For the US to Live the Wolf Must Die: Extermination in the Southwest from 1880 to 1930

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"He said the wolf knew nothing of boundaries"
-The Border Trilogy, Cormac McCarthy

I am pretty sure, but not certain, that wolves don't like the desert. They would rather drink in the coolness of green things around them. Maybe live close to water; since they spend so much of their life running. I am pretty sure, but not certain, that wolves like to play. And for that you need soft ground--something for pups to pounce each other into, for old wolves to lie on. When I close my eyes and think of the wolf in the southwest I see lean bodies with bristly fur and comically long front legs capped off with giant paws. They are quiet until they aren't, and they love each other dearly--not a possessive human kind of love, but the kind that comes from truly living together; reliance. These mind's eye images are all that I have because, like almost anyone born after 1920, I have never seen a wolf in the wild.

The settler colonial project is predicated on death. This paper is an interrogation of the deaths of wolves in Arizona and New Mexico in the 1880's until the 1930's. The killing of individual wolves was a part of a system of wolf extermination first taken on by organized settlers and then professionalized through the United States federal Government. In this eradication campaign, the United States/Mexico border became an intentional site of surveillance of what I call the non-human other embodied by the Mexican Gray Wolf. Due to supposed depredations, the specific killing of livestock, the resident gray wolves were eradicated, and a wolf border patrol was created to keep Mexican Gray Wolves from entering the US to disrupt

settler economies. These processes of classification, lethal removal, surveillance, and restriction are deeply entangled with the creation of the United States/Mexico border as both a physically surveilled and defended region and the continued creation of the racialized human other, the excluded. To power, the racialized other can never be a part of the progressive aspects of settler colonialism's past or future because their un-humaness makes them unfit to be white, a pre-requisite for inclusion.[1]

In this paper I explore the ways in which the extermination of wolves in the United States southwest, specifically through the violence of othering, is analogous and intertwined with the creation of one of the largest monuments to settler colonialism: the United States/Mexico Border.[2] The archive of the wolf in the southwest, the wolf that was written into history, prefigured the corresponding racialized exclusion used in facilitating the imposition of a strict border between the United States and Mexico.[3] These processes were both separate and congruent in their aims and actions as the histories came together and ripped apart.

As we find ourselves in 2021, a year marked by a temporal spiral towards collapse, understanding the structures feeding the settler colonial leviathan is paramount. The history of the United States, and all nation states is a history of displacement, racialized violence and

[1] In *Dangerous Crossings* Claire Jean Kim says "Whites, seen as quintessentially human, have never been located in the borderlands – they transcend the body and nature, they are progressive, they move forward through history, they have civilization and a history. Animals and animal-like humans, on the other hand, are untranscendent, tethered to the body and nature, incapable of civilization and progress, and lacking history". Pg. 25

[2] I call it the US/Mexico border and not the US border with Mexico because of the long-standing role that Mexico as a nation state has played in the creation of the demarcation. The responsibility is shared.

[3] The archive of the wolf is not simply the history of the wolf, but the meticulous details noted throughout the time frame when the wolf in the southwest came under a western gaze; one that was driven towards managerial control and ultimately extermination. I will explain what the archive means in fuller detail later in the essay.

attempted subjugation of all peoples that refuse to enact or adopt whiteness. *The other*, whether it be the wolf in the southwest in 1890 or the migrant border crosser in 1997, is always treated as an enemy of whiteness and its corresponding systems of power. Understanding the ways in which that power has harnessed the idea of the *other*, both human and non-human, is a key component to moving towards an internal and external dismantling of those structures of power.

In this essay, I focus on the archive of the wolf from 1880 to 1930 in the US southwest, in Arizona and New Mexico. By interrogating and interpreting the fables and mythology used first by paid vigilante hunters and then by the professionalized hunters of the United States Biological Survey (USBS), I show how the wolf was written into history as the other. Key components of this othering required that the wolf take on foreign and evil tones within stories and documents readily circulated. By dissecting those documents and putting them in conversation with the contemporaneous United States/Mexico border, we can understand where the othering of the resident gray wolf became a fear mongering campaign against what biologists called the Mexican Gray Wolf. It is worth noting that throughout this discussion, the wolf is conspicuously silent, unable to speak for herself. We as memory carriers must construct her from the descriptions of her deaths, and in this way, we might know something of her fugitive life. She was not the first *other* created so that the settler colonial world could thrive, but she is an important emblem of how the domination of non-humans is intrinsic to the enduring nature of colonization.

Building the United States

The United States is a settler colonial state with several borders physically enforcing that process through structural othering of the non-citizen. The non-citizen is a being, land, human, or non-human entity that does not have access to its own political life through legal and cultural exclusion. Often, this othering has been based on a codification of culturally established and politically motivated rules and classifications regarding race. This process has played out in repetitive cycles of power and dislocation since European contact with what we came to call 'The Americas'.

