American Entrapments: Taxonomic Capture in James Fenimore Cooper's The Prairie

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This essay examines the blind spots of taxonomy, both as a method for classifying animals and, conceived more broadly, as a system for arranging and distributing (*taxis-nomia*) the sensible in early America (the parceling and surveying of land, early developments in the creation of national parks and zones of conservation, and so forth). I show that taxonomy—a scientific paradigm whose "modernizing logic" was extended to the gridding and mapping of the land exemplified by the 1785 Land Ordinance, as well as to the systematized control and management of animal and plant life promoted in the agrarian model that culminated with the Louisiana Purchase—rests on an operation of vision blind to its own limitations. James Fenimore Cooper's *The Prairie*, I argue, registers a historical consciousness attuned to the fast-changing entanglements of humans, animals, and land at the turn of the nineteenth century. The novel is an exemplary site of land speculation[1] at the heart of the project of early American frontierism, which is the subject of Cooper's meditation on the role of vision in the mercantile and libidinal investments of the expansionist doctrine that came to be known as Manifest Destiny. The novelist's approach stands in stark contrast (or so it would seem) to the feverish epistemophilia of taxonomic classification—which sought to subdivide the world into discrete elements neatly ordered and tabulated—that was gaining ground at the time.

To See Is to Overlook

In his *Histoire Naturelle*, French naturalist George-Louis Leclerc, Count of Buffon, pondered at length the absence of large animals in the Americas, ultimately finding fault in the New World's cold and humid climates. He noted that the elephant, which roamed the Old Continent, was nowhere to be found on the New. The only animal that remotely resembled the elephant was the Brazilian tapir, but this "elephant of the New World," Buffon derided, was but "the size of a six-month-old calf, or a very small mule" (qtd. in Gerbi 4). American animals were not essentially different from their Old World cousins, only, according to him, smaller and weaker. The argument went something like this: *you* in America have the tapir, *we* have the elephant; you the puma, we the lion; you the llama, we the camel; and so forth. Buffon condescended, however, that while the Old World's megaspecies only

[1] Speculation, if only because Cooper never set foot on the landscape he describes in such zealous detail. He lived in Paris at the time he wrote *The Prairie* and drew inspiration mainly from geologist and botanist Edwin James's *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains* and Nicholas Biddle's edition of Lewis and Clark's notebooks.

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found diminutive counterparts in America, insects and reptiles seemed to flourish. The allegation of geotaxonomic inferiority, what Buffon diagnosed as the New Continent's degeneracy, also applied to domestic animals, which he argued tended to grow smaller on American soil, with the notable exception of the pig, which, while large in size, was doomed by birth to its lowly status. By the same token, if insects and reptiles thrived in the New World, it was precisely because they were regarded as "impure" creatures "swollen by the humid heat" (8n20).

For the naturalist, *all of nature* was condemned to wither in America's unripe soil. Man was no exception, for Buffon described the American "savage" as "feeble and small in his organs of generation" (6). In the inhospitable climate of the New World, "far from making himself master of this territory as his own domain, [man] ruled over nothing; where having never subjugated either animals or the elements, nor tamed the waters, nor governed the rivers, nor worked the earth, he was himself no more than an animal of the first order, existing within nature as a creature without significance, a sort of helpless automaton" (5–6). While attributing nature's degeneracy to inclement conditions, Buffon managed in the same breath to blame the Native American for his passivity (a corollary of his perceived impotence), thereby helping to sanction the greatness of the Old Continent and to present the exploitation of the New as a moral imperative.

Buffon's theory, not surprisingly, created far-reaching controversy but infuriated no one more than Thomas Jefferson, who would famously counter Buffon by devoting a large portion of his *Notes on the State of Virginia* to documenting how America's animals more than measured up to European fauna (Europe conveniently standing in for the entirety of the Old World). Jefferson found his most decisive refutation in the fossil remains of the great American *incognitum*—what we recognize today as the mammoth—which boasted "five or six times the cubic volume of the elephant" (*Writings* 167). This transatlantic rivalry was more than merely anecdotal, as soon after his rejoinder was published, Jefferson exhorted Harvard University president Joseph Willard to encourage the study of America's natural history. Yet neither the mere desire to establish the United States' intellectual independence nor a will to correct a scientific wrong—nor still simply the by-product of a battle of male egos—Jefferson's ambition was, above all, *an economic strategy*. His *Notes* were initially written as "an application for a loan" (Dutta) in response to a questionnaire sent by French diplomat François Barbé-Marbois, who would later play a crucial role in brokering the Louisiana Purchase as Napoleon's secretary of the treasury. The stakes of Jefferson's own game of one-upmanship were to convince potential investors of America's economic viability—with animals serving as metonyms for the health of the young nation.

What interests me about this well-known taxonomic dispute—and what today may strike us as humorous about its posturing as scientific knowledge—is how symptomatically selective Buffon's and Jefferson's approach to classifying animals can be in its reliance on empirical observation. In order to appreciate the logic at work in Buffon's theory of America's degeneracy (and in Jefferson's rebuttal), one must attend not only to what he saw but also to what he *could not* or *would not* see. Indeed, Buffon's theory required that he overlook the presence of certain animals in order to reconcile two seemingly contradictory phenomena: the supposed absence

of large animals, on one hand, and the supposed exuberance of insects and reptiles on the other. If all of nature were governed by a unique principle, as he posited, how could he account for such different responses to the New World's climate? Buffon's answer was to disregard altogether smaller and lower species as *essentially less evolved*. If insects and reptiles prospered, it was because they were ontologically degenerate, and if they were degenerate, it was because they were small.

It is safe to say that Buffon had little patience for small things. Antonello Gerbi has even gone so far as to argue that Buffon's disdain for small animals, so central to his thesis, "was reinforced by [a] particular physiological characteristic of his, namely his shortsightedness, so serious as to prevent him from even using the microscope" (18–19). It is not just that taxonomy is a problem of vision but that vision appears to be haunted by an irreducible blindness. To be clear, I am not suggesting that Buffon's taxonomic myopia is merely a matter of his not looking hard enough, nor am I suggesting that his scientific epoch is characterized by a systematic indifference to empirical fact. This would imply that an accrued attentiveness to detail would be enough to compensate for the failures of vision. Yet it is not so much that one mode or era of scientific knowledge sees better than another but that, within each, we find distinctive blind spots. And these blind spots must not be understood as impairing vision but as constituting it.[2]

It is one such invisible elision—an elision invisible to itself—that I track in Cooper's novel. Set in 1805, just two years after the Louisiana Purchase, *The Prairie* poses the question of territory at a time when it remained to be seen how the young nation, having just doubled in size, would be changed by the acquisition of the vast expanse of land west of the Mississippi River. At issue in the novel's preoccupation with geography is "the capture" of what seems uncapturable: a wilderness that eludes clear vision, evades representation, and defies occupation.[3] Wrestling with what it means to capture this new land, Cooper introduces a figure who will replace the frontiersman, one who is a harbinger of a different, more systematic approach to territory and its animal occupants: the trapper. At the moment when hunting

[2] If we consider Michel Foucault's partition between natural history (premised on the comparison and ordering of given organisms) and biology (predicated on the establishment of analogies between organic structures), we may think that accrued visibility—aided by the development of mechanized technologies—can account for epistemic breaks, given that Foucault explicitly makes natural history a function of the visible while biology discovers an internal "principle alien to the domain of the visible" (227). But it would be wrong to assume that this epochal shift is but a move from the visible to the invisible, since the *taxinomia* of the classical age was already haunted by an irreducible invisibility (think of the vanishing point of representation in *Las Meninas*), and the invisible principle that governs modern classification (i.e., life) is inextricable from its manifestations (230). Rather than as an indifference to the immediately visible, the transition must be conceived as a rearticulation of the dialectic between the visible and the invisible.

