

Carnivorous Virility; or, Becoming-Dog

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On 26 January 2001, two Presa Canarios, a dog and a bitch named Bane and Hera, attacked and mauled Diane Whipple in the hallway of her Pacific Heights apartment in San Francisco, where she lived with her partner, Sharon Smith. The dogs bit her seventy-seven times (according to the forensics count), and the bites to her larynx, combined with the loss of one-third of her blood, caused her death within hours of the six-minute attack. Bane and Hera were originally owned by various proxies for Pelican Bay State Prison inmate Paul “Cornfed” Schneider, a member of the Aryan Brotherhood whose plan was to become a dog breeder from his cell, where he was serving time for armed robbery and attempted murder.¹ The breeder name was “Dog O’War,” co-founded by Schneider and Dale Bretches, author of a 2005 e-book, *Dog O’War*, which is a memoir, an account of Presa Canario breeding, and a commentary on the San Francisco case (Bretches is also an illustrator and artist who includes “dogs of war” in his drawings).² Bane and Hera’s caretakers were Marjorie Knoller and Robert Noel, residents of the same apartment building floor as Whipple and Smith, adoptive parents of Schneider, and lawyers who specialized in bringing lawsuits on behalf of inmates against the California Department of Corrections (CDC) for its inhumane treatment of prisoners.

Although this was not a unique event—other dogs have attacked and mauled people resulting in death—it was one that immediately generated an archive, both legal and cultural, marking a traumatic moment in the recent U.S. history of dog-human relating, and it brought attention and notoriety to this little-known breed. The dense textual nexus comprising

the case weaves together countrywide legislative frenzies concerning dogs in human-populated environments, especially dogs regarded as “fierce” in genetically essentialized terms, such as pit bulls; legislative movements to obtain spousal rights for same-sex partners (the case set a precedent for wrongful death actions brought on behalf of a same-sex partner); prison reform legislation and the creation and privatization of “supermax” prisons (both Schneider and Bretches are in SHUs, or Security Housing Units); capitalism and the ability of the incarcerated to own and profit from businesses; Presa Canarios and dog-breeding more generally; racism and homophobia; bestiality; the question of human-animal agency and responsibility (Marjorie Knoller, who was present during the attack, was charged with and convicted of second-degree murder, a conviction the judge then threw out); and animal rights and the death penalty resulting from “dangerous dog hearings.”³

The event I recount here marks a chapter in the genealogy of a kind of “sybiogenesis,” the merger of distinct cooperating organisms to form a single being, and it highlights some of the ideological issues at stake in the challenges to humanism represented by dog-human mergers in the present.⁴ From the dogmen of antiquity to the Presa, the conjoined figure of man and dog expresses what Jacques Derrida calls carno-phallogocentrism, a “carnivorous virility” that is, for him, the dominant schema of subjectivity as it is constituted in the Western philosophical tradition. Carno-phallogocentrism thus installs “the virile figure at the determinative center of the subject.”⁵ Donna Haraway, writing about the “ontological choreography” that configures dog-human “naturecultures,” makes the point that “dogs, in their historical complexity, matter here. Dogs are not an alibi for other themes; dogs are fleshly material-semiotic presences in the body of technoscience. Dogs are not surrogates for theory; they are not just here to think with. They are here to live with. Partners in the crime of human evolution, they are in the garden from the get-go.”⁶ In Haraway’s formulation, then, dogs are a matter of ontological uncertainty: not a metaphor, a substitute, or a surrogate, and at the same time not the name of a discrete material otherness (what sometimes gets called nature). Their designation as both material and semiotic suggests a way to think about this case as a meaningful instance of transpecies becoming. The virile figure, in this story, is a hybrid species, a cynanthrope. In what follows, I track fantasmatic relations across time and space to sketch the contours of a “hauntology,” a ghostly logic of being that eludes current explanatory frameworks.⁷ Haunted as they are by a long genealogy of dog-human merger and by a history of colonial, racial, and species encounters, the humans and dogs in this story join forces in a becoming that humanism is unable to contain.

Presa Canarios

Among the territories colonized, with difficulty, by the Castilian crown in the fifteenth century was an archipelago off the northwestern coast of Africa now called the Canary Islands, inhabited by a group of people related to the Berbers who came to be known as the Guanches.⁸ Pliny, who located a race of “dog-men” (*Canarii*) in western Africa, called these the Fortunate Isles, and identified one of them as Gran Canaria, attributing the name to the presence of huge dogs.⁹ The history of these dogs is a transnational one, following and crossing paths with the trails of the legendary cynanthropes or dog-men of antiquity, participating in an equally fantasmatic story of origins and nomenclatures.¹⁰ They were, probably, descendants of the ancient Molossian (also called Molosser and Molossi), which are sometimes thought to descend from Tibetan mastiffs, of whom it was said that they were “trained to attack men of a strange race.”¹¹ They migrated with the Molossi, a once-barbarian Greek group, from Thessaly to Epirus and later became part of the Roman Empire. Molossian is also the breed-type for what are called in English mastiffs, descendants of ancient guard and war dogs from Asia or the Middle East, drifting westward and metaplasmically mating, in the Middle Ages, the domesticated—*mansuetus*, accustomed to the hand—to the folk-etymological “massive” and the term for mongrel in Old French, *mestif*.¹² According to a breeder Web site, “one Canarian legend relays how the Guanche warriors sent their fierce dogs down to the beachheads where it is claimed these dogs massacred the marauding invaders.”¹³ It took nearly a century for the Spanish to conquer the fiercely resistant people of the Canaries; the islands in turn became a relay for the Spanish, then for the English traveling across the Atlantic. They also became single-crop cultivation sites, first for sugar cane, then, when the Caribbean market outstripped their production, vineyards for the Spanish wine trade with England. Spanish and English dogs mixed with the dogs of the Canary Islands, producing one of the mastiff breeds that is today known as the Perro de Presa Canario, the Canarian holding dog.¹⁴ “Holding” or “guarding” Molosser-type mixed-race dogs, these *perros de presa* are thought to combine the indigenous island herding dog of Fuerteventura—the Perro de Bardino Majorero—with Spanish cattle-guarding mastiffs (Presa Español) and English bulldogs (Alano Español, from the English Alaunt) used in the American conquest.¹⁵ In the course of the sixteenth century, these dogs appear as subject to legislation in the municipal councils of several of the islands; the *perros de presa* are threatening livestock, or there are too many of them, or they are running free. Various documents from 1501 to 1737 order that they be tied up or exterminated with impunity (with the

