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THE BUCK, THE BULL, AND THE DREAM OF THE STAG: SOME UNEXPECTED WEEDS OF THE ANTHROPOCENE

ABSTRACT

Landscapes are sites of struggle for many ways of being, human and nonhuman. This paper draws attention to weedy landscapes as places for anthropologists to get to know the Anthropocene, in all its heterogeneity. Weeds are creatures of human disturbance, and the forms they take depend on the kind of disturbance and the kind of unmanagement that follows. Weeds guide us to coordinations between human and nonhuman projects of world making—as exemplified, in this paper, by ‘the dream of the stag,’ an axis linking the imaginations of red deer and hunters, who are both opportunistic interlopers in the research site. The research concerns the weedy ‘auto-rewilding’ of a former brown coal mine in the sandy glacial outwash of central Jutland, Denmark. Previously an anthropogenic moorland used mainly for grazing sheep, labor-intensive mining emerged during World War II but was abandoned in 1970, leaving sand piles and holes that became acidic lakes. Beginning in 2013, Aarhus University Research on the Anthropocene (AURA) began an experiment in fieldwork there that crosses natural science/social science boundaries, and this paper emerges from that continuing encounter. The dream of the stag draws the analysis into the political ecology of weedy emergence, which in turn opens reflections on more-than-human world-making and the possibility of thinking Anthropocene timelines through weeds.

Keywords: Anthropocene, landscape, weeds, red deer imaginaries, post-mining ecologies, auto-rewilding, Heidegger

We live in a world of weeds—a world of human ecological disturbance that stretches around the planet. Yet scholars know too little about weeds, by which I mean the organisms that take over after human

disturbance. New anthropologies of landscape can offer assistance here by showing how to entwine human and nonhuman histories. With hopes to invigorate emerging forms, this essay offers an excursion into some collaborative

transdisciplinary fieldwork on a former brown-coal mining site in Denmark.¹ After mining was discontinued, animals wandered in, and recreational hunters bought up much of the area. It's a 'wild' place by Danish standards. It's also a place to know weedy landscapes—the kinds of places that characterize the Anthropocene, our time of industrial ruin.

One of the weeds in my story is red deer, a species once common in Denmark, but wiped out, except in game parks, in the 18th century. The red deer in our field site are descendants of escapees from those enclosures: maroons, survivors—and now, too, aggressive weeds. Scholars don't ordinarily think of deer as weeds, but that lens, I'll argue, draws us into storytelling practices in which landscapes come to life in the conjunctures of many trajectories, human and nonhuman.

My story begins with a painting, Adolf Henrik Mackeprang's 'Red deer by a lake, morning mist' (Figure 1). It's not exceptional: it is one of many Mackeprang stag paintings.² While Danish, it evokes similar paintings from other parts of northern Europe and, while 19th century in origin, one sees copies of such paintings today everywhere from wall decoration to real estate brochures. It's not exceptional, but it tells a persistent story.

The image shows a proud but vulnerable masculine authority. It lures viewers to the chase. One might call that lure 'the dream of the stag,' and, while not the whole topic of this essay, it will be its guiding trope. Two purposes for the dream of the stag are set out here, interwoven. First, there are material stags and hunters, which help me understand weedy landscapes. Coordinations across human and nonhuman projects, I argue, make landscape assemblages coalesce.³ Weeds, which shout challenges to



Figure 1. *Adolf Henrik Mackeprang* (1833–1911). *Kronhjort ved en sø, morgendis*. Oil on canvas. 122 x 90 cm. Courtesy of Ribe Kunstmuseum.

stability, show us transformations in which landscape assemblages come together and fall apart.

Second, there is the *dream* of the stag. The dream mesmerizes, causing viewers to focus on the wild enchantments of interior self-making. Interior wildness, in turn, makes landscape histories disappear. Landscapes appear without history, and with the completeness and coherence of a theater backdrop. This is no way to know landscapes—especially the weedy landscapes we share with red deer stags. But first let me show you the dream of the stag in action.

FOLLOW ME.

Look over my shoulder; but please be quiet. I am walking as silently as I can along a forest path. My companion is a hunter, a landowner, a financial genius in the Danish garment business. He has gained and lost more money in a few minutes than farmers make in most of a lifetime. I'll call him 'Bull' to mark his barrel chest, his aristocratic aspirations, and his continuing search not just for game but also for rising markets, the ones we call 'bull'. As the evening approaches, we reach a hunting high seat and climb up. In Denmark, individual hunting is done from high seats so that a hunter can safely aim for the ground at the end of the shot. American-style stalking is illegal. Furthermore, high seats must not have roofing or too-comfortable seats. The Bull and I perch precariously on a board and, protected from view, peer over the side. We are looking onto a large grassy meadow, surrounded by dense plantation groves of pine and spruce. The red deer hide in the forest during the day, but at dusk they come out to feed. Shooting is only allowed until sunset, so we have a short window of time. We peer anxiously into the evening.

This time, we don't have long to wait. A hind peeks out from the forest, looks around, and leads her two companions into the meadow. One is another hind; the third is a young buck, perhaps two or three years old. It is late October, and hinds are already pregnant. They have spread out without contest by the stags; only this, I'm told, allows this young buck to hang out with hinds. They eat peacefully, too far away for a shot. Our watching, too, is relaxed and peaceful.

