Chapter 17

From the General to the Particular

Piecing Together the Life and Afterlife of A544, Louis XVI's Quagga

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> It is with the most precious complexity that the shadow of death is entangled within the house of life, and we are always implicated at the threshold.
> —Deborah Bird Rose, 'In the Shadow of All this Death'

Introduction: A Quagga Cannot Change Its Stripes

In natural history, the diversity of stripe patterns and colour variations within the zebra family has historically generated its share of taxonomic confusion. This confusion was particularly acute in the nineteenth century, when no zebra that was observed or captured ever seemed exactly like the last one. Individual variations in striping among members of the same population were erroneously interpreted as evidence for the existence of distinct species. Camouflaged by varied stripe patterns, the animal appeared to have mastered the art of resisting classification. Amongst these taxonomically defiant herds of barcoded equines, one type stood out in particular. Only 'half' striped, with its stripes restricted to the head, neck and shoulders, it possessed a different colouring from other members of the zebra family. Its coat was not the usual black and white, but brownish with cream stripes. Its legs, belly and tail were white. Viewed from an anthropocentric perspective, it could be described as the leader of a conspiracy against typology. The animal was named the quagga.[1] Despite its

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stripes, *Equus quagga quagga*, 'elegant in its proportions',[2] was thought for a long time to be a closer relative to the horse than to the zebra. Thanks to genetic testing conducted on fragments of dried flesh collected from taxidermied individuals, the long-standing mystery of the animal's species was solved in the 1980s. The quagga was confirmed to be a subspecies of the Plains Zebra (*Equus quagga*).[3] Its true stripes finally revealed, the quagga is now scientifically accepted as a member of the zebra family.

Because of its distinctive stripes – a feature that may serve as camouflage, as a form of social identification, as an aid for thermoregulation, as a deterrent to flies, or a combination of some or all of these purposes – the quagga, like other zebras, was found aesthetically intriguing by artists. Its unique *zébrure*, to use the French word for a striped pattern, resulted in numerous depictions demonstrating great variation. Although registered extinct in 1883, the quagga is a recurring 'presence' in contemporary visual culture. Such attention, as Carol Freeman has noted in the context of the thylacine, another extinct animal renowned for its stripes or bands, seems motivated by the perceived strangeness of the species.[4] Quaggas or quagga-like creatures have secured a substantial afterlife roaming visual habitats such as logos, video games, artworks, and movies such as *Khumba* (Dir. Anthony Silverston, South Africa, 2013). A sense of the real physical appearance of the quagga can be gleaned from ageing museum specimens. These specimens, which pose major issues for conservation, are mainly located in the collections of European natural history museums.

Photography would also seem a good option for researchers seeking confirmation of the quagga as a phenotype possessing a distinct morphology. Only one individual, however, was photographed while alive. This quagga was a mare held at London Zoo. Five photographs exist of the animal. Three of these were probably taken in 1864 by Frank Haes, and a further two by Frederick Yorke in the summer of 1870.[5] Haes's photographs are taken from outside the quagga's enclosure. The horizontal and vertical bars of the pen mask part of the animal, whose head is turned towards the photographer. In one image, a top-hatted zookeeper is visible looking at her. An artificial habitat constructed of cobbles and brickwork has replaced the grassy, sweeping plains once familiar to the mare. The cobblestones and bricks, cubes and rectangles, provide an abstract backdrop. As repeated, regular geometric forms, straight and hard-edged, the building materials contrast with the quagga's singular curves and stripes, making her appear out of place, too visually unruly for this rigidly ordered environment. Even though these photographs provide a vital record of the physical appearance of a quagga, as they represent a solitary, captive individual their representativeness of the species is highly questionable. Although their value is clear, these images of a single mare cannot come close to giving a sense of the

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variety that characterized the species as a whole. The mare's uniqueness is a reminder of the singular loss that the death of any animal embodies, but because of this individuality her image cannot be used as the basis for making generalizations about quagga appearance or morphology, and even less about individual psychology.

The artist Ellen Litwiller shares science's curiosity for the living world.[6] In 2014, for her series 'The Last of Their Kind', Litwiller painted the last quagga to die in captivity, a mare held by the Natura Artis Magistra zoo ('Nature is the teacher of art') in Amsterdam, who perished on 12 August 1883. The zoo administrators had not realized that the quagga was the last of her kind until they unsuccessfully sought a replacement. The work by Litwiller recreates the moment of her passing, the instant when the mare finally escapes her captivity, the bars that separate the viewer from the animal seemingly evanescing. Her heavy eyes appear to express both her relief at the end of her incarceration and an unbearable sadness at the disappearance of her kind. The typeface used by Litwiller for the painted plaque at the base of the enclosure that records the quagga's deathday, and also the Latin binomial '*equus quagga*' that is repeatedly stencilled the length of three of the bars, seems blunt and devoid of feeling. The animal stands atop the metal plaque like an equestrian statue, her pose prefiguring the monument her taxidermied corpse was destined to become. The solidity of the plaque contrasts markedly with the delicate transparency of the skin of her rump, her flesh fading to reveal part of her skeleton. Through this work, Litwiller accomplishes the difficult task of inscribing a crude and unfortunately typical interspecies ecology of death into the context of the quagga's captivity and extinction. The painting acknowledges but also looks beyond the generic, portraying the mare as a specific individual with distinct feelings. To me, the work forces us to confront our lack of hospitality towards living as well as extinct species.

