

Mary Walling Blackburn  
**A Spirit Parsed  
from Meat**

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**Reviewed:**

**Bambi: A Life in the Woods (Bambi: Eine Lebensgeschichte aus dem Walde)**

by Felix Salten  
Neue Freie Presse, Vienna, August  
15–October 21, 1922

**Bambi, A Life in the Woods**

translated from the German by Whittaker  
Chambers  
Simon & Schuster, 1928

**Bambi**

a film directed by David Hand, production  
illustration led by Tyrus Wong, 1942

**Bambi's Childhood (Detstvo Bemi)**

a film directed by Natalya Bondarchuk,  
1985

**Bambi's Youth (Junost Bemi)**

a film directed by Natalya Bondarchuk,  
1987

**Bambi**

translated from the German by Hannah  
Correll  
Clydesdale Press, 2019

**The Original Bambi**

translated from the German by Jack Zipes  
Princeton University Press, 2022

**Bambi**

translated from the German by Damion  
Searls  
NYRB Classics, 2022

Together, we flay Bambi; we peg his fawn-  
hide; it dries.

At the end of this literary task, reviewing the  
book form, nothing is animate anymore.

Show me a truly interpersonal living deer –  
the cervine one that actively and repeatedly  
reveals its specificity to a human. Sighted, their  
bodies encompass a contemporary and violent  
itch for liquid eyes, sleek muscularity, and glossy  
hair-fur, but like an emissary's spouse| a top-  
notch sex worker| a deer keeps their interiority  
on lock down (even while butchered). When I was  
young, *doe-like*, I was an artist's model who lived  
with other artist's models- our glade was half-  
alive with us disassociated beasts. At home, we  
wore our clothes; but as workers, we were naked

personnel – anonymous to unbookish students – those deeply hung-over flayers.<sup>1</sup>

To return to the business of the book, Marguerite Duras, penning a column for a local French newspaper in the 80s, notes a deadening exteriority is both the nature and the endpoint of the book review. “Criticism, especially written, journalistic, kills the book that it portrays. To keep the book from obstructing the critic’s operation, the review immobilizes the book, puts it to sleep, distances it and kills it without understanding it.” But this critic’s intention is explicitly to finish off *Bambi* in all of its forms: *Bambi*, first as dreamed up by the originary author Felix Salten, then morphed American by Disney, and finally its Soviet forms – *Bambi’s Childhood* [Detstvo Bembii] (1985) and *Bambi’s Youth* [Junost Bembii] (1987) – reworked by filmmaker Natalya Bondarchuk, better known outside of Russia for her role as Hari in Andrei Tarkovsky’s *Solaris* (1972).

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deer dilogy – where human actors impersonate creatures, was shot in national preserves/parks in the Crimean Peninsula and Estonia. Here, Nikolai Burlyayev, the child star of Tarkovsky’s *Ivan’s Childhood* [Ivanovo detstvo] (1962), plays the role of adult Bambi. Today, a geriatric Burlyayev continues as director of the annual Golden Knight Moscow Film Festival of Slavic and Orthodox Peoples; he is a member of the State Duma and still delivers talks to acting students. His muzzle parts and sound erupts: “Queer is a pathology; it’s a sin.”<sup>2</sup> Why not picture a cobweb clinging to his Styrofoam horns? One translucent strand is soft power, and another is gender.

Back in the late '80s, after the wrap-up of both *Bambis*, Bondarchuk relays that the animal doubles of the human actors were donated to the child survivors of the Chernobyl meltdown.<sup>3</sup> In my head, I draw a misshapen map of the USSR; motion lines trace the relocation sites of irradiated children and the forever homes of the animal stars. But what of tonight’s nuclear battlefield? Is there a functional live webcam out there in the Zone of Alienation where I can tune into a shaking spider secreting a skewed lattice of sunlit gossamer strands – its bright irregular warp indicating persistent mutations in her body?<sup>4</sup> Might I spy, with jaundiced, remote eye, the spider eating her own web? After a trauma-feed, she’s full (again) on her own distortions. [center]\*\*\*

In 1939, Walt Disney sent a couple of his animators to the Maine woods to sketch.

The animators animate in my head: early twentieth century white men, bloated or lanky, replicating their own works: cartoonish figures in transit, they lope and bob; mouths and throats stretch to accommodate elongated roadside hot dogs and a splash of joe; they are animated to gape, to release distended stools into a tangle of quivering public pipes. What feels gnarly (and toxic) is combed out in the drawing: this North American pleasure in simplification (of our national horrors) is so escalated, in these Disney productions and otherwise, that it reveals itself – as manic, dense, and on the brink of ... The paradox is obvious, and this aesthetic crystallizes its political intent. But to hyper-detach from this sort of complexity was and is essential to the sort of white nationalism produced by hegemonic forces at play in the US since its inception.

