

“MENAGERIE TO ME / MY NEIGHBOR BE”: EXOTIC ANIMALS AND AMERICAN
CONSCIENCE, 1840-1900

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ABSTRACT

Leslie McAbee: “Menagerie to me / My Neighbor be”: Exotic Animals and American Conscience, 1840-1900
(Under the direction of Eliza Richards)

Throughout the nineteenth century, large numbers of living “exotic” animals—elephants, lions, and tigers—circulated throughout the U.S. in traveling menageries, circuses, and later zoos as staples of popular entertainment and natural history education. In “Menagerie to me / My Neighbor be,” I study literary representations of these displaced and sensationalized animals, offering a new contribution to Americanist animal studies in literary scholarship, which has largely attended to the cultural impact of domesticated and native creatures. The field has not yet adequately addressed the influence that representations of foreign animals had on socio-cultural discourses, such as domesticity, social reform, and white supremacy.

I examine how writers enlist exoticized animals to variously advance and disrupt the human-centered foundations of hierarchical thinking that underpinned nineteenth-century tenets of civilization, particularly the belief that Western culture acts as a progressive force in a comparatively barbaric world. Both well studied and lesser-known authors, however, find “exotic” animal figures to be wily for two seemingly contradictory reasons. For one, these figures often exceed the bounds and norms of “civilized” American society, from connoting the strangeness of distant lands to escaping their enclosures. While such representations affirm the animals’ exoticized status, authors show the difficulty of accounting for the animals’ mental, emotional, and social capacities. Secondly, and arguably because alien animals present impenetrable mysteries, the authors of this study confront the possibility of finding

correspondence and compatibility with “exotic” animality, even testing the potential for a civil society more open to and tolerant of non-Anglo American difference. This process reveals a public struggling to understand their ethical and cultural identities and responsibilities in the face of global and animal alterity.

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INTRODUCTION

The young narrator of Sarah Orne Jewett's first book, *Deephaven* (1877), catches her omission when describing a traveling circus that stirs an otherwise sleepy New England town: "I have not told you that we were to have the benefit of seeing a menagerie in addition to the circus, and you may be sure we went faithfully round to see everything that the cages held" (102). That the narrator, Helen, seems duty bound to see the captive animals speaks to the menagerie's cultural status as an integral part—even a ritual—of popular recreation in the U.S. Jewett's portrait of what proves to be a "somewhat dreary" show gestures to the nearly century-long practice of displaying and circulating "exotic" species that accelerated after the founding of the early republic (102). The animals on display—an elephant, monkeys, lions, the empty cage and corresponding painting of a recently dead serpent—appear as relics of this history as old and ragged "as if they had been on the road for a great many years" (102). For Helen and her friend, Kate, the circus and its menagerie have the effect of Marcel Proust's madeleine, the pastry that launched a journey into deep memory in the novel *À la recherche de temps perdu*. While Kate wonders that the pastime "should not have altered in the least while I have changed so much, and have even had time to grow up," she recognizes the "caravan's" deep ties to her childhood memory, remarking, "You don't know how it is making me remember other things of which I have not thought for years" (104). This seemingly unaltered form of entertainment lends the characters a ballast by which they might secure their subjectivity and a sense of continuity in otherwise changing times.

Yet, looking at the animals denies the young women an uncomplicated conduit for public and private memory. Helen admits she “cannot truthfully say that it was a good show [. . .] now that I think of it quietly and without excitement” (102). Signs of animal abuse and neglect show in the animals themselves, their environs, and their keepers. A lion handler stands by with a stick intended for goading roars from the lions. The snake, a keeper explains, has since been buried. The “shabby great elephant,” most of all, wears a “look of general discouragement” that makes Helen suspect that he is “miserably conscious of a misspent life” (102). Feeling that the elephant’s suffering “went to my heart,” Helen’s sympathy evokes troubling ethical dilemmas for the reader: is the elephant capable of emotional intelligence, such that the creature might know his predicament? What is the purpose of Helen’s sympathy; what does it intend to accomplish, and would proof that the elephant is sentient impact her response? Any moral urgency that the elephant elicits abruptly dissipates as Helen leaves the elephant to observe other animals and the people that circulate among them. The elephant’s unfortunate state, it seems, is simply a norm of animal entertainment, which often advertised the pachyderm as the friendly face of the circus (Nance 2).

The ethical exigencies that the elephant’s captivity kindles, however, is not so easily squelched and has a wider illuminating effect on the well-being of the humans in this entertainment ecosystem, as well. The circus’s moth-to-flame popularity drives the terminally ill father of the impoverished Craper family to take a faltering journey with his children from the countryside to the town, just as it coaxes Seth Tanner, a “thin little old man” to see an elephant for the first (and probably the last) time in his life. A side show performer, the “Kentucky Giantess,” (or Marilly, after the young women learn her name) mirrors the elephant, eliciting a comparable sympathetic response from Helen: “No matter if she had consented to be carried

round for a show, it must have been horrible to be stared at and joked about day after day; and we gravely looked at the monkeys [. . .]” (106). Though the menagerie and its circus context might be described as a kind of public service—the promise of diversion for Craper and Tanner and a career for Marilly—its dilapidation reflects that of its patrons, a tell-tale sign that some ideal for a more equitable and humane society has yet to be met.

The quoted text I chose for the title of this project, “Menagerie to me / my Neighbor be,”—from Emily Dickinson’s poem, “The Show is / not the Show” (dated 1872)—addresses the double vision that representations of “exotic” animals afford. The thrilling sight of animals from distant lands also fosters self-awareness of the viewer’s own spectatorship and that of other visitors in a cultural enterprise predicated on looking and being seen, by animal and human neighbors alike. Authors, like Jewett, often find in foreign animals and their encounters with Americans reflections of human civil society, perhaps because “exotic” animals were indeed part and parcel of modern civilization, as I will show. Of course, what role these animal figures play in civilizational discourses depends on how authors shape these creatures as scientific specimens, anthropomorphized characters, and loaded signifiers, all operations that aim to fix them in a traditional taxonomical hierarchy that privileges human supremacy. I am interested in texts that both intentionally and unintentionally discover that “exotic” animals’ doubled alterity (as geographical outsiders and nonhumans) cannot be totally confined, thus laying bare the very cultural scripts that the American imagination employed to conceptualize a just, ordered, and superior civilization. Sensationalized for their novelty and incongruity to the status quo, exoticized animal figures sparked reexaminations of what American civilization should be and who or what it should include.

For Jewett, the foreign animal’s sensational strangeness at first seems commensurate with the

everyday marvels of human society; the show animals appear no more spectacular than the people around them. The menagerie and its human creators and visitors together make an intimate portrait of American pastime, one that is sentimentalized and, above all, quite normal. And yet the scene creates an uncomfortable awareness that an ethical crisis is underway, for what is this portrait but that of the inequities of human poverty and animal captivity. Helen and her friend turn away in discomfort from the sad elephant and from the Kentucky giantess, for what they have witnessed are the forgotten and exploited in a purportedly progressive civilization.

By contrast, the orangutan of Edgar Allan Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue" connotes no such intimacy and an extreme discomfort with "exotic" animals' alterity. Perhaps the most iconic and canonical nineteenth-century American representation of alien beastliness—and, indeed, an unavoidable site of discussion for my purposes—Poe's orangutan appears fundamentally antithetical to Western civilization. Unlike Jewett's narrator and her sympathetic lament for the anthropomorphized circus elephant, Poe presents the orangutan as a brute whose "excessively outré" (17) and "preternatural" (16) strength sows chaos. Poe appears to overtly comment on the dangers of foreign incursion that the creature represents in the context of human domesticity. Perhaps a more urgent fear, Poe suggests, is that a blinkered celebration of the human rational mind might distract from the orangutan's threat to established systems of civil order.

At the surface level, the orangutan appears to be a troubling figure in a traditional sense: he has violated the species hierarchy in committing murder, an act which in turn reinforces the dichotomy between civilization and the beast of the jungle. But Poe more subtly warns against such easy ontological conclusions about the foreign creature, especially since by the story's end the narrator notes that the orangutan remains in the heart of Paris in yet another kind of domestic setting: the menagerie of the Jardin des Plantes. The orangutan has repeatedly transgressed the

sanctity of domestic spaces before, first when he escaped the Maltese sailor's apartment (who imported the ape as a ward and commodity) and then upon entering and escaping the home of the murder victims, the L'Espanaye mother and daughter. Given the orangutan's knack for surmounting domestic architectures, what's to keep the ape from rampaging once again?

From the narrator's point of view, the orangutan operates more as a plot vehicle for highlighting Monsieur Dupin's powers of ratiocination than an ideologically troubling figure, for the very scenario that brings the animal in focus is predicated on a game: the mystery of the L'Espanaye women's murders, which the narrator places in parallel with a game of chess in his opening description of rational thought. Dupin may offer a totalizing elucidation of how the murders occurred, but he does not himself locate the animal (the sailor later recaptures the orangutan), nor does he or the narrator address more problematic and lingering questions regarding the animal's nature, where it belongs, and what its fate should be (i.e. does the ape deserve punishment for the women's deaths?).

One reason that the story's end feels yet unsettled is its suspiciously neat characterization of the orangutan and its seemingly suitable addition to the Jardin des Plantes menagerie. Colleen Glenney Boggs contends that to solve the murder mystery "Dupin has to identify with the Ourang-Outang" because the narrator claims that "the analyst throws himself into the spirit of his opponent, identifies himself therewith" (Boggs 131; Poe 132). However, in practice, Dupin actually depends on uncomplicated physical evidence to identify the murderer: the "minute anatomical and generally descriptive account" of the orangutan in a "passage from Cuvier," the early nineteenth-century French natural historian Georges Cuvier (Peterson 160). Tufts of orange fur found in the murder scene and the size and shape of the impressions on the neck of Mademoiselle L'Espanaye serve as the primary identifiers by which the animal is convicted as

the killer. But this physical evidence from the orangutan, coupled with Cuvier's natural history account of the creature, again, is only applicable in the context of Dupin's murder mystery game. At the time Dupin solves the puzzle, not only does the orangutan still roam at large, but the portrait of the killer ape also remains incomplete. Kate Huber draws a similar conclusion, noting that "[. . .] the orangutan is never allowed to exist on its own terms. Instead, it is either an anthropomorphized image held captive in human lodging or a ferocious and brutal killer" (89). Dupin might solve the murder mystery, but his powers of ratiocination fail to recognize the orangutan as a conceptually troubling figure.

The "exotic" animal might be systematically categorized in a taxonomy of species and sequestered in a zoological institution, but other evidence suggests that Poe's orangutan demands further philosophical analysis than a naturalists' eye for species identification, especially given the ape's uncanny association with humanity: a footnote to Cuvier's entry claims the creature's Malaysian name translates to the "wild man of borneo," and the aural witnesses to the killings associate the ape's voice with human language (Frank 37). Also, the orangutan's singular desire to secure its freedom from the sailor's confines also suggests that it is a more complicated creature than Dupin cares (or dares) to explore. Dupin's reliance on outward signs of the animal, as catalogued in Cuvier's 1817 natural history *Animal Kingdom* (*Le Regne Animal*), fails to consider the equally perilous mystery of the orangutan's nature in the context of civil domesticity.

Thus, Poe subtly casts doubt on the narrator's easy assumption that the threat the orangutan poses is eliminated by its captivity in the zoological garden. Obsessing over Dupin's claims of superior observation, Poe suggests, means underestimating the foreign animal as a powerful force in Western civilization, the consequences of which remain unnamed and unforeseen.

Jewett and Poe's examples demonstrate that authors and their readerships recognized, even while adhering to an "us—they" human-animal dichotomy, that the cultural meaning derived from these creatures' presence was far from simple. Jewett gestures to a long history of "exotic" animal exhibitions in the U.S., one that has become a mainstay of cultural identity such that the fates of human observers and exhibited animals have become inextricably intertwined. The menagerie cages might physically separate the two parties but also reflect some overlapping experience as inhabitants of the same social ecosystem. Alternatively, Poe warns of the "exotic" creature as symbolic of foreign incursion, a kind of chaotic excess that may not be safely contained within the parameters of civilized superstructures. Despite Poe and Jewett's differing characterizations of these animals, both authors identify the exoticization of the foreign animal as a cultural convention that complicates the question of how to appropriately observe and represent animal alterity in a civilized context. While literary treatments of "exotic" animals may employ them as subjects of anthropomorphism, symbolism, and consumerism, the conceptual frameworks that render these animals "exotic" figures in turn highlight the constructed nature of a coherent and progressive American civil society.

Accessing and Understanding the Foreign Animal in Nineteenth-century America

In addition to textual representations of "exotic" creatures that were available to American readerships, like natural histories and primers for children, authors also appear to draw inspiration from the proliferation of animal exhibitions and the commercial animal trade that imported these living commodities. Jeffrey Meyers, for instance, posits that Poe may have based his "wild man of Borneo" on a July 1839 exhibit of an orangutan in Philadelphia's Masonic Hall (123). In a letter, Emily Dickinson reported that "[a] circus passed the house - still I feel the red in my mind though the drums are out," a possible source of inspiration for her poetic

representations of big cats, a rhinoceros, and an elephant, among other menagerie animals (L170).¹ In books for children, P.T. Barnum glamorized the adventures of “exotic” animal hunters and collectors in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. These authors and others responded to and shaped the discourses pertaining to the enduring presence of “exotic” animal alterity in the U.S.

Of course, these discourses were ever in flux. American audiences’ encounters with alien animals changed dramatically throughout the nineteenth century, both in terms of the type and scale of human-animal encounters and the scientific, philosophical, and cultural influences that impacted public knowledge and beliefs about these creatures. However, underpinning this diverse history of ideas about and interactions with exoticized animals is a continual desire to substantiate the human-species divide and define standards of American civilization against “exotic” animal alterity, a process that gets unsettled in the texts I examine.

Coterminous with the founding of the American republic, the rise of “exotic” animal shows presents an early example of how cultural architectures formed in response to animals as spectacles. Beginning in 1720 with the exhibit of a lion, itinerant single-specimen exhibits inaugurated the arrival of the animal show in the American colonies, appearing in larger port cities, like Boston and New York, and throughout New England, with less frequent excursions to Philadelphia (Kisling 111). After the lion were other firsts: “a camel in 1721, a polar bear in 1733, and a leopard along with other animals in 1768,” (Kisling 112). Not until the post-revolutionary period did the menagerie, often comprised of a handful of imported animals for public display, become a noteworthy venture, and by the early nineteenth century the menagerie enterprise had begun to travel and add new species, like the zebra, rhinoceros, and hippopotamus, to its shows (Kisling 112). In fact, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s father (Nathaniel

Hathorne—his son added the “w” to his surname) was the first mate of the ship that brought the first elephant—known as the Crowninshield elephant—to the U.S. in 1796 (Nance 19).

Contemporaneous to the emergence of the menagerie, performers from England introduced a new form of traveling entertainment: the circus, often typified by equestrian and aerial acrobatics and clown performances, which became all the more nomadic with the introduction of the easily transported canvas tent (Davis, *Circus Age*, 17). With newfound mobility, circuses began to incorporate menagerie shows by 1828 (Davis 17). After trekking the first transcontinental circus route, Dan Costello’s company heralded the arrival of “exotic” animals to audiences across the nation, movement that coincided with westward expansion (Davis 20).

Both forms of entertainment hit lulls in terms of development and profits during economic crises, such as the Panic of 1837 and the subsequent depression that ended in the 1840s, and during the Civil War (Flint 99). In the postbellum period, however, the rise in urban populations, along with the development of improved infrastructure projects like the transcontinental railroad, secured large audiences for extravagant displays and performances that included “exotic” animal spectacles; Barnum’s American Museum in New York City, for instance, included the first public aquarium in the U.S., which featured short-lived beluga whales, and the usual array of “exotics,” all (rather unbelievably) kept on the upper floors of the museum (Saxon 94).

Exoticized animals and their perceived strangeness provoked some concerns about their moral messaging for American audiences. Sensational promotional tactics and animal performances sparked controversy about whether these enterprises advanced the public good, with community leaders arguing for educational presentations that would support a scientific and Christian understanding of the natural world (Mizelle 221). To convey family-friendly values and at the same time sell exciting novelty, circus and menagerie companies straddled the line

between what was deemed high and low brow culture (Mizelle 222). Reflecting a pervasive suspicion of cheap and careless administration of “exotic” animal shows, an entry in Henry David Thoreau’s journal from 1851 reveals his disappointment that owners of a menagerie in Plymouth, Massachusetts offered little information about the animals but instead peddled trained animal acts: “The absurdity of importing the behemoth & then instead of somebody appearing to tell which it is—to have to while away the time—though your curiosity is growing desperate—to learn one fact about the creature—to have [Dandy] Jack [a riding monkey] and the poney introduced!!!” (qtd. in Davis, “Circus Age,” 18). Thoreau’s desperate curiosity to gain knowledge about the elephant suggests his own captivation with the show’s novelty, but it also reflects an abiding anxiety to determine how and why the American public should consume these commodified creatures.

While mid-century audiences anticipated his humbugs and sensationalism, Barnum combated charges that his animal entertainments were wasteful distractions by pushing an educational angle and claiming a scientific purpose for most of his sensational animal exhibits. When Henry Bergh, the founder of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), publicly condemned Barnum’s exhibition of a boa constrictor feeding on live rabbits, he spurred a highly publicized debate with his opponent. Bergh called for the serpents’ starvation for its cruel method of consumption, while Barnum presented testimony from famed Harvard professor Louis Agassiz to verify that “natural law” dictated the species must eat live prey (Saxon 235). Barnum’s reliance on scientific justification for his entertainments provides one example of the liminal social status of these creatures, which operated as commodified wonders but were paraded as serious objects of study. Despite the conflicting characterizations and practices associated with “exotics,” audiences repeatedly legitimated the continued circulation of these

creatures and their likenesses in print as part of an American experience.

Consistent throughout the history of these myriad forms of animal exhibition are the ways in which they appealed to the Anglo-American middle class and promoted capitalistic ideals. Janet Davis notes that while the circus, in particular, comprised multicultural performers and subversive exhibits and acts, “impresarios” “consciously framed their exhibition of the world with normative tropes about labor, racial inequality, separate spheres, and U.S. Hegemony” (26). Davis identifies these showmen as predominately “McKinley Republicans supporting overseas expansion, big business, and Progressive reforms” who saw the circus as a marker of “national progress” (26).

While Barnum and his competitors fed the public’s appetite for entertainment dressed as education, by the latter half of the century naturalists and zoological societies worked to establish professionally managed and permanent collections. The first zoological park in the U.S. opened in Philadelphia in 1874, but some existing menageries, like that of New York’s Central Park, which received donated animals as early as 1861, later gained recognition as a zoo (Kisling 115-116). Vernon Kisling notes that zoos in the postwar period became “a symbol of America’s greatness” for the scientific, educational, and conservationist endeavors they made available to the public, giving the zoo a reputation as a democratic institution.

However, sources of controversy (and sensationalist promotion) were exhibits that consciously blurred the line between humans and animals, often reflecting popular interpretations of contemporary theories of biology and natural history. Once again, Barnum capitalized on the controversy of Darwin’s evolutionary theory with his “missing link” exhibits. As early as the 1860s, an exhibit like “What is It” promoted a dark-skinned performer as “nondescript” and an evolutionary “link” between humans and beasts and civilization and

barbarity (Cook 124). Barnum also displayed a hirsute Laotian child named Karo Farini as “Darwin’s Missing Link” in the 1880s (Saxon 98) (Bogdan 115). These shows anticipated the popularity of “human zoos” and anthropological exhibits at the end of the century. Many parks (and major exhibitions) reinforced discriminatory conceptions of racial hierarchies by placing representatives of ethnic groups alongside or even within animal enclosures. Perhaps the most notorious exhibit was that of Ota Benga, a man who identified as Mbuti pygmy from the Belgium Congo. Housed with monkeys and apes at the New York Zoological Park, Ota Benga’s ordeal ended after the protests of black ministers secured the closing of the exhibit late in 1906, months after he was first displayed (Wirtz 78). After living in the Howard Colored Orphan Asylum and then passing into the care of a benefactor, Ota Benga chose to take his own life in 1916. One journalist who reported on Ota Benga’s suicide commented on the destructive objectification of “the backward race,” suggesting that his death ““contained the story of civilization in microcosm . . . We become a nation of sociologists, look at the curious objects’ teeth, feel his muscle, prick his skin . . . And if he lets fly an arrow, there’s an end of it. We say he has committed suicide, for we like euphemisms” (qtd. in Adams 42). For this author, the legitimization of Ota Benga’s public degradation in the name of scientific inquiry is but a ruse for regressive, even murderous, civilizationist practice.

Scientific debates about the natural world order and the animal shows that sensationalized them largely secured for Anglo-Americans, in particular, the belief that they maintained an undisputed place at the apex of a hierarchy of the species. A brief overview of landmark shifts in philosophy and natural history before Darwin’s theory of evolution elucidates how tensions across the human-animal divide increased in a post-Darwinian world. By the eighteenth century, early evolutionary theories and geological discoveries (such as fossils of extinct species) had

begun to rattle the Christian-inflected vertical system, imagined as a “Chain of Being,” which ranked each specimen of the earth in a fixed and perfect order from closest to God (humans) to furthest (minerals) (Wilson 133). Efforts to maintain the basic function of the chain metaphor, like those of eighteenth-century natural historian George-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, meant identifying a divine hand in apparent transformations in the natural record, imagining plant and animal species as blossoming into their pre-ordained perfection (133). While notable scientists throughout the eighteenth and early-to-mid nineteenth centuries—like Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck and later Louis Agassiz—increasingly strove to account for diversity and dynamism in nature with early theories of evolution, they preserved the teleological hierarchy of the chain of being sustained by God. Virginia Richter suggests that as theoreticians transitioned “the static classificatory system of natural history” to a “temporal axis,” by which species evolve to become more perfect over time, they prompted “the emergence of notions of development and progress” (21).

Breaking the spatial and temporal logic of this chain, Darwin’s evolutionary theory marked a watershed moment in the history of ideas about what it means to be human because its primary tenets cast doubt on the ascendancy of humanity over the animal kingdom. Among the many implications of his theory, Darwin described evolution as a directionless and random process continually underway, a process from which humanity was not immune. Darwin’s 1871 publication of *The Descent of Man* articulated the impact his theory would have on ideas of the human as an animal. The concept of common descent signaled a narrowing of the human-animal divide with the idea that early *Homo sapiens* co-descended with other species. Drawing humans even closer to other animal kind, Darwin further argued that human mental faculties differed only by degree, not kind (Richter 38). While these revelations threatened human supremacist

discourses, the framework of evolutionary thought was quickly appropriated to reassert human dominance (as the fittest rather than ordained by God) over other species and to support racist and discriminatory categories that ranked people deemed inferior in yet another vertical metaphor: an “evolutionary ladder”(38).

This all-too brief overview of some of the historical contexts that inform exoticized animal discourses reveals a continual effort to sustain a coherent belief in the hegemony of Western civilization. This is accomplished through the recapitulation of scientific, philosophical, and cultural constructions of hierarchizing schemas, as represented by chains and ladders, to reinforce human supremacy and uphold a strict species divide. My study specifically considers Anglo-American assumptions of biological and cultural superiority but with special attention to the ways in which imported “exotics” complicated these assumptions, especially as they were imagined as foundational to civilizationist thinking. In both chapters 2 and 3, for instance, I address the particularly charged representations of simian species that at first appear easily categorized apart from their human observers but in fact unsettle the very parameters of civilization, a concept that historically denotes the separation of human communities from nature (Richter 64). As I will show, the literary engagements with “exotic” animals I study find the lines between civilization and nature, humanity and animality to be troubling mutable categories.

Locating “Exotics” in Americanist Animality Studies

Along with broadsides, photographs, illustrations, and other visual media, literature of the period provided widespread access to representations of exoticized creatures. The materials I examine include a wide range of genres, including poetry, nonfiction (i.e. a biography and a hunting narrative), short stories featured in both collections and periodicals, and novels.

Representative authors include well-known writers such as Emily Dickinson and P. T. Barnum and those yet understudied, from Henry S. Fuller (biographer of a chimpanzee) to anonymous satirists in *Puck* magazine. In the case of recognized authors, like Mary Wilkins Freeman and Harriet Prescott Spofford, I often engage with lesser-known works. This diversity of texts suggests the extent to which the figure of the “exotic” animal permeated the popular imagination, but the specific texts I examine evoke both practical and philosophical questions about the means and value of these representations: can these extraordinary creatures ever be accurately represented? How might one characterize the creatures’ contributions to American society and culture when their captivity and alterity seems to at once lock them in an uncomplicated category of alterity and to hint at the ways in which they complicate or even elude representation? As uncanny figures—foreign and looming large in the American imagination—how do “exotic” creatures both promote and disrupt visions of a progressive and civilized society?

This project aims to elucidate why some postbellum authors invested in the foreign animal figure and then imagined these “exotics” as integral to evolving visions of civilization in America. Of course, these creaturely representations performed inconsistent and precarious functions, as popular media and many of the authors of this study variously treated “exotics” as honored citizens, criminals, mascots, and commodities. Yet, the texts I examine seem to take interest in “exotic” captives because their evocative but unstable identities and social status in human contexts highlight the cultural scripts that demarcate their global alterity. Specifically, I am interested in how “exotic” animal representations test ways of conceiving of a more expansive and inclusive conception of Anglo-American civilization and the cultural institutions with which it is associated. Each of my three chapters examines a set of cultural beliefs associated with civilizational discourses in the late nineteenth century: the power of

philanthropic decorum; the management of sentiment in domestic pedagogy for boys; and civilizing processes that transform outsiders to citizens. Whether purposeful or unintentional, these sundry literary representations try to make sense of “exotic” animal alterity and understand—to some degree—its potentially intimate relationship to civil society, a possible consequence of which is the whelming of these creatures under the same ethical umbrella that determines standards and practices in human sympathy and decency.

When I refer to civilization or civilizationist discourses in the late nineteenth century I refer to assumptions of moral and cultural superiority that were racially coded as Anglo-American and categorized as middle class.² John Kasson’s influential work, *Rudeness & Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (1990), offers a helpful starting point for approaching how mid- to late nineteenth century Americans conceived a civilizationist ideology. Kasson traces the rise of “a new bourgeois ideal” in this period that may be characterized as “orderly, regulated, learned, prosperous, ‘civilized’” (215). What Kasson identifies as “the rituals of polite behavior and interaction” relates to the concept of civilization that emerged during the European Enlightenment, which “came to encapsulate a range of meanings associated with improvements in personal life, education, and the arts, as well as the containment of levels of interpersonal violence—a key dimension of what Norbert Elias described as ‘the civilizing process’” (Kasson 7) (O’Hagan 188). The first sustained study of the concept of civilization in modern Europe, Elias’s *The Civilizing Process* (1939) traced the development of manners among European elites and the consolidation of nation states from the early modern period onward (Fletcher 1). Notions of civilizational standards for Europeans necessarily impacted those of Anglo-America, especially given its comparable national identity with Britain (Hobson 70). From the onset, the idea of civilization was associated with progress and set in contrast to barbarism, a paradigm

echoed in the definition of the term “civilization” and its root word “civilized” as they appear in Noah Webster’s 1844 *American Dictionary of the English Language*. The denotation of “civilization” refers to “[t]he state of being refined in manners from the grossness of savage life, and improved in the arts and learning,” while the definition of “civil” expands on the connotations of what it means to be “refined in manners”: 1) “Reduced to order, rule and government, under a regular administration, implying some refinement of manners; not savage or wild; as, civil life, civil society”; 2) “civilized; courteous; complaisant; gentle and obliging; well-bred; affable; kind; having the manners of a city, as opposed to the rough, rude, coarse manners of a savage or clown” (148).

In the definitions for each of these two terms, it is hardly surprising to find what is “civil,” “civilized,” or a constituent of “civilization” is defined in opposition to what is deemed its antithesis. However, worthy of notice in the definition of “civil” is its attention to ethical prerogatives that become expressed as “manners.” The injunction to be “kind” and “gentle” inevitably meets complication when confronted with “savage life” that also contributes to civilized pedagogy, science, and entertainment. Citing Richard Slotkin’s idea of “regeneration through violence,” John Hobson argues that an Anglo-American belief in its ideological and racial supremacy depended on the “construction and reconstruction of new enemies that could be repressed and defeated in order to reproduce American identity” (70). Setting “civilized” America apart from internal and external barbarisms also relied on ethically coded behaviors and institutional factors, like education, science, and governance, but the local presence of the foreign, exoticized animal weighed a special challenge. What manners should people show “exotic” animal life, and were these creatures seen or expected to participate in them? How did sensational animals in the U.S. meet, defy, or shift the implicit goals of civilization: to attain a

state of political, racial, and cultural refinement?

Kasson assures us that codes of behavior marked as civilized “helped to implant a new, more problematic sense of identity—externally cool and controlled, internally anxious and conflicted—and of social relationships” (7). The instability of civilization as a social concept, just like the social codes of conduct inspired by it, means constant reevaluation of who or what counts as a “savage” outsider, against which the ideal is defined. In her work on U.S. imperialism, Amy Kaplan addresses a similar ambiguity arising from nineteenth-century imperialist pursuits, which sought to expand U.S. borders but stem the threat of “racial and cultural intermixing” that would “make the United States internally foreign to itself” (6). While “exotics” symbolized the U.S.’s global awareness and reach as veritable conquered bodies, these animals did not elicit the kind of explicit resistance that human foreigners did for American civilizationist thought, perhaps because the animals seemed easily subjugated and contained in cages, safely across the species divide.

Yet, as I mention above, foreign imported animals pressed a subtler challenge to the boundaries “between the domestic and the foreign, between ‘at home’ and ‘abroad’ (Kaplan 1). For the authors I examine, “exotics” status as anthropomorphized spectacles and signifiers (the first elephant born in captivity was named “Young America”) make them oddly familiar and less *outré* (Flint 103). Their representativeness of and for the self and public interest signals a shift from “them” to “almost-us,” which chips away at the species divide and signals the possibility of challenging other forms of categorical thinking across a spectrum of social divisions. The oxymoronic treatment of foreign animals as beasts living in a civilized context reflects what Edward Said identified as a “vacillation” between novelty and familiarity: “Something patently foreign and distant acquires, for one reason or another, a status more rather than less familiar.

One tends to stop judging things either as completely novel or as completely well known; a new median category emerges, a category that allows one to see new things, things seen for the first time, as versions of a previously known thing” (58). This “new thing” for the Anglo-American public is the racial, geographical, and species alterity that the foreign animal connotes, which was also evidenced by the non-European design of animal enclosures in zoos, including “Chinese pagodas, Hindu temples and Near Eastern mosques” (Wirtz 78).

Patrick Wirtz attests that this form of presentation “meant inferior through its association with animals” (78). Wirtz rightly acknowledges that the overlapping of animal discourses with that of human societies deemed “barbarous” was commonplace in the nineteenth century. While recognizing the predominance of these racist discourses, I argue that representations of foreign, sensationalized animals also afforded opportunities to imagine fraught and awkward but emotional, psychological, and physical connections and correspondences with the animals’ excessive alterity. Imagining the animals as figures of remarkable diversity *and* potential similitude presents the possibility of a transformation in civilizationist thought; that which fundamentally opposes Anglo-American civilization might also be incorporated. In Dickinson’s poetry, speakers strive to share a meeting of the minds with tigers and leopards. Paul du Chaillu’s adventure hunting book cannot help but imagine and test the place of gorillas and chimpanzees in American domestic settings, and Mary Wilkins Freeman considers the role that a caged monkey plays in potentially fostering a more inclusive and heterogeneous society.

However, in each case, this experiment in interspecies communion seems to fail. Though authors either consciously or unintentionally imagine complex understandings and relationships with the animals, the concept of the human-animal divide remains an impediment. While the animals’ perceived exoticism is a significant factor, authors either intentionally or unconsciously

show the limits of human perception, ethical insight, and creative thinking that prevent the animal from being properly represented on its own terms and as partner (rather than a product) of a progressive civilization. Some authors attend to these human limitations more concertedly than others. Emily Dickinson purposefully examines the failure of this experiment in inclusivity in doubting the ability of her philanthropist speakers to commune with jungle cats. In other cases, unaware authors rely too heavily on anthropomorphism, symbolism, and stereotype in their depiction of “exotic” animality, and in so doing retreat to hierarchizing narratives that create divisions along lines of species, race, and class. Nonetheless, it is the eventual failure or imperfection of these efforts to identify or make a connection with “exotics” that unsettles the discourses of alterity they evoke and illuminates the exclusionary frameworks that underwrite civilizationist thinking.

My project takes a historicist approach to animal studies in American literature, placing both easily recognizable authors and understudied or anonymously authored materials in the context of popular discourses that concern the exoticized nonhuman animal. Scholars have thoroughly (but not exhaustively) examined the ways in which the actual and figurative nonhuman animals of the nineteenth century often served as rhetorical tools to subjugate people marked as outsiders to Anglo-American identity. Because the cultural politics of the period and texts I study frequently and brazenly merged racial, ethnic, and class discourses, in particular, with that of the “exotic” animal, my work bears a responsibility to continue the important work of observing the mechanisms and destructive impact of racist, dehumanizing, and speciesist rhetorics in the historical record — even while acknowledging other functions of the exotic animal figure.

My dedication to contextualizing the cultural and political stakes of these animals in

civilizationist discourses locates my project within the parameters of animality studies. Because this specified field is still relatively recent (compared to its parent field “animal studies”) and its definition and scope is a continuing source of debate, it is necessary to briefly address the issues of categorizing literary and historical research that examines non-human animals. Recently (2017), Michael Lundblad has echoed other scholars in arguing for the end of the umbrella term “animal studies,” citing that scholars—generally speaking—recognize that the idea of the human is inseparable from nonhuman animals, therefore making the designation “animal” irrelevant.³ Declaring “‘the’ animal is over,” Lundblad suggests tidying the tangled approaches associated with animal studies that often admit little to no overlap or openly oppose one another (1). For the sake of clarifying the goals and objects of analysis for what he renames “animalities,” Lundblad identifies three “forms” of study: human-animal studies, animality studies, and posthumanism (2). Simplified to their most basic distinctions, human-animal studies places conscious emphasis on animal rights and welfare advocacy; animality studies examines cultural discourses that either construct humans as animals or locate animality in specific human historical contexts; and posthumanism aims to deconstruct perceived binaries with the human, like the traditional philosophical divides between humans and animals, technologies, and aliens (Lundblad 3).

Lundblad suggests that these forms of study may be conceived on a spectrum (with one end primarily concerned with animal advocacy and post-structuralist aims at the other), and can therefore overlap in constructive ways (i.e. research with a primarily animality studies’s bent might also advocate for animal rights causes) (Lundblad 11). Despite the flexibility Lundblad envisions, I heed Colleen Glenney Boggs’s caution against losing the real and important differences that nonhuman animals embody. She cites the concept of “animality” as another potential means of re-categorizing the nonhuman animal in human terms, which means

downplaying or erasing the significance of animal alterity, especially as it was understood in a particular historical context (8).

While Glenney-Boggs observes animal “alterity’s importance for rethinking subject formation,” I identify a specific concept of animal alterity that invests in animals’ foreign and “exotic” status in the U.S. (8). The texts I examine all feature imported species that either arrived (alive or dead) in the U.S. via global networks of exploration, hunting, and trade that concentrated on collecting animals from what were traditionally identified as “exotic” climes, predominately Africa and Asia. This study distinguishes imported “exotic” species from domesticated “exotics,” such as tropical birds like the parrot in Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening*, and exoticized native North American animals, as exemplified by Harriet Prescott Spofford’s panther-like creature in her short story “Circumstance” and Charles Chesnutt’s werewolf character in the conjure tale, “The Gray Wolf’s Ha’nt.” By contrast, foreign and sensationalized creatures’ geographical origins, their association with the native people from which they originated, and their unique morphology compared to North American species contributed to particular characterizations of their exoticism in America. The non-native wildness and sensational excess they connoted stirred complex literary negotiations of human and nonhuman animal relationships in the period, especially the social place and purpose of creatures traditionally imagined outside a civilizational schema. Because the notion of exoticism is a relative concept dependent on the cultural constructions and connotations of difference, I will enclose the term “exotic” in quotation marks throughout the present text to signify its specific application for nineteenth-century America’s fascination with sensational difference of all kinds, including Orientalism, racial alterity, and rare or novel commodities, to list a few.

The animal marked as nonhuman and foreign operated as a signifier for human designs, but

these beings were also actually present and interacted with the public through whatever means their captivity allowed. Even when mediated in textual depictions, illustrations etc., these living subjects influenced to some degree actual and simulated interspecies encounters. These creatures' responses to their new environment and human treatment inevitably impacted their lives and human interpretations of them. For instance, in the biography of the famous chimpanzee of Central Park, Mr. Crowley, the author strives to anthropomorphize the ape at every turn, but Crowley rebukes some of the human narratives imposed on him, such as the courtship of his intended bride (Miss Kitty Banana) that he refuses to undertake.

