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The Missing Link between Science and Show Business: Exhibiting Gorillas and Chimpanzees in Victorian Liverpool

Abstract

Using the global port of Liverpool as its locus, this article examines interconnections between the exotic animal trade, the entertainment industry, empire, and scientific discourse in the second half of the nineteenth century. The article demonstrates that imperial trade brought a steady flow of exotic species to Victorian Liverpool, analysing various uses that specimens of two of these – gorillas and chimpanzees – were put to once in the city. Specifically, the article examines instances where gorillas and chimpanzees were exhibited in popular entertainments (circuses, menageries), *and* when they were used as objects of scientific inquiry and public education. A key emphasis is on Liverpool Museum, where primate specimens were integral to the organisation of its natural history and ethnological collections along evolutionary principles in the 1890s–1900s.

The article's key contention is that, whether displayed for study or amusement, there were similarities in how gorillas and chimpanzees tended to be exhibited. Claims that gorilla specimens heralded the discovery of the evolutionary 'missing link' recurred in Victorian-era show-business humbug and scholarly discourse alike – whilst individuals responsible for putting gorillas/chimpanzees on show in outwardly differing contexts shared personal and intellectual ties, a mutual classificatory language and a common dependency on colonial trading networks. Evidencing this, the article profiles William Cross, the proprietor of a Liverpool-based menagerie and animal-trading business which interacted with museum curators, academics and researchers in Liverpool and further afield. In the process, the article uncovers Liverpool's role in the 'gorilla mania' of the mid-to-late nineteenth century.

Keywords

Museums

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Evolution

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Abbreviations

JVC: Journal of Victorian Culture

AR: Annual report (see explanatory footnote 22).

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In June 1876, the first live gorilla believed to have been successfully transported to Europe docked in Liverpool aboard the steamship *Loanda*. Procured in Gabon by physician Julius Falkenstein for the German African Society, the gorilla was passing through Liverpool en-route to Berlin, where it became a star attraction at the city's aquarium. Anticipating this celebrity, the gorilla – nicknamed M'Pungu or the anglicised Pongo – caused quite a stir during its brief stay on Merseyside. *The Illustrated Police News* was excited by 'actual demonstration of the "missing link" between the human and animal creation ... the nearest known approximation of the human form.'¹ The gorilla likewise attracted curiosity from learned institutions based in the city. A private audience was held at Liverpool Museum, with its curator, Thomas J Moore, also inspecting Pongo's behaviour at temporary quarters inside a hotel. Pongo equally captured the imagination of Liverpoolian show-business entrepreneurs. William Cross, naturalist and animal trader, was invited to handle the gorilla and proceeded to offer £500 to secure it for his city centre menagerie.² The bid was declined, and Pongo shipped onwards to Berlin. Pongo died in November 1877, shortly being loaned to Westminster Aquarium, London (a misleadingly-named institution which, like its Berlin counterpart, displayed land as well as marine animals). Such was the gorilla's fame that obituary notices were carried in British and German newspapers, with references to Pongo cropping up in pantomimes and other stage shows for a decade or so afterwards.³

The Pongo episode condenses the themes of this article, which explores appearances in Victorian Liverpool by gorillas and their fellow primate, chimpanzees, with whom gorillas were often confused. As will be shown, Liverpool's status as an imperial port brought steady flows of exotic species in-and-out of the city throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with gorillas and chimpanzees (both living and deceased) being displayed in various urban contexts. Specifically, the article scrutinises instances where gorillas/chimpanzees were exhibited both as popular entertainments *and* as objects of scientific inquiry or civic education – principally at Liverpool's public museum, where primate specimens were central to reorganising its collections along evolutionist precepts in the 1890s and 1900s. My main contention is that significant overlaps connected outwardly dissimilar exhibitionary settings. As Pongo's engagements with Thomas J Moore and William Cross hint, museological rationality existed in close proximity to show business during the nineteenth century. One

¹ *Illustrated Police News*, July 8 1876, pp. 1–2.

² *Liverpool Mercury*, June 22 1876, June 24 1876, p. 8; *John Bull*, July 1 1876, p. 436.

³ Andrew Horrall, *Inventing the Cave Man: From Darwin to the Flintstones* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), pp. 61–69.

effect of this was that theatrical entertainers often mimicked scientific and curatorial discourses. In the 1860s, for example, PT Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth featured William Henry Johnson (c.1842–1926), an African American performer known as the 'Nondescript' or 'The Missing Link' who was said to embody 'a lower order of man,' 'a higher development of the monkey' or 'both in combination.'⁴ But the interchange between scholarship and Barnumesque humbug was not one-way. Concurrent to scientific debates filtering into showmen's patter, natural history galleries benefitted from associations with the entertainment industry: Barnum's later enterprise, the Barnum & Bailey Circus, donated animals to Liverpool Museum, just as Belle Vue Zoological Gardens were a reliable source of material for the public museum in neighbouring Manchester.

The article examines, first, how 'discovery' of gorillas' existence in the mid-nineteenth century impacted both the entertainment industry and academic debates. The second section then discusses application of Darwinian theories of evolution – and related quasi-scientific methods of racial classification – at Liverpool Museum, before the third section shifts onto the extensive relationship that linked the museum with the city's university and other scholarly institutions. Testament to its argument about the permeability of science and entertainment, the article proceeds to profile the aforementioned William Cross (1840–1900), whose biography shows that personal, business and intellectual ties united individuals responsible for displaying gorillas and chimpanzees at museums and sideshows respectively. On one hand, Cross's animal trading business was a regular supplier to Liverpool Museum and had contacts with scholars based in the city and further afield – such as the ground-breaking American primatologist Richard Lynch Garner. On the other, Cross was associate and competitor to Barnum and kindred showmen like Carl Hagenbeck and Charles Jamrach. Cross's activities therefore illustrate that institutions of rational instruction were not wholly divorced from those of less reputable, theatrical character. The final section underlines these points by suggesting that – like museums – the exotic animal business bestrode imperial trading networks whilst providing domestic audiences with glimpses of exhibits from colonial possessions. Here, the European 'Scramble for Africa' has special significance, both in the sense that it swelled the holdings of museums and animal merchants alike and because of Liverpool's close economic ties to the continent.

⁴ *New York Tribune*, March 1 1860 via City University of New York Lost Museum archive <<https://lostmuseum.cuny.edu/archive/exhibit/what/>> [accessed February 13 2018]. See James W Cook jnr., 'Of Men, Missing Links and Nondescripts: The Strange Career of PT Barnum's "What Is It?" Exhibit' in Rosemarie Garland Thomson ed. *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 139–157.

The article is informed by recent studies of human-animal relations in Victorian society, including research on the exotic animal trade by John Simons plus Helen Cowie's detailed histories of nineteenth-century zoos and menageries.⁵ It also engages with scholarship on the hunting, display and representation of animals as aspects of colonialism and popular imperialism.⁶ My research adds to this corpus by foregrounding Liverpool and William Cross: Cross has previously received only passing mentions by scholars, with the full implications of gorilla and chimpanzee sightings in Liverpool too going underexplored. In addition, the article's discussion is enhanced by employing theoretical debates within the field of museum studies. Notably, it harnesses Donna Haraway's interpretations of primatology dioramas at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) to demonstrate that Liverpool Museum similarly used gorilla exhibits to uphold assumptions about white, European and (to perhaps a less overt extent) male supremacy.⁷ The analysis also follows Tony Bennett's writing on Victorian museums' connections to mass entertainments and imperialism, plus Bruno Latour's framing of museums as 'centres of calculation.'⁸ However, I refine Bennett and Latour's work by suggesting no rigid binary separated scientific and show-business discourse, instead mapping the extensive interrelationships that conjoined museums and non-scholarly institutions. In this respect, I build on existing scholarship investigating interfaces between Victorian science, showmanship, literature and theatre, reaching conclusions about museums comparable to Oliver Hochadel's regarding zoological gardens in nineteenth-century Germany.⁹ Likewise, emphasis on Liverpool complements Hochadel and Agustí Nieto-Galan's

⁵ John Simons, *The Tiger that Swallowed the Boy: Exotic Animals in Victorian England* (Faringdon: Libri Publishing, 2012); Simons, 'The Scramble for Elephants: Exotic Animals and the Imperial Economy' in Melissa Boyde ed. *Captured: The Animal within Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 26–43; Helen Cowie, *Exhibiting Animals in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Empathy, Education, Entertainment* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Cowie, "'An Attractive and Improving Place of Resort": Zoo, Community and Civic Pride in Nineteenth-Century Britain,' *Cultural and Social History*, 12: 3 (2015), pp. 365–384.

