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Lions and Latour litanies in *The Sketchbook of Villard de Honnecourt*

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Abstract This essay draws on Ian Bogost's invention of 'Latour litanies' to argue that Villard's sketchbook gives us a compendium of vibrant and unpredictable objects, which is particularly true concerning his drawings of lions. Responding to debates over whether these sketches were actually drawn from life – 'contrefais al vif' – as Villard claims, I chart an alternate path by arguing that Villard's lions represent a moment of encounter with a dangerous object, a strange, ultimately unknowable, predatory other.

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Regularly appearing in the *New York Times* Op-Ed section as an 'Op-Art' series, 'Things I Saw' is a column featuring things seen and drawn in various cities by Jason Polan (2012).¹ Portrayed through simple black and white line drawings, Polan's objects – a plant, a taxidermied coyote, a boy peering at a Jim Henson exhibit – mingle freely on the page, with no apparent regard for scale or thematic ordering. Through this mingling, Polan's column creates what Ian Bogost (2012) calls a 'Latour litany.' Referring to the work of actor-network theorist Bruno Latour, the term describes a list of apparently unrelated things, as in this example from Latour's *Pasteurization of France*: 'A storm, a rat, a rock, a lion, a child, a worker, a gene, a slave, the unconscious, a virus' (Bogost, 2012, 38).² Functioning 'primarily as provocations, as litanies of surprisingly contrasted curiosities,' these lists appear with regularity in the work of Latour and other

1 See Polan, 'Things I Saw – No. 3' (2012).

2 See also Bogost, 'Latour Litanizer' (2009), which

'uses Wikipedia's random page API to generate lists of things for visitors to the site.' Here's mine: Serge Poliakov, Robert Pikler, Gergen Boryan, Wayne Shorter
Discography, Olga Barysheva, Metsküla, Lääne County, Marvel Action Universe, Anglican prayer beads, (11587) 1994 UH2.

3 Villard's sketchbook is available online through the Bibliothèque nationale's picture collection: <http://images.bnf.fr/jsp/index.jsp>.

object-oriented theorists, where they are embraced for their ability to alter our perception of ordinary things (Bogost, 2012, 38).

In his recent book *Alien Phenomenology*, Bogost resists what Meillassoux has called 'correlationism,' the view that 'holds that being exists only as a correlate between mind and world. If things exist, they do so only for *us*' (Bogost, 2012, 4). This paradigm is criticized by object theorists for, among other things, its lack of imagination. Humans may indeed be irretrievably human-centric, but correlationism fails to realize that swans, keys, and apples are just as swan-, key-, and apple-centric. Consequently, with correlationism, 'human culture is allowed to be multifarious and complex, but the natural or material world is only ever permitted to be singular' (Bogost, 2012, 4). By juxtaposing objects in unusual combinations (a goat, a telescope, a packet of kool-aid), 'Latour litanies' draw attention to the strangeness and singularity – the 'thing-ness' – of things, a feat also accomplished by Polan's column, as a chair, a lighthouse, and a pile of tires are drawn together, clearly united only by the apparent fact that each is something Polan saw.

Villard de Honnecourt's thirteenth-century portfolio of drawings operates on a similar principle. Created sometime between 1220 and 1240, Villard's sketchbook reveals the artist's wide range of interests, with subjects including architecture, animals, religious figures, and geometry often crowded together onto the same page. Descriptions of Villard's pages often read like Latour litanies in themselves, such as this summary of folio 18v: 'A castellated tower and wall; head of a horse; five human faces; greyhound; extended left hand; a grazing sheep; a spread eagle; two intersecting ostriches' (Bowie, 1959, 82).³ This diversity of subjects has led to some critical controversy surrounding Villard's occupation, with 'goldsmith' put forth as one of the likely candidates (Bugslag, 2001, 361). Another controversy has to do with one of Villard's most famous images, the lion on folio 24v, or rather, with what has been perceived as a discrepancy between Villard's image and his insistence that this and another scene of lions were both drawn from life ('contrefais al vif'). This assertion in particular has fascinated critics, who argue over whether or not Villard actually drew his sketch in the presence of a living lion. Both of these debates seem to indicate a critical unease with Villard's varied and eclectic work, a **desire to determine a master narrative that would tie his disparate images into one human story**. This essay is an attempt to try something different, to consider the objects – especially the much-debated lions – in Villard's sketchbook as existing with, and not only in, Villard's story. With its propensity to form 'Latour litanies' of seemingly unrelated human and non-human objects, Villard's sketchbook acts as a corrective to traditional, **correlationist philosophy** and interrupts conventional understandings of the artistic encounter. Resisting the narratives imposed on them, the objects Villard draws emphasize the otherness and 'multifarious complexity' of the inhuman world. This is especially true of Villard's lions, reputedly 'drawn from life' and depicted in a singularly unusual way. Neither traditionally heraldic nor particularly lifelike, the lions on folios 24 and 24v make