Inspired by Litwiller's case study, I have also chosen to focus on a single quagga, a stallion once in the possession of Louis XVI, the last king of France before the revolution of 1789. This stallion has no name. His only identifier is a catalogue number for the skeleton: A544.[7] I have studied the stallion's physical remains (a taxidermy mount and a skeleton), and also textual and visual records documenting his existence. The quagga in question was imported as a juvenile from southern Africa in 1784. He was corralled for ten years in the royal menagerie at Versailles, far from his natural surroundings of the Karoo, a semi-arid scrubland where species such as gnus and ostriches are common. The quagga was displaced once more in April 1794, moved to the Jardin des Plantes, where he died four years later.[8] In his lifetime, he was prized as a living testament to French colonial power, and viewed as a form of divertissement and as an educational device.

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Post-mortem, the quagga's remains and contemporary accounts of his life were divided and secured in different buildings of the Museum of Natural History in Paris. His skin, bones, writings about him and portraits of him assumed independent existences. Because of how these remnants are currently archived, the insights they offer into the quagga are inevitably partial and disconnected. The narrative relating any life is necessarily fragmentary, marked by lacunae and by decisions over what events to include and exclude, but the way the quagga's life is archived amplifies the difficulties involved in telling his personal story. In death, the quagga was eviscerated, his internal organs removed and destroyed, and also quartered, the physical, textual and visual records of his existence despatched to four different locations. This chapter forms an effort to undo something of this violent dismemberment, threading together hitherto discrete archival elements to provide a rounder picture of this singular stallion. Judith Butler has suggested mourning can only occur when a loss of life is recognized, becomes known, becomes valued.[9] She signals the importance of the obituary in this process, a report of a death that also offers a biography, a life story. This chapter can be read as seeking to provide an obituary for the quagga, one that gives elements of his life story, rendering his recognition possible.

Jacques Derrida has observed that although 'we do not know what hospitality is', we human animals have a responsibility 'to open the door' and 'to welcome' the non-human into our home.[10] Here, the home in question is my text and the non-human I am inviting into my words is dead, radically, other to me. Through my prose I present, or represent, a creature that is no longer. My aim is not to possess the quagga but rather to let him roam within my prose. Circling around the archives of his life enables me to draw out details and insights. Gathering these together permits me to bring him back into circulation, detaching him from the abstract violence embodied in the alphanumeric identifier A544.[11] I seek to resurrect something of his personality, his preferences, and the precise state of his physical and mental health. Inspired by Steve Baker's observation that 'not all animals are seen as equally dead',[12] I have sought to reconstruct as many details of the quagga's life story as possible. My aim in writing this chapter has therefore been to open a space in which some of the violence inflicted on this animal, both in life and posthumously, could be, if not undone, at least attested to, and something of the uniqueness of this particular individual brought to the fore, welcomed into my words.

Detached patience is the strongest ally of any humans seeking to forge a connection with the natural world. Waiting is an important premise of interspecies hospitality. Animals, as 'Other' to us, only reveal something of

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their lives slowly. They do not understand clock time or respect deadlines. Whether they be alive or dead, found in a laboratory, in a museum or in the wild, I argue there is a particular way of seeing, an artful, unmotivated looking, that is particularly favourable to unveiling them. When I approached the quagga in Paris, I did so with a quiet and open mind, adopting a mode of reading his remains that sought to foster the conditions conducive to a holistic encounter. I knew from the outset that my words could not contain the quagga and I could not come to know him. My goal was not to seize his significance, not to impose my will on what endures of him. Rather I have sought to respectfully open a door and invite him to tell his story, letting us in on some of his secrets.

Into the Room of Endangered and Vanished Species

The taxidermy mount of the quagga that forms this case study is displayed in a room that forms part of the Grande Galerie de l'Évolution (Gallery of evolution) at the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle (National museum of natural history) in Paris. The space, called La salle des espèces menacées et disparues (The room of endangered and vanished species), is reserved for extinct, or near extinct, species of plants and animals. It is a quiet place and, in fact, the very architecture encourages silence. Because of its high ceilings, any sounds are prone to echo, and people therefore instinctively murmur. Loud voices are met with a 'shhhh' or a swift glance of reproach. The immobility of the many species behind glass, their deathliness, also fosters solemnity and silence. There is a sharp contrast with what happens just outside the room. Elsewhere, visitors are also encountering taxidermied animals, but not in the same way.

There are clearly two kinds of death: the medium of taxidermy generating markedly different reactions, dependent upon context. In the adjacent imposing central nave of the gallery, a loud soundtrack simulates different animals calls, including trumpeting, varied roars and a vast cacophony of assorted bird calls. The many animal bodies are organized as if engaging in an immense multispecies parade. Although filled with the remains of dead birds and mammals, it is an intensely lively space. Children scream and laugh, adults talk animatedly. A short distance away, by contrast, there is only silence, punctuated each half hour by the chimes of a monumental clock. Commissioned by the king as a gift to Marie-Antoinette, it was built in 1785 by Robert Robin. Its intrusive marking of time forms an acoustic reminder of the House of Bourbon and the royal menagerie at Versailles where some of these species originated – species ripped from their familiar habitat to serve as exotic spectacles.

