foucault has identified as modern man. The split described by Foucault between human observers and nonhuman others appears subconsciously literalized—and simultaneously obliterated—by Audubon's rendition. However unrealistic, Audubon's perspective is not shown as such. The painting purports to offer an unaltered image of what the wild animal *really* looks like. Contrary to the ingenious composition of *Las Meninas* that is always chasing its subject out of the frame, Audubon's painting achieves a fallacious reconciliation between the human observer and the observed nature. Whereas Velásquez and Foucault articulate the paradox of the spectator/subject, Audubon reconciles the observer and nature through their mere juxtaposition within the painting. The creative gap between the self and the world is thereby negated, and the human born out of this elision is left to contemplate proudly its own image in the representation of the animal. Placed side by side with Ford's adaptation, the human's bifurcated subjectivity is revealed to be produced by the effect of taking itself "out of the picture" (in the published version of the painting).

The split perspective at work in Audubon's painting is emblematic of a predatory drive at the heart of some Western modern representations of the animal. As many have compellingly argued, these representations constitute a humanist archive that privileges logics of mastery and domestication and rests upon a strict, if ill-defined, demarcation between human and non-human animals. At issue in humanist representations of animals is more than "just" the way in which animals are treated but the very concept of humanity, and thereby of humanism.[27] The political and ethical principles on which Giorgio Agamben's work is founded underline the inextricable affinities binding the question of the animal to the practical issue of defining who gets to be called human and what, as a result of this partition, is excluded from humanhood. In *The Open*, Agamben describes what he calls "the anthropological machine" as a simultaneously inclusionary and exclusionary apparatus:

> Insofar as the production of man through the opposition man/animal, human/inhuman, is at stake here, the machine necessarily functions by means of an exclusion (which is also always already a capturing) and an inclusion (which is also always already an exclusion). Indeed, precisely because the human is already presupposed every time, the machine actually produces a kind of state of exception, a zone of indeterminacy in which the outside is nothing but the exclusion of an inside and the inside is in turn only the inclusion of an outside.[28]

It is interesting that Agamben would call upon the metaphor of the machine to account for the process of separation at work in our humanistic culture, doubtless to indicate in a Nietzschean gesture the *ahuman* foundations of that aftereffect that is the human. The human is no longer *homo faber* (the maker) but *homo factum* (the "self" made man), or, rather, he is both. Playfully evoking Descartes's animal-machine, the image of the machine undermines the idea by which individual sovereignty and autonomous subjectivity constitute the logical premises of the human condition. Following Nietzsche, I would propose that the issue might not so much be, as Agamben suggests, to "stop" the anthropological machine,[29] as to understand its modus operandi and recognize it as a machinic process over which "we humans" have little control. Instead of lamenting the violence committed against animals perceived as machines, Nietzsche recommends that we extend Descartes's mechanical approach to the human being. One should "unlearn" to bind ethics and politics to questions of rational or divine agency: from this perspective, rationality and spirituality are to be seen as nothing more than the undesirable byproducts of the anthropogenic machine.[30]

The machine should not be thought of as a simple dragnet catching all that is not human, if only because "what is human" is always yet to be decided.

What is at issue in *The Open* is the exposure of the "irony" of the self-perpetuating mechanisms that define the ontological status of the human. The machine should not be thought of as a simple dragnet catching all that is not human, if only because "what is human" is always yet to be decided. The problem is not one of "classification" but of "relation."[31] In fact, Agamben seems to say, it is the *chase* and not the *arrest*—the capturing and not the capture—of the animal that determines *who* deserves to be labeled human and *what* is left over. *The Open* insists on the interminability, indeed the *openness*, of the twofold movement of capture and exclusion at work in the making of the *anthropos*. Instead of running after yet another singular feature that would be "proper" to human beings, rather than trying to establish another decisive specific barrier between the human and the nonhuman, Agamben offers to examine the stalling logic of the "proper." *The Open* can be read as an attempt to re-dynamize an all-too-static anthropological ontology, which Derrida describes as "the *fixism* of the Cartesian cogito."[32]

