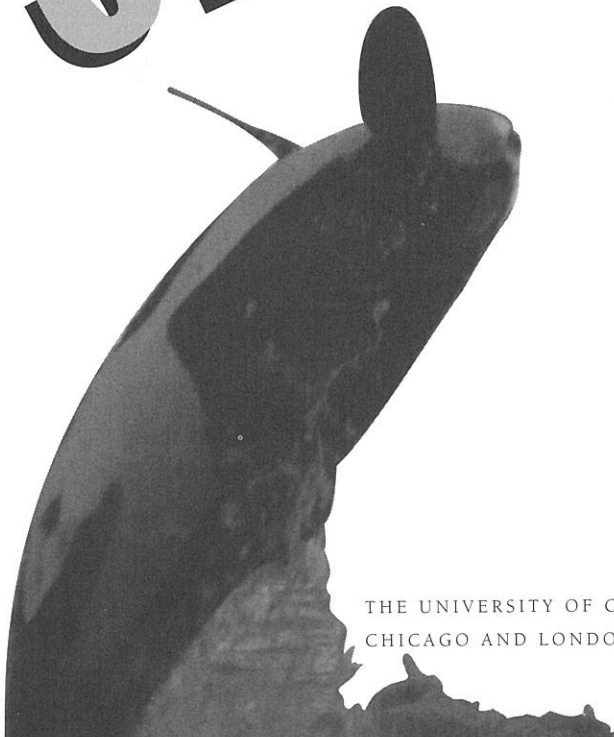


Jane C. Desmond

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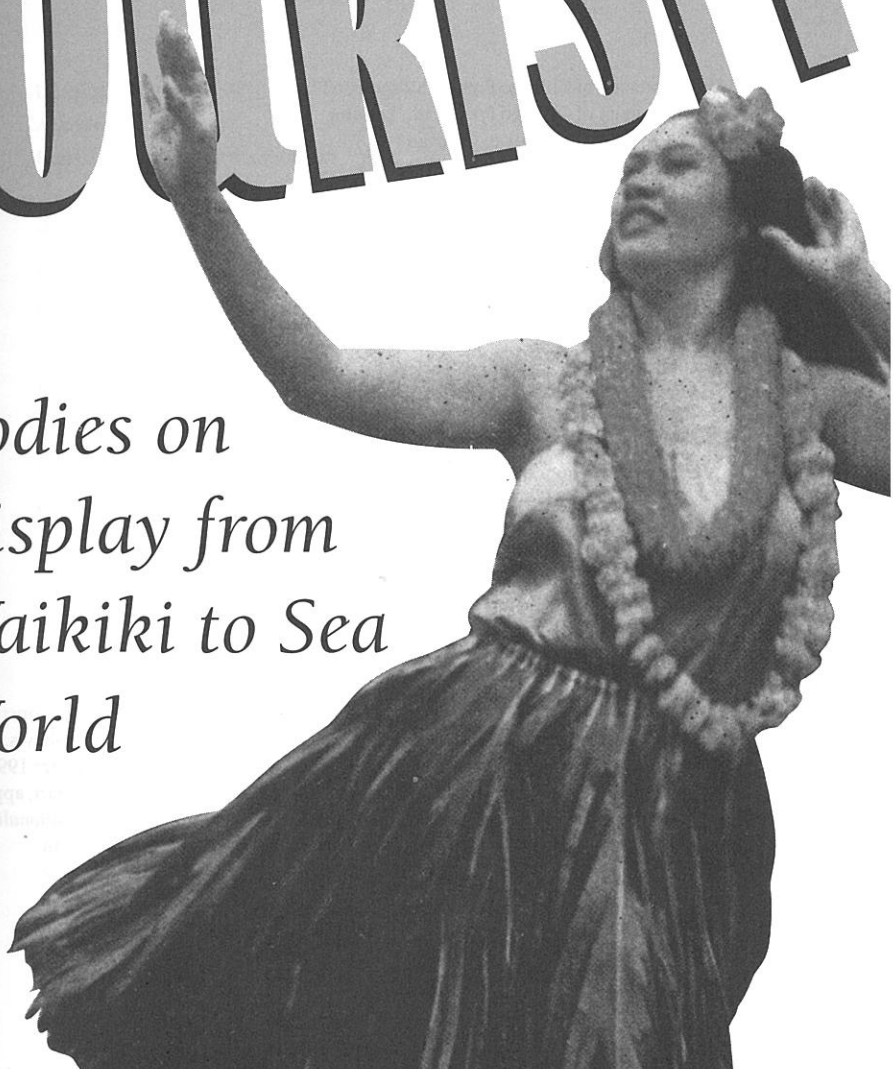


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TOURISM

*Bodies on
Display from
Waikiki to Sea
World*



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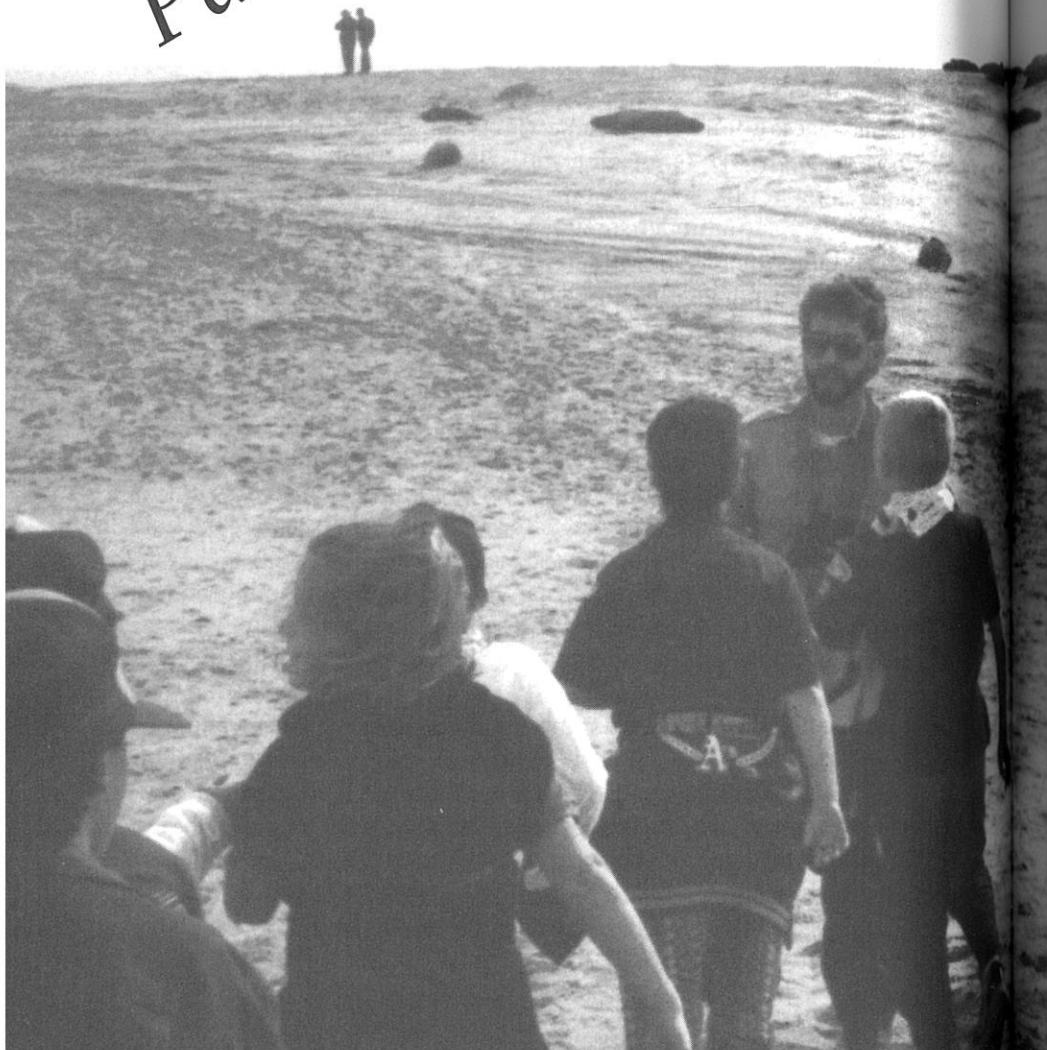
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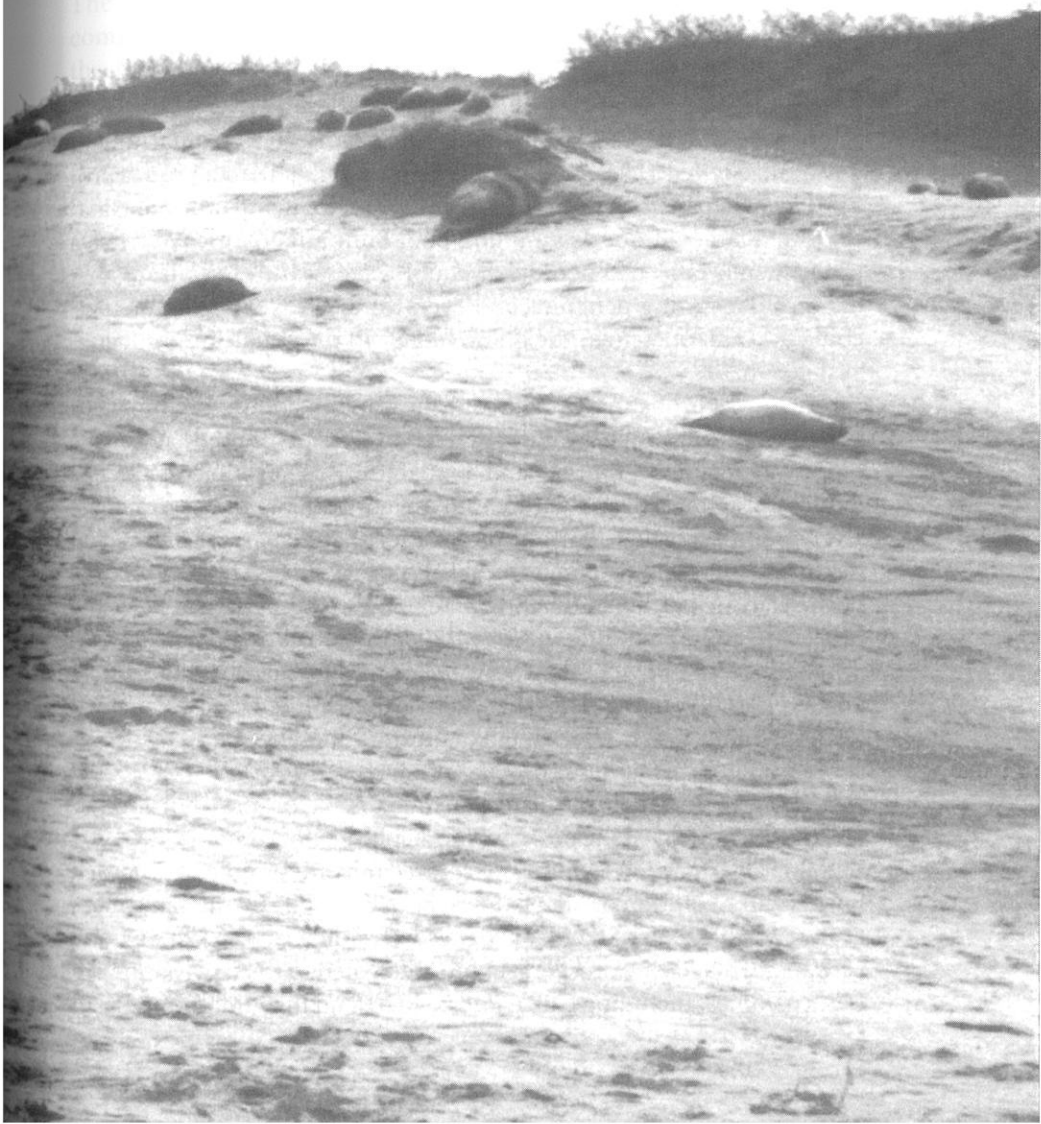
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INTRODUCTION

Looking at Animals

The Consumption of Radical Bodily Difference

In June 1997, debates over plans for a world-class aquarium in Waikiki elicited a passionate letter to the editor. Pomaika'i Souza proposed an expansion of the current aquarium to include the old Natatorium, a large outdoor swimming pool built after World War I as a peace memorial: "The pool itself could then [feature] sea lions that dance hula, surfing penguins and everything else such a large 'stage' could accommodate [as] the grand finale" to the aquarium visit, suggested Souza.¹

Souza was probably joking about the sea lions doing the hula and penguins surfing, but he was not that far off-base in his implicit linkage of Hawaiian cultural tourism and animal tourism. It is no coincidence that cultural tourism and nature tourism are both big industries, massively popular in their current incarnations, and share a commercial history of increasing commodification during the last hundred years. Both share a particular historical relation to imperialism and the process of nation building. And both continue to constitute a contemporaneous sense of what their viewers are by showing them what they are (supposedly) not. This is true whether that difference, always coded as more "natural," is packaged as cultural difference (a *lū'au*) or as species difference (sea lions bathing at the Natatorium).

A hundred years ago, the display of humans and of animals from "far-off lands" symbolized the power of the displayer. For example, the 1901 Buffalo Pan-American Exposition featured not only a zoological garden but also an Evolution of Man exhibit, both managed by the same man, Frank Bostock. Jennie Wilson danced the hula at the exposition's Hawaiian village, one of several exhibits devoted to the newly annexed U.S.'s colonies, including Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, all of

which were booty from the Spanish-American War. Not too far from her, Bostock's Wild Animal Show featured the "missing link" from animal to human in Darwin's evolutionary schema—a performing chimpanzee named Esau, dressed in a suit and top hat. As Robert Rydell has argued, such a presentation "reinforced the lessons of racial hierarchy that saturated the artistic dimensions of the fair and the living ethnological shows" and made implicit and explicit arguments about "progress."² In doing so, such exhibits also confirmed the emergent U.S. position as a colonial power and the dominant position of western and northern European-origin populations within the U.S. mainland. The non-European populations were arranged in village exhibits, often complete with associated exotic animals for decor, and were hired on the basis that they would authentically and accurately display the proper physical characteristics and cultural activities associated with their group.³ These early expositions offered a form of cultural tourism (complete with the demonstration of culturally specific enactments) where the spectator could tour the globe in a matter of hours, just as zoos offered the chance magically to encounter animals from Africa, India, and East Asia, all in the course of an afternoon's stroll, the kinesthetic embodiment of an imperialist eye.

The history of natural history, which categorizes all that is thought to be without politics or subjectivity, underwrites the Evolution of Man exhibit as surely as it does the Wild Animal Show. It posits as "natural" that which is outside the designator's realm of the "cultural." This is the link that still unites cultural tourism and animal tourism despite a century of social change. Tourism, in the kind of industries I am discussing here, promises escape into another more natural realm for those who see themselves firmly positioned in modernity or, more recently, post-modernity. Always antidotal, it shows its audience what they are not and most often does so through the talismanic display of physical difference. In the history of Hawaiian tourism, I have discussed this as the naturalization/racialization of culture. There is a corollary to this experience in animal tourism. Industries like zoos, animal theme parks, aquariums, and ecotourism sites sell a related but distinctive experience of the natural, one we also encounter through visual perception of bodily difference, a difference as fully commodified and staged as the *lū'au*s in Waikiki. The second half of this book examines this industry based on looking at animals. Unlike part 1's historical investigation of tourism in one site, Waikiki, part 2 offers a multisited comparison of many contemporary sites ranging from aquariums to animal theme parks, to zoos and ecotourism.

LOOKING AT ANIMALS

My first visit to an animal theme park was slightly embarrassing. There I was, during the open training session at the marine mammal amphitheater, when the trainer asked for a volunteer. I jumped up and waved my hand wildly. The trainer noticed, smiled, and said, "I think we'll let a child do it this time." A lucky little towhead clambered down the bleachers toward the side of the pool; I sat down, a bit chagrined at having shown so much desire for an activity that was, of course, a big treat for a child. But I was struck by how much I wanted to do this, to go to the side of the huge tank of water, and to stand there waiting for the 10,000-pound killer whale "Yaka" to swim up beside me, push herself straight up out of the water, stick out her tongue (!) and wait for me to lean over, at the trainer's command, to receive her "kiss" on my cheek—all to applause from the spectators, but that wasn't the key. I didn't have the urge to be a performer so much as a participant. So much so, in fact, that walking through the park later I stopped in one of those instant photo booths, where for three dollars you can make a postcard of yourself posed against various fake backgrounds, and had my picture taken with a killer whale. By carefully positioning my height on the stool and looking at just the right angle into the camera, following the instructions to the letter, I received a photo postcard suitable for mailing with a grinning me and a seemingly grinning orca bussing me on the cheek against a background of palm trees. I am slightly *larger* than the whale, mind you, and magically suspended in the water, but that did not matter. It was the realization, or simulation of the realization, of a dream come true.

I had thought I knew what to expect at an attraction like Marine World Africa USA. I'd seen the pictures of happy spectators and leaping whales at places like Sea World in Florida or San Diego. A little awe, a little fun, and a lot of show biz is what I thought I was in for. We would pay our money for the opportunity to "consume radical bodily difference." And I still think this is so. But I wasn't prepared for becoming so involved in the process. The act of consumption is not quite the right phrase. It is too discrete, too final, too unitary. It does, however, usefully imply a physicality and merging. But my desire was not slaked by such consumption. Instead, I wanted more contact with the huge animals. Why was this such a thrill, and why was I so drawn to these huge bodies? Why are we so eager to look at animals and so willing to pay a lot of money to do so? Just what is it they are selling at places like Marine World that I was so eager to buy?

The industries based on looking at animals, what I am referring to as animal tourism, sell an experience of the natural through exposure to wild animals, whether or not the particular animals have ever lived in or even seen the mythical wilderness they are tied to in our imaginations. Many animals spend their entire lives in zoos, for instance, having never lived in "the wild." Indeed, many would probably perish if released, since they lack survival skills like hunting, for which they have no need in a zoo. Despite these contradictions, the animals both stand in for the rest of "the natural" (as that outside human cultivation, one of the word's earliest meanings) and are seen as natural themselves, subject to natural forces or laws.

Like racial others, animals are defined as other on the basis of biological difference.⁴ Such recourse to biology masks the culturalization of this category. That specific and important physical differences exist is undeniable, but the historical attachment of particular values and meanings to those distinctions is very difficult to detect in everyday operations of concepts of animal and of the natural.⁵

The intensity of public discourses of the natural rises and falls at different historical junctures and exists in complex relation to notions of religion, science, and civil society, as Raymond Williams has demonstrated.⁶ Often, nature and culture play a dialectical tune of critique and redemption, with one or the other in ascendancy at particular historical junctures.⁷ It is precisely in the realm of culture that animals are differentiated from ourselves. Concepts of group or individual subjectivity are a precursor to the idea of culture as something humans produce. Animals, as part of nature, are metonymic of the wild; they may possess social organization but are not seen as producing social organizations, cultures, or cultural products. Nor are those organizations seen as subject to historical change and development. Conscious critical agency is associated with humans, but the forces of nature, though they may yield changing results through natural selection, are perceived as lacking such critical agency even if seen as the repository of "rational" laws. In other words, even the history of natural history proceeds naturally. Humans alone are both subject to the laws of nature and able to subject the natural world to their will.

The last twenty years have seen an intensification of concern about this issue of humans' relations with and mastery over a natural world, with the rapid popularization of the concept of ecology and its designation as something that we must save. But the beginnings of this conservation paradigm are much earlier. Raymond Williams has argued that the opposite, and yet double, of conservation is exploitation.⁸ With the

intensification of our separation from the natural world, in the turn from an agrarian-based economy to an industrialized, urbanized one, we can trace a concomitant idealization of nature. Bits of it are cordoned off and set aside as public parks and nature preserves (private parks and preserves predate these). This is apparent especially from the nineteenth century on in Europe and the United States and can be seen in the commitment to city parks, to the emphasis on rejuvenating travel to unindustrialized parts of the country, and on the establishment of federal park systems. In these cases, nature was what was leftover, saved, or left empty. This double ideological move simultaneously commodifies nature while positing it as outside commodification. As Williams has noted, we "consume it as scenery, landscape, image, fresh air."⁹

The animal theme parks, ecotourism sites, zoos, and aquariums discussed in these chapters are contemporary extensions of this commodification. They meld commerce with the salvage paradigm of a vanishing wilderness. They are, in fact, huge industries based on the idea of nature as one of the last bastions of idealized authenticity in the postmodern era and on animals as exemplars of wildness. And within these industries, mammals are supreme. They are presented as our interlocutors, living on the border between the categories of humans and nature.