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The Skin

I approached the mounted skin of the quagga as I would a work of art, studying it in detail, slowly, carefully. I examined the technique of the taxidermist, the quality of their work, and also how well conserved the mount is (Illustration 17.1). As if it were a sculpture on display in a gallery, I studied the context in which the mount was placed, noting its immediate surroundings. In the parquet-floored room, animals and plants are stored in very spacious, even oversized, glass cabinets. The quagga is difficult to locate at first, tucked away on one side of the room. Only the stallion's left side is visible. Compared to more recent taxidermied bodies on display nearby, he shows his age and the hardships he has endured in both life and death. Although his state of preservation is classed as 'good' by the Quagga Project, he is far from 'perfect'.[13] His short hair means old wounds remain in plain sight, and the difficulties encountered by the taxidermist who handled him post-mortem are clearly visible. Mounting the skin on its wooden support was a complicated operation. It has left big scars, which

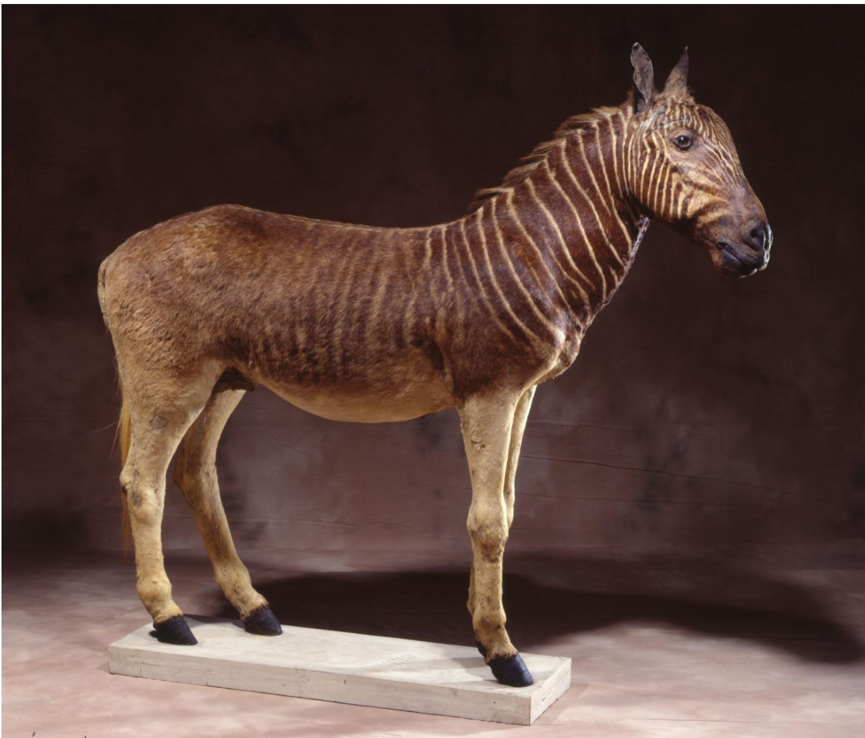

Illustration 17.1 Taxidermy mount of a quagga, Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, Paris. © MNHN – Laurent Bessol.

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are most visible on the inner side of his legs, under his belly, on his neck and around his eyes. Like the rest of his body, his sexual organs were emptied of flesh and then refilled. The skin of his penis and testicles is carefully preserved to show he was a stallion. Human footprints are visible on the rocky surface that coats the base he stands on; at some point a visitor must have left their tracks, whether recently or not is impossible to tell. Time stopped long ago in his glass prison house. Visits are kept to a minimum because clothes moths and *dermestidae* are an ever-present danger, eager to set up home in his remains.[14] The cream-coloured lines on his brown coat are still clearly visible. The harsh artificial lighting enhances the sheen of his fur. Patches of hair are missing here and there. On his head, above his left eye, a hairless patch reveals that the skin itself is also striped.

Labelling is uneven among the endangered and extinct species housed in the room. For those that are endangered, a map or, at the minimum, the name of their country of provenance, is provided. This is not, however, the case for those that are extinct. The mounted skins of vanished birds and mammals list only the name of the species. The lack of basic information, such as the country or region of origin, makes it seem as if the only home these extinct animals have ever known is this habitat of polished wood and glass. For the quagga, the labelling is token. The French word *Couagga* (quagga) is written in white, followed by the word *Éteint* (extinct) scrawled in blue, ending with a small but symbolically weighty final dot. Certain species of plant, either those that are critically endangered, definitively extinct or extinct in nature, such as the Bois de senteur blanc (*Ruizia cordata*) and Gordonia (*Franklinia alatamaha*), also relegated to the side of the room, received the same blue calligraphic treatment regarding their status. Here, it is the species at the centre of the exhibition space that are the unfortunate stars of this spectacle of extinction. Clearly felt to possess more celebrity cachet than the dried flowers and the long-departed quagga, they are the species most likely to be looked at by visitors. Viewable from multiple angles, they also make better material for 'souvenir' pictures.

I stood for hours in front of the quagga's mounted skin, taking copious notes. Now and then, visitors noticed me and therefore took notice of him. Without lifting my eyes from either the animal or my notes, I heard murmured conversations, 'Oh, what is that? A quagga, never heard of that one!' Whenever I do research in a museum, the same phenomenon occurs. My documenting generates a kind of magnetism towards the artwork or other artefact I am focusing on. This time, it is an animal. John Berger makes a direct comparison between zoo visitors, moving from cage to cage, and viewers at an art gallery, moving from picture to picture.[15] In her project 'Zoo World' (ongoing since 2011), artist Julia Lindemalm notes that every year 700 million people from around the globe will visit a zoo, and each of

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them will stay for an average of forty-six seconds in front of each animal's cage or enclosure.[16] While I was studying the quagga, no one else engaged with him for anything like forty-six seconds. The viewing or dwell time accorded to artworks is also often shown in studies to be on average less than a minute.[17] If an 'exotic' animal at a zoo or a work of art by a celebrated artist in a gallery cannot hold the attention for long, what are the chances that a dead quagga will encourage contemplation in a visitor.

