

Elephants, education and entertainment

Travelling menageries in nineteenth-century Britain

Helen Cowie

Ever expanding in scope, and resoundingly popular in appeal, touring menageries functioned simultaneously as a source of rudimentary zoological knowledge and a popular form of entertainment. Though zoological gardens emerged in several provincial cities in Britain during the 1830s, itinerant menageries continued to attract a broad range of visitors throughout the century and catered to sectors of the population who, owing to social class or geography, lacked easy access to static zoological exhibitions. The article assesses who patronized menageries and, through an analysis of advertisements for travelling animal shows and reports published in contemporary newspapers, explores their educational value. Building on recent studies of the relationship between science, showmanship and consumer culture, it argues that menageries, because of their durability and social inclusivity, were important sites for the transmission of natural knowledge.

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 caravan, 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 exhibition. Apprehension, however, was soon replaced by enchantment as the boy scrutinized in turn each of the caged animals and observed their movements. Years later Aytoun still remembered seeing 'Nero, the indulgent old lion, who would stand any amount of liberties', admiring the handsome zebra, 'whom we greatly coveted for a pony', and 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'. He 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'.

The experiences of the youthful Aytoun 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 recollected 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 adult 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', and whose 'glassy stare' seemed to be directed 'right at our chubby countenance as if appraising the source of his next meal'. These recollections – 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 educational and multi-sensory experience.¹

This article examines mobile menageries in nineteenth-century Britain. Ever expanding in scope, and extremely popular in appeal, 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 Though zoological gardens emerged in London at the end of the 1820s and in several provincial cities in the 1830s, including Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol and Edinburgh, menageries continued to attract a broad range of visitors throughout the century and catered to sectors of the population who, through class or geography, lacked easy access to static zoological collections. They have, however, received relatively little attention from historians in comparison to zoos, with the result that their range, longevity and popularity have not been fully appreciated.³

We shall explore both the commercial and educational functions of travelling zoological collections, which were formed and developed with commercial imperatives in mind, but which marketed themselves – and were perceived by some contemporaries – as living museums of natural history. To assess who patronized menageries and how collections were presented, use is made of a previously little used source: contemporary newspapers. These publications frequently 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. 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 itineraries.

Menageries are analysed from two interrelated perspectives. Firstly, they are situated 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. 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 commercialization 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 commercialized from the very early nineteenth century, and in a form which gave rise to a vigorous popular culture of entertainment'.⁴ Travelling menageries in many ways exemplified this shift, forming a key element of contemporary fairs. Their clientele transcended boundaries of class, age and gender, but they also served to reinforce class distinctions by admitting spectators at different rates and at different times according to their background.⁵

Secondly, menageries are viewed as part of the growing movement for rational recreation and popular science that flourished in the mid-nineteenth century. Evidenced by popular crazes like the collection of ferns and the keeping of aquaria, and fuelled by a profusion of increasingly affordable natural history texts, such as Charlotte Smith's *Natural History of Birds* (1816) and J. G. Wood's *Sketches and Anecdotes of Animal Life* (1855) – to name just a couple – a taste for knowledge of the natural world became increasingly widespread in contemporary British society.⁶ Menageries were always, first and foremost, commercially driven operations. Like other fairground exhibitors, however, their owners 'were not immune to the rise of the ethos of rational recreation', and, through making exotic animals accessible to a broad spectrum of the population, they popularized zoology and served as a vehicle for communicating basic scientific information.⁷ Here I consider some of the methods used to enhance the menagerie's educational function – from the production of printed guidebooks to verbal commentaries by keepers – situating these exhibitions within a wider culture of popular natural history, which was itself often consumer driven and performance based.⁸ I am concerned, specifically, with the accessibility of travelling animal collections, the manner in which these collections were publicized and the type of information that visitors may have acquired through visiting a menagerie – the latter harder to

ascertain, but in part recoverable through sources such as personal letters and published accounts like the one in *Blackwood's Magazine*.⁹

Origins and evolution

Exotic animals started to tour Britain in large collections towards the end of the eighteenth century. In earlier decades they had tended to travel singly, like the rhinoceros, Clara, who famously toured Europe between 1741 and 1758.¹⁰ From the 1780s onwards, however, whole menageries began to circulate the country, featuring a variety of different species. In May 1800, for example, Gilbert Pidcock visited Ipswich with a 'grand assemblage of curious foreign animals and beasts . . . in four magnificent caravans', including 'a most stupendous elephant', 'a lion and lioness', 'two royal Bengal tigers', 'two ravenous hyenas' and 'a beautiful antelope . . . said to be the swiftest on the face of the globe'.¹¹

As the nineteenth century progressed, touring menageries grew ever larger. Overseas exploration and colonial trade made new creatures available to showmen and the range and number of animals on display expanded. Where Pidcock had arrived in 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'.¹² Twenty-seven years later Wombwell's rival William Manders boasted an even larger collection, constructing 'a spacious enclosure 170 feet in depth by 64 feet in width' in Leicester for the exhibition of his 'five hundred living specimens of natural curiosity'.¹³

As the size of travelling menageries increased, so did the number of showmen involved in the business, each decade giving rise to a new crop of menagerists. In the first twenty years of the nineteenth century, Pidcock and Stefano Polito monopolized the market. In the 1820s, Wombwell and Thomas Atkins managed touring shows, and in the 1840s William Batty and Joseph Hylton joined the profession. By the 1850s, many of the original showmen had retired or died and a new batch of zoological entrepreneurs supplanted them. The key players amongst this younger generation were James Edmond, who appropriated Wombwell's collection, Manders, who inherited Hylton's menagerie, and George Sanger, whose equestrian show slowly

evolved into a renowned touring circus in the final decades of the century.