[3] The notion of vision is especially problematic for Cooper, who, Elisa New observes, devotes "uncommon concentration to verbal transposition of retinal impressions and much space—proportionally—to lamenting failures of sight" (44). The opposition that New establishes between the visionary rhetoric of empire and the more pragmatic "literature of experience" (14) is useful here insofar as *The Leatherstocking Tales* does not appear to choose between these two registers of "vision." If they chronicle how "unsettled American ranges become bourgeois homes-as-found" (44), the tales never unreservedly denounce the century's expansionist vision.

was falling out of common practice at the turn of the nineteenth century, the novel, I argue, articulates a shift from a regime of the hunt to one of capture.

My contention is that the ostensible disappearance of animals in the modern period, mostly read through the emergence of industrialization and colonization (as mass slaughter and extinction[4]), is a philosophical problematic that demands we interrogate the epistemology of vision. First, I will show how the novel frames the representation of land in ways that dramatize the transition between two distinct regimes of vision emblematized by the hunter Natty Bumppo, on one hand, and the naturalist Dr. Obed Bat on the other. Second, I will outline the phenomenology of capture as a specific mode of vision to suggest not only what capture makes visible but also what it obscures—and how animals appear and disappear in capture. Finally, I will argue that the logic of capture, in a move from vision to supervision, extends from the animals back to the land.

The Purchase of the Empty Empire

> *[M]ost of those who witnessed the purchase of the empty empire, have lived to see already a populous and sovereign state, parcelled from its inhabitants, and received into the bosom of the national Union, on terms of political equality.*
> *The incidents and scenes which are connected with this legend, occurred in the earliest periods of the enterprises which have led to so great and so speedy a result.*
>
> —James Fenimore Cooper

Whereas the titles of Cooper's four other installments of *The Leatherstocking Tales* are based on characters, *The Prairie* (1827) singularly addresses the space in which its action takes place. In striking contrast to the dense woodlands of upstate New York—in which the first two installments, *The Pioneers* (1823) and *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), are set—the arid swathes of the prairie are likened to a moderately agitated ocean wherein "the eye [is] fatigued with the sameness and chilling dreariness of the landscape" (*Prairie* 13). The last retreat for "the barbarous and savage occupants of the country" and a provisional refuge for those who wish to escape the law, the prairie is unintelligible to this disembodied and wearied "eye."

[4] Needless to say, extinction and mass slaughter, if the most patent cases of animal disappearance, are far from simple. It is at the turn of the nineteenth century that discourses on extinction emerged in the wake of epic enterprises of comparative taxonomy and classification, which means that a specific knowledge is needed to make the absence of some animals *visible* (although, arguably, what the term *animals* covers has changed, since extinction demands that they be viewed primarily *as species*—that is, from the point of view of reproduction and sustainability). About the industrialization of slaughter and rendering and the withdrawal of slaughterhouses from urban environments in Europe and North America, see Nicole Shukin's *Animal Capital*. Shukin recovers the forgotten history of Ford's assembly lines, "so often taken as paradigmatic of capitalist modernity," as "mimetically premised on the ulterior logistics of animal disassembly" (87). This amnesia is not fortuitous, she claims, as it shows the degree to which animal killing and rendering were made transparent in our culture.

Only a "practised reader," the narrator observes, will not be deceived by the seeming interminableness and sterility of the landscape (14).

How does one navigate the asemiotic no-man's-land that is the prairie? How does the land both resist and lend itself to representation? How does one read and write—or "decode" and "encode," to borrow from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari—the blank page of the Louisiana territory? In the preface to his 1832 edition of *The Prairie*, Cooper presents the as-yet undomesticated tract of land as a natural frontier to the young nation's westward expansion: "[T]he broad belt, of comparative desert, which is the scene of this tale, appear[s] to interpose a barrier to the progress of the American people westward" (*Leatherstocking* 1:884). But we know that the frontier, in the American imaginary, is never simply a demarcation line separating the wild from the civilized but also the mythical soil in which the American dream is rooted, the phantasmatic "elsewhere" that serves as the breeding ground for the creature whom Leslie Fiedler dubs the "New Man, the American *tertium quid*" (24).[5] Insofar as it traces the perimeter beyond which myth and imagination come to supplant and supplement knowledge, the frontier constitutes at one and the same time a threat and a promise for the emerging nation and for Cooper the poet-historian. As the novel opens, Cooper announces that the challenge for the now-doubled nation will be to domesticate and supervise the inhospitable territories and assimilate the nomadic (and animalized) "swarms of . . . restless people . . . hovering on the skirts of American society" (9). What the narrator calls the "empty empire" (11) of Louisiana was, of course, anything but—designating the lands of indigenous peoples as well as an untold number of plants and animals. This paronomastic turn of phrase appropriates the discourse of the colonizer whose "eye," as Mary Louise Pratt has observed, "produces subsistence habitats as 'empty' landscapes, meaningful only in terms of a capitalist future" (60).[6] This strategic production of emptiness is not just a rhetorical trick, Pratt suggests, but a visual one.

[5] For Fiedler, Natty Bumppo, "that first not-quite-White man of our literature" (25), is the paragon of a new species able to "orient" itself in the West without turning it into the East and thereby to forgo the colonial violence recalled by the appellation "Indians" for the Native Americans. In Fiedler's view, the Westerner is not the emissary of Western culture but the white man remade in the Indian's image (49). The confusion comes from the fact that, according to Deleuze and Guattari, "directions in America are different: the search for arborescence and the return to the Old World occur in the East. But there is the rhizomatic West, with its Indians without ancestry, its ever-receding limit, its shifting and displaced frontiers. There is a whole American 'map' in the West, where even the trees form rhizomes. America reversed the directions: it put its Orient in the West, as if it were precisely in America that the earth came full circle" (19).

[6] The passive voice in *The Prairie*'s first paragraph presents this as a self-evident truth:

> *Much was said and written, at the time, concerning the policy of adding the vast regions of Louisiana, to the already immense, and but half-tenanted territories of the United-States. As the warmth of the controversy however subsided, and party considerations gave place to more liberal views, the wisdom of the measure began to be generally conceded. It soon became apparent, to the meanest capacity, that, while nature had placed a barrier of desert to the extension of our population in the west, the measure had made us the masters of a belt of fertile country, which, in the revolutions of the day, might have become the property of a rival nation. It gave us the sole command of the great thoroughfare of the interior, and placed the countless tribes of savages, who lay along our borders, entirely within our controul* [sic]; *it*

Perceiving in the so-called empty empire of the prairie a clean slate, Cooper's novel foregrounds two dominant (and seemingly conflicting) strategies of territorial appropriation: hunting and capture. Both approaches are encrypted in the term used to designate the transaction: *purchase*, which, as indicated in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, expresses the acquisition of real estate by means other than inheritance while hinting at the labor and violence—*the chase*—necessary to secure possession: "*Purchase* (from Middle French, *pourchasser*, to hunt down): The action or process of obtaining or gaining something for oneself in any way. . . . The action of seizing or taking something forcibly; pillage, plunder. Also: the action of hunting or seizing prey. . . . *U.S.* An area of land purchased by a colony, government, individual, etc., esp. from North American Indians." Bearing in mind the different valences of the word *purchase*, in what follows I examine the epistemologies and ideologies of capture presented in Cooper's novel as they came to define the ethos of the emergent nation. It is at the moment when hunting recedes as a subsistence activity, I argue, that predation is internalized as Manifest Destiny's tacit logic to capture the "nature" of certain beings, thereby contributing to the eradication of wildlife, the near-genocide of Native Americans, and the naturalization of slavery for racialized subjects (or, perhaps more accurately, the naturalization of race for captive subjects[7]). I hope to make *manifest*—that is, to call attention to the self-erasing mark of the hand (*manus* + *-festus*, *OED*)—the violence done to both animals and animalized subjects by exposing the mechanism behind the sublimation of the hunt within the emergent regime of capture.

