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### Abstract

*A few years ago two very old taxidermied Colobus monkeys turned up in the basement of Vienna's Natural History Museum. They were sent by the collector Henry Smeathman to one of his patrons, the wealthy naturalist and collector, Thomas Pennant. The monkeys' story, of how they travelled from Sierra Leone to England in the early 1770s, sheds light on the intersection of collecting with the history of the British slave trade. The article then moves from museums to menageries, and to further discussion of the lives and afterlives of animals via a review of John Simons' *The Tiger that Swallowed the Boy: Exotic Animals in Victorian England* (2012).*

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***Keywords:** Colobus monkeys, museums, exotic animal trade, collecting, taxidermy*

In Honoré de Balzac's short-story, 'Guide-âne à l'usage des animaux qui veulent parvenir aux honneurs' ('Beginners' Guide for Animals Seeking Acclaim'), the donkey-hero looks longingly at the menagerie of the *Jardin des Plantes* as a paradise on earth, a sinecure 'where the animals are so well cared for' and where they can drink and eat 'without fear of being beaten'. Longing for the garden to open up its artificial spaces to him – its 'twenty-square-foot steppes' and 'Swiss valleys thirty meters in size', the donkey can think of no better fate than dying in such an elegant abode. Stuffed, and 'labeled under some number, with the words: *African ass*', he dreams of an immortality in which he may even be gazed upon by the King (Balzac 185-6). Later, masquerading with false stripes as a zebra in London's zoo, the donkey seeks to persuade his fellow inmates that they have arrived at a great destiny, and that the noble end of their current charmed lives will be their transfer to the gallery of comparative anatomy. To leave nature behind and be 'stuffed and preserved in the collections' is to achieve immortality, he argues, adding: 'Les Muséums sont le Panthéon des Animaux' ('Museums are the Pantheon of animals') (Balzac 208).

In the last twenty years there have been many books published in the field of animal studies with a particular focus on museums and menageries. To name just two very recent ones: Samuel Alberti's edited collection of essays, *The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie* (2011) and John Simons' *The Tiger that Swallowed the Boy: Exotic Animals in Victorian England* (2012). Both books take an historical view of animals caught up and managed by humans in various commercial, theatrical and spectacular settings, from menageries, zoos, circuses and fairs, to museums. Simons is particularly alive to the ways in which the nineteenth-century bustle and trade in exotic animals blurred the boundaries between these different institutions, with the travelling menagerie, for instance, defined by him as a hybrid of the zoo and the circus. The subtitle of Alberti's collection – *A Museum Menagerie* – suggests another kind of blending, of dead and live animals. To this end many of the chapters trace celebrity animals who possessed in their life-times individual identities, stretching back chronologically to 'The Queen's Ass' in Georgian Britain to 'Chi-Chi the giant panda' (1957-72) whose immortality is guaranteed in the World Wildlife Fund's first logo. Named animals such as these, and other character animals like 'Maharajah the Elephant' and 'Guy the Gorilla', possess a pre-mortem existence (often

anthropomorphized) which is then consolidated in their afterlives as front-of-house museum specimens or (perhaps even more importantly) in the stories we tell about their lives amongst us.

But of course not all animals are destined for celebrity status or an entry in *The Animals' Who's Who* (Tremain). Most museums contain subterranean vaults of specimens seen by relatively few, apart from research scientists. Leading a hidden, back-of-house existence, millions of these creatures are only cursorily identified through faded labels, loan records, or taxidermist reports. They have no story to tell – unless a researcher comes along and injects new life in them through digging away in the archive. A few months ago I travelled to Vienna's Natural History Museum (NHM) to meet a couple of back-of-house specimens – two eighteenth-century Colobus monkeys, sent by the fly-catcher Henry Smeathman to England in the early 1770s. Their story – of how they travelled to a vast store-room underground in Vienna from their native Sierra Leone, West Africa – sheds light on the intersection of a group of wealthy eighteenth-century collectors with the history of the British slave trade. The fabrication for these 250-year-old monkeys of a history and a biography will be offered here, followed by a review of Simons' book on the lives and afterlives of exotic animals in Victorian England.