Then an older hind enters from the other side of the open space. She is leading a large group of hinds and calves—and a big stag with a rack of antlers. The Bull is riveted, his grip ready

as he stares at the stag through the sight of his gun. It's much too far to shoot, but that doesn't stop his fascination. The other riveted one is the young buck. He stares; he approaches with his head high. The stag looks up from eating. The buck is less than a third of his size, hardly a threat. The stag waves his antlers for a moment and then goes back to eating. But young buck is mesmerized. He stands; he raises his head; he eases back a step but then urges himself to step forward again. And Bull too: mesmerized. He does not want to shoot hinds and calves. It is the stag that draws him. Or perhaps, in both cases, the dream of the stag.

I'm interested in these asymmetrical gazes. The stag does not look at either buck or Bull, and buck and Bull do not look at each other. Each stares at the stag. What are they seeing and not seeing? And how does the entanglement of their respective non-entanglements shape the landscape? Both things interest me: their non-engagement with each other, and the emergent landscape assemblage that's made possible despite that. The coordination between these two non-meeting stares—the unintentional work of the dream of the stag—is key to the weedy dynamics of this place.

The presence of red deer here is already strange. As mentioned above, free-roaming red deer were exterminated in 18th century Jutland. Furthermore, Jutland has become more and more tame, especially since 19th- and 20th-century industrial techniques allowed the conversion of moorland into modern farms. Other than road verges and hedgerows, one can hardly find a square meter of non-agro-industrial space. The trees are plantation crops; the soils are augmented with fertilizers. It takes an abandoned mine to host a scene of wildness. That's why the place is interesting for the Aarhus University Research on the Anthropocene (AURA) research team, whose collaborative



Figure 2. Red deer at Soby Brunkulsejerne. The lake is an abandoned mining hole. Wildlife camera photograph used by permission of Michael Hauge.

research underlies my thinking here.⁴ Many nature reserves and parks across northern Europe are abandoned mines or other sites of human-made ruin. But our field site is not a park. Red deer wandered in by themselves along with an array of surprising guests, including invasive nonnatives such as raccoon dogs as well as the deeply prohibited wild boar and, most recently, the frightening and thrilling: wolves. What a diverse menagerie to have assembled itself!

One might think of this kind of reassembly as auto-rewilding. ‘Rewilding’ refers to the placement of animals in human-disturbed landscapes, whether to aid ecosystems services or merely to enhance biodiversity. Auto-rewilding, then, would be the rewilding activities

of animals themselves, and I would include plants and other organisms as auto-re-wilders too. Auto-rewilding is one of the most important processes for making our human-disturbed world today. Without auto-rewilding, our disturbed landscapes would be thin and bare, devoid of organisms except those we put there. But auto-rewilding offers ambivalent futures. On the one hand, we owe the richness of our feral landscapes to auto-rewilding. On the other hand, auto-rewilders often kill the chances of other, less aggressive and disturbance-loving species. Auto-rewilders are bold. They are weedy. Like us, they do not play well with others. They help us make the Anthropocene, the proposed epoch of outsized human disturbance.

WE OUGHT TO KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT LANDSCAPES OF AUTO- REWILDERS.

Anthropocene scholars have been more interested in feats of human engineering than in weeds. The problem is not the dream of the stag; in fact, it's something like its converse, the lure of universal history, which denies the presence of diverse landscapes altogether. Climate scientists and geologists introduced the term Anthropocene; global and universal time is their gift from the Enlightenment, and they are not about to give it up.⁵ For anthropologists, in contrast, heterogeneity matters. Anthropocene gains traction only when we introduce inequality, history, and cultural specificity. Landscapes are useful for such analysis. Landscapes can show us weedy configurations: the gathering of human and nonhuman trajectories. I turn to landscape, then, as a tool that might vitalize Anthropocene discussions—and bring us back to auto-rewilding.

An argument about landscape's genealogy has stifled the term *landscape's* potential in anthropology. Cultural geographers made us wary by showing us a genealogy that takes us into Dutch landscape painting, the picturesque, and the reification of nature as an object of Enlightenment vision (e.g., Cosgrove 1985). From the perspective of that genealogy, to study landscape is to flatten our perspectives to notice only the distant view. Although phenomenological approaches to landscape have continued to thrive (Ingold 2011), the term's genealogical taint blocked the array of other approaches—materialist, ecological, historical, etc.—that otherwise might have blossomed around the term. I am grateful to geographer Kenneth Olwig (1996) for taking us beyond this impasse. Olwig argues that an earlier and more

pertinent genealogy of landscape in Germanic Europe is that place in which political moots could be gathered to discuss *things*, that is, issues of importance. A landscape is a gathering in the making. This definition lends itself to analysis of many of the problems which landscape studies can address. Landscapes are both imaginative and material; they encompass physical geographies, phenomenologies, and cultural and political commitments.

The definition can be extended, too, to encompass multispecies gatherings in the making (Tsing 2015). My landscapes are moots in which many living beings—and non-vital things as well, such as rocks and water—take part. They come together to negotiate collaborative survival, the 'who lives and who dies' and the 'who stays and who goes' enactments of the landscape. They may not acknowledge each other directly. They may ignore each other, as with the buck and the Bull. But each declines or flourishes in the effects of the world-making projects initiated and maintained by the others.

