

# **Exotic Animals in Eighteenth-Century Britain**

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## ABSTRACT

Exotic animals are conspicuously absent in economic histories and discussions of material culture in eighteenth-century Britain, even though they were highly sought-after luxury goods. As a response, this cultural history is a step towards a fuller understanding of the broad yet related meanings that a range of exotic animals held in Georgian Britain. A study is structured around four themes of meaning. The significance of exotic animals is explored, in turn, through their function as commodities, as objects of sensory encounter, as political symbols and charismatic material for anatomical investigation. The spaces through which animals moved, the contexts of their display and the meanings different audiences produced are considered throughout.

Several species of animal were transfer points for cultural configurations, and a selection receives detailed cultural biographies here. Their histories are utilised to understand practices of collecting and spectatorship, national cultures and natural history. The work of naturalists and anatomists is intertwined with other ways of knowing exotic animals in Georgian Britain. Exhibition and the production of knowledge were interrelated, so ideas produced by some practitioners were absorbed, transmuted and modified into different cultural forms and contexts.

The reality of exotic animals as commodities is established through a history of animal merchants in London and, from there, their wider place in eighteenth-century Britain is discerned. The development of animal trade from itinerant bird sellers to high-end menageries tell, once collated, a story revealing a usual but significant part of commercial and exhibitionary culture. By historicising the sensory encounters of spectators, readings of broader cultural anxieties about malodour and the bodily proximity of women and children to animals are possible. The senses were managed and ordered around exotic animals, and it is argued that experiencing them in this period was predicated on specific and fluctuating notions of risk and endangerment. Exotic animals acquired political symbolism, especially in matters of monarchy. Associations were generated and circulated by public representations that foregrounded humour, political satire, sexuality, luxury and fashion. Interwoven within these concerns were serious and not so serious discussion about Enlightenment attitudes and the “Improvement” of Nature. It is argued throughout that new spaces emerged for the spectatorship of exotic animals during the long eighteenth century, and, as such, that these animals should be historicised as eighteenth-century British phenomenon.

## **DECLARATION**

I declare that no portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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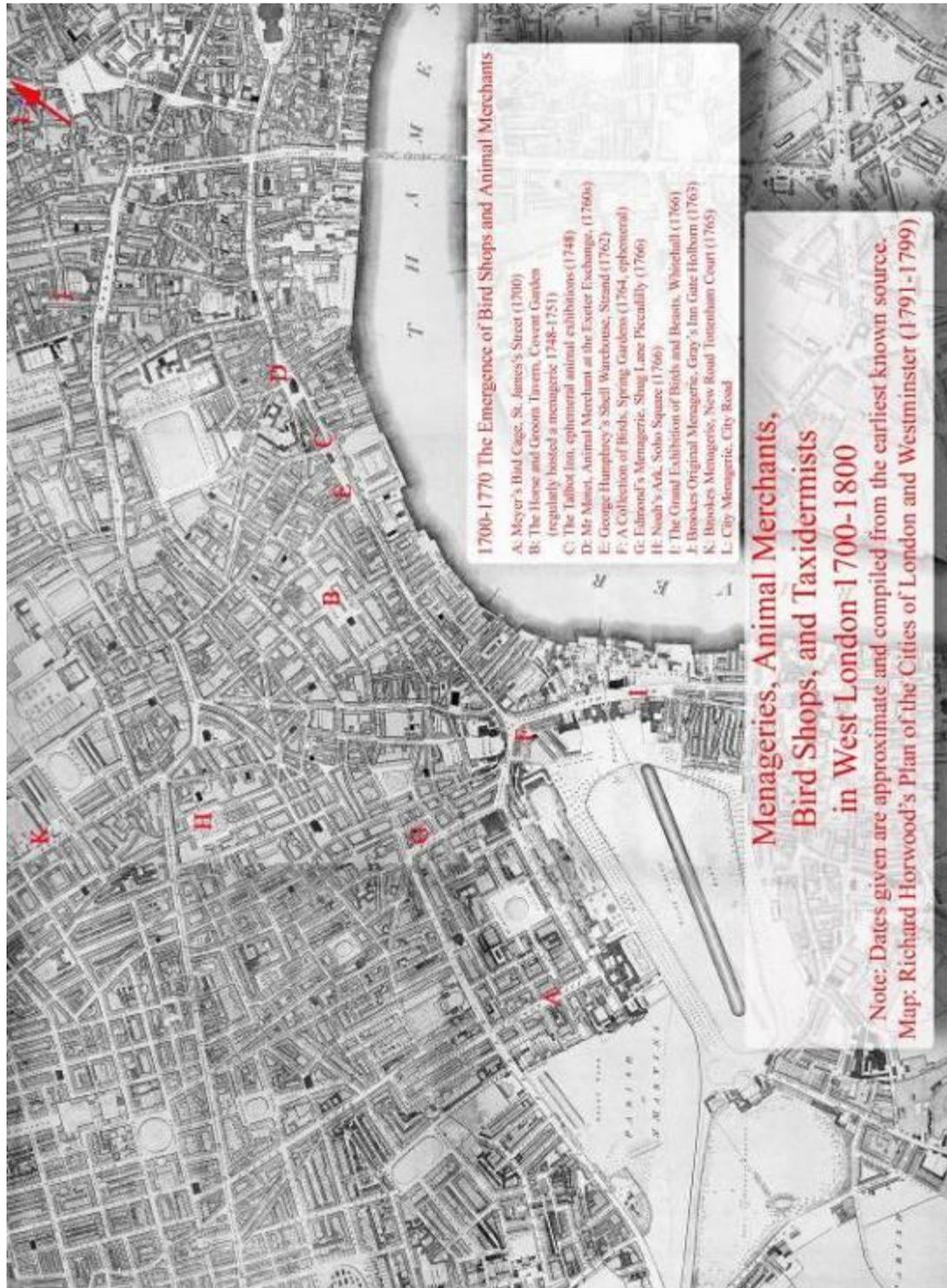
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# MAPS: Menageries, Animal Merchants, and Taxidermists in West London, 1700-1815

## MAP ONE: 1700-1770



**MAP TWO: 1770-1815**

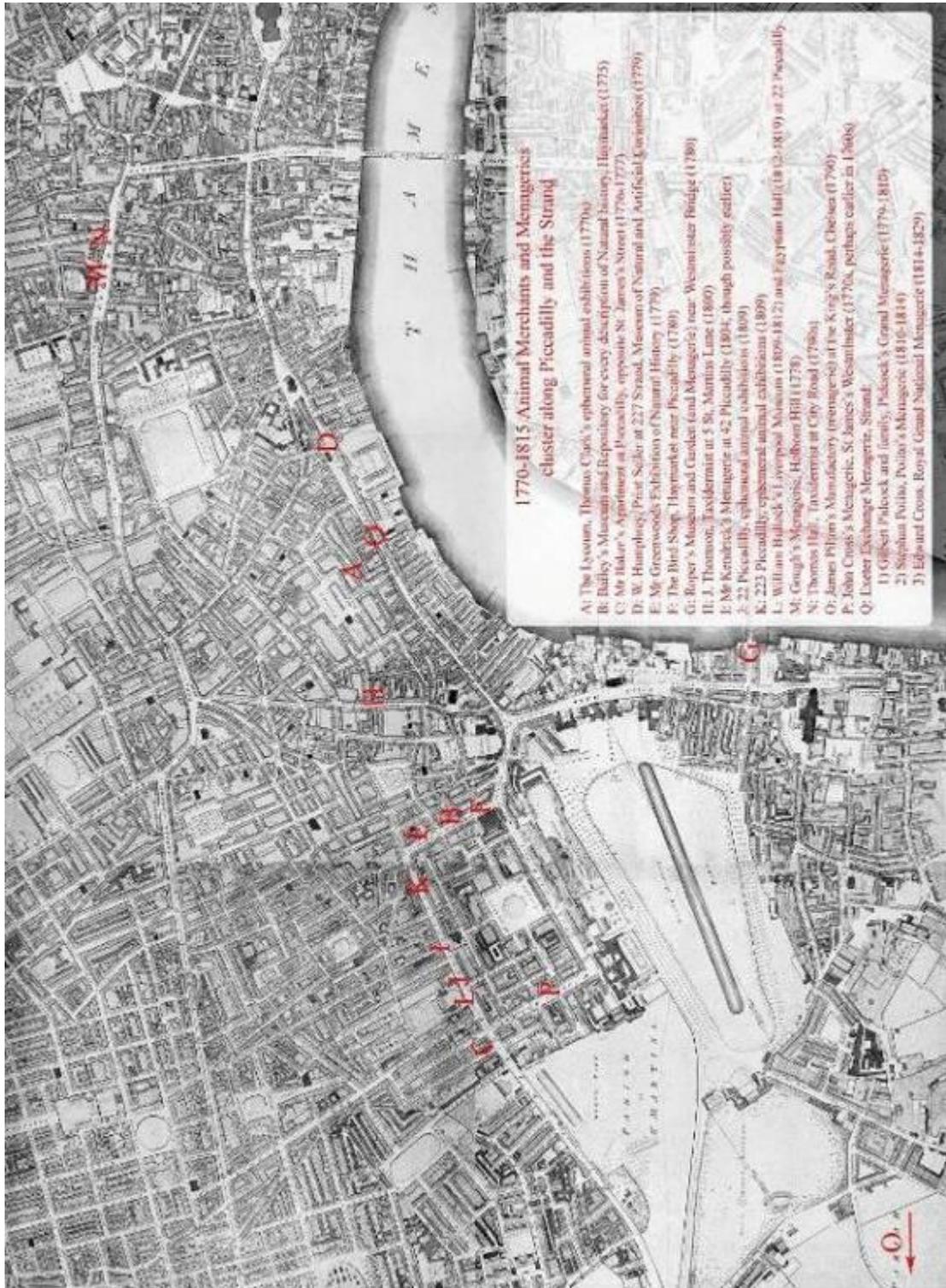




Plate.1 "The Exhibition of Wild Beasts"

Hand-coloured mezzotint

Carrington Bowles (publisher), 1774

British Museum, London

## INTRODUCTION

In a 1774 mezzotint entitled “The Exhibition of Wild Beasts,” a group of spectators crowd in front of cages of living exotic animals; there are a range of preserved natural history specimens on the walls. Although the British Museum catalogue describes spectators in a “museum” peering at “stuffed animals in cases on the wall,” they are, in fact, in a menagerie. In the foreground stands a young vain Macaroni peering through his spyglass at a cage of “silken monkeys” — a closer look reveals one of the monkeys is wearing a fashionable little red coat and wig like the Macaroni. The print is accompanied by the caption, “Mankind is fond at looking at their own Likenesses.” The immediate satirical humour of the print is that the effete man of fashion is compared to a tiny silken monkey, that the Macaroni is gratified in seeing the diminutive monkey in his own likeness. But, more than this, the print is suggestive of Georgian ways of exhibiting, looking at or ordering exotic animals and a range of cultural meanings for these animals in eighteenth-century Britain.

In London, but also, to a lesser extent, other cities and towns, exotic animals both living and dead increased in significant numbers across a broad range of new sites in Georgian Britain. In the capital, the urban geography of the smart, affluent West End was shaped by elite consumption, and there many of the city’s animal merchants or menagerists sold and displayed their exotica. The aristocracy, gentry and some of the “middling sort” had the deep pockets necessary to purchase these animals alive as well as to pay for admittance to menageries and museums. Exotic animals also circulated as luxury ingredients in cosmetics and perfumes, including snuff, wig power and pomade. Exotic animals circulated, too, as illustrations and descriptions in natural histories, ranging from hand-coloured folios to cheaper printed chapbooks. In anatomical collections and museums, exotic animals were “wet” preparations or taxidermy mounts. Dead prepared exotic animals were arranged according to

different competing classificatory systems, invoked as metonyms of foreign lands or even Anglican testament to the creation of a munificent God.

Living animals were meaningful in their symbolic structuring of Georgian cultural preoccupations and social relations; their presence in Britain had important political implications for the Georgian state. The acclimatisation of exotic animals in landscape gardens or menageries attested to the proper dominion and ingenuity of Enlightenment Britons. Alternatively, the ownership of exotic animals and their relationship with elite individuals, notably royalty, became the target of bitter satire. Queen Charlotte and her son George were intimately associated with the “Queen's Ass,” the zebra stabled at Buckingham Gate. Sometimes the exhibition of exotic animals in eighteenth-century Britain generated meanings that at first encounter strike as bizarre — like the erotic connotations of the electric eel in the late 1770s. When Georgians looked at these animals and rendered them meaningful “in their own likenesses” they created different orders or species of animals that can be historicised.

In this introduction I will first define the parameters of this thesis – the chronology I use, the definition of exotic utilised throughout the thesis, and explain why this thesis is not about exotic animals as pets. Secondly a survey of the place of exotic animals in contemporary historiography demonstrates rich field of scholarship within which to situate my doctoral research. Then I introduce the historical sources upon which my research is based and discuss the circulation and audiences for these texts in the eighteenth century. Lastly I give an indication of the order and contents of the four chapters that together argue for the significance of exotic animals in eighteenth-century Britain.

The timeframe of this thesis, ca.1675 to ca.1830, corresponds to a significant period in British political and cultural history. This broad period of time typically described as the “long eighteenth century”. The chronological boundaries of the British long eighteenth century conventionally span the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688 to the cessation of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. Contemporary Anglo-American eighteenth century historians working with British material tend to extend the period to the 1830s, either in 1830/31 with the ascension of the third son of George III,

William IV, to the throne, or to that of Victoria in 1837.<sup>1</sup> Alternatively the political agitation for reform (riots, political unions, and industrial interests) and the limited enfranchisement and electoral reform legislated for in the 1832 Reform Bill, marks a chronological watershed for the long eighteenth century. In the long period covered by this thesis there were substantial changes in the place and meaning of exotic animals and each chapter of the thesis is an account of this change. As a history of exotic animals in Britain the thesis is written against clear and substantial historical change. The argument and sources in this thesis span the Commonwealth and Restoration decades of the 1650s and 1660s, to the industrialised and imperial Britain of the 1830s.

The founding of the London Zoological Society in 1826 and the opening of the London Zoological Gardens in 1828 evince a significant change in context for the collection and display of exotic animals. In 1829, the Exeter Change menagerie, a key site in this thesis, closed — the animal occupants were moved by Edward Cross to his new Surrey Zoological Gardens. As London menageries of the eighteenth century closed, zoological gardens, new cultural institutions for the collection and display of exotic animals, emerged in the provinces — the Dublin Zoological Gardens (1831), Liverpool Zoological Gardens (1832), Belle Vue Zoological Gardens in Manchester (1836), Manchester Zoological Gardens (1838) and Edinburgh Zoological Garden (1839). The emergence of zoological gardens as an important part of provincial, civic middle-class life in major cities coincided with the political assertion of the industrial middle classes and their appeasement in the property provisions required for enfranchisement in the 1832 Reform Act. By the late 1820s and early 1830s, animal collections were now understood as distinct from those of the late eighteenth century. This is, of course, not entirely as sharp a disjuncture as one might imagine; these *new* institutions inherited (often literally)

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Langford, *The Eighteenth-Century: 1688-1815* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London: Yale University Press, 1994); Paul Monod Kléber, *Imperial Island: A History of Britain and Its Empire 1660-1837* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); Frank O’Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century, 1688-1832* (New York: Arnold, 1997); John Styles and Amanda Vickery (eds.), *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America 1700-1830* (New Haven: University Press, 2007).

both the animals and cultural attitudes of earlier menagerie proprietors, patrons and spectators. These attitudes and meanings are traced throughout this thesis. But in substantial ways, early zoological gardens were quite different in the specific claims to utility they articulated. In the conclusion to I use zoological writings from the late 1820s and early 1830s to highlight the ways in which advocates for the zoological garden established the cultural authority of these new institutions and the manner in which they conceived of their institutions and spectator experiences of animals therein as distinct from those of the menageries of the eighteenth century. The early zoological gardens, though not a site for extensive discussion in this thesis, forms the subject of its conclusion.

## **What Are Exotic Animals?**

The word “exotic” was rarely used in eighteenth-century Britain; instead the word “foreign” was regularly used to describe animals, peoples and products of other lands. Most frequently, “exotic” was used as a botanical term to describe delicate non-European plants that required the warmth of stoves or hothouses.<sup>2</sup> In France, too, the *Encyclopédie* defined the adjective “exotique” as the exclusive concern of flowers, rare objects and commodities imported from foreign lands, though, even then, the word *étranger* (foreign) was normally used.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes the “exotic” status of particular animals was re-negotiated and with the passage of time some animals that were once exotic became increasingly less so. Imported canaries, for example, might be considered exotic in the seventeenth century, but not in the eighteenth century when they were bred natively and could be widely purchased. Likewise

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<sup>2</sup> See John Abercrombie, *The Universal Gardener and Botanist; Or a General Dictionary of Gardening or Botany* (London, 1778); John Ash, *The New and Complete Dictionary of the English Language* (London, 1795). Louise Enders Robbins has made a similar observation on the use of the words “exotique” and “étranger” in eighteenth-century France. See *Elephant Slaves and Pampered Parrots and Elephant Slaves: Exotic Animals in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> George Rousseau and Roy Porter, *Exoticism in the Enlightenment* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994).

whereas imported Chinese goldfish were once prized possessions in porcelain bowls and garden ponds, late eighteenth-century commentators noted that the fish could be found swimming wild in London's ditches and waterways. Similarly, London spectators often expressed disdain or ennui for those menageries that had displayed a small range of familiar animals for too long; menagerists assiduously advertised their animals as "new," "just arrived," "the only of its species," "the largest," to appeal to an easily jaded urban audience. Some advertised their stock with a measure of exaggerated self-deprecation; in 1752, one menagerist announced the exciting arrival of "the grandest collection of wild beasts" at Charing Cross, including a crocodile and rhinoceros. Both these animals, it was claimed, were the only animals of their kind in the kingdom. The novelty of these "headliners" was underscored by the assertion that other menagerie occupants were numerous and far "too tedious to mention."

The category "exotic" was also altered somewhat by familiarity; monkeys and parrots kept in the homes of the affluent became a familiar part of the material culture of everyday elite life, but would have had more exotic resonances for those that only saw these species in menageries after paying an entry fee. Prize breeds of cattle or sheep and animal heteroclitics ("freaks") like two-headed cows or "Learned Pigs" were conceived as "exotic" in the sense that they were unfamiliar, rare and divergent.<sup>4</sup> Neither these or domesticated animals, however, are subjects of this thesis. Further, other animals might be included in the category of the exotic but do not feature in this thesis; Abraham Trembley's polyp or hydra and the rotifer — as well as animals like the anemone — were revealed through eighteenth-century microscopy and often presented to spectators in vivid colour in solar microscope projections or kept in glass jars.<sup>5</sup> But these are animals that could be acquired from

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<sup>4</sup> For detailed discussion on freaks and monsters see Dennis Todd, *Imagining Monsters: Miscreations of the Self in Eighteenth-Century England* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995); Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (London: Zone, 1998); Palmira Fontes da Costa, "The understanding of monsters at the Royal Society in the first half of the eighteenth century," *Endeavour* 24, 1 (2000): 34-39.

<sup>5</sup> Virginia Dawson, *Nature's Enigma: The Problem of the Polyp in the Letters of Bonnet, Trembley and Reaumur* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1987); Deirdre Coleman, "Entertaining Entomology: Insects and Insect Performers in the Eighteenth

local ditchwater or the British coast and therefore different from those exotic animals from distant climes with a commodity-value and amassed in collections as living or preserved specimens. The “foreign birds and beasts” brought to Britain during the long eighteenth century were not indigenous to Britain or Western Europe, though some species did become acclimatised. The subjects of this thesis are those animals and birds imported from Africa, the Americas, Asia and (later, of course) Australia. Other European “exotics” were imported from Scandinavia, Russia and the Arctic. The exotic animals that feature in this thesis were shipped to Britain with the intent that their presence in Britain alive was desirable, meaningful, and importantly profitable. These animals were, broadly speaking, mammals, birds and reptiles. They were animals that could be readily supplied with their preferred food source or forced to eat another and were resilient enough to, if not flourish, at least survive in Britain for significant periods of time. The nectar-feeding hummingbird, for these reasons, was never brought to Europe alive in the eighteenth century. In contrast, reptiles like boa constrictors, crocodiles and rattlesnakes are surprising residents in eighteenth-century menageries, a presence accounted for by their ability to control the metabolism so that durations of many months without food can be tolerated. With the exception of the electric eel and goldfish, fish were not imported alive. Because plate-glass aquaria were not developed until the mid nineteenth century, the exhibitionary appeal of exotic fish and marine invertebrates or crustaceans was limited; moreover, few survived extended voyages in dirty and poorly oxygenated water.<sup>6</sup> With a low probability of success and minimal (if any) appeal at home alive, these sorts of animals were shipped to Britain as wet specimens for the collection of naturalists. Similarly, exotic amphibians, readily encountered in the tropics, were not brought to Britain alive, probably because appropriate food sources and temperatures could not be sustained.

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Century,” *Eighteenth Century Life* 30 (2006): 101-119; Peter Heering, “The Enlightened Microscope: Re-enactment and analysis of projections with eighteenth-century solar microscopes,” *BJHS* 41, 30 (2008): 345-367.

<sup>6</sup> Rebecca Stott, “Through a Glass Darkly: Aquarium Colonies and the Nineteenth-Century Narratives of Marine Monstrosity,” *Gothic Studies* 2, 3 (2002): 302-327.

This thesis might, then, have been called “Foreign Animals in Eighteenth-Century Britain,” and this would have certainly made sense to contemporaries in eighteenth-century Britain. I have, however, chosen to substitute “foreign” with “exotic” because the latter resonates better with the cultural and intellectual history this thesis engages, a sense that the word “foreign” lacks. The word “exotic” connotes a European envisioning of and desire for the Other. In short, the word “exotic” does something that “foreign” does not. Despite the semantic slippage here, elsewhere in this thesis I have attempted to retain certain significant traces of eighteenth-century word usage. In particular the word “pet” does not appear, even though animal merchants sold exotic animals.

In this thesis I do not present an argument for exotic animals as “pets” in eighteenth-century Britain. Indeed, it was not until the late Georgian period that the word in English connoted the relationship between owner and animal; contemporaries normally described animals as “the property of” or “kept by” owners — that is, not as pets. Exotic animals were, however, present in the residences of the aristocracy and gentry in meaningful numbers, so, despite substantial scholarship on the Georgian home, there is a conspicuous absence. Instead of discussing exotica in terms of “pets,” I prefer to place emphasis on the circulation of these animals between contexts as commodities with political significance. As such, exotic animals like Queen Charlotte’s zebras are not so much interesting to look at as “pets” (in fact, the Queen grew bored of both her truculent zebra), but instead as animals configured by broader relationships and cultural meanings that extend beyond owner and animal. Of course, the category of “pet” is, absolutely, a historicised relationship between owner and animal understandable only within a wider cultural context. In not utilising this term, this thesis highlights better the way in which exotic animals circulated between animal merchants, homes, menageries, museums and anatomical collections.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Histories of pet-keeping include Katherine Grier, *Pets in America: A History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2006); Kathleen, Walker-Meikle, “Late Medieval Pet-Keeping: Gender, Status and Emotions,” PhD diss., University College, London, 2007; Kathleen Kete, *The Beast in the Boudoir: Petkeeping in Nineteenth Century Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

## **Exotic Animals in Historiography**

This thesis is a cultural history of exotic animals in eighteenth-century Britain and it will convene several methodological approaches and historical arguments concerned with transit and circulation, or classification and ordering. A key conceptual framework for this thesis is taken from recent scholarship in the history of science. Simon Chaplin's concept of the "museum oeconomy" in London in the period 1750 to 1800 provides an important structure for understanding the role of anatomical preparations.<sup>8</sup> Dissecting, preserving, collecting and circulating preparations was critical to a "museum oeconomy" of surgeons, allied physicians and midwives. Collections of preparations for teaching/research and the circulation of preparations between practitioners in the marketplace and through networks of affiliation fostered a corporate identity for surgeons, altered perceptions and practices of dissection and comparative anatomy. Chaplin's thesis primarily focuses on the anatomical collection and school of the surgeon John Hunter (1728-1793), and within this thesis on exotic animals Hunter is also a prominent figure. With his selection of "wet" specimens and anatomical notes, I show, utilising several instances, how Hunter's anatomising of exotic animals was important in shaping their cultural meaning. In this history of exotic animals, Chaplin's "museum oeconomy" is extended by me to include animal merchants and menageries as a marketplace and sites of importance for the circulation of knowledge.

The Georgian geographies of exotic animals, both living and dead, across a range of sites including museums, menageries, animal merchants and anatomical collections

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<sup>8</sup> Simon Chaplin, 2009. John Hunter and the "Museum oeconomy," 1750-1800. Ph.D diss., King's College, London; "Nature dissected, or dissection naturalized? The case of John Hunter's Museum" *Museum and Society* 6, no.2 (2008): 135-151.

intersect with what Secord (2004) has termed “knowledge in transit.”<sup>9</sup> This is a narrative framework that understands science as a form of communication characterised by movement, translation and dissemination. For Secord, texts, images and objects are the traces of acts of communication with receivers, producers and modes of convention that erase the distinction between making and communicating knowledge. In this thesis, exotic animals are conceived as knowledge in transit between varied producers and receivers, including anatomists, menagerie proprietors, spectators, naturalists, zoologists and readers of natural histories. The meaning and spectacle of these animals changed as they were consumed and absorbed into different systems of classification, cultural reference and understanding. This approach to a cultural history of animals draws attention to changing representations, what might be called “cultural species,” and gives significance to the importance of site and context in attributing meaning. Throughout the thesis I use a certain number of exotic animals and their biographies as “hooks” for a broader history. Sometimes these animals are individuals like Queen Charlotte’s zebra or George Baker’s electrical eels, but in most instances the biography is more of a prospography, a collective biography of a species.

Biographies or cultural histories of animals, though gathering pace in contemporary animal and cultural studies, are not entirely new. As well as publishing a biography of celebrated figures in Roman history, the clergyman and naturalist William Bingley (1774-1823) wrote *Animal Biography* (1803) — was printed to seven editions in 1829 as *Animal Biography; or Popular Zoology*. Bingley compiled authorities in natural history, travellers’ tales and anecdotes, arranging them with observations of animals living in London menageries or displayed in museums. It was a four-volume series. Similarly, Thomas Brown, the author of several biographies on horses and dogs, published a natural historical work, *Biographical Sketches and Authentic Anecdotes of Quadrupeds* (1831).<sup>10</sup> For historians of the eighteenth century, object

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<sup>9</sup> James Secord, “Knowledge in Transit,” *Isis* 95 (2004): 654-672; Miles Ogborn and Charles Withers (eds.), *Georgian Geographies: Essays on Space, Place, and Landscape in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> William Bingley, *Animal biography: Or, Anecdotes of the Lives, Manners, and Economy of the Animal Creation, Arranged According to the System of Linnæus* (London: Phillips,

biographies have focussed primarily on “It-Narratives,” a literary genre of the eighteenth century that narrated the biographical lives of coins, fleas, lapdogs, chairs and other animate or inanimate objects.<sup>11</sup> The partial biographical methodology of this thesis is indebted initially to Igor Kopytoff’s biographical approach to material culture, using the “life” or “career” of objects to explore the social relations and meanings mediated through that object.<sup>12</sup> Lorraine Daston and other historians of science have more recently turned towards tracing objects and *things* as material and epistemological categories.<sup>13</sup> A biographical approach to natural history specimens in museums has been the subject of scholarship on objects as diverse as Ole Worm’s “Lupus Marinus” and the Bengal tiger. Alberti (2005) has written on the object-centred historiography of museums, arguing that the museum might not only be discussed in terms of its space and politics but also as a conduit for the objects it houses, objects that channel and enable a series of relationships in their life histories.<sup>14</sup>

In contemporary popular literature, the biographies of animals have attracted considerable interest — Zarafa the giraffe in early nineteenth-century France, Clara the rhinoceros who toured eighteenth-century Europe, Jumbo the elephant and George, the last of the Pinta Island subspecies of the Galápagos tortoise. Another tortoise, Timothy, is the subject of a fictional chelonian autobiography based on the

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1803); Thomas Brown, *Biographical Sketches and Authentic Anecdotes of Quadrupeds* (London: Fullarton, 1831).

<sup>11</sup> Mark Blackwell (ed.), *The Secret Life of Things: Animals, Objects, and It-Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> Igor Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things,” in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in a Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 64-91.

<sup>13</sup> Lorraine Daston (ed.), *Biographies of Scientific Objects* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000); Lorraine Daston (ed.), *Things that Talk: Object Lessons from Art and Science* (New York: Zone, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> Taika Dahlbom, “Matter of Fact: Biographies of Zoological Specimens,” *Museum History Journal* 2, 1 (2009): 51-72; Samuel Alberti, “Objects and the Museum,” *Isis* 96 (2005): 559-571; Samuel Alberti, “The Bengal Tiger in Context: the Leeds Museum in the Nineteenth Century,” *Leeds Museums and Galleries Review* 4 (2002): 13-16.

writings of the Selbourne gentleman naturalist Gilbert White, who inherited Timothy from his aunt. Writing in the history of science and about collecting has also taken a biographical approach to animals that articulates broader themes in the cultural politics of natural history — ‘Grannie’ the sixty-six year old anemone at the Edinburgh Botanic Gardens in the late nineteenth century, the first giraffe at Schönbrunn, Hanno the elephant given to Pope Leo IX in 1514, the hermaphrodite monkey at the Tuscan court of Grand Duke Ferdinando III and the leopard that arrived at the Muséum nationale d’Histoire naturelle in 1793. The charismatic lives of exotic animals, like Obaysch the hippopotamus at the London Zoological Gardens in the second half of the nineteenth century, have been used to tell the history of that institution.<sup>15</sup> These biographies follow the changing status and meanings of their subject whilst living and dead to place emphasis on the contingency and individuality of a particular animal. Other cultural biographies of animals are more prosopographic in nature, concerned with a particular species — like those in the

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<sup>15</sup> Christa Riedl-Dorn, *Hohes Tier: Die Geschichte der ersten Giraffe in Schönbrunn* (Wien: Braumüller, 2008); Paul Chambers, *Jumbo: This Being the True Story of the Greatest Elephant in the World* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Steerforth Press, 2008); Richard Burkhardt, “The leopard in the garden: life in close quarters at the Museum d’Histoire Naturelle,” *Isis* 98 (2007): 675-694; Geoffrey Swinney, “Granny (c.1821-1887) a ‘zoological celebrity,’” *Archives of Natural History* 34 (2007): 219-228; Verlyn Klinkenborg, *Timothy’s Book: Notes of an English Country Tortoise* (London: Portobello Books, 2007); Henry Nicholls, *Lonesome George: the Life and Loves of a Conservation Icon* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Anna Maerker, “The tale of the hermaphrodite monkey: classification, state interests and natural historical expertise between museum and court, 1791-94,” *BJHS* 39 (2006): 29-47; Glynis Ridley, *Clara’s Grand Tour: Travels with a Rhinoceros in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (London: Atlantic Books, 2005); Mark Allin, *Zarafa: The True Story of Giraffe’s Journey from the Plains of Africa to the Heart of Post-Napoleonic France* (London: Headline, 1998); Silvio Bedini, *The Pope’s Elephant* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1997); Narisara Murray, “Lives of the Zoo: Charismatic animals in the social worlds of the Zoological Gardens of London, 1850-1897,” PhD diss., Indiana University, 2004; Tom Quick, “Interpretations of London’s Zoological Hippopotami 1850-1878,” MSc diss., UCL Centre for the History of Science, Medicine and Technology, 2007; Nigel Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

Reaktion Press *Animal* series that includes *Tiger, Ant, Elephant, Tortoise, Parrot,* and *Penguin*.<sup>16</sup>

In his *The Menageries* (1830), the naturalist James Rennie (1787-1867) reflected an important broad late Georgian interest in the significance of animals in human history. As a proponent for new zoological gardens and the new discipline of zoology, Rennie's polemical history of menageries advocated for a departure from the sort of menageries that were familiar to Britons of his and earlier generations. It is these menageries that are the subjects of this thesis. At the beginning of the twentieth century, too, Gustave Loisel's multi-volume *Histoire des ménageries de l'antiquité à nos jours* (1912) was concerned itself with writing a comprehensive history of the collection of living animals.<sup>17</sup> Since the late 1960s, cultural histories of animals have been of considerable scholarly interest, typically concerned with broad attitudinal change over time.<sup>18</sup> Harriet Ritvo's influential *Animal Estate* (1987) is especially noteworthy as an early animal history with a specific cultural historical context, as is David Allen's *The Naturalist in Britain* (1976).<sup>19</sup> In the following decades, the scope of scholarship on animals expanded significantly into multi-volume series with strong disciplinary interest in animals in specific historical

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<sup>16</sup> Stephen Martin, *Penguin* (London: Reaktion, 2009); Dan Wylie, *Elephant* (London: Reaktion, 2009); Susie Green, *Tiger* (London: Reaktion, 2006); Charlotte Sleigh, *Ant* (London: Reaktion, 2004); Paul Carter, *Parrot* (London: Reaktion, 2006); Peter Young, *Tortoise* (London: Reaktion, 2003).

<sup>17</sup> James Rennie, *The Menageries: Quadrupeds Described and Drawn from Living Subjects* (London: Wells, 1830); Gustave Loisel, *Histoire des ménageries de l'antiquité à nos jours (en 3 volumes) Antiquité — Moyen Âge — Renaissance, Temps modernes (XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles), Époque contemporaine (XIXe et XXe siècles)* (Paris: Doin & Laurens, 1912).

<sup>18</sup> Constance Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the end of the Eighteenth-Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (London: Allen, 1983); James Serpell, *In the Company of Animals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

<sup>19</sup> Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987); David Allen, *The Naturalist in Britain* (London: Penguin, 1976).

periods, tending towards the early modern.<sup>20</sup> The new field of animal studies has been highly influenced by poststructuralist thought, what has become known as the “post-humanities” — the boundaries of human and animal are ontologically blurred, with the category of “species” critiqued as a humanist discourse.<sup>21</sup> Historians of science like Charlotte Sleigh and Tania Munz have, like others, been interested in matters of agency, anthropomorphism and animals like the bee, ant and greylag goose.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, the cultural history of thinking about and with animals in science has itself been the subject of a collection of essays, *Thinking With Animals: New Perspectives on Anthropomorphism* (2005).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Jessica Ullrich, Friedrich Weltzien and Heike Fuhlbrügge (eds.), *Ich, das Tier: Tiere als Persönlichkeiten in der Kulturgeschichte* [I, the Animal: Animals as Personalities in Cultural History] (Berlin: Reimer, 2008); Linda Kalof, *Looking at Animals in Human History* (London: Reaktion, 2007); Karl Enkel and Paul Smith, *Early Modern Zoology: The Construction of Animals in Science, Literature, and the Visual Arts* (2 Vols.) (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Erica Fudge, *Perceiving Animals: Humans and Beasts in Early Modern English Culture* (London: Macmillan, 2002); Erica Fudge, *Animal* (London: Reaktion, 2002); Erica Fudge, *Pets* (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008); Linda Kalof (ed.) *A Cultural History of Animals in Antiquity* (London: Berg, 2007); Brigette Resl (ed.), *A Cultural History of Animals in the Medieval Age* (London: Berg, 2007); Bruce Boehrer (ed.), *A Cultural History of Animals in the Renaissance* (London: Berg, 2007); Matthew Senior (ed.), *A Cultural History of Animals in the Age of Enlightenment* (London: Berg, 2007); Kathleen Kete (ed.), *A Cultural History of Animals in the Age of Empire* (London: Berg, 2007); Randy Malamud (ed.), *A Cultural History of Animals in the Modern Age* (London: Berg, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); The Animal Studies Group, *Killing Animals* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Cary Wolfe (ed.), *Zoologies: The Question of the Animal* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Nigel Rothfels (ed.), *Representing Animals* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2002); Christopher Philo and Christopher Whibert (eds.), *Animal Spaces, Beastly Places: New Geographies of Animal-Human Relationships* (London: Routledge, 2000); Randy Malamud, *Reading Zoos: Representing Animals in Captivity* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

<sup>22</sup> Charlotte Sleigh, *Six Legs Better: A Cultural History of Myrmecology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 2007); Tania Munz, “My Goose Child Martina”: *The Multiple Uses of Geese in Konrad Lorenz’s Animal Behaviour Studies, 1935-1988*, Max Planck Preprint 379.

<sup>23</sup> Lorraine Daston and Greg Mittman (eds.), *Thinking With Animals: New Perspectives on Anthropomorphism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

The place of exotic animals in the cultural history of eighteenth-century Europe has been a rich, emergent area of scholarship in the past decade. Louise Robbins's *Elephant Slaves and Pampered Parrots* (2002) is now an authority on the circulation and meaning of exotic animals in eighteenth-century France.<sup>24</sup> Her attention to the political symbolism of the Ménagerie du Roi at Versailles and the Revolutionary-era Jardin des plantes is an important contribution to our understanding of the cultural mediation of exotic animals in national contexts. Likewise, my consideration of the trade in exotic animals by London's animal merchants draws on Robbins's treatment of the Parisian guild of bird-sellers, the Oisleurs. Similar studies of eighteenth-century Spain reveal important cross-cultural comparisons and shared threads, but also significant variation. The exotic animal collections of the Spanish court, especially those of Carlos III, had a strong symbolic significance as well as a utilitarian importance. Spanish naturalists and aristocrats diligently collected and acclimatised a number of species that had not been successful in northerly European nations.<sup>25</sup> The development of exotic animal collections in German-speaking lands has been shown to have a different character to other eighteenth-century national cultures. The secondary literature published from the German research project "Die Haltung exotischer Wildtiere im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert" ("The keeping of exotic wild animals in the eighteenth and nineteenth century") has demonstrated that exotic animals came principally to the German-speaking lands as part of travelling

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<sup>24</sup> Robbins, *Elephant Slaves and Pampered Parrots*. See also Robbins's 1998 doctoral thesis, *Elephant Slaves and Pampered Parrots: exotic animals and their meanings in eighteenth-century France*. Ph.D diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison.

<sup>25</sup> Carlos Gómez-Centurión, "Treasures fit for a King: Charles III of Spain's Indian Elephants," *Journal of the History of Collections* 22 (2010): 29-44; "Curiosidades vivas. Los animales de América y Filipinas en la Ménagerie real durante el siglo XVIII [Living Curiosities: the animals from Spanish America and the Philippines in the royal menagerie during the eighteenth century]," *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 66, 2 (2009): 181-211; "Exóticos y feroces: la ménagerie real del Buen Retiro durante el siglo XVIII [Exotic and Fierce: the royal menagerie of Buen Retiro during the eighteenth century]," *GOYA* 326 (2009): 3-25; "Exóticos pero útiles: los camellos reales de Aranjuez durante el siglo XVIII [Exotic but Useful: the royal camels of Aranjuez during the eighteenth century]," *Cuadernos dieciochistas* 9 (2008): 155-180.

menageries (Wandermenagerien) from England, France and Holland.<sup>26</sup> Later, from the 1830s onwards, zoological gardens were the important sites for spectatorship and the acclimatisation of exotic animals. Annelore Rieke-Müller and Lothar Dittrich (1998) have argued for the role of the zoological garden in the decades preceding German unification in shaping political affiliations of state, nation and citizen.<sup>27</sup> The secondary literature on exotic animals in eighteenth-century Britain is not large — it is limited to a few monographs, inclusion in works as a secondary focus and a handful of articles. Diana Donald's *Picturing Animals in Britain 1750-1850* (2007) is the most comprehensive history of exotic animals in eighteenth-century Britain to date.<sup>28</sup> Donald, an art historian, approaches the subject through four categories of analysis: commerce, imperialism, religion, and science. Although the approach of this thesis is different, my argument also presents exotic animals through categories of meaning.

The purpose of this thesis is to make the case for the significance of exotic animals in eighteenth-century Britain based on four different ways of looking at or making meanings from these exotica: as commodities, sources of sensory engagement,

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<sup>26</sup> Annelore Rieke-Müller and Lothar Dittrich, *Unterwegs mit wilden Tieren: Wandermenagerien zwischen Belehrung und Kommerz* [On the Way with Wild Animals: travelling menageries, between instruction and commerce] (Marburg: Basilisken-Press, 1999).

<sup>27</sup> Annelore Rieke-Müller and Lothar Dittrich, *Der Löwe brüllt nebenan: die Gründung Zoologischer Gärten im deutschsprachigen Raum 1833-1869* [The Lion Roars Next-Door: the foundation of Zoological Gardens in the German-speaking lands] (Wien: Böhlau, 1998).

<sup>28</sup> Diana Donald's *Picturing Animals in Britain, 1750-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Richard Altick's *Shows of London* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1978) and Hahn's *Tower Menagerie* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2003) are excellent introductions to animal collections in eighteenth-century Britain. However, they offer only fragmentary sources and are not interpretative histories of animals and their cultural meaning. Other histories of animal collections with British material are less satisfying but serve as a sparse factual resource. See Vernon Kising (ed.), *Zoo and Aquarium History: Ancient Animal Collections to Zoological Gardens* (London: CRC Press, 2000); Eric Baratay and Elisabeth Hardouin-Fugier, *Zoo: A History of Zoological Gardens in the West* (London: Reaktion, 2004). A short paper on menageries in landscape gardens by Sally Festing published in the late 1980s, is the only scholarly work on that topic; "Menageries and the Landscape Garden," *Journal of Garden History* 8 (4) 1988:104-117.

political symbols, and as objects of anatomy and classification. In each of these four aspects I consider the audience for exotic animals and the changes in meaning and context of display over time. In the instance of specific exotic animals I demonstrate how the character and classification of some animals changes not only over time but also from context of spectatorship and consumption. I ask, who could see these animals and where? What meaning did they have? How did the sites for the spectatorship of exotic animals change across the long eighteenth century? The history of the development of the bird-shops and animal merchants of London presented in this thesis provides a complimentary comparative narrative as to the existing literature on continental European animal trade in the eighteenth century. The British context has not been the subject of previous scholarship. The argument I make in this thesis for the ordering of the senses and behaviours around exotic animals is a contribution in two respects. Firstly there is not a history of bodily engagement with exotic animals and the way in which this shaped spectator experience in the long eighteenth century. Surprisingly given their frequency and prominence in British print sources, accidents involving exotic animals and their keepers or spectators have not been drawn together to create an argument for a historicised concept of risk or endangerment. This attention to the importance of embodied experience in encountering exotic animals in the eighteenth century adds detail to the topography of existing scholarship on sensory histories. The histories of several exotic animal species that are part of this thesis can be situated and read alongside other scholarship in the history of science that utilises animals as “hooks” for exploring changing practices and knowledge. The biographies of the elephant, kangaroo, zebra, and electric eel herein are both in themselves potted histories of the meaning and place of an exotic animal in eighteenth-century Britain, and part of a broader discussion on the politics of ordering nature in this period.

## **Sources, Spaces and Audiences**

In this thesis I have used a variety of contemporary printed works created between the 1670s through to the 1830s, in addition to paintings, sketches, and extant “wet”

or “spirit” specimens in collections. Here, then, in this section, I want to discuss the implications of using these as major sources for the thesis, outlining their role in producing and circulating knowledge in the eighteenth century. Exotic animals were certainly encountered in coffee houses, museums, menageries and animal merchants but were accessible to a wider audience in print material. In particular, an understanding of the contextual dissemination and reception of print material about exotic animals (how people actually read about animals) is crucial in grasping the contexts in which meanings were produced.

Advertisements, printed letters, or news articles from British newspapers like the *Daily Courant*, *Public Advertiser* and the *Morning Chronicle* are significant sources for writing a cultural history of animals. These newspapers had a geographically and socially diffuse readership; newspapers could be purchased from street vendors and read in coffee houses or taverns. Geographically distant subscribers to newspapers (normally the gentry and clergy) could expect to read London newspapers within two or three days of printing. Similarly, large provincial cities and towns distributed their own newspapers containing snippets of local, London and foreign news. After reading, subscribers would typically disseminate newspapers in their parish localities to neighbours and literate parishioners or tenants, who then, in turn, orally transmitted matters of topical interest to others.<sup>29</sup> The arrival of travelling menageries and exhibitions was announced in handbills and broadsheets as well as advertisements, so that residents of smaller towns and villages were aware of unusual exotic spectacles.

Natural histories are important sources for understanding the representation and meaning of exotic animals in eighteenth-century Britain, but it is necessary to contextualise the audiences for these books and the ways meanings were produced from them. Some natural histories, like George Edwards’ *A Natural History of Birds* (1743-1751), were not widely circulated because they were extremely expensive to produce; they were sold by limited subscription in instalments, as the hand-coloured illustrated plates and accompanying text were financed in stages. This sort of printed

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<sup>29</sup> John Mullan and Christopher Reid, *Eighteenth-Century Popular Culture* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2000).

book was subscribed to by the aristocracy, gentry, learned societies and university or collegiate libraries. Large, gilt leather-bound and attractively illustrated books like Edwards' were objects of connoisseurship and conversation in salons and libraries. Subscription to these works accorded subscribers status as patrons of natural history and arbiters of taste. In some cases, subscribers also provided the birds and animals (sometimes living, sometimes dead) for illustration in order to win prestige and authority for their collections.

Other natural histories, like Ward's *A Modern System of Natural History* (1775) or Church's *A Cabinet of Quadrupeds* (1805), were produced in larger numbers and appeared in different formats. In the late eighteenth century, printed leather bound books cost, typically, three shillings, and paper-covered cost around 2 shillings. Many of these utilised woodcuts or copperplate engravings that appeared in other volumes, reproducing large bodies of text from other works. Buffon, in particular, either stylistically or by verbatim influenced many of these natural histories, with the popular *Barr's Buffon* (1792) giving a translation into English. Ardent readers of natural history would have recognised the sources of competing and reproduced authority, but given eighteenth century practices of readership it is probable, if not certain, that my thesis bibliography includes a broad, representative range of titles to which many readers did not have access to. I have consulted books on a broad continuum of natural history ranging from elegant hand-coloured folios, such as William Hayes *Portraits of Rare and Curious Birds, with their descriptions, from the Menagerie of Osterley Park* (1794-1799), to one-penny chapbooks, like Ward's *The Bird Fanciers Recreation* (1728). The former were produced for elite consumption and connoisseurship of the portraits of exotic menagerie birds, whereas the latter offered practical knowledge for the care of canaries that were retailed in taverns and bird shops. Clearly, these texts circulated in different spheres of cultural production — the owners of chapbooks and three-shilling natural histories did not, typically speaking, subscribe to multi-volume folios. This notwithstanding, a historiographical stark contrast between readers in “polite” and “popular culture” is problematic. Contemporary studies on reading practices in the eighteenth century indicate varied

and overlapping topographies of readership.<sup>30</sup> The book presses and library shelves of elite and “polite” readers were occupied by collected bound editions of cheap novels, handbills, tracts and chapbooks even as they were simultaneously disparaged by their owners as plebeian and unedifying.

Books were circulated in considerable numbers as part of lending libraries, lent as a service provided by booksellers or were exchanged between readers in rural and provincial localities eager for fresh reading material. Readers were drawn from the gentry, clergy, merchants and affluent trades people, although some booksellers’ records show servants and labourers as subscribers. Natural histories circulated between readers with novels, but they were not exclusively experienced through private reading. Novels were often purchased and borrowed to be read aloud in a drawing room or salon. Prose and timbre was honed for pleasing oratory, so animals were often characterised in dramatic and affective ways; Buffon’s touching description of the hauntingly lyrical song of a dying mute swan was a favourite in Parisian salons. Likewise, the refusal of Buffon’s noble elephant to reproduce in captivity resonated with the increasingly vocal rhetoric of opposition to slavery.<sup>31</sup> The prose of British writers like Samuel Ward similarly appealed to the sensibilities and sympathies of readers and listeners with patriotic, poetic or theological tones. Conversation about exotic animals took place in elite circles, of course, as part of a broader interest in natural history and botany. Drawing rooms and salons were important spaces for practices of science and the production of knowledge as part of elite fashionable life.<sup>32</sup> The salon of collector Sophia Banks (1744-1818), sister of the naturalist Joseph Banks) at 32 Soho Square, drew together a network of

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<sup>30</sup> Isabel Rivers (ed.), *Books and their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England: New Essays* (London: Continuum, 2003); Jan Fergus, *Provincial Readers in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>31</sup> Robbins, *Elephant Slaves and Pampered Parrots*, pp. 184-185; Lydia Meisen, *Die Charakterisierung der Tiere in Buffon’s Histoire naturelle* [The Characterisation of Animals in Buffon’s Histoire naturelle] (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007)

<sup>32</sup> Geoffrey Sutton, *Science for a Polite Society: Gender, Culture, and the Demonstration of Enlightenment* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997); Anne Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora’s Daughters and Botany in England 1760 to 1860* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

naturalists, conversationalists and intellectuals. Other elite women like Margaret Cavendish Bentinck, Duchess of Portland (1715-1785), amassed collections as authorities on natural history. Her seat at Bulstrode Hall was known in Society as “The Hive” for its vast collection and its menagerie; prominent naturalists like Daniel Solander (1733-1782) flocked there. On the country estates of the aristocracy and gentry, collections of exotic animals in menageries and aviaries were an important part of sociability and exhibition, though they were not always exclusively for the friends or acquaintances of their owners. Increasingly during the eighteenth century, visitors of the “middling sort” paid to visit country-houses and estates as part of a broader interest in touring the antiquarian, picturesque and romantic localities of the nation. From the 1730s, visitors to the menagerie of the Duke of Richmond at Goodwood could expect to take afternoon tea and have a good look at the animals in pens or roaming an idyllic glade.<sup>33</sup> In London and the large provincial cities or towns, this “middling sort” joined the elite in the audiences for museums, exhibitions and menageries.

The composition of readers of natural history and the topography of exotic animals in eighteenth-century Britain could be taken to suggest a broad audience for exotic animals — but this proliferation of animals needs careful qualification. This thesis, concerned with Britain in the eighteenth century, includes sources for the presence of exotic animals in large cities like Dublin, Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Bristol as well as small towns like Kendal and Malmesbury; however, the story of exotic animals in eighteenth-century Britain is, in significant part, a history of these animals in London. With a population of 575,000 in 1700 and 900,000 in 1800, London was the largest city in Europe. In 1750, 11 per cent of England’s population lived in London and, by 1801, one in ten people in England and Wales lived in the city.<sup>34</sup> In Chapter

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<sup>33</sup> Rosemary Baird, *Goodwood: Art and Architecture, Sport and Family* (London: Francis Lincoln, 2007), pp. 66-68; John Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Tom Williamson, *Polite Landscapes: Gardens and Society in Eighteenth-Century Society* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1995); Thomas Richardson, *The Arcadian Friends: Inventing the English Landscape Garden* (London: Bantam Press, 2008).

<sup>34</sup> Peter Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History 1540-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

One, a history of the animal merchants in eighteenth-century Britain is an account of the trade in exotic animals in London, not elsewhere. In part this reflects the constraints of doctoral research, but it also indicates how the cultural geography of London is different from peripheral eighteenth-century Britain. Travelling menageries like Pidcock's and Polito's spent much of the year in London, trading as part of more substantial, permanent premises in the capital. Contemporary visitors to the city commented on the profusion of animals to be seen dead or alive in the city, and this certainly made it different from elsewhere. A geography of exotic animals in London (represented by two maps in this thesis) is also one of concentration in West London, especially along the Strand and Piccadilly. Some of the worst animal attractions could be found in the best neighbourhoods; in 1714, at the request of "persons of Quality," a leopard was baited against dogs in an amphitheatre behind Soho Square before display in a menagerie at Mary-le-bon fields.<sup>35</sup> Alternatively, sometimes animal attractions could draw respectable crowds to areas of ill-repute; King George II and Queen Charlotte braved the brothels and gambling dens of Covent Garden to see a performing sea lion in the early 1760s. In Regency London, however, the pre-eminent dealers in exotic animals were in close proximity to their elite patrons in St James's. The material relations and meanings of exotic animals outlined in this thesis reflect, then, the cultural concerns and authority of a section of Georgian society.

## Thesis Structure

This thesis is structured around four different symbolic orderings or meanings of exotic animals in eighteenth-century Britain. The first chapter, *Animal Commodities*, is an economic history of exotic animals that traces the development, material lives and social world of London's animal merchants. As part of this account, exotic animals — as living, dead and ingredients — are understood circulating in a metropolitan geography of display and consumption. Chapter Two, *Senses and*

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<sup>35</sup> James Peller Malcolm, *Anecdotes of the Manners and Customs of London during the Eighteenth Century, Vol. II* (London: Longman, 1810), p. 144.

*Sensibilities*, is concerned with the sensory and affective experience of Georgian bodies around exotic animals. Here, the disciplining and ordering of the senses or behaviours of spectators and animals is understood as related to the maintenance of political and social order. In particular, a changing notion of a sense of risk or endangerment is traced across the long eighteenth century against the large number of accidents and fatalities involving exotic animals, their keepers and spectators. In the third chapter, *Political Animals*, I show how exotic animals became important in intertwined notions of climate, national character and adaptability. The green pastures of “Happy Britain,” it is found, were free from the “pernicious” and “fearsome” beasts of torrid climes, and that freedom (as it was perceived) was embellished as the political freedoms of the English and the benevolence of their monarch, defender of faith and liberty. The acclimatisation of foreign animals from different climes had a distinct political economy in late Georgian Britain; the “Improvement” of exotic animals is read alongside a broader Enlightenment trend in ordering nature. Last, in Chapter Four, *Anatomising Animals*, uses the case studies of the kangaroo and the elephant in eighteenth-century Britain to explore changing conceptions of species and classification. These two animals were perceived across time in different ways. This last chapter draws together some of the threads developed throughout the thesis. In arguing for the recognition of the elephant and kangaroo as “cultural species,” I show how changing practices of eighteenth-century anatomy, natural history and exhibitions shaped understanding of the very term “species.” My intention is not a biological essentialism that would suggest a neat polarisation between “natural” and “cultural” (far from it).<sup>36</sup> Instead, I want to place emphasis on the function of the circulation of “knowledge in transit” within the “museum oeconomy” and how it shaped categories of species and the characterisation of animals in eighteenth-century Britain. In order to provide a sound historical context for the later three chapters it is necessary to turn to the first, *Animal Commodities*. Here I discuss how the exotic animals appearing throughout this thesis arrived in Britain as part of the trade of the London animal merchants.

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<sup>36</sup> Londa Schiebinger has shown, for example, how Linnaean classification in eighteenth-century Europe was shaped by cultural attitudes to sex and gender; “Why Mammals are called Mammals: Gender Politics in Eighteenth-Century Natural History,” *American Historical Review* 98 (1993): 382-411.

## ANIMAL COMMODITIES

Clarke Abel (1780-1826), Chief Medical Officer and Naturalist to Lord Amherst's Embassy to China on the HMS *Alceste*, left Britain in 1816 with a recommendation from Joseph Banks to his employers the East India Company, an assistant botanical gardener from Kew skilled in living and preserved specimens, and an ample outfit of research apparatus. He arrived back in Britain in 1818, grateful to be alive but with little to show for his botanical endeavours. The *Alceste* had been shipwrecked off the coast of Java and burnt by local Malays: Abel's three hundred packages of plants, spirit collections of zoophytes, and geological specimens were destroyed with the ship. To his particular mortification, a seaman had emptied crates of seeds onto the deck to make room for linen owned by one of the Embassy's gentlemen. Leaving Batavia (Jakarta, Indonesia) on a replacement ship, the HMS *Caesar*, Abel's ordeal was far from over: the *Caesar* was severely damaged by a fire precipitated by an "idle looby" (clumsy fellow) who had been "carelessly pumping off spirits with a naked light to preserve the body of a vile parrot, which had died the night before."<sup>1</sup> Abel's botanising was, then, a disaster, save the description of three species of plants named in his honour, the genus *Abelia*. Fortunately for his reputation as a naturalist, on leaving Java he noted, "we carried on board with us two animals of interesting characters: an immense snake, and an orang-outang."<sup>2</sup> According to the ship's Surgeon John McLeod, two boa constrictors had originally boarded the *Caesar*, but shortly after leaving dock one boa broke loose and drowned after slithering

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<sup>1</sup> John McLeod, *Voyage of His Majesty's Ship Alceste* (London: Murray, 1820), p. 303.

<sup>2</sup> Clark Abel, *Narrative of a Journey in the Interior of China, and of a Voyage to and from that Country in the years 1816 and 1817* (London: Longman, 1818), p. 369.

overboard. The remaining boa was safely secured and, fed with chickens, ducks, and two goats, provided a gruesome spectacle. This boa, however, did not survive the journey, either: it succumbed to a serious intestinal worm infection. Abel's description of his dissection of the boa on the deck of the *Caesar*, witnessed by many of the crew ("eager but restless observers"), was itself used to produce a detailed anatomical account of the boa and an illustrated plate in Abel's travel narrative.<sup>3</sup> But it was the orangutan that made it to England alive that constituted a considerable bulk of Abel's text in lieu of his anticipated botanical contributions. Although the orangutan had been described previously in the works of naturalists like Buffon and Edwards, little was known about its habits and character. Abel assiduously measured and weighed the growth of the infant orangutan by charting growth spurts between 1817 and 1818, described the appearance and physiology of the orangutan, and recounted anecdotal tales of the animal's partiality to tea, coffee, and brandy — how the amused crews observed him climbing the sails and rigging of the *Caesar*. Abel's detailed descriptions of the orangutan, the boa constrictor and his few precious specimens of *Abelia* were published, with acclaim, in his *Narrative of a Journey in the Interior of China* (1818) prior to his election as a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1819.