There are twenty-three quagga skins mounted in various museums. These form a 'physical presence' of the animal in the present and are 'the definition of irreplaceable'.[18] Although the quagga in Paris is held in a room of disappeared or vanished species, it persists, visible and substantial. What we see, however, is not a quagga in any simple sense. The treatment of the quagga's ears offers material evidence of this reality. Hairless, erected in a bizarre position and seemingly much too tall, these auricular impostors contribute to rendering the reconstruction of the quagga's head awkward. Brown and dry, they resemble the long-faded flowers and leaves to be found on the other side of the room. Curled up and neglected, like the plants, many of which are taped to cardboard, they are amateurish, redolent of a sham. Displaying animal or vegetal remains of species that are now extinct, often condemned to oblivion through human action, is a delicate task that requires a great measure of deference for the dead.

An examination of the few remaining quagga mounts renders explicit the challenges faced by taxidermists while sewing and preparing them. The young taxidermied quagga known as Sparrman's quagga (after the Swedish naturalist Anders Sparrman), who is held at the Swedish Museum of Natural History, looks like a caricature of the creature.[19] The quagga has been more denatured than naturalized by its fabricant. Positioned in an ultra-rigid pose, with the taxidermist showing no pretention, ability or willingness to make the animal seem like they were once 'alive', the Swedish quagga exhibits what is best described as cruelty through negligence. Their (the quagga's gender is unknown) mouth is coarsely stitched, mummy like, and their thin infant skin is much damaged. Their life cruelly curtailed, they merit more respect than this shoddy workmanship affords.

A544, although also marred, clearly benefited from the hands of a skilled taxidermist capable of implementing the latest techniques.[20] This impressive attention to detail is, in itself, proof that the remains of the 'royal' quagga benefited from the preferential treatment that only a prestigious and wealthy institution could afford to lavish on its dead. Yet even if he was of major importance to the institution's collection when alive, the actual date of his death is unknown. By the length of his coat, I suspect the quagga died in the colder months. He has his winter coat, so probably died then or in the autumn. The worn patches of skin on his nose and also

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his legs index likely resistance to captivity. These injuries are symptomatic of equine distress. Something of his experience of captivity was therefore conserved with the animal, signs of his psychology and of the effects of human actions upon his mental and physical health inadvertently preserved. Through a close reading of the taxidermy mount, aspects of his life story begin to emerge. I turn to contemporary written accounts of the quagga to see if they lend substance to my suspicions about his suffering.

The Words

The Bibliothèque centrale du Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle (Central library of the national museum of natural history) possesses three copies of the same book dating from 1801 that is dedicated to describing the animals who were living or had lived at the menagerie, and to telling their 'stories'. Promoted as 'the necessary complement to any animal story',[21] the texts were accompanied by 'precise images traced by the pen or engraved by the chisel'.[22] The accounts of thirty-six species were mostly written by Georges Cuvier, with a general introduction provided by Étienne de Lacépède. Fragile, mouldy and incomplete, these old books seem themselves to be on the brink of extinction. Hard to manipulate because of their size and their frail condition, they hold precious textual traces about the quagga. Their content is also of incommensurable value for understanding prevailing attitudes towards non-human animals at the beginning of the nineteenth century in Europe.

In the Introduction, the mandate to educate the public and to participate in elevating science is openly expressed.[23] Writing specifically of the equines exhibited at the Natura Artis Magistra zoo, Rick De Vos explains that '[t]he stable served as a living cabinet, allowing the visitor to distinguish between the equids on display and to discern the similarities and differences between them'.[24] The same pedagogical principle applied to the menagerie. Lacépède and Cuvier were clearly proud of the collection of animals and held good intentions towards them. They were unaware of the degree to which their actions, however well intentioned, would be harmful to the animals they wrote about. A lack of interspecies hospitality at the menagerie was the root cause of the problem – a problem that persists to this day.

> One can compare this immense menagerie to a varied and laughter-filled countryside, where the different species of animals will enjoy all the freedom that it is possible to allow them without endangering the numerous and sometimes imprudent spectators; where they will find a shelter, a way of exhibiting and a form of care tailored to their kind; and where,

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> living in the midst of the plants and trees of their country, shaded, at the very least, by plants as similar as possible to those of their native land, as if they were returned once more to their birthplace, indulging in their games and their beloved activities, feeling neither their exile nor the loss of their independence, they will present to the eye of the observer the faithful picture of the bounties of living nature in the most remarkable regions of the globe.[25]

I am pretty sure that if it was possible to ask them, the animals in the menagerie would not have agreed with the glowing description that Lacépède provides of their existence. A 'varied and laughter-filled countryside' was not really reflected in the gaggle of animals at the menagerie, uprooted from their home and kin, yoked together from diverse geographies and subject to steady scrutiny by human visitors. Their habitat in Paris was far from a 'faithful picture' of their lands of origin. The presence of a few imported trees would not have prevented the animals from sensing their exile and mourning the loss of their native habitat. The living space of animals such as the quagga, used to roaming and grazing, was drastically reduced. The loss of the ability to move freely across significant distances would clearly have been felt as a loss of independence. These animals, symbolizing uncivilized nature,[26] were not looked upon with any real understanding of their specific needs or modes of existence. They were viewed as curiosities.