The building of the United States nation state required the classification and removal or extermination of all things it deemed wild or untamed, whether that be people, land or the non-human. This is more than a process of removing people from their ancestral homelands, as it requires classification and thus, in regards to power, the devaluation of them as non-white people, and the fragmentation from what Audra Simpson refers to as "philosophical and governmental systems" that "predate the advent of the settler state."[4] In tandem with this process was a constant settling and resettling of "the West," at times a geographical location and others a less strict ideology of propriety and place. In the US Southwest in the 1880's and 1890's this settling required the classification and conquering of vast tracts of still wild, unmanaged, land into profitable and economically enticing colonized space. [5] One major hurdle to this process was

[4] "Borders are an ordering regime, both assembling and assembled through racial-capitalist accumulation and colonial relations" Harsha Walia says in *Border and Rule*; Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham ; London: Duke University Press, 2014), 19.

[5] In *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, Roxanne Dunbarr-Ortiz notes that the Indigenous lands were only "unmanaged" by white settler terms and that ''by the time of European Invasions, Indigenous peoples had occupied and shaped every part of the Americas, established extensive trade networks and roads, and were sustaining their populations by adapting to specific natural environments, but they also adapted nature to suit human ends". 27

the consistent depredation of livestock by large mammalian predators: namely wolves, mountain lions and coyotes.

The management process of these big predators was exemplified through the lethal removal of wolves from the southwestern states of Arizona and New Mexico, eventually dovetailing into a federal bureau of lethal removal and taxonomy called the United States Biological Survey. The USBS or "the bureau" as it was often called would eventually become the US Fish and Wildlife Service in 1940. In the 1880's and 1890's wolf removal was primarily a vigilante effort at times paid for by state sponsored bounties for wolf pelts or "scalps." The USBS gathered the working knowledge of the land and created a federally funded and mandated process for hunting, trapping and mass poisoning campaigns against the wolf in the southwest.[6]

These campaigns required the introduction of a wolf border patrol, as the bureau claimed that the intensity of depredations, a fact always in dispute, were the work of "marauding" Mexican Gray Wolves, wolves that would knowingly sneak across the border to attack livestock.[7] The claims that famous wolves, the ones that had outlasted the poison campaigns and horrific eradication procedures, were often exaggerated for the purpose of securing more funding to patrol the United States/Mexico border.

These processes, the tightening of immigration controls against "foreign dangers" and the publicly stated necessity of eradicating the wolf and maintaining a vigilant stance against its

[6] In future works I would like to focus on the complicated and particularly brutal history of poison campaigns against large mammalian predators. The short and devastating history of Compund1080, a rodenticide used to kill an immeasurable amount of wolves and coyotes is particularly interesting,
[7] Which they often identified separately from the resident simply, Gray Wolves.

reintroduction from Mexico, happened in tandem. They work to prove that the border is not a fixed object, but a porous concept constantly in flux. The correlation between wolf eradication and the othering of migrants that attempt to transgress the United States/Mexico border is not a continuation of the animalization of the migrant, but an understanding that the border is not only a physical demarcation of access to citizenship but an ethereal and enduring monument to the power that has the capacity to deny people and non-human beings' access to a political, or full, life.

The Archive of the Wolf in a Few Parts

Just like the wolves, the border is not a single entity. While the entrances and banishments that happen because of the border are flesh and blood, it is ultimately systems of power and relations between the human and non-human that define it. It is a project that Neel Ahuja calls the government of species, where "interspecies relations and the public hopes and fears they govern shape the living form and active lineaments of settler societies".[8] In other words, the interactions between species, both internal and external to the human body, become the ways settler states define themselves.

To the settlers of the West in the decades preceding the turn of the 20th century, large mammalian predators were a threat. They threatened the ability to expand into and maintain a

[8] Neel Ahuja, *Bioinsecurities: Disease Interventions, Empire, and the Government of Species*, ANIMA (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2016). X

strong-hold on the newly acquired land.[9] Stockmen, or those that owned and worked the ranches of the area attributed great loss of revenue and livestock to large predator species, although the actual impact they had on livestock numbers can be debated.[10] In his 1977 unpublished manuscript on the work of wolf extermination in Arizona and New Mexico, Dan Gish remarked that "the gray brujos of the Sierra Madre inflicted a guerilla warfare upon livestock raisers of the southeastern three-fourths of Arizona," noting the attitudes of the time.[11]

The United States/Mexico border is an intergenerational being, created through the interplay of innumerable forces.[12] The othering that happens because of and at the sites of borders in the corporeal world and the othering that happens in more intangible spaces are all by design.[13] The exclusion and excluded is specific and curated to feed the needs of settler

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[9] Another large historical moment is the never-ending dislocation of the Indigenous people of the now US southwest and northern Mexico. The interwoven realities of the creation of the border and the forced displacement of those who had lived on those lands for time immemorial cannot and should not be ignored, to do so would be a unmitigated perpetuation of the same settler colonial tragedy, but to blithely pass over these histories and presents would be similar. To flatten the worlds built upon worlds in the borderlands into a single narrative of either despair or resilience would be using the same colonial brush that the majority of researchers before me have wielded. Instead, I implore you to read the works of Indigenous people and scholars about what the border is and means to them and listen to their own histories to see how displacement and colonization have changed them and how they still maintain who they are through it. In specific I suggest reading the work of Nick Estes and Melanie Yazzie along with Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and Audra Simpson.