Disney’s kingdom runs on the historic liquefaction–genocidal and extractive–of ecosystems (the mutual relation of mineral,



*Bambi's Childhood* (Детство Бемби), 1985, directed by Natalya Bondarchuk.

Bondarchuk’s Soviet psychedelic-ballet

animal, and botanical) and draws it ... drinkable. I gulp. You gulp. Your deer gulps. Something is spilling out of the screen into us. I want my text to be a barium. Can it act as a radiocontrast agent, allowing us to image the guts and illuminate a cultural interior? And then, what?

Cue close ups of hazelnuts, asters, and coarse-grained granites.

Disney's animators' work in Maine was to rough out a forest, a preliminary one that would house Bambi in film instead of a book, a deeply rural wood instead of a near suburban Central European game reserve just shy of fin-de-siecle Wien. Away from Orange County, sketchers yanked the setting of the Bambi narrative from Pre-Nazi Austria to Americanized meadow and stump. Because most contemporary US children's books eschew the specificity of plant identification for the more generalized "tree," "bush," and "flower," the specificity of that Disney field trip bewilders.<sup>5</sup> Down East, these animators parsed their introduced plants from their native ones; they sieved invasive sparrows, red squirrels, and Queen Anne's lace from local red columbine, the Canadian porcupine, and shagbark hickory tree, as Disney demanded scores of photos from the Maine forest.

After the animators returned to Orange County there was an official government offering from the State of Maine; two orphan fawns were shipped from the Katahdin Wilderness area to California; these live models in a Disney studio would morph from baby to adult whitetails under the animators' watch, an artist's gaze differentiated from the hunter's. In a photo of the live model session, the deer in the center is no longer a fawn; he is surrounded by humans with sketchpads; how so still? I look for a chain.

Tyrus Wong, working in studio as what is called an "in-betweeners," catches word that the production process is in crisis and offers Disney sketches influenced by Song Dynasty landscapes. What once were drawings of indigenous witch hazel, hemlock, and waxwing become the idea of flower, plant, and bird. Wong's solution salvages a nearly junked production. It is of note, given Bambi's storyline, that at age nine, Wong left China to join his father in LA; he never saw his mother again.

Wong spends two years generating desaturated atmospheric scenery, only to be fired after an animator's strike he did not participate in. Wong's employment was dissolved; its only causation seems simply to be existing outside of the Caucasian. Wong, for Walt

Disney, appears to encapsulate the *idea of refusal*, even when nothing inside "the mouse" was refused.

Post-production, the model deer lived in a small enclosure in Griffith Park; outside of their cage wended a miniature railroad purportedly gifted to the fledgling state of Israel, black walnut trees, mule deer, and mountain lions.<sup>6</sup> At the edge of the park, drifters camped out amongst the bamboo stands growing along the LA river. This was after its course was forced into a *Mother Trench* (c. 1781), and then diverted into a series of *zanjas* by *zanjeros*, ditch-riders.<sup>7</sup> Straddled water. But before the bottom was cemented over.

In the middle of the twelfth century, at the Mediterranean port of Narbonne<sup>8</sup>, a Jewish exegete named RaDak, also known as Rabbi David ben Yosef Kimchi (1160–1235 CE), comments on a Talmudic passage that some scholars say began as a gazelle eating mildly poisonous greens but whose subject has morphed over the ages: *The deer, when it is tired, it digs a pit and places its antlers in it and bellows, and water rises from the abyss, as it is said: As the hart panteth after the water brooks.*

In the beginning of the twentieth century, in Ottoman-ruled Jerusalem, the roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) became extinct. *Capreolus capreolus*—small, quick, red, and common to Europe—is the species of deer Bambi is modeled after. Online, European hunters sell roe skulls; because they are light and tiny, the shipping is nominal. Offline, I recall a US vegan holding a heavy can of deer meat in her hand, her mother's boyfriend's stockpile.

