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Imperial hunting show legends

By the mid-19th century the character of a safari hunter was appearing in menagerie cage acts in England. The hunter, holding a gun, chased lions, emulating hunters in colonial lands. The identity was associated with the military as the expansion of territorial control came to be represented by exotic animals shipped in increasing numbers to the zoos and menageries of imperial centres. This chapter outlines developments between the 1850s and the 1880s in cage acts, in travelling shows competitively claiming the greatest number of species on display, and in rapidly escalating menagerie spectacles that included pseudo state ceremonial occasions in the USA. The spectacle belied the violent methods of capture and of hunting as a type of war perpetuated on other species.

Biblical stories were supplanted as menagerie animals became trophies of adventures in foreign lands, and became popularised through biographical accounts of exotic wild nature. From 1870 the numbers of American menagerie businesses increased and, as competition intensified, enterprising showmen such as PT Barnum enhanced and embellished their menagerie exhibits with sanitised versions of safari sagas. During the 1880s hunting acts in menageries reinforced the genre of adventure fiction, particularly narratives about hunting sports that circulated in newspapers and books.

Menagerie hunters

The sport of hunting had long been a part of English country life and had featured in paintings and other representational art.¹ Similarly hunting trophies emblematic of social privilege were an accepted part of the interior design of stately mansions, and such displays in private homes were expanded with exotic wild animals, following opportunities to hunt in India and later in Africa. Public displays of hunting booty developed from the mid-19th century. Roualeyn Gordon Cumming was among the first British hunters to return from Africa and publish an account of his activities. In addition, he presented a public show of his trophies.² His 1850 book was subtitled ‘anecdotes of the chase of the lion, elephant, hippopotamus, giraffe, rhinoceros’, and Cumming admitted developing ‘a love of natural history and of sport’ early in his life.³ As a young man he joined the Fourth Madras Light Cavalry in India, where he ‘procured a great number of specimens of natural history’ for a large collection.⁴ He subsequently joined the Cape Riflemen in Africa before setting off to meet David Livingstone and become the first ‘civilized man’ to venture into parts of the African interior, collecting ‘hunting trophies and objects of interest in science’ that eventually weighed 30 tonnes.⁵ These were exhibited in the 1851 Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace and attracted considerable public attention. In a twist on menagerie hunting acts, Cumming exhibited himself as the ‘lion-slayer at home’ for an entry fee of one, two or three shillings.⁶ The authentic hunter was on show.

A menagerie act called ‘The Lion Hunt’ appeared in England by 1857, in which Martini Maccomo (Macomo) fired three pistols as he chased some fairly young animals around the cage, and his act was copied by others.⁷ The pistols fired blanks of wadding or paper. Maccomo was Arthur Williams, an ex-sailor from the West Indies.⁸

1 See Donald 2007.

2 Ritvo 1987, 249–250; MacKenzie 1988, 29. Sporting hunters took care to preserve trophies, see MacKenzie 1987a, 185; Ritvo 2002, 34.

3 Cumming 1850a, A2 (vii).

4 Cumming 1850a, A2 (vii).

5 Cumming 1850a, ix, 207; 1850b, 303.

6 Ritvo 1987 251, poster.

7 *Birmingham Daily Post* 1860, 31 July: 2.

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Apparently he approached William Manders at the Greenwich Fair and began working with the successful Manders' menagerie, billed as the first 'African Lion King'.⁹ He featured in a painting amid a group of big cats, dressed in a costume trimmed with leopard skin. Male and female performers might have commonly worn a piece of wild animal skin as part of the costume, but Maccomo later rejected his fake African identity with its costume of skins and feathers and, instead, wore a suit with a gold watch. Known for his sensible demeanour, Maccomo was proclaimed 'the most daring man among lions and tigers I ever saw' by another lion king.¹⁰ Once, Maccomo was wounded while trying to separate two fighting tigers using a whip. Despite a widespread assumption that he would be torn to pieces, Maccomo survived and died some time later from an illness, probably pneumonia.

The hunting act conveyed the impression of a chase and was considered more dangerous than the longstanding style of tamer-handling performance because of the element of provocation that was almost certainly necessary to make the lions move around the cage. Maccomo's hunting act was supposed to be done with younger lions, whereas regular taming acts were done with older lions who were habituated to the interaction. A hunting act involved the tamer brandishing a weapon while making a lion run around the cage:

It consists in chasing the lions about the cage, the performer being armed with a sword and pistols, and throwing into the mimic sport as much reality as possible. It will be obvious that this is a dangerous exhibition and it should never be attempted with any but young animals. For ordinary performances, most lion tamers prefer full-grown animals . . . [but a lion] will not suffer himself to be so driven and hustled about; and so it is the animals that are put through this performance are often changed.¹¹

The tone of the hunting act emphasised aggressive human dominance.

8 Turner 1995, 86. Mention is made of an African, Henry Porter, with Wombwell's. Also, *Manchester Times* 1884, Lion taming, 23 August: 5.

9 Speaight 1980, 82.

10 Cited in Frost 1875, 134.

11 *New York Clipper* 1872, Lions and lion tamers, 13 April: 12.

Manders' menagerie was among the 12 public menageries listed by Edward Bostock as operating in England, Scotland and Ireland during the 1860s, including his family's Bostock and Wombwell's from 1867.¹² He also briefly mentions that Wombwell's animals came from William Cross in Liverpool, and from William and Charles Jamrach in London, although Wombwell's later bought animals from Hagenbeck's in Hamburg, Germany.¹³ Other menageries probably had a similar process of buying from those dealers who acquired exotic animals from safari expeditions. At the same time hunting acts with horses and hounds, modelled on English hunts, and even chasing a stag prey also became common in the circus ring from the 1850s.

At Manders' menagerie, Massarti (or Maccarte) replaced Maccomo, and by 1872 was working there under the management of Manders' wife, Sarah.¹⁴ Sarah was reportedly also a 'lion queen', most likely some time before Maccomo was 'hired' in 1857, and after Wombwell's lion queens became famous about 1848. When William Manders died in 1871, it was Sarah who became the manager of the menagerie for four years, before their son assumed control. The business later failed.

Massarti was an Irishman, Thomas McCarthy, born in 1838, and he became the lion king with Bells and Myer circus in 1862 after working as a cage attendant, and joined Manders' menagerie in 1871. Ten years before, while working as an attendant before becoming a tamer, McCarthy's arm was so badly mauled that it needed to be amputated.¹⁵

There was a fatal attack involving McCarthy on 3 January 1872.¹⁶ A feature article about lion tamers claimed that, against advice, he turned his back on some lions during the more dangerous hunting act, which caused the accident leading to his death.¹⁷ An earlier report of the

12 Bostock 1972 [1927], 10. The menageries in England c. 1860 were operated by Thomas Stevens, John Day, John Simons, Whittington, William Sedgewick, Anderton and Rowland, Barnham, Chipperfield, Sargano Alicamoussa, and Sidney Braham. Edward started his first menagerie in 1883, opened a second when he took over the family menagerie in 1889, and a third from Barnham in 1892.

13 Bostock 1972 [1927], 11. Bostock also lists JD Hamlyn in London up to World War I and then was taken over by GB Chapman. For more detail on earlier traders, see Simons 2012.

14 Turner 1995, 86, 87–88. McCarthy may have also been spelt 'Macarte'.

15 *New York Clipper* 1872, Lions and lion tamers, 13 April: 12.

16 Turner 1995, 86.

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accident, however, said that he was undertaking the act at about 10.30 am with five lions, when one lion struck him with his paw. McCarthy struck back with a sword but fell down; another lion held him down with a paw on McCarthy's leg, tearing off his leopard skin costume while other lions attacked.¹⁸ He used a sword that he was holding to defend himself, and extracted himself from the cage after 10 minutes. The feature article claimed that he was chasing one lion from one end of the cage to the other when he was accidentally knocked down and, while he jumped up again and drove the lions into a corner, one crept forward and sprang at him, seizing him by the right hip.¹⁹ Initially the 500 spectators thought that this was part of the act until the other lions attacked him. Screams and confusion ensued, despite attempts by attendants to beat the lions off McCarthy from outside the cage. They sought to partition the cage and separate the lions into one section but the door was at the far end of the cage, making it difficult to reach him. The attack continued for a quarter of an hour. Finally irons were heated in a hurry and applied to the lions from outside the cage, allowing McCarthy to escape (or to be pulled out of the cage). Regardless of which version of the attack was more accurate, McCarthy had been fatally wounded.

In the same act, McCarthy also wore the older style costume of a Roman gladiator, and carried a sword with a short Greco-Roman-style blade; the costumes may have been varied to revitalise the act. John Turner's description of the attack included the additional information that McCarthy had exhibited a gorilla and a serpent before entering the lions' cage. McCarthy, distracted by one restless lion, slipped before another lion bit and held his armless shoulder. Turner's summary of the sequence of events suggests that McCarthy might have carried the scent of other animals into the lions' cage with him. Because it was a special performance, 'it had not been deemed necessary to prepare hot irons', which had saved McCarthy in the attack 10 years earlier when he lost his arm.²⁰ In the reports of this fatal attack, it becomes evident that iron rods were in common use for this type of act, and were regularly used as a defensive strategy, and therefore in the management of lions in 19th-century menageries.