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 Maldon, 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 embraced the profession of menagerist, continually expanding and diversifying his collection and travelling all over the British Isles. When he died at Northallerton, Yorkshire in 1850, aged seventy-three, the showman owned three separate menageries and 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 that was 'furnished with not only the comforts but the luxuries of life' and possessed 'more than twenty lions and five elephants'.¹⁴

Accessibility

Fairs were the prime venue for viewing travelling menageries (Fig. 1). Typically annual events, choreographed to coincide with key moments in the agricultural cycle, fairs 'combined the roles of market place, labour exchange, amusement park and even museum'.¹⁵ Though their traditional function as markers of stages in the agricultural calendar was being eroded by the nineteenth century through urbanization and industrialization, fairs survived as sites for pleasure and commerce well into the Victorian era and some even expanded. Successful events were aided by technological innovations such as the railways, which saw the advent of excursion trains and made fairs accessible to a wider range of people.¹⁶

Menageries visited all of the major annual fairs, from St Bartholomew's fair in London, to Knott Mill fair in Manchester and Donnybrook fair in Ireland. Showmen arranged their itineraries to coincide with traditional festivities in the provinces, appearing at particular venues to synchronize with local celebrations.¹⁷ Menageries were one of the key attractions at fairs, competing successfully with other amusements such

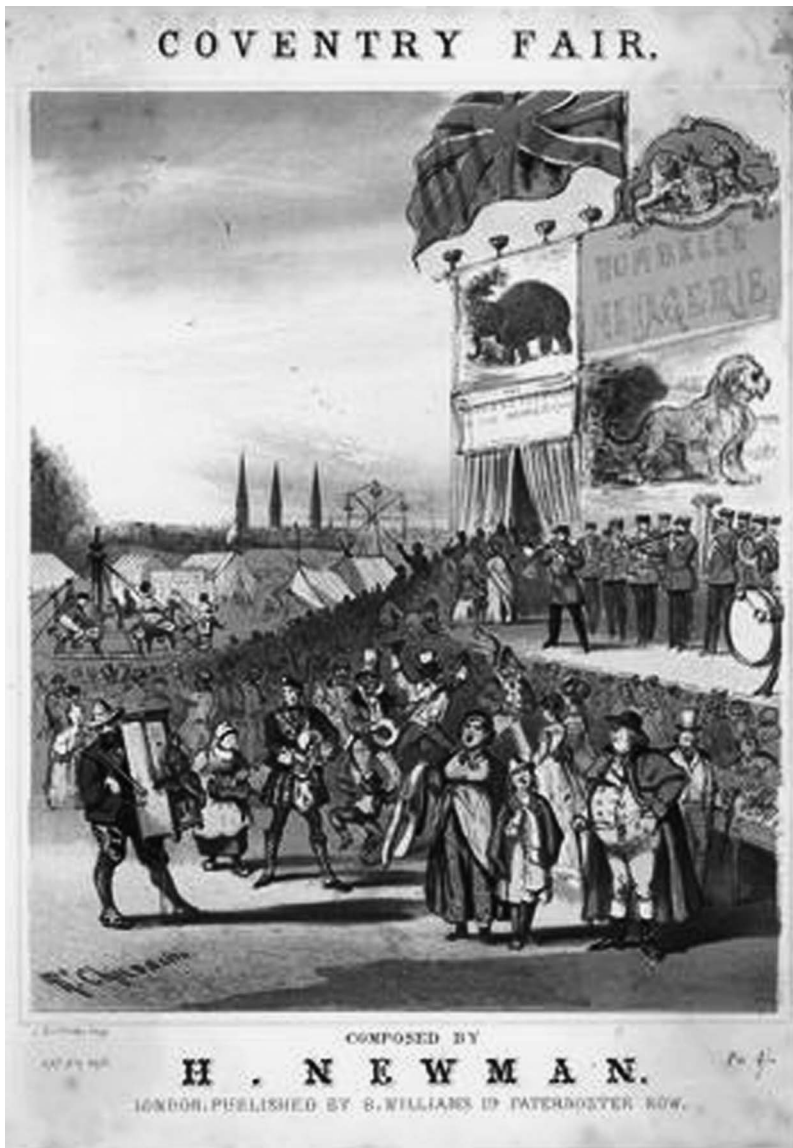


Fig. 1. *Coventry Fair*, from the Spellman Collection of Victorian Music Covers © Special Collections, University of Reading.