Landscapes, then, are gatherings of ways of being in the making. As ecologists argue, they are units of heterogeneity: a landscape can exist at any scale as long as it encompasses heterogeneous patches. There are landscapes on a leaf and on a continent. The so-called 'landscape scale' of GIS is only one of many scales for landscapes worth exploring. And ways of being? Ways of being are historically shifting enactments. Species is relevant, but hardly fully determinate. A farmer and a financier have different human enactments; so too a racehorse and a plow horse have different horse enactments. Rocks and water also have historically shifting ways of being. In landscape moots, ways of being emerge—and shape what's possible for all the others.

Landscapes are historical, and they allow us to think across a variety of scales, from deep time

to current events. Such shifting scales of time are the focus of discussion about the Anthropocene, a term that continues to be contested—and thus still open. How might we bring landscape into discussions of the Anthropocene? In the next section, my challenge is to let landscape interrupt Anthropocene universal histories—both by taking those time lines seriously and by showing how they look different when used to peep at particular landscapes. Landscapes interrupt History; this allows me to come back later to let history interrupt landscapes—or at least the kind that arise in the spell of the stag.

TIMELINES ARE HIGH SEATS FOR WATCHING SHIFTING LANDSCAPES.

What are we to do with Anthropocene timelines? Timelines need not propose epochal shifts; they can also offer points from which to watch for something new. Think of them, perhaps, like a hunting high seat: they are sites, moments, and events from which our awareness of landscape transformations might be heightened. Consider, for example, the key dates currently in play for the beginning of the Anthropocene. These dates are competing entries—but here I make them points for noticing landscape change. Some archaeologists have suggested that the Anthropocene should begin with the very first plant and animal domestications, a date that could make Anthropocene and Holocene coterminous (Smith and Zeder 2013). Some geographers argue for 1610, a global CO₂ drop that can be explained by the genocide of Native Americans by European-introduced diseases (Lewis and Maslin 2015). Genocide encouraged forest regrowth in the New World, lowering global CO₂ and perhaps explaining the latter half of the Little Ice Age in Europe. Climate scientists first promoted 1784 as the start date

for the Anthropocene because of the invention of the steam engine, a marker for the industrial revolution (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000). Now many have turned their attention to 1945, the first atom bomb, with its clear radioactive signature in sediments around the world, and the ‘great acceleration’ of human population and industrial disturbance (Steffen et. al. 2015).

If these dates are high seats from which to notice human innovations, they are also high seats from which to notice new kinds of weeds. Consider the weediness brought into the world by each of the innovations noticed by Anthropocene scholars. The domestication of plants and animals brings weeds of crops and livestock, from rats to the plants that hide in the grain, as barley did in wheat. There are weeds too of disturbed field edges, plants and animals that thrive with human disturbance. There are new diseases for humans and their domestic animals, as pathogens pass back and forth in the crowded conditions of domestic life. Measles and smallpox are examples. These forms of weediness come into the world and stay with us.

The European conquest of the New World offers a whole other catalog of weeds. Historian Virginia Anderson (2006) offers the term ‘creatures of empire’, by which she means the livestock brought by European settlers, which, through their wandering, eating, and property status, helped destroy Native Americans, human and nonhuman. The term might be extended to consider that whole suite of species that travels with conquering humans. First, there are those one might call ‘shock troops’, that is, those that help human invaders do their bloody work. In the New World, European pathogens did that first work; livestock followed them. But there were also one might describe as ‘camp followers’, the suite of intentionally and non-intentionally introduced organisms that made life more difficult for natives, human and not human.⁶

Table 1. **Unexpected weeds of the Anthropocene**

Onset date 1. 10,000 BP: domestication
* Crop and livestock companions (e.g., rats; barley)
* Weeds of disturbed verges
* Zoonoses (diseases transmitted between humans and domestic animals)
Onset date 2. 1610: creatures of empire
* 'Shock troops' kill natives directly, e.g., livestock, pathogens
* 'Camp followers,' e.g., weedy invaders, lessen the life chances of natives
Onset date 3. 1784: industrialization
* Agro-industrial weeds, pests, and pathogens
* Native survivors in non-rationalized edge space
Onset date 4. 1945: Great Acceleration
* Toxic landscapes (e.g., radioactivity and chemical contamination)
* Eutrophication and dead zones
* Acceleration of industrial use and abandonment

Think of starlings, first introduced to the US to commemorate Shakespeare's birds, now spread across the continent displacing native birds. These are creatures of human invasions.

Beginning in the late 18th century, the industrial revolution rationalized landscapes for capitalist asset-making. Several kinds of weediness were born from this rationalization. Pests and pathogens, for example, proliferated and emerged in new, more virulent kinds from the crowded monocrops of rationalized farming. Wetlands were drained, and fertilizers destroyed specialized ecologies; such losses empowered certain kinds of weeds. These are feral landscapes from inside agricultural and industrial rationalization. At its side, however, there were survivors, such as the remnant American prairie grasses described by historian William Cronon (1992); these grasses came to live only on railroad verges, where sparks lit fires and no one regulated the results. Weediness reaches to embrace both terrifying and hopeful ecologies.

The post-WWII 'great acceleration' has also been an acceleration of feral landscapes. Industrial capitalism moves to the most remote spots on earth to use and then quickly abandon

them as sites for asset-production. Feral landscapes replace not just the last wilderness areas but also the last peasant ecologies, with their comparatively long-term accommodations between humans and nonhumans. The massive use of fertilizer runs off into waterways, ruining them for fish and water plants. Meanwhile, toxins proliferate, and slow-degrading anthropogenic substances, including plastics, scatter everywhere.