17 *New York Clipper* 1872, Lions and lion tamers, 13 April: 12.

18 *New York Clipper* 1872, Circuses, 27 January: 339.

19 *New York Clipper* 1872, Lions and lion tamers, 13 April: 12.

20 *New York Clipper* 1872, Circuses, 27 January: 339.

The description of McCarthy's funeral highlighted the sensationalist appeal of the lion tamer and his act. His funeral apparently attracted a large crowd of several thousand who crowded into the chapel; the Catholic priest, Reverend Canon Carter, who was conducting the service, had to ask for silence, and for people to take off their hats. The Reverend expressed a hope during the service that 'in future persons would not be allowed to expose themselves to such danger'.²¹ An inquest ruled that it was death due to misadventure, but expressed disapproval of the 'reckless custom of so-called tamers performing in the dens'.²² Certainly a fatal attack reinforced ideas of the strength and aggression of the lion, and the risks to the tamer continued to be intermittently covered in newspapers.²³

The hunting act was thus a distinct and more dangerous offshoot of the tamer act. The hunt, however, could not simply be enacted by the human presenter: it had to be embodied by live animals enacting a chase sequence. Meanwhile, the details of the actual hunt were obscured and the violence and loss of animal life were camouflaged within the context of entertainment.

Unnatural violent capture

John MacKenzie defines hunting as 'the pursuit, driving, ambushing and trapping of wild animals of all species with the intention of killing them for meat, other animal products, or purely for sport'.²⁴ This definition focuses on hunting to obtain food or trophies, rather than for live capture and sale to zoos and menageries. But the methods of hunting for live capture were often indistinguishable, and animals were incidentally killed in the process. In all cases, hunting may appeal because of what Harriet Ritvo reiterates is the 'thrill of the chase'.²⁵

21 *New York Clipper* 1872, *Circuses*, 3 February: 347.

22 *New York Clipper* 1872, *Circuses*, 27 January: 339. There is a further report about an attack on a cage attendant at Manders.

23 *New York Clipper* 1872, *Circuses*, 10 February: 355; *New York Clipper* 1872, *Circuses*, 24 February: 371.

24 MacKenzie 1988, 2.

25 Ritvo 1987.

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The showman William Coup writes in the 19th century that

[t]here is something thrilling in the thought of the lives that had been lost, the sufferings and hardships endured, the perils encountered, and the vast sums of money expended in the capture and transportation of wild animals for the menageries, museums and zoological gardens.²⁶

He meant that the hunter's risk of dying, rather than the animals' deaths, added to the excitement of the adventure.

One hypothesis, now somewhat discredited, suggests that hunting was central to human evolution. Matt Cartmill summarises various versions of this hypothesis, including one that viewed humans as predators with weapons. He explains that hunting also involved 'estrangement from nature', and that the hunted animal needed to be free-living.²⁷ Cartmill defines hunting as a type of war game involving 'the deliberate, direct, violent killing of unrestrained wild animals', who are additionally defined as 'those that shun or attack human beings'.²⁸ He explains how hunting could be like a military campaign with strategies and subterfuge, and that both hunting and war use similar weapons. The hunting of animals was an extension of human war, a war against other species.

Live animals, like dead trophy specimens, were acquired using strategies of capture that were warlike. Ritvo explains that animal hunting provided a form of military training in most societies and that it became 'a prized requisite of colonial service in Africa and Asia', and imperialism was inherently aggressive.²⁹ The British Empire was forged over time from the endeavours of explorers and adventurers and organised traders, to the rule of officialdom and charter companies supported by the military in the colonies. There were corresponding stages in the acquisition of menagerie animals, with a shift from speculative captures by individual adventurers to business investment in animal acquisition.

26 Coup 1901, 20.

27 Cartmill 1993, 12, 13, 29.

28 Cartmill 1993, 30.

29 Ritvo 2002, 34. Hunting provided 'recreation, status symbol and para-military training', 33.

The interpretation of the ways in which European imperial powers took over human-occupied lands that were also traditional hunting grounds can be enlarged to encompass the ongoing exploitation of animals in their homelands and beyond.³⁰ In Australia, pastoralists went on a kangaroo hunt called 'coursing' that copied the fox hunt in England, down to horsemen wearing red jackets.³¹

David Lambert and Alan Lester explain that colonial networks were both implicit and explicit,³² as formal networks were ghosted by an unofficial opportunism that continued and proliferated after the 1850s. Opportunistic ventures included animal acquisition and, in the example of colonial trade, some of the traded commodities that passed through network hubs were alive. Animal trading developed from informal arrangements and ad hoc sales during the 1850s and 1860s, to formally hired personnel from the 1870s. The capture of live animals in particular involved both indigenous locals and Europeans in an extended hunting process, and the capture of a larger animal, such as an elephant, required financial resources and incentives.

Foundational myths of heroic encounters with large exotic animals in remote jungles were disseminated during the 1850s and 1860s, and adventure narratives were encapsulated by the activities of individual explorers who hunted for food and for bounty.³³ Some of the exotic animals in the shows during the 1850s might have been acquired from the Reiche business created by brothers Henry and Charles Reiche. Charles was a professional hunter and he made his first expedition through Panama in 1851. The German-based animal trade made the brothers wealthy and their New York office later supplied animals to most of the menageries in the USA, including that of PT Barnum. After the Reiche brothers died the Hagenbeck family business became the leading trader internationally.³⁴ European explorers and hunters went

30 MacKenzie 1990b, 2–3, see a summary of approaches.

31 'Spirited, Australia's Horse Story', National Museum of Australia, Canberra, retrieved on 28 August 2015 from <http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/spirited>.

32 Lambert & Lester 2006b, 7, 26–29.

33 For example, see Cumming 1850a, 89 '[w]e galloped about the plains, loading and firing for about six hours' chasing springbok and wildebeest'; 215, 'Cumming was chased by a rhinoceros'; 265, '[t]he appearance of the wild elephant is inconceivably majestic and imposing' in elephant homelands.

34 Rothfels 2002a.

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southwards from Europe into Africa, travelling the Nubian Desert on camels. Coup recounts that Paul Tuhe (probably Ruhe, who worked for the Reiches) described how mother animals fought hard to stop the capture of their young. But it was easier to capture lions, shooting them with rifles, even with the mothers defending their young, than it was to capture baby elephants. Tuhe (Ruhe) explains:

the old ones seem to know instinctively when we are after their young, and their rage is something terrible. The trumpeting of the parents can be heard a long distance and quickly alarms the whole herd. The rifle is comparatively useless.³⁵

The method used required distracting an elephant mother so that an African hunter could crawl up behind her and sever her hind leg tendons with a large knife. She would fall to the ground, at which time a hunter went close in to kill her and to collect her ivory and her baby.

Allowing for some embellishment in the retelling, Samuel Baker gives a comparable account of hunting elephants and other animals on horseback.³⁶ Baker confirms the presence of Johann Schmidt who brought back and traded Jumbo, and that a hunt first killed a mother by distracting her attention to allow hunters to immobilise her from behind. Paul Chambers notes that hunters of the Victorian era, such as Baker, considered that the ultimate achievement was shooting an elephant. Mid-19th-century descriptions of hunting expeditions give details of the capture of young animals and the killing of others. The promotion of animals in touring menageries, however, mostly avoided mention of the violence of capture.

Further, Coup quotes Tuhe (Ruhe) explaining, 'Of course we sometimes have a native or two killed in this kind of hunt; but they don't cost much – only five to six dollars apiece.'³⁷ Hunters and animals were expendable in the violence of the hunt. Human life was nearly always lost in the capture of baby hippopotamuses, because the mothers fought back strongly against boats in the water and against hunters on the land, and they proved difficult to kill. But the acquisition of

35 Coup 1901, 27, citing Paul Tuhe (Ruhe), see Davis 2002, 196, 284 note 14.

36 Chambers 2008, 12; Baker 1868, 369–70, Johann Schmidt joins Baker.

37 Coup 1901, 27, citing Paul Tuhe (Ruhe).

one hippopotamus could earn the same as six lions, and therefore the hunting fight was worth the greater risk and the loss of life.

Traditional hunting techniques were replaced with European methods and guns, and other hierarchies of value associated with hunted animals developed accordingly.³⁸ Although indigenous locals remained a vital part of hunting practices and for live capture, a distinction emerged in England and the British Empire between commercial hunters who supplied animal businesses, and sportsmen who were recognised as great hunters and could achieve social mobility.³⁹ The former usually brought back sufficient specimens to generate an income, albeit at the cost of human and other animal lives.

Hunting overlapped with geographical exploration and extensive newspaper coverage about the exploits of David Livingstone heightened public interest in explorers in England. The celebrity missionary worked in East Africa and became internationally known for his reports from there during the 1850s and 1860s. When his communications ceased during a search for the source of the Nile, public interest meant that an expedition by the Royal Geographical Society was mounted to find him in 1871. It was newspaper reporter Henry Morton Stanley who located him – in the now-famous encounter.⁴⁰ The dependency of European explorers like Livingstone and Stanley on indigenous locals revealed the ways in which such exploration narratives intersect with gender, race and class identities.⁴¹

Animal trophies added an extra dimension to exploration in new places. As MacKenzie points out, British and American notions of the frontier were interchangeable, and although ‘the exploitation of animals is everywhere in the imperial record’, and ‘the colonial frontier was also a hunting frontier’, hunting practices have been somewhat marginalised

38 MacKenzie 1987b, 172–73. Hunting as sport should be distinguished from other activities by indigenous Africans that might be called ‘sports’, see Blacking 1987, 3–22.