Persistence of Vision

> *What [consciousness] does not see it does not see for reasons of principle, it is because it is consciousness that it does not see. What it does not see is what in it prepares the vision of the rest (as the retina is blind at the point where the fibers that will permit the vision spread out into it).*
>
> —Maurice Merleau-Ponty

> *reconciled conflicting rights, and quieted national distrusts; it opened a thousand avenues to the inland trade, and to the waters of the Pacific; and, if ever time or necessity shall require a peaceful division of this vast empire, it assures us a neighbour that will possess our language, our religion, our institutions, and it is also to be hoped, our sense of political justice.* (9)

[7] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun highlights what an indispensable (visual) technology taxonomy was in the repeated efforts to make race an "objective" category from the eighteenth century on, consolidating "hierarchical differences between people [and] rendering some mere objects to be exploited, enslaved, measured, demeaned, and sometimes destroyed" (10). She notes that, as "science moved from eighteenth-century natural history, which based its species classifications on visible structures, to nineteenth-century science, which pursued the invisible processes of life itself, race became an even more important means by which the visible and the invisible were linked" (11). As a consequence, "visible" somatic differences became correlated with deeper, ostensibly less contingent, *essential differences*. "In terms of US slavery," Chun writes, "dark skin became the mark of the natural condition of slavery through which all kinds of external factors—and the violence perpetrated on African slaves—became naturalized and 'innate'" (ibid.).

In *The Prairie*, the aging Bumppo, once a mighty frontiersman and hunter and now but a "miserable trapper" (115), threatens to be supplanted as the protagonist of the romance by his naturalist foil, Bat. It is in the semidarkness of early dawn that we first encounter Bat (or Battius, as he prefers to be called) returning from one of his scientific expeditions. Bat is a cartoonish, easily spooked wildlife expert, a poor man's John James Audubon, with something of a habit of improvising the genus and species of the flora and fauna he encounters.[8] Driven by what we are told is his "thirst for natural history" (66–67), Bat has attached himself to the caravan of the Bush family, a nomadic tribe of squatters with whom he is roaming the "virgin territory" (10) of Louisiana in search of untapped natural treasures.

Losing his path back to camp one day, Bat accidentally "discovers" a new species. Later, recalling the encounter, he boasts of having risked his life "in behalf of mankind" (70) in the hope of documenting his find. In striking contrast to Bumppo, whose nickname is *la longue carabine*, Bat ultimately confesses that his pistol, "adapted to the destruction of the larger insects and reptiles," is of too small a caliber to shoot the specimen. Facing down the terrible beast, the man of science trades the gun for a pen and fumbles for his tablet. "I did better than to attempt waging a war, in which I could not be the victor," he later says; "I recorded the event" (70). His entry, a delectable pastiche of Linnaean taxonomy, reads:

> *Oct. 6, 1805 . . . Quadruped; seen by star-light, and by the aid of a pocket lamp, in the Prairies of North America . . . Genus, unknown, therefore named after the Discoverer, and from the happy coincidence of having been seen in the evening—Vespertilio; Horribilis, Americanus. Dimensions (by estimation). Greatest length eleven feet, height, six feet. Head, erect, nostrils, expansive, eyes, expressive and fierce, teeth, serrated and abundant. Tail, horizontal, waving, and slightly feline. Feet, large and hairy. Talons, long, arquated, dangerous. Ears, inconspicuous. Horns, elongated, diverging and formidable, colour, plumbeous-ashy, with fiery spots. Voice, sonorous, martial and appalling. Habits, gregarious, carnivorous, fierce, and fearless. "There," exclaimed Obed, when he had ended his sententious but comprehensive description, "there is an animal, which will be likely to dispute with the Lion, his title to be called the King of the Beasts!"* (71)

Shortly after, rereading his description aloud, Bat is suddenly terrified at the sight of a dark form running toward him once more, convinced that he is again

[8] The scientist's slapstick quality is deceptive, as Pratt has shown. The naturalist often presents himself as a de-eroticized "insect hunter," a "self-effacing" antihero:

> *Unlike such antecedents as the conquistador and the hunter, the figure of the naturalist-hero often has a certain impotence or androgyny about him. . . . The naturalist-heroes are not, however, women—no world is more androcentric than that of natural history. . . . In the literature of the imperial frontier, the conspicuous innocence of the naturalist acquires meaning in relation to an assumed guilt of conquest, a guilt the naturalist figure eternally tries to escape, and eternally invokes, if only to distance himself from it once again.* (Pratt 54–56)

We must thus ponder the novel's tendency to trivialize the architects of modern racism (as, for instance, in the scene when Bumppo calls Buffon a "buffoon" [106]).

confronted with his newly discovered specimen, only to realize that the form is in fact his faithful donkey, Asinus. As it becomes undeniable that it was his own ass that the naturalist was contemplating all along, he blames his mistake on an optical phenomenon known as *persistence of vision*, in which an image endures after the object seen is no longer present. "The image of the Vespertilio was *on the retina*," he explains, "and I was silly enough to mistake my own faithful beast for the monster" (73; emphasis added).

Bat prides himself on seeing not "with the organs of sight" but with what he claims are "much more infallible instruments of vision: the conclusion of reason, and the deductions of scientific premises" (103–4). As a consequence, and as his surname teases, the good doctor does not see but *oversees* the animal, and thus overlooks his animal. Unlike Buffon, Bat does not discard entire classes as insignificant. Rather, as William P. Kelly has observed, "Blinded by hubris, he extends the ideals of the Enlightenment to a ludicrous extreme," attempting to "impose absolute order on nature through scientific classification" (105). Refusing anatomical coherence, his improbable assemblage proves a chimera, a figment of his own positivist imagination. If Bat creates a monster, however, it is not because he relies too much on his senses or imagination, as Descartes warns, but ironically because he proves to be *overly methodical*. Part feline, part bovine, part avian, his animal does not elude taxonomy but on the contrary lends itself all too easily to the procedures of classification: it is excessively prone to being itemized and captured. Desperate to make the "phenomenal" appearance coincide with a set of preestablished criteria, Bat is guilty of what Jacques Derrida called a *bêtise*, a term that David Wills aptly translates in the English edition of *The Animal That Therefore I Am* as *asinanity* (31).[9] The naturalist's retina is a trap, in which the animal, before it even exists, is already caught. Retina comes from the Latin *rete*, meaning "net," a reference to the retina's fibrous texture. But as the vespertilio anecdote suggests, this net does not just capture the animal as it is but operates as a grid through which it becomes legible. To a large extent, the encounter between the man of science and the animal was prescripted.