Although they were not named celebrities in their lifetimes, Smeathman's monkeys are important for embodying what James Secord has dubbed 'knowledge in transit' (654), a methodology involving a new understanding of scientific knowledge as practice, crossing 'hard' science with the material world, including public, popular culture. Scientifically the monkeys are important because they are type specimens and are amongst the oldest known mammal specimens from Sierra Leone to have survived in a museum collection. One is a King Colobus monkey (*Colobus polykomos*), now designated a 'near threatened' species; the other, a Western Red Colobus monkey (*Piliocolobus badius*), is on the critically endangered list. Applying the methodology of 'knowledge in transit' as an engagement with wider practices of 'entanglement, translation, and border crossing' (Secord 664), there is happily a large archive of Smeathman's letters from the west African coast, where the monkeys were initially captured. The rest of the story – of the monkeys' lives in London and the purposes to which they were put – can be pieced together through the records of the popular Leverian Museum, an eighteenth-century museum of natural history and other curiosities.

With a house and a garden on the Banana Islands, near Sierra Leone, Smeathman lived and collected for four years up and down the coastline, from 1771-1774. The monkeys' skins and bones either returned with him to England in 1778, or were sent beforehand, together with other natural history items he was collecting for his band of eminent and wealthy patrons, which included Joseph Banks and Thomas Pennant. The two monkeys which, to my great excitement, turned up a few years ago in the basement storeroom of the Vienna Natural History Museum (NHM), were given by Smeathman to Sir Ashton Lever for his 'Holophusikon' (meaning 'embracing all of nature'), a museum of natural history which opened in Leicester House, London in 1775 (Pennant, vol I, 198). For an entry fee of half a guinea, the public could view 'beasts, birds, fishes, corals, shells, fossils extraneous and native, as well as many miscellaneous articles' (qtd. in Flynn), including artifacts from Cook's voyages to the Pacific. Of particular note was the collection of 'some very curious monkies and monsters, which might disgust the Ladies' so a separate room was 'appropriated for their exhibition' (qtd. in Flynn), visited only by those who deliberately chose to do so. The scandal of the 'Monkey Room', as it came to be known, consisted of the shocking visual proximity of primates and humans, in a period well before the establishment of evolutionary theory. The argument concerning the relationship between humans and primates had, however, been going on for some time, inaugurated by Edward Tyson's influential book, *Orang-Utan or the Anatomy of a Pigmie*, and further strengthened by Linnaeus' addition of *homo sapiens* to the order of Primates in the tenth edition of his *Systema Naturae*.

Despite the increasing number of claims during the eighteenth century about our links to the world of primates, the scandal of the 'Monkey Room' can be clearly heard in Susan Burney's letter to her sister, the novelist Fanny Burney. Visiting the Holophusikon in 1778, Susan describes a room full of stuffed monkeys, controversially aping human attitudes. There was one (she wrote) which 'presents the company with an Italian Song – another is reading a book – another, the most horrid of all, is put in the attitude of *Venus de Medicis*, and is scarce fit to be look'd at' (qtd. in Haynes 8). Four years later, in 1782, Fanny Burney paid a visit herself, capturing the eccentric Lever prancing about and dressed up as an archer 'while the younger fools, who were in the same garb, kept running to and fro in the garden, carefully contriving to shoot at some mark, just as any of the company appeared at any of the windows' (qtd. in Altick 29-30). Despite the distractingly bizarre spectacle of posed and prancing humans, the thrill of

the Monkey Room remained a key draw-card for visitors at this time, as evidenced by a 1782 newspaper advertisement describing the ‘young male and female orang-outang, conspicuous for their disgusting and distorted resemblance to the human form’ (qtd. in Haynes 8), posed alongside a ‘large African baboon, the long armed monkey, the dog faced monkey, the silky or lion monkey, from Brazil, &c. &c. &c’ (8).

Lever was an eccentric and obsessive collector who also gave generously from his stockpile to friends. Indeed, he collected and bestowed so enthusiastically that, despite the high entertainment value of its popular exhibits, the Holophusikon began to fail financially in the early 1780s. To retrieve the situation there was first of all a lottery, then in 1805 (after Lever’s death) the Government proposed to buy the whole collection for £25,000, a proposition scuppered by Sir Joseph Banks who, according to one contemporary, ‘hated Sir Ashton Lever, therefore hates the Collection’ (qtd. in Garlick and Macintyre 19 July 1806). That Lever’s ‘Monkey Room’ was still attracting a good deal of attention in this year can be seen in a letter from the young American, Benjamin Silliman. Visiting the museum in London in 1805 he described his disgust at being obliged to acknowledge the resemblance between monkeys and men:

There is an apartment very gravely devoted to the monkeys. Not satisfied with what the Creator has done, in making these animals so very ludicrous in their appearance and manners; so much like men that we must acknowledge the resemblance; so much like a brute’s that we cannot but be disgusted at it; the artist has exhibited them as busied about various human employments.