visual Sarah Whatmore's argument that 'complex circulations and linkages between bodies, instruments and artifacts means that the distinction between being present and being represented no longer exhausts, or makes sense of, the compass of possibility of social conduct' (quoted in Wilbert, 2006, 34). Drawing on recent thinking in critical animal theory and speculative materialism, I argue that Villard's lion drawings represent the artist's memorable interaction with a powerful predator, an agentic object. The *vif* of Villard's phrase thus refers not necessarily only to the conditions under which Villard drew, but to his lived experience encountering an agentic other, a strange, predatory, and ultimately unrepresentable thing.

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Intra-action

Villard's captions, which include descriptions of objects and an injunction to the reader to remember him as well as the 'contrefais al vif,' were not initially part of the sketchbook. Originally drawing on unbound parchment sheets, at some point Villard decided to make his sketchbook available to a wider, unknown audience. He collected his drawings – the exact number of which is unclear, as some of the leaves have been lost – and annotated them in Old French, either by himself or by dictation to a scribe. This multistep process had both a visual and conceptual impact on Villard's book. Once drawn, Villard's images became objects, realities that he had to work around and that interacted with his captions and other drawings in unexpected ways. For instance, on many pages the text and images are inverted from each other, and there are clear attempts to adjust the lines to fit in and around the images (Bugslag, 2001, 47). Chris Wilbert calls for an attention to agency that is less concerned with locating it within an organism and more concerned with agency as 'a relational effect of *intra-actions* between people, animals, and other phenomena,' a list I would extend to include paper, drawing, pen, and ideas (Wilbert, 2006, 32). Following Karen Barad, Wilbert specifically uses *intra-action* instead of *interaction*, as the latter term emphasizes the boundaries between things, especially nature and culture. This *intra-action*, a sharing of agency between and among nonetheless discreet things, is evident in Villard's sketchbook.

Folio 9 is a good example of this, as Villard's text describing how to make the depicted hand-warmer and siphon fills up every available inch of the page and is inverted from the page's other images of a boar, a hare, and a pair of men playing dice (Figure 1). This jumbling together of apparently unrelated images and text isolates Villard's figures even as those figures act together to shape the trajectory of that text. Although both the hare and the boar as well as the two men playing dice are linked together by the inclusion of ground lines (a rare technique for Villard), the text comes between these images. In many religious manuscripts, such an imposition of the text functions exegetically, demonstrating how the Word serves



Figure 1: From *The Sketchbook of Villard de Honnecourt*, folio 9; by permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

as a mediator between the spiritual and earthly realms. In this case, however, the text is not only upside-down but also almost entirely secular, resembling a how-to manual describing how to make a hand-warmer and a Tantalus cup. Rather than unite Villard's disparate elements, then, this layering of text in and around the images further emphasizes the objects' simultaneous intimacy with and strangeness to each other, their intra-active agency. Villard's text itself increases this sense of intimate distance:

