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THE ETHOSOPHY OF THE GRIZZLY MAN:

TIMOTHY TREADWELL'S THREE ETHOLOGIES

By

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Thesis

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## Abstract

Ginsburg, Blake, M.A., Spring 2018

Philosophy

Chairperson: Deborah Slicer

Committee Member: Christopher Preston

Committee Member: Kathryn Shanley

Committee Member: Matthew Calarco

The Ethosology of the Grizzly Man: Timothy Treadwell's Three Ethologies

This paper explores the ethical appropriateness and significance of Timothy Treadwell's life among the bears and foxes of Alaska's Katmai National Park and Preserve. In an attempt to reveal the formative and transformative aspects of Treadwell's project, I rely upon an ethological framework developed by Matthew Calarco that moves beyond the narrow conception of ethology as a scientific practice aimed at systematic and rigorous documentation of the quantifiable aspects of animal behavior. While many people might be hesitant to conceive of Treadwell's project as an *ethological* one, I hope to illuminate the ways in which his life among bears and foxes might be understood as emblematic of a kind of *amateur ethology* and *ethological philosophy* (i.e., ethosology) and then use this understanding of Treadwell's work to give shape to the disclosive, generative, and transformative aspects of such practice. I then suggest that ethological experiments of this sort, while subjecting practitioners to certain risks, are vitally important for understanding human-animal relationships, reducing conflict between humans and other predator species, and generating systemic cultural changes in view of other animals.

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## **The Ethosophy of the Grizzly Man: Timothy Treadwell's Three Ethologies**

### **I. Introduction**

In an attempt to reveal the formative and transformative aspects of Timothy Treadwell's project, I rely upon an ethological framework developed by Matthew Calarco that moves beyond the narrow conception of ethology as a scientific practice aimed at systematic and rigorous documentation of the quantifiable aspects of animal behavior. While many people might be hesitant to conceive of Treadwell's project as an *ethological* one, I hope to illuminate the ways in which his life among bears and foxes might be understood as emblematic of a kind of *amateur ethology* and *ethological philosophy* (i.e., ethosophy) and then use this understanding of Treadwell's work to give shape to the disclosive, generative, and transformative aspects of such practice. I then suggest that ethological experiments of this sort, while subjecting practitioners to certain risks, are vitally important for understanding human-animal relationships, reducing conflict between humans and other predator species, and generating systemic cultural changes in view of other animals.

### **II. Rethinking Ethological Practice: Calarco's Three Ethologies**

Rather than limiting our understanding of ethology strictly to the scientific study of animal behavior, Matthew Calarco suggests that we think of ethology as a manner of doing philosophy—that is, an *ethosophy*—that engages with the question of how we might generate new possibilities for human-animal relationships in ways that exceed what is currently possible

given the legal, socio-political, and infrastructural limitations imposed by the dominant culture.<sup>1</sup> Following Félix Guattari's work in *The Three Ecologies*, Calarco suggests that we understand and practice ethology along three distinct registers; namely, the *social*, the *environmental*, and the *mental*.<sup>2</sup> For Calarco, these dimensions of ethology emerge from both the rich etymology of ethology (from the Greek, ἠθολογία [ethology] and its root, ἦθος [ethos]), as well as from ethological practice itself (more specifically, from the practice of living with and studying more-than-human animals on their terms; that is, from the practice of “interviewing an animal in its own language”).<sup>3</sup>

In order to bring the philosophical force and transformative potential of each of these ethological registers into view, Calarco calls upon the work of Joe Hutto, an ethologist and writer who spent seven years living with a pack of wild mule deer in Deadman's Gulch, Wyoming.<sup>4</sup> Calarco decided to use Hutto's work to illuminate the transformative aspects of ethology because “it is representative of the kind of contemporary ethology that seeks to do justice to the richness and complexity of animal life, and because of the unique findings that derive from [Hutto's] sustained, deep ethological approach.”<sup>5</sup> While Hutto's project is distinct from Treadwell's in a number of fashions, Calarco's reading of Hutto is extremely useful for understanding what was and is at stake in Treadwell's project. I hope to use these three registers of ethological practice—

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Calarco. “The Three Ethologies.” In *Exploring Animal Encounters: Philosophical, Cultural, and Historical Perspectives*, edited by Dominik Ohrem and Matthew Calarco, 48-66. Palgrave Macmillan, Forthcoming.

<sup>2</sup> Félix Guattari. “The Three Ecologies (trans. Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton).” London: *Athlone* 69 (2000).

<sup>3</sup> See Robert Sapolsky. “9. Ethology”. Filmed [April 2010]. YouTube video, 1:41:06. Posted [February 2011]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISVaoLIW104>. The neuroendocrinologist and ethologist, Robert Sapolsky defines ethology as “interviewing an animal in its language” during his YouTube lecture series on human behavioral biology through Stanford University.

<sup>4</sup> For more on Hutto's mule deer project see, Joe Hutto. *Touching the Wild: Living with the Mule Deer of Deadman Gulch*. Skyhorse Publishing, Inc., 2016. Joe Hutto is also known for several other professional ethological projects including one in which he lived with wild turkeys for two years. For more on Hutto's life with turkeys see Joe Hutto. *Illumination in the Flatwoods*. Lyons & Burford, 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 49.

understood as both a manner of doing philosophy in view of animals and as material engagement with other animals on their terms—to characterize Treadwell’s life among bears and foxes as an *exposed* (e.g., posed outward, vulnerable, unconcealed) and *experimental* (e.g., exploratory, unpredictable, open-ended) ethological project. I would also like to use these registers to give shape to the social, environmental, and mental transformations that Treadwell experienced through his encounters and relationships with other animals as well as the transformations that these more-than-human participants underwent through their experimental engagement with Treadwell. Following Calarco, I hope to use these registers to illuminate and appreciate “the promises and challenges associated with those transformations by articulating them in terms of social, environmental, and mental ethologies.”<sup>6</sup>

### III. Treadwell’s Social Ethology

For Calarco, *social ethology* “is aimed at a careful study and consideration of what constitutes social life among animals as well as between human beings and animals.”<sup>7</sup> This form of ethology encourages us to think critically about the composition and character of social relations and invites us to consider how these social formations might be reconstituted, reshaped, and transformed along new and different lines. This aspect of ethology takes on significance in light of how harmful and exclusionary many contemporary social arrangements are with respect to the majority of animal species (including sub-groups of humans who have been devalued and subjected to various forms of animalization). Social ethology, as a practice, highlights how these social arrangements might be transformed to produce more just, pluralistic, and inclusive forms of social relation.

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<sup>6</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 50.

<sup>7</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 49.



In light of the focus on exploring and engaging in alternative social relations, Calarco encourages us to consider this sort of ethology as inherently and necessarily experimental. This experimentality has two primary aspects. First, since ethological research often involves living with other animals on their terms, practitioners are exposed to unfamiliar and oftentimes uncanny modes of relation and ways of being-in-the-world; we might think of this as the *disclosive* component of experimental social ethology.<sup>8</sup> Secondly, however, through the practice of social ethology, one participates in the *generation* of unanticipated and unprecedented social relations, exchanges, and interactions that emerge and unfold in ways that affect all parties involved; we might think of this as the *generative* component of experimental social ethology.<sup>9</sup> As an experimental practice that discloses pre-existing social configurations and generates unique social *becomings* and *assemblages*, Calarco suggests that we recognize how ethology provides us with glimpses of other forms of life.<sup>10</sup> These glimpses expose us to the possibility of

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<sup>8</sup> For more on Heidegger's being-in-the-world see Martin Heidegger. *The fundamental concepts of metaphysics: World, finitude, solitude*. Indiana University Press, 1995. Heidegger's understanding of being-in-the-world excludes animals, however. For a sample of accounts that challenge the exclusivity and anthropocentrism of Heidegger's notion of being-in-the-world, see Jacques Derrida. *Of spirit: Heidegger and the question*. University of Chicago Press, 1991.; Giorgio Agamben. *The open: Man and animal*. Stanford university press, 2004.; Cary Wolfe ed. *Zoontologies: the question of the animal*. U of Minnesota Press, 2003.; Matthew Calarco. *Zoographies: The question of the animal from Heidegger to Derrida*. Columbia University Press, 2008.; and Simone Gustafsson. *Outside of Being': Animal Being in Agamben's Reading of Heidegger*. 2013.

<sup>9</sup> It is important to note, however, that the distinction between disclosure and generation is not always clear. There are disclosive aspects of generating new social configurations, for instance, because possibilities are revealed through such practice. This distinction, however, highlights the difference between recognizing extant relations and producing new ones.

<sup>10</sup> For more on these sorts of social becomings see, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 1988.; Donna J. Haraway. *When species meet*. Vol. 224. U of Minnesota Press, 2008.; and Eduardo Kohn. "How dogs dream: Amazonian natures and the politics of transspecies engagement." *American ethnologist* 34, no. 1 (2007): 3-24. For a helpful summary of Deleuze's use of becoming, assemblage, and affect see, Daniel Smith and John Protevi. "Gilles Deleuze", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/deleuze/>>. Here, they say, "In the most general terms Deleuze develops throughout his career, *puissance* is the ability to affect and to be affected, to form assemblages or consistencies, that is, to form emergent unities that nonetheless respect the heterogeneity of their components. (Here we see the empiricist theme of the "externality of relations": in an assemblage or consistency, the "becoming" or relation of the terms attains its own independent ontological status. In Deleuze's favorite example, the wasp and orchid create a "becoming" or symbiotic emergent unit.)" When commenting on dog-human becomings, Kohn says

living otherwise with other animals—in ways that might not be currently available or *actualizable* given the various constraints imposed by the all-too-human institutions and practices of the dominant culture. For Calarco, the experimental aspects of such engagement might encourage us to think of ethological practice “not simply as a tool for expanding a given social order but as a means for fundamentally rethinking how the *socius* is constituted as such.”<sup>11</sup>

While the dominant culture tends to present the *socius* as fixed and permanent, Calarco suggests that we think of the *socius* “as inherently open-ended—as something that emerges in and through *experimentation* with new relations that undo old configurations and open up additional potentials.”<sup>12</sup> Rather than hypostatizing existing relations as fixed or endorsing the belief that any social arrangement is possible, social ethology encourages us to explore and engage with the material constraints that delimit and shape social possibilities as well. This engagement with materiality avoids the criticism that social ethology might be committed to the idealistic (or *immaterial* and *unrealistic*) belief that any social arrangement is possible or actualizable. As such, social ethology is best understood as a practice that provides deep insight into the possibility spaces that exist for social arrangements between different sorts of entities. Moreover, as a practice, social ethology requires engagement with the question of how we might work within and through extant material conditions to actualize such potentials.

It is important to note, however, that regardless of the material conditions that are present in any particular social arrangement, the “inherent open-endedness” of the *socius* remains. By this, I mean to say that the *socius* is constantly shaped and reshaped through engagement and can

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that “[s]uch becomings change what it means to be alive; they change what it means to be human just as much as they change what it means to be a dog or even a predator.”

<sup>11</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, pp. 50-51. Calarco “use[s] the term *socius* here in a capacious sense to refer to the broad sets of relations and affective ties that include but go well beyond “society” and “community” as those terms are normally understood.”

<sup>12</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 51.

always become *other-than-it-is*. Ethological practice that takes seriously the open-endedness of the socius then reveals an alternative social ontology that stands in stark contrast to many idealized, immaterial, and unrealistic conceptions of social arrangements and possibilities.<sup>13</sup> A social ontology such as this embraces the descriptive project of documenting and characterizing extant social relations, while simultaneously illuminating the experimental, creative, and affirmative project of unveiling and actualizing alternative social possibilities.

Hutto's approach to ethology, in Calarco's view, might be understood as emblematic of the "open-ended and experimental attitude [that] is essential for ethological practice."<sup>14</sup> For example, Calarco emphasizes that Hutto refused to subscribe to any belief in the impropriety of human-deer relationships. Instead, he "willingly enters into the world of the deer in order to form different social assemblages and to experiment with other ways of seeing and living."<sup>15</sup> This is an attitude that Treadwell and Hutto share. Treadwell's decision to live with bears and foxes required him to abandon the life and world that he was most familiar with in favor of an experimental engagement with new and different ways of life with new and different individuals and social assemblages.<sup>16</sup>

It may be unsurprising that criticisms of this experimental and adventurous attitude are central to many attacks on Treadwell. While some believe that humans either cannot or should

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<sup>13</sup> That is, by disclosing and generating alternative social arrangements, ethological projects performatively demonstrate that socii are not immutable and challenge the notion that it is impossible to generate interspecies social assemblages. As such, any social ontology that assumes socii are immutable and fixed becomes untenable, which reveals the necessity of adopting an alternative social ontology to make sense of the fluidity and negotiability of socii. For more on alternative social ontologies of this kind see, Manuel DeLanda. *A new philosophy of society: Assemblage theory and social complexity*. A&C Black, 2006.; and Manuel DeLanda. "Deleuzian social ontology and assemblage theory." *Deleuze and the Social* (2006): 250-266.

<sup>14</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 52.

<sup>15</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 52.

<sup>16</sup> Following Manuel DeLanda, I think of individuals and collectives as assemblages themselves and not as different ontological *kinds*. I use the term individual here to capture the distinction between singular nonhuman animal individuals and larger assemblages comprised of nonhuman animal individuals (e.g., social groupings, populations, communities, etc.).

not develop social bonds with “wild” animals in general, others simply believe that humans cannot or should not develop social bonds with “*dangerous*” animals or relatively solitary nonhuman predators. Interestingly, however, despite Hutto’s similar experimental attitude, he tends not to be criticized on the same grounds as Treadwell, either because critics are more open to the idea of humans developing social bonds with herbivorous herd animals such as mule deer, or perhaps, because Hutto’s more conservative methodology and amicable attitude make his project more digestible to potential critics.<sup>17</sup> Calarco is quick to point out, however, that “while the *socius* [Hutto] forms with this specific pack of mule deer would likely not be replicated with, say, a predator species, this does not entail that sociality is somehow less plastic in these other contexts.”<sup>18</sup> Since we cannot write off Treadwell’s project on the grounds that predator species are inherently less socially plastic, we should be sympathetic to the experimental attitude that animates Treadwell’s decision to live with predatory bears and foxes.<sup>19</sup>

### **Social Plasticity**

According to Calarco, Hutto was frequently surprised by the social plasticity and relational possibilities that were revealed and enacted throughout his time living with mule deer. The social dynamics between him and individual mule deer unfolded through time and transformed dramatically. Over the course of many months and years, Hutto eventually gained

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<sup>17</sup> The issue of Treadwell’s indigestibility requires more space to explore than I have available here. It is important to note, however, that many critiques of Treadwell circulate around his mental health, sexuality, gender presentation, and so on. For examples see Werner Herzog. “Grizzly Man (film).” Santa Monica, CA: Lions Gate Film (2005).; and Michael Lapinski. *Death in the Grizzly Maze: The Timothy Treadwell Story*. Guilford: Falcon, 2005. These criticisms are not leveled at Hutto, who is a soft-spoken, masculine-presenting, heterosexual married man, with mild manners. While they share similar attitudes toward ethological practice, Treadwell is frequently dismissed for superficial reasons that fail to attend to the spirit of his ethological project.

<sup>18</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 53.

<sup>19</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 102. It is worth mentioning here that, in a perhaps counter-intuitive fashion, Treadwell considered the red foxes to be more violent predators than the brown bears of Katmai, since they relied almost exclusively on killing prey in order to survive.

acceptance from the pack, while the pack continued to treat other humans with suspicion and denied them the same access they granted to Hutto.

Like Hutto, Treadwell was constantly surprised by the social plasticity of both bears and foxes. While bears and foxes are relatively solitary animals that tend not to be understood as having robust intraspecific social networks like many herd animals (such as mule deer, for example), Treadwell repeatedly commented on how surprised he was to learn that many individuals did not avoid his presence and some even sought him out. This is especially true with respect to the foxes of Katmai, particularly “Timmy the Fox,” who would follow Treadwell around and seemed to enjoy his company.<sup>20</sup>

In *Among Grizzlies: Living with Wild Bears in Alaska*, Treadwell notes that these sorts of possibilities might have been made possible by the material ecological conditions of the region, which afforded a surplus of resources and encouraged bears and foxes to congregate in ways that are not typical for inland populations. The excess of resources such as fish, clams, and sedge grass encouraged high concentrations of bears and increased degrees of sociability due to relatively low resource competition.<sup>21</sup> Treadwell was well aware that this socio-ecological context decreased the likelihood that he would be subjected to violent predatory behaviors or treated as a competitor, which helped foster the sort of tolerance and acceptance that he was hoping to achieve through his interactions with these animals.<sup>22</sup> This recognition reveals

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<sup>20</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, pp. 45, 96; Herzog, 2005. In the film *Grizzly Man*, Spirit, the fox, and her kits willingly approach Treadwell in an open field. This theme will be returned to in the section on mental ethology.