How do these forms of weediness combine and layer upon each other? Every feral landscape dynamic layers forms of weediness brought into being at varied historical moments. Take auto-rewilding, which combines all the forms of weediness I have mentioned. Auto-rewilders are disturbance-loving and disturbance-making; the weeds of crops and livestock are talented auto-rewilders. Auto-rewilders are weedy invaders, drawing agilities from both ancient and modern conquests. Auto-rewilders are survivors in non-rationalized edge spaces; an abandoned industrial site is an edge made large. Auto-rewilders make use of the acceleration of industrial use and abandonment.

The numbing speed of capital's mobility makes auto-rewilding the best agility we have

Table 2. **Auto-rewilding's historically layered agilities**

- * Auto-rewilders are disturbance loving and disturbance making (cf 10,000BP)
- * Auto-rewilders are weedy invaders (cf 1610)
- * Auto-rewilders are survivors in non-rationalized edge spaces (cf 1745)
- * Auto-rewilders make use of the acceleration of industrial use and abandonment (cf 1945)

for survival—as well as a terrifying mess. By *agilities* I mean ways of being that emerge from historical opportunities.⁷ Where earlier thinkers imagined only mechanical repetition among nonhumans, I'm looking for emerging talents. Auto-rewilders have lots. Even where auto-rewilders are blocked, they may be lying in wait to seize the time.

Because of these layered agilities, the high seats I've identified for noticing weedy developments do not tell a historical story in themselves. Instead, they call out for stories of particular landscapes, told at multiple time-and-space scales. In those stories, we can watch agilities, which, though they emerge from different times and places, assemble for a definitive effect in the friction of landscape. In the next section of this essay, I offer a thumbnail history of the Søby brown coal beds—not of the coal, which comes much earlier, but of human habitation since the end of the last Ice Age. Several kinds of auto-rewilding agilities have developed on this multiply disturbed anthropogenic landscape. I narrate three landscape assemblages, each of which condenses human and nonhuman histories in an emergent cohesion of the multispecies moot: the moor, the mine, and the mess. Such histories are the Anthropocene in action, time lines interrupted by landscape—and landscapes radically transformed by histories at multiple scales.

THE MOOR, THE MINE, AND THE MESS: TIME LINES INTERRUPTED BY LANDSCAPE

First, the moor: already a feral landscape, emerging from human burning and grazing. It was never a landscape of full control, although people used and guided it, but rather a gathering of sheep, fire, heather, farmers, mud, sand, gravel, and, not far below, an iron hardpan, itself a historical development of human-nonhuman relations.⁸ The moor emerged from these entanglements, exceeding any singular purpose.

The Søby brown coal fields inherited its sand and gravel from the glaciers. Eastern Denmark was glaciated, but a sliver of southwest Denmark—including this site—remained free of glaciers. Instead, however, it was completely covered with glacial outwash, the result of glacial movement without being of the glacier.

Trees followed the retreating glaciers, and particularly birch, lime, and oak. Humans, too, moved north as the glaciers receded. Jutland is known for its comparatively late Neolithic, but eventually humans cut down those trees, and since they were growing on sandy glacial outwash, they did not spring back. In their slowness, they were overtaken by another landscape assemblage: the moor, a place of heather, sheep, and shepherds.

Figure 3, a well-known Danish landscape painting, shows the 19th century, a time of grazing intensification; for the earlier period, imagine it as a patch. What's missing in the image is fire, another participant in this



Figure 3. Frederik Vermehren (1823–1910), *A Jutland Shepherd on the Moors*, 855, 59.5x80cm, National Gallery of Denmark (right: detail)

gathering of ways of being. Without burning and grazing, trees come back. The moor is a feral landscape gathering historical agilities of humans, sheep, heather, and fire.

This painting also shows knitting, a long-standing livelihood activity of the peasants who lived on the moor—and one that, through the twists and turns of fiber, led to the continuing importance of the textile and garment industry in central Jutland. Here, then, my stories must enter the intertwined histories of textiles, on the one hand, and Jutland ecologies, on the other. It is not fortuitous that my character Bull is a garment industry king. Changes in the organization of textile and garment production go a long way in shaping the varied weedy landscapes that have congealed in Søby. But let me continue to climb each Anthropocene high seat, one by one.

Back when peasants occupied the moor, every shepherd had his wool knitting, and knitted garments became not just a local specialty but also an item of trade. By the 17th century, wool traders from central Jutland were

selling their products in Copenhagen, and, when Copenhagen traders complained, the king even gave them special licenses (Klitmøller 1998). 1610 is my second Anthropocene vantage point from which to survey weedy ecologies. What do we see? Despite advances in the wool trade, the Jutland moors were reeling toward the peripheries—sinking in their mud, as it were.

Two 17th-century retreats associated with human-sponsored global environmental change emerge in the records. First, the Little Ice Age left Jutland cold and damp; agriculture dwindled, and sheep died from diseases (Hansen 1983: 398). Lewis and Maslin (2015) argue that European cooling during this period is an effect of New World genocide. Second, the transfer of organisms associated with European conquest disadvantaged European wool production as other textiles became available.