[10] Phillip S. Gipson, Warren B. Ballard, and Ronald M. Nowak, "Famous North American Wolves and the Credibility of Early Wildlife Literature," *Wildlife Society Bulletin*, Winter 1998.

[11] Dan Miles Gish, "An Historical Look at the Mexican Gray Wolf (Canis Lupus Baileyi) in Early Arizona Territory and Since Statehood" (Unpublished, 1977), 4.

[12] For this we have to turn back to Neel Ahuja's "government of species", and also recognize that the border is not a place. There is a border between Mexico and the United States, but that is not the only one. "The border" is exclusion, it is a framework of the people, non-humans, landscapes, laws and customs that make up exclusion. Each of those pieces of the framework change and grow from their interactions with the others, it is an organism that lives based on its internal and external interactions.

[13] This is also not a conversation about the people that have died crossing the expanse on both sides of the US/Mexico border. The archives of death and care, of tragedy and compassion could not be fully chronicled here. The position I am taking is that the archives I am exploring are an integral part of the violence in state-making strategies responsible for the deaths of people that are currently orchestrated by the US and Mexican Federal governments and then outsourced to the Sonoran desert. Those stories, those many ethnographies are compiled in the archive of books like *The Land of Open Graves* by Jason De Leon, *No One is Illegal* by Justin Akers Chacón and Mike Davis and have been chronicled by border transgressors themselves for decades. Their stories, their lives are integral to this conversation but I could not encompass or accurately describe them here in the space allowed.

colonialism. Fundamentally, it is a dynamic interchange between the interests of two states attempting to maintain internal order and external commerce, which has deadly and devastating consequences for the land, the non-humans and the humans in both countries.[14]

In the Report of the Chief of the Bureau of the Biological Survey for the year of 1907, Bureau head Hart Merriam wrote; "[f]ollowing the adoption of the methods recommended, especially that of destroying the pups in the breeding dens, so many wolves have been killed that the saving of stock this year amounts to least a million dollars, and it is believed that persistent efforts will result in a permanent reduction of the numbers of these destructive animals, if not their practical extermination in the cattle country."[15] The act of destroying the pups in their dens was known simply as denning and was a common method used at the time to find unprotected newborn wolves, laboriously dig them out of the earth and beat them death. These were a part of the practice implemented by the Bureau of Biological Survey, which had a long and illustrious name in the world of predator eradication until it became known as the US Fish and Wildlife Service in 1940.

In its inception, the Biological Survey had several quick changes, and they all revolved around the understanding that nature (or the wild) especially in the West, had to be catalogued and studied for its possible commercial uses. The first iteration was the 1885 3-person unit of the USDA to compile information on bird migration and their relationship to plants and insects. The next year the agency became a division within the USDA and its budget doubled. The agency's

[14]For this archive I suggest you read in its entirety Kelly Lytle Hernandez's book , *Migra!: A History of the U.S. Border Patrol.*
[15] United States, "Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Biological Survey.," *Annual Reports of Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Biological Survey*, Report of the chief of the Bureau of Biological Survey (1929), 1929, 12 v.

focus on migratory birds and their activities "in relation to agriculture, horticulture and forestry" was extended to include mammals.[16] In 1896 it became the Division of Biological Survey and as described in 1897 it was "…a study of the geographic distribution of animals and plants with a view to determining the boundaries of the natural life zones and their subdivisions and is a study of the food habits of birds and mammals—for the purpose of ascertaining the economic relations of our native species."[17]

Reading the accounts of wolves in the timeframe I chose has been harrowing and hypnotic. I've attempted to reconstruct their bodies in my mind through the taxonomic descriptions written nearly 100 years ago. "The feet are large and the pads broad," their tails are long and not too bushy, and they have "some kind of mane" made of long coarse hairs. I think about their black throats and the "decidedly rusty tinge" in the fur around their muzzle. And I get lost in the two-dimensional shapes of this naturalist sketch, forever freezing this image of the wolf like it was behind glass. There is nothing of movement in these descriptions. Nothing of what I would call "the wild," where beings interact without the explicit purpose of rational commerce. As these men cataloguing the frontier write the wolves into history, they captured a part of them down and stole the wild from them, as they stole them from the wild.[18]

Before the USBS became a formalized agency in 1905, the eradication of wolves was organized directly by ranchers and landholders and carried out by a select group of

[16] Alfred L. Gardner, William E. Tydeman, and David J. Schmidley, *United States Biological Survey: A Compendium of Its History, Personalities, Impacts, and Conflicts*, 2016, https://repository.si.edu/handle/10088/29758. 1
[17] Gardner, Tydeman, and Schmidley. 1
[18] Descriptions taken from the Emory documents of the original boundary mission description of wolves