Trapped in his own system of representation, Bat is unable to see the animal for what it appears to be, lured instead by what he wants to see (i.e., his own image, *vespertilio* being the Latin for "bat"). But there is another logic at work: Bat's stated desire to encounter a beast that might prove a match for the lion is a reference to the

[9] Bat's quixotic character is underlined by his being inseparable from his stubborn companion throughout the novel (at one point he is even tied up to Asinus by the Sioux who capture him: "[T]he legs of the Naturalist were attached to the beast in such a manner that the two animals might be said to be incorporated and to form a new order" [304]). But Asinus is not just the correlative of the scientist's ludicrousness. The donkey is also recruited to underline the contrast between the trapper's pragmatic view and the scientist's sentimental idealism. Twice, Bat and Bumppo argue over the lot of Asinus, whom the trapper, for safety reasons, wishes to put to death. The compassionate naturalist ends up saving in extremis the life of his companion, who then proves crucial in helping the two men out of a perilous situation. Thus the course of action vindicates Battius and seems to justify his (selective) compassion. It should also be noted that, though recurrently ridiculed by the trapper, the naturalist is never fully defeated in their debates, and at times the author himself explicitly sides with the man of science (see, for instance, Cooper's footnote [100n]).

aforementioned historical contest between Buffon and Jefferson. At the time when Cooper situates *The Prairie*, this "arms race" raged on, with Jefferson still holding out hope, when he appointed Lewis and Clark for their 1804 expedition, that the explorers might find a living mammoth that could compete with the African elephant.[10] Cooper's antihero embodies the paradox of the New World, whose novelty remains defined and conditioned by the Old World. He personifies the expansionist logic that enlisted natural history in the American imperialist project and, in the process, took animals and other beings hostage in a coercive system of classification. But at stake in Cooper's portrayal of Bat is neither merely the Oedipal drama unfolding between the Old and New Worlds, nor still the complicity between natural history and empire apparent in the doctor's martial rhetoric. Bat's *libido sciendi* is also symptomatic and emblematic of a transition from an epistemological model of the hunt to one of capture. Bringing into focus the differences and similarities in how Bumppo and Battius approach animality can help us give another account for the precipitous disappearance of animals that has characterized the last two centuries.

The Dis-appearance of Animals

> *(Thus knowledge gives life laws that separate it from what it can do, that keep it from acting, that forbid it to act, maintaining it in the narrow framework of scientifically observable reaction: almost like an animal in a zoo.)*
>
> —Gilles Deleuze

"Everywhere animals disappear," writes John Berger in the classic *About Looking* (24). Akira Mizuta Lippit elaborates: "It is a cliché of modernity: human advancement always coincides with a recession of nature and its figures. . . . Modernity sustains. . . . the disappearance of animals as a constant state. That is, . . . animals never *entirely* vanish. Rather, they exist in a state of *perpetual vanishing*" (1). It is in that sense that they disappear "everywhere." Sustained by the devastating present simple of Berger's statement, this abiding disappearance explains why Berger

[10] There are multiple indirect references to the quarrel in Battius's discourse (69–70, 106), but also in Bumppo's attempt to refute the scientist's meliorist vision and his celebration of the Old Continent:

> *"*Old *World!" retorted the trapper, "that is the miserable cry of all the half-starved miscreants that have come into this blessed land, since the days of my boyhood! They tell you of the* old *world, as if the Lord had not the power and the will to create the universe in a day! Or, as if he had not bestowed his gifts with an equal hand, though, not with an equal mind, or equal wisdom, have they been received and used! were they to say a* worn *out, and an* abused, *and a* sacrilegious *world, they might not be so far from the truth!"* (237).

To which Bat responds that the trapper takes this issue of old and new too "literally": if the New Continent is of the same geologic age, it is "morally" less mature (238). I should flag that Bat is not entirely consistent in his allegiances, sometimes attacking Buffon and promoting the grandeur of the New Continent and at other times defending the view according to which this hemisphere was morally, if not physically, unripe.

chooses the zoo as the paradigmatic space for our relation to animals in modernity: an emblem of modern colonial power, the public zoo bears witness to the modern impossibility of "encountering" animals (Berger 26). But if animals "disappear" in modernity, it is not merely because they are increasingly domesticated, enclosed in natural reserves, massively slaughtered, and banished from urban environments—in other words, it is not that they can no longer be "seen." Rather, it is because they have fewer possibilities to "appear," in the sense of emerging out of invisibility.

Berger's is not just a nostalgic meditation on extinction, exploitation, and industrialization in the nineteenth century but also, more literally, on the disappearance of animals as their becoming "out of focus" (21) while paradoxically being increasingly *on display* within the limits of their cages.[11] Alternatively, nostalgia could be understood not as the sentimental recollection of a time when animals would have been *in focus*—there has always been, for Berger, an unbridgeable "abyss of non-comprehension" across which humans look at animals, and vice versa (3)—but rather as the recently developed condition of a humanity that mourns the possibility of knowing itself through the gaze of animals rendered "absolutely marginal" and indifferent (26). French poet and philosopher Jean-Christophe Bailly suggests in *Le visible est le caché* that in captivity animals are submitted to a regime of absolute and inescapable visibility. They cannot hide, but also, as a paradoxical consequence, they do not have the possibility to crop up unexpectedly—to appear. No longer a Heraclitean creature spontaneously encrypting itself, the animal has been *encrypted*.[12] It is worth noting that Bailly defines visibility as a form of *réseau*, or net (14), which resonates with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's "visible" as a connective tissue binding the seer and the seen.

The example of Bat's confrontation with the vespertilio is telling in this respect. There is no "encounter" to speak of, since the sudden appearance (or rather, apparition) of the animal—as a dark form emerging from an open field—is almost immediately caught and replaced with a preposterous taxonomic profile. When Merleau-Ponty chances upon animal life, by contrast, it is as a "power to invent the visible" (*Nature* 190), a disorderly "impression" that surges unexpectedly and wrinkles the smooth veil of invisibility in which it was hiding:

[11] "The disappearance of animals takes several forms," explains Anat Pick, "some of them paradoxically those of enhanced visibility. Animals appear as pets, as endeared subjects of live action or animated film, as stuffed toys, and, most significantly for Berger, in the zoo" (103). Pick adds: "The disappearance of animals from daily life that renders them utterly visible—that represents them—as objects of mastery and knowledge has only intensified under the conditions of endangerment. With a hint of titillation, endangerment lends new legitimacy to zoos as engines of species 'conservation'" (104).

[12] Such, for Lippit, is the lot of the animal in "the crypt of modernity" (54). Lippit's claim rests on the uncanny ontology of the animal in modern thought. Conceived as undying, the animal has a troubling tendency to endure without ever being fully present. As a double consequence of the empirical extinction of animals and of the ensuing melancholy of "missing" these very animals, modern humanity schizophrenically mourns the "loss of its former self" (18). If the animal disappears, however, it does not go away; in effect, it remains a compelling element in the discursive structure of modernity, as Lippit shows that the disappearing animal was thematized by modern apparatuses of technological reproducibility and exploited for its symbolic vitality (24).

> [W]*e see the protoplasm move, a living matter that moves; to the right, the animal's head, to the left, its tail. From this moment on, the future comes before the present. A field of space-time has been opened: there is the beast there* [Un champ d'espace temps a été ouvert: il y a là une bête]. *The perceived crawling is, in sum, the total meaning of the partial movements figured in the three phases, which make action as words make a sentence. There is a perception of a continuity between cause and effect. Michotte questions those who doubt this causality: they have what Nietzsche calls a "scientific myopia."* (154–55)

Animal life is not graspable and isolatable as such but should be approached, according to the philosopher, as "a fold, the reality of a process, as Whitehead would say, unobservable up close" (157). Merleau-Ponty refers to an experiment conducted by Albert Michotte in *La perception de la causalité* (1954), a "duck test" of sorts in which moving traits projected on a screen give "the characteristic impression of life, whatever the familiarity the spectator has with animals" (154). The partial movements of the animal—in the case of Michotte's experiment, of the animate—"*make* action" just as "words make a sentence" (emphasis added). In other words, the impression of unbroken causality, which in a recognizably Nietzschean gesture Merleau-Ponty compares to the sense of continuity conveyed by grammatical predication, is the condition for the "appearance" of the animal that becomes "visible only globally and escap[es] from attentive perception" (155).