39 MacKenzie 1988, 38, names FC Selous, CH Stigand, Denis Lyell and Richard Meinertzhagen as gaining social mobility, and others, such as Sir Frederick Lugard, Sir Alfred Sharpe, Sir Robert Coryndon, Sir Frederick Jackson and Sir Geoffrey Archer, and Sir Harry Johnston, gaining political prestige.

40 MacKenzie 1988; Woollacott 2006, 66.

41 Woollacott 2006, 65, cites Mary Louise Pratt; 4, cites Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler.

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in historical studies of colonial empires until recently.⁴² But Daniel Herman argues that because of an absence of an associated class status in the USA, hunters were initially viewed as backwater rogues before hunting acquired heroic connotations and gradually evolved into a sport, aided by biographies of Daniel Boone.⁴³ The acquisition of animals also subsidised colonial expansion, and they symbolised the outer reach of the empire's frontier through embodied displays in zoos and menageries in imperial centres. MacKenzie notes that in 1858 the British Association for the Advancement of Science was made aware that the British Empire provided the most diverse collection of animal and plant specimens.⁴⁴ Colonial hunters, including military men, were encouraged to keep journals and game books in which they recorded numbers and body size. But as MacKenzie indicates about Cumming, the study of natural history could not be separated from colonial hunting as it, too, propounded an ethos of 'civilization and gentlemanly conduct'. Thus 'violence and cruelty had to be appropriated in order to control and tame' raw nature.⁴⁵ MacKenzie continues that paradoxes abounded: an ideal manly identity emerged from a conjunction of investigations of animal life through science and hunting that would 'preserve to be killed, kill to conserve'.

The wider scientific and philosophical investigation of nature included curiosity about animals, but by the 1860s this supported interpretations of what it meant to be human. Nancy Leys Stepan writes that by the mid-19th century '[t]he "human" (or humaine) became transformed through scientific investigation into "the human species" and its zoological variations'.⁴⁶ She explains that the objectivity of the natural sciences disguised power relations and this unfolded through the changing paradigm of '*nature* and *naturalization*'. The process of studying nature seemed neutral while producing an 'indifference to human concerns'.⁴⁷ It might be added, indifference to animal lives.

42 MacKenzie 1988, 50, 7; and important work on the ivory trade and wildlife conservation, 2.

43 Herman 2007, 47–71.

44 MacKenzie 1988, 37.

45 MacKenzie 1988, 26, also, 27–28, 43.

46 Stepan 2000, 66.

47 Stepan 2000, 69, citing Gyorgy Markus and Lorraine Daston.

Fighting nature

In his philosophical effort to re-position the human in a Dionysian wild nature, Friedrich Nietzsche also outlines a progression to super-human capacity that seems to endorse an additional species order, especially as he finds strength in militarism. Jennifer Ham points out, however, that Nietzsche animates various animals to speak ideas and actually resists a 19th-century tendency to separation with his recognition of animality in humans.⁴⁸ The separation of non-human species for scientific study meant that they became part of a supposedly neutral process of naturalisation. Whatever the justification for hunting, its violent impact was hidden in the ensuing cultural practices of trading, exhibiting and museum collecting and, above all, within scientific approaches to studying animals.

Trading nature

Adventurers brought animals back to Europe and the USA and readily sold them to zoos and menagerie businesses, so the origins of the animals were diffused through a growing trade. Nigel Rothfels' history of the Hagenbeck family trading business details the transition to organised expeditions that brought increasing numbers of exotic animals to Europe.⁴⁹ Hamburg was a major European port and, in the first half of the 19th century, animals were brought there by sailors, bought by intermediary dealers and traded on. Gustav Hagenbeck Senior was able to purchase seals in Hamburg in 1848. There were a number of levels in the animal trade even then. Hagenbeck's bought its first African animals from a European adventurer in the mid-1850s, and these included five lions, panthers, cheetahs, hyena, antelopes and monkeys, acquired mostly from the region of the Sudan.⁵⁰ After buying a larger shipment in 1864 than in the 1850s, Carl Hagenbeck

48 Ham 1997, 145–63.

49 For detailed accounts of the hundreds of animals traded in businesses in 19th-century Europe, see Rothfels 2002a; Simons 2012.

50 Rothfels 2002a, 49–50; Hagenbeck 1909, 7–8, 12; Hagenbeck 1956, intermediary traders included Gutschmidt, Breitweiser and Rath, and the painter of the animals of Hagenbeck Zoo was Heinrich Leutemann whose drawings were published from the 1860s in the magazine *Daheim*.

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contracted the adventurer Lorenzo Casanova in 1865 to supply the family business. In 1870, in Suez, Carl supervised loading Casanova's 60 cages of animals. As well as rhinoceroses, lions and panthers, there were tethered elephants, giraffes, antelopes, buffaloes, and free-roaming ostriches. In the latter part of the 19th century, Hagenbeck's gained pre-eminence in animal trading in Europe and supplied animals for other menageries and circuses and operated their own. The family business also presented an extensive zoo collection for public viewing. Hagenbeck's developed from a business buying from adventurous explorers into one that commissioned from designated agents, and eventually came to dominate the worldwide trade in exotic wild animals for entertainment.

In addition, Hagenbeck's supplied numerous private menageries and European royalty with animals. Carl was given the title of 'Court Supplier to the Emperor of Germany'; and the business also supplied the emperor of Austria-Hungary, the Russian tsar, the sultan of Morocco and the mikado of Japan.⁵¹ Carl became known as 'The King of Menagerie Owners', especially after his profile was enhanced by the English and American press. Although this suggested some curiosity on the part of the royals, exotic animals had become a necessary component in the display of state imperial authority.

Animal trading was found in diverse regions of the world, and animals could be acquired from a wide variety of sources including from indigenous traders. Lorenz Hagenbeck gave a detailed account of how Hagenbeck's was supplied by agents attending long-established animal trading fairs towards the closing decades of the 19th century. Hagenbeck's sent Breitweiser to purchase animals at an important animal fair held annually in Gorki (Lower Novgorod), trading animals found in the Russian empire including Russian marals or stags.⁵² Lorenz went to India c. 1902 to meet up with the Hagenbeck representative there, Jürgen Johannsen, and attended a big elephant fair with hundreds of elephants for sale in business deals held in conjunction with a religious festival at Sonpur. Some of those elephants were sold with several levels of ownership and purchase, and the sale involved debt. Up to the mid-20th century, Hagenbeck's had 48 men and one

51 Hagenbeck 1956, 16.

52 Hagenbeck 1956, 26–27, 39–40.

woman under contract to obtain animals on their behalf.⁵³ Senorita Erika Cook, from Mexico, was not a stereotypical hunter – she held a pilot's licence, carried a gun, and supplied flamingos and rattlesnakes. Lorenz claims she looked like a 'fashion model'.

Demand expanded with an increase in the size of major public menageries in Britain and the USA by the early 1870s. A tally of the species numbers that survived capture and transportation was difficult to establish. The species that eventually reached the British menagerie might be estimated from advertising, which was indicative of the scale of these businesses. When Wombwell's Royal Menagerie was put up for sale in 1872 by George Wombwell's nephew, Fairgrieve, the advertisement listed some of the animals, starting with a 'stud of black maned lions and lionesses';⁵⁴ indicating the lion's continuing pre-eminence. The sale took place in Edinburgh, from whence the animals could be easily shipped to anywhere in Europe. Animals that were part of special cage acts were highlighted in the advertisement as 'performing'; they included Bengal tigers, leopards, hyenas, wolves and two elephants, one of whom, Maharajah, was only eight years old (and therefore more manageable than older elephants) and proclaimed the cleverest elephant ever exhibited, able to be instructed by anyone, even a child. The measurements of the two elephants were given, a common practice throughout the 19th century. Most were bought by traders.

The capture of wild animals for the menagerie trade was done for profit, in keeping with values that sanctioned the conquest of nature and blurred distinctions between hunting and exhibiting. Public promotional strategies meant that wild animals became inseparably associated with the expansion of opportunities for safari hunting in Africa and Asia. Menagerie exhibition continued to enact dominance over animals, diverting attention from the financial imperatives that led to their slaughter or violent capture.

53 Hagenbeck 1956, 212–13.

54 *New York Clipper* 1872, 23 March: 408. There were also zebras, wolves, camels, dromedaries, polar bears, brown bears, Indian bears and spotted hyenas.

