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BREAKING THE SILENCE: METHODS OF WRITING ART HISTORY

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CHAPTER 2

WITH ONE EYE ON THE WILD

MICHAEL ANN HOLLY AND *THE WOLF OF GUBBIO*

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Phenomenological sentiments . . . can take us only so far—as far as the point in the story where the serpent languorously coiled around the tree of golden apples raises its bright head and reminds us of the dangers entailed in the suggestion of too easy a mediation between past and present. Perhaps there are other sinister creatures lurking in the garden.

–Michael Ann Holly

INTRODUCTION: EXCLAMATIONS

The art historian Michael Ann Holly has long been fascinated by those twentieth-century European figures who, at odds with the prevailing tendencies of their era, renovated our understanding of how works of art function in time. These individuals looked for something other than chronological narratives or descriptions of schools and styles to explain the artwork. Holly's first publication, *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History* (1984), focused on one of these figures, Erwin Panofsky, while *The Melancholy Art* (2013), published thirty years later, sketched the rich arena in which Panofsky and others labored and their ideas developed. For example, she discusses Panofsky's mentor, Aby Warburg, whose concept of *Nachleben*, or the afterlife of images, explains how artworks function in the cultural unconscious over time. Holly explores this idea while, at the same time, placing it within the context of the Warburg Institute, which both carried Warburg's unconventional ideas forward and transformed them (or diminished them, according to some critics, who cite Panofsky as the culprit), thereby creating an afterlife for Warburg's "afterlife concept." The history of art history, Holly suggests, is animated by such fraught relationships between art institutions and the scholars who built and transformed them.

Art history is energized by scholars and institutions, but also by the fact that the field of study is inherently unstable. In Holly's view, *art* and *history* are at odds: "art" is encountered by a viewer in the present, while "history" is in the past.

The artwork is a "temporal tangle" where traces of the past reside in, yet outlive, their world, thereby shedding the historical context that might unlock their meaning. Despite this absent context, viewers often use artworks to learn about the past, and as they do so they encounter outdated materials, mysterious forms, cryptic signs, and traces of practices that no longer exist. According to Holly, this makes art history an inherently "melancholy art," an impossible venture. She returns again and again to works from the past while examining the current theories through which art historians try to access the artwork's lost world, even if only partially. The pioneers of art history, she implicitly argues, were aware of the conundrum, and even anticipated contemporary explanations—such as notions of affect, subjectivity, and orientation—even if these were yet to be invented. Holly thereby reclaims these thinkers and reconstructs the stakes of their work in the present.

Holly's 2022 essay "Why Does That Wolf Have Red on His Lips?" adds a new twist to our understanding of art history's "tangle." In this essay, Holly stops partway through her account of viewing an early Renaissance painting in London to focus on one detail in the painting and one response to this detail: a dab of red paint that excited her six-year-old son. Holly takes this encounter seriously, so seriously in fact that she wanders into the painting, outside the painting, and partners with thinkers outside the history of art, most significantly animal studies theorists, such as Donna Haraway and Kari Weil. In the process, Holly introduces the history of art history to animal studies. The two fields collide, and the phenomenological encounter between boy and paint is the spark. A new configuration of Holly's twentieth-century pantheon of art historians takes shape. Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jacques Lacan are rethought, but poets and novelists are also ushered in, including Rainer Maria Rilke and J. M. Coetzee. What is the instigation for this intellectual foray? What is the result?

Below, I examine Holly's notion of the animal and explain how this pertains to "the wild"—an area of interest to climate activists and queer theorists alike, and that she uses to discuss what exists beyond the human realm, particularly in art. To return to the primal scene: Holly's son was excited by a dab of paint that, in the painting, represents blood on a wolf's lips. While this scene inspires Holly's interest in the wild, I believe *how* Holly approaches the wild, and how she integrates the results into her understanding of the painting, serves as a critical intervention into phenomenology. In particular, it is Holly's divided attention that brings unlike elements together, enabling an entangled response that enmeshes not only past and present but also academic fields—animal studies and art history—thereby allowing her to "see" wildness within the painting where she had not before. This insight is sparked by her divided loyalties. When considering *The Wolf of Gubbio* in London, she is torn between her son, who responds to the painting with wordless instinct, sympathizing with the wild wolf, and art history, which counsels objectivity. While

Holly suggests that "consciousness is consciousness of something," as phenomenology contends, in fact her approach suggests that consciousness may also be of something else at the same time. Indeed, her divided attention unfolds in time (splitting, shattering, congealing), thereby traversing a rich field for investigation. The wild, we might hypothesize, is best seen this way, with one eye looking elsewhere.