Causality, thus, is not an a priori principle that organizes life but the name of the global "perception of continuity" whereby meaning is given *to* and *by* the sudden appearance of animal life.[13] Hence, from Merleau-Ponty's point of view, "scientific myopia" stems from the mistrust of one's *impressions* and not from a defective vision that demands to be enhanced.[14] For Bat, on the other hand, the phenomenal "il y a là" of animality, the "ecce" that conditions its visibility, is immediately suppressed and contained by a *caption*: "There . . . there is an animal, which will be likely to dispute with the Lion, his title to be called the King of the Beasts!" (71). There are two "theres" there. It is tempting to hear the doctor's stuttering as a suturing, as if the second "there" signaled the reassertion of control and mastery over the first "there," which on the other hand would be a marker of surprise, a pointer yet unattached to an intelligible object.[15] Battius admits that he made a mistake in taking his donkey for a new species, but in his own defense, he claims

[13] Animal behavior is not "meaningful" solely from an external, objective, human point of view capable of reconstructing a significant sequence of events out of the animal's instinctive and sometimes apparently objectless gesticulations. Rather than explain animal behaviors in terms of objects and ends, Merleau-Ponty characterizes them as "styles" (*Nature* 192).

[14] "The postulate of classical logic is that given the observer as fallible subjectivity," explains Merleau-Ponty, "there can be appearance, but this de facto appearance is reducible de jure by a better knowledge of the apparatus and of our sensorial imperfections. The idea of an 'objective truth' is not beyond reach" (*Nature* 93).

[15] The deictic distance imposed by the scientist's "there" is strikingly (though doubtfully intentionally so) at variance with Bumppo's enigmatic last word before dying: "Here!" (385). This adverb seems to freeze Bumppo in an immobility and a presentism at odds with the West- and future-oriented ethos that drives the rest of the nation and in conflict with the progressive

entrapment: the fault is not his, it is his eye that induced him to commit the crime. That Bat would invoke persistence of vision as an alibi for his mistake is revealing. The problem lies in a flaw intrinsic to the human eye, which proves insufficiently competent to capture the animal and thus requires the assistance of mechanized apparatuses.[16] Bat appears as a harbinger of the new age of "mechanical objectivity," which Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison have defined as the "attempt to capture nature with as little human intervention as possible" (20). In objectivity, taxonomic representation becomes an idealized form of capture.

We see the entanglement of representation and capture in the thaumatrope (figure 1), a device that I take to be paradigmatic of the logic of capture. First popularized by John Paris in 1825, thaumatropes are optical devices made up of a small disc with an image on each side. When the disc is twirled, the two sides appear superimposed, giving the impression of forming a single, composite image. Early prototypes of the "philosophical toy," as Jonathan Crary reminds us it was called at the time (106), commonly depicted a bird and a cage. When in motion, the bird appeared trapped, its capture effected through an *appearance of stillness* caused by a movement too rapid to be registered by the human eye. (While the thaumatrope has been significant to debates about the phenomenology and temporality of

principles that the scientist obeys. At the end of the penultimate chapter, indeed, Bumppo turns down Battius's invitation to "return to [his] countrymen to deliver up some of those stores of experimental knowledge, that [he has] doubtless obtained by so long a sojourn in the wilds," for, says Bumppo, "the Lord has made me for a doer and not a talker" (371). A lot has been written on this mysterious monosyllable. See, for instance, Kay Seymour House (303–4) and John Engell's "Reading and Hearing Natty Bumppo's Last Word in *The Prairie*," in which the word is "experienced as aural event" referring without distinction to "the deictic adverb 'here' and the transitive verb 'hear' uttered in the imperative" (46). Incidentally, in *About Looking*, the modern relation to animals is characterized by a crisis between the hereness and thereness of the animal that, Berger argues, have come to appear incompatible:

> *Animals came from over the horizon. They belonged* there *and* here. *Likewise they were mortal and immortal. . . . This—maybe the first existential dualism—was reflected in the treatment of animals. They were subjected* and *worshipped, bred* and *sacrificed. Today vestiges of this dualism remain among those who live intimately with, and depend upon, animals. A peasant becomes fond of his pig and is glad to salt away its pork. What is significant, and is so difficult for the urban stranger to understand, is that the two statements in that sentence are connected by an* and *and not a* but. (4–5)

[16] There is an intriguing transference at work in the case of Battius, who does not merely want to capture the animal by means of mechanized apparatuses but also dreams of *mechanizing* the animal (prophetically anticipating the intensive modification and commodification of animal life brought by the rapid development of factory farming):

> *Is the power to give life to inanimate matter the gift of man; I would it were! You should speedily see a Historia Naturalis, Americana, that would put the sneering imitators of the Frenchman De Buffon to shame! A great improvement might be made in the formation of all quadrupeds; especially those in which velocity is a virtue. Two of the inferior limbs should be on the principle of the lever—wheels, perhaps as they are now formed, though I have not yet determined whether the improvement might be better applied to the anterior or posterior members, inasmuch as I am yet to learn whether dragging or shoving requires the greatest muscular exertion. A natural exudation of the animal, might assist in overcoming the friction, and a powerful momentum be obtained. But all this is hopeless; at least for the present.* (70–71)

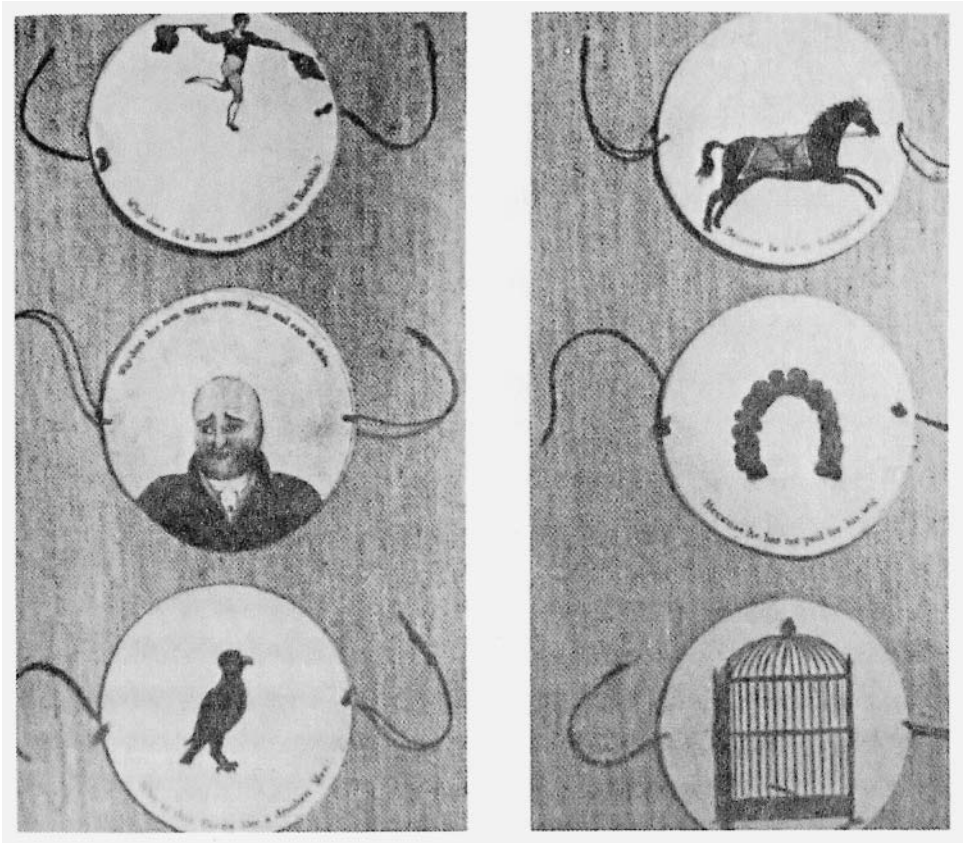

Figure 1. Thaumatropes, circa 1825 (Crary 105)

vision in modernity, little attention has been paid to the images themselves, and particularly to the persistence with which animals are represented.)

