Susan R. Ressler and Stephanie S. Turner

Animals and humans coexist, we co-evolve, and sometimes we converse. Yet it has only been within the last three decades that we humans have begun to recognize that "animals make us human,"[1] that when we look at an animal and it returns our gaze, we become aware of ourselves "returning the look."[2] This recent insight is an important historical development both in representational practices, such as photography, as well as in theories about animal-human relationships. In animal photography, this development can be seen as a shift from depicting animals as dumb objects of the "trophy shot" or the "take only pictures, leave only footprints" ethos of wildlife photography,[3] to animals as sentient subjects with their own perspective on the world, even their own agency. Thus in the 1990s, a body of animal photography began to form in which animals return the viewer's gaze—or, disconcertingly, not—in situations that confront the viewer with the mutual construction of our relationships with them. These photographs show, for example, zoo animals exiting the frame as if escaping their captive environment,[4]

museum taxidermies striking "natural" poses in storage crates[5] or, if on exhibit, "gazing" with glass eyes upon viewers whose own images are reflected in the glass exhibit case.[6] Such photos call into question the received wisdom that zoo habitats resemble the places animals live and that museum dioramas offer a transparent view into animals' worlds. Beginning with a reappraisal of animal representation via the animal on exhibit, this "animal turn" in visual theory quickly expanded during the early 21st century to encompass critiques of animal subjectivity across all visual media.[7] Indeed, a wholesale critical evaluation of the interrelatedness of nonhumans and humans was in the making. As geographer and urban planner Jennifer Wolch noted in 1996, "agreement about the human-animal divide has recently collapsed" as a result of postmodern critiques of science, new appreciation for animals' cognitive capabilities, and the realization of humans' similarities to animals.[8]

John Berger, an important early critic of visual culture, has commented on this emerging sensibility regarding animal representation. Raising the question in his 1980 essay "Why Look at Animals?" Berger delineates their historical invisibility due to modernity's insistence, originating with Descartes, on the mind's precedence over the body. A key implication of the *cogito, ergo sum*, Berger reminds us, is Descartes' denial of animal feeling.[9] In the Cartesian formulation, animals are mere machines, unthinking brutes subject to human cognitive superiority. Yet ironically, thanks to the very scientific thinking that supposedly distinguishes humans from animals, we are beginning to grasp an essential similarity among all living things. The recognition that all species share similar DNA has not only transformed the natural sciences, it has also revolutionized humanity's figurative undertakings, the poetic inclinations with which we (re)make the world. Such world-making, as Donna Haraway explains in *When Species Meet*, gives rise to figures. Neither "representations [n]or didactic illustrations, [figures are] material-

semiotic nodes or knots in which diverse bodies and meaning coshape one another."[10] Figuration in Haraway's sense characterizes much of the recent creative work and scholarship on animal-human relationships, answering Berger's question while raising still more. Steve Baker, for example, considers the possibility of agency in animal representation, including whether some animals can represent themselves.[11] Baker's inquiry is part of the larger conversation generated by Berger's question that was furthered by Jacques Derrida in the provocative title of his 1997 lecture, "And Say the Animal Responded"?[12] This conversation can now be overheard in figurations as far-reaching as the arts, law, cognitive studies, biotechnology, and the role of animal welfare policy in research laboratories, zoos, and factory farms.

Haraway's appreciation of what happens "when species meet" is as much a technological awareness as it is a cultural one. Photographic representations are grounds for probing such connections, as the medium involves much more than technics—photography's figurations are partly technical, partly cultural, and entirely human in their conception. Since photography's inception, its roles as art versus science have been hotly debated. Charles Baudelaire, for example, equated photography with industrial progress, the antipode to art. "Poetry and progress are like two ambitious men who hate one another," he wrote in 1859: "Let it [photography] hasten to enrich the tourist's album …; let it adorn the naturalist's library, and enlarge microscopic animals; let it even provide information to corroborate the astronomer's hypotheses …. But if it be allowed to encroach upon the domain of the impalpable and the imaginary, upon anything whose value depends solely upon the addition of something of a man's soul, then it will be so much the worse for us!"[13]

This oft-quoted passage helped establish an ongoing discourse about photography's proper place, an adversarial dialectics in which science has been pitted against art. From

Baudelaire to John Szarkowski,[14] from Susan Sontag[15] to Rosalind Krauss, critics have theorized "photography's discursive spaces,"[16] generally situating the medium somewhere between those two poles. Yet this notion of photography as medium is limited, and its purview has been enlarged and even surpassed by those who, like Haraway, see imaging technologies as technocultural media.[17] This shift enables new ways of thinking about photographic practices, especially as regards animal-human representations. In this context, a medium could be construed in a number of ways, such as a nutritive formula designed to promote growth. The "Petri dish" metaphor is apt, for in the scientific laboratory, bacteria and other microbiological agents are grown in "culture media,"[18] a term that suggests producing new knowledge through linking "culture" to photography as "medium." In addition, a medium can be a channel or conduit for communication. In one of the first novels to include a photographer as protagonist (Nathaniel Hawthorne's *House of the Seven Gables*, 1851), Holgrave the daguerreotypist is also a mesmerist (and in that sense a medium). Yet according to Megan Rowley Williams, his spiritual and artistic gifts are tainted by "a kind of contagion that everywhere proliferates a dependence on the visual."[19]