as waxwork exhibitions, travelling theatre companies, freak shows and talented or deformed animals.¹⁸ At Stepney fair in 1846 Wombwell's menagerie was 'the best exhibition in the fair', admitting 10,000 people.¹⁹

As well as attending annual pleasure fairs, menageries also visited smaller towns and villages in the course of their travels. Visits to these places were more irregular and usually shorter than visits to cities, the duration of stay sometimes being dictated by levels of custom or the need to arrive at a major event at a particular time. The range of places visited was, nonetheless, surprisingly diverse, considering the logistical difficulties

involved, 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'.²⁰ In 1853, meanwhile, when Batty's menagerie visited Wick in the far north of Scotland, its presence apparently 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'.²¹ 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'.²²

To give a sense of the travels of an average wild beast show, we can look at the itinerary of Wombwell's menagerie in the year 1849, the details of which were recorded in a logbook retained by the establishment's elephant keeper, George Percival. In this year, Wombwell started his travels in Leicestershire, with stops at Hinckley and Lutterworth. In February the showman entered the neighbouring county of Northamptonshire, where exhibition venues included Northampton, Kettering and Wellingborough, and 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 'W[illia]m Wombwell [was] killed with [*sic*] the elephant'. Following this tragedy, Wombwell circled the West Midlands, stopping in Redditch, Wolverhampton and Dudley, before heading south to cover Worcester, Evesham and Cirencester. Wombwell's autumn itinerary encompassed Berkshire, Surrey and Sussex, as well as London Fair. He concluded the year in Canterbury, Kent.²³

To ensure that menageries were economically as well as physically accessible, showmen often offered concessions to less wealthy patrons. Throughout the nineteenth century, the typical entry fee for a mobile wild beast show was 1 shilling. Menagerists, however, usually exempted tradesmen, labourers and sometimes servants from this payment, admitting them for sixpence or sometimes even less. Children were also charged at the lower rate, regardless of class, though the definition of 'child' oscillated between 'under 7' and 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, visiting the same city, his successor Edmond had lowered the threshold for 'child' to '7 years of age'.²⁴

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 typically 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, the latter carefully positioned so as to allow partial glimpses of the wonders within. In 1859, for instance, 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'.²⁵ 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 own village.

Though showmen did not keep comprehensive records of who actually frequented their establishments, intermittent reports in contemporary newspapers suggest that a wide spectrum of lower class people did patronize menageries, evidently finding the discounted entry fee within their means. In 1843, for instance, a youth named Joseph Mountney, 'in the employ of Messrs. Bell and Co., tea dealers, as groom', visited Wright's menagerie at Belper and was bitten by a leopard.²⁶ In 1855, a woman described as 'a servant girl' approached too near to a leopard in the same collection, 'which lacerated her face severely with one of his claws'.²⁷ In 1868 'a seaman named John Brown belonging to her Majesty's ship Duke of Wellington' sustained severe injuries when 'by way of bravado' he 'thrust his hand through the bars of the lions' cage'.²⁸ In 1870 a fishmonger called John Ranshaw, had his watch stolen at a menagerie in Leeds,²⁹ whilst in 1872 one of Wombwell's elephants killed George Stanton, the young 'son of a crate maker'.³⁰ Clearly such reports cannot offer a complete picture of how many working class people patronized menageries, or their motivations for doing so, for the professions of individual customers only received a mention in the Press when something abnormal occurred in one of these shows. 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 – both by the lower classes and 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’ had 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 he was 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 significant still, 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 which could sometimes create problems when self-improving tradesmen attired themselves in their best attire for their menagerie visit and then struggled to convince the showmen of their status. In 1873, for example, in a similar incident to that in Bedminster, a showmistress 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

Whilst menagerists thus did everything they could to enable working people to see exotic animals, the poor 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 élite, large numbers of whom attended travelling wild beast shows when they were in town. The *Derby Reporter* stated, for instance, 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’.³³ The Yorkshire naturalist Charles Waterton, meanwhile, paid a special visit to Mrs Wombwell’s collection at Scarborough in 1856 to see Jenny the chimpanzee, afterwards thanking the proprietress warmly for her hospitality and expressing his hope that the ape ‘may retain its health, and thus remunerate you for the large sum which you have expended in the purchase of it’.³⁴ The popularity of menageries thus transcended class barriers and social divisions, encompassing persons of all ranks. Menagerists also enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with naturalists, whose praise they often cited in their propaganda, and who, in return often received dead specimens for their natural history cabinets.

Publicity

As Fyfe and Lightman have shown, 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’.³⁵ Menagerists were masters of this kind of publicity and showmanship, employing a wide range of advertising techniques to publicize their collections. An analysis of the advertisements in the local press (some of them illustrated like the one in Fig. 2) and the bills on the walls of public buildings shows how they often blended sensationalism with promises of education, offering additional consumer comforts to make a trip to the wild beast show an attractive prospect.

