Performing Animals: Analyzing Live Animals In The Arts And Their Impacts On Our Environmental Perceptions Of The Animal Other

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Centre for Drama, Theatre, and Performance Studies
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Abstract

My thesis research is a critical and ethical analysis of live animals in the performing arts, and their impact on environmental perceptions of the animal other. How does viewing an animal on stage, in a performative role, engender particular reactions from audiences in terms of how and what we learn about those animals. What is the interplay between performance arts, live animals, and their audiences, and how do modes of presentation influence ongoing relationships between those three elements? I investigated these questions through the lens of “geodrama”, which calls for re-reading historical texts to “discover our past sense of place with nature” (Chaplin xix), to learn how the resulting ‘performances’ have come to inform our contemporary environmental perspectives.

My research comprised of three major case studies: nineteenth-century circus elephants; twentieth-century SeaWorld orcas; and a starkly different contemporary work by performance art duo Olly and Suzi, called Shark Bite. By putting these three works into conversation, I interrogate the tradition of animals in performance arts, and question how these relationships may evolve. My research combined primary and secondary historical materials, and theoretical analysis of the primary case studies, based on considerations for ecological performances laid out
by Gail J. Kuhl (on what constitutes ethical ecological art), and Theresa J. May (on what real-world implications and ecological realities the works reflect).

I discovered there is a strong desire for tangible encounters with animals through artistic performance. There is also a strong tendency to supplant animal realities for anthropocentric narratives that necessitate captivity for entertainment and education. However, there is an equally strong desire for these relationships to be ethical or to support the idea that the animals are being incorporated into the performance willingly, and audience perceptions on the animal performer are quickly evolving to reflect this.
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1. 

Introduction

My research focuses on historical and contemporary approaches to engaging with animals in performance, and what impacts those approaches have on the animals, artists, and their audiences. I will be analyzing the role of animal performers as they are characterized within spectacle, education, and contemporary art, and through this will be incorporating case studies on the iconic elephant of the early American circus, the foundational Shamu of SeaWorld, and the shark collaborator of UK-based performance art duo Olly and Suzi in their work Shark Bite. I believe that using these three quite distinct performance types gives a wide overview of the position of animals within performing arts. My goal is to look at how the structure of the relationship between human and animal performers on stage can influence further understandings of environmentalism, and what impacts these performances can have both internally (on the human and animal performers themselves), and externally (on audience and wider ecosystems). Essentially: who is the animal performer, both historically and contemporarily, and what ethical responsibility do we have towards them and their roles within entertainment?

1. Key Questions

There are several key questions I want to ask, and they predominately revolve around three key roles I have identified for non-human animal performers through my research: the animal as spectacle; the animal as hyperreal educator; and the animal as an artistic collaborator who uses their agency to either accept or reject participation in a performance, on their own terms.
I want to question how positioning the animal as spectacle in a circus performance juxtaposes the *real* wild animal with the presumed wild animal? Who is the real wild animal, compared to the performing animal? Finally, how are issues of capture and captivity obscured in order to present unproblematized animal performers? Each of these questions are concealed through performance, in favour of superimposing an entirely palatable and human narrative on the animal performer. In this chapter, I will discuss how this role for animal performers is created, perpetuated, and suggest ways that it can ultimately problematized and dismantled.

When looking at the animal as hyperreal educator, in places like zoos or aquariums, I want to analyze how positioning the animal as a proxy educator for life in the wild, through a performative context, can help or hinder the framing of wildlife conservation issues, and the safety of the real wild animal. As well, how are exploitation and silencing animal voices employed in the creation of animal educators?

Finally, and in contrast to the previous roles for animal performance, I will question if it is possible to have a human-animal artistic relationship that is predicated on the animal willingly becoming a collaborator, through exercising their own agency. This is a question that contemporary performance artists working with animals are beginning to ask, particularly the group Olly and Suzi. What would happen if, instead of speaking for the animal within performance by layering their presence with human narratives, performances created space for the animal to ‘speak for itself’? Is this a possibility? What would this radically different approach to accepting and incorporating animal agency look like, for human performers, animal performers, and audiences?
2. Critical Framework

Joyce E. Chaplin’s theory of “geodrama” can provide a critical framework for a discussion of the roles animal performers hold ‘on stage’, as well as an approach to historical re-readings and contemporary works incorporating animal performers. Chaplin’s theory of geodrama provides a useful method for disseminating and organizing information. She repurposed the term, (which is both an old idea and a new concept I would like to connect to ecological theatre), to examine the growing relationships between sixteenth-century circumnavigators and the world they were charged with ‘discovering’. I believe this can be connected to ecological theatre as Chaplin noted explorers were constantly charged with ‘re-reading’ historical expedition notes in light of what had been discovered since, thereby updating their knowledge and further solidifying their performative roles in a growing world. Chaplin placed the re-readings within a performative framework, and looked at them within the tradition of ‘theatrum mundi’, the world as a stage (Chaplin xx). For those at home, the subsequently written accounts of circumnavigators enabled the development of a new audience to the performance of the earth, within which they were able to “consider themselves as actors in a geodrama, even as the drama has changed over time” (xx). I believe we can take a similar approach to looking at animal performers, by placing historical re-readings of performance traditions like circuses and SeaWorld, in conversation with more recent information on animal behaviourism, conditions of captivity, environmental education, and ethics, and through this approach we can come to a clearer understanding of how the geodrama has changed over time, and what exactly our role is within that performance.

Chaplin divided her ecological re-readings into three primary ‘acts’ of this geodrama. The first act Chaplin identifies is from Magellan's unintentional circumnavigation to James
Cook's death in Hawaii (1519-1779), which is characterized by a fear of the unknown (Chaplin xx). Act Two continued from Cook's death until the 1920s, and was characterized by a developed confidence in the sophistication of traveling technologies, and an assuredness that the application of these tools would result in a successful circumnavigation, or “conquer[ing] of the globe” (Chaplin xx). We sit in a trepidatious third act in terms of our relationship to the earth, characterized by doubt and a sense of extreme danger courted by anyone who dares to encompass the world. There is, as Chaplin says, “a growing sense that the planet is beginning to bite back, now that the environmental costs of planetary domination have begun to haunt us” (xxi). In this sense, the animal performer in mainstream approaches is, as Tait mentions, emblematic of its entire species, but beyond that the animal becomes emblematic of our entire cultural relationship to animals. What I plan to do throughout this thesis is apply Chaplin’s act structure, to the ‘full-bodied performances’ involving both humans and non-humans “on a stage of planetary dimensions” (Chaplin xix):

- Act One, a fear and fascination of the unknown, will analyze the performing animal as a spectacle;
- Act Two, a growing confidence in conquering the globe, will analyze the performing animal as educator and entertainer;
- and Act Three, characterized by doubt and danger, will examine the possibility of dismantling previous traditions of animal performers, in favour of ones that preface animal agency and intentionality, giving them the choice to participate in a performance on their own terms, if this is at all possible.

In the context of animal performers, geodrama is useful as it attempts to incorporate a more ecological view of our relationship to the natural world. Chaplin notes that history thus far has focused primarily on human interactions, and “only recently have human relations with non-human parts of nature been put into dialogue with those human relationships” (Chaplin xix). My goal in using ‘geodrama’ as the theoretical framework for this research is to do as Chaplin did
with her study of circumnavigators: to re-read historical texts to “discover our past sense of place with nature” (xix), and learn how the resulting ‘performances’ have come to inform our contemporary environmental perspectives.

My primary interest in geodrama, however, is this ‘full-bodied’ approach to generating performance, in which the physical co-presence of human and non-human elements is essential to the continued development of relationships within the performance. Within a geodrama, the performance requires “all of a human being, the entire body and its range of physical experiences, in relationship to Gaia, the earth” (Chaplin xix-xx). This ‘full-bodied performative experience becomes not simply a story told onstage, but an ongoing interplay between human and non-human elements. How does one’s physical experience of a non-human animal performer influence the development of both social and performative relationships? For example, how does the presentation of a trained elephant or orca alter one’s relationship to the animal? To all animals of the species? The space the performing animal occupies on stage is a problematic one which, as Chaplin says, has thus far predominately been examined in light of human activities: what are the distinctly human goals for the animal entertainer? This thesis will attempt to dismantle some of the performative roles that animals have held, in terms of how the ‘full-bodied’ approach to the human-animal performative relationships, influenced larger sociocultural and environmental human-animal relationships.

Christopher Balme, in his Introduction to Theatre Studies, notes that animals do not exist outside of semiotics (Balme 84). This is a sentiment that bothered me for some time, as I was unsure how anything could be outside of semiotics. Questioning this within the field of semiotics yielded an answer with which I was satisfied until doing the majority of this research on
performing animals. Balme’s intention was to demonstrate that animals are, in Derridian terms, “pure presence” (84): they are the “place where the closure of representation occurs and theatre necessarily ends” (84). In Lacanian terms, animals on stage represent a moment at which the “signifier in fact enters the signified... rais[ing] the question of its place in reality” (Lacan 417) and short-circuits (Zizek 82). Balme is therefore suggesting that performing animals cannot take on any additional meanings - they can only be exactly what they are, and at the same time, nothing else could fully take on the meaning of ‘animal’.

However, by looking at the various roles and realities held by performing animals in circuses, zoos and aquariums, this exclusion of animals from semiotics can be problematized. An animal performing on stage is, I believe, rarely only themselves; rather, they are a function of years of culturally determined and ascribed meanings based on human relationship to animals, layered over animal bodies. The performing animal becomes a palimpsest, a site of multiple signifiers, most of which relate more strongly to human perspectives on that particular animal, than they do to the physical, emotional, or cultural realities of the animal itself. For example, when one views an elephant in a circus, what they are seeing is not solely an elephant, but: an animal highly trained to perform humorous human actions; the body upon which the success of a circus is determined; an emblem of a wild elephant; a mythologized threat from the exotic world and the assumed privilege of safety in human environments; and hundreds of years of oppression, appropriation, and denial of animal cultures. The performing animal is only outside of semiotics insofar as they are unable to linguistically express its own meanings (Sarbin 337).
‘me’ sentences” (337). Anyone able to linguistically express ownership is positioned as a ‘subject’, and anyone else, anyone outside the means of expression, is an object. As either subject or object, when analyzing the various roles of performing animals, there is not a “pure presence”, but a transgression against mainstream cultural relationships between humans and animals.

As such, my research goals will include considerations of the role that performance has, does and could play in contributing to ecological health, our relationship to the natural world, and the relationship of the animals as subjects of these performance to their own environments. May notes that so far, “theatre may be at best a reflection of human culture’s disassociation from the other-than-human world” (May 95) in that it only tells the human story of the world. We come to understand the world through the stories that we tell about it. Gottschall, in his study on the purpose of storytelling in human evolution, suggests that it is perhaps necessary for us to develop narratives in order to situate ourselves within the world, to understand our roles and how we relate to other actors within the story (Gottschall 15) - the geodrama. In fact, he notes that we are never not telling stories, from the way we structure the teaching of history to how businesses brand their products (15).

If the story we tell actively propagates a negative dramatic relationship between humans and nature or animals, then what may result is a negative actual relationship. We are imaginatively prepped to treat nature and animals just as we do in narrative, and evidence for this correlation can be seen most clearly in the realities of animals used in theatrical performance: we have become completely disassociated from nature and have allowed the capture, captivity and forced performance of animals for human entertainment. Everything about the mainstream
narrative on the relationships between humans and animals is structured to justify this usage. The story we tell provides no counter-evidence to suggest otherwise - or does its utmost to obscure the growing evidence suggesting animals are conscious, cognitive beings that have thoughts, plans and desires of their own that may not include human entertainment. Gottschall notes that the telling of history includes many moments of obscuring realities in favour of supporting mainstream narratives, most telling for him being the teaching of history in regards to Columbus ‘discovering’ North America. Stories like this “represent a determined forgetting - an erasure of what is shame from from our national memory banks so that history can function has a unifying, patriotic myth” (Gotschall 124) - not an objective history, but “a story that blinds a community together” (124). Keeping this in mind, what are we determined to forget about our relationship with animals? By looking at the history of performing animals, such as elephants in circuses, some of this ‘determined forgetting’ can be uncovered, and the works of groups like Olly and Suzi can also be seen in light of attempting to uncover and actively remember such subjugated knowledges.

Attempting to remember these knowledges through re-readings is only a first step, the overall effectiveness of which Kershaw questions. In Kershaw’s criticism of performances about landscapes, he notes that for centuries, ‘landscape’ has been a “major trope in the domination of the human over nature” (Kershaw 128). While some ecological theatre theorists believe that through performances on landscapes, a biocentric worldview can evolve as a “nonhierarchical embrace of the multiplicity of species and languages in a work, that can address the issue of rights in non-sentient beings” (127), Kershaw feels the result is an idealization of the landscape as an overcompensation for ecological destruction (128). How can one really identify with the
landscape, in this whole-body geodrama, to 'become-landscape' and oppose the “anthropocentric entourage” of the individual subject (Baker 68), allowing nature to speak from its own wants and desires? Kershaw would present this assumption as a fallacy. The same could be said for performances incorporating animals.

However, in a paper about a Norwegian kayaking community, Magnussen evaluates the activities as a performance “in the light of ontological play” (Magnussen 25), to determine the value of “learning-in-doing” in performance. In this, I believe Chaplin's notion of the geodrama can be scaled back to include the activities of those experiencing the creation of a performance with and within the natural world. Magnussen notes that play lacks “telos and direction” (26), and in his observations, he looked only at the activities conducted when kayakers were not specifically learning strokes or manoeuvres, but were instead “focuse[d] on the interrelationship between the community, the adventurer, and the ocean” (26). Philosopher Gadamer uses the Norwegian word 'gebilde', or 'creation', to describe this act of play, as “it is set forth in its own appearance as a self-sufficient creation” (30), and the meanings created during moments of play consists of the spontaneous interactions of both kayaker and ocean. Magnussen says, “This makes the ocean a subject in the experience of the paddlers. [...] There, nature is the artwork, the explorer is the spectator, and between them is a Gebilde, a subject by itself” (31). Essentially, the ocean becomes co-creator of the performance, as it dictates, in part, what the kayaker will respond to and what he or she will encounter throughout the play. This gebilde, the learning-in-doing educational moment between the kayaker and the ocean, is the liminal space of becoming, where both meet in the process of undoing traditional ontological categories – kayaker as human, ocean as vast body of water – and 'become-other'. Magnussen describes the ongoing relationship between kayaker and ocean as benefiting from the ability to experience 'hermeneutical
movement’, through which one “reencounters the ever-changing ocean with new understanding, created and enriched by past experiences” (Magnussen 26). The kayaker grows in a further understanding of the ocean, not just to manoeuvre within it, but to exist with it as a co-creator of performance.

In geodrama, humans both shape and are shaped by the landscape in a “network of shared meanings” (Stables 105). Similarly in gebilde is the creative interplay of human and environmental subjects. Just as literary theory moved away from the idea of single authorship with Barthes’ ‘death of the author’, by looking at the landscape and animals as potential creators of meanings — on their own and in a process of gebilde, in their roles in shaping the experiences of both humans and animals, and as providing conditions for a geodrama — we can problematize previously distinct categories of 'subject' and 'object', or 'creator' versus 'created' (107). Who really creates the conditions for a performance becomes a blurred question.

Is ‘remembering’ and undoing of negative human-animal relationship narratives, and opening up the possibility for animals to inform and co-create a performance as simple as changing the story we tell to something more positive? Perhaps what is needed is to move onto an entirely new act in this geodrama, to encourage the performance of more symbiotic human-animal artistic relationships. Questions that remain, even through consideration of Olly and Suzi, are how exactly do we transition into a new act, and what are performances like this going to look like? Olly and Suzi’s approach to the non-human other in performance presents an “eco-criticism that is dangerous to business as usual” (May 104), which exposes our cultural disassociation from the natural world while simultaneously problematizing past artistic relationships between humans and non-human others.
3. Methodology

My approach to the research will be to incorporate a combination of primary and secondary historical materials, the critical framework outlined above, as well as performance analyses of the primary case studies, based on considerations for ecological performances laid out by Gail J. Kuhl and Theresa J. May.

Considerations of how representations of animals can either dismantle or reinforce otherness are integral to this research (Kuhl 106). By representing animals in performance, it puts the performer and the research in inherent positions of power, as they are responsible for the aesthetics and modes of representation (107). It is one thing to represent other humans, but “when the ‘other’ is a member of an entirely different species, creating good, accurate and ethical representations can be an even more daunting task” (107). How do we not, as Helen Cixous asks, “replace the words from our mouth with the words of good intentions?” or “come as close as possible to the place of the other without taking that place?” (Miller 218). In addition, Kershaw cautions that the problem with ecological performances is that “the object of [one’s] attentions, the theatre itself […] has inexorably become part of the pathology producing the environmental crisis: the transformation of everything, including nature, into commodity” (Kershaw 129). This is to say that representation is always filtered through our own lenses, which can be used to “reinforce stereotypes, prejudice, and ultimately be used to justify continued oppression” (Kuhl 108).

Nowhere is this more evident than the relationship between humans and performing animals such as elephants. Part of the problem is that we do not yet have a “research framework from which to disrupt the human/animal divide” (Kuhl 109), nor even a common language from which to reliably recognize or identify with their embodied experiences (110), as in
communication, the “sender and receiver must be bound by a common understanding” (Berrol 313). Linda Vance, an animal rights activist, asks what would happen if “the frogs are effectively gone […] they disappear as soon as I impose a narrative on them” (Baker 86). In Olly and Suzi’s works, they focus on “being open to the animal rather than imposing meanings on it” (Olly and Suzi 4), by working against the assumption of animals as objects (Kuhl 110), so that we can “come to know [animals] instead as subjects with whom we can share experiences” (110). These shared experiences are key. It is the story of the intersubjective experience that becomes the narrative represented.

Kuhl asks if any of this makes a difference to non-human animals, and if so, what constitutes ‘good’ art in this respect (Kuhl 117)? As such, I will also be considering the ethical implications of animal performers. Kuhl suggests that what constitutes a ‘good’ representation of the animal in art should:

- give a voice to animal stories in a manner that encourages empathy for the non-human;
- foreground the subjectivity of the non-human, leading to a furthered understanding of the non-human experience;
- result in an ethical relationship between the human artist and non-human collaborator, in which the non-human is neither marginalized nor forgotten thereafter;
- ensure that the work is not self-serving and further perpetuating myths of non-human experiences that led to their subjugation in the first place (118).

Kuhl cautions that any inclusion of animals in art, either in collaboration or representation, will “fall short of the animals themselves” (118), and skeptics will always be hoping for further justification and proof of the animal’s participation in the artistic project.

In addition, May outlines several key questions and concerns to ask of an ecological theatre performance, in determining its overall success (May 105). Keeping in mind that
ecological theatre is a relatively young field with a multitude of approaches, but even more ‘real-world’ implications, they are important questions to ask of any performance aiming to foreground our relationship to nature, and advocate for a radical shift in the way we conceptualize our interconnectedness to the natural world, not to mention the relationship between humans and animals in art. I will evaluate the performances examined in this research based on some of the questions May has devised, such as:

- “How does the play propagate or subvert the master narratives that sanction human exploitation of the land?” (May 105)
- How does the play engage in or reflect environmental issues?
- How does it represent the human place in nature?
- How does it inform our idea of an ecological community?
- How does it blur the boundaries between person and place?
- How are non-human bodies used?
- Does it inspire us to think of our relationships with nature, on an individual or community level?
- What are the means of production and overall ecological impact of the performance (105)?

While the questions are not comprehensive or intended to evaluate every aspect of the performance, and they certainly leave the aesthetic and production values of the performance unanalyzed, May’s questions foreground one of the most important elements of any ecological performance: the goal of doing more good than harm.  

However, if the same works do not also inspire a sense of wonder in the audience, through a mastery of performative skills, then results can be overly didactic or overly simplified. We have all seen a didactic play, filled with little more than talking heads and a take-away moral lesson that hangs over the audience like a heavy blanket, hammered in at every opportunity. The audience feels as if they should be taking notes in a lecture hall, in anticipation of some upcoming exam. The drier the presentation, the less information the audience will retain from the
performance itself. Alternately, by over-simplifying the problem, some ecological performances can link the problems presented with untenable solutions: save the world’s water by turning off the tap when you brush your teeth, for example. Presented with a catchy song and dance, an overly simplified approach can position the theatre as no expert on the subject of environmental issues, propagating another myth: that disciplines should concern themselves with only their own disciplines, or the fragmentation of disciplines as Orr would say (Orr 3). As such, I will add to May’s considerations by questioning the aesthetic effectiveness and impact of the performance: do the works present topics in a way that deals with the seriousness of the issues, while at the same time using its artistic craft to incite wonder in its audience?

4. Chapter Outlines

I will analyze the three main roles for animal performers that I have identified within my research. Chapter One will focus on the animal as spectacle in entertainment, addressing issues of animal identity, capture, and captivity which are obscured in order to present an unproblematic image of the animal performer. Chapter Two will analyze the role of the animal as a hyperreal educator, questioning how exploration and silencing animal voices are employed in the creation of animal performers. Chapter Three will shift gears and look into the animal as an intentional performer, using its own agency to choose to engage or not engage in a performance. This chapter is built on the question of how we can relate to animals within performance, while acknowledging that their former roles have had significantly negative impacts on animal performers.

Each of these performative roles fit within a particular act of the “geodrama” that Chaplin outlines: the first act parallels with the circus and our relationship to performing elephants; the
second with aquariums and performing orcas; and the third act is indicative of the uncertain and problematic human-animal performative relations that Olly and Suzi recognize and attempt to oppose with their works. As Chaplin said, “the theatrum mundi was a metaphor, but around-the-world travellers made it a reality by presenting themselves as actors on a stage of planetary dimensions” (Chaplin xix). The circumnavigators she writes about took the theoretical and made it theatrical, actually occurring on a stage of sorts, in front of a captive audience - even if that audience is simply waiting at home for further news, as families and patrons of early explorers were. I feel a similar parallel can be drawn between the theoretical relationships between humans and animals, and the performative relationships created ‘on stage’ in circuses, aquariums and within Olly and Suzi’s works.

I will illustrate each role and theme with specific case studies demonstrating the structure of the human-animal relations created within that performance. The animal as spectacle will be illustrated with the role of the performing elephant in 19th and 20th Century American traveling circuses. The animal as hyperreal educator is best analyzed in the light of contemporary performing orcas in aquariums such as SeaWorld. Finally, the role of the animal as intentional performer is questioned through Olly and Suzi’s piece Shark Bite. Each case study takes a vastly different approach to the inclusion of the animal as a core aspect of their art-making processes. Notably, circuses and aquariums are built on the practice of taking animals from the wild or breeding them in captivity, creating a captor-captive, or subject-object relationship. Olly and Suzi, on the other hand, focus on immersion in nature as their primary means of incorporating animals into the performance. The juxtaposition of circuses and aquariums, in all their cultural popularity, with Olly and Suzi’s more experimental approach to animals, will yield an
investigation into the performative relationships between humans and animals, and how they can be altered to both promote symbiosis within an ecological theatre, and recognize animal agency within performance.

4.1. Act One: The Animal as Spectacle in Entertainment

The first role I decided to analyze was that of the animal performer as object within an spectacle. I will address the problem of how animal identity, capture and captivity are obscured in order to present the image of an unproblematic animal performer. I want to analyze how positioning the animal as spectacle juxtaposes the real wild animal with the presumed wild animal, and how the end result of such spectacle-based performances ultimately superimpose an entirely human narrative on the animal performer. This is done as the image and illusion of ferocity is more useful for the spectacle than the presence of a truly wild, untamed animal. This relates both to the potential danger of the physical co-presence of humans and wild animals within a spectacle space, as well as to the danger posed to the spectacle if the circumstances through which a wild animal came to be incorporated into a performance were to be revealed.

The entire spectacle is about subduing the animal performer, in order to re-create an image of ‘ferocity’ within an anthropocentric narrative. In the context of a ‘geodrama’, I want to frame the overall issue as how the reality of the animal performer exposes issues of capture and captivity which reveal an ecologically destructive side to the inclusion of animals within spectacle. This will loosely fit within what Chaplin outlines as geodrama’s first act - characterized by a fear of the unknown, or in this case, a fear of the wild and untamed.

To best illustrate the performative role of animals as a spectacle through a case study, I will look at the elephant in 19th and 20th Century circus in North America. The elephant is a
useful example for this spectacle role, as they have always held fascination. I would like to trace the history of how elephant inclusion in circus became so popular. This involves looking at the role of the circus elephant particularly in terms of capture, training, and the impacts of performance as they relate to the 19th Century circus’ overall goal of financial success, which P. T. Barnum recognized as depending predominately on the elephant. What does the circus elephant teach us about our ethical responsibility to performing animals? I will also look at the various training methods for circus elephants, and how identification with the elephant performer yielded more positive results for both the elephant, and the trainers.

Based on this case study, I would like to question the ethical implications of our overall responsibility to the animal performer within spectacle. What are the impacts of obscuring the real wild animal, in favour of a performance that entertains its audience? To connect the concept of ‘geodrama’ to 19th Century circus as well, circuses engaged in exploration to take wild animals from their habitats, and correctly suspected that spectators would continue to impose a “wild” narrative on the captive. This can be related to Chaplin’s description of geodrama’s first act, which is characterized by fear of the unknown, death and failure (Chaplin xx). All of the elephants used in early circus were caught and captured, most often in raids that killed the majority of the herd, from places like Sri Lanka, and Africa (Haney 125; Nance 8-9, 17-18). Immediately upon capture, the elephants were physically restrained and starved into submission, into associating domestication and complying with human commands, with being fed and kept alive (Nance 17). Even when incidents arose which began to problematize conditions of captivity, such as a performing elephant injuring or killing a trainer, the belief remained that the
actions of the circus were necessary both for society, and for the captive animal: they were otherwise afraid of the consequences of crossing wild animals.

The elephant, even though fully removed from its homeland and in the process of domestication (at least attempted), was always representative of the exotic world of its origin, and “the connection between a live elephant and the public [was and is] undeniable” (Nicol). The elephant, essentially, is what made the American touring circus (Nance 3). The captivity of performing elephants was touted as a ‘necessity’ for circuses: as P.T. Barnum said, “the elephant is the hook on which the circus hangs” (Alexander 124). The performing elephant is and was “more emblematic of the body of the species” (Tait 190) but in its largely unproblematic existence, the performing elephant threatened to erase the existence of both the wild elephant within the particular performer and the non-captive elephant in the wild. I wanted to look at this predominately from a historical standpoint, as for many in North America, seeing a elephant in the circus was the first exposure they had to wild, exotic animals. This excitement, I believe, led audiences to either turn a blind eye to the facts of elephant capture and captivity, or to accept the circus narratives of elephants being ‘happier’ performing than they would be in the wild (Nance 74-75).

What I recognized within this role and theme was a largely one-sided relationship between human and animal performers within spectacle. When I say ‘one-sided’, what I am referring to is that performing animals in spectacle give to their human co-performers. They follow commands, learn tricks, make their audiences laugh. They keep us entertained, and in the case of elephants, became a staple in North American traveling circuses. What did we give to the performing elephant in return? This is something I will question in this chapter.
For this chapter, I relied heavily on secondary historical materials, or accounts of elephants in touring circuses, written by contemporary academics, such as Michael Daly’s *Topsy*, Susan Nance’s *Entertaining Elephants*, and Peta Tait’s *Wild and Dangerous Performances*. I did so specifically as these academics were able to connect historically-written accounts of elephant performers, with scientific and sociocultural information about the impacts of performing had on the animals — information that would not have been accessible or as developed back then. I felt that using these resources helped to make the case study more well-rounded. When focusing on historical training methods and the relationships between trainers and elephants in the 19th and 20th centuries, I used a number of primary sources, particularly *Haney’s Art of Training Animals*, and Bill Ballantine’s *Wild Tigers and Tame Fleas*, as well as training accounts of Stuart Craven and Eph Thompson, which indicated the nature of the human-animal relationships created in captivity, from the perspective of trainers who felt training was in the best interest of the animal.

My goal for this chapter is to ultimately question the ethics behind incorporating animals into spectacle, not only in terms of their treatment onstage, but in light of the complete cultural shift that comes with removing an animal from the wild, and forcing them into a tamed performative parody of their wildness. As Steve Baker asks, can we be trusted with animals in art? (Baker 1). That is, can human artists be trusted to act ethically towards animals when it concerns not only the success of their works, but also the entertainment value that the work possesses? Additionally, when artists aim to ethically incorporate animals within their artworks - such as the elephant trainers who aimed to teach their charges through ‘kindness’ - how can we be sure their definition of ‘ethical’ matches what the animal performer would want for itself?
4.2. Act Two: The Animal as Educator in Hyperreality

What *would* the animal performer want for itself? This is a question that popular institutions like zoos and aquariums often claim that animals cannot answer for themselves, and therefore they must act with the best interests of the animals in mind (Dempsey). Zoos and aquariums present themselves as a “last resort” (Scigliano 293): “this mission justifies the pleasure we get from viewing captive animals and the enrichment zoos derive from exhibiting them” (293). With this in mind, I wanted to look at another popular role and theme for animals within art: that as an educator. I analyzed what educational relationships are created between audiences and animals, through live animal exhibitions. How does positioning the animal as a proxy educator for life in the wild, through a performative context, help or hinder the framing of wildlife conservation issues, and the well-being of the real captive performing animal?

This is geodrama’s second act, characterized by a confidence in ‘conquering the globe’ (Chaplin xx). Nowhere is this sense of conquering more evident in the realm of animal performers, than in the capture of orcas for aquarium entertainment. SeaWorld incorporates orcas into performances that make claims to education and conservation benefits, but what really are we learning from these shows? I will look at how the ‘conquering’ context of orca capture is obscured from performance, and also how individual orcas are psychologically ‘conquered’ into becoming performers. Chaplin also notes that this act of the geodrama is characterized for expecting success from efforts, and I will look at how SeaWorld, much like the circus, structures animal performers into narratives of success, which often evade truths. Zoos and aquariums position themselves as the only viable avenue for wildlife access (Shani 33). It is predicated on conquering and taming nature, capturing and containing the animal performer, and these actions having positive and educational results for the institution, animal, and audience alike. Analyzing
the situation of orca performers within this second act will give a sense of the human-animal relationships involved in the creation of something like Shamu.

I will also be looking at the live performing animal in the context of a ‘hyperreality’, in which the captive animal comes to stand in for the wild animal so much that they effectively replace the ‘wild animal’ in audience minds. This essentially obscures anything that could be learned about real life in the wild. The animal as an educational tool in performance erases the agency of the real animal, in favour of providing palatable, unproblematic information to human audience members, generally at the cost of animal lives. This is entertainment, under the guise of education. Aquariums have become the primary method of marine animal access in North America (Shani 33), presenting themselves as a ‘last resort’, “justifying] the pleasure we get from viewing captive animals and the enrichment zoos derive from exhibiting them” (Scigliano 293). In fact, a study by the American Zoological Association [AZA] in 1997 showed that zoos and aquariums attracted more than one-hundred-thirty-four million visitors per year - more than professional basketball, football and baseball combined (275). The animals in zoos not only, as Tait noted, become “emblematic of their species” (190), but also push the representation of animals within zoos closer to a simulacra, as in the captive animals in their man-made enclosures become more real to spectators than animals in the wild. While many zoos have at their core educational mandates, Malamud notes that a captive animal offers little insight into the wild animal: they are not representative of how wild animals behave in the wild, but simply how a wild animal would behave when confined to an unnatural environment (Malamud 2). The animals quickly lose “species form” (Shepard 161) in favour of becoming a mirror for human
meanings culturally inscribed on animal bodies, carrying with them a wealth of signifiers on the circumstances of their captivity (Malamud 12).

I will analyze this educational hyperreality primarily through a case study that focuses on performing orcas in SeaWorld, with the aquariums stemming from a long history of zoological institutions’ positioning of live animals as ‘performers’ of their wild kin. I specifically focused on Shamu shows, a high-spectacle mix of aquatic acrobatics performed by orcas, and environmental interpretation intended to teach audiences to care for oceans (“Backstage of Believe”). People attend these shows to get a sense of ‘what if’: what if they could see a wild orca up close, in its own habit, but… safely? SeaWorld provide this opportunity, juxtaposing the freedom of people roaming through the stands, with the captivity of Shamu in its tank, acting ‘as if’ they would within their natural habitat.

Specifically captured and trained to be performers, orcas in aquariums are often presented alongside a litany of misinformation. SeaWorld, the popular company exposed for their mistreatment of animals in the recent documentary Blackfish (Cowperthwaite) and the investigative journalism piece Death At Seaworld (Kirby) aims to couple the spectacle of highly-trained performing orcas, with the goal of “educat[ing] and inspir[ing] visitors in a way to help conserve the environment and support wildlife” (Zimmerman). The educational aspects of their shows, such as Believe (Zimmerman) emphasize that orca life in captivity and in the wild are identical, that orcas leave their families at a relatively young age, and that their average lifespan is approximately forty years (Zimmerman). Each of these statements is untrue, and yet they are the foundation of education within SeaWorld’s performances. This is what spectators of shows at SeaWorld and other aquariums walk away believing. The performing orca not only becomes
more real to audience than the possibility of an orca in the wild, but they also supplant
fictionalized biologies for scientific realities: it is more palatable for a spectator to believe in the
legitimacy and ethics of an organization showcasing performing orcas, if they are truly
convinced that performing orcas are healthy, happy and leading lives no different than those in
the wild.

The lives they lead while captive performers are actually significantly different from lives
in the wild. Marine biologist Naomi Rose referenced Harry Harlow and Stephen Suomi’s study
of social deprivation in rhesus monkeys (Harlow 276) as a means of explaining the social
realities of captive orca performers. Investigations like *Blackfish* and *Death at SeaWorld* revealed
higher instances of orca violence, both towards other orcas and to trainers. For animals not
particularly violent *amongst one another* in the wild, this was curious behaviour for the
performers to be exhibiting. In Harlow and Suomi’s study, rhesus monkeys were deprived of
contact with other rhesus monkeys, specifically any mother-figure. They were then given a
mental monkey as a surrogate ‘mother’, designed to elicit violence responses via protruding
spikes or high-pressure air, to the rhesus monkey subject (276). Not only did they discover that
the rhesus monkey preferred the violent metal stand-in to having no monkey-like figure to
interact with at all, but researchers also found that the lack of socialization induced psychopathy
in the subject. When the subject was placed back in proximity to other rhesus monkeys, they
would lash out violently. In some cases, they would even kill their children, without recognizing
the social implications of these behaviours (Jensen 38). Rose’s observations on performing orcas
such as Tillikum (who has killed three of his trainers) suggests that between isolation from their
pods, and captivity in relatively small and concrete enclosures, performing orcas are being driven
to a fate similar to circus elephants (Kirby 180). Compounding this, the enclosures in which orcas live and perform are made of concrete, which are fantastic reflectors of sound energy, and for highly vocal animals - who, in the wild, vocalize amongst their pod for the majority of the day (Zimmerman) - this can cause intense echoes of the orca’s own voice (Warkentin). Those critical of SeaWorld’s claims of environmental authenticity for the orcas (Kirby; Zimmerman) liken the physical realities of performing orcas, to a human trapped in a sound-reflective bathtub, for forty years.8

I will be supporting this chapter with historical examples of animal performers placed in ‘educational’ roles, to trace the impetus to learn from animals, to what is actually learned. The two examples I will predominately use are: the role of animals in curiosity cabinets, and in early North American zoos. I feel these examples will help to round-out the positioning of animals as performative educators. Overall, in this chapter I will look at the impact of such education on the performers themselves. I will conclude with asking if these attempts at positioning the animal as education within an entirely human narrative have actually educated audiences at all. Have we actually learned anything about the real wild animal? For circuses, learning is intended as a byproduct of the spectacle - it is nice if it happened, but it is not the main intention. However, for zoos and aquariums, education is the point. If we’re learning more about captivity than we are about wild animals, what impact does that have?

For this chapter, I am drawing from a number of first-hand accounts of SeaWorld trainers, particularly David Kirby’s *Death at SeaWorld*, the documentary *Blackfish*, John Hargrove’s *Beneath The Surface*, and interviews conducted with a number of former trainers, like Samantha Berg and Mark Simmons. I will attempt to keep a balance between advocates for and against
captivity, in order to create a fuller analysis of what educational opportunities these performances are truly able to offer. Currently, there is no shortage of sources on orcas in captivity, from either the pro- or anti-captivity camps; however, none of the sources approach the issue entirely from a perforative or educational perspective, so my job here will be to analyze these documents within this light.

4.3. Act Three: The Animal as Intentional Performer

In Chapter Three, I divert from captive-based animal performances, and look at unconventional human-animal collaborations in contemporary performance art, with a focus on Olly and Suzi’s Shark Bite and Damien Hirst’s The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living. Olly and Suzi are a UK-based art duo whose work is predicated on interactions with live, wild animals, within their natural ecosystems. Their work is ‘created’ and ‘signed’ by three artists working in tandem: Olly, Suzi, and the animal they are observing. It is their mandate to create works representative of wild animals, that also encourage audiences to reflect on their relationships to animals, through providing artistic evidence of wild-animal encounters (Olly and Suzi 2). I compare their work to contemporary Damien Hirst, as his work is predicated on the display of dying, dead, or decaying animal bodies, as a means of accessing the sublime and analyzing the relationships between human artists, animals, and his audiences. Both of their works create unconventional human-animal artistic relationships, and are indicative, in very different ways, of Chaplin’s third act (Chaplin xxi) in which ‘circumnavigators’ begin to find nature ‘biting back’, or responding to the subjugation placed upon them.

My goal with this chapter is to look at how Olly and Suzi’s work radically differs from what has come before, in terms of their ethics of animal engagement, access to animals,
recognition of animal agency, and animal intentionality in art. By analyzing their works within these four themes, and looking at how their process and approach directly challenges and engages in a dialogue with historical animal performances, I was able to analyze how Olly and Suzi propose to set themselves apart, and whether their unique approach actually pushes the performance art work to consider unconventional human-animal relationships as viable alternatives, for the artists, animals and audiences alike.

Through this, I aim to decipher the next possible steps for human-animal relationships, specifically within performance, as after the events outlined in Chapter Two, it will be clear that we are very much at a crossroads with animals in art. Will we continue to exploit animals for art and entertainment, noting the possible negative impacts it can and does have, much in the same vein as Hirst’s work does? Or will we look to other possibilities and ways of artistically engaging with animals that prioritize agency and intentionality, as Olly and Suzi attempt to with their body of work. Olly and Suzi may even be positioned on the cusp of a fourth act, in which Chaplin suggests may be a more ecologically literate frontier, in which it is not a human explorer positioned against the world, but a whole-bodied experience of the world, on a stage “of planetary dimensions” (xix). I wanted to suggest that the closer one could come to this type of experience, the more able they would be to understand the lives of animals, and perhaps be able to represent the animal and their voice on an artistic level. This chapter is very much a theoretical investigation of what might come next.

I look at the animals incorporated in Olly and Suzi’s work, specifically the shark with whom they created their iconic piece _Shark Bite_, as intentional performers. An intentional performer has the ability to possess and express its own agency through the artwork. I ultimately
want to look at the impact it has on an animal performer, to be conceived of and related to as a subject with its own agency, and not as an object forced into a performance. As well, if animals can or do possess agency, can that agency ever be expressed artistically, in a way that we can understand? What would happen if, instead of speaking for performing animals by relegating them to particular, palatable and easily understandable roles, and layering those performances with an anthropocentrically-driven narrative, the animal performers instead have space to speak for themselves. What would this radically different approach look like, for human performers, animal performers, and audiences? In this sense, I will not look only at Olly and Suzi’s work, though their approach forms the core of my research here, but also draw from examples that both support the presence of animal agency - such Joseph Beuys, - and actively oppress it - Damien Hirst and Kim Jones in particular - in order to analyze the ability of an animal to be an intentional performer.

I analyze Olly and Suzi’s methods as a performance of ‘becoming-animal’, in which two distinct and unacquainted bodies encounter one another with the decided purpose of forging a new relationship (Deleuze and Guatarri 238). While very different from the previous chapters, I wanted to look at Olly and Suzi as the beginning of a potentially new trajectory for human-animal artistic relationships, which places the sustainability of wild animal lives as paramount to creating tangible encounters for their audiences. I found through analysis, and comparison to fellow contemporary artist Damien Hirst, the potential for more ethical human-animal artistic relationships that can be achieved simply by maintaining that animals have a right to independent existence, and our desire for artistic access to them should not supplant that. I do not conclude
that Olly and Suzi are the pinnacle of ethical artistic relationships with animals, but simply that their popularity points to a changing tide for animals within art.

I look to Olly and Suzi’s approach to the animal performer as a site of transgression, wherein the animal is not only a fascination and subject of their artwork, but a subject who is able to articulate its own agency and desire to become a participant in the performance. In this, Olly and Suzi’s work consciously speaks back to the various traditions of incorporating animals in performance, and proposes a vastly different relationship structure for human and animal performers, one which may begin to undo some of the negative traditions of the past. Considering why exactly Olly and Suzi opt to physically enter the wild animal’s habitat in order to create and imbue their art with the physical co-presence of their animal subject (Broglio xvii-xviii) gives more insight into artistic traditions to which they object: not only were these animals removed from their homelands in order to provide entertainment, but they were (and are still, in contemporary society, though to a smaller degree) confined to predominately unnatural physical and social situations. Evaluating Olly and Suzi’s work in opposition to previous works incorporating animal performers becomes a large part of my analysis.

My research into animal agency in art, and Olly and Suzi, is based predominately on their accounts of experiences making art with wild animals, as well as reviews and analyses of their works by critics. I will also analyze documentation of their work Shark Bite, as viewed through their self-produced documentary Instinct. As Olly and Suzi’s approach to making art with animals is relatively novel, I will be looking at their work from more of a theoretical perspective, drawing from Broglio and Baker’s writings on the surface value of animals, Nagel’s work on the impossibility of accessing animal interiority and understanding what it might be like to be an
animal, and through Deleuze and Guatarri’s concept of ‘becoming-animal’. My hope is that by putting these works in dialogue with Olly and Suzi’s artistic approaches, I can further explore the unconventional human-animal artistic relationships they create, and determine what their approach has to offer future groups who want to bring animals into performance.

5. Afterward

A few quick notes. First, I recognize that when talking about “our” relationship with nature, I am obviously excluding peoples and cultures with a much healthier relationship to nature, both historical and contemporary. I have tried to indicate this where possible, including the historical relationship of mahouts (elephant trainers) to Asian elephants, the Maasai people in Kenya to African Savanna elephants, and Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest in Canada to orcas. There are obviously hundreds of examples I could have included as well, so when I generalize and say “our culture has a destructive relationship to nature”, what I am referring to is the mainstream, the dominate hegemony, both to save space (as typing “mainstream dominate hegemony over and over would quite quickly up this page count), and as much of our education and entertainment comes from within this system, I feel that this is what must be problematized and dismantled.

I also endeavoured to use personal pronouns — they/their — when referring to animals, as I wanted to work against the objectification of animals within performance. So often, animal performers are referred to as ‘it’, as if they are only objects to be moved by and through the will of a human trainer. As much of my research will conclude, there is much to be gained by looking at expressions of animal agency and interiority, and by personal pronouns, I hope to contribute to support these expressions. There are notable exceptions though. Many of the historical texts I
draw from use the pronoun “it”, and I felt it was most accurate to maintain that distinction, or accuracy particularly within quotes. As well, when writing about Hirst’s work, I will be using the pronoun “it” to refer to the body of the shark as it appears in *Physical Impossibility* and other incarnations of the work. Hirst as well refers to the animals he uses as “it”, and I have kept these instances as well in order to speak more clearly about his personal relationship with artistic animals.

As well, much of this research is not explicitly theatrical. When looking at cases of animals in performance, I felt it prudent to dig into their daily lives - both wild and captive - to provide an accurate picture of the impact of the artistic representations of animals within each performance form — performance art, circuses, zoos and aquariums. Specifically, I have included information on the negative health impacts of on performing elephants and orcas, to illustrate the potentially destructive role that theatrical performance can have on representing non-human animals. Throughout all of this, my consideration was about the responsibility of the theatrical form in general to some of these findings.

If we are to now, or ever, transition away from our current fearful act in this geodrama, towards a more ecologically literate frontier, or a ‘fourth act’ as Chaplin would say, and if theatre has always been the mirror in which human culture is reflected (May 95), then the way we represent nature through performance will become integral to the creation of this new act. By putting circus elephants, SeaWorld orcas, and Olly and Suzi’s unconventional human-animal artistic relationships into conversation, the hope is that we can come to a fuller understanding of what harmful representations have been created and perpetuated in the past, and how we might come to learn from these and really question our desire to include animals in performances.
The idea of ‘theatrum mundi’ originated in Ancient Greece, and was popularized through Shakespeare’s ‘all the world’s a stage’ metaphor.

Gottschall points to several possible evolutionary benefits to storytelling, from Darwin’s assertion that storytelling is part of sexual selection (27), to instruction, and even cognitive play that helps the storyteller rehearse for potential real-life situations. Gottschall likens storytelling, in a sexual selection sense, to “peacocking displays of our skill, intelligence, and creativity - the quality of our minds” (Gottschall 27). In terms of cognitive play, Gottschall looks at studies of innate child’s play - the stories children make up on the spot or when playing pretend in a group. Brian Sutton-Smith, play scholar, says, “the typical actions in orally told stories by young children include begin lost, being stolen, being bitten, dying, being stepped on, being angry, calling the police, running away or falling down. In their stories they portray a world of great flux, anarchy, and disaster” (Gottschall 34). The centrality of disaster within these stories may provide a cognitive ‘work-out’ to enable the storyteller to cope should any of these situations become reality: “through stories we learn about human culture and psychology, without the potentially staggering costs of having to gain this experience first-hand” (28).

As a test, he asks his grade-school daughter to recount what she learned in history class. She dutifully tells him that “in 1642 Columbus sailed the ocean blue” and landed in North America (Gottschall 124), but as Gottschall notes, that is a conveniently created myth, leaving out the fact that Columbus actually landed in the West Indies, and subsequently set about actively enslaving the Arawak people who lived there.

This can be connected to another term within the field of animal studies - zooësis. Chaudhuri coined the term to cover the field of animal discourse and representation (“Animal Acts” 5). Zooësis looks at all of the ways an animal is incorporated into a discourse, including how they are “constructed, represented, understood, and misunderstood” (“The Stage Lives of Animals” 5). The aim of this project — which is echoed in both Kuhl and May’s questions - is to “valorize the animal and bring a heightened ethical attention to human-animal relationships” (5). The incorporation of ethics into animal-based performances is a theme that will be dealt with throughout the research.

At the time, Sri Lanka was then called Ceylon.

We can also look at this through the project of literalization. Chaudhuri defines this as a “steady focus on - or return to - the animal or animals around whom the performance revolves […] never forgetting the animal and […] always asking ‘where is the real animal in all this’” (“Animal Acts” 5).
Zoos initially had entirely educational mandates, though that was not always at the heart of why they were founded. In the 1700s, zoos were referred to as “rational amusements” and exercise for the mind as well as for pleasure (Kalof 119), and the goal of depicting animals as situated within a microcosm of their “natural habitat” (119) amounted to decorating surrounding concrete enclosures with “tropical foliage” (119), a poor stand-in for the animal’s natural ecosystem, but a convincing ruse for those yearning for access to wild animals. Berger noted that “public zoos came into existence at the beginning of the period which was to see the disappearance of animals from daily life” (Malamud 30), primarily through urban expansion and habitat destruction. The physical co-presence of wild animals was reduced within an increasingly anthropocentric space, and people were fascinated with the idea of ‘what else’ might be out there in the wild (30). This led to very similar, although much more sedentary, social conditions for captive zoo animals, entertainers in their own right, positioned to live within an ongoing performance of what their life might be like in the wild.

In addition to this, the orca becomes a very salient example of this juxtaposition between supposedly wild and actually captive. Again, as places like SeaWorld maintain that the orcas’ captive environments are no different than their wild homes, it become necessary to note that while the conditions of captivity generally cause a significantly shorter life-span, and a host of health problems, perhaps the most distinct issue here is that aquariums like SeaWorld place both Southern and Northern residents together in man-made pods with transient orcas (Zimmerman). Some marine biologists actually consider residents and transients to be two distinct species (Kirby 72), and at the very least, studies into orca vocalizations note that they ‘speak’ different languages (Zimmerman). While Northern and Southern residents do share some ‘vocabulary’, their languages have nothing in common with the transients (Zimmerman). Aquariums like SeaWorld do not acknowledge the distinction between groups. So, imagine that in compounding this ‘bathtub’ analogy, the human in question also has to share that same area with a group of strangers, none of whom even speak the same language.
2. The Animal as Spectacle in Entertainment: The Historical Importance of the Elephant Performer

The old saying is that one should never share the stage with either children or animals. While perhaps excellent advice, it is given in jest, referring to the potential slow-downs or annoyances - or upstaging - that may come with working alongside more unpredictable characters. But what of performances that rely specifically on the allure of animal performers - the hand-standing elephant, the dancing bear, the team of lions leaping into tall pyramid formations? There is a drive to see just what they can do, what they can learn to do, and how close they can come to seeming almost human. There is a majesty and wonderment inspired by close encounters with the great megafauna, the last vestiges of the still wild world. Within this spectacle the old saying should rather read ‘never have a stage without a wild animal’, as some of our most culturally beloved forms of entertainment are built on the backs of animal performers.

And that is why one should never share the stage with an animal.

When it is said that entertainment is ‘built on the backs’ of anything at all, what springs to mind are images of hard-working playwrights, directors, actors, designers, producers, stage managers, and so on, who perhaps dedicate their entire lives to artistic creation. It evokes a sense of nobility and selflessness, of total preoccupation and devotion, even to the point of self-sacrifice: when the work comes before one’s physical and mental well-being, when they become so much a part of the work that they could no more divorce themselves from the performance, than the performance could exist without them. This, of course, presupposes that a choice has been made, that the owners of the ‘backs’ upon which the performance is built have at one point consciously exercised their agency and knowingly embarked into this life.
This was historically not the case with the vast majority of animals in spectacle-based performances. By ‘spectacle-based’ what I am referring to are performances in which the physicality, aesthetics and visual experience are paramount to narrative or dramatic structure. In the case of spectacle-based performance with animals, some of this was a necessary decision. Without common language between human and animal performers, the emphasis is generally placed less on a shared verbal narrative and more on a shared visual narrative. In this, it can be argued that both human and animal are working towards common creative goals, in terms of building towards particular stage images. Take, for example, the 19th- and 20th-century North American circus, where animals such as elephants were depicted by their trainers as willing participants and eager performers (Daly 21; Scigliano 177):

- “his intelligence makes him as near an approach to Man as Matter can approach Spirit” (Shettel 10).
- “[with their] superior reasoning faculties or instincts […] they could be made to do the hitherto deemed impossible” (“A Chat About Elephants”).
- “Willingly, they respond to every wish of their master […] They play musical instruments, they execute military drills, fight sham battles, die on the field, and are buried with military honours; they roll ten-pins, tally their own score, and grow enthusiastic over the same just the same as a local bowling team would do. They are, without a doubt, the finest, cleverest, and quickest performing Elephants in the world” (“Miller’s Elephants”).

With all of these quotes in mind, it becomes evident that animals in spectacles are depicted as nearly co-creators of the visual stage. In fact, trainer George Arstingstall went so far as to say that “no circus, however small, could hope to exist without an elephant” (Nance 221). The elephants were the workhorses of the circus, who pitched the three-ring tents, pulled the heavy equipment, led the parade of performers into town, and drew the crowds at every stage from posters to post-show merriment. Without the elephant, and their wild animal co-performers, the
circus would not have grown into such a popular cultural tradition at the time - and it largely hinged on the notion that the elephants were participating willingly.

However, while the circus and similar spectacle-based performances were creating their fame, fortune and foundations ‘on the backs’ of these animal performers, there is a notable lack of exercised agency. Animals chosen for spectacle-based performances were often captured from the wild or bred in captivity, constrained from natural activities, taught acts through operant-based conditioning where nutrition was at stake, and often suffered shorter life-spans and a higher rate of critical injuries than their wild counterparts. Can it be argued that no performing animal ever willingly consented to become the bedrock of spectacle? Simultaneously, can it be argued that a spectacle such as the circus would not have amassed near the amount of popularity that has helped these arts endure, were it not for animal performers? Could, for example, the 19th century circus have been built upon the backs of any human performer, or are animals within art more foundational than we admit?

In this chapter, I will investigate the implications of having cultural performance traditions built ‘on the backs’ of non-consenting animal performers, transforming the wild animal into an object of spectacle, the primary draw to the stage. I will be focusing predominately on 19th and early 20th Century North America, as a locus of change in performative human-animal relations. I will argue that increasing exposure to animal performers through spectacle brought audiences to unrealistic and potentially damaging outlooks on both wild and captive animals, the consequences of which can still be recognized today.

Theoretically, I will analyze this research through the lens of Joyce Chaplin’s geodrama as a ‘full-bodied performance’ of the world. Chaplin says that the first act of the geodrama is
predicated on a fear of the unknown (Chaplin xx), or an attempt to learn one’s place within the world. She makes this observation in looking at early sailors embarking on global exportation and explorations routes, such as Magellan, and notes that there was a very real expectation that those who left the known oceans would not return (Chaplin xx). Fear of the unknown, and a desire to survive the wild, fuelled these performances (xx). I acknowledge that geodrama and circumnavigators may bear a tenuous connection to looking at animals in performance. However, many parallels begin to emerge, predominately through the narratives of historical circus trainers in their endeavours to ‘conquer’ feared wild animals, and also encountering a fear of the unknown. Famed circus trainer Bill Ballantine, for example, often acknowledged that in his attempts to discover the limitations of his relationships to the wild world and animal performers, he may not return (Ballantine 90). This suggests that performance with animals can also be viewed a whole-bodied performance of the earth, a human-animal drama played out on a global stage. Along these lines, John Berger suggests that animals are the lens through which one learns about the world (Berger 10), and I will use questions of this and geodrama to ask what exactly it is that we learn from sharing the stage with animals. Finally, I will also draw from May and Kuhl’s questions regarding ethical relationships to and representations of animals within art.

My main area of focus in this chapter will be a case study on the incorporation of elephant performers in the 19th and 20th century American touring circuses. I have chosen to focus here specifically based on the sheer amount of historical resources which depict the centrality of these animal performers within the circus. The resources I have found also demonstrate how narratives of animal incorporation were inherently flawed or intentionally skewed in order to support the circus business. As well, as elephants are among the largest
megafauna and foreign to most parts of the world, the first experience most will have had with this animal in the 19th and 20th Centuries was within a performance like circus. Simply by taking the form that the elephant does - the long trunk, the big ears, the way they move - audiences are attracted to see what they will do and how they will behave. The circus made it possible to do this without leaving the comforts of civilization - without tracking the animal into the wild. The performing elephant sits perfectly between being an element of a foreign wilderness, and part of our own culture. By analyzing the roles the elephant held within these two categories - largely, as a ferocious wild animal, or a domesticated curiosity - one can see that both our narrative and physical treatment of performing animals are largely a reflection of how we culturally view human-animal relationships.

My intent is for the historical case study within this chapter to provide a foundational view of human-animal performing relationships, that I will go on to analyze in a contemporary setting in the second chapter. Finally, I aim to provide an understanding in this case study of how animal performance narratives were developed, so I can expand on this within my final chapter, where I propose that if we can alter performing narratives to illuminate issues inherent in captive performing animals, then perhaps we can spark an evolution in our cultural relationships towards animals. The circus elephant within this section will be the gateway to both subsequent explorations. To achieve this, I will question how realities of capture and captivity are obscured in order to present the illusion of willing animal performers on stage, ultimately superimposing an entirely palatable and human narrative on the animal performer. I will discuss how this role for animal performers was created, perpetuated, and look for ways that it can ultimately be problematized and dismantled.
1. Research and Analysis

I want to make a note on the resources I used. My research comes from a mix of historical sources, and contemporary analysis. Historically, I drew from the work of circus producers, animal trainers, circus promoters, and those involved in animal acquisition, including Ballantine, Barnum, Day, Haney and Tennent. These are fantastic insights into human-animal relations during the circus heyday of the 1800s and early 1900s. However, the information they include is very clearly in support of their industry and the idea that animals belong in the circus, so that audiences may see and experience them. This is not surprising for the time, but I feel that any analysis of historical circus that depends solely on these resources is necessarily limited.

In light of these limitations, I decided to draw much of my analytical research from contemporary sources. The resources I have included were able to draw from additional fields - such as animal behaviourism, welfare, and ecology. These additional contexts provide a much more well-rounded explanation of what may have actually been happening to circus animals, beyond the narratives that producers needed to justify the captivity. This is information that could not be gleaned from historical sources, in part because the fields were not as well-developed then.\textsuperscript{12} Drawing further information and analysis from writers like Alexander, Bradshaw, Daly, Nance, Seigliano and Tait helped me to place the historical information into the context of sociological and scientific information that had not evolved at the time people like Barnum were working.

What I am doing that is unique, I think, is combining the historical sources that show the stated intentions of circus producers, and putting them into conversation with contemporary sources that show the probable outcome of these actions. I believe this helps to make the historical writings on circus animals stand out more as products of time - and natural
anachronisms in a contemporary setting. Moreover, I believe it will help to highlight the stark contrast between what circus promoters claimed the audiences would be learning about animals, and what was actually learned.

2. The Animal as Object

I want to first outline how it became possible to incorporate an animal into a performance without their consent. What systems and beliefs must be in place in order for this to occur? I will quickly look at some historical instances and theories behind the characterization of ‘animal’ as ‘object’ rather than a being with agency. I believe this is an important distinction to make as it speaks to a how we arrived at the position of building performances on the backs of animals. What is the process through which animals came to be largely associated with mindlessness, and therefore unworthy of agency, particularly in the field of arts and entertainment? John Berger notes a curious juxtaposition in our cultural relationship to animals, in that “a peasant becomes fond of his pig, and is glad to salt away its pork” (Berger 5). For Berger, key to that sentiment “is that the two sentences are connected by an and and not by a but” (5), as in we are delighted by the animal itself, and also have no qualms about using the animal as an object. It is this objectification that is key to the role in which animals have been positioned as performers on stage.

Berger produces a theoretical explanation for how this might have occurred. He says that when we look at animals, we are seeing beings who are both remarkably alike us, and incomprehensibly unalike us. We are alike in that humans and animals are both sentient and moral characters - those worthy of being the spiritual and historical guides - and unalike in terms of physicality, and that is the gap we cannot seem to cross (Berger 2). Berger refers to this as an
“abyss of non-comprehension”, supported in part by a lack of common language, or even the ability to communicate linguistically in the same manner. Whereas between two people who speak different languages, the existence of a recognizable language still ‘proves’ that the other person exists (3). But the lack of an even remotely common language served to solidify the distance between people and animals (4). Derrida notes this as well when he says that human language can in fact imprison animals. We use the one word ‘animal’ to “corral a large number of living beings within a single concept” (Boyde 2), and at the same time deny animal agency to name or distinguish on their own.

Foucault’s theories of inequality within power relations can be examined to build on this. He writes that “social power operates through regime of privileged speakers” (Jensen 19), and those who possess the ability to enter into language and this regime are ‘real’, while anything outside of this is only ‘conceptual’. The ‘real’ consists of those whose ‘selves’ are “constantly decreased from a person’s silently formed or overtly expressed ‘I’ and ‘me’ sentences” (Sarbin 337), or in other words, the ability to formally and identifiably state ownership over an object. These objects exists on the ‘conceptual’ level, unable to communicate within the system and presumed devoid of autonomy. This is the realm in which animals exist, and is key to understanding why their presence on stage is not commonly problematized. Outside of language, “pronouns have no context or meaning” (337), meaning that ownership cannot be expressed, and if one cannot own, then theoretically they can be owned - or at least that is the position in which we find our relationship to animals has evolved. Animals, within this distinction, can become real though human ownership whose “defining characteristic is that it relies upon clearly delineated things” (Stefanovic 46) and the ability to express ownership over these things. As
objects, we could relate to animals as we would any other stage prop - albeit, harder to wrangle
and more highly trained.

Descartes played a significant role in distinguishing between the ‘real’ and ‘conceptual’
when it comes to the gap between humans and animals. Philosophy in the Enlightenment
“look[ed] at animals as philosophical and ethical subjects” (Kalof 97), with an interest in the
subject spurred by the availability of print media depicting animals, as well as the popularity of
bear-baiting and vivisections. During the Enlightenment, Descartes was a proponent of animals
as mere surface objects - unfeeling beings lacking the language, thought and feeling required to
be a conscious being. In his ‘beast machine’ theory, Descartes looks at animal behaviour and
skill, and likens them to a ticking clock, a very accurate - not intentional - machine (98). His
theory stated that there are two criteria, or tests, one can rely on for the identification of a
conscious being: speech and intention (Descartes 281). Speech, Descartes felt, is the only means
of expressing interiority, and even humans who were without vocal speech were able to make
themselves understood through signs and gestures. The fact that animals “never use speech or
other signs as we do when placing our thoughts on record for the benefit of others” (281) was not
that animals are physically incapable of communicating in a human manner, Descartes thought,
but simply that animals possessed no thoughts (Masson 18). Secondly, while animals can
complete complicated tasks and actions, such as finding food or building shelter, they do “not act
from knowledge, but only from the disposition of their organs” (Descartes 281). Essentially,
animals are automated beings responding solely to external stimuli, in manners required for their
sustenance and survival. Responding to critics who debated this relegation of consciousness to
speech and intention, Descartes argues for the “principle of parsimony, in which one always must
begin with the simplest of explanations of observed phenomena" (281), and every observed action of non-human behaviour could, he felt, be explained just as well in the absence of mind and consciousness (Descartes 281, Masson 9).

This, of course, denies the possibility of animal interiority - or any inner lives that we are unable to access through the gulf between human and animal communication. This also creates a series of subjugated knowledges, which are knowledges purposely disclosed from the dominant discourse as “historical contexts that have been buried or disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemization” (Foucault 81). Subjugated knowledges are not usually referred to in a non-human context, but it stands to reason that if there is an ‘abyss’ between humans and animals, and if recognizable language is that barrier, then it is likely that there is something across that abyss that is being formally denied inclusion in the ‘real’. The burial or denial of these subjugated knowledges allows for a ‘business as usual’ mentality, or the ability to continue on with regular life without significant contradiction, as the incorporation of these knowledges would dismantle key elements of our existing ideology. This is not a new suggestion. Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, a zoologist in the 1700s, said:

To the same degree man has raised himself above the state of nature, animals have fallen below it: conquered and turned into slaves, or treated as rebels and scattered by force, their societies have fade away, their industry has become unproductive, their tentative arts have disappeared; each species has lost its general qualities, all of them only retaining their distinct capabilities, developed in some by example, imitation, education, and in others, by fear and necessity during the constant watch for survival (Berger 10).

Essentially, if for example it were revealed that, as Christopher Manes notes, “the entire world used to speak [...] the birds have something to say. So do worms, wolves and waterfalls” (A
Language Older Than Words 361), then we would have to significantly reconsider our positioning of animals as objects.