Showmen adventurers

In turn, showmen recognised that exotic animal shows sparked public interest in adventurous journeys to remote regions and some showmen undertook their own travels. Animal exhibition was fused with ideas of geography and foreign travel. It was touring menagerie promotion that inspired G Van Hare to undertake trips abroad, including to Africa to obtain animals. As a young man Van Hare had gone to every visiting menagerie, including Wombwell's, and his working life included being a performer, showman, adventurer, hunter and lion tamer. After a journey to Africa, Van Hare performed in an act with lions in Cuba, billed as 'Professor Van Hare, the African Traveller'.⁵⁵ During the 1850s and 1860s Van Hare presented shows in London and Europe that included affordable domesticated species and monkeys. After travelling and working in Spain, Van Hare seems to have been encouraged by financial problems to venture southwards and undertake an African expedition for several months to obtain animals. It was then that he acquired several gorillas.

Van Hare observed the catching of elephants without guns by indigenous Africans. The men scared the elephant into a tactically placed barrier of vines by crawling around on the ground. The elephant's frantic efforts to struggle free caused the vines to become more entangled, and the trapped elephant was eventually killed with spears. Van Hare noted the capture of seven elephants in one day.

Although he joined these hunting expeditions, Van Hare called himself a traveller rather than a hunter. It was possible that the hunter figure was not yet well established as a theatrical identity, even in the 1860s. Van Hare took over a lion act with five lions in Havana, Cuba, after the death of the English tamer, William Braithwaite, who had performed under the name Herr Jounklar. Van Hare recalled that the lion act received the greatest applause that he had witnessed, not to mention a sizable fee of four shillings and two pence from each spectator. He describes rushing into the cage, upon which 'the animals were at once struck with awe, and crouched into their usual corner'; he coaxed them to jump through a hoop by use

55 Van Hare 1893, also 154–69, 170–83, 218, about hunting in Africa.

of a whip.⁵⁶ He put them through this sequence each day for several weeks. Van Hare's act was in the older tamer style; it was unusual for the showman to be the adventurer, and so he could rely on the novelty of having visited Africa. But Van Hare, like a number of others, only presented his lion-taming act for a short time. When he left, he wished that they would have 'a kind master' since 'animals appreciate kindness more than human beings'.⁵⁷

In the USA, Barnum had, by 1851, used the circumstances of the safari hunt to promote his show with 10 elephants. Janet Davis points out that a poster bill for Barnum's Great Asiatic Caravan, Museum and Menagerie proclaimed how 'a drove of elephants was captured in the jungles of Central Ceylon, by Messrs Stebbins, June and George Nutter, accompanied by 160 natives'.⁵⁸ On this poster the explorers doubled as safari hunters and were billed like stars of the show, even though they were not present in it. Advertising the large numbers of indigenous people involved in the expedition promoted its importance. It was the elephants on show, however, who embodied the fantasy of a safari adventure for the public.

Barnum had first promoted displays of hunting with buffalo hunters using lassos in 1843, and he later promoted New York's first Wild West Show with Native Americans, which developed into a distinct genre.⁵⁹ During the 1840s, however, when Barnum was establishing his reputation as America's pre-eminent showman through his strategies for promotion, the main attractions at his New York American Museum were the chimerical half-monkey, half-fish Feejee Mermaid (a hoax) and the composite woolly horse, and these were being concurrently managed with the famous little person, General Tom Thumb (Charles Stratton). The museum's publicity was supported by constant promotion, placed in newspapers on Barnum's daily visits to editors and printing offices. The natural history component of Barnum's exhibition was less sensational than a large component of 'wonders', and AH Saxon writes that these might conceivably be termed

56 Van Hare 1893, 242, 243, the menagerie included two tigers, a bear and two jackals.

57 Van Hare 1893, 246.

58 Davis 2002, 196.

59 Werner 1923, 68–69, 71, 72.

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‘ethnographic’, consisting of humans exhibited for their physical difference.⁶⁰ Nearly every well-known performer of this type worked for Barnum, and Saxon points out that the menageries were more socially acceptable entertainment in the USA than the ‘wonders’ and humbugs that made Barnum’s reputation, although it was by managing the European singer Jenny Lind that he first became wealthy. While Barnum relied on other adventurers for animal acquisition, he also travelled to Europe to develop and to promote his acts, and he toured his shows to Britain.⁶¹

Travelling menageries were directly connected to permanent zoos and travelling circuses through the exchange of animals and the way all three were attributed the capacity to provide an education on foreign geography. Biblical associations, however, helped to provide an imprimatur for American menageries to make them acceptable and therefore viable. In the 1850s in the USA, exotic animals were still mainly acquired from ship captains and crew, and individual animal exhibits could be profitable. Barnum’s expansion of his menagerie reflected increased diversification in sources. In 1861 ‘two living whales’ in a large tank had top billing at Barnum’s American Museum, above the ‘man monkey, Madagascar albinos, pure white negroes, or moors, seal lion, and the mammoth bear, Sampson.’⁶² When the whales died, Barnum found another use for the tank and advertised the ‘first and only real hippopotamus’, ‘the Great Behemoth of the Scriptures’, from the Book of Job, ‘the marvel of the animal kingdom’ as ‘frightful antagonists’, capable of overcoming attack.⁶³ The description explained how the hippopotamus lived in and out of water and floated invisibly under the surface.

Barnum had been buying animals from the Hagenbeck business for several years by the time he visited Germany in 1873 and met Carl Hagenbeck.⁶⁴ At that time Hagenbeck’s was supplying animals to menageries accompanying German circuses including, in one example, two giraffes for a Queen of Sheba pageant at Renz’s circus.⁶⁵ In 1873 Barnum was planning a grand New York hippodrome and Carl gave

61 Speaight 1980; Assael 2012, American circus in Britain.

62 Werner 1923, 246–47, bill reproduced (original in capitals).

63 Werner 1923, 248–49, bill reproduced (original in capitals), Job XI, 15–24.

64 Saxon 1989, 246.

Barnum advice about the animals Barnum was buying from Hagenbeck's for US\$15,000. Barnum made notes about elephant races in India, and Carl's suggestion that an ostrich might make a feasible riding steed for races. Barnum's later shows would have elephant races and his semi-fictional adventure stories included ostrich riding. It was the prominence of elephants in increasing numbers, however, that made them the animal show travellers of distinction in the USA, and supported Barnum's expanding entertainment empire.

Elephant travelogues

Small travelling menageries date from 1813 in North America and sometimes there were several animals in cages on wagons travelling with circuses. American menagerie showmen formed a Zoological Institute as early as 1835 to integrate all existing menageries, but it was abolished by 1837.⁶⁶ In the mid-19th century in North America, big cats were usually viewed in their cages, but circus ring parades did periodically include camels, bears and one rhinoceros by 1857, and by 1859 also included lions and a leopard. However it was individual elephants from Asia that took centre place in these walking displays.

The popularity of elephants in the USA can be traced back to Old Bet, although it was the legendary Jumbo that Barnum promoted in the 1880s who later became inseparable from public perceptions of the elephant (see Chapter 4). An elephant arrived in 1796, but it was Old Bet, acquired in London, who became a profitable exhibition from about 1805 in the eastern states of the USA.⁶⁷ She was shot to death in controversial circumstances that were publicised as a dispute about ownership, and her skeleton was exhibited from 1816. An elephant appeared in an American circus from 1833 and was without

65 Hagenbeck 1956, 18. Rothfels 2002a, 47, Carl had initially purchased animals from the Christian Renz travelling menagerie in 1862 and resold the lion, wolf, jaguar and panther for a profit.

66 Thayer 2005, 130–32. This was in contrast to permanent menageries, such as New York's menagerie in the Bowery. Also, see Flint 1996, 98.

67 See Flint 1996, 98; Durant & Durant 1957, 25; Culhane 1990, 14–16; Kreger 2008, 185–203; Nance 2013, 15–38; Nance 2012, 233–49.

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competition until 1848 when others began to appear including Romeo, Abdullah and Lallah Rookh.⁶⁸ Elephants were known to keepers by name and they were walked along roads beside the menagerie wagons or in advance of them in the early hours. They continued to be walked between performance sites in 19th-century shows without train transportation.

Lallah Rookh was very cooperative and was trained to walk a thick rope in 1856, probably by Charles Noyes.⁶⁹ The name Lallah Rookh was derived from an 1817 poem by Thomas Moore about an Indian princess, Lalla-Rookh, destined for marriage to a foreign prince. The poem was adapted as a pantomime that had a lion tamer character who was an Englishman, Lionall; with the help of the lions he saved Lallah's romantic interest, Pinion, from the Tartars.⁷⁰

Elephants could be considered uncooperative, although at that time their scarcity meant they could not be easily replaced. Romeo stood 11 feet 2½ inches (more than 3.4 m) in height and had lost an eye. He was acquired in about 1847 from a brickyard in Calcutta, where he had been used to grind clay, and was reportedly bought for US\$10,000.⁷¹ But he attacked his keepers, possibly fatally: Long John in 1852, and Frenchy in 1855. Romeo was soon known as a 'bad elephant', as was Chief.⁷² In 1860 Stuart (also Stewart) Craven was called in to manage Romeo. Craven secured ropes around the animal and subdued him with shotgun pellets.⁷³ Forepaugh's circus acquired Romeo in 1863 for US\$25,000 and Romeo was still there when he died a decade later, worth at least twice that amount.⁷⁴

68 Thayer 2005, 130–31. Allen & Kelley 1941, 69. Later elephant arrivals were also called Hannibal, Bolivar, Columbus, Virginius, Mogul, Siam and Pizarro.

