Exhibiting Animals in Nineteenth-Century Britain

Empathy, Education, Entertainment

Helen Cowie

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Other works by Helen Cowie

CONQUERING NATURE IN SPAIN AND ITS EMPIRE, 1750–1850 (2011)

Exhibiting Animals in Nineteenth-Century Britain

Empathy, Education, Entertainment

Helen Cowie
Lecturer in History, University of York, UK

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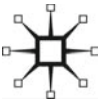

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For Daisy, my own little lion

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Introduction

> Walk up, walk up; come and see the wild beasts; the keeper is jist agoing [*sic*] to begin. (*Liverpool Mercury*, 25 February 1867)

In January 1863 an Edinburgh printer named James Turner hosted his annual dinner celebration at the city's Café Royal. The event was a jolly affair. All Turner's guests appeared to be greatly enjoying themselves and the wine flowed merrily as diners tucked into the 'sumptuous repast' cooked up by the Café's chefs. After several hours of feasting, and just as many of those present were starting to feel rather full, 'two waiters brought into the room a very large-sized pie, handsomely ornamented with a crimson cloth'. There were audible groans from some of those present, who doubted their capacity to force down yet another course. The sighs, however, changed to gasps of amazement when the covering cloth was removed to reveal, not a culinary delicacy, but 'five young lions, sent direct from the menagerie of Mr Manders to Mr Turner's dinner table'. The cubs, born only a few weeks previously, had been ordered by the host for the entertainment of his visitors, and were now publicly christened before the assembled company, 'a libation of port wine' being 'poured over their noses' and each animal given a stirring Scottish name (one of the lions was called 'William Wallace' and a second 'Walter Scott'). The ritual completed, the little beasts were 'handed round the company for inspection', before being 'carefully wrapped up in a warm cloth' and taken back to the menagerie in a cab. It was, needless to say, a memorable evening for all present.[1]

Some two years earlier, another British couple had an equally intimate, if less desired, encounter with an exotic animal. On this occasion, the individuals in question, Mr T.B. Clarke and his wife, of Dunstable, Bedfordshire, were in the process of retiring to bed at around 11.30 p.m.

when they were disturbed by the frenzied barking of a dog in the back yard. Concerned that there might be a burglar on the premises, Mr Clarke ventured outside to investigate, expecting to find a human intruder. 'His surprise', however, was 'extreme' to behold, 'within three feet of him, an elephant', busily engaged in demolishing the corner of his house. Once his initial astonishment had abated a little, Mr Clarke remembered that there had been a menagerie in town earlier in the day and ran urgently to alert the keepers, who, with some difficulty, apprehended the fugitive. Thankfully, no one was physically injured in the incident, which might have had serious consequences. The *Standard* suspected, however, that the psychological effects might prove more enduring; it would, the paper feared, be 'some time before Mrs Clarke recover[ed] from the severe shock given to her nervous system by this untimely and unwelcome visitor'.[2]

The two incidents cited above illustrate the surprising pervasiveness of exotic animals in nineteenth-century Britain. They could be seen on the streets, where showmen exhibited them for money. They appeared in sites of sociability, such as coffeehouses and taverns. They enchanted readers of all ages in popular works of natural history by writers like Thomas Bewick and J.G. Wood. They could be viewed in stuffed form in museums, where some, like the lion, Wallace, in Saffron Walden Museum, achieved iconic status. They could even be owned as pets by private individuals, becoming objects of ostentation and affection; the actor Edmund Kean was well-known for keeping a 'lion' – in fact a puma – 'in his house in Clarges Street', while the poet and painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti owned a wombat named Top.[3] As the British Empire expanded and hunting fever gripped colonial settlers, animals featured increasingly as trophies and domestic décor, from buffalo heads mounted on walls to elephant-foot hat stands and tiger skin rugs. The taxidermist, now something of a niche profession, was a common sight on many high streets; 'in the census of 1891 there were no fewer than 369 people (247 male and 122 female) employed as animal and bird preservers in the establishments of taxidermists in London'.[4]

Though nineteenth-century Britons thus had many opportunities for seeing exotic species, the majority of such encounters occurred in two prime locations: the travelling menagerie and the zoological garden. Menageries, sometimes referred to as wild beast shows, were itinerant animal exhibitions that toured the country in horse-drawn caravans. They evolved from rather ad hoc displays of single animals in the eighteenth century into vast collections of creatures by the mid-nineteenth, often filling as many as fifteen wagons. As primarily commercial operations,

menageries were designed, above all, to make a profit, focusing on the largest, rarest and most eye-catching animals. By bringing exotic beasts within reach of people who would not normally get the chance to see them, they also claimed to serve an educational function, spreading at least rudimentary zoological knowledge among the masses.

Zoological Gardens emerged in Britain in the early nineteenth century. London Zoo – then known as the Gardens of the Zoological Society – was founded in 1828, and modelled closely on the animal collection in the Parisian Jardin des Plantes. In the 1830s cities across Britain, particularly ports and industrial centres, followed its example, forming their own zoological gardens as part of a wider programme of cultural enrichment and civic improvement. Often socially exclusive in their admission policies, zoos catered primarily for an elite and middle-class clientele, who could afford the entrance fees and had the leisure to visit during limited opening hours. Unlike menageries, zoos fashioned themselves as places for study and education rather than entertainment, emphasising their contribution to science and their role as sites of rational recreation. As we shall see, however, these distinctions were never as rigid as was sometimes implied; many zoos developed, in practice, into glorified amusement venues, offering similar – if slightly more refined – attractions to those of travelling shows.

This book studies the collection and exhibition of exotic animals in nineteenth-century Britain. In an era of overseas exploration and imperial expansion, rare beasts were among the many foreign commodities to appear on British soil. They were a source of fascination to people across the social spectrum, and served simultaneously as objects of entertainment, enlightenment and reflection. Focusing on zoos and travelling menageries in the period 1800–1880, the book explores how contemporaries thought about rare animals, where they encountered them and what symbolic, pedagogic and scientific value they attached to them. I use animals as a vehicle through which to examine issues of race, class, gender and colonialism. I devote particular attention to menageries, whose appeal transcended social boundaries and whose personnel included an eclectic range of individuals, from female lion tamers to West Indian elephant keepers.

Domesticating the exotic

Exotic animal exhibitions may be seen as part of a wider culture of imperial display. In recent decades, there has been increasing concern with the domestic consequences and manifestations of empire, and the ways

in which ordinary Britons were incorporated into the imperial project. Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose, in a groundbreaking edited collection, explore how empire was felt 'at home' in the 'everyday' lives of British people, emphasising how 'national and local histories were imbricated in a world system fashioned by imperialism and colonialism'.[5] John MacKenzie's important research on the relationship between empire and popular culture has also greatly enhanced our knowledge of the ways in which concepts and ideas of the wider world were transmitted beyond elite circles to a wider reading and watching public.[6] Following on from this pioneering work, several historians have analysed the different media through which imperial themes, peoples and scenes were communicated to British subjects back home. Felix Driver has focused on travel accounts by explorers and their reception by the British public.[7] Edward Ziter has studied representations of the Orient in nineteenth-century British theatre, noting how stock images of Eastern exoticism, played out on increasingly elaborate stage sets, 'helped constitute the modern British colonial imaginary'.[8] Roberto Aguirre has explored how many Europeans were swept up in the exotic magic and imperial gaze of the panorama, which transported metropolitan viewers from the frozen wastes of the Arctic to the Mexican Tropics, while Nadia Durbach and Sadiah Qureshi have studied exhibitions of native peoples.[9] Collectively, these works suggest that images of the empire percolated down through British society to become deeply embedded in many branches of the entertainment industry. The latter was 'a primary site for the dissemination of visual information', and, as such, crucial in creating and popularising European stereotypes of the colonial world.[10]

As Harriet Ritvo and Kurt Koenigsberger have shown, zoos and menageries were part of this culture of imperial display.[11] An important element of the Victorian leisure scene, their contents, by their nature exotic, were consciously marketed and exhibited in ways that highlighted their colonial connotations. Guidebooks and advertisements referenced the foreign origin of the animals on show, sometimes verbally, with allusions either to specific places or to a more generic 'wilderness', sometimes visually, through the liberal deployment of palm trees and other exotic foliage in accompanying images. Showmen re-enacted colonial scenes, such as lion hunts or elephant processions, while journalists identified the menagerie as a venue for imperial instruction; writing in 1885, as General Charles Gordon lay besieged in Khartoum, the *Glasgow Herald* theorised that the two camels in Bostock's menagerie would 'give the youthful portion of our citizens some idea of the chargers on which the Camel Corps in the Soudan are mounted'.[12] How exactly customers

interpreted these images, and the extent to which they consciously reflected on imperial themes is, of course, harder to judge, for we cannot assume an uninterrupted transmission of concepts and ideas.[13] Whatever the degree of imperial uptake, however, zoological collections deserve attention within the wider context of imperial culture, for they offered close and memorable encounters with the exotic, and, in the case of menageries, strikingly encapsulate the interplay between the global and the local. Figure I.1 shows elephants from a travelling menagerie entering Lincoln *circa* 1900, to the palpable excitement of the watching crowds. Here the empire was, in a very tangible sense, 'brought home'.

As this vivid image suggests, however, this book focuses not just in the figurative value of exotic beasts, but also on their physical presence. Exotic animals are often studied purely in an abstract sense, as living metaphors for colonial power or human dominance over other species.Without doubt, they often did fulfil this symbolic role, and were deliberately cast in it by zoo directors, showmen and journalists. As real living beasts, however, exotic animals also exerted some agency

Figure I.1 View of Lincoln High Street showing a parade of elephants (late 19C/early 20C), from the collections of Lincolnshire County Council Heritage and Library Service, Ref: 19 MLL 2

over their interactions with the public, connecting with spectators on a more visceral level as huge, ferocious, noisy or hungry beings who could be fed, ridden or touched. Customers had much closer contact with animals than do visitors to modern zoos, and the physical proximity they enjoyed with species big and small probably impressed them more than the verbal references to faraway lands and British heroism. People seeing the elephants marching through Lincoln may have experienced titillating visions of the Orient and reflected on the global extension of British commerce, but they also got a chance to see these massive beasts up close. The crowds lining the animals' route may or may not have been thinking about imperial glory; they were, though, entranced, as modern audiences would be, by the immense size and gentle demeanour of these majestic creatures.

Zoos and menageries also need to be viewed as part of a wider culture of popular science and recreation. The nineteenth century was a period of growing public interest in science, which was made accessible to a broader stratum of the population through the opening of museums, the delivery of lectures and the increasing availability of affordable works of natural history. New, cheaper printing technologies and rising literacy levels enabled more and more people to read about the natural world. New exhibition venues allowed them to see nature for themselves. In recent years, historians of science have devoted increasing attention to the popularisation of science, placing particular emphasis on how it was marketed, consumed and received. Aileen Fyfe and Bernard Lightman have explored the wide range of venues for science, from public gardens to town halls.[14] Joe Kember, John Plunkett and Jill Sullivan have highlighted the commercial and experiential dimension of scientific exhibitions, emphasising the role of showmanship in attracting and maintaining audiences. They have also noted the significance of local contexts in understanding how science was disseminated.[15] All these scholars have stressed the importance of seeing the audiences for popular science as active consumers, rather than passive spectators, paying attention to the spatial and sensory elements of popular science and its status as a commodity.

The nineteenth century was also a period in which leisure activities underwent a major change. As Britain became increasingly urbanised and industrialised, traditional entertainments came under attack. Old recreations like bull-baiting were suppressed, partly because of the cruelty they inflicted on animals, partly because they were associated with other vices such as drinking and gambling. At the same time, the growth of cities encroached on leisure spaces, while the new work

rhythms of the industrial age deprived workers of free time, at least until legislation to limit working hours was introduced in the 1830s and 40s.[16] The rising middle class preached the values of industry and respectability, 'confining their pleasures to those which were permissible because they were rational, not morally corrupting and not recklessly extravagant'.[17] They hoped to convert the working classes to this way of thinking, promoting forms of leisure that were edifying, decorous, and not conducive to social disorder. Zoological gardens clearly formed part of this drive for polite, educational entertainment, though the position of menageries was more ambiguous; some contemporaries perceived them as sites of crime and sordid sensationalism, others trumpeted their pedagogic potential. This book explores the ways in which both institutions fashioned themselves as places for learning, paying particular attention to how notions of social reform and civic virtue shaped contemporary debates about animal exhibitions. It also engages with a more recent current of scholarship that questions the extent of reformist attitudes in Victorian Britain, and points to a latent fascination with violence, danger and sensation that drew people to read about grisly murders, attend executions or watch lion taming exhibitions.[18] I focus primarily on the years 1815–1880, from the end of the Napoleonic Wars to the high-Victorian era, a period that witnessed the beginnings of commercialised leisure for the masses, but predated the emergence of a mass working-class culture based on the football field and the music hall.

Cruelty and compassion

The broader context of evolving human-animal relationships also frames this study. The nineteenth century has been seen as a time of changing attitudes towards animals. In previous eras, blood sports and all manner of animal cruelty were part of the fabric of British life, and had gone more or less unchallenged. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, however, and into the nineteenth, an apparent growth in compassion for animals led to the passing of the first formal anti-cruelty legislation in Parliament in 1822. It also resulted in the foundation of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (1824), which assumed the task of educating the public in the humane treatment of animals. These developments have led some historians to view the decades around 1800 as a period of significant shifts in the treatment and perception of animals, brought about by urbanisation and industrialisation and inspired by a wider climate of humanitarian activism that encompassed prison and

factory reform and the abolition of slavery. According to Keith Thomas, scientific developments resulted in a less anthropocentric conception of the natural world. The upper and middle classes began to adopt a more sentimental approach to the animal kingdom and to perceive cruelty to animals as barbaric and uncivilised.[19]

While all of this suggests that at least some Britons were beginning to embrace the country's modern identity as a nation of animal lovers, other historians have been more cautious in accepting this narrative of progress. John MacKenzie, for instance, contests Thomas' view that British society was becoming more compassionate towards animals, emphasising the extreme popularity of big game hunting in India and Africa.[20] Diana Donald, in similar fashion, stresses the schizophrenic attitudes of nineteenth-century Britons towards the animal world. She notes, for example, how racehorses were fêted in their prime but abused and abandoned when they grew old, ending their lives in the fetid horrors of the knackers' yard.[21] The growing popularity of pet-keeping offers another example of this inconsistency in attitudes towards animals, for while individual owners cosseted and pampered specific animals, most were able to dissociate their tender feelings towards domestic companions from wider moral issues affecting animals more generally.[22] The comforting narrative of growing kindness and empathy towards animals thus turns out, on closer inspection, to be a more complicated and morally ambiguous story, one that was often as much about concealing cruelty from view as about actually ending it.[23]

The position of exotic species in zoos and menageries in some ways encapsulates the conflicting feelings people held about animals, and brings to the fore the tensions that existed over their (mis)treatment. Not officially covered by the anti-cruelty legislation of the early part of the nineteenth century, which confined itself to 'domestic' species, exotic beasts were nonetheless the subject of debates over animal welfare, featuring in several prominent anti-cruelty cases. As with pets, which menagerie and zoo specimens often were, in a communal sense, individual exotic beasts were loved and anthropomorphised. Some were given human names, like the camel 'Robert Burns', named in honour of the Scottish poet on whose birthday he was born.[24] Others were endowed with human qualities or made to mimic human behaviour, blurring human-animal distinctions; a chimpanzee exhibited in London zoo in 1830 was 'dressed in a Guernsey frock and little woollen cap' and 'offered a glass of sherry'.[25] These individualised, emotionally appealing creatures stirred the sympathies of sensitive viewers and were sometimes described with fondness. A select few – such as the famous elephant

Jumbo – were elevated to the status of national or regional favourite, and remembered with affection long after their deaths.

At the same time as they were loved and humanised, however, captive exotics were also the victims of casual cruelty and culpable neglect. People fed menagerie elephants tobacco, to see how they would react.[26] One man abused a bear by offering it 'a piece of apple on the point of a knife' then 'stabbing it in the eye'. A group of boys in Dublin Zoo clubbed a seal to death in 1864.[27] Alongside such deliberate violence, many animals suffered injury or disease due to the cramped and unhealthy caravans in which they were confined; others must have succumbed rapidly to inappropriate diets. As Nigel Rothfels reminds us, moreover, the process of catching exotic animals in the wild was brutal in the extreme, frequently resulting in a form of mass slaughter that highlighted the distinction between the visible, individualised animals at home and the invisible, depersonalised beasts overseas.[28] Looking at actual encounters between humans and exotic beasts, and at the public scandals they occasionally triggered, we can further probe nineteenth-century conceptions of the animal world. We can also see how the treatment of animals came to be used as a barometer for moral progress and civilisation in an era that put increasing stress on personal restraint and respectability.

* * *

Chapters 1 and 2 focus on zoological gardens. Beginning with London Zoo, Britain witnessed the creation of a spate of public gardens for the entertainment, relaxation and edification of the masses. These institutions emerged in major industrial cities like Manchester, in cultural centres like Edinburgh, and in ports like Liverpool and Bristol, forming part of a wider movement to encourage instructive and morally uplifting forms of leisure for the middle and lower classes. The new zoos presented themselves as places of learning and research. They also espoused a rhetoric of inclusivity and community benefit, which was not always delivered in practice. I explore the relationship between zoos and the communities they served, assessing the role of gardens in engendering imperial, national and civic pride.

Chapter 3 studies the other prime site for viewing exotic animals: the touring menagerie. Travelling animal shows were hugely popular, attracting large audiences throughout the nineteenth century and constantly growing in size. Drawing extensively on contemporary posters and newspaper advertisements, I consider how showmen marketed their wares and how visitors' experiences were mediated by the physical environment of the show. I also explore the status of the

menagerie as a fairground exhibit at a time when pleasure fairs were attracting increasing criticism as sites of disorder and debauchery.

Chapter 4 examines the supply side of exotic animal shows, looking at the collection of foreign beasts and their transportation to Europe. I consider who donated or sold rare creatures to zoological gardens and menageries, and how the collection of exotic species both relied upon and reflected colonial administrative structures. The practical challenges of catching and shipping pernickety, dangerous or delicate animals were considerable, and the environmental impact could be devastating. The chapter reveals the brutal realities of wild animal collecting and the commercial imperatives that underlay it.

Chapter 5 moves on to evaluate the educational function of zoos and menageries. The nineteenth century witnessed a rise in interest in rational recreation and the concept of learning in one's leisure hours. It also saw a growing interest in popular science, fuelled by a profusion of increasingly affordable natural history texts.[29] Zoological gardens and, to a lesser extent, travelling menageries, formed part of this tradition of instructive entertainment. I examine the means these institutions employed to disseminate zoological knowledge – from printed guidebooks to verbal commentaries by keepers – and situate zoological collections within a wider culture of popular science.[30]

Chapter 6 addresses the issue of animal welfare in relation to zoos and menageries. The nineteenth century has been seen as a time of growing concern for animals and increasing efforts to prevent and punish their mistreatment. The chapter situates the fate of exotic animals within this broader climate of changing attitudes towards animals, and argues for a gradual evolution over the course of the century, from concern over the demoralising effects of blood sports to an emphasis on the suffering of animals themselves as sentient beings. Four case studies illustrate these changing views: (1) the reaction to a fight between a lion and six dogs in Warwick (1825); (2) the controversy over feeding live rabbits to snakes in Liverpool (1869); (3) the prosecution of showmistress Mrs Edmonds for abusing hyenas in Leeds (1874); and (4) the public outcry following London Zoo's sale of the elephant Jumbo to the American showman P.T. Barnum (1882).

Chapter 7 moves away from the welfare of animals to consider the welfare of humans visiting zoological collections. Health and safety were not always priorities for menagerists. Accidents in shows were relatively common, many resulting in mutilation or death. Escapes were not unknown. The chapter explores the main causes of accidents, and studies how they were reported in the press. Though accidents

happened often, menagerists were rarely prosecuted for the damage caused by their animals. Fines, if imposed at all, were usually nominal, and the emphasis was on the individual visitor to protect him or herself, rather than the menagerist to remove all possible hazards. Indeed, the element of danger may have actually constituted part of the allure of menageries, appealing to the latent voyeurism of spectators. When a lion tamer named Massarti was killed by a group of lions at Bolton in 1872, the show-woman, Mrs Manders, entertained visitors with 'a recitation of the horrid details of the tragedy ... specifying the part that each animal took in it'. This showed, in the view of the *Manchester Examiner*, 'some want of taste', but was evidently a crowd-puller for the menagerie.[31]

Finally, Chapter 8 focuses on performances with exotic animals, their form and reception. The extensive use of exotic animals as performers did not begin until the 1880s, when foreign beasts were incorporated into touring circuses – until then predominantly equestrian affairs. Some animal acts, such as lion taming, were common in menageries before this date, however, and the chapter considers how such performances evolved in terms of content and personnel. From 1845–1850, for example, there was a fashion for female lion tamers, or 'Lion Queens'. The 1860s saw the rise of African lion tamers. The chapter examines opposition to lion taming, which, in the wake of accidents, was often criticised as sensationalist, voyeuristic and morally questionable. It situates this within the wider elite critique of popular leisure activities and blood sports outlined in Chapters 3 and 6.

1
The Lions of London

> Is it not strange that one of the *coldest* animals in the Zoological Gardens is the *otter*? (*Ipswich Journal*, 11 February 1837)

In September 1823, an anonymous correspondent addressed a letter to the editor of the *Morning Chronicle* emphasising the urgent need for a zoological garden in London. The correspondent, who gave his initials as 'C.T.', hoped that his letter would draw public attention to 'a subject which other nations have not thought beneath their notice'. A national zoological collection, C.T. explained, would be of benefit to Britain, both socially and scientifically, and would raise its international image. Now, moreover, was an ideal moment to found a zoo, since a project of this nature was well suited to 'these times of peace and general improvement'.

Outlining the reasons why he favoured the creation of a zoological garden, C.T. cited a number of factors – scientific, social and humanitarian. Firstly, a zoo would advance the discipline of zoology by providing live animals for Naturalists to study, for 'great as are the advantages to Naturalists in the collections of animals preserved by art, yet the advantages to be derived from the study of the nature and properties of the living animal are undeniable'. Secondly, a zoological garden would function as a place of public recreation and education by furnishing 'the idle and ill-disposed' with 'objects to arrest their attention, and perhaps teach them to reflect'. Thirdly, a zoo would entertain 'the more useful class of society', fulfilling 'the great political desideratum … of keeping this important part of the community in good humour' at a time when calls for electoral reform were growing louder. Fourthly, the creation of formal gardens would ensure better conditions for the animals than existed in menageries, providing, in turn, a more pleasurable viewing

experience for spectators, as 'surely ... it is more gratifying' to see 'the noble lion enjoying a capacious apartment open to the free air, or the unwieldy elephant stalking forth from his spacious habitation to roll himself in a pool of water' than 'to see these inhabitants of the forest or refreshing glade or sequestered lake moping away their melancholy lives in the hot unwholesome air of crowded rooms!' Finally, the establishment of a zoological garden was necessary as a matter of national pride. While France, Britain's neighbour and rival, already had an impressive zoological garden at the Jardin des Plantes, the best London could muster was 'a few wretched animals shut up in the gloomy confines of our Tower of London'. According to C.T., it had 'long excited the surprise of Foreigners and the regret of many of our enlightened Countrymen, that this nation possesses nothing deserving the name of a National Menagerie'. The time had surely come to rectify this situation, not least because Britain's powerful navy, flourishing commercial connections and growing number of settlements overseas provided the means by which to do so. 'Possessing ... settlements in the various quarters of the globe, in extent and power beyond any other nation ... [we enjoy] opportunities ... for collecting specimens of the various animal tribes of other countries.'[1]

It took five years for C.T.'s vision to be realised through the foundation of the Gardens of the Zoological Society (the present London Zoo) in 1828. If his letter had little immediate impact, however, its content nicely encapsulates the main reasons for establishing zoological gardens, not only in London, but also in other British cities, where the tropes of animal welfare, rational recreation, social well-being and national pride surface again and again in prospectuses and newspaper reports. To have a zoological garden became a symbol of material wealth, social consciousness and moral progress. The creation of zoological gardens also formed part of a broader movement to open museums and other sites of education to the middle and lower classes, serving a public beyond the cultured elite.[2]

While other cities would copy London's Zoological gardens, it was in the British capital that the idea first took hold. We therefore begin our study of exotic animal exhibitions in the metropolis, which, even before London Zoo came into existence, was home to an eclectic range of zoological displays. Here I discuss where people could view foreign beasts and birds, how their conditions of display changed during this period and what value and meanings were ascribed to them. The chapter starts by looking at fixed menageries and other sites of exhibition in the early nineteenth century. It then moves on to look at two key zoological

establishments: the Gardens of the Zoological Society in Regent's Park and the less well-known Surrey Zoological Gardens in Walworth.

Sites of exhibition

Though London had no zoological gardens until 1828, it was by no means bereft of exotic animals. Travelling shows provided a venue where people of all classes could view rare beasts, either singly, or, increasingly, en masse (see Chapter 3). In addition to these itinerant exhibitions, Londoners could see exotic creatures in a number of other locales, some permanent, others more temporary in nature. Most notable among the former were two static menageries whose contents were open to the public from the eighteenth century. The first of these, the Tower Menagerie, was a royal collection, dating back to the Middle Ages. The second, the menagerie at Exeter 'Change, was formed in the mid-eighteenth century for explicitly commercial purposes.

Founded in the thirteenth century, the Tower Menagerie was Britain's oldest zoological collection and functioned principally as a glorified repository for the various exotic beasts bestowed upon the monarchy as diplomatic gifts. Originally located in Woodstock, near Oxford, the collection was moved to a wing of the Tower of London under Henry III (1207–1272). The menagerie remained in this location until 1831, when it was transferred to the Gardens of the Zoological Society. From the seventeenth century it was open to the public, who could view it for one shilling.

Though the quality of the Tower Menagerie fluctuated over the years, depending on the enthusiasm of the reigning monarch, it usually consisted of at least a handful of big cats, mainly lions and leopards. Other more unusual inmates also occasionally featured in the collection. In 1252, for instance, records show that the sheriffs of London were 'commanded to pay 4 pence a day for the maintenance of a polar bear', which the following year required 'a muzzle and chain' to hold him 'while fishing or washing himself in the River Thames'. Three years later, in 1255, the sheriffs were 'directed to build a house in the Tower for an elephant which had been presented to the King by Louis King of France'.[3] When keeper Alfred Copps published a list of the animals in the collection in 1822, he enumerated over thirty beasts, among them a 'striped hyena', a 'cinnamon bear, presented by the Hudson's Bay Company' and 'a pleasing variety of parrots, parroquets, doves, manakins, nutmeg birds etc.'[4] Some of these had been donated by royalty and others purchased by Copps himself.

The diarist Gertrude Savile offered a first-hand account of a visit to the collection in the early eighteenth century. Visiting the Tower on 17 August 1728, Savile described how the menagerie then consisted primarily of big cats and birds of prey, namely six lions, 'a Tiger, a Leapard [sic], a Panther, 2 Eagles and a Vulture'. The star exhibits, two newly-born lion cubs, were on view in one room, where Savile watched them being nursed by two women 'by a fire Side ... stifleing hot [sic]'. They were ensconced on the laps of the women, 'wrap'd in little Quilts' and drinking milk. During the same visit, Savile admired '2 [lions] together that were whelp'd here of 3 Year old, in a Den – a He and a She (which I saw a year and a half ago)', which were 'tame enough to let the Man Stroak [sic] them', and two more year-old cubs 'about as big as a pretty large dog', which were running 'loose in a Room'. The diarist apparently enjoyed her encounter with the animals, declaring herself 'much pleas'd' with the lions, particularly the young ones.[5]

From the early nineteenth century, the Tower Menagerie co-existed with another royal animal collection: the menagerie at Sandpit Gate. Situated in the grounds of Windsor Castle, 22 miles outside of London, this menagerie was also accessible to the wider public, who could see it for free on Mondays and Saturdays. Sandpit Gate was much more roomy than the Tower, and, in the view of one journalist, considerably more pleasant to visit, for 'in this menagerie the animals are not pent up in miserable dens, but have large open sheds with spacious paddocks to range in, water in plenty and spreading trees to shade them from the midday sun'. While the Tower concentrated mainly on ferocious carnivores, which required strong cages, most of the animals in the Windsor collection were herbivorous, allowing for a more pastoral layout. In 1829, the menagerie's inmates included antelopes, deer, kangaroos, zebras, ostriches, emus and a sickly male giraffe presented to George IV by Muhammad Ali Pasha of Egypt.[6]

The other major zoological collection in early nineteenth-century London was the menagerie at Exeter 'Change. Founded in the late 1780s, this impressive assemblage of animals was housed in the upper apartments of a building in the Strand, above a concourse of shops.[7] Unlike the Tower Menagerie, which began as a royal collection, Exeter 'Change operated as an overtly commercial venture, and was designed from the outset to make a profit. The menagerie survived in its original location until 1829, when it was transferred to a more spacious building in the King's Mews, Charing Cross; it was formally disbanded two years later. During its forty-year existence, the exhibition had three different owners: Gilbert Pidcock (1789–1810), Stefano Polito (1810–1818) and Edward Cross (1818–1831).

Exeter 'Change was the prime site for viewing exotic animals in London at the turn of the nineteenth century, attracting visitors with a constantly changing range of beasts. In 1790 the menagerie featured 'that renowned Animal the Rhinoceros' and 'three stupendous ostriches, lately arrived from Barbary'.[8] In 1793 it boasted 'the most beautiful ZEBRA ever seen in Europe' and in 1831 it contained a 'fine' and 'very hearty' baby camel, said to be the only one born in Britain.[9] Several monstrosities and manmade wonders were also exhibited alongside these exotic species, including a cow with 'two heads, four eyes, four ears and four nostrils', and, in the aftermath of 'The Terror' of the French Revolution (1793–4), 'a model of the Guillotine, or French beheading machine'.[10] The menagerie's most famous inmate, the elephant Chunee, resided in the collection for 17 years and was a great favourite with Londoners. He sadly grew unmanageable as he reached maturity and was destroyed by a firing squad in 1826.[11]

The creatures in Exeter 'Change were displayed in tiny cages. The walls of the building were 'painted with exotic scenery' to conjure images of the Tropics and visitors appear to have enjoyed quite intimate contact with the beasts, from stroking the 'gentle zebra' to caressing the newly-born lion cubs.[12] For those spectators who wanted to learn more about the animals, printed pamphlets were available for purchase at the entrance, containing descriptions of the different creatures in the collection. In 1820, for instance, proprietor Edward Cross published a *Companion to the Royal Menagerie, Exeter 'Change*, to 'attract the attention of the youthful visitor to this most pleasing and important branch of natural history, and to draw the inquiring, unbiased mind to study the characters of animated nature herself, as these rare specimens present'.[13] Keepers would also be on hand to deliver short lectures on the different beasts, though how educational these were is open to question. A satirical account of a visit to the menagerie in the periodical the *Fancy* mocked the ignorance of the zoological guide, who spoke with a strong Cockney accent – 'that there is the vunderful Hafrican helephant' – and regurgitated many old myths about wild beasts, from the chameleon's ability to live on air alone to the belief that the bear 'licks his cubs into shape with his tongue'.[14]

A contemporary print by Rudolph Ackermann (Figure 1.1) gives us a sense of how the exhibition might have looked. Here we can see what appears to be a relatively small wooden-floored room with cages arranged around the periphery. The elephant's enclosure at the far end of the room is so cramped that the animal is barely able to turn around. The cages of the lion and tiger are hardly more generous in their dimensions,

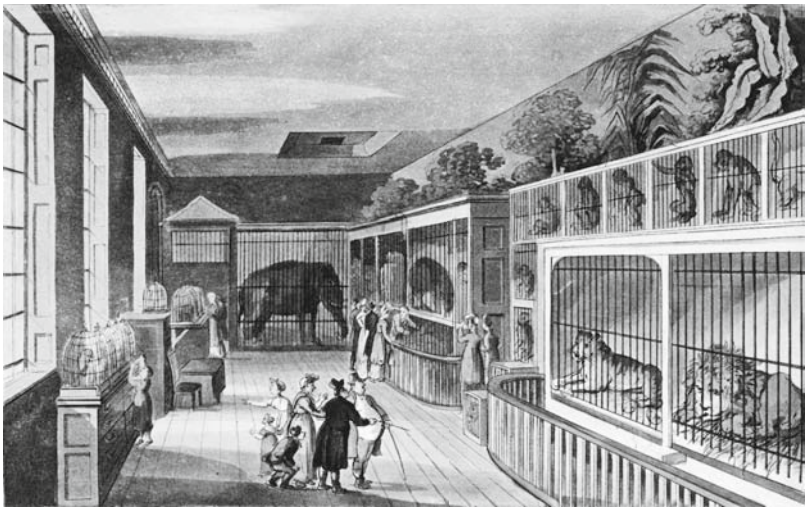


Figure 1.1 Rudolph Ackermann 'Royal Menagerie, Exeter 'Change, Strand'

Source: *The Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce*, Vol. 8 (1812), courtesy of the Yale Center for British Art.

allowing their inmates to do little more than lie torpidly behind bars; the monkeys' cages, stacked on top of the latter permit almost no movement. The painted tropical foliage mentioned in verbal accounts is depicted immediately above the top storey of cages, though this is hardly sufficient to give any air of naturalness to the scene. The visitors flock around the exhibits, looking curiously at the animals, and receiving instruction from the keeper. A party in the centre of the composition stares and points excitedly at the beasts as its members decide which to approach. Their attire and physique – bonnets, top hats, canes, and, in one case, protruding stomach – suggest that they are upper or middle class, the one shilling entry excluding less affluent members of the community. Though it conveys the overall ambience of the menagerie, Ackermann's print does not correlate precisely with contemporary advertisements, which suggest that particularly valued animals were sometimes placed in separate apartments from the main show room, and an additional fee charged to view them individually. In 1798, for instance, one publicity piece stated that 'two beautiful zebras' and 'a most astonishing elephant' could be seen 'in one apartment' and 'three Bengal striped tigers ... in another apartment'.[15] Rather than being an exact reconstruction of the exhibition, therefore, Ackermann's image is perhaps a somewhat simplified re-creation, altered for aesthetic purposes.

In addition to visiting the Tower or Exeter 'Change, eighteenth and nineteenth-century Londoners could also encounter foreign animals in a variety of other more temporary venues. These ranged from traditional sites of sociability such as taverns and coffeehouses, to annual fairs, places of commerce and more domestic settings. In 1779 an advertisement in the *Morning Post* invited 'the curious' to view 'the largest bird ever exposed to public view ... the OSTRICH' in 'an elegant and commodious room, genteelly fitted up ... at Mr Patterson's pastry cook'.[16] In 1807, meanwhile, Mr Kendrick of no. 42 Piccadilly informed the public that 'THREE CROCODILES and an ALLIGATOR' might be seen at his premises from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. 'without any other expense than the usual one of 1s each'. Kendrick, who appears to have been a dealer in animals, had earlier promoted what he described as 'the Ouran Outang or real Wild Man of the Woods' (probably in reality a mandrill, given that his face was 'of a rich blue and a blooming vermillion colour'), adding that he had 'lately received a large order to purchase any foreign animals or birds by commission, if alive, for which he will give the utmost value'.[17] Dealerships of exotic animals like Kendrick's often seem to have served a dual function, operating both as places for buying and selling rare beasts and as temporary menageries where people could view the animals on sale for a set fee.[18]

Another key exhibition venue, William Bullock's London Museum offered the public the chance to see a wide range of stuffed animals in a setting designed to evoke their native habitats. The London Museum occupied the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, from 1809 to 1819, when Bullock replaced it with another exhibition. According to the promotional literature, the museum consisted of 'upward of Fifteen Thousand species of Quadrupeds, Birds, Reptiles, Fishes, Insects, Shells, Corals, etc.', all collected and preserved by Bullock.[19] Unlike the more conventional museum layout, where stuffed specimens were displayed on shelves or in glass cases, Bullock's show simulated the natural haunts of the creatures on view, promising to transport the viewer 'from a crowded metropolis to the depth of an Indian forest'. As Bullock himself explained:

> Various animals, as the lofty Giraffa, the Lion, the Elephant, the Rhinoceros etc. are exhibited as ranging in their native wilds and forests; whilst exact Models both in figure and colour of the rarest and most luxuriant plants from every clime give all the appearance of reality, the whole being assisted with a panoramic effect of distance and appropriate scenery, affording a beautiful illustration of the luxuriance of a torrid clime.[20]

Open daily from '10 till dusk', and viewable for the price of a shilling, the London Museum catered for a primarily upper- and middle-class audience who sought visual spectacle as well as education.[21]

Zoological gardens

Though there were plenty of places in early nineteenth-century London where the public could view exotic animals, calls arose in the 1820s for a more formal, more respectable form of zoological exhibition. In neighbouring France, during the violence and social upheaval of the Revolution, Louis XVI's private menagerie at Versailles had been ransacked by the populace and the surviving animals relocated to a National Menagerie in the Parisian Jardin des Plantes. This new institution (founded in 1792) was intended to facilitate research into animal behaviour, to provide a venue for the acclimatisation of potentially useful species, to offer a home for animals given to the government by foreign rulers as gifts and to function as an educational tool for artists, who could practise drawing rare beasts.[22] Though most of the original inmates died from starvation during the subsequent revolutionary wars, the menagerie itself survived and expanded in the early nineteenth century, adding to Paris' reputation as a centre for zoological research. Where the beasts at Versailles had been closely caged, the emphasis at the National Menagerie was on creating an idyllic and naturalistic environment, in which the more peaceable animals were allowed to roam free. There was stress, too, on the scientific and educational potential of the menagerie, and, above all, its status as a 'national' institution, rather than a private princely collection.[23]

Londoners did not necessarily share the revolutionary sentiments of their French counterparts. They did, however, envy their zoological establishment, which was soon regarded throughout Europe as the model for contemporary zoological collections. Inspired by the Parisian example, British writers advocated the creation of a spacious park like that in the Jardin des Plantes in which foreign creatures could be properly exhibited and scholars working in the emerging discipline of zoology might learn about their behaviour. Such research could not be done adequately in menageries like the Tower or Exeter 'Change, where cramped, chaotic conditions constricted animals' movements and dulled their natural instincts. As zoologist James Rennie observed of the elephant:

> Whatever interest we may feel in the sagacity which is already displayed by the elephants in 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 its many peculiarities ... We cannot ... see the animal bound about in a state of nature – roll with delight in the mud ... 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 till we have a proper receptacle for the elephant in our national menagerie, the Zoological Gardens.[24]

The quest was thus on to establish a national zoological collection to rival that in Paris and provide a fashionable place of resort for pleasure-seeking Londoners. This resulted in the emergence of two zoological gardens in the British capital: the Gardens of the Zoological Society in Regent's Park and the Surrey Zoological Gardens south of the Thames.

The Gardens of the Zoological Society, Regent's Park

The institution that is now London Zoo was founded in 1828 and opened to the public the following year. Created by the Zoological Society of London, which emerged in 1826 as an offshoot of the Zoological Club, the zoo was designed to serve a variety of scientific, educational and practical functions, from the teaching of natural theology to the acclimatisation and domestication of useful foreign animals.[25] The prime instigator of the gardens was Sir Stamford Raffles, who, as Governor of Bencoolen in the East Indies, had developed an interest in exotic fauna and formed a substantial collection of his own, much of which was lost when the ship in which it was being transported sank in heavy seas.[26] Raffles and his fellow zoo promoter Sir Humphrey Davy envisaged the gardens as both a valuable resource for research and a boost to national pride, at a time when the aspiring British naturalist 'who wishes to examine animated nature has no other resource but that of visiting and profiting by the magnificent institutions of a neighbouring and rival country' (France). They also wanted the Zoological Society to foster 'the introduction of new varieties, breed and races of animals, for the purpose of domestication, or for stocking our farmyards, woods, pleasure gardens and wastes'.[27]

The gardens, when they opened, consisted of four major components spread across different sites around London. Firstly, there was the menagerie, the main element, which was situated in the Regent's Park on a plot allotted to the Zoological Society by the Government. Secondly, there

was a museum of stuffed specimens at 33 Bruton Street, later moved to larger premises in Leicester Square and finally relocated to the Gardens themselves in 1843, where it was housed in the old carnivore house.[28] Thirdly, there was a library containing the latest zoological publications, which, by 1840, included 'a complete copy of the "Planches Coloriées", of the Voyage of the Beagle, Zoological and Geographical Parts'.[29] Finally, there was a farm at Kingston-upon-Thames, a repository for live animals set apart from the public attraction and intended for the breeding of 'useful' species.

The zoological collection at the gardens was initially small and somewhat haphazard, but it grew quickly thanks to donations of animals from aristocratic patrons like the Duke of Bedford and Lord Auckland, who donated a llama and a leopard respectively.[30] Diplomats and officers serving overseas were requested to send back interesting creatures encountered on their travels, which many did (see Chapter 4). As a result, specimens for both the menagerie and the museum poured in from around the world, the 1841 haul of donations including 'a black bear from North America, presented by Alexander MacPherson', 'a crested porcupine, presented by Capt. Stubbs' and 'a purple-capped Lory, presented by Mrs Stevenson'.[31] The King also sanctioned the transfer of the beasts in the Tower Menagerie to the Regent's Park in 1831, adding further to the zoological collection.[32]

To fund the establishment of the gardens, the Zoological Society relied largely on member subscriptions. These initially cost £2 per year, but were raised to £3 in 1833.[33] Visitor receipts constituted another source of income, and, at least to begin with, furnished a substantial amount of money. The founders of the gardens made a point of contrasting the private, commercial nature of the Regent's Park establishment with the state-subsidised scientific institutions on the continent, boasting that in Britain, royal or government patronage was not necessary to establish and sustain zoos and museums. As one member of the Zoological Club, the assistant keeper of Natural History at the British Museum J.G. Children, gloated in 1827:

> It is a glorious feature in the philosophical character of Great Britain that whilst in foreign countries science owes most of her success to the fostering care of royal patronage, or the protection of executive power, here, with faint exceptions, few and far between, she relies on her own resources; and unlike the creeping parasite, raises her head in independent dignity by the individual exertions of her disinterested cultivators, who, loving her for herself, seek only to accelerate

> her progress and establish her empire in the human mind on the firm basis of immutable truth.[34]

In reality, of course, George IV did contribute to London Zoo, both ceding the Zoological Society the land for the gardens and supplying it with multiple animals that he and his successors received as diplomatic gifts. It remains true, however, that the Gardens of the Zoological Society – and the majority of other British zoos – were privately-funded ventures, the work either of groups of shareholders or individual entrepreneurs.[35]

Science and research

The Zoological Society conceived of the gardens as a prime site for scientific research into the anatomy and physiology of rare animals. In the prospectuses drafted for the establishment's foundation, and in subsequent annual reports, the Society contrasted the experience of studying animals in spacious enclosures with that of viewing them in cramped cages like those in Exeter 'Change, or as inanimate stuffed specimens exhibited in a museum. The ever-expanding collection of living beasts would, the Society prophesised, furnish 'a constant series of additions to our knowledge of the true character of animals, which can only be acquired by the Naturalist, and still more by the Artist, from healthy living specimens'.[36] To prove the point, the Society cited examples of the type of information that could be gleaned in this superior environment, suggesting that seeing exotic beasts alive and at close quarters was crucial to the progress of zoological science. Writing in 1851, for example, the author of the Society's Annual Report enthused that the presence in the gardens of an elephant calf and its mother – a zoological novelty in Europe – had 'afforded every means of studying the habits of elephantine infancy in the most satisfactory and interesting manner', permitting observations on 'the process of lactation' and other previously obscure physiological functions.[37]

To foster the exchange and dissemination of zoological research, the Zoological Society published regular transactions detailing the latest discoveries made in its establishment. These were circulated widely to 'many of the most important scientific societies in Great Britain, on the Continent and in the United States of America, as well as to some of those situated in the most distant dependencies of this country'.[38] The latest publications in natural history were collated and stored in the Society's library, for use by its members, while popular lectures on zoology were delivered at the Society's headquarters, often based around

living (or recently deceased) specimens in the gardens. The Society also commissioned artists to execute accurate anatomical drawings of its most valuable specimens, some of which were specifically targeted at a non-specialist audience and designed to serve an educational purpose. In 1848, for example, the Council of the Zoological Society elected to publish 'a series of Illustrative Plates in 8vo, which it is hoped will supply a desideratum in zoological literature', and which were to be sold 'at a low price' to the general public.[39] In 1852 the Society contracted the respected Austrian artist Joseph Wolf to complete 'a series of drawings' of its rarest creatures, conscious of 'the great value of an accurate artistic record of the living form and expression of the rarer species of animals which exist in the menagerie'.[40] It was hoped that the publication of images and delivery of lectures would engage with the wider scientific community and cultivate a broader popular interest in natural history. Wolf's images in particular captured the public imagination, for though based on the animals in the zoo, the subjects are depicted in vivid, life-like tableaux, and filled with character and vitality, fostering a more sentimental view of animals that would sharpen as the century wore on. The Austrian's image of the hippopotamus, for example, shows a yawning pachyderm entering an African lake, while his image of the elk shows a pair of muscular animals striding across the snowy tundra of the Arctic.

The Zoological Society envisaged the gardens not only as a site for scientific research, but as a place for the naturalisation of useful foreign beasts. This objective was espoused with particular vigour by the aristocratic backers of the zoo, who 'emphasised its benefit in terms of the introduction of new game to stock their parks and ponds'.[41] Animals that were good to eat or whose coats might be used in the textile industry were earmarked as priority candidates for naturalisation. Though only the more hardy species were likely to survive in the British climate, ambitious plans were made to naturalise handsome and edible beasts in the hope that they would soon grace British fields and tables. In 1840, the Council advocated 'the propagation of the Guans and Currasows, those Gallinaceous birds which supply the place of peacocks in the forests of South America, and which, from their size and beauty and the superior delicacy of their flesh, are likely ... to form a valuable accession to our poultry and farmyards'.[42] The South American alpaca, 'the earless sheep' of Shanghai and the South African eland were also considered for naturalisation, the former for their wool and the latter for its meat, which apparently tasted like veal with 'a soupçon of pheasant flavour'.[43]

To begin with, breeding experiments took place at the farm at Kingston Hill. When financial constraints and shifting priorities led this establishment to be disbanded in 1834, alternative arrangements were put in place and breeding was transferred to the zoological gardens themselves. The offspring of animals that bred successfully were often sent to individual members of the Society so that they could be reared on large estates in the provinces and naturalised in Britain more widely. In 1857, the Society sold three eland fawns to the Marquis of Bredalbane, 'for the purpose of establishing them in Scotland', and some wapiti deer to Lord Hardinge, who proposed to rear them in his private park at Melton Constable.[44] Adrian Desmond has pointed to tensions throughout the early years of the zoo between the practitioners of zoological science and aristocratic game breeders, suggesting the ultimate triumph of the former by the 1830s.[45]

Social function and engagement

Initially London Zoo operated a rather exclusive admissions policy. Only members of the Zoological Society and their families enjoyed automatic access to the gardens. Everyone else had to pay an entry fee of one shilling and obtain a letter of recommendation from one of the Society's fellows in order to gain admission, a process that – though in practice easily circumvented – acted as something of a deterrent to the casual visitor.[46] Some charity schools were admitted for free, but in general, owing to the expense and difficulty of getting in, middle-class audiences predominated.[47] The lower orders were confined for the most part to walking along the southern boundary of the gardens, where they could 'view gratuitously several splendid specimens of the buffalo, zebra, camel etc'.[48]

In 1847, motivated in part by social reformers, who advocated rational recreation for the masses as an antidote to drunkenness and immorality, and, more pressingly, by falling visitor numbers, the Zoological Society relaxed its admission policy to accommodate the poorer classes. Visitors were now admitted without a letter of recommendation. They were also granted access to the gardens at half price (6d) every Monday, making the institution economically accessible to a wider stratum of society.[49] Under the new entry criteria, the number of visitors to the gardens greatly increased (Figure 1.2) and the Zoological Society focused more intently on satisfying popular tastes by acquiring animals that would appeal to the wider public through their rarity and exotic forms. The Zoo's Secretary David Mitchell introduced what was known as a 'starring

system', whereby the most popular animals were fêted as zoological 'stars'. In 1852, for instance, the Council justified the recent purchase of an elephant and calf on the grounds that 'the extreme interest created by the possession of so young a specimen of this pachyderm' would generate revenue for the gardens.[50] Two years earlier, in 1850, the hippopotamus Obaysch had been the talk of the town, attracting visitors in their thousands and spawning a whole industry of hippo-themed paraphernalia, from 'ornaments for the dinner table' and 'toys for the boudoir' to a comical play entitled 'The Hippopotamus' and a 'Hippopotamus Polka' (to be played 'meditatingly and slow' in order to achieve a proper hippo-like feel).[51] A horse named 'Hippopotamus' was even listed as one of the runners at the Doncaster races.[52]

Despite fears to the contrary, lower-class visitors generally conducted themselves appropriately at the zoo, assuaging concerns that they would misbehave if given access to public museums and gardens. The Report of the Zoological Society of 1854 explicitly commended the 'extreme order and good conduct which pervaded the whole assemblage' of Whitsun visitors, estimating that over seven thousand people had visited the

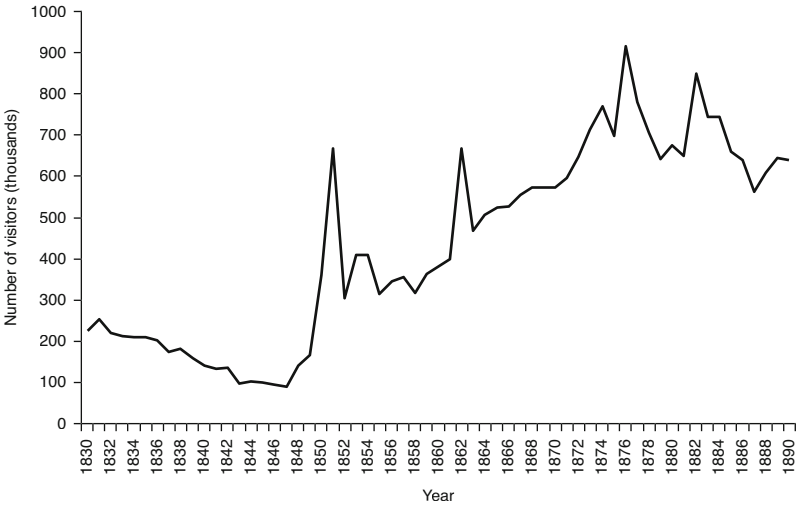


Figure 1.2 Visitors to London Zoo, 1830–1890. The two most successful years for the Gardens were 1876, when the Prince of Wales donated a large collection of animals from India to the Zoological Society, and 1882, when thousands flocked to see Jumbo the elephant (see Chapter 6). The jump in attendance in 1851 was due primarily to the Great Exhibition.

Source: Figures taken from *Reports of the Council and Auditors of the Zoological Gardens of London* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1831–1891).

gardens for twenty consecutive Mondays during the summer months.[53] An earlier article in *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, advocating the extension of opening hours to Sunday (a thorny issue), pointed, likewise, to the excellent behaviour of working-class visitors on holiday Mondays. *Lloyds* noted, not without a hint a condescension, that since non-fellows had been allowed in, 'not a single lion has been carried off', 'no woman decamped with a lovebird in her reticule and no mischievous urchin left the gardens with a rattlesnake in his pocket'. The zoological gardens, far from encouraging bad behaviour, acted as a vehicle for civilising the masses, diverting them from less salubrious locales like 'the public house and tea gardens and skittle grounds'.[54]

As it widened its social appeal, the Regent's Park Zoological Gardens also established itself as a distinguished venue on the London tourist circuit, becoming one of the metropolis' must-see attractions. The zoo harmonised well with other cultural institutions such as the British Museum, and came to be seen as a fashionable, healthful place, destined to 'afford considerable enlivenment to a region which, although perhaps affording the purest air in the metropolis, is seldom visited, except ... by elderly persons for their morning airings, or by grooms having restive horses to exercise'.[55] The gardens rivalled other similar institutions on the continent – most particularly the menagerie at the Parisian Jardin des Plantes – becoming one of the regular stopovers for foreign dignitaries. In 1838, Marshal Soult and the Prince and Princess of Capua visited the gardens; in 1842 the King of Prussia conducted 'a minute survey of all the animals ... in this favourite (we might say national) place of amusement'; and in 1844 Emperor Nicholas I of Russia enjoyed a lengthy excursion to the establishment, 'visiting successively all the attractive features of the place' and 'lastly inspecting the giraffe', with which he declared himself 'much pleased'.[56] The zoo was seen as beautifying and enriching the capital – or, as the above quotation suggests, perhaps even the nation – forming an important cultural attraction with which to impress foreign visitors.

Once London Zoo opened up to the general public, it also fulfilled a broader role in educating and entertaining the middle and lower classes. The zoo served as a place for exercise, leisure and rational recreation, where Londoners could escape the toil and fumes of the city. It functioned equally – and was consciously marketed – as a microcosm of the British Empire, in which ordinary Britons could get a tangible sense of British power and enterprise overseas, and even, through a ride on an elephant or a glimpse of the hippopotamus, simulate on a small scale the experience of the colonial official or big game hunter. 'From the

mid-nineteenth century onwards the animals were regarded not as present beings but rather as signs and commodities upon which a number of competing and complementary ideologies, fantasies and dreams were meticulously inscribed'.[57] Though not all visitors would necessarily have imbibed such images, repeated references in guidebooks to the origins of particular animals and their connection to overseas exploration and trade must have made an impression on many and given them a sense of what the empire was all about. As *The Times* rhapsodised in 1853: 'It is one of the minor advantages of our extended commerce and our immense colonial empire that whenever there is a rare species of bird, reptile or quadruped to be found, it is forthwith caught and consigned to very comfortable quarters for the rest of its life in the Regent's Park', enabling 'the least travelled, by a short ride in an omnibus' to 'see more than if he were a Nimrod or a Cummings'.[58]

Surrey Zoological Gardens

In 1831 a second zoological garden was founded in London: the Surrey Zoological Gardens. Situated in Walworth, to the south of the capital, the Surrey opened to the public on 13 August that year.[59] It was financed by subscriptions from local supporters and managed by the showman Edward Cross, formerly of Exeter 'Change. The Surrey was closely modelled on the Regent's Park, though it regarded itself as a protégé of that institution rather than a rival; as its founders remarked, they had 'neither wish nor intention ... to interfere with the Parent Society', but wanted merely to provide the people of Brixton, Clapham and South Lambeth with 'an institution which, by its readiness of access, may present to an influential and populous district a source of rational enjoyment'.[60] The Surrey was initially intended to be a place for scientific research, equipped with 'a library, lecture-room, laboratory, museum, botanic garden and all the apparatus of a scientific and literary institution', but this plan was ultimately abandoned in favour of a narrower remit based on education and, increasingly, entertainment.[61] London's second zoo thus emerged as a more commercial variant of the gardens of the Zoological Society, serving a similar demographic of elite and middle-class visitors.

The Surrey, like the Regent's Park Zoological Gardens, acquired its first complement of animals from an existing collection, in this case Cross's establishment at Exeter 'Change. As the years went by and the gardens expanded, new animals were added from other sources. Some were donated by royalty, such as the 'majestic Oude elephant' presented

by William IV, while others were procured by commissioned agents, like the three giraffes secured by the zoo's agent in Cairo, John Warwick, in 1836.[62] Where the Regent's Park Zoological Gardens received frequent donations from overseas ambassadors and foreign princes, the Surrey seems to have been more reliant on the work of agents like Warwick, again reflecting its more commercial character. According to William Tyler, who took over from Cross as manager in 1844, this put the Surrey at something of a disadvantage to its north London counterpart, which, 'being the constant recipient of presents of animals from crowned heads, ambassadors and other notabilities, had advantages against which it was in vain for any individual speculation to attend'.[63]

Partly because it was less favoured in its access to exotic animals, and partly, no doubt, because Cross was an astute showman, the Surrey Zoological Gardens quickly diversified its entertainments, offering a variety of other spectacles to the paying public. From early on in its existence, the zoo played host to balloon ascents and concerts, organised a number of fêtes and held regular 'fancy fairs', featuring a variety of performers. In 1836 two French strongmen performed on the grounds. In 1837 a 'fancy dress fête' was held to raise money for 'the distressed Highlanders and Islanders' and in 1844 the famous American dwarf General Tom Thumb put in an appearance.[64] Members of the public who preferred to take a more active role in events could participate in the annual flower shows, enter their prize fowls in the 1853 'show of poultry &c.' or, in 1855, enter their children into a 'Baby Show' at the gardens, £5 being presented 'to the parents of the prettiest baby under the age of twelve months'.[65] Those who wished to eat as they toured the zoo were served with a variety of refreshments at the on-site restaurant, where the menu included 'ices … sandwiches, tea, coffee and pastry, ginger-beer, soda and lemonade'.[66]

In addition to fairs and shows, the Surrey became particularly famous for its panoramas or painted tableaux. Each depicting an exotic locale or re-enacting a recent battle, these vivid recreations consisted of a huge painting or model of a famous scene, the subject changing each season to ensure novelty. In 1837 a reconstruction of Mount Vesuvius was the big draw, while in 1845 the zoo featured 'a truly magnificent modelled representation of Edinburgh', showing 'the old and new town, the Nor' Lock, as it formerly existed, the Carlton-hill, Nelson's Monument, Arthur's Seat … the Castle, Sir Walter Scott's Monument, the Royal Institution [and] Holyrood Palace'.[67] In 1855 the topical novelty was 'the gigantic modelled representation of the siege and bombardment of

Sebastopol' in the recent Crimean War, brought to life by 'the martial strains of an effective band'.[68] These pageants proved very popular and usually met with rave reviews from critics. Sometimes the pictures toured the country after they had made their appearance in the gardens, giving them wider exposure to the British public.

While all of these supplementary amusements made the Surrey financially viable, they diminished the value of its original function as a zoo and made the exotic animals less important as attractions in themselves. When the establishment first opened, the focus was very much on the rare beasts. Their acquisition was advertised widely in the press, and Cross and Tyler issued personal invitations to subscribers offering a sneak preview of the newest and most interesting arrivals. In April 1834, for instance, Lord Proudhoe was invited to 'a private view' of the rhinoceros 'on the 4th instant from 12 till 3 o'clock'.[69] As time went by, however, the Surrey metamorphosed into a general pleasure garden and the animals ceased to be the main draw. The menagerie continued to be stocked, and visitors to the gardens still went to see it, but the fireworks and panoramas took pride of place. As Tyler put it, 'a very short experience ... proved that the wonders of zoology were not sufficient as an attraction, as even the second live giraffe ever seen in this country, although brought over at enormous expense, failed to draw before the end of the first season'.[70]

Given this attitude, it is not surprising that the zoological element of the Surrey was finally dispensed with in November 1855, when Tyler auctioned off the menagerie to raise money for the building of a music hall. Held in the gardens under the supervision of Mr J.C. Stevens, the auction featured 138 separate lots, including 'a red and blue macaw', 'a wombat' and 'an elephant (very fine)'.[71] The sale was attended by 'about five hundred people' ranging from 'regular animal dealers' to 'proprietors of shows both large and small'. According to Charles Dickens, who went to watch, the animals 'realised very fair prices'.[72] Early the following year the fixtures and fittings of the menagerie were also sold off, giving interested parties a chance to buy 'two snake baths', 'a lion's den' and 'a glass cage containing stuffed birds'.[73] After the dispersal of the animal collection, the Surrey gardens became exclusively about entertainment and the original zoo in Regent's Park was once again the prime zoological exhibition in town. The timing of the Surrey's demise coincides with the closure of a number of similar gardens in the provinces (Chapter 2), perhaps marking a nationwide dip in enthusiasm for zoological exhibitions.

Conclusion

London had a long tradition of exhibiting, selling and studying exotic animals. In the eighteenth century this was mainly the preserve of small-scale dealers, showing rare creatures on their own premises, in the streets or in traditional social spaces like coffeehouses. In the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the zoological garden emerged as the fashionable venue for viewing exotic beasts, supplanting Exeter 'Change and the Tower. Royal and privately owned collections shifted into the public domain, attaining a national status. Zoos emerged along with other venues like museums and botanical gardens as places for rational recreation. They have also been seen as playing an important role in showcasing Britain's commercial prowess and imperial power, displaying simultaneously man's dominion over the animals and Britain's growing influence around the globe.

London led the way in founding zoological gardens. Before long, however, the fashion had become more widespread and zoos were being established across the British Isles. Some of these copied the scholarly model pioneered by the Gardens of the Zoological Society, while others adopted the more commercial model favoured by the Surrey. In the next chapter, I look at the formation of zoological institutions outside of London and consider their meaning and significance to local people.

2
Zoo, Community and Civic Pride

> Lord Mayo, we read, has, at his own expense, sent an elephant to the Dublin Zoological Gardens. It is not, we hope, a white one. (*Manchester Times*, 3 July 1869)

In June 1848, tragedy struck at the Liverpool Zoological Gardens when the 'fine elephant Rajah' crushed to death his keeper, Richard Howard. The accident happened on a Saturday morning, when Howard had gone into the elephant's house to clean it. According to two visitors who witnessed the incident, a 'Mr and Mrs Liversedge, from a village about three miles from Stockport', Howard had ordered the animal to move from one side of the den to the other, for access purposes. Rajah, however, refused to budge, and when the keeper punished him for his disobedience by beating him with a broom the elephant knocked him to the floor and trampled on him, 'smashing, there is little doubt, every bone in his body'. Though several keepers rushed to their colleague's assistance, Howard's injuries proved fatal; he expired just minutes after being removed from the den.

Upon being informed of the accident, the owner of the gardens, Mr John Atkins decided to have the elephant destroyed. This was not Rajah's first offence – he had killed another keeper four years earlier – and, though the animal seemed serene enough, Mr Atkins judged it necessary, for public safety, to remove him from the menagerie. Determined upon this course of action, the proprietor initially opted to use poison to do the job, administering 'two ounces of prussic acid' in a treacle bun. When this failed to dispatch the elephant, Atkins summoned soldiers from the local barracks to shoot the beast, requesting a battalion of men armed with rifles and also 'two canon pieces' in case the animal became rowdy. Two rounds of bullets were required to kill Rajah, who in the end collapsed 'almost without a struggle' (Figure 2.1).[1]

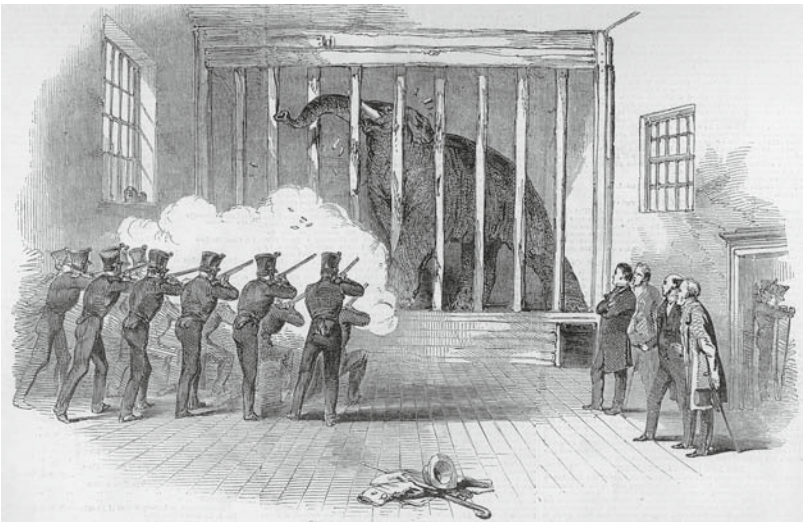


Figure 2.1 'Shooting the elephant "Rajah" at the Liverpool Zoological Gardens', *Illustrated London News*, 24 June 1848

The violent death of Rajah the elephant represented a severe blow to Mr Atkins, whose family had owned the animal for 'between eleven and twelve years', and who valued Rajah at 'at least £1,000'. More than just a financial loss, however, Rajah's demise appears to have been seen as a sad fate for a much loved beast. A well-known character in the locality, the elephant was regarded with affection by the public, having established himself as '"the pet" of all who frequented the gardens'. Rajah had endeared himself to local people by parading 'round the gardens on gala nights, with an eastern car, filled by those who chose the honour of such a conveyance'. He had further cemented his reputation as a local favourite through regular performances in the Christmas pantomime at Liverpool's Theatre Royal.[2] With such accomplishments to his name, Rajah was something of a local celebrity, making his premature end a source of real sadness. One man was so moved by Rajah's death that he wrote a long letter to the local paper, mourning the animal's passing and criticising the hasty manner in which the elephant had been executed. 'The poor fellow was a well-known favourite, not only to hundreds, but to thousands, and not only to the inhabitants of Liverpool, but to the surrounding towns of England and Wales', eulogised the writer, who was himself from Holywell in Flintshire. 'Many who had not yet made their summer visits to the gardens from the country must feel quite

disappointed at not having another opportunity of seeing their old favourite.' The zoo director, moreover, had 'violated ... the right of the visiting public and subscribers to the gardens' by not consulting them before sentencing the beloved beast to death.[3] Rajah's shooting was thus a notable local event, and one that evoked strong emotions from at least some contemporaries.