<sup>21</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 120. As Treadwell notes, this is especially true during heavy salmon runs; “Years of studying bears had taught me that during major salmon runs, brown grizzlies were more tolerant of other life because of the abundance of food.”

<sup>22</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 138; “There are other clues to my acceptance by bears in the habitat and social conditions of the bears I live among. These animals are coastal brown bears, historically more tolerant than other types of bears. These bears migrate in large numbers to areas with abundant food sources. Competition between grizzlies for food in a finite area forces the bears to develop their social skills. A recognized social hierarchy and tolerance among grizzlies reduces the levels of aggression to a minimum.”

Treadwell's engagement with the material substrate and context within which his project was made possible. He understood that the environment afforded unique bear-human and fox-human social possibilities.

Treadwell also revealed the unrecognized social plasticity and sociability of bears through stories and footage of him interacting with individual bears in surprisingly intimate fashions. For example, in the film *Grizzly Man*, Treadwell is frequently seen within touching distance of cubs and wading through the water alongside an adult brown bear.<sup>23</sup> Treadwell also details the manner in which bears would use his presence to deter other bears from harassing or assaulting them and mentions that he used a similar social tactic to deter certain aggressive bears from charging him, by keeping a bear who trusted him between himself and hostile individuals.<sup>24</sup> These interactions fostered new and unprecedented social dynamics that challenged prevailing conceptions of these animals as socially static entities.

It is also important to note that Treadwell's relationships with the bears and foxes respectively, may have played a role in reconstituting the social dynamics between bears and foxes themselves. While I will not take up the details of how this may have happened here, it is worth noting that in many instances during Treadwell's footage, the bears and foxes are in relatively close proximity to one another. In his book, Treadwell reveals the capacity for unanticipated and unprecedented bear-fox social possibilities when he describes his astonishment upon discovering Timmy the Fox sleeping with three bear cubs;

. . . I noticed something odd in the mass of brown and gold fur. In the pile of dozing cubs was a strange little orange blob. I squinted in disbelief. Passed out in the middle of the babies was that darn little fox. 'Psst, Timmy!' I whispered. 'What are you doing, little buddy? In case you've forgotten, you're a red fox, not a grizzly bear.' Timmy responded with a groggy yawn, then stretched his paw across Scruffy's back and nodded off.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Herzog, 2005; Treadwell is also seen interacting and playing with foxes in surprisingly intimate fashions.

<sup>24</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, pp. 32, 90.

<sup>25</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, pp. 46-47.

While this account is anecdotal, it seems to reveal an important aspect of Treadwell's project. The lack of fear exhibited by the foxes and the corresponding lack of suspicion on the part of bears, may have been generated, or at least encouraged, by Treadwell's ability to gain the trust of individual bears and foxes. More specifically, it seems possible that the trust that these animals exhibited toward Treadwell may have facilitated interspecies interactions between members of these species. Although the lack of fear on the part of certain foxes may have also stemmed from the infrequency of bear-fox predation (since grizzly and brown bears are not known to routinely eat red foxes), it is interesting to consider the possibility that the red foxes' trust and perhaps affection for Treadwell may have encouraged them to risk being in closer proximity to bears than they would absent his presence.<sup>26</sup> While this question is largely empirical and the point speculative, if Treadwell did encourage these animals to live in closer proximity than they did prior to his arrival, then we might understand him as an interspecies liaison or bonding catalyst of sorts.

Following this line of thought, Treadwell might also be understood as a literal and figurative *world traveller*, who moved between the social worlds of various groups of humans, bears, and foxes, and did so *fluidly* after years of building social relations with members of each species.<sup>27</sup> From this perspective, Treadwell's project can be understood as one that simultaneously revealed and generated new sorts of multispecies becomings, communities, and

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<sup>26</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 184. Treadwell does acknowledge, however, that once Timmy had fox kits of his own, "they did not tend to venture out among the bears" when fishing near them. Treadwell notes that Kathleen, the mother of Timmy's kits, was the one who would "bark and yip" to keep the foxes from wandering too far away.

<sup>27</sup> For more on world-travelling see; Maria Lugones. "Playfulness, "world"-travelling, and loving perception." *Hypatia* 2, no. 2 (1987): 3-19.; and AnaLouise Keating. "New Mestiza, Nepantlera, Beloved Comadre: Remembering Gloria E. Anzaldúa." *Letras Femeninas* (2005): 13-20.; this notion will be taken up in more detail below.

ecological assemblages, which is something that is often overlooked or negatively valued by many critics of Treadwell's project.<sup>28</sup> As such, Treadwell's ethological project should be understood as an experiment with and through *social indistinction*; whereby social boundaries thought to necessarily separate humans from other animals and other animals from each other were blurred, transformed, and shown to be deeply contingent and context-dependent.<sup>29</sup>

### **Social attentiveness and Intergenerational Change**

Calarco also emphasizes the fact that the social bonds between Hutto and the mule deer (as a pack and as individuals) required long-term, daily attention and care in order to be maintained. This is another common thread that runs through the projects of both Hutto and Treadwell; both were willing to put in years of arduous work to gain measures of familiarity, tolerability (or indifference), and (in some cases), acceptability with other animals. While the social bonds built between Hutto and the mule deer, on the one hand, and between Treadwell and the bears (and foxes), on the other, differed in multiple fashions based on the personalities of individuals and the types of social assemblages already in place when they arrived, they both gained unprecedented access to various individuals and collective ways of life throughout their time living with other animals. Both Hutto and Treadwell, for instance, talk about the intergenerational changes that stemmed from building relationships with particular individuals and their progeny.

In his book, Hutto describes the intense honor and privilege of being licked by deer with whom he developed deep and intense relationships, and also details the humbling and

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<sup>28</sup> For criticisms of this kind, see Lapinski, 2005. These multispecies becomings, communities, and assemblages are often negatively valued by ecologists and others who subscribe to an outmoded belief in a dualistic relationship between human and nature.

<sup>29</sup> For more on the implications of indistinction in general and social indistinction in particular, see Matthew Calarco. *Thinking through animals: identity, difference, indistinction*. Stanford University Press, 2015.



brehtaking experience of being led by a mother doe to where she recently hid her newly born and vulnerable fawn.<sup>30</sup> Hutto explains that his relationship with this fawn and her children led to deeper relationships and increased trust.<sup>31</sup> As a greater number of deer in the population were exposed to Hutto from birth, his presence became more and more accepted and familiar, which allowed for more robust, rich, and intimate interspecific relations to unfold.

Similarly, during Treadwell's time in Katmai, he came to know and become intimately close with several multi-generational bear and fox families. The first generation of bears and foxes, unsurprisingly, were the most skeptical and wary of Treadwell's presence. However, as he continued to interact with these animals on a regular basis and earned their trust, they began to tolerate his presence and treat him in manners ranging from indifference to acceptance.<sup>32</sup> As the first generation gave birth to the next, however, Treadwell's presence began to be taken for granted by an increasing percentage of the bear population. Treadwell's intergenerational track record as an unthreatening and friendly creature inspired the individuals with whom he spent the most time to treat him with increased familiarity, tolerance, and curiosity.

While the new generation's willingness to engage with Treadwell in more intimate fashions sometimes placed Treadwell in precarious positions (especially with mothers of curious bear cubs or with adolescent bears who would "bluff charge" him), it also undercut the prevalence of fear and distrust within the socius, which characterized many of his most

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<sup>30</sup> Hutto, 2016, pp. 44, 85. Licking is a social practice mule deer reserve for close family members.

<sup>31</sup> Hutto, 2016, p. 85.

<sup>32</sup> Contrary to what many of his critics suggest, Treadwell was deeply cognizant of the indifferent attitude many animals had toward him and recognized that the love he felt for them was an unrequited love in many if not all cases. While he refers to particular animals who tolerated him or seemed to enjoy his company as *friends*, his engagement with these topics suggest that he was deeply aware and accepting of the fact that these animals would not reciprocate his love. For instance, he notes that when attempting to live with bears in habitats with which he was unfamiliar, "the risk of rejection was real." (p. 55). For an account of how Treadwell had a mistaken understanding of these animals' abilities to reciprocate, see June Dwyer. "A Non-companion Species Manifesto: Humans, Wild Animals, and 'The Pain of Anthropomorphism'." *South Atlantic Review* 72, no. 3 (2007): 73-89. For examples of the tendency of bears to ignore Treadwell and his acceptance of this indifference, see *Among Grizzlies*, pp. 79, 111, 121, 128, 145, and 174.

uncomfortable engagements when he first embarked on his project. For example, in his book, Treadwell describes how the relationship that emerged between himself and a mother bear he named Booble, yielded unanticipated and unprecedented behavioral changes. When Booble's cubs were young, Treadwell discouraged them from approaching him despite their curiosity; "He was especially interested in me, stretching and straining to catch a look, occasionally wandering close. I cautioned him to stay near his mom, but he ignored me. Booble usually reined him back in with a series of soft, firm huffs."<sup>33</sup> But, over time, Booble began to trust Treadwell around her cubs;

I backed away to give them some space, but distance didn't seem to be what Booble wanted. She moved her family toward me, shadowing my every step. . . They were so close that I could hear their breathing. . . I pinched myself in disbelief, elated by their trust."<sup>34</sup>

This unprecedented level of trust eventually led to significant behavioral changes within Booble that produced a new sort of social assemblage between Treadwell and her family; "Booble began to let the cubs move closer to me than they were to her, a behavior that testified to the special bond I shared with this beautiful animal."<sup>35</sup> Experiences like this led Treadwell to proclaim that "in the Grizzly Sanctuary . . . the mothers [were] the safest bears for [him] to be around."<sup>36</sup> He said that the tolerance, trust, and friendliness exhibited toward him by these mothers likely stemmed from the fact that he knew many of them from the time they were cubs and that they never perceived his presence to be threatening.<sup>37</sup> Rather than belittling the potential

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<sup>33</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 65.

<sup>34</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 67.

<sup>35</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, pp. 71-72.

<sup>36</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 65.

<sup>37</sup> See Val Plumwood. "A Wombat Wake: In Memoriam Birubi." *The eye of the crocodile*. ANU E Press, 2012. p.49-54; It is interesting to consider whether the robustness of these interspecific social bonds and social transformations might have something to do with the importance of motherly bonds and child rearing for humans, bears, and foxes. Plumwood comments on this in a piece she wrote in memory of a wombat she lived with for more than twelve years, named Birubi; "I think it was the centrality of the mother-child relationship to both our species

threat of these mothers (let alone *any* bear), Treadwell “knew that mothers with cubs could still be incredibly dangerous, and [he] never approached family groups, always letting them dictate the distance.”<sup>38</sup> Throughout his book and his video footage, Treadwell regularly demonstrates a keen level of attentiveness to the social etiquettes and a general level of respect for the autonomy of other bears in dictating the level of intimacy of their interspecific engagements.

Over the years that Treadwell spent in Katmai, an increasing number of individual bears demonstrated a sense of composure when in his presence, which led to an increased frequency of nonviolent and oftentimes friendly interactions with these animals. This is not to say that conflict disappeared—clearly Treadwell and Amie Huguenard’s eventual deaths are evidence of the contrary—but, it is important to recognize that the character of both the bear and fox social assemblages in which Treadwell participated transformed overtime as he and these animals gained familiarity with one another.

These transformations are worth attending to and appreciating, because they reveal precisely what was at stake for Treadwell in attempting to live alongside bears and foxes on their terms. Treadwell recognized that conflict and negotiation are aspects of any social relation regardless of whether the participants are human or more-than-human. Unlike most human-animal relationships, however, where human participants are insulated from harm through various means (e.g., through the use of cages, walls, and weapons, or through the exclusion of animals from “human-dominated” spaces etc.), Treadwell was willing to embrace the inevitability of such conflict and negotiations while forsaking his own means of establishing

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and what was shared in its framework of ethics and expectations that made possible intimate contact with a creature so very different.” Plumwood, 2012, p. 51.

<sup>38</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 65.

long-term security, dominance, or control.<sup>39</sup> We might then understand Treadwell's project (and other ethological projects) as social experiments that require co-exposure, vulnerability, and intimate immersion in the worlds of other animals.<sup>40</sup>

### **Imposition or Invitation**

The desire to live on the terms of other-than-human animals might also be read as an *imposition* because it entails sharing physical space with these animals, which necessarily affects and influences their behavior. Calarco is careful to note, however, that Hutto's decision to live with mule deer was inspired by an individual mule deer herself and "was not simply his own imposition on the pack."<sup>41</sup> Calarco's analysis of Hutto's response to this *invitation* is very helpful when thinking about whether or not Treadwell's decision to live with the bears and foxes of Alaska should be understood as an unwelcomed invasion, so it is worth quoting at length:

One doe in particular, which he named Rayme, was the one who initially broached the gap separating Hutto's and the deer's social lives. Rayme took an unusual interest in Hutto and his partner Leslye's activities in their cabin and consistently sought out their attention and contact. As Hutto notes, it was Rayme who signaled that another socius was possible. He treated this invitation to be alongside and in the vicinity of the deer with

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<sup>39</sup> Treadwell can be rightly criticized for both his self-aggrandizing comments whereby he refers to himself as the "master" of the bears as well as his more theatrical episodes whereby he seems to transform his practice of living with bears into a challenge that reveals his strength and resourcefulness. However, I believe it is more fruitful and fair to consider how these comments stand in stark contrast to the *spirit* of his engagement with these animals. These comments are typically made when Treadwell is alone, in a heightened state of excitement following an encounter with a bear, or when he is venting his frustrations about people who are critical of his project.

<sup>40</sup> I use co-exposure, vulnerability, and intimate immersion here for two reasons. First, I hope to give shape to the spirit of Treadwell's project and draw attention to the sacrificial and uncomfortable aspects of such work. Secondly, I want to draw connections between Treadwell's project and the focus that many pro-animal philosophers place on beginning thought from a space that does not presuppose a dualistic or hierarchical opposition between humans and other animals. Treadwell's project represents the practical and material prongs of such a philosophy by recognizing nonhuman agency and focusing on the ways that humans are deeply indistinguishable from other animals in their vulnerability, fragility, and finitude. The tendency of philosophers to presuppose a dualistic distinction between humans and other animals oftentimes stems from a failure to attend to the vulnerability and exposure we share with nonhumans. Rather than understanding himself as radically distinct or superior to other animals, however, Treadwell embraces the co-animality and nakedness he shares with these creatures without insulating himself from his animality by clothing himself with a particular anthropocentric and exceptional conception of humanity. We might, then, understand these ethological projects as efforts to live alongside fellow co-exposed entities in ways that subject one to the material and ethical bareness (or *bearness*) of animal life. For more on these themes see Jacques Derrida. *The animal that therefore I am*. Fordham Univ Press, 2008.; Agamben, 2004.

<sup>41</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 52.

caution and was careful not to force his way into the pack. Rather, by patiently realigning the edges of their joint worlds and carefully occupying shared territory in a non-threatening manner, Hutto was eventually accepted by Rayme and the other mule deer as a member of their pack. . . He thus came to realize that the deep fear wild mule deer seem to have of human beings can in fact be at least partially overcome through sustained commitment to establishing alternative modes of relation.

We might pause to consider for a moment that in the case of Treadwell, the possibility of sharing and co-creating *socii* with bears and foxes, was revealed or *signaled* by individual bears and foxes themselves. While Treadwell originally went to Alaska to see bears after being encouraged to do so by his friend, Terry Tabor (whom he claimed saved his life after a drug overdose), he did not visit Alaska with the intention of living with them.<sup>42</sup> His decision to attempt to live alongside these animals came after a series of encounters with bears that signaled that it might be possible to cohabitate and build social bonds with these animals.

In Treadwell's first encounter with a brown bear, the animal ran away immediately after seeing him, which filled Treadwell with a combination of "elation" and "sadness."<sup>43</sup> According to him, he was excited by the encounter with such a beautiful and powerful animal but was saddened by the bear's decision to run from him because he felt that this animal's fear was a product of a long history of human violence enacted against these creatures. In Treadwell's second encounter, he was surprised by the appearance of a large bear and "fear enveloped [him]."<sup>44</sup> Instinctively, he slowly retreated while singly softly to the bear—which Treadwell believed may have gestured some good will—before the animal decided to walk away from him calmly. In his third encounter, a massive brown bear approached Treadwell and walked over him while he was curled up in the fetal position. Treadwell was terrified throughout the encounter but

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<sup>42</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 7. It's important to note that Treadwell's decision to go to Alaska in the first place stemmed from Tabor's encouragement. While he wanted to go somewhere remote where he could see wild animals, he was not set on seeing bears, let alone living with them, until he spoke with Tabor.