For these reasons, Berger suggests that we look at animals across this abyss with “ignorance and fear” (Berger 3), much like Chaplin suggests early circumnavigators approached their expeditions, as if successful completion would negate either a complete change of cultural ideology, or lead to death. What is at the root of this fear, Richard Ryder suspects, is that we are not as separate from animals as we are led to believe. In his article on the ethics of laboratory animals, he suggests that, “If nonhuman animals are sufficiently similar to humans for them to be used as scientific models in research, then they are sufficiently similar to be accorded a similar moral status” (Ryder 89). We grant animals similarity to use under circumstances that support our total separation from them, while at the same time being dependent on our similarity to them. If the ‘abyss’ were to become smaller, or even bridged in some small way, this would destabilize the system which allows and perpetuates animal objectification - allowing for the conceptual identities to even be theorized as non-human subjects - which would ultimately demand a reconsideration of the domination that humans, in both contemporary and historical cultures, have claimed over nature. From a Cartesian perspective, if animals are mindless objects, then Berger suggests that we naturally associate them with a sort of happy innocence (Berger 10), which provokes a nostalgia. It is easiest, based on our cultural principles, for animals to remain in the ‘conceptual’ or ‘object' category, as any rise from this would be, in some ways, akin to a puppet breaking off its own strings and taking control of the show.
3. The Animal Object as Surface Value

What otherwise hidden knowledges would the puppet have to reveal based on their experiences on the other side of the strings? When the performing animal is reduced to object, their total value is relegated to the surface they become more concept than actuality. They are relegated to aesthetic appearance, physicality, and the base idea of what the animal is or should be. Reducing animals to their surface value considers only its biological elements, the “visible and tactile exterior” of their bodies (*Living Flesh* 104), stripped of “the means of thinking and productivity” (104), or concessions that they might have interiority, “self-reflectiveness, memory, depth, and the ability to process events” (*Surface Encounters* xvi), or even be aware of their environments just as well as we are (86). Heidegger says that “the stone is worldless; the animal poor in world”, but only humans are “world-forming” (86). Animals, as we have conceptualized them, are believed to perceive the world as only ‘flat’, or surface. Broglio notes that as soon as we limit our perception of animal depth, “we corralled them under the concept *animal*” (xvi), and began to relate to them as we believed they relate to the world - as Heidegger would say, “as water in water” (86). Christopher Balme notes this as well - that animals exist outside of semiotics because they only possess a surface value. As I mentioned in the introduction, animals are, in Derridian terms, “pure presence” (Balme 84), the “place where the closure of representation occurs and theatre necessarily ends” (84). In Lacanian terms, animals on stage represent a moment at which the “signifier in fact enters the signified […] rais[ing] the question of its place in reality” (Lacan 417) and short-circuits (Zizek 82). Balme is therefore suggesting that performing animals cannot take on any additional meanings beyond what their surface dictates - they can only be exactly what they are.
If the animal is limited to its surface value, then how does the artist go about selecting what elements of that surface are to be represented or highlighted? Any evidence of animal existence beyond surface value would be problematic for the images and performances created. If one is going to use an animal body on stage, it would be in the service of a particular image or narrative that supports how the animal came to be on stage in the first place, or how the ‘abyss’ between humans and animals positions the human performer as almost a puppeteer in control of animal bodies. Berger writes that when surface value is predominant, the animal has been “co-opted […] into the spectacle” (Berger 13), reduced to its raw materials - food, clothing, meat, and in the case of art, its primary entertaining qualities (11).\(^\text{15}\) For animals in performance, its primary entertainment quality is the innate sense of fascination that accompanies seeing the wild in person. Elizabeth Grosz looks at how we become fascinated with anything, and points to two distinct processes. On one hand, if something is ‘fascinating’, then it has to “attract, irresistibly enchant, [and] charm” (Grosz 6), which clearly animals do. We are drawn to animals, to a connection with them, viewing them both in the wild and in captivity. On the other hand, to ‘fascinate’ means to “deprive a victim of the powers of escape or resistance by look or presence” (Grosz 6), meaning that fascination is always a duality of wonderment and aggression (6). It is about selecting the attractive quality of the surface value, and denying all other substance beyond that: the animal within art can be one thing only, even if that is an illusion.

So what exactly is it that draws us to animals in performance, or more accurately, what is it about them on stage that would draw viewers towards their surface value? Woodward says that animals, particularly exotic animals, are “always already spectacle” (Woodward 9), in that by
combining our unfamiliarity with their forms, the sense of majesty and fascination inspired, and perhaps a measure of our own convenience, we are drawn to them.

4. Theorizing the Distance Between Human and Animal Interiority

I want to look at how Deleuze and Guatarri characterize the relationships between humans and animals, as I feel they have a simple yet effective means of depicting the distance necessary for an animal to be transformed into an object. For them, the primary condition of the relationships is distance from the animal itself (*Living Flesh* 107), and that space is generally predicated on what separates humans from animals - that abyss. According to Deleuze and Guatarri, natural history conceives of relationship between humans and non-humans in terms of ‘series’ and ‘structure’, or the taxonomical differences that exist between species. Understanding this, I believe, can be foundational to linking historical human-animal relationships, and more contemporary relationships, such as within 19th-century circus elephants.

According to the theorists, a ‘series’, simply described as ‘a resembles b’ (Deleuze and Guatarri 234) is a relationship in which everything correlates in degrees to a “quality as the principle behind the series” (234), or to a perfection, the Platonic ideal of what something should be.

A relationship between humans and non-humans along a series could also be conceptualized as a method of distancing humans from nature, which is essential when looking at these past performance traditions. Within this series, humans are perceived of as the pinnacle, the ideal to which all nature strives. If a resembles b (Deleuze and Guatarri 234), then in this case ‘a’ refers to the most wild and untameable animal, and b would be the most highly
developed animal, a person, so animal resembles human, but can never fully attain that position. If there were no space or difference between human and bear, could bear baiting occur? By maintaining this distance, theoretically we create the conditions for co-opting animals into performance unproblematically.

To 19th Century biologists and animal behaviourists, the term ‘sagacity’, or the degree of mental capacity and discerning qualities exhibited by an animal (Boddice 65), was a measure of that distance between wild animal and ideal human. The term was developed as a means of determining and discussing animal intelligence, by way of ordering them hierarchically, with humans at the top (65). The term was most often applied to an animal’s “ability to adapt to human surroundings and please people” (Nance 55). This serial relationship suggested that animals more readily docile or adaptable had a large sagacity, as they were closer, in comparison, to being human than wild animals who proved untameable. The larger the sagacity, the closer to civility, and therefore most easily integrated into human society. The belief in the sagacity of animals that, in part, helped in this transition to viewing the animal as object. It was believed that animals could be taught sagacity (Nance 72), trained into mimicking human behaviours, and through this domestication, animals could become closer to being human (Boddice 70), but the distinction remained: no matter how apparently sagacious an animal appeared to be, it was not to be trusted outside of strict human control. The more sagacious an animal, the more desirable and admired. The ultimate goal, however, in this process of “graduating resemblances” (Deleuze and Guatarri 236) would be an arrival at the ‘perfect’ being: human, with all of its consciousness and rationality, characteristics considered to be unique to humans.
The surface value of the animal performer is then that which positions the animal at an optimal distance from human performer: not too tame, or ‘sagacious’ so as to uproot the ‘superiority’ of the human performer, but not too wild so that the animal performer appears to pose any threat.

6. The Objectification of Animal Performers

The economic value of an animal performer is centred on how well its aesthetic can be projected onto the larger narrative of human domination of the natural world. By this, I mean that spectacles in which animal sub-ordinance is highlighted, or especially acts in which animal sub-ordinance is fought for an achieved by a human performer, are most successful. This evokes both the wonderment and aggression of Grosz’s concept of ‘fascination’, and propels the spectacle. If we return to the idea that a break in the perception of animal objectification would be akin to a puppet breaking its own strings an acting of its own accord, we can actually further conceptualize the animal performer, in terms of its commodification, as a puppet, strung and placed with precision to further the illusion of human dominance.

The comparison between animal performers and puppets is predicated on both the exacting of controlled movements, and who happens to be in control of the movements. A prime contemporary example of this is The Casselly Family, a European-based circus dynasty, and their elephant acrobatic act. It is an award-winning act, directed by the Casselly elders and veteran circus performers Rene and Alexia and performed by their children Merrylou and Rene Jr., and features a combination of tumbling, dancing, hula-hooping and acro-balancing, all on the backs of four elephant performers (“Casselly Family Video, 2012”). I first became aware of the troupe through Anders Riis-Hansen’s documentary The Circus Dynasty.17 Although I am speaking
historically within this chapter, their video provides a helpful illustration of this puppetry on which I will continue to build. In this video, the performers run across the backs of the elephants, leaping from one to the next as the audience applauds, and the act concludes with Rene Jr. completing a triple somersault from an elephant-launched springboard, landing on the back of another elephant (“Casselly Family Video, 2012”). Rene Casselly strives to create a narrative in which the elephants are members of his extended family, loved and treated as if they were his own children (Riis-Hansen), which creates an image of willing animal performers. However, this is where the idea of performance being ‘built on the backs of animals’ returns. These elephant performers are surfaces, much like moving tables, upon which the family competes the acrobatic feats. Each animal movement is carefully synced with the command of a human performer, as one misstep could mean the difference between Rene Jr. landing the triple somersault on an elephant, or missing entirely and hitting the ground. Puppets, likewise, move at the flick of a wrist or the tug of a string: it is not to say that there is no spontaneity in a puppet, or that unexpected movements cannot occur, but simply that there is someone in command of the strings who dictates the direction in which they should move in order for the performance to proceed. This is the manner in which the elephants of the Casselly family are presented to audiences: as carefully controlled family members.

Woodward suggests that puppets approximate the real, breathing bodies (Woodward 12), and their primary work is “the performance of life” (Woodward 12), or striving to “depict and embody life” (12). An animal performer’s work is to mimic that of the wild animal, to approximate the real animal body so that the strings - the human performers commands - simply disappear, or cease to be noticed for the duration of the act. I believe this occurs through the
presentation of notable physical characteristics that position the animal as truly wild, and yet at the same time tamed. In the case of the Casselly Family, it would be the majesty and gigantic stature of the elephant performers, projected against the minute and intricate tasks that they are asked to perform. If we look at Rene Jr.’s triple somersault, we can see that the elephant commanded to launch the springboard has been carefully positioned and trained to act at a specific time and with a specific amount of force, in order to project the acrobat perfectly so that the lands on the back of the second elephant. The elephant clearly has enough force to propel the acrobat much farther and faster than commanded, leading to potentially disastrous injuries, and Rene Sr., the elephant trainer of the family, is on stand-by to ensure that does not happen - or to create the illusion of this control. The elephant, as tame as they may be, is consistently led and commanded by Rene Sr., thereby giving the audience a sense that without this element of control, the act would fall apart. Yet, the elephant completes the movement with such grace and finiteness, that even though there is a sense that its ‘wildness’ could break through, the ‘tameness’ wins out, and the act is complete. The elephant upon which Rene Jr. is to land likewise stands steadfast, commanded to stay put and wait for the acrobat to land on its back. The elephants could, theoretically, do anything, but they are commanded to stay, and so they do.

The elephant performer sits between ‘wild’ and ‘tame’, at once dangerous and unpredictable, and a consistent and trusted performer. The focus is entirely on the body of the elephant, not its interiority, as it would be with the puppet. Its interiority is given to or imbued by the human performer controlling the ‘strings’. Any meaning or interiority, such as the elephants being beloved members of the Casselly family, is a human-driven narrative, and without this it is presumed that the elephants would be perceived as merely inert objects on a stage that no one is
watching. Jones notes that for actual puppets, the human puppeteer is the only one who can make
the audience believe in the inert object’s “life and credibility” (B. Jones 266). Even Kenneth
Feld, CEO of Ringling has said that the only reason people have learned to care about elephants,
is because they are showcased on stage alongside incredible human performers in spectacles of
daring: “No other institution has done or is doing more to save this species from extinction, and
that is something of which I and my family are extremely proud” (Feld Entertainment). 20

The audience then learns to relate the animals along these lines, oscillating between a fear
of what the once - and possibly still - wild animal might do, and wonderment at what they can
do. Puppets occupy a space between “the world of imagination and the world of actuality” (M.
Cohen 123) or the conceptual versus the real. The ‘world of imagination’ would evoke images of
the ‘wild’ and whatever illusions the audience has come to associate with landscapes and
ecosystems presumably beyond human culture - notably that of the world where its every animal
for itself, survival of the fittest enacted, and where animals are entirely ferocious, as far from
sagacity as one could be. The ‘real’ is that of utter control in captivity - the actual circumstances
in which the animal performer finds itself. By blending these two worlds, the animal performer is
raised to a position in which both realities are presumed to exist at once, striking a careful
balance. Puppets also confuse the distinction between ‘me’ and ‘not me’, in that they are operated
solely by a human body - a part of the ‘actuality’ - and we relate to the actions as something
animated by a human performer. Therefore, animal performers are an extension of ‘me’, but at
the same time they are seen to take on a life of their own, and in their wholly foreign bodies are
most distinctly ‘not me’ (124) - an extension of the ‘imagination’. This confusion of the self and
the other (123) could on one hand threaten to destabilize the system which distinguishes ‘human’
from ‘animal’, but on the other is carefully held in place by positioning the animal performers as “extensions of the [human] body” (124).

We can compare this to puppetry again when looking at the idea of ‘breath’. Breath is central to building the life of a puppet, as an “original movement” (Hanspring Puppet Co.). It serves to distinguish the actor from the puppet as the puppets’ struggle and desperation to live (Hanspring Puppet Co.), whereas the actor struggles to die, or fade into the background so that it can appear as if the puppet has no strings at all (Hanspring Puppet Co.). This is in contrast to the animal performer, wherein the distinction between human and animal performers, although blurred, still remains. The objective of ‘puppeteering’ an animal performer is maintaining the centrality of the human trainer in creating and sustaining the illusion of control: the narrative of the death-defying process of training the animal to appear on stage. The animal is supposed to appear as if they participate in the performance of their own accord, and yet they are entirely submissive to the human trainer. In this, the animal performer creates an abstraction of their reality where what the audience observes is a beguiling fiction - a ‘fascination’ under Grosz’s first definition where ‘irresistible charm’ is paramount (Grosz 6).

Where the charm lies is in the imagined ‘ferocity’ of wild animals, and in a nostalgia for the wild. In 19th Century circuses, for example, producers would heighten the illusion of animal ferocity, in conjunction with audience proximity, to elicit excitement and investment within the performance. Trained animals always had the ‘possibility of rebellion’: “trainers of ferocity took advantage of this expectation and rehearsed and staged disobedience in a sequence in which the trainer seemed likely to become a potential victim, only to escape at the last minute” (Tait 71). No matter how long the animal had been in captivity and highly trained, acts were presented as if
the animals could turn on their trainers at any moment (71). The illusion of ferocity was always more useful to the spectacle, than the presence of a truly wild and untamed animal. This relates both to the potential danger of the physical co-presence of humans and wild animals within a spectacle space, as well as to the danger posed to the spectacle if the circumstances through which a wild animal came to be incorporated into a performance were to be revealed. The entire spectacle is about subduing the animal performer, in order to re-create an image of ‘ferocity’ within an anthropocentric narrative.

This means that the audience is always looking at animals as if through photographs (Berger 14), with a sort of “technical clairvoyance”, carefully staged so that we at once acknowledge and forget the presence of the strings, and imagine the animal as within their natural habitat, or in the case of circus, acting as they would naturally, by choice (14). This is the erasure of the animal mind in favour of the animal image, and Berger notes that as a result, what we know of animals “is an index of our power, and thus an index of what separates us from them. The more we know [about the illusion] the farther away they are [in actuality]” (14), solidifying the conceptualization of animals as objects. Berger says that “animals are always the observed. The fact that they can observe us has lost all significance” (14), and it would not be dissimilar to say that it is just as likely, within this system, to presume we are at any time being actively watched by an actual puppet, whether or not someone is controlling the strings.

If ‘ferocity’ is the desired aesthetic, then that is the ‘product’ that spectacle-based performances featuring animals aim to sell. Based on our cultural relationship to animals as objects, I want to look at the translation of ‘animal as objects’ to ‘object as commodity’, as a means of further understanding how we relate to the animal performer. Georg Simmel, in his
1907 *Philosophy of Money*, said that the “inherent property of objects […] is a judgement made for them by subjects” (Appadurai 3). Objects become valuable when they “resist our desire to possess them” (Appadurai 3), and in this case, when it seems improbable for the animal-object to be co-opted and tamed into performance. For Simmel, if an object is to become economic, it should exist in the space “between pure desire and immediate enjoyment” (Appadurai 3), where the distance can be somehow overcome through economic exchange. Therefore, if the ‘desire’ is to depict a human-animal relationship in which the wild and ferocious animal is subservient to the human performer, then some transaction must take place in order for the animal performer to become a commodity.

7. **Case Study: Elephants in the 19th Century American Circus**

Appadurai suggests that if we look at objects in motion (4), from their origins, to human consumption, then it can illuminate much in the way of how we come to make valuation decisions (Appadurai 4). Essentially, “through the analysis of these trajectories […] we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things” (4), or what makes the puppets, the animal performers, ‘come alive’. To examine this, I will analyze how the development of the specifically North American circus was rooted in the introduction of the performing animal to dramatic stages, from touring menageries that paved the way through the first elephant in circus. While still making the argument that performing animals are related to as objects with only surface value, and that this surface value - the physical characteristics that inspire fascination - has become a commodity, I want to take a side-step and illustrate this point through discussing the inclusion of the 19th Century American circus elephant, the true back upon which the American circus tradition was built.21
7.1. Seeing The Wild: Touring Menageries Come to North America

Many early circuses in both the US evolved from touring menagerie exhibits. They were led by “strolling animal men” with one or two animals each (Ballentine 8; Daniel 162). Building from the history of curiosity museums, traveling menageries aimed to showcase the weird and exotic of the world. Menageries were initially separate from the circus. They would set up shop, promote the coming circus, and move onto the next town only when their ticket sales declined (Nance 22). Menagerie casts varied with the economic constraints of the circus, with smaller menageries operating more of a petting zoo featuring monkeys, snakes, burros or parrots (Alexander 104) and the larger ones showcasing dancing bears, trained horses, lions, tigers, wild cats, hyenas, baboons, elephants, and domestic animals, but only if they were “monstrous, talented, or deformed” (Kalof 115).

Showmen would advertise the exhibition of alert animals specifically, trading on the hope of seeing an animal in the wild - albeit, without the added threat of actually meeting a wild animal on its own turf (Nance 26), but this was often not the case. Animals were housed in “shifting den cages” only a bit bigger than the animal itself, “carried in wagons, unloaded by hand, and placed on sawhorses for public viewing” (26). As Nance noted, the animals were seldom moved from their cages, often bald from stress, starved, and reduced to pacing as their only form of physical exercise (26). Audiences, however, expected and demanded the alertness of animals, and so feats of trained animals were often looked at as a mark of the circus’ ability and professionalism. They marketed their exhibitions not only as entertainment, but as a principle source of education on exotic animals. The strolling men, or menagerie men as they were later called, proclaimed to have the most “thorough knowledge of natural history (theoretical) and be[ing] acquainted with its species practically” (274). Where else could one go
to learn about wild animals in the early 19th Century? People came to view the menagerie as an “instructional amusement that improved a community” (Nance 42), so much so that Coleman notes local schools who refused to let their students out of class to see “the menagerie’s procession through town ran the risk of a scolding […] What kind of educators would deny their young scholars the chance to see an elephant?” (Coleman 605). As Tait mentions, “together with zoos, traveling menageries provided the principle opportunities for the viewing of exotic animals” at the time (Tait 15).

7.2. The Spectacle of Elephant

The wildest of all animals to be introduced to the circus was the elephant. Nance notes that the use of captive elephants is a uniquely American addition to the circus (Nance 3). The first modern elephant on North American soil was brought here in 1796 as a foreign fascination, an immigrant from Sri Lanka, then called Ceylon, made to ‘come alive’ through puppeteering by her handlers. She could be used to capitalize on audience desires to see the wild, and - along with those who followed - became distinctly American through the evolution of the circus, so much that elephants have come to be seen as entirely synonymous with circus. She was simply named ‘Elephant’ (Alexander 105; Ballantine 274; Nance 3-15). She was not initially considered a performer so much as a procession leader. Elephant’s journey to North America was wholly an experiment, with importer John Crowninshield stating, “if it succeeds, I ought to have the whole credit and the honour, to, of course, for it will be a great thing to carry the first elephant to America” (Scigliano 177). Crowninshield, and Elephant’s eventual owner, menagerie man John Owen, essentially created the market for wild animal exhibitions in the United States. They believed that elephants could be showcased lucratively, without requiring a ton of training
or specialized knowledge (Nance 22). To return to the argument about animal objects becoming commodities, Appadurai describes the process through which an object enters into an economic state as a “commodity situation” - the “exchangeability (past, present or future) of some thing” (Appadurai 12), as well as the social and cultural contexts of that process. Before an object enters into a commodity situation it, Appadurai says it has a “commodity candidacy”, or a set of criteria or standards that “define exchangeability” (14), and the “cultural framework within which things are classified” (14) as valuable or invaluable. Before it can enter into a “commodity phase” (12), which is when an object is actually considered a desired product on the market (12), its exchangeability has to be determined - or there has to be a specific place for it within the culture. Prior to Crowninsheild’s injection of Elephant into the North American consciousness, there was no American market for elephants. Essentially, Crowninshield had to create a “commodity context” (15) for elephants, generating social arenas that linked the object-elephant to audiences (15), by both giving the audience what they want - a close-up encounter with a wild animal! - and at the same time, convincing the audience that this is what they wanted. This cyclical, symbiotic sales pitch not only drummed up ticket sales for this first Elephant, but also created a drive for audiences to want to see more.

Elephant was a marketing scheme, which in essence generated a commodity context for performing animals in North America. From 1796 until approximately 1799, Owen walked with Elephant, and a troupe of other menagerie men and their more common animals, up and down the eastern American coast, charging people between ten to twenty-five cents to simply view the elephant (Nance 15), a small price to pay for an animal which, prior to these experience, only existed in audiences’ imaginations. A New York newspaper even responded to seeing Elephant
live with a review, stating, “[i]t is the first ever seen in America, and a great curiosity” (20). Appadurai says that commodities in general lie "at the complex intersection of temporal, cultural, and social factors” (Appadurai 15), and the path from ‘purchase’ to ‘economic value’ that began with Elephant was spurred by a desire for reconnection with the wild world, a nostalgia for animals disappearing from daily life, and novelty. Who but the very worldly could say that they had seen an elephant in person, moreover touched one!33 Elephant’s trunk provides a strong example of this. Those who had never before seen an elephant - including her handler or other menagerie men at the time, had no understanding of how the trunk worked, so displayed it as sort of an elongated hand (Nance 25), until the showmen realized it “provided consumers with such emotionally-rich experience of elephant sentience” (25), and that touching the trunk heightened the sense of an “authentic animal encounter” (25). The sense of wonder generated from this helped to create a context in which elephants were culturally valued, and entered them into a ‘commodity phase’ (12).

Two ads about Elephant’s entrance into the North American culture demonstrate how this valuation proceeded, making elephants a desired commodity, and eventually a circus necessity. Advertisements were designed to create a strong narrative of both Elephant’s wild origins, and ‘his’ desire and delight in meeting the American public. Compare these two ads:

1. “He eats 130 weight a day, and drinks all kinds of spirituous aquas; some days he has drunk thirty bottles of porter, drawing the corks with his trunk. He is so tame that he travels loose and has never attempted to hurt anyone” (Scigliano 177).34
2. “There has just arrived from New York, in this city […] an elephant. He possesses the adroitness of the beaver, the intelligence of the ape, the fidelity of the dog. He is the largest of the quadrupeds; the earth trembles under his feet” (Daly 21).35
Both focus on the physicality of the elephant, drawing audience attention to the things that both liken Elephant to the audience - opening bottles of porter, for example - and distinctly separate her - the “earth trembling” under her feet. Interestingly, both ads chose to identify Elephant as male, when she was in fact female (Nance 18). This could be, in part, due to advertisers and reviews not knowing how to distinguish between male and female elephants, but more than likely it was a conscious choice by Owen, under the assumption that a male elephant would be able to inspire a greater sense of wonder - and fear. The ads also focus on the intersections of ferocity and domesticity, ensuring that Elephant is depicted as wild enough to inspire wonderment, but also tame enough that families would have no qualms about taking children to see her. They both paint Elephant as a willing participant. The ad Daly quotes specifically depicts Elephant as a creature who could very well trample the audience and cause serious harm (Daly 21), but juxtapose this with the broadside and its image of Elephant as ‘so tame’ she is able to travel loose (Scigliano 177). Through her ‘adroitness and intelligence’, it is presumed that she has chosen to be here.36

7.3. “A circus without an elephant is merely a carnival.”

This narrative propelled the desire for elephants on North American soil, and especially within entertainment, until at one point, George Arstingstall concluded that “no circus, however small, could hope to exist without an elephant” (Nance 221): they simply could not attract the audiences or funds to sustain the business.37 38 This is not even the greatest sentiment expressed about the impact elephants had on the developing North American circus. Consider these two statements outlining the importance of elephants to the circus:

- “A circus without an elephant would be like Hamlet without [Hamlet]” (Daniel 174).39
- “A circus without an elephant is merely a carnival” (Alexander 124).
- “The elephant is the hook on which the circus hangs” (Alexander 124, quoting P. T. Barnum).

By 1880, larger companies had herds of elephants traveling with them, and companies would have ‘elephant wars’ with competing claims about whose elephants were the largest, strongest and best trained. The ‘best’, usually, was the company who had the most: Barnum in 1851 with a “team of ten elephants” (Nance 146; Scigliano 186), Forepaugh’s circus with forty elephants in 1884 (Nance 146), and trainer Smokey Jones with Ringling Brothers and his herd of fifty-five elephants in the 1950s (Ballantine 261). All charged people simply for the privilege of seeing the animals when to the majority of North America, an ‘elephant’ was still more story than reality.

Elephant and other early circus elephants became interesting cases in the intersection of these two values - simultaneously ferocious and tame, dangerously exotic, and delightfully evoking a sense of grandeur. The narrative of a connection to the exotic was created through elephant appearances, names, and alleged backstories. Elephants were named as marketing tools to “cultivate the interest of the powerful but fickle American audience” (Nance 45). Exotic names like ‘Mogul’ denoted a sense of the wealthy and powerful empires from which the elephants were ‘donated’ (45). The elephants would likewise be adorned in “symbols of their [home country’s] power and sophistication” (47), as if they were visiting dignitaries. In another approach to the evoking a sense of the exotic, Tait suggests that “exotic animals from remote places embodied concepts of geography as they came to typify ideas of danger” (Tait 1). They would always be pictured in ads with giant tusks, even though the majority of early circus elephants were female Asian elephants, who have no tusks (32). This was done to play on human desire for a foreign physical form, something entirely alien and potentially lethal, and the
commodity value of the elephant performer’s surfaces helped to further the illusion of danger or ferocity: at any moment, the elephant could stampede or gore an innocent audience member with their tusks!

However, the elephant would always ‘elect’ not to, through the employment of the grandeur aspect of their narratives. The elephants were painted as “consumer-friendly animal[s] with a biography, noted individual habits, human friends, and a desire to travel around America for audience enjoyment” (Nance 41). This also connects to the trainer-elephant narratives that were generated to accompany their exhibition. The displays played on elephant’s memories of their trainers, and if they had fond memories of them, as Elephant was said to have of Owen, then the circus would stage a reintroduction, in order for the audience to see the elephant caress and greet the trainer upon his or her return (32). This promoted the idea that people could have a personal relationship with elephants, and moreover, that this is something elephants would want as well (32). This narrative would be quickly and unquestionably accepted by media sources, at least initially (68). This goes back to the idea of ‘sagacity’. Whereas elements of the exotic position elephant performers at a distance to human performers and audience members, elements of grandeur bring them closer, elevating them in the process of “graduating resemblances” (Deleuze and Guatarri 236). They are not ‘perfect humans’; however, early circus elephants were depicted as having made specific choices to journey to North American and take to the circus stages. Nance sees this as promoting the narrative of circuses as a “co-production in which each individual, human and non-human, had his or her own understanding of how to respond to the other party” within a performance (Nance 82), as if each had their own conscious
goals and desires for the show, foremost of which was to showcase themselves and become “emblematic of the body of a species” (Tait 90), or representative of all elephants.

By combining these two elements and positioning the elephant as sagacious, “animal bodies became enveloped in human emotion” (Tait 1), and the desire to see them on stage became even greater. They were a curiosity, and people longed to see them, but they were also sources of distrust and the type of curiosity that devalues potential for animal interiority, over possibility of exposing myths of their exteriorities.

7.4. Achieving Celebrity Through Performing The Impossible

If we trace the evolution of the performing elephants’ commodity phases past the 1850s, there is a stark change in the manner in which elephants are exhibited, as the menagerie and performative circus fully merge around this time (Nance 75), and the “intersection of temporal, cultural and social factors” (Appadurai 15) shift towards a desensitizing audience. Before this, elephants were large showpieces, there to look at, and otherwise often employed as workhorses to both lead a circus procession into town - and what greater marketing tool could be selected than the possibility of seeing, for the first time, a wild animal from a foreign land (Nance 49) - as well as physically build the circus by pulling up the centre poles and helping to secure the tent. The spectacle was in watching, touching, and being in proximity to wildlife.

However, ‘everyone’, at this point, had ‘seen’ the menagerie elephant, and no longer was it enough to simply stand next to one, or feed one, or ride one (Tait 76), but a “competitively inspired diversion” (Appadurai 17) had to be implemented to keep up audience attentions, to keep the elephant within this ‘commodity phase’ that made it a draw and an economic success
for the circus. Nathaniel Hawthorne noticed the beginnings\textsuperscript{41} of this trend for waining interest in simply animal exhibition, when he happened upon a Barnum show in 1838. He observed:

The country boors were continually getting within the barriers, and venturing too near the cages. The great lion lay with his fore paws extended, and a calm, majestic, but awful countenance. He looked on the people as if he had seen many such concourses. The hyena was the most ugly and dangerous looking beast, full of spite, and on ill terms with all nature, looking a good deal like a hog with the devil in him, the ridge of hair along his back bristling. He was in the cage with a leopard and a panther, and the latter seemed continually on the point of laying his paw on the hyena, who snarled, and showed his teeth. It is strange, though, to see how these wild beasts acknowledge and practise a degree of mutual forbearance, and of obedience to man, with their wild nature yet in them. The great white bear seemed in distress from the heat, moving his head and body in a peculiar, fantastic way, and eagerly drinking water when given it. He was thin and lank (Hawthorne 355-356).

Hawthorne notes that at this fairly lacklustre Barnum show, he witnessed a theatrical first: the moment in which trainer Isaac van Amburgh entered a lion cage and “put his arm and head into the lion's mouth, - all the spectators looking on so attentively that a breath could not be heard. That was impressive, - its effect on a thousand persons, -more so than the thing itself” (353). van Amburgh was, quite possibly, the first trainer to ever attempt this feat (Lewis 118). Whereas performances were once about showcasing the surface value of the animal, van Amburgh was the first to risk showcasing his own surface value. Theoretically, he could just as easily have been torn apart by the lion, like a bear baited by its audience. It could have been his very own theatre of humours, and yet it was not. I want to suggest this as a discernible moment in which the valuation of animal exhibitions took a performative turn, from simply viewing an animal and appreciating it for its surface value, to pressing the animal's surface value into theatrically strengthening the dual narratives of ferocity and domesticity, controlled by the exhibitors.
Lewis notes that, “[t]he novelty rapidly became established tradition and a bridge to other feats of human daring; thereafter, if posters displayed wild cats, almost always it was with the brave keeper in the cage” (118). This is the moment in which the cultural conditions of the performing animal’s commodity situation were altered. Looking back to the definition of commodity candidacy (Appadurai 14), which defines how an object can be moved in and out of value, it can be argued that for an animal in a menagerie to be a candidate before van Amburgh’s feat with the lion in 1838, that an animal would simply have to be physically co-present for the desired impact of fascination to occur. After this moment, the “cultural framework within which things are classified” (14) expanded to include the numerous feats of physical daring that could be attempted by an animal and their trainer. Just like a menagerie must have included an elephant after Elephant made her debut, after 1838, circuses evolved to necessitate feats of daring, and these acts had to continually increase in difficulty, if the circus was to remain competitive (Tait 76).

Acts like a trainer putting his head inside a trained lion’s mouth became standard to all circuses, not just in North America but in Europe as well, and a vast distinction can be seen in the way ferocity was employed in the acts. Clyde Beatty and Alfred Court, lion and tiger trainers from America and Paris respectively, both believed that the illusion of ferocity was integral to the acts, and although working in the 1930s, their philosophies and approach to training illustrate the drive and approach towards feats of daring. Beatty was the first to bring lions and tigers together - while narrated as natural enemies - within a large-scale performance (Ballantine 118), and he worked to make the lions appear more fierce than they actually were, as “since trained animals lessened appearance of danger” (Tait 38). Critics called this a very
Americanized approach (38), especially compared to his contemporary, Court, who was known as one of the first trainers to showcase the “obedient cleverness” (38) of the lions, while enclosing himself within their cage (45). His approach to showcasing the lions was more sophisticated than Beatty’s. Rather than simply exhibiting trainer control over the lions’ innate ferocity, his acts positioned the trained animals as representative of “European colonial geography” (Tait 39), so they had come to be presented within the further narrative of the British Empire, and thereby extensions of political successes. This placed Britain as the natural owners of the animals, and any training as simply ‘civilizing’. Both trainers acts centred on a controlled roar, wherein they would signal the lions to roar at a specific time (39), pushing the “possibility of rebellion” (71) to the forefront of the audiences’ minds. Tait says, “trainers of ferocity took advantage of this expectation and rehearsed and staged disobedience in a sequence in which the trainer seemed likely to become a potential victim, only to escape at the last minute (71). Regardless of how long the animal was trained to be docile, even if they had been raised entirely in captivity, the idea was that they could turn on their trainers at any moment, and “the staging of overt aggression […] suited modernist anxieties” (73). This fits well with Chaplin’s assertion that the first act of the geodrama aligns with a fear of nature and the wild, as if it might overtake any civilizing attempts to explore and expand human presence at any second. Even though the trainers could be reasonably sure that no actual rebellion would occur, the lion acts played with audience perceptions on this topic.

Van Amburgh, Beatty and Court worked with lions, who were often seen as more unreliable, naturally rebellious, and potentially dangerous. Court often spoke of the danger of ‘losing fear’ of the big cats (Tait 65), which on one hand could allow the lions’ fear of their
trainer to be alleviated through familiarity (68), but on the other hand could lead to a false sense of security between trainer and lions, and as Beatty was known to admit, although he spent a lifetime working with the animals, he never once trusted them (60)\textsuperscript{43}. Elephants, on the other hand, had a lighter public image, at least in the 1850s when van Amburgh stuck his head inside a lion’s mouth, and if elephant acts wanted to keep up with this trend and maintain popularity, they had to work towards feats such as this. Circus PR-man F. Beverly Kelley said:

> In the pre-Civil War period, elephants were as popular as rock stars are today. And - since very few people had seen an elephant - size was the attribute which impressed them most. After that came dangerousness. The biggest beasts, box office-wise, had names like Hannibal, Tusko, Bolivar, Columbus […] that is, most were aggressive-sounding males. Since size and dangerousness ranked high, the public was especially interested in the each beast’s homicidal potential (Alexander 123-124).

While it is easy to see how this might be created with an animal like a lion, the elephant sat in an interesting position, particularly situated on the animal’s presumed sagacity, and its already heightened celebrity, compared to other circus animals. Nance says that the transition from ‘animal exhibition’ to ‘animal as performer’ drew on the consumer experience of the animal celebrity (Nance 42), which the elephant had in spades. Little strengthens celebrity more than pushing the limits of human-animal interactions with performances eliciting a sense of danger. Circuses around this time took the simple viewing spectacles, like that of Elephant, which narratively promoted the intersections of ferocity and domesticity, and heightened their performative value, playing on audience desires for pushing the known limits of human-animal interactions, which essentially ‘made’ the circus. This was achieved by creating a series of performative acts or tricks which played with audience perceptions of ferocity and domesticity, and how close the elephant could come to appearing human, without supplanting the trainer in
charge of essentially ‘puppeteering’ the events to “depict and embody life” (Woodward 12) in such a way that the elephant becomes a natural extension of the human performing world.

Circuses after the 1850s really played with the line between ferocity and domesticity, in the creation of elephant performance acts. Wall notes that there are types of animal acts: showing, and training (Wall 144). Animal showings are expeditions of exotic animals captured or procured from abroad (144). Training, on the other hand, required less money but considerably more skill, as previously ‘uncultured’ animals were taught to dance, tumble, count, and imitate (145). These acts, I believe, can be further divided into five categories: animal observation; behaviour imitation; zoological pantomime; acrobatic feats; and learned animal performances. Each of these categories built upon the previous one in terms of how the animal performer spectacle was generated, especially in terms of trainer engineering or puppetteering. Paul Bouissac, in his work *Circus and Culture: A Semiotic Approach*, suggests that trained circus acts range from doing the possible, to not doing the possible, to doing the impossible, to not doing the impossible (Bouissac 95). He illustrates this with the example: juggling is possible. A clown falling down while trying to juggle is not doing the possible. A lion tamer does the impossible, while not doing the impossible in that particular situation would be at the risk of death (95). I see the correlation between these ranges and the types of acts set out for elephant performers like this:

**Table 2.6.4. Elephant Acts from the Possible to Impossible**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doing The Possible</th>
<th>Not Doing The Possible</th>
<th>Doing The Impossible</th>
<th>Not Doing The Impossible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animal Observation</td>
<td>Behaviour Imitation</td>
<td>Zoological Pantomimes</td>
<td>Exists as a plausible risk with every act.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Acrobatic Feats</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Doing The Possible

With the rest of Elephant, the star of Crowninshield’s menagerie, and other animal observation acts, circuses generated a considerable amount of pre-show revenue through their touring menageries. These were predicated on the notion that everyone would want to see an animal up close and personal. It is easy, and possible for an elephant to simply stand and be observed. While prior to 1796, seeing an elephant in person was not an anticipated possibility, by the 1850s it was common, and circuses had moved passed simply offering this as the sole animal attraction.

Not Doing The Possible

To ‘not do the possible’ played with the idea of animal sagacity, and how close the elephant could come to seeming almost human. This involved creating particular ‘behaviours’ for the elephants which imitated common human behaviours, to ‘play at’ the idea of an elephant being almost human, but comically not-quite. The performance was intended to be imperfect in its execution, to reinforce the gap between human ideal and animal performer. We can view this as a serial relationship, to borrow again from Deleuze and Guatarri. The animal performer, \( a \), will never arrive at a complete imitation of the human character, \( b \). The goal is to show that a perfect representation will never be achieved, but the attempt can be mocked.

An example of this comes from Robert “Smokey” Jones, and elephant trainer first hired in 1955. One of his greatest ‘tricks’\(^{145}\) was to have an elephant either riding in or pushing a baby

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example - Viewing Elephant</th>
<th>Example - An elephant wearing a baby costume and playing at pushing a carriage.</th>
<th>Example - Elephants and tigers co-existing on stage; elephant headstands; elephants who can count.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Learned Animal Performances | |
|----------------------------| |

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\(^{145}\) An example of this comes from Robert “Smokey” Jones, and elephant trainer first hired in 1955. One of his greatest ‘tricks’ was to have an elephant either riding in or pushing a baby.
carriage, or making a phone call, just like a regular person might (Ballantine 278). Jones trained his elephants to behave ‘as if’ human, the comedy of which - as the elephant would invariably fail in some way during this act - would both delight and fascinate the audience. A similar example to this, from Forepaugh’s circus, was described by Richard Conover in his 1959 description of the company. He mentions an act put together for an 1884 show at the Covent Garden in London:

The elephant is a rusty-looking little beast wearing a shall and cap, whose appearance as he takes his seat is very much like that of a very large, very fat, and very funny boy. This amusing little creature draws a chair up to the table in which he takes a seat, rings for his dinner, and takes off the hat of the man who sits opposite. Having eating what was placed before him, he rings for more, which he disposes of with one sweep of his trunk. He then drinks a bottle of wine and wipes his mouth on a napkin. When asked to pay his bill, he turns over the table and chairs and hurries off (Conover).

The moments of failing possibility - such as simply appearing inelegantly ‘elephant’ while performing a human action requiring grace and precision, like pushing a baby carriage - were carefully orchestrated to blur “the ontological and cultural distinctions between ritualistically humanizing other mammals” (Bouissac 104). Anthropomorphism was essential to these shows, as they had to convince people that there was enough shared emotional states between humans and elephants in order for the audience to be impacted “by demonstration of non-human sentience” (Nance 55), but at the same time the failure, essentially, existed only through the performing elephant’s surface value.

The behavioural imitations they performed in ‘failing the possible’ were directed to fascinate audiences at the sight of such human activities in the almost lampooning hands of circus animals. They toyed with audience perceptions of domesticity and sagacity. A popular trope was to “satirize cultural authorities by dressing monkeys and apes in human-style clothes
and training them to mimic human habits before a crowd” (Nance 27), with the end-goal of “assert[ing] the inferiority of non-human animals” (27), or “diminish[ing the animal act] to frivolity” (Tait 74). Ballentine suggests that “people look more into mirrors than pictures, always more interested in themselves than in other living creatures” (Ballantine 202), and they “exploit our predilection for mimetic reproduction of familiar physical behaviour” (Tait 7). Acts in which animal performers imitate human behaviour elicit humorous versions of ourselves (Ballantine 202), thereby heightening the popularity of the act, and the celebrity of the animal performer.

Doing The Impossible

Doing the impossible, however, is where circus animal acts got interesting! Zoological pantomimes, acrobatic feats, and learned animal performances all shoved danger to the forefront, and showcased the human trainer’s ability to hold everything down and have domesticity prevail over ferocity. Circus performance has always been inclusive of risks, Bouissac says, and this is what creates the performance value for the audience - wondering if the tightrope walker is going to make it all the way across, or if the trapeze artist is going to fall. No one explicitly wants that to happen, of course, but placing the possibility even on the periphery heightens audience attention. This happens even more so when it comes to acts of animals performing the impossible. It is conceivable for an audience to look at a fellow person on a trapeze and intellectually understand the rigorous training process they must have undergone. We can correlate their physicality to our own, and understand how the tricks and movements must occur, at least a little bit, even if they are outside our personal realms of possibility. When it comes to seeing an animal do these same things though, especially when coupled with the common
narrative of wild animals being ferocious and dangerous, that act becomes even more incredible. This, of course, intensifies the effectiveness of the act, and in turn the animal celebrity.

Zoological pantomimes provide the greatest instance of the possibility of chaos, constrained by the trainer in what can only be equated to a conductor leading an orchestra - except, in this instance, it is not just a out-of-tune oboe or loud trumpet which could lead the chorus off-trail, but wild lions, tigers and bears, each with their own supposed degrees of sagacity. In zoological pantomimes, humans and animals would be trained to position themselves in a tableau so as to play out a story together (Nance 56). Also called “mixed-species acts” (Tait 49) or “Happy Family displays” (Nance 74), these acts were often built around morality tales (61). Antonio Franconi was among the first animal trainers to create these acts, and he specialized in “theatrical zoology” (Wall 144), or “vast animal pantomimes and melodramas written by noted local playwrights and staring everything from hundreds of horses, to two domesticated stags” (144). He worked alongside Astley once hired in 1783, and began to incorporate his trained stunt animals - mostly dogs, pigs, and bears - into the shows (147). Examples of this work include his 1812 work with the stag Coco, in which he trained him to wander into the audience and present “flowers to the ladies and nibbl[e] from their palms” (147), and his 1829 Elephant of the King of Siam, in which he trained elephant Mademoiselle Djeck to carry the ‘Prince of Siam’ offstage from the battle scene (147). These were animals trained to seamlessly integrate into the human action of the piece, as if simply human performers with memorized lines and blocking (147).

P. T. Barnum was particularly fond of staging these acts and started small, by putting different species morally considered to be in conflict in proximity, and demonstrating that
through the firm and caring hand of their trainers, these differences could be overcome. Groups of cats and dogs, and mice and birds started these displays, and drew from an idealized sense of the pastoral in creating a ‘Garden of Eden’ of sorts which would ‘improve’ upon the animals’ naturally wild states (Nance 75). A popular example of this, which derived inspiration from Barnum’s works, was van Amburgh’s biblical performance of Isaiah 11:6, in which he trained lions and lambs to lie down together on stage (74), to show human dominion over nature. Trainer Carl Hagenbeck likewise created a ‘Happy Family’ show in which he juxtaposed the domesticated puppy with the wild lion, and had them pose together on stage. Other famous acts Hagenbeck trained included a lion riding on top of a horse (Tait 17), lions and tigers riding on trikes (18), and a lion riding in a Roman-style chariot, pulled by other lions or tigers (17). Nigel Rothfels, in his book *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Zoo*, says that such pantomimes were “the redemption of animals from their state of ferocity” (Rothfels 153). Frank Bostock, considered to be “The Animal King” of the 1880s with over one thousand animals - lions, tigers, elephants, and others - said that acts combining different animals - like his signature act of a tiger riding an elephant (Tait 31) - was “one of the greatest proofs of the extent of man's power over wild animals (24).

Each of these pantomimes drew from the belief that human control over nature “could produce a semblance of family relations amongst diverse animals” (Tait 18), but despite the alleged paradise presented on stage, what the audience came to see was the potential of ferocity breaking forth. The audience wanted the possibility of danger and gore, of a lion lashing out and taking down an elephant, or even a human trainer. They, of course, did not explicitly want this to happen, but only for the possibility to be looming the entire time, growing in potential the longer
the zoological pantomime continued. This “diverted focus from human imposition on animals to one in which the animals might be perceived to instigate confrontations with each other” (49), thereby potentially giving the audience a sense of what it might be like for these animals to truly live together in the wold (49). Bouissac’s analysis of animal semiotics would suggest that through combining physical animal bodies with the spectacle of circus - the wild with the tamed and trained - “the circus embodies […] the presence of wild nature in our urban fabric” (Bouissac 104). In this sense, it is not so much that the animals here are doing the impossible by refraining from eating each other and creating chaos, but that the human trainer is at the same time also doing the impossible by creating the conditions in which this almost alarmingly peaceful scene can be presented without incident.

Animal acrobatics heighten the image of animals successfully performing the impossible, particularly for larger performing animals like the elephant. These were simple tricks at first, such as demonstrating the dexterity of an elephant's trunk, which slowly expanded into more complex manipulations (Daniel 163). Ballentine suggests that all elephant acrobatic tricks stem from four variants: leg stand, lay down, sit up, and whirl-around (Ballantine 278-279). These could be chained together and built upon, until the elephant performed tricks such as walking on tightropes, waltzing, and cycling. The Sands, Nathan & Co., for example, had two trained elephants in the 1850s, named Victoria and Alberta, who were taught to stand on their heads: “they were animals that both endorsed the ostensible inferiority of animals […] while also functioning as ‘embodiments of Nature’s transcendence’ by humanity” (Nance 66). Duo or group balancing acts such as this were the standard of 20th Century Euro-American circuses when it came to performing elephants (Tait 76-77).
There is a sense of absurdity and surreality that accompanies an elephant as it turns themselves upside down, or walks across a tightrope, especially due to its “mass and might” (Ballantine 279), which circuses after the 1850s began to capitalize on more, in an effort to turn the elephant performer into a potential ‘brutalist’ who could, at any moment, flip from its graceful and once-unexpected acrobatics into a terrible rage (279). These acts are most recognizable as a performance rather than a showing or simply being trained to stay in one place on stage, as in the zoological pantomimes. These headstands or tightrope walks are acts that audiences would claim ‘impossible’ for most human performers. This further aligns the animals with the human performers with whom they share the stage - making an elephant successfully doing a headstand seem almost more fantastical in terms of its ‘mass and might’ than a human doing the same action, thereby pushing the boundaries of what actions were thought to be in the realm of animal capabilities. It also makes them more noticeably ‘performers’ in their own rights.

Tait says that by performing these acrobatic acts, elephants and other circus animals are “learning prescribed movements and in repeatedly presenting them to audiences for effect, as happens in the theatre, animal performers conform to a definition of performance as the doing of actions for the spectators” (Tait 2). Each year, to keep audiences returning, the complexity of the acts would increase to include either more animals or more tricks (Nance 55) - making the scope of what is thought to be ‘impossible’ include even more daring feats.

The ‘learned animal’ genre furthers audience conceptions of what is or is not possible for performing animals. In learned animal performances, we usually see animal positioned as if their performance is the result of some higher learning and study, for example, monkeys dressed up as horsemen and riding horses (Nance 57), horses who can “fall down, jump up, or down on
command” (56), or even animals appear to have who have learned math (Gucwa 130). The animals “appear to understand and support the performance’s narrative” (Nance 56) because they are positioned as even more sagacious than the typical circus animal. The mastery of human actions by performing animals was thought to be the most sagacious. It was the exoticness of wild nature combined with the civilized behaviour of humans, the combination of which made trained animal acts such a draw. One of the strongest examples of this learned animal category comes from Ringling Brothers, Barnum & Bailey Circus 1942 act ‘Ballet of the Elephants’ (Tait 80) in their duo-show *The Greatest Show on Earth*. The act was choreographed by George Balanchine, who worked along with the avant-garde composer Igor Stravinsky (Tait 74), in teaching the elephants to mimic the human ballerinas who would appear on stage as well (81). Stravinsky composed a polka-style score (81), which was intended to take the stereotypical movements of elephant bodies and build the score around their physical abilities, rather than solely push the elephant performers to become ballerinas, which would have landed in the category of ‘failing the impossible’. The goal was to “suggest […] that elephant feet could move with the precision of ballet dancers” (81).55

A true ‘elephant ballerina’, in terms of how we view human ballerinas, was not the end-goal of this piece. Balanchine and Stravinsky aimed to train the elephants to ‘perform the impossible’, appearing as close to human ballerinas as their surface physicality would allow, in terms of audience perception, and this was achieved. After this, the “heavy elephant bodies made this balletic action satirical” (Tait 81). The elephant’s actions could not be appreciated on their own, but continually compared to what they could never be - slight human ballerinas. The elephant ballerinas, who were dressed right down to the tutus and faux-ballet shoes, were more
like “costumed clowns” (74), the comedy of which “was achieved through the absurdity of having large elephant bodies” (74) juxtaposed to human dancers, thereby furthering the difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’. In this serial relationship between human and animal dancer, the process of “graduating resemblances” (Deleuze and Guatarri 236) stopped short of proposing elephants as equal dancers to humans, but simply that they were as learned and trained as any animal performer could be, and therefore, Balanchine and Stravinsky have truly achieved the impossible.

Not Doing The Impossible

Finally, there is Bouissac’s category of ‘not doing the impossible’. Through any animal act where achieving the impossible is in some way involved, “the risk of failure and death is ever-present in the minds of the witnesses” (Bouissac 95). On one hand, failing to achieve the impossible had the potential consequence of losing relevance as a performer or an act. Bouissac notes that training animal acts which focus on achieving either the possible or the impossible often evoke a sense of having made magic (Bouissac 128). He says the “‘action’ [trick] can be defined as the implementation of a plan involving at least two agents, one making the other perform some task” (128), and I suggest that the possibility of failure in the category of ‘not doing the impossible’ stands a greater risk of resulting in the death of one of these two agents. Failing to achieve the impossible - such as an elephant failing to complete a walk across a tightrope, or a trainer failing to successfully insert his head into a lion’s mouth - would turn animal biology into the performative spectacle, just like watching the elephant fights at the Roman gladiator games, or witnessing Elizabethan bear baiting. For the animal performer, it is
never simply about achieving the impossible, but always at the same time not failing at the impossible, or simply, just trying to stay alive.

The primary difference between human and animal performers in this category is the finality of mistakes. If a human performer is injured, they would undoubtedly be taken care of. For animal performers, this was not always the case. The first male elephant in North America, Horatio, was injured during a bridge collapse and he fell forty-six feet to the ground (Nance 46). In this case, he was simply walking from one end to another, not attempting the impossible, and the bridge proved too unstable for his weight. When the circus could not get him to rise, Horatio was shot (46). Many circuses simply did not have the financial means, or veterinary skills, to heal injured animals.\textsuperscript{57} Nance notes that it was not uncommon for shows to set out with a full menagerie, including performing animals, at the beginning of the season, only to have a number of them die on the way, due to stress, injury, or incompatibility with the rest of the company (Nance 75). Performances predicated on achieving the impossible “reinforced an impression of [animal] integration into the human world beyond that required for entertainment, and they misrepresented human-elephant relations to spectators” (Tait 77), by not explicitly uncovering the consequences behind the failing the impossible. It was exactly what the audiences came to see, where the idea of animal performer celebrity took off - the possibility of death and destruction from an act that pushed the limits. But what would happen if that really occurred? It was not a part of the common animal performer narratives of the time.

7.5. “Jumbo, The Trained Elephant”

I want to analyze the previous act classifications though applying them to footage of an elephant named Jumbo\textsuperscript{58} in a 1919 film by Hans Spanuth.\textsuperscript{59} In this footage, Jumbo is led by a
trainer through a series of acts which showcase performances of the possible and impossible. When he first emerges onto the stage, Jumbo and the trainer bow to the audience. The trainer then introduces two other performers to the stage - a small horse and a dog. Together, they execute a series of simple movements - a line in which the horse leans on Jumbo and the dog leans on the horse, the elephant walking in a circle while the dog runs figure-eights through his legs, jumbo and his trainer holding the ends of a skipping rope while the dog jumps through it. Next, Jumbo is seated at a small table and equipped with a tiny dinner bell, which he rings. Upon receiving and finishing his dinner, Jumbo tosses the plate behind him rings the bell again, and finally upends the table. Finally, with the help of a bull hook - a training instrument which I will detail in a later section of this chapter - the trainer leads Jumbo into a headstand (Spanuth). Each of these acts demonstrate one of the performance categories, and support the focus of the circus narrative as being solely on the surface value of the performer, presupposing any interiority Jumbo might possess to be brought out only through the skill of his trainer.

When Jumbo bows to the audience, it is a showcase of humility and sagacity, not to mention a mark of a performer happy to be on stage. This maintains the ‘abyss’ Deleuze and Guatarri note exists between human and animal performer. While the human trainer bows gracefully, the elephant stumbles into a crouch - he will necessarily not achieve an elegant action. In this, Jumbo does not perform possible, through his attempts at human imitation, but shows that he can at least make an attempt at approaching the human ideal in this serial relationship. As well, the section in which Jumbo is seated and mimics a person in a restaurant - complete with throwing the plate and upending his table - is a performance of ‘not doing the possible’. The dining elephant lampoons human impatience, and became a popular trope within
circus acts. While a person in a restaurant may conceivably complain about slow service, they would never take the protest to such an unsophisticated level. The elephant performer provides enough distance between the action and its intended human ideal to facilitate such mockery, giving space for the audience to almost laugh at themselves, through being mimicked in such a way. The mockery, though, still lands on the elephant performer. Both instances speak to the abyss Descartes alludes to between human intellect and animal mindlessness - if the human trainer did not spark this action to greet the audience, it appears as if the elephant performer would not have thought of it. Likewise, if the human trainer did not appear to admonish the elephant for its poor behaviour in the dinner scene - as he seems to do as a ‘bellboy’ type of character when the elephant knocks over the table - then there would be no correction of the improper behaviour. The elephant’s inelegance would stand as a direct comparison to the human ideal, rather than pointed out as a misstep - albeit, one that has been carefully calculated into the performance. The human trainer, in essence, is directing all social behaviours on the stage, showing that the elephant does not possess thought any of its own, or if throwing the table could be seen by the audience as an expression of autonomy, then showing how separate it is from proper human behaviour.

The introduction of the horse and dog showcase a smaller version of a zoological pantomime, the peaceful co-existence of diverse animals who would not normally be seen together. The trainer directs these actions, though the mechanisms of which cannot be clearly seen in the video. As a silent film, the particular commands which lead into each pose are lost, but once can see a bull hook in the trainer’s hand, and during the section in which the dog runs figure-eights under Jumbo’s legs, slight gesturing of the hook in the direction in which the trainer
wants the two animals to move. As mentioned earlier, acts in a protected contact approach could be instructed through target training or chaining (Scigliano 278), in which individual sections of the acts were bridged together one at a time until seamless. What the trainer here is likely doing is much like a composer - stringing together potentially disparate elements into a unified movement, controlling the possibility of either actor stepping out of place.

Finally, Jumbo performs the impossible with a headstand, a feat many in the audience would not have thought possible, due to the performer’s great size. The trainer again has this acutely controlled, directing the elephant’s movements up and down by signalling with his hook. Acrobatic acts such as these would have been the highlight of circus performances, albeit on the simple end of them, considering many elephant acts by the end of the 1800s showcased multiple elephants, or pushed the impossible towards something seemingly impossible for even human performers, like tightrope walking.

As a finale to this film, Jumbo was lead into a quick two-step. The video introduces the act with the exclamation “Oh, how she dances!” (Spanuth), and the audience can see the elephant swaying side-to-side, presumably in time with the music. Just like Ballantine and Stravinsky’s ballerina elephants, Jumbo enacts the learned animal genre, coming as close to human mastery of an art as possible, without supplanting actual human dancers. The impossibility of this act sparks celebration on stage, with the dog reappearing to bounce across the stage, the trainer taking his final bow, and Jumbo waving an American flag towards the audience.

My analysis here is intended to show that the performing elephant in Spanuth’s film is directed around the stage much like a puppet with invisible strings, further supporting the idea that they appear before the audience through the benevolence and skill of their trainer, acting
only when told. The acts, whether they are a performance of the possible or impossible, successful or otherwise, reinforce the anthropocentric narrative which lends legitimacy to both performer and spectacle, by showcasing not just the surface value of the elephant body, but the mastery of human trainer in controlling it to such a degree that the elephant could be ostensibly provoked into doing just about anything the trainer asked. At the same time, the surface value of the elephant body is paramount: what the audience wants to see is the combination of this majesty and might, in acts which progress in size and skill, leading up to the ultimate excitement - in this case, an elephant standing on its head. I relate to this performance as I would a ventriloquist or a puppeteer: I look where the trainer directs me to look through his own gaze, allowing the puppet strings to fall into the background in a suspension of disbelief. However, because the narrative enforces the idea of a conscious - alert - animal co-performer, the trainer ‘misdirects’ audience gaze in another way as well. When the trainer bows, the audience becomes aware of his role, his interiority and intellect in controlling this act. What is still invisible is the interiority of the elephant performer. How the elephant performer himself actually feels about this is a non-issue: they are positioned for the audience to assume they feel what the trainer feels, mimics what the trainer asks. The elephant does not exist, beyond the trainer, at least in terms of the act structure. There is no room in the established narrative for even the possibility of independent animal thinking. These are the strings that stay attached to elephant performers long after individual acts have ended.

7.6. Performing the Ecologically Impossible in Contemporary Circus

I want to take a look forward to contemporary circuses, in terms of how they take on a performance of the impossible with new ecological undertones, because I feel it builds on this
sense of the elephant performers lacking interiority or substance outside of their trainer’s direction. Current Ringling Brothers owner Kenneth Feld has often said that research shows the main reason people come to the circus is to see the animals, and by extension, the main animal is the elephant (Scigliano 262). Circuses, like zoos, position themselves as an institution that can be trusted to care these rare and exotic animals, in order to promote most ecologically positive and aware attitudes within their audiences (Nance 5), presuming that if you see one elephant, you can use this personal connection with a single animal to springboard to a greater connection to the entire species. Feld goes on to say that it is currently more important than ever for audiences “to see animals in the flesh” (263), as a performance of the ‘impossible’ now revolves around the global disappearance of elephants from their natural habitats. Simply having an elephant onstage reaffirms the centrality of both the circus and the human trainer in allowing the stage to become a refuge, a place where elephants can go to escape the dangers of the wild, and convince the audience to care about them. At the current “intersection of temporal, cultural and social factors” (Appadurai 15), the manner in which the audience relates to the object of an elephant performer is through the lens of wildlife preservation, and the assumption that if animals can be as impossibly trained and sagacious as elephants, then perhaps they are worth saving.

The idea is not unfounded - there has been a significant decline in elephant populations since the 1970s, due to increases in ivory poaching, particularly for African elephants. As an example, in the 1930s and 40s there were between one to five million African elephants on the continent, which has dropped to only 472,000 - 690,000 today (Amboseli Elephant Trust; Dell-Amore; McGrath). The Amboseli Elephant Trust notes that approximately eight-five percent of its African elephant population was depleted during a ten-year period between 1979 and 1989,
when ivory trade bans were officially imposed. Still, the global illegal wildlife industry is currently worth approximately $19-billion (McGrath). Will Travers, of the Born Free Foundation, suggests that upwards of 30,000 elephants are poached per year for their ivory, and despite stringent regulations, threats to wild elephants have actually increased as “elephants are being poached out of existence for their ivory” (Stringberg).

All of this seems to support Feld’s assertion that it is more important for people to see elephants in the flesh, to form these personal and emotional connections, and to further advocate for their continued protection in the wild. Bouissac supports this further, going so far as to state that the circus is “an essential ecological resource” (Bouissac 105) when he writes that, “the human capacity for empathy needs to be primed through personal experience of the kind circus offers in a safe, institutional context” (105). It gives audiences the opportunity to view the “human face” of the wild animal, which would otherwise be impossible, by allowing them to see “biology processed into art, and forbidden channels of communication […] opened to create common grounds between the wild an the tame” (108). The commodity context for the elephant circus performer now creates space for a conceptualization of the huge numbers behind global elephant endangerment. While John Owen marketed Elephant in a ‘see her now before we leave town’ context, elephant performers are now presented as ‘see them now before they disappear from the wild forever - unless we, as the human audience, act now to change that reality’.

Circuses, in the narrative of ‘presenting the impossible’ to the audience, help people to confront the “discontinuities” between people and animals (Bouissac 108), including presumably the cultural conditions which led elephant ivory to be such a desired commodity in the first place. At least, that is the goal.
7.7. What Do We Actually Know About The Elephant Performer?

With all of these goals and positions for the elephant to hold in the circus, especially for their ecological goals, the correlating audience reaction should indicate an increase in knowledge on wild elephant behaviour. What did circus audiences in the 19th and early 20th centuries really learn about elephants from these in-person encounters? To discuss this, looking at what was commonly understood of elephants at the time can help to show if knowledge on elephants was indeed increasing through these acts and experiences. Specifically, I want to suggest that there is a history of elephants that the circus went out of its way to make invisible. I will retrace the inclusion of elephant within circus performance, but this time look at all of the information not made explicit to the audience, which may have further problematized the events. In here, I will look at their means of acquisition, obfuscation of real biographical information, the opacity of training processes and tools, and the conditions of their training and performing environments. I will analyze these through Theresa J. May’s questions for performances which engage with aspects of the environment, in order to determine their overall success (May 105), in order to further determine the lasting impact on the increased ecological knowledge that circuses claimed to develop within their audiences.65

May asks how the performance either engages in or reflects environmental issues, or the position of animals within the art (May 105). The extent of factual biological information shared about the performing elements was at the discretion of the elephant men in charge of training and presenting the acts, and were often manipulated and polished in order to support the image of the elephants as willful performers. This really resulted in the development of an elephant mythology surrounding circuses, where the elephants were said to both be ‘saved’ from the hardships of the wild, and also evidently live for centuries (Logan 281), which was a part of the
wonderment they inspired. They were presented as “wonders of nature” (Nance 30), objects of “curiosity” (Logan 287), and most often took on the role of the genial “trickster” (Nance 31), stealing food from the pockets and bags of unsuspecting circus patrons, for laughs of course. Another popular trick involved elephants pulling a cork from a bottle of liquor and drinking, which played on myth of elephant drunkenness (Nance 15) - which served to both bring the elephant behaviourally closer to the audience, and, especially during prohibition-era audiences, also separate them as less civilized for their lack of restraint. This was a well-loved trope, and presumed to be quite based on truth (15). This suggests that the engagement with nature was predominately based on either myths, or quirky commonalities that would serve to draw the audience emotionally closer to the animal performer, without delving too deeply into biological information that might problematize the inclusion of animals on the stage.