"outdoorsman."[19] By the beginning of the 20th century the passage of land holdings from Mexican or Indigenous communities to Anglo-Americans or white settlers was nearly complete.[20] Kelly Lytle Hernández describes this land acquisition as "the final element of conquest in the new American West."[21] The landholdings were huge, averaging tens of thousands of acres and generally controlled by land barons. In a late 1880's account of the region, famed trapper and outdoorsman Earnest Seton described the region of northern New Mexico as "a land of rich pastures and teeming flocks and herd, a land of rolling mesas and precious running waters."[22]

It was in front of this backdrop that the Gray Wolf would begin to interact with settlers and their ensuing use of the land in the mid 1800's. Much of our initial information about the numbers of wolves and their actions come from the naturalists who accompanied various boundary mapping expeditions before the border was marked.[23] The interconnectedness of settlement strategies tied to the mapping and cataloguing of the natural world was not happenstance. Some of the first descriptions of what we would later understand as the Gray Wolf in the southwest were written by Dr. Kennerly into the *Report on the United States and Mexican Boundary Survey* presented to Congress in 1856 following the Gadsden Purchase. Dr. Kennerly was the naturalist on the boundary expedition.[24] The same people who surveyed the border were

[19] With both the 1873 Timber Culture Act and the 1877 Desert land act among many other homesteading acts, the removal of Indigenous people and those that until the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 had been Mexican citizens, continued the work of the doctrine of discovery.
[20]Kelly Lytle Hernández, *Migra!: A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley, CA:UCPress 2010), 22
[21] Hernandez, *Migra!*, 22.
[22] Ernest Thompson Seton, *Wild Animals I Have Known: And 200 Drawings* (Scribner's, 1898). Pg 17; Those precious running waters were most likely made possible by the Newlands Reclamation Act of 1902.
[23] David E. Brown and Dan Miles Gish, eds., *The Wolf in the Southwest: The Making of an Endangered Species* (Tucson, Ariz: University of Arizona Press, 1983).15
[24] Brown and Gish.16

the ones who surveyed the wolves. In both accounts Kennerly describes the wolves he encountered as hidden, or unknown. While he writes a descriptive picture of the wolf, known as *Canis Occidentalis* of the *Mexicanus* variety or simply the Lobo Wolf, he admits that he knows little about their distinctions from other wolves or their habits.[25] Their howls are described as both "melancholy" and "dismal."[26] In all, the effect of an unknown, semi dangerous wraith that is always out of sight and possesses a penchant for predation is written into these first accounts. In much of the accounts of the early wolves before the 1950s the three subspecies are spoken about interchangeably, with the moniker "Mexican" often implying a wolf that has come up from Mexico to replace a native or resident wolf in Arizona or New Mexico. Taxonomically, the distinction is based on the home ranges of the three major subspecies but often these naturalists used no distinguishing markers or notes to discern which wolf they were speaking about.[27] It is important to understand the intentions of these surveys and descriptions, as they are primarily written with the intent of commerce in mind. The survey document accompanying the Gadsden purchase is much like other government reports written throughout the turn of the 20th Century; they tend to set the stage for a change that will benefit one of two things, a stockmen or stockmen's holdings or sport and game hunting in a given area.[28]

[25] William H. Emory, "Report on the United States and Mexican Boundary Survey," 1856, https://docs.newsbank.com/s/Digital/sset2doc/SERIAL/1070819E569F0BD0/0D2A02882BC90595.
[26] William H. Emory, 15.16.
[27] Gish, "An Historical Look at the Mexican Gray Wolf (Canis Lupus Baileyi) in Early Arizona Territory and Since Statehood." Preface ix
[28] In 1905, the year of the USBS founding as a Bureau, the responsibilities could be summed as classification and reporting on plants and animals and the ability to grow crops in certain regions; the economic impacts of both stationary and migratory birds on agriculture; economic impact of animals on agriculture, and game preservation along with regulation of the importation of foreign birds and animals (from the United States, "Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Biological Survey." Pg 60)

The descriptions of the wolves themselves become more numerous as the necessity to articulate the damage they are doing to livestock herds becomes more important. In his book *Wolves in the Southwest*, Dave Brown writes, "by the late 1880s the region was relatively settled, and cattle were more abundant and widespread. Wolves were conspicuous if not abundant, and their conflict with ranchers was acute."[29] These conflicts that were beginning to be chronicled by early naturalists were headed into a terrain of management that would come to exemplify the region of what became Arizona and New Mexico. What followed were incomplete pictures of the lives of wolves to both humanize them for the adventuristic consumption of besting a worthy foe and to bring their bestial elements as close to the surface as possible in an effort to garner support for their eradication.[30] The US southwest was a battleground between the now "empty" but still wild lands and the ranchmen attempting to graze their herds through the government controlled property.[31] The methods of control would begin to take shape as the surveillance, management and extermination of the wolves began in earnest.