⁶ John MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); John Miller, *Empire and the Animal Body: Violence, Ecology and Identity in Victorian Adventure Fiction*. (London: Anthem Press, 2012); Peta Tait, *Fighting Nature: Travelling Menageries, Animal Acts and War Shows* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2016); Kathleen Kete ed. *A Cultural History of Animals in the Age of Empire* (Oxford: Berg, 2009).

⁷ Donna Haraway, 'Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908–1936,' *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 26–58.

⁸ Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995), *Pasts Beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 2004); Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

⁹ Oliver Hochadel, 'Darwin in the Monkey Cage: The Zoological Garden as a Medium for Evolutionary Theory' in Dorothee Brantz ed. *Beastly Natures: Animals, Humans and the Study of History* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 2010), pp. 81–107; Hochadel 'Watching Exotic Animals Next Door: "Scientific" Observations at the Zoo (c. 1870–1910),' *Science in Focus*, 24:2 (2011), pp. 183–214; Joe Kember, John Plunkett and Jill A Sullivan eds. *Popular Exhibitions, Science and Showmanship, 1840–1910* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012); Carin

desire to reorient urban histories of science, technology and medicine away from touchstone cities such as London, Paris and New York.¹⁰

1. Gorilla Mania

Unlike chimpanzees, which had been known to Europeans since the seventeenth century, the existence of gorillas was disputed by Western science until the mid-nineteenth century. Although sources dating back to the classical period alluded to creatures bearing resemblances to gorillas, beyond Africa accounts of large, human-like apes only gained widespread credibility after analysis of skeletal remains by Thomas Straughton Savage in 1847. An 1855–1859 expedition by French-American explorer Paul Du Chaillu subsequently increased popular awareness of the species' existence. Du Chaillu's sensational tales of encounters with gorillas in West Africa stimulated virtual 'gorilla mania' in early-1860s Britain, providing ample material for satirists, cartoonists and children's authors. The gorilla's 'discovery' gained extra frisson from coincidence with the fallout surrounding Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), inciting heated debates amongst luminaries such as Richard Owen and Thomas Henry Huxley.¹¹

Liverpool was favourably positioned to profit from 'gorilla mania.' The city had well-established maritime connections with West Africa,¹² and centrality to imperial commerce had long amassed it a reputation as somewhere tropical species could be accessed and displayed. In 1806, for example, William Bullock had advertised his natural history collection – opened at Liverpool in 1795 before its 1809 relocation to London – on the basis that 'every tide flowing into the Mersey bring[s] stores of gratification to the naturalist' and that Liverpool 'is perhaps the most advantageously-situated town in Europe for making a collection of rare or estimable productions of nature.'¹³ Comparable rhetoric later distinguished the city's public museum. Remarking on Liverpool Town Council's establishment of a museums committee in 1851, *The*

Berkowitz and Bernard Lightman eds. *Science Museums in Transition: Cultures of Display in Nineteenth-Century Britain and America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 2017).

¹⁰ Hochadel and Agustí Nieto-Galan, 'How to Write an Urban History of STM on the "Periphery,"' *Technology and Culture*, 57:4 (2016), pp. 978-988

¹¹ Miller, *Empire and the Animal Body*, pp. 98–148; Jochen Petzold, "'How Like Us is that Ugly Brute, the Ape": Darwin's "Ape Theory" and its Traces in Victorian Children's Magazines' in Eckart Voigts, Barbara Schaff and Monika Pietrak-Franger eds. *Reflecting on Darwin* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 58–62; Amanda Hodgson, 'Defining the Species: Apes, Savages and Humans in Scientific and Literary Writing of the 1860s,' *Journal of Victorian Culture* [hereafter *JVC*], 2:2 (1999), pp. 228–251; Susan D. Bernstein, 'Ape Anxiety: Sensation Fiction, Evolution, and the Genre Question,' *JVC*, 6:2 (2001), pp. 250–271.

¹² Francis Hyde, *Liverpool and the Mersey: An Economic History of a Port, 1700–1970* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1971), pp. 61–63, 95–114.

¹³ William Bullock, *Prospectus ... for description of ... Liverpool Museum* (Liverpool: George Harris, 1806).

Liverpool Mercury forecast that the resultant museum would be ‘inferior to no provincial establishment in the British empire’ thanks to ‘the facility to which specimens of everything illustrat[ing] natural history can be obtained in this great seaport.’¹⁴ Once opened, Liverpool Museum fulfilled such aspirations, year-on-year receiving thousands of living and deceased animal specimens from around the world.

But museums were far from the only place Victorian Liverpoolians might encounter non-native species. Monkeys, elephants and lions were used in travelling menageries – such as the one run by Liverpool resident William Manders – and exotic animals occasionally starred in theatre productions.¹⁵ Liverpool Zoological Gardens, in operation 1833–1864, were another beneficiary of in-flows of animals from overseas, with civic elites and the working classes alike contributing to its collection.¹⁶ Folk memory too records that owning exotic pets (especially monkeys) was common amongst Liverpool’s seafaring population well into the twentieth century.¹⁷ And, as we shall see, William Cross’s Liverpool menagerie offered yet another chance to view and buy foreign species, also acting as a venue in which animals were trained for street or stage performances.

Liverpool’s status as an international trading hub facilitated dispersal of information and misinformation about gorilla ‘discoveries.’ The city’s Literary and Philosophical Society deliberated Du Chaillu’s return expedition to Africa in 1861, and the same year *The Liverpool Mercury* reported that ‘a gentleman recently arrived at this port’ professed to having verified Du Chaillu’s findings while travelling in equatorial Africa.¹⁸ It was not long before alleged gorilla sightings – still extraordinary outside of Africa – occurred in Liverpool itself. In 1862 ‘two Frenchmen from Africa’ claimed to have imported Britain’s first live gorilla, exhibiting it at a Liverpool waxworks. Downplaying the showmen’s bluster, the *Mercury* doubted ‘whether the animal be a genuine gorilla’ – scepticism seconded by Liverpool Museum.¹⁹ Its curator Thomas J Moore wrote to *The Annals and Magazine of Natural History* clarifying that the ‘so-called gorilla is simply a chimpanzee’ before adding that a live gorilla had in fact been imported into Liverpool seven years earlier.²⁰

¹⁴ *Mercury*, August 19, 1851, p. 4.

¹⁵ Cowie, *Exhibiting Animals*, pp. 86–96, 164–171, 195–201.

¹⁶ Cowie, ‘Zoo, Community and Civic Pride,’ pp. 373, 380.

¹⁷ Tony Lane, *Liverpool: Gateway of Empire* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1987), pp. 37–38, 105–106.

¹⁸ *Proceedings of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool* (Liverpool: Thomas Brackell, 1862), p. 9; *Mercury*, October 26 1861, p. 3

¹⁹ *Mercury*, November 13 1862, p. 7, November 15 1862, p. 1, November 21 1862, p. 7.

²⁰ *Annals and Magazine of Natural History*, 10 (1862), pp. 473–474. Moore had been keeper for the 13th Earl of Derby, whose natural history collections provided the foundations of Liverpool Museum. John Millard,

Whether the latter animal truly was a gorilla is questionable – although its backstory is intriguing regardless. Originally billed as a chimpanzee, the creature – named Jenny – toured northern England with Wombwell’s Travelling Menagerie in 1855, catching the eye of Charles Waterton, a naturalist and traveller from Wakefield, West Yorkshire. Upon close inspection, Waterton became doubtful that Jenny was a chimpanzee, instead hypothesising she represented a species hitherto unknown to Europeans; indeed, his writings drew attention to physical features which later led others to surmise she was an infant gorilla.²¹ Waterton persuaded the menagerie to gift him Jenny’s remains should the creature pass away – an eventuality which duly transpired in 1856. It seems possible that Jenny subsequently ended up in one of Waterton’s famed taxidermy experiments. Predating Barnum’s use of the term, Waterton had in 1825 premiered his ‘Nondescript,’ a fantasy man-ape combining the carcass of a howler monkey and a human-like visage.²² A similar fate possibly befell Jenny. Wakefield Museum houses an assemblage containing animal hide rumoured to have belonged to Jenny **[some words cut out in this paragraph]**.²³

2. Gorillas in the Museum

Glimpses of would-be gorillas eventually became commonplace enough for ‘a stuffed gorilla in a naturalist shop’ to be the subject of a painting at a Liverpool fine art exhibition in 1879.²⁴ By this time, Liverpool Museum had staged several gorilla displays of its own. The museum’s 1862 annual report recorded a temporary exhibition of ‘very valuable remains of gorillas’ destined for the British Museum. These parts were the property of RB Walker, ‘a gentleman resident at the Gaboon,’ who also deposited a gorilla skeleton ‘larger than any specimen previously brought to Europe’ at Liverpool Museum. Contemporaneously, the museum was ‘indebted to Henry Duckworth’ who donated a different gorilla’s skeleton and skin.²⁵

Liverpool’s Museum: The First 150 Years (Liverpool: National Museums Liverpool, 2010), pp. 4–32 <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/wml/history/WML_150_years.pdf> [accessed February 21 2018].