According to Paris, the aim of the toy was to generate "young Cartesians" by "driving a wedge between what we know and what we see" and valuing the former over the latter, as film theorist Tom Gunning has argued (33). If the Cartesian discourse surrounding the thaumatrope reveals a "prejudice towards perception as a static process" (34), it also implies that stillness was thought to be the condition for reliable knowledge. Ironically, the thaumatrope taught this lesson by demonstrating that stillness can be manufactured by motion.

The problem is not that knowledge about the animal is produced by apparatuses of capture but that we are liable to conflate, as Rey Chow has observed, "the prey's experience of *being* captured" with "the intent or intelligence of the trap's design" (and, might I add, designer) (46). Chow argues that "the trap tends to be treated as a unified discursive plane . . . oriented toward the interest of the hunter—that is to say, the winner—when, ontologically and epistemically speaking, no such unity exists" (ibid.). In other words, the logics and temporalities of the prey may be *hinged*

to these of the hunter by the trap, but it does not mean that they are commensurable. Because the trap does not require any direct intervention on his or her part, the hunter—or rather, the trapper—can "appear" as a godlike figure presiding over the preordained fate of the entrapped animal. Chow insists on the need to refrain from collapsing the (supposedly reactive and active) temporalities of the trapped and the trapper: if they are "situationally entwined," it is crucial to understand them as "phenomenologically disjointed" (47)—that is, to envision capture not as the thoroughly premeditated and continuous operation it purports to be but rather as a process of entanglement that brings together multiple temporalities without homogenizing them.

The mistake, so to speak, comes when one forgets that it is *through* capture that the animal has come into being and when one assumes, tautologically, that it has been caught because it had such or such defining property (it has been trapped; *therefore* it is animal). When the hands that hold and operate the thaumatrope are no longer seen, when the trapper takes himself *out of the picture* that he contributed to creating, the animal is perceived as always-already captured.

The Trapper

> *Everything else which belongs to the Western scene has long since been assimilated: the prairies subdivided and landscaped; the mountains staked off as hunting preserves and national parks; fabulous beasts, like the grizzlies and the buffalo, killed or fenced in as tourist attractions; even the mythological season of the Western, that nonexistent interval between summer and fall called "Indian summer," become just another part of the White year. Only the Indian survives, however ghetto-ized, debased, and debauched, to remind us with his alien stare of the new kind of space in which the baffled refugees from Europe first found him (an unhumanized vastness).*
>
> —Leslie Fiedler

The transition I locate occurs at the moment when the human hand recedes from view. This does not mean that the hand no longer constitutes the distinguishing mark of humanity, only that the labor of prehension/predation is obliterated or sublimated (here I think of mechanical objectivity, described by Daston and Galison as a form of "hands-off epistemology" [130], and of photography conceived as an art without artist, but I also think of the "invisible hand" ideally presiding over the free-market economy). In the imperial logic of early nineteenth-century America, it is the moment when the hunter is replaced by a new type: the trapper.

In a meaningful footnote, Cooper feels compelled to explain that "this American word means one who takes his game in a trap. It is of general use on the frontiers" (22). Tellingly, the word "trapper" is used in neither *The Last of the Mohicans* nor *The Pioneers*, in which Bumppo is already seventy years old. And when he is resuscitated as a twenty-one-year-old huntsman in *The Deerslayer* (1841), the young Bumppo exclaims: "I am no trapper. . . . I live by the rifle. . . . I never offer a skin, that has not a hole in its head besides them which natur' made to see with, or to breathe

through" (*Leatherstocking* 2:500–501). In *The Prairie*, the eighty-some-year-old frontiersman has become too old to catch anything except through the trickery of traps. The protagonist's name is not mentioned once throughout the novel, and the woodsman would remain anonymous if not for his tendency to reminisce about his former exploits. But a shadow of his former self, Bumppo insists on being called a trapper (61), for he no longer feels worthy of his famous aliases, Hawkeye and La Longue Carabine, which celebrate his once great hunting skills. His decline does not prevent him from playing a critical role in the domestication of the hostile landscape of the prairie, though at this point, too weak to go after animals, he lets the animals *come to him*.

Bumppo's metamorphosis from hunter to trapper cannot simply be attributed to the character's senescence. For most critics, the trapper's lost youth "sounds an elegiac note not only for a way of life and a wilderness that is vanishing beneath the settlers' axes but for the passing of the frontiersman as a type" (Nevius xxiv). But the hunter's decline and eventual death also herald a transformation in how the animal came to be perceived and conceived in modern America. This theory is corroborated by the troubling similarities between the trapper and his foil, Bat: "[I]t is no cause of wonder," Bumppo exclaims, "that a man whose strength and eyes have failed him as a hunter, should be seen nigh the haunts of the beaver, using a trap instead of a rifle" (117). The naturalist is the ultimate trapper, though it is important to recognize how different Bat's and Bumppo's approaches are.

Let us look briefly at another scene that registers an interesting symmetry with Bat's animal encounter (or lack thereof). Shortly after rescuing young Inez de Certavallos, kidnapped and used as a "decoy" by the Bush family (92),[17] Bumppo and his friends are threatened by the sudden irruption of a wild herd of bison running in their direction. While the myopic naturalist is incapable of anticipating the danger, the hunter is able to read the land: "yonder is a sign that a hunter never fails to know" (196). He says to Battius: "I conclude that a hunter is a better judge of a beast . . . than any man who has turn'd over the leaves of a book" (196–97). While on the verge of being trampled by the wild animals, in typical Cooperian fashion (what so infuriated Mark Twain), the two men begin to debate the biblical account of Adam's naming the animals and the hubris of scientific classification. After an unrealistic amount of time, they are interrupted by the "sudden exhibition of animal life which changed the scene, as it were by magic":

> *A few enormous Bison bulls were first observed scouring along the most distant roll of the Prairie, and then succeeded long files of single beasts, which in their turns were followed by a dark mass of bodies. . . . The herd, as the column spread and thickened, was like the endless flocks of the smaller birds, whose extended flanks are so often seen to heave up out of the abyss of the heavens, until they appear as countless and as*

[17] The novel raises on several occasions the specter of the possibility of animalizing, and consequently subjugating and exploiting, human subjects. This is especially clear in the characterization of Esther Bush's brother, Abiram White—thus named because of "his enmity to the race of blacks"—as a "humanity-hunter" (165–66). On the human/animal distinction as a "discursive resource" rather than a "zoological designation," see Cary Wolfe's *Before the Law* (10).

> *interminable, as the leaves in those forests over which they wing their endless flight. Clouds of dust shot up in little columns from the centre of the mass, as some animal more furious than the rest ploughed the plain with his horns, and from time to time a deep hollow bellowing was borne along on the wind, as if a thousand throats vented their plaints in a discordant murmuring.* (198)

Endless, interminable, countless, the herd of bison is reminiscent of the army of demons portrayed in *Paradise Lost*. The group is utterly paralyzed at the sight of this terrible manifestation, until the silence of the bewildered spectators is broken by the trapper, who, "having been long accustomed to similar sights felt less of its influence, or rather felt it in a less thrilling and absorbing manner" (198). Less captivated by the aura of the spectacle, Bumppo throws down his rifle and "advance[s] from the cover with naked hands, directly towards the rushing column of the beasts" (200).