Clark Abel's late Georgian disaster is suggestive of the way in which some exotic animals were brought to Britain in the eighteenth century. Exotic animals living and dead arrived in increasingly large numbers during this period. They arrived in Britain as desirable commodities consumed in a culture that had created a range of new spaces for exotic animals. This first chapter is particularly concerned with one of these, the animal merchants, and tracing the development of these exhibitionary and commercial sites. As I chart the "Georgian geography" of exotic animals in eighteenth-century London, this historical account will be both diachronic and synchronic in approach. This spatial relationship between exotic animals as commodities and other desirable goods will be understood both in a visual and textual cartography of the animal merchants of St. James's, Piccadilly, the Strand and Whitehall as well as in the value of exotic animals as ingredients or products used to

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<sup>3</sup> Abel, *Narrative of a Journey*, p. 49.

create commodities for retail in apothecaries, peruke makers, perfumers, taxidermists, and grocers or poulterers. (Plate.2)

These new sites for the spectatorship and consumption of animals are salient to historical research on collections and museums history and, of course, the broader field of eighteenth-century studies. For although scholars in these fields are, like the humanities in general, increasingly interested in animals and their place in cultural history, there are substantial historical and methodological lacunae in contemporary scholarship. Exotic animals are conspicuously absent in economic histories or discussions of material culture and consumption in eighteenth-century Britain, a stark contrast to the broader European literature on consumption and animals.<sup>4</sup> There is no history of commerce in exotic animals in eighteenth-century Britain, even though the animal merchants of London were a thriving community.<sup>5</sup> Nor has the use of exotic animals as luxury ingredients or products attracted the interest of historians. Yet these were highly sought-after and expensive luxury goods: an important and unusual part of the material and exhibitionary culture of eighteenth-century Britain is obscured if exotic animals remain absent or are considered anomalies. A history of the animal merchants that appreciates the extent of trade in animals is significant because it broadens current understandings of the place of exotic animals in British

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<sup>4</sup> Rieke-Müller and Dittrich, *Unterwegs mit wilden Tieren*; Pamela Smith and Paula Findlen (eds.), *Merchants and Marvels: Commerce, Science, and Art in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Robbins, *Elephant Slaves and Pampered Parrots*; Miguel de Asúa and Roger French, *A New World of Animals: Early Modern Europeans on the Creatures of Iberian America* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Mary Morton (ed.), *Oudry's Painted Menagerie: Portraits of Exotic Animals in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Los Angeles: Getty, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> Authoritative works on consumption and luxury in the eighteenth century are reticent on matters of the trade in exotic animals. See John Plumb, Neil McKendrick, and John Brewer, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialisation of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982); John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds.), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1993); Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford (eds.), *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe 1650-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Woodruff Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability 1600-1800* (London: Routledge, 2002); Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (eds.), *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods* (New York: Palgrave, 2003); Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2005).

culture in the eighteenth century. Far from peripheral, these animals constituted an increasingly significant prospect of the everyday material culture of the elite and the affluent “middling sort”.

Regency Londoners, for instance, could buy or catch a glimpse of a wide variety of exotic animals even as they walked or rode up the Strand and Piccadilly:

I was one day walking down Piccadilly, early in the morning, when I met a porter carrying a live kangaroo, which he was conveying from Mr Pidcock’s at the Exeter Change, to a person who had purchased it. The animal was fastened to his knee by the feet, and his head lay dangling over, very near the left ear of the fellow who was carrying him; this it seemed was a temptation not to be resisted by the kangaroo, who, after smelling at the man’s ear for a long time, gave it a terrible bite, and nearly clipped it off.<sup>6</sup>

Another Londoner, John Thomas Smith, Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum, recalled returning home from a night out as a young man in the early hours of one morning in 1785:

Approaching Temple Bar, about one o’clock, a most unaccountable appearance caught our attention, – it was no less an object than an elephant, whose keepers were coaxing it to pass through the gateway. He had been accompanied by several persons from the Tower Wharf with tall poles, but was principally guided by two men with ropes, each walking, either side of the street, to keep him as much as possible in the middle on his way to the menagerie, Exeter Change; to which destination, after passing St Clement’s Church, he steadily trudged on with strict obedience to the commands of his keepers.<sup>7</sup>

Exotic animals, we can say, were part of the cultural life of eighteenth-century London, and a key aspect of this chapter will be gauging the extent to which these animal-commodities constituted a significant commercial trade.

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<sup>6</sup> *Letters from an Irish Student in England to his Father in Ireland, Vol.1* (London: Lewis, 1809), p. 149.

<sup>7</sup> John Thomas Smith, *A Book for a Rainy Day: Or, Recollections of the Events of the Years 1766-1833* (London: Bentley, 1861), p. 92.

Two principal research questions, then, inform the structure and shape of the argument in this chapter. Here I explore the relationship between exotic animals and other consumer goods in eighteenth century Britain to question the extent to which the consumption of these animals in their various forms was a socially distributed phenomenon. Also, important for the history of collections I outline the appearance and development of new spaces for the display and consumption of exotic animals, foregrounding these sites against broader economic changes and shifts in consumption practices. First, this chapter traces the emergence of the early English trade in exotic animals and places its origins in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. Then, alongside the economic growth during and following the 1750s, I trace the proliferation of menageries and animal merchants in London. Later, the financial status of the menagerists may be handled in such a way as to understand the commodity-value of exotic animals as assets, which is also to say the legal protection of exotic animals as property. Last, this chapter examines a broader context for the circulation and consumption of exotic animals as luxury ingredients and products in perfume, soup, and hair grease. Keen attention is paid throughout to the social differentiations between consumers and audiences of exotic animals.

Beginning in the Dutch Republic of the early 1600s rather than eighteenth-century Britain, the historical, political and cultural background is required. Animal merchants of late Georgian London of the 1790s and early 1800s had a cultural root or genealogy in the collecting cultures of the seventeenth-century Dutch coffee house. The Anglo-Dutch cultural and political exchange that, in time, culminated in the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688, developed the early trade in exotic animals in England from which new sites would later emerge. The story of early exotic animal exhibitions in England is best understood with reference to the United Provinces because this state was, in the seventeenth century, a trading empire with greater influence and wealth than England and possessed a range of cultural institutions that had yet to emerge across the North Sea, but did so later in a period of formal union between the two states and informal cultural exchange.

Discerning a strong cultural link between the Dutch Republic and England, as opposed to other European nations, is not problematic: clear affinities mark the two powers as more tightly bound to each other than, say, England to France or Spain.

Anglo-French relations in the seventeenth century have been characterised by historians by ambivalence (at best) and open antagonism (at worst). Earlier in the century, a series of failed treaty negotiations and French diplomatic machinations had attempted to sour Anglo-Spanish relations and fan English civil war. In the mid-seventeenth century England could hardly claim the status of a major European power, indeed the civil wars of the 1640s and 1650s suggested the opposite. War with Spain and aggression with France was compounded by sporadic hostilities with the Dutch Republic, with whom Cromwell had hoped there could be a political union. At mid-century, as the Dutch Republic engaged in extensive trade routes with a mercantile fleet larger than the other European powers combined, England engaged in a war with the Dutch (1652-1654) to assert shipping interests in the seas surrounding their coasts and to English colonies in North America. Later, in the 1660s, the “Great Fire of London” (1666) and the “Great Plague” (1665-1666) was an unpropitious baptism for the Restoration monarchy. In 1667, following large naval losses and economic strains, the English sued for peace with the Dutch, and another Anglo-Dutch war (1672-1674) led to brokered peace: niece to Charles II, Mary Stuart married William of Orange. In a context of shared political-cultural traits and rivalries, England and the Dutch Republic became strongly linked in ways distinct from other states in Europe.

French culture was influential in the court of Charles II (he had, after all, been an exile in France), but it was not adopted with enthusiasm by all of the aristocracy and gentry, despite the Continental tour. French language, food, and fashion gained a stronger presence in England following 1685. Some 40,000 French Huguenots fled to England after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes made Protestantism illegal in France. Despite three Anglo-Dutch wars earlier in the seventeenth century, relations at the end of the century were cordial and strong. Indeed, between 1688 and 1702 the two nations shared the same rulers and administrators; and they inter-married their elites. This was the outcome of a long cultural exchange preceding 1688. The Dutch, of all the powers, dominated European commerce and finance, in contrast to, say, the Spanish Empire (with whom a war of independence was fought) weakened by

internal politics, antagonism with Portugal, and economic decline.<sup>8</sup> Spain, however, had earlier established a trading empire in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as did Portugal, which provided ample opportunity for trade in New World exotic animals and their presence in menageries.<sup>9</sup> In the sixteenth-century an array of living exotic animals was shipped to Lisbon, including dodos and cassowaries (joining the known thirteen Asian elephants and two rhinoceros that entered Europe through Lisbon in this period). These animals were distributed across Europe by foreigners based in Lisbon or by Portuguese merchants based in major European cities.<sup>10</sup> Later, the Dutch Republic became more influential than the Portuguese in the East Indies and, as such, Amsterdam replaced Lisbon as a major *entrepôt* for exotic animals in Europe. Spanish influence was strong in the Spanish Netherlands (1579-1713) but weakened after 1581 when the Northern provinces declared their independence as the Dutch Republic. For much of the seventeenth century they were very different sorts of nations; the United Provinces was the wealthier mercantile power. The goods that flowed into the Dutch Republic stimulated the emergence of particular spaces for consumption and spectatorship.

England, though, was hardly unaware of luxury consumption in the seventeenth century: Jacobean London was replete with shops and merchants peddling expensive and foreign goods.<sup>11</sup> But this notwithstanding, it was not until later that some areas of consumption were developed in the same way as Continental Europe — though the English coffee house did become an important site for the exhibition of curiosities.

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<sup>8</sup> Richardson (ed.), *Contending Kingdoms*; Karel Davids and Jan Lucassen (eds.), *A Miracle Mirrored: The Dutch Republic in European Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>9</sup> de Asúa and French, *A New World of Animals*; Annemarie Jordan Schwend and Almudena Pérez de Tudela, “Renaissance Menageries: Exotic Animals and Pets at the Habsburg Courts in Iberia and Central Europe” in *Early Modern Zoology: The Construction of Animals in Science, Literature and the Visual Arts, Vol. I*, eds. Karl Enkel and Paul Smith (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> Palmira Fontes da Costa, “Secrecy, Ostentation, and the Illustration of Exotic Animals in Sixteenth-Century Portugal,” *Annals of Science* 66, 1 (2009): 59-82.

<sup>11</sup> Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendour: Society and Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

The significance of cabinets of curiosity in the Renaissance Italian States, and the Northern European *Kunstammern* is a well-delineated area of scholarship. But in spite of a tradition of courtly and aristocratic collecting in England (libraries, galleries, and some menageries), particularly at Hampton Court, Whitehall Palace, St. James's Park and at the Tower, it was in the first few decades of the seventeenth century that cabinets and later museums emerged comparable to continental equivalents.<sup>12</sup> The emergence of a trade in exotic animals practiced by animal merchants dealing from permanent premises was, likewise, a later development. It is to the specifics of that trade, then, that we turn.

## Coffee Houses and Bird Sellers

Some East Indies Ships arrived and brought some very strange birds and beasts, such as were never seen in England. A great number of persons from the city of London and other parts flock daily to see the rarities that they have brought over.<sup>13</sup>

In 1649, *Tuesday's Journal* wrote of the excitement generated by the arrival of an English East India Company Fleet in London laden with an exotic cargo; it was a scene that would have been familiar to contemporaries in Amsterdam and other large cities in the Dutch Republic (United Provinces). There, the United East Indian Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie) was at the helm of a large mercantile empire based on trading concessions and colonies in South America, Asia, and Africa. Tea, coffee, spices, textiles, tobacco, porcelain flowed into Amsterdam to be sold on a domestic market as well as a wider European. The ships that carried these goods also brought an array of animals both living and dead, as well as bulbs, seeds and plants.<sup>14</sup> These precious commodities flowed into the spaces

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<sup>12</sup> Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Ken Arnold, *Cabinets for the Curious: Looking Back at Early English Museums* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> *Tuesday's Journal*, London, 24 July, 1649 (Lysons Collection, British Library).

<sup>14</sup> One of these exotic animals was "Hansken," the elephant who arrived in the Dutch Republic in 1637, decades before the East India Company would bring an elephant to

that Dutch culture had appropriated or created for their consumption: botanical gardens, menageries, orangeries, apothecaries, florists, coffee houses, cabinets, and taverns. The Dutch Republic's passion for novel consumer products is mostly known through the tulip speculation of the 1630s.<sup>15</sup> Describing material life became a visual sensibility in Dutch paintings that took a descriptive rather than narrative form of representation.<sup>16</sup> A concern with description was developed through engagement with new objects as the material world as something perceived through the senses became the foundation for new types of knowledge.<sup>17</sup> Consumption was linked to taste as a sensory experience, and this experiential knowledge became the foundation of objectivity. The apothecary armed with a mortar and pestle, with Delft blue and white jars of *materia medica*, was the apotheosis of this material and sensory path to knowledge. But description and cultivation of taste were not limited to taking one's medicine; taste and sensory engagement were, more agreeably, realised in the bucolic gardens of Dutch fashion – a prudently planted garden offered not only visual and olfactory delights but also a sound financial investment for the future to be enjoyed in the present, a happy marriage of pleasure with the Protestant work ethic and the spirit of capitalism. The nurturing of exotic plants in hothouses and on terraces was an expensive proposition, so gardens might be dug up and dispersed in straightened financial circumstances or left as an inheritance. Finely honed horticultural skills applied to tulips, carnations, and hyacinths provided a variety and opportunity for consumption. An expanded world of material goods manifested an embarrassment of riches: there was always the Calvinist fear of rot at the root of the tulip bulb, the loss of honour and moral decline.

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England in 1675. See Leonard Slatkes, "Rembrandt's Elephant," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 11, 1 (1980): 7-13.

<sup>15</sup> Anne Goldgar, *Tulipmania: Money, Honour, and Knowledge in the Dutch Golden Age* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007); Marina Bianchi, "In the Name of the Tulip: Why Speculation?" in *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe 1650-1850*, eds. Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1999), pp. 88-102.

<sup>16</sup> Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983).

<sup>17</sup> Harold Cook, *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

Anglo-Dutch political and cultural exchange, or “Going Dutch”, is the subject of Lisa Jardine’s history of relations prior to the accession of William and Mary in the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688. Jardine argues, “by 1688 England and Holland were already so closely intertwined culturally, intellectually, dynastically, and politically that the invasion was more like a merger.”<sup>18</sup> One particular aspect of this “merger” was a shared Anglo-Dutch passion for gardening. Since the early 1630s the gardens of the United Provinces had been the subject of envy and emulation in England. Gardeners like John Tradescant were collecting their own seeds, bulbs, and plants as well as purchasing them from the Dutch. Wealthy patrons requiring fashionable Dutch-style gardens sent their gardeners across the North Sea to bring back plants and the latest designs. Estates in East Anglia brought in experienced Dutch landscapers to irrigate land and render low-lying coastal land productive. Gardening theory, planting schemes and hothouse technologies developed by the Dutch were found also in the gardens of the English elite in the decades prior to 1688.<sup>19</sup> When King William III and Mary Stuart came to England, they found a cultural and material landscape that resembled that of the Dutch and those elements that were displeasing might be readily changed. In the same month William and Mary ascended the throne, the most pre-eminent Dutch connoisseur of exotic plants, Gaspar Fagel, died. They purchased his entire collection and shipped it over once appropriate glasshouses, stoves, and hothouses had been constructed in the gardens of Hampton Court Palace. By improving the gardens of the royal residences, the new monarchs spent a colossal £88,000: financial testimony to the political economy of a well-tended garden.

The gardens of the wealthy could boast hundreds of exotic plants. Gaspar Fagel, as Grand Pensionary to King William III, possessed over 400 non-European species from as far afield as Japan. His hothouses grew pineapples and orchids, whilst oranges and lemons thrived in an orangery. Similarly the garden of Magdalena

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<sup>18</sup> Lisa Jardine, *Going Dutch: How England Plundered Holland’s Glory* (London: Harper Collins, 2008), p. 349.

<sup>19</sup> John Dixon Hunt and Erik de Jong (eds.), *The Anglo Dutch Garden in the Age of William and Mary* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1988).

Poulle at Gunterstein in the 1680s had a hothouse stocked with coconut palms, papaya, and hibiscus.<sup>20</sup> Similar horticultural wonders were to be found on the Huygens's estates at Hofwijk and Clingdael, the Bentinck estate at Sorgvliet, and in the gardens of King William III's Honselaarsdijk residence. Exotic animals, too, populated the gardens and houses of the mercantile and aristocratic elites. At the apex of Dutch society, William III and Mary II established a menagerie at their Het Loo residence near Apeldoorn in the 1670s. Here the artist Melchior d'Hondecoeter painted waterfowl, pheasants, parrots, monkeys, pelicans, and cassowaries roaming the formal gardens, climbing over urns and staircases or swimming in canals. The canals and irrigation channels that supplied the gardens of Dutch estates were part of a wider improvement of the landscape of the United Provinces: dredging cultivable land from the North Sea. Tree lined avenues and immaculate borders thrived in a topography sustained by ditches, pumps, and imported soils. Overseas, Dutch-style formal gardens were planted in Dutch colonies, whilst others, like the botanical garden of the United East Indian Company, functioned as an intermediary garden for specimens intended for distribution back to the Dutch home market. But Dutch mercantile culture did not only trade in the goods of the world: it came to define the parameters of that world. Amsterdam dominated the production of globes, maps, atlases and catalogues of the world's myriad cartography. As Schmidt (2002) argues, the "Dutch represented the world circa 1700 as a supremely seductive and wonderfully accessible space. To Europeans, at least, the world appeared enchanting, amenable, and reassuringly exotic."<sup>21</sup> The bountiful warehouses and shops of the Dutch Republic rendered visible this world of goods and made it attainable — at a price. Such a milieu was eminently suitable for trading in exotic animals. In 1675, Jan Westerhof opened a restaurant with a difference on the Kloveniersburgwal, a canal lined with the residences of Amsterdam's wealth merchants. For the price of a hot meal or a drink, customers could see and even

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<sup>20</sup> Marisca Sikkens-De Zwaan, "Magdalena Poulle (1632-1699): A Dutch Lady in a Circle of Botanical Collectors," *Garden History* 30 (2002): 206-220.

<sup>21</sup> Benjamin Schmidt, "Inventing Exoticism: The Project of Dutch Geography and the Marketing of the World, circa 1700," in *Merchants and Marvels: Commerce, Science, and Art in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Paula Findlen and Pamela Smith (New York: Routledge, 2002): 347-369 (p.364).

purchase exotic animals both living and dead at the Menagerie Van Blauw Jan. An etching by Isaak de Moucheron produced in the early eighteenth century shows a porticoed courtyard filled with aviaries and enclosures. Well-dressed ladies and gentlemen accompanied by their dogs observe a multitude of cranes, parrots, vultures and other birds. Lubricated by Westerhof's hospitality and showman's patter, these genteel clients were cajoled to part with their guilders. The sketchbook of Jan Velten, a visitor to the Blauw Jan as well as other Amsterdam menageries, shows an array of animals in cages or tethered with ropes, as well as preserved specimens on shelves or hanging from the ceilings.<sup>22</sup> (Plates. 3 and 4.) Other menageries also operated in the city, like Die Witte Olifant (The White Elephant), established by Bartel Verhagen in 1681, or Casal & Ekhorsts Menagerie.<sup>23</sup> These stationary, permanent exhibitions of exotic animals owned by animal merchants (who had often commissioned the transport of these animals from the Dutch East and West Indies Companies), emerged several decades before those of London. These menageries often had touring menageries that sent animals to fairs, taverns, and coffee houses in neighbouring cities and nations.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, animals and exoticised humans at the Blauw Jan were exhibited in London during the late seventeenth century and early 1700s.<sup>25</sup> Exhibitors at Dutch inns knew that they had a potential market in Britain and periodically sent animals over for exhibition. Since the 1640s, the Dutch had

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<sup>22</sup> Velten's sketchbook is known as *Wonderen der Natuur: In der Menagerie van Blauw Jan te Amsterdam, zoals gezien door Jan Velten rond 1700*. It has been digitised with a commentary and index as Florence Pieters and H. Veldhuijzen van Zanten, *Wonders of Nature: In the Menagerie of Blauw Jan of Amsterdam, as Observed by Jan Velten Around 1700* (Amsterdam: Artis Library and ETI, 1998).

<sup>23</sup> Florence Pieters, "The Menagerie of 'The White Elephant' in Amsterdam, with some notes on other 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century menageries in The Netherlands," in *Die Kulturgeschichte des Zoos*, eds. Lothar Dittrich, Dietrich von Endgelhardt and Annelore Rieke-Müller (Berlin: Verlag für Wissenschaft und Bildung, 2001). For a full list of the menageries and cabinets of the Dutch Republic see Pieter Smit, *Hendrik Engel's Alphabetical List of Dutch Zoological Cabinets and Menageries* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1986).

<sup>24</sup> For a lengthy account of touring menageries on continental Europe and particularly German-speaking Europe see Rieke-Müller and Dittrich, *Untervegs mit wilden Tieren*.

<sup>25</sup> Angela Vanhaelen, "Local Sites, Foreign Sights: A Sailor's Sketchbook of Human and Animal Curiosities in Early Modern Amsterdam," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 45 (2004): 256-272.

been importing animals and exhibiting them, like Hansken the elephant who, between the 1630s and 1650s, toured the United Provinces and neighbouring countries.<sup>26</sup> So whilst as early as 1649 crowds had enthusiastically flocked to see the ships of the British East India Company bring curious animals to London, there was not a trade in animals comparable to that of Amsterdam at the end of the seventeenth-century. Established menageries like the Blauw Jan and De Witte Oliphant that emerged in the 1670s and 1680s were different from the ad hoc auctions and itinerant sellers of exotic animals in contemporary London. In the following decades, however, increased Anglo-Dutch exchange led to the development of more permanent sites for the trade in and exhibition of exotic animals in Britain.

The merging of horticultural interests invited other cultural diffusion, including the collection and trade of exotic animals. In the late seventeenth century a significant number of animals were on display in London taverns or coffee houses with a Dutch provenance, shipped in and traded by the Dutch United East Indies Company. Moreover, sites gradually emerged for trade in animals that resemble those of Amsterdam. The earlier hegemony of Dutch mercantile activities would account for the earlier rise of animal merchants in specialised menageries prior to England, where commercial expansion took place later. Indeed, it was not until the 1750s that animal merchants in London dealt from dedicated premises as menageries — the successors to earlier bird sellers. The taverns and coffee houses of London were, however, significant sites for the early display and trade in exotic animals, even if they were not initially like those in Amsterdam, Utrecht, or Leiden.

Economic histories of the long eighteenth century suggest that during the period 1675 to 1725 there was a dramatic increase in the introduction of material goods into domestic spaces in Britain, particularly in London. Goods that had been rare in a domestic context became increasingly commonplace. The ownership of clocks, for example, tripled in this period, and though rare in 1690, by 1725 utensils and china or other cups for hot drinks were present in a much larger number of households.

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<sup>26</sup> A 1642 engraving of Hansken performing tricks with descriptions in Dutch and French is in the collection of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (RP.P.FM.1854).

New goods indicate new shopping habits and cultural tastes. An increase in ownership of ordinary goods was accompanied by that of the consumption of goods increasingly imported and available at relatively modest prices.<sup>27</sup> The practice of shopping and the physical space of shops altered as shopping became a staged pleasure and a method of choosing between varieties of manufactured goods on offer. In this period, shops might range from small wooden stalls or counters to the fronts of houses converted to trade purposes by the fitting of glass windows.<sup>28</sup> In the later eighteenth century, the purpose-built showroom emerged as a retail space replete with decorative mouldings, cabinets, cornices and pillars. Shopkeepers began to develop specific strategies for selling their goods; for instance, glazed panelled windows with crossbars to frame the window and cast the attention of shoppers onto particular goods along with racks, display boards, and cases. In London and larger towns, shops and shopping became part of a wider public culture of consumption.<sup>29</sup> The selection of goods whilst promenading around shops was a manner of performance on the street or in the arcade that worked alongside the theatre and assembly rooms as spaces to see and be seen.

In this context of changes in the appearance of shops, the structure of shopping and an increase in the possession of material goods, we find the earliest bird shops. In the 1680s the engraver Marcellous Laroon II published a series of etchings titled *The cries of the City of London Drawne after the Life* — their subjects were the street vendors of London (Plate.5). In 1688, his etching of a young street vendor with cages

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<sup>27</sup> Louise Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660-1760* (London: Routledge, 1996); Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: British Women and Consumer Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

<sup>28</sup> Claire Walsh, “Shops, Shopping, and the Art of Decision Making in Eighteenth-Century Britain,” in *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America 1700-1830*, ed. John Styles and Amanda Vickery (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Kathryn Morrison, *English Shops and Shopping: An Architectural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

<sup>29</sup> Jon Stobart, Andrew Hann, and Victoria Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption: Leisure and Shopping in the English Town c.1680-1830* (London: Routledge, 2007); Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660-1770* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

of canaries was printed accompanied by his tradesman's cry "Buy a fine singing bird." That such a vendor was published in a series featuring bakers, basket weavers, fruit sellers and milkmaids suggests that the sale of canaries was a commonplace in late seventeenth-century London. The tradition of bird catchers selling native species of songbirds was readily accompanied by the sale of canaries. These birds were not, however, in most cases imported from exotic climes but rather from Germany and Switzerland where they had been acclimatised and selectively bred to produce a medley of attractive and desirable variations. These birds were then exported to the British and French markets. In France these foreign dealers in birds came to blows with the Oisleurs, the guild of bird trappers and sellers who held an approved monopoly over the trade in birds and animals.<sup>30</sup> In England, however, there was no such guild to prevent the exploitation of new markets, so it is fitting that one of the earliest specialist bird sellers in London dating to ca.1700 was the "Bird Cage" on St James's Street owned by "J.C Meyer the German."<sup>31</sup> The "Bird Cage" provided the prospective customer with all manner of necessities for keeping canaries including birdseed and cages (and, of course, canary birds). Meyer had developed an ingenious range of pulley and line contraptions with which to suspend and lower cages. These ornamental birdcages were fitted with additional novel accoutrements like crystal glasses that held seeds and prevented unsightly mess. Meyer's insistence that his goods were of superior quality and design to those hawked in the streets indicates that he had itinerant competition in the bird trade.<sup>32</sup>

Competition could lead to significant and rapid market diversity, but it is clear that some individuals preferred not to risk their assets in permanent premises; London periodicals and newssheets of the early decades of the eighteenth century are replete with advertisements for the rapid wholesale and retail of packets and parcels of canaries at taverns. Other individuals, like Thomas Ward at the "Bell and Bird cage" on Wood Street from ca.1717, were willing and able to make significant investments

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<sup>30</sup> Robbins, *Elephant Slaves and Pampered Parrots*, esp. Chapter Four, "The Oisleurs Guild."

<sup>31</sup> *Postboy*, London, 14 January, 1701 (Burney Collection, British Library).

<sup>32</sup> *Postman and the Historical Account*, London, 16 March, 1706; *Tatler*, London, 26 December, 1710 (Burney Collection, British Library).

in what was a vocation and trade.<sup>33</sup> Ward published and sold his own pamphlets on the appropriate selection, care, and breeding of canaries and songbirds, which ran to three editions.<sup>34</sup> The opening of his second premises at “The Bird Cage” on Stamford Hill indicates the handsome sums that could be generated from dealing in birds. Although the trade in birds was not regulated by any guild at this early stage, it is reasonable to propose that the trade was kept within families who were able to draw on their shared knowledge, contacts and financial assets. In the case of Thomas Ward, for example, it is probable perhaps that there was a London Ward family particularly prominent in the trade — a bird seller called Matthew Ward was selling canaries, songbirds, and parrots from his premises on King Street near Tower Hill in the early 1720s.<sup>35</sup> Later, from the 1750s, it is much clearer that the animal merchants were dominated by a small number of families.

The bird shops of the early eighteenth century sold their stock in an exhibitionary context where animals, living and dead, were regularly to be seen in coffee houses and inns. The emergence of the coffeehouse was the product of the acquisition of a cultural taste for the roasted coffee bean that had developed in Britain in the 1650s and 1660s.<sup>36</sup> Coffee houses became an important location for consumer culture; they were, after all, the sites of auctions and the hosts of insurance agents and merchants. Some of these coffee houses are important to the history of collecting and animals because they amassed collections of curiosities accessible to their customers. The earliest of the coffee houses to display a collection was Don Saltero’s in Chelsea in 1695. Proprietor John Salter had been a valet to Sir Hans Sloane, and on leaving his service to go into business Sloane presented him with specimens, mostly natural

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<sup>33</sup> *Daily Courant*, London, 17 January, 1717 (Burney Collection, British Library).

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Ward’s pamphlet was sold on his premises and titled *The Bird Fanciers Recreation, Including Choice Instructions for the Taking, Feeding, Breeding and Teaching of Them*. The pamphlet featured woodcuts of birds and was issued in three editions in 1728, 1735 and 1740.

<sup>35</sup> *Weekly Journal or Saturday’s Post*, London, 23 March, 1723 (Burney Collection, British Library).

<sup>36</sup> Markman Ellis, *The Coffee House: A Cultural History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2004).

historical, for his coffee house to draw in custom. From the early 1690s, other spaces like the apothecary shop of John Coyers began to display and retail curiosities; later in the decade (1698), the “Monster Shop” started trading behind the London Stock Market.<sup>37</sup> Curiosities were an important part of the culture of coffee houses and taverns, and it became more frequent for live exotic animals to be displayed at inns. . The earliest extant source for the display of living *and* dead animals in a coffee house is dated to 1698, an advertisement for Moncreff’s Coffee House. Here for sixpence one could view between 8am and 8pm a live civet cat, spotted like a leopard, a strange monster “being humane upwards, and brute downwards” that had recently died and been preserved.<sup>38</sup>

Whilst this was probably not the first instance of this type of animal display, they are unlikely to have predated the 1690s by much. Don Saltero’s was after all considered by contemporaries to be an unusual sort of establishment when it became the first coffee house to display a collection of curiosities in 1695. By the 1730s, however, the display of exotic animals in taverns and coffee houses had become increasingly widespread. Some had considerable collections of animals like the George Tavern that displayed live birds including cassowaries, a vulture, and a crocodile.<sup>39</sup> Those coffee houses that displayed living and dead animals often exhibited those that made novel or striking juxtapositions, such as the chimpanzee foetus and live female pouched opossum at the Virginia Coffee House, or the male and female chimpanzees at the White Peruke preserved “as if alive” alongside a live four foot rattlesnake.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Brian Cowan discusses briefly exotic animals in coffee houses but does not place emphasis on the collection and display of living and dead animals in the same space, nor in a history of the emergence of the trade in exotic animals. Brian Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffee House* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

<sup>38</sup> Handbill for Moncreff’s Coffee House, June, 1698 (British Library, 2026/25(9)).

<sup>39</sup> Lysons Collections (MS 20453) and Eleazar Albin, *A Natural History of Birds, Vol. II* (London: Royal College of Physicians, 1731-1738).

<sup>40</sup> *London and Daily Post and General Advertiser*, London, 18 Jan, 1739, and 7 March, 1739 (Burney Collection, British Library).

Rattlesnakes were popular animals for exhibition in the coffee houses of London in the 1730s. Transported from the British North American colonies they probably made a relatively good choice of animal for the ocean voyage to Britain. Although venomous and potentially lethal, the rattlesnake is subdued in mild climates and, like other snakes, can survive for many months without food. The varied advertisements for their display tempted the curious by appealing to their sense of vicarious horror — the rattling sound of the snake’s tail and the glistening scaled skin. At Smithfield Fair two live rattlesnakes were displayed alongside the rattles and teeth of other rattlesnakes for patrons to handle; elsewhere at the Virginia Coffee House a live rattlesnake was displayed alongside a variety of prepared rattlesnake specimens. Not to be outdone, the proprietor of the Apollo Coffee House sought to lure extra customers by offering printed copies of the description of a rattlesnake as a gratuity to those who came to see a live female rattlesnake and her nine young.<sup>41</sup>

By the 1730s and 40s, then, a number of sites for the consumption of exotic animals had emerged in London. These were, in part, the result of cultural exchanges with the commercial culture of the Dutch Republic; Anglo-Dutch interactions diffused ways of exhibiting animals across the North Sea. The culture of tavern collections and menageries that flourished in Amsterdam appeared later in London, though even in the 1730s there was still no establishment that resembled the Menagerie Van Blauw Jan. Small bird sellers, though, were trading in the city, and these would later become larger in scope and be described as menageries by contemporaries. These small shops selling initially canaries bore, too, the hallmark of foreign exchange. Around 1700, “Meyer the German” and his shop “The Bird Cage” was one of the few earliest permanent London bird shops when other dealers were trading through taverns or coffee houses on an itinerant basis with parcels of birds sent from Germany and Switzerland. Meyer, in all likelihood, saw a market niche and filled it, and others must have soon realised the profitability of commerce in birds since within two decades the number of such enterprises proliferated in London. These

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<sup>41</sup> *Daily Post*, London, 3 August, 1730; *Daily Journal*, London, 18 September, 1735; *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, 19 April, 1738 (Burney Collection, British Library).

bird sellers would later acquire more extensive stock in the mid-eighteenth century and become more substantial animal merchants.

### **Animal Merchants after the 1750s**

The 1750s and 1760s were decades of war and economic expansion for Britain, a period that changed the character of animal merchants in London. British territorial gains and engagement in the Seven Years War (1756-1763) seriously diminished French authority overseas. Britain acquired “New France” (France choosing the islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique instead of their large North American territory) and parts of India at the expense of the French, particularly stipulating that remaining trading ports be unfortified with minimal garrisons. The East India Company grew substantially in these years. The rapid increase in shipping between Asia and Britain cannot be overstated: in the early 1700s around 200,000 lb per annum was carried by the British East Indies Company, but by the late 1750s this had swollen to 3,000,000lb a year.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, the volume of shipping entering the Port of London increased fourfold during the eighteenth century.<sup>43</sup> Ships returning from overseas territories and foreign ports brought with them exotic animals in increased variety and abundance. Advertisements in newspapers and periodicals show that from the 1750s and 1760s animal dealers were selling a broader range of species than the bird sellers of the early eighteenth century, many originating from newly acquired lands. Animal dealers in this period also began to use the word “menagerie” to describe their business, a reflection, too, of increased stock and changes in status. Many, like “Edmond’s Menagerie” on Piccadilly, advertised a greater range of exotic birds (more parrots and fewer canaries) and small mammals like American chipmunks.<sup>44</sup> Songbirds like cardinals, American box turtles and

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<sup>42</sup> Phillip Lawson, *The East India Company: A History* (London: Longman, 1993), p. 97.

<sup>43</sup> Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (London: Penguin, 1994), p.138.

<sup>44</sup> *Gazetter and New Daily Advertiser*, London, 15 May, 1766 (Burney Collection, British Library).

chipmunks reflect an increased availability of North American species commensurate with territorial gains and commercial expansion. Others, like the “City Menagerie,” had a considerably larger repertoire of animals for sale in addition to the usual birds; monkeys, tigers, opossums, and camels were all advertised as “to be seen or sold.” The animal merchant dealing from the aptly named “Noah’s Ark” offered a wolf, buffalo, crocodile, several camels and a huge variety of parrots and other caged birds.<sup>45</sup>

In the 1760s, a distinct geography of animal exhibitions and commerce emerged in London as animal merchants and menageries began to line the Strand, Piccadilly, and St James’s. In the following decades, and certainly by 1800, these would proliferate to the extent that it was possible to walk through West London and see all the principle “animals of importance.” These animals could be found living and dead in a variety of permanent and temporary exhibitionary contexts. In London during the summer of 1805, a young twenty-six-year-old American, Benjamin Silliman, chair of chemistry and natural history at Yale College, bathed in the sights of the city. He found the city to cater to his tastes perfectly, noting in his journal:

*July 23.* —Having occupied my leisure hours, of late, in perusing Buffon, Shaw, and other writers on zoology, I have been naturally led to visit the museums, and collections of animals, which are found in such perfection in London. With these views I spent several hours before dinner in Pidcock’s menagerie at Exeter Change, and at the Leverian Museum. There are not many animals of importance which one may not see, at this time, in London; to mention only a few of those which I have examined to-day; the lion and lioness, royal tiger of Bengal, panther, hyena, tiger cat, leopard, ourang-outang, elephant, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, great white bear of Greenland, the bison, elk or moose deer, the zebra, &c. Most of these were living. I was regretting, as I was returning home, that, in all the collections of animals in London, there was no camel, and I had never seen one since I was a boy. With this regret on my mind I had almost reached my lodgings, when I was saluted by martial music, which I thought must proceed from a regiment of volunteers going out to a review; but, on turning the corner of Margaret-street, what should I see but a camel, directly before my windows. The

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<sup>45</sup> *Public Advertiser*, London, 24 December, 1766 and *Public Advertiser*, London, 28 September, 1765 (Burney Collection, British Library).

music preceded the camel, which was led by a man, while a monkey, dressed in a scarlet military coat, with much seeming gravity, was mounted on his back as a rider.<sup>46</sup>

Silliman visited Pidcock's menagerie twice that summer, as well as Brookes' menagerie further along Piccadilly on the Haymarket (a short walk from Pidcock's) — where, after he had imprudently tapped the llama with his cane to get a better look, it spat on his face. The elephant at Pidcock's picked up Silliman's cane and reached into his waistcoat pocket for money. Seen before dinner, or for an odd hour whilst on a stroll, it was possible in London to see most of the animals to be found in the pages of Buffon's *Histoire naturelle* or George Shaw's *General Zoology*. Menageries like Edmond's, Noah's Ark, and the City Menagerie indicate a significant commodity status for exotic animals in London by the 1760s. Earlier bird sellers were joined and to an ever greater extent superseded by a large number of animal merchants. (MAP ONE) Comparatively little is known about these menageries, they are not well documented and are known only through sporadic advertisements. Only one menagerie in the 1760s leaves substantial historical traces, that of Joshua Brookes, which would remain in his family until the early nineteenth century and was established at some point in the 1750s. Indeed, the family names of those associated with Brookes in the 1760s as employees or business associates — the Cross's and Heering's — would become established animal merchants in their own rights by the early 1800s (Plates 6 and 7). Edward Cross operated a menagerie at the Exeter Change between 1814 and 1829, and a descendant called William Cross operated a menagerie as an "importer of wild beasts" in Liverpool in the 1890s. The three businesses of Joshua Brooke's that emerged in the 1760s were then highly significant in shaping the topography of late eighteenth century animal retail. Brooke's menagerie, though it probably represented the "high end" of the trade, is worth exploring as a case study: his menagerie highlights a trajectory of development from the 1750s to the early 1800s that maps general historical trends. One of the earliest sources for Joshua Brookes's "Original Menagerie" at Gray's Inn Gate, Holborn is a 1763 advertisement for the sale of birds from Bengal and America, contextualising the roots of his business in the decade of commercial

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<sup>46</sup> Benjamin Silliman, *A Journal of Travels in England, Holland and Scotland, and Two Passages over the Atlantic in the Years 1805 and 1806, Vol. 1* (Boston: Wait, 1812), p. 271.

expansion during and following the Seven Years War.<sup>47</sup> From around 1765, Brookes was also importing and selling a variety of plants and seeds at his menagerie, as well as extending his business to include other premises on the New Road at Tottenham Court. These premises were advertised as well-kept and ventilated rooms where animals could be bought or exchanged. A catalogue available to customers, unfortunately no longer extant, listed species as diverse as antelope, lions, monkeys, vultures, and porcupines as available for purchase.<sup>48</sup> From 1772, the King's botanist William Young began to send large quantities of plants and seeds to Brookes from the American colonies. The largest consignment included several thousand flowering shrubs, trees, bog plants, ferns, seeds, acorns and cones for planting in gardens or preservation with stoves — including orchids and the Venus flytrap.

This large quantity of plants was split into two different types of boxes from which customers could choose. Boxes with forty-four varieties along with a catalogue of their contents were sold for £4.4s and boxes with around ninety varieties of seeds for £3.3s.<sup>49</sup> Expansion into exotic flora was accompanied elsewhere by the growth of the business. Brookes opened another menagerie at the Haymarket near Piccadilly, an excellent strategic site to take advantage of West London's elite residences. Joshua Brookes did not operate the menagerie at the Haymarket however. Instead, his new partner referred to as "Cross" in advertisements operated it. This was Mary Cross, indentified as a "dealer in live fowls and birds" in the joint insurance policy her associate Joshua Brookes took out on her dwelling house in 1777.<sup>50</sup> Insured for three hundred pounds this was certainly a respectable and substantial property ("two houses laid into the one") and an indication of the financial status of dealing in animals. Brookes had been the business partner of her late husband John Cross, who had also been a proprietor of a menagerie in St James's. In his will, Cross left his

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<sup>47</sup> *Public Advertiser*, London, 19 May, 1763 (Burney Collection, British Library).

<sup>48</sup> *Public Advertiser*, London, 23 December, 1767 (Burney Collection, British Library).

<sup>49</sup> *Gazette and New Daily Advertiser*, London, 21 February, 1772 (Burney Collection, British Library).

<sup>50</sup> Joshua Brookes, 20 February, 1777 380450 Sun Insurance Policy Register MS11936 (London Metropolitan Archives/ Guildhall Library).

property to his wife and small monetary sums to his brother's widow and her sons. To his late partner, Joshua Brookes, he left a gold watch, suggestive of a strong personal and professional relationship. Mary Cross and Brookes continued in a partnership that had clearly been a close affiliation between two prominent menagerie families; shortly after his partner's death, Brookes inherited his gold watch and paid his late partner's wife's insurance policy.<sup>51</sup>

Mary Cross is one of the only menagerists identifiable as female, though it is probable that some other women were involved in this trade as proprietors. In lieu of a guild like the Oisleurs in eighteenth-century Paris, the animal merchants of London protected their interests by drawing from a shared pool of labour, business partners, and family members. Inherited wealth and trade skills both explicit and tacit circulated amongst a few families like the Brookes', Crosses, and Pidcock's. In larger menageries like Brookes', servants and keepers were employed to tend to the animals and daily trade, meaning that as the wives and daughters of wealthy merchants some women attained a separation from labour as a hallmark of respectable gentility. In smaller bird dealers and cage makers the labour of women was necessary for survival. Others, like Mary Cross, furnished with financial capital and a pedigree of familial experience with the animal trade, operated menageries as proprietors of their own establishments.

In around 1775, Brookes' establishment at Gray's Inn Road in Holborn was removed to premises at Tottenham Court Road, and in a handbill of that year we are given an impression of what that menagerie looked like, or rather the image Joshua Brookes wished to portray to his clients (Plate.8).<sup>52</sup> In a well-planted garden, peacocks and other birds roam alongside a greyhound; in the background, there are a number of small buildings with large windows facing onto the garden. Perhaps these housed the pens and enclosures of the menagerie inhabitants. The stock of the menagerie was immense, some 160 different avian species alone ranging from cassowaries to

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<sup>51</sup> John Cross Prob. 1776 and 1777 11/1027 (Public Record Office, National Archives).

<sup>52</sup> Joshua Brookes, *Joshua Brookes, at His Menagerie, in the New-Road, Tottenham-Court... Buys and Sells and Exchanges All Sorts of Foreign Birds and Quadrupeds* (British Library, L.23.3 (48)).

cockatoos and finches to flamingos. Moreover, as a prominent and capable “zoologist,” Brookes boldly claimed to convey his birds from and to “any part of the world”. This was not pure hyperbole since an extended network of dealers, agents, and seamen aided in the acquisition and dissemination of exotic animals and plants. These routes, however, were subject to change. Brookes’ consignment of American plants and seeds from his botanical agent William Young ceased in 1775 with the beginning of the American War of Independence (1775-1783), and those plants were not advertised for sale again until 1786. The disruption of trade between the rebel colonies and, later, the early Republic correlates with both the cessation of importation of species from North America and an increase in those from India and Africa.

Brookes, like other menagerists, sourced his animals from overseas but he also received animals from the sale of estates and assets from within Britain. In 1786, the living animals belonging to the late Duchess of Portland were advertised for sale, including Asian cattle, rare breeds of goat and sheep and wildfowl from her menagerie.<sup>53</sup> Brookes was also able to fulfil specific orders for individuals, such as the Duke of Norfolk’s sixteen reindeer for his estate in Cumberland in 1789. Imported from Lapland, the herd of reindeer arrived in Hull along with sacks of arctic mosses to mix with their feed and help them acclimatise.<sup>54</sup> The aristocracy and gentry sought plants and animals to acclimatise or naturalise on their estates, and menageries like Brookes catered to their tastes profitably. By 1790, another London menagerist provided a comprehensive service from James Pilton’s Manufactory in leafy Chelsea, a short carriage-ride from West London. A designer and producer of ironwork, Pilton would design and stock a menagerie or aviary for wealthy clients.<sup>55</sup> Along the Strand, the menagerie of Gilbert Pidcock was well positioned for commercial success (MAP TWO). By the 1780s and 1790s, the Strand, Piccadilly,

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<sup>53</sup> *Public Advertiser*, London, 1786 (Burney Collection, British Library).

<sup>54</sup> *Morning Post and Gazette*, London, 17 August, 1789 (Burney Collection, British Library).

<sup>55</sup> There are a few references to Pilton’s manufactory in periodicals but the bulk of sources pertaining to the manufactory are a small number of trade cards (British Museum, Trade cards Heal 85.237).

Pall Mall, and St. James's were populated by an array of retailers catering to the fashionable tastes of the metropolitan elite who resided in squares like St James's or the great aristocratic houses like Devonshire or Hertford House. In this milieu, Twinning's Tea Merchants and Fortnum and Mason's stocked the tables of the wealthy with the edible commodities of Empire; Dru Drury's provided the silverware. Josiah Wedgwood's showroom on St James's Street and the print shop of Rudolph Ackermann on the Strand were spaces for luxury consumption, pleasurable socialisation and leisured browsing. These decades, too, saw the topography of the West End populated by exhibitions, print shops and galleries as an alternative to the Royal Academy. With a one-shilling entry fee these exhibitions were also the preserve of the affluent since a day labourer might only earn one or two shillings a day. Likewise, entrance into Pidcock's menagerie would cost a visitor two shillings and sixpence or a shilling for an apartment. This would have excluded a large proportion of eighteenth-century Londoners. Later in the eighteenth century some menageries did offer reduced rates for servants and working people, so in principle these were more accessible to a greater number of people.

The proliferation of menageries and animal merchants in the second half of the eighteenth century is indicative of broader economic expansion, like that illustrated in the earlier increased ownership of material goods in the period 1660-1760. The emergence and specialisation of bird sellers and menagerists from earlier itinerant origins can be traced against this economic growth. Furthermore, the expansion in the trade in exotic animals also indicates significant numbers of wealthy consumers, or rather a concentration of disposable wealth in a small proportion of consumers willing to spend money on animals. That late eighteenth-century London had a thriving community of animal merchants would suggest that menagerists could rely on a consistent and profitable trade. The illustrated natural histories of George Edwards and Eleazar Albin, prepared and published between the early 1730s and late 1750s, list the occupations or rank of the owners of the birds and animals that they drew and included in their works. Of the fifty-eight individuals acknowledged as the proprietors of exotic animals, twenty-eight were aristocrats, government officials or members of the gentry — with a further seven listed without a rank or occupation. This suggests that they were of independent means. But a substantial number of individuals, indeed almost a third of this sample, were professionals or tradesmen.

Clerks, merchants, inn-keepers, coffee house proprietors, physicians and apothecaries were also owners of exotic animals: Thomas Walker (apothecary) had a toucan, and Mr. Bradbury (apothecary) a mongoose, Mr Scarlet (optician) a Jeroba, and Mrs. Kennon (midwife) a ring-tailed lemur and marmoset. Merchants, too, appear as the owners of parrots and monkeys, and rather unusually a thorn-tailed lizard. George Edwards, himself a librarian to the Royal College of Physicians, had a large collection of animals that included parrots, finches, a lemur, squirrel, monkey and a pair of tortoises. Exotic animals were then the property of at least some of the “middling sort” in the decades before the 1750s and 1760s.

Later individuals like Dr. Thornton are perhaps typical of a “prosperous middling sort” around 1800 willing and able to spend large sums on exotic animals. Dr. Robert John Thornton (1768-1837), lecturer on medical botany at Guy’s Hospital and physician to the Marylebone Dispensary, purchased his parrot for fifteen guineas (£16, around the annual wage of a domestic servant) from Brooke’s Menagerie at the Haymarket with the intention of displaying the bird in his “museum, or botanical exhibition” at 49 Bond Street. There, the bird was on display alongside his botanical specimens, illustrations and prints for his botanical work, *The Temple of Flora* (1804), first advertised in 1797. “Sulky and unhappy,” the parrot made “those screaming noises so offensive in that tribe” until the botanical exhibition was closed and he was brought home by Thornton. The short periodical story on Dr Thornton’s macaw discerned this moment as decisive in the enculturation of the parrot; his withered foot healed, his plumage became resplendent, he “forgot his barbarous sounds” and instead imitated words — he began to take breakfast with the family. Fed on buttered toast, dumplings, potatoes and fruit, the parrot was trained to stand on the doctor’s finger and fan his wings at Thornton or his spectators to “show their beauty”. The parrot would also crack nuts and peach stones for gathered company. Thornton, probably like many other patient late eighteenth-century parrot owners, even taught his parrot an array of phrases including “Pretty Fellow”, “What’s o’ Clock”, “Saucy Fellow”, “Macaw”, and the names of his children.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> *The Monthly Magazine* 22, 2 (London, Phillips, 1806), 130.

## **Animal Assets**

If the lives of many of the animals that merchants sold are untraceable, the lives of some of the merchants are themselves partially documented. Some of the London animal dealers prospered with secure incomes and smart premises, others struggled at the bottom end of a business troubled with high grain prices and unpopular birds, or the threat of legal action for handling, knowingly or otherwise, stolen animals. The financial status of the London menagerists is useful too as an introduction to broader discussion on the important status of exotic animals as commodities and legally protected property in the eighteenth century. Using a range of sources, including wills and insurance policy records, I reconstruct the material culture of the menagerists; their possessions, properties and particularly the value of their animal stock. Utilising court records, I show how animal merchants positioned themselves as authorities or reliable witnesses in cases of animal theft and the extent to which the owners of animals sought legal redress after the theft of their property.

The financial status of London menagerists is recorded in those documents that were created to guarantee or protect their property. In addition to legally proved wills, two new methods were available for asset and personal security in the eighteenth century: life insurance and fire insurance. These are the documents that offer historical insight into the lives of animal merchants. Like other individuals with salaried incomes, stipends, or secure trade but not otherwise independently wealthy, animal dealers were concerned with protecting the respectable status of their families in the event of their death:

Long-term life insurance was aimed at a growing middle class of salaried professionals — clergymen, doctors, and lawyers, skilled artisans who were respectable but not of independent means. In a world where apparently even clergymen could not count upon communal charity, the sudden death of the provider could topple the family from the middling ranks of society to the very bottom. Such reversals of fortune were the proper

fate of the gambler, not the good bourgeois, and the new life insurance companies set about domesticating risk...<sup>57</sup>

The will of the menagerist Joshua Brookes, proprietor, if we remember, of a menagerie since the 1760s, is replete with annuities and estate stipulations — the hallmarks of the prudent good bourgeois and an assiduous domestication of risk. It is clear that the Brooke's family were thriving as animal merchants and were of the affluent "middling sort". Joshua Brookes was the proprietor of a small number of freehold and leasehold properties and estates which, alongside annuities, provided financially for his family.<sup>58</sup> In 1803, his wife Elizabeth Brookes received £200 in a lump sum on his death with a £50 annuity, supplemented further with an annual income from estates of £150. With an annual income of £200, Elizabeth Brookes constituted part of the 2-3 per cent of Londoners in the "upper income" bracket, albeit at the lower end.<sup>59</sup> In addition, Brooke's will not only provided for the financial independence and respectability of his wife, but also of his daughters Arabella and Ann. Both were in receipt of £50 annuities until they chose to marry and received £200 in lieu. His sons George and Thomas were without an annuity but received £200 as a single payment, and his sons Paul and William much smaller sums of £20 each. Paul Brookes, though hardly financially independent on his £20 lump sum did benefit from his family's business; he travelled in Europe and later established a menagerie on the New Road, St Pancras, that thrived into the 1840s.

When the Brookes's menagerie at Tottenham Court Road was sold in 1813, the contents of the menagerie were listed alongside the family furniture, including "good pieces of fine mahogany" commensurate with genteel living.<sup>60</sup> One of the wealthiest menagerists (who later moved to a different trade) was probably Thomas Clark (1736-1816), an early London menagerist and partner of Gilbert Pidcock. Clark

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<sup>57</sup> Lorraine Daston, *Classical Probability in the Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p.175.

<sup>58</sup> Joshua Brookes Prob. 11/1385 (Public Record Office, The National Archives).

<sup>59</sup> Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England 1680-1780* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p.16.

<sup>60</sup> For advertisements for menageries and contents see Lysons Collection, MC 20452, 26.

rented large parts of the Exeter Change in London and had diversified his small umbrella and cane business into several trades (Plates. 9, 10,11 & 12) He had once owned the menagerie before Pidcock took over, and later as proprietor of the Exeter Change rented the rooms to Pidcock, whilst dealing himself in cutlery. He had earned a prodigious £6,000 a year at points and died with assets of £300,000 in 1816, including a smart townhouse in Belgravia Place. Clark had displayed many exotic animals at the Lyceum and Exeter Change since the 1770s and the monies from these must have substantially contributed to his amassed wealth.<sup>61</sup>

A man called John Bobey (1774-?), born to slaves in Jamaica and formerly a slave and an indentured-servant of Thomas Clark, was at one time a menagerie exhibit himself, but later a menagerist with a personal biography tied to Clark and Pidcock. Bobey was born with vitiligo and arrived aged 12 in London to be displaced as a racial “spotted” or “pie-bald” curiosity. In 1789, Clark purchased him as an indentured-servant for 100 guineas, continuing to exhibit him and use his labour in the menagerie. Later at auction, Clark sold his menagerie animals to Pidcock, with Bobey bringing forward the animals as lots. When it came to his turn to be sold, despite Bobey’s protestations, his servitude was sold for 50 guineas to Pidcock. Refusing to be sold, he is credited with the words “I can’t stand that, I will not be sold like the monkeys.” In time, Pidcock paid Bobey a salary and he soon left the menagerie to marry an Englishwoman. Bobey and his wife then established their own travelling menagerie. Bobey clearly utilising skills as an animal keeper acquired as a slave and indenture. They had established this menagerie at some point after 1795 but before 1804 when a brief description of it appeared in a short biographical account of his life:

By a proper application of their savings, they soon made up a good collection of monkeys, birds, beasts, etc and notwithstanding the expense of travelling, and the keep of five horses and men, which is at least two guineas a day, yet such are the exertions

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<sup>61</sup> “Obituary of Thomas Clark,” *The Gentleman’s Magazine and Historical Chronicle* LXXXVI (London: Nichols, 1816), 378.

and industry of this couple, and the satisfaction they give at all the principal fairs, that there is little doubt but in a short time they will accumulate a decent fortune.<sup>62</sup>

John Bobey's later life as a menagerist and his material conditions is unclear but along with Edward Cross, Thomas Hall, and John Clark (a possible relation of Thomas Clark) is one of the few menagerists of whom portraits exist. (Plate.13) A better glimpse at the finances and lives of the menagerists and their families is afforded in the contents of their fire insurance policies, as listed in the extant policy registers of Sun Insurance. These insurance policy registers record the policies of a number of London menagerists between the late 1770s and 1820s, with multiple policies for Gilbert Pidcock and Edward Cross making it possible to trace changes in the growth of their businesses. The insurance values of other policyholders are a useful comparison; the properties, premises and possessions of trades people are typically insured for sums between £300 and £400, and of gentlemen and professionals from £500 upwards. Paintings and china appear insured separately between £30 and £50. Among the menagerists, George Kendrick, wireworker and animal dealer at 42 Piccadilly, insured his household goods, printed books, apparel and silver plate for £300 and his stock (presumably animal and wirework) for £400. With a total insurance value of £700, Kendrick was at the lower end of what could be a lucrative trade in exotic animals.<sup>63</sup> This, notwithstanding the value and range of his possessions, indicates a robust trade and some of the material comfort and literacy of a comfortable merchant. The possessions of menagerists Pidcock and Cross are those of typical late eighteenth-century middling comfort and respectability; printed books, china and glass, musical instruments, silver plate, clothing worthy of insurance, and paintings. In 1803, Pidcock insured his business premises at the Exeter Change for £250 and a range of paintings, prints, pictures, and three organs within for an

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<sup>62</sup> William Granger, *The New Wonderful Museum, Vol. II* (London: Allen, 1804), p. 711; George Wilson, *The Eccentric Mirror: Reflecting a Faithful and Interesting Delineation of Male and Female Characters Ancient and Modern, Vol. II* (London: Cundee, 1807), p. 32. A woodcut of John Bobey with a short description appears in Burt, *Delineation of Curious Foreign Birds and Beast, in their Natural Colours, which are to be Seen Alive at the Great Room Over Exeter Change* (London: Jordan, 1791).

