



DRESSING FOR WAR AND UNNATURAL POSES

HUMAN-ANIMAL ACTS AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY¹

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Performance with animals greatly expanded during the nineteenth century to include exotic animals from far-flung colonial regions such as lions and elephants. By 1900, in popular lion acts, male trainers costumed as soldiers exemplified military discipline and scientific precepts, while female lion trainers in long day dresses were considered emblematic of psychologies of kindness. Yet the new animal training regimes were the same for both types of acts. Nineteenth-century tamer-handling acts within menagerie cages had been superseded by trained acts with minimal bodily contact, conveying mastery over nature as well as care of nature. Acts with male trainers remained connected with African safari hunting and thereby also with scientific collecting — all three activities appealed to the

American President, Theodore Roosevelt — and acts with female trainers belied the repetitive discipline that trained captive lions out of instinctual behaviour.

This essay considers the cultural significance of prominent examples of trained human-animal acts and safari hunting during the transition from taming to training at the turn of the twentieth century. An imitative military costume had become standard in lion and tiger acts as the male trainer dressed for war demonstrated the new science of animal training that proclaimed gentler treatment in ironic contradiction of the soldier's outfit. The female lion trainer offset her noticeably unconventional identity by casually posing in everyday dress with her arm around the lion's neck as if with a pet.

(above)

Fig. 1. 'Julius Seeth and his Forest Bred Lions', poster by Friedlander, 96.5 x 95.3 cm.

PHOTO: COURTESY P. TAIT (TIBBALS DIGITAL COLLECTION)

MILITARY AESTHETICS

When Hagenbeck's trainer, Julius Seeth, appeared with 21 lions at the long-awaited opening of the London Hippodrome in 1900, he was costumed in quasi-military dress. Hagenbeck's trainers had risen to prominence wearing evening dress, now even their acts had succumbed to the prevailing aesthetic of army dress.² Hagenbeck's had become well known in London for acts that demonstrated reliable obedience and false compatibility between animals in close proximity to other species that they were known to attack in the wild. With the advent of well-trained animal acts during the 1890s, largely developed by the Hagenbecks' trading business in Germany, and Frank Bostock's menagerie business in England, a big cat act in particular manifested both direct and indirect associations with the military and the geography of colonial empires.³ The military costume conveyed dual but paradoxical impressions of implicit force and well-regulated discipline to maintain submission.

Although Seeth's act was completely different to earlier tamers' cage acts of haphazard aggressive confrontation, it could still be aligned with a topical allusion to current events in several ways. The issue of *The Times* which reviewed Seeth's act also contained news about the Boer war and African colonies where European nations had deployed their military forces.⁴ Territorial acquisitions by Germany and England in East Africa encompassed areas with large numbers of wild animal species such as those in Seeth's act. The reviewer thought the whole program was excellent but Seeth's 'forest-bred lions' were said to be 'the sensation of the evening' and were received very enthusiastically with numerous curtain calls. The reviewer praised the way Seeth brought on 21 lions 'with a quiet confidence which compels admiration, which though the situation excites some trepidation, makes the great beasts do his bidding with perfect docility'. In the act Seeth is the 'the hero' and his 'frame is certainly cast in the heroic mould'. The lions are compared to dogs answering to their names. 'If occasionally one snarls or claws at his trainer, Herr Seeth smiles and pats his nozzle, or if kindness is wasted, chases it round the ring with

the whip.' The trained animal act was so well controlled that antagonism from African lions received kindly gestures of understanding; the movement sequence and the use of the whip would have been part of the rehearsed show.

Captain Jack Bonavita, wearing a military-style costume in a quiet act, was called a 'hero' by the American Vice-President Theodore Roosevelt when attending Bostock's show at the Pan-American Exhibition in 1901 in Buffalo and praised for his 'pluck'.⁵ While the soldier's costume was indicative of broader costuming trends in the circus, the image of the soldier that underpinned the newer trained animal acts was especially associated with heroism.⁶ The thick material of the uniforms usefully provided the trainer/presenter's skin with some protection from incidental scratches. But perhaps this militarisation of human identity in big cat acts was also a covert response to political events, while also implicitly responding to the popularity of war shows, including those touring with indigenous warriors after the 1870s. Certainly it reiterated the social esteem of the nineteenth-century soldier and firm beliefs about the social value of militarisation, as well as the century's legacy of war dramas on theatre stages and circus war re-enactments with horses and elephants.

In his reflections on human advancement in the nineteenth century, its successes and failures, social thinker Alfred Russel Wallace vividly criticised 'militarisation' as a curse that held his society back, particularly because 'the vampire of war' between nations and the 'war-spirit' prevailed and escalated in the second half of the century.⁷ He described Europe as a vast military camp with greater numbers of military personnel than ever before. Performance aesthetics reflected this society.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, some species of large exotic animals could be, like horses earlier and with comparable rhetoric about gentleness in training, reliably trained for performance, although the animals were put through regimes of conditioning that seemed quasi-military. There was a transition from taming to training in big cat and other animal acts; from a generalised hit-and-miss, physical handling and pushing to strictly regulated, complex routines of obedience with

minimal handling. Importantly, the principles of training removed any physical shoving of the big cats during the best of these acts, with the trainer carrying sticks, poles and other props for visual effect and to cue animals, only making contact when absolutely necessary. Trained animals responded to verbal and visual cues, including the body position of the presenter and the other animals.