Scholars have paid considerable attention to the asymmetrical ecological effects of 16th- and 17th-century European conquests (Crosby 2004; Grove 1996). Compared to Americans, Europeans were lucky; the flow of invasive

species at that time was going mainly the other way. Consider, however, the spread of European attention toward Asia. The whole point of funding exploration—both west and east—was to position European traders to get Indian cottons and Chinese silks without the mediation of Muslims, whom Christian Europeans had learned to despise. In 1600 and 1602, respectively, the British and Dutch East India Companies were formed, with their gunboats and wealthy investors. By 1610, Europeans had a presence in the Asian trade. In 1664 alone, the British East India Company imported over a quarter of a million pieces of calico and chintz (Wells 2007: 26). The result in Jutland? Wool was no longer exciting to urban elites, who could now buy colorful cotton and silk. Jutland's moors dozed unmolested and mixed with oak scrub as European metropolises looked elsewhere for their riches. Slavery, colonialism, and the industrial revolution—the dynamic developments of Europe—came into being through the search for cotton, not wool (Beckert 2014). The sustainability of the moor's weedy ecology was a side effect of the trade in cotton and silk, which allowed wool production to molder in backwaters such as central Jutland. Only later would wool production be modernized.

The industrial revolution is my next high seat, and, indeed, central Jutland landscapes were transformed. In the important sheep counties, the sheep population more than doubled between 1837 and 1871 (Hansen 1983: 388). By 1847, an estimated 25,000 people were occupied in knitting, and while most knitting was done by individual peasants, workshops emerged in the Herning area, which imported wool from surrounding, poorer districts (Hansen 1983: 386).

In the last part of the 19th century, the meaning of 'progress' changed. After Denmark lost its most fertile farmlands to Prussia in 1864,

Danes dedicated themselves to turning Jutland's moors into modern farms, saying, 'what was lost without must be regained within' (Olwig 1984: 58). Artificial fertilizers and machines that could break the moor's iron hardpan made it possible to plant crops and tree plantations and to raise dairy cattle and pigs. Sheep rearing declined as moors disappeared. Yet the emerging Herning-Ikast-Brande textile triangle was an exception; already a center for wool production, wool remained the center of modernization efforts. Small factories sprung up, and travelling wool-sellers increased (Klitmøller 1998). Wool merchants introduced knitting machines and a putting-out system for wool garments. Knitting scaled up, no longer left in the hands of peasants. Serious money could be made, enough to become capital. By the early 20th century, textile and garment entrepreneurs were importing cotton to add to their businesses; the decline of Jutland sheep herding would no longer form an impediment to textile production.⁹ By the mid-20th century, one hundred and fifty factories produced textiles and clothing, much of it for export (Hansen 1983:385).

Note that Danish, like English, uses the French word *entrepreneur* to praise businessmen as those who make things happen. From the first, these garment and textile entrepreneurs were a close-knit group, tied by kinship, marriage, and personal favors (Illeris 1983; 1992). They were also what we now call 'flexible': they moved capital around from one business sector to another.

This is one way to understand why some invested in brown coal during World War II. The Damgaard family, for example, had three notable brothers, raised in textiles: Aage, Mads, and Knud. When WWII came along, it was Knud who moved back and forth from brown coal mining at Søby to textile production. He also continued to work closely with his

textile-industry brothers, starting a textile high school among other things.¹⁰ Not all the investment in brown coal mining came from the regional textile and garment industry; entrepreneurs arrived from all over Denmark. But the regional commitments of this industry have laid continuing sediments on the landscape, even in its disruptions.

We have arrived at World War II, my next high seat for weedy landscapes, and the Søby mines. What a time it was: everything was turned upside down in the most literal sense. The war cut Denmark off from its British coal supplies; some politicians tried to protect Danes from being conscripted into Germany; poor moor farmers were delighted to sell their land to entrepreneurs.¹¹ The net result of this conjuncture was a make-work program of shoveling for one of the world's most inefficient and dirty fuels, brown coal. Great holes were dug and drained; sand piles and acid lakes were left behind. This is a good landscape to think about auto-rewilding precisely because the former ecosystem was wiped out. Thus the 'mess'.

After 1958, brown coal companies were required to put funds in a landscape rehabilitation fund, and it was used for tree replanting, particularly with fast-growing exotic conifers such as American lodgepole pine. Lodgepole turned out to be an accomplished auto-rewilder; it took off across the landscape, and now landowners battle, unsuccessfully, to cut it down (Gan and Tsing n.d.b.). It also invited all kinds of animals, including red deer, who showed up for the first time in 1985. That brought hunters, who bought up the land and fought against development, citing the instability of the sand piles left by mining, with their proneness to sudden collapse. With management for hunting, other animals moved in; daring auto-rewilders took over. Fed by the hunters, red deer proliferated like proverbial rabbits.

Meanwhile, after the war, the textile and garment industry rationalized and boomed. Then came the end of the Cold War; former Soviet states became much cheaper places to make textiles and garments (Illeris 1992). Our entrepreneurs were ready with their flexibility. They outsourced all production and specialized in design and innovation—and amassing capital. Their textile workers lost their jobs. But business analysts think of them as great models (Illeris n.d.). They have lots of money and lots of time. They invest in modern art—and hunting. They push others out of their hunting grounds, thus encouraging the red deer. Red deer suppress the plants, making the landscape useless for farms or tree plantations. Together, hunters and red deer create a particular kind of weediness.

THIS IS COUNTRY FOR THE DREAM OF THE STAG.