²¹ Waterton letter to *Preston Guardian*, January 12 1856.

²² Julia Bradbury, *Charles Waterton, 1782–1865: Traveller and Conservationist* (London: Vintage, 1997), pp. 91–97.

²³ Because Waterton creations morphed multiple animal remains, definitive attribution is elusive. BBC Radio 4, ‘In Search of Jenny,’ September 30 2009 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00mw5n7>> [accessed April 28 2016].

²⁴ *Mercury*, May 15 1879, p.8. The painting was by Augustus Edwin Mulready. See Nicholas Daly, *The Demographic Imagination and the Nineteenth-Century City: Paris, London, New York* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 132–146.

²⁵ *Tenth Annual Report of the Committee of the Free Public Library, Museum and Gallery of Arts of ... Liverpool* (Liverpool: D Marples, 1862), p. 8. Annual reports hereafter referred to as ‘AR,’ alongside their number and date of publications, e.g. 10th AR (1862). Walker was a prolific contributor to Liverpool Museum. Nora McMillan, ‘Robert Bruce Napoleon Walker: West African Trader, Explorer and Collector of Zoological Specimens,’ *Archives of Natural History*, 23:1 (1996), pp. 125–141. Duckworth was father to an anatomist whose later

According to *The Popular Science Review*, upon arrival in port Duckworth's gorilla was exhibited at a salesroom where 'curious and wondering Liverpool gentlemen' stood 'with open eyes and closed nostrils' as the ubiquitous Thomas Moore went about 'measuring the monster's proportions' – a scene equated to an illustration of Du Chaillu 'and a number of blacks ... contemplating a fallen gorilla.'²⁶

Liverpool Museum's gorilla specimens drew admiring notices. In 1871, Bostonian publisher Curtis Guild remarked on its 'enormous and splendidly-mounted specimen of the gorilla larger than any Du Chaillu exhibited in America.'²⁷ Five years earlier, a journalist from New York's *Beadle's Monthly* gazed 'for a full half-hour' at the museum's 'stuffed male gorilla standing nearly five feet in height.' Elaborating, the *Beadle's* reporter parroted lurid aspects of Du Chaillu's accounts, branding the gorilla 'a creature formed to horrify and shock the instincts and senses alike' due to its discomfiting likeness to humans: 'What a monster! If Caliban c[a]me back to earth in his questionable shape, even h[e] would shudder at the creature in that glass case. So human yet so inhuman! So like man yet so very unlike!'²⁸

Such apparent kinships fuelled belief that the gorilla constituted the 'missing link' (an as-yet undiscovered common ancestor) between 'higher' and 'lower' animals – specifically man and apes. The concept of a 'missing link' accrued academic credence with publication of Charles Lyell's *Geological Evidences of the Antiquity of Man* in 1863 – however, it already enjoyed everyday currency by that point. For example, an 1862 *Punch* skit headlined 'The Missing Link' intervened in the 'gorilla controversy' by calling readers' attention to 'a creature manifestly between the Gorilla and the Negro met in the lowest districts of London and Liverpool ... a tribe of savages, the lowest species of the Irish Yahoo.'²⁹ Similar phraseology entered Victorian showmen's lexicon. William Henry Johnson had debuted as Barnum's 'Missing Link' in 1860, and in the 1880s the term promoted Krao, a Siamese child exhibited by the Great Farini – an entertainer who had been involved in displaying Pongo at Westminster Aquarium (reports of Krao's early appearances at the same venue even likened her to the

scholarship on primate osteology referenced Liverpool Museum's gorilla specimens. WLH Duckworth, *Morphology and Anthropology Vol. 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), pp. 167, 233.

²⁶ *The Popular Science Review*, July 1862, pp. 537–538.

²⁷ Curtis Guild, *Over the Ocean: Or, Sights and Scenes in Foreign Lands* (Boston, Massachusetts: Lee & Shepard, 1871), pp. 33–34.

²⁸ *Beadle's Monthly*, 1:1 (1866), p. 33. Early accounts propagated myths gorillas were lascivious man-eaters. Ted Gott and Kathrun Weir, *Gorilla* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013). pp. 7–31, 121–157. Only later were these falsehoods dispelled. Hannah Paddon, 'Biological Objects and "Mascotism": The Life and Times of Alfred the Gorilla' in Samuel JMM Alberti ed. *The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 2011), pp. 134–150.

²⁹ *Punch*, October 18 1862, p. 165. On caricatures conflating gorillas and Irish people see Kate Holterhoff, 'Liberal Evolutionism and the Satirical Ape,' *JVC*, 21:2 (2016), pp. 209–214.

gorilla). Like Barnum,³⁰ Farini honed a publicity strategy that emulated language used in scientific debates, introducing Krao as ‘a perfect specimen between man and monkey’ and testament to ‘the truth of Darwinian theory.’ A shrewd marketing gimmick, ventriloquizing academic discourse enabled Farini and others to affect airs of legitimacy before middle-class audiences who might otherwise have been put off by sideshows’ licentious reputation (Westminster Aquarium, for example, was shut down after becoming a promenade for men soliciting prostitutes).³¹

By contrast, public museums – veritable bastions of bourgeois respectability – were slow to explicitly endorse evolutionary ideas. As late as 1887, William Abbott Herdman, professor of natural history at the University of Liverpool, produced an essay bemoaning that the theory of evolution had ‘apparently little or no effect’ on museological practice. Herdman diagnosed most museums, including Liverpool’s, as remaining ‘in their pre-Darwinian condition,’ arguing they needed ‘great changes before be[ing] regarded as abreast of modern science.’ To rectify this status quo, Herdman drew up a theoretical museum layout in which the ‘most important’ feature was ‘a large type (or phylogenetic) collection ... arranged to illustrate the evolution of plants and animals.’ Such curatorship would be ‘more intelligible and instructive to the general public’ plus ‘more in accord with the present state of biological knowledge ... demonstrating to everyone with ordinary intelligence the great doctrine of Organic Evolution.’³²

Herdman’s proposals were embraced by Henry Ogg Forbes, director of Liverpool Museum from 1894 to 1910. Shortly after taking office, Forbes cited Herdman in a report criticising lax display techniques at Liverpool Museum. Forbes singled out the mammal gallery’s ‘bewildering and confusing’ arrangement for particular opprobrium. On entering, he wrote, visitors met ‘the Marsupials and ascend[ed] to the higher Apes and Man,’ but thereafter had no means of ascertaining these exhibits’ relation to other animals because birds, reptiles, fishes and suchlike were housed in a different wing of the museum.³³ Consequently, ‘to

³⁰ See Katharine Pandora, ‘The Permissive Precincts of Barnum’s and Goodrich’s Museums and Miscellaneity,’ in Berkowitz and Lightman eds. *Science Museums in Transition*, pp. 36–64.

³¹ Nadja Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British Culture* (Berkeley: University of California, 2010), pp. 89–95; Ann Garascia, ‘The Freak Show’s ‘Missing Links’: Krao Farini and the Pleasures of Archiving Prehistory,’ *JVC*, 21:4 (2016), pp. 433–455.

³² William Abbot Herdman, ‘An Ideal Natural History Museum’ (1887) reprinted in Thomas Greenwood, *Museums and Galleries* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co, 1888), pp. 180, 183, 187, 195.