<sup>43</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 10.

<sup>44</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 13.

expressed deep gratitude to the bear after he was allowed to live. These encounters revealed three lessons to Treadwell: 1) fear is a barrier that inhibits positive interactions between humans and bears; 2) not all bears are afraid of humans and seem to respond amicably to song and high frequency sounds, and 3) bears have the capacity to be merciful and magnanimous rather than blood-thirsty killers as many make them out to be. While it may be easier to think abstractly about these encounters, it seems more appropriate to take pause and dwell with how powerful and sublime these encounters must have been for Treadwell. Upon deep reflection, it is not difficult to understand how one might interpret these three potentially lethal encounters with three different bears, which ended peacefully, as immensely powerful gifts that indicate the possibility of an alternative way of life alongside these animals.

In combination, these lessons revealed the possibility of co-constituting social assemblages with bears, which Treadwell interpreted as an invitation to experiment with the possibility of living with these animals.<sup>45</sup> These meaningful encounters also encouraged Treadwell to envision a world in which humans and bears (as well as foxes) interacted with each other without fear and violence, which inspired him to dedicate his life to living with these animals and sharing the richness of his experiences with these animals with others.<sup>46</sup> In light of these experiences, Treadwell decided to carefully and cautiously explore the possibility of co-

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<sup>45</sup> While it is reasonable to question whether it was correct or accurate for Treadwell to have interpreted this encounter as an invitation, to dwell on this question would overlook the significance of these events. At the very least, we must recognize that these encounters were *inviting*, even if we do not understand them as “genuine” or “intentional” *invitations* as such. It is also important to note that the character of Treadwell’s engagement with these animals throughout his time in Alaska left them with the power and space to revoke these “invitations.” Treadwell was respectful of the bears who were not inviting and often took measures to avoid them. Attending to individual animals in this way allowed him to avoid potentially lethal encounters and gave him deep insight into the unique personalities of these animals. This insight prevented him from thinking of bears in essentialist or abstract terms and kept him from falling prey to the fantasy that all the bears (and foxes for that matter) were equally enthusiastic and willing to engage with him socially.

<sup>46</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 121. Treadwell notes that the bears in more remote regions of Katmai were initially more tolerant of his presence than those who more regularly encountered humans.

existing alongside these animals in a manner that might generate new social relations beyond the initial fear that members of both species often experience and which increase the likelihood of interspecies violence.<sup>47</sup> He notes, however, that “the first priority of [his] work was to respect the wishes of all of the animals in their wilderness home,” which often resulted in him “backing off” from animals and giving them space.<sup>48</sup> However, as the story of Booble and her cubs illustrates, the animals with whom he lived were agentive and often (co)facilitated the creation of social bonds by following him and adjusting their behaviors in ways that revealed unprecedented trust and affective relations. Throughout his book and his footage, Treadwell repeatedly emphasizes that people would not engage in violence against these animals if they could understand the richness of knowing them intimately and living among them.<sup>49</sup>

With respect to the red foxes of Katmai, the possibility of building a socius was revealed to Treadwell shortly after he decided to respond to the “invitation” of the bears and began his first camping expedition in the park. In his book, Treadwell suggests that upon meeting an adventurous fox who regularly sought him out and followed him around, he became aware of the possibility of building a socius with him and members of his species.<sup>50</sup> Treadwell claims that the fox (whom he named Timmy because he believed they shared the same bold spirit) initiated

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<sup>47</sup> This mutual fear, we might add, might be understood as stemming from colonial misunderstanding and vilification of bears combined with the intergenerational historical trauma experienced by coastal brown bear populations as a consequence of the long-term hunting and abuse of these animals by humans. These problems were exacerbated by Western hunters, poachers, and trappers who killed these animals in greater quantities than the Indigenous Peoples of the surrounding areas and disrupted the long-term relations existing between Indigenous Peoples and these bears. For more information, see <https://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol14/iss1/art42/>. Accessed 4/28/18.

<sup>48</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 67.

<sup>49</sup> Herzog, 2005; Treadwell and Palovak, 1999. This will be taken up in more detail in the section on Treadwell’s mental ethology

<sup>50</sup> Hutto, 2016, p. 44. Hutto refers to the individual animals who reached out to him as “breathrough” deer. Following Hutto, we might think of Timmy the Fox as a “breathrough” fox.

contact and invited the possibility of building an alternative way of life with him. In his book, Treadwell illuminates the role that Timmy played in linking their social lives;

The pups obeyed and kept their distance except for one particularly ornery sibling who sneaked closer and closer to me. . . Much to his parents' dismay, he became more brazen with each visit. . . The more I got to know the little bugger, the more I realized that the disobedient flaming torpedo of terror was a lot like me. One day, after he'd left the relative safety of the fox family's domain to follow me, I had no doubt what to name him. I called him Timmy the Fox.<sup>51</sup>

Treadwell mentions that Timmy's adventurousness and willingness to build an interspecies socius with him was passed on to his offspring and continued for multiple generations, which led to more robust social relationships with various red foxes during Treadwell's thirteen years in the field.<sup>52</sup> While some might say Treadwell's decision to name Timmy after himself might constitute a narcissistic and inappropriate imposition on the fox in the form of anthropomorphism, I suggest that we resist reading this naming event in such a manner.<sup>53</sup> The issue of anthropomorphism and the ethical dimensions of Treadwell's decision to name other animals will be explored in more detail shortly.

### **Social Deterritorialization**

A reader who remains convinced that Treadwell inappropriately imposed himself on the bears and foxes of Katmai as a consequence of his decision to physically translocate to a region uninhabited by humans, might find it helpful to think deeply about what ethological projects involve. For Calarco, ethology is a practice that entails,

. . . a *literal* deterritorialization, a literal change of social and territorial location. Hutto does not take mule deer out of their habitat and bring them into laboratory settings where

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<sup>51</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, pp.44-45.

<sup>52</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, pp. 110-111, 176-177.

<sup>53</sup> For accounts claiming that Treadwell's naming of bears is anthropomorphic see Taylor J. Mitchell. "Calling 'Them' by Timothy Treadwell's Pet Names: Cultural Implications of 'Cute' Grizzly Bears." In *Of mice and men: animals in human culture*, edited by Nandita Batra and Vartan Messier, pp. 42-58 Cambridge Scholars, 2009.; and Martin Drenthen. "Fatal attraction: Wildness in contemporary film." *Environmental Ethics* 31, no. 3 (2009): 297-315.



they are more easily studied. Instead, he leaves his usual habitat behind and joins the deer in their world and on their terrain, sacrificing the comfort of the familiar for the wonder and astonishment of the unfamiliar.<sup>54</sup>

Since literal deterritorialization is an aspect of any ethological project in which humans live with animals in non-laboratory settings, it is difficult to critique Treadwell (or Hutto) on these grounds without challenging ethological practice in principle. Also, since ethological practice requires sacrificing the familiar, it seems difficult to think of Treadwell's project (let alone any ethological project of this sort) as an imposition on the animals with whom he lived, since he was willing to allow these animals to largely dictate the terms and conditions of interaction. While he did live with animals in their domain, Treadwell was willing to engage with these other animals on their terms, relying solely on his ability to adapt and respond to these animals, without relying on the use of weapons for self-defense (aside from the use of bear spray in the early years of his expeditions). Treadwell's approach was filled with humility and a deep respect for the autonomy of these animals, which makes it difficult to narrowly conceive of what he was doing as intrusive or impositional. It is also important to note that his presence was temporary, ephemeral, and while he did have an impact on the local ecology and the behaviors of the local animals, his presence was not coercive, nor did it compromise the integrity of the environment.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, Treadwell repeatedly emphasized that he was a visitor who was on land that did not belong to him. This attitude comes to light in how he responds to Timmy the Fox's tendency to mark him and his equipment with urine; "Timmy raised a leg and squirted a

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<sup>54</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 54.

<sup>55</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 111. Treadwell was known to alter the environment in minor ways (e.g., by rearranging creek rocks to allow fish to get through shallow water, so the bears would be able to fish more easily). While Treadwell undoubtedly made other (intentional and unintentional) alterations to the environment, it is clear that he, in principle, attempted to "leave no trace" during his time in Katmai; "Except for the trampled grass around the campsite, I . . . left the wilderness without a trace."

friendly stream of urine to remind me that my campsite was his.”<sup>56</sup> This sort of humility is a recurrent theme in Treadwell’s descriptions of his daily life amongst these animals in Alaska.

Calarco’s understanding of ethological deterritorialization also raises the question of what sorts of imposition are acceptable, especially with respect to formal scientific research on animals. While many are quick to criticize Treadwell for lacking formal scientific training and for distracting or harassing the bears of Katmai, these critics often fail to criticize the far more prevalent, more invasive, and directly harmful practices in which many trained scientists engage (e.g., sedation, trapping, tagging, killing animals to “manage” populations, various experiments that maim or kill animals in laboratory settings, etc.). One cannot legitimately criticize Treadwell on the grounds of inappropriate imposition, without also leveling these same critiques at formal scientific practices that are just as, if not more, imposing than Treadwell’s practices and quite literally entail territorialization as well as the domination and control of other animals.

Moreover, it is important to note that unlike Treadwell and Hutto, many scientists are unwilling to sacrifice the comfort of the familiar in favor of studying animals on their own terms.<sup>57</sup> Rather than superficially criticizing Treadwell for being willing to live near the animals he loved, we might instead celebrate Treadwell’s ethological practice as a viable alternative to more imposing methods of relating to animals and acknowledge Treadwell’s impressive ability to live in and embrace a precarious state of exposed vulnerability with other creatures. And,

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<sup>56</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, p. 108. It is worth noting that Treadwell generally responds in a playful and light-hearted manner when the foxes urinate and defecate in his tent or on his clothing and supplies (see p. 92, 177, 182, and 185 for some particularly humorous examples). Events like these are frequent and he embraces the process of humbly negotiating space. Treadwell mentions that in the spirit of negotiation and play, he responded to a kit who urinated on his travel bag by urinating on the entrance of one of the fox den tunnels (p. 177). He also points to how Timmy in particular would treat bears similarly to how he treated Treadwell (p. 185). In *Grizzly Man*, there is also a humorous scene in which a fox steals Treadwell’s hat—while this irritated Treadwell, it is clear that he recognized that the unpredictability and playfulness of these animals was part of what made their relationship so mutually fulfilling (Herzog, 2005).

<sup>57</sup> Although, it is important to note that there are many scientists who are willing to study other animals in this manner.

instead of thinking of Treadwell's decision to live with bears "in their world(s)" as imposing, we might more appropriately characterize it as a form of *surrender* that renounces the all-too-human tendency to relate to animals in controlling and managerial fashions that insulate them from harm and utterly fail to account for the interests of other animals.

Calarco goes on to claim that we should learn to read ethological projects like Hutto's as invitations to "practice a similar kind of 'gay science,' one that moves beyond a notion of knowledge aimed at bringing what is strange back to oneself and that gestures instead toward a form of inquiry and relation predicated on gratitude and reverence for that which is inhuman and more-than-human."<sup>58</sup> Practicing this sort of joyful experimentation requires that we embrace difference and learn to dwell in precarity, while taking fine risks aimed at revealing and generating new and different relational possibilities with those who are typically devalued and marginalized within the dominant social order.

While Treadwell, at times, may have misinterpreted or mischaracterized his relationships with these animals, his footage with these creatures seems to speak for itself; he disclosed and generated new and unprecedented sorts of relation with these animals that leave many who watch his footage speechless. It is worth emphasizing again that these relationships were inherently experimental and emerged from and through long-term social interactions, negotiations, and quarrels, and resulted in the creation of unique interspecies socii. Treadwell's footage, like Hutto's, documents a shared social product that was nurtured, maintained, and explored by both human and more-than-human participants.

#### **IV. Treadwell's Environmental Ethology**

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<sup>58</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 54.

*Environmental ethology*, for Calarco, is concerned with “analy[zing] human-animal relations within their environmental milieu.”<sup>59</sup> By revealing the contingency and transformative potential of socii, Calarco suggests that ethological projects like Hutto’s encourages us to rethink “our relations not just with deer and other animals but with micro- and macro-relations at all levels, human and nonhuman beings, living and dead, intra-individual and ecological, and beyond.”<sup>60</sup> In other words, once one is exposed to the fluidity of social relations, one cannot help but consider how relations at other levels might be reconsidered and reshaped. Analyses of this sort demand that ethological practitioners recognize the constraints, opportunities, and possibilities presented by specific environmental contexts and that they learn to be attentive to the ecological aspects of human-animal relations.

### **Ecological Indistinction and Functional Ontological Pluralism**

Calarco emphasizes that Hutto’s deep long-term engagement with mule deer opened him up to understanding the deer in terms of their specific ecological niche and environmental relations to the point that he “starts to see the deer as indiscernible from those relations.”<sup>61</sup> As Hutto himself states, “this singular vision of a creature so perfectly interwoven into the ecology instantly transformed the way in which I perceived this remarkable animal, but also forever changed my understanding of its significance as an indivisible component within the landscape.”<sup>62</sup> Treadwell experienced similar revelations throughout his time in “nature’s secret classrooms” where he learned to appreciate the degree to which Alaskan brown bears (and red foxes) live in “perfect harmony with their environment.”<sup>63</sup> This recognition encouraged him to

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<sup>59</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 49.

<sup>60</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 55.

<sup>61</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 55.

<sup>62</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 55; Hutto, 2016, p. 77.

<sup>63</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, pp. 190, 28.

consider ecological preservation and environmental activism to be essential aspects of his life work aimed at protecting other-than-human animals.<sup>64</sup>

This *ecological indistinction*, does not erase or obscure either Hutto's or Treadwell's appreciation of the singularity and uniqueness of nonhuman animals at the level of the individual, the population, the species, or the socius, however. We might understand this ecological insight as an additional layer of understanding that is simultaneously informed by and gives shape to both of their approaches to ethological practice as well as their understandings of the world. This is a keen insight, because it points to how ethological practice subverts attempts to understand other animals or the world in general using any single scientific perspective (physical, chemical, physiological, neurological, organismal, ecological, etc.) or ontological scale, and reveals the inherently multiscale, pluralistic, palimpsestic, and intersectional aspects of ethological work. Calarco refers to the practice of moving between ontological scales as *functional ontological pluralism*. In his words,

. . . there can be no priority given here to one ontological perspective over another. It is not a matter of determining whether objects, singularities, or relations are most basic—all of these ontological levels must constantly be borne in mind to practice ethology.<sup>65</sup>

Hutto and Treadwell embrace functional ontological pluralism by thinking at each of these levels and gracefully moving between them, since a comprehensive understanding of the *enworldments* of mule deer, brown bears, and red foxes requires thinking through each of these scales individually and with respect to one another. Treadwell employs a similar skill by using

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<sup>64</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, pp. 178, 43. It should also be noted that through his engagement with bears and foxes, Treadwell came to love and appreciate the land and relations that sustained them; "Most of the bears were gone now. . . That didn't really matter so much to me. I simply wanted to touch the land where they grazed, slept, played, and loved one more time before I headed back to civilization." (p. 178); Moreover, he came to appreciate the reciprocal ecological relationship between bears and the land; "Bear scat is beneficial to the land because it can scatter and fertilize seeds of plants that the bear has consumed, as well as create humus, which enriches the soil." (p. 43).

<sup>65</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 56.

multiple scientific lenses during his time with these animals. For example, throughout *Among Grizzlies*, he frequently shifts from analyzing the personalities and behaviors of individual animals, to seasonal behavioral changes, to intra and interspecies social dynamics, to physiology, to ecological relations, to environmental concerns, and so on.<sup>66</sup>

In addition to helping provide a more comprehensive understanding of various environments, Calarco believes that this ontological pluralism emerges from ethological practice out of social necessity because, in order to be “fully responsible” to a group of nonhuman animals, one must appreciate that they are “irreducibly nested within these various ontological relations.”<sup>67</sup> Treadwell demonstrated an intense appreciation of these various ontological relations and frequently moved between these perspectives.

### **Attending to Anthropogenic Environmental Degradation**

By embracing functional ontological pluralism and attending to ecological contexts, Treadwell was able to develop a deeper appreciation of how human activity affects nonhuman animals. For example, Treadwell’s practice of environmental ethology inspired him to engage in conservation and preservation efforts aimed at protecting large swaths of land from development and urbanization, because he keenly understood that in order to protect the individual animals he loved, he would have to protect the environments in which they were enmeshed.<sup>68</sup> It might also be noted that environmental ethology is practiced with relative ease when one is engaging ethologically with animals that require as much space as Alaskan brown bears do. It is widely emphasized by conservationists, biologists, and ecologists, for instance, that these bears require relatively large amounts of space, fill important functional niches in Alaskan ecologies, and are

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<sup>66</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999.