69 Thayer 2005, 131; Slout 1998, 222–23. Slout also has a brief entry on John Carter as an elephant performer and trainer of Lallah Rookh.

70 *New York Clipper* 1872, To Lalla Rookh, 30 March: 414. The identification of a menagerie elephant as the poem's heroine predated the staging of the full drama in 1872 in the USA.

71 *New York Clipper* 1872, Circuses, 15 June: 87.

72 Allen & Kelley 1941, 71.

73 Conklin 1921, 114.

74 *New York Clipper* 1872, Circuses, 15 June: 87. Forepaugh bought Romeo from Mable's menagerie.

A circus that could afford an elephant for the menagerie might also walk him or her around the circus ring, but those elephants did not initially perform tricks. Craven, the first elephant tamer in the USA, first presented a group of elephants for the Van Amburgh menagerie in 1853, and worked with a number of touring shows until the 1880s. Craven developed a troupe for Forepaugh's, although there was a dispute over payment that Craven resolved by bringing along a lawyer and witnesses.⁷⁵ Craven, a tall, slim man, learnt to ride standing up on an elephant, and even standing on one leg. These were unique feats in the mid-19th-century American circus. The elephants were being used in the same way that horses were used as steeds for the display of human acrobatic skills and were not yet trained to do physical tricks. Craven also stood on the elephant Tippto Saib, juggling and doing a backflip from the animal's tusk.⁷⁶ Later Craven taught a group of 12 elephants to form a pyramid and move in unison. As the numbers of elephants increased, their value depended on their cooperative passivity and what they could do. The transition to small groups of trained elephants executing clever feats regularly in the circus ring happened from the 1870s and 1880s.

While George or Adam Forepaugh presented some of the elephants in the circus ring, they had been trained by Craven, and his pupil, the legendary Ephraim Thompson.⁷⁷ Thompson, a tall and muscular African-American performer, was in demand internationally during the 1880s and 1890s. He rode an elephant like a horse, impressive in his evening dress with diamond shirt studs. His act included four elephants playing skittles, walking a rope and playing instruments; one was ejected from a chair, and together they enacted a pantomime depicting a rescue from a house fire. Despite their size, elephants can be dexterous and fast-moving and there was a group of elephants trained by Thompson in a 'Musical Prodigy Elephants' act; it went on tour in the USA for a number of years with a presenter called Rossi. Using their trunks, the elephants played the chimes and moved the bellows of an organ with their feet. Thompson was working

⁷⁵ Conklin 1921, 112, 114.

⁷⁶ Slout 1998, 65.

⁷⁷ Slout 1998, 301; Kober 1931, 46–47; Allen & Kelley 1941, 50, citing Sturtevant about notable trainers.

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for Hagenbeck's as they established a circus in Hamburg after 1887, and his major competitors were the Lockhart family act and Miss M'hamedin's act with two elephants.⁷⁸

In the USA from the mid-19th century, a single elephant or small groups of them might appear in the circus parade through the main street of a town and then in the ring parade; they were also lined up in human acrobatic vaulting or leaping acts in which the acrobat leapt over assembled animals.⁷⁹ By the late 19th century some elephants had been taught physical feats to present in performance, while behind the scenes they were deployed to do loading and lifting offstage as the menagerie travelled between locations. Their versatility made them very important to the travelling menagerie and to the circus. Charles Fox and Tom Parkinson write:

Then elephants made the march – the grand free street parade at noon. Next it was time for the afternoon performance in which elephants were dressed in spangled blankets for the spec [spectacle] and later walked back for the featured elephant display.⁸⁰

Elephant travellers of distinction became the stars of American animal entertainment.

American circus menageries

During the 1870s in the USA, a travelling menagerie with a circus and/or a museum or sideshow, each operating out of a separate tent, became commonly known as a 'combined travelling show', and it was promoted by the number of menagerie cages.⁸¹ This was a far larger enterprise than the menagerie or regular tenting circus of previous decades that had a single tent presenting equestrian acts, acrobats and

78 Hagenbeck 1956, 18; Kober 1931, 47.

79 For example, see the Barnum and Bailey Program 1891, 37: Display No. 1. Leaping, vaulting somersaulting over elephants (Billy Rose Collection, Performing Arts Library, New York Public Library).

80 Fox & Parkinson 1969, republished posters, 275.

81 *New York Clipper* 1872, The tenting season, 13 April: 12.

clowns. Smaller circuses continued to visit small towns and co-existed with the increasingly larger combined enterprises that required a more populated centre to be profitable. A larger show might also travel by rail between larger centres.

As Stuart Thayer explains about American circuses, however, even side by side the menagerie and the circus were usually separate shows, and this was not always made clear to the public. He writes, 'A circus and menagerie title did not guarantee a ring appearance by the animals', and there was ambiguity when menageries claimed also to be circuses.⁸² He found that the archival sources about these wild animals, which are mainly advertisements, did not make clear whether a caged animal was only displayed in a menagerie sideshow or whether a menagerie cage was also wheeled into the ring. It was a minority of menagerie animals that were paraded, with the rest viewed in cages or in the confinement of stalls and other areas. It can be presumed that most menageries remained separate tent shows with a distinctive history for much of the 19th century. One entry fee for everything was only instituted towards the end of that century. But a menagerie travelling with a circus could become the dominant business.

There was growing competition among menagerie owners as those businesses generated more opportunities and expanded from 1870. Barnum entered into business partnership with William Coup and Dan Castello in 1871, to open 'P.T. Barnum's Museum, Menagerie and Circus', exhibiting exotic animals and humans with Barnum-hyped wonders.⁸³ When their mammoth show opened on 10 April 1871 in Brooklyn, New York, the lead attractions were the so-named Fijian cannibal family and a giraffe, since the high mortality rate of giraffes meant that other showmen had stopped importing them.⁸⁴ But it was Coup's advance publicity that became important for the 1872 tour. Barnum's tendency to buy expensive animals and to make other business gambles caused his more cautious partners considerable anxiety about how the box office takings would cover costs. The partnership had developed a railroad show by 1872 with their Great Traveling

82 Thayer 2005, 132; Thayer 2006, 10–16.

83 Saxon 1989, 238. The name of a show did vary in the advertising.

84 Werner 1923, 309–10; Saxon 1989, 240. See Dennett 1997.

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World's Fair, which included animal stock cars among the rail cars, with partitions and troughs for feeding the animals.⁸⁵

In 1872 there were at least 20 big shows in the USA that had both menagerie and circus, and some additionally had museums. The number of menagerie cages was nominated as the distinguishing feature of those combined shows. For example, as well as the number of employees, menageries were listed as having: PT Barnum's, 20 menagerie cages; Sells Brothers, 13 cages; WW Cole's, 20 cages; Adam Forepaugh's, 32 cages, with three new cages; John O'Brien's, 30 cages; and Kleckner and Conklin Brothers, eight cages.⁸⁶ 'Howe's Grand London Circus and Sanger's English Menagerie of Trained Animals' did not specify the number of cages, and there were also four larger circuses touring that were circus-only ventures. The 'Van Amburgh & Co., Great Golden Menagerie', however, remained a menagerie with 26 cages and promoted a large number of new arrivals in 1872 as competition escalated.⁸⁷

There was clearly a commercial benefit to the menagerie business in promoting its size through the number of animal cages, even though other animals were kept in stalls. Competition for audiences drove this strategy. The number of tents also became significant, with one show advertising 12 tents and 41 'dens' and a two-mile-long (3.2 km) parade

85 Davis 2002, 20.

86 *New York Clipper* 1872, The tenting season, 13 April: 12. The full titles of these shows were: 'P.T. Barnum's Great Traveling Museum, Menagerie, Caravan and Hippodrome Combined with Dan Castello's Circus'; 'Sells Brothers Mammoth Quadruple Alliance Museum, Menagerie, Caravan and Circus'; 'W.W. Cole's Colossal Museum, Hippodrome and Menagerie'; 'Adam Forepaugh's Grand Menagerie, Museum, Caravan and Equestrian Aggregation'; 'John O'Brien's Consolidated Shows' and 'Kleckner and Conklin Brothers Monster Menagerie and Circus'.