John Berger has commented on this relationship between an increasing marginalization of animals in terms of our daily lives and a simultaneous increase in their commodification.¹⁰ While substantial changes mark the dominant relations between humans and animals over the course of the last several centuries, Berger argues that at least since the eighteenth century there has been a nostalgic regard for animals. With increasing commodification of human labor and its increasing separation from the use of animals, we can trace a concomitant rise in the commodification of interacting with animals.

Berger divides this latter commodification into two realms: as part of the family unit and as spectacle.¹¹ He notes, for example, that children in the nineteenth-century industrialized world were surrounded by images of animals in toys, decorations, and pictures. Animals were also brought into the family as pets, a trend which has reached gigantic proportions today. Pets and animal toys, especially stuffed animals, serve as totems of domesticated wildness, as an interface between human culture and animal nature.

Stuffed animals had their parallel in living animals put on display. The first stuffed animals became popular toys at roughly the same time that public zoos were being established in the early to mid nineteenth

century and later.¹² “The zoo to which people go to meet animals, to observe them, to see them is, in fact, a monument to the impossibility of such encounters,” notes Berger.¹³ In addition, zoos like the London Zoo, established in 1828, or the Berlin Zoo, in 1844, brought prestige to national capitals by displaying exotic animals from faraway lands. They were, as Berger has noted, symbolic of imperial conquest of the lands themselves.

Zoos also demonstrated a civic function of public enlightenment, displaying natural history exhibits for all classes. Not unlike the popularity of stereoscope travel photographs or early film travelogues, zoos democratized access to the exotic. The “heritage” of nature was presumed to be the right of all. This blend of educational and imperial discourses continues today in distinctive applications.

Berger notes that part of our fascination with animals is a result of their similarity and difference from ourselves. This oscillation of similarity and difference operates on two related planes, the physical and the social. My contention in the next three chapters is that our visual observations of physical difference form the bedrock for concepts of social and psychological difference as they are developed in the structure of animal shows and in the educational and entertainment discourses that surround and extend these shows. Ultimately, whenever we talk of animals, we talk of ourselves, for the presentation of nature is simultaneously a buttressing or critique of certain conceptions of human cultural practice which the animals are compared with and contrasted to. The problematic of the natural is also that of the cultural, and these two poles are in constant dialectical motion. The category of mammal as that most similar physiologically to humans is the arena where the most intense preoccupation with the nature-culture divide is acted out.

Animals’ identities as authentic representatives of the natural are ultimately presumed to reside in their bodies, in their physical difference from humans. Their division from us articulates the Cartesian and Christian mind-body or body-spirit split. Even when these conceptual boundaries are smudged, animals are seen as fundamentally more embodied than humans, that is, as more determined by their bodily aspects. In a Judeo-Christian philosophy that values mind/spirit over body, animals are placed lower on the hierarchy of valuable beings and therefore more subject to domination. Theatrical structures construct and present this idea of physical authenticity across a wide continuum of viewing situations which will be considered in these chapters.

With variations according to the genre of display, the animals are presented as aestheticized bodies. Often seen at rest, the stasis of such

bodies heightens their objectness and allows for our leisurely contemplation of discrete bodily details. This is related to the allure of taxidermy, of the preparation of "trophies" which display "an animal frozen in a moment of supreme life . . . muscles tensed, noses aquiver," as Donna Haraway puts it.¹⁴ These trophies elicit a fetishistic response, a substitute of desire for one object (the animal that lived) with pleasure in the fascination of another (its stuffed resurrection). But we also have a desire to see these bodies in motion. People's zoo behavior, feeding or taunting the animals, often aims at getting the animals to move, to *do* something.¹⁵ Instead of the fetishistic pleasures of taxidermy, living animals offer a kinesthetic show of movement, of rippling muscles; they give off a smell, and invoke not just awe but the frisson of danger should they decide to come roaring our way. Animal movements and behaviors provide further evidence of a species' particular characteristics. Such behaviors are often perceived in a matrix of similarity and difference from human actions and interactions. We watch animal male-female interactions in these terms, for example.

But our perceptions of animal behavior are based on synecdochic evidence. The notion of natural behaviors is constructed in zoos through key omissions and rearticulations. Hunting is not permitted, breeding is tightly controlled, and most species only interact with others of their own kind. In addition, some behaviors, like obsessive pacing, reflect the dynamics of captivity and the physical limitations of some display modes. Selected, permitted actions, like grooming, are taken as evidence of the animals "being" themselves, that is, performing natural behaviors.

Newer zoo designs address this issue of presenting natural behavior by increasing realism in habitat design, therefore providing more of the conditions of possibility for natural, that is, wild, behaviors to be seen. There may be more room to run, for instance. But the key omissions of hunting, breeding, and species interaction remain, resulting in a false realism based on the material presence of the body but divorced from the full range of bodily practices. In contrast to the more static display mode of zoos, animal shows offer us the opportunity to see the bodies in spectacular motion and to see interactive behaviors, most often with people, but occasionally with other animals of the same or different species. While the key omissions remain, the discourse of the natural is complexly played out in terms of actions in these shows, as later discussions will detail.

The viewing structures of zoos, whether cage or habitat oriented, seem to depend on a rather straightforward sense of realism. In the sim-

plest cages, bodies themselves are presented as "facts." The animals are there, and we stare at them. The representational mediation that structures zoo viewing becomes more and more apparent when the display context becomes complex, presenting a simulacrum of habitat of origin. Then the goal is not just to show bodies, but to show bodies in motion and in (selectively engineered) ecological context. But when animals appear in shows, as performers, a different level of more obvious mediation occurs. In these cases, as will be discussed in terms of performing sea mammals especially, the current style of display encodes action as extensions of natural behaviors. Whereas zoos present either a photographic, iconic sense of animals (displayed in cages) or a panoramic view of animals in a built environment, only performances display intense interaction between the animals and their environments, other animals and humans.

In contrast to the slow, muted pace of a PBS-type of animal documentary, which our experience of watching animals in environmental contexts resembles, these shows have an MTV sensibility. They string together fast bits of ever-changing actions, like rapid cuts of choreography in a music video. These motions and interactions are highly scripted and choreographed. The execution of specific actions on cue turns the animals into performers while denying them the subjectivity of human performers who both perceive and produce the fictive aspects of theatrical performance. The animals thus perform a fiction of themselves as wild, and they do so within the context of an obviously constructed theatrical vehicle for their display.

Spectacle at times disrupts the fictive aspect of the shows, presenting moments of sublime visual and kinesthetic pleasures for the audience. We can be overwhelmed by the scale of powerful jumps by the killer whales, for instance, while forgetting the frame of the show as a show during that moment. The spectacle of the bodies in motion stands in for wildness and uncontrollability, not subject to the constraints of culture, while simultaneously being wholly produced by it in the theatrical framework.

Animals, not being human and therefore outside the possible realm of culture, present an idealized authenticity, unchangeable because it is conceived of as a product (bodily essence) rather than a process (culture) subject to variation over time. As an ever-vanishing horizon of the authentic, animals perform their role of nature in ways that depend on their bodily display and its constant reworking as more or less similar to our own. With intense irony, these representatives of the wild exhibit through their performances their ultimate domination by and depen-

dency on the humans who have captured or bred them. Their role is to help define the cultural through the display of what it is (supposedly) not. As Alexander Wilson has noted, while zoos and animal shows purport to be about animals, they are really "explicit, even intentional, models of relations between human cultures and the natural world."¹⁶

The following chapters consider various models of these relationships, analyzing a continuum of viewing experiences I call "in-situ," "out-of-situ," and "in-fake-situ." Ecotourism sites, zoos, and shows at animal theme parks will provide examples of each of these nodes on the continuum, each encoding specific notions of bodily authenticity, display, and human/animal interaction within an elastic discourse of the natural.

The Industries of Species Tourism

A huge and diverse industry supports our desire for looking at animals. Wildlife facilities attract more than 100 million visitors a year in the United States.¹ In 1997, a remarkable 40 percent of all adults in the United States visited a zoo, aquarium, or wild animal park.² There are other venues too: circuses, ecotourism, public television nature shows, even dog and cat shows.³ Take, for example, the membership of the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums, which issues accreditations to facilities meeting rigorous standards of animal care. It now has about 160 members. However, they represent merely one-tenth of all institutions, organizations, and businesses involved in the public display of animals in the United States. The U.S. Department of Agriculture issues exhibitors' permits to more than 1,700 animal collections.⁴ These can range from large metropolitan aquariums, to shopping-mall petting zoos, to roadside tourist attractions like exhibits of snakes and alligators, or even bars and hotels or magic shows. The well-known Las Vegas magicians Siegfried and Roy use rare white tigers in their acts, for example, and a bar in Chicago was reputed to have two dolphins called "Scotch" and "Soda" on display.⁵ Certainly the USDA numbers underrepresent the number of animal attractions in the United States.

Given the variety of venues involved, it is impossible to generate figures on the income of this industry for looking at animals. The full range of this activity on a global scale is gigantic. Consider just one segment of the industry, zoos, which are still the single most popular form of live entertainment in the world. According to the latest figures available, more than thirty-five million people visited the world's 900 zoos in 1978.⁶ Undoubtedly, that figure has grown significantly in the last two

decades. In 1990, the San Diego Zoo alone, one of America's most popular, attracted more than 3,300,000 people. Its membership comprises 170,000 households, the largest of any such organization in the world. Even calculating at the low end of average ticket prices, the gross income for this one zoo must be at least \$50 million a year.⁷

Looking at animals is not merely a contemporary fascination. The earliest records of menageries date back as far as 2,500 B.C.⁸ Nor is it a socially segmented one: this is an activity that cuts across social lines of class, race, gender, age, religion, region, and nationality.⁹ Why do so many people pay so much money to go to special places to engage in the activity of looking at animals? In this chapter and the ones that follow, I consider this social activity of looking at animal bodies across a range of contemporary venues. I give special attention to marine mammal bodies, which form the basis of one of the fastest growing segments of this industry and yet have received the least critical analysis.¹⁰

LOOKING AT ANIMALS: A PARTIAL HISTORY

The creation of opportunities for humans to look at animals has a long and wide-ranging history, of which I will only sketch a portion here. Menageries, zoos, circuses, dime museums, carnivals, and safaris are all precursors of the modern animal theme park and its cousin in conservation, ecotourism. The linkage of privilege, rarity, ownership, exotica, and looking is evident from the earliest records of zoo-style collections. Pictographic remains in archaeological digs in Siqqara, Egypt, show pet monkeys, hyenas, ibex, and gazelles dating as far back as circa 2,500 B.C. Exotic plants, birds, and mammals from Syria were kept by Thutmose III in Karnak during the fifteenth century B.C. Similar examples can be drawn from ancient Chinese, Greek, and Roman history. One of the largest of these early collections was assembled by Ptolemy I in Alexandria during his rule of Egypt. His successor, Ptolemy II, enlarged the zoo, sending collecting expeditions into Ethiopia and bringing the first chimpanzees into captivity. The scale of these endeavors is demonstrated in a feast celebrating Dionysus circa 285 B.C., which featured a parade of captive beasts. This giant procession included 96 elephants drawing chariots, 2,400 hounds, and lions, leopards, camels, cheetahs, huge snakes carried by groups of slaves, a giraffe, a rhinoceros, and 150 men carrying trees to which birds and other wild animals were chained.¹¹

Two things are striking about this image. One is the similarity to today's big-draw animals at zoos—lions, elephants, camels, giraffes. The

other is the chaining of the birds to trees, a crude sort of habitat display. The parading itself reverses one aspect of the visual economy of zoos, where animals remain relatively confined and the people move, but it provides a similar experience for the spectator of a changing sequence of exotic variety representing geographical range. Much like a modern-day arms parade, such a display signaled the wealth and power of the sponsor and his geographical reach.

To own "the other" and to subject it to a particular theatrical aesthetic enact a politics of vision based on differential hierarchies of power. This underlying structure still forms the basis of zoos and animal shows, but its negotiation, meaning, and particularities of enactment are always subject to change and contestation. For instance, the current paradigm for zoos is as animal conservation organizations involved in complex and globally expansive breeding and tracking programs for endangered species.¹² Related to this mission is public education about animals and animal habitat, which underwrites the necessity for public display. The San Diego Zoo puts it this way: "If even a fraction of [these projected] environmental catastrophes happens, wildlife in its natural setting is doomed. In all likelihood, endangered plants and animals will find sanctuary only in the protected confines of zoological parks and preserves. Thus, those institutions which began as the playthings of royalty have become sanctuaries for the world's wild animals. Zoos are responding to this moral imperative. . . . A successful conservation effort requires public support. That will come only with education. Conservation education can best take place as the public's interest is sparked. What better way to fan that flame than with the wholesome, family-oriented entertainment offered by zoos?"¹³

A remarkably packed paragraph, this statement from the glossy zoo souvenir book casts zoos as saviors, enacting a moral imperative to rescue doomed animals. A careful reading teases out the links between money and politics. Conservation requires "public support" (i.e., money and votes), which in turn requires "public education" (the information which will presumably persuade people to give their support), which in turn requires sparking the public's interest (so they will pay attention to this information) through "wholesome [i.e., natural, and what could be more natural than animals?] family-oriented entertainment." Entertainment becomes the means to a morally justified end—salvation—not merely a (potentially unwholesome, indulgent) pleasure in itself. Still, not everyone accepts this justification. The meaning of zoos is actively contested today. Vocal critics, often aligned with the animal liberation movement, charge that the emphasis should

be on saving habitat, not on animal display, which they characterize as imprisonment, not entertainment.

The history of live animal display for human entertainment yields some very dark episodes, nearly unimaginable in their scale of mistreatment and in their production of sadistic pleasures. From roughly the third century B.C. to the sixth century A.D., "blood-sport" spectacles, featuring animals or animals and humans locked in combat, were popular in Europe. In a perverse early habitat re-creation, Nero flooded an arena so that gladiators in boats could spear seals while the crowd looked on. Writing in 1869, the historian W. E. H. Lecky described some of the massacres that took place during the Roman Empire: "In a single day, at the dedication of the coliseum by Titus, five thousand animals perished. Under Trajan, the games continued for one hundred and twenty-three successive days. Lions, tigers, elephants, rhinoceroses, hippopotami, giraffes, bulls, stags, even crocodiles and serpents were employed to give novelty to the spectacle."¹⁴ In these spectacles, animals (like captive humans in other coliseum "games") were pitted against one another, fighting to the death, or they were tortured and killed by humans.

In such spectacles, the exoticism of the animal was important, as were its size, strength, and wildness. Nature was here subdued by men in an eroticized display of phallic power. Remnants of this coercion remain in attenuated form in lion and tiger shows in circuses and in bull-fights. By extension, since most of these species came from outside Europe, the emperor simultaneously demonstrated his superiority over the regions whence they came. Since many of the gladiators were slaves, their bodiliness was matched against that of the animals, a category to which they were closely aligned. Animals and slaves were, in this context, both dispensable. It was the display of their physical capacity and prowess and its erotic, sadistic subtext that were valued.

One particularly gruesome "entertainment" took place in roughly 55 B.C. Pompey sponsored a game's finale in which "gladiators massacred twenty-one elephants that Pompey had acquired from Egypt only after swearing that the giant pachyderms would not be injured. The gladiators killed the elephants slowly, spearing them with javelins, the beasts flailing their great tusks, falling to their knees, trumpeting and wailing fiercely."¹⁵ The elephants' resistance was a key part of the spectacle, simultaneously a signifier of their power and of the ultimately greater power of the gladiators who overcame them, and hence of the emperor who sponsored the spectacle. In these abhorrent performances, the animals played themselves. It was the authenticity of their natural behav-

ior, fighting for their lives, that both signified their wildness and provided the foundation of the man-nature contest. Both the difference of their bodies from domestic animals and the display of the body's behaviors (enacting their fierce animalness) contributed to the spectacle.

Such blatant, state-sanctioned brutality toward animals died out with the Roman Empire, but royalty maintained animal collections during the Middle Ages, and, during the Renaissance, European travelers brought back both exotic animals and reports of zoos in other countries. Marco Polo visited a large zoo at the palace of Kublai Khan, which included monkeys, falcons, deer, camels, bears, and elephants, and Hernando Cortes reported on Montezuma's zoo in Mexico, which included pumas and jaguars in bronze cages, as well as giant turtles, armadillos, and huge aviaries full of quetzals, chachalacs, and condors. It was reported also that Montezuma also had human "freaks," like dwarfs and bearded women, placed in cages, where visitors could throw food at them.¹⁶ This forerunner of the carnival sideshow indicates the disenfranchisement of the physically different and their banishment across the species line to the objectified status of the animals, indicated most dramatically by their being put in cages and "specimenized."

The sixteenth century gave rise to large private menageries, attesting to the power and wealth of their owners, as more and more animals were brought into Europe from expeditions to continents like Africa and Asia. Dresden, Prague, and Paris, among others, all built collections during this period. The emphasis on the exotic that seems to be a constant throughout the history of zoos, at least in Europe and North America, can be seen clearly at this time.¹⁷ To this day, the big-draw animals (called "charismatic megafauna" by some in the zoo world) are the large mammals from Asia and Africa, the lions, tigers, elephants, and giraffes.¹⁸ Indeed, it would be nearly inconceivable to think of a zoo without them.¹⁹ The specific meanings of such importations may have changed throughout historical eras and as the zoos changed from private to public spheres, but the emphasis on conquest, and the attendant imperialism that it conveyed, remain.

Expeditions to bring animals out of Asia or sub-Saharan Africa were massive undertakings, costing a great deal in money and lives, of both men and animals. Large animals would be marched out of the jungle or savanna, hobbled. A crowd of water bearers and of domestic livestock, to be used for milk and meat on the journey, accompanied the pitiful parade. Untold animals died in this way.²⁰ These were trophy animals for the zoos, just as surely as a lion's skin and elephant tusks were trophies for Europeans on safari to Africa.²¹ This lingering smell of colonialism

mixes with the animal odors in safari parks in Africa and the United States today, even though the guns have been exchanged for cameras.

Little changed in the structure of zoos until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the 1800s, European private collections began to be opened to the public, and publicly funded zoological gardens became very popular. The London Zoo, founded in 1826 by the Zoological Society of London, typifies this shift from private to public access. Although originally restricted to use by the upper-class members of the society, by 1846 anyone with the price of admission could enter. While some of the upper classes may have expressed annoyance that the new class of visitor exhibited “vulgar” behaviors like picnicking on the grass, others applauded their attendance, citing the zoo as an uplifting alternative to the public house.²²

Before the establishment of public zoos, the wider public encountered exotic animals grouped together in traveling menageries or exhibited singly, like the llama from Peru put on display in Haymarket in 1805. Permanent commercial establishments also existed. Before the establishment of the London Zoo, for example, the major zoological attraction in that city was the Exeter Change Menagerie. Two rooms in a commercial district in central London were packed with animals in tiny cages stacked on top of one another. By hiking up the stairs to the second floor, visitors could see tigers, monkeys, sloths, a lion, leopard, panther, and a camel. Such attractions were not limited to the big cities. Traveling exhibits toured throughout the country, bringing panthers, ostriches, lions, and kangaroos to smaller towns like Norwich and Exeter, reaching patrons of all classes.²³

Like the earlier private menageries of European royalty, these haphazard entertainments also encoded the power of imperialism in their displays of specific colonial booty, but the new movement toward zoos as public institutions made their civic purpose more explicit and more expansive. The Royal Zoological Society of Ireland, citing the recent success of opening its facilities to the working classes for a one-penny admission, boasted an attendance record of 100,000 in 1841, “confirming . . . the people in their improved habits” of respectability.²⁴ As Harriet Ritvo has suggested, such civic entertainments not only confirmed the status of Britain as an imperial power (the center to which animals from its colonies flowed), but also evidenced the triumph of humans (specifically Europeans) over nature.²⁵

In the United States, the situation was similar. Small commercial traveling menageries moved from town to town, displaying individual specimens of various animals in rows of cages. But in the latter half of

the nineteenth century, as part of changing social class formations, there was a growing emphasis on experiencing nature as an antidote to expanding, industrializing cities, and on public education, and several important zoos were established in major cities in the United States. For example, in 1859 civic leaders in Philadelphia, then the country's largest city and home to the first U.S. botanical garden as well as Peale's Museum of Natural History, created the Zoological Society of Philadelphia. Over the next fifteen years land was purchased, buildings erected, animals secured, and a professional staff was hired. The nation's capital followed suit, but not until 1891, when a zoological garden was opened as part of the Smithsonian Institution, with the express purpose of advancing "science and the instruction and recreation of the people."²⁶ In 1899, the Bronx Zoo was established, and by the early 1900s there were twenty-three professionally managed zoological gardens in U.S. cities.