exception of those used for guarding the home or by farmers for guarding livestock), and that every dog of prey be registered with the court.¹⁶

These centuries also saw the development of dog-fighting matches, introduced to the Canaries by the English and deploying the mongrel that the mixing of English “Bandogges” and “Tiedogs” (thought to be the predecessors of bulldogs and mastiffs) with the island dogs produced. Dog fighting continued legally until the 1940s when the dogs of World War II—German shepherds, Great Danes, and Doberman pinschers primarily—also made their appearance on the islands, along with Generalissimo Francisco Franco. The opposition to Franco’s regime and its eventual decline brought movements to reclaim lost cultural traditions, and beginning in the 1970s and culminating in 1982 and 1983 with the autonomization of the Canary Islands, a Club Español del Presa Canario was formed to recover, protect, and develop the breed, winning exclusive rights to represent it to the Real Sociedad Canina de España and thus to the Fédération Cynologique Internationale (World Canine Federation) that recognizes and certifies the Perro de Presa Canario breed to this day. Thus these mestizo dogs were forged in a crucible of colonial encounters, enlisted to defend and conquer and cannibalize one another in “civil” wars until they were swept up into a national movement for independence, when their “race” is fixed and given an identity and when they also begin to participate in the commodification of third-world culture for first-world consumption. Immigrants to North America and descendants of those immigrants, Presa Canarios have been conscripted to infuse civilization with a certain virilizing savagery.

Nature and Culture

Some parties in the Whipple case made the argument that the dogs were genetically predisposed to attack and kill. Most cultural commentary, however, familiar by now with the disconcertingly close resemblance between species sociobiology and racism, adopted a liberal humanist position that, on the one hand, polices the ontological boundaries between canine and human and, on the other, maintains a contradictory distinction between “nature” and “nurture” that testifies eloquently to the fetishist’s famous phrase, “I know, but nevertheless. . . .”¹⁷ Many, for example, faulted the dogs’ handlers and caretakers for their negligence and failure to train their animals and simultaneously condemned the practice of deliberately raising dogs for their capacity to fight.¹⁸ Aphrodite Jones, the “true crime” author who also brought notoriety to the Brandon Teena murder, dedicates her book to Whipple and concludes her narrative with a plea for animal protection:

Schneider is the man who brought those animals to California, who had them sent to San Francisco, who masterminded the dog-breeding scheme . . . who single-handedly created a new demand for fierce “killer” dogs among the drug lords and gangbangers throughout the world. . . . Perhaps the death of Diane Whipple will force humans to accept our role as caretakers of animals, both of domestic pets and of animals in the wild. That would be the best result of this horrible tragedy—that stray animals will no longer be orphans, and that animals roaming free on the planet will be safeguarded from human overpopulation.¹⁹

Cesar Millan, the “dog whisperer,” writes:

I’ve said before that pack leaders are born, not made. Red-zone dogs are just the opposite—made, not born. Humans create dogs to be red-zone monsters. We started thousands of years ago by breeding dogs to be fighters, selecting them for certain characteristics and matching them up with a similar mate. . . . We breed these dogs to be warriors, but under their armor, they’re simply dogs with more powerful weapons than other dogs. They don’t begin life as dangerously aggressive. . . . Though fighting is in their genes, they need guidance to bring this instinct out.²⁰