<sup>67</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 56.

<sup>68</sup> For more on enmeshment see Haraway, 2008.

typically considered keystone species.<sup>69</sup> As such, those who study bears in intimate fashions (as amateurs or as professionals) frequently think about these animals in terms of multi-species conservation efforts, the maintenance of biodiversity, and their trophic relations. The tendency for amateur and professional ethologists to think of bears in conservational and ecological terms make it difficult to think about human-bear relations outside of their environmental milieu and seem to require a sustained engagement with the questions of how humans affect this milieu and how they might affect it differently.

Given the vulnerability of both mule deer populations and brown bear populations, both Hutto and Treadwell, respectively, are deeply engaged with issues of ecological degradation as well as human policies and practices (e.g., animal management practices), which place individual animals in harm's way using ecological justifications. With respect to their written work, both *Touching the Wild* and *Among Grizzlies* are deeply concerned with opening up their readers to how their daily decisions might contribute to violence against these animals indirectly with the hope of inspiring people to live their lives in view of such violence.<sup>70</sup> It is important to emphasize here that, for both of them, their engagements with various forms of anthropogenic environmental issues stems directly from their social engagement with animals. As such, it is important that we make salient the connection between social ethology and environmental ethology.

As Calarco points out, given the violent, systemic practices of particular human groups that do great damage to these animals and the environments in which they live, social ethology is “conceptually, practically, and ethically” connected to environmental ethology. While

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<sup>69</sup> For more on brown bears as keystone species, see James M. Helfield and Robert J. Naiman. "Keystone interactions: salmon and bear in riparian forests of Alaska." *Ecosystems* 9, no. 2 (2006): 167-180.

<sup>70</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999; Hutto, 2016.

environmental ethology informs and constrains the social possibilities that might be enacted materially, social ethology feeds back into environmental ethology by generating new ecological relations. The environmental ethological dimensions of both Hutto and Treadwell reveal the need to dramatically restructure dominant ways of life in view of the plights of these animals. As Calarco puts it, “To take seriously the situation of animals today is to be immediately opened onto the realm of environmental ethology and the challenge of radically reconstituting our collective relations with the ecologies in which we find ourselves.”<sup>71</sup> One of Treadwell’s primary goals was to reveal the manners by which we might alter our ecological relationships in ways that allow for other animals to have more space and more livable environments.<sup>72</sup> It is important to note that part of what is at stake in Treadwell’s project is a glimpse of a minimalist way of life that does not participate in many of the most environmentally egregious and violent practices of the dominant culture. While Treadwell relied on goods produced in factories and contributed to climate change through travel, he lived a relatively simple, ecologically-minded life. He avoided excessive consumption and consciously avoided the practices that he knew would negatively affect the environments and bodies of the animals he loved. As such, Treadwell’s decision to live his life differently in light of ecological concerns might be understood as a transformation stemming from the practice of environmental ethology.

### **Ethical Pluralism**

It is interesting to note that Treadwell became keenly aware of how his actions would affect the local ecology throughout his time in Alaska and used this awareness to deeply consider how his actions would affect individual animals, their social groups, and extant ecological relationships. During his time living with the brown bears and red foxes of Katmai, Treadwell

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<sup>71</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 57.

<sup>72</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 138.



constantly negotiated and renegotiated his relationships with individual bears, the bear population as a whole, and extant ecological relations in ways that reflect an appreciation for local ecology without hypostatizing the extant ecological relationships or reifying simple, static boundaries between culture and nature or between humans and animals. Treadwell seemed to practice a functional ontological and *ethical* pluralism when confronted with ethical encounters with other animals.<sup>73</sup> For example, when confronted with the problem of an injured bear, whom he called Mickey, Treadwell was unsure how to both attend to this animal's woundedness while respecting natural selective pressures and the local ecology. He elaborates on this when he says;

Now his back limbs seemed to be useless . . . His condition crushed me, but I felt helpless. I have always believed in letting natural selection take its course. Nature may be cruel from moment to moment, but its overall effect is to create balance. However, Mickey's predicament forced me to find a compromise.<sup>74</sup>

This passage reflects how seriously and thoughtfully Treadwell engaged with evolutionary and ecological principles, while simultaneously recognizing that he influenced these processes. For him, it was not a question of whether or not he influenced these processes, but of *how* he influenced them. This approach reveals a nuanced understanding of how humans interact with ecology that does not reify an uncritical or untenable commitment to the belief that nature and culture *are* or *ought to be* separate. Even more, this passage captures the ethical ambiguity and uncertainty that emerges from intimate relationships with other animals. Treadwell's desire to find a compromise reveals one of the intense paradoxes he was exposed to during his time with these animals.

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<sup>73</sup> For more on these sorts of encounters, see Emmanuel Levinas. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis, Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969.; and Thomas H. Birch. "Moral considerability and universal consideration." *Environmental Ethics* 15, no. 4 (1993): 313-332. Levinas describes these face-to-face encounters with vulnerable Others as pre-cognitive expressions that command one not to harm the Other, while simultaneously revealing the Other's defenselessness. Birch refers to these encounters as *deontic experiences*; unanticipatable encounters with other entities that call one into ethical action.

<sup>74</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 83.

As Calarco points out, these sorts of paradoxes emerge from ethological practice itself, especially when one comes to love the animals with whom one lives and engages. Interestingly, Treadwell's tendency to see himself as part of these relations (without justifying any and all forms of engagement) has inspired attacks from critics (many of whom are scientists) that are committed to the belief that humans should not "interfere" or influence these processes at all, which oftentimes betrays a commitment to an outmoded belief in a simple nature-culture distinction or the inappropriate (and *anti-ethological*) notion that the ideal way to study or understand a an organism, population, system, or process is from a *transcendent* or *objective* external position—which has been challenged by many theorists and ethologists, including Donna Haraway, Jane Goodall, Jeanne Altmann, Barbara Smuts, Val Plumwood, and Joe Hutto among others.<sup>75</sup> Thus, these critics must be very careful with respect to how they challenge the legitimacy of Treadwell's methods and insights.

Moreover, the compromise Treadwell came to with respect to how to deal with Mickey and work through his competing commitments to individual bears, the population of bears, and ecological processes reveals Treadwell's focus on negotiability while simultaneously addressing the concern that the bears gained nothing from Treadwell's presence. After recognizing that Mickey was injured and that there was a strong possibility that he could be killed by one of the other, larger bears, Treadwell decided to intervene in the situation:

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<sup>75</sup> See Donna J. Haraway. *Primate visions: Gender, race, and nature in the world of modern science*. Routledge, 2013.; Jeanne Altmann. "Observational study of behavior: sampling methods." *Behaviour* 49, no. 3 (1974): 227-266.; Barbara B. Smuts. *Sex and friendship in baboons*. Routledge, 2017.; Jane Goodall. *Through a window: My thirty years with the chimpanzees of Gombe*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010.; and Val Plumwood. *The eye of the crocodile*. ANU E Press, 2012. p. 53. According to Plumwood, "It is no coincidence that the more revolutionary forms of ethology pioneered by women like Jane Goodall have given us new insights precisely because they have broken these false choices [. . . the non-human and the human, nature and culture] down. Between them, the 'nature' and 'culture' frameworks rule out the possibility of deep personal contact with animals except on our terms."

I slowly reacquainted myself with Mickey, singing soft, gentle songs of love and praise. I herded him in the direction of the nutritious grass near my tent. He didn't seem nervous, and at my prodding slowly dragged himself onto the sedge grass. Mickey began to feed while I stood guard. I left him alone while keeping an eye out for any intruders. If larger bears attempted to dominate Mickey, I stepped out and calmly dissuaded them.<sup>76</sup>

Treadwell goes on to say that he continued to “guard” Mickey during the daytime for a number of consecutive days, while the bear recovered, ate, and slept close to his tent. Treadwell embraced the ambiguity of the situation and recognized that there was not a clear and correct answer with respect to how he should respond to Mickey’s plight. He chose to attend to this animal’s vulnerability and pain by placing his own body in harm’s way on his behalf. It is important, I think, that we do not dismiss the sacrificial beauty of this gesture. While we cannot expect everyone to care for other wounded animals (be they human or more-than-human) in this manner, it is important that we recognize the power of such a gesture and respect it, without dismissing it as an act of insanity or attacking Treadwell for “violating” the bears or natural processes. It is also important to note that Treadwell himself refers to this act as an act of *interference*— “As Mickey healed, I thought about my interference with nature. It was of little consequence to the Grizzly Sanctuary as a whole. But in my heart, it seemed right and felt good.”<sup>77</sup> While we might interpret this statement as revealing a commitment to a sort of nature-culture binary, this interpretation is undercut from within by Treadwell’s recognition that interference in non-human processes should not be conceived of as universally unacceptable or inappropriate. Treadwell struggled through the situation and embraced a sort of ontological pluralism by moving between thinking about his responsibilities to a particular, individual organism, a population of bears (by attending to the significance of natural selection), and to larger ecological processes, before deciding how to find a compromise that engaged with each of

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<sup>76</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 83.

<sup>77</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 83.

these levels of responsibility. Rather than helping Mickey by feeding him or attempting to directly address his wounds, he decided to compromise by creating the conditions by which Mickey could heal on his own by deterring potential threats, which directly benefited Mickey without denying or ignoring the bear's autonomy.

In light of this example, we might recognize that Treadwell's functional ontological pluralism—his ability to think along different ontological registers—required a corresponding functional ethical pluralism as well. As Treadwell's engagement with Mickey illustrates, how a practitioner of ethical pluralism responds to individuals, social groups, or processes, for instance, requires one to engage with the unique responsibilities that one feels toward various sorts of entities. In turn, this ethical pluralist must allow each of these unique responsibilities to inform their ethical decisions and dwell in the “*spandrelic*” *in-between spaces* that emerge as by-products of their competing ethical sensibilities before making an ethical decision.<sup>78</sup>

For example, a particular ethical action might be appropriate from one ontological level but might contradict one's ethical responsibilities at another ontological level of consideration. Moving between these ontological and ethical worlds seems to require that a practitioner of such pluralism learns to embrace ambiguity, uncertainty, and contradiction. Gloria Anzaldúa describes

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<sup>78</sup> For more information on spandrels and how the term is used in architecture and biology see Stephen Jay Gould and Richard C. Lewontin. "The spandrels of San Marco and the Panglossian paradigm: a critique of the adaptationist programme." *Proc. R. Soc. Lond. B* 205, no. 1161 (1979): 581-598.; Stephen Jay Gould. "Exaptation: A crucial tool for an evolutionary psychology." *Journal of social issues* 47, no. 3 (1991): 43-65.; and David M. Buss, Martie G. Haselton, Todd K. Shackelford, April L. Bleske, and Jerome C. Wakefield. "Adaptations, exaptations, and spandrels." *American psychologist* 53, no. 5 (1998): 533. In architecture, spandrels refer to “the spaces left over between structural features of a building. The spaces between the pillars of a bridge, for example, can subsequently be used by homeless persons for sleeping, even though such spaces were not designed for providing such shelter” (Buss et. Al., 1998, p. 533-548). In biology, spandrels refer to useful characteristics that were not selected for directly and “owe their origin to side consequences of other features” (Gould, 1991, p. 53). I use “spandrelic” here to capture the incidental and emergent character of these onto-ethical spaces. They emerge as by-products of competing ethical commitments to different kinds of ontological entities.

this space as *la nepantla* (which is a Nahuatl word meaning, “middle” or “in-between space”).<sup>79</sup> Anzaldúa suggests that the person who dwells in such an in-between space might be understood as *la nepantlera*. Neplanteras dwell in this space while moving between worlds and perspectives. While Anzaldúa focuses primary on social and subjective *world-traversing*, the concepts of *la nepantla* and *la nepantlera* seem to be appropriate for capturing the paradoxical and *antinomic* aspects of the ontological and ethical pluralisms that emerge directly from ethological practice. We might understand these *interstitial spaces* and the ethical decisions that emerge from them as deeply *nepantlic*.

Another example shows how Treadwell was not always willing to make compromises out of respect for his ethical commitments toward social groups, populations, and extant ecological relations. For example, after watching a “feeble and scrawny” cub struggling to keep up with its mother, Treadwell dwelled in the spandrellic and nepantlic space between his antinomic and competing ethical commitments before ultimately deciding that he would not interfere or make any compromises on behalf of the cub. For Treadwell,

I wanted to rescue the cub and nurse it back to health in a more caring environment, but I knew that couldn't be. Back in the Grizzly Sanctuary I had aided Mickey, but there was no way I could come between a mother and her cub. This time I was just going to have to follow the rules of nature, terrible as they may be.

In this case, Treadwell's sentimentality was restrained by his commitment to maintaining the integrity of the local ecology. His decision to follow the “rules of nature” might be understood as an indication of his attempt to live *kata phusin*—*in accordance with nature* and

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<sup>79</sup> For more on *la nepantla* and *la nepantlera*, see Gloria Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating, eds. *This bridge we call home: Radical visions for transformation*. Routledge, 2013, p. 1. Here, Anzaldúa says, “I use the word *nepantla* to theorize liminality and to talk about those who facilitate passages between worlds, whom I've named *nepantleras*. I associate *nepantla* with states of mind that question old ideas and beliefs, acquire new perspectives, change worldviews, and shift from one world to another.”

natural processes—without attempting to manage or impose his own conceptions of order on other animals or more-than-human processes.<sup>80</sup> Treadwell’s approach to resolving challenging ethical situations required astonishing degrees of humility and attentiveness while demanding that he learn to embrace ambiguity, discomfort, and in many cases intense emotional agony.

### **Treadwell’s Sentimental Ecology**

During his time in the Grizzly Sanctuary, Treadwell also came to appreciate the unpredictable contingency and cyclical flux of the weather, tides, and food resources.<sup>81</sup> During a memorable segment of Treadwell’s footage depicted in the film *Grizzly Man*, Treadwell expresses his intense frustration with respect to a lack of rain because he knew that the bears were so deeply enmeshed with their environments that even a minor drought would increase the mortality of these animals.<sup>82</sup> Treadwell’s detailed accounts of grizzly bear fishing practices, foraging behaviors, and of trophic relations (especially the ecological role that bears played in making clams and fish scraps available for consumption by red foxes and scavenging birds) also reveal his ecological awareness and sustained engagement in environmental ethology.<sup>83</sup>

While Treadwell, at times, might have placed a mistaken emphasis on the harmony and balance of nature,<sup>84</sup> he repeatedly reminded himself that nature is oftentimes unforgiving, hostile, and indifferent, which is something many critics of Treadwell (including his documentarian, Werner Herzog) seem to overlook (intentionally or otherwise).<sup>85</sup> Treadwell has been criticized

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<sup>80</sup> Calarco, Matthew. "Beyond the Management of Pe (s) ts." *The Ethics and Rhetoric of Invasion Ecology* (2016): 1.

<sup>81</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 68; Herzog, 2005.

<sup>82</sup> Herzog, 2005.

<sup>83</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 164.

<sup>84</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 83; “Nature be cruel from moment to moment, but it’s overall effect is to create balance.”

<sup>85</sup> Herzog, 2005.

for both harboring anti-ecological views (deriving from his allegedly “inappropriate” sentimentality and his alleged desire to *fuse* or become *one* with bears) and for maintaining an uncritical belief in a dualistic relationship between culture and nature.<sup>86</sup> Under close scrutiny, however, it becomes apparent that these attacks fail to capture the complexity of Treadwell’s attitudes and practices. While Treadwell did have difficulty embracing the death of the animals he loved, he seems to accept the ecological necessity of death.

For example, in *Death in the Grizzly Maze: The Timothy Treadwell Story*, Mike Lapinski recounts a story he was told by a biologist named Tom Smith, who regularly harassed Treadwell.<sup>87</sup> Upon stumbling upon a dead brown bear cub, Smith and another biologist decided to berate Treadwell and coax him out of his tent by shaking the tent pole and yelling, “I know you’re in there, Tim. Come on out. One of your bears is dead.”<sup>88</sup> As Treadwell frantically emerged from the tent, Smith “told him, with tongue in cheek, ‘Tim, you’re supposed to be protecting these bears, but you’re not doing a very good job of it. I just found a dead cub a hundred yards from your tent.’” According to Smith, “Tim got all serious and spread his arms and said, ‘Hey, that’s nature!’”<sup>89</sup>

Treadwell’s critics conveniently overlook these events, because they not only reveal the psychological and emotional abuse that he was subjected to by professional scientists, but they also serve as testaments of his acceptance of the necessity of death as an unavoidable aspect of

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<sup>86</sup> For a critique of Treadwell on these grounds see Patrick Curry. “Grizzly man and the spiritual life.” *Journal for the Study of Religion Nature and Culture* 4, no. 3 (2010): 206. I believe that critiques of this kind stem from a misreading of Treadwell’s project and a general lack of charitability. As Curry himself admits; “I’m aware of a certain lack of charity in my attitude to Treadwell, probably because I am a recovering seeker after romantic unity with sentimental tendencies myself. He was patently an innocent, so to speak, and terrible things often happen to innocents. So that is a failing on my part. . .”