If you wish to make a hand warmer, you must first make a kind of brass apple with two fitting halves. Inside this brass apple, there must be six brass



rings, each with two pivots, and in the middle there must be a little brazier with two pivots. The pivots must be alternated in such a way that the brazier always remains upright, for each ring bears the pivot of the others. If you follow the instructions and the drawing, the coals will never drop out, no matter which way the brazier is turned. A bishop may freely use this device at High Mass; his hands will not get cold as long as the fire lasts. That is all there is to it. (66)⁴

Although the nouns Villard evokes here are described in terms of their relationship to each other, there is still a litanizing quality to the passage, a sense of singular distinction to these objects. One of the metaphors Bogost uses to envision Latour litanies is that of exploded-view diagrams, drawings that show the internal components of an object and that are commonly found in parts manuals. Although ‘they are not identical ... the exploded view and the ontograph [another word for the Latour litany] have much in common An ontograph records the presence of many potential unit operations, a profusion of particular perspectives on a particular set of things’ (Bogost, 2012, 52). With its brass apple, brass rings, pivots, brazier, instructions, drawings, coals, Bishop, High Mass, hands, and fire, Villard’s description acts as a kind of verbal exploded-view diagram, resisting narrative and emphasizing the intra-action of parts and whole, of image and artist. And although they involve far fewer figures, Villard’s lion images on folio 24 and 24v also display this intra-action. While critics tend to discount Villard’s possible encounters with a real lion, arguing that his image is mostly drawn from models, I suggest that such a reading puts too much focus on an individual, delimited human story. Villard’s lions, I argue, reveal a more relational form of agency, one that attends to the affective space between models, living artist, and living lion.

4 All citations of Villard’s *Sketchbook*, unless otherwise noted, are from Bowie’s (1959) edition, cited parenthetically by page number.

Contrefais al vif

In his inscription for the full-page lion on folio 24v, Villard writes the following: ‘Here is a lion seen from the front, please remember that he was drawn from life’ (quoted in Givens, 2005, 56; ‘LEO, Ves ci.i. lion si com on le voit p[ar] devant; [et] sacies bien q[u]’il fu contrefais al vif’) (Figure 2). While some critics have tended to take him at his word, assuming that Villard actually drew his sketches in the presence of a live lion, recently scholars have become increasingly skeptical of this claim. These critics – and it is a long list, including Michael Camille and Madeline Caviness, along with Jean Givens and James Bugslag – point to certain perceived ‘flaws’ in the lion’s anatomy, including its uncannily human ears and teeth, to largely dismiss a literal interpretation of ‘contrefais al vif’ as referring to life drawing as it is currently understood. Ultimately, critics have come to the conclusion that Villard’s lions were based more on models than on living lions.