Writing specifically of the quagga, Cuvier notes of him that 'despite being locked up at a very young age, captivity had taken almost nothing away from our individual's fierce nature'.[27] The text goes on to acknowledge the fact that, 'in the wild, Quaggas sometimes live in herds of more than a hundred individuals'.[28] The fact that a herd animal such as the quagga was forced to live alone at the menagerie, as most captive quaggas did, did not seem to register as a possible explanation for the 'fierce nature' that Cuvier described. In their natural habitat, taking turns, individual quaggas will doze standing, while the rest of the herd is able to sleep soundly on the ground. The male at the Jardin des Plantes had no other quaggas to watch his back as he slept. Captive, bereft of companionship, deprived of mutual grooming, without opportunities for courtship and mating, these trying conditions would have triggered immense stress and frustration. Recent studies show that 'caging large mammals and putting them on display is undeniably cruel from a neural perspective. It causes brain damage'.[29] Cuvier goes on to observe of the quagga that

> he sometimes allowed himself to be approached and even caressed; but as soon as he was bothered, he would kick, and when [someone] wanted to move him from one park to another, or to change his location in any way, he would become furious; he would try to bite, throw himself on his

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> knees, and seize everything he came across with his teeth, seeking to tear it up or break it.[30]

Even though the quagga seemed to enjoy interacting with humans at times, he clearly did not like being manhandled. When he was moved, he became violent, biting and kicking. This is also the case with so-called 'wild' horses. When they are finally caught, the halter is never removed, facilitating control of the animal in the future. The scraped skin on the nose of the taxidermied quagga is proof that he received the same treatment. The wounds on his knees and forelegs had already led me to believe he had fallen repeatedly on hard surfaces. The biography confirmed my suspicions, he would 'throw himself on his knees'. Here two different archives, two different parts of the quagga's story, inflect and confirm each other.

Many animals still live on the original grounds of the menagerie. Walking around, I reflected on the quagga's lodging quarters. From the buildings, the iron fences and the mature vegetation, it seems not much has changed since the late eighteenth century. Endangered Przewalski's horses were introduced to the menagerie between 1902 and 1906. The perimeter of their present enclosure, made of large stones slabs, is a sad relic of the material commonly used for the flooring of pens at the time. As was the case with the compound depicted in the photographs of the quagga held at London Zoo that I discussed earlier, the ground of the enclosure in Paris was composed of cobbles. Even though this is a surface that is convenient for humans, making it easy to pick up excrement, it is alien to the quagga. The sensation of sleeping on stone, and the pain of falling on it, is markedly dissimilar to the comfort afforded by the grasses of their native plains.

The Art

The motivation behind the practice of producing drawings on vellum at the menagerie was initially fuelled not by a love of animals but of the botanic. Gaston d'Orléans, the brother of Louis XIII, wished to preserve the beloved flowers of his garden by having their 'portraits' painted by plant specialist Nicolas Robert.[31] When the collection of plant drawings was transferred to the museum on 10 June 1793, its significance shifted and less emphasis was placed on memorialization. There was a growing recognition of the value of draughtsmanship as a scientific tool that could be used for teaching purposes. On 3 December 1793, the artist Nicolas Maréchal was commissioned by the museum to enrich the collection of drawings with representations in watercolour of the mammals resident at the Jardin des Plantes. Since the quagga's death is registered as having oc-

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curred in 1798, and working on the assumption that the representation of the animal was made from life, it must have been created sometime in this four year period. Maréchal continued to work for the institution, offering his services to science as an artist until 1802, just a year prior to his death.

Maréchal's illustration of the quagga (Illustration 17.2) is one of seven thousand drawings that form the museum's precious vellums collection, a collection that includes representations of mammals, birds and plants. The museum's Central Library has equipped itself with secure means to protect these priceless treasures. The 107 unbound portfolios, all measuring 46 x 33 centimetres, are stored flat in custom-made locked cabinets and are only exposed to cold lighting. Access to the air-conditioned storeroom is accompanied by extreme restrictions. The museum's collection of vellums is little known, almost never seen and even less frequently touched.[32] Their only chance of survival lies in darkness and solitude. The medium itself is extremely fragile. In the case of the depiction of an extinct species such as the quagga on vellum, the material support in itself attests to immense rarity and precarious existence. We failed to save the quagga but have acted in time to save a precious and endangered likeness of him. This is no consolation.

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Illustration 17.2 Nicolas Maréchal, *Le couagga*, c. 1794. Watercolour on vellum. 460 × 330 mm. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.

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Monique Ducreux explains that the word vellum comes from the old French '*veel*' or '*veau*' (veal). It is a parchment prepared from the skin of a stillborn calf or a calf slaughtered before it was more than fifteen days old. Ducreux observes of vellum: 'Very white, fine and transparent, uniform, supple and light, the blood system of the calf is still seen by transparency. The skin is of small dimension, the trace of the spinal column hardly perceptible'.[33] To our contemporary eyes, vellum can appear an eccentric, even unethical, medium to use for making scientific records. But in the context of A544, vellum also embodies an extremely powerful material metaphor. Death is inscribed in the medium itself. Additionally, the pigments used by Maréchal would have been of mineral, vegetable and animal origin. Ox gall (*fiel de boeuf*) was often used as a wetting agent when making watercolours. Maréchal's paintbrush would have been made of sable. The drawing therefore took life through animal death. The vellum stands as a memorial not just to the extinct quagga but also to other animals, anonymous casualties killed in the name of art. These animals helped to bring the quagga's likeness into being, their bodies now forever intertwined with his. His flesh is their blood and skin.