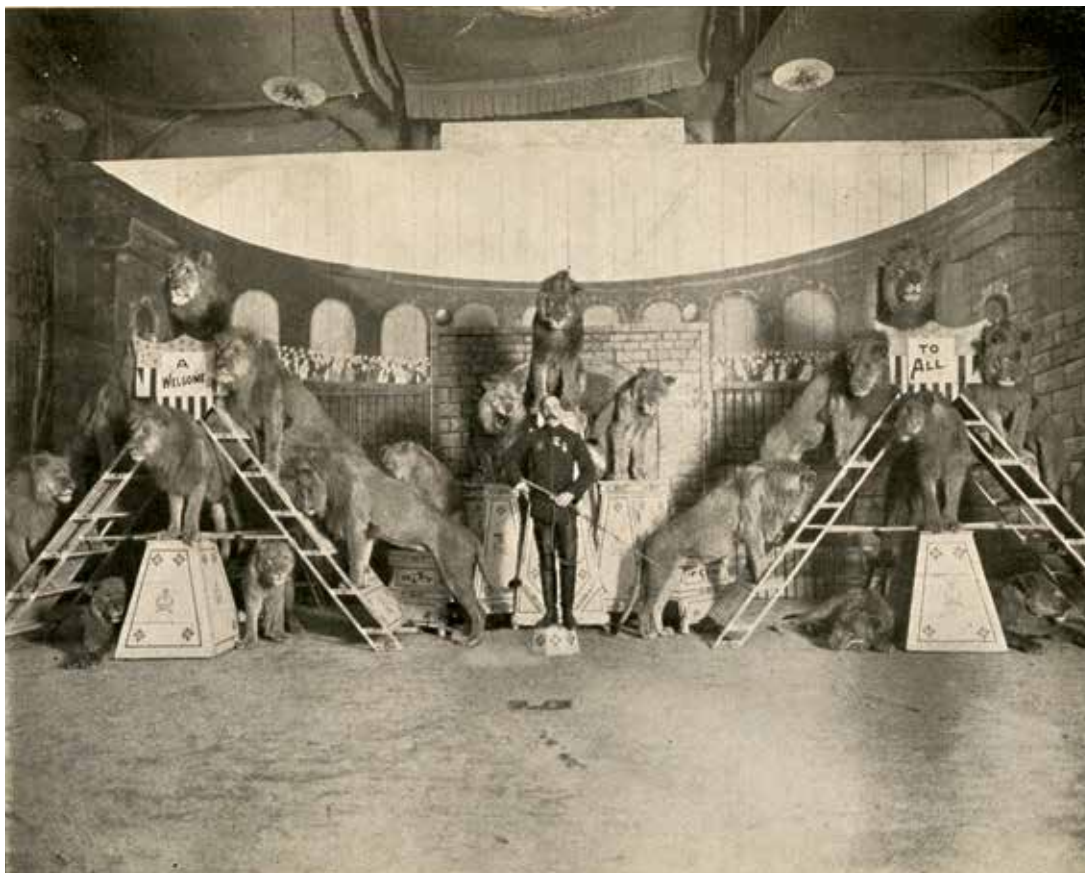
Older menagerie cage acts with a willing but inexperienced handler who often had to provoke a relaxed group of lions to react were replaced by shows in which animal groups predictably moved on a cue that was often not seen by the spectators. The animals seemed to willingly take their seats on pedestals in a graduated pyramid formation. As well, a small number of the trained animals proved amenable to executing a sequence of complicated movements that delivered impressive physical feats. Animals were reasonably cooperative in these acts and movement was guided by a standard set of cues that could be learnt and given by different presenters. The animal performers learnt the routine so that it was often delivered with minimal instruction. While the dominant businesses by 1900 were exemplified by Hagenbeck's and Bostock's shows in Europe and the USA, it was the Hagenbeck trading business, directly connected to its entertainment business, that eventually became synonymous with milder methods of conditioning the movement of exotic animals with rewards and coaxing; this happened after Hagenbeck's engaged an ex-Bostock employee.⁸ The point here is that these trained gentler acts were created within a small interconnected network of trainers and it is likely that specialised knowledge was passed on, a process not so apparent for the earlier nineteenth-century tamer acts.

In the Hagenbeck business, brothers Carl and Wilhelm began developing circus acts after 1887 with male presenters wearing formal attire and they would become highly successful over the next fifty years, selling or hiring out the complete finished act. Initially Carl was able to select a small number of animals who proved especially cooperative and suitable for training to achieve what were understood as gentler and caring methods. Other trainers had less choice

and had to work with the available animals, although there was far greater knowledge with big cat species — if not with elephants — of the need to avoid the use of forceful methods in the initial training.

While trainers passed on knowledge to each other, rumours abounded about how training was achieved. These included notions that a trainer had to enter the cage for the first time naked in order to be smelt, or that lions were drugged or hypnotised.⁹ But the 'secrets' of animal training were actually greatly improved methods of animal care due to closer observation and understanding of a species, and recognition of distinctive animal personalities. Nonetheless, in training from the 1890s, a lion was often restrained in an iron collar and chain while he or she got used to having a human presence in the cage. A chain was needed as lions could bite through rope, and George Conklin even put gloves on a lion's paws and used a muzzle.¹⁰ While whip-cracking could be discarded, big cats could be given a strong tap on the nose, which was sensitive, with a light stick or buggy whip if they misbehaved, and this practice continued. It was trainers who also mentioned some of the performance subterfuge used in older menagerie acts, such as the smell of ammonia to rouse lions.¹¹ Trainers responded to public scrutiny and changing social expectations by advocating training with rewards, but they generally avoided mention of punishments and the initial use of bodily restraints.¹²