³³ Henry O Forbes, *Report of the Director of Museums Relative to the Space Required for the Extension of the Free Public Museums* (Liverpool: JR Williams, 1894), pp. 3–4. Although located in the same building, Liverpool Museum was officially divided between the Derby Museum, composing chiefly natural history galleries, and the more eclectic Mayer Museum.

discover the continuation of the animal series' a museumgoer needed to 'retrace not only the classificatory order, but his footsteps also.' Recognising this, Forbes devised a complete overhaul that would make evolutionary theory 'clearly intelligible to [even] the least scientific visitor' by:

'Commenc[ing] with description of the simpler forms, leading step by step to the higher and more complex, so as to present to the visitor the lowest form of life on entrance, gradually introducing those of nearest affinity in ascending order till the highest are reached.'³⁴

Forbes outlined a floorplan where zoological specimens were kept 'in evolutionary order,' culminating at a special section 'devoted to Man and the Simian anthropoids – the Chimpanzees, the Gorillas, the Orang-utans and the Gibbons.' There, drawings, photographs and crania exemplifying 'the various races of mankind' would accompany 'mounted specimens' of anthropoids and 'comparative preparations of osteology and internal anatomy.'³⁵

Forbes's plan was implemented after renovation of the museum in 1902. The reorganised galleries adopted the principle that 'the Biological series f[ell] into logical sequence with the Anthropological exhibits' whereby observation of plant and animal evolution mapped onto study of 'the three great ethnic divisions of the globe, namely, the Caucasian (white), the Mongolian (yellow), and the Melanian (black) Races.'³⁶ Befitting the scientific racism of the age, this situated the 'Caucasian' race as the highpoint of human evolution, with 'Melanian' exhibits deemed least developed and 'Mongolian' ones acting as intermediaries.³⁷ Clothed as its exhibitions were in the respectable language of mainstream science, Liverpool Museum was thus not above the sort of crude racialism espoused by *Punch* and other sources.

Archival photographs illustrate how gorilla displays helped materialise Forbes's intentions. Images of the museum's refitted mammal gallery show a series of glass cabinets culminating with two cases dedicated to primatology – the first containing anthropoid skeletons and the second mounted gorilla specimens [Figure 1]. On one level, the display's visual logic flaunted humans' evolutionary supremacy: the skeletons' positioning mirrors the frontispiece

³⁴ Forbes, *Report of the Director of Museums*, pp. 4–8.

³⁵ 43rd AR (1896), p. 11.

³⁶ 49th AR (1902), pp. 36, 55.

³⁷ Louise Tythacott, 'Race on Display: The "Melanian," "Mongolian," and "Caucasian" Galleries at the Liverpool Museum,' *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 9:2 (2011), pp. 131–146.

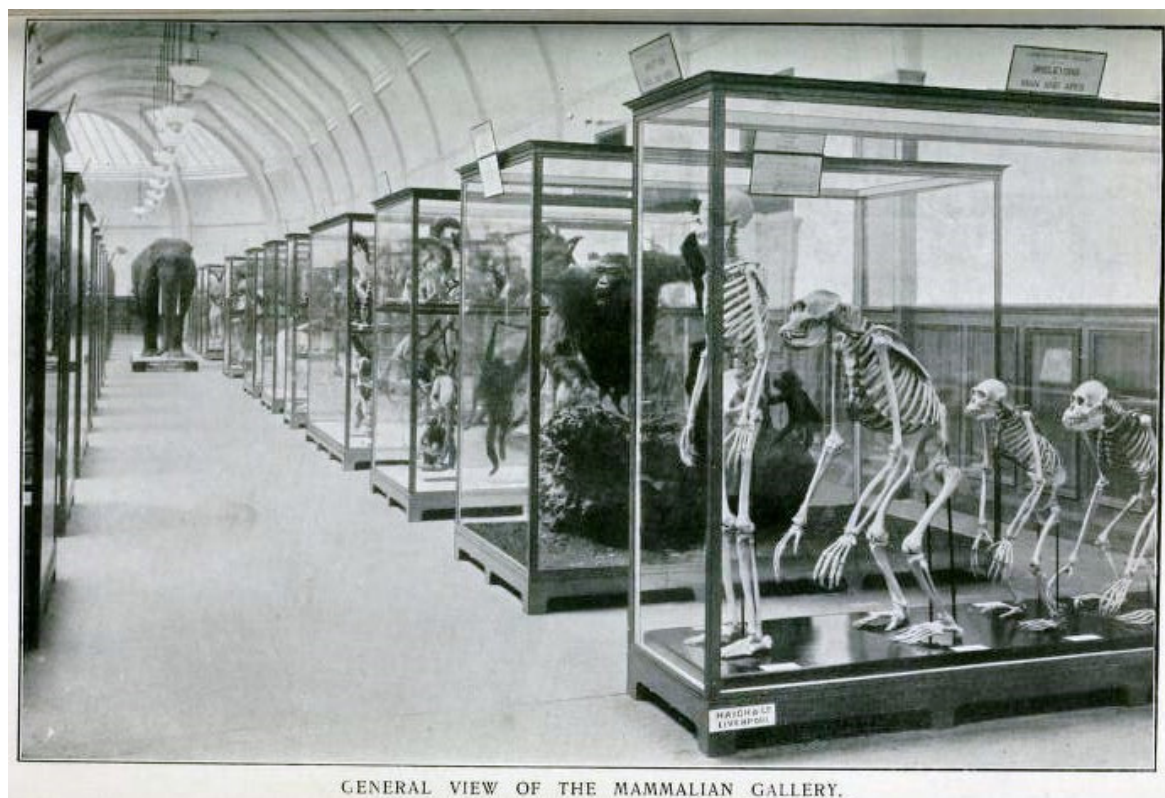


Figure 1 ‘General View of the Mammalian Gallery,’ *Fifty-First Annual Report of the Committee of the Free Public Museums of the City of Liverpool* (Liverpool: C Tinling, 1904)

to Thomas Henry Huxley’s *Evidence as to Man’s Place in Nature* (1863) with an upright Homo Saipan stood before three stoop-backed simians. At the same time, nearness to the mounted gorillas connoted mankind’s affinity with such species. The taxidermy exhibit featured two small infant gorillas alongside an adult female – an arrangement which matched descriptions of ‘Man-Like Apes’ in a reference work authored by Forbes. Corresponding to foliage visible in Liverpool Museum’s gorilla display, *A Handbook to Primates* (1897) noted gorillas typically inhabit a ‘platform-nest or shelter ... of sticks or twigs on a branch of a tree’ – dwellings primarily occupied by the ‘the female and her family’ with males stationed ‘on guard below.’ Citing writings by Huxley and Savage, Forbes added that gorillas ‘prove affectionate mothers, bravely protecting their young at the cost of their own lives.’³⁸

3. Liverpool Museum as Centre of Calculation

Forbes’s descriptions approximate the anthropomorphising of gorilla behaviour examined by Donna Haraway’s study of the American Museum of Natural History, New York. The

³⁸ Forbes, *A Handbook to the Primates, Vol. II* (London: E Lloyd, 1897), pp. 183–186.

undertones of white, male supremacy that Haraway identifies when analysing gorilla dioramas at AMNH appear to have had analogues in Liverpool – albeit with the focus shifted onto maternal (as opposed paternal) gender roles. And while the expressly gendered elements of this interpretation remain speculative, it is certainly true that the racial aspects of Haraway’s analysis were paralleled at Liverpool Museum – as evidenced by the hierarchical classification system discussed earlier. Lending greater validity to such comparisons, Liverpool Museum was a close collaborator with AMNH. Staff from the two institutions corresponded with and visited one another throughout the 1890s and 1900s, also entering into material exchanges.³⁹ In 1905, Liverpool sent anthropological items, mainly from West Africa, to New York in return for ‘a series of life-sized busts of natives of the United States and the Philippine Islands.’⁴⁰ Two years later, there was ‘a further exchange of African objects for a collection of Ethnography from the Philippine Islands previously unrepresented in [Liverpool] Museum.’⁴¹

The most immediately noteworthy aspect of these exchanges is their implication in Euro-American imperialism: they swapped items originating in an area of British hegemony (West Africa) for ones from a US colony (the Philippines having been annexed after the 1898 Spanish–American War). Colonial expansion fuelled intense museological traffic in the late nineteenth century – particularly in relation to the European ‘Scramble for Africa.’ Displays of African material culture became commonplace at British museums, acting as conduits for expressing colonial power-relations: to cite a high-profile example, Liverpool Museum was amongst several institutions to exhibit bronzes looted by Britain’s 1897 ‘punitive raids’ in Benin.⁴² Such displays also had localised resonances given Liverpool’s strong economic ties to West Africa. The city museum enjoyed a fruitful relationship with the Liverpool-based African Steamship Company (also known as the Elder Dempster line), whose chairman Alfred Jones provided free passage for items intended for the public collection.⁴³ Elder Dempster’s chief engineer, Arnold Ridyard, was an exceptionally prolific museum patron, donating thousands of anthropological artefacts and natural history specimens (including gorilla and chimpanzee remains). In 1902, the museum’s annual report praised Ridyard, Jones and Liverpool Chamber of Commerce for equipping an entire room with ‘as complete

³⁹ 43rd AR (1896), p.7; 45th AR (1898), p.6; 53rd AR (1906), p.11; 55th AR (1908), p. 45.

⁴⁰ 53rd AR (1906), pp. 37, 39; 54th AR (1907), pp. 41–42.

⁴¹ 55th AR (1908), pp. 65, 68–71.