The establishment of zoos was part of a larger movement to reform public spaces, to instill homogenous notions of citizenship, and to educate and "civilize" lower, often immigrant working classes. Also during this period we see the establishment of public libraries, parks, and museums. Theodore Roosevelt pushed for a conservation program in the United States, and most American cities responded to the "city beautiful" movement by bringing culture to the urban centers in the forms of grand civic buildings, ceremonial boulevards, and green areas. The natural was an integral part of this cultural movement, whether in the form of far-off nature preserves like Yosemite National Park in California or in urban zoos.

Nature, characterized, as Donna Haraway has noted, as a source of both health and purity, provided a model of social relations and citizenship when a white upper class feared "race suicide," embraced the eugenics movement, and struggled to Americanize massive waves of immigrants from southern Europe and elsewhere. Zoos and natural history museums were part of this effort to present an instructive nature. H. F. Osborne, president of the American Museum of Natural History in New York, encapsulated this goal when he wrote in 1922 that visitors could "become more reverent, more truthful, and more interested in the simple and natural laws of their being and better citizens of the future through each visit."²⁷

The San Diego Zoo was established at just about this time. It began with a small collection of animals that had been housed in circus-like cages during the 1915–16 Panama-California International Exposition, held at Balboa Park, the site of today's zoo. Recalling the initial inspiration, founder physician Harry Wegeforth said: "On September 16,

1916, as I was returning to my office . . . I drove down Sixth Avenue and heard the roaring of the lions in the cages at the Exposition. . . . I turned to my brother, Paul, who was riding with me, and half jokingly, half wistfully, said, 'Wouldn't it be splendid if San Diego had a zoo! You know . . . I think I'll start one.'" Appealing to notions of civic pride, he raised money from San Diego's wealthy citizens, such as major supporter Ellen Browning Scripps, to establish a permanent exhibition.²⁸

The birth of this zoo shows the confluence of several factors at the time. The international exoticism captured by the exposition, the sense that a well-developed city *should* have a zoo as part of its civic institutions to educate the public, and the active involvement of the upper-class industrial leaders in shaping such a civic culture for the lower classes, are all evident in Wegeforth's remarks. The enduring power of this philosophy is evidenced by the continuing emphasis placed on this story in the zoo's contemporary narrative about itself.

Not coincidentally, these same civic leaders and wealthy industrialists would have been prime targets of the emerging Hawaiian tourist industry, which was by that time advertising heavily on the West Coast. The international exoticism of the zoo at the San Diego Panama-California exposition was the same as that purveyed a few hundred miles to the north, at the 1915 San Francisco Panama-Pacific Exposition, where the appearance of Hawaiian musicians was credited with igniting a nationwide fad of Hawaiian music and dance. Both expositions depended on displays of "the exotic" to articulate a new sense of nationalism at the beginning of World War I.

A History of Exhibition Styles

Zoos necessarily articulate social constructs of the relation of knowledge to vision, since they operate at the intersection of theatrical and scientific frames. They use techniques of visual display to reveal information and to construct a specific relationship between viewer and viewed, humans and animals. These exhibition practices and the relations they construct shift over time. The animals at the 1915 San Diego exposition were displayed in what Jon Luoma describes as the first of four stages, a "bars-and-shackles menagerie" style, still evident in many zoos today. Barred cages were usually arranged along both sides of a pathway, so the visitors could stroll through this living taxonomy, arranged one species per cage.²⁹ This orderly arrangement reflected older notions of the natural sciences as a cataloging of differences and the presentation of evidentiary specimens. (Later exhibition techniques would emphasize the functioning of the body, not just its exter-

nal construction, indicating a parallel development in the nascent sciences of anthropology and ethnology.) The relationship of animals to their species, to other species, and to their environment was not part of such cage displays. The pathway arrangement encouraged people to talk, look, and stroll and focused the attention of the viewers as much on their own social interactions as on the animals.³⁰

This bars-and-shackles stage had seen development during the nineteenth century, with a shift in some zoos to an emphasis on "heightening the sense of theater by setting a mood believed compatible with an animal's origins, or its perceived origins. Curiously, all the mood-setting exhibits showed the creature not in relation to other fauna or flora, but to human cultures. At Cologne, for example, the elephant was housed in a building of distinctly Moorish design, complete with tiny, minaret towers."³¹

At the Budapest Zoo in 1992 I visited just such an elephant house, still in use. Its exterior resembles a Byzantine castle, with domed ceilings and an elephant head bas-relief decorating the center arch of the entryway. Inside, the first animal one sees is a lone elephant, framed by a scalloped prosceniumlike archway fronted with thick, widely spaced bars. Golden light streams down from above, spilling in from windows in the vaulted ceiling and accentuated by additional spotlights focused on the animal. Just in front of the bars stands a lone palm tree rising twenty feet into the air and topped with a scraggly tuft of leaves. Striking lighting, arched framing, the soaring architecture, and the sole palm tree in Budapest theatricalize this display of the captive animal. In the pen, nothing but a bale of straw. For the animal, nothing to see, to do, to smell, or to hear but the stream of visitors, who are never more than fifteen feet away. As in the barred cages that preceded these barred rooms, the animals can never get very far away from us.³² This theatricalization, this Orientalization of the elephant, provides the visitor with a context with which to view the animal and to construct the meaning of that viewing. Unlike many of the habitat exhibits of today, which attempt to re-create the habitat from which the animal comes, this exhibit represents the cultural imaginary of mid-nineteenth-century Budapest, with the elephant serving as a symbolic marker of the human other with which it supposedly shared its home terrain.

The second stage of zoo exhibition practices, commencing in the early years of the twentieth century, focused on the clinical health needs of the animals and reflected a more scientific approach to zoo keeping. This emphasis extended through the mid-1950s (and continues to be a primary concern today). It wasn't until 1956, for example, that the first

lowland gorilla was born in captivity, evidence of the increased attention to the animals' physical requirements.³³

Stage three emphasized the barless "naturalist" approach, which had been pioneered by Carl Hagenbeck in Germany in the early years of this century. Hagenbeck wrote, "I wished to exhibit them not as captives, confined to narrow spaces, and looked at between bars, but as free to wander from place to place within as large limits as possible, and with no bars to obstruct the view and serve as a reminder of captivity. . . . A certain point must be fixed in the garden from which might be seen every kind of animal moving about in apparent freedom and in an environment which bore a close resemblance to its own nature haunts."³⁴

To provide this illusion of freedom-in-captivity, Hagenbeck pioneered the construction of habitats utilizing invisible barriers—moats concealed by vegetation, or water barriers disguised as ponds and integrated into the landscape. As Nigel Rothfells has noted, Hagenbeck experimented to determine the vertical and horizontal jumping abilities of animals and then used those statistics to design barriers that would work effectively for each species on display.³⁵ Such a technique seemed to remove the barrier between animals and humans, finally banishing the thick iron bars that bisected vision.

The San Diego Zoo was one of the first in the United States to try the Hagenbeck model. Ellen Browning Scripps donated funds for the lion grotto exhibit, one of the zoo's first barless, moated enclosures. This exhibit is still home to the lions and was very progressive for its day, when such display techniques were just being tried in Europe and were nearly unknown in the United States. An old photograph of the exhibit shows Scripps, walking stick swinging out in front of her, striding by the enclosure dug into the side of a hill and inlaid with concrete walls.³⁶ The frame is exactly like a proscenium stage, with the top wall tilted down at a forty-five degree angle to meet the sloping earth. Narrower at the top than at the bottom, the rim outlines a space like a truncated parallelogram. Our vision is focused inward and upward toward the cavelike recess at the back of the terraced stone interior. Even in these recesses the lions remain available to our gaze. The narrowish ledges of the terraces encourage walking or patrolling, displaying the animal to us in side view, in motion, and recalling the Edward Muybridge photographic studies of bodily motion in animals and humans during the 1880s.

In these aspects of Hagenbeck's design we see more clearly not only the idealized fiction of peaceful coexistence of humans and animals but also Hagenbeck's long experience as an animal trainer. The same entrepreneur who staged animal shows for 6,000 spectators each night in his

private pavilion at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago designed the lion grotto.³⁷ His Chicago pavilion featured camels on roller skates, bears walking a tightrope, and lions driving a chariot pulled by tigers, and the grotto, while seemingly light-years away in its conception of animal display, was equally theatrical. It provided an arena where natural behaviors were forcibly presented to view and literally framed, through the design of the structure, like an act on a stage. Theatrical and scientific visual discourses are united in this exhibit, as they are in ensuing zoo-display techniques up to the present.³⁸

An unobstructed view, movement, the illusion of freedom and natural habitat, and a privileged point from which all is visible—these are the key components of Hagenbeck's concept and are the ideological underpinnings of such fake in-situ approaches to animal display. Moats, ravines, Plexiglas, and invisible netting today facilitate such visual sleight of hand and allow predators and potential prey to exist visually side by side in unnatural naturalism, precisely Hagenbeck's vision of zoos as a "paradise" where "animals would live beside each other in harmony and where the fight for survival would be eliminated."³⁹ Humans and animals seem to exist in harmony too. As Alexander Wilson notes, "Hagenbeck's sensitivity to sightlines and cross-viewing [of different species] were key contributions: the moats, groves of trees, artificial lakes, mountains . . . not only framed these vistas but also prevented zoo-goers from concentrating their gaze on other viewers."⁴⁰ In other words, we became part of their world. In describing Hagenbeck's achievement, naturalist writer Jon Luoma says: "Suddenly, they were no longer just animals on exhibit, but animals in some relationship to their own environmental framework. It was no longer just lions and gazelles, but a vision of Africa, of creatures of the savanna inextricably linked to the land and to one another . . . the framework for the zoo of the twentieth century, and perhaps beyond."⁴¹

The fourth stage in zookeeping extended this notion of environment to that of habitat, surroundings which would be behaviorally satisfying to the animals. "The architects should be the animals," argues one recent working group on zoo ethics. "The goal is to create an environment that maximizes the opportunities for the animal to express its natural behavior."⁴² Animals need territory to mark and defend as their own and social groups in which to live. Such habitats would fulfill "the animals' powerful behavioral and social needs" and have become "part and parcel of ethical zookeeping."⁴³

This vision of ecological "systematicity" parallels the desire to see a display of living culture, enacting its authentic self. The visual aesthetic

of authenticity creates this illusion, while the missing ingredients, such as the key forbidden behaviors, like hunting, and the unseen moats, are rendered insignificant through their invisibility.⁴⁴ The illusion is that we are seeing not only authentic animals but authentic performances of species-specific behavior as well. In fact, what we do see in this display of wildness is a display of total dependence on humans for food, care, protection, and survival.

Along with this contextualization of the animal in a habitat is a parallel emphasis on seeming to place people in the same habitat, the inklings of which were already apparent in Hagenbeck's early exhibits. Since the 1980s, this style of design has been known professionally in the landscape trade as "landscape immersion." "If older exhibits aimed for naturalism, contemporary exhibition technology aims for realism," notes Alexander Wilson. It "conceals the barriers between people and the animals so well that we're never sure whether the animals can approach us or not."⁴⁵

One aspect of this type of design is the replication of habitat specific to the animal's wild environment, that is, the appropriate plants which can be used for food, and it even involves designing the service buildings in the appropriate architectural style, like thatch or adobe. Interestingly, these habitat recreations are often faked organic realisms. For example, in its African region exhibit, the North Carolina Zoo uses hearty "look-alike" plants to impersonate tropical plants that could not survive in North Carolina's climate.⁴⁶ Keys to landscape immersion are zoo-geographical fidelity, proximity to the animals (but also no private areas for them), and the lack of visual distraction for visitors, notes Wilson.⁴⁷ The use of nonglare glass, covered buildings and service objects, and even piped-in sounds add to the immersion illusion.

The Gorilla Tropics exhibit at the San Diego Zoo is an excellent example of this style of display. This two-and-one-half acre "simulation of an African Rain Forest," comes complete with thousands of botanical specimens representing foliage appropriate to African locales, like Rwanda and Gabon. Birds and small primates coexist in the exhibit, which is anchored by a 8,000 square foot enclosure, where a troop of western lowland gorillas lives. Taking part of their food from the exhibit growth, they thus exhibit more natural behaviors. But even this introduction of food gathering is staged, for the actions depend on where the foliage is planted relative to the viewing spots.

Visitors walk along landscaped tropical garden paths as if strolling in the rain forest, until they come upon the specific areas staging the gorillas. The one closest to the gorillas is a semi-enclosed area fronted by

Plexiglas, with stations for viewing on a series of steps lined up in a row. "Actual environmental sounds of the African rain forest" come from hidden speakers, to "enrich the visitor's experience, as well as to add to the animal's comfort and security." Other viewing areas "are revealed as you wind your way around the sunny mesa that makes up a large portion of Gorilla Tropics," some of which are near several cascading waterfalls. The "exhibit attempts to capture the look and feel of the African rain forest . . . and encourages animals to climb, play, build nests, or otherwise express their natural abilities."⁴⁸

The exhibit is open to the sky, with fake rocks rising to wall the gorillas into their part of the rain forest. The rolling terrain seems to blend seamlessly with the rest of the Southern California landscape, extending our sense of immersion. Once on the paths, we are enclosed by foliage, and the exhibit seems boundless, as if we were transported to the greater African landscape, but one where the foliage is labeled by name and with the name of the benefactor whose cash contribution made it possible. These exhibition styles reflect a conception of human and nature relationship shaped by the popular ecology movement and by the growth of ecology as a science during the last thirty years. Humans are seemingly conceptually placed in (and as part of) nature, which operates as a complex system, an ecology.

However, what seems on the surface to level the hierarchy between humans and animals, placing both within a larger system, and to provide the animals with a more natural environment, has a more sinister aspect as well. As the realism quotient in display practices increases, so does the sense of voyeurism. The implication is that more realistic habitats yield more natural, that is, realistic, behaviors. We seem to be seeing the "real" natural, which is more fully exposed to our view.

Certainly the spectrum of observable and allowable behaviors has been increased, as the inclusion of some foraging on the planted foliage indicates. But the idea that increased realism automatically yields an increase in animal welfare also covers up the fact that an increase in performative behaviors provides the viewing audience with a more entertaining experience. The gorillas do more, they exhibit their bodies in action; their strength, agility, size, and mass all become more visible. They are, in a sense, unwittingly performing themselves, or demonstrating their species. The mediating effects of the visual structures frame their behavior as a performance, theatricalizing actions for us, and turning them into observable signifiers of species-specific behavior, of "gorillaness."

The direct act of looking and the force required to contain the animal

for our view, which was underlined by the old bars and cages mode of display, are less obvious to us here. As we become more hidden, so do the power relationships that subtend the visual structure, for, while in both habitat and bars-and-shackles designs the animals may occasionally "return the look," we still hold the keys to the locks. The commodification of bodily difference, of the natural, and of authenticity that zoos both provide and are based on is ultimately only reinforced by the rise in realism.

THE STRUCTURE OF SPECIES TOURISM: BODIES AND VENUES

Two powerful categories of differentiation structure the animal tourism industry. One concerns the situations in which viewing takes place, and the other concerns the bodies on display. Each of these categories can be thought of as a continuum. I want to discuss three categories of venue, which I am terming "in-situ," "in-fake-situ," and "out-of-situ." These form nodes on a continuum from real or natural to fake or artificial. But these terms are not mutually exclusive or rigid. Elements of more than one may coexist at any site. The second continuum concerns animals' bodies. Here I am proposing a gradated range of similarities to and differences from human bodies. Various animals present greater or lesser possibilities for anthropomorphization and spectator identification. However, both striking similarity to and striking difference from human bodily structures can exert a fascination for spectators. And in some marine mammal shows it is precisely this combination of similarity and radical difference that gives the shows their charge and their structure of meaning.

A Theory of Gradation

Mammals are usually the biggest crowd pleasers at zoos and oceanariums. Their biological similarity to us is important. Like us, they have intercourse, give birth to babies, nurse them, have warm blood, and have skin/hair/fur analogous to ours. Most of them, like lions, tigers, bears, elephants, hippos, and giraffes, also have facial structures that look like ours, with recognizable noses, eyes on the front of rounded skulls, ears, and mouths with at least a suggestion of lips. Most of them make sounds, even if we may never have actually heard them (have you ever heard a giraffe call?). Thus, there is at least the conceptual possibility of animal "language." This humanoid face quality facilitates our identification with these animals, with what we imagine their senses to

be, and with what we imagine to be their sense of perception of our shared environment. (If it is hot out, we imagine a polar bear must be really hot, because we would be sweltering in a fur coat in that heat, for example.) I don't mean to suggest that this sort of identification, at least for adults, proceeds in such a literal or conscious way as we look at these animals. But their biological structure is *comprehensible* to us in a way that other animals' are not.

Take eyestalks, for example. Now *there* is a real impediment to identification. And the hard-shelled bodies of crustaceans in general, like the thorax—abdomen divisions of insects—or the cold-bloodedness and scales of reptiles, are similarly incomprehensible from the perspective of our sensory imagination. At the phenomenological level, some animals just live in a different world than we do. Usually, these animals, like lobsters or sea slugs, do not gather a great public.

But sometimes the radical difference can become a draw in itself, especially where it can be successfully transmuted in display from “ugly” to aesthetically pleasing. The spring 1992 display of jellyfish at the Monterey Bay Aquarium is a good example. These fish aren't really fish at all, but coelenterates of remarkable variety and shape. Nearly transparent, these “jellies” (as they are called in the trade) float diaphanously through the water like geometric ghosts. Drifting tentacles three feet long wiggle to the pulsing movement of the moon jelly, with its half-dome top. Others are like delicate disks, fringed with tiny tendrils or decorated with long, streaming tails.

These improbable beings are displayed in special \$500,000 tanks, and New Age music provides the atmosphere for contemplative, transcendent viewing. Sensuous, sustained, and continuous movement animates the white edges of these nearly translucent animals as they drift by or move through the water with propulsive openings and closings of their bodies. Glistening against the black background of their tanks, they look like diamonds at the jeweler's, white against a soft black velvety background and lit with the intensity of a spotlight on stage. Behind them the blackness recedes like outer space, recalling the mysteries of unknown worlds and banishing our preconceptions of these gelatinous things as prickly stings merely to be avoided while swimming. These jellies are so abstractly beautiful in shape and movement they are nearly aestheticized right out of the category of animal. They become surrealistic white shapes, odd mixtures of volume and line continually changing against an ebony background, ebbing and flowing without sharp punctuation, just like the music that “accompanies” them. Of course, the fact that these are jellyfish makes this gossamer

art display all the more remarkable. That lowly jellyfish can be so aesthetically pleasing is part of our pleasure. After all, who would have imagined?