In terms of content, menagerie publicity consistently addressed two main areas, its style changing little throughout the century. On the one hand, written advertisements described at length the collection of animals on view, stressing their quality, quantity, diversity and rarity. On the other, showmen focused on the overall visitor experience, indicating the special measures they had taken to make a visit to their establishments a pleasant, safe and sanitary undertaking. Novelty was in both cases the key word, as exhibitors tantalized the public with previously unseen wonders.

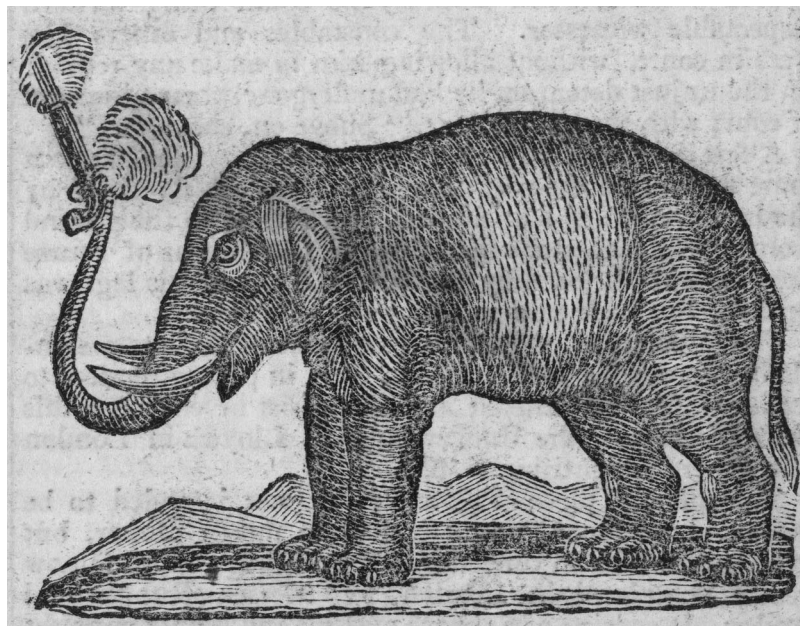


Fig. 2. Advertisement for Drake and Gilman's Menagerie, showing an elephant firing a pistol, *Liverpool Mercury*, 27 December 1822. © The British Library Board.

The first thing menagerists emphasized was the size and exclusivity of their animals. Advertisements for travelling animal shows were peppered with superlatives, describing the beasts they exhibited as the largest, the smallest or sometimes the only representatives of their species to have graced the British Isles. Patrons were promised sights that would astonish and delight them, and the rarity of specific animals was consistently stressed. Polito, for instance, advertised his 'stupendous' Egyptian camel, as 'the only one that has been imported into Britain for the last twenty-five years',³⁶ whilst Wombwell touted an elephant 'so extraordinary in his size that all elephants hitherto offered for public inspection will sink into mere pygmies'.³⁷ Edmond 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'.³⁸ There was a constant struggle to achieve one-upmanship over travelling competitors, each showman trumping the latest zoological wonder with a bigger and better rival 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 apologized 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!'³⁹ The showman thus capitalized on an impediment to increase interest in his star pachyderm. He repeated the trick when he visited Portsmouth again in 1842, informing prospective visitors on this occasion 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 'been under the necessity of erecting a temporary building to contain two of those most sagacious animals during the sojourn of the Menagerie'.⁴⁰

As well as stressing the size of their stock, menagerists were not shy about disclosing the cost of their animals, routinely professing to have spared no expense or effort in amassing the most exquisite specimens on the market. Showmen emphasized the value of specific animals in their propaganda, parading their own selfless desire to

gratify the paying public, and relating how they had overcome the most severe financial or logistical challenges to obtain their stock. Wombwell, advertising his collection in Glasgow, adopted precisely this strategy, announcing that 'the whole of this immense menagerie' was the result of his own 'individual exertions and penury sacrifices'. He boasted that he had 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'.⁴¹

Part of the appeal of any metropolitan zoological collection lay in its potential to mentally transport visitors to the places from which its inmates originated. To do this effectively, verbal descriptions of the various animals often referenced the details of their acquisition, if known, thereby helping to contextualise them and to endow 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 invited to imagine the lands from which specific beasts came 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]'.⁴² That the precise manner by which animals were collected – and not the mere fact of their collection – elevated their symbolic value is further suggested by explicit allusions in advertisements to the donors of certain prize specimens, some of which implied that the prestige of the former enhanced the attraction of the latter. Publicizing 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 which would render the specimen 'doubly interesting from its historical fame'.⁴³ Advertising another prize specimen, the tiger 'Striped Bob, the glory and terror' of his menagerie, the showman similarly related the circumstances of the feline's capture, informing visitors that he had been snared by two English hunters 'on the Sunderbunds, at the mouth of the Ganges' and bought from them for £390 by Mr Wombwell's agent.⁴⁴ Such details enhanced the exotic appeal of particular animals, giving them a pedigree that extended beyond their function as natural history specimens. Supplying certain

