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## Beyond Biosecurity

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**Abstract:** As boundaries between domesticity and the undomesticated increasingly blur for cohabitants of Vancouver Island, home to North America's densest cougar population, predatorial problems become more and more pressing. Rosemary-Claire Collard responds on a pragmatic plane, arguing that the encounter between human and cougar is only ever destructive, that contact results in death and almost always for the cougar. Advocating for vigilance in policing boundaries separating cougar from civilization, therefore, she looks to Foucault's analysis of modern biopower in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality* for support in favor of a more contemporary notion of *biosecurity*. In response to Collard's arguments, concerned with ethical conclusions drawn on the basis of her policy-based proposal, I challenge the prohibition she places on encounter. In the first section, "Becoming Killable," I address her use of Donna Haraway's phraseology, and in the second section, "Biological Dangers," I scrutinize her reading of Foucault, arguing that the appeals she makes distort the mode of argumentation at work for each thinker. The final section, "Facing Cougar, Facing Death," advocates further ethical possibilities generated on the basis of Foucault's correlation between overcoming the fear of death and resisting abuses of power with respect to others. My contention is that our transgressing boundaries constructed to separate humanity from the inhumane curtails tendencies toward the marginalization and subjugation of those animal others whose very existence brings us face to face with the fact of our own mortality.

**Q.** Do you think the role of philosophy is to warn of the dangers of power?

**M. F.** This has always been an important function of philosophy. In its critical aspect—and I mean critical in a broad sense—philosophy is that which calls into question domination at every level and in every form in which it exists, whether political, economic, sexual, institutional, or what have you. To a certain extent, this critical function of philosophy derives from the Socratic injunction "Take care of yourself," in other words, "make freedom your foundation, through the mastery of yourself." (Foucault 1997a, 300-301)

Bracketing concerns about what counts as “nature” and what does not, about whether this term should retain its terminological primacy in environmental discourse, and skirting debates concerning civilization, wilderness, and the construction of each, we bring ourselves to face a most frightening threat to self-preservation:

But what would ensue if we were to let down our defensive posture in regard to the natural predator—if only for a moment—and desist from our ongoing domestication of predatory space, allowing the animal who eats a chance to address us more fully? What would we find if we were once again to step into a space where we would willingly become edible, a space that might even be termed inhumane? What would come of our own sense of ourselves as human and humane beings? (Hatley 2004, 15)

How might such radical vulnerability bear upon tendencies toward domination, especially of those individuals whose very existence elicits fears from which we find ourselves inclined to flee, perhaps at any cost?

In years past, a growing number of scholars have looked to the work of Michel Foucault to aid in destabilizing deeply rooted practices of interspecies domination. While the majority of resultant literature deploys Foucauldian methodology in efforts to criticize contemporary agricultural practices, a minority has addressed knowledge and power relations at work in other animal domains.<sup>1</sup> Responding in part to Donna Haraway, who promotes contact but concentrates on domesticated animals, Rosemary-Claire Collard extends the reach of this literature into territory previously left untouched.

Focusing on relations between human and cougar on Vancouver Island, home to the densest cougar population in North America, Collard argues that these wild cats pose a serious threat to human “safe space,” a good to be preserved at all costs. So while cougars on the island are themselves subject to biopolitical calculation, boundaries separating wild predator from domestic prey must be strictly policed. Contact is out of the question because only harm results when humans and cougars encounter one another.

Collard’s appeals to Foucault are intended to support her thesis that when cougars transgress these boundaries they invite their own executions: “In the case of cougars, as I will argue, the biological threat they pose to humans and their property (in the form of domestic animals) renders them ‘killable’ in the same manner that Foucault claims killing under biopower is condoned if the entity killed is perceived as a ‘biological danger’” (2012, 24). Recourse to the discussion of biopolitics in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1990) grounds her argument that counter-predatorial killing is warranted when carried out in the name of *biosecurity*.

Endeavoring to prevent predatorial deaths of pets and livestock is necessary and worthwhile. However, Collard crosses a certain line when she seeks to absolutize her principle that contact is only ever destructive. Flashing a policing badge, she slips into the realm of environmental ethics: “My research seeks to understand these bloody entanglements between cougars, humans, and other animals on ‘Cougar Island’ and draws on this understanding to question an environmental ethics

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<sup>1</sup> Chloë Taylor (2013, 540) cites Chrulew 2011 as expanding this literature to address zoos, Palmer 2001 as addressing companion animals, and Collard 2012 as addressing wild animals.

that depends upon face-to-face encounters with animals” (2012, 38).<sup>2</sup> My response challenges her preclusion on an ethical plane.