For the sake of situating the methodological aims of this present study in existing scholarship, I acknowledge that my research primarily invests in the cultural history that shaped and was influenced by representations of the "exotic" animal; I investigate texts that think about animals and that, by extension, think about wider human social issues through the signifying and/or anthropomorphized foreign animal. As straightforward as this may seem, I also identify the sometimes surprising ways in which some authors of this study, like Emily Dickinson and Paul du Chaillu, recognize the limits of knowing and representing foreign animals and thus confront the human discourses that construct the animal world and humanity's relationship to it. My scholarly approach, however, would seem to situate this study outside the goals of posthumanism that Cary Wolfe outlines. In his 2009 *PMLA* article, "Human, All Too Human: 'Animal Studies' and the Humanities," Wolfe calls for scholars to examine their own participation in humanist constructions that establish them as "knowing subjects": "The full force of animal studies, then, resides in its power to remind us that it is not enough to reread and reinterpret—from a safe ontological distance, as it were—the relation of metaphor and species difference, the cross-pollination of speciesist, sexist, and and racist discursive structures in

literature, and so on. That undertaking is no doubt praiseworthy and long overdue, but as long as it leaves unquestioned the humanist schema of the knowing subject who undertakes such a reading, then it sustains the very humanism and anthropocentrism that animal studies sets out to question” (569). The research in the following chapters does not make an explicit about-face turn to examine the ways in which my position of power as the scholar may or may not reinforce anthropocentric paradigms. However, in investigating historically situated discourses of the animal, I attend to the important ways in which authors negotiated and/or contributed to the concepts of “human” and “animal” in their own culture and time. In so doing, my hope is for a nuanced portrait of the historical human-animal divide that might contribute to further interrogation of our present humanist discourses.

While the field of animal studies continues to develop, the future of studying animals and animality in literature depends on the groundwork and innovative scholarship of the last few decades. This study is particularly indebted to Americanist scholars who have examined the animals as critical figures and actors in constructing, informing, and challenging nineteenth-century social philosophies. Jennifer Mason’s work, *Civilized Creatures: Urban Animals, Sentimental Culture, and American Literature, 1850-1900*, led the vanguard in shifting the focus of environmental studies scholarship from the “wild” frontier—the primary influence of the natural world on American ideologies and culture—to the affective influence of the domesticated and urban animal. Mason cites “civilized creatures”—dogs and horses, in particular—as critical to “an eventual questioning of humans’ absolute ascendancy over other forms of life” (20). Also examining pet culture and its affective relationships, Boggs’ ambitious and thoughtful study brings together biopolitical theory and animal studies. Boggs argues that at stake “is a larger

issue by which the question of what counts as life and who exerts power over life hinges on a complex system of representations,” and her attention to representations of animals in American literature, specifically animal figures “abjected as beasts and sentimentalized as pets,” prove crucial to subject formation in American history, from the Puritans to Barbara Bush (12). Indeed, Boggs expands the temporal scope of Mason’s project and addresses under-examined and even traditionally taboo discourses, such as gender and bestiality, identified in animal representations, finding them key to the formation of biopolitical subjectivity and relationships. She evaluates the way representations of affective relationships with animals confront “the boundaries of who or what can count as an ‘other’ that we feel ‘for’ and what forms such ‘feeling’ takes in the context of a particular history of subject formation” (6). Other influential scholars include Brigitte Fielder and Lesley Ginsburg, who demonstrate that domestic creatures served as emblematic lightning rods for lessons in ethical behavior for young readers, especially for the purpose of cultivating proper sentimental responses.

While Mason, Boggs, and others establish crucial theoretical and methodological frameworks for my inquiry, my particular focus on civilizational discourses associated with foreign animal exoticism addresses a blind spot in these scholars’ concentration on domesticated and sentimentalized species in American literature. Mason, for instance, distinguishes her literary subjects of study as “those that were not only present in the built environment but believed to share humans’ affinities for civilized life” (2-3). Mason’s chapter on Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Marble Faun*, for instance, sets the domesticated animal in direct comparison with the exoticized ape, arguing that the author’s representation of affective relationships with companion animals superseded the influence ape figures had on brokering “acceptance of evolutionary theories, Darwinian and otherwise” (24). Mason’s emphasis on the affective influence of sentimentalized

creatures in “the built environment,” which “seemed to many to be more honest, more generous, more loyal—in short more civilized—than many of the people who lived there,” invites a companion study, like my own, to investigate what happens to contemporary understandings of what constitutes “civilized” when “exotic” creatures are also part of the same “built environment,” albeit in separate enclosures (20). For my purposes, “exotic” animals transplanted in the U.S. also profoundly impacted civilizational ideologies, especially upsetting dichotomies such as “civilized” and “savage” and “exotic” and “local” or “native.”

In *Animalia Americana*, Boggs also predominately examines domesticated animal figurations and “sentimentalized pets,” such as Emily Dickinson’s poems that include common animal figures, like dogs, cats, and native birds (12). The one exception is her reading of Poe’s orangutan in “Murders in the Rue Morgue.” Boggs suggests that the orangutan figure enables “alternative forms of subjectivity and representation” because animality enfolds both the real and figurative animal (131). Thus, while the mechanisms are in place to racialize the orangutan (and, Boggs claims, discriminate against a “rebellious slave”), such mechanisms are laid bare and also unsettle the categories of “human” and “animal” (131). Her compelling reading, however, neglects to address the orangutan’s cultural status as a foreign and sensationalized commodity and the role these characteristics also play in shifting the ground on which hierarchizing concepts of humanity, civilization, and animality depend.

My sustained examination of “exotic” animal representations in literature is also indebted to the contributions and models of cultural historians who account for the presence of foreign animals in American “built environments” (to borrow Mason’s phrasing). Susan Nance’s *Entertaining Elephants: Animal Agency and the Business of the American Circus* (2013); Janet Davis’s *Circus Age: Culture & Society Under the American Big Top* (2002) and *The Gospel of*

Kindness: Animal Welfare and the Making of Modern America (2016); and Judith Hamera's *Parlor Ponds: The Cultural Work of the American Home Aquarium, 1850-1970* (2012) provide important models and context for my literary approach. Among these scholars, Susan Nance advances innovative critical insights on how to acknowledge animal agency in the historical record. Her particular focus on elephants in nineteenth- and early twentieth century American popular entertainment traces these animals' shifting characterizations, from a gentle giant to a raging beast throughout this period, but she also stresses that elephants themselves shaped their experience, the people around them, and their environment as subjects that posed difficulties to a simple and pleasing anthropocentric narrative. Nance offers a useful model in telling the history of human-animal relationships as she strives to strike a balance between the story of human control over elephants and the story of the elephants themselves. In piecing together the ways these creatures exercised agency in the entertainment world, Nance suggests that interactions between humans and sentient beings like the elephant are a meeting (or sometimes a clash) between different two cultures, rather than a relationship centered solely on human perspectives and desires.⁴

My dissertation, then, advances a new approach to Americanist scholarship on the socio-political discourses of identity and belonging by including the foreign and animal. I investigate how depictions of "exotic" animals serve as touchstones for addressing underlying cultural anxieties about the nation's relationship and responsibilities to both animals and the global alterity it represents. My focus suggests that nationalism and ethnocentrism have always been complicated by global influence and an array of responses to it. Given our present political moment (2018), marked by visible invocations of Anglo-American nationalism, my analysis of the alien animal's literary treatment in nineteenth-century America offers an important but

overlooked point of entry into ongoing discussions of the U.S.'s fraught historical engagement with diversity.

In chapter 1, Dickinson takes up the figure of the “exotic” jungle cat to question the power structures inherent in humanitarian and reformist endeavors. In a letter, Dickinson recounts that “Friday I tasted life. It was a vast morsel. A circus passed the house – still I feel the red in my mind though the drums are out” (L318). The “exotic” animals parading under her window no doubt contributed to her rapture, but where they appear in her corpus, Dickinson grapples with her own and her culture’s perceptions of and encounters with alien animals. Popular entertainments, like circuses, scientific discourses, and literary representations, treated foreign animals as readily apprehended in both senses of the word: at once the physical captives of America’s fascination and the objects of absolute comprehension, despite (or, indeed, because of) their mysterious exotic allure. In three poems either featuring a leopard or a tiger, Dickinson interrogates claims to intimate knowledge of the alien animal and the animal mind, and critiques speakers who presume to know the identity and interiority of “bold” big cats in order to resolve their own identity crises and ethical relationships to foreignness.

Chapter 2 examines the primate hunting scenes in Paul du Chaillu’s *Stories of the Gorilla Country* (1876), the first children’s book published by the first (presumably) successful Western gorilla hunter, and P.T. Barnum’s *The Wild Beasts, Birds, and the Reptiles of the World* (1888). Du Chaillu, the explorer of French descent but who identified as American (even claiming New Orleans as his birthplace, though evidence suggests otherwise), demonstrates conflicted feelings about the primates pursued in the jungle. His anxieties and desires concerning gorillas and chimpanzees reflect more general uneasiness about radical change in the U.S.’s postbellum social and political landscape. Published at the end of Reconstruction, the text’s fraught gorilla

hunts ultimately insinuate the arbitrariness of racial classification and tentatively promote the possibility of amalgamation in a racially segregated nation. While foreign animal figures in nineteenth-century texts, like du Chaillu's primates, serve as surrogates or symbolic stand-ins for human parties in social debates, their extra-human status challenges in strange ways the easy binaries of civilization and barbarity, foreignness and locality, and citizen and alien. P.T. Barnum's book for children intends to entertain while also advancing capitalistic and domestic pedagogy for American boys, guiding them in proper sentiment for some animals but not others (like the gorilla) in the course of the hunt. However, as stalwart as Barnum's mission seems, the text admits some ambivalence about seeking violence against anthropoid creatures that seem to share similar cultures of domesticity as that of the hunters.

Maintaining a focus on the anthropomorphic figure of the simian, Chapter 3 moves from the scene of the gorilla and chimpanzee hunt in Africa to that of the caged ape or monkey in the U.S. Authors Mary Wilkins Freeman, Harriet Prescott Spofford, and Henry S. Fuller, the biographer of a famed Central Park chimpanzee, consider how the mechanics of caging do more than physically and metaphorically separate humans from exoticized animals; they also afford a mutual gaze and sustained interspecies interaction. The uncanny mirror effect that humanlike simian captives create enables new ways of conceiving of community that includes "exotic" animality and the species difference it represents. I argue that these authors approach a form of autoexoticism in which Anglo-American society might embrace a multicultural and interspecies identity that opens new pathways to and ideas about citizenship in a civilized nation.

Finally, the epilogue meditates on the limits of human privilege in observing the captive "exotic" animal in a "civilized" fashion. I set in conversation two texts that bookend the time frame of this project: Hawthorne's mid-century novel, *The House of the Seven Gables*, and

Rebecca Harding Davis's 1871 short story for *Our Young Folks*, "How to Hunt a Tiger." In each, the authors consider the dangers of housing and commercializing "exotic" animals for American consumption, but rather than present the animal as a literal threat by escape from captivity, the danger lies in the false sense of physical and psychological security and ethical certainty that "civilized" superstructures seem to afford characters. "Exotic" animals in these texts are the stuff of hyper-anthropomorphism, essentially products of human imagination that ultimately reveal chaos and violence at the heart of human civilization. I consider these examples in light of twentieth and twenty-first century incidents of fraught human and "exotic" animal boundary crossings, from the deadly escape of Siberian tiger, Tatiana, from the San Francisco Zoo in 2007 to the killing of Harambe the gorilla at the Cincinnati Zoo in 2016.

To return where I began, when Jewett and Poe invoke "exotic" animal figures, though with differing aims, they each demand that when we look at the animals that captivate us (and are in turn captives), we examine the nature of our fascination and the social architectures that foster it. In both stories, the characters otherwise prove to be excellent observers—Jewett's narrator faithfully records her circus adventure; Poe's Dupin epitomizes rational study—but they each overlook the exoticized creatures' revealing and potentially radical effect on the civilizational systems and ideologies that showcase animal alterity.

ENDNOTES

¹ Dickinson refers to foreign and “exotic” creatures in a number of poems, including the big cat poems I address in chapter 1. A rhinoceros appears in “You said that I “was Great” – one Day –“ (F736A), clouds take the shape of elephants in “On this long storm the Rainbow rose -” (F216A), and Dickinson refers to “[t]he Camel’s trait” in “Strong draughts of their refreshing minds” (F770A).

² I use two adjectival forms of the term “civilization” throughout this project: “civilizational” and “civilizationist,” but these two forms carry different (though related) meanings. “Civilizational” generally refers to that which is associated with civilization, while “civilizationist” is a critical term that specifically refers to philosophical and institutional hierarchies according to categories of race, class, gender, and species. Kyla Wazana Tompkins, for instance, clarifies the meaning of “civilizationist” in calling it a discourse of “civilizational hierarchy” that is often associated with nationalism and imperialism (65).

³ Lundblad has argued against the use of the term “animal studies” in previous publications, including his 2009 article in *PMLA*, “From Animal to Animality Studies.”

⁴ Though I merely hint at the transatlantic history of “exotic” animal captivity in my chapters, it is also important to note here that “exotic” animal entertainments were often imported from British and European versions and adapted to American tastes and environments. I therefore draw from scholars of British history and literature whose investment in the foreign animal figure and the cultural phenomena it inspires has been underway for decades longer than that of their Americanist counterparts and includes such scholars as Harriet Ritvo, John Miller, and Helen Cowie.

CHAPTER ONE

Through the Tiger's Eye: Constructing Animal Exoticism in Emily Dickinson's "Big Cat" Poems

In the leading article of the May, 1860 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*, titled "Instinct," the author—Leonard Augustus Jones, a Boston lawyer and journalist—admits to humanity's limited powers of observation and interpretation when it comes to animals: "In regard to instinct, as well as everything else, we must be content with finding out what it seems to us to be, rather than what it is" (514). And yet, despite his reverence for the mysteries of the animal mind, Jones also attempts to illustrate the nonhuman animal's incapacity for reason, a faculty he reserves only for humankind. Delving into the dog's brain, for instance, he suggests the animal's inability to discern cause and effect, and he goes on to probe the mental limitations of other species before concluding that humanity's superior "mental faculties bring him into by far the most diversified and intimate relations with all created things" (524). Jones thereby stumbles into a contradiction common among many nineteenth-century authors of popular natural history who, on the one hand, wish to tantalize an audience with the undiscovered and unknowable realm of animal experience and, on the other hand, celebrate humanity's God-granted mental faculties compared to nonhuman subjects.

Emily Dickinson quite possibly read Jones's pronouncements about animal nature and the superiority of human faculties, having confirmed in a letter to Thomas Wentworth Higginson that she had read Harriet Prescott Spofford's story "Circumstance," which appeared in the same *Atlantic Monthly* issue as "Instinct." At the center of Spofford's tale, the "Indian Devil," an

unidentified and almost mythic panther-like animal, holds a pioneer woman captive in a tree for the majority of the story, its motivations a mystery. Perhaps the Indian Devil's status as a frightening enigma prompted Dickinson to confess to Higginson that the story "followed me, in the Dark - so I avoided her [Spofford]" (L261). Characterizing the story itself as a lurking predator, Dickinson was clearly enthralled with Spofford's almost otherworldly big cat, whose cryptic example belies Jones's assertion that humans maintain "intimate relations with all created things" (Jones 524). A creature like Spofford's makes Jones's willingness to make assumptions about animal mentation appear overbold.

In her poetry, Dickinson invokes her own "big cats," but unlike Spofford's native but alien "Indian Devil," Dickinson's speakers assume shared intimate understanding of feline nature with the poems' readers.¹ In three poems centered on either a tiger or a leopard, Dickinson's speakers cross the human / animal divide in order to claim comprehensive knowledge of these creatures. Dated as having been written during the years of the Civil War, the poems "Civilization - spurns - the Leopard!" (F276A), "As the Starved Maelstrom laps the Navies" (F106A), and "A Dying Tiger - moaned for Drink - " (F295B) ventriloquize a common assumption held by leaders of "exotic" animal entertainment and popular science, both in print and live exhibitions: that the consumer has special insight into the life of the animal, its character, experience, and place of origin.² Dickinson's speakers each claim progressive agendas—animal rights advocacy, dietary reform, and palliative nursing, respectively—and yet their representations and presumptive knowledge of the leopard and tiger undermine their philanthropy. Dickinson suggests that her speakers' overreaching attempts to peer into the alien animal world and so define it violates the sanctity of animal life, damages human and animal relations, and diminishing the dignity of humankind.

A well-established body of scholarship explores Dickinson's poetic interest in the limits of human knowledge and the imperfection of human perception, especially when applied to the natural world. Colleen Glenney Boggs, Michelle Kohler, and Aaron Shackelford confirm Dickinson's consistent affirmation of humanity's unique but limited comprehension of nature. In his study of Dickinson's anthropomorphism, Shackelford convincingly argues that her animal portrayals reveal on the one hand "that your comprehension of the animal will necessarily be bounded by your own human biases," but on the other hand that anthropomorphism of nonhuman species serves as a crucial tool for experiencing the animal world (Shackelford 60, 62). Similarly, Colleen Glenney Boggs contends that Dickinson investigates how human-animal relationships can both disrupt "social construction" and advance "alternative forms of representation" that resist "the didactic interpretation of the animal" (143, 148).³ According to both scholars, Dickinson cites animal alterity as a means of fostering humanity's awareness of its limited capacities to accurately perceive the nonhuman world and human nature.

However, Dickinson scholarship has yet to address the ways in which Dickinson challenges humanity's capacity for demonstrating comprehensive humaneness on behalf of animals. Specifically, she demonstrates that claims to reformist and progressive treatment of creatures fail to escape overriding cultural narratives about animal life. Shackelford contends that Dickinson's anthropomorphic treatment of animals tests more accurate ways of appreciating animals' strangeness by "push[ing] the limits of how far we can project the human onto the animal" (51). The "big cat" poems I treat here locate the utter limits of this projection, whereby the poems' speakers ventriloquize contemporary culture's dominating vision of the feline alien.⁴ In so doing they incriminate themselves, grappling openly with their problematic motivations, ethical positions, and self-delusions in claiming to comprehend the alterity of a big cat. For

example, in “Civilization - spurns - the Leopard!,” even as the speaker attempts to humanize a captive leopard, her presumed insight into the leopard’s mind objectifies the animal as a commodity. Similarly, the poem “As the Starved Maelstrom laps the Navies” presents a speaker who—to excuse her unethical eating—metaphorically characterizes tiger nature as barbarous in order to contrast with and thus uphold her moral superiority. In the final poem, “A Dying Tiger - moaned for Drink - ,” Dickinson disrupts the speaker’s narrative control of a tiger’s death scene and emphasizes unexpected parity between the human and non-human species. Across these three poems, Dickinson presents to the reader’s scrutiny her speakers’ well-intentioned but appropriative approaches to animal mentation, stereotypes of animal behavior (specifically eating), and humanity’s assumed superior perception, respectively.

Dickinson’s choice of foreign and wild cats for these poems is set in stark contrast to her purported ambivalence (or, more accurately, violent hostility) toward domesticated felines. Long a disconcerting topic in Dickinson biography, the poet’s alleged antipathy for her sister Lavinia’s numerous litters of cats spurred her to wage “comic war” against them (Armand 171). A cousin maintained that Emily sent her a cat’s tail adorned with a pink ribbon and accompanied by a poem; Emily’s niece recalled her aunt’s “iniquity” in drowning four of Lavinia’s kittens in a jar of pickle brine (qtd. in Armand 171). According to Lisa Marie Jones, the value of house cats for Emily was their hunting prowess, and even this, Jones suggests, little endeared them to her (152). By contrast, Dickinson sets up complicated relationships with her leopard and tiger subjects that seems to reverse the power dynamic of the poet’s alleged animal abuse; indeed, in each of the three poems examined here, Dickinson portrays the big cats as elusive and resistant to definition and even victimization, weighing these qualities of her leopard and tiger figures against Western civilization’s domesticating force. Dickinson’s understated reverence for the big cats may be

attributed to their foreign status and untamed nature, an alternative identity that cannot easily be contained and trampled underfoot in a cramped domicile. Jones abstractly corroborates this about Dickinson's leopards, which, she somewhat obscurely argues, indexes "identification and distance" (513). Dickinson's leopards (and her tigers, too) represent a worldlier subjectivity than the kittens that so aggravate Dickinson; however, the suggestion that Dickinson's African and Asian big cats broker "identification" or correspondence between the speaker (and the reader) simplifies the fraught politics of power and representation with these feline subjects. In these three "big cat" poems, Dickinson hazards the sanctity of the cats' elusiveness to make a point about human desires to intercede and interpret—whether benevolently or meanly—on behalf of the alien animal.

Just as Spofford's "Indian Devil" indexes untamed and—given the name—ethnic alterity in the United States, so, too, does Dickinson's choice of geographically "exotic" cats influence the speakers' posture toward their feline subjects. As a result of American trade with largely European markets for African and Asian "exotic" creatures, imported cats circulated as major menagerie and circus attractions throughout much of the United States (Kisling 112; Kotar and Gessler 115).⁵ These animal spectacles and the literatures inspired by them staged encounters between "civilized" United States audiences and the ultimate foreigners: "exotic" species from distant climes.⁶ For all their spotted or striped beauty, the leopard and tiger, whose behavior contemporary observers characterized as sensitive but volatile, connoted danger and mystery for nineteenth-century audiences. As representatives of non-Western geographies, which for many Americans indexed primitivism and barbarity, animals like tigers and leopards posed a symbolic challenge to American and Western civilizationist ideology, a belief in the inherent superiority of Western civilizations (Aldridge 420). Big cats, especially lions and tigers, might serve as a

national or institutional brand, like the lion's popularity in English heraldry, but the felines also connoted unpredictability and willfulness. Recognizing big cats' caginess, Dickinson's implied critique of her speakers' hegemonic Western perspective emphasizes the artificiality of humanity's presumed dominant and pervasive habit of interpreting animal life.

This civilizationist approach to species discourse also intertwined human racial classifications according to a ranking system based on Western standards of superior cultural accomplishment. Likely guided by polygenist thinking, which denied a shared, single origin for all humanity and thus provided the ideological foundation for a belief in multiple and unequal human races, some contemporary thinkers ranked classifications of race in a hierarchized taxonomy that placed some non-white ethnic groups, like African Americans, between white humanity and apes (Fielder 489-490; Richter 38-39).⁷ In turn, nonhuman animals deemed more or less human-like rose or fell in the species ranking system, often according to whether a species could serve the interests of Western civilization (Ritvo 37). In her study of elephant agency in American circuses, Susan Nance cites "white paternalism" and "dominionism," the belief that the Christian God bequeathed animals to the unmitigated control of humankind, as underlying cultural tenets that informed the relationship between humans and "exotic" nonhumans in the nineteenth century (124). Nance maintains that "many Americans adopted theories of natural history to speak to these debates by reconceiving nature as a 'vicious' wilderness in which a 'drama of warring species' played out," a war which white humanity must inevitably win (124). Dickinson's "big cats," as "beasts" from ostensibly primitive lands, are part and parcel of these tumultuous debates about Americans' relationship to nonwhite alterity. To varying degrees, her speakers conceive of "exotic" animal nature via a civilizationist point of view, but one that simultaneously sets "civilized" humanity apart from alien species and alleges

intimate insight into the animals' nature.

However, to tell the story of the "exotic" animal is to flirt with a revealing paradox. White representatives of "civilization" might reinforce their superior status in species and racial hierarchies by speaking for an alien animal, but authorial claims to understanding an alternative identity require imaginatively crossing over into unknown territory. When Dickinson's speakers construe animal nature for their own pleasure, they expose the species hierarchy to be a narrative of human invention like its twin white supremacist discourses.

Dickinson's scrutiny of hierarchical fantasies is explicit in her inversion and demotion of popular spectatorship in "The Show is not the Show" (F1270B). Though not one of her Civil-War "big cat" poems, the poem, dated 1872, undercuts the privilege of those who blithely exercise the power of their domineering gaze:

The Show is not the Show,

But they that go -

Menagerie to me

My Neighbor be -

Fair play -

Both went to see -⁸

For all her neighbors' eagerness "to see" the show and its menagerie animals, she turns the same powers of observation on their human activity, thereby rendering them a spectacle in their acts of spectatorship. The poem's notion of fairness, or "Fair play," implicates the human gaze as problematic, evoking human observational power as privileged, objectifying, and ethically short-

sighted, especially given U.S. menageries' widely acknowledged association with negligent animal care (Kisling 114).⁹ This poem, along with the "big cat" poems I will examine, reveals Dickinson's intentions to scrutinize her own and her contemporary culture's eagerness to consume and construct the alien animal. Sandra Runzo notes Dickinson's awareness of "the pervasive presence of popular amusements in her time" and points to a specific moment of rapture upon seeing the pageantry of a menagerie caravan, an experience Dickinson recorded in a letter to Elizabeth Holland: "Friday I tasted life. It was a vast morsel. A circus passed the house - still I feel the red in my mind though the drums are out" (Runzo 21; L170). For all her feelings of titillation at the circus sighting, Dickinson's "big cat" poems serve as a sobering response to her and the public's possessive fascination with "exotic" animals.

Commoditizing Animal Consciousness

Dickinson's "Civilization - spurns - Leopard!" addresses just such an imagined possession of the animal mind. Her speaker voices a controversial stance among competing mid-century theories of animal mentation, but Dickinson questions whether even animal advocates like her speaker can escape repeating cultural scripts about the animal world. Harriet Ritvo and Rob Boddice note the mercurial rhetoric inherent in these wide-ranging debates on animal mentation, or what Ritvo calls a "grab bag of intellectual and emotional attributes" (850). The very distinction between terms like "intelligence" and "sagacity" proved slippery, no one term holding a fixed denotation in species discourses (Boddice 65; Ritvo 850). Because the terms of the debates were so fluid, especially the meaning of intelligence and what counts as evidence, the myriad and often contradictory opinions about animal mentation set up an unstable scale of relative similarity and distinction between humans and nonhumans (Ritvo 850).¹⁰

At stake in these debates was not only the traditional vertical structure of species categorization but also the specter of humanity's limited capacities to understand animal mentation. Some theorists skirted these issues altogether in favor of a pat denial of non-humans' cognitive abilities. Those who maintained Descartes's conclusion that nonhuman animals function by involuntary propulsions like automatons secured humanity's primacy over God's tinker-toy creatures. Cartesian thought upheld humans' status as the sole species capable of reason and therefore upheld the human-animal divide (Richter 39). Charles Darwin, on the other hand, greatly diminished humanity's exceptional status. With his ideas of common descent in *The Origin of the Species* percolating into American intellectual consciousness, Darwin promoted the idea of "genealogical connections linking all living creatures, and linking all humankind" (Feeley-Harnik 265). Because of these connections, he argued, nonhumans likely have comparative mental faculties to humans because, according to Darwin in his 1871 publication, *The Descent of Man*, "every one who admits the principle of evolution, must see that the mental powers of the higher animals, which are the same in kind with those of man, though so different in degree, are capable of advancement" (624). However, as Harriet Ritvo's study of Victorian human-animal relations suggests, interpretations of Darwin's evolutionary theory encouraged notions of human superiority rather than fellow-feeling with animals: "Clearly, if people were animals, they were the top animals, and with God out of the picture, the source of human preeminence lay within" (40).

In the poem "Civilization—spurns—the Leopard!" Dickinson drops her speaker into this discursive fray as a potential champion of Darwin's more complex cognitive portrait of nonhuman creatures. Likely aware of the precarious foundations at the root of science on animal psychology, Dickinson evokes ethical complications at the heart of the speaker's claims: to what

extent can or should one claim insight into animal lives? Is poetic insight an ethically specious exercise in human hubris?

Civilization - spurns - the Leopard!

Was the Leopard - bold?

Deserts - never rebuked her Satin -

Ethiopia - her Gold -

Tawny - her Customs -

She was Conscious -

Spotted - her Dun Gown -

This was the Leopard's nature - Signor -

Need - a keeper - frown?

Pity - the Pard - that left her Asia!

Memories - of Palm -

Cannot be stifled - with Narcotic -

Nor suppressed - with Balm -

At first glance, Dickinson positions her speaker as both an adversary of bigotry and an animal activist in begging "Pity" for "the Pard" from a xenophobic "Civilization." Dickinson's speaker appears to mistrust Western hegemony and its colonization of the Leopard's body. She weighs a compelling argument to convince the keeper (and the reader) of the Leopard's beauty because of—and not despite—her alien alterity. Strikingly, the speaker also promotes the Leopard as a

psychologically complex creature with irrepressible “Memories - of Palm - ” of her homeland, and further emphasizes the Leopard’s keen awareness of both herself and of her subjugated status in American or European captivity. For instance, the double syntax surrounding the line, “She was Conscious - ,” affords the cat full awareness that “Civilization” deems “her Customs” and her “Dun Gown” as “Spotted,” literally referring to the Leopard’s coat but also her body or character as “blemished” or “corrupted by sin” (Hallen).¹¹ Instead of a barbarous and totally alien creature, the cat is cast as a sentient being in full recognition of her victimization, a characterization which might render her more humanlike and worthy of pity.

Despite the speaker’s sympathetic treatment of the Leopard, however, her advocacy raises several questions: is her representation an accurate account of the leopard’s experience? To what extent is the speaker an agent of the “Civilization” she shames? Additionally, what is the speaker’s relationship to the leopard’s keeper, and what outcome does the speaker seek for both herself and the Leopard in making her case to the keeper and Civilization? Does the speaker take on the trope of the captive leopard—describing herself as an oppressed feline—for her own ends? These questions unsettle the speaker’s animal-rights philanthropy, which ultimately threatens to reinstate the oppressive Orientalist and species discourses that she superficially strives to reject.

That Dickinson’s speaker narrates the Leopard’s internal experience is unusual—both for her time and her poetry—but not completely anomalous. Dickinson’s decision to expose the Leopard’s “Memory” comes well in advance of a rise in literature featuring the animal perspective or a narrator who peers into the animal’s inner life, which would become increasingly popular through the end of the century. For instance, Anna Sewall’s popular animal autobiography, *Black Beauty*, one of the first major works narrated by an animal, circulated as

pirated copies in the U.S.—up to two million copies—in the two years after its original publication in 1877 (Walker 26). In addition to animal advocacy efforts to sentimentalize animal experience, authors like Jack London, whose canine narratives sought to decenter the human perspective, perpetuated turn-of-the-century debates about animals' relative intelligence and likeness to humans. Dickinson's peep into the Leopard's mind, then, was an extraordinary act in poetic license in the early 1860s.

However, given the contentious scientific disputes concerning animal mentation that I briefly outline above, Dickinson's emphasis upon her speaker's omniscient trans-species insight may directly or indirectly reflect contemporary popular and intellectual efforts to determine to what extent the human mind might derive truth from these interpretations of nonhuman nature. A contemporary scientist like Lewis Henry Morgan nearly equated the mental capacities of humans and animals in stating, like Darwin, that the differences were merely by "degrees, and under different modifications" (414). Instead of assuming that this correspondence allows humans to intuit animal experience, however, Morgan stressed the limits of the human mind, which precludes our knowing the "ultimate nature" of animal minds, much less that "of the human mind" (414-415). Morgan was not alone in this awareness of humanity's circumscribed knowledge, and even if Dickinson was not familiar with Morgan's particular argument, she was likely aware of similar cautious approaches to animal study that identify shared human traits with animals but without presuming access to how those traits manifest in nonhumans.

Dickinson's speaker in "Civilization" appears to afford the Leopard a kind of respect for the feline's difference, as the speaker insinuates the injustice of "Civilization's" rebuke of "her Satin" and "her Gold." But Dickinson's speaker also appears equally generous in affording the Leopard consciousness. But in assuming access to the cat's mentation, she ignores the limits of

the human mind that Morgan stressed precluded our knowing the “ultimate nature” of animal minds, much less that “of the human mind” (414-415). Because the speaker advertises an extraordinary but questionable ability to know the feline’s inner world, Dickinson signals that the speaker herself is an important subject of the reader’s study, which must evaluate whether the speaker appropriately interprets and represents animal nature.

Drawn into the circumference of this examination of the speaker’s reliability is the speaker’s apparent reliance on popular modes of deciphering animal nature, a notable one being the animal anecdote, a transatlantic literary form that had become increasingly popular by the mid-nineteenth -century and likely a model for Dickinson’s speaker’s wholesale representation of the Leopard. Treating its readers as amateur naturalists, the animal anecdote presented an informal collection of first-hand observations of both wild and domesticated animals, offering brief and focused portraits of the animal world with little or no commentary. Largely available in books and periodicals for child and adult audiences alike, the animal anecdote appeared frequently in *Harper’s Magazine*, to which the Dickinson family subscribed (Miller 119). Dickinson was likely well versed in the anecdote’s provocative observations of animal nature and well aware of its dual goals: to entertain and, more implicitly, to encourage an egalitarian approach to the study of animal nature, prompting readers to seek and interpret evidence of animal mentation derived from the anecdotes themselves and from the reader’s own experience with animals.

A single periodical article of the genre typically featured a list-like sequence of animal stories ranging from remarkable animal encounters, such as sensational animal hunts and animal mysteries, to observations of nonhuman animals appearing to exhibit emotional registers and even moral and ethical capacities similar to those of humans. In her article “Representing Animal Minds in Early Animal Autobiography,” Julie Smith cites the anecdote’s “disruptive” effect for

established knowledge in natural history, the anecdotes operating as “sites where animal behavior collides with human explanatory efforts” (738). While the animal anecdote exposes potential lacunae in natural history, it also invites lay interpretations of documented animal behavior that might contribute new understandings of the animal mind.

Rather than simply marvel at the impenetrable mysteries of animal mentation, readers of the anecdote actively interpret the extent to which nonhuman animals in the stories share human characteristics and values. To spur interpretation, the anecdotes often framed the animal in anthropomorphic terms to embolden the reader’s evaluation of an animal’s human qualities. *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine’s* July 1852 article “Stories about Beasts and Birds,” for instance, relates the story of a poodle that attends church services each Sunday, with and without his human master (221). This anecdote prompts the question of whether the dog’s faithful attendance is a learned habit or a result of spiritual longing. While most animal anecdotes featured common native animals, like rats and birds, or domesticated pets—the dog being the most popular subject of the genre—foreign “exotics” allowed readers an opportunity to negotiate their relationship to the most alien species. *Harper’s Monthly* featured foreign cat species in two different articles, one in January 1852 and another in May 1855. Like anecdotes for native and domesticated animals, the natural history profiles for the big cats equally tease readers with the animals’ capacity to participate in human society and imitate human values. Both *Harper’s* stories, for instance, describe leopards as trainable, “as tractable as domestic cats” (1852) and “celebrated for their intelligence and good-nature” (1855) (“Anecdotes of Leopards and Jaguars” 227; “Lion and His Kind” 738). Each author also notes the cats’ appreciation for human refinements and fashion, like the leopard named Saï who “was passionately fond of lavender water” (1855) or a leopard kept in the Tower of London who reportedly had a taste for articles of

dress, filching them for herself before destroying them (1852). The felines' anecdotal "interest" in human pastimes and submission to domestication invite readers to determine where in the schema of animal intelligence big cats belong.

Perhaps borrowing from the animal anecdote, Dickinson's speaker in "Civilization - spurns - the Leopard!" assumes that the natural world is openly interpretable when, in the final stanza, she peeks into what she perceives to be the Leopard's sad mental condition, employing imaginative perception to cross the human-animal species divide. With the lines, "Memories - of Palm - / Cannot be stifled - with Narcotic - / Nor suppressed - with Balm - ," the speaker suggests that she has special insight into the Leopard's thought life, an ability that—if real—reveals the Leopard's human ability to remember and even mentally escape her physical confines. However, if, indeed, Dickinson invokes the animal anecdote and its open-ended invitation to interpret animal life, she turns the form on its head, using its *modus operandi* to observe a human thinking about an animal thinking. At this meta-discursive level, Dickinson tasks her readers with observing and judging the validity of the speaker's observation of the Leopard's mind, much as the animal anecdote invites its reader to study an animal's relative humanity.

Dickinson suggests that her speaker's assumed insights into the Leopard's experience are not the products of objective study but shaped by the speaker's cultural environment, along with her own personal desires. Her advocacy for and representation of the Leopard, then, cannot help but reflect the speaker's own experience—her biases, cares, and influences—and the discourses of her time and place, including theories of species hierarchy, Orientalism, commerce, and animal entertainment. Steeped in these popular discourses, the speaker models an exploitative approach to understanding animal experience, from using commoditizing language to describe the Leopard

as “gold” or “satin” to implementing the hyperbolic rhetoric and exclamatory syntax of sensational newspaper headlines about “exotic” animal feats, as I will show.

For one, the Leopard’s exposed or, more accurately, imagined interior world invites the Leopard’s audience (and the reader) into a voyeuristic vision of distant Asian jungles. The speaker’s assumed intimacy with the cat allows the reader to travel imaginatively through the Leopard’s memories to a land “of Palm.” Of course, Dickinson may well be examining her own means of and purposes for imaginatively accessing a world outside of New England. In a letter to Elizabeth Holland, Dickinson enacts her own fantastical globetrotting by way of the “exotics” in her garden: “My flowers are near and foreign, and I have but to cross the floor to stand in the Spice Isles” (L315). Potentially complicit in and critical of the speaker’s voyeurism in “Civilization - spurns - the Leopard!,” Dickinson poses the Leopard as an emblem of global transportation as much as she does her “exotic” plants. Perhaps Dickinson’s object in this poem is to ply the reader with a crucial issue at the heart of assuming such intimacy with the Leopard: does the speaker embark on an imaginative journey with the Leopard out of sympathetic interest in the cat’s well-being, or for her audience’s pleasure, education, or self-aggrandizement?