<sup>63</sup> George Kendrick at 42 Piccadilly 816235, Sun Insurance Policy Register MS11936 (London Metropolitan Archives/ Guildhall Library).

additional £300 — the animal dens, fittings and harnesses within for £140. Pidcock's "living birds and beasts & preserv'd specimens" were insured for the large sum of £1565, so large a sum that the animals were itemised in a catalogue lodged with the office of the insurer.<sup>64</sup> With an insurance value of £2,400 Pidcock's assets were several times those of typical merchants, trades people and professionals catered by Sun Insurance. Between 1803 and 1809, Pidcock's business grew considerably; his total assets in 1809 were insured for the sum of £4,000.<sup>65</sup> The insurance policies for his successor, Edward Cross demonstrate a continued high value for exotic animals; his animal stock alone was insured for £2,150 in 1816, £2,350 in 1818 and £2,700 in 1822.<sup>66</sup>

The relative wealth of the menagerists at the top of the trade should not mask the precarious situation of those at the bottom, like small bird dealers or cage makers. Smaller dealers were particularly vulnerable to loss of stock through death, fluctuations in the prices of grains and other animal foods and changing consumer preferences. Most menagerists did not own the freeholds to their properties (even the Brookes's were leaseholders of their premises and some of their estate). With rent to pay and expensive, hungry stock, financial ruin was a real possibility for animal dealers. In early 1800, a dealer in birds appeared in court desperate to plea for reparations for his ruined business. He had fallen behind on his rent and the landlord had seized his stock in lieu of payment. The dealer claimed that his stock of 200 pigeons, pheasants, owls and other birds was worth £64.10s but it had been sold by his former landlord for a mere £10.12 s in order to pay the rent and the costs of negotiating a sale with the purchaser. The purchaser and appraiser of the undervalued stock was another menagerist, Mr. John Brookes, a relative and successor of Joshua Brookes. Brookes had accompanied the landlord late one evening between 9 and 11pm to agree, having seen the birds, on a price. The judge probed the dealer and

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<sup>64</sup> Gilbert Pidcock, 9 March, 1803 730081, Sun Insurance Policy Register MS11936 (London Metropolitan Archives/ Guildhall Library).

<sup>65</sup> Gilbert Pidcock, 27 July, 1809 832885, Sun Insurance Policy Register MS11936 (London Metropolitan Archives/ Guildhall Library).

<sup>66</sup> Edward Cross, 15 July, 1818, 942859 and 30 August, 1816 921657 Sun Insurance Policy Register MS11936 (London Metropolitan Archives/ Guildhall Library).

Brookes about the actual value of the birds; the dealer protested that although the value of some of the birds had depreciated of late, his stock had been worth sixty-four pounds. Brookes argued that the stock really was depreciated and that he had valued and purchased them accordingly. After all, so he told the court, the demand for some varieties of birds was so low and the price of grain so unusually high that he had little choice but to set free his own stock of imported pigeons. With only his daughter testifying to the value of her father's stock, the dealer was ruined when the court ruled against him.<sup>67</sup> The landlord received his rent and Brookes, even as he positioned himself as a credible authority in court, aggressively purloined the stock of a competitor.

There was, then, a marked social and economic distinction between the status of menagerists like Pidcock (with animal assets valued at, say, £1565) and others struggling with modest stocks (worth £64.10s, or indeed £10.12s). Animal merchants, even those like Pidcock, were vulnerable to the death of animals on transit to their purchaser and the inevitable ensuing legal action. Fortunately for Pidcock, on at least one occasion he managed to avoid financial losses in the Court of Common Pleas. In 1800, a Chief Justice and Jury decided in favour of the plaintiff, Pidcock, in the case of *Pidcock v. Saunders*. Pidcock had sold a bear, two monkeys, a leopard, a wolf and a variety of other animals to Saunders and sent them to him in a caravan along with the bill. The monkeys and leopard were found dead on arrival and a furious Saunders refused to pay his bill. In settling the dispute in court, the Chief Justice, Lord Eldon, along with the jury, ruled that since no warranty had been provided stating that the animals would all arrive alive, Saunders should settle his bill.<sup>68</sup> Perhaps other animal merchant too avoided any such promises since death on or shortly after arrival was probably not uncommon given the rigours of travel. When Pidcock sold a rhinoceros to an agent of Holy Roman Emperor Francis II (later Emperor of Austria) in 1799 for £1000, he must have been especially relieved since the rhinoceros died a mere two months later in the care of Francis's agent in London, which is to say not on *his* balance sheet. Pidcock had purchased a rhinoceros earlier in 1790 for £700 from the East India Company, but he died unsold

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<sup>67</sup> *The Sporting Magazine* XVI (London: Wheble, 1800), 128.

<sup>68</sup> *The Sporting Magazine* XVI, 182.

just three years later from an inflammation of a dislocated leg.<sup>69</sup> Exotic animals were significant investments and their deaths whilst the property of animal merchants was a disastrous loss of assets.

In some instances the menagerists themselves appeared in court charged with handling stolen goods as proprietors of animals lost their property through theft rather than death. In others, the menagerists stood in court as witnesses attesting to the identity of stolen animals and the accused. In December 1768, William Enoch, claiming that he had “caught them in a wilderness by the roadside, near Highgate” stood in court charged with the theft of two gold China pheasants belonging to the Hon. Charles York, Esq. The two pheasants had been stolen from York’s menagerie; the door had been forced open with an iron instrument. The two birds were produced in court as living evidence. York’s servant and gardener both recognised them; “these are the same, I know them well”, “I am very sure these are the same produced”.<sup>70</sup> Enoch had taken the pheasants to a salesman in Newgate market, who, doubting their provenance, took them to a Mr James in Holborn, a dealer in birds. Mr James had received intelligence of the bird theft and identified the birds as those belonging to York. With a value of 3.1 shillings each, the pair of golden pheasants was worth a handsome sum, the equivalent of a labourer’s weekly wage. Enoch did not profit from his theft, though he was convicted and transported to the American colonies.

Later, in 1789, Thomas Andrews was indicted for a similar crime, the theft of another pair of gold China pheasants — this time worth 20 shillings and belonging to Jervoise Clark Jervoise, Esq.<sup>71</sup> The pheasants were stolen from his aviary; during the theft, the cock pheasant’s tail had been pulled out and left behind inadvertently as criminal evidence. The menagerist William Gough of Gough’s Menagerie on Holborn Hill testified that Andrews had brought the birds to him, taking one out of

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<sup>69</sup> William Bingley, *Animal Biography*, p. 124.

<sup>70</sup> *The Proceedings of the Old Bailey: London’s Criminal Court, 1674 to 1913*, 13<sup>th</sup> April 1768. ([www.oldbaileyonline.org](http://www.oldbaileyonline.org), 15 June, 2009); The trial of William Enoch (t17680413-54).

<sup>71</sup> *OBP*, 22 April, 1789. The trial of Thomas Andrews (t17890422-41).

each side of his coat from a pocket, and offered them for 30 shillings. Gough detained Andrews and the birds believing them to be stolen. Bringing the lost tail feathers with him, Jervoise's gardener George Rolls came to the menagerie and vouched for the birds, recognising the burn marks he had made under their left wings. Like Enoch, Andrews was found guilty and sentenced to transportation. In the 1780s, as a transportee, Andrews would have been on one of the first fleets to New South Wales.

The Brookes family were also the subject of two legal cases related to stolen property in 1805 and 1807. A stolen pug dog was found in the possession of John Brookes and identified as belonging to a Colonel McKenzie. After two failed appeals and the fraudulent testaments of Brookes' servants, he was, at his behest, held accountable for damages of thirty pounds. His reputation was damaged.<sup>72</sup> Two years later and John Brookes appeared in court again, although this time as a prosecutor. Even so, this court appearance was deeply shaming and not in the least because the defence reminded him of the affair of McKenzie's pug. Brookes had taken two of his former employees to court with the theft of property, including a birdcage and a bag of feathers from his menagerie. Mazarine Bell and his wife had worked at Brookes' animal exhibition and had been left to pay themselves fourteen or fifteen shillings a week from the exhibition monies received - a good weekly wage. Brooke's however had fallen behind on his employee's wages and they moved on in May 1807. Months later in November 1807, he brought his former employees to court for alleged theft. There it transpired that not only was he in arrears for their wages, had lied about their requests for payment, and had met his former employees several times in the intervening months making no such allegation of theft or attempt to charge them. The court threw Brookes' claim out and his former employees were acquitted.<sup>73</sup>

Far from the world of weekly waged servants and unscrupulous menagerists, contested ownership of valuable animals sometimes saw embittered aristocratic households brought to the bench. Disputed ownership caused society scandal when a parrot in a cage was brought in front of a magistrate at Great Malbrough Street.

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<sup>72</sup> *Annual Register of World Events: A Review of the Year 1805* (London, 1807), 390.

<sup>73</sup> *OBP*, 14 January 1807. The trial of Mazarine Bell (t18070114-100).

Stolen from the house of Lady Harriet Gill, the parrot was later found in the possession of the Countess of Granard a few streets away. The parrot had been a gift from Gill's husband Earl Wigton. Granard's cook was called to court along with the parrot. Wigton's servants swore that the parrot and cage belonged to the Earl; Wigton himself, to prove ownership, placed his hand in the cage and tickled the bird's side — he elicited a croak and a bite. Granard's servants protested that the parrot had been given to their employer ten years earlier as a present, and that any parrot would croak and bite if handled in such a manner. The parrot had, according to the report, uttered only two words, "No, No!" during the trial (the bird "behaved with great decorum"), but Granard's servants strenuously assured the magistrate that the parrot, unusually taciturn then, habitually dealt a "great deal of abuse" and "vulgar appellations" to Her Ladyship. The magistrate, caught between the representatives of two feuding aristocratic houses, each utterly convinced that the parrot belonged to them, had little recourse than to suggest that he reserve judgement and that the Earl of Wigton should call on the Earl of Granard to "clear up the business" like gentlemen.<sup>74</sup>

The value of exotic animals as property is also indicated in the legal inclusion of animals in wills. Normally such animals are horses and, especially in rural areas, amongst cottagers, cows, pigs or chickens. For wealthier individuals, domestic animals would be included in the estate and are often unspecified. Sometimes more exotic animals were left to individuals; Gilbert White's tortoise Timothy, for instance, was inherited from his Aunt. But this practice was not common in wills, so is likely to have taken the form of tacit or verbal agreements. Sometimes more formal and legally binding agreements existed but these were clearly unusual since they attracted particular attention. Indeed, they were so remarkable that in 1762 an annuity of five pounds per annum left to the parrot and cat of Mrs. Killinghall, widow of a surgeon at Chatham naval docks in Kent, was deemed worthy of notice in the *London Chronicle*.<sup>75</sup> Several decades later, annuities for animals were still unusual; Elizabeth Orby Hunter's inclusion of her parrot in her will was published at length in Kirby's *Wonderful and Eccentric Museum*. Hunter had kept her parrot since

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<sup>74</sup> *The Sporting Magazine* XXI, 44.

<sup>75</sup> *The London Chronicle or Universal Evening Post*, 4-6 March, 1762.

1788 and in 1813 intended to provide for it in the event of her death. To do so she bequeathed her parrot two hundred guineas a year, an extraordinary sum. The annuity would be paid to whoever had the care of the parrot in two yearly payments — it would cease on the death of her parrot. If any such person attempted to replace the parrot with a substitute, Hunter instructed her executors to recover the payments. The parrot was left in the possession of Mrs. Mary Dyer who was given twenty guineas to buy a new cage and instructed that upon her death she should leave it to another respectable female. It was stipulated that the parrot must never be in the care of a man, a servant or leave England. Furthermore if anyone to whom she had left other legacies should dispute her decision, her executors were to forfeit them their share. She justified her decision in bitter terms; “I owe nothing to anyone, many owe me gratitude and money, but none have paid me either.”<sup>76</sup> The parrot presumably lived to a ripe old age on a generous annuity.

Exotic animals were, then, valuable commodities in eighteenth-century London, worthy of insuring, stipulating in wills, and going to court over. As valued commodities, however, exotic animals were more often consumed as ingredients or luxury products. The trade in exotic animals was not the sole concern of animal merchants since, as we shall see, some animals were crucial to apothecaries, barbers, peruke makers, and “turtlemen.” This transition in context for commerce and display also involved a transition and juxtaposition between life and death, relationships that were highly visible and known to spectators and consumers.

## **Exotic Animals as Luxury Ingredients**

Animal merchants sold their animals as living commodities but the consumption of exotic animals by the elite was also gustatory and cosmetic. Indeed, three of the most desired consumer goods in the late eighteenth century were either derived from exotic animals or had them as ingredients. Perfumers, apothecaries, and grocers traded in goods prepared from either living or dead turtles, bears or civet cats

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<sup>76</sup> Kirby's *Wonderful and Eccentric Museum V* (London: Kirby, 1820), p. 28.

(Plate.14). Certainly, exotic animals appeared as consumer goods as furs, feathers, skins or taxidermy preparations, amongst others, but these three products in particular involved either special sites of consumption or attracted particular critiques. These three products and their consumption articulate much about the consumers and critics of luxury goods (Plates. 15 & 16). Furthermore, in arguing for the ubiquity of these goods in the everyday material culture of the elite and the higher “middling sort,” I problematise the notion that the place of living and dead exotic animals was limited to only those who consumed them in museums and menageries — this broadens the scope for what might be considered exhibitionary sites and spaces for consumption. The topography of exotic animals in eighteenth-century London is shown to be rather different. As cosmetics and ingredients exotic animals moved beyond these spaces further into elite Georgian Britain further — in large numbers they were readily eaten by or applied to the bodies of those who could afford them. Civet, a scented glandular secretion extracted from the anal glands of Civets (a small and slender carnivorous mammal from Africa and Asia), was one of the most expensive materials utilised by seventeenth and eighteenth-century apothecaries and perfumers. At forty shillings (two pounds) an ounce the smallest quantities of civet were measured in miniscule grains at two pence a grain. Some apothecary manuals list the number of grains required to manufacture individual concoctions giving an indication of the relative expense of the treatment. The hot, moist, and anodyne qualities of civet made it a good Galenic humoral treatment for reviving the spirits, warming the stomach, relieving cholic in infants, guarding against pestilential disease and preventing suffocation of the womb.<sup>77</sup> Civet was used to scent linen, pomades or handkerchiefs in addition to its wider use as a principal ingredient in perfumes — it would be mixed with floral scents like violet or used as an ingredient in scented confectionary. Civet could also be applied as a balsam, a tincture or as a pessary. Civet as an aphrodisiac was also utilised by apothecaries and physicians as a treatment for sexual and hysteric disorders.<sup>78</sup> An early eighteenth-

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<sup>77</sup> William Salmon and Royal College of Physicians, *Pharmacopœia Londinensis: Or the New London Dispensatory* (London: Nicholson, 1702).

<sup>78</sup> The cultural history of hysteria as a contingent pathological condition is a subject with a rich secondary literature. A recent biography of hysteria by Andrew Scull serves as an entrée; *Hysteria: The Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

century treatment for erectile dysfunction utilised twenty-five grains of civet (four shillings) for a single dose.<sup>79</sup> Onania engendered in women an insatiable desire for “venery,” pallid and sickly complexions and spoilt their uterine retention and health.<sup>80</sup> Civet taken in the form of ten grains (two shillings) in a “refreshing balsam” aided women who had “debilitated themselves greatly” in curing vices and diseases.<sup>81</sup> In the 1750s, these prices would have made regular use of civet in perfume and treatments a trifle for elite consumers (one paid five shillings for a pound of chocolate or a bottle of claret) but a considerable, if not impossible, expenditure for much of London who might otherwise spend two shillings on a week’s rent of a furnished room or use five shillings to purchase a second-hand coat or petticoat. For the poorest, two pence would either buy coal for the day, a night in a lodging house or a hot meal—the price of a single grain of civet used to scent linen or form the basis of a day’s eau de toilette.<sup>82</sup>

Although the French perfumer Pierre Pomet considered English produced civet to be the finest, it was the Dutch apothecaries and merchants that dominated the European market. With the promise of huge profits, their English counterparts did continue, however, to import civets and produce their own to guarantee its unadulterated status and a firm financial gain. In the late seventeenth century, the “Civet-Cat Merchant” John Barksdale and later Daniel Defoe in Newington Green owned seventy civet cats; a “civet house” consisted of coops, troughs, and cisterns for feeding and watering, as well as stoves for warming the house appropriately. The cats alone were valued at twelve pounds apiece.<sup>83</sup> The naturalist Ralph Beilby, in his account of the civet, described how the cats were nurtured by merchants and apothecaries with

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<sup>79</sup> John Marten, *A Treatment of the Venereal Disease* (London: Marten, 1711).

<sup>80</sup> Stephen Freeman, *The Ladies’ Friend, and Family Physical Library* (London: Nunn, 1788).

<sup>81</sup> *The Ladies Dispensatory or Every Woman her own Physician* (London: Hodges, 1740).

<sup>82</sup> Liza Picard, *Dr. Johnson’s London: Everyday Life in London 1740-1770* (London: Orion, 2003).

<sup>83</sup> Theodore Newton, “The Civet-Cats of Newington Green: New Light on Defoe,” *Review of English Studies* 13, 49 (1937): 10-19.

meat, fish, boiled eggs and rice to produce the highest quality scent and would have their glands scraped with a spoon two or three times a week. Extraction of the scent could only be achieved by placing the civet in a narrow cage so that it could not turn. A smooth small wooden spoon was then used to avoid so much as was possible injury to the delicate sacs as the secretion was scraped out. Apothecaries estimated that some civets would die before they had yielded even half an ounce, and especially so if extraction was attempted more than twice a week or with a crude spoon. On a daily routine of such extractions, a civet could live no longer than a fortnight. That the scrapings from the anal glands of the civet cat were the practical and economic foundation of their luxury trade was not a matter that perfumers concealed from their consumers. Indeed, depictions of a civet cat frequently appeared on trade cards and on the signs attached to perfume shops. Moreover, the names of many of these shops were variations on the animal or at the very least dealt at “the sign of the civet”: “Civet Cat and Perfume Shop”, “The Old Civet”, “The Civet Cat and Roses”. At least some of these perfumers and apothecaries would have housed their civet cat(s) on their premises, and so were a familiar spectacle for these shop’s patrons. The pungent aroma of an agitated caged civet (though some were tamed to be readily handled) would not have perturbed customers. Far larger and dangerous animals were present on these premises.

Apothecaries, perfumers, and peruke-makers (wigs) could also make a lucrative trade in the sale of bear grease as pomade for hair and wigs.<sup>84</sup> Bear grease was sold as a restorative cosmetic for the scalp, a preventive for grey hair and a necessity for soft, strong and luxurious hair. Less scrupulous individuals (or cost-conscious consumers) attempted to pass off tallow or oil as bear grease, so the authenticity of one’s pot of bear grease assumed considerable significance. Perfumers, barbers, and apothecaries advertised the impending or recent slaughter of fattened bears (and especially the cost of fattening the bear at their own expense) kept on their premises or in yards and warehouses. These advertisements invited ladies and gentlemen to either visit themselves to see their grease “cut from the animal in the presence of purchasers” or

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<sup>84</sup> The Brown Bear was extinct in Britain by the 10th or 11th century. The bears that appeared in Britain were imported from North America, Russia or Scandinavia.

to “send their servants to see it cut off the animal”.<sup>85</sup> Small pots could sell from between one shilling and a guinea, or grease could be purchased per an ounce for two shillings. Bear grease was, then, extremely expensive (though far cheaper than civet) and even when used sparingly on flaky scalps, lacklustre locks and tattered wigs, it would require frequent purchase. At two shillings an ounce, it is unsurprising that bear grease had many imitators and substitutes in tallow from sheep, pigs and cows. This notwithstanding, some manufactories like “Reeve’s Perfumery Warehouse and Ornamental Hair Manufactory” on Holborn Hill killed one bear a month in the 1790s to satisfy demand.<sup>86</sup> In London, other retailers like “Lewis Hendrie Perfumer” and “Vickery’s Perfumery Warehouse” similarly imported bears in large numbers and killed them on site for the production of grease.<sup>87</sup> Likewise, in Dublin “Jones’ Peruke Maker and Hairdressers” distributed bear grease to image-conscious elites.<sup>88</sup> This grease was vital to the trade of wig makers and hairdressers because bear grease provided the adhesion and texture required to comb the hair and wig attachments (supported by cotton pads and gauze) into the voluminous fashionable styles of the period, and also assisted in fixing scented powder to the wig. Ostrich plumes also imported by milliners and hairdressers were the finishing touches (along with stuffed birds, waxed fruit, and wooden ships) for aristocratic Whig women, who, in emulation of the Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire, wore ostrich feathers to signify allegiance to the Prince Regent (his crest being three ostrich plumes) especially so since Queen Charlotte despised them and banned this sartorial excess at court. Those who disparagingly avoided the excesses of the Beau Monde’s hairdressers still had their uses for bear grease. Properly powdered and dressed wigs

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<sup>85</sup> These two phrases are stock terms in the advertisements for bear’s grease that appear in large number from the 1760s and especially in the 80s and 90s. In the 1790s, however, taxation on wig powder and fashions in hairdressing and perukes changed the use of bear grease substantially. The Regency masculine elite of a younger generation, for example, wore their hair in short cropped, tousled “Grecian” styles or the popular “Caesar Cut.” Italian oils and scented waters were the appropriate cosmetics for these. Bear grease did however continue as a significant part of hairdressing and was produced in great quantities to lend structure and sheen to the hair of nineteenth century male Europeans.

<sup>86</sup> *Sunday Reformer and Universal Register*, 30 June, 1793.

<sup>87</sup> *Parker’s General Advertiser*, 26 October, 1782.

<sup>88</sup> *Dublin Mercury*, 14 October, 1769.

even if modest were the hallmark of gentility and respectability, and as such a necessity for elite self-presentation in “society.” Coiffed with expensive bear grease and scented with civet perfume or powder women (and some men, the much mocked “Macaroni”) became the subjects of satire, especially because these accoutrements were seen as foreign and particularly French. Exotic animals in satires sometimes serve to underscore the follies of feminine fashion: in “Sleight of Hand by a Monkey” (1776) a monkey perched on a wall removes the wig of a passing woman, and in “The Feathered Fair in Fright” (1779) two plumed society women flee from the plucked ostrich that pursue them eager to avenge their loss (Plates. 17 and 18). Sent to the table in a baked turtle shell or a soup tureen, the taste for dressed turtle and turtle soup attracted considerable attention as a culinary affectation of the privileged who eschewed good beef and mutton for the gustatory pleasures of turtle. Before turtle was a delicacy of the British upper classes, it was a staple food of sailors in the tropics and eaten almost daily by English settlers in the West Indies. Large quantities of turtle could be brought onboard ships (some weighing as much as 400lbs each) in a single day. Lanced with spears in shallow waters or lifted from beaches at night, the crew of the *Duchess* caught 150 in a single day in the waters off the Galapagos in 1709.<sup>89</sup> The largest turtles would be winched onto the ship with ropes attached to their shells. The crews of other ships did not have to undertake such strenuous labour to acquire turtle. In 1770, whilst anchored off Indonesia, locals in boats drew up alongside the HMS *Endeavour* full of all manner of live animals for consumption and trade; “turtle, fowls, ducks, parrots, paroquets [sic], rice-birds, monkees, and other articles”. For one Spanish dollar, Lieutenant Cook purchased a small 6lb turtle and with two other dollars 25 large fowl, for another dollar Cook noted that he could have purchased two monkeys or a cage of ricebirds (brightly coloured Java sparrows). After tasting iguana and sitting down to kangaroo, Cook and his fellow officers found that fresh turtle compared favourably to that found in London:

The next day our kangaroo was dressed for dinner, and proved most excellent meat; we might now be said to fare sumptuously every day, for we had turtle in great plenty, and we all agreed that they were much better than any we had tasted in England, which we imputed to their being eaten fresh from the sea, before their natural fat had been wasted,

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<sup>89</sup> Roger Woodes, *A Cruising Voyage Around the World* (London: Bell, 1712), p. 260.

or their juices changed by a diet so different from that the sea affords them, as garbage and a tub.<sup>90</sup>

Nevertheless, turtles housed in tubs and fed on “garbage” arrived in large numbers in the second half of the eighteenth century and were prized culinary ingredients. Although Hawksbill and Loggerhead turtles were imported for their flesh, they were deemed a poor relation to the Green turtle, prized for their sweet and lean meat. As a material for crafting goods, the thin shell of the green turtle was only useful for inlay and it was the shells of the less appetising turtles that were more prized by artisans in the creation of boxes, cabinets and combs. Coffee houses and grocers in Covent Garden specialised in the retail of live turtle in London. “Ward’s Original Turtle Warehouse” regularly imported turtles from the Bahamas, boasting a “great variety” to customers. Wood’s Coffee House insisted “families in town and country may have any quantity in the highest possible perfection,” and they would also purchase living turtles for resale.<sup>91</sup> Unusually large turtles were advertised prior to their sale to ensure a high price from multiple or single purchasers, but many other smaller turtles awaited their inspections by cooks in anonymity. They were also regularly advertised as part of the exotic cargo pouring into grocers; pineapples, limes, tamarinds and turtles. Many of these London merchants “continued dressing all season,” which is to say that reliable turtle trade routes were established to maximise the profit to be made from the most desired ingredient at elite tables from October to June, when the aristocracy and gentry resided in the city.

Once in the kitchen turtles were kept in water alive until the night before they were on the menu. Then they would be turned on their backs, decapitated, scalded and then hung to drain of blood.<sup>92</sup> Turtle soup was thickened with butter and flour and then flavoured with onions, thyme, parsley, and Cayenne pepper. A more substantial

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<sup>90</sup> John Hawkesworth, *An Account of the Voyages Undertaken by the order of his Present Majesty for Making Discoveries in the Southern Hemisphere...drawn up from the Journals which were kept by the Several Commanders and from the Papers of Sir Joseph Banks, Esq* (London: Cadell, 1773), p.174.

<sup>91</sup> *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser*, 15 September, 1783.

<sup>92</sup> Charlotte Mason, *The Ladies’ Assistant for Regulating and Supplying the Table* (London: Walter, 1787), p. 211.

dish involved brushing a turtle shell with flour, filling it with the flesh and then brushing the stew and shell with egg before baking until browned. More parsimonious cooks created a “mock turtle” by replacing turtle flesh with a boiled calf’s head separated from the bone. The consumption of sweet buttery turtle flesh became associated in print culture with the complacent and hearty gluttony of London’s masculine elite. The social caricature of the bloated greedy alderman, a privileged council member of the City of London Corporation, became synonymous with his favoured dish. A satirical “Alderman Mr. Turtle” appeared in news columns or editorial comments, and the phrase “turtle-feast,” alluding to excess and greed appeared with the punch line “as gay and lively as an Alderman to a turtle-feast.”<sup>93</sup> Indeed, when addressing the Court of Aldermen during the election of a Lord-Mayor in 1773, a Captain Allen told his esteemed audience that “the majority of them were a set who cared for nothing but gorging turtle, and smacking their lips.”<sup>94</sup> The lip-smacking Alderman clearly tickled the sense of humour of William Dent, whose “City Coalition” (1783) showed a stout Alderman, Mr. Henry Kitchin, kissing the turtle lovingly embraced in his arms (Plates. 19 & 20).

The turtle-guzzling alderman seeking his succour or pleasure in the fashionable spa town of Bath featured in several plays. In *The Widow’d Wife* (1767), “Alderman Lombard” is told, “you citizens live so luxuriously,” that the “increased importation of turtle” provided a “good excuse” for visiting Bath to ease one’s gout in the warm waters of the spa.<sup>95</sup> In Samuel Foote’s *The Patron* (1764), “Sir Peter Pepperpot” imports a “glorious cargo of turtle” to London. Seven of his nine turtles are sold to London Aldermen for corporate entertainment; his two “sickly” ones are dispatched to Yorkshire. The London Aldermen’s allowance is a hefty six lbs a sitting with another five lbs for their wives. As for the gentry of Yorkshire and their newly acquired taste for turtles: “Ay! What, have the Provincial’s a relish for turtle?” Sir Pepperpot gleefully replied, “Sir, it is amazing how this country improves in turtle

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<sup>93</sup> *The Monthly Review or Literary Journal* XXX (London: Griffiths, 1764), 239.

<sup>94</sup> Sylvanus Urban, *The Gentleman’s Magazine and Historical Chronicle for the Year 1773* (London: Newbery, 1773), 518.

<sup>95</sup> William Kenrick, *The Widow’d Wife: A Comedy* (London: Davies, 1767), p. 36.

and turnpikes.”<sup>96</sup> Foote’s satirical comedy was well observed because improved roads did indeed allow the dissemination of goods, including turtle. “Turtle Boats” arriving in Bristol supplied their delicacy to kitchens and tables far from that port. Throughout the 1780s and 1790s, the Bush Tavern in Bristol advertised regularly in the *Bath Chronicle* to targeting precisely the elite consumers in the city 12 miles away. Live turtles could be purchased in the city and dispatched to the country in haste or could be bought prepared and potted to last for up to ten days in transit. London aldermen and other well-heeled connoisseurs of turtle need never go without. Turtles in transit from tropical waters to the dinner plate, available throughout the year, demonstrate the extent to which regular and sustained trade routes shaped elite consumer habits and choices.

The juxtaposition between living animal and animal product was not problematic for eighteenth century consumers: it was a firm feature of commercial life. Indeed, in the case of the turtle, bear and civet, this association conferred authenticity and thus commercial value. At markets like Smithfields, cattle and other livestock were traded and slaughtered. Poultry would sell living birds in cages for slaughter at home or domestic rearing as well as plucked and prepared birds. Some of these birds were certainly unusual, and poulterers often sold Chinese pheasants and exotic poultry or waterfowl. The fate of these birds was uncertain however; they might be purchased for the table or for the menagerie. The South-Sea Company brought large quantities of whale and seal oil into Britain along with a variety of animal pelts and furs. Living animals, too, like seals and “Greenland Bears” could be brought back from Greenland to supplement an already profitable cargo or, in some cases, ease the financial losses of a poor season. In summer 1725, for example, the Greenland whaling fleet returned with a young seal that became known as “Toby” — he was so popular he was eulogised in a ballad.<sup>97</sup> For several months, Londoner’s crowded to see him swimming in a pool on a converted Thames barge. Later, another young seal arrived on a South-Sea ship to be displayed at Bartholomew Fair alongside furs and

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<sup>96</sup> *Supplement to Bell’s British Theatre, Consisting of the Most Esteemed Farces and Entertainments now Performing on the British Stage, Vol. IV* (London: Bell, 1774), p. 361.

<sup>97</sup> *An Excellent New Ballard on the South-Sea Dog-Fish, that was Shown on the River Thames in July 1725* (London: Lewis, 1726).

the head of its mother.<sup>98</sup> Merchants and other dealers in living animals were then keen to make direct associations between the origins of their animal ingredients and products. Exotic animals in a world of goods outside of the animal merchants were then present in large numbers. The perfumer's civet cat, peruke-maker's bear and grocer's turtle circulated in a commercial exhibitionary sphere as highly visible goods. Once processed as ingredient or product, this consumption was of course markedly different from that of the stock of the animal merchant. The former were valued as exotic goods because they could be materially transformed into a secondary product of greater value. The latter were culturally marked as separate and valuable because their ownership in a living state engendered quite distinct cultural meanings and appraisal.

## **Conclusion**

In the late eighteenth century, the financial pressures of Anglo-French conflict, a rapidly expanding consumer society, and production restraints led to a shortage in specie. Merchants produced brass tokens to ease monetary scarcity by issuing tokens that functioned as a form of barter. Merchants issued tokens as payment for goods on the condition that the holder of the token redeemed it at their premises, thus effectively binding the holder to a commercial relationship of convenience. Gilbert Pidcock as the proprietor of a large menagerie issued his own series of tokens between 1795 and 1801, including a 1795 bronze token with an elephant and a cockatoo on the verso and recto of the token (Plate. 21). A de facto halfpenny and an advertisement for the menagerie, the token circulated as small change in transaction for goods or labour until it was finally redeemed at the menagerie. Although it would take a considerable hoard of ha'pennies to purchase entrance, animals or goods at his menagerie, Pidcock must have been in the financial position to commission the tokens and underscore the risk. His menagerie tokens, small in value, would have been taken towards payment or redeemed at his premises for minted crown coinage.

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<sup>98</sup> *Daily Advertiser*, 27 August, 1731.

Alternatively, the bronze tokens could also function as tickets of admission to the exhibition in lieu of their face value, which the bearer could then retain or redeem. Pidcock's tokens are suggestive of the way in which exotic animals had become commodities in late eighteenth-century Britain, present as part of larger economic exchange.

This chapter has been a history of the emergence and growth of bird sellers and animal merchant across the long eighteenth century, a context for commerce and collecting that has not been the subject of previous scholarship on Britain of this period. Anglo-Dutch cultural exchange significantly shaped the form that the commerce in animals took in circa 1700. In the next few decades the bird shops increased both in number and the range of their stock so that by the 1750s and 1760s economic expansion and territorial acquisitions of these bird shops had developed into menageries of animal dealers. This expansion continued over the following decades until the Strand and Piccadilly were the sites of many menageries and animal exhibitions. The wills and insurance policies of the animal merchants show that the trade could be lucrative for those individuals and families at the high end of the market, although those at the lower end of the scale faced considerable challenges. In the absence of a guild structure, the animal dealers of eighteenth-century London were a close-knit community of familial associations where assets and employment passed within restricted circles. Indeed, the family names of the prominent menagerists of the 1750s and 1760s like Brookes and Cross are associated with the trade in exotic animals into the early decades of the nineteenth century and, in some cases, up until the twentieth.

The status of exotic animals as commodities has been related to the consumption of other luxury products in Britain, as well as extended to include the consumption of exotic animals as ingredients and products like turtle soup, bearing grease and civet. These uses for exotic animals considerably broaden understandings of their place in British culture, or rather the culture of the elite. In this way, exotic animals permeated the material lives of the higher echelons as consumed edibles, olfactory pleasures, follicular or peruke necessities and curative pharmacopoeia. Such commodity usage necessarily involved an exhibitionary context and in some cases the emergence of new sites, like the "turtle man's" turtle warehouse. The expense of

these products made the authenticity of origin a matter of concern, so an association between animal and product was established through in-person selection or the delegation of witnessing to servants.

The distribution of consumers of exotic animal commodities was confined to the elite (aristocracy and gentry) as well as to the “middling sort”. Some animal merchants themselves amassed the material and cultural trappings of the upper echelons of the “middling sort” with smart West End premises, insurance, respectable and fashionable possessions, vocational expertise and clients (and thus acquaintance with) from the bon ton. Physicians, clerks, apothecaries, merchants, and the proprietors of inns were able to acquire a variety of exotic animals, suggesting that they were not unobtainable, if still expensive. Since exotic animals could be brought home by the crews of ships, it is probable that at least some outside the “middling sort” were able to acquire them through seafaring relations or acquaintances, but with such a financial value ascribed to them it is likely that many returning sailors sold them on to animal dealers. The expense of purchasing and owning exotic animals made them valuable assets and targets for theft, with menagerists appearing in court as witnesses and defendants. Exotic animals themselves might be brought in front of a magistrate as living evidence. In the next, having established exotic animals as commodities, we explore the ways in which they became meaningful in another way, through the senses and affect.

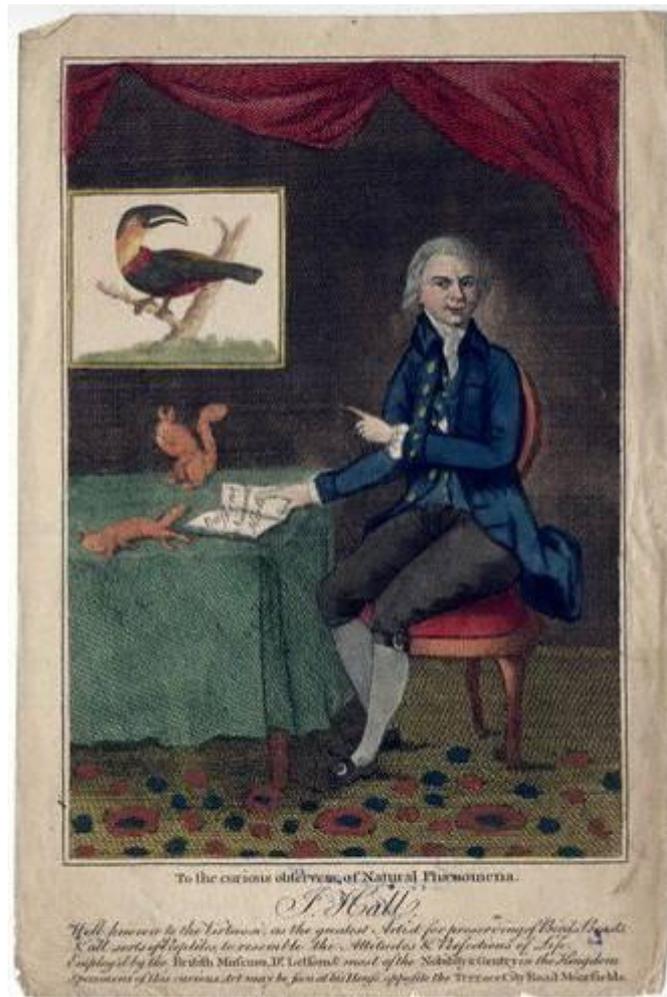


Plate.2 Thomas Hall, Taxidermist

Thomas Hall (?-ca.1797)

Hand-coloured engraved portrait in the form of a handbill (ca.1780)

National Portrait Gallery, London

The Hall family owned a taxidermy business on the City Road, Finsbury (London) from the 1750s. Thomas Hall (primus) also used to exhibit his taxidermy at a museum on his premises or at fairs, as well as taking on commissions from the British Museum and private patrons. The business was carried on by his grandson Thomas Hall III (1780-1838).

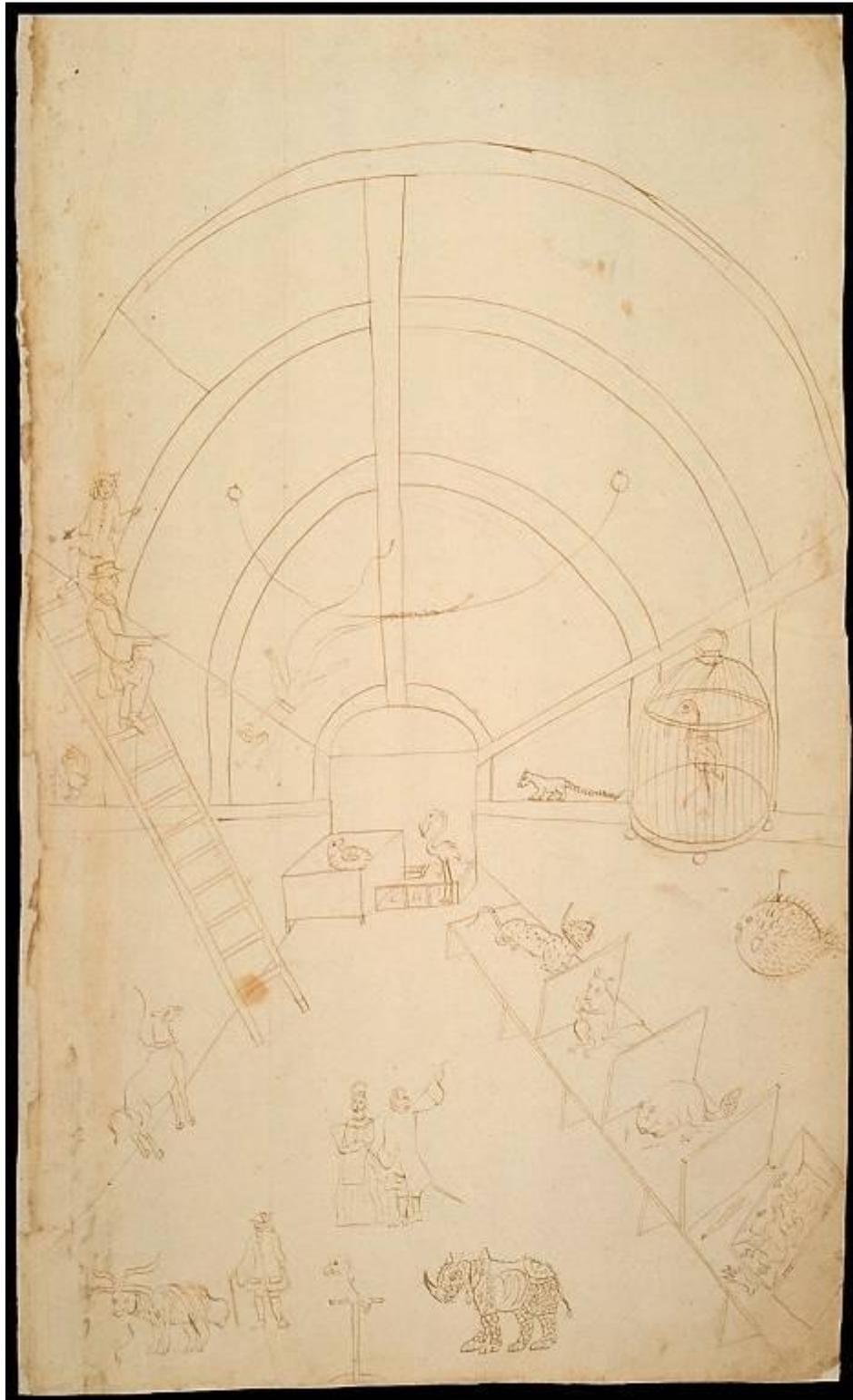


Plate.3 Menagerie van Blauw Jan, ca. 1700

*Wonderen der Natuur: In de Menagerie van Blauw Jan te Amsterdam, zoals gezien door Jan Velten rond 1700, Wonders of Nature: In the Menagerie of Blauw Jan, of Amsterdam, as observed by Jan Velten around 1700.*

Artis Library, University of Amsterdam



Plate.4 View of Blauw Jan at Amsterdam, ca.1682-1744

Engraving

Isaak de Moucheron, Amsterdam

British Museum, London



Buy a fine singing Bird

*A mes beaux oysseaux qui chantent  
Uccelletti che canto uccelletti*

Mauro delin

P. Knapp del.  
(aut. Privilegi)

Plate.5 "Buy a Fine Singing Bird"

*The Cryes of the City of London Drawne after the Life*

Marcellous Laroon II, 1688 (reprinted ca.1750)

Etching

British Museum, London



Plate.6 Edward Cross (1774-1854)

Proprietor of Exeter Change menagerie between 1814 and 1828, Cross was later the superintendent of Surrey Zoological Gardens.

Oil portrait (1838)

Jacques-Laurent Agasse

© Christies Ltd., 1994 (Private Collection)



Plate.7 “The Wonderful Spotted Indian, John Boby (sic)”

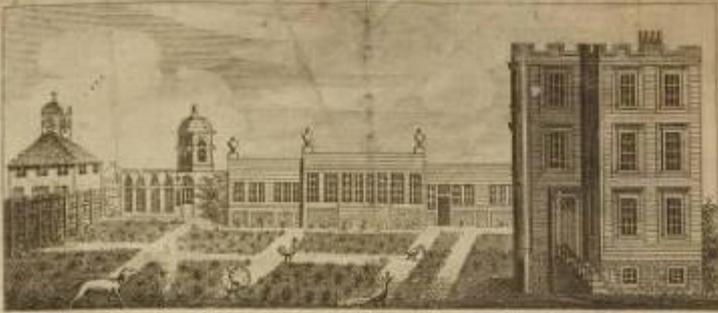
Engraving

*The New Wonderful Museum* Vol.II (1804)

John Bobey (1774 -?) shown exposing his skin to spectators and holding the insignia of the

Freemasons of whom he was a member. Bobey was exhibited as a racial curiosity in a menagerie and later worked as an animal keeper before becoming himself a menagerist in

ca.1795



423.02 (48)

## JOSHUA BROOKES, ZOOLOGIST,

At his MENAGERY, in the New-Road, Tottenham-Court,  
(Removed from Gray's-Inn-Gate, Holbourn.)

Buys and Sells and Exchanges all Sorts of FOREIGN BIRDS, QUADRUPEDS, &c. viz.

|                        |                            |                            |                             |
|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>BUSTARDS.</b>       | Hartmann                   | Small Red from the Main.   | All Green                   |
| <b>CRANES.</b>         | Clingside                  | <b>DOWLS.</b>              | Do. Ring-neck'd             |
| Crown Bird of Africa   | Hampden                    | Great Horned, from Auspach | Do. Grey                    |
| Crest from Afa         | Hamburgh                   | Large ditto, from Hedon's  | Hoatz, with Yellow Beak     |
| Noridian, or Dumbel    | Poland                     | Bay                        | All Yellow                  |
| Wandering American.    | Rumples                    | Small ditto, from Auspach  | with Orange Beak, and       |
| <b>CASSAWAYS.</b>      | Genoa Lewis                | Small ditto, from America  | All Green, with Orange Beak |
| <b>CURACDAS.</b>       | Pyde                       | <b>OSTRICH</b>             | Large Green, with Red Beak  |
| <b>CUSHIA.</b>         | People                     | <b>OLIVES.</b>             |                             |
| <b>COCKATOOS.</b>      | White and Black            | <b>ORTOLANS.</b>           | American                    |
| Small ditto.           | Shag-Bags                  | European                   |                             |
| <b>DAWS, (Cassini)</b> | Spanish                    | <b>PHEASANTS.</b>          | Chinese, Gold               |
| <b>DUCKS.</b>          | Silk-Sumatra               | Ditto, Silver              | Ditto, Ring Neck            |
| Aylebury               | <b>FEN FOWLS.</b>          | English, Py'd              | Ditto, White                |
| Cassina                | Baldcocks                  | Ditto, White               |                             |
| Dutch Topping          | Dashbirds                  | <b>PEWEE.</b>              | Jephimons                   |
| Black Nile             | Easterlings                | Pyde ditto                 | White ditto                 |
| Moridil                | Golden Eyes                | Wild ditto                 |                             |
| Mule                   | Gargons                    | <b>PEROS.</b>              | European                    |
| Mulvory                | Shoval Kells               | Orinental                  |                             |
| Ross                   | Tait                       | <b>PARTRIDGES.</b>         | American                    |
| Schild                 | Widgeons                   | Barbary                    | French                      |
| Spanish                | Genoa                      | Portugal                   |                             |
| Turkish                | Parde                      | <b>PARROTS.</b>            | American                    |
| Wild                   | Prick                      | Red India                  | Guinea                      |
| Whiffing               | White                      | Portugal                   | Spanish Main.               |
| <b>DOVE.</b>           | Pyde                       | <b>PARROQUETS.</b>         | Large Ring Neck             |
| Black Ring             | Cassina                    | Ditto, with India.         | Red Wings                   |
| Cassina from Carolina  | <b>GERBIL.</b>             | Small ditto, spotted       | Small ditto, with Red Head  |
| Crest from Barbary     | Beast                      | <b>IBIS, or Secretary.</b> |                             |
| Cuba Red Pace          | Casside                    | <b>LOWBYQUETS.</b>         |                             |
| Cuba Blue Pace         | Casside                    | <b>LEUCORA.</b>            |                             |
| Ground from Cuba       | Cassina                    | <b>LOWRYS.</b>             |                             |
| Nicober                | Cape                       | <b>MINOS.</b>              |                             |
| Oriental Chain-wing'd  | Greenland                  | <b>MACCAOS.</b>            |                             |
| Parage from Cassina    | <b>HERRONS.</b>            | Blue                       |                             |
| Par from ditto         | Blue                       | Red                        |                             |
| Red-Rings from Senegal | White                      | <b>IBIS, or Secretary.</b> |                             |
| Spotted Cape Tingoua   | <b>IBIS, or Secretary.</b> | <b>LOWBYQUETS.</b>         |                             |
| White-Wings            | <b>LOWBYQUETS.</b>         | <b>LEUCORA.</b>            |                             |
| White from Barbary     | <b>LOWRYS.</b>             | <b>LOWRYS.</b>             |                             |
| White from Senegal     | <b>MINOS.</b>              | <b>MINOS.</b>              |                             |
| <b>EAGLES.</b>         | <b>MACCAOS.</b>            | Blue                       |                             |
| Cassina                | Blue                       | Deep Red                   |                             |
| Guinea                 | Deep Red                   | Green                      |                             |
| Norway                 | Green                      | Scarlet                    |                             |
| Ruffe                  | <b>FOWLS.</b>              | Alpines                    |                             |
| <b>FLEMINGOS.</b>      | Alpines                    |                            |                             |
| Major and Minor        |                            |                            |                             |
| <b>FOWLS.</b>          |                            |                            |                             |
| Alpines                |                            |                            |                             |

Note, Proper Baskets, Coops, &c. provided for their Conveyance to any Part of the World.  
\* \* Birds, Poultry, curious Quadrupeds of all Sorts exchanged.

Plate.8 Joshua Brookes, Zoologist, at his menagerie, in the New-Road, Tottenham-Court...buys and sells and exchanges all sorts of foreign birds and quadrupeds, &c.

Joshua Brookes Handbill

ca. 1775

British Library, London



Plate.9 Pidcock's Grand Menagerie of Wild Beasts and Birds

Watercolour

Charles Tomkins, ca.1773-1810

British Museum, London



Plate.10 Polito's Menagerie

Watercolour

George Shepherd, 1815

British Museum, London



Plate.11 Edward Cross's Menagerie, 1829

Engraving

London Metropolitan Archives



Plate.12 “Polito’s Menagerie of the Birds and Beasts from most parts of the World”

Mantelpiece Ornament: Polito’s Menagerie

Staffordshire, ca. 1830

Lead-glazed earthenware and enamel

Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Plate.13 John Clark(e), Keeper of the Royal Menagerie at Sand-Pit Gate, Windsor.

Oil and canvas

John Frederick Lewis (ca.1825)

The Royal Collection, London

Made, and Sold Wholesale and Retail,  
 B Y  
**Charles Lillie, Perfumer,**  
 At the City of *Barcelona*, the Corner of *Beaufort-*  
*Buildings* in the *Strand*, *London*.

**Essences, &c.**  
 Plain Spanish  
 Havana's  
 Portugal  
 Brazil  
 Orange  
 Bergamot  
 Fennel  
 Caraway  
 Scull  
 Cinnamon  
 Clove  
 Spanish Brandy  
 Scotch Whisky  
 Fig tail Tobacco, &c.

**Essences, Butters, and  
 Oils.**  
 Essence of Jessamy  
 Essence of Orange-flowers  
 Essence of Ambergrain  
 Essence of Musk  
 Essence of Bergamot  
 Essence of Lemon  
 Essence of Orange  
 Oil of Jessamy  
 Oil of Almonds  
 Oil of Lavender  
 Oil of Echin  
 Oil of Rhodium  
 Orange-flower Butter  
 Lemon Butter  
 Cold Creams  
 Preparations for the Face and  
 Hair, &c.

**Person's Waters.**  
 Aqua Mellis, or, *The King's  
 Honey Water*  
 Orange-flower Water  
 Lavender Water  
 Portugal Water  
 Amber Water  
 Rose Water  
*Unguentum* *Wann* *from* *Mari-*  
*poler, &c.*

**Soaps and Wash-balls.**  
 Amber Washballs  
 Balaam Washballs  
 Champhid Washballs  
 Jerusalem Washballs  
 Chemical Washballs  
 Common Washballs

**Soaps.**  
 Naples Soap  
 Jappa Soap  
 Genna Soap  
 Castile or Allicant Soap  
 Yankee Soap  
 Black Soap, &c.

**Hair-powders, &c.**  
 Orange-flower Powder  
 Amber Perfum'd Powder  
 Milk Powder  
 Violet Powder  
 Rose Powder  
 Damask Powder  
 Jessamy Powder  
 Orrise Powder  
 Almond Powder

**Perfumes, Colicatives,  
 Animateks, &c.**  
 Ambergrain  
 Mace and Clove  
 Patch  
 Balsam Apocryphus  
 Pearl Powder from India  
 Bismuth  
 French Red  
 Carmine  
 A liquid White for the Face  
 Spirit of Benjamin  
 Portugal Dillies  
 Spanish Wool  
 All Colours from China  
 Bees Grease  
 Almond Paste  
 Powder Bags and Boxes  
 Powder Puffs of all sorts  
 Lip Salve  
 Tooth Powder  
 Poland Starch  
 Common Starch  
 Indigo and Powder Blues  
 Salts for Pocket Bottles  
 Sponges  
 Perfumes to burn  
 Powder Machines  
 Boxes for Washballs  
 Cases for Oil Bottles, &c.

**Printed and Sold by**  
 Charles Lillie, Perfumer,  
 at the City of *Barcelona*, the Corner of *Beaufort-*  
*Buildings* in the *Strand*, *London*.

93.29

BRITISH MUSEUM 2 3 4  
 Centimetres 10  
 Inches 4

PPA14708

Plate.14 Handbill: Charles Lillie, Perfumer

Woodcut

ca. 1736

British Museum, London



Plate.15 Pot à Sucre (Sugar basin)

Sèvres, 1758

Soft-paste porcelain, gilt, and enamels  
(from the collection of Horace Walpole)

Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Plate.16 Chocolate cup and saucer, ca. 1756

Soft-paste porcelain and enamels

Chelsea Porcelain Factory, London

Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Plate.17 “Sleight of Hand by a Monkey or the Lady’s Head Unloaded”

Hand-coloured mezzotint, 1776

Carrington Bowles (publisher)

British Museum



Plate.18 “The Feather’d Fair in a Fright”  
Hand-coloured mezzotint, 1777  
Carrington Bowles after John Collet (publisher)  
British Museum



Plate.19 "The English Glutton"

Hand-coloured etching, 1776

Matthew Darly (publisher)

British Museum



Plate.20 “City Coalition: Of all Life’s Dainties, says Kitchin, Turtle is the most bewitching.”

Hand-coloured etching, 1783

William Dent (publisher)

British Museum



Plate.21 Pidcock's Menagerie Token, ca.1795

Copper, 20mm diameter

Photographer: Stephen Devine (Manchester Museum)

Private Collection: Christopher Plumb

## SENSES AND SENSIBILITIES

In his essay *The Menagerie of the Senses* (2006), Steven Connor considers the mediation of the senses in a broad overview from the early modern to the contemporary, demonstrating how animals were in some cases used to enforce cultural notions of the lowliness of the senses. Later, the awareness of the nature of some animal senses encouraged imaginative exploration to augment human perceptions and capabilities. Of particular interest to Connor is the vision of the fly. He notes that the word “menagerie” has, in the English language since the seventeenth century, connoted a form of household management in the tending and maintenance of animals. Before then, “menagerie,” or “menage” borrowed from the French “ménager” or ménage,” referred to handling personal, household, or domestic matters with care and diligence. The senses, too, in early modern thought required cultivation, ordering and, in particular, self-conscious control over the crass or coarse; that way, more refined sensibilities could blossom. This management of the senses often positioned animals as the mediators of the senses or emblematic. Thus, for Connor, “the term “menagerie” convenes two claims: firstly that our relation to our senses is one of active and constructive management (the old sense of the word “menagerie”), and that animal senses, or our idea of them, play an indispensable part in that management of the senses.”<sup>1</sup>

This chapter is about that management of senses and a similar “menagerie” of sensibilities towards exotic animals in eighteenth-century Britain; how, in other words, they were articulated and embodied by those that most frequently came into contact with these animals in menageries, exhibitions and domestic spaces. This

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<sup>1</sup> Steven Connor, “The Menagerie of the Senses,” *Senses and Society* 6, 1 (2006): 9-26.

narrative of Georgian sensibilities and senses is, then, concerned with elite individuals and the “middling sort” (including menagerie keepers) and, especially, those contemporaries voiced particular anxieties about, women and children. The sensory and affective cultural ordering and arrangement of interactions with exotic animals was significant as a practice of spectatorship, and constitute interesting historical cases of contingent acts of engagement that have attracted little attention.<sup>2</sup> Here, I identify several themes or concerns that were of principal interest to spectators in their encounters with exotic animals and trace their alterations and remedies — odour and filth, bodily proximity, and endangerment (risk and liability).<sup>3</sup> In each section I consider what was at stake in sensory and affective engagement with animals, the ways in which contemporaries conceived of these phenomenological matters and, lastly, the range of solutions employed to manage the menagerie of animals and senses.<sup>4</sup> Discussion on these encounters is later in the

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<sup>2</sup> Significant works on exotic animals in the eighteenth century do not, for example, pay due attention to historicised notions of comfort or risk. From the perspective of eighteenth century print sources it is clear that these were of principle concerns and that an archaeology or history of senses in the menagerie is a worthwhile endeavour.

<sup>3</sup> There is a limited scholarship on concepts of risk or endangerment in the eighteenth century and none in relation to encounters with exotic animals. For the elite pleasures of motion and endangerment whilst at play on swings see Jennifer Milam, “Playful Constructions and Fragonard’s Swinging Scenes,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 33, 4 (2000): 543-559. Risk in finance and insurance is the subject of Geoffrey Clark, *Betting on Lives: the culture of life insurance in England, 1675-1775* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999) and Daston, *Classical Probability in the Enlightenment*. On chance in gambling see Thomas Kavanagh, *Enlightenment and the Shadows of Chance: the Novel and the Culture of Gambling in Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> Scholarship on the senses and sensibilities in the early modern period and the eighteenth century does deal with some of these themes already, but without reference to exotic animals. Touch and feeling are in particular the subject of Ann Jessie van Sant, *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel: The Senses in Social Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). See also Elizabeth Harvey (ed.), *Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2003). Bodily fluids and the senses of embarrassment or shame are the subject of Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1993). General cultural histories of the senses include Diane Ackerman, *A Natural History of the Senses* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993) and the cross-cultural comparative histories included in Constance Classen (ed.), *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and Across Culture* (London: Routledge: 1993).

chapter, contextualised in an extended case study on the spectacle of the electric eel; there it is demonstrated how sensory mediation was significant in producing meanings for the “electric spark” outside the sphere of electricians and anatomists, which is to say wider cultural perceptions of touch, women and women touching animals. Lastly, this chapter traces the development of new ways of regulating visitor behaviours to early zoological gardens in the 1830s as these institutions sought to define themselves against the menageries of the Georgian period.

