Let’s begin with the distinction between “wild” and “domesticated,” a distinction that seems, in these images, already problematic if not indeed under erasure, but only to make possible its crossing with another distinction that follows a similar logic, on political rather than ecological terrain: namely, the distinction in biopolitical thought (reaching back to Aristotle) between bios (or the form of life proper to membership in a community) and zoe (often translated as “bare life,” life excluded from the community and exposed to sovereign violence, the vagaries of natural existence, or both). In this light, the fundamental issue, under conditions of what is called globalization, is not membership in a species but, rather, inclusion and exclusion from membership in a community of those who are protected from violence and receive care. The point, in other words, is not “wild” versus “domesticated” nor even “animal” versus “human” but, rather, to use Judith Butler’s words, “whose lives count as lives” (26). After all, many non-human animals (namely, companion animals) in what Richard Rorty unabashedly calls “the rich North Atlantic democracies” receive an

1 On the bio/zoe distinction in biopolitics, see, canonically, Giorgio Agamben but also, for important correctives and critiques, Timothy Campbell and Laurent Dubreuil.

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historically unprecedented level of care in food quality, medical treatment, and even pharmacological enhancement and health insurance unavailable to many millions of the world’s human population—not in spite of the fact that they are “animals” but indeed because they are animals (198). Or, more precisely, because they are felt to be members of a community composed of different species, lives that count as lives.

Along similar lines, although not precisely biopolitical, we would have to redraw the distinctions that obtain between, say, populations of elk or bighorn sheep or elephants or migratory birds that are monitored, tracked, genetically profiled, and so on, and those creatures—perhaps of the same species but under different geopolitical conditions, or perhaps, and in the same political space, thrust into a different role in the management of animal populations—left to their own exposure to violence, starvation, the perils of climate change and habitat destruction, not to mention those animals who in our society are living only to be killed, whether that refers to the billions of animals involved in factory farming and aquaculture or those animals (exotic or otherwise) whose role it is to service what are increasingly canned (that is to say, managed) hunting operations (and nowhere more egregiously than in my state of residence, Texas). In different ways, these animals are managed via increasingly sophisticated and exact regimes of biopower to “make live,” as Foucault puts it, if only for the purposes of maximizing the extraction of value from their deaths.²

What becomes of the wild/domestic distinction when it is entirely plausible to say (and for these very same reasons) that the squirrels who live in your backyard, along with other urban wildlife such as pigeons or rats or nutria, might well be more wild than animal populations who are heavily monitored by the same satellite technologies used by the military? Wild animals are named (a practice pioneered by primatologist Jane Goodall) and heavily individuated in their behaviour (and not just their reproductive behaviour), their comings and goings plumbed and studied in unprecedented fashion by these new management regimes of power/knowledge: all, of course, in the name of a model of conservation that is conceived more and more in terms of genomics and genetic flows.³ This is indeed part (but only part) of what Roberto Esposito means in Immunitas when he observes that biopower operates not on “subjects,” nor even on

² On animals living to be killed in factory farming, see Jacques Derrida, 26. On biopolitical life and “making live,” see Michel Foucault, 271–72.
³ On the tracking of animal populations, see Robert Anderson. The literature on conservation genetics is of course abundant, but see, for example, eds. George Armato, Rob DeSalle, Oliver A. Ryder, and Howard C. Rosenbaum.
“the body,” but rather at the level of “flesh” or, more precisely, at the level at which we fantasize that the unruliness of flesh can be mathematized and quantified. Flesh, Esposito writes, is “nothing but the unitary weave of the difference between bodies. It is the non-belonging, or rather the intra-belonging, which allows what is different to not hermetically seal itself up within itself, but rather, to remain in contact with its outside” (121).

And yet, for all that, those animals we habitually call wildlife are different. That moose or elk you stumble upon in Jasper National Park in Alberta, where some of these images are taken, will kill the uninformed or the unlucky among us. And in Jasper too there are signs, posted everywhere in the spring, and even in the most inhabited and developed parts of the park, that warn you to keep your dog on leash because visitors have had theirs attacked and killed by grey wolves. Over here, the Fairmont. Over there, not twelve hundred metres away, down by the river, a strewn pile of fur and what is left of a femur, that golden retriever, say, who just bounded out of your Infinity FX35 equipped with Sirius satellite, GPS, a video monitoring system that parallel parks the car without your aid, while in the meantime that dog is happy as a clam from the drug Reconcile that treats his separation anxiety and is probably even covered by the insurance policy you took out on him, knowing about the history of goldens and hip dysplasia (among other genetic maladies that plague pure breeds: too many dogs from too few genes). In the end, though, his pre-existing condition cuts no more mustard than yours with the same insurance conglomerate that, in the world of finance capitalism, runs neck and neck with the drug companies in the race for profitability.