May also asks how the performance represents the human place within nature (105). A vast majority of the focus went to the trainers, who had themselves achieved the impossible by domesticating these massive animals, and were now able to act as interpreters of sorts, a liaison between civilized human culture, and the wilderness of the elephants. Animal trainers in the 19th Century were actually considered to be the foremost authorities on animal cognition and psychology, based on their close, personal relationships with the animals. With the “genial circus elephant” (Nance 5) at their side, the narrative they presented “suggested to viewers that they could come to understand animals by paying to be entertained by them” (5), especially as entertainment was a common goal between the species. People want to be entertained, and the elephants, according to their trainers and presenters, wanted nothing more than to be up there on the stage. They offered the audience a “magical relationship to a member of another
species” (Tait 72) which “asserted that they could shape elephants […] into any performance that humans desired” (72-73). Essentially, what was known of elephants at the time culminated in the ideal that “elephant response[s] and human culture could be combined to produce aesthetically pleasing performances” (88). The human place in nature, according to circuses, was therefore to have nature at its disposal for entertainment above all else.

In my research I came across a curious note from Shana Alexander’s investigation into elephants in America. She recounts an experience from her first encounter with an elephant in the 1960s, when she was invited as a journalist to witness the surprise birth of Packy the Elephant - surprise, as no one in the zoo had any inclination that the mother was pregnant, and in fact they had no idea, after over a hundred years of experience with elephants, predominately through circuses, that elephants have a gestation period much longer than humans (Alexander 123). How is it possible that we have come to have so much access to elephants - in fact, by this time approximately eight hundred elephants had been brought into the USA for circuses and zoos (123) - and so much in the way of opportunity to increase our knowledge of them, and yet at the same time know so little of essential aspects of elephant biology? Nance suggests that the methods of presenting elephant acts as if they were willing performers helped to obscure the realities of elephant acquisition and training, and thereby confuse what we think and what we would like to know about the animals on which the circus is built, with what we actually understand.

So what are we missing from these narratives? May asks how the performance informs our idea of an ecological community (105). If the elephant performer is only seen or accessed through its surface value, and the anthropocentric narratives which surround their acts, then what
results is a trajectory from the animal as an autonomous living being, to an animal as a object within a spectacle, wherein the animal itself - its mind, its interiority, its independence - is erased in favour of commodification of the body. There is little reality of the ecological community represented within circus performances. The animal object becomes voiceless, a site of subjugated knowledges, obfuscated origins and biographies, and the spectacle is a fabricated wonderment divorced from the conditions of the animal-objects production. How we look at animals is a product of how the acts are narratively structured - the animal as performer of the impossible, made visible only because of human insight to put them on stage. What we learn is the mass, might and majesty, the stories that sell tickets. What we do not learn are the elephant’s real biographies, their real training, and the real conditions of their circus employment.

Elephant Origins

A big illustration of the performing elephants’ invisible biographies comes from their often obscured origins - the root of how non-human bodies are used within circus (May 105). How were elephants brought into North America in the first place? Early circus elephants were predominately Asian Elephants, predominately based on the history of elephant domestication and training in Southeast Asia - India and Sri Lanka, then Ceylon. As fewer Asian elephants have tusks, and elephants in Ceylon rarely possess them, they were less in demand for poachers and more wide-ranging, subsisting in ecosystems from open plains to forest to mountains (Tenant 5), saying they were “so peaceable and harmless […] that nature appears to have left it unprovided it any special weapon of offence” (9). Additionally, in India, elephants are worshipped as incarnations of the god Ganesh (Bradshaw 63), and so they are culturally protected, but also put
to work. Those elephants captured and trained were historically paired with a mahout, an elephant trainer and keeper, who would stay with that elephant for life (Nicol).

The process of capture and domestication was well-established by the time Crowninshield went to Ceylon in hopes of purchasing Elephant, which Tennent outlines from his extensive observations of Ceylon elephant hunts in 1846 and 1847 (Tennent 3). Elephants were considered property of the Kandyan crown, and hunts had to seek royal sanction (5). These royal sanctions would have been granted for any elephants captured in Ceylon, a popular acquisition site for elephants destined to perform in North American circuses. There were several approaches to capturing the animals. One involved mahouts riding trained elephants out to wild herds, so they could get close enough to slip nooses around the necks or feet of the elephants they wanted to bring back (Bradshaw 63; Haney 125). Another approach was to drive individuals into ‘kraals’ - enclosures or nets - baited by noises, captive females or food (Haney 125; Nance 17).

Tennant’s description of the elephant hunts came from following ‘panickeas’ (Tennent 98) or professional elephant hunters. The kraals they constructed were funnel-shaped, with an entrance equipped with a sliding door that trapped them in an enclosed space (Tennent 113-114). To lure elephants to this site, the panickeas would follow the herds from behind, using water to draw the elephants forward, and controlled fires to keep them from turning back (104-105). When the elephants were close, “the signal was made and the stillness of the forest was broken by the shouts of guards, the rolling of drums and tom-toms, and the discharge of muskets” (116).

Once kraal gates were shut, Tennent describes a panicked herd where any attempt to escape was “threatened [with] a sufficient force” (Tennent 115). Nevertheless, on one hunt,
Tennent observed “for upwards of one hour, [an] elephant continue […] to traverse the corral and assail the palisade with unabated energy, trumping and screaming with rage after each disappoint” (119). When this abated, the captors would release the elephants one by one with a noose around their legs, usually aiming for the more docile or curious juveniles first (Nance 18; Tennent 123), sometimes sending a tame elephant into the kraal to assist in subduing the herds.

When brought out of the kraal, the elephant would be tied to a tree until suitably docile for training. As Tennant described, “some in their struggle make no noise, whilst others bellowed and trumpeted furiously, then uttered short, compulsive screams, and at last, exhausted and hopeless, gave vent to their anguish in low, piteous moanings” (Tennant 131). Haney also described a similar setting, explaining that once captured, “the elephant struggles fiercely to break his bonds, writhing in a manner one would think impossible for one so bulky and unwieldy an animal” (Haney 132), and at this moment is said to be broken and ready for training.

Often, the elephant was brought from here into a small, enclosed area where they would be further restrained by ropes (Nance 17), and denied food or water for several days (Haney 125; Nance 17), sometimes even putting two fully domesticated elephants in the same enclosure, on either side of the new capture. The elephant would only be allowed to eat (Haney 135) when they understood that docility meant food, as the elephant would come to immediately associate their mahout with food and water — essentially becoming their lifeline (Bradshaw 63; Elephant Voices; Haney 125; Nance 17). Jeff Kinzley, Elephant Manager at the Oakland Zoo, refers to this process as a “breaking down period” or a “breaking the spirit” (Schatz), which aims to control through fear and physical discipline. This is the culture of capture and submission from which early elephants in the American circus stemmed.
This was a reality the circus would either willfully hide, or simply be ignorant of, as the elephants often passed through several owners before arriving in North America. May would suggest this as an indicator of ecological failure within the performance, as not only are non-human bodies manipulated into false narratives in their usage on the circus stage, but the performances also “propagate […] the master narratives that sanction human exploitation of the land” (May 105). As well, once in the circus, elephants were often bought, sold, and passed between companies, both to mix up the acts and to remove elephants who were not working well within a particular company (Tait 79). They would simply change the name of the elephant and pretend that they were someone new (79). Through all of this, both trainers and audiences had little idea of who the performing elephant was, and where they originated. Biographies such as Horatio’s ‘descendant from an Indian monarch’ were likely more fiction than fact. Essentially, the “means of production” and “overall ecological impact” (May 105) of animal acquisition were entirely obscured. Without exact information, and while positioning the elephant performer as voiceless, spoken for only by the trainer, the circus could really invent any story they wanted - and what they wanted was a story that sold tickets.

Training Processes

The real training conditions are also obscured. Training methods at this time essentially fell within Chaplin’s first act of the geodrama, in which the fear of the animal - the ferocity and wildness highlighted - becomes the focus of the act, both for the audience and for the trainers. We can compare the role of the adventurous explorer going off in an attempt to conquer nature, accepting that they may ultimately meet their deaths, with that of the elephant trainer. At one time, elephant training was known to be among the most dangerous professions (Scigliano
In fact, much of the way elephants were trained into these acts was predicated by a sense of fear, or acknowledgement that most likely the trainer would lose their life or become injured, and all tactics were based on cutting off the potential for danger before it began.

As the majority of what we came to understand about elephants stemmed from their trainers, it is important to look at the tactics and schools of thought employed by these elephant men. They often spoke of the process as ‘teaching’ and not training, as the former seemed more benevolent, as if they were endowing the animals with sagacity and a betterment that the elephants themselves desired, and the latter process of training suggested punishment (Nance 72). There was no typical training process for the tamers themselves, and much of their approach was learned on the job - such was Beatty’s experience, for example - or passed down through circus generations the way mahouts would pass their processes from father to son (Tait 89). The goal of all members of the elephant teams - the presenter in the ring, principle trainers, keepers, men who worked in the barns (Nance 151) - was to “keep animals alive and performing as long as possible” (151), and to achieve this, trainer Henry Thetard said that from the outset, a trainer must already be a “first-class actor” (Tait 2), able to control the emotional states of the self, the elephant, and the audience simultaneously. Most tamers or trainers felt that the animal truly did not understand what he or she was doing, and therefore it was important to lead them through the steps of the act - through the process of chaining or bridging, as mentioned earlier - through a combination of positive rewards and negative sensations (Nance 71). Rewards such as food or gentle tones of voice would lead the elephant towards the desired act, while negative sensations - specifically, pain - would discourage undesired behaviours (71). This drove the focus of the performance to the trainer, in what Nance refers to as a “conforming” process (101), or where
“human management and entertainment cultures confront [...] elephant reality” (101). The trainer’s goal was to sharply curb or control elephant emotions and movements on stage, and through the animal’s obedience and submission, they could create acts where it appeared as if the elephant was responding to commands emotionally and participating in the narrative, of their own accord (Nance 80; Tait 2). This “theatricalized emotion” (2) played on the audience’s desire to communicate with the giant animals, for some shared perception or understanding (Nance 80), and trainers looked for ways to heighten this desire - by having the elephants dance to live music, respond to growing audience applause, even interact with the audience by, for example, eating out of an audience member’s hand. However, these movements and emotional reactions were highly conditioned, and the elephant was trained to ignore all stimulus external to the trainer, so that the most successful acts were considered to be ones in which the elephant was “unmindful” (71) of audience reactions, applause, laughter, or the music to which they were supposedly dancing. The elephants were not ‘reacting’ and participating, so much as following strict commands.

Free Contact

There were several methods for achieving this controlled act, which I can best explain in the terms contemporary circuses and zoos use: free contact, and protected contact, as well as the tools associated with these methods - restraints, hooks, and food.\textsuperscript{74} Free contact, mostly associated with early elephant training methodologies, is an old approach that has been in use for thousands of years, or as long as we have been domesticating elephants. It is the approach that Indian mahouts used when capturing and taming their elephants as well (Scigliano 279), and involves a combination of patience and intimate, tactile relationships with the elephant on one
hand, and “coercion” with chains, prods and hooks on the other (279), with trainer dominance as key to maintaining the strict control present in all acts (284). Few trainers spoke openly about the specifics of their tactics, but some do-it-yourself handbooks, such as Olive Logan’s *The Mimic World and Public Exhibitions* from 1871 and Haney’s *Art of Training Animals* from 1890, have illuminated the process. Training elephants in the free contact approach ideally began when they were three months old, to ensure that the trainer could fully position themselves as a substitute parental figure (Schatz; Tait 87). They would then use a combination of restraints and hooks in order to enact the ‘coercion’ part of the process, with any approach to learning specific elephant cognition and behaviour - where the patience and intimate relationship - coming in most often through trial and error (Nance 76). This, of course, would not be part of the performed narrative, where the fascination derived from everything appearing seamless and without coercion. It would not have evoked a sense of the elephants 'performing the impossible’ if their on-stage behaviours could be clearly correlated with a desire to either receive positive reinforcement, or avoid negative stimuli like restraints or hooks.

Restraints were used to shape an act, through ropes, chains, pulleys, weights that pulled elephants into particular positions (Nance 92; Schatz). The trainer would move the elephant to where they wanted them to be, and reward them with food once they were able to hold the position for the desired period time. For trainer Frank Bostock, a simple trick such as getting an elephant to lie down was dependent on using ropes to pull its legs to the ground, "at least sixteen times before the trick was ingrained" (Tait 23). Robert “Smokey Jones” would use chains to force elephant submission, and once achieved would sit on the elephant’s head to show that he was in charge (Ballantine 266), which Lucia Zora, one of the first female elephant trainers, said
was necessary to convince elephants of their powerlessness, and in turn the power of people (Nance 98). Ropes were additionally used to stake elephants to a particular spot around the circus, limiting any free-roaming movement to a single step forward or backward (Ballantine 87), which would teach the elephants that any movement came at the discretion of the trainer alone.\footnote{75}

The hook\footnote{76} was the most noticeable training tool within the free contact approach, and considered to be an integral “mechanism of motivation and persuasion” (Nance 86), or the “principle weapon used in guiding and controlling the elephants” (Haney 135). It was adopted from mahout practices in Ceylon, where it was used as a “steering tool” (87). Katy Payne, expert on elephant communications, explained that trainers would use the hook to both push an elephant into a desired position, and lead them away from undesired positions by using either end of the tool. One end had a sharp point, and the trainers would poke this into particularly sensitive parts of the elephant, such as behind the ears, above the eye, on the feet, or on the trunk (Haney 145; Nance 86; Schatz), in order to push them in a direction. The other end had an actual hook, which they would use to grab onto the skin behind an elephant’s ear and move them away from an area (Schatz). It was also used to train acts, such as an elephant learning to do a handstand or to stand on one foot. If the animal put its other feet down, Haney suggested that the trainers could take advantage of an elephant’s sensitive feet by jamming the pointy end of the hook into their feet in order to discourage mistakes like this from occurring again. Before long, even slight pressure or sight of the hook would be associated with pain, and therefore the repercussions of an improperly performed act (Nance 86; Schatz).\footnote{77}
The acts trained did provide the conditions of fascination and the performance of the impossible, for the audience. An excellent example was George Conklin’s dancing elephants. Conklin, who trained in the 1860s, used the hook for direction and obedience (Nance 88), and taught an elephant called Queen Anne to dance to music (88), in an act that was certainly indicative of an animal performing the impossible. Whereas the audience saw something fascinating and magical, what was not seen is Conklin behind the scenes hitting Queen Anne’s feet with the hook whenever he wanted her to move in time with the music. After a few training sessions, all he needed to do was raise the hook in the direction of her foot, and she would move. Conklin eventually found it easiest for the live band he had accompanying this act to simply play in time with her marching movements, so Queen Anne was not dancing so much as the band was playing to her swaying back and forth on stage (Nance 97), which ultimately looked to the audience as if she had been taught how to dance. This was the goal: if the audience was convinced that Queen Anne was dancing, well then she was a natural dancer, and Conklin would express as much while on stage.

None of the trainers would openly admit to the level of cruelty involved in the acts, instead insisting that rope restraints and bull hooks were a necessary part of the civilizing and culturing process for the animals, and trainers should treat them as they would ignorant children: “authoritative but benevolent” (Tait 25). This was somewhat of a social Darwinist approach, believing that animals developed through human benevolence, and as the “trained exotic animal was considered to demonstrate an evolutionary improvement, […] animal training became associated with progress” (Tait 16), and the sense that people could begin to control nature through domination and dominion (17). Furthermore, “once trained, the wild animal became
took valuable to mistreat” (25). However, harsh animal treatment was the foundations for all elephant acts. Consider these three popular trainers: van Amburgh, the best-known 19th Century menagerie performer with the head-in-the-lion’s-mouth act; Adam Forepaugh Jr, promoted to be the “youngest elephant trainer and performer in the world” (Daly 112); and Bostock, the Animal King himself. Each of these trainers were known to take particularly aggressive approaches (Daly 166; Tait 13; Tait 25), and believed that animals had to be afraid of their trainers in order to fully follow commands (13). Forepaugh Jr. in particular was known to be very harsh with the elephants, and “handled his fork [hook] loosely, and often jabbed the animals needlessly” (Daly 165).

Ballantine’s profile of Robert “Smokey” Jones is more open about the free contact training approach then trainers who have come before him, mostly as he was working in the 1940s-1950s and audiences had already begun to see the negative impacts that such an approach could yield. While the concept of animal suffering was still thought to be non-existent at that point (Bouissac 107), critics began to feel that the acts were problematic (Nance 70). Howard Townsend, a New York journalist and art critic in the 1880s, observed a clear “lack of trust between human and non-human onstage” (70), particularly in instances where the hook was employed, as it presented an opposing view of the sagacity process that the circus wanted its audiences to buy into (71). Jones, in the 1950s offered a number of insights into the severity of the process, stating “first, I ask an elephant nice, then I command” (Ballantine 265) through the hooks, “beat[ing the elephant] into submission; there is no other way” (266). He instructed trainers to beat the elephant on the side of the head between the ear and the eye, or on the feet, as those spots would not hurt the elephant, being “all gristle” (266). This would all result in what he
felt was “true elephant love” (265), which comes to the trainer who is feared but also shows compassion, by demonstrating to the elephant that beatings or even slight use of the hook would only come if the elephant disobeyed (265). Jones learned this process as it was passed down from trainer to trainer, and was the standardized training process for the majority of American circus history.

Protected Contact

Some circus trainers began to have concerns about the free contact system, and felt as if creating a training environment in which no unnecessary force is used against the animal performer would be in everyone’s best interests. Certainly, in the family-friendly environment of the early American circus, displays of gratuitous violence were looked down upon by the predominately Christian audience, and as producers like Barnum depended on the illusion of squeaky-clean entertainment in order to boost ticket sales, if there was a way to assure audiences that no force was used in the creation of these acts - namely, if it could be even more obvious that the elephant performers were engaging with the circus and performing these tricks under their own agency, then that would be even better for the box office. Doc Henderson, who worked as a circus veterinarian beginning in the 1940s, articulated a challenge to the mindset of free contact, stating that “even a fly or a mosquito is felt [by the elephants], so they feel the hook all right” (Ballantine 295). If the spots of ‘gristle' were not felt, how would they even be effective pressure points for a trainer to push or pull the elephant where they were needed?

Other trainers, such as Eph Thompson and Stuart Craven, were working on the same problem in the late 1800s. Assertions of a pain-free training process seemed to be mostly for the audiences’ assurance, or perhaps what the trainer needed to excuse their own acts. This led to the
development of a wholly different training process, now referred to in zoos and circuses as ‘protected contact’, which draws from operant conditioning and positive reinforcement, the behavioural studies of Pavlov and Skinner (Scigliano 278). Protected contact is a “hands-off” approach, where the elephant can be patted or stroked, but there can be no greater tactile reinforcement such as hugs or the types of punishments that would come through the use of a bull hook (278). Protected contact involved “target training” (281) - also called chaining or point training - but instead of using hooks or chains as the reinforcement, food was the leverage used. In point training, the elephants were conditioned to pair a pointed hand, a nod, or even a positive verbal cue, with the desired action (Haney 42), by breaking the trick down into component pieces, demonstrating each one at a time, reinforcing the right behaviour, and then putting them all together (Nance 82). An example that Haney mentions is the trick of teaching a horse to kiss. The trainer would condition this act by placing a full apple between their teeth, and directing the horse to take it. Slowly the full apple would be reduced to just a single piece, and then no apple at all, resulting in the ‘kiss’ (Haney 45-46). Lion and tiger trainers, for example, still carried a whip, more important to the integrity of the act was the “little pieces of meat which are to reward the young carnivores for their obedience” (Tait 19). Overall, associating food with the command for the trick in training (19) placed further emphasis on elephants exacting their own choices. Do they want the food, or do they not want the food? Little coercion was to be used beyond this one basic choice. However, where food was the reward, the choice to not comply with a direction could be a matter of being fed, or not being fed.

In Haney’s guide to animal training, he cautions budding tamers that animals never learn with the “club” (Haney 13): “few people imagine that to possess a proper mastery […] they must
maintain their authority by brute force” (15). However, as ‘elephants never forget’, they will clearly remember the tamer who has used force against them and so it is best to use kindness and to “acquire specialist knowledge of the animals through observing them over time” (Tait 14) in order to develop the foundational confident relationship between trainer and animal that results in strong acts (Haney 15; Nance 29). Part of developing this includes acknowledging elephants’ reasoning abilities, and while this may seem like forward thinking for the time, it was mostly based on the idea that elephants would react instinctually to positive stimuli (Haney 10-11), and trainers looked at this as making the training process easier. If elephants could be convinced to act, then there would be no need for any harsher measures. Haney said trainers were coming around to understanding that:

the evidence is too strong to be doubted that many animals perceive the relation between cause and effect and that many of their actions, especially when the animals are surrounded by the unnatural circumstances of a state of domestication, must be ascribed to the reasoning power (Haney 9).

There were two primary views of animal reasoning when Haney was writing in the 1860s: that they are sentient and “shaped primarily by culture and experience” (Nance 82), or that they are souls and instinct-driven (82), like Descartes would suggest. The former is about tapping into an animal’s unused potential and reasoning abilities (83), and Haney believed that in order for a once wild animal to even have the capacity to adapt to a captive environment, they had to be able to reason, and make a conscious choice to obey commands. It was all about reinforcing sagacity - not only for the good of the animal, but because they believed it really was what the animal wanted for itself, an “improvement” (78). It was a diversion from the harsher Cartesian, free contact training methodologies, and was a progressive stance for its time, but it was also about
interrupting the ‘ferocious’ nature of the wild animal, as trainers believed animals would not continue to evolve without interference from people (Haney 11).

In many ways, circus trainers who followed this protected contact approach were ahead of animal behaviourists at the time, who still firmly believed that animals were solely instinctual and devoid of reasoning abilities, and as mentioned earlier by Shana Alexander, the majority of what we came to know about elephants by the 1960s was a product of this approach to training. In protected contact, an integral aspect was ‘getting to know’ the elephant performer, connecting to their natural instincts (Nance 83) and emotions, and building an act from there. Ballantine said of those two trained circus dogs, for example, that one must learn “the manner of the animals, the little traits, everything” (Ballantine 29) and have a “good understanding of animal psychology” (Daniel 166) in order to be successful. Part of understanding this psychology was looking at the free contact approach and learning how harsh training methods were impacting the animals, not just in terms of training but also in terms of behaviour. Stuart Craven, a trainer from the 1870s, is a fantastic example of revisiting past processes and attempting positive revisions. As a trainer, he knew that he played a role in “an escalating cycle of subjugation and rebellion” (Daly 99), or abuse, and his work with the elephant performer Romeo helped him to break this cycle, as least as far as his participation in the system. Romeo attacked a man named George Forepaugh, and in order to call him off, Craven decided to shoot Romeo until he paid attention and dropped the attack (Daly 96; Nance 113). Romeo lost an eye to this, and even still Craven and the other elephant men tied him down and beat him with the hook until Craven felt that he was “broken” (Daly 96-97; Nance 113). This was not Romeo’s first attack on one of the trainers - he had, in fact, already killed four of his previous trainers, and even those
who worked closely with him were said to be afraid (Daly 99; Nance 113) - and critics lashed out that he had “outlived his usefulness” (Daly 97) and perhaps was better ‘put down’ for the good of the circus. For Craven though, this was a failure of the training process, and Romeo's violence and attack was not indicative of his uselessness, but rather the trust lost between trainer and performer, and he acknowledged that if Romeo had been treated better by all of his trainers - Craven included - then he might not have acted as he did (99).  

It was not specifically a moral decision, but what he felt would produce greater results for the training process (100).

In fact, Craven’s assertion that “if there were no bad trainers, there would be no bad elephants” (Daly 100) began to impact other trainers working in the field, inspiring a more meticulous approach to training, getting to know the elephant and learning what worked best for a specific animal in a ‘here and now’ perspective, not assuming that a training process could work for every single animal every single time (100). Each elephant performer was as distinct as the trainers, and their individuality should be treated as such. Others who took the individualist, protected contact approach included Hagenbeck and Thompson. Hagenbeck transitioned from a notoriously harsh treatment of animals, to working only with “carefully selected individual animals who showed the temperament for training and the performance of active feats” (Tait 12), as he came to realize that animals had distinct temperaments just like people, and he preferred to work with those whose temperament coincided with the work ethics he identified in other circus performers (16). Hagenbeck believed that the elephants would best develop in their performances through kindness, or having a ‘friendship’ with the animal (20). His focus on individual animal emotionality was not for the protection of the animals, but believing that the resulting act would be more fantastic and enticing for the audience if the animals appeared to be
enjoying themselves, rather than acting terrified of any pending repercussions for mistakes made.  

Some will refer to trained elephant acts as a ‘co-created performance’, in which the positive, protected contact zone between trainer and elephant is influenced, in part, by the elephant performer’s input and participation. Trainers spoke of a heightened sensory experience when performing with the animals, a “whole body alertness” (Tait 185) in which they could feel an animal begin to move before seeing any physical change. Trainers like Gunther Gebel-Williams, who worked predominately with Bengal tigers, described this as being on the same wavelength (186), as did Eph Thompson, Stuart Craven and even Mabel Stark, the first female tiger trainer, who would often show off her bites, scratches and scars when asked what it takes to become a circus animal trainer. She would respond by saying that while it is possible to “beat a cat into obedience just like you can a kid […] one day you’ll get it all back in spades” (Ballantine 90), and therefore she learned to sense animal emotion closely reading the performer’s bodily experiences as a means of accessing its emotionality and intellect (Ballantine 89; Tait 183-184). In a sense, when human and animal performers encounter one another on the circus stage, their sensory responses “converged [… so that] each species was being conditioned by the other” (Tait 186), and neither appeared to be entirely in control. The narrative presented to the audience is one of near symbiosis, human and animal coexisting and communicating, which in itself would be an act of performing the impossible. It is, as May would say, an attempt to blur the boundaries between person and place (May 105), which would be a successful goal of ecological theatre - demonstrating the interdependence and interconnectedness of the human and natural worlds. Tait, however, suggests that while it is a beautiful sentiment, and certainly kinder
in training tactics than the free contact approaches, the result was seeing humans and animals perform together without a full sense of the control exerted over the animals - so, ultimately, the creation of a convincing narrative, but not a successful engagement with ecology overall, as it maintains the strict boundaries between human trainer and dependent animal performer. As well, building acts dependent on food, where the possibility of not receiving food if acts are improperly performed is very much present, is still a misrepresentation of the nature of this training relationship, let alone the nature of the animal performer itself, especially as this process was not transparent for the audience (188).

While the protected contact approach was a step in a positive direction, it did little to uncover the real training conditions of the elephant at the time, or to elucidate these conditions for the public, as trainers were still reluctant to speak openly about their processes. What the audience then observed in either free or protected contact approaches might have appeared the same, especially to the untrained eye uncertain of what a “terrified” animal - as Hagenbeck would say - would look like, compared to an animal comfortable with the stage and the trainer. All of this contributed to the creation of a narrative in which the surface value of the elephants is integral to the performance, but any sense of interiority is disallowed, and the animal performers become more puppets, manipulated into place and position in order to mirror and support a very anthropocentric view of human relations to wild animals.

Even acts created through protected contact were seen as ‘for the good of the animals’, with evolutionary betterment as their goal, with the assumption that animals want to be more sagacious. This again fits in with Chaplin’s first act of the geodrama - the circus trainers at the time were setting forth cautiously, wanting to discover new lands and ‘bring civilization’ to other
animals of the world, but with eyes on the danger inherent in the process, hence the harsh treatment of the animal performers. That dominance and violence trainers asserted was in order to stave off the anticipated negative adaptations of wild elephants brought into captivity. Once ‘broken’, they were emotionally and physically dependent on the trainers, and the conditions in which they existed are hidden from audiences to maintain the illusion that they are acting with the best interests of the animal performers in mind.

Performing Conditions

I want to look at the specific conditions for performing elephants, which were not made public or widely known for some time, though further prove that it was the surface value of the elephant body and its ability to be manipulated in the narrative of the fantastic and impossible that drove audiences into circus tents, and further separated what they thought they knew of the wild elephant by association, and what facts and realities were actually making it through the anthropocentric narrative. For this, I will analyze what was unstated about health records, the conditions of ‘problem elephants’, and how circuses dealt with animals who had either outlived their usefulness to the stage, or threatened narratives of willing animal participation.

First, looking at the health records - or what happened to be recorded and reported - of performing elephants elucidates the conditions of their captivity, which appear to be not in the best interest of making the elephants more sagacious or allowing them the opportunity to become beloved circus stars, but instead indicate a number of serious injuries and illnesses faced by the animal performers as a direct result of their engagement in the circus. By 1905, there were over one hundred circuses and menageries operating in the United States, and the elephants always had “top billing” at these events (Schatz). Trainers claimed that they provided all of their animal
performers with the top medical care, “as these animals were not easily replaced” (Tait 65), and as a result circuses claimed that captive elephants were actually living much longer lives than their wild relatives, a claim which has been challenged as many lived only until early adulthood (Nance 6). As Nance suggests, it was not uncommon for shows to set out at the beginning of the season with a full menagerie, and then have animals continuously die on the way (75). As discussed in the juggling analogy, it is often hard for audiences to conceptualize the difference between ten elephants and fifteen elephants, for example, so if the circus were to lose a couple between shows, it was not often acknowledged in reviews.

Violence and attacks on trainers by ‘problem elephants’ were often the results of poor care, as indicated by Craven’s experience with Romeo. By the end of the 19th Century, it was common knowledge that elephants could be “prone to murderous acts” (Nance 185), which only heightened the sense of ferocity the performers were able to bring to the circus; now everyone knew there was a distinct possibility that the elephant could attack their trainer at any moment, as they had seen it all before - a popular instance being Chief, an elephant with John Robinson’s Circus in the 1870s. Chief once became so agitated during a performance, that he reached out into the audience and struck a young boy with his trunk (Nance 116). It was not the first time an elephant performer had become violent, but one of the first times it was witnessed publicly, and the circus had to speak for it. It was a moment of “elephants […] stepping out of their assigned role as part of the passive landscape against which human dramas play out” (Bradshaw 41), and in this situation, Chief’s attack on that young audience member, while terrifying for the audience, was perhaps the first moment in which he rebelled against the conditions of his captivity and training, and made a choice to 'step out of character’, and “in doing so […] upset
human’s sense of order” (41). Chief’s trainer, John King, was known to be particularly brutal with the elephants under his care, and often beat the elephant in order to provoke further ferocity, as he wanted to "always hold the job of handling a bad elephant” (Nance 116-117). It was simply better for business, and made more exciting shows. During a show in Charlotte, North Carolina in 1880, Chief attacked King and killed him. The response was swift: Chief had stepped out of line too many times, and was now worth more to the company dead than alive (Alexander 128; Nance 8; 117). John Robinson, owner of the circus company, decided to turn this into a live performance opportunity, greater than any show he had ever staged. He staged the live execution of the murderous elephant, with thousands in attendance. What could better depict the clash between human civility and animal ferocity than punishing an animal performer for stepping out of its anthropocentric role and daring to act as an autonomous being, rather than a puppet?

This was not a one-off reaction to elephant attacks. Topsy the elephant, the first baby elephant to have been imported into the USA and survive, was a popular feature of Forepaugh’s circus, with the entire country clamouring to see her. However, as she grew she became less manageable. After the death of audience member Fielding Blount in 1902 - which was either provoked when he crawled under the menagerie tent and he slapped her (Nance 184), or when he fed her a lit cigarette (Scigliano 201-202; Schatz), depending on what source you believe - the Forepaugh and Sells circus company sold Topsy to Cony Island, in anticipation of another public execution, this time organized in conjunction with Thomas Edison’s experiments on the safety of alternating currents (Nance 185).

This is among the most disturbing records of historical circus entertainment that I have found. The execution date was set and highly publicized as ‘justice’. There is video
documentation of this, a film Edison made in 1903 of the event. The video is a little over a minute long and shows Topsy led to a platform, where she is attached to the electrocuting device, plumes of smoke rise from around her feet, and she topples over (Porter). Scigliano refers to both the executions of Topsy and Chief as indicative of audience members once again growing tired with the same old elephant acts - and even acts in which the illusion of ferocity was heightened were growing old, unable to evoke the same wonderment (Scigliano 197). The lore of Topsy’s execution only grew into a fascination with elephant deaths: not only were their trainers able to make them perform the impossible, but they could also swiftly remove them from the stage - and the world - if their performance was not exactly right. Soon the story had grown beyond the simple electrocution, and Topsy's trainers reported that she would not walk into the scaffolding. Executors attempted to feed her carrots laced with cyanide, but they did not kill her; however, after this, she stopped fighting (203).96

These execution spectacles are simply the most popular instances of turning elephant violence and attacks into public events. Many of these were done quietly, so as to avoid generation assumptions that the circuses might be doing something wrong, if they had so many violent elephants. Columbia, the first elephant born in captivity,97 is an excellent example of circuses dealing with violent elephants outside of the public eye. Columbia was raised exclusively by human trainers, in a company in which other performing elephants were caught as juveniles and therefore knew little of elephant culture (Nance 217). Like Topsy, as Columbia grew, she came to be seen as untrustworthy, and press agent Townsend Walsh recounts how she met her end in 1907:
After crippling one trainer and almost killing another, she was deemed too dangerous to travel with the show and set a bad example of the rest of the herd. So she was quietly sent to oblivion one night (Nance 218).

Haney deals with these situations in his training handbook, suggesting that elephants “in their wild state, it is very seldom that they attack any person or animal, unless provoked or assailed” (Haney 133), but the anthropocentric narrative obviously could not incorporate this, if the goal was benevolent sagacity and audience fascination. Any elephant’s ‘murderous’, ‘malicious’ or even ‘mad’ behaviour must either be an inextricable part of their nature, an emotional disturbance within the animal (Tait 35), or simply buried, becoming the subjugated knowledges of the circus. Gay Bradshaw, in looking at contemporary elephant violence, suggests that perhaps elephants become violent simply because they have been left with no other choice (Bradshaw 42). The conditioning process and behaviour modelling that circus elephants were subjected to by the trainers, who intentionally positioned themselves as parental figures for the animal performers, would have imprinted upon them the lesson that if you want someone to do something, you hit them until they do it. During one other execution a police officer responded to the scene that he felt “the elephants are trying to tell us something, I think […] But we have not been listening” (Alexander 145).

Objections to Free Contact

I want to note that when much of the realities of captivity and free contact came to light - such as when they were observed impacting the quality of a performance (Nance 70) or the police officer’s above reaction to the elephant execution (Alexander 145), there were protests and those who objected to this harsh treatment. In a foundational book on animal rights and the responsibilities of people towards animals, Henry Salt notes that in the mid-to-late-Nineteenth
Century, there was a resurgence in the theoretical debate on animal interiority, agency, and the consequences associated with performing animals (Salt 3), possibly predicated on the renewed closeness between people and animals, through menageries, early zoos, or circus performance. This also coincided in part with the rise of Henry Bergh’s American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals [ASPCA] the anti-vivisection movement, the Women’s Christian Temperance Movement, and to a smaller extent, women’s suffrage (Buettinger 857; DeMello 3; Salt 3). Salt noted that up until this point, animals were viewed far more as property than as living beings (Salt 7). In fact, some of the first laws set up to regulate animal welfare were based solely on notions of property damage, namely the Ill-Treatment of Cattle Bill of 1822, which was passed in the UK to punish cruelty inflicted on “beasts of burden” when such cruelty damaged the economic value of the animal (Salt 5). The same law also prohibited the trapping of animals for the purposes of bear-baiting and other such entertainments (5), because:

> to take a wild animal from its free natural state, full of abounding egoism and vitality, and to shut it up for the wretched remainder of its life in a cell where it has just space to turn around, and where it necessarily loses every distinctive feature of its character - this appears to be to be as downright a denial as could well be imagined of the theory of animals’ rights (39-40).

Salt suggested in 1894 that what was needed was a new philosophical and sociological approach to animals, primarily because the enactment of the 1822 law was deemed insufficient. There were no mechanisms through which this law could be enforced, and no similar law protecting animals - even as property - in the US, especially as circuses and traveling menageries were gaining steam. This led Salt and his contemporaries to lament that “animals, on account of their interests having been neglected by the insensibility of ancient jurists, stand degraded into the class of things” (13-14).
By the late-19th Century, it was not uncommon to find narratives mourning the loss of ‘wildness’ for animals encountered in traveling menageries - the listless bear\textsuperscript{104} or the unpredictable tiger\textsuperscript{105}, not to mention the elephants prone to rampage\textsuperscript{106}. Authors like Anna Sewell\textsuperscript{107} began to pen stories in which leading female characters could identify with the powerlessness of animals, which paralleled the rise of both the women’s rights movements and anti-vivisectionists and animal rights protesters (DeMello 3). The commonality could be found tied up with discussions of rights and possessions: “only being which possess things” - such as property - “can have rights, only those who have interests can have rights” (Soave 46). If one could not make a claim, then one had no rights. Women, perceived as weak, and animals, perceived as mindless (46) were in the same boat, and this association began to spur further investigations into the inner lives of animals. What is needed to have and exercise rights, Soave says, is a “rational mind, language to communicate, ability to make choices and exercise free will, ability to have and use morality, culture, social and communal relations, and interests” (Soave 46). Animals, until relatively recently, were presumed to have none of these.\textsuperscript{108} The ASPCA and Henry Bergh played a particular role in helping to educate spectators about their responsibilities towards working and performing animals, as well as helping to enforce laws protecting animals (McCrea 5-6), and through their work they were able to “prohibit […] or abate […]” cock-fighting, bear-baiting and other such activities (10).

When it comes to the nineteenth-century American circus specifically though, not a great deal has been written regarding protests of animal treatment, and I believe much of this has to do with the manner in which the circus shows were marketed. There was a great deal of ‘huckster-ism’ going on at the circus — particularly surrounding figures like P. T. Barnum, who was in turn
called a fraud, a charlatan, a masterful storyteller and narrative illusionist, and sometimes a straight-up liar (Brooks). There was strong use of misdirection both on and off the stage when it came to not only disguising, but denying that any animal mistreatment occurred. On stage, the trainers would play up the narrative of elephant ferocity in the event their hooks and whips were to be used, as if they were simply in defence, or to maintain the strict roles between trainer and animal. Other uses of the hook were kept out of the sight lines, or reserved for after the show, and both Nance and Tait note instances of elephants refusing to leave the stage after the shows, knowing what was in store for them. Essentially, the trainer or ringmaster directed the audience gaze.

Pre-show advertisements were also a huge element of this misdirection, as they would precondition the audience to view the performing in a particular light. Barnum in particular knew that he had to “please both the straight-laced Anglo-Saxon puritan and the fun-loving German immigrant, and had to appeal to both men and women alike, adults and children” (Daniel 68), so directed all advertisements to feature exciting images of ferocious animals - thereby preparing them for any instances of ‘wildness’ on stage. He was also known to direct poster painters to create images depicting the animals in their natural habitats (70), thereby associating the circus with what is already ‘natural’ for the animal. These posters would be plastered in the thousands by the show men who traveled to town in advance of the circus, drumming up attention (70). It may also have helped that the circus was almost entirely in control of media and advertising space at the time. Charles Day, a former circus showman, said:

The old-time circus managers in this country, it may be said, discovered advertising. Who ever took any noticeable space in a newspaper until after the circus made the experiment and demonstrated the profit and the possibilities?
Who appropriated the poster to his purpose and adopted it almost solely as his own? The old-time circus manager (Day).\textsuperscript{112}

The combination of this ferocity and domesticity again placed the circus as the only institution willing and able to present these animals so up-close-and-personal, while being safe at the same time. They essentially incorporated any instance of trainer aggression into the narrative of the show, making it both invisible for the most part, but wholly necessary when it was seen. Any group wanting to voice protests, from Bergh and the ASPCA, to the Temperance Movement, to even a writer as famous as Anna Sewell, may have been dwarfed in competition with that volume at the time.

All of this may have served to soften the criticisms of elephants in the circus, at least in the nineteenth-century. Even Salt, while being critical of the entire endeavour, states that trained elephants are not nearly as morally reprehensible as elephants who remain caged and sedentary in zoos, though he looked forward to a day when they could be excluded from captivity at all (Salt 41). For Salt, his major criticism of circuses centred not around animal abuses, but instead on the illusion of intimacy between the audience and animal through this spectacle-based encounter: “if we desire to cultivate a closer intimacy with wild animals” it cannot be based on unequal power dynamics “by which we can drag them from their native haunts, warp the whole purpose of these lives, and degrade them to the level of […] curiosities” (41).

In this, I think we can theorize on the relationship that is generated between spectatorship and animal agency. The circus clearly directed audience gaze away from any evidence of mistreatment or the impacts of confinement on the performing elephants, and gave a false sense of security in the authority of the circus as caretakers of animal performers. We can pull from Berger’s suggestion that the way we look at animals - and the ways we are directed to look -
colours not only our view of them, but also our place in the world (Berger 10). The representation of the elephant performer, in this sense, misdirects the audience into the illusion of elephant sagacity, while at the same time reinforces the animals’ ‘otherness’ (Kuhl 106), which can “ultimately be used to justify continued oppression” (108). Cixous would look at this as a substitution of human desires for animal needs and realities (Miller 218). If spectator gaze is directed in such a way as to suggest that the performing animal is exhibiting agency and choosing to be present on stage in the spectacle, and that any use of force is simply in keeping with maintaining the power balance between trainer and performer, then the spectators are going to learn to recognize animal agency in a very specific light. ‘Agency’, in terms of the circus, could be recognized in the elephant’s apparent cooperation with the performance, regardless of coercion tactics employed behind the scenes, or who is operating the ‘puppet strings’. It also further reinforces how the spectators should treat and relate to animals outside of the circus, with life in the world coming to mimic — in outlooks on animals if not in action — life on the stage.

Consequences for Performing Elephants

The invisible histories of performing elephants obscured many things, but Shana Alexander suggests that nothing was hidden as much as the real consequences of their captive lives - beyond just the publicly-known problem elephants. Alexander’s investigations in her work *The Astonishing Elephant* focused primarily on male elephants. In her research, she noticed that by the end of World War One, the number of circuses rose, but the number of bull (male) elephants declined slowly (Alexander 124-125), and as we can note from the example of Robert “Smokey” Jones, when he trained with Ringling Brothers, he had a herd of fifty-five elephants, only one of which was male. This seemed curious to Alexander, especially when she realized that
by the 1930s, there were no male elephants or mature or breeding age left anywhere in the country (126). Through thorough investigations, what she found is that male elephants during the early 1900s were being systematically ‘disposed of’ - “shot, poisoned, stabbed, clubbed, garrotted, electrocuted, drowned and even hung” (125), mostly at night, mostly without public acknowledgement, and approximately around the time the male elephant began to reach puberty (Ballantine 314).

When male elephants reach puberty at around ten years old, they enter a state called ‘musth’, which is “a periodic state of excitation characterized by surging levels of testosterone, dribbling urine, and copious secretions from his temporal glands” (Nicol), and severe aggression. It is at this time that, in the wild, they would theoretically be looking to mate with female elephants (Nance 111), but in captive conditions this was not a possibility, so the elephant in musth would become, as Alexander said, eight thousand pounds of a “deadly nightmare” (Alexander 124), which would attack trainers, charge bleachers, and pose a risk to the audience. Circuses did not know how to deal with these, having little understanding of what was going on, and so they were initially often chained and starved until the musth passed, as there was little possibly of convincing the elephant to obey any commands, let alone perform on stage, and this could take several days or weeks (Nance 112; Scigliano 76).

When the idea of controlling male elephants in musth was no longer an option, it became easier for companies to dispose of the bull (Nance 127), knowing that there would always be a steady string of imports from Southeast Asia to fulfill their male elephant needs. That way, the company would have young males that would draw audiences in for the pleasure of seeing a well-trained baby elephant, but none of the risk of dealing with that same elephant once they
have matured. There was, however, nowhere else for these elephants to go once they had fulfilled their performative usefulness in the circus (Nance 180), so owners like Bailey simply “ordered the quiet elimination of male elephants whenever they got out of hand” (Scigliano 203). In 1903 alone, Bailey had five elephants killed for this reason (203). References to these executions were slyly snuck into articles, reporting what occurred but without drawing criticism to the crisis themselves. For example, in Edmund Heller’s 1934 National Geographic article “Nature’s Most Amazing Animal”, he recorded:

> Male Indian elephants formerly were common in circus parades. Sooner or later nearly all male elephants become periodically dangerous at the recurrence of their ‘must’ period, during which time they are uncontrollable and must be kept heavily chained. Frequently they take violent dislike to certain of their attendants and craftily await an opportunity to kill them unawares. So many men have been inured and killed by such treacherous male elephants that to-day the circus herds are usually made up of females only (Heller 745).

The focus was entirely placed on the risks posed to the trainers, and curiously does not examine how it came to be that females now made up the majority of circus elephant performers. The majority of roles for male elephants - still greatly needed for the narrative as the biggest and most ferocious - were given to female elephants, meaning that elephant roles past the 1900s were ungendered. All circus elephants were called ‘bulls’ and their keepers ‘bull hands’ (Alexander 125). Less emphasis was placed on tusks, and there was an increase in the importation of African elephants, where both the males and female have tusks, in order to make up for the lack of male Asian elephants. Elephants were also given gender-neutral names like Louis, Tommy and Tony (143), and the thought was that if the audience heard a male name come from the trainer, then the performing elephant beside them must be male as well. Alexander suggests that the circus owners willfully, when realizing they were incapable of providing care for male elephants in
musth, “stamped out the male elephant tin the United States because he was bad for business. And they did it efficiently and in secret” (125),116 and few - including the National Geographic itself - even noticed what was going on. Alexander calls the actions of the circus owners indicative of a genocide, or a pachycide (125) as by 1952, the US census counted living elephants, and with a grand total of two hundred and sixty-four in the country, only six were males (143).

This is a big claim, and also entirely obscured within the conditions of elephant performer lives, so far from the narrative that when I came across this research, I dismissed it as exaggeration. Alexander pointed to a number of instances in which male elephants were either executed or the company attempted to execute them, including Hercules,117 Columbus,118 Rio119 and the infamous Black Diamond,120 not to mention Chief. Every example seemed similar: a young bull elephant captured from the wild, transported half-way around the world, trained to perform the possible, on stage and beloved by an audience, so long as he fit within the specific narrative set out for him by his trainer, and one day - seemingly out of the blue - he lashes out and is set to be executed. Any of the previous examples of training conditions, the dependency on act success to receive food, the increased risk of illness or disease faced by any circus animal performer at the time, provide a stressful environment. Elephants are keystone species of their ecosystems (Scigliano 38), meaning that we can judge the health of an ecosystem by looking at the vitality of elephant herds. If there is adequate space, sustenance, biodiversity and an assurance of safety, and elephant herds are thriving, it is more than likely that other species will be thriving as well. If we can translate this concept to the circus, and view elephants as a keystone species for the circus stage, and look at the number of male elephants being secretly
removed from herds - not to mention other troublesome elephants being executed as well - then it becomes obvious that at this point in history, the circus was not properly functioning as an ecosystem for these animals, and therefore it is more than likely that they were not functioning for any of the animals.

However, each source I came across listed different stories and different timelines for deaths, not to mention the number of elephant performers - male or female - executed by circus companies, so I wanted to test Alexanders assertions of this elephant genocide. What I have done — and included as Appendix A — is amalgamate sources in order to find out exactly how truthful Alexanders claims were, by creating a list of elephant performer deaths in the circus from Elephant through to Alexander’s research on elephants in the 1950s and 60s. I have also included publicized elephant performer deaths from contemporary circuses, as an example on how this trend has developed. While at time it was difficult - or impossible - to find out exact genders of the elephants, I have included this information where available.

Looking at the data, it becomes apparent that, regardless of elephant performer gender, there is a problem in how historical - and in some ways also contemporary - circuses deal with their elephants, especially when the elephants become ‘problems.’ As we can see, there is a notable decline in male elephant deaths after 1951, when circuses had generally phased out male elephant performer in favour of the more commonly manageable female elephants. Prior to 1951, there were sixty-five recorded elephant deaths directly attributable to performing life within the circus: nine female, twenty-two male, and thirty-four gender unspecific. Male elephant deaths - particularly executions organized by the circus companies when the male elephant performers became unmanageable, were more than double that of female elephant deaths, more if we
assume that a number of the gender unspecific elephants might have been male as well. After 1951, the trend switches sharply, with only six male elephant deaths recorded, forty-two female elephant deaths, and twenty-nine gender unspecific. This seems to support Alexander’s claim that a male pachycide either took place, or the elimination of male elephants from circus stages was ultimately successful.

Ultimately, the gender of the performing elephant is secondary to the means through which circuses decided to deal with elephants who did not seamlessly conform to the larger narratives the circuses were presenting. Overall, there were 142 recorded elephant deaths from 1796 until 2013, but considering that many historical circuses declined to make their actual numbers public, nor did many advertise their executions beyond those which would be economically beneficial, such as Topsy or Chief, this number could be only a fraction of what actually occurred. Consider the 1938 death of Sammy, from Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey’s circus, considered to be “too mean to live” (Alexander 126). His departure from the narrative, like many other elephants executed at the time, was considered “resist[ance to] the conditions of his experience”, as it began to explore the subjugation of elephant performer to human-driven narrative as false (Nance 41). As punishment, not only was Sammy executed, but later the company hired a taxidermist to make “novelty waste baskets of his feet” (Alexander 136): the ultimate symbol of demonstrating human power over animal performers within the spectacle. If the animal did not fit, or resisted, then it was not only their surface bodies in performance within which the circus could find value, but then inert body parts would create a fine spectacle on their own: would would not pay to see waste baskets made out of the feet of an elephant?
The case study, as well as the overall placement of animals within performance spectacles based on May’s questions for ecological performance, leave still more questions than answers. While May might determine animal circus acts to be successful in one way — that they undeniably do inspire audiences to think on their relationships with nature (May 105) — what we are asked to think on is the product of a wholly fictitious and often fatal narrative, posing more threats to the animal performer than benefits, even if the goal of sagaciousness, or saving these animals from the perils of the wild, are to be believed. Ultimately, how are we able to justify the inclusion of animals within performance, while accounting for how their lives have been impacted? When animal surface bodies are valued more than the potential for interiority, then it presumes that interiority does not exist, that these are essentially puppets on an anthropocentric stage, which is a direct contradiction of the narrative of sharing the stage that especially circus animal trainers depend on.

8. **Breaking the Strings: Exposing the Artifice of Puppetry in Animal-Based Spectacle**

Kuhl suggests that we consider what constitutes a ‘good’ representation of non-human animals within art (Kuhl 118), and his list of questions provides a strong conclusion: if a performance cannot give voice to animal performers, further any understandings of their realities, forge ethical relationships between human and animal performers, and stop the perpetuation of animal subjugation (118), then what we have is ultimately a performance that needs to be problematized and dismantled.

Woodward suggests that within captivity, performing animals are cheated “of any authentic kinetic expression, possibly only in the extended spaces of their natural
environment” (Woodward 14). Animals are limited in terms of the movements they can make, by instruction of their trainers, like puppeteers manipulating strings. As Kuhl would suggest, the performance gives no voice to the actual animal performer (Kuhl 118), so any empathy generated through the performance is misdirected, either relatable to the human trainer, or intended for the ‘mythology’ of the animal presented. When the animal moves of its own accord - in the case of circus elephants, to lash out, inflict harm on rough trainers, even refuse to move, as Columbus did on the bridge (Powers) or Charley in the swamp (Powers) - then the strings are revealed. Once one sees a Murderous Mary or a Topsy, there is an opportunity to reconsider the system which funnels animal performers from ‘fellow animal’ to mindless object, and ultimately to commodity. Essentially, the positioning of animals within performance spectacles operates on a *Wizard of Oz* level, of sorts, an insistence that you ‘don’t look at the man behind the curtain’. Spectators are not supposed to see, because when they do, when animal performers break out of their predefined roles, it poses the question that perhaps the performance was not entirely consensual, and that there might be an artifice beyond the stated animal performer - human trainer narrative. When the puppet animal breathes of its own accord, unapologetically, there is no duality of domesticity or ferocity, not question of whether it’s an act of ‘performing the impossible’ or ‘not performing the impossible’. It is entirely unscripted movement, contradicting the illusion of human control. It is a failure of the spectacle. For Kuhl’s considerations of ‘good’ representations, this would definitely constitute a foregrounding of the subjectivity the non-human, but it is unintentional, and no furthered understanding of non-human experiences (Kuhl 118) result. Instead, there are still only more questions, or ‘abysses’ in our knowledge of animal realities.
Animals in spectacle “occupy the space between the world of imagination and the world of actuality” (M. Cohen 123), being simultaneously ‘relatable to me’ and ‘not me’ (123). They are at once creatures who we can unequivocally say exist and breathe just as we do, but also are so vastly different that they, as Grosz suggests, spark fascination. The way we have come to exist alongside animals in spectacle is to tease apart the ways in which we are the same and different, just as we would investigate the liveliness of a puppet or a toy. Cohen suggests that the way they relate to puppets constitutes a “violence against the object” (124), or a means of reaching “social differentiation” (124): exacting the ways in which we are separate from the non-human object, the goal of which, in terms of animals, we can trace back all the way to Aristotle, if not beyond (Kalof 36), and most certainly with Descartes (97). Cohen quotes D. W. Winnicott as saying that “we fantasize about destroying [the] internal objects we hold most dear” (124), as a means of quickly distinguishing between ‘me’ and ‘not me’, which has a clear Cartesian connection. Acts such as Roman gladiator fights distinguish the triumph of human fighters over nature; bear-baiting exposed the interiority of the animal as mere surface value; the positioning of the circus elephant is as mindless object at the will of a human manipulator. Each of these further the narrative of human superiority - ‘me’ - versus animal subjugation - ‘not me’, and becomes possible in these spectacles through pushing the animal performer to destruction. This is clearly, for Kuhl’s considerations, not an ‘ethical relationship between the human artist and non-human collaborator’ (Kuhl 118), but one in which the animal performer is both marginalized and forgotten (118). The existence of animal interiority and autonomy is pushed into the realm of impossibility, brought out only through its relationship to a human trainer, where the animal is ‘taught’ sagacity, where the audience is supposed to be pleasantly shocked at the domesticity
arising from the ferocity. Ultimately, it becomes necessary to destroy the animal, erasing all potential for animal minds, in order to underline the narrative of human superiority, and at the same time, if the spectacle pushes this destruction too far, that is when the cracks in the illusion begin to show.

Subsequently, this is when the performing animal is also ‘forgotten’ (Kuhl 118). This is perhaps why there are more questions than answers about the animal performer in spectacle. We have traded knowledge on the conditions of captivity, in order to buy into the commodity of wonderment, and our relation to the animal as simply a body, just a surface with no interiority - no mind, intentionality, or autonomy. Kuhl notes that Baudelaire once said children destroy beloved objects in order to “see the soul of their toys” (125), as a process of showcasing strength. In this sense, the animal performers can be seen as our imaginative puppet-toys on the spectacle stage. When a toy is broken, one moves on. It is both indicative of our culture of planned obsolescence, as well as our relation to animals on stage: they are fun, until they break themselves, of their own accord, and smash cultural narratives of human conquest, problematizing issues of capture and captivity. It is impossible to not see the animal-puppet come to life — for example, when Topsy lashes out and kills her abusive trainer (Scigliano 201-202; Schatz). This connects back to Chaplin’s delineation of geodrama’s first act, in which participants were consistently and consciously in fear of the natural world, its unpredictability, and that it might lash out at any moment, revealing all we thought to know to be false (Chaplin xx). For those relating to animals within performance, the fear here might be best expressed not as a ‘fear of the natural world’ entirely, but a fear that the natural world might actually be just as ‘alive’ as they are, and have something to say about the way in which we are relating to it. It is
much easier to justify the inclusion of a intellectually ‘dead’ or inert animal object within performance — one that can both delight and inspire fascination, but also support our anthropocentric narratives.

The question that then arises is: what do we do once the animal performer is undeniably ‘alive’ once again?

9 By this, I mean that there is a notable difference between stating that an animal ‘has agency’, and allowing them to act upon it. For example, throughout this chapter I will be detailing instances in which trainers comment on the animal’s choice to be in the circus, or their supposed enjoyment of life there. While this suggests to the audiences that the animal has elected the circus life, as we’ll see from the research this isn’t necessarily so. “Exercised agency” implies that the animal both has the ability to make a choice, and is permitted to do so.

10 I will discuss many of these consequences in Chapter 2, which focuses on the performing animal as an educational object.

11 The ox can also be considered an example of this, from a more historical approach. Soave notes that cattle are historically imbued with moral characteristics (Soave 30), such as “strength, endurance, energy, and power” (30). Rulers would align themselves with bulls to demonstrate manliness (30). Compare this to how cattle were treated with Bakewell’s approach to agricultural art in the 1700s, and even to how cattle are treated in most cultures today.

12 For example, when one viewed an elephant swaying in Balanchine’s Ballet of the Elephants — an act I will analyze in greater detail during this chapter — the animal trainers employed by the circus would not have known it was likely the product of stereotypy, a condition caused by the stress of captivity. Animal behaviour had just not been investigated thoroughly enough to discover this at the time. Any analysis of circus animals based solely on historical sources would not be able to pick up on these details.

13 In Chapter 2, I will also be drawing comparisons between Barnum’s historical writings on captive animal performers, and SeaWorld’s current depictions of the animal cast of Shamu. I hope that this chapter also provides the necessary framework to make those anachronisms just ill-fitting in an aquarium as they are in a circus.
Bear-baiting is an interesting topic when it comes to discussing the duality of relegating an animal to surface value, but also presuming that they have an interiority. Beginning in the 16th-century, this was not simply performative torture, though its methods speak to this end. It featured bears who were blinded, sometimes trapped in a shallow pit, tied to a stake, and then either set upon by dogs, or the audience themselves, who were permitted to flog the bear for entertainment (Kalof 189). Kalof suggests that Elizabethan audiences of bear baiting were seeking “leisure and pleasure in the face of [...] disruption, disease, and death” (92), a rebellion against societal hardships and the threat of plagues. He also looks to these acts as a “psychological anatomy theatre” (Kalof 90), which was already popular at the time, as theatre featured the performative revealing of one’s anatomy through dissection, either to a public or private audience, and generally at a university (Kalof 90). These performances delved into the psyche of the performing bear, pushing to animal to its psychological limits so that the audience could experience new and previously unobserved aspects of its behaviour. Kalof suggests this as a “comedy of humours” (90), the ancient idea that within every person are of humous or bodily substances that determine nature. By degrading the bear performer, they could prompt the animal to reveal its true nature (90), which they felt would be “wild and uncontrolled behaviour” (90).

Bear-baiting continued to be a popular activity into Enlightenment, and in some cases, up until the 19th Century (Kalof 90). Audiences continued to participate enthusiastically, often claiming favourite bear competitors, and rooting for their survival. In fact, the best shows were not simply the ones in which the audience was able to participate in baiting and tormenting a bear, but the ones in which the bears ‘heroically’ fought back, displaying “raw animal courage” (92), blending the audience’s cruelty with their pity for the struggling animal. If this combination of emotions, combined with the audiences continued participation, seem out of place, consider this: the goal of exposing animal nature though ‘humours’ simultaneously presupposes and denies the existence of an animal interiority. Mob-like audiences both believed animals possessed no psychological interior, and paradoxically, through the ritualistic beating of the bears, also attempted to expose that interiority - the inner psychology of the bear performer or its humours - that they are assured is not there. This paradox, or struggle to reconcile questions of the animal mind were also hotly debated in philosophy, leading not only to the acceptance of such cruel performance traditions, but also the belief that the animal victim was entirely unaware of its starring role in bear-baiting anyway.

Looking at dominate theorists at the time when bear baiting was popular - Rene Decartes and Francis Bacon - can help to characterize the philosophical means through which spectators approached the stars of these performances. Descartes thought the starring bears were simply unthinking, unfeeling beings without the slightest concept of its circumstances, and any fight they put up for their survival was done without actually knowing what they were doing. Francis Bacon also encouraged people that it was within their rights to make nature their slave. Essentially, either the audience may have truly felt they could expose the bear’s humours and through this psychological anatomy theatre come to know the ‘real’ animal, and were doing so conscious of the torment inflicted on the animal in the process, or perhaps it was all a futile exercise. The performance of bear-baiting was simultaneously one of revealing and concealing animal character, of accepting that there is an interior to find, and doing one’s all to silence it.
I want to look briefly at one historical and artistic example that illustrates this reduction to pure surface value and disavowal of animal interiority: cow portraiture of the early 1800s. I am not intending to draw any transhistorical conclusions from this, but simply to use it as an illustration of the theory outlined so far. I believe it shows how the animal object can be translated into a spectacle, particularly through artistic representation. I am also thinking ahead to Kuhl's list of questions regarding what constitutes a ‘good’ representation of the animal within art, and using this example as well to demonstrate what Kuhl might call negative representations. Broglio gives an excellent example of how a particular surface value is selected in his discussion of 19th Century agricultural art and cow portraiture where “paintings of prized cattle were made into prints which circulated to illustrate the standard toward which graziers should breed their beasts. These bovine pin-ups changed the way farmers looked at and fashioned their animals” (Living Flesh 107). The surface values that these breeders and painters selected aimed to “translate the wilds to culture” (Surface Encounters 83) by generating ‘ideal’ images.

The process began with Robert Bakewell, a cattle farmer in 1760s Britain, who is credited with inventing modern cattle breeding (Living Flesh 106). He would select certain desirable traits, “having a preconceived image of what an ideal cattle would look like” (106), and would then commission a portrait of the cow, but have the painter highlight and accentuate certain marketable values such as weight accentuated. Take, for example, The Durham Ox, a 1802 painting by John Boulbee, commissioned and modelled from an actual animal but bearing little resemblance to it. Broglio points out that in Boulbee’s portrait, the animal’s back and neck are “exaggerated in length in order to provide a more seemly and proportionate animal” (Technologies of the Picturesque 176), though the actual dimensions would be impossible for the breed (176). This image served to enhance the real, making the ox more picturesque and visually appealing for buyers, thereby driving up cost and demand for the breeder’s stock (176). This reduced the animal purely to surface details - no interiority or consciousness, just meat (Surface Encounters 83). Nature in this sense is conceived of as mimetic, because it is often seen imitating in order to progress towards that ‘perfect’ image, an “improved animal” (Living Flesh 104).

The first formal definition of sagacity was in Samuel Johnson’s Dictionary in 1755-1760, in which the term translated to “quickness of scent, thought, discovery” (Boddice 65), which did not explicitly preclude wild animals, who undeniably have these characteristics.

This documentary played at Toronto’s 2015 Hot Docs Festival.

The feat itself is undoubtedly and acrobatically incredible, and it is no wonder the act has won awards.

Another example of the tricks in this act includes Rene Jr. placing one foot each on two elephant heads, and commanding the elephants to step back in opposite directions until he is doing the splits, suspended between their heads (“Casselly Family Video, 2010”).

Feld was, at the time, actively pursuing the Casselly family for their final North American tour with elephant performers.
Elephants were not on the horizon for early circuses, an invention of Philip Astley, who was focused on performing horses (Daniel 162; Nance 42). Astley, aimed to create a mix of “wholesome” and “adult” entertainment (Nance 42), which would ideally stand as equal to the traditional theatrical stage. Astley was trained as a cavalry horseman in Coventry, England, and while there learned various “trick riding” tactics for surviving on a battlefield (Wall 109-110). He translated these skills into performance art, hanging from a horse to not pick up a wayward pistol but to pull out ribbons or handkerchiefs for the delight of the audience (110). His form combined the fear of war and battle that would have been present in audience minds, with a nostalgia for animals, and the daring of an acrobatic equestrian, enacting Grosz’s first definition of ‘fascination’ - to “attract, irresistibly enchant, [and] charm” (Grosz 6).