The archive of wolves in Arizona and New Mexico in this 50-year period is not the story of wolves, or the stories of wolves or the stories from wolves. The archive was created with intention and does not hold the contradiction or chaos that beings allowed a full life contain. It was created the Biological Survey and naturalist writers of the day employed to sway the opinions of the public, and garner support for wolf extermination.[32]

[29] Brown and Gish, *The Wolf in the Southwest*. Pg 19
[30] Robert M. Anderson, "Killing for the Common Good? The (Bio)Politics of Wolf Management in Washington State," *Elementa: Science of the Anthropocene* 9, no. 1 (June 24, 2021): 00179, Pg 4 https://doi.org/10.1525/elementa.2020.00179.
[31] Terra Nullius was not real
[32] Phillip S. Gipson, Warren B. Ballard, and Ronald M. Nowak, "Famous North American Wolves and the Credibility of Early Wildlife Literature."Pg 812

Non-citizens and the Border

From the onset, wolves, especially those that transgressed the United States/Mexico border would be non-citizens, without the capacity or ability to access a political life in the US. They could be granted individual rights; in the ways the wolf became individualized through the lens of "famous wolves" battling it out with ranch-hands and trappers. They could be individually sentenced to death through their supposed actions, but they could not be given their own sovereignty.[33] In this role, they could be killed without consequence and their stories could be told for them without concern to truth or fact. This relationship, the "big bad wolf" metaphor, was necessary to gain the funds and materials needed to eradicate the wolf and turn this border region into a profitable expanse. The wolf had to die, not just in the desert hinterlands but in the minds of the US farmer and public. Trappers and hunters would strap the bodies of large predators to their cars as a symbol of status.[34]

Each wolf death and subsequent windfall for the cattle industry was a building block for the idea that a strong USA was predicated on a strong and secure southern border. If the federal government could not protect the sheep ranging across the southwest from marauding attacks across the border nor catch the perpetrators before they slunk back to their Mexican hideouts, then the government could not be trusted to manage and protect its internal population. Killing some 600 wolves that spread themselves out in Arizona and New Mexico was a world building

[33] Judith Grant and Vincent Jungkunz, *Political Theory and the Animal/Human Relationship*, SUNY Series in New Political Science (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016).
[34] Gardner, Tydeman, and Schmidley, *United States Biological Survey*.

exercise for the federal US government. The graphic displays of wolf death were done not only with personal reputation in mind but were reproduced as a state building activity.[35]

Fables of wolves' ability to slaughter livestock in the hundreds each night and for the "joy" of it abounded in the late 1880's and early 1900's. The archive created the wolf as the enemy, as the thing that must be destroyed to save the United States. It took an interplay of various actants; humans, wolves, cattle, the land itself and re-wrote the history as binary, a double-sided exchange.[36] This was an intentional misdirection, as most knew that the ranch hands and the hunters of the day embellished and fabricated stories into the public imaginary.[37] The reason they were hunted well into the 20th century, after the resident populations had been decimated and their offspring beaten into the dirt, was that they dared to defy and thus negate the border. This defiance exposed a flaw in the state building apparatus; the difficulty in managing and containing the wild. This fear of the *wild other* transgressed from the border lands into carefully crafted narratives of the dangerous outsider. This hole in the armor of the US project left open the concern that just anyone could come across the border.[38] With them could come disease and traitors, un-American ideologies and un-clean men.[39] The wolves were showing how porous the exclusionary laws of the day were. They went beyond ignoring the authority of the line, and the countries that created that line—they refused to acknowledge that the border

[35] Robert M Anderson, "Killing for the Common Good?", Pg 7
[36] An actant is a part of the idea of the hybrid colectif. More than just the normal agents are brought into the understanding of having real and affective consequence on the outcome of an encounter.
[37] Phillip S. Gipson, Warren B. Ballard, and Ronald M. Nowak, "Famous North American Wolves and the Credibility of Early Wildlife Literature."
[38] Which had been true for generations, if the border itself was a new idea, the idea of border controls or check points was even newer.
[39] At a certain point, wolves (and other large mammals) began to be held responsible for rabies outbreaks in the border region. Their extermination became tied to disease control throughout the entire US where they still ranged.

existed, that the land was demarcated at all. For them, there was no border. Their very presence inside the US, full of predations or not, was a threat.