So how do photography's "discursive spaces" both facilitate and constrain our relations with the natural world? More to the point, what roles can photography play in the co-evolutionary animal-human conversations through which we produce new knowledge? To explore these questions, we consider a broad spectrum of photographers' works that reconfigure animal-human conversations. These span the medium, from "straight photography" to mixed media and digital video, and from the "traditional" document to the fabricated image, including works by John Vucetich and Rolf Peterson, who have contributed to the study of wolf-moose ecology on Isle Royale, Michigan, and by Nancy Macko, whose *Lore of the Bee Priestess*

mythically revisions patriarchal society as feminist utopia. Along this spectrum we locate examples of a developing reflexivity in animal-human representations, including the mapping of colonial casualties like the Malagasy elephant bird in Catherine Bebout's *Cartographies* series, the museum taxidermies in Richard Barnes' *Animal Logic*,[20] and the implicated human viewer of natural history museum dioramas in Diane Fox's *UnNatural History.*[21] We show how figurations of animals possessing magical power, as in Pieter Hugo's *The Hyena & Other Men*,[22] or having the potential to heal, as in Susan Ressler's *Fiona and Me*, both depend upon and comprise the mutually constituted "response" in Derrida's question "and say the animal responded?" For what Derrida is asking in his provocative question is not whether the animal in our gaze "looks back," but whether we can know, when it does so, that it sees us as a subject in its own right.[23] If it does, the binary of the Cartesian *cogito* dissolves, and we humans are at once more than what we think we are, and less. This inviting dilemma, as Haraway describes it, is the "risk of an intersecting gaze."[24]

As though aware of that risk, and thus trying to avoid it, the scientific gaze strives to "observe, analyze, [and] reflect on the animal,"[25] not be seen by it. Yet this effort has always been fraught. One much-photographed example is the "living laboratory" on the Lake Superior island of Isle Royale. Beginning in 1958, ecologists undertook what has become a decades-long study of the island's wolf and moose populations,[26] observing, analyzing, and reflecting on the shifting predator-prey relationship in a setting nearly ideal for controlling variables. Cut off from the mainland since the early twentieth century, with limited human traffic and a well-established, complex ecosystem, Isle Royale and its animal inhabitants would hypothetically provide humans a rare opportunity to document "untrammeled wilderness."[27] However, as with any scientific project designed to produce a photographic record of animal behavior and habitat,

the researcher necessarily influences the object of study. On Isle Royale, researcher and subject become co-constitutive in a larger drama of intersecting gazes, one that yields as much poetic insight as it does scientific knowledge.[28] Much of the visual representation of Isle Royale's animal populations, for example, strives to maintain the integrity of their habitat through less intrusive aerial photography. Such photographs give viewers a privileged glimpse of the predator-prey relationship between wolves and moose in a mostly untouched and still viable ecosystem. Attractively framed and displayed at events where project leaders John Vucetich and Rolf Peterson discuss their work, these photographs serve as an aesthetic introduction in order to raise funds for the study. Other photographs show stunning close-ups of the animals. At such close range, animal and human paths tend to intersect.

Figures 1 & 2: © John A. Vucetich, "Radio Collaring and Disease Monitoring 2003," www.isleroyalewolf.org

Figure 1, for example, shows two sets of footprints: a wolf track superimposed on that of a boot. Headed in opposite directions yet overlapping, the two sets of prints suggest the transient aspects of this animal-human conversation and, by implication, how photography itself entails a mutually constitutive relationship between photographer and subject. In addition, figure 2 shows

how the scientific gaze can intervene when the animal attempts to look back. Here, the viewer sees a close-up of a wolf that has been sedated and fitted with a radio collar for monitoring. To subdue and calm the wolf, her muzzle has been secured and her eyes covered by a blue mask. Although the mask literally prevents the wolf from "looking back," once she is turned loose and her radio collar begins transmitting, she will in effect, via radio signals, be returning the researchers' gaze many times over while also providing important data for wolf conservation. As the Isle Royale Wolf-Moose Study photographs demonstrate, poetic awareness and scientific inquiry can be co-constitutive. Moreover, this study invokes age-old questions about the veracity of photographs. Just as Arthur Rothstein did during the Great Depression, when he moved a steer's skull on to cracked earth to better convey the dire consequences of extreme drought,[29] so too do Isle Royale researchers implicate themselves in their study when they interact with the animals to document them. In both cases, the slippage among aesthetic choices, social implications, scientific data and the truthfulness of photography generates worthy issues to contest.

Some photographs in the Isle Royale study depict dead animals, such as moose killed by wolves and wolves killed by other wolves or by starvation. Like the aerial photographs and close-ups, these images do provide important data. Photographing animal carcasses for the scientific record also recalls Steve Baker's analysis of the greater visibility of the dead, as opposed to the living, animal.[30] As Baker observes, the dead animals in photographs of hunting kills and taxidermies serve to maintain the illusion of the proprietary gaze of the viewer; dead animals can't look back. And yet, inasmuch as their inanimate bodies bespeak some of the facts of their lived existence, including our occasional role in ending it, killed animals have a lot to say about our relationship with them. The works of mixed-media artist Catherine Bebout reference

this phenomenon. Intended to "confront the viewer with the consequences of science, technology, exploration, and exploitation and illustrate its impact on culture," Bebout's *Cartographies* series explores the mediating role of photographs *vis-à-vis* animal extinction.[31]