These discourses posit an originary and “natural” innocence followed by a genetic fall due to human intervention, a kind of diabolical eugenics project that produced organic “warriors” or fierce “killer” dogs. They also, to different degrees, argue against genetic determinism by positing a decisive role for “nurture” or human cultural intervention into instinctual potentiality. Nurture—the thing that is to blame, as Millan’s statement makes clear—is also the *cure* for what nurture has genetically produced. Both statements point to a conundrum of dog-human natureculture, the inability definitively to articulate the boundary between nature and culture (and animal and human) in the history and agency of this companion species relation. Millan is fond of stating that underneath the “armor” or sometimes “clothing” of breed is dog, a category that, for him, is a natural one. But he cannot escape the genetic metaphor that implants breed deep below the surface, just as he does not claim that dogs *are* wolves, although all dogs must be descended from them. His discourse echoes the enlightened humanism of a Montaigne or Rousseau with reference to noble savagery: it is civilization that corrupts a natural and Edenic state of being. Montaigne’s is a discourse about new world indigeneity; in “Of Cannibals” there is no small measure of nostalgia for an archaic, autochthonous, and “uncorrupted” warrior culture of virility upholding the values of courage, loyalty, and strength, values most often promoted by the breed sites that advertise Presa Canarios and other holding or guarding dogs.²¹ Indeed, some breeders and dog experts who rose to the defense

of Presas argued that Bane and Hera were not “pure” specimens, as though mongrelization were the decisive factor in their aggressive attack. Like Montaigne and Rousseau, Millan and others occlude, even as they intermittently recognize, the always already thoroughly contaminated category to which any dog—and any human civilization—belongs.

The doubly supplemental and fetishistic logic that says that culture must be added to nature to enhance it but also to repair a deficiency in nature resulting from culture, on the one hand, and that the animal prosthetic that supplements a lack in the human also produces an excess, on the other, testifies to the work of a symptom. Slavoj Žižek calls this the ideological symptom par excellence: a recognition, a knowledge that is refused, not as a matter of belief, but in practice.²² Under capitalism, intersubjective relations become social relations between things. The relations of domination and servitude between people—a fetishism of persons—become de-fetishized and transferred to the social relation between commodities as things of value, what Marx described as commodity fetishism.²³ Žižek points out, for example, that subjects in capitalism know very well that “money is in reality just an embodiment, a condensation, a materialization of a network of social relations,” but argues that “in their social activity itself, in what they are *doing*, they are *acting* as if money, in its material reality, is the immediate embodiment of wealth as such. They are fetishists in practice, not in theory. What they ‘do not know,’ what they misrecognize, is the fact that in their social reality itself, in their social activity—the act of commodity exchange—they are guided by the fetishistic illusion.”²⁴

And he concludes, “The fundamental level of ideology . . . is not of an illusion masking the real state of things but that of an (unconscious) fantasy structuring our social reality itself.”²⁵ This abstraction of human subjectivity and agency into the commodity relation—a real abstraction—characterizes human activity under capitalism and constitutes the fantasy that animates or anthropomorphizes commodities.

Jean-Joseph Goux, who, like Žižek, links a psychoanalytics of subjectivity to capital, further argues that this subject is archaically masculine, originating in the exchange of women as gifts that founds the principle of exogamy instituting social relations.²⁶ As Goux notes, “The position of the exchanging subject, in opposition to the objects of the exchange (which are themselves people), marks a place, a function, which is not that of the ‘subject’ whose aporias transcendental philosophy explores, but which may involve the essence of the subject’s symbolic site.”²⁷ He thus suggests that symbolic remnants of a gendered “archi-economy” inhabit subjectivity under capital.

In this animating fantasy of commodity fetishism, the subject is detached, displaced, and abstracted into the commodity as the site of an idealized objectification that preserves the subject from consumption and

use in the process of exchange while also memorializing the loss of corporeality, transmuting it into value in the “sublime” object.²⁸ Insofar as the commodities in question here also have a subjectivity and an agency of their own, and insofar as in their embodiment they are not only (but also) the animate vessels of an agency that inhabits them from elsewhere, the (dog-)commodity fetish can be seen to mark a desire—and a longing—for an embodied and unalienated masculine subjectivity. This is a subjectivity that refuses to sacrifice carnivorous virility in exchange for symbolic power and that consumes rather than being subsumed.²⁹ Like Montaigne’s “savages” and the cynanthropic cannibals inhabiting the peripheries of civilization, the merger of human and dog figures an embodied plenitude that phallic modernity experiences as loss.

The aporia delineated by these contradictions also recalls anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss’s name for the boundary between nature and culture, the incest prohibition. In its character as “universal,” the incest prohibition would seem to be natural; in its character as rule, however, it partakes of culture. For Lévi-Strauss, it is above all a prohibition against the fantasy of and desire for an endogamous intimacy not unlike ontological blurring, where the merging of other and self constitutes an inside against which outsider-ness or alterity is measured and refused. Lévi-Strauss thus argues that symbolic manifestations of incest “do not . . . commemorate an actual event. They are something else, and more, the permanent expression of a desire for disorder, or rather counter-order.”³⁰ The desire for an archaic counter-order, figured in the plenitude of human-dog becoming, is a recognition disavowed in humanist efforts to maintain the ontological divide between nature and culture, dog and human, in this scene of violent species merger.

Becoming-Dog

Traces of this recognition persist, both in the accusations of bestiality against Noel and especially Knoller, rejected as evidence in the trial, and in the jury’s subsequently overturned verdict of second-degree murder, which would have implicated both dog and human in a murderous agency and intent.³¹ What may be seen to haunt this case is the possibility that, rather than an accidental failure in the history of social relations between humans and dogs, the attack on Whipple was one exemplary instance of a force unleashed in and by dog-human becoming. It is perhaps no accident then that the desire for cynanthropic becoming finds its fullest expression in the *scriptio inferior*, the underwriting of this palimpsest populated by ghosts in the machine of transnational capital and the prison industrial complex.