87 *New York Clipper* 1872, The tenting season, 13 April: 12. *New York Clipper* 1872, 18 May: 55. A report on OJ Ferguson, who was buying animals for Van Amburgh's in Europe, listed: 'one two-horned rhinoceros, a giraffe, black tigers, one adday [sic], one dano and one Sardinian mouflin [sheep] antelope, the three latter being new to America, a pair of black African ostriches, Royal Bengal tigers, king vultures, a maribou stork, a young anodad [aoudad], an adjutant [stork], ibex, crossoptillon [pheasant] gold, silver and Bohemian pheasants, hyenas, wombats [wombats], ocelots, a nyllghau, porcupines and many rare birds and monkeys'.

in 1873.⁸⁸ The financial investment to mount a 20- to 25-cage show after 1872 also necessitated significant returns. While noting that the circus was competing with political events and a presidential election for public attention, a newspaper commentary explained that investment in shows had gone up that year.⁸⁹ Shows usually paid a separate licence fee for the menagerie and the circus at each location. For example, in a small town in 1872, those fees might be US\$50 for the circus, US\$25 for the menagerie and US\$5 per sideshow; the total annual revenue from licences in one state could reach US\$75,000.⁹⁰ When one show reduced the admission fee to 25 cents for adults and 15 cents for children, the other show managers argued that this entry fee could not cover costs of licences, advertising, accommodation and 'hay, oats, and raw meat for the animals' to 'yield anything like a remunerative profit to the management for the labour and capital invested'.⁹¹

It should be pointed out that the practical competency and loyalty of the animal keepers became an important part of animal survival in the larger shows, and therefore was critical to menagerie profitability.⁹² Knowledgeable menagerie managers became a crucial component of viable shows from the 1870s, but there still did not seem to be much concern about the animals' living conditions while held in cages for years, although CG Sturtevant notes that some animals suffered from a condition called 'cage paralysis'. This condition was seemingly more evident in animals living in zoos, because animals in travelling menageries that were transported in cages had to use their muscles to maintain balance, and would leap up at sudden noises and jolts. This may have been one incidental benefit of travelling in a menagerie.

88 *New York Clipper* 1873, 8 March: 392, The Great Eastern Menagerie, Museum and Aviary Circus.

89 *New York Clipper* 1872, The tenting season, 13 April: 12.

90 *New York Clipper* 1872, Circuses, 29 June: 103. This was the licence fees at Poughkeepsie. *New York Clipper* 1873, Circuses, 1 February: 351.

91 *New York Clipper* 1872, Circuses, 13 April: 15.

92 Sturtevant 1925, 76. Circus historian Sturtevant lists 23 'outstanding' menagerie superintendents in the USA working in the 50 years before 1925 and 17 elephant superintendents.

Species contests

A pre-show parade through the streets of an American town, featuring wagons (known as 'cars') containing major attractions, advertised the arrival of the circus and menagerie. The wagon cages were increasingly elaborately decorated as the parade evolved into a distinctive spectacle in its own right.⁹³ Some decorated wagons had themes, or even presented a free glimpse of the performers, including the lion tamers, who would later perform in the menagerie tent. The menagerie itself was rapidly increasing in size. In 1872 Barnum's menagerie included a baby elephant, a giraffe, camels, dromedaries, zebras, lions, tigers, hyenas, rhinoceroses, leopards, eland, a large white bear, grizzly bears, a panther, sea lions, a kangaroo, a tapir, crocodiles and other reptiles.⁹⁴ The range of animals seemed typical of an American menagerie collection by the early 1870s, although a large show, such as Forepaugh's, advertised some additional species.

While the menageries tried to outdo each other on size and on the variety of species, elephants and lion cage acts were common elements. Elephants were given names inspired by legendary identities, the lion tamer act accorded a high profile. For example, Sells Brothers had an elephant called Julius Caesar, and the lion tamer, Robert Elwood, appeared in the parade before the show, although Mademoiselle Amelia was also billed entering the lion cage, but most probably only appeared once in the menagerie tent show. Adam Forepaugh's had George Forepaugh as a performer with the elephants, Herr Alexander Darius as a performer with other animals, and H[J] Childers as a lecturer.⁹⁵ Forepaugh's show had four tents that would become crowded. The first contained automaton curiosities, including mechanical bellringers, and the second and third tents were the menagerie, and the fourth was the circus.⁹⁶ Only WW Cole promoted

93 Fox & Parkinson 1969, 174–87, 143, 150, 207 (posters).

94 *New York Clipper* 1872, The tenting season, 13 April: 12. For example: Sells billed monkeys, anteaters and Australian birds; WW Cole's billed sacred cattle, llamas, ibex, jaguars and emus; and Adam Forepaugh's billed two rhinoceroses, four sea lions, a white caribou, sulphur-crested cockatoos, and an orangutan. *New York Clipper* 1872, 6 July: 111, John Robinson's Combination Circus featured sea lions.

95 *New York Clipper* 1872, 13 April: 12.

a different lead attraction, in 1872 billing the 16 musicians in the band as wearing Prussian uniforms. The JE Warner & Co.'s 'Great Pacific Museum, Menagerie and Circus' had AJ Forepaugh as the lion tamer and, for the parade, the aerialist, Leona Dare, was positioned in a tableau on a wagon roof with a Bengal tiger,⁹⁷ presumably below her inside the cage. Van Amburgh's promoted Professor C White as the lion tamer, but the car with an Egyptian theme had a live lion on the rooftop. White had survived an attack in 1872,⁹⁸ but there had been a fatal accident at O'Brien's that year during a rehearsal by the new lion tamer, Joseph (Joe) Whittle (see Chapter 5).

The threat of fire remained a major business risk in menageries with restrained or caged animals. On 24 December 1872 a fire started by a furnace at Barnum's circus, museum and menagerie spread and killed the animals in cages because the keepers did not have keys, and only the three elephants could be rescued.⁹⁹ The loss due to the menagerie fire, and Coup's sale of his share of the menagerie and the Madison Square Gardens enterprise to Barnum, provided him with an opportunity to increase the scale of the spectacle. He would outdo his competitors once again.

In 1873, as well as purchasing new animals, Barnum asked that George Sanger provide him with duplicates of the costumes worn in the Sanger's Congress of Nations in London (see Chapter 2), which he had seen, and he paid US\$165,000 for the costumes, armour and chariots.¹⁰⁰ Saxon writes that these made up a substantial portion of 1000 historically accurate costumes to represent the 'Kings, Queens, Emperors and other potentates of the civilized world'.¹⁰¹ While the replacement building in New York at Madison Square Gardens could seat 8000 for the

96 *New York Clipper* 1872, 13 April: 15.

97 *New York Clipper* 1872, 13 April: 12.

98 *New York Clipper* 1872, Circuses, 1 June: 71.

99 *New York Clipper* 1873, Burning of Barnum's circus, museum and menagerie, 4 January: 316. The animals in the menagerie were reported as: '[t]wo lions, two Bengal Tigers, a leopard, Rocky mountain sheep, an albino deer, an African wart hog [sic], a llama, a yak, an élan, two ostriches, five snakes, four giraffes (which were probably the most valuable part of the collection, being the only ones in America)'. There were also monkeys, a porcupine, a badger, two sea lions, two polar bears, a horned horse, four deer, two seals and 10 camels.

100 Werner 1923, 315; Saxon 1989, 248.

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hippodrome show in August 1874, Barnum described having a large tent made for touring – approximately 880 feet long and 400 wide – to create a hippodrome that would seat 11,000 spectators twice a day.¹⁰² There were 1200 people involved with the show, 750 horses, and the show cost US\$50,000 to transport from New York to Boston. Although the touring hippodrome show did not include the full menagerie, it did include the larger exotic animals such as elephants, camels, ostriches and giraffes, who were presented in processions. Some were put in races – possibly influenced by Barnum’s discussion with Carl Hagenbeck. Barnum and his team greatly enlarged the scale of indoor menagerie spectacles in combination with imitation state ceremonies (Plate 5).

The 1875 hippodrome program was even more extensive, with Chinese warriors and Tartar soldiers in supporting roles to the performers playing their respective royal rulers in an overwhelmingly large orientalist spectacle.¹⁰³ Armies of soldiers enhanced the spectacle of royals, and exotic animals were amalgamated into a military parade through time and across geographies. There were Roman chariot races

101 Cited in Saxon 1989, 248. Saxon lists how they represented: Britain, France, ancient Rome, Germany, Turkey, Italy, Egypt, Russia, Ireland, Spain, China, India and the USA.

102 Saxon 1983, 189 (162) to Samuel L Clemens.

103 ‘P.T. Barnum’s Great Roman Hippodrome Bill of the Performance for the week ending Jan. 2nd, 1875’ (John and Mable Ringling Museum, Archive). The opening spectacle was: ‘Fete at Peking. Holiday of the Celestials. Grand Reception of the Emperor Haamti, A.D. 1690 seated in a Royal Palaquin, borne by Mandarins of the first class, followed by a grand procession of the Tartar Cavalry, Mongol, Manichou and Kathaian Soldiery ... Warriors of the Yantse, with the emblems of the Celestial Empire, The Winged Dragon.’ ‘Feats of the Agility and Ledgerdemain by Mons. Aymar, Le Petit Eugene, Ling Leek, Yamadiva, Satsuma and Little All Right. Victoria on the High Wire. Gorgeous Chinese Ballet.’ Subsequent acts were as follows: 2. Flat Race by five Ladies on their English Thoroughbreds. 3. Monkey carriage. 4. Roman standing race – 2 horses abreast. 5. Liberty horses. 6. Two horse chariot race. 7. Mad. D’Atalie, the female Sampson. 8. Indian Life a chase for a wife. 9. Race by Monkeys on ponies. 10. Race between English and American Jockeys. 11. Boy race. 12. Hurdle race by ladies. 13. Chariot race 4 horse D’Atalie and Mons Arnaud. 14. Satsuma and Little All Right – Most Wonderful Japanese Equilibrists in their Ladder Balancing and other Acts. 15. ‘Pantomime equestrian spectacular \$53,000’; ‘first grand Dramatic Equestrian Pantomime’; ‘Elephants, Camels, Dromedaries, Giraffes, Reindeer, Horses, Ponies’. Also, there was a Moorish village and Bluebeard’s Castle.

and Colosseum acts, and ‘a scene called “Indian Life on the Plains” wherein scores of Indians of various tribes appear with their squaws, pappooses, ponies, and wigwams’, and ‘engage in buffalo hunts with real buffaloes.’¹⁰⁴ The buffalo hunting was enacted alongside cowboy and Native American war re-enactments on horseback.