On June 8, 1944, *Bambi* premiered in Israel. According to *Ha-mashkif*, a Tel Aviv news daily that listed local cinema screenings, it ran in Tel Aviv for two more decades.<sup>9</sup>

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A male Persian Fallow Deer in Mount Carmel Nature Reserve, Israel. On December 8, 1978, on the eve of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, four female fallow deer were airlifted from Iran to Israel. They had been connected to males which were previously transferred to Israel. The airlifting operation was a symbol of friendship between the Persian Sheikh's brother and the staff at the Israel Nature and Parks Authority. The entire group was released into the Carmel Hai Bar Nature Reserve by the Nature and Parks Authority. The was the original group of fallow deer from which expanded into Israel's Persian fallow deer breeding nucleus. License: CC BY-SA 3.0.

Some November in mid-1980s Crimea. Two men, encamped in the woods, breach the perimeter of the set of *Bambi's Youth* and coax three tamed fawns from their holding pens; it is the younger man's birthday; in celebration, they kill, roast, and eat. A US tabloid claims the authorities find the men passed out drunk beside the remains. The man celebrating his birthday will be sentenced to six years hard labor. The older celebrant will serve four years in a labor camp. 2,452 km north, in Leningrad, *The Mitki* make zines that joyfully feature folksy cartoon fools because these celebrated bumblerers are ill-equipped to be heroic or beautiful or useful to anyone and everyone. But these southern fawn-eaters exceed these punk expectations ... maybe exceed punk feelings, even. Are you weeping while burping? Let your tears run into your open-mouth belch. Maybe this is how we will all eat any meat in the 2030s.

In the early '90s, an acquaintance stands on the street with me. It is very bright out. He is blinking. He is explaining that while driving in Maine yesterday, he accidentally smashed into an albino fawn. Puled over and waiting for the state trooper to collect the white form, he was stuck in the fact of how he is not a white form. He smiles nervously as he relays the kill. The sunlight feels like his first interrogator: Did he hold the deer in his arms (pieta-style)? Did he consider harvesting? My uncle used to dry-cry about how some white hunters used to strap the legal carcass to their vehicle's roof and let it rot

in the sun. They were in it for the horns.

I am not sure my friend has a knife and a tarp in his car; I do not know if he is like my mother and knows how to safely separate the game from the guts. I am unsure if field dressing and eating curbside is illegal. I am uncertain as whether the government would process the fawn and redistribute it as meat.<sup>10</sup>

We stand there feeling terrible about the baby and the waste. We stand there quiet – in the forcefield of his physical beauty. A strong wind is whipping his hair into a halo of straight black lines. I note dark freckles scattered across this near poacher's cheekbones and lips. We are not in a thicket of ideas anymore. Somewhere there is a striped spot pattern of whiter dots on cream-colored fur in a hole on a real hot day. Alive, the animal belonged to its mother; and dead, it belongs to the state. Spirit parsed from meat; the government decides: commodity or waste.<sup>11</sup>

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, I am visiting the Redwood National Park Interpretation Center. On the table, a stag skull emerges from a hunk of tree. The ranger explains that first, the deer body rotted away, but each year, the antlers moved farther and farther up the redwood's trunk. I thought I wanted to imagine the ensnared deer as Harvey Weinstein, made into a stag prisoner by a righteous deity. But I swap my punishment fantasy for something that cleaves closer to a liberatory real: chickadees alighting on the embedded rack, bones falling. Bright yellow slugs gliding and fucking, hermaphroditic, amongst the pieces.  
[center]\*\*\*

In 2019, Clydesdale Classics, an imprint of Simon and Schuster, publishes a translation of Felix Salten's *Bambi* by Hannah Cornell.<sup>12</sup> In 2022, Princeton University Press publishes Jack Snipes's translation of *Bambi* in the UK in January and in the US in February. The New York Review of Books publishes a translation by Damien Searls in September of 2022. Note that three different English translations of Salten's *Bambi, A Life in the Woods* will appear in three years. Last summer, I am unaware of this surge. Passing through Farmington, Maine, I pick up a brittle copy, the first printed in English, translated by the US spy and journalist Whittaker Chambers (1928). I smell the book, and, in the humidity, dark yellow pages fall out here and there. Holding it, I remember that a friend of mine attended this town's rural university for a single term. He remembers a guest lecturer whose class was intended to detail a personal

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and expansive history of genocide. The lecturer wept the entirety of each class. Masked and rushing, I am contemplating the lecturer's pedagogy while paying for my books; for once, I am trying to get out of Trauma Town quick. I am close but not very close to the forest where Disney's animators convened. We are driving away from it. The animators' work-trip took place decades before people and deer were more liable to be sickened by infected ticks. Was it the tail end of TB and polio then? Did the men and deer sprawl on the mosses and grasses – some humans with blood alcohol high but blood clean of babeosis?