Near the conclusion of *The Open*, Agamben synthesizes his baroque overview of the human/animal differentiation in Western philosophical discourses with a series of

theses. In his second thesis, Agamben argues that ontology, the branch of metaphysics that concerns itself with matters of essence and being, is sustained by *a logic of the chase* that works to exclude animals:

> Ontology, or first philosophy, is not an innocuous academic discipline, but in every sense the fundamental operation in which anthropogenesis, the becoming human of the living being, is realized. From the beginning, metaphysics is taken up in this strategy: it concerns precisely that meta that completes and preserves the overcoming of animal physis in the direction of human history.

The overcoming of the human's animal nature does not happen overnight; rather, *it never happens inasmuch as it is ceaselessly happening* even though the human is, in effect, *always presupposed* to be a meta-animal: from the outset, "metaphysics is taken up" (or captured) in this ontological pursuit. The inclusionary/exclusionary logic at the heart of anthropological ontology is the result of huntology's ongoing process of incorporation and expulsion.

Offering a model for thinking the space maintained between man and animal, huntology queries the mode of apprehension of a philosophy that works to maintain the distance between the hunter and his prey, between the philosopher and his animal object. Huntology calls into question the deferral of knowing on which philosophical knowledge, in line with Descartes's metaphysical school of thought, is based. This philosophy, Derrida hypothesizes, "governs, in the sense of being prevalent or hegemonic in, all domains that treat the question of the animal, indeed, where the animal itself is treated: zoology, ethology, anthropology, but first of all ontology, mastery by means of knowledge."[34]

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche delimits the ground of the "human soul" as a "hunting ground" for a "born psychologist and lover of the 'big-game hunt.'"[35] We might literalize Nietzsche's analogy to suggest that the human subject is not merely studied but also constituted by his ontological pursuits. As Heidegger has argued, tracking evidence of one's humanity implies that one knows what one is after and *therefore*, that the human is both presupposed and deduced by such a metaphysical quest.[36] The validity of one's hypothesis rests on evidence that, in turn, is sanctioned as such if and only if one already knows what one is looking for. Such vertigo-inducing recursivity turns *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* into a sort of thriller in which Heidegger investigates the appropriate method to "*initially* approach and *subsequently* pursue" his "subject matter," namely, the animal, one that huntology aspires to render apparent and tactical.[37]

As in the case of Audubon's *Golden Eagle*, the hunter who has "gone after" the animal is motivated by a certain idea, sustained by a certain *ideal* that he pursues. The living animal in turn poses a resistance to, that is it *opposes*, the hunter, who, "for the express purpose of shewing his semblance" to the beholder has to execute it and paradoxically to lose his object.[38] Audubon's example is characteristic of the raptorial character of certain representations of animals and, subsequently, of the production of knowledge derived from these representations. In the end, it is not the bird in its irreducible singularity that is described but the hunter's fantasized relationship to the bird as exemplary of its sub-

species. The "capture" of the animal informs us not so much about the animal as such but rather about our negative relationship to what we call "the animal," and by extension, about the formation of our ontological status as human beings.

If the anthropological machine is relentless, this is because the hunt is not so much concerned with catching the prey but with the hunt itself, or rather with the way it ensures the human dominion by catching *and* rejecting the animal in the same gesture. "I fear that this is the origin of hunting," writes Michel Serres. "The only things hunted are those that have to be chased away."[39] It is revealing that the French word *chasser* contains within it two seemingly irreconcilable meanings. This double meaning expresses the apparent paradox at the heart of a concept that means simultaneously *to hunt*—that is, to go after, to chase—and *to repel*—that is, to chase away from oneself (for instance, *chasser le naturel*[40]). Whereas the English "to hunt" would seem to privilege the pursuit of the prey (indulging the fantasy of ultimate capture), the polysemy of the French illuminates the complexity of the term that illustrates the production of knowledge about the animal.