In *Dog O’War*, SHU inmate Bretches provides an account of the Dog

O'War breeder project that he and his cellmate developed, autobiographically linking his life of fighting to the fighting dogs he grew up with and the breed—Presa Canario—that came to incarnate, for him, a heroic ideal. Throughout this book—echoed in the recorded testimony of Noel and Schneider and on Presa Web sites throughout the world—a double portrait emerges: the embattled survivalism of a warrior protecting family and tribe against a world of hostile strangers, on the one hand, and the heroic individualism of a captive “gladiator” pitted against other gladiators for sport in a battle to the death, on the other.

In the SHU prison, inmates form racialized tribes for protection against the guards and other racialized tribes, and they value strength, courage, sangfroid, loyalty, pain tolerance, and the ability to fight.³² Schneider's description of the Aryan Brotherhood, whose motto, “in for life and out by death,” points to a double condition of constraint, both individual and collective, horizontal and vertical, puts this in stark and somewhat counterintuitive terms: “I'm no Nazi. I'm in prison. Prison is made up of Blacks, Mexicans, Whites. The Whites are a minority. I've grown up around Black people. They don't relate to me and I don't relate to them. . . . Things are really racially divided in prison. . . . I'm not a White Supremacist . . . I didn't start the Aryan Brotherhood and I'm not going to end it. I'm just along for the ride.”³³ The Brotherhood creed invokes a bellicose tribalism—“I will stand by my brother/My brother will come before all others/My life is forfeited should I fail my brother/I will honor my brother in peace and war”—memorialized by the adoption of ancient Celtic, Norse, and Irish mythology and iconography in tattoos and in Pelican Bay artwork, which also prominently features Presa Canarios.³⁴

The motto emblazoned on Bretches's Dog O'War breeder logo is “Courage, Strength, Loyalty”; Presa literature, including Bretches's book and Millan's, documents the tests of “gameness”—the ability to fight to the death—administered by “dogmen” to produce the combination of hardness and endurance—especially endurance of pain—that is said to mark the breed: “These men engage in a sport known as ‘game testing,’ throwing their dogs into a ring with another dog and culling out the ones that manage to survive but that don't perform to the breeder's standards.”³⁵ Quoting a subsection of *Rolling Stone's* article about Pelican Bay's connection to the case, “Hell Is for Inmates,” Bretches describes the training his prison provides: “These conditions have earned the SHU a place alongside Iraq and Kenya in [a] 1996 U.N. human rights report citing ‘inhumane’ prison facilities around the world. ‘A lot of inmates who go in there become severely affected with mental illness,’ says attorney Russell Clanton. ‘Those who don't go mad become incredibly strong individuals.’”³⁶ That strength and its challenges are what Bretches names as the point of identification between himself and the dogs: “To me there's no better high than the test

of one's own gameness and abilities. One of the reasons I respect these traits in presas and pit bulls is I identify with theses [*sic*] warrior breeds. Ole' war dogs, yeah, you are the company you keep as the saying goes. Maybe that's why so many resemble their dogs."³⁷ This is eloquently demonstrated in a passage that forges a morphological identification between man and dog and extracts a heroic ethos of survival from conditions of radical inequality:

Though I'm not into going around "acting" hard, I like the severe expression of the Presa and I like to get this expression in the Dogs of War that I like to draw. As long as you're trying your hardest and never quitting or currying out, you haven't lost because you never gave up! And though there's no such thing as the perfect dog or person, the Presa is a dog who is bred to be the best of all things. Bane was a perfectly hard dog that was handled by a person who wasn't.³⁸

Embodiments of "bare life," achieving only intermittently, in the eyes of the state, the status of human, Pelican Bay SHU inmates inhabit concrete cellblocks with access, once daily for ninety minutes, to an area called a "dog run."³⁹ Noel graphically describes some of the dehumanization techniques designed to erode the subjectivity of particularly unruly and recalcitrant prisoners:

"They put Paul in what's called dog status. That's where, in the cold of winter, they throw you in an unheated concrete box, with a hole in the floor as the only sanitary facility. You're there with no running water, naked, with no blankets, no mattresses, no nothing. They leave you there for three days, and the only thing they would slip through in the way of food was a tray with a pile of, literally, frozen dog shit on it."⁴⁰

This carceral performative works to transform the prisoner into pure animal embodiment, a body that matters for punitive purposes but is stripped of its status as subject and rendered unintelligible as human.⁴¹ The animal body is, in turn, degraded, forced to eat excrement. Prison practice thus deploys the mediatory metaphors of human-canine becoming to produce, discursively and materially, ontological uncertainty as a degradation of being. Caught up in the mutual entanglements of dog and human, with their shared histories of predation and oppression, dominance and submission, and unable to claim their subjectivity in human terms, the prisoners embrace a counter-discursive version of this ontological uncertainty, transforming the "underdog" into an über-being. Rather than issuing a plea for "humane" treatment, Bretches and Schneider refigure becoming-dog as the powerful embodiment of an archaic force articulated in the metaplastic confusions of warrior and gladiator that

join dogmen and dogs of prey.⁴² This force is nowhere better realized than in the idealized and heroic carnivorous virility of the Presa referred to as “El Supremo” Bane:

I find it hard not to respect a creature who was “also” a very impressive animal to look at. Everyone who wasn’t afraid of these impressive looks who truly got to know him loved the big hearted warrior dog. Let Bane’s good traits live on in his offspring. Bane was a hell of a dog, not because he mistakenly killed a person, but because he was my first Presa and he was a legend among the prison population of Pelican Bay because the rich and powerful elite hated him so much they made him famous/infamous. I’ll always think of him living on in a warrior’s after life and getting to live his life to the fullest potential, making it a little easier to stomach his death. I like to remember old friends and family in an after-life sort of way when they die, like I remember Bane. He was all that to quite a few people, even crossing over racial boundaries there sometimes are in prison. Everyone in here saw Bane as a symbol of strength.