By the spring of 2023, the targeted ads in my feed only contain a singular child's red tank top patterned with plump yet gangly fawns. The Bambi publishing blitz has settled without any sort of deeper reckoning of Salten mobilizing Zionist visions; no palpable collective feeling around Salten's possible identity as child pornographer; not even a discernible cervine vibe shift in marketing. Given this, it seems unlikely that Bambi's unexpurgated sequel which Salten claimed was specifically written for adult audiences will be translated. Instead, perhaps a new deer narrative that begins with the bluish CCTV footage of a lone stag wondering the deserted hallways of an elementary school.

In another cyan clip, a hart breaks through the plate glass front of an American beauty salon. Patrons scatter. He bucks. Strip mall quivers: Dreamy male aggression? Trance-like animal revolt?

**POP-UP AD:** Bambo, the Deer Avenger: a synthesis of Rambo and Bambi. Bambo stalks and blows apart bloated white human hunters and beds/ruts does in rustic cabins ...

(The masculine dimensions of a potentially uncircumcised Salten feels more Bambo than Bambi, but more Shin Bet than Shaun the Sheep. Is Bambo auto-fiction or auto-feuilleton – yet in a twist of time travel, a video game stretching backward from this future?<sup>13</sup>)

The real Salten is a stag-man who wants, in vain, to be held in intellectual regard by a German-speaking, Jewish, male literary elite of means including Hofmannsthal, Schnitzler, Zweig, and Kraus, amongst other luminaries.<sup>14</sup> Like a Bambo, Salten rapidly pursues successive sexual conquests and challenges men to duels. Still, total control remains elusive. Is he like or not unlike a digital deer with a machine gun?

Impulsively, he slaps a critic across the

face.

Sniff HIM and stomp. *Wheeze. Blow.* So go the deer.

In Salten's *Bambi* (1922), the hunter is never named, only gendered. "It's HIM!" gasp all sorts of animals. In Thornton Burgess' *Lightfoot the Deer* (1921), another cervid yarn, the phrase *terrible gun* dangles from the pronoun without fail.<sup>15</sup> Lightfoot bemoans the *dreadful man-smell* ... A diamond shaped lump, the vomeronasal organ in a hart or hind's mouth, serves as a "second nose"; it amplifies all scent beyond human capabilities; gun and genital fuse into a multi-pronged pronoun. In a mid-century cartoon, an animal knots the long stalk of the rifle and the gun powder's bulge reverses direction, exploding in the hunter's face.<sup>16</sup> In rural Vermont, there is a day reserved for juvenile hunters. From inside the house, I hear an adolescent cavalcade discharge their guns for hours into the surrounding hills. What was HIM becomes THEM! I refrain from walking the baby and dog. HIM to THEM. Free as my newborn – as no gender has taken root in the small frame. The little hunters, neither boy nor girl, are untethered from gender, too. THEM boom. THEM BOOM BOOM.

In the Palin-Trump era, the visibility of white American *feminine-nazis* in camo increases.<sup>17</sup> We see ladies splaying the carcass while jeering for trophy pics. But there is something about the purpose of masculinity as expressed in male bodies that Salten and Burgess are circling. These agnate books, *Bambi* and *Lightfoot*, are written and published in the lull between the great wars. After the armies disperse, the dead buried, and the maimed stowed, both Austro and American cultures were hard pressed to reconcile just how a man alone should or can kill. In climate-degraded woods, HIM withdraws from the social to recover from war and prepare for the next. Can HIM smell his own Terrible Gun? Can HIM rim his nostril with the barrel? HIM hums his last HYMN. And what of HYM as pronoun rising?

[center]\*\*\*

1975. Cinema House. Orange, Nova Scotia. My mother and aunt drop me and my cousin off at the door. My cousin is six. I am three. She is the one in charge of us.

On our farm, the phone is a party line shared by many, and there are no satellites and therefore no television. We listen to children's radio broadcasts on the weekend. This day the

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movie screen will function as narcotic. In the memoirs of an Iranian film director, he describes throngs of unattended children ruling the bright afternoon screenings in the dark city theaters of his childhood; in our foggy coastal farming village, the theater is a quarter full. Me and my cousin settle down to watch Disney's *Bambi*. I am not sure how many minutes have elapsed by the time the forest is in flames – the upturned asses of animals fleeing amongst smoke and fire. The fawn's parent seems dead. Trauma spiked, sped up by the reel in its projector. I abruptly decide to leave the theater. My cousin's decision? Stay. Mine? Go. The ticket taker is gone. The lobby is deserted. I stand there and turn the emptiness of the ceiling, the floor, the door, the weight of the air. No one comes. A flat and featureless cloud is framed by the partitions in the glass door. I stand in the lobby until *Bambi* comes to an end.