animals with 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.⁴⁵

If the contents of the menagerie constituted its main attraction, its outward appearance also contributed to its appeal. To lure visitors into the show, the façade was typically garishly painted with exotic scenes depicting animals in their native landscapes (Fig. 3). Sometimes one of the keepers paraded in front of the menagerie touting for custom; sometimes a couple of the smaller inmates were also on view. Thomas Frost, author of a history of London's fairs in 1875, recounted how, as a young boy in the 1820s and 1830s, 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 to colouring'. These sumptuous images were designed to evoke a sense of wonder in those who saw them, encouraging spectators to view the living specimens behind the striking façade. Frost noted, moreover, that the pictures 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'.⁴⁶ As the century progressed, these lavish exteriors became ever more elaborate and impressive in line with the expansion and diversification of their contents. In 1867, for example, the outside of Manders's menagerie was festooned with 'carved Corinthian columns', the walls of which 'were lavishly adorned with 'life-sized allegorical figures (typical of the chase)', whose 'brilliancy and colouring' tempted many visitors into the show.⁴⁷

Once attracted into the menagerie spectators wanted to admire the animals in as much comfort as possible. To satisfy their wishes, menagerists installed gas lamps in their establishments as soon as these became available, lit stoves to temper the cold during winter months and sometimes re-scheduled popular performances, such as the feeding time of the animals,



Fig. 3. Staffordshire figure of Polito's menagerie c. 1830; note the band and lavish exterior. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

in order to accommodate visitors with complex travel arrangements or delicate constitutions.⁴⁸ In Bristol, for example, Wombwell 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'.⁴⁹ To enhance visitors' auditory experience, menagerists frequently contracted brass bands, often themselves a major attraction, to travel with their establishments. Aware that a collection of live animals could produce some rather pungent smells, meanwhile, showmen also made a conscious effort to improve cleanliness, again taking advantage of the latest technologies. Visiting Liverpool in 1867, Manders proudly trumpeted 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 . . . to purify and perfume the atmosphere' and which was now appearing 'for the first time in a travelling Zoological Collection, where its delicious emanations' would, Manders believed, 'be duly appreciated'.⁵⁰ Like museums, public lectures and other venues for the dissemination of scientific ideas, we can view the travelling menagerie as 'an early form of multimedia experience', in which the senses of sight, sound, smell and touch were all stimulated and accommodated.⁵¹

Education

Menageries have typically been portrayed as promoting entertainment rather than providing education. This was the view put forward by the directors of the newly

established 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.⁵² Whilst such stereotypes certainly had some 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 mass of the population. Travelling animal shows also largely escaped the censure that was increasingly directed at fairs in the middle decades of the nineteenth century as sites of vice and debauchery,⁵³ being credited with raising the overall tone of the fairground. The *Leeds Mercury* thus 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 Menageries were seen to instruct as well as to entertain, harmonizing nicely with middle-class values.

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. Consequently, the sight of novel animals for the first time was a revelation to some more rustic citizens, who sometimes expressed their amazement at the stature, form and composition of certain animals. One old lady from Kilmarnock, visiting Wombwell's menagerie in 1850, allegedly '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'.⁵⁵ 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!'⁵⁶ 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'.⁵⁷

Menageries also served a wider educational function by giving viewers the chance to appreciate nature's stunning variety. By 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. In the opinion of one visitor to Manders's establishment, 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'.⁵⁸

Beyond merely bringing exotic animals to the masses, showmen instituted a number of practical measures to make their establishments more informative. Firstly, they often formulated a short guidebook to enlighten visitors about 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. Most contained a succinct catalogue of the creatures to be seen. Some included illustrations. Visiting Ipswich in 1800, for instance, 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'.⁵⁹ Touring Wrexham in 1867, Manders likewise tempted menagerie-goers with a literary keepsake in the form of an 'Illustrated and Descriptive Catalogue, containing the "Life and Adventures of Macomo [the lion tamer]"', the latter available 'in the menagerie, price one penny'.⁶⁰ Such texts functioned initially as a guide for visitors, as they viewed the zoological collection and examined

its inmates – a handbook for Bostock and Wombwell's collection advised spectators to 'compare the numbers [on the pamphlet] with those over the dens, starting from the birds' carriage and following to the right round the enclosure'.⁶¹ 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, namely: the popular and perhaps 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 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 verbal description of the rhinoceros in Wombwell's menagerie epitomizes this approach. Promoting the arrival of this splendid creature in Leeds in 1837, the description – in this case contained within a newspaper advertisement – begins by chronicling the history of this particular rhinoceros, documenting how it was 'procured by Captain Mangles and brought to England in the Ganges East Indiaman from Calcutta', where it was purchased by Wombwell for his menagerie. The advert describes the pachyderm's distinctive anatomy, specifically its 'impenetrable coat of mail', so thick that 'it will turn the edge of a sabre'. It reports that the rhinoceros, 'a gramnivoruous [grass-eating] animal' is 'a native of Bengal, Siam, Cochin China and the Isles of Java and Sumatra', and notes how it 'frequents shady forests and marshy places in the neighbourhood of rivers and is fond of wallowing in the mud like a hog'. The origin, figure and diet of the beast covered, the description then recounts some of the beliefs surrounding the animal, stating, for instance, that 'its skin, flesh and hoofs are used in India medicinally', and that its horn is considered an antidote to poison. The account concludes by mentioning the supposed enmity between the rhinoceros and the elephant – a belief stretching back to classical writers – describing how the rhinoceros will attack the elephant by 'penetrating with its horn the lower and most vulnerable parts of his body'.⁶² The descriptions of animals circulated in menagerie pamphlets thus contained a mixture of scientific