Trained animal acts increased in number once training techniques were standardised. For example, Willy Peters worked for Bostock's during the 1890s and trained 36 tigers and 100 lions.¹³ Peters presented them running around and, for the act's finale, the big cats jumped over him and blocked each other's passage. Bostock's trained by first letting animals play around the trainer. Next Peters had them 'begin to run around the ring at top speed, but at his word of command they pulled up suddenly on their haunches, turned around and set off running in the opposite direction'.¹⁴ Dangerous chasing action in a small cage was replaced by controlled fast movement in a larger new arena cage, and this was repetitively rehearsed. Peters trained a tiger to shake his hand, a second



tiger to embrace him and a third to roar and snarl. He trained some to perform as if fighting him or as obediently submissive, and this dual division of ferocity or docility in trained styles continued throughout the twentieth century. Trained ferocity, however, was often perceived as a continuation of nineteenth-century menagerie-tamer acts in which the tamer appeared to be embattled, often firing a weapon. Fighting acts with trained animals in the circus after the 1890s were, in most instances, highly orchestrated routines.

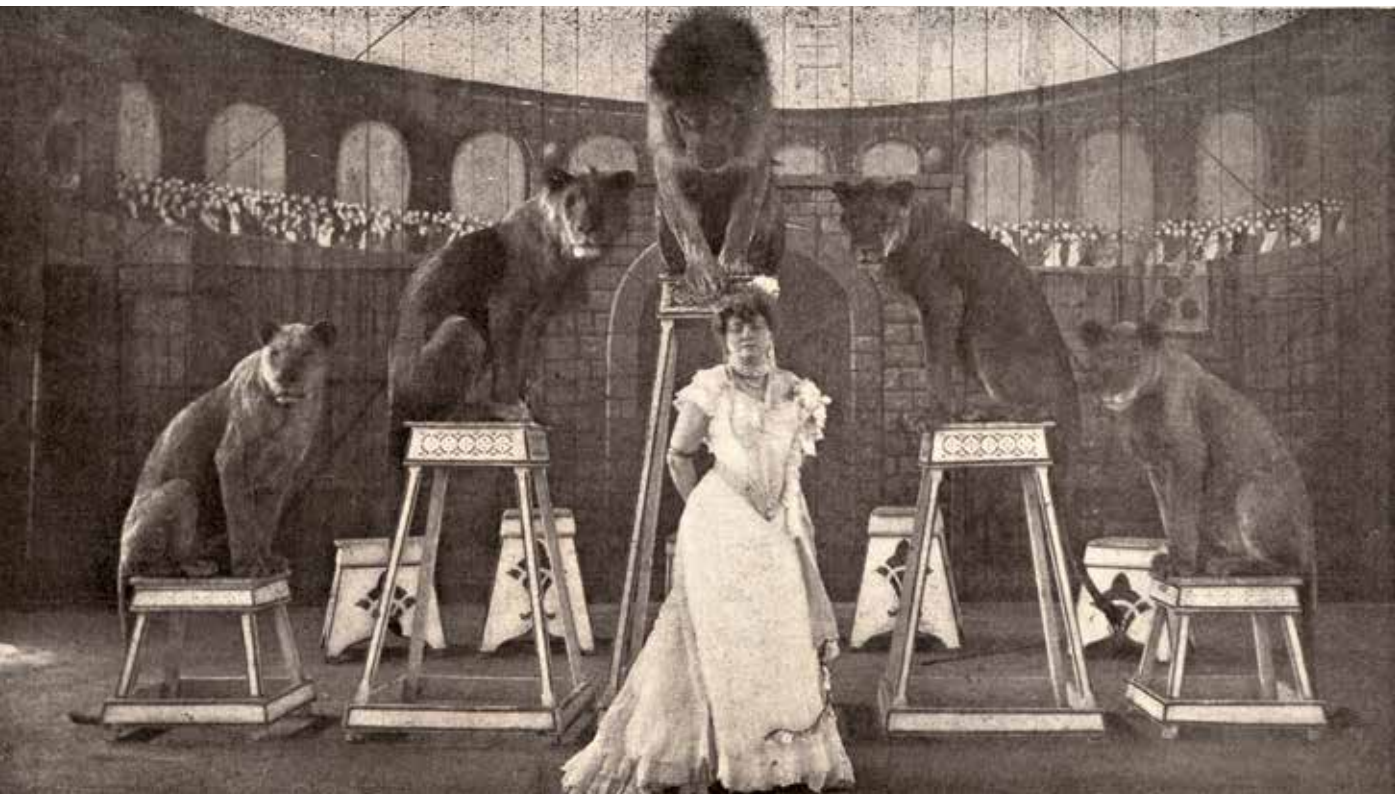
By the early 1890s there was an increasing number of other trained animal acts in circus programs: white doves landed on an apparatus held by an elegant female trainer in evening dress and instrument-playing shiny seals balanced objects on their noses. Seals and sea lions were first trained by Captain Joseph Woodward in the 1880s and these acts were further developed by the Judge brothers.¹⁵ John Tiebor coached a sea lion for two years before exhibiting him, and Albert Rix from Hagenbeck's took three years to teach a seal to stand on one flipper.¹⁶ Big cats were not necessarily even the most dangerous animal

performers to train. Bears were considered extremely difficult to work with, although street acts with brown bears long preceded the invention of the early modern menagerie and circus. Polar bears were introduced into acts, and were possibly first developed as a speciality by Wilhelm Hagenbeck. The popularity of novel animal acts created demand, but highly trained animals were expensive to acquire because training was time-consuming and only a small number of animals cooperated in the presentation of complex feats in the act.¹⁷