The taylor monkey sits, cross legged, threading his needle, with his work in his lap, and his goose, scissors, and bodkin by his side.

The watchman stands at a corner, with his cane and lanthorn in his hands.

The house carpenter monkey is driving the plane over the bench.

The ballad singer, with his ballad in his hand, is very gravely composing his muscles to sing.

The clerk of the monkey room sits writing at a desk.

The shaver has one of his own species seated in a chair; his beard lathered, and the razor just beginning to slide over his face.

The dentist holds his patient by the chops, while he strains the turnkey, and produces all the grimace and contortion of features, which tooth-drawing can extort.

Crispin is pushing the awl and pointing the bristle to the shoe, and thus we have our rivals in form actually placed erect, and emulating human employments.

(Silliman 208-209)

Silliman concludes by quipping that all that is needed now is for one of these monkeys to lose his tail and he can then aspire to the Speaker's seat in the House of Lords, a barb fired off against the early evolutionist Lord Monboddo who argued that humans had once possessed tails, but had since evolved without them.

A year later, in 1806, the Holophusikon finally closed its doors. Its contents were then auctioned off over sixty-five days in almost 8000 lots, a great event which attracted a lot of publicity. The items described in the enormous Sale Catalogue include many kitsch novelties – animal household items such as the ‘leg and foot of the small African antelope, mounted with gold, as a tobacco stopper’, and ‘the leg bone of the same animal made into a [bottle] stopper, and mounted with silver’. It is often claimed that Banks hated Lever because of the latter's rivalry in collecting valuable and rare Pacific items, but perhaps Lever's non-scientific ‘novelty’ uses of natural history items were equally an irritant for Banks? Also listed in the Sale Catalogue were the Monkey Room inmates seen the year before by Silliman: ‘Monkeys Grotesquely set up’, including ‘7 monkeys mimicking humans’, ‘the tumbling Monkey’, the ‘student’ etc (Donovan *passim*). Perhaps some of these descriptions of Lever's monkeys matched the Colobus monkeys I was about to meet in Vienna's NHM?

Vienna has a long and rich history when it comes to the acquisition and display of animals. In 1752 it was the first European city to have enclosures full of exotic animals, located on the grounds of Schönbrunn Palace just outside the city. Founded as an imperial menagerie, the royal enclosures were opened up to the public as a zoo in 1779. The NHM has an equally long history. With collections dating back to 1750, it is now one of the largest and most important museums in Europe, boasting thirty-nine exhibition halls displaying thousands of objects, from precious minerals to huge dinosaurs, and room after room of stuffed animals,



posed behind wavy, pre-industrial glass in giant timber cases. One of the earliest specimens on public display is a rhinoceros, dated 1800. The pitfalls of reconstructing exotic animals at this early stage can be seen in the fact that its rear legs are much shorter than those in front, necessitating a mount raised at the back so that the rhino can stand level. (Fig. 1) The taxidermied monkeys I was about to meet in the NHM's nether world of scientific research predated this odd-looking beast, but they must have been passable in appearance because they were purchased by Count Leopold von Fichtel, along with half of Lever's collection, for the NHM's precursor, the 'Vereinigte K. K. Naturalien-Cabinete'.