This uncertainty generates an unresolved tension in the speaker’s portrayal of the Leopard. While the speaker may afford the cat a degree of consciousness usually not afforded “exotic” animals, the speaker also firmly relegates the Leopard to her nonhuman status as a popular commodity and lower-ranking member in the classification of species. This appraisal is especially evident in the speaker’s catalogue of the Leopard’s virtues. Outwardly, the speaker argues for both culturally relative and broadened standards of the Leopard’s beauty in pointing to geographies commonly associated with leopard populations: the “Deserts” of Asia and Africa (or “Ethiopia,” nineteenth-century shorthand for Sub-Saharan Africa). However, the speaker’s

appeal also depends on stereotyping these foreign continents as the origins of fine commodities, like “Satin” and “Gold.” Because she chooses to compare the cat’s coat to luxuries coveted in the West and already circulating in international trade networks, the speaker promotes the Leopard as a figure of monetary and aesthetic value in a global marketplace.

The speaker’s reliance on language of commodification to describe the Leopard reveals the speaker’s implicit participation in commercial enterprises like the menagerie or circus that reduce the animal to a consumable spectacle. Comparing the Leopard’s coat to “Satin” and “Gold” also indexes historic and ongoing United States and European efforts to colonize and trade with much of the non-Western world, one consequence of which was the nineteenth-century’s robust “exotic” animal trade. Even the speaker’s word choice for the Leopard’s tranquilizer—“Narcotic”—evokes Asian opium. This glancing reference to the global opium trade further contributes to the Leopard’s status as an exoticized Oriental commodity.¹² Thus, Dickinson hints at her speaker’s complicity in her culture’s large-scale and far-reaching appropriation of foreign bodies and products for mass consumption.

Indeed, the speaker fails to advocate overtly for the Leopard’s release from captivity and return her to “her Asia.” Instead of adopting the discourse of an activist, her rhetoric borrows from contemporary promotional literature about circus and menagerie shows. P.T. Barnum and other showmen’s companies of the mid- to late nineteenth century inspired sensational headlines in newspaper and poster advertisements not unlike Dickinson’s first line: “Civilization - spurns - the Leopard!” Its succinct and exclamatory promise of drama reads much like the following representative newspaper headlines: a November 1848 article in the *New Hampshire Sentinel* proclaimed a “Thrilling Incident at the Menagerie Noble Gallantry of the Lion” concerning the story of a lion who protected a young female performer, “Miss Adelina, the Lion Queen,” from

the advances of a tiger and several leopards; and a February 1861 *The New York Herald* headline announced “A Conflict with a Tiger” (NHS 2; NYH 2). The Leopard’s “bold” behavior in the poem—remarked upon but not witnessed—implies that a dramatic tussle between herself and “Civilization” has taken place, with Civilization’s and the keeper’s physical domination of the cat ultimately restored. This unseen drama and its aftermath suggest that the Leopard’s rebellious disposition renders her an object of scorn but also one of the principal players in an entertaining melodrama. As a result, the speaker’s portrayal of the cat is less a sympathetic defense than a series of promotional strategies that sensationalize the Leopard’s captivity.

Further capitalizing on the Leopard’s nonhuman and foreign status, the speaker also subtly alludes to the Leopard’s educational value as a specimen of study for natural historians. American menageries and circuses of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries often cultivated a family-friendly public face that promoted first-hand observation of the world’s most remarkable creatures, not just for gawking curiosity but for earnest study, as well (Nance 52).¹³ According to the double syntax across the lines, “[...] her Gold - / Tawny - her Customs - ,” the pivot word “Tawny” refers to the Leopard’s blonde-brown fur while also referencing an epithet for racial and species classification, as in “a brown-skinned person” for non-white peoples and “tawny bunting” or “tawny monkey” for animal species (*OED*). Reading the syntax another way, the Leopard’s “Customs” are also “tawny,” a possible racialization of the cat’s temperament that is associated with African or Asian people and the purported barbarity of these regions of the world. The description of the Leopard’s gown as “Dun” has a similar effect, referring to the gray-brown colors in her coat as conferred on other species, like the brown-headed Dun Diver duck of North America or the Dun Fish, or dried cod, of New England (*DARE*). Instead of crusading for the Leopard’s return to “her Asia,” the speaker’s monologue further entrenches the

captive cat within contemporary entertainment and scientific discourses that often interwove race and species to create rankings according to the species' imagined capacity for reason and domestication.¹⁴ The Leopard, then, remains fixed outside the nonhuman realm as a classifiable specimen for human study and as a racialized foreign animal beyond the pale of Western civilization.

Both of the speaker's seemingly contradictory characterizations of the Leopard—as a thinking and feeling being and as an entertaining commodity—construct the cat's identity in human terms. Dickinson suggests that the speaker renders the Leopard a totemic figure that represents generalized Western thought on the alien and “exotic,” and in so doing, the speaker employs the Leopard as a metaphor for her own ends. In wearing the Leopard's presumable experience and Oriental connotations as a mantle, the speaker potentially metaphorizes her relationship to the “keeper” as a good-natured tussle with “Civilization.” This is most notable in her direct address to the “Signor,” as though speaking playfully to a familiar: “This was the Leopard's nature - Signor - / Need - a keeper - frown?” Her tone is flirtatious as much as it is scolding. Dickinson's emphasis on the word “frown,” so blithely rhymed with “Gown,” softens, and perhaps even attempts to excuse, the keeper's displeasure and by extension his ill care of the over-medicated Leopard.

Implicit in the speaker's defense of the Leopard, then, is a self-interested motive: to plead her own case with her “Signor.” She adopts the exoticized animal's predicament for subtle double speak with the keeper: her advocacy for the animal's better treatment is also an appeal for the keeper/Signor's acknowledgement of her (the speaker's) merit. However, in adopting the Leopard's arguably more serious plight—her unjust and unhealthy captivity—as a means of plying the keeper, the speaker compromises her outward philanthropic support for the actual

distressed animal. She reduces the Leopard, in spite of her beliefs in the cat's mental complexity, to an amalgam of cultural and personal meanings. Thus, Dickinson's Leopard is doubly captured. "Civilization" bodily confines her and administers mind-altering drugs to mold her into an appropriate commodity for Western consumption. The speaker also treats the cat as a penetrable body, one whose thoughts and experience can be accessed, interpreted, and translated into her (the speaker's) own experience.

Human Hypocrisy in Tiger Clothing

In "Civilization - spurns - the Leopard!," Dickinson targets the nearsightedness of even philanthropic efforts to know the animal and reveals that well-intended advocacy can recapitulate what it seeks to oppose. Taking this concern a step further, a later poem, "As the Starved Maelstrom laps the Navies" (F1064A), dated 1865, more aggressively questions humanitarianism that touts moral superiority at the expense of harming its beneficiaries. Dickinson links the speaker's dubious ethics to the construction and replication of "exotic" animal stereotypes through which the speaker insists on her greater status in a species hierarchy. Through a sustained figuration of a tiger, the speaker simultaneously excuses her depraved desires and parades a reformist agenda. This hypocrisy calls attention to the culturally mediated practice of co-opting animals to make sense of and veil human nature's most troubling traits.

In "As the Starved Maelstrom laps the Navies," the speaker attempts to come to terms with her own animality and her vaunted human status in setting herself in comparison to a man-eating tiger. In pursuing seemingly contradictory aims, the speaker reveals not only the limitations of her insights about animals and herself, but also her overreliance on contemporary narratives of civilizationist progressivism:

As the Starved Maelstrom

laps the Navies

As the Vulture teased

Forces the Broods in lonely Valleys

As the Tiger eased

By but a Crumb of Blood, fasts Scarlet

Till he meet a Man

Dainty adorned with Veins and Tissues

And partakes - his Tongue

Cooled by the Morsel for a moment

Grows a fiercer thing

Till he esteem his Dates and Cocoa

A Nutrition mean

I, of a finer Famine

Deem my Supper dry

For but a Berry of Domingo

And a Torrid Eye -

As the poem's central image, both structurally and in terms of emphasis, the anthropophagic

Tiger presents a confounding spectacle of animal behavior. Notably, he harbors an addiction for

tabooed man-eating—but he is also a former vegetarian, having supped on the luxurious goods of his native geography, “his Dates and Cocoa.” Even more bizarrely, this anthropomorphized Tiger is also a gentleman of refined etiquette who recognizes the aesthetic beauty of his supper so “Dainty adorned.” He savors and contemplates his meal when he “partakes - his Tongue” with protracted satisfaction and “esteems” his food choices with thoughtful deliberation in spite of his fevered addiction. The Tiger’s contradictory behavior—at once brutish and sophisticated—ultimately reflects on the speaker who provides the Tiger’s description. In creating complex and unreal portraits of anthropomorphized nature, she casts herself in comparison and contrast with her animal creations in an attempt to explain her own problematic gourmandizing.

In fact, the speaker’s self-presentation reads like an awkward murder confession. In the final stanza, the speaker emerges with an emphatic “I” to present her own anthropophagic cravings: a “Berry of Domingo,” cited often in Dickinson scholarship as a diminutive representation of a rebellious Haitian slave associated with the late eighteenth- to early nineteenth-century Haitian Revolution, and a “Torrid Eye.”¹⁵¹⁶ Eliza Richards insightfully interprets the Berry as a racialized botanical metaphor for African people and slave experience. Specifically, the Berry encapsulates a taste of the African slave’s retaliation and newfound freedom, which in turn fosters the “hunger of the white speaker for an emotional intensity that she imagines the slave has and she lacks” (Richards 174). Given her problematic means of tasting “racialized lawlessness,” the speaker’s single-sentence monologue also amounts to a confession and a defense of what she likely suspects to be an ethically unsavory appetite for the botanized African body (Fretwell 79).

The speaker’s cannibalism has greater implications for a national culture of exploitative consumption. Her craving for black sweetness points to real economic and ideological

dependence on African slave labor (for example, sugar and its byproduct rum produced in the United States and imported from the West Indies) and the figurative maceration of black bodies in America's racialist imagination. Kyla Wazana Tompkins's study of race and antebellum diets in *Racial Indigestion* cites fears that "a diet embracing the foreign commodities" . . . "decayed the body and the mind," and thus, as a food choice, the Berry of Domingo threatens to "have a subversive and perverting effect on the antebellum American body" (70). The speaker's "exotic" snacks of choice, both unwholesome and unpatriotic by most contemporary standards of dietary purity in the United States, threaten further moral aberrancy in crossing a racial line to experience black lives. But her indulgence also signals her complicity in white and Western ideologies that tout moral superiority on the one hand but dehumanize nonwhites to an extreme and unethical degree on the other, as this speaker does in reducing African slave experience to an edible morsel. Dickinson's speaker exemplifies her culture's tense negotiation of its supposedly "civilized" moral codes and its often barbaric treatment of those deemed outsiders in spite, or indeed, because of these codes of conduct.

However, the speaker in "As the Starved Maelstrom laps the Navies" also admits some discomfort in her gastronomic preferences. By performing logical acrobatics that might simultaneously "animalize" and humanize her cravings, the speaker seeks resolution for what amounts to her dehumanized/ing tastes. To highlight her own animal nature, she relies heavily on an invented portrayal of the Tiger's irrepressible feeding habits, setting herself into careful comparison with the Tiger's contradictorily sophisticated and horrific eating. Her repetition of "as" phrases, for example, creates through simile a relationship of likeness with the animalized Maelstrom and anthropomorphized Vulture and Tiger. Even as a preposition, "as" suggests simultaneity, thereby situating her own eating in the panorama of beastly feeding she portrays in

the initial stanza. She presumably “laps” up, hunts down, and “partakes” of the Berry alongside the other predators she imagines. Her rhetorical strategy here seeks to place the onus of her problematic appetite on a natural design greater than herself and self-control, specifically that which determines an animal’s instinctual feeding behavior. So goes the speaker’s logic: if a tiger can be both gentleman and addict, then surely a well-meaning person can enjoy occasional, even if questionable, indulgences.

The speaker’s self-comparison with the tiger stems from the common and casual use of animal tropes to explain what were perceived to be animalistic human behaviors. Rebellious or cruel people, for instance, might embody tiger nature, connoting unpredictable violence and brute force.¹⁷ Whether authors applied tiger comparisons to people who either exercised righteous protest or committed despicable acts, the Asian big cat signified lawless brutality in humans.

Documentary evidence from contemporary media sources reveals the flexible and wide application of species stereotypes to exemplify human behavior across racial and socio-political boundaries. The ephemera I discuss below demonstrate how tiger-ness might be both racialized in a comparison with African slaves and exemplify aberrant white behavior, just as the big cat’s assumed lust for violence did not necessarily connote unjust violence. For instance, in a December 1859 issue of the abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator*, an author—identified with the initials S.E.—relies on animal symbology to evoke the specter of imminent slave insurrection following the assassination of John Brown. In an allegorical vision of animalized patriotism, an eagle sounds a “scream” that heralds a successful slave insurrection whereby “every slave would be a tiger in his den, thirsting for blood, and the ‘pound of flesh’ alone would cancel the deep damning wrong they seek to revenge” (*The Liberator* 211). The author’s vision of slaves as

captured tigers aims to work against proslavery stereotypes of slaves as innately docile and subservient, but it of course also promotes a troubling vision of animalized African Americans.¹⁸As I note above, animal metaphors were not exclusive to nonwhite groups. Antislavery authors, for example, equally cast slaveholders as ravenous tigers who fed on slave oppression (“The Riot”), and the South’s secession from the United States rendered the Confederacy an “exotic” for its errant behavior. For example, a series of anti-Confederate political cartoons printed on envelopes circulated images of a caged tiger labeled “The Striped Davis,” a feline embodiment of Jefferson Davis (Hayes).

Similar to the function of these animalizing metaphors, Dickinson’s speaker links herself to the tiger to characterize as animalistic a small but pernicious element of herself—a “fiercer thing”—over which she insinuates she occasionally lacks control. And by selecting tiger nature’s recalcitrance as her comparative emblem, she situates her metaphoric bloodlust for the berry between, as the examples above suggest, the rebellion of the slave and the oppression of the slave owner or slave catcher. She wishes to share in the black Berry’s rebellion and capture it, too. Her own tiger nature in partaking the Berry, she suggests, might complicate her moral prerogatives but not damn her for the foreign animality within her.

To further veil her animal nature, the speaker appeals to human exceptionalism by resisting a full affiliation with her animalized (the starved Maelstrom that laps) and animal (the Vulture and Tiger) figurations. For one, the structure of her monologue enforces a species hierarchy in its tumbling list from anthropomorphized nonhumans to the speaker’s superior humanity. Because she identifies herself as being “of a finer Famine,” she also insists on her human consciousness and free will, which she denies her nonhuman counterparts. She identifies her “finer” diet as civilized, and claims to keep her tastes chaste when she alleges to keep her

“Supper dry” for all but the times she indulges in the Berry and the Eye. Seeking to draw further contrast, the speaker constructs the Tiger, Erica Fretwell notes, as an impulsive addict of human flesh, even at the risk of his own starvation (79). By contrast, the speaker’s emphasis on her power to “deem” promotes her cognitive abilities and ethical judgment as a reasoning human, and not a ravenous beast (Richards 175). Armed with contradictory rationalizations for her gustatory indiscretions, the speaker means to have her Berry and eat it, too.

Part of her self-defense entails setting in contrast the Tiger’s diet and popular dietary reform movements to which the speaker alludes and subscribes. Her “finer” and “dry” diet aligns her with the views of prominent dietitians like Sylvester Graham, the founder of Grahamite dietary reform in the 1830s—and inventor of the graham cracker—who sought to hearten the moral constitution of a national American body through the “civilizing” properties of bread (Tompkins 69).¹⁹ Along with other popular proponents of farinaceous diets, like Catherine Beecher and Sarah Josepha Hale, Graham loaded bread with biblical Christian meaning and leavened it with “the ideology of early nationalist racism,” thereby correlating a people’s ability to bake “fine,” white bread with their superior status in a “civilizational hierarchy” (Tompkins 65). The speaker’s “finer” and “dry” supper, then, references both the healthful virtues of bread and its links to an advanced civilization that consumes only the most refined bread, though this repast fails to fully satisfy her.

Dickinson’s speaker vaunts her primary “dry” diet as more sound and healthful than that of the Tiger, who not only gormandizes human flesh but formerly supped on decadent dates and cocoa. The African cat’s anthropophagic diet, along with his former vegetarian delicacies, fixes him squarely outside the parameters of civilized tastes; his physical constitution may be “Cooled by the Morsel for a moment,” but these corrupting foods mean he “Grows a fiercer thing.”

According to leading American reformers of Dickinson's era, the heavy consumption of meat and "exotic" goods contributed to a citizen's moral degradation and, widely construed, that of the nation (Tompkins 65). Compared to the speaker's self-portrait, the Tiger she describes abases himself in the species hierarchy partly by way of his depraved diet.

Alongside contemporary dietary reform, Dickinson also resurrects British anti-sugar movements of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Dickinson loads the Berry of Domingo with an allusion to the successful Saint-Domingue slave rebellion from 1791 to 1804, and, in keeping with events of this era, the Berry's sweetness conjures the concurrent abolitionist sugar boycotts.²⁰ This British abolitionist awareness campaign sought to code sugar consumption as a form of cannibalism, given the brutality that tainted plantation sugar with the blood of slaves (Tompkins 219, fn 27). Thus, the speaker's mid-century "dry" diet indexes an abolitionists' sugar-free diet. This temporal and ideological conflation would seem to heighten the speaker's claims to ethical exceptionalism; her supposedly conscientious "dry" diet not only means to soothe her own conscience and moral well-being but implicitly alleges her contributions to solving the greatest humanitarian crisis of her time: the problem of slavery. Thus, emboldened with her "finer Famine," she promotes her cultured status as a progressive reformer and perhaps even as a friend of the slave. Her delusion of philanthropic grandeur would seem to distance her all the more from the addict Tiger. And yet, her many contradictions puncture this illusion. Just as her tortured representation of the tiger as both genteel and depraved, her own self-portrait—set in parallel to the Tiger's—is also a suspiciously fictional one.

Like the Vulture, the reader—and even the speaker herself—are "teazed" into a fantasy of the speaker's ethical stability, one that Dickinson reveals to be too transparently facile. This fantasy coalesces in the final image of the poem and the speaker's second snack of choice, the

“Torrid Eye.” While the emergence of the speaker’s “I” early in the final stanza acts as a syntactical turning point in the poem, the “Torrid Eye” serves as a crucial interpretative key to the speaker’s perspective, an eye through which the reader may see as the speaker sees. Most commonly a word for describing scorching heat, “Torrid” connotes tropical and desert geographies, as in the “torrid” zones of the southern hemisphere (Hallen). Thus, an eye described as “Torrid” offers two possibilities: it promises a far-reaching view of the earth’s distant hot zones from a New England vantage point, and it suggests an “exotic” way of viewing the world, a lens through which alien experiences might be comprehended. In both instances, the speaker’s imagined assumption of this eye would have her believe that her powers of perception grant her unlimited access to and knowledge about alien places and their inhabitants. In essence, the speaker believes herself in possession of “exotic” alterity, through which she may indulge in “exotic” tastes and against which she might also set herself in opposition.

Her “Torrid Eye,” then, prompts a retrospective reading of the poem through the speaker’s “alien” lens. Indeed, her anthropomorphism of the Tiger and his gustatory desires are what Richards argues to be “fantastical projections of her [the speaker’s] own mind, created for her own convenience, in order to describe her own hunger through comparison” (175). Maelstroms lack an appetite; vultures do not “force” with predatory lust; and tigers are not vegetarian and epicurean gourmands of “Dates and Cocoa.” Thus, her efforts to excuse her decadent snacking collapse into inanity. If her tropical imaginary were not so blatantly unsound in its logic, perhaps she might succeed in effacing the complexity of her subject position as a moral progressive, one that exploits the Tiger in a gross misrepresentation and violates slave experience.

The Reciprocated Gaze

In “Civilization - spurns - the Leopard!” and “As the Starved Maelstrom laps the Navies,” Dickinson asks her reader to scrutinize her speakers’ failed philanthropies, which collapse under self-serving and culturally contrived methods of interpreting their alien animal subjects. Through these two voices, Dickinson confronts contemporary scientific and philanthropic discourses that claim objective truth and purity of intention in the treatment of animals. In so doing, she casts doubt on humanity’s ability not only to interpret animal nature, especially that of an “exotic” creature, but also to know human nature.

Dickinson most overtly emphasizes the limits of human self-knowledge and the sanctity of the animal world in “A Dying Tiger - moaned for Drink - ” (F529B). She accomplishes this by troubling humanity’s powers of perception, showing that the speaker’s narration cannot fully account for the big cat’s separate and impenetrable experience. This poem, which Franklin dates to 1863, casts the speaker in the role of a would-be nurse who wishes to be palliative, even while she strives to make sense of her relationship and responsibility to her feline patient:

A Dying Tiger - moaned for Drink -

I hunted all the Sand -

I caught the Dripping of a Rock

And bore it in my Hand -

His mighty Balls - in death were thick -

But searching - I could see

A Vision on the Retina

Of Water - and of me -

‘Twas not my blame - who sped too slow -

‘Twas not his blame - who died

While I was reaching him -

But ‘twas - the fact that He was dead -

As other scholars have aptly noted, the poem’s central crisis involves the speaker’s conflicted self-defense of her failure to nurture the “Dying Tiger” back from the brink of death. Her frank acknowledgement of death’s stark factuality in the final stanza—that death was to blame—stands in for what appears to be her enduring sense of responsibility to her deceased patient. Indeed, Vivian Pollack cites the poem’s affective undercurrent: “If there were no guilt, there would be no poem” (46).

Previous scholars have offered critical insights for the figurative significance of the intense but brief meeting between the nurse-figure and the Tiger. Pollack, for instance, interprets the Tiger as a “potent threatening masculine symbol” whose thirst is code for sexual desire and results in the speaker’s subsequent feelings of inadequacy in failing to satisfy the Tiger’s lust (46). Placing the poem in its Civil War context, Daneen Wardrop interprets the poem as an abolitionist allegory with the Tiger serving as “a representative of the slave who thirsts for change and escape” (83). The poem’s Tiger offers compelling meanings as a loaded metaphor, but this poem also stages a revealing cross-species encounter that exposes the philosophical exigencies that confound humanity’s relationship with actual non-human animals. The Tiger’s state of crisis places the onus of action and reciprocation—with all the ontological and ethical underpinnings of this cross-species encounter—on the speaker.

At stake in this encounter are contemporary assumptions of the actors' uneven standing in a species hierarchy, especially given the human speaker's power to either provide or withhold aid to an animal so often portrayed as living in violent antipathy to Western civilization. And yet, the speaker "hunted all the Sand - " on the Tiger's behalf, even "bore it [water] in my Hand - " in a gesture of intimacy and trust that places her hand close to the storied danger of the Tiger's mouth. Though still acting from a privileged—albeit altruistic—position, the speaker's literal proximity to the Tiger stages a revelatory moment that brings about a sudden and tremendous leveling of the species hierarchy. In the second stanza, speaker and Tiger share an extraordinary, though brief, moment of connection, one of visual exchange that equilibrates the subject position of each. The double syntax enfolding line nine—"His mighty balls - in death were thick - / But searching - I could see"—creates an inclusive ambiguity that allows an alternative source of vision to the speaker's affirmation that "I could see." The hinge word—"searching"—equally refers to the Tiger's and the speaker's sight. Though death dims the Tiger's vision, his "searching" signals that he is yet a seeing, perceiving creature.

Accordingly, the speaker's description of "A Vision on the Retina / Of Water - and of me - " is a kind of double vision in which the speaker realizes that the Tiger, like her, has the power of perception and can see the speaker and the water she bears. Since this vision occurs "on the Retina," a membrane inside and at the back of the eyeball, Dickinson emphasizes that the Tiger's sight is undeniable. The speaker's mirror image in the Tiger's eye might be read as a solipsistic gaze at her own reflection, or indeed, indicate that her human gaze and narration regulate the reader's access to this "Vision," potentially circumscribing it with the speaker's human perception. Nevertheless, the Tiger's eye, however "thick," is not simply a mirror, for it reciprocates her gaze. The speaker sees herself being seen in the Tiger's living eye and thus

recognizes that the Tiger has his own “Vision” of the water and the speaker, a vision that may be similar but not identical to her own. Though she witnesses at close range the moment of the Tiger’s death, the speaker identifies her position outside of the Tiger’s mental universe.

What makes this moment of double vision in the second stanza so tremendous and, indeed, a turning point in the poem, is the speaker’s simultaneous new awareness of an alien creature’s consciousness and her confrontation with the limitations of her human perception and capacities. She finds proximity and a proximate vision in a fellow thinking being but not access to his thought-life. The speaker’s unexpected realization harmonizes with what Juliana Chow argues to be Dickinson’s own awareness that she might observe the animal world and be seen in return (419). Chow suggests that Dickinson and some of her contemporaries, including Thoreau, Darwin, and Higginson, advocated a “version of science that knows knowledge to be deficient and is animated with or alongside the multifarious and mysterious lives of others” (436). Additionally, Dickinson also introduces the possibility that in this moment the speaker recognizes her status as the alien other in the rheumy eye of the Tiger. Like the speaker and the Tiger’s mirrored and mutual vision “Of water - and of me - ,” so, too, does the anaphoric repetition of the stanza’s first two lines—“’Twas not my blame - who” and “’Twas not his blame - who” —create a visual and aural correspondence between the speaker and Tiger that equalizes the subject positions of each. In attempting to forgive her own and the Tiger’s frailties and failures in these parallel lines, she finds herself on equal footing with the dying Tiger in the face of death’s equalizing power, which overrides the human constructs of a species hierarchy.

Death’s democratizing effect also overrides the speaker’s attempts to aid the Tiger and emphasizes her own physical constraints in having “sped too slow.” In so doing, Dickinson tugs at the logic of the animal/human species divide, for death is more than a mighty leveler in this

stanza but also a force that disrupts humanity's constructed reality. For instance, the speaker's narrative of her strange rescue mission in the first two stanzas derails at the level of sound and form in the final stanza. Emphasizing the stark factuality of death, Dickinson breaks the poem's ballad rhyme scheme (ABCB) by pairing "died" and "dead" where the reader anticipates perfect rhymes. This defunct rhyme flattens the musical drive of the speaker's voice. Just as the Tiger's "mighty Balls - in death were thick - , " then so too does the speaker's mastery of her narrative begin to depreciate in the presence of death. A further corruption of the ballad structure finds the final two lines flipped from the expected 4-3-4-3 beat pattern to 4-3-3-4. Such an abrupt shift from the poem's regular ballad form—itsself a poetic construct loaded with aural and textual meaning in nineteenth-century America—to an off-kilter soundscape highlights the speaker's compromised ability to accurately observe, comprehend, and narrate the Tiger's experience, much less the specter of death. The sudden dissolution of her lyric narrative concedes to death's inevitable finality, which flattens all man-made hierarchies, including that which separates man from beasts.

Dickinson's nurse speaker simultaneously confronts the incomprehensibility of death and the sovereignty of the Tiger's own "Vision" or consciousness, which together underscore humanity's fragile and unstable scripting of the unknown. In the several "big cat" poems examined here, Dickinson exposes the inadequacy of overriding human narratives for the animal kingdom, particularly those promoted by contemporary cultural discourses, like live animal entertainments and popular natural history. In particular, she subtly cautions against the appropriative, condescending, and devaluing treatment of exoticized animals, like her tigers and leopards, when made spectacles for public consumption. In the same letter to Higginson in which Dickinson admits her terror of Spofford's "Circumstance," Dickinson also introduces her

“companions,” her dog Carlo and the “[h]ills” and “the sundown” (L261). Of these nonhuman friends she remarks, “They are better than beings because they know, but do not tell” (L261). Despite her intimacy with these nonbeings, she acknowledges that they possess insights into an alternative, nonhuman reality and commends them for preserving the sanctity of their experience in silence. She trades a desire to “know” for the pleasure of appreciating what she *cannot* know.

In these three poems, the speakers’ monologues provide a micro-portrait of a “civilized” public that claims or attempts to know the alien animal. Even from the singular vantage point of a speaker, Dickinson subtly reveals her sensitivity to the nearsighted and cacophonous treatments of animals, both in life and in texts. Attuned to the physical capture of exoticized animals in menageries and circus acts and the epistemological “capture” of these creatures in a body of public knowledge, Dickinson ventriloquizes these appropriative acts through her speakers to expose the potentially destructive braggadocio of her contemporary consumer and intellectual culture. She implicitly promotes an alternative approach to knowledge about animals, one that concedes the impermeability of the nonhuman world. This conviction emerges in the unsettling mystery of the following quatrain (F201A):

With thee, in the Desert -

With thee in the thirst -

With thee in the Tamarind wood -

Leopard breathes - at last!

This tiny poem dwells in disorientation, with its speaker and addressee displaced and suffering in an unfamiliar wilderness, like the imported animals transplanted on United States soil. In turning

the tables, Dickinson also disrupts the speaker's efforts to establish comfort and camaraderie and leaves the reader with the specter of the unpredictable, indecipherable Leopard. Returned to her homeland and to herself, the Leopard finally "breathes," animated but not narrated by human intercessors.

Further Sensationalizing the Animal Mind

Though Dickinson was one of several voices who questioned the ability to access animal consciousness, she is one of few known authors to challenge the ethical grounds of appropriating animal experience. The practice of exploring an "exotic" animal's imagination would gain in popularity throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, but with varying degrees of circumspection about human interpretation of the animal world. As I have mentioned, American authors would increasingly experiment with representing the nonhuman perspective. Some did so to address cruelty against animals and animal rights as part of the postbellum humane movement, which caused a boom in the animal autobiography genre through the turn of the century, marked by bestsellers like *Black Beauty* and Margaret Saunders's 1893 dog story *Beautiful Joe* (Armbruster 18). Given the rise in fictionalized versions of animal consciousness for domesticated animals, some media sources bemused audiences with the speculation that even "exotic" creatures possess valuable perspectives comparable to that of humans, or that at least, might only be only conceivable in human terms.

A cartoon in the February 1891 edition of Harper's Weekly's illustration (see figure 1), for instance, bemuses readers with the human child's empathetic imagination, which prompts the children in the illustration to see a caged tiger as they do themselves: both protected in a domicile and equally deserving of diversion. Tommy asks of his sister: "Why don't they have little shut up houses?—why do they have open bars?" Dorothy answers: "Oh! That's for them to

see the people, of course!” Dorothy’s assumption that the zoo visitors and the zoo attractions share not only the same social space but also a common purpose evokes humor because Dorothy overlooks the human motivations that made the tiger a spectacle in the first place. Instead, she participates in the increasingly popular trend of representing the animal mind in innocently projecting her human condition onto the foreign animal. However, the cartoon’s wit also relies on the possibility that Dorothy’s supposition may not be totally myopic; she touches on the fact that the tiger observes her, too, and may have a legitimate perspective from inside the bars.

This late-century Harper’s cartoon illustrates not just the ubiquity of popular media references to nonhuman experience and the human imagination’s construal of the animal mind, but it also reveals an increasing public awareness that human insights into the animal world are anything but sure and simple. Jack London’s famous dog autobiographies, for instance, evoked wildly opposing responses to his representations of the dog mind: his publisher, George Brett, among others, argued that London’s break from the sentimentalism of the Humane Movement offered a realistic portrait of dog mentation (Carswell 306). In 1903, however, renowned American naturalist John Burroughs initiated the “Nature Fakers” controversy when he accused popular authors of animal stories, including London, of committing gross inaccuracies in their animal representations, especially in bestowing wild animals with complex and vast mental capacities (Carswell 307). This particular debate altogether sidesteps Dickinson’s concerns about humans’ ethical grounds—their means and motivations—when representing animal mentation. Rather, the debate pivots between two bold positions: 1) the old Cartesian notion that the incomprehensibility of animal behavior, especially that of “exotic” species, must indicate nonhumans’ drastically inferior mental abilities compared to humans; and 2) the assumption that—because Darwin and many of his contemporaries pronounced the gap between humans and

higher animals narrow—authors like London may with relative accuracy depict animal realism in fiction. From these opposing positions, either animal cognition does not compare with that of



[Figure 1.1] "At the Zoo."
Harper's New Monthly Magazine, 1 Dec. 1890, p. 472.

humans or if it does, then humans have license to envision animal interiority. But, inevitably, late-century authors of animal realism likely encountered, though seemingly unexpectedly, something like Dickinson's anxious negotiation of humanity's ethical responsibilities to the animal world.

In the following chapter, authors Phineas T. Barnum and Paul Belloni du Chaillu cannot seem to escape the idea in their gorilla hunting books that human-like apes may not be so different from themselves. The introduction of one such book—a production of Phineas T. Barnum's publishing enterprise—sets out a bold intention: to elucidate the mysteries of the animal world, even presuming to know the thoughts of “exotic” beasts. In an 1897 reprint (several years after Barnum's death) of the businessman's sensational natural history book for children, *The Wild Beasts, Birds And Reptiles of the World: The Story of Their Capture* (1888), the narrator introduces the books' purpose: to give the history of the animal before its captivity in a circus, menagerie, or zoological garden. Just like so many earlier naturalists, the narrator professes that “[n]o living man has ever known, and none will ever fully know, the bosky realms where the wild beasts live and roam in natural freedom,” but in a dramatic turn, he adds, “But they wish to know” (Barnum 9). The sheer force of popular demand means, according to the narrator, that “the mind” will have its satisfaction, “for [t]he world they [the animals] once lived in is a realm of the imagination” (Barnum 9). Taking the liberty of examining an elephant's “wonderful history,” the narrator professes to know the creature's memories of the jungle (9).

Despite the narrator's confidence in sharing the experience of the elephant, the apes that the book's characters will hunt in later chapters complicate the imaginative process of knowing the alien animal because the consequences of meeting apes and interpreting their behavior is that they appear little different from humans, especially in terms of their social organization and

interpersonal relationships. How “exotic” can foreign animals be if they exist in equally complex and parallel civilizations? The next chapter examines P.T. Barnum and Paul du Chaillu’s gorilla-hunting narratives in which encounters with African primate families demonstrate familiar and human domestic values. In his 1900 children’s book, *The World of the Great Forest: How Animals, Birds, Reptiles, Insects Talk, Think, Work, and Live*, famed gorilla-hunter du Chaillu ventures as a third person narrator into the domestic scene of a gorilla family, where “[t]he big ugly creatures looked at each other and at their baby ngina [gorilla], and once in a while gave chuckles which in the ngina language meant, ‘How happy I am! How I love you both!’” (128). Du Chaillu’s window into the gorilla’s loving family circle in this turn-of-the-century text informs his earlier depictions of gorilla families in his first hunting narrative for children, *Stories of the Gorilla Country* (1867), which I will examine in depth. As they entertain the prospect of gorillas’ and chimpanzee’s fitness for the human family, both Barnum and du Chaillu grapple with the possibility of exploding the human-animal binary, a prospect darkened and complicated by their protagonists’ devastating violence against gorilla communities.

ENDNOTES

¹Out of 1,789 poems Emily Dickinson references animals roughly 700 times, and her corpus represents a diverse menagerie, with the birds and the bees of her own garden predominating (Jabr). In addition to her bobolinks and robins, however, Dickinson includes a small but significant number of foreign and exoticized animals in her poetry, including a flamingo, a camel, a peacock, a rhinoceros, an antelope, kangaroo, and elephants.

²Because the notion of exoticism is a relative concept dependent on the cultural constructions and connotations of difference, I will enclose the term “exotic” in quotation marks to signify its specific application for nineteenth-century America’s fascination with foreign difference of all kinds, Orientalism, racial alterity, tropical commodities—including imported species.² Given that out of 1,789 poems Emily Dickinson references animals roughly 700 times, much of her corpus represents a diverse menagerie, with the birds and the bees of her own garden predominating (Jabr). In addition to her bobolinks and robins, however, Dickinson features a small but significant number of foreign and exoticized animals in her poetry, including a flamingo, a camel, a peacock, a rhinoceros, an antelope, kangaroo, and elephants□.

³ In a similar vein, Michelle Kohler notes Dickinson’s skepticism of the Transcendentalists’ “idealization of insight” (27). Kohler finds Dickinson at odds with Ralph W. Emerson’s confidence in total communion with Nature. Instead, Kohler argues, Dickinson promotes a full acceptance of Nature’s success in “evad[ing] our efforts for communion” (Kohler 51).

⁴ As a poet conscious of her craft as a way of shaping experience and alternative realities, Dickinson also likely explores her own complicity in species discourses. While I maintain that Dickinson keeps authorial distance from her speakers in these three “big cat” poems, I also recognize that she may be trying on various voices to negotiate her orientation to her contemporary culture.

⁵ S. L. Kotar and J. E. Gessler examine eighteenth- and nineteenth-century archival sources, especially newspaper advertisements and articles, to document the prevalence of specific imported species in menageries and circus entertainments. Big cats, including lions, tigers, and leopards, appear repeatedly in contemporary reporting of animal attractions.

⁶ Cristanne Miller’s chapter “Becoming a Poet in ‘turbaned seas’” details Dickinson’s awareness of and engagement with Orientalist popular culture and ideas of foreignness in America. Particularly prominent between the years 1858 and 1886, Dickinson’s interest in Eastern foreignness enabled her “to measure assumptions and values of Christianity and New England in relation to those of cultures and people elsewhere” (118).

⁷ Both before and after the emergence of Charles Darwin’s evolutionary theory, subscribers to either polygeny or monogeny (the belief that humans descended from a single common ancestor) articulated racist taxonomic categories that classified peoples deemed less civilized in relation to nonhuman animals. Virginia Richter cites Darwin’s adoption of common racist beliefs of his time. Despite his monogenist assertions, Darwin suggested “‘lower races’ constitute a ‘living link’ demonstrating the continuity of the evolutionary ladder” (Richter 38). This racialized rung

in the “evolutionary ladder” sought to place lower ranking humans between higher animals and civilization (39).