Three sections to follow build upon observations concerning an idiom Collard employs often and consistently, Haraway’s “making killable.” In the first I argue that her adaptation of this phrase distorts the argument it advances in the chapter cited as its point of origin. In the second I establish that her appeals to Foucault mistake analysis for commendation, thus distorting his method of argumentation. It turns out that for both Haraway and Foucault contact with one’s own mortality serves to counter human domination, but while Haraway explores this point straightforwardly, for Foucault the insight is present in an inchoate form. Finally, then, I look to cultivate this connection in defense of encounter.

### I. Becoming Killable

Operating in the realm of policy, advocating strict policing of borders that separate humanity from the inhumane, Collard leans heavily on the phrase “making killable.”<sup>3</sup> Contrary to the manner in which she employs it, however, this category has been crafted to malign a disposition deemed categorically condemnable:

I think what my people and I need to let go of if we are to learn to stop exterminism and genocide, through either direct participation or indirect benefit and acquiescence, is the command ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ The problem is not figuring out to whom such a command applies so that ‘other’ killing can go on as usual and reach unprecedented historical proportions. The problem is to learn to live responsibly within the multiplicitous necessity and labor of killing, so as to be in the open, in quest of the capacity to respond in relentless historical, nonteleological, multispecies contingency. Perhaps the commandment should read, ‘Thou shalt not make killable.’ (Haraway 2008, 80)

Donna Haraway displaces “making killable” in order to replace it with a notion of “responsible” killing. While the former suggests anesthetization and systematic slaughter, the latter paints a picture of dominion-sans-domination.<sup>4</sup>

Yet central to Collard’s argument is the refrain that cougars are “made kill- able” when they breach borders separating πόλις from φύσις, threatening the biosecurity of the political body.<sup>5</sup> One formulation expresses this point well: “Cougars are ‘made killable’ . . . when they lurk stealthily in the shadowy borderlands between wild and domestic spaces and throw the split between these two worlds into question, and when they demonstrate not only the fragility and porosity of boundaries but also the vulnerability of human life” (Collard 2012, 31-32). Shifting our gaze from biopolity

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<sup>2</sup> Summarizing her position, “questioning” becomes outright preclusion: “My analyses suggest that the biothreat cougars and humans pose to each other precludes the formation of ethics through encounter” (Collard 2012, 23).

<sup>3</sup> Collard 2012, 24, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 38.

<sup>4</sup> In doing so she charts a course between the scientist and the activist. Envisioning an experimental science marked by care and shared pain, Haraway refuses to reject wholesale the possibilities of harm or even death for laboratory animals. She reiterates, “It is not killing that gets us into exterminism, but making beings killable” (2008, 80). While “making killable” serves as a gateway to exterminism, “responsible” killing promotes interspecies flourishing.

<sup>5</sup> Collard cites the same page I have cited in the preceding whenever she invokes this phrase: Haraway 2008, 80.

to human psychology, or from biopolitical masses to the sovereign individual, we find *fear* reinforcing walls constructed to eliminate unwelcome encounters.<sup>6</sup>

In shadowlands between πόλις and φύσις “shadow cats” and other crepuscular predators are transfigured, becoming specters of imminent death. Where two worlds collapse into a domain of common origin, encounters force us to face a fact we have gone to great lengths to ignore, deny, or refute: *the human animal is mortal*.<sup>7</sup> Anesthetization, lack of contact, facilitates slaughter.<sup>8</sup>

For this reason Haraway adjoins an equally vital imperative to her entreaties to kill responsibly: “I do not think we can nurture living until we get better at facing killing. But also to get better at dying instead of killing” (Haraway 2008, 81).<sup>9</sup> *Becoming killable* develops from rudimentary responsiveness and cultivates responsibility, an ability to respond to nonhuman individuals on the basis of shared sensitivity. Facing the threat of one’s own mortality compels the sovereign human to think twice before exercising a wrested right to kill.