In this case, their bodily dissimilarity to ours, with no face, no bones, no blood, no skin, becomes an occasion not for disgust or distaste but rather for marveling. But while we enjoy the jellies as beautiful objects (living objects), we do not identify with them as sentient beings. This transmutation of nonidentification into aestheticization seems to be working very well in developing a public for these creatures. Aquarium spokesman Hank Armstrong reports, "Attendance is way up. The jellies are motivating people. No one was predicting anything like this. But if you enjoyed our sharks [exhibit], you will turn to mush for the jellies." The jellies exhibit has shattered attendance records.⁴⁹

Marine mammals interestingly fall in between categories, and this is, I believe, one of the reasons for their popularity. Marine mammals are both radically different from us and reassuringly similar. Living in a foreign medium, water, they are separated from us in a fundamental, though temporarily bridgeable, way. We can swim, snorkel, or scuba dive; they can surface and even survive out of the water for limited periods. But they are also very similar to us, being mammals, raising their young, having flippers that can clap like arms (sea lions) or little "hands" with claws (sea otters), and, with whales and dolphins at least, "dialects" and speech systems. There is a tension between the mammalness of whales and dolphins, and their "fishness." Living in the water, having fins if not scales, flippers and not arms, blowholes and not noses, they can remind us of fishes even though technically they are mammals. At the same time, their "faces," especially the jaw structure of whales and dolphins which can be reminiscent of perpetual grins, make them anthropomorphic candidates, as does their communicative and interactive ability.

Living Cultures: In-Situ, In-Fake-Situ, Out-of-Situ

Aquariums, oceanariums, theme parks, and ecotourism sites all offer the opportunity to see sea creatures on display. What are the relationships among these types of sites, and between them and museums, cultural performances, and other forms of entertainment?

Central to each of these modes of presentation, whether in an art museum or at Sea World, is the idea of collection and presentation or demonstration. Knowledge or entertainment is usually the stated goal. For marine mammal shows and tourist shows, the combination of education and entertainment, sometimes dubbed "edutainment," charac-

terizes the display. Museums and aquariums may put more emphasis on the "edu" part of edutainment, but they too are pleasure-producing places, although information is perhaps rated as important as display in these venues. Pleasure may be broadly defined in this context as visual pleasure, intellectual stimulation, and possibly the pleasures of participating in activities associated with certain social classes (art museums or whale watches, for instance). These pleasures are different from those in other types of entertainment, such as going to an amusement park, where the rides provide kinesthetic pleasure, or going to a sports event, which shares many of the dimensions noted above, but with the addition of competition as the structuring relationship.

In each of these cases, animal tourism, people tourism, and museums, we go to see things we don't see everyday. They promise a distinctive, out-of-the-ordinary experience. Dogs and cats are not featured in zoos, for instance (although performing dogs may be part of a circus act). Similarly, ecotourism provides the opportunity to come close to animals we usually cannot see or see only at a great distance or through representations. Watching cockroaches in the kitchen or rabbits in the backyard doesn't count as ecotourism. Likewise, museums usually feature art and artifacts produced either by artists deemed exceptional or professional (as in the Museum of Modern Art) or by groups other than ourselves (Museum of Natural History, and anthropological museums in general).⁵⁰ In either case, uniqueness is offered. In each venue, specimen selection, arrangement, commentary, and physical display are of the utmost importance. Zoos, like art museums and performing animal shows, have curators who perform these tasks. In museums, most of the things on display are inanimate objects, although a live performance may complement some particular exhibit. By contrast, in all the other categories of display noted above, living creatures or humans are what are being displayed. Associated artifacts are secondary.

In all of these exhibition venues, the collection of good specimens is important. Performing whales that can't jump high, or small specimens of gigantic snakes, or ecotourist sites with sickly inhabitants are undesirable. Similarly, the museum curator seeks a good example of a Shoshone basket, while the tourist-show producer seeks good dancers or, for the nightclub shows, attractive ones. Quality and value are produced in accordance with specific standards for each field of display.

In each display genre, these elements of selection, presentation, and valuation reveal the formulation of a specific underlying problematic of the cultural (as is the case with art or anthropological museums or tourist performance) or of the natural (as in zoos, animal theme parks,

ecotourism sites). Ultimately, these two poles are part of the same dialectic, and the similarities and differences in presentation represent the defining framework of these problematics as well as the oscillations, redundancies, surpluses, and “noise” that erupt in the continual production of these systems.

Subjectivity and Realism

Museums and zoos have changed their visual formats. With turn-of-the-century dime museums, for example, objects were presented in curio cabinets, as objects. It was their physical presence which made the museum a museum. The objectness completely overshadowed the context in which the object had existed before it was collected. Later, dioramas provided a visual context for objects. The objects were “real,” while the context was represented. Now in aquariums, for instance, and in many zoos, context is both presented and represented.⁵¹

Many habitats at zoos now function as theatrical peep shows. The Gorilla Tropics exhibit at the San Diego Zoo, discussed earlier, is a good example. Re-created habitat surrounds the animal on three sides, with a fourth wall constructed of glass or acrylic for the viewing public. In these habitat displays, real organic material is employed (real grass, real water, sometimes real trees), along with manmade items like plaster trees, rocky landscapes, and caves. An animal's habitat is realistically represented or in some cases re-created, as in the two-story high Plexiglas-enclosed kelp forest at the Monterey Bay Aquarium. Wild animal parks remove the fourth wall and proscenium-scape approach. Or rather they reposition it, so that as we ride by on the monorail we are above the animals looking down, or sometimes merely separated by uncrossable moats and seemingly within their habitat.

The ultimate in contextual realism is approached through ecotourism, where all the props for the context are real, and it is the public viewing and its visual and ideological framing that turn the animals into a display. On this continuum of realism, the marks of construction, both material and conceptual, are increasingly invisible, literally removed from sight. The animals become increasingly “subjects” along this continuum, situated in relation to others of their own kind and of other species and able to act upon and respond to their environment.⁵² In popular and even some scientific discourse, certain species are granted status not only as actants but also as subjects possessing a psychological interiority. Both popular anthropomorphism and scientific intelligence or communication experiments with mammals reinforce this gray area of animal subjectivity. However, their objectification never fully ceases,

because our species tourism places a fundamental emphasis on their bodily difference and subjects it for pleasure to our gaze. The entire structure of animal display is predicated on the value of this gazing and the hierarchy of control that it reveals.

An example in human presentation is provided by the Polynesian Cultural Center (PCC) in Hawai'i. It offers representative bits of architecture and traditional activities, like woodcarving and cooking, enacted by contemporary representative of seven Polynesian countries, like Samoa and Fiji. However, here the presentation and representation overlap, because those hired to "be" in each village re-creation must in fact be what they represent, that is, a Samoan or a Fiji Islander. They must be authentic on the bodily level and also on the cultural level because they must be knowledgeable about the traditional songs and dances of their communities.⁵³ The historical nature of the re-creation is not emphasized, and what are often residual modes of cultural practice in increasingly urbanizing island communities are here presented as embodying popular living cultural practices. The PCC in Hawai'i is parallel to the Wild Animal Park in San Diego, where animals are placed in re-created habitats yet carefully separated one from the other. We ride through the park on a monorail, traversing continents in minutes, and at the PCC we make a similar journey by boat, gliding by one island representation after another. The inhabitants of both parks are in fake in-situ.

The continuum for animal viewing from in-situ to out-of-situ is based on increasing human intervention in the exhibited behavior as well as varying degrees of realism. The animals in-situ are presumably being themselves, as they would were no humans present. This as-if-ness is constitutive of ecotourism and is constantly negotiated both in the discourse of ecotourism and in the physical proximity between animals and humans. The animals totally out-of-situ, in a tiger show, for instance, are performing behaviors they would presumably never perform in the wild. The complex discourse of naturalism, that is, performed behaviors as extensions of natural behaviors, will be discussed in detail later, but it is clear that the choreographed movements through space, and their temporal and spatial coordination with that of other animals or humans in the act would never be seen in the wild. For instance, we would never see six tigers sitting up on their hind legs in perfect unison.

The in-fake-situ category, like the Gorilla Tropics exhibit, is particularly interesting. Presumably the animals are performing behaviors similar to those they perform in the wild, for example, caring for their

young, establishing social hierarchies, and grooming. However, these behaviors are separated from the full complex of behaviors in which they would otherwise engage, such as breeding, fighting, and hunting for food. We come to see an attenuated performance of natural behaviors which stand in for the whole.

Structures of Vision: What We See and How We See It

I have already mentioned some of the ways in which our vision is structured in these various situations. Ecotourism takes us as close as possible into the environment inhabited by the animals. Performances totally out-of-situ, like the circus or Sea World, place us as theatrical spectators at events where the performance and viewing spaces are rigidly separated. Spaces like the Monterey Aquarium and the San Diego Wild Animal Park attempt to provide us with views "as if" we were part of the animals' environment. We may ride a monorail through the reserve, or we may view the full height of a kelp forest as if we were diving in it, with viewing stations showing us underwater views two-stories high.

The act of viewing is slightly different in each of these places. Visiting a nature preserve, we move through the space, creating a constantly moving panorama, like a diorama come to life. At the circus, our viewpoint is stationary, and the animals move in a circumscribed space, usually presenting all sides of their bodies to our vision. This is also the case in animal performances at theme parks like Sea World and at zoos. At the aquarium, we see the animals moving in their environment, and we can simultaneously position and reposition ourselves at varying angles and heights to view the animals from above, below, or head on. We actively participate in constructing the view we will have, within the limits of possibility determined by the structure of the display tanks. Here the duration of our looking is self-determined.

If something happens, that is, if there is movement rather than stasis, we are likely to look longer. Zoos have experimented with ways of getting the animals to do something, to perform a behavior, to move, so that people will be more interested. The irony is that many activities, like hunting and mating, which provide spectacles of movement and titillating drama in animal documentaries, are forbidden in the zoo. Sometimes zoos' experiments to manufacture an activity backfire. For example, Minnesota Zoo employee Jim Pichner commented on the use of devices to get animals to display behavior: "We've tried a few things here. We had a hydraulic feeding system for otters that was supposed to release a fish so that people could see the predator-prey relationship

when the otters slid into the pool and caught the fish. But in practice, we didn't get squat out of it. The otters learned after a few times that the sound of a motor or a click or two at the back of the exhibit meant that a fish was about to be released. They'd swim over to the device and—wham—they'd have that fish the minute it was out."⁵⁴

In a sense, these viewings encapsulate miniperformances, where the animals do something (or don't) and we watch. Each act of viewing has a beginning, middle, and end, at which point our attention shifts to another animal or exhibit. Animal shows, which are increasingly popular not only at animal theme parks but also at zoos, take this urge to see the animals do something even further. Temporarily trading the in-fake-situ display habitat for the out-of-situ stage, zoo shows choreograph behaviors in a way the experimental fish machine in Minnesota failed to do. Such shows reveal the strong parallels between this notion of a staged enactment of species specificity (hawks soaring, seals swimming like torpedos) and the staging of cultural (ethno)specificity, as discussed in part I.

Condensation

Another aspect shared by both people tourist shows and animal viewing structures is the emphasis on condensation and selection. We don't see all animals, even from a particular geographical region. Similarly, we don't see all extant dances from a particular region. Decisions have been made about what is worth looking at, what is distinctive, even essential, and worthy of our time and effort as well as representative of the culture or species we have come to see.

The criteria vary historically and from circumstance to circumstance, but in each case there is some consideration of what makes a good show or exhibit. Drama, variety, surprise, humor—these are some of the qualities of experience that the designers of people or animal presentations may strive for. The choreography of the show, its costuming, the musical score, the verbal narration all shape our experience of the culture on view. In a museum or aquarium, for example, the correlative decisions become architectural. How is the spectator moved through the space? What sequences of viewing are facilitated or made more difficult by the spatial formation? How are the exhibits lit, where are the viewpoints for looking constructed? What relations among spectators and between spectators and animals do such pathways and viewpoints prescribe? In animal theme parks, both the theatrical structures and the spatial structures are operative. The viewing of the performance is spatially and temporally situated as part of a larger range of park activities.

Compression occurs in both the temporal and spatial dimensions. In the Kodak Hula Show, for instance, we see renditions of both ancient (*kahiko*) and modern (*'auana*) style of hulas, and at Germaine's Luau we see dance forms from Tahiti as well as forms developed in Hawai'i. At the PCC we walk from Samoa to New Zealand. In a zoo, we can metaphorically cover the earth in our afternoon's visit, skipping from the Sumatran tiger exhibit to the penguin habitat in merely minutes. Like a fantastical armchair traveler, we skim the globe while walking a quarter of a mile, peering in at reproductions of African savannas and Amazon jungle. For example, the Minnesota Zoological Park has a one-and-a-half acre building that "claims to offer a sample three-thousand-mile walk through . . . the humid forests of Southeast Asia." Five stories high, it gives us a journey through vertical as well as overland space. We can descend from the top of the forest, where free-flying birds accompany us, down past cliffs and waterfalls to sea level, where dolphins swim in a pond.⁵⁵ These presentations of animals in-fake-situ allow us to reap some of the rewards of tourism without the cost and inconvenience of travel. It is, in effect, the experience of travel that is being simulated as much as it is the recreation of natural habitats. Class privilege is leveled in this democratizing access to the exotic.

Bodies, Actions, "Identity"

The discursive limits of each of these formats—in-situ, in-fake-situ, and out-of-situ performances, like the circus—are based on the species boundary of animal/human. In each case we are predisposed to view animal movement and animal behavior, as expressive of (a) animality and (b) particular species identification. Tigers act like tigers and, conversely, actions by tigers are tigerly. The evidence of the body determines the species division, and the actions we see are perceived of as species-identified behavior—unless, of course, the actions are perceived as reproducing human behavior.

The more explicitly anthropomorphized behaviors, like seals clapping or a chimp waving and "smiling," similarly take their meaning from the humanness of the actions and the nonhumanness of the performers. In each case, the bodily difference of the animal is the foundation through which the action gains its meaning. Whatever an animal does ultimately reaffirms our concept of it as an animal, given the resilience of the human-nonhuman divide. Animals may be "cute" when they exhibit behaviors coded as human, but they never stop being perceived as animals. In fact, it is precisely the gap between humans and animals that is revealed through these mimicry constructs.

What do “extensions of natural behaviors” imply in this context? By definition, we might expect an extension of natural behavior to mean an amplification of naturalism. In practice we have seen that these extensions merely choreograph behaviors which it is possible for the animal to do. For example, to see the tigers at Marine World USA play leapfrog is not to see them being more tigerly; it is to see the abstraction of tigerliness (capacity to jump) into a framework that takes its intelligibility from human actions. Humans play leapfrog. (Presumably even frogs don't leapfrog, as the term refers more to the position of the body, hands in front, legs bent and spread in the air, that recalls a frog jumping.) Similarly, coordinated acrobatic behaviors, such as ten tigers sitting up balanced on their haunches at once, are intelligible and applaudable through the human matrix of precision behaviors, like acrobatics, and the “ta-da” picture moments of held poses at climactic moments in a traditional ballet. Animals always reveal their difference from ourselves even when they are performing their similarities. No matter how elastic the animal/human, nature/culture distinction, it is continually reasserted, as the following case studies of “in/out of/and fake” situ reveal.

In/Out-of/In-Fake-Situ

Three Case Studies

In 1992, I moved to the West Coast for a year. Searching for a little relaxation, I started visiting local tourist sites. First, just down the road from Santa Cruz, it was Año Nuevo State Park, home of breeding elephant seals. Then it was a weekend trip up north to Vallejo to Marine World Africa USA. Other excursions took me south to the Monterey Bay Aquarium, and then eventually further south, to Sea World in San Diego. Living on the coast, I suddenly felt surrounded by marine attractions, never a big part of my life during the preceding decade in North Carolina. Just like that fateful first visit to Hawai'i, when a vacation inaugurated an intense engagement with issues surrounding cultural tourism, I found myself thinking more and more about animals. I couldn't get them out of my mind. One day I was talking about the elephant seals with a colleague, who casually remarked, "You know, animals occupy a whole floor of my mind." Somehow that one sentence validated my growing need to think carefully about these fishy bodies and the huge industries they support. I realized I had crossed the species barrier in my study of tourism.

This chapter investigates three of these sites, Año Nuevo, the Monterey Bay Aquarium, and Marine World Africa, in extended case studies. Ranging along a continuum of degrees of "realism," each of these tourist sites embraces particular conceptions of animal subjectivity, notions of authenticity, and models of human-animal relationships. Each represents a different relationship to the concept of "situ."

The higher the perceived realism quotient for each site, the more difficult it is to detect the staging of the natural. Ecotourism sites, like Año Nuevo, represent the maximum end of the realism continuum, where the intervention of humans and the culturalization of nature are most

masked. Performing animal shows, like those at Marine World Africa, where the ecological context for the animals is only referred to but not represented, operate on the lower end of the realism continuum. At that end, the intervention of humans in presenting the natural is most apparent. But even at this low end of the range, complex visual and verbal rhetorical structures work to activate the concept of the natural, here encoded as authentic (wild) animals performing extensions of natural behaviors. In between on the realism continuum are sites like the Monterey Bay Aquarium. These feature elaborate constructions of representations of the real, rather like docudramas. Ultimately, in each case the repository of the natural lies in the bodily evidence of the animals on display.

IN-FAKE-SITU: THE MONTEREY BAY AQUARIUM

The entire Monterey Bay Aquarium presents itself as a transitional space, with the goal being to bring the outside in, or us into the outside, and to exchange our above-water position for the below-water world. Built in 1984 on the edge of the sea in Cannery Row, the architecture retains the blocky flavor of the old canneries but punctuates its space with huge expanses of glass, balconies, and walkways out over or overlooking the ocean bay. Telescopes on these breezeways allow a closer look at sea lions and birds perched on nearby rocks, technologically extending our eyes and bodies out over the water and seemingly extending the aquarium even further out into the bay.

Monterey Bay was made famous by John Steinbeck's novel *Cannery Row*, which portrayed the area as a tough, male site of scrabble and struggle. In its current incarnation, it is still selling fish, just as in its heyday as a canning operation, only now the fish are for looking, not for eating. Monterey now flourishes as a wealthy recreational site amid farmland tilled by migrant workers, and the lower-class maleness nostalgically associated with the site is transposed into institutional power, a cannery-style museum of the sea that retains in its architectural design the traces of its marketable past. Given the aquarium's goal of getting us to know the world below the water, the ideal would have been to sink a glass building under the bay, bringing us into that watery world but, that being impossible, the designers have settled for re-creating the bay on the edge of it, using the same salt water that flows freely by the doorstep.¹

This is ecotourism for people without scuba equipment, a keep-your-feet dry sea adventure that features a thirty-foot-high kelp forest exhibit

of tons of water, plants, and fish. The “nature immersion” zoo exhibit format described by Alexander Wilson seems a particularly apt description here, with the added twist that this aquarium of and on the bay replicates the site it sits on. It thus gains a double layer of authenticity, one from the discourse of science as real knowledge of the real, the other from its docudrama format of using itself (kelp from the bay outside the glass) to represent itself (the “same” kelp forest and fish inside the glass). Here nature is posited as both system and material. Using real material to re-create the system on the same site where it exists naturally helps hide the culturalization of nature through doubling and proximity.

Producing this “real simulacrum” requires complex ideological work, as the two poles of the nature/culture division are brought together under the oscillating sign of the real/not real. Such a feat also requires significant physical and economic resources. For example, the influx of real sea water into the exhibits requires a massive infrastructure of pumps, filters, and wave machines. More than two-thousand gallons per minute are pumped in day and night. When the aquarium is open, “sand filters improve on nature’s work, turning the bay’s cloudy water clear. Then, for a few hours each night, when the visitors are gone, unfiltered water is pumped in, feeding those creatures that filter food from it.”² In this revealing statement resides the irony of such hyperreal recreations. The natural water that feeds the animals is denaturalized to present nature more clearly (literally). However, in the process life-sustaining resources are removed, making the wild organisms domestic, totally dependent on the human apparatus for their continued survival. This management of and improvement upon nature is typical of the in-fake-situ approach.

Building a building to contain a portion of the ocean isn’t easy. A new wing, opened in 1996, contains even more water than in all the previous exhibits combined. The project required several years of construction and cost more than \$60 million. The centerpiece of this addition is a one-million-gallon exhibit showcasing the plants and animals that live in the outer bay, where the open ocean begins. Most striking among these is the *Mola mola*, a giant ocean sunfish that can grow to a diameter of ten (!) feet and weigh a ton and a half. This vision extends the reproduction of nature from the confines of the bay to the border of the ocean. If the bay is a place where humans and nature interact, the ocean is more distinctly conceived of as purely the natural realm. By extending the conceptual reach of the aquarium, the design also extends the border of the cultural further into the natural.