Initially, Astley’s shows were performed in rented theatres, resulting in collaboration between these early circuses and the theatre of the time. Works staged included pantomimes, melodramas, staged hunts, and dances, but “equestrians and their mounts were always the start of the show, galloping through canon smoke, rearing up, swooping in to save children in peril” (Wall 146). One description written of these horse-driven processions stated:

Tramp, tramp, tramp! There they come. Observe the grand entree by four-and-twenty Arabian horses, while the rustic mother chaps her infant to her breast, scared by these terrible sports. At the first interruption of the cavalcade, the audience are bewildered with the general splendour of the scene. The horses, beautifully marked and caparisoned, are obedient to the slightest will of the rider, and yet by their proud looks and haughty bearing, seem conscious of their lineage (Lewis 123).

The resulting ‘hippodramas’ - the fusion of equestrian and dramatic arts - had a significant impact on the developing of American touring circuses, primarily because they infused the entirely physical art of equestrianism, with dramatic characters from traditional theatre (146). The circus also began to hint towards a political expansion of the stage, capitalizing on the growing disassociation from animals in everyday life necessitated by the expansion of the Industrial Revolution (Daniel 163). Whereas wild animals were still in recent memory a part of everyday life, through human expansion and animal exploitation, animals were being pushed to the edges of civilization, and this distancing helped to shape the animal, as we have seen before, as “always already spectacle” (Woodward 9) - and spurred a fascination of the wild and exotic (162). Essentially, the more we were societally separated from animals, the greater the desire grew to see them in performance. When the circus began to rise in popularity in the USA, the effects of this expansion were widely felt on circus stages: why have a horse, an animal still so common to everyday life, when one could instead draw one’s audiences in to see something entirely foreign.

As an example of audience expectations, Nance noted a review by William Bentley of the Boston Bowen’s Museum in 1798. Bentley attended to see animals within the menagerie exhibit, and was most displeased by the bear, who he determined to be in “contempt with every visitor” (Nance 26) simply because they were sleeping, and not roaring like one would expect of a wild bear. The illusion of the ferocious animal was ruined by the dozing and inert animal.

I will expand on this argument in my next chapter as well.
Menageries also had religious undertones, claiming to serve “to show the children [...] how wonderful are the creatures of other lands, even in the subdued condition of captives” (Logan 274). They connected the people “of good and regular standing” (“Circus Reformation”) to the circus, as spectators would come for the menagerie, the traveling ‘Noah’s Ark’, and be lured into staying for the circus show. In fact, an 1846 ad by the Raymond and Waring Menagerie steered directly into the religious analogy, saying that menageries were the physical fulfillment of the biblical call for dominion over other animals: it is “necessary that man should study the history of animated nature [the live animal on exhibition], [to] make himself a master of the science” (Nance 64). The menagerie became positioned as good, wholesome entertainment.

Sciglio notes that a fascination with elephants has pervaded almost everything that we do, and might perhaps stem from the remains of another extinct species of elephant, the mammoth (Scigliano 21). Derived from the Siberian word ‘mammut’ meaning “giant mole-like creatures that lived deep in the permafrost” (Larmer), who “perish[ed] in light [and brought] death with them” (Scigliano 22). W. B. Scott, in his work American Elephant Myths, cited a 1712 account of a “kind of beast, which is like a mouse, as big as an elephant, crawls in tunnels, and dies and it meets the sun or the moonlight” (Scigliano 22). The possible origins of this fascination might be with the emergence of mammoth bodies from the permafrost - perishing in the light as they began to decay. The bones were both revered and feared that, historically, Siberians were keen to leave the bones alone, as if removing them might bring back luck (22).

Elephants were not new to performance in general. Our cultural fascination with elephants can be traced back to antiquity, with the Roman Gladiatorial games. The lure of seeing animals onstage, and elephants in particular, was great then as well. Pliny the Elder once observed of his time at a Roman carnival:

Elephants even walked on tightropes, four at a time, carrying in a litter a woman pretending to be in labour. Or they walked between couches to take their places in dining rooms crowded with people, picking their way gingerly avoid lurching into anyone who was drinking. It is a known fact that one elephant, somewhat slow-witted in understanding orders, was often beaten with a lash and was discovered at night practicing what he had to do (Kalof 35).
By ancient Rome, animals were co-opted into roles depicting Roman domination over its expanding empire, particularly in terms of gladiatorial games and spectacles. By the time of Julius Caesar’s reign the games were major political events and “propaganda tools” (Minowa 512) stage to maintain authority and unity throughout the empire (512). Each day of gladiator games during the peak of their popularity, approximately from the 1st Century BCE until the 3rd Century CE (Minowa 513), had a specific schedule. The days would begin with venationes, or ‘animal hunts’, which would include “wild beasts from Africa and Asia, including elephants, bulls, bears, crocodiles, lions, panthers, and tigers… brought into the arena to be pitted against one another or slain by bestiarii, men with lances and spears and protected with light padding on legs and torsos” (Minowa 513). During afternoon shows, animals would take the stage in damnatio ad bestias (Minowa 513), or the execution of criminals by large captive animals such as lions or elephants. Each of these animal spectacles were preludes to the main event of the games: human gladiatorial combats (513).

The sacrifice of animals during these games increased in popularity after the fall of Carthage, when they - particularly elephants - were not as needed by the armies, so they were instead transferred to the games as a spectacle (Scigliano 129). The animals were representatives both of their conquered homelands, and of civilization encroaching on nature, and a performed struggle against the untamed. It was a way to showcase humans besting nature: if a human gladiator could defeat a wild, ferocious animal, cathartically it imparted to the audience that Roman society in general could triumph over the unknown. It was a performance of political stability, for an audience who often felt increasingly politically unstable (Epplett 210). It was also a way to demonstrate lavish excess. Animals revered in foreign countries could be scarified here easily, to entertain the people and showcase the defeat of their enemies.

The use of animals in gladiatorial games can be viewed as a sort of performative biomimicry: Kalof notes that “the ancients were fascinated by the spectacles of nature. They believed that animals were naturally violent and aggressive, [and therefore] watching their combative behaviors was an appropriate human activity” (Kalof 37). Essentially, because a snake would bite an elephant in the wild, it was morally acceptable for the games to create conditions for this battle to occur for the benefit of human spectators. It was a philosophy supported by the Stoics, who can be credited with the western idea of the earth being built for people (Bowler 45). In Cicero’s On the Nature of the Gods, he argues “that the rivers are designed for navigation and that mineral veins have been carefully positioned in the earth for our use” (45). Therefore if, as Pliny says, “nature is desirous, as it were, to make an exhibition for herself, in pitting opponents [such as an elephant and a snake] together” (Kalof 38), then engineering similar situations - mimicking nature for entertainment - in which these exhibitions could occur was simply something that people had a right do with their earth.
This fascination may actually go back even further. We can notice this interest beginning even in prehistoric times, through the study of geomythology, which is the process through which geological occurrences, such as the discovery of fossils, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, or land formations (Mayor 194) are explained in “poetic metaphor and mythological imagery” (194). The field was defined in 1968 by Dorothy Vitaliano as a way of seeking “the real geological event underlying a myth or legend to which it has given rise” (Vitaliano 5). This converts “mythology back into history” (5; Mayor 194). For performance arts this is especially interesting, as the area central to the development of western theatre also shares roots with the demise of several species of megafauna, ancient and extinct elephant species specifically, the fossils of which were discovered around the time that ancient Greek theatre began to rise. The Aegean Islands of Samos, for example, and the nearby the village of Mytilene, are referred to as the ‘Elephant’s Cemetery’ (Mayor 15). Protruding from the ground are giant, fossilized bones of a variety of elephant species: mammoths, mastodons, deinotheres, stegotrabeladons, and pygmy elephants of about one meter tall (Scigliano 22-23). Adrienne Mayor, in her work *The First Fossil Hunters*, notes that the world “was once populated by giant creatures, and the ancients were continually confronted by their remarkable petrified remains” (Mayor 3). Remains of these ancient megafauna literally eroded out of Greek and Roman landscapes, exactly where “ancient Greek myths located […] giant myths and monsters” (4). What were the bones doing there, and who did they belong to, were questions asked by those who found them, and eventually spun into the mythologies staged in Ancient Greek theatre: Titans, giants killed by Zeus, even the Oracle at Delphie, all inspired by the remains of prehistoric megafauna or other naturalistic occurrences (Mayor 195; McKie; Scigliano 23). Even early Greek philosophers made note of these discoveries. Lucretius, in his *On the Nature of the Universe*, said it was clear that the earth was not built or people, but for ‘monsters’:

In those days the earth attempted also to produce a host of monsters, grotesque in build and aspect - hermaphrodites, half-way between the sexes yet cut off from either, creatures bereft of feet or dispossessed of hands, dumb, mouthless brutes, or eyeless and blind, or disabled by the adhesion of their limbs to trunk, so that they could neither do nothing nor go nowhere nor keep out of harm's way nor take what they needed (Bowler 42).

When keeping in mind the number of bones that could be uncovered in such a geologically active area, it is not hard to see why the ancient Greek world was easily populated with mythological characters. Examples of this geomythology also include Cyclops and Ajax, who were both inspired perhaps by the remains Pleistocene dwarf elephants found in Sicilian caves (Mayor 35) as people were hungry to see “oversized bones as proof that heroes of the Golden Age walked taller than the corrupt modern man” (Scigliano 23). I mention this to illustrate the point that some of our foundational stories are based on finding the unexplainable remains of deceased megafauna, and trying to decipher how we may be connected to these great giants. The fact that we can trace these, through geomythology, back to a physical, once-living animal, only strengthens our relationship to animals within art. While it is not possible to conclusively prove that the discovery of the bones predated the myths, Thomas Strasser, archeologist at California State University says the ancient Greeks “would certainly come across fossil bones like this and try to explain them. With no concept of evolution, it makes sense they would reconstruct them in their minds as giants, monsters, [and] sphinxes” (Mayell).
Popular theories suggest that elephants play a role in contemporary legends, such as that of Loch Ness. The mystery of Loch Ness dates all the way back to 565CE when it was said that St. Columba saved a man who was attacked in the lake, so there was a preexisting mythology well before ‘Nessie’ even had a name (Jordan). In 1933, circus owner Bertram Mills promised 20,000 pounds to anyone who could capture Nessie herself. However, at the same time, Mills’ circus was traveling along Loch Ness on their way to a performance in Inverness, shortly after the A82 highway was opened. Loch Ness was a popular place for the circus trucks to stop for a rest and give the animals water. It is not unlikely that the first contemporary sightings of ‘Nessie’ was actually one of the circus elephants taking a dip (Jordan). In fact if you look at any of the documented ‘photos’ of Nessie, you can see that the curve and dip of her head is remarkably similar to that of an elephant’s trunk. This would have been ingenious promotion: Mills could support local folklore, drum up attention for his circus, but never lose money, knowing that Nessie was right there with him under the big top.

30 Elephant’s purchase was initially made in Calcutta by Captain John Crowninshield (of Salem, Mass) for a sum of $450. (Nance 15). He sold her again when his ship docked in the US (Alexander 105). Another nickname for Elephant was “Owen’s Elephant”, after John Owen, the menagerie man who ultimately purchased her in the US (Alexander 105).

31 Although Elephant was purchased in Calcutta, some sources say she was captured from elsewhere in Asia (Nance 17), possibly Ceylon (20), or even Bengal (Scigliano 178). She was probably about two years old at the time of capture, (Nance 18), or still at an age where she would have been entirely dependent on her mother or allomother, which would have therefore made her easier to capture and ‘tame’.

32 Rumours even state that Owen would only travel with Elephant at night, so that no one could catch a glimpse of her without paying (Nance 15).

33 Elephant may actually be the possible source of the expression “He has seen the elephant”, as in - ‘he is worldly and has seen it all’ (Alexander 105).

34 This ad was published as a broadside in 1797, likely by Owen himself (Nance 18).

35 This review was published by the Philadelphia Aurora, on July 28th, 1796 (Daly 21).

36 Heightening this narrative of Elephant’s agency is the production of Alexander the Great at Philadelphia’s Chestnut Street Theatre. To sell all seats not purchased for a production, the theatre owners worked out a deal with Owen to have Elephant dressed for war and appear on stage (Daly 21). The show, of course, sold out, and suddenly having an elephant became an assurance that a production would have great economic success (21).

37 The drive for circus elephants was so significant, that by 1954, captive-owned elephants were counted in the census. At the time, there were 264 elephants in the USA, with 124 of them owned by circuses (Ballantine 274).
This also has an economic connection. Logan, in his 1871 *The Mimic World and Public Exhibitions*, says, “an elephant is always in demand, and sells, whether it be male or female, large or small” (Logan 276). The key indicator of circus health was its ability to financially maintain the elephants. Logan notes that in 1871, the approximate cost of maintaining an elephant was between $3000 to $6000 per year (275), but the price differed based on the elephant’s “size, rate, [and] quality of species” (275).

Daniel quoted this from Robert Edmond Sherwood’s book *Here We Are Again: Recollections of an Old Circus Clown*, published 1929.

Nance suggests that this use for elephants could be the historical root for the expression “hold your horses”. Elephants were said to scare horses, so the menagerie men would enter a parade route first, call out, ‘Hold your horses’, as in, ‘Just wait, the elephants are coming!’ (Nance 49).

Hawthorne recorded these observations in his *American Notebooks*, 1868.

Beatty has an interesting story, as far as animal trainers go. The story tells that he ran away to join the circus in 1919, at the age of 15, and when applying to the Howe’s Great Circus in London, he was told the only position he could apply for, with no experience, was as an animal trainer. He started right away (Ballantine 118).

When Barnum and Bailey trainer William Winner was asked in 1896 if he trusted elephants, he responded by saying, “Not one […] An elephant will throw you down and trample on you; the males will gore you, and the females, which have no tusks, will crush you with their heads” (Nance 186).

I’ve separated these based on the severity of acts and level of skill required, not chronologically in terms of when they were developed.

He once said the act was borrowed from both the Sells-Floto Circus of 1902, as well as a 1905 show at the New York Hippodrome by a different company (Ballantine 278).

A similar act in a Sells-Floto show notably had an elephant riding around in a snake cage with the glass siding cut out, so the audience could clearly see the elephant elegantly dressed as a Gibson Girl (Ballantine 278).
While elephants performed these acts of ‘failing possibility’ from a purely comical standpoint, primate trainers were able to walk more closely to the line of becoming almost-human, and they serve as an illustration of how fare these acts of behavioural imitation could be pushed. Chimp trainer Hank Craig simply stated, “I watch the people acts, and I copy them” (Ballantine 202). Ballantine points to Peter the Great, a six-year-old chimp performer, as “possibly [the] most imitated of the ape virtuosos” (205), who could in turn imitate fifty-six separate human behavioural ‘stunts’, such as smoking a cigar, pouring tea, brushing his teeth, cycling, and writing (205). The sense of fascination here is that Peter seemed to come so close to ‘doing the humanly possible’, albeit in a satirized sense, almost as if no physical direction or memorization had gone into the preparation of these acts (206). Peter the Great and other primate performers were likely led through a process of memorization exercises called ‘chaining’, “when one response provides the stimulus for the next” (206), via a reward - food or praise - and then it is all strung together on stage with the promise of a reward after the performance. The food here becomes the puppet strings. While the trainer can sit back and perform as if he or she is actively not performing, or simply watching the performance, they are directing the piece through this slight-of-hand.

Wall says this performance “incited a rage for elephant drama, leading theatre managers to reinforce their stages and playwrights to revise their old plays for pachyderm actors” (Wall 148).

Hagenbeck’s show was staged in Chicago in 1893 (Rothfels 153).

This act was widely copied as an act of ‘performing the impossible’ - getting two animals, who narratively were considered to be at odds, to be so physically close and dependent on each other.

This act, one of his most famous, was called “The Triumphant Drive of the Little Prince”, and was staged as a mimic of human history (Tait 18).

This act was actually inspired by one of Hagenbeck’s, in which he had trained a lion to ride a horse (Tait 31). In zoological pantomimes, every trainer was trying to out-do one who had come before.

‘Alleged’, as it was often rumoured that the animal performers were drugged with morphine in order to create the seamless integration of wild animals without conflict (Nance 74).
Examples of this can be traced back to 1830s menageries, which were pushed to showcase their more alert animals - particularly those who could perform human-like behaviours (Kalof 115) - such as fleas who pulled chariots, hares playing drums, dogs playing cards, or elephants having a tea party (115). These menagerie acts would be precursors to the trained animals of touring circuses. The goal here was to highlight the distinction between humans and animals, or making human actions more palatable by viewing them through the humorous lens of animal behaviour. A poignant example of this in early touring menageries is *The Deserter Bird*:

A number of little birds […] being taken from different cages, were placed upon a table in the presence of the spectators, and there they formed themselves into ranks like a company of soldiers: small cones of paper bearing some resemblance to grenadier’s caps were placed upon their hoods, and diminutive imitations of muskets made with wood, secured under their left wings. Thus equipped, they marched to and fro several times. (Kalof 115-6).

One bird was trained to act as the ‘deserter’ by marching in front of the canon. When it fired, the Deserter Bird would fall down ‘dead’ - until, of course, commanded to rise again by the menagerie man running the show (Kalof 116). The description was taken from Joseph Strutt, a man who observed the show in London, England in 1775 (Kalof 115).

This was not an altogether obscene conclusion. Although Balanchine and Stravinsky may not have known this at the time, elephant feet are profoundly sensitive, particularly to sound waves. There are receptors in both their feet and in the tips of their trunk, called “pacinian corpusles” (O’Connell-Rodwell), which detect sound and send the signals to their brains. These receptors are capable of detecting “frequencies ranging over more than ten octaves, from a low of 5Hz to a high of over 10,000Hz” (Elephant Voices), or approximately three octaves below the typical human voice, so they have a natural learning ability when it comes to sound and music. This was a discovery made by Caitlin O’Connell-Rodwell in 1997 (O’Connell-Rodwell). While Balanchine and Stravinsky knew elephant feet were sensitive, they would not have known to what extent.

Clever Hans is an interesting example of this trope, as it exposed the illusion of the ‘learned animal’, insofar as it was conceived through circus performance. Clever Hans was a horse in the early 1900s, who German school teacher Wilhelm Van Osten claimed to have taught to count. People traveled in droves to see Clever Hans tap out the answers to mathematical equations with his hooves - and he did not appear to be responding to visual cues from his trainer, meaning that it appeared highly unlikely that the audience was being tricked (Nance 81-82). However, the trick was unintentional - Von Osten himself was fooled - and it was debunked by psychologist Oskar Pfungst, who discovered “the clue Von Osten gave involuntarily was an all but invisible tensing of the musculature when the answer was reached” (Gucwa 130). Subsequent studies have been proven that horses are able to detect movement of only 1/5mm, much too small for most people to perceive or even recognize themselves doing (130). They are, in this sense, incredibly learned, and perhaps more so than their trainers, but not in the conventional sense of being able to count, as the audience once presumed was occurring.

Interestingly, this provided no financial set-back to the circus. The menagerie who owned him at the time of his death simply continued to display his bones, both on tour, and at Boston’s New England Museum (Nance 40).
Not to be confused with the infamous Jumbo the Elephant, a member of Barnum’s circus, who was advertised as both the “Lord of Beasts”, the “largest elephant to ever be on exhibition” (Duble 5), and quite possibly the origin of the word “Jumbo” (Wilson). That Jumbo was killed by a train in St. Thomas, Ontario in 1885, 34 years before Spanuth shot the film. However, as previously noted, circuses elected to give their performers names which highlighted ferocity or spoke to their monstrous size, playing on audience desires for connections to these large megafauna. We can note in this video that the Jumbo showcased is, in fact, not quite ‘jumbo’ at all, but perhaps still quite young.

Online footage of this video can be found via the US Library of Congress American Memory website: http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/varstg:@field(NUMBER(4002s1)).

The source I used was a silent film. Other edits of this footage have inserted typical Vaudeville music or soundtracks from the time to exact a more accurate depiction of the elephant’s performing environment. A nice example, though inaccurate in year and director credit, improperly attributing the footage to Edison, can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tKz77p-ABBI. I include this for the soundtrack addition alone.

Illegal wildlife trade, including poaching for ivory, has become the fourth largest organized crime overall (McGrath).

The Amboseli Elephant Trust maintains a biosphere reserve in Kenya, where the observations and numbers from their studies have come from.

A huge part of this is the rising demand for ivory in China (Strindberg). As further examples of the increases elephants still face, approximately 62% of African Elephants have disappeared from Central African between 2002 and 2011 (Strindberg). The year 2011 was actually the highest rate of elephant poaching since the 1989 ivory ban (Bouissac 112; Dell-Amore). In total, there might only be 500,000 African elephants even left in the wild, and some suspect this number might actually be as low as 32,000 (Morell, “It’s Time”). As well, Gabon once had the most forest elephants in Africa, mostly located at Minkebe National Park. In 2004, they had 28,500 of them, and by 2012 there was only 7,000 remaining (Morell, “It’s Time”).

Further reading on the responsibility of the circus - or any theatrical endeavour - to climate change, can be found in Una Chaudhuri and Shonni Enelow’s Research Theatre, Climate Change, and the Ecocide Project: A Casebook. Sharon Matola also has an interesting perspective on the roles of educational institutions such as zoos, and what their responsibilities are towards animals impacted by climate change, landscape degradation, and human activity. The philosophies of her zoo and animal welfare practices are detailed in Bruce Barcott’s The Last Flight of the Scarlet Macaw: One Woman’s Fight to Save the World’s Most Beautiful Bird.

Circuses, while never claiming to be educational institutions, became such for the majority of their audiences, as they constituted the primary access to wild animals, thereby positioning circus animal trainers as default educators.
African elephants became more popular in the American circus after the 1900s. Prior to this, they were both not as plentiful, as they were extirpated from many places due to the Roman circuses, gladiators games, and ivory trade (Scigliano 5). They were also considered more primitive and untrainable (Scigliano 5). According to a popular Barnum and Bailey pamphlet on natural history, the African elephant was inherently less intelligent and sagacious than its Asian counterpart, having a physiologically smaller forehead (Barnum and Bailey 12). However, with a desensitized audience primed for bigger and more ferocious circus animal acts, the drive to showcase African elephants with their giant tusks - on both male and female elephants - increased exponentially (5). So many African elephants were captured for the circus, using similar tactics learned from the mahouts, that the captures coincide with movements of mass African elephant extinctions (Nance 8-9), as for every elephant caught - again, usually juveniles - many in the herd would be caught in the crossfire and die (8-9). When this practice was taken up by the circus industry, Barnum himself boasted that the people he hired to capture elephants “killed the largest number of the huge beasts before finding the right ones to bring home” (Scigliano 186).

Ganesh, also considered the "remover of obstacles" (Elephant Voices), provided the inspiration for elephant domestication: they would be employed to help move large objects, such as in forest clearing, building roads, or riding out to wild herds of elephants and assist in further captures (Haney 131).

Mahout traditions also stem from royal dynasties, and were passed down from generation to generation (Bradshaw 64; Nicol). This system has not been maintained today, as it's no longer a desired job due to the high and rising costs of keeping an elephant, and the danger associated with the job (64).

This practice was first noted in Ceylon during the 1650s, and Haney quotes this in his handbook, *Haney's Art of Training Animals : A Practical Guide for Amateur or Professional Trainers*, published in 1869 (Haney 125).

The enclosure would have been approximately 500x250-feet, for an entire herd of elephants, which could sometimes be upwards of 100 individuals. The goal was to trap them in a small space, to heighten their desire to get out, and therefore cooperate (Tennant 113-114).

It is also interesting to read the performance of an animal as intricately connected or disconnected from a particular landscape. Chaudhuri notes in *Land/Scape/Theatre* that studies of landscapes have evolved from ways of documenting and recording geography, to “ways of seeing” (“Land/Scape/Theatre” 11), which foreground our relationship to the world around us. Who we are is partially a product of where we are, and what our interactions are within that ecosystem. For elephants who were forcibly removed from their natural environments - their home landscapes - to become accustomed to the landscape of the circus, must have been a massive adjustment. Further reading could be done on how the elephants’ interactions within these foreign landscapes influenced their reactions to and behaviours within performance.

This statement is relevant to contemporary elephant training as well. In 1991, the manager of what is now Disney’s Wild Kingdom, John Lehnardt, said that for every six hundred elephant handlers there was one fatality, which statistically makes the profession three times as dangerous as coal mining (Scigliano 278-279).
Alternately known as ‘tamers’ (Daniel 163; Tait 13), or elephant men.

I am choosing to use the contemporary terms as they are simple classification, and circuses during the times I am discussing just did not have such specific terms.

An extreme example of this can be seen with the elephants at the ‘Great Circus Fire’ in Cleveland in 1942. Doc Henderson, the vet working under trainer Robert “Smokey” Jones, recounted watching four elephants in the menagerie burn to death as they refused to leave the tent until their elephant man, Walter McClain, arrived to free them. Whereas Henderson thought it was touching to see the elephants place so much trust in McClain to free them from the fire, he also noted that the elephants were more than physically capable of picking up their ropes and stakes and walking away on their own (Ballantine 298). This is the extent to which elephant movements trained with ropes and restraints were so highly controlled.

Also called the bull hook, the “India Spike” (Nance 86), the “hendoo” in Ceylon (Haney 135), the “hawlius” in Bengal (135) and the “ankus” in India (Scigliano 278).

Frost’s 1881 examination of circus life shows a similar approach to training lions, except instead of hooks they used whips. Trainers tailored their tools to what would most readily impact individual animal physicality. He said, “to get a lion to lie down and allow the trainer to stand on him is more difficult. It is done by flicking the beast over and back with a small tickling whip, and at the same time, pressing him down with one hand. By raising his dead and taking hold of the nostril with the right hand, and under the lip and lower jaw with the left, the lion by this pressure on the nostril and lip, loses greatly the power of his jaws, so that a man can pull them open and put his head inside the beast’s mouth. […] The only danger is if the animal should raise one of its forepaws, and stick his talons in, and if he does, the trainer must stand fast for his life” (Frost). This is the process through which van Amburgh approached his groundbreaking ‘head in the lion’s mouth’ trick.

He learned this approach from trainers Stuart Craven, who ultimately abandoned this approach for its cruelty, and Adam Forepaugh, who was notorious for being rough with the elephants (Nance 88).

This is possibly because Forepaugh Jr. was not the elephants’ primary trainer, but only the one who performed the training process. Their actual trainer was a black man named Ephraim Thompson, who was known for taking a much gentler and behavioural approach to training. Forepaugh Jr. took the credit from Thompson, as the circus felt the audience, in the 1870s, would not want to see a black man on stage. Forepaugh Jr. was likely more violent with the elephants as he felt it helped him maintain control over the animals who were almost wholly unfamiliar with him outside of the ring (Daly 165).

At this time, he was working for the Ringling Brothers, and was in charge of the largest circus elephant herd ever - fifty-five female elephants, and one bull elephant (Ballantine 261).
Haney points to Yankee Robinson as the developer of this method, though the classical and operant conditioning studies of John Watson, Ivan Pavlov and B. F. Skinner respectively were both developed around the same time as Robinson’s systems, and therefore its more likely to say that Robinson might have been the first to adapt their behavioural studies to the circus stage, but even that claim is tenuous, as both Stuart Craven and Ephraim Thompson were working with the same training philosophies around this time, and most often it seems that he who claimed the loudest to be the ‘king’ of animal training or the first person to ever achieve something, received the credit, while others who may have come first or developed at the same time were seen as trying to copy or one-up the originator. Carl Hagenbeck also claims to have invented the humane methods of animal training, as he wanted to make shows where terrified-looking animals were obsolete (Tait 19). His claims are often disputed as well. Either way, Robinson’s circus in 1875 inspires the approach to training that Haney recommends.

His quote specifically refers to horses, but it can be related to work with elephants as well, although he says that elephants will need only a little more training (Haney 145), especially those who were born wild and trained somewhere like Ceylon. When they arrived in America, all of the acts were “all but modifications of his labour when a captive in his native country” (145), such as pulling wagons, clearing logs from jungles, and making roads (139).

Circus trainers may have even been the foremost experts in the field of animal behaviour at the time (Nance 83).

George Forepaugh was the brother of circus owner Adam Forepaugh, and also worked as a trainer (Daly 96).

Romeo died in June, 1872, when an infection in his feet had become necrotic and trainers noticed a “rapid wasting of the flesh” (Daly 97-98). He died during an operation to remove the infected tissue. Craven would, for the rest of his career, refer to Romeo as “a fine fellow […] the greatest elephant of his day” (99).

Hagenbeck was also wary of working with elephants, as he found them unpredictable and therefore untrustworthy (Tait 17).
Thompson represents the most interesting case of protected contact training approaches. He studied under Craven, during the period when Craven was rethinking the free contact approaches, and was one of the main advocates for a training process which did not include any negative reinforcement for the elephants. Thompson was African American, and Daly suggests that perhaps his gentler approach to elephant training stemmed from the "knowledge of how slaves of his parents' generations had suffered" (Daly 118). He worked with the elephants to find a series of signals and commands which could be easily communicated between them, and along with food reinforcements, it is said once his elephants learned a trick "it is never forgotten [...] Ten years afterwards [they] will go through the performance without a hitch" (164).

As he was African American, the Forepaugh circus kept Thompson mostly in the background, while promoting Adam Forepaugh Jr. as the primary trainer - who, as was mentioned before, was rather liberal with his use of the hook during performances. However, during Thompson’s training routines, like Craven and Hagenbeck before him, he focused on playing to the elephant performer’s strengths. Like Conklin, he developed a ‘dancing elephant’ act by simply having the band play in time with his elephants, who seemed to sway naturally while training and performing. Unlike Conklin, he did not use coercion, but looked for elephants who had the ‘aptitude’ for dancing, and proceeded from there (Daly 165). He did the same when training an elephant to perform his signature ‘John L. Sullivan’ act in 1885, in which an elephant with a boxing glove attached to its nose would ‘box’ with Thompson in the ring; he simply looked for elephants whose own natural movements would coincide with the illusion of boxing, at least when in costume.

This was also the first time Thompson was credited as a primary elephant trainer, and Daly suggests that it was because the circus’ main trainer, Adam Forepaugh Jr., did not want to appear in a clowning role where it looked like the elephant might be able to beat him up: “the crown prince of the show could hardly be seen being struck below the belt by some elephant” (Daly 168). Before he died, Thompson was considered to be the most skilled trainer of his generation, having created an act where he taught an elephant named Mary to somersault. He was the only trainer in the world with the skill to do this, and the strongest working relationship with his elephants that would allow both trainer and elephant performer to achieve these acts (168).
How long an elephant lived was, for a time, hotly debated. Aristotle assumed the answer to be between two to three hundred years, while Cuvier, an 18th-century zoologist and the father of paleontology, said two hundred (Tennent 177). In 1854, Jean Pierre Flourens, a French physiologist, published a study on life expectancies, which Tennent outlined in his book. Flourens suggested that the sum total of all life could be determined by the following equation: 

\[(5) \times (\text{age at which the animal reaches maturity})\]  

(177). For people, Flourens suggested an average lifespan of one hundred. Tennent notes that elephants under thirty still have marks of immaturity, so by that equation, elephants should live to approximately one hundred and twenty (177). It was common belief in the circus though that elephants should reach eighty years, as “an approximate idea of the age can be gained by the amount of turn-over of the upper edge of the ear. The edge is quite straight until the animal is eight or nine years old; then it begins to turn over. By the time the beast is thirty the edges lap over to the extent of an inch; and between this age and sixty the droop increases to two inches or more” (Thompson, WC). While average lifespans for elephants have since been determined to be between sixty to seventy years, it was still exceedingly rare for an elephant to reach even half that age. I cannot conclusively prove that circuses knew of Flourens’ study, or had a sense of what an average elephant lifespan should be, but this suggests two things. One, the circuses missed even the most basic of information on their elephant performers. Two, if Flourens’ studies were known to them, then premature deaths were yet another obscured aspect of performing elephants’ lives.

When bred in captivity, elephants would often be taken from their mothers to begin the training process at only three months, thereby making the young elephant dependent on human trainer as ‘mother’ (8), and a number of the elephants would eventually die of foot disease (Schatz); whereas in the wild, approximately sixty percent of elephant life is spent wandering and foraging, captive elephants faced higher rates of foot disease, arthritis and other related injury because of the hours spent walking and performing on concrete flooring, not to mention the severe limitations placed on their mobility. Other injuries include abscesses from hooks and trainers aiming to ‘break’ the elephant performers, or dental problems from grinding teeth on the bars of their menagerie cages. How do these instances correspond to the extreme quality of care the circuses claimed to provide for their animal performers?

In fact, looking back at early European circus records show that Astley and his contemporaries would employ horses until they died due to injury, disease, or simply from exhaustion (Nance 8).

Bradshaw’s quote references the elephants of the Amboseli Basin, where there has been a huge increase in elephant-inflicted violence to humans and other animals in the region, but I thought it was particularly relevant to this situation as well.
This is not the only historical instance of performing elephants 'stepping out' of the roles created for them, and rebelling against the conditions of their captivity. Pompey the Great organized what he thought would be the greatest gladiatorial fight to date, to commemorate the dedication of a theatre (Scigliano 131). H.H. Scullard said that at the time, “the world was ransacked for animals” (Scigliano 131). On the very last day of the games, he had twenty elephants pitted against Gaetulian prisoners with javelins. The elephants threw the weapons away and then tried to escape and break down the doors (132). Pliny wrote of the event:

The whole band attempted to burst through the iron palisading by which they were enclosed and caused considerable trouble among the public […] But Pompey's elephants when they had lost all hope of escape tried to gain the compassion of the crowd by indescribable gestures of entreaty, deploring their fate with a sort of wailing, so much to the distress of the public that they forgot the general and his munificence carefully devised for their honour, and bursting into tears rose in a body and invoked curses on the head of Pompey for which he soon afterwards paid the penalty (Pliny the Elder 8.20-2).

It was the elephants' almost human reaction to captivity and their pending deaths that swayed the audience to consider the morality of this sacrifice, and ask for the games that day to stop (132). Pompey's support began to wane just then (132). However, the interest in animal sacrifice as a form of entertainment, excluding elephants, was only strengthened, as subsequent emperors all tried to outdo the carnage that Pompey had created: Augustus ordered the public sacrifice of 3,500 animals during his games; in 80CE Titus had 9,000 animals killed; and Trajan put to death 11,000 in celebration of a Roman conquest (Scigliano 132).

Since Pompey, no emperor ordered the slaughter of elephants, instead promoting them to more dignified tasks such as pulling chariots (Scigliano 133). Whether it was the elephants sacrificed by Pompey who made the difference, forcing the spectators to confront their definitions of animality or the morality of animal sacrifice in these games, will never be known, but Pliny even noted that elephants have “virtue rare even in men: honesty, wisdom, justice, also respect for the stars and reverence for sun and moon” (Scigliano 16). The events in Pompey's games seemed to open up the question of morality in animal sacrifices: what exactly is the distance between humans and animals, the tame and the wild? Although the games continued until they could not be financially supported, the question of the relationship between humans and animals in performance, and the legitimacy of positioning animals for sacrifice in order to entertain an audience, began to be problematized.

She arrived in the US in 1875 (Nance 183).

The use of electrocution on circus animals in general was more common than the public knew. In W. C. Thompson's 1903 article “On The Road With A Circus”, he notes that in 1889 Bailey allowed a series of electrocution experiments, predating Topsy's execution, which began “at 11am in the morning and continued until nightfall” (Thompson).

Although, it is important to note that the trainer who worked directly with her at the time of her execution, Bill Emery, came immediately to her defence, suggesting that she was either reacting to the pain of the lit cigarette, or just ‘playing’. Emery refused to participate in the execution (Nance 184).
I would be remiss in not also mentioning the execution of Murderous Mary in 1916, which was one of the largest execution spectacles to be staged (Schroeder). Spurred by rumors that Mary was responsible for the deaths of eighteen men (Alexander 139) - likely generated by the circus themselves to stir interest - the audience demanded her death after an attack on her trainer, Red Eldridge, who was well-known to be over-generous with the hook. The circus opted to turn the execution into a spectacle. They hired a railroad crane (Scigliano 203) so that her massive body could be hung and hoisted up and seen from far away. He also determined that he would leave her body hanging as a means of continuing the show throughout the night (Schroeder). Over 2,500 people were in attendance, cheering at the event, which for the Sparks Brothers’ Circus helped to stave off what they felt would be a “sure drop-off at the box office” (Alexander 139). Before her death, Mary was proclaimed to be even larger than the infamous Jumbo, but with such adroitness she could “play twenty-five notes on the musical horns without missing a note” (Schroeder). She was the perfect intersection of domesticity and ferocity, put to death for stepping out of line just like Chief and Topsy.

Colombia was born March 10th, 1880. The mother, Hebe, attacked the baby, and trainers presumed she didn’t know what it was or what to do with it, having never been taught by an older female elephant how to handle babies (Nance 211).

Of the elephant Janet with the Great American Circus in Palm Bay, Florida.

Though, there are earlier documents promoting the consideration of animal rights, such as Thomas Taylor’s 1794 *Vindication of the Rights of Brutes*, which he wrote in response to Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (Salt 4).

Henry Bergh decided to found the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals after witnessing several instances of brutality towards horses in particular while he was in Europe. In 1865, visited the newly-founded Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in the UK, and realized no such organization yet existed in the US (McCrea 11). The organization finally opened in 1866, and was quickly followed by George T. Angell’s chapter in Massachusetts in 1868, and several others (11-12).

The anti-vivisection movement, spearheaded by the American Anti-Vivisection Society and Mary Lovell (Buettinger 857) strongly opposed the use of animals in live dissection either for entertainment or medical education, noting that it was both cruel and a crude physiological stand-in for human anatomy (857). The organization consisted of clergy members, organized SPCA’s, some physicians, and members of both the Women’s Christian Temperance Movement and the Women’s Suffrage Movement. The members were predominately middle-class American women (857).

The Women’s Christian Temperance Movement looked upon those who were “inclined to perceive the brutalized vivisector as cousin to the cruel drunkard” (Buettinger 859).

Salt also noted that the act only covered “that which prohibits their being baited or pitted in conflict; otherwise it is open for anyone to kill or torture them with impunity, except where the sacred privileges of ‘property’ are thereby offended” (36-37). As well, there was no actual means through which this law could be monitored or enforced (37).

Nance 26.
Curiously, there was not as strong a tie between circus protests and the suffragette movement as I initially expected to find. Buettinger noted that the suffragettes tended to be more politically-focused, and although the position of women as property was philosophically intertwined, the prevailing thought was that the focus must be kept on the emancipation of women (Buettinger 857).

Brooks notes this in regards to his search for the roots of the apparently famous Barnum saying "there's a sucker born every minute". He wanted to find the initial moment in which that had been said, by Barnum, but was unable to find any record of him saying it at all. Instead, through an exhaustive search through Barnum's letters to and from fans what he has instead decided is that Barnum was rather a thoughtful entrepreneur, solely looking to create truthful, family-friendly, wholesome entertainment (Brooks). Whether any of that holds truth, compared to the multitude of other sources claiming Barnum as a shadier figure, at least as far as the narratives of his circus and museum go, will probably never be known.

We can see similar instances dating back to Pliny's observations on elephants in Roman Gladiatorial games. The conditions for these performing animals were often dire. Pliny was among the first to describe the role of the performing elephant, and noted that like other spectacle animals they were trained in dancing and, because of their surprising dexterity, being a large animal, acrobatics such as tightrope walking (Scigliano 130). He also noted the beatings that often occurred when a particular animal was unable to perform, and recounted a story about one elephant who “had been beaten because it was slow to learn its stage moves… found practicing at night” (130). For Pliny, this was evidence that “the elephant understands the language of its country and obeys orders, remembers duties that it has been taught, [and] is pleased by affection and by marks of honour” (130-131), and yet despite clear observations of its conscious and sensitive nature, the elephants were then slaughtered in these games as feared wild and untameable animals. On the stage, the animals were reluctant participants: “the wild beasts, looking up mistrustfully at the thousands of spectators, became tame under stress of fear” (30), and therefore were naturally unexciting performers for the typically bloodthirsty gladiator game spectators. Burning straws or irons, as well as starvation, were tactics to entice the animals to move, particularly in the viscous manner in which their wild nature manifested in spectator imaginations (30).

I came across one reference, from Charles Day's writings in *Billboard*, the circus history magazine. He said that two writers were working on the show press releases for a Barnum and Bailey production, and had their drafts returned with a very strict note from Bailey: “Please lie, with some sort of uniformity” (Day).

We can add to this depiction of the circus's advertising enormity with those quote by Daniel: “even before you saw the actual show, the circus was already delivering its wonders far and wide with its advertising (Daniel 70).
Alexander actually found a record from 1936 of an animal psychologist searching for male elephants with whom to conduct a metabolic study. The psychologist found sixty-four captive elephants in North America that could work for the study - and of them sixty-three were female (Alexander 143).

In Southeast Asia, however, musth is considered to be the “apex of bravery and warrior spirit” and is celebrated (Scigliano 76).

There was a sense that any good trainer should be able to ‘work past’ musth (Nance 126), but as we can see from what trainers actually understood of elephant psychology, what constitutes a ‘good trainer’ can be hotly debated, especially as far as the elephant himself is concerned.

Barnum was once known to tell audiences that he sent troubled elephants to educational institutions, when in reality he was executing them in the middle of the night. At one point, he had his keepers cut up the remains of one elephant to prevent Henry Bergh, at the time head of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) from finding out about the elephant's specific injuries (Nance 132).

Hercules, owned by Reynold's Great Mexican Gymnasium and Menagerie (Nance 114), had a reputation for being particularly violent during musth. His trainer, John Alston, warned the company that no one should go near him in this stage, and under no circumstances should be be performing, but the company decided to put him on display anyway. In his most notable instance, he first attacked Alston, then charged a freight train, derailed the engine, broke the tent, and the lion cage (114). His cause of death is not recorded, but he did not stay with the circus much long after this incident, and disappears from the record.

This was an attempted execution. In 1841, Columbus killed Crumm, his trainer, his horse, a team of mules, a driver, and some cattle (Alexander 127-128) when he rampaged during a show. He was shot in the head to stop him, and survived with the bullets in him for twenty-four years longer, until he fell from a bridge (Alexander 128).

Rio stampeded during a performance, and was then captured, chained down and made to lie on his stomach. When his chain snapped, he was shot by executioner. Alexander says, “Rio died for stampeding, and because he was a male, with the attendant nuisance of handling him” (Alexander 134).

Black Diamond was slated to be executed as his trainers were unable to handle him. At first, they tried to poison him with peanut shells stuffed with “a deadly, tasteless, odourless poison” (Alexander 135), but Black Diamond was able to sniff out which ones had poison in them, so carefully picked around them. Next, he was offered poison oranges mixed in with normal oranges, but was again able to pick out the safe ones as well. When the company was at a loss for what to do, they called in a firing squad, and “Black Diamond died without making a sound or fighting his chains” (136), as if he had given up entirely.
Some disclaimer on the data. For both the ‘Unnamed / Unknown Elephants’ and the elephants for which gender was not made explicit, I counted these all as gender non-specific, and calculated them separately. As male elephants became scarce or harder to deal with, companies would often give female elephant male names (Alexander 125), so it not possible to analyze that data towards Alexander’s thesis. At the same time, it is also impossible to determine with certainty that these elephants were not in fact male after all, and their deaths are important to note nonetheless, so these data had been counted separately.

In fact, if the elephants for whom gender was not specified were actually male, that would mean that male elephants were more than six times as likely to meet their deaths from circus performance than female elephants.

While I ultimately want to steer away from analyzing the contemporary role of the elephant in circus, I do want to point out the obvious trend in elephant deaths post 1951: euthanasia. Investigations by PETA and Born Free concluded that from 2008 - 2011, a number of elephants were euthanized because they were past ideal performing age, and therefore their economic usefulness to the company had ceased (Born Free; “Elephant Incidents”). This furthers the argument, albeit from a contemporary perspective, that elephant performers were, and remain, more relatable in terms of their surface value, than any possibility of an interior life.

In fact, throughout my research, I found it impossible to determine with any certainty how many elephants came to perform in circuses overall. In searches of circus company records, US census records - in which elephants were once recorded - and seasonal route books, the numbers reported changed often. As problem elephants often changed hands and names as well, it becomes even more difficult to track how many elephants were roaming with the circus, and how many met fates such as the ones described in this chart.
3. The Animal as Hyperreal Educator: What We Learn from Shamu and Other Captive Animals in Environmental Education

1. Learning From Animals

No one knows what killed Qila, but what owners are certain of, is that it could not have been captivity. The young beluga whale, the first captive-born Beluga and long-term resident of the Vancouver Aquarium, died suddenly after a short illness (Omand). The results of the necropsy were inconclusive, leading facility managers to two potential causes: disease or toxin. What was never considered at fault, however, was Qila’s captive life, which was spent entirely in the Vancouver Aquarium, far from her natural arctic habitat. When skeptics of captivity questioned the aquarium president and CEO John Nightingale about the conditions, stating that since 2005 three other belugas have also passed away shortly before the age of three (Early Edition), Nightingale sought to comfort aquarium supporters: “belugas are among - if not the best - animals we have that start the process of curiosity and awareness in people. [...] If you have an animal like a beluga whale that is so good at lighting that little flicker or flame of interest and curiosity, I’d hate to loses it. It’s at the very heart of our mission” (Early Edition).

It is a common side-step employed by proponents of animals in captivity - disavowing critiques in favour of highlighting what these animal give to us, namely, increased levels of interest, education and empathy for the natural world. These ‘little flickers’ supplant all other animal interests. Now, they have a purpose, even in death.

This chapter will delve into the ‘little flickers’ created by captive animals in institutions with educational mandates, where the animal body is co-opted to increase audience knowledge of the natural and animal world. Chaplin notes that the second act of a geodrama is characterized
by “conquering the globe” (Chaplin xx), wherein circumnavigators approached exploration with heightened confidence. They learned from the tribulations of early explorers, streamlined routes, perfected methods, and had now reached a point at which sailing across oceans was much more common than dangerous. They had learned - or expected - to tame nature, through “generat[ing] technologies and political alliances to dominate the planet” (xvi). This is the act in which I believe contemporary human-animal relationships can be situated. There is a growing confidence with our abilities to ‘maintain’ nature, to save it, though both in-situ and ex-situ conservation projects. We can create conservation areas and preservations, and attempt to mediate habitat fragmentation. We can rehabilitate injured animals and release them back into the wild. We can create specialized captive breeding programs for species in danger, regenerating vulnerable populations in the zoo, or like the Frozen Zoo, saving DNA of those creatures for a later time. With all of these advancements in animal management techniques, the confidence associated with keeping these species in captivity has abounded. Would any of these efforts have been possible if the animals were left truly wild? Institutions like SeaWorld emphatically claim that the answer is ‘no’, citing a 2005 study by the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums which found 97% of respondents agreeing that aquariums and zoos “play an important role in educating the public about marine mammals they might not otherwise have the chance to see” (“Benefits of Animal Training”). The paradox emerges - to save nature we believe we have to tame it, and ‘taming’ in this act of the geodrama revolves around captivity. But, what impacts does that ultimately have, and does it achieve the desired goal of ‘saving’ wild animals?

2. Themes

The research compiled in this chapter can be analyzed through five major themes:
1. Wild versus domestic animals;
2. Education by animals versus education about animals:
3. Tangible education versus intangible education;
4. ‘Visiting’ animals versus the animal educator as ‘visitor’;
5. The ethics of spectatorship.

Each of these themes articulates a different relationship between the animal educator and human spectator, the foundation of which is based on how we construct and exhibit the concept of ‘animal’. I will touch on these themes throughout the chapter, to question what we are really learning from the captive animal performer.

2.1 Wild versus Domestic

In Chapter One, I wrote about the tendency to view the animal performer as existing somewhere between ‘ferocious’ and ‘tame’, with a sense of wonder evoked from demonstrations of animal behaviour brought to light by the trainer’s will. In circus, for example, this is exhibited when a monstrous lion roars, and yet allows the trainer to place their head within its jaw without injury or death. When demonstrations of such ardent domesticity are translated into an educational setting, what does the audience learn about animal nature, the relationship between animal and trainer, and their own preconceived notions of what exactly is a ‘wild animal’?

2.2 Education By Animals versus Education About Animals

We can also look at the narrative construction of animals within educational settings. When SeaWorld says their animal performers are here to ‘teach us something’ about life in the wild, what impact does this have on the spectators? If we compare the presentation of a living animal to the exhibition of an animal artefact such as an antler or a bone, how does this strengthen, deepen or otherwise influence the relationship between the audience, the animal, and the information they are intended to learn from the event? How does our relationship to the
animal as ‘teacher’ change our relationship to the information and the performative ways in which it is presented?

### 2.3 Tangible versus Intangible Education

How does first-hand access to animals influence the quality and impact of an educational opportunity. Learning about animals in abstract, such as through documentaries or textbooks, does present certain limitations, and may reiterate the notion that wild animals do and should exist ‘out there’, completely separate from us. Are these impacts heightened or mitigated when educational opportunities are coupled with immediate, tangible access to the animal? What other concerns arise as a result of this?

### 2.4 ‘Visiting’ Animals versus the Animal Educator as ‘Visitor’

Each example I will analyze in this chapter places the animal in the role of almost benevolent educator - visitor from another world, here only to bestow upon a human audience its physical knowledge. Is a different kind of human-animal relationship engendered when coupled with a narrative that constructs captive exhibition as the animals’ conscious choice? The word ‘visit’ invites a sense of one making a choice to relocate for a short period of time, which may make animal presence in educational settings seem like a sojourn from life in the wild, when in reality captive animals are there for life. Does the construction of their presence as ‘visitors’ make the exhibition more palatable? What impact does that have on the spectators?

### 2.5 The Ethics of Spectatorship

The education that can be provided to us in regards to animals falls into two broad categories: animal physicality and inspirations of how vastly different we are from ‘their’ world;
and animal sagacity presumably obtained through rigorous training which inspires its audience to think on how alike us animals can be. The performance of ‘being animal’ is always measured in its relationship to us, the audience. How does becoming a spectator of animals within these settings change one’s relationship to the subject? The power dynamics between ‘human spectator’ and ‘animal performer’ are clearly imbalanced from the outset, so what ethics do we or must we attach to this relationship in order to ensure that both a quality education is received, and there is a positive impact on the animal itself?

Throughout the chapter, and through the lens of these themes, I will aim to evaluate both the effectiveness of their performances from the mindset of institution owners and audience members, and also look at the lasting impact of performance and captivity on the animal itself. I argue that the animal in a cage of any kind - zoo enclosures to aquarium tanks - puts such severe limitations on animal residents that any potential for educating its audience is already mediated through the lens of a human captor. We are never seeing the animal itself, but the animal body as part of a lineage of human exploitation and captivity. Therefore, whatever ‘little flickers’ are created are immediately misdirected, and whatever education is gleamed from their performances is incomplete. The captive performing animal becomes a hyperreality - more real to its audience than its wild kin, but ultimately divorced from so much of its wildness that they are not truly representative of their species at all. What they represent, is us, like we are looking into a mirror and seeing the history of human-animal relations reflected back at us.

3. Framework

To evaluate this role of the animal performer, I will begin by giving a critical framework for engagement with animals in an educational setting, focusing primarily on the foundations of
environmental interpretation. Freeman Tilden’s 1957 *Interpreting Our Heritage*, and Larry Beck and Ted Cable’s *Fifteen Principles of Interpretation*, are central theories for ethical and education animal engagement. I will also pull from a number of academic sources which note the positive impacts of tangible educational opportunities on the quality of information provided to participants. We can look at these theories in relation to SeaWorld’s practices, from which we will be able to see a clear difference in ethical engagement - but *not*, interestingly, a difference in the narrative behind ethical engagement. Both sources tout tangible opportunities as foundational for increasing engagement in conservation projects, but their paths diverge significantly from that point on.

I will then look at one historical example of the animal educator, in an attempt to trace SeaWorld’s roots not to education but instead to entertainment, through the curiosity cabinets of P. T. Barnum. While Barnum is an unreliable narrator at best, his perspectives on the educational values of live animal exhibitions did speak to the predominate mindset of the time, and we can clearly see a correlation between his ‘showman' character, and the narratives used to promote the high-energy, spectacle-and-education fusion shows of SeaWorld.

The focus of this chapter will be a case study on performing orcas in aquariums accredited by the Association for Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), namely the famous “Shamu” shows which have been ongoing since the late 1960s. For places like SeaWorld, much of instigating these ‘little flickers’ comes through performance, where the animal in question is trained to repeat a series of behaviours within the context of a highly theatrical environmental interpretation presentation. From waves and splashes to leaps through the air with a trainer on
their back, the orcas interpret for the audience what life is like in the ocean, putting their wild realities into a human context or setting.

I will evaluate the effectiveness of these performances based on the questions May and Kuhl provide for practitioners of environmental theatre. I will also use SeaWorld’s own framework for animal training and performance development - which they refer to under the acronym HELPRS\textsuperscript{129} - to help evaluate the impact of the Shamu performances.

4. Changing Landscapes and a Necessary Lack of Conclusion

Finally, the landscape of animals in performance is rapidly changing, with both Ringling Brothers and SeaWorld making groundbreaking decisions to end certain aspects of their animals in performance programs. Over the course of writing this chapter, elephants have been phased out of performances at Ringling Brothers Circus.\textsuperscript{130} They later announced that the entire company would be closing its operations in May 2017, citing the removal of elephants from their performances as the source of lost revenue and the demise of their business (Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey).\textsuperscript{131} SeaWorld has also committed to phasing out its theatrical programming for orcas, with the final Shamu show at SeaWorld San Diego set to be performed on Sunday, January 8th, 2017, and the remaining parks closing Shamu in 2019.\textsuperscript{132} Both groundbreaking changes will ultimately impact how audiences come to view animals in captivity. Will the evolution away from theatrical shows ultimately benefit the elephants and orcas left in captivity? Ringling and SeaWorld have both depended on the allure of these charismatic megafauna to draw in audiences and support educational mandates: without being able to see an animal up close and personal, how will its audiences learn to care and support conservation mandates? Will their removal alter commitment to conservation projects, our ability to care about nature, our
ability to take positive environmental action? Will we begin to see the realities of a life in captivity, and ask ourselves whether we have the right to keep animals captive for our own education? As this is still very much unfolding as I am writing, and no conclusions will be drawn until long after I am finished, I will conclude this chapter by looking at Gay Bradshaw and Eve Abe’s studies of elephants in South Africa, who they have discovered are suffering from PTSD due to habitat fragmentation, frequent herd culls, and the resulting absence of elders within the herds (*Elephants on the Edge* 54). They approached aberrant elephant behaviour - increased violence against both humans and other animals - through the lens of trans-species psychology, by looking at survivors of war and domestic abuse (49) and found many correlations between elephant and human groups in the observations, leading to the conclusion that “we are witnessing [...] nothing less than a precipitous collapse of elephant culture” (Siebert). While wild and captive animal populations are of course vastly different, I think we can observe similarities between this collapse of wild elephant culture, the outcomes of ‘problem elephants’ in early touring circuses, and the contemporary difficulties faced by captive orcas in SeaWorld. I will end this chapter by arguing that even if personal, tangible interactions with a captive animal leads to positive increases in environmental knowledge, if the performance itself poses the potential for the animal to face physical, psychological and cultural damage, does the human audience really have a right to this performance or this education at all?

5. The Animal As Educator

I want to begin by considering how animals are used within educational settings. Contemporary institutions like SeaWorld claim that personal encounters with animals have profoundly positive educational impacts (“Benefits of Animal Training”). What studies have
been done on this, and is there in fact a positive correlation between animal encounters and subsequent pro-environmental behaviours, even outside of a theatrical or performative context?

When we speak of an animal being an ‘educator’, what is generally meant is that the proximity of an animal body - dead, alive, or simply as an artifact - generates opportunities for teachable moments about the other-than-human world, wherein a program curator or facilitator helps the audience to discover their connection nature. The animal ‘educates’ insofar as they are physically present in some manner. I will be framing the animal performances in this chapter within the context of environmental interpretation. Interpretation “translates’ artifacts, collections, and physical resources into a language that helps visitors make meaning of these resources” (Bacher 2), by creating “a bridge between the meanings of the resources and interests of the visitors” (6). While environmental interpretation is generally seen within the context of a national park or a museum of natural history, the principles integral to the field can be recognized in works from curiosity cabinets to contemporary aquariums. The foundational text for environmental interpretation was Freeman Tilden’s 1957 *Interpreting Our Heritage*, which first laid out the principles of any educational programming by or about natural landscapes or animals. These principles have since been updated, particularly by Larry Beck and Ted Cable in their *Fifteen Principles of Interpretation*. Five primary goals for interpretation that I would like to point out in particular are:

1. Interpretation should be relayed within the context of visitor experience.
2. Interpretation should focus on the revelations that come out of information, and not solely on the information itself.
3. Interpretation is art, and therefore the narrative in which the information is presented is essential to audience understanding.
4. The aim of interpretation is to provoke the audience to positive environmental behaviours and an increase in audience knowledge.
5. Any information presented, such as a specific animal artifact like an antler, should be situated within the context of the whole animal. The antler is interesting; the moose and the challenges it faces within its wider ecology and our human impact on that needs to be conveyed above all (Bacher 3-4).

In addition, researchers into environmental education suggest that successful programs — ones which both engage visitors and have identifiable, lasting impacts on the environmental subject, insofar as that can be measured — should place at the forefront of its practice the protection of ecological integrity, refraining from interfering with any ecological processes (Curthoys 233), and instigating dialogue about one’s place within nature (233). Each of these principles and practices focus on visitor experience more than the animal or natural element being explained itself - which we can view through the lens of the ethics of spectatorship. In fact, some studies on environmental education go so far as to suggest that the primary goal, beyond communicating the facts, should be to “enhance visitor experience” (Curthoys 224), because if the program can foster a connection to place, such as a national park, then the place becomes a part of one’s environmental identity, and the visitor will stand a greater chance of wanting to protect that place if anything were to threaten its existence. By situating the audience experience within a anthropocentric narrative — what impact does this have on the viewer, or as Bacher frames it, “why should I care?” (Bacher 5) — researchers suggests the “personal connection” can create “powerful meanings that visitors will remember long after their site visit” (5).

The goal of all of this is for visitors to become eco-literate citizens (Curthoys 225), or “understanding the basic principles of ecology and being able to embody them in the daily life of human communities” (226). They emphasize “listening to the landscape” (233), not as a metaphor but as a system of living, communicative entities from which one can learn that the world “is not of human making, [and] does not play by human rules” (225).
While environmental interpreters note that “storytelling is a necessary vehicle for reanimating the landscape” (Curthoys 234), it is the lived experience within specific places in nature that create the strongest programs. It is not enough for an interpretative program to simply tell a story about environmental connections. For interpretation programs to be successful, this connection is generated through two primary means: intangibles and tangibles (Bacher 5). The harder one to achieve is the connection to intangibles, which “are abstract and include processes, relationships, ideas, feelings, values and beliefs” (6), such as sustainability or climate change, as these issues are multifaceted and difficult for many to connect with on a concrete level. Focusing on tangibles - which has “material qualities that you can see, touch, taste, hear or smell” (6) is what ultimately makes environmental interpretation programs successful. Bacher notes that the tangible element employed “is the engine that powers the presentation […] that captures and reveals a myriad of ideas, values, relationships, contexts, systems and processes” (20). It is the object to which the audience is able to connect and experience, their gateway into the other-than-human world.

In a national park setting, tangibles are generally animal artifacts - non-living pieces such as moose antlers, beaver tails, or bear hides, which are passed around so that interpreters can create visceral experiences for the audience. Touching a moose antler has been shown to have a greater impact than simply looking at a photo of a moose; it makes the animal seem more real (Bacher 20). Through this, interpreters create a link to more intangible information - such as connecting a threatened moose population to habitat fragmentation - and these links are referred to as the “building blocks of interpretation” (20). Nothing happens though, without that tangible element.
One of the most important ‘tangibles’ is the living animal. John Berger questions why we are so drawn to looking at animals, and suggests perhaps it is because they are both alike and unlike us at once - with the possibility of sentience, but also physically dissimilar, so we look at the “across an abyss of non-comprehension” (Berger 2). He suggests that we wonder what it is like to be so wild, and when look at an animal, we see the nature from which we feel so far removed staring right back at us. We can think of it as a hierarchy of audience interests. If you show an audience a photograph or a video of an animal, that is engaging (Bacher 17). If you bring in a tangible artifact like an antler, immediate proof of the existence of an animal other, your audience will make a personal connection and show a greater interest in learning more (17). This is where national park interpretation programs generally end, as bringing live animals into the setting is often infeasible and unadvisable. However, you can imagine how audience interests could increase exponentially when there is a possibility of a living animal staring right back at them. It is evidence of the natural world making a connection back to the human world, to provide them with the personal experience and knowledge they need to make informed, environmentally-conscious choices upon leaving the interpretation program. This is the ‘little flicker’ Nightingale refers to when speaking of Qila at the Vancouver Aquarium.

In a 2006 study conducted on the impacts of wild animal encounters on the youth summer camp experience, researchers found positive correlations between animal exposure and increased positive environmental behaviour (Watson 127). Encountering wild animals - moose, foxes, squirrels and other common forest animals - “provided lived experience with [and of] the more-than-human world” (129). Once the campers held a frog, for example, the frog transitioned from being an abstract idea to the children - an intangible - to a living thing. Unlike the inert
artifact that national parks would use however, this study suggested that wild animal encounters provided campers with the ability to reflect on the animal’s “otherness” (136), “having a life of its own [...] value, agency, and worth” (138). For Kuhl, the most impactful environmental interpretation programs are those that build from the identification of ‘otherness’, into a recognition of “mutlivocality” (Kuhl 110), in which non-human voices become audible to the learner. Building on this hierarchy of interest once more - if looking an animal who is potentially looking back at a visitor increases audience engagement in an interpretive program, then any program that takes the visitors a step further into potentially communicating with that animal, making the visitor feels as if they are stepping as close to the wild as they possibly can, may also allow the visitor to account for their own animality (Curthoys 229; Kuhl 110). Kuhl mentions this as “embodied knowing [...] going beyond the cognitive and attending to the kinaesthetic experiences with the animal other” (Kuhl 111). In this sense, animals help audiences to learn because through any shared, communicative experiences, the audience slowly begins to recognize similarities, gain empathy for the animal other, and bridge that “abyss of non-comprehension” (Berger 2). This led researchers to conclude that if educators want to foster a deeper understanding of the natural world, then facilitating first-hand experiences with animals is essential (Kuhl 130).

This, however, poses significant risks to the animal other if not constructed or facilitated properly, and I will examine later on in this chapter how one’s desire to be as close to this ‘wildness’ as possible in their educational experiences may in fact have detrimental outcomes. Again, Kuhl notes that any representations of animals, be it in stories, on stage, or in interpretative programs, can either dismantle or reinforce otherness (Kuhl 106), or even be used
to justify continued oppression (108). She says that the power dynamics inherent in any environmental interpretation programming involving animals - alive or artifact - is skewed towards the human presenter. The presenter curates the experience for both human and animal participants, and the way in which they frame the event dictates how the audience will come to relate to that animal afterwards (107). For example, if one curates a program in which sharks are depicted as ferocious, man-eating, Jaws-theme-inducing predators, then the audience is likely to categorize sharks as “vicious” in subsequent experiences. The shark automatically becomes the ‘bad guy’ of the scenario in that depiction, vastly different from its human audience in terms of behaviour. If the program instead deemphasizes sharks’ predatory nature and instead focuses on the role they play within a larger ecosystem, then the shark is positioned as essential, and the audience will be more likely to advocate for its protection. The shark behaviour can then be understandable. Audience reaction has little to do with the way the animal behaves, and everything to do with the story the educator structures around it. With no shared language or cultural experience between the curator and curated of interpretative programs, and with the sheer amount of knowledge we still have to learn about so many animals, it is more than likely that educational programs will get something wrong or “fall short of the actual animals themselves” (118). Kuhl suggests that we should therefore account for an “inability to foresee the consequences” inherent in every representation (109).