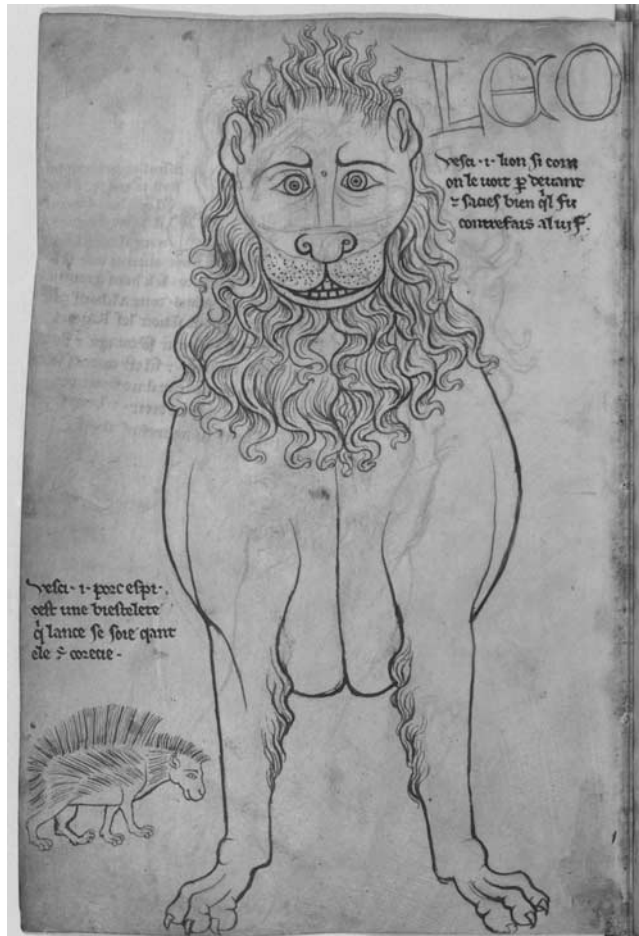


Figure 2: From *The Sketchbook of Villard de Honnecourt*, folio 24v; by permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Givens succinctly summarizes what seems to be the critical consensus, arguing that ‘even if Villard produced his image in the presence of the lion, the result was conditioned by the representational strategies employed by other artists of the period, in Gombrich’s terminology, their “schemata”’ (Givens, 2005, 58). Here, like many critics, Givens attributes Villard’s drawings almost entirely to ‘culture,’ discounting the extent to which Villard’s actual experience might exist in complex conversation with his reliance on models.

For even as critics discount the naturalism of Villard’s lion, they nevertheless accept it as highly possible that he actually saw one at some point. Menageries were frequent throughout the medieval period, with animals arriving through many channels (Kiser, 2007, 105). Such animal collecting served a number of purposes, the most important of which was ‘to reinforce the symbolic – and



actual – distance between [wealthy, largely royal families] and those of lower social station’ (Kiser, 2007, 106). Lions, with their associations with heraldry and royalty, were important to this purpose, and so it is unsurprising that they were the most commonly collected exotic animals. Indeed, the evidence indicates that not only lions, but also an elephant and a porcupine (the largely neglected creature that shares folio 24v with Villard’s famous carnivore) were close at hand for Villard, as Louis IX (1214–1270) owned all of these (Kiser, 2007, 106). It is plausible that at some point Villard saw a living, breathing lion, which raises an issue: What should we make of the discrepancy between Villard’s drawing and what we (and, presumably, he) know lions to look like?

In his article, “contrefais al vif”: Nature, Ideas, and Representation in the Lion Drawings of Villard de Honnecourt,’ Bugslag argues that largely because of the influx of new ideas, including Aristotelian philosophy, early thirteenth-century Europe occupies a unique epistemological moment, one marked by a compromise between a Platonic emphasis on form and an Aristotelian preference for the changing aspects of nature and the privileging of direct experience (Bugslag, 2001, 368). For Bugslag, Villard’s lion – and particularly the artist’s clear use of a compass to map out the lion’s face and possibly its chest – makes this particular theoretical moment highly visible. For in spite of Villard’s enthusiastic assertion of direct experience, ‘in his use of geometry here to define the body of the lion, there is a conscious effort on Villard’s part to avoid a full sense of particularization One might fairly characterize this geometry as an attempt to register the form of the lion, in a Platonic sense’ (Bugslag, 2001, 368). For Bugslag, Villard’s drawing is less representative of a specific lion than it is of ‘lion-ness.’ It reflects the lion in Villard’s head rather than the lion in the room. And yet this emphasis on Villard’s mediated experience of the lion as the only crucial element threatens to elide the ‘reality’ of the lion, a reality that manifests itself to Villard through the animal’s predatory potential.

If the Lion is Angry

Both Villard’s lion on folio 24v and the lions on folio 24 (Figure 3) differ from other figures the artist depicts in several important respects. For one thing, the folio 24v lion is one of Villard’s largest images. Taking up almost the entirety of the page, the lion’s size has more in common with Villard’s depiction of religious figures and architecture than it does with Villard’s other animal drawings, which tend to be smaller and interspersed with other images, like the boar and the hare from folio 9.⁵ Furthermore, Villard’s lions on folios 24 and 24v differ from the artist’s other leonine representations. Here, again, the question of scale is important, especially in reference to folio 24, which depicts a scene of lion taming. Unlike the lion on folio 24v, which occupies a space in which the human does not immediately appear, the

⁵ Folio 4, which depicts a large bear and swan, is an exception to this rule.