The massive scale of this undertaking underlines its ideological im-

portance. To give visitors the sense that they are really looking at the ocean, the fish are kept in a seamless tank, fronted by an acrylic wall forty-five-feet long and fifteen-feet high. "You'll see no surfaces at all. You'll just be looking out into the blue," remarks aquarium director Julie Packard.³ This architecture makes it possible for the viewer's peripheral vision to be completely filled by the "ocean" and its inhabitants. Pressing our noses to the glass, it is almost possible to imagine we are out there under the sea. Hushed audiences wait in the dark for the arrival of the behemoth, erupting into oohs and aahs when it swims into view.

In addition, the new wing houses the world's first live deep-sea exhibit. Deep-sea creatures have rarely survived in captivity before, but this exhibit houses dozens of creatures "never before seen live in an aquarium." The emphasis on bringing the sea inside and on the creation of one-of-a-kind displays reminds us that both authenticity and uniqueness are hallmarks of tourist destinations, and bringing them together is necessary for commercial success.

The centerpiece of the Monterey Bay Aquarium is just such a unique exhibit. Rising two stories and cutting through both floors of the building is the world's only kelp-forest exhibit. Like trees underwater, thirty-foot-high kelp plants stretch upward toward the mixture of artificial and ambient sunlight at the top. Rooted on rocks at their base, the long stalks of broad flat leaves are buoyed by tiny air sacs, like balloons that keep them floating, waving rhythmically in the fake tide that is essential for their processing of nutrients. At the top, the yellowish-green plants open out into a canopy three feet thick.

We stand in semidarkness, looking into the huge lit box. Black metal strips divide the sixty-six-foot-long expanse of glass into tall rectangular panels fifteen feet high and eight feet long. The framing effect gives the feel of looking through a big bay window into the sea. Our world becomes muted as the lighted space before us pulls our gaze deep into the blue-green water. In this vertical, cutaway ecosystem, each area has its inhabitants. Crabs and crevice kelp fishes hide in the bottom in red algae, and brick red starfish cling to the rocks. Sea cucumbers scavenge on the sea bed, and turban snails slide up and down the fronds. In the upper reaches, schools of fish swim by, again and again, each one sticking with its own kind. Sheepheads, perch, and golden senioritas cruise the tank in endless motion. Rockfish, their fins motionless, drift by in a school with the eerie stillness of a submarine. Tiny anchovies, glinting gray, circle in a school in the upper-right portion of the tank. Below them, a school of slightly larger sardines makes a bigger circle. The "sunlight" comes filtered through the water and spangles the white-

gray scales. The motion is endless, the schools ever circling in this miniocean. Their limited pathway keeps them within our vision.

Between these fish highways swim more solitary fish. There is continual movement here across every plane—close to us, in the far distance, and in the middle distance, fish are swimming. The endless, unpunctuated motion is mesmerizing. Against this horizontal movement is the vertical line of the innumerable kelp plants stretching toward the water top and swaying with the never-ending fake tide motion. Our attention constantly shifts back and forth from the large-scale sense of movement to our own sudden “discoveries” as particular inhabitants catch our eye, drifting into range or rewarding our intense scanning of the nooks and crevices.

Having seen the kelp forest from its bed, with the sardine school at eye level and the kelp stretching far over head, one can then walk up to the second floor and look down from above or stop by a window shaped like a huge porthole and have a look at the upper portion of the forest. Like a television set that is always on, the window frames a continual flow of constantly changing visuals, all of which are basically the same. Except for the twice-daily feeding times, when a scuba diver enters the tank to feed the fish, the motion rarely shifts from its hypnotic moderate speed. There is a guide nearby to answer questions (such as, “Do fish sleep?”), but the labeling is minimal. Seeing is all. As if watching a movie without a narrative, we continually shift from one scene to another, our eye drawn by motion, color, and shape into an almost abstract pleasure at this vision of the sea.

The emphasis on the visual throughout the aquarium is very important. It implies that knowledge can be obtained through vision alone. It places a premium on perceptible bodily difference and implies that in itself such difference is meaningful. We learn little about how these bodies work, how they function in their particular habitats. The visual emphasis also links the entertainment value and spectatorial habits of film-and-television watching to the museum/aquarium experience. This linkage brings together popular-culture visual pleasures with the more elite, class-identified pleasures of museum going and educational pursuits. It also increases access by implying an equality among viewers. Age, class, and literacy distinctions are not brought to the fore, although they may shape the demographics of the visitor population. The implications are that nature exists as a knowable physical realm that is not the cultural (i.e., does not require or display knowledge specific to distinctive cultural groups), and that it is visible, accessible, fun, and of importance to all.

The spectacle of scale that characterizes the kelp forest is transposed into a more delicate and even more highly aestheticized mini-exhibit nearby. I've christened it the "sardine can," after the cannery days, and it consists of an acrylic cylinder five feet across and roughly four feet high, resting on a base. Inside are a couple of hundred sardines (at least), a far cry from the record catch of 235,000 tons in 1945, but still a good number of fish.⁴ The sardines fill the tank with a stream of silver, forever swimming counterclockwise around their confining quarters. All of the fish move at the same speed in the same direction, never stopping. It's quite remarkable really, like a mobile, or a moving painting, something one would put in a showy modernist house. Peering in we can see the other viewers opposite us, their faces bulging large through the curving glass. Individual fish bodies are abstracted through motion into an almost solid sheath of glinting silver. The lowly sardine, re-canned, has become an aesthetic object, lit like a jewel.

Viewing

As I mentioned earlier, the visual parallels with museums, movie houses, and theaters are quite apparent in the aquarium. The small exhibits especially are reminiscent of museum display, where important objects are laid out in acrylic containers (look but don't touch), lit for maximum drama, or at least unobscured vision, and labeled. Flowering sea anemones, animals that look like plants, are displayed in this way. And tiny sea slugs, only an inch or two long but boasting brilliant coloring, are similarly glamorized. Some animals are thus displayed as unique objects, while others, like those in the kelp forest, are presented as constituent parts of a larger whole.

The latter provide the pleasures of large-scale spectacle, whereas the former provide the intimacy of investigation. Each invites a different and opposite sense of the nature/culture problematic. The intimate exhibits position us as separate from, but powerful over, the objectified physical oddities on the other side of the glass. In contrast, the huge exhibits dwarf us in scale and position us as separate from this natural world. Were we really to enter it, rather than pretend to enter its simulacrum, it would literally overwhelm us and we could not survive. One of the pleasures of the aquarium is this attenuation of danger and its linkage to desire through a transposition of a physical encounter into a visual one.⁵ The physical presence of the living animals rather than inanimate representations is essential to this dynamic.

The visual format of the kelp forest is somewhere between a movie and a live theatrical show. The huge size recalls a wide film screen. The

seven-inch-thick acrylic layer between us and the animals, and the tons of water that would inundate us were it not there, give a sense of separation that is more like movie viewing than live theater. The "actors" in this case may be live, but they proceed behind the seven-inch-thick acrylic panels without responding to our presence, or so it seems. Like movie audiences, we have no effect on the unfolding of the movie on the screen or the actions taking place before our eyes. The exception to this is the touch tank, where a streamlined bat ray may elude our touch if it wishes.

Viewing practice is continually negotiated in relation to the framing provided by the architectural design of the exhibits. Rectangular viewing tanks, like picture frames, or round windows, like portholes, focus our attention into the smaller tanks. In the huge exhibits, of course, the big walls of glass reject the framing idea and instead emphasize limitless expanse, filling our eyes full of the ocean, putting us, as nearly as possible without a wetsuit, in that environment. But, whether in the large or the small exhibits, it is clear who is viewing and what is being viewed. The exhibits are lit, but we are in darkened rooms. Like peeping toms staring in through a lighted window, we observe unobserved.

As viewers, we are very active. I've mentioned the oscillation between mesmerized contemplation of movement, shape, and color, which is so striking in viewing the kelp tank, and our focusing in on specific animals. Our gaze shifts from long shot to close-up continually, and from deep focus, to middle ground, to near space. We put together a series of views, of visual investigations into the continual stream that moves in front of us. This emphasis on active viewing is due in part to the lack of narrative. We are guided visually by the architecture, lighting, and interior design of each display, but how and where we look within those frameworks is quite open. This means that each viewer's experience will be considerably different from another's. It also encourages a collage style of viewing, similar to MTV editing, a type of visual pleasure based on juxtaposition and image rather than character, story, or linear development. In addition, this spectatorial freedom opens the possibility of collaborative viewing. Nudges and "Oh, look!" exclamations in the dim lights provide evidence of this type of social exchange.

The importance placed on the framing of our viewing is underlined by the emphasis on taking pictures. The back of the aquarium visitors' guide brochure lists a series of "Kodak picture taking spots" throughout the aquarium. These are marked on the map too. The brochure even provides "suggestions for great photos." At the Touch Pool, for instance, we are advised to try "a close-up with subject, tide-pool animal and aquarium guide in frame," and are reminded to "shoot with the

windows behind . . . to reduce glare." At the Great Tide Pool it seems that "several angles are possible." We should "try at least one with Monterey Bay in the background." And from the outdoor decks, there is an "excellent view . . . from the top of the pump house." Remember, "Get the ocean in your photos from the decks." Each of these instructions tells us how to enact and picture the transitional space of the aquarium. We should document our interaction with the animals in the tide pool, the bridging of the worlds of air and water, and we should also stage for our lens the aquarium as bridge or borderland, uniting the ocean and the land, the bay and the exhibits.

As with the emphasis on photography in other forms of tourism, the documenting of the difference of the "foreign" inhabitants, as well as our contact with them in their homeland (or a representation of it), is an integral part of species tourism. Free use of cameras, shops selling film, slides and postcards, and the provision of photo spots to stage the memory along with guidelines for producing good photos, all underline the importance of visual consumption, visual framing, and visual documentation of bodily difference to the tourist enterprise.

The aquarium involves several of the characteristics of animal viewing that I discussed in the preceding chapter. Geographic habitats are condensed, although less so than in many exhibits, since this aquarium concentrates on life found in the Monterey Bay region. But still we travel from the tidal channel to mudflats to marsh, dunes, and ocean. And interesting or visually striking animals tend to be featured. Only selected species are displayed in exhibits that purport to be realistic and comprehensive. Predators and prey must be kept apart for the most part, although in some cases coexistence is possible because each is so well fed. (The sharks, for instance, don't bother with the mackerel.) Even that is an odd type of faux realism—predators coexisting without predation! And in the kelp forest, several species are shown together that wouldn't normally inhabit the same territory, but would come and go as the temperatures change with the seasons. There is no "weather" in this kelp forest, though.

Still, the ecosystem approach of the exhibit, which seems to show us a whole community of plant and animal organisms in dynamic relationship, would lead us to believe that what we are seeing is real, a full slice of the ocean life just brought in a few feet from the sea and resurrected behind the glass. A sort of in-situ transplant, made all the more believable in this case because of the aquarium's particular emphasis on the Monterey Bay that we see right in front of our eyes every time we lift them from the exhibit to look out the window.

We also assume that the behavior we see is realistic. Fish do not make great trained performers! But, in fact, the tight circling of the fish schools which contributes to their visual abstraction is very different from their mile-covering behavior in the ocean. In the aquarium, it is not training that extends natural behaviors, as it does with marine mammal shows. It is, rather, the missing interactions and the re-choreographed behaviors caused by the confinement that rework the meaning of "natural" in this fishy world. Although it appears that the kelp forest is an organically developed community, it is in fact constructed of re-assembled inhabitants mimicking natural or wild behavior.

Fish are far away from our bodies on the similarity continuum and do not exhibit behavior that can be framed in terms of personality. They are not great candidates for anthropomorphism.⁶ Nevertheless, there is one area where the power of anthropomorphic framing asserts itself against all odds, and that is in the ways that reproduction is presented. Although there is not a lot of discussion or many wall labels at the aquarium, the souvenir booklet goes into some detail about the reproductive behavior of kelp-forest inhabitants. The intense cultural overlay on what is presented as perhaps the most natural of all natural behaviors indicates our heavy ideological investment in sexual difference. Many sea creatures aren't obviously sexually dimorphic, and visible differences cannot assist the casual viewer in determining the biological sex of the animals. And in some invertebrates, like the moon jellies, or sea anemones, the question for all but specialists seems moot.

In many cases, intercourse doesn't take place, rather the male swims over the eggs and sprays them with sperm to fertilize them. Interestingly, some fish exhibit a most progressive approach to biology. Consider the enviable gender fluidity of the rockfish, for example. When there are no males present, one of the females will change shape, size, color and gender to become one. The piscene transsexuals would surely have gathered more of the public's attention if they were mammals and not fishes.

Feminist scholars have pointed out the gendered structure of some scientific research and reportage. Valiant sperm are always battling their way to penetrate desirable eggs in these patriarchal narratives. While we might expect to find this anthropomorphic conceptualization at the cellular level with regards to human reproduction, it is interesting to see it applied to invertebrates and even microscopic animals. It seems that the biological process of species reproduction is very difficult to frame in any way that does not resemble the traditional heterosexual human narrative. The language of such science frames our conception of the

behavior we do see and of that we imagine as we ponder these seagoing bodies. Here are a few examples of descriptions taken from the aquarium's book on the kelp forest:

Summer and winter, night and day, there's almost always some reproductive activity underway in the kelp forest. With sexual encounters or sexual arrangements, the plants and animals lay the groundwork for future generations. Some creatures keep it simple: they reproduce by dividing in half. The beautiful diatoms of the kelp forest plankton use this asexual method. . . .

. . . Sex complicates life for many plants and animals; it adds the problem of finding a mate to the rest of life's challenges. To its credit, sex offers a reshuffling of genes. . . .

. . . Snails, clams, and vertebrates, like mammals and fishes, rely exclusively on sexual reproduction despite the problems of getting together with the opposite sex. Many organisms take the best of both worlds, fragmenting or cloning some of the time, while maintaining sex as an option when the time is right.

. . . Some kelp forest creatures are hermaphrodites, with both male and female sexual organs. A few hermaphrodites can fertilize their own eggs. Others, like the showy sea slugs—the nudibranchs—can maximize each sexual encounter. Any two nudibranchs can mate, and when they do, twice as many eggs are fertilized at one time.⁷

One of the pictures accompanying this section of the book shows a pair of white-speckled burgundy-brown sea slugs joined head to tail and mating in what looks like a whirling dervish dance. The application of this sexual discourse about finding mates, waiting till the time is right, and having profligate sex with anybody is quite remarkable for the way in which it attaches so much meaning to whether the animal produces sperm or eggs. For surely the sex act often bears little relation to the cycle of arousal that humans associate with sex. And for many animals, like the star fish, the sex act involves no physical contact at all. They merely release their eggs and sperm directly into the water.

An enormous discursive and imaginary effort is required to translate information about species reproduction into such highly sexed tales of mating. That such a discourse can successfully be attached to something as morphologically different from ourselves as a sea slug is a testament to the power that the concept of sexual dimorphism (and by extension the gender characteristics that are socially attached to such marked bodies) still exerts on scientific and popular attempts to conceptualize all forms of life. As Donna Haraway has noted, "Animal societies have been exten-

sively employed in rationalization and naturalization of the oppressive orders of domination in the human body politic . . . and in the reduction of the body politic to sexual physiology.”⁸

The culturalization of nature proceeds here in casting biological reproduction as “sexual encounters” and in continually reasserting the categories of male and female even when such divisions are basically meaningless. Such explanations of reproduction attempt to make bodies which are radically different from our own comprehensible by inscribing a sexual difference even when none is visible. This construction of the natural as sexual obversely functions as evidence of what is natural in the cultural. Ideologically, such discourses of nature naturalize the attachment of sex as a gendered activity to sex as a biological category.

The Monterey Bay Aquarium as an “in-fake-situ” site provides us with a simulacrum of the very site it sits on. It sells the opportunity to look at fish while keeping our feet dry and relies foremost on reciprocal notions of the visibility of nature and the naturalness of vision to structure its product. Its claims to being/presenting authenticity, and hence true knowledge, lay in the physical evidence of the fish on display and the invisibility of the design elements that structure their relationships to one another and to the habitats provided for them. What is invisible is most important in this museum of the visible. If the operations of these invisible structures and their implied constructs of the problematic of the natural are sometimes hard to see owing to the discourse of realism that pervades these displays, they are less visible still in the next category on the realism continuum, ecotourism.

IN-SITU: ECOTOURISM AT AÑO NUEVO

If such in-fake-situ environments as the Monterey Bay Aquarium promise a high degree of naturalism, there is still nothing so natural as nature. Ecotourism promises the ultimate immersion and the greatest guarantee of authenticity and realism. Such tourism involves going somewhere to see something natural with the intent of disturbing the destination as little as possible. It is a growing part of the tourist industry, and I had my first formal encounter with this phenomenon as I made plans to see the northern elephant seals during their breeding season at Año Nuevo State Park south of San Francisco. At Año Nuevo, I would be seeing elephant seals in their natural coastal environment, doing what they naturally do, in this case, breeding. But before I could enter into this primordial space, I had to buy a ticket.

I called the toll-free phone number for tickets and found that they were cheap, only \$2, in keeping with the state park mandate of accessibility for the whole population. What was most impressive was the amount of lead time needed to get a reservation. The breeding season runs from December through March, and tickets must be purchased a minimum of ten days in advance for one of the guided nature walks, which are the only way to see the seals. Weekend walks sell out quickly, and most were booked for the rest of the season when I called in mid-January. So I signed on for a midweek tour, little suspecting that my fellow walkers would be mostly under ten years of age—a Cub Scout group out earning their badges.

The seriousness of this entire endeavor was underlined when my tickets arrived in the mail with an information sheet warning in bold print that “the walks leave on time and you forfeit your reservation if you are late.” Like a show with no intermission, latecomers would not be seated. And, it seems, a certain amount of commitment is required, for this is not a passive watching experience. “The walk is 3 miles round trip and takes approximately 2.5 hours to complete. A portion of the walk is located on sand. Be prepared for possible wind, rain, and sun and wear layered clothing and appropriate shoes. Rain gear is advised. . . . The walks proceed as scheduled, rain or shine. There are no refunds for cancellations,” warned the information sheet.

The physical set-up of the preserve constructs the experience of viewing the seals as a journey from our world to the world of the elephant seal, literally from culture to nature, the border between the two consisting of a one-mile walk out across scrub lands to the sand dunes area where the seals congregate. At the staging area where the dunes begin, we were met by a second ranger, having been first put into our group by another ranger at the entrance to the park. Now the walking became more difficult, and the highway and even the visitors center receded from view. As we walked, the ranger talked about the natural habitat surrounding us, pointing out plants and telling us how to behave around the seals, that is, how best to be an audience in this situation. He was both our tourist guide in the foreign territory and the protector of the seals we came to see. It seems there is danger on both sides though—we were told to stay twenty feet away from the seals at all times (a state law), not only for their protection but for our own. Riled elephant seals can cover that distance in three seconds and have been known to charge intruders when they perceive danger to their pups.

I knew there would be a great many seals, and I knew we were getting closer, but still I wasn't fully prepared when we crested the top of a sand

dune and saw the first pup dozing in the sand ten feet away. Somehow the word “pup” doesn’t give the right impression. Newborn baby elephant seals weigh sixty pounds, and pups grow to three-hundred pounds after nursing for a month, at which point they are called “weaners.” The term is apt because not only have they been weaned, but they also look like wieners, like fat sausages, tapered at each end, sleeping. “Super weaners” can get even bigger. Stealing fat-rich milk from more than one female, some males can reach 500 pounds in just two months.

There was the pup, just lying there, being an elephant seal in its habitat, which was exactly what I came to see. Over the crest of the next dune, the landscape opened out to a wide sandy area, dotted with groups of elephant seals and scattered individuals. Everywhere I turned there were elephant seals, lying around motionless, like a living museum display. The count that day had been 490 females, 355 males, 350 pups, and 1,002 weaners. In these groups were some truly huge animals, the males, especially the so-called alpha bulls, whose size gave them top ranking in the community of seals. Such animals can reach fifteen feet in length and weigh three tons.⁹ Giant masses of gray-brown flesh, these males occasionally woke, snorted, and rearranged their bulk, their big fleshy snouts wobbling at one end of their ill-defined bodies.