fact, interesting trivia and unsubstantiated myth, reflecting their dual role as entertainment and education.

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 constituted an alternative means of acquiring zoological information. Brief commentaries on the animals on display were delivered at regular intervals, often hourly, by menagerie personnel. Sometimes, to make these descriptions more interactive, keepers would take specific creatures out of their cages to highlight their most notable features. On other occasions they would reserve time for answering visitors' questions, thereby helping to increase understanding of the exotic captives in their exhibitions. The *Liverpool Mercury*, for example, chronicled how a keeper at Manders's menagerie 'caressed and fondled an immense boa constrictor while giving a short account of that monster of reptiles'.⁶³ 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'.⁶⁴

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 natural history and the Queen's English . . . many applying for and being allowed to occupy similar positions being woefully deficient of either qualification'. The menagerist accorded particular attention to his employee's moral probity, requesting that no person apply 'whose character will not bear close investigation'. 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.⁶⁵ A lot of applicants probably fell short of these stringent

criteria, but some at least seem to have acquitted themselves well. The *Nottinghamshire Guardian* reported that the 'intelligent keeper' in Edmond's 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'.⁶⁶

To further enhance the educational credentials of their establishments, menagerists often authorized the poorer sectors of the community to visit their shows gratis, both inviting lower class children to their establishments on their own initiative and working in tandem with other charitable organizations to co-ordinate educational visits. Such informative treats appear to have been a relatively frequent occurrence. In Sheffield, for example, Wombwell generously 'treated 544 boys and 380 girls attending the Lancasterian schools with a view of his exhibition'.⁶⁷ 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.⁶⁸ 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'.⁶⁹ In Cupar Wombwell allowed 'a number of the patients of the Fife and Kinross District Asylum' to visit the menagerie 'in charge of their keepers . . . at a reduced rate'.⁷⁰

The menagerie seemingly harmonized well with the objectives and beliefs of contemporary philanthropic bodies, who conceived 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 both enlightening the poorer classes – in particular the young – and giving some of these less fortunate members of society a brief interlude of pleasure in 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,⁷¹ the sight of wild animals was construed as a great 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'.⁷² There was also an oft-recited belief that

actually *seeing* real creatures in the flesh would transmit zoological knowledge far more effectively than merely reading about them in books, 'for however natural in appearance the representations of animals may be, yet nothing can so impress the young mind as the real living creatures'.⁷³ As one contemporary newspaper philosophized, the menagerie constituted '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'.⁷⁴

What charity school children themselves made of their visit to the menagerie is, of course, harder to know, for few of them consigned their experiences to paper. For this reason, a letter written by a youth named Thomas Collins following a menagerie visit is particularly interesting, since it offers 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 expressing his pleasure at the visit. In so doing he offered a tantalizing 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. I saw three lions, walking in cages; their bodies were brown . . . 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 ginger-bread 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. Its huge body is covered with a callous

hide: he has not hair; his legs are thick, black and are curved; his head is large. 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 forelegs were short, on the floor: we were afraid; porcupine's front was black; his tail is thick.

Thomas' letter is interesting 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 anatomical forms of the various animals, commenting, for example, on the 'curved and brown' back of the camel, the 'beautifully striped' body of the zebra and the 'pendulous ears', 'callous hide' 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 snake 'was yawning'; the laughing hyena was 'wild in his cage' – 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 might explain why his description concentrates primarily on the visual aspects of the show – the colours of the beasts, for example – and omits any reference to the sounds of a menagerie – the chattering, roaring and barking that so impressed William Aytoun. Thomas's 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, it offers a relatively unmediated glimpse of what a visit to a menagerie was like. It suggests that the examination of Polito's collection familiarized the children with the physique and behaviour of exotic creatures and gave tangible form to abstract snippets of zoological knowledge imparted in the classroom.⁷⁵

Conclusion

Travelling menageries formed 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 generated a sizeable audience. Charging affordable rates, touring extensively and often admitting charity school and workhouse inmates for free, wild beast shows helped to democratize natural science, literally bringing elephants to the doors of the masses.