"The figure of a man," we are told, "when sustained by the firmness and steadiness that intellect can only impart rarely fails of commanding respect from all the inferior animals of the creation" (200). Like Moses parting the Red Sea, Bumppo splits in two the torrent of life rushing toward them: "The head of the column . . . divided, the immovable form of the trapper cutting it, as it were, into two gliding streams of life" (201). Cooper describes how the trapper divides the flow of wild animals in terms strikingly close to those used by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Not quite the unmoved prime mover, Bumppo is presented as the "immovable form" that interrupts, parcels out, and organizes life, the arithmetic force that breaks the one into two. If no longer a hunter—a fact made explicit by his throwing down his rifle and advancing untooled, "with naked hands"—Bumppo is not a trapper, either, so much as he is the trap itself. Placing himself between the stampede and his friends, he uses his body to redirect the progress of the buffaloes. He is not merely instrumental in saving his friends but is, quite literally, the instrument of their salvation. The hunter thus dissolves into his own exploit; his body becomes the vanishing point of the partitioning of the herd.

Structurally, in the economy of *The Leatherstocking Tales*, Bumppo—the "saint with a gun," as D. H. Lawrence called him—unfailingly occupies a sacrificial position (55). But at the end of *The Prairie*, having completed the task of paving the way for civilization, the hunter no longer has a raison d'être.[18] In contrast to the arc typical of early American captivity narratives, generally premised on the possibility and desire to return to civilization, there is no "going back" for Bumppo, who insists on being buried far from the din of the settlements. "I am without kith or kin in the wide world," the old hunter confides in his last breath: "When I am gone

[18] The figure of the frontiersman is a tragic one, as Georg Lukács has shown, comparing Bumppo to the "middle-of-the-road" heroes of Walter Scott's novels (64–65). Bumppo's fate illustrates the well-known story of Daniel Boone, whose "long hunts" were retroactively assimilated into the teleology of Manifest Destiny. Fiedler notes the paradoxical nature of Bumppo, who, though he incarnates the true spirit of America, must make way, along with the Indian, for the civilized man: "Cooper disconcertingly condemned his own kind of fiction to extinction by predicting the disappearance of the 'New Man'—that backwoods American neither Red nor White represented by his Natty Bumppo—along with that of the Indian himself" (121).

there will be an end of my race" (383). As a matter of fact, Bumppo does recognize in the Pawnee Hard-Heart his only "son" (384) and symbolically condemns the Indian to survive spectrally in a time that is no longer his.[19] This spectral survival, this programmed yet interminable disappearance, is the subject of *The Return of the Vanishing American*, in which Fiedler laments that nothing remains of the "unhumanized vastness" and "historyless antiquity" of the precolonial Americas except for the "alien stare" of the Native American (24)—not a timeless, primitive gaze so much as a deeply untimely, anachronistic stare reminiscent of the irreducible asymmetry of Derrida's "visor effect" (*Specters* 7).

The hunter's metamorphosis into the trapper—or, better even, into the trap, as in the buffalo stampede scene—signals a stricter distribution of the sensible between man and the "inferior animals of the creation," and concomitantly between the people who have supposedly outgrown their drive to hunt and those who have not (i.e., the Native Americans). In the same way as humanity was commonly thought to have "evolved" from hunter-gatherer to agricultural societies, hunting was often presented in the young republic as a temporary expedient supposed to yield to a more civilized and "humane" set of practices—a discourse routinely echoed in the promotion of the agrarian model defended by Jefferson starting with the great "Land Ordinance" of 1785, which divided the US territory according to the "rectangular survey system" devised by Jefferson himself, and culminating with the purchase of the Louisiana territories. As the ideology sustaining the purchase of land shifted from one of conquest to one of control, the United States grew less concerned with the acquisition of new territories than with the securing of the land.

[19] Tellingly, in *The Pioneers*—set twelve years before the events of *The Prairie*—Bumppo describes the death of his friend Chingachgook as "nater giving out in a chase that's run too long" (*Leatherstocking* 1:425). The life of the Mohican is entirely subsumed under the motif of the hunt. The end of the chase for the Native American metonymically marks a historical transition over the rights and modes of occupation of the land. Indeed, the figure of the Native American, whom the author sees fading before his eyes, is emblematic of the precarious openness of the land:

> *The Great Prairies appear to be the final gathering place of the red men. The remnants of the Mohicans, and the Delawares, of the Creeks, Choctaws, and Cherokees, are destined to fulfil their time on these vast plains. The entire number of the Indians, within the Union, is differently computed, at between one and three hundred thousand souls. Most of them inhabit the country west of the Mississippi. At the period of the tale, they dwelt in open hostility; national feuds passing from generation to generation. The power of the republic has done much to restore peace to these wild scenes, and it is now possible to travel in security, where civilised man did not dare to pass unprotected five-and-twenty years ago.* (1832 preface, *Leatherstocking* 1:884–85)

The unwitting irony that binds the Union's peacemaking to the extinction of the previous occupants of the land lays bare the imperial logic underwriting this passage. At the moment Cooper wrote this preface, two years after Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act, the land of the Great Plains had been for the most part "secured," and peace, thereby, had been "restored." In a Hobbesian gesture, Cooper equates pacification with the process of civilizing the ageless and natural belligerence of the "savages." Yet in the same breath, the idea of "restoration," as opposed to "instauration," of peace implies that the pacification of the land is in effect a *return to normal*. Such logical inconsistency naturalizes the extermination of the Native Americans and works toward the exculpation of the republic's assimilationist politics, which is presented as following a preordained agenda.

Spurred by the accelerating industrialism of the nineteenth century, hunting was gradually rendered obsolete by more efficient means of procuring animals, as in the introduction of factory farming and the industrialization of slaughter, and by the taming of the nation's wild territories.

The hunter's disappearance, however, does not signal the interruption of hunting: even as (ostensibly) one no longer needed to go after the animal, since it appeared, in fact and in principle, already captured, the predatory drive that underlay the purchase of America endured (as evidenced by the mythification of the figure of the hunter, which was to become a significant topos in the US imperial narrative).[20] As Cooper insinuates repeatedly, the hunter and the naturalist after all may well be, as Bat tries to convince Bumppo, "lovers of the same pursuit" (98)—only Bat has a system where Bumppo had a method. The shift from hunt to capture illustrated by Bumppo's metamorphosis and his replacement by Bat is thus less a rupture than a form of *sublimation*, in the Nietzschean sense.[21] Capture, conceived as a geoeconomic model and an epistemo-visual regime, is determined by the *acceleration of the process of predation to the point of invisibility*. This new regime does not just witness and contribute to the material disappearance of animals—evidenced by the patent issues of extinction and industrialized slaughter—but also to their dis-appearance, that is, the negation of the animal's capacity to appear. When the interruption of the hunt appears permanent, capture can be said to have become the *condition of the animal*.

Table 1 summarizes the main differences between the ways in which, in the hunting and the capture regimes, what we call "the animal" is apprehended.

[20] An evolving signifier for America's changing cultural identity, hunting was gradually recast as an archaic recreational activity while at the same time being valorized as a nostalgic pursuit associated with the intrepid early years of the nation. For Bumppo, tragically, civilization represents the triumph of white "cunning" over the forthright "manhood" granted to the Native American. Hence the complex formula composed by *The Prairie*: proceeding from trickery, the inexorable advancement of white modernity precipitates an unacceptable loss of virility and moral rectitude (223–24). This symbolic impotence is compensated for by erecting hunting as a prevalent cultural identity for Americans at the very moment when it ceased to be an everyday activity. Meanwhile, the image of the American Indian was being refashioned as that of a hunter so as to permit a spurious identification with him (see the paintings of Karl Bodmer, Charles Bird King, George Catlin, and later the photographs of Frederic Remington). On Bumppo as a national icon and surrogate Indian, see Marius Bewley's *The Eccentric Design*. On the real and symbolic collusions between hunting and imperialism, see Harriet Ritvo's *The Animal Estate* and "Destroyers and Preservers," Greg Gillespie's *Hunting for Empire*, James R. Ryan's *Picturing Empire*, and John M. MacKenzie's *The Empire of Nature*.