Does *Bambi*'s Disney mama finally appear Down East again, her burns visible but healed, a fresh baby at her heels? I wouldn't know. Is she the *idea of a mother*? And is this spectral force joined by the *idea of a child*? Perhaps I don't know. This is the same year my mother has returned from a year without me; a year she has spent in Lebanon, Egypt, Sudan, and Syria. The beautiful wanderer then arrives from the dead. At least that is how my psychoanalyst frames it. My mother likes to recount the moment she turned up and out of the underworld. I am on the toilet in the bathroom. She bursts in; I bleat: *Who are you?*

*Bambi*, a beastly, stands in the lobby of his forest: *the idea of a fawn, an orphan notion*.

Perhaps *Bambi*'s sequel reveals the ultimate fate of those who are untethered from care – maternal, human, and state. In the bit of the volume I watched, forty-seven years ago, *Bambi*'s parents are each a cinematic and wandering force, sublimely absent, not owned by anyone nor owning anything. Imagine parents, your parents, existing outside of economy – Marxist or Capitalist! Imagine a parent who is not eroded by the need for resources?! Maybe it is unimaginable; she just bends down to the ground and there – food! She paws the ground, water gushes forth.

**POP UP AD: Together, Mommies! NOW, Mommy (and mommies' mommy-friends)! Mommies Make That ME TIME to READ. Join us in reading Felix Salten's work, both his pornographic and bucolic texts. EXTRA: his slender volume on Klimt! His rousing propaganda urging readers to BATTLE for their NATION (World War 1, Austria)! (HUMAN & DEER MOMMIES READ BAMB)**

**TOGETHER)!**

[center]\*\*\*

**READER, RESIST POP-UP!!!**

As gay visionary Guy Hocquenghem frames it, the Couple, aka the Family Unit (queer or straight), aids and abets this deepening ecological/economic traumatic reality with their intergenerational deep consumption. Years ago, there was no English translation of this anti-capitalist essay available, so I just crowd-sourced it from French speakers on the streets of New York, line by line, stranger by stranger.<sup>18</sup> In contrast, there are so many versions of *Bambi* in translation ... Does this indicate that Salten is a Capitalist writer? How could he help himself, given that European culture tells him that everything is personal property, and anything can be liquidated – a Jew, a queer, a girl, a deer? The dissolution is even down to a murmur. The liquidation of beings continues in another Austrian Jew's work – Elfriede Jelenik's – but hers is directed against the inevitability of male violence and so it comes as no surprise that she wrote a play based on Salten's *Bambi* some years ago. Her last name may be translated as "little deer."<sup>19</sup>

Kathryn Schulz, when reviewing the freshly translated edition of *Bambi* in the *New Yorker*, poses a question: Is *Bambi* a Jew?<sup>20</sup> Salten, a Jew and hunter, by this accounting, is both protagonist and author, prey and predator? I am imagining a school of literary analysis, in psychoanalytic overdrive, where any author is required to be portioned into every character in their oeuvre; in this mega construction, add Salten's pseudonymous pornographic pseudo-memoir *Josefine Muzenbacher, or the Story of the Viennese Whore as Told by Herself* (1906).<sup>21</sup> By the purported logic, Salten is expressing his own identification with a little girl of five who continuously relishes the repeated assaults of her/his own body. If Salten as main character is always a symbolic Jewish body, to follow these loop-de-loops, little Josephine becomes the ever vulnerable but (within a localized antisemitic ferment) culpable Jewish one? He's a sacrificial bimbo, always to blame? It seems unlikely that Schulz traced her line of reasoning through the totality of Salten's oeuvre because this is an impossible ask: to emotionally sort out the victimhood of any perp.

A pandemic ad in an Austrian newspaper (2021) announces an open call (men ages sixteen

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to ninety-nine) for casting of a remake of *Josefine Mutzenbacher, or the Story of the Viennese Whore*. It joins a number of cinematic versions (1970, 1976, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1987, 1990, 1991...). I half-heartedly half-tally its kin: myriad novel-to-screen adaptations of *Justine*, *Fanny Hill*, and *Lolita*. I feel I have unwittingly wandered into an arcade; find myself playing Whack-A-Mole ... my little hammer on the heads of infinite pedophiles.