⁴² Annie Coombes, *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 7–28.

⁴³ 45th AR (1898), pp. 28–29.

representation as possible of the Ethnology of West Africa, the region with which Liverpool is so intimately in relation.’⁴⁴

Donations from the African Steamship Company demonstrate that Liverpool Museum benefitted from proximity to lucrative trading networks – just as curators’ rapport with AMNH counterparts signals their connectedness to intellectuals based elsewhere in the world. Collaborations with Liverpool’s university college (founded 1881) likewise increased the museum’s academic leverage. Professor Herdman spent a period on Liverpool Town Council’s museums committee, whilst Forbes was appointed Reader in Ethnography at the university in 1904.⁴⁵ The museum also permitted use of gallery and laboratory space by the university’s Institute of Commercial Research in the Tropics (in existence 1905–1908), reciprocally gaining donations from faculty members in the archaeology and veterinary departments, as well as the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (est. 1898).⁴⁶ Underscoring such interconnections, Alfred Jones, a loyal museum supporter, was the medicine school’s main benefactor.

Links with the university mark Liverpool Museum as one component within a multifaceted, international network of letters: for example, the School of Tropical Medicine conducted voyages around the world, whereas Forbes once spearheaded a museum expedition to Socotra in the Arabian Sea.⁴⁷ Such globalism relates to a foremost concept within museum studies – Bruno Latour’s notion of the museum as a ‘centre of calculation.’ In *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (1987), Latour interprets natural history museums (plus comparable institutions like botanic gardens or scientific laboratories) as nodes within vast networks transporting people, objects and information from place to place. Latour links these ‘cycles of accumulation’ to continental exploration and the ‘bringing home’ of remote territories as artefacts, specimens, maps or data. Once returned to metropolitan locales, masses of information can be reviewed and calculated: inside museum storage facilities, for instance, one might ‘open few dozen drawers [and] travel through all the continents, climates and periods.’ The end-product of such analytics can henceforth be

⁴⁴ 50th AR (1903), p. 58. On Liverpool Museum’s African collections see Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, pp. 129–160; Zachary Kingdon and Dmitri van den Bersselaar, ‘Collecting Empire? African Objects, West African Trade and a Liverpool Museum’ in Sheryllynne Haggerty, Anthony Webster and Nicholas J. White eds. *The Empire in One City? Liverpool’s Inconvenient Past* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), pp. 100–122; Tythacott, ‘The African Collection at Liverpool Museum,’ *African Arts*, 31: 3 (Summer, 1998), pp. 18–35, 93–94.

⁴⁵ Tythacott, ‘Race on Display,’ p. 136.

⁴⁶ 49th AR (1902), pp. 42, 45, 47–49; 51st AR (1904), p. 11; 53rd AR (1906), pp. 2, 4, 8–9, 37.

⁴⁷ *Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine: Historical Record, 1898–1920* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1920), pp. 2–9; Forbes, ‘The Expedition to Sokotra,’ *Bulletin of the Liverpool Museums*, 2:1 (1899), pp. 1–13.

‘translated back’ to peripheral contexts, allowing scientists (or museum professionals) to exert ‘control’ over them from afar.⁴⁸

Latour’s ideas have application to museums’ relationship with colonialism. Tony Bennett details how ‘the increasingly internationalised museum networks’ of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century ‘facilitated the exchange of objects (usually flowing from the periphery to the centre) and of knowledge (usually flowing in the reverse direction).’⁴⁹ The ensuing ‘scientific-administrative assemblages,’ Bennett posits, ‘linked museums to colonial locations as sites of collection that were also developing as governmental domains.’ According to Bennett, centres of calculation sought to ‘provide new templates for action,’ whereby expeditionary yields could be ‘assembled, ordered, classified, exhibited, circulated ... [and] formatt[ed] for intervention in colonial government.’⁵⁰

Its embeddedness in imperial and academic networks identify Latour and Bennett’s ideas as being germane to Liverpool Museum. Nonetheless, such theoretical frameworks should not distract from the *local* functions performed by museums and other centres of calculation.⁵¹ Simultaneous to providing insights about the different parts of the world they originated from, anthropological and natural history exhibits housed at Liverpool Museum conveyed information about their host city – a city defined by maritime heritage, global trade and connections to empire.⁵² The museum – through its exotic collections and the modern exhibitionary schema implemented by Henry Forbes – accentuated Liverpool’s self-image as a worldly, cosmopolitan city, retaining a local ‘accent’ via displays of items donated by participants in Merseyside’s maritime economy.⁵³ In this sense, imperial ideologies bore distinct regional complexions: we might, for instance, regard Liverpool’s status as a home to immigrants from Ireland and elsewhere – alluded to by *Punch*’s gorilla skit – as an informing backdrop to the racial commentary surrounding animal displays in the city.⁵⁴ Exhibiting a

⁴⁸ Latour, *Science in Action*, pp. 215–257. For a systematic application of Latour’s ideas to museum collections, see Sarah Byrne, Anne Clark and Robin Torrence eds. *Unpacking the Collection: Networks of Material and Social Agency in the Museum* (London: Springer, 2011).

⁴⁹ Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory*, p. 80.

⁵⁰ Bennett, ‘Museum, Field, Colony: Colonial Governmentality and the Circulation of Reference’ in Bennett and Chris Healy eds. *Assembling Culture* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 95–112.

⁵¹ This is in keeping with Latour’s later work on actor-network theory, which argues the need to both ‘localise the global’ and ‘redistribute the local.’ See Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 165–218.

⁵² See John Belchem ed. *Liverpool 800: Culture, Character & History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University 2006), pp. 6–57, 257–310, 311–392; Haggerty, Webster and White eds. *Empire in One City*; Lane, *Gateway of Empire*.

⁵³ Cowie makes similar points about zoological gardens fostering civic identities. ‘Zoo, Community and Civic Pride,’ pp. 369–373.

⁵⁴ On gorillas and metropolitan concerns about racial stagnation/‘degeneration’ see Miller, *Empire and the Animal Body*, pp. 149–169.

gorilla or a chimpanzee in Liverpool thus *said something* about that city as well as about colonial relations between Europe and Africa (see Sections 2 and 5).

4. William Cross and the Exotic Animal Business

Nor should Liverpool Museum's status as a centre of calculation obscure its imbrication in commercial, as well as scholarly, networks of communication. A subtext to Latour's work on 'cycles of accumulation' is an attempt to a 'redefin[e] capitalism in terms of long distance networks,' and recent research has stressed the importance of merchants and non-scholars – such as curio and souvenir dealers – in museological supply chains.⁵⁵ With this in mind, it bears reiterating that Liverpool Museum operated in close vicinity to theatrical and show-business entertainments – quite literally so with Manders's Star Menagerie, which regularly took residence adjacent to the museum in the 1860s.⁵⁶ There was, though, disquiet about this situation. As Bennett has explained, nineteenth-century public museums and comparable civic spaces to a significant degree staked their institutional authority *against* the less cerebral pursuits of mass entertainment.⁵⁷ Suggestive of this, in 1874 Liverpool Town Council prohibited the earlier practice of travelling attractions setting up beside the museum.⁵⁸ Yet sniffy attitudes towards popular entertainments were not entirely consistent with Liverpool Museum's own actions: for instance, it happily took donations from public amusements such as Manders's Menagerie and Barnum & Bailey Circus.⁵⁹ The latter especially attests that, even during Forbes's tenure, the museum retained connections to spectatorship and entertainment. In May 1898, Forbes was on hand to watch an elephant – 'Don Pedro' – be put down by the ringmaster, James A Bailey. The carcass was then transported to the museum, where the taxidermist prepared it for display in the mammal gallery [Figure 1].⁶⁰

Strikingly, the museum also had decades-long association with William Cross, the enterprising individual who tried to acquire Pongo in 1876. Museum annual reports record purchases from Cross's Menagerie in 1865, with numerous donations following between the

⁵⁵ Latour, *Science in Action*, footnote, p. 264; Rodney Harrison, 'Consuming Colonialism: Curio Dealers' Catalogues, Souvenir Objects and Indigenous Agency in Oceania,' in Byrne et al eds. *Unpacking the Collection*, pp. 119–140.

⁵⁶ *Mercury*, February 13 1867, p. 1; February 20 1867, p. 1; January 13 1869, p. 6; December 1 1869, p. 3

⁵⁷ Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*, pp. 3–4, 89–103.

⁵⁸ Suzanne MacLeod, *Museum Architecture: A New Biography* (Oxford: Routledge, 2013), p. 48.

⁵⁹ 15th AR (1867), p. 13; 21st AR (1873), p. 14; 46th AR (1899), pp. 33–34; 47th AR (1900), p. 16.