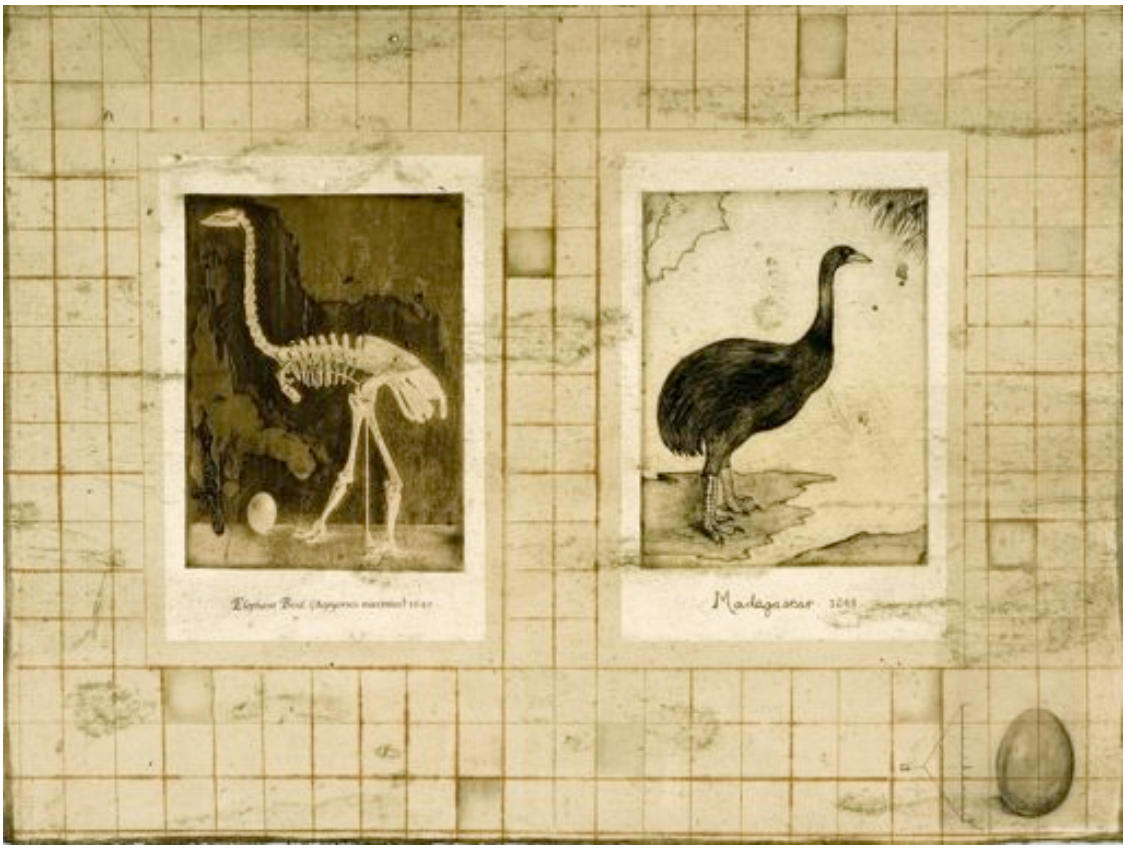

Figure 3: © Catherine Bebout, *Aepyornis-Maximus*, mixed media, 22 x 30 in., 2005, from the *Cartographies* series

In figure 3, for example, Bebout positions two analogous scientific images side by side, each utilizing a different form of visual representation. Both depict the now-extinct Malagasy elephant bird, *Aepyornis-Maximus*. On the left is a photo-etching of its skeleton—along with an elephant bird egg—labeled with the bird's taxonomic name and specimen collection date, 1649. On the right is a second rendering, also an etching (albeit not optically derived), that illustrates the bird alive, along the shoreline. It too is dated 1649, but the artist's handwritten label replaces the taxonomic one, identifying the bird's native land, Madagascar. The two halves of Bebout's

nearly symmetrical image suggest numerous oppositions: death contrasts with life; dark with light; negative with positive (ethically as well as photographically); the camera's lens with the artist's hand; the specimen on display with the animal in the wild; the confined space of the museum with the unfettered space of the outdoors. However, the image is not quite symmetrical: the skeletal image threatens to take center stage, crowding the "live" bird and pushing it slightly to the right, as if to question an implied wish for the species' survival. Moreover, Bebout shows that, under the scientific gaze, not even extinction is absolute since, conjoined with photography and mechanical reproduction, the conquered animal lives on, if only in the artificial space of the Cartesian grid. Thus *Aepyornis-Maximus* depicts a life preserved ultimately through visual media: both the photo-etching and the hand-inscribed one are fictions—both printed from a chemically etched and inked plate run through a press—both products of human artifice and imagination. Indeed, the egg—symbol of birth and renewal—is just one more object to be mediated, as depicted in the measuring apparatus to the left of it. Though the egg posits new life, no matter how much we might wish to see the bird's progeny survive, that wish is but a fantasy. Phoenix will not rise from its ashes. We have only this image: fixed, frozen, plotted on a grid, and mapped. In this way, Bebout shows how not only histories of human conquest, but also human image-making, have dominated *and* mediated our conversations with animals and the natural world.

One especially important site for these conversations is the natural history museum. From the 16th-century *Wunderkammer* to the 19th-century Crystal Palace and contemporary museums like the Smithsonian Institute, collections of animal bodies, including those of rare or extinct animals, as well as type specimens considered to be representative of the species,[32] became popular attractions for a viewing public eager to see scientific exhibitions of the world's

natural wonders. Such exhibitions were often mediated through taxidermies of animals installed in highly realistic dioramas. The diorama, invented by Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre in 1822, was designed to create the illusion of a natural scene. Comprised of an elaborate layering of hand-painted linens illuminated by natural light that passed through carefully positioned screens, the diorama attempted to "mirror" the natural world seamlessly (much like the daguerreotype that Daguerre later invented in 1839). Like the public zoos that arose during the nineteenth century, however, natural history museums also served more ideological purposes. As Berger elucidates, they were prestigious repositories for the artifacts of imperialist conquest, intended to "enlighten" viewers about their moral and intellectual pre-eminence over the natural world. Significantly, Berger argues, the development of animal collections for human viewing occurred at precisely the same time—the period of industrialization and urbanization—during which animals began to disappear from everyday life.[33] Thus the function of the natural history museum increasingly took on the cultural and symbolic work of reestablishing our connections to the living world, even as, warehousing the dead and fabricating their lived environments, it compromised those very connections.