But Ruth Beckermann's *Mutzenbacher* (2022) visualizes no fawn, no girl, no woman character. It is only moles. Whack? We see the open call; a hundred men reading every line of the novel, and not much else (a couch, the director's query, and prod). Some mole-men act, and some cannot act and only feel. I get caught up in each mole-man's professional limits, the collective cloud of bluster-arousal-recognition-shame-laughter. I feel tangled in a clothesline of sorts, strung with their longing (separate from the substrate of hebephilia): there is the specific but familiar desperation of unknown actors (both for fame and food) and then, the peculiar drive of the director (to reverse the status of the book form from child porn to bildungsroman, an educational genre that traces the apprentice's journey.) I realize that I don't know where the set is located within Wein because we are always inside the building ... but me and a fraction of the men would like to exit the film to anywhere outside ... somewhere outside is the Ringstrasse (once a fashionable elite Jewish quarter); the island that floods (at a certain time, the only place where authorized Jews were allowed to bury their dead); the parks, viaducts, and alleys where migrant indigent Eastern Jewish men slept and fought and fucked; and the hunting grounds that nestle close to the city (where Salten stalked game).

In an interview, Beckermann maintains that the author of *Josefine Mutzenbacher* is not Salten – this despite collective academic consensus and his descendants suing for the rights to the text. So, where Schulz wants us to consider whether Bambi is a Jew (more closely a “Jew-as-historically situated victim”), Beckermann communicates that Salten does not figure in and neither does victimhood. No one will be an enchanted meat-thing that magically refreshes itself for each fresh rape. I hazard that Beckermann, who has relayed that as a child in Wien she found the book within her parents' possessions, is resisting the memory of that first read. To excise Bambi-né-Salten seizes up further excavation of a damaged reader. After the film, mentally, I hover beside the empty enclosure Beckermann has created. Who are the

viewers who lick the salt off the lock, pay-per-view and rewatch? Are they attracted to the imperial agony of what and who is owned and what is not; what can be seized and what cannot in fin-de-siècle Wien, or after, on any shore? ... Perhaps ... they are attracted to some anti-reckoning around early childhood sexuality ... a middle-aged distancing from raging against the forces that warp us.

Herzl publishes *Der Judenstaat* in Vienna and Leipzig in 1896. After reading the pamphlet, Salten embraces Zionism ... *As a matter of fact, a mixture of human and superhuman goes to the making of a State ...* ;<sup>22</sup> in thrall, Salten deftly works the European lecture circuit, mouthing Herzl's text; he communicates the impending shunting down of temporary status to listeners situated in a fragile suspension between pogrom and holocaust. Franz Kafka and his sister watch Salten command the stage at a double billing with Martin Buber. The crowd is intoxicated by a vision of safety, a small nation (that might feel like a million individual sleeping bags attached to one another by the tip, each sack occupied by a dreamer-settler). Herzl names both Palestine and Argentina as promising promise-lands.

1936: Lucille Kramer, Russian emigre and Disney animator, is invited to the Soviet Union to retrain the Soiuzmultifilm animators; she will instruct them, female and male animators, in cel technology. The year of her visit is the year abortion is illegalized in the USSR. Maybe surplus workers will place surplus emotions in Disney-like films. This is the North American plan.

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*The Banyan Deer*, 1957, storyboard.

1956: Clair Weeks, an animator who was assigned to the story unit in *Bambi*, travels to Mumbai as part of the American Technical Cooperation Mission. He will teach Disney methods to Films Division India; he is there to transfer technical skills to countries the US government is attempting to lure away from Soviet influence. The language released by the operation to the public includes "Indigenous leadership," "aspiration," and "mutuality." It is not incidental that Weeks is the son of a Methodist missionary man who had been born and raised in Mysore, India. By 1957, FDI will release its first feature-length technicolor animation, *The Banyan Deer*, based on The Jataka Tales, Theravada Buddhist scriptures (300 BCE–400 CE).

From the texts: So the golden coloured Banyan Deer, king of one of the herds, went to the king of the other herd, the Branch Deer, and persuaded him to a compact that lots should be cast, and that, every day, the one deer on whom the lot fell should go voluntarily to the cook's place of execution, and lay his head upon the block. And this was done. And so by the daily death of one the rest were saved from torture and distress.

After working for the US government throughout Central Asia, Weeks returned to India, as a professor. He taught in a Hawaiian shirt and shorts. I noticed he was holding a can of Coca-Cola, and everything was casual.