In addition, when we position live animals as educators, there is a major distinction to be made between education by animals and education about animals. It comes down to a question of agency. When one frames a program to state that the education is provided by animals, the assumption is that the animals are engaging in this performance or interaction
through their own choosing. This comes down to the power inherent in program curation - if the human interpreter suggests that the animal is an educator, the audience is led to believe the relationship between human and animal is one of near equals, both contributing to the educational experience in comparable ways. This is how institutions like SeaWorld position the animals in their custody - as visitors from the natural world who are here to teach the audience about their ecosystems through “creating closeness between people and animals” (Kalof 156). It is suggested as within the animal’s best interest, and as if performing and educating the public is something that they also enjoy doing. Education about animals on the other hand places the animal on the periphery from the outset. This is the actual aim of environmental interpretation programs in national parks, such as the programming Bacher outlines: that the animal does not have to put itself before an audience in order for that personal connection to occur. It is peripheral by necessity. It also suggests that the live animal is unessential to the program. If a live animal is present, they exist solely as a surface value, an object, interesting only for its physicality and not as a co-educator or with any sense of multivocality. The lines are also blurred here in terms of the impact the representation can have on the live animal within the scenario. If the animal is framed as educator, and the representation is inaccurate or misleading, then the misinformation is almost solidified as fact - it was, after all, presented in part by that animal. However, the connection forged through this kinaesthetic experience still remains, and the audience may feel an increased sense of empathy, still leading to positive environmental outcomes. If the animal is framed as peripheral object and the representation is inaccurate or misleading, and a live animal is not present, this poses the risk of creating a scenario in which the audience is not engaged in the information presented. The animal becomes less valuable to them
within the experience, less tangible, and perhaps no positive environmental outcomes result from
the program.

This is where my research diverts from traditional environmental interpretation, as I have
come to believe that any interpretive program involving a living animal who appears solely
through the intention of the program curator or interpreter, blurs the line between education by
and education about animals, as recognizing animal agency in the decision to become educator is
difficult. Does the animal ever directly indicate that they elect to become this tangible asset in the
interpretation program? For the pieces I will discuss in this chapter, which have been among the
most popular forms of engaging with animals on an educational level, I will argue that they
either do not, or cannot. I want to acknowledge that the research clearly shows that visitors report
feeling more engaged with programming when exposed to tangibles like wild animals. However,
how does one balance the those positive anthropocentric impacts, with the potential for
misrepresentation? The question of who curates the program, how it is framed, and what role the
animal is given within this environmental interpretation influences how it is received by the
human audience, and what consequences, positive or negative, it has on the animal educator.

6. History of Animals in Education

When we think about the curation of programs which place animals as educators, Berger
wants us to recognize that what we come to know about them “is an index of our power, and thus
an index of what separates us from them. The more we know [about animals], the further they
are away” (Berger 14). As mentioned in the chapter introduction, there are two broad categories
of performances which incorporate animals as educators by placing them directly in relation to
the human spectator - those which emphasize physicality and differences, and those which focus
on sagacity and similarities. The history of animals, education and performance stems from this first category, in which the allure of the exotic animal body, and discovering what exactly separates ‘us’ from ‘them’, was the purpose behind their capture, exhibition, and everything that was learned about them. In this section, I will highlight two major historical examples of animal physiology in performance: the “rational amusements” (Kalof 119) of curiosity cabinets; and the first public zoological gardens in the 18th and 19th centuries. These are each performances about animals, in which the animal body is used to disavow any evidence of interiority or agency. The animal is educational insofar as the audience is exposed to a view of wilderness from which they have mostly been separated. They are able to see the animal up close, sometimes in great detail, and always framed within the context of entertainment. Each of these performance types provides the foundation for what I will be discussing in the case study for this chapter - orcas at SeaWorld. I also want to note that I am only looking at historical instances as examples of this ‘index of power’ in human-animal relationships, and I am not intending to make any transhistorical conclusions about the events in particular. However, there are clear threads that we can see between the use of animal bodies as inert objects in curiosity cabinets, and denying agency to an orca at SeaWorld. It is all in service of a particular educational mandate and approach, which foregrounds profits over the welfare of captive animals. What I am interested in exploring in this section are some potential roots and examples of human-animal separation that we still see today. My hope is that by placing today’s practices in line with historical practices, we will understand a little more of what may be behind the choices we make towards animals in education today.
6.1 “Rational Amusement” of Curiosity Cabinets

‘Curiosity cabinets’ or Kunstkammers (Fiorani 269) arose in Europe during the mid-16th Century (Mauries 30), and began as private collections of oddities, including “all kinds of curiosities brought back by ambassadors, explorers, and others traveling abroad on official business” (MacGregor 37). The goal of the curiosity cabinets was to become a “microcosm [...] of the world” (Fiorani 269), to ‘distill’ the universe into a single room in order for all of its oddities, from human cultural history to the natural world, to be intimately studied (Fiorani 269, MacGregor 11), and eventually exhibited. In this sense, curiosity cabinets fit readily within Chaplin’s theory of geodrama's second act. They can be characterized by: growing confidence in the sophistication of investigative and exploratory tools; an assuredness that the application of these tools will result in a successful discovery; strengthened political connections meaning that more of the world’s discoveries would be shared; and participating in, and actively encouraging, “conquer[ing] the globe” (Chaplin xx).

By the late 17th Century, rational amusements - entertainment with the explicit primary purpose of sharing scientific and nature-based discoveries - were open to the public. They were designed to give visitors “examples of wildness that might be seen in their natural habitat” (Kalof 119) with walls decorated with foliage, so that the exhibition seemed more natural (119). The most famous of these rational amusements was the Versailles menagerie, owned by Louis XIV in the 1660’s, which Kalof says this was the “first western menagerie to displace in one place only rare and exotic animals of viewing by visitors” (121). The menagerie was octagonal in design to demonstrate how culture fully “enclosed nature” (121), and from any vantage point in the building one could see an array of wildlife without having to do so much as slightly turn their heads. This sense of animals being constantly within sight, was central to
both the physical design of menagerie, and also to the philosophy behind it: there was nothing that was beyond human observation. Each of the live animals were also exhibited next to illustrations of them in the wild, so that the visitors might be able to ‘see’ wildness come to life right before their eyes (122).

Perhaps the most famous of all curiosity cabinets was Barnum’s American Museum, owned by P. T. Barnum from 1841 until 1865, which housed all manner of curiosities, from historical artifacts to human oddities and cages of exotic animals. Barnum had little interest in the education-first, world-in-a-museum approach to exhibition. Rather, he focused predominately on the entertainment value of his specimens, luring audiences in off the street with a combination of ‘one-in-a-lifetime’ opportunities, and marketing genius. Barnum was perhaps the first showman in charge of a collection of live animal curiosities, and he was the first to explicitly frame a visit to a curiosity cabinet as anthropocentric entertainment, where the value for his audience was the number one goal. Questions of animal rights and welfare, especially pertaining to the live members of his collection, were brushed away through cleverly constructed narratives, pitting the animals as ‘visitors’ - much like the audience - here to share their experiences of the other-than-human world.

Barnum’s narratives were hardly reliable. For example, one of his first exhibited ‘oddities’ was Joice Heth in 1835 (Barnum 93). Most of Heth’s backstory was created by Barnum to attract a wide audience. He was well-known for taking a ‘prove me wrong' attitude, but then also inventing his own ‘expert’ either in support of or in opposition to the veracity of his exhibitions, depending on what he felt the audience wanted to see. He went so far as to write his own ‘letters to the editor’, published anonymously, extolling the virtues of his museum. Barnum, as a producer who invented and played both sides of the narratives of his curiosity cabinet, is
hardly someone we can depend on for an accurate account of history. However, he was among
the first to pitch the animals in his curiosity cabinets as having educational value - even lessons
to teach the audience, and his exhibitions were arguably the most popular in North America at
the time. As such, I am going to examine the construction of his narratives in order to draw a
parallel between Barnum, and the contemporary sales pitch approach that SeaWorld takes to their
exhibitions. I believe there are similarities between the two that are worth drawing out.

For Barnum, rational amusements focused on animals came in the form of exhibiting
oddities without corruption (Barnum 92) — or, that which could be caught. Barnum framed
himself as the honest, down-to-earth, rags-to-riches everyman, whose life transitioned from the
pastoral to the tragic, and finally to the master of everything143 — a life which mirrored, in
essence, the depiction of animals within his curiosity cabinet. Like Barnum, most of his animals
began their lives out in the wild. They were then captured and taken from their homes. Finally,
they were exhibited and displayed as the most ferocious, exotic creatures from around the world
(178), here in his museum to delight, entertain, and educate visitors. It was the showman’s spin:
the way a story is constructed has a profound impact on the audience’s willingness to play along.
By depicting Barnum as a ‘master of nature’, and the animals he exhibited as the apex of their
ecosystems, it created the illusion of duality within the performance: two masters, coming
together, to create the best experience an audience could ever have.144

Included in his establishment were “rare spectacle[s]” (Barnum 93), animals that New
York audiences would never have seen - rhinos, giraffes, and “whatever else of the kind money
would buy” (169).145 He also included learned animal performances, such as educated dogs and
trained fleas (161), ostensibly to show the audiences that the displays were not beneficial to
human audiences alone, but also provided a platform for animals to be trained into exercising
their own curiosity about the human world. Barnum used these animal exhibits in the same manner he used Heth: to get audiences talking. In one of his many autobiographies, he claimed “at the outset of my career, I saw that everything depended on getting the people to think, and talk, and become curious and excited over and about the ‘rare spectacle’” (98). What could be more alluring and polarizing, than an animal reportedly trained to count? To bolster audience interest, Barnum often paid for his own anonymous editorials — written under the guise of an ordinary guest, but with the same flourish that could only be attributed to Barnum himself. He encouraged debate, disagreement, even hostile challenges to his honesty, which he took up under the claim that “no man can be dishonest, without soon being found out” (608).

But nothing got Barnum’s audiences talking more than his most famous 1861 exhibit: the white whales (Barnum 682). Barnum realized that the animal that would most capture audience imaginations was a whale: “a real life whale is as great a curiosity as a live lord or prince, being much more difficult to catch, and far more wonderful in its appearance and habits” (Leiren-Young, *The Ultimate Exhibit*). Barnum decided that having an aquarium in his American Museum would be a fantastic entertainment and educational opportunity for the whole city — not to mention, would make him a considerable sum in ticket sales. He hired a team of fisherman to capture two whales off the coast of the St. Lawrence, and find a way to ship them back to the museum. The capture method was quite similar to what Barnum had used himself in capturing elephants. A kraal was set up in the river with an open net that narrowed as the whales swam further in. The fisherman drove the whales into the kraal with noise from their boats, kept them in the nets until low tide, and then “secur[ed] a slip-noose of stout rope over their tails, and tow[ed] them to the sea-weed lined boxes in which they were to be transported to New York” (Barnum 683). The public interest was immediately immense, with thousands crowding
train station platforms to catch a glimpse of the whales on their way to Barnum’s museum (685). Still thousands came to see the whales on their debut at the American Museum, with the New York Times reporting “here is a real sensation” (Hoare 32). Hoare called the first injection of aquatic life into Barnum's museum “a characteristic marriage of ingenious science and human curiosity” (33).

However, the exhibit did not last long. Barnum said:

[…] my first whaling expedition was a great success, but I did not know how to feed or to take care of the monsters, and, moreover, they were in fresh water, and this, with the bad air in the basement, may have hastened their death, which occurred a few days after their arrival, but not before thousands of people had seen them (Barnum 685). 149 150

If the ultimate animal exhibition in a curiosity cabinet would be a creature from the ocean, then the hunt was on to find a way to properly house and care for the animal, before Barnum considered brining another back into his museum. On the second try, Barnum had a series of pipes built that connected the museum to the New York bay so that the whales could swim in salt water. In an editorial for the New York Daily Tribune, Barnum wrote that “this is probably the last attempt that will be made to exhibit a living whale in connection with the other expensive attractions at the Museum for only twenty-five cents” and that there was no doubt “the public will embrace the earliest moment (before it is too late) to witness the most novel and extraordinary exhibition ever offered them in this city” (“A Card From P. T. Barnum”). Stating this as a ‘last opportunity’ was certainly a ploy to sell tickets, as well as to depict himself as a ‘worn out’ from the effort of attempting to curate such a valuable educational exhibit. The more sympathy he could generate for himself, and the more urgency he could make the audience feel in relation to seeing these whales, the more he would make in profits. All decisions he made in constructing narratives surrounding the whales were done in service of ticket sales. However, the
new whales died soon after being moved into the museum,\textsuperscript{151} and to allay audience critiques, Barnum’s obituary of the whales simply stated that “their sudden and immense popularity was too much for them” (Barnum 686-687).\textsuperscript{152}

In 1865, Barnum had two more whales - white whales\textsuperscript{153} - captured off the coast of Labrador (Barnum 687). The plan was to use funds generated from these two whales to expand the aquarium immensely, bringing in aquatic plants, sharks, porpoises, horses, and rare fish, and Barnum would be the first to create an exhibit of the ‘ocean in miniature’ (688). His ads spoke of how essential it was that audiences flock to the new exhibit as quickly as possible:

\begin{quote}
BARNUM’S AMERICAN MUSEUM
\textbf{. . . TWO LIVING WHITE WHALES}
weighing TWENTY THOUSANDS POUNDS per registers
Hudson River Railroad Co.,
after several months of immense labor and at an expense of NINE THOUSAND DOLLARS,
were captured and brought to this city from the coast of Labrador and are now disporting in that MINATURE [sic] OCEAN,
the MAMMOTH WHALE TANK,
the only specimen to be seen alive.
NOW IS THE TIME
to see these wonders as THEIR LIVES ARE UNCERTAIN,
seven of the same species having died while being exhibited at this Museum.
GEORGE, the great WHALE CAPTURER, will enter the WHALE TANK every day at 10 3/4 A.M., 2 1/4 and 7 3/4 P. M.
(Lost Museum Archive).
\end{quote}

However, on July 13th of that year, Barnum’s America Museum burnt down, allegedly started from sparks within the engine room, which was running at full-capacity in order to support the constant stream of salt water the whales needed (Barnum 793). In a report published the next day by Nathan D. Urner in the Tribune, the fate of the whales - and other animals within this rational amusement exhibit - was outlined:\textsuperscript{154}
The whale and alligators were by this time suffering dreadful torments. The water in which they swam was literally boiling [...] The poor whale, almost boiled, with great ulcers bursting from his blubbery sides, could only feebly swim about, though blowing excessively, and every now and then sending up great foundations of spray. At length, crack went the glass side of the great case, and whales and alligators rolled out onto the floor [...] The whale died easily, having been pettily well used up before. A few great gasps and a convulsive flap or two of his mighty flukes were his expiring spasm (797-799).

Barnum printed an obituary for the whales the following day, calling reports of their agonizing deaths simply fiction. The degree to which the animals are eulogized speaks to the entertainment and education the animals provided to audiences, and the loss of knowledge: “Almost in the twinkling of an eye, the dirty, ill-shaped structure, filled with specimens so full of suggestion and of merit, passed from our gaze, and its like cannot soon be seen again” (“Disastrous Fire”; Thompson). What we can see here is Barnum’s ability to spin the narrative in whichever direction best fits and supports his business. The ‘limited-time’ exhibition was at once a certain to see the whales to die in captivity, and also an unprecedented occurrence. This may speak to Barnum’s unreliability as a historical source, but it is interesting to see him within the context of these shifting perspectives on animals. This in itself demonstrates how rational amusements such as this fit in with Chaplin’s second act of the geodrama: even in the face of disaster, the circumnavigator has the tools and abilities to come out on top as master of nature, and continue to explore. Barnum does the same here, positioning the animals in his collections as ultimately replaceable.

All of this considered suggests that the animal that visitors to Barnum’s museum encountered was, as Berger explains, less than animal. He wrote of early zoological displays that “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” (Berger 19), and the same sentiment can be
reflected in Barnum’s displays. What audiences truly encountered was a reflection of society, with the captive animals “a symbolic representation of the conquest of all distant and exotic lands” (19). Nature was tamed, white-washed, and reflected back to the audience as inert, palatable, and happy to be in captivity.

The curiosity cabinets that Barnum and earlier Kunstkammers provided though were immensely popular, which speaks to the effectiveness of having tangible animal encounters as part of a learning opportunity. It also demonstrates that even when tangibles are present within environmental interpretation, if the framing of the experience emphasizes the anthropocentric nature of their captivity in a positive light, then the audiences will come away from the exhibit with an understanding of human domination over the natural world, and animal expendability. Of course it was sad that Barnum’s white whales had died, but it was also telling that his audiences still yearned for more exhibits, rather than problematizing the whales’ presence in the museum.157

7. The Spectator is the Point

Before I launch into a case study, I want to question what kind of education these historical performances provided about animals, as I believe it is an important question to keep in mind throughout this chapter. I find this review from a New York Zoological Park visitor in 1904 to be particularly telling about the real educational experience:

learning natural history […] is not the greatest good this Zoo does for the multitude. It matters little whether Michael Flynn knows the difference between the caribou and the red deer. It does matter a lot, however, that he has not sat around all day disconsolate, or in the back room of the saloon, but has taken the little Flynns and Madam Flynn out into the fresh air and sunshine for one mighty good day in which they have forgotten themselves and their perhaps stuffy city rooms (Killing 169).
Education, really, is not the point. The point is how the spectators spent their day, and the quality of entertainment they feel they received. We can see from these last two examples of animals as educational performances that, as Berger suggested, there is a correlation between how close we come to an animal, and how little we actually know about it. In curiosity cabinets, for example, the animal body became an oddity out of place. Again an “index of our power” (Berger 14), it was permissible to take an animal from its ecosystem and make them an anachronism in a museum, even when acknowledging - like Barnum did with his white whales - that their life may be severely shortened. The audience was taught the animal could be moved at human will and for human convenience. In early zoos, visitors were taught that the animal was to be seen in a manner which neither annoys visitors nor complicates their captivity. Each of these focused entirely on what visitors could learn from simply viewing or being physically present with the animal. If the physical co-presence of a wild animal could be used as a tangible experience to spur audience fascination with the other-than-human world, and sell tickets to the event, that in itself justified its usage in these historical settings. I believe this is the sentiment that was carried forward into industries like Sea World, and will next look at how the approach to animals in education has since evolved.

8. Case Study: The Shamu Story

When we talk about performing animals within education, one of the most famous contemporary examples is Shamu, SeaWorld’s starring orca character, who has traveled from the ocean to share its experiences and love of the ocean. With audience-soaking splashes, amazing acrobatics, and a gentleness coaxed out of the aquatic giant by trainers with seemingly transcendent human-animal communication skills, the orca becomes an ambassador to the sea, a
catalyst for learning to care about the other-than-human world. At the height of their popularity, Shamu shows would draw in approximately 5,000 audience members per day (“Backstage of Believe”), most, according to SeaWorld, either ardent supporters or recent converts to the belief that “what matters most [is] the people, the guests, the visitors, from all over the world, com[ing] into SeaWorld, mak[ing] connections, memories, celebrat[ing], and hav[ing] a whole new commitment and concern for animals and each other (“Backstage of Believe”).

SeaWorld asserts that its Shamu shows are one of the primary ways in which people are able to interact with aquatic wildlife in a way that engenders an “emotionally enriching experience” that “fosters a sense of caring for these animals and their ocean environments” (AMMPA). Their literature often quote studies which support the “consistent and overwhelming public support […] and their role in conservation education” (AAMPA), noting that 97% of SeaWorld visitors agree that the institution - and their orcas - plays a profound role in helping children learn about aquatic life (AAMPA). Since the late 1960s, SeaWorld has worked to build up a strong narrative supporting orca captivity. The stories they tell through their flagship Shamu shows follow a basic premise: a human trainer and an orca encounter one another, are inspired by each other, and from this create a strong friendship that transcends species boundaries, allowing them to learn how the other lives and come to a place of greater empathy. Brad Andrews, SeaWorld’s Chief Zoological Officer, heightens the gravity of this narrative by insisting that “conservation [has] to be a group effort, and if the public doesn’t receive the sensitivity, the education, the concern, then how is conservation going to happen” (Kaplan)? Education becomes the largest argument supporting captivity, noting that such tangible, connective experiences would be impossible if orcas were simply left in the wild,
or asking ‘how will anyone know to care about the ocean if they are not shown how’ (Kalof 156; Kaplan; Morton 55).

However, when one looks closely at the performances, there are a number of gaps in the education provided that ultimately suggest what is most important to SeaWorld is the audience’s tangible first-hand encounter with Shamu, the spectacle of its body, which in many instances both challenges and denies the authenticity of SeaWorld’s claims. Rather than being a catalyst for education, SeaWorld often becomes a site of perpetuating damaging misinformation, which substitutes an entertaining performance for the well-being of the orca.

8.1 Shamu On Stage: An Overview of Significant Shamu Performances

To evaluate the impacts and achievements of Sea World Shamu productions, and to see if they actually achieve the education goals they set out for themselves, I viewed past shows and analyzed their educational content. In this section, my intent is to briefly outline specific acts that occur within each production, highlight similarities or trends that continue from one show to the next, and also point out any glaringly obvious bits of misinformation shared with the audience. This will be used as the foundations for subsequent analysis.

This Is Shamu (1981)

The first recorded Shamu show that I can find dates back to 1981, with This Is Shamu, performed at the SeaWorld Orlando. The trainer begins the show with brief and general biological information about orcas, the basic husbandry information, including how much water the tank holds, and the orca’s usual diet, which they suggest is mostly herring and smelt, but “in their own environment, they will kill and eat anything that lives in the sea” (“This Is Shamu”).
The show then transitions into its first musical number - an introduction of the eponymous Shamu, with a high-energy soundtrack focusing on the orca’s power, speed, and big splashes, during which the singer assures the audience they will “laugh and play” and “some pretty miss might even get a kiss” (“This Is Shamu”). Shamu bursts in, splashing the audience, while a trainer rides on her back, which the song underscores with the line “people and animals working and playing together like they never have before” (“This Is Shamu”). It puts the novelty of the human-animal co-performers at the forefront, assuming that for the majority of the audience, this might have been their first opportunity to see an orca up close.

A segment on orca training follows this opening number, with the head trainer letting the audience in on the secrets of teaching orcas to perform each of these tricks. They hint at the operant conditioning base of their training methods, telling the audience that the trainers ‘bridge’ hand signals together, indicating the trick they would like the orcas to perform, with a reward at the end, such as fish or “rub-downs” (“This Is Shamu”). The trainer then demonstrates by signalling Shamu to perform a basic trick, and then rewards her with a fish while joking with her “[we] want to make sure you never ever forget” (“This Is Shamu”). We can see in here the power dynamics developed between the orca and trainer, with food clearly being offered on the condition of successful behaviour performance.

The trainers position this as a symbiotic relationships, explaining that “animals do something for us, so we do something for them” (“This Is Shamu”), and this is a sentiment that is reiterated through subsequent Shamu shows as well, as if the power dynamics between the trainer and orca are completely balanced. The trainers then juxtapose the teaching of very basic tricks, with a completed act, “The Ballet of the Whales” - a choreographed routine in which the orca and trainer ‘dance’ together in the water, pirouetting and leaping to elicit wonderment at the
orca’s apparent newfound gracefulness. It is a longer segment, almost positioned through the
tone of the music as a love story between trainer and Shamu, building on the ‘friendship’
established through training, as if to say to the audience ‘look what we can create together’. As a
quieter, more contemplative number, it encourages the audience to think about the inner lives of
these monstrous animals, reflect on previously held stereotypes, and come to a new
understanding of both Shamu, and wild orcas. It is the most effective element of the show in
terms of undoing the misconception of orcas being viscous killer. The act is concluded with
Shamu splashing the audience - a demonstration of her humour, thereby suggesting to the
audience that Shamu has a personality all her own.

Now that the audience has come to learn something new and unexpected, the head trainer
says that it is the audience’s turn to be in the show - and maybe even get a kiss from Shamu
(“This Is Shamu”). They bring up an audience volunteer, and ask them to make Shamu dance,
which of course Shamu will not do… until the volunteer does as well. The trainer then tells the
audience, “You’ve just witnessed Shamu training [an audience member]” (“This is Shamu”).
This suggests that not only can the trainers teach Shamu to be graceful like in the previous act,
but Shamu has much to teach the audience herself. The audience volunteer is then permitted to
touch Shamu’s tongue, providing the volunteer a strongly tangible learning experience, and a
reward to Shamu for a well-performed act.

Finally, the show concludes with another high-energy act set to music, in which Shamu is
accompanied by two leaping dolphins. The trainer explains that in the wild, orcas and dolphins
are natural enemies, as orcas eat dolphins - but here at SeaWorld, Cindy the Dolphin gives
Shamu a kiss to show how things have “changed” (“This Is Shamu”). The scene is reminiscent of
Hagenbeck’s happy family animal scenes from the circus, in which former enemies are now
united and trained into docility and sagacity - a harmony that would be unachievable without the intervention of knowledgable trainers. The piece finishes with Tom the trainer on a “rocket ride” with Shamu (“This Is Shamu”), as they leap twenty-feet into the air and dive in unison back into the water.\textsuperscript{163}

\textit{The Shamu Experience} (1985)

The next SeaWorld show\textsuperscript{164} focuses on deepening the relationship between the audience and orcas, noting that ‘man’ has always been inspired by ocean life, and Shamu is here to help unravel that mystery. \textit{The Shamu Experience} also opens with a song telling the audience that the “creatures here are not to be feared; they’ll open up your heart” ("The Shamu Experience"). While “the sea’s most spectacular performer” ("The Shamu Experience") leaps out to splash the audience, the trainer speaks about the orca’s speeds, strength, instinct and intelligence, without going into detail. The audience learns the bare bones of orca husbandry: the orca swims fast.

The show then quickly advances into demonstrating that there is “a whole lot more to these animals - there’s personality” ("The Shamu Experience"), by exhibiting another version of ‘The Ballet of the Whales’. The distinct orca personalities are best shown when the orcas swim and play in the water, the trainer explains as the ballet begins. The song is different from the earlier Orlando version, with lyrics extolling how SeaWorld brings people and orcas to “be friends forever” ("The Shamu Experience"). The trainer and Shamu swim in unison, doing back crawls, pirouettes, and finally spinning together with the trainer holding Shamu’s flukes, all underscored by the line “we are friends in a very special way” ("The Shamu Experience"). Again it is a demonstration of orca grace and agility, meant to surprise the audience into learning something new about the orca - specifically, that they have their own personality, and that it is possible to become ‘friends’ with one.
The specifics behind the training process are not highlighted within the Shamu show itself, but are instead given to the audience during a pre-show featuring dolphins. Trainers explained to the audience that all performative behaviours are met with various rewards, be it a rub-down, play toy, or food, while reiterating, “we work on a 50-50 basis with these animals. They do something for us, we do something for them” (“The Shamu Experience”). The symbiotic narrative is still central to SeaWorld’s performances; if the relationship between trainer and orca are not seen as reciprocal, then it calls this ‘friendship’ into question. As the audience is still entering during the pre-show segment, it is not evident how many receive this information. Education on the trainer-Shamu relationship is then left simply at ‘we’re friends’.

The show also concludes with a spectacle-based, high-energy acrobatic performance during which the trainer and Shamu perform a ‘rocket hop’ (“The Shamu Experience”).

The themes of friendship are strongest in this performance, leaving little room for any elaboration on human-orca relations, training information, or information on wild orcas. All information imparted is couched within Disneyfied songs about friendship, creating a sense of the pastoral within SeaWorld. While in the ocean, these “mysterious creatures of the sea” (“The Shamu Experience”) may have to be fast and strong, here they are able to become, in a sense, their ‘true, friendly selves’.

*The Shamu Celebration* (1986)

This production celebrates the evolution of the ongoing relationship between SeaWorld and orcas, as “we invite you to enter our third decade with a Shamu celebration” (“The Shamu Celebration”). The show traces SeaWorld’s exploration of performances with orcas, beginning with the tale of the “first trainer” who dared to step into a tank with a “viscous killer” (“The Shamu Celebration”). They explain that when SeaWorld started in 1966, “we had no idea what
was ahead of us” (“The Shamu Celebration”). The act, set to music, is a physicalization of this history, beginning with the trainer cautiously putting one toe into the water, then gingerly jumping in, as the narrator explains the action was “so daring […] there was no turning back. All of a sudden he was riding on the back of a killer whale, and it seemed all right, so he decided to take it a step further” (“The Shamu Celebration”). This transforms from the trainer swimming on Shamu’s back, to performing basic tricks, to leaping off in a rocket-hop (“The Shamu Celebration”). The show mythologizes the trainer-Shamu relationship, pitting that first trainer as hero boldly going where no one has gone before, benevolently introducing to audiences mysterious orca, and creating a relationship that no one “thought possible” (“The Shamu Celebration”).

The act transitions into the Shamu staple of audience interaction, while the trainer explains that in 1970, SeaWorld wanted to find a way to ‘share’ this newfound “special relationship” with the public (“The Shamu Celebration”), so they developed an act in which one lucky audience member would get to meet Shamu up close and personal. The act mimics what one would normally expect a first orca-encounter would be like:

**Trainer:** How do you feel?
**Volunteer:** Scared.
**Trainer:** Nothing to be scared of. He’s just a… *killer whale* (“The Shamu Celebration”).

The trainer explains that once orcas were hunted for sport, and the goal of Shamu shows, and this audience interaction segment in general, is to turn “public fear into fascination” so that the audience can learn to “love” an orca (“The Shamu Celebration”). The show concludes, as usual, with a quick acrobatic set, prefaced by the trainer’s assertion that their favourite thing about training ‘killer whales’ is being in the water with them where “they really know you” (“The Shamu Celebration”).
The spectacle-based show, narrated by James Earl Jones, highlights the ‘special’ relationship between the Tlingit, Haida, and the ‘blackfish’ (“The Legend of Shamu”). The stage is adorned with totem poles depicting orcas, and “evoking the birthplace of the legend” (“Shamu’s Got A New Show”).

The show begins with a series of animations depicting orcas in the wild, while Jones’ narrates ‘facts’ about their lives, including:

- “He is a killer.”
- “His teeth are designed for ripping and tearing.”
- “He is relentless.”
- “He can kill anything that swims in the ocean” (“The Legend of Shamu”).

Narrated in Jones’ iconic imposing voice, the orca is cast as villain, akin to a deadly shark, legendary in its destructive capabilities - but only in the ocean.

Jones then outlines the ways in which “tribesmen” viewed the bloody destruction left in orcas’ wake, and determined that these creatures of the deep demanded their respect. He mentions killer whales visiting chiefs in their dreams, speaking to them in song, ostensibly about the special relationship between people and whales (“The Legend of Shamu”). This is now positioned as the origin of human-orca relationships that the show will explore, specifically through Baby Shamu, who introduces herself with a black flip. Baby Shamu “demonstrates that her species, as the clan believes, has "the speed of a hawk, the strength of a bear, the eyesight of an eagle” (“Shamu’s Got A New Show”), and is therefore the chief of the underwater world.

The trainers demonstrate the basics behind orca training, moving from hand signals to a new underwater communication system they have been working on, featuring a series of tones and whistles fed through a speaker system in the tank, which they say is “perhaps our first steps
in communicating with these magnificent animals” (“The Legend of Shamu”). This leads into a streamlined audience interaction segment, in which a volunteer gets the opportunity to try out giving Shamu a hand signal (“The Legend of Shamu”). The show again concludes with an acrobatic waterworks segment in which the audience is thoroughly drenched.

*The Shamu Show (1989)*

A return to classic Shamu show forms, *The Shamu Show* follows the basic format outlined in *This Is Shamu* and *The Shamu Experience*, with a high-energy introductory number, basic but over-generalized scientific information that is only partially accurate, and an audience participation number. The trainer tells the audience they have learned much about orcas and performing with orcas since they were first introduced to SeaWorld in 1966, and while progress was slow at first, they are continuing to advance this ‘special relationship’ (“The Shamu Show”).

The show is light on substance, beyond a demonstration of underwater orca communication. The trainer says that they have been working on ways to speak to the whales while they are underwater, using a series of tones and whistles. However, the trainer says that orcas communicate by vocalizing through a hole in their head called a blowhole (“The Shamu Show”). They go on to assert that orca vocalization “is not the same thing as language” (Killer Whales InfoBook).

The show concludes in the usual way with a trainer in the water performing various acrobatic tricks, enabled only because of the special relationship that has developed between orca and trainer.

*The Shamu Adventure (2002)*

This show takes the audience back to Orlando. It opens with a video of glaciers calving and collapsing into the north Pacific, while the narrator tells of the ocean’s ‘top predator’ - and a
pod of orcas surface while hunting for food (“The Shamu Adventure”). While the video wraps up, the narrator says that orcas exist around the world, “from Shamu stadium to Alaska”, positioning the captive pods as just another natural ecotype, here to “allow us to share in the beauty and majesty of the top predator of the sea” (“The Shamu Adventure”). As the narrator concludes, Shamu leaps up from the tank, breaches, and splashes the audience.

The head trainer launches into the explanation of training procedures, focusing mostly on the sentiment surrounding training, which is to “offer a better understanding of Shamu here”, and establishing a “trust […] that words alone can’t describe” (“The Shamu Adventure”). This again sets SeaWorld up as a place of benevolent knowledge-sharing, where orcas and people come together naturally, an is accompanied by a performance of the trainer and orcas dancing together in sync. It is not specifically ‘The Ballet of the Whales’, but one can easily see its inspiration and evolution. The dance is also set to softer, slower music, meant to evoke a sense of trainer and orca coming together to create something beautiful. Whereas in past shows, this might have been underscored with lyrics like ‘we are friends in a special way’ (“The Shamu Experience”), the sentiment here is more subtle.

The act is juxtaposed with an audience participation segment, pitting a male volunteer against a female volunteer. The female volunteer signals the orca to perform a series of tricks. The male volunteer is splashed, which is set to look like the orca is simply ‘misbehaving’ because she does not like the volunteer. The attempt at humour is intended to demonstrate the orca’s varying personalities, and the trainers note that they “never take for granted the sheer power” of Shamu (“The Shamu Adventure”), but with thirty-five years of experience “we’ve developed the knowledge and skills to train them” (“The Shamu Adventure”). In the midst of this, the whale ‘knocks down’ the trainer, seemingly as one final assertion of its personality.
The audience participation and finale segments are largely demonstrations of Shamu’s benevolent power - Shamu could hurt the audience, but instead she decides to splash them, because as previous shows have reiterated, ‘they’re all friends here’. These two segments suggest that SeaWorld is at the pinnacle of orca knowledge, the only ones with the experience to assist audiences in these valuably tangible educational opportunities.

*Believe (2008)*

*Believe* marked the last show during which trainers were allowed into the water with the orcas. Like *The Shamu Adventure*, *Believe* opens with a short movie of wild orcas in the Pacific Northwest is projected onto a screen behind the tank, where the trainers stand. It is the first to incorporate a specific, invented narrative, depicting a young boy carving a whale out of wood while sitting on a beach. Suddenly, he sees orcas up in the distance, grabs a kayak and begins to paddle out to them, where he is surrounded, as if all of these wild orcas are coming up just to say hello (“Believe”). This may also be a characterization of Ted Griffin’s ‘origin story’. As mentioned earlier, in an interview with PBS Frontline, Griffin spoke of seeing an illustration of a boy riding on a dolphin’s back when he was a child, and this inspired him to want to get closer to the whales, transforming curiosity into learning through tangible connections (Frontline). This is also a way that SeaWorld mythologizes its origins, scrubbing them of the realities of taking orcas captive and focusing solely on that desire for a greater connection to the natural and animal world.

The narrator underscores this moment by saying, “there comes a moment in everyone’s life where you stop wondering and start to believe” (“Believe”), at which point Shamu leaps from the depths of her tank to greet the audience, as if rewarding the belief that brought them to SeaWorld in the first place. The head trainer then runs out with a kayak paddle, aligning himself
- and his journey to SeaWorld - with the curiosity felt by that little boy in the movie. This positions SeaWorld as the locus of transforming nature wonderment into tangible learning opportunities, suggesting to the audience that anyone can ‘grow up’ to know whales.

For the first time in the Shamu show history, the trainers are costumed in black-and-white patterned dive suits to mimic orca colouring. This similarity subtly places trainers and orcas on the same level, as if they are the same species in differently shaped bodies. With the trainers giving the cues, it suggests they are the ‘leaders’ of this unconventional pod.

Believe contains the most physical and acrobatic waterworks of the Shamu shows so far, and places the bulk of its focus on encouraging wonderment through the spectacle of an orca propelling a trainer twenty-feet into the air for them to both dive simultaneously. The allure of seeing a tightly choreographed, highly skilled interspecies performance propels curiosity into what else animals could do, if ‘we’ only believed they could. Aside from this, there is no focus on any orca facts, life in the wild, training processes, or what exactly the audience is supposed to believe in.

One Ocean (2013)

After trainers were barred from entering tanks with the orca, SeaWorld wanted to continue producing educational entertainment, but they had to find a way to induce audience wonderment without a trainer in the water. Their answer has been the show One Ocean, in which “majestic killer whales join you on a journey into a world that drenches your senses in vivid colours, vitality, and the global rhythms [where] you connect with thrilling sea creatures, feeling the energy and spirit of life underneath the sea, and realize that we are all part of one world, one ocean” (“One Ocean”). This “all new Shamu” ("One Ocean") again begins with a nature-based video, which aims to reinvent the mythology by tracing the journey into wildlife conservation
work of three young children. The first child, a girl, wanders a forest with her father, until they find themselves on a hill, watching a pod of wild orcas. The clip transitions into the girl, now grown, working as a guide on a whale watching ship, taking students to see orcas ("One Ocean"). The next depicts a boy who dreams of swimming with whales, and shows him growing up to become a rescue worker, releasing an orca back into the wild ("One Ocean"). Finally, another girl watches a whale in the wild and they begin to communicate with one another. The girl waves, and so does the orca. She spins, so do they. She dances, and they do too - all without making physical contact. The girl grows up to become a SeaWorld trainer ("One Ocean"). Just like Believe’s head trainer took on the role of that curious young kayaker, in One Ocean, three trainers emerge as the characters just seen in the video. These character roles align with SeaWorld’s conservation goals of providing education, wildlife rehabilitation and conservation, and wildlife communication, thereby asserting a more serious role for SeaWorld as it transitions away from the flashier Shamu shows of the past. No longer is Shamu here to entertain and educate through spectacle, but now it is time to talk to the audience about how they too can take their childish fascination with the non-human world and turn it into a career with positive environmental impacts.

The overall messaging of the show is that we all belong to one ocean, so we should take care of the creatures within it. This light conservation message is the most substance the new show has. In fact, the trainers barely talk in this new version, but simply bridge the gaps in the show by reciting positive messages about conservation work anyone can do, including:

- “We can choose to protect our planet”
- “A bright and beautiful future is in our hands”
- “With you by my side, everything seems to go right”
- and “Let me show you a place where the wonder never ends” ("One Ocean").
Even the chorus of its theme song reiterates that this is intended to be “one song for a brand new day” ("One Ocean"), SeaWorld turning over a new leaf, transitioning into a world where humans and orcas can really live harmoniously by working together to save the oceans. Rather than the acrobatic ending of past Shamu shows, One Ocean combines high-energy music with an elongated splash segment, from Shamu spraying the audience with its flukes, to Shamu bellyflopping and soaking the first few rows of audience, while the line “one people, one family, one ocean, one message, one future, one circle” is repeated ("One Ocean").

8.2 Analysis

Using the preceding summaries as a foundation, I will analyze what education these productions provide to their audience. The purpose is to come to an understanding of what the audience learns through the Shamu shows, how they learn it, and what is the impact of this learning on the orca performers. We can see how these narratives are propagated throughout the format of the shows. Hargrove says that the format and storyline of the Shamu shows have been unchanged since the first show in the 1960s. The general format is:

1. Intro: high-energy welcome song with leaps, splashes and a basic trick. The song revolves around the trainer and orca discovering one another and their mission of becoming friends (Hargrove 29).
2. Big orca intro: the star of the show! The orca completes a series of “aerial leaps […] to show off the skills and athleticism of the whale as they respond to signals from the trainer” (29). The trainer underscores this with explanations of how orcas in the wild are feared, ferocious killers, but we have nothing to be afraid of at SeaWorld.
3. The story: the trainer introduces the audience to the message behind why Shamu has come to SeaWorld: because the audience has a role to play in protecting oceans.
4. Demonstration of orca training, often with a brief and general explanation of rewards for successfully completed behaviours. Will often reiterate the notion that the relationship is “50-50” or some semblance of “they do something for us, so we do something for them”, and an assertion that the relationship is symbiotic.
5. Act which shows off orca grace, agility and docility, set to slower, prettier music, demonstrating “how gentle and loving that [human-orca] relationship is” (29). “The Ballet of the Whales” is an example of this act.
6. Audience participation segment: meet and teach the orca to perform a trick. Prior to Believe, also gave the opportunity for the audience to touch the orca.
7. A quick reiteration of the importance of orcas and trainers working together.
8. A big, high-energy grand finale with spectacular waterworks that splash the audience “so they can feel that they have become a part of the relationship” (29).

The format aims to deepen the emotional connection between the audience and Shamu at each step, and therefore seems to depend little on actually educating its audiences.

I will analyze this information in the context of the questions for human-animal artistic relationships outlined by May and Kuhl (Kuhl 118; May 105). May’s questions centre on the success of the performance in accurately representing the human-animal relationship (May 105), so I will be using her questions to guide the analysis on Shamu’s educational impacts. Kuhl question what constitutes a ‘good’ representation of the non-human animal (Kuhl 118), so I will be using those questions to discuss Shamu’s lasting ethical and conservation impacts. Both academics’ questions will help me to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the shows in terms of their informational content, beyond the high-energy spectacle of orcas leaping out of the water on trainer command.

Finally, I want to analyze one specific statement that SeaWorld makes through its literature on ‘killer whales’, in which it notes that any ‘tricks’ performed by orcas are “learned behaviour”, which can be defined as a “permanent change in behaviour” (“Animal Behaviour and Learning). To learn something in this sense means to permanently adjust one’s attitude and actions towards a situation, and for the orcas, this means responding to their trainer’s commands and incorporating behaviours they would not normally have conducted in the wild. To not learn something means to continue as is - for the orca to be unresponsive to all bids that they acquiesce
to commands. If we follow the same line of logic in evaluating audience response to SeaWorld shows, then we should see a positive correlation between the education provided in Shamu and subsequent pro-environmental behaviours by the audience.

To organize all of this information, I will be dividing my analysis into five categories, comprising the major themes found throughout this research: wild versus domestic animals; education by animals versus education about animals; tangible education versus intangible education; ‘visiting’ animals versus the animal educator as ‘visitor’; and the ethics of spectatorship.

8.3 Wild Versus Domestic Animals

A visitor to Shamu stadium learns comparatively little about the distinctions between wild and domestic orcas through SeaWorld’s productions, and in fact the essence of their performances is to conflate the two categories as if Shamu is the same as any wild orca.

SeaWorld aims to change human-versus-animal narratives surrounding orcas by substituting a new mythology predicated on kinship between human and aquatic worlds. They are imperfect narratives, glossing over pertinent information in order to create a story that is smooth, palatable and unproblematic. Shamu shows take on preconceived notions of orcas - or ‘killer whales’ - as vicious killers and aims to transform this reputation. Historically, orcas were ‘feared’. The word ‘orca’ was first classified in Carolus Linnaeus’ 1758 *System Naturae*, as ‘orcinus orca’, named for the Roman god of the underworld, Orcus, (Kirby 2; Leiren-Young, *The Sea Beast*) because in descriptions of the animals up until this point, they were depicted as “bloodthirsty monsters and brutal, shark-like killing machines” (Kirby 2), based on their tendencies to both play with and physically destroy their food before eating (Leiren-Young, *The*
While orcas are not actually whales, their massive size often leads them to be classified as members of the cetacean family, which likewise has linguistic roots that focus on a terrifying reputation: *ketos*, from the Greek for “sea monster” (Hoare 55). The term ‘killer whale’, which SeaWorld perpetuates as a means of fuelling this ferocity, stems from this reputation. Their terrifying characterization, prolific hunting skills, and role as the largest carnivore on earth today (Kirby 1), made them an alluring challenge for aquarium owners. Like Barnum, they could play on audience fascinations, giving them an opportunity for an aquatic encounter they may never again experience (Barnum 687).

SeaWorld challenges this ferocity by substituting a new mythology that places humans and orcas as friends and not natural enemies, and SeaWorld as the only place that these encounters can occur. In this, it is helpful to look at the origins of SeaWorld, which lie with Seattle Marine Aquarium founder Ted Griffin. Griffin was insistent on acquiring a live orca to exhibit at the Seattle World's Fair (Frontline). He was inspired in particular by the Vancouver Aquarium’s Murray Newman, who stated that he “felt a lot of aquatic wildlife was savagely treated and the public should really know more about these different types of animals” (Leiren-Young, *Canada’s Captain Ahab*). For Griffin, the best way to teach people about aquatic life was to capture an orca - and sell tickets for the privilege of the tangible experience.

He heard that a male orca was caught in a net off the coast of Seattle, so had him towed to a sea pen at the Aquarium (Leiren-Young, *The Blackfish Gold Rush*; Zimmerman). Thousands of people lined up to see him on the first day of the exhibit. Griffin then decided to play on the Disney idea of whales being ‘gentle’, friendly creatures, and the best way for him to demonstrate this was to find a way to swim with the whale (Leiren-Young, *The Blackfish Gold Rush*;
Zimmerman). In an interview with PSB Frontline, Griffin spoke of being inspired by an illustration of a boy riding a dolphin, and during his work as a fisherman in the Puget Sound, he began to question stories he often heard of ‘killer whales' and their dangerous reputations:

I lived on the water and we started following the whales in the boat and then [... we followed them in] the water. And the whales never seemed to pay much attention. Many times when [we were] skin diving the whales would come by [and] swim right past the divers. You'd see them sometimes as a streak. Sometimes they would stop just for a brief moment at maybe 10 or 20 feet. And I came to understand that they were not... dangerous. ...[I]n that period of time... I decided I would attempt to ride one of these whales (Frontline).

For Griffin, it was a transformation from a fear-based curiosity, into a greater understanding of orca behaviour, all based on tangible encounters. From this, he “built [an enterprise] on personal love of the whale [and and] infinity of feeling of kinship” (Frontline). Eventually, after working to desensitize the orca to his presence in the water, Griffin was able to ride on its back.\textsuperscript{179} \textsuperscript{180}

Griffin's discovery that he could swim with whales is commonly dramatized in SeaWorld's Shamu shows, specifically in \textit{A Shamu Celebration, The Legend of Shamu}, and \textit{Believe}, which I will write more about shortly. While this makes for an interesting story, it was the second orca that Griffin took into captivity who solidified the mythology that would soon form the foundations for SeaWorld. The original Shamu\textsuperscript{181} (Zimmerman) was captured specifically for SeaWorld when it opened in 1964. She survived an unprecedented six years in captivity before dying (Leiren-Young, \textit{The Blackfish Gold Rush}), and was the first orcas to be trained specifically as a performer. She gained immense popularity among visitors to SeaWorld. Company owners reflected on the death of Griffin’s first orca, and subsequent public devastation, much like how Barnum’s Museum patrons reacted to the death of the first ‘white whales' in his exhibit. This drove SeaWorld to understand that profits are negatively impacted when whales die (Kirby 79), and that live orcas have a profoundly positive impact on sales. They wanted to find a
way to keep an orca alive indefinitely. As such, it was decided that when Shamu died, it would not be made public, and future orcas - male and female - would all be introduced under the name ‘Shamu’, as a performative identity for all SeaWorld orcas. The result was a collapse of two terms into one, making ‘Shamu’ synonymous with ‘orca’. It perpetuated a collective identity amongst orcas in the facilities, as if one was the same as any other - they all looked the same, whistled the same, performed the same tricks. Any one of them could be the original Shamu, for all the audience knew at first, and this allowed SeaWorld to persist as if the orcas in their facilities never died: “as with James Bond, there is always another actor prepared to step - or swim - into the iconic role” (Leiren-Young, *The Blackfish Gold Rush*; Morton 57; Neiwert 22).

In this, Griffin took a page from past circus directors: “Celebrity fishes are great for free publicity, and it is an unwise aquarist who forgets or disdains that one of the first aquarium directors was P. T. Barnum” (Leiren-Young, *Million Dollar Baby*). SeaWorld though was the first to apply this idea in a contemporary setting, even going so far as to apply ‘eternal’ and misleading names to his animal performers just like Barnum and other circus directors did with their elephants. With several ‘Romeos’ wandering North American in touring circuses, one single ‘Romeo’ could not have died. With most elephants taking on ferocious and masculine-sounding names, there could not be a significant lack of male elephants in the circus industry. The act of naming a performing animal to both hide or deny individual identities and bolster the idea of a celebrity animal was proliferated throughout circuses, and now put into practical - and lucrative - use at SeaWorld.
We can see this conflation leading to several major instances of misinformation delivered to the audience throughout the productions I looked at. Across the eight plays I have analyzed, only one of the Shamu performances - *The Shamu Show* - had any focus on orca biology, behaviour, and their lives in the wild, and the information they did include was not entirely accurate. For example, in “This Is Shamu”, the trainers note that SeaWorld orcas have a very specific diet of herring and smelt (“This Is Shamu”). Morton’s own experience working with orcas at Marineland of the Pacific, SeaWorld, and in the wild demonstrated that orca diets are much more varied and tied into their particular eco-types than this information indicates. Whereas transient orcas of the Pacific Northwest are known for a mammal-based diet of seals, porpoises, and other small animals, northern and southern residents are more fish-eaters. Morton noticed that on occasion the orcas she worked with would appear to refuse the food offered, and it eventually became apparent that the diet in captivity, especially for new captures, was so vastly different from their wild diets that they did not recognize the fish offered as ‘food’ (Morton 159). Therefore, herring and smelt might be the majority of what SeaWorld gives to their orcas, but it does not have a strong correlation to orcas in the wild.

In both “This Is Shamu” and “The Shamu Celebration”, the trainers further perpetuate misleading information on orca diets, by constructing a potentially tenuous, acrimonious relationship between Shamu and Cindy, a dolphin performer. “The Shamu Celebration”, for example, begins with a pre-show featuring performing dolphins. While not entirely pertinent to the themes and goals of the show, I want to quickly outline one of the acts in terms of unintentionally feeding into negative orca stereotypes. The pre-show features dolphins Cindy and
Starbuck, and when they are asked to leave the tank so they can begin the Shamu show, Starbuck ‘refuses’ to leave, leading to the following exchange:

**Trainer:** Oh, I get it, Starbuck. You want to be the star of the show.

**Starbuck:** *(Nods).*

**Trainer:** Well, you better discuss that with the big black and white guy. You want to do that?

**Starbuck:** *(Shakes head vigorously, and quickly leaves the stage)* *(“The Shamu Celebration”)*.

This places Starbuck and Shamu in opposition, natural enemies who would have disastrous encounters in the wild. It also elevates Shamu’s position as willing ‘diva’ of the show. Shamu wants to be there, wants the stage time, and will be unhappy with any Starbuck getting in her way. The humorous exchange lasts maybe a minute, but clearly demonstrates to the audience that this is Shamu's party, and Shamu intends to be the only one receiving audience adoration today. This again conflates diet information that is specific to ecotypes, as in the Pacific Northwest only transients are known to eat dolphins, and northern and southern residents have been observed to have if not friendly then simply co-existent relationships with them *(Morton 170)*.

Aside from occasional mentions of orcas being found in oceans around the world, their relatively fast swimming speeds, and the fact that fish and dolphins may comprise a portion of some orca diets, relatively little is taught about biological life of Shamu. Missing in particular is any information regarding breeding and familial relations, lifespans and orca health. The audience is also led to equate domestic orcas with wild orcas, simply by providing no accurate comparisons. The later Shamu productions go so far as to visually parallel the captive Shamu with visions of swimming wild orcas, and the act of placing these two images side-by-side may allow the audience to view Shamu as just as free.
What results is an erasure of ‘orca’ - specifically the wild orca - under a conflated, domesticated, almost mythological identity of ‘Shamu’. Shamu, as a singular identity, serves to justify other aspects of captive orca lives that would pose challenges to SeaWorld’s stories, making the information they give during the shows “often muddled and sometimes downright false” (Neiwert 23). For example, having a singular ‘Shamu’ allowed audiences to also presume that ‘orca’ is a singular species. Orcas are found in oceans all around the world, but they are actually classified under ten distinct eco-types,¹⁸⁴ each with different ranges, hunting and eating habits, vocalization and socializations. Morton calls this adaptations to diverse ecosystems, stating that “just as human hunter-gatherer societies different from one another based on their geography, climate, and food source, so have the different conditions faced by various orca populations given rise to differing orca ‘cultures’” (Morton 3-4). In some cases, genetic lines between different eco-types diverged millions of years ago, leading some experts to wonder if they should even be classified as the same species (Kirby 72).¹⁸⁵ There is generally no mixing between eco-types (6), a fact which SeaWorld does not clarify within its productions, nor does it note which specific eco-types its orcas may come from.

As well, the Shamu performances indicate little of wild orca migration patterns. This becomes more important when considering both the construction of SeaWorld orca pods. From the time SeaWorld opened in 1964 until the late 1970s, Griffin and head orca collector Don Goldsberry pioneered the capture techniques for orcas, maximizing the number caught while aiming for the those within a prime age: young enough to quickly adapt to captivity and be easily trainable, but not too young that they would be unable to live without their mothers.¹⁸⁶ The captors would watch pods from helicopters while attempting to corral them into a cove using boats and seal bombs,¹⁸⁷ in a similar vein to how elephants were captured for circuses.¹⁸⁸
During SeaWorld’s early history, they focused their captures in the Pacific Northwest, targeting coves in the Orcas and Gulf Islands (Morton 68). This meant that SeaWorld targeted a habitat in which three eco-types overlapped: the Southern Residents, Northern Residents, and Transients, bringing orcas from each group back into their facilities, and combining them into man-made pods. This was before biologists really understood the differences between eco-types. They may have even been unaware that the orcas taken into captivity were fundamentally different. Residents have large, complex and matriarchal social networks in which the oldest and largest female is the leader. They spend approximately twelve to fifteen percent of their time in playful socialization (Kirby 75), and the rest looking for food. They vocalize constantly, and “travel in deliberate, forward-moving patterns” (72). While the territories of the Northern and Southern groups overlap, the pods do not, and when they do encounter one another, it is often observed to be a respectful passage in which the groups acknowledge one another but do not engage (72). Transients on the other hand are carnivorous stalkers who are known to play with their food extensively before it dies - perhaps the origin of the killer whale name and reputation. Their travel is erratic and they form much smaller pods which do not always have a matriarch (Kirby 5-6). The performers of ‘Shamu’ during these early days of SeaWorld could come from any of these eco-types, and they were coupled together indiscriminately. Of the fifty-five orcas taken into captivity specifically from the Pacific Northwest, only two are still alive (Neiwert 24).

These practices lasted until the late 1970s, after a series of studies found that the captures were doing more to deplete orca populations than SeaWorld stood to encourage saving. Both Canadian and US governments responded by limiting captures, initially allowing aquariums to
acquire new orcas only when old ones had died through the 1972 US Marine Mammal Protection Act (Morton 67), and eventually outlawing all captures in national waters by 1975 (67). In response to this, SeaWorld moved its capture operations to Iceland, where orcas were viewed as ‘nuisances’ and competition for fish stocks (Orlean; Zimmerman). This meant adding an additional one or two eco-types to the SeaWorld pods, as Icelandic orcas in this range could either be from the Type 1 or Type 2 Eastern North Atlantic groups. When one considers all wild-caught orcas from around the world, there have been one hundred thirty-six taken in total and only thirteen still survive in captivity (Neiwert 24). When the International Whaling Commission (IWC) declared a moratorium on commercial whaling in 1986, SeaWorld had to stop all wild captures, and since that point they have been focusing on captive breeding programs to not only create an unending supply of whales, but also to draw audiences in with the allure of a baby whale\textsuperscript{194} (Morton 65; Zimmerman) - much as in the way audiences were drawn in by the prospect of seeing the infant elephant Topsy in the circus.

If all of this integral information is underrepresented or ignored in Shamu performances, then the audience learns relatively little of substance, about either the wild or domestic orca. What the performances do achieve though is a softening of the ferocious ‘killer whale’ image, and perhaps an added sense of empathy towards the orca in the wild.

8.4 Education By versus Education About Animals

When we speak of being educated ‘by’ animals, we immediately mean that the animal has elected to provide this education. By packaging the education as if it is coming direct from the orca, it narratively places the orca in a position of experience and authority. This trend can clearly be seen amongst Shamu performances, in the reiteration of the symbiotic relationship
between orcas and trainers — the idea of ‘they do something for us and we do something for them’.

However, in a captive environment where the orca is clearly not in control and not overtly voicing a desire to be there, the education is actually being provided by SeaWorld, via its trainers. What appears to be education provided by the orcas is actually education about orcas that is made to fit within a very particular narrative in which SeaWorld is in control of the information and how it is presented. We can see this very clearly through their orca training processes.

What separated Griffin from early aquarists such as Barnum, or even his contemporaries at Marineland of the Pacific and the Vancouver Aquarium, was his success in training the orcas to become performers, and to assume the rule of Shamu. It was those iconic leaps and splashes that really turned Shamu into a celebrity, “made all the more marvellous by its reputation as a ruthless assassin” (Orlean). SeaWorld explains their training process as somewhat of a ‘school’ for orcas (Hoare 27), which they “repackage […] as beneficial improvement on nature” (Kalof 157), or sagacity. Their training philosophy, and the manner in which they create shows, centres on three basic tenets:

1. Trainers create an environment that is fun, interesting and stimulating for the animals.
2. Trainers reinforce desirable behaviour with a variety of rewards and do not draw attention to the undesirable behaviours.
3. Trainers build strong and rewarding relationships with the animals based on a history of positive and stimulating interaction (Kirby 108).

Their ultimate goal, and what they report to their audiences, is that this training is beneficial to trainers, orcas and audiences alike, and that if the orcas did not want to perform they would not be forced to (“Backstage of Believe”).
The training process begins when the orca is still quite young, under 1,000 pounds, and the trainer is able to position themselves as the ‘matriarch’ or head of the pod (Zimmerman), ensuring that the orca will look to them for guidance and will follow their commands. When SeaWorld began to train orcas as performers, they looked for ways to communicate across species boundaries, and used B. F. Skinner’s theories on behaviourism and operant conditioning as a base, wherein ‘tricks’ are created and modified by associating “desired behaviours with a ‘reinforcer’” (Kirby 41). They begin with teaching the orca target recognition (228) - often, a large white stick with a big red ball on the end. In the beginning, the orcas are taught to follow easily achievable targets - such as swimming from one side of the pool to the next, or touching their rostrum to the ball on the end of the stick. When they correctly perform this movement the orca is rewarded, or ‘reinforced’, thereby pairing ‘behaviour’ with ‘reward' and ensuring that the orca understands what is being asked of them. Reinforcements come in the form of fish, toys, tactile contact with the trainer such as back or tongue rubs, ice cubes, being sprayed down with a hose, or another type of stimulus that the trainers have observed the orcas enjoying (Zimmerman). Likewise, there is a reinforcement in place if a behaviour is not performed correctly. Called a “least reinforcing scenario” or an LRS, it is a neutral reaction with no reward for three seconds (Kirby 110). In this, SeaWorld has learned from animal training practices of the past, including circuses, and realized that animals become better performers if sessions are ‘positive’, rather than if they fear their trainers (135). The LRS is intended to elicit calm and give the orca an opportunity to try to reach the target once again (110).

Eventually, each of these small targets are then linked to other targets along a series that, when every element is connected, creates a behaviour such as splashing the audience, leaping up
from the bottom of the pool, sliding up on the observation deck, and so on. With circus elephants, trainers called this process ‘bridging’. In SeaWorld, it is fundamentally the same process, and is referred to as ‘tactile bridging’ (Kirby 67). Eventually, once an entire behaviour has been correctly performed, the trainer will transition the orca to responding not to the target, but to specific hand signals (109). In the end, this is what is observed by the audience - the trainer motioning with their hand, the orca recognizing which signal they are being given and correctly conducting the behaviour, and a reinforcement awarded at the end of the entire act.

A longer version of this process was used when introducing the orca to ‘waterworks’ - acts in which trainers entered the water with the orcas to perform acts side-by-side. Hargrove says that before any orca begins waterworks, both they and the trainer are intimately familiar with one another, having worked together for several years (Hargrove 46). When the trainer and orca begin the waterworks process, the first step is desensitizing the orca to the appearance of a trainer in the water, focusing the orca’s attention on another trainer giving targets from the stage. Eventually, once they are accustomed to a trainer in the water, control shifts to that trainer, with targets given to the orcas through physical contact, such as pressure from a foot on the orca’s rostrum. Hargrove describes this process:

You steer the whale by shifting the weight and the direction of your body. You use your feet to indicate the speed you want to go. Two feet firmly on the whale is a signal to swim at normal speed. If you drop one foot and gently tap with pressure three times, the whale knows it is time to swim fast. It’s like power-steering — except that the car is a killer whale and the steering wheel is your body (Hargrove 46).

All of Shamu’s most famous waterworks, such as the stand-on, hydro hop, and rocket hop, have been created through this process.
Each Shamu show does, at least in part, touch on how the orcas are taught, through demonstrating how the trainers give a signal which corresponds to a particular behaviour. Some of the productions even have audience volunteers demonstrate the process for their peers, intending to show that anyone can form a closer relationship with orcas, if they know the right procedures and ‘develop the knowledge and skills’. However, the information is quickly processed in service of introducing one of their more spectacle-based acts, such as The Ballet of the Whales. As well, Kirby’s research found that often orcas are not fed until they learn to comply with basic commands, solidifying the relationship between food and correctly performed behaviours (Kirby 107). For Shamu performers then, performance is a prerequisite to eating, and if they elect not to perform - as a performer in a truly equal relationship could - then the trainers could elect not to feed them. Hargrove also noted the centrality of food to the trainer-orca relationship (Hargrove 54), and while assuring that no trainer he ever worked with would withhold food from ‘Shamu’, there was no way to adequately communicate that to the orcas, thereby making the successful completion of performative behaviours a potential matter of life and death for ‘Shamu’ (54).

While it would be difficult to indicate this tenuous relationship in an entertaining setting for SeaWorld audiences, the information imparted in this section is also incomplete and misleading.

Training goes beyond the iconic tricks, and the same target recognition and tactile bridging methods are applied to all aspects of trainer-orca relations within SeaWorld, covering everything from how the orcas relate to the public, to their basic medical care. SeaWorld employs the acronym HELPRS to organize how trainers and orcas spend time together (“Backstage of Believe”; Hargrove 79; Kirby 228). The elements are: husbandry; exercise;
learning; playtime; relationships; and shows (“Backstage of Believe”; Hargrove 79; Kirby 228). Of all elements SeaWorld stresses to its trainers and audiences that “relationship is number one” (“Backstage of Believe”), because if there is not a mutual trust and ‘friendship’ between trainers and orcas, these shows could not be created, and this would ultimately negatively impact their conservation efforts (“Backstage of Believe”). They also emphasize that all shows “are in essence training sessions because all of the behaviours the animals perform are actually all our training sessions encompassed in one” (“Backstage of Believe”). This makes HELPRS a very useful tool for not only understanding how orcas are trained to become ‘Shamu’, but also for evaluating the performances that result from these sessions.