The painting in question, *The Wolf of Gubbio* (figs. 2.1, 2.2), is one of nearly sixty panels mounted within the double-sided San Sepolcro alterpiece by the early Renaissance painter known as Sassetta.[1] The essay begins with Holly's memory of viewing this painting at the National Gallery in London decades prior with her son (to whose memory the article is dedicated). In a dreamlike fashion, she fails to recall the exact date of the visit. However, she remembers the event that occurred there with crystalline clarity. While standing before the painting, her son, wordlessly exclaimed, pointing to the dab of red on the wolf's lips, unable to articulate the meaning of his discovery. This exclamation takes Holly's thoughts away from the painting itself and toward a meditation on animals and animality, the limits of human consciousness, and the humanities more broadly. She concludes by noting that, for her son, the representation of the wolf and the real wolf were elided. And, as we come to understand, it is in this conflation of object and representation that new areas of thought are brought to bear on the encounter. Her son's exclamation opened this area by refusing to separate the dab of paint from the wildness of the wolf.

Accordingly, the query midway through the essay—"Is there a difference between blood on a painted wolf's lips and that on a real wolf?"—and Holly's response—"only if the animal is standing there in front of you!"—are not to be taken at face value. Rather, they serve as a foil to her broader argument that an engaged viewer, like her son, complicates the distinction between real and actual, past and present. This is the ontological tangle the artwork invites the reader to enter. To soothe her son's anxious response to the painting, Holly explains the story of St. Francis, since, as she notes, "Renaissance art historians are ironically good iconographers: we are good at finding words." She describes how St. Francis, a "wandering saint" who "treated all the creations of nature as his brethren," tamed the wolf that terrorized the townspeople of Gubbio, in Umbria. He did so, Holly writes, "with his ready and kind greeting to 'Brother Wolf' issued under the sign of the Cross."[2] Thus, with a greeting and a handshake, St. Francis ushers the wolf into Christendom. After this comes a scene that serves as a resolution, but also a troubling sign of more to come:

> Eleven birds swirl sweetly overhead in the mottled blue sky. Peace reigns in the valley. And so they all lived happily ever after. Yet there's still the matter of that suggestive color on that wolf's lips. My child didn't want to be "shown" (in the sense of case closed); he wanted to continue to

Fig. 2.1. Sassetta (Italian, active by 1427; died 1450), *The Wolf of Gubbio*, c. 1437–44. Egg tempera on wood, 34 ¼ × 20 ⅝ in. (87 × 52.4 cm). National Gallery, London, bought with contributions from the Art Fund, Benjamin Guinness and Lord Bearsted, 1934

Fig. 2.2. Detail of fig. 2.1

> "see" through to something beyond. Clearly, he was enraptured, "caught" inside a material detail, its compelling effect hardly dependent on the charm of its iconography, the story behind it. What invisible worlds does this visual anecdote intimate?[3]

Holly's son is not soothed. What intrigues Holly, and the fulcrum around which her essay revolves, is his "excited experiential entanglement in this particular detail."[4] He was *not* pointing to the painting itself, an oddly static scene of the wolf shown pacified by St. Francis, nor to the gruesomely dismembered body parts shown scattered behind the wolf, including that of a child's arm. "'Why,'" her son asked, "'does that wolf have red on his lips?'"[5] In this detail, the painting acknowledges—and her son responds to—the wolf's wild nature, despite the animal's seeming acquiescence—its paw resting compliantly in the hand of St. Francis. And with this exclamation as a prompt, Holly challenges the humanist viewpoint implied by the painted panel and suggests instead that the wolf—the animal and the other—is an integral part of the phenomenological encounter occasioned by the painting.

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE WILD

Phenomenology is the study of phenomena, of things. Holly is investigating a particular sort of thing—an early Renaissance painting with a dab of red on a wolf's lips. This dab of red, her reading suggests, challenges the scene of which it is a part—a scene wherein St. Francis pacifies the wolf and makes a pact with the animal while the townspeople look on. The dab of red paint is like a kernel of animality, untamed and ready to spring into action, destabilizing the entire San Sepolcro alterpiece within which it is lodged. This will prove to be true. But how to explain? Holly writes that

> Sassetta's *Wolf of Gubbio* (the trigger that initiated a foray into animal studies) may docilely place his paw in the saint's hand (the master point of the fable), while the streak of red still reveals that he will always bear the traces of an "other." The blood on his lips is ample testimony to his being wild on the outside (forty-two teeth vs. thirty-two in humans!), as well as inside.[6]