Richard Barnes and Diane Fox are two photographers whose works critique the contradictory framework of the natural history museum. While both Barnes and Fox reveal the "fabricated nature"[34] of these museums and their displays, they do so via distinct visual strategies, Barnes emphasizing the natural history museum's alienating containment culture, and Fox inserting the viewer directly into natural history exhibits by means of reflections and other subtle cues.

Figure 4: © Richard Barnes, *Flayed Man, MCA, Paris,* digital chromogenic print, 48 x 60 in., 2005, from *Animal Logic* series and book

Barnes' photograph *Flayed Man* (figure 4), made in the Museum of Comparative Anatomy in Paris, is visually constructed to emphasize the human conquest of nature and man's dominion over it. Barnes' vantage point and wide-angle lens give the anatomical exhibit of a "flayed man" center stage. Placed atop a pedestal, arm raised as though leading a charge, this "flayed man" is the only specimen in the hall with flesh on its bones. The blood red color of its musculature contrasts with the pale blue glass cases and green trim of the ceiling architecture, making the sculpture "stand out" even more. Arrayed behind this powerful figure in symmetrical rows, skeletons of primates, ungulates, and other mammals seem poised to follow.

The photograph's deep space and converging lines further emphasize the "flayed man's" prominence. His is the only raised pedestal, and its didactic plaque is the only one visible from our vantage point. Reiterating the "flayed man's" imposing stance, it too signals that he *is* in charge.

Barnes' decision to photograph this particular museum and exhibit hall is indicative of his stated interest in "how museum collections develop, specifically in the way they express the relationship between the natural world and our place, or the human presence, within it."[35] The vast architectural space, controlled arrangement of the collections, and preeminence of the male figure in *Flayed Man* do reference natural history museums categorically, as well as the ideological frameworks they have institutionalized. For example, the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition in London was also housed in huge edifices made of glass and steel, and like photography, these architectural wonders signified industrial and technological progress, celebrated as evidence of Western man's elevated status in the world. Moreover, the precisely arranged display cases, neat rows of skeletons, and walls of windows allowing natural light to illuminate the objects in *Flayed Man* recall Donna Haraway's analysis of the natural history museum as a kind of "visual technology" that "works through the desire for communion."[36] For although this space is clearly arranged to enable looking at and walking though the exhibits, and in that sense to "commune" with the animal-objects on display, when Barnes made this photograph museum officials had apparently barred access with a forbidding chain, thus prohibiting communion. Cordoned off and restricted from entry, the viewer is left only with the *desire* for communion, not its fulfillment. By sheer dint of the size of this collection, the exhibit seems to prevail over and above the desires of the viewer, who cannot fully enter. This photograph therefore raises the question of whether Barnes' work reinscribes what it purports to

dismantle, that is, whether, in photographing the natural history museum primarily as a container of artifacts, he reestablishes it as a repository for the disappearing animal, the human able only to catch a glimpse of what is inside.

Although at times his work seems to venerate the natural history museum, Barnes also documents its decline. With taxidermy and the diorama falling out of fashion, and new exhibition technologies taking their place, [37] the notion of the natural history museum as mausoleum, a "container of the dead"[38] is, itself, on the decline. Barnes discovered this while photographing for *Animal Logic*; when drawn to exhibits undergoing renovation or installation, he sought to emphasize the artifice and fragility of the natural history museum. In so doing, however, Barnes only partially deconstructs the natural history museum's contradictory framework: by photographing taxidermies and dioramas in the process of being refurbished, his work nostalgically reiterates the role of the older, imperialist visual technologies in mediating our relationship with the natural world.

What Barnes attempts by allowing the viewer a behind-the-scenes glimpse of museum taxidermies and natural history displays under repair or construction, photographer Diane Fox addresses by implicating the viewer in such exhibits, working with reflections on glass diorama cases to call attention to the "obvious disconnect between the experience represented within [the] case and its reality."[39] Pairing two images from Barnes and Fox (figures 5 and 6) illustrates their contrasting approaches.

Figure 5 (on left): © Richard Barnes, *Smithsonian Suspended Deer*, digital chromogenic print, 2005, from *Animal Logic* series and book

Figure 6 (on right): © Diane Fox, *Übersee-Museum Bremen, Bremen, Germany (gazelle)*, archival digital print on buff rag paper, 23.5 x 35 in., n.d., from *UnNatural History* series

In Barnes' photograph *Smithsonian Suspended Deer* (figure 5), the protective plastic sheeting covering a wooden museum storage crate has been peeled back to reveal the deer taxidermy placed carefully within it. As in the human anatomical model in Barnes' *Flayed Man* (see figure 4), the deer taxidermy in this image is uncovered to expose its function as a formal representation, a copy of the actual living thing that is both scientific in its precision as well as artistic in its fluidity. Reminiscent of Eadweard Muybridge's animal-human locomotion studies, the deer is poised mid-gallop, at the moment of "unsupported transit" when all four of its hooves have left the ground.[40] Barnes' emphasis here, however, is on the aesthetic object of the perfect type specimen, supported by straps in its packing crate that simultaneously protect yet restrain, and removed from inspection until it can be refurbished and restored to its "proper" place, whether freestanding museum case or enclosed diorama. Barnes positions his camera so that the crate's wooden supports both contain and negate the animal penned within. One strip of wood

forms a horizontal bar that literally bisects the deer, cutting off the viewer even as it visually severs the dead animal's body. In sharp contrast, the gazelle taxidermy in Fox's photograph, *Übersee-Museum Bremen, Bremen, Germany (gazelle)* (figure 6), appears to be galloping right out of its diorama. With safari hunters (perhaps photographers?) in pursuit in the distance, this animal, clearly in the moment of "unsupported transit," seems to be jumping over the glass interface of the exhibit container into the viewer's domain. Partially reflected in the glass, the photographer and her tripod are placed in such proximity to the gazelle taxidermy that both figures seem united, the gazelle's upper body, head and eye, almost replacing her own. Yet despite this apparent fulfillment of what Haraway calls the "desire for communion" in the museum, that possibility remains ambiguous: the glass barrier, after all, remains, and reflected in it are the museum's other multiple divides. Nonetheless, the viewer is implicated within the diorama by the multiple reflections. In this way, as Fox explains, "the reflection extend[s] the meaning of the image."[41]