The late Soviet interpretation of *Bambi* restores the superhuman element to world-building: onscreen, psychedelic fades feature a Bambi that toggles between actual deer and royal man in tights leaping up into the void (the airspace above the Crimea Reserve and an Estonian national park that still houses a Soviet-era underground nuclear shelter). In this iteration, do we still locate Felix Salten zipped into a Bambi suit; a man-cervid who longs to escape prosecution by becoming a denizen of an official forest state? Consider certain passages like "beautiful losers who keep moving" ... a deer can't rest that way. A beautiful human loser drops carved sconces, thick manuscripts, heavy furniture, busted lamps in the dust along a way ... but like a deer, what they still have is their feelings – erotic, neurotic, posthypnotic – and their diseases – frenetic, zoonotic.

×

Deer Harvey,

If a letter can have a soundtrack: Herb Alpert's "Rise" (#1 on

the billboard charts, October 1979) ... slinky trumpet wail-surround piped into the surface of my city, the Big Apple Core, into you and now, your pen.

Harv, I realize I have a real problem. I listen in to trauma's sound wave with the comfort of a familiar but bested technology, wax cylinder or Walkman. I am conditioned to tune into and infinitely examine the perpetrator to the extent that all other options are foreclosed. It seemed that repetition, a reexamination of evidence, might release the means of vanquishing all violators, always. And yet I have got nothing on anyone.

"Rise," a "monster hit single," got its start as the soundtrack to an infamous daytime soap opera sexual assault scene at the afterhours Campus Disco. Back then, you were probably not tuning into *General Hospital* but by '79, you were probably already raping people, am I right? On the same album, a song is crafted in hopes that it will serve as the theme song for the 1980 Moscow Olympics. It's always bodies, Har.

Did it rankle you that Natalya Bondarchuk and Elfride Jelenik remade *Bambi* before you got to it with real live gamines? Did it irritate that you could not remake *Bambi* with human starlets, that you could not keep dilating the harm? Do you read the *NYT* while you are in your Golden Crib? Maybe you skimmed Bill McKibben's Op-Ed on *Bambi* and its ecological lessons. But he spoke about a book and not a flic. How much does each year of cinema production heat the earth? Are all of the movies worth all of the forests? If I live through this extinction, I wonder if people will sit around and tell old movie plots, like stripped and junkered Benshis. Which of your films will survive that? If you are alive, will you, Olde Stag, squat by the embers and lip sync your version of *Bambi* to your bambinos? Will your bambinos learn to market the trauma of being your issue? A buck to be made. I hear from the capitalists that one should fuck capitalism before it fucks you—that freshly subversive egos can be self-sourced and self-marketed.

Best (fuck off),

Me

P.S. But now that your ego has been shucked, do new political possibilities reveal themselves? Fess Up!

e-flux journal #137 — June 2023 Mary Walling Blackburn  
A Spirit Parsed from Meat



1  
There was a model, who did not live with us; one who kept a small rat. She walked the hall before her modeling session with the creature clinging to her shoulder. While modeling, her rat was stowed in her bag at the edge of the room. Once in a while, I was a student in a drawing session where she was the working model. I was furious with the way her interiority hung out—in rodent-form—and my sketches self-destructed because I drew to force a gap between me and her, or anyone, rather—but her imp deftly collapsed it. I modeled solo; no animal familiar; just the atmospheric thickening of my own trauma crackling between me and the sketchers. There would be no devil's fawn suckling from a witch's mark – a hybrid mole-nipple. When I think through the description of demons/imps/familiars in colonial New England witch-hunting tracts, zero are cervine. It seems deer will not work for humans (are good witches wicked bosses)?

2  
Thanks to Andreas Petrossiants for locating this quote.

3  
This detail comes from an online English translation of Bondarchuk's memoir.

4  
Arachnid specialists collected the data in Ukraine's *zone of alienation*. The expanded perimeter of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, Kyiv Oblast, Ukraine. The Polesie State Radio Ecological Reserve is adjacent but administered separately in Belarus.

5  
In the making of Disney's *Bambi*, would the mid-century American child truly be unnerved by the *idea of forest* versus one that has roots in a specific ecosystem? Disney appears to reverse the forces of simplification only temporarily. Really, Disney's *Bambi* only contains the *idea of deer*, so why not heap on the simulacra? Ultimately, the specificity overwhelms the production process, and they regroup under the direction of Tyrus Wong.