Saxon reported that Barnum joked that Queen Victoria and her company could not match the grandeur of the royal processions of his hippodrome.¹⁰⁵ His ambitious intention to outdo state pomp was unmistakable. Barnum continued that he would pay the cost of the Ashanti (or Ashantee) War (probably the 1873 to 1874 period of conflict) in Africa if he could have the British royals to show in the USA for a couple of months. In this proposal, the realities of fighting a war were displaced into a triumphant parade with processional figureheads and symbolic soldiers emulating an official occasion, and military action was reduced to a costume contest. The entertainment spectacle and state ceremony became interchangeable.

After the 1870s, advertisements and posters that depicted one or more elephants at the centre of elaborate costume parades were increasingly associated with circus and its pageantry. Although horses dominated Barnum’s hippodrome spectacle, the entourage in the geographically themed displays with elephants were clearly in the grand pageant, and a separate act by 1877.¹⁰⁶ A spectacle with the impression of an Indian raj became a regular feature of American circus and at Forepaugh’s by 1881, with ‘Lallah Rookh’s Welcome’. Charles Fox and Tom Parkinson note: ‘Defying geographical and historical accuracy, elephants effortlessly appeared in any setting, whether it be Roman or medieval French or Oriental.’¹⁰⁷

Sturtevant describes the last decades of the 19th century as the heyday of menageries accompanying the travelling circus in the USA. Sells’ had 51 menagerie cages in 1884, O’Brien’s had 50, and the ‘superior’ Adam Forepaugh’s circus – the largest in North America – had 50 cages

104 Saxon 1983, 190.

105 Saxon 1989, 248.

106 PT Barnum Daily Show program 1877 (Billy Rose Collection, Performing Arts Library, New York Public Library).

107 Fox & Parkinson 1969, 219 (poster).

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and 25 elephants. But Sturtevant recalls a visit to a menagerie about 1890 that had:

very large displays, but many of the dens in fact, the majority of them, were small two-horse cross cages, there were many duplications in the collections, and a relatively large number of small and unimportant animals and birds such as wolves, foxes, porcupines, badgers, various parrots, etc, was carried [sic]. Of course there also were big dens of large and rare animals.¹⁰⁸

Interestingly, the well-established Barnum and Bailey Circus ‘The Greatest Show on Earth’ menagerie (BB) probably had 25 cages at the most, about the average number. According to the 1886 BB route book, among the animals exhibited were Asian elephants, three Bengal tigers, four African lions, four African leopards, four panthers, monkeys, rhinoceroses, a polar bear, two sea lions, a hippopotamus and a yak.¹⁰⁹ An African elephant remained a rarity.

Menagerie exhibition grew in conjunction with opportunistic economic exploitation and business competition and provided the basis for the presentation of increasingly elaborate indoor and outdoor spectacles from the 1870s and 1880s (also see Chapter 6). Large-scale exotic animal acquisition only became systematic once entertainments such as menageries with circuses generated the public demand to ensure sufficient financial return. Henceforth the scale escalated to encompass thousands of animals.

108 Sturtevant 1925, 76. The information about Forepaugh’s comes from WC Boyd.

109 Sturtevant 1925, 76. There were also a nyighau, a wolf, two Russian bears, a lioness and cubs, one striped and three spotted hyenas, three kangaroos, an Australian emu, a warthog, a pelican, a leopard and cubs, a tapir, azis deer, a sacred bull, a black buck, a mandrill monkey, a dog-faced baboon, a porcupine, a gnu (horned horse), a llama, a sacred goat, a double-horned rhinoceros, four white camels, 12 dromedaries, and one Nubian buffalo.

Advertising sporting chases

Show posters underwent changes as the numbers of menagerie animals increased and as shows expanded on ideas of safari hunting.¹¹⁰ Illustrations on lithograph posters initially depicted a single animal body, often set against a backdrop of flora. As the public became more familiar with the appearance of species and their numbers increased, advertisements promoted animal groups against a natural setting. Depicting nature in the background might have downplayed the presence of confining cages in the menagerie tent. Poster bills also advertised menagerie animals in stylised formations. For example, 'A Scene in Africa' was the headline on a lithograph used for generic promotional purposes in the USA during the 1870s; it showed a male lion in the centre, standing on a rock with an ordered line of leaping tigers and leopards below him and moving camels behind him.¹¹¹ The grouping might also be interpreted as a hierarchical ordering of the animals.

The advertising of animal exhibits increased in complexity, especially after 1871, when Barnum expanded his travelling menagerie and sideshow to include circus.¹¹² As images of elephants and lions began to be routinely included in circus and menagerie advertising, a circus required at least one elephant and, if possible, some lions, suggesting Africa, to remain competitive. The Great Eastern Circus Menagerie in 1872 proclaimed 'Zoological Triumph' on a poster with an illustration of a hunter firing a gun from each hand at two pouncing mid-air lions (Plate 6).¹¹³ While the image may well have promoted a hunting act in the menagerie, it also drew spectator attention to an idea of the safari hunt. The action of the hunter carried a direct association with colonial lands, and the fear and excitement of a lion attack. Sometime later, poster images would deliver those ideas, using only the

110 Bills viewed at Billy Rose Collection (encompassing the Townsend Walsh Collection), New York Public Library of Performing Arts, and Joe E Ward Collection, Harry Ransom Library Special Collections, University of Texas at Austin.

111 Pfening 2004, 13.

112 Davis 2002, 42, citing Fred Dahlinger and Thayer.

113 Slout 2006, 28.

enlarged head of a lion or a tiger menacing, their fangs bared ready to pounce, in condensed images of aggression.¹¹⁴

Print publicity took advantage of the ways in which the connections between hunting and collecting were expanding, as social practices converged within a scientific paradigm. In 1880 in London, taxidermist Rowland Ward published a best-selling book, *The Sportsman's handbook to practical collecting, preserving and artistic setting-up of trophies and specimens: to which is added a synoptical guide to the hunting grounds of the world*.¹¹⁵ As MacKenzie notes, '[t]he striking thing about nineteenth-century science was indeed that it was ubiquitous . . . [e]very hunter was a zoologist and reader of natural signs'.¹¹⁶ He outlines how the material exploitation of colonial regions had always been a combination of science and economics. The pursuit of natural sciences and collecting became integral to the spread of colonial power, and individuals were quick to identify the opportunities in new places.

Even before Rowland Ward's book on sporting hunts for trophies became a bestseller, Barnum, the master of advertising, directly exploited the link between the hunting safari and the menagerie collection in semi-fictionalised accounts derived from the diaries of hunters. In the later years of Barnum's working life, adventure stories made the menagerie interchangeable with the safari hunt as a sporting pastime. This was a perceptual shift from killing for financial gain (or food) to hunting for enjoyment and leisure.¹¹⁷ Barnum worked as a journalist in his early years and his publications included two controversial autobiographies and a collection of jungle adventure stories published in serial form in 1876 and in book form as *Lion Jack*, in both the USA and in England.¹¹⁸ The latter featured Jack, a 16-year-old adventurer; the Jack identity seemed to have its origins in the travel adventures of the sailor character Jack Tar in the late 18th century. A subtitle for *Lion Jack* included the explanation 'a story of perilous

114 Fox & Parkinson 1969, 27, 201 (posters).

115 MacKenzie 1988, 35.

116 MacKenzie 1990b, 5, 7.

117 See Baker & Mangan 1987; MacKenzie 1988, 3, a shift from the 'practical to pleasurable'. Joys 1983, 15, citing Coup.

118 Saxon 1989, 290.

adventures among wild men and the capturing of wild beasts: showing how menageries are made' and Barnum admitted to publicising his show with his book.¹¹⁹ The sequel was *Jack in the jungle*, which developed into a genre of collected stories that Saxon suggests also drew on 'two thick notebooks [that] Barnum filled during his meetings with the animal dealer', Hagenbeck.¹²⁰

A growing field of juvenile literature with hunting in the title fuelled the aspirations of young men in the 19th century.¹²¹ JS Bratton found precedents for childhood adventure stories in nautical serials of the early 1870s, which were subsequently expanded.¹²² In the first of the boy stories set in colonial frontiers, Canadian writer RM Ballantyne published *The young fur traders* in 1856, and Rider Haggard's classic *King Solomon's mine* was published in 1885.¹²³ The most well known of the British authors writing for adolescent boys was GA Henty, with his first book, *Jack Archer: a tale of the Crimea*, published in 1884; in this and his subsequent stories, he offered a portrait of masculinity based on battle bravery and honour. Henty's stories were mainly war stories using his experiences as a soldier, and later as a war journalist during the major campaigns of the 1860s and 1870s. Henty's Jack had a naval career that also took him to India.