⁸ For the Franklin 1270A version of this poem “Fair Glee” occupies the place of “Fair play.”

⁹ In his essay “The Origin and Development of American Zoological Parks to 1899,” Vernon Kisling, Jr. examines the connotations of the term “menagerie” in the U.S. and Europe. American menageries, he claims, generally conjured an impression of “improperly kept, caged animals, despite its continued use at many well-respected institutions, primarily in Europe” (114).

¹⁰ Harriet Ritvo notes the “subtle shifts” in definition and use for terms like “consciousness” and “intelligence” for the purpose of ranking species according to “how closely they approached the human condition” (849). Ritvo points to Victorian naturalists who claimed dogs share the greatest cognitive affinity with humans, even greater than apes and their evolutionary proximity to humans.

¹¹ For all Hallen citations, I reference Cynthia Hallen’s *Emily Dickinson Lexicon*.

¹² Noting another globalized commodity in the poem, Li-Hsin Hsu argues that Dickinson’s reference to “Narcotics” alludes to opium and the opium trade, and the poet’s choice to foreground this product “evokes and unsettles the intended control of Orientalist discourses over the racial other” (7, 20).

¹³ Susan Nance details the specious educational claims of many menageries’ marketing strategies. Advertising and promotional materials often exaggerated animals’ natural history profiles and basic facts about individual animals (51-52).

¹⁴ In his study of the varying applications of the word “sagacity” for animal intelligence, Rob Boddice cites its use to denote either an animal’s subservience to human control as a sign of its high mental capacity or an animal’s malignant opposition to human influence as evidence of its cunning. For Boddice, the shifting use of “sagacity” for describing animals highlights the assumed superiority of humankind predicated in natural history’s anthropocentric modes.

¹⁵ While I read the “Berry of Domingo” as a food metaphor that embodies black slavery and rebellion in the Caribbean, I also recognize that Dickinson also uses “Domingo” as shorthand for rum and its intoxicating effect. Erica Fretwell notes that Domingo was known as both a site of rum production and slave rebellion in Dickinson’s time (71). One of Dickinson’s most notable figurations of Domingo appears in her 1862 letter to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, which he later published in the *Atlantic Monthly*: “DEAR FRIEND,--Your letter gave no drunkenness, because I tasted rum before. Domingo comes but once, yet I have had few pleasures so deep as your opinion, and if I tried to thank you, my tears would block my tongue” (Higginson 444). Timothy Marr also suggests that another referent for “Berry of Domingo” could be the coffee berry, which the French introduced in Saint-Domingue in 1734. Production boomed in the

following decades, as the number of slaves to tend the coffee crop also grew. In 1788, San Domingo produced half of the world's coffee (Pendergrast 17).

¹⁶ Kenneth Price and Ed Folsom's digital essay "Dickinson, Slavery, and the San Domingo Moment" briefly outlines the Dickinson's reference to San Domingo and the slave rebellions that unfolded there at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Daneen Wardrop takes up this insight in her essay, "'That Minute Domingo': Dickinson's Cooptation of Abolitionist Diction and Franklin's Variorum Edition." Dean Flower makes a similar connection in his piece, "Desegregating the Syllabus."

¹⁷ In their examination of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British visual depictions of tigers, Ralph Crane and Lisa Fletcher provide a helpful overview of scholarship that traces the largely negative connotations of tigers prevalent among the British public. Because of close diplomatic, cultural, and economic ties (including the trade of "exotic" animals), many of the connotations of tiger nature—its supposedly vicious and threatening opposition to civilization—likely percolated into American popular discourses, as well.

¹⁸ The author perhaps overlaps slave vengeance with tiger violence to call up the successful slave rebellion of St. Domingo, whose participants were compared to tigers¹⁸ following their violent overthrow of the French plantocracy. A significant example of tiger metaphors for rebelling slaves is the nickname "The Tiger" for Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Toussaint L'Ouverture's lieutenant during the Haitian Revolution. An 1849 *The North Star* article describes Dessaline [as] "a tiger in human form" because "executions and massacres were his favorite amusements" ("Selections Captain Ruffnott..."). Additionally, Thomas Ott's *The Haitian Revolution, 1789-1804* cites an eyewitness account of the revolt that described participants as "tigers."

¹⁹ Kayla Tompkins traces antebellum dietary reform efforts to a greater "culture of reform" that included "temperance, abolition, and early feminism," all of which marked "collectivity on the individual body, which they interpreted as a site of personal transformation" (69). In my reading, the speaker's "dry" diet signifies her experiencing "personal transformation" that in turn reflects national reform efforts.

²⁰ Saint-Domingue, the primary site of revolt for the Haitian Revolution, was a French-owned territory on the western side of the island of Hispaniola. This territory would become Haiti following the revolution. The Spanish side of Hispaniola was named Santo Domingo or San Domingo, what is currently known as the Dominican Republic. Nineteenth-century American authors appear to use the names of the French and Spanish territories interchangeably when referring to the slave rebellion in Hispaniola (Clavin 187n1).

CHAPTER TWO

Aping the Domestic in Africa: P.T. Barnum and du Chaillu's Primates in Postbellum Adventure Stories

When Paul Belloni du Chaillu, claiming to be the first Westerner to observe and hunt the gorilla in Africa's interior, submitted several taxidermied specimens to the avid interest of the American and British public, he spurred a transatlantic obsession with the gorilla. Upon his return from Africa in 1859, du Chaillu travelled extensively with his gorilla specimens, supplementing the display with vivid stories of his hunting exploits. For nineteenth-century American audiences, this exhibit offered a first in-person glimpse of the anthropoid ape, and because du Chaillu declared himself the first white man to observe the primate in the wild, he also supplied the first Western accounts of gorilla behavior, which he detailed in his first publication, *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa* (1861).¹

The gorilla, as portrayed from du Chaillu's perspective, offered a particularly troubling dilemma: how to reconcile the gorilla's supposedly ferocious animality with its anthropoid characteristics. For instance, du Chaillu describes in *Explorations* the sensations of hearing the death cries of a felled gorilla, a sound that "tingles his ears with a dreadful note of human agony," but, he adds, "[i]t is this lurking reminiscence of humanity, indeed, which makes one of the chief ingredients of the hunter's excitement in his attack of the gorilla" (398). Du Chaillu's confession is a problematic one, since it is the gorilla's human qualities that inspire his joy of the hunt. The hunted gorilla provokes questions of moral incertitude: is the hunter titillated at extinguishing in death the wild animal's human qualities, an act of affirming the dominance of

his own human status; or, perhaps more damning, does the hunter harbor unconscious murderous intent for his own kind? Or does du Chaillu's excitement at the gorilla's "lurking reminiscence of humanity" imply his own perversity in killing so close a taxonomic relative? With contemporary evolutionary debates becoming increasingly controversial, representations of the gorilla catapulted religious, scientific, and popular discourses into a frantic reexamination of humanity's sovereignty in a hierarchy of the species and of humanity's moral obligations to so human an animal.

Literature for children and adolescents proved no less invested in examining and weighing in on the challenges the gorilla posed as a potential close relative to humanity. The two main texts examined in this chapter—Paul Belloni du Chaillu's first book for young readers, *Stories of the Gorilla Country* (1867), and P.T. Barnum's *Wild Beasts, Birds and Reptiles of the World: The Story of Their Capture* (1888), a natural history book dressed up in an adventure plot—both feature African primate hunts as a way to reassure the taxonomic and moral superiority of their target audience: predominantly white, middleclass boys. This superiority is secured by attempting to instruct a young male audience in how to appropriately understand and respond to their primate relatives. To circumvent the kind of moral quandary the gorilla espouses, the authors of these children's books promote a "right" sentiment toward their primate relatives, teaching boys when to observe, when to nurture, and when to shoot their primate brethren.

This education relies on an implied domestic order that underlies the adventure plot, whereby heroes of the stories uphold and exemplify domestic values in the African wilderness: how to balance labor and pleasure for the development of a healthy work ethic; how to relate to nonwhite peoples and their cultural differences, and how to feel about the animals they capture

and kill. Ken Parille cites that the rise of boy books from mid- to late century included texts that “can be seen as a kind of ‘domestic-adventure novel,’ in which domestic ideology is dramatized in an adventure context” (5). Du Chaillu and Barnum’s texts clearly inhere a domestic logic already popular in literature for boys. Part of the authors’ participation in an adventure-domesticity discourse is to dramatize their white characters’ ascendancy into adulthood, which comes about as a result of protecting the sphere of domesticity itself. The heroes take interest in but hold themselves above and apart from the ape’s liminal status as a reputed “link” between humanity and the animal world, and thus, the hunters demonstrate a restrained sympathy for their gorilla and chimpanzee victims and captives. For Barnum and du Chaillu’s adventure stories, the presumed triumph of white male domesticity over the African gorilla acts like a buffer from the crumbling binaries that divide civilization from barbarity, whiteness from foreign heterogeneity, and especially (Anglo) humanity from nonhumans.

However, as much as these authors aim to prime young male readers to be the stewards of an exclusive domestic culture, one that limits and controls bonds of sympathy with non-human members, Barnum and du Chaillu—likely inadvertently—frustrate their object. The texts’ negotiation of apes’ kinship with humanity proves unwieldy. In setting up scenarios like the killing of gorilla parents and the subsequent prospect of adopting gorilla orphans, in which heroes and readers must judge the reasonableness of affective responses to fellow primates, the authors often lose control of the sentimental impact they originally meant to downplay. Instead of lessons in excluding the gorilla and other apes, like the chimpanzee, from the sympathy and society of men, readers are often left to seriously consider possibilities for kinship with apes, especially when gorilla families so closely resemble human ones. Therefore, primate hunts and the adoption scenarios that follow them, especially in du Chaillu’s case, often expose the fluidity

and instability of taxonomic distinction between white characters and their fellow primates. Indeed, the authors unwittingly seem to stumble upon awkward discoveries of the very scriptedness of a species discourse predicated on white male hegemony. The result of the authors' investigation of the human and nonhuman divide—with domestic sentiment as an unwieldy rubric—ultimately destabilizes the adventure genre's hierarchizing mode.

Outside of their publications, Barnum and du Chaillu both encouraged the public to encounter first-hand examples of foreign “exotics” that tapped into and advanced concerns about the divide between the human and the non-human. After finding little traction in the American and British scientific communities for his “discoveries,” du Chaillu opened an “African Collection” exhibit on New York's Broadway as part of his tour, the main feature being his famed and controversial stuffed gorilla (Reel 91). With his American museum also on Broadway, Barnum capitalized on du Chaillu's “man-monkey,” as the gorilla was often called, by exhibiting in 1860 his own evolutionary wonder: “What-Is-It?” who Barnum promoted as a “missing link” caught in Africa. The most prominent performer of this act, William Henry Johnson, was an African-American man thought to have microcephaly.

Barnum's “What-Is-It?” was one of many exhibits the showman launched to render ambiguous the human/nonhuman species line, including the “Wild Men of Borneo,” two U.S.-born little persons given a title that had long been attributed to orangutans; the “dog-faced” boys; and the Feejee Mermaid. In his book, *Arts of Deception: Playing with Fraud in the Age of Barnum*, James Cook comments on the intrigue and stakes of blurring the species line: “As Barnum and his customers knew all too well, the ‘scientific’ questions raised by What Is It? were inextricably linked to issues of racial definition, social order, and political partisanship” (122). The symbolically charged figure of an ape or “missing link” in their public displays also appears

in their adventure tales, but with the intent of preparing their young readership for a ready response to the gorilla's uncannily familiar alterity for its human-like characteristics. The texts, like the authors' ape and "missing link" exhibits, leave the reader asking of anthropoid apes not only "What is it?" but also "What does 'it' make me, if 'it' is kin? What is my responsibility to an ape relative?" Du Chaillu and Barnum cannot satisfy either question, but the taxonomical and moral quandaries they evoke regarding the species line have significant social implications for how a young readership might conceive of a more inclusive, sympathetic, and heterogeneous domestic culture.

The gorilla hunting scenarios endeavor to set up a side-by-side comparison among the white hunters, Africans, and the gorillas, but despite the differences the authors mean to emphasize between all three, this mode of pairing the human and nonhuman species also invites a mindset that seeks out similarity instead of difference. Such possibilities for finding cross-species compatibility were not unheard of in antebellum and late nineteenth-century children's literature. For some abolitionist texts that aimed to encourage children to acknowledge the humanity of black slaves, docile animals—either domesticated pets or woodland creatures (i.e. squirrels and rabbits)—were meant to mediate readers across racial lines. Brigitte Fielder argues that these lessons in "animal humanism" did not "simply substitute for lines of race and species" by comparing animals and slaves but provided an example of how sympathy in cross-species relationships might also cross lines of difference in human groups (4). Lesley Ginsburg, on the other hand, acknowledges the ethical challenges that arise from using animals mediums for sympathizing with racialized peoples, especially when abolitionist children realize that pets themselves suffer a domestication process and dependency similar to slaves' subjugation to their masters. Ginsburg identifies "the animal figure in literature for and about children as a mirror for

adult anxieties over the border and boundaries of citizenship in antebellum America,” especially the politics of citizenship for slaves, women, children, and animals themselves (89).

Given the ethical quandaries that even pets might evoke for the nineteenth-century public, the ape drew the prospect of cross-species bonds of sympathy to a point of crisis. With the percolation of Charles Darwin’s and other theorists’ evolutionary theories into British and American discourses, transatlantic publics balked all the more at the prospect of ape kinship with humanity.² For one, Darwin claimed that humanity shared a common ancestry (a monogenist stance), rather than many unrelated human species (as polygenists believed), but more incendiary for many was Darwin’s assertion that nonhuman primates and humans also stemmed from a common ancestor (Richter 360). Though inquiries about human-ape biological proximity had been an ancient concern, Darwin shattered the assumed division between humans and animals, and thereby expanded humanity’s relational sphere to include wild, foreign anthropoid apes. Many of the period reacted vehemently in protest of the “reasoning human being” so tied to the “irrational brute” (Ritvo 39).

Indeed, transatlantic publics found sympathetic correspondence with their dog more viable than with a gorilla. For instance, an 1873 article “Monkey Not Man-key” in *The Youth’s Companion* condemned claims of kinship between humankind and apes, aiming to prove “[m]an is the apex of creation, but not a developed ape” (YC). To this end, the author conducts a metaphorical vivisection of the gorilla to show that the ape’s stuffing is inferior to a human’s: “Let us pierce below the shaggy exterior. The gorilla has not much heart. Has he a good brain? No; in this respect he is far surpassed by the orang” (YC). However, not unlike the cautionary characters of nineteenth-century morality tales, like “Jack Idle” and “Mary Ann Selfish,” “Mr. Gorilla” may be lacking in good character and smarts but because the author ascribes to the

gorilla the same characterological meaning for his heart and brain as one would for a person, the author complicates the boundary between the human and the ape all the more. The author's unintended anthropomorphism of the gorilla here is not uncommon among similar efforts to reject ape kinship with humans, as authors seem to find difficulty avoiding descriptions of apes in human terms.

Like the author of the *Youth's Companion* piece, du Chaillu and Barnum represent violence against apes as a way of depreciating their anthropoid status, a gesture in protest of primates' taxonomic closeness humans. The primate killings also serve to condition young male readers for masculine maturity, an empowering practice through which boys might discern who deserves entry into their civilized sphere. And yet, the authors purposefully sensationalize the primates' human-like features for readers' entertainment, even employing sympathetic mechanisms to manipulate readers' responses to scenes of tenderness in ape families and their subsequent murder. These antithetical modes in representing apes mean that the undeniable horror of the primates' deaths or capture overflows the authors' efforts to contain it. In encountering the authors' confusing subterfuge, du Chaillu and Barnum's audiences—like the readers of cross-species abolitionist fiction—must negotiate for themselves the affective force that the ape hunting narratives generate but do not resolve.

Tracing the cultural evolution of primate representations from mid to late nineteenth-century America, the discussion that follows appears in reverse chronological order, beginning with Barnum's 1880s text and following with an examination of du Chaillu's influential work from the 1860s. The purpose of this temporal flip is to acknowledge Barnum's highly influential representations of ape and simianizing subjects (such as his "What Is It?" exhibit) that spans, borrows from, and eclipses du Chaillu's career, his popular treatment of ape and "missing link"

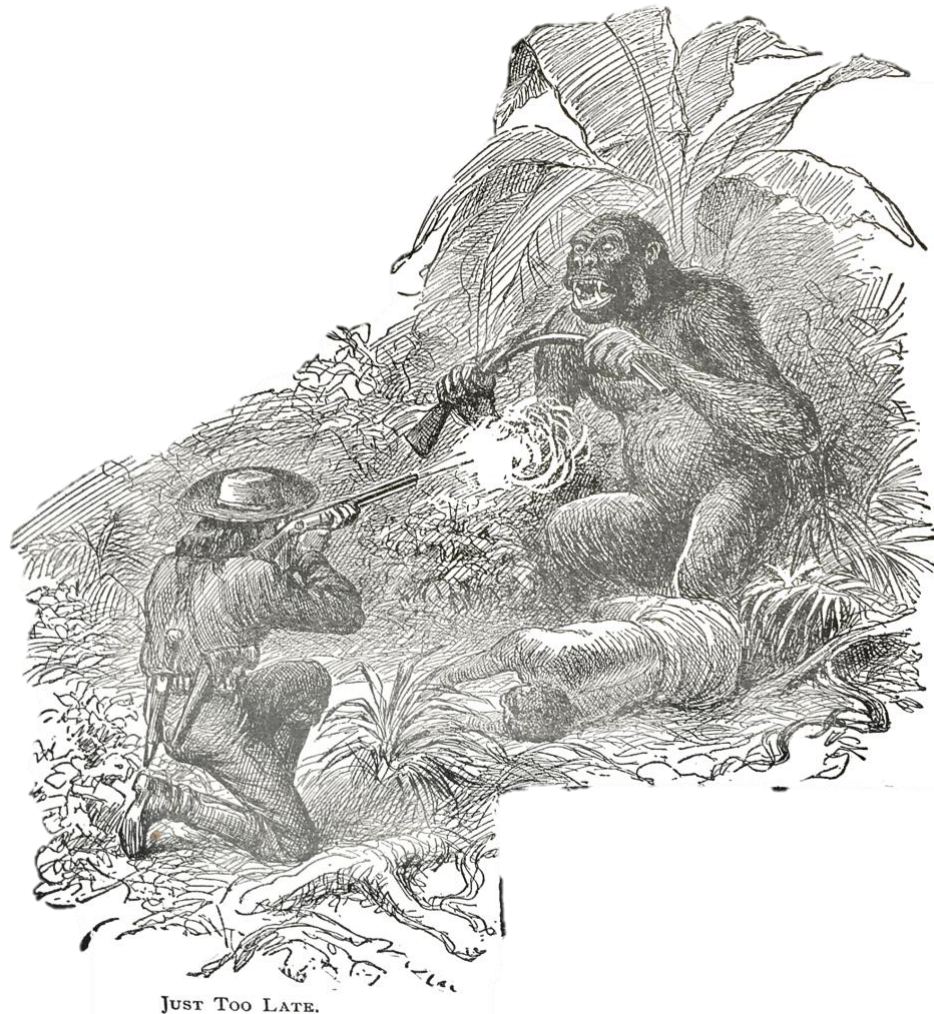
subjects resonating well into the twentieth century. In following Barnum's more readily recognizable example with du Chaillu's earlier work, I aim to show how the latter's arguably more complex approach to the question of human-primate kinship contributes to but also interrogates primate tropes that his work made popular in the American imagination.

Barnum's Entrepreneurial Ethics for Killing Kin

Having styled himself as "The Children's Friend" by the 1880s, Barnum participated in young adult adventure literature as a response to the mass popularity of David Livingston, Henry Morton Stanley, and du Chaillu's African travel narratives, many of which were adapted for young readers (Davis, *The Circus Age* 35; McCarthy 25).³ Written about 20 years after du Chaillu's *Stories of the Gorilla Country*, the lengthy *Wild Beasts* was likely authored by circus press agents and/or Sarah J. Burke, who used Barnum's profitable brand name to promote the showman's circus venture with James Bailey (Saxon 290). Since the text is attributed to Barnum, I will identify its authorial and publication choices as Barnum's but with the knowledge that it is a product of a larger enterprise likely comprised of multiple authors and editors.

The book primes young readers for a grand finale in saving the characters' book-long craving for a gorilla hunt for the final chapters. Two simultaneous gorilla hunts ensue: adolescent hunter, Bob Marshall, devastates a gorilla family all on his own, while his mentor, Bruce Harvey, a former "Indian" fighter in the American West, dispatches a man-killer male gorilla, one made memorable for his barbarous strength in folding in half the rifle of a felled African hunter (see figure 1). In this latter scene, Barnum enlists a violent stereotype of the gorilla initially inspired by du Chaillu's early hunting narratives and other mid-century explorers' tales, which cast the gorilla as a chest-beating monster of great strength and unpredictable aggression (though these, too, capitalize on the gorilla's anthropoid qualities).⁴ This staple image from the mid-19th century

to early 20th century sought to distance the anthropoid ape from its claims of a shared kinship with humanity.



[Figure 2.1] “Just Too Late”
Wild Beasts.

Barnum’s two hunting scenes recreate the most common tropes of ape hunts in earlier adventure books: (1) the Western hunters’ unmitigated domination of the gorilla family, and (2) the male gorilla’s formidable resistance to the hunters before succumbing to the white man’s firepower. Because Bruce Harvey’s encounter with the man-killer male gorilla sequentially occurs after young Bob Marshall’s, Barnum clearly intends to leave his young audience with this

definitive final image of a colossal brute undeserving of the reader's sympathy. Nonetheless, Harvey's scene is curiously set in an intentional pairing with Bob Marshall's unprovoked violence against a gorilla family unit of parents and their baby. In setting the circumstances of these two hunting scenes in tandem, Barnum sets up a lesson in judgment for his young readers: to determine when a fellow creature deserves mercy and when it does not. Due to the gorilla's violent behavior in the latter scene, Barnum implies that the aggressive male does not deserve peace and that the gorilla family represents a unit of the same such beastliness.

Yet also in the balance is the economic value of the baby gorilla, the spoil of the "exotic" animal trade. While the two hunting scenes described above levy a challenge to ethical certainty, Barnum outlines early in the book the "rule of hunters," which he explains in the chapter titled "How Curiosities Are Captured" "is to seek the place where the young are receiving the attention of the mother, and then lying wait, shoot her, and quite often the father, too, when he is in the neighborhood" (25). This "rule," he assures the reader, is necessary because "[m]ost of these beasts, in their savage state, will fight to the death before yielding" (25). Rather than question the ethics of the hunting and animal collection enterprise itself, Barnum aims to protect the moral and physical safety of the hunters, emphasizing the killing of animal parents as strategic rather than excessive.

However, the question of primates' genealogical kinship with white hunters rests at the heart of Barnum's lesson in discernment, even as the author otherwise works to blast away this concern with more outward interests in the economic success of the hunting enterprise. But Barnum must also buffer his hunter (and reader) from the ethical doubts that inevitably arise from killing so human an animal. Even the question of killing the bird that warns the rhinoceros of its predator becomes a source of ethical ambiguity; hunting protégée Dick Brownwell argues:

“‘That strikes me as wrong. I cannot see any justification for killing a little bird simply because it warns an animal of danger’” (305). Bruce Harvey’s response leaves the question of morality open while shifting the focus back to the fundamental purpose of the hunt: “‘Is it any more wrong than shooting the animal itself?’ was the pertinent query of Jack; ‘we are apt to forget – helloa! I hear something!’” (305). Harvey trails off as a development in the rhino hunt unfolds. What this brief example illustrates is how Barnum emphasizes the boy’s moral consciousness, perhaps as a way of preemptively mitigating their eventual violence against hunted animals. The boys might shoot to kill but not without first assessing the humaneness and necessity of that choice. But the conclusion of this exchange also returns the focus to the business of hunting and the economic logic of collecting specimens, dead or alive.

In this section, I will trace two means by which the text aims to preserve his heroes’ ethical privilege in the killing of apes: its rhetorical maneuvers in describing the gorilla family’s ruin and this same scene’s accompanying illustrations. In each case, however, while the author strives assure that his Anglo-American hunters are of sound ethical judgment, the textual and artistic rendering of the scene creates a more ambiguous outcome that confounds the issue of primates’ near humanness all the more.

Woven into the narrative rather than appearing as didactic expositions, Barnum’s lessons, or what I call his domestic pedagogy, draw from antebellum theories about how to ready boys in the home for first-rate citizenship in the world. Indeed, rather than an example of masculine escapism from the feminine and “separate” domestic sphere, as much scholarship has coded books for boys generally, Barnum’s text functions as what Ken Parille calls a “domestic-adventure novel” (5). Parille argues that “even when the boy’s adventure takes place away from home, these books reveal themselves as advocates of the primary importance of home values.

Thus, the adventure is never an escape from domestic ideology, but rather a journey into it” (3-4). Barnum suggests that Dick and Bob are already the successful graduates of a domestic education in the U.S. Emanating ethical good and sound sense in a chaotic wilderness, Dick Brownwell and Bob Marshall are Barnum’s ideal boy-heroes as “strong, athletic youths, belonging to good families, bright, honest, manly” who aspire “to become students in Yale College” (31). Already fit with “manly” qualities, Dick and Bob find themselves well prepared for their African adventures by evidence of their purportedly kind nature and smarts. Even so, the boys’ domestic education continues in the midst of their African adventure with their adult hunting superiors, who perform the role of guiding parents. Together these four form a stable family unit of white American hunters in the African wilderness. The thrill of adventure, then, is not simply pleasurable but experiential education, as well.

Per predominate domestic pedagogies and theories of boy nature that commonly targeted American boys, Barnum’s boys are not founts of sympathy; rather, their domestic education angles toward a moral but more pragmatic practice.⁵ In action, the boy heroes participate in a pedagogical process that instills a sound work ethic, since their hunting counts as a vital apprenticeship in a respectable career, one that ultimately serves U.S. interests by providing the American public with spectacles of “exotic” animals. In the same vein, the primary project of *Wild Animals* invites readers to enjoy the pleasure of the hunting narratives but also means for American children to glean lessons in natural history that might ultimately advance their careers on a global stage.

The text’s domestic formulation schools the boys in their opposition to and ethical relationships to African foreignness. For instance, their mentor, Bruce Harvey, is clearly a mother figure who practices tough love. Though Harvey is a “demon” of a fighter, the narrator

attests that “his was the heart of a woman. No ear was more open to an appeal for mercy, and his adventurous career had never been stained by an act that ought to bring the blush to his cheek” (218, 219). Harvey’s womanly gallantry models appropriate sentiment for his two protégés, but it is sentiment meant to regulate the environment and subjects around them. In hunting for giraffe, for instance, Harvey hesitates in felling a giraffe mother. ““I’ll be hanged if I can kill her, though I expected to do it,”” Jack Harvey complains, ““them eyes are too human. If she’ll behave herself, and let us lead her back to camp, I’ll spare her”” (99). The tonal register of Harvey’s monologue clearly mocks his domestic sentiments, inviting the audience to laugh at a man with feelings. But importantly, his feminizing sentimentality also softens his career in killing, thereby condoning his choice to kill animals that may not deserve sympathy. Because Barnum establishes his white hunters as model men who make on-the-ground judgments of the value of other lives (those of African natives as well as animals), the hunters’ actions and feelings serve as rubrics for readers’ appropriate responses to African alterity, in general. Thus, Harvey’s sympathy for the animal’s maternal beauty is contingent on the giraffe’s compliance with his project of specimen gathering. At the very foundation of this rubric is the predominance of white male entrepreneurship, which explains Harvey’s conditional stay of execution for the giraffe mother.

Indeed, Barnum dedicates the final chapters of his adventure book to establishing a pedagogy in affective maturity that supports the heroes’ success in the animal trade. Barnum’s boy-heroes must be moral, meaning adequately sensitive to the ethical dilemmas they face, but above all they must secure their financial success. In fact, the characters’ moral solvency hinges on their confident decisions to advance their careers and vice versa. For instance, when confronted with the wrath of the orphaned baby gorilla whose parents he has just killed, Bob

insists he has no intention “to put a bullet through the young spitfire” because, though the gorilla may—in Bob’s mind—deserve punishment for its rage, Bob must consider his own economic prosperity and his responsibilities to the American public: “Bob afterward said that during the brief seconds he and the infant gorilla confronted each other it seemed to him that the hideous beast represented a million of dollars, and he pictured the delight the public would feel when they saw him on this side of the Atlantic” (Barnum 480). The matter-of-fact or flat ethical register of this conclusion to Bob’s gorilla hunting scene would seem to neatly package another lesson in business acumen. Bob’s fantasy that his hunting success will inevitably contribute to the public good echoes a maxim in Barnum’s 1880 book, *The Art of Money Getting; or, Golden Rules for Making Money*: “The history of money-getting, which is commerce, is a history of civilization, and wherever trade has flourished most, there, too, have art and science produced the noblest fruits” (91). Based on this logic, Bob’s hunting feats not only make him financially successful but also a hero of progress and civilization. However, in the same chapter of this advice book, Barnum stresses in abstract terms the value of “[u]ncompromising integrity of character,” stressing that “[i]t secures to its possessor a peace and joy which cannot be attained without it—which no amount of money or houses and lands can purchase” (89). In seeming to use a similarly ambiguous rubric for the young hunter’s ethical standards in their capitalist venture, Barnum attempts to secure the boys’ moral standing as obvious and unequivocal; however, the violence against the gorilla family, in particular, questions the basis for such blanket claims.

With the bodies of the gorilla parents still lying within the reader’s view—both textually and in an illustration alongside—Barnum’s attempt to definitively convey that primates are commodities, only worth their monetary and entertainment value in the U.S., falls short, not the

least because his text haphazardly attempts to balance two motives: to teach his readers business acumen (with apes as his pedagogical currency) and to enforce a domestic logic by which Barnum intends to nurture and train his heroes in moral values in opposition to the gorillas' animal alterity. Yet, the gorilla family's own unmistakable domestic order troubles the hunters' domestic values in destroying it.

As evidence of the text's conflicting modes, Bob Marshall's initial encounter with the gorilla patriarch fuels the tension in the ape/human comparison, as the ape's human-like qualities drive the scene's sensationalism: "At the instant of turning, the male uttered an appalling, human-like screech and went over backward, flinging his arms aloft, as a man sometimes does when mortally stricken. He was dead, instantly, killed by a bullet from Bob Marshall's rifle, which had pierced through his iron skull as he stood with his front toward the youth, the shot being so effective that no second one was required" (Barnum 479). This theatrical death scene tugs at the discomfiting possibility that the gorilla's throes underscore its close relationship to humanity, which would render the killing morally ambiguous. Has Bob murdered his own kin—rather than hunted a dangerous beast? Per Barnum's custom of featuring purportedly human/nonhuman hybrid exhibits in his museum, he aims to stir similar interest and controversy with the gorilla hunt. He keeps the audience guessing at how to categorize an animal that can at any given moment reveal human-like characteristics, just as his exhibit, "What Is It?," invited audiences to determine the performer's relationship to themselves through an observation of William Johnson's familiar (human) and his perceived foreign (construed as nonhuman) attributes.

Barnum, however, aims to do more than amuse his young readership with the spectacle of the ape's relative humanness; he means to model how an upstanding American boy should

regard the gorilla as a spoil of capitalist entrepreneurialism. Perhaps reluctant to leave his audience intellectually and emotionally adrift with the question of the gorilla's claims to humanity, Barnum advocates a specific response to the primate's liminal status: to actively expunge the primate's human characteristics in death. In the scene described above, the sequence of events shows that Bob's decisive shot elicits the gorilla's man-like demise, but because of the immediacy and effectiveness of the shot, it also abruptly ends his human gestures and screams. In a flash, the gorilla is shockingly like a murdered human and then, just as suddenly, another spoil of the hunt. Perhaps Barnum would like his readers to believe that—given the sequence—his hunter has effectively eliminated the problem of the gorilla's brief claim to proximity to humanity.

Bob's stalwart killing of the gorilla father is one example of how Barnum's pedagogy in entrepreneurialism intersects with the question of the ape's fellowship with humankind. In effect, Bob's motivation to succeed in the commercial trade of "exotic" animals also means he acts decisively to flatten the relational confusion the ape creates. Because the actualization of this education are dramatic spectacles of primate pain and death, Barnum instructs his readership in measured affective responses to critical moments of exchange between hunters and the gorillas, especially the violent dispatch of ape parents and the subsequent care and adoption of the orphan.⁶ Bob's dispassionate killing of the gorilla mother, "disposing" of her "in a summary fashion," in the same scene illustrates the business-like approach Barnum advocates (480). Per the "rule of the hunter," which, again, cites the killing of infant animal parents for the safety and financial success of the hunter, Bob Marshall knew "from the first what was necessary, and he executed his design with a promptness and success that would have delighted any ranger of the jungles" (480).

But because Barnum also anthropomorphizes the mother, he complicates—as he heightens—the scene’s sensationalism. The narrator follows her as she gains “a dim perception . . . that some overwhelming calamity had overtaken her lord,” gives a “strange cry,” and clambers to reach her fallen mate (Barnum 480). “She never reached it,” the narrator flatly adds, but then briefly recounts her sudden death: “[S]he bounded forward, uttered a wild shriek, and fell dead, with her young one so tightly clasped that it was thrown beneath her body” (480). Here Barnum aims to instruct and entertain: the narrator describes the mother’s death as a sentimental spectacle that Bob creates and then seems to neutralize in killing her. However, the sensational anthropomorphism of the fallen patriarch as a “lord” suggests a noble family, which insinuates that she is not simply an animal mother but a lady to “her lord” (480). Though likely meant to evoke humor, Barnum’s insistence on associating the gorilla family with respectable humanity introduces an ethical predicament for his readers. The gorillas may be isolated from human society, but their essential similarities to a human family and anthropomorphized domesticity suggest they may be more than spoils for profit.

Though the reader only witnesses the gorilla family intact briefly before Bob’s violent interruption, the family appears to have its own internal domestic order, with the patriarch as a protector of their domestic sphere and the mother as a caretaker of her young. Before his own killing, the male gorilla has protected “his mate” and their “young one” from a predacious leopard, earning him the “proud admiration” of his family (479). Above all, the gorillas here exhibit affection for one another; they are a loving family under siege. How, then, does Barnum so nonchalantly allow the gorilla parents’ murder when the pretty giraffe mother might be spared? How different are the gorilla families from human ones? Is such violence against them inhumane and undeserved? These are the implied and urgent questions with which Barnum

seems to tease his readership. To dampen these concerns, Barnum relies on tropes from expedition-hunting fiction. For one, he establishes the gorillas as opponents worthy of human endeavors to kill them, a logic perpetuated in the transatlantic adventure-hunting genre.⁷ Also, predicated perhaps on the Darwinist concept of the “survival of the fittest,” Bob exercises what he believes to be his right to hunt an animal that offers him an adequate challenge. Indeed, beneath an illustration of the male gorilla killing the leopard, directly opposite the one depicting Bob’s hunt, reads the caption “The King of the Jungle” (478). Just as the male gorilla had eliminated an inferior opponent in the leopard, Bob may honor his own hunting prowess by dethroning the “King” gorilla⁸.

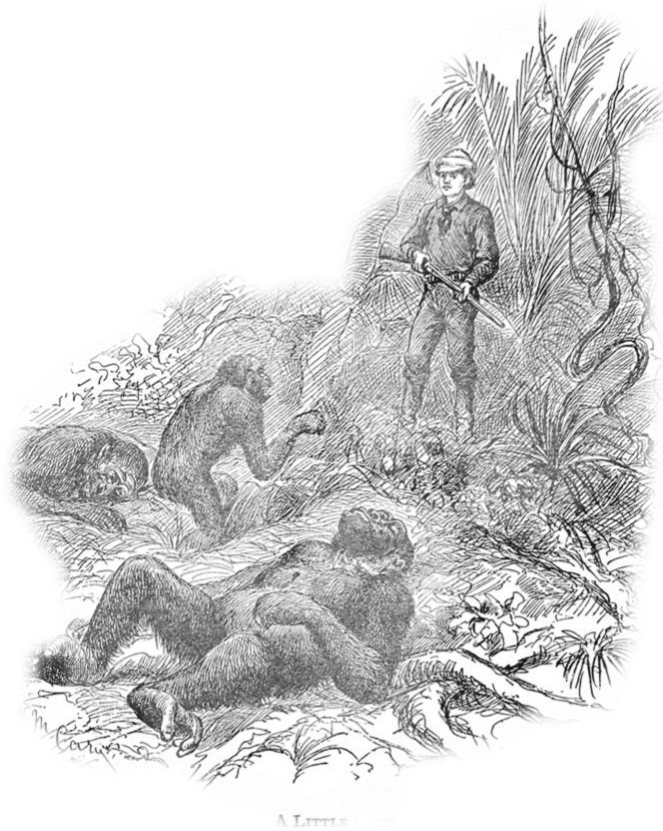
Another possible reason for Barnum to include these emotionally provoking encounters—other than their entertaining drama—is to establish a kind of sentimental catharsis that might inure the book’s boy heroes and male readership to the relational confusion the ape creates. Through a curing process of terror and pity, perhaps Barnum hopes his readers might eventually regard the gorilla’s human characteristics with unflinching dispassion. Regardless of the possible reasons Barnum complicates his portrayal of gorillas, their representation as emotionally mature creatures bonded in mutual sympathy—even if only witnessed briefly—overspills his violent efforts and entrepreneurial lessons that aim to exonerate the gorilla killings. In other words, because Barnum wields sentiment as a tool to cultivate a readership of worldly businessmen who might learn its appropriate use, his manipulative evocation of sentiment convicts the very violence he intends to condone. The characters’ (and the readers’) domestic training, then, cannot help but confront in mirror-like correspondence a semblance their own enterprise in the gorilla’s domestic organization. Thus, Barnum’s haphazard attempts to

manipulate sympathy in favor of entrepreneurial reasoning only serves to blur the species line all the more.