6  
The anecdote about the gifted train detail is from a crowd-sourced oral history of Griffith Park, California. I have not been able to source corroborating evidence at this point.

7  
Spanish soldiers disrupted the estuarine flooding cycle at conquest, implementing the zanjas system of water distribution.

8  
Jews settled in Narbonne, Occitania (contemporary France) in the fifth century, existing, for the most part, peacefully with

first Christians and then Muslims and finally Christians again for long stretches of time. In the twelfth century, it was considered a chief center of Jewish thinking including science, biblical commentary, and law.

9  
*Ha-mashkif*, June 8, 1944, 3. Tel Aviv and Haifa theaters continued to show the film over the next two decades. See Tel Aviv Allenby Theater advertisement, which continued to run for the rest of the war years, in *Ha-mashkif* May 31, 1944, 3. See advertisement for *Bambi* in Haifa in *Ha-z'afa* December 20, 1949, 3.

10  
State laws vary.

11  
I am seeking a flow chart that visualizes when the state camouflages itself from its responsibility to the creatures that inhabit its folds (in this case, cervine and humanoid) and how the government manages to dodge at the same time it controls. Can this sort of dynamic ever be mutual, mutually beneficial, and mutually agreed – a detente between half-citizen (a paperless entity) and half-government (the slush of corporation/army)? It feels more likely that a sort of mutual abandonment has risen? The state abandoning our living corpse ... and without adequate health care or stable shelter, us abandoning the automatized corpse of the state.

12  
Né Siegmund Saltzman (1869–1945).

13  
The feuilleton is a nineteenth-century form that literally translates as small sheet and proliferates in German language newspapers into the present. The genre been critiqued as wordy, superficial and often with loose relation to fact. Felix Salten was an eager producer of this Viennese newspaper staple.

14  
He abandons lovers, engages prostitutes, brags in detail at the coffeehouse. This is not particularly unusual behavior for men of his class and position at this point in time. Another detail in determining the overall shape of their physical and mental lives is to note that many within this echelon contracted syphilis from the thousands of Viennese sex workers. I hesitate to mention these details because syphilis figures into antisemitic renderings of the "hypersexual Jew" but an argument can be made that our sexually transmitted infections are ours to disclose, however these dead operate as manipulables in far-right projects that depend on both the image of and actuality of reproductive heteronormative family life.

09/09

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15  
In the *New England Homestead*, November 13, 1897, Thornton Burgess writes, "Every boy over fifteen should be taught the use of a gun, and how to care for it." Over time, he increasingly urges a more cautious approach. He reflects on a moment as a child ("I shot a chickadee") to point towards the careless and simple way we might exterminate a species for leisure. His lifework includes the national organization of children's groups dedicated to animal conservation. A blog dedicated to his works claims that 9,000 of these children gather for a sleepover in the rough of NYC, hosted by the Bedtime Story Man, aka Burgess.

16  
In early twenty-first century America, instead, guns are oft equated with humans hunting humans. The Uvalde school shooting (June 2022) predictably centers a male teenage shooter slaughtering children. What surrounds and soothes the remains? It is unbearable to mention the bees of Uvalde as a source of sustenance, known for the taste of their honey.

17  
A play on the casually deployed slur "FEMINAZI." In the US, the combination of Nazi and feminist is intended to communicate an authoritarian misuse of power as specifically deployed by feminist women, while also undermining the historic abuses of actual Nazis.

18  
After the translation, we (Che Chen and myself), a former couple, sang Hocquengham's text at a symposium at Cooper Union. The pamphlet has since been formally translated and published.

19  
Jelenik's father, Friedrich, was a working-class Jew who became an industrial chemist. He was spared by the Nazis in order for his work to be incorporated into their war production; Friedrich Jelenik died in a mental hospital in 1969.

20  
Kathryn Shultz, "'Bambi' is Even Bleaker Than You Thought," *The New Yorker*, January 17th, 2002 <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/01/24/bambi-is-even-bleaker-than-you-thought>

21  
Additionally, another pornographic work featuring a teen prostitute, *Albertine*, is found in his papers.

22  
Initially addressed to a banking family—the Rothschilds—in order to raise a sum thought to be enough to insure the founding of the modern state of Israel, in Palestine or Argentina. The money is explicitly intended to pay the inhabitants for their

land. This sum is never raised in full, and the idea of restitution is abandoned by Zionists. I haven't yet located the texts that indicate that the inhabitants would be given a choice as to whether they willfully vacate or stay rooted in place.