SeaWorld defines the performances as an extension of their training sessions (“Animal Training Philosophy”), and each of the training sessions are built on the foundations outlined in HELPRS. If this is so, I would expect to see each category of the ‘HELPRS’ training areas well-represented throughout the Shamu shows. Each category can be read not only in terms of how the orcas are trained to perform particular behaviours, but also in terms of what they can teach the trainers and audience about themselves. For ease of evaluation, here are the general categories of the training exercise, and what one would expect could be learned about the animal from each:
Table 3.8.4. HELPRS and Associated Educational Criteria

<table>
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<th>Category</th>
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| Husbandry         | - Feeding
|                   | - Medical care
|                   | - Breeding and familial relations
|                   | - Raising young
|                   | - Lifespans
|                   | - Health care
|                   | - Natural lives
|                   | - Orca ecotypes                                                        |
| Exercise          | - Physical fitness
|                   | - Acrobatic fitness
|                   | - “High-energy behaviours” (“Animal Training Philosophy”)
|                   | - Migratory patterns in the wild                                         |
| Learning          | - Training process
|                   | - Tricks
|                   | - Orca intelligence
|                   | - How parents teach their young everything from migratory routes to hunting |
|                   | - Natural behaviours                                                    |
| Playtime          | - How do orcas ‘play’?
|                   | - Do orcas play in the wild?                                            |
|                   | - Natural recreation habits?                                             |
| Relationships     | - Human-animal relationships
|                   |   - Trainer-orca
|                   |   - SeaWorld-orca
|                   |   - Audience-orca
|                   | - The complex social patterns of orca families
|                   | - Orca culture
|                   | - Perspectives of orcas worldwide and orca-human relations
|                   | - Empathy for the non-human animal                                      |
| Shows             | - Creation of a high-energy spectacle
|                   | - Role of Shamu shows in inspiring audiences
|                   | - Conservation and pro-environmental human behaviours inspired by Shamu |
|                   | - Challenges faced by orcas in the wild, what Shamu is doing about that, and what the audience can do about that |
|                   | - What the shows do for the various orca Shamu performers               |
As we can see from the Shamu productions outlined earlier, relatively little of this information is imparted to the audience beyond the spectacle, and what is provided only serves to support SeaWorld’s continued existence. As such, the performances can also be read in terms of how they provide education about animal trainers. Throughout the Shamu shows, trainers speak about their ever-growing knowledge and understanding of orca life, and suggest that their acrobatic feats are strong evidence that they too have learned from the orca. As Hargrove outlined, there is just as much ‘training of the trainers’ that goes on behind the scenes as there is orca training (Hargrove 46). In Hargrove’s first chapters, he outlines the various steps he had to go through in order to be considered a qualified orca trainer at SeaWorld: from obtaining a degree in biology or psychology, to apprenticing at other less challenging exhibits, such as Sea Lion Stadium or Dolphin Stadium. The Shamu Stadium training begins with basic husbandry work: preparing food for the orcas, including vitamin supplements for their diets (46). At first, there is no contact with the orca at all: “a senior trainer had to be nearby whenever the apprentices were close to the edge of the pool [as] whales can easily come out past the pool’s perimeter and grab you” (46). From there, the focus is on building relationships, noting that if one is to get into the water with an orca, mutual trust must be constructed (46). In many ways, just as in the circus, training comes down to constructing power dynamics between human and animal performers, in which the former is always in command of the latter as the trainers develop the ‘knowledge and skills’ to successfully control the animal performer.

However, this assertion of ‘developing the knowledge and skills’ speaks to what David Orr calls a ‘myth of contemporary education’. Orr looks to contemporary education systems as ‘silos of education’ in which disciplines have become so fragmented there is little communication between them, so what one learns in a biology class about an orca, for example,
might bear little relation to what one would learn in a social science class. In the case of Shamu, one might learn particular approaches to entertaining and educating - such as the undeniable effectiveness of providing tangible learning opportunities - but have no knowledge of how these performances will impact the orca. Orr suggests that we have come to believe that “with enough knowledge and technology, we can manage planet earth” (Orr 2), which in this sense encompasses gaining enough experience with orcas that SeaWorld thinks captive populations can be effectively managed. Griffin supports this idea, saying:

I believe that a man’s job and man’s duty or woman’s, if you will, is to learn everything there is to know to gain all knowledge possible and a part […] of that process includes animals and investigating animals for their uniqueness and the characteristics they might have. Sometimes, this can be done in captivity […] to have access to animals they might otherwise not get access to. […] We’re learning more, we’re getting to know more about them and us. So does that mean we should be tough on whales and make them perform five times a day? Does that means we should release all whales in captivity? It doesn’t mean any of those things. It means a balance, an orderly pursuit of whales and having them in captivity or keeping any animals in captivity […] doing the best job we can or with the best environment (Frontline).

We can see the ‘gaps’ in knowledge that Orr indicates when looking at the immediate toll that captivity and performance takes on the orcas who portray Shamu. A clear indicator of captivity is the male orca’s collapsed dorsal fin. SeaWorld asserts that this is a natural occurrence, quoting a study by Dr. Ingrid Visser which stated that dorsal collapse occurs in 23% of wild whales. However, Vissar has repeatedly asked SeaWorld to stop using the study because it over-generalizes her findings to the point of being incorrect. Vissar’s study focused on general deformities in dorsal fins, including crooked or collapsed ones, and in her records has noted only one instance of naturally occurring dorsal collapse, making the actual statistic only 0.1% (Hargrove 232). In captive environments, dorsal collapse occurs 100% of the time (Hargrove
Naomi Rose, a marine mammal scientist, suggests this occurs due to stress, dietary restrictions, restricted physical activity, and most likely, gravity acting against prolonged time at the surface (Kirby 325-326). It seems as if the largest correlation between the trainer’s increasing knowledge of orcas, and the reality of orcas, is that the closer the trainers get the less they actually appear to know.

Orr cautions that when knowledge is gained, what we do not yet know likewise increases exponentially, and if one takes into account the potential for biological and behavioural change in living animals, and factors in our inability to effectively and reliably communicate with non-human life - especially those to whom we do not credit linguistic abilities - then Orr would suggest no amount of knowledge and learning will ever be enough. As such, what the audience learns is incomplete - in some ways, unavoidably.

8.5 Tangible versus Intangible Education

We can look at the various ways in which Shamu provides tangible educational opportunities for the audience — both those the audience can participate in themselves, and those they can live vicariously through the orca trainers. May suggests that the success of environmental theatre productions be determined by analyzing how non-human bodies are used, and what is the overall ecological impact of these performances (May 105). Shamu’s body is the obvious tangible factor within the shows. SeaWorld presumes, as environmental interpretation theories have shown, that tangible encounters with the non-human animal have a positive correlation to pro-environmental behaviours, and through the history of Shamu audiences have been offered every opportunity for physical contact with the orcas - petting and being splashed by Shamu. Through these actions, the audience is physically incorporated into Shamu's aquatic
world, so that they can “maybe, just maybe, even love [an orca]” (“The Shamu Celebration”). This is the most effective explanation of SeaWorld’s goals in Shamu shows so far, positioning the institution as a catalyst for strengthening positive human-animal relationships, dismantling problematic stigmas, and giving the audience tangible opportunities to understand more about orca life.

This theme can be seen most effectively in *The Shamu Celebration*, which focuses primarily on the growing tangible relationship between orca and trainer. The show reads as a ‘proof of concept’ for SeaWorld’s endeavours, as it explains of the human history of orcas, specifically mentions of over-hunting and sport hunting, which SeaWorld suggests it has helped to end. This is the show with the most content, which is striking because they include no information on Shamu or orcas.

We can also look at the tangible - though not tactile - benefits of orca vocalizations on the audience. Being able to hear an orca ‘speak’ can be a valuable opportunity for the audience to learn how aquatic animals communicate. Morton notes that orcas experience the world primarily through sound, through echolocation and vocalization, so hearing an orca also allows the audience to get a sense of what the orca’s experience of the world might be like. However, in the shows that talk about orca communication, the trainers are very careful to note that there is a sharp distinction between ‘vocalizations’ and ‘language’, and that vocalization “is not the same thing as language” (Killer Whales InfoBook). We can view this in light of power dynamics inherent in language. As mentioned in previous chapters, the animal is considered to be outside of semiotics as they are unable to linguistically express their own meanings as a “pronoun [which has] no context or meaning” (Sarbin 337). Those unable to claim ‘I’ are outside of this power, or “pure presence” (337). If SeaWorld claims that orca vocalizations are evidence of
linguistic communication, even in a form we do not yet understand, then they would be undermining their own position of power. Instead, orcas ‘vocalize’, which SeaWorld can easily equate to simply giving or responding to stimuli while navigating or hunting (Killer Whales InfoBook). Essentially, SeaWorld both promotes tangible education through hearing orca voices, and denies the possibility of any real understanding or connection at the exact same time.

This is not only inaccurate but also potentially damaging to both wild and captive orcas. John Ford, who studies orca communication in the wild, discovered pod-specific dialects in vocalizations. This means that southern and northern resident groups each have a distinct series of vocalizations, none of which are shared between ecotypes (Leiren-Young, *The First Orca*; Morton 68; Zimmerman). Their vocalizations have even less in common with the transients of the Pacific Northwest, and nothing at all in common with the North Atlantic Types 1 or 2 from the Icelandic coast. As SeaWorld’s orca pods come from different ecotypes, they have no vocalizations in common with each other. If, as SeaWorld insists, these vocalizations are not language but responses to stimuli, then an argument could be made that one sound is like any other. It simply indicates the orca is responding to something. And if this something is a trainer’s command and the command is successfully performed, then it could be even more evident that the orcas understand. If, on the other hand, these vocalization were to be considered evidence of language, with pod-specific dialects taken into account, then it positions the orcas as lacking the ability to be understood by even their own species in this captive environment.

Perhaps even more telling are Morton’s studies on captive orca communication (Morton 2). She notes that “with their exquisite sensitivity to sound, all [the captive orcas] could hear was the constant draining and recycling of their water” (Morton 95). Warkentin also remarked that orca tanks are made of concrete, which reflects sound, so when considering SeaWorld’s claims to
coming to a fuller understanding of orca communication, the pertinent information missing is that these Shamu performers have no shared language amongst them, and are kept in tanks that consistently intensely reflect their own vocalizations back to them. If, as Morton’s research shows, the orcas experience the world as sound, then any SeaWorld assertion that orcas do not have or communicate through language serves to normalize a captive environment that could quite literally drive them insane with the constant reflections of their own voices.205

Having a tactile and tangible relationship with orcas in the water is what most trainers said was their favourite aspect of working at SeaWorld. When a trainer is in the water with an orca, that is where “they really know you” (“The Shamu Celebration”). I find this line particularly interesting as it suggests that the tank is a liminal space in which trainers and orcas can really come to understand one another. The Shamu shows hint towards a sense of self that is geographical or specific to an ecosystem, in which one can only truly come to know someone if they get to know them within their natural ecosystem, which for orcas they equate with seawater.206 While they suggest is it not possible for SeaWorld to bring the whole audience out to the ocean, this tank is like an enclave of ocean life, where orcas can live peacefully without any natural predators, focusing all of its energy on meeting people and teaching them about the ocean. Likewise, the tank on land ‘allows’ orcas the opportunity to learn about the human world and come to ‘know’ people. With acts like ‘The Ballet of the Whales’ still within SeaWorld’s recent history, this show celebrates Shamu’s opportunity to increase their sagacity, become cultured, and seemingly have a great time doing it.

However, we can also see this theme evolve along a dangerous line, revealing that tangible relationships between orcas and trainers do not always end positively for both parties. We can see this clearly through the show Believe, which was the last show to feature waterworks
performances before they were permanently banned, and irreparably disrupted any ‘belief’ in SeaWorld’s orca training expertise. Kirby’s *Death at SeaWorld* and the documentary *Blackfish* have gone over the events in great detail, but to summarize, the orca Tilikum, one of the Shamu performers, killed trainer Dawn Brancheau after a lunch-hour “Dine With Shamu” educational program.\(^{207}\) Brancheau was on a raised platform, providing Tilikum with tactile reinforcement — patting him, engaging in the relationship-building segment of their HELPRS training mandate. Tilikum grabbed Brancheau by the arm and dragged her under the water until she died. Brancheau was the third person Tilikum had killed, and at this point only the most qualified - most knowledgeable - trainers were permitted to get into the water with him. Brancheau had worked extensively with Tilikum for a number of years and Tilikum was familiar with her. They had that ‘special, tangible friendship’ that SeaWorld had been extolling throughout Shamu show history.\(^{208}\)

Much like the ‘problem elephants’ that circuses had to find ways of dealing with, the incident with Tilikum pushed SeaWorld’s treatment of orcas into the spotlight. There were a number of eyewitnesses to Brancheau’s death (Kirby 638-639; Melich; Surovik). Hargrove notes throughout his book that trainers had been injured during performances before, and even felt that orca behaviour could become aggressive if not handled properly, but this was the first time it had undeniably happened in plain view, and in such a violent manner.\(^{209}\)

What the audience was poised to learn from *Believe*, and what they encountered in Brancheau’s death, was the dissolution of the Shamou mythology. The idea of the animal educator here to teach audiences through tangible encounters with the mysterious aquatic world served to teach a much more intangible lesson about the consequences of captivity. It also actively challenged — and in many ways, unravelled - SeaWorld’s support of tangible education.
Learning about orcas could not be interactive and fun, with a murderous Shamu. With other facts about this particular ‘Shamus’ life coming to light in the wake of investigations, it becomes clear that Tilikum’s behaviour was not simply aberrant, but almost curated through the conditions of his captivity. Tilikum was born in the wild off the coast of Iceland, either a North Atlantic Type 1 or Type 2 Resident. The other whales in the Orlando pod were either wild-born residents, or had been born in captivity, making Tilikum the only Icelandic whale in the pod and therefore the only ‘speaker’ of his dialect (Kirby 49). As mentioned before, orca pods are matrilineal, lead by the largest and oldest female, and trainers noted that Tilikum was often raked to assert domination (Kirby 324). Paul Spong, director of OrcaLab in British Columbia and former captive orca trainer noted that whales in these conditions are exposed to “an extreme level of sensory deprivation” and isolation (Zimmerman), and if these conditions were to be imposed on a person, it would not be surprising to see that person become, at the very least, highly stressed (Zimmerman). However, because of SeaWorld positioning itself as the lead expert in orca behaviour, disavowing the existence of orca language and therefore power to assert - or possess - its own agency - its audiences and attendees were given no clear indications of the stresses to which Shamu was exposed. As far as anyone could gleam from the Shamu shows specifically, the narratives strongly reiterated that Shamu wanted to be here, and was glad to be teaching audiences about the ocean. What was learned about Tilikum, and any Shamu before this moment, was a belief in an anthropocentric orca reality which did not exist. This time, the impact on at least one orca performer became clear, and it did not reflect positively on SeaWorld.

What happens though when the tangible, tactile element is taken from Shamu productions? We can see how the SeaWorld’s assertion of the benefits of tangible education swiftly falls apart when trainers are not allowed into the water. The latest production, One
Ocean, has the least amount of substance in terms of science, education, or trainer-orca relationships. Other than projected images of orcas in the wild, there is no specific information relating to Shamu whatsoever. The production does lean heavily into conservation themes and the role everyone has to play in protecting ocean life, but aside from pitting SeaWorld as the place conservation naturally occurs, there is no information on what SeaWorld is actually doing to protect orcas in the wild. One Ocean is a feel-good, family-friendly performance in which no trainer stands to get hurt, no potentially damaging or questionable information is given out, and the audience still gets to see an orca up close. For a corporation in an identity crisis like SeaWorld, it is the safest alternative, but it teaches the audience nothing of note.

Finally, we can look at the tangible element in terms of its ability to assist in creating ‘good representations’ of the non-human animal within performance. Kuhl says that any ‘good’ representation of animal stories will give a voice to the animal in a manner that encourages empathy from its audience (Kuhl 118), and in this instance, studies show that SeaWorld is succeeding at its goals primarily through providing tangible educational opportunities. A 2014 study conducted the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, of which SeaWorld is a member, concluded that zoos and aquariums are “powerful catalysts for developing a conservation ethic and awareness of supporting behaviours among our huge and global growing audience” (A Global Evaluation of Biodiversity Literacy 3). This study surveyed 6,357 visitors to thirty WAZA institutes to discover, among other things, if there as a positive correlation between seeing animals and increased education and pro-conservation beliefs. They found an increase in respondents who could identify a “pro-biodiversity action that could be achieved on an individual level” (5) but at the same time mentioned in the conclusion that “biodiversity
understanding was still somewhat limited after the zoo or aquarium visit” (5), and suggested actions that institutions could take to improve and increase their educational content.213

The Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA) also found in two studies conducted in 2004 and 2011 that 93% of respondents agreed marine parks help people to learn to care about animals (AAMPA), and 88% found the experience much more effective than traditional classroom learning because the tangible encounters with animals fuelled their curiosity and empathy (AMMPA). They conclude that there is “consistent and overwhelming public support for marine mammal facilities and their role in conservation education” (AMMPA).214 Diane Sweeny also conducted a series of studies to discover if facilities offering hands-on experience with aquatic animals, dolphins specifically, would see a greater return in visitor education, empathy and environmental behaviours. She questioned what visitors would learn about aquatic animal physiology, natural history, care and training, and conservation (Sweeny xiv). She found that respondents felt the tangible experiences had a greater impact on them than traditional zoos, and they were able to recall memories of the event eight to eighteen months after the visit (xiv). She defines this as “change through participation” (17), as participant environmental identities could be shifted and reformed while incorporating increased knowledge, awareness of other environmental perspectives and attitudes, and a greater confidence with non-human life (17-18). So, in terms of encouraging empathy, as Sweeny concludes, “the value of personal experience is a cornerstone of environmental education” (32), and when aquariums incorporate this into a performance event, the audience clearly benefits.215

What can we conclude about the inclusion of tangible education, other than that it clearly does have a strongly entertaining impact on the audience, and there is potential for a profoundly negative impact on the orcas and trainers? Tangible education as it is presented by SeaWorld still
does not ensure that the audience will leave the performance having actually learned anything about orca lives. When considering the impact of any educational performance with conservation aims, May suggests that we have to consider if the play “propagates or subverts the master narratives that sanction human exploitation of the land” (May 105). The Shamu shows are all reiterations of this ‘master narrative’, justifying and mythologizing the necessity for captive-held performing orcas. ‘Shamu’ presumes a right to tangible, educational experiences that extends beyond an animal’s right to its own existence. The audience’s emotional experience is paramount to Shamu. If the audience leaves the show feeling that they too are part of ‘one ocean’, then the show is successful.

8.6 Visiting Animals versus the Animal As Visitor

Just like the distinction between education by and about animals, this theme strongly suggests that the orcas have agency within SeaWorld performances, when they are depicted as visitors. All of the Shamu shows pitch the orcas as friends here to share their information, and that suggests a finiteness to their stay, as well as a potential to leave once the information is imparted. It is not to say that is what is intended by SeaWorld at all, but simply that this softened language adeptly sidesteps the finality of Shamu’s captivity, through which the audience may be almost put at ease.

But, how can the orca really come to ‘visit’ an audience on land, when its life and livelihood cannot be sustained on land? SeaWorld fashions itself as liminal space in which the orca can visit us instead, noting that it is often inconvenient and impossible for audiences to transport themselves to the ocean. As SeaWorld inducts its audience into a conservation role though tangible experiences such as teaching, touching or simply witnessing up-close-and-
personal evidence of orca sagacity, it also reiterates its indispensability to wildlife education. It blurs the boundaries between ‘person’ and ‘place’ (May 105), but in a way that presumes a constant right to wildlife access, in much the same vein as the curiosity cabinet panopticon design afforded its audiences the right to perpetual views of animals in their cages. The Shamu shows do strive to impart an interconnectivity and connection to place that inspires empathy for the non-human world, but it does so in such a way that it erases the non-human’s access to place. It suggests on one hand that we can best know and communicate with the orcas in their own environment (“The Shamu Celebration”), but on the other hand distills everything about the orca’s natural ecosystem into one attribute: water. If the only thing Shamu requires to be wholly itself in terms of a connection to place is water, then SeaWorld can put water anywhere. It severs the connection between Shamu and the actual ‘place’ of an ocean ecosystem, and erodes the audience’s ability to view the ocean as more than a big pool. On this level, the Shamu shows inspire the audience to think of nature as malleable and moveable. Just like curiosity cabinets or early zoos, we can create animal enclosures that offer the illusion of nature through backdrops and strategically placed props, little pockets of nature within human environments, and support the existence of these spaces through narratives that suggest this is enough for the animals. This is the ‘liminal space’ of Shamu’s tanks. In this sense, Shamu also blurs anthropocentric boundaries between personal and place, suggesting that we have a right to bring ‘nature’ wherever we want it to be.

We can also analyze this in light of where the orcas are said to be coming ‘from’. As noted earlier, there are many distinct eco-types of orcas, some with specific roots in human cultures. In The Legend of Shamu, SeaWorld attempted to trace some of these cultural roots, allowing the audience to see Shamu as “tribesmen” of the Pacific Northwest once did (“The
Legend of Shamu”). This iteration of Shamu may include the most misinformation in any Shamu show to date, in terms of both the orca, human history, and the creation of Shamu as visitor.

Narrated in Jones’ iconic imposing voice, proclaiming “he is a killer” (“The Legend of Shamu”), the orca is immediately cast as villain, akin to a deadly shark, legendary in its destructive capabilities - but only in the ocean. This introduction is also the first specific gendering of orcas as male, and it feeds into a depiction of Shamu as the anthesis of this wild ferocity. In earlier shows, ‘Shamu’ is generally referred to as ‘she’, but by immediately identifying the ‘killer whales’ as ‘he’ from the outset, it connects to very specific ideas of masculinity and violence - underlying the same desire to create images of ferocity that led early circuses to give female elephants male-sounding names. This gendering serves to separate the nameless wild orca, from docile, female ‘Shamu’. The former is wild and untameable, liable to tear apart anything that enters its path. The latter is about to dance for its audience. One, the audience learns to fear. The other they want to hug.

Most of the show is underscored by dark, fast-paced, and suspenseful music as the trainer jumps back into the water with Shamu and performs a series of acrobatic acts. In the Orlando Sentinel’s review of the show, the author notes The Legend of Shamu was the first act in which there were trainers in the water after a self-imposed hiatus to reevaluate orca behavioural problems. This was a decision reached after a trainer was squished between two orcas during a routine performance, and was severely injured (“Shamu’s Got A New Show”). The suspenseful music might have played on audience awareness of this incident, using the inherent danger to keep them on the edge of their seats. It might have also factored into the decision to portray orcas as ‘killers’ from the outset, with the underlying aim being to juxtapose these incidents and beliefs, with the docility displayed during the show. The primary educational goal behind the
piece was to encourage its audiences to learn to love the orcas as the ‘tribesmen’ that Jones’
spoke of earlier did, knowing that there is nothing to be afraid of if you treat the orcas with
respect. It may also have been an attempt for SeaWorld to sidestep any criticism of sending its
trainers back into the water after a nearly deadly incident.

However, the bulk of critique on this show is that it not only gives relatively little
information on orcas’ lives beyond an assumption of their might, power and reputations, but it
also both appropriates and erases Tlingit and Haida histories within this performance. The
Orlando Sentinel review notes that Jones’ deep voice ‘imposes’ “over sparse Indian drums and an
ornate pop score” (Shamu’s Got A New Show”), and I think this description is most apt. The
Legend of Shamu imposes SeaWorld over Tlingit and Haida, erasing those voices. According to
the review, SeaWorld sent a team of researchers and entertainment department representatives to
Alaska and the Pacific Northwest, to research Indigenous orca stories. What they present has
little connection to Tlingit or Haida cultural views on orcas. They do mention the story of Nat-se-
la-ne (“The Legend of Shamu”; “Shamu’s Got A New Show”)217, which is about solidifying a
relationship of respect and reciprocity between humans and orcas (Marks 113) through the
friendship that develops between a young man and an orca. However, stories of ‘tribesmen’
fearing viscous killer whales seem to be unfounded within my research. Another review though
takes a wholly different approach, likening the show to a “Broadway” production (J. Morris)
which is “fun, with live animals, [and] not a fantasy world” (J. Morris). The second review takes
the perspective that The Legend of Shamu teaches its audience how to ‘revere’ the orcas, just as
the Tlingit did, by showing “how playful and intelligent these creatures are” (J. Morris).

The story of Naatsilanéi is specifically Tlingit, not Haida, and The Legend of Shamu
conflates these distinct cultures, taking the narrative from one and the totemic imagery from the
And unlike the show claims, ‘blackfish’ is not the Tlingit and Haida word for orca, but simply a name by which orcas were known in the Pacific Northwest region, potentially originating from the orcas past abundance in the Blackfish Sound northeast of Vancouver Island, where “commercial salmon fisherman said the ocas were so thick at times, you could walk across their backs” (Morton 65). “Blackfish” is not particularly associated with any culture.

Both Tlingit and Haida associated orcas with a sense of guardianship or kinship, with Tlingit stories telling of orcas “protecting them from danger and providing gifts of strength, health and food” (Norman 7), and the Haida calling themselves “Sgaana Xaaydagaay”, translating to “killer whale people” (7). Finally, when Jones mentions that the ‘tribesmen’ view blackfish as reincarnations of their ancestors, that belief actually stems from the Nuu-chah-nulth (Kirby 14; Leiren-Young, *The Sea Beast*), who traditionally live on the west coast of Vancouver Island, and not in Alaska or the Pacific Northwest at all. Nowhere in here is the inherent fear of these “killers” who can devour “anything that lives in the ocean” (The Legend of Shamu), but the sensationalism serves SeaWorld’s ends because it positions them as researchers and experts who have been able to reach out ‘beyond’ this mythology and help to unravel the orca’s ferocious imagery. It appropriates, erases, and trivializes any Indigenous perspectives included in the show, creating Shamu as a visitor from various cultures that SeaWorld clearly does not understand, and what it teaches the audience is potentially harmful misinformation.

Overall, Hargrove says SeaWorld “turned orcas into the pandas of the sea: commercial and cuddly, with little […] of the complexities of killer whales and the effects of confinement on them” (Hargrove 12). In this, ‘education’ and ‘emotional connection’ at odds with one another. We are allowed to feel good about seeing Shamu, because it supports the narrative that Shamu should be performing for us and should be visiting us at SeaWorld. We are not allowed to see
information that directly challenges or subverts this narrative, even if that means the educational content included in Shamu is necessarily misleading or outright false.

8.7 The Ethics of Spectatorship

Finally, we can analyze the performances based on the ethics surrounding spectatorship. Simply because we want to learn about animals does that automatically insinuate that we have the right, and moreover that we have the right to learn at the expense of the animal performers? To consider this, we need to first speak about SeaWorld’s approach to dramaturgically curating the roles inherent in Shamu productions. We can see three main roles at work here: Shamu; the trainer; and the audience member. As mentioned earlier, the role of Shamu is clearly created as an educator and visitor. The trainer is depicted as this interspecies communicator, a conduit between the orca and the audience who facilitates the exchange of information. In later productions, like *Believe* and *One Ocean*, this connection is even strengthened by costuming the trainer in a black-and-white patterned wetsuit that looks curiously similar to orca colouring. The trainer has the ability to go between both worlds - to get in the water and perform with the orca, and also return to land and translate their experiences for the eager audience.

Perhaps more interesting is how SeaWorld curates the role of the audience. Those attending a Shamu production are clearly interested in being both entertained and educated, and likely have an interest in supporting conservation projects. All of the information in the show, acts performed by Shamu and the trainer, and the marketing materials are directed towards the audience experience, the “why should I care” (Bacher 5). When audience attendance dropped drastically after the events with Tilikum and *Believe*, that was the only factor that could convince SeaWorld to alter the foundations of its Shamu performances. When that still was not enough to
quell audience concerns about their captive conditions, SeaWorld made the revised decision to phase out Shamu altogether, transitioning to exhibitions of more natural orca behaviours. The audience is at the heart of the entire performance, the only essential character.

May asks creators of ecological theatre to ask themselves how the work engages or reflects environmental issues, “informs our idea of an ecological community” and represents human roles in nature (May 105), to the spectators in particular. Shamu productions do continuously state that people have a profound role to play in ocean conservation, and if we do not mitigate our impacts on aquatic life, we too will be impacted. This goal is most clearly stated in the most recent show, *One Ocean*. However, the Shamu productions overall have a tendency to overrepresent and mischaracterize the human role in nature, making Shamu only tertiary to the show, after the audience and the trainer. Only one of the shows - *The Shamu Celebration* - dealt seriously with the human element of orca conservation, noting that the orcas were once hunted for sport, and looking at the evolution of orca training in captivity, but it too failed to account for the full story, instead relying on sensationalism and mythologizing SeaWorld’s role in orca history. What is taught in these productions is a wholly anthropocentric history of orca life, which continually disavows or denies orca interiority in order to justify the means of its existence. Morton noted SeaWorld’s success with teaching audiences that orcas are not to be feared or hunted out of fear, but through their efforts “public opinion has swung to the opposite extreme” which can only teach audiences that orcas are “obedient” performers (Morton 55).

In this sense, it is important to also look at what occurs as a result of continued audience attendance. What do Shamu spectators enable, even unconsciously, simply by continuing to frequent SeaWorld productions?
Rose remarks on the psychological impacts of captivity on these Shamu performers. In six out of seventeen aquatic parks that SeaWorld owns worldwide in which there is a Shamu program, the performing orca is kept in isolation (Hargrove 369; Kirby 180). For the rest, the orcas were either taken from the wild at a very young age, or they are captive born, meaning that none of them have been properly socialized as orcas. During her observation and studies on wild orcas, she came to the conclusion that captive orcas behave more like “feral children” (Hargrove 111), through raking each other, incessant bullying of male orcas, attacks on trainers, or attacks on other orcas. In fact, it has since been found that “15 percent of all orcas at SeaWorld have been involved in ‘acts of serious aggression’ against trainers” (Kaplan).

Rose made two striking connections from this observation: the first to a study on the impacts of extreme isolation on socialization; and the second to a study on elephant survivors of herd culls (Hargrove 325). The study on isolation to which Rose referred was Harry Harlow and Stephen Suomi’s iconic - and ethically questionable - attempts observe how children progress without parental socialization and to explore the boundaries of mental health, by taking infant rhesus monkeys from their mothers shortly after birth and raising them without contact in a plain cage (Harlow 276; Kirby 180). The researchers had the cages equipped with ‘surrogate mothers’ – a “welded wire cylindrical form with the nipple of the feeding bottle protruding from its 'breast', and with a wooded head surmounting it” (Harlow 277). These cloth mothers were designed to inflict terrifying experiences on the young monkeys, including directing high-pressure compressed air at the monkey, rocking violently, and having sharp spikes jut out from the mother monkey's wire frame (A Language Older Than Words 38). They found that the infants would cling to the wire mother tighter during these events, as they would cling to a real mother for protection (38). Harlow and Suomi concluded that “the infants... derived a strong sense of
security from the presence of their cloth mothers” (Harlow 277). They developed attachments to this artificial environment.

When removed from isolation, Harlow and Suomi wanted to see how the rhesus monkeys would fare in a social setting. They found that the monkeys raised in isolation were “depressed, made permanently psychopathological” (A Language Older Than Words 38), through removal from the social settings in which they were intended to evolve. They refused to engage with others, and often ignored or inadvertently killed their own young (38). Rose was observing similar behaviours in captive orcas. Socialization is considered integral to human development, and orcas are similar in this regard. Morton has observed that “an orca spends its life acting in concert with its pod mates: breathing together, moving together, vocalizing together, staying together” (Morton 98). Eva Saulitis, who studied a distinct lineage of transient orcas impacted by the Exxon Valdez spill, suggests that orcas’ “ties to one another [are] another kind of food, as essential, it seemed, as seal fat” (Saulitis 49). Even SeaWorld’s orca literature notes the importance of socialization, stating that they exhibit strong social bonds in the wild, are rarely separated from their mothers in matrilineal pods, and depending on the ecotype, they spend their entire lives in groups that range from around fifty orcas, to up to two thousand five hundred (Killer Whales InfoBook). When this propensity towards socialization is impeded (Kirby 112), Rose suggests this has a detrimental impact on the orcas’ mental health. If we take into account here Morton’s studies on orcas living in a predominantly acoustic world, the natural acoustic reflection of the Shamu tanks, and the linguistic isolation generated from man-made pods of various orca ecotypes, then this isolation for the orca performers can be profound.

Rose’s other observation - the connection to young African elephants impacted by herd culls - may actually also help to explain the ‘problem elephants’ of early circuses that I spoke
about in chapter one. Rose looked into research on escalating male African elephant violence -
including attacks on other elephants, rhinos, and surrounding villages, depression, stereotypic
behaviours and infant neglect, all of which used to be considered quite rare in the wild
(*Elephants on the Edge* 71; Siebert) - and noticed that the perpetrators were all generally sole
survivors of large culls, who “grow up without being properly socialized” (Hargrove 114).

Researchers such as Gay Bradshaw and Dr. Evelyne Lawino Abe, have noticed a profound
change in elephant culture in the past few generations - from complex social lives and large
geographical ranges, to persistent threats of culls, poachers, and having “nowhere to go” (*Elephants on the Edge* 43). Bradshaw and Abe’s studies have focused on these orphan
herds, and suggest that “what we are witnessing is nothing less than a precipitous collapse of
elephant culture.” (Siebert). They both arrived at the conclusion that there are strong
parallels between elephant violence, and the violence exhibit by former child soldiers and
survivors of genocides (*Elephants on the Edge* 55). Abe makes this parallel deliberately, after
studying the impacts of social and cultural isolation on physical and psychological well-being on
survivors of the Holocaust, Rwandan genocide, Ugandan civil war in the 1950s, and the forcible
removal and placement into residential schools of both Australian Aborigines and the Indigenous
peoples of North America (55-56). She noted whole generations raised without elders and
increases in violent or self-destructive behaviours (56) “without what an elephant ethologist
would call socioecological knowledge, the wisdom and tutelage of mothers, fathers,
grandparents, and the intact communal network” (60).

Bradshaw takes this a step further and attempts to link elephant suffering to post-
traumatic stress disorder, noting that orphaned elephant herds fit a number of diagnostic criteria:
• They were exposed to a traumatic event at which they witnessed or were threatened by death (*Elephants on the Edge* 81);
• The traumatic event is “persistently re-experienced” (82), and considering the latest survey on African elephants has indicated that due to poaching and habitat fragmentation, population has plummeted “from 1.3 million elephants in the 1970s to 352,000 today” (Dell’Amore), it’s evident that the threat is continually present;
• They avoid stimuli associated with the traumatic event, including detaching and estranging themselves from others (84), which could account for the high rates of infant neglect or inter-species violence;
• They exhibit frequent bouts of “irritability or outbursts of anger” (85) which severely impact social functioning.

The diagnosis of PTSD would not be easily accepted, so she opted to take a trans-species psychological approach to test her theory. Animal life has not been traditionally afforded a psychology or interiority, and means of access to the roots of animal behaviour have often stopped at assumptions of responses to stimuli, or cautions that any probing into interiority would result in anthropomorphism, which is unscientific. To take a trans-species approach to animal inner lives entails beginning from notable similarities between humans and animals, or between a known and a lesser known animal, building from what we know already into the questions we do not yet have answers to, which “allows us to imagine […] what it might be like to ask in elephant ‘shoes’” (*Elephants on the Edge* 18).236 It does not immediately equate human and animal psychological experiences, but merely asks what we have in common, to use that as a starting point.237 In this instance, Bradshaw began with research on human childhood development, using the studies of John Bowlby on orphaned children and subsequent attachment difficulties (22), noting that “our relationships and interactions with the environment are mirrored on the inside by neurobiological patterns and processes” (21). Children emulate what they see within parental or authority figures. Without a parental figure or matriarch, Bradshaw conceded that “elephants are merely mirroring circumstances in which they have come to
live” (71), as in “aspects of humanity we would rather not own” (32). Violent elephants were not raised as elephants, Bradshaw suggests, but the human impact on wild elephant life has severely and perhaps permanently altered what it means to ‘be elephant’, just as any persistent violence and trauma might alter any human identity (72).

Bradshaw cautions not to immediately associate wild elephant violence with the rampages of old circus ‘problem’ elephants, because while elephants like “Black Diamond might have been at the time a candidate for a similar diagnosis given his experience of violence in the circus, their histories differ” (*Elephants on the Edge* 15). However, some of the evidence Bradshaw observes “suggest[s] that elephants are stepping outside of their assigned role as part of the passive landscape against which human dramas play out” (*Elephants on the Edge* 41), and are “upset[ing]” the sense of order (41), which can also be noted in captive circus elephants. Of particular interest, she noted the stereotypic behaviours prevalent in many captive zoo animals as evidence of severe impacts on mental health. Stereotypy, or abnormal repetitive behaviour such as weaving, swaying, excessive grooming, or pacing, is often seen in captive elephants, but researchers are unsure of the cause (Alexander 142; Berens; *Elephants on the Edge* 98; Nance 169; Scigliano 276; Schatz), though, there is some evidence to suggest that stereotypy is a response to the inability to “express highly motivated naturalized behaviours” (Nance 169). Schatz also suggested that stereotypic swaying is perhaps an attempt to simulate an instinctual drive to walk, as elephant herds usually travel many kilometres in a single day while foraging for food (Schatz). Ringling Brothers and animal scientists Ted Friend also conducted their own study on this in 2001, during which they concluded simply that it provides the elephants with stimulation and is good for them (Scigliano 259). They also noted that the swaying increases immediately before a show begins, but if keepers try to prevent the elephant from joining the
show, to give it the opportunity to de-stress, the elephant will only push to join the show anyway, leading Friend to believe that the swaying is ultimately a good and natural behaviour (258). The interesting thing between these studies is the biases inherent in the sponsor. Nance and Schatz both come from an anti-captivity background, and try to link stereotypy to a stress reaction. Friend’s study is sponsored by the zoo, and therefore was bound to conclude that the swaying is nothing to be concerned about. This used to be a behaviour only observed in captivity, but it has since been recognized in herds of orphaned elephants that Bradshaw and Abe have identified as suffering from PTSD.

To connect this back to chapter one, when Balanchine and Stravinsky created their ‘Ballet of the Elephants’ (Tait 80), they were tasked with teaching the elephants how to dance. How did they achieve this ‘performance of the impossible’? They simply timed the music to the elephants stereotypic swaying, the repetitive weaving behaviour they had developed during their time in captivity (Nance 168). The ballet was not a beautiful expression of elephant grace, but an erasure of elephant interiority, and a sign of captive-induced insanity (Elephants on the Edge 65).

For Bradshaw, this positions elephants as the “canary in the environmental coal mine” (Elephants on the Edge 38), in terms of their psychological reactions to human impact, and as Rose suspected, this can also be observed within the orcas who perform Shamu. As far back as 1988, critics were beginning to seriously question the mental health of captive orcas. Robert Reinhold, in a special to the New York Times, asked “if whales could talk […] would they say they are happy?” (Reinhold). His article came on the heels of a number of accidents between SeaWorld orcas and trainers, and details the pressure placed on ‘Shamu’ as a superstar, the notoriously low wages of trainers, and the tendency to “overemphasize the importance of the entertainment” (Reinhold). He quoted marine biologist Paul Spong as
saying that orcas under confinement are abnormally stressed, particularly due to their limited range. In the wild, they would often travel fifty to one hundred miles per day, but in the SeaWorld tanks are left with only a short lap around a pool (Reinhold). While performance may give the orcas something more mentally and physically stimulating to do in captivity, Reinhold still begged the question “what, in short, is the proper relationship between the two most highly evolved species in the planet's two biological realms, land and sea” (Reinhold). Even the first performing orca, the real Shamu herself, foreshadowed the problematic human-animal relationships inherent in SeaWorld, when her performance career ended abruptly after she bit a trainer who had fallen off her back during a show (Kaplan). The trainer’s injuries were severe, and the original Shamu was never allowed to perform again - and died several months later (Kaplan). This did suggest to some members of the company that perhaps the conditions of captivity were aggravating to the orcas, and dangerous for the trainers, but in theatrical fashion, seemed to align themselves with the adage ‘the show must go on’, as they simply replaced Shamu with another orca, and move on.

Years later, the same questions and critiques surround ‘problem' whales like Tilikum, wherein the conditions of captivity, social deprivation and stereotypy have all taken a large toll on captive orcas, all of which are continually justified or necessitated to provide audiences with entertainment and education. As mentioned earlier, Tilikum was born wild and captured off the coast of Iceland in 1983 when he was approximately two years old. He was selected along with two other whales to be sold to SeaLand in Victoria, BC. Morton recalls being at the facility during the Icelandic whales’ first night in captivity, in an attempt to record what she hypothesized would be a different type of vocalization than she had previously observed in residents and transients, and said she could only describe what she had recorded as
‘crying’ (Morton 160). While SeaWorld has, objectively, made improvements to its facilities, including making larger tanks, since Tilikum’s capture, the amount of space given to the orcas is still immediately restrictive for large mammals. In the wild, Tilikum would have been accustomed to traveling up to 75 kilometres per day while following schools of salmon (Zimmerman). The immediate physical restrictions - specifically, only having enough room in the tanks to swim short laps - would have been, to say the least, a stressful environmental change. Zimmerman and Spong, the director of OrcaLab in BC, both note that regardless of SeaWorld’s goals and how nice their facilities become, there is still “an extreme level of sensory deprivation [imposed] on them” (Zimmerman). This isolation would have been heightened when Tilikum was moved to the SeaWorld facility in Orlando, where he was the only Icelandic orca, the only ‘speaker’ of his dialect. Spong noted that if any human performer was put into this kind of environment, we would not be surprised to find them with severe mental health issues (Zimmerman).

Hargrove says that orcas born in captivity are usually removed from their mothers before they are fully mature (Hargrove 102-103), either because SeaWorld fears they are being rejected by their mothers, or “for breeding and entertainment purposes” (103). This socialization is further interrupted. You have orcas from the wild, who have never been fully exposed to parenting skills trying to parent a new generation of captive orcas, seemingly with no idea what to do. Hargrove and Kirby, while interviewing former trainer Carol Ray, both mention the case of Katina and Kalina at SeaWorld Orlando. Katina was captured off the coast of Iceland in 1978 (Kirby 93), and whereas in the wild most orcas do not start reproducing until fifteen at the earliest, SeaWorld started breeding her when she was nine. Her first calf, Kalina, was the original Baby Shamu and the first captive-born orca to survive. By the time Kalina was four. Katina
already had another calf and SeaWorld decided to move Kalina to the Ohio facility (234). Press at the time questioned why this was occurring, and SeaWorld responded by updating a handbook of frequent questions and answers that trainers receive during the show:

**A:** Why Did you take Baby Shamu away from her mother?

**Q:** Baby Shamu was no longer a baby. She was five years old and quite independent from her mother, who was socially pushing her away and was already raising a new baby (Kirby 237).

In addition, SeaWorld’s zoological director at the time, Ed Asper, told the press he did not believe whales would stay with their mothers for their entire lives in the wild (Kirby 237), which was already contrary to what every whale researcher knew at the time. By 1995, Katina would have two calves herself, both of whom were separated from her when they were under eighteen months old, and one of whom would, like Tilikum, eventually kill a trainer (95). What results from this system of consistently shifting and man-made pods is a group of orcas who have no idea how to raise themselves, being raised by a corporation who expresses disbelief in one of the most basic and well-known aspects of their lives, all while insisting that they are playing a vital role in education by having ‘Baby Shamu’ perform at all of their facilities.

If Tilikum had remained in the wild, he would have experienced living in a complex social and matrilineal structure of approximately twenty to fifty other orcas, led by the oldest female, and he would have stayed with his mother for his entire life (Zimmerman). Ken Balcolm, who studies orcas of the Pacific Northwest, has said that for orcas “the group is your home, and your whole identification is with your group” (Zimmerman), so removing an orca from this system, especially as young as Tilikum was, means that they are never given the opportunity to be fully socialized or taught to ‘be’ whales. Bradshaw might see similarities between Tilikum, taken from the wild as a calf, and young orphaned elephants in terms of exhibiting a “bi-cultural
identity” (*Elephants on the Edge* 29): they are at once effects of both animal and human culture, neither complete, neither accessible to them.

Finally, I want to take a look at stereotypy in orcas, as this has not been explicitly studied, but I can see some similarities to both Bradshaw’s research, and early circus elephants. Grazian suggests that because orcas and other aquatic animals are less phylogenically similar to people, stereotypy and other signs of stress are more difficult to recognize (Grazian 156). It is assumed that if they are given room to swim, then they probably have everything they need. Temple Grandin noted though that repetitive swimming patterns may be signs of stereotypy, after observing captive dolphins swim figure-eights from all corners of the pool. She said, “his path was unusual enough that the keepers were not aware that this was an abnormal stereotypy” (157). When Ringling says that its elephants sway because it provides them with stimulation, SeaWorld likewise suggests that some of the strange, compulsive behaviours exhibited by captive orcas are the result of ‘boredom’ or an attempt to entertain themselves (Hargrove 85). During Hargrove’s work as a trainer at various SeaWorld facilities, he stated that the orcas would constantly “rub their faces against the walls or sometimes bang their heads against the sides of the pool”, regurgitate their food, and obsessively rub their teeth against the ledges, floor and stage of the tank to the point of breaking teeth (85). He also worked with a number of orcas who would obsessively peel paint from the bottom and sides of the tank (Hargrove 84; Kirby 772), all repetitive behaviours not seen in the wild. Others have observed the orcas swimming repetitively in the same tight circles for an entire day (Leiren-Young, *The Pugnacious, Dangerous Monster*), which is a stereotypy often observed in zoo animals who obsessively pace the same path in their enclosures. Some orcas exhibit stereotypy by remaining listless, floating at the top of the tank.
(Morton 52). Each of these behaviours in a zoo setting would be called stereotypy, but in SeaWorld, just like the circus, it is marked as ‘stimulation’.

If a similar trans-species approach is applied between elephants and orcas, using what has been learned about the impacts of isolation and a lack of socialization on violence within early circus elephants, as a bridge to begin understanding the impacts of captive-based performance on orcas like Tilikum, some stark similarities emerge:

**Table 3.8.7. Behavioural Similarities Between Early Circus Elephants and Shamu Orcas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Early Circus Elephants</th>
<th>Shamu Orcas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Early Lives</strong></td>
<td>Often wild captured during mass culls</td>
<td>Wild captured (prior to the 1990s), or captive-born.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socialization in the Wild</strong></td>
<td>Matrilineal culture, remains with their mother throughout adolescence.</td>
<td>Matrilineal culture, remains with their mother throughout their entire lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Captive Socialization</strong></td>
<td>Broken by keepers, refused food or water until responding to human commands. The keeper becomes the matriarch of the herd, raising them in isolation from elephant culture. Young separated from their mothers to facilitate lending elephants out to other circuses. Little to no connection to elephant culture.</td>
<td>Strictly controlled by keepers. The keeper becomes the matriarch of the herd, raising them in isolation from orca culture. Young separated from their mothers to facilitate lending orcas out to other facilities, or to enhance SeaWorld’s breeding programs. Often kept in tanks with orcas of different ecotypes and vastly different dialects, in linguistic isolation. Little to no connection to orca culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performance</strong></td>
<td>Trained through operant conditioning and free contact. Food was the primary reward and was often not given until a behaviour was performed correctly. Often performed several shows a day. Shows seen as both educational for the elephants and providing mental stimulation.</td>
<td>Training operant conditioning and free contact. Food is the primary reward, along with physical contact and toys, and can be withheld until a behaviour is performed correctly. Often perform several shows a day. Shows seen as both educational for the orcas and providing mental stimulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health</strong></td>
<td>Increased foot problems, injuries from performance, shorter lifespans.</td>
<td>Collapsed dorsal fin, skin infections from over-chlorinated water, higher instances of tooth decay and dental issues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The behaviours, though not identical, are profoundly similar and worrying. If we can assume through Bradshaw’s studies that circus elephants were likely suffering from PTSD, and we can see like behaviours in performing orcas, we could conclude that the impact of Shamu shows pose increased risks of inducing mental health problems within captive orca performers. While SeaWorld insists the Shamu performances are essential for audiences to develop empathy towards animals and aquatic life and take action to protect it, we in turn exhibit a lack of empathy towards the performers, and the closer we get to them within this tangible experience, the more we normalize their presence in this anthropocentric space and justify their captivity.

For May, all of this should problematize the spectator’s right to animal-based entertainment and education, noting that we are not actually learning who the orcas are, what impacts the performances have on the orcas, or the conditions behind their performances. We are
only gaining insight into the narratives that SeaWorld wants its spectators to see. Following this, we need to question what our ethical responsibilities are to this information. If SeaWorld wants its audiences to empathize with the orca and advocate for further protections of its natural habitat, how should we respond to the information of what is behind the Shamu performances?

Kuhl suggests that it is not enough for a company to want to induce empathy for orcas through tangible encounters and performance, but that empathy has to be properly directed. If SeaWorld’s barometer for ‘learning’ centres on a “permanent change in behaviour” (“Animal Behaviour and Learning”), then one would expect to see audiences demanding that Shamu performers be treated more humanely, and their representations accurately reflect their lives in captivity. Any critic of orcas in captivity is also quick to note that trainers working with them really do believe that they are doing what is best for the orcas (Hargrove; Morton 98; Schatz). However, Schatz may have put this best, when speaking of elephant in captivity: “What is the problem with the elephant in the room? The room. That’s the problem” (Schatz). And in this case, it is what the room proposes to represent.

What all of this leaves out are specific animal voices and the animal’s own experience (Kuhl 118), which SeaWorld conflates with simple physical presence, as if the body of Shamu is the entire store the orca needs to tell. Denying animal interiority means that SeaWorld can supplant its own narrative onto Shamu and have that be the only story heard and recognized. Shamu shows actively perpetuate myths of orca experience that led to their “subjugation” and captivity (118). While public views on captivity are shifting, SeaWorld’s rebranding of Shamu to focus more on conservation still marginalizes and forgets that the performing orca exists as an individual beyond the Shamu persona. Shamu is a character, represented as an individual always happy to be visiting and sharing their experiences with the audience. The performers behind
Shamu though are continuously, as circus elephants before them, rebelling against the conditions of their captivity, challenging the narrative that justifies their isolation. Whereas Shamu is eternal, Tilikum, Corky, Katina, Kalina, Keto and other orca performers have faced serious and sometimes terminal consequences from being performers. In terms of representation, Shamu occupies an interesting position of simultaneously revealing and concealing orca life, leaving viewers - I would argue - less educated about orcas overall, than if they had not visited in the first place.

9. The Hyperreal Shamu

Activists are calling for Tilikum to be the last orca to die in captivity (Howard). I was about to conclude this chapter when SeaWorld publicly announced that Tilikum died of a drug-resistant bacterial lung infection. This comes months after SeaWorld announced the orca’s illness, bracing audiences who had long loved Tilikum as Shamu for his inevitable death. SeaWorld memorialized him as a performer:

While today is a difficult day for the SeaWorld family, it is important to remember that Tilikum lived a long and enriching life while at SeaWorld and inspired millions of people to care about this amazing species (“The Life and Care of Tilikum”).

They went onto to remind media that they are phasing out Shamu shows, changing with the times and with public perception of animals in captivity, and will “remove the existing theatrical moving screens and show set in the stadium and replace them with a natural backdrop that will reflect the natural world of the orcas” (Howard). Grazian would refer to this as manufacturing nature (18), Malamud making a “microcosm of the real world” (Malamud 12), and for Brian Morrow, a zoo designer, he would call what SeaWorld is attempting to do “replicating nature” (French, “The Human Exhibit”). I think it can also be looked at through the lens of
dramaturgy as well, in terms of how the construction and design of enclosures gives certain pertinent information to the audience that allows them to immediately understand and characterize the animal within its world. How do we organize information in such a way that the audience can come to a closer understanding of the character of the animal, as well as the environment in which it lives?

In this section, I want to analyze the move towards enhancing educational animal encounters with naturalistic enclosures. While SeaWorld insists their decision will help them to showcase more of the orcas’ natural behaviours, and it is a response to audience concerns about captivity, I believe the impetus towards this ‘nature making’ has stronger ties to curiosity cabinets and contemporary zoos, and the creation of hyperrealities, than any concern for animal well-being. Extending the case study in this direction will allow for a furthered understanding of what education may result from these new performances. Will they really be an evolution in the way we exhibit and educate using captive animals, or - as I suspect - will they simply repackage old exhibition techniques in a more palatable and socially acceptable manner? To investigate this, I will be drawing from current practices in creating naturalistic enclosures in traditional zoo environments, focusing on the integration of natural-looking landscapes, props and sound design. I will draw theoretically from Baudrillard’s theory of hyperreality, and Eco’s *Travels in Hyperreality*, as often enclosure designers focus less on the creating the most accurate landscape, and more on creating what their audience will believe to be the most accurate landscape, a distinction which colours both the quality of audience education, and the well-being of the animals within the exhibit. I will conclude this section with considerations about the future of Shamu, and what we still stand to learn from these types of exhibitions.
9.1 What Is Hyperreality

The closer the replication to what audiences believe the animal’s natural landscape should look like, the greater the educational impact it has (Coe 120), and the more likely it is that audiences will feel the animal is happy and healthy (Grazian 19). When this ‘nature making’ for captive animals is seen to be as sufficient as its natural habitat, it becomes a hyperreality, a replication so removed from the real that for audiences, a sense of what actually is real within the exhibit no longer exists. The captive orca is replaced by the image of the orca happily swimming in front of a backdrop of coastal mountains. The ocean is always clear blue, affording every opportunity for the orca to be seen at all times. Nothing about the location or conditions are natural, but they are accepted as such. These hyperrealities normalize lives and deaths of captive animals like Tilikum, making the original invisible.

We can think of hyperreality as several steps removed from the real. Baudrillard said:

abstraction today is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality […] The territory no longer proceeds the map, nor survives it (Baudrillard 2).

If we begin with a real animal - an orca in the wild, for example, and aim to replicate, we could end up with a reproduction, like the scale model that Burich attempted to make of the orca who would become Moby Doll for the Vancouver Aquarium. With each reproduction, we are further separated from the reality of the orca in the wild. The moment at which the model becomes a hyperreality is when it is more real to us, in its unreality, than the original Moby Doll himself. This allows the reproduction to stand in for the real, and to be treated as real. This is also not a new concept, especially in relation to animals.255
However perfect the reproduction, Benjamin notes that it is always lacking in “its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be” (Benjamin 220). Reproduction in a captive habitat changes the reaction of the masses towards the original (234), creating the assumption that caged and tame is acceptable. According to Benjamin, reproduction in art – including in zoological environments – is not necessarily a bad thing. The forgery can be independent of the original and can go places the original cannot, to “meet the beholder half-way” (Benjamin 220). This “half-way” is the space in which zoos believe this empathy for animals through tangible encounters can be generated. However, if these simulations continue to be presented as realities to the public, then it poses a threat to the living authority of the original, or even the idea of the original (132). If it can be argued that the captive animal is more real to people than an animal in its natural habitat, and one’s only experience with that animal comes through a zoo, then the treatment and conditions the zoo provides are normalized, making significant wildlife conservation seem unnecessary, or directing support to organizations that may not have the best interests of wildlife in mind. Acampora suggests that zoos in this sense “make the nature of their subjects disappear precisely by overexposing them” (Acampora 1) as “exhibitionism extinguishes for us the existential reality of those animals even as it proclaims to preserve their biological existence” (1).

9.2 Naturalistic Enclosures

SeaWorld’s plan to transform Shamu Stadium into an enclosure that showcases more of the orcas’ natural behaviours, through an addition of a backdrop more indicative of their natural habitats reflects curiosity cabinets more so than it speaks to a sense of animal welfare. The transformation of enclosures from the starkly empty bared cages of early zoos has roots in the
circus. Carl Hagenbeck, of the Happy Family circus acts, also noticed flaws in animal exhibitions, but to him they lay in the exhibition design. He felt that one could not truly come to know an animal and its wildness, unless they viewed the animal within something akin to its natural habitat. Drawing from his circus background, he aimed to get his audience as close to the animal as possible (Kalof 155). He then began to theorize on a zoo without bars, something that would immerse the audience into the wild without putting them in danger. In 1907, he experimented with redesigning a the Tierpark in Stellingen, Germany, with these ends in mind, and created a “natural, open, moated panoramic exhibit” (Killing 164). Instead of small cages and thick bars, he placed animals on small islands surrounded by six-foot wide ditches filled with water (Kalof 156), which he hid from visitor viewpoints to create the illusion of omnipresence, as if the visitors had unimpeded, unlimited access to the animal world. Hagenbeck would then fill the island with fake rocks and vegetation in order to recreate the animal’s natural habitat - or, more likely, what he thought that natural landscape would look like (156). This dramaturgy of the space would have allowed the spectators an almost theatrical experience, like watching a production behind a fourth-wall, getting a glimpse into the animal’s life. Many zoo owners were skeptical of Hagenbeck’s approach, questioning what was wrong with the traditional bars when it both assured - presumably - visitor safety and constant views of the animal. However, when attendance at the Tierpark shot up drastically (Killing 164), other zoo owners were convinced.258

Since then, zoo audiences have evolved to view cages as "antiquated and inhumane" (Grazian), and studies have shown people spend more time at exhibits where there are no visible barriers between themselves and the animals: “It’s all about the idea of the juxtaposition of humans and nature. [...] Proximity equals excitement, and excitement will turn into a connection and love for animals” (French, “The Human Exhibit”). The goal becomes, as
zoo designer and architect Jeffrey Smith says, to find a “magic barrier” (Grazian 22) that is both secure and invisible. Contemporary zoos make use of glass, levels and moats to create the illusion of getting as close to the animals as possible. Glass barriers allow the visitors to come right up to the exhibit and see inside, just like the fourth-wall of a theatre. Levels allow visitors to get on eye-level with the animals - especially larger animals like giraffes (French, "The Human Exhibit"). Catherine Brinkley, a zoo consultant, says that if levels are also used to place visitors at lower levels than predators, then this will aesthetically mimic a healthy fear of predators (Grazian 31), kinaesthetically teaching visitors the relationship between predators and prey. Moats have become particularly useful as there is no need for bars or glass, and they create unobstructed views (Grazian 23). Grazian mentions the risks inherent in using moats. While they give unobstructed views, they also make the distance between people and animals even greater. Studies show that “the greater the distance between visitor and animal, the less likely the visitors will stop by the exhibit” (23). They also take up a great deal more space within the exhibit, cutting into the space the animals have to move around simply to create this barrier-free view (24). It is an illusion of education. The animal is still just as caged, just as visible, but when the cage looks like a habitat, it does not draw as much criticism or worries about animal welfare, especially when coupled with educational signage, interpretative programs, and in some cases even opportunities to hold or feed the animals (Kalof 153; Killing 169).

These barriers extend even into the language surrounding captivity. Former SeaWorld trainer Carol Ray notes that educators employed by the company were given strict instructions on acceptable and audience-friendly language, and asked to avoid certain words or phrases (Kirby 95): instead of caged, they were to refer to the animals as “acquired”; a cage or tank became an “enclosure”; captivity is a “controlled environment”; and evolution only referred to as
adaptations (95-96). On the other side, SeaWorld continues to use the term ‘killer whale’ even while noting that their public perception has been highly coloured by misinformation, simply because the violence inherent in that language, while juxtaposed with the apparent docility of the orca in performance, makes the Shamu shows that much more amazing (Eco 51). This language is carefully stripped of controversy and downplays the power relationships inherent in captivity. If the animal is not a captive but a resident, then it furthers the image of the zoo as a place where animals naturally occur.

Within these barriers, enclosures are “theatrical stages of the performance of authenticity and reality” (Grazian 9). The shift towards naturalism that Hagenbeck began is now referred to as “new naturalism”, in which “exhibit designers envelope animals and audiences together in landscape gardens that simulate the wild” (17). It is no longer enough to be close to an animal - one has to feel they are within its environment, as close to being wild themselves as they could possibly be, without putting either human or animal in danger (French, “The Human Exhibit”). The exhibits are “reduced-scale models of the Golden Age, where struggle for survival no longer exists, and men and animals interact without conflict” (Eco 51). The exhibits become a reflection of an idealized reality that does not exist, but when presented in an educational and authoritative context, they come to stand in for and displace actual nature. As we can see by looking at what goes into the creation of naturalistic exhibits, the dramaturgy of space, when it comes to depicting reality, is always tempered by aesthetics and what would look, sound and feel like a pleasing environment the audience would want to inhabit along with the animals, more than anything else. For example, creating naturalistic enclosures involves not only studying an animal’s natural ecosystem, but also audience perceptions of that ecosystem, capitalizing on the images one already has in mind when they think about an animal in the wild. Grazian suggests
that when we attend a zoo, we expect the nature of our imaginations (18), and visitors want to see exhibits that are both “aesthetically alluring and sufficiently entertaining […] that offer enough scientific realism that they can serve an educational purpose, while also providing safe and comfortable living quarters for the zoo’s resident species” (18). The focus is on the aesthetics and how we come to visually value an ecosystem. Zoo designer Jon Coe likens this to finding the most compelling metaphors, a “scenario that fully describes the exhibit context, just as a cinematic or theatrical scenario sets the scene for a performance” (20-21). Like set design for a stage play, enclosure designers focus on creating the illusion of reality. Instead of actual ecosystems, the enclosure hints at the idea that animals have a large space in which to roam (Grazian 29) by incorporating theatrical backdrops that appear to extend the space, and by hiding sight lines to ensure that the entire exhibit cannot be seen in a single glance.

Enclosures are also designed to highlight the “outstanding physical features of the animal” (Polawski 127), such as the climbing ability of monkeys or the paws of a grizzly bear, by providing 'enrichment' elements which give the animal opportunities to perform their most popular adaptations. For example, the Berlin Zoo polar bear exhibit offers educational signage relating to the bears' natural swimming abilities. While the information relayed neglects to mention the reality of the polar bears' rapidly disappearing habitat, or the distance the animals would usually cover within a day when in their own environments, it is also the feature that will draw in a crowd. A strong example of this is Penguin World at the Berlin Zoo, in which signage advertises an audience opportunity to “travel through Antarctic and see how the cute little tuxedo wearers practice their diving” (“Animal Highlights at Zoo Berlin”). The exhibit is a glass dome encasing a pool of water that is bookended by a miniature mountain landscape on the far side, and a glass wall on the other. The audience is afforded equal views of the penguins on land and
in the water, so that their continual dives and circles underwater are placed in immediate sight (“Penguin World”). This makes the diving the primary referent for the animals, who have themselves become representatives of all penguins for zoo visitors, making them even more isolated from their source: in this setting the show reduces the penguin to its ability alone.