Working outdoors and outside the confines of the museum, Pieter Hugo's staged environmental portraits, which could be characterized as *plein air* dioramas, seem to renegotiate the point of contact where species meet. Hugo has been dubbed "one of a new generation of savvy young photographers who have emerged from post-apartheid South Africa," yet whether his work challenges or supports preconceptions about animal-human relationships on the "dark continent" remains to be seen. Hugo's *The Hyena & Other Men* garnered him the Discovery Award at the International Photography Festival, Les Rencontres d'Arles, in 2008. Does Hugo represent "what might be called a new photographic consciousness as regards the representation of Africa to the West"? [42] And to what extent do these images of marginalized Nigerians and the

animals they have conscripted reflect a new figuration of the mythic dimensions of non-Western social relations to Western eyes?

Hugo, a native of South Africa born in Cape Town in 1976, traveled to Lagos, Nigeria to photograph itinerant street performers based on an image emailed from a friend's cellphone that showed men "walking down the street with a hyena in chains."[43] Hugo subsequently spent eight days with the men (and a little girl, all from the same family), along with the hyenas, monkeys, and rock pythons that comprised their menagerie. Two years later, in 2007, he returned to Nigeria to complete this series, having kept contact and established a stronger personal relationship with the group. He says the second trip was very different: "they were keen to be photographed again" and the images are "less formal and more intimate." Moreover, Hugo was able to reflect on previous notes he'd jotted down that underscored "dominance, codependence and submission" as key features of this family's bond with their animals.[44]

Figure 7: © Pieter Hugo, *Mummy Ahmadu and Mallam Mantari Lamal with Mainasara*, Abuja, Nigeria, digital C-Print, 2005 (from *The Hyena and Other Men*) Courtesy Yossi Milo Gallery, New York

Although made during his first trip in 2005, *Mummy Ahmadu and Mallam Mantari Lamal with Mainasara* (figure 7) is one of the most compelling photographs in Hugo's series, exhibiting all the phenomena he originally noted—"dominance, codependence, and submission"—that he believed characterize this family's relationship with its animals. Hugo constructs a classical tableau from three elements: father, daughter, and hyena. The father pries open the hyena's mouth, revealing ferocious teeth, but the animal is subdued with three coils of rope around its neck, attached to a heavy chain. Ironically, the other end of the chain is hidden under the father's legs, suggesting (improbably) that he is the sole mooring keeping this "savage beast" at bay. But in the formation of what Haraway would describe as a "material-semiotic node. . .in which diverse bodies and meaning coshape one another,"[45] a young girl about six years of age crouches on the back of the hyena, her head on its head, her hand patting its cheek (perhaps affectionately), and her foot on its foot. With her checked dress pressed against the hyena's spotted coat, she is virtually a mirror image of the animal. Yet she is "on top," fearless and invincible.

According to Adetokunbo Abiola, whose essay is appended to Hugo's photographs in his book, this family has administered herbs to the little girl to protect her from harm, and her father believes that this "potion" (which she has both bathed in and imbibed) will guarantee her safety from all animals for the rest of her life. Abiola says, "The handlers believe that humans are capable of transforming themselves into animals such as hyenas, hence the need for powerful

voodoo charms and incantations as protection." He adds that the family sells these herbs, as well as charms and amulets, to the public to protect against animal attacks and ward off "witches and wizards, which many Nigerians believe are responsible for their misfortunes."[46] Such folklore makes for good business, and the trade in animals who perform, along with potions that protect, helps families like this one survive. Whether Hugo's photographs can ameliorate their lives is another matter. Although Hugo writes that "we could ask why these performers need to catch wild animals to make a living. . .or why they are economically marginalized if Nigeria is the world's sixth largest exporter of oil,"[47] it is doubtful that his photographs will raise such questions. Hugo's work seems estranged from social documentary, his use of the medium carefully contrived. These staged portraits, muted and drained of color by digital means, attest to his aesthetic, not activist, concerns. Westerners, unfamiliar with such exotic sights, may become fascinated by what they perceive as latent violence, about to erupt. Perhaps the risk of the intersecting gaze is more perilous in a cross-cultural context, for empathy gives way to voyeurism, and we become complicit with the photographer's gaze, as well as his photographic performance.

Figure 8: © Susan Ressler, *Fiona and Me*, archival digital ink jet print, 12 x 33.5 in., 2010

Susan Ressler's photographs of her young cat, Fiona, made while Susan was recovering from a severe illness, also evoke notions of charms, safety and protection (see figure 8). But in this case, it is the animal that, through a ritualistic series of representations, enables the photographer to heal. Without premeditation, when Ressler noticed her pet stretched out in the warm sunlight on the wooden floor in her studio, she grabbed a point and shoot camera to record the blissful moment. Fiona, who was less than a year old, soon got up and sauntered away. Yet an impression remained, and Ressler, who was feverish and chilled, decided to lie down in much the same position as had Fiona. The warm sun relieved some of her discomfort, and she again raised her point and shoot, this time aiming at herself. With one hand on the camera, and the other on her heart, she made perhaps four or five exposures. Suddenly Fiona returned and began licking Susan's face. Once again she raised her camera: the moment lasted only a few seconds, and she recorded only two fleeting instants. As the animal returned her gaze, the bond between Susan and Fiona was strengthened. Over the ensuing months, Susan gradually recovered from her illness. She now believes that making these photographs helped catalyze that process. The act of photographing brought Susan and her pet into an intensely personal encounter, and during the winter and early spring of 2010, keeping her pet close provided companionship, support, and enabled her to heal.