<sup>87</sup> Lapinski, 2005, p. 8; “[Treadwell] wouldn’t come to me. He’d run away like a bear. He was a nut, but there’s a lot of them out there. . . I’d seek him out whenever I saw him, whether he wanted it or not.”

<sup>88</sup> Lapinski, 2005, p. 8.

<sup>89</sup> Lapinski, 2005, p. 8.

participating in ecological flows. It is also interesting that many of these same critics also claim that Treadwell either had a death wish, was insane, or did not properly value his own life, without recognizing that Treadwell's acceptance of his finitude and his approach to death can be understood as an unmistakably ecological attitude; an attitude that is clearly deeper and more sound than the attitudes of many of these critics whose lifestyles and practices do not acknowledge, let alone embrace, human edibility and ecological participation.

Many critics cite footage of Treadwell crying over the dead body of a red fox kit who was torn apart by wolves as evidence of his anti-ecological sentimentality.<sup>90</sup> It seems odd, however, to claim that expressions of sentimentality—especially in the form of mourning—necessarily reflect unsound ecological views. For example, if sentimentality and sound ecological attitudes are incompatible, then ecologists who mourn the loss of close family members or companion animals should be held to the same standard as Treadwell and reminded that such sentimentality simply indicates a failure to recognize the ecological necessity of death. This expectation seems to be inappropriate, however. And, if we appreciate the love that Treadwell felt toward these animals, it is just as inappropriate to criticize him for grieving over the dead body of a baby fox, especially one whose family he had known and loved for years.<sup>91</sup>

Those who are critical of Treadwell's sentimentality, might also recognize that even Charles Darwin was filled with wonder in recognition of the compassion, emotion, and empathy

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<sup>90</sup> Herzog, 2005. Many of Treadwell's critics define sentimentality as an illegitimate and harmful excess of feeling or emotion that blocks rationality. I understand sentimentality, however, as the ability or tendency of a person to allow their feelings and emotions to inform their life and ethical decisions. Contrary to what his critics claim, I do not believe that Treadwell's tendency to recognize and mourn the deaths of other animals is evidence of excessive emotion or anti-ecological idealism on his part. It seems more likely to me, that our culture is so disconnected from the worlds of other animals and death, that we often mistakenly dismiss appropriate acts of mourning as excessive and disproportionate displays of emotion.

<sup>91</sup> For more on the value and appropriateness of mourning other animals, see Margo De Mello. *Mourning animals: Rituals and practices surrounding animal death*. MSU Press, 2016; and James Stanescu. "Species trouble: Judith Butler, mourning, and the precarious lives of animals." *Hypatia* 27, no. 3 (2012): 567-582.



that he discovered throughout his time studying the more-than-human world.<sup>92</sup> The attempt to characterize Treadwell as a naïve sentimental idealist who could not come to grips with the cruelty of the natural world seems to assume that the world can be reduced to “chaos, hostility, and murder.”<sup>93</sup> Treadwell, however, recognized that the world is far more than chaotic, hostile, and murderous; his project reveals the immeasurable richness and surprising amount of harmonious interaction expressed between members of the same species, across species lines, and between individual animals and their environments. During his time in Katmai, Treadwell witnessed and generated untold joys, affects, and shared passions that render his decision to focus on the more harmonious aspects of the natural world while mourning the deaths of other animals both reasonable and ecologically sound.<sup>94</sup>

## V. Treadwell’s Mental Ethology

Mental ethology, according to Calarco, “investigates the various practices that form and reform the character and subjective constitution of an individual animal, whether human or more-than-human.”<sup>95</sup> Rather than thinking of subjectivity as being fixed or “identities as being relatively stable and persistent across time,” we might instead think of “an individual’s subjective constitution as perhaps being more plastic, and identity as something that is accomplished and built across time and that remains fundamentally open to future negotiations and new forms.”<sup>96</sup> The plasticity and fundamental openness of identity become more salient in

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<sup>92</sup> Charles Darwin and Phillip Prodger. *The expression of the emotions in man and animals*. Oxford University Press, USA, 1998.

<sup>93</sup> Herzog, 2005. In Herzog’s words, “Here I differ with Treadwell. He seemed to ignore the fact that in nature there are predators. I believe the common denominator of the universe is not harmony, but chaos, hostility and murder.”

<sup>94</sup> Curry, 2010, p. 7; “I note too (as pointed out to me by Mark Dickinson) that Treadwell probably stood a better chance among the bears than among his own people; and that he was also, in part, a victim of sheer bad luck. Nor is it negligible (as Bron Taylor reminded me) that he had more than a decade of a richly meaningful and satisfying life with bears and, for all we know, they with him.”

<sup>95</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 49.

<sup>96</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, pp. 58-59.

view of subjective transformations that stem from powerful events or encounters with others. For example, a human person might become indelibly marked and subjectively transformed after witnessing an extreme act of violence or generosity. From this example, we might think of subjectivity as something that is capable of being disrupted and affected through encounters with others. While most people site events and encounters with other humans as the most transformative ones in their lives, there is no good reason to ignore or dismiss mental transformations that often stem from experiences with more-than-human others.<sup>97</sup>

Calarco points to a series of mental transformations that Hutto underwent during his time living with mule deer to illustrate the ways in which ethological practice can generate unanticipated *dehabituations* (i.e., changes of habit and practice) as well as *resubjectifications* (i.e., changes in subjective constitution, personality, and identity) that influence and transform the behaviors and perspectives of individual animals. Treadwell as well as individual bears and foxes underwent transformations throughout his time in Katmai. These sorts of individual transformations fed into larger social transformations, which altered the properties, capacities, and characters of the *socii* in which Treadwell participated.

It is also important to note that from this perspective, dehabituating and resubjectification are processes that are shared by individual animals that emerge from shared *affects*.<sup>98</sup> This is a

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<sup>97</sup> For more on the transformative and revelatory potential of encounters with the more-than-human world, see David Abram. *The spell of the sensuous: Perception and language in a more-than-human world*. Vintage, 2012; and David Abram. *Becoming animal: An earthly cosmology*. Vintage, 2011.

<sup>98</sup> For more on shared affect see Sean Bowden's chapter, "Human and Nonhuman Agency in Deleuze" in Hannah Stark and Jon Roffe, eds. *Deleuze and the Non/human*. Springer, 2015. Here, when describing Deleuze's affect, Bowden says, "The basic idea is this: for Deleuze, following Spinoza, the power of a given body to act – that is, to affect other bodies – is inseparable from its capacity to be affected by other bodies, for better or for worse. Moreover, the capacity of a body to affect and be affected is inseparable from the 'affectations' experienced by that body, especially the affectations of joy and sadness, which, respectively, correspond to good and bad encounters with other bodies or, what amounts to the same thing, increases or decreases in the power of acting as a result of these encounters." For more on Deleuze's reading of Spinoza's affect, see Gilles Deleuze. *Spinoza: practical philosophy*. City Lights Books, 1988, pp. 48-51; and Gilles Deleuze. "Expressionism in philosophy: Spinoza." 1990, pp. 93, 239-241.

crucial point, because many analyses of Treadwell tend to focus on how he affected the bears without recognizing the reciprocal aspects of affective events. In other words, affects are always double and shared. Treadwell did not simply impose one-directional pressures on other animals that bent them to his will—rather, he changed alongside these animals as they shared space, negotiated boundaries, and influenced one another. Ethological practice, then, might be understood as a series of experiments with new and different subjectivities, which allow for new potentials and relations to unfold. These new and different subjectivities, however, are oftentimes unanticipatable. Even when one practices ethology (particularly mental ethology) with an open mind, one is often surprised by the subjective and perspectival transformations that unfold through such practice. Treadwell was frequently surprised by other animals during his time in Katmai, which deepened his appreciation for them while exposing him to unsuspected joys and pains.

As Calarco points out, the processes of dehabituations and resubjectifications that take hold of Hutto and transform his life were “initiated not by Hutto himself but by encounters with the mule deer.”<sup>99</sup> The most potent transformations emerged from ethical encounters initiated by injured and vulnerable mule deer. Calarco draws special attention to how encounters with animals in such precarious situations served to,

alert him to their finitude, fragility, and singularity and call him out of habituated modes of knowing and loving that tend to cancel radical singularity . . . these encounters draw Hutto out of himself and into new epistemological processes of subjectification.<sup>100</sup>

We might recall that Treadwell’s encounters with injured and vulnerable animals (particularly Mickey and the frail cub mentioned previously) affected Treadwell in a similar

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<sup>99</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 59.

<sup>100</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 59.

fashion. These encounters drew him out of himself and demanded that he attend to their vulnerability, even if he ultimately decided that it was not his place to interfere after dwelling in the borderlands between his various ethical commitments. These encounters challenged Treadwell in ways that forced him to think from the perspectives of these other animals—in ways that “irrevocably changed” his “frame of reference.”<sup>101</sup> The ability to travel between subjective worlds and embrace epistemological pluralism stemmed from a handful of transformative affective encounters with other animals. While Treadwell was constantly exposed to new perspectives during his time in Katmai, some of his most potent transformations stemmed from feelings of intense gratitude toward bears and intense shame toward his complicity in forms of anthropogenic violence.

### **Re-Bjorn**

Some of Treadwell’s most transformative encounters with other animals were ones that filled him with intense feelings of gratitude and love. Treadwell’s third encounter with a bear during his initial trip to Alaska (which, we might recall, taught him his third lesson: that bears have the capacity to be merciful and magnanimous and are not merely blood-thirsty killers as many make them out to be), was one such encounter.

When Treadwell was on his way back to his camp after encountering the two previous bears, he was approached by a massive male grizzly bear. His attempts to withdraw from the animal were denied by the bear’s quick encroaching steps and he was almost immediately overcome. Treadwell responded by “falling down hard, face first” and “curl(ing) into the fetal position.”<sup>102</sup> Treadwell, paralyzed with terror, could not move— he found himself in a state of absolute vulnerability in which he was at the mercy of the powerful creature. While still curled,

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<sup>101</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 60; Hutto, 2016, p. 294.

<sup>102</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, pp. 13-14.

Treadwell peered through his fingers which were covering his face and gazed upon the immense battle-scarred bear who stood over him. Treadwell, trembling, watched helplessly as the giant breathed him in. Then, “ever so gently, [the bear] stepped over [his] quivering body . . . and vanished in the direction of the river.”<sup>103</sup> Treadwell was shaken by this meeting and was slow to rise, but after he did, he returned to his camp “all the while chanting, ‘Thank you, bears . . . thank you, bears.’”<sup>104</sup> Treadwell considered this encounter—and the bear’s decision to let him live—to be a gift. When this bear spared his life, he was reborn for the first time.<sup>105</sup> He recognized that bears, while capable of great aggression and violence, were also capable of great compassion and mercy. It was this realization that encouraged him to study bears obsessively until he returned the following season for his first official “expedition” where he camped in solitude among the bears of the “Grizzly Sanctuary.” While he desired more than anything to help protect the bears that had changed his life, he still had an alcohol addiction that he knew would impede his efforts.

It was during his first “official” expedition that he met and grew quite fond of a bear, whom he named “Booble.” Among other things, Booble and her cub Beacon were the first bears with whom Treadwell built profound connections. Treadwell learned how to swim across a river by following Booble’s example and also shared several moments of vulnerability with Booble

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<sup>103</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 14.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> It is worth noting that the words “bear” and “born” are both etymologically derived from the Old English word *bera(n)*; “bera” means “a bear,” while “beran” means “to carry, bring; bring forth, give birth to, produce; to endure without resistance; to support, hold up, sustain; to wear.” Given the themes of exposure, nakedness, and bareness, it is also interesting to note that the verb form of “bear” (i.e., beran) is also connected to “bare” and “born” through the past indicative of beran, “*bær*,” which means “naked, uncovered, unclothed.” In light of these connections, we might think of Treadwell’s subjective rebirths as stemming from encounters with bears who inspired him to shed his humanness and embrace his bare animality. For more on the etymology of “bear,” “born,” and “bare,” see <https://www.etymonline.com/word/bear>, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/born>, and <https://www.etymonline.com/word/bare>. (all accessed on 5/7/18).

and Beacon that affected him acutely.<sup>106</sup> Treadwell attributed one of these moments to his decision to permanently abstain from alcohol for the rest of his life.

Treadwell recalled a particular day on which “[he] begged [Booble] for her help” as she dug for clams beside him.<sup>107</sup> While he cried, he expressed his worry that he would “never really be [her] defender because [he couldn’t] t stop drinking.”<sup>108</sup> As she listened to this utterance, Treadwell says that Booble moved closer to him while she continued to dig. As he existed with her in a suspended state of mutual trust where they “could not have been more vulnerable,” Treadwell looked at Booble and pledged that “[He would] stop drinking for [Booble] and for all bears,” and that he would “stop and devote [his] life” to them. Upon completing his pledge, Booble responded in an “extraordinary” way— “with a playful swat, she flipped a clam shell over to [him].”<sup>109</sup> He kept these “treasures” and considered this to be another rebirth that instilled a sense of purpose in his life. When he returned to society after this expedition, no longer did he live his life in a drunken stupor, instead he “had dreams, goals, hopes, and a reason to live.”<sup>110</sup> Booble and the giant male grizzly from his first encounter gave him life, and he was determined

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<sup>106</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, pp. 22, 33.

<sup>107</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 33.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.; There is a striking parallel between Treadwell’s request for help in overcoming his addiction and a Sicangu Lakota approach to asking for help from one’s relations as described by Albert White Hat Sr. in his book, *Life’s Journey—Zuya: Oral Teachings from Rosebud*; Albert White Hat Sr. and John Cunningham. *Life’s Journey—Zuya: Oral Teachings from Rosebud*. University of Utah Press, 2012. p. 89. Here, White Hat Sr. describes the process of asking for assistance from a relative in a time of need; “If I lie down to drink from the creek, I’ll say, ‘Tunkasila, Unsimalayo’ (feminine would be Unsimalaye), asking that creek, that water, to address my thirst. I’m not asking that creek to pity me or have mercy on me but to help me with a need. I am asking a relative to give me that water to give me strength and the ability to go on.” In Lakota cosmology, all of creation are our relatives: the sun, the moon, the wind, the water, plants, animals, rocks, and so on. According to White Hat Sr., in times of need, it is common practice to ask one’s relations for help. He points out that one who asks for help must know what their need is, announce their desire for help, and promise one’s relations that one will “offer something in return.” This practice seems to shed light on Treadwell’s encounter with Booble—Treadwell requested Booble’s help in overcoming his addiction, and in exchange for her help, promised to dedicate his life to serving bears and other animals.

<sup>109</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 33.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

to “devote it to bears, to animals of every stripe, and to ecological preservation.”<sup>111</sup> These transformations corresponded to massive changes in Treadwell’s habits and subjective constitution. In addition to the transformative power of gracious and loving encounters, however, Treadwell also underwent mental transformations in response to encounters that filled him with feelings of shame.

### **Transformative Shame, Becoming-Animal, and Mental Indistinction**

According to Calarco, the encounters that emerge from Hutto’s ethological practice revealed “the possibility of establishing a fundamentally different form of life that begins by displacing standard anthropocentric perspectives and identities.”<sup>112</sup> Some of the most profound encounters that Treadwell had with bears and foxes that challenged his anthropocentrism were ones that filled him with intense feelings of shame. The transformative power of shame is revealed by Treadwell’s first encounter with a bear, whereby the bear ran away from him immediately upon seeing him. In his words,

It was the briefest of encounters, the first time that I stood near a truly wild beast. My heart was pounding and I was shaken, both equally elated and saddened by the meeting. Elated, for it was my dream come true to meet a bear in the wilderness. Sad, because as imposing as the bear was, it was afraid of me. In the wilderness, this bear should be frightened of nothing. Yet a brief glimpse of a human had caused it to flee. The message was clear to me. After decades of adversity caused by man, the bear was wary of people. For me, the encounter was like looking into a mirror. I gazed into the face of a kindred soul, a being that was potentially lethal, but in reality was just as frightened as I was.<sup>113</sup>

In this encounter, Treadwell was opened up to a perspective that subverted his all-too-human identity. For the first time, it was revealed to him that he could inspire fear in an animal

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<sup>111</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 34.