The Rajah saga, though rather melodramatic, is illustrative of the way in which zoological gardens, and particular animals in them, forged close and sometimes sentimental links with the local community. Rajah's death, as we have seen, was widely reported in both the local and national press, where it was interpreted as a tragic blow to Liverpool Zoo. The elephant was well known to local people, who clearly saw him as more than just a zoological specimen in a den. Because Mr Atkins loaned him out to the city theatre, he was even familiar to individuals who never even went to the gardens. Furthermore, as the heartfelt letter in the *Liverpool Mercury* indicates, some of Rajah's admirers paid regular visits to the zoo and regarded the elephant as an old favourite. A few, like the writer himself, felt a degree of investment in the institution, to the extent that they believed they were entitled to a say as to the fate of the elephant; they regarded 'the gardens and its animals', as 'in one sense, public property'.[4] The relationship between the zoological garden and the local community was not, therefore just a passive one, in which the proprietor exhibited animals and the public came to look at them, but an active one, in which the latter felt, to a degree, that they communally owned the institution and its contents.

This chapter looks at the relationship between zoos and civic identity. Zoological gardens are often studied as sites for the construction and transmission of imperial consciousness, with major national institutions such as London Zoo receiving most attention to date.[5] Less work has been done on zoos in a local context, however, and fewer studies have been written about zoos in other parts of Britain. The focus of this chapter is therefore on the relationship between zoological collections and urban improvement in mid-nineteenth century Britain and the ways in which zoological gardens – like museums, scientific societies, fashionable shops, theatres and other symbols of urban 'politeness' – could foster civic and regional pride.[6] I begin by outlining the circumstances surrounding the foundation of zoological gardens in the provinces – notably in Dublin, Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol, Edinburgh and Hull. I then consider how these institutions integrated themselves into their respective local communities through educational initiatives, charitable events and carefully planned fund-raising strategies.

Before looking in detail at how this community focus played itself out in different regional settings, it should be noted that zoos often failed in their efforts to engage community support, owing to elitist admission practices, public apathy or unrealistic expectations. Though many were short-lived, and their aims misconceived, I am interested in how the language of community was nonetheless repeatedly invoked by the upper- and middle-class founders of gardens – and in the local press – to justify their creation or continued existence, as well as why ideals did not always translate smoothly into reality. When zoos were failing financially, local papers often published pleas for public support, emphasising what a disgrace it would be to the city if the establishment were to close. Concerned citizens also wrote in to newspaper correspondence pages suggesting solutions to the problem of keeping their respective gardens open. When, conversely, zoos adopted entry criteria or opening hours that appeared to exclude the poorer sectors of the community, or, as in the case cited above, when they destroyed a beloved animal, letters were written denouncing their mean spiritedness and suggesting that this contravened the establishments' intended social and educational purposes. The chapter will explore how zoos presented themselves as civic amenities, catering to the needs of local people and, on occasion, requesting their assistance. I am also interested in how zoological gardens and their contents served to situate cities within a wider imperial context, highlighting at once their regional importance and their global connections.[7]

Foundation

Zoological gardens were established in a number of British cities in the 1830s and 1840s. The first zoo outside London, Dublin Zoological Gardens, was founded in 1831.[8] The second, Liverpool Zoological Gardens, opened in 1833, under the supervision of ex-menagerist Thomas Atkins (see Chapter 3). A third, Bristol Zoological Gardens, was established in 1836, and a fourth, Manchester's Belle Vue Gardens, opened in the same year. A spate of new zoos followed, including Manchester (separate from Belle Vue, which was a privately run institution), Cheltenham, Leeds and Kent (at Gravesend) in 1838, and Hull and Edinburgh in 1840. Gardens were contemplated in Newcastle in 1838, though these never actually materialised.[9] In Brighton, meanwhile, a small zoological collection survived for less than a year in 1832 before bankruptcy prematurely terminated its existence.[10] Birmingham, something of a late starter, did not acquire a permanent zoological garden until 1873.[11]

As these cases illustrate, zoological gardens germinated primarily in major administrative or industrial cities, and in cities that conceived of themselves as cultural centres and places of learning. Zoos emerged, unsurprisingly, in port cities, whose seaboard location and role as commercial hubs gave them a logistical advantage when it came to importing exotic beasts.[12] They also appeared in spa towns and seaside resorts such as Cheltenham and Brighton, which experienced significant growth from the eighteenth century onwards.[13] Viewed by their founders as important constituents of civic pride, zoological gardens were expected to elevate and beautify their respective cities and to complement other civic institutions such as museums, art galleries and botanical gardens. Zoological collections also slotted nicely into the prevailing culture of 'rational recreation', effectively combining enjoyment and learning with healthful physical exercise. The directors of Manchester Zoological Gardens thus anticipated that the establishment would 'heighten the enjoyment of the wealthy, recreate the busy, give new ideas to the artist, cheer the convalescent' and assist 'the good mother' in 'the education of her children'. The gardens would function, too, as 'an attractive and improving place of resort' for the working classes, well calculated 'to improve the understanding and to diminish the temptations to intemperance, vice and grossness'.[14]

Keen to distinguish themselves from travelling menageries, zoological gardens consistently stressed the superior conditions they offered for animals. More spacious enclosures and better care regimes would, it was hoped, furnish a better work environment for the amateur zoologist, who would find himself 'supplied with specimens which will serve to illustrate his reading'.[15] A more salubrious environment would equally alleviate the sense of pity and guilt that occasionally oppressed the visitor to a touring wild beast show, making the whole experience of seeing exotic animals more pleasurable and fulfilling. The owner of the Liverpool Zoological Gardens boasted that his elephants and rhinoceroses were 'of the most stupendous size, acquired by their daily exercises and ablutions', inviting 'the naturalist' to 'judge the superiority of witnessing animals in the Zoological Gardens compared with those confined in close dens'.[16]

The supporters of zoological gardens also expatiated at length on the cultural value of such institutions, emphasising their significance as symbols of civic progress and enlightenment. Reading contemporary newspaper reports and correspondence, we get a distinct sense of conscious inter-city competition and even, in the case of Edinburgh, national rivalry, which compelled prominent cities to surpass each

other's scientific and cultural achievements, and made having a zoological establishment a matter of civic pride. The residents of cities that were founding zoological gardens prophesised confidently that their home towns offered the ideal conditions for such an institution. A zoo was a perfect vehicle for demonstrating the mercantile spirit and wealth of the locality, and was sure to prosper with the support of enlightened, self-improving citizens. Conversely, the inhabitants of cities that did not yet have zoos questioned why this was the case. If their size, commercial potential or public spirit augured well for a venture of this kind, then why had it not been attempted? Two Scottish cases provide a good example of this mind-set. In Edinburgh, which acquired a zoo in 1840, supporters cherished the establishment as, 'as far as Scotland is concerned, a national institution', which would, along with the University museum, 'contribute to the attractions of the Modern Athens, drawing many, who have no particular tie to any other place, to pitch their residence here'.[17] In Glasgow, on the other hand, which did not have a zoo, a 'friend of improvements' wrote to the local paper in 1844 urging that one be founded. If 'the experiment has been tried in Edinburgh, apparently with success', might it 'not be equally [successful] *here*?'[18] Zoos therefore represented sites of civic growth and noteworthy tourist attractions, appealing to both locals and strangers. In this they followed the same trajectory as (and were indeed, intimately associated with) provincial museums, which likewise functioned as 'manifestations of civic pride' and 'evidence of the sophistication of one town in contrast to its neighbours, the capital and the wider empire'.[19]

Zoo and community

Provincial zoological gardens not only fashioned themselves as civic ventures, but engaged actively with the local community in a number of ways. The first of these was through appeals for monetary support. Buying rare animals and landscaping parkland in a suitably picturesque manner were expensive endeavours, so the directors of zoos needed to find innovative ways of raising the necessary capital. To a large extent, the funding for gardens came from subscribers and shareholders – as in London – with a further income being generated by ticket sales at the gate.[20] On occasion, however, when the usual sources of money were insufficient to cover some particularly costly or prestigious project, zoo directors made one-off appeals to the local community, calling upon the latter's civic conscience. These more high-profile campaigns for funding, mostly centred on a particularly

noteworthy animal, were an effective way of accruing a large amount of money in a short period, which was sometimes imperative if the beast in question was subject to competition from other zoos and menageries or required urgent accommodation. More significantly, perhaps, focused appeals had the psychological advantage of giving locals a sense of ownership of the zoo, thereby consolidating ties with the city's residents.[21]

One example of this type of campaign occurred in Bristol in 1838. On this occasion, the Bristol Zoological Gardens had been offered 'a pair of fine young Barbary lions' by a local animal dealer, but, lacking sufficient funds to buy them outright, its directors sought to raise the money by organising a special Grand Gala, the proceeds of which would go towards the animals' purchase. To maximise ticket sales, the organisers arranged for admissions to be sold, not just from the zoo itself, but at various local retailers, including Mr Miller's, Seedman, Clare Street, Mr Giles', Chemist, Royal York Crescent and Mr Hazard's, Confectioner, St. Augustine's Parade. The zoo directors enjoined all the 'friends of this institution' in the city to 'take tickets in proportion to their zeal for its success', speculating that, 'as tickets may be had at different places, both in Bristol and Clifton', it would 'give those an opportunity of assisting who, either from ill health or other causes, may be prevented from attending'. The *Bristol Mercury* specifically entreated 'the residents near the gardens, who on the nights of the exhibitions ask large parties to view the fireworks from their houses', to 'contribute their portion to this valuable addition to the menagerie, as a return for the amusement which they have hitherto gratuitously received'.[22]

Several years later, the Royal Zoological Society of Ireland likewise solicited funds from members and the wider public to cover the cost of construction of a new house for the giraffe, Albert, recently donated to Dublin Zoological Gardens by the Zoological Society of London. Though Albert already had a temporary residence in the zoo, the young giraffe's 'extremely rapid growth' meant that this modest structure no longer satisfied his bodily needs, 'his horns suffer[ing] much from striking against the ceiling. Desiring to provide as becomes the Society for so munificent a donation, and at the same time knowing that their funds would not without aid enable them to do so', the Royal Zoological Society petitioned 'the members at large for contributions, intending to build not only a house for the giraffe, but one which would accommodate the elephant and camel, both fine animals imperfectly housed'. The Society accepted that the new building would be costly, but justified

its request for financial support on the grounds of animal welfare and national honour. It was essential, it argued, to provide 'for the due protection of the giraffe, which they could not have purchased for £700, and which was sought, accepted and received with a full assurance on the behalf of the society that the gift should be duly valued and taken all possible care of'.[23] A total of £114 5s was ultimately raised for the giraffe house from 114 separate donors, among them the Archbishop of Dublin, who gave £5, Lord Talbot de Malahide, who donated £1 and Miss Ribton, who also donated £1.[24]

If asking for monetary aid was one way of forging links with the local community, appeals for specimens constituted another even more direct connection. Often founded, as we have seen, in sea ports or commercial hubs, zoological gardens in the provinces relied to a large extent on the generosity of sailors and other travellers to furnish them with free or discounted specimens for their collections. Local citizens with overseas links, private menageries or unwanted exotic pets could assist materially in the collecting effort by offering living donations to their local zoos, simultaneously 'free[ing] themselves of the trouble of taking care of them … ensur[ing] their good treatment and promot[ing] the interest of an institution every way deserving of the public support'.[25] Gentry with surplus foliage could donate trees and bushes to fledgling zoological gardens,[26] while local tradesmen could do their bit by providing supplies or services for free; Morris Roberts, director of Birmingham Zoological Gardens, requested 'Bakers having Stale Bread suitable for elephants and bears' to forward it to the zoo, thereby reducing food bills.[27] By acknowledging generous contributions in their official guidebooks, zoological gardens publicised the efforts of donors, giving them some kudos in the local community and ensuring that visitors were aware of their offerings – something which probably had more significance in a provincial institution, where those who donated animals might well have been known to spectators personally, than in a national zoo. The 1839 guide to the Liverpool Zoological Garden, for example, cited the names, and in some cases addresses of notable donors: the 'llama' was 'presented by Charles Tayleur, Dingle Park', the 'green parakeet', by 'Mr Smart, Whitechapel, wireworker to the Establishment', and the 'jaguar', by 'Mr Gill, surgeon, Seel Street'.[28]

Sometimes zoological gardens cast their net more widely, entreating townsmen overseas to remember their institutions while on their travels. Emblematic of this approach was the Edinburgh Zoological Society, whose directors reasoned in their 1844 annual meeting that, since 'Scotsmen – especially natives of Edinburgh – were to be found in

all parts of the globe', a wide range of donations might reasonably be expected.[29] Just months after this rallying call was issued, the Society received a letter from a group of Scottish colonists in Demerara, stating that they had recently forwarded 'a tiger cat and several excellent specimens of snakes' to the gardens, and had even formed their own Natural History Society to choreograph future donations, desirous, 'though separated by the wide Atlantic', of 'affording our assistance to an institution so well calculated to amuse and improve all classes of our fellow citizens'. The Edinburgh Zoological Society interpreted this generous donation as evidence of 'the warm interest which our friends in foreign lands take in the prosperity of our institution', expressing the hope that 'the noble and spirited example of our respected countrymen in British Guyana' would be imitated elsewhere. 'Were associations of the same kind at work in Africa, India, China and other tropical colonies', it conjectured, 'our Zoological Gardens might speedily boast of being the first zoological museum in the world'. The zoo thus interacted successfully not only with enthusiasts in the immediate locality, but with a global Scottish diaspora whose 'best feelings and affections' remained 'centred in [their] native land'.[30]

Zoological Gardens therefore engaged with the wider community by asking for its help in the form of both money and physical specimens. Though such requests were important in cementing the zoo's place within the city, this relationship was not all one-way traffic, but rather a reciprocal one. Zoological Gardens not only asked for assistance and charity, but also offered the same services in return. To embed themselves more firmly within the local community, gardens attempted to cater for the needs of people in their locality, making themselves part of the fabric of civic society.

Firstly, zoological gardens assisted the local community by raising money for charity. Galas, concerts and fairs were often held in their grounds on evenings or public holidays, offering additional entertainments to pleasure seekers. When there were no lions to be purchased, the proceeds from these festivities were frequently donated to good causes in the locality, thereby advertising the benevolence of the zoo. In 1834, for instance, funds raised at a bazaar at the Liverpool Zoological Gardens were split between six city charities, £20 going to the Liverpool Infirmary, £13 6d to the Ladies' Charity, £15 to the Dispensaries, £10 to the Bluecoat Hospital, £10 to the Deaf and Dumb School and £10 to the North Infirmary.[31]

A second way in which zoological gardens manifested their community spirit was by admitting impoverished local children for free,

following the example of travelling menageries. Bristol Zoological Gardens admitted children from the Clifton National School gratis in June 1838, to celebrate Queen Victoria's coronation, feeding each youngster 'a good dinner of plum pudding' once they had finished their tour.[32] Dublin Zoological Gardens followed suit, admitting 742 children from 14 different charity schools in 1849.[33] An excursion to the zoo was perceived as an uplifting and cheering outing for less privileged youngsters, an opportunity for them to expand their minds and expend their energy.

A less common but more imaginative way for a zoological garden to engage with the local community was by allowing its most exquisite animals to participate in local pageants. Menagerists, as we shall see, already did this when the opportunity arose, primarily as a publicity stunt. Zoos, more embedded within a particular city, were quick to emulate their example, and sometimes made an effort to exhibit their inmates beyond the confines of the gardens themselves. The Liverpool Zoological Garden, for instance, permitted the elephant, Rajah, to feature in a production of Bluebeard in the Liverpool Theatre Royal during the winter of 1835, along with a large dromedary and, with less obvious relevance to the oriental theme, that 'beautiful and curious animal the llama'.[34] The directors of the Edinburgh Zoological Gardens likewise leased their female elephant to appear in a procession through the city to celebrate the foundation of public baths for the working classes.[35] Such gestures cemented the reputation of zoos as contributors to civic culture, and were usually gratefully acknowledged in the local press. They operated simultaneously as a useful form of free publicity for the gardens, encouraging viewers to go and see the other wonders on offer in these institutions.

Some zoological gardens went a step further and proactively choreographed formal tours for their most popular animals so that less wealthy or less mobile spectators could catch a glimpse of them. Hull Zoological Garden took this approach in 1842, when it arranged for its beloved performing elephant to pass through the neighbouring towns in the weeks before Christmas. Designed to advertise the establishment's civic credentials and to bolster its popularity, the elephant's tour was envisaged explicitly as a form of public outreach. The zoo directors stipulated in their publicity that the purpose of the tour was 'to afford the servants and children during the Martinmas week an opportunity of witnessing [the elephant's] wonderful feats'. The bellman in Driffield entered into the spirit of things, grandly announcing the performing pachyderm as 'the most biggest wonder in the world'.[36]

Trouble in paradise

Despite such acts of reciprocal generosity, relations between the zoological gardens and the public were not invariably harmonious. On the contrary, there were instances when community spirit appeared to be notably lacking, either on the part of the zoo, for offering miserly concessions to generous local citizens, or from the public, for failing to support a worthy institution with the necessary fervour and consistency. When either party appeared to be letting the side down and detracting from the zoo's status as an educational community facility, recriminations were loudly voiced, often through the medium of letters to a local newspaper. Such recriminations were frequently levelled when gardens were initially proposed, as conscientious and active townsmen first started to canvass for support for a garden, but found it wanting from some sectors of society. Criticisms also surfaced later on if below-par takings from visitors threatened particular zoological gardens with closure – a fate that many faced in the economic depression of the 1840s, and to which some ultimately succumbed. In both instances, a particular emphasis was placed on how the indifference of the paying public or, on occasion, the parsimony and social exclusivity of the management, reflected poorly, not only on the gardens, but on the city as a whole.

The birth pains of the new zoological gardens formed the backdrop for the first bout of civic soul searching. As zoos emerged in various British cities, the residents of places that did not yet possess one started to question why this was the case. In some instances, it was suggested that public will was lacking or focused on less laudable enterprises. In others particular groups were explicitly branded as unhelpful or actively obstructive. This selfish behaviour was perceived as having negative results not only for the prospective gardens, but more significantly, for the reputation of the city in a national context.

One early advocate of the Liverpool Zoological Gardens expressed the former concern when he wrote a letter to the *Liverpool Mercury* complaining that Liverpudlians showed little interest in any venture that did not offer the promise of swift financial returns. 'If any new speculation, be it a gas company, a steam company or a railroad company, holds out the prospect of paying 8 or 10 per cent, there will be no lack of funds to carry it into execution.' If, however, 'it be a noble establishment like our Royal Institution in Colquitt Street, combining library, museum, lecture rooms, a school, a gymnasium and other useful and ornamental appendages, it meets with little encouragement because it does not make a handsome return for the outlay'. The author of the letter, anxious

to rectify this sorry state of affairs, entreated his fellow townsmen to take a less mercenary approach to civic amenities, encouraging them to support an institution that promised to be both educational and culturally enriching. Were they to do so, the zoological establishment could not fail to be impressive in scale, 'in consequence of the constant intercourse between this port and foreign countries, particularly Africa and South America, those inexhaustible sources from which to supply a garden of natural history or a museum'.[37]

A similar blend of enthusiasm and frustration pervaded a letter by a subscriber to the Edinburgh Zoological Gardens in 1839, in which the writer condemned the residents of Princes Street for raising puerile objections to the temporary lodging of animals near their homes while the gardens themselves were under construction. Writing to the *Caledonian Mercury*, the subscriber trivialised the various reasons that had been given for denying the exotic beasts temporary residence in the neighbourhood, dismissing as 'erroneous' the beliefs 'that the animals [would] make such a noise during the night that the inhabitants [wouldn't] get a wink of sleep' and 'that the effluvia proceeding from a few quadrupeds, birds etc. [would] create an offensive nuisance'. Like his Liverpudlian colleague, the subscriber bemoaned what he called the 'spirit of vexatious hostility' that threatened the zoo's existence before it had even got off the ground, and hoped that the 'absurd crotchets' of a privileged minority would not suffice to obstruct the foundation of an establishment 'which as an auxiliary to our present scientific institutions, is of the highest importance'. Were the zoo to fail for such petty reasons, it would not only be a disappointment to animal lovers, but would 'reflect a lasting disgrace upon this city'.[38]

In both these cases early teething troubles were surmounted, and Liverpool and Edinburgh became the proud owners of fixed zoological collections. This was not the end of the story, however, for once initial obstacles had been overcome, concern for the success of zoological gardens shifted to issues of attendance and sustainability. For provincial zoos to remain in business, they needed a steady influx of visitors – which meant, in practice, repeat visits by locals – and the continued backing of subscribers. If either waned, gardens faced contraction and possible closure, eventualities that supporters strove hard to avoid, and which came to be equated, as before, with civic honour and respectability.

A good example of how insufficient public support was seen to undermine the financial viability of zoos appears in a letter to the editor of the *Bristol Mercury* in 1839 by a gentleman using the assumed name 'Puma'. Bristol Zoo was at this point in rather dire financial straits and

threatened with closure. 'Puma', a major advocate of the institution, blamed this state of affairs on his fellow townsmen, berating local residents for failing to give the gardens adequate patronage. 'The constant complaint for years past has been that there was no place of attraction and amusement for the residents and visitors of Bristol and Clifton', Puma ruminated bitterly. Now that 'a valuable collection of animals and birds' had been opened to the public 'at a very moderate charge', however, 'they [sic] have not met with the support which they had a right to expect from this rich, populous neighbourhood', with the result that 'the committee are ... left without adequate funds to meet the necessary expenses of the ensuing winter'. To salvage the situation, and to 'prevent a finale so discreditable to public taste', Puma exhorted his fellow townsmen to do their bit for the gardens by frequenting them more often. Alone, he admitted, individuals could not make up the deficit, but if the people of Bristol all clubbed together, a solution could be found. 'Though we cannot afford to give pounds, let each one take his family and pay their shilling, and the numbers will easily form a fund for the expenses of the coming winter'.[39]

The same sense of betrayal and wounded civic pride suffused an article in the *Leeds Mercury* from 1842, in which the writer protested against the imminent closure of the city's struggling zoological gardens on account of insufficient funds. 'It behoves everyone', the writer contended emotionally, '(however humble his sphere of life may be) to raise his voice to prevent, if possible, an occurrence alike so disgraceful to the town of Leeds and the West Riding of Yorkshire'. The zoological establishment was a place of both moral and social value, particularly to the lower classes, who, unlike the 'opulent', did not possess 'gardens and conservatories of their own', and it was consequently the duty of the public at large to save an institution that was 'becoming daily more instructive, alluring and beautiful'. Perhaps, the author of the article suggested, the garden's viability could be improved by focusing solely on botany and dispensing with the expensive zoological element. Alternatively, 'by means of a low subscription', 'the greater part of our tradesmen' could be induced to subscribe to the zoo, in this way granting them 'the privilege of giving tickets of admission to the operatives etc., to repair to the gardens for recreation', and thereby granting them a sense of ownership of the establishment.[40] As in Bristol, the emphasis was on the public pulling together to revive a precarious but valuable civic institution.

Though the public was often blamed for the failures of provincial gardens, the management of the zoos were themselves not always above criticism. On the contrary, the way in which zoo directors engaged

with the public could come under attack, and their more ungrateful or miserly acts could be seen as a derogation of their duty towards the wider community. In their treatment of the working classes in particular, zoos could be hostile and dismissive rather than welcoming and inclusive. If they were mean spirited or tight fisted, the public might cease to support the gardens and take their custom elsewhere, an outcome that would, ultimately, prove counterproductive, as well as undermining the oft proclaimed social and cultural agenda outlined in zoo prospectuses. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that 'the public' occasionally 'wrote back', denouncing the elitist policies of some zoos and requesting better access for all sectors of society.

A poignant example of a zoo's failure to do its community duty appeared in the *Bristol Mercury* in 1839, when a self-professed 'Mechanic' wrote to the editor to complain that Bristol Zoological Gardens' admission criteria for working-class visitors were too exacting. The gardens had 'recently instituted a policy of offering half-price admission for mechanics on Mondays', which the writer heartily condoned. In enforcing this policy, however, the staff at the establishment apparently acted with rudeness and officiousness towards those hoping to take advantage of it, insisting on receiving full details of a man's employment before allowing him to enter for the reduced fee. The 'Mechanic', who had himself been subjected to this unpleasant interrogation, complained that, in order to gain discounted admittance, it was 'necessary for persons to bear the badge of their employment about them, in the shape of dirty apron and working clothes', a dress code that went against the desire of the self-improving working man to appear in 'respectable apparel' on his days of leisure – for 'even a mechanic and his family may have half-decent clothing if they like'. This unwelcoming reception, the Mechanic contended, would alienate many of his fellow workers, in particular those who, wishing to bring their wives and 'train up' their children 'in a knowledge of the works of nature', might find the latter paying full price for want of professional documentation to prove their status.[41]

Another critic of the Bristol Zoological Gardens, one of the owners of the company Headford and Sage, addressed a similarly disgruntled letter to the *Bristol Mercury* in 1844, denouncing what he called an 'instance of ill-judged parsimony on the part of the manager'. In this letter, the writer described how one of his men had been working on Clifton Down 'with a cartful of bricks' when he spotted an escaped eagle flying clumsily in the vicinity. Upon the bird's coming to roost, the labourer captured him and returned him to the gardens, only to be rewarded for his pains with 'the paltry sum of two pence'. Reflecting upon the incident, the

workman's employer complained that this recompense was pitifully low, considering the efforts to which his man had gone to restore the eagle to its rightful owners. He warned that, if news of such miserliness filtered out (which the publication of his own letter ensured it would), Bristol Zoo might forfeit the goodwill of local citizens in future. 'We consider this excessively bad economy, for what poor man would take the trouble to walk a mile or two to restore to the Society one of their stray animals if only the price of a pint of beer were to be the reward for their honesty and labour?'[42]

While officious gatekeepers and parsimonious managers were one source of tension between zoological gardens and the working classes, a bigger and more serious issue was the question of accessibility. Charging a standard entry fee of one shilling, most zoological gardens were out of the price range of the working classes and appealed primarily to a middle-class constituency – despite the constant rhetoric on how good it would be if the lower echelons were enticed out of the public house and into a more uplifting place of public resort. There were exceptions to this rule, as when Edinburgh Zoological Gardens offered half-price admission for the Queen's Birthday in 1841, or when Dublin Zoological Gardens introduced the concept of penny visitors in 1840, the latter being granted admission to the zoo at reduced rates on a Sunday.[43] In general, however, and again with the exception of Dublin, these concessions applied only to one-off days and did not provide the working classes with a regular opportunity to see exotic animals. For some animals, indeed, the viewing hours were even more restricted; the directors of Bristol Zoological Gardens stipulated in 1838 that their newest arrival, the chimpanzee, would only be exhibited to the public 'from 12–2 in the morning and 6–8 in the evening' to preserve the creature's delicate health, reducing the time for public display to just four hours per day.[44] All this meant that zoological gardens were socially exclusive, catering mainly for those with both time and money at their disposal.

Acknowledging the limitations of their admissions policies, zoos did consider ways in which to improve access for local people, suggesting, in some cases, that their establishments be open on a Sunday at a discounted rate so that labourers could visit on their day of leisure. This proposal, however, proved highly controversial, generating heated debates as to whether visiting the zoo did or did not desecrate the Sabbath. On the one hand, supporters of Sunday opening insisted that discounted admissions would provide the lower classes with rational recreation during their rest day and would act as an antidote to intemperance and criminality, activities to which it was assumed the lower

classes would resort if not kept entertained. Sunday was the only day when the poor were free to visit the zoo – at least until mid-century, when the Saturday half-day holiday was introduced across a wide range of industries – and it was hoped that, far from threatening Christianity, the act of viewing exotic animals would have a religious function, in that it would allow them to contemplate the magnificent works of the Creator.[45] On the other hand, opponents of Sunday opening condemned the move as an offence to God, suggesting that people would go to the zoo when they should be in Church or at home contemplating God's benevolence. Some Sabbatarians argued – somewhat idealistically – that, if workers required Sunday to recuperate from their jobs, they really ought to be working shorter hours during the week, for neither 'workers nor masters ought, for lucre's sake, to toil from morning to night during six days so severely as to make it necessary to spend the Sabbath in recruiting their injured health'. Other opponents of Sunday opening, taking on the temperance argument, contended that allowing the public to visit the gardens on the Lord's Day would not, as some had suggested, reduce drunkenness, but actually increase it, since workers would probably visit the pub on their way to the gardens or start tippling on their way home. As if this were not bad enough, Sunday opening would, as Dr Williamson of Leeds Zoological Gardens argued, represent an increase in labour, since it would 'entail the necessity of employing a great number of servants on that day' to accompany their employers to the zoo.[46]

A good example of how these debates played themselves out is the case of Manchester Zoological Gardens. When the proprietors of the gardens convened in February 1839 to discuss the prospect of Sunday opening the majority of those present opposed it on the grounds that it would violate religious observance and possibly even threaten public order. One speaker, Mr Adshead, pontificated that 'as a father of a family, he should dread the responsibility which would attach to him if he were to take his children [to the zoo] on a Sunday and teach them to desecrate a day which he thought ought to be set aside for the worship of God'. Another speaker objected, more prosaically, that 'the poor people [visiting the gardens on the Sabbath] would disturb the retirement of rich people who inhabit the neighbourhood'. A third, the Reverend J. Wood, concluded, for reasons that were not entirely clear, 'that opening the Manchester Zoological Gardens on Sunday would endanger the throne'. With such ominous consequences in prospect, the committee erred on the side of caution and elected not to admit the public to the zoo on a Sunday; only eleven persons voted in favour of the motion.[47]

Not everyone concurred with this decision, however. One dissenter, a journalist writing for the radical paper the *Examiner*, ridiculed the ban on Sunday opening as self-interested and short-sighted, condemning the hypocrisy and inconsistency of the Mancunian elites, who denied one form of entertainment to their inferiors while enjoying equally culpable recreations themselves. Responding to the objections of Mr Adshead and co., the reporter countered that there was 'nothing inconsistent with the becoming observance of the Sabbath in admiring the wonders of the creation'. If 'Mr Addlehead' was so concerned with preserving his children's morals, then he must blindfold them on a Sunday, lest they should catch a glimpse of birds and beasts in their own garden; if not, the shareholder must explain 'in what respect it is more sinful to see an ostrich or an eagle in a cage than a redbreast or linnet on the wing', and why it was 'profane to look at an elephant, but quite innocent to look with wistful eyes at a quarter of house lamb'. As for the argument that the poor would disturb the peace by visiting the gardens on Sunday, the journalist regarded this as elitist and unjust, for the Sabbath was the only time that the working classes got to relax and recuperate, whereas the rich people living in the vicinity of the zoological gardens had the luxury of doing as they pleased every day of the week. This being the case, it could hardly be fair to compromise 'the pleasure of the little folks who have only one day of recreation', simply to safeguard the repose 'of persons who have seven days for enjoyment'.[48] Closing the gardens on Sunday therefore smacked of hypocrisy and class bias.

Other zoological gardens also confronted the prickly issue of Sunday opening. Most of these chose not to admit the general public on the Sabbath. One, however, Dublin Zoological Gardens, bucked this trend, its director Sir Dominic Corrigan electing in 1840 to open the zoo 'to the humbler classes of the city after the hour of divine service at the nominal entrance fee of 1d'. At the time, this decision elicited much 'obloquy and opposition'. Twenty years later, however, when the outrage had largely abated, Sir Dominic justified the move as a public service that had enabled the less affluent members of society to indulge in rational recreation. 'We have frequently 5,000 or 6,000 people in the gardens and I am not aware that we have ever had an instance worth noticing of any confusion or misbehaviour.' Indeed, having the gardens open 'brings the people away from whisky drinking houses and bad air and induces the tradesmen's wives, which I think is a very important thing, though it may appear ridiculous to notice it, to compete with one another as to the dressing of themselves and

their children'. Allowing the general public to visit the gardens on the Sabbath was therefore a positive move, and one which consolidated the zoo's position as a key attraction for Dubliners. It was also the only realistic way in which the lower classes could get a chance to see exotic animals, for though admitting the labourers for a reduced fee after 5 p.m. was tried as an alternative, this proved ineffectual; working men were too tired to visit the zoo after a day of labour, and the lower admission fees only enticed crowds of 'stingy respectable people', who wanted to take advantage of the discount.[49] Of the 136,859 people admitted to the Gardens between 1 May 1857 and 30 April 1858, 130,207 (95 per cent) were penny visitors, demonstrating the latter's importance to the institution.[50]

Conclusion

From the 1830s, many zoological gardens opened across Britain. Conceived as fashionable, instructive and entertaining places of resort, they emerged in industrial cities, major ports and cultural centres. Zoos were part of the panoply of urban leisure facilities that came into being during the nineteenth century, from theatres and concert halls to museums and public libraries.[51] As such, they were frequently portrayed as important symbols of civic pride, not only in the propaganda released by their directors, but also, more interestingly, in the correspondence of visitors, where we find the actual, or at least desired, community function of the zoological gardens repeatedly emphasised.

Though initially popular, the ultimate fate of provincial zoos was rather mixed, reflecting both changing fashions and misguided policies. Several gardens folded very quickly for financial reasons, notably Brighton, which was auctioning off its collection of 'Bengal tigers … East India leopards, several Russian and American bears … [a] striped hyena … an assortment of monkeys … [and a] boa snake' barely six months after it opened.[52] Other zoos survived for a couple of decades, but were forced to diversify their entertainments to maintain a respectable attendance, evolving from animal-focused exhibits to all-purpose venues of public amusement. John Jennison's Belle Vue Gardens, for example, featured not only a well-stocked menagerie, including 'a female hippopotamus' and the elephant Maharajah, 'added at the dispersal of Wombwell's menagerie', but also a music hall, tea rooms serving beef and ham sandwiches, a maze modelled on the one at Hampton Court and a picturesque lake where visitors could hire rowing boats or chug about in a model steamer.[53] By 1870, the majority of the original zoos

had closed, suggesting a decline in public interest in this type of institution, at least in its current form. Though several zoos experienced a revival at a later date, only Bristol and Dublin survived uninterrupted up to the present day.

What happened to the others? A brief look at four of the zoos that failed gives us an insight into the problems they faced. It also underlines the perception of these zoological collections, even in their death throes, as having close links to the local community.

Manchester Zoological Gardens was an early casualty. Founded in 1838, the institution was in financial trouble by 1842 and in November of that year it succumbed to bankruptcy. Unable to continue functioning, the directors closed the zoo to business. 'The furniture of the lodges, the implements of the farm yard and other sundries' were sold and the animals were auctioned off, most of them at a loss – the elephant, valued at £400, was 'knocked down to Mr Labrey at 250 guineas', a 'long-tailed green parrot' went to 'George Sanders, corn merchant' for just 12s, 'less than the value of the cage', while 'the beautiful Bengal tiger' was sold to Wombwell's menagerie for just £45, 'a bargain ... having cost the company £80'.[54] Though various factors contributed to the zoo's failure, a lack of subscribers, an overly-exclusive admission policy and too great an emphasis on science and education over entertainment seem to have been the primary causes. A more general economic downturn probably exacerbated these problems; the *Leeds Mercury* cited the Gardens' demise as 'another proof ... of what depressed trade can effect'.[55]

Edinburgh Zoological Gardens survived longer, but by the late 1850s it was experiencing similar problems. On 8 January 1857 a public meeting was convened to discuss the zoo's future. At this meeting, the zoo directors confessed that the establishment was 'encumbered with a heavy debt', much of it incurred at the institution's commencement and never recouped, and expressed the hope that a private individual might come forward who would assume control of the zoo and 'manage the Gardens ... in a more economical and Barnum-like manner than had been previously the case'.[56] Such an individual did materialise sometime later, in the form of John Jennison, manager of Manchester's Belle Vue Gardens. The new owner was, however, more interested in converting the grounds into pleasure gardens than maintaining them in their current form, and he curtailed their zoological function.[57] Despite a brief coup in August 1857, when Edinburgh 'fortunately secured from a whaler recently arrived at Peterhead a pair of very fine young polar bears', the zoo's days as a place for exhibiting animals were numbered.[58] By 1858 it had ceased to be a 'zoological' garden in anything but name,

and was essentially just an entertainment venue. Over fifty years elapsed before the current Edinburgh zoo was opened in 1913.

In Hull it was a similar story. What had begun primarily as a zoological exhibition had metamorphosed, by the late 1850s, into something much more amusement based, hosting fancy fairs, fêtes and regional brass band competitions. The establishment appeared, overall, to be 'in a most dilapidated condition', possessing 'nothing calculated to form an attraction to strangers visiting the town' – at least according to the local paper.[59] It was only a matter of time before the owners called time on the zoo, and the end ultimately came in April 1862, when the formal closure of the gardens was announced. What became of the animals, if indeed any remained, is not recorded, but on Thursday 17 April an auction was held in the grounds to dispose of the establishment's fixtures and fittings. Among the lots on offer were 'a handsome iron cage and den, with iron palisades, for [the] polar bear', 'a unique Swiss entrance lodge' and some 'fine Gothic ruins originally from York Minster and Holy Trinity Church'.[60]

Finally, coming to Liverpool Zoological Gardens, we find much the same trends and results, though in this case strongly infused with the sentiments of wounded civic pride that had attended the destruction of the beloved Rajah. Founded by the ex-menagerist Thomas Atkins, the Liverpool Gardens had remained under the ownership of the same family after Atkins' death in 1847, and apparently done quite a brisk trade. In the early 1860s, however, management of the institution was taken over by a new proprietor, who, like Jennison in Edinburgh, rebranded it as a public amusement ground and downgraded the zoological element, to the extent that disgruntled patrons questioned whether it any longer merited the title of 'zoological gardens'. One disenchanted visitor, after taking his young son to the zoo in September 1864, complained that 'the only things to be seen were three or four ducks swimming in some dirty water, about half a dozen monkeys, a goat and four birds, the latter of which (with the exception of the wretched-looking ostrich) it would puzzle someone far more learned than I am in natural history to say from which part of the world they emanated'.[61] Another visitor described how 'the rust of antiquity had overspread the Bearpit' and 'even the skeleton of poor Rajah, which told a story of past glories, had disappeared', leaving 'nothing which justified the retention of the word "zoological"' in the establishment's title.[62] Though the Gardens' new owner refuted these aspersions, the season proved to be the institution's last, for in October its closure was announced.[63] The *Liverpool Mercury*, in its obituary to the Zoo, expressed sadness at its decline and contrasted the establishment's

current decadence with happier times, when everyone in Liverpool who aspired to a 'genteel' position in the social scale deemed it essential to become an annual subscriber to the Zoological Gardens, and when the latter were 'the pride of the town, the admiration of strangers and a source of pleasure and profit to all who visited them'. The loss of zoos in various provincial cities was therefore interpreted as a blow to civic pride and the thwarting of a community project; a project in which people of all classes contributed as donors – 'from "Jack", who brought his monkey or parrot, to the then Mayor … who presented a live crocodile' – and in which particular animals established themselves as local favourites through repeated interactions with the public.[64]

3
Elephants in the High Street

> Why is an elephant unlike a tree? – Because a tree leaves in the spring, and the elephant leaves when the menagerie does. (*Bristol Mercury*, 23 December 1871)

In 1855 a contributor to *Blackwood's Magazine*, William Aytoun, recounted his childhood experiences of visiting George Wombwell's travelling menagerie on Edinburgh's Castle Mound. Writing nostalgically about his boyhood encounters with the wild beasts, the now grown-up menagerie customer described how he had been enticed into the show, that 'mysterious quadrangle of wagons', by the 'huge and somewhat incongruous pictures of lions, tigers, panthers, leopards, wolves and boa constrictors making their way towards some common centrepiece of carrion'. The entry fee paid, Aytoun ventured into the menagerie 'with a far more excited feeling than any middle-aged traveller experiences when he first catches a glimpse of Timbuctoo', and, descending a flight of stairs into the interior of the exhibition, was immediately assailed by the 'strange and wildly tropical … commixed odour of sawdust, ammonia and orange peel. A hideous growling, snarling, hissing, baying, barking and chattering' assaulted the young visitor's ears as he penetrated further into the menagerie. Apprehension, however, was soon replaced by enchantment as the boy scrutinised in turn each of the caged animals and observed its movements. Years later Aytoun still remembered seeing 'Nero, the indulgent old lion, who would stand any amount of liberties'. He recalled admiring the handsome zebra, 'whom we greatly coveted for a pony', and fondly recounted proffering a bun to the amicable elephant – 'what a nice beast' – who 'from nine in the morning till six in the dewy eve … must

have swallowed as many [cakes] as ought to have deranged the digestion of a ragged school'. Aytoun was more wary of Wallace, 'the Scottish lion – a rampant, reddish-maned animal, who would not tolerate the affront of being roused by the application of a long pole'.

Aytoun's recollections encapsulate the distinctive ambience of the travelling wild beast show and conjure a vivid picture of how the layout, atmosphere and contents of the menagerie mediated visitors' perception of its inmates. Detailing his memories of Wombwell's show from a distance of some twenty years, Aytoun still recalled, quite graphically, the sights and sounds that had greeted him upon entering the zoological establishment. He was convinced that 'the ambulatory menageries were most valuable schools for instruction in natural history' in the days when 'there were no zoological gardens', and he contended, for this reason, that 'the names of Wombwell and [fellow menagerist] Polito' should be regarded 'with reverence'. Still more interestingly, the now grown-up Aytoun presented his visit to Wombwell's collection as a truly magical and awe-inspiring experience that encompassed a whole gamut of emotions – from 'intense delight' on viewing the gentler animals to an 'ecstasy of fear' at the sight of the Bengal tiger, whose eyes flicked open as he walked past as if 'waking up from some pleasant reverie of masticated Hindoo'. These memories – though inflected with humour and exaggerated for comic effect – elucidate the physical reality of visiting a travelling menagerie and the exotic associations it evoked in at least one spectator. They show how proximity to the beasts, with all the associated smells, sounds and anxieties, could make a trip to the itinerant animal collection an informative and multi-sensory experience (Figure 3.1).[1]

This chapter looks at the place where most nineteenth-century Britons would have had their first encounter with an elephant or a lion: the travelling menagerie. Ever expanding in scope, peripatetic wild-beast collections functioned simultaneously as a source of rudimentary zoological knowledge and a popular form of entertainment, complementing contemporary amusements like the pantomime, ethnographic exhibition or moving panorama.[2] Although zoological gardens had emerged in London and in several provincial cities by the 1830s, menageries continued to attract a broad range of visitors throughout the century, and served sectors of the population who, through class or geography, lacked easy access to static zoological collections. Relatively neglected by historians, their range, longevity and popularity are yet to be fully appreciated.

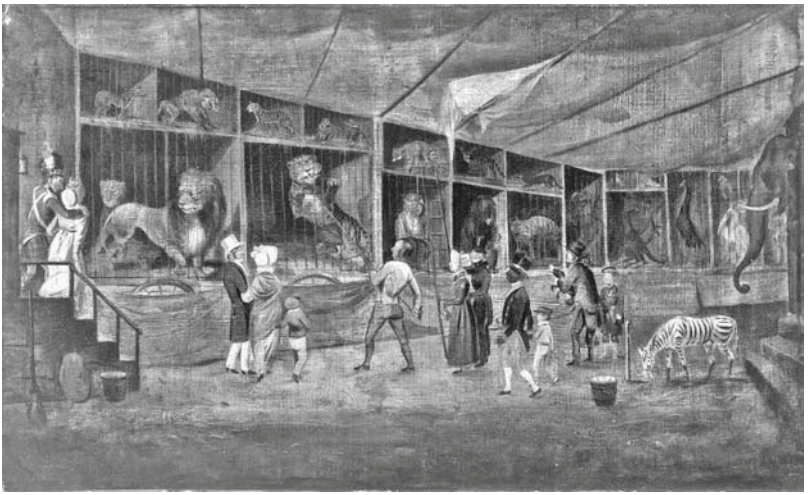


Figure 3.1 Robertson's Royal Menagerie, 9 the Strand, *c*.1820, © State Library of New South Wales – ML 1354. This image closely resembles the scene described by Aytoun. Note the stairs leading down into the show, the positioning of the caravans around the perimeter (the wheels clearly visible behind the hoarding) and the keeper prodding a tiger with a long pole.

Here I consider the geographical and social reach of nineteenth-century menageries, and analyse the publicity strategies employed by showmen to draw customers into their exhibitions. I assess how accessible menageries were to the British public, situating wild beast shows within the broader context of popular culture and entertainment. The Industrial Revolution has traditionally been seen as leading to the suppression of popular leisure activities as a gulf opened up between elite and popular culture.[3] This view has, however, been challenged by Hugh Cunningham, who suggests that, rather than witnessing the decline of popular leisure, the first decades of the nineteenth century saw its commercialisation on a mass scale: 'if leisure for the middle class became commercialised in the eighteenth century, for the mass of the people it was being commercialised from the very early-nineteenth century, and in a form which gave rise to a vigorous popular culture of entertainment'.[4] Cunningham argues that many forms of pre-industrial leisure survived into the nineteenth century, albeit with significant adaptations. Travelling menageries exemplified this shift, as even though exotic animals had long featured in traditional fairs, it was in the nineteenth century that they

emerged as large-scale commercial operations, continually rebranding themselves to meet changing conceptions of respectability.

To assess who patronised menageries and how collections were presented, I exploit a previously little-used source: contemporary newspapers. The reduction of newspaper stamp duty from four pence to a penny in 1836 made provincial newspapers more viable and led to the creation of many new publications. Faster communications, in the form of railway expansion and, later, the advent of the telegraph, also helped news to circulate more widely. New genres of paper came into existence in the nineteenth century, including 'local weeklies such as the post-1860s *Preston Chronicle*, typically serving a market town or borough'; county weeklies like the *Northampton Mercury*, 'based in the county town and circulating across the entire shire'; and 'the weekend regional miscellany paper, usually an offshoot of a provincial morning paper'. These publications, particularly those with a localised distribution, often carried information on travelling shows in the form, firstly, of paid advertisements; and secondly, of reports on how menageries were received; or, on occasion, of unfortunate accidents that occurred within their walls. Because there was considerable cross-fertilisation between different local papers, more outlandish or interesting stories were often reproduced verbatim in several publications, sometimes with a time lag, giving certain events national coverage.[5] Though occasionally somewhat condescending towards working-class menagerie patrons, newspaper reports offer a valuable insight into the audience make-up and reception of menageries, and give us a sense of their movement and itineraries. Letters written to the editors of local papers also illuminate the public perception of menageries, though these must be treated with some caution as they were sometimes fabricated by journalists to fill space, and may even have been submitted by showmen as a more subtle form of advertising for their collections.[6]

Another important source is a logbook for Wombwell's Menagerie Number One retained by the show's elephant keeper, George Percival. This document covers the period 1848–1871, during which the show was in its prime, and lists of all of the places visited by the menagerie during these years. The logbook records the mileage between stops, revealing the average distances the collection travelled each day. It also records the different counties through which the establishment passed. Marginal notes document significant events affecting the menagerie, including changes in personnel, the arrival of new animals, and accidents that happened in the show – for example, Ripon, 1853, 'front of the giraffe wagon broke'; Wigan, 1862, 'Drummer Tom left'; 'Wootton

Bassett, 1868, Elephant Maharajah came'.[7] Though the logbook is a copy of the original, probably transcribed by Percival's daughter, the information it contains appears to be largely accurate.[8] Using the entries in the book, we can see how often Wombwell visited individual towns and which regions his show toured most frequently.

Origins and evolution

Exotic animals had appeared in Europe intermittently throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Many became the property of royalty but some were exhibited to the wider public. Usually travelling as single animals or in pairs, exotic species were exhibited at fairs and festivals and in public spaces like coffee houses and taverns. One of the most famous arrivals, the rhinoceros Clara, toured widely around Europe between 1741 and 1758, traversing the continent in a specially reinforced carriage.[9]

Around 1780, single animal shows matured into entire touring collections, giving British citizens outside the metropolis the chance to see exotic animals en masse. Initially, these exhibitions were quite small; in May 1800, for example, Gilbert Pidcock tantalised the people of Ipswich with his 'grand assemblage of curious foreign animals and beasts ... in four magnificent caravans', including 'a most stupendous elephant', 'a lion and lioness' and 'two ravenous hyenas'.[10] As the nineteenth century progressed, menageries grew ever larger and the range and number of animals on display increased. Where Pidcock had visited Ipswich with four caravans of animals, his fellow menagerist George Wombwell entered the city in 1841 towing 'a train of caravans, amounting to upwards of fifteen in number and drawn by between 60 and 70 horses'.[11] Visiting Wrexham in 1867, Manders' show covered an area '170 feet in depth by 64 feet in width' and featured over five hundred animals.[12]

Clearly, operations of this magnitude required some level of planning and coordination, so to ensure that adequate food, accommodation and publicity were in place before a menagerie arrived in town the bigger concerns started to employ agents to deal with the administrative and logistical side of the business. By the 1860s the recruitment of agents was common practice, their duties including answering queries from the public, securing employees, publicising the show and arranging food and accommodation for animals.[13] In 1867 James Edmonds' agent John Thurlby posted an advertisement in the *Hampshire Telegraph* in advance of the menagerie's visit to Portsmouth, asking 'farmers and others' for

'grass for 40 horses and stabling for 20'. Thurlby also requested 'coach houses for herds of camels', the doors of which 'must be 10 feet high' to accommodate their humps.[14]

As the size of travelling menageries increased, so did the number of showmen involved in the business. In the first twenty years of the nineteenth century, Pidcock and Stefano Polito monopolised the market. In the 1820s, George Wombwell and Thomas Atkins managed major touring shows and in the 1840s William Batty and Joseph Hylton joined the profession. By the 1850s, many of the original showmen had retired and a new batch of zoological entrepreneurs replaced them. The key players amongst this younger generation were James Edmonds, who appropriated one of Wombwell's collections; Alexander Fairgrieve, who took over another; William Manders, who inherited Hylton's menagerie; and George Sanger, whose equestrian show evolved into a renowned touring circus in the final decades of the century. There were also a significant number of female menagerists, mostly widows, who took over their deceased husbands' collections. These included Wombwell's wife Ann and Edmonds' wife Harriet.

Though a variety of showmen profited from the growing popular taste for exotic animals, no single menagerist was more successful than George Wombwell, whose name soon became synonymous with touring zoological collections. Born in Dudnorend, Essex, Wombwell entered the business somewhat fortuitously when, on a whim, he purchased a couple of boa constrictors at the London docks. Finding the exhibition of the reptiles very profitable, Wombwell abandoned his previous work as a cobbler in Soho and became a menagerist full-time, continually expanding and diversifying his collection and travelling all over the British Isles.[15] When he died at Northallerton in 1850, aged 73, the showman owned three separate menageries, and had contracted agents in London and Liverpool 'to watch for the arrival of vessels from other climes and purchase for him whatever was new and rare in his line'. He resided in a commodious caravan, 'furnished with not only the comforts but the luxuries of life', and possessed 'more than twenty lions and five elephants'.[16]

Accessibility

Given the logistical difficulties of transporting live animals, menageries circulated surprisingly widely. Showmen like Wombwell travelled the length and breadth of Britain, entertaining audiences throughout the kingdom. Menageries congregated at all of the major annual fairs,

including St Bartholomew's Fair in London, Knott Mill Fair in Manchester, Nottingham Goose Fair and Donnybrook Fair in Ireland. Their owners choreographed their itineraries to coincide with traditional festivities in the provinces, giving their movements a cyclical rhythm.

As well as attending annual pleasure fairs, menageries also visited smaller towns and villages. Visits to these places were shorter and less regular than visits to cities, the duration of stay sometimes being dictated by levels of custom or the need to arrive at a major event elsewhere at a particular time. The range of places visited was, nonetheless, surprisingly diverse, and the arrival of a menagerie in town was usually a memorable event. In 1848, for example, when Hylton's establishment stopped at the town of Pwllheli in North Wales, 'the whole town was on the look-out for the lion of the day, the monster elephant's, debut'.[17] In 1853, when Batty's menagerie visited Wick in the far north of Scotland, its presence had the salutary effect of reducing cases of intemperance in the town, proving 'the importance of providing the people with sources of innocent amusement and instruction'.[18] The geographical range of menageries was impressive, encompassing almost all extremities of the British Isles. As the *Bristol Mercury* remarked in 1858, 'even in these days, although Bristol and a handful of the leading towns can boast of their Zoological Gardens, there are scores of communities, many of them large communities, who would never see a lion, an elephant or a rhinoceros if these menageries were driven off the road'.[19]

To give a sense of the travels of an average wild beast show, we can look at the itinerary of Wombwell's Menagerie Number One for two complete years, 1849 and 1866, the details of which were recorded in the show's logbook. In the first year, 1849, Wombwell started his travels in Leicester, with stops at Hinckley and Lutterworth. In February the showman entered the neighbouring county of Northamptonshire, where exhibition venues included Northampton, Kettering and Wellingborough. In March, he was in the fens, taking in Peterborough, March and Stamford. In April and May Wombwell toured North Lincolnshire and South Yorkshire, visiting Doncaster, Gainsborough and Lincoln, and in June he moved on to Birmingham and Coventry, where his nephew 'W[illia]m Wombwell [was] killed with [sic] the elephant'. Following this tragedy, Wombwell circled the West Midlands before heading south to Worcester, Evesham and Cirencester. His autumn itinerary encompassed Berkshire, Surrey and Sussex, as well as London Fair. He concluded the year in Canterbury, Kent.

Seventeen years later, in 1866, Wombwell's successor Alexander Fairgrieve conducted an equally extensive tour. On this occasion the show opened the

year in Edinburgh, Fairgrieve's home town, where it maximised attendance by appearing in three separate venues: London Road, the Cattle Market and Lothian Road. From the Scottish capital, the menagerie meandered north through Stirlingshire, Perthshire and Fife; and by mid-spring it had reached Aberdeen. After completing a circuit of north-eastern Scotland, the menagerie headed south to Dunblane, Stranraer and Wigtown, where 'Tommy the elephant came'. It then toured Cumbria, County Durham, Yorkshire and Derbyshire. The show ended 1866 in Dudley, Staffordshire.[20]

The menagerie logbook also reveals how often Wombwell's show visited particular towns and cities and the typical intervals between visits. To select a few examples from across the country: Stamford, a small market town in south Lincolnshire, received seven menagerie visits in the period covered by the log, in 1849, 1850, 1854, 1857, 1861, 1863 and 1865; Kendal, in Cumbria, hosted the show eight times, in 1850, 1851, 1852, 1858 (twice), 1865, 1868 and 1869; Ludlow in Shropshire hosted it six times, in 1848, 1852, 1856, 1862, 1868 and 1871; and the Wiltshire town of Malmesbury was visited four times in 1848, 1860, 1862 and 1868. Some places only received one visit, among them the fishing town of Buckie in north-eastern Scotland, whose sole encounter with the menagerie was in 1869. Others enjoyed visits almost every other year. One of the most frequented places, York, hosted Wombwell twelve times in this twenty-four year period, receiving visits in 1848, 1850, 1851, 1852, 1854, 1855, 1857, 1858, 1859, 1863, 1866 and 1868.[21]

The frequency with which Wombwell's menagerie visited a town depended in large part upon its location. If a place was situated centrally, the menagerie would generally visit it more often, since it would have to pass through it en route to various other venues – thus the show visited Birmingham 21 times in just 24 years. Conversely, if a town was located at the extremities of Britain, it was likely to see the menagerie less frequently, as a special tour would have to be undertaken to incorporate it into the show's circuit. For example, Plymouth, a large naval port in Devon was visited just three times between 1848 and 1871, in 1855, 1860 and 1867, all visits falling during the show's only three tours of the West Country. Though three visits in 24 years may seem very infrequent, we must remember that Wombwell's Menagerie No. 1 was not the only wild beast show in action at this time, but was, on the contrary, one of several major menageries touring the country. It is therefore fair to assume that the people of Plymouth would have seen a menagerie more often than at the five to seven year interval this statistic implies.[22] Another 'peripheral' venue, Norwich, had at least 29 visits by menageries between 1800 and 1885: three times by Polito's, in 1803, 1811

and 1813; once a piece by Shore's and Drake's, in 1818 and 1823; three times by Atkins' in 1825, 1828 and 1832; eight times by Wombwell's, in 1816, 1818, 1821, 1822, 1824, 1837, 1841 and 1844; three times by Edmonds', in 1854, 1872 and 1876; once by Manders', in 1867; and twice by Fairgrieve's in 1862 and 1868.[23] Moreover, while a particular town might not be visited on every circuit of the menagerie, it was often the case that neighbouring venues would be, giving residents a chance to see it by travelling a relatively short distance. Although Warwick, for instance, had no visits from Wombwell's in 1849 or 1853, nearby Leamington Spa hosted the menagerie in both years, so anyone wanting to see exotic animals could have done so with relatively little effort.[24] The logbook shows that the average distance the menagerie travelled between stops was ten and a half miles, suggesting that most towns of a reasonable size were visited on a circuit.[25]

To ensure that menageries were economically as well as physically accessible, showmen offered concessions to less wealthy patrons. Throughout the nineteenth century, the typical entry fee for a mobile wild beast show was a shilling. Menagerists, however, usually admitted tradesmen, labourers and sometimes servants for sixpence or sometimes even less. Children were also charged a lower rate, regardless of class, though the definition of 'child' ranged from 'under seven' to 'under twelve' years of age, ten being the most common cut-off point. In Liverpool in 1850 Wombwell listed prices as '1s; labouring people and children under 10 years of age sixpence'; four years later his successor Edmonds, visiting the same city, had lowered the threshold for 'child' to '7 years of age'.[26]

Though showmen did not keep comprehensive records of who actually visited their establishments, intermittent reports in contemporary newspapers suggest that a wide spectrum of lower-class people were among the customers. In 1828 William Cavers, 'a gun-implement maker' from London had money stolen from his pocket while 'looking at the elephant' in Wombwell's menagerie.[27] In 1867 'James Burke, hatter', 'James O'Brien, bookmaker' and 'Charles Chatwin, vocalist', were arrested by Chester police for 'being in the crowd in front of Manders' Menagerie ... for a felonious purpose'.[28] In 1873 'a boy named Robertson, son of James Robertson, the Glenprosen letter-carrier', required stitches after a lion in Bostock's menagerie lacerated his ear.[29] And in 1875 'a man named King, a miller' from Salisbury 'lost a portion of one of his fingers by a bite from a hyena' in Wombwell's show.[30] Clearly such reports cannot offer a complete picture of how many working-class people patronised menageries, for the professions of individual customers only received a mention in the press when something abnormal occurred.

The range of backgrounds cited nonetheless provides a snapshot of the variety of working people who visited a menagerie, suggesting that servants, tradesmen and children did indeed take advantage of the concessions offered by showmen.

Further evidence of the importance attached to these concessions – by both the lower classes and the showmen themselves – is afforded by a terse exchange that appeared in the letters column of the *Bristol Mercury* in March 1867. On this occasion, a man claiming to be a 'Bedminster collier' addressed a letter to the editor of the paper complaining that he had been denied access to Wombwell's collection at the rate to which he felt entitled. This grievance elicited a passionate rebuttal from the then owner of the show, Alexander Fairgrieve, who protested that no person of the collier's description had been 'refused admission to the menagerie at sixpence', and insisted that 'we admitted the labouring classes at sixpence each after 5 o'clock', circulating news of this reduction 'to the fullest extent possible'. 'It is not usual for that class of men to be attired as gentlemen', reasoned Fairgrieve, 'and I firmly assert, without fear of contradiction, that no person to whom anyone would apply "labourer", or the least approach to a labourer, has been refused admission to the menagerie at sixpence, as can be verified by the vast numbers who belong to that class and have visited the menagerie every evening'.[31] This impassioned exchange is interesting, since it shows both that the collier knew of the discount and considered it his right, and, perhaps more significantly, that Fairgrieve took pride in his liberal treatment of the working classes, regarding it as a point of professional honour to refute the collier's allegations. The menagerist's response also implies that clothing was the primary criterion used to assess an individual's class background – a measure that could sometimes create problems when self-improving tradesmen attired themselves in their best clothes for their menagerie visit, and then struggled to convince the showmen of their status. In 1873, for example, a show-mistress at Bostock's menagerie in Leslie, Scotland, got into a row with one gentleman, who, 'having on a better looking coat than the company he was in', was asked to pay the full shilling.[32]

For those not affluent enough to pay even the discounted entry fee, there was still the chance of seeing exotic animals in the street, as they made their way to their places of exhibition. A common feature of the show, the menagerie parade was a popular attraction in the provinces and was often advertised in local newspapers. Various exotic animals were used to pull the carriages – from camels to zebras – and spectators were sometimes treated to a sneak preview of the more ferocious

beasts behind the bars of their cages, which were carefully positioned to allow partial glimpses of the wonders within. In 1859, when Manders processed through Bampton, his living van was drawn by three camels and one of the cages, containing three bears and three hyenas, 'was so constructed as to afford an excellent view of those animals to the admiring crowd who were awaiting their arrival'.[33] The purpose of promenading in this manner was to excite prospective spectators and thereby generate custom. For those who could not afford an official visit, however, the parade also offered an opportunity to, at least, glimpse exotic animals without leaving their home, something many contemporaries were eager to do. The logbook from a school near Hull recorded in 1877 that 'the attendance, on Thursday [19 October] was poor, on account of Wombwell's Menagerie passing from Beverley to Driffield'.[34] Six years later, 'scores of idlers' waited 'for hours' to watch Edmonds' enormous elephant pass through Redruth.[35]

While menagerists thus did everything possible to display exotic animals to the lower classes, the latter did not constitute their only patrons. On the contrary, the appeal of menageries, far from being confined to the lower echelons of society, seems to have extended to the elite, large numbers of whom frequented travelling wild beast shows when they were in town. Lawyers and doctors patronised menageries on a regular basis, as did civic representatives and naturalists, the latter often being granted special leave to study or draw the most interesting specimens. The *Derby Reporter* stated that Wombwell's menagerie came to Derby in 1851 'under the immediate patronage of the Mayor' and 'was visited by his Worship and family and by most of the leading gentry of the town and neighbourhood, as well as by tradesmen and artisans'.[36] The Yorkshire naturalist Charles Waterton enjoyed a private two-hour audience with the chimpanzee in Mrs Wombwell's show in Scarborough in 1855, noting the ape's peculiar mode of locomotion and its fondness for celery.[37] He subsequently wrote to the show-mistress to thank her for her hospitality, expressing his hope that the animal 'may retain its health and thus remunerate you for the large sum which you have expended in the purchase of it'.[38] The popularity of menageries thus transcended class barriers, encompassing persons of all ranks.