No, there is something different here, with these animals. I think of it as in part a difference in speeds, how the wild of wildlife is imprinted through time and evolution, on a completely inhuman scale, into their bodies and behaviours, the very way a grey wolf moves through its world, all business, sizing you up, and your dog too as he cavorts, all too familiaris, mired in his permanent adolescence, if not neotanous. There is a difference between their speed and their time and ours, not that there is just one speed and one time, precisely because there is no “the Animal,” whether we are talking about wild or domesticated, although the aim of the most craven forms of bipolitical control, that which results in the manipulation and “enhancement” of livestock through eugenics, inoculation, and so on, is certainly to materialize this condition of this “definite article,” to turn all animals into the same mere variant of a flesh-bearing piece of furniture (Derrida 47–48, 26).

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That difference in speeds can be felt by us, in the pit of our stomach and in our bones, because we, as animals, bear that imprint and share that slowness too; we too are marked by that shared past with other forms of life in ways that we routinely underestimate because we have built a world for ourselves around different speeds, different times. That difference that wild animals make manifest even has a sound, you might say, and I felt it, walking with a friend’s dog (on leash) in Jasper, when out of the corner of my eye I saw—but more heard than saw—a large mule deer, weighing probably two hundred and fifty pounds, bounding through the forest, landing at the end of each high-arcing leap with a dull thud—first one, then two, then three—and it reverberated through the very earth we shared, up through my feet and into my chest like a bass note sounded from the Pleistocene.

In *Basin and Range*, John McPhee observes that geologists “see the unbelievable swiftness with which one evolving species on the earth has learned to reach into the dirt of some tropical island and fling 747s into the sky…. Seeing a race unaware of its own instantaneousness in time, they can reel off all the species that have come and gone, with emphasis on those that have specialized themselves to death.”*4* If, in this light, our current modes of technology and technoscience constitute, as Richard Beardsworth has argued, an unprecedented *speeding up* of time that “risks reducing the *différance* of time, or the aporia of time” (146) to “an experience of time that *forgets* time” (148), then tending to the qualitative difference of time—the fact that time does not assume its being or reveal its essence *for* the human—involves tending to what we might think of as the “slowness” of non-human forms of existence, the different chronicities and periodicities that obtain and express themselves very differently for different forms of being. Indeed, they obtain and express themselves as such *in us*, in our being as flesh and animal, which is precisely what allows these electrifying and sometimes jarring zones of contact with our fellow creatures.

It is this difference in times and speeds that in part creates the emotional and biopolitical torque of these spaces of encounter—the eighteen wheeler bisecting a small family group of bighorn sheep, the elk with a radio tracking collar. It is as if two worlds, two geological epochs, are suddenly, jarringly made co-present in their simultaneous recognition and non-recognition of each other. But of course, there is another kind of collision here, one that sometimes goes under the name of the anthro-

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4 McPhee 128. Thank you to Kristina Van Dyke for drawing my attention to this passage.
pocene, and it is impossible to talk about that without talking about how the qualitatively different networks of movement and speed experienced in these encounters are themselves a product of networks of transportation, development, and resource management made possible by energy, gas and oil, petrochemicals, and hydrocarbons. In his study of animal migrations, David Wilcove notes that in the North American west, the migratory routes of virtually all the large mammals are being disrupted by “the recent zealous, almost fanatical, push to develop the region’s oil and gas resources,” which may result “in the creation of thousands, even tens of thousands, of new wells and drilling pads over the next decade or two,” not to mention, of course, the phenomenon of the oil sands that has exploded into public view in recent years and not to mention the fact, as Wilcove notes too, that in the entire process climate change “can best be described as the joker in the deck” (121, 7).

But what if the anthropocene is just another form of hubris? What if “what calls itself man,” as Derrida frames it (30), is nothing but an upshot of “peak oil,” as Alan Stoekl has suggested? What if we recognize that “the illusion ‘Man’ derives his ‘freedom,’” as Stoekl puts it, “from the quantification and commodification of natural resources: oil, to be sure, but also the steel, plastics, and other materials that go to make up the ‘autonomist’ lifestyle” (132)? And what is peak oil if not, precisely, a relation to time, what else but a hypercondensed form of that very slowness we were touching on a moment ago, the ossified time not only of animals but also, following the classical definition, of plants, which are differentiated from animals by means of their immobility (and thus are even slower than the animals themselves). In that light, “man” is nothing other than the spectacular conflagration, the wanton burning, of time itself, not our time, because time is not for the human, indeed it cannot be if, as I have already suggested, the human is itself not human but, rather, millions and millions of slow inhuman years released in a geological instant, the “luminous, explosive characteristics” of “humanity’s presence on earth” consisting now “not merely of the burst of population in the twentieth century,” as McPhee writes, “but of the whole millenial moment of people on earth—a single detonation, resembling nothing so much as a nuclear implosion” (127). In that geological epoch—or is it that moment?—we erase these animals scarcely after they have emerged fully into view, in the blink of an eye, for which their time is far too slow, one might even say soft, to keep them here and hold their line.

“Holocaust” means all is burned.
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