Trained big cat and elephant groups could be fully integrated into the circus ring program by 1900, with human performance identities ranging from military conquest to older *faux* native origins. Richard Sawade, a leading trainer with Hagenbeck's, performed until 1919 in a signature fanciful costume of an Indian rajah, suggesting mysterious powers, and cueing tigers to leap from pedestal to pedestal and pose in tiered groupings.¹⁸ Sawade was accorded honorary membership of the (British) Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.¹⁹ Hagenbeck's reputation for a gentler approach was legitimised in this way. Official

(above)
 Fig. 2. 'The towering of the kings', photograph by Hall from Frank Charles Bostock, *The Training of Wild Animals* (New York: Century, 1903), p. 26.

PHOTO: COURTESY P. TAIT (PUBLIC DOMAIN)



recognition that the newer training approaches were encouraging humane methods in animal care was indicative of a major shift in social responses when compared to how nineteenth-century animal acts in the menagerie were staged and interpreted, especially as big cats could now be viewed by the public away from their small cages. The animal acts that left menagerie precincts gave a distinct, often false, impression that they had moved beyond the harsh treatment of animals over decades.

Regardless of whether a presenter adopted softer costuming or a uniform, by the early twentieth century animals were trained in similar ways to be either quietly obedient or noisily confrontational. The militarised aesthetic heightened the impact of the animal act and trainers readily adopted the uniform of warmer climates and remote geographies, an outfit also worn on safari. Since some trainers were ex-soldiers, the costuming had the added effect of eliding the distinction between animal training for performance and military training for battle. But a presumption of violent action was subsumed into the display of preparatory discipline.

These militarised acts represented a culmination of a parallel expansion throughout

the nineteenth century of travelling shows presenting exotic wild animals and the hunting practices to obtain them. The latter reached an almost incomprehensible scale by the end of the nineteenth century. Animals were caught up in a chain of economic transactions emblematic of a determination to exploit nature, often through force. Countless animals were hunted, trapped, transported and traded for profit to English, European and American menageries and zoos. Those purchased by travelling menageries continued to be transported and moved from place to place, often advertised with the rhetorical pretext of educational and scientific benefit. With the exception of big cats, regularly born in captivity by 1900, most trained acts continued to present animals who had been hunted and captured from the wild.

CLAWS AND LACE

Madame Pianka (Charlotte Bishop) worked for Bostock and toured in the USA. A photograph, 'Mme Pianka and her Class', shows five lions placed in a graduated pyramid formation, standard for a trained act at this time (fig. 3). They sit on pedestals of varied height behind Pianka standing with her back to the lions,

(above)

Fig. 3. 'Madame Pianka and her class'

PHOTO: COURTESY P. TAIT
(PUBLIC DOMAIN)

dressed in a full-length elegant white dress. There are five lower pedestals, suggesting that the lions moved between these pedestals during the act. Pianka's act started with the lions walking in and climbing on to pedestals. In one part she fired a gun with blanks and in another she put her arm around a lion's neck in a 'natural pose'. Of course this was a completely unnatural pose but the familiarity and casualness of the human and animal posed together suggested interspecies friendship and implied that the lion had become a pet.²⁰ Bostock's book on training includes another studio photograph showing Pianka without the lions, wearing a white dress with a train at the back and a large hat, and carrying a white parasol as if attending a garden party (fig. 4). In one incident, a swipe from a lion's paw tore Pianka's long dress, and cut into her skin, causing bleeding. At the beginning of the act, she had taken into the arena cage a bunch of red roses from an audience member; a lion who had not reached his pedestal sprang forward at the roses, catching Pianka with his paw. The roses were a new addition to the cage environment and attracted attention, possibly because of the smell and/or the colour. Pianka threw the roses down, the other lions sprang to look and then went back to their pedestals, and she continued her act to its end. She fainted from her injury when she got offstage.

The full-length, full-skirted, fashionable dress of the female presenters may have offset some criticism but it put them at greater risk of incidental accidents; what was worn was also of special interest to the lion performers. An account of the preparation for a photographic session with Pianka and the lions sitting on their pedestals revealed that this was extended over three days. Over the nights before the photographic session commenced, Pianka had made a new dress of white that Ellen Velvin described as 'organdy, pretty and dainty enough for a fashionable tea-party'.²¹ When the photography was due to start, the lions did not want to enter the arena, as if they knew that it was not a regular performance. Velvin continued, 'Trying to rouse them the trainer [Pianka] touched one lion lightly with the whip. He struck at the whip gently with his paw, as though to put it out of the way, his claws caught

in the light dress and the whole skirt was nearly torn to shreds'. The dress was repaired and the posing resumed, except that this time a lion reached out to touch a new bow Pianka had put in her hair. Clearly the new additions to the costume were of considerable interest to the lions. An attendant or trainer outside the cage flicked a longer whip at the curious lion, who took this as his cue to get down off the pedestal as happened in the routine towards the end of the act. The other lions followed him and they would not return to the pedestals, assuming that they had done the act for the day. When the photographic posing was resumed on the third day, the lion at the top of the pedestal pyramid again tried to reach out with his paw to touch Pianka's new bow, and this was captured by the camera (fig. 3).

Female performers experienced the same problems as males when an element in the

(below)

Fig. 4. 'Madame Pianka', photograph by Chickering from Frank Charles Bostock, *The Training of Wild Animals* (New York: Century, 1903), p. 85.