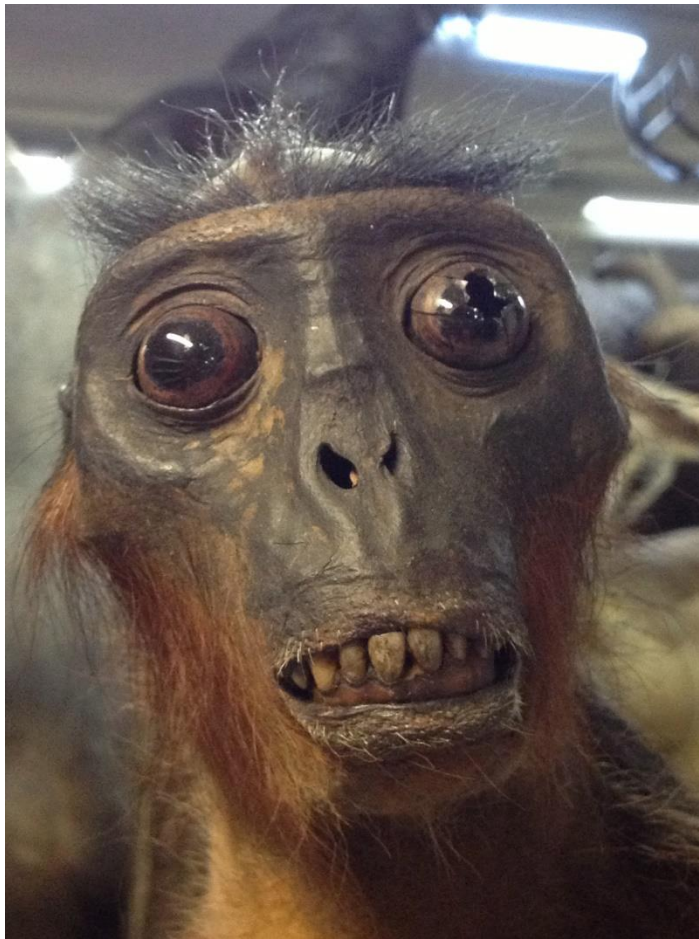
*Fig. 1 African Rhinoceros, 1800; author's photograph, courtesy of the Vienna Natural History Museum.*

The scale of Vienna's late-nineteenth century architecture is so colossal that when I first emerged from the underground station into the city's Museum Quarter I felt like Gulliver in the land of the giants. At street level the NHM is a colossal building, and yet it also extends four stories below street level. My descent underground required an overcoat as the storage facilities are kept at 11c degrees throughout the year, to preserve the animals from parasites. When my guide opened the door, the first beast to greet me was a huge lion reared up on its back paws and roaring. I then quickly became aware of hundreds of other large standing animals – a 'breathless zoo' (to use Rachel Poliquin's arresting phrase) of antlers, tusks, and horns set above innumerable pairs of deceptively bright (glass) eyes. There were also shelves upon shelves of smaller animals, including monkeys innumerable, and corridor after corridor of skins hanging on hooks. The latter impressed me forcibly with the difficulty of a taxidermist's job in earlier times, when the only images available were those of the collector's (sometimes amateur) draughtsmanship. No wonder the first images of exotics such as kangaroos look so odd, assembled as they were from skins, bones, and drawings, and described by different travellers to the antipodes as resembling deer, greyhounds, or jerboas (hopping desert rats). Amongst the thousands of stuffed animals, stretching for what seemed to be miles, there must have been some former inmates of the Vienna (and other European) zoos. There were extinct animals too, such as the quagga, hunted for its meat and hide, and the remarkable marsupial, the thylacine (Tasmanian devil), also hunted out of existence (although sightings in Tasmania are still publicized). My guide advised that many of these storage animals had better-looking counterparts far above us on display, implying that the store-room was a *Salon des Refusés*, inhabited by more tatty or moth-eaten siblings excluded from public view because of the taxidermist's lack of artistic skill, or poor standards of care over the decades.



*Fig.2 King Colobus monkey (Colobus polykomos) and Western Red Colobus monkey (Piliocolobus badius); author's photograph, courtesy of the Vienna Natural History Museum.*

It was not long before we found Smeathman's monkeys. They were frightful to look at – more like mangy meerkats than monkeys in their thin upright poses, and the taxidermy was incredibly crude, with large clumsy stitches running down the middle of their abnormally elongated torsos. The unnaturalness of their upright poses was clearly the result of being 'grotesquely set up' like humans. Perhaps they were a dancing or courting young couple, the King Colobus being, in fact, a Queen (Fig. 2). Certainly they can only ever have been beautiful in each other's eyes, for their silky fur and magnificent tails had fallen prey to moths; eerily the Western Red still had his teeth but sported a smashed glass eye (Fig. 3).