As Edmund Husserl reminds us, phenomenology is the study of things *as they appear in consciousness*. All consciousness is consciousness of something, he famously asserts.[7] But how does something unconscious come to consciousness when humans generally overlook—or, with Freud, look away from—difficult sights? A phenomenologist therefore asks not just about the painting under consideration, but also about who is viewing the painting, in what way, and with what intention. In this

case, the exclamation is uttered by a child, trapped in a stuffy museum, perhaps looking for signs of life. A different understanding of this boy's encounter with the painting, Holly suggests, might resolve the significance of the red paint, seemingly blood dripping from the "pacified" wolf's mouth. Something is at stake for the history of art history in this quest. Holly explains that, "as long as we restrict ourselves as art historians to figuring out what came before the formation of a work . . . we foreclose its continuing presence."[8] What is at stake, therefore, is the continuing presence of the lost world that *The Wolf of Gubbio* once belonged to, a world that contains a shard of animality and that will cease to exist if not caught sight of in the present. While the viewer can't necessarily understand the richness of this lost world—the smell, feel, and texture of Sassetta's fifteenth-century Italy, for example, or the full significance of the wolf in religion, art, and everyday life at the time—the viewer can (and Holly cites Panofsky on this point) "re-create the creations."[9] In such instances the painting reveals something of itself. Holly's son catches sight of the wildness of the wolf. Thought to have attacked the villagers, the wolf carries the scent of cruelty and death. This cruelty goes beyond the painting frame, touching the boy, who responds in kind. "The wild," the queer theorist Jack Halberstam reminds us, bears a "potential for evil." It is "a mode of embodiment and knowing that is oriented ambivalently toward un-being." This orientation toward wildness poses a constant threat, and Halberstam, quoting Michel Foucault, cautions that "life is forever in danger of 'becoming wild once more.'"[10]

In the epigraph to this essay, Holly suggests that phenomenology does not adequately account for time, with its "too easy a mediation between past and present." Indeed, challenging encounters often scramble linear time, particularly when artworks are added into the mix, since the viewer engages with historical materials, practices, and signs. The serpent, this creature that represents our "fall," cautions us to mind our myths lest we forget that encounters in the present are ghosted by the past in multiple ways. This comes as a threat and a warning, and, Holly adds, mysteriously, "perhaps there are other sinister creatures lurking in the garden."

However, in her essay on *The Wolf of Gubbio*, written decades after *Past Looking*, Holly reconsiders her position on the creatures that lurk in the garden. Rather than issuing a threat and a warning, the wolf offers a new way to think of the wild, as well as the dangers and possibilities it augurs. The wolf may eat humans, but the wolf is not cruel. It is itself. Holly is challenged to "see" the painting through the wolf's eyes and, as she writes, the dab of paint sparkles. She muses that when attending to "a highly charged aspect—a mere detail perhaps—*and attuned to its unfolding possibilities* . . . the work and its viewer momentarily exchange roles or become one."[11] The wild offers an unfolding sense of time, not "too easy a mediation," and Holly proposes that we take animal consciousness seriously. To do so she examines wolves from numerous angles, noting the desecration of wolves by human hands and the

representation of wolves in fairy tales and other works. In Dario Fo's theater piece based on the story of the Wolf of Gubbio, for example, she notes that Fo challenges humans to accept the inevitability of ravenous nature, and the wolf upbraids St. Francis for humanizing him. In turn, St. Francis, as if addressing his modern-day viewer, retorts: "'It was not Nature's fault. It was my fault. I tried to turn animals into good men. I should have tried to turn men into good animals.'"[12]

The philosopher Jacques Derrida is a key figure in Holly's account, since, with his term *l'animot*, he replaces the abstract "animal" with the plurality of actual creatures that exist while simultaneously indicating how "the animal" (a creature without words) demarcates "the human" (a creature who uses words). Derrida writes that the animal is not a "what" but a "who," and its singularity makes it irreducible.[13] Given this, a narrative will not suffice to explain the wolf and the boy's reaction to it; neither will an iconological reading of signs in their social context—and Holly is clearly adept at both. The phenomenological encounter, as partial as it is, is the site where the work comes to life. It is where viewers enter the entanglement that the artwork elicits. The wild is represented by the blood on the wolf's lips while the wolf refuses to be relegated to "animal." This wolf is a particular being that bears "the traces of an 'other.'" Holly places the wild into the phenomenological encounter between the viewer and painting. This maneuver leads Holly not to answers, but to more questions, such as: Can one "enter" into the wild by way of the painting? Did humans once have the ability to communicate with animals, with their relationship to the wild, or have species always lived in separate *umwelt*?