PHOTO: COURTESY P. TAIT (PUBLIC DOMAIN)



environment was varied even slightly and the animals reacted with curiosity or adversely. On another occasion the cage for Pianka's act had been lost and she had to perform in a smaller one, which upset the lion performers. A lioness, who was usually compliant, refused to go into the performance cage. Pianka 'coaxed, ordered, and flicked her whip' without effect, and Bostock intervened to 'insist on obedience'.²² The lioness obeyed and went through her routine but Bostock admitted that his confidence made him careless. When he flourished his whip, the mate of the lioness leapt six metres, jumped on him and lifted

are made to seem instinctive. An act with a female trainer was not appraised as a calculated demonstration of human will exercised over animals who had been conditioned to overcome their instincts and behaviour. Instead Heliot was attributed instinctive reactions like the animals; as a female, she would somehow have a civilising effect on them.

Heliot was perceived as being kind to the lions who complied accordingly. Was it simply the expectation that female trainers and presenters would be kinder? Heliot explained that lions have effective memories and '[i]f you are good to lions, they will be good to you. Be

LION TRAINER CLAIRE HELIOT ... WAS PHYSICALLY STRONG ENOUGH TO CARRY A FULLY GROWN LION, SICCHI, ACROSS HER SHOULDERS

Bostock up in his mouth. Pianka was holding a revolver with blanks and fired two blanks close to the lion who responded out of habit to the sound and dropped Bostock. The firing of blanks was the cue for coming closer and, combined with Pianka's other cue for the stunt when she draped her arm around the lion's neck, the lion's resistance dissipated and he took up his accustomed sitting position. A regular feature of a trained lion act with female presenters and trainers, this sitting action on cue had been especially useful on this occasion.

A PSYCHOLOGY OF KINDNESS

Lion trainer Claire Heliot was described as being 'frail but fearless', 'mild and gentle', in a 1905 *New York Times* feature article.²³ Actually, she was physically strong enough to carry a fully grown lion, Sicchi, across her shoulders, and to manage another rebellious lion. Such descriptions reveal illogical responses to a female trainer working with lions. In the article, about Heliot's appearance at the New York Hippodrome, she was also labelled a 'timid sentimentalist'. The lions, however, were deemed murderous and the article began by saying that the lions would not hesitate to kill her. The article specifies the instincts and sentiments of the lions at length so that, by association, Heliot's gentle, mild 'sentiments'

positive with them, dominate them, but do not strike them'.²⁴ Certainly, she did not use force to train, in keeping with the ideal new training practice.

Heliot was unusual because there is no easily traceable link to someone even indirectly connected with Hagenbeck's or Bostock's until later in her career. She expressed a love of lions, explaining that they were beautiful to look at, and said she had been encouraged by a zoo director who observed her regular visits there as a teenager.²⁵ Her ambition in 1906, however, was to save enough money to retire to a country property in three years, suggesting economic reasons for undertaking the act, although her retirement was also attributed to an attack in Copenhagen when a lion bit through her leg. Heliot was the stage name of Klara Haumann (Huth) from Leipzig, the daughter of a government postal official and the granddaughter of a minister of religion. In April 1897 she created a sensation in Leipzig when she performed at the zoo assisted by two male attendants, and she later toured widely. She toured England with ten lions and two large hounds and performed at the London Hippodrome in 1901. The male attendants may have been socially protective of Heliot's reputation as well as keeping a defensive watch for sudden or subtle movement pre-empting attack. The touring act included a simulation

of a dinner party scene, with the lions seated at a table to be served raw meat by Heliot. The meat-feeding scene was less mentioned in the USA although Heliot explained in detail how she started training lions by hand-feeding them and this definitely continued. By 1905 Heliot's act had as many as fourteen lions who performed behind a four-metre-high spiked arena barrier to music from *Carmen*. Heliot was described patting the lions and lightly touching the nose of one with a leather whip, although she also carried a steel rod. Three photographs accompanying the 1905 New York Times article, however, show Heliot encouraging two lions to walk on a raised platform and a third female to mount a rolling barrel, and her posing with an arm around the neck of a male lion. Again, this pose contradicted the regimented training used over time to achieve it.

The climax of Heliot's act involved a feat in which she carried a ten-year-old lion, Sicchi, on her shoulders as she left the performance. This was part of the act in 1905 in New York and in 1906 in Chicago as part of 'A Yankee Circus on Mars'. It involved draping the 159 kilogram Sicchi across her back and shoulders, probably achieved by lifting the animal performer off an elevated platform onto her shoulders. Heliot

explained that she started this with the young Sicchi, and her strength grew as he gained weight. This type of trick was pioneered by Captain Bonavita for Bostock's (fig. 6) and Julius Seeth with Hagenbeck's and achieved by a handful of leading trainers.²⁶

The feats in Heliot's act physically demonstrated control and she was compared to Seeth; in a biblical reference, she was also billed as 'The Lady Daniel' and wears a Romanesque shift with bare arms in one photograph. But she mostly performed in the long dresses that were the fashion of the time, including one made of white satin. In one incident when a lion, August, bit her so blood spurted over the white dress, Heliot drove the lions back to their cages, bound the wound with a handkerchief, and waited for a doctor to arrive to clean the wound to prevent poisoning, the greatest risk for human presenters. In New York in 1905 a lion's claw became caught up in the lace of her dress; he became disturbed when he could not extract it and she was wounded.²⁷ In 1906, Velvin noted that Heliot made a clear distinction between a deliberate lion's bite and accidental scratches, which were frequent, with her skin covered in deep scars from these. Heliot claimed that lions in her act would not bite her because she hand-



(left)

Fig. 5. Claire Heliot in (un)natural pose.