We have the CDC California Department of Corrections with all of its many lies and corruption and their rich and powerful favor currying San Franciscans to thank for turning Bane into a martyr for the oppressed!⁴³

Like the cannibals Peter Hulme studies in the history of colonial encounters, which become an ideology-concept designating fierce resistance to colonization, the devouring dog, in Bretches’s description, assumes the weight of prisoners’ resistance to their oppression, mediating between worlds for them and sacrificing himself in their name.⁴⁴ If, then, the symptomatic disavowals apparent in dominant discourses concerning the case consist in misrecognizing the intersubjective relation between dog and human and in misrecognizing, as well, the degree to which the dog of prey can be understood to have absorbed a corporeal subjectivity in excess of the animal object-status to which these discourses consign it, it might also be said that Bretches and his colleagues perform the excessive merger at the opposite pole of this transpecies habitus, a subsumption of human selfhood in becoming-dog. In the one case, it is a question of the essential ferocity or innocence of the nonhuman animal and its sheer instrumentalization for human ends, and in the other it is a question of the nonhuman animal’s nobility and capacity to mediate racial tribalism, traits absent from a humanity stripped of agency altogether. Neither discourse, it would seem, ultimately understands the co-implication entailed by cynanthropic becoming in this tropic dog story.

Queer Encounters

Although the Whipple case is cited as a landmark moment in securing rights and privileges for same-sex partners because Smith was able to

bring a wrongful death lawsuit against Noel and Knoller on Whipple's behalf, the scene of the murderous encounter was often scripted in queerly heterosexual terms. Noel speculated that Bane attacked Whipple because of "pheromones," and both Knoller and Noel suggested at various points that Bane did not intend to attack, but was, rather, attracted to Whipple and approached her as a dominant male inspecting a creature of the opposite sex. Sensationalist media reports of the case, including Jones's, allude to evidence of bestiality between Knoller and Bane, even as they also document the personal correspondence describing a mythical incestuous sexual union among Noel (as primitive father/king), Knoller (as mother/queen), and Schneider (as son), with Bane standing in as substitute/symbol of the absent Schneider. The sexualization of the relationship between Bane and Knoller was cited—and then dismissed—as potential cause of Bane's aberrant behavior, while the alleged noninvolvement of Hera in the attack was also used to buttress the heterosexual reading.

Indeed, in accounts and illustrations of Presas engaged in the work of protection and guardianship, a (genetically enhanced) heteronormative masculinity is precisely what seems to be at stake. The Presa is enlisted to protect women (and, as other accounts demonstrate, children) against the competing predations of strange men. Presa Web sites often display puppies surrounded by children (to illustrate their docile nature) on the one hand, and adult dogs attacking padded men during *Shutzhund* (protection work) training, on the other, while anecdotal accounts often turn on the seeming contradiction—reminiscent of travelers' accounts of the character of cynocephalic cannibals and saints and for which the Presa, among dog breeds, is known—between a protective, gentle, "humanlike" intelligence and temperament and a ferocity toward hostile strangers:

My Presa's name is Satan. This is the name my boyfriend insisted on giving because he thought it would contribute to his ability to ward off strangers coming into our home. Since I am a small dog (now a large dog) breeder, I was apprehensive about welcoming this monster puppy into my home. Needless to say, it did not take long for Satan to take over the household. Never in my life have I trained a dog with such ease. This dog was so humanlike I just couldn't believe it. . . . The most amazing part of it all is the fact that Satan never harmed, even by accident, any of my small dogs (Chihuahuas). He has matured into the most docile adorable dog I have ever met. My boyfriend was very disappointed with this attitude until one dark winter night returning home from the movies. Since it was dark, Satan couldn't see who was approaching the house, so he started barking aggressively like he usually does. Suddenly, my boyfriend lifted his jacket up over his head and started beating me (playing around) to see what Satan would do. I started screaming to add to the drama. Within seconds, Satan crashed through the large front room window and was racing to the attack. I have

Figure 1. Neno, male Presa Canario, and female trainer, ca. 2006. Courtesy of Sanders Kennels



never seen my boyfriend remove a piece of clothing so fast to reveal who he was. Thankfully no one was hurt, and guess who paid to repair the window. Satan is extremely aggressive when needed. He is everything that we both wanted in a dog.⁴⁵

Sanders Kennels display the sheer power of the Presa by visually staging him in a gym, wearing a spiked leather collar and faux-dominated by an equally muscular but very slender Asian woman in army fatigues and ersatz combat boots (fig. 1); or held at leash's length and/or companionably seated next to an African American male bodybuilder/heavyweight lifter (fig. 2).⁴⁶ He—for this Presa is, of course, a male—is the ideologically compensatory fetish. Freud makes the point that fetishism, the sexual valorization of a metonymic substitute for the mother's (always already) absent penis, acts as a memorial to the horror of castration, wards it off, and “saves the fetishist from being a homosexual by endowing women with the attribute which makes them acceptable as sexual objects.”⁴⁷ In these photographs, the fetish is doubled: the human bodies of color already