Ideas of animality prompt, to my mind, questions about an "animal eye" (to complement Michael Baxandall's "period eye," referring to the eye that sees an artwork in its historical and cultural context), which might detect the animality that lurks within paintings such as *The Wolf of Gubbio*. Introducing animality also challenges the phenomenological dictum, concerned as it is with *human* consciousness, by suggesting that phenomenological encounters engage the nonhuman, or at the least the divide that separates the human and nonhuman. The dab of red paint that so shocked Holly's son points to that which rests outside of our human world and outside of the humanities as we know them. It points to a lost world that is not in "our" past. *L'animot* can't be known, it does not speak in our language, and even if it could—as Ludwig Wittgenstein writes of the lion, and Holly reports—we wouldn't understand it anyway.[14]

GOURD, MATRIX, WORLDING

In her reading of *The Wolf of Gubbio* Holly places unlike objects and theories together to pry open new theoretical configurations. Joining in this gambit, I introduce a contemporary artwork into the discussion and compare it to the early Renaissance *Wolf of Gubbio*. *Matrix* (2016) is a gourd-shaped blown-glass work by the Icelandic-British

duo Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir and Mark Wilson (known as Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson)—the first of a series of glassworks based on polar bear maternity dens. *Matrix* was developed from drawings of maternity dens located in the Arctic region of Svalbard, which the artists studied while on a residency in the spring and summer of 2010. Wilson explains that it is a 1:20 scale model, so at 35.4 inches this represents a maternity den sixty feet in length.[15] Unlike the taxidermied polar bears shown in natural history dioramas, here, the glass casing refers not to the killing, stuffing, and displaying of an animal specimen, but to the necessary space created by the pregnant polar bear to birth her pups and provide for their first months together.

Surveillance video—specifically, an infrared technology developed by the oil and gas industry—was used to locate the maternity dens.[16] This information is useful, since these industries are required by law to avoid drilling within a one-mile radius of the dens. This is the "matrix" referred to in the work's title. However, the "matrix" also includes the pregnant polar bear and the births that took place within the den—the human and nonhuman matrix, the big matrix, if you will. Etymologically, *matrix* is derived from the French *matrice* for "womb, uterus," following the Latin *mātrix* for "pregnant animal," and by the mid-1500s was used to mean "that which encloses or gives origin" to something, and, later still, a "mold in which something is cast or shaped."[17] Ultimately, in the inaugural exhibition for this project, the artists declined to display *Matrix* along with the infrared information.[18] Instead, Wilson explains that the "single, spot lit object" was "suspended at head height, on one of the most prominent and tallest walls in the gallery," and served as "a foil or balance to the overarching narrative in the show of anthropogenically induced death."[19] The shadows created by this lighting underscored the near extinction of the polar bear, thus giving shape to the human threat that haunts these animals' lives—a theme throughout the exhibition.

Different artworks elicit different responses. *Matrix* is about polar bears and not wolves, and thoughts of the animals' ravenous desire turns, therefore, to thoughts of endurance. Polar bears must survive hunger and isolation, accentuated by long journeys on ice floes from landmass to landmass. Unlike wolves, polar bears do not attack without reason. What the work offers is therefore less a statement about the boundary between the animal and the human, or the state of "détente" that might ensue between the two, than a sense of the animal world and its contours *without human intervention*.

Matrix, recall, was created using scientific data. A second iteration of the work emphasizes this fact by placing the glass gourd-like shape on a screen showing the video surveillance footage of the coastal area, captured using the oil and gas industry's forward-looking infrared technology to identify the presence of polar bear dens (fig. 2.3).[20] This den is located in Alaska, and the artists note that "out there polar bears share the terrain with a complex human matrix comprising the

Fig. 2.3. Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson (Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir [Icelandic, born 1955] and Mark Wilson [British, born 1954]), *Matrix*, 2016. Glass, video; maquette: 5 ½ × 20 ⅛ × 8 ⅝ in. (14 × 51 × 22 cm). Anchorage Museum, museum purchase, 2016.016.001ab. Installation view, *View from Up Here: The Arctic at the Center of the World*, Anchorage Museum, 2016

Inupiaq people, the oil industry, the tourist industry, and a legion of environmental scientists. As a consequence, bears will often den in close proximity to human sites."[21] This conflation suggests that the instinctual intelligence by which the female polar bear creates her intimate birthing space and the calculative logic that underwrites human information-gathering are not necessarily at odds. While the thermal imaging resonates with the dead future shown in the iconic film *The Matrix*, the den suggests possibility and regeneration.[22] With its translucent skin, the work defines, but also reflects and mirrors, a site of generation. We do not know what lies within it or will lie within it. It gleams with possibility. It is, to use Heidegger's terminology, resonant of worlding.[23]

In comparing *Matrix* to *The Wolf of Gubbio*—two very different artworks from alien periods—we come to understand that in the early Renaissance painting the wild threatens mankind, whereas in *Matrix* it is mankind that threatens the wild. Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson seek not to tame the wild but to preserve what little is left of it. Like Holly, they look to animal studies to understand the nature of the issues facing life on earth and possible responses to this threat. They also detect sites of partial wildness while they leave off from picturing it. They let the births happen without us. Holly, by contrast, bores into the dab of paint her son pointed to, as if there might be a behind or beyond the paint that leads to—as St. Francis suggests in his gesture of equanimity—a resolution to the human-animal divide.

THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF DIVIDED ATTENTION

Holly's analysis of *The Wolf of Gubbio* contributes to our understanding of the possibilities that exist when viewers encounter artworks, and she does so by highlighting her own divided attention—she attends to both the artwork and her son, with his inarticulate gesturing to the wild. Following her son's lead, she eventually detects the wild *in* the artwork; she wonders about animals, and she considers the past the painting refers to in a new light. Her divided attention complicates "too easy a mediation of past and present." In this way Holly's intervention contributes to critical phenomenology—a subfield that, as the philosopher Rasmus Dyring explains, was "instigated by feminist thinking and queer theory" and that "most often takes its point of departure in the lifeworlds of those living somehow on the margins of society: for example, people of color, queer people, drug users, homeless people, and people living with dementia or other mental illnesses."[24] The wild is a way to name such outsiders.[25] These outsiders "on the margins of society" resonate with Holly's melancholic art historians (and Warburg, we know, was suffering from mental illness). In her various accounts, Holly brings these figures alive, not as the insiders they would come to be thought of as but as the truly wild outsiders they were. She "re-creates" them in their worlds. In *The Melancholy Art*, for example, Holly writes of Gustav Klimt's controversial murals in the context of Viennese culture, Freudian

analysis, and their precarious political moment, thereby saving Klimt from institutional erasure.[26] Her current focus on animals might save phenomenology from institutional erasure by challenging its basic precept that an object appears to *someone* in *human consciousness*.[27] Human consciousness, as she notes, is not a given when thought alongside animals. Perhaps human consciousness is more (and less) than previously thought.

An appropriate place to begin squaring Holly's thought with critical phenomenology is suggested by Sara Ahmed in her pioneering 2006 book *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Ahmed begins by imagining Edmund Husserl, founder of phenomenology, at his desk:

> If we start with Husserl's first volume of *Ideas*, for instance, then we start with the writing table. The table appears, we could say, because the table is the object nearest the body of the philosopher. That the writing table appears, and not another kind of table, might reveal something about the "orientation" of phenomenology, or even of philosophy itself.[28]

Ahmed then imagines Husserl's backside. When facing his desk he is facing away from his children (and the family realm more generally). She quotes Husserl: "I can let my attention wander from the writing-table I have just seen and observed, through the unseen portions of the room behind my back to the veranda, into the garden, to the children in the summerhouse."[29] Locating Husserl's orientation, Ahmed also orients phenomenology. What is Husserl, as he orients himself toward his task, simultaneously facing and turning away from? Clearly, the everyday life that his "phenomenological reduction" brackets to better examine the object and subject in relation to each other (but not in relation to others). This brings Ahmed to her discussion of "lining up" and "toeing the line," all pertinent metaphoric and literal forms of engagement with the field of phenomenology. Husserl lines up as he faces the desk and away from his unseen children in the summerhouse. Husserl's philosophical children also line up, or not. His student Heidegger did not line up behind Husserl, famously, and instead invited the lifeworld that Husserl excised into his phenomenological equation—moods and anxiety would be part of the encounter. Phenomenology, as a field, is punctuated by figures such as Heidegger who refuse to line up behind Husserl, who turns his back to his family. (And we should, in turn, consider whom Heidegger turned his back on.)

The anticolonialist psychoanalyst Frantz Fanon demonstrates that orientation is not freely given.[30] To illustrate this point, he describes an orientation that is thrust upon him as a Black man in France. Noting that being seen "as" a stigmatized group is psychologically damaging, he counters, "I wanted quite simply to be a man among men." "Yet it is this very anonymity," as scholar Gayle Salamon notes,

"that Fanon shows to be a prerogative of racially unmarked manhood, [and] which only white men may enjoy."[31] As Fanon suggests, race is not "in" the body of the viewer, but is an orientation woven into the phenomenological encounter between a viewer and object, or a viewer and another viewer (or, in Fanon's example, a viewer as object). Who gets to be a man? A woman? Human? When seen by whom? Race, gender, and sexual identity are markers considered to be "on" the body but are, in fact, created within these encounters. This is Ahmed's point, and why she talks about sexual orientation as perceptual orientation.

Taking Husserl's desk as her example allows Ahmed to explore the concept of orientation but, also—as it is *Husserl's* desk—the orientation of phenomenology, particularly its biases around gender and sexual orientation. Taking Ahmed's cue, we might ask, what is Holly's orientation? What table is she facing, while turning away from what (or whom)? Holly, predictably, is oriented to the past. Returning "to that long-ago moment in London," she does not describe the museum space, as in Ahmed's real-time reading of Husserl at his desk. She looks behind the painting to the distant world that once cloaked the picture in ubiquity. After her detour she adds to this "the impenetrable silence of animals entrapped in paint."[32] It is precisely at such moments of active viewing that lost worlds can, as Holly reminds us, be regained.