PHOTO: COURTESY P. TAIT (PUBLIC DOMAIN)



fed them, and even a particularly antagonistic lion did not bite her. Velvin observed how Heliot ‘would take a small piece of meat, and telling each lion to open his mouth would put it inside with her fingers’.²⁸

Statements attributed to Heliot suggest that she felt responsible for the welfare of animals. Certainly, animals were not accorded subjective agency, and Heliot was quoted in the *New York Times* article explaining that animals such as an elephant reveal how ‘a divine order of things has given his soul into the keeping of man’. This was a well-established belief: humans had a moral duty to provide for animals and to improve brute natures. But Heliot’s diary entries explain that, while she loved the lions in her act, she was creating performance, so contradicting gendered perceptions of an instinctual female nature. Her protective strategies during the act were a steel rod, a whip and a quick exit through the cage door; she had to delay a performance when the whip went missing because one of the dogs had taken it.²⁹ During a performance, when the lion August was in a bad temper, she had to threaten him with the steel bar, and a ‘pretty curly-haired little girl in the front row cried, “Why don’t

you push him, lady?” It made me laugh’.³⁰ The expectations arising from simpler nineteenth-century tamer acts lingered, with misleading assumptions that lions could be easily touched.

It took Heliot two years to develop a fully trained act, first spending hours in the cage with the animal performers, and then teaching them to respond to names and eventually to verbal cues. On tour, a troublesome lion was often omitted from the act for a period. Heliot was concerned that they would hurt each other in fights, and Sicchi had a habit of taking the mane off any other lion put into his cage. But in the 1905 *New York Times* article, Heliot’s capacity to work with the lions was attributed to nurturing sentiments, with a quote from Heliot about the accidental scratches on her skin being due to the playfulness of the lions supporting this notion. The lions were described in emotive language as embodying ‘violence, rage, fearlessness, hatred, power, a wicked shrewdness, the impenetrable expression of a sphinx, and the instinct for murder [... and having] no virtues that are without passion’.³¹ A snarling reaction, with the lions putting their ears back, was said to have received conciliatory overtures from Heliot,

(above)

Fig. 6. ‘Captain Bonavita carrying a lion weighing five hundred pounds’, photograph by Hall from Frank Charles Bostock, *The Training of Wild Animals* (New York: Century, 1903), p. 238.

PHOTO: COURTESY P. TAIT (PUBLIC DOMAIN)

which were interpreted as being coquettish. The article claimed that aggressive lions did not appreciate her adoration of them, but they were nonetheless involved in a ‘beautiful psychology’. While this recognises how human psychologies might manage human–animal relations, it reinforces older nineteenth-century notions about management through kindness and a polarisation between animal aggression and human trust and moral responsibility. James Sully noted that, although ‘Animal or Comparative Psychology’ as the study of animal minds had become a separate field by the 1890s, emotional ambiguity in animal expression and the ‘region of animal instinct’ remained ‘a psychological puzzle’.³² Nonetheless, a human psychology of emotions prefigured the contradictory status of the female trainer, since kind emotions and caring could be attributed to females while the science of animal training with unemotional repetitious training behaviour and calculated mental manoeuvres went unrecognised.

Heliot raised the profile of female big cat trainers in the USA. She returned to southern Germany when she retired from performance,

and was reported working as a hairdresser in 1930.³³ Even though trained acts with female performers were recognised as utilising aspects of animal psychology through care and kindness, they were not also attributed an ordered repetitive approach to physical training or an educational function. A female trainer’s interactions with the animals were seen as based on intangible, socially ascribed emotional attitudes rather than careful observation and knowledge of species behaviour that might constitute a so-called scientific approach.

HUNTED NATURE

At the turn of the twentieth century a sizable number of exotic animals in trained acts had still been hunted and captured from the wild. In 1892 a reasoned rejection of menagerie ‘wild-beast shows’, along with the idea that captive animals enjoy their lives because they are fed, included the longstanding accusation that animal shows for entertainment did not advance human knowledge.³⁴ Regardless, menageries and zoos presenting living ‘specimens’ faced increasing competition from



(left)

Fig. 7. Roosevelt on safari.

PHOTO: COURTESY P. TAIT
(PUBLIC DOMAIN)

natural history collections of dead specimens, claiming a direct educative purpose for hunted animals killed and preserved in the wild.

Despite associative connections between animal species in menageries and those displayed in museums, observation of live animals was not the same as viewing dead specimens. Public interest in the taxidermied animal body expanded throughout the nineteenth century as viewing opportunities, formerly the prerogative of scientists and private collectors, increased. Even though living animals logically seemed to offer more scope for study, large collections of dead specimens came to represent an advancement in science. The dead species in museum displays of substantial size reconfigured longstanding patterns of exhibition and colonial expansionist activity—museums also stored countless numbers. Although this ‘exhibitionary complex’ modelled rationality, its trajectory reached back to ad hoc curiosities on display.³⁵

The protective sentiments now widely proclaimed by animal trainers to offset scrutiny over cruelty can be contrasted with an apparent absence of such sympathy in the hunting of animals under the pretext of supporting the natural sciences. The latter seemed to perpetuate the uncaring attitudes of imperialistic trade in contrast to the marked change in values from forceful menagerie handling to careful training. Nineteenth-century philosopher Henry Salt rejected the way big-game hunters indulged in ‘murderous masculinity’ and yet deemed themselves to be civilised.³⁶ Regardless, a lack of sentimentality over animal deaths in the process of hunting specimens alive or dead transferred to modern scientific collecting, and the identity of hunter and professional scientist was somewhat fused in the early twentieth century.³⁷