Even Queen Victoria visited menageries – or rather they visited her. In 1847, the Queen, hearing that Wombwell's establishment was at Windsor Fair, summoned the showman to Windsor Castle, so that she 'and the royal children might see the lions, tigers, elephants and other strange creatures which [had] for so long been popular with her Majesty's subjects'. Victoria 'walked twice around the exhibition,

entering into familiar conversation, with reference to the animals and birds, with the proprietor, Mr Wombwell'. The monarch and her retinue admired a litter of lion-tiger cubs, 'whelped about two months since at Appledore in Kent', and watched the large elephant Jemoonah circle the quadrangle bedecked in a howdah with the Lion Queen, Miss Chapman, on his back'. After about an hour, the Queen retired from the exhibition, whereupon it was visited by a contingent of boys from Eton, the servants at the castle and 'the whole of the gardeners, labourers and others engaged about the grounds'. Later in the evening her Majesty ordered Wombwell to illuminate the collection, so that Miss Chapman could entertain the Court with her performances in the lions' den.[39] During its visit to the palace, therefore, the menagerie attracted a cross-class – if sometimes socially segregated – spectrum of visitors, showing, in microcosm, the range of individuals who typically crossed its threshold.[40]

Doing a roaring trade

Fairs were prime venues for seeing menageries. Traditionally annual events, scheduled to coincide with key moments in the agricultural cycle, fairs served a variety of functions in the nineteenth century. Some operated primarily as market places for local produce, such as the Hull Fair of 1861, which featured a 'very creditable' meat show.[41] Some functioned as opportunities for hiring servants or labourers. Others, like the St Giles Fair in Oxford, were purely for pleasure.[42] More often than not, fairs combined the roles of 'market place, labour exchange, amusement park and even museum', mixing business with entertainment and drawing in sizeable crowds from the surrounding area.[43]

Menageries were just one of many entertainments on offer at fairs. Theatrical performances were common. Punch and Judy shows and waxwork exhibitions competed for trade with human curiosities, while swings and roundabouts delighted the younger generation. Fairgoers could feast on gingerbread sold by itinerant vendors and marvel at the acrobatic feats of equestrian performers. They could also view misshapen or learned animals, such as 'Toby the swinish philosopher', a pig trained to 'spell, read and cast accounts'.[44]

Manchester's Knott Mill Fair of 1854 featured a fairly typical range of entertainments. There was Edmonds' menagerie, 'this year headed by the two performing elephants, Abdullah and Zamoonah'. There was a peep show exhibition of 'the horrible slaughter at Sinope', which excited 'a strong anti-Russian feeling' during the Crimean War. There was the usual array of 'nut, gingerbread and toy stands' to tempt 'the

eye and the palate'. There were 'merry-go-rounds and ups-and-downs' to cater for juvenile fairgoers and there were bands in attendance on Wednesday and Saturday to enhance the auditory pleasure of visitors. For those desirous of more edifying pursuits, a selection of 'pictures of the Arctic regions' was on view at the Exchange Rooms and the Botanical Society Gardens were accessible throughout the week 'at the moderate rate of 6d each visitor'. The *Manchester Times*, for its part, recommended a visit to the menagerie, which boasted, in addition to the elephants, 'a male Indian rhinoceros, the largest in Europe' and 'a gigantic giraffe or camelopard, 18ft high, of the most graceful and elegant form, the only full-grown animal of its class ever exhibited in the provinces'.[45]

The pleasure fair at Leicester over a decade later enticed visitors with a similar array of amusements. Edmonds' menagerie was there again, offering rides in a carriage drawn by zebras, while fairgoers who preferred the more bizarre productions of the animal kingdom could see 'a hairless horse', whose skin was 'as smooth as a piece of silk' and 'an enormous fat pig, fed on Beach's farinaceous foods'. Kelsall's waxwork exhibition and Middleton's marionettes added to the range of shows, as did a bearded lady, 'the honly hinstance hon record'. Other attractions included 'swing-boats, merry-go-rounds, etc. in abundance'; a 'blowing apparatus' that allowed users to test the strength of their lungs; and a 'performing sea-leopard', who entertained viewers by 'fir[ing] a rifle' and 'play[ing] a tambourine'.[46]

Though menageries thus had to compete for attention with a plethora of other attractions, they nearly always did good business, often emerging as the central feature of British fairs. At Stepney Fair in 1846 Wombwell's menagerie was 'the best exhibition at the fair', attracting '10,000 persons'.[47] At Edinburgh in 1854 '7000 sightseers "walked up" to view the natives of the desert and forest' in Edmonds' show, while at Hull in 1877 Mrs Edmonds' menagerie 'was patronised by the majority of those who visited the fair'.[48] Such figures – particularly when cited in advertisements for menageries – must necessarily be treated with caution, since it was in the interest of showmen to inflate them. Even if exaggerated, however, these numbers give some sense of the menagerie's relative popularity amongst rival attractions, and are to a certain extent supported by contemporary images such as this one of Coventry Fair, which shows crowds flocking into Wombwell's exhibition (Figure 3.2). The popular appeal of menageries is attested, moreover, by the responses of visitors, who generally seem to have considered their time inside the menagerie well spent. One old woman exiting Manders' collection at Bampton reportedly declared that it was 'worth all the money to see

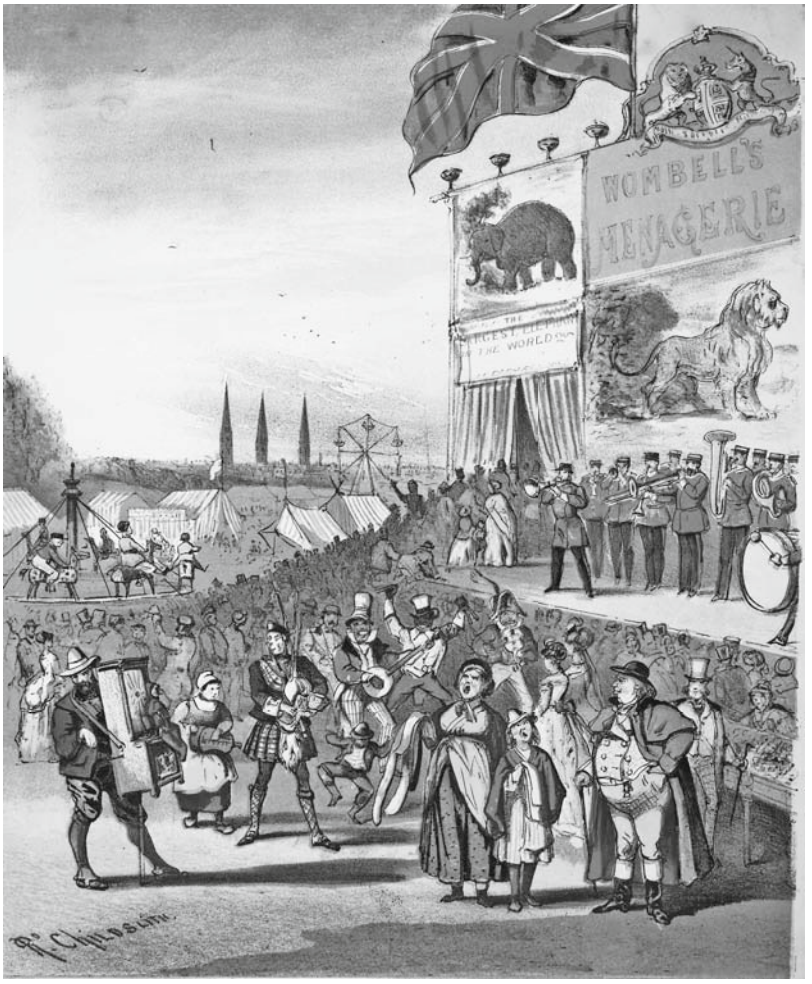


Figure 3.2 'Coventry Fair' Spellman Collection No.6024, © University of Reading Special Collections

the helement!'[49] Another more discerning customer, the diarist William Hone, was full of praise for the keeper at Atkins' menagerie, who 'showed every animal in an intelligent manner and answered the questions of the company readily and with civility'.[50]

As well as drawing impressive crowds, menageries also largely escaped the censure that was increasingly directed at fairs in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Divorced more and more from their

traditional function as the British population became more urbanised, fairs were often maligned in the press as sites of vice, indecency and debauchery.[51] Some were forcibly abolished by the authorities, notably Peckham (1827), Saint Bartholomew's and Donnybrook (1855).[52] Others, though they survived, were widely disparaged by moral reformers, who condemned such events as 'unnecessary … the cause of grievous immorality' and 'injurious to the inhabitants of the towns where they are held'.[53] While fairs as a whole thus had a bad press, menageries appear to have been to some extent exempted from this stigma on account of their perceived educational function (see Chapter 5). The *Leeds Mercury*, to give one example, explicitly prescribed a visit to Wombwell's menagerie at the 1839 winter fair as a suitable antidote to 'the scenes of folly and vice presenting on these occasions', urging fairgoers to 'spend a profitable hour in viewing the wonderful works of the Creator contained in this collection'.[54] Writing three decades later, the Stipendiary Magistrate of the Potteries, Mr Davis, attributed 'the absence of crime for two days in his district to the visit of Mr Manders' menagerie to Hanley', leading the *Birmingham Daily Post* to commend the 'civilising and ameliorating influences of tigers, bears, hyenas and wolves' on the 'native ferocity' of the working classes.[55] Of course, this was not the whole story, and there were instances when wild beast shows were less welcome. One hotel owner in Glasgow complained in 1871 that 'the whole neighbourhood' was 'disturbed by the roaring of the animals' after Manders' menagerie pitched itself in Bath Street.[56] Seven years earlier residents of Mile End had instituted legal proceedings against Edmonds' menagerie, alleging that the show lowered the tone of the area by attracting daily 'a mob of 2,000 or 3,000' 'drunk and rioutous' persons.[57] There were also, as we shall see, occasions when wild beast shows attracted criticism as sites of crime or animal abuse. Nonetheless, in providing material for Christian contemplation and rational recreation, menageries escaped the most searing condemnation of moral reformers, offering a blend of instruction and entertainment that harmonised nicely with contemporary middle-class notions of respectability. Credited with raising the overall tone of the fairground, menageries were conceived as a corrective to the prevailing anarchy and sordidness of popular holidays and frequently distinguished from the less wholesome entertainments on offer.

Stupendous elephants and ravenous hyenas

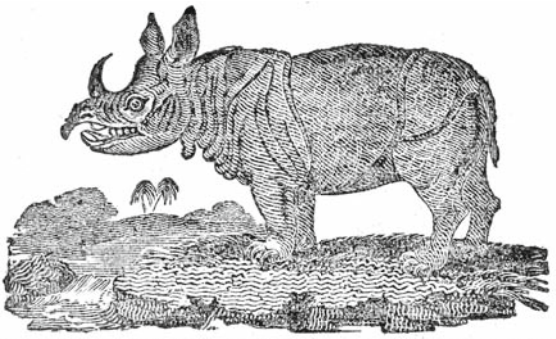
Popular science in the nineteenth century was a commercially driven operation whose protagonists worked in an increasingly competitive

marketplace: 'Nineteenth-century attractions may not have had gift shops to rival our modern science centres, but their directors were nonetheless highly skilled in the business of attracting visitors with their entertaining and instructive spectacles.'[58] Menagerists were masters of this kind of showmanship, employing a wide range of advertising techniques to publicise their collections. An analysis of their advertisements gives us a sense of how they marketed their shows, using both rhetorical wizardry and visual cues.

Advertisements for menageries appeared in a variety of forms. In the late eighteenth century, the presence of a wild beast show in a particular town might have been publicised verbally, by a town crier. As the range and volume of print culture expanded in the early nineteenth century, the shows were increasingly advertised textually through posters pasted on walls, handbills distributed on the street and advertisements in local newspapers.[59] Taxed at the rate of 3s 6d until 1833, and 1s 6d thereafter, newspaper announcements were a more costly option for showmen, but had the advantage of covering a wider geographical area.[60] Menagerists could, moreover, minimise costs by issuing truncated versions of their propaganda in papers and reserving more detailed descriptions for other untaxed media; an advertisement for Fairgrieve's menagerie in the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* advised readers to consult the 'numerous Window Bills' for further information, 'it being utterly impossible to recapitulate the many features of this Great Menagerie in an advertisement'.[61] Cheaper to produce than newspaper advertisements, posters were more accessible to poorer or illiterate customers, who might not buy or read a newspaper. Their downside was that they risked being obscured in a short time by a constant stream of rival publicity or, worse, ripped down by vandals. William Manders, a victim of vandalism, complained in 1866 that 'in anticipation of the arrival of my menagerie for exhibition at Liverpool, I h[ad] issued large quantities of expensively got-up placards, which h[ad] been affixed to hoardings in the usual manner', but, on entering the city a few days later, 'I noticed that these placards, as well as all others belonging to other advertisers, h[ad] been destroyed and mutilated in the most shameful manner'. Manders claimed to have spent £50 on the placards, which explains his anger at this 'wanton mischief'. His protest, published in the letters page of the *Liverpool Mercury*, also gives us a sense of the large sums menagerists were prepared to spend on advance publicity by the mid-1860s.[62]

Visually, advertisements for menageries were designed to be eye-catching and attention-grabbing, showcasing the collection's most alluring features and ensuring readers were aware of key details, such

as the date(s) and location of the exhibition. Some advertisements employed a range of fonts to highlight major attractions. Others emboldened, capitalised or italicised particular words or phrases to give them added impact. Yet others included images, which evolved from rather crude woodcuts in the early part of the century to more sophisticated pieces of artwork in later decades as technological advances facilitated higher quality reproduction.[63] An advertisement for Wombwell's menagerie in 1818 featured a tubby little rhinoceros with curled lip, pointed ears, folds of saggy skin hanging from its neck and a hint of scales over its hindquarters (Figure 3.3).[64] A handbill for Drake and Shore's menagerie in 1822 was headed by the arresting image of an elephant firing a pistol, while a handbill for Wombwell's and Bostock's in the 1880s was bordered with intricate scenes of exotic beasts in a wild landscape, interspersed with images of 'the unrivalled African Lion Huntress' Madame Salva, and portraits of the proprietors.[65] Designed to appeal to readers of varying ages and levels of education, menagerie advertisements



WOMBWELL'S ROYAL MENAGERIE,

INDISPUTABLY the most Grand, Rich, and Complete Collection of rare and beautiful LIVING ANIMALS, that was ever known to travel in any part of the world, is now offered for the inspection of Amateurs, Connoisseurs, and the Public, which affords an opportunity of viewing, at one glance, every kind of extraordinary, rare, and valuable Quadruped and Bird, that ever crossed the ocean; such as have always been considered as leading objects of exhibition. Exclusively of several singular Animals, entirely new to this country, the RHINOCEROS, or UNICORN of SCRIPTURE, is the largest, and ranks the highest of all quadrupeds, and is an animal never before exhibited in any part of this country: he was purchased by the Proprietor for the sum of Eight Hundred Guineas, and is the only animal of the kind alive in Europe; that formerly exhibited at Exeter 'Change being dead. There are, also, the largest Lion and Lioness in the kingdom, with their offspring, a young Lion and Lioness, whelped in England on the 27th of July, which were actually brought up and suckled by their mother; their fond and gentle manner with their Cubs surpasses all description, for they will not only suffer their Keeper to enter their Den, but take up the Cubs, one in each hand, and present them to the company: a sight truly novel and pleasing: and the Proprietor begs leave to inform the Public in general, that the Lioness is hourly expected to whelp again. Also, to be viewed, the sagacious MALE ELEPHANT, the last arrival from India, the only one travelling the kingdom, with a great variety of other Animals, too numerous to mention: in fact, the whole Assemblage is in such fine order, cleanliness, and condition, that the multitudes of Visitors that are continually viewing them are struck with astonishment.

N. B.—The utmost value given for Foreign Animals and Birds alive, at the Menagerie, at the top of Dale-street, near the Exchange.

Figure 3.3 Advertisement for Wombwell's Menagerie. *Liverpool Mercury*, 2 January 1818, © The British Library Board

contained both recognisable symbols and, for those with more time to peruse them or a higher level of literacy, detailed descriptions of the animals in their collections.

A handbill for Earl James' menagerie (Figure 3.4) illustrates these techniques. Issued in Exeter in 1825 to publicise the arrival of his show in Devon, the advertisement concentrates on the menagerie's star attraction, the bonassus or bison, which had recently been wowing crowds in London. The most striking image on the handbill is a woodcut of a shaggy-maned, hump-backed ruminant, with flaring nostrils, bushy beard and delicate hooves, strutting its stuff against a generically exotic background of palm trees.[66] Textually, what stand out are the animal's name – '**BONASSUS**' – which is trumpeted in bold capitals below the image – the place of exhibition – '**NOW EXHIBITING AT THE BOTTOM OF NORTH-STREET, OPPOSITE THE BARNSTAPLE INN**' – the name of the menagerist – '**EARL JAMES AND SONS**' – and a reference to the immense size of the star ruminant – '***He stands 6 Feet High and weighs 2 Tons !!***' Readers wanting to know more about the bonassus could study


NOW EXHIBITING, AT THE Bottom of North-Street, Opposite the BARNSTAPLE INN,

EARL JAMES And SONS' GRAND ROYAL MENAGERIE.

The Inhabitants of EXETER are most respectfully informed, that the last Opportunity now offers for them to see that WONDERFUL ANIMAL, THE

BONASSUS.

It being about to be Removed to the Continent.

This huge, terrific, and extraordinary animal, which has, for the last eighteen months, occupied the attention of the Naturalist, the Historian, and the whole of the Cognoscenti and Literati of the age, and more particularly the inhabitants and visitors of the greatest metropolis in the world, who from his hitherto unknown and unparalleled nature, has been the subject of Editorial observations in the London Newspapers, and whose history and origin was the foundation and formed the materials of that most popular piece, performed at the Royal West London Theatre, entitled "The Bonassus;" and lastly, the fac-simile of whose exhibition was made the principal Scene in the Pantomimes profused at the Theatres Royal, London. This most wonderful and interesting beast has been visited, in London, by upwards of Two Hundred Thousand Persons, amongst whom were observed, H. R. H. the Duke of York, H. R. H. the Duke of Clarence and Family, H. R. H. the Duke of Gloucester and Suite, H. R. H. the Prince of Saxe Coburg and Aid-de-Camps, their Excellencies the Ambassadors of France, Madrid, Portugal and Vienna, the Duke of Wellington, Buckingham, and Devonshire; and the major part of the Peers, and the Members of the House of Commons, during the last Session of Parliament, as well as several of the Bishops and other distinguished Dignitaries of the Church. Ladies of distinction came in parties, along with their families, to see the stupendous and interesting Bonassus. In his wonderful Phenomenon of nature is combined all the horrific grandeur of the animal creation, having the head of an Elephant, the fore part of a Bison, the mane and hind part of a Lion, the eye on the cheek bone, and ear similar to that of a human being. On the whole we may say with our immortal Bard, "taking him all in all, we ne'er may look upon his like again."

He stands 6 Feet High, and weighs 2 Tons ! !

His consumption of Food daily exceeds that of an Elephant; he is not a carnivorous animal, but is particularly fond of Fruit and Vegetables. Of the latter, he is partial to Onions, and frequently consumes a bushel and half at a meal. In the case of the Bonassus, the religious scruples against visiting exhibitions are laid aside, and all sects and sorts of people join in admiration of this great and noble piece of work; which at once presents a striking and rare instance of Animal Beauty, and Natural Curiosity; which affords contemplation for the mind, and instruction for those who live into the wonderful works of the Almighty. The following is a description of the singular animal above stated, which is now exhibiting:—"Bonassus or Bonasus, the Bonasse of Aristotle, 2145 years since; the Urus of Cæsar; the Bos ferous of Strabo, 1798 years since; the Bison of Pliney 1744 years since; the Bisius of Opion, so called from its being found in the Histories of Thrace. According to these authorities it was found in their days in Media, and Persia, a province of Macedonia, among the Alps, and in the great Hyrcanian Forest, which extends from Germany even into Scythia.'

A PAIR OF ROYAL

Figure 3.4 Handbill for the Menagerie of Earl James and Sons, © The Bodleian Libraries, The University of Oxford, John Johnson Collection: Animals on Show 1 (25)

the small print between the bold lettering, from which they would have learned that it had 'the head of an Elephant, the forepart of a Bison, the mane and hind part of a Lion, the eye on the cheek and an ear similar to a human being'. Those in a hurry, or less proficient at reading, might omit these sections of densely-packed type, but could still get the gist of the advertisement from the bold headlines. The handbill thus catered for readers of varying levels of interest and literacy, skilfully synthesising text and image to publicise James' travelling wonder.[67]

In terms of content, menagerie publicity consistently addressed two main areas. On the one hand, written advertisements described at length the animals on view, stressing their quality, quantity, range and rarity. On the other, showmen focused on the overall visitor experience, indicating the special measures taken to make a visit to their establishments a pleasant, safe and sanitary undertaking. Novelty was in both cases the keyword, as exhibitors tantalised the public with previously unseen wonders.

Menagerists emphasised first and foremost the size and exclusivity of their animals. Their advertisements were peppered with superlatives, routinely describing the beasts they exhibited as the largest, the smallest or the handsomest representatives of their species ever to have graced the British Isles. Drake and Shore presented 'an elegant zebra ... which for colour, far surpasses any other imported'.[68] Wombwell touted an elephant 'so extraordinary in his size that all elephants hitherto offered for public inspection will sink into mere pygmies'.[69] Mrs Bostock publicised 'the mighty, majestic, powerful, gentle MADAM JUMBO, the largest, best-proportioned and heaviest female Elephant ever gazed on by British eyes'.[70] Edmonds was so confident of the novelty and quality of his stock in 1852 that he coolly challenged 'all the zoologists and collectors in Europe for either £100 or £1000 to produce, at the present time, either so fine an elephant, rhinoceros, black-maned lion, zebra, horned horse, or so handsome a tiger as those here notified'.[71] There was a constant struggle to achieve one-upmanship over travelling rivals, each showman trumping the latest zoological wonder with a bigger and better specimen of his own.

Where showmen refrained from explicitly touting the splendour and magnitude of their animals, they found other equally potent ways of communicating their grandeur, sometimes even turning adversity into profit. In 1831, for example, when logistical difficulties retarded Wombwell's entry into Portsmouth, the menagerist blamed the delay on the size of his elephant. Wombwell apologised to the citizens of Portsmouth for the late arrival of his collection in the city, but explained that his menagerie 'cannot possibly be exhibited before Tuesday next, as

the immensely large male elephant will be obliged to be taken out, and the body of the great carriage [in which he travels] must be taken off the under-works in order for its admission through the gates of Portsmouth; otherwise it would be impossible to get it in!'[72] The showman thus capitalised on a setback to generate interest in his star pachyderm. He repeated the trick when he returned to Portsmouth in 1842, stating, in this instance, that, 'the immense moving castle in which is conveyed the enormous Siamese Elephant being of too ponderous a size to pass through the Gates of Portsmouth', he had elected instead to erect 'a temporary building to contain two of those most sagacious animals during the sojourn of the menagerie'.[73]

As well as stressing the size of their stock, menagerists were not shy about disclosing the cost of their animals. Showmen routinely professed to have spared no expense or effort in amassing the most exquisite specimens on the market, repeatedly emphasising their own selfless desire to gratify the paying public. No financial or logistical challenge was too daunting to prevent a coveted beast from appearing in a menagerie, and no risk too great in their altruistic quest to please the discerning visitor. Indeed, pre-exhibition propaganda often invited sympathy and admiration for the tireless efforts of the showman, who was apparently willing to bankrupt himself in the interests of the public good. Wombwell, advertising his collection in Glasgow, proudly announced that 'the whole of this immense menagerie' was the result of his own 'individual exertions and penury sacrifices', having, he claimed, never 'shrunk from any expense, however great, when an opportunity offered to procure rare and extraordinary animals for the information and entertainment of his countrymen'.[74]

Part of the appeal of the metropolitan zoological collection also lay in its ability to transport visitors mentally to the places from which its inmates originated. To do this effectively, written descriptions of the various animals often referenced the details of their acquisition, if known, thereby endowing them with a kind of history that elucidated, at the same time, the great efforts to which their captors had gone to procure them. Reading these accounts, visitors were encouraged to imagine the lands from which specific beasts had come, and the labours necessary to acquire them. 'Framed by such a narrative, the animal is placed "in the mind's eye" so as to perform the dual function of transporting the spectator into the lands from which it originates and of that land into London [or anywhere else in Britain]'.[75] That the precise manner in which animals were collected – and not the mere fact of their collection – elevated their symbolic value is further suggested by explicit

allusions in menagerie advertisements to the donors of certain prize specimens, some suggesting that the prestige of the former enhanced the attraction of the latter. Publicising his collection in Leeds, in 1833, for example, Wombwell announced proudly that his newest acquisition was 'the identical polar bear brought to England by the celebrated Captain Ross, the Explorer of the North West Passage', a fact that would render the specimen 'doubly interesting from its historical fame'.[76] Such details enhanced the exotic appeal of particular animals, and gave them a pedigree that extended beyond their function as natural history specimens. Giving certain animals a colourful back-story also tickled the spectator's imperial imagination, conjuring alluring images of sultry jungles, frozen wastelands and British heroism overseas and allowing viewers to conceive of the beasts as individuals connected with specific colonial settings and agents of empire, rather than as generic representatives of abstract zoological types.

Alongside size and cost, two other measures of quality were invoked with some frequency in advertisements for travelling menageries. The first of these was completeness, for in addition to possessing the premier specimens in their class, showmen wanted to convince prospective customers that the range of animals on display was the most eclectic ever seen and that the collection as a whole surpassed all others in existence. Polito employed this rhetorical device when, visiting Hull in 1818, he described his collection as containing 'almost every species of Bird and Beast in the universe, perhaps more in variety than ever entered Noah's Ark'.[77] Wombwell also used this mode of description when he informed the citizens of Portsmouth in 1831 that his menagerie comprised 'fifteen immense wagons, heavily laden with wild beasts and birds of every description and denomination, from the enormous elephant to the minute marmoset, and from the stupendous ostrich to the almost insect humming bird'.[78] By presenting their outfits in this way, showmen consciously styled their menageries as mobile microcosms of the world's natural wonders, emphasising the number and variety of specimens in their establishments and creating the illusion of comprehensiveness.

The second marker of quality was novelty. Since menageries toured Britain on a fairly regular basis and sometimes visited the same place more than once, they had to constantly update their stock in order to appeal to people who had already patronised them. Customers, it was assumed, would not want to see the same batch of creatures again – with the exception, perhaps of one or two cherished favourites – so a continual replenishment of the collection was necessary to satisfy their

appetite for new wonders. Advertisements duly emphasised what was new in the menagerie, as well as what was large or expensive, assuring previous patrons that a return visit would be well worth their while. Visiting London in 1841, for instance, Hylton professed to have 'made Extensive Alterations and Additions to the Menagerie, by Purchasing the most Handsome Quadruped in the World, namely THE ZEBRA, ALSO THE OURANG-OUTANG OR MAN MONKEY'.[79] Visiting Hull in 1825, Atkins likewise announced that since he 'last had the honour of exhibiting' in the city, 'an entire change of animals has taken place – the old lioness which whelped at Beverley…and the huge elephant, who will greet his old friends with renewed pleasure, excepted'.[80] Menagerists thus continually updated and expanded their collections, in order to ensure the novelty factor.

Colour, comfort and cleanliness

If the contents of the menagerie constituted its main attraction, the ambience of the show, its outward appearance and the special measures taken by proprietors to accommodate visitors also contributed to its appeal. Showmen wanted to assure visitors that they would be comfortable, and, despite the close proximity of the odd 'ravenous hyena', that they would be safe. They consequently did all they could to enhance the visitor experience, improving the heating and lighting inside their collections and trying to promote good hygiene and security. The aim was to make visiting a menagerie enjoyable and physically pleasurable, as well as thrilling and exotic.

The first facet of the menagerie that appealed to fairgoers was, of course, the establishment's exterior. To entice visitors into the show, the facade was typically garishly painted with exotic scenes depicting animals in their native landscapes. Sometimes one of the keepers paraded in front of the show touting for custom, and, in some cases, a couple of the smaller inmates were also on view; Bostock and Wombwell's menagerie, for example, featured 'a young seal tumbl[ing] about in a tub at the door'.[81] Such on-site publicity often proved successful in tempting fairgoers inside the collection, particularly, perhaps, illiterate visitors, who might not have understood the printed matter on pre-circulated handbills. According to one, somewhat hostile, contemporary, many people were lured inside the show by:

> flaming pictorial representations of the wonders of the earth, sea and air depicted on their outside canvas; with their shrill trumpet, big

> drum and inevitable gong; with the miserable little monkey and the disconsolate-looking cockatoo perched on the exterior rails; and with a dissipated individual gesticulating at the apex of the steps bawling out the words: "Walk up, walk up; come and see the wild beasts; the keeper is jist agoing [sic] to begin.[82]

Thomas Frost, author of a history of London's fairs, recounted how, as a young boy in the 1820s, he had frequently been enticed inside Atkins' and Wombwell's menageries at Croydon Fair by the 'immense pictures, suspended from lofty poles, of elephants and giraffes, lions and tigers, zebras, boa constrictors and whatever else was most beautiful in the brute creation or most susceptible of brilliant colouring'. These sumptuous images evoked a sense of wonder in those who saw them, encouraging spectators to view the living specimens inside. In addition to the exotic forms and rich hues of the pictures, Frost noted that the images on the facade typically exaggerated the size of the 'zoological rarities', adding still further to their allure. 'The boa constrictor was given the girth of an ox', reminisced Frost, 'and the white bear should have been as large as an elephant, judged by the size of the sailors who were attacking him among his native icebergs'.[83]

Once tempted into the menagerie it was assumed that spectators would want to admire the animals in as much comfort as possible, and to see them performing their most exciting activities. To satisfy these wishes, menagerists took a number of measures. Firstly there was the question of heating and lighting. The inside of the menagerie could be somewhat dingy owing to its enclosed structure and, in the winter months, rather chilly. To counter these inconveniences, gas lamps were installed as soon as they became available (circa 1840), and fires lit to temper the cold.[84] An advertisement for Wombwell's show in the *Leeds Mercury* in 1839 assured readers that 'in order to render the Arena of the Establishment comfortable constant Fires are kept'; two years later, an advertisement for the same menagerie in the *Ipswich Journal* stated that 'the Menagerie will be brilliantly lighted with Gas', enabling visitors to inspect the animals properly even after dark.[85] From the early 1870s, gas lighting started to be supplanted by electric lighting. Electricity was initially employed to illuminate special performances by the animals, and, judging by contemporary advertisements, constituted almost as much of an attraction as the beasts themselves. An advertisement for Manders' menagerie in 1871 announced that during the performances of 'the Renowned One-Armed Lion King, MASSARTI … the Den will be Brilliantly Illuminated with the Electric Light'.[86] A report in the *Norfolk*

Chronicle from 1867 commented, similarly, that 'the electric light was exhibited in the interior [of Manders' menagerie] during Maccomo's performance with the lions, tigers and elephants', the wording implying that the light was as much an attraction as the animals.[87] This shows how menagerists quickly seized upon new technologies, which contributed to the spectacle of their exhibitions.

A second measure taken to please the paying public related to the scheduling of special performances. The main highlight of a visit to the menagerie was seeing the animals being fed, the time when they became most active, and were believed to assume their natural ferocity. Because feeding typically took place at 9.30 in the evening, however, before the menagerie closed for the night, some older or more fragile visitors might find it too late. To accommodate the needs of such individuals, menagerists sometimes arranged for a number of daytime feedings. In Liverpool, for instance, Wombwell instituted a special daytime feeding to cater for those 'parties living at a distance and wishing to see the animals fed by daylight'.[88] In Bristol, he announced that 'on Monday next the time of feeding the lions and tigers etc. will be at 3pm, thus allowing invalids, families etc. an opportunity of viewing these ferocious animals in their greatest state of excitement without being subject to the inconvenience of the late hour or the ill effects of the cold night air'.[89] The rescheduling of feeding time ensured that even customers with complex travel arrangements or delicate constitutions had the chance to witness the animals eating. It also allowed the menagerist to assume his favoured guise of considerate host.

A final concern was sanitation. As can be imagined, keeping many wild animals in close proximity to one another could lead to some rather pungent smells, the like of which might not be desirable, particularly to the more fashionable visitors. Showmen, anxious to please, did everything possible to expel or disguise these odours, reassuring prospective customers that the levels of hygiene within their establishments were high. Some relied simply upon regular cleaning while others turned to new technologies for solutions. Manders, for instance, visiting Liverpool in 1867, proudly announced the installation of 'Rimmel's Patent Vaporiser' inside his collection, a device that had 'been used with great success at the principal Metropolitan and Provincial Theatres, Concert Halls, Ball Rooms and Private Assemblies to purify and perfume the atmosphere', and which was now appearing 'for the first time in a travelling Zoological Collection, where its delicious emanations will be duly appreciated'.[90] Menagerists, therefore, considered the olfactory as well as the visual pleasures of their visitors,

taking advantage of the latest technologies to deodorise their exhibitions.[91] They also enhanced visitors' auditory experience by contracting brass bands to perform in front of the show, and increased their tactile pleasure by letting them touch, ride or feed the more gentle animals (see Chapter 5).

Conclusion

Travelling menageries were an enduring and popular source of entertainment in Victorian Britain. Their appeal transcended social classes and their innovative use of images, sounds and new technologies ensured that they were popular wherever they went and were able to generate a sizeable audience. Charging affordable rates and touring extensively, wild beast shows helped to democratise natural history, literally bringing elephants to the doors of the masses.

A constant presence at fairs, menageries repeatedly eclipsed most of the other shows on offer. They were perceived, at least by the press, as more morally uplifting than the majority of fairground exhibits, and seemingly retained their popularity amongst the British public long after the most famous fairs had receded in importance, to the extent that their absence was regarded as a crippling blow. One Birmingham paper reflected in 1870 that 'whenever the history of the Decline and Fall of the British Fair shall come to be written, the historian will, we imagine, have to recall that the fall was long staved off, and the decline invested with a certain glory and dignity by the zoological collections which, in the later years of fairs, grew to really stupendous proportions, and without a visit from at least one of which the principal fairs could not be held to be other than a melancholy failure'.[92] The menagerie was thus a key form of amusement and a stalwart of the popular leisure scene. For most British people, even after the foundation of zoological gardens, it was also the prime site for encounters with exotic animals.

4
Animals, Wholesale and Retail

> We feed the Giraffe on Milk in the Winter but can't do so in the Summer because it has so far to go it turns sour before it gets to the stomach. (Harry Hunter, *Manders' Menagerie*, 1876)

On 25 May 1850, a large crowd of onlookers congregated at Southampton docks to greet the P&O steamer, *Ripon*, recently arrived from Alexandria. The *Ripon* was carrying 'the heavy portion of the India mail' and '166 passengers, 101 of which were first-class'. The 'great curiosity' that the crowd had come to see, however, was not a human passenger but a zoological wonder: the first hippopotamus to be transported alive to Europe. The animal was 'a male specimen, in good health, about ten months old and 500lbs weight'.

The hippopotamus was nearing the end of a long and arduous journey. Captured several months earlier on the small White Nile island of Obaysch (after which he was named) the young pachyderm had travelled overland to Alexandria, where he boarded the *Ripon* for England. Obaysch was accommodated during the voyage in 'a stable, close to which was an iron tank holding fresh water, which was renewed every day'. He 'bathed three or four times daily', and subsisted on a diet of 'milk and rice', which he consumed in large quantities, 'both boiled and raw'.[1] After delighting the assembled crowds at Southampton, the hippo was transferred, with his bath, onto a train to London, and then taken by van to the Regent's Park Zoological Gardens. On arrival, he was driven to his new enclosure and enticed inside by his Arab keeper, Hamet Safi Canaana, who walked in front of him carrying a bag of dates (Figure 4.1).[2]

Figure 4.1 Obaysch. Photograph by Don Juan Carlos, Count of Montizón, from *The Photographic Album for the Year*, 1855, © The British Library Board C.43.i.17 pl. 9

The hippopotamus was just one of many exotic animals shipped to Britain in the nineteenth century. He was part of a complex and lucrative trade in living zoological specimens that persisted and expanded throughout the Victorian period. At the start of the century, this trade was largely speculative, the result of 'individual enterprise' rather than systematic exploitation. As naturalist James Rennie commented in 1829, the typical practice was for 'a tiger or a bear' to be 'caught young, and entrusted as a speculation to the captain of a merchant vessel to be brought to England. The proprietor of the valuable collection at Exeter 'Change, or ... one of the owners of the three or four travelling menageries in the kingdom', then 'bought the animal at a large price, if it suited his purpose'.[3] As the century progressed, the channels for acquiring foreign animals became more streamlined, and the appeals for specimens more focused. Zoological gardens and enterprising menagerists like Wombwell

requested specific species from overseas donors, sometimes contracting agents to track down especially coveted or elusive beasts. Professional animal dealerships, which existed on a small scale in the eighteenth century, also grew, in the latter half of the nineteenth, into much more serious and profitable concerns, exchanging thousands of animals each year and selling a large stock of exotic creatures from their premises.[4]

Though not every piece of animal cargo was awaited as anxiously as Obaysch, all exotic arrivals required some degree of care, and those that made it alive represented something of a logistical triumph. Successfully acquiring an animal like a hippopotamus demanded a considerable outlay of energy and money. It also required the labour, dedication and expertise of a wide range of individuals, including, in this case, the British Consul at Cairo, C.A. Murray, who personally arranged the pachyderm's transportation; P&O employee Captain Moresby, who cared for him aboard ship; and the hippo's 'faithful' keeper Hamet, who accompanied him all the way to London.[5] This selection of assistants was fairly typical of the intermediaries who facilitated the exotic animal trade, and underlines the latter's close connections to the bureaucratic, military, scientific and commercial networks within the British Empire – an entity which, by 1830, boasted formal colonies in Australia, Southern Africa, Canada and the Indian subcontinent as well as a strong commercial and diplomatic presence across Asia and newly independent Latin America.[6] To explore in more detail how these networks operated, this chapter considers the key figures involved in the collection and transportation of exotic beasts and emphasises the transnational dynamics of the business. It also considers how the identity of the donor, or the difficulty of acquiring a particular animal, could influence its symbolic value, converting it into an individualised icon of scientific prowess, naval supremacy and commercial penetration.

Donors and traders

Menageries and zoological gardens obtained animals through a variety of channels. Sometimes they purchased beasts from dealers or private citizens. On other occasions they received donations from British subjects overseas. Zoos were more often the beneficiaries of donations than menageries, owing to their status as civic or national repositories for zoological specimens. The Zoological Society was a frequent recipient of donations, some large, like the 'fine young female elephant' presented by officers engaged in the survey of the Euphrates, others small, like the hermit crab presented by a Miss Bell.[7] Menageries usually had to buy

their animals, though they might acquire the odd unwanted pet on the cheap. Arthur Patterson, author of a guide to keeping monkeys, advised the owners of aged, 'crusty' primates to sell them to a 'passing menagerie', which would generally have 'a vacant cage suitable for a small fiend of this description'.[8]

Of all those who made offerings to British zoological institutions, overseas diplomats were among the most prolific. Stationed across the globe, colonial governors and ambassadors were ideally situated to superintend the collection of rare animals. Many governmental representatives enjoyed hunting as a means of asserting their valour or simply as a way to pass the time. Others had a keen personal interest in natural history; the Bavarian naturalists Johann von Spix and Friedrich von Martius were surprised to learn, while exploring the environs of Rio de Janeiro, that 'the English Consul, Mr Chamberlain ... amuses himself with entomology, and has a rich collection of the insects of the neighbourhood'.[9] The Lists of Donations in the Society's Annual Reports feature many governors and consuls, highlighting their importance as suppliers. William Ogilby, HM Consul at Charleston, for instance, donated a Virginian opossum in 1844; Colonel Butterworth, Governor of Singapore, sent a Malay bear and a cassowary in 1840; Henry Southern, HM Minister at Rio, presented a tapir in 1853; and Sir George Grey, Governor of the Cape Colony, presented a quagga and an eland in 1858.[10] As these cases demonstrate, donations came both from within Britain's overseas colonies and from foreign states where it had a diplomatic presence, extending the specimen-gathering network well beyond the limits of the formal empire.

Sir Thomas Reade, H.M. Consul at Tripoli, was emblematic of the patriotic diplomatic donor, furnishing the Zoological Society with multiple specimens. Based in North Africa for the later part of his ambassadorial career (he had previously served as Napoleon's gaoler on St Helena), Reade opened his account with the Society in 1833, when he sent 'a pair of lions, a pair of ostriches, a pair of deer ... and a bubal antelope' to the establishment. The following year, Reade 'increased his claims on the gratitude of the Society by presenting to it ... three Kolbe's vultures, an Egyptian vulture ... and numerous pigeons'; in 1835 'a lioness and other animals' featured amongst his 'munificent presents'. Relocated to Tunis, Reade continued to collect exotic animals on the Society's behalf, forwarding 'four camels, a pair of ostriches, three eagles, a kolbe's vulture, two fezzan sheep, two porcupines and a lioness' to their menagerie in 1836, and a striped hyena in 1838. When the diplomat died in 1850, the Zoological Society elected him an honorary member, praising the way

he had 'liberally availed himself of the power afforded by his position to advance the objects of zoology'.[11]

Military personnel were another prime source of zoological specimens. Billeted in far-flung locations, policing the Empire and fighting in foreign wars, army and navy officers had ample opportunity to collect rare animals, and, in some cases, the requisite patriotism and education to appreciate the scientific interest of particular specimens. Individual soldiers sometimes acquired exotic creatures with an eye to profit on their return. Other beasts were adopted by groups of officers as a kind of regimental mascot, a handsome accessory for parades and a pleasant distraction from the stress or tedium of a military campaign; the 108th Regiment had a 'pet antelope' called 'Fan', who 'was brought home ... from India in 1876'.[12] Many of these animals found their way into zoological gardens when their owners concluded their tours of duty, making valuable additions to the collections. In 1855 'S.B. Lakeman, Capt. Cape Mounted Rifles', presented the Zoological Society of London with a springbok. The following year the Royal Corps of Engineers, just returned from the Crimea, 'most liberally offered to place at the Society's disposal a young female [camel], which had been born in their camp on the heights of Sebastopol in February 1855'.[13]

One soldier, Captain Alexander, went to considerable lengths to transmit a 'curious' bear to the Surrey Zoological Gardens. Serving in Afghanistan in 1843, in a somewhat beleaguered colonial campaign, Alexander captured the animal in the Kyber Pass while it was still a young cub. Finding the beast a congenial companion, the Captain retained him into adulthood, during which time he 'shared with his captors in all the vicissitudes of war, imprisonment and victory'. When hostilities ceased, Alexander brought the bear back to England, feeding him on an entirely vegetarian diet and allowing him to roam 'quite loose on board ship'. The *Morning Chronicle*, reporting the bear's arrival, classified him, tellingly, as one of 'the numerous trophies obtained from the recent seat of war in the east', underlining not only his scientific value as a zoological 'novelty', but his figurative value as a memento of colonial ventures.[14] The camel from Sebastopol probably conjured similar reminiscences of the Crimean campaign, another exotic souvenir of a foreign war.

If bureaucratic and military personnel were thus central to the specimen collecting process, Britain's commercial connections also played a vital role. The British Empire was, to a large degree, built on commerce. British ships travelled all around the world to exchange goods, from textiles to cutlery.[15] Britain's trading links extended far beyond its formal

colonies to regions such as China and Latin America, giving zoological entrepreneurs access to animals around the globe. While scientific institutions in some other European countries (e.g. France and Spain) relied to a considerable degree on government orders and on expeditions to supply them with specimens, nineteenth-century Britons took pride in the enterprise, ingenuity and patriotism of individual citizens, who exploited commercial and intellectual opportunities without official prompting from above. As James Rennie expressed it: 'the spirit of commercial speculation has ... amongst us supplied the place, and sometimes very admirably, of a fostering care on the part of the Government'.[16] Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that merchants, chartered companies and ships' captains should all play their part in the exotic animal trade, either by procuring the beasts in the first place, perhaps in exchange for manufactured goods, or in superintending their transportation to Britain. The East Indies Company and the Hudson's Bay Company – two of the most important trading companies in the British Empire – both featured among the donors to the Zoological Society of London, the former offering a Tibetan ram, and the latter, beavers and a silver fox.[17] Ordinary sailors would also collect and transport exotic animals to Britain in the hopes of being able to sell them at a profit upon their return to port. One sailor, James White, wrote to Edward Cross at the Surrey Zoological Gardens to inform him that 'I have got Two Boas from Madras ... in good condition and remarkably lively', available for purchase at £10 the pair.[18]

Scientific expeditions also played a part in supplying zoos and menageries with exotic animals, though perhaps to a lesser degree than their focus would lead one to expect. This was largely because naturalists usually collected dead rather than living animals, finding them easier to store, classify and study. Yorkshire naturalist Charles Waterton, for example, collected thousands of animals from British Guyana in the mid-1820s, all stuffed using a special taxidermy process he had developed himself.[19] While this approach was more typical, scientific explorers did, on occasion, bring back living specimens from the lands they visited, many of which ended up in the national collection. Charles Darwin presented a tortoise to the Zoological Society of London in 1856. Arctic explorer Sir John Franklin supplied two Mackenzie River dogs from northern Canada.[20] These donations were valuable to the Society and were further supplemented by the offerings of the Zoo's corresponding members, who supplied specimens from both within the Empire and beyond. Dr Felipe Poey, Professor of Zoology at the University of Havana, gave the Society a raccoon in 1842. Sir Jamsetgee Jejubhoy of Bombay transmitted, 'at his

own cost, a number of valuable animals to the Society's Menagerie'.[21] Here we can see complex networks of scientific exchange in operation; networks which drew upon the knowledge, expertise and power of colonial subjects and foreign scientists.

Two further groups performed important roles within the exotic animal trade: commissioned agents and dealers in wild beasts. The former operated directly on behalf of zoological gardens and menageries, and were dispatched to the colonies with the express objective of obtaining the most singular and coveted animals – often ones that required special care or substantial outlay of money and could not be acquired from more casual sources. Since they stood to be reimbursed handsomely for their expertise, agents were willing to take significant risks to procure the best specimens and were often prepared to spend considerable sums to get the animals they wanted. One of Mr Wombwell's agents paid £390 to a pair of hunters for the 'celebrated' tiger, 'Striped Bob'.[22] Another agent, 'an enterprising traveller' from Vienna named Lorenzo Casanova, procured an African rhinoceros for the Hamburg animal dealer Carl Hagenbeck, who, in turn, sold it to the London Zoological Society for '£1,000 – being ... the largest sum they have ever paid for a single animal'.[23] As Nigel Rothfels has shown, such mark-ups were necessary, to compensate for the many losses inherent in the wild animal trade and the high costs of conveying livestock to Europe.[24]

Though often linked contractually to a specific zoological establishment, agents could also act independently, and were sometimes entrusted with the delivery of a single animal which they were particularly suited to procure. In 1833, for instance, the Zoological Society of London contracted a Frenchman named Monsieur Thibaut to co-ordinate the acquisition of four giraffes, a species considered 'among the most important objects to which the attention of the Council [could be] directed'. Though not a regular employee of the Society, Thibaut, then based in Cairo, agreed to travel up the Nile to Dongolah to obtain the animals. With the help of Arab hunters he eventually succeeded in procuring four calves, which were shipped to Egypt and then on to Malta and London in the steamship *Manchester*. The Zoological Society initially agreed that Thibaut would be paid £700 when he delivered the giraffes to Malta. Following the Frenchman's success in fulfilling this part of the bargain, however, the Society extended Thibaut's contract, asking him to oversee the animals' transportation to London in return for a further 'handsome present'.[25]

The second group of zoological speculators, wild animal dealers, were based, not in colonial outposts, but in the major port cities of Britain

and other industrialised nations. As the owners of sometimes sizeable, though constantly changing menageries, dealers collected exotic creatures from across the globe and functioned as clearing houses for all those beasts that arrived in Europe without any pre-arranged recipient. Usually situated close to the docks, to facilitate easy access to incoming vessels, these traders relieved sailors and other colonial personnel of their living cargo then re-sold it, at a profit, to zoological gardens, travelling menageries and private individuals. Some operated on a large scale, particularly in the second half of the century, others on a more ad hoc basis. At the more professional end of the spectrum, the Liverpool-based animal merchant William Cross advertised the range of beasts on sale at his premises in 1871 – 'Lions, Hyenas, Bears, Wolves, Pelicans, Ostriches, Double and Single Hump Camels' – and entreated 'parties having animals to dispose of' to 'apply by letter or telegram' to 'W. Cross, the largest importer in the world'.[26] At the more amateur end, George Willson of 'Milton, near Sittingbourne, Kent' contacted Mr Edward Cross of the Surrey Zoological Gardens in 1833 to inform him that 'I have a beast alive from South America, from Valparaiso'. Willson described the animal – a peccary – as having a nose 'like a pig … the back like a porcupine', the 'back part like a bear, feet like a deer [and] a blow hole in the back'. He confessed that he had bought it 'on speculation' and asked Cross to let him know if the proposed transaction interested him.[27]

The most renowned exotic animal dealer in mid-nineteenth-century Britain was the London-based, Hamburg-born, Charles Jamrach, who served clients across the country from his outlet on Ratcliffe Highway. Jamrach's business, which flourished from 1840–1891, comprised a retail shop, crammed with shrieking macaws and parakeets and, just a little further along the street, a large warehouse in which the prospective buyer was greeted with a veritable menagerie of 'pelicans gorged with fish-gobbling, antelopes thrusting forward their graceful heads, emus fretting against the bars … baboons – some ferocious, others tame, together with such a variety of other animals that a list of them would read like the index to Buffon'. In an upstairs showroom a selection of more vicious creatures assailed the viewer's ears with menacing roars and spine-chilling hisses. Back in Jamrach's private apartment, a handsome sloth could be seen languidly 'suspended by his four claws from a chair-back … in front of the fireplace'. To keep his stock in prime condition, and to compensate for the inevitable losses occasioned by death and disease, Jamrach deployed agents around the world to secure him the most coveted (and therefore profitable) specimens; it was claimed that

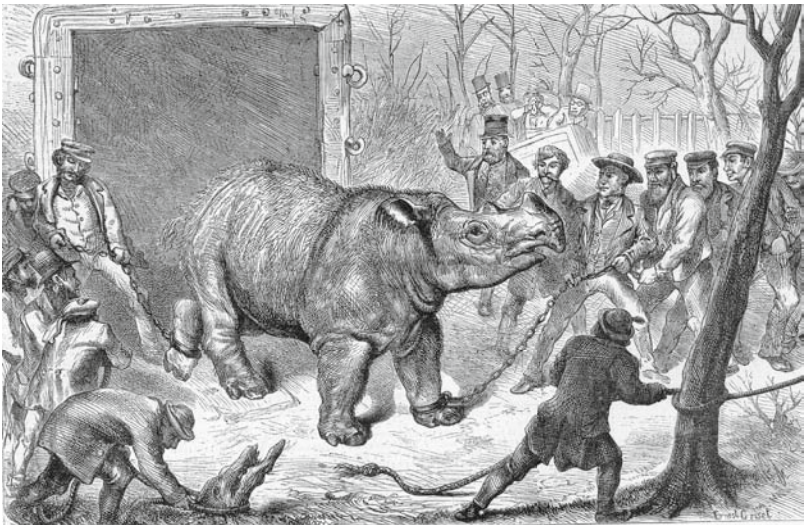


Figure 4.2 'Transferring the hairy rhinoceros from her travelling van to her cage', *The Graphic*, 2 March 1872

there was 'no native hunter or trapper, in any part of the globe, however remote, but knows where Jamrach's agent and Jamrach's purchase money can be found'. The wild animal dealer frequently collaborated with the most prestigious zoological gardens, including the Zoological Society of London, which bought a Sumatran rhinoceros from him in 1872 (Figure 4.2). On a more modest scale, Jamrach transacted business with private buyers, selling 'lions and tigers ... wholesale or retail, like haberdashery or cheese'.[28]

Tricks of the trade

The sources of exotic animals and the mechanisms through which they were obtained conferred a specific meaning on those animals, and also influenced the way in which they were presented and understood. As Samuel Alberti has noted in the case of natural history specimens in nineteenth-century British provincial museums, 'the status of these objects was intimately connected with their individual histories (often ... evocative of imperial adventure)'.[29] The acquisition of particularly coveted or elusive specimens could be interpreted as something of a national triumph, the result of individual or collective perseverance and ingenuity. At the same time, the exploitation of colonial

administrative structures to procure exotic beasts co-existed with a wider transnational interchange of living creatures, in which commercial imperatives took precedence over national sensibilities. The trade in exotic animals can therefore be seen as a complex network of interactions and exchanges.

Several aspects of this trade are particularly worthy of note. Firstly, the collection of zoological specimens, alive and dead, was greatly facilitated by the popularity of big game hunting across the British Empire. In the nineteenth century, as John Mackenzie has shown, hunting was an all-consuming passion for many Britons. 'In the military almost everyone, from high-ranking officers to white troopers, participated in their respective places in some form of the chase'. Civilian administrators in India embraced hunting, partly as a form of recreation, partly as a way of flaunting their courage. 'Even the commercial elite of the port cities regarded it as a useful means of making social contacts'. Hunting-related literature proliferated in this period, perpetuating the cult of the big game hunter and whetting the desire of metropolitan readers to see living animals in zoological gardens or menageries.[30] Though hunting expeditions usually resulted in the death of their quarries, some specimens were kept alive and taken back to Europe. These few survivors – often the most notorious or dangerous individuals – functioned as emblems of a heroic and vibrant imperial culture, and usually sold for high prices. In 1869, when the 'famous Government elephant hunter … Wallymaloo' captured a family of elephants who had been damaging the plantations of northern Ceylon, Manders' agent in India purchased them 'for a fabulous amount', confident that their violent back-story would appeal to British menagerie-goers.[31]

If the collection of exotic species thus harmonised nicely with colonial leisure pursuits, its figurative value helped to consolidate imperial ventures back home and to advertise British power overseas. Rare animals, like foreign flora, ethnographic artefacts and antiquities, functioned as tangible symbols of Britain's imperial reach, the more so due to the difficulty in obtaining certain specimens and the challenge of keeping them alive all the way to British shores. The fact that many donations arrived courtesy of the very embodiments of British colonialism – the diplomatic corps, the army, the navy and the commercial elite – further cemented their potency as metaphors for the extension, efficiency and enlightenment of the nation's imperial representatives, enabling institutions such as London Zoo to fashion themselves as living microcosms of Britain's global connections. As one writer for the *Quarterly Review* rhapsodised in 1836:

> What a collection it is! What a proof that our commerce is pushed to the ends of the earth! Look at the localities; look at the condor, the child of fable but a few years since, and then remember that Sir Francis Head saw a Cornish miner wrestling with one in the Andes.[32]

While zoos and menageries were emblems of the British Empire in miniature, a third feature of the exotic animal trade nonetheless needs to be mentioned: its frequently *trans*national dimension. Though many specimens were transplanted only from their country of origin to a zoological institution in the metropolis, living out the remainder of their (probably truncated) lives in a single establishment, many others passed through several hands after leaving their native territories. Some creatures were given away in a gesture of fraternal good feeling, as when the Zoological Society lent its female elephant to its 'sister Society in Dublin'.[33] Others were auctioned off after their owner died or left the menagerie business, passing to either fellow showmen or private individuals. Such sales attracted prospective buyers from across Europe and even as far away as the United States, suggesting the existence of an international market in zoological specimens. When the Earl of Derby's impressive zoological collection was sold at his death in 1851, buyers included Lord Hill and his brother Captain Hill, Mr Western of the Amsterdam Zoological Gardens, Mr Veckman of the Antwerp Zoological Gardens, 'Mons. Prevôt, of the Jardin des Plantes, Paris, Mr Titus, proprietor of the Van Amburgh collection, from New York', Mr Jamrach, Mr Atkins of the Liverpool Zoological Gardens, Mr Thompson, 'who was understood to purchase for an Italian prince' and a Mr Rylands of Wigan, who 'obtained a cow of the [zebu] species for the amazingly low price of £2 10s'.[34] Selling his entire menagerie in Edinburgh in 1872, Alexander Fairgrieve anticipated a similarly international range of buyers for his animals. In an advertisement for the auction in *The Era*, Fairgrieve assured prospective purchasers that Edinburgh was 'conveniently situated for exporting wagons or animals, as there are steamers weekly to London, Hull, Hamburg, France, Rotterdam, Stettin and St Petersburg'. There were also good rail connections to Glasgow, 'from whence there are steamers weekly to all parts of the world'.[35]

A final point that should be made regarding all donations is that, regardless of who was credited with supplying a particular animal, the process of collecting and conveying any beast from its native land to Britain almost always required the labour and cooperation of multiple individuals, and, more specifically, of indigenous people. Familiar with the animals' habits and needs, native peoples often proved vital

in hunting exotic species and transmitting them to Europe. The hippo Obaysch, for example, was cared for at all times by his Arab keeper, Hamet, who accompanied him on every stage of his long journey. Two Asiatic lions forwarded to London Zoo by Sir Thomas Erskine Perry, ex-Chief Justice of Bombay, were 'attended by an aged native soldier', who 'exert[ed] very extraordinary control over their temper'.[36] Without the cumulative efforts of local people some of the most coveted creatures would long have eluded European appropriation.[37] Contemporary accounts, however, tended to downplay the contribution of non-Europeans, presenting it as motivated by greed or obstructed by irrational superstitions. *The Era* reported that a 'white' Siamese elephant sourced by Cross for the American showman Adam Forepaugh was procured through Tuan Ah-Hia-Ma, 'a Chinese gentleman connected with the opium trade, who would do anything for money'.[38] Colonel Doherty, Governor of Sierra Leone, meanwhile, complained that he had, as yet, been unable to obtain a hippopotamus for the Zoological Society because these animals were 'so much dreaded by the timid and superstitious inhabitants that no reward would induce the natives to catch them'.[39] The animal trade thus reinforced prevailing racial and national stereotypes, consigning indigenous assistants to the status of mercenary labourers with an innate sympathy for the animals they provided, rather than skilled contributors to science.

All at sea

Recognising the variety, motivations and cultural backgrounds of donors is important to an understanding of the trade in exotic animals and the wider global networks in which that trade operated. To gain a fuller appreciation of what collecting rare beasts really entailed, however, we need to consider the practicalities of conveying live creatures around the world. Soliciting and even catching zoological specimens was all very well, but carrying them safely from their country of origin to the place selected for their exhibition represented a formidable logistical challenge. Rare animals, whose dietary requirements were not always precisely known, had to be fed and watered to keep them alive. Some species were ferocious, requiring special accommodation. Others would need to be kept warm or wet in climates different from their native habitats. None of this was easy or cheap to do, and many zoological specimens died before they reached their destination. The successful conveyance of exotic animals was a risky and often brutal process that required careful planning, perseverance and a considerable dose of luck.[40]

The first challenge in transporting live specimens was a nutritional one. If exotic animals were to reach British shores alive, they had to be properly fed. This could be both time-consuming and expensive. A young rhinoceros presented to the Surrey Zoological Gardens in 1834 cost upwards of £1000 for its 'food and conveyance', even though it was 'little more than a year and a half old'.[41] A walrus named Toby lived chiefly on 'the fat of pork' during its shipment from Spitsbergen to Peterhead, as well as occasional treats of 'fish, limpets and mussels', which it sucked 'with great gusto'.[42] An elephant called Tom consumed 'hay, corn, grass, wood-shavings, rice, paper, straw, tea leaves and blacking' en route from Calcutta to Plymouth, washed down with 'beer, champagne and spirits'.[43] Another peckish passenger, a 'fine young tiger' donated by the Governor of Bombay to Liverpool Zoological Gardens, 'devoured no less than sixteen sheep for its sustenance during its voyage' to Britain.[44] To keep prized animals alive, colonial bureaucrats, native keepers and ships' crews had to pander to pernickety palates and satisfy voracious appetites.

Special passengers like the hippopotamus Obaysch required even more onerous care. Captured in Sudan while still a calf, this young hippo was not yet capable of eating solid food and needed to be furnished with a steady – and plentiful – supply of milk. In Cairo, awaiting transportation to England, the little pachyderm's insatiable 'cravings' for cow's milk were reported to have 'created a scarcity of that article' in the city.[45] Lodged subsequently aboard the P&O steamship *Ripon*, the hippo's daily consumption of milk was 'about eighty pints, for the furnishing of which several cows had to be kept on board'.[46] To induce the animal to drink, his Arab keeper simulated the suckling action of the mother hippo by thrusting his milk-covered hand into its mouth at feeding time and allowing it to 'lick or lap it' off with its 'monstrous lips and tongue'.[47]

As well as attending to the dietary demands of the animals in their care, conveyors of exotic fauna often had to give careful thought to their other physical needs. If the beast came from a tropical country, measures would need to be taken to keep it warm en route. If it were a water-dwelling or amphibious creature, it might need to be doused in its natural element at regular intervals to keep it in good health; a requirement that necessitated attentive carers and sometimes significant structural alterations to the ship. Often the animal was young or weak, and would have to be carried for at least part of the journey. Such demands inflated costs and could cause delays. The animal dealer Mr Jamrach, writing in 1869, reported that a consignment from Abyssinia of '13 young elephants, 14 hyenas, 8 ostriches, 9 antelopes, 1 giraffe

[and] 2 lions' had all 'with the exception of the elephants and the giraffe' to be transported on camels' backs, making it impossible to 'travel more than six miles a day across the burning sand'.[48]

Safety was also of paramount concern, particularly in the case of carnivores. In 1837 Captain Grant of the *Fifeshire* was accorded the dubious honour of transporting three wild polar bears from Kirkcaldy in Scotland to London docks. The animals, which had been caught by whalers in the Davis Straits, were 'very ferocious', so Grant stowed them in 'three large iron-hooped casks' for want of any more suitable accommodation. During the passage from Scotland, the bears 'made repeated efforts to break out of their temporary dens', but were thwarted 'by the judicious precautions' taken by the Captain and his crew. To keep the prisoners alive and give them a fleeting sensation of their native environment, Grant fed them on 'whale blubber and daily saturated [them] with sea water'. When the ship docked in Smithfield 'crowds of people went on board the *Fifeshire* to see them' before their removal by wagon to Wombwell's establishment in the Commercial Road.[49]

Not all voyages went so smoothly. In 1869, the steamer *Bonny* departed India carrying 'three monster baboons' for the Liverpool naturalist William Cross. The apes were known for their 'ferocious disposition', so 'a strong den with iron bars' was installed in order 'that they could be constantly under the eye of the crew'. Despite these precautions, the *Bonny* was just two days out of port when 'a crash was heard' and the largest of the baboons appeared on the deck 'armed with the bars with which he had been confined'. In the confusion and panic that ensued, the ape 'paused for a moment and surveyed his captors', then assaulted one of the sailors, 'seizing him by the arm and holding on … until he had torn the flesh from above the elbow to near the wrist'. At length the crew subdued the animal, throwing a noose over his head. The baboon was finally returned to his den, where he remained, apparently in a quiescent state, until the vessel arrived in Liverpool.[50]

If some wild animals posed a major safety hazard aboard ship, others enjoyed more cordial relations with their human carers and, if anything, probably enlivened the tedium of a long voyage for crew and passengers alike. Some more docile creatures were accorded almost free range of the ship and fraternised openly with their fellow travellers. Others forged a close relationship with particular members of the crew, perhaps establishing a rapport with the sailors who fed and petted them. An 'unusually fine' male orang-utan from Singapore allegedly became so fond of the cook aboard the *Malcolm* during the journey to England that 'when the time arrived for parting, these two really attached friends' embraced

emotionally, 'the poor brute shrieking, fighting and rending to pieces his queer little Guernsey shirt in a paroxysm of grief'.[51] A chimpanzee carried from Sierra Leone to Britain aboard the Waverley played happily with the ship's crew, forming a visible 'attachment to the sailors'. The ape was permitted to 'sit and eat at table like a human being', and even to repose in Captain Lewis' private cabin, where one day, left unsupervised, it quaffed two decanters of wine.[52]

Though a few animals thus endured their journeys to Europe with some stoicism and befriended their fellow passengers, this blissful picture must not be exaggerated, for the experience of most shipboard animals was miserable in the extreme. Crammed into tiny cages and nourished with alien food, many exotic beasts succumbed to illness. A shocking proportion of creatures perished en route, sometimes despite the best efforts of the crew to keep them alive; others expired shortly after their arrival from diseases contracted aboard ship. While the advent of steam-powered vessels from the 1840s increased the chances of survival by shortening the length of time spent at sea, this development only went so far in reducing casualties.[53] In 1849, only twenty of the five hundred ornithological specimens forwarded to the Gardens of the Zoological Society by the naturalist Mr Jenner Plomley survived the 'most tedious voyage of seven months' from the East Indies – a 96 per cent attrition rate that, though exceptionally high, was far from unique.[54]

Equally representative of the effects of illness upon ocean-going creatures is the fate of a collection of animals aboard another ship, the West India steamer *Medway*, comprising two alligators and fifty turtles. During the voyage, the alligators, which originated from Tampico, Mexico, were fed by the crew on a somewhat atypical diet of 'bread and pea liquor'. One expired during the voyage, but the other, though he 'fell off very much on his new diet', was still just about clinging to life on his arrival in Britain and had in fact 'got very tame under the care of the butcher, in whose pen he was kept', and who took the trouble to throw 'the buckets of water ... over him two or three times every hour'. Of the turtles, purchased at Tampico and Nassau, all 'lost flesh coming home'. Those specimens 'kept in the paddle box' and 'constantly wetted by spray', were, despite their weight loss, 'in capital order' when they reached England. 'The majority', however, 'though laid on the sponsons and much wetted and shaded from the sun, fell away', and were dead on arrival. The survival rate for the cargo overall was thus less than half. While not appearing to be a great result, it seems, if anything, to have represented a lower than average death toll for a shipment of this nature,

and was actually presented as a qualified success. Reporting the ship's arrival, the *Hampshire Advertiser* concluded that 'from the shortness of the voyage (the run from Bermuda to Falmouth was accomplished in twelve days and a half) the fish are generally in much finer order than they used to be [when] brought in by sailing vessels'.[55]

For those animals that survived the ravages of disease, other dangers presented themselves, some of which also proved fatal. The perils of travelling at sea and the ever-present threat of shipwreck accounted for many deaths during ocean passages. A dangerous or troublesome beast might be slaughtered by the crew if they were unable or unwilling to care for it, while frightened and closely confined animals could injure themselves by struggling in their cages. Freak accidents occasioned further deaths in transit, some the result of misguided attempts to meet an animal's needs. A male walrus accompanying the aforementioned Toby from Spitsbergen to Peterhead was being given his daily bath in the sea when he 'struck himself against the ship while under the water' and 'came up dead'.[56] Two hundred and seventy alpacas en route from Islay (Peru) to Liverpool also perished, 'suffocated' by the 'effluvia' from 'guano manure' stored in a lower deck.[57]

Perhaps particularly poignant was the fate of three elephants purchased for Manders' menagerie in 1869 and transported from Ceylon to England by a combination of ship and rail. These animals, a male, a female and her young calf, were in the process of being conveyed overland at Suez when the train in which they were travelling caught fire, it was supposed from 'the immense weight of the large elephant' causing excessive friction between the wheels and the track. In the inferno that followed, all of the animals were extricated from their carriages, but both of the adults had sustained such extensive burns that they later died. The baby elephant survived the fire and a subsequent 'terrible passage' to Southampton and was consigned to Manders' menagerie in Liverpool. The *Liverpool Mercury*, reporting on the incident, sentimentalised the noble conduct of its mother, who 'notwithstanding her intense pain … caressed [her infant] with the utmost fondness, even in the agonies of death'.[58]

The deaths of the Indian elephants, the walrus and the alpacas were all accidents that occurred despite the desire of their captors to keep the animals alive. To assess the true cost of collecting live animals for display in zoos and menageries, however, we need also to factor in the many creatures that were killed deliberately in the process of capture or died at the point of seizure, without ever making it aboard ship. Including these casualties considerably inflates the already high death toll, underlining both the individual suffering and the wider environmental

damage perpetrated by European animal collectors. It reminds us that the hunters who procured a particular specimen for the Zoological Gardens had often slaughtered hundreds of other animals for sport, the few living trophies they collected being spared either because they were young and manageable or, conversely, because they were exceptionally fierce. 'Striped Bob', for instance, was captured in India by two Englishmen who prided themselves in having 'killed between them about forty-seven Royal Bengal tigers'.[59]

Looking more closely at the unsentimental reality of collecting methods also reveals that it was more or less standard practice for specimen-hunters to target cubs, which were easier to control and transport. 'Sportsmen' like Gordon Cummings or Frederick Courteney Selous construed their encounters with wild animals as closely matched contests, where the animal, before dying a noble death, put up a vigorous fight and forced the hunter to exert all his courage and skill to subdue it. They therefore selected large males as their ideal quarries and derived little satisfaction from dispatching young or unworthy opponents.[60] Professional animal catchers, by contrast, were 'rarely concerned with the ritualised confrontation of man and animal on a field of honour', and more worried about profit. The romance of the chase meant less to them than the successful remission of a valuable commodity, and in consequence they often resorted to tactics that a self-respecting sportsman would have derided as underhand. In particular, catchers, in order to get at the younger, more tractable calves or cubs, would habitually slaughter their mothers.[61] This brutal strategy often sentenced the young animal to death as well if it was still suckling, so its environmental impact was significant. The hippo Obaysch, for example, was captured on the banks of the White Nile only after his mother had been 'mortally wounded' and after he himself had been impaled with a boat hook in order to prevent him from escaping.[62] The scar caused by this injury can be seen quite clearly in the Count of Montizón's photograph (Figure 4.1).[63]

The capture of a young polar bear by the crew of the whaler, *Ravensburg*, illustrates this ruthless process even more vividly. According to a subsequent newspaper report, the *Ravensburg* was steaming down Davis's Straits, to the west of Greenland when three white bears were spotted walking on an ice flow close by. Excited at the promise of 'sport', the mate, Mr Mundie, authorised a boat to be lowered and, along with the harpooner and six other men, rowed out in the direction of his prey. As they approached the bears, the men observed that the ursine party comprised 'an enormous she-bear and two of her cubs'. The mother bear immediately charged at the intruders. They, however, 'knowing how

savage these animals become in defence of their young, fired a volley at her', killing not only their intended target, but also the smaller cub, which was cowering at her side. Uninjured but clearly traumatised, the larger cub 'showed pretty forcibly that he would not hold parley with the murderers of his relatives' but was, with perseverance, eventually immobilised, being hauled aboard ship with a rope and conveyed to Dundee, where he was purchased for Manders' menagerie. This cruel but sadly representative episode demonstrates the considerable collateral damage entailed in the collection of wild animals: to obtain one living polar bear, two others were slaughtered, one deliberately, the other by accident; had 'Master Bruin' expired en route, the entire family would have been exterminated. The rather jocular tone in which the *Mercury* recounts this information, suggests, moreover, that such practices were not considered unduly horrific. There was no attempt to suppress the bloody reality of collecting exotic beasts, which implies that most readers would not have been shocked or angry to hear how menagerie inmates were obtained.[64]

Sickness and mortality in a menagerie

For those animals that made it to Britain alive, the prospects of survival were still not good. Accommodation was often inadequate, food excessive or insufficiently nutritious and veterinary medicine in its infancy. Animals travelling in itinerant menageries could sometimes suffer injuries during transit or be goaded by spectators. Poor sanitation was a killer in zoological collections of all forms. Mortality rates in both menageries and zoos were, consequently, alarmingly high, many beasts perishing after only a few weeks in captivity. Showmen, of course, presented the continual changes to their zoological collections as a positive thing, brought about by daring monetary investments. In reality, however, death was the major reason for the rapid turnover in menagerie stock.