These histories help me read how the dream of the stag enchants at Søby. For the Bull, hunting has something to do with playing with money: each tests his mettle; each develops his drive. Hunting also draws government ministers and CEOs into his network; he invites them to his hunts, thus augmenting financial flexibility, another kind of freedom. As he explained, he isn't interested in shooting for meat. If he kills, he lets someone else do the butchering. Besides, the autumn stags he prefers are so rank that no one wants to eat them. It's his confrontation with the great male that is at stake. So too for the buck, who looks at the stag with the urge to fight. The buck, like the Bull, is a historical figure, a bundle of congealed agilities in this moment of auto-rewilding. He stands there in preparation; he is grooming himself to steal the herd and to inseminate the hinds. While the hinds can be said to lead the herd, they lead for food and safety. The bucks, in contrast,

are masters of reproduction and expansion. In this protected zone, the landscape assemblage I've called the mess, there is room for male pretension and fighting, more than in a stable ecology. Herds can spread and reproduce; males search for wild corners. Just as for the Bull, for the buck this is a historical time for freedom and ferocity.

The dream of the stag thus acts as an axis of coordination between the projects of the buck and the Bull. Without much notice between the two, they find themselves with overlapping projects of world-making. Through such overlaps, a landscape emerges. Lots of other organisms, as well as non-vital things, occupy this landscape. But every time even a small coordination emerges, a moment of friction if you will (Tsing 2005), it has landscape-making effects. It gives the assemblage at least a momentary trajectory. The feral menagerie of the Søby brown coal fields—from wolves to lodgepole pines—owes a lot to a moment of coordination between the projects of red deer, on the one hand, and financial entrepreneurs, on the other. All landscapes are made in such moments of friction. This is why we need both human and nonhuman histories to know them.

The coordination between red deer and hunters encourages a particular kind of weedy landscape; it also blocks out others. This is the message of nature writer George Monbiot's recent book *Feral*, an exploration of the possibilities of rewilding (Monbiot 2015). Several chapters take readers to Scotland, a good analog for the central Jutland site I've been describing. Red deer hunters own huge tracts of land there, and red deer and hunters together encourage a particular landscape. (Mathilde Højrup's research followed the central Jutland nexus there: one landowner is a central Jutland garment magnate, and he brings Jutland-style hunting to Scotland.¹²) Monbiot doesn't like the

landscape of red deer and hunter landowners. He sees another weedy landscape waiting at the gates, excluded. If you fence even a small area so that deer can't get at it, he shows, a forest begins to emerge. Oaks and pines are auto-rewilders just waiting for a different set of coordinations to allow them to return. Monbiot argues for the advantage of this set of weeds, in waiting. They encourage a much larger suite of animals; they restore some of the floral richness of the place. Every landscape coordination blocks out other coordinations. Every weed that takes over excludes others. This is a useful caution. Without calling it by name, Monbiot ties exclusion to the dream of the stag. He mentions the British painting, 'Monarch of the Glen', which shows a Scottish red-deer stag with vague wild mountains behind him. Landscape details cannot be in focus—because the hunting coordination disallows it. Monbiot condemns the dream of the stag for blocking the richness of other coordinations.

The dream of the stag is a form of self-absorption in which other enabling engagements are forgotten. One coordination mesmerizes; other landscape assemblages disappear. What if we take this insight into theoretical territory? There is an irony here I want to probe. To be enchanted by the dream of the stag is to care about nonhumans—but only to be caught in the erasure of landscape assemblage. How can our very best thinkers about multispecies relations yet return again and again to human exceptionalism and landscapes made entirely by human dreams and schemes?

ONE PLACE TO BEGIN IS WITH UNREPENTANT HUMAN EXCEPTIONALISM.

My reading of the dream of the stag makes me sympathetic, even as I disagree. Human

exceptionalism excludes nonhumans as outside the charmed circle of world-making. Here other humans take the place of the stag; the theorist is mesmerized by the dream of the human. In limiting focus to this one enchanting antagonist, then, other entanglements are erased. Human self-making rather than multispecies' coordination takes over the analysis. The enhanced agilities of the viewer, caught in the dream of the human, block out the lifeworld histories that make the dream possible.

From here, it is easy to alight on philosopher Martin Heidegger, that astonishing thinker about language, being, and dwelling as agilities of humans. In his focus on the dream of the human, however, he excludes all others, although at least he has the courage to say so. Consider his famous claim that animals are poor in world (Heidegger 1995: 185). This statement would reduce my buck's gaze to instinct; as an animal, to Heidegger, the buck has only its inherited sensory sphere. It cannot develop agilities or make worlds; humans alone are world makers. Yet consider how this is a reflex of how Heidegger defines 'world', which for him requires language as *logos*, a particular human proclivity. If we defined world from a deer's proclivities, humans would be poor in world. Heidegger is focused on the human; the animal is collateral damage. But watch how this blocks the history of landscape assemblages. The animal is instinctive, that is, mechanical; it has no history, for history, to Heidegger, is made in the meaning space of language.¹³ The animal is ahistorical because it does not live with language. Thus animals have no historical projects to coordinate with humans; the *mise en scene* of human life, the landscape, must be entirely human made. Heidegger offers an exceptionally clear statement of the dream of the human, which catches us in its enchantments, blinding us to others. Indeed, late in life, Heidegger

moved away from this stance, thus making his earlier position even clearer. It is as if my buck was there. In 'Language in the poem', Heidegger (1971) shows us the gaze of a deer, albeit a deer in a poem; the lines between human and deer blur in the face of their common mortality (see Mitchell 2011). The dream of the deer, ironically, releases Heidegger from the dream of the human.¹⁴