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In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida plays on the double valence of the word to show that the hunt (here, the antagonistic fascination Karl Marx had for the German philosopher Max Stirner) is interminable and finds its object not in the prey it pursues but in itself:

> I chase *you*. I pursue you. I run after you to chase you away from here. . . . And the ghost does not leave its prey, namely, its hunter. It has understood instantly that one is hunting it just to hunt it, chasing it away only so as to chase after it. Specular circle: one chases after in order to chase away, one pursues, sets off in pursuit of someone to make him flee, but one makes him flee, distances him, expulses him so as to go after him again and remain in pursuit. One chases someone away, kicks him out the door, excludes him, or drives him away. But it is in order to chase after him, seduce him, reach him, and thus keep him close at hand.[41]

Derrida exploits a similar semantic ambiguity in his posthumous *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, in which he laments Western philosophy's failing of the animal. He challenges the ethics of a philosophy sustained by a logic of hunting that would strive to frame the animal in a *tableau de chasse* ("stilling the wildlife," so to speak). From Descartes to Lacan, Derrida asserts, philosophers have labored to preserve the ontological difference between man and animal by consistently depriving the animal of the capacity to respond. Derrida evokes the mythic figure of Bellerophon: "He deserves a ten-day conference alone. He represents, as is well known, the figure of the hunter. He follows. He is he who follows. He follows and persecutes the beast. He would say: I am (following) (*je suis*), I pursue, I track, overcome, and tame the animal."[42]

The title, *L'animal que donc je suis*, characteristically plays on the double meaning of the French "je suis" that can be translated as both "I am" and "I follow," which forces

the translator to write each time "I am (following)." Derrida tricks language into forcing the reader's identification with the animal ("I am the animal") and into recognizing the distance maintained by the one who goes after the animal ("I am following the animal"). This conceit enables him to apprehend the anthropological ontology as a relational economy rather than a predetermined state of things. I chase the animal *ergo sum*. This is huntology: the injection of a dynamism—often unacknowledged, as Agamben makes clear—inside an overly static, lifeless anthropological ontology. Not only does the term huntology intend to conjure up *the repressed dynamic* out of which the figure of the human emerges, not only does it demand, following Derrida, that we develop an "alternative ontology of animal life, an ontology in which the human-animal distinction is called radically into question,"[43] it also renders visible the violence done to the living beings (for example, women or foreigners along with beasts and vermin) that are chased away from the category of the human. This exclusion recalls Derrida's notion of carnophallogocentrism, denoting the traditionally masculinist dimension of the hunt, a critique of which remains to be developed in future work.

Questioning the premise of any unqualified distinction between human and nonhuman animals, huntology offers the opportunity to rethink what is usually excluded from the realm of ontology. Hence the transparent echo with Derrida's "hauntology," a key principle of which is the welcoming in philosophy of what philosophy tends to discard, namely, specters, ghosts, and other ephemeral appearances that lack ontological substance. In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida himself makes the relationship between hunting and haunting explicit:

> This logic and this topology of the paradoxical hunt (whose figure, beginning before Plato, will have traversed the whole history of philosophy, more precisely of the ontological inquest or inquisition) should not be treated as a rhetorical ornament when one reads *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*: its first sentences, as we saw, immediately associate the figure of haunting with that of hunting.[44]

Affirming the possibility of accounting for that which is not recognized by ontology, Derrida *deontologizes* philosophy. This essay wishes to expand the scope of this gesture by opening ontology, with the concept of huntology, to animal life. Huntology is both a critical paradigm for "tracking down" the anthropocentric prejudice undergirding a dominant Western philosophical discourse and a reparative theory that seeks to nuance the dogmatism of human/animal demarcations and to rethink, without necessarily doing away with, that which calls itself human.