For some artists working to refigure and re-imagine animal-human relationships, the healing and mythic dimensions take shape through their choice of subjects and the mediums they use to represent them. Nancy Macko, a mixed media and digital video artist, has devoted nearly two decades to exploring intersections of science and technology in regard to honeybee communities, ancient goddess myths, and pre-Christian matriarchal societies. Her intent is to reshape Western cultural narratives from a feminist perspective and thus restore a healing

connection between humans and the natural world. In a 1997 artist's statement, Macko asked, "Why do scientists choose to *describe* nature—and therefore, control it—rather than exist with it? How is it that women maintain or lose their power based on their possession or lack of sexual autonomy and independence? And, what kind of a culture might support or enhance the possession and maintenance of true female autonomy? I hope that by examining the relationships between nature and science, the feminine spirit and the power of female sexuality, I can uncover some connections."[48] In this way, Macko claims a central position for feminist praxis: it can unify and make discourse more meaningful between art and science, eschewing Western narratives that fragment and objectify the gaze (following Descartes' *cogito*). As Macko explained in 2006, "The world is constructed in terms of dualities…. I am looking for the space between the physical and the spiritual."[49] In other words, she is attempting to heal the split "between rational and organic,"[50] to suture mind with matter, and to revision a world that is woefully out of balance.

Nancy Macko's *Lore of the Bee Priestess*, a 14-minute digital video, brings these questions and aspirations to the fore. Part of a larger installation titled *Hive Universe* that combines video, sculpture, photography and printmaking, Macko worked on the project for twelve years from 1992 to 2004. As a result of this focused "odyssey," *Lore of the Bee Priestess* became one of the most cogent expressions of her quest for a feminist utopia. She traveled to France, Greece, Romania, and other European sites in order to experience the remnants of matriarchal cultures first hand, read historical works such as Savina Teubal's *Hagar the Egyptian: The Lost Tradition of the Matriarchs*, and researched the science of honeybee social behavior in depth. [51]

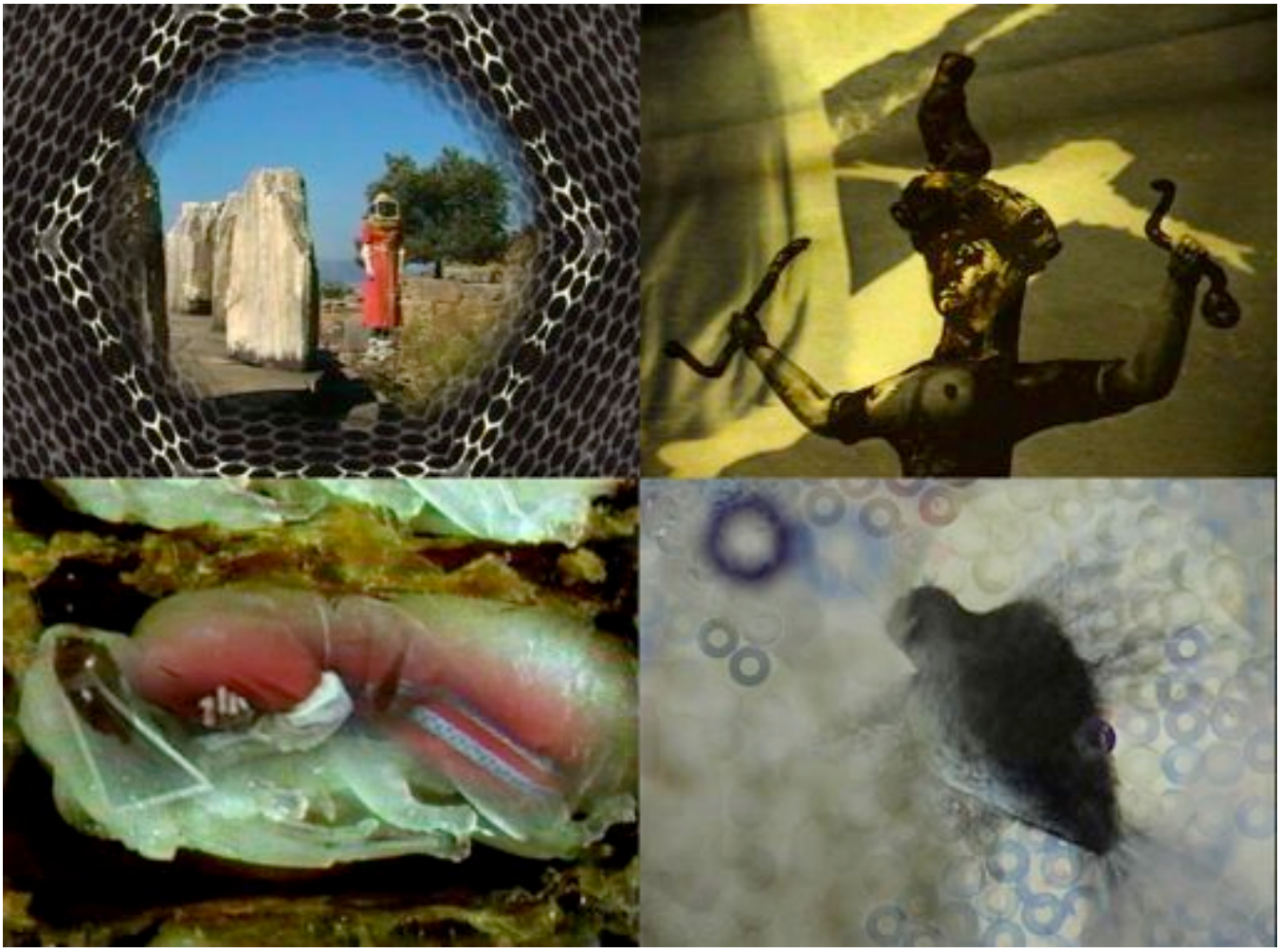

Figure 9: © Nancy Macko, four digital video stills from *Lore of the Bee Priestess*, 2004