However, the contribution Holly makes to critical phenomenology is not only, to my mind, her application of animal studies to the work of art. It is her divided attention—a specific type of scholarly orientation that she brings to her study of *The Wolf of Gubbio*. She first attends to the historical axis, which is divided between the past to which the work once belonged and the current scholarly context in which the work is seen today—a context that supports new critical approaches, such as animal studies. If we focus in on the spatial axis, her attention is divided between the artwork and her son, poles that correspond to her dual role as a professional art historian and a mother. This doubling and dividing of attention fuels Holly's analysis: at one moment she is behind the work, and at another looking ahead of the work, to critical phenomenology, to animal studies. In her analysis, the work is not static; it is unfolding in time. For example, as she notes, some of the painting's details only came to light *after* the painting's restoration, including the dab of paint in *The Wolf of Gubbio* that captivated her son. It was uncovered in the 1970s.[33]

Such asynchronicity demonstrates that the phenomenological encounter as described by either Husserl ("object meets subject") or Ahmed (with her "front and back" orientation) does not go far enough. Whereas Ahmed looks behind Husserl's back, finding his children there—and, we might speculate, a nanny, too, perhaps even a lover and a wife[34]—Holly looks behind her son's encounter to find a wolf, a real wolf, who frightens him. The encounter is haunted by prior

encounters—both literal and figurative—with objects, people, and works. Like Merleau-Ponty's "phantom arm"—a theory instigated by his examinations of World War II veterans who carried "ghost limbs" with them (the veterans felt their limbs, even in their absence)—viewers carry with them prior viewing experiences that inform their encounters with art.[35] We might think of this situation as akin to those subjects who are thought to be "hearing things" that are not in the aural field. Holly is seeing things, and she suggests that seeing is always seeing things.

Attention reveals how viewers approach objects and with what intention.[36] As we know only too well, attention is also a commodity. Beginning in the nineteenth century, it was harnessed to all sorts of commercial ventures, including film but also Ferris wheels and moving sidewalks.[37] Pertaining to Holly's divided attention in the National Gallery in London, an odd instrument known as the double stereoscope emerged in the mid-nineteenth century to accommodate two viewers, both focused on one stereoscope card—which, like all such cards, showed two photographs of the same scene from slightly different angles, with the viewer mentally assembling these into a three-dimensional image. The double stereoscope was introduced at a time in which art history was also popularized for the masses, and the January 1859 issue of *The Art-Journal Advertiser* shows the double stereoscope advertised on the same page as *The History of Ancient Art Among the Greeks* by "John" Winckelmann (fig. 2.4). The instrumentalization of attention has continued apace and, today, is measured in clicks as attention is split into ever-finer slivers. This history complicates the art encounter, which complicates the history of art history since—and this is Holly's more radical claim about entanglement—how viewers encounter artworks today changes the past, not only how the past is represented *but also what the past is*. The wolf in the painting appears with blood on its lips, but only after animal studies and queer theory articulate wildness as a limited resource, and only after the communication technology industries domesticated this resource more successfully than St. Francis could have ever imagined.

CONCLUSION: REORIENTATIONS

A "visual synecdoche"—so Holly writes of the dab of paint. The visual part for the whole. But what is the whole that the detail, the dab of red paint, points to? What is the world it refers to? Holly suggests that the world it refers to includes wildness. This dab of wildness was always there and is now coming into visibility. Holly first reads this detail as a "punctum" and, later, iconographically as a "rhythm of reds among the saint's stigmata."[38] By the end of her study, the detail takes on metaphysical powers; it is "an invitation to dissolve the material barriers between subjects and objects, the 'real' world and the world of the work, time in the past and time now."[39] It does so by coming from a lost world (which the art historian seeks to discover) while emerging to visibility by way of her son, an engaged viewer.

Fig. 2.4. *The Art-Journal Advertiser*, no. 247 (January 1859): iv

Holly confesses that she has been meditating on her son's response to the dab of paint for nearly forty years. The solution to the puzzle has been a long time coming and has now arrived.

But why is Holly thinking back to this moment at the National Gallery now? And what, at this moment of remembrance, is she able to understand of her son's exclamation before Sassetta's *The Wolf of Gubbio*? Whatever the prompt is for her query—and we are not told—it allows her to realize that her son saw something beyond what was plainly shown in the painting. The dab of paint spoke of a wildness that outlasts the peace with St. Francis, something beyond the border of the image. The boy's exclamation in front of the painting exposes a secret hidden within this early Renaissance painting, which prompted her essay delving into new critical methods for understanding the relationship between human beings and animals, which itself prompted this essay. It is the boy who put this process in motion by responding, wordlessly, as if he too were a wolf.