Glynis Ridley, in her review of Louise Robbins’s work on exotic animals in eighteenth-century Paris, raises an important methodological and historiographical issue relating to experiences of the senses; “individual experience of exotic animals cannot be used to generalise about the experience of the majority of eighteenth-century viewers, who doubtless stared from afar, as the bulk of zoo visitors do today.”<sup>5</sup> Ridley was thinking particularly of the extrapolation from the notes of a naturalist who encountered an animal close up, the experiences of others as being equally tactile. Ridley’s cautionary note is well taken, but in this chapter I shall demonstrate that close encounters with exotic animals were encouraged, tolerated and facilitated in eighteenth-century British menageries. Bodily proximity to animals though problematic, as we shall see, provided spectators with pleasures and embodied experiences that are substantially different from zoological gardens. Certainly, in this sensory history sources have been selected so that individual experiences are not conflated as representative of collective experience, though there are indeed also many sources that do demonstrate aggregate engagement. Furthermore, caveats understood, some useful extrapolation from historical sources pertaining to individuals remains.

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<sup>5</sup> Glynis Ridley, “Review: Elephant Slaves and Pampered Parrots in Eighteenth-Century Paris,” *French History* 16, 4 (2002): 478-479.

## Odour and Filth

The cultural management of odour had a history before the seventeenth century — pomanders and nosegays or flower and rush scented rooms were a feature of fifteenth-century interiors. Floral scented waters, clothes and foods were, likewise, a feature of Elizabethan and Jacobean tables.<sup>6</sup> The politics of scent at the end of the early modern period are expressed well in John Evelyn's *Fumifugium* (1661), which was as much contemplation of the state of Restoration state and monarchy as it was a treatise on the properties of air and olfactory offences. London was choked under a fog of burnt sea-coal, which left a thick layer of soot on buildings, clothing, blighted fruit trees and vistas (it "fouls our clothes", "obscures our churches"). The "horrid stinks" and "unwholesome smells" caused by chandlers and butchers could be removed by expelling these trades from the city. There should, it was said, be no further burials within the city's limits. Evelyn's most poetic and ambitious proposal involved the planting of a strip of land to encircle the city; it would be planted with fragrant plants and flowers so that the "sweet and ravishing varieties of the perfumes" would drift across the city.<sup>7</sup> This Edenic encirclement of Restoration London would "ravish our senses." This was not whimsy on Evelyn's part, since the use of scent to reform the body politic, the sick and the corrupted was an interrelated idea; "the use of perfume pastilles or pomanders was an integral part of medicine and the College of Physicians recommended a variety of such olfactory measures to ward off the evil miasma which might cause plague."<sup>8</sup>

The editorial preface to the 1772 edition of Evelyn's *Fumifugium*, that is, over a century later, considered olfactory offences to have increased in the city since original publication. The "black catalogue" of soap-boilers, brewers, dyers and lime-burners alongside new manufactories like sugar refining and glass workshops and

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<sup>6</sup> Classen, *Worlds of Sense*.

<sup>7</sup> John Evelyn, *Fumifugium, Or the Inconvenience of the Aer, and the Smoak of London Dissipated* (London: Godbid, 1661), p. 24.

<sup>8</sup> Mark Jenner, "The Politics of London Air: John Evelyn's *Fumifugium* and the Restoration," *The Historical Journal* 6, 3 (1995): 535-551.

iron foundries offended the noses of Londoners. The bodies of the dead “left to rot amongst the living” contributed to this miasma. Burials were within the city limits. Paradoxically, even important attempts to cleanse London, like the city waterworks, exacerbated the problem because the smog exhaled by their “fire-engines” left “the astonished spectator at a loss to determine whether they do not intend to poison and destroy more of the inhabitants by their smoke and stench than they supply with their water.”<sup>9</sup> A “foul air” wafted through the streets of London as it carried an “unremitting poison.” The editor proposed that it would be incompatible with the “liberty of the subject” to force the offensive trades out of the city — once again, odour and politics were linked — but suggested that legal recourse should be taken to mitigate odour if the manufactories could be compelled to build taller chimneys or choose to locate themselves outside London. Addressing Evelyn’s text to the magistrates and citizens of the city, the editor hoped that continued “public spirit and perseverance” would remove the olfactory blights that had persisted since Evelyn’s day. The politics of the senses were manifested elsewhere in Evelyn’s generation in the realm of “taste.” In the case of the pineapple, or “king-pine,” occupied, both real and imagined, the cultural palate of a Royalist elite.<sup>10</sup>

Although cultural acts of odour-mitigation had not extended to a fragrant floral ring encircling the city, in other ways foul odour had if not been minimised, had instead come to occupy an increasingly prominent place in cultural thought. The identification of foul odour and its mitigation communicated much about Georgian notions of hygiene, comfort and social order. The rejection or valorisation of animal odour, including exotic animals, was part of this process of olfactory awareness. As the late Georgian elite and “middling sort” observed with concern the fuming chimneys of manufactories, they were also simultaneously regulating personal odours and the odour of social space. Deodorising began to involve the refusal of animal odour in some very practical ways, but in some areas intense “cultural work” went into ensuring and assuring that some animals, however exotic, were fragrant

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<sup>9</sup> John Evelyn, *Fumifugium, Or the Inconviene of the Aer, and the Smoke of London Dissipated Together with Some Remedies Humbly Proposed* (London: Godbid, 1772), p. vii.

<sup>10</sup> Sean Silver, “Locke’s Pineapple and the History of Taste,” *Eighteenth-Century* 49 (2008): 43-65.

and pleasing to be around. Those that did not sweet smell were identified as such so that spectators could be satisfied in the reassuring knowledge that they were not insensible or ignorant to the olfactory offences committed. This awareness of the unpleasant nature of animal's bodies was predicated on the anxiety about the odour of one's own body. Across the long eighteenth century a process of deodorisation or rather a particular cultural attenuation to odour significantly shaped the human experience of animals. This is was an extended process with roots in the early modern period. The 1650s English woodcut "Oderatus" is amusing precisely because it plays upon anxieties about human and animal odour. A lady of fashion holds flowers to her nose; her bodily odour might not be as fragrant as she might have hoped. Still, her lapdog provides a convincing and convenient scapegoat (Plate 22).

A narrative of cultural deodorisation over the long nineteenth century has been offered by Corbin (1986). Tracing olfactory discourses in France, he delineates the threat of putrid miasmas, bourgeois disdain for the loathsome stench of the poor and social disorder, fear of asphyxiation and the slow rejection of strong animal perfumes like musk in favour of delicate floral scents evocative of *plein air à la montagne*.<sup>11</sup> This process of deodorisation had intensified in the mid-eighteenth century as changes to elite domestic spaces produced a desire for the banishment of odour from well-ventilated private spaces. Stifling odours became increasingly associated with excrement and putrefaction.<sup>12</sup> Potent perfumes imposing or intruding on one's olfactory comfort, or indiscreet body odours, were anathema in a culture (elite and bourgeois) that came to conceive of the personal toilette as part of good manners and a necessary social function (Plates. 23, 24, 25 & 26). Histories of changing olfactory tolerances, preferences and transgressions have proliferated since Corbin and

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<sup>11</sup> Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odour and the French Social Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986).

<sup>12</sup> David Howes, "Senses and Sensibility," *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 13 (1989): 89-97.

troubled his polarisations of “foul” and “fragrant.”<sup>13</sup> Brant, for example, writes of the necessity for finer distinctions in these categories in the eighteenth century since “foul smells can be good, fragrant smells can be bad,” and individual idiosyncratic preferences or tolerances coexist with broader cultural norms.<sup>14</sup> This notwithstanding, Corbin’s narrative of deodorisation is still persuasive as the story of the gradual alteration of smell and the olfactory imagination; the historical contingency of the body and embodied experience is still an area of critical interest in cultural studies and literature.<sup>15</sup> Histories of body odour, dirt and cleanliness provide a robust framework for understanding responses to sensory mediations; it is possible, for example, to write histories of the experience of one’s own and others bodily odours in a variety of periods.<sup>16</sup> That animal odour has a related history is a notion conspicuously absent.

The place of exotic animals in the reconfiguration of olfactory comfort, although not a conventional part of deodorisation and the redefinition of the intolerable, is significant to this narrative, as well as to a wider cultural history of exotic animals in eighteenth-century Britain. Whilst rejecting strong animal scents worn on the body, much thought was given to the appropriate nature of animal smells and bodily comfort. That contemporaries thought about, recognised and cultivated these aspects of sensory encounter is evident in their traces in natural histories and advertisements. This “sensory turn” has been linked to consumption in Anglo-American culture.

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<sup>13</sup> Constance Classen, David Howes and Anthony Synnott, *The Cultural History of Smell* (London: Routledge, 1994); Jim Drobnick, *The Smell Culture Reader* (Oxford: Berg, 2006); Mark Smith, *Sensory History* (Oxford: Berg, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Clare Brant, “Fume and Perfume: Some Eighteenth-Century Uses of Smell,” *Journal of British Studies* 43 (2004): 444-463.

<sup>15</sup> Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise, and Stench in England, 1600-1770* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008). For a fictional account of the disquietingly scentless (and thus loathed) perfumer Jean-Baptiste Grenouille and his art of concocting exquisite yet deadly scents in eighteenth-century France, see Patrick Süskind, *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> Katherine Ashenburg, *Clean: An Unsanitised History of Washing* (London: Profile Books, 2009); Virginia Smith, *Clean: A History of Personal Hygiene and Purity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Comfort came to be understood as “progressive rather than physically natural,” meaning that the sensation of comfort provided a rationale for consumption of new material goods and cultivation of new behaviours as a demonstrable signifier of one’s demeanour and status.<sup>17</sup> Thus comfort communicated a self-conscious satisfaction between one’s own body and the immediate physical environment. The smell of an animal, whether “disgusting” or “pleasant,” was something that mattered to spectators and was critical in negotiating encounters with animals. Throughout much of the eighteenth century, animal musk was worn on the body to disguise corporeal odours, but the hot and pungent scent of the exotic civet cat, extracted from a gland in the vicinity of the anus, was dismissed late century as a “disgusting” folly of the older generation. The clergyman naturalist William Mavor informed his child readers in 1800 that:

However disgusting as all animal perfumes must be, there has been a time when the produce of the civet’s posteriors was in the highest esteem with the ladies and effeminate men ...the very idea of borrowing from such a source, is not a little offensive to a delicate mind. The traffic in this perfume, however, is still very considerable...but to the credit of taste and elegance it is now greatly on the decline.<sup>18</sup>

This denunciation of animal perfume as disgusting worked alongside a broader discourse delineating acceptable and unacceptable animal odour. Dogs, animals with whom Londoners frequently found themselves in bodily proximity, were frequently diseased with mange or digestive and dental complaints recognised as offensive. Furthermore, attempts to treat these ailments might even exacerbate olfactory horror. Mercury, as a curative, could salivate a dog, which is to say, increase quantities of saliva so that they “lose their teeth very early, and their breath continues offensive through life.”<sup>19</sup> Felines, too, could suffer bodily discomfort. A lion at Pidcock’s menagerie drooled profusely after a keeper injudiciously applied mercury as a cure for mange; thereafter, the poisoned tongue hung limply out of the mouth until

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<sup>17</sup> John Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort: Sensibilities and Design in Early Modern Britain and Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 292.

<sup>18</sup> William Fordyce Mavor, *Natural History for the Use of Schools* (London, 1800), p. 89.

<sup>19</sup> Delabere Pritchett Blaine, *Canine Pathology, Or, a Description of the Diseases of Dogs* (London: Boosey, 1817), p. 10.

death.<sup>20</sup> Excrement, too, was fastidiously avoided because most elite spectators, unlike curious physicians, assiduously distanced themselves from bodily contact with dung. Dr. Prout analysed the excrements of the boa constrictor at the Exeter Change menagerie with enthusiasm, describing its scent as “faint and mawkish” with the texture of dry chalk; it left a white mark when rubbed hard on a surface.<sup>21</sup> Few preferred as close an inspection as this.

Touch, however, along with the other senses was a potent gauge of authenticity and enriched the experience of museum collections. Constance Classen has shown how visitors to the Ashmolean Museum touched paintings, pick-up objects and fingered ashes in urns; they also tasted specimens of natural history like bird nests, seeds, fruits and botanical preparations.<sup>22</sup> Olfactory stimulation was a valuable perceptual tool that gauged cultural authenticity; this was possible because the decaying odour of specimens or the scented polish of wood revealed the intrinsic properties of these objects. Smell created both a tangible and invisible architecture in museums and menageries as experiential places. Where separation from odour or its concealment could not be achieved, self-conscious acknowledgement and disgust marked certain odours as unacceptable. The decaying odour of preserved natural history specimens would have been familiar to those who visited cabinets, coffee houses and menageries. Yet, clearly, the recently dead were especially malodorous. The charred carcass of an elephant burnt in a fire in Dublin attracted an eager crowd of souvenir hunters in July 1681, but the odour was so putrid the authorities threatened to take action. A local physician performed a dissection overnight, boiling flesh and bones. The odour wafted through Dublin, reaching the windows of the Lieutenant Governor’s offices. Decades later, in 1800, the death of a rhinoceros outside Portsmouth created a stench so intolerable that “the mayor was obliged to order the body to be immediately buried.” Two weeks later, the proprietor returned to exhume

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<sup>20</sup> Delabere Pritchett Blaine, *Canine Pathology*, p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Thomson, “Analysis of the Excrements of a Boa Constrictor,” *Annals of Philosophy, or, Magazine of Chemistry, Mechanics, Geology, and Natural History V* (London: Baldwin, 1815), 413.

<sup>22</sup> Constance Classen, “Museum Manners: The Sensory Life of the Early Museum,” *Journal of Social History* 40 (2007): 185-914.

and preserve the valuable bones and skin, but “the stench was so insufferable, that it was with the utmost difficulty the persons employed could proceed in their operations.”<sup>23</sup> Large dead animals were, then, particularly problematic because their bulk made them difficult to preserve. Such animals were then guaranteed a short exhibitionary afterlife, like the whale displayed at the Lyceum on the Strand in 1787; the proprietor could not depend on the January cold to slow the inevitable decay, so the whale was “not exhibited longer than fourteen days at the latest.” The air at the Lyceum would have been cloying and offensive before then.<sup>24</sup>

Exhibitions of living animals could also offend the olfactory comfort of spectators. A keen recognition of a cultural sense of propriety or discourse of deodorisation led many exhibitors to advertise their premises as clean, sweet smelling and well ventilated. In the 1750s, some went further; they began to assert that their animals’ bodies were not merely odourless, like their premises, but were actually pleasantly fragranced. The two camels exhibited at the Talbot Inn on the Strand in 1758 attracted specific commentaries on the relative merits of their odour. In the first instance their proprietor attempted to assuage public, and particularly feminine, misconceptions about the scent of his camels:

Many ladies may suppose, who have not yet seen them, that there may be something disagreeable, either to the sight or smell, on a near inspection; but should such supposition really exist, reasonable as it may appear, it has not the least foundation in truth; for the breath of either of them is as sweet as a sow’s.<sup>25</sup>

Particular assumptions were held about “disagreeable” animal smells or appearances and this advertisement was an attempt to pre-empt and negate them. A later newspaper column on the camels at the Talbot Inn rhapsodised about the appeal of the camels, demonstrating a keen appreciation of odour and comfort in constituting

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<sup>23</sup> William Wood, *Zoography, Or, the Beauties of Nature Displayed Vol. I* (London: Cadell, 1807), 86-87.

<sup>24</sup> “The Piked Whale,” Advertisement from unknown print source, 29 January, 1787 (Lysons Collection MC20452, British Library), Frame 53.

<sup>25</sup> Advertisement for the “Dromedary and Camel”, 26 January, 1758 (British Library: Lysons Collection) Microfilm MC20452 Frames 9 and 8e.

pleasant spectatorship: “The ladies are especially charmed with them; and express great satisfaction at the sweetness of their breath, and the neatness of their apartment.”<sup>26</sup> Other odiferous animals included the buffalo at the “Bird Shop” on the Haymarket, Strand, in 1799, which had an odour “so perfectly sweet, that it fills the room with a rich perfume.” Furthermore, the buffalo was “so extremely tractable and gentle, that the most timid Lady may approach it with perfect safety.”<sup>27</sup> The strenuous assertion that particular proprietor’s premises were clean suggests that there were conversely many that were not. The German dramatist and government official August von Kotzebue (1761-1819) was unimpressed by a Parisian animal merchant’s shop on the Pont Neuf. He preferred the taxidermy shop:

This theatre of inanimate bodies is, in some measure, preferable to that which swarms with living creatures, but which is rendered offensive by the disagreeable exhalations. If, however, you can stay a few moments in the latter shop without feeling indisposed, you will obtain some idea of Noah’s ark, which could scarcely have been celebrated for its pleasant smell. Here you see lodged in a vast number of cages, grey, green, and party-coloured parrots, white cockatoos, superb India ravens, all of which scream at once, in such a manner as to deafen you.<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, English commentators travelling overseas were quick to draw their reader’s attentions towards the aesthetic and olfactory horrors of foreign menageries. In what might be thought of as a form of sensory nationalism, the mismanagement of menageries in foreign states was synonymous with political or cultural disorder. The “filth” of Constantinople (“very disgusting to a European”) was mirrored likewise in the Ottoman menagerie, a “filthy and neglected place.”<sup>29</sup> The English writer Robert Southey made more explicit connections between a mismanaged state and a

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<sup>26</sup> Commentary on the “Dromedary and Camel,” 5 April, 1758 (British Library: Lysons Collection) Microfilm MC20452 Frames 9 and 8e.

<sup>27</sup> “A Live Boos Potamus, or the River Cow of Egypt, from the Banks of the Nile” (British Library: Lysons Collection) Microfilm MC20452 Frame 26.

<sup>28</sup> August von Kotzebue, *Travels from Berlin, through Switzerland to Paris in 1804, Vol. I* (London: Phillips, 1804), p. 121.

<sup>29</sup> *The Edinburgh Gazetteer or Geographical Dictionary II* (Edinburgh: Constable, 1822), 328.

neglected menagerie when he wrote about the Portuguese royal menagerie at Lisbon; “Like every other useful establishment of royal munificence in this kingdom, the menagerie is ill-managed and ill-supplied. I was almost sickened at the pestilential filth in which the beasts are confined.”<sup>30</sup> Malodour clearly related to broader mismanagement, and it had its own political economy amongst elites in Georgian Britain. Where offensive animal smells could not be avoided or re-cast into a more favourable appreciation, the self-conscious acknowledgment of malodour and a distancing from the recognised source was a practical sort of sensory management. In the early nineteenth century, in his delineation of the menagerie of the London Zoological Society, Edward Bennett took considerable pains in describing the scent of the peccary and the reader’s righteous revulsion:

It has been generally said that the secretion from its dorsal gland is inodorous; and the individual before us, if not so offensive as the others, is nevertheless sufficiently so to render its proximity not very desirable. [...]

Far from pleasant...the filthy and disgusting smell emitted by the fluid which is secreted by the gland in large quantities, furnishing of itself a sufficient and to any sensible nostril a perfectly satisfactory indication of its existence...there are few, we apprehend, among our readers who would enjoy being placed for any considerable length of time to the leeward of the Peccaries in the Society’s Garden.<sup>31</sup>

Notions of bodily comfort worked to banish unclean surroundings and malodour, though some offensive aromas could be rendered as pleasant fragrances in cultural thought as menagerists sought to market their animals. A sense of ease was also facilitated by the mitigation of the threat of bodily endangerment from encounters with exotic animals, where tactile and close engagement was seen as an important feature of spectatorship so long as they were appropriate.

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<sup>30</sup> Robert Southey, *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Spain and Portugal* (London: Longman, 1799), p. 315.

<sup>31</sup> Edward Turner Bennett, *The Gardens and Menagerie of the Zoological Society Delineated: Vol.1, Quadrupeds* (Chiswick: Whittingham, 1831), pp. 57, 64.

## **Bodily Proximity**

English cottagers and other rural labourers worked and lived with a variety of agricultural animals including poultry, cattle and sheep. Urban inhabitants, especially if poor, would also live in close quarters with the pigs and chickens commonly reared in yards and wandering the streets, or would see the livestock for sale and slaughter at open-air markets like Smithfields. But a substantial number of the elite and “middling sort” came into contact with a limited range of animals and of their own volition. The deodorisation of space over the long eighteenth century did not necessarily exclude animals from domestic or public spaces as such; rather, only certain sorts of animals were excluded. Lapdogs, especially, and later parrots and monkeys, shared private spaces distinct from other animals. Dogs could be found carried on persons, being walked in the street, sleeping on beds or sitting in the drawing room. Such privileged access to bodily and social spaces was not, however, unproblematic, and attracted criticism centred on critiques of luxury and concerns about women’s sexuality. Using the lapdog as a starting point, this section explores the emergence of specific concerns about bodily proximity between women, children and animals. Thinking through these anxieties, I draw out a number of menagerie spectator behaviours that emerged in the eighteenth century that will be discussed later in reference to changing notions of endangerment or risk.

The lapdog and other favoured canines in British culture have their roots in the seventeenth century. Before that time, the predominant cultural position of the dog was one of utility, primarily of hunting, though this did not preclude the earlier keeping of dogs for companionship, especially by elite women and clergymen. Dogs and their owners formed the basis of portraits in the Italian States as early as the 1400s but did not emerge as subjects in Anglo-Dutch painting until the early 1700s.<sup>32</sup> There, lapdogs wearing collars with bells and ribbons attached sit on silk cushions in affluent homes; pedigree hunting or gun dogs chase game birds or feast on joints of meat. Significantly, these dogs are shown inhabiting human spaces and in close proximity to their owner’s bodies; sat in laps, hiding in skirts or being the recipients

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<sup>32</sup> Edgar Bowron, *Best in Show: The Dog in Art from the Renaissance to Today* (London: Yale University Press, 2006).

of their owner's caresses. It is clear that the wealthy elite wanted to be portrayed with their property; the three eldest children of King Charles I were painted in 1635 by van Dyck with their cavalier spaniels nuzzled alongside them. Elite women like Mary Churchill, the Duchess of Montague, were shown stroking their dogs affectionately. In portraits or "conversation pictures" of elite families and individuals in domestic spaces or in landscape gardens, dogs are shown at their owner's side or on their lap. Expensive Italian greyhounds and pedigree gundogs were joined by smaller exotic lapdogs like the pug, originally imported by the Dutch East Indies Company from China. These were especially associated with luxury consumption as lapdogs lacking a functional utility, the "aestheticised intimates" of (principally) elite women.<sup>33</sup> Dressed in collars, ribbons or jewels and held close to the body with privileged access to private feminine spaces like the toilette and drawing room, these animals became contested sites for debates on femininity and appropriate sensibilities. Lapdogs perched on their mistress's laps or carried around in arms could be troubling to some (especially male) commentators who thought that these little dogs with their "biting snappy ways" were the ungrateful recipients of "misdirected sentimental feeling, inordinate caresses, excessive attention and grief."<sup>34</sup>

This scepticism about appropriate bodily proximity and sentimental investment between dogs and women extended to other, more exotic animals. Take, for instance, example of the parrot. The act of feeding, nurturing, and training a parrot was a suitable pastime for cultivating genteel habits and tenderness in young girls; the parrots in eighteenth-century children's books are fed biscuits and nuts from the hand, are fondly stroked, and respond to their owner's voice.<sup>35</sup> But in wider

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<sup>33</sup> Theresa Braunschneider, "The Lady and the Lapdog: Mixed Ethnicity in Constantinople, Fashionable Pets in Britain," in *Humans and Other Animals in Eighteenth-Century British Culture: Representations, Hybridity, Ethics*, ed. Frank Palmeri (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2006), pp. 31-48.

<sup>34</sup> Markman Ellis, "Suffering Things: Lapdogs, Slaves, and Counter-Sensibility," in *The Secret Life of Things: Animals, Objects, and It-Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. Mark Blackwell (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007), pp. 92-116.

<sup>35</sup> See "Miss Poll and her Parrot," in Thomas Marchant, *Puerilia or Amusements for the Young Consisting of a Collection of Songs, Adapted to the Fancies & Capacities of Those of*

literature the relationship between women and parrots was a subject of satire and censure. There parrots are held close to the breasts and peck lovingly at their mistress's hair or neck. Parrots were imagined as a substitute lover or rival suitor and not an appropriate childhood or adulthood companion. The eroticism of bodily contact with parrots appears as a motif in a number of works, the 1789 poem "To a Lady on Her Parrot" is suitably representative. The lady's parrot is presented as 'wanton', with 'swollen plumes' and enraptured in an 'amorous trance'.<sup>36</sup> Much earlier, in the 1650s, the perils of close bodily contact between parrots and women was used to create a humorous contemplation on the nature of the senses. As a parrot sits on a woman's finger, she bemoans the pain of the sharp bite it has inflicted, as blood trickles down her hand. Even after the senses of taste, sight, and hearing have weakened in old age, the senses of touch and therefore pain persist (Plate.27). Ingrid Tague's study of animal epitaphs in the eighteenth-century identifies a wider cultural trope of male fantasies revolving around closeness to women; "women's love for their animals rather than for men – presumably more suitable objects of female affections — was a commonplace of writing about pets. Following a long tradition, authors were often inspired by the sight of a woman caressing her pet to wish themselves in the animal's place or at least to wish that she would care about him as much".<sup>37</sup> Fathers, husbands and sons were the more appropriate recipients of feminine affections and caresses. Much of the criticism that was levied on spoiled animals and their indulgent owners was predicated on the idea that sentiment and caresses were wasted on animals because they did not return gratitude or attentions. Some late eighteenth century writing on parrots, however, gendered the traits of these birds to understand them not only as capable of reciprocal affection but as enjoying acts of spectatorship.

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*Tender Years* (London, 1751); *The Royal Primer; Or, an Easy and Pleasant Guide to the Art of Reading* (Brentford: Norbury, 1770).

<sup>36</sup> "To a Lady on Her Parrot," *The Festival of Love; Or, a Collection of Warm yet Elegant Poems* (Dublin, 1789), p. 29.

<sup>37</sup> Ingrid Tague, "Dead Pets: Satire and Sentiment in British Elegies and Epitaphs for Animals," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 41, 3 (2008): 289-306. For discussion on women and birds in the eighteenth century in an art historical context, see Donald, *Picturing Animals in Britain*. The relationship between women and exotic birds in eighteenth-century France is a key aspect of Robbins, *Elephant Slaves and Pampered Parrots*.

William Hayes's illustrated *Portraits of the Rare and Curious Birds with Their Descriptions from the Menagery of Osterley Park* (1794-1799) presents birds, especially parrots, as the embodiment of feminine qualities. The lesser white cockatoo was "elegant", "uncommonly graceful" and capable of "deriving great pleasure from being caressed."<sup>38</sup> The great red-crested cockatoo received praised as possessing a "superior understanding to that of the common Parrot, and are more docile, kind, and sincere in their attachments. This amiable disposition was particularly manifested in the subject of this Plate, for its fondness, affectionate attention, and attachment to the person who had the care of it was beyond expression."<sup>39</sup> The cranes in the collection at Osterley Park were also pleasant and affective; the Numidian crane "is gentle and social, apparently much pleased at being admired, and embracing every opportunity of showing and setting itself off to the greatest advantage to those who seem attracted by its beauty; it accompanies visitors in their walk in the most graceful manner imaginable."<sup>40</sup> The crowned African crane was "yet more gentle and familiar. It is much delighted with being taken notice of, and was a constant attendant to those who visited this delightful spot, making the tour of the menagery, with slow but measured steps, and always parting the company with much apparent regret, which it expressed by raising the neck, and making a hoarse unpleasant cry."<sup>41</sup> Language of sensibility and the picturesque diffused into the assessment of exotic birds in other natural histories too, like Wood's *Zoography; or the Beauties of Nature Displayed* (1807). There, the cockatoo at the Exeter Exchange menagerie is feted as "beautiful," "picturesque," even "mannered" and "attentive."<sup>42</sup> This notwithstanding, the abominable screams of the cockatoo like the hoarse cry of the crane at Osterley were unpleasant to the ears of otherwise admiring spectators. This recognition of the attention given by spectators was an important

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<sup>38</sup> Thomas Hayes, *Portraits of the Rare and Curious Birds With Their Descriptions from the Menagery of Osterley Park in the County of Middlesex, Vol. I* (London: Bulmer, 1794-1799).

<sup>39</sup> Hayes, *Portraits*, p. 38.

<sup>40</sup> Hayes, *Portraits*, p. 4.

<sup>41</sup> Hayes, *Portraits*, p. 3.

<sup>42</sup> Wood, *Zoography*, p. 427.

(and anticipated) feature of menagerie encounters. In 1798, in Salem, Massachusetts, the Rev. William Bentley recalled his disappointing menagerie visit in his diary, where he had seen “a bear sleeping and in insolent contempt of every visitor. A baboon, more fond of entertaining his guests, an affronted porcupine, & two owls who gave us no share of their notice.”<sup>43</sup> Later we will see how menagerie behaviours included provoking reactions from recalcitrant animals.

In contrast to the concern about the closeness of women to animals, that between children and animals had more positive connotations. In children’s fictional literature of the late eighteenth century the dialogues of talking animals and sensitive children were intended to finely hone the sensibilities of children towards animals.<sup>44</sup> Ease around (selected) animals became important in an elite culture that esteemed a cultivated informality and ease of manners. Children of high-status individuals accompanied their parents to pleasure gardens, museums, assembly rooms, concerts, the theatre and to fashionable spa resorts from as early as nine, and certainly by thirteen. Participation in the world of polite urban leisure, which included West End menageries, was necessary for the absorption and reproduction of elite sociable behaviours. These were especially important since these behaviours were necessary in adulthood for success in a competitive marriage market and distinct social world. Recent scholarship on childhood in the eighteenth century has drawn attention to “the child” as a consumer and product of elite urban culture as well as interpreting print sources and portraiture as suggestive of new familial sensibilities.<sup>45</sup> These scholars have worked within the framework of the “closed domestic family” and “new world of childhood” that was, according to Lawrence Stone, characterised by strong and affectionate relationships between parents and children; as well as written

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<sup>43</sup> *The Diary of William Bentley*, 12 March, 1798, cited in Brett Mizelle, “Man Cannot Behold It Without Contemplating Himself: Monkeys, Apes, and Human Identity in the Early American Republic,” *Explorations in Early American Culture: A Supplemental Issue of Pennsylvania History* 66 (1999): 144-173.

<sup>44</sup> Tess Cosslett, *Talking Animals in British Children’s Fiction 1786-1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

<sup>45</sup> Anja Müller (ed.), *Fashioning Childhood in the Eighteenth Century: Age and Identity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Andrew O’Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child: Children’s Literature and Childhood in the Late Eighteenth century* (London: Routledge, 2003).

more nuanced histories of family, kinship and friendship in the eighteenth century.<sup>46</sup> Toys, clothes, and reading material have received considerable attention as part of the material culture of childhood and the eighteenth-century family, but animals, and especially exotic animals, are conspicuously absent in secondary literature except in their literary guises or cursory allusions to pets like birds or dogs.

In part, the scarcity of sources that identify children as the owners of exotic animals is a problem — exotic animals like parrots or monkeys were expensive consumer goods (some equivalent to a servant's wage) and were normally the property of high status adults. Though parrots do appear occasionally in the presence of children in paintings, along with other animals like dogs and rabbits, they may serve sentimental or allegorical purposes or be included as an indicator of wealth and prestige. Peter Lely's (1670) oil painting of a young girl in a white robe feeding cherries to a parrot is perhaps better understood as allegorical given the cultural associations between parrots, intimacy and sexuality. Later, eighteenth-century paintings of aristocratic children playing with parrots are probably better sources for exotic animals in elite childhoods. Joshua Reynolds (1773) painted Lady Cockburn and her three eldest sons with their rather disgruntled looking parrot. The children of King George III and Queen Charlotte are shown playing with parrots and lapdogs in two paintings by, respectively, Johann Zoffany (1770) and John Copley (1785). It is certain that some exotic animals were a familiar part of a number of children's domestic lives based on visual and literary sources and on the basis of adult ownership of these animals. It is unclear, however, the extent to which exotic animals in domestic spaces were closeted-away luxury private possessions of adults or whether they were considered as household, family or children's property.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship and Patronage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London: Penguin, 1990).

<sup>47</sup> Of the 58 different individuals acknowledged in the works of the naturalists George Edwards and Eleazar Albin in the 1730s and 1750s as the owners of exotic animals, only one is a young adult or child; a gold crowned parakeet listed as the property of the daughter of Dr. James Jurin, President of the Royal College of Physicians.

Stronger foundations for exotic animals as part of the material culture of elite and “middling sort” childhoods exist in sources that pertain to menageries (Plate.28). These sources have not been used by historians to write either a cultural history of animals, collecting or, indeed, of childhood in the eighteenth century. A short consideration of these scarce sources is suggestive of an ease of manners and a management of risk around exotic animals that established close encounters with menagerie animals as a routine feature of their exhibition. From the 1790s, advertisements in newspapers and (more so) periodicals attempted to assuage fears about the suitability of menagerie animals for children. In 1791, a young male zebra at the Lyceum on the Strand was advertised as “so gentle that ladies and children may stroke him with safety.”<sup>48</sup> The zebra was burnt in a fire started by a monkey that set straw alight, but whilst living he would “suffer a child, six years old, to sit quietly on its back, without showing the least sign of displeasure; it was familiar with strangers, and received the caresses usually given to the horse with evident satisfaction.”<sup>49</sup> Later, in the 1790s, at Pidcock’s Menagerie children were given the opportunity to ride a “most stupendous male elephant” in an apartment that had been specially built to accommodate elephant rides.<sup>50</sup> This elephant would also perform ticks with buckets, coins and handkerchiefs that involved audience participation. Similarly, when the first Andean llama and alpaca arrived in London in 1811 and 1812 respectively, stroking their “immense rich shining fleece” or riding on their backs was advertised as a particularly appealing prospect.<sup>51</sup> This familiarised sensory engagement with menagerie animals probably had a much earlier point of origin, though earlier accounts of exotic animals in the eighteenth century scarcely mention spectators riding animals or engaging in close contact.

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<sup>48</sup> Advertisement: “Just arrived at the Lyceum in the Strand, a most beautiful Zebra,” *Woodfall’s Register*, 2 April, 1791 (British Library, Burney Collection).

<sup>49</sup> John Church, *Church’s Cabinet of Quadrupeds* (London: Darton and Harvey, 1805), p. 672.

<sup>50</sup> Gilbert Pidcock, *Now Exhibiting in an apartment at the Great Room over Exeter-Change, in the Strand, a Most Stupendous Male Elephant* (1797) (Single sheet folio, British Library); Advertisement: *True Britain*, 2 April, 1800 (British Library, Burney Collection).

<sup>51</sup> Advertisement: “Cameloganaco” of 1811, the Alpaca and Llama of 1812 MC20452 Frame 28 (British Library, Lysons Collection).

Sources from the 1730s and 40s, for instance, relating to the exhibition of a rhinoceros in London, are replete with direct references or gestures towards keen audience participation. The young male rhinoceros “bore to be touched on any part of his body” but if struck or hungry he would become enraged and could only be pacified by food — hay, sugar, rice and greens. His tongue was described as “smooth” like a calf’s, and in “running one’s fingers” over the skin folds they felt “like a piece of board,” with the flesh in between as “soft as silk.”<sup>52</sup> Other animals, too, sometimes ferocious, were often approached quite readily by spectators; the caged leopard at Sir Ashton Lever’s museum at Leicester House in the 1770s was apparently “gratified by attention and caresses” and would evince pleasure by “purring and rubbing itself against the bars like a cat.”<sup>53</sup> Similarly, far from terrifying, the six-foot flightless cassowary at the Exeter Change would be taken out of his cage several times a day and run around, allowing “even strangers to handle it.”<sup>54</sup>

Two sources for menagerie behaviours written by or about blind/deaf child spectators offer detailed descriptions of encounters with exotic animals. The earliest, referring to the childhood of the natural and experimental philosopher John Gough (1757-1825), describes his own desire and that of his father to extend his senses of touch and hearing. As a young boy in his native, rural Kendal during the 1760s, he could regularly see itinerant animal shows to which he was taken by his father:

In his father's arms, he was permitted to handle the bears, monkeys, and camels, which travelled the streets. At a later period, he was introduced, by the same cautious guardian, into a travelling menagerie; and, an arrangement having been made with the keeper, he entered many of the cages, and examined all the harmless animals. But the fulfilment of this part of the agreement did not satisfy the curiosity of the blind boy: he begged to be permitted to handle the rest of the collection; and his entreaties prevailed.

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<sup>52</sup> Parsons, “A Letter from Dr. Parsons to Martin Folkes, Esq; President of the Royal Society, Containing the Natural History of the Rhinoceros,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 42 (1742): 523-541.

<sup>53</sup> Bingley, *Animal Biography, Vol. I* (London: Phillips, 1803), p. 278.

<sup>54</sup> Bingley, *Animal Biography, Vol. II*, p. 283.

The result was, that he ran his fingers over all the carnivorous animals, nothing daunted by their expressions of disapprobation; the hyena's cage being the only one which was not entered, though he was ready to make this venture also, had not the keeper refused to comply with his wish.<sup>55</sup>

Gough's management of his senses in the menagerie was clearly encouraged by his father and facilitated by the menagerist, demonstrating that close encounters with animals could be seen as a sensory education and a worthwhile childhood experience. Though Gough's biography has distinct features — his blindness and precocious intellect — these are clearly attitudes that gained some ground in the last half of the eighteenth century. Not only did proprietors advertise their animals as eminently suitable for handling or approach by children (as they had done for women decades earlier), but with special reference to children with impairments, the value of encounters with animals as both entertainment and sensory instruction had diffused. In the 1830s, Dr. Charles Orpen of the National Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb Children of the Poor in Ireland, published accounts of his novel educational practices, including sign language and the pedagogies of his success of his school. Letters written by children at the institute were offered as evidence of their progress made in moral and practical education; they showcased the acquisition of the literacy thought difficult or impossible to teach to the deaf.<sup>56</sup> This education involved visits to a variety of exhibitions in Dublin, including, in 1819, a trip to Polito's Menagerie. Two letters by William Brennan and Thomas Collins are unusual

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<sup>55</sup> Cornelius Nicholson, *The Annals of Kendal: Being a Historical and Descriptive Account of Kendal and the Neighbourhood with Biographical Sketches of Many Eminent Personages Connected with the Town* (London: Whitaker, 1861), p. 358.

<sup>56</sup> In the United States during the 1830s the letters of deaf children visiting menageries were also reprinted in volumes concerned with pedagogy, and these provide again scarce sources of menagerie spectatorship authored by children, albeit in a slightly later period and national context. For example, *Twenty-Eight Annual Report and Documents of the New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb* (New York: Egbert, 1847), p. 63. One author was particularly interested in the response of deaf children to the sight of the elephant or lion; “a sprightly deaf-mute child, one accustomed to have his pantomimic efforts received with kind interest, at the first sight of an elephant or lion, will give this new animal a fitting sign-name; and, at the first perception of some new feeling, or mental relation, will devise some suitable mode of expressing it in pantomime.” Frederick Barnard, *Observations on the Education of the Deaf and Dumb* (Boston: Low, 1834), p. 19.

as first-person accounts by late Georgian children articulating the experience of visiting a menagerie. They reveal much about practices of spectatorship. Brennan wrote:

We went to Mr Polito's House, and gave our twelve pennies for admittance. We saw a camel eating straw; he wanted cakes. The buffalo was standing, looking through wooden rails. I saw a panther marching on the floor of his cage; his mouth was yawning; he was grinning at a lady; she was beating him with a stick. [...] A man was beating a monkey with a stick; he put his stick into his mouth; it was pulling the stick out of the man's hand. [...] I saw a man speaking to the elephant who was bending his legs; his trunk took up cakes; he was eating them. [...] A man was playing with a kangaroo; D\_\_ gave kangaroo small cakes; he was eating them; he wanted cakes in his cage. [...] Collins was shaking his glove at the stork, who was snapping his bill at it; his throat is slender, its wings are slender; his legs are long; his eyes are small; its head is hard; he was standing crooked on the floor of his cage; a man was beating it to get up; a door porter opened the door of his cage.<sup>57</sup>

Collins was on the same trip; he was boy teasing the stork:

I went to Mr Polito's, Lower-Abbey Street. I saw many beasts playing in their cages of iron. [...] The spotted, or laughing hyena, was wild in a cage; he was unpleasant. [...] The beautiful zebra was in a cage of wood; his body was beautifully striped. [...] A kangaroo's forelegs were small and short; his legs were long; he was jumping to my glove, I was shaking it at him. The Lion was sleeping in a cage; his tail was down pendulous through rail to my hands were touching tail. [...] A porcupine; quills are thick; he was in a cage; his quills are long, and black and white. I felt his quills. We were afraid. [...] A Monkey's face was grinning, and speaking, in a small cage. He was kneeling on his hands, and was eating cakes. [...] His tail is long, and was black; his arms are black; he and I were friends; he was scratching his thigh, and pulling the rail of irons.<sup>58</sup>

In both letters, the boys record a range of their own and other spectator's behaviours; they feed, touch, tease and beat the animals. Collins is able to touch the tail of a lion

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<sup>57</sup> Extracts from the letter of William Brennan, 3 June, 1819 in Charles Orpen, *Anecdotes of the Deaf and Dumb* (London: Timms, 1836), pp. 432- 434.

<sup>58</sup> Extracts from the letter of Thomas Collins, 3 June, 1819 in Charles Orpen, *Anecdotes of the Deaf and Dumb*, pp.413-415.

and the quills of a porcupine and lean in close enough to tease a kangaroo with his glove. Both he and Brennan saw menagerie porters and others beating the animals with sticks, and their responses to the animals are sometimes ambivalent reflecting disgust, fear and amusement.

It is clear from these letters and other sources cited in this section that close encounters with exotic were commonplace in menageries and facilitated by keepers who would open doors to allow closer access. Where this was not possible in the case of large carnivores (although John Gough was permitted to do so) spectators were able to draw close enough to cages to touch dangerous animals like lions, including children under the supervision of adults. These encounters have not been the subject of scholarship, but they articulate a very different sense of endangerment or risk that is important to understanding the cultural history of exotic animals in eighteenth-century Britain.

## **Endangerment**

Accidents and even fatalities involving exotic animals were not uncommon in this period, and these occurrences, their reporting and legal verdicts indicate a culture in which an assessment of risk was not only different but also notions of accident and culpability continued to condone such surprisingly close encounters. It would seem that some proprietors were able to construe their animals as approachable and tractable in the minds of spectators, and indeed some certainly must have been. This sense of safety and comfort — a managed cultural ease around exotic animals — was, however, unsettled by accidents and tragedies that exposed the fragilities of control and could be deeply unsettling.

Some exotic animals on display could be dangerous; keepers might be mauled, spectators maimed and animals could escape the confines of their cages. Periodicals and newspapers, particularly from the 1780s, ran sporadic stories on sensational animal accidents; the drunken man bitten after handling a rattlesnake, a keeper killed

by his lion, escaped menagerie animals attacking horses or mail coaches on toll roads, the story of a leopard strolling down Piccadilly are but a few examples. In 1703, Hannah Twynnoy, a servant in the rural market town of Malmesbury, was mauled to death by a tiger in the menagerie staying in the yard of the White Lion where she worked; she became the first spectator to claim that dubious honour in the eighteenth century.<sup>59</sup> A century later, in central London, a leopard “walked up Piccadilly in majestic style” after escaping from Wombwell’s Menagery and “evinced no sign of terror or alarm, although he produced both in every beholder.” The leopard was recaptured but only after biting and scratching his keeper; he was later admitted to St. George’s Hospital for an arm amputation. Earlier in 1773, a large wolf had escaped from a menagerie along Piccadilly and roamed at large until a pack of butcher’s dogs savaged it.<sup>60</sup>

Not all accidents occurred outside the home. From as early as the seventeenth century the domestic dangers of monkeys was well-known. In the press and in conversational anecdotes, the dangers of exotic animals in human spaces had circulated prolifically. In the 1680s, John Evelyn noted in his diary two stories of women’s monkeys savaging human babies in their cribs he had heard at dinner and read in print. At the table of Sir William Hooker, his wife, Lady Lettice Coppinger, regaled Evelyn with the tale of a “vile monkey” that had ripped out the eyes and “torne the face” of a sleeping baby before it had “eaten the head into the braine.”<sup>61</sup> On his part, Evelyn was hardly faint-hearted; in 1654 he had seen a “huge beast” of a lion, writing in his diary; “I thrust my hand into his mouth, and felt his tongue rough like a cats [sic].”<sup>62</sup> The fear of monkeys endangering children was not without foundation, though, since those at the Tower of London menagerie were permitted to roam in the yard until they attacked and lacerated a young boy. Later, Enlightenment

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<sup>59</sup> John Moffatt, *The History of the Town of Malmesbury* (Tetbury: Goodwyn, 1805). The gravestone of Hannah Twynnoy (1670-1703) is in the grounds of Malmesbury Abbey.

<sup>60</sup> *Gentleman’s Magazine* XLIII, 404.

<sup>61</sup> John Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. Guy de la Bédoyère (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004), p. 265.

<sup>62</sup> Evelyn, *Diary*, p.86.

tales recalled in natural histories told of lascivious baboons and mandrills raping human women in the jungle or on sandy shores. In literature, too, monkeys as the playthings of women attracted criticism for the disorder they brought to a well-ordered household. In the children's book *Fabulous Histories* (1794), an entire chapter is dedicated to "Mrs Addis's Monkey Doing Mischief at the Tea-Table." The young Miss Benson and her mother pay a visit to the genteel, if dishevelled countryseat of their neighbour Mrs Addis:

On entering the hall, the young lady took note of a very disagreeable smell, and was surprised with the appearance of a parrot, a paroquet, and a macaw, all in most elegant cages. In the next room she came to, were a squirrel and a monkey, each which had a little house neatly ornamented.<sup>63</sup>

Aside from an unpleasant odour, the monkey marred the Bensons' visit by bursting into the drawing room; the monkey broke free from his chain, leapt on to the tea table and sat smashing teacups one by one before tearing a sofa cover. The monkey bit Mrs Addis's daughter and received his comeuppance after falling from the roof of the house and breaking his neck. Mrs Addis died alone with her ill-behaved and smelly animals, abandoned by her children.

This revulsion for monkeys, even when dead, was reflected in a letter written by Susan Burney reporting her visit to the Leverian Museum with her father in 1786. There she had seen taxidermy monkeys arranged in anthropomorphic poses, a sight so revolting that they were "scarce fit to be look'd at."<sup>64</sup> Disturbing and threatening, exhibitions of apes and monkeys were sometimes shielded from the sight of women, or offered on the condition that paid servants of the proprietor conduct them around. Chaperoned women did not only need protection from monkeys or apes, proprietors also felt it necessary to strenuously assert the safety of other animals in their exhibitions. Faced with the terrors of animal escapees, spectators were assured that dangerous animals were properly confined; phrases like "these things are in wire

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<sup>63</sup> Sarah Trimmer, *Fabulous Histories, Designed for the Instruction of Children Respecting Their Treatment of Animals* (Dublin: Porter, 1794), p. 101.

<sup>64</sup> Letter from Susan Burney to her sister Fanny Burney (1778) cited in Altick, *The Shows of London*, p. 29.

cages” or “the animals are all well secured” were commonplace in advertisements drumming up custom. Alternatively, animals themselves might be styled as obedient, docile, and approachable —spectators might find these laudable traits counter-intuitive. A crocodile was guaranteed as tame, gentle and able to “walk around a room silent as a lamb.”<sup>65</sup> Even giant boa constrictors were presented as approachable; the proprietor of two exhibited in an apartment on Piccadilly attempted to assuage fears of endangerment by proffering the closeness of their keeper to his charges as testimony:

As the antipathy against these reptiles generally prevails, the public may be assured that they are quite harmless and inoffensive, so that the keeper may play with them like a child, and that the most timid lady may approach them without fear or danger.

Harmless or not, other exhibitors of eleven-foot boa constrictors liked to entertain an element of danger in their exhibits. Advertisements contained references to their “loud hissing” and propensity to attack “man and beasts,” “darting down” from trees to “dispatch” hapless travellers.<sup>66</sup> Reassuring for late Georgian spectators, the specimens offered for inspection were restrained; Mr. Polito kept his “perfectly secure” in a “commodious caravan” and properly trained. Whilst in Edinburgh, the keeper of Edward Cross’s travelling menagerie, “at the pleasure of the visitors”, would enter the cage of the boas and “suffer them to entwine themselves in immense folds around his neck, arms, etc.”<sup>67</sup> Nathaniel Sheldon Wheaton, an American in London, visited the menagerie of Edward Cross on the Strand with “great offence to the nostrils,” but was charmed with the gentle nature of the “beautiful” boa

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<sup>65</sup> Advertisement: “To Be Seen a Young Crocodile,” July 1789 Microfilm 20452, Frame 53 (Lysons Collection, British Library).

<sup>66</sup> Advertisement: “Living Wonder!!, The Boa Constrictor,” *Aberdeen Journal*, 9 October, 1816 Aberdeen (Burney Collection, British Library).

<sup>67</sup> Advertisement: “The Boa Constrictors, or Great Serpents Alive,” *Caledonian Mercury*, 17 August, 1816 (Burney Collection, British Library).

constrictor: “he seemed to be very tender, as he started and gave a hiss, on laying my hand on his back.”<sup>68</sup>

With some affection a boa constrictor on display in Liverpool became known by the moniker “The Great Boar Constructed” after the “Memorandums” of an anonymous Liverpudlian, complete with the phonetic and typological error, was printed in the *Liverpool Mercury*.<sup>69</sup> Charming nomenclature notwithstanding, spectators knew that the boa constrictor did pose a threat of bodily endangerment. The menagerie spectacle of boas suffocating and swallowing live rabbits was a horrid if compellingly macabre reminder of the treat to safety. Mr. Cops, a keeper at the Tower Menagerie, scarcely needed reminding; he had been throttled and pinned down to a post by a boa, and was rescued only by the efforts of another keeper.<sup>70</sup> Lions and tigers were also exhibited as gentle and tame. At the Tower of London, Dunco the lion was taken as proof “that good company and kind treatment will tame the most savage animals.” William, Dunco’s keeper, was able to play with him and on one instance fell asleep with Dunco lying next to him, “his great paw over William’s breast, and laying his nose upon his head.” Another lion at the Tower, Nero, was tame enough to play with his “feeder” and “let him play with him like a spaniel.” To others, however, Nero was a fearsome animal, but that said, spectators had “been so foolhardy when they have been to see this terrible beast, as to pluck a lock of his mane.”<sup>71</sup> Earlier, in the 1710s when the satirist and raconteur Edward Ward (1667-1731) visited the menagerie (he thought it “smelt as frowzily” as a dove house or dog kennel), the keeper recalled the tragedy of the mauled female keeper in 1684. The keeper then moved on to his own lion anecdote; he recounted how he had

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<sup>68</sup> Nathaniel Sheldon Wheaton, *A Journal of a Residence during Several Months in London: Including excursions through Various Parts of England and a Short Tour in France and Scotland in the Years 1823 and 1824* (Hartford: Huntington, 1830), p.125.

<sup>69</sup> “Memorandum,” *Liverpool Mercury*, 14 May 1813 (Burney Collection, British Library).

<sup>70</sup> Edward Turner Bennett, *The Tower Menagerie: Comprising the Natural History of the Animals Contained in that Establishment with Anecdotes of their Characters and History* (Chiswick: Whittingham, 1829), p. 238.

<sup>71</sup> David Henry, *An Historical Account of the Curiosities of London and Westminster* (London: Newberry, 1769), pp.16-19.

fallen asleep whilst cleaning a lion den one night. He awoke to find a lion licking his face and wagging his tail, in “gratitude for my feeding him.” Those “few favourite kisses” from the rasping tongue of the lion rubbed his face raw. After Ward had narrowly avoided the errant paw of an angry lioness and seen some “stuffed” lions (previous tower occupants) with which he was unimpressed, he vividly recalled his encounter with a leopard:

A leopard, who is grown as cunning as a cross Bedlamite that loves not to be look'd at, for as a madman will be apt to salute you with a bowl of chamber-lie, so will the leopard, if you come near him, stare in your face and piss upon you, his urine being as hot as Aqua Fortis, and stinks worse than a pole-cats.<sup>72</sup>

Other menagerie spectators, with dismay, frequently complained about the torpor of supposedly “wild beasts” and would often make dangerous attempts to rouse them if they proved less engaging than the peeing leopard. Secure pens satisfied necessities for safety, but some spectators clearly craved the thrill of closeness to dangerous animals as part of the menagerie experience, a desire for jeopardy that some pursued to harrowing ends as some spectators attempted closer contact than plucking hair from a lion mane. The American rector Nathaniel Wheaton (1797-1862), in a frustrated tone, noted that a large box of “alligators, crocodiles and lizards” on exhibition were all so “torpid and sluggish, that they scarcely deigned to move, unless provoked.”<sup>73</sup> Provocations, as we saw earlier, normally involved the use of a cane or stick and put both animal and spectator in danger. In other instances, visitors attempted closer contact with dangerous animals, and widely circulated accounts of accidents became proverbial tales of poor conduct. A newspaper reported one accident explicitly as a cautionary tale:

*Unfortunate Accident: Caution to others.* – A person viewing the Royal Menagerie at the Tower, lately, imprudently ventured to touch the paw of one of the tigers, which instantly seized his arm with his mouth and drew him close to the den, notwithstanding the assistance of two or three other men. He was at length liberated from the tiger, by a

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<sup>72</sup> Edward Ward, *The London Spy Compleat, in Eighteen Parts. Being the First Volume of the Writings of Mr. Edward Ward*, 5th ed. (London: Bettesworth, 1718), pp. 303-307.

<sup>73</sup> Nathaniel Sheldon Wheaton, *Journey of a Residence*, p. 122.

person's succeeding in forcing a stick down the throat of the beast. He was carried to a surgeon, with his arm dreadfully lacerated.<sup>74</sup>

The normally placid and obedient elephant was also a source of potential menagerie endangerment, especially in the presence of ill-behaved children. At Miles's Menagerie at Bartholomew Fair in 1811, a group of boys teased an elephant by attempting to climb upon his back. Unimpressed, the elephant turned around and squeezed one boy against a wall in a "very dreadful manner." The boy would have died without the hasty intervention of the elephant's keeper.<sup>75</sup> Again at Bartholomew fair, another boy had his scalp torn off after daringly pressing close to the bars of the lion den.<sup>76</sup> With their routine acquaintance with exotic animals menagerie keepers appeared most sensationally and tragically as fatalities. In 1686, a "woman that lookt after the lions at the Tower" died after a lion caught hold of her hand and "grip'd it so hard that it was forc'd to be cut off to prevent a gangrene."<sup>77</sup> She died shortly after. And so Hannah Twynnoy in 1703, who became one of the earliest documented exotic animal fatalities. Two different fatalities at the Exeter Change menagerie on the Strand in the early nineteenth century testified to continued endangerment. A keeper, walking into a den with a sleeping lion inside, awoke it suddenly — he lost his life.<sup>78</sup> Another keeper at the menagerie, John Tietjen, was crushed by an elephant and punctured in the chest with a tusk after attempting to chivvy the elephant along with a broom.<sup>79</sup> In compliance with English law, the elephant was fined a one-shilling deodand (from the Latin *deo dandum*, "given to God") to be given to charitable causes.<sup>80</sup> Not all the keepers at the Exeter Change were so unfortunate; a

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<sup>74</sup> *The Literary Panorama, Being a Compendium of National Papers and Parliamentary Reports* XI (London: Baylis, 1812), 167.

<sup>75</sup> *The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature for the Year 1811* (London: Longman, 1812), 99.

<sup>76</sup> Rennie, *The Menageries: quadrupeds*, p.181.

<sup>77</sup> Narcissus Luttrell, *A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs from September 1678 to April 1714, Vol. 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1857), p. 371.

<sup>78</sup> Rennie, *The Menageries*, p. 17.

<sup>79</sup> "Death Caused by Elephant," *The Examiner*, 7 November, 1825.

<sup>80</sup> John Nichols, "The Obituary of John Tietjen," *Gentleman's Magazine* XCV (1825), 475.

young keeper narrowly avoided being impaled by a rhinoceros when he was thrown over the animal's head (the horn passing both fortunately and precariously between his thighs) and was able to clamber to safety whilst the rhinoceros's horn was impaled in a wooden partition.<sup>81</sup>

Clearly, then, tending exotic animals could be a perilous vocation, even when keepers ostensibly held control and displayed their disciplined animals to the public. Spectators were charmed by the intimate bonds between keepers and their charges, though its display could, in horrific but not uncommon occurrences, lead to the exhibition of sudden reversals of fortune. Sometimes spectators wanted fierce animals, and obliging proprietors made sure to provide. The feeding of lions and tigers at Exeter Change menagerie on Monday evenings was known as one of the best times to visit. The lions were kept nil by mouth from eight o'clock on Saturday evening to the same time on Monday evening (feeding time was announced by an elephant ringing a bell).<sup>82</sup> After two days of hunger, the lions were ravenous and vocal. As the keepers circulated the shins of beef, the lions "paced to and fro" with "deep and angry roars." The tigers would "growl dreadfully at anyone who approached their den," and so visitors had to be content with watching the carnivores "tear away the flesh" and "scronch the bones between their mighty jaws."<sup>83</sup> It was a tradition for much of the eighteenth century at the Tower of London to admit those who could not pay sixpence if they instead brought a "dog or cat as an oblation to the beasts, in lieu of money to the keeper."<sup>84</sup> Gruesome, spectators watched the lions tear these animals apart. The rare and charming sight of lions and their canine companions living in harmony at the Tower and Exeter Change was surprising to spectators precisely because they had seen the contrary. Other big cats at the Tower

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<sup>81</sup> Everard Home, "On a New Species of Rhinoceros found in the interior of Africa" *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society for the Year 1821* (London: Nicol, 1822), p. 44.