As on ships, illness accounted for the majority of deaths in travelling shows. Crammed into claustrophobic cages, fed on an unnatural diet and deprived of space for exercise, menagerie animals were highly susceptible to disease. The bracing British climate induced sickness in creatures used to more balmy conditions, as did the trauma of being captured, confined and lugged about the country. Premature deaths were common. A lioness in Wombwell's menagerie expired in Edinburgh shortly after giving birth, it was supposed 'from the intense cold' (it was January).[65] A male lion in Atkins' collection succumbed to 'inflammation of the bowels' when exhibiting in Hampshire.[66] Monkeys very rarely

lived long in the British climate, frequently falling victim to pulmonary disease.[67]

Accidents also caused some much-lamented losses. These sometimes occurred en route to an exhibition venue, when a caravan jolted excessively or overturned. They could also be the result of human malice or adverse weather conditions, both of which compounded the misery of caged menagerie residents. In 1852 Wombwell lost a tiger when its caravan was blown over by a heavy gale in Liverpool.[68] In 1841 the menagerist's giraffe fatally dislocated its neck as the establishment was heading for Carlisle, tearing 'the ligaments which connect the vertebrae of the neck' and injuring 'the spinal marrow'.[69]

Even food could precipitate sickness or death if animals consumed the wrong thing, ate their meals too quickly or feasted on contaminated material. Such mishaps happened with depressing regularity. Wombwell's much-loved elephant, Tom, expired in Flintshire after 'drinking water impregnated with poison from a chemical works'.[70] A large boa constrictor in Mrs Wombwell's collection 'fell victim to its own voracity' at Carlisle in 1852, when it got a rabbit wedged in its throat and suffocated, unable either 'to swallow or disgorge it'.[71] A lion nearly choked on a bone while on show in Edinburgh.[72] A polar bear in Fairgrieve's menagerie almost suffered the same fate when, instead of receiving its usual dinner of 'bread soaked in train oil', it consumed 'a large shin bone, which was intended for one of the tigers'.[73] Only the daring intervention of the lion tamer saved it from death.

Sometimes if a piece of rancid food got into the menagerie several animals could succumb to its ill effects. In 1835, when Wombwell's show was in Salford, two raccoons and a coati mundi were found dead in their cages, and a young lion called Caesar exhibited signs of serious illness, 'there being an immense swelling about the jaws'. Wombwell initially ascribed the coincidence to bad luck and, in the lion's case, physical violence from one of its larger brothers. He changed his opinion, however, when the two bigger lions, George and Dan O'Connell, also fell sick, concluding that the illness must have been caused by meat from a diseased bullock, 'drenched and physicked with some poisonous drug'. Despite all efforts to save him, Caesar perished from his sickness, though George and Dan revived after a local vet bled them and applied 'hot fomentations' to their jaws. Wombwell calculated that his dead lion had been worth more than £500, a serious financial loss.[74]

As this last case shows, the keeping and exhibition of exotic animals was highly risky as a business venture. Some animals never lived long in the British climate, despite the most strenuous efforts to keep them

alive. Exceptionally severe weather, a freak accident or contaminated food could occasion multiple fatalities in a single establishment, putting a severe strain on the finances. Unable to guarantee that the animals they purchased at such high cost would survive for long enough to recoup the expenditure, showmen risked bankruptcy if a particularly prized specimen perished prematurely. This factor explains why menagerists made a point of emphasising the considerable sums they had spent on key attractions, and the selfless financial gamble they had taken in so doing. It also explains why showmen occasionally made the best of a bad job and exhibited dead specimens, hoping, by this means, to compensate for the monetary blow they had suffered. When a hyena in Manders' menagerie was killed by a leopard, the menagerist announced that its 'carcass' would be 'exhibited in the menagerie this day and Monday next … preparatory to its being forwarded to Professor Owen of the British Museum London'.[75]

Whether the exhibitors of exotic beasts cared much for the well-being of their charges in more than strictly financial terms is another matter. While it was certainly in their interest, as businessmen, to keep their animals alive for as long as possible, there is evidence that they were willing to buy creatures they knew would not live long if the latter promised a swift return on their investment. The case of Wombwell's chimpanzee illustrates this attitude. Bought by the proprietor just a week before Knott Mill Fair in Manchester, the great ape was 'one of the principal attractions' of the collection, but had, at the time of purchase, 'already begun to show symptoms of the disease which, gradually increasing, finally caused its death' seven days later. The death of the chimp might be supposed to have represented a serious blow to Wombwell. However, 'so much … did it excite the curiosity of sightseers during Wombwell's brief possession of it that the money expended in its purchase and subsequent maintenance has been … abundantly repaid'. Wombwell thus got his money's worth out of the chimpanzee during its truncated life, leaving Manchester happy despite its demise. The *Manchester Times*, reporting on the fair, intimated that the showman had always known the chimpanzee would not survive long and had seen it purely as a source of short-term profit, not having bought it 'with any other view than of being exhibited merely at this fair'.[76] Financial reward thus eclipsed animal welfare in the showman's list of priorities.

Was it the same story in zoos? Zoological gardens were, of course, a little different, in rhetoric, if not in reality. The directors of these institutions, as we have seen, cited the improved welfare of the animals as one of the key features that distinguished them from travelling menageries,

and greater efforts were indeed made to give inmates larger enclosures and more sophisticated dens in order to keep them alive. Despite the promise of better conditions, however, the fact remains that zoo animals were almost as vulnerable as their counterparts in touring shows. Many died after a short time in the gardens from complaints such as lung disease, while obesity was another persistent problem. Visitor interference also remained an issue, even among more respectable clientele visiting zoos. In 1838 a 'fine ostrich' at Manchester Zoological Garden 'died from the effects of some foolish person having given it a halfpenny to test its fabulous powers of digestion'.[77]

The Annual Reports issued by the Zoological Society evidence the consideration given to animal welfare, and the practical measures taken to prolong the lives of the inmates of the Regent's Park establishment. These focused primarily on shielding vulnerable species from the intemperate British climate, ensuring them proper ventilation and according them sufficient space in which to exercise. In 1849, for example, the Society erected a roof to protect the big cats from 'the ill effects of driving rains, which formerly penetrated to the very back of the dens'.[78] In 1851 it authorised the construction of a special 'tank in the open air, 33 feet square and of suitable depth' to accommodate the hippopotamus'.[79] In 1855 when the growth of the young pachyderm necessitated an upgrade to his accommodation, the Society constructed a large house 'with a bath 35 feet in length, 15 feet in breadth and 9 feet deep, fenced with massive iron railings of a strength commensurate with the enormous force which the animal is rapidly attaining'.[80] Compared to menagerie inmates, therefore, zoo animals lived in relative luxury.

While the Zoological Society and its counterparts in the provinces thus made real efforts to accommodate the animals in their care, the challenge of keeping exotic beasts alive nonetheless remained a daunting one. True, conditions may have been an improvement upon those in a travelling show, a point that zoo proprietors made with some regularity. There were still, however, major problems in catering for animals accustomed to a life of 'uncontrolled freedom', and it often took considerable time (and many casualties) before the best method of caring for a particular species was discovered. Until 1844, for instance, when a new carnivore house was erected, the Society's big cats were lodged in 'a long narrow building with double folding doors at each end and a range of cages on each side', the interior of which was 'artificially heated to such a degree that the atmosphere resembled that of the small glass house in Kew Gardens' and was pervaded constantly by a 'strong ammoniacal odour'.[81] These unsavoury conditions, coupled

with limited veterinary knowledge, resulted in the deaths of many inmates; it was calculated that 'lions, tigers, leopards and pumas, taken separately' had lived 'on average only twenty-four months in the Society's Gardens'.[82]

Another problem was the tendency to equate the needs of animals with those of humans and not to recognise the debilitating effects that loss of liberty could have upon creatures that roamed through vast territories when in the wild. Writing in 1849, several years after the big cats had been transferred to their more salubrious lodgings, social activist Mr Cochrane compared the felines' dwellings favourably with the accommodation currently inhabited by some of the London poor, noting that, while some 23 persons had been found 'lying on the floor' of a room '12 feet by 8 in extent' in London's East End, the lion and lioness at the zoo luxuriated in 'a parlour 22 feet by 8 and a bedroom 11 feet by 4'.[83] Though he was doubtless correct in exposing the atrocious living conditions of the working classes, Cochrane at the same time underestimated the needs of the lions, who, though perhaps pampered by human standards, could not exist naturally within the confines of a typical house. The campaigner's comments were, of course, intended to prove a different political point. They show, nonetheless, a wider tendency to assess animal welfare according to human criteria and thereby misinterpret animal behaviour.

The living arrangements for the orang-utan, 'Miss Jane', provide a striking example of this blend of goodwill and misunderstanding. Acquired in 1838, Jane belonged to a species that had rarely survived for long in captivity, and was thus accorded every luxury that might help to prolong her existence. To keep the ape warm, 'the temperature in her apartment [was] evenly preserved at 60º Fahrenheit'. A nice warm blanket' was constantly placed 'at her disposal' as 'a good warm covering ... for her arms and loins', while 'two or three long poles, with arms like branches of a tree' were installed in the cage to enable Jane 'to display her favourite attitudes and agility'. For sustenance, the orang-utan received regular doses of bread and milk, plus the occasional treat of 'a little broth or a morsel of tender boiled mutton'. A go-cart and an arm chair' were also left in the den 'for her amusement'.

While such considerate arrangements might have been expected to fully satisfy Jane's needs, the animal's behaviour suggested that she was, in fact, less than content with her artificial dwelling. According to a reporter from the *Morning Post* who visited her shortly after her arrival, the young orang-utan, though 'provided with every blessing of life but that of liberty', was 'so foolish to desire that above all things', devoting

most of her time to 'trying, by various contrivances, to force the door of her habitation, or to gnaw through the wires that have been added for her greater security'. The go-cart, intended for Jane's pleasure, was 'hurled against the door, for the purpose of opening it'. The arm chair was used as 'a battering ram, with the same intention'. Finding such behaviour 'most amusing', the reporter trivialised it as the result of simian mischief. In truth, however, it graphically underlined the limitations of even the most benign captivity and the error of treating a wild beast like a human child.[84]

Conclusion

Nineteenth-century Britain was home to a thriving trade in exotic animals. These came from across the globe and ended up in zoological gardens, menageries and, sometimes, the homes of private individuals. The wild animal business was largely speculative and informal in the early part of the century, but became increasingly organised and lucrative as time went on, reflecting the expansion and formalisation of British control in Africa and Asia, and the advance of steam technology in shipping. In just one week in 1882 new arrivals at Cross's establishment included '60 Grey African parrots, 200 Pair Orange Waxbills ... 1 Pair Adult Llamas, 1 pure White Alpaca ... 1 Pair Dromedaries ..., 1 Toucan, 1 Talking Grey Parrot, 1 Pelican [and] 23 Monkeys'.[85] The increased volume of trade diminished the novelty and exclusivity of exotic species, dramatically lowering prices.[86] It was not all good news for British traders, however, for the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 also allowed exotic beasts to be shipped directly to French, German and Mediterranean ports, such as Genoa, Marseilles, Hamburg, Antwerp and Trieste, undermining London's role as the primary entrepôt in the wild beast trade. As Jamrach remarked in 1885, 'the business of which my house used to be the centre has now no centre', and 'instead of one agent there are many'.[87]

For the animals themselves, the trade could be devastating. Transporting a beast over long distances presented major logistical challenges. Animals succumbed to accidents and diseases, both during shipping and after their arrival in Europe. Mortality rates were extremely high. Long term, concern over plummeting game numbers would trigger a movement towards conservation. In the 1870s and 1880s, however, the ecological and humanitarian consequences of the exotic animal trade were only beginning to be realised, and the knowledge that collecting animals usually entailed killing some of them appears to have

been accepted as a necessary evil. The Zoological Society, for instance, was seemingly happy to stage a special exhibition in 1877 showing 'animals slain' by the Prince of Wales in India the previous year, while also promoting his living donations to the Gardens – the fortunate survivors of this royal killing spree.[88] The *Daily News* acknowledged that 'Between the sportsmen who go fully equipped for slaughter from [the Sudan] and other countries ... and the snarers who seek live specimens for Mr Jamrach and his brethren, the monarchs of desert and forest are having a hard time of it', but couched this admission in the jocular tone typical of the period.[89] Even the RSPCA's monthly magazine, *The Animal World* appeared fairly sanguine about the issue, concentrating its efforts on abuses closer to home. In an 1882 article on the animal trader Charles Reiche's expedition to Abyssinia, the publication reported that 'Europeans go out with a score of natives, and in the country around plenty of animals are killed while the young ones are captured'. The magazine, which was highly critical of other forms of animal cruelty (see Chapter 6), might have condemned such losses. In fact, however, it made no overt comment, simply describing Reiche's collection of 'elephants, giraffes, ostriches, lions, hippopotami, apes [and] baboons' as 'a curious cargo'.[90] It would be decades before the true cost of the wild animal business was recognised.

5
Seeing the Elephant

> 'This 'ere hanimal, my little dears', observed the keeper of a menagerie to a school, 'is a leopard. His complexion is yaller, and agreeably diversified with black spots! It vos a wulgar herror of the hancients, that the critter vos incapable of changin' his spots, vich vos disproved in modern times, by obserwin' that he very frequently slept in one spot and next night changed to another'. (*Preston Guardian*, 24 May 1851)

In February 1858 Maria Brinning, a pupil at the Bristol Deaf and Dumb Institution, visited Edmonds' menagerie in Bristol together with other children from her school. Following her visit, Maria addressed a short letter to Mr Edmonds thanking him for granting them free admission to the show. The *Bristol Mercury* subsequently published the note, preserving its contents for posterity. Maria wrote:

> We are very grateful to you for so kindly allowing us to see your menagerie freely. We admired the beautiful and strong wild beasts very much. We were astonished at the intelligent elephant, which performed wonderful actions. We never saw a giraffe before; it is very tall and was eighteen feet high. It is as high as three men. Its neck is long. We were astonished that the bold man was not afraid of the lions. They would kill us. The bold man was like Daniel in the den of lions. We never saw so many wild beasts. We saw a large and heavy rhinoceros. It has a thick skin. A gun cannot go into its skin because it is very thick…We also saw llamas and alpacas. Dresses are made of alpaca. We saw a civet cat, spotted hyena, striped hyena, a black bear, etc. Camels are from Inkerman in the Crimea. We saw small and large parrots, an ostrich, pelicans, pheasants and other birds. The

> emu comes from Australia. Three boys rode on the elephant's back. Your menagerie is the finest. We all thank you.

Maria's touching thank-you letter gives a rare insight into how one young girl responded to the sight of animals in a travelling menagerie, and how she processed the information available there. Looking at the text, we can see that the letter concentrates, primarily, on the physical appearance of the beasts – the giraffe is 'very tall', the rhinoceros 'has a thick skin'. Maria alludes to the animals' place of origin – 'camels are from Inkerman in the Crimea', 'the emu comes from Australia'. She cites the uses of particular creatures – 'dresses are made of alpaca' – and she even includes a biblical reference – the 'bold man' is 'like Daniel in the den of lions'. Recollecting her experiences in the menagerie, Maria records her own (or the group's collective) emotional responses to the performances of particular animals, ranging from fear and apprehension on watching the lion tamer to astonishment at 'the intelligent elephant'. She emphasises the thrilling novelty of the menagerie visit – 'We never saw so many wild beasts' – and recounts how some of the children were allowed to interact physically with the more docile inmates – 'three boys rode on the elephant's back'. The letter's short, direct sentences read like snippets from a natural history primer, elucidating the kind of information that might be acquired during a visit to a wild beast show. The *Bristol Mercury* characterised the letter as 'a specimen of simple truthfulness', indicative of 'the pleasure which a small amount of kindness can sometimes convey to these afflicted children of silence'.[1]

Maria's letter illustrates the educational function of zoological collections. As a source, of course, it raises a number of questions. Rather than being written by Maria alone, it is possible that the letter was a collective effort, compiled jointly by several pupils under the guidance of their teacher. Equally, Maria's letter might have been the most effusive or coherent of several sent to Mr Edmonds in the aftermath of the visit, which may explain why the *Mercury* selected it for publication. From a more cynical viewpoint, the letter could even have been doctored or entirely composed by the menagerist himself, in a bid to publicise his charitable activities. Though we must thus be wary of treating Maria's letter as an unmediated window onto a child's perception of exotic beasts, the source remains valuable to us because it underlines, at the very least, the intended pedagogic role of the travelling menagerie, and, if genuine (and there is no hard evidence for suspecting otherwise), offers a rare glimpse into a child's perception of a wild beast show. The letter points to the ways in which visiting a

travelling menagerie could consolidate zoological knowledge already gleaned from books. It also highlights the entertainment element of such shows, which included lion taming and elephant rides as well as educational talks.

This chapter focuses on zoological gardens and menageries as sites of education. In a period when popular science was becoming an increasingly crowded and lucrative marketplace, live zoological collections offered a potentially useful resource for disseminating knowledge about the natural world. Many authors advocated seeing exotic animals in the flesh as an ideal way of bringing to life the sometimes rather arid descriptions that appeared in books. This experiential approach was trumpeted loudly by showmen, whose advertisements emphasised the importance of visual forms of learning; an article in the *Hull Packet* on Wombwell's show urged 'parents and guardians' to take the opportunity of visiting the show while it was in town, because menageries 'can convey to the minds of their youthful charges far more lasting and vivid impressions of zoological science than would be afforded by years of text-book study'.[2] Assessing the reality behind this rhetoric, the chapter considers how successful zoos and menageries were in imparting zoological knowledge, and what tools they used to do this. To put the pedagogic function of zoological collections into context, I begin by situating menageries and gardens within the wider cultural movement of popular science and rational recreation. I then go on to explore the particular ways in which these establishments attempted to promote learning and, where possible, how visitors responded to their efforts.

Sites and sources

Before looking in detail at zoological gardens and travelling menageries as learning environments, it is useful to consider where else visitors were able to obtain information about animals, and how any preparatory study might have coloured their experience of viewing a collection of living creatures. As recent research has shown, popular science was a growing field in nineteenth-century Britain.[3] The scientifically curious attended public lectures, visited museums and read texts about the natural world. They might also have acquired knowledge by playing board games with a scientific theme, collecting botanical specimens or keeping aquaria. This growth in popular science reflected broader social and cultural changes, and is indicative of new attitudes towards leisure and learning. Two key developments made this possible: the availability of accessible, cheaper books and periodicals on scientific

subjects, and the emergence or expansion of sites where people could see or hear about the natural world in a manner that was both informative and fun.

The nineteenth century witnessed significant shifts in reading patterns brought about by advances in education and technological innovations. Literacy rates increased dramatically in Britain over the course of the century, with male literacy standing at around 70 per cent in 1850 and female literacy at around 55 per cent.[4] At the same time, the advent of the steam press, together with the increased speed of distribution facilitated by the railways, rendered books and periodicals cheaper to produce, thereby lowering their retail price. This expansion in the book trade occurred in two key phases. The first phase, the 'distribution revolution' took place between 1830 and 1850, and was characterised by 'the introduction and development of the Foudrinier machine, steam-driven presses, case binding, as well as the reduction of the "taxes on knowledge" and the development of the railway system'. The second phase, the 'mass production revolution', came in the 1870s. Among its main features were the advent of new technical processes such as rotary printing, hot-metal typesetting, the use of lithographic and photographic techniques and the shift from steam power to electricity. The public library, the sixpenny paperback edition and the mass circulation daily newspaper were also features of the 'mass production revolution'.[5]

Works of natural history constituted a popular literary genre for the reading public, which increasingly came to include new groups such as women, children and the working classes. Popular natural histories for children had existed since the eighteenth century.[6] The 1820s and 1830s, however, saw the publication of increasing numbers of books aimed at a non-specialist adult readership, perhaps with limited mobility and spending power, who wished to educate themselves in zoology, botany and other scientific subjects. To serve this growing audience, a new breed of authors – described by Bernard Lightman as 'popularisers of science' – appeared on the scene. The works they produced were often commissioned by enterprising publishers, who saw a lucrative market for scientific topics among interested but non-expert readers.[7]

In order to cater for the needs of such readers, popular natural history publications adopted a variety of didactic strategies. Firstly, they usually kept descriptions of animals and plants simple, to avoid boring or confusing the reader. Secondly, some works of natural history took the form of a dialogue, whereby questions posed by one fictional character were answered by another, whose responses could in turn be recited by

the reader. An example of this is *The Zoological Keepsake*, which features Mrs Aston, her children George and Jane and her brother, Mr Dartmouth, taking a morning walk around the Regent's Park Zoological Gardens; the children pose questions and Mr Dartmouth delivers lengthy lectures about the animals on view.[8] Thirdly, once advances in printing technology facilitated it, popular science publications included an increasing number of illustrations to give a visual dimension to the verbal accounts. *The Pictorial Museum of Animated Nature*, published throughout 1848 and 1849 in weekly eight-page instalments, was 'packed with wood-engraved animals, beginning with lions and tigers and continuing through giraffes and llamas, hummingbirds and chickens, goldfish and sharks, before ending with sea urchins, corals and jellyfish'.[9]

Some of the most popular works of natural history relied heavily on amusing vignettes and a narrative structure to convey information about the natural world. One author particularly noted for using these techniques was the Reverend J.G. Wood, whose works *Illustrated Natural History* (1853) and *Common Objects on the Sea Shore* (1857) were best-sellers, and whom *The Times* credited with having done 'more to popularise the study of natural history than any other writer in the present age'.[10] A clergyman by profession, Wood lectured and published extensively on natural history topics, skilfully combining factual anatomical and physiological information with humorous anecdotes and homely asides. Describing the elephant in his work *Sketches and Anecdotes of Animal Life* (1855), Wood substantiated his claim that 'the elephant is one of the few animals who like intoxicating liquors' by relating the recent case of a menagerie elephant in Wales, which broke out of its den one night to visit a wine cellar, and was found the following day 'very snugly reposing among the bottles and evidently quite satisfied with his position'.[11] Earlier in the same entry, Wood commented intriguingly that 'slices of the elephant's trunk broiled are considered wonderful delicacies, and are unrivalled except by the rather superior flavour of the feet when baked'.[12] Such details were calculated both to amuse the reader and, more constructively, to cement zoological information in his mind.

At the same time as a new range of printed works on natural history became available, access to museums also widened, giving more people the chance to see zoological specimens in the flesh. In the eighteenth century, the private collections of the nobility had gradually started to be exhibited to the paying public. 'Enlightened rulers such as the Empress Maria Theresa and the Archduke Peter Leopold made their collections of art and science accessible to their subjects through the opening of

the Brera Museum in Milan in 1773 and through the public donation of the Cabinet of Physics and Natural History in Florence in 1775 and the Uffizi galleries in 1789'.[13] The nineteenth century saw a continuation of this process, opening up an increasing number of collections to a lower-class clientele, a group that reformers believed would benefit from 'rational recreation'. In Britain, major accelerants of this process were the Museums Acts of 1845 and 1850, which permitted local councils to levy a tax on residents to fund museums and public libraries. With the cost of these institutions now covered by the ratepayer, the need for high admission charges diminished; many were thrown open to the public gratis or at a small charge, becoming more socially inclusive.[14]

Zoos and menageries were additional sites for the transmission of natural knowledge, and should be situated within this wider educational framework. Both forms of live zoological collection served a broad spectrum of the population, as we saw in Chapters 1, 2 and 3, espousing worthy educational objectives. Contemporary writers routinely emphasised the value of actually *seeing* the animals described in books, suggesting that zoos operated in conjunction with texts and museums and complemented their pedagogic aims. Some authors even assumed that their readers would, at some point or another, have had direct contact with the species they described, obviating the need for extensive verbal descriptions. Writing in 1838, William Dowling reasoned that 'the inhabitants of our country towns will have seen the elephant pace up and down their streets on fair days thanks to Mr Wombwell and the travelling menageries' while 'the veriest chit of a boy in frock and trousers narrates without any great wonderment, his ride on the back of the elephant in the Regent's Park'.[15] Whether visitors actually learned much from their time in zoos and menageries is, of course, another question. Many doubtless went there primarily for entertainment; others learned little or learned the wrong things. Nonetheless, while we must be wary of accepting the educational claims of zoos and menageries at face value, both institutions should be viewed as important sites for popular science and each will be examined in this light. The remainder of the chapter will explore how zoo directors and showmen attempted to maximise the educational impact of their establishments, and how visitors responded to what they saw.

Zoological gardens

Education was regarded as one of the key functions of zoological gardens. The directors of these institutions consistently preached the value of

'rational recreation', presenting their establishments as ideal venues in which to study the natural world. Somewhat exclusive admission policies initially limited the audience for such zoological lessons to a predominantly upper-class clientele (though charity children were occasionally admitted for free as a form of social outreach). By mid-century, however, and thanks, also, to advances in rail travel, fixed zoological institutions became more accessible and the role played by zoos in educating the masses grew more significant. As we shall see, not all visitors went to the zoo primarily for education, and efforts to impart zoological knowledge were not invariably successful. Nonetheless, zoos helped to familiarise spectators with the basic form of exotic animals, giving them a tantalising glimpse of creatures from far-off countries.

Zoo-goers wishing to learn more about the animals they were viewing were most likely to do so from a guidebook. While visitors might tour a zoological garden without receiving any formal instruction, those who wanted to get the most out of the experience could usually purchase a written guide to accompany them on their rambles. Some guides were produced by zoos themselves. Others were published independently, often forming part of more extensive tourist handbooks to London or other cities. These latter works were intended to be purchased before visiting the zoo and could be carried around during the visit. An 1833 work entitled *The Zoological Gardens* was advertised as containing 'anecdotes of the quadrupeds, birds and reptiles in the Zoological Society's Menagerie, with figures of the most important and interesting'. This book – rather expensive at 7s 6d – was 'prefixed with a descriptive walk round the Gardens, with illustrative engravings, the whole forming an entertaining Manual of Natural History and a complete guide for visitors'.[16]

The guides available varied in terms of length and content. Some gave only cursory descriptions of the animals, listing the names of the beasts but little else. Others elaborated a little more on the animals on display, commenting on their origins, habits, longevity and anatomy. The formal Latin name of animals was sometimes given, as well as the popular one. The name of the donor was also included on occasion, though this was less common in mid- and late-nineteenth-century guidebooks than in those dating from earlier in the century. In general, the entries on each animal were brief enough to read while inspecting the creature in question. This suggests that these guides were intended to be portable handbooks rather than lengthy doses of preliminary reading.

The official 1829 guide for London Zoo was one of the more detailed. Drawn up by Nicholas Vigors and William Broderip, both leading

members of the Zoological Society, the book stated at the outset that its aim was 'to give a faithful account of the animals contained in the collection as they were arranged at the period of publication', and specifically to 'make their subject in some degree popular by a brief reference to the habits and localities of some of the more interesting of these animals, as well as to afford some instruction by an occasional notice of their scientific qualities'. The result was a concise and accessible text that, hopefully, held the reader's attention without overburdening him with detail. An entry on the llama, for instance, cited the donors of the two specimens represented (the Duke of Bedford and Robert Barclay), mentioned the contrasting temperaments of the two varieties (the white one was 'gentle mild and familiar, the tawny variety ... morose') and warned visitors of the darker animal's propensity to spit when angry.[17]

More succinct was Thomas Allen's 1829 *Guide to the Zoological Gardens and Museum*. This text either assumed some pre-existing zoological knowledge in the reader or expected him to obtain it from another source, for it confined itself to very short descriptions of each animal, conveying at most its size and appearance or one or two amusing facts. Of the beavers, for example, Allen observed only that 'they are exceedingly tame and will accept a biscuit or anything offered with docility'.[18] Describing the inhabitants of enclosure number 3, the bear pit, meanwhile, Allen informed readers that there were 'two arctic bears and one Russian black bear' to be seen there, the latter, a bear named Toby, having been 'presented to the Society by the Marquis of Hertford, who had previously kept him at Sudborne ... where he was noted for distinguishing strong ale from beer etc.'[19] For visitors who did not already have some understanding of the animal kingdom, these short snippets would not have been sufficient to impart much additional knowledge of zoology. For the more elite and educated classes who visited London Zoo in the 1820s and 1830s, however, this level of detail might have been perfectly adequate, the attached map and key showing them where to find the species they had already read about in more weighty tomes of natural history.

Longer, unofficial guides were also published by contemporaries to ensure that patrons of the new zoological gardens got the most out of their visits. Some of these texts were aimed specifically at children, seeking to make zoological information amusing and digestible. Others were designed for a primarily adult market, capitalising on the growing taste for popular works of natural history. The authors of these works adopted various stylistic techniques to enliven and simplify their content, ranging from dialogues between fictional characters to amusing

stories and anecdotes. Several writers explicitly renounced the use of overly scientific language, aware that too many unfamiliar Latin names might alienate and confuse the less-educated reader.

A couple of texts nicely illustrate this genre of natural history writing. The first, James Bishop's *Henry and Emma's Visit to the Zoological Gardens*, was published in the 1830s, and, as the title suggests, targeted a juvenile readership Appearing for the first time in 1835 (a second edition was published in 1854), Bishop's work was written expressly to educate children in zoology. The text was constructed as a narrative, in which two imaginary children, Henry and his sister Emma, visit the Regent's Park Zoological Gardens with their father, Mr Butler, who delivers short lectures about the various animals they see. On the frontispiece, Bishop specified that the short book was 'intended as a pleasing companion to juvenile visitors of this delightful place of recreation and fashionable resort', suggesting that it should be read prior to, or possibly during, a visit to the zoo. The book contained '12 illustrative engravings' to help sustain the interest of young readers and was 36 pages long. Priced at one shilling, the text would probably have served a primarily middle-class market, the poorer classes being, in any case, largely excluded from the gardens at this time by the restrictive entry criteria.[20]

Stylistically, Bishop's guide interspersed a narrative of the visit with short descriptions of some of the animals. These descriptions were delivered by the knowledgeable Mr Butler, sometimes spontaneously, sometimes in response to a particular question from one of the children. Most of the descriptions given by Bishop concentrated on the origins of the various animals, their appearance and their uses to human beings, though a few were more moralistic in tone, praising or denouncing the character of particular beasts as admirable or condemnable. The boa constrictor, for example, was described as 'a deplorable picture of gluttony and inaction', on account of its tendency to ingest whole deer at once. The beavers, by contrast, were 'singular and industrious animals who associate together in societies, erect their own habitations and are their own timber-cutters, carpenters and bricklayers; their teeth answering the purpose of saws and their tails as the wheel barrow and trowel'.[21] Natural theology also made an appearance at several junctures in the text, notably in Mr Butler's description of the elephant's trunk – 'a most wonderful piece of nature's mechanism' – reminding juvenile readers of the religious significance of God's creatures.[22]

Where Bishop addressed juvenile zoo visitors, the second work analysed here, William Dowling's *A Popular Natural History of Quadrupeds and Birds* (1838), catered for a predominantly adult audience, and was

a more substantial work of natural history. Conceived as a preparatory text, to be read in advance of a visit to the zoological gardens, *A Popular Natural History* was intended to enlighten visitors and help them to better appreciate the animals they saw. The segmented structure of the work, with separate headings for each animal, meant that readers could either study the whole thing from beginning to end or dip in and out to focus on a specific creature. There was the possibility, too, of consulting the book *after* a visit to the zoo in order to embellish or clarify information acquired while touring the garden.

To make his work intellectually accessible, Dowling eschewed complicated scientific language and concentrated his descriptions on the forms and habits of animals in a manner that, he hoped, would hold the reader's attention. The author was aware, as he stated in the introduction, 'that a long array of names of genera and species give little pleasure to the general reader, who requires the life and habits of an animal to be detailed rather than a discussion of its place in this or that scientific system'. Knowing this, Dowling consciously confined himself to 'brief notices' on 'such matters as classification and anatomy', confident that 'the intelligent reader can fully comprehend the habits of the tiger or the eagle without an elaborate disquisition on the paw of the one or the claw of the other'.[23] Keen, at the same time, to convey something of the lifestyle and origins of the animals he described, Dowling took pains to furnish information that might not be immediately apparent in the zoological gardens. In some cases, the visitor himself might have been able to deduce the behaviour of a beast in its natural habitat by watching it in action in the zoo. Often, however, life in captivity suppressed or distorted the true character of exotic creatures, and in such circumstances a text like Dowling's could assist the reader's imagination, conjuring a more dramatic picture of the animal's natural behaviour than the denatured specimens in a zoological collection were able to do. Describing the formidable power of the rhinoceros' horn, for example, Dowling meditated that 'some reader who has seen the rhinoceros in the Regent's Park may doubt the powers of the horn to do much mischief, as it appears too blunt and short to produce a deep laceration'. Such a conclusion was misguided, however, for 'this metropolitan animal has worn away its horn by incessant rubbing against hard substances, until it has become little more than a mere protuberance, bearing little resemblance to the formidable weapon on the wild animal'.[24] Reading a guide like Dowling's could help visitors to contextualise what they saw in the zoo and more accurately visualise a beast in its native environment.

Stupid wonder and vapid curiosity

This, then, was the theory. Visitors were supposed to immerse themselves in relevant literature before they visited the zoological gardens and then tour them with a guide in hand, paying close attention to each of the caged beasts and reflecting reverently on their beauty and exoticism. But did all spectators behave so diligently? Were there other, less orthodox ways of visiting a collection of exotic animals, and how did ordinary viewers actually respond to the sight of elephants, lions and tigers? Did some visitors draw personal meanings of their own from zoological collections that were not anticipated in the guides?

Visitor reaction is, of course, difficult to reconstruct. Guidebooks are one source of information, but, as we have seen, they usually describe how a visitor was expected to behave, rather than how he or she actually did. The imaginary character in the children's primer or the idealised reader of the natural history text was not necessarily a reliable representation of the average zoo-goer, who was probably rather more impulsive and superficial in his inspection of caged beasts. Likewise, Dowling's studious and contemplative visitor was a model observer rather than a flesh and blood reality. To access the reactions of these less committed, but probably more typical zoo visitors, therefore, we need to look elsewhere. Diaries offer one source of information, as do letters published in newspapers. We can also infer something of actual visitor behaviour from the critical comments in the prefaces to guidebooks, which were often written explicitly to correct aberrant conduct in zoos and menageries. None of these sources is, of course, entirely representative. Newspaper reports in particular may carry the gloss of journalists and editors, who sometimes had their own educational and moral agendas to peddle. For all their shortcomings, nonetheless, the remarks of contemporaries give us an intriguing glimpse of how some visitors at least experienced a visit to the zoological gardens, suggesting some of the assets and limitations of the zoo as a learning environment.[25]

Firstly, we may consider the reactions of some juvenile visitors – the group at which much of the education on offer was targeted. Reported only second hand, the two examples given here are not unmediated accounts, and may not accurately encapsulate the feelings of the children themselves. They do, for all that, give a sense of how children were believed to be responding when confronted for the first time with wonderful and strange animals. They also show the delight and amusement that the sight of exotic animals engendered in many young zoo-goers.

The first account is taken from the *Liverpool Mercury*, which reported the outing of the boys from the city's Bluecoat Hospital to the Liverpool Zoological Garden in 1833, and recounted their reactions. According to the report, the children's visit was initially quite regimented. 'They entered the grounds in regular order, preceded by drum and fife, and were at first placed under some constraint, being obliged to march round, thus getting only a passing glance at the different animals'. This mode of proceeding rather suppressed the children's enjoyment of the event, countering any natural feelings of curiosity and adventure. After a time, however, and at the special request of the garden's director, Mr Atkins, the boys were 'permitted to break their ranks and disperse themselves about the grounds, each in the direction to which his taste and humour led him'. The result was an outburst of childish wonder and excitement as the youths capered spontaneously around the exhibits. As the *Mercury* reflected, 'it was highly gratifying to see the glee with which the youngsters broke up, one set exclaiming, "Now for the monkeys!", another "Let's go see the elephants!"'.[26]

A comparable, if slightly more orderly scene, was described by the *Bristol Mercury* in 1858, when it reported on a visit by the pauper children of the Stapleton Workhouse to Bristol Zoological Gardens. On this occasion the three hundred boys and girls 'were brought in from the workhouse in large covered vans ... attended by their schoolmaster and schoolmistresses'. Upon their arrival, the children were conveyed first to the carnivore house, where they apparently relished the chance to find themselves 'in the presence of real live lions, bears, tigers, snakes and serpents, of whose existence they had only previously known through the medium of pictures'. They were then conducted to the pit of the 'great polar bear', which 'seemed particularly to delight them', and to the aviary, where they scrutinised 'the gay plumage of the numerous parrots, macaws and other oriental birds in which the Bristol collection is so rich'. While the pleasure that the children derived from their visit was primarily visual and untutored, the *Mercury* applauded the efforts made by the keepers to 'explain to some of the more intelligent the characters, habits and peculiarities of many of the leading animals, so that instruction was pleasingly blended with amusement'.[27] Some of the children at least would have departed with their notions of zoology enlarged, if only to the extent of being able to identify the different animals they had seen; a few of the brightest might have retained more profound impressions of the animals and remembered the keepers' descriptions. Though workhouse inmates were unlikely to have a great

deal of zoological literature at their disposal, more privileged children might also have been able to re-read their natural history textbooks with a more critical eye, following a zoo visit and spot any discrepancies between the representation and the real thing. A subscriber to Edinburgh Zoological Gardens, Mr Pattison, cited as a praiseworthy example of such behaviour the case of 'a boy only four yours of age, who, like most boys, had a picture book of natural history, and who, on being asked whether the representation of the dromedary was accurate, replied that it wanted the curtain over the eye, he having marked the long hair which protected the eyes of the specimen in the gardens'. This pleasing vignette was recounted at the annual meeting of the zoo's board of directors as concrete proof of 'how advantageous such an institution was in training the young mind to accurate observation'.[28]

While the infant zoo-goer from Edinburgh exemplified the kind of learning experience visitors were meant to have in these institutions, the majority of patrons were probably less observant. A trip to the zoo could be as much about taking the air in a fashionable resort as about acquiring detailed zoological knowledge. Many spectators passed nonchalantly from one animal to another, without spending long enough at each enclosure to properly inspect the inmate. Nor did everyone prime himself for a zoo visit by engaging in relevant preliminary reading. The resulting apathy, ignorance and indifference of a few of the more inattentive visitors was criticised – and occasionally parodied – in contemporary sources, which advocated a more diligent study of the animal creation. Though many of these critiques were overdrawn for effect, their more sceptical description of spectator behaviour offers another – perhaps more representative – insight into how a zoo visit might have been experienced.

One social commentator who observed his fellow zoo-goers was the writer Leigh Hunt. Paying a visit to the Regent's Park Zoological Gardens in 1836, Hunt described the actions of a particularly casual individual, who 'hastened from den to den and from bird to beast, twirling an umbrella and giving little self-complacent stops at each, not longer than if he were turning over a book of prints while waiting to transact some business'. Hunt gently mocked the man's superficial scrutiny of the wild beasts, imagining his thoughts as he flitted from cage to cage:

> 'Ha!' he seems to be saying to himself, 'this is the panther, is it? Hm, panther. What says the label here? "Hyena capensis". Hm, hyena, eh! A thing untameable. "Grisly bear". Hah, grisly – hm. Very like. Boa – "Tiger Boa" – ah! Boa in a box – hm – sleeping, I suppose. Very

> different from seeing him squeeze somebody. Hm, well! I think it will rain. Terrible thing, that – spoil my hat!'

Hunt conceded that the man might possibly have been giving each animal a cursory overview 'preparatory to a more than usual inspection'. He suspected, however, that the visitor's fleeting glances constituted the sum total of his zoological observation, in which case his appreciation of the animals must have been limited. Inattentive and easily distracted, the man behaved like many modern zoo-goers who pause by each enclosure only long enough to read the name on the sign and catch a glimpse of the occupant, and who soon lose interest if the latter is concealed or sleeping.[29]

Popular natural history writer William Dowling was of a similar opinion, for though he emphasised the value of zoological gardens as sites for rational recreation, he believed that 'very many persons of all ages derive little real benefit from their visits to such institutions as those in the Regent's Park and Surrey Gardens, in consequence of ignorance of the history, habits and uses of the various animals'. Dowling lamented that he had frequently seen 'a large party walking listlessly amongst the animals, or attentive only to some rare exhibition of ferocity or size'. Had they prepared for their excursion by doing a little preliminary reading, they might have got more out of their time in the zoo. Knowing 'nothing of the creatures around', however, they saw 'little to interest, save the mere forms of the animals', and went away only marginally better informed than when they arrived.[30] Reviewing Dowling's book, the *Morning Chronicle* concurred that zoo visitors did not always make the most of the educational opportunities afforded them at the gardens, suggesting that the motivation for a zoological excursion was often 'to display their smart clothes, to spend a day's pleasure', as much as to engage in 'observation and instruction':

> Let a shrewd observer pass some hours in one of those gardens on a fine day, a holiday, when it is most crowded, and, marking well not the quadrupeds but the bipeds, who are gazing upon them, decide for himself upon how many countenances he can distinguish the traces of lively interest or intelligent inquiry, as compared with the number upon which the expression is unmistakable of vague and vapid curiosity or stupid wonder. Tell the proprietor of one of these stolid visages that the grisly lion is of the same family as the domestic cat, and instead of receiving the knowledge of the fact as a stimulus to the acquisition of others, the chances are his answer will be 'Dear

> me, well I shouldn't have seen the likeness' as he turns away to get another broad grin out of the antics of the monkeys, or proffers his fingers to scratch the poll of the cockatoo.[31]

This was not the curious and intellectually engaged visitor imagined by zoo directors.

If visitors sometimes fell short of the ideal, however, gardens themselves did not always provide the perfect learning environment. Guidebooks, as we have seen, could be rather brief in their descriptions of rare animals and could sometimes be out-of-date if existing inmates died or new ones were purchased and the guide was not reprinted. The layout of the enclosures and the placement of labels was likewise not always best calculated to impart zoological knowledge, for while zoo directors aspired to present animals in a way that would illustrate their classification in the Linnaean system or highlight other key anatomical features, practical needs often militated against this. Under such conditions, the ability of the viewer to compare and contrast similar species or acquire more information about them was impaired.

One critical visitor to Dublin Zoological Gardens certainly felt that this establishment's managers were not doing all they could to make a trip to the zoo instructive. Touring the gardens again in 1843, the visitor, who signed himself 'Homo', alleged that the layout of the enclosures, the inadequate labelling of the exhibits and the failure to adhere to prevailing systems of zoological classification rendered a visit to the animals much less informative than it had the potential to be. The range of creatures, it was true, was impressive and each beast 'seemed to show the fostering hand of tender care'. 'Homo' was distressed, however, to find that 'in not one instance could I observe, over the respective cages, either the class or order of the inhabitant'. Moreover, where labels did exist, these were often positioned in places that were not easily visible, which would discourage all but the most determined from reading them: 'The distinguishing marks of each tribe should be so painted and placed as to catch the eye of the observer at once, and not, as in the present instance, where those who are "honoured with a name" [have it] placed so remote as to render it a matter of some research to find out its "whereabouts"'. The result was that one left the gardens feeling entertained and refreshed, perhaps, but not mentally enriched. A spectator might get a general sense of what a certain animal looked like, but he would not know where it lived, what it ate, or perhaps even what it was called if he was relying for information solely on textual cues in the gardens themselves. 'The total omission of anything like either classification or science in their arrangement made

the whole appear to me as forming rather a collection for the mere gaze of the idly curious than a group laid out for the promotion of useful knowledge by the study of this interesting branch'. To rectify this state of affairs, the zoo's management would do well to adopt the presentation standards of the Botanical Gardens of the Royal Dublin Society, where 'the name, class, order and family are painted legibly upon metal plates' for the edification of the viewer.[32]

Interestingly, 'Homo's' critical letter generated a swift response from an employee of the gardens, politely refuting his claims and pointing out, at some length, why the reforms he proposed were impractical. This rebuttal nicely elucidates the constraints that zoos were under when it came to making their displays instructive, though its speed of issue and level of detail also underline the desire of the Dublin gardens to maintain a reputation for educational worth. Addressing 'Homo's' first complaint, that the arrangement of the animals was unhelpful for illustrating classificatory trends, for example, the zoo's representative emphasised the necessity of caring for each creature's health, since 'animals may belong to the same group in natural history, and yet be of very different habits as to their requirements of food, air, aspect, temperature etc.' Thus, 'the sloth bear, accustomed to the broiling temperature of Calcutta, would be speedily killed if caged in the same pit with the Norwegian bear, that spends his life amid continual snows'. Moving on to 'Homo's' second complaint, that more detail should be given about each animal's family and mode of life, the zoo's representative tartly dismissed this as superfluous, retorting that 'the scientific and popular names of each animal are placed over each cage, and this is surely enough; it is not necessary to place over a dog that he belongs to the order of "quadrupeds", or over a cockatoo that he belongs to the "aves"'. Finally, 'Homo's grumbles about the misplacing of labels might occasionally have justification, but, as with the arrangement of the animals, this was largely dictated by practicalities, for one could not put these labels absolutely anywhere. 'The [labels] are placed generally on the upper part of the cages, so as to be out of reach of the animals', explained the writer. 'It will occasionally happen that the labels will be injured by the weather, by the animals or by visitors, and will be misplaced for a short time in consequence of changes of animals, deaths, new arrivals etc., but every care is taken to remedy this as soon as it can be done, with the very limited number of attendants which the funds of the society permit the council to retain.' A desire to educate visitors as effectively as possible was therefore compromised by the practical realities of keeping animals alive in captivity. When funding and staffing were at a premium, scientific ideals had to be sacrificed.[33]

Menageries

If zoological gardens at least aspired to function as educational venues, what of menageries? Could ordinary people go to these places to acquire information about the animal world, or were menageries merely for entertainment? If they did transmit information, what methods did they use to do so?

Menageries have typically been portrayed as offering amusement rather than providing education. This was the contemporary view put forward by the directors of zoological gardens, who contrasted the spacious, genteel atmosphere of their own institutions with the cramped, sometimes unseemly conditions of the travelling wild beast show. It has also been the general view of historians, who have tended to draw a sharp distinction between the menagerie and the zoo.[34] While such stereotypes certainly had validity, the perception of the menagerie as a place solely for crude amusement was not necessarily the prevailing perception at the time, and was certainly not how showmen themselves depicted their establishments. Menageries, if less sophisticated than zoological gardens, *did* perform a pedagogic function in Victorian society and *were* important vehicles for the dissemination of zoological knowledge to the masses. As we saw in Chapter 3, they were often portrayed as the only reputable show at the fair – a distinction they owed in large part to their educational potential. To what extent did they deserve this reputation?

At their most basic level, menageries were educational simply by making exotic animals visible to persons of all social classes. Many Britons would never have seen a lion or a tiger had Wombwell and his cohorts not conveyed these curious creatures to their home towns and villages, and the menagerie was often the place where young and old had their first glimpse of a lion or an elephant. The sight of novel animals for the first time was a revelation to some more rustic citizens, who occasionally expressed their amazement at the stature and anatomy of certain animals. One old lady from Kilmarnock, visiting Wombwell's menagerie in 1850, 'passed round the area with her friends in almost mute astonishment at the variety of the tenantry of air and earth' and lingered for several minutes outside the elephant's stall, 'waiting to see his head' (she thought his trunk was a tail).[35] Another parochial Scot, 'a natural' of Forfar, was apparently intrigued by the sight of Batty's elephant marching into his village, exclaiming 'Sae, man, there's the elephant coming – tail foremost, nae less!'[36] Though probably apocryphal, both of these stories suggest that menageries demystified more

gullible customers (or the 'natives' at home, as the last quotation seems to imply) as to the bodily form of foreign creatures, making exotic beasts accessible to a broad range of people. 'No-one probably has done so much to forward practically the study of natural history amongst the masses', conjectured *The Times* in its obituary to Wombwell, 'for his menageries visited every fair and every town in the kingdom and were everywhere popular'.[37]

Menageries also served a wider educational function by giving viewers the chance to appreciate nature's stunning variety. In amassing so many different species in a small space, the wild beast show permitted spectators to compare and contrast animals from different climes, gaining an appreciation of their form and habits. The images and descriptions read in natural history books were brought to life and impressed in the memory by the sight of the living animals they represented, embellishing and consolidating the lessons of the classroom or natural history primer. This deepened and accelerated the learning process. As one visitor to Manders' establishment commented, the menagerie 'is an exhibition ... in which the juvenile mind may be educated more in a single hour than by a twelve months' perusal of the laboured treatises of the most learned professors', for here could be seen 'those great animals which we used to portray upon our slates at school – the elephants', and a whole array of birds whose 'beautiful plumage' was 'shown off to great advantage by the judicious arrangement of the different species in their respective cages'.[38]

Beyond merely bringing exotic animals to the masses, showmen instituted a number of practical measures to make visits to their establishments more informative. Firstly, many showmen published a short guidebook to enlighten visitors as to the contents of their menageries. Usually sold at the entrance to the show for a moderate price, these guides were readily available to viewers and considerably cheaper than other, more scholarly, natural history texts.[39] Most contained a succinct catalogue of the creatures to be seen. Some included illustrations. Visiting Ipswich in1800, Pidcock announced that 'pamphlets, neatly printed on fine wove paper, giving a description of the animals and birds' were 'to be had at the carriages'.[40] Touring Wrexham in 1867, Manders, likewise, tempted menagerie-goers with a literary keepsake, in this case an 'Illustrated and Descriptive Catalogue containing the "Life and Adventures of Macomo [the lion tamer]"', available 'in the menagerie, price one penny'.[41] Such texts functioned initially as a guide to visitors, while they viewed the zoological collection and examined its inmates. The guides also potentially operated as an educational souvenir, which,

if retained, could be re-read after the show to consolidate and refresh the knowledge gleaned during the visit.

Though the type of information contained in menagerie pamphlets varied between shows, and over time, it usually included some or all of the following features: the popular and, in some cases, the scientific name (in Latin) of an animal; details of its origin, habits and diet; a description of its key anatomical features; comments on its uses to man and its cultural significance; and a summary of the myths and fables surrounding the creature, perhaps citing extracts from contemporary natural histories, biblical references or classical texts. A printed guidebook for Wombwell and Bostock's menagerie, purchased by a spectator in Norwich in January 1882, was fairly typical of the genre. Compiled by one of the proprietors, James Bostock, to facilitate 'a more intelligent knowledge of some of the rarer objects of Natural History', the nine-page guide consisted of short snippets of information on each of the animals on display. The guide recommended that spectators take a specified route for maximum instruction, asking readers to 'please compare the numbers [in the catalogue] with those over the dens, starting from the Birds Catalogue and following to the right round the Enclosure'. It conceded, however, that 'as additions are being continually made to the Menagerie, and some of the Animals included in this Catalogue may die, we cannot guarantee, in every instance, all the numbers as they are marked'.[42] In terms of content, the guidebook entry on each animal gave both its common and Latin names and, in some cases, a brief description of its most salient physical features – the cassowaries had feet 'armed with formidable nails';[43] the kangaroo was a 'pouch-bearing animal'.[44] Some descriptions cited the origins of particular animals – the tiger 'is found in the Himalaya at certain seasons'; some mentioned the character and habits of particular beasts – the Tasmanian devil, 'though small', was 'the most cruel and bloodthirsty of all the carnivorous animals'; and others alluded to their uses to human beings – the llama's wool has lately attracted interest as 'an article of manufacture'.[45] The short length of the entries (none was longer than two paragraphs) would have enabled visitors to scan them while viewing the animals in the show, or to consult them quickly after they had observed a particular beast. This sort of engagement was further encouraged by requests that spectators focus their attention on the particular features of some specimens, taking advantage of their access to living examples.

For those spectators who elected not to purchase an official pamphlet, or whose illiteracy prevented them from reading one, oral descriptions given by the keepers offered an alternative means of acquiring zoological

information. Brief commentaries about the animals on display were delivered at regular intervals, often hourly, by menagerie personnel. Sometimes, to make these descriptions more engaging, keepers would take specific creatures out of their cages to highlight their most notable features (Figure 5.1). On other occasions they would reserve time for answering visitors' questions, thereby helping to promote better understanding of the exotic captives in their exhibitions. These more interactive displays are mentioned in many menagerie advertisements and were seemingly popular. The *Liverpool Mercury* described how a keeper at Manders' menagerie 'caressed and fondled an immense boa constrictor while giving a short account of that monster of reptiles'.[46] Another paper, the *North Wales Chronicle*, praised 'Mr Stevens and his numerous company' for 'their gentlemanly demeanour and anxiety to accommodate visitors and explain matters to the uninitiated'.[47]

Though the pedagogic value of these keeper talks doubtless fluctuated from performer to performer, there is evidence that some menagerists at least aspired to a greater degree of professionalism. Manders certainly did. Advertising in 1868 for 'an intelligent person as Describer, who will not object to make himself generally useful', Manders stipulated that he would prefer applicants to possess 'a little knowledge of

Figure 5.1 'A Travelling Menagerie', *The Graphic*, 18 April 1874

natural history and the Queen's English ... many applying for and being allowed to occupy similar positions being woefully deficient of either qualification'. Manders accorded particular attention to his employee's moral probity, requesting that no person 'whose character will not bear close investigation' need apply. He also intimated that an 'extra recompense' would be given to 'one who can produce his temperance pledge certificate', it being his intention to enlist a man 'who can study his employer's interest to a greater degree than the quality of the beer at the nearest public house'. Though the result of Manders' search for such a 'model showman' is not known, the prescriptions in the advertisement suggest that a desire existed to make menageries educational, and to secure competent and committed employees.[48] Many applicants probably fell short of these stringent criteria, but some at least acquitted themselves well. The *Nottinghamshire Guardian* reported that the 'intelligent keeper' in Edmonds' menagerie gave 'a very interesting description of the animals' in the collection, 'so that those who want to ... receive a good practical lecture on zoology cannot do better than spend a short time in this menagerie'.[49]

Finally, to further enhance the educational credentials of their establishments, menagerists often allowed the poorer members of the community to visit their shows for free, sometimes inviting lower-class children to their establishments on their own initiative and, in some cases, working in tandem with charitable organisations to co-ordinate educational visits. Such informative treats appear to have been a relatively frequent occurrence. In Sheffield, for example, Wombwell 'treated 544 boys and 380 girls attending the Lancasterian schools with a view of his exhibition'.[50] In Belfast, Batty 'kindly gave free admission ... to upwards of sixty children from the Old Poor-house', granting the 'youthful visitors' a rare glimpse of his zoological collection.[51] In Llandudno Mrs Wombwell collaborated with the local school authorities to arrange a visit by 222 'children of the National Schools' to her menagerie, making special arrangements with the railway operators 'so that the little people not only had the pleasure of seeing this fine collection of animated nature, but ... had a nice little railway trip into the bargain'.[52] The menagerie harmonised well with the objectives and beliefs of contemporary philanthropic bodies, who perceived it as a site for the transmission of zoological knowledge and Christian values. A visit to the touring animal show was regarded by teachers and Poor Law administrators as a means of enlightening the poorer classes – in particular the young – and giving some of those less fortunate members of society a brief interlude of pleasure in their otherwise melancholy and monotonous lives. At a time

when childhood was becoming increasingly cherished as a distinct stage of existence, reserved for education and play,[53] the sight of wild animals was regarded as a real treat 'to children who are to a great extent shut out from many of the innocent enjoyments so keenly appreciated at their time of life'.[54] These visits were also viewed as a source of learning. As one newspaper philosophised in 1848, the menagerie was 'an exhibition well calculated to enlarge the minds of that class of children who are generally left in superstition and ignorance of the natural appearance of our ferocious beasts'.[55]

What charity school children themselves made of their visit to the menagerie is, of course, harder to know, for few consigned their experiences to paper. Contemporary newspaper reports typically emphasised the pleasure, gratitude and respectful appreciation of such youngsters, describing them as 'gratified',[56] 'highly delighted'[57] and 'much pleased'.[58] This may well have been the case – it is likely the children were 'much pleased' by 'the truly wonderful performances of the leopards' and Mrs Wombwell's 'musical elephant' – but it is also true that such descriptions were in keeping with the wider moral agenda of the time, which stressed the value of charitable acts in reforming the lower classes. For this reason, a letter written by a youth named Thomas Collins following a menagerie visit is particularly interesting, since it offers a valuable insight into the actual reception of a touring wild animal collection. An inmate of the Claremont Deaf and Dumb Institution, Dublin, Thomas was treated to a trip to Polito's menagerie in 1819. After his excursion, he penned a touching letter describing his outing, noting his recollections of the various animals and his interactions with some of them. In so doing he offered a tantalising glimpse of what it was like to see exotic species for the first time in the environment of a travelling wild beast show. Thomas wrote:

> My dear_, I went to Mr Polito's, Lower Abbey Street. I saw many beasts, playing in the cages of iron … The spotted, or laughing hyena, was wild in a cage; he was unpleasant … The great water buffalo, from Bombay; his horns are black; his body black; on the floor. A beautiful Egyptian camel was eating hay, in rail of wood; his back was curved and brown; his under-neck is curved … The beautiful zebra was in a cage of wood; his body was beautifully striped … A kangaroo's fore-legs 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. I saw a live serpent, lying in a cage, upon blankets; his body is slender and

> long; he was striped with rings; his tongue is forked, and was black; he was yawning. A large elephant was eating hay; his body is large and black; was standing on the floor; his trunk took cakes from D_ who has some gingerbread cakes; his legs are short and thick; his hoofs were large and black; and his body has not hair. A porter went to the door, and spoke to D_, who was with us; he opened the door. We saw an elephant in the stable; his body is all black; his ears were pendulous, and were wiping his little eyes; his tusks were little, of bone; his mouth was sucking trunk. D_ had some cakes … A porcupine; quills are thick; he was in a cage; his quills are long, and black and white. I felt his quills; he went walking; his fore-legs were short, on the floor: we were afraid; porcupine's front was black; his tail is thick.

Thomas' letter is worth quoting at length because it elucidates how charity children (and by extension probably other youngsters) reacted to the sights they witnessed in a zoological exhibition. In the passage quoted above, Thomas alludes to the form and colour of the different animals – the 'small…short' forelegs of the kangaroo, the 'beautifully striped' body of the zebra and the 'pendulous' ears and 'sucking trunk' of the elephant. The schoolboy references the origins of some beasts – the buffalo is 'from Bombay'; the camel is 'Egyptian'. He chronicles the behaviour of the more active creatures – the elephant was 'wiping his little eyes' – and he records his own interactions with others, from touching the lion's tail to feeling the quills of the porcupine. How much of this information Thomas acquired in the menagerie, and how much he gleaned from previous lessons and textbooks is, of course, difficult to know. Being deaf, he presumably could not have benefited from any lecture delivered by the keeper, nor could he hear the noise of the animals, which would explain why his description concentrates primarily on the visual aspects of the show – the colours of the animals, for example – and omits any reference to the sounds of a menagerie – the chattering, roaring and barking that so impressed the writer in *Blackwood's Magazine* (Chapter 3). Thomas' letter was most likely composed under instruction from his teachers as part of a writing exercise, or it may have been written of his own volition, either as a memento for himself, or to enlighten the other children who had not seen the show. Whatever the case, the document purports to be 'uncorrected' (a claim that its imperfect grammar, repetitive prose and staccato style substantiate) and, as such, offers a relatively unmediated glimpse of what a visit to a menagerie was like. It suggests that the examination of Polito's collection familiarised the children with the physique and behaviour of exotic creatures and gave

tangible form to abstract snippets of zoological knowledge imparted in the classroom.[59]

Conclusion

The nineteenth century saw an increased emphasis on rational recreation and educational leisure pursuits. Efforts were made to foster learning through new institutions such as museums and public libraries. These focused initially on the middle classes, but started to be targeted more consciously at the working classes from the 1850s. From the 1820s, popular science emerged as an important literary genre, and authors began to write texts aimed specifically at non-specialists. These works sold well, building upon a taste for natural history that had already started to manifest itself in the eighteenth century, with the popularity of texts like Buffon's multi-volumed *Histoire Naturelle* (1749–1788).[60]

Zoological gardens viewed themselves very much within the rational recreation remit, consistently marketing their collections as places of informative amusement. Not all those who visited made the most of the educational potential of zoological gardens, while inadequate labelling, incorrect information and, above all, the unnatural behaviours of animals in prolonged captivity, could also limit the pedagogic value of a trip to the zoo. As animal rights campaigner Henry Salt complained in 1894:

> What do the good people see who go to the gardens on a half-holiday to poke their umbrellas at a blinking eagle-owl, or to throw dog-biscuits down the expansive throat of a hippopotamus? Not wild bears or wild birds … but merely the outer semblances and *simulacra* of the denizens of forest and prairie – poor spiritless remnants of what were formerly wild animals.[61]

This was doubtless true, and certainly had implications for the moral justification for caging exotic species, discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Nonetheless, many visitors derived some knowledge from their visits, and even the more apathetic could gain a rudimentary understanding of the appearance and character of exotic beasts.