Figure 2. Neno, male Presa Canario, and male trainer, ca. 2006. Courtesy of Sanders Kennels

fantasmatically assume the cultural significance of embodied plenitude, even as, simultaneously, the dog prosthetically restores potency, that is, stands in—and compensates—for the symbolic castration to which those bodies are subject.⁴⁸ Sanders Kennels offer some clues to the disavowals at work in the heterosexualization of the Presa's participation in human kinship arrangements. It suggests that the dog's masculinity, though metaphorically heterosexual perhaps, metonymically works as identification, a site of narcissistic investment for a fetishistic subjectivity that, as a consequence, evades the implied homosexuality this narcissism would otherwise entail.

That this fetishistic relation is linked to bodies of color on the Web site reiterates the ideological and historical affinity of dogs and dogmen in the multiple colonial encounters that haunt their ontological conjoining, effected here through the (metonymically) related metaphors of species and race. It is precisely that juxtaposition that also hints at another dimension of the disavowals in this case: the spectral appearance of the “myth of the black rapist” at the scene of the murder, uncannily accented by the



Figure 3. Bane, a four-year-old male Presa Canario owned by two inmates of Pelican Bay State Prison in California, Knoller and Noel's adopted son, Paul "Cornfed" Schneider, was destroyed by animal control officers after the attack. *San Francisco Chronicle*, 28 March 2001. Photo by Robert Noel, courtesy of San Francisco Animal Control

ultra-whiteness of Whipple in photographs (cf. "Diane Whipple," www.wikipedia.com) and the ultra-blackness of Bane (fig. 3) that circulated in the press.⁴⁹

On the one hand, then, there is an effort to re-normativize a queer cross-species encounter through the heterosexual matrix, a matrix that, in this case, disregards species difference insofar as it signifies anything other than primitive masculinity. But to inscribe the encounter with human (hetero)sexual meaning also conjures spectral—spectral and spectacular—histories of racialized power in the United States. Both transform the human-dog encounter into a potent and condensed figure of (human) sexual/sexuality and racial conflict distributed across multiple cultural institutions or "state apparatuses," from the legal system to the prison system to the populist imagination represented by the media.⁵⁰

Coda

In the epilogue to his book, Bretches, whose analysis of the legal case is a fascinating, if paranoid, view of San Francisco insider politics, makes a shocking remark: "And if all this wasn't poetic enough, Grin! Sharon Smith went ahead and took her cut of the two and a half million she cheated the apartment building owner out of. And got her and her new-

est 'life mate' pregnant! They stole my idea to use the law suit money to breed dogs!"⁵¹ In some sense, Bretches succeeds: sales of Presa Canarios rose spectacularly in the United States after this event. But I also hear in these lines another postcolonial hybrid's wish, one whose name carries this story in it, too: "O ho, O ho! Wouldt had been done! Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else this isle with Calibans."⁵²

The agencies and subjectivities that collided in the Whipple case are not available to me, however much I might wish to understand them. Such access, were it possible, would offer up neither truth nor ethical guidance, even if the native informants were to speak language for purposes other than to curse. The figural genealogies I have been tracking amount to a historical "hauntology," a story of the ways haunted ontologies that are not (only) human can be said to appear and reappear in specific historical and social/cultural collisions.⁵³ They have a force and they have effects; they are an "archive of feelings," with material consequences that elude even as they affect the rationalist disavowals of liberal humanism relative to cynanthropic (or anthrocynic) becoming.⁵⁴ If we are, as Haraway asserts, partners in a crime of evolution (and if evolution can be said to be historical), it is not a crime prosecutable through the assignment of blame to the sovereign subject conceived in humanist terms.⁵⁵ Newer ways to think agency, subjectivity, and social collectivity will need to be forged for the evolution of this social, but not altogether human, species-being.

Notes

1. Aphrodite Jones, *Red Zone: The Behind the Scenes Story of the San Francisco Dog Mauling* (New York: Avon, 2003).

2. Dale Bretches, *Dog O'War*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2005).

3. See Kenneth Phillips, "Dog Bite Law," www.dogbitelaw.com (accessed 14 July 2010); and Richard H. Polsky, "The San Francisco Dog Mauling: Insights into the Fatal Dog Attack on Diane Whipple," www.sfdogmauling.com (accessed 14 July 2010).

4. The implications of the term *symbiogenesis* are developed in Lynn Margulis and Dorion Sagan, *Acquiring Genomes: A Theory of the Origins of Species* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

5. Jacques Derrida, "'Eating Well' or the Calculation of the Subject," in *Points: Interviews, 1974–1994*, ed. Elisabeth Weber (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 280.

6. Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003), 5.

7. *Hauntology* is Derrida's term; see Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994).