<sup>82</sup> Horace Wellbeloved, *London Lions for Country Cousins and Friends About Town: Being All the New Buildings, Improvements, and Amusements in the British Metropolis* (London: Wright, 1826), p. 28.

<sup>83</sup> William Clarke, *Every Night Book or Life After Dark* (London: Richardson, 1826), p. 153.

<sup>84</sup> *The Monthly Mirror* II (London: Bellamy, 1796), p.331.

could be dangerous to approach, even if they were perfectly tame and accustomed to their keeper Mr. Cops. A leopard at the Tower allowed her keeper to pat her, and, in return, licked his hands, but strangers were advised to exercise caution when they came into close proximity:

Strangers, however, especially ladies, should be cautious of approaching her too familiarly, as she has always evinced a particular predilection for the destruction of umbrellas, parasols, muffs, hats, and such other articles of dress as may happen to come within her reach, seizing them with the greatest quickness and tearing them into pieces almost before the astonished visitor has become aware of the loss. To so great an extent has she carried this peculiar taste that Mr. Cops declares that he has no doubt that during her residence in the Tower she has made prey of at least as many of these articles as there are days in the year.<sup>85</sup>

Wallace the lion, a long-term resident in Wombwell's menagerie became notorious in newsprint during the 1820s and 1830s for his litany of maulings. In 1827 and 1828 alone he tore the hands and limbs off three people, including his keeper. Jonathan Wilson, fifty years of age, had "imprudently and incautiously" placed his hand in Wallace's den. The Lancaster Gazette printed a salutary warning:

People cannot be too cautious how they approach the den of such animals: curiosity might be gratified without incurring the like danger as has befallen this unfortunate man.<sup>86</sup>

Wombwell's menagerie animals caused other problems too including a leopard that tore at the breast of a woman, and lacerated a young boy who approached the chained animal too closely. In 1835 in one incident Wallace and a tiger killed four people, two of them children, after they escaped from their caravan. This "melancholy accident" was given the verdict of "accidental death" and a deodand of £10 (much larger as we will see than earlier sums). Wombwell, in spite of many accidental deaths attributed to his animal exhibitions, emerged unscathed:

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<sup>85</sup> Bennett, *The Tower Menagerie Delineated*, p. 38.

<sup>86</sup> *Lancaster Gazette*, 28 July, 1827

Too much praise cannot be given to Mr Wombwell on the promptness he displayed on hearing the melancholy accident. He expressed the utmost concern, ordered the funerals of the sufferers to take place at his expense, and promised to make good all damages arising from the melancholy event.<sup>87</sup>

Menagerie accidents were, then, not uncommon in the long eighteenth century, and cannot be attributed to an absence of physical security since well-secured (in principle) dens were necessary to reassure patrons and to confine valuable property. Instead the frequency of accidents gestures towards an understanding of spectator “endangerment” or “risk” as assessed or intuited in surprising ways by contemporaries. In short, there was a different threshold of bodily comfort around exotic animals which saw spectators draw close to the bars of cages and even step inside. Nor were such interactions necessarily considered reckless (though in retrospective historical assessment, some do appear shockingly injudicious) since proprietors encouraged close encounters with their animals, though it is clear that some accidents were discerned as an education in imprudence. Menagerie patrons expected to touch animals and get close enough to feed them, but a line at which physical endangerment became too real a prospect was more idiosyncratic than universal (Plate.29).

There was, however, the line of jurisprudence to arbitrate the management of menagerie behaviours, or rather assign the burden of responsibility. Precedent in English law made the owners of domestic and wild beasts responsible for the actions of their property, though the owners of domesticated animals who could be presumed tame were not accountable for any damages called by aberrant behaviour in domesticates (*mansuetæ naturæ*).<sup>88</sup> Culpability was easy to assign where proprietors had reasonable grounds to suppose an animal was a liability, and this applied to an intractable horse or bull as much as to a lion or tiger. Indeed, even a menagerie

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<sup>87</sup> Broadside, “Fearful Accident. Four lives lost!” (ca.1834/1835), National Library of Scotland

<sup>88</sup> For an overview of the long legal history of animal culpability and deodands in early modern England see Erica Fudge, *Perceiving Animals*; Elizabeth Cohen, “Law, Folklore, and Animal Lore,” *Past and Present* 110 (1986): 6-37.

animal with impeccable credentials, docile and tractable, was assumed to be capable of mischief, and, as such, proprietors could not plead ignorance about the nature of their property (*feræ naturæ*). By 1800, histories of crown pleas and legal compendia enshrined the precedent of proprietorial responsibility, normally with allusion to the earlier case of Andrew Baker who had sued the owner of a monkey for damages after it had broken free and bitten his child:<sup>89</sup>

Tho he have no particular notice, that he did any such thing before, yet if it be a beast, that is *Fera naturæ*, as a lion, a bear, a wolf, yea an ape or monkey, if he get loose and do harm to any person, the owner is liable to an action for the damage, and so I knew it adjudged in *Andrew Baker's* case, whose child was bit by a monkey, that broke his chain and got loose. And therefore in case of such a wild beast, or in case of a bull or cow, that doth damage, where the owner knows of it, he must at his peril keep him up safe from doing hurt, for tho he use his diligence to keep him up, if he escape and do harm, the owner is liable to answer damages.<sup>90</sup>

In light of this, it is unclear why menagerists allowed such close contact with their animals given that they were legally responsible for the consequences. The decline in the status of the deodand offers a partial explanation. English common law had long required that animate and inanimate objects found liable in cases of murder or manslaughter were to be forfeited to the crown for charitable purposes with financial sums offered in lieu.<sup>91</sup> But these were not excessive and were even piteous sums amounting to mere formalities in late Georgian Britain. John Tietjen's death-by-elephant had a deodand of one shilling attached to the elephant only because the jury were satisfied that the death was accidental; during the coroner's inquest the jury went to see the elephant and watched him eat a carrot quietly, penitently. Baptiste Bernard, the keeper of the elephant in a menagerie at Morpeth, was grasped in his charge's trunk and shaken to death. An inquiry recorded the verdict as "Died from

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<sup>89</sup> Robert Raymond, *Reports of Cases Argued and Adjudged in the Courts of the King's Bench Vol. I* (Dublin: Lynch, 1792), p. 606.

<sup>90</sup> Matthew Hale, *Historium Placitorum Coronæ: The History of the Pleas of the Crown, Vol. I* (London: Rider, 1800), p. 430.

<sup>91</sup> Edward Payson Evans, *Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* (London: Heinemann, 1906).

wounds and bruises received from the trunk of an elephant; deodand 5s.”<sup>92</sup> A deodand sum five-times larger was fixed on Tietjen’s elephant, though this was still hardly dented the coffers. Mary Wombwell paid another paltry one-shilling deodand as proprietor of Wombwell’s menagerie at 22 Piccadilly, on a wire-worker called Thomas Soper who had died after teasing a rattlesnake with a ruler (repairing a cage, it was alleged, inebriated); he received a lethal bite when he attempted to retrieve his ruler from inside the rattlesnake’s cage and grasp the snake.<sup>93</sup> This small deodand on the rattlesnake was only granted after the inquest of a coroner and a jury. The menagerists, then, were expected neither to give their animals as deodand (but rather a nominal fee) nor, under pressure to necessarily cull or otherwise, punish the “guilty” animal. The legal management of the risk of endangerment engendered by “feræ naturæ” in menageries did not overtly punish menagerists or their animals for accidents or fatalities. Coroners and juries were likely to consider deaths accidental and award nominal deodands. Spectator engagement in the broadest sense was not threatened by the legal obligations of proprietors. On their part, the willingness of coroners and juries to consider menagerie deaths “accidents” with “guilt” assigned to animals provided little incentive for proprietors to impede “hands-on” spectatorship. The onus was on menagerie spectators to regulate their own behaviour.

Finally, in addition to the legal context for understanding endangerment in the menagerie, the ease with which many spectators approached animals has another cultural explanation. I argue in this chapter for an understanding of menagerie behaviours as historically predicated, including responses to animal smell and the perception of animals as approachable, frightening or disgusting. It is reasonable then to propose that menagerie visitors (and keepers) had their own thresholds of personal comfort and acceptable risk that made possible certain engagements with animals that in the contemporary are difficult to understand as sensible or even plausible. The case of the electric eel in late eighteenth-century Britain is worth discussing at length as a confluence of many of the strands developed in this chapter including

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<sup>92</sup> *The Lady’s Magazine, or Mirror of the Belles-Lettres: Improved Series II* (London: Whitling, 1830), 170.

<sup>93</sup> *Gentleman’s Magazine* LXXIX, 1175; *The European Magazine and London Review* LV (London: Asperne, 1809), 430.

touch and sexuality, and a changing notion of risk. In particular the sensory experience of the eel was experienced by a small number of individuals and was a staged event that sparked discussion on animal electricity as well as having an alternative meaning amongst masculine elite as an eroticised experience. The management of the senses in George Baker's electric eel exhibition of 1776 and 1777 through collective experience is demonstrative of the extent to which sensory and affective encounters with exotic animals in Georgian Britain could be shaped by exhibitionary context and specific cultural concerns. The "electric stroke" of the eel is an unusual fabrication of the imagination and material circumstances of Georgian elite culture.

## The Electric Eel

Ah dear Gymnotus! Pride of all the land, Joy of my heart, and partner of bliss;

I've seen thee oft magnificently stand,  
And shar'd with thee the rapture of a kiss.

(...)

That eel which made the very dullest rise,  
Is robb'd of rigour and electric flame.<sup>94</sup>

"Lucretia Lovejoy" was not alone in praising the erotic flair of the electrical eel in the late 1770s and mourning the eventual extinguishing of his electric flame. In the wake of George Baker's *Gymnotus electricus* exhibition, satirical elegies proliferated in Georgian London. A decade later, Drury Lane audiences still laughed along to a bawdy opera in which the protagonist, upon breaking into a nunnery, "as full as light as the electrical eel," broke into the memorable chorus line, "And now we get in, As

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<sup>94</sup> Lucretia Lovejoy, *An Elegy on the Lamented Death of the Electrical Eel, or Gymnotus Electricus...* (London, 1779).

glib as an eel, Oh what fun to pry, Into the nunnery”.<sup>95</sup> John Walsh (1726-1795) demonstrated the electrical flame or spark of the *Gymnotus* in experiments that were participated in and verified by spectators. The electrical spark (important in visualising animal electricity) was produced by creating an electrical circuit with the eel and a metal chain stretched taut so that the current would pass through the links. A foil strip pasted on to a small piece of glass was introduced, breaking the circuit and creating a “small but vivid spark, plainly distinguishable in a dark room.”<sup>96</sup> This spark was significant for anatomists and electricians but also visible in erotic and satirical literature; in some cases John Hunter was associated with the eel in these works. The theme of this chapter, sensory and affective engagement with animals, is followed here through the biography of the electric eel in late eighteenth-century Britain.<sup>97</sup> Different and intersecting publics, members and correspondents of the Royal Society and elite metropolitan spectators shaped the meaning of the electric eels displayed in London during 1776 and 1777; this was through, I demonstrate, the management and ordering of the senses that made the electric stroke of the eel an unusual cultural object. The creation of the electric spark and the significance of the electric stroke of the eel provide a cultural context for the extant specimens of *Gymnotus electricus* in the Royal College of Surgeons of England, and show the importance of animal exhibitions to practitioners of anatomy, electricians and other spectators. The place of the electric eel in British culture in the late 1770s is historicised against earlier interest in the eel in the American colonies, the journey the eels made to Britain and the different meanings their “spark” shaped by Walsh and Baker on arrival.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> John St. John, *The Island of St. Marguerite: An Opera, in Two Acts, and First Performed at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, on Friday, November 13, 1789* (London: Debrett, 1790).

<sup>96</sup> Tiberius Cavallo, *A Complete Treatise on Electricity, in Theory and Practice; with Original Experiments, Vol. II* (London: Dilly, 1786), p. 309.

<sup>97</sup> This section on the electric eel has been extended and adapted for forthcoming publication as; Christopher Plumb, “The ‘Electric Stroke’ and the ‘Electric Spark’: Anatomists and eroticism at George Baker's electric eel exhibition in 1776 and 1777,” *Endeavour* 34, 3 (2010). Forthcoming.

<sup>98</sup> For a history of research on another electrical species of fish, the ray, see Marco Piccolino, *The Taming of the Ray: Electric Fish Research in the Enlightenment from John Walsh to Alessandro Volta* (Firenze: Olschiki, 2003). A history of animal electricity,

The cultural history of the eel in eighteenth-century Britain began with a distinctly colonial flavour as electricians, showmen and polite audiences in the thirteen American Colonies revelled in electrical spectacles and demonstrations.<sup>99</sup> Early British-American savants working in a Franklinist experimental tradition after the 1750s consumed apparatus and books from London, but they were also significant producers of their own instruments and experimental practices. Knowledge circulated through the Atlantic world. It was in cities like Charleston and Philadelphia, not London, that knowledge about the electric eel was first produced and disseminated to Anglophones. The Dutch colony of Guiana — native terrain of the electric eel and a participant in the European Atlantic trade in slaves, sugar and rum — was critical in the passage of eels to the American colonies. The mercantilist policies of the British government sought in vain to compel Anglo-American merchants to buy British rum and sugar, though many continued the profitable trade in shipping Guiana rum to New England for eventual sale in Europe by way of London. James Debourgo has shown how these same ships, notably Captain George Baker's, that plied the Atlantic trade-route were fundamental in shipping live eels out of Guiana. Difficult to acquire and susceptible to climatic alteration, the few electric eels that made it into the American colonies alive were valuable commodities, and George Baker made sure he capitalised on his investment.<sup>100</sup>

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particularly that of the frog in the experiments of Volta and Galvani, may be found in Marcello Pera's *The Ambiguous Frog: The Galvani-Volta Controversy on Animal Electricity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

<sup>99</sup> Eighteenth-century experimenters with electricity called themselves “electricians,” and have also been termed “electrophysicists” in contemporary secondary literature. Schiffer (2003) also uses the terms “electrotherapist” and “electrobiologist.” I do not favour these terms and retain “electrician” as a corporate identity whilst indicating where practitioners were surgeons, physicians or apothecaries. See Michael Brian Schiffer, *Draw the Lightning Down: Benjamin Franklin and Electrical Technology in the Age of Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

<sup>100</sup> James Delbourgo, *A Most Amazing Scene of Wonders: Electricity and Enlightenment in Early America* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006).

After indulging audiences, naturalists, experimental philosophers and even electricians for a handsome fee in Charleston and Philadelphia during 1773 and 1774, Baker later turned towards London as a lucrative market. Despite Baker's efforts, none of his eels arrived in London alive in winter 1774, though the surgeon and anatomist John Hunter was delighted to receive such fresh specimens for dissection and preparation as specimens.<sup>101</sup> Debourgo has claimed that "because the eel could not be made to travel as a live specimen, it ultimately reverted, as a dead one, from the domain of experiment (in the Americas) to the domain of natural history (in Europe)...difficulties of circulation meant that the potency of the American *Gymnotus* was indeed a fantasy, not a reality in enlightened Europe."<sup>102</sup> The electric eel did, however, make it to Europe alive. The supposed binary between an experimental (American) and natural historical (European) was disrupted in the cultural life of the electric eel. George Baker brought the electric eel alive to London on his second attempt. He purported to have caught the eels himself. Whilst in Guiana, the physician and chemist Edward Bancroft (1744-1821) observed the elaborate preparations made for capturing and handling electric eels for shipping. Firstly, the eels would be caught when young and kept in large, specially constructed troughs of freshwater. The trough required scouring and fresh water daily, not least because the eels "secreted a slimy substance" that fouled the water. Whilst the trough

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<sup>101</sup> Piccolino and Bresadola (2002) first claimed that the electric eel arrived in Britain in 1775, identifying John Walsh (1726-1795) as the demonstrator of the electric spark of the eel; later Piccolino (2009) dates John Walsh's experiments to 1776. I suggest an alternative historical narrative in which Walsh draws a seminal spark from "his eel," probably one of Baker's kept at his own residence. In all likelihood, he experiments on Baker's eels in 1776 in front of the Royal Society, with Hunter dissecting an earlier eel that died shortly after arrival in Britain and some of Baker's 1776/1777 eels. The rich cultural life of the eel in 1776/77 and beyond in broadsheets, periodicals, satires and scholarly transactions would indicate that it is unlikely that any living eel was in the sole possession of Walsh before 1776. Piccolino and Bresadola's claim that Walsh demonstrated on the eel at his London residence in 1775 is not probable; see, for example, single broadsheet news story from 1776 that outlines the previous failure of the eel to be brought alive (which is acknowledged elsewhere), and Walsh's (as well as the Royal Society's involvement) with Baker's eels (*Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 6 August, 1776). See Marco Piccolino and Marc Bresadola, "Drawing a spark from darkness: John Walsh and electric fish," *Trends in Neurosciences* 25 (2002): 1-17.

<sup>102</sup> Delbourgo, pp. 195 and 199.

was scoured clean of slime, the eel lay motionless exposed to the air. Food had to be procured, preferably small fish or their favourite delicacy, cockroaches; earthworms were a substitute, if pushed. This, in addition to a lack of fresh water onboard a ship with which to scrub and refill the trough, the constant motion of the ship inflicting bruises on the soft-bodied eel, meant that it was no small wonder that several attempts to convey electric eels alive to Europe failed.<sup>103</sup>

After an abortive attempt the previous year, George Baker succeeded in bringing five live electrical eels to London in August 1776. Throughout the year, he exhibited them to impatient royal society and an enthusiastic public. The beginning of the American Revolutionary War in 1775 and the disruption to shipping between the Americas and Britain had made the safe passage of the live *Gymnotus Electricus* to London a slim possibility. The Royal Society in London had been furnished a year earlier with two separate communications from physicians in the colonies giving accounts of experiments carried out on the enigmatic eel.<sup>104</sup> From Charleston, Alexander Garden sent a preliminary account of an eel, asserting the absolute impossibility of ever accurately examining a living specimen since “this fish hath the amazing power of giving so sudden and so violent a shock to any person that touches it.”<sup>105</sup> But Hugh Williamson’s report from Philadelphia was encouraging — and

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<sup>103</sup> Edward Bancroft, *An Essay on the Natural History of Guiana in South America* (London: Becket, 1769), pp. 200-201.

<sup>104</sup> The early experiments of the Spanish Jesuit missionary Ramón Marín Termeyer (1737-1814) in the 1760s in Paria (Venezuela) employed an electrostatic generator, an electroscope and a Leyden jar. See Miguel de Asúa, “The Experiments of Ramón M. Termeyer on the Electrical Eel in the River Plate Region (c.1760) and other Early Accounts of Electrophorus electricus,” *Journal of the History of the Neurosciences* 17, 2 (2008): 160-174. Alexander von Humboldt’s experiments with the eel are narrated (and assume a significant place) in a translation and distillation of his narrative of a journal to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continen. See his 1814 *Jaguars and Electric Eels* (London: Penguin, 2007).

<sup>105</sup> *An Account of the Gymnotus Electricus or Electrical Eel in a Letter from Alexander Garden, M.D.F.R.S. to John Ellis, Esq; F.R.S.* Philosophical Transactions in *The Annual Register, or a view of the history, politics, and literature of the year 1775*, 4th ed. (London: 1783), 87-92.

tantalising.<sup>106</sup> Williamson had performed no less than nineteen separate experiments on a living electric eel. They involved throwing catfish into the water and observing the process of electrocution, touching the eel with the hand in order to provoke an electrocution, and blocking or conducting the electrical charge with cork, glass, brass and silk. More dramatic still, Williamson persuaded a company of eight-to-ten people to stand in a circle holding hands and carry the charge through their bodies. Grasping the head and tail of the eel, every person in the circle received a severe shock. Furnished with the sensational proceedings of these experiments, it is easy to imagine the anticipation felt by those awaiting the arrival of *Gymnotus electricus* in London. Certainly, the English theologian and electrician Joseph Priestley was not alone in bemoaning the fact that colonial and Dutch colleagues had neglected to carry out “experiments of principal consequence” on the eel since, so he assumed, they “must have been very easy to make.”<sup>107</sup> Surely they would conduct these experiments properly, as soon as the situation presented itself.

The electrical eel was compared to the Leyden jar. This jar was a storage device for static electricity and employed along with a wide range of friction machines (electrostatic) in a variety of dramatic demonstrations for polite audiences that often took place in darkened rooms lit only by the electrical charge and infused with the aroma of the sulphurous smell of the electrical light.<sup>108</sup> Suspended from silk cords, a

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<sup>106</sup> *Experiments and Observations on the Gymnotus Electricus, or Electrical Eel* by Hugh Williamson, M.D. Communicated by John Walsh, Esq, F.R.S. William Bryant another Philadelphia physician reported a series of experiments including his unwilling servant who received a series of severe shocks whilst changing the water of the electric eel.

<sup>107</sup> Joseph Priestley, *The History and Present State of Electricity, with Original Experiments* (London: Dodsley, 1769), p. 404.

<sup>108</sup> For an introduction to electrical spectacles in eighteenth-century Europe see Oliver Hochadel, “The Sale of Shocks and Sparks: Itinerant Electricians in the German Enlightenment” in *Science and Spectacle in the European Enlightenment*, eds. Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent and Christine Blondel (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 89-102; Paola Bertucci, “Domestic Spectacles: Electric Instruments between Business and Conversation” in *Science and Spectacle*, eds. Bensaude-Vincent and Blondel, pp. 75-88; Simon Schaffer, “The Consuming Flame: Electrical Showmen and Tory Mystics in the World of Goods,” in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. J. Brewer and Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 488-526.

young boy attached to a friction generator would attract small pieces of paper to his hands, turn the pages of a book or pass on the charge to another participant. At electrical soirées, a lady might stand on a stool as a charge was generated; a gentleman would then attempt to kiss her only to be repulsed by the charge carried through her body and whalebone corset into her lips. Quivering with electricity and with flashes of light emitting from her corset, the electric woman became known as the “electrifying Venus.”<sup>109</sup> The electrician Benjamin Martin (1705-82) would produce “purple fire” and a “beautiful apparition of stars” with his glass globe containing electrified threads, and Thomas Yeoman was famed for his “shooting stars” and “Aurora Borealis.” Electrical marvels in exhibitions also extended to those like Dr Katterfelto and his necromantic, electric-conducting and static-producing black cats, the more respectable “perpetual electrified gardens” based on Erasmus Darwin’s experiments on the application of electricity to hasten the germination and growth of plants and on a 1755 proposal of Benjamin Martin in his *General Magazine of Arts and Sciences*.<sup>110</sup>

It was in this cultural space for electrical spectacles that that the electric eel arrived for public exhibition in Britain in 1776. Mr George Baker and his five electric eels first set up along the Haymarket before an apartment along Piccadilly, opposite St James’s Street. This placed Baker’s attraction in a prime location alongside West London’s other exotic animal attractions and the residences of the Beau Monde in St James’s and Mayfair were willing and able to spend money to see the “wonderful powers” of this unusual attraction. The debut of the electric eel was a glittering event attended by 70 high profile figures; the Duke of Devonshire, the Marquis of Rockingham, Lord Charles Cavendish and the President of the Royal Society were amongst thirty society members present. George III and Queen Charlotte were also curious and patroned Baker’s electrical spectacle. Repeating a series of experiments

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<sup>109</sup> Paola Bertucci, “Sparks in the Dark: the attraction of electricity in the eighteenth-century,” *Endeavour* 31, 3 (2007): 88-93.

<sup>110</sup> For discussion on Erasmus Darwin, electricity and Georgian medical practice see Elliott, “‘More Subtle Than the Electrical Aura’: Georgian Medical Electricity, the Spirit of Animation and the Development of Erasmus Darwin’s Psychophysiology,” *Medical History* 52 (2008): 195-220.

similar to those of Hugh Williamson in Philadelphia, visitors marvelled at natural electricity. The Italian electrician Tiberius Cavallo (1749-1809), resident in London from the 1770s, wrote of the strength of the shock that could be felt from the eel. One could receive a mild shock from putting a finger or hand in the water in which the eel swam, but the “best way” to receive a strong shock was to grasp the eel firmly by the head and tail. Cavallo felt the shock in his arms and his chest. Other participants in electric eel demonstrations received numb limbs (sometimes for hours afterwards), were brought to tears or lay prostrate on the floor. Writing a decade after Baker’s eel exhibition Cavallo recalled their significance:

A few of these animals were brought to England about ten years ago, which, as far as I know, were the first of the kind brought to Europe. They had been caught in Surinam River, a great way above where the salt-water reaches. It was one of those identical fishes that Mr. Walsh made many discoveries relating to their electrical properties, and the experiments, which show those properties, were publicly exhibited in London, during several months. The subject of Animal Electricity was considerably advanced by the discovery of the spark, with which the shock of the gymnotus was attended... the spark having been discovered with the gymnotus, the analogy between its power and Electricity is rendered more evident, and it would be scepticism to doubt.<sup>111</sup>

So popular were these experiments that Baker informed the public that he was “obliged to draw the spark or vivid flashes from [the] fish but three times a week that is Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, on account of the danger of their being exhausted by the too repeated experiments of everyday.” These experiments could be witnessed for the huge sum of 5 shillings a head. Those less inclined to separate with their money might be persuaded to view the eel every day, “the electrical shock felt from ten to four, at 2s 6d, each person.” Baker’s five electrical eels clearly succumbed rapidly to sickness and exhaustion and he was forced to scale back his public show almost entirely, discarding the dramatic exhaustive experiments and the 5-shilling premium.<sup>112</sup> To feel the shock of the eel at its best, one had to grab both

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<sup>111</sup> Cavallo, *Complete Treatise on Electricity*, p. 300.

<sup>112</sup> To place these prices in the context of other exhibitions, a one-shilling charge would normally buy admission to entire collections of art and living animals. One shilling was the equivalent to a daily wage for a manual labourer. At 5 shillings a person, it is unlikely that few if any outside London’s elite witnessed these experiments.

the head and tail of the unfortunate eel; this close contact took a toll on Baker's eels. Instead the eager crowds would have to be satisfied with paying 2s 6d for a sight of the electrical spark at one o'clock only.<sup>113</sup> Unsurprisingly, the eels did not weather the London season of 1776/1777 well; unwitting victims, we might say, of their own success. Their cultural legacy did however live on in their afterlife.

## Eroticising the Eel

The anatomist and surgeon John Hunter dissected one of the eels that arrived with dead with Baker. There are ten extant wet preparations of electric eel organs and tissues in the collection of the Royal College of Surgeon's Hunterian Museum dated between 1760 and 1790 (Plate.30). Hunter had already dissected an electric eel in 1775 and presented his findings to the Royal Society in the *Philosophical Transactions*.<sup>114</sup> But he must have been waiting scalpel in hand for the chance to dissect more fresh specimens from Baker. Hunter's intimate association with the electric eel earned him the dubious honour of a 1777 erotic poem on the electrical eel. Addressed to "Mr John Hunter, surgeon," the erotic exploration of the electric eel was a ribald satire of the Beau Monde. The reader was positioned as the observer of the body and manners of the eel partaking in tactile, sexual acts:

Those flashes in the dark; so indeed the wanton Dame  
Is pleased with the ethereal flame,  
She covets every spark

[...]

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<sup>113</sup> This biography of the electrical eel has been pieced together from a series of advertisements featured in London newspapers in 1776. See *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, London, 23 November, 1776, 27 November 1776, and 14 December, 1776 (Burney Collection).

<sup>114</sup> Specimen RCSHC/ 2185 is an electric eel dissected and mounted with skin folded back to display the pair of electrical organs to the viewer.

A touch of this Electric Fire,

[...]

To Piccadilly strait she flies,  
The Electric eel her wants supplies

[...]

Full well I know his polished crest,  
His tempting form, his speckled vest,  
Can female flames provoke:  
When, warm'd by their creative hands,  
Sudden his length erected stands,  
And gives the electric stroke.<sup>115</sup>

The author of this poem was not alone in visualising women rushing to Piccadilly to receive an electric stroke from Baker's electrical eels. In another poem "electric fire soon warm'd the heart" of women and, the following year, several other poems were published that framed the electric eel as an erotic sensation.<sup>116</sup> One such poem was dedicated to the honourable members of the Royal Society who engaged in Baker's *Gymnotus* experiments; it was remarked that though expensive, the electric pleasures of the eel could be had for much less than those of other sexual pleasures in different parts of the city. The soporific and lethal effect of the cold weather on the eels — indeed, there was only one eel remaining by early 1777 — was turned to comedic effect as poet James Perry imagined the warm hands of women relieving their "mutual friend."

No Eel can flash forever

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<sup>115</sup> Selected extracts from *The Torpedo, a poem to the Electrical Eel. Addressed to Mr Hunter, Surgeon* (London, 1777).

<sup>116</sup> James Perry, *The Electrical Eel; Or Gymnotus Electricus. Inscribed to the Members of the Royal Society, by Adam Strong Naturalist* (London, 1777). See also *The Inamorato: Addressed to the Author of The Electrical Eel by a Lady* (London, 1777) and Lucretia Lovejoy, *An Elegy on the Lamented Death of the Electrical Eel, or Gymnotus Electricus* (London, 1779), or *The Old Serpents Reply to the Electrical Eel* (London, 1777).

And ladies too will turn their eyes,  
 And deign the thing to feel:  
 As nature's subject to decay,  
 Their warmth alone can fix its stay,  
 Or cold may freeze the eel.  
 [...]

It hath been smuggled round the globe,  
 Beneath the petticoat and robe,  
 But not in such condition:  
 Ladies, and Gentlemen attend,  
 This eel will prove a mutual friend,  
 And please on exhibition!<sup>117</sup>

Contemporary scholarship on women, eroticism and natural history help us to contextualise further the popularity of the electric strokes, sparks and shocks of the electric eel. Schiebinger (2004) shows how women's bodies and sexualities were important in shaping the discourse of botany as the sexual reproduction of plants or "steamy plant sex" proliferated in popular literature.<sup>118</sup> Recent work by Karen Harvey on "spaces of delight" has explored the garden and women's bodies as erotic spaces to be navigated spatially by description in eighteenth-century male erotica.<sup>119</sup> Her scholarship on eighteenth-century erotica<sup>120</sup> has focussed on those works that took sexual pleasure as their subject and depicted sex, bodies and desire to their male readership through allusions and metaphor. Sex was a topographical or botanical activity, as Schiebinger has argued, with genitalia imagined as caverns or shrubs. In her analysis, Harvey reads the electric eel as a penile metaphor in *The Electric Eel; or Gymnotus Electricus* (1777) and *The Torpedo, a poem to the Electrical Eel* (1777). But she does not consider the exhibitionary context of the electric eel and

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<sup>117</sup> James Perry, *The Electric Eel: or, Gymnotus Electricus. Inscribed to the Honourable Members of the R\*\*\*\* S\*\*\*\*\*y, by Adam Strong, naturalist* (London, 1777).

<sup>118</sup> Londa Schiebinger, *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Science* (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 2003) See especially Chapter 1, "The Life of Plants."

<sup>119</sup> Karen Harvey, "Spaces of Erotic Delight" in *Georgian Geographies*, ed. M. Ogborn and Charles withers (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp.131-154.

<sup>120</sup> Karen Harvey, *Reading Sex in the Eighteenth-Century: Bodies and Gender in English Erotic Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

relate it to Baker's electric spectacle on Piccadilly. I, however, want to make a direct association between the readership of erotica and the spectacle of Baker's five electric eels in 1776 because this exhibition was critical in exposing the living eel and animal electricity to audiences — indeed some these works specifically mention Baker's exhibition. This small literary genre of electric eel erotica and satire would not have emerged without the presence of Baker's exhibition and the demonstration of the “electrical spark.”<sup>121</sup>

Erotic and pornographic material was not necessarily enjoyed exclusively in furtive privacy. The consumption of erotica could be a convivial shared experience in coffee houses, taverns, or dining clubs. The licentious escapades of “Samuel Cock” in *A Voyage to Lethé* (1741), or the novel *The Secret History of Pandora's Box* (1742) were sufficiently steeped in parody, classical scholarship, and ribald humour to entertain a masculine elite readership. This sort of erotica could engender knowing guffaws from gentleman endowed with the largesse of elite cultural literacy. The satisfying erotic humour and botanical riddles to be found in *The Natural History of the Frutex Vulvaria* (1737) were certainly worth reading aloud in company. Other printed erotica or pornography sported fewer classical allusions or wry political allegories. Instead titillating fictional biographies (“whore biographies”) of prostitutes and courtesans offered to readers embellished tales of fashionable scandal and dissipation. Periodicals too, like *The Covent Garden Magazine* (1772-1775), contained scurrilous gossip suitably illustrated with erotic scenes.<sup>122</sup> Earlier in the eighteenth century erotica related to electricity had in one instance taken the form of

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<sup>121</sup> Perry in *The Electic Eel* refers for example (as we have seen earlier) to the advertised cost of Baker's exhibition and the price of feeling the shock or seeing the spark, see p.10. Later in the same poem on p.19 reference is made to an advertisement in which it was said that “the eel is grown so feeble this cold weather, that the spark is only extracted three times a week.” Clearly then the author “Adam Strong” (James Perry) even if he did not attend Baker's exhibition followed the advertisements for it in newspapers. That the poem is dedicated to the Royal Society (and another to John Hunter) demonstrates Perry's keen awareness of the contemporary interest in Baker's electric eels.

<sup>122</sup> Lyn Hunt, ed. *The Invention of Pornography, 1500-1800: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity* (New York: Zone Books, 1993). More specific to sexual practices and humour see Julie Peakman, *Lascivious Bodies: a sexual history of the eighteenth-century* (London: Atlantic Books, London, 2004).

a mocking parodic letter from “Paddy Strong-Cock” (1746) to the Royal Society. Here the experiments of electricians were eroticised as intimate contact with plant-like female genitals. Wagner’s *Eros Revived* (1988) is important secondary work on erotica in the eighteenth century and gives some detailed attention to erotic poems and metaphors (along with Libertinism, medical literature, sex guides, sex crimes, deviant sex, and pornography) but in consideration of the electric eel does not include Baker’s exhibition against which electric eel literature was, and can be, profitably read.<sup>123</sup> The electrical spark had from the early eighteenth century a connotation in the English language with sexuality, and in Bailey’s 1773 dictionary a “spark” could be defined as a both a “very small part of fire” and “a brisk young gallant lover”.<sup>124</sup>

Readers for this broad range of eighteenth-century erotica were drawn from some of the “middling sort” as well as the aristocracy and gentry, the costs of printed books and tracts precluding ownership by labourers and poor artisans. These readers of erotica or pornography were also predominately male and metropolitan. The idle lascivious woman pleasuring herself in private to French pornography, or the young girl eagerly perusing and chattering about smutty novels troubled Georgian male hierarchies: fears about women reading in private articulated anxieties about moral decay and the degenerative effects of inflamed passions and onania. Within erotic texts themselves women were presented as particularly susceptible to the debilitating effects of intimate reading habits. Particularly shrill moralists decried any private novel reading by women, targeting romances especially as responsible for folly and sloth. As we will see in the case of the electric eel women were also construed as peculiarly susceptible to the electric stroke of the eel.

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<sup>123</sup> Peter Wagner, *Eros Revived: Erotica of the Enlightenment in England and America* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1988). For an excellent edited series of primary sources of erotica and pornography from the eighteenth century see the five volume series edited by Alexander Pettit and Patrick Spedding (eds.) *Eighteenth-Century British Erotica* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2002).

<sup>124</sup> Nathan Bailey, *An Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (London: Bailey, 1775).

The erotic appeal and satirical humour of electric eel related erotica printed in the late 1770s was predicated upon knowledge of the experiments of anatomists and electricians. In erotic writing about *Gymnotus electricus* participants and observers as well as anatomists became central figures. The electrical eel as a penile metaphor has a clear sexual resonance but more than this spectator engagement with the eels in Baker's exhibition could be read and experienced within an erotic framework – especially so since the earliest electric eel erotica was printed alongside the exhibition. At least some of those that flocked to Piccadilly in 1776 and 1777 to Barker's darkened apartment were simultaneously amused and titillated by this literature. Some of those that witnessed Baker's experiments would have also have been connoisseurs of erotica, and an appreciation of Baker's experiments was important for a reader to make sense of the many poems and eulogies printed about the electric eel. Those that hadn't attended the exhibition could also get much out of these works, because the erotic connotations of the eel made sense in a broader cultural space. Authors and readers of eel erotica were aware of erotic connotations of participating in the experiment either through first-hand experience, rumour, or reading habits. Some of the poems on the electric eel published in 1776 and 1777 either allude to Baker's exhibition or mention it specifically.

Of particular interest, the sensory perspective of the participant or the anatomist is sometimes adopted to facilitate the erotic exploration of the eel's body. This eel erotica is peppered with allusions to elite society personalities both male and female, revelling in scurrilous sexual gossip and wordplay. The electric eel as a not so subtle penile metaphor could be used to mock the affairs and sexual misdemeanours of prominent aristocrats. In the eulogies to the electric eel - supposed letters from ladies of fashion who had been the eel's lovers - the author "Lucretia Lovejoy" (some eighteenth-century erotica was authored by men with female pseudonyms for added erotic frisson, here Lovejoy was the alleged sister of "Adam Strong, naturalist") speculated in particular on the sex life of a prominent Countess as well as the enigmatic Chevalier d'Éon de Beaumont. Charles-Geneviève-Louis-Auguste-André-Timothée d'Éon de Beaumont (1728-1810) had been a French exile in London with a pension and annuity from King Louis XV as a former diplomat and spy (generously paid providing he kept quiet about the incriminating royal correspondence in his possession). He returned to France in 1777 to the court of King Louis XVI where he

lived and dressed as a woman. d'Éon claimed that she had been raised and lived as a man for the purposes of her inheritance. In London the affair put to rest speculation and wagers as to her true sex at the same time that Baker's electric eel, an eroticised fish that was more than it seemed, became a celebrity. Indeed the frontispiece to Lovejoy's poem carried the motto "I am not what I seem". Other individuals are less easy to identify although glib asides and witty hints in footnotes would have easily revealed to Georgian readers in the 1770s their intended celebrities.

We have seen how the electrical eel generated a particularly strong response in elite culture in late eighteenth-century Britain. Sensory experience of the electric eel was limited to the wealthy able to pay 2 shillings and 6 pence for a shock or 5 shillings for a spark, and how it was fetishised by an elite male readership. These participants experienced the electric eel in a salon culture that revelled in the novelty and sexuality of electricity, as enacted in experiments like the "electrifying Venus." In Barker's darkened apartments on Piccadilly, London's elite shared sensory and sensible experiences of the electric eel that illuminate our understanding of culturally specific encounters with animals. We can picture electricity coursing through the whalebone corsets of women and illuminating the room with sparks, or the jocular knowing looks and private thoughts of an elite male readership well acquainted with the electrifying erotic wonder of the electric eel. The correspondence of the Royal Society and the observation of Walsh's and Baker's experiments by the President and members of the society indicate that knowledge about the electric eel was simultaneously produced and observed by authorities and a circle of elite spectators. In their observation of the electric eel, some of these spectators transposed the electric spark from the sphere of electricians and anatomists into that of satirical and erotic literature. Evidently, the presence of living exotic animals was important for the production and observation of knowledge, but the case of the erotic eel in late eighteenth-century Britain, this also speaks of the degree to which spectators absorbed and transmuted knowledge produced by practitioners into different, and surprising cultural milieux.

## Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the ways in which eighteenth century menagerie spectators and proprietors of exotic animals thought about their sensory and affective encounters. Though these aspects of Georgian cultural life have attracted little academic interest there is not, as perhaps might be expected, a paucity of material, though sources are scattered and require collation. A few rare sources describe children's interactions and menagerie behaviours, but the more abundant are those first-person narratives and anecdotes written by adults and published in travel journals, natural histories and, as scholarly notes, in the *Philosophical Transactions*. Newsprint, too, and particularly advertisements placed by the proprietors of exotic animals, says much about the cultural concerns and expectations of spectators. These varied sources have been utilised to discuss the cultural ordering or management of the senses around exotic animals in three broad categories: odour and filth, bodily proximity and endangerment. Linking these sensory interests with secondary literature on deodorisation and comfort has revealed that, in the space of the menagerie, these notions were too of bodily concern. Spectators noted the odours of animals in a period when the wearing of animal perfumes like civet gradually declined towards the end of the eighteenth century. Proprietors made certain to advertise their animals and premises as suitably fragrant, if not odourless. The breath and scent of animals like the camel and buffalo could even be found to be pleasant, though some animal odours like that of the peccary were so offensive that they had to be openly acknowledged thus. Not all animal exhibits were olfactory delights, and sources that describe the unpleasant scents of animal merchants and poorly kept menageries evince the keen interest of eighteenth-century spectators in a sense of cleanliness and comfort.

Anxieties about women and their physical and emotional closeness to lapdogs and parrots extended to other animals, too; as monkeys, in particular, were perceived as violent or even sexual threats. Prints and paintings depicting monkeys in bedrooms or in women's arms hint at the anxiety and frisson (Plate.31). In the instance of the electric eel, though, this frisson between women and bodily contact with animals was turned into the sensation of the eel's "electric stoke" as an erotically charged experience in erotic literature. Birds, however, imbued with feminine qualities, could

become not only agreeable to the eyes or to gentle caresses but also animals that enjoyed being the objects of spectatorship. This “gratitude” was also associated with menagerie animals that received the attentions of menagerie spectators with a placid demeanour. The menagerie behaviours of children are especially associated with close contact with animals as a positive experience, and menagerists or exhibitors towards the end of the eighteenth century specifically promoted their animals in advertisements as docile and approachable.

The not uncommon deaths of menagerie keepers and spectators and deodand payments have been interpreted within a different understanding of endangerment or risk around exotic animals. Close encounters with exotic animals were actively encouraged by proprietors and expected by spectators, but menagerie deaths or accidents and tragedies did not prevent bodily proximity to even dangerous animals. In part, this was because nominal deodands were not an incentive to menagerists and did not in the case of deaths place overt blame on their shoulders. Assuming the animal was restrained, a minimal deodand for accidental death was the likely outcome of coroner and jury proceedings. The spectacle of control over fierce beasts that keepers displayed to their paying crowd persuaded them to draw close and touch animals that might otherwise provoke reluctance and fear. Some keepers were clearly able to train animals, even lions and boa constrictors, to tolerate bodily contact with spectators — but sometimes this control collapsed publicly and spectacularly. Even the appealing and gentle elephant could be lethal. Assurances over the intrinsic safety of an animal exhibit could take the form of either locating a sense of security in the tamed and docile nature of an otherwise normally ferocious creature or in reference to physical confinement. In addition to practices of spectatorship that involved different embodied understandings of endangerment — approaching lions or touching a rattlesnake — spectators were also in some instances desired danger. Monday nights at the Exeter Change menagerie were a popular post-dinner event precisely because the hungry tigers and lions had been awaiting food for two days and were vocal in their hunger. A deodorisation of space and a certain ease of comfort around exotic animals were necessary in menageries, but an element of danger too was actively constructed. Behaviours of spectators whilst visiting menageries suggest that many were inured to the possibility of danger despite accidents being periodically and sensationally reported.

In some respects the eighteenth century saw the domestication of risk via insurance policies or annuities, condemnation of gambling, and as such it is difficult to understand the distinctly risky behaviours of menagerie keepers and their crowds. But the system of exotic animal deodands and notions of culpability suggest a lack of domestication of endangerment in this area of Georgian culture. New animals exhibited unpredictable behaviours and whilst keepers might exercise control over some, other animals remained intractable or volatile. Tellingly, exotic menagerie inhabitants in late eighteenth-century print were particularly praised for behaviours that were a testimony to the adaptable nature of animals and the extent of human dominion over beasts. Fierce exceptions to the rule thrilled spectators and provided spine-tingling sensations, but accidents aside, spectator behaviours attest to a tenacious conception of exotic animals as approachable because captivity, habituation, and human ingenuity were seen as capable of transforming and managing them. A deodorisation of animal scents, the valorisation of some animal odours and the attenuation of general filth or stench went a long way to ensure physiological comfort and an ease of sensibility around exotic animals. Naturally, iron bars and wooden railings kept animals secure, though sometimes they did escape, but spectators clearly drew reassurance from something other than these palpable boundaries. It is clear that few in the eighteenth century spectating in menageries looked on from afar, though some menagerie exhibits did have the capacity to elicit fear or disgust. In their willingness to grasp an electric eel with two hands, provoke a crocodile, touch the paw of a tiger or touch the tail of a lion, even daring to pluck a hair from a mane, eighteenth-century spectators demonstrate not only the historicity of sensory and affective encounters (the menagerie of the senses) but also changing perception of endangerment and embodied experience of risk.

By the 1830s the new zoological gardens sought to shape visitor behaviours away from those of Georgian menagerie spectators. The management of the senses and of spectator behaviour was a challenge for the early nineteenth-century zoological garden. In this period, too, museums also made measures towards curbing the tactile and other behavioural follies of eighteenth-century visitors that threatened decorum or endangered objects. By 1850, visitors to galleries or museums could not expect to touch paintings or taxidermy, taste or smell botanical specimens, or brush their

fingers through ashes in urns — as they had a few decades earlier.<sup>125</sup> At the London Zoological Gardens, a similar sensory dislocation and disciplining took place as the gardens sought to distinguish themselves from malodorous and filthy menageries and from itinerant animal shows that catered, supposedly, only for the tastes of the “vulgar” who were *personae non gratae*. In substantial ways, the new gardens were a very different sensorium to the urban menageries of the previous century — patrons were separated from animals by fences or ditches, viewed in the fresh air and in planted gardens. The London Zoological Society’s admission policy of those either enrolled as members or guests of members clearly enforced certain regulatory measures. A “keepsake” guide to the zoological gardens published in 1830 stated why membership and appropriate behaviour were not unrelated matters:

It is evidently proper, that in the admission of Strangers, some degree of system should be observed, especially at the Garden, for the sake of both of preventing mischief and injury to the animals, and to the Garden itself, and of contributing to some degree to save visitors themselves from the accidents that sometimes attend exhibitions of wild beasts of prey. The vulgar are too fond of irritating the fiercer animals and of teasing or hurting those which are gentle; and both vulgar and others are often exceedingly rash in introducing hands into the dens or enclosures, or careless in placing themselves so near the bars, as to defeat the effect of every precaution of their safety... Only the other day, too, as we saw, one of the Wolves, though so well guarded in the kennel, bit the arms of a little boy that had taken much pains to introduce it through the bars. You see, therefore, that caution is needful; and perhaps even in this view alone, it is proper that the admission should not be indiscriminate.<sup>126</sup>

Audacious risk-takers and their errant hands were a danger unto themselves and to the animals. Accidents and dangerous or crude behaviours that were common to menageries had no place in the zoological gardens — in theory, at least. Instruction in new menagerie behaviours needed active encouragement, even amongst Zoological Society fellows and their guests, since by 1831 it was necessary to display copies of the following cautionary and admonishing sign; “Ladies are respectfully requested not to touch any of the animals with their parasols,

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<sup>125</sup> Classen, “Museum Manners.”

<sup>126</sup> *The Zoological Keepsake or Zoology and the Garden and Museum of the Zoological Society for the Year 1830* (London: Marsh & Miller, 1830).

considerable injury having arisen from this practice.”<sup>127</sup> The sale of buns, cakes and fruit to feed to the elephant and other animals continued to encourage visitors into close contact with animals. Some of the monkeys in the gardens, tethered to poles, could get close enough to jump onto people and whip the hats off of passing heads. Indeed, it was around the monkey house that some sensory offences familiar to eighteenth-century menageries persisted.<sup>128</sup> An indignant letter to the council of the zoological society reported on the unsatisfactory new monkey house within several years of its opening in 1829:

The front of the monkey house is constructed with taste and judgement; it is everything that could be wished for the exercise and the amusement of the company, but the house or back-part of the building is low and defective, it is unhealthy and inconvenient; there is not room enough for the company; they are suffocated from the confined air and the stench of the animals, and the animals suffer in return. Ladies have frequently their veils and dresses torn by being pressed too near the dens.<sup>129</sup>

Stench and stifling air, not to mention danger to the spectator’s body and possessions, were still salient concerns for early patrons of the zoological gardens. The late Georgian period, ending in the 1830s, is a significant period for observing changes in the management of menagerie behaviours. Perceptions of risk and endangerment altered, though only gradually. Mortalities and accidents were of particular concern since straying hands and parasols damaged institutional reputation as much as people and animals. The effort separating people from animals with physical boundaries and new “polite” behaviours indicates changing sensibilities as well as the new institutional authority of the zoological gardens disciplining its patrons. That spectators could feed animals buns and be pressed close enough to have their dresses torn or hats stolen would suggest however, that older behaviours and ways of arranging exhibitions persisted.

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<sup>127</sup> Henry Scherren, *The Zoological Society of London: a Sketch of Its Foundation and Development and Development and Story of Its Farm, Museums, Gardens, Menagerie and Library* (London: Cassell, 1905), p. 57.

<sup>128</sup> Bennett, *Gardens and Menagerie of the Zoological Society Delineated*, p. 24.

<sup>129</sup> Scherren, *Zoological Society of London*, p. 56.



ODERATVS

*Wee that are Dames of the most dainty nose,  
Sometymes the Violett seek, and then the Rose:  
But if about vs all things proove not well,  
Our Doggs are neare, that can excuse the smell.*

Plate. 22 The Five Senses: Oderatus

George Glover, 1640s or 1650s

Engraving

British Museum, London



Plate.23 Snuffbox and Scent bottle

(The dog's head is the bottle lid)

Gold, diamonds, agate, and enamel

London, ca.1760

Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Plate.24 Double Scent Bottle: Parrot and Cochin-Cock

Charles Gouyn (London), ca.1749-1754

Porcelain and Gold

Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Plate.25 Bonbonnière: Coiled Snake  
(box for lozenges and pastilles to sweeten breath and relieve coughs)

Bliston (West Midlands), ca.1765-1775

Copper and Paint

Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Plate.26 Etui: Bird in a Cage

(a case for daily toilette implements like tweezers and scissors)

Chelsea Porcelain Factory (London), ca.1775

Porcelain, enamel, and gold

Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Plate.27 George Glover, 1640s or 1650s

Engraving

Wellcome Library, London



Plate.28 A well-dressed man, woman, and four children watch a lion and wolf

Graphite Drawing

John Bewick, ca. 1780-1795

British Museum, London



Plate.29 “To Be Seen Alive. Alive O.”

Hand-coloured etching

Laurie and Whittle (publishers), 1795

British Museum, London



Plate.30 RCSHC/2185

(An electric eel dissected and mounted with skin folded back to display the pair to electric organs to the viewer)

Prepared by or for John Hunter between 1775 and 1793

The Royal College of Surgeons of England, London

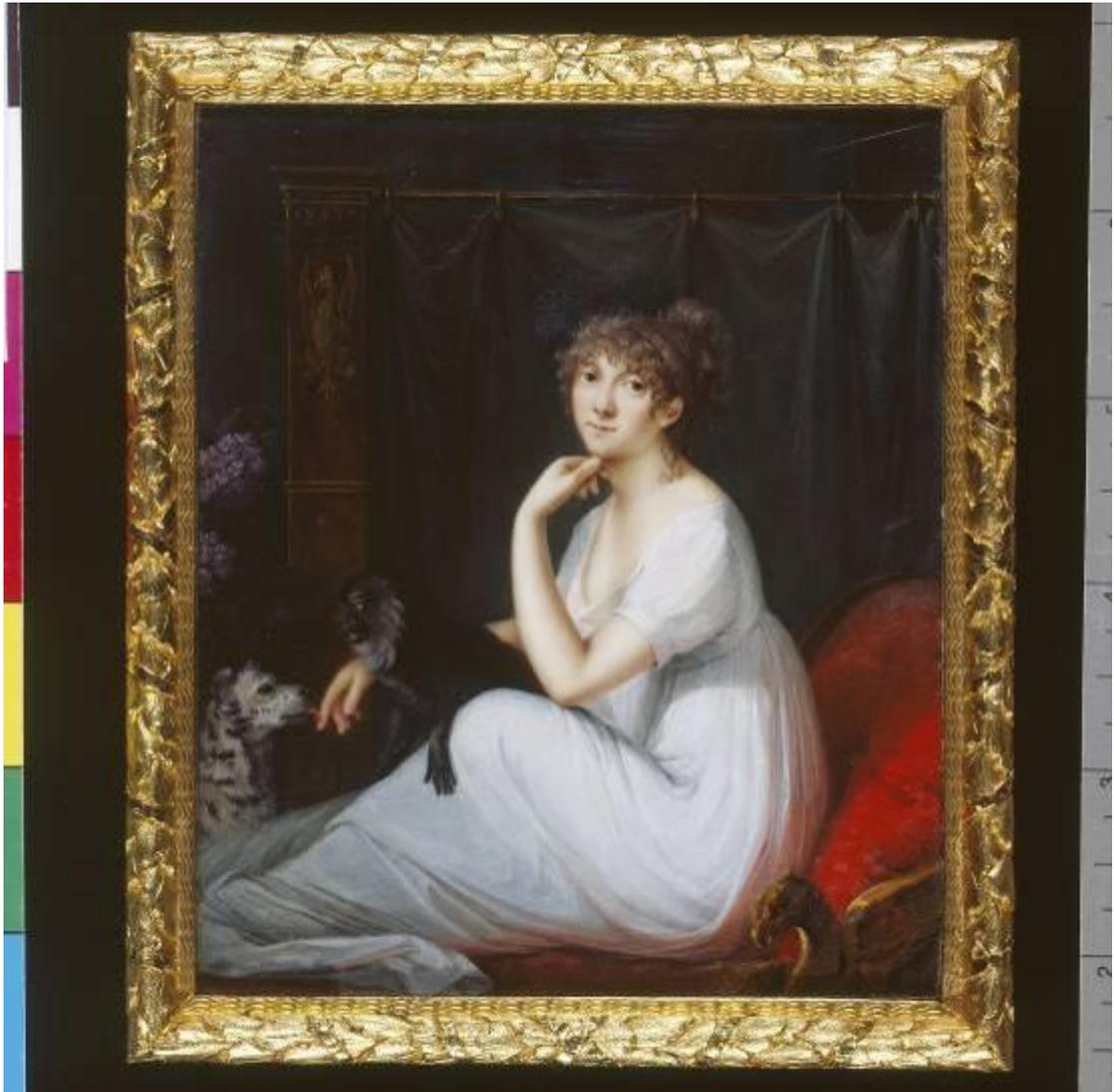


Plate.31 Frederica, Duchess of York (1776-1820)  
(Wife of King George III's son Prince Frederick, Duke of York)

Monkey sat on lap, lapdog licking her finger.

Watercolour on ivory (Regency period portrait)

After Jean-François-Marie Hüet-Villiers (1772-1813)

The Royal Collection, London

## POLITICAL ANIMALS

The introduction to this thesis opened with a 1774 mezzotint (Plate.1) showing spectators in a Georgian menagerie, looking at exotic animals in “their own likenesses.” If we recall, it was a vain young man of fashion looking at some small jacketed and bewigged silken monkeys who was the target of the caricaturist. In Georgian Britain the symbolic potential of exotic animals was readily exploited by caricaturists and satirists to highlight the excesses of fashion, political corruption, or to represent well-known personalities. Earlier in *Animal Commodities*, for example, we saw how the fashionable taste for turtle provided ample fodder for the popular image of the turtle-guzzling City of London alderman in caricatures. In the last four decades of the eighteenth century Queen Charlotte and her son George appeared with a zebra in satirical prints and verse. “The Queen’s Ass,” as the zebra was known, became a popular representation of the Hanoverians and their royal or personal interests.

This chapter is a focussed cultural history or biography of the zebra in Georgian Britain and whilst specific, this story is also one of many stripes. The zebra is a good candidate for understanding the political nature of animals in the eighteenth century. Of course here, the association between monarch and zebra is of some immediate significance but the zebra held as this chapter evinces, other important places in Georgian thought. Thinking about the zebra is a way to historically understand what is was for spectators to look and think about a particular animal “in their own likenesses.” The rich vein of source material pertaining to the “Queen’s Ass” is used here to explore through an animal the politics of humour, spectatorship, and ownership as well as the manner in which exotic animals in menageries circulated through different texts and contexts.