## II. Biological Dangers

Collard’s argument rests even more fundamentally upon her appeals to Foucauldian biopolitical analysis, and just as her adaptation of Haraway’s phraseology overlooks its potency in criticizing views that lend to the propagation of interspecies exterminism—views invited by Collard’s contention concerning cougar intruders—so her appeal to Foucault’s *History of Sexuality* glosses over his point in juxtaposing sovereign power and biopower at this stage in this work.<sup>10</sup>

The final section of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* begins by shelving larger concerns in order to delineate categories of power central to Foucauldian thought, as these in turn prepare

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<sup>6</sup> She admits as much when she writes, “Exploring cougar—human interaction through the lens of biosecurity, thus, helps to explain why humans attempt to control cougars: largely because of their powerful position in the human mind as human-eating predators” (Collard 2012, 31).

<sup>7</sup> Foucault’s *heterotopia* may harbor unique insights into this domain, the “outside”—χώρα—as a place marked by the threat of death. In “Different Spaces,” for instance, he speaks briefly of “the curious heterotopia of the cemetery,” writing, “In any case, it was in the nineteenth century that each person began to have the right to his little box or his little personal decomposition; but, further, it was only then that people began putting cemeteries at the edge of cities. In correlation with this individualization of death and the bourgeois appropriation of the cemetery, there emerged an obsession with death as a ‘disease’” (1998, 181).

<sup>8</sup> “Contact” here cannot be merely physical, as the slaughterhouse worker counter-exemplifies. I employ the term in a more radical sense: “To be tactile is to be exposed to otherness across gaps, to navigate and negotiate sensitively between other embodied beings. From the beginning, contact always involves an element of *tact*” (Kearney 2015, 103).

<sup>9</sup> “I suggest that what follows from the feminist insight that embraced historically situated, mindful bodies as the sight not just of first (maternal) birth but also of full life and all its projects, failed and achieved, is that human beings must learn to kill responsibly. And to be killed responsibly, yearning for the capacity to respond and to recognize response, always with reasons but recognizing that there will never be sufficient reason” (Haraway 2008, 81).

<sup>10</sup> Again, her position rests on the following verification: “In the case of cougars, as I will argue, the biological threat they pose to humans and their property (in the form of domestic animals) renders them ‘killable’ in the same manner that Foucault claims killing under biopower is condoned if the entity killed is perceived as a ‘biological danger’” (2012, 24). It remains unclear as to whether she means to imply that Foucault himself condones this type of killing, or whether she means to say that this point simply *is* condoned, by society, for example. In either case Collard cites this passage in support of her own claim that “killing under biopower” is justified in response to threats posed to the human population, or more often to their animal “property.” Attention to context undermines the force of her appeal.

the reader for the climax of the book. Here the figure of the sovereign who ruled in earlier epistemes contrasts directly with the population concerns that dominate the modern episteme.<sup>11</sup> When the larger population supplants the sovereign, the sovereign's right to "*take* life or *let* live" is succeeded by a more clandestine "power to *foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death" (Foucault 1990, 138).<sup>12</sup> The contrast is between sovereign power and biopower, where the latter seeks to protect and cultivate "life" at all costs, over and against those deviants who threaten the health of the race.

Whereas the sovereign rules with the sword, modern biopower controls the life of the population by producing and employing "continuous regulatory and corrective mechanisms" (Foucault 1990, 144).<sup>13</sup> And as the pre-modern preoccupation with *blood*—relating to both shedding of blood in defense of the sovereign, and to purity of bloodline—gives way to the modern fixation on *sexuality*, "dreams of the perfecting of the race" inspire deathly aspirations toward a "eugenic ordering of society" (148, 149). Distracted by specious longings for liberation from powers of sexual repression, the body becomes increasingly subject to aims of state racism.

To illustrate further the disparity between the sovereign's overt right to kill and modern biopolitical techniques, which covertly "disallow [life] to the point of death," Foucault cites the example of the death penalty. Capital punishment suddenly strikes the subject as abhorrent under conditions introduced in the modern episteme, so modern biopower circumvents aversion and retains the sovereign right to kill by shifting attention from crime to criminal: "Hence capital punishment could not be maintained except by invoking less the enormity of the crime itself than the monstrosity of the criminal, his incorrigibility, and the safeguard of society. One had the right to kill those who represented a kind of biological danger to others" (Foucault 1990, 138).

Collard quotes this final line in support of her proposal. Yet when set against the relevant backdrop it becomes clear that genealogical analysis serves to expose conditions informing the very

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<sup>11</sup> This contrast between earlier epistemes and the modern episteme is merely heuristic. In every episteme sovereign power, disciplinary power, and biopower are exercised with varying intensity and in various, entwining relations. Collard takes recourse to *disciplinary power* in calling for the punishment of those nonhuman predators who trespass in the humane domain, and to *sovereign power* in calling for the deaths of those trespassers who have killed human "property."