Studies have shown that “physically active animals impress zoo visitors far more than their sleepy counterparts” (28), so any elements which can entice the animal to move in a way that seems natural draws in even more visitors, especially if the movements highlight these ‘feature’ animal attributes. Behavioural simulators or ‘enrichment’ additives to enclosures are one way in which this occurs (Grazian 27), such as hiding food around the enclosure to mimic foraging, altering enclosure light levels and temperatures to represent seasonal changes and to create compositions and atmosphere, especially for habitats for nocturnal animals (Polawski 138), and adding ambient sounds and fragrances to pique animal curiosities (Coe 122; Grazian 27). This can essentially be seen as dramaturging the enclosure right down to directing animal behaviour, employing props to help bring out these behaviours. For animals like gorillas, these props can be “large or small branches hung horizontally, diagonally and vertically to provide full access to their three-dimensional area” (Coe 122). Plastic jugs, paper bags, and cardboard boxes have also been seen (Thought to Exist in the Wild 91) as means of amusing animals, and are often strategically placed towards the front of the exhibit as a means of drawing animals further towards visitors (Grazian 27). Zookeepers suggest that the entertainment value of a paper bag is a comment on the lower mental capacity of the animals (Thought to Exist in the Wild 91), as opposed to boredom or the need for amusement. The idea is that including such examples of enrichment and variety will provide the animals with “some choice of micro-habit and social
setting” (13), thereby further mimicking their natural habitat with unnatural objects – bringing out the realistic within the artificial.263

However, it is noted that the designer “should not be too concerned about clearly understanding the distinction between reality and illusions” (Polawski 135). Temple Grandin explains this most aptly, noting that while one might say zoo displays should be naturalistic, “real nature means predators or prey, disease, hunger, and danger” (Grazian 20), which is not the type of nature that will draw in visitors. The sight lines in an enclosure design are as much about what can be seen as they are about what audiences are not permitted to see - such as the relatively small size of the enclosures, any unnatural elements such has heaters, "backstage areas" (32), animal sex in front of youth audiences (36), or animal deaths (38).264 This makes a sharp distinction between nature realities and nature aesthetics. The former includes all aspects of animal life, including potentially a struggle to survive. The latter is a backdrop seemingly stripped of challenges and consequences, completely inert. It is nature in image alone, with only enough detail to appear scientifically accurate. This disregard for reality is clearly seen in Coe's article on the integration of plant life into naturalized habitats, wherein he encourages the use of plants native to the animals' home, but stresses that, where possible, “exhibit designers should select plant varieties, soil type and support facilities such as irrigation to be most compatible with the climate in which the exhibit is located” (Coe 119). The goal then cannot be to “help educate the zoo visitor about the reality of the animals' natural habitat” (Polawski 135), as what is presented is only an “illusion of the wild” (129). The dilemma faced by exhibit designers, is not how to make the habitat as realistic as possible, but how to bring out the 'wild' within the blatantly artificial and hyperreal (129).
9.3 Soundscapes

In 2014, The World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) completed a study titled *A Global Evaluation of Biodiversity Literacy in Zoo and Aquariums*, which detailed their contributions to the United Nation’s Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (*A Global Evaluation of Biodiversity Literacy*). The plan outlines twenty specific targets, called Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and the one of primary interests to zoos and aquariums is “by 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably” (7). WAZA concluded that “zoos may be uniquely placed to contribute to the goal of raising understanding biodiversity and actions to protect biodiversity” (8), simply because of the capacity for immersion into the animal world.

This study was not wholly positive, however. It found that zoos do not always align themselves with conservation goals in their marketing strategies, rather than “primarily portraying themselves as providers of entertainment” (*A Global Evaluation of Biodiversity Literacy* 8), and they feel that zoos can improve on the clarity of the biodiversity lessons inherent in every exhibit (34). What they have strived to do though is bring animal and human worlds even closer together, predicated on the notion that the closer one gets, the greater one’s imagination about the other-than-human world will be sparked, and the more empathy for the animal that will be generated overall, leading to greater conservation efforts. While visitors had begun to recognize the limitations of contemporary zoo designs - such as reflections off glass (Grazian 23), or the hazards posed by moats, not to mention the growing public awareness of animal behaviour in captivity - zoos have sought to develop enclosures which both allay visitor worries of animal welfare and heighten exhibit excitement.
One way in which this has occurred is through the inclusion and creation of soundscapes. Beyond ambient sounds, designers have sought to capture and replicate the typical sounds of ecosystems the animals represent - blowing wind for a polar exhibit or humming insects and chirping birds for a jungle exhibit. Studies into the effects of noise pollution on the development of zoo animals – or noise that would be unnatural to their home environment – found that the noise of people talking outside the enclosures had a stressing effect on the animals, and contributed to some 'abnormal behaviour'. To alleviate these effects, and to immerse zoo patrons further into the illusion of encountering these animals within their wild homes, “natural sounds, recorded with high quality techniques [were] introduced into both the public zoo and animal areas...” (Coe 122). These sounds, intended to induce feelings of comfort within the animal and excitement within the patron, are played on twenty-four hour cycles, and are designed to not be too regular or predictable (122). However, the hyperreality of this sound design becomes obvious when considering that when hearing the sound “it inevitably becomes an object out of context and when played back, it does not belong to the place that surrounds the listener” (Westerkamp 110). Soundscapes are designed as stewards of disappearing sounds. Soundscape designer Michael Coghlan said, “[i]t occurred to me that, as nature becomes more eroded by urban expansion, many streams will dry up” (Westerkamp 112), and along with it the sounds by which they have come to be known. The sounds played outside and within the zoo enclosures become the primary referent for sounds within the wild. Whereas patrons in an obvious theatrical performance would disassociate the recordings from reality, within the zoo environment, both the soundscapes and the animals' reactions to them are assumed to be natural.
9.4 The Illusion of Intimacy in Immersive Aquarium Designs

Zoo designs have continued to become more immersive - not only through enclosures and soundscapes but through the physical design of the space through which audiences walk. Immersive landscape designs are recreations of whole ecosystems in which the animals live seemingly within their natural habitats, and the barriers behind which visitors can view the exhibit are so hidden or invisible that it appears as if animals and audiences inhabit the same space. The benefits of this are the presentation of the animal within its ecosystem as a singular display, which furthers the notion that you cannot preserve an animal population outside of protecting the ecosystem as well.

The hyperreality inherent in this type of design is in the illusion of intimacy between audience and animal. The designs “dramatically stimulate natural environments” (Grazian), placing the visitor at the epicentre - literally anthropocentric. This is seen in aquariums especially, where immersive and naturalistic exhibits have made them the most successful AZA institutions in North America (Grazian 156). Grazian even suggests that “fish seem so lacking in [...] phylogenetic similarity to humans that they are hardly even thought of as animals” (156), which means that it is easier to “naturalize their captivity” (156) and people report feeling both less guilt at attending an aquarium, and a heightened sense of wonder when able to experience more tangible experiences with animals. These tangible experiences can be created through sting ray petting pools, shark feeding events, or in the case of Ripley’s Aquarium in Toronto, the world’s longest underwater aquarium tunnel, the Dangerous Lagoon, which contains among other animals, the sandbar shark, the rough tail stingray, green sea turtles, and the sang tiger shark - the animals most popularly seen in Ripley’s promotional materials. Ripley’s states that its
goal is to create immersive experiences that will “foster education, conservation, and research, while providing fun and entertainment for locals and tourists of all ages” (Ripley’s Aquarium).

The Dangerous Lagoon suggests that this tunnel is not only insight into aquatic animal lives, but also into their kinaesthetic experience. The exhibit gives visitors the privileged perspective of life under the water, a 360-degree view of tropical ocean life amongst some of the fiercest predators. Ripley’s suggest that by physically being ‘under the water’, visitors will be able to empathetically place themselves in the animals’ positions in terms of ocean conservation, experiencing aquatic life as a shark might (Grazian 156; Ripley’s Aquarium). It is as close to being with sharks as one can safely get while still on land. What this does is attempt to erase the phylogenic differences in a way that no other aquarium has yet been able to achieve. While Shamu Stadiums often have underwater viewing rooms, where audiences can see Shamu swimming underwater, much like the Berlin Zoo’s Penguin World, they are always clearly removed from the animal, in a separate room and space entirely. The Dangerous Lagoon and other immersive landscape designs subsumes the viewer into the animal world. The water surrounds the visitor on every side. They walk through the tunnel just as sharks swim next to them and a turtle swims overhead. The only barrier left in the exhibit is that which is wholly necessary to sustain human life - a tunnel of air in which visitors can breathe.

However, visitors will notice that the exhibit contains sharks and fish in the same tanks - creatures which would normally have a predator-prey relationship, and in here live harmoniously. There is also no presence of human damage to the aquatic environment. The tank includes tropical fish and coral found in the Great Barrier Reef, which we know has been extensively damaged by human activities, and yet appears here as pristine and idyllic. The hyperreal immersive design scrubs the ‘dangerous’ lagoon of all its danger, presenting something
closer to *Finding Nemo* than anything real. It generates an illusion of closeness, while further removing the visitor from the actual animal. Berger analyses the position from which zoo and aquarium patrons ‘look’ at animals, and notes that the closer one gets, the farther away the animal actually is (Berger 24). ‘Closeness’ is predicated on animal nature tamed into docility or restrained through captivity. If you are able to get close enough to an orca to touch them, or close enough to a shark for it to swim right over top of you, that means the animal has nowhere else to move, or realizes that moving will mean the possibility of no food reward later on. They are left without options.

9.5 Watching Animals

Naturalistic enclosures and immersive designs have little positive impact on the animals themselves, but they do allow visitors to feel as if the animals are more ‘at home’ in the zoo. The visitors get to feel as if they are peering into another world where the animals exist just as they would out in the wild, because the designs fit the aesthetics of what we imagine that world to be like. Temple Grandin suggests that “some zoos have spent a lot of money building fancy enclosures that appear natural to people, but are just as boring and painful for the animals as a barren concrete cage” (Grazian 20). In a book on evaluating one’s experience at a zoo, Malamud asks what kind of insight one receives into animal lives by watching one in a cage (Malamud 1). Like May and Kuhl, he asks about the quality of experience one has, while taking into account the impacts of that experience on the animal itself. What is the toll that providing this tangible, educational experience takes on the animal itself, and do the means justify the ends? Do we, as SeaWorld defines learning, exhibit enough ‘changed behaviour’ to make the experience - and the conditions of captivity - worthwhile.
By looking at hyperrealities inherent in enclosures, it can be seen that zoos “teach children […] exactly the wrong thing about [animals]: they do not see the creature as it is, but as an amusement, a display, a spectacle” (2). The animal in the wild exists as a construct - something that exists out there. The ‘out there’ is an abstract, and the zoo animal only an ambassador from the wild, with no actual connections to a wild life. Like the orcas SeaWorld bred in captivity, most of the animals in WAZA institutions have never experienced life in their native ecosystems. Like the people walking from one exhibit to another, they have no idea what their ecosystems are ‘supposed to’ look like. The animal exists in an enclosure almost as a backdrop to a specifically human experience (Malamud 1). In this, the animal is transformed into a hyperreality, something that is more real in idea than substance, wholly divorced from ‘the real’. Umberto Eco, in his Travels in Hyperreality, suggests that within a zoo, “absolutely unreality is offered as real presence” (Eco 7) where “nature [is] erased by artifice precisely so that it can be presented as uncontaminated nature” (52), or in this case, a legitimate educational experience. Therefore, what one watches in a zoo is not just an animal, but a reflection of what we think the animal should be, as well as all of the circumstances of captivity, all of which have become more ‘real’ and normalized to zoo visitors than the animal itself (Malamud 12). In this, Berger says, zoo animals “constitute the living monument to their own disappearance” (Berger 24) being both right in front of us, and nowhere to be seen at exact same time as they have been “rendered absolutely marginal” (22).

9.6 Challenging Hyperreality

Conservation and marine wildlife biologists such as Paul Spong, Naomi Rose and Alexandra Morton are advocating for a total overhaul of SeaWorld’s orca education programs, by
decentralizing human views and retiring the various Shamus to sea pens, or “open ocean enclosure[s] anchored to the ocean floor that provide a vastly more natural environment for the orcas” (Hargrove 237-238). This would provide SeaWorld continued opportunity for animal exhibition, while at the same time giving the captive orcas a “more natural environment” (Kirby 866) in which they could continue to receive human care while becoming semi-independent (866). While it would not afford visitors a constant, panoptic view, it is the only means through which SeaWorld can truly showcase more naturalized orca behaviours within a very unnatural setting, and allow their audience to truly learn anything about orcas. The displays would also be able to speak to “the impacts of human activity and industry” (OrcaLab) on the lives of aquatic animals, notably what has happened to them in captivity and why we need to ensure they are the last generation of orcas to live in captivity.

In SeaWorld Orlando’s pod, there are now six remaining ‘Shamus’. Katina, like Tilikum, was born in the wild off the coast of Iceland. The rest are captive bred and raised. At the three other SeaWorld facilities in San Antonio, San Diego, and Loro Parque, the remaining wild-captured orcas are either from Iceland - Type 1 or 2 Eastern North Atlantic - or from the Pacific Northwest, making them either Northern or Southern Residents. The rest are captive born. The natural habitats of these wild-born orcas are vastly different. Ecologically, they have vastly little in common beyond outward appearances. The captive-born orcas have never seen a natural habitat. Any recreation of what appears to be a natural habitat for Shamu will only further conflate distinct ecotypes, perpetuate misinformation, and erase captive experiences, justifying their SeaWorld residency because at least it will ‘look natural’.

Educational performances starring animals may rely on tangible contact to spur empathy, generating these ‘little flickers’ of interest in the other-than-human world, but they are created at
the expense of the animal performer - and often the cost is animal life. But, as noted earlier, zoos and aquariums believe that “if people don’t see these animals [in a zoo], they will never see them [...] Their habitats are going to disappear forever and they will be extinct” (Grazian 226). Lawrence Buell refers to this as a crisis of environmental imagination. Buell studies environmental perceptions, or how nature is perceived in culture (Buell 1), and he believes that the most pressing issue is not that people will be unable to or unaware of how to care about animal lives without tangible encounters, but that our current educational engagement with animals is lacking in imaginative capacity to view the world in a more ecocentric manner (1). We have a tendency to place ourselves as protagonists, which is clearly evident in performances such a One Ocean, in which audiences are told that only they can turn the tides of human interference on ocean lives by coming to recognize that we also belong to the same ocean and we are all alike (“One Ocean”). The audience is at the centre of the action, with all animal lives and environmental impacts revolving around heightening the human experience of the natural world. How can we come to think outside of this anthropocentrism?

Clearly, with the closure of Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey, the removal of elephants from the American circus, and the closing of the Shamu shows at SeaWorld we are at an interesting time in regards to animal performers, and for theatre creators this can be propelled into reimagining environmental representations that do not require the use of animal bodies and the erasure of animal lives into a hyperreality. Buell cautions that “how we imagine a thing, true or false, affects our conduct towards it” (Buell 3), making whatever comes next for animal performers a very important move. As theatre creators, if we know that a performance may leave a human actor permanently damaged, we either avoid it altogether or mitigate the risk. With animal performers, historically we have ignored these ethics, which is only okay if we accept
that animals possess no interiority — if we take a Cartesian perspective and assume that the animal is unthinking, unfeeling, unaware of its surroundings, and is simply here for us to use.

Can we accept this with certainty though? If there is the possibility that ‘problem’ elephants like Topsy at early circuses were rebelling against the conditions of their captivity, and see the strong parallels to orca behaviour in captivity like Tilikum, can it be even remotely suggested that animal performers are speaking out? At the very least, can we say for sure, as SeaWorld insists, that captivity has no negative impacts on animals, and their educational programs have a positive enough impact to necessitate their removal from the wild? Essentially, what is our responsibility to the non-human performer with whom we cannot directly communicate, and who we can easily recognize has a profound impact on environmental education programs? Is captivity good for orcas, good for audiences, or good for anyone at all (Kirby 7). These are not new questions. Even as far back as 1987, reviews of the Shamu shows were dealing with the same ethics, asking if “the human species [has] the right to confine [orcas] for entertainment and profit, or even research? What, in short, is the proper relationship between the two most highly evolved species in the planet’s two biological realms, land and sea?” (Kirby 177).

10. Conclusion

I want to conclude this chapter by making an ethical argument based on the Precautionary Principle. Various definitions and approaches to this have been in place since the 1970s, but the standard definition first accepted by the United Nations states that “where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation” (World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology 12). Essentially, if an action poses a
risk of damaging animal lives — even a risk which has not yet been fully proven — then the action should be halted and the damages dealt with. In terms of animal performances in education, the damages are clear, and range from verifiably shortened lifespans to possible insanity. Do we really have a right to environmental education, or animal performers, at this potential expense?

Hoare notes that animals also have a history, and we are always only able to know and understand a small part of it (Hoare 27). Places like SeaWorld that claim the incorporation of animal performers will help audiences to learn the entire story erase their lives, justify damages, and point those ‘little flickers’ in directions that will likely create no actual learning, or changed behaviours, and if SeaWorld’s next steps with the revitalization of their Shamu enclosures does not take this into account, they will be aligning themselves even closer with P. T. Barnum, than with any animal. Upon the death of Barnum’s first ‘white whales’, he wrote an editorial to the New York Daily Tribune, stating that “while the public mourns, it may also console itself with the reflection that there are plenty more where it came from, and the energy of Barnum is not to be abated by any of the common disasters of life” (“A Whale No More”).

These ‘energies’ have to be not only abated, but ended.

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125 The trainers claim this illness had the beluga doubled-over in pain (Ormand).

126 We can even, like George Adamson and later Tony Fitzjohn, create programs which hand-raise abandoned or orphaned wild animals and teach them how to survive in the wild on their own.

127 The Frozen Zoo, part of the San Diego Institute for Conservation Research, “contains over 10,000 living cell cultures, oocytes, sperm, and embryos representing nearly 1,000 taxa, including one extinct species, the po’ouli” (“Frozen Zoo”). The hope is that one day scientists may have greater capabilities to regenerate the species, or the species habits may have rebounded significantly enough to make reintroduction a possibility.
Note that SeaWorld is an accredited member of the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums, so the study they cite may be considered invalid in some circles as it was essentially self-funded, moderated, analyzed and evaluated without outside reviews. As well, their study size was comparatively low - polling 1,102 respondents in 2004 and another 1,011 in 2011, out of approximately 45-million people who visit Alliance-accredited parks annually (Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums).

HELP RS - the acronym employed by SeaWorld to help trainers and orcas form positive, safe working relationships, stands for the seven areas of importance in animal training: husbandry, exercise, learning, playtime, relationships, shows (“Backstage of Believe”).

Ringling committed to phasing out elephants in performance by 2018, citing a change in audience interests and their ongoing commitment to Asian elephant conservation at their facility outside of Sarasota, FL. After consideration, the last performance by Ringing Elephants took place on May 1st, 2016 (Karimi).

Ringling made this announcement on January 14th, 2017, declaring an end to the company’s 146-year-old history. The final performance is currently set for May 21st, 2017 in Uniondale, New York (Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey).

Likewise, SeaWorld is also committed to a regeneration centred on its performing orcas, noting that audience climate has changed and in the wake of high-profile cases such as Tilikum and Dawn Brancheau, which I will touch on later in this chapter, audiences no longer trust that SeaWorld is the proper place for orcas. As such, current CEO Joel Manby has decided to phase out theatrical orca programs and captive breeding programs, meaning that the current generation will be the last in captivity, and in the meantime the institution will focus on generating entertaining and educational programming that highlights the natural behaviour of orcas (Buss).

This is ‘interpretation’ as it is defined by the U.S. National Park Service publication Foundations of Interpretation Curriculum Content Narrative (Bacher 2), and taken from John Muir’s Yosemite writings in 1896 (2).

This list was published in Beck and Cable’s 1998 book Interpretation for the 21st Century (Bacher 3).
Hans Blumenberg suggests that the general atmosphere of curiosity throughout early modern Europe was a direct consequence of medieval Europe’s religious oppression. In medieval Europe, curiosity was “often decried as a sinful interest in knowledge either beyond the scope of human understanding, or in vain empty matters that lacked futility and worth” (Harkness 173), which can be viewed in correlation to the fear of the natural world exhibited at the time. By Enlightenment, curiosity was considered a virtue and a way of “fostering important inquiries in to the natural world” (173). Blumenberg points to the diminished religious restrictions on scientific study as spurring new inquiries and discoveries - such as Galileo’s work. As Galileo finally proved the sun did not rotate around the earth, and as explorers began to reach their destinations successfully, it left people wondering what else there was to discover of the natural world. Just as Chaplin notes that furthered knowledge of exploratory routes, distances, and how to maintain one’s health on the open ocean made exploration safer, the relent of restrictions on what could be studied during the Renaissance and Enlightenment made academic discovery safer: now curiosity could continue mostly unabated and with new confidence that within these curiosity rooms of oddities from the natural world, “miraculous objects […] that represented their creators' interest in understanding and ordering a fast-expanding world” (Moore), their mysteries would soon be uncovered.

Chaplin also notes that strengthened political connections between previously waring countries - such as Spain and Portugal - meant that departing sailors had more resources to draw from, as well as more safe places to stop on route (Chaplin xx). The atmosphere of collaboration assured the success of explorations. Curiosity cabinets were likewise initially marks of power (Mauries 30, Moore), a “place of delight, refuge and intellectual entertainment, as well as a means to express self-promotion and political and intellectual prestige” (Fiorani 269). However, through collaboration many of these collections developed into precursors of modern natural history museums (Kalof 73): “the visual autopsy and the training of the eye in the collections of the Kunstkammer […] favoured the cultural, ideological and scientific transition from the traditional, static view of nature to a dynamic view of natural history and, eventually, to the historicization of the world history and its objects, both natural and man-made” (Fiorani 270). Most strikingly was the role of the curiosity cabinet in spurring the conquering of the natural world (Chaplin xx). By considering themselves microcosms of the world (Fiorani 269), owners and patrons of curiosity cabinets demanded the consumption of animals as artistic objects for display. In part inspired by a 16th Century obsession with discovering and dismantling the myths of monsters, particularly the sea monsters may believed existed in oceans before global exploration entered geodrama’s second act (Evan xv), the belief was that there was little left in the natural world to fear. This being the case, why not exhibit the world’s monsters as objects of curiosity, a final defeat of the wild? To be curious about animals during the height of curiosity cabinets meant to be curious about how to ultimately display them as inert art pieces, finally stripped of their interiority.
In Kalof’s research about the history of the animal in art, he mentions a few specific examples of early royal institutions and menageries, but two I want to make note of here. First, the Museum of Alexandria, a research institute with an accompanying zoological gardens with educational aims, found by Ptolemy 1 (367-280BCE) and Ptolemy 2 (309-247 BCE). Their research was not recorded, but there is a list of their vast collections, comprising of elephants, antelope, parrots, cheetah, lions, buffalo, polar bears, and pythons, just to name a few (Kalof 36). If any conclusions can be drawn from the records that survive, however tenuous, I think the surviving list of animals indicates that the institutions primary goal was collection and exhibition, and any research only peripheral to that. Kalof also mentions the royal menagerie at the Tower of London, which as early as 1210BCE employed lion keepers (66) and in 1254BCE created a small hut for an elephant (66). Royal privilege was inherent in both collections, and they were the only ones with the ‘right’ to see wild animals.

Francis Bacon had some thoughts on this as well, specifically for the philosophy behind the design of such institutions. He suggested that any ‘garden-as-cabinet’ bring into its collection “whatsoever plant […] the earth out of divers mould” (MacGregor 38). He also wanted “the garden to be built about with rooms to stable in all rare beasts, and to cage in all rare birds; with two lakes adjoining, the one of fresh water and the other of salt, for like variety of fishes: and so you may have, in a small compass, a model of universal nature made private” (MacGregor 39).

One of the most famous curiosity cabinets was that of the Ole Worm, “where walls and ceilings [were] lined with preserved fish, stuffed mammals, turtle shells, corals, specimen jars and their ilk” (Moore).

This is not unlike the panopticons that Jeremy Benthan eventually designed for prisons and poor houses. In an analysis of prison history, Foucault mentions that “one finds in the programme of the Panopticon a similar concern with individualizing observation, with characterization and classification, and with the analytical arrangement of space” (Kalof 122). Just like the animals were under constant observation, so too were the prisoners. And animal and prisoner alike at the time, many died of cold, malnutrition, and deformities caused by the conditions of confinement (122).

This began as Scudders Museum of New York City. Scudders was opened in 1810. Coincidentally, Barnum was also born that year — or so he claimed — and in his biographies he would often point to the he and the museum being born in the same year as a sign of destiny (Barnum 157). Initially, they were not even interested in selling to Barnum, insisting that he could not acquire the capital they needed to hand the deed over. But Scudders had faced years of financial difficulties (146), so when they refused Barnum’s initial offer, he took advantage of this precarious position by paying newspapers to publish ‘editorials’ from ‘former visitors to Scudders’ claiming the museum to be a fraud and not worth the admission fee (152). By the time Barnum was done with them, Scudders had no choice but to sell to Barnum. He was now their only bidder.
Heth was a former slave and claimed to be the childhood nurse of George Washington, which would have made her 161 years old at the time she encountered Barnum (93). While Barnum — and most other showmen - knew the story to be a fabrication, and would eventually admit that it was a hoax, it did draw crowds, and they used the story to their advantage, earning Heth (and Barnum) approximately $1000 per week. Though advertisements and self-written editorials criticizing the exhibition and story, Barnum drummed up audience attention, kept them talking, and considered any public debate about the validity of Heth’s claims to be good publicity. When Heth died the following year, Barnum took the intense interest one step further by holding a public autopsy so that his audiences could see first-hand that Heth was as old as they claimed. The autopsy found her to be approximately 80 years old.

A basic timeline of Barnum’s life — as illustrated by Barnum himself — reads almost like a Charles Dickens novel. He paints a picture of his early childhood as pastoral but rife with tragedy - death of his grandmother and father, plunging into poverty, and having to work his way up from the bottom of life. He’s even had smallpox (Barnum 57). As an adult, he worked a series of odd jobs — grocer (56), auctioneer (80), even writer and owner of a weekly news paper (81), before determining that the only life for him, would be one in which he could inspire everyday people to see the wonders of the universe… if they could afford the ticket price.

For a time, Barnum also partnered with another ‘master of nature’, James “Grizzly” Adams, who was famous for capturing and domesticating — as much as was possible — a collection of bears, wolves, California lions, tiger, buffalo and elk (654) so that they were “as docile as kittens” (654). Adams’ body bore the brunt of these training attempts, to the point that he was almost as much of a show as the animals within his care. The best example of this is General Fremont, a bear who broke Adam’s skull in the process of being trained (Barnum 654). General Fremont ended up playing the role of Adams’ porter, carrying all of his gear from one stop on tour to the next. Adams eventually died from complications due, in part, to this skull injury. When Adams died, Barnum inherited all of his animals, and without a single scar to show from any of the animals under his care, Barnum solidified this image of being in control of nature.

Along these lines was a ‘mermaid’ that Barnum bought from a sailor, who in turn claimed had purchased it from Japanese sailors off the coast of Calcutta (Barnum 174). Barnum claimed it looked exactly like another mermaid that had been exhibited in London in 1822, and he used its novelty as “indirect advertising” (176), placing it right outside of the Museum to entice people passing by.

He saw his first aquarium on a tour of England in 1856. In the US, he knew that James Cutting of the Boston Aquarial Gardens had already been experimenting with keeping captive ocean animals, and by 1861 had three belugas, one bottlenose dolphin and a grey shark (Killing 155). By 1862, Barnum would purchase Cutting’s aquarium, and rename it Barnum’s Aquarial Gardens. He then moved all of the animals to his museum in New York, just before it burnt down in 1865 (Killing 155).

Barnum wanted two whales so that he could construct a story of a husband-and-wife team of cetaceans venturing on land to explore the people of New York City, and so none of his audience would feel sorry for a single whale being all on its own (Barnum 682).

The whales’ enclosure inside Barnum’s Museum was a 40x18-foot tank of salted freshwater (Leiren-Young, The Ultimate Exhibit). There is also some disambiguation on the size of the tank. Philip Hoare, in his book The Whale: In Search of the Giant of the Sea, suggests that the tank was actually 58x25-feet and 7-feet deep (Hoare 32).
The whales actually died within 48 hours (Leiren-Young, *The Ultimate Exhibit*).

Barnum went onto publish an obituary of the first whales, which stated: “It seemed but yesterday [...] we gazed upon the youthful form, instinct with life, and looking forward to a useful and pleasant career. [...] The loss of the public is great, although not irreparable. The world moves on, and many natural curiosities remains to fill up the gaps caused by death” (“Obituary: A Whale No More”).

The challenge of exhibiting ocean creatures without personal aquariums and public curiosity cabinets was the subject of an 1857 lecture by Robert Warrington for the Royal Institute of Great Britain, a lecture Barnum was almost certain to have come across in his research on whale exhibitions. Warrington cited the fish tanks installed by the Zoological Society of London in Regent’s Park in 1852 as an example of how to properly house ocean animals, by creating a balance of “animal and vegetable existences” (Edwards 19), and using aquatic plant life to help filter bacteria out of the water. For Warrington, the added benefit to this was that the audience would be able to see the animal perform within a setting resembling its natural ecosystem, allowing researchers the opportunity to come to a fuller understanding of animal behaviours. The goal was to create “to a certain extent, a world in miniature” (21), just like curiosity cabinets and menageries like Versaille had been doing for ages. Of special note though, Edwards cautions any exhibitors away from using “globes” (23) for their fish - small bowls which gave the fish only space enough to swim in a tight circle. Each of these elements was present, somewhat, in Barnum’s next attempt at bringing whales into his museum.

In the same editorial, Barnum painted himself as “the public’s obedient servant” (“A Card From P. T. Barnum), bringing the whales into the city not because he wanted to, not because he stood to make money, but because he was asked to, and what kind of entertainer, educator, and neighbour would he be if he declined?

These were likely belugas. There was quite a controversy over whether the whales were naturally white or if Barnum had them painted so he could drum up audience attention. He went so far as to bring in Professor Agassiz of Harvard to confirm they were whales (Barnum 687), but it was just as likely that Barnum himself was the one who started the public debate, as the professor confirmed that the animals were, clearly, whales. Belugas, also nicknamed both “white whales” (Hoare 449), and “canaries of the sea” (450) because they are the most vocal of whales. Barnum likely captured so many Belugas because they are relatively small, are the only whales to stay in the arctic all year round, and they have articulated necks, “lending them a quizzical, human expression” (450), making them both easy and entertaining to exhibit.

I have truncated this significantly, as the report was several pages long.

There were also reports that workers within the museum had smashed the glass walls of the whale tanks in order to drain the water and put the fire out. Barnum suggests this is also false, and that anyone who claims to have been inside the museum at this point in the fire would not have escaped with their life (Barnum 799).

Despite all of this, Barnum was determined to rebuild his menagerie, coupling it with Van Amburgh’s animal collections (Barnum 876).
We can also see similar objectives within early American zoological institutions. Curiosity cabinets like Barnum’s, even though they had educational aims, could still be brushed off by more academic communities as simply ‘entertainment’. An institution that prides itself on the performance of tamed fleas could clearly not speak to the physiology and behaviour of animals in the wild. This was one of many impetuses for the establishment of early zoological institutions in North America: creating a place where animals could be studied in safe semblances of their natural habitat, by both academic and public audiences, and without entertainment being a primary goal. Like curiosity cabinets, early zoos were collections of animals, but they had a greater air of authenticity, and unlike Barnum they were not in the habit of overtly drumming up controversy to attract an audience. What set them aside was their potential to “powerfully aid, encourage and stimulate human progress, eduction, and science” (Killing 158).

When the first zoological institution was established in North America in 1874 (Killing 151), the owners wanted to “surpass” and “Americanize” the zoo-going experience (152). They were heavily influenced by the Victorian zoos, which focused on visitor experience, placing animals “in pens that were patently too small but had the benefit of affording the best views to visitors” (Bateman 2013). They emphasized the animal body without flourish. While curiosity cabinets often set animal bodies - particularly those which had been taxidermied - in exhibits alongside vegetation that made the animal seem more embedded into its natural environment, early zoos focused on the animal body alone, giving them no place to hide, cower, or become less than entirely visible to the crowds at all times (Kalof 153; Killing 152). North American zoos also focused on building massive collections and herds of animals, “a living collection of wild animals on a grand scale” (151), as many as they could possibly contain within the space give (Malamud 30).

The education intended from the displays was, like Barnum’s museum, split. While on one hand early zoos were focused on teaching people about nature through first-hand encounters, the subtle messaging focused on human domination of nature, teaching the audience that it was permissible to imprison animals to learn about them, without having to outwardly say it. There was a strong sense of smoothing out any edges or complications that might present the animals in captivity as any less than grateful for their inclusion in the human world, as that was the only way ‘wildness’ could be experienced by the audience.

This study, as well as the majority of other studies that Sea World quotes to support its use of captive orcas is funded and facilitated by the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums, of which SeaWorld is a member, making the study academically biased and calling into question all of their conclusions.
Before going further, I want to make a note on my methodology within this section. Accessing historical Shamu shows was more difficult than anticipated, especially after SeaWorld announced its pending transformation of Shamu into performances more focused on orcas’ natural behaviours. Their distribution of any shows prior to 2010, when trainer Dawn Brancheau was killed by orca performer Tilikum after a Dine With Shamu show (Melich), have ceased. My most reliable access to these performances was through recordings made by audience members at the Shamu shows, and posted on video-sharing platforms like Youtube or Vimeo. While not ideal, I was able to find a wide variety of Shamu shows, spanning from 1981 until 2015. Six specific shows were most represented: This Is Shamu (1981), The Shamu Experience (1985), The Shamu Celebration (1986), The Legend of Shamu (1988), The Shamu Show (1989), The Shamu Adventure (2002), Believe (2008), and One Ocean (2013), and these are the shows I will evaluate. I hope that by having such a wide range in dates that it will be able to demonstrate the evolution of the Shamu shows from the introduction of trainer waterworks to the exclusion of trainers from the pools.

While SeaWorld also anticipates that its audience will follow-up their experience at the Shamu show with a more interactive orca experience - such as paying to feed one of the animals, attending an ‘Ask A Trainer’ session, or visiting the InfoBooks on their website, for the purposes of evaluating just the content of the Shamu shows themselves, I have not indicated in this analysis any instance where a trainer suggested the audience could visit another location for further information. While helpful and prudent for them to mention, there was no way for me to evaluate how many people in the audience, if any, acted on this suggestion.

The chart included as Appendix A gives a short summary of this analysis in point-form, citing information that was specifically given to audiences during the shows.

The video uploader indicated the performance took place on March 20th, 1981.

The tank holds just over one billion gallons (“This Is Shamu”).

I did attempt to find out which specific whale was performing in the show, and while the larger whale was consistently referred to as Shamu, the smaller whale used in the audience participant segment was alternately referred to as “Kandu” and “Kandy”. However, there was no Kandu at SeaWorld Orlando, leading me to conclude that this was a stage name. Like elephants in early circuses, SeaWorld gives a variety of stage names to its performing orcas to obscure origins and any inter-park movement that might cause the audience discomfort - such as moving a calf from a mother.

This version of The Shamu Experience was recorded at the now defunct SeaWorld Ohio location.

This character was clearly inspired by SeaWorld founder Ted Griffin, although within the script he remains unnamed.

This was also the first show in which Baby Shamu - or Kalina - appeared, on May 21st, 1988 (J. Morris).

The only review of the show, from the Orlando Sentinel, says The Legend of Shamu incorporated eight fibreglass totem poles, each between 20 and 30 feet, and all decorated with Alaskan art (“Shamu’s Got A New Show”).

This is possibly an extension of the program that Alexandra Morton was working on when she was conducting orca research at SeaWorld San Diego.
This is inaccurate. As SeaWorld notes in their own literature, specifically the Killer Whales InfoBook they publish on their website and sometimes encourage audiences to look at after their visit to SeaWorld, orcas vocalize by moving air between nasal sacs near the blowhole (Killer Whales InfoBook). I suspect the blowhole was identified as the origin of vocalization as it is easy for audiences to identify, even from seats way up in the bleachers.

I was unable to find any Shamu show recordings that took place in the 1990s, even though my goal was to find somewhat consistent representation from the 1980s until present.

This may be a callback to the Tlingit story of Naatsiłanei.

Hargrove pinpoints the first Shamu show as occurring in 1965 (Hargrove 29), but SeaWorld puts it at 1966 (“The Shamu Show”).

Hargrove says that SeaWorld’s formula has historically been so successful that they receive approximately four million visitors per year to the Shamu stadium (Hargrove 29). SeaWorld itself places this number at a combined twenty-two million guests between its eleven aquatic parks (“Who We Are”). SeaWorld has not publicly updated its audience statistics since 2015.

Other languages and cultures similarly adopted this feared orca reputation. The French called them *ork*, from *orque*, or ‘sea monster’; in German, they are *morderwal* or ‘whale murderer’; in Basque, *ballena asesina* or “assassin whale”. Even in North American Indigenous languages, the orca is depicted as a terrifying sea creature, though their cultures showed the animals much more respect. The Haida called the orca *skana*, for “killer demon [with] supernatural powers”, and in Aleut, Alaska, they were called *polossatik*, or “the feared one” (Leiren-Young, *The Sea Beast*).

Orcas are actually the largest members of the Dolphinidae family (Kirby 1; Zimmerman), making them more closely related to dolphins and porpoises than any actual whale.

This also contributed to orcas becoming targets for whalers when populations of larger whales began to decline, and competition for fishermen when fish stocks dropped, both of which led to orcas being hunted in large numbers (Kirby 3; Leiren-Young, *A Living Nightmare*). They were also so abundant in the Pacific Northwest at one point that they gained a reputation for being ‘pests’ (Leiren-Young, *Save The Whale*). Between 1954 and 1997, approximately 1178 orcas were hunted in Japan, 978 in Norway, and over 3000 in the USSR and Russia (Kirby 3). Morton suggests that these numbers are all underestimated and likely to be much lower than the number of orcas actually hunted (Morton 65), and this is not even to include the Pacific Northwest.

Griffin knew that both Marineland of the Pacific and the Vancouver Aquarium had had some luck in capture and short-term exhibits, but none had managed to successfully maintain an orca outside of the wild.

Griffin named the orca “Namu” after the island where he was caught (Leiren-Young, *The Blackfish Gold Rush*; Zimmerman).
The intent was to expand his own facilities in Seattle, but Namu died after eleven months in captivity, before Griffin could put his future plans into action. The cause of death was ultimately revealed to be water pollution (Leiren-Young, *The Blackfish Gold Rush*; Zimmerman). The salinity of the water was so low that Namu had difficulties staying afloat, and eventually became so exhausted that he was caught in the netting of the sea pen and drowned (Kirby 79; Leiren-Young, *The Blackfish Gold Rush*; Zimmerman). This is not something Griffin would have anticipated or known to prevent, as to him, sea water in a Seattle harbour would have seemed to be the same as sea water in the open ocean. The run-offs from shore, pollutants from passing boats, and other contributors to water pollution would not yet have been on the radar.

Griffin then shifted his focus to orca capture and sales, stocking SeaWorld with their future performers. Namu has since been called “the whale that launched a thousand ships - looking to catch more killer whales” (Leiren-Young, *The Blackfish Gold Rush*).

“Shamu” was short for “She-Namu”, or the female version of the first whale Griffin had captured. Griffin’s actual goal was to take a mother and calf into captivity, but the mother died during the capture (Leiren-Young, *The Blackfish Gold Rush*; Zimmerman).

This shared name enabled SeaWorld to bypass the public outcry that occurred when Wanda from Marineland of the Pacific and Moby Doll from the Vancouver Aquarium died in full view of the public.

This was actually a quote from Murray Newman of the Vancouver Aquarium, in reference to his goal of making Moby Doll the first performing orca celebrity in the vein of famous film dolphins.

These types of orcas are: Southern Resident, Northern Resident, Bigg’s or Transient, Offshore, Type 1 Eastern North Atlantic, Type 2 Eastern North Atlantic, Pack Ice or Antarctic Type A, Gerlach or Type B, Ross Sea or Type C, and Subantarctic or Type D (Killer whales InfoBook; Leiren-Young, *Save The Whales*, Morton 4; WDC). Though, some researchers - such as Eva Saulitis - believe that so little is understood currently about some eco-types that there could potentially be even more. Her doctoral research focused on a small group of transient orcas she called the “Chugach transients” (Saulitis xiv), after the region in which she saw them most active. This is in Alaska’s Prince William Sound, or the area impacted by the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989. After years of research, she realized that their patterns and vocalizations were so separate from other transients that they may one day - with more research, if their population is able to significantly rebound - be classified as a distinct eco-type.

Kirby is referring to the genetic lines between Residents and Transients of the Pacific Northwest (Kirby 72).

In the wild, most orcas - males in particular - stay with their mothers throughout their entire lives (Morton 82), with the exception of Bigg’s or Transient orcas. If the mother dies, the male orcas will join the family of their next oldest adult sister or an allomother within the pod (82), but they are never alone.

‘Seal bombs’ are underwater bombs used by fishermen to scare seals away from fish stocks (Zimmerman).
Griffin and Doldberry captured and sold thirty whales before the Marine Mammal Protection Act limited their activities, and they sold each of the whales to amusement parks for around $25,000 (Kaplan). However, this number does not account for the orcas caught accidentally or killed in the process, the deaths of whom Griffin tried to hide, noting one instance in a 1970 capture where five whales died after being trapped in a net. Wanting to avoid pad press, he had the bodies filled with rocks, assuming they would sink and never be seen again. The bodies washed up on shore not long after (Kaplan).

The Southern Resident type span from mid-Vancouver Island down to the California Coast, and are currently listed as endangered (Kirby 6). There were an estimated 200 in their population during the late 1800’s, and they are now more likely to number around 85 (Morton 65).

The Northern Resident type span from northern Vancouver Island up into Alaska, and are currently listed as threatened (Kirby 6).

Much less is known about the Transients in terms of their range and their numbers (Kirby 6), but in 2003, the Canadian Species At Risk Act (SARA) listed their population as threatened (Morton 65).

This also pre-dated an awareness that orcas could be differentiated on individual levels. In the 1971, when Mike Biggs and Graeme Elis were conducting a survey orca populations in the Johnson Strait, Biggs noticed that the margins on dorsal fins were different for each orca, and he hypothesized that they could be identified through these markings. Through an exhaustive study in which all orcas in this area were photographed, Biggs was able to determine which orcas belonged to which families, larger pods, and eco-types (Morton 68), leading to the discovery that orca pods are matrilineal and much more complex than originally thought (68).

In 1971, Canadian Department of Fisheries sent Mike Bigg, a marine mammalogist, to estimate how many orcas were left in the Johnson Strait. He asked local fisherman to participate in surveys, and was able to estimate that there may be only 200-250 left (Morton 66). Morton suggests “it is possible that one-fifth of the entire population in the Northwest had been taken or killed in captures” (66).

The first surviving ‘Baby Shamu’, Kalina, was described in early show reviews as “the making of a new legend” (J. Morris).

The reward often varies. Thad Lacinak, former SeaWorld VP, says that variability in reinforcements “makes the animals more flexible about what the outcome is and keeps them interested” (Zimmerman), while at the same time desensitizes them to anticipating a specific outcome for every behaviour, which ultimately makes them more adaptable performers in a show setting. If the orcas expected a fish at the end of every behaviour, and one was unavailable during a specific moment in the show, it could cause stress for the performer. If the orca simply expected a reward of some sort, then anything could do.

Not every trainer and every orca will perform in the waterworks. Trainers much reach a certain level of experience before they are given the opportunity to get into the water, and orcas must associate that specific trainer with target recognition, reinforcements, and a general sense that the trainer has their well-being in mind (Hargrove 46).

In the stand-on, the trainer balances on the orca’s rostrum while the whale leaps perpendicularly into the air (Kirby 23, 59), and the trainer stays balanced.
In the hydro-hop, the orca pushes the trainer to the bottom of the foot tank, where the trainer repositions and holds onto the orca’s rostrum. The orca then thrusts to the surface at approximately a sixty-degree angle, and when they reach the surface, the trainer swan dives off to one side and the orca jumps off to the other and belly flops (Kirby 66).

In the rocket-hop, the trainer dives into the pool and laces their fingers together. The orca places its rostrum between those fingers, allowing the trainer to reposition and place a foot on each pectoral fin. They dive down to the bottom, shoot back up, leap into the air, and both do a back dive (Kirby 68).

Kirby, on the other hand, found records of interviews given anonymously to a 1992 study on captive performing orcas, stating that whales who refused to perform are sometimes denied food, and that “uncooperative orcas received just two-thirds of their daily allotment, plus vitamins.” After this, “the whales would start perfuming when they realized they weren’t going to get fed” (Kirby 370).

The specific toys or recreational activities mentioned in SeaWorld’s ‘behind the scenes’ look at Believe are: balls, barrels, and “mimic time” (“Backstage of Believe”).

For example, when the trainer signals a simple fluke wave, that is an extension of the orca presenting its fluke for medical evaluation (“Animal Training Philosophy”). Likewise, feeding and demonstrating what orcas like to eat would also be exhibited under ‘husbandry’ (“Backstage of Believe”)

Recent studies have found even variations in the frequency of orca vocalizations depending on ecotypes, nothing that transients in the wild vocalize less than residents, and orcas are often most vocal when traveling in larger pods (Killer Whales InfoBook).

She focused primarily on Corky and Orky, who were captured so young that Morton was concerned that they did not have the opportunity to learn “language” from their elders before being taken to SeaWorld (64).

Perhaps one of the strongest pieces of evidence that orcas of possess ‘language’, even in a form we do not understand, comes from an experiment Morton and a documentary crew conducted with Corky, who was at the time one of the longest-held captive orcas. Morton’s research on wild residents managed to track down the pod that Corky had come from, including the whale which Morton believed to be her mother. She recorded a series of the pod vocalizing in the wild, and then convinced SeaWorld to let her play it back to Corky through their underwater speaker system, to see if she would respond. Morton recalls that Corky “began shuddering terribly” (Morton 96), and eventually became so distressed that they had to turn the recording off.

The tanks at SeaWorld are not solely sea water. Without any biotic life to filter out bacteria, the SeaWorld tanks are controlled environments in which chlorine and other chemicals artificially clean the water. Hargrove, in his SeaWorld expose Beneath the Surface noted that the chlorination of SeaWorld’s tanks was often harmful to both human trainers and orcas.

The purpose of this program is to give the audience some more factual information on what orcas eat, provide opportunities for audience members to feed Shamu themselves - for a price - and give the audience a chance to eat their own lunches, while taking a break from walking around the SeaWorld facilities.
The other victims of Tilikum were Keltie Bryrne at SeaLand in Victoria, BC, 1991 (Zimmerman), and Daniel Dukes at SeaWorld Orlando, 1999 (Kirby 528).

The Orange County Sheriff’s Office conducted a number of interviews with eyewitnesses, including with Jessica Wilder (Melich), and Laura Surovik (Rivera), who both remarked that Tilikum seemed agitated at the end of the show, while Brancheau was finishing a ‘relationship’ portion of a training session with him, by patting him on the back. During this time, Wilder witnessed him grab her arm, drag her into the tank, and hold her under the water, becoming more aggressive as she or any of the trainers tried to divert his attention (Melich). Surovik was a fellow trainer and the assistant curator of animal training, and when she arrived at the Shamu stadium, she noted that Tilikum treated Brancheau’s body as “his possession” (Surovik). The Sheriff’s Office eventually concluded that Brancheau’s death was the result of “drowning and traumatic injuries” (Melich).

Although SeaWorld cannot say this with any certainty, they estimate Tilikum’s age at the time of capture to be approximately two years old. He was captured in 1983 (Howard).

“Raked” means that Tilikum was gashed with another orca’s teeth.

In fact, SeaWorld pulled trainers at all of its parks from waterwork immediately following Brancheau’s death, pending investigation. Hargrove recalls that SeaWorld initially tried to pin blame for the incident on Brancheau’s behaviour, suggesting that she had done something wrong within the performance to trigger Shamu (Hargrove 189-190).

However, this study, like the one mentioned earlier in the chapter, is also funded by an organization to which SeaWorld belongs, is financially dependent on portraying the institutions in a positive light, and the analysis is not peer-reviewed, but it is still one of the primary pro-captivity studies publicized by SeaWorld and other zoos. The study also noted that WAZA institutes receive approximately 700,000,000 visitors annually, making their survey sample 0.0009% of their annual attendance.

Like the WAWA study, SeaWorld is also an accredited member of the AAMPA, and the survey and its results have not been independently peer-reviewed. They polled park visitors ages 18 and up on both occasions, and compiled the responses of 1,102 people in 2004 and 1,011 people in 2011 out of the 45-million people who they claim visit AAMPA-accredited parks annually, making their survey size approximately 0.002% of annual visitors.

However, Sweeny, was also co-chair of the AMMPA education committee from 1992-1999 and again from 2001-2007, as well as being a member of AZA. I point this out not to challenge that SeaWorld has provided opportunities for audiences to increase their marine knowledge, but simply to note that their findings are not peer reviewed, and the authors of the studies have a bias towards presenting SeaWorld in a positive light, which may call their conclusions into question, as good as those conclusions may look.

I want to note that this is a clear conflation of several Indigenous cultures, and was apparently created through SeaWorld-funded research on Indigenous-orca relationships in the Pacific Northwest. All cultural appropriations belong to SeaWorld, and are simply being reiterated for the sake of analysis.

This story might best be remembered as the one shared with Jesse by Randolph in Free Willy, about a boy saved by a whale and returned to the earth.
Kirby and Neiwert also note that many Indigenous cultures across the Pacific Northwest do have similar myths and legends of orcas living underwater in homes and villages, taking human form beneath the waves, and that people who drown come to join them (Kirby 13; Neiwert 30), but likewise he does not specify which regions or cultures these beliefs originate from.

The actual Tlingit word for orca is ‘keet’ (Hunsaker), and the Haida word is ‘skana’, meaning “killer demon” (Leiren-Young, The Sea Beast).

As Morton put it more succinctly later on, “years of Shamu shows have conditioned the public to think of killer whales as pool toys” (Morton 197). As mentioned earlier, if orcas were seen as possessing language, and the ability to possess and express independent thought, our approach to ‘deepening these emotional connections’ between human and animal would - hopefully - be quite different.

One of the orcas currently held alone is Kiska, the resident orca at Marineland in Niagara Falls.

This is a behaviour which has only been observed in young orcas in Northern or Southern Resident populations (Hargrove 111).

An example of this is Tilikum’s attack on Brancheau. Hargrove also notes throughout his book on the number of times he felt lucky to remove himself from the tanks as the orcas he worked with became more aggressive during a performance.

Though orca attacks do not often escalate to causing fatal injuries to other orcas, it has happened. During the middle of a show at SeaWorld San Diego in 1987, the two orcas performing - Kandu V and Corky - had a confrontation (Hargrove 106; Kirby 348). When Kandu V attempted to “emphasize her role as matriarch” (Hargrove 106), being the larger of the whales, she slammed into Corky’s, accidentally fracturing her jaw, which “ruptured one of [her] arteries as she hemorrhaged to death on the bottom of the pool” (106) and the whole audience watched. Head orca trainer Kelly Flaherty Clark once said, “every day you walk into your job, you’re walking into a potentially dangerous situation. You never forget that. You can’t afford to forget that” (Zimmerman).

These studies were conducted in the 1950s. They selected rhesus monkeys based on their developmental similarities to human children (Harlow 277).

This group was observed only a handful of times, in the Arctic, and may have been a convergence of several other groups (Killer Whales InfoBook).

Socialization could be impeded by taking orcas from the wild, moving the orcas from one park to the next, or separating calves from their mothers before they are fully grown.

Male orcas and male elephants hold very similar positions in the social lives of their pods / herds. They both exist in matriarchal societies (Nicol) in which relationships with their mother and allomother are lifelong. Male elephants usually stay with their mothers until they are between ten to fifteen years old, and then join a herd of mature male elephants. But the matriarch of the herd still holds all of the cultural information - routes, calls, migratory paths, locations of deceased relatives, and so on (Elephants On The Edge 28). Separation from this matriarchy has been shown to have profoundly negative impacts on immature male elephants (81).
Bradshaw includes in here wildlife fragmentation (Elephants On The Edge 36), “loss of migratory routes and breeding grounds” (37), “big game hunting” (57), and poaching for ivory in particular (56). Their studies spanned South Africa, specifically Kruger and Pilanesberg National Parks, to the Amboseli region between Kenya and Tanzania, the Acholi region of Northern Uganda, and Uganda’s Queen Elizabeth National Park, (Elephants On The Edge 12; Moss C. 12; Seibert).

Add to this separate studies conducted by Katharine Payne at the Oregon Zoo, and by Caitlin O-Connell Rodwell in Namibia, which found that elephants like orcas, exist in a very acoustic world. They are able to communicate seismically, “listening” through the ground up to ten kilometres away (Nicol; O'Connell-Rodwell; Scigliano 275), so even if the elephants did not survive culls themselves, there is great possibility that they both felt and heard the impacts of surrounding massacres.

Payne was initially a specialist in whale calls, and initially theorized that elephants may be communicating seismically and through frequencies too low for the human ear, based on her studies of whale vocalizations (Nicol). This seismic communication is enabled through pacinian corpuscles, receptors in elephant feet and the tips of their trunk which are very sensitive to vibrations, and have direct connections to the brain’s auditory system (Nicol; O’Connell-Rodwell). Low frequency sound travels at approximately 248-264m/s through the ground, giving elephants a seismic hearing range of around 300km² (O’Connell-Rodwell).

Abe is an elephant ethologist.

For example, in Kruger National Park, which was created in 1926 “in response to catastrophic declines in wildlife” (Elephants On The Edge 74), approximately 16,201 elephants have been culled between 1966 and 1994, creating large herds of orphaned elephants. Former Zimbabwe National Parks game ranger Adrian Read explained to Bradshaw how these culls would often occur: they would find herds of forty to fifty elephants by helicopter, and “take out every single elephant” (75), often leaving a single purposely wounded calf to go free so it could lead them onto a nearby herd (76). Read bragged that in his career, he has personally killed 15,000 elephants, and only one had escaped (76).

Abe noted that the young elephants in the Acholi region were “without […] socioecological knowledge” (Elephants On The Edge 60), and prone to violence. Abe’s studies on the Acholi region found that by 1994, elephant populations in Uganda had dropped by 90% (61). In North Luanga National Park in Zambia, she found that approximately 93% of elephants have been killed off, leaving 36% of elephants in herds with no adult female, and 7% of herds made up of entirely “sexually immature orphans” (61). In Queen Elizabeth National Park, the population dropped from 30,000 elephants in 1960, to a mere 200 in 1982 (54).

In some ways, this is not an entirely new approach to looking at animals in captivity. When Barnum’s first whales died in 1861, he published an obituary for them which read, “If a man were confined in the most comfortable of water-tight boxes and carried […] hundreds of miles beneath the water, we should not be startled to hear that his condition was much shattered by the end of the journey” (“Obituary: A Whale No More”). While he goes to great lengths to reiterate the ‘comfort’ he presumes the whales felt, he also acknowledges what ‘stepping into their shoes’ might be like.
In one of the many articles Bradshaw has written about trans-species psychology and elephants, and she specifically cautions anyone working within this approach to be certain they are not further marginalizing animal psychology by assuming it to be identical to human psychology (Trans-Species Psychology, 13), and asks how this might be possible, having not yet arrived at a definite answer.

Journalist Shana Alexander also came to the conclusion that perhaps captive elephants were exhibiting signs of mental health problems, when she looked at the 1976 case of Julia, an elephant at the Central Park Zoo. Julia was euthanized after attacking both other elephants in her enclosure and her trainer. The zoo veterinarian at the time said, “if she were a person, we would probably put her in a sanitarium” or at least find her some psychological help (Alexander 142). As she was an elephant, it was easier to euthanize her, just as it was easier for historical circuses to euthanize all of their male elephants once they reached puberty.

Bradshaw provides the example of captive Moluccan cockatoos who “pick at their chests until the breastbone is exposed and then die of the wound” (Elephants On The Edge, 40).

Reinhold cites two incidents from 1987: one in which trainer Jonathan Smith was hit by an orca with such force that it caused internal injuries and he barely survived; and the other in which trainer John Silca was struck while riding on the back of another whale and suffered a broken back, hips, pelvis, leg and ribs (Reinhold).

Spong was once a proponent of captivity himself, until he worked with two whales at the Vancouver Aquarium in the late 1960s and this caused him to reevaluate his stance (Reinhold).

The conditions almost certainly led Tilikum’s death. In August 2016 it was announced by SeaWorld that Tilikum had a drug-resistant bacterial lung infection and was struggling, though still performing. SeaWorld announced his death on January 6th, 2017, at approximately 36 years old, after 34 years in captivity (Howard).

Tilikum and the other Icelandic whales in the tank at the time were the first captive orcas to ever kill a person (Morton 160).
One case that stands out clearly in this regard is the story of Corky and her second calf, who was being fed by trainers as Corky had not yet learned how to nurse a calf (Morton 137-138). Corky was captured off the British Columbia coast near Pender Island in 1968, when she was still very young (Morton 68). SeaWorld says that Corky rejected the calf, as she had with her first - though Morton suggests that may be because she had never been socialized to understand what to do with a calf (Morton 46) - and began to act aggressively, leading them to remove the calf from her care. Morton observed some of this behaviour, saying that Corky was actively hitting the calf in the stomach, so she initially agreed that the trainers should take the calf away before they were injured (137-138). The calf died a few days later. When they performed an autopsy, they found a large, fatal pocket of air in the calf’s stomach, which they suspect was caused by the formula the trainers were feeding her being too harsh for her digestive system (140). With Morton’s background on acoustics and knowledge of orca echolocation, she came to the conclusion that rather than being aggressive, “a pocket of air would reflect sound better than all the tissue and bones around it” (140), so it was more likely that Corky was trying to burp the calf and save their life. In the months following the calf’s death, Morton observed Corky purposely slamming into a glass wall of her tank that overlooked the gift shop supply room, which housed large stuffed orcas. When the wall cracked from Corky’s repeated hitting, SeaWorld claimed it was an accident, but with echolocation, orcas should not ever accidentally hit anything. Morton could only include Corky’s actions had intentionality. This was one of the contributing factors to Morton’s eventual anti-captivity stance.

In the wild, they would have learned these parenting skills from their mothers and allomothers.

SeaWorld’s *Killer Whales InfoBook* notes that Kalina was the original Baby Shamu and the first to be born and thrive in captivity (*Killer Whales InfoBook*). They list her age as twenty-three (“Backstage of Believe”), but fail to mention that she died in 2010. Even in SeaWorld’s educational literature, Baby Shamu will always be portrayed as alive.

While Tilikum was known to be a difficult whale to work with in the water, Keto was the “most reliable and oft-used orca in both dry and wet shows” (Kirby 773). He was born in 1995, and by 1999 was moved to Loro Parque in Spain where he would be one of the first four “Shamu” performers, all young orcas who had been similarly separated from their mothers. This new pod, ranging in age from eighteen months to a couple of years, had no ‘leader’ (612). During a rehearsal in 2009, Keto was unexpectedly aggressive towards trainer Alexis Martinez, so they had another trainer call Keto over to the side of the tank for a reward, hoping that would break his focus on Martinez. When he noticed Martinez begin to swim out of the pool, Keto attacked and Martinez was dead in minutes (774).

An historical example of this can be seen in the 1877 case of Cony Island’s sole beluga whale, which “contracted his habit of swimming in a circle” (Hoare 33-34). In an article by The Times, it was reported that the beluga “swam up and down the tank rapidly, hitting its head on the wall. Then, having somewhat recovered, it seam again several times round the tank, and again came into collision with the end of the tank, turned over, and died” (Hoare 35-36). The aquarium continued to exhibit its body for days after the death. Likewise, when one looks at descriptions of Moby Doll’s time in captivity, reports suggest that she spent much of her time only swimming in slow circles while refusing to eat (Leiren-Young, *The Pugnacious, Dangerous Monster*). Said one audience member, “I was very disappointed. [...] It was much smaller than I expected and it wasn’t very interesting to just stand there and watch it swim around” (*TPDM*).
In the wild, when pods are traveling constantly, orcas will make four or five short thirty-second dives underwater, and follow this with one long three- to five-minute dive (Morton 52), but there is not enough depth to accomplish this pattern in captivity so the orcas have learned how to simply float (52).

An interesting note in terms of lifespans: long whale lifespans have been dismissed as sailors’ myths for a long time, but “since 1981, six stone or ivory harpoon points have been found in the blubber of whales - weapons that modern Inupiats did not recognize, having used mostly metal harpoons since the 1870’s” (Hoare 490). This was recorded from native Alaskans hunting bowheads in the Bering Sea, making some of the whales caught recently well over a hundred years old. One study, by Dr. Jeffrey L. Bada of the Scipps Institution of Oceanography in California, dates animal ages using aspartic acid levels in eyes, and estimates some bowheads caught by Inuit to be 135-180 years old, while at least one was 211 years old. They suggest that there are even older ones out there (Hoare 490-491).

Dr. Lori Marino, an expert on cetacean brains, would like to make this connection even stronger, if permitted. She has been pushing to see the brains of deceased SeaWorld whales, because she suspects that they would exhibit neurological changes consistent with humans or other animals who have suffered from prolonged PTSD, specifically in “areas that respond to chronic stress, such as the hippocampus” (Hargrove 168). In the brains of mammals, the HPA - hippocampal-pituitary-adrenal axis regulates stress and stress hormones. Chronic stress impairs this system, causing it to release corticosteroids on a continual basis, changing the body on a neuro-chemical and biological level (Trans-Species Psychology 44-45), resulting in a shrinking hippocampus, memory loss, inability to regulate one’s emotions, and a weakened immune system (Hargrove 168; Trans-Species Psychology 44). Bradshaw has seen this impact in elephant brains. While Marino has not been permitted access to the brain of a deceased SeaWorld orca, she theorizes this is exactly what she would find. Hargrove, as a former trainer, supports this hypothesis, having noticed the impacts of chronic stress levels through orca blood work, persistent ulcers, and stereotypy (Hargrove 168).
I want to note that from the outset, there have always been public protests about the impacts of captivity on orcas, even before much of this information was known. Even predecessors to SeaWorld, such as the Vancouver Aquarium, were sites of disagreement between pro-captivity and anti-captivity camps. In 1963, the Vancouver Aquarium hired Murray Newman, a man who was once called “Canada’s P. T. Barnum” (Leiren-Young, *Canada’s Captain Ahab*), and he decided that the aquarium needed a “star attraction” (Leiren-Young). He commissioned Samuel Burich, a specialist in stone carving and sculpting who had a background as a fisherman (Leiren-Young) to capture and kill an orca for the purposes of creating a “a perfect, anatomically accurate [and life-sized] replica of the most feared predator on the planet” (Leiren-Young).

Zurich and his assistant attempted to harpoon a larger whale off the coast of Saturna Island, but hit a juvenile one accidentally. When they witnessed two larger whales attempting to keep the injured one afloat, it seemed to them that the whales were attempting to ‘rescue’ the whale as the fishermen would rescue an injured member of their own team. In the end, Zurich felt any further action on his part would be an execution (Leiren-Young, *Loomings*). Zurich instead decided to bring this now harpooned whale back to Vancouver as a live specimen, determining that “if a dead whale was worth dissecting, a live whale would be invaluable” (Leiren-Young, *A Terrible Struggle*). On the other hand, the media dismissed Zurich’s role as “a rather dumbfounded amateur Ahab” (West). The orca, once destined for visual art, transformed into a potential performer for Newman, as he struggled to find both a large enough sea pen, and a way to teach the whale to do tricks like the dolphins from Marineland of the Pacific (Leiren-Young, *The Ultimate Exhibit*). On opening weekend, 20,000 people came to see the whale that the Aquarium was calling alternately ‘Hound Dog’ - because she had been towed back to Vancouver by a length of rope attached to the harpoon still embedded in her back - and Moby Doll (Leiren-Young, *From Moby Dick to Moby Doll*). The media reaction varied. Florence Bar, one of Canada’s first anti-captivity activists and the head of the Vancouver SPCA, protested the “sideshow-like atmosphere of the exhibition (Leiren-Young, *The Pugnacious, Dangerous Monster*). An editorial in the Globe and Mail suggested the Aquarium should take a cue from what the author did with stray animals around his home - bring them back to the wild, “that […] is what Vancouver should do with Moby Doll” (West). Others commented that “her survival should be a boon to sculpture and in science, not to mention the tourist trade”, while lamenting that “I think they’ve forgotten all about the whale. She’s just incidental to this whole thing” (Worth).

Moby Doll survived only eight-seven days in captivity, which was a new record for orcas (Leiren-Young, *The Blackfish Gold Rush*; Orlean). Like Wanda, it was later discovered that the sea pen had low salinity, meaning that Moby Doll likely had a difficult time staying afloat and eventually died of exhaustion (Leiren-Young, *The Blackfish Gold Rush*). Her body was eventually exhibited at the Vancouver Aquarium as originally planned.