The counter-archive of the wolves that refused is vast and unknown to us. It was an active archive, not a passive erasure of lives and life but an active re-telling to frighten. The public and Congress had to be scared and convinced to support wolf extermination. The fables created around Lobo and Blanca or the many others, like Old Aguila, positioning them as cunning tricksters able to kill hundreds of animals in a night for the sheer sport of it was an intervention into the public imaginary.[40] These were the names given to the wolves by their enemies, but we have no idea what these wolves called each other, we don't know their real names. "We cannot simply assume that real wolves, the wolves in nature, make no meanings for themselves."[41] We know the ones written into reports, into the historical narrative to justify their killing. The wolf was created in the image of the monster, of the terror and then it was destroyed.[42]

Their exclusion, and strategic inclusion is the most telling part. There is an intimate understanding of the dangers of the wolves, of just how much damage to the US economy they can do. And there is a detailed intimacy that follows the descriptions of how to kill them; the field guides and pamphlets distributed with tips on poisoning, where to hide the poison and how to find the bodies as they scatter. There is an uncomfortable familiarity with the wolf that brings someone to their den, and then drags the pups out and clubs them to death. The closeness we can

[40] Seton, *Wild Animals I Have Known*.
[41] Grant and Jungkunz, *Political Theory and the Animal/Human Relationship*. Pg 115
[42] Claire Jean Kim, "Slaying the Beast: Reflections on Race, Culture and Species," n.d.

examine between wolf and human is so clearly articulated in the way death is often dealt by hand, in the way pelts are stripped as trophies and bounties. The Archive of wolves in Arizona and New Mexico is one of death. Dead wolves, and about to be dead wolves. Only the wolves that eventually get taken are catalogued, there is no archive of the wolves that got away. The fugitives are missing.

Their evasion of capture reached mythic proportions. Their exploits were exaggerated along with their ferocity. They lived and mated and denned throughout the Southwest, covering thousands of miles and traversing mainly semi wooded corridors. They ran at night and formed packs with the capacity to outrun large ungulates. They plotted and schemed and took down the sheep and the cows left to fend on their own in the open grasslands. They drank from the river that became the boundary to define the country that did not want them. They evaded traps and died slow deaths from the many poisons employed against them. They created units, families, and had them broken apart. Their fugitive lives became the legends that helped cement their demise, that pushed them into the hands of trappers and ranchers, the men who broke their bones and severed their toes before they skinned them.

"It took only eight years for a few biological survey hunters, working under a well-planned program, to completely eliminate resident wolf populations in Arizona," the annual report for the Arizona District of Predator and Rodent Control said in its synopsis of the July 1 1951 to June 30 1952 year.[43] A well-managed and centralized assemblage of hunters, trappers, poison, federal funds, state funds and stockmen lobbyists had been able to root out the scourge of

[43] Gish, "An Historical Look at the Mexican Gray Wolf (Canis Lupus Baileyi) in Early Arizona Territory and Since Statehood."

livestock owners. But their work was not done, as it was not just the resident wolves that posed a great threat, but those wolves that both refused to abide by the customs of the United States, that which deeply valued the livestock herds as not prey animals, but who lacked citizenship to the nation. “These predators continued to enter the state from Mexico, and Service hunters have taken an average of five wolves per year since 1926” the report said. By the 50’s the wolves were no longer a domestic threat, but it has been well known since the inception of the Bureau in 1905 that wolves crossing the border from Mexico would mean eradication of the wolf was impossible until the border was fully fortified.[44]

Border historian Jason De Leon talks about the ways in which “border zones become *spaces of exception*” where an “individual’s rights and protections under law can be stripped away upon entrance.”[45] This idea can be applied to the wolf as the non-citizen border crosser. It moves into the US and out again without even knowing it has crossed a line since the wolf refuses to acknowledge the demarcation. But as it moved across the well-worn wolf tracts, it was immediately hunted and surveilled. The possibility that it might depredate US livestock is enough to get it on the wanted list, and to spur what naturalists in the early 1900’s called wolf border patrols.

De Leon refers to *bare life*, as the life that is not allowed to access citizenship and politics. It is often reserved for the human animal-and is an apt description of the ways in which state power treats the human border transgressor. The thousands of deaths in the desert every

[44] Gish. 118
[45] Jason De Leon, *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail.*, 1st ed., California Series in Public Anthropology Ser (Oakland, Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2015), 27.

year on both sides of the border is a strategic deployment of an anti-immigrant politic based on the process of Prevention Through Deterrence. But what if the application of *bare life* to those that cross the desert and move across a line knowingly, was shaped by the application of a policy on non-human communities that transgressed blindly? Here I run the risk of further "animalizing" the border crosser, which is what white supremacist methods have done since before the creation of the border.[46] My intention is not to demonstrate similarities between wolves and the communities of people that are attempting dangerous desert crossings. The goal is to connect these two groups through their shared relation of being under the assault of state power; and that state power is gathering momentum through their current and historical subjugation.

"These stories are true" the note to the reader said. And myself as the reader wondered, but aren't all stories true? The account of Lobo and Blanca, written by the man who killed them, Earnest Seton, aren't untrue even if incorrect, they just aren't the whole truth. Lobo, a supposedly giant wolf, remarked to be twice the size that we understand Mexican Wolves of the time to be, he was written as an adept but wasteful hunter. A "terror among the cattle." His appointed mate, "who the Mexicans called Blanca", was a wiley all white female wolf forever by Lobo's side.[47] This pair became famous wolves through Seton and others stories. And they appeared many times in my readings. They were exemplary fables after which all other notions of wolves were modeled and conceptualized.