Holly is looking at the wild in her son, then at the painting. Her attention oscillates, as it does for the stereoscope viewer. If we take this viewing on the model of the double stereoscope—an instrument as lost to time as the shard of animality in *The Wolf of Gubbio*—who, we might ask, might the second viewer be? Might it be the wolf in the process of becoming a subject, a viewer? Might Holly be looking *with* the wolf? Might Holly herself be a split subject—part human, part wolf? These pictures of the viewing situation contrast with that of Husserl, who sits alone, looking to his desk and away from his family. As Holly suggests, however, such scenes are not static. Husserl's desk might, at another moment, become the background to his family (perhaps he, too, was torn) as he turns his back on phenomenology. This sort of dynamism transforms viewing into responding into worlding: the viewer is a responder who turns, grasps, and rejects aspects of the artwork, locating possibilities in the past, which in turn reveal and foreclose possibilities in the present. As the literary scholar Pheng Cheah writes, "The work of art is ontologically the same as the process of worlding. It is worlding to a second degree."[40] This is why art matters to Holly, to her son, and to Heidegger. This is why visual studies and art history debate the topic of "what is art" incessantly. Is television art? Instagram? Why or why not? Certain conditions are necessary for this second-order worlding to occur.

With these considerations in mind, I imagine what might have happened at the National Gallery in London all those many years ago. Why, Holly wonders, had she not noticed the dab of paint before her son responded so vigorously to it? She is displaced. She feels the wolf look right through her. This sense of dis-ease allows the art historian to understand that "she" is not a cohesive subject, nor was she on that day in London. Her attention was torn between her son and the artwork (feeling that sense of double duty many working parents feel). This divided

attention brings her back to the founding of phenomenology with the scholar at his desk, facing away from his children and toward his task. She turns away from her task and toward her son, and, through the resulting breach in the visual field, responds to a single dab of red paint.[41]

NOTES

Epigraph: Michael Ann Holly, *Past Looking: Historical Imagination and the Rhetoric of the Image* (Cornell University Press, 1996), 4.

1. From the National Gallery in London: "Known as Sassetta since the eighteenth century, Stefano di Giovanni was the most important artist in fifteenth-century Siena, where he probably trained with Benedetto di Bindo and where he was inscribed with the guild of painters before 1428. . . . His masterpiece was the double-sided altarpiece for San Francesco, Borgo San Sepolcro, 1437–1444." https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/artists/sassetta. On the San Sepolcro alterpiece: https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/sassetta-saint-francis-and-the-poor-knight-and-franciss-vision#painting-group-info.

2. Michael Ann Holly, "Why Does That Wolf Have Red on His Lips?," *Oxford Art Journal* 45, no. 3 (2022): 341.

3. Holly, "Why Does That Wolf," 346.

4. Holly, 344.

5. Holly, 341.

6. Holly, 352.

7. Husserl writes, "Each expression not merely says something, but says it of something: it not only has a meaning, but refers to certain objects." Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations* (Routledge, 2001 [1970]), 1:197. Husserl borrowed this concept of intentionality from Franz Brentano.

8. Holly, "Why Does That Wolf," 353.

9. Holly, *The Melancholy Art* (Princeton University Press, 2013), xxi.

10. Jack Halberstam, *Wild Things: The Disorder of Desire* (Duke University Press, 2020), 12. Halberstam's full quotation reads "Foucault gives this ambivalent mode of knowing a name, 'the wild,' and speculates that within a modern equation, life is forever in danger of 'becoming wild once more.'"

11. Holly, "Why Does That Wolf," 356. Emphasis mine.

12. Holly, 352. Dario Fo, *Holy Jester! The Saint Francis Fables*, trans. Mario Pirovano (Opus, 2018).

13. Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Luise Mallet, trans. David Wills (Fordham University Press, 2008). Derrida writes, "When I say 'the animal' [*l'animal*] or 'the animals' [*les animaux*] I'll be asking you to silently substitute *animot* for what you hear. By means of the chimera of this singular word, the *animot*, I bring together three heterogeneous elements within a single verbal body." To paraphrase, these three elements are (1) the plurality of creatures referred to by the word "the animal"; (2) the limit or marker (*le mot*, the noun) that names the animal and separates it from the human; (3) to think of the absence that marks the animal in human thought as something other than "privation." To think of this absence inventively. Derrida, *The Animal*, 47–49.