Watercolour is a capricious medium. For Maréchal to achieve his fine-detailed portrait, he would have had to 'caress the skin with great meticulousness'.[34] Watercolour demands extremely precise gestures. Any slip will leave an unpardonable trace. Looking closely at Maréchal's work, it is possible to feel the empathy he developed for the quagga. He probably sat in front of the stallion for long periods. Portrait painting of non-human as well as human animals requires a special kind of dedication. The elegance of the portrayal of the quagga, even though it is romanticized, speaks of a certain type of affection for another species, for the 'Other', which exceeds a desire for scientific objectivity.[35] The delicate brush strokes potentially bespeak attachment. They are delicate movements that gesture towards tenderness on the part of their maker. Did the quagga turn like the mare in the London photograph, and look at the 'Other' that looked at him? Did he address the painter's gaze? Writing in the context of South African literature, Wendy Woodward has argued that accepting the power of the animal gaze is the only way to recognize him or her as subject, and therefore to question human superiority within an interspecies relationship.[36]

On vellum, the stallion feels almost weightless. There is shadow, which grants the body substance. The hooves, however, rest lightly on bare earth. The animal lacks density. This ethereality can be read figuratively as evoking both the animal's imminent death and a willingness to raise the animal to the status of an ideal, an idea, that transcends the quagga in his captive reality, his distress and depression. Maréchal grants the quagga nobility – he stands upright, immaculately groomed. The painting is from life but

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is not realistic. This quagga looks young and healthy. His rump is well rounded in contrast to the stallion's taxidermied self. His coat is shiny, lighter in colour and no scars are shown. The four hooves are clean and look well maintained. The veins of the animal, clearly visible on both his left front and hind legs, are gorged with blood. This quagga is in fine fettle. Maréchal gives him a vigour that was probably illusory.

On vellum, the quagga is revitalized. He is shown at his best; a beautiful animal with a perfectly combed mane, an elegantly swirled tail and a clean coat. This vision jars with the textual description of a difficult animal and the physical traces of distress that mark the taxidermy mount. The quagga is also shown in a landscape, the colours of which are in harmony with his coat. He is depicted as at one with nature. There is no trace of his incarceration. As was tradition, the frame surrounding the portrait is of gold leaf and the name of the species is also written in gold. Overall, there's an aureate glow to the image that signals admiration but also indicates that this likeness is not based on strict observation.

Despite his idealizing, Maréchal has faithfully captured some particulars. The long hairs under the quagga's eyes and on his nose are realistic details that a casual observer might easily overlook. The ears of the animal in the watercolour are 'horse like', very delicate.[37] They are far different from the foreign objects that seem as if they have been stuck onto the head of the taxidermy mount. The eye Maréchal accords the quagga also cannot be confused with the bulging ones of the mount. Glass eyes can never come close to the real thing. There's a vitality to the eye visible in the watercolour that invites recognition. The glass eyes that were transplanted to the quagga post-mortem are too small and give him an unrealistic gaze.[38] They make for an impossible encounter. The eradication of the quagga as a species deprived us of the possibility of meeting its gaze, but Maréchal gives us a glimpse of it, the possibility of a fleeting connection.

The nineteenth-century French painter of animals, Rosa Bonheur, was able to reveal an animal's personality by painting their gaze with almost surgical precision.[39] When treated with that level of attention, the animal gaze in a picture becomes a means to attest to their singularity. The gaze becomes like a signature, a guarantee of individual identity. Maréchal's treatment of the quagga's eye is noteworthy for its finesse. Through it, he acknowledges that his 'sitter' had distinct qualities. He was not just a quagga – not generic but particular. With his head turned three-quarter view, Maréchal makes us believe that the animal posed for his portrait as a human would. This obviously involves a measure of anthropomorphism. I would argue, however, that something of the quagga exceeds Maréchal's anthropomorphizing tendencies, enabling his equine character to show through also.

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The only other image left of the quagga is a mouldy black-and-white engraving made by Simon-Charles Miger after Maréchal's watercolour.[40] The reversed image is generally loyal to the original portrait, apart from the animal's left hind hoof, which does not touch the ground completely as it should. Miger's rendering of the quagga is, however, less vital. Produced after the stallion had died, death is inscribed in the image. The quagga is now pictured confronting his own mortality: there is a pile of bones lying in front of him. In accordance with the scientific remit of the institution, these bones were probably his own. Miger would have had access to them so that he could draw them accurately. The stallion is therefore forced to gaze upon his own insides. Now skin without bones, he takes an impossible last stand. The vegetation alongside where the skull and bones are carefully arranged is clearly ornamental. Like Maréchal's watercolour, Miger's engraving does not seek to record the quagga's natural habitat. The background in the engraving, however, is more extensively worked. In the book, no other species depicted by Miger receives anything like the same careful treatment of their surrounds.

There were representations contemporary with Miger's that provide truer portrayals of the quagga's habitat. The hand-coloured aquatint engraving of a quagga from Samuel Daniell's book *African Scenery and Animals* (1804–5), for example, shows the quagga in a more naturalistic environment. In the background of the engraving, Daniell even goes so far as to depict an animal, most likely another quagga, being captured. He therefore alludes to colonization, and to how European attitudes towards animals were based on a logic of domination. Maréchal's and Miger's fantastical backdrops distract from the lived reality of the quagga's plight. Both artists have erased all traces of the quagga's uprooting and granted him a specious liberty. Yet Maréchal's watercolour, in particular, also adds to our knowledge of the Paris stallion, correcting misrepresentations such as the false ears of the mount, even as it in turn misrepresents.

The Bones

Globally, no more than seven complete quagga skeletons still exist. None remain in countries that overlap the quagga's former natural habitat. At the Grant Museum of Zoology in London, the now restored skeleton of the quagga known as Z581, safe behind glass, is one of the most popular exhibits amongst visitors. As part of their 'Bone Idols' project, Nigel Larkin and his staff carefully restored this 'iconic skeleton'. Once cleaned with appropriate chemicals, it was reframed in a more anatomically correct position. This particular quagga was renowned for its missing fourth leg.