<sup>12</sup> The evolution of modern biopower is binal, unfurling via the mechanisms of "anatomy-politics," in which power is exercised over the human body, and of "biopolitics," in which power is exercised over the social body (Foucault 1990, 139). While biopolitics operates on the population by means of "an entire series of interventions and *regulatory controls*," a third form of power central to Foucauldian thought, here labeled "anatomy-politics," operates directly upon the individual human body in order to extract power from it. This latter form is commensurate with the *disciplinary power* interrogated at length in *Discipline and Punish*.

<sup>13</sup> Juridico-discursive *law* is transformed into less perceptible *norms* which serve to regulate and correct both human body and social body. The shift is flagged by the contrast between spectacular public punishment and the subsequent "humanization" of punishment displayed at the beginning of *Discipline and Punish* (and in various juxtapositions throughout), for example. "Among so many changes, I shall consider one: the disappearance of torture as a public spectacle" (Foucault 1995, 7). And for Foucault this is far from an incontrovertible advance toward humanitarian peace. As Richard Twine argues, "It is a mistake to read Foucault as arguing that a shift to biopower is somehow an end to violence. Indeed he is specifically interested in considering how the political power to kill is sustained under conditions of biopolitics" (Twine 2010, 85; quoted in Taylor 2013, 543).

production of figures like “the criminal” and “the monster,” constructed to justify the covert killing of those whose continued existence presents a threat to the health of the race.<sup>14</sup> Collard’s proposal concerning “biological dangers,” those nonhumans who threaten human security, is no exception to this discourse.

Seeking to uphold the sovereign right to kill in defense of the population, Collard fails to appreciate incongruities that set contemporary *biosecurity* discourse at odds with the analysis of modern biopower to which she appeals.<sup>15</sup> In doing so she contorts the latter to make it fit with the former, turning a blind eye to the critical impulse at the heart of Foucauldian genealogy. Taking into account the larger context of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, therefore, her proposal ends up defending that which she reproves Foucault for not acknowledging: state-sanctioned racism extended across species lines.<sup>16</sup> Foucault does not condone “killing under biopower” in

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<sup>14</sup> Or, in the antecedent genealogy of modern disciplinary power in *Discipline and Punish*, constructed to justify the subjugation and exploitation of those deemed “abnormal” and therefore harmful to the “health” of society. See, e.g., Foucault’s brilliant juxtaposition in that work of mechanisms implemented in response to the twin threats of *the leper* and *the plague*, situated at the front of the developing modern biopolitical techniques of coercion. These introduce the central section on “Panopticism,” but could also serve to introduce his larger body of work: “They are different projects, then, but not incompatible ones. We see them coming slowly together, and it is the peculiarity of the nineteenth century that it applied to the space of exclusion of which the leper was the symbolic inhabitant (beggars, vagabonds, madmen and the disorderly formed the real population) the technique of power proper to disciplinary partitioning. Treat ‘lepers’ as ‘plague victims’, project the subtle segmentations of discipline onto the confused space of internment, combine it with the methods of analytical distribution proper to power, individualize the excluded, but use procedures of individualization to mark exclusion— this is what was operated regularly by disciplinary power from the beginning of the nineteenth century in the psychiatric asylum [*History of Madness*], the penitentiary [*Discipline and Punish*], the reformatory [*Discipline and Punish, History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*], the approved school [*Discipline and Punish, History of Sexuality, Vol. 1, Herculine Barbin*], and, to some extent, the hospital [*Birth of the Clinic*]. Generally speaking, all the authorities exercising individual control function according to a double mode; that of binary division and branding (mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal); and that of coercive assignment, of differential distribution (who he is; where he must be; how he is to be characterized; how he is to be recognized; how a constant surveillance is to be exercised over him in an individual way, etc.). On the one hand, the lepers are treated as plague victims; the tactics of individualizing disciplines are imposed on the excluded; and, on the other hand, the universality of disciplinary controls makes it possible to brand the ‘leper’ and to bring into play against him the dualistic mechanisms of exclusion. The constant division between the normal and the abnormal, to which every individual is subjected, brings us back to our own time, by applying the binary branding and exile of the leper to quite different objects; the existence of a whole set of techniques and institutions for measuring, supervising and correcting the abnormal brings into play the disciplinary mechanisms to which the fear of the plague gave rise. All the mechanisms of power which, even today, are disposed around the abnormal individual, to brand him and to alter him, are composed of those two forms from which they distantly derive” (Foucault 1995, 199-200). Behind these cooperative forces, behind the subsequent “mechanisms of power which, even today, are disposed around the abnormal individual, to brand him and to alter him”—which extend even to the nonhuman—lies the threat with which our inquiry began. Informing the “political dream” of a “pure community,” which motivated the exclusion of the leper (contact with whom would lead directly to death), and behind the dream of a “disciplined society,” which motivated the separation and surveillance of the plague victim (contact with whom would also lead directly to death), lurks the all-too-human, all-too-*animal* fear of mortality. The possibility of resistance brings an ethical dimension into play.