Figure 3: From *The Sketchbook of Villard de Honnecourt*, folio 24; by permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

lion on folio 24 is directly involved in a human-animal interaction. In this way folio 24 is aligned with folios 26v and 27, in which Villard depicts gladiators battling lions. However, the lion on folio 24 is considerably larger with respect to the human figure than the lions in the gladiator images, a sense that is emphasized by the drawing's unspecified perspective.

Although the drawings of the man with his dogs and the crouching lion are thematically connected, the spatial relationship between them is less clear. The trio of man and dogs occupies a lower position on the page than the lion, but because Villard did not provide ground lines,⁶ it is difficult to interpret their relationship. Is the man simply closer to the viewer than the lion? If so, this would further emphasize the lion's remarkable size compared with the human figure. Or are the lion and the human not meant to interact? Villard's caption would seem to make this latter possibility unlikely:

I want to describe how a lion is trained. The lion's trainer has two dogs. Whenever he wishes the lion to obey his command, and the lion growls, he beats his dogs. This puzzles the lion so much that, when he sees the dogs beaten, his own spirits are dampened, and he does what is ordered Please note that this lion was drawn from life. (72)

Holding a whip and flanked by two dogs, the man depicted in Villard's image is clearly a lion trainer like the one he describes. This has led critics to assume that

6 Villard rarely provides ground lines. Consequently, the viewer is often unable to definitively establish relationality between objects, which further emphasizes the Latourian quality of Villard's pages.



Villard is here depicting such a training session, and that his claim to have drawn this particular lion from life is also intended to indicate that he had seen such a spectacle. The lion's crouch is consequently interpreted as fearful, in line with classical models (Bugslag, 2001, 364).

And yet Villard's assertion that he drew this page from life – the 'contrefais al vif' that also appears on this page – has been roundly dismissed by critics, who note that such trainings were common tropes in literary texts and unlikely to refer to actual practice. Such criticisms, however, completely elide a crucial part of Villard's caption (represented by the ellipses in the above quote): 'If he [the lion] is angry, there is no use trying, for he will do nothing either with good or bad treatment.' This is a crucial addition as it allows us to understand Villard's assertion that 'this lion was drawn from life' as referring not specifically to the lion engaged in this training, but simply to an angry lion. The image itself supports this possibility; importantly, it does not show an actual scene of training. Rather, one of the dogs yaps worriedly at its master, its flailing feet and tail conveying a sense of anxiety, as the other dog, its ears perked, looks over its shoulder towards the lion with palpable alarm. The lion trainer, too, seems concerned. Although his feet are turned away from the lion, his torso turns back, and his arms are loose; this is not the pose of a trainer exerting dominance over an animal. He seems scarcely conscious of the dogs at his feet, so focused is he on the lion. And his concern seems justified. Although critics have argued that the lion's crouch represents its fearful response to the beating of the dogs, this seems unlikely. After all, the dogs are not being beaten at the time, nor do they seem afraid of the trainer. Furthermore, the tautness of the chain reveals that the lion is not shrinking from the man and the dogs, as one might expect if it were afraid, but advancing towards them, claws exposed, tail thrashing, a cat about to pounce.

In his seminal essay 'The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow),' Derrida describes his shame at being seen naked in the bathroom one morning by his cat. His consideration of this shame leads him to recognize the gaze of the animal, in the process rethinking the opposition between human and animal and resisting those philosophers 'who have never been *seen* by the animal' (Derrida, 2002, 382). We might lob this same accusation at Villard's critics, who have failed to either allow themselves to be seen by the lion or to imagine the lion 'trainer' to, himself, have been seen by an angry lion. But this is too easy on Derrida, who himself elides the potential violence of his own encounter with the cat, 'the scene of the aging, naked philosopher being challenged by his cat in his bathroom *every morning*' (Fudge, 2007, 48).⁷ Although Derrida acknowledges that his cat, who 'follows [him] when [he wakes] up, into the bathroom, asking for her breakfast,' is hungry, he never entertains the possibility that, all else being equal, what she might eat is *him* (Derrida, 2002, 382). Villard's full-page lion asks us to make exactly this imaginative leap.