## The Queen's Ass

It may seem ludicrous to close this chapter after so touching a narrative, with an exhibition of animals, but biography is necessarily mixed, and we must take our transitions according to the order of time, without considering the description of the events. Among other presents which were made to Her Majesty, a female zebra attracted most notice and excited considerable amusement.<sup>1</sup>

After an unctuous and sugared account of the late Queen Charlotte's domestic happiness and patronage of charitable institutions, John Watkins (1786-1831) dithered about how to approach the matter of the "Queen's Ass" in his biography. Few in Georgian Britain were as restrained, and many would have smirked at Watkins' fastidiousness.<sup>2</sup> Queen Charlotte was associated with two living zebra during her lifetime that became significant public representations of her character and that of her son in British culture.<sup>3</sup> These two zebra had a material history as they shifted between exhibitionary contexts as well as between life and death. In the "afterlife," too, these zebra became a source of humour and satire as Hanoverian "mascots." If the zebra that grazed at Buckingham House were ripe for satire, they were also good for thinking about Enlightenment "improvement." Moreover, as the Queen's zebra moved between different sites and practitioners — to showmen,

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<sup>1</sup> John Watkins, *Memoirs of her Most Excellent Majesty Sophia Charlotte, Queen of Great Britain* (London: Colburn, 1819), p. 185.

<sup>2</sup> The chronological boundaries of the Georgian period normally extend between 1714 and 1837. For the purposes of this chapter I am concerned with the Georgian period 1760-1820; the reign of King George III, the Regency, and the lifetime of Queen Charlotte.

<sup>3</sup> A short history of Queen Charlotte's zebra has been written by Dorcas MacClintock. This history does not however consider the satirical and humorous cultural life of the zebra, nor does it argue for the significance of the zebra in "improvement", nor consider the zebra in eighteenth century natural history texts. Dorcas MacClintock, "Queen Charlotte's Zebra," *Discovery* 23, no.1 (1992): 2-9. For specific natural historical works on the zebra as a species see Dorcas MacClintock, *A Natural History of Zebras* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1976) and David Barnaby, *Quaggas and other Zebras* (Plymouth: Bassett Publications, 1996).

anatomists, museums, and anatomical collections — the cultural life and influence of the zebra was diffuse and enduring.

The charisma of the Queen's zebra in Georgian Britain, though a "ludicrous" closing vignette in the first chapter of Watkins's biography, is at the very heart of this critical cultural biography. This zebra narrative follows two distinct "stripes." First, the charisma of the zebra in Georgian humour and, second, the treatment of the zebra in natural histories as a principal character in Enlightenment discourses of Nature and "improvement." These stripes are permeable because culture is, of course, not starkly variegated. It was possible to think about the Queen's zebra in both registers simultaneously. This chapter is not simply about a single zebra. Instead, it concerns an eighteenth-century zebra with a hybridised pedigree, a composite of two different female zebra associated with Queen Charlotte, a male and female zebra belonging to Lord Clive and later dissected by John Hunter, as well as a zebra stolen from the King of Spain by privateers. The first section of this chapter follows Queen Charlotte's two zebra and their charismatic place in Georgian culture as the "Queen's Ass." The second half is a broader cultural history of the zebra in eighteenth-century Britain, utilising the zebra hybrids of Lord Clive and the character of Queen Charlotte's zebra in natural histories as case studies in wider Enlightenment discussion on naturalisation and Improvement. The separate "stripes" were closely related in Georgian Britain as the charisma and celebrity of the Queen's zebra intersected with political critique and the manipulation and tractability of Nature. Georgian readers and spectators were aware of the simultaneously respectable and seditious cultural life of the zebra in their national (and particularly elite) culture. This is, perhaps, why talking about the "Queen's Ass" was so pleasurable and enduring. John Watkins's truncated and dignified biographical account of the association between his Queen and her zebra was contrived; everyone knew what he was talking about. Polite society had, after all, in most cases, been laughing for several decades.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> This chapter is forthcoming in an adapted format as; Christopher Plumb "The Queen's Ass': The Cultural Life of Queen Charlotte's Zebra in Georgian Britain," in *The Afterlife of Animals*, ed. Samuel Alberti (Charlottesville: University of West Virginia Press, forthcoming).

In September 1761, King George III married the seventeen-year-old Duchess Sophia Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz (1744-1818) — a belated wedding present arriving in July 1762 on the HMS *Terpsichore*. Sir Thomas Adams, the ship's captain, had intended to present a pair of zebra (male and female) to the new young Queen, but only the female made it alive to England (Plate.32). This zebra became a celebrity, and the Queen with her eldest son George were associated with the "Queen's Ass," as the zebra became known, for several decades after her arrival. The cultural meanings of the "Queen's Ass" were diffuse in Georgian satire, where the representation of the zebra became a symbol of royal interests in the broadest sense but more so in critiques of Hanoverian self-fashioning.<sup>5</sup> The cultural life of the "Queen's Ass" was dependent on the original physical presence of the Queen's zebra in 1762, but was also acquired robust associations that enabled it to exist for years beyond the lifetime of the Queen's first zebra.<sup>6</sup>

The Hanoverians had a familial association with striped equids before the arrival of Queen Charlotte's first zebra in 1762. Frederick Louis (1717-1751), the Prince of Wales, kept a male and female zebra at Kew in the late 1740s and early 1750s. These zebra were described with accompanying coloured plates in George Edwards' *Gleanings of Natural History* (1758); they were drawn "from the living animal" at Kew and a "stuffed skin" at the Royal College of Physicians, London.<sup>7</sup> Frederick's daughter-in-law Charlotte and spendthrift grandson Prince George Augustus

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<sup>5</sup> Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> The word "zebra" has an uncertain etymology although it is thought to have been a loan word from Amharic into Old Portuguese as "zevra" ("wild-ass"), later borrowed into English as "zebra" and into French as "zèbre". Early modern Portuguese observers of the zebra would have compared it to a subspecies of dun-striped wild horse in the Iberian Peninsula also known as the "zebra" or "zebro". Other equids implicated in the linguistic history of the "Queen's Ass" include the Onager and the Syrian Wild Ass, often referred to as the "wild ass of the wilderness" and sometimes confused with the zebra in natural histories and biblical scholarship.

<sup>7</sup> George Edwards, *Gleanings of Natural History* (London: Royal College of Physicians, 1758), p. 222-223.

Frederick (1762-1830) became, later, closely associated with the zebra. George was born the year his mother acquired the "Queen's Ass."

The role of King George III and Queen Charlotte as collectors and patrons has been the subject of considerable scholarship, yet neither their zebra nor their animal collections have received much critical attention.<sup>8</sup> Contemporaries certainly recognised the intellectual and cultural weight of their monarch's libraries, galleries and cabinets, but in other respects were distinctly unimpressed with the tone of the British court. George and Charlotte's matrimonial bliss and sense of domesticity (they had 15 children), their emphasis on understated private family life, was construed, at best, as naïve and sentimental by much of elite society. George and Charlotte's court was not a glittering Versailles. Characterised by many at home and abroad as moralising, parsimonious and (worst of all) unfashionable, the court was often ruthlessly lampooned in private letters and public satire. King George, with his plain clothes, love of cold rooms and preference for beef, made a jocular "John Bull" or "Farmer George" to his more libertine eldest son. Associated with happy domesticity, Queen Charlotte, personally speaking, deserved little of the lewd humour and innuendo heaped liberally upon her, as it was on many other elite women. Happily married with children, she was unlikely to offer a paramour a peek of "Her Majesty's Ass," as it was custom to say. As we shall see, the satirical function of the zebra became less sexual and more representative of the hegemonic interests of the Queen and Tories.

The fashionable, aristocratic Beau Monde, especially the Whigs, poured scorn on the tedious court levées they were obliged to attend. Those without favour at court hardly mourned any enforced absence; instead, it was the opportunity to create their own envied circle that arbitrated taste and discussed political power.<sup>9</sup> Instead,

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<sup>8</sup> Clarissa Campbell-Orr, ed., *Queenship in Britain, 1660-1837: Royal Patronage, Court Culture, and Dynastic Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002) and Jane Roberts, ed., *George III and Queen Charlotte: Patronage, Collecting and Court Taste* (London: Royal Collections, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Leslie Mitchell, *The Whig World, 1760-1837* (London: Hambledon Press, 2006) and Hannah Greig, "Leading the Fashion: the material culture of London's beau monde," in

"society" revolved around West London's grand residences like Devonshire House and the aristocratic squares like St. James's that were crammed with leading Whig families. Glad to escape his staid, penny-pinching father, Prince George's residence, Carlton House, became late Georgian London's most fashionable address. His sexual and financial liabilities were the bread and butter of London's Regency caricaturists. The zebra were a popular sight. The *London Magazine, or Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer* and other society periodicals announced the arrival of the first zebra in 1762; it was to be seen feeding in a paddock near Buckingham House as a gratuity of the Queen.<sup>10</sup> A painting was made for display in the Mews stables for the benefit of those unable to get a closer view (Plate.33).<sup>11</sup> The Queen's Guard had different ideas about free admission, and the first public outcry to emerge in early 1764 prompted the Queen's regiment to issue strict orders; "Complaint having been made that the Sentinels on the Queen's Guard extort money from persons that come to see the Zebra and Elephant, the Field-Officer in waiting desires that Officers in that guard to give strict orders that such unbecoming practices may be prevented in the future."<sup>12</sup> This order did little to prevent extortion of spectator's purses and in the following years a number of indignant newspaper writers observed:

Some servants were turned away last year for extorting money to see the Elephant and Zebra, owing to our gracious Queen's condescension to indulge the people with the sight, without any expense; but their dismissal has not deterred their successors, who have absolutely refused to show the Zebra without being paid for it.<sup>13</sup>

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*Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America 1700-1830*, eds. John Styles and Amanda Vickery (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> *The London Magazine or Gentleman's Intelligencer*, "Some Account of the Zebra, or Painted African Ass, lately brought over and presented to the Queen", July 1762.

<sup>11</sup> George Stubbs (1724-1806) painted Queen Charlotte's zebra "from life" in 1762/1763 and exhibited the painting with the Society of Artists in 1763. It is plausible that the painting commissioned to hang in the stables at Buckingham Gate was either a copy of this painting by (or in the style of) Stubbs. George Stubbs, *Zebra* (1762-1763) Oil on canvas. Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT, USA.

<sup>12</sup> "Extracts from the Orders given to the Third Regiment of Guards on the 9th Instant," *Lloyds Evening Post*, issue 1055, 13 April, 1764.

<sup>13</sup> *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* XI (1766), 636.

Is it consistent with dignity and decorum, that the property of the Sovereign should be exposed for pecuniary considerations under the very eye of Majesty? Do their Majesties know of such *petit* practices? Or, is the above a low trick of those in office to satisfy some wretched dispensation? What must foreigners, who judge of the whole by the characteristics of the few, think of such sordid doings?<sup>14</sup>

Those abusive Scotch fellows who make a show of these animals, never were authorised to imposed upon the public, by extorting money for a view of them... this certainly cannot be known to her Majesty, whose study is to do everything in her power to please and indulge her subjects; it is a pity, therefore, her goodness, affability, and generosity, should be disparaged by such paltry wretches.<sup>15</sup>

The robbing of the public purse, then, became a matter of honour and national pride. The patriotic abhorred any offence to Royal dignity while the sceptical insinuated that the three-penny visitor fees kept the Queen's coffers full.

Later, in the 1780s, the financial implications of maintaining a zebra were turned into a critique of the spendthrift Prince of Wales. Described as "The Queen's Ass," George was both associated with his mother's penchant for zebra and mocked for his own vanity. Furthermore, the Prince (like many others) was frustrated with Queen Charlotte's ability to curtail his political power with the assistance of Tory cronies, in lieu of any husband's intervention from her husband (increasingly perceived of unfit to rule).<sup>16</sup> Charlotte was making an ass of her son. In 1788, it was her turn to be represented as an ass, or rather a zebra, ridden by the Tory Prime Minister William Pitt and weighed down by gold-filled saddlebags containing "the spoils of India and Britain." "What are Childrens rights to Ambition," her cartoon brayed, "I will rule in spite of them if I can conceal things at Q (Kew)." (Plate.34)

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<sup>14</sup> *Middlesex Journal or Chronicle of Liberty* XXI, 75 (1769).

<sup>15</sup> *Middlesex Journal or Chronicle of Libery* XVI, 125 (1770)

<sup>16</sup> George III became mentally ill in the later years of his reign and serious discussions about a proposed Regency headed by George's eldest son began around 1788 and were formalised in 1789. Queen Charlotte was critiqued for obstructing his right to rule.

Prince George's 1787 portrayal in a zebra-striped three piece-suit is comedic but also bitingly satirical; it undermined his masculinity, Englishness and aesthetic judgement (Plate.35). David Kuchta's cultural history of the three-piece suit has shown how the masculinity of costume in the eighteenth-century was vital to political legitimacy. Luxury and effeminacy, especially in the last quarter of the century, were understood as counterproductive to "public spirit" and virtue, visible indicators of political corruption and despotism. There was a consensus amongst Whigs and Tories "that decrying effeminacy and luxury was an effective political strategy in a culture that associated political virtue with masculine simplicity."<sup>17</sup> In the case of a three-piece suit, the choice of cut, colour and material all attested to the adage that clothes maketh the man. In 1787, the poet William Wallbeck's *Zebra and the Horse* jibed:

A zebra insolent and proud,  
Kept in the King's Menagery,  
Vaunting, as oft he did aloud,  
'None had so fine a coat as he'

"True!" — (Says the Hackney of a Squire  
Who chanced along that road to pass)  
"Your gaudery we must admire —  
But, still, we know you for an ASS."

Similarly, the zebra as an exotic commodity attracted mercantilist critique; imported luxury goods impinged upon British industry and trade, weakening her moral fibres. Within a month of her arrival in July 1762 the zebra was ample fodder for satirists. In August 1762, "FART-inando" the "ASS-trologer" published a song titled "The Asses of Great Britain," and a large body of rump-related humour quickly amassed. The zebra proliferated in satires of 1762 and 1763 that scored political points against the new young queen.<sup>18</sup> Bawdy humour ran through a laborious ten verse allegory:

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<sup>17</sup> David Kuchta, *The Three-Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity: England 1550-1850* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 97.

<sup>18</sup> See for example the broadsheet satires; *With a fool's head at the tail: the other side of the zebra* (1762), *The Real Ass* (1762), *The King's Ass* (1762), *Zebra Rescued, or a Bridle for the Ass* (1762). Broadsides 1868,0808.4200, 1868,0808.4201, 1868,0808.4199, 1868,0808.4203, British Museum.

A sight such as this surely was never seen;  
Who the deuce would not gaze at the A\_\_\_ of a Q\_\_\_?  
What prospect so charming!--What scene can surpass?  
The delicate sight of her M\_\_\_'s A\_\_\_?

Though squeamish old Prudes with Invective and Spleen,  
May turn up their Noses, and censure the Q\_\_\_n;  
Crying out, — "Tis a Shame, that her Q\_\_\_nship, alas  
"Should take such a Pride--in exposing her A\_\_\_." <sup>19</sup>

Other satires deployed the charisma of the Queen's zebra to articulate political concerns over perceived undue personal influence of the Queen over the King or government ministers. Some manipulated the conspicuous exotic commodity status of the zebra as a means of underscoring unnecessary parsimony elsewhere. Begrudging the penny-pinching absence of fireworks or celebrations following the Peace of Paris in February 1763 (to mark the end of the Seven Years War), "The Plain Dealer" even proposed that the Queen' zebra should take part in a mock battle.<sup>20</sup>

Polite society aspired to suppress unseemly laughter as a hallmark of gentility and instead cultivated amiable humour as a social currency distinct from the low idioms of the mass. But ribald humour flourished in the highest ranks as drinking songs and caricatures were purchased and collected for connoisseurship over a decent port. Displayed in the windows of printshops, caricatures passed into the hands of individuals who then disseminated within their circles of acquaintance and friendship selectively those passages that had tickled them personally or deliciously captured the flavour of current affairs and scandal.<sup>21</sup> There was plenty of scope for semantic

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<sup>19</sup> Verses I and II from H. Howard (1763) *The Queen's Ass: A New Humorous Allegorical Song* London. Broadside 1868,0808.4198 , British Museum.

<sup>20</sup> *Lloyds Evening Post*, 1 December, 1763 Issue 998 or *British Chronicle for 1763*, 2–5 December, 539. Queen Charlotte received an elephant in 1763 that was displayed alongside the zebra at Buckingham Gate.

<sup>21</sup> See especially the chapter "Bums, Farts and Other Transgressions" in Vic Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006),

horseplay because the English words "ass" and "arse" had, as it does today, a profusion of meanings. "Ass" and "Arse" were sometimes homophones (depending on pronunciation) and scatological or sexual humour surrounding the "Queen's Ass" evinces how the two words and their connotations often coalesced. "Arse," of course, referred to the buttocks, but "to hang an arse" was also to be sluggish and tardy. An "ass" was a stupid or dull fellow with lazy inclinations, so a clumsy person could be said to have fallen-over "arse-versy." A "jack ass" was an idiot and a pun for Justice of the Peace was, predictably, "Just-Ass." A "black arse" was a burnt-bottomed kettle or pot and "Ask my Arse!" a feisty street retort. In masculine collegiate circles, Cambridge scholars and students wore their "cover-arse-gown."<sup>22</sup>

Foreigners learning English or native speakers seeking guidance in matters of pronunciation had a profusion of dictionaries to consult. Gentlemen orthoepists like the actor Thomas Sheridan (1719-1788) became increasingly concerned in "remedying" the linguistic "peculiarities" or "vulgaritys" of their provincial reader's tongue.<sup>23</sup> Clear orthographies from this period give some indication of how "ass" was said by most and proscribed by a few. Around 1762, when the Queen's first zebra arrived, "ass" was a short vowel sound on the "a" and an enunciated extended "ss," to sound almost like an aspirated hiss with a distinct abrupt stop.<sup>24</sup> This "hiss" was thought unpleasurable to the ear by some, and by the late eighteenth century had attracted criticism; one rival orthoepist described the "hissing sound" as "the most disagreeable and reproachful of all our sounds, and therefore should not be affectedly

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pp.178-209. A more general history of humour is provided in Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg, eds., *A Cultural History of Humour: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (Polity Press: Cambridge, 1997).

<sup>22</sup> Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (Dublin: Jones, 1768); Francis Grose, *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (London, 1785); Nathan Bailey, *A Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (London: Ware, 1751); Eric Partridge and Jacqueline Simpson, *The Routledge Dictionary of Historical Slang* (London: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>23</sup> Joan Beal, *English Pronunciation in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Sheridan, *A General Dictionary of the English Language* (London: Dodsley, 1780); Sheridan, *A Course of Lectures on Elocution* (London: Strahan, 1762).

extended."<sup>25</sup> Others agreed, and the orthography of "ass" in pronunciation dictionaries changed to reflect the shortened, less extended "ss."

Considering that Sheridan's diction was not that of an isolated and idiosyncratic actor (his works were widely read), it seems probable that his pronunciation of "ass" (with a mannered and aspirated hiss) was that used in the speech of the elite and their emulators between (at least) the 1760s and 1780s. By the late eighteenth century, the "aspirated ass" was endangered as English speakers dropped some of the linguistic traits and cultural habits of earlier decades that attracted criticism as capricious, effete and affected. In the decades when jokes about the "Queen's Ass" had most currency, the "aspirated ass" was likely to have been the one delivered. Mannered and exaggerated pronunciation added to the humour and ludic pleasure of double entendre.

The humour of the "Queen's Ass" and the biographical life of the first zebra to be associated with Queen Charlotte are entwined in the correspondence of the Rev. William Mason to Horace Walpole in 1773. Both clergyman and aristocrat were aesthetes, and their correspondence was suffused with literary flourishes, accounts of foreign news, travel and politics. With some pleasure, Mason wrote to Warpole from Yorkshire, dressing an exquisite titbit as a "dull" communiqué:

This dull place affords me no news except that her Majesty's zebra, who, according to the advertisement in our *York Courant* of this day, it seems was lately the property of Mr Pinchy and purchased by him of one of her domestics (although, as I rather suspect, given to him for the valuable consideration of his friendship) died the third day of April last at Long Billington near Newark. This advertisement further adds "that the proprietor has caused her *skin to be stuffed*, and that upon the whole the *outward structure* being so well executed, she is as *well* if not better *to be seen now* than *when alive*, as she was so *vicious* as not to suffer any stranger to come near her, and the curious may now have a *close inspection*, which could not be obtained before." She is at present exhibited at the "Blue Boar" in this city with an oriental tiger, a magnanimous

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<sup>25</sup> James Adams, *The Pronunciation of the English Language Vindicated from Anomaly and Caprice* (Edinburgh: Moir, 1799).

lion, a miraculous porcupine, a beautiful leopard and a voracious panther, etc., etc.  
(Emphasis added.)<sup>26</sup>

The Queen's zebra was, at some point, sold or given as a favour to a Mr. Christopher "Pinchy" Pinchbeck (1710-1783), a clockmaker and friend to George III, and found herself on tour as part of a travelling menagerie. When she died she was "stuffed" and placed on display at the Blue Boar Inn in York — a far cry from the regal grounds of Buckingham House. The zebra's demeanour and the crowds that clamoured to see her were denied any close inspection (hence the commissioning of a portrait in her stable). Mason finished his letter with a flourish alluding to humour familiar to Walpole:

Pray do you not think the fate of this animal truly pitiable? Who after having, as the advertisement says, "belonged to her Majesty full ten years," should not only be exposed to the close inspection of every stable boy in the kingdom, but her immoralities whilst alive thus severely stigmatized in a country newspaper. I should think this anecdote might furnish the author of *Heroic Epistles* with a series of moral reflections which might end with the following pathetic couplet:

Ah beauteous beast! Thy cruel fate evinces  
How vain the ass that puts its trust in Princes!<sup>27</sup>

With her "immoralities" stigmatized in a newspaper and sexual undertones to the "close inspection" of stable boys, the charisma and caricature of Queen Charlotte and her zebra converge; neither could be referred to without allusion to the other. The afterlife of Queen Charlotte's second zebra, acquired in the 1780s, was more elevated than the "Blue Boar" in York. Charlotte presented this second zebra to the Leverian Museum where it was displayed alongside the elephant that also, belonging to the Queen, had lodged at Buckingham Gate. At the Leverian, the affiliation between the Queen and her zebra persisted, with guides to the sights of London even in the 1790s

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<sup>26</sup> William Mason to Horace Walpole, 2 June, 1773; Horace Walpole, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence 1756-1799*, ed. William Lewis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), pp. 90-91.

<sup>27</sup> William Mason to Horace Walpole, 2 June, 1773, *Walpole Correspondence*, p. 91. By "Heroic Epistles" Mason referred to the epistles of Ovid and possibly also to the poet Alexander Pope known for his Greek translations and epistolary style.

deeming the relationship worthy of note. The 1800 Leverian museum guide for children perpetuated the cultural association so familiar to those of an older generation; "a zebra or Wild Ass, such as was presented some years ago (Mamma told us) to Her Majesty Queen Charlotte, did not escape our attention."<sup>28</sup>

In late 1780, another royal zebra arrived in London, taken alive as booty by English privateers from a Spanish ship. Intended for the menagerie of King Charles III of Spain, the zebra was exhibited at the Bell Inn in the Haymarket near the Opera House; spectators were charged a one-shilling fee. The following week the zebra was exhibited at Mr. Astley's Riding School near Westminster Bridge and advertised for sale at a hefty 400 guineas (£420).<sup>29</sup> Later, in the early 1780s, at Bartholomew Fair the taxidermist and menagerist Thomas Hall exhibited his "fine collection of stuffed birds and beasts," including a zebra. Perhaps it was Astley's zebra that had passed into his ownership; but in any case, a "mob" at Smithfields Fair in either royalist or anti-royalist sentiment purloined the "stuffed" zebra as a symbolic "Queen's Ass" and "drew it around the fair" to Hall's dismay. He never exhibited at the fair again.<sup>30</sup> The zebra as a royal mascot (Spanish booty and a mob trophy) appeared again the 1770s and 1780s as two naval warships were named after the animal: the first HMS *Zebra* was launched in 1777 but scuppered and blown-up in 1778 during the American Revolutionary War. The second HMS *Zebra* was launched in 1780.

The charismatic appeal of Queen Charlotte's two zebra was clearly such that, even several decades after they had been visible to spectators whilst living in London, their presence in Georgian cultural life was enduring. As indicated earlier, this zebra biography is one of two "stripes," satire and humour and the discursive function of the zebra in notions of enlightened "improvement" and changeable nature. With particular reference to the Queen's zebra and to the zebra belonging to the former Governor of Bengal, Lord Clive (1725-1774), this biography now turns towards the significant cultural life of the zebra that ran in parallel with this satirical representation.

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<sup>28</sup> *The School-Room Party, Out of Hours* (Low: London, 1800), p. 64.

<sup>29</sup> *Public Advertiser*, 15 November, 1780, *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 20 November, 1780.

<sup>30</sup> William Hone, *The Every-Day Book* (London: Hone, 1825), p. 1246.

## Taming the Zebra

The collection of the Royal College of Surgeons of England contains two (extant) anatomical preparations of Lord Clive's male zebra, prepared by or for the surgeon anatomist John Hunter (1728-1793) before 1774. One, in particular, the iliac artery from the zebra's penis (RCSHC/953), is important.<sup>31</sup> Hunter (or an assistant) dissected a section of artery to show contraction and elasticity in the penis. Clive however — whilst his female zebra was living — carried out a very different experiment with zebra reproductive organs. Clive, it would seem, made no (successful) attempt to breed his male and female zebra together, assuming they were kept in his menagerie at the same time. But he was successful, eventually, in producing a hybrid from his female zebra. Lord Clive's successful attempt in 1773 to cross breed a zebra with an ass is a dramatic example of the desire to adapt and render serviceable the zebra. After initial rejection of a stallion, the "shy" mare accepted her new partner (an ass) after the "extraordinary expedient of painting another ass so as to resemble a zebra." A male foal born in December 1773 "resembled both parents," and was thought likely to "propagate this species."<sup>32</sup> However, after Lord Clive's death in 1774 his menagerie was sold and the extraordinary foal's whereabouts became unknown to hopeful naturalists. The male zebra at the Versailles menagerie in 1761 had "disdained" the female asses presented to him, leading the naturalist Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707-1788) to conclude that "this coldness could be attributed to no other cause than the disagreement of their natures; for this zebra was then four years of age, and was very

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<sup>31</sup> Lord Clive's zebra died in 1774 and was dissected by Hunter. The collection of the Royal College of Surgeons of England contains the following two anatomical preparations of *Equus zebra* related to John Hunter: duodenum (RCSH/822) and iliac artery (RCSH/953).

<sup>32</sup> Nicholson, *Journal of Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, and the Arts* (London: Robinson, 1799), p. 267.

lively in every other exercise."<sup>33</sup> Clive's successful breeding between an ass with painted stripes and a zebra suggested that perhaps this disagreement in nature was pliable after all. The malleable nature of the zebra — or rather, the hope that the zebra would one day be tractable — was a significant feature of writing about the animal in Georgian Britain, with recurrent themes of domestication, natural adaptation and wildness.

Queen Charlotte's zebra were remarked upon as difficult, biting and kicking treated as characteristic of "ungovernable behaviour".<sup>34</sup> Confinement and a diet containing flesh and tobacco took their toll on the Queen's zebra, as their keeper was obliged to inform spectators of potential dangers. Indeed, nicotine-fuelled bad behaviour and ennui probably contributed to the passing on of the Queen's first zebra to Christopher Pinchbeck after ten years in her menagerie — though her replacement in the following decade was equally intractable. This zebra was later moved to the menagerie at the Tower of London. There, the "irritability of her disposition" was demonstrated in an incident where she grasped her keeper with her teeth, threw him upon the ground and "would have probably sacrificed his life to her resentment" had he not managed to get away.<sup>35</sup> The vicissitudes of capture, a sea voyage and captivity indicated the adaptability of the zebra diet, feeding on tobacco, flesh and any other foods.<sup>36</sup> The "iron law of necessity" might change some of the habits and diet of the zebra, but it was also observed that in other matters of character the zebra, even when kept in a menagerie, remained unalterable:

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<sup>33</sup> George Louis Leclerc Buffon, *Natural History, General and Particular*, 3rd ed., trans. William Smellie (Cadell: London, 1791), pp. 265-266. Louise Robbins has written a short biographical account of the search for a zebra for the menagerie at Versailles and the zebra's subsequent arrival in 1761. See "The Zebra Quest," in Louise Robbins, *Elephant Slaves and Pampered Parrots*, pp. 52-60.

<sup>34</sup> Samuel Ward, *A Modern System of Natural History* (London: Newberry, 1775), p. 81.

<sup>35</sup> Oliver Goldsmith, *An Abridgement of Dr. Goldsmith's Natural History of Beasts and Birds* (Whittingham: London, 1807), p. 14.

<sup>36</sup> Bingley, *Animal Biography, Vol. II*, p.141.

All attempts to tame this animal so as to render it serviceable have been hitherto fruitless. Wild and independent by nature it seems ill adapted to servitude and restraint.<sup>37</sup>

So wild and vicious as to give little hope that this beautiful race of creatures will ever eventually be of great service to mankind...should the zebra ever be made safely and easily convertible to the purposes of the horse, an elegance and variety would be added to the luxuries of the great and the opulent.<sup>38</sup>

The Enlightenment dream of tame zebra pulling the liveried carriages of the great and opulent around St James's was never realised; but was not in itself a naïve expectation for contemporaries, especially since in the last decade of the century a naturalised colony of kangaroos belonging to the Queen grazed on the banks of the Thames at Kew and on the estates of the gentry and aristocracy.<sup>39</sup>

This economic and cultural potential of an "improved" zebra is particularly meaningful when understood within much broader moves towards naturalising, "improving" and disseminating other species of plants and animals throughout Empire. The hothouses of the botanical gardens at Kew cultivated specimens that, through the vast network of Joseph Banks (1743-1820), might find their way to foreign climes, the landscape gardens of the English gentry and aristocracy, the dinner plate or the manufactory. There, for example, Banks advocated the economic benefits of Tahitian breadfruit as a cheap food source for the slaves of British plantation owners in the West Indies, the production of hemp and tea in India, or advised on the suitability of Persian cotton for the manufacture of cotton in

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<sup>37</sup> Bingley, *Animal Biography*, Vol. I, p.121.

<sup>38</sup> "Equus Zebra" in William Nicholson, *The British Encyclopaedia; or Dictionary of Arts and Sciences Comprising an Accurate and Popular View of the Present Improved State of Human Knowledge*, Vol. 3 (London: Longman, 1809).

<sup>39</sup> Christopher Plumb, "It fact, One Cannot See it Without Laughing": the spectacle of the kangaroo in London, 1770-1830," *Museum History Journal* 3, 1 (2010): 7-32. Lord Walter Rothschild (1868-1937) famously shocked sceptics by drawing a carriage through London and Tring Park drawn by tamed Zebra and zebra hybrids (zebroids). For an account of late nineteenth century zebra hybrids see Harriet Ritvo, "Understanding Audiences and Misunderstanding Audiences: some Publics for Science," in *Science Serialized: Representations of the Sciences in Nineteenth-Century Periodicals*, ed. Geoffrey Cantor and Sally Shuttleworth (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004), pp. 331-350.

Manchester.<sup>40</sup> The managed production of these plant resources and their distribution was intended to create economic autarky thus mitigating the drain of specie to foreign powers in exchange for commodities.

Animals too were altered and re-distributed. Spanish merino sheep were introduced and crossed with other varieties to produce higher quality wool. Banks, Hunter and others were involved with the work of the British Wool Society in "improving" livestock. The British Wool Society hoped that Hunter might be a pioneer in this selective breeding of a goat suited to British climes but with down suitable for "India shawls" and other textile production. With such work in-progress, the naturalist Oliver Goldsmith was optimistic that industrious Britons would prevail:

It is however, most probable that the zebra, by time and assiduity, might be brought under subjection, for as it resembles the horse in form, it has indisputably a similitude of nature, and only requires the efforts of a skilful and industrious nation to be added to the number of our domestics.<sup>41</sup>

The biographical life of the zebra, and her representation in Georgian Britain extended from caricatures and natural histories, to aesthetics and theology. The "Queen's Ass" left hoof prints across Georgian intellectual life, sometimes to comedic effect. Less successful was the attempt by some theologians and Hebrew scholars to suggest that the striped ass belonging to the Queen was akin to that which Jesus had rode upon into Jerusalem. Thomas Osbourne's *A Dissertation on a Passage of Scripture* (1792) posited that the "wild ass of the wilderness" tamed by Christ in the desert was a zebra "the handsomest of its kind" and "like that presented to our most gracious queen," to which a critical reviewer responded sharply; "we can see no very important end to be answered by making out this point, except it be to bring the

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<sup>40</sup> John Gascoigne, *Science in the Service of Empire: Joseph Banks, The British State and the Uses of Science in the Age of Revolutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Gascoigne, *Joseph Banks and the English Enlightenment: Useful Knowledge and Polite Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Patricia Fara, *Sex Botany and Empire: the Story of Carl Linnaeus and Joseph Banks*. (London: Icon Books, 2004).

<sup>41</sup> Goldsmith, *Natural History of Beasts*.

queen's *Zebra* into fashion among the modern objects of superstitious idolatry."<sup>42</sup> As late eighteenth-century naturalists envisioned the future domestication of the zebra, so it was imagined that it had been achieved by divine power in the Biblical past.

The Biblical provenance of the "Queen's Ass" did not become canonical theology, yet the zebra did receive attention in the two eighteenth century works of Georgian aesthetic theory. Although natural histories consistently portrayed the zebra as an attractive animal, it is clear that some arbiters of taste were unconvinced. Writing in the 1760s, the early progenitor of picturesque taste, Reverend William Gilpin (1724-1804) saw curiosity rather than beauty in the zebra; "the tiger, panther, and other variegated animals have their beauty but the zebra, I think, is rather a curious, than a picturesque animal. Its streaked sides injure it both in point of colour and in the delineation of its form."<sup>43</sup> It is possible that Gilpin saw Queen Charlotte's first zebra when formulating his opinions on the relative beauty of variegated animals, so perhaps his verdict was individual rather than collective, but either way he was unimpressed. Richard Payne Knight (1751-1824), in his *Principles of Taste* (1805), acknowledged this shortcoming in Gilpin's dismissal of striped equine beauty since one could not properly judge if a zebra was beautiful relative to others of its species without seeing more of that kind. But many judged the more beautiful of different kinds of animal; "I never saw but one zebra, and one rhinoceros; and yet I found no difficulty in pronouncing the one to be very beautiful, and the other very ugly; nor have I met with any person that did." This was hardly unqualified victory for the zebra, however. Payne Knight reserved his highest appreciation for his pet water spaniel, who, with long curly hair afforded more play and variety of light; "a still more beautiful animal than a zebra."<sup>44</sup> Few spectators of the Queen's zebra would have evaluated her with this vocabulary and stringent aesthetic criteria in mind but, this notwithstanding, some did as picturesque theory became a robust and culturally

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<sup>42</sup> Thomas Osbourne, *A Dissertation on a Passage of Scripture Little Noticed* (Evans: London, 1792); *The Analytical Review or History of Literature* (London: Johnson, 1792), 89.

<sup>43</sup> William Gilpin, *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty, Picturesque Travels, and Sketching Landscape* (London: Blamire, 1792), p. 37.

<sup>44</sup> Richard Payne Knight, *An Analytical Inquiry into Principles of Taste* (London: Payne, 1805), p. 85.

significant way of talking about and looking at landscapes and objects in Georgian Britain. Although the "Queen's Ass" was best known in her satirical incarnation, the presence of the zebra in theological and aesthetic treatises is indicative of the extent to which this animal, principally because of its material presence in Britain and its association with the Queen, permeated cultural life.

## **Conclusion**

This cultural biography of Queen Charlotte's zebra has articulated the intertwined charisma and characters of Charlotte and her zebra in Georgian Britain, showing how the zebra functioned as a political symbol. Their association with one another endured throughout their own lives and into a rich afterlife as Britons living in the second half of the eighteenth century continued to think and laugh about these two animal celebrities. The human and zebra as distinct categories in some cases slip so that commentators and spectators conflate Queen and Ass; in other cases the material presence of the zebra is independent of royal charisma. The personality of the zebra as an individual emerges in natural histories as temperamental, intractable, and liable and a tobacco-addicted, yet admired nevertheless. The bodies of the Queen's zebra do not exist, though they once did at Buckingham House, the Blue Boar and the Leverian Museum. In their life and afterlife, material traces were left in printed texts, satires, and oil paintings that exist in the present. These attest to a rich culture of spectatorship in late eighteenth-century Britain embracing the menagerie, museum and print shop. The biography of the zebra demonstrates the contingent nature of spectatorship and the symbolic place animals hold in national and historical cultures. As Georgian Britons, and especially the masculine elite, looked at or thought about the zebra, the "Queen's Ass" loomed large as a cultural motif. When crowds flocked to Buckingham House in 1762 to catch a glimpse, some would have been fully aware of the satirical "Queen's Ass" circulating in ballads and broadsheets. Indeed, this knowledge probably enriched the pleasure to be had from spectatorship and will have prompted many to see the zebra. Likewise when John Hunter dissected and prepared

body parts of Lord Clive's zebra a decade later, he did so with an awareness of these cultural associations.

The cultural persistence of the "Queen's Ass" independent of the "real" zebra is telling of the depth to which symbolic meanings generated by living animals persist in the afterlife. The binding of the characters of the Queen and her zebra in British culture speak of the manner in which animals both living and dead become entrenched in relationships of affect and association. This charisma and the symbolic mental world or perspective of the spectator is often transient and difficult to interpret historically.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was warned in a letter from Voltaire that the English news writers had a habit of keeping an exact register of actions and jests; he would be talked about "as they do the Queen's Zebra, the English love to amuse themselves with oddities of every kind but this pleasure never amounts to esteem."<sup>45</sup> Writing in 1766, four years after the Queen's zebra arrived in England, Voltaire would have marvelled (and remained baffled) at the pleasure and amusement the English could derive from their equine oddity fifty years later. In one sense, at least, Voltaire was wrong. The English esteemed the "Queen's Ass" immeasurably, even if Queen Charlotte's biographer John Watkins could scarcely bring himself to write about her.

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<sup>45</sup> François Marie Arouet de Voltaire, *A Letter from Mr. Voltaire to M. Jean Jacques Rousseau* (Payne: London, 1766), p. 35.



Plate.32 Sophia Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz (1744-1818) as portrayed at age 18 when she received her first zebra as a wedding present in 1762.

“Her Most Excellent Majesty Charlotte, Queen of Great Britain”

Mezzotint by Thomas Fyfe, London (1762)

British Museum , London



Plate.33 *Zebra*

Queen Charlotte's Zebra  
George Stubbs (1762-63)

Oil on Canvas

Yale Center for British Art  
New Haven, Connecticut





Plate.35 "The Queen's Ass"

Hand-coloured etching, S.W. Fores (1787)

British Museum, London

## ANATOMISING ANIMALS

The Georgian geographies of exotic animals, both living and dead, across a range of sites including museums, menageries, animal merchants, and anatomical collections intersect well with what Secord (2004) has termed knowledge in transit.<sup>1</sup> This is a narrative framework that understands science as a form of communication characterised by movement, translation and dissemination. Here texts, images and objects are the traces of acts of communication with receivers, producers and modes of convention that erase the distinctions between making and communicating knowledge.<sup>2</sup> This chapter explores exotic animals as knowledge in transit between varied producers and receivers — anatomists, menagerie proprietors, spectators, naturalists, zoologists, and readers of natural histories. The meaning and spectacle of these animals changed as they were consumed and absorbed into different systems of classification, cultural reference, and understanding. This biographical approach to a cultural history of animals draws attention to changing representations, what might be called “cultural species,” and gives significance to the importance of site and context in attributing meaning.<sup>3</sup> The category of “cultural species” is not deployed as a contrast to a biologically essentialist notion of “species,” but rather to draw attention to the manner in which the taxonomy, anatomy, and character of two different animal species was fabricated in eighteenth-century Britain. In this period although Linnaean binomial classification became increasingly dominant, it was not the only classificatory method for ordering nature. Likewise what was appropriate in

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<sup>1</sup> Understandings of space and place, and the geographies of knowledge production and dissemination in Georgian Britain are the subject of an excellent co-edited collection. See Ogborn and Withers (eds.), *Georgian Geographies*.

<sup>2</sup> Secord, “Knowledge in Transit.”

<sup>3</sup> For further details on animal biographies and a secondary literature on object biographies refer to the thesis introduction (*Animals in Historiography*).

constituting valid knowledge about a species like the elephant was disputed and changed over the course of the long eighteenth century. The historical contingencies of classification in the nineteenth century are the subject of Harriet Ritvo's *The Platypus and the Mermaid and Other Figments of the Classifying Imagination* (1997).<sup>4</sup> Ritvo shows how in acts of nomenclature and classification animals can be ontologically unstable or intransigent. Particularly challenging are those animals or beings that must be incorporated within an ordered nature; anomalies, monstrosities and hybrids. Furthermore the naming of names and the position of authority on matters of taxonomy was a matter of intense contestation. Zoologists, showmen, naturalists and anatomists could impose both competing and complimentary order animals and specimens. The politics of social order and hierarchy in the human realm mould and structure the imagined order of the natural.

In late Georgian and early Victorian Britain the distinctions between physicians and surgeons reflected both a different competing political orders and understandings of nature. Adrian Desmond has shown how early politics of evolution and medical reform was shaped by broader demands of state reform.<sup>5</sup> "Public gentlemen" like physicians educated in classics and theology (like noblemen and the clergy) In late Georgian and early Victorian Britain dominated London's scientific institutions and wielded political power. This was antagonistic to a new generation of radicals trained in comparative anatomy and practical physiology particularly shaped by French physiology and nonconformist (Unitarian or Quaker) politics. The organisation of organisms was contested against competing ideal of state organisation by conservative physicians and radical surgeons or physiologists. The earlier eighteenth-century distinctions between physicians and surgeons created a significant hierarchy of access to exotic animal specimens. Patronage and pecuniary advantage meant that physicians were far more likely to acquire exotica as material for producing knowledge and prestige. Those with patients and acquaintance with the aristocracy did well. Though, in some instances, as we shall see, when exotic animals

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<sup>4</sup> Harriet Ritvo, *The Platypus and the Mermaid and Other Figments of the Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997)

<sup>5</sup> Adrian Desmond, *The Politics of Evolution: Morphology, Medicine, and Reform in Radical London* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989)

died in the provinces it was local doctors who were first to wield their scalpels and send their anatomical proceedings to the Royal Society. Such papers made careers. In late eighteenth-century London however it was high ranking physicians who had privileged access to exotica. Such individuals were in receipt of specimens sent to them as personal or professional gratuities and were in a position to intercept and approve the findings of others. Small wonder that the Royal College of Physicians teemed with living and dead exotic animals or that their librarian-naturalist George Edwards was able to gain access to those animals belonging to those at the top of Georgian society. The surgeon and anatomist John Hunter had perhaps the most unrestricted access to exotic specimens (indeed, he purchased many on credit and his debtors reclaimed on his death) because aside from his anatomical school he was surgeon-extraordinary to the king. As we will see Hunter's collection worked to create respectability for the dissection for human bodies and advocate for the complimentary study and arrangement of the comparative anatomies of humans and animals.

In this chapter I look at exotic animals, chosen from their conspicuous cultural presence in contemporary printed material making them accessible to track across sites, different practitioners, and changing meanings — facilitating the writing of a diachronic and chronological biographical account. The animal species selected are the elephant and the kangaroo – species that are represented by anatomical preparations in the collection of the London surgeon and anatomist John Hunter, who was at the centre of a network of preparations and practitioners in late eighteenth-century London. John Hunter's (1728-1793) early career was spent assisting his brother William in his anatomy school in London, learning dissection through practice and arranging the procurement of corpses. Later in his career, from the 1770s, Hunter was at the pinnacle of his profession as surgeon-extraordinary to the king, and as surgeon-general of the army.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, by royal favour he was granted first refusal on the exotic animals that died in the royal menagerie enabling

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<sup>6</sup> Hunter was elected surgeon to St George's Hospital in 1768, and appointed as Surgeon-Extraordinary (1776-1793) to King George III, as well as Inspector of Hospitals and Surgeon-General to the army (1790-1793). For a biography of John Hunter in a broader cultural perspective, see Wendy Moore, *The Knife Man: The Extraordinary Life and Times of John Hunter* (London: Bantam Press, 2005).

him to become familiar with the anatomy and physiology of a wide range of animals — as well as build a large and respected collection. Chaplin’s concept of a “museum oeconomy” in London in the period 1750 to 1800 is important to understanding the role of anatomical preparations, such as those discussed in this chapter.<sup>7</sup> Dissecting, preserving, collecting, and circulating preparations was critical in creating a “museum oeconomy” for surgeons and allied physicians or midwives.<sup>8</sup> Collections of preparations for teaching and research, and the circulation of preparations between practitioners in the marketplace and through networks of affiliation fostered a corporate identity for surgeons and altered perceptions of dissection. The dissection and display of body parts in eighteenth-century London was intimately associated with the practices of “resurrection men” supplying anatomists and medical schools with corpses dug-up illegally and delivered in the early hours of the morning. At his residence in Leicester Square John Hunter received bodies around the back entrance in Castle Street for dissection and preparation by assistants or students and didactic use in his medical teaching. The respectable front entrance was patronised by patients, visitors, and guests to Mrs Hunter’s elegant salons, lectures, the museum, or to soirees in the “conversazione room.” These different spheres of activity separated the social and professional life of the anatomist separating the dissecting rooms, paying pupils, and dead bodies from other social and professional engagements of Hunter. The museum however had two different sorts of spectator and mediated between the surgical and elite polite social spheres; an “homogenised, masculine medical audience,” and a “heterogeneous feminised literary audience” from Anne Hunter’s (1742-1821) conversation parties and literary salon — including prominent social and intellectual figures like Horace Walpole and Elizabeth Montagu. An anatomical collection like Hunter’s worked to naturalize dissection through the display of preparations. Hunter’s anatomical museum was significant in establishing the epistemological legitimacy of dissection in Georgian civic society.<sup>9</sup> His

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<sup>7</sup> Chaplin, PhD diss..

<sup>8</sup> For more on the preparation of specimens in the early modern period see Harold Cook, “Time’s bodies: crafting the preparation and preservation of naturalia,” in *Merchants and Marvels: Commerce, Science and Art in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Pamela Smith and Paula Findlen (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 223-247.

<sup>9</sup> For discussion on the shaping of spectator affect and anatomical collections in the nineteenth century, see Samuel Alberti, “The Museum Affect: Visiting Collections of

collection also significantly aligned the medical practice of human dissection with the dissection of animal bodies –thus reshaping the interests of surgeon-anatomists.<sup>10</sup> Hunter’s interests in animals extended to a small menagerie and farm at Earl’s Court, many animals from which made their way upon death into his anatomical collection. Hunter also purchased avidly and received by generosity other exotic animals from animal merchants, aristocrats, and a network of correspondents with interests in natural history and anatomy like Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander.<sup>11</sup> Other London anatomists acquired similar collections, like that of the museum and vivarium of Joshua Brookes (1761-1833) on Blenheim Street.

In this chapter the collections of anatomists and the practice of anatomy are contextualised alongside the cultural histories of two exotic animals that were the subject of particular natural historical and anatomical interest in eighteenth-century. From the biographies of the elephant and the kangaroo it is possible to reach broader conclusions about the creation and dissemination of knowledge and argue for the co-constitution of knowledge and display. The different sites and spaces through which these two animals transitioned are representative of those through which other animals both living and dead circulated, and the modes by which these animals were made meaningful, and the accretion and contestation of these meanings, is equally applicable to other animals too. Of the anatomical preparations discussed in this chapter (and the species they represent) several were in the collection of Hunter and are still extant in the museum of the Royal College of Surgeons of England. This chapter is concerned with the use of the bodies of exotic animals both living and dead as the subjects for constituting natural historical and anatomical knowledge

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Anatomy and Natural History,” in *Science in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century Sites and Experiences*, eds. Aileen Fyfe and Bernard Lightman (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007), pp. 371-404.

<sup>10</sup> Simon Chaplin, “Nature dissected, or dissection naturalized? The case of John Hunter’s Museum,” *Museum and Society* 6, 2 (2008): 135-151.

<sup>11</sup> The relationship between John Hunter and menagerists has not been the subject of much scholarly interest. Dobson’s 1962 paper on this topic remains an established authority — but is not, by any means, a comprehensive account of London menageries and animal merchants in late eighteenth-century London. See Jesse Dobson, “John Hunter’s Animals” *Journal of the History of Medicine* (October 1962): 479-486.

through speculation, demonstration, and spectatorship in eighteenth-century Britain. The theme of the co-constitution of knowledge production and display is important to this chapter. I consider several questions related to the co-constitution of knowledge production and display; firstly who were the practitioners of natural history or anatomy, and who were their audience? Secondly, what was the relationship between the collection and exhibition of living or dead exotic animals to knowledge production?

The cultural biographies in this chapter articulate the interactions between learned societies, anatomists, naturalists, readers, audiences, and proprietors, and how these groups shaped the form those animals took in Georgian culture, as fabricated textual bodies, living spectacles, and dissected preparation or taxidermy specimen. The first section of the chapter is concerned with the elephant in British culture across the long eighteenth century, examining the changing framings of the elephant by anatomists, naturalists, and spectators.<sup>12</sup> The second part of the chapter is a biography of the kangaroo.<sup>13</sup> Here the interest of anatomists, including Hunter, in the reproductive behaviours and anatomy of the kangaroo are understood as related to a much broader interest spectators had in kangaroos on display, as menageries became valuable sources for observation. Chaplin's "museum oeconomy" is then a framework on which this chapter builds an argument for exotic animals as "knowledge in transit" in Georgian Britain. Furthermore in extending the theoretical implications of Chaplin and Secord I argue for an understanding of the historically contingent anatomy and character of exotic animals (their "cultural species") as constituted spatially and temporally, defined by both accumulation and contestation of meaning.

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<sup>12</sup> The two animal histories in this chapter are to be published (or already published) in a different scholarly form: Christopher Plumb, "Strange and Wonderful": Encountering the elephant in Britain 1675-1830," *Journal of Eighteenth-Century Studies* 33, 3 (2010). Forthcoming.

<sup>13</sup> Plumb, "In fact, one cannot see it without laughing."

## Elephant in Britain, 1675-1830

There is scarcely any animal in the Creation that has at different times taken up so much the attention of mankind as the Elephant.<sup>14</sup>

So the naturalist and clergyman Reverend William Bingley (1774-1823) began his biography of the elephant in *Animal Biography* (1803). The cultural biography of the elephant in the eighteenth century has not however for cultural historians been the object of such rapt attention.<sup>15</sup> Yet, the elephant as an animal with a rich cultural history has been the subject of a recent cultural history, *Elephant* (2008),<sup>16</sup> and has attracted the attention of nineteenth-century scholars.<sup>17</sup> The recent turn in eighteenth-century studies towards object biographies or 'It-Narratives' and especially those scholars that consider animals as material culture does however provide an ample intellectual context for an eighteenth-century pachyderm prosopography.<sup>18</sup> This section is an attempt to write such a narrative and to cast attention onto the elephant

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<sup>14</sup> Bingley, *Animal Biography*, p. 118. Rev.

<sup>15</sup> The elephant as an animal with an eighteenth-century cultural history in France is, however, a subject of Robbin's *Pampered Parrots and Elephant Slaves*. Liv Emma Thorsen's has written a biography of "Elefantino" in early nineteenth-century Venice; Liv Emma Thorsen, "A Fatal Visit to Venice: The Transformation of an Indian Elephant," in *Investigating Human/Animal Relations in Science, Culture and Work*, ed. Tora Holmberg (Uppsala: Universitetsstryckeriet Uppsala, 2009): 85-96. The material lives of the elephants in the menagerie of Carlos III in the eighteenth-century along with their symbolic meanings are the subject of Carlos Gómez-Centurión's 2010 paper, "Treasures fit for a King: Charles III of Spain's Indian Elephants".

<sup>16</sup> Wylie, *Elephant*. For another cultural history of the elephant in the twentieth century see Nigel Rothfels, "Why Look at Elephants?," *Worldviews* 9, 2 (2005):166-183.

<sup>17</sup> Other nineteenth-century material may be found in Sujit Sivasundaram, "Trading Knowledge: The East India Company's Elephant's in India and Britain," *Historical Journal* 48, 1 (2005): 27-63; Robert Jones, "'The Sight of Creatures Strange to Our Clime': London Zoo and the Consumption of the Exotic," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 1, 2 (1997):1-26; Nigel Rothfels, "Killing Elephants: Pathos and Prestige in the Nineteenth Century," in *Animal Dreams: Representations of Animals in Victorian Culture and Literature*, eds. Deborah Denenholz Morse and M. Danahay (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), pp.53-63.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Blackwell (ed.), *The Secret Life of Things*.

as an animal with a cultural history of interest to scholars of eighteenth-century Britain and historians of science. There are some sixty-three extant elephant specimens in the Hunterian that were made either for or by John Hunter between 1760 and 1793, though there may have been more in the collection during Hunter's lifetime. These include both "wet" preparations of organs and tissues, dry tissue preparations, osteological specimens and tusks. Hunter, with royal favour, had "first dibs" on one of Queen Charlotte's elephant's that had previously lived in the menagerie at Buckingham Gate — so it is certain then that at least some of this Hunterian material came from an elephant that had been exhibited alive in England. Hunter's anatomical interest in the elephant is understood in this section as related to earlier eighteenth-century elephant anatomies. The elephant(s) that Hunter dissected in the last third of the eighteenth-century had been significantly shaped by the knowledge of preceding antiquarians, anatomists and natural historians. The long cultural history of the elephant, of which Hunter would have been at least partially familiar with, was shaped significantly by anatomical interpretation and validation. The tract that was printed to broadcast the arrival of an elephant at Whitefriars, London, in July 1675 was not exaggerating when it claimed that "few persons amongst us, but such as travelled the Eastern World, ever saw one of them."<sup>19</sup> For the majority of the inhabitants of seventeenth century Britain the elephant was a mythological beast encountered only on the painted signposts of taverns, five guinea gold pieces and in the pages of Pliny, Gessner and travel writers such as Robert Knox. But during the long eighteenth century the elephant could be seen as a living spectacle, a cadaver and as a specimen. In particular the reception of the first living elephants in Britain since 1623 in 1675, 1683 and in 1720 will be interrogated through an analysis of the tracts, letters, natural histories, anatomies and broadsheets that their arrival generated towards writing a series of elephant object biographies.<sup>20</sup> Later, I will look at the changing cultural portrayal of the elephant in the second half

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<sup>19</sup> *A True and Perfect Description of the Strange and Wonderful Elephant Sent from the East Indies* (London: Sumpter, 1675).

<sup>20</sup> In 1623, King James I had been presented with a live elephant as diplomatic tribute from the King of Spain, Phillip II. This was the first elephant to be seen in Britain since that sent by Louis IX of France to Henry III in 1255. The first three elephants that are the subject of the early part of this paper are then some of the earliest live elephants to be on display.

of the eighteenth century demonstrating how naturalists and anatomists conceived of the elephant as a different sort of animal to those earlier elephants. Encounters with animals are always mediated historically and culturally — looking back from a contemporary vista the elephant seems as though it should be a familiar sight. But the eighteenth-century elephant is a different beast altogether.

The ‘framing’ of the elephant in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century was significantly determined by the challenge of constructing animal behaviours, attributes and anatomy from a mythical beast. The result was an elephant that articulated its audience’s specific cultural concerns and anxieties. By the end of the eighteenth-century, the work of anatomists and naturalists had altered cultural perceptions of the elephant towards focussing the sapient and sentimental qualities of the elephant upon the inner structures of its body or visible organs and not in the authorities of classical or early modern humanist sources.

I shall consider different “ways of knowing” the elephant as concurrent antiquarianism and anatomical inquiry interacted to produce a beast that was elusive, mythological and evaded easy classification.<sup>21</sup> Spectators, anatomists and exhibitors were challenged with making new spaces and roles for ‘nature’ (the elephant) in ‘culture’. Anatomies indicate attempts to separate an empirical natural knowledge from a cultural understanding of the elephant but we shall see how in a period of rationalised natural philosophy and enlightenment the elephant proved to be persistently “strange and wonderful.” The elephants that are the subjects of this chapter are Asian elephants, brought on East India Company ships from India and the East Indies. When the Swedish botanist and naturalist Carl von Linné (Linnaeus) gave his binominal classification for the elephant, *Elephas maximus* (1758), he considered the African and Asian elephants to belong to a single species. It was not until 1797 that the German naturalist and anatomist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach assigned the African elephant a separate binominal, *Loxodonta africana*. The operations of the East India Company, the long history of elephant domestication and

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<sup>21</sup> For more on “ways of knowing” and natural history see John Pickstone, *Ways of Knowing: A New History of Science, Technology and Medicine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

trade in Asia, and the more tractable nature (and compact dimensions) of the Asian elephant made it a more preferable animal for transportation than the African elephant.

After arriving at Whitefriars, London on the 3 July 1675 a young male elephant billed to the public as “strange and wonderful” was taken to Garraway’s Coffee House and exhibited to a large and eager crowd for an entrance fee of three shillings. This elephant was scarcely tractable and according to his keepers would “punch either man or beast that anger’d him, and came within his reach” with his trunk.<sup>22</sup> Whilst on exhibition in Dublin the booth in which this elephant was stabled caught alight in the early hours of 17 July 1681. The elephant was burnt alive and had broken a tusk in attempting to escape. Such a large crowd gathered around the charred remains of the elephant and its booth that armed guards were employed by the deceased pachyderm’s proprietor Mr Wilkins to protect his property, the crowd having “endeavoured to procure some parts of the Elephant, few of them having seen him living by reason of the great rates upon the sight of him.”<sup>23</sup> Confronted with a noxious and rotting carcass Mr Wilkins sent for the butchers, but the Irish physician Allan Moulin proffered his services and was “delirious” to instruct himself in the “structure of the elephant.” That night in a temporary wooden shed in Dublin city centre Moulin undertook the first British dissection of an elephant, boiling bones and cutting into parboiled organs by candlelight.