As sites for the transmission of natural knowledge, menageries were valuable because of their durability and social inclusivity. Natural history museums and zoological gardens started to open up their exhibits to the general public from the middle of the nineteenth century,⁷⁶ but touring menageries were accessible from its beginning and had a wider geographical reach, thanks to their itinerant nature. Menageries also outlived many provincial zoos, some of which survived only a couple of decades: 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'.⁷⁷

Commercial imperatives always came first for menagerists. Nonetheless, entertainment could be, and was, synthesized with education – sometimes consciously, sometimes adventitiously – whilst the showmanship of the menagerist was not in practice so different from that of contemporary lecturers in natural history, who likewise recognized the importance of performance in drawing in crowds to their talks.⁷⁸ Though not ideal as venues for research and learning, travelling animal shows played an important part in familiarizing 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, in Rennie's opinion, 'amongst the most rational gratifications of the curiosity of the multitude'.⁷⁹

Address for correspondence

Dr Helen Cowie, Department of History, University of York,
Heslington, York YO10 5DD.
helen.cowie@york.ac.uk

Notes and references

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- 2 For a discussion of other popular nineteenth-century entertainments see Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure and the Industrial Revolution c.1780–1880* (New York, 1980). For a study of ethnographic spectacles, see Bernth Lindfors (ed.), *Africans on Stage. Studies in Ethnological Show Business* (Bloomington, 1999). For a study of panoramas, see Ralph Hyde, *Panoramania. The Art and Entertainment of the All-Embracing View* (London, 1988).
- 3 Studies of zoological gardens, their accessibility and their figurative value include 'Exotic captives' in Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate. The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge MA, 1987), pp. 205–42; Nigel Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts. The Birth of the Modern Zoo* (Baltimore, 2002); Robert Jones, "'The sight of creatures strange to our clime": London Zoo and the consumption of the exotic', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 2 (1997), pp. 1–26; and Eric Baratay and Elizabeth Hardouin-Fugier, *Zoo. A History of Zoological Gardens in the West* (London, 2002).
- 4 Cunningham, op. cit. (note 2), p. 37.
- 5 Menageries shared this characteristic with the freak show, which, 'by offering the working class cut-rate admission only at certain hours of the day or in certain sections of the venue, and by staging private performances in the drawing rooms of the rich and famous, exhibitors ensured their elite clientele a degree of social segregation, while at the same time providing inexpensive amusement for the masses.' See Nadja Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity. Freak Shows and Modern British Culture* (Berkeley, 2010), pp. 6–7.
- 6 Bernard Lightman, *Victorian Popularisers of Science. Designing Nature for New Audiences* (Chicago, 2007), pp. 1–37.
- 7 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, 1983), p. 27.
- 8 See Aileen Fyfe and Bernard Lightman, *Science in the Marketplace* (Chicago, 2007), pp. 1–19.
- 9 For a discussion of showmanship and education, see Susan Pearce, 'William Bullock: inventing a visual language of objects', in Simon Knell, Suzanne MacLeod and Sheila Watson (eds), *Museum Revolutions. How Museums Change and are Changed* (London, 2007), pp. 15–27. On visitor responses to natural history collections and how these can be recovered, see Victoria Carroll, 'The natural history of visiting: responses to Charles Waterton and Walton Hall', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 35 (2004), pp. 31–64.
- 10 Charissa Bremer-David, 'Animal lovers are informed' in Mary Morton, *Oudry's Painted Menagerie. Portraits of Exotic Animals in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Los Angeles, 2007), pp. 91–104.
- 11 *Ipswich Journal*, 3 May 1800.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 11 December 1841.
- 13 *Leicester Chronicle*, 28 September 1868.
- 14 *The Era*, 24 November 1850.
- 15 Judd, op. cit. (note 7), p. 15.
- 16 Cunningham, op. cit. (note 2), p. 25.
- 17 *North Wales Chronicle*, 29 July 1834.
- 18 *Leicester Chronicle*, 13 October 1866.
- 19 *Daily News*, 14 April 1846.
- 20 *North Wales Chronicle*, 6 June 1848.
- 21 *The Examiner*, 19 November 1853.
- 22 *Bristol Mercury*, 30 January 1858.
- 23 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, 1989), pp. 18–21.
- 24 *Liverpool Mercury*, 8 February 1850; *Liverpool Mercury*, 3 February 1854. Zoological gardens offered comparable rates for lower class visitors, but the refusal of the majority to admit the working classes on a Sunday until late in the nineteenth century, coupled with their relative inaccessibility compared to menageries, meant that they were less easy for tradesmen and labourers to visit. Moreover, many of these gardens had relatively short lives, so for the periods before and after they came into existence menageries remained the prime source of zoological knowledge.
- 25 *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 17 September 1859.
- 26 *Derby Mercury*, 8 November 1843.
- 27 *Glasgow Herald*, 11 July 1855.
- 28 *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 11 July 1868.
- 29 *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 8 December 1870.
- 30 *Birmingham Daily Post*, 16 April 1872.
- 31 *Bristol Mercury*, 30 March 1867.
- 32 *Dundee Courier and Argus*, 19 December 1873.
- 33 *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 8 November 1851.
- 34 *Preston Guardian*, 12 January 1856.
- 35 Fyfe and Lightman, op. cit. (note 8), p. 1.
- 36 *Caledonian Mercury*, 10 May 1817.
- 37 *Hull Packet*, 13 October 1843.
- 38 *The Era*, 4 April 1852.
- 39 *Hampshire Telegraph*, 11 July 1831.
- 40 *Hampshire Telegraph*, 11 July 1842.
- 41 *Glasgow Herald*, 8 July 1822.
- 42 Jones, op. cit. (note 3), p. 7.
- 43 *Leeds Mercury*, 3 November 1833.
- 44 *Morning Chronicle*, 9 January 1856.