14. Holly, "Why Does That Wolf," 351.

15. Mark Wilson, email with author, July 1, 2023.

16. For more on *Matrix*, see Æsa Siggurjónsdóttir, "Dead or Alive," in *Debatable Lands / Óræð Lönd* (published for the exhibition *Debatable Lands: Dialogues from Shared Worlds* at Gerðarsafn Kópavogur Art Museum, Iceland, September 11, 2021, to January 9, 2022), 214–215, 235.

17. Thank you to Ted Mann for noting the etymological link between matrix and "womb, pregnancy." See the Online Etymological Dictionary: https://www.etymonline.com/word/matrix.

18. *Visitations*, solo exhibition by Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, Listasafni Akureyri, September 25, 2022–January 16, 2023. Curated by Æsa Sigurjónsdóttir.

19. Wilson, email to author, July 1, 2023.

20. "Matrix | 2016," November 23, 2021, https://snaebjornsdottirwilson.com/_dsf9626/.

21. "Matrix," https://snaebjornsdottirwilson.com/category/projects/matrix/.

22. "Matrix | 2016," November 23, 2021, https://snaebjornsdottirwilson.com/_dsf9626/.

23. Heidegger writes, "If we let the thing be present in its thinging from out of the worlding world, then we are thinking of the thing as thing." Martin Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Harper & Row, 1971), 181.

24. Rasmus Drying, "Critical Phenomenology," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, accessed June 22, 2024, https://oxfordre.com/anthropology/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190854584.001.0001/acrefore-9780190854584-e-461. See also Gayle Salamon, "What's Critical About Critical Phenomenology?," *Puncta: A Journal of Critical Phenomenology* 1, no. 1 (2018): 16.

25. Halberstam, *Wild Things*, 13. Halberstam writes that T. S. Eliot linked wildness and the sexual outsider in his poem "Burnt Norton." He, "like other so-called loners in this book, lived a life at the very edge of our definitions of sexuality. 'Neither flesh nor fleshless / Neither from nor towards' is how he might have described the orientation of the wild things who live neither in nature nor beyond it within 'both a new world / and the old made explicit.'"

26. The murals were commissioned for the ceiling of the Great Hall at the University of Vienna.

27. "Intentionality" is a basic concept in phenomenology. Husserl claims that consciousness is always conscious of something: it is directed, or "intentional." However, phenomenology is not entirely clear on what this consciousness consists of and how it pertains to intention. As David Woodruff Smith writes, "As Husserl and others stressed, we are only vaguely aware of things in the margin or periphery of attention, and we are only implicitly aware of the wider horizon of things in the world around us.

Moreover, as Heidegger stressed, in practical activities like walking along, or hammering a nail, or speaking our native tongue, we are not explicitly conscious of our habitual patterns of action." See "Phenomenology," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, revised December 16, 2013, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/.

28. Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Duke University Press, 2006), 3.

29. Quoted in Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 28.

30. Husserl also claimed that attention is not entirely freely given. For more on Husserl's theory of attention and its relationship to his theory of intention, see Thomas Byrne, "The Origin of the Phenomenology of Attention," *Research in Phenomenology* 52 (2022): 425–441.

31. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (Grove Press, 2008), 92. See Gayle Salamon, "'The Place Where Life Hides Away': Merleau-Ponty, Fanon, and the Location of Bodily Being," in *Fanon, Phenomenology, and Psychology*, eds. Leswin Laubscher et al. (Routledge, 2021), 159.

32. Holly, "Why Does That Wolf," 348–49.

33. Holly, 341.

34. Ahmed writes, "The children might be in the background because others (wives, mothers, nannies) care for them. They do not distract him from his work." Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 31.

35. On the "phantom limb," see Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (Routledge, 1962), 88. He writes, "The imaginary limb is often found to retain the position in which the real arm was at the moment of injury: a man wounded in battle can still feel in his phantom arm the shell splinters that lacerated his real one."

36. See Luca De Giovanni, "Husserl on Intentionality and Attention: From the *Logical Investigations* to Genetic Phenomenology," *Phänomenologische Forschungen* 2 (2018): 81–98. "We would be closer to the essence of attention if we described it as a specific way in which I can accomplish my intentional acts. In fact, Husserl generally speaks of attention as a *Vollzugsmodus*, as a mode of accomplishing intentional acts. Attention expresses a specific way in which the act is directed toward its intentional object." De Giovanni, 84.

37. For Jonathan Crary, it was through the study of attention in the nineteenth century that the "perceiving body was deployed and made productive and orderly, whether as student, worker, or consumer." Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (MIT Press, 2000), 22–23.

38. Holly, "Why Does That Wolf," 347.

39. Holly, 347–48.

40. Pheng Cheah, *What Is a World?: On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature* (Duke University Press, 2016), 129.

41. Thank you to Michael Ann Holly for inspiration.

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