>> Conclusion: *Ergo Sum*

No consciousness that we would recognize as consciousness. No awareness, as far as we can make out, of a self with a history. What I mind is what tends to come next. They have no consciousness *therefore*. Therefore what? Therefore we are free to use them for our own ends? Therefore we are free to kill them?
— J. M. Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello*

So then, what, therefore? What comes *after* the human, as the notion of posthumanism would seem to herald? To answer this question, Derrida proposes that we invent a different, "unheard-of grammar"[45] to articulate differently the relationship between the human and the nonhuman. *The Animal That Therefore I Am* is punctuated by a series of "therefores"—recalling Descartes's *cogito ergo sum*. It adopts, as well as mocks, the predatory logic of this grammatical hinge that poses, really *imposes*, a methodical connection between a series of proposals or events. One recalls that Derrida famously opens his essay "Différance" with a "therefore" that is not preceded by anything in order to show the potential violence made possible by this adverb. The "therefore" postulates a logical sequence, it presupposes a "before" and an "after" and determines a hierarchical order, as is shown by the Bellerophon passage: "[The hunter] follows. He is he who follows. He follows and persecutes the beast."

But it also implies a categorical statement. There is something authoritative and final in the binding character of the therefore, something exclusive. "When we say 'therefore,' when we consider a proposition as concluded, we make it the object of an assertion," writes Deleuze. "We set aside the premises and affirm it for itself, independently. We relate it to the state of affairs which it denotes, independently of the implications which constitute its signification."[46] The dismissal of the premises upon which the "therefore" depends echoes the way in which the human excepts himself from the picture he paints of the animal.

Huntology exposes the temptation of a purely logical discourse that would enforce a rational order on the heterogeneity of animal life. The point is neither to abolish all notions of order, nor is it to "stop" the anthropological machine, nor still to cease hunting. Rather, the imperative is to reassess what kind of relationship the human has to the animal. Right after mentioning the logic that, according to him, guided the most "paradigmatic, dominant, and normative" figures of Western philosophy (namely, Kant, Heidegger, Levinas and Lacan), Derrida writes:

The point is neither to abolish all notions of order, nor is it to "stop" the anthropological machine, nor still to cease hunting.

> The strategies of this *right* (*for more*) *to follow* [droit de suite] that I have just evoked resemble those of the hunt, whether the animal thereby follows its desire, what is desirable in its desire (or in its need, as will be said by those who wish, out of desire or need, to believe in an ironclad distinction between the two, desire and need, just as in the distinction between man and animal), or whether, while following its drive, the animal finds itself followed, tracked by the drive of the other. And we should not exclude the possibility that the same living creature is at the same time follower and followed, hunter knowing itself to be hunted, seducer and seduced, persecutor and fugitive, and that the two forces of the same strategy, indeed of the same movement, are conjugated not only in the same animal, the same *animot*, but in the same instant.[47]

The logic of following presupposes the possibility of an affinity (of a relation as a relative) and yet, in the same gesture, contributes to producing the very dichotomy it promises to eradicate. In lieu of chasing the animal, the hunter chases it away. For Derrida, "hauntology" evokes and revokes in the same gesture the violence of ontology: it exceeds the confines of ontology, it is irreducible to it, but it is also what makes ontology possible, what justifies it. Likewise, huntology accounts for the formation of anthropological ontology and offers a poetic grammar for deconstructing the "ironclad" demarcation between the nonhuman and the human animal. Huntology should be understood as eluding the logic of philosophical language, dreaming instead of a non-hypotactic, illogical grammar that would upset certain preestablished associations concerning the animal and disturb the unyielding predation of grammatical predication. If huntology is not ossified into an ontology, if it is not stabilized, if it remains cynegetic, if it opens itself to other forms of existence, if it does not try to erase the traces of its own process, it might provide the grounds for an alternative, non-nihilistic posthumanist perspective.

Notes

1 The entanglement of hunting with the acquisition of knowledge is nothing new. Prehistoric cave paintings, for example, demonstrate a longstanding interdependence between ritual, epistemological, and predatorial practices.