<sup>112</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 61.

<sup>113</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 10; Lapinski, p. 3. Unsurprisingly, many critics of Treadwell, including Lapinski, fail to acknowledge why Treadwell was so moved by this bear’s decision to flee from him. In fact, Lapinski does not even mention Treadwell’s sadness, and instead, claims that Treadwell felt “successful and, in fact, elated when each bear veered away from him into the brush” (p.3).

as powerful and imposing as an Alaskan brown bear. Rather than invoking feelings of power and dominance in Treadwell, however, he was filled with a deep sadness at what he took to be the woundedness of a fellow creature who was the progeny of a long line of animals who had been systematically abused by humans.<sup>114</sup> In this moment, Treadwell glimpsed the world from the bear's eyes, which inspired him to think deeply about how he might convey to these bears that he meant them no harm.

The shame Treadwell felt in the wake of this encounter left an indelible mark upon him and inspired him to live his life in view of the anthropogenic violence regularly enacted against these animals by the dominant culture. Perhaps more significantly, however, this shame encouraged Treadwell to think beyond his own individual habits toward collective and systematic transformations aimed at opening up space for these and other animals to flourish. He founded Grizzly People, became a vocal environmental activist, and decided to document the rich lives of bears in an effort to inspire the largescale change that he deemed necessary to preserve these animals and their habitats; he did all of this while using his body and good will to show the world that the anthropogenic fissure between these species can be mended with love, respect, and patience.

As Calarco points out, Hutto experienced similar feelings of shame when he considered the violence enacted against mule deer by humans, especially the practices he found himself complicit in. While Hutto began his ethological experiment with mule deer as an avid hunter who “insist[ed] on the legitimacy of hunting mule deer and wish[ed] to help maintain this

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<sup>114</sup> For more on wounded animals and fellow creatures, see Cora Diamond. "Eating meat and eating people." *Philosophy* 53, no. 206 (1978): 465-479.; J.M. Coetzee. *The Lives of Animals* [Princeton Classics]. Princeton University Press, 2016.; Stephen Mulhall. *The wounded animal: JM Coetzee and the difficulty of reality in literature and philosophy*. Princeton University Press, 2008; and Deborah Slicer. "Joy." In *Ecofeminism: Feminist intersections with other animals and the earth*, edited by Carol J. Adams, and Lori Gruen, 59-74. Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2014.



practice in a sustainable manner in the future,” over time, he came to “view hunting from the inside of the mule deer pack, wondering whether he too has been in the crosshairs of a hunter’s rifle” at some point during his ethological project.<sup>115</sup> While Treadwell himself was never a hunter or hunting advocate, he became increasingly opposed to hunting practices (especially poaching) during his time in Katmai because his intimate knowledge of bears and foxes rendered the conception of killing one for sport untenable.

In his book, Treadwell recounted the feelings that overtook him on a particular evening while he was reading a book about “a man and his passion for killing bears.”<sup>116</sup> He described the rage he felt while reading descriptions of bear-killing methods and seeing pictures of “slaughtered bears and their smiling killers.”<sup>117</sup> The words and images made him physically sick and left him deeply troubled for the rest of the evening. After realizing that Mr. Chocolate had bedded down near his tent for the night, however, he decided to sit down near the bear outside his tent. He then told the giant bear, “Tonight I’ve been reading about animal killers. Many people would love to kill you, Mr. Chocolate. I’m ashamed to be human! I want to be like you, wild and free, liberated from the wicked ways of people.”<sup>118</sup> While Treadwell recognized that he was not directly responsible for these human practices, he felt *sullied* by them and was inspired to challenge and scornfully resist them.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 62.

<sup>116</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 168.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Here I am following Deleuze and Guattari’s analysis of how recognition of one’s complicity in practices that are unjust and violent leaves one with a sense of moral dirtiness that inspires action on behalf of the victims of such practices. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. *What is philosophy?*. Columbia University Press, 2014. p. 106: “As Primo Levi said, they will not make us confuse the victims with the executioners. But, he says, what Nazism and the camps inspire in us is much more or much less: ‘the shame of being a man’ (because even the survivors had to collude, to compromise themselves). It is not only our States but each of us, every democrat, who finds him or herself not responsible for Nazism but sullied by it.”

In both his book and footage, Treadwell emphasizes his desire to help others appreciate the wonder and beauty of these animals.<sup>120</sup> He repeatedly emphasizes that people would not hunt these animals if they had even the faintest appreciation for the richness of these animals' worlds. For instance, in the film *Grizzly Man*, Treadwell addresses the issues of fox hunting and fur farming by drawing attention to the bond he shares with Timmy the Fox.<sup>121</sup> He goes on to state,

Between Timmy the Fox, this beautiful fox, and me, we ask the public, please stop killing and hurting these foxes and torturing them. Don't you think? If they knew how beautiful he was, and how sweet he was, they would never hurt him.<sup>122</sup>

Timmy's affective capacities and rich emotional life inspired Treadwell to advocate on his behalf. He emphasizes both his beauty and his unique personality to suggest to the viewer that foxes are often killed because people have failed to attend to these animals in ways that would foster appreciation of them. It is important to note that Treadwell appears to be in deep anguish as he talks about the horrors of these practices. According to Calarco, Hutto "sees and feels with the deer, utterly immersed in their individual pain and shared grief." In Hutto's words,

Now, when a bullet passes through the body of one of my family members . . . there is no more displacement or refuge from my attachment—that mindless, objective space where previously my emotions would have safely resided. Now there is only the shared pain and agony and the loss of one that I care for deeply.<sup>123</sup>

Like Hutto, there is nowhere Treadwell can go to escape from the pain of knowing that the animals he loves are suffering and dying needlessly due to violent human practices. He has spent so much time with these animals that he feels the urge to do whatever he can to prevent

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<sup>120</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 140; "Please don't leave the safety of the Maze because there are men out there who will shoot you for trophies. If only people knew how wonderful you are. I'm sure then that they wouldn't want to hurt you. I'll try my best to teach them.' . . . I felt such love for these bears, for all bears. How could any person hurt them?"

<sup>121</sup> Herzog, 2005; "I think one of the things that's really important is you can see the bond that has developed between this very wild animal and this very, fairly wild person. And you realize he has this gorgeous fur, and people are trying to kill him for it with steel door traps and cruel farming practices. And other people run him down on horses for sport. Fox hunting. We want this to end."

<sup>122</sup> Herzog, 2005.

<sup>123</sup> Hutto, 2016, p. 294; Calarco, forthcoming, p. 62.

them from being killed unnecessarily. The mental indistinction of this shared agony and the desire to live one's life in view of it is beautifully described by Deleuze and Guattari, who might describe Treadwell's shame and agony-driven desire to act on behalf of these animals as an instance of *becoming-animal*:

We think and write for the animals themselves. We become animal so that the animal becomes something else. The agony of a rat or the slaughter of a calf remains present in thought not through pity but as the zone of exchange between the human and the animal in which something of the one passes into the other. This is the constitutive relationship of philosophy with non-philosophy. Becoming is always double, and it is this double becoming that constitutes a people to come and the new land.<sup>124</sup>

The agony that Treadwell shared with these fellow exposed and vulnerable creatures served as the animating force behind his efforts to generate new possibilities for the animals he loved. He could not bear the idea of passively allowing these animals to suffer and die around him, which inspired him to act in view of their suffering. Treadwell became-animal to liberate the more-than-human world into new potentials beyond regular exposure to intense anthropogenic violence.

It is important to recognize that Treadwell frequently made reference to his humanity and the various differences that existed between himself and other animals, which undercuts claims that he was attempting to achieve oneness with bears, foxes, or the natural world in general.<sup>125</sup> While some of his comments can be read as revealing the desire to *fuse* with bears and foxes, it seems more appropriate to understand them as being driven by a desire to *become-other*; that is, to become-animal in such a way that he would both be able to survive alongside wild animals and overcome the kind of humanness that has come to define the dominant culture (especially in

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<sup>124</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 2014, p. 109.

<sup>125</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 154; "His keen senses told [the bear] that although I wasn't a bear, I certainly wasn't a threat."

the United States). His close friend and ecologist, Marnie Gaede, for instance, said that “he wanted to become *like* the bear.”<sup>126</sup> In a letter sent to Gaede, which she reads aloud in the film *Grizzly Man*, Treadwell proclaimed, “I must mutually mutate into a wild animal to handle the life I live out here.”

Treadwell’s focus on “*mutual mutation*” reflects his understanding of how his relationship with these animals—a relationship characterized by becoming-animal—involved a double (i.e., mutual, reciprocal, shared) becoming. He recognized that in order to survive and to generate robust ways of life with other animals, practitioners of ethology must meet these creatures on their terms and be willing to change alongside them. Rather than wrongly criticizing Treadwell for desiring to fuse with these creatures, we might instead emphasize how willing he was to sacrifice aspects of his humanity and human privilege in favor of an exposed existence that scorned the comforts of society and blurred the lines between human and animal. Treadwell balanced a recognition of his difference from bears with a deep appreciation of the fact that he was becoming something-other, something deeply *indistinct* (i.e., unrecognizably human, bear, or fox), through his immersive project;

My strategy is one of complete immersion within the hierarchy of bears that is both respectful and peaceful. It would be quite interesting to know what the bears think I am; whether they consider me just another bear, an animal like Timmy the Fox, or something altogether different. Whatever their evaluation, it is abundantly clear that most of the bears I live among either tolerate me, or enjoy my company.<sup>127</sup>

Based on this passage, it is clear, that Treadwell did not believe that he was a bear in any literal or naïve sense. He did, however, recognize that individual bears treated him in fashions that were indistinguishable from how they treated other bears. It is important to note that he was humble

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<sup>126</sup> Herzog, 2005, 16:53; my emphasis.

<sup>127</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 138. For more on shared joys that cross species demarcations see Slicer, 2014; and Deborah Slicer. "More Joy." *Ethics & the Environment* 20, no. 2 (2015): 1-23.

enough to recognize his epistemic limitations and did not simply assume that the bears were treating him like another bear *because* they thought he was a member of their species. Instead, he embraced agnosticism with respect to why the bears treated him the way that they did. This indistinguishable treatment seems to reveal the mental fluidity of the bears, who, through spending time with Treadwell, underwent parallel changes in their behaviors, attitudes, and personalities, which resulted in unprecedented and novel interspecies becomings.

Treadwell was able to embrace the differences between himself and the bears while simultaneously recognizing the ways in which he and the bears were dynamic and capable of changing one another. This ability reflects a profound interspecies mental indistinction, whereby his subjective world and the subjective worlds of bears seemed to blend, interact, and become indiscernible from one another.

Perhaps the single most illuminating encounter that filled Treadwell with a sense of shame was an encounter with a male bear whom he called Cupcake. When Cupcake was an adolescent, he made a habit of bluff-charging Treadwell, which led to many tense and uneasy encounters. After a series of close calls, Cupcake eventually charged Treadwell while he was near his tent. Treadwell responded by spraying the bear with pepper spray;

He coughed in agony, rolling his head in the grass. I was beside myself, miserable at being responsible for Cupcake's suffering. I called to Cupcake, almost crying. I'm sorry, Cake! You scared me!<sup>128</sup>

After spraying him a second time and chasing him with a stick, Cupcake finally ran away, but Treadwell was deeply distraught by this encounter. Treadwell eventually came to believe that carrying bear spray was incompatible with his desire to respect and live with these

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<sup>128</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 87.

animals on their terms.<sup>129</sup> It seems reasonable to assume that the shame he felt after using his bear spray on Cupcake was a crucial aspect of his decision to stop carrying bear spray during his expeditions. It does not seem unlikely that the agony Treadwell shared with Cupcake inspired him to surrender himself completely to the animals he loved.

The shame Treadwell felt when confronted with his direct and indirect participation in violence against animals led to massive and permanent changes in his habits and subjective constitution. Contrary to the condemnations of many of his critics, Treadwell did not impose himself on these animals; he was willing to make sacrifices and alter his behaviors if it meant that the lives of bears and foxes would be enriched. Treadwell became-animal—he became-bear and he became-fox—with the intention of creating new possibilities for the creatures who saved him from himself and filled his life with meaning. The character of his ethological project and his decision to attempt to share his experiences with the world was born out of the desire to radically restructure the all-too-human world in ways that open up space for bears, foxes, and other animals to flourish beyond the oppressive and punitive hand of the dominant culture. For Treadwell the success of his life’s work would generate new opportunities for other animals to engage in unpredictable new socii alongside and independent of humans.

### **Radical Singularity, Unpredictability, and Inexhaustibility**

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<sup>129</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 105. While Treadwell claimed that a few days after the encounter he did not regret using the spray on Cupcake because “giving him a dose of fear was exactly what he needed for his own survival” (i.e., so he might avoid being shot after charging a gun-bearing visitor of the Grizzly Sanctuary), Treadwell eventually decided that carrying bear spray was incompatible with his commitment to living with these animals on their terms. See Craig Medred. “Biologist Believes Errors Led to Timothy Treadwell and Amie Huguenard Attack.” *Anchorage Daily News*, August 28, 2005. [http://www.wolfsonnews.org/news/Alaska\\_current\\_events\\_1381.htm](http://www.wolfsonnews.org/news/Alaska_current_events_1381.htm). Accessed 4/24/2018.; “Treadwell didn't believe it was right to spray bears with the irritating pepper spray -- even if it caused no long-term injuries to the bears.” According to Treadwell’s friend and filmmaker Joel Bennett, “He just felt that was an invasive, aggressive mechanism that translated into a kind of attitude. He didn't want to have that attitude . . . He kind of wanted to resign himself to whatever happened.”

Calarco also draws attention to how Hutto's ethological practice deepened his appreciation of the irreducible singularity of mule deer personalities. Despite having spent seven years living in close proximity to these animals, "Hutto concedes that he is ultimately unable to discern some kind of essential, abstract deer personality."<sup>130</sup> By spending time with individual mule deer, Hutto learned to become attentive to the differences that existed between them and came to recognize that each one possessed a unique and rich personality that distinguished each individual from other members of the pack. Like Hutto, Treadwell became deeply attentive to individual bears and foxes of Katmai. This attentiveness helped ensure his safety while simultaneously expressing his love and appreciation for individual animals. Throughout his book, Treadwell constantly comments on the unique personality traits, tendencies, and proclivities of individual animals.<sup>131</sup> His attentiveness to various character traits disclosed the degree of indistinction that exists across species lines with respect to personality qualities that we tend to assume only humans (or perhaps only certain nonhuman animals) possess. For instance, Treadwell noted that "fighting and playing styles differed dramatically from bear to bear, depending on each bear's personality" and he recognized that "all bears have their personal distance at which they tolerate humans and other animals."<sup>132</sup> Treadwell never made the mistake of underestimating the individuality of bears and foxes, and always acknowledged the possibility that they could surprise him.

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<sup>130</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 59.

<sup>131</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 30. As Treadwell notes, "The levels of skill and digging styles were varied, differing from bear to bear. It was fascinating—and entertaining—to study the various techniques employed by each animal. He also made it a point to acknowledge when his observations of bears called his hypotheses into question; "My initial guess was that the giant males would be the most proficient clammers . . . I could not have been more wrong."

<sup>132</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 98; p. 109. Treadwell recognized that bears, foxes, and humans (including himself) all participate in negotiations of space. He was keenly aware that how much personal distance an animal prefers to have from others depends on their individual personalities, rather than species membership. From this perspective, spatial preferences and other traits cannot be predicted a priori or reduced to a particular species being, although there may be trends within populations of particular animals.

While Treadwell was deeply attentive to individual bears, he remained careful and wary because he recognized their unpredictability. For instance, an unanticipated encounter emerged between Treadwell and a bear he knew well named Warren after Timmy the Fox woke him up and made him angry during mating season. Warren exhibited signs of aggression (i.e., he had lowered his head and was holding his ears back), but Treadwell responded by averting his gaze and exposing his neck to the bear while Timmy hid behind him. This encounter made him appreciate the level of awareness he had to exercise given the unpredictability of two animals he thought he knew quite well—in his words;

The encounter had a profound effect on me. Though I had known Warren for over five years, I could have been killed. The lesson was clear: To live near mating grizzlies, I would have to be wary and respectful at all times.<sup>133</sup>

While Warren was unpredictably aggressive on rare occasions, there was one bear in particular that Treadwell found to be utterly unpredictable in a manner that made him feel deeply unsafe whenever he could see him; a “dark male” with “manic and wary eyes” whom he named “Demon.”<sup>134</sup> According to Treadwell, some bear experts labeled him the “25<sup>th</sup> Grizzly,” which signified a bear “that tolerates no man or bear, one that will kill without bias.”<sup>135</sup> On more than one occasion Treadwell believed that this animal was going to kill him. During their first encounter, Demon began to stalk Treadwell from a distance. Treadwell “tried to decipher his body language . . . but couldn’t see any outwardly aggressive signals.” While most bears display obvious signs of aggression before charging, Demon, acted “nonchalant.” Demon’s unpredictability left Treadwell “dumbfounded” and desperate; he responded to Demon’s relentless encroachment by “lunging toward him kicking and screaming,” “ready to die

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<sup>133</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 74.