Even visual representations of the gorilla hunt reveal how the texts creators' attempts to segregate Bob from the gorillas—and therefore symbolically secure his human primacy—potentially confound their object. I examine two illustrations that complicate Barnum's and his associates' entrepreneurial approach to human decency: one depicts the aftermath of Bob's gorilla hunt, allowing readers to look upon the dead bodies of the gorilla parents; the second, an etching added in a later edition of *Wild Animals*, faces opposite the image described above and, in so doing, appears to challenge the logic of dominant vision Barnum ascribes to the boy hunter. Analyzing the whole ecosystem of the scene—including both illustrations that depict action in the text and images unrelated to the plot—reveals multiple and arguably contradictory perspectives at work in the narrative.

One approach to interpreting the illustrations is to observe how the power of sight operates as a form of privilege in the text, whereby the characters' (and readers') possession of dominant sight lines seems to grant them authority and supremacy. In the image depicting Bob's hunt, titled "A Little Fury," the boy hunter has stepped out from his cover and towers over his destruction at the upper right corner (see figure 2).⁹ The action just before this visual scene of carnage suggests that neither of the gorilla parents "realize the presence of the death-dealing hunter" before or at the moment of their deaths (Barnum 480). Bob's role as a sniper outside the gorilla's space circumscribes the primate family into a unit that is decidedly alien, a distance that is then echoed in the accompanying illustration; the two bodies of the ape parents and the baby form a triad below the gaze of their hunter. Here Barnum departs from popular images of gorilla encounters in which the hunter and the gorilla often stand opposite one another, drawn together

in a visual pairing that invites the viewer to descry difference and likeness between human and ape.



[Figure 2.2] “A Little Fury,” *Wild Beasts*.

For comparison, du Chaillu’s first publication for a scientific and popular audience, *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa*, in 1861 features an oft-reprinted illustration of du Chaillu’s first encounter with a gorilla (see figure 3). Standing opposite du Chaillu and his fellow African hunter, the upright male gorilla’s gestures convey stately surprise—his one arm extended to his side in seemingly nonthreatening supplication and his other hand grasping protectively at his breast—in what Miller identifies as a “tragic, even Shakespearian, stance”

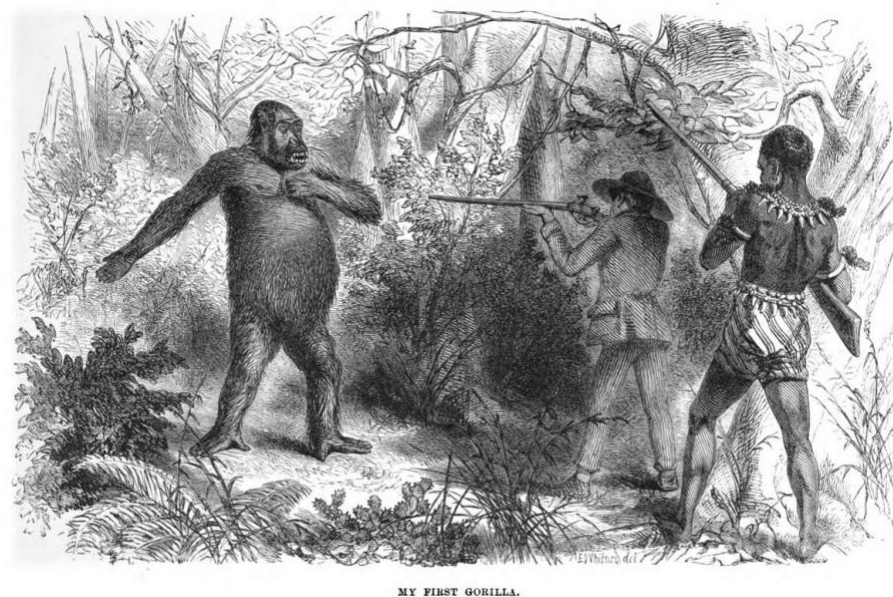
(Miller 106). Du Chaillu's and his hunter's backs are to the viewer, their faces obscured.

However, the rifle du Chaillu levels at the gorilla draws a visual line, though a treacherous one, between them; man and ape hold positions in striking parallel, as though mirror images.

Like other illustrated ape encounters, the gorilla gazes at his aggressors, a stare which Miller claims "destabilizes the animal's objectification" and brings, in this instance, du Chaillu in confrontation "with his own otherness in the gorilla's apprehension" (Miller 107).

Beyond the power of the gaze and despite the two species' apparent difference—punctuated by the gorilla's nakedness and visible teeth—the gorilla's seemingly harmless bewilderment, in being literally taken aback (his weight braced on a back leg), renders him strikingly familiar in this instance. The gorilla's theatrical or "Shakespearian" stance and gestures—as though uttering "Et tu, Brute?"—make him recognizably human-like in his benign expressiveness, and it is this appearance of the gorilla's stately victimization—importantly in play with his mirrored stance with the hunter—that heightens the dramatic tension in this scene. In addition to the illustration, the text also reflects du Chaillu's sense that the sight of the gorilla tottering on his hind legs and staring with "gloomy eyes" makes the killing feel more like murder than sport: "I never quite felt that matter-of-course indifference, or that sensation of triumph which the hunter has when a good shot has brought him a head of his choice game. It was as though I had killed some monstrous creation, which yet had something of humanity in it. Well as I knew that this was an error, I could not help the feeling" (487). The implied tragedy of the gorilla's impending death threatens the white hunter's ethical and moral standing in killing a creature so like himself, inviting the viewer's suspicion of the hunter's own beastliness.

Bob's covert (in the text) and then overlooking (in the illustration) position in *Wild Animals*, however, re-scripts—perhaps even mocks—the shared human-animal sight lines and



[Figure 2.3] “My First Gorilla,” *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa*.

parallelism with hunters commonly afforded the gorilla in illustrations like the one in du Chaillu’s text. In the *Wild Animals* illustration, the artist segregates the boy from the gorillas so that he can take aim from outside the gorillas’ social circle and avoid confronting the gorilla’s visual acknowledgement of himself as a fellow being, with the exception of the baby gorilla’s protest.

The baby’s wrath, however, appears humorously miniscule and below Bob’s unchallenged sightline. In the foreground, the large male gorilla lies face up on his back so that his lifeless expression (with his eyes closed) is proof of a neutralized threat. Neither can the mother gorilla confront the reader or Bob with the discomfort of mutual seeing. Laying prostrate in death half out of the image’s frame, her lifeless expression faces in the direction of the audience, but her gaze is blank and angled toward the ground. Though the scene is unavoidably emotive as a tragic spectacle of a family’s destruction, the illustration’s compositional

manipulation of who has the power to see and be seen visually keeps the hunter at the apex of the species ladder.

Bob Marshall's predominating position in the upper half of the illustration means he towers over the parents' bodies and the small, hunched form of the orphan, who lurches in Bob's direction, his face turned away from the viewer. The only observable "seeing" eyes in this image, then, are Bob's from his privileged position on the upper ground. The reader, too, from the omniscient position from the outside looking in, has unobstructed visual access to Bob's face, which creates a relational connection between them, tethered by their shared humanity and privileged sight lines over the scene. This mirroring effect thus places the reader in line, so to speak, with Bob's position, both in terms of his empowering stature and his (not outwardly questioned) ethical standing. The artist advances a visual rhetoric of impersonal violence that means to justify Bob's killings.

And yet, the bodies of the gorillas loom large in the foreground, lying closer to the reader in terms of perspective. The spectacle of death is inescapably provoking because of the conflicting dramas it presents. Again, the textual depiction of violence against the gorillas coincides with a vision of the gorillas' resemblance to humankind as a family unit, thereby heightening the ethical stakes of the event. Because the editorial choices for this scene—its rhetorical provocation of drama—seems slapdash, perhaps even beyond the control of the makers of the text, scenes like this one invite readers to identify the scripted and gimmicky nature of the portrayals and their attempts to distance the Americans from the gorillas. Stirring both sentiment for and a sense of triumph over the gorillas' deaths and trauma, Barnum hampers his aim of providing moral clarity for the ape killings and for the capitalistic profit from the hunt.

The seams of Barnum's artifice also show in a companion image to the one described above, one that demonstrates the potentially fluid terms of greater primate kinship. Republished in 1896 with the new title *Forest and Jungle; an Illustrated History of the Animal Kingdom, Wild Beasts* replaced a selection of illustrations with new ones. Directly opposite the illustration of Bob's gorilla hunt, the editors substituted the image of the male gorilla defending his family against the leopard with a more arresting one. This full-page, fine etching reintroduces the face-to-face encounters between gorillas and humans that typified hunting illustrations since mid-century, but notably the hunter is absent.¹⁰ This scene, unrelated to the story, depicts a male gorilla in mid-swing along a set of low hanging branches in the foreground; the direction of his approach promises to bring him close and eye-locked with the viewer (see figure 4). The gorilla's expression of surprise and awe draws the central focus: his jaw hangs slack with wonder but without sign of aggression, and his eyes appear lucid, his stare penetrating. Without a hunter as an intermediary, the illustration creates an intimate encounter between the viewer and the gorilla, an imagined moment of shared recognition on equal terms.

Unlike the opposite image of Bob's hunting triumph, this one suggests a totally immersive visual experience, as the composition entices the viewer into the gorilla's social world. Several paces behind the foremost male gorilla, a female carrying her baby turns an expression of terror to the viewer's intrusion. Almost imperceptible are two more gorillas at a distant vantage point; both sit among the heavy foliage, one staring in the direction of the viewer and one with his back turned. The viewer's long gaze into this jungle scene accomplishes two things: it makes the audience an active participant in the scene, placing the audience in the heart of a gorilla enclave. Therefore, this illustration allows Barnum's audience to cross over into the gorilla world, to interface with its strangeness and familiarities as it appears on the page. Despite

the text's primary efforts to maintain distance between gorilla and white hunter (and the target white male audience), the conflicting messages of these adjacent illustrations (and the accompanying narrative) is an inconsistency that bespeaks the difficulties of demarcating the lines of kinship between humans and other primates.



[Figure 2.4.] "Gorilla." *Forest and Jungle*.

This immersive illustration lacks a clear economic impetus, since the absence of a hunter and guns in the scene denies the promise of snaring a gorilla specimen. Instead, the reader's reciprocated gaze at the gorilla complicates—even convicts—Barnum's otherwise quick dismissiveness of ape kinship and human sympathy for apes. Because the emotive force of this illustration is inconclusive (does it inspire awe, fear, cross-species sympathy, etc.?), Barnum's

audience does not have a clear textual directive about how to process their visual ape encounter. As a result, Barnum's entrepreneurial enterprise admits a lurking ethical crisis—that it might dismiss too readily the sensationalized suspicion that the gorilla may be more “us” than “them.”

In examining the entire visual and textual environment of Barnum's gorilla hunt, it becomes apparent that the gorilla-killing scenes are the result of multiple responses and perspectives. From the authorship (likely a combination of Barnum's own influence, ghost writers, and circus agents) to the editorial choices (including the selection and collation of illustrations from one edition to the next), the book's mixed rhetorics for gorilla encounters and suffering subtly impact the text's more overt effort to offer clear professional and moral directives to American boys. Visions of the gorillas' own domestic logic, coupled with its violent destruction, conflict with the text's domestic education in sentiment-based entrepreneurialism. As a result, Barnum's readers confront the moral ambiguity of capturing and killing creatures that the text portrays as at once foreign and uncannily familiar to their own experience.

“Something Human in its Discordance”: du Chaillu's Species Boundary Crossing

Paul Belloni du Chaillu owed his controversial career as an explorer, natural historian, and author to the gorilla, which he brought to popular and academic audiences toward the end of the antebellum period in America. Equipped with sensationalized narratives of his hunts and the taxidermied bodies of gorillas for exhibition in the U.S. and England, du Chaillu promoted himself as the foremost authority of the gorilla and its nature. In numerous publications, beginning with his bestselling work *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa* (1861), du Chaillu recapitulated his gorilla and ape encounters. He likely did so to capitalize on his original claim to fame and that of other writers who also perpetuated a transatlantic obsession with all

things gorilla in the latter half of the century. Of course, the gorilla also made a provocative subject in a post-Darwinian world struggling to make sense of primates as ancestral relatives.

However, du Chaillu also, I argue, returns to his gorilla (and chimpanzee) narratives, especially his books for children, to explore the possibilities the animal offers for breaking ontological boundaries predicated on exclusion and difference. For du Chaillu, the ape's ambiguous relationship to humans unsettles Western ideologies, both cultural and religious, rooted in assumptions of humanity's primacy over the lower animals. Evolutionary theory began gaining cultural interest after the Civil War, making the gorilla, or "man-monkey" as it was commonly dubbed, an unsettling anthropoid ape with a foot on each side of the human/animal divide. Du Chaillu fitfully explores in these texts the possibility for a more expansive conception of humanity that might include apes in spite of the monstrous, chest-beating portrayals that du Chaillu had also perpetuated. His treatment of apes is fitful in the sense that he vacillates wildly between (1) denying, like Barnum strives to do, the ape's relationality with humanity and (2) questioning his ethical relationship and responsibility to apes as fellow hominids.

The gorillas are human-like enough to give du Chaillu pause, for on an adventure to collect gorilla specimens, he must inevitably decimate gorilla families: the adults for taxidermy and the babies for transport to the U.S. (which proved an unsuccessful venture till the 20th century). Du Chaillu questions how he ought to feel about this violence against primate relatives. In killing gorillas, he must grapple with the possibility that his hunting is morally degrading, a dangerous position for the authoritative voice of a book for children, like *Stories of the Gorilla Country*. Specifically, the graphic deaths of ape families create an ethically troubling and sensational spectacle because the gorillas' familial behaviors astonish du Chaillu with their displays of sentiment for fellow members and inspire in him sympathy across the species line. In

one instance, du Chaillu describes a scene of loving communion with a gorilla mother “stroking the little one, and looking fondly down at it” (185). Du Chaillu admits that “the scene was so pretty and touching that I withheld my fire and considered (like a soft-hearted fellow) whether I had not better leave them in peace” (185). Here he struggles to demarcate the exclusive bounds of human sympathetic bonds, his “soft-heartedness” seemingly in communion with the gorillas’ shared tenderness.

Further complicating this vision, however, is the scene’s replication of the ubiquitous mother-and-child image that indexed middleclass motherhood. I refer to the American Madonna photographs that Laura Wexler identifies as an extension of antebellum notions of sacred motherhood in popular portraiture after the Civil War. Wexler identifies mother-child pairing as “the model image” by which “the model home” would be defined and employed in the “regime of sentiment,” a social vision that sought “to establish itself as the gatekeeper of social existence”



[Figure 2.5] Image of Mother and Child Gorillas. *Stories of the Gorilla Country*.

and “to denigrate all other people whose style or conditions of domesticity did not conform to the sentimental model” (Wexler 67). Given that his audience was likely well acquainted with such portraits of domestic American motherhood, du Chaillu’s mother-and-child gorilla scenes whelm the primates into affiliation with middleclass domesticity (see figure 5). The primates appear relatable and familiar in spite of their foreign and non-human status. The pair’s mirroring of human maternal love suggests an affective correspondence that transcends the species boundary.

On the other hand, because du Chaillu’s object is gorilla hunting, he inevitably confounds the affective power of these scenes with violence. He blasts the vision of the mother gorilla as sacred in describing her killing. In the aftermath, the baby gorilla, “crawled over her body, smelt at it, and gave utterance from time to time to a plaintive cry, ‘hoo, hoo, hoo,’ which touched my heart” (185). Why, for all du Chaillu’s tenderheartedness for the gorilla family, does he continue to hunt them and sensationalize their violent deaths? Perhaps he aims to exploit the gorilla’s demise as an entertaining spectacle, as Barnum does, and thereby further exoticize the animal in death, essentially dismissing the gorilla from the parallel domestic maternal vision he had originally proposed. In short, du Chaillu’s emphasis on violence against the gorilla may be to reaffirm the creature’s non-human status. More believable, however, given the authors fraught and changing relationship to apes over the course of *Stories of the Gorilla Country*, du Chaillu cannot account for the primates’ ambiguous ethical relationship to himself, a mystery that violently abuts with his role as a “great white hunter.”

In another instance, du Chaillu recounts his African hunters’ encounter with a different gorilla mother-and-child pair (to which he is not witness). His imagination paints a disturbing scene: “She [the mother gorilla] fell on her face, the blood gushing from the wounds. The young one, hearing the noise of the guns, ran to his mother and clung to her, hiding his face and

embracing her body . . . [and] by this time, was covered with blood coming from his mother's wounds" (140). In this second account, for all its horrible sanguinity, du Chaillu is oddly non-emotive compared to the earlier scene, as he expresses "[h]ow much I wished that I had been with them, and been so fortunate as to assist in the capture of a live gorilla!" (140). Du Chaillu's unsympathetic attitude here, set in contrast to his former tenderheartedness for ape victims, exposes his undecided approach to gorillas and his shifting feelings of ethical responsibility to them. This puts his readership in the difficult position of parsing his conflicting responses, which further confuses the reader in how to affectively and ethically respond to primates.

Primates, especially the gorilla, frustrate what Brigitte Fielder describes as an "alternative model of [humanist] sympathy" because the great ape so quickly became a loaded signifier for "exotic" and racial difference (14). For du Chaillu, however, primate subjects, because of their liminal status as humanlike non-humans, trigger awkward, vacillating responses that enfold both cross-species sympathy and violence. The juxtaposition of the gorilla's uncannily human-like domesticity and du Chaillu's startling destruction of the mother-child pair threatens to blast the very ethical underpinnings of a domestic logic traditionally reserved for humans. For an audience well versed in the discourse of sacred motherhood and the sanctity of the family, du Chaillu's violence toward the Madonna mother gorilla cannot help but inspire cross-species sympathy that drives the text's implicit moral imperative to decipher humanity's responsibility to the gorilla.

Part of du Chaillu's waffling between repulsion and awe of gorillas' apparent humanness depends on his equally conflicted responses to West African culture and his place within Gambian societies. Du Chaillu's white supremacist ideologies abut his slow acculturation into certain communities of African hunters, and as a result, these opposing modes disturb his assumptions of racial division that distinguish his "whiteness" from his African counterparts.¹¹

However, at crucial moments in the text the gorilla and chimpanzees, as I will show, break the hinge by which du Chaillu pivots between binaries like civilization and barbarity and white European and black African identity. Rather than suggest either an ever expanding and more inclusive conception of human equanimity or limited spheres of racial or species categorization, du Chaillu's conflicted portrayals of primates offer an alternative model for relational thinking that is lateral rather than hierarchical. This is achieved through his unwieldy affective responses to both African peoples and apes. Guided by sentiment, du Chaillu tests the species boundary in two significant ways: 1) by entertaining the veracity of African myths that view gorillas, in particular, as alternative, supernatural versions of humanity and 2) by adopting orphaned primate infants into his domestic vision.

“It looked almost like a black hairy man.”

I have chosen to examine du Chaillu's first children's book, *Stories of the Gorilla Country*, to determine how his ethical qualms about the boundaries of humanness (and humaneness) take shape for specifically American child audiences. Importantly, du Chaillu's hunting narrative addressed child readers at a pivotal time in U.S. history, when the postwar Reconstruction project evoked heated debates about the racial and social composition of the U.S. With the increasing social and geographical mobility of former African American slaves, a growing influx of immigrant populations, and the systematic seizure of American Indian lands in the West, much cultural production during this period advanced a vision of national unity that was exceptionally exclusive. Literature for boys, in particular, often demonstrated a desire to suture a recently hemorrhaged American national identity into a homogenously white, middleclass sphere (Cohoon 90).

As a children's author, du Chaillu became affectionately known as "friend Paul" and "Cousin Paul," one of the trusted guides—along with David Livingstone and Morgan Stanley—into the interior of Africa (Ross and Schramer 119). While his works for children draw heavily from his earlier publications, du Chaillu reorients this material to a child audience for a pedagogical purpose: to instruct his young readers in how to responsibly maintain one's civilized citizenship when tested by primitive influences. To this end, du Chaillu models himself as a civilizing force in a primitive jungle that children might admire and to which they may aspire.

Part of his paradigmatic role as an actor in the text demonstrates, as Barnum does in *Wild Beasts*, appropriate affective responses to foreign kindred: both racialized (and often animalized) humans and anthropoid apes. He implicitly advocates an ethics of bounded or selective sympathy that, I argue, frequently escapes his control. His affective mode, when not confused or compromised, demonstrates a derisive pity for what he perceives to be degraded humanity on the part of both his Gambian counterparts and the primates. His attempts to convey limited sympathy for African alterity intend to set him apart based on presumptions of civilized decency associated with "white" men. For instance, du Chaillu aligns himself with commonly held Western conceptions of Africa as a cradle of primitivism and brutality when he directly addresses the audience to express horror at an African "wizard's" execution: "Ought we not to be thankful that we were born in a civilized country?" (29). The relief he shares with his readers binds the author and his readership in pity for Africans, a condescending sympathy that aims to distance the "American" narrator and reader from African subjects.

Indeed, at a surface level, du Chaillu's practice at an ethics of inclusivity with African people and relationality with apes is wholly disappointing. Hardly surprising for a "white" explorer and travel writer of his era, he operates on assumptions of white supremacy that secure

his paternalistic oversight of African counterparts, who he often openly disparages as barbaric. For instance, he frequently elides African people with apes, a rhetorical move that signals du Chaillu's ascription to (whether serious or joking) pseudoscientific race theory. This line of thinking proposed rankings of unrelated classifications of race in which people of African descent might be positioned as inferior to Europeans and therefore taxonomically closer to apes (Fielder 13). A notable instance of his ape/human conflation occurs when the African hunters turn tables on his racially charged comparisons following the capture of a white-faced chimpanzee: "Look, Chaillie, look at your friend. Every time we kill gorilla, you tell us look at your black friend, your first cousin. Now, you see, look at your white friend" (215). The African hunters' rebuttal not only highlights du Chaillu's racist animalization of his Gambian counterparts, but it also lays bare the slipperiness of such cross-species confluences, for in manipulating the human-animal line for Africans, du Chaillu also invites the collapse of institutionalized social categories, like his own white Euro-American identity, with which he protects himself (and vicariously his readers). As I will later show, du Chaillu's adopted primate ward, the white-faced chimpanzee, continues to challenge du Chaillu's primacy as a "white" patriarch and American representative in an African context.

The mysteries of du Chaillu's personal history may offer some insight into the conflicted sense of racial and national identity that emerges in his cross-cultural and cross-species domestic scenarios. Educated in France and in missionary schools in West Africa while on trade expeditions with his father, the French author adopted the U.S. as his home after only a few months in New York. By 1855, he sailed on an African expedition to the Gabon with the support of the Philadelphia Academy of Science and the Boston Society of Natural History.¹² Throughout his career, du Chaillu obscured his family history and birthplace, presumably—as

many contemporaries and current scholars believe—to hide his mixed racial heritage. Du Chaillu cited his nativity as both New Orleans and Paris, but recent scholarship also suggests that the gorilla-hunter's French father may have resided on what is now the island of Réunion (then Ile Bourbon) off the coast of Madagascar at the time of du Chaillu's birth. His mother, who the author avoided mention, may have been of African or Creole heritage (Miller 117).

His purposeful obfuscation of his biography likely intended to discourage personal attacks from his detractors. Indeed, perhaps in search of a more forgiving audience, du Chaillu turned to a prolific career of authoring literature for children following what was dubbed “The Gorilla Wars,” which began when critics of his book, *Explorations*, questioned his credibility as an explorer and scientist. These attacks primarily targeted what some identified, like John Edward Gray, the Keeper of Zoology at the British Museum, and American naturalist George Ord, as over exuberance and sensationalism in his lectures and publications. While some argued that his dramatic style rendered his reports unfit for objective scientific discourse, others racialized his illustrative style as a sign of non-white traits that du Chaillu had either inherited or acquired during his sojourns in Africa (Miller 119). Ord, for instance, sought to discredit du Chaillu's scientific approach altogether in identifying him as racially inferior in letter a to his friend, Charles Waterton:

Some members of our Academy, who saw Du Chaillu, when he was here, say that the conformation of his head, give evidence of a spurious origin, the offspring of an African and a European; and a photograph of him which I have seen should seem to confirm this opinion. If it be a fact that he is a mongrel or a mustee, as the mixed race are termed in the West Indies, then we may account for his wondrous narrative; for I have observed that it is a characteristic of the negro race, and their admixtures, to be affected to habits of romance. (qtd. in Miller 117)

While du Chaillu denied such assaults on his Euro-American racial identity, his victimization at the hands of virulent practices of racial classification perhaps informs his vacillating affective

responses to the primate's symbolic boundary crossings. In popular media and much of the scientific community, at least, du Chaillu and the gorilla became linked by their exoticization as foreign and racialized outsiders. The 1870s sheet music cover below comments on the mass popularity of the anthropomorphized gorilla in England and the U.S. (the sheet music was



[Figure 2.6] Alfred Concanen, *Mr. Gorilla, Lion of the Season*. 1870s. Sheet music cover. Printers Stannard & Dixon, Victoria and Albert Museum.

published in both London and New York), but the image also imagines du Chaillu and the creature that brought him fame as united in the same body (see figure 6).

Du Chaillu's self-portrayal in *Stories of the Gorilla Country* reveals his simultaneous effort to pass as a white American and probe the categorical divides that segregate black men from white men and gorillas from humanity—ideological divides already in flux in a post-Darwinian world and as exemplified by his mixed race identity. With his white paternalism constantly under siege (within the text and without), du Chaillu establishes a village under his own leadership, which he names “Washington.” At this outpost, an African analog to the U.S. seat of government, du Chaillu advances a domestic logic that aims to organize (respectively) himself, his African hunters, and captive apes within a family hierarchy. Adam Lifshey traces du Chaillu's “act[s] of Americanization” in the adventurer's *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa*, like his brandishing the American flag in the African jungle, which symbolically rewrites “both Africa and himself as American” (4). Such proto-colonial visions are equally applicable to *Stories of the Gorilla Country* in which du Chaillu's “Washington” operates as a circumscribed domestic sphere under his patriarchal supervision.

Though predicated on his assumptions of paternalistic dominance, du Chaillu's reconstruction of a version of American domesticity in Africa results in surprisingly filial relationships among its diverse members. For instance, though *Stories of the Gorilla Country* selects narrative episodes from more extensive accounts of his 1855 African explorations, he affirms that he has “kept no chronological order” of his African travel for the children's book, but “selected incidents and adventures here and there as they seem to be fitted for my purpose” (1). His purpose, it seems, is to suggest an increasingly positive rapport with Gambian people. The text's structure traces the narrator's growing affinity and respect for certain African groups,

particularly the “good Commi” (157). Indeed, it is du Chaillu’s seemingly incompatible approaches to African alterity that makes his text fascinatingly complex. I pause here to emphasize that I do not intend to dismiss the violence of du Chaillu’s proto-colonial treatment of Africans, but I also mean to grapple with du Chaillu’s oddly fluctuating motives and tone, which at times appear to favor a more equitable relationship with his African counterparts. Given the author’s personal and professional orientation to pressing issues of race and belonging—so inescapably present in the text—the text’s strange negotiation of racial and species lines has implicit pedagogical implications for young readers in postbellum America who witness his transgressive boundary crossings.

Du Chaillu’s gradual African acculturation corresponds to a loosening of his control over his self-image as a stable representative of Euro-American whiteness. This is made symbolic in his frequent adoption of blackface as camouflage in the hunt. He explains the purpose of this practical alteration and yet marvels at his blackness: “The beasts there seem to have a singularly quick eye for anything white. I made myself look exactly like Igala. We both had black faces and black hands” (149). Du Chaillu notes—perhaps jokingly, perhaps matter-of-factly—that their likeness in color now binds them; they make up a plural “we” united by their twin blackness. In donning a black mask, du Chaillu may obviously strive to “look exactly like Igala” to embody his own amalgamated racial identity: both black and white, African and Euro-American.

In an attempt to explain du Chaillu’s possible ulterior motives for “blackening up,” John Miller offers two explanations: (1) the author participates in blackface “to emphasise his underlying difference from the generalized ‘them’ that accompany him,” but (2) also might constitute a playful reference to the racial slurs he endured (Miller 124). Miller rightly notes du Chaillu’s cagey tone here, but his suggestion that du Chaillu’s blackface scenes only serve to

flaunt his masked whiteness, especially as a humorous way of dispelling rumors about the author's racial bloodlines, neglects the significance of his trying on blackness in these scenes. Like du Chaillu's nervous investigation of the human/nonhuman species line in his gorilla hunting scenes, so, too, do his brief descriptions of blacking up participate in a symbolic boundary crossing of racial lines.

Additionally, du Chaillu's young audience would have identified du Chaillu's black masking as a nod to the American blackface tradition. A massively popular entertainment throughout much of the nineteenth century, blackface minstrelsy staged what Eric Lott identifies as a "cross-racial desire that coupled a nearly insupportable fascination and a self-protective derision with respect to black people," one that "made blackface minstrelsy less a sign of absolute white power and control than of panic, anxiety, terror, and pleasure" (Lott 6-7). Du Chaillu does not directly allude to blackface minstrelsy when he adopts a black mask for the hunt, but the minstrel tradition's ubiquity, especially in post-Civil War America, makes it an unavoidable subtext in these scenes, and as such, du Chaillu's "blacking up" implicitly stirs "panic, anxiety, terror, and pleasure" with the unintended result of exploring and crossing the color line with his young audience in tow. Lott insists that blackface, as "an investiture in black bodies," "seems a manifestation of the particular desire to try on the accents of 'blackness' and demonstrates the permeability of the color line" (Lott 6). Seemingly in step with the minstrelsy tradition, du Chaillu's obsession with blackness—in both identifying and trying it on—performs racial boundary crossing that also implicates fluid species boundaries, as well. His trope of "blackness" signals alterity, but it is an identity to which he can also belong.

Because the adventurer associates the Africans' racialized blackness with the gorilla's dark pigmentation ("intensely black"), he implicitly links his own blackness to a pan-blackness

that defies racial and species categorization (141). Indeed, du Chaillu complicates his relationship with apes all the more as he begins to ascribe to the Gambians' cultural and religious knowledge of apes, which models more fluid movement across the species divide. Concluding that God "has made human hearts tender and kind to me; that, even under the black skin of the benighted and savage African, He has implanted something of His own compassionate love," du Chaillu's growing respect and affection for certain tribes and African hunters appears to move him to entertain African knowledge of primates. As a token of this respect, du Chaillu, for instance, insists on presenting to his young audience the native language for species and place names, including the "new" species—the "nshiego mbouvé" and the "kooloo-kamba"—he claims to have discovered: "[Y]ou must not mind these hard names—they are not my choice. I must call things by the names the natives give them" (30). In introducing the African language into his young readers' lexicon, du Chaillu invites linguistic heterogeneity that deflates what Mary Louise Pratt terms "a unified, European perspective," like that typified by the Linnaean classification system (Pratt 36).¹³

Further, the title of the work, *Stories of the Gorilla Country*, of course refers to his own book-length narrative, but it may also acknowledge the African storytellers who shape his, and by his extension his readers,' view of primates. In several key scenes, du Chaillu points to the native belief that men, without explanation, can become gorillas. Or, more specifically, the spirit of a man can inhabit a gorilla in a kind of trans-species metempsychosis. Tamara Giles-Vernick and Stephanie Rupp confirm the authenticity of these great ape myths as Central African oral traditions and not simply du Chaillu's narrative invention. In rare and extraordinary moments, du Chaillu foregoes his own narrative predominance to grant African individuals leeway to tell their

gorilla stories. On one occasion du Chaillu records the African's story-telling as a theatrical scene, thereby removing his narrative voice altogether:

Next Gambo spoke. 'Several dry seasons ago a man suddenly disappeared from my village after an angry quarrel. Sometime after an Ashira of that village was out in the forest. He met with a very large gorilla. That gorilla was the man who disappeared; he had turned into a gorilla. He jumped on the poor Ashira, and bit a piece out of his arm; then he let him go. Then the man came back with his bleeding arm. He told me this. I hope we shall not meet such gorillas.'

Chorus—'No; we shall not meet such wicked gorillas.'

I myself afterward met that man in the Ashira country. I saw his maimed arm, and he repeated the same story. (195)

In claiming to have heard the story from the Ashira himself, du Chaillu seems to corroborate the myth, and in doing so, he demonstrates his conformity with an African perspective. As a result, he vicariously introduces his readership to an even more mysterious and intimate understanding of ape-human relations.

This African perception of gorillas as spiritual brethren proposes a radical alternative to scientific and social categories of "races" and species in a hierarchical taxonomic system. However, one might argue that du Chaillu allows African myths to proliferate in the text to further advance the racist pseudoscientific fantasy that sought to yoke African people to primates. Important to consider again is du Chaillu's growing affinity for native society as the book progresses and his own forays, like the blackface scenes, across racial and cultural lines. He is no longer simply a European-American playing at colonization in Central Africa: he is also a relatively acculturated member of an African community, one that views itself as spiritually connected to gorillas. In giving the African gorilla myths free reign in his narrative, du Chaillu implicitly stages the possibility of mutable racial and species boundaries—mutable because these boundaries already overlap in his mind. These episodes illustrating the interconnectedness of

humans and primates model an alternative to hierarchical species categorization and the notions of racial difference that it inscribes.

Ape Sons and Cross-Species Relations

From a bird's-eye-view, the text's moments of cross-cultural and cross-species relations conflicts with du Chaillu's civilizationist modes. Filtered among the signs of du Chaillu's bodily, physical, and affective intimacy with African society are his myriad attacks on African human and primate alterity. Perhaps because many of his first-hand experiences do indeed draw him and his audience across racial and species lines, he elsewhere tussles all the more violently with his chosen identity as a European American explorer. As I have shown, one of du Chaillu's main projects in the text is to maintain a bastion of American domesticity in central Africa, his "Washington," the nucleus of this civilized space being his own hut. While certain tribes or African individuals are welcome citizens of his African domicile, the spoils of his hunts—the yet living primate orphans—offer a special challenge to his American domesticating project. Du Chaillu struggles with his appropriate role as both a protector of his domestic realm and a responsible, tenderhearted caregiver of an ape ward. In these primate adoption scenes, du Chaillu studies the viability of acculturating infant gorillas and chimpanzees into a scenario configured as an American middleclass human family. Given the symbolic power of du Chaillu's "Washington," the author negotiates the potential permeability of American domesticity's implicit codes of exclusivity.

In testing such an extreme example of heterogeneous domesticity with ape babies, du Chaillu tasks his young readers with interpreting the wisdom of his extra-species adoptions.

According to Katherine Adams, those upholding the values of antebellum domesticity fought to maintain the white middleclass as a class-defined and racially distinct sphere. Domesticity under siege, Adams argues, “became a kind of protection itself, a prophylactic against the movement of various others (most pointedly blacks, white women, and the working class) into the domains of white male freedom and power” (Adams 124). This defense of a circumscribed and sacred domestic sphere extended to the education (and entertainment) of white American youth. Thus, du Chaillu’s confidence that his readership is both affectively and ideologically aligned with himself, as when he asserts that his readers would share his mental state if in his shoes (“Yes, I am certain that every one of you would have felt as I did”), his adoption of infant primates guides his readers to at once challenge and reify fears that foreign, racialized bodies might defile the sacred white home in the U.S. (8).

Unsurprisingly, du Chaillu’s experimental adoption of both a gorilla and chimpanzee does not result in the apes’ easy acculturation into his domestic commune. Each adoptive scenario results in reciprocal cruelties, failed communication, and ultimately the adopted animal’s death—this in addition to the frequent comical slapstick routines that play out the stressed relations between the human “parent” and the primate adoptee. On the one hand, the baby apes’ deaths reflect the very real frustrations of many an ambitious menagerie, circus, and zoo owner to procure apes for exhibition; infant gorillas, in particular, did not live long in late nineteenth-century modes of captivity.¹⁴ On the other hand, in more emblematic terms, du Chaillu concludes that the apes’ boundary crossings from barbarity to civilization and animality to humanity are not sustainable in the long term. Domestic civilization, he concludes, must not be made vulnerable to the apes’ incursion.

Part of the danger of including apes in domestic civilization is their seemingly innate resistance to its social standards of conduct and education. Du Chaillu's first infant gorilla captive, "Fighting Joe," exemplifies the horror of everlasting boyhood in its most natural (and undomesticated) state. Upon Joe's arrival at du Chaillu's "Washington," the author alerts his audience to what will be Joe's failure to grow out of his immaturity: "Shall I be able to tame him? I thought I should; but I was disappointed" (141). In addition to enumerating Joe's many attempts to attack him and escape his confines, du Chaillu catalogues Joe's ominous physiological features, especially his gaze from a face that du Chaillu stresses is "very black" (141). As a racially coded creature, Joe also sports "wicked little eyes" and again "very savage eyes" (140-141). Joe's near-human version of "boyhood" makes him an experimental candidate for contemporary pedagogies usually reserved for human boys.