In the four video stills shown in figure 9, we see a cycle of transformation and regeneration. A newly awakened Bee Priestess, viewed through the hexagonal structure of the hive, is on a transhistorical journey across space and time, visiting sacred ancient sites only to discover that the Goddess has died, her energy extinguished in a modern world gone awry. The Bee Priestess then enlists the aid of the Cretan Snake Goddess (top right), performing rites to restore her lost powers. According to feminist scholar Gloria Orenstein, this was accomplished by "imprinting,"[52] a merging with the Snake Goddess that preceded burrowing deep into the hive

to pupate and give birth to a new generation (and by implication, a new world order.) The final digital still (bottom right, figure 9), references the *Woman of Willendorf*, a sculpture dated from 22,000 B.C.E. considered to be a symbol of female fertility.[53] Shaped like a woman's body, it floats in a cosmic sea reminiscent of amniotic fluid, radiating light and grace.

Importantly, Nancy Macko's *Lore of the Bee Priestess* is a performative work: the artist dons a beekeeper's suit and literally enacts these rituals in front of the camera, which perforce mediates them. Macko's video works, paintings, prints, and photographs are mutually co-constitutive. She has photographed and videotaped the surfaces of her paintings, recycling them into backgrounds for digital prints and layering these images into digital video. She says, "At this point I think that my work crosses media. Sometimes it is formed by the concept, and sometimes the medium creates the concept, especially when I am working with the bee materials."[54] By including bee's wax and raw honeycomb along with photographic and other representations, Macko reunites the image with its subject, infusing form with substance, so that mind, matter, and medium are made whole.

Photography and other visual mediums present new opportunities for reuniting art and technology, poetry and science, and for exploring the biological and cultural commonalities we share with the living world. As the works of these photographers show, our co-evolutionary conversations with other animals have been, and will continue to be, highly mediated. Not only is this mediation inevitable, it can also be an invaluable tool for revitalizing such conversations. Because photography is a light and lens-based medium that records discrete moments of time and demarcates finite spaces, its representations provide unique opportunities for examination, reflection, and interpretation. This ability to "capture" the real and conjoin it with our ideals, if examined, can also enhance our animal-human conversations. As we've seen, when

photography is applied to scientific field work (such as the Isle Royale wolf-moose study), to the cultural work of the natural history museum (such as the taxidermied animals photographed by Richard Barnes and Diane Fox), and to the cross-cultural work of representing Africa to the West (such as the environmental *tableaux* of Pieter Hugo), it illuminates what Berger describes as our inability to "transcend the animal" who is, indeed, the same as us.[55] Moreover, when artists such as Catherine Bebout comment on animal extinction, or when Ressler and Macko invoke healing as they bond and even merge with animals through lived experience, it is clear that any attempt to deny animal-human connection is doomed to fail.

Figure 10: © Diane Fox, *Animals Reflecting, California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco,* archival digital print, 28 x 18 ½ in., 2010

Diane Fox's *Animals Reflecting* (figure 10) illustrates the important ways photography can mediate and enhance our co-evolutionary animal-human conversations. The image depicts a gorilla encased in a natural history museum diorama. Museum visitors move through a deep architectonic space to view the other exhibits, and we see them and the gorilla through numerous reflected windows, including the "window" of the two-dimensional picture plane. Indeed, both humans and animals are "reflecting" in this photograph, but despite the visual ambiguities, one thing is clear: the gorilla is looking at us, just as we are looking back at him.

When such similar species' gazes intersect, "looking" is reversed and relocated: the animal, as Derrida conjectures, does indeed "look back," and in so doing, initiates our response. By making the gorilla the locus of the gaze, this photograph calls for a different engagement with the natural world, one that involves more reciprocal ways of looking. And as we have shown, the ontology of the photographic image enables that reciprocity. Transfixed by the gorilla's direct gaze, we recognize that we are *all* animals reflecting.

NOTES

1. Temple Grandin and Catherine Johnson, *Animals Make Us Human: Creating the Best Life for Animals* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 2009).

2. John Berger, "Why Look at Animals?" in *About Looking* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 1-26. Berger refers to the returned gaze on page 3.

3. See, for example, Matthew Brower's description of animal trophy photography as a symbolic domination over the animal other in "Trophy Shots: North American Photographs of Nonhuman Animals and the Display of Masculine Prowers," *Society and Animals* 13, no. 1 (2005): 13-32 and his critique of the "vision of nature as a non-human space" in wildlife photography in " 'Take Only Photographs': Animal Photography's Construction of Nature Love," *Invisible Culture: An Electronic Journal for Visual Culture* 9 (2005), n.p.

4. See, for example, the zoo photography of Britta Jaschinski, *Zoo* (London: Phaidon Press, 1996).

5. Richard Barnes, *Animal Logic* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2009).

6. Diane Fox's official Web site, *UnNatural History*, http://www.dianefoxphotography.com/photography/index.html.

7. Influential works on animal subjectivity in visual culture include Steve Baker, *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity, and Representation* (Champaign-Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2001); Jonathan Burt, *Animals in Film* (London: Reaktion Books, 2003); and Nato Thompson, ed., *Becoming Animal: Contemporary Art in the Animal Kingdom* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).

8. Jennifer Wolch, "Zoöpolis," in *Animal Geographies: Place, Politics, and Identity in the Nature-Culture Borderlands*, ed. Jennifer Wolch and Jody Emel (London: Verso, 1998), 119-138.

9. Berger, 9.

10. Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 4.