8. For a brief history of the Canary Islands, see "Canary Islands," en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canary_islands (accessed 15 July 2010); see also Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *The Canary Islands after the Conquest: The Making of a Colonial Society in the Early-Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

9. Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), book 6, chap. 37, 491. See also David Gordon White, *Myths of the Dog-Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 51, 59.
10. See Carla Freccero, "Figural Historiography: Dogs, Humans, and Cynanthropic Becomings," in *Comparatively Queer*, ed. Jarrod Hayes, Margaret Higonnet, and William Spurlin (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2010), 45–67.
11. Robert Leighton, *The New Book of the Dog* (London: Cassell, 1916), 512; cited in Tamara Taylor, "The Origin of the Mastiff," *Canis Max* 1 (1996–97), people.unt.edu/~tlt0002/mastiff.htm (accessed 15 July 2010).
12. See J. K. Anderson, *Hunting in the Ancient World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), and "Canis Max: The Web Site for Large Dog Enthusiasts," canismax.angelcities.com/miscellany.htm (accessed 15 July 2010).
13. See "Sanders Kennels," www.sanderskennels.com (accessed 15 July 2010); and "Dogo Canario Club of America, Inc.," www.dogocanarioclub.us (accessed 15 July 2010).
14. Ibid. See also "Fédération Cynologique Internationale," www.fci.be (accessed 15 July 2010).
15. Numerous documents of New World conquest refer to the dogs used by the conquerors as "mastiffs" and "greyhounds"; see Bartolomé de las Casas, *Apolo-gética historia de las Indias* (Madrid: Bailly, Bailliere e hijos, 1909); John G. Varner and Jeanette Varner, *Dogs of the Conquest* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983); and Marion Schwartz, *A History of Dogs in the Early Americas* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).
16. Agustín Millares Torres, *Historia general sobre las Islas Canarias* (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria: Cedirca, D. L., 1977). See also "History and Theories Surrounding the Origin of the Presa Canario," from *El mundo del perro* (August 1997), trans. Manuel Martin Bethencourt [sic], www.dogocanarioclub.us/articles. The translator is a descendant of Juan de Bethencourt, one of the Norman nobles who first "explored" the Canary Islands. See also "Irema Curtó Kennels: Article 1: Origin of the Old Perro de Presa Canario," www.iremacurto.com/presacanario/english/articles/article1.htm (accessed 15 July 2010).
17. Octave Mannoni, *Clefs pour l'imaginaire ou l'autre scène* (Paris: Seuil, 1985); also Carla Freccero, "Fetishism," *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas* 2 (2005): 826–28. This is the way Mannoni describes the mechanism of disavowal at work in Freud's notion of fetishism, in a phrase uttered by one of his patients. In Freud, fetishism is a split knowledge: on the one hand, the man (boy) recognizes that his mother does not have a penis; on the other, he supplies a penis substitute for the one that is not (never has been) there. See also Claude Lévi-Strauss's discussion of nature and culture in *Elementary Structures of Kinship*, trans. James Harle Bell, John Richard von Sturmer, and Rodney Needham (Boston: Beacon, 1969), 3–11; and Derrida's critique of the distinction in "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourses of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 278–93.
18. Cesar Millan, with Melissa Jo Peltier, *Cesar's Way: The Natural, Everyday Guide to Understanding and Correcting Common Dog Problems* (New York: Harmony, 2006), 174–78; and Jones, *Red Zone*.
19. Jones, *Red Zone*, 364–65.
20. Millan, *Cesar's Way*, 178–79.
21. Michel de Montaigne, "Of Cannibals," in *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald Frame (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1957), 150–59.

22. Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), 31–33.

23. *Ibid.*, 26.

24. *Ibid.*, 31 (emphasis in original).

25. *Ibid.*, 33.

26. The original *coup de force* is in the assignation of the roles by which a dissymmetry is instituted between that which becomes the agent and that which becomes the thing of the agent. *Man is the giver, woman is the gift. Man is the exchanger, woman is the exchanged.* Such is the principle of this archi-economy which is the basis for all economies (*oikos*: the household). Here we approach the originally sexed archi-exchange from which the exchange in general, including the economic one, can be conceived. (Jean-Joseph Goux, “The Phallus: Masculine Identity and the ‘Exchange of Women,’” *differences* 4 [1992]: 65)

27. *Ibid.*, 65.

28. For a more extended discussion of this process, see Carla Freccero, “Ideological Fantasies,” in “Queer Theory and the Crises of Capitalism,” ed. Jordana Rosenberg and Amy Villarejo, special issue, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (forthcoming).

29. Derrida’s interview on the question of the subject in (post)modernity, “Eating Well,” argues that the philosophical schema of Western subjectivity is founded on a sacrificial structure whereby the subject consumes and gives himself to be consumed; he calls this carno-phallogocentrism. My argument is that this structure is a schema-in-disavowal. Goux discusses the sacrificial transition from penis (fleshly embodiment) to phallus (symbolic masculine power) in “The Phallus.”

30. Lévi-Strauss, *Elementary Structures*, 491, and see the following passage: “To this very day, mankind has always dreamed of seizing and fixing that fleeting moment when it was permissible to believe that the law of exchange could be evaded, that one could gain without losing, enjoy without sharing . . . removing to an equally unattainable past or future the joys, eternally denied to social man, of a world in which one might keep to oneself” (496–97).

31. For a comparison between second-degree murder and involuntary manslaughter in the case, see Jaxon Van Derbeken, “Why Jury Called It Murder: Negligence, Deception Cited in Mauling Trial,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 22 March 2002.