The scale of hunting expeditions continued to increase with hunting as a narrative of dangerous adventure marking a man as ‘virile’.³⁸ Safaris were attracting influential figures with sizable public profiles and/or political power as exemplified by the expeditions of Winston Churchill and Theodore Roosevelt.³⁹ Roosevelt was also a high-profile spectator of trained lion acts. An ex-military man, after serving his two terms as President of the USA,

Roosevelt went on an African safari, justifying it by a scientific purpose (fig. 7). Departing on 23 March 1909, he was undoubtedly the most famous of the safari hunters in the early twentieth century. Roosevelt had a reputation in the natural sciences thanks to the major national parks created under his presidency and his commentary about preserving the habitat of wolves and pumas.⁴⁰ He ostensibly travelled to Africa to obtain specimens for natural history displays at the Smithsonian Museum, taking his son, Kermit, who had a camera. They travelled to Mombassa in British East Africa (Kenya) by boat from Italy. Their entourage of 73 tents and 200 porters, the largest expedition of its kind at that time, went inland by train and stayed at well-established colonial properties in east Africa, venturing southwards over seven months, albeit camping in style. A smaller group continued on to Uganda by train on 18 December 1909 for two months of hunting white rhinoceros and giant eland, and then went through the Sudan and Egypt.

The animals Roosevelt sought were “in order of priority: lion, elephant, rhino, buffalo, giraffe, hippo, eland, sable, oryx, koodoo, wildebeest, hartebeest, warthog, zebra, waterbuck, Grant’s gazelle, reedbuck, and topi”.⁴¹ The hierarchically grouped species denoted hunting prowess and most of them became dead specimens. Three naturalists were employed by the Smithsonian for the expedition so that what might have been considered a ‘private junket scheme was transformed into a full-fledged scientific expedition’.⁴²

To warrant the label of ‘naturalist’, a hunter needed to observe exotic animals in their habitat — alive. There was some criticism of the impact of hunting on wildlife numbers, which led Roosevelt to justify his position in private communication. He denied that he was a ‘game butcher’ and proclaimed ‘the chief value of my trip to consist of the observations I was able to make upon the habits of the game, and to a lesser extent, of the birds, smaller animals and the like’.⁴³ In exacting detail he wrote about killing a lion:

I was sighting carefully [...] he galloped at a great pace, he came on steadily — ears laid back, and uttering terrific coughing grunts [...] The soft-nosed Winchester bullet

had gone straight through the chest cavity, smashing the lungs and the big blood vessels of the heart. Painfully he recovered his feet, and tried to come on, his ferocious courage holding out to the last; but he staggered, and turned from side to side.⁴⁴

A hunter's right to kill large numbers of animals was being questioned at that time, if not a hunter's right to shoot in this way.

Roosevelt had been impressed by Captain Bonavita's act with lions. Trained acts with live animals were a major influence because they were widely seen, in turn encouraging interest in safari practices. But though there was praise for the bravery and courage of the trainer combined with expectations of gentle care for animals in captivity, these sympathetic attitudes did not transfer into safari hunting, which was devoid of animal-centred emotional impositions. As entering the cage with the lions was not really an option, someone with the resources to be backed by skilful hunters and adept locals set out to test himself — and later herself — carrying a state-of-the-art gun and coming face-to-face with a live wild animal. The legacy of publicised safari hunting and human–animal acts with trainers visibly dressed for war — war against other species — continues in the twenty-first century though no longer with a scientific pretext. ¶



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I. This essay draws on the author's book, *Fighting Nature: Travelling Menageries, Animal Acts and War Shows* (Sydney University Press, 2016).

2. For a history of Hagenbeck's business see Nigel Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Zoo* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, 2002).
3. Frank Bostock, *The Training of Wild Animals* (New York: The Century Co., 1903).
4. *The Times* (London), 16 January 1900, p. 4. Subsequent quotes are from this review. The 'steel grills' enclosed the ring but were lifted with 'hydraulic rams' to let the lions into the ring. The newspaper also covers the events of the Boer war and has a brief note on food shortages among the 6000 inhabitants of the 'German Colonies' in east Africa on the same page as the review.
5. Captain Bonavita was the stage name of John Gentrer. See Bostock, *The Training of Wild Animals*, p. 218 (also pp. 37–40, 43–44, 78, 136, 197–98, 200, 211, 217–20, 238); John Turner, *Victorian Arena: The Performers. A Dictionary of British Circus Biography*, vol. 1 (Formby, England: Lingdales Press, 1995); vol. 2 (Formby, England: Lingdales Press, 2000), p. 12 (Bonavita); See Joanne Carol Joys, *The Wild Animal Trainer in America* (Boulder: Pruett Publishing Co., 1983), pp. 28–32 (p. 30). For the list of Bonavita's films, see <<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0093844/>> [accessed 1 February 2016].
6. Harriet Ritvo, 'Destroyers and Preservers: Big Game in the Victorian Empire', *History Today*, January 2002, 33–39 (p. 33). Safari hunting in the colonies provided 'recreation, status symbol and para-military training'.
7. Alfred Russel Wallace, *The Wonderful Century: Its Successes and its Failures* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1898), p. 331.
8. See Peta Tait, *Wild and Dangerous Performances: Animals, Emotions, Circus* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 21. This is a history of trained big cat and elephant acts in the twentieth-century circus and the opposition to them, and describes the influence that Darwin's work on animal emotions had on key trainers.
9. Paul Eipper, *Circus: Men, Beasts and Joys of the Road*, trans. by Frederick H. Martens (New York: Junior Literary Guild, 1931), p. 115. This was a longstanding accusation. Also see Hugues Le Roux and Jules Garnier, *Acrobats and Mountebanks*, trans. by A. P. Morton (London: Chapman and Hall, 1890), p. 146.
10. George Conklin, *The Ways of the Circus*, set down by Harvey W. Root (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1921); Courtney Ryley Cooper, *Lions 'N' Tigers 'N' Everything* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1928), pp. 17–18, 31.
11. Clyde Beatty and Earl Wilson, *Jungle Performers* (London: Robert Hale, 1946), pp. 131–33.