11. Steve Baker, *The Postmodern Animal* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000).

12. Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Ed. Marie-Louise Mallet. Trans. David Wills. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

13. Charles Baudelaire, from "The Salon of 1859," in *Literature and Photography Interactions, 1840-1990: A Critical Anthology,* ed. Jane M. Rabb (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 67-68.

14. John Szarkowski, *The Photographer's Eye.* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1966).

15. Susan Sontag. *On Photography.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 1973.

16. Rosalind Krauss, "Photography's Discursive Spaces," in *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, ed. Richard Bolton (1982; repr., Cambridge, MA: MIT Pres, 1989): 288-289.

17. See, for example, Haraway's analysis of National Geographic Channel's *Crittercam* series (2004), in which various marine animals were outfitted with video cameras to enable the viewer to see their world from their point of view, "*Crittercam*: Compounding Eyes in Naturecultures," in *When Species Meet*, 249-63.

18. Sarah Franklin's comment on the metaphor of the "culture media" of the science laboratory is apt here. Describing it as the "socially constructed environment in which we grow our own biological experiments," her point, like that of Haraway (whom she is referencing here) is that our "interaction [with the natural world] must play a role in the constitution of what we know." See Franklin, "The Cyborg Embryo," *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 7-8 (2006): 167-87.

19. Megan Rowley Williams, *Through the Negative: The Photographic Image and the Written Word in Nineteenth-century American Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 30.

20. Richard Barnes, *Animal Logic* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2009).

21. Diane Fox, *Unnatural History*, http://www.dianefoxphotography.com/photography/unnatural_bw/1.html

22. Pieter Hugo, *The Hyena & Other Men* (Munich: Prestel, 2007).

23. Derrida makes clear that the cat that looks back at him is "she and no other, the one *I am talking about here*," 7.

24. Haraway, 21.

25. Derrida, 13.

26. Rolf Olin Peterson, *The Wolves of Isle Royale: A Broken Balance* (Minocqua, WI: Willow Creek Press, 1995).

27. The idea of an "untrammeled wilderness" gained traction in the American cultural imagination with the introduction the Wilderness Act of 1964, which defined "wilderness" as "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man." For a discussion of the impact of this construction of the land and its animal and non-animal inhabitants, see Douglas W. Scott, "'Untrammeled,' 'Wilderness Character,' and the Challenges of Wilderness Preservation," *Wild Earth* (Fall/Winter 2001-2002): 72-79.

28. This may be true even for remote photography of wildlife; see, for example, Tricia L. Cutler and Don E. Swann, "Using Remote Photography in Wildlife Ecology: A Review," *Wildlife Society Bulletin*, 27, No. 3 (Autumn, 1999): 571-581.

29. James Curtis. "Flight from Reality: Arthur Rothstein and the Dust Bowl," in *Mind's Eye, Mind's Truth: FSA Photography Reconsidered.* Philadelphia (Temple University Press, 1989), 69-77.

30. Steve Baker, "'You Kill Things to Look at Them': Animal Death in Contemporary Art." In *Killing Animals*. Ed. The Animal Studies Group (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 69-98.

31. Catherine Bebout's official Web site, http://catherinebebout.com/.

32. For a discussion of the type specimen as representative of its species, see Donna Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936," *Social Text*, 11 (Winter, 1984-1985): 20-64. Haraway links the aesthetics of taxidermy to the scientific establishment of a perfect type specimen on page 34.

33. Berger, 10-13.

34. Barnes, Preface, *Animal Logic*, n.p.

35. Barnes, Preface, *Animal* Logic, n.p.

36. Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy," 52.

37. Melissa Milgrom, *Still Life: Adventures in Taxidermy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2010). Milgrom documents the rise and fall of natural history museum taxidermy.

38. Barnes, Preface, *Animal Logic*, n.p.

39. Diane Fox, "Constructed Reality: The Diorama as Art." *Antennae: Journal of Nature in Visual Culture*. Issue 6 (Summer 2008): 13-20.

40. John Ott, "Iron Horses: Leland Stanford, Eadweard Muybridge, and the Industrialised Eye," *Oxford Art Journal* 28, no. 3 (2005): 407-28.

41. Fox, 18.

42. Sean O'Hagan, "Africa as You've Never Seen It," *The Observer*, July 20, 2008, http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2008/jul/20/photography.southafrica#article.

43. Pieter Hugo, “The Dog’s Master” in *The Hyena & Other Men* (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 2007), n.p.

44. Hugo, “The Dog’s Master,” n.p.

45. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 4.

46. Adetokunbo Abiola, “The Hyena Men: Making Money from the Fringe,” in *The Hyena & Other Men*, n.p.

47. Hugo, “The Dog’s Master,” n.p.

48. Susan R. Ressler, “It’s All About the Apple, or Is It?” in *Women Artists of the American West*, ed. Susan R. Ressler (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2003), 166-98. The quote from Macko appears on page 184.

49. Mary Davis MacNaughton, “Bees, Stars, and Beyond,” in *Hive Universe: Nancy Macko, 1994-2006* (Claremont, CA: Scripps College, 2007), 31.

50. Connie Butler, “Nancy Macko: Envisioning a Feminist Future,” in *Hive Universe: Nancy Macko, 1994-2006* (Claremont, CA: Scripps College, 2007), 16.

51. Mary Kay Lombino, “Inside the Hive: An Interview with Nancy Macko,” in *Hive Universe: Nancy Macko, 1994-2006* (Claremont, CA: Scripps College, 2007), 46.

52. Gloria Feman Orenstein, "The Shamanic Journey of the Bee Priestess in the work of Nancy Macko," in *Hive Universe: Nancy Macko, 1994-2006* (Claremont, CA: Scripps College, 2007), 32.

53. Wikipedia contributors, "Venus of Willendorf," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia,* http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Venus_of_Willendorf&oldid=398892709 (accessed November 29, 2010).

54. Lombino, 50.

55. Berger, 10.

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