7 For a similar reading of Derrida, see Steel (2013).

Hello Kitty

Although it shares several important characteristics with the ‘tamed’ lion, the lion on folio 24v is importantly different, as well. One of these differences regards the unclear perspective created by the lack of a ground line. While the absence of a ground line creates a sense of separation between the lion and the porcupine, the viewer’s unconscious attempt to combine the two images into one narrative thrusts the porcupine into the background and the lion into the foreground, which adds to the sense of the lion’s advance upon the viewer. The lion’s strikingly human features, especially its ears, eyebrows, and grin, as well as Villard’s decision to leave out its back legs and tail, further emphasizes this sense of advance. Givens takes this conflation of the human and the lion as proof of Villard’s reliance on extra-leonine visual aids, but this seems unlikely (Givens, 2005, 59–60). If the conflation of human and animal in Villard’s image is simply a result of his slavish adherence to previously established visual models, surely all of the lions in Villard’s book (and there are eight of them) would share these anthropoid qualities. This is not the case. Most of the lions depicted by Villard are far more iconographically traditional than those on folios 24 and 24v. For instance, the lions battling gladiators on folio 26v share similarities with both classical and biblical images (Bugslag, 2001, 364). The lion of St. Mark depicted on folio 13v is especially iconographic, and shares characteristics with many other such depictions, including wings and a scroll which it clutches in its front paws (Bugslag, 2001, 365). Clearly Villard relied on models at times. And yet this necessary acknowledgment fails to adequately capture the whole picture, as it were, and threatens to elide some of folio 24v’s most striking elements. These details, including the lion’s teeth, eyes, and body structure, emphasize its unique ‘lion-ness’ as well as its predatory potential.

Unlike the lion of St. Mark or the lions defending themselves against gladiators, almost all of whom have visible fangs, the lions on folios 24 and 24v have distinctly human-like teeth. The side view of a roaring lion’s head on folio 24 reveals a mouth full of what appear to be molars, lending an eerie, ‘Jack O Lantern’-like grin and an uncanny sense of human/animal slippage to the lion. Might Villard, too, have experienced this uncanny conflation of the self and the other? I argue that his image – and particularly its vacillation between human and leonine elements – suggests that he did.

We see further evidence of this vacillation in the lion’s eyes. While the lion’s eyebrows evoke the human (cats do not have visible eyebrows), its eyes are remarkably leonine. Whereas Villard’s other figures demonstrate an iris and a pupil inside an eyeball, he takes the lion on folio 24v one step further, enclosing what is evidently the eyeball within another, larger structure. This is also evident in the lions on folio 24 and even, to a lesser extent, in the lions on the gladiator pages. Although to my knowledge no other critic has remarked on this strange doubling, I would argue that this extra structure reflects



Villard's attempt to convey the unique teardrop shape characteristic of a lion's eyes.

More than any other single feature, however, it is the unnervingly direct gaze, echoing the gaze of Derrida's cat, of the lion on folio 24v that sets it apart from Villard's other drawings. This is partially because few other figures in the sketchbook could be said to be making eye contact with the viewer at all; by my estimation, this group is restricted to the diagrammatic figures on folios 18v and 19v, the foliate heads on folios 5v and 22, and the oddly proportioned horse on folio 23v. Of these, the most direct gazes belong to the horse and to the four foliate figures. Unlike most of the diagrammatic images, these five figures have clearly defined pupils, a detail that contributes to the viewer's sense of being viewed. Next to Villard's lion, the sharpest gaze in the book belongs to the large foliate man's head on folio 22, an appropriate quality for an ostensibly wild fantastic figure. However, none of these gazes seem to convey much information or emotion. Each figure seems to be simply observing, in great contrast to the active *look* (as opposed to gaze) of the lion. For the lion's eyes are not mournful or even placid, like those of the horse. Rather, the lion's look is malevolent, or, at the least, defiant. He stares back at the viewer as an equal, an advancing, agentic creature.