- 45 Victoria Carroll has demonstrated how, in the case of the stuffed specimens from Guyana exhibited by the explorer Charles Waterton at his Yorkshire residence, the origin of the individual animals constituted a considerable part of their appeal. Waterton published a written account of his travels, *Wanderings in South America*, in 1824 which contained vivid stories of his adventures there. Copies of this were given to visitors at the start of their visit, so that they could make explicit connections between the text and physical objects on view. As a result 'the *Wanderings* was a source of narratives that could be attached to particular specimens, enabling them to recall to the visitor the distant circumstances of their acquisition' and to imagine Waterton's travails in capturing them. See Carroll, op. cit. (note 9), pp. 51-2.
- 46 Thomas Frost, *Old Showmen and the Old London Fairs* (London, 1875), p. 259.
- 47 *Liverpool Mercury*, 25 February 1867; *Liverpool Mercury*, 8 January 1867.
- 48 George Sanger claimed to have been a pioneer in using naphtha lamps and reports that by 1850, 'gas was becoming quite a common illuminant'. See George Sanger, *Seventy Years a Showman* (London, 1926), p. 161.
- 49 *Bristol Mercury*, 3 February 1855.
- 50 *Liverpool Mercury*, 1 January 1867.
- 51 Fyfe and Lightman, op. cit. (note 8), p. 8. Constance Classen has shown, similarly, how multiple senses were stimulated in the Early Modern museum, where visitors had the chance to touch, smell, and even taste some of the exhibits on display. See Constance Classen, 'Museum manners: the sensory life of the early museum', *Journal of Social History* 40:4 (2007), pp. 895-914.
- 52 Elizabeth Hanson, notes, for example, that American zoos 'were planned in a way to distinguish them from earlier menageries, which were considered disorderly'. See Elizabeth Hanson, *Animal Attractions. Nature on Display in American Zoos* (Princeton, 2002), p. 6.
- 53 Cunningham, op. cit. (note 2), p. 25.
- 54 *Leeds Mercury*, 9 November 1839.
- 55 *Preston Guardian*, 20 July 1850.
- 56 *Derby Mercury*, 18 January 1854.
- 57 *Glasgow Herald*, 29 November 1850.
- 58 *Liverpool Mercury*, 25 February 1867.
- 59 *Ipswich Journal*, 3 May 1800.
- 60 *Wrexham Advertiser*, 2 March 1867.
- 61 James Bostock, *Visitor's Guide or Descriptive Catalogue of The Great Show of the World, Bostock and Wombwell's Royal National Menagerie* (Nottingham, 1882), p. 1.
- 62 *Leeds Mercury*, 15 July 1837. For a fascinating discussion of classical conceptions of the rhinoceros – and their longevity – see Juan Pimentel, *El Rinoceronte y el Megaterio: Un Ensayo de Morfología. Histórica* (Madrid, 2010), pp. 47-76. For a study of how Mughal and Hindu conceptions of the elephant permeated British science see Sujit Sivasundaram, 'Trading knowledge: the East India Company's elephants in India and Britain', *Historical Journal* 48 (2005), pp. 27-63.
- 63 *Liverpool Mercury*, 28 January 1859.
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- 67 *Northern Star*, 29 December 1838.
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- 69 *North Wales Chronicle*, 16 June 1864.
- 70 *Dundee Courier*, 25 November 1869.
- 71 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.
- 72 *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 21 May 1869.
- 73 *Belfast Newsletter*, 2 May 1869.
- 74 *Hampshire Telegraph*, 5 August 1848.
- 75 'Collins' Letter about Polito's Menagerie' and 'Brennan's Letter about Polito's Menagerie', in Charles Edward Herbert Orpen, *Anecdotes of the Deaf and Dumb* (London, 1836), pp. 413-5 and pp. 432-4.
- 76 On changing access to museum collections in nineteenth-century Britain, see Samuel Alberti, 'Placing nature: natural history collections and their owners in nineteenth-century provincial England', *British Journal for the History of Science* 35 NO. 3 (2002), pp. 291-311.
- 77 *Caledonian Mercury*, 4 February 1862.
- 78 Fyfe and Lightman, op. cit. (note 8), pp. 13-14.
- 79 James Rennie, *The Menageries. Quadrupeds Described and Drawn from Living Subjects* (London, 1829), vol. 1, p. 11.