In this type of ecotourism, the animals are basically being spied on. We look at them, but they do not look at us, ignorant of or ignoring our presence (or so it seems). Basically, the visual structure is a theatrical one, with the animals performing themselves and the humans providing the paying audience. Each group stays in its assigned spot for the duration of the viewing, which has a defined beginning (long entrance prologue), middle (being in the middle of the animals’ space), and end (the long walk out of the reserve, passing the next group coming in for the next “showing”).

But even though all the participants in this visual equation are live, and there is no screen or glass panel separating them from us, we also have the voyeuristic sense of watching a movie. The animals do not interact with us and they rarely move, so the nearly static scene unfolds on the landscape like an early Warhol film, like *Sleep*, that will run its course with or without us. But this is a movie that might change into a riot at any moment. There is always the possibility (and danger) that this stasis will break and suddenly we will be confronted not with 1,000 sleeping sausages, but with three tons of raging flesh in motion, charging toward us. This ever-present but latent potential for interaction, for movement, for a return of the gaze, is one of the ingredients in this ex-

perience of realism and is one of the defining characteristics of live theater of any kind. Ultimately, the tension between stasis and latent mobility, between the bodies as part of the inanimate landscape and as active agents in it, results in a surreal sense of the natural rather than a realistic one.

Part of this surrealism stems from the fiction of our nonintrusive intrusion. By definition, ecotourism precludes interaction, substituting for it the incompatible value of seeing the animals as if they were undisturbed. However, visitor figures reveal the fiction of this supposed human invisibility. At peak times during the breeding season up to 500 people a day pass through this reserve, making the ratio of animals to humans roughly four to one.

For instance, ours wasn't the only group out there gawking that afternoon. Right beside us was a Japanese film crew making a documentary on the elephant seals. They'd paid the state of California for forty days of shooting time, our ranger told us. In fact, they took pictures not only of the seals but also of us looking at (and taking pictures of) the seals. I took pictures of them taking pictures of us taking pictures of the seals, just for documentary purposes. A basic question becomes, Why were we all there and why were we taking pictures? What was the experience we had paid for and were documenting for future reference?

A key ingredient in this experience is the closeness to the animals, to wild animals, who are supposedly unaffected by our presence. The behavior we see is presented as authentic, since such wild nature is by definition natural, that is, not shaped by humans. These are not trained behaviors, or caged behaviors, or even behaviors in re-created habitats in which the animals are obliged to be. Unlike zoos, where the "wild" animals stand synecdochically for nature, here the equation is authentic bodies in authentic setting yields authentic behavior equals real nature.

This ecotrip has something of the magical journey about it, because this is precisely their world we are entering, not their world that we are re-creating for them to be in, or our world that they are transported into. This is a journey which takes us to see something both rare in occurrence and spectacular in scale. After all, this is not just one, happenstance run-in with a lone deer or elk in some less-populated area but rather an encounter in a habitat periodically and annually claimed by the thousands of seals that return here as part of their yearly migration pattern. So the number of animals has its importance not just in determining the scale of the spectacle but also in creating and defining the land as seal land, into which we enter in tightly controlled access. Like a cordon sanitaire, literal pathways into this foreign and exotic "culture"

are created daily by the rangers moving guideposts among the animal groupings. Vision can cross this line, but not bodies.

Crossing from our world into theirs provides a fantasy of returning to our origins, of becoming part of the natural world ourselves, at least for the duration of the visit. The natural is privileged as a "truer" real, one to which we have lost access in daily life yet can regain in these special pilgrimages to sacred sites. The ritualized procedures for access and behavior at the site all emphasize this pilgrimage aspect. Religiousness comes through also in the hushed voices and sense of awe evoked by the scale of the spectacle. Nature here means not only the natural world but the transcendent forces which supposedly animate it and control fundamental processes like reproduction, growth, death, and prescribed sex roles, all of which feature prominently in the Año Nuevo educational rhetoric. The unstated belief is that these forces are acted out unimpeded in the preserve, thus creating it as a utopian site of purity, one which must be maintained because it represents something of inherent value.

Central to this construct is the assumed need to control human access while providing immersion in the space. The boundaries between the natural and the cultural must be rigidly maintained in order for ecotourism to work, yet simultaneously this boundary must be permeable; we must be able to cross it without disturbing it. The Monterey Bay Aquarium gives a simulacrum of this type of immersion by building its kelp-forest tank two stories tall, so that it's as if we were in the water with the fish, which are at our eye level, and above and below as well. At Marine World Africa, the animals are trained to come into our environment. Hawks soar over our heads, killer whales rise from the water to kiss us, and llamas stroll about by the concession stand to be petted and introduced by name by their trainers. But at Año Nuevo there is no "as if," and there is no training. What we are consuming is the minimal constructedness of the experience (which is not to say the meaning of the experience isn't heavily determined by various discourses). The structuring absence is not, as in Monterey, the unmarked choreography of animal life and the visual structures of the design but, rather, the fiction of our own bodily presence as absence, our unobtrusive intrusion.

This is related to other kinds of tourism, of course, that is, to the trips where we go to look at people and their products rather than at animals. In these cases, too, there is an ethos of not disturbing the culture that we went there to see (a Hilton or two is OK, but don't build it so it looks just like home!). There too we have the fantasy of seeing, even participating (buying a souvenir in the local market, for example), without fundamentally changing that which we came to see.

Ultimately, it is the animals that hold the final card. If they are too annoyed with the tourism, they can (a) charge the visitors (physically, not monetarily) and cause mayhem or (b) leave this site and seek out another. At least in the short run, their agency gives them the upper hand in setting some of the limits of contract between seer and seen. But in the longer run their existence depends on our interest in preserving such habitats. Their continued use of this land depends on our tourism just as surely as the economies of some small nations depend heavily on tourist dollars. The natural, defined as that which is outside human intervention, or, as Raymond Williams, said "that which is left over," is fundamentally dependent upon humans for its continued existence.

It is not inconsequential that the tourism that helps support the preserve is heightened during the breeding season. Watching animals breed, at least those that do so by means of some type of intercourse, provides one of the few socially sanctioned (under the rubric of education) occasions for viewing procreative acts. Like the privileged views of human and interspecies violence sanctioned by the state during the Roman Empire, the preserve similarly sanctions group viewing of that which is usually outside of social acceptability. Were these humans, of course, the site would be closed down immediately. But sex among animals is nature at its most natural.

The intercourse of these large blubbery mammals, with the huge, awkward male lumbering onto the female, isn't very sexy, but it is sex. There is a mystery to the sexual organs of these animals. These large sausage-shaped masses seem nearly undifferentiated, and with the eyes closed, as they mostly are, since the majority at any time is sleeping, facial expression is nil. Huge, dangling proboscises of drooping flesh characterize the male faces. Necks are nonexistent, flippers nearly useless on land, as these animals lurch forward like huge, ungainly inchworms.

Despite our inability to locate primary and secondary sexual characteristics (relative male and female size is the best clue for the casual viewer), the sex act itself, consisting of penetration of the female by the male from behind, is a familiar category of activity. Penetration, invisible though it may be, and with a male organ we cannot see or even perhaps visualize, still provides a category of anthropomorphic possibility for us to frame the activity within. This unknowable similarity is perhaps one of the attractions of the site. They do it and we do it, in ways that are at the least analogous, and that reinstate a sex differentiation as formative of elephant seal "culture." No matter how different they may be, the sexual differentiation gives us something to hold on to in calculating similarity to and difference from ourselves. It reconfirms our

voyeuristic role, too, putting the element of sex into the pleasure of viewing bodily difference.¹⁰

On our group outing we did glimpse mating on the seaside area below us. As the ranger explained it to the Cub Scout who asked what was going on, the male bites the female on the neck to hold her down while they mate. "Can't she leave?" asked the boy. "He's too heavy for her to get away." As the talk develops, the ranger explains that the females are stuck in whatever "harem" they join. The ruling male protects them from "molestation" by other bulls. "Sort of like keeping one abusive husband rather than many abusive suitors," remarked one of the adults in our group. The females, it seems, won't leave their pups in the group and strike out alone. The subtext of wife abuse structures the exchange.

Sexual habits, I suspect, would have been discussed more frankly had our group not been dominated by young children. The sociobiology subtext is developed extensively in the writings on these animals, particularly those of leading authority Burney Le Boeuf, a University of California at Santa Cruz researcher, who has studied the seals for the last twenty-five years. His writings characterize the bulls as sexual dominators, while a more feminist response appearing in a companion book by Sheri Howe characterizes the sexual activity as rape.¹¹ The intensity of these debates and the inquisitiveness of the tourists reveal the truth value and utopianism still attached to the natural, and its presumed basis for the cultural.

Our stake in scrutinizing animal reproduction, called sex, is not so much to find out how they do it, but why we do it. It reveals also the bodily foundationalism underlying the category of both the natural and the cultural. By positing the natural and the cultural as distinctive spheres, sometimes opposite yet with the natural as originary, and taking sexual dimorphism as a founding principle, the naturalization of the cultural proceeds. The category of the natural functions as a rudder, bringing us back to biology as if it were a neutral, natural, originary category.

If the emphasis in the ecotourism model is equally on the animals, the site, and the placement of people in the site, something quite different happens in the staging of the natural at out-of-situ sites like Marine World Africa USA. Here the focus is very much on trainer-public-animal interaction as opposed to the denial of human presence at Año Nuevo. Activity rather than stasis characterizes the animal presentations, and little effort at all is expended in creating the illusion of habitat realism. This site represents the low end of the realism scale. The removal of real or not-so-real context means that our perception is focused even more firmly on the animal bodies and actions.

OUT-OF-SITU: MARINE WORLD AFRICA USA

Marine World Africa USA, as the polyglot name implies, combines aspects of a number of genres of public activity. Part zoo, part theme park, part circus, even part carnival, it blends these formats quite effortlessly throughout its 160 acre grounds in Vallejo, California. Created through a merger of Marine World (which opened in 1968 in Redwood City, California), and Africa USA, an exotic-animal training facility in southern California, it is now a nonprofit foundation for research and education, "devoted to furthering people's understanding, appreciation, and concern for the world's wildlife."¹² It is the first nonprofit foundation of its kind, sponsors research projects at the park and abroad, and does extensive educational outreach in the northern California area, as well as providing animals for media events.¹³ (Some of the elephants, for instance, were featured in Eddie Murphy's movie *Coming to America*.) The physical layout of the park is like that of a theme park, with many separate areas, theaters, activities, and showcases. There is almost no effort to provide realistic surroundings for the animals. We see them in shows or strolling around the landscaped grounds, but extensive energy and money have not been spent on habitat re-creation. As one of the animal trainers noted, "Realism is for people; [it isn't necessary for] the animals."¹⁴

As the visitor's guide states, the goal of the park is to "provide education through entertainment," to bring out "a serious message of conservation," and to "enable people to come as close as possible to exotic wildlife," so that visitors will "leave with a better appreciation of the other species that inhabit our earth and an understanding of what you can do to save them."¹⁵ The idea is that, if we get to know and like these animals, we will care enough about them to work to preserve them and their environments. In fact, this "knowing" is framed less in terms of educational facts about the animals, despite the heavy emphasis on a discourse of education, and more in terms of personality and individualism. Neither of these latter aspects features prominently in the construction of experiences at Año Nuevo or the Monterey Bay Aquarium.

What are these animals, and how are they showcased or portrayed so that we can get to know them? The overriding impression one gets from spending time at the park and from reading the program booklet (which features brief bits of information about the separate shows, individual animals, individual trainers, and more scientific information about life span, eating habits, and training procedures) is that most of these ani-

mals are beautiful, charming, intelligent, inquisitive, often playful, and dying to meet us. They come across as just the sort of "people" we would like to have as friends: trustworthy, fun, clever, responsive, and good looking.

The most popular exhibits and shows feature lions and tigers, elephants, dolphins and whales, sea lions and harbor seals, chimpanzees and orangutans, and birds. There are also butterflies, reptiles, fish, rhinoceroses, and flamingos, but these are not the big draws. Those in the first list are featured daily in a number of "shows" in specific "theaters." An exception is the elephants, which have their own "encounter" area, where they perform a variety of behaviors, including a logging demonstration and "traditional performance" (i.e., circus-type activities), give rides to adults (myself included) and children, and engage kids in a tug-of-war competition.

In addition to the animal shows, there are people shows, or rather, people-only shows, because there are human performers in all of the animals shows, too. The people shows consist of performances by the Marine World International Ski Team, who mogul and slalom their way across the parkside lake, competing with each other in "gravity-defying jumps, acrobatic flips, graceful and daring doubles routines" (as the park booklet states), and the "Incredible Acrobats of China," from Shanghai (subject of the only full-page photo in the entire booklet), who "perform incredible feats of balance, precision and strength, continuing traditions that date back over 2,000 years." Since my visit was during the off-season, neither of these people shows was on the schedule, but it is interesting to note two things. The emphasis on marine mammals in the park is carried over into the waterski team demonstration. And the emphasis on the exotic, the ancient or timeless, and on feats of physical skill, strength, coordination, cooperation, and precision, which is conveyed by the blurb for the Chinese acrobats, could easily describe any of the big animal performances as well. For instance, the killer whales also perform gravity-defying jumps, acrobatic flips, and graceful and daring doubles routines at high speeds, and the sea lions also excel in feats of balance, precision, and strength. Both animals and humans can learn and perfect similar spectacular feats (presenting a sort of artistic product or cultural artifact), owing to their "natural" physical abilities and intelligence.

Constructing the Animal-Human Relationship

The animal-human relationship is emphasized throughout the park and its literature. There are two axes to this relationship. The first is that

of the trainers and their animals. The second and parallel one is of the visitors and the animals. In both cases, the subjectivity of the animals is emphasized and framed in terms similar to and usually equal to that of humans. "Trust, respect, and affection" are the key to training animals, we are told in the visitor's guide, in what sounds like a marriage counselor's holy trinity. And the romantic and familial subtext is not far off. Trainers often hand-raise the performing animals, many of whom are not wild at all, but born and bred in Vallejo, California. The park features a nursery where we can see bottle-feeding in progress. And the trainers all develop one-to-one bonds with their performers, often living with them for years at a time, as surrogate parent and friend.

When their animals are not performing, many of the trainers walk around the park with their charges, answering questions from visitors and allowing the visitors to interact with the animals, and sometimes even to touch them. The trainers all work with specific animals which they train, display, and physically care for. Throughout the program book are photos that demonstrate these friend/family relationships. The blurb on the chimpanzee, for instance, includes a family photo that could stand on any coffee table. Smiling mom and dad sit in a field of wild flowers, arms around their hirsute children. Only in this case the children are all chimpanzees, and "their two trainers have become part of the family and are recognized as its dominant members."

And in the tiger habitat area, called Tiger Island, two male trainers "swim, wrestle, and relax" with their adult Bengal tigers, which resemble huge, rambunctious house cats. The bonds between trainer and tiger are so strong that "when a female tiger on Tiger Island gives birth, the trainers are right there, assisting with the birth and helping her nurse her cubs." This is a permeable boundary zone between animal and human life that temporarily blurs the species barrier. The trainers inhabit this zone, and so can we, in fantasy, as their surrogates. This is very different from the aquarium site, which offered the "as if" experience (as if we were underwater in the kelp forest), or the Año Nuevo example, where we move into the natural world but mustn't interact with the inhabitants or risk destroying the naturalism we came to see.

In the middle of the booklet is a section called "familiar faces," which features photos and biographical sketches of three of the most important trainers. Like any other theater playbill, these sketches are complete with head shots, a listing of experience and how they got started. Mark Jardarian, for instance, "answered an advertisement for a parking lot attendant at Marine World" eighteen years before and rose through the ranks to become manager of the Wildlife Theater. Ron Whitfield,

lion-and-tiger trainer and owner and perhaps the most notable human star, is featured in a portrait shot with his favorite lion, Zamba, which has been with him for twenty years. Ron and Zamba lie together in a field of gold-tipped hay, both their manes of hair burnished by the sun, both looking out at the camera, heads tilted to one side. They are a couple, out for a day in the country, completely at ease with each other, lounging with elegance in a beautiful natural setting. Debbie Marrin-Cooney, trainer of killer whales and dolphins, is pictured in the water nose-to-nose (so to speak) with one of her dolphins, sun dappling hair and water and glinting on her teeth and his as the dolphin "grins" and she tickles his chin.

The emphasis on animal subjectivity plays itself out through a highlighting of animal intelligence and of individualization. In every big show, not only are the trainers named as stars, but so are the animals. Every animal. And an emphasis is placed on the individual animal's likes, dislikes, and particular "personality." At the elephant-ride concession, for example, everyone placed atop a pachyderm is told the name of her or his particular elephant, each of which is featured with a "profile" and individual picture in the guidebook. For example, Ginny, the oldest elephant at Marine World at fifty-two years, is an 8,500 pound Asian female elephant (most names are gender coded to the sex of the animal) and likes to peel her oranges and shell her peanuts before eating them because she is so "fastidious."

Featured in the program booklet, and given a lot of time on the official souvenir video, is "Tasha, the snow leopard," and her trainer, Karen Povey. Tasha serves as a heightened locus for the human-animal bond, because she is blind. "Karen is a 'seeing-eye human' for Tasha and says she gets great satisfaction from providing an excellent quality of life for the cat." The level of dependence of these animals, some of which, like Tasha, work for years with only one trainer, is highlighted in this case. But lest we feel sorry for the snow lion, the booklet assures us that "Tasha, however, does not realize she is different." This disabled snow leopard is able to lead a full and satisfying life thanks to Marine World Africa.¹⁶

The amount of physical contact between the trainers and their animals is enormous, and the intimacy of it is symbolized by the shots in the program booklet (roughly 90 percent) that feature embraces, kisses, or at least touching between animal and trainer, or animal and human audience member. It is encapsulated in the walkarounds, where visitors are invited to get close to the animals led by their trainers, and it appears throughout the shows, where, through the vicarious identification with

the trainers, the visitors can be within touching distance of the animals. In the case of the whales, this contact space extends through the first six rows of the amphitheater, the "wet zone," where viewers will be sprayed with water as the huge animals purposefully belly flop for spectacular splash effects.

This emphasis on cross-species bonding invokes many fantasies and works on a number of ideological levels at once. These bonds create an Edenic vision, as does the whole park, of "Man" in harmony with "Nature." And it goes beyond the goal of harmony to a suspension of the boundaries that separate species one from another and to a merging of individual animals and individual men and women into pairings of long-lasting, mutually loving, and respecting relationships. An idealized, nonconflictual relationship is shown, one which few human pairings can approach. The natural realm here acts as a blueprint for the social.

The natural may open out also to a nostalgic prototype of Eden, reminiscent of that promised in Hawaiian tourist advertisements, evoking a rural, agrarian past when life was supposedly lived with and on the land, not in contradistinction to it. The green rolling hills of the theme-park setting activate this sense. The park is set off from the city of Vallejo yet abuts suburban housing, which peeps in over the hills. Simple, enduring, meaningful social relationships are associated with the park setting in contrast to the built environment of cities or the anonymous tract housing of suburban sprawl. Purity, harmony, simplicity, trust, and morality are the underlying themes for social harmony built on a familial model and encapsulated in the animal-human dyad.

The animals, it appears, "love" just as we do, developing their primary bonds not with one another but with their trainers, on whom they are dependent for food, exercise, freedom or confinement, and physical care. The dominance in this bonding is submerged and also counterbalanced by the wildness of the animal, or ability to reject the intimacy, even to react by inflicting physical injury should it so choose, given the physical supremacy of each of the main animals, such as lions, tigers, elephants, whales, dolphins, and orangutans. The animal appears to choose to be with the trainer in so loving and trusting a way. Force, domination, restraint, and confinement, all necessary to the production of a site like Marine World Africa USA, are invisible. Resistance is hidden by training. The implication is that all animals and all humans could reflect this intimacy and trust if only they could get to know each other as well.¹⁷

Along with this sense of pleasurable innocence, of Eden before the Fall, there is a submerged sexual subtext. Expressions of human-animal

bonding are represented through interspecies kissing, embracing, and lolling about together. The trainers and animals act out human-to-human behaviors, framed by human body language (the whale kiss, the orangutan embrace, tickling the dolphin under the chin) that indicates affection, and if done by humans, would often express sexuality as well, especially mouth-to-mouth kissing.