Du Chaillu enlists prevalent cultural theories that identified boys—specifically white boys—as having a natural propensity for naughtiness that is, as Lorinda Cohoon terms, "necessary badness." Scholars of nineteenth-century domestic discourses of boy nature and pedagogies for boys reveal that parents, educators, and authors identified the American boy, especially the postbellum adolescent, as requiring specialized preparation for male citizenship. The rise of "Bad Boy" literature after the Civil War gave credence to the belief that boys' mischief operated as a form of self-exploration and self-identification (Cohoon 90). The outcome of his exploratory "badness," Cohoon argues, encouraged readers to recognize their role in reaffirming national citizenship as distinctively white male, regardless of southern or northern regional identity. Kenneth Kidd's study of the "Bad Boy" trope also affirms its "white-centeredness" but identifies white boys' badness as a necessary phase of contemporary recapitulation theory, which contended that boys dwell in a "savage" phase before evolving into

“civilized” citizens (Kidd 51). The boys of these books eventually mature to assume masculine occupations as ship captains, soldiers, and businessmen. Kidd argues that “Bad Boy” literature invoked evolutionary biological theory to distinguish white American adolescents from non-white or non-American children, a theory which “designates the Other as permanently primitive, in contradistinction to the temporarily primitive or juvenile white male self” (53). In *Stories of the Gorilla Country*, du Chaillu portrays primates as bad boys, perhaps to test their likeness to white human counterparts and their adaptability to domestication.

However, of course the test is rigged. Most obviously, the primates are not and never will be white boys, who—according the Bad Boy trope—are exclusively eligible for social and biological development. Thus, the white boy-savage can safely associate with and then grow out of barbarity associated with non-whiteness according to what Kidd calls “a fantasy of racial recapitulation” (55). For du Chaillu’s infant gorilla and chimpanzee, however, their racially-coded foreignness and species difference automatically makes them irredeemable bad boys. In other words, the primates are guilty of innate and unchanging savagery until proven innocent, a seemingly impossible feat. As a result of this contrived experiment, du Chaillu concludes that the primates’ deaths are an unfortunate but unavoidable outcome of their inability to adapt to a white “civilized” life.

In gorilla Joe’s case, du Chaillu casts him, as representative of his species, to be anything but “healthily” mischievous (Cohoon 99). The author makes this distinction between pleasure-seeking boy and sinister ape all too stark in his observations of Joe: “He sat in his corner, looking wickedly out of his gray eyes; and I never saw a more morose or ill-tempered face than this little beast had. I do not believe that gorillas ever smile” (142). While Joe resists du Chaillu’s version of domestic acculturation as any rowdy boy might, du Chaillu insists that Joe’s surly disposition

is incurably incompatible with his white father figure (himself) or as a future celebrity animal of the American public.

Nonetheless, Joe's "badness" also operates as a destabilizing force that upsets the exclusivity of du Chaillu's domestic order. Joe often attempts to wrest himself from du Chaillu's narrative altogether by escaping his confinement, but he also appears in one brief scene to demonstrate his own version of domestic belonging. In this instance, Joe escapes not to the forest like his other getaways but to du Chaillu's house, the equivalent of the White House in his African "Washington." Joe's brief possession of du Chaillu's hut develops into a symbolically significant scene: the adopted gorilla occupies a seat of power in an act of revolution and discovery while du Chaillu looks in from the outside, "peeping through the keyhole" (143). Now calling his ward "Master Joe," du Chaillu interprets the gorilla's reaction to his new surroundings as a critical moment of exploration, both in terms of the gorilla's discovery of "civilization" and the ape's negotiation of his relationship to it: "I saw Master Joe standing still in the middle of the room, looking about for his enemies, and examining, with some surprise, the furniture. He seemed to think that he had never seen such things before" (143). In a sense, Joe seizes an opportunity to have what white "bad boys" are promised: a right to domestic ascendancy.

For du Chaillu, however, Joe's occupation is a threat to what makes the hut a "civilized" and specifically American space. Obsessing about the fate of his clock, the adventurer "watched with fear, lest the ticking of my clock should attract his attention, or perhaps lead him to an assault upon that precious article. Indeed, I should have left Joe in possession but for fear that we would destroy the many little articles of value or curiosity I had hung on the walls, and which reminded me so much of America" (143). Here du Chaillu admits some complacency with Joe's "possession," but he cannot abide Joe destroying his reminders of America, essentially the

elements of the hut that distinguish it from the natives' primitiveness and from the wilderness. His attention to the clock, in particular, indicates his fear that fully adopting Joe into his home threatens to degrade his outpost beyond the pale of civilization. The clock represents the progressive regulation of time now so essential to modern life since America's industrial revolution. Its tick—potentially an oppressive sound to Joe—measures out order, keeping at bay the atemporality associated with primitive Africa. As a result, Joe—du Chaillu decides—does not belong in the White House of his “Washington” village.

To curtail Joe's potential destruction to his circumscribed domestic space, du Chaillu has the gorilla chained by the neck in an outdoor cage, where the infant gorilla dies ten days later of a purportedly broken spirit (and inadequate nourishment). As a nonhuman and nonwhite outsider, Joe is doomed never to out-grow his Bad Boy phase, but not because this is not a possibility, for Joe could have remained in du Chaillu's hut to mete out his own process of domestication on his own terms, to essentially make “Washington” his own. Joe will forever be a Bad Boy because du Chaillu will not allow him to be otherwise. Seeing the gorilla as a potentially entropic influence on the order of a nationally symbolic domicile, du Chaillu rejects Joe as an adoptable child.

Nonetheless, du Chaillu finds difficulty controlling his tone when reflecting on his potential cruelties to Joe. A narrator who condemns the horrors of slavery and the slave trade throughout the text, du Chaillu must face his own iteration of the peculiar institution in his capture (and torture) of the young gorilla.¹⁵ After the death of “Poor Joe,” du Chaillu takes possession of the body for taxidermy, and after a transatlantic voyage to New York where he puts Joe on display, du Chaillu admits giving pause to observe the marks of captivity still imprinted on the gorilla's body: “Around his neck, where the chain had been, the hair was worn

off” (145). The passage’s sudden and striking focus on Joe’s chafed neck admits du Chaillu’s discomfort at his enslavement of his animal ward. It is at once du Chaillu’s implied confession of guilt and an acknowledgement of the violent consequences of adopting foreign outsiders into white domestic care. Joe’s abraded neck is the last look du Chaillu gives the audience of his first adoptive primate, and as a disturbing and intimate final image, it evokes a sentimental pull that warns the readership of the uncharitable and even violent nature in themselves.

Joe’s inveterate Bad Boy status as a nonwhite and foreign species threatened du Chaillu’s belief in the sanctity of his own “civilized” decency, but only from well outside the parameters of du Chaillu’s domestic fantasy in Africa. However, the white-faced chimpanzee, who du Chaillu’s African hunters call his “white friend,” upsets the explorer’s conception of apes as racially affiliated with Africans.¹⁶ Further, as du Chaillu’s second primate ward, the ape’s whiteness also suggests the baby’s potential genealogical closeness to himself and his primarily white audience. Though du Chaillu assures his audience that the baby’s white face will darken as it matures, the author admits his discomfort: “I cannot tell my surprise when I saw that the nshiego baby’s face was as white as that of a white child. I looked at the mother, but found her black as soot in the face. What did it mean?—the mother black, the child white!” (214). The seeming paradox of the mother and child’s differing pigmentation unavoidably connotes the enduring cultural and legal rejection of racial mixture or miscegenation in Reconstruction America.

Since African apes already connote racial, specifically black African, difference in the text, the chimpanzee’s whiteness insinuates that racially coded whiteness may also exist among primate species. Du Chaillu still identifies the white ape as a symbol of miscegenated difference, from which he aims to distance himself. Aiming to reestablish the racial and species hierarchy

that would set him above his African counterparts and his primate wards, he denies the hunters' insistence that the chimpanzee must be his relative: "'Yes,' said I; 'but when he gets old his face is black; and do you not see his nose, how flat it is, like yours?'" (215). His racist retort would seem to mark the chimpanzee infant, who he names "Tommy," as a racialized alien. Perhaps Tommy challenges du Chaillu's own claims to white American identity, and as a result, we might expect him to reject the white ape from his domestic sphere altogether. Oddly, however, the primate's whiteness prompts the author to imagine the possibility of a more inclusive domestic space. Tommy's skin automatically gives him access to du Chaillu's domestic sphere that Joe, the black gorilla, never could attain.

By all appearances, Tommy fits the role of an adopted human child, or at the least a beloved pet, in becoming a fixture of the adventurer's African home life. Du Chaillu calls him "tame and docile," shares his breakfast with Tommy at table, and hosts him in his home. However, Tommy is very much a Bad Boy, according to the literary trope for white human boys. The chimpanzee acquires the habit of stealing from huts and demands his favorite foods at mealtime. He also garners a taste for "strong drink," stealing and getting drunk on du Chaillu's brandy until, du Chaillu claims, "he looked disgustingly and yet comically human" (218). Unflattering for humanity, Tommy's badness makes him seem all the more like a man. Tommy's delinquency differs from Joe's in that du Chaillu describes the chimpanzee as a wayward youth rather than an irredeemable animal, affirming "he behaved very much like a spoiled child" and required "flogging to teach him better manners" (217). Based on his fatherly concerns and responsibilities for Tommy, du Chaillu seems to have expanded his domestic domain to include cross-species membership. This scenario suggests that Tommy may develop "better manners" and grow into a citizen and inheritor of the American domestic tradition, as afforded human boys

portrayed in the Bad Boy trope. However radically inclusive this possibility appears, it is clearly an amusing fiction for du Chaillu, a way of “playing house” with alterity.

Despite Tommy’s adoption and adaptation, he is necessarily short lived under du Chaillu’s care. Tommy cannot, of course, fulfill the civilizing path of the white Bad Boy because he can never be a human boy and because his whiteness is transitory. If Tommy were to survive his captivity (which he does not), he would inevitably become an object of entertainment and study in the U.S. Perhaps for this reason du Chaillu shucks his fatherly attachment to Tommy. When Tommy dies after living five months with du Chaillu, the author’s final words on his adopted chimpanzee are strikingly dispassionate, ending where he began with his interest in the ape: the color of his complexion. The author concludes, “Tommy turned darker as he grew older. At the time of his death he was yellow rather than white. If he had lived to be old, he would, no doubt, have become black, like his mother” (219). Seemingly undergoing a kind of regressive recapitulation of the racial hierarchy, Tommy returns to the status of an alien. Tommy represents a hybrid of the familiar and foreign, the human and nonhuman, and racial blackness, “yellowness,” and whiteness. Du Chaillu’s glib response to his ward’s death signals his rejection of Tommy’s embodied hybridity in favor of American social standards of racial purity, perhaps an effort to distance himself from rumors of his own mixed race heritage.

In symbolic terms, Tommy must fade from du Chaillu’s domestic scene before his matured and darkened face further implicates du Chaillu for having expanded his family across the color and species lines. Even though the author ultimately rejects apes as potential members of an American domestic scenario, du Chaillu leaves his readership without clear guidelines for appropriate affective responses to apes and therefore makes the ethical stakes of capturing or killing primates all the more fraught. Over the course of the text, du Chaillu presents the gorilla

and chimpanzee in a range of capacities and identities: from specimens for scientific inquiry and entertainment to spiritual brethren and Bad Boy playmates. As a representative figure himself, du Chaillu also proves himself to be a porous body at once influenced by African people and the environment around him but also the white supremacist discourses he maintains. Because du Chaillu invites in this text Gambian perspectives and his own conflicted feelings about apes, he creates—if only briefly and hesitantly—a vision of relationality not based on a fixed hierarchy of race or species but one that considers a more expansive perspective that might expose the ontological limits of his own and Western systems of knowledge and categorization.

Perhaps unintentionally, the ape's liminal status as both a hominid and an exoticized animal represents for du Chaillu and Barnum the possibility for lateral movement across porous borders of perceived difference. As much as the authors attempt to set American boy citizens in contrast to the primate's alterity, the primate, as this chapter has illustrated, often exceeds or eludes its representative power. In seeking to enforce a vision of white domesticity in Africa, du Chaillu and Barnum's reliance on an unstable animal signifier effectively unsettles the very social taxonomies the authors mean to impose. This also proves true of "exotic" species that survive the voyage to the U.S. and gain symbolic resonance in U.S. menageries and zoos. The next chapter examines the displaced simian as a fixture of the domestic and domesticating space of the menagerie and zoo, a liminal zone where the American imaginary further plays out anxious visions of social amalgamation and segregation.

ENDNOTES

¹ According to Ted Gott and Katherine Weir, France acquired some of the earliest gorilla specimens because of trade alliances with Gabon established in 1839. By the early 1850s, the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle of Paris had featured the first taxidermied gorilla in the West, thus prompting British scientists to scramble for similar specimens until receiving du Chaillu's collection (35-36).

² In her book, *Literature After Darwin*, Virginia Richter notes that the ape, as man's "distorted mirror image," had long challenged humankind's identity and relationship to the natural world, but this tense relationship between apes and men "received an entirely new virulence in the wake of Darwin's blow against man's self-esteem" (33).

³ Fictional accounts of foreign animal encounters also inspired Barnum to suffuse lessons in natural history with sensational plots, as he would in *Wild Beasts*. Popular British adventure author, Robert M. Ballantyne, for example, never traveled to Central Africa but capitalized on ongoing evolutionary debates and the controversy over du Chaillu's recent "discovery" of the gorilla with his book, *The Gorilla Hunters* (1861).

⁴ Some myths, both those formulated by Central Africans and Europeans alike, either emphasize the gorilla's "exotic" beastliness or see the creature as intimately intertwined with humanity. Katherine Weir and Ted Gott account for many examples, including mid-nineteenth century stereotypes of the gorilla as a lascivious predator of African women, which was famously depicted in Emmanuel Fremiet's "Gorille femelle" sculpture displayed in Paris in 1859 (26). My discussion of du Chaillu's *Stories of the Gorilla Country* also examines Central African myths about the gorilla's spiritual ties to humanity.

⁵ Scholarly assessments of moral education for boys identify a combination of domestic and capitalistic values apparent in Barnum's young hunters. E. Anthony Rotundo's 1987 study of gendered education for nineteenth-century middle-class American boys generalizes three "ideals": "the Masculine Achiever, the Christian Gentleman and the Masculine Primitive" (36). If Barnum's characterizations of the young hunters could be neatly categorized, they would exemplify the first two "ideals" as both aspiring entrepreneurs and participants "an ethic of compassion" (38). Rotundo observes that these types were compatible, in which the ideal boy "accepted commerce as a part of their social order, but insisted that it be pursued in a spirit of Christian decency" (38). Ken Parille complicates assumptions about boyhood moral education, stressing that undue scholarly emphasis on more canonical works like Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* characterized boy education as "the pursuit of autonomy and promoted an oppositional attitude to a culture that was trying to feminize men" (14). Citing understudied boys' novels, Parille notes that the heroes of these books "embrace the domestication and discipline of cultural authorities" (14).

⁶ Nigel Rothfels notes that popular representations of animal hunts and collection emphasized "the frequently bloody and destructive methods employed in most catches," but by the end of the nineteenth century, descriptions of the hunt expunged the bloodshed in favor of a "code of catching" meant to give the impression of professional efforts in "conservation and education" (52).

⁷ In *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa*, du Chaillu determines that the gorilla's "roar" is "awe-inspiring, and proclaim this beast the monarch of these forests" (484).

⁸ John Miller identifies in nineteenth-century British hunting fiction an emphasis on the immense size and perceived savagery of a hunted animal for the purpose of representing the superiority of the English hunter's imperial agenda (37). For instance, conquering a tiger, which acquired "cultural identification as

the most recalcitrant of animals,” brought English hunters the honor of “bringing the earth into his [God’s] divinely sanctioned order” (37).

⁹ William de la Montagne Cary, the artist of the illustration “A Little Fury,” was a well-established illustrator for *Harper’s Weekly* and *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*. Among the many illustrations in *Wild Animals*, Cary’s depict the plot-based scenes of the book, which are set in contrast to the text’s more detailed images for the purpose of readers’ zoological study (Smithsonian).

¹⁰ This illustration, simply titled “Gorilla,” was likely illustrated by Josiah Wood Whymper or his son Edward, both of whom were British engravers well known for their natural history illustrations.

¹¹ Du Chaillu differentiates the various African tribes, finding affinity with the Commi, for example, but depicts the Fans as fearsome cannibals and “horrible people” (60). Seemingly regardless of his preference for one tribe or individual over another, du Chaillu frequently confuses his African counterparts for jungle animals; for instance, he mistakes his fellow hunter and friend Aboko for a chimpanzee (88) and describes him in an elaborate conceit as a serpent (106).

¹² Biographers disagree whether du Chaillu acquired U.S. citizenship before his 1855 expedition to the Gabon. Mary K. Edmonds, for instance, finds his citizenship a likely requirement for American scientific societies’ financial support of his African travel. Robert L. Gale, author of du Chaillu’s entry for the *American National Biography*, denies the gorilla hunter’s successful naturalization as a U.S. citizen. Regardless, scholars agree that du Chaillu advertised an affinity for the U.S. and self-identified as a “loyal American” (Gale).

¹³ Important context for du Chaillu’s treatment of the Gambian gorilla myths is his denouncement of what he calls “superstition” elsewhere in the text. In response to the hunters’ belief that the leopard’s liver contains poison, du Chaillu responds, “But I told my men that their belief was all nonsense, and mere superstition. They said it was not. As I could not prove their notion false, I stopped the discussion by saying I did not believe it” (101).

¹⁴ The first gorilla to survive the Atlantic passage from Africa to the U.S. would arrive in Boston (when?) but die three days after its arrival. Not until 1914 would young Dinah, a 3 year-old female gorilla, live long enough in the Bronx zoo to become an animal celebrity. Dinah would live only 11 months after purportedly succumbing to “malnutrition” and “homesickness” (Got and Weir 103; Harvey 341).

¹⁵ While du Chaillu laments Portugal’s ongoing trade and African slaves and Africans’ complicity in a slave economy, he expresses his own feelings of guilt at watching from afar a group of slaves in transport: “I was glad that these poor creatures could not see me, for I was hidden from them by trees and bushes. I felt ashamed of myself—I actually felt ashamed of being a white man!” (84).

¹⁶ Du Chaillu promotes the white-faced ape as a new species he has discovered, naming it *nshiego mbouvé*. Late nineteenth-century contemporaries soon proved the ape to be a sub-species of chimpanzee (Meyer 47).

CHAPTER THREE

“We seem to see ourselves through the bars”: Autoexoticism through the Simian’s Cage¹

In their African hunting books for children, Barnum and du Chaillu never penned a feat that could not be realized in their time: the successful captivity of gorillas. Dying prematurely of disease, malnutrition, and reportedly heartbreak in captivity or during transport, the gorilla did not sustain a living physical presence in the U.S. until the twentieth century (Gott and Weir 98-104). The first living gorilla arrived in the U.S. in 1897 but died within a few days. The capture and display of this great ape earlier would have afforded the American public an opportunity to scrutinize firsthand the most troubling specter of a common human ancestor to date and, at the same time, literally cage anxieties about the animal’s relative humanness. The zoo or menagerie cage, as Mark Feldman suggests, “offered a fantasy of externalization, which caged the animal apart from the human” (162-3). Late-century literature relied on the imagination for an across-the-bars encounter with the gorilla, but other primates, like chimpanzees and monkeys, were living spectacles in animal shows, menageries, and zoos. This visualization of an uncomplicated human-animal binary seemed fundamental to Western social order, underpinning the categorical thinking that also distinguished and ranked human races, classes, and nationalities. Thus, the “exotic” caged animal in American literary discourses (and in life) was triply subordinated as a nonnative, nonhuman, and consumable spectacle for education and entertainment.

This chapter investigates the semiotics of caged simian figures, in particular. Recognizing the historical treatment of apes and monkeys as uncanny and often comical mirror images of humans, I identify the simian’s cage as a mechanism that structurally reinforces this mirror

effect, affording American audiences greater opportunities to study correspondences and differences between themselves and simian captives. In the texts I examine for this chapter, authors test what happens when looking at apes and monkeys in captivity (and meeting their reciprocated gaze) becomes a more nuanced encounter than a source of curious spectacle. Captive simians initially generate interest because they bear some physical resemblance to humans, but more significantly, that resemblance also entails the monkeys' or apes' human-like intellectual and moral capacities, compelling and complex personalities, and their ability to form interpersonal relationships with humans and other creatures. The longer people look at monkeys and apes the more that image appears to equilibrate, with simians appearing more human and often humans more like simians.

Finding a basis of connection with these animals, authors treat simians' "exotic," non-human difference as integral to shaping and even revitalizing conceptions of Anglo-American civilization. Of course, this mirror-effect of a simian's cage and the sense of connection with the animal it affords also acts as an instrument of human projection onto the animal, serving as a permeable boundary across which a range of desires may be exercised. For one, the ape or monkey's human likeness satisfies a desire for an exotic animal's conformity to Anglo-American civilizational norms, exemplified by dressing up a chimpanzee in a gentleman's top hat or training it to eat at a table with fork and knife. But the simian's connotations of novelty, jungle wildness, and extra-civilizational geographies also drive a desire to incorporate primates' global vitality and animality. Monkey and ape figures appear to expand human perspectives and spur reassessments of the status quo by virtue the creatures' fascinating difference.

Each text also employs monkey or ape figures to simianize non-normative people who do not meet Anglo and middle-class standards of whiteness, wealth, and civility. Some authors, like

Mary Wilkins Freeman, engage with this commonplace nineteenth-century trope to reject its harmful connotations and reclaim it in order to imagine productive cross-species likeness and relationships. A text like Henry Starkey Fuller's biography of a celebrity chimpanzee, on the other hand, wields this trope to simultaneously imagine the integration of marginalized people and subordinate them, situating them as deemed appropriate within a panoply of American social categories. The overlapping of these desires—to acculturate simians, embrace their “exotic” difference, and organize the social environment according to simians' perceived social standing points to complicated discourses of belonging that arise across the ape or monkey's cage.

Further contributing to this complexity, these animal figures do not lose their animality, no matter how smartly they may be outfitted in human clothes, whether they are ascribed human characteristics and capacities, or how long they dwell in cages. A chimpanzee's act of generosity to a fellow simian in Harriet Prescott Spofford's story, “At the Menagerie,” does not make him human; his kindness, rather, expands human conceptions of ethical practice. So, too, does the celebrity chimpanzee, Mr. Crowley, according to his biographer, appears to resist popular narratives of ape marriages when he shows little interest in courting his intended, Miss Kitty Banana (Davis 96). In his biography, Crowley freely expresses his will as an ape, rather than as a conscript to an American civilizing process. Similarly, the caged monkey of Freeman's story brims with his own desires for freedom, distinct from those of the humans who possess him. When these authors then imagine these caged simians mirrored in a civilizational schema, they do so with the awareness that the primates' animality also becomes a part of this vision.

Given the desires for imagining simian animality as part of the self and society, the operation of a human-simian mirror in these texts suggests a new way of reading encounters between humans and caged animals. This present study complicates the “fantasy of externalization” that

Feldman recognizes as a physical and metaphorical trope for human-animal separation. It also identifies the relevance of Donna Haraway's theorization of 'simian orientalism,' a phenomenon she identifies in primatology studies, particularly in the West, that constructs knowledge about apes such that humanity might construe culture and identity as exceptional by contrast. In *Primate Visions*, Haraway describes the binary thinking that simian orientalism imposes to construct the human, from "the construction of the self from the raw material of the other" and "the appropriation of nature in the production of culture" to "the clarity of white from the obscurity of color [. . .]" (11). While similar hierarchizing and dichotomous relationships between humans and primates that Haraway describes are evident in each of the texts—and are indeed implicated through the mechanics of caging—these authors also envision a kind of boundary crossing that tests simian integration into American society and encourages a renegotiation of what it means to be a civilized human.

Spofford, Fuller, and Freeman, I argue, engage in a form of autoexoticism in which simian animality has the potential to recast mainstream ideas about civilized society and to thereby reassess the boundaries and diversity of human animal nature. Coined in the 1990s, the critical term "autoexoticism" referred to an exoticized person or a group's act of reclaiming an "exotic" identity for personal or collective benefit (Xiaofan 393). In other words, those marked as "exotic" regain agency through autoexoticism and disrupt discourses of exoticism traditionally theorized as an uneven power dynamic between a dominant culture and a subjugated one.

In a *PMLA* series exploring the directions of autoexoticism in literary study, Xiaofan Amy Li observes that the discourses and practice of autoexoticism can reorient the traditional trajectory of the study of exoticism from the negative power relations between dominant and weak. She argues that what is exoticized represents crucial difference because it "appeals to the viewer and

appears as new [. . .] or even superior. This desire-infused characteristic of exoticism therefore makes the exotic a discourse, practice, or way of perceiving that is relational and emotional. More significant, what is relational and emotional is also what can be changed and negotiated” (393). The authors I examine imagine in the late nineteenth century the potential of fostering intimate emotional and intellectual ties with apes and monkeys such that these animals shape and American cultural identity. Thus, this chapter aims to answer Xiaofan’s question when she contemplates the scope of the study of autoexoticism: “How should we understand the exotic when it becomes an imagining of the self instead of the other?” (394).

Taking Xiaofan’s prompting to explore autoexoticism in terms of reversing the direction of exoticism back on the self or the presumed dominant culture, the readings of this chapter trace a developing vision of simian autoexoticism. This idea invokes aspects of but is distinct from Haraway’s “simian orientalism.” While the primates of these texts remain caged and physically separate from their human observers in a scenario that appears to enforce human-animal binaries, through-the-bars encounters enable humans to not only see in primates a reflection of themselves and their society but also that image overlaid with the strangeness of simian animality. From Spofford’s debates about moral apes to Fuller’s multi-ethnic characterization of Mr. Crowley and, finally, to Freeman’s account of a Boy and a Monkey’s alternative society, the readings are organized according to the extent to which authors envision simian autoexoticism, from most speculative to most fully realized, as a positive and transformative revision of American ideals of civilization.

Exotic Animal Institutions and Ethical Ambiguities

The rise of American zoological gardens in the late nineteenth century combined a host of motivations that framed interactions between the animals and the public. From the single-animal

spectacle of the 18th-century to the traveling menagerie and then the elaborate entertainment enterprises like that of P.T. Barnum's museums and later circus acts, the late nineteenth-century arrival of the zoological garden in the U.S. strove to be a purely scientific and educational institution, but it could not completely distinguish itself from its more entertainment driven predecessors and contemporaries. Though the term "zoo" connoted a not-for-profit public institution, as opposed to the private and commercial associations of the menagerie, the nomenclature appears to be interchangeable (as they were in Europe), even though, as Vernon Kisling notes, the term "menagerie" carried a negative meaning in the U.S., connoting "improperly kept, caged animals" (114). The fact that the zoo was so difficult to define and distinguish from animal entertainment enterprises attests to a multiplicity of beliefs about what caged animals should mean or do for the public good and how these animals deserved to be treated.

Harriet Prescott Spofford offers her readers no firm footing on the question of the zoo or menagerie's social value—much less the nature of the animals on display—in her 1895 short story, "At the Menagerie." One of her many pieces for New York's *The Independent*, the story centers on a free-wheeling tea-time dialogue between Uncle Burton, who has just returned from an afternoon visit to "the Menagerie," and his nieces and nephews of varying ages. Their discussion amounts to a series of anecdotes concerning animal and human nature, especially observations gleaned from previous zoo and menagerie visits.

The story leads with the question of whether "monkeys" are "governed by moral principle. Uncle Burton details a scene he witnessed at the menagerie: a chimpanzee shares half of its apple with a monkey in an adjoining cage. From here the tea-partiers vacillate between two main concepts concerning nonhuman animal nature that are framed by the animals' captivity: for one,

animal exhibits provide a means of envisioning a civilizational order imposed on the non-Western and natural world; second, the speakers also discuss ways in which such caging allows for more permeable boundaries and relational encounters with curious animals. The speakers, however, fail to draw any conclusions from their observations; indeed, Spofford seems to end the story *in media res*, as the conversation seems ongoing and circular, as I will show. Although the speakers continue to arrive where they began with the question of animals' ethical capacities, by the close of the story the discussion also implicates humans and the speakers themselves. Spofford makes her readers into serious observers of the animal observers in the story. Unfolding with the organic quality of casual conversation (in lieu of a traditional narrative structure), the story generates interest in providing the spectacle of the characters' inability to determine the nature of human relationships with "exotic" animals, much less the moral nature of the animals in question and that of themselves.

The apparent controversy of the chimpanzee's kindness to another creature sets off the seesaw effect of the story-long conversation. In response to Uncle Burton's interpretation of the ape's thoughtfulness as "moral principle," one of the older children, Miss Mary, denies her uncle's conclusion, but when pushed to explain her doubt, she admits, "I don't know" and adds her own example of charity between two setters. Though Mary insists that animals lack ethical intelligence, she seems to contradict herself with the example with domesticated animals, perhaps one with which she may be more comfortable. Mary further contradicts herself when she takes a turn speaking later in the story, venturing that "[t]here is a great deal of human nature in some of the animals." She draws this conclusion based on the story of the lion who recovered from homesickness upon hearing Bayard Taylor speak Arabic. Mary does not seem to recognize her self-contradiction, but the trajectory of her anecdotes suggests that she might consider that

animals—even “exotic” ones—may not be so socially or cognitively distant from humanity and, further, are consequential members of “civilized” culture.

Apparently following this same line of implicit argument, Miss Fanny shares a harrowing anecdote about her last visit to the zoo in which Jumbo the elephant nearly trampled her and her mother when the pachyderm escaped its keeper to satisfy his sweet tooth at a cake stand. However, Miss Fanny’s tale of horror takes a sudden turn in tone as she recounts her realization that “the poor, innocent creature” simply desired a human snack. Jumbo’s desire for cake is integral to the fellow feeling Fanny expresses for him. Citing the stereotype of elephants’ excellent memory, she wonders whether ““when I saw him afterward in this country, and offered him a seedcake, if he recalled that morning.”” From visiting Jumbo in England to seeing him after his sale to P.T. Barnum and transport to the U.S., Fanny would like to believe that he remembers her as she remembers him, that the memory they share somehow connects them. The interpersonal intimacy that Fanny imagines with Jumbo acknowledges his participation in the pastime of animal exhibition and public memory. But the reader is given little time to linger on Fanny’s portrait of a socially engaged elephant before the conversation shifts to another speaker and seemingly an unrelated topic.

At this point, Uncle Burton abruptly asserts that ““[t]he Zoo is a great institution,”” which seems like a simple truism, one that acknowledges the zoo as an integral historical (““It is a very old one””; ““Belshazzar had one, evidently””) and symbolic (““Adam had one before him!””) component of human civilization. Uncle Burton’s point is of consequence in this juncture of the conversation for two reasons: for one, his comment distracts the other characters and the reader from contemplating zoo animals, like Jumbo, as intellectually and emotionally complex members of the same local community; and second, his praise of the zoo as a facility established

to regulate human-animal encounters seems to ignore a crucial factor in Fanny's story: Jumbo had escaped his bounds and nearly trampled Fanny and her mother. Nonetheless, Uncle Burton abruptly shifts the conversation from human relationships with non-human animals to the human-made institution, and, in so doing he also signals that his confidence in the zoo as a marker of cultural achievement appears too quick, even myopic.

His nearly patriotic admiration for the zoo stems from the oft-cited observation that early zoological parks in the U.S. were largely considered necessary components of a modern civilization and were modeled after the zoological gardens of European empires. An 1869 article titled "Zoological and Botanical Garden" in *The Scientific American* encourages legislation that would create a zoological park in Central Park, in addition to "a first-class astronomical observatory" for the purpose of "not only a pleasant and innocent amusement, but the most rapid and impressive instruction in regard to the animals and plants of our globe" (128). The author notes that plans for the park are fashioned after London's Regent's Park and Paris's Jardin des Plantes. Nearly twenty years later, an article in the *Washington Post* titled "The National Zoo: A Measure that Congress Should Act Upon Favorably and at Once" argues that [e]very civilized Government regards the establishment and support of such collections as part of its legitimate work, and the United States should not be left behind" (4). The zoo and menagerie's multifarious purposes—as both a scientific/educational and commercial/entertainment enterprise—led some to question the public benefits of government investment in animal captivity.

From the first call for the establishment of a national zoological park in 1841 to the eventual passing of the bill that sanctioned its establishment in 1889, factions argued on the one hand that the absence of a zoological park in the nation's capital depreciated the country's status in the eyes of the world, while on the other hand, some expressed that federal funding for such a

venture was inappropriate and unnecessary, especially since many felt the goals of the Smithsonian Institution's natural history museum met the needs of the scientists and the public (Kisling, 120).² Nonetheless, the idea that living animal institutions were necessary components of a "civilized" nation won out, and both federally funded and privately owned zoos flourished in the final decades of the nineteenth century.

Spofford seems tongue-in-cheek about Uncle Burton as an authoritative voice. His pronouncement about the zoo's greatness begs the question: what makes the institution so "great," other than the historic provenance he and the children outline? This turn in the conversation from Fanny's sympathetic portrayal of foreign animality to Uncle Burton's platitude illustrates a telling rhetorical shift, especially considering where he began with the chimpanzee's "moral principle." Spofford suggests in this dialogue that her characters have the capacity to imagine more sympathetic and egalitarian relationships with animal outsiders, but that they tend to fall back on old civilizationist scripts, which reinforce the species divide and the racial and class boundaries so often mapped onto it.

Indeed, in some of their anecdotes the tea partiers' invoke a civilized-savage dichotomy in their characterization of animal relationships and the zoo, a rhetorical choice that heightens all the more the difference between the two primary lines of thought expressed in the piece: that of sharing fundamental moral similarities and interpersonal relationships with strange creatures on the one hand and erecting boundaries between human and animal barbarity and their (the characters') conceptions of "civilized" decency, on the other. In one anecdote, a monkey that reminds Miss Fanny of "a little picaninny" inspires Uncle Burton to remark that monkeys "are uncanny caricatures" that lead him to "sometimes" think "the Zoological Gardens are good places to go and study what human nature ought *not* to be." For him, monkeys are merely

human “caricatures,” but seemingly regrettable ones because they represent for him nonwhite alterity. His and Fanny’s racialization of the monkey is answered later in the piece when Uncle Burton condemns the Zulu for their methods of killing hippopotami, citing Zulu “states and conditions where humanity is more cruel than the brutes.” In these instances, Uncle Burton hints at a moral equivalency between human-like animals and “cruel” people he codes as uncivilized. To draw this conclusion, he sees the menagerie or zoo institution as a reflection of a hierarchical order in nature that is also imprinted in civilizational structures. The implicit goal of the zoological institution, in Uncle Burton’s mind, is to visualize the inferiority of both curious animals and strange people and their customs; the very fact that such a significant and symbolic monument exists would seem to prove the greatness of the nation that established it.

By the end of the story (after a number of non-sequiturs), the conversation appears quite far from where it began with the philosophical debate concerning simian capacities for moral consciousness. But rather than close with yet another expression (from Uncle Burton, in particular) of speciesist and civilizationist beliefs in Western and Anglo-American superiority, a final line of argument returns the conversation to a similar philosophical question as that concerning the chimpanzee’s morality but one that implicates the character’s ethical capacities. In answer to Uncle Burton’s comment on the cruelty of Zulu hunting methods, Miss Mary offers an animal story for comparison. She recounts a scene she witnessed in Italy: a lizard devours a giant worm and gives her what she interprets as a knowing, cheeky wink. When one of the tea partiers, Tom, chimes that the lizard’s feast “‘wasn’t cruel,’” an unnamed speaker agrees: “‘No indeed. That was only nature—an incident in illustration of the law of demand and supply.’” In sussing out the conditions of cruelty, for these speakers the lizard’s killing is a dictate of nature, while the Zulu’s hunting methods are decidedly barbarous.

Curiously, however, this speaker frames the lizard's natural instinct for worm eating in terms of human economic markets, as a result of the "law of supply and demand." In setting up such a comparison, the speaker categorizes capitalistic opportunism as a natural right, but the consequence of such a comparison means adhering to the same ecological operating system as the "brutes;" these speakers find a moral equivalency between the lizard's hunt and the practice of manipulating markets for human profit. By this logic, the capitalist markets in which the characters participate (as consumers of tea, for one) operate according to the same laws as animals. Perhaps unknowingly, the tea partiers place themselves in the same moral universe as the lizard in implicitly admitting to their own animality in categorizing human economics as a force of natural law.

Thus, when the character, Will, who has spoken little heretofore, concludes the story, he returns the conversation to its beginning but with a subtle, crucial difference. Will says of the lizard's meal, "I wonder what the worm thought" (28). Will's speculation grants the worm sentience and leaves the issue of cruelty unresolved. Not only does his consideration of the worm's feelings implicate the lizard's ethical values but also, by extension, those of the tea-partiers and the human economic "laws of nature" by which they abide.

The idea of the worm as a victim whose feelings must be considered seems ludicrous, as Will's final line might simply be a cute conclusion to a meandering conversation. But the nature of Will's concern and its positioning as a bookend to the question of simian moral intelligence with which the story began, is too strategic. From Will's perspective, the worm's apparent capacity for pain (and the lizard's questionable predation) places it in a human ethical spectrum and, by extension, would seem to confirm the chimpanzee's capacity for "moral principle." In conferring emotional intelligence to a wide range of nonhuman animals, from the sentient

earthworm to the kind, human-like chimpanzee, the characters must grapple with their ethical responsibility to non-human animals that might feel, think, and behave much like themselves—or perhaps, in some cases, even more humanely.