Though less often viewed in this light, travelling menageries were also valuable sites for the transmission of natural knowledge thanks largely to their longevity and social inclusivity. Menageries had a wider geographical reach than zoos, and served a broader spectrum of the population. Touring wild beast shows also outlived many provincial zoos, taking the

place of fixed zoological establishments after these had closed. Writing in 1862 the *Caledonian Mercury* observed that 'In Edinburgh, now that our Gardens are abolished, good travelling collections of wild beasts are welcomed as the only means left to the citizens of witnessing zoological specimens'.[62]

Commercial imperatives always came first for menagerists. Nonetheless, entertainment could be, and was, synthesised with education – sometimes consciously, sometimes adventitiously – while the showmanship of the menagerist was not always so different from that of contemporary lecturers in natural history, who likewise recognised the value of performance in drawing in crowds to their talks.[63] Though not perhaps ideal as venues for research and learning, travelling animal shows played an important part in familiarising the wider public with the form and habits of exotic species, and reached sectors of the population that other media did not. As the naturalist James Rennie concluded in 1829:

> The animals may be confined in miserable dens, where their natural movements are painfully restrained; the keepers may be lamentably ignorant, and impose upon the credulous a great number of false stories, full of wonderment and absurdity: but still the people see the real things about which they have heard and read, (though they are not always pointed out to them by the right names) and they acquire a body of facts which makes a striking impression upon their memories and understandings.

Despite their flaws, therefore, menageries deserved to be ranked 'amongst the most rational gratifications of the curiosity of the multitude'.[64]

6
Cruelty and Compassion

> Why do monkeys in small cages die so soon? Because they are used to better climbs. (*Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 15 January 1871)

On November 21, 1874, Nottingham magistrates Mr Shelbrooke and Mr Milward presided over a rather unusual animal welfare case: an alleged incidence of cruelty towards an elephant. The elephant in question, an exhibit in Day and Rayner's travelling menagerie, was suffering from a chronically infected foot that required urgent medical attention. Instead of being permitted to convalesce, however, the sickly pachyderm had, 'for many months', been 'crawling about the country in such a condition that the magistrates would be astonished to hear that it was able to walk at all', and had, only recently, been compelled to hobble from Nottingham to Gotham in a state of 'positive torture'. Lawyer Mr Richards, representing the RSPCA, described how the elephant walked at the pitiful rate of 'one mile in two hours', 'groaning as it went along'. A veterinary surgeon called in by the Society testified that the animal 'was suffering from some inflammation of the joints of the foot', which 'discharged matter' whenever it moved.

Summoned to explain their actions, menagerists John Day and Thomas Rayner admitted that their elephant was not in good health, but denied wilful cruelty. The showmen confessed to having made the ailing animal limp through Gotham while in physical pain. They justified this decision, however, on the grounds that it had been impossible to find suitable accommodation for the beast in the village, making it necessary to 'travel to Castle Donnington in order for stabling to be procured for it'. Quizzed as to their duty of care towards the pachyderm, both Day and Rayner insisted that they were 'very anxious to preserve the elephant

in good health' – not least because they estimated its value at £3000.[1] Day professed to enjoy a particularly intimate bond with the creature, having raised it 'with almost paternal care since its infancy' – a statement that elicited guffaws of laughter from the courtroom. The defence emphasised that the elephant's condition had improved significantly since it had been impounded by the RSPCA some six weeks previously, and hoped, for this reason, that the bench would waive the charges. The magistrates, unconvinced, convicted both Day and Rayner of 'ill-treating an elephant', fining them 21s each for the offence.[2]

The case of the footsore elephant was a relatively minor legal matter, and just one of many animal cruelty prosecutions made by the RSPCA in the nineteenth century. The victim, however, was atypical, and the verdict had implications for future legal proceedings involving exotic animals. Though the fines imposed on the defendants were relatively modest, the level of publicity accorded the case was higher than usual and the public outrage proportionally greater. The menagerists' claims of personal attachment to the afflicted animal suggest a concern for the public perception of their show and awareness that allegations of mistreatment would be bad for business. This in turn suggests that menagerie visitors, at least by the 1870s, did not want to see brutalised and abused creatures in zoological collections. The RSPCA's decision to intervene on the elephant's behalf and prosecute its owners illustrates one of the mechanisms available to protect animals from mistreatment in mid-nineteenth-century Britain, and shows that captive exotics were coming to be considered – if somewhat peripherally – as lying within the Society's remit for intervention.

Looking at the case of the Gotham elephant and others like it, this chapter explores conceptions of animal welfare in nineteenth-century Britain, with a specific focus on exotic animals. Shifting attitudes towards animals in this period were manifest in the treatment of menagerie inmates, and in the response of both legal authorities and the general public to actual or perceived cruelty. The RSPCA, though not primarily concerned with non-domestic species, intervened in a number of prominent cases involving exotic animals. The contemporary press also aired strong views on the subject, bringing incidences of abuse to the attention of a wider public. Concentrating on four case studies, the chapter argues for a gradual evolution over the course of the century from concern over the demoralising effects of blood sports to an emphasis on the suffering of animals themselves as sentient beings. I consider the degree to which wild animals were covered by evolving anti-cruelty legislation. I also suggest that the mistreatment of animals was seen as symptomatic of

wider social ills through its association with particular classes, genders or nationalities.

A compassionate nation?

Historians have traditionally seen the early-nineteenth century as a period of increased compassion for animals. In previous centuries, the British, rather than enjoying their current reputation as animal lovers, were notorious for their cruelty. In the years around 1800, however, a shift in attitudes started to take place, resulting in greater concern for animal welfare and giving rise to the modern 'connection between Englishness and kindness to animals'.[3]

Historians have offered a variety of explanations for this change. Keith Thomas argues that it was the culmination of a gradual shift in attitudes towards non-humans. These grew, in part, out of new religious principles – most often held by non-conformists like Quakers and Methodists – which stressed that it was man's duty to take care of God's creation. They also grew out of a more secular emphasis on 'sensation and feeling as the true basis for a claim to moral consideration'.[4] This latter stance was most famously articulated by the utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham, who argued that animals should be treated with compassion because they could feel pain. 'The question is not, can they *reason*, nor can they *talk*, but can they *suffer*?'[5]

At the same time as new ideas influenced the thinking of a (probably small) minority of the upper classes, major social changes further affected the way people treated animals. James Turner suggests that sensitivity to animal welfare was heightened by the social re-structuring resulting from industrialisation and urbanisation. On the one hand, the new work demands imposed by factory discipline supplanted the more uneven rhythms of the workshop and made drawn-out and violent blood sports like bull-baiting appear socially corrosive and anachronistic. On the other, a sense of nostalgia for the natural world arose among the newly-urbanised middle classes, stimulating feelings of compassion towards the brute creation – especially farm animals, reminiscent of a rural idyll.[6] Hilda Kean and Diana Donald, challenging this last point, argue instead that it was the continued presence of farm animals in cities, and their critical role in the economy that fostered concerns for animal welfare, the sight of visible cruelty on the streets shocking and upsetting social reformers. As Donald observes, 'It was not philosophical distance from sites of cruelty, but painful proximity to them which prompted Londoners' protests'.[7]

Whatever its cause, increasing compassion for animals was reflected in the introduction of legislation to prohibit some of the most blatant forms of cruelty, particularly those closely associated with social disorder. From the early eighteenth century individual towns banned the practice of cock-throwing, a brutal form of entertainment in which a live cock was tethered to a pole and bombarded with missiles. Moved by similar concerns, the authorities in Birmingham suppressed bull-baiting in 1773. In 1800 a bill was introduced into Parliament to abolish the sport on a national level. This and several subsequent efforts to enact nationwide anti-cruelty legislation ended in failure, but in 1822 Parliament finally passed the Animal Cruelty Act, making it a crime to mistreat any farm or draught animal. Over the following decades the original Animal Cruelty legislation was revised and toughened to broaden its scope and complexity, encompassing more forms of abuse. In 1835, Parliament abolished blood sports, outlawing 'fighting or baiting any bull, bear, badger, dog, cock or other kind of animal, whether of domestic or wild nature'.[8] In 1845, an amendment was made to 'the law for regulating knackers' yards', and in 1854, following a public campaign, an Act was passed 'prohibiting the use of dogs as beasts of draught and burden'.[9] A further Animal Cruelty Act in 1876 attempted to regulate animal experimentation.[10]

To police the treatment of animals, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was founded in 1824. Gaining royal patronage in 1840, the SPCA (hereafter, RSPCA) centred its operations on London, but soon spawned affiliated branches in the provinces in cities such as Liverpool, Plymouth, Leeds, Belfast and Dublin.[11] The Society recruited a team of uniformed inspectors to apprehend abusers and collaborated with the police in the suppression of animal cruelty. In the years following its creation, it successfully prosecuted many offenders, some of whom received fines and others short periods of imprisonment or hard labour.[12] Between 1830 and 1839, 1,357 people were convicted for cruelty to animals; in the following decade the Society secured 2,177 convictions.[13]

An analysis of the cases brought by the RSPCA reveals that most prosecutions were for the abuse of livestock and draught animals and most defendants were members of the lower classes or foreigners.[14] In 1845, for instance, William Peacock, 'a ragged-looking fellow' was convicted at Ilford petty sessions for abusing a donkey at Fairlop Fair by 'hitting it with a thick stick'.[15] In 1854 a man named Augustin Joseph Tolbyrne, apparently of non-British origin, was called upon to explain, 'in broken English', why he had battered a cat so badly that its owner had for several

weeks been obliged to feed 'the poor animal with a spoon'.[16] In 1849 a greengrocer named Tempest Fletcher was fined the maximum possible penalty of 4s for 'maiming a dog of the St. Bernard breed' that had 'stopped in front of the defendant's shop for the purpose of nature'.[17] These cases were typical in terms both of the social rank of the abusers and the punishments they received.

In addition to punishing acts of cruelty, the RSPCA endeavoured to encourage greater kindness to animals in British society through repeated educational campaigns. The Society circulated 'thousands of tracts and small publications', delivered lectures to 'cabmen, servants, children and others' and, from 1869, published its own magazine, *The Animal World* to spread the gospel of kindness to animals to 'persons having the care of dumb brutes'. To foster benevolence amongst the younger generation, the RSPCA distributed pamphlets designed 'to inculcate the duty and profitableness of kindness to animals', as well as organising essay writing competitions for children.[18] In 1875, Baroness Burdett-Coutts presented 514 prizes to young essay writers, among them 12-year-old Annie Green of 14 Thistle Grove, South Kensington and 13-year-old Earnest Adams of 104 Clarendon Grove, Notting Hill.[19]

A tract produced by one of the RSPCA's sister societies, the Calcutta Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, exemplifies the organisation's pedagogic role. Published in 1872, for circulation amongst the children of British expatriates, the pamphlet presented kindness to animals as a worthy crusade in which all young colonials could play their part. The tract urged readers, firstly, to abstain from cruelty to animals themselves. It then explained how children could spread notions of compassion to native servants and even to their own parents, who might accept gentle correction more willingly from a youngster than from another adult:

> When you see drivers of poor horses and bullocks cruelly beating or tormenting them in any way, you can speak kindly to such men and tell them how wicked it is, and many men will think *much* more about what a child will say to them and be more ashamed of being corrected *by you* than if a grown-up person scolded them![20]

The purpose of this tract – and others like it – was to dissuade children from personally tormenting animals and to enlist them at an early age into the animal welfare cause, so that they might censure brutality when they witnessed it from their peers or parents (or, in this colonial context, the less humane 'natives'). The pamphlet explicitly equated the suppression

of cruelty to animals with the abolition of slavery and other human reform movements, suggesting that kindness towards other species was a natural progression from these earlier humanitarian endeavours.

Alongside the punitive and educational efforts of the RSPCA, the nineteenth century also witnessed two other developments with important implications for human-animal relations. The first of these was pet-keeping. Though animals had been kept in a domestic setting in earlier periods, it was in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that large numbers of the middle classes started to adopt the practice. Dogs emerged first as family pets, valued for their obedience and fidelity, while cats started to receive similar attentions from the middle of the century. To cater for the needs of these cosseted animals, shops started to sell pet accessories, food purveyors manufactured products specifically for dogs, and books were published to instruct owners in their training.[21] Dog shows also became popular in this period, the first taking place at Newcastle in 1859.[22]

Another development that reflected changing attitudes towards animals was the advent of vegetarianism as an ethical lifestyle choice. The Vegetarian Society, founded at Ramsgate in 1846, officially advocated 'the use of a farinaceous diet, in preference to the use of flesh'.[23] Its members declared themselves 'opposed to the eating and consequently killing of animals or the exercise of any degree of cruelty to procure food'. Though not a mass movement (the Society boasted 463 members in 1849), vegetarianism evidenced a wider social concern for the treatment of animals, and a sense that slaughtering them for food was wrong.[24] This attitude represented an advance on previous centuries, when a vegetarian diet was generally adopted purely from poverty or for reasons of health.[25]

This, then, was the broader context of animal welfare in nineteenth-century Britain. But where did exotic species fit within this picture? Were they covered by the legal framework of Animal Cruelty Acts? Was their treatment monitored by the RSPCA? Were they capable of inspiring the kind of affection lavished on cherished family pets? To answer these questions, I will focus on four case studies taken from different decades in the nineteenth century, each of which illustrates a particular animal welfare issue. I argue that there was a gradual shift in emphasis from blood sports and premeditated brutality to aspects of everyday animal treatment (over-work, feeding practices). I conclude with the singular case of the elephant Jumbo, whose sale to the American showman Phineas Taylor Barnum elicited an outpouring of public sympathy on an unprecedented scale.

The Warwick lion fight

In the summer of 1825 showman George Wombwell arranged a fight between his famous lion, Nero, and six British bulldogs. Scheduled for the evening of 26 July, in the yard of an old factory in Warwick, the contest was to consist of two rounds, three dogs at a time being set upon the lion and the latter accorded a 20-minute respite between bouts. The dogs, some of them brought up from London, were 'good-looking, savage vermin, averaging about 40lbs in weight'.[26] They were lodged in the Green Dragon Inn, where 'a great number of persons paid sixpence each to have an opportunity of judging their qualities'. The lion, Nero, was reputed to be 'one of the largest lions ever seen in Britain'.[27] A special iron cage, 'about 15 feet square, elevated 5 foot from the ground' and with bars sufficiently spaced to allow the dogs (but not the lion) to pass in and out, was constructed to accommodate the combatants, and seating was erected for spectators.[28] Wombwell, with an eye to profit, charged 'three guineas for the best places, two guineas for the second, one for the third and half a guinea for standing on the ground' – a high price that reportedly 'prevented thousands from attending'.[29] The majority of spectators selected those seats 'most distant from the lion, from an apprehension that the unfortunate animal might break forth and take revenge on his tormentors'.[30]

Given the high calibre of the combatants, those who parted with their money expected a feisty contest. They were disappointed. The dogs, for their part, showed considerable spirit, one of them, Turk, manifesting 'extraordinary fierceness and game'. Nero, however, reared 'in domestic retirement, without ever having to look for his dinner', evinced little desire to fight and cowered dejectedly in one corner, 'his great tail hanging out through the bars'. When the dogs made their first onslaught, the lion swatted them away half-heartedly, apparently 'endeavouring more to get rid of an annoyance' than to inflict serious injury. When they assailed him a second time, 'the poor beast's heart seemed to fail him altogether', and he slumped 'against the side of the cage totally defenceless'. Wombwell initially refused to concede defeat, attempting to revive his flagging protégé by climbing up next to the cage and sprinkling water in his face. After a third round proved equally one-sided, however, the showman grudgingly gave in on behalf of his lion, fearful that further violence would result in the animal's death. Nero was left in a sorry state, panting and bleeding, though he appeared 'to suffer more from exhaustion and loss of wind than from punishment'.[31]

The first Warwick lion fight thus had a disappointing outcome. Wombwell, however, unabashed, agreed to a second contest in the same town just a week later to recoup the honour of his lions. This second combat featured another lion, Wallace, known for his viciousness and strength. It quickly degenerated into a massacre.

Where Nero had cowered before the dogs, Wallace was disposed to fight. As soon as the dogs were fed into the cage, the lion 'clapped his paw' on one of them and grasped another 'in his teeth ... deliberately walk[ing] round the stage with him as a cat would a mouse'. In the second round Wallace mutilated two more dogs, all the while 'lashing his sides with his tail and roaring tremendously'. In the third, he seized a dog in 'his leviathan jaws', only relinquishing the animal when a hunk of beef was thrown into the den to distract him. One of the dogs perished immediately after the fight and a second died the following morning. *Jackson's Oxford Journal* conjured a gruesome picture of the scene, recounting how Wallace strutted menacingly around his cage between bouts, 'his jaws ... covered with crimson foam' and his blood-stained paws 'printing each step with gore'.[32]

The two Warwick lion fights were a blatant instance of animal cruelty and attracted considerable attention at the time, much of it unfavourable. Staged primarily to raise money, the combats were reminiscent of spectacles from an earlier age. They were quite plainly at odds with the SPCA's agenda to promote compassionate treatment of animals and received largely negative coverage in the contemporary press. The fact that some 'six or seven hundred persons' attended the first contest shows that such crude amusements still exerted considerable appeal, despite recent moves in Parliament to suppress bull-baiting and related sports.[33] Nonetheless, the strong criticisms made of the events suggest a growing revulsion against spectacles of this nature and a fear that cruelty to animals might spill over into human-on-human violence. This manifested itself in several key complaints.

Firstly, in the case of the initial contest, there was some genuine compassion for the lion and his sufferings. Nero's docility and clear reluctance to fight aroused the sympathy of more sensitive observers, who condemned his owner for risking his life. Newspaper reports of the fight anthropomorphised Nero, endowing him with quasi-human emotions. One commentator recounted how, following the second bout, 'the poor beast, lacerated and torn, groaned with pain and heart-rending anguish'.[34] Another writer, the diarist William Hone, singled out eighteen separate 'points of cruelty' in his later summary of the fight, all of which evoked pity for Nero.[35] Had the contest had any scientific

value, it might have been viewed more indulgently, on the grounds that it was contributing to natural knowledge. Nero's long captivity, however, rendered the fight meaningless as 'an experiment in natural history' and relegated it to the level of pure brutality. As the *Liverpool Mercury* remarked, 'this poor beast, born in a cage in which he can scarcely turn himself, labouring under the effects of long and unnatural restraint' could hardly be expected to perform naturally against 'a pack of fierce dogs, in the finest possible condition, both as to training and nourishment'.[36] Indeed, he exhibited 'no more thought or knowledge of fighting than a sheep would have had under the same circumstances'.[37]

A second line of argument placed the focus less squarely on the animal suffering involved, and more on the moral corruption of those who had organised the fight, particularly Wombwell. As owner of the lion, so this reasoning went, Wombwell was responsible for its welfare, and had an obligation to shield it from harm. In failing to do so, he was exposing himself to public anger; worse, he was exposing his immortal soul to eternal damnation. This view was expressed most forcefully by a Quaker, Mr S. Hoare, who, hearing of the proposed lion fight, delivered a personal letter to the showman begging him to cancel the contest. In the letter, Hoare protested that 'it is unmanly – it is mean and cowardly, to torment anything that cannot defend itself, that cannot speak to tell of its pains and sufferings, that cannot ask for mercy'. Forcing dumb animals to engage in combat was an 'evil' to be avoided, as it would merely 'gratify a spirit of cruelty and a spirit of gambling'. Moreover, the showman should spare a thought for his own immortal soul, for God 'who gave life did not give it to be "the sport of cruel man"', and would 'assuredly call man to account for his conduct towards the dumb creatures'. The lion fight was therefore both cruel and un-Christian. Wombwell, in sanctioning it, made himself 'unworthy of being ranked with the rational creatures'.[38]

Alongside these touching concerns for Nero's bodily integrity and Wombwell's spiritual well-being, the Warwick lion fights also raised more worldly worries about public order and decency. The sordid nature of the contests and the raucousness of the crowds who attended them engendered fears of lewd behaviour. Wombwell's prohibitive entry prices somewhat reduced the size of the audience, which in the end 'mainly consisted of the gentlemen resident in the neighbourhood'. Nonetheless, halfway through the first round a 'mob' of locals eager to catch a glimpse of proceedings forced its way 'into the factory at a vulnerable point next to the race course' and 'rushed towards the centre of the area', where it had to be beaten back by menagerie personnel.[39]

Though serious clashes were averted, there remained a wider conviction that watching animal fights brutalised susceptible viewers and could incite human-on-human violence. The *Liverpool Mercury*, one of the most vocal critics of the combat, condemned 'that ferocious and unchristian spirit, which appears to be alarmingly on the increase in this country', and made pointed allusions to William Hogarth's famous 'Rake's Progress', in which the dissipated protagonist 'begins with tormenting dogs, cats and inferior animals and ends his career by the murder of a fellow creature'.[40] The *Morning Post* reported that 'several well-dressed females witnessed the exhibition from the upper apartment of the factory' – hardly a lady-like way to spend a Saturday night.[41]

The Warwick lion fights also need to be seen within the context of a growing revulsion against blood sports in the early-nineteenth century, which focused as much on their social evils as upon the suffering of the animals involved. Bull-baiting, cock-fighting and dog-fighting were all condemned for their association with drinking, gambling and violence. Consequently, campaigns to suppress such practices focused heavily on the moral implications for spectators, who were routinely characterised as 'ruffians'. Though the well-being of animals was a concern for those involved in these campaigns, the reform of the bloodthirsty lower classes was often the primary social goal, with the result that those forms of animal abuse that actively threatened the public peace received the most hostile attention. As one RSPCA member remarked in 1850, looking back on the anti-blood sport crusades of previous decades: 'The object of the Society was not only to prevent cruelty being exercised towards animals, but also to obviate the brutalising effects which must necessarily arise from such wanton exhibitions'.[42] Reaction to the Warwick lion fights therefore showed early stirrings of compassion for animals, but was concentrated predominantly on public morality and public order. The combats appear, moreover, to have directly influenced contemporary parliamentary debates on the subject, one MP, Colonel Wood, citing the 'brutal scene which took place at a lion fight in Warwickshire' as his prime reason for supporting a bill to ban bull- and bear-baiting.[43]

Domestic abuse?

Despite the furore occasioned by the Warwick lion fight there were relatively few prosecutions of menagerists by the RSPCA in the nineteenth century. The Society's focus lay elsewhere, predominantly with the abuse of draught animals, farm creatures and, to a lesser extent, cats and dogs. When charges were made against showmen, these often related to the

horses employed to pull caravans around the country rather than their exotic inmates. In 1872, for instance, three men from Manders' menagerie were convicted of 'cruelly ill-treating three horses by using them for the purpose of drawing caravans while in an unfit state to be worked'.[44]

Though court cases involving exotic animals were not the norm, those that did occur received extensive press coverage on account of their novelty. Two of the most high profile took place at the start of the 1870s, one spanning 1869 and 1870, and the other occurring in 1874. Both concerning live performances in travelling menageries, these two cases shared many features and resulted in the same outcome: failure for the RSPCA. Despite the lack of convictions, however, these scandals nicely illustrate changing public attitudes towards the exhibition of exotic animals in Britain, and reflect contemporary notions of 'civilisation' and national identity. Both also had significant implications for the legal status of exotic beasts, serving to clarify the law as well as to highlight individual abuses.

The first of our two cases concerned the longstanding practice of feeding snakes live prey. Centred specifically on the fate of a small grey rabbit, who suffered a grisly death in James Edmonds' show in full view of the paying public, the case was heard at Liverpool Police Court on Tuesday December 28, 1869. It was conceived largely as a test case by the RSPCA, the aim of which was to ascertain the limits of the current animal cruelty legislation.

The Liverpool hearing opened with a statement from the prosecution, who were keen to establish the cruelty of the exhibition. Solicitor Charles Pemberton, representing the RSPCA, described in graphic detail how the rabbit had been placed in the serpents' den alive, whereupon one of the reptiles immediately 'coiled itself round the rabbit and sucked it', making it squeal 'very piercingly'. When the snake released the rabbit, one of its eyes had been extracted and 'its face was all bloody'. Worse, instead of immediately killing the animal, the snake subjected it to 'torture' for a further three-quarters of an hour, causing it visible pain.[45]

The prosecution persuaded the magistrate that considerable cruelty had occurred. Their case foundered, however, on two more nebulous issues: reptilian dietary preferences and the scope of the current animal cruelty legislation. The former issue, which the RSPCA had anticipated, concerned whether or not snakes could survive on the flesh of dead animals alone, or whether they required their dinner to be still warm and breathing when they ate it. The Society claimed that live prey was unnecessary, and that freshly killed rabbits would do just as well.[46] Menagerist James Edmonds disagreed, arguing that while such a diet

might suffice to keep sickly reptiles 'a little longer in existence', it was inadequate for snakes 'in full health and vigour (as mine are)', and would shorten their lives. In support of this point, Edmonds invoked the authority of 'Frank Buckland, Esq; – Bartlett, Esq, of the Zoological Gardens, Regent's Park, London; and Charles Jamrach, Esq., of London, all noted naturalists'.[47]

The issue of legal jurisdiction was even more thorny and revolved around whether the rabbit in question could legitimately be classed as a 'domestic animal' – the only type of animal covered in the Animal Cruelty Act of 1835. The prosecution emphasised the tameness of the rabbit, one witness, Mr Harvey asserting that the animal mutilated in Edmonds' show was most certainly 'a tame one'. The defence refuted this, pointing out that the definition of 'domestic' could hardly 'be stretched so far as to cover the rabbits of our woods and fields'. Weighing up the evidence, magistrate Mr Mansfield reluctantly agreed, dismissing the case.[48] The feeding of live prey to snakes, he concluded, 'may be an odious exhibition' but it did not 'come within the statute'.[49] Legal definitions, rather than reported facts, thus proved the downfall of the RSPCA's prosecution.

It was a similar story in November 1874, when the RSPCA prosecuted menagerist Harriet Edmonds and her employee Frederick Hewitt for mistreating the company's pack of hyenas. Appearing at Leeds Borough Police Court, the Society, represented by prosecution lawyer Mr Ferns, charged the defendants with 'wanton, wicked and excessive cruelty for the purposes of pecuniary profit'. Hewitt was accused of lashing the hyenas with 'a heavy whip' and forcing them to jump through a fiery hoop, 'saturated with naptha and then lighted', during which act 'many of the poor animals got severely burned, some on the back and some on the chest'. All of the beasts were in a poor state, and some of them 'suffered so much they were unable to do what was required of them'. Ferns conjured a graphic picture of the hyenas' injuries, describing how 'in several places the hair was singed off them' leaving 'raw wounds … from which blood oozed'.

To substantiate its allegations of mistreatment, the RSPCA summoned several witnesses to the stand. The first, Inspector Peet, recounted how he saw the keeper, Hewitt, 'flog' the hyenas 'repeatedly', reducing them to such a state of abject terror that 'many of the spectators cried "Shame"'. The second, a veterinary surgeon named Mr Ellis, testified that he had accompanied Peet to the exhibition in order to judge the cruelty for himself. Ellis stated that the hyenas 'were sometimes lashed and singed on the raw flesh of old wounds, and must have suffered excruciating

agony'. He refuted the defence's suggestion that these wounds could have been sustained through fighting amongst the animals, asserting that they were clearly burns, some of which had been 'covered over with something white like chalk' to expedite healing. Two more witnesses corroborated these observations.[50]

Though the cruelty charge was persuasively established, a debate ensued as to whether hyenas could be regarded as 'domestic' animals, and thus whether they were protected under the terms of the current Animal Cruelty Act. According to the official wording, the Act covered 'any horse, mare, gelding, bull, ox, cow, heifer, steer and pig or any other domestic animal', though, influenced in part by the Warwick lion fight, it did explicitly outlaw 'the baiting or fighting' of 'any bull bear, badger, dog or other animal (whether of domestic or wild Nature or kind)'.[51] The defence claimed that the hyenas did not qualify for protection, since 'if you asked anybody who understood the English language, and who was not a lawyer, what was a domestic animal, the answer would not include a lion, or a panther or a hyena'. The prosecution contended, however, that menagerie inmates did fall within the purview of the existing legislation, for according to their reading of it, the Act should be taken to encompass 'any domestic animal, whether of the kind of species particularly enumerated in clause 20 or of any kind of species whatever, whether quadruped or otherwise'. As precedents, the RSPCA cited a recent ruling that a game cock was a domestic animal and the case of 'an elephant which was driven through the streets with a sore foot' – the Gotham affair. The Society reasoned, moreover, that 'the hyenas in question, from the nature of their use and training, as well as from the fact of their captivity, might now be legally regarded as domestic animals', since they were 'deprived of their freedom, shut in from their usual mode of life and dependent entirely upon their owner and keeper for their food'.

Assessing the merits of both arguments, magistrate Mr Bruce decided, ultimately, that classing hyenas as domestic animals was a step too far, and, for that reason, exonerated Hewitt and Edmonds. Moved by the reports of the prosecution witnesses, nonetheless, Bruce made it clear that he was only dismissing the case on a technicality, for he was certain the actions of the defendants contravened the spirit of the law, if not its precise wording. As he explained, when the Animal Cruelty Act was instituted, 'the idea of a hyena leaping through blazing hoops was not then thought of', so no clause was inserted to prohibit it. The absence of specific legislation did not make the spectacle in any way acceptable, however, and it was the magistrate's view that 'such treatment of the

poor animals ought not to be allowed in a good, well conducted menagerie'. When Mrs Edmonds' son suggested that the level of abuse had been exaggerated, Mr Bruce rejected this, ordering him to suppress 'these disgusting exhibitions' immediately in the interests of animal welfare and public decency. Bruce admitted his own powerlessness to stop the abuse, but hoped that 'if [the cruelty] is not discontinued ... the common sense of the people will discourage it, or ... the Legislature will interfere in the matter'. The law, he suggested, was lagging behind public feelings when it came to the proper treatment of animals.[52]

The two cases detailed above both received coverage in the local press and beyond. The debate they generated functioned as a barometer for contemporary attitudes towards animal rights and revealed the issues at stake when wild beasts were abused in public. Some of these related directly to the suffering of the animals, while others were more concerned with the impact that seeing such suffering would have upon human beings. The snake feeding and hyena beating scandals also highlighted the limitations of the current animal cruelty legislation at a time when the RSPCA was pushing for its extension to encompass Britain's wild animals and birds, the latter under threat from the 'prevailing cruel fashion' for ornamenting ladies' hats with the wings of wrens and robins.[53]

Firstly, as with the Warwick lion fight, there was concern that witnessing scenes of brutality would engender similarly violent tendencies amongst the masses. The *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, siding with the RSPCA, condemned the snake feeding incident as a cruel and sensationalist practice, designed specifically to gratify 'the taste of the public', who unfortunately 'find horrors more attractive than simple feeding'.[54] The RSPCA's periodical *The Animal World* had equally harsh words to say about the abuse of the hyenas, remarking that it was 'a sad condition of things to be going on in the midst of Christians – but sadder still when Christian parents send their children to these menageries for amusement'.[55] There was a particular fear, as this statement makes clear, that children would see such horrors and be corrupted by them. There was equally a sense that cruel spectacles were out of place in menageries, which were, in other respects, ideal venues for education (see Chapter 5).

Related to this latter point, there was also an explicit association made between cruelty to animals and belonging to a barbarous age, a barbarous nation or a barbarous class. Magistrate Mr Bruce drew attention to the class-based nature of animal abuse when he juxtaposed the brutality of Edmonds's hyena performances with the more sedate and genteel

pleasures of the zoological garden – 'Imagine such a thing going on upon Sundays at the Zoological collection in Regent's Park!'[56] The *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, taking a slightly different tack, painted the public feeding of live prey to snakes as a national aberration, equating it with 'the barbarities of the Roman Amphitheatre', and Spanish bull-fighting, widely regarded as cruel in contemporary Britain. In making these comparisons, commentators insinuated that menageries and their patrons demeaned themselves by sanctioning or witnessing such sordid spectacles, exposing even the most cultured members of the human race as but 'savages slightly veneered'.[57]

For all the fears of public depravity, the cases of the snake feeding and the hyena beating also suggest that public expectations of menageries were changing, and that certain practices were no longer seen as acceptable. It is, of course, hard to estimate how widespread such sentiments were; they may have been confined to the educated elite (who still, it should be noted, visited travelling animal shows in this period), and may not have extended to the less cultured masses. Nonetheless, there is evidence that *some* aspects of travelling shows that had previously gone uncontested were, by the second half of the nineteenth century, starting to attract criticism. There are also records of members of the public expressing opposition to blatant animal abuse and being willing, where necessary, either to testify for the RSPCA in court or to address letters on the subject to local newspapers. In the case of the battered hyenas, for example, spectators cried 'Shame' during the performances, while one man wrote a long letter to the *Leeds Mercury* commiserating with the 'wretched brutes'.[58] Inspired by the same 'diabolical' scandal, another contemporary complained in a letter to *The Animal World* that 'keeping wild animals for performance' was 'one of the worst' forms of cruelty, owing to 'the horrible tortures inflicted in order to make them understand what is required of them'.[59] A third individual, S. Monro, contacted the *Penny Illustrated Paper* in 1884 to condemn multiple incidences of cruelty, including the case of an elephant that was 'stabbed ... in the trunk' with a pitchfork.[60] Such references to ordinary menagerie patrons reacting with revulsion to particularly blatant instances of mistreatment imply that excessive violence in menageries would no longer be tolerated. As *The Animal World* observed in 1881, 'public opinion' was increasingly sensitive to the ill-treatment of wild creatures, with the result that 'when wild animals are tortured wantonly or thoughtlessly there is a general voice heard of condemnation throughout the country'.[61]

This apparent shift in attitudes had implications not only for the judicial system, but also for the showmen themselves, several of whom

made a concerted effort to suppress – or at least conceal – acts of cruelty. Day and Rayner, owners of the footsore elephant were, as we have seen, anxious to stress their compassion for the animal when summoned to court on abuse charges.[62] More calculatingly – and under less duress – fellow showman William Manders capitalised on the tribulations of his rival Edmonds in the snake feeding controversy to publicise his own superior welfare practices, sending an open letter to the *Manchester Times* in which he stated that 'I never resort to this barbarous practice, but feed [my snakes] on fresh meat – it must be fresh – and not only do they live, but thrive wonderfully'.[63] This latter interjection was doubtless a cynical publicity stunt, and may or may not have reflected the actual feeding regime in the menagerie (Edmonds unsurprisingly claimed that it did not). What it does suggest, however, is that menagerists needed to be in tune with a public that was growing increasingly hostile to scenes of abuse and cruelty, reforming their shows (or at least their propaganda) accordingly.

Finally, of course, the two cases outlined above exposed a legal loophole regarding wild animals, which the RSPCA lobbied to change. Both the rabbit and the hyenas were denied protection under the law because they did not appear to qualify as 'domestic' animals. As a result, showmen – while they might promise to act otherwise – were able to continue abusing these creatures without the risk of legal interference. The RSPCA, keen to avoid further travesties of justice, made a concerted effort to amend the law, and succeeded in 1875 in getting a hearing in Parliament.[64] Its efforts appear to have had some impact, for after this the definition of 'domestic' was sometimes interpreted more inclusively, preventing showmen from invoking non-domesticity as a get-out clause. In 1877, for instance, when lion tamer William Nichols was charged with wounding a camel in the eye with a pitchfork after it 'threw some froth from its mouth on his clothes', magistrate Mr Travis at Hull Police Court dismissed the defendant's suggestion that the animal did not come 'within the meaning of the Act', fining Nichols '10s and costs'.[65] In 1880 when the RSPCA prosecuted Ledger Delmonico at Derby Borough Police Court for making hyenas jump through a hoop 'enveloped in flame', magistrates likewise accepted the Society's contention that animals 'retained in captivity and deprived of liberty' should be considered domestic, fining Delmonico £5.[66] The 1870s therefore witnessed significant debate over the legal status of menagerie inmates, triggered, seemingly, by growing public compassion and reflected in the pages of *The Animal World*, which featured a steady stream of letters on the subject, and, in 1876, published a series

of articles on 'the practice of capturing, caging, importing and keeping animals of a wild nature under conditions unfavourable to their health and happiness'.[67] The shift in approach that resulted, however, appears to have been more about judicial interpretation than new legislation, for only in the year 1900 were 'wild' and 'captive' animals formally protected by law, and only in 1925 was a law passed specifically to regulate the treatment of performing animals.[68] Until then, despite the successes cited, the RSPCA continued to face difficulties in convicting abusers of menagerie animals and definitions of 'wild' and 'domestic' remained unresolved. As late as 1884, when the Society charged lion tamer Hezekiah Moscow of the East London Aquarium with beating four bears, local magistrate Mr Hannay dismissed the case, arriving at the by now familiar conclusion that 'the statute did not regard a bear as a domestic animal'.[69]

Poor dear Jumbo!

So far, all our case studies have focused on travelling menageries. Zoological gardens also presented their share of animal welfare issues, however, if in a slightly different register, and the final case in this chapter illuminates some of these. Serving a more genteel clientele than menageries, and more orientated towards research and education than spectacle (at least in theory), zoological gardens did not pose the same threats to social order as touring shows and were less inclined to feature flagrant acts of animal abuse – as Mr Bruce rightly pointed out, the directors of London Zoo were unlikely to make their hyenas jump through burning hoops. The absence of any such obvious brutality, however, rather than dispelling all concerns for animal welfare, shifted the focus onto the wider philosophical issue of captivity and its effects. More reflective visitors commented on the smallness of some dens, and the apparent distress of their occupants. Though few worried about the brutal methods of catching animals (Chapter 4), which were hidden from public view, some did express reservations about keeping them in captivity, where their suffering was visible.[70] Writer Leigh Hunt came away from London Zoo in 1836 feeling 'more melancholy than comfortable' at seeing animals deprived of their liberty.[71] Another anonymous zoo-goer, inspired, so he claimed, by 'a visit to the Zoological Gardens' in Bristol, composed a poem entitled 'To a Caged Eagle', in which he lamented the fate of the tethered bird of prey and asked 'who will not sigh / Thee coop'd and chain'd to see?'[72] Both writers attempted to place themselves in the position of the animals, imbuing them with human

sentiments and expressing disquiet at their emotional state rather than their physical well-being.

Part of the reason zoo animals aroused more tender and personalised feelings than menagerie inmates was because they occupied the status of communal pets. People might visit zoological gardens on multiple occasions and see the same animal. This familiarity heightened sympathy for the creature should it be perceived to be suffering. Though such sympathy usually remained within reasonable bounds, finding its natural outlet in a few poetic outpourings, a contemplative article or a strongly-worded letter, in our final case compassion for one particular beast assumed unprecedented proportions, engrossing the entire nation and filling column after column of newsprint for a six-week period in 1882. This was the well-documented story of Jumbo the elephant, whose sale to the American circus entrepreneur P.T. Barnum generated a nationwide outcry.

Jumbo was an African elephant at the Gardens of the Zoological Society. Caught by Arab hunters in Abyssinia in 1861 when he was just a calf, he was sold to the Italian animal dealer Lorenzo Casanova, who in turn sold him to the Parisian Jardin des Plantes. After being exhibited for several years in Paris, Jumbo was given to the London Zoo in exchange for a rhinoceros. He soon established himself as a firm favourite with the British public, spending much of his time walking round the zoo with excited children on his back.[73]

In 1882 the American showman P.T. Barnum approached the Zoological Society and asked whether it might be willing to sell Jumbo. Normally the Society would have been reluctant to part with such a celebrated animal. By 1882, however, Jumbo was approaching the age at which male elephants become dangerous in captivity, so Barnum's proposal was given due consideration. The Society offered to sell Jumbo for £2,000. Barnum accepted the offer, sending agents over to London to collect his purchase. The American was confident that he'd found his next zoological sensation. The Society was equally happy with the arrangement, pleased to be rid of a beast that threatened to be a liability, and hopeful that Jumbo's violent tendencies might be easier to contain in a travelling circus, where 'much more scope can be given to the muscular power of the animal'.[74]

Under normal circumstances, the matter would have rested there, for the sale of a zoo animal was not an unusual occurrence. On this occasion, however, the proposed sale of Jumbo mushroomed almost overnight into a national cause célèbre. There was a loud public outcry against the decision to deport the giant elephant, whom many people viewed as a 'quiet

pet animal'.[75] There was anger, too, that the Zoological Society had sold the elephant to Barnum, thereby degrading London Zoo from a 'place for the study of natural history' to 'an exchange for dealing with speculative showmen and caravan owners'.[76] The upshot was a truly national animal welfare case with ample opportunity for contemplation, pathos and more than a dash of absurdity. Patriotism and a snobbish disgust at the Zoo's 'ungracious materialism' in selling Jumbo to a brash American circus owner were undoubtedly major causes of public anger, as several historians have argued.[77] An underlying current of compassion – hard at times to distinguish from a rather mawkish sentimentalism – may nonetheless be detected in the popular and press reaction to the elephant's departure, suggesting that animal welfare was seen, at the very least, as an important justification for keeping Jumbo in London.

Above all, what set the Jumbo saga apart from earlier animal welfare cases was the sheer volume of public outrage it generated. Supporters manifested their solidarity with Jumbo in every conceivable way, compiling petitions against his deportation and flocking to the Zoo to bid their hero a final farewell. A group of ladies convened a meeting at the gardens to protest against Jumbo's departure.[78] Mr W.E. Milliken wrote to the *Morning Post* to propose the establishment of a 'Jumbo Redemption Fund', the proceeds of which would be used to reimburse Barnum for his purchase of the elephant.[79] People sent plaintive letters to Dr Sclater, Mr Bartlett and the RSPCA, begging for Jumbo's retention in London and accusing his 'dastardly' owners of having 'no instincts above those of the slave dealer'.[80] Large crowds congregated daily at the gardens to see their huge friend for the last time; according to one report, 'the Zoological Gardens were visited by 3,615 persons' on Wednesday 1 March 1882, 'against 502 on the corresponding Wednesday [the previous] year'.[81] To ease Jumbo's pain and demonstrate their own compassion, zoo visitors also regaled the elephant with copious cakes and pastries, either delivering these delicacies in person (Figure 6.1) or sending them in the post. An elderly lady brought Jumbo 'grapes ... raisins, apples, oranges, cakes, biscuits and sweets' and wondered if he might enjoy 'a nice leg of mutton'.[82] Another female – 'one who rode on your back as a child' – forwarded Jumbo a generous slice of her wedding cake. This delicacy had symbolic resonance, since Jumbo himself was about to be separated from his 'little wife', the female elephant Alice. 'May you enjoy my wedding cake', read the accompanying letter, 'and never have to part from your Alice'.[83]

On a more serious level, Jumbo's most proactive supporters sought to put a stop to his deportation by mounting a legal challenge to his

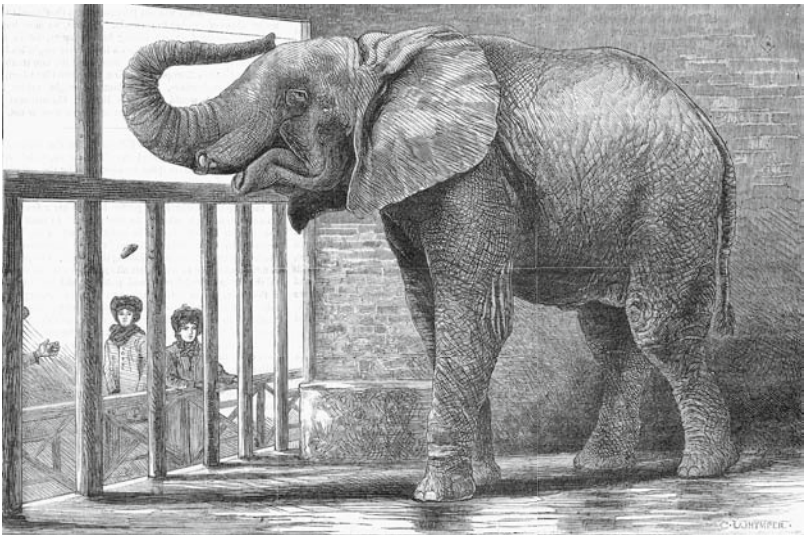


Figure 6.1 'Jumbo, the big African elephant at the Zoological Gardens, recently purchased by Mr Barnum', *The Graphic*, 25 February 1882

removal from the gardens. Bankrolled by financial contributions from well-wishers, a hearing was convened on 7 March 1882 before Mr Justice Chitty with the aim of securing an injunction against the elephant's deportation. The prosecution argued that Jumbo's sale was illegal, since the Council of the Zoological Society did not have the right to dispose of an animal without the consent of all the fellows. The Council could, if necessary, destroy a dangerous animal – and the jury was still out as to whether or not Jumbo belonged in this category – but it had no right to sell such a beast. Moreover, in dispensing with Jumbo for monetary gain, the Council was violating the express aims of the Zoological Society, which were to foster 'the advancement of zoology and animal physiology' and to introduce 'new and curious subjects of the animal kingdom' to the country. African elephants were still a novelty in Europe at this time, and Jumbo, said to be the biggest of those in captivity, should not therefore be sold.

The defence countered all of these claims, insisting that the Council of the Zoological Society *did* have the right to sell and exchange animals if it so wished. Philip Sclater, Secretary to the Society, and Abraham Bartlett, Superintendent of the Zoological Gardens, both testified that it was standard procedure to sell or exchange duplicate animals without first consulting all of the Society Fellows. Such a step would be highly

impractical and would paralyse the efficient workings of the institution. Sclater stated that 'a young male Indian elephant' had previously been sold by the Zoological Society in 1874 for £450 without generating the slightest opposition. He also remarked that while he had received 'an enormous number of letters' in favour of Jumbo's retention, these were 'mostly from women and children', with only 'perhaps a dozen' emanating from Fellows, one of whom later apologised for making 'such a fool of himself'. Bartlett denied that African elephants like Jumbo were rare in Europe, estimating that there were currently around thirty throughout the continent. He assured the Judge that Jumbo was indeed dangerous, for only his keeper, Matthew Scott, was able to control him. Mr Justice Chitty, weighing up the evidence, found for the defence, permitting Jumbo's removal to go ahead.[84]

Jumbo defended

This, then, is how the Jumbo case was resolved. To understand its wider implications, however, we must look in more detail at the specific objections raised to his departure and situate these within our existing narrative of animal cruelty. What arguments did Jumbo's supporters use to oppose his deportation? How did these build on existing conceptions of animal welfare?

Firstly, several of Jumbo's supporters challenged the contention that he was dangerous. Countering the perception of Jumbo as a violent beast, pro-Jumbo commentators suggested either that the elephant had exhibited no symptoms of rage to date, or that, were he to do so, such manias would be temporary, and could be contained. Speaking at the anti-deportation hearing, Matthew Berkeley Hill denied that Jumbo had a 'bad temper' and stated, in any case, that 'the dangerous period or condition of "must" is shown by discharges which, in the case of dangerous elephants, give the keepers ample opportunities of putting them under restraint'.[85] Another expert witness, Colonel Hartsborne, noted that in India male elephants did periodically become violent. This condition only occurred once every four or five years, however, and could be effectively controlled by 'chaining them to a tree for three or four months'.[86] Talk of Jumbo's dangerous behaviour had therefore been greatly exaggerated.

A second batch of supporters conceded that Jumbo was subject to fits of irritability, but contended, nonetheless, that this did not justify the decision to sell him. Instead of surrendering Jumbo to Barnum, these commentators argued, the Zoological Society should take measures

to improve the elephant's living conditions in Britain, expanding his enclosure and strengthening his house. Sir Samuel Baker, a vocal proponent of this view, suggested that, in order to tranquillise Jumbo, the Zoological Society should commit the necessary funds to reinforcing his accommodation, thereby providing the elephant 'with a lunatic asylum of sufficient strength during those hours when the evil spirit is upon him'. As Jumbo matured, he might well also have to relinquish his role as a carrier of children, so as to avoid any accident. This should not necessitate his removal, however, for, as Baker wryly observed 'the lions and tigers are interesting specimens to the public, although they ... would certainly be unfitted for carrying children, except as inside passengers'.[87] Another supporter of Jumbo, signing himself only 'M.A', concurred with Sir Samuel that Jumbo could, with the right precautions, be safely accommodated at the Zoo, though he proposed a rather different solution. Lack of space, it appeared, was the main reason for selling the elephant. 'M.A' therefore advocated giving to Jumbo 'some of the disproportionate space now given up to the (not so edifying) carnivora – in particular that portion of the grounds assigned to those useless monsters the boa constrictors and other serpents maintained, as they are, only by the sacrifice and torture of living mammals such as rabbits and guinea pigs' (echoes here of the snake-feeding controversy of 1869). 'M.A.' theorised that making this exchange would not only benefit Jumbo but would be good for humanity generally: surely 'all thoughtful persons will agree with my proposition that the less the great mass of a people are accustomed to sights of blood and suffering, and the more they are trained to take pleasure in the ... innocent habits ... of the higher beings ... the better will it be for the nation intellectually, morally and spiritually'.[88]

The second issue around which support for Jumbo coalesced was the question of animal cruelty. On a practical level, concern was expressed about the conditions the elephant would have to endure during the transatlantic crossing to America, and also about the means that would be deployed to keep him in check once he arrived. On a more sentimental level, Jumbo lovers voiced fears for the elephant's emotional well-being, suggesting that he would not only suffer physically during his deportation, but would grieve for the loss of his female companion, Alice. 'M.A' contended that it was the height of cruelty for the Council of the Zoological Society 'to drag the terror-stricken elephant from his affectionate partner and from his accustomed home in Regent's Park, to force him to undergo the inexpressible misery, and something more than misery to him, of the transit by ship across the Atlantic'.[89] Another of Jumbo's fans, W.E. Milliken, remarked that Jumbo showed

'an attachment to his home and companions which is deeply touching, though it does not touch his owners so nearly as the appeal that lies in two thousand pounds'.[90] Misconceived or not, such beliefs, by projecting tender feelings onto Jumbo, humanised his plight and underlined the beast's status as not just *any* elephant, but a named individual capable of a whole spectrum of emotions. A group of ladies visiting the elephant house in the weeks leading up to the Jumbo's departure even believed they 'detected grief upon his very countenance, and thought it wonderful that the animal should seem to have the gift of fore-knowledge as to its doom' (though it subsequently transpired that the beast with which they empathised was not 'Jumbo at all, but ... the Indian elephant').[91]

While it clearly found such reactions tiresome, the Council of the Zoological Society was highly sensitive to the public infatuation with Jumbo, and, like the menagerists in the snake feeding controversy, made every effort to demonstrate its compassion. The Council was not willing to go back on its decision to get rid of Jumbo. Short of keeping the elephant at the Zoo, however, the Society very publicly did everything possible to assuage public fears for his well-being, pandering to contemporary sensibilities and demonstrating awareness that visible cruelty would not be tolerated. To ensure that Jumbo suffered no injury during his removal from the gardens and transportation from the docks, for instance, the Society invited Superintendent of the RSPCA, Mr Tallet, to oversee the procedure and record any abuse.[92] To maximise the elephant's comfort in transit, meanwhile, the Zoo commissioned 'the manufacture, by the Queen's harness makers, of a strong leather tubing' to encase the chains that were to bind the elephant's legs, thereby preventing any painful chafing.[93] These were clearly the acts of a body highly conscious of public opinion and anxious to maintain its reputation as a cultured and respectable establishment. A menagerie keeper might on occasion find himself in trouble with the law for 'beating, kicking etc.' an elephant, but there would be no such brutality in the Zoological Gardens.[94] Consequently, when Jumbo declined to enter the waggon and a number of onlookers urged the beast's devoted keeper, Scott, to hit him, the latter, representing the Society as much as himself, very firmly refused to do so: 'I never struck him and I never will', for 'should he remain in the gardens, my power over him would be gone'.[95]

Perhaps even more interesting than the measures taken by the Zoological Society to minimise Jumbo's suffering in transit was the way in which its members explicitly abjured some of the methods already in existence for controlling dangerous animals, on the grounds that

these would be deemed unacceptable by the British public. This stance suggests that standards of animal welfare varied from nation to nation, and that Britons were seen as more sensitive to the mistreatment of wild beasts than some of their counterparts elsewhere. Speaking at the hearing before Judge Chitty, for example, Mr Bartlett described how 'the plan adopted on the Continent is to place iron spikes round the inside of the building [where an elephant is kept], and the poor animal when he becomes "must" rushes on the spikes and injures himself so much that he often dies'.[96] London Zoo could do the same to keep Jumbo in check, but Bartlett rejected the idea, believing it would not be tolerated. Similarly, in an earlier interview with the *Daily News*, Bartlett described how, in India, 'a fractious animal ... is securely chained and flogged till his excitement abates', or might be subdued with the assistance of a special 'fighting elephant' kept for the purpose. Bartlett appeared to favour this latter technique, proudly flourishing 'a fine photograph of an elephant which was in its day quite a champion in the very useful occupation of taming its own species in India'. The Zoo's superintendent admitted, however, that such a brutal approach could not be taken in Britain, for 'any "taming" of this description ... would, if adopted here, raise such an outcry against the Zoological Society as would compel them to desist'.[97]

Under such circumstances, deportation seemed like the kindest option, and it was largely because the Society could not be seen to physically chastise Jumbo that he had to be sold to Barnum. In sending the elephant to America, however, the worries about Jumbo's welfare were not entirely quieted, for reservations were expressed as to how the beloved beast would be treated there. When Barnum's agent Mr Davis was quizzed as to whether he thought Jumbo would be dangerous in America, he stated that he would not, because 'our plan of operations ... is entirely different from that which exists in this country, or would be allowed here'. Judge Chitty asked whether he was to infer from this that 'Mr Barnum will treat [Jumbo] cruelly'. Davis responded: 'Well Sir that is a question of what you call cruelty (laughter). Your definition of cruelty is very different from that in America'. Davis' comments were perhaps meant somewhat flippantly, but his remarks nonetheless suggest a higher level of sensitivity towards animal cruelty in Britain than elsewhere, or at least a perception of British superiority in animal welfare matters.[98] This point was raised again in 1883, when it was reported that Jumbo had misbehaved in America and received 'a most severe drubbing with thick sticks and elephant goads'. According to the *North-Eastern Daily Gazette*, such a castigation, though merited,

could not have been inflicted in England, 'where the utmost punishment permitted by the *vox populi* [voice of the people] was the flick of a cart whip, which could only tickle the hide of this huge pachyderm'.[99]

Wider implications

If animal welfare was thus central to the debate surrounding Jumbo's future, some additional questions need to be considered. Firstly, why was Jumbo singled out for such particular concern? Secondly, did the Jumbo controversy touch at all on the much broader issue – still contentious today – of the ethics of keeping exotic animals in captivity? Thirdly, as the pro-Jumbo hysteria continued and became in itself a subject for satire and criticism, what arguments were raised against the campaign to save the African elephant, and how was compassion for animals perceived within the wider context of charitable activities?

As far as Jumbo's special status was concerned, two factors seem to have elevated his plight above that of other more anonymous animals: his intimate acquaintance with the British public, and the positive attributes of his species. The former was articulated very clearly in contemporary media. Jumbo's long residence in the gardens meant that several generations had, at some time or another, thrown the majestic beast a bun or ridden around the zoo on his back. This personalised the sense of loss felt at his removal, conjuring nostalgic recollections. One of Jumbo's most ardent aficionados, W.E. Milliken, reflected that 'he has been known to thousands, including myself, from childhood, the gentle, docile playfellow of generations of children'.[100] Another writer, a journalist for the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, enjoined his readers to recall 'with what pride and joy have we climbed the ladder that led to his back'.'He has had many a British bun from my trembling hand', reminisced the journalist, and 'I wonder whether he will take to Boston crackers'.[101]

Jumbo's species also contributed significantly to his popular appeal, for while the sale of a leopard or a deer would probably not have caused any major concern, the loss of an elephant stirred deeper emotions. Elephants had long been perceived as among the noblest and most intelligent of animals by naturalists and their status as 'reasoning' beasts gave rise to some of the claims cited above that Jumbo knew what was happening to him and was capable of attachment to his adoptive home at the Zoo. One letter writer to the *Daily Post* argued explicitly that Jumbo's sensitivity made him worthy of superior treatment, for 'the cruelty likely to be perpetrated against poor Jumbo is intensified

by the fact of the intelligence and tenderness of the elephant character … Surely the intelligence of a creature which has made it the "God of Wisdom" (Ganesha) to the Hindoos should be so far respected by a civilised people as to spare their favourite from the mental agony which may be involved in his removal?'[102] A second critic, a 'military officer', was disgusted that men who had 'reared Jumbo from infancy … could put him under the tender mercies of a showman'. He concluded that if the Zoological Society had stooped to such base commercial depths over Jumbo, it might as well abandon its claims to respectability altogether and start 'breed[ing] animals in their Gardens for vivisectors' – the very nadir of animal brutality.[103]

Did the Jumbo case touch on the ethics of keeping exotic animals in captivity? The answer is, partially, yes, and in this it was relatively novel. Though no one said in as many words that exhibiting wild creatures in zoological gardens was inherently cruel, the evidence given at the hearing to stop Jumbo's removal clearly highlighted the problems associated with keeping male elephants confined in zoological collections, leading some critics to infer that they made unsuitable menagerie residents. Speaking in court, Superintendent Bartlett confessed that male elephants typically became dangerous when they exceeded the age of 20, owing, he thought, to their being 'petted, generally over-fed and under-worked'. As a result, Bartlett believed that all the male elephants held at European zoos in the nineteenth century had ultimately had to be destroyed.[104] Though zoological gardens offered elephants some room to expend their energy, it was nothing compared to the enormous territories they would have roamed in the wild, and it was impossible to control them without a degree of physical force. Sir Samuel Baker, with this in mind, advised the Council of the Zoological Society 'in future purchase to confine their attention to the ladies, and to avoid all gentlemen of the elephant species', which constituted an admission that certain types of animals at least were unsuitable for captivity.[105] Jumbo's case, to this extent, shone a spotlight on the problems associated with keeping elephants in Zoos, and, in the view of the RSPCA, taught Londoners 'more about elephants, their ways, food, proper treatment and chances of survival … than could have been taught to London by the Zoological Gardens in a hundred years'.[106]

Finally, the negative reaction generated as a backlash to 'Jumboism' is interesting to observe, for this touched on the wider issue – still topical today – of how much public attention should be devoted to animal welfare. As the furore over Jumbo's departure grew, some commentators argued that public sympathy for the elephant was excessive, and

ought to be channelled into more worthy causes. The paper *World* satirised the hypocrisy of those individuals 'who pride themselves in refusing a penny to a street beggar' but 'hasten to send cheques to buy Jumbo'.[107] Another observer, 'a Humanitarian', concluded that much of the anguish expressed for Jumbo was 'mere sentimental gush', which distracted contemporaries not only from human misery, but from more routine abuses of animals, specifically the 'everyday torture of those poor rabbits, guinea pigs and birds' fed to snakes by 'the same Society which got rid of the elephant'.[108] The hysterical attentions lavished on a single elephant were deemed unwarranted in a society where human suffering was frequently overlooked and where more endemic forms of animal cruelty went unchallenged. This view prefigures some of the criticism that is today sometimes levelled at the public for favouring animal over human charities or confining their compassion for animals to the most cuddly or iconic species.

Epilogue

Despite the passionate campaign to retain him in England, the Jumbo saga concluded with the elephant's deportation to the USA. The court proceedings finished, Jumbo's keepers, after much coaxing, succeeded in luring the animal into his travelling carriage. Following a few false starts when the wheels became bogged down in soggy ground, and a minor crisis when Jumbo's trunk 'lighted upon a crowbar', Scott and Barnum's keeper William Newman escorted him through the streets of London, where crowds of onlookers serenaded the cortege 'by singing "Rule, Britannia" and other airs'. On arrival at St Katherine's Docks, Jumbo was hoisted on board the steamer the *Assyrian Monarch* with a crane and safely installed in 'the most comfortable part of the vessel, next to the first class saloon and nearly amidships'.[109] The elephant endured the passage to America fairly stoically and was greatly cheered on the third day at sea, when 'the 300 hundred emigrants [on board] visited him, giving him cakes, fruit and bread'.[110] According to one report, Jumbo feasted regularly on 'hay, oats, bread and onions', was occasionally given tobacco by 'mischievous sailors', which 'made him thoughtful and indignant', and quaffed liberal quantities of whiskey, which 'made him affectionate'.[111]

Arriving in New York on 10 April, Jumbo was landed safely and 'drawn up the Broadway in his cage at midnight'. On Sunday 12 April, the elephant was marched through the streets of New York to greet the American people for the first time. Shortly after, he embarked on

a continental tour, stopping in Philadelphia and other cities on the eastern seaboard. To facilitate the transportation of the enormous beast around the country, Barnum constructed 'a special car ... 40ft long by 13ft high'.[112] To maximise public interest in his latest acquisition the showman, 'a past-master in a peculiarly transatlantic art of bunkum', purposefully alluded to the sorrow that had accompanied Jumbo's departure in Britain, distributing publicity pamphlets in which 'the whole British nation, headed by Queen Victoria, is represented as clinging tearfully to Jumbo's tail, vowing that they will never be separated from their Jumbo'.[113] There was talk of returning Jumbo to Britain in November 1882, along with the baby elephant Tom Thumb, but this never happened.[114] The large elephant's career was prematurely curtailed in 1885, when he was hit and killed by a train in Ontario, Canada.

Conclusion

The nineteenth century witnessed significant shifts in human-animal relations and a rise in concern for animal welfare. This shift was not sudden, but occurred in phases, affecting different classes at different rates. The (R)SPCA, the main body promoting and enforcing the better treatment of animals, focused its attention initially on the abuse of cattle and livestock. From the 1830s to the 1850s, the Society attacked working-class sports and practices, such as bull-baiting and the use of dogs to pull carts. Later in the century it moved on to confront the shooting of wild birds, vivisection and (to a limited extent) aristocratic blood sports such as fox and deer hunting. These latter concerns pitted the Society against more educated and powerful offenders, necessitating more careful tactics.[115]

As the focus of the animal welfare movement evolved, so too did the language and philosophical underpinning of the debate. In the first decades of the century, the emphasis of animal protection was very much on the negative human repercussions of animal abuse, and its brutalising tendencies. The SPCA's first Annual Report (1825) thus opened by stressing the 'necessity of checking a disposition too prevalent among the less reflecting minds, towards barbarity in the treatment of the inferior animals', on the grounds that 'such cruelty was not only evil in itself, but tended to degrade and brutalise the character, and to produce acts of violence and outrage in the intercourse of mankind with each other'.[116] By the 1870s, as the antivivisection campaign gained ground, there was more focus on the suffering of animals themselves and their capacity to experience pain.[117] The growing popularity of pet-keeping fuelled

this more emotional relationship with animals, though emotion could, equally, be lavished entirely on the individual pet without extending to the brute creation more widely.[118]

Though they were never the priority of the RSPCA, exotic animals did feature in the welfare debate. Some cases involving exotic species were heard in court. Others provoked direct intervention by the RSPCA and received extended press coverage. The immediate concern of these cases was often quite specific, with a focus on a particular animal or showman. Nonetheless, the most shocking cases were widely reported, and the debates they generated touched on deeper issues about the ethics of baiting, feeding, performing with and confining exotic species.

The four cases analysed in this chapter broadly conform to the overall policy priorities of the (R)SPCA – themselves reflective of the wider climate of public opinion. The lion fights of 1825 stressed the links between violence towards animals and human depravity. The snake feeding and hyena abuse scandals of the early 1870s emphasised the suffering of the animals themselves – though specifically in the context of public performance – and exposed a significant loophole in the animal cruelty legislation. The Jumbo case triggered an extreme outpouring of public emotion and a pet-like intimacy with an individual creature. Not everyone shared these concerns, and, in fact, all of the cases discussed here resulted, at least in the short term, in failure. Together, however, they may be seen as representative of a growth in compassion for animals and a sense that their mistreatment was unacceptable and, increasingly, un-British.