From here, it is not too large a step to anthropologists working on alternative ontologies. Consider those with the strongest critiques of the West, that is, theorists of radically different ways to do worlds (e.g., Mignolo 2011; Escobar 2011; Viveiros de Castro 2015). I am full of excitement and respect for this move, which has woken anthropology from a long doze. And yet—isn't it a branch of human exceptionalism? This might be a shocking claim. Lots of nonhumans are key figures of concern, from jaguars to shamans' snuff bottles.¹⁵ Yet these nonhumans do not have their own ontologies; they are brought into being by humans. Only humans have ontologies; only humans make worlds. Only humans make landscapes.¹⁶

I tend to agree that only humans have ontologies. Ontologies are philosophies of being, and it's not clear to me that any organisms other than humans bother with philosophy. Yet perhaps the situation changes when we consider Helen Verran's term 'ontics' (Verran 2001). Ontics are not philosophies but practices in which modes of being are enacted. Anyone can do ontics, whether or not they are interested in philosophy. A deer, a plant, a stone: all have ontics, even if they don't have ontologies. Furthermore, ontics are humbler than ontologies; they don't demand to take up all the space. Most thinkers about ontology divide the world into contrasts. There is Ontology A and Ontology B, and ne'er the twain shall meet. Ontics, in contrast, touch,

overlap, work around each other, layer, and mutate in each other's presence. There are axes of coordination as well as refusals. Looking at landscape emergence is a matter of ontics. It is the coordination between the ontics of the buck and the Bull, rather than their coherence in a single cosmology, which offers a powerful trajectory to landscape history. Landscape assemblages arise in the juxtaposition of varied modes of making worlds; no single cosmology can order a landscape alone.

SO WHY HAS IT BEEN SO EASY TO IGNORE THIS POINT?

The dream of the stag, or the jaguar, or the West, enchants viewers to enhance their own agilities in the chase while neglecting the coordinations that make this possible. The landscape blurs and the only nonhumans that can be seen are those that occupy the space of the dream, the space of the chase.

This argument is not a plug for a more scientific storytelling. When it comes to the dream of the stag, scientific stories can be just as bad as cosmological stories. Let me return to Monbiot's *Feral* (2015) as exemplar. When I first read that book, I couldn't get to the ecological insights because I was so disturbed by the frame. The premise of the book is that rewilding begins in the heart of the self, and while masculinity is never mentioned directly, it is clear that this is what is intended. Rewilding, to Monbiot, means putting oneself into dangerous situations on purpose in order to cultivate an imagined intimacy with wild animals and primitive people. By 'imagined' here, I mean fantasized. Monbiot's intimacy with these Others is limited by the fact that this is a project for building the self; it is the wild interiority of the masculine self that best promotes the feral, he tells us. This is not about relationships or coordinations but

about individuals who find their feral selves. As Monbiot puts it, describing how good it feels to shoulder a dead deer he found in the woods, '[c]ivilization slid off as easily as a bathrobe' (2015: 33). One is left with one's inner animal. Despite Monbiot's dislike of red deer hunting, this is the dream of the stag. Monbiot's immersion in multispecies landscapes is eclipsed by self-making, which erases other agendas.

Again, the dream of the stag helps me be sympathetic, even as I disagree. It helps me put Monbiot's chase in the context of his antagonists, the ones he calls 'civilization'. Consider the public intellectuals of Anthropocene discussion. A powerful group has grown up to advocate the 'good Anthropocene', that is, the one that can be controlled and exploited by familiar civilizational tools. I think of these voices as the 'inheriting sons' of Anthropocene thought. They are 'ecomodernists' who use the master's tools to refurbish the master's house. Their tools are capitalism, elite technology, and canonical philosophy. (See, for example, Breakthrough Institute 2015; Ellis and Ramankutty 2008; Purdy 2015). They tell us that these tools can fix what's broken; they don't worry about weeds. Like other social engineers before them, they tell us that nothing will go wrong with their plans. They are not lured by the dream of the stag; they just want to inherit the property.

In contrast, Monbiot is a rebellious son. He sees the problem of civilization; he develops his will to resist the mandate of the father. Here he joins other rebellious sons: heroes, pirates, loners. (See, for example, Abbey 1968; Watson 1980; Krakauer 1996). They immerse themselves in wild places to sop up their wildness. They hope that the sheer strength of their newly established selfhood will defeat civilization. Yet they are limited by the dream of the stag. They don't notice the entanglements and coordinations that take them there. It's hard not



Figure 4. *Adolf Henrik Mackeprang* (1833–1911). *Kronhjort*.

Oil on canvas. 76.2 × 56.4 cm. ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum.

to imagine that they are escaping from the wife and kids. If we want to take the Anthropocene seriously, even through description, we must do better than either of these two masculine alternatives, inheritors and rebels.

THE ANTHROPOCENE IS AN INVITATION TO PAY ATTENTION TO WEEDS.

So many of us are Anthropocene weeds. Weeds are creatures of disturbance; we make use of opportunities, climb over others, and form collaborations with those who allow us to proliferate. The key task is to figure out which kinds of weediness allow landscapes of more-than-human livability. This requires history at

many scales. Thus the field site I have described, an unremarkable ruined place in the boring center of Denmark: any ruined place can provoke stories of weedy assemblage for the last 10,000 years—and the last 10 years.