This submerged subtext of species miscegenation banishes bodily differences through analogous actions and postures for the humans and animals. And it temporarily moves the flexible boundary of the nature/culture divide to place humans and animals on the same side of the line. Interestingly, although wild animals like lions and elephants usually stand in for the natural in zoo-style settings, in this case the animals, shown in stadiums or walking along the paths with their keepers, seem to be so closely paired with their humans (and by extension with us), that they become decontextualized from the natural. Not free, not fully domesticated, they exist with us in a borderland of postsuburban rural bliss. The older cultural form of rural life becomes nostalgically reconfigured into uncorrupted pastoralism. In the visitors' guide, photographs illustrate and document this transcendentalism. For example, one pictures a Michelangelo-like touch between the furry fingers of a chimpanzee and a white male hand (god?), and another features a lip-to-lip kiss of orangutan and male trainer, locked in an embrace, back-lit by golden sunlight that gives them both angelic halos.

Alexander Wilson has commented on the possibilities anthropomorphism present for eroding human/animal speciesism. Anthropomorphism, "as a cultural strategy for addressing relations between humans and the natural world," can, he notes, allow "animals to be addressed as *social* beings, and nature as a *social* realm. This suggests a breach in the species-barrier between human and animal. [Many] conservation and preservation documentaries insist on that barrier and reject the possibility of interspecies intimacy. Anthropomorphism is . . . an historical and strategic intervention, a step on the way to understanding that the wall between humans and the natural world is not absolute. It is permeable, movable, shifting, able occasionally to be leaped over—as it always has been by hags and shamans."¹⁸ Wilson is right as far as he goes, but this shifting of boundaries is not innocent.

Each shift relates to specific conceptions of the natural and the cultural and the dialectical relationship between them. And each shift invokes a different sense of the possible, the moral, the desirable, and the true. In the case of Marine World Africa USA this shift activates a whole complex of social values based on concepts of family values and tran-

scendental pastoralism. This ideology is encoded through the medium of animals, the display of their bodies, and the imaginary of intimacy and desire that subtends the shows. Whereas nostalgia for an exotic primitive frames the selling of Hawai'i, Marine World's nostalgia is in some ways based on less difference, not more. Intense ideological work throughout the park makes the animals more like us despite their obvious dramatic physical differences. In Hawaiian tourism, the reverse is true. Bodily difference must be emphasized, and cultural difference must be distinctively portrayed not downplayed.

Souvenirs

The staging of nature that motivates the many shows at Marine World has a miniversion in the park's many opportunities to create a piece of memorabilia of your trip. One booth offers the opportunity to picture yourself perched atop a fifteen-foot-long leaping whale (made out of plaster) against a background of a huge wave. If this photo souvenir isn't enough, you can have it embossed on something useful, like a coffee mug or a tee-shirt. Or you could have yourself pictured kissing the killer whale, or next to an elephant, through the magic of photocopying.

These souvenir creations offer the chance to act out, or to "fake" a realization of, the fantasy of coming close to the animals. That is the guiding principle of Marine World's whole format, from the "have lunch with the animals," when the trainers stroll by the snack bar with their pettable animals, to the elephant rides, to the flyover by the birds in the show, to the "wet zone" and kisses during the killer whale show. I was surprised that they didn't have photographers ready to take your portrait with your family atop the elephant during the elephant rides.

Unlike the opportunity to dress up in hula clothes for a souvenir photograph offered at the Kodak Hula Show or at the Polynesian Cultural Center, no such chance is presented to "become" temporarily, at the bodily level, that which you came to see. At Marine World, the closest approximation would be having one's picture taken with a (fake) animal, just as tourists clamored for the chance to pose next to the dancers from the Kodak Hula Show, to document their contact with these representatives of another culture. And the "kissing the killer" photo is another way of documenting that contact even if, in this case, I outsized the whale in the photograph. I suppose it would have been too tacky to have a booth where people could dress up like the animals and have their picture taken in midleap or midroar. Children might be able to get away with that without appearing to make fun of the animals, which would be unforgivable given the conservation orientation of Marine

World.¹⁹ Also, our goal here is not to become temporarily nativized (or “animalized”), which is one of the pleasure subtexts of a romantic vacation in Honolulu. Rather, it is to establish physical and emotional contact with the animals. The animal-human boundary must be maintained at the physical level in order for the prescribed cross-species social and psychological intimacy to be meaningful. These souvenirs offer the opportunity simultaneously to stage and document this desire for boundary permeability and its imaginary fulfillment.

*Extending the Natural: Trained Behaviors
as Extensions of Natural Abilities*

The success of a park such as Marine World rests on a tension between this humanizing and the maintenance of the authenticity of the natural, which must be carefully managed. The discourse on training provides an example of this management. “All training, whether of land animals or marine mammals, begins with understanding the animal’s natural instincts, behavior, and intelligence,” notes the guidebook. “Working with animals requires an unfailing respect for the animal and its physical abilities and instincts,” and it “requires hours of dedication and patience. . . . Our trainers must give endless praise and reassurance in the form of pats on the head, belly rubs, tongue tickles (for whales and elephants), and ear scratches. It’s all in a day’s work for these dedicated professionals.”

The animals, then, are really like completely reasonable human beings, having moods, expressing feelings, and being capable of being understood if only we work hard enough at breaking a code based on individual personality, instincts, and behavioral traits. Here it seems that it is really only the instincts that separate them from humans, although granted some species may be more intelligent (i.e., more like us) than others. What these instincts might be is never specified, but it seems an essential part of the equation which reads: natural instincts and behaviors—plus shaping by human contact and training based on understanding of instincts and behaviors—equals successful performances. This discourse presents humanized animals that remain different from us but comprehensible.

Training, a culturalization of the natural, is presented as a beneficial improvement on nature. The program stresses that “the benefits of training go far beyond entertaining and educating guests. Trained animals enjoy a greater range of physical and mental activities than their untrained counterparts.” For instance, in the case of elephants, “Training also incorporates the animal’s natural desire to form strong relation-

ships and belong to a structured group, and taps into their need for intellectual challenges and ability to learn accepted ways of behavior." The proof, it seems, is in the pudding. Elephants at Marine World can live almost twice as long as nonworking (i.e., zoo or wild?) elephants.

In the section on training in the program booklet, a distinction is drawn between trained animals and "tame" ones. Wild animals are never completely tamed, it seems, because they "will always have . . . natural instincts." But these natural instincts do not make for unpredictable, savage behavior. Rather, there "is a reason, a motivation, for every behavioral trait an animal displays, whether it is affection, fear or aggression. . . . The ability to 'read' or understand the animal's thoughts or moods is only accomplished with a great deal of patience, love, and dedication. All training, whether of land animals or marine mammals, begins with understanding the animal's natural instincts, behavior, and intelligence."

A discourse of the natural is maintained through this distinction between trained and tamed animals. But the tripartite linking of "instincts, behavior, and intelligence" implies a homology among the three and softens that distinction. Instincts (nature as hardwired) almost become a kind of intelligence, the key to which the trainers must find. Thus aspects of human subjectivity such as emotional attachment, critical intelligence, and the act of choice that such implies, as opposed to behavioristic determinism, combine to present animals as radically different in body but similar in a supposed psychological interiority. Each species is framed differently in terms of more or less similarity to humans, as the format of the different shows indicates.

I will consider four different shows at Marine World Africa USA. The bird show is the most heavily narrativized, the lion and tiger show the least, and the "Magic of Animals" and whale and dolphin shows somewhere in between. How is the dialectic between natural and trained (or unnatural? or man-made?) played out in these main shows? And how is that tension related to the bodies of the animals and how they are displayed?

For the Birds

The bird show takes place in an amphitheater that holds approximately three hundred on bleachers. At the entrance up top is a sign for the Bates Motel, and on the stage is a worn wood, ramshackle building that is overcast with the spooky aura of Hitchcock's *Psycho*, with its evocations of stuffed birds and maniacal humans. The show itself, however, is not at all macabre. There are two human female characters in this

show and several birds. The plot is thin and centers on a search for "Max," the missing turnbill, who does whatever he wants, it seems. Ins and outs, appearances and disappearances, give this piece a slightly comic, farcical touch, but these are not professional actors, rather actor-trainers, so the drama is not exactly first-rate. The birds, however, are wonderful, entering on cue from inside the motel set, or flying in from a nearby field when called. Bits of information about the birds' dining habits and abilities are recounted or displayed. At one point, for example, a scarlet macaw puts together a three-piece jigsaw puzzle while the theme music from the game show *Jeopardy* plays, further anthropomorphizing the animal into a feathered contestant. The *Psycho* and *Jeopardy* citations provide additional human framing for the birds, which are less like us physically than mammals and therefore somewhat harder to personalize.

The audience is physically involved in two ways. At one point, one of the actor/trainers asks for a volunteer, who holds out a dollar bill in her hand, and a bird flies out to her, picks it out of her hand without landing, and swoops back onto the stage, a feathered pickpocket.²⁰ This closeness of contact is later extended to the whole audience. At the end of the show, a hawk soars in close over our heads from a birdhouse on the neighboring hillside, circles the amphitheater and lands on the trainer's arm on stage. The trainers urge us to "look to ourselves" for a solution to the disappearing rain forests, and a strikingly colored parrot swoops over the audience to end the show. "A beautiful bird in flight is not easily forgotten," runs one of the closing lines. And it is true. I gasped when that bird soared right over me.

The thing about birds is that they can fly. This is one of their defining characteristics, one of their main differences from us, and the source of a great deal of human fantasy, as well as an inspiration for aviation. This is a fundamental bodily difference between them and ourselves, and in this show it is the culminating moment of the performance, the punctuation mark to a plea to save endangered species and their habitats. What is even more remarkable is that these birds, the flight of which represents freedom, escape, and existence in another stratum of the world from our own, "choose" to fly on cue, to soar out and not to leave, to return to their keepers. The contrast between freedom and docility, instinct and training, is contained in and enacted through these dramatic flyovers that are the highlight of the bird shows.

But why does the presentation of the birds require a narrative excuse, whereas the shows for other animals, like the tigers, do not?²¹ Does it have to do with their size, our perception of their intelligence, the type of press they receive, perceptions of aloofness, of nonaffection (com-

pared with domestic catlike tigers, for instance) or is it that they are physically more different from ourselves? Their wings are somewhat analogous to arms perhaps, but the eyes are often small and beady (associated with rodent eyes?), and for all the softness of their feathers and the attraction that brilliant colors bring, they cannot be easily nuzzled or petted. The beaks are problematic too—no lips—even if they can mimic human vocalizations better than other animals, and even if they have an elaborate repertoire of songs and calls with which to communicate with one another. In the popular imagination, birds do not make as intimate pets as mammals. They are heavily narrativized, made in some sense into characters in the play, in order to personalize them more fully, making the mission of Marine World, the one-to-one contact of visitors and animals, more possible.

Lions and Tigers

At the other end of the spectrum of narrativity is the lion and tiger show, held in the Jungle Theater, a three-quarter thrust stage with amphitheater-style seating around a central performance area enclosed in wire mesh. It's about forty feet wide and decorated with a backdrop mural of grazing zebras in an African savanna. The rim of the stage area is punctuated with crests painted on the concrete, featuring chimpanzees. In the back, barely visible, is a cage area with iron bars. This is noticeable only as the animals enter and exit. The wire mesh which surrounds the playing areas is strong enough to make us feel safe in the audience (in the first row I was only ten feet away from the animals), but not so massive as to be intrusive. We are aware of the separation between the animals and ourselves, but importantly they do not seem caged.

The show begins with lion owner and trainer Ron Whitfield entering the arena. He is handsome, fit, energetic, and dressed in khaki pants, a polo shirt, and sneakers. He hardly fits the slick-haired lion-tamer stereotype. He looks more as if he stepped out of a Ralph Lauren advertisement. Throughout the show he will speak, move the big cats, adjust the various apparatuses, pushing stands together or apart for different parts of the show. Sitting close, I can see how hard he is working. He makes it look easy, and the show flows well, almost covering the potential danger that exists in being the lone human in a closed space with twelve tigers and a lion. There is no whip, no chair, no gun, just a short stick that he uses as a prod, a guide, to direct the animals' movement.

The force of domination is nearly invisible here, with almost all of its trappings removed. So is the power of reward. Ron tosses the cats tidbits of steak after each action, but this motion is so swift and neat it is unnoticeable. The meat comes from a discrete pouch on his belt and is

quickly restocked by his assistant whenever needed. We hardly notice the ingestion of the reward either, because our attention is always drawn to another animal just starting a new trick. Of course the bars do remain, reminder of latent danger to ourselves, and occasionally a cat will passively resist a command. But these moments are usually passed off with humor, not increased assertiveness on Ron's part.

Whereas in the circus the danger element would be foregrounded, here it is very understated. In keeping with the Marine World Africa philosophy, these animals are presented as partners in the show, each with its own name and distinctive personality. Ron explains that what we will see are "extensions" of "natural behaviors," not "tricks," a term he says implies slight of hand, hence deceit. What we will be seeing is, by implication, truthful, not deceitful or unethical.

In every case, in fact, throughout the park, the performances are based on extensions of natural behaviors. What does this phrase really mean? It is key to the park's philosophy, to the underlying ideology of the presentation of animals to humans, and frames our perceptions of what we see in each of the shows. "Natural behaviors" can mean either behaviors that occur naturally (i.e., without training) or behaviors that occur "in nature." There is a slightly different implication in each reading of the phrase. Behaviors that occur in nature would include courting and breeding behaviors, food gathering, fighting, and social interactions. Some of these behaviors are perhaps desirable in the park (breeding, for example, when controlled), and others, like fighting, would be undesirable, considering the vast expenditures invested in these animals. Given that the animals are not in "the wild" and furthermore that most of them have never been, having been born and hand raised at the park, natural behavior can also refer to those actions that are instinctual, or hardwired into the central nervous system of the animal. These behaviors could include ways of using the body, for example, jumping, standing, lying down, and reactions to other species which may be enemies.

By reassuring the audience that what they are seeing are all extensions of natural behaviors, the trainers imply that what we are seeing is still natural, perhaps even better than natural, as in heightened abilities. We can train them to do things they are capable of naturally, but in ways that are more spectacular or more controlled, or more designed, or on cue. In this case, humans improve on nature, molding it, shaping it into a regulated, improved, and enhanced version of itself.²²

There is in this tiger show something of the Fordist body, a body whose movement is regulated, standardized, performed in coordina-

tion with others, under direction from a management source to produce a product which can be sold, in this case "tiger performance." For example, at one point in the show, three tigers lie down and roll over in perfect unison, just like a small corps de ballet. At another point, two tigers alternate jumping over each other repeatedly in a remarkably fluid leap frog. But these are happy workers, well fed, and stimulated by the work they do, or so the story goes. The pleasurable connotations of "stimulation" code the animals' work as fun. In this regularization, in this discipline, lies the transformation between animals and humanness, and it is coded in the language of desire. The animals *want* to do these actions, we are told. Again the attributed subjectivity and the implied choice for each individual animal mask the human-animal power differential that structures the show, and their very existence in the park. Such a masking presents labor as fun and entertaining, for them and for us, and rides on a notion of self-fulfillment and unalienated labor that coincides with the transcendental pastoralism of the park.

Once all of the dozen tigers have entered and are on their pedestals, the first "behavior" consists of a salute to the audience. The tigers, arranged in a semicircle around the stage, all sit up on their haunches to welcome us. One lion is also in the show, but he remains up high in the back part of the stage until the very end and is kept separate from the tigers. The opening section of the show introduces Ron by a voiceover from the production booth in the back, coordinated by Mike. Throughout the show, the male announcer will alternate with the male trainer in telling us about the cats and the behaviors they perform. Music will come in at appropriate moments to heighten the mood, and two unnamed but muscular male assistants will roam the outside of the ring area, pushing the cats from behind to keep them in proper form. A little educational patter is slipped in. We are told that all tigers are endangered and that some are more compatible in groups than others, since tigers in the wild usually live solitarily. Given their solitary lives, it is difficult to see how group performance is an extension of natural behaviors.

The cats are introduced by name, and one, "Lucy," dominates the show. She has the closest relationship to Ron, who incorporates her general recalcitrance into the show as a form of humor. "Sit up and look like a tiger," meaning proud, alert, powerful, he jokes to the supine Lucy, always sleeping on the job. The cats, like humans, all have distinctive faces, which makes it easy for him to tell them apart. They also have distinctive stripe patterns, "like our fingerprints." Named, identified by face and "fingerprints," and exhibiting distinctive personalities, these cats are personalized.

The behaviors consist of jumping, rolling, and sitting in various combinations. Again the exclusion of some behaviors (fighting, sleeping, urinating) is paired with the heightening and condensation of others, just as was the case at the Monterey Bay Aquarium, owing to the physical design and fish curating. Our desires at the zoo to see the animals “do something,” to display their bodies in movement, and to interact with one another and us, are satisfied by the show format. The animals do a lot, a lot more in fact that animals naturally do in the wild, given that most time is spent resting, and that vigorous activity like running, leaping, or hunting occurs only in spurts. Like a greatest hits album, the show presents only those behaviors deemed worth looking at. The tiger bodies are the ultimate visual evidence of wild nature. Its portrayal in the tiger show culturalizes that physical difference through aestheticization, amplification, and choreographed display. This display intensifies as the show progresses.

The “most spectacular” behavior, Ron says, is the leap through a burning ring of fire. He warns us in advance that this will be a “good photo opportunity” so that we can get our cameras ready. This is definitely a circus trick, so indicative of “circus” in fact that it is often depicted in circus posters.²³ But there is none of the whip snapping and drum rolling usually associated with our images of circus tricks. Ron is careful to assure us that the fire doesn’t bother them at all. This way we can have our circus and our ecotourism, too. Tigers gladly perform tricks that aren’t tricks for the reward of mental stimulation (and presumably for the sense of pride in a job well done), with a little meat inconspicuously thrown in on the side. They are not bothered by jumping through a ring of fire, which presumably is an extension of natural behavior. Is it natural to be unafraid of fire?

In the next behavior—jumping through a suspended, paper-covered hoop to triumphal strains of brass music—Ron demonstrates that tigers can overcome their natural perceptions, although he doesn’t put it in those words. Tigers, he tells us, think that when something looks solid, it is solid. Therefore, to get them to jump through a paper covered hoop is not easy. They have to train the tigers to jump through ever smaller openings in the hoop until they are willing to burst through the paper ring. Here natural perception is overcome so that we can enjoy the unnatural spectacle of a tiger leaping through a paper ring while demonstrating their natural agility. The show patter links this ability to unlearn tiger perception to intelligence when Ron jokes that one tiger, Kenny, “never figured out paper.” So it appears that it’s good to do tigerly things except when those tigerly “instincts” conflict with the choreog-

raphy of a good show. This moment is symptomatic of the tremendous flexibility of an ideology of the natural which can constantly be reformed to accommodate conflicting data.

Toward the end of the show the patterned choreography of the bodies is more evident. One tiger, in an upright sitting position, hops across the stage on its hind legs. Although Ron notes that the big cats sit on their hind legs when fighting, he fails to note that this is a momentary behavior and one that occurs not in perfect balance but in contact with an opponent. Here, the repeated action requires perfect verticality and serves no purpose other than our entertainment. What is it we applaud with a trick like this? Is it the skill of the trainer, the skill of the tiger, or the anthropomorphism of the act which transforms the horizontal natural body posture of the feline into the vertical posture of humans?