⁶⁰ *Liverpool Echo*, May 16 1898, p. 2. This was not Forbes's sole dalliance with novelty spectacles: he once attracted a crowd to watch him unwrap an Egyptian mummy at Liverpool Museum. 51st AR (1904), p. 6.

1870s and 1910s.⁶¹ Cross's dealings with the museum hint at how his public persona navigated both academia and entertainment. Typically billing himself as a naturalist, other escapades – such as importing a white elephant or lending a polar bear to Lewis's Department Store – earned Cross the sobriquet 'the English Barnum.'⁶² Cross's business catered to 'all ranks of society, from the Prince of Wales ... to the organ-grinder in want of a monkey and the crossing-sweeper desirous of having a favourite sparrow stuffed.'⁶³ Celebrity customers included the actor Sarah Bernhardt, with Barnum himself 'an extensive purchaser from the Liverpool menagerie ... the majority of his performing animals having trained at that great breaking-school.'⁶⁴ Further to this, an 1897 profile in *The English Illustrated Magazine* estimated that Cross was responsible for some of the 'most successful exhibits seen in the music hall or the sideshow,' labelling his menagerie:

'A university or seminary for higher education of animals ... Lions are trained, monkeys are taught how to earn a livelihood both for themselves and the people that buy them; elephants become proficient beggars, and parrots are given a vocabulary if they have not got one already.'⁶⁵

Adding yet another string to his bow, Cross provided animals to the 1886 Liverpool International Exhibition of Navigation, Commerce and Industry – also arranging for human performers (dancers, conjurers, jugglers and a 'Kroo boy' from Sierra Leone) to appear at its Indian Village [**moved from elsewhere in article**].⁶⁶

By the end of the nineteenth century, Cross's reputation as an animal impresario rivalled that of Londoner Charles Jamrach and Carl Hagenbeck of Hamburg. Though

⁶¹ 13th AR (1865), p. 13. Additional donations mentioned in annual reports published 1873, 1874, 1878, 1879, 1897, 1901, 1906, 1908, 1911 and 1912. Such activity was not restricted to Cross's immediate locale: museum collections in Dundee and Glasgow today house gorilla specimens obtained from his menagerie. John E Cooper and Gordon Hull, *Gorilla Pathology and Health: With a Catalogue of Preserved Materials* (London: Elsevier, 2017), pp. 512, 516–517.

⁶² *Pall Mall Gazette* April 11 1887, pp. 1–2; *The Era*, March 5 1892, p.19; *Police News*, March 22 1884, pp. 1–2, January 8 1887, p. 1; *Mercury*, December 21 1886, p. 6, December 22 1886, p. 8, December 25 1886, p. 6; Edward Terbutt, 'Abducting a White Elephant,' *The Wide World Magazine*, January 1901, pp. 246–250; TW Wilkinson, 'The King of Wild Beast Collectors,' *Chums: An Illustrated Paper for Boys*, October 16 1895, p.119; 'Wild Animals as Ocean Voyagers: Menagerie Beasts on Board Ships,' *Chums*, August 11 1897, Vol. V, Issue 257, p.806.

⁶³ *Manchester Times*, December 14 1894, p. 5.

⁶⁴ Terbutt, 'Abducting a White Elephant,' p. 246. Purchases from Cross are listed in 1879 and 1880 route books for Barnum's circus. Circus Historical Society <<http://www.circushistory.org/History/PTB1879.htm>> <www.circushistory.org/History/PTB1880.htm> [accessed February 13 2018];

⁶⁵ AG Page, 'Wild Beasts in a Great City,' *English Illustrated Magazine*, 171 (1897), p. 250; *Era*, June 29 1895, p. 14; Sarah Bernhardt, *My Double Life* (London: Heinemann, 1907), pp. 315–318.

⁶⁶ *Mercury*, April 7 1886, p. 7, May 20 1886, p. 6.

commercial competitors, these traders enjoyed convivial, even filial, relations. Originally Hamburgers themselves, the Jamrach family had longstanding connections with Hagenbeck (who was also brother-in-law to another London animal dealer, Charles Rice); likewise, that Cross christened one of his children Charles Jamrach implies close bonds existed between the Liverpool and London firms.⁶⁷ Like Jamrach and Hagenbeck, Cross was also part of a trading dynasty: grandson of Edward Cross (c. 1774–1854), proprietor of Georgian London’s Exeter ‘Change Menagerie, his eldest son, William Simpson Cross (1873–1920), went on to run zoological gardens at Otterspool, South Liverpool in the early twentieth century.⁶⁸

Cross’s attempt to buy Pongo was part of a protracted pursuit of gorillas and chimpanzees – one that again blurred science and showmanship. In August 1879, Cross managed to buy a baby gorilla which (after Thomas Moore judged ‘the genuineness of the specimen’) was paired with a chimpanzee at his menagerie.⁶⁹ These were then sold to a Manchester showman, with the gorilla – dubbed Gena – fetching £2000. Shortly afterwards the pair were exhibited at the Crystal Palace, London. There, *The Era* reported, Gena provoked chatter ‘as to whether the gorilla is the connecting link between man and brute.’ The paper went on to document the ‘great anxiety felt by disciples of Darwin that the gorilla live so that it may be compared with human kind as it grows older’ – an especially desirable outcome since ‘even now its likeness to a Negro child is generally remarked.’⁷⁰ Such hopes were quickly dashed. Gena died within a matter of days – apparently due to cold (although the meals of ‘chicken, mutton and other delicacies’ fed by Cross could hardly have agreed with the gorilla’s predominantly herbivore palate).⁷¹

Two years later, *The Illustrated Police News* reported that Cross had purchased another gorilla from a steamship docked on the Mersey.⁷² Querying this assertion, the accompanying engraving showed an animal looking suspiciously like a chimpanzee [Figure 2]. This conflation could have been the product of a deception by Cross and/or ignorance on the artist’s behalf: misidentification of gorillas and chimpanzees was typical while sightings of the former

⁶⁷ Simons, ‘Exotic Animals and the Imperial Economy,’ pp. 27–30, 34–39; Eric Ames, *Carl Hagenbeck’s Empire of Entertainments* (Seattle: University of Washington, 2008); Nigel Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002), pp. 47, 213. Details on the Cross family gleaned from the website of Toxteth Park cemetery (<http://www.toxtethparkcemetery.co.uk/dbase/grave.php?grave=382§ion=P>; accessed July 19 2018).

⁶⁸ Ken Pye, *Merseyside Tales: Curious and Amazing True Stories from History* (Stroud: The History Press, 2015), pp. 106–110.

⁶⁹ *Mercury*, August 14 1879, p. 6.

⁷⁰ *Era*, August 24 1879, p. 2

⁷¹ *Mercury*, August 14, 1879, p. 6. See also: *The Times*, August 14 1879, p. 9; *Manchester Times*, September 6 1879, p. 4; *The Graphic*, September 13 1879, p. 269.

⁷² *Police News*, September 17 1881, pp. 1–2



Figure 2 ‘Cross’s Gorilla and the Captain,’ *Illustrated Police News*, September 17 1881, p. 1

remained a novelty in Europe. Either way, it seems unlikely that this specimen really was a gorilla. In 1883, Cross’s Menagerie advertised ‘a genuine Du Chaillu gorilla, not the chimpanzee usually palmed on the public’ – including, one might infer, at his own establishment on previous occasions.⁷³ Similarly, *The Liverpool Mercury* once reported Cross getting his hands on a specimen of ‘Coola Camba’ – a species of ‘man monkey’ Du Chaillu claimed to have found in equatorial Africa, and which was allegedly comparable to ‘a half-human creature’ mentioned in dispatches by Henry Morton Stanley (the journalist-explorer famed for tracking down British missionary David Livingstone in sub-Saharan Africa).⁷⁴ Du Chaillu had stated that the coola camba was the most like humans of all apes, though there remains no empirical proof of its existence – or of later theories that it is a gorilla-chimpanzee hybrid.⁷⁵ None of this dissuaded the *Mercury* from urging readers ‘interested in Darwinian theory’ to visit Cross’s Menagerie to ‘see if there is any connection between the coola camba and the “missing link.”’⁷⁶

⁷³ *Mercury*, January 9 1883, p. 1.

⁷⁴ *Mercury*, January 23 1880, p. 19.

⁷⁵ On the coola camba see Paul du Chaillu, *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa* (New York Harper & Brothers, 1862), pp. 314–317, 399, 408; Brian T. Shea, ‘Between the Gorilla and the Chimpanzee: A History of Debate Concerning the Existence of the *Kooloo-Kamba* or Gorilla-Like Chimpanzee,’ *Journal of Ethnobiology*, 4:1 (1984), pp. 1–13.