*Fig.3 Head of Western Red Colobus monkey; author's photograph, courtesy of the Vienna Natural History Museum.*

Creepy and unattractive as these monkeys were, I could not help but be moved by the sight of such rare survivors from a distant past. In the early 1770s the only way for Smeathman to get his specimens off the African coast – epicentre of the European slave trade – was by slave ship, so these monkeys had travelled to England via the middle passage together with a cargo of kidnapped Africans. We know about the terrible human cost of this notorious route, but as Smeathman’s patrons complained, the triangular trade also threatened their collections. Dru Drury, the eminent entomologist, grieved about the insects and other specimens ‘sweating their way across the middle passage’, and in a letter to Linnaeus, the Quaker physician William Fothergill complained that not a single seed or plant had reached him from Smeathman in three years, the reason being that the specimens shared the same fate as that ‘wickedest of cargoes’, the slaves – ‘everything dies’ (Fothergill 409). Smeathman’s monkeys were already dead so they were spared the deprivations and horrors of the middle passage but their shared journey with enslaved Africans images the intersection in this earlier period of the lucrative and blood-soaked trafficking in both human and non-human animals. Notably, after only a year on the coast, Smeathman was already backsliding from the anti-slavery principles with which he had set out. Writing of his life on the Banana Islands, he now argued that ‘A man here must receive payment in what he can get, whether in Guineas or Bank notes, that is to say in Slaves, Rice, Ivory or any other commodity’. Given the dominance of the coast’s slave economy he had (he confessed) begun to trade in Africans himself, considering it a ‘meritorious act’ to send as many ‘black gentry’ to the West Indies as he could. The phrase ‘black gentry’ concurs with the hierarchical ordering of Linnaeus’ Primates when he added *homo sapiens* to that group, but Smeathman was of course using heavy irony. Observing slaves on board ship, waiting to sail the middle passage, Smeathman noted that they looked ‘like Monkeys’, squatting around tubs of rice and taking up the food with their hands.<sup>1</sup>

In his lively and readable book, *The Tiger that Swallowed the Boy*, John Simons several times invokes the connection between the trade in exotic animals and the imperial project, but ‘the dreaded comparison’ of Marjorie Spiegel’s book on the parallels between human and animal slavery is not his concern. Instead, the strength of the book lies more locally, in a history of exotic animals and their performative settings in Victorian England. Of course, as Simons himself admits, the history of exotic animals in England long predates Queen Victoria. Monkeys, baboons, bears and apes were common throughout the Elizabethan period, with animal acts

attracting large audiences and often providing comic diversions on stage. By all accounts, and it would have been nice to have seen Simons include some of this colourful material, trained animals were numerous and easily procurable, ranging from the exotic, such as dancing bears, to dogs, goats, birds (mainly for sleight of hand) to performing fleas and bees (Coleman, 2006). Richard Tarlton, the famous Elizabethan clown, had a trick dog who ‘lickt up sixpence’ and dogs that smoked on stage. Henry Morley, in his *Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair*, records numerous eye-catching animal stunts: curious serpents from the East which ‘danced on silk ropes to the sound of music’ (454), a bear which turned a good summersault ‘and generally danced to the bagpipes’ (476) with a monkey riding on his back and accompanied by little dogs dressed in red jackets, and Toby the learned pig who could ‘spell, read, and cast accounts . . . tell the hour to a minute by a watch, tell a card, and the age of any party . . . and when asked a question, he will give an Immediate Answer’ (480). Nor were all these exotic and non-exotic animals dedicated public performers. Some were used to alleviate the tedium of daily, domestic life. Susan Burney, who we have already met at the Holophusikon, mentions in passing a visit to family friends in Avebury, England in 1796: ‘we were very cordially received and treated – it was lamentably dull, except for the amusement given us by a monkey, 2 parroquets and 3 puppies’ (Brimley Johnson 230).

The key question Simons wants to ask of the Victorian age is as follows: ‘if you were born in rural England in 1837 and died in 1901 and never travelled more than thirty miles in any direction would you have seen a hippopotamus before you died’ (Simons 4). By the end of this book Simons has given a definitive ‘yes’ to this question. Furthermore, in addition to illustrating the ubiquity of exotic animals in the nineteenth century, Simons brings to life the colourful dealers and menagerie managers who owned them, characters such as George Pidcock, Frank Bostock, and the East End dealers George Wombwell and Charles Jamrach. One of the funniest stories touches on the rivalry between these businessmen. When Wombwell’s elephant dropped dead shortly after he had opened a new show, his rival Thomas Atkins quickly posted an advertisement: ‘The Only Live Elephant at the Fair’, a boast which immediately elicited Wombwell’s sign: ‘The Only Dead Elephant at the Fair’ (Simons 67). If even a dead animal could draw a crowd, tales of exotic escapees such as tigers, bears, gorillas and leopards were even greater drawcards for drumming up business. Simons tells us that, at the height of Bostock’s career, he probably had about 2000 animals on the road (70). Given the enormous