12. Accusations that big cats were declawed or otherwise deformed seemed to be avoided rather than addressed, as if mention of this practice was counterproductive and unacceptable to the public and might raise suspicions.
13. A. H. Kober, *Circus Nights and Circus Days* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1931), pp. 103–4.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
15. Carl Hagenbeck, *Beasts and Men*, trans. and abr. by Hugh S. R. Elliot and A. G. Thacker (New York: Longman Green and Co., 1909), pp. 144–5.
16. Fred Bradna, as told to Hartzell Spence, *The Big Top: My Forty Years with the Greatest Show on Earth* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), p. 209.
17. Antony Hippisley Coxe, *A Seat at the Circus* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1980), pp. 145–46. Coxe specifies that Hagenbeck's 1890s mixed-species act cost nearly £300; in 1897 an untrained polar bear cub would fetch £30–35 and a trained bear £100, but costs increased ten-fold after World War II.
18. Eipper, *Circus: Men, Beasts and Joys of the Road*, pp. 112–14; Lorenz Hagenbeck, *Animals Are My Life*, trans. by Alec Brown (London: The Bodley Head Ltd, 1956), p. 85.
19. Kober, *Circus Nights and Circus Days*, p. 112; Hagenbeck, *Animals Are My Life*, p. 92.
20. Bostock, *The Training of Wild Animals*, pp. 157–58, 85, 229. The detail of Pianka's act comes from a description of an attack on Frank Bostock.
21. Ellen Velvin, *Behind the Scenes with Wild Animals* (New York: Moffat Yard & Co., 1906), p. 63.
22. Bostock, *The Training of Wild Animals*, p. 157.
23. Pendennis, 'Claire Heliot: Most Daring of Lion Tamers', *New York Times*, 29 October 1905, (SM)1.
24. Claire Heliot, 'Diary of a Lion-Tamer', *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, 41, September 1906, 463–8 (p. 466); includes diary entries.
25. Heliot 'Diary of a Lion-Tamer', p. 467; Kober, *Circus Nights and Circus Days*, p. 109; Turner, *Victorian Arena*, vol. 2, p. 55; also see Deidre Jackson, *Lion* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), pp. 63–4.
26. Tait, *Wild and Dangerous Performances*, pp. 108–46.
27. Velvin, *Behind the Scenes with Wild Animals*, p. 57.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 74–75.
29. Heliot, 'Diary of a Lion-Tamer', pp. 463–4.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 463.
31. Pendennis, 'Claire Heliot: Most Daring of Lion Tamers', (SM)1.
32. James Sully, *The Human Mind: A Text-Book of Psychology*, vol. 1 (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1892), p. 21.
33. Turner, *Victorian Arena*, vol. 2, p. 55. The likely source of this information is Kober, *Circus Nights and Circus Days*, p. 109.
34. Henry Salt, *Animals' Rights: Considered in Relation to Social Progress* (Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania: Society for Animal Rights Inc., 1980 [1892]), pp. 49–50.
35. Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 72–73.
36. J. A. Mangan, and C. MacKenzie, 'Imperial Masculinity Institutionalized: The Shikar Club', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 25:9 (2008), 1218–42 (p. 1220).
37. See Donna Haraway, *Primate Visions* (New York: Routledge, 1989).
38. Joseph Sramek, "'Face Him Like a Briton': Tiger Hunting, Imperialism, and British Masculinity in Colonial India, 1800–1875', *Victorian Studies*, 48:4 (2006), 659–80 (p. 659), citing John MacKenzie on virile masculinity; William Storey, 'Big Cats and Imperialism: Lion and Tiger Hunting in Kenya and Northern India, 1898–1930', *Journal of World History*, 2:2 (1991), 135–73 (p. 137).
39. Winston Churchill, *My African Journey* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1990 [1908]), see chapter 'On safari'.
40. Velvin, *Behind the Scenes with Wild Animals*, pp. 187, 204.
41. J. Lee Thompson, *Theodore Roosevelt Abroad: Nature, Empire and the Journey of an American President* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 14, 34, shot with three big game rifles, and also pp. 10, 29. Also see Iain McCalman, 'Teddy Roosevelt's Trophy: History and Nostalgia', in *Memory, Monuments and Museums*, ed. by Marilyn Lake (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006), pp. 58–75.
42. Thompson, *Theodore Roosevelt Abroad*, p. 10.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 10, citing a letter, 25 June 1908, to Edward North Buxton, President of the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire.
44. Theodore Roosevelt, *African Game Trails: An Account of the African Wanderings of an American Hunter-Naturalist* (London: John Murray, 1910), pp. 190–91.