At the end of the show, the lion, introduced as the 500-pound "Chad," which has remained stationary throughout, performs a similar act. He is, we are informed, the only lion in the world trained to perform this behavior. (We might ask why even one lion is trained to do so.) Here the issue of mastery emerges more clearly. This lion, king of the jungle, more massive even than the tigers, is momentarily turned into a pet, a house cat begging for food on his hind legs.²⁴ Domesticated, this "other" obeys and, we are led to believe, enjoys doing so. "I never saw a cat do anything he didn't want to do," says Ron. The lion, idealized synecdoche of the natural world, is metaphorically miniaturized in this action. In this powerful rhetorical doubling lies the special pleasure of this moment. Pets represent a domestication of wild animals, which in turn stand for the whole of nature. Telescoping nature into the figure of a begging house cat moves the nature-culture boundary still further, so that the culturalization of the natural is completed in this act of imaginary bodily transposition.

The "Magic" of Animals Show

Of all the shows at Marine World, "The Magic of Animals" show comes closest to presenting animals as humans. It takes the place of the Chinese acrobats performance in the winter season and is played in the largest outdoor auditorium of them all, seating about 2,000. The day I attended, with cold and blustery weather, in the middle of winter, there were only about twenty people in the audience, including some of the staff from the other shows.

In this show, Marine World becomes most transparent about using animals as vehicles for entertainment rather than justifying entertainment as the frame through which to educate. This was the only show in

the park where the verbal emphasis was not on the abilities of the animals but on a theatrical theme in which the animals were players but not the stars. Even so, facts about each animal are woven into the patter to retain the educational cover.

The concept behind this show is to perform magic tricks with animals. Once the structuring gimmick is decided on, a show is woven out of the raw materials available, depending on which animals are not already in other shows and the specific behaviors those available can perform. These animals and specific actions are then woven into a loose story line. Finally, the verbal script is written and a complex musical score is assembled to accompany the actions. This show had thirty different bits of music accentuating the tricks and providing emotional cues and atmospheric shading. The sound cues are taken from the verbal script, not from behaviors, since animal actors can be less predictable than humans. Like any other theatrical show, the production also requires a director, sound designer, scenic designer, costumer, star, and supporting players.

The backdrop for the magic show consisted of a painted Mayan temple, giving the tricks a vaguely jungle-like setting. The star is a young male actor, dressed as if he stepped out of *Raiders of the Lost Ark* in dapper hat and bush vest. First, he produces a dove out of his hat in a typical magician's trick. Then he moves on to bigger things. Trainers, dressed in khaki, roll in an empty cage and cover it with a cloth. Whoosh—the cloth is pulled away to reveal a puma in the cage (facts about the endangered status of pumas follow). Next, he makes one of the female trainers disappear and later suspends her magically in midair, passing a hoop around her body so that we can see the absence of hidden strings. The typical male-female relationship of magic acts is repeated here, with the female body being subjected to superhuman control by the magician. This relationship also, not surprisingly, aligns the female with the animals, which were also acted upon by the magician's "will."

Since most of the actors in this show are animals, not humans, sometimes things go wrong. For instance, at one point the orangutan (Jolyn) is supposed to pop out of a suitcase. During one rainstorm, Jolyn got scared and couldn't or wouldn't do the trick. In these cases, they have to try to turn it into something positive; no coercion can be displayed. "Here at Marine World, we never make the animals do anything . . ." they might joke, with revealing irony, to cover a gaff while retaining audience goodwill. In these cases, the animal is never forced to perform the trick, but neither is it rewarded. Similarly, when timing doesn't go as

planned, the actors have to fill in time between stunts by verbal vamping, such as in vaudeville, but in this case the patter consists of educational facts about the animals.

In the other shows, like the lion and tiger show, the trainer directs the animals, and there is less uncertainty. But here the lead character is an actor (one of the few professional actors on staff), and the animal trainers or handlers are kept in the background, getting the animal to enter and exit and stay in position as needed for the illusions. There is proportionately a looser chain of command, and more uncertainty results, revealing the usually masked control of the humans over the animals through these "mistakes." These resistances were not so much aggressive contestations, but passive refusals or ignoring of commands. The animals might pay attention to something else besides the directive cue or want to loll about or play with the trainer. Natural actions or responses replace trained extensions of natural actions in these revealing moments of wandering attention, thereby marking through contrast the intense structuring and training that goes into presenting the natural in the other shows.

Toward the end of the show, the orangutan appears, in a humorous segment, in the only instance in the park where I saw an animal dressed up like a human. Jolyn appears wearing black running shorts, blows her nose using a hanky, gives the magician a kiss, and grins, revealing a toothy smile. Cast as a humanoid, the orangutan plays the crowd against the magician as she foils a simple trick where an orange is supposed to disappear. Using this staged usurpation as his cue, the magician gets in a plug for conservation. "We have fun up here," he says, "but it's not fun that orangutans are disappearing in the wild." The show then closes with an animal "fax," as a tiger cub is magically transferred from a cage on stage right to one on stage left. At the end of the show, audience members are invited to come up and talk with the trainers, meet the tiger, and ask questions.

It is significant that the only animal to be dressed up was the orangutan, the most human looking of all animals in the park. None of the other animals was costumed, although several engaged in behaviors that mimicked human actions, like waving. What is permissible with a primate would not be permissible with marine mammals or with the big cats, perhaps because it would invoke a circus atmosphere and seem to take away the dignity that the shows try to give them. The orangutan, inheriting the chimp's reputation for human behaviors, can be gotten away with. We are not making Jolyn into a human so much as we are laughing at the recognition of the fact that she is almost (but not quite)

human. The orangutan is thus conceptually positioned just on the other side of the animal-human divide. With a little costuming and choreography she can almost step over it.

On the realism continuum of in-situ to out-of-situ, this show presents animals on the far edge of the out-of-situ range. Not only is no habitat context provided, but the heavy narrativization and characterization used to present the animals and their behaviors reposition them firmly in our world, cloaking the natural world associated with the symbolic presence of the tiger cub body, for example, in the high-tech framework of an animal fax. That this is a tongue-in-cheek magic show facilitates this importation of the natural into the cultural. Orangutans use handkerchiefs, wear clothes, laugh, and go on trips.

The magical fantasy of anthropomorphism is an extended instance of domination through incorporation, here presented as humor. Like the concept of racial assimilation, which is dependent on the idea of different social groupings called races, anthropomorphism makes the partial or temporary erasure of social difference its focus while retaining physical differences (between the category "animal" and the category "human") as the ground of meaning. The humor is manufactured in the gap between the difference and similarity between human and animal. Anthropomorphized animals are both like and unlike us, and obversely we are both like and unlike them. Sometimes humans are considered a part of the natural world; sometimes they are defined against it. The humor of the Magic of Animals show reveals and is dependent on the motion of the ever-shifting boundary between the natural and cultural.

Orangutans hold quite a different place in the public imaginary than whales do though, and the relationship between animals and humans is played out differently in the emphasis on spectacle rather than narrative that characterizes the marine mammal shows at the park. Even here, though, anthropomorphism is not absent.

Killer Whale and Dolphin Show

The killer whale, referred to earlier in the section on kissing, is the premier symbol of Marine World Africa. Its picture is the most dramatically featured on all material about the park. Its leaping black-and-white torpedo body appears on the cover of the program booklet, in a two-page spread on the publicity pamphlet used to advertise the park, and on the cover of the souvenir video. What do this particular animal and its representations convey, and how do those relate to what we see in the show?

One of the most stunning aspects of whales is their size and power. The two female killer whales in the show weigh in at ten thousand

pounds and is twenty-three feet long, for the twenty-three-year-old Yaka, from the North Pacific, and six thousand pounds and seventeen feet long for the younger, more diminutive twelve-year-old Vigga, from the North Atlantic. They are marked dramatically in black and white, like early Rauchenberg paintings. The black is absolutely black, covering their backs from the tip of the snout to the tail. The bellies are glistening white, again starting at the snout tip, thinning in the middle, and swirling outward on the ends of the bodies. There is something important about this coloring. It gives their bodies a definition that all-gray whales lack.

The top jaw is black, the bottom snowy white, the long line of the two meeting colors gives a sense of a mouth, of lips. And behind their small, dark eyes, on a background of black, are large oval circles of white, looking like eyes, or maybe like eyebrows, but somehow giving definition to the face of the animal, a face that must be imagined, because the rocket shape of the marvelously streamlined and blubber smooth bodies does not differentiate between head, neck, and belly. But the short, wide black flippers intersect the white underbelly just about where arms might be and give an impression of a torso. Looking improbably like large five-ton penguins, these animals soar out of the water and through the air. They are striking in their markings, "cute" in their short-armed flippers and long grin. They look almost like a Disney version of whales, just as Mickey Mouse is a Disney version of a rodent. Photogenic, with markings and "arms" that provide requisite fodder for anthropomorphism, Yaka and Vigga combine awesome size, strength, and power with aesthetic beauty, personality, and cuteness. They are the emblem of Marine World.

The show opens with a painted backdrop of the Pacific Northwest, mountains and fir trees, backing the large performance tank. It is surrounded by a large outdoor amphitheater, which seats several hundred. A young man in his twenties plays the master of ceremonies. He is dressed like a fur trapper in buckskin and boots. The Indians of the Northwest, he tells us, once worshiped the whales and thought them gods. A few tidbits of information are thrown in about their eating habits and habitat, then the two whales surge into the tank, the music swells to Olympian proportions, and they introduce themselves with huge leaps out of the water. Then two women are introduced as the trainers; they give the cues to the animals throughout the show, as the MC provides narration.

The animals zoom around the tank at forty miles an hour and then slow to an *adagio* tempo, showing us their flukes. (This is part of the trained medical behaviors, behaviors that allow the animal to undergo

medical tests like examinations and the withdrawing of blood without undo stress. These very valuable animals receive better medical care than most humans in the world.) After the MC tells us about the medical behaviors, it is time to boost the tempo again, this time with appropriately triumphal music. The two orcas breach, that is, soar out of the water and purposely crash back onto its surface, creating a huge splash. The sound and flying water emphasize their magnitude. In comparison, human belly flops are a pinprick of sound and a few drops of water. The power that translates from these breaching carries a frisson of danger, too. Humans cannot compare in terms of size, strength, mass, or power. It is thrilling to see such a demonstration up close.

But the orcas are only huge in comparison with people. Compared with most whales (technically, the orcas are the largest member of the dolphin family), orcas are downright diminutive.²⁵ Whales, in common mythology, are supposed to be big—think of the biblical story of Jonah and the whale, or *Moby-Dick*. The orcas are big enough to be big, but small enough to be approachable and believably “friendly,” with a body size that is not so out of scale to our own as to be too terrifying. This is a controllable sublime, in which size, activities, facial markings, and body shape all combine to make the orcas the perfect whale performer for these shows.²⁶ We can desire to be close to them while simultaneously being impressed with their capacity for physical dominance of ourselves.

Another part of the aesthetic of this show is the demonstration of control and smooth, sustained movement that could be described as graceful. No sudden changes of speed, energy usage, or direction detract from the elegance of the next segment, called the “ballet of the killer whale.” Yaka and Vigga roll on their backs and swim around the tank upside down, their milky white bellies exposed to the audience. There is in this emphasis on grace a sense of channeling and containing all the power (and potential wildness) that were demonstrated moments earlier by the breaching. There is reassurance and safety here in the knowledge that such huge, powerful animals can be so trained/tamed as to restrain themselves on command to produce the movement coded as “beautiful” by the ballet reference.

Animals as Professional Performers

“Have you stopped to think they are watching *you*?” asks the MC. This is an interesting moment in the show. This is a casual, funny aside, surely, yet underneath it lies a host of issues. *Are they watching us?* And if they are, what does that reversal imply? Can whales “return the gaze”?

To do so, they would have to possess a subjectivity capable of understanding themselves as both watcher and watched. This might be going too far, but the question of the animals' subjectivity, which is heightened in so many ways throughout the park and in a great deal of the popularization of the research on marine mammal intelligence, is interestingly brought to the fore. Do we grant them a subjectivity but not a consciousness, or a self-consciousness? If so, what is the tension between the anthropomorphism of body and body language, as well as vocal language in some cases, and the lack of self-consciousness or self-awareness that is implied in the show situation? The animals, it seems, perform for their trainers, and, to be crass about it, they perform for that smelt that they will receive as a reward for good behavioral production.

For all the framing in terms of their enjoying the activities, needing the mental stimulation which the training provides, and getting tactile rewards from their trainers, the animals are never performing for the reward of audience applause. They would only be performing directly for the audience if we arrived with our pockets full of fish. The applause then is for whom? To express delight, approval, awe at what we see? As a reward for the trainers and production designers? Are we applauding the animal for being itself (i.e., the mass of the body that makes a big splash), the choreography of the show, the innate abilities of the animal ("intelligence"), or the skill of the trainers in shaping the behavior?

What would it be like if the trainers were invisible during the show? Maybe they could give all the cues through underwater windows or underwater signals. Imagine a show that, like a ballet, consisted only of dancing dolphins or whirling whales moving to music against a painted backdrop. Pyrotechnical skill could be highlighted in solos, and unison work featured in the group movements of the corps de ballet. Entrances, exits, tempo changes, could all happen on cue, seemingly without the direction of humans. This is the next logical step in showcasing these animals as intelligent individuals. Then, they could take their reward in applause, bowing to the audience. We would never need to know that a feast of fishes awaited beyond the gated exit. But it appears that the duration of behavioral sequences must remain relatively short in between gustatory reinforcements. This places the animals, trainers, and audience in a triangulated position. The animals desire rewards from the trainers (smelt or praise), the trainers seem to desire rewards from the audience (appreciation for the animals and for their own skill) and from the management that pays their salary, and the audience desires spectacle from the animals.

These shows are different from traditional Euro-American dance or

theater performances because the expressivity and creativity of the animal as performer are not among the ingredients. (In those types of performances we may recognize the importance of the designer, writer, or director, but the contribution of the performer is not merely to reproduce their directions faithfully but also to do that while bringing him- or herself to the role, that is, making his or her rendition distinctive. Each actor would strive to do "his own" Hamlet, not Olivier's, for example.) And these shows also differ from sports because, although trained skills are important (as are coordination and the ability to execute the plays called by a coach), individual responsiveness to changing circumstances, key to making a spectacular pass in basketball, or driving toward the basket around a shifting field of defenders, is not operative in these shows. The improvisatory use of learned skills within predetermined structural parameters is not granted to the animals.²⁷ What would it mean if they were? It would grant the animals an agency in the process which is now limited to choosing or not choosing to fulfill a particular prescribed bodily motion.²⁸

However, these divisions are not absolute. There is an emphasis on the species capability (to breach, to swim speedily) paired with an individuation of the performers which stops short of granting creativity to them. Trainers will develop behaviors for specific animals depending on abilities they show and they will incorporate individual personalities (even recalcitrance) into the action and narration of the show, as with the tiger Lucy, but they will not frame the animals' public performance in terms of creativity or problem solving.²⁹ The performance of specific movements of the body through prescribed paths in space and at specific times and speeds is what is rewarded, whether that be whale soaring in the air on cue or tigers leaping through a hoop of fire. We applaud what they can do, that they do it (choice, training), and that they do it on cue.³⁰

These distinctions reveal the particular mediation of performance that occurs when the performers are animals. With humans, performance in the theatrical sense places a set of quotation marks around a set of actions, heightening their symbolic content, and supplying the sense of "as if" that unites the audience and performers for the duration of the event. The actress speaks as if she were the character Ophelia, for example. For the audience, cognitive awareness of the boundedness of the performance situation, of its production as a representation, of the behavioral contracts between audience and performer, and of the emphasis placed on symbolic rather than instrumental words and behaviors all characterize human dramatic performances. In tourist per-

performances like those in Waikiki, however, the as-if-ness, the fictionality, is replaced by a presumption of nonfiction, of documentary. The expressivity of the dancers is presumed to be real, not acting, since by definition they are performing themselves.

At animal performances like Yaka and Viggas at Marine World, a splitting of documentary and fiction occurs. The human performers, like the show's MC, are perceived through a theatrical frame that recognizes them as actors portraying a role. The stars of the show, the animals, are not. While their actions may still generate the double meanings of what is done and what is implied, like the fake shooting of a protagonist in a play, they do not themselves produce this distance between the act and its meanings. In other words, the orca that busses me on the cheek is not pretending we are in love; rather, it is matching its nose to a target. Behaviors which are instrumental (i.e., they yield fishy rewards) are perceived as symbolic, referential, aesthetic, or emotionally expressive, depending on the framework of the show. In tension with this is the bodily presence of the animal and its physical size, mass, and capabilities—its facticity. The demonstration of these aspects of the animal tend toward the production of spectacle, with its emphasis on the visual and iconicity, but they function on the symbolic level, too, as evidence of realness, and of species specificity.

The alternation of these aspects of performance is highlighted in the next segment of the whale show. The kiss comes next, like the one I described in the opening during the training session, only this time accompanied by a big smooching sound on the microphone. Humor is yoked to anthropomorphism again. Then we shift gears from the intimate to the spectacular with a demonstration of strength and power in the dramatic "speed run." In this segment, the two whales race around the perimeter of the seventy-foot tank in opposite directions. But this time, they make a mistake, going the wrong way, so they are recalled. No improper behavior can be tolerated, even in public. This reminds us they are animals. It was their mistake, presumably, not the trainer's, that got them confused. They try it again, this time passing the center of the circumference in perfect unison, and kicking up big waves in their wake like huge speedboats. The speed and the displacement of water once again serve as impressive demonstrations of physical mass and strength.

We are close to the end now, and the alternation between personalizing behaviors and those that demonstrate species specificity continues. The MC demonstrates the hand cues they use to get the whales to vocalize, but this time the whales won't stop talking. The trainer and MC exchange helpless looks, until finally the whales pipe down. When he

asks them to speak next time, they emit loud farting sounds and shake their heads “yes” in approval. This segment produces humor by giving the whales the appearance of agency, like smart-alecky kids who thumb their noses at the teacher, ignoring commands and dipping into scatological body humor. But this is a staged resistance, therefore humorous. No real resistance can be tolerated, both for safety reasons and for ideological ones.

The show closes with another round of spectacular behavior as smart-alecky kids become once more denizens of the deep. We are cued to get our cameras ready, because aerials are coming up, and they “make the best pictures.” The whales jump into the air in unison, one sailing over the other, and then they execute a series of jumps rising fifteen feet out of the water, touching their noses to a suspended target with the kinesthetic eloquence of Michael Jordan making a basket. The big bodies are fully revealed for our cameras; what is normally hidden under water is suspended vertically in full view. Then they land in big, breaching splashes as the water explodes into the air. The spray rains onto the audience, their bodies directly affecting ours. The music cues our applause, and the MC closes by telling us, “We hope you leave with a better understanding of the animals and why they were even worshiped by the Northwest Indians.”

Massive, powerful, athletic, spectacular, funny, friendly, kissable, and sublime, these orcas have earned their keep this day. But, as impressed as I was, I hadn't seen anything that would compare with the presentation of Shamu at Sea World.

Performing Nature

Shamu at Sea World

What Mickey Mouse is to Disneyland, Shamu is to Sea World.¹ Marketing symbol, ambassador, embodiment of dreams come true for children (and adults), Shamu, the most celebrated orca whale of all time, is the synecdoche of Sea World. The orcas at Marine World Africa, Yaka and Vigga, shrink in comparison with the megastar personality of this mighty marine mammal and the industry of marine theme park which has sprung up around it.

The ideological work of Sea World is based on the trope of family as the conceptual frame around which to construct a problematic of the natural. We saw a similar construction operating at Marine World Africa, but it is much more intensely played out here and is articulated through the choreography of the show (exactly what actions are performed and how they are presented), the specific bodily relationships between the trainers and the animals, the relationship posited between the audience and the animal and human performers, and the verbal narration that goes along with the presentation. In addition, special technological effects reinforce certain aspects of these actions and our perceptions of them.

By uniting the idea of family with nature, both sides of the equation are reconfigured. Families as specific social organizations are naturalized as paradigmatic of all relations, whether on a global scale or between humans and animals. Obversely, nature becomes part of the human family, completely culturalized and incorporated. Complex tensions pull at the edges of these formulations and are revealed in the structure of the shows at Sea World. But even with these competing tensions, the shows ultimately promote a utopian view of Americanism tied to corporatism and world leadership.