7
Dangerous Frolicking

> The lynx that escaped the other day from a menagerie near Liverpool has not been recovered. It is still, in fact, the *missing lynx*. (*Huddersfield Chronicle*, 15 January 1870)

In April 1836, an unpleasant accident occurred at Wombwell's menagerie, which was then stationed in Carlisle. The victim, a fifty-four-year-old ex-soldier named John Newbolt, had been sauntering around the exhibition for some time, 'inspecting and patting' all the animals, when he arrived at the cage of the tiger and 'had the audacity to take hold of the animal's ear'. 'Not being accustomed to such familiarity', the tiger seized Newbolt's hand, mauling it with its teeth and dragging him into the cage. Wracked with pain, Newbolt screamed loudly. The majority of his fellow spectators, terrified by his cries of alarm, speedily absented themselves from the show, but 'two or three persons having more courage than the rest', seized hold of the wounded man and hauled him from the beast's jaws. Newbolt was taken to hospital, where a surgeon amputated his mangled thumb and forefinger. A few days later he contracted a fever and perished in great agony, his arm and face 'frightfully swollen'. An inquest into the accident heard that the keepers had issued 'repeated warnings' to Newbolt against 'using familiarities with the animals', but that these had been ignored. The coroner returned a verdict of 'accidental death'.[1]

Some thirty years later, in 1866, another similar, though happily less tragic, accident took place in Manders' menagerie when the collection was exhibiting in Preston. On this occasion the victim was a local labourer, visiting the show one Saturday evening after he had been 'indulging in sundry potations'. Feeling merry, and wishing to share his goodwill with the menagerie's inmates, the labourer sidled up to a

cage containing seven lions and clasped the paw of one of the animals, inviting the king of the beasts to 'shake hands, old fellow'. Despite appearing to be 'in a lethargic mood', the lion acceded rather too readily to this request, greeting the man 'more roughly than he had expected'. Soon 'blood oozed profusely' from the hand of the labourer, who was only saved by the timely intervention of a keeper. The *Preston Guardian*, reporting the affair, observed that it 'might have ended somewhat seriously'. It hoped the victim would emerge from his brush with mortality 'a wiser if not a better man'.[2]

The sorry cases of John Newbolt and the labourer from Preston were not isolated incidents, but emblematic of a broader trend of accidents occurring in travelling menageries. Over the course of the nineteenth century, a worrying number of people succumbed to attacks from wild animals. Some of these proved fatal. Others left victims permanently disabled. Yet others caused serious facial disfigurement, like that suffered by the protagonist in the Sherlock Holmes mystery, 'The Veiled Lodger'.[3] Accidents persisted throughout the nineteenth century and occurred all over the country, affecting people of both sexes and of various ages. In the 1870s, for example, 49 different accidents were reported in the press, five of which were fatal, eight of which resulted in the loss of a limb (or, in three cases, a finger), two of which caused broken bones and one of which (an attack by an elephant) left a man 'much affected in his head'.[4] Of the victims, 17 were keepers and the rest spectators, among the latter 13 children, a farmer, a gardener, a miller, the wife of a labourer, a shopkeeper and a journeyman tailor.

This chapter explores the darker side of menageries, considering what happened when a visit to one turned to tragedy. Drawing predominantly on local newspaper reports, which recounted – sometimes in graphic detail – the mishaps that occurred in travelling animal shows, I assess the frequency and severity of accidents involving exotic animals, and look at how contemporaries responded to these tragic or dangerous occurrences. I study the way in which accidents in zoological collections were reported in the press, where coverage ranged in tone from alarmist to comical. I also examine the delicate question of blame, suggesting that self-preservation was very much the order of the day in wild beast shows and the onus placed squarely on the spectator to keep him or herself out of harm's way. Though one might expect news of a serious accident to detract from the popularity of the zoological collection, this does not seem to have been the case, for people continued to go to menageries even in the aftermath of a mauling. If anything, news of a dramatic attack gave a certain lustre to a zoological establishment and

fed the latent voyeurism of spectators, both increasing attendance and encouraging some menagerists to publicise such incidents rather than suppress them; a tiger with a few human scalps to his name enjoyed a certain social cachet and embodied the savage ferocity that people wanted to see from caged animals. Danger and its portrayal thus need to be factored into the picture if we are to understand nineteenth-century encounters with exotic beasts.

Don't joke with elephants!

Most accidents in menageries could be attributed to one of four main follies: drunkenness, over-familiarity with vicious beasts, ill-advised teasing and allowing oneself to stray, or be pushed, within striking distance of animals. Occasionally, as we shall see, keepers were reproved for permitting such accidents to occur through their inattention or negligence. More often, however, blame was placed firmly on the victims themselves for engaging in 'dangerous frolicking'.[5] Certainly few measures were instituted to prevent similar mishaps from occurring in the future – a fact evidenced by the recurrence of the same types of accidents throughout the nineteenth century.

Alcohol was probably the most frequent cause of misadventure in the menagerie. Despite claims that wild beast shows could serve as an antidote to intemperance (Chapter 3), drinking seems to have taken place in or near menageries. Witnesses often testified that the injured or dead party had been 'under the influence' at the time of his accident and menagerists usually agreed, keen to pin the blame on the compromised mental state of the victim. Contemporary newspapers repeatedly alluded to the drunkenness of accident victims, using a colourful range of synonyms to describe their level of inebriation. The unfortunate John Newbolt was reported to be 'not sober' when he fondled a tiger's ears with such tragic results, while a plumber from London who thought it would be a good idea to pull an elephant's tail was described as 'pot valiant'.[6] A Birmingham lady named Grummage who stroked the paw of 'a remarkably fine but ill-tempered lion' had apparently not been 'adhering very strictly to the rules of temperance'.[7]

Drunkenness was often a contributory factor in the second major cause of menagerie accidents: over-familiarity with dangerous animals. Sometimes spurred on, like Miss Grummage, by excessive consumption of alcohol, or sometimes impelled purely by bravado, many spectators felt an irrepressible urge to poke their hands through the bars of cages and to bestow their affections on the handsome inmates.

Unsurprisingly, this irritated the caged beasts, who did not usually appreciate such gestures of affection. It rarely ended happily for the 'poker', who, in the best-case scenario, might receive a nasty fright, and, in the worst, might sustain a life-threatening wound. When, for example, Mr John Martin of Stamford, Lincolnshire, reached inside the den of a tiger at the Mid-Lent fair to 'pat' the animal's 'outstretched foot', the beast mauled his arm, inflicting injuries that subsequently proved fatal.[8] When 'a youth from Durham, while visiting Wombwell's menagerie, laid his hand upon the paw of an African lion, which was protruded beneath the bars', he suffered disfiguring injuries to his head and neck.[9] And when a man unwisely inserted his hand into the bears' cage at Hylton's menagerie in Liverpool, 'with the intention of patting one of the animals on the head', the ungrateful object of his affection grasped hold of his extended limb and 'held it for some time in his mouth', cruelly belying its cuddly appearance.[10] The impulse to stroke a dangling leonine foot was clearly a temptation to be resisted at all costs, no matter how strong the desire, or how benign or somnolent the creature in question appeared to be.

Nor was it just with caged carnivores that such unwelcome intimacy was to be avoided, for other seemingly innocuous animals could also inflict serious injuries, leaving spectators with a painful souvenir of their visit. In 1844, when a journeyman baker from Bath tormented an elephant in Wombwell's menagerie, the beast retaliated by 'grabbing him with his trunk and lifting him in the air'.[11] In 1862, when a keeper offered a male zebra a biscuit at a menagerie in Nottingham, the animal coolly declined the proffered treat and instead 'bit off his forefinger'.[12] In 1872, at Birmingham Whitsuntide Fair, an orang-utan in Day's menagerie bit a man's hand 'so severely that it will bear the marks as long as the owner lives'.[13] And in 1875, when Mrs Robins, 'the wife of a labouring man', approached a male dromedary at the same menagerie in Swaffham and 'smoothed it on the neck', the animal 'struck her with its head and directly seized her by the right arm, completely crushing it, so that Mr Thomas, surgeon, had to amputate it' (Figure 7.1). This last accident was caused in part by the accessibility of the dromedary, which was 'chained up' in the centre of the show within touching distance of spectators.[14]

If simply petting menagerie animals could elicit such unwelcome reactions, consciously assaulting them was hardly likely to go down more favourably. Visitors must have known this, and yet a sizeable minority of menagerie-goers went out of their way to annoy exotic creatures, poking beasts with sticks, knives or needles and contriving

Figure 7.1 'Singular Accident at the Swaffham Menagerie', *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 18 September 1875

all manner of ingenious ways to torment them. The incentive for acting so recklessly lay partly in sheer cruelty and partly in a childish desire to goad motionless or sleeping creatures into action and thereby get one's money's worth from the show. Whatever the precise motivation, the results could be explosive, ranging from stern reprimands in the press to instantaneous vengeance from the animal. When a 'country bumpkin' visiting Hylton's menagerie at the Barnsley Statutes 'pricked the elephant's trunk with a penknife', the beast burst out of his den and 'caught the delinquent by the collar', throwing him violently to the ground.[15]

Such acts of maliciousness were, sadly, not uncommon in touring wild beast shows. If contemporary newspapers are to be believed, they happened on a regular basis, sometimes involving simple prodding, but on other occasions showing a more refined level of cruelty. In Glasgow, for instance, 'a mischievous urchin' at Hylton's menagerie 'after teasing the African lion, punctured his nose with a needle', sending the animal into a pain-induced hysteria.[16] In Mullingar, Ireland, 'one of those

depraved wretches who are often to be found under a more respectable garb than they are entitled to wear, squirted some vinegar ... from a large syringe into the face of the noble lion' in Batty's collection.[17] In Woburn, Bedfordshire, 'a foolish fellow' took out a pocketknife and assaulted Fairgrieve's elephant Maharajah, 'deliberately plung[ing] one of the blades into the trunk' of the animal, 'which was extended towards the spectators begging for cakes, apples, etc.'[18] In Llanduff, Wales, 'a collier from the hills named Jenkins' committed a similar offence, cutting the lion in Wombwell's collection 'on the foot between the toes' with his penknife.[19] Though most of the perpetrators of such 'ruffianly conduct' were lower-class individuals, this was not always the case, for more privileged patrons could also commit acts of cruelty; the Oxford University students, who, for a lark, threw fireworks into some of the animals' dens at Wombwell's menagerie in 1842 were unlikely to have been of plebeian origins.[20] Nor were the assaults on menagerie inmates always acts of spontaneous thuggery, for some at least show a degree of premeditation; one presumes that the offender at Mullingar did not habitually carry a syringe of vinegar about his person, so must have entered the menagerie with the conscious intention of injuring one of the animals. All this suggests that playing pranks on caged animals was a recurrent vice among menagerie-goers of all classes, albeit one that could result in the direst of consequences.

While actively tormenting wild beasts was clearly asking for trouble, this was not the sole cause of accidents. Sometimes people were assaulted by tetchy inmates through no fault of their own, but simply because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. Menagerie visitors could expose themselves to danger unwittingly by straying too near to the dens of predators, or unconsciously wandering within reach of outstretched claws. This sort of blunder was easily made when the boundaries between humans and animals were insufficiently demarcated, or when visitors were distracted by the antics of other creatures.

The case of Sophia Moorshead epitomises this type of accident. Visiting Edmonds' menagerie at Leeds in 1864, Sophia, who was thirteen years old, somehow managed to get 'within the ropes in front of the lion's and tiger's cages'. One of the lionesses, seeing the girl within paw range, shot out a foot and seized her by the arm, trying to haul her into the den. The child's shrieks attracted the attention of other spectators, many of whom were watching the performance of the elephants in the centre of the exhibition. The establishment's lion tamer ran to her rescue, beating the lioness on the feet until she released her victim. Sophia was immediately conveyed to the hospital, where it was 'ascertained that she was

very much injured about the side of the head and one of her arms'. The following morning the surgeon described her condition as 'very bad'.[21]

If simply walking of one's own volition into the vicinity of ferocious beasts was dangerous, being pushed within striking distance of caged animals by clumsy or restive fellow visitors was perhaps even more frightening. This kind of accident was not uncommon. The popularity of wild beast shows in the nineteenth century meant that they were often crowded, with a large number of people clustered in a relatively confined space. Spectators could consequently find themselves elbowed up close to the cages against their will by the throngs of onlookers attempting to reach the most exciting exhibits. This was dangerous and alarming, as a man named Drakeford discovered when he 'was pushed too near the unprotected cage of the lioness' and, 'in the twinkling of an eye', seized by the animal, sustaining 'four or five gashes on the back and shoulder'.[22]

Even worse were the manifold accidents involving children. Enticed into the menagerie by the alluring prospect of seeing rare creatures, youngsters were often unaccompanied by adults and not adequately supervised. This exposed them to attacks from caged beasts, either because they were playing recklessly in the vicinity of dangerous predators or because they found themselves pushed within striking distance of the animals by the pressure of the crowd. A child named Pepper was attacked by a chained leopard in Wombwell's menagerie in Nottingham, only escaping when one of the musicians struck 'the animal a heavy blow on the head with a bugle'.[23] Less fortunate was 'a boy of thirteen named [George] Stanton', 'son of a crate-maker', who irritated an elephant in Wombwell's menagerie by feeding it stones instead of nuts. Stanton was lifted up and 'crushed' by the animal, suffering 'severe internal hurts' from which he later died.[24] Accidents of this nature occurred throughout the nineteenth century, suggesting that little was done to increase security.

Intoxication, unwelcome petting and straying too close to dangerous animals were the most frequent causes of accidents in menageries. They were not, however, the only sources of injuries and deaths at these establishments. Even if a spectator attended the show while in full possession of his senses, refrained from stroking any dangling paws and kept well back from the bars of the cages, his safety was still not entirely guaranteed, for he might come to grief in an event affecting the menagerie as a whole. Though such incidents were comparatively rare, they did happen from time to time, and could result in fatalities. They could arise from structural failings in the construction of the show, from freak weather

conditions and, perhaps most commonly, from the hysteria of fellow menagerie-goers.

Firstly, there were the dangers associated with gathering a large number of people in a relatively confined space. Menageries, as we have seen, were incredibly popular, despite their inherent hazards. Consequently, when they exhibited at a town they often attracted hundreds of people to visit at any one time, causing the large tent that contained the animals to become very congested. Diarist William Hone recounted with displeasure how he had had to elbow his way through a 'sweltering press' of bodies at Wombwell's show in 1825 in order to view the lion Nero.[25] Overcrowding in itself could be an issue, since it could result in individuals being inadvertently pushed too close to the dens. Real problems, however, occurred when, owing perhaps to the rage of one of the animals, or perhaps to false reports of escaped beasts, spectators wished to make a swift exodus from the exhibition. In such situations, the panic to reach the exits could result in some very serious injuries as the slower or weaker members of the audience were knocked down and trampled by their stronger comrades.

One particularly nasty accident of this nature occurred at Redruth in Cornwall in 1846, when, during the evening performance, a rumour started that 'a lion had broke [*sic*] loose'. The exhibition was crowded at the time, and the news circulated rapidly. Soon people were flocking out of the menagerie in a disorderly stampede, spewing from the tent 'in the wildest terror' and even bursting through the sides of the show in their desperation to get away. Some spectators congregated in the street, communicating the alarming news to those waiting outside the menagerie. Others flew in terror 'into private houses, up stairs [*sic*] and into all imaginable places, expecting the wild beasts were at their heels'. In the event, no one was seized by a marauding lion, for the beast was, in fact, safely confined in his den. Many spectators did, however, sustain severe crush injuries in the pandemonium, and it was necessary to summon the town's surgeons to resuscitate the fallen. 'The old and feeble were thrown down and trampled on' as spectators fought their way to the exits. 'A great many persons…were taken up almost insensible, their eyes suffused with blood' and their ribs and collarbones fractured.[26]

A second danger – though a less common one – emanated from the structure of the menagerie itself. This usually consisted of several caravans covered over with a canvas roof. The dens containing the animals were stationed around the edges of the show and there was a walkway in the centre, for the visitors to pass up and down. While this was in most cases a perfectly secure arrangement, the temporary nature of travelling menageries could compromise the stability of the venue. Menageries

appear to have been particularly vulnerable to adverse weather conditions, since high winds could be channelled under the canvas and drag the carriages over, exposing visitors to the hazards of falling beams or toppling wagons. The fact that many shows were heated by an open stove to keep the animals alive and the visitors comfortable further compounded the danger, for there was a risk that, should wood or cloth fall on the grate, the whole show might go up in flames.

A very grave weather-related accident occurred in Holywell, North Wales, in 1859. Mrs Wombwell's menagerie had only just arrived in town, in early April, and a considerable number of visitors had entered the tent to see the animals. Suddenly, at about 8.30 in the evening, 'a great gush of wind blew under the canvas attached to the inner side of the caravans and caused three of them to upset', bringing 'the canvas roof, tent poles and lights' crashing down on top of the spectators. About twenty people found themselves trapped beneath the capsized wagons, four of whom perished in the accident – one of the keepers, Mr McBane and three local youths, 'Edward Jones, 11, David Oxford, 13, and John Hughes, 13'.[27] Fortunately, none of the lions, tigers or bears in the overturned cages escaped, or the tragedy might have been even worse. It was lucky, too, that a few people had the presence of mind to hold up the canvas and prevent it from falling into the open stove, for without their timely intervention, 'nothing could have saved the whole affair from being reduced to ashes'.[28]

A lion out!

Menagerie animals were clearly capable of doing plenty of damage from within their cages. But how much more carnage could they cause if they got out? Transporting exotic beasts around the country inevitably carried with it the inherent danger that they might escape and run amok in British towns and villages. Considering the impressive numbers of creatures on show in nineteenth-century Britain, such occurrences were comparatively rare. Nonetheless, escapes were not unheard of, and a couple of these incidents figured in contemporary newspapers almost every year, be it 'two large polar bears' on the loose in Liverpool or an orang-utan 'at large' in Renfrewshire.[29] There seems reason, moreover, to assume that this was an underestimate, for some creatures would not be immediately missed, while others would probably be recaptured before their exploits became newsworthy.

Caged beasts were particularly liable to escape during transit. As caravans processed along roads, the jolting of the wheels could loosen insecure bolts, providing an exit for restive inmates. Menagerie wagons could

also tip over or collide with other vehicles, dislodging panels and setting wild beasts at liberty. In 1833 a caravan en route from Ballymahon to Longford in Ireland overturned and released a tiger, which devoured a raccoon, a chamois, a monkey and 'several yards of a boa constrictor' before menagerie personnel put a stop to its murderous spree.[30] In 1874, as Edmonds' menagerie was crossing the moors north of Sheffield, the van containing the rhinoceros 'was partly upset, to the great terror and alarm of the ponderous creature inside' and the equal alarm of his keepers, who only prevented an escape by feeding the animal with bread, 'calming his fears by filling his stomach'.[31]

While menageries were especially vulnerable to breakouts when they were on the road, this was not the sole occasion for escapes. Animals sometimes got out within the confines of the menagerie itself, while a show was going on. Though this in some ways minimised the danger they posed, since it facilitated their swift recapture, it maximised the terror of the spectators, who were understandably frightened to find rampaging animals in their midst. In Coventry when a wolf broke loose in Wright's menagerie, 'the appearance of such an unsociable creature at large ... excited no small commotion and terror amongst those who were still lingering at the exhibition'.[32] In Rochdale, when a tapir burst out of his cage in Wombwell's menagerie and 'walked majestically forth into the space assigned for the visitors', the sight of the 'huge and savage-looking animal' caused considerable hysteria among spectators, who took some time to believe the keepers' assurances that the beast was harmless.[33] Figure 7.2 shows a lion that escaped from a menagerie in Birmingham in 1889 and hid for some time in the city's sewers (Figure 7.2).[34]

Animals that escaped while the menagerie was open for business were at least contained relatively easily, and their absence immediately noted. When beasts absconded in the night, however, it was a different story. If keepers noticed that one of their charges had got out, there generally ensued a frantic hunt for the fugitive. If, on the other hand, the absence of a wild beast was not promptly detected, the escapee could roam the streets or fields for some considerable time until he was spotted by – or attacked – some unwitting member of the public. Some escaped menagerie animals were probably never retaken, particularly those that got loose in rural areas.

A particularly exhilarating nocturnal chase occurred in Belper, Derbyshire, in 1867, when three gorillas escaped from Manders' menagerie. On this occasion, the trio of simian fugitives made their escape by tearing up the floor of their caravan. The animals initially congregated on the canvas roof of the menagerie 'evidently holding high council as to

Figure 7.2 'The Escape of Lions from the Menagerie at Birmingham', *The Graphic*, 5 October 1889

their future proceedings'. When one of the keepers fired a blank cartridge into the air to dislodge them, they uttered 'a horrid yell' and capered off along the Derby road, bounding 'Indian file' along the street pursued by Mr Manders and his employees. After much exertion, the three apes were successfully apprehended, though not before the showman had contemplated shooting the last of the runaways. The *Liverpool Courier*, reporting on the 'exciting chase', considered it 'a matter of congratulation that all these stirring scenes were enacted without the slightest injury to any person'.[35]

The three gorillas were quickly missed and hunted down. Often, however, some time elapsed before a creature's escape was noticed by keepers, and in these cases unsuspecting members of the public would have the dubious pleasure of meeting roving beasts in the streets. In 1857 a drink seller at a fair in Lincoln was somewhat perturbed to see a loose leopard sauntering into his booth and elected, wisely, to make himself scarce, leaving the 'spotted gentleman to help himself cost free'.[36] In Preston in 1865, P.C. Bentham noticed 'a strange looking object standing near the Methodist Free Church', which, on closer inspection turned out to be a large black bear. The animal was taken to the police station, where it was reclaimed by a keeper from Whittington's menagerie.[37]

Though all of these incidents were relatively benign, this was not always the case, for escaped wild beasts could pose a real threat to those in the vicinity. Sometimes other animals were their victims, as when

a 'huge lioness' from Ballard's menagerie killed the lead horse of the Exeter mail coach near Salisbury in 1816.[38] On occasion, however, humans were attacked, suffering grievous injuries or even death. In 1826 a leopard dashed out of its cage in Mold, near Chester, and 'fastened upon a youth about 15 years of age', mutilating his face and leaving him in 'such a state as to leave no hope but that death would speedily terminate his misery'.[39] In 1839, a bear that had escaped from its caravan in Ipswich 'pounced upon a woman named Harvestone ... lacerat[ing] her throat in a shocking manner'.[40] Such outcomes were uncommon – most escaped animals kept their distance from any people they might see and made for the fields. When attacks on humans did occur, however, they made a big impression, leading, in some cases, to legal intervention.

Probably the most notorious attack by a loose wild animal occurred in 1857, when a tigress escaped from a cattle van while en route from London's docks to Charles Jamrach's establishment and skulked down Ratcliff Highway, throwing the neighbourhood 'into a state of terrible consternation'. As the animal made her way down the road, she was approached by a young boy who unwisely 'began patting her', thinking she was a big dog. The tigress responded by seizing the boy by the shoulders. She would probably have killed the child had Jamrach not personally come to his rescue, hitting the beast on the head with a crowbar and wrestling the child from its grasp. Though reportedly 'frightfully mangled', the boy did eventually recover from his physical injuries, but was greatly traumatised by the affair, betraying disturbing symptoms of psychological imbalance. The *Birmingham Daily Post* reported that he subsequently conducted himself 'in a strange manner' at school and bit his own brother in bed in the belief that he was the tiger, eccentricities which the paper attributed to his terrifying assault.[41]

Gross negligence or dangerous frolicking?

Given the profusion of accidents in menageries, the issue of blame naturally arose. When a member of the public was savaged by a wild beast, who was held responsible? Did the authorities prosecute menagerists for failing to ensure the safety of their patrons, or was the victim seen to have brought his unhappy fate upon himself through his own stupidity? Did victims or their families claim compensation for their sufferings? If so, were they successful?

An analysis of contemporary newspapers reveals that itinerant showmen were sometimes blamed for misdemeanours perpetrated by their animals. On a few occasions the authorities actively prosecuted

them for recklessness or negligence. More often, menagerists voluntarily compensated victims for any loss of property or body parts, as when showman Mr Bell made arrangements to ensure that a servant maimed by a lion in Liverpool would 'not be pecuniarily a sufferer by the accident'.[42] Menagerie personnel were more liable to be criticised in cases of escape than for accidents within the menagerie, since the former implied some degree of culpability on the part of keepers while the latter were often seen as partly (if not wholly) the fault of the victim. The escape of a lion in Dartford during a performance was thus considered to have resulted from 'some gross carelessness'.[43] Conversely, when a 'young man' who had been teasing the elephant in Manders' menagerie was lifted up and shaken by the animal, the *Northern Echo* blamed the victim, concluding that it 'served him right'.[44]

On those occasions where menagerists were clearly at fault, contemporaries could subject them to strong censure. Following the mauling of the youth in Mold, for example, the *Macclesfield Courier* was highly critical of the establishment's management, attributing the accident to 'the carelessness of the keepers, or the inadequacy of the security, or both' and condemning the negligence of menagerie personnel, who had only the previous week seen a lion and a bear escape from their show. The *Courier* wholeheartedly condoned the magistrates' decision to banish the menagerie from the county, hoping that this would send a strong message to other showmen. 'These repeated instances of danger, arising from the culpable negligence of those entrusted with the care of wild beasts call loudly for magisterial interference and severe punishment'.[45]

The authorities in London took a similarly dim view when a tiger from Wombwell's premises in the Commercial Road escaped from its den and terrorised local residents, devouring a large dog and badly scratching an Irish coal-whipper. Concerned that such an episode might occur again, perhaps with fatal consequences, magistrate George Frederick Young summoned Wombwell to appear before the bar and charged him with creating 'a public nuisance'. Young ordered Inspector Simmonds of the K division to call on the showman in person 'to caution him and his servants to be more careful in the interim as to the security and proper restraint of the animals'. He extracted a public apology from Wombwell, who said he had dismissed the servant responsible, and warned the showman that he was liable to more serious legal proceedings were another escape to occur.[46]

In both the above cases the menagerie proprietors were rebuked for their misdemeanours, but did not incur any serious penalty, either

custodial or financial. This was probably the typical outcome, even on those few occasions when showmen actually went to court. There were, nevertheless, a handful of cases resulting in a prosecution in which showmen or their underlings were judged culpable for the sufferings of spectators or other innocent parties and compelled to pay damages to the victim. To achieve such a verdict, it was usually necessary to prove both the severity of the sufferer's injuries, either physical or psychological, and the clear responsibility of the defendant for their infliction.

One such case was that of Mr Jamrach's tiger, which, it will be remembered, escaped en route to his premises in Ratcliff Highway and attacked a young boy. The victim's father prosecuted Jamrach for the offence, claiming that his son's injuries had been caused 'through the ... negligence of the defendant's servants'. In court, the prosecution argued that though the boy's wounds had by now, more or less, healed, the accident had transformed him from a 'strong and hearty' lad to a timorous child afflicted by 'nervous fears of a serious character'. He 'was afraid to go about the house at night without a light', would call out to his parents during his sleep 'in tones of terror' and had even started to assault his young brother with whom he shared a bed, 'biting him as if he were the tiger'. Jamrach confessed that the incident was in part his fault, but considered the sum of £10, 'ample compensation for the boy'. The jury disagreed, awarding the victim damages of £60, 'being £50 more than had been paid into the court'.[47]

Another individual to successfully challenge a showman in court was a man from Great Yarmouth by the name of Gillings. A carpenter by trade, Gillings had been 'standing in the place appointed for the spectators', watching the performance of Maccomo, the lion tamer, when a bullet from the African's pistol hit him in the face. Gillings collapsed, and was carried out of the show, where the surgeon Mr Stafford extracted a substance 'which turned out to be paper' from his eye. The artisan's life teetered in the balance for some days and he was obliged to remain 'in a darkened room for nine months', during which time he forfeited the money he would have earned at work. Ultimately, Gillings lost the sight of the afflicted eye, which he believed would greatly compromise the quality and speed of his workmanship. He also racked up medical bills of £8, 12d, in addition to charges for nursing. Defending himself against accusations of negligence, Manders protested that the lion taming performance was usually perfectly safe, but that on this occasion a lion had lurched at Maccomo in a threatening manner, causing the pistol to go off at an unfavourable angle. 'Being expostulated with for permitting such a dangerous performance, he said he regretted being obliged to

have it, but it took with the public, and it had been carried on for four *years* without an accident happening'. The jury sided with the plaintiff, who was awarded the substantial sum of £150 for suffering, expenses and lost earnings.[48]

While menagerists were sometimes fined for accidents caused by their animals, this was the exception rather than the rule. If dangerous beasts escaped and assaulted blameless passers-by, the culpability of the showman was clear and a successful case might be brought against him. When animals attacked reckless or drunken persons inside the menagerie itself, however, the responsibility of the proprietor was less direct, and the tendency seems to have been to write the incident off as a tragic misfortune. More often than not, indeed, contemporary commentators explicitly absolved menagerie staff of any blame for such accidents and actually praised their efforts to rescue the victim, whose own foolishness was seen as the cause of his woes. When a boy viewing Gilman's menagerie in Arbroath 'incautiously laid hold of one of the lion's cubs' and had his shoulder dislocated by their mother, *The Times* averred that 'no fault ... can be attributed to any of the keepers'.[49] Similarly, when a 'black serpent' being exhibited by keeper John Chadwick 'made a sudden spring at Mr Stevenson Wells' and 'knocked off his hat', the victim actually gave Chadwick 'a present' for his 'praiseworthy exertions' in saving his life, rather than suing the man for negligence.[50] The presumption was, in general, that spectators had a duty to look out for their own safety when visiting a menagerie and that it was not the owner's obligation to police their every action. If keepers spotted someone doing something foolish it was incumbent on them to issue a warning. If visitors flouted this advice, however, they must bear responsibility for the consequences, no matter how grave these might be. This approach was in keeping with prevailing nineteenth-century attitudes towards personal responsibility, when 'injured parties were supposed to accept the world as they found it' and prosecutions for negligence were relatively infrequent. As J.H. Baker has remarked: 'If a railway passenger was injured by tripping over something in a dimly lit station, he might be regarded by the light of cold logic as the author of his own misfortune ... If it was too dark for the man to see, he had no business to go there. If it was light enough for him to see, he had no business to tumble over the obstacle'.[51]

The case of a Liverpool man mauled by a black tiger epitomises this stance. Visiting Wombwell's menagerie in January 1830, the individual in question, 'a labouring man in a state of intoxication', approached too close to the den of the animal and foolishly 'placed his arm at the bottom of the cage, within the reach of its inmate', which immediately

'lacerated' his hand 'very severely'.[52] The *Liverpool Mercury*, reporting on the accident, broadly exonerated menagerie personnel, on the grounds that the victim had been inebriated. The paper suggested tentatively that 'it would be well', in future, 'if drunken persons were not allowed to enter the menagerie, and better still if a railing were placed in front of the dens so as to prevent the spectators from approaching too near the more savage animals'. It concluded, however, that it was 'rather too much to expect the spirited and enterprising proprietor to take care of those who will not take care of themselves, but choose to run themselves in danger's way'.[53] In a somewhat tetchy statement to the *Mercury*, Wombwell supported this view, denying any responsibility for the accident and even taking exception to the gentle suggestion that he increase his security; there was, he claimed, already a partition about six feet high between the spectators and the dens, 'which the blockhead leaped over and ran to the den of the black tiger and thrust his hand in before anyone could reach him to pull him away'.[54] The onus was thus on visitors to conduct themselves sensibly in wild beast shows, not on showmen to shield them from hazards of their own making.[55]

Sometimes, of course, menagerists showed a little more sympathy for spectators who came to grief in their establishments and actually covered the costs of their medical treatment. When they did so, however, their actions were interpreted by contemporaries as a laudable gesture of goodwill on the part of the showman, and not in any way as an admission of guilt. It was made quite clear that the victims had precipitated their own misfortunes. The menagerists, in contributing towards their care, were merely exhibiting a civic virtue above and beyond what the law required of them.

Take, for instance, the case of Joseph Mountney. Visiting Wright's menagerie at Belper in 1843, Mountney, a young groom for the tea dealers Messrs. Bell and Co., 'foolishly entered the tiger's den' behind the keeper and sustained a wound which 'will, if all goes well, be several weeks in healing, and probably render the young man unsound for life'. Upon learning of the incident, Mr Wright arranged for the transferral of Mountney to the Derby Infirmary. He very generously 'lodged 1*l* in the hands of the young man's master, to cover expenses and pay his wages whilst unable to attend his employment'. He also made 'another present to the sufferer' to see him through his convalescence. The *Derby Mercury*, chronicling the affair, completely absolved the showman of any blame for the accident, contending, on the contrary, that Wright had 'behaved in the most honourable manner', taking care of Mountney when he had no obligation to do so.[56]

Manders acted with similar generosity when a youth by the name of Henry Crowther was gored in the hip by an elephant in his menagerie. Crowther, like Mountney, had engineered his own downfall, for the 'silly fellow' had been teasing the animal before it attacked him. Manders, however, despite not being to blame for the accident, organised the victim's transportation to a nearby surgery and 'generously promised to pay the medical expenses', as well as covering his cab ride home. The *Manchester Examiner* considered the showman's conduct in the matter to have been exceptionally decent, for he had assisted Crowther financially 'notwithstanding that [he] brought upon himself the injuries that he has sustained'. In this case, as in that of Mountney, compensating patrons for wounds inflicted in a menagerie signified a charitable heart; it did not betray a guilty conscience.[57]

Very occasionally, when showmen were not so compassionate and the law disinclined to act, victims or their families might take matters into their own hands. The most widely reported case of this kind occurred at Emly, County Tipperary, in 1871, when a four-year-old girl, 'daughter of a publican named Fleming', visited Whittington's menagerie on the evening of October 19 and 'thrust her hand into a leopard's cage, which the animal grasped and mutilated fearfully'.[58] Upon news of the accident getting out, 'a party of 40 or 50 men' from the village descended on the menagerie and vented their anger on the proprietor. Their first act – presented in the papers as a frenzy of Catholic superstition – was to shoot the offending jaguar and seize its corpse, which they subsequently dissected 'for the purpose of recovering the portions of flesh which had been eaten, in order that they might be buried in consecrated ground'. The men then assaulted Whittington, dealing him 'a severe blow on the head' when he attempted to remonstrate with them. After that, they vandalised the caravans, pelting them with 'as many as 1,200 stones' before the local police arrived on the scene.[59]

The legal response to the Emly violence was interesting. The incident did result in a court case, as a number of other menagerie accidents had done. In this instance, however, Whittington was the plaintiff, not the defendant, and the debate was over whether the taxpayers of Tipperary should compensate the showman for the damage done to his establishment by the raging mob. Whittington, who thought they should, sued the county 'for a sum of £140 as compensation for damages sustained by [his family] from the shooting of a leopard, the destruction of oil paintings and the breaking of their caravan'. The opposing lawyers refuted this, arguing that the claim was excessive and that, in any case, the killer of the animal should pay, not the ratepayers. The court, after hearing

evidence from both sides, awarded the showman 'the full amount sought for'.

In the course of the hearing, Whittington was questioned about the accident to the little girl that triggered the violence, but he denied culpability, boasting that 'the cage in which the jaguar had been confined was strong enough to secure twenty such animals'. That the child had been mutilated, Whittington did not contest. The fault, however, lay with the victim herself, for she had voluntarily inserted her hand into the cage and, as the showmen phrased it, 'if a fire is kindled, and you put your hand into the middle of it, you must expect to be burned'. This statement – reminiscent of Wombwell's earlier response to the 'blockhead' from Liverpool – apparently satisfied the magistrates, who accepted that the showman had done all that could reasonably be expected of him to ensure the safety of customers. Nothing was said about compensation for the injured girl or her family.

Unsurprisingly, the coverage of the Emly affair in contemporary newspapers contained a strong anti-Irish streak. The attack upon Whittington was treated with a mixture of ridicule and contempt, and the members of the mob were caricatured as primitive, pitchfork-wielding yokels, spoiling for a fight and spurred on by Catholic superstition. Whittington himself, judging from his reported utterances in court, had little time for the people of Emly, a place he stigmatised as 'a disgrace to any country'. The showman's comment, moreover, that, at the time when the child was injured by the jaguar, his three keepers were 'doing all they could with the savages' – meaning the spectators, not the wild beasts – 'risking their lives among cannibals', conjures all the contemporary stereotypes of the Irish as, in effect, white colonial subjects. The men of Emly, of course, may have understood their actions rather differently, perhaps as an act of community solidarity and compassion for the injured girl. We cannot know their true motives since we can only see these refracted through the unsympathetic eyes of men distant from them in class and – as the latter would have seen themselves – race. What is clear, nonetheless – and what goes for reactions to many other menagerie accidents as well – is that polite opinion, the legal system and the press supported the showman, placing the damage to his property above the maiming of an Irish child.[60]

Violence and voyeurism

If menagerie accidents rarely resulted in prosecutions or compensation, one might imagine that they would nonetheless negatively affect

the appeal of the show by putting off prospective customers. There is, however, no real evidence for this. True, in the immediate aftermath of an attack, or when rumours circulated that some wild beast was on the loose, menagerie-goers did evacuate the show with unseemly haste. Once the hazard had gone, however, most spectators were induced to return, while news of an accident on one day does not appear to have deterred visitors on the next. On the contrary, contemporary testimony suggests that reports of an accident could actually increase attendances at a wild beast show, since they titillated the public and gave free publicity to the exhibition, sometimes attracting people to the show for the explicit purpose of seeing a notorious or murderous animal. A young lion that escaped from its cage at Stow Fair 'became an object of more than ordinary interest' following its successful recapture.[61] More sinisterly, after Wombwell's female lion tamer was killed by a tiger at Chatham in 1850 (Chapter 8), the menagerie was reportedly visited by 'hundreds of persons … attracted thither by the interest the late melancholy accident has occasioned'.[62] There seems to have been something here of the ghoulish voyeurism that drew people to witness public hangings or to collect relics of criminal deeds, complex emotional responses that emanated from a blend of fear and morbid curiosity.[63]

That an accident or escape was not necessarily bad for business is confirmed by the fact that showmen themselves alluded explicitly to such events in their publicity, seemingly unconcerned that this would deter visitors from coming. One might have thought that menagerists would want to play down violent accidents and hope that people would forget they had happened. Instead of hushing up escapes and attacks, however, showmen often did the reverse, making direct reference to these accidents in their advertisements and assuming – as it turned out, correctly – that a tiger with a little blood on his paws was a draw rather than a liability. Manders, for example, stated openly in a newspaper advertisement that the 'three monster full grown gorillas' on view in his establishment were 'those whose escape at Belper, Derbyshire, on May 26th, created such a profound sensation throughout the entire Kingdom'.[64] His rival, Edmonds, cynically purchased 'the poor dear tiger' that mauled the boy in Ratcliff Highway for the princely sum of £400, advertising his infamous acquisition as 'the tiger that swallowed the child in Ratcliff-Highway'.[65] Menagerists thus took pains to remind prospective visitors of accidents that might otherwise have faded from their memories and purposely acquired animals known for their chequered pasts.

The above cases also highlight another significant aspect of menagerie accidents; namely, that the animals that maimed or killed members of the public were rarely destroyed to prevent them from committing further atrocities. Today, zoo animals and domestic pets that kill a person are routinely euthanized in the interests of health and safety. More curiously, in the Medieval and Early Modern period, it was relatively common for animals that killed a human being to be tried for their crimes in courts of law and, if found guilty, executed by the public hangman – a process that has been interpreted as a means of enacting vengeance and restoring the divinely ordained hierarchy of species.[66] In nineteenth-century Britain the legally ordered destruction of animals seems very rarely to have happened, for while a few particularly unmanageable animals were slaughtered, such as the elephant Chunee, executed at Exeter 'Change in 1826, or the Liverpool elephant Rajah (Chapter 2), most creatures that perpetrated attacks were permitted to continue touring with the menagerists who owned them, some even going on to re-offend in other locales without inviting serious retribution; a lion in Batty's menagerie that mutilated a small child in Forres, for instance, was reputed to have bitten off a boy's arm in Wick just a few weeks earlier.[67] The fact that such beasts went unpunished implies that their lives were often seen as worth more than those of their often lower-class victims, at a time when human life was held relatively cheap. It evidences a different conception of personal responsibility, in which greater onus was placed on the individual to look after himself than on the state to shield him from harm. It also evidences the wider legal status of animals in the nineteenth century, when an owner could be fined for the misbehaviour of his property, but the animal itself was deemed innocent, on the grounds that, as an irrational subject, it could not be said to have acted with intent.[68] This law, known as 'deodand', can be seen in operation in a number of cases related to menageries; the jury at the inquest into John Newbolt's death imposed 'a deodand of 1s on the tiger' – a somewhat derisory amount given that it had killed a man.[69]

Fact, fiction and fabrication

We have seen some of the sorts of accident that could happen in menageries, and considered the public response to them. Given that the main source of information on these incidents is the local press, however, it is worth looking in a little more detail at how they were reported, and examining the close relationship between showmen and the media.

What kind of language did newspapers use to describe menagerie accidents and escapes, and what does this reveal about their attitude towards both menagerists and the public? Was the information published in newspapers always accurate, or could it be exaggerated and distorted? In whose interest might it be to disseminate false reports?

Let us begin by thinking about the typical presentation of menagerie mishaps. Looking at multiple press reports on these incidents, we can see that their tone oscillated between the alarmist and the comical, by turns shocking, amusing and titillating readers. Some accounts clearly revelled in the danger of menagerie accidents, maximising the tension with graphic and emotive language and imitating the stylistic conventions of contemporary murder stories, which likewise wallowed in horror and gore.[70] Other reports were more sober in tone, reproving either the recklessness of the victim (especially if drunk) or the lax security of menagerie personnel. Still others exploited the inherent comedic potential of roving elephants or rampaging rhinoceroses, mocking the hapless protagonists for their foolishness or naivety – the individual who pricked an elephant at Barnsley was caricatured unflatteringly as 'a country bumpkin'. The tone adopted was, of course, dictated to a large extent by the seriousness of the incident in question – multiple deaths lent themselves less well to comedic treatment than did fugitive elephants – and by the status of the victim, as in the case above or that of the child in Emly. It also depended to some degree on the nature of the publication, some newspapers (e.g. the *Illustrated Police News*) being more given to sensationalism than others (e.g. *The Times*).

A couple of examples illustrate these differing reporting strategies. Firstly, let us consider a report in the *Illustrated Police News*, a Saturday penny newspaper (founded in 1864), which specialised in the popular genre of 'true' crime. Published in June 1868, this article sensationalised the chaos that ensued when an elephant broke loose at Cross and Rice's menagerie in the Agricultural Hall, Islington, and released four lions from their cage. The textual portion of the report, situated inside the paper, recounted the affair with graphic and alarmist language, describing how the wild beasts engaged in 'deadly combat', drawing large crowds with their 'terrific roarings'. The lurid image that accompanied this description, positioned on the front page of the publication, shows a frenzied lion sinking its teeth into the rump of the elephant and another lion dangling powerlessly from its trunk, its face contorted in a diabolic grimace. To the right of the picture, two policemen wrestle with a third lion; to the left, a keeper bludgeons a fourth with a long stick, and in the centre, a frightened female flees

in terror. The tone of the whole piece – visual and verbal – was breathless and racy, and the scene one of palpable carnage. This was entirely in keeping with the typical content and style of the *Illustrated Police News*, which, in the same issue, featured a 'fatal accident', a 'supposed murder' and a 'murderous outrage'.[71]

By contrast, a report in the *Nottingham Journal* on the escape of an elephant from Day's menagerie adopted a much more laconic tone, and consciously maximised the inherent comedy of the incident, which pitted two policemen against the fugitive beast. Under the jocular title 'Policemen Nonplussed: Too Big to be Arrested', the *Journal* presented the episode as a humorous romp. The paper anthropomorphised the elephant, which it described, at one point, as 'jogging' along 'at the double, like a Robin Hood' (very apt for Nottingham), and it satirised the clownish behaviour of one of the officers, PC Marshall, who cowered timorously behind a pillar, fearful that the animal might charge at him. Finishing with a flourish, the *Journal* related the most slapstick element of the affair, when the elephant accosted a 'sleepy watchman', slumbering by the Exchange pump, and, 'with a snort both loud and long, almost deluged the poor fellow with the unsavoury contents of its trunk'. Where the *Illustrated Police News* sought to shock its readers with a weekly dose of blood and gore, the *Journal* played up the comedy of an elephant-policeman encounter, portraying the saga as a farcical pantomime chase.[72]

The stories in the *Illustrated Police News* and the *Nottingham Journal*, though given their own particular spins, both appear to have been based on genuine events. This was not invariably the case, however. Menagerie accidents made good copy. They seem to have helped sell a paper, or, somewhat surprisingly, the menagerie itself, and they often merited lengthy and lurid reports, as in the *Illustrated Police News*. For this reason, it was sometimes in the interests of both journalists and showmen to fabricate accidents or escapes, preying on the credulity of the reading public. Because provincial papers typically re-printed material verbatim from one another or from their London counterparts, these stories quickly gained national coverage, eliciting outraged responses when those recycling them realised they had been duped.[73]

A revealing example of this process appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* on 24 February 1834, when the paper re-published a report taken from the *Northampton Herald* on the escape of a lion and a tiger from Wombwell's menagerie. According to the article, the caravan containing the lion Wallace and a tigress was being driven into the yard of the White Lion Inn in the town of Worksworth when it had the misfortune

to collide with 'a carriage laden with timber', sustaining severe damage. 'Every pains possible were taken to prevent the beasts obtaining their liberty, by repairing the van as well as circumstances would permit, and by closing the gates of the yard'. During the night, however, the caged beasts succeeded in escaping into nearby fields, where they promptly embarked on a killing spree, the tigress slaughtering three sheep and the lion killing a cow before the resulting commotion brought keepers and local residents running to the scene. The keepers attempted to recapture the escaped animals, but it was not until four human lives had been lost that their depredations were brought to an end. The lion, injured by a musket shot, rushed at a man and 'unfortunately' killed him, before being cornered in a cattle shed. The tigress eluded her pursuers even longer, attacking a party of workers en route to a local brickworks and mutilating a woman and two children. She was eventually restrained, but only after she had been 'so dangerously wounded as not to be expected to recover'. An inquest held the following day recorded a verdict of 'accidental death', imposing a £10 fine on the menagerie's owner. In keeping with the rather lenient stance we have seen in other menagerie accidents, the *Northampton Herald* absolved Mr Wombwell personally of any blame for the carnage, reporting that he had expressed 'the utmost concern' for the tragedy (as well he might!), and had kindly offered to cover the cost of the victims' funerals.[74]

National and provincial papers re-printed the story of the Worksworth massacre almost verbatim over the following few days, most of them copying it from the *Morning Chronicle*. Relatively soon, however, doubts started to surface as to its veracity. Could such a heinous incident really have occurred in rural Northamptonshire? Was there actually any evidence to corroborate the details reported by the *Northampton Herald*, or was this a hoax in decidedly poor taste?

The *Liverpool Mercury* was the first provincial newspaper to scent foul play. Referring to the story on 28 February, four days after it first appeared in the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Mercury's* correspondent suspected that it was a fraud, the brainchild of 'the penny-a-line manufacturers of dreadful accidents, cases of hydrophobia and heart-rending tales of woe'. The *Mercury* interviewed a local source, an employee of the Liverpool Zoological Gardens, who purported to have 'heard the account to which we have adverted hawked through the streets four or five weeks since'. It also managed to speak to a man from Wombwell's own company, who claimed he had 'never heard anything from headquarters on the subject'. Armed with this information, the *Mercury* dismissed the story as 'a hoax'. The gruesome tragedy was merely the 'clever device of some

craving genius to raise a few shillings, for we presume fifty or sixty lines of such rare intelligence would produce so much'.[75]

Upon reading this sceptical interpretation of events, other papers also began to entertain doubts as to the veracity of their too-eagerly published tales of woe, sheepishly retracting their earlier reports. The *Examiner* admitted apologetically that 'the paragraph relating to the escape of a lion and tiger from Wombwell's menagerie, which was copied into *The Examiner* last week ... turns out to be a complete fabrication'.[76] The *Shrewsbury Chronicle* likewise withdrew the lion story, alleging that 'two months ago this same horrible tale was printed verbatim in this town and sold for a penny to each of the simpletons who bought it'.[77] The *Morning Chronicle*, which initially printed the report, apologised to its readers for propagating an untruth. Peeved, no doubt, at having been made an accessory to a hoax, the *Chronicle* minimised its own apparent gullibility by claiming that such frauds were relatively frequent. 'These annual disasters are extremely profitable to the travelling showman', averred the paper, 'and if our readers refer to the different provincial journals, they will find similar accidents of seeming horror reported at least once a year'.[78]

Though the Worksworth lion outrage never happened, it did, in fact, reveal much about the occurrence and reporting of accidents involving menagerie inmates. Firstly, it shows the popular appeal of such stories, which were evidently lapped up greedily by both journalists and the public, and which were sufficiently lucrative to be worth faking. Secondly, it illustrates the internal workings of the contemporary provincial press, which often re-printed one report in many newspapers (sometimes without acknowledgement). Thirdly, the scam suggests that showmen themselves were implicated in fabricating stories, presumably on the assumption that all publicity was good publicity – the *Caledonian Mercury* wondered, pointedly, 'whose too *Well*-peopled *Womb* it is that teems with such a brood of hoaxes'.[79] Fourthly, and perhaps most interestingly, the hoax implies that actual menagerie accidents were relatively common – albeit not quite as horrific as the Worksworth affair – for otherwise the story would not have appeared sufficiently plausible to be published, and would probably not have been re-printed so widely before it was exposed. The Worksworth fraud thus, in its way, attested the comparative frequency of menagerie escapes. It was also typical in showing lenience towards the offending showman.

8
In the Lions' Den

> Van Amburgh had one of his fingers bitten off on Tuesday last at Falmouth, by the lion. He could not perform the following day. Let him beware his head. (*Preston Chronicle*, 13 August 1842)

On Monday 1 November 1841 a singular convoy wended its way through the outskirts of Ipswich. The weather that day was inclement, partaking 'fully of the characteristics of November'. This did not discourage the stalwart inhabitants of the town from venturing out to witness the procession, however, for despite the fog and continuous rainfall 'the lower part of the Woodbridge Road was lined with spectators', all jostling to catch a glimpse of the strangers in their midst. The wait seemed to drag as the minutes ticked by and the rain intensified, but, at length, the crowd's patience was rewarded. Around Scrivener's Corner came a stocky, self-possessed foreigner, driving a carriage drawn by six horses, a 'finer stud', which 'never before were seen in this town'. Behind this young maestro snaked 'a train of caravans, each drawn by four horses', and, bringing up the rear, 'a first rate band' which serenaded the assembled spectators with a series of rousing airs and marches. All that was wanting to render this impressive cavalcade complete was the collection's 'stupendous and beautiful elephant', which, though present in the town, had been obliged to walk from neighbouring Woodbridge during the previous night in order avoid frightening the local horses – a journey it accomplished in less than an hour.

The menagerie arriving in Ipswich that cold autumn morning was that of the famous American lion tamer, Isaac Van Amburgh, who had been touring Britain since 1838. Safely installed in 'a gigantic marquee, pitched upon a piece of waste land in Berners Street', the exhibition opened on Monday afternoon and remained in the town until

Wednesday, during which time Van Amburgh's exhilarating performances 'were distinguished throughout by overflowing auditoriums, including all the fashionables in the neighbourhood'. The collection's giraffe, 'from its graceful appearance, elicited the admiration of the spectators', while the company's elephant endeared itself to visitors by conveying several parties around the ring in an Indian Howdah 'after the fashion of the East'. Most riveting of all, and the centrepiece of the show, were Van Amburgh's own antics in the dens of his big cats, which included putting his head inside the lion's mouth and subjecting a group of tigers to 'that sort of management which is peculiar to himself'. These audacious performances mesmerised 'the almost breathless audience', whose pleasure, as the *Ipswich Journal* noted, 'was often allied to pain'.[1]

Probably the most famous of nineteenth-century lion tamers, Isaac Van Amburgh was in the midst of a grand transatlantic tour that was to influence the evolution of the travelling menagerie. Though not the first keeper to train wild animals, the American was certainly the individual who popularised the practice in Europe, deftly marrying the performance culture of the circus with the curiosity value of the wild beast show. Thanks to his dramatic feats, Van Amburgh received a rapturous reception wherever he travelled, emerging as one of the iconic figures of his age. He soon spawned a horde of imitators, including, at different times, female and non-white performers.

This chapter focuses on one of the most dramatic elements of the exotic animal show: the lion taming act. Beginning with the pioneer, Van Amburgh, the chapter examines the practical and dramatic dynamics of the big cat performance. It considers the ways in which Van Amburgh's American origins mediated his reception in Europe and assesses public responses to different types of performer, from female tamers in the 1840s to 'African' tamers in the 1860s. The chapter also traces growing opposition to lion taming, which some contemporaries regarded as dangerous to the performer, some as abusive towards the animals and others as brutalising for the spectators. Writing in 1881, after a lion in Birmingham attacked his West Indian trainer, *The Animal World* argued that the exhibitions 'ought to be suppressed, because they lead to the systematic … torture of the creatures said to be tamed; sooner or later cause the death or mutilation of the tamer; and invariably tend to the demoralisation of the hundreds of young and ignorant visitors, who are most amused when big animals are punished into sulky obedience or are made to howl with anger'.[2] By turns captivating and controversial, lion taming tapped into wider debates about sensationalism, cruelty and public morality, testing the boundaries of risk and respectability.

The lion of his day

Isaac Van Amburgh was born in Fishkill, New York State, of Dutch American parentage. He honed his lion taming skills in a menagerie called the Zoological Institute of New York and toured the republic extensively with that establishment, 'applauded, appreciated, courted and fêted wherever he appeared'.[3] In 1838 eager to extend his fame to the Old World, Van Amburgh embarked on a lengthy European circuit, performing for several months at Astley's Circus in London and later signing a contract with the Drury Lane Theatre. The American appeared in Paris, to great acclaim, and even travelled to St Petersburg at the express command of Tsar Nicholas I.[4] He then toured the British provinces for several years before returning to the USA in 1845.

Van Amburgh's act was a masterpiece of daring and showmanship designed to exhibit man's mastery over the animal creation. Among other feats, the lion tamer inserted 'his bare arm, moist with blood, into the lion's mouth', introduced a lamb into the predators' enclosure and induced his feline accomplices to bound around the stage at his command, 'standing upon his shoulders, embracing him and lying down at full length beside him'. The great showpiece of the exhibition, and Van Amburgh's trademark, consisted of thrusting his head into the mouth of his largest lion.[5] This trick was achieved predominantly by brute force on the part of the trainer, who kept his co-stars in a state of subjection by the timely application of a crowbar.

A consummate showman, Van Amburgh was immensely popular wherever he went, attracting large audiences and eliciting enthusiastic reviews. In Dublin, the Theatre Royal was 'literally crammed in every corner, so that there were actually some hundreds of persons who could find no better accommodation than mere standing room'.[6] In Paris the theatre was 'every night of his performance ... crowded to the ceiling'.[7] In Leicester 'the Duke of Rutland commanded a morning performance, which was numerously and fashionably attended'.[8] In Penzance 'upwards of £400 were taken at two performances', moving the *North Devon Journal* to describe his 'progress in the west' as nothing less than 'a march of triumph'.[9]

Van Amburgh also enjoyed royal approbation. Queen Victoria, a big fan of his act, patronised his show at Drury Lane on three separate occasions. On her final visit, Her Majesty went behind the scenes with the lion tamer and his lions, watching with interest as 'the beasts in their dens devoured their food (raw beef) with a violent rapacity' and paying her respects to the most diminutive performer, the lamb, 'which

had been washed and furbished up to a snowy degree of cleanliness' for the occasion.[10] The Queen pronounced her satisfaction with the performance and seemingly relished the chance to meet the American in person. As proof of her fascination, she commissioned a portrait of Van Amburgh by the artist Edwin Landseer, in which the lion tamer appeared 'fondling with his animals on the stage of Drury Lane Theatre for the amusement of the Court, who attend as spectators of this interesting scene'.[11]

What was the secret of Van Amburgh's appeal? Of course, in large part, there was no secret. It was not every day that one could see a man put his head in a lion's mouth, and the sheer audacity of such performances assured the American a warm reception on both sides of the Atlantic. That said, there *were* additional elements to Van Amburgh's performance that enhanced its attraction for European viewers. These related to the lion tamer's origins, his dress, physique and self-fashioning. They also related to his selection of particular dramatic modes and themes for his appearances on stage.

Firstly, there were Van Amburgh's American roots. The fact that the lion tamer was a citizen of the United States constituted part of his appeal to European audiences. Van Amburgh's charisma and valour embodied the spirit of the intrepid frontiersman, a character who came, from the American Revolution onwards, to symbolise both political and personal independence in a rapidly urbanising and expanding nation.[12] His purported Native American ancestry, through 'his Indian grandfather, Fangborgon-d'oom' added yet another dimension to his allure, conjuring images of shamanic power and indigenous sagacity. Stories circulated describing how he had learned his skills in the forests of his native New York State, training insects and small mammals as a child before working as a horse breaker in Kentucky.[13] The figure that emerged from these tales was the epitome of the brave pioneer, a man who boldly ventured forth into the untamed wilderness of his continent, undaunted by ferocious wild beasts and forbidding terrain.

A pocket biography in *The Times* typified this perception. Chronicling the lion tamer's origins, the article stated that Van Amburgh emanated from Fishkill, 'a beautiful town on the North of the Indian River', where he was 'a descendent from one of the original Dutch settlers of that state'. The biography expatiated at length on the tamer's robust physique, describing him as 'one of the most athletic men of his size in the world'. It proceeded to document his singular transition from office boy to wild beast keeper, drawing heavily on the stereotype of the pioneering frontiersman. 'When about 15 years of age, with a fine

constitution and a good temper, Van Amburgh left the little village of Fishkill and visited New York', becoming, 'for several years a clerk in the warehouse of a relative'. 'This kind of life not suiting his enterprising spirit', however, 'he packed up and set out on his travels, as every adventurous Yankee or Yankee Dutchman does', ending up an employee of a travelling beast show; a vocation for which his 'fine figure, iron frame and Herculean strength fitted him admirably'.[14]

If part of Van Amburgh's charm lay in the romanticism of his American upbringing, part of it lay also in his ability to assume other stock personae equally congenial to the European public. The raw power of the intrepid frontiersman was synthesised expertly with the feats of classical heroes and the allure and despotism of the Orient. Gladiators, Arabian potentates and stoic explorers graced the lion tamer's repertoire, in which he fused the adventurous spirit of the American West with the mystique and intrigue of the East. Appearing for the first time at Astley's theatre in London, for example, Van Amburgh fashioned himself as 'Mulerius the Roman renegade', who is 'cast into a den' of lions by the Machiavellian Emperor of Pompeii.[15] Debuting in Paris, the American starred in a drama entitled 'the Emir and the Sultana', concocted specially for the occasion and suffused with oriental imagery.[16] Such theatrical selections capitalised on a contemporary appetite for things oriental which was fuelled by panoramas, exhibitions and travel writing, and represented in the theatre by melodramas such as the Adelphi's 'The Elephant of Siam and the Fire Fiend', 'a gorgeous Indian spectacle with splendid scenery, dresses and decorations'.[17]

As well as experimenting with orientalist tropes, Van Amburgh also courted European viewers with representations of overseas exploration and imperial expansion, appearing at one stage in a drama loosely based on the exploits of British explorer Mungo Park. This piece, which opened in Manchester in 1841, re-enacted Park's doomed expedition to find the source of the Niger in West Africa and featured Van Amburgh as an Arab slave named Karfa. The American's human co-stars, 'Park himself (Mr Gray), Sergeant Martyn (Mr Slaiter) and a naturalist named Ganda (Mr Baker)' were the only surviving members of the original party, which had been decimated by disease. His main antagonist was a murderous Moorish chief, 'who had cause to hate Christians' and subjected the Britons to various tortures, most of them involving ferocious big cats.[18] At one point in the action, Van Amburgh is lying next to a bush when 'a small tiger actually dashes, as from a thicket, upon the open stage' and engages him 'in a desperate conflict, to the consternation of the pit visitors and with no apparent satisfaction to

Mungo Park, who, whilst the scene is falling, brushes off as fast as his legs will carry him'.[19] Later in the same production 'the ruthless Moor' orders Karfa to be thrown into a den of lions, which, against all odds, he manages to subdue.[20] Fantastical and melodramatic, such performances combined cultural stereotypes with biblical references and partial historical fact, satisfying contemporary tastes for oriental splendour, scientific martyrdom and clichéd Arabian villainy.

A final ingredient of Van Amburgh's success – and indeed the success of any lion taming act – was his ability to persuade the audience that he was exposed to real danger from his animals while at the same time minimising the actual risk. Part of the thrill of watching a circus act lies in the possibility that something might go wrong, and the belief that what is being attempted is at the very limits of human capability. To convey this impression, a tamer had to ensure that his beasts seemed genuinely ferocious, and his control over them tenuous. If he appeared to have civilised them too completely his act would become boring and the dramatic tension of his performances would be lost.[21]

Van Amburgh's appearances at the Theatre Royal in Dublin epitomise this delicate balance between power and peril. In the main, the American exercised impressive command over his animals, but from time to time the audience got glimpses of their natural character sufficient to keep them on the edge of their seats. According to the local paper, 'scarcely a night passes that some circumstance does not occur in [his] wonderful exhibition which strikes the spectator with sudden terror and alarm'. When this happened (whether scripted or unscripted) Van Amburgh was obliged to intervene and subdue his refractory co-stars, 'his invariable success' always drawing forth 'a burst of applause from the audience, which was in proportion to the spectators' joy after so evident a danger had been surmounted'. Slight lapses in the tamer's control over his animals thus added to the appeal of his performances, maintaining spectators in a state of emotional limbo.[22]

While the American apparently achieved the perfect cocktail of moderated terror to please the people of Dublin, he did not invariably get the balance right. On the contrary, he constantly teetered between charges of recklessness and charlatanism, pushing the boundaries of feline performance too far for his own safety or exerting such complete power over his animals that the authenticity of his achievements was questioned. When Van Amburgh conceived the idea of taking his largest lion up in a hot air balloon in the Vauxhall Gardens, for example, the authorities banned the venture, persuaded that 'if loss of life … occur (without, in this instance, even the shadow of a scientific pretext) it will certainly

entail responsibility of a heavy kind upon all the parties concerned in so absurd an exhibition'.[23] When, conversely, Van Amburgh was injured by one of his animals at Bristol, the *Examiner* intimated that the accident was nothing more than a publicity stunt. 'One of this gentleman's lions', it reported, 'purchased for the Surrey Zoological Gardens, was, on examination, found to have it claws closely cut and its teeth filed!'[24] The line between suspense and suspicion, between magic and madness, was thus a thin one.

Two separate articles in the *Examiner*, written just a month apart, nicely illustrate this conundrum, both criticising the same aspect of Van Amburgh's act, but for contrasting reasons. In the first article, published on 26 August 1838, the paper was largely in awe of the lion tamer, describing his performances as 'extraordinary' and characterising his animals as 'splendid' creatures, the finest of their species in the country. The reviewer objected nonetheless to one element of the show, namely 'the thrusting of his head within the lion's jaws', which he condemned as 'at once a piece of gratuitous impertinence towards the animal, a very disagreeable exhibition for the spectators, and above all a highly hazardous proceeding for the exhibitor'. He expressed the hope that this practice would be discontinued, there having already been 'several cases in which lions have snapped off the heads of persons persisting in this sort of foolish experiment'.[25]

The head thrusting was continued, despite the *Examiner*'s misgivings, and was still going on when the paper appraised Van Amburgh's act for a second time on 30 September. By this point, however the reviewer seemed to have forgotten his concern for the lion tamer's bodily integrity and was complaining, not that the head thrusting trick was too dangerous, but that, if anything, it was not dangerous *enough*! The American's act was still impressive, 'yet the ascendancy he has acquired over animals hitherto considered indomitable is so perfect as to destroy the excitement of spectators very speedily':

> Before he has put his head into the mouths of his lions you feel quite confident of its being left un-tasted, and as often as his large leopard jumps on his shoulders or licks his face, there seems no fear of a scratch remaining to denote any of these sudden changes of temper to which leopards, cats and lions are subject; alas for the poetry of the thing![26]

The novelty and exhilaration of Van Amburgh's act thus quickly wore off – at least for this critic – obliging the lion tamer to devise ever more elaborate scenarios to satisfy public demand.