It is likely that Barnum's influential stories contributed to the development of the genre, and his original 'Jack' hunting stories were illustrated in the 1880s, possibly with further additions to the text. An illustrated volume narrated in the first person – supposedly by Barnum – called *Animal stories*, features Jack Harvey, a Texan cowboy in Africa, with a titlepage carrying the descriptor, 'Natural history from a new standpoint'. Stories about the hunting of animals for their live capture were assumed to contribute to the study of natural history. In his set of adventure stories, Barnum hires a group of hunters to enter 'the wilds of

119 Werner 1923, 373, 347, a publisher suggested Barnum employ a writer but use his name. The bibliographic record of the books published in the 1880s lists the press agent as a co-writer, but does not name him, although Morris H Warner was the press agent c. 1886. See 356–60, also 371.

120 Cited in Saxon 1989, 290.

121 MacKenzie 1987a, 190–91, lists examples of hunting adventure stories; MacKenzie 1988, 45–46.

122 Bratton 1986, 84.

123 Woollacott 2006, 64, also 61.

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Africa in quest of curiosities' and 'valuable prizes for The Greatest Show On Earth'.¹²⁴ The leader of Barnum's semi-fictional hunting group is an American, Carl Godkin, who had worked for him in India, and Godkin is described as having 'knowledge of natural history and was one of the most successful sportsmen that ever lived'.¹²⁵ The members of the sporting group are named as Diedrick, Pongo, Abdallah from Senaar, 'Govozy, Wart, Adz, Bormo, Divak, Valmur, Orak and Goobo' and a Hottentot and a bushman. But Godkin's main assistants are presented as three Americans, Harvey and 17-year-old cousins Bob Marshall and Dick Brownell. They set out from the east coast of Africa, from Port Natal, and move northwards to the Transvaal near the Kalahari Desert. Pongo reports that he knew Cumming and Livingstone; the *Animal stories* book was based on the biographies of hunters.

A visual impression of the safari is highlighted at the beginning of the stories through descriptions of clothing and weapons that might have been familiar to readers as the costumes and props of circus equestrian spectacles. Harvey is a good horseman and rifleman who could 'throw the lasso with the skill of a Comanche chieftain'; he always wears 'flowing hair, [a] thick flannel shirt' and a 'broad sombrero', and introduces the cowboy costume to southern Africa.¹²⁶ Marshall and Brownell wear hunting coats, helmet hats and trousers tucked into cavalry boots. The costumes conflate hunting and Native American wars of resistance and colonial military conquest. The so-named natives are armed only with spears and knives and walk beside the wagon and horses, although Pongo does carry an African throwing weapon that is described as being comparable to the boomerang used in Australia.

In Barnum's adventure narrative of hunting sports, the African characters are crucial to the venture and work at considerable risk. For example, the group first encounters a lion who attacked Orak during the night; the lion is shot and wounded by Harvey, who follows the lion out of the camp and eventually kills him and rescues Orak.¹²⁷ Meanwhile a lioness attacks Divak, who fights back with a javelin and causes

124 Barnum 1926, 19, 109.

125 Barnum 1926, 14, also 13, 15, 19, 20–21, Barnum based this narrative on accounts by the hunters.

126 Barnum 1926, 15, 123, also 17.

127 Barnum 1926, 26–32, 34.

her skull to shatter. Pongo, who is adept at locating lions' dens, retrieves a lion cub. The next hunt sequence is in a chapter called 'The champion of stupidity'. The hunters are on horseback in a valley in pursuit of a flock of ostriches for their saleable feathers when the frightened birds appear to flee in the direction of the hunters, making themselves easier targets for the hunters' lassos.¹²⁸ But the ostriches are not stupid and fight back; despite being shot, one kicks Marshall and knocks him unconscious. As the birds escape at speed, Brownell jumps onto the back of one until Pongo's throwing weapon clips the ostrich's head and the bird falls down. Harvey's attempts to lasso an ostrich only end with him being dragged off his horse and along the ground; the ostrich is only stopped by a bullet to the head.

Brownell and Marshall set off to hunt giraffes, and Marshall climbs a tree and comes face-to-face with a male giraffe that dislodges him from the tree branch. While lassoing a giraffe, Harvey says that he found it hard to kill the giraffe because 'Those eyes are too human' and therefore if she behaved well, he would not harm her.¹²⁹ (Readers may not have accepted the death of a giraffe.) This episode is followed by the pursuit of an African buffalo being hunted by lions at the same time, and Godkin recounts his experience in India of riding on the back of an elephant who was attacked by a buffalo and lost. The group hunts a fast-moving oryx also stalked by a hyena, who is gored by the oryx. They lasso a zebra, shoot a snake, encounter monkeys, baboons and hippopotamuses, and a long-horned white rhinoceros charges at them. 'Nothing inspires a sportsman with courage so much as the sight of his fleeing game.'¹³⁰ They do not hunt elephants because Barnum had a large number in his show.

In these stories, animals exist to be either captured or shot. Equally unnerving is the way the safari sportsmen in the stories were oblivious to how the African men were constantly at risk of their lives, while the American hunters remained more protected with their rifle power. As the human characters were competitively pitted against a range of fleeing species in different episodes, and the Europeans and Americans came away the victors, animals were positioned as if they were warring

128 Barnum 1926, 43–56, 65, 60, 66.

129 Barnum 1926, 86, also 103.

130 Barnum 1926, 186, also 236.

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enemies to be defeated. Such stories depicted hunted wild animals who fought back; that is, hunting for sport was a process of fighting nature. It seemed like waging war on other species.

The entrepreneurial showman Farini (William Hunt), who was Barnum's contemporary and, after 1880, his business colleague, undertook an African safari to the Kalahari (Botswana) in 1885. He later published a widely read account of his safari adventure, with extensive appendices on Kalahari flora and fauna.¹³¹ Farini had previously relied on agents to acquire human performers from Africa.¹³² He recounted being told of adventure in southern Africa by an indigenous hunter he met in London, digging up diamonds in Kimberley, South Africa, and travelling in a 'hunter's paradise'. Farini travelled with his adopted son, Sam Hunt, who since 1870 had been performing as Lulu Farini, the very lovely, secretly cross-dressed, adolescent trapeze performer; although Lulu was exposed as a man in 1874, she continued to perform to a curious public.¹³³ Importantly, Lulu took camera equipment so that the expedition was promoted on their return by Farini's book and Lulu's photographs (Plate 6).¹³⁴ Farini's biographer, Shane Peacock, gives an extended description of the expedition (which included hunting lions) and the specimens it collected, and evaluates the validity of Farini's claim to have found the ruins of a city. They travelled with horses, mules and ox-drawn wagons, depending on bushmen who often went their own way. The trip involved numerous mishaps, betrayals and miscalculations – early in the expedition, Farini nearly died. Farini's observations about hunting constituted only some of the experiences, and there were what seem to be comparatively honest accounts of clumsy accidents while trying to shoot, missing out on spotting lions, a lion grabbing one of the party at night, and firing in mistake at one of their own party. For example, when Farini did succeed in what he thought was the shooting of a lion, he crept forward only to find the lion dead,

131 Farini 1886, 450–68. There are appendices on flora, reptiles, insects, birds, mammalia and geology, and a table of distances.

132 Peacock 1996, 311, 306. One was WA Healey.

133 See Tait 2005, 66–67.

134 Farini 1886, vi, 36, 358–459, Farini 1886 nearly dies 140–41, misadventures 161–65, 191–202. Lulu's photographs were exhibited separately and with Farini's papers presented at Berlin Geographical Society, 7 November 1885, and Royal Geographical Society of England, 8 March 1886. Peacock 1996, 305–57, 344.

impaled on the horn of his bok prey. Farini is atypical in revealing his inept effort.

Intentionally or not, Farini exposed some of the terrible consequences of colonial rule alongside hunting misadventures. He gives an account of slaughtered indigenous prisoners, and Hottentot children offered for sale. In addition, he writes in empathetic acknowledgement of how a wounded giraffe looked back at Farini with 'despair in his drooping eye', to ask, 'what harm have I ever done you?' (Plate 6)¹³⁵ Farini's well-known account differed from most perhaps because he was not trying to make his reputation through hunting achievements. To some extent the numerous difficulties of the adventure in this widely read book countered, if not dispelled, illusions that safari hunting was an enjoyable sporting challenge.

It was the circulation of unrealistic, embellished adventure stories of hunting in Africa and Asia, including those associated with menagerie entertainment, that fuelled the proliferating ambition to undertake a safari. As newspaper graphics were supplemented by photographs of safari hunts, hunters increasingly aspired to travel to Asia and Africa (see Chapter 7). With its lion chases, gunfire and overtly aggressive gestures, the menagerie act seemed to involve hunting; it unmistakably added to the spectrum of entertainments that presented fighting behaviour and war re-enactments. Menagerie entertainment helped to foster 19th-century illusions about hunting escapades, much like adventure stories for boys. While it is arguable whether military campaigns in the colonies continued to receive popular support throughout the 1880s and 1890s, an imperialist hegemony of individualistic hunts for animals remained entrenched in popular culture through its manifestation in the safari adventure story genre.

135 Farini 1886, 370, 384, 292.