⁷⁶ *Mercury*, January 23 1880, p. 19. According to a later interview, Cross’s coola camba died ‘from cold’ after eight days in Liverpool. *Era*, March 5 1892, p.19.

5. Animal-Trading and Empire

The tall claims emanating from Cross's Menagerie and his gorilla/chimpanzee hunt make it easy to dismiss him as a purveyor of mere humbug. But this should not overshadow the sophisticated character of Cross's enterprise. His business relied on an extensive array of contacts throughout the globe, with these securing a stream of exotic species into the Mersey docks. In this, Cross profited from the advanced trappings of late-Victorian modernity. Newspaper profiles noted the importance of Reuter's telegraph service in enabling communication with international agents and suppliers, also recording that the steamship's advent had increased the efficiency of transporting animals overseas. For his part, Cross additionally credited the development of imperial railways in India, China and Southeast Asia with making new species accessible to traders.⁷⁷

The latter details highlights the extent to which imperialism augmented the Victorian animal trade – and vice versa. For one thing, individuals like Cross acted as middle-men for supplying museums with colonial-themed exhibit. In 1898, for example, Cross donated ethnographic artefacts from Benin (bronzes, ivories, paddles) to Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum, also using accompanying correspondence to advertise live animals (including '200 baboons, apes and monkeys') and 'museum specimens' (remains of hippopotamuses, elephants, lions, tigers and panthers) that were purchasable from his menagerie.⁷⁸ Hunting animals, furthermore, was concomitant with colonialism – especially in Africa. Colonial governors such as Cecil Rhodes amassed zoological collections as 'symbols of dominance,' whilst hunting metaphors were a common means of demeaning Africa's human inhabitants in written descriptions of the continent.⁷⁹ Imperial hunts correspondingly provided arresting copy for fiction aimed at domestic audiences, as well as the illustrated newspapers and magazines which emerged as 'vehicles for imperial propaganda' in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁸⁰ Britain's animal traders were very much part of this wider print culture. Drawings and photographs of the Liverpool Menagerie appeared *The Graphic*, *Wide World Magazine*, *Illustrated Police News* and *English Illustrated Magazine*, whilst Cross was interviewed on several occasions by

⁷⁷ *Era*, December 27 1890, p. 16; *Era*, June 29 1895, p. 14; Page, 'Wild Beasts in a Great City,' pp. 249–258; 'Wild Animals as Ocean Voyagers: Menagerie Beasts on Board Ships,' *Chums*, August 11 1897, p.806.

⁷⁸ William Cross letter to Augustus Pitt Rivers, December 2 1898. Accessed via Rethinking Pitt-Rivers: Analysing the Activities of a Nineteenth-Century Collector website (<http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/article-index/12-articles/668-b-series-dealers/index.html>; accessed July 10 2018).

⁷⁹ MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature*, pp. 38–39, 133.

⁸⁰ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880–1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 15–38.

Chums – a journal paradigmatic of juvenile literature’s role in popular imperialism.⁸¹ Accordingly, paternalistic attitudes which characterised colonial literature seeped into the animal traders’ rhetoric: the Liverpool menagerie advertised itself as being ‘known throughout the civilised and uncivilised world,’ with Cross bragging that ‘natives talk about “Massa Cross” even where Europeans have rarely been seen.’⁸²

This reciprocity between the animal trade and empire was not without attendant problems, however. Events in the colonies sometimes proved unwelcome obstructions for animal merchants: for instance, in interviews Cross complained that the Mahdist War (1881–1899) stymied exports of ‘hippopotami, giraffes, gorillas and antelopes’ from Sudan.⁸³ The sheer scale of hunting too presented broader dilemmas. An 1897 interviewer heard Cross lament:

‘Africa, the richest storehouse the naturalist now possesses, is rapidly becoming impoverished. Every day expeditions start from the coast to trade, shoot or capture ... The southern parts are rapidly coming under the white man’s sway, and when he comes on the scene all noble forms of wildlife disappear.’⁸⁴

These comments tapped into the concerns of the emerging conservation movement, which aimed to redress threats of extinction posed by hunts and safaris.⁸⁵ As Cross noted, ‘the march of civilisation is, in a sense, an enemy of [my] business,’ given that ‘the commercial spirit of the age’ was depleting stocks of once-populous species such as the Indian elephant and Bengal tiger.⁸⁶ Cross thus concluded that the late nineteenth century amounted to the ‘heyday of the naturalist’s trade’ – one which would not ‘last long.’⁸⁷ Prescient as these sentiments were, they underplayed Cross’s complicity in a destructive and wasteful trade. Not only was low life-

⁸¹ Robert H MacDonald, *The Language of Empire: Myths and Metaphors of Popular Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 99–111; Jeffrey Richards, ‘Popular Imperialism and the Image of the Army in Juvenile Literature’ in MacKenzie ed., *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850–1950* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp. 100–108. Cross’s son even tried his hand at literature of this ilk. See William Simpson Cross, ‘An Elephant Hunt in Liverpool,’ *The Wide World Magazine*, July 1904, pp. 243–246.

⁸² Advertisement, *The Avicultural Magazine*, 3:3 (1904); *Era*, June 29 1895, p. 14

⁸³ *Manchester Times*, December 14 1894, p. 5

⁸⁴ Page, ‘Wild Beasts,’ pp. 252.

⁸⁵ MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 200–224; Jeremy Rich, ‘Chimpanzees in the Colonial Maelstrom: Struggles over Knowledge, Race and Commodities in the Gabonese Primate Trade, c. 1850–1940’ in Toyin Falola and Emily Brownell eds. *Landscape, Environment and Technology in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa* (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 21–41.

⁸⁶ *Manchester Times*, December 14 1894, p. 5

⁸⁷ Page, ‘Wild Beasts,’ pp. 252–253, 256.

expectancy the norm at Britain's zoos and menageries, capturing a single animal for sale on the open market typically involved killing many more of the same species as collateral.⁸⁸ Moreover, conscientious objections hardly deterred Cross from acquiring species from Africa and other colonial contexts. As late as 1914, chimpanzees and other apes were still being advertised amongst the 'pet animals always in stock' at the Liverpool menagerie.⁸⁹

Disingenuous as his flirtation with the conservation movement may have been, it does suggest that Cross was attuned to current affairs and scholarly debates. This was partly borne of necessity. As *The English Illustrated Magazine* observed, Cross's clientele included 'the ordinary sight-seeing public on the one hand and scientists on the other' – with the latter requiring that he be 'an epitome of the learning of all the specialists'⁹⁰ By the end of the nineteenth century, for example, Cross seemingly had some understanding of medicine and veterinary science: *The Manchester Times* reckoned that his 'practical experience of many years' qualified Cross to 'play the part of the doctor ... whether it be a sick lion, delicate snake or invalid bird.'⁹¹ At the very least, his cognisance of animal nutrition improved as the century progressed. An 1893 interview saw Cross insist that gorillas 'must be fed on pineapples and English grapes' – a far cry from the diet lined up for Gena in 1879 or the 'sausages, cheese and Berlin white beer' once deemed suitable for Pongo.⁹² Cross even felt knowledgeable enough to assert that 'if human beings stuck to a wholesome diet as consistently as beasts of the field there would be fewer cases of dyspepsia.'⁹³

On occasion, scholars also called on Cross to help their cause. In 1893, the American zoologist Richard Lynch Garner deposited two chimpanzees at Cross's Menagerie – a decision Garner likely regretted as, true to form, both creatures expired after a matter of weeks in Liverpool.⁹⁴ The unusual circumstances surrounding these chimpanzees' stay with Cross nonetheless deserve elaboration. They had been left in Liverpool whilst Garner travelled to London to promote research he had conducted in Gabon. Garner had obtained the two chimps, christened Aaron and Elisheaba, during pioneering investigations of simian communication –

⁸⁸ Rothfels, 'Catching Animals' in Mary J Henninger-Voss ed. *Animals in Human Histories: The Mirror of Nature and Culture* (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press), pp. 182–228.

⁸⁹ Advertisement, *Avicultural Magazine*, 5:5, April 1914

⁹⁰ Page, 'Wild Beasts,' p.257.

⁹¹ *Manchester Times*, December 14 1894, p. 5

⁹² *Chums*, November 8 1893, p.172; *Truth: A Weekly Journal*, May 3 1877, pp. 564–565

⁹³ *Manchester Times*, December 14 1894, p. 5. On the relationship between zoo animals and medical practices, see Abigail Woods, 'Doctors in the Zoo: Connecting Human and Animal Health in British Zoological Gardens, c.1828–1890,' in Woods, Angela Cassidy, Michael Bresalie, and Rachel Mason Dentinger eds. *Animals and the Shaping of Modern Medicine* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 27–69.