<sup>134</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 123.

<sup>135</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 123.



fighting.”<sup>136</sup> Unlike the other bears that Treadwell encountered, Demon was the only one who stalked him from a distance and was one of a handful of bears that Treadwell desperately avoided as much as he could. He commented on Demon’s “menacing, wicked” and “maniacal” eyes and avoided meeting his gaze. Despite his distrust of Demon, however, Treadwell still thanked him for sparing his life. Treadwell respected and loved Demon, while recognizing that his unpredictability and aggressiveness made him an unlikely candidate for acceptance or social bonding. Encounters with Demon and other unpredictable bears taught Treadwell two important lessons; that 1) he should not “trust nonchalant behavior”, and that 2) “in the wilderness, you can’t take anything for granted. You can be killed on your last day just as easily as on your first. There’s no coasting in the wild.”<sup>137</sup>

While Treadwell was regularly surprised by bears who were unpredictably dangerous and aggressive, he was also pleasantly surprised by bears and foxes regularly. For instance, after five years of seeing Mr. Chocolate only in the portion of Katmai he called the Grizzly Sanctuary, the large bear appeared in a portion of the Preserve twenty miles from the Sanctuary—a place where Treadwell did not expect to see him. This brought great comfort to Treadwell because Mr. Chocolate was a very tolerant bear with whom he had a strong relationship. Having him around made Treadwell feel safe because the bear deterred young adolescent male bears who might otherwise challenge him.<sup>138</sup> Treadwell was also pleasantly surprised by the mercifulness and tranquility exhibited toward him by individual bears. For example, in 1995 during a trip to the Grizzly Maze, a bear woke him up by nearly climbing into his tent;

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<sup>136</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 124.

<sup>137</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, pp. 153, 156.

<sup>138</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, pp. 79, 90. Mr. Chocolate oftentimes helped Treadwell by serving as a protective buffer when he was in trouble. By angling toward the bear strategically, Treadwell was able to deter many young bears from exhibiting aggressive behaviors toward him. Mr. Chocolate never exhibited aggressive behavior toward Treadwell and felt comfortable in his presence, but he would chase off ambitious and aggressive subadult bears when they got too close to him.

With almost human dexterity, the bear pulled the front tent flap aside and peered in at me. I screamed and scrambled for a can of bear mace. . . I finally located the spray and had uncapped the can before I realized that this calm, curious bear meant no harm. Wild animals can be unpredictable, but as my head cleared and my heart slowed, I sensed only peaceful intentions from the bear. . . I recognized the visitor: It was Melissa, a bear I'd met the previous season. Melissa's doglike snout and sparkling brown eyes looked at me in wonder.<sup>139</sup>

This story reveals Treadwell's acknowledgment of the unpredictable wildness of these animals, while also bringing light to the inquisitiveness and peacefulness of individual bears. This encounter reveals the intense richness and excitement of Treadwell's experiments with these individual animals. After sharing a few minutes together, Treadwell considered himself lucky for having the opportunity to spend time with "such a sweet, beautiful bear" and thanked Melissa for her visit.

These encounters, and others like them, caused Treadwell to alter his practices, behaviors, and beliefs, while encouraging him to attempt to—"however partially and imperfectly"—view the world from the perspectives of other, individual animals. The epistemological world-travelling that stemmed from these encounters subverted and challenged the all-too-human belief that nonhuman animals are replaceable, predictable, and exhaustible. It is important to recognize that some of Treadwell's methodologies that are often considered to be anthropomorphic—particularly his singing and naming practices—emerged from encounters with particular animals and were intended to recognize their singularity.

Treadwell's use of song emerged instinctively from him during initial encounters with these animals. We might recall that during Treadwell's second encounter with a bear, he instinctively began singing to the animal and believed that the gesture exhibited good will.<sup>140</sup> He

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<sup>139</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 117. This story took place before a transformative encounter that encouraged him to stop carrying bear mace. This encounter will be explored below.

<sup>140</sup> Herzog, 2005.

had not planned to sing to the animal; rather, the inclination emerged from him in an unanticipatable fashion. The accidental emergence of this behavior became a crucial method of deescalating potential conflicts and relaxing these animals. In Treadwell's words, "I mastered a way of interacting with them with body language that enables me to be in extremely close contact with them. . . I discovered that singing soothes these bears."<sup>141</sup> And while many may interpret Treadwell's tendency to sing to these animals as revealing a deep misunderstanding of bears and their behaviors, this criticism seems to be subverted when we attend to how Treadwell used song as both a survival tactic (i.e., as a method of deescalating and discouraging conflict with other, unpredictable animals) and as a method of acknowledging the uniqueness and singularity of individual bears. As Treadwell explains, "For each bear, I had a particular rhythm tune, and tone of voice."<sup>142</sup> In light of these aspects of Treadwell's decision to sing to animals, it is inappropriate to dismiss this practice as anthropomorphic.

Like Hutto, Treadwell named animals based on unique aspects of their personalities, appearances, or in recognition of an event. While some critics claim that his decision to name bears "pet names" was anthropomorphic, these criticisms focus on the names themselves without attending to the circumstances, encounters, and reasons behind particular names.<sup>143</sup> An investigation of the events that produced some of the most controversial names (i.e., Mr. Chocolate and Timmy the Fox), may reveal that these naming practices were not domineering or anthropomorphic.

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<sup>141</sup> See "Sings to Grizzlies: Timothy Treadwell Friday," Newsmax, October 14, 2005, (accessed May 5, 2018), <https://www.newsmax.com/pre-2008/sings-grizzlies-timothy-treadwell/2005/10/14/id/681143/>. While I resist Treadwell's characterization of bears as "big party animals," it is important to recognize the efficacy of his singing and high frequency speech practices. It is also important to acknowledge that many people criticize his decision to sing and speak to these animals in a high pitch voice using misogynistic, *effeminophobic* (anti-effeminate), and homophobic justifications without fully appreciating how these methods of communication are ethologically effective and valuable. I intend to take these issues up in more detail in a future paper.

<sup>142</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 181.

<sup>143</sup> Mitchell, 2009; Drenthen, 2009.

Treadwell first met Mr. Chocolate during his first “official” expedition to Katmai. While watching fifty or so bears graze, wrestle, and mate in an open field, Treadwell stumbled upon a craterous bear daybed where he fell asleep. He awoke to a huge, “deep chocolate brown” bear grazing inches from his face. In this moment Treadwell was struck by the animal’s sublime power; “I was terrified, yet I couldn’t help but marvel at the magnificent animal.”<sup>144</sup> Even though the animal was physically powerful and could have easily dispatched Treadwell in that moment, he was neither territorial, nor outwardly aggressive. Treadwell recognized, however, that “at that moment, [his] future rested in his paws.”<sup>145</sup>

Rather than allowing his fear to take over, Treadwell responded to the presence of the creature by gently singing and apologizing for his encroachment; “. . . I sensed something unique about this bear. I began to sing, ever so softly, ‘Mr. Chocolate Bear, I’m sorry I’m in your way.’” Rather, than reflecting a childish or fanciful denial of the bear’s uniqueness, the name “Mr. Chocolate Bear” emerged from Treadwell during an emergency as he desperately attempted to convey good will to an animal he had unintentionally intruded upon. It is also worth mentioning that this name reflects Treadwell’s attempt to show respect for the bear (by calling him “Mr.”), while simultaneously acknowledging the uniqueness of the bear by attending to his rich brown coat. The name also seemed to stick because it accurately signaled and honored the bear’s friendly and gentle disposition, given the honorific connotations built into the title, “Mr.”<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 29. Jeff Gailus shed important light on the power of sublimity in encounters with bears during an in-person discussion with me.

<sup>145</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 29.

<sup>146</sup> The humility built into Treadwell’s decision to call the bear Mr. Chocolate might come to the surface in light of the fact that “Mr.” is etymological derived from the word “master.” Thus, we can read this name as an attempt to indicate that Mr. Chocolate was “the boss” in their relationship.

People also condemn Treadwell for naming Timmy the Fox after himself. However, if we recall the circumstances under which Treadwell named Timmy, a more charitable reading of this decision might emerge.

The pups obeyed and kept their distance except for one particularly ornery sibling who sneaked closer and closer to me. . . Much to his parents' dismay, he became more brazen with each visit. . . The more I got to know the little bugger, the more I realized that the disobedient flaming torpedo of terror was a lot like me. One day, after he'd left the relative safety of the fox family's domain to follow me, I had no doubt what to name him. I called him Timmy the Fox.<sup>147</sup>

Rather than conceiving of this name as an egocentric and anthropomorphic attempt to deny the difference of the fox, we might instead recognize that this name emerged from Treadwell's recognition of the spirit that he and Timmy seemed to share. This name also served to remind Treadwell of the initial encounter with the animal that was made possible by the brazenness and boldness that characterized both of their personalities. It is also significant that Treadwell did not go by Timmy. As such, within this name we might detect acknowledgment of both this animal's independence and singularity as well as a sort of kinship or family resemblance.

While any naming practice can be understood as an act of violence that runs the risk of pinning down or attempting to exhaust the singularity of an "Other," it is important to recognize the violence that stems from refusing to name animals as well. That is, when one refuses to name an animal out of respect for their singularity, one risks homogenizing a population of animals by failing to attend to each individual's uniqueness. In view of how much attention Treadwell paid to individual animals and his admission that he could never eliminate their uniqueness and

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<sup>147</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, pp. 44-45.

irreducible difference, it seems inappropriate to write off his naming practices as anthropomorphic denials of their inexhaustibility.<sup>148</sup>

### **Loving Perception and World-Travelling**

Treadwell's comments regarding the failure of the National Park Service (which for him emblemized the restriction, hegemony, and managerial perspective of the dominant order and culture) to "watch" and "care" about these animals, illuminate the connection that Treadwell makes between attentiveness and genuine concern;

They do not watch these animals. They don't care about these animals. All they wanna do is screw people like me around. It's amazing. "Let the fishermen fucking shoot the animals. Let the fucking poachers come in here and fuck 'em. Let the fucking commercial people fuck them around with their fucking cameras and the tourists. But we're gonna go screw with Timothy Treadwell because he loves animals and teaches kids for free. Let's go. Let's do that. That's what we're gonna do."<sup>149</sup>

A crucial aspect of his care and concern for other animals was intimately tied to appreciating them and coming to know them as individuals. The failure (or inability) of most tourists to closely attend to animals and their plights was deeply troubling to him. Many critics of Treadwell dismiss this "rant" as egomaniacal, insane, or exaggerated, without recognizing the validity of his concerns. For instance, Lapinski is extremely dismissive of Treadwell's distaste for tourists and criticizes his tendency to run away, hide, or "act like a bear" (by growling or behaving as a bear does when they are agitated) when he was confronted by tour guides and camera-bearing tourists.<sup>150</sup> He would also sometimes scare the bears away, so tourists could not

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<sup>148</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999. Treadwell describes how he came to name quite a few bears and foxes during his time in Katmai. See the following pages for accounts of how Treadwell named particular bears and foxes see: p. 22, Booble; p. 25, Warren; p. 27, Beacon; p. 32, Comet; p. 41, Czar; p. 45, Timmy the Fox; p. 57, Kathleen the Fox; p. 85, Lazy; p. 91, Sergeant Brown; p. 97, Wilcox; p. 98, Tommy and Tom; p. 123, Snowball; p. 132, Diver; p. 143, Grumpy, Stormy, and Killer; p. 161, Sugarbear; p. 168, Duffy; and p. 183, Dash.

<sup>149</sup> Herzog, 2005; Treadwell and Palovak, pp. 43-44. This sentiment is also expressed in his book; "One day I hope that humans come to understand how beautiful all of the grizzlies are and let you be completely free. Until that day comes, I'll care for you and watch over you."

<sup>150</sup> Lapinski, 2005, pp. 8-10.

take pictures of them, which irritated many bear tour guides. While it is tempting to accuse Treadwell of hypocrisy or claim that he was possessive of the bears, there is a richer, and more charitable account of why Treadwell responded to tourists in this manner.

Rather than claiming he was delusional, hypocritical, possessive, or out of touch, we might instead recognize that these acts served to prevent tourists from using the animals he loved in ways he deemed disrespectful. We might illustrate this point with Maria Lugones' distinction between loving perception and arrogant perception.<sup>151</sup> For Lugones, loving perception involves the expression of sensitivity and good-will when encountering others and their worlds—it involves a humble attempt to see the world from another's perspective. Arrogant perception, however, is characterized by a failure to deeply attend to others and their worlds. Arrogant perception often involves a dismissal of the value of other perspectives or an attempt to reduce or essentialize the worlds of others in uncharitable or impoverishing fashions. Lugones describes world-travelling as a method of putting epistemological pluralism into practice in such a way that one might lovingly attend to others and attempt to see the world from their perspectives. While Lugones focused on human world-travelling, these concepts are apt for understanding interspecies world-travelling as well.

Treadwell's ethological project was lovingly perceptive in this sense; he respected and valued the worlds of these other animals and conceived of himself as a respectful visitor. From Treadwell's perspective tourists and park officials exhibited arrogant perception toward both him and the bears. Rather than sympathetically engaging with him and the bears in ways that showed respect and understanding, from Treadwell's perspective these people were participating in an

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<sup>151</sup> Lugones, 1987. The connection between "seeing" and "caring" is also described by Karen Warren and Margaret Olivia Little. See Karen J. Warren. "The power and the promise of ecological feminism." *Environmental ethics* 12, no. 2 (1990): 125-146.; and Margaret Olivia Little. "Seeing and caring: The role of affect in feminist moral epistemology." *Hypatia* 10, no. 3 (1995): 117-137.

unacceptable form of conceptual violence that failed to attend to Treadwell and the bears as individuals with unique and meaningful worlds. The failure of these individuals to embrace loving epistemic pluralism, stemmed directly from their non-loving and inattentive attitudes. Treadwell scorned people who failed to world-travel in respectful and loving fashions and denounced practices that treated the animals he loved as objects for their consumption.

Like Hutto, however, Treadwell's world-travelling exposed him not only to great joys, but also to great pains. As Calarco points out, Hutto's life among mule deer inevitably exposed him to irreconcilable paradoxes that were quite painful for him. For instance, we might recall Hutto's inability to think about the hunting of mule deer from a detached position after immersing himself in the pack and developing emotional bonds with individual animals. In addition to the paradoxes that Treadwell underwent with respect to how he should respond to the plights of other animals, Treadwell also believed that the influence of his project would be magnified by the drama of his death. His ethical commitment and deep love for these animals created a paradoxical tension within him. On the one hand, he wanted to live with these animals and continue his work, but on the other, he felt that his death would draw more public attention to the issues facing the animals he loved. Treadwell's struggle with this paradox is illuminated by a letter he wrote to his friend and ecologist, Marnie Gaede. In *Grizzly Man*, Gaede reads the letter aloud and comments on it thusly;

'There are many times that I feel death is the best option. My work would be much more seriously looked at and possibly make the difference that in living, I can't do.' I think that was sort of a paradox for him. That he felt not worthy enough to get his message across at times. And so, maybe, in the drama of death his message would be more poignant and reach out to more people.

This letter and Gaede's response reveal Treadwell's bottomless love for these animals as well as the force of the transformations inspired by his encounters and relationships with



individual bears and foxes. His ontological pluralism and the mental transformations he underwent during his time with these animals combined in such a way that he embraced the possibility of his death if it would stimulate the systemic and cultural transformations needed to generate more just relationships with these animals.<sup>152</sup> The sacrificial beauty of this gesture cannot be understated. Treadwell's ability to simultaneously see himself as an individual subject, an ecological participant, and a narrative force allowed him to escape the egoism that traps many people and allowed him to deeply consider how he might use his body to generate the kind of change that humans and other animals desperately need. Treadwell's ability to see himself from these multiple lenses is worth pausing over. As individuals and as a culture, we have much to learn from him.