Imitators and rivals

Van Amburgh's performances spawned many imitators in Europe. From a rare and novel act, lion taming soon emerged as a common feature on the contemporary entertainment scene, taking place in the theatre and at zoological gardens and becoming part of the standard fare in travelling wild beast shows. By 1845, when Van Amburgh auctioned off many of his animals and returned to the United States, most British menageries boasted their own lion tamer, and many Britons would have experienced the lion taming act. As early as 1841, a report on Wombwell's menagerie in Ipswich could say that 'the keeper, as usual, displays his intrepidity in the tigers' dens', suggesting that such feats were now commonplace.[27]

Of all Van Amburgh's rivals, his greatest was probably James Carter, 'a native of Gloucestershire', but 'generally known as an American from the fact of his family having emigrated to that country when [he] was only three years old'. Arriving in Britain in 1839, a year after his famous compatriot, Carter, like Van Amburgh, commenced his continental tour at Astley's in London. The American delighted British audiences with a variety of novel feats, including 'the harnessing of the majestic lion to a triumphal car'.[28] He subsequently 'visited Paris, Russia and other parts of the continent', before performing in Dublin, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester and Newcastle.[29]

While Carter's act comprised 'all the experiments of thrusting his arms and legs into the mouths' of his animals that had characterised Van Amburgh's performances, his method of training his feline co-stars was considered to be more humane. Where Van Amburgh's big cats appeared cowed by fear, Carter's wild beasts submitted to his will without apparent prompting, particularly the largest lion, which seemed 'to manage itself rather than to be managed'.[30] Thanks to this gentler method of training, human actors fraternised with quadruped performers on stage in seeming harmony and the feats of the animals synthesised better with the dramatic content of the play, in this case 'a sort of Egyptian Hindoo Arabian spectacle in which horses, ponies, zebras, ostriches and crocodiles … are paraded in endless variety up and down the stage'. As one London paper reported, 'the audience are separated from the lions by a network of strong iron wire, but the *dramatis personae* – i.e. the bipeds of the theatre – mingle on the stage with their four-footed associates in perfect harmony … .[T]hough the lamb does not actually lie down with the lion, there would be no danger in a scene shifter taking part of a bed with a panther'.[31]

Two other performers, an Englishman and a Frenchman, also distinguished themselves as credible successors to Van Amburgh. The Englishman, Mr Batty, was already a well-known circus proprietor. He branched out into the hazardous business of lion taming in the wake of Van Amburgh's arrival in Britain, performing at Dublin theatre and Portobello Zoological Gardens.[32] The Frenchman, M. Taudevin, performed at the St James Theatre in London, in direct competition with the American, and was noted, like Carter, for treating his animals with a degree of compassion. *The Era* condoned this kinder manner of taming, though equivocated as to which approach would ultimately emerge as the more effective, a conundrum it believed would presently be solved through observation. 'Which method is likely to be the best, Van Amburgh's or M. Taudevin's, will be proved by that proprietor which is destroyed first', for, as everyone knew, 'the proof of the pudding is in the *eating*'.[33]

Unfortunately, this sometimes proved to be true. Lion taming was no easy feat, and for some of Van Amburgh's disciples its performance had a tragic denouement. In 1844, for instance, a man named Matthew Ferguson, a keeper at Mr Sharples' menagerie, entered a room in the Star Inn in Bolton where some leopards were kept and was found an hour later 'lying dead in the den of the male leopard ... literally weltering in blood'.[34] It was believed he had been attempting to make the animals perform tricks. Another serious accident occurred in 1848, when Wombwell's nephew William was attacked by a lioness during a performance in Stafford. The animal seized William 'by the neck, tearing the scalp off the back part of his head and frightfully lacerating the neck with her fangs'.[35] Although clearly horrific, such tragic accidents were not necessarily detrimental to business, since they underlined the dangers of lion taming and, by extension, the skill and finesse of the successful tamer. Like menagerie accidents more generally, lion-taming tragedies attracted the paying public by proving that the danger to performers was real.

Beauty and the beasts

Until the mid-1840s, most of Van Amburgh's imitators were male. From around 1845, however, a new trend swept the menagerie business: the phenomenon of the female lion tamer. Eager, as ever, to ratchet up the tension of the lion-taming spectacle, menagerists hit upon the idea of recruiting a woman to enter the lions' cage. This trend quickly caught on in Britain, where a rash of 'Lion Queens' soon materialised. It also extended to the USA and continental Europe, eliciting similar levels of excitement.[36]

According to the chronicler of London's Fairs, Thomas Frost, the first British 'Lion Queen' was a Miss Hilton, niece of the menagerist. Persuaded by her uncle to enter the den of his lions at Stepney Fair in 1839, Miss Hilton's performances 'proved so attractive that the example was contagious'.[37] Soon there was a plethora of rival female tamers touring Britain to the extent that having a 'Lion Queen' on the staff became almost a necessity for any self-respecting showman. In 1845 Wombwell enlisted the services of a Mrs King, who exhibited her 'daring at Glasgow by going into the dens of the lions and tigers'.[38] In 1847, visitors to the statute fair at Chipping Norton were greatly excited by 'the novel exhibition of a lady', Miss Chapman, 'accompanying the keeper into the lion's den' and in 1848 Mrs Batty, wife of the circus proprietor, ascended in a hot air balloon at Cremorne Gardens seated on the back of a lion.[39] A fourth Lion Queen, Ellen Bright, took over from Miss Chapman in 1849.

The chief appeal of the 'Lion Queen' craze lay, of course, in the gender of the performers, who, like the American Van Amburgh, embodied – though at the same time challenged – certain cultural stereotypes. As females engaged in a decidedly masculine profession, Lion Queens were at once daring pioneers who transgressed the boundaries of their sex and semi-erotic figures whose blend of panache and poise titillated the watching public. To succeed as performers, they had to harmonise masculine valour with feminine elegance, demonstrating that they possessed the same nerve and skill as their male counterparts, but never letting the audience forget that they belonged to the gentler sex; this at a time when women were expected to embrace the virtues of domesticity and lead a chaste and sedate life away from the public gaze.

Contemporary newspapers emphasised this alluring disjuncture. Detailing an early incidence of a woman entering a lion's den, in this case chaperoned by the male tamer Carter, *The Era* commended the lady's courage but stressed that such valour was highly abnormal in one of her sex. 'As an instance of the triumph of men over brute force, we may instance the curious fact that a lady boldly ventured into the den with Mr Carter on Friday morning, and, undismayed by the astounding troop, coolly surveyed their magnificent proportions and felt quite at home with the miscellaneous company, by whom she was received with all courtesy'. Such bravery was to be commended, but was certainly atypical of the female sex as a whole. 'It is not every lady in the land who can boast … of screwing up her courage to the like sticking point', and, as 'a new feature in female education' it reflected 'equal credit on the march of intellect with modern *Diana Vernons* and the lordly denizens of the forest'.[40]

The same blend of admiration and condescension surfaces in accounts of the Lion Queens themselves. Reporting on the arrival of Wombwell's menagerie in the city, *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post* remarked that 'the performance of the "Lion Queen" is certainly deserving of all the encomiums that have been passed upon it, and is very interesting, as it shows the power of man – woman we beg pardon – over the most ferocious denizens of the forest'.[41] Detailing the breath-taking antics of Miss Chapman at St Giles Fair in 1847, *Jackson's Oxford Journal* averred, likewise, that 'we certainly never saw one of the softer sex display such power over animals as she does'.[42] As these commentaries illustrate, contemporaries tended to place special emphasis on the gender of this latest breed of lion tamers, presenting their feats of bravery as something exceptional and rarely before seen. At the same time, emphasis was also placed on the essential femininity of the Lion Queens and their simpering attractiveness as sexual beings. One fictional portrayal romanticised the 'graceful form', 'pretty dimples' and 'delicate wrist' of a female tamer called Teresa, having her describe, in almost pornographic language, how the lion 'hungers for my flesh and pants for my blood' – just like the male protagonist Arthur Templer, who watches transfixed as she enters the cage.[43] This paralleled similar developments in the circus, where commentaries on female equestrians and acrobats tended to stress 'their prettiness, elegance and desirability to men'.[44]

That erotic appeal was a big part of the female tamer's attraction is reinforced by the final ingredient in securing her success – a ravishing wardrobe – for, in addition to thrilling gaping crowds with their mastery over the animal creation, Lion Queens accentuated their sexual allure by their choice of apparel, donning costumes by turns martial and coquettish. Miss Chapman, entering Glasgow on the back of a 'gaily-caparisoned elephant', was said to have been 'dressed out in the helmet and cuirass with which painters love to invest Richard of the Lion heart', aspiring, evidently, to an image of medieval chivalry.[45] Hilton's Lion Queen Mrs Mourdant appeared in South Shields wearing what the *Shields Gazette* described as 'the lately-introduced bloomer costume', while Mrs Batty, taking to the skies on the back of a lion, was festooned 'in all the panoply of a glittering helmet, with flowing ostrich feathers, a shining suit of mail armour and silk fleshings', thereby harmonising the heroic with the burlesque.[46] Such costumes bedazzled the public with images of gladiatorial valour and feminine glamour, combining masculine power with a dash of delicacy and charm. There was more than a hint of gender blurring in these representations, though the addition of distinctly feminine trimmings such as ostrich feathers and

stockings tempered the somewhat bellicose image created by helmets and clanking armour.

While the sight of ladies in lions' dens was immensely popular amongst menagerie visitors, the practice was, at the same time, deeply controversial. Not everyone thought it was proper for a woman to keep such close company with lions and tigers. Some found the whole act highly distasteful, expressing concern that lower-class spectators went to the menagerie precisely in the hopes of seeing a female 'mangled to death by a wild animal'. This sinister trend was seen as conducive to savagery and incompatible with the morals of a 'civilised community'.[47]

Misgivings over the phenomenon of female lion taming first started to be voiced in 1847, when Mrs King was bitten by a lion at Stamford Fair. Though she was rescued before she suffered serious injury, the incident was a forceful reminder of the dangers inherent in performing with wild beasts, prompting some to call for the abolition of Lion Queens. This attitude was widely aired in the contemporary press, which published several critical articles. The *Preston Guardian*, one of the most vocal opponents, censured both Mrs King's employers and the audiences who paid to watch her. 'It would seem to be a standing trick with the proprietors of a parcel of wild beasts dignified with the title of "Wombwell's Menagerie" to palm a paragraph upon the provincial newspapers describing an onslaught made upon Mrs King, the "Lion Queen" by some one or other of the imprisoned brutes … Such stories, of course, whet the public appetite', for 'people rush to the menagerie, in the amicable hope of seeing the woman worried'.[48]

Though the murmurings against female lion taming dated from its inception, the incident that galvanised elite public opinion against the practice was the tragic death of Wombwell's own niece, Ellen Bright, 'daughter of a bugle player in the band', who was killed by a tiger in 1850 while the show was exhibiting at Chatham in Kent (Figure. 8.1). According to witnesses at the subsequent inquest, Ellen, who was only seventeen years old, had been performing in a cage with a lion and a tiger throughout the day, and was coming to the end of her final performance of the evening when, 'the tiger being in her way, she struck it slightly with a small whip that she carried in her hand'. The animal 'growled, as if in anger', and immediately tripped the girl with its outstretched paw. When she fell to the ground, it pounced on her from the corner of the den, 'seizing her furiously by the neck, inserting the teeth of the upper jaw in her chin, and in closing [its] mouth, inflicting frightful injury in the throat'. Though two army surgeons in the audience tried to revive the stricken woman, her injuries proved fatal, and she died at the

Figure 8.1 Staffordshire Figure of the 'Death of the Lion Queen', *c*.1850

scene. One of the surgeons, Richard Cooper Todd, stated that she had suffered 'a very large wound under the chin, which, aided by the shock her system had sustained, produced death'.[49]

It was not every day that a young British female was mauled to death by a tiger, and the shocking incident precipitated a flurry of impassioned protests against Lion Queens. One horrified menagerie patron pledged to boycott these establishments until the practice had been extirpated,

remarking that, hard as it was 'upon persons in the country interested in natural history, and especially children, that they should be debarred from the amusement of seeing wild beasts' he was 'resolved that none of my family shall ever countenance this revolting spectacle'.[50] Another commentator, a journalist from the *Stamford Mercury*, who had seen the victim in action at Newark the previous May, eulogised 'the graceful attractions of Miss Bright' and deplored 'the folly of allowing so perfect a form to be thus exposed to ruthless hazard' through her 'ill-advised tampering' with 'caged monsters'.[51] The general feeling among the more respectable echelons of society was that women should not expose themselves to death and mutilation by performing in a den with wild beasts. There was also a wider concern that witnessing such pernicious spectacles was bad for the morality of the lower classes, whose violent tendencies would only be nurtured by exhibitions of this nature.

These more nuanced views were expounded at some length in two contemporary publications: the literary magazine the *Athenaeum* and the *Morning Chronicle*. Writing in the immediate aftermath of Ellen Bright's death, the *Athenaeum* stigmatised lion taming as reckless and morally corrupting, contending that 'every person who witnesses any exhibition repulsive to taste, useless as not establishing any scientific fact and tempting miserable beings to peril their lives, limbs or reason for hire, is in part responsible for such catastrophes as these'. Female viewers, united by gender to the victim, should feel especially ashamed and should make it their duty to shun a form of entertainment that was unseemly, unfeminine and un-British. 'The same universal disparagement and censure which have contributed to blot prize-fighting, bull-baiting and the once beloved excitement of the cock-pit out of the list of the Englishman's sports should visit every Englishwoman witnessing such monstrous exhibition as cost the poor "Lion Queen" her life, henceforward and forever'.[52]

The *Morning Chronicle* espoused similar views, impugning lion taming – and particularly the female variety – as a futile and brutalising spectacle that 'degrades both the exhibitor and the spectator and hardens the nature while steeling it to fear and to pity'. The paper emphasised the inherent danger of the practice, for however tame the feline participants appeared, their true nature could never be fully extinguished; 'after years of domestication and the successive generations of a race, the dog still bites, the cat still scratches and even the homestead cow occasionally gores its milker'. Like the *Athenaeum*, the *Morning Chronicle* equated lion taming, with other now reviled blood sports, urging the masses to substitute the brutality of the wild beast performance for

more innocuous pastimes such as 'cricket, bowls, archery, boxing with gloves, wrestling' and, rather archaically, 'the quarter staff'. The restoration of these 'simple, hearty, manly sports', would engender a healthier, morally superior society and reflect favourably on the 'national character', for 'men who had a pleasant concert to attend, or a good game of skill or strength to play out, would not care to see a young female in deadly peril of being mangled by a wild beast'.[53] Mistreatment of animals and voyeuristic, non-educational forms of entertainment were thus perceived as a marker of working-class barbarism and a blemish on the nation's reputation at a time when blood sports – hunting excepted – were increasingly confined to the plebeian and the foreigner.

Out of Africa

The rising hostility towards Lion Queens (temporarily) terminated the craze for female tamers, but did not mark the end of lion taming as a profession. On the contrary, the late 1850s witnessed the onset of a new trend in animal-training circles: the advent of the non-white lion tamer. From around 1860, menageries throughout Europe sought to add a dash of exotic glamour to their exhibitions by hiring men of African or Asian extraction to perform in the lions' den. Manders enlisted the 'Angolan' Martini Maccomo in 1857.[54] Mrs Wombwell contracted 'the black African lion hunter' Andoko Sandallah in 1862.[55] Edmonds hired Delmonico, 'the Arabian Lion Chief', in 1865 and Sanger recruited Sargano Alicamusa, 'born ... at Kingston, St Vincent, West Indies, of African parents'.[56] This trend towards non-white tamers coincided with a growing interest in overseas exploration in Britain, which expressed itself, in part, in a desire to see exotic scenes re-enacted on British shores.

The appearance of non-white people as lion tamers raises questions about the reception of these figures and what their engagement as circus performers meant for their status within British society. On the one hand, the employment of Africans and Asians in these roles could be seen to reinforce colonial stereotypes of these people as exotic beings, and, in their way, zoological specimens of equal interest to the big cats they tamed. On the other hand, lion tamers like Maccomo were not passive subjects of analysis for curious eyes, but active agents who in many cases forged successful careers as entertainers and used their association with the menagerie business to accrue a level of fame, respect and income that they would have been unlikely to attain through other, less dramatic channels. Like their predecessors the Lion Queens,

non-white lion tamers were arguably both liberated and constrained by their singular vocation. Sometimes they were exploited by menagerists but often they appear to have made their own conscious career choices, shrewdly exploiting the public appetite for things exotic.

Before looking in more detail at the exploits of Maccomo and his lion-taming colleagues, we need to situate their performances within a wider interest in non-white peoples as subjects of both scientific study and popular entertainment. Fascination with Africans, Asians and Native Americans was not an exclusively Victorian phenomenon, but dated back many centuries. Nonetheless, the imperial conquests of the nineteenth century made certain racial groups more accessible to European showmen at the same time as lurid accounts by explorers and missionaries whetted the public appetite for African exhibits in particular. David Livingstone's *Missionary Travels* (1857), for example, sold seventy thousand copies in the first few months following its publication.[57] In the decades after the abolition of the slave trade (1807) and prior to the 'Scramble for Africa' in the 1880s, Africa came to be seen increasingly as 'a part of the world possessed by a demonic "darkness" of barbarism, represented above all by slavery and cannibalism, which it was their duty to exorcise'.[58] The emergence of ethnology as a distinct discipline in 1843, following the foundation of London's Ethnological Society, further sharpened interest in the origins and evolution of human populations and stimulated the desire for living examples.[59]

There was also a shift in the nature and meaning of ethnographic exhibits. Whereas, in the eighteenth century, native peoples had tended to be exhibited for their rarity and distinctness, showmen often asserting 'that their natives were noblemen or paragons of savage conceptions of beauty', by the mid-nineteenth century the emphasis was more on conformity and representativeness, with native performers being prized mainly for their ability to embody the races and cultures from which they emanated.[60] Under these circumstances, the desire to showcase individuals from different ethnic groups intensified, and native peoples appeared with increasing frequency in venues for public exhibition, from the fair to the theatre.[61] The provenance of these people – now perceived more baldly as ethnological specimens – mirrored the extension of British exploration and conquest overseas, though the range of humans on display extended beyond the Empire to include fugitive slaves from the United States and Central American Indians.

If the native peoples exhibited at theatres and fairs functioned as intriguing ethnological specimens, the position of indigenous keepers was more ambiguous. Contracted, first and foremost, to care for wild

animals, these individuals were, on the face of it, employees rather than exhibits. They were enlisted for practical reasons, because they knew best how to deal with the beasts of their native lands. They were not classed officially as subjects for display, but, if anything, as fellow exhibitors, whose expertise was often paramount in keeping exotic animals alive. That, in any case, was the theory. In reality, of course, non-European menagerie attendants remained a focus of attention for curious spectators, who could not help but notice their dark complexions and exotic attire. Showmen often capitalised on this exoticism to render their collections still more attractive and non-white handlers sometimes generated nearly as much comment as their animals, forming part of the spectacle rather than simply the supporting cast; the *Morning Chronicle*, for instance, reported that the 'sooty physiognomies and rich costumes' of the two Sudanese giraffe attendants at the Surrey Zoological Gardens seemed 'to excite almost as much wonder as their four-footed charges … render[ing] the group exceedingly picturesque'.[62] The role of keeper thus, in practice, often elided with that of exhibit, even when the caged animals were billed as the primary attraction.

This complex dual identity is nicely illustrated by the career of Maccomo, one of the most famous black lion tamers in the Victorian era. Entering Manders' show in 1857, Maccomo was marketed as 'a native of Angola, in the South West of Africa',[63] though he was probably a West Indian former sailor named Arthur Williams.[64] According to Frost, Maccomo first approached Manders in the London docks, where he was working as a sailor. He so impressed the showman with his command over the lions that he was appointed to the position of tamer, touring widely throughout Britain and achieving a level of national fame.[65] He was particularly noted for staging a 'Lion Hunt', in which he fired off a pistol inside the den to simulate what were supposed to be traditional Angolan hunting techniques.

While such feats in themselves merited recognition, there is little doubt that Maccomo's ethnicity also contributed to his growing celebrity. This is demonstrated by the repeated references to the lion tamer's purported Angolan heritage and dark skin in the menagerie's publicity. Appearing in Birmingham in 1865, for example, Maccomo was advertised as 'Angola's mighty Czar of all lion tamers'.[66] Performing in Hull later that year, he was touted as the 'renowned sable Lion King', an explicit allusion to his complexion.[67] In Bradford he was billed as 'Angola's mighty non-such, the Dark Pearl of great price'.[68] Maccomo's ethnicity thus formed an important part of his (constructed) identity as a performer and influenced how he was perceived by British audiences.

It is significant, moreover, that the lion tamer was presented specifically as Angolan, rather than as the Afro-Caribbean national he probably was, since this also reflected contemporary imperial interests – the African origin harmonised nicely with a fascination for the 'Dark Continent' at a time when Africa was being penetrated ever deeper by missionaries, explorers and big game hunters.[69]

Like the coquettish Lion Queens, Maccomo fortified his exotic image through a careful choice of costume, selecting clothing that accentuated his African heritage. On the front cover of a catalogue for Manders' menagerie, he is shown attired in a short tunic, his shoulders swathed in a leopard skin cloak and a feathered headdress completing the outfit.[70] A contemporary Staffordshire Figure of the lion tamer, likewise depicts the tamer barefoot, shrouded in a pink-spotted robe and wearing a turban, a sartorial selection that evoked the Orient.[71] That such garments were not Maccomo's typical attire, but were donned solely for his performances, is suggested by a newspaper illustration showing an attack upon the lion tamer at Thetford in Norfolk. In this scene, supposed to have taken place early one morning when Maccomo went to clean the lions' cage, the tamer looks rather dapper. He sports a suit, tie and waistcoat, and, unlike his ceramic likeness, is wearing conventional leather shoes.[72] The existence of this image implies that Maccomo was no primitive lion hunter, as the propaganda surrounding his performances suggested, but that he deliberately exoticised himself when in public to convey this impression.

If Maccomo's appearances in the lions' den in some ways reinforced racial stereotypes, this was not the whole story. Certainly, Manders capitalised on Maccomo's ethnicity to market him as a performer, and certainly some viewers regarded the African as a zoological specimen in his own right. At the same time, however, the comments elicited by his performances suggest that many considered him to be genuinely brave, and skilled at his profession – despite, or regardless of, his colour – and that the respect he earned through his daring deeds was, at least in some instances, at a human rather than narrowly racial level. Lamenting the lion tamer's death from rheumatic fever in 1870, for example, *The Era* rhapsodised that Maccomo's name was 'familiar to all lovers of bravery', thanks to his 'extraordinary courage' and 'inoffensive disposition'.[73] Equally importantly, Maccomo, as well as being a respected performer, was a willing one. While some native peoples were plucked from their homelands and coerced into performing for metropolitan audiences, Maccomo seems to have joined the menagerie voluntarily. The available sources, though not entirely in agreement on his origins, concur that

the 'African' freely offered his services to Manders.[74] Like many contemporary freak show exhibits, he was not a pliant victim, forced to perform against his will, but someone who exerted a degree of agency over his public image and career trajectory.[75]

Still more revealing of the esteem in which Maccomo was held – though also of the condescending way in which Africans were treated in Victorian Britain – was Manders' decision to present his star performer with a specially commissioned gold medal in 1866 as a reward for his 'good suit and service'. This medal, which bore the inscription 'Martini Maccomo, 1866, presented by William Manders Esq. as a reward for bravery, courtesy and integrity', was bestowed upon the tamer at a special dinner in Liverpool. Manders himself was away on business at the time, so his secretary Mr Stevenson performed the honours, presenting Maccomo with his 'little tribute of [the Manders'] esteem' and explaining that the trinket was intended to 'teach to him the lesson that energy of purpose, rectitude of conduct, courtesy of demeanour and integrity of life are sure, sooner or later, to meet with their reward'. Maccomo graciously accepted the medal and expressed his determination to win a second decoration for the other side of his chest. The menagerie band then serenaded the lion tamer with 'the stirring strains of Yankee Doodle'.

Reported at length in the *Liverpool Mercury*, Maccomo's award ceremony could be construed as highly patronising. It was probably conceived by Manders as something of a publicity stunt, and there was a suggestion in the words of Mr Stevenson and the inscription on the medal that the tamer was being recognised for having assimilated commendable British values, thereby embodying the civilising influence of English society upon a man who was supposed to be the son of an Angolan hunter and trapper. While the affair undoubtedly contained elements of condescension, however, it can equally be interpreted in a more positive light. Manders' gratitude, after all, may have been genuine, and, perhaps, no more patronisingly expressed than if he had bestowed a similar award on a white keeper. Maccomo, by the same token, may have sincerely cherished the award. If this were the case, it would seem that the lion tamer, by engaging in such a dangerous profession and to some extent pandering to racial stereotypes, had achieved a degree of fame, wealth and social elevation that a man of his colour would have struggled to reach in Victorian Britain through more conventional channels.[76] Lion taming, then, may be seen to have simultaneously reinforced contemporary stereotypes of Africa in the minds of British audiences, and allowed individual Africans to circumvent the social constraints imposed upon their race.

Lion taming under scrutiny

On Wednesday 3 January 1872 the lion tamer 'Massarti' entered the lions' den at Manders' menagerie, Bolton, to put the animals through their final performance of the evening. It was 10.30 at night and the menagerie was 'moderately well filled with people' – one newspaper report estimated '500 persons were present'. Massarti, whose real name was Thomas McCarty, had already given eight performances that day. A native of Cork in Ireland, the lion tamer had been working with the big cats since the previous January, and was renowned primarily for having only one arm, 'his left arm having been torn off by a lion at the circus of Messrs. Bell and Myers in Liverpool, nine or ten years ago'.[77] On this particular evening, Massarti was dressed in a dashing leopard skin costume and armed with 'a sword and a revolver'. Some witnesses suspected that he had been drinking before the performance, making him 'unusually careless and venturesome'. Others subsequently disputed this.

Tipsy or otherwise, Massarti's act started to go wrong when he noticed that one of the lions 'was restive and showing its teeth'. To subdue the animal he 'pointed his sword threateningly at its mouth'. The lion recoiled, apparently cowed.[78] While Massarti's attention was distracted, however, a second lion 'crept stealthily out from the group and sprung towards him, seizing him by the hip and throwing him on his side'. Seeing the lion tamer was in trouble, the spectators rushed to his aid. One man, a butcher, jabbed at the lions 'with a pickel'. Another man prodded the beasts with a broom; a third inserted a ladder into the cage. Eventually several keepers arrived with heated irons and succeeded in driving the lions behind a hastily inserted partition.[79] By this time, however, the floor of the den was 'saturated with blood' and Massarti was in a bad way, the flesh having been 'torn from both his thighs', his remaining arm broken in two places and his chest hideously 'lacerated'.[80] The lion tamer was carried in a mangled state to the Infirmary, where he was heard to exclaim dolefully, 'I am done for'. Just fifteen minutes later, he expired.[81]

The untimely death of Thomas McCarty made headline news across Britain, and crystallised the misgivings that middle-class commentators already had about lion taming. Though many lion tamers had been injured while performing, none had died since Ellen Bright some twenty years before. Consequently, Massarti's violent end triggered a similar bout of soul searching, bringing the practice of wild beast taming once again under the microscope.

Initially, concern centred on the precise causes of the accident. Soon, however, this more technical discussion mushroomed into strong condemnation of lion taming as an exhibition, and questions were asked about the morality of watching such violent performances. Menagerists, journalists and the wider public participated in these debates, conducted, in large part, through the correspondence pages of contemporary newspapers.

Concentrating, at first, on the immediate cause of the tragedy, witnesses emphasised two errors made by Massarti: firstly, the lion tamer had turned his back on his animals while performing; secondly, he had been drinking prior to his act. Addressing the first point, the *Leeds Mercury* alleged that Massarti, 'unlike Maccomo, the African lion killer ... frequently turned his back upon the animals, and was so late as Tuesday cautioned against the practice'.[82] The Reverend Enoch Franks, a Methodist minister and witness to the mauling, testified at the coroner's inquest that the Irishman, 'unlike every other lion tamer' he had seen, was 'not managing these beasts with his eyes', a feat with which Franks initially declared himself 'very impressed'. Lion tamers, it was generally believed, needed to keep the animals within their line of vision in order to control them, but McCarty flouted this cardinal rule. The *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* reported that the tamer had 'been repeatedly cautioned against' turning his back on the lions, his 'utter disregard of this warning' being 'the cause of his death'.[83]

Whether or not the lion tamer was inebriated at the time of his accident was less clear. The consensus seemed to be that, yes, McCarty had been drinking prior to performing, but no, he was not drunk, and had not imbibed so much as to render him incapable of going on with the exhibition. The Reverend Franks, quizzed on this point, opined that 'I do not think anybody would call him drunk'. The minister did, however, suggest that alcohol might have been a contributory factor in Massarti's death, moderate consumption of the substance having put him 'just in that position when men are mischievous, bold, daring, thoughtless'. Another witness, keeper John Ryan, broadly substantiated this view, affirming that Massarti, though he may have had a little tipple, 'did not seem to me to be the worse for liquor'. Ryan admitted that he had, on several occasions, seen the lion tamer 'the worse for liquor in business hours', but felt, overall, that alcohol played only a minor role in this attack.[84]

If Massarti's tactics and alcohol intake thus contributed in part to his death, a number of other factors also worsened his situation. Firstly, there was the behaviour of the assembled spectators. On a general

level, visitors were apt to tease animals, as we have seen, which could endanger the lives of keepers. An attack by an elephant upon keeper Thomas Burrows at Chatham in 1851 was attributed to the misdeeds of a group of soldiers who had visited the menagerie earlier that day and 'amused themselves by teasing and irritating' the animal.[85] Massarti's death was not seen as the result of any such misconduct of this nature. While the spectators were not actively to blame for the lions' attack, however, their behaviour afterwards was viewed by some as counter-productive, and may have contributed to his demise. John Ryan conjectured that the presence of so many visitors had obstructed the rescue effort, preventing the keepers from extricating Massarti sooner:

> I do not think we could have got him out of the cage in time to save him, for the people about would not stand back. Some of them might think they were rendering us assistance, but they were doing us a great deal of harm. I am sure we could have saved him had there been no-one in the menagerie but our own men.[86]

Secondly, and more contentiously, Massarti's death was ascribed to the fact that no irons had been heated up to subdue any lions that got out of control. Keeping irons heated for this purpose was apparently standard practice in the menagerie. One visitor to the establishment reported that he had seen 'irons placed on the fire' and 'was informed, on asking, that they were there in case of an emergency'. Another visitor stated that these irons were kept 'uncomfortably hot' to 'prevent the lions injuring either themselves or their keepers'. He also remarked that the furnace where the irons were heated was positioned 'in a straight line opposite the carriage containing the performing lions' to facilitate quick assistance if necessary.[87] On the night of Massarti's accident no irons had been heated because this was 'an extra performance', not on the daily schedule. Ryan stated that when he heard the lion tamer scream, he immediately 'ran with the lamp iron and put it into the fire' in order to heat it. No other irons being ready for use, Ryan was obliged to return to the fire several times to reheat his weapon, giving the lions the chance to inflict further damage on their victim.[88] The delay in preparing the irons was believed by some commentators to have cost the Irishman his life.

While avoiding such a fatal omission might help to guard against future accidents, the issue of the irons led some contemporaries on to wider concerns about the safety of lion-taming performances. If it was standard practice to have heated irons on standby to cow unruly lions, could big cats ever really be 'tamed'? Were there certain features of menagerie

life that exacerbated the dangers of the lion-taming exhibition? Could the sight of such performances have a morally corrupting influence on those who watched them? If so, should they be discontinued?

Not everyone thought wild beast performances should be suppressed. One advocate of these exhibitions, menagerie proprietor Alexander Fairgrieve, saw the solution not in abolition, but in gentler training methods. In a letter to the *Glasgow Herald* two weeks after Massarti's death, Fairgrieve, patently exploiting the discomfort of his rival Mrs Manders, insisted that lion taming was carried out safely in his own establishment, and that he had not experienced a single accident since he took over management of the show six years previously. This superior safety record, he surmised, was down to good treatment of the animals, for 'I always insist on kindness, constant and unvarying, on the part of all my men'. Fairgrieve professed never to use hot irons on his lions and conjured a touching picture of the intimacy he enjoyed with his big cats, which, 'whenever I present myself at the dens ... will come to the front and manifest in their own peculiar way their fondness and affection for me'. Though he stopped lion taming in his show after Massarti's death, 'out of deference to public feeling', Fairgrieve clearly viewed this more as a publicity stunt than a practical necessity, for he felt that, with the right training techniques, such performances could be managed effectively.[89]

In stark disagreement with Fairgrieve, another letter writer in the *Glasgow Herald* signing himself only with his initials, 'J.A', contended that lion taming was always dangerous. No big cat, no matter how well trained, was immune from sudden fits of temper. All were capable of inflicting the most horrendous wounds, even accidentally or through play, and in consequence, 'no keeper or tamer who has followed the calling above a few months can truly say that he has escaped injury or serious risk'. Maccomo, the famous African trainer, had once received a debilitating bite from a tiger in the palm of his hand, which 'resulted in part of the crushed bones and severed tendons of the hand sloughing out and leaving a gap where the skin of the palm and back of the hand met as thin as the web of a frog's foot'. Another keeper, George Seaborne 'exhibits in his person several evidences of the gratitude to be expected from the feline species', including a 'large cicatrice' on his hand, where a leopard had nearly severed his thumb. The natural instinct of the big cat was to attack; no amount of training could suppress this. The lion tamer, however courageous and however careful, would invariably sustain a crippling injury at some point, and if he were lucky, of the non-fatal variety.[90]

Not only were big cats inherently malicious, but the itinerant nature of the travelling menagerie added to the dangers, since it often caused the big cats to be inadequately fed, and therefore more inclined to violence. Sometimes a particular animal was accidentally passed over at feeding time. On other occasions, the 'inability to procure flesh food while journeying through wild, non-populous districts, as in the North of Scotland, or across the Cumberland fells', could leave the whole carnivore department with empty stomachs, making taming a yet more dangerous business. Showmen might have reduced the danger by deferring performances until the beasts had been nourished. Commercial imperatives, however, usually trumped health and safety in the menagerie business, and instead of foregoing the chance to earn some extra cash, 'at the first place where the caravan rests, if there is an audience to be gathered, a performance is always ready, whatever may have been the previous regularity or irregularity of the feeding arrangements'. For much the same reason, menagerists often exceeded the advertised number of lion-taming performances to satisfy popular demand, with the result that 'sometimes ... there take place twenty performances in a day, and the animals may be seen going through them at every crowded fair, footsore and limping lame'.[91] Aside from the clear animal welfare implications, such tactics were hardly conducive to a safe show. Many tamers – Massarti included – paid the penalty for performing with restive, irritable animals.[92]

Finally, the aspect of lion taming that really exercised contemporary critics was its perceived tendency to brutalise spectators – especially the lower classes – and its lack of any intellectual justification. In an age where rational recreation was so much cherished, the appearance of a human being in a lion's den was seen only to titillate the baser instincts of the masses, some of whom perhaps secretly hoped that an accident might happen. No scientific knowledge was derived as to the nature of the animals and no moral lessons were learned. Even as a display of bravery such performances were wanting, since the type of valour on view was 'not the courage which achieves great deeds, but merely the courage which for a livelihood panders to the idle and mischievous love of sensation which besets all our amusements'.[93] For middle-class audiences, lion taming was thus a turn-off, and was seen as detracting from the genuine pedagogic value of travelling menageries. The Reverend E. Carter, presiding over Massarti's funeral in Bolton, explicitly cited the 'revolting danger to which persons exposed themselves in the lions' den' as 'one reason why he himself had not attended [menageries]'. 'It is a great pity', he lamented, that exhibitions

in themselves instructive and interesting should be accompanied with danger to human life'.[94]

Conclusion

Lion taming was a hazardous and controversial pursuit. Intriguing as a demonstration of man's (tenuous) control over exotic and dangerous animals, performances with caged predators continually drew large crowds, whose desire for novelty was satisfied by periodic changes in personnel. In the 1830s, Van Amburgh reigned supreme, wowing spectators on both sides of the Atlantic. In the 1840s, the American spawned a raft of male imitators of multiple nationalities. From 1845–1850, the phenomenon of the 'Lion Queen' captivated audiences across Britain with its hypnotic cocktail of femininity and fearlessness, while the 1860s witnessed the rise of the 'African' tamer, part-exotic performer, part-zoological specimen in his own right. Always in search of cheap thrills, showmen contracted ever more extreme minority groups to perform in the lions' den, from the 'great one-armed French Lion Tamer Massarti', to 'a dwarf named Tommy Dodd', and a five-year-old boy called Daniel Day, 'a little sprightly fellow … dressed in Highland fashion' who rode on the back of a lion.[95] The maimed, the short and the infantile sought fame and fortune in the lions' den, some to great acclaim, others with tragic consequences.

As lion taming grew more prevalent, it attracted increasing opposition. Van Amburgh himself was subject to accusations of recklessness. These objections became more vocal when the performers in question were women or children. Lion taming came to be perceived by critics as a gross form of exploitation of vulnerable individuals, 'an exhibition of successful cruelty' towards the animals and a socially corrosive spectacle that pandered to the basest instincts of the viewer.[96] Magistrates occasionally intervened to outlaw a particularly abhorrent spectacle, as when the authorities in Nottingham denounced Day's child tamer as 'upholding a sensationalism … contrary to the sentiment of the town'.[97] In general, however, magisterial rulings had little long-term impact, and menagerists continued to employ lion tamers in their shows. Day's child lion tamer may not have performed in Nottingham in 1866, but the showman's son was still doing his act in 1872, when he was advertised as entering 'the den of full-grown lions'.[98] A lady by the name of 'Madame Cardona', meanwhile, was reported as performing 'with hyenas and other animals' at York Fair in 1875, some twenty-five years after females had been officially forbidden from performing with wild animals.[99]

Despite intermittent bouts of outrage after specific tragedies, therefore, the dramatic appeal of lion taming ensured its long-term survival as a popular spectacle. Only in 1879 did the government pass the first bill to regulate 'dangerous performances' and even these restrictions applied solely to children under fourteen.[100]

For the performers themselves, the wild beast act had ambiguous implications. On the one hand, lion taming probably offered a certain kudos and social status to the people who engaged in it, as well as a relatively generous salary – one tamer, Mr Crockett apparently earned £20 a week in the American menagerie of Howes and Cushing, while the unfortunate Massarti earned a more modest but still respectable '£2 a week' with 'perquisites ... about the same amount'.[101] Financially rewarding as the profession may have been, however, the degree of control such individuals truly exercised over their own destinies remains a matter for debate, for while some lion tamers doubtless embraced the job from a sense of vocation, eager to flaunt their power over the animal creation and to transcend the limitations of their race or gender, others turned to lion taming for more mundane reasons. One retired tamer, a former bill-sticker, confessed that he 'was never meant for a lion king', but took the position to feed his young family, relying on prayer and brandy to get him through performances.[102] Though this individual admitted that some of his fellow performers had 'more nerve' and took 'to the work kindlier', it remained the case that all lion tamers, whether coerced minors, cash-strapped billstickers or willing participants, flirted with real danger in the course of their exhibitions, few leaving the profession without some painful scars.[103] As tamer Frank Bostock reflected in his autobiography, 'no animal is ever to be trusted until he is dead'. Big cats might be trained to perform specific acts on command, but 'the tamed animal is a chimera of the optimistic imagination, a forecast of the millennium'.[104] The lion tamer, however skilful, risked his life performing with wild beasts.

Conclusion

Exotic animals were part of the fabric of nineteenth-century society. They were far more prevalent and much more accessible than we might imagine. Most British people probably *would* have seen an elephant at least once in their lives. Some would have done so without even leaving their native towns and villages. Exotic beasts were not just cultural referents for nineteenth-century Britons; they also had a strong physical presence.

Most people who saw exotic animals in the nineteenth century did so in one of two venues: the zoological gardens or the travelling menagerie. The traditional narrative of exotic animal exhibits draws a sharp distinction between menageries and zoos. Menageries were oppressive, rowdy, crudely commercial places, where animals were abused and crime and immorality prospered. Zoological gardens, by contrast, were respectable, decorous institutions. Research was conducted within their walls, animals were kept in spacious enclosures and education and civility were the order of the day. Over the course of the century, so this narrative goes, the zoological garden gradually superseded the menagerie. This development marked yet another step in the wider 'civilising process' in which many Victorians believed themselves to be engaged.

Does further investigation bear out this story? To an extent, perhaps, but it also suggests a rather more complicated picture. On the one hand, as we have seen, many of the new zoological gardens, despite the rhetoric of rational recreation, actually retained a lot of the features common to menageries. When visitor numbers dropped, they soon sacrificed serious research and educational aims for popular entertainment, bringing in panoramas, fireworks and other non-zoological amusements. Surrey Zoological Gardens led the way in the shift from research hub to pleasure

gardens, and other institutions quickly followed suit. Even the Gardens of the Zoological Society conceded the need for a more diverse customer base, admitting non-fellows from 1847 and introducing the 'starring system' for the most popular animals.

If zoos were more entertainment focused than their propaganda would suggest, menageries remained the most accessible sites for seeing exotic beasts, and, though orientated predominantly towards commercial ends, performed at least a rudimentary educational function. Showmen regularly 'did their bit' for science, granting naturalists privileged access to their collections or donating the corpses of dead animals to provincial museums. Guidebooks and keeper talks conveyed some basic information about their inmates, while menageries were, it seems, relatively well thought of by the moralising middle classes, who repeatedly singled them out as the one major exception to the squalor and debauchery of the fairground; at Glasgow Fair in 1856, Edmonds' menagerie formed 'the chief attraction for the more respectable visitors'.[1] Zoos and menageries were therefore not as distinct in their offerings and clientele as might be imagined. Their rhetoric was different, but there were similarities as well as contrasts.

Another familiar narrative relating to this period concerns the rise in compassion for animals. In the early nineteenth century the first legislation was introduced to protect animals from abuse. Popular barbarities like bull-baiting were suppressed. The RSPCA launched educational campaigns to encourage kindness to other species, and efforts were made to discipline the masses to make them conform to middle-class expectations of respectability. Some historians see this as a pivotal moment in the treatment of animals. Others contest this optimistic view, suggesting instead that the shift in attitudes was largely cosmetic, and limited in scope.

The treatment accorded exotic species provides evidence to support both sides of the debate. If we look at the rhetoric surrounding zoos, and particularly menageries, it is clear that acts of cruelty towards animals were increasingly frowned upon as the century progressed. The RSPCA, though always more concerned with domestic species, intervened to prosecute the most blatant instances of abuse, whether it was 'travelling an elephant when in an unfit state' or making hyenas leap through fiery hoops.[2] These cases, widely covered in the contemporary press, helped to highlight loopholes in the existing animal cruelty legislation, which, in the view of some magistrates, applied only to 'domestic' animals. They also elicited comment from ordinary people, who recorded their concern for zoo and menagerie inmates, in letters and petitions. One

reader of *The Animal World* was moved by the hyena-baiting scandal to express her disgust at menageries in general, claiming that she could never 'think of any exhibition of the kind without feeling acute pain'.[3] Another recounted a distressing visit to the zoological gardens, where 'the rhinoceros was dashing his head in raging despair against the walls of his cage' and a small bear was pacing uneasily in its 'cruelly small cage'.[4] Such responses went beyond the condemnation of blatant physical abuse, prefiguring twentieth-century critiques of zoos as unnatural, imperialistic and superfluous.[5] The author of the second letter described his feelings in the zoological gardens as a mixture of 'sorrow for the persecuted beasts and disgust at the cruelty of man'. He went on to reflect on the devastating effects of loss of liberty upon wild beasts, who found themselves 'condemned to solitary confinement so totally opposed to their nature'.[6]

While isolated outbursts of compassion can undoubtedly be detected amongst nineteenth-century commentators, however, empathy for exotic beasts had its limits. People continued to goad and torment animals in zoological collections on a regular basis. Menagerie-goers of all classes still enjoyed seeing violent performances, from young girls taming tigers, to snakes consuming live prey, and showmen bought animals that they knew would not survive long in the British climate, concerned only with short-term profit. Specific beasts, of course, might be loved and sentimentalised in an almost hysterical fashion, as in the case of Jumbo, but the same people who shed tears over the fate of one famous pachyderm were content to turn a blind eye to the mundane or concealed suffering of many other animals. As the writer of the letter cited above remarked, many people 'from whom one might expect better things, can hear of, or even witness (or send their children, which is still worse) the sufferings of sentient beings, if not with pleasure, at least with calmness, and with no desire to make any effort at amelioration'.[7] Concerns about cruelty often focused less on the pain experienced by an animal and more on the brutalising effect that witnessing such cruelty might have on human spectators, an observation that could equally be applied to dangerous human performances like lion taming. Exotic animal exhibits in nineteenth-century Britain therefore reveal a somewhat schizophrenic engagement with the animal kingdom; visible cruelty distressed more sensitive or 'respectable' viewers, but abuse behind closed doors or beyond British shores provoked little comment.

A final lens through which exotic animal exhibitions are often viewed is that of the wider history of empire. Historians are increasingly interested in the extent to which imperial power affected not only British

subjects in the colonies, but the population at home. What were the cultural effects of imperialism? How has empire been represented, transmitted or domesticated?

Exotic animal exhibitions clearly fed into this broader cultural imperialism and have often been studied in this light. While the language of empire was common in propaganda and guidebooks, however, it came in varying shades, making it possible to discern differences in emphasis between the different zoological shows. London Zoo, for instance, construed itself as *the* National Collection and the self-proclaimed rival of the Parisian Jardin des Plantes, with which it competed to secure the most novel animals. Provincial zoological gardens, on the other hand, championed the wealth, cultural capital and cosmopolitanism of their respective cities, which themselves enjoyed important global connections. The imperial message was still there, but it was given a specific regional dimension. As for menageries, they too touted imperial symbolism, but the experience of empire they offered was slightly different. Firstly, they were more overtly commercial operations, trumpeting the entrepreneurial genius of individual owners over the generosity of patriotic donors. Secondly, menageries often went further than zoos in playing up the ferocity of their inmates, presenting a more chaotic, slightly rawer imperial aesthetic in which the latent wildness of fierce beasts was part of the attraction. Finally, while the itinerancy of menageries prevented them from having strong ties with specific cities, it did mean that they brought exotic species to the people in highly intimate settings, so that something as physically alien as an elephant appeared against the familiar backdrop of the local town. The circus owner 'Lord' George Sanger claimed in 1897 that his favourite elephant Charlie was 'well known' in country towns across Britain, fraternising with residents and reportedly 'stop[ping] at every shop or house where he ha[d] been given food perhaps years before'.[8] In this respect, menageries, perhaps more than zoological gardens, encapsulated the notion of the Empire 'at home'.

Whether the imperial message was absorbed by the population at large is, of course, harder to tell. Some viewers may have imbibed it wholesale and had their perceptions of empire shaped by what they saw in zoological collections. Some perhaps took a rather less profound pleasure in Britain's imperial achievements, gleaning only limited knowledge, but relishing a fleeting contact with the exotic; one teenage menagerie visitor, Frank Marsland, wrote to his sister, Edith, that he had seen a 'monstrous hippopotamus' in a show in Kendal in 1873, and an 'awful jolly' horse called Hammel 'which once upon a time was the

favourite charger of the late king Theodore' of Abyssinia – an animal with overtly imperial connections.[9] Other visitors may have missed the imperial symbolism entirely, and simply enjoyed the tactile dimensions of the show, the frisson of danger that surrounded the lion-taming act or the chance to show off their best clothes in a fashionable civic setting. As Andrew Thompson has argued on the subject of imperial consciousness more generally, it is impossible to fully assess its depth and extent, or to know exactly how imperial symbolism was received and internalised.[10] The menagerie did bring relics from foreign lands into the lives of the most parochial people, but whether its effects were deep or lasting is difficult to know. Moreover, since zoological collections exhibited species from all over the world, and not just formal British colonies, we cannot necessarily assume that what was represented in them was the 'Empire', *per se*. People came to zoos and menageries to see animals that were alien, novel and intriguing. In this sense, as Bernard Porter has suggested, 'it was the exoticism that was important, not the imperialism'.[11]

What, finally, of the menagerists themselves? This book has introduced a cast of colourful characters whose lives are now only sketchily known, but who were once household names in Britain. What did participating in the exotic animal business mean to these individuals, and what became of the men, women and beasts that brought the Empire to the people? It is perhaps fitting to end with an overview of their respective fates.

George Wombwell, the menagerie pioneer, died in November 1850. He was 73 years old and still on the road. He passed away in his commodious living van while the menagerie was visiting Northallerton, Yorkshire. When his death was announced, the menagerie band played 'the Dead March in *Saul*' in his honour and the show closed for the night.[12] Wombwell was later buried in Highgate Cemetery in London, where his tomb sported a statue of his favourite lion, Nero. His three menageries were taken over by his wife, Ann, his niece Harriet Edmonds and her husband James and his nephew George.[13] Ann herself retired from the menagerie business in 1867, bequeathing her collection to her nephew Alexander Fairgrieve, who subsequently auctioned it off in 1872.[14] James Edmonds ran Wombwell's Menagerie Number 2 until his death in 1871, when Harriet assumed full control of the show. She in turn disposed of the collection in 1884 (Figure C.1), much of it ending up in the hands of the Bostock family.[15] All was not harmonious among Wombwell's successors, who frequently contested the right to continue using the founder's name for their respective exhibitions.[16]

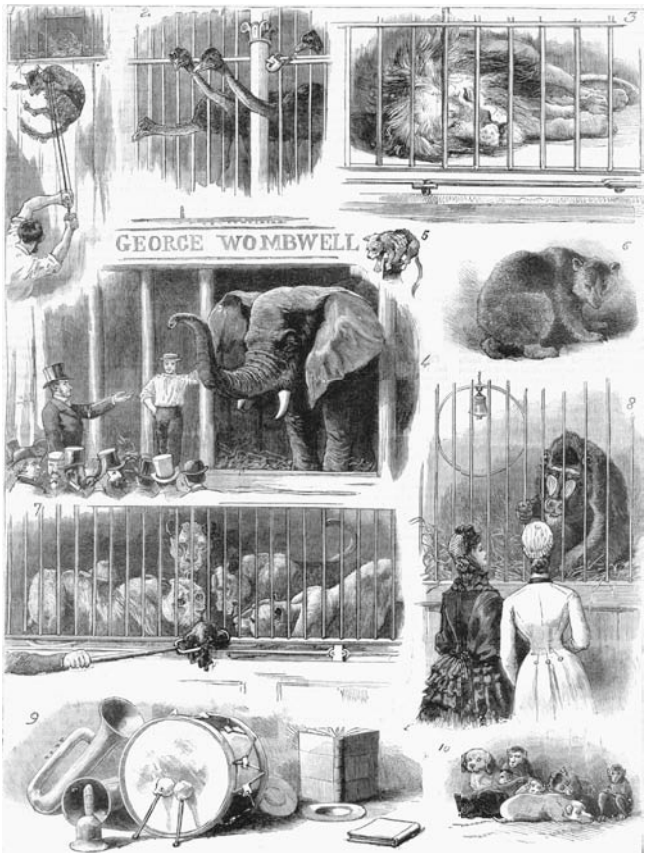


Figure C.1 'Knocking Down a Menagerie', *The Graphic*, 9 August 1884, © The British Library Board

Thomas Atkins, Wombwell's first big rival, bowed out of the menagerie business in 1833 to become the first director of Liverpool Zoological Gardens. He remained in charge of the institution until his death, in 1848, after which it was run by his sons.[17] The institution itself closed in 1864.

William Manders, who vied with Wombwell and his successors in the 1850s and 60s, died in Glasgow 1871 and left his collection to his wife.[18] She continued in business until 1875, when she decided to auction off the collection. Naturalist Frank Buckland, who attended the auction, recorded the sums fetched for the various animals, including 'a very fine camel', which sold for £7 10s, and 'a fine Russian or Grizzly Bear' called

Johnny, who sold for only £1. According to Buckland, the prices were depressed due to the season; the auction took place in August, and 'since shows cannot travel without difficulty in winter' and 'the animals are very apt to die in cold weather', few buyers were willing to risk the loss – another illustration, if one were needed, of the casual cruelty inherent in the wild animal business.[19]

The lion tamers who entertained menagerie-goers with their daring feats had mixed fates. Van Amburgh, the American star, died peacefully in his bed at the age of 65, having become the owner of a substantial menagerie back in the States. His rival, Carter, died at the relatively young age of 33, reportedly from heart failure, while the celebrated 'African' lion tamer Maccomo died of epilepsy in Sunderland in 1871, aged only 31.[20] Ellen Bright and Thomas McCarty both perished while performing with their animals, the death of the former triggering opprobrium for the phenomenon of the 'Lion Queen' and that of the latter bringing the whole taming act into question (though not, in either case, for long). More fortunate were Ellen's rival, Miss Chapman, who went on to marry circus owner George Sanger, and 'Massarti's' rival 'Lorenzo' (Stephen Lawrence), who, despite a close call with some hyenas in 1867, remained with Fairgrieve's collection until its dispersal in 1872.[21] Lorenzo subsequently accompanied the elephant Maharajah to Belle Vue Zoological Gardens, Manchester, where he lived out the rest of his life in relative calm as the animal's keeper.[22]

Two final obituaries not only tell us about the fate of their subjects, but also illustrate contrasting roles within the exotic animal business. The first of these, for the hippopotamus Obaysch, appeared in *The Times* on 13 March 1878. The famous pachyderm, the paper reported, had expired the previous Monday, 'rather suddenly, but not unexpectedly, as he had been showing manifest signs of old age for some time'. A post-mortem was being conducted on his body, to determine the precise cause of death. In the meantime, *The Times* took the opportunity to reflect nostalgically on Obaysch's eventful history, reminding readers that he 'was born in the White Nile, somewhere near the island whence he obtained his name' and that he made a 'triumphal entry into London' on 25 May 1850. The paper reported that Obaysch was survived by his mate, Adhela, and by a daughter named Guy Fawkes (she was born on 5 November 1872), for whom a male companion had recently been secured from the Zoological Society of Amsterdam. Though the prospect 'of the race of British hippopotami being continued in future years' thus looked good, *The Times* suspected that 'the fellows and friends of the Zoological Society' would nonetheless 'hear with regret of the death of

the old hippopotamus', who had been a favourite with visitors to the Gardens since his arrival.[23] Obaysch, was, indeed, one of the greatest zoological sensations of the Victorian era, a beast who, perhaps better than any other, embodied Britain's scientific prowess and imperial potency.

By contrast, the lamentations for menagerie keeper Thomas Burrows were rather more muted. Burrows, 'a native of Barbados' worked in Mrs Edmonds' menagerie, where his job consisted of feeding gingerbread to the elephants. In March 1875, in Wrexham, Burrows was performing his usual role when he suddenly collapsed in the middle of the show. Two doctors who happened to be in the menagerie at the time tried to revive the fallen man, but despite their efforts the keeper 'died in a minute or two'. Because the cause of death was unclear, a coroner's inquest was subsequently held, the results of which were reported in the local paper, the *Wrexham Advertiser*. This brought to light various facts about Burrows' life that would otherwise have gone unrecorded – notably, that he was unmarried, that he earned 'about £1 a week' and that he had joined the menagerie thirty years ago in Glasgow. A police constable conducted a search of Burrows' body and found '£6, 12s in silver and 5d in copper … in addition to a watch and chain'. Burrows' colleagues further testified that he had £100 deposited in the bank and that he 'was a very godly man' whose 'quiet habits gained for him the esteem of all his associates'.[24] Though the jury ultimately dismissed the case, satisfied that Burrows had died from natural causes, the report on the inquest nonetheless offers a fascinating insight into the life of one obscure but well-travelled keeper whose chosen career took him across the Atlantic and around the British Isles, earned him money and respect but also brought him face to face with danger and race prejudice – when Burrows was injured by an elephant in 1851, several local people refused to let him convalesce in their houses.[25] Where Obaysch was the privileged object of British imperial acquisitiveness, therefore, Burrows was an itinerant colonial subject who came to Britain voluntarily and sought a living in the animal business. One was celebrated and mourned, the other more anonymous. Both, in their different ways, represented the circulation of knowledge, animals and people taking place within the British Empire and the cosmopolitan character of the menagerie.

Notes

Introduction

1. *The Era*, 22 January 1863.
2. *Standard*, 5 September 1840.
3. Samuel Alberti (ed.), *The Afterlives of Animals* (University of Virginia Press: Charlottesville, 2011); *Guide to the Gardens of the Zoological Society* (London: Richard Taylor, 1829), p.25; John Simons, *Rossetti's Wombat: Pre-Raphaelites and Australian Animals in Victorian London* (London: Middlesex University Press, 2008).
4. John MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p.41.
5. Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose, *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.21.
6. John MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986).
7. Felix Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).
8. Edward Ziter, *The Orient on the Victorian Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.3.
9. Roberto Aguirre, *Informal Empire: Mexico and Central America in Victorian Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Nadja Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Sadiah Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire and Anthropology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).
10. Ziter, *The Orient*, p.3.
11. See 'Exotic Captives' in Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp.205–242; and Kurt Koenigsberger, *The Novel and the Menagerie: Totality, Englishness and Empire* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2007), p.38. Koenigsberger argues that the menagerie 'represented the empire as a comparable whole, in which every element rendered testimony both to the power of the collection of which it was a part and to the wonder of the wider imperial world toward which the collection gestured'.
12. *Glasgow Herald*, 13 February 1885.
13. Bernard Porter has argued that the British Empire occupied a surprisingly small role in the consciousness of most Britons, certainly before 1880, and a very superficial place in working-class culture. See Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
14. Aileen Fyfe and Bernard Lightman, *Science in the Marketplace* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
15. Joe Kember, John Plunkett and Jill Sullivan (eds), *Popular Exhibitions, Science and Showmanship*, 1840–1910 (London: Pickering and Chatto 2012).

16. James Walvin, *Leisure and Society 1830–1950* (London: Longman, 1978), pp.4–5.
17. FML Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830–1900* (London: Fontana Press, 1988).
18. For a discussion of this darker side to the Victorian psyche, see Rosalind Crone, *Violent Victorians: Popular Entertainment in Nineteenth-Century London* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012); Brenda Assael, *Circus and Victorian Society* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005).
19. See Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500–1800* (London: Penguin, 1983); James Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast: Animals, Pain and Humanity in the Victorian Mind* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1980); 'A Measure of Compassion' in Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, pp.125–166.
20. MacKenzie, *Empire of Nature*, pp.26–27.
21. Diana Donald, *Picturing Animals in Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). For the discussion of horses, see 'Prosperity and Adversity, the Life of the Horse', pp.199–232.
22. On the moral ambiguities raised by pet-keeping, see Teresa Mangum, 'Animal angst: Victorians memorialise their pets' in Deborah Denenholz Morse and Martin Danahay (eds), *Victorian Animal Dreams* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2007), pp.15–34.
23. On the link between vision and cruelty, see Jonathan Burt, 'The Illumination of the Animal Kingdom: The Role of Light and Electricity in Animal Representation', *Society and Animals* 9.3 (2001), pp.203–228.
24. *Liverpool Mercury*, 28 January 1867.
25. *The Times*, 29 October 1835.
26. *Belfast-News-Letter*, 21 October 1871.
27. *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 1 October 1878; *Freeman's Journal*, 20 April 1864.
28. See 'Catching Animals' in Nigel Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002), pp.44–80.
29. Bernard Lightman, *Victorian Popularisers of Science: Designing Nature for New Audiences* (Chicago, 2007), pp.1–37.
30. Fyfe and Lightman, *Science in the Marketplace*, pp.1–19.
31. *Manchester Examiner*, cited in *Lancaster Gazette*, 6 April 1872.

1 The Lions of London

1. *Morning Chronicle*, 9 September 1823.
2. Fyfe and Lightman, *Science in the Marketplace*, pp.6–7.
3. Edward Bennett, *The Tower Menagerie* (London: Robert Jennings, 1829), p.xiv.
4. *Examiner*, 4 August 1822.
5. *Secret Comment: The Diaries of Gertrude Savile, 1721–1757* (Devon: Kingsbridge History Society, 1997), p.129.
6. *Examiner*, 11 October 1829.
7. The first newspaper advertisement I've found appears in February 1789. See *World*, 5 February 1789.
8. *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 12 November 1790.

9. *Morning Chronicle*, 16 January 1793; *Morning Chronicle*, 11 March 1831.
10. *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 12 November 1790; *Morning Herald*, 29 June 1793.
11. *Morning Post*, 20 September 1833; *The Times*, 2 March 1826.
12. *Morning Chronicle*, 16 January 1793; *The Times*, 9 February 1818.
13. Edward Cross, *Companion to the Royal Menagerie, Exeter 'Change* (London: Tyer and Honeyman, 1820), preface.
14. *The Fancy* (date unknown), p.678, Issue XXVII.
15. *Morning Post*, 9 August 1798.
16. *Morning Post*, 19 February 1779.
17. *Morning Chronicle*, 7 September 1807; 'Kendrick's Menagerie, 42 Piccadilly', in John Fillinham, *A Collection of Cuttings from Newspapers, Advertisements, Playbills, etc. VI–VIII Trained Animals, Menageries, etc.* (1860) (British Library General Reference Collection 1889.b1016).
18. Christopher Plumb describes the trade in animals in eighteenth-century London, situating this within a wider consumer culture. See 'Animal Commodities' in Christopher Plumb, *Exotic Animals in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, PhD Dissertation (University of Manchester, 2010), pp.36–102.
19. William Bullock, *A Companion to the London Museum* (London: Whittingham, 1816), p.iii.
20. Ibid., p.iv.
21. William Bullock, *A Concise and Easy Method of Preserving Objects of Natural History* (London, 1818), p.35. For a more detailed account on Bullock's display techniques see Susan Pearce, 'William Bullock: Collections and Exhibitions at the Egyptian Hall, London, 1816–25', *Journal of the History of Collections* 21:1 (2008), pp.17–35.
22. Jacques-Bernardin-Henri de Saint Pierre, *Mémoire sur la nécessité de joindre une ménagerie au Jardin National des Plantes de Paris* (Paris: Didot le Jeune, 1792). The animals from Versailles were initially going to be killed and stuffed. Saint-Pierre persuaded the Convention to grant them a reprieve with his passionate statement of the benefits of a menagerie and his touching descriptions of the surviving beasts.
23. For more on the French context, see 'Vive la liberté' in Louise Robbins, *Elephant Slaves and Pampered Parrots: Exotic Animals in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002), pp.206–230.
24. James Rennie, *The Menageries; Quadrupeds Described and Drawn from Living Subjects* (Boston: Lilly and Wait, 1832), Vol. II, pp.21–22.
25. For a detailed discussion of the aims, membership and divisions within the Zoological Society in the 1820s, see Adrian Desmond, 'The Making of Institutional Zoology in London, Part II', *History of Science* 23:3 (1985), pp.153–185.
26. 'Loss of the Ship Fame', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, January to June 1822, Vol. XCIV (London: Nichols and Son, 1822), p.171. According to Raffles, 'There was scarcely an unknown animal, bird, breast or fish or an interesting plant which we had not on board. A living tapir, a new species of tiger, splendid pheasants etc. all *domesticated* for the voyage'.
27. Thomas Allen, *A Guide to the Zoological Gardens and Museum* (London: Cowie and Strange, 1829), pp.3–4.

28. *Report of the Council and Auditors of the Zoological Gardens of London* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1843), p.6.
29. Ibid., 1840, p.16.
30. J.G. Children, *An Address Delivered at the Anniversary Meeting of the Zoological Club of the Linnaean Society* (London: Richard Taylor, 1827), pp.13–14.
31. *Report of the Council*, 1844, pp.14–15.
32. *Examiner*, 27 November 1831.
33. *Report of the Council*, 1833, p.7.
34. Children, *Address*, p.11.
35. This fact was acknowledged by a French visitors' guide from 1860, which remarked that 'The zoological collection of London owes nothing to the government, like the Jardin des Plantes of Paris: it is the result entirely of individual initiative'. See *Guide du Voyageur à Londres et aux environs* (Paris: Reclus, 1860), p.347.
36. *Report of the Council*, 1848, p.14.
37. Ibid., 1859, p.22.
38. Ibid., 1834, p.8.
39. Ibid., 1848, p.10.
40. Ibid., 1852, p.11.
41. Adrian Desmond, 'The Making of Institutional Zoology', p.225.
42. *Report of the Council*, 1840, p.26.
43. Ibid., 1858, p.13; *Essex Standard*, 2 February 1859.
44. Ibid., 1857, pp.11–12.
45. Adrian Desmond, 'The Making of Institutional Zoology', pp.227–229.
46. *A Picturesque Guide to The Regent's Park* (London: John Limbird, 1829), p.55.
47. In 1841, for example, 800 children from St James's associated charity and parochial schools visited the Zoological Gardens. See *The Era*, 19 September 1841.
48. *Northern Star*, 21 August 1841.
49. *Lloyd's Weekly London Newspaper*, 2 April 1848.
50. *Report of the Council*, 1852, p.8.
51. *Punch*, 31 August 1850; *The Northern Star and National Trades' Journal*, 17 August 1850; Louis Saint Mars, *The Hippopotamus Polka* (London: Charles Jefferys, 1851).
52. *Bell's Life in London*, 25 August 1850. For an analysis of the hippopotamus's reception see Andrew Flack, '"The Illustrious Stranger": Hippomania and the Nature of the Exotic', *Anthrozoos* 26:1 (2013), pp.43–59.
53. Ibid., 1854, p.5.
54. *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 22 May 1852.
55. *Morning Post*, 25 March 1833.
56. *Caledonian Mercury*, 5 July 1838; *Standard*, 28 January 1842; Ibid., 4 June 1844.
57. Robert Jones, '"The Sight of Creatures Strange to our Clime": London Zoo and the Consumption of the Exotic', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 2:1 (1997), pp.5–6.
58. *The Times*, 29 March 1853.
59. Handwritten note in *A Collection of Programmes*, Vol. I.
60. 'Surrey Zoological and Botanical Institution' in Ibid.
61. *Morning Chronicle*, 31 January 1831.