2 Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello*, 104. On the issue of slavery in *Politics* (1–8.), Aristotle argues that war for the purpose of acquisition can be just, and the kind of acquisition he is thinking of involves acquiring other humans who are "intended by nature to be governed" (i.e., slaves). He then likens this war to hunting (the "acquiring" of wild beasts). Aristotle was perhaps influenced by Xenophon's *Cynegeticus, or Treatise on Hunting*, in which hunting is described as "an excellent preparation for the toils of war" (Xenophon, *Minor Works*, 368), or by Plato's *The Laws*, where the youths are advised to hunt in order to be familiar with their country in case it must be defended against enemies (Plato, *The Laws*, 192). For Plato, the hunt concerns animals and humans indifferently: "we also have to take into account the hunting of men, not merely by their enemies in war . . . but by their lovers, who 'pursue' their quarry for many different reasons, some admirable, some execrable" (*The Laws*, 272).

3 As Jacques Rancière defines it, "the distribution of the sensible [is] the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it" (*The Politics of Aesthetics*, 12). This essay proposes to understand the birth of modern man, alongside the narratives of colonization, industrialization, and technological progress that consummated the divorce between humans and animals, by reviving a forgotten or repressed rivalry that contributed to determine the modern partition of a shared space.

4 For Derrida, the war continues to be waged in arenas other than hunting grounds, such as in language. Whenever "a philosopher, or anyone else, says 'The Animal' in the singular and without further ado, claiming thus to designate every living thing that is held not to be human," Derrida affirms, "he declares, just as a disease is declared by means of a symptom, he offers up for diagnosis the statement 'I am uttering an *asinanity* [bêtise].' And this 'I am uttering an *asinanity*' should confirm not only the animality that he is disavowing but his complicit, continued, and organized involvement in a veritable war of the specie2s" (Derrida, The Animal That Therefore I Am, 31).

5 The fear that technology would have a negative influence on the human hunter is not new. In *The Laws*, Plato praises hunting but opposes the capture of birds and fish with nets and traps: "Friends, we hope you'll never be seized by a desire or passion to fish in the sea or to angle or indeed to hunt water animals at all; and don't resort to creels, which a lazybones will leave to catch his prey whether he's asleep or awake. We hope you never feel any temptation to capture men on the high seas and take to piracy, which will make you into brutal hunters and outlaws. . . . Nor should any young man ever be seduced by a fancy to trap birds. . . . All men who wish to cultivate the 'divine' courage have only one type of hunting left, which is the best: the capture of four-footed animals with the help of dogs and horses and by your own exertions, when you hunt in person and subdue all your prey by chasing and striking them and hurling weapons at them" (Plato, *The Laws*, 273).

6 This accounts for how the conversation could be radically changed by Jeremy Bentham, for whom the question concerning the animal was not "can they think" but, famously, "can they suffer?" Since then, the war was no longer waged over the question of reason but, Derrida suggests, "over the matter of pity." The last two centuries "have been those of a struggle, a war (whose inequality could one day be reversed) being waged between, on the one hand, those who violate not only animal life but even and also this sentiment of compassion, and, on the other hand, those who appeal for an irrefutable testimony to this pity" (Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 28–29).

7 Jacques Roger reminds us that the knowledge of the animal displayed in Buffon's *Histoire naturelle* was that "of the huntsman" and that the *philosophe* Friedrich Melchior Grimm "used the article 'Hunt' in the *Encyclopédie* to oppose Buffon's position" (Roger, *Buffon*, 89, 270n5).

8 Darwin describes the fauna of the Galapagos Archipelago as being naturally "tame." The terrestrial birds of these islands "are often approached sufficiently near to be killed with a switch, and sometimes, as I myself tried, with a cap or hat. *A gun is here almost superfluous*; for with the muzzle I pushed a hawk off the branch of a tree." Fear of man is an acquired instinct, Darwin continues: "It would appear that the birds of this archipelago, not having as yet learnt that man is a more dangerous animal than the tortoise or the Amblyrhynchus, disregard him, in the same manner as in England shy birds, such as magpies, disregard the cows and horses grazing in our fields" (Darwin, *The Voyage of the Beagle,* 356; emphasis mine).