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Thanks to cutting-edge technology, a CT-scan of the quagga's existing right hind leg was made. The data was then 'mirrored' and 3D printed in black to become its left hind leg, hence remedying an imbalance that had lasted for over a century. In the process, the quagga was also given a right scapula. For Jack Ashby, manager of the Grant Museum of Zoology, the creation of the prosthesis permitted the animal 'to ride again'.[41] This demonstration of commitment towards the well-being of a dead 'Other' gestures towards what could be called a kind of posthumous hospitality.

The skeleton of A544 is a permanent resident of the impressive Galerie de Paléontologie et d'Anatomie comparée (Palaeontology and comparative anatomy gallery). There, he is exhibited in the front row of what looks like an army of skeletons marching towards the exit door. He is housed in a glass case which he shares with an Okapi, an endangered species that is partially striped, and also a Syrian Wild Ass. The latter, a subspecies of onager, became extinct about 1930. Entering the gallery, visitors are 'welcomed' by a flayed man or écorché; the figure was cast by the artist Jean-Pancrace Chastel from a cadaver in 1758. Displayed atop a plinth, the man's penis is concealed by a leaf. His left index finger points to the sky. The way the reddish plaster flesh of this muscled figure contrasts with the sea of fleshless, cream-grey-coloured bones of non-human bodies exhibited behind him is troubling. The *écorché* seems to signal human hegemony. From his pedestal he points heavenwards, indicating his divine origins, while the quagga and the other animals remain earthbound. At the very back of the 80-metre-long gallery, in a frieze inspired by the parietal art at Lascaux, there are representations of animals that potentially evoke a different, more balanced, type of interspecies relationship.[42]

The label for the quagga provides a bit of general history of his species and also gives the death date of the last of his kind, the female who perished at the Natura Artis Magistra zoo. Nothing is written about the stallion, but his skeleton reveals hardships he probably endured before he died. He is missing at least eight teeth. One of his remaining molars is cracked, which would likely have been a source of terrible pain if this damage occurred while he was alive. In 1916, the circus elephant Mary was accused of murder and hanged. Her autopsy revealed a toothache that may have explained her immense irritability. In the case of the quagga, it is possible his propensity to 'seize with his teeth everything he came across, to tear it up or break it'[43] was a symptom of dental distress, of a physical ailment. His 'fierce nature'[44] could be explained by physical as well as psychological trauma.

A piece of his skull is missing, evidence of a necropsy. The cranium was sawn open for his brain to be extracted and dissected. It was then sewn back together carelessly, using a metal spindle. The same kind of metal thread now keeps his rib cage from falling apart. His catalogue number of

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A544 is plainly visible, inked on his right shoulder blade. This act of branding objectifies his remains. Numbering the stallion renders him abstract and makes it easier to forget he was once a living creature. Like the quagga held at the Grant Museum, the pose of A544 requires anatomical correction. The alignment of the first and second phalange of his left anterior leg leaves him hanging in a precarious, if not impossible, pose. Holding this counter-intuitive stance, which would be tremendously uncomfortable, the quagga is not in any position to 'ride again'.

Studying the stallion's skeleton, I was convinced that his bones had much more to tell me about the hardship he had endured and I would have liked to consult someone equipped with knowledge of forensic anthropology about the skeleton. Together we would have been better able to read the bones and decipher the stories they hold; however, even without the benefit of scientific expertise, the bones have contributed to the quagga's story. Taken cumulatively, the skeleton, the mount, the textual accounts and the artworks have enabled something of the quagga's singular qualities and experiences to emerge once more.

Conclusion: *In Memoriam* A544

We can only properly learn to say 'adieu' to the quagga once we have come to recognize him. This endeavour requires a collaborative effort that draws on the resources of art and science; only in this way can A544 and others like him become an individual once more. My own efforts here have been directed at weaving together separate archives – physical, textual and visual – each of which reveals important facets of the singular story of this quagga. These archives demonstrate how art and science in the museum are always intertwined. The taxidermy mount displays artistry as well as anatomical knowledge. Maréchal's watercolour had a scientific aim, to record and preserve the appearance of a particular species, but his artwork transcends this intention. Through close readings of these varied documents – bones, skin, paint, words – I have contributed a more rounded picture of the quagga, inviting a recognition of his singularity and welcoming back what was particular to him and to his life. Through making representations of this kind, we can begin to mourn this quagga for who he once was and, in a sense, continues to be.

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Notes

1. De Vos points out that the term quagga was used indifferently by both the Khoekhoe and Dutch settlers to refer to all zebras. This caused confusion, and contributed to the disappearance of the 'real' quagga, which passed unnoticed by British hunters and administrators. De Vos, 'Stripes Faded, Barking Silenced', 31. The Khoekhoe (or Khoikhoi, 'men of men') are the traditional nomadic pastoralist Indigenous population of south-western Africa.
2. Cuvier and Lacépède, *La ménagerie du Muséum national d'histoire*, 'Le Couagga', 1.
3. 'The Quagga Project'. Retrieved 20 January 2021 from: https://quaggaproject.org/.
4. Freeman, *Paper Tiger*.
5. The animal was a female bought in 1851 from the animal dealer Carl Jamrach (Edwards, 'The Value of Old Photographs', 142). In the nineteenth century, photographs were perceived as too ephemeral, and were not considered suitable for the task of creating scientific records (ibid., 148). Professional photographers were often motivated by profit rather than a love of science and exactitude (ibid., 150).
6. 'Portfolio'. *Ellen Litwiller*, n.d. Retrieved 10 October 2021 from: https://www.artworksforchange.org/portfolio/ellen-litwiller/
7. Several skeletons of equines are numerically close to the quagga, including an Arab horse (*Cheval arabe*) numbered A538, a Bashkir horse numbered A542 and a Dauw (a zebra) numbered A547. The close grouping of these numbers suggests the cataloguing was carried out by genus some years after the quagga died. These skeletons are all listed in the Nouvelles Archives du Muséum d'histoire, 173.
8. In captivity many large mammals develop chronic stress which a change of location can exacerbate.
9. Butler, *Precarious Life*, 34.
10. Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*.
11. In a recent article, 'Sexual dimorphism', Peter Heywood refers to A544 by the name 'Paris quagga' (2760). This posthumous linking of the identity of the quagga to a city where he was held captive is problematic as, for many, 'Paris' connotes romance and