In 1683, after a tour of Europe, another elephant arrived in Britain. This young female elephant was exhibited for some time at Edinburgh before she made her way to Dundee. Collapsing of fatigue on the road to Dundee in 1706, the elephant drowned after a ditch that had been dug to support her weight was filled with water during torrential rain. The bloated carcass attracted the attention of the locals who stole away with the elephant’s forefoot — a body part that had to be recovered by

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<sup>22</sup> Alan Moulin, *An Anatomical Account of the Elephant Accidentally Burnt in Dublin* (London: Sam Smith, 1682), p.35.

<sup>23</sup> Moulin, *Anatomical Account of the Elephant*, p. 4.

force.<sup>24</sup> The Dundee surgeon and apothecary Patrick Blair performed the dissection and the production of the subsequent anatomical account brought him into the network of correspondence and acquaintance with the Royal Society and Sir Hans Sloane.

The third elephant to arrive in the early period covered by this pachyderm prosopography was reported in *Mist's Journal* on 2 July 1720 as arriving in West Smithfield London. A mere four months later *Mist's Journal* informed its readers that “Hans Sloane, that curious inspector of the Works of Nature is now dissecting the young elephant that was lately shown at West Smithfield.” The elephant was dissected on the lawn of Sloane’s London residence and was reported by his colleagues William Stukeley and Dr Douglas as:

Dy’d, as we may reasonably suppose for want of a suitable and proportionate method of food, and from the ignorance of the keepers, who expos’d it to cold and moisture”. A fever exacerbated by a broken tusk, “the great quantities of ale the spectators continually gave it.<sup>25</sup>

Intestinal purges and the failed medical intervention of a farrier can only have hastened the eventual death of the elephant on the 4 October 1720. The audience for these three public exotic spectacles in life included in theory anybody who could pay an entrance fee but this would change radically upon the death of the elephant. In death the ownership of the bodies of the first two elephants was rigidly asserted and those body parts removed from the carcasses (which became separate objects in themselves) were recovered through legal coercion and retained by armed guards. The physical act of dissection created distinct new objects: bones, preserved skins and organs — and these specimens moved through private spaces. Moulin kept elephant tissues and organs from the Dublin elephant to examine at his leisure after they had been “preserv’d” and utilised in the production of his anatomical account.

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<sup>24</sup> Patrick Blair, *Osteographica Elephantina: Or a Full and Exact Account of the Bones of an Elephant which Died near Dundee*, (London, 1713), p. 18.

<sup>25</sup> William Stukeley, “An Essay Towards the Anatomy of the Elephant, from one dissected at Fort St George Oct. 1715 and another at London Oct. 1720”, in William Stukeley, *Of the Spleen, its Description and History* (London, 1723), p. 18.

Moulin must have been keenly aware of the intellectual and financial value of his preparations since he took great pains to satisfy the Royal Society that all salvageable material had been preserved. Sloane and Dr Douglas dissecting their elephant forty years later also removed specific anatomical parts for further examination and collection. Stukeley informs us that Sloane stretched out the plexus of the arteries that ran along the exterior of the brain onto paper for this purpose, and that Dr Douglas took home “those organs pertaining to generation in a female.”<sup>26</sup>

It is possible to write about the afterlife of these elephants after their deaths and dissection because Patrick Blair meticulously recorded both the process by which he prepared his specimen skeleton and skin, and the manner in which Moulin mounted his. The elephant that died outside Dundee had deteriorated rapidly when exposed to the elements, in lieu of much extant soft tissue the preservation of the salted skin and skeleton took precedent. That the skin of the earlier Dublin elephant had been incinerated in the booth fire increased the significance of the later Dundee specimen. Blair did not disappoint in his 118-page *Osteographica Elephantina*, delivering four large copper plates depicting (in order) the skin, mounted skeleton, soft tissue and other osteological observations (Plate.36).

The stuffed skin of the elephant stood in the Hall of the Royal Society and by a self-congratulatory Blair was deemed to be “done to a good purpose,” “lively” and a “most curious ornament”.<sup>27</sup> The skeleton remained in Dundee in a repository and was mounted to make best advantage of its aesthetic and didactic appeal — areas in which Blair faulted Moulin’s earlier attempt at mounting. Moulin’s method of mounting placed the skull too far forward and encased significant osteological features behind ironwork. Blair however ran iron rods through the spinal cord, and wired the skull and foot bones so that “none were visible to the beholder.”<sup>28</sup> Missing cartilage and ribs were forged from beaten and wetted leather to render the representation more aesthetic. This triumph of representative illusion was

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<sup>26</sup> Stukeley, “An Essay Towards the Anatomy of the Elephant,” p. 16.

<sup>27</sup> Blair, *Osteographica Elephantina*, p. 104.

<sup>28</sup> Blair, *Osteographica Elephantina*, p. 104.

transformed into a working model through ingenious wiring of the jaw so that a pin could be pulled causing the jawbone to open and close thus impressing on the spectator the weight of the jawbone. Furthermore, the skull that has been cut in the field to allow for the extraction of soft tissue was adjusted so that sections could be removed to reveal the “Structure and Contrivance of the Cellules.” It is pertinent to note that a mounted skeleton should become an articulate, animated display — normally it is the skin and taxidermy preparations that are rendered the most attractive and arresting representative technologies. In life the elephant had been a spectacle observed in the street and in its wooden booth. In death it became a conversational device to elicit wonder and speculation through demonstration, housed inside the Dundee Repository of Rarities, close to the site of its demise.

The authority of anatomical accounts was in part bolstered by the privileged access of physicians to the carcasses of elephants. As we have seen the property ownership of the elephant was rigorously defended by armed militia. The attempts of the crowds that gathered around the charred and bloated elephant remains at Dublin and Dundee to physically remove and carry away parts suggests a broad interest in purloining these macabre souvenirs, but only physicians with personal and professional networks were able to gain intimate access to these objects. The afterlife of these early elephants in Britain involved the circulation through private cabinets and repositories of spirit specimens, mounted bones, and stuffed skins, which were employed to provide empirical material for learned accounts on elephant anatomy. This privileged access was a requisite to attaining credentials within the profession and Royal Society. Later in the eighteenth century, elephant remains circulated in broader circles of knowledge production and could be seen on display in a variety of museums and coffee houses.

The dismembered, reassembled and preserved remains of the elephant became articulate narrators of natural knowledge and had a surprisingly active afterlife. These body parts assisted in the concomitant negotiation of the elephant as both mythical *and* as a natural animal cleaved (unsuccessfully) from its cultural baggage. The creation of anatomies on the basis of previous accounts as well as observation demonstrates a keen interest in antiquarianism and the extent to which anatomists discerned the mythological qualities of the elephant as grounded in its anatomy.

Thomas Blount's *Glossographica* (1661) offered to his seventeenth century readers definitions of difficult or unfamiliar words in English language usage, one such word being "Elephantine," "pertaining to an elephant." Another was "Proboscide," (proboscis) "the long snout of an elephant."<sup>29</sup> As a tactile appendage attached to an elephant the trunk is perhaps a fairly straightforward qualifier for the term "elephantine," a survey of the anatomies, natural histories and tracts of this period indicates that a broad spectrum of less straightforward behaviours and qualities (from the perspective of a cultural historian) were also considered by contemporaries as "elephantine."

### **Anatomists, Classical Authority and Antiquarianism**

To literate spectators of the three elephants that were exhibited in Britain the literary resonance of the elephant as portrayed in Pliny's *Naturalis historia* (1601), Conrad Gessner's *Historiae Animalium* (1558) or John Johnston's *A Description of the Nature of Four-Footed Beasts* (1678) would have been potent. The anatomies of Allan Moulin, Patrick Blair and William Stukeley demonstrate the physical creation of an animal from a mythological beast, and the influence of both contemporary natural histories and the earlier classical sources that were frequently cited and invoked in these works. The elephant's trunk, skin and sex life are particularly salient points for consideration. Pliny's writings on the elephant feature strongly in seventeenth and eighteenth century conversations about the elephant — in thinking about the purpose of the elephant's thick coarse skin, its trunk and its apparent enmity with dragons, lions, tigers and the rhinoceros. Drawing from Pliny in 1682, Moulin saw the wrinkled skin of the elephant as a means for crushing irritating flies by contracting these wrinkles — thirty years later Blair observing the structure of the skin through a microscope refuted this interpretation. Careful measuring of the tail,

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<sup>29</sup> Thomas Blount, *Glossographica* (London, 1661), p. 661.

trunk and body of his elephant cadaver led Blair to argue that the elephant's tail and trunk were far better weapons to wield against irritating flies.

Other mythological animal behaviours were more resistant to the prying gaze of the anatomist. Moulin noted that the elephant lacked an epiglottis and proposed that the truism of the elephant being scared of mice could be attributed to its concern that a mouse might crawl into its trunk and stifle it. The observation of the elephant keepers that the beast used to sleep with his trunk close to the ground "so that only air might go in" reinforced such an assessment.<sup>30</sup> The use of antiquarianism to underscore anatomical observations persisted from the 1680s into the 1720s when Stukeley wrote his 1723 anatomy. Pliny's tale of a learned elephant that learnt to read and write the Greek alphabet was proverbial in this period and was invoked by Stukeley to convey the structure of the elephant brain which he found "so fine and perfect, that we need not wonder this creature, according to history, should be the wisest of all beasts, and even embu'd with human passions."<sup>31</sup> Stukeley's elephant anatomy was published as an appendix to his work *Of the Spleen, its Description and History* (1723). For Stukeley the spleen maintained the balance between solids and fluids in the body and so was of service in vomiting, menstruation, fever and digestion. A disordered spleen gave rise to the 'vapours', hysteria and dyspepsia, also known as "The English Malady." A disease conceived of as specific to the quick of mind, the hysteric, and the hypochondriac and endemic to England particularly due to her climate and luxury indulgences.<sup>32</sup> The link between climate and national character is pertinent here, since the death of Stukeley's elephant was precipitated by the damp

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<sup>30</sup> Alan Moulin, *Anatomical Account of the Elephant*, p. 34.

<sup>31</sup> Stukeley, "Essay Towards the Anatomy of the Elephant," p. 16.

<sup>32</sup> Jan Golinski, *British Weather and the Climate of Enlightenment* (Chicago: Chicago University Press). For more on the politics of climate in the early modern period, see Rachel Poliquin, "'To Make the Stubborn Clod Relent' or Climate, Character, and Cultivation in Early Modern England," PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 2007. For literature on the intersections between nature, climate, and diet see Ben Rogers, *Beef and Liberty: Roast Beef, John Bull, and the English Patriots* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2003) and David Bindman, "How the French became frogs: English caricature and stereotypes of nations," in *The European Print and Cultural Transfer in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, eds. Philippe Kaenel and Rolf Reichardt (Zürich: Olms, 2007): 423-436.

cold rigours of the British climate and an inappropriate diet. The melancholy young elephant thus implicitly contracted and yielded to the “English Malady.”

Credulity was accompanied by both doubt and wonder — the prodigious intellectual qualities of the elephant may have been debatable — but they were at least plausible. In this period it was possible to think about the sagacious and chaste elephant because there was a cultural and intellectual space for these “framings” of the elephant. Spectators and dissectors of elephants were receptive and sympathetic to such constructions and co-opted in their production. Certainly, the antiquarian nature of these allusions and citations cannot be ignored and such mythological sentiments were indeed weakened even by the 1720s, but the mythical envisioning of the elephant still strongly persisted. In Johnston’s *Description of the Nature of Four-Footed Beasts* (1678), the illustrated plates of the elephant were positioned adjacent to those of different unicorns, another mythical beast reconstructed from fables and a plethora of narwhal, rhinoceros and antelope horns.<sup>33</sup> A century later, a natural history of the unicorn would have seemed a contemptible endeavour, yet Tennant’s *Natural History of the Elephant* (1777) persisted tenaciously in presenting the elephant as a wonderful beast with prodigious talents.<sup>34</sup> The empirical discourse of anatomy did not preclude the term “elephantine” embracing a variety of the marvellous and mythic.

This persistence of vision is concisely demonstrated by the controversy that surrounded thought on the nature and mechanics of elephant reproduction and sex. In 1675, the “strange and wonderful elephant” was a beast that took “venereal compliments” infrequently, in a private place with the female on her back and the male “covering her.” Patrick Blair however thought such sexual habits to be abominable and an inversion of nature’s proper order, besides the elephant was far too unwieldy for the missionary position. Forty years later and Dr Douglas and William Stukeley were still envisaging a female elephant lying on her back on a bed

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<sup>33</sup> First written in Latin (1603-1675) and translated into English by John Johnston, *A Description of the Nature of Four-Footed Beasts* (London, 1678).

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Tennant, *The Natural History of the Elephant* (London, 1777)

of herbs, emitting a peculiar cry.<sup>35</sup> It was patently anatomically impossible any other way. So tenacious was this ambiguity surrounding the mechanics of elephant coitus that in 1803 a French engraving of the Jardin des plantes' two elephants Hans and Marguerite chose to portray Marguerite on her bed of herbs with Hans on top — a conception of elephant reproduction that originally appeared in the works of Pliny and Aristotle.

If a degree of ambiguity surrounded the intimate matters of elephant coitus, by the late eighteenth-century other areas of the elephant's character had been more closely scrutinised. When those elephants that arrived in 1675, 1683 and 1720 came to Britain they arrived as we have seen carrying the weight of cultural baggage. Of particular note was knowledge about the relationship between elephants and rulers. In September 1763, a young male elephant arrived from Bengal and was presented by a Captain Brook Samson to King George III. The exact proportions of the extraordinary animal were circulated in periodicals like the *Gentleman's Magazine*; the *St James's Chronicle* informed London society, "the elephant lately made a present to the King, is ordered to be kept where the Queen's Zebra is kept."<sup>36</sup> The Queen's zebra had occupied the menagerie at Buckingham House Gate since early 1762 and had already become, as we have seen, a popular attraction and satirical icon, and the elephant too would acquire a political meaning.<sup>37</sup> The elephant was endowed with the satirical moniker 'Elephantus Magnus' and in *A Letter from the Elephant to the People of England* was a rhetorical device for a knowing commentary on despotism, autocracy, and the maltreatment of the Scots. Writing of the "wonderful humility and submission" that would arise from his appointment to a government post our authorial elephant mocks the problems and political tensions of the Georgian state from his accommodations in the stables of Buckingham House.<sup>38</sup> The elephant despite its sticky political symbolism was a resident of the Queen's Menagerie until he died in 1776 and was dispatched to the anatomist William Hunter

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<sup>35</sup> Stukeley, "Essay Towards the Anatomy of the Elephant."

<sup>36</sup> *St James's Chronicle*, 27 September – 1 October, 1763.

<sup>37</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>38</sup> *A Letter from the Elephant*.

(1718-1783), accompanied by Dr. Hunter's pupils.<sup>39</sup> After this when the youngest of the Queen's elephants died, it was dissected by his brother John Hunter, the afterlife of *Elephantus Magnus* extended to his display in the Leverian Museum in Leicester Square, opposite Hunter's residence and anatomy school.

The cultural framing of Queen Charlotte's elephant as a political pachyderm can be contextualised against broader ideas about the elephant and the monarchy. A 1675 elephant letter that was written to accompany the arrival of the "strange and wonderful" elephant at Whitefriars that year predated the 1764 elephant letter. Written by the elephant in first person this tract can be read as substituting the monarch for the elephant and defining the proper relationship between the 'elephant' and *his* "keepers." The elephants announced to the citizens gathered at Bartholomew Fair:

I know thou art a beast as great as thy self, and that our natures are both alike, for when we are mad; we are hard to be tam'd, there is nothing that will govern us but an Iron Hook thrust into my pole; and an Iron Hook thrust into thy nostrils; yet thou seest at other times how tame and gentle we are. And truly Brother, take it from me, that I never find myself at better ease than when I am obedient to my keepers.<sup>40</sup>

Printed in 1675, this tract is characterised by many of the tensions of the Restoration Settlement, including the renegotiation of the relationship between monarch, parliament and citizen. This elephant's speech evokes memories of the regicide and wars of the 1640s and 1650s and the willingness of the "keepers" to tame the beast with an "iron hook." The elephant as an orator and literate entity had a classical legacy from Pliny as the anecdotal tales of elephant competent in Greek.<sup>41</sup> Given this proud heritage it is perhaps unsurprising that satirists sought to couch their political critiques in the mouths of elephants. The witty literate elephant appeared later in the

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<sup>39</sup> See *St James's Chronicle*, 25 July, 1776 and *London Evening Post*, 25 July, 1776.

<sup>40</sup> *The Elephant's Speech to the Citizens and Countrymen of England* (London, 1675), p. 6

<sup>41</sup> For an excellent account of the reception of Pliny's literate elephant in Renaissance Europe see Brian Cummings, "Pliny's Literate Elephant and the Idea of Animal Language in Renaissance Thought," in Erica Fudge (ed.), *Renaissance Beasts: Of Animals, Humans, and Other Wonderful Creatures* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2004), pp. 164-185.

work of poet and dramatist John Gay. In *The Elephant and Bookseller* (1726) the elephant passes a droll commentary on the conceits of mankind and the drunken bookseller's verbatim recollection of antiquarian elephant anecdotes.<sup>42</sup> (Plate.37) Tracts and natural histories strongly emphasised the relationship between kingship and the elephant. Both the 1675 and 1683 tracts that heralded the arrival of elephants in Britain claimed that the elephant could “discern betwixt Kings and common persons, for they adore and bend upon them, pointing to their crowns.” Deference to royalty was also invoked in the retelling of classical and traveller's tales of “Oriental” kings who enlisted elephants in administering their will. The elephant as an instrument of authoritarian punishment is the subject of a vivid woodcut in Robert Knox's *An Historical Relation of the Island of Ceylon* (1681).<sup>43</sup> (Plate.38) The elephant was however also an animal framed as possessing “a divine instinct of Law and Equity” — a quality manifested in accounts of the refusal of King Bochus's thirty elephants to trample upon thirty men unjustly condemned to death. The elephant could be a deferent subject, but also a potential dissident. In public spectacles in Britain the deference of the elephant to the monarch was performed for spectators through elephant tricks. A white elephant touring British towns in the first decade of the 1700s was trained to take off his hat to the company and;

Makes reverence on his knees. His master then asking where he loves Queen Ann, then he points with his Trunk to his Heart, and he must do for her, he Sounds for her on the Trumpet; but for the Grand Turk he will do nothing but make a dreadful Noise shaking his Head.<sup>44</sup>

This same loyal subject would also take ten passengers on his back, two on his head, and two on his ears (Plate.39). Similarly the young elephant that came to London in 1720 was reported in *Mist's Journal* as both “bending her knees to the ground to

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<sup>42</sup> Gay's work was regularly reprinted. See, for example, John Gay, *Fables by the Late John Gay* (London: Rivington & Longman, 1792). *The Elephant and the Bookseller*, Fable X, is pp. 28-31.

<sup>43</sup> Robert Knox, *A Historical Relation of the Islands of Ceylon* (London: Chiswell, 1681).

<sup>44</sup> *The Great White Elephant. Alive. Is to be seen in this Town*, Single Sheet Folio (John Johnson Collection, 1702-1714), Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

drink his majesty's [George I] health" and "paying her compliments to company at their entrance."<sup>45</sup> As loyal subjects and orators, elephants appeared to both readers and audiences in the early eighteenth-century, but had by the latter half of the century lost their cultural appeal. The amusement and appeal behind articulate and Royalist elephants was directly linked to the circulation of print material that supported these assertions. As naturalists and anatomists diverged significantly from citing travellers' tales and antiquarian texts the prospect of elephants actually competent in Greek or loyal to the crown became less a dim possibility and more a self-conscious curiosity — anecdotes worth citing for their literary credentials and political resonance. Significantly these sorts of sources became manipulated by authors in written accounts of elephants to provide depth and historical context to their elephant biography, as well as allude to the prodigious qualities of the elephant that were increasingly becoming anatomically explained. This notwithstanding, the presence of a young female elephant from Cross's Menagerie on the stage in the melodrama "*Siamoraindianaboo, Princess of Siam, or the Royal Elephant*" at the Royal Coburg Theatre, London, in 1830, enraptured audiences with a theatrical representation of the elephant as a loyal royal subject.<sup>46</sup> In a period of three weeks the elephant has been trained to "move with a measured pace to musical cadences" and "taught to distinguish one actor from another, so as to place the crown, with true poetic justice, on the head of the lawful king".<sup>47</sup> In the same year the rival Adelphi Theatre also boasted a performing elephant, who, in a dramatic scene, would assist in "the escape of the Prince and his adherents from prison, by kneeling upon her hind legs, and thus forming an inclined plane, upon which her friends might safely reach the ground."(Plate.40)<sup>48</sup>

The tricks that elephants performed included those that included deference to the audience or monarch (saluting and bowing) and carrying buckets, blowing trumpets,

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<sup>45</sup> *Mist's Journal*, 1720 Microfilm: 20452 (Lysons Collection, British Library).

<sup>46</sup> John Booth, *A Century of Theatrical History, 1816-1916* (London: Stead, 1917).

<sup>47</sup> Rennie, *The Menageries*, p.17.

<sup>48</sup> Rennie, *The Menageries*, p. 15.

waving flags, as well as counting the number of persons in an audience, picking their pockets for watches and handkerchiefs, drinking bottles of beer, and picking coins off the floor. All these were designed to principally amuse spectators but they also demonstrated to differing degrees the physical and mental properties of the elephant. Whilst the elephant might crush the unfortunate victims of an Eastern despotic monarch in eighteenth century literature, in public performances the elephant was a more gentle soul. Close physical contact with elephants and indeed other animals emerged as an appealing menagerie practice. The 1819 letter of a “deaf and dumb” Irish schoolboy called William Brennan (see also Chapter Two) relates an eyewitness perspective of a menagerie visit. Here affective relations including stroking and feeding are conducted alongside ambiguous attitudes towards spectator violence:

We went to Mr Polito’s House, and gave our twelve pennies for admittance. We saw a camel eating straw; he wanted cakes. The buffalo was standing, looking through wooden rails. I saw a panther marching on the floor of his cage; his mouth was yawning; he was grinning at a lady; she was beating him with a stick [...] A man was beating a monkey with a stick [...] I saw a man speaking to the elephant who was bending his legs; his trunk took up cakes; he was eating them. [...] A man was playing with a kangaroo; D\_\_ gave kangaroo small cakes; he was eating them; he wanted cakes in his cage...<sup>49</sup>

Close tactile engagement with exotic animals was, as we have seen, a clear feature of the menagerie encounter in the late eighteenth century. Print advertisements and other promotional materials suggest that the opportunity to touch or ride an animal like a zebra, llama or elephant was a crowd pleaser. Advertisements attempted to convey the suitability of particular animals for closer encounters, especially for women and children. Not only were the accommodations clean and pleasantly fragrant but the animals were amiable too; a male zebra being “so gentle that ladies and children may stroke him with safety” and would “suffer a child six years old, to sit quietly on its back, without showing the least sign of displeasure”.<sup>50</sup> At Pidcock’s Menagerie on the Strand a “most stupendous male elephant” would give children elephant rides in an apartment that had been constructed for that purpose. This

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<sup>49</sup> William Brennan cited in Charles Orpen, *Anecdotes of the Deaf and Dumb*, p. 432.

<sup>50</sup> John Church, *Church’s Cabinet*, p. 672 and *Woodfall’s Register*, 2 April, 1791.

elephant would also perform tricks with buckets, coins, and handkerchiefs that involved audience participation.<sup>51</sup>

To ride an exotic beast from foreign climes was an important experience and sensation of British hegemony overseas. The capture and transportation of an animal like the elephant involved extensive colonial and mercantile networks — and the display of a live elephant on London's Strand rendered visible these power relations. To stroke, feed, and watch the elephant was to encounter in an embodied sense Empire. The elephant permeated the material culture of childhood in other ways particularly in natural histories printed for the young. *Tales of the Academy* (1820)<sup>52</sup> presented snippets of popular natural histories familiar with adult audiences, like those of Buffon or Goldsmith, in the form of child friendly dialogues. There, schoolboys adopt the roles of animals and their menagerie showman parroting the authority and truisms of naturalists, including Monsieur Buffon:

ELEPHANT      I am an elephant

SHOWMAN      Then you unite, as an eminent naturalist has observed, the most exalted qualities in the three animals, who, next to the elephant, make the nearest approaches to human intelligence; the beaver, the dog, and the ape. Pray favour us with your observations upon a race of creatures, so vast, and deservedly celebrated. [...]

ELEPHANT      The eyes of the elephant, though small, are lively and brilliant; and distinguished from those of all other animals by an expression of sentiment, and an almost rational management of all their actions. He turns them slowly and with mildness towards his master, and when he speaks, regards him with a look of friendship, and attention.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> There are a number of printed sources related to elephants at Pidcock's Menagerie. See, for example, Gilbert Pidcock, *Now Exhibiting, in an Apartment at the Great Room over Exeter-Change, in the Strand, a Most Stupendous Male Elephant*, Single Sheet Folio (Microfilm 4215), British Library, London.

<sup>52</sup> *Tales of the Academy* (London: Cowie & Co, 1820).

<sup>53</sup> *Tales of the Academy*, p. 79.

This appropriation of Buffon into the dialogue of a schoolboy play focuses particularly on spectatorship or rather, the encounter with the elephant mediated through *his* eye. Buffon had deemed the eye of the elephant as the measure of elephant sentiment (which he called ‘pathetic’) because it revealed an inner mental order and consistent flow of feelings, unlike, as he saw it the dog:

When he speaks [the elephant’s master], the animal regards him with an eye of friendship and attention, and his penetrating aspect is conspicuous when he wants to anticipate the inclination of his governor. He seems to reflect, to deliberate, to think, and never determines till he has several times examined, without passion nor precipitation, the signs which he ought to obey. The dog, whose eyes are very expressive, is too prompt and vivacious to allow us to distinguish with ease the successive shades of his sensations. But, as the elephant is naturally grave and moderate, we read in his eyes, whole movements are flow, the order and succession of his internal affections.<sup>54</sup>

The public exhibition of elephants brought spectators into close contact with elephants and the tricks that these animals performed were often interpreted as confirmation of a sagacious and sentient mind. But increasingly at the end of the eighteenth-century the elephant began to be conceived in a different manner. Instead of the turning of a key in the lock, or pick pocketing audience members pockets, or drinking a bottle of beer with its prehensile trunk — the elephant’s sagacious and sensitive nature became expressed and located in the physiology of the elephant. Certainly parlour tricks conveyed the sensitivity and dexterity of the trunk, but it was the eye that attracted particularly the gaze of spectators.

The eye had become a site or focus of spectatorship, a means for authenticating the mental and emotional inner world of the elephant. The true nature of the elephant was evinced in the eyes and it was the eye of the elephant and not the tricks that it could perform that especially set it apart from all other animals. The eye revealed a rational and sensitive creature. Rothfels (2008) has shown how the ‘piggish’ swine eyes of the elephant in the seventeenth century articulated a swinish and bestial

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<sup>54</sup> de Buffon, *Natural History*, p. 48. For a detailed look at the characterisation of animals in Buffon’s *Histoire naturelle* and particularly the elephant, see “De l’Éléphant” in Lydia Meisen, *Die Charakterisierung der Tiere in Buffons Histoire naturelle*, pp. 233-246.

imperfection (*E. horribilis*). Yet by the end of the nineteenth-century the eye of the elephant, or *E. dolens* as Rothfels terms this cultural category of elephant, was seen as communicating the capacity of the elephant to suffer sorrow and pain especially that at the hands of Victorian trophy hunters and other colonial agents.<sup>55</sup> The capacity of the elephant to suffer was tragically evinced in the shooting of the Chuneé the male elephant at the Exeter Change Menagerie in 1826. Celebrated for his amicable nature and tractability, Chuneé became uncontrollable and dangerous in captivity during his annual “musth”, a period of sexual excitability, which in 1826 was exacerbated by a broken tusk and fever. After causing the death of a keeper Chuneé was shot by armed soldiers, with over 150 musket balls fired before he died; the pathos of the horrific scene being widely reproduced in newspapers and engravings.<sup>56</sup>

Rothfels’ eighteenth-century elephant is *E. sentiens*; the elephant is gentle, thoughtful, and feeling. I agree with Rothfels’ attractive and compelling elephant cultural taxonomies and want this chapter to resonate alongside his work. However Rothfels in his readings of eighteenth-century elephants does not consider the contexts of anatomy or menagerie spectatorship that I address here. It was these significant features of elephant encounters and not purely printed natural histories that created the embodiment of the elephant as *E. sentiens*. (Plate.41) *E. sentiens* was also culturally configured though another organ, the ear. The response of the elephant to music was tested in a special concert given to the elephants Hans and Marguerite at the Jardin des Plantes in 1798, acquired by Napoléon’s troops as war trophies from the Dutch. The elephants were treated to a concert performed by 14 musicians from the Conservatoire and were reported to have been stirred with emotion, with amorous romantic feelings, and to have reflected deeply in response to the Revolutionary anthem “*Ah! ça ira!*” responding to the pitch of the music these elephants became the epitome or embodiment of revolutionary *sensibilité*. Charmed by operatic arias and revolutionary zeal the elephants, apparently, began to copulate

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<sup>55</sup> Nigel Rothfels, “The Eyes of Elephants: Changing Perceptions,” *Tidsskrift for Kulturforskning* 7, 3 (2008): 39-50.

<sup>56</sup> Chuneé is the subject of considerable scholarship; the most detailed biography may be found in Jan Bondeson’s *The Feejee Mermaid and Other Essays in Natural and Unnatural History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

and were to observers, freed from their chains of slavery by the rhythms of the music recalling the freedom of their native climes.<sup>57</sup> Musical experimentation on the elephant took place too in Britain in the early nineteenth century as the anatomist Sir Everard Home sought to determine the anatomical distinctions between the human and elephant ear. Home's experiments implicitly validated the elephant's capacity to respond emotionally to sound and the "Elephant Concert" the subject of amused speculation in periodicals. Home along with Mr Broadwood, of Broadwood & Sons Pianoforte Makers to the King, played notes on the piano forte and French horn to the elephant at the Exeter 'Change menagerie:

The effects of high and low notes were tried on the elephant at Exeter 'Change, by playing on the piano-forte and French horn; when the upper notes of the piano-forte scarcely attracted the attention of the elephant, but the lower notes excited and retained it. The full sound of the French horn produced the same effect.<sup>58</sup>

The rapt attention of the elephant to the low notes of the French horn and the mummings of approval it produced were reported by periodicals as evidence for the appropriate satisfaction of his musical tastes, a sharp contrast to the atonal menagerie lion:

The low one's [notes] made his ears move forward and remain evidently listening, uttering some sounds of expressive of satisfaction. [...] The lion at the Exeter 'Change was also treated with a little music. The high notes attracted great, but silent attention. But were no sooner the flat (and we suppose low) notes sounded, then he sprung up, lashed his tail, exhibited every symptom of fury, and accompanied the music with deepest yells.<sup>59</sup>

Like Buffon's comparison between the eyes of the dog and the elephant, the reaction of the furious lion served to contrast with the sensitive and attentive response of the

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<sup>57</sup> Walter Putnam, "Captive Audiences: A Concert for the Elephants in the Jardin des Plantes," *Drama Review* 51, no.1 (2007): 154-160.

<sup>58</sup> Everard Home, "On the Difference of Structure between the Human Membrana Tympani and that of the Elephant," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 133 (1823): 23-26.

<sup>59</sup> *The British Critic* XXI (London: Rivington, 1824), 29.

elephant. The elephant in both cases exhibited external expressions of a rational inner sentiment. It is clear that in the eighteenth century the elephant was an animal apart from the other *dumb brutes*. Yet it is equally true to assert that there were considerable disparities in credulity and assent with which readers perceived the prodigious qualities of the elephant that were presented to them in natural histories.

Bingley's *Animal Biography* (1803) persisted in narrating elephant truisms that has been discarded by other authorities earlier in the eighteenth century. We have seen how early anatomists argued over the purpose of the elephant's wrinkled skin or whether elephants were actually afraid of mice. In both cases Bingley's elephant biography informed readers that elephant's crushed flies between the wrinkles in their skin, and that they slept with their trunks to the ground lest mice crawl into their proboscis and stifle them. Similarly the classical and humanist tales of elephant's writing and reading Greek were offered as evidence of elephant sagacity. Certainly, many natural histories had discarded these explanations of elephant behaviour and physiology, but in his detailed description of the anatomy of the elephant trunk with accounts of its prehensile dexterity Bingley did not render his biography conspicuously antiquarian. Far from it, Bingley claimed that the contents of his elephant biography however incredulous had been validated by respectable and observing men:

Such are the accounts, collected through a pretty wide range of sources, which we have been enabled to give, of the disposition and manners of this useful and most intelligent of all animals. These may, perhaps, in a few instances, have been somewhat exaggerated by the authors, and must consequently be received with some degree of limitation; yet we have had so many surprising instances of their sagacity, given to us on undoubted authority, that, however wonderful these may seem, it would not be just entirely to discredit any of them, without direct proof of their untruth. The authorities for the whole are such as have been received by different and respectable observing men, who, with both the powers and abilities of enquiring into them, seem to have entertained no doubts whatever of their validity.<sup>60</sup>

Bingley's readers (of whom there were many, *Animal Biography* printed to a seventh edition in 1829 as *Animal Biography; or Popular Zoology*) at the end of the long

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<sup>60</sup> Bingley, *Animal Biography*, p. 158.

eighteenth-century were then presented with the challenge of constructing an animal from the legacies of a mythological beast and new anatomical explanations of elephant physiology and behaviours. It is clear, however, that many readers and spectators did not perceive these two stances as incompatible polar opposites. In some instances anatomical accounts and experimentation validated earlier wonderful and strange elephant occurrences, or lent itself to the reinterpretation of these antiquarian stories. In 1831, James Rennie (1787-1867), naturalist and professor of zoology at Kings College, London, at the end of the long eighteenth century in his assessment of the “Utility of Menageries” considered that spectators had, in actuality, formed few “adequate notions” of the elephant in existing menageries:

Whatever interest we may feel in the sagacity which is already displayed by the elephants of our common English menageries, the wretched state of confinement in which so large an animal is kept prevents us from forming any adequate notions of many of its peculiarities. For this reason the most recent exhibition of the elephant in the theatre has contributed very much to remove some of the popular prejudices concerning the quadruped, and to induce correct ideas of its peculiar movements. We cannot, indeed, upon a stage, see the animal bound about as in a state of nature – roll with delight in the mud to produce a crust upon the body which should be impervious to its tormentors the flies – collect water in its trunk, to sprit over its parched skin – and browse upon the tall branches of trees which it reaches with its proboscis. We shall not see these peculiarities of its native condition, til we have a proper receptacle for the elephant in our national menagerie, the Zoological Gardens. Without imputing blame to those who exhibit the elephant in this country, there is great cruelty in shutting up in a miserable cage a creature who has such delight in liberty, and who is so obedient without being restrained.<sup>61</sup>

Elephants on the Regency stage might serve to correct some misconceptions, but the great cruelty inflicted on *E.sentiens* in captivity would not be corrected until, so Rennie argued, the new London Zoological Gardens (opened in 1828) construct appropriate accommodations following the model of the Jardin des Plantes: the elephants enjoyed “a life of much happiness” in a large enclosure with a pool. Rennie’s criticisms were apposite since as he wrote a new enclosure was in construction at the London Zoological Gardens. In August 1832 *The Mirror of*

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<sup>61</sup> Rennie, *The Menageries*, p. 21.

*Literature, Amusement, and Instruction* featured a description and engraving of the new “luxurious accommodation”, detailing the rustic stable, iron fenced enclosure, within which are:

A few lime-trees, the lower branches of which are thinned by the Elephant repeatedly twisting off their foliage with his trunk, as adroitly as a gardener would gather fruit. His main luxury is, however, in his bath, which is a large pool or tank of water, of depth nearly equal to his height. In hot weather he enjoys his ablutions here with great gusto, exhibiting the liveliest tokens of satisfaction and delight. [...] His keeper had at first some difficulty in inducing him to enter the pond, but he now willingly takes to the water, and thereby exhibits himself in a point of view in which we have not hitherto been accustomed to view an elephant in this country.<sup>62</sup>

This changing exhibitionary context for the elephant clearly reflects much wider changes in practices of natural history, zoology in early nineteenth-century Britain but it also reflects a significant point in the cultural biography of the elephant. As a sapient and sentient animal, the elephant was increasingly understood as ill suited to menageries where it suffered cruelly, like Chuneer at the Exeter Change. Instead, and perhaps of equal significance to spectators and zoology, the new zoological garden presented a new and diverting elephant spectacle allowing the exhibition of behaviours of natural historical veracity.

The cultural biography of the elephant also gestures towards broader conclusions about the nature of natural historical practices and knowledge in eighteenth-century Britain. We have seen how the co-constitution of knowledge production and display worked to create a cultural understanding of the elephant as sapient and sentient. Spectatorship is intimately linked to *knowing* about the elephant whether in the form of menagerie encounters or with a scalpel in hand. An emphasis on the biographical life of the elephant reveals the different publics for the elephant and the cultural species of elephant that these audiences produced knowledge about. In the early 1800s the expressive eyes of the elephant with *his* satisfied and approving sounds, attentive listening, and gentle brilliant eyes was not the elephant of the late seventeenth-century. Although still wondrous, elephant sapience was in natural

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<sup>62</sup> *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction*, 4 August, London, 1832.

histories no longer constructed consistently through the authority of classical authority or Renaissance humanists. Instead, the focus for authoritative knowledge about the elephant turned towards the body of the elephant, the external and internal organs, in mustering support for a wondrous elephant. This was a cultural transformation facilitated by the spectatorship of living elephants in Britain and by anatomical scrutiny.

In the late seventeenth century the elephant became increasingly known as an anatomical entity but anatomical accounts of the elephant were always informed by a sense of antiquarianism and a desire to render physical the prodigious qualities of the elephant. Natural histories and anatomies wrestled with the challenge of constructing a tangible animal from a mythological beast. In the process of producing such knowledge about the elephant practitioners of anatomy did not, as we have seen, produce a less wondrous elephant by the early nineteenth century. Elephant anatomies were an attempt to separate empirical natural knowledge from an antiquarian or classical understanding of this animal. Yet these anatomical accounts worked to make physical or anatomize those marvellous qualities and behaviours that made the elephant appealing to antiquaries, exhibitors, and spectators. Instead, for many spectators the elephant with musical ears and feeling eyes persisted to embody the cultural resonances or meanings it had been previously imbued with. The place of the elephant in eighteenth-century British culture disrupts or challenges conceptions of the Enlightenment as an anti-marvellous discourse. The elephant continued to be a strange and wonderfully multifarious animal, and in being so further articulates the contingency and historicity of any cultural encounters with animals.

The anatomising of the elephant, then, was more than the dissection and representation of constituent elephant tissues, organs and bones by anatomists. The anatomisation of the elephant was a broader cultural process facilitated by the dissemination and interpretation of spectator accounts and textual authorities. The body of the elephant in the eighteenth century was then constituted across a range of sites, a fragmented body that was an amalgamation of dissected body parts, skeletal models, antiquarian and travellers' tales, and menagerie elephants. The anatomising of the kangaroo in the Georgian Britain extends this conception of anatomising animals. The elephant had a long cultural history, even in the 1700s. But the

kangaroo as a new animal to naturalists and anatomists (without a long genealogy in European cultural history) is a counterpoint case study to the elephant, of another exotic animal conspicuous in late Georgian culture. The keen attention that anatomists gave to kangaroo anatomy, physiology and behaviours in contextualised in the next section alongside the politics of natural history in the eighteenth century as well as contemporary understandings of climate and national character. The kangaroo body that was anatomised and constituted in late eighteenth-century Britain was one that was very specific to this national context; indeed, no other European nation had the sort of access to kangaroos that anatomists and menagerists in London benefited from.

### **Kangaroo in London, 1770-1830**

The cultural history of Australian marsupials and monotremes is not, perhaps surprisingly, uncharted territory — the politics of the platypus and the biography of the first complete wombat specimen in Britain for instance being excellent examples of scholarship in this area. The kangaroo too has also been the subject of a study of early European images of Australian animals.<sup>63</sup> These histories do not in the first instance place adequate emphasis on the early presence of Australian mammals and particularly the kangaroo both living and dead in Georgian Britain. Secondly, the significance of the kangaroo to British political culture and practices of natural

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<sup>63</sup> Ann Moyal, *Platypus: The Extraordinary Story of How a Curious Creature Baffled the World* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2002); Louise Jessop and Louise Pigott, “The Governor’s Wombat: early history of an Australian marsupial,” *Archives of Natural History* 34 (2007): 207-218; Des Cowley and Brian Huber, “Distinct Creation: Early European Images of Australian Animals,” *La Trobe Journal* 66 (2000): 3-32; Richard Burkhardt, “Naturalist’s Practices and Nature’s Empire: Paris and the Platypus, 1815-1833,” *Pacific Science* 55 (2001): 327-241. Markman Ellis has written on the problems of kangaroo nomenclature and classification in eighteenth-century Britain, but his account does not discuss the presence of living kangaroos in Georgian Britain; see Markman Ellis, “Tails of Wonder: Constructions of the Kangaroo in Late Eighteenth-Century Scientific Discourse,” in *Science and Exploration in the Pacific: European Voyages to the Southern Oceans in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Margaret Lincoln (Rochester: Boydell, 1998).

history and anatomy merits attention as a case study in expertise and the production and circulation of knowledge in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Britain. Of particular interest here is the political economy of the kangaroo in Georgian Britain and the link between the consumption of the kangaroo and the production of knowledge about the kangaroo against the context of the Napoleonic Wars, tensions between the expertise of naturalists and anatomists, and the emergence of the zoological garden as an exhibitionary site. Kangaroos both living and dead, taxidermy and spirit preparation, were to be found across a range of sites in Georgian Britain; in animal merchants, menageries, anatomical collections, museums and, by the early 1830s, in zoological gardens. Each of these sites produced different sorts of kangaroo, animals that might be called *cultural species* of kangaroo; we shall see, for example, how anatomical discussion on the reproductive organs of the kangaroo and the maturation of young took place alongside the display in London of live kangaroos and their young — a spectacle that enchanted London society. The collection of kangaroo tissues and organs by anatomists was accompanied by the much broader exhibition of taxidermy kangaroos in museums. In London, in the period 1770-1830, it was then possible to understand the kangaroo as a humorous oddly proportioned menagerie occupant, as an anatomical entity with an interesting physiology, or as a museum specimen displayed alongside other marsupials both Old World and New.

Firstly, I introduce the cultural context for “kangaroo mania” and discuss the manner in which these specimens and live kangaroos arrived in Britain with a chronology for the early transmission and circulation of this material. Then the meaning and spectacle of these kangaroos is discussed with reference to the politics of natural history during the Napoleonic Wars and British politicised understandings of climate and naturalisation. Lastly, we shall see how the kangaroos that were brought to Britain were used to produce anatomical and natural historical knowledge.

I was one day walking down Piccadilly, early in the morning, when I met a porter carrying a live kangaroo, which he was conveying from Mr Pidcock’s at the Exeter Change, to a person who had purchased it. The animal was fastened to his knot by the feet, and his head lay dangling over, very near the left ear of the fellow who was carrying him; this it seemed was a temptation not to be resisted by the kangaroo, who,

after smelling at the man's ear for a long time, gave it a terrible bite, and nearly clipped it off.<sup>64</sup>

In his 1807 letter home, the Irish law student writing to his father in Ireland was doing so towards the tail end of an early British mania for the kangaroo. It had been almost forty years since the *Endeavour* botanists and naturalists Joseph Banks (1743-1820) and Daniel Solander (1733-1783) had first described the kangaroo to British natural history, and less than two decades since the first live kangaroo in Britain had been displayed at the Lyceum on the Strand in 1791. A porter walking down Piccadilly, with a kangaroo slung over his shoulders is perhaps a strange historical image for contemporaries, but in the late eighteenth century London's Strand and Piccadilly districts were lined with an array of animal merchants or dealers, menageries and museums. These animal merchants sold, bought, and exhibited a diverse range of animals and had emerged from earlier seventeenth-century itinerant bird sellers and canary shops.<sup>65</sup> On the return of the *Endeavour* from New South Wales, the precious collected specimens of the kangaroo were dissected by the anatomist John Hunter and painted by George Stubbs in 1773; an image that widely reproduced natural histories. The elusive kangaroo was known to many only through its image and description, and to others through scarce fragmentary specimens in private collections or early museums such as the Leverian Museum (Plate.42). So strong was interest in the kangaroo that a 1789 public exhibition of a preserved taxidermy kangaroo collected by Daniel Solander attracted both huge crowds and coincided with the publication of several accounts of voyages to New South Wales, all featuring desirable illustrations of this curious animal.<sup>66</sup> The kangaroo was probably most familiar to readers of natural history in Pennant's *General History of Quadrupeds* (1790), featuring an image of the kangaroo derived from Stubbs's 1773 painting. Live kangaroos were held in the collection of Queen Charlotte's menagerie at Kew from 1792, and by the end of the decade these rare animal commodities were offered for sale at Pidcock's Menagerie on the Strand, near Piccadilly. Kangaroos in

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<sup>64</sup> *Letters from an Irish Student*, p.149.

<sup>65</sup> See Chapter One.

<sup>66</sup> Arthur Phillips, *The Voyage of Governor Phillips to Botany Bay* (Stockdale: London, 1789) and John White, *Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales* (London, 1790).

the royal menagerie attracted the attention of at least one satirist the following year in 1793, who remarked at the presence of the gentle beast in the presence of the Royalist tiger:

A kangaroo the other day  
(Who lately cross'd the wat'ry way  
To Britain's hospitable shore,  
From climes which Cook had fail'd t'explore)  
In manner gentle, temper kind,  
Quick as a deer to catch the wind,  
Beneath the roof where tiger's fed,  
Was doomed to lay its faunish head  
Belov'd by those who saw and knew  
The properties of a kangaroo.  
Quiet he pass'd the night and day,  
In mild repose of active play;  
Contented with his daily bread,  
And lick'd the hand by which he fed.  
But often startled with alarm,  
That roaring Tiger's boded harm.<sup>67</sup>

Royal ownership of live kangaroos fuelled a kangaroo mania represented in particular by the commissioning of the HMS *Kangaroo* in 1795, replaced by a successor in 1805. Snuffboxes, printed books and engravings joined naval ships as part of the material cultural of kangaroo mania. Live kangaroos though absent elsewhere in Europe ceased to be uncommon in West London. Pidcock's Menagerie could boast six kangaroos in 1799/1800, easily trumping the solitary specimen to be then seen at Kendrick's Menagerie.<sup>68</sup> By mid 1800, Gilbert Pidcock (1743-1810) had sold all but two of his kangaroos, a male and a female. The following birth of a baby kangaroo in October 1800 drew in crowds of spectators flocking to see the widely advertised celebrity hop in and out of its mother's pouch — heralded as the “greatest rarities ever seen”. Contemporary periodicals reported the clamour for kangaroos, and especially the baby, in London society;

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<sup>67</sup> Griffith, *Fables in Verse: Or, Present Life under Different Forms* (Murray: London, 1793), p. 18.

<sup>68</sup> Advertisement; Kangaroo at Pidcock's Menagerie, *True Briton*, 17 January, 1800.

One of the kangaroos which have been exhibited at the Grand Menagerie over Exeter  
'Change brought forth a young one [...] far more curious than anything ever yet  
observed by human eye [...] The delicacy of this young animal is beyond expression [...] of  
this is absolutely one of the most extraordinary subjects that nature has presented us  
with; and is truly deserving of the attention of the curious.<sup>69</sup>

The “wonderfully formed and playful kangaroos” at Pidcock’s Menagerie attracted the attention of West London’s fashionable beau monde and aristocracy.<sup>70</sup> “His Serene Highness the Prince of Orange, his Grace the Duke of Argyle, Lady Howe, and many others of the Nobility having in the course of the past week condescended to honour Pidcock’s Grand Menagerie, Exeter-change, with their presence.”<sup>71</sup> This exhibitionary context with the kangaroo as a darling of high society was quite different from the manner in which colonists in New South Wales perceived and utilised kangaroos, and the perilous voyages that brought these live kangaroos to London.

The kangaroo was known to British readers of natural history as a principal source of meat for colonists in New South Wales and was described as “good eating.” These kangaroos were hunted with dogs or shot for their meat and pelts – or for recreation. Hunted kangaroos also became a source for the skins and preserved organs that were sent to Britain and examined by anatomists like John Hunter. Living kangaroos especially those captured when young could be sold or bartered and dispatched onwards to Britain. The transport ships that supplied the penal colonies of New South Wales, Norfolk Island and Van Diemen’s Land with supplies and convicted transportees often returned to Britain with an exotic cargo. Anne Reed, the wife of the Captain of the transport ship *Friendship* published an anonymous account of her voyage as *Cursory Remarks Onboard the Friendship* (1818/1819), which also

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<sup>69</sup> Advertisement: Kangaroo at Pidcock’s Menagerie, *Oracle and Daily Advertiser*, 23 October, 1800.

<sup>70</sup> News Column: Kangaroo at Pidcock’s Menagerie, *The Morning Chronicle*, 16 December, 1803.

<sup>71</sup> News Column: Aristocracy at Pidcock’s Menagerie, *The Morning Chronicle*, 18 April, 1801.

appeared serialised in periodicals. Reed noted in her account that she had bartered a bottle of spirits for a young kangaroo to bring back to England:

I had also a young docile kangaroo, received in barter for a bottle of spirits, which was preferred to one pound in money. It was rather larger than a hare, and grew fond of us; now sitting at our feet, and now with its nimble and active pranks, amused us by playing about the cabin; it ate fruit, vegetables, and bread from the hand, and answered to its name.<sup>72</sup>

Later Reed noted gloomily that:

This day my poor kangaroo fell down the hatchway and broke its back; I had hoped to take it safe to England. Its innocent pranks, playing around the cabin and steerage, were often a source of amusement to the officers, who felt its loss as much as I did.<sup>73</sup>

The accidental death of another kangaroo is recorded in the memoirs of James Hardy Vaux (1782-1841+) convicted and transported three times to New South Wales. On a return trip to England on the transport ship *Buffalo* he noted, “Our ship was at first so literally crowded, so as to resemble Noah’s Ark.” In addition to returning convicts, the ship carried kangaroos, parrots, an emu, black swans, cockatoos, and “smaller birds without number.” But as the ship rounded Cape Horn, cold weather set in “destroying almost every natural production of New South Wales”.<sup>74</sup> A solitary cockatoo and half a dozen swans survived the severe weather, to be presented to the Royal Menagerie at Kew. Given that kangaroo flesh was a staple foodstuff (said to resemble venison) in the penal colonies and that supplies often ran low on the extended voyage back to Britain, many kangaroos are likely to have become meals for starving sailors and convicts. The perils of frigid climes, disease, accidental death and the thin distinction in emergency between valuable cargo and necessary foodstuff, means that those kangaroos that arrived alive Georgian Britain probably

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<sup>72</sup> *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British India and its Dependencies* IX (London: Allen, 1820), 40.

<sup>73</sup> *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register* (1820), 134.

<sup>74</sup> James Hardy Vaux and B. Field, *Memoirs of James Hardy Vaux, Written by Himself in Two Volumes, Vol. I.* (London: Clowdon, 1819), p. 20.

represent only a small fraction of those that initially embarked upon the eight month voyage. Whilst it is certainly difficult to ascertain some form of historical kangaroo census for Georgian Britain as a whole into the 1830s, it is certainly possible to produce a chronology for the transmission and dissemination of early living kangaroos and osteological, taxidermy and spirit preparations to c1800.

## **Kangaroo, a Political Geography**

The three voyages of Captain Cook between 1768 and 1779 provided the earliest kangaroo material. Of the kangaroo material that came to Britain in 1771 John Hunter received a kangaroo skull, that remained in the Hunterian Museum until 1941 when it —and around three quarters of the original Hunterian collection — were destroyed by wartime bombing<sup>75</sup> A prepared skin collected by Daniel Solander was on public display in 1789 but the earliest specimens were in the collections of naturalists and anatomists, being circulated amongst networks of expertise and acquaintance. John Hunter received Joseph Banks' New Holland Collection in 1792 but would have had access to this beforehand. There are 14 extant preparations of wet kangaroo specimens in the collection of the Royal College of Surgeons in London but Hunter certainly had more than this. 19 different specimens alone are recorded in a partial series of nineteenth-century catalogues<sup>76</sup>. (Plate.43)

The early transmission of living kangaroos or kangaroo preparations to Britain initially followed the return of the Cook voyages in 1771 (1768-1771), 1775 (1772-

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<sup>75</sup> I am grateful to Simon Chaplin for drawing this to my attention. For an excellent account of the difficulty in establishing the number of objects in Hunter's collection and attributing objects to him see the sixth appendix (John Hunter's Collections) in Chaplin's doctoral thesis.

<sup>76</sup> See *The Contents of the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons in London Part IV* (London: Taylor, 1830); *Catalogue of the Royal College of Surgeons in London Part I, Comprising of Pathological Preparations in Spirit* (London: Taylor, 1830). Kangaroo specimens are also listed in Richard Owen's publication of Hunter's notes; *Essays and Observations on Natural History, Anatomy, Physiology, Psychology, and Geology. By John Hunter, F.R.S.* (London: Van Voorst, 1861), pp. xxxvii.

1775) and 1779 (1776-1779). Skins and skulls as well as wet specimens can be dated at the earliest to these three voyages. A second wave of material to Britain then dates to the late 1780s with the return of the first fleet of ships commanded by Arthur Phillips sent to establish a penal settlement at Botany Bay. Between 1788 and 1792, over 4,000 convicts in addition to naval personnel and officials with their families landed at Port Jackson. These fleets significantly expanded the body of kangaroo material in Britain and brought back the first living kangaroos. The first fleet contained 11 ships including naval, transport, and supply ships —the second fleet 6 and the third fleet 11 ships. The return of ships in the Second Fleet in 1791 correlates with the exhibition of the first living kangaroo in 1791 at the Lyceum on London's Strand. Similarly, the presence of live kangaroos in Queen Charlotte's menagerie from 1792 corresponds with the return of ships in the Third Fleet also in that year. Hunter's collection and indeed those of other naturalists or anatomists would have been significantly swollen by the return of these fleets over a decade after Cook's last voyage. The living kangaroos present in Pidcock's menagerie and Kendrick's menagerie from 1799 are probable cargo from the flotilla of supply and transport ships that sustained the early colonies in Australia.

Kangaroo specimens might be acquired by donation or purchase. In the period ca1799 to 1828 the Hunterian acquired by purchase the skull and bones of a kangaroo that had been kept alive at the Exeter Change Menagerie, and by donation from Everard Home the skeletons of a wombat and dingo that had also been kept alive at the same menagerie.<sup>77</sup> It is clear that in late Georgian England menageries were valuable sources within Britain for the circulation of kangaroo material in addition to increasingly regular shipping. In his annotations of John Hunter's notes, Richard Owen recalls the regret with which Hunter wanted for the opportunity to investigate more fully the mode of generation in marsupials - especially the failure in propagating his captive opossums. Owen reassured readers that such a lacuna in the collection had been filled: "since the time of Mr. Hunter, the introduction of the kangaroo into our menageries, and its frequent breeding, have afforded opportunities

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<sup>77</sup> The kangaroo is item 479, the wombat 486, and the dingo 297. *Catalogue of the Contents of the Museum of The Royal College of Surgeons Part III Comprehending the Human and Comparative Osteology* (London: Warr, 1831).

of elucidating many of the peculiarities of the marsupial generative oeconomy; and the transmission of the impregnated uteri of the Kangaroo and Ornithorhynchus to the Museum by enlightened and liberal Donors has tended still more satisfactorily to supply the deficiency which the Founder had occasion to regret in the present department of his Physiological Collection.”<sup>78</sup>

These routes of acquisition represented a temporary victory for British nomenclature and natural knowledge of the New World. British ascendancy in the new territories meant that any living kangaroo —and indeed pelts, bones or preparations - coming into Europe did so under British auspices. Colonial control and Anglo-French conflict ensured that few other European natural historians had seen a dead specimen yet alone a living, leaping kangaroo. From 1792 kangaroos grazed at Kew Gardens, more than a decade before live kangaroos were seen in any other European collection. Around 1800 the kangaroo was familiar enough in British culture to find a place in a schoolroom natural history text, William Mavor’s *Natural History for the Use of Schools* (1800). Accompanied by a plate of the kangaroo, the text celebrated the kangaroo as a patriotic victory for Britain —the kangaroo being first discovered by “our British colonists,” “unknown in other parts of the world,” and unlike elsewhere the readers could even see a “beautiful animal of this kind in the exhibition at Exeter ‘Change.”<sup>79</sup>

Also in 1800, the Swiss physicist and chemist Marc-Auguste Pictet (1752-1825) visited Britain and when in London saw living kangaroos in two different menageries. His detailed account of the kangaroo was published in 1802 and was one of the few Francophone descriptions of living kangaroos. Pictet’s description of the kangaroos (“*on pronounce kangarou*”) at Kew, where he saw the large breeding colony in their fenced enclosure, describes his astonishment at their habits and appearance. Pictet got a good close look, since he fed a mother and her young “du pain” from his hand:

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<sup>78</sup> Owen, *Essays and Observations*, p. xxxvii.