[21] In Freudian psychoanalysis, sublimation describes the elevation of instinctual animal impulses (including sexual attraction for animals) into more socially acceptable occupations, especially artistic pursuits (see Freud's *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*). Often credited for being the first to introduce the concept of *Sublimierung* in psychological language, Nietzsche also defines sublimation as the evaporation of animal drives, but, contrary to Freud, he does not so much valorize sublimation as he treats it as a common form of inhibition and repression, the symptom of modern falsification. Calling the bluff on the ostensible "spiritualization" of modern civilization, Nietzsche seeks to retrieve the obliterated animal instincts still active under its polished carapace (see, for instance, 234–35).

Table 1. Hunting and capture regimes

	Hunting Regime	Capture Regime
Axiom 1:	The animal is endowed with the capacity to appear "on its own terms." The animal encounter cannot be fully anticipated or planned. *The animal is, essentially, something that emerges or appears in a fugitive manner.*	The animal appears, in principle, "already at hand." The animal can no longer be "encountered." *The animal is already there, at the human's disposal (in what could be schematized as the shift from hunting to agrarian to agro-industrial societies, where animals go from prey to cattle to livestock).*
Axiom 2:	Since the animal cannot be taken for granted, the hunt is interminable but each time unique. Hunting is an atelic process (the object of the hunt is not predetermined). *The human-animal agon at work in hunting is conceived as iterative and endless (hence Benjamin sees in the hunter the prototype of the flaneur, as the hunter's experiences "are a product of chance, and have about them the essential interminability that distinguishes the preferred obligations of the idler" [801–2, M2,1]).*	Capture is repetitive and monotonous. Capturing is a telic process (the object of capture is predetermined). *Transition from ritualized hunting practices to mechanized slaughter—in Benjaminian terms, when the killing (and the reproduction) is mechanized, the animal tends to lose its aura.*
Axiom 3:	The animal can escape, or it can die. *For the hunter, the animal is essentially "à hauteur de mort [at the level of death]," explains Bataille, for it "est l'être que le chasseur ne voyait que pour le tuer [is the being that the hunter sees only to kill it]" (370).*	The animal cannot escape, and it cannot die. *Because presumably deprived of logos, history, or consciousness, the animal has been cast as "undying" by a predominant trend in Western philosophy (see Lippit's* Electric Animal*). As Derrida (*Animal*) and Shukin have noted, conceiving animals as undying (thereby unmurderable) has played a crucial part in justifying the capitalistic exploitation of animal life.*

Coda: Land Supervision

For the frontispiece of their chapter on the "apparatus of capture," Deleuze and Guattari borrow the image of a bird trap (figure 2) from French agronomist Noël Chomel's 1732 *Dictionnaire Œconomique*. According to David Gissen, "[s]uch traps illustrated a larger 'apparatus of capture' that . . . took the form of stockpiling nature to impose economic control over the productivity of the earth and convert open territories into saleable land" (185).

In Chomel's encyclopedia, the drawing is accompanied by very detailed instructions on how to capture the partridge: after carefully spanning the net, the trapper is to hide behind a cow disguise in order to lure the birds, who have learned to be afraid of the figure of man but not of a placid bovine. Once the partridge are sufficiently close to the entrance of the circular net (*tonnelle*), the trapper can spring from behind his Trojan cow to collect the prey. Everything is meticulously represented in the picture except for the human trapper, as though the trap was capable of working of its own accord. Even more intriguing is the background of the

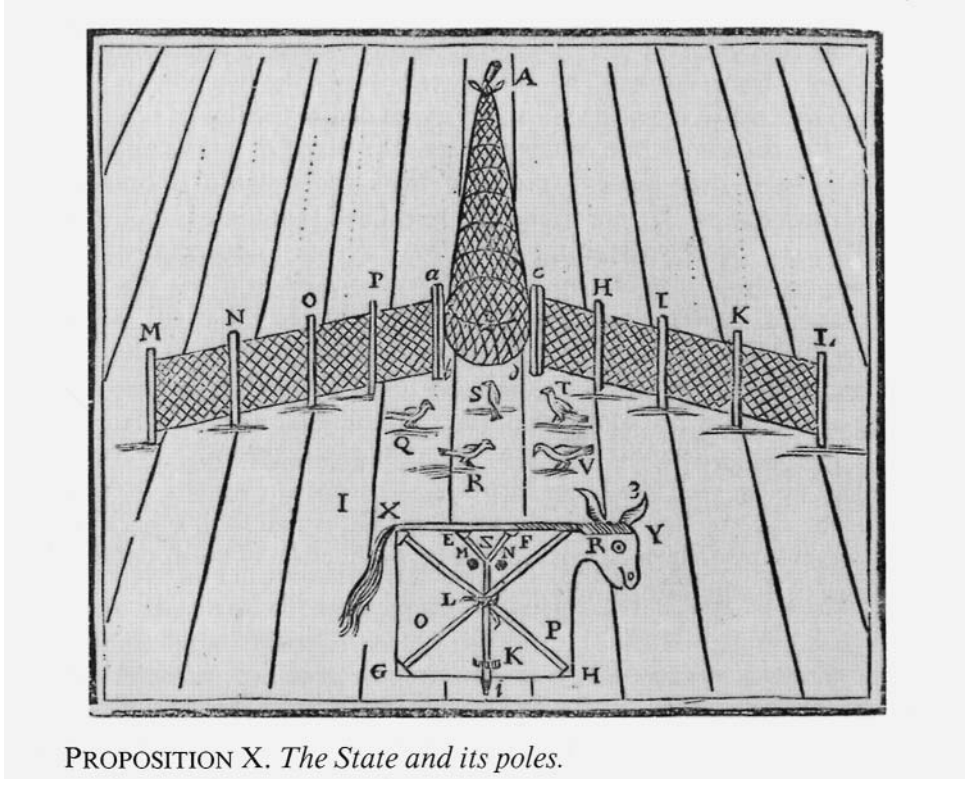

Figure 2. "Tonnelle," under "perdrix," *Dictionnaire Ėconomique*, Noël Chomel, 1732 (Deleuze and Guattari 424)

picture: the parallel lines of the furrows denote the isomorphic force imposed by the state apparatus on the land as well as on the birds, who are forced into the *tonnelle*, itself parallel to the furrows. Chomel's drawing suggests that the discontinuity between hunting and capture (in this case as agriculture) revolves around issues of presence and absence or, more precisely, visibility and invisibility (here, the dual invisibility of the trapper hidden behind the luring cow and absent from the picture). Accordingly, if we follow Deleuze and Guattari, agriculture as capture is not so much the end of hunting,[22] in the sense of its interruption, but instead its falling out of visibility.

* * *

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[22] The distinction Deleuze and Guattari make between hunt and war is muddled by the fact that the *nomos*, from which the term *nomad* is derived, comes from the Greek *nemein* meaning "to capture, take, or allot" (hence taxo*nomy*). This etymological intricacy precludes deriving a simple dichotomy between the animals raised by nomads and those raised by farmers:

> *In striated space, one closes off a surface and "allocates" it according to determinate intervals, assigned breaks; in the smooth, one "distributes" oneself in an open space, according to frequencies and in the course of one's crossings* (logos *and* nomos*). As simple as this opposition is, it is not easy to place it. . . . When the ancient Greeks speak of the open space of the* nomos*—nondelimited, unpartitioned; the pre-urban countryside; mountainside, plateau, steppe—they oppose it not to cultivation, which may actually be part of it, but to the* polis*. . . . For from the most ancient of times, from Neolithic and even Paleolithic times,* it is the town that invents agriculture. (481)

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