challenge of securing so many animals in travelling cages, it is not surprising that this book is so full of dramatic episodes, such as the famous one alluded to in the title, ‘the tiger that swallowed the boy’. There is a statue in Wapping’s Tobacco Dock commemorating this incident, and the novelist Carol Birch has recently published *Jamrach’s Menagerie* (2011) which opens with the incident. Certainly newspaper reports of exotic wild beasts roaming the cities and the countryside and attacking hapless humans advertized the fact that the travelling menagerie was on its way or had already arrived in town.

The travelling menagerie did better financially than a zoo because it was not dependent on repeat business. Its reputation was far from squeaky clean, however, with many menageries synonymous with disorder and sometimes mayhem. The whiff of the disreputable which hung about menageries was in part due to their association with fairs, but the pursuit of profits had an even darker side, involving frightful cruelty to animals for the sake of a good spectacle. This can be seen in the story of Wombwell’s favourite lion, Nero, who he shamelessly put up against six vicious bull-dogs in the town of Warwick. Simons’ account of this incident is short, telling us only that Nero was ‘badly bitten and bleeding’ and that his honour was saved by another of Wombwell’s lions, Wallace, who ‘dealt with all the dogs in a few minutes’ (93). Given that this event attracted widespread public indignation, with many newspaper accounts expressing disgust at the cruel spectacle and ‘the supineness of the magistracy’, Simons might well have recreated it in much greater detail. He says nothing, for instance, of William Hone’s detailed and colourful narrative in his *Every-day Book* of how Wombwell, before the scheduled fight, ‘sent trumpeters forth, mounted on horses, and in gaudy array, to announce the fight’ (993-994), travelling to Leamington and adjacent villages, while the ‘trained and savage’ dogs who were chosen to attack Nero ‘held a levee at the Green Dragon’ where folk paid sixpence to see them and judge their ‘qualities’ (1200). It would have been useful, too, to have reproduced Hone’s savage attack on Wombwell for his cruelty and avarice. ‘The pain of the lion was to be Wombwell’s profit’, Hone wrote, adding that the man himself was as ‘undersized in mind as well as form’, ‘a weazen, sharp-faced man . . . with a skin reddened by more than natural spirits’ (1199). All of this negative press might have been used by Simons to pinpoint more accurately the growing animal welfare movement through the nineteenth century. For while he refers to the ‘gradual advance of humanitarian sentiments’ (71) and the founding of the RSPCA

in 1824, a fuller picture of how such changes in public sentiment came about, in particular the role of print media in this process, would have been helpful.

Simons conjures up the nineteenth-century world in glorious, material detail. He is particularly strong on the pricing of the different exotic animals, and their declining values towards the end of the century as they became more common. He is also good on how and why the various businesses involving exotic animals either flourished or declined. Bristol Zoo, for instance, founded in 1835, is still going strong today as one of the most successful city zoos in the world. In the nineteenth century it lay the foundations for this enduring success by blending the more 'straitlaced educational mission' (131) of Leeds and Hull with more festive, recreational activities. But the driver for all these enterprises was curiosity, and the curiosity which drew the English to exotic animals in the nineteenth century is very much continuous with that which drove the topsy-turvy world of Bartholomew's Fair in London. Wordsworth's description of this Fair in *The Prelude* conveys the shock of its 'anarchy and din', the whole constituting a monstrous phantasma, 'With chattering monkeys dangling from their poles', wild beasts, puppet-shows, and such prodigies as the 'Horse of knowledge, and the learned Pig' (Wordsworth 263). That John Bull 'would rather spend his time and money in seeing a Calf with two heads' (Morley 389-390) than visit for free the magnificent Towneley collection of sculptures on display in the British Museum was much to be regretted, according to a newspaper of 1805. This complaint about the philistinism of the English was a long-standing one, dramatized by Oliver Goldsmith in his satirical *The Citizen of the World* whose narrator Lien Chi Altangi, a Chinese philosopher, records the ardour of Londoners of all classes, from high to low, 'in running after sights and monsters'. And that includes himself as well as the exotic animals. In a letter home to his friend, Fum Hoam, Lien Chi writes of the English:

I am quite mortified . . . when I consider the motives that inspire their civility. I am sent for not to be treated as a friend, but to satisfy curiosity; not to be entertained, so much as wondered at; the same earnestness which excites them to see a Chinese, would have made them equally proud of a visit from a rhinoceros . . . A cat with four legs is disregarded, though never so useful; but if it has but two, and is consequently incapable of catching mice, it is reckoned inestimable, and every man of taste is ready to raise the auction. (245-247)



The continuum of a Chinaman and a 'rhinoceros' is a reminder of the capaciousness of the term 'exotic animal', encompassing the human animal as 'other' for entertainment, for ethnographic study, for enslavement. Although this is an area into which Simons says he will not stray, arguing that it belongs in 'an entirely different book' (12), the topic cannot be successfully quarantined, erupting in Chapter 4 on the Victorian circus and the 'Wild West Show', and then later in the book when Simons alludes to Melbourne Zoo and its setting up of a native village in 1882 and again in 1885, so that people could see how the Aborigines lived (134). These digressions reveal the impossibility of sequestering the captivity and exhibition of human exotics from the fate of other exotic animals. Nor can we afford to set aside the role of museums, science, and anthropology in lending respectability to the 'edutainment' industry of circuses, carnivals, amusement parks and world fairs.

The wider global context for the Melbourne Zoo's native villages is, of course, the exhibition of human 'curiosities', focusing on themes of savagery, cannibalism, human sacrifice, and costume. By the mid-1850s human 'curiosities' had become commonplace, popular, and profitable in both America and Britain. Best known in Australia are the infamous Barnum and Bailey shows of the late 1880s in which kidnapped Aborigines posed as cannibal boomerang throwers, living examples plucked from the so-called 'lowest' forms of humanity. The important study of such captive lives, not mentioned by Simons, is Roslyn Poignant's book and exhibition about the Aboriginal man Tambo and his eight companions who performed in America as professional savages, as exotic as the trick horses, wild tigers and snakes which were exhibited alongside them. When Tambo died in 1884, after a brief life of being exhibited to the public as well as privately examined, measured and photographed by anthropologists, his body was embalmed and put on show in the debased 'Pantheon' of Drew's Dime Museum in Cleveland, Ohio. Evidence uncovered by Poignant shows that Tambo's mummified body, discovered in the basement of a Cleveland funeral home, was widely displayed in that city well into the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup>

Racism and speciesism: the similarities between the violence inflicted on humans by other humans and the violence we inflict on non-human animals must be acknowledged. Nevertheless, wild, exotic animals hold an enduring attractiveness for humans. This can be seen in the recent acclaim of the book and film, *The Life of Pi*. Here a young boy called Pi risks his life attempting to make friends with a Bengal tiger in his father's zoo. The painful lesson that the boy

must learn is that the tiger, ‘Richard Parker’, is not his friend – that what he sees in the tiger’s eyes is nothing more than his own gentle, compassionate self reflected back at him. That the tiger is called, in administrative error, by the name of the hunter who captured him, only underscores his exotic otherness, as well as the error of Pi’s persistent, sentimental anthropomorphizing. That Richard Parker should, in the end, walk off into the jungle without a backward glance leaves Pi to reflect on the gap between his own intense feelings and the tiger’s unceremonious nonchalance. But does Richard Parker exist, or is he just part of a story told by Pi to distance himself from the human horror of murder and cannibalism on the high seas? In other words, instead of being swallowed by an actual tiger, Pi fabricates an imaginary tiger for psychic survival. Either story is possible, illustrating once again the profound connections, both actual and metaphorical, between human and non-human animals.

## Notes

1. Extracts [copied] from Henry Smeathman’s letters to Dru Drury from University Library, Uppsala, MS D.26. For a hitherto unpublished account of crossing the middle passage on a fully-loaded cargo ship, see my ‘Henry Smeathman and the Natural Economy of Slavery’.

2. See also her 1999 exhibition at the Australian Museum, Sydney, ‘Captive Lives: Looking for Tambo and his Companions’. Also overlooked by Simons is the ‘Circus, Trade and Spectacle’ section in Barbara Creed and Jeannette Hoorn’s *Body Trade: Captivity, Cannibalism and Colonialism in the Pacific*.

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