<sup>15</sup> Her understanding of *biosecurity* is based in a body of recent literature on the subject (see her overview at Collard 2012, 29-32), and my objection is not directed toward the contemporary notion as developed therein but instead toward the laxity with which Collard attempts to homogenize this notion and Foucault’s biopolitical analysis.

<sup>16</sup> Speaking at one point of “the power central to biopower” which “reduces humans to a ‘bare life’ or animalizes the other,” Collard argues that this power “applies in the first instance to the animal itself,” or that biopower, typically understood to pertain only to the life of the human animal, must account for the fact that its calculations often extend into the realm of the nonhuman. She continues: “Foucault comes close to making this observation but falls short of extending his definition of racism...to species other than humans” (2012, 30). Chloë Taylor’s extractions from

response to “biopolitical dangers.”<sup>17</sup> By contrast, his task is to uncover epistemic changes that make the aforementioned and other such shifts possible, ultimately resulting in the production and perpetuation of those figures of deviance around which certain modern social sciences have been fabricated. Foucauldian genealogy is something of an exercise in advocacy, then, which exposes the arbitrary geneses of these identities, the power and knowledge relations combining to bring about their production, and the state racism their continued existence serves to enforce.

### III. Facing Cougar, Facing Death

The ethical question accentuated at the limits of genealogy is whether *we* want to condone and so further entrench the dominance of this discourse concerning nonhuman predators, and thus also submit to its governance, or whether we want to resist it.<sup>18</sup> The fact of the matter is that each of us is going to be dominated, so we ask ourselves: by whom, and in which capacities?<sup>19</sup> Approaching

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Twine’s comments on the biopower-sovereign power juxtaposition lend support to my criticism that Collard’s proposal further entrenches the same discourse of interspecies dominance that she simultaneously wishes for Foucault’s work to subvert. After noting Foucault’s suggestion that “biopolitical states shed even more blood than traditional sovereign states, since they can slaughter not merely in their own names but in the name of entire populations and life itself,” Taylor writes, “According to Twine, in the biopolitical state, ‘racist modes of representation intervene to legitimize killing’ ([Twine 2010] 85), whether the racialized other is identified as a threat to the population or as a being that it is legitimate to kill. As Twine also argues, Foucault’s extremely general use of the term ‘racism’ is ‘applicable to the naturalization of gender, class, race, and species hierarchy.’ (85)” (Taylor 2013, 542).

<sup>17</sup> The discussion of biopower occurring in *The History of Sexuality*, therefore, does not and cannot support Collard’s thesis. Even if we take Collard to mean to imply [when she appeals to Foucault’s reference to “biological dangers,” cf., e.g., footnote 10] that *society* condones such practices, arguing on the basis of communal acceptance that her thesis is thereby warranted, the point of Foucault’s analysis of biopower in the final section of *The History of Sexuality* has still gone unheeded. Again a phrase has been lifted from context in defense of her position, and again this context actually criticizes practices of domination akin to those which her view explicitly intends to sustain.

<sup>18</sup> “Let’s say very briefly that, through studying madness and psychiatry, crime and punishment, I have tried to show how we have indirectly constituted ourselves through the exclusion of some others... And now my present work deals with the question: How did we directly constitute our identity through certain ethical techniques of the self?” (Foucault 2000, 403-404). We have certainly constituted ourselves through the exclusion of certain nonhuman others, and more fundamentally by distancing ourselves from our own animality. Likewise we ask: how might we thenceforth (re)constitute our identities with this animality more directly in mind, and which ethical practices might help facilitate interspecies harmony—or at least help mitigate interspecies oppression?