Of course, the story ends abruptly at this point, and given the pattern that unfolds over the course of the text, readers are left to wonder whether the characters will recapitulate the same kind of exchange over and over with no consensus and a perpetually limited conception of animal life and their own animality. But the story's circuitousness with a difference suggests a lurching toward a vision of more relational, rather than hierarchical, relationships with animals across cage bars, much like the chimpanzee's generosity to a fellow simian in the adjoining enclosure.

The lines of conversation that Spofford draws create a yet unresolved tension about what “exotic” animal captivity means for human observers, whether caging, especially that of the anthropoid ape, reinforces the species divide or affords an opportunity to imagine human-like emotional and moral capacities in even the least anthropoid of creatures. In the case of celebrity simian captives, this tension is heightened because the animal's fame depends on its anthropomorphized and culturally acculturated social status that mirrors its human observers all the more, from showing proper table manners to displaying a range of personality traits. The following section examines popular media responses to a celebrity chimpanzee, who inspired authors to see the chimpanzee as a product of an American civilizing mission and thus a reflection of themselves, but also one that highlights the diversity of an evolving American public.

“A token of good feeling”: Cultural Amalgamation Imagined in an Ambassador Ape

The nineteenth century made celebrities of a number of “exotic” creatures, elephants being one of the most represented, as entertainment enterprises competed to exhibit the largest or

albino specimens.³ Susan Nance traces the beginnings of animal celebrity in America to the 1810s, after which individual creatures were viewed “as public, named, and commercially engaged individuals” that would appeal to audiences’ “flattered humor, visual interest, or morality” (4). In her study of elephants in nineteenth-century entertainment enterprises, Nance observes that the American public knew little about the nature of elephants in general or individuals, for the commercial ventures often portrayed the pachyderms as simplistically genial or rampaging beasts (8). By contrast, a strikingly complicated public animal figure who has essentially disappeared from public memory is the chimpanzee of the Central Park menagerie, Mr. Remus Crowley, Esq. Multiple contemporary periodical sources claim that Crowley was a household name in New York and popular nationwide; he was also the first living chimpanzee on display in the U.S. (Blackmar and Rosenzweig 346). Mr. Crowley lived in New York from 1884 till his death from pneumonia and consumption in 1888. This section examines how textual representation of Crowley established the chimpanzee as an embodiment of American cultural norms but whose celebrity simultaneously magnified and tempered popular concerns about the economic, legal, and cultural status of groups deemed outsiders to Anglo-America, especially those identified as immigrants.

Publications about Crowley provide a remarkable amount of detail about his relatively short tenure in captivity that include his diet, table manners, sleeping arrangements, play and performances, courtship and romance with his “bride,” Miss Kitty Banana, emotional capacity and moods, friendships and enemies, bouts of illness, and his likenesses to humankind.

Representative print materials suggest that Mr. Crowley intrigued a wide audience, from children reading *St. Nicholas; an Illustrated Magazine for Young Folks* to Chicagoans catching up on the latest news about Crowley in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* (from a reprinted account in the *New*

York Tribune). The chimpanzee also inspired satirical poems and was the subject of provocative illustrations and paintings, which were also documented in newspaper and periodical accounts. A central text for this study, the 175-page paperback biography titled *Mr. Crowley of Central Park* (1888), aspires to provide the most comprehensive account of the ape's nativity and captivity.⁴ These texts attest to Crowley's iconic status, but one that differs from that of the elephants Nance describes. Unlike some of the one-dimensional characterizations of elephant characters as either genial friend or crazed killer, the chimpanzee garners positive interest because he demonstrates a complex personality, one who can alternately be a precocious boy, a contemplative philosopher, or a raging beast. An 1888 article in *Current Literature* (published after Crowley's death) illustrates how popular culture embraced Crowley as a panoply of humanness and animality. It recounts painter James Henry Beard's difficulty in capturing the "best-known picture of Mr. Crowley," an image of the chimpanzee gazing contemplatively skyward with a copy of Darwin's *The Descent of Man* (1871) in hand and a pair of skulls, one chimpanzee and the other human, on either side of him. It's the story behind the humanizing painting that rounds out Crowley's complex character (see figure 1). He first throws a tantrum at seeing his portrait and destroys it, rails against the artist, then repents of his rage and seeks redemption. Crowley gives Beard reason to repaint him once again as a philosopher once he shows the artist gentlemanly behavior: "I shook hands with him, and he was so pleased at this sign of forgiveness that he danced a jig as evidence that there remained with him not the slightest vestige of ill-feeling" (440). Like many other newspaper and periodical accounts of Crowley's moods, his spectrum of behaviors, both beastly and civil, make him all the more fascinating to his readers.

Anthropomorphism, a standard feature of simian depictions, as we have seen, certainly contributes to Crowley's popular characterization as humanlike, but authors still firmly



[Figure 3.1.] "It is very queer, isn't it?"
James Henry Beard
Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR, 2007.179

characterize him as nonhuman, driven by propensities that are unique to his species and native continent. For instance, the author of Crowley's biography, Henry Starkey Fuller, suspects that even though the chimpanzee is often mistaken for an old man when wrapped in his shawl, Crowley's thought life is the very opposite of people for whom "the emotional drama of life have to them disappeared" and is still wild and unknown to his observers. Fuller insinuates that Crowley possesses an "untutored mind" that "responded to each vibration" because he is of "the dark continent of Africa, and all that appertains to it," where "high stages of civilization have not yet been reached" (117). While Fuller's assumption about Crowley's mental state is in itself a form of anthropomorphism, I find the author's emphasis on Crowley's foreign animality to be crucial to his audience's response. Fuller and other authors depicting the chimpanzee imagine him as an acceptable, even bemusing, amalgam of human domestication and exotic animation.

Thus, marked as both an ad hoc American citizen and an imported outsider, the Crowley of these texts is, on the one hand, granted the power of tastemaker and socialite, his celebrity serving as a vehicle for parsing which marginalized ethnicities and nationalities may be admitted as participants in the project of U.S. civilization. On the other hand, Crowley also embodies the same groups for which his apparently weighs judgment; the chimpanzee is variously identified as African and African American, Chinese, Irish, and English, and is to a lesser extent drawn in comparison to American Indians: his yell "would startle a Sioux Indian" (70), and he bangs on his cage "with his Indian Clubs" (57).

Crowley's given name, for example, combines the popular African American title character from Joel Chandler Harris's 1880 book, *Uncle Remus, His Songs and a His Sayings*, and a common Irish surname in the U.S.⁵ Likely for tongue-in-cheek comedic value but also a nod to Crowley's revered cultural status, Fuller bookends the chimpanzee's name with two honorific

titles: Mister and Esquire. The controversial import of the ape's name, as I will show, strikes at the inherent tension in Crowley's characterization: his relationship to non-Anglo identities draws them into his orbit of palatable difference but also at the expense of their humanity.

In either case, Crowley signifies disturbing prejudice as yet another figure employed to dehumanize maligned communities in the nineteenth century. However, because authors depicting Crowley accept him in his totality—his foreignness and beastliness along with his national popularity and supposed acculturation to life in New York—I argue that representations of Crowley, particularly in Fuller's biography, attempt to portray the chimpanzee as a positive embodiment of inclusive social heterogeneity. Though highly problematic and volatile, Crowley's representational value as an ambassadorial figure seems to consciously promote a more tolerant vision of the U.S.'s cultural diversity.

Yet, important to stress is that Crowley is no blithe alternative symbol for the American melting pot. This study does not intend to ignore or minimize the harmful stereotypes that Crowley's hyper-racialization perpetuates. Earlier and famous instances of simianization, the often derogatory comparison of humans with simians, include the famous image of Charles Darwin's head on the bent frame of an ape, and George McClellan's labeling Abraham Lincoln "the original gorilla" (McPherson 68). Nonetheless, a long history of simianizing nonwhite and marginalized people contributed to the systematic socioeconomic, cultural, and psychological oppression of people of color and immigrant populations in the United States. Predating but eventually emboldened by popular interpretations of Darwin's notion of common descent, entertainment and popular media collapsed the existing social hierarchy with the perceived anthropocentric hierarchy of animal taxonomy.

An earlier literary example of this social engineering through speciesism includes the

responses to Dion Boucicault's 1859 transatlantic and abolitionist play, *The Octoroon*, which portrays a fraught romance between the mixed-race title character, Zoe, and her white Southern suitor. While scholars have debated play's vastly different reception in the U.S. and London (the latter, for instance, demanded Boucicault change the original ending so that the heroine might enjoy a happy marriage rather than commit suicide), the environments in which it was performed and critical responses to it reveal the extent to which American popular culture imagined human alterity entangled in animal exoticism. At the American Museum, P. T. Barnum staged his missing link exhibit 'What is It?' during the intermission of *The Octoroon*, and a 1860 minstrel show farce further rejected Zoe's near ascendancy to elite whiteness in the *Moctoroon* by staging her as the descendant of an ape (Goodall 137). Fuller's biography connects Crowley to this long tradition of simianization in American literary and popular culture. The often unfortunate attempt at humor in Fuller's biography, especially, implicitly argues that Crowley is like or associated with cultural outliers and that immigrant and nonwhite groups, in turn, are like him. These comparisons both imply that minority populations, like Crowley, might be innocuous, curious, and even relatable spectacles in their own right but also inherently inferior to white middle-class America. The following sections illustrate how Fuller and other authors employ Crowley and other ape figures to simultaneously mock and integrate cultural outsiders.

***“Exotic exile from some Afric isle”*⁶**

Like du Chaillu and Barnum's comparisons of African natives with gorillas, as we saw in the last chapter, Fuller's Crowley relies on the same simianizing tropes of Africans that gained cultural currency with the rise of the Atlantic slave trade (Smith and Panaitiu 78). The biography's chapter, “The Home of the Chimpanzee in the Dark Continent,” dwells in these troubling stereotypes to depict Crowley's early life as the prince of a “troop” of chimpanzees led by his “despot” father, Boog-a-boo (13). Crowley's transfer to human care follows a battle

between African hunters and the chimpanzee troop, and after being stolen from his wounded mother and nurtured by an African woman, an African American minister discovers and adopts him. Fuller's choice to cast Crowley as an ape prince likely draws on and satirizes a trope popularized by Thomas Southerne's 1695 play based on Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688), which "established a particularly influential nexus of exoticism, nobility, thwarted resistance, and tragic sentiment around the figure of the enslaved African prince" (McGill 118). Meredith McGill identifies later poets' adoption of the noble slave trope, including William Cullen Bryant's "The African Chief" (1826), abolitionist poems which generally argue that slavery is incongruous with the nobility of the enslaved and with the moral principles attributed to a Christian civilization. The African noble figure often operated as a touchstone by which authors might extend sympathy for the noble African to other slaves and negotiate the legitimacy of the economic relationship between the slave and the owner.

On one level, Crowley's association with this trope works as satire that cuts in two directions: for one, in staging an ape in the role of the African chief or prince figure, Fuller yet again enforces a simianizing framework for African people, and second, he threatens to trivialize the historic import of abolitionist tropes and genres. However, on another level it ennobles the ape, signaling his worthiness of sympathy and respect. What Fuller borrows from a figure like Oroonoko is his association with an African civilization comparable that of the West. By extension, Crowley's origins constitute an ape civilization that somewhat resembles and intersects with African societies. Though tongue-in-cheek, Fuller's examples society include the chimpanzee's contributions to ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics for their "strange characters" "in the soft clay" (3). Fuller also re-contextualizes Crowley's African and simian lineage as comparable to "ancient and honorable" human family lines, "as illustrious in their day and

generation as the Plantagenets, the Bourbons and Hohenzollerns” (2-3). Fuller’s hyperbolic humor here highlights the stark differences between animalized jungle society and the U.S., but he also acknowledges chimpanzee culture as an alternative civilization that intersects with that of humans, who also have despot leaders, wars, and social organization. Other authors also draw human and ape worlds in parallel. An 1885 satirical poem in *Puck* magazine suggests that Crowley occupies a parallel existence to his human counterparts, with the exception of his captivity, which serves to separate him from humanity’s “venomed greeds / And passions” (W.E.S.F., 308, line 20). The author, identified as W.E.S.F., even imagines a Christian version of heaven shared with “dead chimpanzees” and filled “with monkey-music” (308, lines 45-46). In each of these texts, the rhetorical impact of setting human and ape societies in parallel (or as overlapping) downplays Crowley’s captive status. In Fuller’s biography, especially, Crowley’s association with the African chief or noble slave trope confers on him a noble lineage, nobility that is then added value to his new home in the U.S. Crowley represents a cross-species ambassador of chimpanzee-ness but without the connotations of enslavement. Rather than a slave, Crowley benefits from the American dream, an immigrant welcomed as “a ward of the city” (6).

In evoking but then erasing echoes of slavery from Crowley’s history, Fuller performs a slight of hand that aims to recuperate the U.S.’s past by revising its history of slavery through Mr. Crowley’s biography. Unsurprisingly, Fuller’s aggressive simianization of Africans and African Americans underlies his effort to both anthropomorphize Crowley and reimagine African Americans as the beneficiaries of a Western civilizing process. The story of Crowley’s pre-civilized life rehearses contemporary popular culture’s association of African women with sexual animality. For instance, when the American minister first sees Crowley, the ape is paired

with an African infant in the arms of an African chief's wife, who has nursed the ape at her breast; the scene's implicit joke is that the chimpanzee might believably be the offspring of an African woman. Fuller replays this (tired) joke again when the narrator heavily implies that the black minister releases Mr. Crowley from his custody because "gossips" suspected Mr. Crowley of being the minister's (or minister's wife's) illegitimate child (and therefore a missing link figure) (29). A popular trope imagined African women as ape-like and biologically capable of reproducing across the human-nonhuman species boundary, a stereotype on which du Chaillu also capitalizes in his gorilla tales (Jones 322).⁷

This simianizing stereotype of Africans results from another civilizationist trope at work in Crowley's early biography. The sequence of his shifts in custody stages a progressive evolution represented in Crowley's changing environmental and social circumstances: from jungle animal, to African child, and then to ward of an African American professional. His transport to the U.S. and eventual care at the Central Park menagerie initiates his potential to become a beloved friend of white civil society and an acculturated member of a civil society. Crowley's capture and travel to the U.S. rehearses an alternate and more humane history of the Middle Passage and African slavery in America, essentially reframing this history as an immigration story, one that promises social mobility for all, just as Crowley himself is reared as a beneficiary of state and public interest.

Like his namesake, Harris's Uncle Remus, Crowley's story shapes public memory to romanticize the South's slave system as a civilizing force, one so powerful and inclusive that it enfolds even a chimpanzee. Fuller assures his readers that Crowley's first benefactor, "the Hon. John Henry Smythe, colored Minister of the United States to Liberia," is one such beneficiary of a fantasy of social mobility, according to Fuller's observation that "numerous colored

immigrants settled here from the United States do not appear to become infatuated with their fatherland, and as soon as they have accumulated the means, find some pretext for returning to the United States” (8). The black minister proves to be a necessary conduit for Crowley’s successful tenure in the U.S., both literally and figuratively. Minister Smythe transports Crowley to the U.S., but his adoption of the chimpanzee into the African American community elides the lines between race and species so that Crowley might have a social stepping stone to his place in American civilization.

“A Full Blown Chowder Chucker”: Crowley as Irish Stereotype

In terms of Crowley’s behavioral profile, Fuller develops a strong affiliation between the ape and the fictional Irish society, the “Donnegan Full Blown Chowder Chuckers, a social and political organization of much weight in the city” (52). This pairing participates in the simianizing caricatures of Catholic Irish that appeared in British and U.S. popular media in mid to late century, including major publications like U.S. humor magazine, *Puck*, London’s *Punch*, and *Harper’s Weekly*. Martin Forker summarizes nineteenth-century depictions of Catholic Irish in popular media “as being inebriates, feral, charming, flagitious, or corrupt, but not especially ‘civilized’” (58). With unflattering portrayals of Irish society leaders, like the character Michael Donnegan, whose brogue dialect and exaggerated physicality (as “Fatty” Donnegan) identify him as uncouth, Fuller suggests that the Irish might be powerful political players in New York but that they are also in need of proper socialization, which rivals their search for respect. Donnegan and his group visit the zoo director, William Conklin, to protest what they believe to be the chimpanzee’s given name: the traditionally Irish name Michael or “Mike,” a mistake originating from Crowley’s keeper who forgets the name “Remus.”

Conklin, upon realizing the potential political fallout of calling the Chimpanzee “Mike,”

insists that “his name was Remus! Remus! Uncle Remus!” (53). Conklin’s panic reveals an implicit cultural sensitivity to the matrix of overlapping discriminatory discourses, like speciesism, racialization, and classism, weighed against marginalized groups like the Irish. From Conklin’s perspective, the chimpanzee’s given name must not cross the color line and must, for the sake of keeping the peace, maintain the ape’s less controversial affiliation with Africa and African Americans. Fuller, however, appears to ridicule the “Chowder Chuckers” for their sensitivity, noting that Donnegan “reiterated that such names as Patrick or Michael should never be applied to a heathen” but had no complaint about the Irish surname “Crowley” (57). Fuller hints that the group is more reactionary than measured in failing to address the full scope and spirit of their complaint in neglecting to protest Mr. Crowley’s Irish last name. Indeed, the underlying implication of Fuller’s depiction of the Irish suggests that this community fosters the very associations they protest, but in the case of their relationship with Mr. Crowley, the Irish both unconsciously demean and redeem themselves, as I will show.

Fuller’s 1888 biography of Crowley portrays but one effort on the part of the Irish community in New York to curb the practice of giving Central Park zoo animals Irish names. Documentary evidence from the spring of 1893, in particular, reveals heightened tensions between the Irish and the mainstream media and public opinion. According to John Ridge, a letter to the *New York Times* spurred Irish societies to protest this naming practice at the Central Park zoo (284). An April 17 article in *The New York Times* likely responds to this initial letter and praises the paper for raising the alarm about the indignity of the naming practice. Calling on Irish politicians with influence to act, the author, J. B. Murphy, laments the dire consequences of such public discrimination: “One glance at a menagerie of wild animals having familiar Irish names creates more prejudice than could whole years of reading libraries of the most anti-Irish

literature” (Murphy).

By May, the park commissioners forbade the practice of giving the animals names associated with races or nationalities (Ridge 284). Before this tidy resolution, several print sources employed ape figures to mock the Irish society’s complaint (see figure 2). A short satirical piece in an April 27 edition of *Life* magazine calls on “[a]ll truly high-minded citizens who are solicitous for the maintenance of human dignity” to support the “spirited protest of certain Irish societies of this city” and suggests its own solution: “If the hippopotamus will consent to be known as “Martha Washington,” she will be sufficiently identified, and such names as William Waldorf Astor, Pierpont Morgan, Charles Darwin [. . .] are plenty good enough for the monkeys” (266). The author aims to undercut the spirit of the complaint in suggesting the names of honored and high profile persons be given to the “exotic” animals; this rhetorical move claims that attributing human names to these species is harmless. However, the hidden barb of this suggestion is that it implicitly underscores the extent to which the Irish have been animalized in popular media, while a name like “Martha Washington” does not draw special attention because, unlike the simianized Irish in popular media, it does not inspire ridicule.

Another author in an April 29 opinion piece for *The Churchman* attributes the Irish protests to Tammany Hall, the New York City Democratic political machine known both for aiding the immigrant population and for massive corruption. Part of the piece’s critique capitalizes on stereotypes of the Irish as irrationally violent: to name a rhinoceros ‘Patrick,’ even in his own

OUTRAGEOUS.



AS we've dared to call the monkeys in the Zoo by Irish names,
Erin's sons, in wrath, declare us snobs and flunkies ;
And demand that we withdraw them—nor should we ignore their
claims—
For it's really very hard—upon the monkeys.

[Figure 3.2] "Outrageous." *Life*, 11 May 1893.

tank, or to mention a chimpanzee as ‘Mr. Crowley’ is an occasion for red paint and tomahawks, which even The New York Sun can hardly circumvent, to keep the peace” (“The Chinese” 39). Suggesting that the Irish community’s complaint spanned multiple years, the author seems to offer a retrospective on debates about Mr. Crowley’s name, who had long since died in 1888.

While Fuller perpetuates this characterization of the Irish societies as overly sensitive and even deserving of their animalized caricatures, he also plots a strategy for integrating the “Chowder Chuckers” into mainstream culture, the key, of course, being Mr. Crowley. The chimpanzee’s ability to charm each of his visitors is contingent to what the viewer values most about themselves, and despite Crowley’s animal status, his visitors’ self-reflections in the ape’s behavior appears to inspire commendation rather than insult. While the “Chowder Chuckers” initially resent sharing a common name with a “heathen,” they come to adopt the ape as one of their own (57). This shift occurs after Crowley intentionally trips Donnegan, a playful act and a power play that occasions Donnegan’s respect: “‘That monk ain’t no chump, you bet cher sweet life’” (60). The group requests that Crowley be allowed to attend society meetings (which the zoo director declines), and the “Chowder Chuckers” prove to be one of Crowley’s most frequent visitors. The Irish society members, especially Donnegan, identify an affiliation with the chimpanzee, which means they further and shape their own simianization.

An earlier satirical piece in an 1877 *Scribner’s Monthly*, titled “To a Gorilla in a Menagerie” and presumably written by Frank Wigglesworth Clarke, a lauded “Geochemist” known for his dry humor, strives for a similar effect. Clarke’s speaker addresses a caged gorilla as the missing link, telling the creature that his taxonomic standing grants him access “to a higher plane” (line 7). He couples an antiquated poetic style with echoes of the widely circulated anti-slavery medallion reading “Am I Not a Brother and a Man?”: “Rise up, O brother, and thy wrongs

redress; / Rise in thy might, and be no longer tame!" (lines 20-21). In nodding to abolitionist poetry, Clarke compares the gorilla's captivity with that of antebellum slaves, a move that aims to create an equivalence between the two and therefore relegate Africans to a lower taxonomic tier. But the gorilla becomes a "horrid monster" upon revealing that he is an Irish man dressed in a gorilla skin, who clarifies that "'I'm hired by the wake to wear the thirty cray- / thur's skin; / I come from Tipperary, and me name is Micky / Flynn" (29-32). This revelation interrupts the speaker's expression of cross-species sympathy and hints that the speaker will have to revise anew his conclusions about the species hierarchy: Micky Flynn, it seems, has brought about his own degradation in wearing another creature's skin and in duping the public. And though Flynn vies for his own respectable place in this social and evolutionary hierarchy in attempting to distance himself from the gorilla's "dirty" skin, his unfortunate career would seem to exclude him from the respect that the speaker intended to confer on the gorilla.

While Fuller's depiction of the "Chowder Chuckers" is undeniably discriminatory, the Irish society's adoption of Crowley as a friend and mascot works toward a different end than Flynn's self-simianization. Crowley serves as a uniting figure who embodies and acculturates a wide range of markers of diversity because he represents foreign wildness made suitable for the American public. As the emblem of a civilizing project, Crowley's cultural status holds the "Chowder Chuckers" in the same orbit as his other visitors, which include former President Ulysses S. Grant, P.T. Barnum, and animal rights advocate Henry Bergh. Fuller assures his reader that Crowley drew the interest of "clergymen, physicians, actors, editors, and men eminent in all ranks and pursuits, amongst his visitors" (109). Set among these groups, the Irish society's association with Crowley has the effect of striking a balance between Irish acculturation and tolerance of Irish difference; Crowley both pacifies to some extent the violent

and barbaric characteristics associated with the Irish and naturalizes Irish alterity into Anglo-American middle class culture by force of his relatively normalizing alterity. For Chinese immigrants, however, Crowley's representational value is far more ambiguous, suggesting the potential limits of the chimpanzee's influence by association.

“A Chinese Infant, stained and disguised”

In the biography, Fuller attests that upon having landed in New York from his voyage in Africa an infant Crowley is mistaken by Custom House officials for a Chinese baby in blackface. Fuller clarifies the reason for the officials' error: “There was a stringent law prohibiting the landing of the Chinese, and some question arose as to whether or not this might be a Chinese infant, stained and disguised to evade the statute” (23). Referencing the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the first federal legislative act to bar immigrants “solely on the basis of race or nationality” that would be renewed until 1904, the author draws Crowley into a physiognomical comparison with the Chinese (Gyory 1). The agents also try to restrict Crowley's entry based on the Alien Contract Labor Laws of 1885 and 1887, “[a]nother statute, equally as stringent as that relating to Chinese, [that] forbids the landing of pauper emigrants or of imported foreign labor” (Fuller 24). This latter statute was intimately tied to the Chinese Exclusion Act, as the Chinese were often associated with working fixed term contracts for companies in the U.S., leading to the belief that an influx of Chinese immigrants was choking the native workforce. This scene—in which Crowley nearly succumbs to the enforcement of these laws—and one of the illustrations in the biography, as I will show, avoids interpretation and reveals authorial choices that threaten to undercut Fuller's vision of a multicultural society united by shared interest.

Because Fuller's cagey tone teeters between humor and somewhat serious commentary, he invites his reader to project their own beliefs and politics against the commonplace stereotypes

and platitudes he references, to judge for themselves when or whether he is in earnest. One such scene might be a satirical estimation of the U.S.'s benevolence on a global scale or honest praise of the nation as a generous safe harbor; in anticipation of Crowley's arrival in New York, Fuller describes what Crowley might have seen from the deck of his ship: "Outward bound vessels passed them, bursting with the rich products of America that were to feed the Old World. Massive, stately steamers like their own were gliding to their piers, their lower decks freighted with the peoples of foreign climes, who, like the chimpanzee, were coming to find new homes in the land of the free" (23). On the surface, Fuller appears to advance a national ethos that welcomes foreigners, but directly following this image of the U.S. as prosperous in its goodwill is the scene of Crowley's difficulties with the Custom House officials. This juxtaposition would appear to question the U.S. as a beacon of hope for immigrants and hints that Fuller might sympathize with the plight of the Chinese and other immigrants rejected on the basis of racial and cultural difference.

However, Fuller does not overtly pull the Chinese into Crowley's naturalizing orbit, as he does for African Americans and the Irish. The biography does not feature any Chinese characters, only likenesses: the complicated racial and species crossing indicated in the comparison with Crowley's infant face; and an illustration of Crowley as a "Chowder Chucker" beating a doll with Asian features and traditional Chinese dress with a club (see figure 3). As the 1882 law dictates, the Chinese are effectively excluded from the text. The violence of the illustration, in particular, likely intends to be humorous, but it evokes uncertainty about what Crowley means to the public: is Crowley's apparent allegiance to the "Chowder Chuckers" a kind of celebration of symbolic violence against Chinese immigrants? Is Crowley anthropomorphized as a tastemaker, whose behavior may be interpreted as judgment for the

inclusion or exclusion of certain groups? Or does the image reference the unjust mistreatment of the Chinese by the Irish, who are in turn stereotyped as brutes? By and large, historians cite the New York Irish community's consistent denigration of Chinese immigrants and its leadership in the anti-Chinese movement in the 1880s (McCarron 199).⁸ Fuller's apparent ambivalence about Chinese immigrants and Crowley's relationship to them, exposes the fault lines of Fuller's implicit project to imagine cultural amalgamation through the animal's celebrity.

The author's reliance on common racial and nationality stereotypes, in particular, ultimately implodes; overloading Crowley with a multiplicity of these human markers of difference makes him more a dumping ground for discriminatory comparisons than a uniting symbol. In the illustration "A Full Blown Chowder Chucker," for example, Crowley's apparent mimicry of the Irish doubles back to caricaturize the group as brutal reactionaries. Crowley's "Chowder Chucker" costume, a top hat and club, insinuates that rather than sharing an identity with the Irish, Crowley performs and mocks them even while lending his own foreign and wild animality to their characterization. In the case of the customs official suspecting Crowley of being Chinese but "stained" creates an image of layered racial and species mixture in which he is at once simian, Chinese, and African. Crowley's symbolic embodiment of these groups too easily elides and arrests them in his image as a foreign animal, and as a result, Fuller's subtle argument for tolerance of difference is overshadowed by the largely derisive spectacle he creates. Crowley himself—the actual animal and his experience—all but disappears into his value as a symbol and source of entertainment.



A FULL BLOWN CHOWDER CHUCKER.

[Figure 3.3] “A Full Blown Chowder Chucker.”
Mr. Crowley of Central Park, 1888.

Nonetheless, worth consideration is the biography’s reimagining of racial, class, and species plurality in America. In striving to establish Crowley as both a citizen and a foreigner, he employs Crowley as a metaphor of the “missing link”; however, instead of representing a literal biological bond that connects and ranks various races and nationalities in a civilizing hierarchy,

Crowley personifies difference that at once defies categorization and encourages the flourishing of a heterogeneous nation.

The Soul Selects a Cross-Species Society

Mary Wilkins Freeman also identifies the difficulty of interpreting or even accepting a reality in which human and animal societies are not only intertwined but also beholden to each other. The six leading tales of her 1901 collection of short stories, *Understudies*, feature primarily native or domesticated animals (the second half comprises six botanically themed stories) that stage, as Shirley Marchalonis accurately observes, “parallel worlds” between animals and humans “that cannot come together but between which, in spite of their separateness, there is a connection” (96). But for Freeman, this separateness need not enforce a speciesist hierarchy. While the title of the collection does suggest an unequal power dynamic, a dichotomy between an original and its double, it remains ambiguous whether the animal or human holds the status of understudy. Observing the title’s reference to theater, Susan Griffin asks, “who are the understudies and who are the leads—animals or humans?” (511).

The story, “The Monkey,” particularly dwells on this relational ambiguity through the figure of the titular animal, but in doing so, Freeman suggests the possibility of an alternative coexistence between humans and animals that does not rely on a dichotomy between human civilization and animal beastliness. For this story, Marchalonis identifies it as a “chilling tale” of a monkey and a boy who share a connection because of their “caged” circumstances, the first being literally caged and the latter figuratively “caged by the limitations of poverty and ignorance” (96). Rather than simply a “chilling” tale of misfortune, the story proposes a potentially radical vision of civilizational progress enabled by the Monkey and Boy’s affinity for

one another, both in terms of mutual affection and physical resemblance.⁹ Through the human-ape mirror, Freeman offers a glimpse of an integrated human-animal society that emphasizes shared characteristics rather than categorical differences and loving regard for fellow creatures, even to the extent of bending the human to experience the life the animal. A possible happy result of a society centered on cross-species affinities, Freeman suggests, is the redefinition of success in terms of fellow feeling rather than individualism and personal achievement.

“The Monkey” is a story of a Boy coming into possession of his only friend, a pet shop monkey, and the alternate world the two seem to share together. The central question of the story, then, is how to define this cross-species relationship and what the consequences of such definition might be. The narrator, for instance, frames this story through the perspective of the Bird-Fancier, or pet shop owner, who claims to have eliminated any confusion about human and animal relationships (“‘It’s simple enough when you know’”) (22). Weighing in on evolutionary theory’s controversial ideas about the origins of humankind, which he appears to construe—as popular science discourses often did—as a relatively direct link between humankind and primates, the Bird-Fancier flips the direction of evolution, claiming that non-human species “ain’t the beginning, as I have heard some say they believed, but they are the end” (22-23). He bases his conclusions on observations of the animals and customers in his pet shop to concoct his own pseudoscientific and religious theory, one that merges elements of degenerative evolution and reincarnation: humans, like plant species, “run out” (“how pansies run out, till they get back to violets”) when they lead “no-account lives,” their souls entering animal bodies repeatedly until “they finally die out, and all the animal races do” (22-23).

While the Bird-Fancier’s theory envisions a direct biological and spiritual tie between human and animal subjects, it also complicates the moral competency of his worldview and his trade in

pets, given that his livelihood depends on selling the reincarnations of what he deems to be lesser human souls. Freeman does not explicitly address or play out the potential sociopolitical consequences of the Bird-Fancier's theory in practice, namely the reinforcement of social inequality but along the species line. The theory invites ambivalence toward human and animal difference, proposing a kind of determinism that dehumanizes and then excludes those deemed unfit or antithetical to civilizational progress. While the Bird-Fancier does not actively promote these contemporary ideas per se, his outlook reflects a general tendency to concoct and proliferate potentially dangerous scientific, cultural, and religious narratives about human and animal nature but without much nuance or self-awareness.

To this point, the narrator of "The Monkey" circumscribes the Bird-Fancier's perspective so that the reader might independently review and judge the Bird-Fancier's evidence, the Bird-Fancier himself, and the environment that shapes him. The reader, then, observes the owner as he studies his primary subjects: the titular character, an unspecified simian species for sale in the pet shop, and a "saturnine" boy "with a face not unlike the Monkey's own" whose only companion is the monkey he visits in the shop (25). The boy's simple-mindedness, the narrator tells us, and his affection for and apparent resemblance to the monkey convince the Bird-Fancier that the boy and his beloved monkey prove his theory of degenerating reincarnation, with the Monkey having "run out" and the Boy well on his way to "running out," too (27).

But the narrator offers different evidence to suggest that the pet shop owner's vision of degeneration is itself a potential pathway to moral turpitude because of its myopic fatalism. For one, the narrator points to a visual correspondence between the Bird-Fancier and the Monkey that suggests that the Bird-Fancier may be blind to evidence that he, too, would be "running out" according to his theory. His hypocrisy demonstrates how easily this pessimistic determinism gets

out of control. Outward behavioral signs point to the old man and the monkey's resemblance. For instance, an Orientalizing description of the monkey as an "Eastern sage" often lost in meditative thought "with that long wrinkle of thought over his closed eyes" immediately precedes a description of the Bird-Fancier as "something of a thinker" (21). The two are joined by their apparent penchant for reverie, neither one intentionally mimicking the other but rather companion thinkers alongside one another. Further drawing the Bird-Fancier into comparison with the Monkey, the narrator notes that, like the simian, the Bird-Fancier dwells in relative isolation, that he "had no more audience than if he had been himself an inhabitant of some distant jungle, and removed by force to a cage of civilization" (22). The narrator characterizes the Bird-Fancier and his theorizing as wild and foreign and seemingly irrelevant to the civilizing forces that sequester him, much like the Monkey who usually remains unseen at the back of the store.

Yet, the Bird-Fancier fails to see in the Monkey a mirror image of his own captivity, a revealing image that might school him in empathy and reverse his penchant for diagnosing the fate of "no-account lives." Instead, the pet-shop owner operates according to civilizational norms, and even his wild ideas concerning the divide between successful people and "no-accounts" sets up a kind of civilized-barbaric dichotomy. Such norms are exemplified in the owner's emphasis on the value of economic relationships, as he regards the creatures in the shop "simply from a philosophical and financial point of view" (24). The Bird-Fancier's civilized environment centers on economic success and marginalizes interpersonal relationships. In context, the phrase "cage of civilization" seems to signify a combination of hyper individualism and banality that squelches communal bonds.

With the exception of the Boy and the Monkey, the humans and animals of the pet shop

keep their own society. For instance, the Bird-Fancier's wife and cousin never give him audience and keep a taciturn focus on the maintenance of the shop. Their one-dimensional interest in their commercial enterprise ranks them, according to the narrator, "on a higher range of stupidity than the animals" (24). Here the narrator articulates her own system of species categorization, one based on standards of emotional intelligence and general decency. The narrator's attention to moral character provides an alternative to other stereotypical hierarchies that appear in the story, such as adult wisdom over childhood indolence; economic stability versus poverty; and, of course, superiority of the (thriving) human over the "exotic" animal (or "run out" human).¹⁰ The boy, too, appears stunted by traditional measures of "civilized" success; he belongs to an economically challenged family, does not excel in school or sports, and, other than the monkey, has no friends. If the Bird-Fancier's theory proved true, all the pet-shop characters face extinction; they all appear to be "running out."

Freeman does not directly discredit the Bird-Fancier's hypothesis, and she also participates in civilizationist language, as several quotes above attest, in imagining a stark contrast between civilization and the jungle. Perhaps the most tragic figure of the story, the monkey, most clearly evokes this dichotomous rhetoric as a transplanted "exotic." "[C]hoking for liberty," the creature suffers from "[t]he deadly monotony of his life" "to the point of madness" (29). The narrator confirms the creature's biological, geographical, and psychological alienation from his native habitat when interpreting the monkey's occasional cry as evidence of his displacement: "It had a strange, far-off quality, perhaps from its natural assimilation with such widely different scenes. Of a right it belonged to the night chorus of a tropical jungle, and was a stray note from it, as out of place as anything could well be in this nearness to commonplaceness and civilization" (20). For a story dominated by the Bird-Fancier's observations, the story's climax centers on the

Monkey's experience during his one night of escape from his cage and subsequent terrorizing of the other shop pets. Described in triumphant terms, the escapee becomes "a vibration of liberty" and "a little spark of liberty let loose to work its own will" (30). Like a force of nature (as a "spark" and "vibration"), the Monkey exceeds the artificial boundaries imposed on him by the Bird-Fancier or the "cage of civilization," more generally. Freeman does not deny the Monkey's difference and displacement, but in so doing, she acknowledges the creature's "right" to "liberty" in his homeland.