Through attention to the coordinations that allow particular weedy assemblages, landscape can be a research object that shows us the heterogeneity of world-making projects. To watch the dream of the stag, and yet attend to coordinations that hunters ignore, we need to make histories of landscapes that involve all kinds of beings, human and not human. Thus, too, we can take up a central analytic challenge of thinking Anthropocene: how to combine landscape and history such that difference and possibility remain in sight.

What can varied approaches to landscape do? In this essay I have addressed this question by throwing many different kinds of materials together. Perhaps this can open further conversation about the more-than-human social worlds around us—and the challenge of surviving the Anthropocene.

NOTES

- 1 I am grateful to the Aarhus University Research on the Anthropocene (AURA) team for the collaborative research on which this article is based. Mathilde Højrup deserves special gratitude for helping me understand the social history of central Jutland and translating Danish research on this issue. Thanks to Anu Lounela and the Finnish Anthropological Society for soliciting this essay for their special concern with landscape.

The fieldsite, located in central Jutland, is Søby Brunkulslejerne; it is the focus for AURA's collaborative fieldwork, which promotes collaborations between humanists and natural scientists. Anthropologists work here together with biologists, ecologists, science-studies scholars, and

- artists. To date, AURA research at this site has been conducted by Filippo Bertoni, Nathalia Brichet, Nils Bubandt, Thiago Cardoso, Rachel Cypher, Maria Dahm, Pierre Du Plessis, Natalie Forssman, Peter Funch, Frida Hastrup, Maria Henriksen, Colin Hoag, Mathilde Højrup, Agata Konczai, Thomas Kristensen, Katy Overstreet, Julia Poerting, Meredith Root-Bernstein, Jens-Christian Svenning, Heather Swanson, Line Thorsen, and Stine Vestbo, as well as myself. My paper draws from all their research. Master's theses from this research include Dahm 2014 and Højrup 2015. A special issue of articles from this research is in preparation.
- 2 I would have preferred Mackeprang's 'Roaring stag standing by a lake', the more iconic treatment, seen in many reproductions (<http://www.plentyofpaintings.com/Adolf-Henrik-Mackeprang/Roaring-Stag-Standing-By-A-Lake-oil-painting.html>) and forms of homage (e.g., <http://hp-comic.com/roaring-stag-standing-by-a-lake/>). However, I was unable to obtain permission for that painting.
 - 3 For further discussion of this point, see Gan and Tsing, n.d.a.; Tsing, n.d.
 - 4 See anthropocene.au.dk for more information on this program.
 - 5 Bonneuil and Fressoz (2015) offer a useful introduction to the history of Anthropocene discussions.
 - 6 The term originates from Crosby (2004); I am indebted to his analysis here.
 - 7 I take the term 'agility' from Donna Haraway (2007), who uses it to describe a game in which people and dogs learn each other's capacities. The term here refers to many kinds of historically acquired abilities, across species.
 - 8 The story of the making of hardpan-lined moors is a wonderful model for noticing the unintentional interplay between humans and geology, so central to the Anthropocene. Here is how archaeologist Karl Butzer (1982: 125-126) tells the consequences of Mesolithic deforestation in northern Europe: 'In cool wet environments with low-nutrient soils, removal of forest reduces plant evapotranspiration and raises the already high water table; furthermore, deforestation reduces soil biota, increases soil acidity, and thus favors leaching of soil nutrients. As a consequence, acid tolerant plants, such as spruce, heather, and mosses expand, reinforcing the trend toward acid soils in which 'raw' humus accumulates. Seasonal dehydration of exposed soil leads to irreversible dehydration of iron and aluminum oxides, favoring subsoil hardpan formation and further impeding proper internal soil drainage. Eventually, infertile and waterlogged cultural podsoles, peats, and heath soils are generated, creating soils that are marginal or unsuitable for agriculture, while favoring an acidic vegetation of little grazing value. In this way, extensive cultural wastelands (moors and heaths) were formed in northwestern and northern Europe, particularly in montane environments and on sandy substrates.'
 - 9 See <http://www.visitherning.com/In-int/herning/textile-city-herning>
 - 10 See http://www.kulturarv.dk/1001fortaellinger/en_GB/herning-folk-high-school
 - 11 As British and German coal were gobbled up for war mobilizations, Denmark began looking for energy sources. With German occupation of Denmark in 1940, coal imports from the United Kingdom were fully closed. For discussions of early policy decisions that led to brown coal mining by hand, see Nielsen 1982; Kristensen 2009. Mathilda Højrup's interviews established that many farmers were eager to leave (Højrup 2015).
 - 12 Mathilde Højrup, personal communication, October 2015.
 - 13 Aho (2007:10) explains this point as follows: 'Logos, on [Heidegger's] view, articulates the unfolding historical space of meaning, making it possible for us to be attuned to things. The animal is not tuned in this way because it is held captive within its environment by instinctual responses.... The animal's way of being...is 'ahistorical...''
 - 14 'The stranger's footprint/ rings through the silver night./ Would a blue deer remember his path?'

(Trakl 1915). On the twilight paths of spiritual transition, remembrance moves between human and deer. The blue deer is *Wild*, a game animal and a beast, but both human and animal are transformed by the twilight into witnesses of movement and death. Mitchell (2011) guides my reading here.

15 For jaguars, see Viveiros de Castro (2004); for snuff bottles, see Pedersen (2012).

16 The major exception of which I am aware is Eduardo Kohn's *How Forests Think* (2013), although even Kohn makes communication the *sine qua non* of being, an almost Heideggerian move.

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