<sup>79</sup> William Mavor, *Natural History*, pp. 101-103.

When one considers altogether this animal, her unusual structure, a foreigner to the proportions of the quadrupeds; and especially in the way they move; when observing her appearance, her habits, we exclaim that nature is playing in this species; that she is a phenomenon, I tell you, like a kind of practical joke, like a little piece in the grand théâtre of organisation. In fact, one cannot see it without laughing.<sup>80</sup>

This amusement at the spectacle of the kangaroo became more animated and visceral at Pidcock's Menagerie where Pictet observed two male kangaroos boxing in a cage and a kangaroo dancing the minuet with his trainer:

I then saw in Pidcock's Menagerie in London one of these animals, which when they quietly support it a little by its small arms, as a dance teacher in the first lesson of the minuet, he stays for some seconds sat on his tail like a pivot. The third step depends upon a rapid movement. The animal jumps, body bent forward, to balance on his tail. He jumps on two legs at a time, and in a steady rhythmical manner; when one of the kangaroos begins to dance, the others imitate; and nothing is more ridiculous and more laughable than this scene. We have to say that our burst of applause encouraged him and he gratified us in putting on this spectacle.<sup>81</sup>

Whilst Pictet was in Britain during 1800, the French naval ships the *Naturaliste* and the *Géographe* left Le Havre on the Baudin Expedition (1800-1804) to chart and document "Terre Napoléon". During the peace afforded by the Treaty of Amiens in 1802 Joseph Banks presented two kangaroos to the Ménagerie du Jardin des Plantes, whilst the Baudin expedition was extensively charting the topography and flora of Southern Australia. Banks' gift of the kangaroo to the French is indicative of considerable Anglo-French intellectual exchange in spite of hostilities. Certainly, the presence of kangaroos in Britain was a source of patriotic pride but the rivalry between British and French naturalists should not be overstated. The diffusion of French periodicals, books, and other print material even during wartime meant that London naturalists and anatomists remained au fait with French anatomy, classification, and natural history. The cordial meeting between the British

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<sup>80</sup> Marc-Auguste Pictet, *Voyage de Trois Mois en Angleterre, en Ecosse, et en Irlande pendant l'été de l'an IX* (Paris: Manget, 1802), p. 284. The translations from Pictet's *Voyage* in this chapter are my own.

<sup>81</sup> Pictet, *Voyage de Trois Mois en Angleterre*, p. 284.

cartographer Matthew Flinders on the HMS *Investigator* and the *Géographe*'s French cartographer-naturalist Nicolas Baudin off the Australian coast in 1802 evinces a collaborative spirit. As far as Baudin and Flinders were concerned their nations were at war, but Flinders' French passport and the practical benefits to be garnered from knowledge exchange meant that both parties parted amicably. The seven-year imprisonment of Flinders in Mauritius on his return to Britain in 1803 by the French governor Charles Decaen would suggest alternatively that the rivalry and politics of Anglo-French conflict could determine significantly the flow of persons and knowledge.

When the Baudin expedition finally returned from "Terre Napoléon" in 1804 preserved plant and animal specimens were brought back as well as living fauna and flora for acclimatisation. The live kangaroos, black swans, and emus that were brought to France were presented Empress Joséphine, twelve years after kangaroos has first grazed in Queen Charlotte's Menagerie at Kew. The title page vignette to the 1807 publication of the Baudin expedition, *Voyage de découvertes aux terres Australes* (1807), victoriously portrayed kangaroos roaming the imperial residence of Malmaison.<sup>82</sup> By 1805, another imperial menagerie could boast the acquisition of kangaroos in its collection. The dramatist August von Kotzebue saw kangaroos at the menagerie of Francis II at Schönbrunn near Vienna, again recalling the humour of an encounter with the unusual quadruped:

Among the more recent arrivals is an amiable family of kangaroos, which are inexpressibly comical and interesting. A Cato could not forbear laughing or leaping [...] the sight is perfectly unique.<sup>83</sup>

The kangaroos in Francis's collection, given the scarcity of living kangaroos in Europe, were probably a purchase from Pidcock's Menagerie in London, or a gift from King George and Queen Charlotte, perhaps to solidify their coalition with Francis II against the French. The ongoing conflict between the Holy Roman Empire

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<sup>82</sup> Louis Claude Desaulces de Freycinet and F. Péron, *Voyage des découvertes aux terres Australes* (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1807).

<sup>83</sup> August von Kotzebue, *Voyages Through Italy in the Years 1804 and 1805 Vol. IV* (London: Phillips, 1806), p.305.

and France would certainly preclude Napoléon and Joséphine gifting any of their kangaroos. Indeed the fecund kangaroos at Kew had begun to circulate in elite British circles as their offspring were gifted to friends and supporters of the royal family; in 1801 the Dowager Marchioness of Bath acquired a male and female kangaroo for her menagerie at Longleat, as did the Duchess of York for her menagerie at Oatlands.

The significance of the kangaroo to nationalist discourse is indicated in Britain by the interest in the naturalisation of the kangaroos at Kew. The adaptation of the kangaroo to the British climate had a distinct political economy at a time when the Georgian state looked towards Australia as a colonial replacement for the American colonies. Initially strange and climatically hostile, Australia could be made fertile and harnessed by English settlers who would foster English political ideals.<sup>84</sup> In the eighteenth century the bodies of Britons and their national character had become increasingly understood as constituted by the British climate and susceptible to the maladies of foreign climes. British writers of natural history like Samuel Ward was particularly keen to valorise the British climate and in particular the absence of “pernicious” or “rapacious” animals:

Happy Britain, as in a thousand other particulars, so in the peculiar favour of heaven on thy climate; which no pernicious or rapacious animals inhabit; through which never stalks, furious with hunger, the devouring tiger; over which never hangs threatening devastation, the voracious and unwieldy condor! Happy Britain, whose fields smile with plenty; and over whose plains roves fair freedom, unmolested, and blest to her with; while studious to protect thee, a gracious monarch sways thy sceptre, who never draws the sword, but in defence of freedom, and his people; who is rejoiced to diffuse blessings around him.<sup>85</sup>

The kangaroos grazing on the green grass at Kew, on the banks of the Thames had reproduced in captivity and clearly demonstrated their naturalisation in “Happy

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<sup>84</sup> Glynis Ridley, “Losing America and Finding Australia: Continental Shift in an Enlightenment Paradigm,” *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 26 (2002): 202-224.

<sup>85</sup> Ward, *Modern System of Natural History*, p. 91.

Britain,” and the ability of Britons to alter nature. Yet the Anglicisation of the kangaroo was also seen to have at least some deleterious effects:

The kangaroo may now be considered in some measure naturalised in England; having been kept some years in the royal domains at Richmond; which, during their residence there, have produced young ones, and seem very likely to succeed well in this country; though by confinement and alteration of food, they may probably lose many of their natural habits, and exhibit less of that bounding vivacity, by which they are so distinguished in New South Wales.<sup>86</sup>

If indeed the kangaroo did lose some of its leap in England this was but a small price to pay for the “permanent acquisition” of the kangaroo to England. Bullock’s Museum on Piccadilly displayed two large kangaroos and a wallaby, and the companion catalogue to the museum considered the elegant kangaroo as a national asset:

The kangaroo maybe considered in some degree as naturalised in England, several having been kept for many years at Richmond, which have during their residence their produced young, and promise to render this most elegant animal a permanent acquisition to our country.<sup>87</sup>

This permanence as suggested by Thomas Smith would cause the kangaroo to lose many of its natural habits, but the surgeon Everard Home (1756-1832) went further in his explanation for altering kangaroo behaviours. Home’s extensive paper to the Royal Society in 1806 compared the stomachs of horses, elephants, dogs, *man*, and the kangaroo. Although the kangaroo found a place alongside other ruminants, it was an oddity because of the larger size of its stomach in comparison to other ruminants. Home’s observations of the kangaroos at the Exeter Change Menagerie, and the absence of rumination in other captive specimens gestured at the adaptive nature of the kangaroo stomach. Kangaroo physiology would adapt to the “iron will of necessity” as they adapted to the British climate.

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<sup>86</sup> Thomas Smith, *The Wonders of Nature and Art* (London: Walker, 1804), p. 127.

<sup>87</sup> William Bullock, *A Companion to the Liverpool Museum* (London: Sabine & Sons, 1809), p.25.

This political economy of the kangaroo, and especially those at Kew, was particularly meaningful when understood within much broader moves towards naturalising, “improving,” and disseminating other species of plants and animals throughout the Empire. The Banksian exchange of specimens for cultivation across the Empire and improvement at home rendered many plant and animal specimens useful as sources of food and raw materials. Although the kangaroo was utilised by British colonists (and Aboriginal peoples) as a source of food and pelts — this was not the rationale behind the naturalisation of the kangaroo in Britain. Certainly naturalists and readers of natural history or indeed readers with any familiarity with the New World were aware of the value of these products to colonists, but “kangaroo mania” was not predicated on any agricultural aspirations for the species in Britain. The mania for the kangaroo in late eighteenth century London was, at least in part, predicated on its eminent conformance to Enlightenment ideals. Attractive, graceful, (seemingly) docile, and naturalised to the English climate the kangaroo was a reassuring success for the Georgian State. Moreover the touching sight of young kangaroos, kangaroos that would dance the minuet, take bread from the hand, and make spectators laugh all confirmed the status of spectators as sensible and sensitive enlightened observers. Britons so suited to their own clime, observing kangaroos that had, with apparent ease, flourished in “Happy Britain.” Of course, the appealing late Enlightenment dream of docile kangaroos grazing on the Elysian banks of the Thames was a precarious vision. A writer for the *Monthly Review* drolly commented that it was “not to be safe to allow them to range at large, and that they were rightly surrounded by a high paling. For although some, like the amicable kangaroos Pictet encountered, “would allow persons to approach and touch them, especially if they give them bread,” the “others are [were] by no means docile.”<sup>88</sup>

## **Anatomising the Kangaroo**

The presence of the kangaroo in Britain extended from menageries and animal merchants to anatomical collections and museums. The clamour that the birth of the

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<sup>88</sup> *The Monthly Review; or Literary Journal* XLIII (London: Straban, 1804), 498.

young kangaroo generated at Pidcock's Menagerie in 1800, and the broader cultural appeal of the gentle and comical joey in a pouch intersected with the interest of anatomists in the mode of reproduction in kangaroos; a concern that produced new objects for the production and visualisation of knowledge. Kangaroo preparations in the Hunterian collection made after 1770 and before 1793 include a series of kangaroo embryos and young at varying stages of maturation, as well as dissected kangaroo legs, displayed to reveal the tendons within. Of the fourteen-spirit preparation prepared by or for the surgeon John Hunter nine are kangaroo embryos or young, and two preparations of kangaroo mammary glands and teats from females. The remaining specimens are a tongue and dissected foot of a young kangaroo. This clear interest in the anatomy of reproduction in the kangaroo is unsurprising given the novelty of marsupial animals to anatomists like John Hunter. The museum and collection of anatomist Joshua Brookes, however, represented a more osteological interest in the kangaroo; with a large selection of crania and complete skeletons of different kangaroo species.<sup>89</sup>

Despite John Hunter's multiple preparations of material pertaining to the "mode of generation" in the kangaroo, it was Everard Home in 1797 that first presented a letter to the Royal Society detailing reproduction in the kangaroo. Professional and familial ties to John Hunter (Home was his brother-in-law, had been Hunter's pupil and worked alongside him), not to mention that Home lived in Leicester Square near Hunter's anatomy school and collection, meant that Home must have used Hunter's kangaroo specimens in his research. Hunter died in 1793, and the publications of Home after this date were considered (often sneeringly) by contemporaries as attributable in the greater part to Hunter's anatomical notes. Home had appropriated much of Hunter's unpublished works — and destroyed most of these papers in the 1820s. Home's observations on the kangaroo are then based on Hunter's specimens and notes, and specimens received after Hunter's death.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Joshua Brookes, *Brookesian Museum...Anatomical and Zoological Preparations* (London: Gold & Walton, 1828).

<sup>90</sup> For a brief historical account of the destruction of the Hunter papers see Duncan Fitzwilliam, "The Destruction of John Hunter's Papers," *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine* 42, 11 (1949): 871-876.

Later, in 1799, a lengthy five-page description of “the mode of generation in the kangaroo” appeared in the comparative physiology of Richard Saumarez (1764-1835), surgeon and governor at Magdalen Hospital, London. Saumarez’s kangaroo anatomy was indebted in part to Everard Home’s earlier work, but contained his own observations of the kangaroos at Kew. After describing the visual and tactile qualities of uterus and its fluids (which suggest Saumarez had dissected one) he described the development of the foetus before birth and then after as it adhered to the nipple. The reproductive organs and foetus of the kangaroo were described as a “beautiful mode of construction”, and later Saumarez described the later maturation of the kangaroo:

One of the females now in Richmond Park [Kew] had a young one in the false belly [pouch], when only about a year and half old. Although the young one remains in the false belly, or goes into it occasionally, and sucks the mother a long time after it appears capable of procuring its own food; if the mother is closely pursued, in attending to her own safety, she then forces the young out of the false belly, provided it be arrived at a sufficient age to be covered with hair. The kangaroo, therefore, would seem to form a connecting medium between the oviparous and viviparous animals, not only in the mode of generation, but in the mode it nourishes its offspring.<sup>91</sup>

This interest in the mode of generation was particularly focused on establishing a satisfactory place within classificatory schema for the kangaroo, and practices of comparative anatomy produced particular knowledge about that animal, including new objects like prepared embryos, mammary glands and uteri. Kangaroos produce on average only one joey a year, but that young may still be occasionally suckled and reared at the same time a second is born and occupies the mother’s pouch. Hunter’s specimens of kangaroo foeti and young are then unlikely to have been solely sourced from the Queen’s menagerie at Kew. Most would have been acquired from kangaroo specimens brought to England, sent by physicians and naturalists in Australia. Hunter wrote in his notes that “in all the young kangaroos yet brought home (although some are as large as a full-grown rat), there are all the marks of a foetus.” The suggestion

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<sup>91</sup> Richard Saumarez, *A New System of Physiology, comprehending the laws by which animated beings in general, and the human species in particular, are governed, in their several states of health and disease* (London: Davis, 1799), p. 387.

is that at least some of the immature kangaroos in his collection were acquired this way.<sup>92</sup>

It is clear that Everard Home, Saumarez and other naturalists or anatomists certainly observed carefully the reproductive cycles of the Queen's kangaroos but it is less clear to what extent the largest breeding colony of kangaroos in Britain was a source of specimens for these practitioners. As late as 1829, John Morgan, surgeon at Guy's Hospital and a fellow of the Linnean society, advocated the domestication of the kangaroo as the only means for making detailed examinations of the interior of the pouch to ascertain the appearance of the young kangaroo when it first attaches to the teat after birth.<sup>93</sup> The 1829 catalogue to the preparations in the anatomical museum of Guy's Hospital indicated that Morgan presented numerous dry and wet preparations of kangaroo organs to the hospital, including those he had used in his research.<sup>94</sup> Similarly, Richard Owen, in his capacity as Assistant Conservator of the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons London, was indebted to dissections sent to him of the uterus of the kangaroo and that of the platypus — sent to him from Australia in 1834.<sup>95</sup> These instances suggest that except in the instance of mortality in birth, foetal and maturing young were not always readily available from the kangaroos living in London.

Living kangaroos in menageries and specimens in museums were also useful sources for the classification of different species of kangaroos and wallabies — but there was not a consistent approach to nomenclature. Bullock's Museum displayed three

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<sup>92</sup> John Hunter and Richard Owen, *Essays and Observations on Natural History, Anatomy, Physiology, Psychology, and Geology*. By John Hunter, F.R.S. (London: Van Voorst, 1861), p. 387.

<sup>93</sup> John Morgan, "A Further Description of the Anatomy of the Mammary Organs of the Kangaroo," *The Zoological Journal*, 16 (1829): 264-265.

<sup>94</sup> Thomas Hodgkin, *A Catalogue of the Anatomical Preparations in the Anatomical Museum of Guy's Hospital*. (London: Watts, 1829).

<sup>95</sup> Richard Owen, "On the Gestation of the Marsupial Animals; with a description of the impregnated uterus of the kangaroo" in *Abstracts of the Papers Printed in the Transactions of the Royal Society of London* 3 (1834), 278-280.

specimens of kangaroos alongside the pouched Opossums (*Didelphis*: double womb) and described its kangaroos as “*D. Gigantea*.” The Dublin Society used the same nomenclature in their museum to describe their kangaroos, mounted alongside opossums in a systematic arrangement of nature.<sup>96</sup> Joshua Brookes alternatively arranged his specimens of kangaroos under a separate family called *Kangaroidae*, split into *Macropus* (macropod: big foot) and *Kanguris*. Hunterian specimens were named followed the conventions of the naturalist and keeper of Natural History at the British Museum, George Shaw (1751-1813), in calling the kangaroo *Macropus major*. Shaw’s magisterial *Zoology of New Holland* (1794) being an authority on the fauna of the continent.

The sheer diversity of kangaroos, wallabies, tree-kangaroos and pademelons (53 species of Macropod prior to European settlement, 47 extant species today) made menageries useful, if challenging sites for new species identification. In 1805 at a meeting of the Linnean Society, the botanist Aylmer Bourke Lambert (1761-1842) reported the identification of a new type of *Macropus*, which he called *Macropus elegans*, that he had seen living at Exeter Change. In addition to the measurements of the animal he had made, he presented an account and drawing:

The account of this animal, and the drawing which I here offer to the Society, were taken from a specimen latterly brought from New South Wales, and now in the possession of Mr Pidcock of Exeter ‘Change [...] The colour is a beautiful silver grey; and upon the whole, it is one of the most elegant animals I ever saw. It is also very docile.<sup>97</sup>

After consulting Shaw’s *General Zoology* (1800), Lambert found his elegant silver grey animal to be a quite different species from *Macropus major*, being smaller and “of a more handsome shape” (Plate.44). The animal Lambert identified is, contemporarily, known as the “Whiptail Wallaby,” or *Macropus parryi*. Earlier Shaw had used a specimen of a kangaroo at the Leverian Museum to identify the hitherto

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<sup>96</sup> *A Catalogue of the subjects of Natural History in the Museum of the Dublin Society* (Dublin: Campbell, 1813).

<sup>97</sup> Aylmer Bourke-Lambert, “A Description of a New Species of *Macropus* from New-Holland,” *Transactions of the Linnaean Society* (London: Taylor, 1807), p. 318.

unknown species in his *Museum Leverianum, containing select specimens from the museum of the late Sir Ashton Lever (1792-1796)*.

The significance of anatomical, museum and menagerie collections for naturalists and anatomists is clear. The species of kangaroo that they produced represented specific understandings of comparative anatomy and classification of species. The strange quadruped that early British naturalists and colonists encountered in the 1770s and 1780s was by the early nineteenth century absorbed into systems of classification and comparative anatomy. The surprisingly significant place of the kangaroo in Georgian British political thought is recalled in the choice of anecdote with which an Irish student in 1809 chose to regale his father with back in Ireland. In recalling the sight of a porter walking along Piccadilly early one morning with a kangaroo slung over his shoulder, our student has a particular motive in mind. After the porter had his ear bitten by the kangaroo, he threw the kangaroo on the floor in a rage, upon which a passing drayman (driver of a horse-drawn goods cart) leapt to the kangaroo's defence.

A crowd speedily collected, a ring was formed, and the drayman, after several severe rounds, gave the porter a hearty drubbing; then took the kangaroo into his cart, and as the animal had the address of the person to whom he was going fastened to the string that confined his feet, he drove off with it, followed by the porter, who's head and face, from the united exertions of the kangaroo and his protector presented a hideous spectacle.<sup>98</sup>

This hideous spectacle, the student hoped, would “place in a whimsical view the indignation which the lower classes feel, on seeing animals, either of their own, or of any other species unequally assailed.”<sup>99</sup> This “generous feeling” of Britons towards the kangaroo belies the importance of the kangaroo as a “permanent acquisition” for the nation in late Georgian Britain. The appealing kangaroo on display in London before anywhere else in Europe had become the unlikely subject of naturalisation and acclimatisation, a spectacle suffused with ideological meaning. The kangaroos in Georgian Britain, and especially those at Kew, held a particular political economy in

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<sup>98</sup> *Letters from an Irish Student*, p. 149.

<sup>99</sup> *Letters from an Irish Student*, p. 150.

a period when other species of animals and plants were being naturalised or acclimatised, altered and dispatched across the Empire. Unlike the Enlightenment dream of tamed zebra, the idyll of kangaroos grazing in English climes actually amounted to something, albeit not on large scale. There were after all no plans to use kangaroos for their meat or fur as indeed they were by colonists in Australia. But kangaroo mania demonstrates that the kangaroo held a particular visual and affective appeal for spectators — in Britain and indeed, eventually, elsewhere in Europe. In the 1790s fashionable London society was amused and charmed by the kangaroo, especially young kangaroos — and by 1805 visitors to Malmaison or Schönbrunn were similarly entertained. This interest in the kangaroo has been understood within the broader context of haptic and other sensory encounters between spectator and object or subject in the eighteenth century. In an elite culture that advocated an ease and sensibility of manners, physical comfort, and aesthetic refinement as the hallmark of an enlightened individual, the kangaroo was a particularly appealing animal in the late Enlightenment Britain. Not only were the sensibilities of spectators pleasingly elicited in the kangaroo — but in the geographical displacement of the kangaroo it also became a signifier or metonymic of colonised and foreign lands. Especially during the Napoleonic Wars the presence of living kangaroos and kangaroo preparations in collections consciously reminded spectators of British ascendancy in Australia, and the pre-eminence of British naturalists and anatomists in knowledge about the fauna of the new continent.

## **Conclusion**

The individual biographies of the elephant and the kangaroo gesture collectively towards more general practices of knowledge production in eighteenth-century Britain. The multifarious representations of these diverse animal bodies and their alteration or configuration through time demonstrate the necessity to conceive of the category of natural historical knowledge as broad and subject to alteration. Tracing the biographical lives of these animals from life to death — and through a collections afterlife has highlighted significant connections between sites and practitioners that

have been previously obscured or not fully aligned. Menageries and animal merchants, as well as temporary exhibitions were critical sources for observation for anatomists and naturalists as well as for the acquisition for bodies for mounting, dissection and preparation. Articulated skeletons like that of the elephant at the Royal Society Repository, and carefully crafted staged anatomical preparations, evince the significant epistemological status of models and preparations as representations of knowledge systems. The changing representation of exotic animals in this period is then also linked into disciplinary histories of natural history and anatomy. Chaplin's "museum oeconomy" of late eighteenth-century London, epitomised in Hunter's collection, saw anatomical collections amassed as a corporate identity forging exercise by surgeons and anatomists in an attempt to establish dissection as a valid episteme in late Georgian society. The exotic animals that arrived in Britain, in their afterlife, were absorbed into this "museum oeconomy" and anatomists over the long eighteenth-century began to constitute the bodies of animals in particular ways. The biographical life of the elephant in this chapter particularly traced the production and exhibition of knowledge and the dissemination of this by a variety of practitioners to their audiences.

The transformation in the nature of the elephant over the long eighteenth century reflected changes in the production of natural historical knowledge, as late seventeenth century anatomies and natural histories increasingly relied less on the authority of Renaissance and antiquarian authority in their work. Anatomists turned to the body of the elephant to produce knowledge about its character and physiology. Initially practitioners utilised earlier observational source and anecdotes about the elephant as an interpretative framework within which to make sense of the hitherto unseen. But by the late eighteenth century the wondrous qualities of the elephant had been relocated and envisioned as demonstrable in their internal structure and external organs, especially the eyes and the ear. Spectators, "the public", utilised popular natural histories or museum catalogues to inform their understanding of the animal, living or dead, that they were looking at — in books, menageries, museums, and anatomical collections — but they also clearly interpreted the bodies of these exotic animals within a much broader cultural frame of references, a sphere that foregrounded collections. These "framings" or "cultural species" of animals sometimes diverged substantially from the sort of knowledge that practitioners of natural history

and anatomy. This chapter explored the kangaroo and elephant as knowledge in transit between varied producers and receivers including anatomists, menagerie proprietors, spectators, naturalists, and readers of natural histories. Within the “museum oeconomy” and in broader Georgian culture exotic animals both conceptually and physically moved across sites, their bodies altered and re-constituted.



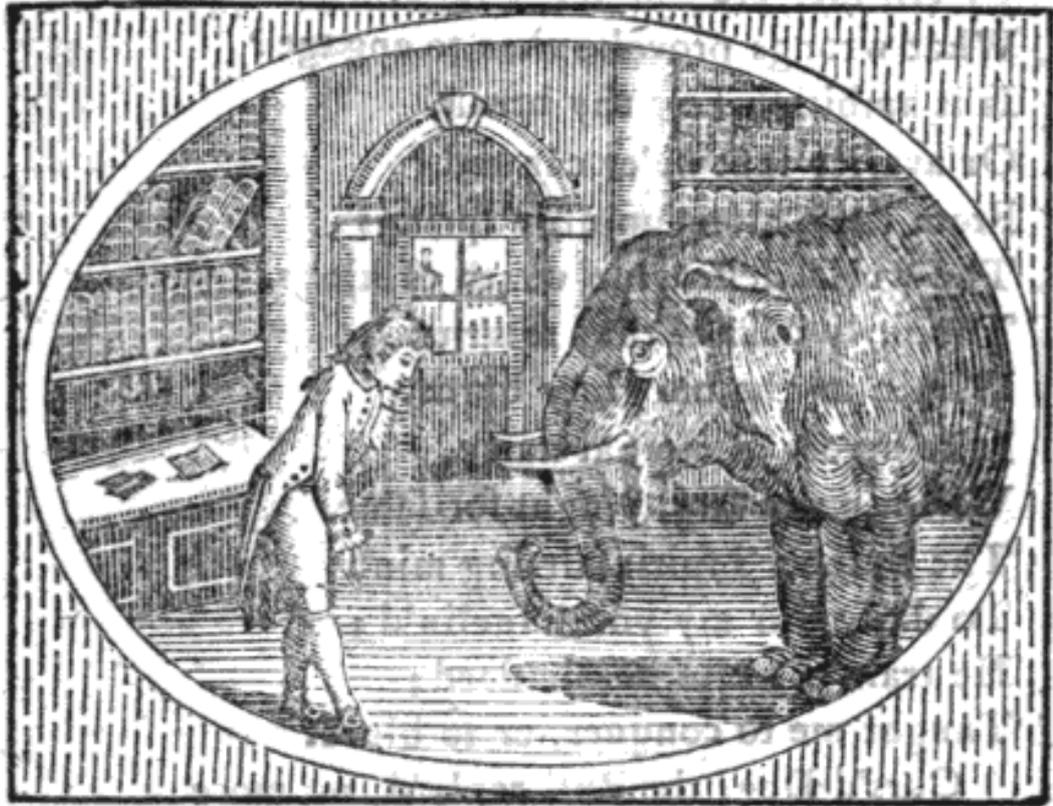
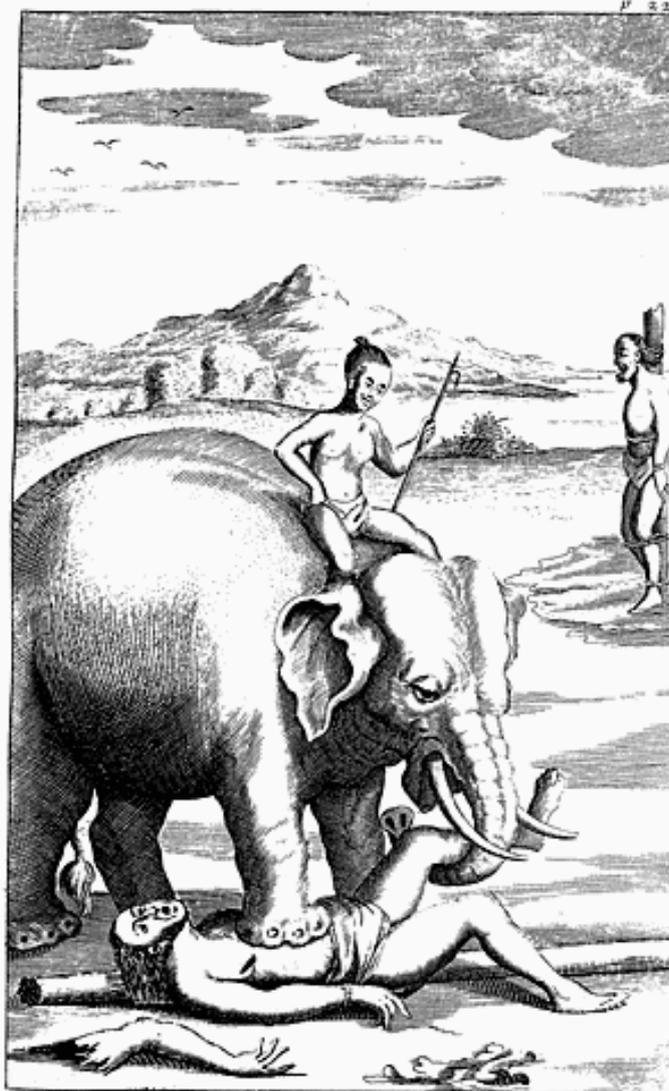


Plate.37 The Elephant and the Bookseller  
*Fables by the Late John Gay (1792)*  
Bodleian Library, University of Oxford



*An Execution by an Eliphant.*

Plate.38 "An Execution by an Eliphant"  
*An Historical Relation of the Island of Ceylon*  
Robert Knox (1681)



Plate.39 Broadside: "The Great White Elephant"

(Printed between 1702 and 1714)

Bodleian Library, University of Oxford



Plate.40 “Scene Exhibited at the Adelphi Theatre” in 1830.

*The Menageries: Quadrupeds described and drawn from living subjects*

James Rennie (1831)



Plate.41 Elephant

Moulded lead-glazed earthenware

Staffordshire (ca.1785-1800)

Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Plate.42 “Gum-Plant and Kangooroo of New Holland”

Watercolour drawing (1789)

George Raper (1769-1797), a naval officer in the First Fleet sent to establish a penal settlement.

Natural History Museum, London



Plate.43 "Macropus" RCSHC/3776

(A young male kangaroo towards the end of development)

Prepared by or for John Hunter between ca.1775 and 1790.

The Royal College of Surgeons of England, London



Plate.44 “Macropus elegans”

(Drawn and described from the living animal at the  
Exeter Change menagerie, London)

*Transactions of the Linnaean Society* (1807)

The Linnaean Society of London

## CONCLUSION

Fam'd Exeter 'Change is, alas! no more;  
Good bye to the Apes and all their Monkey tricks,  
With the Lion's and Tiger's melodious roar.<sup>1</sup>

When folks who were fond of wild beast breeding,  
To Exeter change went to see them all feeding;  
And on the first and second flooring,  
'Twas awful and grand to seem [sic] them eating and roaring.  
But Exeter Change has seen it's [sic] pride end,  
'Tis all pull'd down for the Strand to be widen'd;  
And Mr. Cross is only able  
To shew his beasts and birds in a stable.<sup>2</sup>

At the end of the long eighteenth century the place and meaning of exotic animals in Britain was demonstrably different to that at the beginning. The foundation of the Zoological Society in 1822 and the opening of the London Zoological Gardens in 1828 had profound implications for the menageries, collections and practices of natural history or zoology that have been the subject of this thesis. Menageries feature prominently in early nineteenth century print including Edward Bennett's *The Tower Menagerie: comprising the Natural history of those Animals contained in that Establishment* (1829), James Rennie's *The Menageries: quadrupeds described and drawn from living subjects* (1831), and Edward Bennett's *The Gardens and Menagerie of the Zoological Society Delineated: being descriptions and figures in*

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Hudson, "Comic Song," in *Comic Songs by Thomas Hudson: Collection the Thirteenth* (London: Hudson, 1832) p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Hudson, *Comic Songs by Thomas Hudson: Collection the Twelfth* (London: Hudson, 1831), p. 4.

*illustration of the natural history of the living animals in the society's collection* (1831). Replete with allegorical tales, anecdotes, biographies, and citations of exotic animals both living and dead in collections, these printed natural histories reflect many of the traditions of eighteenth century naturalists. But this proliferation of menageries in print was published alongside the closure of the Tower Menagerie and the Exeter 'Change Menagerie — and the opening of the London Zoological Gardens, a site that articulated new early nineteenth-century practices of natural history and zoology. In 1829, the Exeter 'Change Menagerie (founded in the 1770s) was closed with the animal occupants moved by the menagerist Edward Cross (1774-1854) to his new Surrey Zoological Gardens. Later, in 1834/1835, the last animals in the Tower Menagerie left the Tower of London upon the orders of the Duke of Wellington and joined the other animals that had earlier trickled into the collection of the London Zoological Society. The dispersal of the royal collection at the Tower and the donation of the private menagerie of William IV to the Zoological Society were partially financially motivated but also politically symbolic. The political symbolism of the menagerie and museum at the Jardin des Plantes in the French Revolution is particularly resonant here because captive animals became embedded in revolutionary discourses of *liberté*, and their “freedom” from the royal menagerie at Versailles resonated with the politically evocative storming of the Bastille by citizen sans-culottes. By the early nineteenth century, the Jardin had become a French state showcase for zoology, anatomy, and British commentators bemoaned the absence of an equivalent at home. The formation of the Zoological Society's museum, gardens, and menagerie were consciously modelled as a national collection to rival and possibly excel the Jardin.

In the late 1820s and early 1830s, the formation of the menagerie of the Zoological Society and the relocation of animals into it also coincided with a period of significant political instability and reform in Britain. The pressures of industrialisation, rising food prices and economic instability further motivated protest and revolutionary agitation alongside much broader demands for electoral reform. The zoological gardens that in the early 1830s emerged as an important part of civic provincial middle class life in cities like Dublin (1831), Liverpool (1832), Manchester (1836) and Edinburgh (1839) corresponded to the political assertions of the industrial provincial middle classes and their appeasement in the property

provisions required for enfranchisement in the Reform Act of 1832. In 1831, as a prominent Tory opposed to Whig reform, the Duke of Wellington had been the target of angry protestors who gathered outside Apsley House to break the windows. In Derby protestors stormed the city gaol, in Nottingham the Duke of Nottingham's residence was set ablaze, and protest simmered across vast tracts of the West Country and major industrial cities like London, Birmingham, and Manchester. The political crisis was heightened further in early May 1832 when protestors attempted to collapse the Bank of England by withdrawing private funds in gold. Against the revolutionary agitation, William IV donated his private menagerie to the Zoological Society in 1831, and as Warden of the Tower of London the Duke of Wellington began to remove the animals to the ownership of the Zoological Society; improving the fortification and military capacity of the Tower in their place. Royal captive animals had become a clear political and financial liability.

The London menagerie stalwarts of the eighteenth century closed and had their animals removed and new cultural institutions for the collection and display of exotic animal emerged. As such, it is clear that the late 1820s and 1830s saw the rise of collections that were substantially distinct from the menageries of the eighteenth century. This is, of course, not entirely as sharp a disjuncture as one might imagine; these *new* institutions often literally inherited both the animals and attitudes of earlier menagerie proprietors, patrons, and spectators. But in substantial ways early zoological gardens were quite different in the specific claims to utility they made. Significantly, an appraisal of both Rennie's and Bennett's natural histories articulates the perceptions a new generation of naturalists and zoologists held about the menageries of previous decades.

Rennie's *The Menageries* (1831) in a polemical argument for the "Uses of the Menagerie" defined a new national collection as a bold and necessary departure from the inadequate antecedents of the zoological garden:

For all popular purposes, the menageries offer much more interesting modes of studying some parts, and those the most important, of the animal kingdom, than the best museums [...] The value of menageries, not only for popular but for scientific study, depends, however, very much upon the arrangements which determine their

construction and regulation. The great object should be, as far as possible, to exhibit the animals in their natural state. It has been a favourite plan with many naturalists to establish a garden, in which the animal should find himself surrounded by his natural food -where the beaver should live amidst a rivulet and a bank of poplars, and the reindeer browse upon his native lichen. Great difficulties, of course, present themselves to the completion of such a project; and though its execution were compatible to any reasonable expense, the difficulty of adjusting the temperature of our climate to the plant and the animal would very considerable. Yet, in a *national* menagerie, much ought to be attempted, gradually but systematically, to realise such a desirable object as the exhibition of animals in their natural habits. If the cat tribe are pent up in close dens, what idea can be formed of the crouch and spring which characterise both their sport and their seizure of prey? [...] We can acquire no adequate notion of the kangaroo in a cage, but in a paddock its remarkable bound at once fixes our attention and curiosity. [...] To put such a creature in a den is to torture him, and to give false notions of his habits. If the sloth be placed in a menagerie, he should have a tree for his abode; and then we should find that he is neither habitually indolent nor constantly suffering. [...] The menagerie of the Zoological Society will doubtless become the national menagerie, and in the course of a few years it may rival that of Paris. Our opportunities for forming the finest collection in the world are unbounded; and the taste for natural history which distinguishes the public mind, in itself will create ample funds for its gratification.<sup>3</sup>

A properly arranged menagerie would satisfy not only popular purposes but also scientific study. A well ordered menagerie was, in many ways, also superior in its didactic functions to even the best of museums — but only if it was rendered useful. A national menagerie like the London Zoological Gardens would gradually and systematically work towards exhibiting animals in their *natural state* and as such would attempt to dispel ignorance — “the false notions of habits” — thus making animals in captivity suitable subjects for proper scientific study whilst assuaging animal suffering. Rennie employed two animals in his condemnation of menageries whose cultural biographies have been familiar throughout this thesis; the kangaroo and the elephant. In the case of the elephant Rennie dismissed the didactic possibility of menageries claiming that spectators had, in actuality, formed precious few “adequate notions” of elephants in captivity. He contrasted the different quality of knowledge about elephant habits formed by the exhibition of elephants in menageries, on the theatre stage, and in the Jardin des plantes;

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<sup>3</sup> Rennie, *The Menageries*, pp. 31-33.

Whatever interest we may feel in the sagacity which is already displayed by the elephants of our common English menageries, the wretched state of confinement in which so large an animal is kept prevents us from forming any adequate notions of many of its peculiarities. For this reason the most recent exhibition of the elephant in the theatre has contributed very much to remove some of the popular prejudices concerning the quadruped, and to induce correct ideas of its peculiar movements. We cannot, indeed, upon a stage, see the animal bound about as in a state of nature – roll with delight in the mud to produce a crust upon the body which should be impervious to its tormentors the flies – collect water in its trunk, to sprit over its parched skin – and browse upon the tall branches of trees which it reaches with its proboscis. We shall not see these peculiarities of its native condition, til we have a proper receptacle for the elephant in our national menagerie, the Zoological Gardens. Without imputing blame to those who exhibit the elephant in this country, there is great cruelty in shutting up in a miserable cage a creature who has such delight in liberty, and who is so obedient without being restrained.<sup>4</sup>

Rennie's elephant observations were apposite since as he wrote a new paddock was in construction at the London Zoological Gardens to house the elephant at the Tower Menagerie, and another acquired by the Zoological Society. Misconceptions about the elephant and the suffering inflicted upon it by captivity, so Rennie argued, would not be corrected until appropriate accommodations following the model of the Jardin were constructed, since here elephants enjoyed "a life of much happiness" in a large paddock with a pool. In August 1832, *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction* featured a description and engraving of the new "luxurious accommodation," detailing the rustic stable, iron fenced enclosure, within which were:

A few lime-trees, the lower branches of which are thinned by the Elephant repeatedly twisting off their foliage with his trunk, as adroitly as a gardener would gather fruit. His main luxury is, however, in his bath, which is a large pool or tank of water, of depth nearly equal to his height. In hot weather he enjoys his ablutions here with great gusto, exhibiting the liveliest tokens of satisfaction and delight. [...] His keeper had at first some difficulty in inducing him to enter the pond, but he now willingly takes to the

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<sup>4</sup> Rennie, *The Menageries*, p. 21.

water, and thereby exhibits himself in a point of view in which we have not hitherto been accustomed to view an elephant in this country.<sup>5</sup>

This changing exhibitionary context for the elephant clearly reflects much wider changes in practices of natural history, zoology in early nineteenth-century Britain but it also reflects a significant point in the cultural biography of the elephant. As a sapient and sentient animal, the elephant was increasingly understood as ill suited to menageries where it suffered cruelly, like the Exeter Change, closed in 1829. Instead, and perhaps of equal significance to spectators and zoology, the new zoological garden presented a new and diverting elephant spectacle allowing the exhibition of behaviours of natural historical veracity. Rennie's related claim for the kangaroo, that "we can claim no adequate notion of the kangaroo in a cage, but in a paddock its remarkable bound at once fix our attention and curiosity," also reflected a later material change in the context of display. In 1836 the *Dublin Penny Journal* printed a feature on the kangaroo, accompanied by an engraving of a kangaroo in a paddock observed by a gentleman spectator; no doubt, it was hoped, being instructed properly in the habits of the kangaroo. For zoologists, naturalists, and spectators the live animal collections of the previous century were unacceptable. Since these sorts of menageries were offensive to both scientific veracity and to spectator sensibilities, zoological gardens and older menageries were consciously constructed as practical and ideological opposites.

Although Rennie, a naturalist and professor of Zoology at Kings College London, discerned useful menageries as superior to even the best of museums the Zoological Society clearly perceived the society's collections of living and dead animals as closely affiliated. In this way, the London Zoological Gardens had something in common with the menageries, museums, and coffee houses of the eighteenth century that had displayed both living and dead animals within a single exhibitionary site. The introduction to the first delineation of the London Zoological Society's collection, written by Edward Bennett the Secretary of the Zoological Society, assured its readers that:

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<sup>5</sup> *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction*, 4 August, London, 1832.

The establishment of the Zoological Society forms an era in the history of the science in England as regards the higher departments of animated nature. In its Gardens and Museum our countrymen in general, whether previously attached to Zoology or indifferent to its allurements, have found incitement as well as opportunity to make themselves familiarly acquainted with the appearance and manners of a large proportion of the animal creation. To the most extensive assemblage of living Quadrupeds and Birds ever exhibited in this, perhaps in any other, country has been added the attraction of a delightful promenade; and fashion has combined with other and more legitimate stimulants to render the Menagerie as popular as it is instructive. The Museum too has had its full share in promoting the objects for which the Society was instituted, by affording to individuals of more expanded views the means of enlarging their knowledge of nature through a closer examination of her works. It cannot be a matter of surprise that under such circumstances there should have arisen in the public mind a taste for zoological pursuits, and a desire for correct zoological information.<sup>6</sup>

The society's museum at 33 Burton Street Mayfair and the menagerie at Regents Park were not merely related conceptually under the auspices of the Zoological Society. Instead animals living or dead circulated between the two collections, with the addition of specimens from private patrons and other menageries; like the taxidermy giraffe received in 1829 as a gift from George IV that had previously been kept alive in his menagerie at Windsor, or the live vulture received from the sale of the collection of the anatomist Joshua Brookes. This pattern or network of acquisition also resembled that of the eighteenth-century menageries and museums.<sup>7</sup>

The Zoological Society credited itself for the “taste in zoological pursuits” that had arisen in the “public mind” after the inauguration of the London Zoological Gardens. Of course, this cultural taste for zoological pursuits had much earlier origins in the eighteenth century but the practice of zoology recast the collection and display of animals in anew. Certainly, as has been demonstrated, a significant *public* or rather *publics* existed for exotic animals in eighteenth-century Britain — but the Zoological Society represented a new site for the production of knowledge by practitioners. As a

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<sup>6</sup> Bennett, *The Gardens and Menagerie of the Zoological Society Delineated*, p.v.

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed institutional history of the early years of the London Zoological Society's museum and menagerie, with details of animals received, see the beautifully illustrated antiquarian history by Henry Scherren, *The Zoological Society of London*.

national collection, albeit initially restricted to a limited *public* of members and the elite, the London Zoological Gardens was a showpiece for natural history and zoology in Britain. As a learned society the Zoological Society had more intimate affiliations (ownership, geographical proximity) with the living animals from which they produced knowledge. If animals represent knowledge in transit, in the early nineteenth century practitioners thought to secure greater control of that source of knowledge for the new discipline of zoology and its practitioners by establishing an integrated menagerie, museum and garden. The most prominent and vocal advocates of the *new* zoological gardens were, fittingly, two individuals with much invested in professional zoology; James Rennie was the first professor of zoology at Kings College London, and Edward Bennett, the Secretary of the Zoological Society between 1831 and 1836.

The zoological garden then whilst reflecting the preoccupations of British culture in the early nineteenth century was also a continuation of many of the principal concerns of the eighteenth century. The utility of menageries — their role in the naturalisation of species, or value to naturalists — had been a question of debate decades earlier. Similarly the suffering of exotic animals in captivity as a significant matter of sensibility had deeper historical roots than the decades preceding 1828. This notwithstanding, the elephant that exhibited the “liveliest tokens of satisfaction and delight” in his new pool at the London Zoological Gardens in 1832 was a quite different sort to the “strange and wonderful” elephant that arrived at Garraway’s Coffee House in London in 1675. The two elephants are representative of different “cultural species” of elephant, distinguished from each other by the changing spectacle and meaning of exotic animals both living and dead in Britain during the long eighteenth century.

This thesis has argued for a significant place for exotic animals in eighteenth-century British culture and structured the meanings they held under three broad categories; commodities, senses and sensibilities, and symbols. The fourth chapter has discussed both the anatomical and natural historical meanings for exotic animals, in addition the much broader processes of “anatomising” animals, or, producing and circulating knowledge about exotic animals. As commodities exotic animals were traded by animal merchants as well as in the form of cosmetic or ingredients by barbers, peruke

makers and apothecaries. As high status goods exotic animals were stolen, disputed in court, or protected in wills and insurance policies. Furthermore, the legal records of some animal merchants indicate that trade in exotic animals could be very profitable as well as reveal details pertaining to the material culture of the menagerists and their families. As a history of the growth of the trade in exotic animals, Chapter One, *Animal Commodities*, is a novel and significant contribution to studies of the British eighteenth-century as well as animal studies.

Historical and cultural categories of risk or endangerment have been shown to be a strong explanatory framework for thinking about encounters with exotic animals in eighteenth-century Britain. I have shown in Chapter Two, *Senses and Sensibilities*, how the legal tradition of the deodand did not assign blame to either proprietors or their animals provided that reasonable measures had been taken to confine them. The wills, insurance policies, annuities, and legal cases of the London menagerists and animal merchants attest to the calculation and domestication of risk in the eighteenth century — in this context the persistence of common menagerie accidents and tragedies is perhaps incongruous. But we have seen how other measures were made to domesticate wild exotic animals. Instead of shaping the character of their exhibits as fierce and dangerous, proprietors were more likely to emphasise the tractability or gentleness of their animals, the power of confinement to alter the nature of fierce beasts, and the relationship of dominion or affection that they had established with their animals. Cleanliness and the mitigation of olfactory offence also reassured spectators of the suitability of encounters with exotic animals. The odour of a buffalo could be a “fragrant perfume” or the breath of a camel “perfectly sweet.” A crocodile could be said to roam an apartment as “gentle as a lamb” and pythons too could be approached without timidity. The behaviour of spectators attests to a general sense of ease or confidence around exotic animals — even if some smelt of “frowsy” urine or might engender shivers of terror. Spectators would “tap” or beat some menagerie animals with canes or umbrellas. Others fed animals from their hands and were able to inspect the exhibits with strokes and pats. Some got close enough to lions to pluck a hair from their manes, sometimes with dreadful consequences. Georgian attitudes to endangerment and exotic animals were very different to those of the later nineteenth century. From the 1820s and 1830s zoological gardens were particularly concerned with disciplining the behaviours of their visitors. Teasing (or worse,

maiming) animals or squeezing hands through bars to get close to animals was the behaviour of the “ignorant” poor or the “ill-disciplined child,” this notwithstanding even the respectable patrons of the new London Zoological Gardens had to be reminded to refrain from poking animals with sticks or putting their limbs inside animal enclosures. The disciplined behaviour of spectators to zoological gardens is historically concomitant to similar overtures in museums and galleries.

The biography of the “Queen’s Ass” in Chapter Three, *Political Animals*, has articulated the degree to which exotic animals were present in cultural discourse in Georgian Britain. The zebra became a significant public representation of Queen Charlotte and her son George in satires that evince the symbolic potential of exotic animals. With George dressed as a striped “ass,” he looked like a spendthrift fool *and* unsuitable to rule. Queen Charlotte could even *be* her zebra, ridden by the Prime Minister, William Pitt. The “Queen’s Ass” was also a present in different sorts of humour; bawdy ballads and jokes that relied on humour predicated on the ludic qualities of the word “ass” and its pronunciation. The “Queen’s Ass” also appeared elsewhere in natural histories as a symbol of the limits of Enlightenment “Improvement” with her intractable nature, and the promise of eventual domestication. The zebra to elite Georgian spectators and readers familiar with printed satires, natural histories, and the zebra in menageries or museums would have understood the zebra as an animal with a diverse range of symbolic cultural meanings. This zebra biographical life and afterlife intersects with much broader claims about the symbolic value of exotic animals in eighteenth-century Britain. I have shown how menageries were understood to alter the behaviours, temperaments, and physical constitutions of the animals held within. Exotic animals assumed a significant symbolic status in a culture that had in the eighteenth-century forged strong conceptual relationships between climate and national character. “Happy Britain” was free from scourge of wild fierce beasts and benefited from a monarch who wielded his sceptre with benevolence as defender of freedom. The presence of exotic animals made discussion on climate and character visible and salient, with the Georgian state triumphant in an ability to choose foreign plants and animals for their own uses. Menageries like Pidcock’s were also representations of foreign climes considered too arid, torrid, or dull — and some of the animals within were trophies, symbolic of political ascendancy and order.

Chapter Four, *Anatomising Animals*, used practices of anatomy collection and anatomising in the eighteenth-century “museum oeconomy” as a framework for understanding how exotic animals were produced and circulated as “knowledge in transit”; how a variety of meanings including the natural historical and anatomical worked to create different “cultural species” of exotic animal, each particular to Georgian Britain and altering across time. The biographies of the elephant and the kangaroo demonstrate how natural historians and anatomists produced knowledge about these animals alongside other meanings, sites, and audiences. Moreover, especially in the instance of the elephant, the character of the elephant – both what an elephant was or meant, or indeed what it was to *be* an elephant — altered significantly across the eighteenth-century.

Sites for collecting and spectating exotic animals changed across the eighteenth-century and these are clearly related to economic and imperial expansion, as well as the rise of an urban culture of elite polite leisure. The late Georgian menageries the lined the Strand and Piccadilly had their roots in the bird shops of London in around 1700. The bird and animal shops of early eighteenth-century London were smaller than those that followed in the wake of the Seven Years War in the 1750s and 1760s. Indeed it was only after this date that animal merchants began to call themselves “menagerists” (or in the case of Joshua Brookes, “zoologist”) and their establishments “menageries.” The coffee houses of late seventeenth-century London had been sites for the exhibition of both living and dead exotic animals, sometimes alongside one another in a single exhibitionary space. This relationship between the living and the dead changed spatially in the eighteenth-century; as museums like the Leverian Museum or Bullock’s Museum exhibited specimens, and menageries living animals. Although spatially separated, these institutions were still intimately related in both a geographical and practical sense. Foreign visitors like Benjamin Silliman could expect to see “most of the principal animals” in London around 1800, and many of them alive. Indeed, the two prominent menageries he visited in the city were within minutes of each other; the Leverian Museum being a short carriage ride away. Later that decade Bullock’s Museum was located on Piccadilly, a short walk from Pidcock’s menagerie further up the Strand. Animals too moved between establishments, the exhibition catalogue for Bullock’s Museum listed many of the preserved animals as hailing from the menagerie at the Exeter Exchange or from

Brookes Menagerie. This general picture of an increased separation between dead and living exotic animals does need to be nuanced however; both the Leverian and Bullock's Museum occasionally exhibited live animals, and Pidcock displayed and insured the preserved animals at his menagerie. Furthermore elsewhere in eighteenth-century London consumers were aware of the often visible relationship between exotic animal as product and live animal, indeed this was often a relationship important to gauge authenticity and assign a high commodity value. Turtles could be selected by hand and purchased alive in the warehouses of Turtlemen or bear grease purchased from the barber, cut from the carcass into a pot.

In writing a cultural history of exotic animals in eighteenth-century Britain this thesis has made several historiographical contributions including a history of the animal merchants, the biographies of several animals (zebra, elephant, and kangaroo), as well as drawing attention to the importance of the senses and historically embodied experiences of exotic animals. Another contribution is a methodological one; the application of a biographical approach to exotic animals in an historical culture (here, Georgian Britain) that has involved conceiving of exotic animals as "cultural species" constituted across different sites as "knowledge in transit" between different practitioners and audiences. This approach rendered visible exotic animals in eighteenth-century Britain that had been hitherto ignored by historiography. Moreover this thesis has demonstrated how research in the humanities can be applied to understanding natural history collections or individual specimens within a collection. As an exploration of the historical meaning of exotic animals, with reference to extant specimens, I have suggested in this thesis that it is worthwhile to attempt to understand the historical charisma and changing character of exotic animals in human culture. To understand better the way in which these animals were culturally specific is to attempt to better understand past engagements with the animals, once living, that now spend their afterlives in museum collections - or indeed objects that were once held within museum collections in the past and are no longer extant.

Future research could extend significantly several areas developed in this thesis. Chapter One, "Animal Commodities," was a history of the animal merchants of London in the eighteenth century and it would be expected that large provincial cities

with ports and docks like Liverpool, Newcastle and Bristol had other networks of animal dealers in this period. The cultural history of London and the practical exigencies of archival organisation make a history of the capital's animal merchants more feasible than some regional projects. It is probable that localised studies of regional fire insurance registers, wills, and newsprint would produce sufficient evidence for a brisk trade in exotic animals outside London. The menageries and animal merchants on the Strand and Piccadilly represented the "high end" of the trade in exotic animals in London — and with many of them dispatching animals to the provincial cities and towns for exhibition and retail it is reasonable to suggest that archival research would not reveal animal dealers and exhibitors of a similar status outside of London. This notwithstanding small local bird and animal sellers (with premises and itinerant) are certain to have thrived on a degree of regional trade. At the end of the nineteenth century Liverpool had a thriving range of animal dealers including Cross's "Wild Beast Shop." These would have had antecedents in the eighteenth century.

Similarly, the familial history of the animal dealers and the persistence of specific families in the exotic animal trade would be a profitable avenue for further research. It has been established in this thesis, using archival materials, that certain families dominated the trade in exotic animal throughout the Georgian period and into the late nineteenth century. Economic or cultural historians interested in the production and protection of trade skills and financial assets through familial and professional circles could write a history of the animal dealers in the nineteenth century using this thesis as a historical starting point.



Plate.45 The two elephants in their new accommodations at the early London  
Zoological Gardens

*The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction*, London (4<sup>th</sup> August 1832)

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**Note: Sources that are either especially rare or known to be held in a single collection are listed in this bibliography with shelfmarks and other identifiers.**

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*Daily Courant*

*Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*

*Lloyd's Evening Post*

*Middlesex Journal or Chronicle of Liberty*

*Mist's Journal*

*Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser*

*Morning Post and Gazetteer*

*Observer*

*Oracle and Daily Advertiser*

*Parker's General Advertiser*  
*Postboy*  
*Public Advertiser*  
*St James's Chronicle*  
*Sunday Reformer and Universal Register*  
*The Examiner*  
*The Morning Chronicle*  
*The London Chronicle or Universal Evening Post*  
*The London Magazine or Gentleman's Intelligencer*  
*The London Packet*  
*The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction*  
*The Postman and Historical Account*  
*True Briton*  
*Tuesday's Journal*  
*Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post*  
*Woodfall's Register*

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*The Elephant's Speech to the Citizens and Countrymen of England.* London: 1675.

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*The King's Ass* (1762)

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*The Real Ass* (1762)

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*With a fool's head at the tail: the other side of the zebra* (1762)

*Zebra Rescued, or a Bridle for the Ass* (1762)

## **Legal and Insurance Documents**

Trial proceedings of the Old Bailey from the eighteenth century may be accessed online; *The Proceedings of the Old Bailey: London's Criminal Court, 1674 to 1913* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, 15 June 2009). The trials cited in this thesis are given the following identifiers:

13 April 1768, The trial of William Enoch (t17680413-54).

22 April 1789. The trial of Thomas Andrews (t17890422-41).

14th January 1807. The trial of Mazarine Bell (t18070114-100).

The probate records held at the Public Record Office (National Archives) are searchable online and are available in digital formats:

Joshua Brookes Prob. 11/1385 (Public Record Office, National Archives).

Edward Cross Prob. 1776 and 1777 11/1027 (Public Record Office, National Archives).

The policy registers of the Sun Insurance Company must be consulted at the London Metropolitan Archives or Guildhall Library since they do not exist in digital format. These have been partially indexed by occupation, address, or name but are best searched by policy number:

Joshua Brookes 20 February 1777 380450, Sun Insurance Policy Register MS11936 (London Metropolitan Archives/ Guildhall Library).

Edward Cross 15 July 1818 942859 and 30 August 1816 921657 Sun Insurance Policy Register MS11936 (London Metropolitan Archives/ Guildhall Library).

George Kendrick at 42 Piccadilly 816235, Sun Insurance Policy Register MS11936 (London Metropolitan Archives/ Guildhall Library).

Gilbert Pidcock 9 March 1803 730081, Sun Insurance Policy Register MS11936 (London Metropolitan Archives/ Guildhall Library).

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