9 This self-definition, as is well known, rested heavily upon an imperialistic conception not only of nature but also of those who were designated as the "naturals." "Audubon, the self-taught frontiersman risen to eminence in Europe and at home," Blum explains, "was the naturalist *par excellence* of the Jacksonian era, while at the same time his idealization of nature, and establishment of a privileged vantage point for viewing it, appealed to the Whig elite of New England. Audubon's contemporary culture-hero counterparts opened the Oregon Trail and roamed the best-selling fiction of James Fenimore Cooper. The wilderness celebrated in these mythmaking works and deeds was about to be subjected to speculation, migration, and cultivation. Audubon, like Leatherstocking, symbolized the appropriation for the European population of the intimate knowledge of nature associated with the Indian" (Blum, *Picturing Nature*, 118). Cooper's representation of Leatherstocking can be seen as an exemplary if problematic conflation of the American imperial project with the "natural" and "ancestral" activity of the hunt. A "white man" raised by the "red men," Leatherstocking (a.k.a. Deerslayer, La Longue Carabine, Trapper, or Hawkeye) is, as his aliases indicate, the überhunter. Hunting as a cultural identity for Americans came about when it ceased to be a practical, everyday activity, but also when the image of the American Indian was being refashioned as that of a hunter in order to permit a spurious identification with him.

10 Rhodes, *John James Audubon*, 74–75.

11 Stebbins, "Audubon's Drawings of American Birds," 20.

12 Rhodes, *John James Audubon*, 376.

13 Ibid.

14 The Manifest Destiny that these images illustrate is also reminiscent of Emanuel Leutze's *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way* (1862) or John Gast's *American Progress* (1872), in which a series of archetypal American figures are facing the wild and promising territories of the West. During the American Civil War, Leutze was commissioned by the Congress to paint this mural in the Capitol celebrating Manifest Destiny. Gast's painting celebrates the progress of civilization over savagery epitomized by Native Americans fleeing westward and untamed nature represented by a herd of bison hunted by men on horses.

15 Audubon, *Writings and Drawings*, 355.

16 Ibid., 355–56.

17 Cook, "Walton Ford," par. 2.

18 Sollins, Art 21, 124.

19 Cook, "Walton Ford," par. 8.

20 Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 16, 15.

21 Wolfe summarizes brilliantly Stanley Cavell's analysis of the irreducible gulf separating the knowing

subject and the phenomenal world in Kant's philosophy: "Cavell has plumbed the consequences of what it means to do philosophy in the wake of what he calls the Kantian 'settlement' with skepticism. As he characterizes it in *In Quest of the Ordinary*, 'To settle with skepticism . . . to assure us that we do know the existence of the world, or rather, that what we understand as knowledge is *of* the world, the price Kant asks us to pay is to cede any claim to know the thing in itself, to grant human knowledge is not of things as they are in themselves. . . . But if, on Cavell's reading of Kant, 'reason proves its power to itself, over itself' by logically deriving the difference between the world of mere appearances (phenomena) that we can know and the world of the *Ding an sich* (noumena), which our knowledge never touches, then we find ourselves in a position that is not just odd but in fact profoundly unsettling, for philosophy in a fundamental sense then fails precisely insofar as it succeeds. We gain knowledge, but only to lose the world" (Wolfe, Introduction, 4–5).

22 Daston and Galison, *Objectivity,* 80.

23 Ibid., 79. For a detailed account of the skepticism and criticisms with which Audubon's paintings were met by the naturalist community of the time, see Blum, *Picturing Nature*, 111–18. "The improving position of the fine arts and of their practitioners in American society and the increasing popularity of landscape painting enhanced Audubon's reputation at home. At the same time, the growing distinction between naturalist and illustrator in scientific practice created the basis for controversy over defining his true calling. . . . In an important sense, Audubon, man and work, epitomized the transformation of the practice of the naturalist-illustrator into the ethos of the artist-naturalist" (Blum, *Picturing Nature*, 115).

24 Blum, *Picturing Nature*, 88.

25 Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*, 363.