32. See C. A. (“Cal”) Terhune, “A Question of Control,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 9 April 2000; Angela Davis and Cassandra Shaylor, “A Question of Control,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 9 April 2000; Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories, 2003); and Evan Wright, “Mad Dogs and Lawyers,” *Rolling Stone*, 28 February 2002, 42–47, 68–69.

33. Jones, *Red Zone*, 291.

34. “Celtic Reign,” www.celticreign.com (accessed 15 July 2010); see also “Aryan Brotherhood: Prison Gang Profile,” www.insideprison.com/prison_gang_profile_AB.asp (accessed 15 July 2010).

35. Millan, *Cesar’s Way*, 179.

36. Bretches, *Dog O’War*, 176–77. See also Wright, “Mad Dogs and Lawyers,” 45.

37. Bretches, *Dog O’War*, 38.

38. *Ibid.*, 164–65.

39. See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998); and Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The*

Power of Mourning and Violence (London: Verso, 2004). Wright notes that “Inmates are kept inside their cells for twenty-two and a half hours a day. During the ninety minutes in which inmates are allowed ‘outside,’ each man is transferred to a larger concrete box called the ‘dog run.’ The dog run is an eleven-by-twenty-six-foot cell with a drain in the center and a small opening eighteen feet above their heads” (“Mad Dogs and Lawyers,” 45).

40. Robert Noel, quoted in Jones, *Red Zone*, 225.

41. On the issue of what constitutes conditions of intelligibility, see Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993). See also Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); and for a description of the reduction of body to flesh under conditions of torture and slavery, see Hortense Spillers, “Interstices: A Small Drama of Words,” in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carol S. Vance (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), 73–100.

42. Haraway uses the term *metaplasm* as the figure of speech appropriate to the material-semiotic fusion of the dog-human nexus:

My favorite trope for dog tales is “metaplasm.” Metaplasm means a change in a word, for example by adding, omitting, inverting, or transposing its letters, syllables, or sounds. The term is from the Greek *metaplasmos*, meaning remodeling or remolding. Metaplasm is a generic term for almost any kind of alteration in a word, intentional or unintentional. I use metaplasm to mean the remodeling of dog and human flesh, remolding the codes of life, in the history of companion-species relating. (*The Companion Species Manifesto*, 20)

43. Bretches, *Dog O’War*, 84.

44. Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean 1492–1797* (London: Routledge, 1986). See also Carla Freccero, “Cannibalism, Homophobia, Women: Montaigne’s ‘Des cannibales’ and ‘De l’amitié,’” in *Women, “Race,” and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (London: Routledge, 1994), 73–83.

45. Jeanne Eubanks, “Quips and Quotes,” *The Gripper: The Official Publication of the United Perro de Presa Canario Club* 33 (2004), www.uppcc.net/QuipsAndQuotes.aspx (accessed 15 July 2010).

46. The images can be found at “Sanders Kennels,” www.sanderskennels.com/Presas_Male_Imports.htm (accessed 16 July 2010).

47. Sigmund Freud, “Fetishism (1927),” in *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Collier, 1963), 206.

48. See David Eng, *Racial Castration* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

49. For the photographs of the *dramatis personae*, see “The Death of Diane Whipple,” SFGate.com, www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/object/article?f=/g/a/2002/03/22/dogmaulgallery.DTL&o=0 (accessed 15 July 2010); and “Multimedia Special: The Whipple Case,” SFGate.com, www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/object/article.cgi?f=/g/a/2002/03/22/dogmaulgallery.DTL (accessed 15 July 2010). For myths of the black rapist, see, among others, Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Vintage, 1983); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “‘The Mind that Burns in Each Body’: Women, Rape, and Racial Violence,” in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review, 1983), 328–49; and Barbara Omolade, “Hearts of Darkness,” in Snitow et al., *Powers of Desire*, 350–67.

50. See Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes

toward an Investigation),” in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays* by Louis Althusser, ed. and trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review, 1971), 127–86.

51. Bretches, *Dog O’War*, 221.

52. William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Robert Langbaum (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), 1.2, 349–51. Frank Lestringant, *Le cannibale: Grandeur et decadence* (Paris: Perrin, 1994), 43–55; Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*; and White, *Myths of the Dog-Man*, 63–64, make the point that Christopher Columbus associates and condenses Cyclops, Cynocephaly, Canibal, Canis, Carib, and the Great Khan in his projections onto the New World, concluding that the Caribbean islands he encounters are populated by dog-headed cannibals. Caliban’s name is a transposition of both Carib and Cannibal.

53. See Derrida, *Specters*; and Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). The term *appear* here is not quite right. Derrida uses *revenir*, to come back, as a play on the word for ghost in French, *revenant*, and to make the point that ghostly returns are not a matter of visibility. Gordon adds the important argument that ghostly returns are social and historical.

54. Here I am citing the title of Ann Cvetkovich’s *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

55. I am thinking along the lines of what Judith Butler writes in “Burning Acts, Injurious Speech,” in *Deconstruction Is/In America: A New Sense of the Political*, ed. Anselm Haverkamp (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 149–80: that “the juridicalization of history . . . is achieved precisely through the search for subjects to prosecute, who might be held accountable and, hence, temporarily resolve the problem of a fundamentally unprosecutable history” (156). Evolution may be the most difficult of histories to prosecute, however much some would wish to try.