<sup>19</sup> In his research for latter volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault rediscovers a foundational insight: for the Greeks, including Plato, *care of the self* (ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ) grounds the Delphic command to know oneself (γνῶθι σεαυτόν). “The precept of the ‘care of the self’ was, for the Greeks, one of the main principles of cities, one of the main rules for social and personal conduct and for the art of life. For us now, this notion is rather obscure and faded. When one is asked, ‘What is the most important moral principle in ancient philosophy?’ the immediate answer is not ‘Take care of oneself’ but the Delphic principle, *gnōthi seauton*” (Foucault 1997b, 226). The principal aim of an ethics of care for the self, therefore, is self-mastery. Foucault says as much in an interview occurring six months before his death, of which Paul Rabinow remarks, “Foucault provides an unusually unqualified formulation of his philosophical and ethical work” (Rabinow 1997, xxv). Here Foucault notes, for instance, that care for the self “also has a political model insofar as being free means not being a slave to oneself and one’s appetites, which means that with respect to oneself one establishes a certain relationship of domination, of mastery” (1997a, 286-287). Care for the self is primary in that it must be prioritized over care for others, and it is communal insofar as caring for oneself directly informs relations of mastery with respect to others. Transitioning from genealogy to ethics, we follow his lead: “Perhaps I’ve insisted too much on the technology of domination and power. I am more and more interested in the interaction between oneself and others, and in the technologies of individual domination, in the mode of action that an individual exercises upon himself by means of the technologies of the self” (1997b, 225).

his own death, Foucault shows increasing interest in relations between mastery of the self and coming to terms with one's own mortality as a practice of care for the self.<sup>20</sup>

Dwelling on relations between caring for oneself and caring for others, an interviewer presses Foucault: "But doesn't the human condition, in terms of its finitude, play a very important role here? You have talked about death: if you are not afraid of death, then you cannot abuse your power over others. It seems to me that this problem of finitude is very important: the fear of death, of finitude, of being hurt, is at the heart of the care of the self" (1997a, 289). Before maligning the idea that salvation occurs "beyond life," Foucault answers in the affirmative: "Of course." Whereas fearing death invites abuses of political power, self-mastery helps guard against it.

Learning to grapple tactfully with knowledge of one's own mortality counteracts a lust for the safe, the sanitary and biosecure. Foucault gestures in this direction when explaining relations between *care for oneself* and the command to *know oneself* in Ancient Greece.

But if you take proper care of yourself, that is, if you know ontologically what you are, if you know what you are capable of, if you know what it means for you to be a citizen of a city, to be the master of a household in an *oikos*, if you know what things you should and should not fear, if you know what you can reasonably hope for and, on the other hand, what things should not matter to you, if you know, finally, that you should not be afraid of death—if you know all this, you cannot abuse your power over others. (1997a, 288)<sup>21</sup>

Attending to modes of care and contemplation prevalent among the ancients generates suggestions for evaluating contemporary practices of the self, for undermining and rewriting prevailing discourses of domination. Along these lines, I maintain that when the human animal enters the domain of the predator she makes herself vulnerable with respect to her own mortality and refuses enslavement to the fear of death.

Beyond merely heightening composure, however, insight into the depths of human frailty can be gifted when the human animal humbles herself before an other whose vigor outstrips her own. Better to consult the wisdom of one whose credibility derives from firsthand experience: "The illusion of invulnerability is typical of the mind of the coloniser," Val Plumwood writes, "and as the experience of being prey is eliminated from the face of the earth, along with it goes something it has to teach about the power and resistance of nature and the delusions of human arrogance" (1995, 34). The disposition cultivated in response is one of humbled hostility toward

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<sup>20</sup> The care of the self materializes in Foucault's analyses of Greek and Roman ethical practices. Characteristically reliant upon powers of description, and so disinclined to defend a position claimed as his own, he shows intensive interest in Stoic practices. I cite two relevant notes. First, he records, "Pliny advises a friend to set aside a few moments a day, or several weeks or months, for a retreat into himself. This was an active leisure—to study, to read, to prepare for misfortune or death. It was a meditation and a preparation" (1997b, 232). Secondly, having cataloged practices of the care for the self exhibited in a letter from Marcus Aurelius to his young lover, Fronto, he writes, "The importance of the rural retreat in this letter is that nature helps put one in contact with oneself" (234). Combining these suggestions, we note that entering the domain of the predator puts one in contact with oneself in a most intimate manner, serving also as preparation for death.