62. *Morning Post*, 27 March 1837; J.E. Warwick, *Description and History, with Anecdotes, of the Giraffes Now Exhibiting at the Surrey Zoological Gardens* (London: J. King, 1836).
63. *Daily News*, 11 January 1855.
64. *Morning Post*, 23 May 1837; Ibid., 27 May 1844.
65. *Morning Chronicle*, 24 August 1853; Ibid., 18 October 1855.
66. Poster in *A Collection of Programmes,* Vol. I.
67. *Morning Post*, 11 July 1837; *Standard*, 13 May 1845.
68. *Morning Chronicle*, 29 May 1855.
69. Printed admission ticket with name of recipient filled in by hand in *A Collection of Programmes*, Vol. I.
70. *Daily News*, 11 January 1855.
71. *A Catalogue of the Valuable Foreign Animals, Birds and Reptiles Forming the Entire Collection of the Royal Surrey Zoological Gardens* (London: H. Kemshead, 1855), in *A Collection of Programmes,* Vol. VII (London, 1851–1855).
72. 'A Zoological Auction' in Charles Dickens, *Household Words*, 12 January 1856, in *A Collection of Programmes*, Vol. VII.
73. 'Final Sale' in ibid.

2 Zoo, Community and Civic Pride

1. *Liverpool Mercury*, 20 June 1848. Rajah's first victim had been another keeper, Henry Andrews. He entered the elephant's den in December 1843, and was soon after 'found lying dead … under circumstances which rendered it very probable that he had exasperated the animal by ill-treatment and paid for his temerity with his life'. John Atkins testified at the ensuing inquest that all of Andrews' ribs were broken and that 'there was the mark of the elephant's foot upon his back'. See *Liverpool Mercury*, 29 December 1843.
2. Ibid.
3. *Liverpool Mercury*, 4 July 1848.
4. Ibid.
5. See, for example, 'Exotic Captives' in Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, pp.205–242; 'The Elite and the Invention of Zoos' and 'Imperial Glory' in Eric Baratay and Elisabeth Hardouin-Fugier (eds), *Zoo: A History of Zoological Gardens in the West* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), pp.73–130; Robert Jones, 'The Sight of Creatures Strange to our Clime', pp.1–26.
6. For a discussion of how provincial towns constructed themselves as centres of 'polite' sociability see 'The Town: Politeness and Place' in John Stobart, Andrew Hann and Victoria Morgan (eds), *Spaces of Consumption: Leisure and Shopping in the English Town, c.1680–1830* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp.57–85. For a discussion of the relationship between science and regional identity see Simon Naylor, *Regionalizing Science: Placing Knowledges in Victorian England* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2010), which explores scientific activities in nineteenth-century Cornwall; and Diarmid Finnegan, *Natural History Societies and Civic Culture in Victorian Scotland* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2009).
7. See, for example, John MacKenzie, 'The Second City of the Empire: Glasgow – Imperial Municipality' in Felix Driver and David Gilbert (eds), *Imperial Cities*

(Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp.215–237. MacKenzie argues that nineteenth-century Glaswegian identity had a strong imperial dimension, and that the city perceived itself both as Scottish and as intimately connected to the wider British Empire.

8. Catherine de Courcy, *Dublin Zoo: An Illustrated History* (Cork: The Collins Press, 2009), pp.1–4.
9. *Newcastle Courant*, 16 March 1838.
10. *Morning Post*, 13 December 1832.
11. *Birmingham Daily Post*, 15 May 1873.
12. The pattern for the foundation of zoological gardens mirrored the establishment of other civic institutions during the nineteenth century. As Fyfe and Lightman have noted: 'At the start of the century, Edinburgh and Dublin had been the most prominent alternative centres for polite and learned society, and they followed London in gaining an increasing range of sites catering to wider audiences. But from mid-century onward, the growth of such newly industrial cities as Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Glasgow and Belfast stimulated intense civic pride that encouraged the establishment of public museums, gardens and lecture halls'. Fyfe and Lightman, *Science in the Marketplace*, p.5.
13. John Langton, 'Urban growth and economic change: from the late seventeenth century to 1841' in D.M. Palliser (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.479; F.M.L. Thompson, 'Town and City' *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, Vol. I, Regions and Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp.1–86.
14. *Manchester Times*, 2 June 1838.
15. Ibid.
16. *Liverpool Mercury*, 7 February 1840.
17. *Caledonian Mercury*, 6 July 1839.
18. *Glasgow Herald*, 5 January 1844.
19. Samuel Alberti, 'Placing nature: natural history collections and their owners in nineteenth-century provincial England', *British Journal for the History of Science* 35:3 (2002), p.292.
20. Manchester Zoological Gardens, for example, was funded by the sale of '10,000 shares at £20 each'. See *Prospectus for establishing a Manchester Zoological, Botanical and Public Gardens* (Manchester: T. Sowler, 1836), Manchester Country Records Office, GB127.Broadsides/F1836.1.
21. Elizabeth Hanson has studied similar community efforts to buy animals in US zoos in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1914, for example, 'the Boston *Post* coordinated a campaign for the city's children to donate their pennies to purchase three retired vaudeville elephants for the new Franklin Park Zoo' mobilising support from 'tens of thousands of people across the spectrum of class and ethnicity'. See Elizabeth Hanson, *Animal Attractions: Nature on Display in American Zoos* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p.60.
22. *Bristol Mercury*, 14 July 1838.
23. 'Annual Report of 1845' in Royal Zoological Society of Ireland, *Proceedings of the Society as reported in Saunder's News-Letter, The Dublin Evening Post and the Freeman's Journal, 1840–1860* (Dublin: Council of the Zoological Society, 1908), pp.30–31.

24. Ibid., pp.33–34.
25. *Liverpool Mercury*, 31 January 1834.
26. Manchester Zoological Gardens exhorted 'the shareholders and gentlemen of this neighbourhood' to 'materially forward this undertaking without any injury to themselves, by a judicious thinning of their gardens and plantations', to give the grounds 'a more mature appearance than they would [have] for several years if planted with trees from the nursery'. See *Manchester Times*, 11 November 1837.
27. *Birmingham Daily Post*, 14 February 1876.
28. *List of the Animals in the Liverpool Zoological Gardens* (Liverpool: Ross and Nightingale, 1839), pp.26, 15, 25 and 10.
29. *Caledonian Mercury*, 22 April 1844.
30. Ibid., 29 August 1844.
31. *Liverpool Mercury*, 27 June 1834.
32. *Bristol Mercury*, 16 June 1838.
33. 'Annual Report of 1850', Royal Zoological Society of Ireland, *Proceedings of the Society*, p.65.
34. *Liverpool Mercury*, 27 November 1835.
35. *Caledonian Mercury*, 25 July 1844.
36. *Hull Packet*, 2 December 1842.
37. *Liverpool Mercury*, 22 April 1832.
38. *Caledonian Mercury*, 6 July 1839.
39. *Bristol Mercury*, 5 October 1839.
40. *Leeds Mercury*, 15 April 1843.
41. *Bristol Mercury*, 29 June 1839.
42. Ibid., 11 May 1844.
43. *Caledonian Mercury*, 20 May 1841; 'Annual Report of 1840', Royal Zoological Society of Ireland, *Proceedings of the Society*, pp.2–3.
44. Bristol and Clifton Zoological Gardens, *The Chimpanzee* (Bristol: Hutchings, 1838).
45. Walvin, *Leisure and Society*, p.31.
46. *Leeds Mercury*, 10 February 1838.
47. *Manchester Times*, 9 February 1838.
48. *Examiner*, 17 February 1839.
49. *Pall Mall Gazette*, 10 April 1869. For a discussion on the wider social agenda of the zoo, see Juliana Adelman, 'Animal Knowledge: Zoology and Class-ification in Nineteenth-Century Dublin', *Field Day Review* 5 (2009), pp.109–121.
50. 'Annual Report of 1859', Royal Zoological Society of Ireland, *Proceedings of the Society*, p.107.
51. Paul Hohenberg and Lynn Hollen Lees, *The Making of Urban Europe, 1000–1994* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp.275–282.
52. *Morning Chronicle*, 18 January 1833.
53. *Guide to the Zoological Gardens of Belle Vue*, 1878, Chetham's Library, Manchester, F.4.3.3.2.
54. *Manchester Times*, 26 November 1842.
55. *Leeds Mercury*, cited in *Morning Chronicle*, 8 November 1842.
56. *Caledonian Mercury*, 9 January 1857.
57. *Glasgow Herald*, 24 November 1858.
58. *Caledonian Mercury*, 7 August 1858.

59. *Hull Packet*, 30 August 1861.
60. Ibid., 11 April and 25 April 1862.
61. *Liverpool Mercury*, 31 August 1864.
62. Ibid., 1 September 1864.
63. Ibid., 3 October 1864.
64. Ibid., 19 October 1864. Liverpool did acquire a second zoological gardens in 1883, after complaints that 'the want' of such an institution was 'unpardonable in a place that presents such extraordinary facilities for supplying it'. This new gardens appears to have had a short life, however, for in 1886 the zoo closed following financial difficulties and its animals were auctioned off. See *Liverpool Mercury*, 16 June 1883 and 11 March 1886.

3 Elephants in the High Street

1. *Blackwood's Magazine*, February 1855, pp.189–190.
2. For a discussion of other popular nineteenth-century entertainments see Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure and the Industrial Revolution c.1780–1880* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1980). For a study of ethnographic spectacles, see Bernth Lindfors (ed.), *Africans on Stage: Studies in Ethnological Show Business* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999). For a study of panoramas, see Ralph Hyde, *Panoramania: The Art and Entertainment of the All-Embracing View* (London: Trefoil Publications 1988).
3. Walvin, *Leisure and Society*, p.9.
4. Cunningham, *Leisure and the Industrial Revolution*, p.37.
5. Andrew Hobbs, 'When the Provincial Press was the National Press (*c*.1836–*c*.1900)', *The International Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, Series 2 5:1 (2009), pp.16–43.
6. For a discussion of the issues surrounding correspondence to magazines and newspapers in the nineteenth century, see Patricia Anderson, *The Printed Image and the Transformation of Popular Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p.139.
7. Kevin Tomlinson and David Barnaby (eds), *The Log Book of Wombwell's No.1 Menagerie 1848–1871, as Retained by George Percival, Driver of the Elephant Wagon* (Manchester: ZGSM Publications, 1989), pp.32, 62 and 89.
8. Some of the incidents described correspond to articles in contemporary newspapers. The announcement of Maharajah's arrival, for instance, corresponds to an article in *The Era*, which reports that 'a very fine specimen of the Asiatic Elephant… was safely landed at Southampton and was purchased by Mr Fairgrieve, the acting proprietor of the Queen's Menagerie (Wombwell's Royal No.1)'. The rather more unusual comment, 'serpent swallowed crocodile' (Darlington, 1853) is corroborated by an article in the *Durham Chronicle* describing how a boa constrictor in Wombwell's show swallowed one of two crocodiles with whom it had been 'carefully wrapped in flannel' as protection against the cold weather. See *The Era*, 7 June 1878; and *Durham Chronicle*, cited in *Examiner*, 24 December 1853.
9. Glynis Ridley, *Clara's Grand Tour* (New York: Atlantic Books, 2004).
10. *Ipswich Journal*, 3 May 1800.
11. Ibid., 11 December 1841.

12. *Wrexham Advertiser*, 2 March 1867.
13. Advertisements for menagerie employees regularly appeared in *The Era*, the prime theatrical paper of the period. These illustrate the wide range of jobs performed in menageries, from lamplighters to lion tamers. In 1865, for example, Manders' advertised for 'a Steady, Competent Man to look after Seven Horses'; in 1866, the same menagerist advertised for 'a man fully competent to manage naphtha lamps'; and in 1870 Edmonds posted an advertisement for 'an Elephant and Animal Trainer'. See *The Era*, 5 March 1865; Ibid., 25 February 1866; Ibid., 1 June 1870.
14. *Hampshire Telegraph*, 26 June 1867.
15. Bostock, E.H., *Menageries, Circuses and Theatres* (London: Chapman, 1927), pp.1–2.
16. *The Era*, 24 November 1850. Wombwell bequeathed his Menagerie No.1 to his wife, Ann, his Menagerie No.2 to his niece Harriet Edmonds and her husband James, and his Menagerie No.3 to his nephew, George. See TNA, *Will of George Wombwell, Gentleman, Commercial Road, Middlesex*, PROB 11/2126/233.
17. *North Wales Chronicle*, 6 June 1848.
18. *Examiner*, 19 November 1853.
19. *Bristol Mercury*, 30 January 1858.
20. Tomlinson and Barnaby (eds), *Log Book*, pp.18–21, 78–83.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., pp.37, 55 and 84.
23. Charles Mackie, *Norfolk Annals: A Chronological Record of Remarkable Events in the Nineteenth Century* (Norwich: Office of the Norfolk Chronicle, 1901), Vol. I, pp.21, 64, 69, 96, 103, 111, 129, 138, 151, 154, 162, 167, 180, 211, 233, 256, 270 and 304; Vol. II, pp.25, 76, 109, 116, 144, 170 and 227. Norwich also enjoyed visits from Batty's circus in 1839 and from American lion tamers Carter and Van Amburgh in 1841, 1843 and 1844. See Ibid., Vol. I, pp.258, 266, 269, 282 and 288.
24. Tomlinson and Barnaby (eds), *Log Book*, pp.20 and 31.
25. Ibid.
26. *Liverpool Mercury*, 8 February 1850; Ibid., 3 February 1854.
27. *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0, 20 February 2014), September 1828, trial of JOHN CLARK (t18280911–66).
28. *Cheshire Observer*, 20 April 1867.
29. *Dundee Courier*, 22 November 1873.
30. *Bristol Mercury*, 17 July 1875.
31. *Bristol Mercury*, 30 March 1867.
32. *Dundee Courier*, 19 December 1873.
33. *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 17 September 1859.
34. Beswick and Watton School Records, Logbook (1866–1903), East Riding County Records Office, Champney Collection, SL247/1.
35. *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 8 June 1883.
36. *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 8 November 1851.
37. *Cassell's Popular Natural History* (London: Cassell, Petter and Galpin, 1860), Vol. I, p.20.
38. *Preston Guardian*, 12 January 1856. Mrs Wombwell subsequently cited this letter in her publicity.

39. *Illustrated London News*, 6 November 1847.
40. Though contemporary illustrations often show different classes of people visiting menageries at the same time, written accounts suggest that social segregation was the norm, with different rates charged at different times of the day.
41. *Birmingham Daily Post*, 27 September 1867; *Hull Packet*, 11 October 1861.
42. *Derby Mercury*, 6 November 1861; *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 10 September 1859.
43. Mark Judd, 'The oddest combination of town and country': popular culture and the London fairs, 1800–60' in John K. Walton and James Walvin (eds), *Leisure in Britain, 1780–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983).
44. Thomas Frost, *Old Showmen and the Old London Fairs* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1875), pp.195.
45. *Manchester Times*, 19 April 1854.
46. *Leicester Chronicle*, 13 October 1866.
47. *Daily News*, 14 April 1846.
48. *Caledonian Mercury*, 5 January 1854; *Hull Packet*, 12 October 1877.
49. *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 17 September 1859.
50. William Hone, *The Every-Day Book* (London: William Tegg, 1826), Vol. II, 5 September, p.1180.
51. Cunningham, *Leisure and the Industrial Revolution*, p.25; Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*, p.285.
52. Séamas ó Maitiú, *The Humours of Donnybrook* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1995), p.44.
53. *The Fairs Act 1871* (http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/34–35/12).
54. *Leeds Mercury*, 9 November 1839.
55. *Birmingham Daily Post*, 2 June 1870.
56. *Glasgow Herald*, 30 May 1871. Though in this instance it was the position of the menagerie rather than its content that generated the most annoyance – another complainant described the establishment as 'a respectable but a noisy one'. See *Glasgow Herald*, 27 May 1871.
57. *The Era*, 13 March 1864.
58. Fyfe and Lightman (eds), *Science in the Marketplace*, p.1.
59. Anderson, *The Printed Image*, p.20.
60. Diana and Geoffrey Hindley, *Advertising in Victorian England, 1837–1901* (London: Wayland Publishers, 1972), p.10.
61. *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 15 May 1869.
62. *Liverpool Mercury*, 22 December 1866.
63. Anderson, *The Printed Image*, p.2. Printers regularly advertised in *The Era* for the business of menagerie and circus owners. T.C. Barlow's 'Steam Colour Printing and Engraving Works' publicised their 'ANIMAL POSTERS in Colours (very effective)' in 1871, while C.W Adcock printed a testimonial from Alexander Fairgrieve praising the 'taste, tact and thorough efficiency' of his work. See *The Era*, 3 July 1870 and 22 October 1871.
64. *Liverpool Mercury*, 2 January 1818.
65. Manchester County Records Office Ref: GB127.Broadsides/FND.8.D; *Wombwell's Mammoth Menagerie* (A. Whitfield: Plymouth, 1880–1890?), John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera, Animals on Show 3 (23).

66. Benjamin Schmidt has noted the ubiquity of palm tree imagery as a symbol of 'a vaguely situated generically tropical culture'. See Benjamin Schmidt, 'Collecting Global Icons: The Case of the Exotic Parasol' in Daniela Bleichmar and Peter Mancall (eds), *Collecting Across Cultures: Material Exchange in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), pp.31–57.
67. *Handbill for the Menagerie of Earl James and Sons*, John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera, Animals on Show 1 (25). The estimated date of the handbill is 1820–1830. A contemporary newspaper report places James and his bonassus in Exeter in August 1825. See *Caledonian Mercury*, 20 August 1825.
68. Manchester County Records Office, Ref: GB127.Broadsides/FND.8.D.
69. *Hull Packet*, 13 October 1843.
70. *North Wales Chronicle*, 24 April 1869; Handbill for the *Royal National Menagerie* (Plymouth: Creber, 1870), John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera, Circuses 2 (23). Although the date given on the catalogue is 1870, contemporary newspaper reports suggest that Madam Jumbo toured between 1883 and 1886. See *Hull Packet*, 5 October 1883, and *Bristol Mercury* 20 July 1886.
71. *The Era*, 4 April 1852.
72. *Hampshire Telegraph*, 11 July 1831.
73. Ibid., 11 July 1842.
74. *Glasgow Herald*, 8 July 1822.
75. Jones, 'The Sight of Creatures Strange to our Clime', p.7.
76. *Leeds Mercury*, 3 November 1833.
77. *Hull Packet*, 10 March 1818.
78. *Hampshire Telegraph*, 4 July 1831.
79. Handbill for Hylton's menagerie (Lambeth: J.W. Peel, 1842), in Fillinham, *A collection of cuttings*.
80. *Hull Packet*, 24 January 1826.
81. *Dundee Courier*, 4 September 1873.
82. *Liverpool Mercury*, 25 February 1867.
83. Frost, *Old Showmen*, p.259.
84. George Sanger reports that by 1850, 'gas was becoming quite a common illuminant'. See George Sanger, *Seventy Years a Showman* (London: Dutton, 1927), p.161.
85. *Leeds Mercury*, 2 November 1839; *Ipswich Journal*, 4 December 1841.
86. *Glasgow Herald*, 2 November 1871.
87. Mackie, *Norfolk Annals*, Vol. II, 26 December 1867, p.109.
88. *Liverpool Mercury*, 8 February 1850.
89. *Bristol Mercury*, 3 February 1855.
90. *Liverpool Mercury*, 1 January 1867.
91. For a discussion of the sensory aspects of menageries in the eighteenth century, see Christopher Plumb, 'Reading Menageries: using eighteenth-century print sources to historicise the sensorium of menagerie spectators and their encounters with exotic animals', *European Review of History* 17:2 (2010), pp.265–286.
92. *Birmingham Daily Post*, 10 June 1870.

4 Animals, Wholesale and Retail

1. *Daily News*, 27 May 1850.
2. *Glasgow Herald,* 10 June 1850.
3. Rennie, *The Menageries*, Vol. I, p.12.
4. For a discussion of exotic animal dealers in eighteenth-century London, see 'Chapter 1, Animal Commodities' in Plumb *Exotic Animals*, pp.36–102. For discussion of the evolution of this trade in nineteenth-century Europe and the USA, with a particular focus on Hamburg dealer Carl Hagenbeck, see Rothfels, 'Catching Animals' in *Savages and Beasts*, pp.44–80; and Richard W. Flint, 'American Showmen and European Dealers' in R.J. Hoage and William A. Deiss (eds), *New Worlds, New Animals: From Menagerie to Zoological Park in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp.97–108.
5. *Report of the Council*, 1851, p.14.
6. On the close links between empire and specimen collecting see Narisara Murray, 'From Birds of Paradise to Drosophila: The Changing Roles of Scientific Specimens to 1920' in Kathleen Kete (ed.), *A Cultural History of Animals in the Age of Empire* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), pp.113–134.
7. *Report of the Council*, 1836, p.16; Ibid., 1858, p.19.
8. Arthur Patterson, *Notes on Pet Monkeys and how to Manage them* (London: Upcott Gill, 1888), pp.96–97.
9. Johann Baptista von Spix and Carl Friedrich von Martius, *Travels in Brazil in the Years 1817–1820* (London: Longman and Hurst, 1824), Vol.I, p.212. On the wider relationship between collecting, empire and identity, see Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Conquest and Collecting in the East, 1750–1850* (London: Fourth Estate, 2005).
10. *Report of the Council*, 1844, p.13; Ibid., 1850, p.22; Ibid., 1853, p.18; Ibid., 1858, p.32.
11. Ibid., 1833, p.13; Ibid., 1834, p.12; Ibid., 1835, p.14; Ibid., 1836, p.16; Ibid., 1838, p.14; Ibid., 1850, p.4.
12. *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 15 May 1853; 'The Pet of the Regiment', *The Animal World*, June 1882, p.90.
13. *Report of the Council*, 1848, p.15; Ibid., 1855, p.19; Ibid., 1857, p.12.
14. *Morning Chronicle*, 18 March 1843.
15. For a discussion of the relationship between trade and empire in Victorian Britain, see Martin Lynn, 'British Policy, Trade and Informal Empire in the Mid-Nineteenth Century' in Andrew Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp.101–121.
16. Rennie, *The Menageries*, Vol. I, p.12.
17. *Report of the Council*, 1851, p.20; Ibid., 1857, p.19.
18. Handwritten letter from James White to Edward Cross, dated June 7 1833, in *A Collection of Programmes*, Vol. I, British Library, London.
19. See Charles Waterton, *Wanderings in South America* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2005).
20. *Report of the Council*, 1856, p.17; Rennie, *The Menageries*, Vol. I, p.24.
21. *Report of the Council*, 1842, p.15; Ibid., 1843, p.4.
22. *Morning Chronicle*, 8 January 1856.

23. *Morning Post*, 12 September 1868.
24. Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts*, p.57.
25. *A Popular Description and History of the Giraffes or Camelopards now exhibiting in the Zoological Gardens, Regent's Park* (London: T. Hurst, 1836), pp.3–5.
26. *Hampshire Advertiser*, 6 May 1871.
27. Handwritten letter from George Willson to Edward Cross, 29 July 1833, in *A Collection of Programmes*, Vol. I.
28. *Daily News*, 12 August 1869. See also 'Imperial Glory' in Baratay and Hardouin-Fugier, *Zoo*, p.120.
29. Samuel Alberti, 'Objects and the Museum', *Isis* 96:4 (2005), p.566.
30. John MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature*, p.168.
31. *Liverpool Mercury*, 1 February 1869.
32. 'List of the Animals in the Gardens of the Zoological Society', *Quarterly Review*, June 1836, p.316.
33. *Report of the Council*, 1836, p.16.
34. *Preston Guardian*, 11 October 1851.
35. *The Era*, 28 January 1872.
36. *Daily News*, 1 April 1854.
37. For more on the role of indigenous people in the creation of natural knowledge and the procurement of specimens – as well as their representation in (or omission from) European accounts – see 'Indian Sagacity' and 'African Magi, Slave Poisoners' in Susan Scott Parrish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), pp.215–306; Sujit Sivasundaram, 'Trading Knowledge: The East India Company's Elephants in India and Britain', *The Historical Journal* 48:1 (2005), pp.27–63; and Fa-Ti Fan, 'Victorian naturalists in China: science and informal empire', *The British Journal for the History of Science* 36 (2003), pp.1–26.
38. *The Era*, 8 March 1884.
39. *Morning Chronicle*, 25 October 1838.
40. The processes involved in collecting exotic beasts have been examined in other European contexts. Louise Robbins discusses the practical difficulties of transporting exotic animals in eighteenth-century France, through a case study of Louis XVI's attempts to procure a zebra for the menagerie at Versailles, while Michael Allin chronicles the journey of a giraffe that walked to Paris from Marseilles as a present from Mohammad Ali Pasha of Egypt to Charles X. Nigel Rothfels has studied the collecting channels employed by Hamburg-based animal trader Carl von Hagenbeck, who became one of the premier animal merchants in the world at the end of the nineteenth century. See 'Live Cargo' in Robbins, *Elephant Slaves and Pampered Parrots*, pp.9–67 and 44–80; Michael Allin, *Zarafa: A Giraffe's True Story* (New York: Delta, 1998); Rothfels, 'Catching Animals' in *Savages and Beasts*, pp.44–80.
41. *Standard*, 5 April 1834.
42. *Daily News*, 28 October 1853.
43. *Graphic*, 27 January 1872.
44. *The Times*, 21 September 1836.
45. *Glasgow Herald*, 10 June 1850.
46. *The Times*, 20 May 1850.
47. *Preston Guardian*, 29 July 1854.

48. *Hull Packet*, 29 November 1869.
49. *Manchester Times*, 11 November 1837.
50. *Glasgow Herald*, 26 July 1869.
51. *Bristol Mercury*, 22 May 1841.
52. *Daily News*, 28 August 1855.
53. On the history of steam travel at sea, see Stephen Fox, *The Ocean Railway* (London: Harper Collins, 2003).
54. *Morning Post*, 12 April 1849.
55. *Hampshire Advertiser*, 9 September 1843.
56. *Daily News*, 28 October 1853.
57. William Walton, *The Alpaca: Its Naturalisation in the British Isles considered as a National Benefit* (New York: Office of the New York Farmer and Mechanic, 1845), p.15.
58. *Liverpool Mercury*, 1 February 1869.
59. *Morning Chronicle*, 9 January 1856.
60. For further discussion of contemporary hunting practices see 'Imperial Glory' in Baratay and Hardouin-Fugier, *Zoo*, pp.113–130; 'The Imperial Hunt in India' in Mackenzie, *The Empire of Nature*, pp.167–199); and 'The Thrill of the Chase' in Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, pp.243–290.
61. See 'Catching Animals' in Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts*, p.44–80.
62. *Glasgow Herald*, 10 June 1850.
63. Philip Lutley Sclater, *Guide to the Gardens of the Zoological Society of London, Fourth Edition* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1860), p.52.
64. *Liverpool Mercury*, 3 November 1866. Such graphic accounts of the capture and slaughter of wild animals ceased to be considered acceptable by the European public in the early decades of the twentieth century, and started to be consciously suppressed by zoo directors. Writing to the wild animal dealer Carl Hagenbeck in 1902, for instance, William Hornaday, director of the Bronx Zoo, stated that 'I have been greatly interested in the fact that your letter gives me regarding the capture of the rhinoceroses [for the institution]; but we must keep very still about the forty large Indian rhinoceroses being killed in capturing the four young ones. If that should get into the newspapers, either here or in London, there would be things published in condemnation of the whole business of capturing wild animals for exhibition'. See Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts*, p.67.
65. *Caledonian Mercury*, 1 January 1820.
66. *Hampshire Telegraph*, 29 July 1822.
67. *North Wales Chronicle*, 29 July 1834.
68. *Liverpool Mercury*, 31 December 1852.
69. *Caledonian Mercury*, 11 October 1841.
70. *Freeman's Journal*, 10 August 1864.
71. *Liverpool Mercury*, 12 October 1852.
72. *Caledonian Mercury*, 12 January 1854.
73. *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 18 February 1870.
74. *North Wales Chronicle*, 1 December 1835.
75. *Liverpool Mercury*, 3 February 1866.
76. *Manchester Times*, 10 April 1850.
77. *Northern Star*, 11 August 1838.
78. *Report of the Council*, 1849, p.9.

79. Ibid., 1851, p.11.
80. Ibid., 1855, p.12.
81. Frost, *Old Showmen*, pp.275–276.
82. *Report of the Council*, 1844, p.1.
83. *Caledonian Mercury*, 26 November 1849.
84. *Morning Post*, 16 January 1838.
85. *The Era*, 22 December 1882.
86. 'A two-horned Rhinoceros, for which [London] Zoo paid 1250*l*' in 1872 could 'be bought at 100*l*' in 1884, 'plenty of them coming from Malacca and Singapore to different parts of Europe'. See *Standard*, 2 August 1884.
87. *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1 December 1885.
88. Efforts to conserve African animals began seriously in the 1890s, though they were initially aimed primarily at preserving game for hunting. See MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature*, pp.200–224. The Prince of Wales (the future Edward VII) visited India in 1875–1876 and spent much of his time hunting. On his return he presented both living and dead animals to the Zoological Society, including four 'first-class' elephants, a tiger cub, 'the mother of which the Prince himself shot', and 'the skull of a large elephant' shot in Ceylon. See *The Times*, 22 May 1876 and 6 February 1877.
89. *Daily News,* 29 July 1884.
90. 'Traffic in Wild Animals', *The Animal World*, July 1882, p.103.

5 Seeing the Elephant

1. *Bristol Mercury*, 6 February 1858.
2. *Hull Packet*, 5 August 1870.
3. See Lightman, *Popularisers*; Fyfe and Lightman, *Science in the Marketplace*; and Kember et al., *Popular Exhibitions*.
4. Martyn Lyons, 'New Readers in the Nineteenth Century: Women, Children, Workers' in Guiglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier (eds), *A History of Reading in the West* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1999), p.313.
5. Lightman, *Popularisers*, pp.30–1.
6. On eighteenth-century natural history texts, and the increasingly naturalistic portrayal of animals in children's stories, see Jane Spencer, 'Creating Animal Experience in Late Eighteenth-Century Narrative', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 33:4 (2010), pp.469–486.
7. Lightman, *Popularisers*, p.20.
8. Anon., *The Zoological Keepsake* (London: Marsh and Miller 1830).
9. Aileen Fyfe, 'Reading Natural History at the British Museum and the *Pictorial Museum*' in Fyfe and Lightman (eds), *Science in the Marketplace*, p.199.
10. Lightman, *Popularisers*, p.169.
11. J.G. Wood, *Sketches and Anecdotes of Animal Life* (London: Routledge, 1855), pp.54 and 17. The story about the tipsy elephant was reported in the papers in 1854. According to the *Daily News*, the animal vanished during the night and was found in the early afternoon 'lying fast asleep in the wine cellar of the hotel', surrounded by broken bottles and looking 'the picture of contentment'. See *Daily News*, 13 September 1854.
12. Ibid., p.67.

13. Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp.394–395.
14. Alberti, 'Placing Nature', p.305.
15. William Dowling, *A Popular Natural History of Quadrupeds and Birds* (London: James Burns, 1838), p.150.
16. *Morning Chronicle*, 16 May 1833.
17. Nicholas Vigors and William Broderip, *Guide to the Gardens of the Zoological Society* (London: Richard Taylor, 1829), pp.2 and 8–9.
18. Allen, *A Guide to the Zoological Gardens*, p.13.
19. Ibid., p.11.
20. James Bishop, *Henry and Emma's Visit to the Zoological Gardens in the Regent's Park* (London: Dean and Munday, 1835).
21. Ibid., pp.27 and 29.
22. Ibid., p.35.
23. Dowling, *A Popular Natural History*, pp.3–4.
24. Ibid., p.159.
25. For a discussion of visitor responses and the sources we can use to recover them, see Victoria Carroll, 'The Natural History of Visiting: Responses to Charles Waterton and Walton Hall', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Science* 35 (2004), pp.31–6.
26. *Liverpool Mercury*, 5 July 1833.
27. *Bristol Mercury*, 18 September 1858.
28. *Caledonian Mercury*, 22 April 1842.
29. Leigh Hunt, 'A Visit to the Zoological Gardens', *New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* (London: Henry Colburn, 1836), Part II, p.481. For a discussion of visitor behaviour in modern zoos, see Gareth Davey, 'Visitor Behaviour in Zoos: A Review', *Anthrozoos* 19:2 (2006), pp.143–157, and Bob Mullan and Gary Marvin, *Zoo Culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), p.133. Mullan and Marvin state that most zoo visits last for less than two hours: 'unless there is some particular activity in a cage or enclosure, or unless the animal is a special favourite, it seems that, for the majority of people, watching consists of merely registering that they have seen something as they quickly move past it'.
30. Dowling, *A Popular Natural History*, p.2.
31. *Morning Chronicle*, 4 September 1849.
32. *Freeman's Journal*, 30 November 1843.
33. *Freeman's Journal*, 7 December 1843.
34. Elizabeth Hanson notes, for example, that American zoos 'were planned in a way to distinguish them from earlier menageries, which were considered disorderly'. See Hanson, *Animal Attractions*, p. 6.
35. *Preston Guardian*, 20 July 1850.
36. *Derby Mercury*, 18 January 1854.
37. *Glasgow Herald*, 29 November 1850.
38. *Liverpool Mercury*, 25 February 1867.
39. J.G. Wood's popular *Common Objects of the Country* (1858), for example, cost one shilling per copy in its first edition, while the *Pictorial Museum of Animated Nature* retailed at 3d per issue. An 1876 guide to Dublin Zoological Gardens was 'sold at the moderate figure of sixpence'. See Lightman, *Popularisers*,

p.174; Fyfe, 'Reading Natural History', p.199; *Freeman's Journal*, 29 September 1876.
40. *Ipswich Journal*, 3 May 1800.
41. *Wrexham Advertiser*, 2 March 1867.
42. James Bostock, *Visitors' Guide or Descriptive Catalogue of The Great Show of the World, Bostock and Wombwell's Royal National Menagerie* (Nottingham, 1882), p.1.
43. Ibid., p.1.
44. Ibid., p.5.
45. Ibid., p.7 and 5.
46. *Liverpool Mercury*, 28 January 1859.
47. *North Wales Chronicle*, 7 November 1863.
48. *The Era*, 13 September 1868.
49. *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 9 October 1868.
50. *Northern Star*, 29 December 1838.
51. *Belfast News-Letter*, 5 May 1859.
52. *North Wales Chronicle*, 16 June 1864.
53. For a discussion of changing conceptions of childhood in nineteenth-century Britain, see Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500* (Harlow, 2005), p.58.
54. *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 21 May 1869.
55. *Hampshire Telegraph*, 5 August 1848.
56. *Liverpool Mercury*, 30 January 1818; Ibid., 19 February 1847; *Derby Mercury*, 3 November 1852.
57. *Liverpool Mercury*, 26 February 1868; *Hull Packet*, 20 October 1865.
58. *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 11 October 1867.
59. 'Collins' Letter about Polito's Menagerie', in Charles Edward Herbert Orpen, *Anecdotes of the Deaf and Dumb* (London: Robert Tims, 1836), pp.413–415.
60. Robbins, *Elephant Slaves and Pampered Parrots*, pp.169–170.
61. Henry Salt, *Animals' Rights Considered in Relation to Social Progress* (London: Macmillan, 1894), p.40.
62. *Caledonian Mercury*, 4 February 1862.
63. Fyfe and Lightman, *Science in the Marketplace*, pp.13–14; Kember, Plunkett and Sullivan, *Popular Exhibitions, Science and Showmanship*, p.5.
64. Rennie, *The Menageries*, Vol. I, p.11.

6 Cruelty and Compassion

1. This was very high. By way of contrast, when Mr Fairgrieve auctioned off his entire menagerie two years earlier, in 1872, his large male elephant sold for just £680. See *Glasgow Herald*, 10 April 1872.
2. *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 27 November 1874; Nottingham County Records Office C/QSM 1/51: Quarter Sessions minute book 30 June 1873 – 23 October 1876.
3. 'A Measure of Compassion' in Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, pp.125–166.
4. Thomas, *Man and the* Natural *World*, pp.180–182.
5. Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907), p.311.

6. See 'Cruelty in the Factory Age' in Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast*, pp.15–38. See also 'The Undermining of Popular Recreations' in Robert Malcomson (ed.), *Popular Recreations in English Society 1700–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp.89–117. Malcolmson argues that 'industry' came to be increasingly prized in the late eighteenth century. In this new moral climate, popular recreations of all kinds came to be seen as unnecessary distractions from labour, and an impediment to productivity.
7. See Hilda Kean, *Animal Rights: Political and Social Change in Britain since 1800* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998), pp.30–31, and Diana Donald, '"Beastly Sights": The Treatment of Animals as a Moral Theme in Representations of London, c.1820–1850', *Art History* 22.4 (1999), p.516.
8. Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast*, pp.15–38.
9. RSPCA, *Sixty-First Annual Report* (London: C. Beckett, 1885), p.4; *Morning Post*, 8 May 1850.
10. Great Britain Parliament, *Cruelty to Animals Act* 1876 [39 & 40 Victoria, c. 77].
11. *Derby Mercury*, 15 June 1842.
12. For a more detailed history of the RSPCA, see Brian Harrison, 'Animals and the State in Nineteenth-Century England', *English Historical Review* 88 (1973), pp.786–820.
13. Brian Harrison, 'Religion and Recreation in Nineteenth-Century England', *Past and Present* 38 (1967), p.102.
14. Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, pp.144–148.
15. *Morning Chronicle*, 8 July 1845.
16. *Morning Post*, 5 August 1854.
17. *Standard*, 11 June 1849.
18. RSPCA, *Fifty-First Annual Report* (London: C. Beckett and Sons, 1875), pp.4–5.
19. Ibid., pp.43–45.
20. *To the Children of Calcutta: On Cruelty* (Calcutta: Thacker Spink and Co., 1872), pp.22–24.
21. See 'Dreamworlds of the Bourgeois Interior: Domesticity and the Dog-Care Book' in Kathleen Kete, *The Beast in the Boudoir: Petkeeping in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1994), pp.76–96.
22. See 'Prize Pets' in Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, pp.82–124.
23. *Daily News*, 13 April 1846.
24. *Bradford Observer*, 26 July 1849.
25. Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast*, p.18. For a discussion of the ethical motivations for adopting a vegetarian diet, see 'Beasts and Saints' in James Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians: The Vegetarian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Tauris, 2007), pp.88–110.
26. *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 30 July 1825.
27. *Morning Chronicle*, 28 July 1825.
28. *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 30 July 1825.
29. 'Great Fight between The Lion Nero and Six Dogs', Warwick, Warwick County Records Office, CR1097/330/p.353 part VII.
30. *Caledonian Mercury*, 1 August 1825.
31. *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 30 July 1825.
32. Ibid., 6 August 1825.

33. *Morning Chronicle*, 28 July 1825.
34. *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 30 July 1825.
35. Hone, *The Every-Day Book*, July 26, 1825, pp.994–995.
36. *Liverpool Mercury*, 29 July 1825.
37. *Examiner*, 21 July 1825.
38. *Morning Chronicle*, 28 July 1825.
39. Ibid.
40. *Liverpool Mercury*, 29 July 1825.
41. *Morning Post*, 1 August 1825.
42. Ibid., 8 May 1850.
43. *Morning Post*, 22 February 1826.
44. *Birmingham Daily Post*, 3 September 1872.
45. Ibid., 30 December 1869.
46. Ibid.
47. *Liverpool Mercury*, 5 January 1870.
48. *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 3 January 1870.
49. *Birmingham Daily Post*, 30 December 1869.
50. *Leeds Mercury*, 5 December 1874.
51. 'Great Britain Parliament, *Cruelty to Animals Act* (1835) [5 & 6 William IV c. 59]. A further statute in 1849 updated the animal cruelty legislation, but simply repeated the passages defining 'animal' and banning fights. See Great Britain Parliament, *Cruelty to Animals Act* (1849) [12 & 13 Victoria c. 92].
52. *Leeds Mercury*, 5 December 1874.
53. 'The Protection of Wild Birds', *The Animal World*, March 1876, p.35. On the use of birds in millinery, see 'Writing for the Birds' in Barbara Gates, *Kindred Nature: Victorian and Edwardian Women Embrace the Living World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp.114–124.
54. *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 3 January 1870.
55. 'Cruelty to Wild Animals', *The Animal World*, January 1875, p.3.
56. *Leeds Mercury*, 5 December 1874.
57. *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 3 January 1870.
58. *Leeds Mercury*, 12 December 1874.
59. 'Animals in Menageries', *The Animal World*, February 1875, p.61.
60. *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 19 January 1884.
61. 'Caging Large Animals for Exhibition', *The Animal World*, December 1880, p.177.
62. *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 27 November 1874.
63. *Manchester Times*, 1 January 1870.
64. RSPCA, *Fifty-First Annual Report*, p.29.
65. *Hull Packet*, 19 October 1877.
66. *Derby Mercury*, 27 October 1880.
67. 'Visits to the Zoological Gardens', *The Animal World*, September 1876, pp.129–130.
68. The *Wild Animals in Captivity Protection Act* of 1900 stated that 'Any person shall be guilty of an offence who, whilst an animal is in captivity or close confinement ... shall ... cause or permit to be caused any unnecessary suffering to such animal'. The 1925 Act created a Committee with the power 'to prohibit, restrict, modify or suspend any particular exhibition of a performing animal in any case in which they consider that there is cruelty to

the animal'. See Great Britain Parliament, *Wild Animals in Captivity Protection Act* (1900) [63 & 64 Victoria c. 33.] and Great Britain Parliament, *Protection of Animals, &c., Bill* (1922), pp.7–16. On legal protection for performing animals in the early twentieth century see David Wilson, 'Racial Prejudice and the Performing Animals Controversy in Early Twentieth-Century Britain', *Society and Animals* 17 (2009), pp.149–165.

69. *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 9 February 1884.
70. Diana Donald has highlighted the exclusion of big game overseas from the rise in compassion towards animals in the early nineteenth century, noting how 'in the very decades when metropolitan reformers, prompted by religion, humanitarianism and feminine sensibilities, were introducing laws to protect domestic animals in Britain, hunters in the colonies tacitly abandoned the sporting protocols which had controlled and restrained the killing of wild species in the home country'. See Donald, *Picturing Animals*, p.178.
71. Leigh Hunt, 'A Visit to the Zoological Gardens', p.490.
72. *Bristol Mercury*, 4 September 1841.
73. *Illustrated London News*, 15 July 1865; *Derby Mercury*, 8 March 1882.
74. *Bristol Mercury*, 27 February 1882.
75. Ibid.
76. *Standard*, 21 February 1882.
77. For a discussion of the ways in which Jumbo's departure represented a symbolic loss to London Zoo, see Robert Jones, 'The Sight of Creatures Strange to our Clime', pp.16–20; Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, pp.232–233.
78. *Birmingham Daily Post*, 3 March 1882.
79. *Morning Post*, 1 March 1882.
80. 'Jumbo', *The Animal World*, March 1884, p.34.
81. *Leeds Mercury*, 4 March 1882.
82. 'Jumbo', *The Animal World*, March 1884, p.34.
83. *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 19 March 1882.
84. *Standard*, 8 March 1882.
85. Ibid.
86. *Hull Packet*, 17 March 1882.
87. *Derby Mercury*, 8 March 1882.
88. *Morning Post*, 1 March 1882. Ironically, the sale of Jumbo actually raised the Society enough money to build a new reptile house, much to the chagrin of the RSPCA, which considered 'pythons, who insist on torturing domestic animal for their food…wretched substitutes for an elephant that spent his days giving pleasure to generations of children'. See 'Jumbo', *The Animal World*, March 1884, p.36.
89. Ibid.
90. *Standard*, 21 February 1882.
91. *Daily News*, 6 March 1882.
92. *Illustrated London News*, 1 April 1882.
93. *Birmingham Daily Post*, 3 March 1882.
94. RSPCA, *Fifty-Third Annual Report* (London: C. Beckett and Sons, 1877), p.19.
95. *North-Eastern Daily Gazette*, 7 March 1882.
96. *Standard*, 8 March 1882.
97. *Daily News*, 25 February 1882.

98. *Standard*, 8 March 1882. SPCAs were founded in the USA in Philadelphia, Boston and New York. These developments took place later than in Britain, mainly in the 1860s and 1870s, so it was perhaps legitimate for Britons to see themselves as leading the way in this area. See Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast*, pp. 45–59.
99. *North-Eastern Daily Gazette*, 6 January 1883. This may have been true of Jumbo, but there is evidence that other British elephants *were* subjected to physical punishment. The *Gazette* reported in 1886 that a female elephant in Birmingham called 'Aston Jumbo' was repeatedly prodded with bull hooks when she refused to carry passengers on her back. This treatment 'several times fetched blood', but was apparently the standard method of correcting an 'obstreperous' elephant. See *North-Eastern Daily Gazette*, 6 May 1886.
100. *Standard*, 21 February 1882.
101. *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 23 February 1882.
102. *Daily News*, 6 March 1882.
103. 'Jumbo', *The Animal World*, March 1884, p.35.
104. *Standard*, 8 March 1882.
105. *Derby Mercury*, 8 March 1882. Baker was a prolific big game hunter, so how far he was motivated by compassion is open to question.
106. 'Jumbo', *The Animal World*, March 1884, p.35.
107. *Bristol Mercury*, 9 March 1882.
108. 'Snake Feeding', *The Animal World*, December 1882, p.184.
109. *Morning Post*, Thursday March 23 1882.
110. *Star*, Tuesday 11 April 1882; *Lancaster Gazette*, Wednesday 12 April 1882.
111. *Star*, Tuesday 11 April 1882.
112. *Lancaster Gazette*, 29 April 1882.
113. *The Graphic*, 15 April 1882.
114. *Blackburn Standard*, 10 June 1882.
115. Harrison, 'Animals and the State', pp.786–820.
116. *Morning Post*, 25 August 1825.
117. See Heather Schell, 'Tiger Tales' in Deborah Denenholz Morse and Martin Danahay (eds), *Victorian Animal Dreams* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2007), pp.230–248.
118. Teresa Mangum, 'Animal Angst: Victorians Memorialise their Pets' in Ibid., pp.15–34.

7 Dangerous Frolicking

1. *Carlisle Patriot*, cited in *Caledonian Mercury*, 28 April 1836; *The Times*, 14 May 1836.
2. *Preston Guardian*, 21 April 1866.
3. See Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Veiled Lodger' in *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes* (London: John Murray, 1927). This story concerns a menagerist's wife who is mauled by a lion while trying to murder her abusive husband.
4. *Morning Post*, 10 December 1874. These figures must be treated with caution. It is possible, on the one hand, that they underestimate the number of accidents, as many were probably not reported. Conversely, it is also possible that the figures may be an *over*estimate, as showmen and journalists would sometimes fabricate accidents to attract publicity.

5. *Morning Chronicle*, 27 December 1844.
6. *Caledonian Mercury*, 28 April 1836; *Newcastle Courant*, 22 September 1827.
7. *Daily News*, 14 June 1849.
8. *Derby Mercury*, 23 March 1842; *Examiner*, 26 March 1842.
9. *Glasgow Herald*, 8 November 1850.
10. *Liverpool Mercury*, 11 February 1851.
11. *Morning Chronicle*, 27 December 1844.
12. *The Times*, 8 October 1862.
13. *Birmingham Daily Post*, 24 May 1872.
14. *Ipswich Journal*, 11 September 1875.
15. *Bristol Mercury*, 25 November 1843.
16. *Liverpool Mercury*, 19 August 1853.
17. *Belfast News-Letter*, 14 January 1859.
18. *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 26 March 1869.
19. *Bristol Mercury*, 10 June 1876.
20. *Morning Chronicle*, 3 December 1842.
21. *Leeds Mercury*, 5 January 1864.
22. *Illustrated Police News*, 29 June 1878.
23. *Derby Mercury*, 13 October 1830.
24. *Birmingham Daily Post*, 16 and 18 April 1872.
25. Hone, *The Every-Day Book*, Vol. II, 5 September 1826, p.1199.
26. *Western Times*, cited in *Glasgow Herald*, 19 June 1846.
27. *Daily News*, 4 April 1859. This incident is also mentioned in the logbook for Wombwell's menagerie, which includes the comment 'waggon blown down' next to the entry for 'Holywell'. See Tomlinson and Barnaby (eds), *Log Book*, p.51.
28. *Liverpool Mercury*, Monday 4 April 1859.
29. *Belfast News-Letter*, 26 February 1851; *Liverpool Mercury*, 6 January 1849.
30. *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 30 November 1833.
31. *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 2 December 1874.
32. *Bristol Mercury*, 1 June 1843.
33. *Manchester Times*, 2 April 1851.
34. See 'A Lion Hunt in a Sewer' in Frank Bostock, *The Training of Wild Animals* (New York: The Century Co., 1903), pp.6–22.
35. *Leeds Mercury*, 29 May 1867.
36. *Morning Chronicle*, 2 May 1857.
37. *Preston Guardian*, 8 April 1865.
38. *Caledonian Mercury*, 24 October 1816.
39. *The Times*, 1 February 1826.
40. *Ipswich Journal*, 9 February 1839.
41. *Caledonian Mercury*, 29 October 1857; *Reynold's Newspaper*, 18 February 1866.
42. *Daily News*, 18 November 1862.
43. *Morning Chronicle*, 8 July 1861.
44. *Northern Echo*, 13 September 1873.
45. *The Times*, 1 February 1826.
46. *Morning Chronicle*, 8 January 1839; Ibid., 9 January 1839; Ibid., 19 January 1839.
47. *Birmingham Daily Post*, 8 February 1858.

48. *Daily News*, 30 July 1860; *Hull Packet*, 3 August 1860.
49. *The Times*, 29 September 1821.
50. 'Miraculous Escape from a Serpent' (newspaper clipping, dated 1834), in Fillinham, *A collection of cuttings*.
51. J.H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History, Fourth Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp.416–417.
52. *Liverpool Mercury*, 1 January 1830.
53. Ibid., 15 January 1830.
54. Ibid., 22 January 1830.
55. There was more sympathy for the victims of road accidents involving menageries. In 1885, for instance, Mr Ginnett, a railway agent, successfully sued showman Mr Knight after an 'unattended' elephant frightened his horse, causing him to fall and break his ankle. He was awarded damages of £300. See *Standard*, 26 March 1885 and *Morning Post*, 27 March 1885.
56. *Derby Mercury*, 8 November 1843.
57. *Manchester Examiner*, cited in *Hull Packet,* 15 March 1861.
58. *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 29 October 1871. There appears to have been some confusion as to the precise identity of the animal. One report referred to it as 'an enraged jaguar', another as a 'leopard' and a third as a bear. See *Cheshire Observer*, 4 November 1871 and *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 27 October 1871.
59. *Cheshire Observer*, 4 November 1871.
60. *Belfast News-Letter*, 7 November 1871. For a discussion of the racialised nineteenth-century conceptions of the Irish, see Christine Kinealy, 'At home with the Empire: the example of Ireland', in Hall and Rose, *At Home with the Empire*, pp.77–100; L.P. Curtis, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (London: David and Charles, 1971).
61. *Liverpool Mercury*, 11 June 1861.
62. *Maidstone Journal*, cited in *Bristol Mercury*, 26 January 1850.
63. For an analysis of the complex psychological experiences of gallows crowds, see V.A.C. Gattrell, *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People, 1770–1868* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), especially 'Death and the Scaffold Crowd', pp.56–89. On the Victorians' taste for violence in popular entertainment, see Crone, *Violent Victorians*.
64. *Leicester Chronicle*, 28 September 1868.
65. *Liverpool Mercury*, 9 October 1857; *Reynold's Newspaper*, 18 February 1866.
66. Esther Cohen, 'Law, Folklore and Animal Lore', *Past and Present* 110 (1986), pp.6–37. This practice appears to have been confined to continental Europe, and did not extend to Britain.
67. *Glasgow Herald*, 21 November 1853. Amy Wood suggests that the situation was rather different in the late-nineteenth-century USA, where staged executions of elephants functioned both as commercial boost for showmen and a form of restorative justice for the watching public, particularly after the public hanging and electrocution of human criminals was moved behind prison walls. Such public killings did happen in Victorian Britain, again usually involving elephants, but I have been more struck by the number of menagerie inmates who attacked humans and were *not* destroyed. See Amy Louise Wood, '"Killing the Elephant": Murderous Beasts and the Thrill of Retribution, 1885–1930', *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, 11 (2012), pp.405–444.

68. Erica Fudge, *Animal* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), p.30.
69. *The Times*, 14 May 1836. Under the law of deodand, the owner of an inanimate object that caused death was supposed to forfeit the value of the object to the courts. Deodand was expunged from the statue books in 1846. See Baker *An Introduction to English Legal History*, p.212.
70. On the portrayal of murder in the Victorian press, see Judith Flanders, *The Invention of Murder* (London: Harper Collins, 2009).
71. *Illustrated Police News*, 27 June 1868.
72. *Nottingham Journal*, cited in *Blackburn Standard*, 16 October 1872.
73. Journalists who witnessed or received information about an event in their locality might send reports directly to multiple provincial papers. These would then be copied by other papers. This explains why identical reports on a particular event appeared simultaneously in multiple publications. See Hobbs, 'When the Provincial Press was the National Press'.
74. *Northampton Herald*, cited in *Morning Chronicle*, 24 February 1834.
75. *Liverpool Mercury*, 28 February 1834.
76. *Examiner*, 9 March 1834.
77. *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, cited in *Bristol Mercury*, 8 March 1834. A broadsheet describing this incident still exists in the National Library of Scotland. See 'Fearful accident' (Edinburgh: Menzies, date unknown), NLS, shelfmark F.3.a.13 (115).
78. *Morning Chronicle*, 3 March 1834.
79. *Caledonian Mercury*, 8 March 1834.

8 In the Lions' Den

1. *Ipswich Journal*, 6 November 1861.
2. 'Fighting with Beasts at Birmingham', *Animal World*, March 1881, p.39.
3. O.J. Ferguson, *A Brief Biographical Sketch of I.A. Van Amburgh* (New York: Samuel Booth, 1860), p.12.
4. *Belfast News-Letter*, 10 September 1839.
5. *London Dispatch and Social Reformer*, 12 August 1838; *Morning Chronicle*, 24 August 1838.
6. *Freeman's Journal*, 20 May 1839.
7. *London Dispatch*, 25 August 1839.
8. *Derby Mercury*, 16 September 1840.
9. *Preston Chronicle*, 13 August 1842.
10. *Examiner*, 27 January 1839.
11. *Morning Chronicle*, 4 May 1839.
12. Hunting was disparaged in Colonial America, where the Puritans associated it with 'unconverted aristocrats and savage Indians', but became respectable during the Revolution, when freedom-loving frontiersmen symbolised the wider cause of opposition to British tyranny. In the nineteenth century, hunting came to be seen as good for the physical and moral development of an increasingly urbanised nation. See Daniel Justin Herman, 'From Farmers to Hunters: Cultural Evolution in the Nineteenth-Century United States' in Kathleen Kete (ed.), *A Cultural History of Animals in the Age of Empire* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), pp.47–71.

13. Ephraim Watts, *The Life of Van Amburgh the Brute Tamer* (London: Robert Tyas, 1838).
14. *The Times*, 19 September 1838. .
15. *Morning Chronicle*, 24 August 1838.
16. *Odd Fellow*, 17 August 1839.
17. *Morning Chronicle*, 4 December 1829. For a wider discussion of the changing representations of the East in nineteenth-century British theatre, see Ziter, *The Orient on the Victorian Stage*, p.95; and John MacKenzie, 'Empire and Metropolitan Culture' in Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp.275–277.
18. *Preston Chronicle*, 23 January 1841.
19. *Manchester Times*, 23 January 1841.
20. *Preston Chronicle*, 23 January 1841.
21. John Stokes contends that the appeal of the thrill of the wild beast act depends on 'a combination of proximity and distance, a mixture of dominance and vulnerability, of harmonious certainty and ever present risk'. See John Stokes, "'Lion Griefs': The Wild Animal Act as Theatre', *NQT* 20:2 (May 2004).
22. *Freeman's Journal*, 27 May 1839.
23. *Morning Chronicle*, 24 September 1838.
24. *Examiner*, 28 July 1839.
25. Ibid., 26 August 1838.
26. Ibid., 30 September 1838.
27. *Ipswich Journal*, 11 December 1841.
28. *The Charter*, 20 October 1839.
29. *The Era*, 20 June 1847.
30. *The Charter*, 20 October 1839.
31. *Freeman's Journal*, 17 October 1839.
32. Ibid., 3 May 1839; Ibid., 9 July 1840.
33. *Operative*, 10 February 1839; *The Era*, 3 February 1839.
34. *Glasgow Herald*, 16 February 1844.
35. *The Manchester Times*, 13 June 1848.
36. Raymond and Waring's menagerie featured a lion queen by the name of Miss Adelina. See *Buffalo Advertiser*, quoted in *Manchester Times*, 2 January 1849.
37. Thomas Frost, *Old Showmen*, p.337.
38. *Derby Mercury*, 6 August 1845.
39. *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 10 October 1846; *Hull Packet*, 28 September 1848.
40. *The Era*, 29 September 1844.
41. *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 23 August 1849.
42. *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 27 November 1847.
43. 'In the Lion's Den', *The English Illustrated Magazine* (London: Macmillan, 1885), pp.616–625.
44. Marius Kwint, 'The Circus and Nature in Late Georgian England' in Rudy Koshar (ed.), *Histories of Leisure* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), p.53; Assael, *The Circus and Victorian Society*, p.109.
45. *Glasgow Herald*, 7 July 1848.
46. *Leicester Chronicle*, 17 January 1852; *Hull Packet*, 28 September 1848.
47. *Morning Post*, 7 February 1850.
48. *Preston Guardian*, 10 April 1847.

49. *Daily News*, 14 January 1850.
50. *The Era*, 10 February 1850.
51. *Newcastle Courant*, 8 February 1850.
52. *Athenaeum*, No.1161, 26 January 1850, p.102.
53. *Morning Chronicle*, 15 January 1850.
54. *Derby Mercury*, 23 May 1860.
55. *Liverpool Mercury*, 28 January 1862.
56. *Leeds Mercury*, 6 July 1866; *Visitors' Guide, Bostock's Continental Menagerie* (Plymouth: Creber, 1895), Plymouth Record Office, 2887/254.
57. Patrick Bratlinger, 'Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent', *Critical Enquiry* 12:1 (1985), p.176.
58. Ibid., p.175.
59. Ziter, *The Orient on the Victorian Stage*, pp.101–102. See also Bernth Lindfors (ed.), *Africans on Stage: Studies in Ethnologial Show Business* (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1999), especially Z.S. Strother, 'Display of the body Hottentot', pp.1–61, and Bernth Lindfors, 'Charles Dickens and the Zulus', pp.62–80.
60. Ziter, *The Orient on the Victorian Stage*, p.95.
61. Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade*. See Chapter 2, 'Artful Promotion', pp.47–97.
62. *Morning Chronicle*, 6 May 1843.
63. 'An Important Enquiry: Who is Maccomo?' Poster for Manders' Menagerie, Lancashire Record Office, DDHU 53/82/313–318.
64. John Turner, 'Pablo Fanque, Black Circus Proprietor', Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina (ed.), *Black Victorians, Black Victoriana* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), p.21.
65. Frost, *Old Showmen*, p.360.
66. *Birmingham Daily Post*, 2 June 1865.
67. *Hull Packet*, 29 September 1865.
68. *Bradford Observer*, 23 November 1865.
69. Leila Koivunen, *Visualising Africa in Nineteenth-Century British Travel Accounts* (London: Routledge, 2008).
70. *Illustrated and Descriptive History of Manders' Menagerie and Shows*, in Kevin Scrivens and Stephen Smith, *Manders' Shows and Menageries* (Fairground Society, Newcastle Under Lyme).
71. Maccomo's inclusion in this genre is in itself a testament to his celebrity, since Staffordshire Figures typically represented the famous (and infamous) characters of the period. See Rohan McWilliam, 'The Theatricality of the Staffordshire Figurine', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 10:1 (2008), pp.107–14.
72. *Illustrated Police News*, 21 March 1868.
73. *The Era*, 15 January 1871.
74. 'An Important Enquiry'.
75. Nadja Durbach has argued that freaks, 'like other performers, largely maintained control over their exhibition, and could negotiate the terms and condition of their display'. They probably earned more money that they could have done in other forms of unskilled labour, and they would not necessarily have seen themselves as disabled. See Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, pp.1–13.
76. *Liverpool Mercury*, 8 February 1866.
77. *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 6 January 1872.

78. *Leeds Mercury*, 5 January 1872.
79. *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 6 January 1872.
80. *Leeds Mercury*, 5 January 1872.
81. *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 6 January 1872.
82. *Leeds Mercury*, 5 January 1872.
83. *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 6 January 1872.
84. *Morning Post*, 6 January 1872.
85. *The Times*, 29 May 1851.
86. *Morning Post*, 6 January 1872.
87. *Glasgow Herald*, 23 January 1872.
88. *Morning Post*, 6 January 1872.
89. *Glasgow Herald*, 18 January 1872.
90. Ibid., 30 January 1872.
91. Ibid.
92. *Daily News*, 6 January 1872.
93. *Leeds Mercury*, 5 January 1872.
94. *Dundee Courier*, 9 January 1872. Carter was perhaps unusual in allowing his misgivings about lion taming to keep him away from menageries. Other middle-class people continued to attend the shows, including clergymen like The Reverend Franks.
95. *Aberdeen Journal*, 23 August 1871; *Glasgow Herald*, 14 July 1870; *Leeds Mercury*, 16 October 1866.
96. 'Fighting with Beasts at Birmingham', *Animal World*, March 1881, p.139.
97. *Leeds Mercury*, 16 October 1866.
98. *North Wales Chronicle*, 27 July 1872.
99. *York Herald*, 24 November 1875.
100. Great Britain Parliament, *Children's Dangerous Performances. An Act to Regulate the Employment of Children in Places of Public Amusement* (1879). This Act, which came into effect in 1880, was really aimed at child acrobats in circuses. It would presumably have covered lion taming as well, however, since it encompassed 'any public exhibition or performance whereby ... the life or limbs of [a] child shall be endangered'.
101. 'Lions and Lion Taming, by an Ex-Lion King', *Daily News*, 6 January 1872; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 5 January 1872.
102. Ibid.
103. *Pall Mall Gazette*, 9 November 1870.
104. Bostock, *The Training of Wild Animals*, pp. 184 and 227.

Conclusion

1. *Glasgow Herald*, 21 July 1856.
2. RSPCA, *Fifty-First Annual Report*, pp.23 and 29.
3. 'Animals in Menageries', *Animal World*, February 1875, p.61.
4. 'Zoological Exhibitions', in Ibid., October 1876, p.140.
5. Randy Malamud, for instance, dismisses zoos as 'prisons for animals and quick, convenient, sometimes titillating, but ultimately distorting experiences for people'. See Randy Malamud, *Reading Zoos: Representations of Animals and Captivity* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998). On more complex

nineteenth-century responses to animal cruelty, specifically hunting, see Nigel Rothfels, 'Killing Elephants: Pathos and Prestige in the Nineteenth Century' in Denenholz Morse and Danahay, *Victorian Animal Dreams*, pp.53–63.

6. 'Zoological Exhibitions'.
7. 'Animals in Menageries'.
8. *Standard*, 12 January 1897.
9. Letter to Edith Marsland, Kendal, 20 October 1873, Manchester County Records Office, GB127.MISC/980. King Theodore II was defeated by a British army expedition in 1868, after which he committed suicide.
10. Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back: The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (London: Longman, 2005), especially 'The Working Class at Play', pp.83–95.
11. Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, p.131.
12. *Glasgow Herald*, 29 November 1850.
13. Will of George Wombwell.
14. *Glasgow Herald*, 10 April 1872.
15. *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 20 December 1871; E.H. Bostock, *Menageries, Circuses and Theatres* (London: Chapman, 1927), p.7.
16. *Liverpool Mercury*, 19 March 1875.
17. *Blackburn Standard*, 14 June 1848.
18. *Glasgow Herald*, 20 November 1871.
19. Frank Buckland, *Notes and Jottings from Animal Life* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1886), pp.237–242; *Daily News*, 3 August 1875.
20. *The Era*, 20 June 1847; *Newcastle Courant*, 13 January 1871.
21. *The Era*, 23 June 1861; *Liverpool Mercury*, 5 December 1867.
22. David Barnaby, *The Elephant who Walked to Manchester* (Plymouth: Basset Publications, 1988).
23. *The Times*, 13 March 1878.
24. *Wrexham Advertiser*, 13 March 1875.
25. *The Times*, 29 May 1851. According to a report in *The Times*, Burrows was performing with an elephant in Chatham when it suddenly 'made a fearful rush at him ... breaking his collarbone, several of his ribs, his right arm and severely injuring, though not fracturing, his skull'. Burrows was carried out of the menagerie and taken to the house of a local grocer Mr Kent, who 'very humanely took him in when several other parties had refused him admittance'.

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