[46] The border is not a naturally occurring phenomenon, and has been bought and contested since the mid 1800's. It was the 1848 Guadalupe-Hidalgo treaty that ended the two years long Mexican-American War and saw Mexico lose nearly 50% of its northern lands. The treaty established the first universally understood demarcation between the 2 nation states, but was still disputed until the Gadsden Purchase of 1854

[47] Seton, *Wild Animals I Have Known*. Pg. 19; The point here about Lobo failing to thrive because of the love he has for Blanca that eventually kills him is not lost on me. Whether Disney character or Shakespeare trope, the downfall of men is always the same.

I read into how Lobo and Blanca became mythologized into larger discourse about our intersections with the wild. Brief internet searches brought up fanart, a Walt Disney movie about them, and a semi contemporary BBC documentary. But all of these stories are based on the work of Earnest Seton, a trapper and hunter in the late 1880's and 90's. From his own accounts, Lobo is the king, the head of his band and a formidable foe. He is cast as the obvious enemy and foil to a cadre of failed trappers and eventually to Seton himself. Lobo's death is always foreshadowed though, there is no possibility of Lobo as the fugitive wolf that gets away. In Seton's archive he was dead before the story started. Seton eventually captures and kills Blanca and drags her body through the dirt to lure Lobo into the trap he has been avoiding for years. In the end, he traps Lobo, and according to Seton's account takes him home alive, acquiesced to his fate, where he dies in chains peacefully the next day.[48]

As I read a little deeper into the lives and deaths of Lobo and Blanca it became clearer that this story was one of many. Like any archive, the nature of the classification changes based on who is writing. Lobo and Blanca were named enemies for Seton, because he needed them to be beasts. The story is not nearly as good, nor as compelling unless Lobo and Blanca are as close to being human as they were allowed to get while still being the "other," worthy of names, but ultimately killable without consequence. What Seton mentions but does not fully articulate is that there has been a $1,000 bounty placed on Lobo's head. An astronomical sum for the day.

[48] Seton, *Wild Animals I Have Known*, 49.

In another telling, that of a different kind of naturalist, Lobo and Blanca have different names. She is Skull 3726, and he is Skull 1875; both housed in the National Museum of Canada. And it is through reading this story, that I came to know that Seton lied to me. Another truth was found in the unhealed bullet wound between Lobo's ears.[49] *Skull 1875 told another part of the tale that Lobo did not show. The idea that Lobo had died "lying there still in his position of calm repose" was another fabrication.*[50] *I won't ever know if Seton believed himself or spoke the idea into being with such ferocity that it became true for him. But throughout all the classification and mythologizing I wonder what sounds of comfort and familiarity Lobo and Blanca used for each other, what vocalizations gave their lives with each other shape. What really were their names?*

Policy and action along the southern border is able to animalize, or take the political life from the border transgressor because it has already situated that transgression as being "animal", as being cunning and wiley. To deny and ignore the demarcations of the boundaries of citizenship by transgressing them both outside the legally and socially acceptable realm is, in the eyes of the state, animal. This creation of a duality of difference between the citizen/non-citizen both in a judicial and juridical manner gave the United States, as both a state and population, the ability to kill those they find to be *the other*, the border crosser, the non-resident. "Indeed humans can denigrate other humans through animalization only because animalness, though constructed, is such a stable site of meaning for us, an enduring counterpoint to humanness, the baseline below which we cannot fall."[51] While the wolves in the southwest were being hunted

[49] Phillip S. Gipson, Warren B. Ballard, and Ronald M. Nowak, "Famous North American Wolves and the Credibility of Early Wildlife Literature." Pg 813
[50] Seton, *Wild Animals I Have Known*, 54.
[51] Kim, "Slaying the Beast: Reflections on Race, Culture and Species." Pg 12

into oblivion and chased back across a then unmarked boundary line, the laws and rules of race based human exclusion were becoming codified and ratified in the highest courts.

The passage of the National Origins Act in 1924 by Congress limited legal migration and created ethnically based entrance caps into the USA. This era helped the conversation about Mexican immigration became a matter of large debate.[52] Large growers in the Southwest had been petitioning to keep the United States/Mexico border open to laborers, not with an intention of assimilation but for the labor they could extract. Nativists in many sectors spoke to the inability of Mexican nationals (they meant all people living south of the United States/Mexico border who they relied on for farm labor) to be assimilated into white America. "Mexico was a nation of mongrels" congressmen argued during the 1924 hearings on National Origins Act.[53]

Agribusiness owners needed the labor coming in from Mexico, they had become reliant on it over the preceding decades. But attitudes about the nature of the US citizen had been changing for those same decades and had been codifying difference into law at a steady pace. "After the passage of the 1862 coolie labor law, Congress spent the next several decades deeply shaping the course of American history by placing a series of limits on immigration to the United States."[54] The delicate balance of requiring a work force with little to no rights, while assuaging the racist desires of growing US populist nativism was struck with the unfettered access that Mexican laborers continued to have with the US, but the extreme segregation with which they