<sup>21</sup> In other words, caring for oneself is "a way of limiting and controlling power." He goes on: "For if it is true that slavery is the great risk that Greek freedom resists, there is also another danger that initially appears to be the opposite of slavery: the abuse of power" (Foucault 1997a, 288).



anthropocentric or self-exalting patterns of thought undergirding colonialist, masculinist, and interspecies modes of oppression.<sup>22</sup>

Plumwood's escape from the jaws of death is downright anomalous, a trauma that ought not be wished upon anyone. Yet the wisdom gleaned thereby serves as both censure and direction for a species bent on refusing responsibility for its abuses. "The wisdom of the balanced rock does not, I think, instruct us to reintroduce the experience of being prey, but rather to try to become aware of the dimension of experience that we have lost, and to find other, hopefully humanitarian, ways to secure the knowledge of vulnerability that it represents" (1995, 34).<sup>23</sup> She concludes, "Let us hope that it does not take a similar near-death experience to instruct our culture in the wisdom of the rock."

### Conclusion

Collard advances her proposal in the realm of policy. On this basis alone she should not be expected to guard against unethical consequences left unaddressed by her view, tendencies toward human domination and anesthetized killing. Yet when she breaches borderlines between policy and environmental ethics (2012, 38), asserting, "My analyses suggest that the biothreat cougars and humans pose to each other *precludes* the formation of ethics through encounter" (23), she exposes her position to criticisms raised on an ethical plane.

*Becoming Killable* refers not to predatorial suicide but to a willingness to enter shadowlands where "domestic" and "wild" categorically collapse into a domain of common origin. To transgress boundaries separating humanity from the inhumane is to facilitate contact with *Biopolitical Dangers*, with fears motivating our tendencies to cast unwelcome modalities of being, those who threaten psychological security, from our horizons of encounter. *Facing Cougar, Facing Death*: to care for oneself in this way is to care for others in turn. And for the late Foucault this is the position of the philosopher: "He is the man who cares about the care of others."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> "In my work as a philosopher, I now tend to stress our failure to perceive human vulnerability, the delusions of our view of ourselves as rational masters of a malleable nature" (Plumwood 1995, 34).

<sup>23</sup> This "balanced rock" is the rock formation she encountered prior to her attack: "One especially striking rock formation on the skyline, a single large rock balanced precariously upon a much smaller one, held my gaze. As I looked, my mutter of unease turned to a shout of danger. The strange formation put me sharply in mind of two things: first, of the indigenous Gagadgu owners of Kakadu, whose advice and permission to come here I had not sought, and second, of the precariousness of my own life, of human lives" (1995, 30).

<sup>24</sup> Or, of course, the woman who cares about the care of others. Having been asked what role philosophy can play in the context of a politics informed by care for the self, Foucault responds, "Let's take Socrates for an example. He would greet people on the street or adolescents in the gymnasium with the question: are you caring for yourself? For he has been entrusted with this mission by a god and he will not abandon it even when threatened with death. He is the man who cares about the care of others; this is the particular position of the philosopher" (1997a, 287).

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[A note post-publication: this essay was published in an issue of *Environmental Philosophy* dedicated to the memory of my late professor Scott Cameron, edited by Brian Treanor. While the essay itself is, I regret, excessively critical of Prof. Collard's position, I hope it becomes clear at least by its conclusion that the zeal which characterizes my position stems from genuine care and concern for the animals in question—in this case, cougars. And a desire to call into question an all-too-human tendency to exalt oneself above the Other, especially with(out) respect to animals of other species. Of course, the question arises as to the status of the cougar as apex predator: if animal lives are intrinsically valuable, and the cougar's continued life threatens the lives of a much greater number of animals, do we need to invoke the utilitarian calculus and kill the cougar to save the greater number of lives? Perhaps we should we adopt a holist approach, valuing the species above the individual? My point in the essay, echoing James Hatley's suggestion, is to adapt something like a Levinasian ethical stance in the face of the Other [acknowledging, of course, that Levinas would eschew such an extension of ethics to nonhuman animals] in response to the existential threat that the cougar poses, specifically to human life. Rather than unequivocally exercising a "right" to kill in defense of the (human) population, what if we instead called our own sovereignty into question? For those who didn't have the chance to meet him, Scott Cameron's pacifism and feminism materialize in this essay—which is, of course, dedicated to his memory].