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sophistication. If the quagga experienced 'Paris', it was in physical terms as an imposed, stressful, solitary confinement. Paris was a cage, not a city.

12. Baker, 'Dead, dead', 290.
13. Museum national d'Histoire naturelle, Paris, France. 'The Quagga Project', n.d. Retrieved 20 January 2021 from https://quaggaproject.org/skins/museum-national-d-histoire-naturelle-paris-france/.
14. Graham, 'Le soin des collections d'histoire naturelle', Figure 22a.
15. Berger, *Pourquoi regarder les animaux?*, 48.
16. For an overview of this powerful project, see 'Zoo World', Julia Lindemalm, n.d. Retrieved 12 October 2021 from: http://kontinent.se/wp-content/uploads/ZOO_J_1.pdf.
17. Stephanie Rosenbloom, 'The Art of Slowing Down in a Museum', *The New York Times*, 9 October 2014. Retrieved 6 December 2020 from: https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/12/travel/the-art-of-slowing-down-in-a-museum.html.
18. Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo*, 4.
19. The quagga, a foetus, was collected by Sparrman in 1875 and presented to the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in 1876.
20. A constant improvement in taxidermy techniques now makes it possible to see the animal's teeth through its mouth, as in the case of several zebras installed in the Gallery of Evolution.
21. Cuvier and Lacépède, *La ménagerie du Muséum national d'histoire*, 'Introduction', 9.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., 6–7. '[T]o serve public curiosity to diffuse accessible and sustainable education', 'to give naturalists the real means to perfect zoology' and 'to acclimatize the animals demanded by the public economy'.
24. De Vos, 'Stripes Faded, Barking Silenced', 31.
25. Cuvier and Lacépède, *La ménagerie du Muséum national d'histoire naturelle*, 'Introduction', 6.
26. Ritvo, 'Animal Planet', 209.
27. Cuvier and Lacépède, *La ménagerie du Muséum national d'histoire*, 'Le Couagga', 2.
28. Ibid.
29. Jacobs and Marino, 'The Neural Cruelty of Captivity'.
30. Cuvier and Lacépède, *La ménagerie du Muséum national d'histoire*, 'Le Couagga', 2. Inspired by Thomas Pennant's *History of Quadrapeds* (1793), Harriet Ritvo has recently noted that the quagga was historically perceived by some naturalists as morally balanced, as by turns brave and meek. See Ritvo, 'Q is for Quagga', 146.
31. Cardinal, 'Les vélins du Muséum'. Nicolas Robert (1614–1685) once painted a quagga in watercolour and gouache on vellum; see 'Old Master Drawings: 66 Nicolas Robert'. Sotheby's, n.d. Retrieved 20 January 2021 from: https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2007/old-master-drawings-n08281/lot.66.html.
32. The exhibition 'Précieux vélins. Trois siècles d'illustration naturaliste' was organized by the museum, and took place from September 2016 to January 2017. Because of the extreme fragility of the vellum only 40 works were exhibited at any one time and these were changed every month. Approximately 150 different vellums were displayed in total over the duration of the show.
33. Ducreux, 'La technique des vélins', 609.
34. Ibid., 609–10.
35. In an important recent reading, Peter Heywood views the watercolour through the prism of morphological truth, finding the painting exaggerated and lacking in veracity. It is too horse-like compared to the taxidermy mount. See Heywood, 'Ways of Seeing

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Nonhuman Animals', 7–8. For me, neither of these forms of representation is totalizing and to be privileged. Each offers a valuable perspective on who A544 was.

36. Woodward, *The Animal Gaze*. How species such as plants, which have no eyes, can aspire to recognition under this logic is an unanswered question.
37. Hamilton Smith, *Equus*, 230. See also Cuvier and Lacépède, *La ménagerie du Muséum national d'histoire*, 'Le Couagga' (1) : '[T]his animal shares to a certain extent the beauty of the Zebra's dress, surpasses it by the elegance of the proportions, and looks more like our prettiest Horses.'
38. Even though the official photo of the animal, provided by the museum for this chapter, strives to promote, with the right angle and carefully chosen lighting, an aesthetically pleasing gaze, the encounter I had with the quagga offered a very different experience.
39. See my discussion of Bonheur's treatment of the animal gaze in Bienvenue, 'Au-dela de l'hégémonie humaine', 82–83.
40. Of the three copies of the book consulted, only one still contains the engraving made by Miger. In the other two, the engraving had been removed along with the ones of the zebu (*Bos taurus indicus*), another animal probably sought after for their atypical look.
41. Ashby, 'The World's Rarest Skeleton'.
42. For a discussion of the significance of animals, including horses, in palaeolithic art (including the parietal art of Lascaux), see Guthrie, *The Nature of Palaeolithic Art*.
43. Cuvier and Lacépède, *La ménagerie du Muséum national d'histoire*, 'Le Couagga', 2.
44. Ibid.

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