26 Rhodes, *John James Audubon*, 379.

27 I should make it clear that the humanism at issue here is one whose theoretical roots are located in the Western metaphysical tradition influenced by Descartes and (for the most part) by his followers. It is this ontotheological metaphysics that Derrida is after in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. On the seminal position occupied by Descartes in this philosophical tradition, see Fontenay, *Le silence des bêtes*, 275–88.

28 Agamben, *The Open*, 37.

29 Ibid., 38.

30 Nietzsche always describes man as another animal—that is, as an animal among others, and not as essentially other to animals. A large section of *The Genealogy of Morals* is devoted to rehistoricizing the separation between man and animal (see for instance 70; II.8, 85; II.16, 87; II.18, and 95; II.24). In *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche playfully wishes to extend Descartes's concept of the animal-machine to the human: "Man is absolutely not the crown of creation: every creature stands beside him at the same stage of perfection. . . . And even in asserting that we assert too much: man is, relatively speaking, the most unsuccessful animal, the sickliest, the one most dangerously strayed from its instincts—with all that, to be sure, the most *interesting*!—As regards the animals, Descartes was the first who, with a boldness worthy of reverence, ventured to think of the animal as a *machine*: our whole science of physiology is devoted to proving this proposition. Nor, logically, do we exclude man, as even Descartes did: our knowledge of man today is real knowledge precisely to the extent that it is knowledge of him as a machine" (*The Anti-Christ,* 136).

31 On the impossibility of determining what is proper to the human and the political and scientific consequences of such a limitation, see the last chapter of Smith, *Scandalous Knowledge*, "Animal Relatives, Difficult Relations."

32 Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 130.

33 Agamben, *The Open*, 79.

34 Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 89.

35 Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 74.

36 Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," 225–26.

37 Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 201. Heidegger himself comments on the circularity of his philosophical inquiry at the beginning of The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics, the 1929 seminar where he meditates at length on the (non) place the animal occupies in the world. While this recursivity testifies to Heidegger's attempt at coming to terms with the question of the animal, his investigation is thoroughly thetic in that it holds unyieldingly to the axiom that the animal is "poor in world" (*weltarm*) while man is "configurator of world" (*weltbildend*). Heidegger describes the animal essence as a form of permanent "numbness" or "captivation" (*Benommenheit*)—one is tempted to say of "capture." It seems that the animal, as it is presented in Heidegger's seminar, plays the role of a tragic hero trapped into an ineluctable pattern of repetition. I do not have the time here to elaborate on this, but it would be interesting to look at the examples of the bee cut in half that continues to drink, unaware that it will never be satiated (figure of Tantalus); the bee unable to return home (figure of Ulysses); the moth whose wings are burnt by the lamp (figure of Icarus).

38 Audubon, *Writings and Drawings*, 355.

39 Serres, *The Parasite*, 77.

40 Significantly, the second half of the proverb is "et il revient au galop," which suggests that if you try to chase nature away, it finds a way to get back at you, acting as some sort of *revenant*. It is worth noting that nature comes back *galloping*, at the swift pace of the ur-domesticated animal.

41 Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 175; emphasis in original.

42 Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 66.

43 Calarco, *Zoographies*, 141. Calarco goes on to say that Derrida's œuvre paves the way for a "relational and machinic ontology of singularities, one that is informed as much by Nietzschean and Deleuzean materialism as by Heidegerrian and Levinasian phenomenology. This is perhaps the most radical strain of Derrida's thought on the question of the animal, and it is the closest to the argument developed in this book—for this line of thought takes away the ground for making any kind of binary human-animal distinction. If what we call 'animal life' is constituted by a 'heterogeneous multiplicity' of entities and a 'multiplicity of organizations of relations' between organic and inorganic life forms, then what sense can be made of an insuperable division between human and animal? Do not 'human beings' belong to this multiplicity of beings and relations? Are we to believe that human beings are somehow exempt from the play of differences and forces, of becomings and relations?" (ibid., 142).

44 Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 175–76.

45 Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 64. Derrida's dream can be read as a response to Nietzsche's fear in *The Twilight of the Idols* that we are not rid of God because we still believe in grammar. See Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols*, 48.

46 Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 19–20.

47 Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 55.

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