The Monkey's caging, then, points to its unnatural and unjust transplantation, a commercial practice sustained by the whims of pet-culture in America. By mid-century, captive monkeys and "exotic" pets had become commonplace, particularly in urban centers. In *Pets in America*, Katherine Grier identifies major port cities, including Salem, Massachusetts and Charleston, South Carolina, as the entry points for many non-native species, especially birds and monkeys, brought by seamen for sale, gifting, or personal pet keeping (45). Grier cites Lucy Larcom's memoir, *A New England Girlhood* for evidence of the monkey's routine incursion into even the most private domestic spaces; published in 1889, the text looks back to the 1820s and 1830s when "many living reminders of strange lands across the sea" abounded in the author's birthplace, a town near Salem harbor: "Now and then somebody's pet monkey would escape along the stone wall and shed-roofs, and try to hide from his boy-persecutors by dodging behind a chimney, or by slipping through an open scuttle, to the terror and delight of juveniles whose premises he invaded" (Larcom 96). Hawthorne's organ-grinder monkey in *The House of the Seven Gables*, among other texts, also attests to the seemingly anomalous but sustained presence of captive monkeys in the American imagination.

Perhaps because the practice of business of selling and keeping "exotic" animals appears

deeply engrained in American culture, Freeman may acknowledge the caging as a detriment to the Monkey's wellbeing, but she also appears to accept these conditions as immutable fact. The cage remains an important tool, especially in the case of the Boy, for fostering a more equitable relationship with the animal. Of course, the physics of caging inherently sets up an uneven power dynamic between the observed captive and the observer, but it also affords opportunities for communication and connection. When the Monkey finally comes into the Boy's possession, the Boy totes him home in a birdcage, communicating per their custom with "silent mouthing" (26).

Freeman's approach to animal and human difference quietly suggests potential for a new kind of human-animal companionship and society. For one, she redirects the reader's attention to stress the quality (i.e. relational, psychological, and personal), rather than kind or cause (biological and economic), of cross-species interrelations in the U.S. The Boy and Monkey's mutual affection might, on the one hand, be the case study for the Bird-Fancier's theory of degeneration, but it also represents a kind of contact zone, to use and expand on Mary Louise Pratt's term, that allows for an alternative coexistence between humans and animals that does not rely on a dichotomy between civilization and the jungle or degeneration and progress. Instead, the Boy and the Monkey's example promotes fellow feeling and an emphasis on the present, rather than the future of the species or the progress of civilization. The most striking example of this interaction is the Boy and Monkey's apparent communication or "silent mouthing," wherein the two huddle together to commune without spoken language (26). Susan Griffin reads this interaction as an ambiguous exercise in mimicry, as it remains unclear who mimics who, but she posits that "in this mirroring, it is the monkey, not the human, who is aped: the Boy doubles over to the Monkey's level" (515). According to this logic, the Boy simply replicates the Monkey's behavior (or what he presumes monkeys do) to become like the animal. Indeed, at the end of the

story, the Bird-Fancier, observing the Boy crouched and mouthing over the monkey as he carries the creature away in a bird cage, remarks, “There goes one monkey carrying another” (35).

Griffin argues that this final image through the Bird-Fancier’s perspective suggests the impossibility of seeing more than the play of imitation that entraps them; the Monkey especially “seems locked into a life of aping” the Boy’s mimicry of himself (515).

However, what Griffin does not consider is that, despite the redundancy and limitations of the Boy and Monkey’s silent exchange, the narrator leaves open the possibility that the two do actually communicate. They certainly commune with one another, which the narrator emphasizes through an emphasis on their mutual possession of one another. For the Monkey’s part, he repeatedly desires to clutch at the other pets in the shop and at his image in the mirror the Boy holds up for him. Reaching from the opposite side of the mirror, the Boy—who would appear as a monkey himself to his simian friend—takes “the little outreaching hands” in order “to satisfy the Monkey to a certain extent” (27). The Boy becomes the Monkey’s double in a mirror image that emphasizes their similarities. Possession for the Boy manifests in his acquisition of the Monkey after the Bird-Fancier—who deems the creature’s destructive escapes too costly—relinquishes the Monkey as his commodity. Just like the Monkey’s joy of grasping things through the bars, the Boy experiences “for the first time in his life the ecstasy of possession,” an exhilaration of happiness that lifts the “fog” of his saturninity so that he could “see truths clearly” (35). Possessing the Monkey amounts to an epiphany, for he “had never fairly known that he was alive until he had come into the ownership of this tiny life of love” (35). While the monkey has little choice about his participation in this “life of love,” as he is transferred from one cage to another, the story hints that he and the Boy create in one another their own loving community, locked into one another’s orbit outside civilization’s demands for success and

progress (i.e. commercial gain, scholastic excellence, intellectual certitude, didacticism). Not only does the pair disprove the Bird-Fancier's case studies for a theory on degeneration, they are the very opposite of "running out." The Monkey's powerful vitality as a caged "spark" imparts a similar verve to the otherwise saturnine Boy, and in turn, the Boy provides comfort and a form of expression (through the "mouthing") to the fitful Monkey.

Thus, Freeman's choice of possession metaphors borrow but subvert the kind of commercial, capitalist ideas of human progress and degeneration by which the Bird-Fancier abides. The monkey becomes more than a pet and the boy more than an owner; their companionship suggests a possible renaissance in a culture of affection between the wild, foreign animal and the human, a relationship that upends distinctions between civilization and the wilderness. Unfortunately, the Monkey does not by "right" return to the jungle; instead, the story suggests that a "life of love" with the Boy allows him a kind of freedom from behind bars.

None of the texts examined here completely satisfy an inherent paradox of primate captivity: can they acculturate, becoming alternative members in pluralistic society, or can they only ever be spectacles of difference? For that matter, authors' approaches to simian representations vary widely, some self-aware of the civilizationist and species discourses in which they inevitably participate, while others inadvertently stumble upon questions about the social purpose, place, and treatment of these animals in postbellum America. Still others reduce the simian to simplistic terms without regard for the ethical imperatives that animal captivity and even animal representation inhere. What these texts do have in common is the fact that they all—to some extent—return to the fundamental question of what constitutes human nature and a civil society. In peering at the represented monkey or ape through the cage, the public encounters its own

reflection but with its animality, both human and nonhuman, emphasized.

ENDNOTES

¹ The quoted text in the title appears in the article titled “A Sketch in the Monkeyhouse,” which appeared in the August 12, 1871 *Harper’s Bazaar*.

² Founded in 1846, the Smithsonian Institution eventually added a menagerie to its collections in 1887 as a reference resource for taxidermists. Vernon Kisling, Jr. notes that this menagerie expanded and gained popularity during its first year, which convinced members of Congress to create a zoological park in Washington (120).

³ What is known as the “elephant wars” began when elephants became commonplace in menageries and circus shows. Starting in the 1870s, showmen—notably P.T. Barnum and Adam Forepaugh—rivalled one another to generate public interest in aiming to parade the most elephants in a single show. The circus owners next vied to exhibit the biggest elephant after Barnum purchased Jumbo the elephant from the London Zoo in 1882. By the mid-1880s, showmen competed to exhibit an all white elephant (Flint 103).

⁴ Biographical information for the author of Mr. Crowley’s biography, Henry Stark Fuller, remains scant. As a result, I am unable to trace the nature of Fuller’s connection to the chimpanzee, nor am I able to account for the factuality of the details Fuller gives about Mr. Crowley.

⁵ *A Dictionary of English and Welsh Surnames: With Special American Instances* notes that while the name Crowley can refer to inhabitants of a so-called township in Chester, England, “it is clear that the vast majority of the American Crowleys are of Irish descent” (221).

⁶ The subheading is taken from the first line of an 1885 poem, “To Mr. Crowley: The Little Chimpanzee in Central Park,” published in *Puck* magazine and signed with the initials W. E. S. F.

⁷ Jeannette Eileen Jones identifies the association of bestiality with African women as an extension of popular and scientific discourses that “configured ‘Negroes’ closest to the simian in form and intellect” (322). This association imagined “the female African body as the producer of ‘the missing link’—a half-man, half-beast creature that would reveal the key to the descent of man” (332).

⁸ Lew-Williams contends that contemporary accounts of anti-Chinese sentiment among the Irish were overblown, and she calls for a more nuanced account of Irish-Americans’ participation in the anti-Chinese movement, citing that their participation may not have been racially motivated (308n66). However, most scholars cite multiple Irish-American institutions that opposed the Chinese on racial grounds in addition to labor competition (McCarron 199).

⁹ I maintain Freeman’s capitalization of the names “the Monkey,” “the Boy,” and “the Bird-Fancier,” as her choice nods to several possible meanings. For one, the capitalization may allude to the theatrical connotations in the collection’s title, *Understudies*, with the characters recognized as the capitalized names for parts in a play. Another possibility is the potential allegorical function of the characters.

¹⁰ I emphasize the “exotic” animal because the monkey figure in particular, unlike the other imported species in the pet shop (i.e. canaries, parrots, and Angora cats), receives an Orientalist treatment that seems relevant to the monkey’s depiction as a displaced creature of the jungle. For instance, the monkey is compared to both a pharaoh and an “Eastern sage” (21). The birds and cats, by contrast, are identified as mainstream domestic pets, while the monkey is an unlikely human companion, largely unseen at the back of the store except for the boy’s frequent attention.

EPILOGUE

The final image of Freeman's "The Monkey"—the Boy mouthing with the caged Monkey—all but galls an otherwise happy ending. Perhaps because the story's ending edges out the perspective of the Monkey, focusing exclusively on the Boy's newfound joy and the Bird-Fancier's feeling that his theory has been proved, the scene casts some doubt on the long-term success of the Boy and Monkey's cohabitation, which relies on the Monkey's continued captivity. Freeman assures her readers that the creature desires his freedom and the jungle, hence his ecstatic moment of escape and destruction in the pet shop. If Freeman tests a hopeful and alternative vision of civilized society through affective bonds with "exotic" creatures, she also suspects that this vision yet relies on the nonhuman animal's exploitation or forced complicity. Having escaped before, Freeman leaves the reader with little doubt the Monkey will escape again, but what then? Where will the Monkey find succor and belonging, and what of the Boy's fate, which seems dependent on his cross-species friendship? The success of the whole scenario hangs by a thread.

A repeated theme this project traces are the possibilities "exotic" animal representations create for new ways of conceiving and shaping the idea of a modern civilization. "Exotics" connect the native with the global and allow Anglo-Americans to imaginatively cross geographical, racial, and species boundaries and to fulfill desires associated with foreign alterity. But as each chapter attests, the texts also reflect an underlying problem with figuratively hitching foreign animals to ideals of modernity. Set in contrast to the animals' own social cultures, human

superstructures that sell, show, represent, and consume these animals are underwritten with chaos and violence. This is apparent in physical and discursive violence against the animals themselves (through capture, displacement and confinement in addition to ill treatment and mass commodification) and in ideological violence against people deemed incompatible with Anglo-American civilizationist thinking through the racialization of certain species.

The texts examined in this study offer a number of perspectives on the apparent ruse of civilized social order. In these literary contexts, the hunt and captivity of “exotic” animals expose deep insecurities about what it means to be a human animal in an ontological sense but also a social one: how should Anglo-America approach a global, diverse community, especially one in its very midst? While mass consumption of these creatures in live spectacles, zoos, or literature often sought to visually and intellectually organize the natural world and human society to envision coherent values, identities, and power structures, the circumstances of consuming “exotic” species reveals a volatile social system with competing desires for both science and sensationalism, knowledge and mystery, humaneness and cruelty.

In this final section, I consider the most literal insecurities of civilizationist social structures: wild animal escapes. Both real and false reports of loose “exotic” animals were a frequent reminder to nineteenth-century readers that anthropomorphized foreign animality could suddenly shift from familiar friend or educational amusement to a danger to civil order. Like Poe’s orangutan from “Murders in the Rue Morgue,” the creatures’ wild foreignness poses a latent threat to human citizens, even the promise of a grizzly demise as exotic as the animals themselves. However, civilization’s vulnerability to foreign animality ultimately reveals its own very human failures, whether it be inappropriate management, faulty caging mechanisms, hunting accidents, or even the ethics of the entire enterprise of animal capture and exhibition.

To meditate further on the meta-discursive effect that “exotic” animal escapes allow, I pair two texts that bookend the timeframe of this study: Nathaniel Hawthorne’s mid-century novel *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) and Rebecca Harding Davis’s late-century short story “How Jack went Tiger Hunting” (1871). Each text approximates the human experience of an animal rampage for readers, but rather than stage the reversal of power that animal escapes portend—usually a dramatic change from human domination over nonhuman animals to becoming their potential prey—the authors find human desires (especially that of leisure and entertainment) to blame, rather than the creatures whelmed into human social systems.

Hawthorne and Davis redirect fear of the foreign animal’s potential anarchy to reflect back on the wiliness of American consumer culture. With each author associating consumer mania with children, especially boys, the texts point to a capitalist legacy that is both constitutive of American civilization and its threat. Reading the antebellum novel and postbellum short story together suggests temporal continuity in the “exotic” animal’s iconicity as a popular but ethically disconcerting commodity. Though each text reflects the concerns of a particular issue in American popular culture—Hawthorne observes the young republic’s response to entering an increasingly global marketplace, and Davis considers the psychological consequences for children who consume sensational media—their attention to foreign animality may help us understand our own contemporary practices in commodifying exoticized animals. Before I begin these readings, I sketch a portrait of nineteenth-century media responses to “exotic” animal escapes and disasters that still influence an American imaginary of the rampant wild animal.

Great Animal Escapes

In the summer of 2009, I returned to my parents' home in northeast Georgia to reports of lion sightings on the roads north of their house. Each day for about a week, the *Dahlonega Nugget* printed new eyewitness accounts of a big cat. One person spied an enormous feline crouched in her flowerbeds and fled into the house; another day a woman found her horse dead with evidence that a predator had recently fed upon it. While some suggested a rare native species, like a mountain lion, might provide an explanation, witnesses insisted they had seen an African lion, to the extent that local authorities asked a nearby animal rescue to account for its big cat population. None were missing. Eventually the stories fell out of the news cycle, and the community assumed the creature, whatever it was, had either fled further into the wilderness or died of starvation. Whether or not a lion truly menaced this rural community, the series of reports generally suggest some latent doubt in the mechanisms that safely separate humanity from beasts, the possibility that the "exotic" animal company we keep might find freedom and hunt back. Additionally, the story's emphasis on the presence of an escaped "exotic" animal, rather than a native species, like a bobcat, appears to inherit the sensational interest in the escaped foreign animal from nineteenth-century reportage, both fabricated and true.

Newspaper stories from the period hint at an abiding fascination with the potential subversive power of wild animals that either escaped or suffered disastrous conditions of their captivity. For example, Susan Nance points to Americans' intense interest in the elephant "rampage" at the turn of the century, which was either misapplied to elephants who ambled away from their keepers on an innocent adventure or referenced female elephants who did protest the conditions of her confinement with violence and/or escape (177). Nance emphasizes the power

of the rampaging elephant to upend a circus, an enterprise that “represented the height of human organization and efficiency, backed up by modern technology and managerial expertise” (177).

Mark Feldman understands Americans’ interest in animal escapes as part of a narrative of animal wildness set in contrast to but also an important component of human civilization. The mechanics of caging, Feldman suggests, visualized this dichotomous relationship between the wild and “civilized,” and the perceived triumph of animal captivity “presented the animal as an exhibit of and testament to civilization and progress” (164). Yet Feldman also cites inevitable failures to contain wild animals—either real or fictional—as “essential and enlivening” events that also constructed the animal as wild and in contention with “an architectural apparatus always trying to contain animals” (165).

Evidence from the historical record certainly attests to this “enlivening” effect. “Exotic” animal escapes were fairly commonplace, as were dramatic incidents of animal suffering, and sensational news about them abounded (Feldman 165). Many such stories as that printed in a December 1867 issue of the *Philadelphia Enquirer*, titled “Terrific Contest of Wild Beasts. Bears, Tigers, &c., Liberated by a Railway Accident,” detailed the chaos that ensued when systems of order involving wild animals failed. In this case, the railroad derailment of cars holding the property of the Barnum & Van Amburgh Museum and Menagerie Company between Montgomery and Mobile, Alabama precipitated a spectacle of fighting between predators.

In another case, few animals escaped the burning of Barnum’s American Museum in New York in 1865 (one of the museum’s many devastating conflagrations). Readers of the *Dallas Herald* learned from an eyewitness account of the creatures’ intense stress and suffering during the event. Among the many ghastly scenes, the beluga whale, or “the great white whale, which has created such a furore in our sight-seeing midst for the past few weeks” becomes a

point of interest in death. The witness reports that the creature is “almost boiled” before its tank bursts, the whale finally perishes, and “a stream of spermaceti ran from his carcass down the sides of the building, taking fire and making impromptu candles on a colossal scale” (1). The author who frames the witness’s tale assures readers that it is one of many “detailed accounts” that “contain much that is both interesting and amusing” (*DH* 1). These lurid scenarios of chaos and suffering in both the Philadelphia and Dallas newspaper stories clearly expect to enthrall the public imagination.

While the spectacle of such animal-related escapes and disasters played out a popular story—that of American civilization’s contentious domination of the global natural world—I also agree with Nance that the disasters accompanying “exotic” animal escapes provided some evidence of dangerously volatile architectures of American modernity. From the animals’ untamable agency to railway accidents and city fires, the causes of animal escape reflected the fallibility of modern infrastructures. A latent fear of “exotic” animal anarchy found expression in a leading story of the *New York Herald* on November 9, 1874. Titled “A Shocking Sabbath Carnival of Death,” it reported the deadly rampage of a rhinoceros at the Central Park Zoo that led to the escape of several predatory animals that at the time of publication had killed 49 people and injured about 200 others. A panther was seen “gnawing horribly” on a man’s head; the “African lioness, after saturating herself in the blood of eighteen victims” was killed by Swedish hunters; and a tiger gained passage and sowed destruction on a ferryboat. In addition to numerous examples of carnage, the story included a proclamation from the Mayor advising citizens to stay in their homes “until the wild animals now at large are captured or killed.”

Many readers of the story failed to recognize that it was a hoax. Many had not read to the end where a disclaimer in small print admitted that it was “a pure fabrication,” that “[n]ot a

single act or incident described has taken place.” Assuming the story to be true, some followed the mayor’s “proclamation” and waited indoors until the mayhem was contained, others flocked to the piers to escape the city by boat, and a smaller number took up arms to confront rampaging beasts (Sides 17). The complete—if brief—dissolution of civilized order was believable, and “exotic” animals proved to be sources of powerful difference that were not simply entertaining, educational, or anthropomorphized. These animals’ displacement in the U.S., whether as captives or fugitives, to some degree highlighted a civilization underwritten by architectural and psychological instability. Their presence might move American audiences to consider their own constructed animality and what it means to be human when the species boundaries fall away.

From Cannibals to Cowards, Hawthorne and Davis’s Crumbling Civil Infrastructures

Hawthorne’s *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) admits a near obsession with animality and is most apparent in the narrator’s exuberant penchant for symbolism. For instance, the novel’s aristocratic Puritan family, the Pyncheon’s, is literally visualized as “crack-brained” ancestral hens that perform as simulacrum of the family’s degeneration. Hawthorne also uses animal metaphors to establish a moral hierarchy of the House of the Seven Gables’ male characters (by contrast, the female innocents—Alice and Phoebe Pyncheon—exhibit delicate floral aspects that compliment their moral profiles). Occupying the lowest order of this schema is Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon, the modern moral equivalent of the family’s great patriarch, Colonel Pyncheon, who “had fallen into certain transgressions to which men of his great animal development ... must continue liable” (88). Jaffrey himself presents as a low creature driven by gluttonous appetites; at “dinner-hour” he transforms from “a great animal” to a “great beast”

(194). Yet their problematic beastliness appears to be the worst of human animal nature rather than a metaphorical reference to nonhuman animals.

The Colonel and the Judge's abuses of power (i.e. the feud with the Maule family and their corruption and grasping for indigenous lands) mire them in the politics of the local. Hawthorne envisions these villains and their Puritan legacy replaced and invigorated by a generation inflected with global movements of people, products, and animals. For the elderly Pyncheon siblings, Hepzibah and Clifford, their entries into "the surging stream of human sympathies" from lives of social seclusion are also associated with animality, ones that reflect their slow adaption to what appears to be a new and thriving social order. Hepzibah opens a cent-shop and sells gingerbreads in various shapes, the most common being exoticized creatures. Clifford's initiation to the "surging stream" he views outside his window begins with his fitful response to the ugliness he finds in an organ grinder's monkey sitting under the Pyncheon elm. These foreign animal figures, among others (i.e. an illustrated lion peers from the map of Maine territory the Pyncheon's had hoped to claim), seem at first to contribute to a positive acceleration and circulation of both imagined and actual global commodities in and out of the Pyncheon house, movement that might contribute to what the narrator calls "the great system of human progress" (87).

As a pre-Darwinian notion of human ascension up a ladder to human civilization, "with every ascending footstep, as it diminishes the necessity for animal force," the narrator's "system" suggests the subversion of the socioeconomic hierarchy dominated by Judge Pyncheon, who "could endure a century or two of such refinement, as well as most other men" (87). The narrator's civilizationist language cites a thriving global economy as key to ending aristocratic insularity and encouraging "human progress," but upon more careful examination of the text's

exoticized animal figures, it becomes apparent that Hawthorne casts doubt on this thesis. Objectified and commodified, “exotic” animality may be part of kinetic circulations and exchanges between the house and the world outside, but this movement is founded less on a “great system” than on an erratic and exploitative commodity culture that has long been in place.

Indeed, the narrator’s perusal of the Pyncheon house finds it permeated with signs of global influx and influence from its beginnings, such as the lion represented in the old map of Maine, one so old that the lion’s very presence there admits “the natural history of the region [was] as little known as its geography, which was put down most fantastically awry” (26). The inclusion of the lion exemplifies the curious exaggerations of seventeenth and early eighteenth-century colonial settlers in the New World who sometimes misinterpreted sightings of North American wildcats for the African big cat. Thus, the aged illustration also undercuts the narrator’s association of “exotic” animal figures with modern vitality that appear elsewhere in the text, such as the menagerie of gingerbreads and the organ grinder’s monkey (Armstrong 107).

Oddly enough, the narrator grants the house, despite its dilapidation, enduring vitality, “itself like a great human heart, with a life of its own, and full of rich and somber reminiscences” (Hawthorne 22). Part of its “life” includes the foreign fixtures it envelops, and yet, these foreign things are just that—things. Each of the animal figures I mention above appear in this human organ of a house as flattened, commodified totems. Rather than animated in kind, the animal figures seem immobilized in this built environment and resist a clear meaning in what is otherwise a highly symbolic text. The text’s domestic or human-oriented animality is relatively legible or has easy referents, like the Pyncheon hens mentioned above or even the owl-like behavior of the narrative itself when it alights in tandem with “The Flight of Two Owls,” the title

of the chapter in which Hepzibah and Clifford flee their ancestral home (188). The house, then, essentially performs as a sort of menagerie, one that renders its animal curiosities ambiguous and flattened signifiers.

Les Harrison likens the house to an antebellum museum, particularly noting the preservation of the family's ancestral aristocratic trappings. By "museum" he refers to the likes of Charles Willson Peale's popular collections of "curiosities," opened in Philadelphia in 1874, that included an art gallery, anthropological artifacts, natural history specimens, and a menagerie. Barnum would purchase Peale's Museum by mid-century but had already established his own entertainment-driven enterprise in the early 1840s, the American Museum, which featured much the same as Peale's but amplified the sensationalism of the museum enterprise with minstrel shows, more extensive displays of "exotic" animals, and exhibits claiming to feature human-animal hybrids, such as his "Missing Link" figures (Thomson 147).

Like the menagerie components of nineteenth-century museum entertainments, the cent-shop gingerbreads in particular make up a seemingly random collection of what the narrator labels "specimen[s]" or "stocks" of "natural history" (50, 157). Gingerbread elephants, camels, dromedaries, whales, hippopotami, and rabbits curiously share the same edible form as Jim Crow and locomotive cookies. Setting the shape of Jim Crow, the popular figure of blackface performance, among the animal figures recreates the kind of variety entertainment from which Barnum and other impresarios benefited. Add the locomotive image to the mix, which for the narrator stages another symbol for the "great current of human life," and the collection figuratively gains national reach. Together the gingerbread products are edible versions of traveling circus and menagerie shows: processed, uniform, and addictive morsels for new American appetites.

Hawthorne does not directly make the connections between these figurations, but every detail associated with the gingerbread collection, whether implied or explicit, forms a palimpsestic commentary on mass consumption and exploitative commercial practices. When the “urchin” Ned Higgins develops a voracious appetite for the pastries, his gormandizing is particularly disturbing because the edible bodies represent actual dehumanized people and objectified creatures. Higgins himself transforms into a “little cannibal” upon eating the “renowned Jim Crow” (38). His diet functions as a collision of seemingly disparate worlds: Jim Crow’s blackness, Higgin’s working class roots, the caravan’s foreign animality, and Hepzibah’s degraded aristocracy (83). Kyla Wazana Tompkins identifies this transformation as double-edged; the reduction of the Jim Crow’s blackness to a consumable object is unavoidably a form of “total dehumanization,” but the blackness of the Jim Crow figure “also infects Higgins’s body with its own ‘primitive’ likeness” (95). This primitiveness, of course, also applies to the “exotic” animal figures in the cent-shop window. Since Ned Higgins consumes the whole “varied caravan” without much discrimination, his cannibalistic diet includes “exotic” animality.

The adage “you are what you eat” would seem to be relevant here; in eating the figurative animals Ned does indeed highlight his supposed animal nature through his appetite, like Jaffrey Pyncheon’s “dinner-hour” beastliness. However, Ned’s emergent animal nature is not a traditional speciesist trope that assumes the inferiority of non-human animals and that of humans drawn into a degrading comparison with these animals. Instead, his supposed animality is a kind of human-made aberration rather than an innate natural state; it is shaped by his circumstances as an out-of-control consumer in a capitalist market that renders alterity digestible but also—in the end—unrecognizable mush. The cent-shop gingerbreads might represent the profits of American civilization, literally as products for sale and figuratively as symbols of circuits of trade and

entertainment featuring “exotic” novelties. But they also denote the mass exploitation of exoticized people and non-human animals.

On the one hand, the boy’s diet predicts a new generation of consumers that might be free of aristocratic hegemony and open to the commercial and cultural trade winds of the world. On the other, his disordered eating foretells of the unforeseen moral consequences of purveying and consuming such problematic morsels. Instead of reflecting civilized order, the mass consumption of “exotic” novelties threatens to collapse the moral hierarchy the narrator has envisioned as a segregation of modern animal vitality from old aristocratic beastliness. The text suggests that non-human animal alterity is an inappropriate rubric for human civilization that has run amok, for the centripetal force of capitalistic modernity is a product of its own terrible making.

Nearly twenty years later, Rebecca Harding Davis revisits a similar theme but for a young audience. Her story, “How Jack Went Tiger Hunting,” in *The Youth’s Companion* adheres to a tradition of morality tales that involve the reformation of a “bad boy.” In this case, young Jack sees himself as a “courageous fellow” ready to “trap elephants and hunt tigers” and even best his hero, Paul du Chaillu, in the field (163). As an aspiring adventurer, he squirms under the dictates of his mother’s domestic education. Davis clearly marks Jack’s braggadocio and resistance to domestic pedagogy as his “bad boy” flaw that must be humbled. And Jack is indeed humiliated when he wrongly identifies a big dog in the backyard for a tiger that the newspaper had reported loose from a menagerie show. Davis assures her readers that Jack “never was known to brag again” after this gaff, but while the story seems to reach a predictable and satisfying conclusion, Davis hints that much remains unresolved.

For one, the story ends with the tiger still at large, and given the excitement and fear Jack stirs in his neighborhood, it is apparent the threat the tiger represents looms large in the

imagination of this community. When throngs surround Jack's house to witness or facilitate the recapture, tensions run high; the police argue with menagerie keepers whether to shoot to kill, and Jack's mother dashes into the house, "terrified at the thought of what might have befallen her children" (163). Jack may have misidentified the tiger, but he easily finds believers. Jack's and his neighbors' imaginations run wild with belief in the tiger's presence in the backyard because (at the risk of my being too obvious and redundant) an actual tiger does run wild in the city. As I have noted, Davis would have her readers recognize the most obvious moral of the story: Jack's over-confidence in what he imagines to be masculine heroism, like being a "fine courageous fellow" in distant jungles (163). But her warning against over-confidence also seems to apply to a general confidence in civil institutions and the supposed order they impose, for the very fact that Asian tigers and other wild and "exotic" creatures reside in the city (under the auspices of the entertainment industry) suggests an overconfidence both in American imperial designs abroad (which the foreign animals undoubtedly represented as spoils or representations of exploration, trade, and empire) and the wisdom of containing nonnative species at home at all. Jack's bragging is indicative of a larger cultural phenomenon: a reliance on cultural institutions that are blind to the chaos they sow.

In Jack's case, his arrogance is supported by his sense of domestic security. From his reading of adventure fiction from the comfort of his home, he makes problematic assumptions about race and his masculine prowess based on his reading, contending that "'those negroes were poor stuff for hunters, I think! Used to give out in a week or two. So did Du Chaillu. Why, *I* could go on for months, and never complain'" (Davis 163). Jack falls prey to the myth perpetuated in adventure hunting tales like du Chaillu's of a social, racial, and zoological hierarchy for humans and beasts. Inevitably, the invincible white American hero in these hunting

scenarios ranks at the top of this social schema. Of course, Jack's sense of security proves false when the tiger incident shrouds the coal-shed in the backyard "with the mystery and horror of an African Jungle" (163). And the threat of the tiger also undercuts Jack's belief in his racial superiority, revealing to him "his shame" as a "young coward" (163).

However, Jack is not the only one who fails to recognize the limits of domestic security, even when evidence of its inevitable failure is not at all "a mystery" but readily apparent (163). For instance, at the beginning of the story, bells signal a fire in the city, prompting Jack to leave and return with news of the event. His mother acknowledges, "'There was great confusion,'" to which Jack responds, "'There always is.'" The fire proves to be the catalyst for the menagerie tiger's escape, and yet, the confusion inherent in the event of fire does not seem to apply to the seemingly distant threat of foreign beasts. Before the Jack's tiger-sighting incident, his mother maintains a cheerful confidence in the order and pedagogical mission she maintains in her home. In response to Jack's interest in soon leaving for an African animal hunt, his mother jokes about his inability to sit through Latin and grammar lessons: "'If you cannot conquer nouns and verbs, Jack, ... I am not afraid for the wild beasts'" (163). She is right that Jack does not possess the stuff to hunt animals abroad, but the connection she makes between learning language arts and hunting in foreign jungles does not bear out by the end of the story. Jack's mother imagines a kind of mental fortitude of a cultivated mind that might be applicable to a number of practical skills, but given the chaos that unfolds in her own home, neither the mother's book learning nor Jack's fantasies of adventure seem appropriate to "conquer" either the real or imaginary tiger's intrusion.

Perhaps because "exotic" animal entertainments were signature features of civilizations throughout human history and the world, to call the practice fundamentally unsound—on ethical

and rational grounds—might seem naive. However, Davis’s unseen tiger invites the sense that keeping company with dangerously displaced animals provides one example of the ways in which a culture thwarts the project of progress it touts. America’s sense of itself as a civilization lacks the intellectual and psychological tools necessary to understand (much less accurately identify—in Jack’s case) and cohabitate in an urban space with a wild, transplanted animal. While it is unlikely Davis’s story calls for a referendum on the “exotic” animal enterprise writ large, its surface-level moral—the warning against blind hubris—seems fitting, given the fact that the tiger’s predicament is the result of human desires that have become cultural enterprises, like the menagerie. Deeper still, however, we are left to wonder what the use of such maxims might be. What changes even if Jack is chastened? What is gained? Jack might now turn to his Latin and grammar lessons, but a cultural infrastructure remains in place to play out the same chaotic scene again and again, reinforcing what he and his mother say of the fire: there is ““great confusion””—“there always is.”

Human responses to the dramas that play out between Americans and imported exoticized species do not so easily reduce to truisms, as contemporary examples of tragic encounters in zoos between exoticized species and humans attest. Improvements in the design of animal enclosures at zoological parks and the decline in circus animal acts and the circus itself in recent decades mean far less animal-related accidents and escapes like those reported in the nineteenth century. But species barrier crossing still occurs, with the most visible examples involving big (and often) endangered captive animals. In 2007, the Siberian tiger, Tatiana, leapt across a moat and scaled the wall of her enclosure of the San Francisco Zoo after three visitors reportedly taunted her. She killed one of the visitors and injured the other two before she was shot. The surviving victims and the family of the deceased sued the zoo for failing to meet safety

standards, but the park suggested that the tiger had been provoked to make such an extraordinary escape; no party blamed Tatiana for her actions.

In addition to adding a glass wall at the top of the tiger exhibit, zoo officials posted “Protect the Animals” notices, which read: ““Help make the zoo a safe environment: The magnificent animals in the Zoo are wild and possess all their natural instincts. You are a guest in their home. Please remember that they are sensitive and have feelings. PLEASE don’t tap on glass, throw anything into exhibits, make excessive noise, tease or call out to them”” (Yollin, Schevitz, and Fagan). The sign (coupled with the glass wall added to the tiger enclosure) attempts to make compatible the “exotic” animal and its spectators; the glass wall physically contains the exhibit animal, while the zoo’s messaging seeks to tame unruly “guests.” The sign reminds visitors of how the creatures significantly differ from humans (that they have unique “natural instincts”), but the message also intends to suggest how the psychological and emotional experiences of the animals overlap with that of humans, all having sensitivities and “feelings” (which I believe they do). These animal curiosities may be strange, thrillingly and even dangerously so, but in also treating them as fellow creatures, we are invited to identify their exoticism as different but familiar.

The tensions identified in the posted sign at the San Francisco Zoo echo discourses of “exotic” animality in the nineteenth century. The desire to make the animals’ captivity into a “home” and treat them as obliging hosts to human “guests” inherits the anthropomorphizing commercial practices of early animal shows and zoos, and even that of “exotic” hunting narratives, like Barnum and du Chaillu’s human-like depictions of gorillas’ and chimpanzees’ domesticity in their adventure books. The sign promotes an ethic of human neighborliness, asking visitors to be content to let the animals be themselves, undisturbed at “home,” and yet, the

very structure of the zoo environment, no matter how innovative and considerate the design, promotes human proximity to the “exotic” animal, satisfying desires to make contact with or even seek ourselves in animal alterity—but also stoke horror at the thought of encountering “exotic” danger or mystery in the animal, especially sans artificial barriers.

The incident that resulted in the gorilla Harambe’s death at the Cincinnati Zoo in May of 2016 attests to these desires and fears. Perceived as a deadly threat to the three-year old boy who entered the gorilla grounds, Harambe was killed by zoo officials, an act which sparked outrage across social media outlets. The zoo’s decision and the mother of the child’s perceived negligence instantly became targets of public ire. Some took up arguments against animal captivity, while others saw expressions of vitriol against the mother and son (who are African American) as sexist and racist. Still others pointed to the news story that the Harambe story buried in the same of the news cycle: that of the more than 1,000 migrants who died attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea (Romano). However, in turn, predominantly satirical memes swiftly critiqued what was seen as predictable and over-the-top outpourings of anger over the circumstances of the gorilla’s killing. In the months following the event, cultural commentators prescribed answers for the range of humorous responses that had less to do with mourning the gorilla than targeting any number of social identities.

Aja Romano’s *Vox* article reflects on the months-long longevity of the Harambe memes, given their traditionally short online lives, positing that the meme trend was universally available for social commentary: “If you were a progressive, the Harambe meme gave you a chance to mock what you viewed as the hypocritical haranguing of the mainstream while avoiding real issues of social justice; and if you were a conservative, the Harambe meme gave you a chance to mock liberal hysteria.” Additionally, Brian Feldman’s piece in *New York Magazine*, “The Dark

Internet Humor of Harambe Jokes,” suggests that the survival of Harambe’s internet presence amounts to its unshakable “*frisson* of offensiveness,” though he adds that “it’s hard to actually take offense at the jokes.” But the fact that jokes at the same gorilla’s death inspires jokes that aren’t “actually” offensive but also provokes a national controversy leads us to questions that nineteenth-century authors asked or discovered in their depictions of “exotic” animals. What purpose do these animals serve, both as real animals and in figurative capacities to address cultural phenomena? Why make the “exotic” animal an intimate part and iconic fixture of civilized life? What does our obsession with viewing and writing about animals as spectacles say about us?

Neither authors in the nineteenth century nor the many people today who turn to social media to express grief, anger, amusement, or ambivalence about significant zoo or circus animal events have ready answers to these questions. But what remains consistent is an abiding discomfort with keeping these creatures close yet also at arms length through both physical and conceptual architectures. From this liminal position, the “exotic” animal complicates the human-animal divide, proving much more fraught than the animals’ commonplace captivity in the U.S. would have us imagine. Instead of simply confirming what might be deemed the animals’ excessive and irreconcilable alterity, discourses of “exotic” animality test notions of belonging on either side of the species divide. The transplanted and sensational animal, then, figuratively performs as an unlikely tool for social reformation that prompts us to understand how we might adopt into our civil spaces that which represents incongruity. This reformation is hardly lucid, not necessarily being a conscious social enterprise, but perhaps it stems from a desire to connect with and honor the animals we have marked with extraordinary difference, even if our means of doing so leaves us with a lingering fear of who we are as a people. The totemic power of

exoticized creatures seem to promise an escape from categorical thinking, turning us loose to tame ourselves.

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