Calarco points out that sometimes these ethological paradoxes lead to psychological anguish that render it extremely difficult for one to continue living intimately with vulnerable animals.<sup>153</sup> The regular grief Hutto felt upon witnessing the suffering of the deer whom he loved combined with a recognition of the existential plight facing the species as a whole, led to his decision to cease living in their midst; "For his own psychological integrity, then, he felt the need to remove himself from the daily life of the deer."<sup>154</sup> His advocacy did not stop after leaving the pack, however, as he continues to share his stories and spread awareness regarding the challenges that these animals face.

While we must respect Hutto's decision to leave the mule deer after spending seven years of his life with them, it is important that we do not condemn those whose love for other animals

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<sup>152</sup> For more on embracing the possibility of edibility, see Val Plumwood. "Human vulnerability and the experience of being prey." *Quadrant* 39, no. 3 (1995): 29.; James Hatley. "The uncanny goodness of being edible to bears." na, 2004.; and Matthew Calarco. "Being toward meat: anthropocentrism, indistinction, and veganism." *Dialectical anthropology* 38, no. 4 (2014): 415-429.

<sup>153</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 63.

<sup>154</sup> Calarco, forthcoming, p. 63.

consumes them, both figuratively and literally. It is important to acknowledge the power, beauty, and (sometimes) irony of those who are annihilated by their love for another.<sup>155</sup> A reader familiar with the biographical details of Friedrich Nietzsche might recall that he lapsed into madness and never spoke another word upon seeing an exhausted horse being beaten in Turin, Italy. Rather than dismissing the power of this story (even if it is anecdotal), we must recognize the transformative power of such an encounter and come to understand that anyone can be consumed by love for another and that there is beauty in such consumption. Despite the pain that stemmed from his life among bears and foxes, Treadwell never allowed this pain to deter him from his project. This decision eventually resulted in his consumption—a possibility he recognized and embraced.<sup>156</sup>

According to Nietzsche there is wisdom in pain and the people who are able to embrace pain and affirm life in view of it should be recognized as heroic; he refers to these individuals as “great pain bringers.”<sup>157</sup> Monika Langer elaborates on Nietzsche’s pain bringers, thusly;

Nietzsche acknowledges some heroic individuals rejoice and increase their energies when confronting impending danger and pain. Nietzsche calls them humanity’s “great pain bringers.” He says they contribute enormously to preserving and furthering our species – even if only by resisting and scorning comfortableness. Nietzsche’s calling these “great pain bringers” heroic species’ furtherers may alarm readers. However, it is important to realize these people do not cause or create the impending danger. They only respond differently, by proudly defying it. . . Nietzsche also said humanity’s “great pain bringers” oppose and scorn comfortableness. All this indicates these are not tyrants or torturers. Rather, they challenge complacency by scorn and example.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> It is troubling that people oftentimes find beauty in tragic stories about people whose love for other humans resulted in demise, while refusing to acknowledge the aesthetic power of stories like Treadwell’s.

<sup>156</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 37; “I was self-assured, clearheaded, unafraid, and determined to help preserve bears. I was even prepared for the possibility of my death: Unfortunately, when a bear injured or killed a person, that bear was usually killed. So that no bear would suffer, I instructed everyone involved in transporting me to the Sanctuary to secretly dispose of my body in the event of a deadly encounter. I wanted so much to live for the bears, but if they killed me, I would rest in peace in the Grizzly Sanctuary.”

<sup>157</sup> Nietzsche, 1977, p. 252-253.

<sup>158</sup> Monika Langer. *Nietzsche's Gay Science: Dancing Coherence*. Springer, 2010. pp. 194-195.

Treadwell challenged the complacency of his culture through scorn and by lived example; as such, we might understand him as a pain bringer who refused to allow a fear of exposure, discomfort, or pain to dissuade him from living out his vision of the good life without reservation. He rejected the trivial comforts and complacency of the dominant culture and refused to insulate himself from the agony of other animals or the anguish of recognizing his own edibility. It was his hope that through embracing the discomfort and pain of an exposed life, new vistas, joys, and possibilities would present themselves to him—and they did.

Treadwell died as consequence of his dedication to his principled decision to live a life of exposure and to suspend himself in vulnerability. Treadwell accepted that his death was an inevitability and refused to let his finitude or fear of being consumed inhibit him from living *dangerously*. He recognized that pain and danger were unavoidable aspects of his experimental ethological project and learned to embrace discomfort and risk in view of the riches they made possible. Nietzsche captures this sentiment beautifully;

For believe me: the secret for harvesting from existence the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment is-to live dangerously! Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius! Send your ships into uncharted seas! Live at war with your peers and yourselves! Be robbers and conquerors as long as you cannot be rulers and possessors, you seekers of knowledge! Soon the age will be past when you could be content to live hidden in forests like shy deer. At long last the search for knowledge will reach out for its due; it will want to rule and possess, and you with it!<sup>159</sup>

The fruits of Treadwell's pain-bringing and affirmation in the face of danger are perhaps most evident in his response to a radio broadcast detailing the end of a two-week storm that delayed the arrival of his supplies. As the long storm carried on, Treadwell worried that he might starve because the weather had delayed the arrival of much needed supplies. In response to his pessimism, Treadwell told himself, "Get a grip, Timothy! . . . This is just the rainy-day, cabin-

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<sup>159</sup> Nietzsche, 1977, pp. 228-229.

fever blues. It's nothing a bit of sunshine can't cure."<sup>160</sup> Not long after, Treadwell heard the news that the storm was coming to an end and enjoyed a surprise visit from his friend and pilot, Bill, who arrived with fresh supplies and relieved his anxieties regarding the possibility of starvation. In response to these developments, Treadwell was filled with immense joy and decided to dance in the light of a new day.

Kicking off my soggy shoes, I danced around in my bare feet. Twenty-seven bears grazed, dozed, and played around me. I moved among them at will, feeling like a bear myself. Wet, brown earth oozed and squirted between my toes.<sup>161</sup>

There is a deep resonance between Treadwell's words and those of Nietzsche;

Are we not surrounded by bright morning? And by soft green grass and grounds, the kingdom of the dance? Has there ever been a better hour for gaiety? Who will sing a song for us, a morning song, so sunny. so light. so fledged that it will *not* chase away the blues but invite them instead to join in the singing and dancing?<sup>162</sup>

There is no doubt that Treadwell knew how to sing and dance. With his every breath he invited us to sing and dance alongside him.

## **VI. In Favor of Exposed Ethological Experiments**

The bears and foxes with whom Treadwell interacted should not be understood as having lost their "wildness;" nor should they be thought of as becoming domesticated by Treadwell. Rather, the set of relationships and assemblages that developed and unfolded over Treadwell's thirteen summers changed all parties and animal individuals with whom he interacted. These

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<sup>160</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 102.

<sup>161</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 105.

<sup>162</sup> Nietzsche, 1974. p. 347. It is worth noting that the title of the work that this passage comes from is entitled "The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs." Walter Kauffman's editorial comments on the title shed light on the connection between dancing and resisting the values of the dominant culture of one's time; "... the title of the book has polemical overtones: it is meant to be anti-German, anti-professorial, anti-academic. . . It is also meant to suggest 'light feet,' 'dancing,' 'laughter,'—and ridicule of 'the spirit of gravity.'" Treadwell's light-footedness, then, might be understood as polemical with respect to American culture in a similar fashion. It's also worth noting, that "blues," in the sense Nietzsche uses it conveys two meanings; it refers both to "feelings of sadness" (as Treadwell uses it) and to "crickets." This double meaning reveals the interspecies aspects of song and dance that are shared by Treadwell and Nietzsche.

shared becomings might be understood as instances of *wild familiarity*. Val Plumwood uses the term “wild familiar” to capture the character of her relationship with a wombat named Birubi.<sup>163</sup> After nursing the injured wombat back to health when he was young, Plumwood spent twelve years of her life negotiating space, sharing food, and being astonished by the “mysterious” animal; “Birubi was a ‘wild familiar’ who established his own terms for contact and friendship.”<sup>164</sup> Plumwood repeatedly emphasizes that even though Birubi spent time with her and regularly shared her domicile, he never lost his “wombatness.” He continued to pursue his own interests and act out his desires while being free to come and go as he pleased. Similarly, the bears and foxes with whom Treadwell spent his time were neither dominated or coerced by Treadwell and never lost their independence, wildness, or singularity—they retained their beariness and foxiness respectively. As such, it seems inaccurate to claim that Treadwell’s project was an act of domestication.<sup>165</sup> We might, however, accurately describe his project as one that habituated or familiarized these animals to a human.<sup>166</sup> It is important that we do not conflate domestication and habituation (or familiarization). While Treadwell’s did familiarize these animals to his presence, he did not make bears and foxes dependent upon him, nor did he shape

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<sup>163</sup> Plumwood, 2012. pp. 49-54.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>165</sup> Plumwood, 2012, 51. Plumwood explains that Birubi resisted human will and that her relationship with him was characterized by a deep respect for his independence. Treadwell’s relationships with individual bears and foxes were also characterized by a deep respect for the “Otherness” and independence of these creatures. As Plumwood puts it; “Birubi, like other wombats and unlike dogs, was a resilient and determined animal who could not be shaped to human will. He did not recognise human superiority or pretensions to own the world and had a strong sense of his own independent selfhood, his own equal interests and entitlements. This stubbornness and sense of equality is the feature that has brought the wombat so strongly into conflict with the farmer, but to me it was wonderful. It meant that you were dealing with a real other; that contact had to be on his terms and not just on yours. Discipline, punishment and training to accept human will, of the sort we apply to dogs, were out of the question; not only would they be totally ineffective, but they would jeopardise the entire basis of relationship.”

<sup>166</sup> I use “a human” here to signal the ability of foxes and bears to distinguish between individual humans. The belief that habituating these animals to a single human will somehow make them treat all humans in an identical fashion, both diminishes the agency, subjectivity, and attentiveness to individuals that these animals possess as well as the uniqueness of singular interspecific relationships. Treadwell’s presence, however, did work to overcome the distrust and suspicion that these animals might have been conditioned to possess by revealing that entities that have similar features to Treadwell are not all threatening, which opens up the possibility for new sorts of relations beyond fear and distrust.

them according to his will. Some critics of Treadwell are resistant to co-exposed projects grounded in wild-familiarity and interactive negotiability because they worry that familiarization might encourage members of nonhuman species to be more likely to trust humans who intend to do them harm. Others renounce projects like Treadwell's because they are concerned that familiarization may encourage conflicts that result in the deaths of nonhuman animals. These worries, however, indicate a need to interrogate the fear-driven and violent practices that are encouraged, allowed, and facilitated by the dominant culture. This theme is explored in the following section. Similarly, if these critics are concerned for the safety of humans who might not know how to relate to other animals (especially other predators) in ways that do not generate conflict, then we should attend to this lack of knowledge, rather than condemning projects that aim to live with animals on their terms. Arguments against familiarization, then, point toward socio-cultural and political issues, not shortcomings of Treadwell's project itself. It is important that we embrace projects of this kind, because such projects provide important insight into how space might be negotiated and how conflicts might be deescalated.

Moreover, if we are reluctant to encourage ethological projects like Treadwell's or if we refuse to live near other animals out of fear that they will become habituated, then we must interrogate why exactly we fear or condemn habituation. If we do not want animals to become familiar with humans out of concern for the welfare of these animals, then that should point to the need to restructure our urban centers, our modes of production and transportation, as well as our behavioral and cultural practices. Given the vulnerability of many predator species (in the United States and abroad) exposed ethological projects like Treadwell's are needed if predator populations are to remain viable in years to come. As I hope to have shown, these sorts of

projects play four important roles that should inform the cultural and behavior practices of non-ethologists.

First, these projects serve to disrupt and challenge notions of human exceptionalism, which is critically important for getting to the root of many anthropogenic ecological issues that threaten nonhuman animals and the rest of the more-than-human world. Second, exposed ethological projects disclose the incredible social plasticity of other animals. Treadwell's project allowed many people to appreciate the impressive social plasticity of supposedly inflexible social dynamics of relatively solitary predatory animals like brown bears and red foxes. Long-term projects are especially revelatory because they tend to disclose deeper forms of intergenerational change, as young animals grow up without predisposed fear of humans. These disclosures are invaluable when it comes to overcoming ignorance and misunderstandings of other animals. Third, exposed ethological projects encourage us to embrace epistemological, ontological, and ethical pluralism while revealing how we might negotiate conflicts emerging from competing ethical sensibilities. While there will always be ambiguity and tension in our decision-making processes, ethological projects of this sort provide indications of how we might resolve these conflicts. And fourth, by disrupting human exceptionalism and revealing different interspecies social possibilities, these projects open up space for thinking about how we might make various forms of cohabitation safer, more viable, and less likely to result in interspecies conflict and violence. Treadwell's work provides us with a rich and intimate knowledge of brown bear and red fox behavior. His footage and stories also provide examples of how to handle and respond to fear (through expressing goodwill), aggression (by standing one's ground and negotiating space), and distrust (by spending time with these animals and developing social bonds). This information is extremely valuable to those who are likely to interact with predatory species because of where

they live.<sup>167</sup> Treadwell himself emphasized the ways his project was beneficial for both “animals and people alike.”<sup>168</sup> In his words;

For the animals, my presence offers a shield of protection from human displacement and poaching. For people, my studies will help in understanding the natural ways of the bears and will make a contribution toward their preservation.<sup>169</sup>

Ethological experiments with predators, also help humans come to terms with their vulnerability in ways that might encourage humans to sacrifice some of their control and safety in an effort to create space for other animals to flourish.<sup>170</sup>

## VII. Conclusion

In this paper, I made a case for how Timothy Treadwell’s project, while problematic in certain respects, ought to be understood as a form of exposed ethological experimentation compatible with Calarco’s ethological framework. I have suggested that Treadwell’s ethological project led to social, environmental, and mental transformations that illuminated and generated unprecedented interspecies social dynamics and assemblages while providing Treadwell with deep insight into the worlds of two prominent predator species. These aspects of Treadwell’s life

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<sup>167</sup> See Charlie Russell. “Letters from Charlie.” cloudline.org. (February 21, 2006). Accessed 4/25/18. Charlie Russell, a fellow bear lover who knew Treadwell and corresponded with him, expressed a similar sentiment in a post regarding Treadwell’s death; “The most valuab(l)e thing that I learned back then was that everything that decreases the fear and tensions between land managers and brown bears, which let them live on productive land, was a huge help for grizzlies. In other words, I thought that perhaps one of the best ways to create habitat for them was by understanding them better. . . Soon I understood that disharmony between bears and humans was not the bears [sic] fault. It was a human inadequacy brought about by our fear and distrust of them.”

<sup>168</sup> Treadwell and Palovak, 1999, p. 138.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> See Val Plumwood. “Human vulnerability and the experience of being prey.” *Quadrant* 39, no. 3 (1995): 29. pp. 42-43; “Coming to terms with the ethical challenge of other large predators is part of coming to terms . . . with the ethical dimensions of our own predation. In the large predator of humans, the ethical and the ecological collide; we are forced to face an ecological challenge to the realm of ethics and to try to respond with something more ethical than condemnation or revenge . . . the existence of free communities of animals that can prey on humans indicates our preparedness to share and to coexist with the otherness of the earth, to reject the colonizer identity and the stance of assimilation, which aims to make the Other over into a form that eliminates all friction, challenge, or consequence The persistence of predator populations tests our integration of ethical and ecological identities, our recognition of our human existence in mutual, ecological terms, as ourselves part of the food chain, eaten as well as eater.”



among predators are especially enlightening because coastal brown bears and red foxes tend to be thought of as solitary and nonsocial animals.

Treadwell's ethological practice and the subsequent transformations, dehabituations, and resubjectifications he underwent, expose us to new perspectives and help us reimagine possibilities for relationships between humans and other predators. Treadwell's ability to embrace the paradoxes that emerged from it inspire us to not allow the pain of contradiction to impede our efforts to generate new ways of life and to work passionately to change world in view of the plights of animals.

Treadwell's eventual death at the jaws and paws of a bear should not overshadow the power and efficacy of his methods and the possibilities that they revealed and actualized.<sup>171</sup> Treadwell's ontological, ethical, and epistemological pluralisms in conjunction with his willingness to dwell in the nepantlic and spandrellic thresholds between social and subjective worlds reflect his ability and desire to embrace the murkiness and pain of world-travelling. Treadwell was a nepantlera and a "great pain bringer." He embraced the possibility of his edibility, and lived a life characterized by fine risk that flirted with the borderlands between life and death, between his subjectivity and "the outside."<sup>172</sup> He sang and danced alongside the animals he loved in the face of this danger—we should admire the beauty of such an existence.

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<sup>171</sup> I intend to take up the question of Treadwell and Huguenard's deaths in detail in a future paper.

<sup>172</sup> Plumwood, 1996, p. 35.

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