[52] Nativist tendencies helped establish the idea of whiteness, by flattening the once subdivided European immigrant into a counter argument against the decidedly non-white Asian. By this demarcation, the line between Asian and white, the concept of whiteness expanded it's inclusivity to encompass formerly othered groups.
[53] Hernandez, *Migra!* 26
[54] Hernandez, *Migra!* 26

lived. Beyond segregation, vigilante and state sanctioned physical violence against Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the border states had long been a common occurrence. "Borderland repression was conducted equally by law officers and night-riding groups such as the Mounted Rifles, the White Owls and the Wolf Hunters."[55]

Management of the border had become a common mode for the US government in the Southwest, as policies governing the land and the use and movement of the wild had been decades in the making. Careful categorization, cataloguing and ever vigilant eyes on the border were the building blocks for governmental bodies such as the US Biological Survey. These bodies did not predate the times and places where the other in the US political imaginary became intimately related to the non-white person. The physical and legal exclusion and attempted extermination of non-white people is a fabric with which the US is sewn. The trajectory of careful classification through taxonomy, surveillance and eradication of threat and then vigilance in the borderlands on the US border of the Gray Wolf and Mexican Gray Wolf in order to solidify a profit margin was acutely similar to the methods employed against human populations along the United States/Mexico border.

In 1929 the USBS annual report boasted "the gray wolf is no longer a livestock menace in States west of the one-hundredth meridian, although patrol work must be continued on the southern border of Arizona and New Mexico to prevent ingress of individual wolves from Mexico."[56] Earlier in 1922 the report noted how important that constant vigilance and patrols

[55] Greg Grandin, *The End of the Myth: From the Frontier to the Border Wall in the Mind of America* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2019), 157.
[56] United States, "Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Biological Survey.," 656.

along the border were for securing the continued success of wolf eradication.[57] The wolf had been eradicated at home, and with it the internal wild conquered and made safe for settler enterprise. What still lay ahead and would be the continual push towards securing the ever-changing frontier that was the United States/Mexico border. In a perpetually growing and changing rhizomatic set of laws and structures, the entry of the other, the non-citizen, would be challenged over and over again.

Conclusion

Classification and exclusion are defining aspects of the border, both as a construct and a physical place. Nation states defined by their white settler origins and futures rely on borders to help both construct a physical container for the nation as well as an ideological one. These demarcations, inside/outside or citizen/noncitizen require differing kinds of violence to create. It requires the physical violence of expulsion and extermination of humans, non-humans and the land that has been deemed to be on the outside, as well as the inherit violence in devaluing life so that it cannot access the rights that a political life has. The subjugation of peoples, lands and the non-human are often through racialized means. This is the history and intention of the border.

In the US southwest at the turn of the 20th century large predators came under the surveillance of settlers attempting to turn the area into profitable grazing land. To the semi organized settlers, and then the professional federal government the wolves that would predate on their herds were trespassers. They were transgressors over both moral codes and legal/physical boundaries; they could not be given the rights of citizens. The wolf and the

[57] Gardner, Tydeman, and Schmidley, *United States Biological Survey*, 410.

communities of wolves were written into the archive as both lacking citizenship and political life as well as exterminated.

Originally the wolves taken from the wild with brutal violence were primarily "resident" from inside the US, but once those populations were decimated the attention turned towards those supposedly entering from Mexico. A wolf border patrol was formed to keep the incursions at bay and mass trapping and poisoning campaigns would follow every wolf sighting in the border lands until the Mexican Gray Wolf was decimated. These mass exterminations were primarily organized by the US Biological Survey, an arm of the USDA that eventually become US Fish and Wildlife Service. The archive of the time holds the stories of wolf death, in the thousands they were trapped, hunted and poisoned. The times with which the living wolf is allowed to be seen is when a fantastical or mythical "famous wolf" is needed as incentive to further fund the wolf border patrol and gain public sympathy for their slaughter.

This entanglement of the deaths of wolves into the framework of the border is indicative of the larger settler colonial project of the United States. The nation-state in creation and perpetuation requires the othering, the casting out, of the people and non-human beings that cannot be assimilated into its framework. The others become the metric that the citizen can use to value its worth and belonging; the citizen is the not-other as well as the other is the not-citizen. In this process of state making the ways in which the land and the non-human entities in it are erased from the official accounts of history. This interrogation was an effort to rip open that archive and allow the non-human wolves, othered without voice, to speak by highlighting their silence. In all the space where the wolf is not written, is where the story of the life of the wolf is.

In those silences is something important about the border itself, and its enduring legacy as a monument to settler colonialism.

Nation-states and their borders are not immutable, their foundations are based on an imposed and ever-changing framework of exclusion and strategic inclusion. The extermination of millions of lives, both human and non-human are a part of the process of creating and maintaining the US as a settler colonial state. At times those non-human voices have been hidden and their importance diminished. The is the graveyard of the wolf, and all the other beings and people who never reached the shores of inclusion. If the wolf had been allowed to speak in the last 140 years, we would know that.

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