⁹⁴ Richard Lynch Garner, *Gorillas & Chimpanzees* (London: Osgood, McIlvaine Co, 1896), pp. 136–142.

fieldwork which involved him making phonographic recordings while situated inside a cage.⁹⁵ Based on his interactions with them, Garner believed Aaron and Elisheaba were representatives of a peculiarly intelligent breed of chimpanzee. Modifying terminology coined by Du Chaillu, Garner's book *Gorillas and Chimpanzees* (1896) affirmed they were specimens of what he called the 'kulu-kamba.' For Garner (unlike Du Chaillu) the kulu-kamba was not a distinct species, but 'simply a high order of chimpanzee' – one distinguishable from the commonly-found 'ntyigo.' Continuing in this vein, Garner theorised that the kulu-kamba and ntyigo constituted 'the white man and the negro of a common stock ... the patrician and plebeian of one race or the nobility and yeomanry of one tribe.'⁹⁶

Penned by a white Virginian, these words carry extra gravity when related to the racial segregation then enforced in the American South.⁹⁷ More directly pertinent for my purposes are the similarities between how presumptions about human culture influenced Garner's interpretations of simian behaviour and the manner in which racial pseudo-science impinged on the exhibitionary apparatuses at Liverpool Museum. In essence, Garner's chimpanzee hierarchy afforded kulu-kambas equivalence to how Caucasian specimens were classified in the museum's anthropological galleries. Exaggerating the point, Garner's research had practical links to Liverpool Museum. *Gorillas and Chimpanzees* referenced specimens in the Liverpool collection, whilst Garner gifted the museum 'two photographs of series of skulls of Gorilla, etc.' in 1901.⁹⁸ On top of this, it was aboard an Elder Dempster ship that Garner's expedition to Africa commenced, and primary sources document that, after her death, Elisheaba's brain was donated to William Herdman at the University of Liverpool.⁹⁹

The latter detail neatly squares the circle between the functions of gorilla and chimpanzee displays at scholarly institutions and popular entertainments in Victorian Liverpool. As Hochadel has pointed out, even scientists who sneered at show-business marketing and display strategies benefitted from 'public demand' for exhibits of anthropoid apes, with zoos and menageries offering a ready source of specimens for observation, examination and experimentation.¹⁰⁰ Aaron and Elisheaba, for example, were expressly regarded as objects of academic inquiry and passed along the same networks of accumulation

⁹⁵ Gregory Radick, *The Simian Tongue: The Long Debate about Animal Language* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2007), pp. 106, 124–135; Keith Candland, *Feral Children and Clever Animals: Reflections on Human Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 152–154, 207–226.

⁹⁶ Garner, *Gorillas & Chimpanzees*, pp. 35, 41–42.

⁹⁷ See Rich, *Missing Links: The African and American Worlds of RL Garner, Primate Collector* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia, 2012).

⁹⁸ 49th AR (1902), p. 50.

⁹⁹ *Proceedings of Liverpool Biological Society, 1893–1894* (Liverpool: T Dobb & Co, 1894), p. x.

¹⁰⁰ Hochadel, 'Darwin in the Monkey Cage,' p. 96.

and communication as many items in Liverpool Museum's collection – yet for an interim period they resided at a menagerie closely associated with the entertainment industry. For all his learnedness and scholarly experimentation, Garner – like Herdman and Liverpool Museum more broadly – was dependent on the assistance of William Cross, who, in a revealing error, *Gorillas and Chimpanzees* labelled 'Dr Cross.'¹⁰¹

This misattribution boosts the impression that Cross held esteem in the scientific community. Certainly, the Cross name commanded lasting respect from museum professionals. In 1905, Henry Forbes wrote to *Nature* regarding a monkey he had been invited to inspect at the Liverpool menagerie. According to Forbes – who, as noted, was sufficiently well-versed to have written a primatology textbook – the monkey, obtained in Cameroon, was evidence of a previously 'undescribed' species of guenon. He proceeded to propose the new binomial '*Cercopithecus crossi* ... and for popular use Cross's guenon' as a 'compliment to the courteous proprietor of that large and well-known importing house of wild animals.'¹⁰² Here, though, Forbes was guilty of show-business overstatement: the species has since been reclassified owing to another author having identified it seven years prior to the *Nature* article.¹⁰³

6. Conclusion

As has been demonstrated, Cross's animal business successfully crisscrossed the realms of public education and mass entertainment. It therefore merits repetition that evolutionary displays of gorillas and other mammals were – alongside menageries, illustrated newspapers, fine art galleries, shop windows and personal collections – only one of numerous contacts with exotic animals available to nineteenth-century Liverpoolians. Bearing this in mind, it seems reasonable to assume that visitors would not automatically have differentiated gorilla/chimpanzee displays encountered in these varying settings. As documented, there existed myriad overlaps between Liverpool Museum's purportedly rational space and the more disordered environs of somewhere like Cross's Menagerie – similarities which ranged from personnel interrelations, common exhibitionary methods, a mutual classificatory language and shared ties to empire. What is more, descriptions of Cross's Menagerie make it sound positively museum-like. Besides live animals, newspaper stories mention the presence of an Egyptian

¹⁰¹ Garner, *Gorillas and Chimpanzees*, p. 136.

¹⁰² Forbes, 'On a New Species of Guenon,' *Nature*, October 1905, p. 630.

¹⁰³ Bo Beolens, Michael Watkins and Michael Grayson, *The Eponym Dictionary of Mammals* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009), pp. 90–91.

mummy, Burmese marble idols and a mounted male gorilla ‘with frowning brows and open ferocious mouth’ who ‘stretches out his fat clumsy hand to welcome the visitor.’ [moved from elsewhere in article].¹⁰⁴

As Hochadel notes regarding nineteenth-century zoological gardens, such crossovers between divergent display settings make it difficult to retrospectively ‘disentangle strictly “scientific” observation from other kinds of observation.’ This is especially true given that Victorian zookeepers made little effort to formally record ‘ordinary’ visitors’ opinions.¹⁰⁵ The same applies to museums. Curators deployed comment books and suchlike only sparingly in the nineteenth century, leading Kate Hill to resolve that visitors remain the ‘great unknown’ to museum historians despite ‘the weight of speculation targeted at them.’¹⁰⁶ Of course, this makes it hard to gauge exactly what the public made of the miscellaneous ways gorillas and chimpanzees were exhibited in nineteenth-century Liverpool. We can, though, be confident that a plurality of audiences – museumgoers, journalists, showmen, academics of various stripes – viewed animal displays, and that they received mixed messages from them.¹⁰⁷ Specifically, the intended impact of Liverpool Museum’s mammal gallery must have been tempered by the anomalous presence of Don Pedro the elephant [Figure 1]. Not only associated with a decidedly non-scholarly institution (the circus), Don Pedro’s remains were curated in a manner markedly different to the mammals inside surrounding glass cabinets. Positioning Don Pedro one step removed from other specimens interrupted the evolutionary pathway visitors were programmed to trace, rendering it unclear precisely where the elephant fitted into the museum’s exhibitionary schema. It follows, then, that museumgoers may have comprehended unintended equivalences between Don Pedro the circus performer and nearby ‘scientific’ gorilla and primate exhibits – a logical corollary to sideshow ‘missing links’ being perceived as embodiments of Darwinian theory.

This, and the weight of evidence assembled in this article, offers a reminder of why Haraway concluded that the border between ‘technical and popular discourse’ has historically been ‘very fragile and permeable,’ teetering on ‘the boundaries of struggles to determine what count[s] as knowledge.’ While such tensions applied to any animal display in Victorian Liverpool, the stakes were raised when exhibiting primates, humanity’s ‘taxonomic kin.’¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Page, ‘Wild Beasts,’ p. 250; *Era*, April 14 1900, p. 17.

¹⁰⁵ Hochadel, ‘Exotic Animals Next Door,’ p. 207.

¹⁰⁶ Kate Hill, *Culture and Class in English Public Museums, 1850–1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 125.

¹⁰⁷ This parallels Hochadel’s analysis of the “highly heterogeneous” character of zoo audiences, and visitors’ “correspondingly diverse ... perceptions and motives” when viewing “monkey and apes.” ‘Darwin in the Monkey Cage,’ p. 97.

¹⁰⁸ Haraway, *Primate Visions*, pp. 13–14.

Exhibits of gorillas and chimpanzees tested the limits separating humans from animals, and science from show business.