The lion's upright stance – which Bugslag, borrowing a term from architectural drafting, describes as the lion's 'front elevation' – also contributes to this sense of threat and is emphasized by Villard's decision not to give the lion visible back legs and a tail (Bugslag, 2001, 363). This is not a failure of technique; Villard successfully enfold[s] the 'rear elevation' into his full frontal view of the horse. Rather, Villard's decision not to articulate the lion's latter half seems to have been a conscious choice, perhaps intended to emphasize the lion's human qualities. This is a dangerous endeavor, as Steel suggests: 'In the corporeal tradition, those traits that supposedly distinguish human from bestial bodies – bipedalism and the possession of hands – also proclaim or even, in some articulations of the tradition, enable the human possession of reason, with all this implies about supremacy' (Steel, 2011, 45). By attributing a species-slipping bipedalism to the lion, Villard heightens the sense of danger posed by the animal.

In his article 'What is Doing the Killing?' Wilbert discusses animals that attack people and the resulting shifts in the 'boundaries and flows of human-animal relations' (Wilbert, 2006, 30). For instance, in a conversation about the man-eating lions at Tsavo – made famous in the early 1900s through the book *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo and Other East African Adventures* (1907), and again in the late 1990s through the film *The Ghost and the Darkness* (1996) – Wilbert notes a curious fact about animals that eat humans: they cease being able to be conceptualized as purely animal (Wilbert, 2006). As he suggests, 'the man-eater threatens the distinction of "the animal," becoming diabolical, more active, calculating, in ways that suggest qualities reserved for "the human"' (Wilbert, 2006, 33). This sense of cunning is clearly demonstrated in Villard's image.

The addition of the previously mentioned eyebrows, for instance, gives the lion a look that is both angry and intelligent, while its mane, strikingly different from that of the more formulaic lions, evokes demonic flame. The lion's bipedalism also imparts a sense of malevolent reason on the lion while leaving oblique the ends to which that reason might be put. If 'the upright human form both allows and reminds humans to direct their eyes away from the mundane desires and toward the heavens' while 'the tradition characterizes [animal] bodies as prone to the ground and their eyes directed only at their food,' we might wonder what *this* animal body is looking at (Steel, 2011, 45). Advancing on the viewer with a piercing look and strikingly human features, Villard's lion – here unchained, unlike the lion on folio 24 – presents itself as a powerful predator, an agentic other with unknowable experiences and potentially dangerous intentions.

What the viewer has here, then, is a strangely mixed image: a lion/human, omnivore/predator who may or may not be embroiled in a strange narrative with a porcupine and whose history – despite Villard's 'contrefais al vif' – is entirely unknown. This is fitting, as finally it is this unrepresentability that lingers. In spite of attempts to locate the lion within a specific conceptual framework – attempts that include Villard's caption as well as critical work that tries to place the lion within a history of representation – the lion resists being pinned down by a definitive explanation. Following Graham Harman, object-oriented theorists refer to this resistance to meaning making as 'withdrawal,' observing that 'the idea we have of things really is present, but the things themselves still withdraw indefinitely' (Bogost, 2012, 63). My knowledge of my kitchen table can never encompass what it is like to be my table: 'imagining what it's like to be a bat is not the same as *being* a bat' (Bogost, 2012, 63). Acknowledging this inevitable anthropocentrism, Bogost advocates for the 'construction of artifacts that illustrate the perspectives of objects,' a practice he calls 'carpentry' (Bogost, 2009). In its attempt to depict the intra-agentic space between himself and the lion – a space that includes not only the lion's predatory potential and its unknowability, but also the artist's response to those qualities – Villard's sketchbook should be read as just such a work of carpentry. A record of the sense of wonder created by the lion's dangerous power and ability to endlessly withdraw into infinite worlds of its own, Villard's sketchbook asks us to re-examine the very nature of the artistic encounter, reminding us of the unfathomable depths not just of lions and humans, not just of artist and subject, but of the charged and risky space between.

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