Since then, protest has only steadily grown of SeaWorld’s practices. PETA, for example, launched a lawsuit against SeaWorld on behalf of its orcas, claiming that SeaWorld wilfully violates the orcas’ “constitutional rights” (PETA). Also named as a “next friend” to the orcas in the lawsuit is Ingrid Visser, whose study on damages and collapsed dorsal fins is routinely misused to support SeaWorld’s claim that dorsal fin collapse is a natural occurrence in the wild (PETA). Other scientists to challenge SeaWorld’s captivity practices are Ken Balcomb, Naomi Rose, Paul Spong and Alexandra Morton, all of whom have extensive experience studying orcas in the wild. A final sect of SeaWorld protest comes from former employees, such as John

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252 At the time, Tilikum was SeaWorld’s oldest and largest male orca.
I do want to acknowledge that there are institutions which are aiming for a more all-encompassing, immersive exhibition design which take into account the natural landscape of the zoo and the animal in conjunction. I am referring specifically to places like the Arizona-Sonoma Desert Museum and the Belize City Zoo.

Eco devotes an entire chapter to life in a zoo in his *Travels in Hyperreality*. If we look back even further, Henry Salt, in his 1894 *Animals’ Rights Considered In Relation to Social Progress*, goes so far as to equate captivity and the types of naturalistic enclosures one might see in 19th-Century menageries or curiosity cabinets with “merely outer semblances and the *simulacra* of the denizens of forest and prairie - poor spiritless remnants of what were formerly wild animals” (Salt 40).

Other sources list Seattle’s Woodland Park Zoo as the first naturalistic habitats, for gorillas specifically, in 1879 (Coe 118).

Hagenbeck did still insist on having cages for carnivores and birds, to impede any escape attempts, and to put visitors at ease (Kalof 156).

The Denver Zoo was the next to apply a no-bars approach in 1918 (Killing 164). However, the idea was not mainstream until the 1970s, as I will touch on later in this chapter.

Grazian also suggests that the thicker the glass, the more risk that the barrier will be “amplified” (Grazian 20) as it muffles sound from within the enclosures, and can create other distractions such as light reflections.

Brinkley also suggests that there is a tendency for people to feel as if they can look down on animals if they are literally looking down on the animals (Grazian 32), so if they are prevented from this, perhaps the design can encourage a greater sense of respect for the animals.

Naturalistic enclosures do give some opportunities for animals to hide - for example, a den for polar bears. Eco suggests that the invisibility of an animal within a zoo may even suggest further authenticity, even though it does not immediately attract visitor interest. The inability to immediately see an animal suggests that they have the freedom to appear where and when they like, much like within a natural ecosystem (Eco 49).

By this, Grazian means that any enrichment that can keep animals from exhibiting stereotypic behaviours (Grazian 28).

The trees used in most zoo exhibits are actually made of steel by the company NatureMaker. They are described as “87% botanically accurate” (Grazian 33), sculpted to look real in every way, complete with bark and knots, to help simulate environments that animals cannot destroy easily (33).

Though some zoos prefer to have animal death occur solely ‘behind the scenes’, others capitalize on animals deaths as further educational opportunities. The Copenhagen Zoo for example recently euthanized a young male giraffe, Marius, as he did not fit within their breeding program and the zoo said keeping him would divert resources away from other giraffes whose genetic lines were less represented. He was euthanized and autopsied live - and live-streamed - and then fed to the lions, all for educational purposes. A zoo spokesperson said, in response to criticism, “I’m actually proud because I think we have given children a huge understanding of the anatomy of a giraffe that they wouldn’t have had from watching a giraffe in a photo” (“‘Surplus’ giraffe put down at Copenhagen Zoo”).
Bekoff’s analysis of this study shows that while WAZA institutes may claim their visitors leave with a greater understanding of biodiversity, there is no proven correlation between what is learned at a zoo, and subsequent positive environmental action outside of the zoo (Bekoff, 11 Mar 2014). Bekoff also noted that this study was self-funded by WAZA, received no peer-review, and that while it celebrated its result that “fewer than 10 percent of people who go to the zoo come out with a greater awareness of biodiversity than they had when they went in” (Bekoff), it is a significantly low percentage for the approximately 700,000,000 visitors WAZA institutions receive annually (Gussett). Essentially, there is no way for zoo claims to be substantiated.

In addition to taking up approximately one-third of the animal enclosure, moats also pose risks to animals. The moats are constructed to include a significant drop from the exhibit to the bottom, with a sizeable gap to the audience viewpoints, meant to deter any animal from trying to make their way across (Grazian 23). If any animal does attempt it, they face the risks of falling and serious injury (23).

To that end, Ripley’s Aquarium has nine specifically curated galleries, each dedicated to a different area of marine life - coral reefs, coastal seas, dangerous predators, saltwater and freshwater alike.

This is not to say that all zoos have similar methods and aims. The Arizona-Sonoma Desert Museum for example shifts its focus from recreating naturalistic enclosures, to providing tangible educational encounters with an entire ecosystem in which the animal lives naturally, without guaranteeing or coordinating opportunities to look at the animals on command. Established in 1952, it became the first zoo to create enclosures that were miniature ecosystems, “fusions” of animal lives, botanical gardens, natural history, and environmental education displays, all centred around a specific ecosystem which is native to the zoo’s location (Arizona-Sonoma Desert Museum; Killing 172). The museum was immersive before it was trendy, simply because they brought the zoo into the ecosystem, rather than trying to replicate the ecosystem within the zoo. Instead of entering into a facility where animals are separated into clearly defined enclosures, the desert museum is set along a trail and eighty-five percent of enclosures encountered are outside, within the animals’ actually natural habitats, where they caution visitors that “spontaneous or unexpected experiences [such as] a snake on the path” (Arizona-Sonoma Desert Museum) may occur. They opted to do this to combat the various hyperrealities that can be generated within facilities that claim to be immersive or focus on naturalistic designs, and their concerns can be greatly echoed in SeaWorld’s upcoming plans for revitalized orca exhibits:

We believe that a danger often accompanies the success of living museums, zoos or botanical gardens - and that is that people may be so assured and comforted by the health and vitality of the collection that they become complacent about the condition of wild environments and species. We seek to avoid this through techniques of exhibition and interpretation - and also by considering the wild and undeveloped portions of our grounds as part of our collection and by encouraging our visitors to contemplate and enjoy the whole as well as its parts (Arizona-Sonoma Desert Museum).

Along with their refusal to ‘collect’ animals, they are known for strong education programs focusing on ecosystem preservation, and the facility is rare for an AZA-accredited zoo in that it states education as its primary purpose (Killing 172). This immersive zoo decentralizes human experience. In exposing visitors to ‘spontaneous encounters’, including inclement weather, this zoo suggests that human comfort is not their top priority and looking at an animal is not a right.
The Belize City Zoo likewise takes an animal-centric approach, while at the same time ensuring that what visitors see most prominently are not animal bodies but reminders of the impacts that human activities have had on animal lives. Their educational mandate states:

[...] a commitment to achieving the following goals:

• To heighten the awareness and increase appreciation of the natural world;
• To promote the recognition and understanding of Belize’s unique ecosystems and diverse wildlife;
• To instill sound knowledge, positive attitudes and valuable skills that will aid in the preservation of Belize’s natural resources (Belize Zoo).

The Belize City Zoo achieved these goals by setting the zoo within the ecosystem they wanted to preserve, and creating enclosures that did not privilege human sights at the expense of animal well-being. Jaguars, for example, have a small jungle enclosure in which to live, and if they cannot be seen, there is no enticing them to the front of the cage. For the Belize City Zoo, that is the point. There are no outward aesthetic ideals to which the design has to live up to, no hyperrealities generated through orchestrated animal encounters, and the animals who are residents of the zoo are only there because they have absolutely nowhere else to go. The zoo has never “purchased or captured an animal for [their] collection. Often they just appear at the front gate” (Barcott 41), each with stories of a domestic upbringing, cruel treatment, misunderstanding, and injuries so severe the animals would not be able to survive in the wild on their own (Barcott 13, 42; Belize Zoo). For the zoo, this is the only reason an animal should be in captivity — if human activity has limits its abilities to survive in the wild so severely that without captivity they would die. Even then, they insist that the enclosures created be large enough within the confines of the twenty-nine acre facility to provide room for the animal to move, include the same variety of vegetation and other biotic elements as would be found outside of the zoo, and if there is any possibility that the animal could be rehabilitated and released back into the wild, that should be their first priority (Barcott 41; Belize Zoo). This has led AZA and WAZA to rescind their support, stating that zoo refusal to participate in captive breeding programs goes against the mandate of a zoo (Barcott 42-43). Director Sharon Matola responded that the Belize Zoo should not be run to fulfill a mandate that perpetuates captivity, but rather to ensure that captivity eventually ends (43).

Hargrove goes on to say that sea pens like this are “[...] the closest sanctuary that human beings can construct for orcas whose lives and behaviour have been compromised by captivity” (Hargrove 238).

Makaio, Malia, Katina, Trua, Kayla, and Nalani are the remaining orcas at SeaWorld Orlando. Katina is the last remaining wild orca in the pod, and the rest have been bred in captivity.

The text of the Precautionary Principle was made in Rio during the 1992 UN Summit (World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology 12).
4. **What Is It To Be An Animal:** Using Performance Artists Olly and Suzi’s Works as a Guide to Creating Unconventional Human-Animal Artistic Relationships

When I finished writing Chapter Two, I could not draw a concrete conclusion regarding the future of animals in education-based performances. The state of animals within this performance setting has changed drastically from a generally accepted trope, to one that is slowly - and in many ways, *finally* - being phased out. Producers are now tasked with creating something different if they want to continue incorporating animals in performance arts. What SeaWorld will opt to create, and whether the role they envision for their future Shamu has any lasting positive impacts on the animal performer, remains to be seen. Even Ringling Brothers has stopped using animal performers, noting the starkly changing public perception on animal welfare, and its results on ticket sales. We have begun to situate ourselves within the third act of the geodrama, which Chaplin characterizes as the re-emergence of ‘doubts’: “there is a growing sense that the planet is again beginning to bite back, now that the environmental costs of planetary domination have begun to haunt us” (Chaplin xvi). When we look at the impacts of forcing animals into performance roles, not simply on the performers themselves but also on their wild counterparts and on human audiences, we can see the consequences of this ‘domination’ reaching much further than many anticipated.

When Chaplin looks at geodrama’s third act, she asks if the actors within these ‘full-bodied’ performances of earth have been more like “stage hands who tug a final curtain around the planet” (Chaplin 449), while exhibiting “doubt that the human relationship to the planet should be a matter of controlling it” (450). Is there a way to move beyond the third act, into a wholly different relationship with the other-than-human world? Chaplin suggests that we will
always “live with all three legacies of around-the-world travel: a reemerging fear that the planet could simply shrug us off; continuing confidence that we might be able to generate technologies and political alliance to dominate the planet; but doubt that it is always wise to do so” (Chaplin xxi). We are, I believe, at the tipping point of this doubt, where we could either continue to depict animals as artistic objects, or we could experiment with creating space for animals to represent and speak for themselves.

Eva Saulitis’ *Intro Great Silence* articulates a fundamental question about tipping points that I feel has not yet been adequately addressed by artists making work with animals: “what is asked of us?” (Saulitis 110). This question forms the foundations of this chapter, as I will be exploring human-animal artistic relationships in the field of contemporary performance art, where I find a crucial dialogue is occurring about the intersections of art, animals, and audiences. I recognize that contemporary art is deviation from the spectacle and education-based works from the previous chapters, but as Ringling has ended its operations and SeaWorld is currently at a standstill as to what its next iteration of Shamu will become, the field of contemporary art is one of the only places that the debate about ethical inclusions of animals in art is currently occurring and evolving, making this field an interesting one to explore as a site of potential new directions into the next act of the geodrama.

In previous chapters, the art forms have enjoyed, until recently, almost unproblematic access to animals for the purposes of providing entertainment or education to their audiences. In this chapter, I will look at a group who questions whether immediate and tangible access to animals should be an artistic right, if it has any added benefit to the audience, and how it influences the incorporated animals themselves. I will suggest that this group — UK performance art duo Olly and Suzi — answer the question “what is asked of us” in a radically
different way from art forms that have included animals in the past, and their approach, while not conclusive or prescriptive, offers insights into possible unconventional human-animal artistic relationships that could teach both artists and audiences different ways to engage with animals that preference animal well-being above all. I will compare Olly and Suzi’s work, specifically their iconic paintings and performance of *Shark Bite*, to their more well-known contemporary, Damien Hirst, whose famous work *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*, incorporates a shark body in a representation that is essentially a continuation of more traditional human-animal artistic relationships, much in the same vein as circus and SeaWorld performances. Looking at these works in conjunction will allow me to analyze how Olly and Suzi propose to set themselves apart, and whether their unique approach actually pushes the performance art work to consider unconventional human-animal relationships as viable alternatives, for the artists, animals and audiences alike.

Olly Williams and Suzi Winstanley create mixed-media paintings and sketches that depict predatory animals — such as lions, wild dogs and sharks — from first-hand observation in the wild. The paintings include markings made by the animals themselves, who Olly and Suzi claim as a co-creators of the artistic work. Their work was inspired in part by overwhelming research demonstrating negative impacts of human-animal artistic relationships, which they feel contribute to misinformation about the animals far more than a sense of education or connection (Williams and Winstanley 160). For Olly and Suzi, the question ‘what is asked of us’ is not simply creating work that is *different* from what has come before. They also aim to directly challenge preexisting performative and artistic roles, in which a human narrative is overlaid on animal bodies and presumes to speak for them. It is a process of questioning if and how an animal could have a voice of its own, artistically.
Conversely, Hirst’s work stems from the tradition of landseers, who “used to have his lions killed and stuffed before he drew them” (Campbell-Johnston). Hirst states that he is concerned with representations of human-animal relationships within art, but he looks at the animal as no more than an artistic object. Arguably considered one of the most prolific modern artists in Britain, he has made a name for himself through works incorporating animal as objects: a severed cow’s head or butterflies, or most famously, sharks. That is the relationship with animals most propagated through visual and performing arts, and the relationship to which Olly and Suzi’s work stands in direct opposition: animals as the silent object.

Themes and questions explored in this chapter include: considering the ethics of animal representation or inclusion in any performance; agency of animal performers; acknowledging that animals have an experience of the world that is not the same as our own; and questioning whether the intentions of artistic animals are the same as what the performance states.

1. Frameworks

First, I want to touch on the analytical frameworks I will use to look at Olly and Suzi’s *Shark Bite* and Hirst’s *Physical Impossibility*. I will draw primarily from three theories which touch on animal engagement, human-animal artistic relationships, and the relationships created between animals, artworks, and their audiences.

I will begin with looking at Broglio and Baker’s writings on the “surface value” of animals - their immediately recognizable physical and aesthetic traits (“Living Flesh” 104). Both writers look to the tradition of landseers as representative of how animal surfaces are valued. Landseers would kill and stuff wild animals so that they could be posed, framed or painted for museums or other institutions. The bodies of the animals were the only parts that mattered, and
the idea of there being anything ‘underneath’ was not given much credibility. This generated a long-lasting distinction between human and animal minds: animals exist along surfaces; people have interiority (104). We can see how this has impacted animal acts in the past. Without interiority, we can make decisions ‘for’ animals, presuming what is best for them, and layering their existences in art with our own narratives. However, as Broglio and Baker both suggest, if we are able to look to physicality and surfaces as sites of knowledge equal or comparable to interiority, then we may be able to understand something of what it is to be an animal (104). If we go a step further and value only surfaces within a human-animal encounter, then it opens up the possibility for a more equal artistic relationship (Artist / Animal xxviii). Could we further our understandings of animal experiences through these artistic surface encounters, and translate them to audiences?

Nagel’s “What Is It Like To Be A Bat” is a philosophical work that likewise tackles the question of animal experiences, as well as problematizing our access to them. His work suggests that “no matter how the form may vary, the fact that an organism has conscious experience at all means […] that there is something it is like to be that organism” (Nagel 436). The problem then become the means of accessing this interior, when humans and animals share vastly different experiences of the world. Nagel explores how we may approach an animal’s phenomenological experience of the world, which I believe brings up a number of important considerations for both Olly and Suzi’s and Hirst’s works. Namely, if Olly and Suzi claim the animal as an artistic collaborator, how do we determine that the animal shares their experience? Likewise, if Hirst claims the animal as an unconscious object, how do we know the animal has no experience of ‘becoming art’? The closest we can come to animal experience, Nagel suggests, is a “rough or
partial” comparison to what we think we may experience in the same situation (442). Nagel’s work helps to place animal and human experiences on a more comparable level.

Finally, I will draw from Deleuze and Guatarri’s concept of ‘becoming-animal’. This is an event in which two distinct and previously unacquainted bodies encounter one another with the decided purposes of forging a new relationship where direct identification, serially or structurally, is inadequate or impossible (Deleuze and Guatarri 238). Olly and Suzi see themselves embodying this when making art with animals, as they feel they lose a sense of individuality, giving themselves over to a process in which they are not two human painters and one animal, but all together something new. Olly and Suzi call this the “third piece”: “the collaborative entity, not my piece, not your piece, the third piece” in which all become “one in the act of creation” (Feraca). Deleuze and Guatarri’s becoming-animal gives a framework through which to analyze this process.

Each of these theories and frameworks will help to not only clarify what Olly and Suzi are attempting to do, and strengthen their artistic opposition to Hirst’s works, but will also give a sense of what new and unconventional human-animal relationships may be generated by consciously stepping away from what has previously been created. I will also evaluate the effectiveness of the works based on the questions outlined by May and Kohl, which had been used in previous chapters as well.

2. Themes

Next, I want to look at the themes I will be examining throughout this chapter. I will focus primarily on Olly and Suzi’s process and how they make artistic decisions in regards to the animals who co-create their works, through the lens of four main themes: access to animals;
animal agency; the intentionality of the animal artist; and the ethics of human-animal artistic engagement. I will be using one of their most famous works, *Shark Bite*, completed in 1997. It is a painting of a great white shark, as an example of their process. When I compare their work to Damien Hirst, I will be examining his famous *Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*[^274], which features the body of a deceased tiger shark suspended in formaldehyde ("Saatchi mulls £6.25m shark offer").[^275]

2.1 Access to Animals

In stark opposition to circuses and aquariums where access to animals is presumed, Olly and Suzi’s access depends on a number of factors: the willingness of animal participants; the artists’ ability to find and make connections with animals; the safety of all participants; and weather conditions, to name a few. Olly and Suzi don’t presume a right to access. The creation of their art is a communicative interplay between these factors, a heightened awareness of their position within the ecosystem, and how they might best fit. Conversely, Hirst’s work is predicated on immediate access to animals, particularly those he can have killed and transported to his studio or a gallery. Without that access, he would have no work. In this chapter, I will explore how presumptions of access to animals colour how those animals are represented in art, and how that influences audience perceptions of them.

2.2 Animal Agency

In terms of agency, I want to consider what choice an animal is afforded within an artwork. Is the animal given the option to participate, or is their participation a given? I will propose that Olly and Suzi’s work can be set apart from other human-animal works like Hirst’s, because they begin with the assumption that animals have preferences and desires that they may
elect to act on, if given the space. Unlike circuses or aquariums, making art with animals is not a
guarantee for Olly and Suzi. They may venture out to an ecosystem and return without the works
they aimed to complete. On the other hand, agency is a non-issue for Hirst, as his work is built
on the decaying - or frozen decay - of animal bodies made canvases. Any animal interiority is
made surface in the transformation of the animal from living being into artistic object. By
presuming their animal collaborators have agency, and creating space for it to be acted upon,
Olly and Suzi actively oppose the more established artistic approaches to animals in art. While it
may be difficult to definitively identify animal agency in art, Olly and Suzi take the approach
that an animal marking a canvas — without force or a sense that refusing to participate will have
a negative impact — is a good place to begin a conversation about what forms a non-human
expression of agency could take.

2.3 Animal Intentionality

A big question inherent in Olly and Suzi’s work is the idea of animal intentionality. While
they claim the animal who marks or engages with the canvas is their artistic collaborator, what is
the distinction they make between incidental or coincidental interaction, and the thorough
thought that one would expect to see from a human artist? How do Olly and Suzi make these
claims, and what kind of weight can be placed on them? Is the animal an artist in name only, or is
there a way to determine - or at least propose - that the animal intended to enter into a
consciously artistic relationship? For Hirst again, animal intentionality is a nonissue, as it is the
primacy of the relationship between the audience and the decaying animal body that is the
essence of his works. I will suggest that there is no way for Olly and Suzi to definitively address
questions of animal intentionality, but their work does aim to open up the question of intentionality for discussion.

2.4 Ethics of Human-Animal Artistic Engagement

Throughout the chapter, I will be examining the theme of ethical human-animal artistic engagement. Olly and Suzi preface that the safety of all involved in the art is paramount to actually making artworks (Williams and Winstanley 144), but ethics should encompass more than just the safety of participants. Olly and Suzi also engage with questions of how their art impacts human-animal relations, what it teaches their audiences about animals, and whether they can use their works to influence positive change. In this, I will be looking at what messages their artistic process stands to teach their audiences about the animal artist in Shark Bite, as well as other sharks. In comparison, I will look at how Physical Impossibility has become immensely popular\(^{276}\) as Hirst capitalizes on the mainstream image of the shark viscous, predatory carnivore, and gives the audience what he thinks is a satiating image: the shark frozen mid-bite, effectively neutered, unable to harm, creating an aesthetic for the spectacle of animal death.\(^{277}\) What does this teach his audience about this, and every other, shark the work intends to represent? As Olly and Suzi are in direct opposition to this approach to animals in art, how do they both propose and act on new ethical relationships, and what forms do these take?

3. Case Study: A Tale of Two Sharks - Olly and Suzi’s Shark Bite and Damien Hirst’s Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living

I want to begin this case study by giving an overview of both works, including the artists’ methods and their creation processes, as a foundation for a comparison and analysis of their overall impacts. It is my intent in this section to set up why Olly and Suzi and Damien Hirst are
natural opponents in considerations of how to transition into the next act of the geodrama, and to show how Hirst’s approach reveals the potential effectiveness of Olly and Suzi’s unconventional human-animal artistic relationships.

3.1 Olly and Suzi and *Shark Bite*

Olly and Suzi are a UK-based performance art duo who create visual representations of animals *with* the animals they are depicting, in that animal’s natural ecosystem. Their collaborations began while the two were studying abroad at Syracuse University. Olly and Suzi became concerned with the lack of animal representation they saw in contemporary visual art so they developed an approach to representing animals that has dominated their careers. Their ‘studios’ are vastly different from what might be imagined for typical artists, and they have created works in environments from the Indian Ocean, to Tanzania, to the Arctic. Their work can be classified as both visual and performance art. The creation process they employ is a performance, a negotiation between two human artists and the live, wild animal they are painting. Their finished works are what they call a “trace document” of the event (Feraca; Williams and Winstanley 149), which are distributed to art galleries around the world, as well as exhibitions in the National History Museum in London.

There are a few agendas in Olly and Suzi’s work, relating to their selection of animal subjects, which I will briefly outline here. First, they prioritize first-hand encounters with wild animals in their natural habitats. With the assistance of nature guide and scientists, they seek physical interactions with large and endangered predators — great white sharks, polar bears, lions, rhinos, wild dogs and more (Shepherd) — to paint their images, with both Olly and Suzi’s hands on the canvas at the same time, right in the animals’ natural ecosystem (Williams and
Winstanley 149). It was important for them to venture out to the animal’s wild habitat for many reasons, namely the differentiation they noticed between a captive animal and a wild animal. Olly says, “a tiger in a zoo moves in a very different way to the one in the wild, and what we wanted to capture was the essence of the wild animal” (Mikhail). What interests them most, Olly says, is “this relationship between humans and animals, between the civilized world and the wilderness between art and science” (Olly and Suzi 187), which can be experienced anywhere – from the Amazonian jungles to a Toronto back yard. What is important in undoing the disconnection between human culture and nature is to leave the comforts and presumed safety of ‘home’ and venture out into the ecosystem, our environmental home, and get reacquainted. While it may sound like a simple - and expensive - alternative studio, they also invite and entice the animals they are painting to join the process and leave markings on the work, giving the piece three ‘authors’ - Olly, Suzi, and the animal(s) (149).

Secondly, the ecological agenda of Olly and Suzi’s work is to use the animal-‘signed’ canvas to entice their audience to discover something of the natural world about which they were previously unaware (Feraca). Clive James says the duo combines their own curiosity with the “capacity to register curiosity” within their audience (Murray), and through this they encourage their audience to become more informed about or engaged with environmental conservation issues. As Olly says regarding polar bears and climate change, we are in trouble and there is very little we can do about it (Murray), but their goal is to encourage whatever can be done, whatever shifts in human-animal relationships can be made in order to facilitate preserving animal lives and ecosystems in the long-run. Fundamental to all of this is understanding that the majority of human-animal relationships existing in the mainstream today are propagated by misunderstandings and misrepresentations of animals. By seeking out endangered, predatory,
wild animals, Olly and Suzi are aiming to dismantle these misconceptions from the top down. By encouraging healthier relationships with keystone species such as sharks or polar bears, they are at once advocating for the protection of an entire ecosystem through their artworks.

Olly and Suzi occupy a distinct cultural sphere to the works discussed in the previous two chapters. Whereas circuses and SeaWorld attract an audience interested in performances of massive spectacle as well as tangible human-animal interaction opportunities, Olly and Suzi’s audience are primarily from the visual arts or they are museum patrons. While their works have been exhibited in galleries around the world, their target audience are patrons, curators and researchers of natural history museums — those who are already concerned with wildlife and are striving to make connections to the natural world (Olly and Suzi). Their hope is that in viewing works made by both human and animal artists, they made be influenced to find different means of communicating and connecting to animals (Olly and Suzi).

What the audience may experience at an exhibition of Olly and Suzi’s work is far more intimate, introspective and intellectual than the sensory overload of a Shamu show. One of Olly and Suzi’s largest exhibitions, at London’s National History Museum, was often coupled with talks by leading conservationists. Moreover, Olly and Suzi are quite open about the process through which their works are created, further separating them from the opacity of something like the SeaWorld training process. When they dispense with the need to ‘wow’ their audiences with a “Wow! How does Shamu do that!?” type of reaction, they can delve deeper into the ethics of the human-animal artistic relations they are creating, as well as provide further opportunities for educating audiences on the realities of these animals and their ecosystems.

For the purposes of this chapter, I am less interested in their audiences and audience reactions to their work, particularly given the vast cultural sphere they occupy. Instead, I am
interested in what their unique approach to both representing and incorporating animals in art may be able to teach practitioners of performance arts with wild animals.

*Shark Bite*, as part of Olly and Suzi’s “Untamed” exhibit, is a painting that has been shown in art galleries, museums, and both reproductions of the work and photographs of the event have been sold on Olly and Suzi’s website (Olly and Suzi). As their works are predominately exhibited in museums, they reach audiences already engaged with animal issues and conservation, and are therefore more likely to be open to human-animal relations that are a bit on the unconventional side and do not harm the animal participant. This translates into works that can conceivably become more of a conversation starter than a set product. By also bridging the gap between conservation and art worlds, works like *Shark Bite* connect audiences who may not have been able to engage in discussions on animals lives before, thereby increasing the impact of their works overall (Olly and Suzi). In this section, I will look at how *Shark Bite* was created, what the artists intentions were, and what this piece says about Olly and Suzi’s overall approach to the animal artist.

For Olly and Suzi, painting sharks is a matter of dispelling rumours and misconceptions that have led to the predators’ endangerment. Great white sharks were selected as their subject because the hunting sharks for their fins, in combination with sport fishing, results in over two hundred million great whites killed every year (Winstanley and Williams 160). Great whites are now endangered, and illegal to hunt in South Africa, California, and Southern Australia, but that has not helped to stabilize their numbers (160). In 1997, the duo went on expedition in Gansbaai, South Africa, in search of great white sharks with the help of the White Shark Research Institute (WSRI), who supplied them with dive cages in which they could paint and observe safely (160). They worked with knowledgeable and experienced guides to further their understanding of the
creatures, and maintained a level of safety within the work for both artists and their animal subjects (144).

The *Shark Bite* image itself was created from the desk of the research boat, while observing one particular great white. Throughout the expedition, Olly and Suzi wondered what would happen if they could diverge from their usual routine of painting the animals, and entice one of them to engage with the work as well (Murray). So, once their painting was complete, they covered the canvas in blood and sardine remains, tossed it in the water, and waited. The shark circled the work curiously, most likely thinking that the shaded underside of the canvas was in fact the bottom of a seal (Williams and Winstanley 160), and eventually took a bite out of the painting. Olly and Suzi then realized that the resulting bite makes on the canvas could be seen as constituting the shark’s ‘signature’ (*Artist / Animal* 88). As they viewed the shark as equal in aesthetic contribution to the resulting image as their own paintbrushes, they wondered if perhaps the shark could be conceptualized as a ‘co-creator’ of the work. This, they told a BBC interviewer during the making of *Wild Art: Olly and Suzi Paint Predators*, was the first time they had considered doing more than simply painting the animal in its wild habitat (Murray), and it formed the foundation of many of their subsequent approaches to the animal within their works. Olly and Suzi aimed to showcase this shark ‘signature’ as evidence of the shark’s presence and agency within the work, and to encourage their audience to conceptualize a radically different relationship between themselves and sharks. If a viscous great white shark could participate in an artwork, without harming the human creators of the work, then does the shark truly deserve the feared reputation they so often receive? By selecting endangered, misunderstood and predatory keystone species such as the great white shark, Olly and Suzi place an urgency within their art, to represent animals that are here now but “might not be [here] for much longer” (Feraca).
3.2 Damien Hirst and Physical Impossibility

Next, I would like to give some background on Damien Hirst and his body of work. Hirst began creating, exhibiting, and curating works in the late 1980’s while he was a student at Goldsmiths College of Art (Tate Modern). His work was roughly the genesis for the ‘Young British Artists’, a group of contemporary artists focused on found objects, shock-art, and a “complete openness towards the materials and processes with which art can be made, and the form that it can take” (Tate Modern). Hirst exemplifies the ‘shock art’ aesthetic of the group, and his body of work include severed cow heads, bifurcated cow bodies, a deceased lamb, and a room filled with 9,000 live butterflies that his audience is permitted to touch. Most of these works are now exhibited in major museums, such as the Tate Modern, but in the beginning the group also become known for their propensity to exhibit in non-traditional spaces like warehouses, making their work edgier and more accessible to non-traditional arts audiences (Mayer; Tate Modern).

Art collector Charles Saatchi was an early investor and promotor in Hirst's work, giving him the financial foundation to create some of his most iconic works, such as Physical Impossibility. While a student, Hirst also worked in a mortuary, stirring an interest in artistic representations of death (Broglio 2; Mayer). Hirst’s work is preoccupied with the distinctions between life and death, and the sublimity created when seeing death in process, and he notes that the fascination has historical roots in vivisections and public autopsies (Broglio 2). He sees his works as an extenuation of these traditions, and asks his audiences to examine their relationship to death, using the animal body as a proxy for their own (Broglio 2; Mayer). Hirst often creates work with a large team who are responsible for carrying out his visions, but in many cases he has minimal interactions with the creations themselves (Cohen). This approach goes right down to
Hirst’s means of access to animal bodies as well - he always pays others to acquire the bodies for him. In many ways, Hirst is more the overseer of his own work, directing various teams to assemble and execute each piece in the image he has created. He is currently considered to be the richest living artist in Britain as a result of these animal-based works (Kinsella).

To create his most famous work, *Physical Impossibility*, Hirst commissioned the capture and kill of a tiger shark off the coast of Australia, had the body shipped to his studios in the UK, and preserved in formaldehyde (Broglio 14-15). There were actually two sharks used for this piece. The first shark, caught by Australian Vic Hislop - a transaction so distanced that it was organized while Hirst was still in London, England, as he “realized you can get everything over the phone […] The shark was the culmination of all that” (Hirst 44). The shark was initially intended to be the one and only, but when the body began to rot from the inside out, a second one was ordered with no more trouble than dialling for a pizza. Hirst said, “it’s conceptual art. If the shark gets fucked up, buy another shark. I don’t mind […] the whole thing is totally replaceable, if you want to replace it. […] What are you going to keep alive: the original, or the ideal?” (Hirst 219). Hirst chose the ideal.

This piece — as well as the replicas it has inspired — have become staples of his work.²⁸⁶²⁸⁷ The fourteen-foot tiger shark is suspended in a vat of blue-hued formaldehyde, positioned to look as if it is currently swimming the ocean in search of prey - mouth open, sharp jaws, mid-bite and aiming for its audience, who are allowed to walk around the vat and view the shark from any angle they wish. The piece is about seeing death frozen in place — both the death of the tiger shark, and their own plausible deaths, should they ever find themselves in biting distance of a great predator like this in the wild. A physically co-present live shark would be a source of fear and distress for the majority of his audience, outside of a zoo environment. Hirst banks on the
familiarity of the media-driven shark ideology, and the history of animal objectification. This work eventually won the Turner Prize (Reynolds), and has been exhibited in art galleries around the world.

3.3 Creating Shark Bite

As we can already see, there are sharp distinctions between Olly and Suzi and Hirst’s approaches to the animal body in art. As Hirst’s process is not unlike that of the historical circus and SeaWorld's early orcas — in that he commissioned locals with to capture the shark and bring the body to him. Hirst exists very much within the traditions of the works analyzed in previous chapters. As such, I want to examine what Olly and Suzi have done that is distinctly different in creating Shark Bite.

I will be using Shark Bite to illustrate how Olly and Suzi approach the animal artist. Each work Olly and Suzi create can be discussed both as a product — a finished art work — and as a process — how the work is created. In this section, I will describe both, as give a close reading of their process, as viewed through documentary footage of the work captured by Olly and Suzi.

The product of Shark Bite is a completed painting of a great white shark in black, grey and red, composed with non-toxic paints, fruit juices, and sardine remains (Williams and Winstanley 140). The image itself is not overly detailed, as is slightly reminiscent of a child’s depiction, with broad brush strokes, unfinished lines, and a sense of haphazardness to it, as if the artists were struggling to finish the work quickly. There is a large shark-sized bite out of one corner of the canvas, which cuts off Suzi’s signature and part of the shark (140). The bite was made by the great white shark Olly and Suzi were observing while creating the painting.
The process through which their work is created can be discussed as a performance, in which Olly and Suzi encounter an animal in the wild, and together the three ‘devise’ an artistic work. For Olly and Suzi, this takes the form of all three making tangible marks on the canvas, each placing their own ‘signature’ on the work (Feraca, Williams and Winstanley 149). There are three signatures on the painting *Shark Bite* - those of human artists Olly and Suzi, and that of their great white shark collaborator. However, the painting looks as if it was made by just one hand, painstakingly creating an expressionist representation of a wild predatory animal in its natural habitat. The three ‘hands’ involved encountered one another off the coast of South Africa in 1997, where the former were completing a series of dives aiming to paint sharks. The latter made its mark on the work when the painting was intentionally dropped into the water for the animal to explore. One bite on the artwork embeds this shark’s existence into a mostly human enterprise - performance art - forcing the consideration of the animal into a culture that generally perceives itself to be separate from the natural world. Encounters and considerations such as those are foundational to Olly and Suzi’s mandate, who aim to “make all [their] work in wild places… [to] endeavour to take a mark or trace of creatures that are here now, but may not be for much longer” (Olly and Suzi), as a result of disastrous environmental change. The performance is then only witnessed by the artists themselves — Olly, Suzi, and the animal who participated.288 What their audience sees afterwards is the ‘trace document’ or painting of the encounter (Feraca; Williams and Winstanley 149).289

Olly and Suzi’s work can be difficult to conceptualize, particularly in their claim that the shark who bit the canvas should be considered as much of an ‘author’ of the piece as they are. I want to analyze documentary footage of the work to take apart what occurs during the process. As part of their 2001 “Untamed” exhibit at the National History Museum, Olly and Suzi
compiled footage of their early expeditions to seek out predators in the wild. The resulting eleven-minute video, *Instinct*, consists of various animal encounters, including crocodiles, lions, wild dogs, and the famous shark from *Shark Bite* (“Instinct”). Most are relatively quick clips of the moment at which animals encounter the canvas and begin to engage with it, leaving their mark(s) behind.

Olly and Suzi’s role is not showcased in the documentary, but can generally be described as such: with assistance from conservationists or field guides, the artists locate wild, predatory animals and observe them from a safe distance. For *Shark Bite*, for example, they watched one particular shark from the deck of a research boat. Then, Olly and Suzi begin to sketch or paint the animal as they observe them, while both working on the canvas at the same time. When they consider their portion to be ‘complete’, they leave the canvas in a neutral location between themselves and the animal(s), and retreat to allow the animal to approach the canvas — or not. With *Shark Bite*, Olly and Suzi put the canvas directly in the water. From there, they wait to see if an encounter between the animal and canvas will occur. Documentary viewers can assume that something along these lines has occurred before every clip in the video.

When footage of *Shark Bite* begins, viewers can see Olly and Suzi’s canvas already floating in the ocean, tethered to the boat by a metal wire. The great white shark emerges from the water and instantly lurches for the canvas, taking it in their jaws and attempting to take a bite. The shark takes three bites total before trying to wrestle the painting away from the wire. When the corner of the canvas finally breaks loose, the shark dives under water again. The entire encounter between the shark and the canvas lasts all of thirty seconds.

From an aesthetic perspective, the footage is revealing. It showcases an ingenious way of manoeuvring artistic collaboration between two disparate species, by bringing the canvas to the
shark to entice collaboration, without putting anyone in danger or risking loss of the canvas. Olly and Suzi actually painted the bottom of the canvas with sardine chum, thereby heightening the potential for shark interaction (Trivedi). In many of the clips, the animals are shown to be thoughtful or contemplative in their investigations of the canvases. Rather than the popular image of sharks blindly attacking, this shark does not completely destroy and devour the canvas. They may leave a sizeable mark, evidence of their power and presence, but the majority of the canvas is largely intact after the shark swims away. This, Olly and Suzi hope, shows the shark instead as a selective feeder, more than a mindless, Jaws--esque killer.

Aesthetically, the curiosity and subsequent disinterest the shark demonstrates towards the canvas may be one of the most realistic artistic depictions of a shark within performance arts at the time it was created.\textsuperscript{291} Certainly, when compared to Hirst’s \textit{Physical Impossibility}, which is predicated on inspiring images of death and destruction frozen in place, \textit{Shark Bite} seems tame by comparison. For Olly and Suzi, this contrast was integral. They wanted to show wild predators as marred by misconceptions (Williams and Winstanley 2), which ultimately negatively impact conservation efforts — the same misconceptions that Hirst plays on to evoke images of ferocity within his work. To help illuminate why these distinctions have occurred, it helps to look at the origins of the dangerous reputations that sharks have. Pliny the Elder, in his \textit{Natural History}, writes “Divers have fierce fights with the canis marinus; these attack their loins and keels and all the white parts of their bodies. The one safety lies in going for them and frightening them by taking the offensive, for the canis marinus is as much afraid of man as man is of it” (White 5). Until the European colonization of North America, the term for shark was ‘canis marinus’, which translates to ‘dog of the sea’ (T. Jones 211).\textsuperscript{292} Jones notes that the modern use of the word ‘shark’ was introduced after sailors\textsuperscript{293} captured one off the coast of the
Yucatan in the 1560’s, and learned the Mayan term for it: ‘xoc’ (211). The body was later exhibited back in England, a curiosity the likes of which had not been seen before. The term ‘shark’ was then historically adopted in colonized nations as the ferocity of the sound, and the alien culture from which it came, conjured a hostile, untamed and dangerous image of nature, which then the colonizers could use to support any civilizing agendas, under the guise of keeping people ‘safe’ (White 10). The image of nature as ‘unsafe’ and the transformation of the ‘canis marinus’ from ‘dog of the sea’ to a wild man-eater are rooted in the aim for “commodification and control of human life” (T. Jones 12). We can see Olly and Suzi and Hirst on both ends of this spectrum, with Shark Bite exhibiting more ‘curious sea-dog’, and Physical Impossibility aiming for ‘ferocious man-eater’. Notably, nothing in the thirty seconds of Shark Bite footage shows anything beyond an animal simply investigating a new addition to its ecosystem.

At the end of the clip, where the imprints from the shark’s jaws become evident, it is of course impressive in scale, and this may be the impression the audience is left with overall, with only the now-torn canvas going on to most exhibits. Suzi herself would not pick Shark Bite as their most important work, though it is often the most recognizable (Artist / Animal 37). In fact, she believes the most iconic image of Shark Bite, a photograph in which the shark subject of the painting tears into the work with its teeth, may only further reinforce the idea that sharks are ruthless predators (Winstanley and Williams 160). It is ironic that the work that could be seen as the anthesis of their goals as both contemporary artists and wildlife artists (Murray), is perhaps also the work that garnered the duo the most attention. This may be a downside to Olly and Suzi’s work, in that their direct experience of the process is going to be necessarily reduced to the most striking aesthetic evidence of its occurrence, the shark’s bite. As such, it might be
difficult for audiences of the end product to tease apart the ‘selective feeding’ and curiosity, from shark tooth gashes left in the canvas.

However, this may reveal more of a bias in the audience than anything, to confirm preconceived notions about this predator. Olly and Suzi title their documentary *Instinct*, but it consciously opposes everything we would think of as being part of animal instinct. Most of the clips show animals tentatively approaching the canvases, moments at which these seemingly viscous predators slow down to investigate. The audience is positioned as if they are flies on the wall of the animals’ private lives. If these ‘ferocious’ predators do not mindlessly destroy, then it calls into question our perceptions of their instincts. What occurs when audience expectations of animal ferocity, particularly with something like a shark, are not met, and now have to be countered or dismantled? *Instinct*’s footage of *Shark Bite* demonstrates that we know far less of the shark than anticipated. This is a stark contrast to the previous works discussed. Audiences go to see Shamu, and went to see elephants at the circus, under the guise of learning more about the animal through the performance - and the performance being the only place these learning opportunities could occur. The power of viewing this part of Olly and Suzi’s process in *Shark Bite* is in discovering how much we do not know about the animal in the encounter.

In the next section, I will analyze Olly and Suzi’s approach to *Shark Bite* and other works, through the four themes discussed earlier: the ethics of human-animal engagement; access to animals; animal agency; and the intentionality of the animal artist. I will also compare their approaches in each of these themes, to Hirst's work, to demonstrate how Olly and Suzi are really generating possibilities for new human-animal artistic relationships that are in direct opposition to what has come before. My intent is to begin with ethics, as in that theme we can best consider the tradition from which Olly and Suzi’s work stems, and then in subsequent
themes we can look at how they intend to set themselves apart from artists like Hirst, clearly building towards more unconventional, and environmentally positive, artistic relations between humans and animals.

3.4 The Ethics of Human-Animal Engagement

I want to begin the analysis of this case study with a discussion of ethics in human-animal artistic engagements, combining both *Shark Bite, Physical Impossibility*, and a wholly different counter-example that prefaces the ethics of engagement above artistic creation: von Hagen’s *Body Worlds*. While this may seem to be a strange combination, each of the works requires engagement with once-living bodies to combine the fields of art, science, and education. In each case, the animal or human body — or for Olly and Suzi, the evidence of an animal body interacting with their canvas — is incorporated to teach the audience something of what it is to be that animal, and to reflect on human-animal relationships. *Body Worlds*, however, has a strict ethical consent policy for the use of bodies in its artworks. I want to posit that the primary difference between von Hagen’s work and Hirst’s work is obtained consent.²⁹⁴ Looking at *Body Worlds* in comparison to Hirst, and other contemporary artists who incorporate non-human bodies into their works, could provide a ground for exploring the concept of consent when it comes to using previously living bodies as art, in terms of considering the responsibility of the artist to the alive subject before it is transformed into artistic object, and determining the line between art and exploitation. As far as Olly and Suzi are concerned, I believe *Body Worlds* deals with similar issues of having to navigate what exactly ‘consent’ entails with regards to bodies as art. As well, the lengths they go to make this consent a large part of their resulting exhibitions achieves similar ends to Olly and Suzi’s explanations of the animal as a co-creator of their
works: the access, agency and intentionality of the animal other is foregrounded for the audience to reflect on.

I want to argue that von Hagen’s work could set a standard for the use of bodies as artistic objects: if consent cannot be recognized and granted, the body should not be considered available for use. This is a sentiment that Olly and Suzi both echo and practice, while Hirst actively opposes through his artistic process. Yet, Hirst’s work has been met with rave reviews and has sold for millions of dollars. What puts the use of animal bodies as artistic objects in an ethical ‘grey area’, while the same practice for human bodies would be obviously regarded as a crime? Why are there different ethical standards for animal and human bodies, and could a consent process like von Hagen’s ever work for human-animal artistic relationships? I believe Olly and Suzi strive to obtain ‘consent’ from the animals they work with, insofar as they may be able to recognize consent or intentionality from a shark, and that comparing their ethical approaches to these two other artists will help to illuminate why their work is so effective and what it might be able to teach other artists working with animals.

In terms of the shark’s reputation in contemporary art, it is almost impossible to look at Olly and Suzi without simultaneously considering how Damien Hirst tackles the same subject. Theresa J. May says that “theatre may at best be a reflection of human culture’s disassociation from the other-than-human world” in that it tells only the human story of the world (May 95). Hirst’s work erases the possibility of the shark’s story, featuring instead a distinctly human story of conquest and defeat. Hirst’s shark becomes recognizable for its benefit to human artistic consumption as embodiments of human domination. What are the ethics involved in co-opting the non-human into a performance of death - or, in this case, death itself? How would a spectator of such brutality react towards seeing a live animal conquered, either in the act or as it appears
after in an inert, dead form? Hirst aimed to position the shark in *Impossibility of Death* as an embodiment of the sublime, his definition of such stemming from the writing of Edmund Burke, in which the body, mortality, power and pain are combined in such a manner as to evoke a sense of the terrifying contained at a reflective distance (Nevarez 29). Burke, in his 1757 work “A Philosophical Enquiry into our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful” wrote:

> Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or that operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling… When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful, as we everyday experience (Nevarez 30).

The sublime occurs when nature is shown conquered, without the audience having to physically face the reality of doing so themselves. For Hirst, the sublime is terror mixed with delight, ensuring that the viewer is at once both entirely captivated and yet not entirely consumed by fear (31).

For Hirst, a shark exemplifies “a really powerful kind of horror” (White 4). If such horror could be both contained and rendered harmless, that would, to him, be sublime. By virtue of being lifeless, the shark in his work became a still performance of the “brutality of fact” and the “violence of inanimate objects” (13). Hirst considers death is sublime, so long as it is beautiful. As such, part of Hirst’s project with the shark was to “hold off the inevitable decay and corruption as a part of a futile effort to preserve [it]” (White 12), and by placing it in a vat of formaldehyde, he was able to create the illusion of holding off decay, of not only defeating the ferocious, carnivorous shark, but also besting nature in total. Death could be in stasis: terrifying in that the creature occupying the body no longer exists, but beautiful in its preservation, and therefore sublime in the juxtaposition of these two conflicting reactions. Hirst says:
I think I’ve got this obsession with death, but I think it’s like a celebration of life, rather than something morbid… I don’t think death really exists in life. I think the only thing that exists is an obsession with it. And an obsession with death is a celebration of life. It’s that kind of looking for it and you can’t find it (Hirst 21-22).

Thus, in seeing the object body associated with death, a further layering of the sublime is created through wondering what that life might have consisted of.295

In its focus on presenting the sublimity of death in stasis, Hirst’s work ignores the ecological reality of the animals incorporated into the art piece. Looking at Theresa J. May’s assertion that any relationship between humans and non-human animals represented in art should have a positive impact on the non-human animal, the ecological impacts of Hirst’s works can clearly be seen. May asks if the art work “propagate[s] or subvert[s] the master narratives that sanction human exploitation of the land” (May 105). Hirst capitalizes on the supposed authenticity of the physical body of the shark he selected for Physical Impossibility, banking on the familiarity of media-driven shark ideology and animal objectification: it was the idea shark he put on display, to borrow Aristotelian terms, not the physical, real shark. In an interview with Gordon Burn, he stated that he “always wanted to work with sharks. They’ve got this really powerful sense of horror” (Hirst 19). This was a culturally, not physically, induced horror; Hirst had not seen a live shark in the wild. The shark’s cultural reputation had preceded it; what he heard about sharks, much like the majority of his art-viewing public, had been conjecture, publicized through movies like Jaws and reports of shark attacks off of coastal resorts - which, naturally, position sharks as cold-blooded killers who would stalk unassuming humans and, without warning, tear them to shreds. The hapless victim is, of course, always caught ‘unaware’. Hirst felt that if he could “get one in a big enough space, actually in liquid, big enough to frighten you, that you feel you’re in there with it, it would work” (Hirst 19). Therefore, in
rendering the shark body harmless, Hirst propagates the master narrative that wild animals need to be contained or inert to co-exist with humans. As well, in seeming to halt death in the process of creating this shark sculpture, Hirst positions himself as a master of nature and death.

*Physical Impossibility* takes it as a human right to capture a live animal such as a shark, commission its death, and display it for audience pleasure. As well, it obscures the ecological impact that this work has, and does not engage in any narratives of ecological protection. Research shows that there has been a 97% drop in the populations of both hammerheads and tiger sharks since the 1980s - both species that Hirst has killed and exhibited. Both species are listed as “near threatened” by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) (Sample). In fact, Hirst has said that “the original idea was that I wanted a shark… how you get it there isn’t all that important” (Hirst 47). This includes, presumably, the impact that taking a shark for art can have on its natural ecosystem. Artists like Hirst who engage with non-human animal bodies in art have to consider the possible ecological impacts that their works can have.

What is the impact of taking a wild predator from its natural habitat, when there are already so few of them left in the wild? Hirst’s work showcases an inability to perceive actions, artistic or otherwise, as intimately connected with the wider ecosystem, as well as an inability to perceive the sublime body of the shark as once belonging to a living being who might have had a say in its future.

Hirst says that nature is not “infinitely unknowable, rather, hiding implies its opposite: finding” (3), achieved by cutting animals open, or having a shark killed, injected with formaldehyde, and put on display, exposing the hidden interiors “as visually accessible interiors” (4). What this comes down to, for me, is an issue of consent: artists wanting to use animals for their creative purpose. On one hand, we have Olly and Suzi going to extreme lengths to meet the shark within its own territory and engage with it in the artistic process in such a way that its life
is not impacted, and the shark seems to have a say in the matter. On the other hand, we have Hirst determining that his shark’s body is a useful artistic object and he is within his rights to take it - or take many. Noting that we have no real, reliable way to fully determine an animal’s want to participate in art, how are artists to go about deciding what constitutes ethical treatment? While Olly and Suzi talk about the animals with whom they make art as consenting beings, can we really say this is so without any proof, or can we determine something of their measurement for consent?

To get more into this question, I would like to briefly compare *Physical Impossibility* to von Hagen’s *Body Worlds*, which makes donation and consent a primary element of their work: *Body Worlds* positions the plastinated human body as an object in relation to a presumed natural habitat - be it a gymnast on rings or a person sitting in a chair. The once human sculptures are intended to be a biology lesson, appreciated on both an aesthetic and realistic level (Byasee 10), instructing viewers on everything from how muscle groups work together, to the physical impacts of smoking.\(^{297}\) The plastinated bodies, like Hirst’s shark, are an intersection of life and art through which an audience member can come to a further understanding of his or her own reality. von Hagens also uses the body as a sculpture to showcase the sublime in death, and for von Hagens, this sublime, the combination of beauty and terror, comes with opening up the body, freezing it within a moment through plastination, and showcasing its inner workings. Just like Hirst, it showcases the “violent transformation of life to death and opaque to knowable as animals [or donated human bodies] become meat” (Baker 2013, xxvii-xxviii). To achieve this, von Hagen preserves the bodies, like Hirst preserves the shark in formaldehyde, by putting corpses through a process called ‘plastination’, in which all body fluids and soluble fat are extracted and replaced with liquid reactive plastics. […] Before hardening […] the plastinates are
fixed into lifelike poses, illustrating how our bodies respond internally to everyday movements and activities” (8). The science is in exhibiting human biology, but the art is in how that biology is showcased: as if the palatinates are still living, breathing, moving beings. The terror of being physically co-present with a body is mediated by the delight in first-hand understanding of biology, in almost comical poses, which provides sufficient distance between the object body and the viewer for an experience of the sublime to be created. It is almost as if the bodies oscillate between being once alive and always plastic. One palatinate stands as muscle with his skin held out in front of him like a coat, showcasing the body’s heaviest organ (von Hagens 10). A gymnast poses on a set of rings. A pregnant woman reclines in a chair. The audience walks by them like tableaus, like they could come alive and change the scene at any moment.

Von Hagen attributes the success of his works, like Hirst attests to the success of The Physical Impossibility, to the viewers’ physical co-presence with real bodies: “the realism of the specimens contributes enormously to the fascination particularly in today’s media-dominated world […] the exhibit satiates the tremendous desire for unadulterated realism” (Linke 152). Hirst notes that his works would not be as effective if he only used prosthesis (Hirst 45). This can also connect to SeaWorld’s assertion that tangible experiences with real animals is the only way people will learn to love the ocean, or Barnum’s claim that even viewing a dead elephant provides more of a visceral and cultural experience for the audience, than seeing no elephant at all (Alexander 136; Duble 5; Nance 41). Likewise, the draw to an exhibit like Body Worlds would not be as enticing — nor would it have attracted more than a million people around the world and three separate touring shows — if the plastinates had not once been living and breathing just like the viewers. An ethical review of Body Worlds said “What makes the exhibit
so compelling – to have a meaningful and comprehensive view inside the real human body – is also what makes this exhibit so controversial” (California Science Centre [CSC] 7).300

The educational displays attached to each palatinate detail everything from how the plastinate was created, to what system in the body is of the most interest in each display, and through this addresses the issue of consent. As the exhibit uses real human bodies, exhibiting institutions also feel that it is within their responsibility to “verify that bodies and organs have been donated with the full and informed consent of the donors […] as] to exhibit human bodies without full and informed consent is not acceptable” (CSC 6). When bringing the exhibit to California for the first time, the California Science Centre set up an ethics review to see if this is the type of educational and aesthetic exhibit their institution could support. The committee, made up of medical professionals, spiritual advisers and members of the CSC community, brought in an independent bioethicist, Dr. Hans-Martin Sass, to study Body Worlds. He concluded that “the Institute for Plastination Body Donation Forms meet the standards for Informed Consent in Germany; they actually exceed the legal requirements for […] clinical research and the customary forms for body donation for education to university based departments of anatomy” (CSC 3). Moreover, the donation forms used by Body Worlds were actually significantly more involved than traditional body donation forms, including a section for the prospective donor to express why they want to donate their bodies to Body Worlds specifically.301

Where does this place Hirst’s Physical Impossibility, acknowledging that there will never be a surplus of sharks willing to donate their bodies to science or art upon their deaths? The sharks’ inability to express their desires in human terms leaves a gap which those like Hirst are willing to fill with a human narrative. To compare this to the acquisition of human bodies, it is
interesting to trace the trajectory of ‘body snatching’ for the study of human anatomy throughout history. Renaissance anatomists raced to use corpses of the executed and Leonardo da Vinci himself “reportedly took corpses that had been stolen from the gallows and hid them under his bed” for future study. Governments responded by introducing regulations for the donations of human remains. In England, the Anatomy Act of 1832 was passed, meticulously monitoring the use of any corpses for study. On the European continent, and in Germany specifically, unclaimed corpses were kept for a minimum of four days to see if they might be claimed by family, and only after exhausting that possibility were they sent on to anatomists. Those who were donated were usually victims of suicide, executions or prisoners, who the spiritual leaders of the country determined were not suitable for religious burial. von Hagens places Body Worlds along this trajectory transparently, acknowledging the tradition both in his writings, and within the displays so that audiences are fully aware that the bodies they see on display come solely from consenting parties, which does more than simply fuel the legitimacy of the organization. It also places the visitors at ease, knowing that they are not witnessing anyone plastinated against their will. As of 2003, the Body Worlds exhibit has attracted over 5,600 donors, a fact that exhibition material brags about when telling viewers the origins of the plastinated bodies. The reality that von Hagens is therefore able to represent in the acquisition of these bodies for aesthetic display is one of respect and responsibility for both the subject body and the object body, communicated transparently to his audience. Unlike Hirst's shark, the body remains a human body, expressing the reality that its living self wanted to be a part of such an exhibition, for the purposes outlined by Body Worlds. Any possibility of exploitation is put at rest for the visitors.
I believe this is a strong parallel to the questions Olly and Suzi are asking about consent with animals in art. If an animal can knowingly and consciously agree to be used in art, then like *Body Worlds*, it can create the conditions for sublimity that von Hagens desires: the combination of terror of death, beauty of the human body, and the “transformation of life to death and opaque to knowable” (*Artist / Animal* xxvii-xxviii), of exposing interiority as surface knowledge. If the living body cannot or does not provide its consent, and these conditions are made obvious, it will slowly pull apart the dominate narrative that the world is for human use and entertainment alone: the presumed hierarchy between humans and non-human animals in terms of agency and desire threatens to collapse. What is missing in Hirst’s work, and a benefit to Olly and Suzi’s approach, is a discussion of what the absence of consent means for the shark. How could the shark in *Physical Impossibility*, existing outside of methods of human communication, have consented to its use as a sculpture, knowing that it would mean the immediate end of its life? Death was no benefit to the living shark, and as its corpse is now an artistic object furthering the distance between human culture and nature and the myth of human superiority, it is not likely that such a piece is furthering the situation faced by sharks around the world. Hirst takes no responsibility for the being he killed, even though it made him a very rich and popular artist, routinely saying “I can't be fucked with dealing with the decay of my own art. I'm dealing with the decaying of myself” (Hirst 219). As Cixous warns, he ends up filling the shark with a solely human narrative, speaking for them as if to say 'the shark is truly happy here, in this galley, in its own little slice of ocean'. The desires of the once-living shark are not only absent, but unrecognized within the piece. The shark matters in so long as it attracts enough of an audience for him to get paid. Hirst's shark is therefore devoid of any connection to or understanding of an ecological reality.

As Hughes says, “His far-famed shark... is 'nature' for those who have no conception of nature, in
whose life nature plays no real part except a shallow emblem, a still from *Jaws*” (Alexander 6). It is a multi-million dollar trophy sculpted to showcase the manufactured illusion of human separation. This is directly what Olly and Suzi oppose.

To finish this comparison: if von Hagens, like Hirst, commissioned the kill of any of the human bodies in his display, he would spend the rest of his life in jail. Hirst, on the other hand, is a millionaire, and the acceptance of his work is evidence of a power relations struggle between culture and nature. What he has done is find ways to return to act two of the geodrama, by legitimizing the deaths of animals for art, or at the very least, not engaging with these works on a level that criticizes their impact on the wild animal. The presentation of a non-human animal for entertainment in such works is seen to warrant the unconsented death of a living being, resulting in not only its individual death but also in the propagation of a mentality that supports this type of action. Hirst’s shark become more object than once-living being. Hirst wants the terror and delight of being in close proximity to a shark which, according to the dominate ideology, could very well devour one whole, to speak for itself in generating the sublime, but only if it does not problematize its capture and kill. All the shark can therefore tell its viewers is how distant human culture has become from any understanding of ecology, namely how major disruptions to ocean ecosystems fuelled by the capture of such creatures, can have detrimental effects on human life. The biological desire to continue breathing does not belong to humans alone. Therefore, why should the forced and unconsented end of breathing become an artistic subject? If it would not be acceptable for humans to be exploited in such a manner, and tiger sharks are threatened species, then Hirst’s work should be further criticized. The dividing line between art and the body (Nevarez 29) can therefore be located in the full, conscious consent of the donating body to such aesthetic endeavours.
What does Shark Bite teach its audiences about the shark, and what impacts does that have on the shark itself? Is this, as Kuhl would ask, a ‘good’ representation of the artistic animal, or does it further perpetuate negative stereotypes that may ultimately cause more harm, not only to this shark, but to other sharks in the wild? Olly and Suzi are likewise conscious of the tradition they fit in, with their use of animals in the creation of art. While their system of obtaining consent from participating animals cannot be as thorough as von Hagen’s, we can see the artists taking the same precautions with animal lives that Body Worlds takes with human lives. I would like to argue that Body Worlds sets a standard for the ethical use of bodies as artistic and educational objects, as they are so tightly regulated. If we want to find similarly ethical ways to use animal bodies in art, we could look to Body Worlds as an example of how this consent may be transferable to non-human bodies. I have compiled a list of the conditions a body must meet in order to be included in a Body Worlds exhibit, including the conditions set out on their lengthy consent form. I would like to compare this to the standards met by both Shark Bite and Physical Impossibility, to determine how works using animals might learn from Body World’s ethical standards. The following chart features a centre column outlining what participants are asked to agree to in the Body Donation for Plastination Donor Consent Form. The other columns outline Olly and Suzi’s and Hirsts’s standards on the same conditions.

Table 4.3.4. Ethical Use of Bodies as Artistic and Educational Objects
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Olly and Suzi, \textit{Shark Bite}</th>
<th>Body Worlds</th>
<th>Hirst, \textit{Physical Impossibility}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant is given the option to participate, and to rescind participation at any time.</td>
<td>Shark was observed from a distance, enticed towards the canvas by the artists’s application of sardines, but not forced. The shark could have opted to not participate.</td>
<td>The participant is aware that this donation form “is not a contract but rather a living will that can be revoked by either party” at any time (\textit{Body Donation for Plastination 34}).</td>
<td>Shark was captured and killed for the work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consent obtained from participant in sound mind, without coercion.</td>
<td>Consent arguably obtained in the shark’s interaction with the canvas, without being forced.</td>
<td>Lengthy consent form and participant evaluation.</td>
<td>No consent given, so far as we know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement from next of kin.</td>
<td>No agreement.</td>
<td>Consent form asks if the family is aware of the donation and if they agree.</td>
<td>No agreement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement to public exhibition.</td>
<td>No agreement, but as it was only the shark’s bite mark that went to exhibition, its presence there did not obstruct the shark’s life in any substantive way.</td>
<td>Consent form asks if the participant agrees to have their body exhibited in public for educational purposes.</td>
<td>No agreement, and the exhibition relies on the shark’s death.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement for use as an artistic object.</td>
<td>No agreement, but the shark’s existence as an artistic object is only in its bite mark.</td>
<td>Consent form asks if the participant agrees to become an anatomical work of art.</td>
<td>No agreement, and the artistic piece consisted entirely of the shark’s body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation of motives for participation.</td>
<td>None, though Olly and Suzi theorize on it, and conceptualize the shark as a co-creator of their work.</td>
<td>Consent form asks the participant to elaborate on why they want to participate in this work.</td>
<td>None, and Hirst focuses only on his own motives when describing the art work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditions</td>
<td>Olly and Suzi, <em>Shark Bite</em></td>
<td>Body Worlds</td>
<td>Hirst, <em>Physical Impossibility</em></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreed anonymity or recognizability in display.</td>
<td>No agreement, but Olly and Suzi use the shark bite to stand in for all other sharks in threatened ecosystems, as physical presence that they are there and should be protected.</td>
<td>Consent form asks if participant is comfortable having identifying features obscured through the plastination process, and becoming more representative of someone with their physicality as a whole, rather than as an individual. Form also asks if the participant is comfortable having recognizable features, such as tattoos, still visible, in the event that someone is able to identify them at a future exhibit.</td>
<td>No agreement, and Hirst uses the shark body as a stand-in for all other sharks in terms of the fear and ferocity they inspire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End Result For Participant</td>
<td>The shark swims away, presumably to live the rest of its life.</td>
<td>The participant has died, potentially become a part of the exhibit, and which was their goal all along.</td>
<td>The shark is dead, and the work propagates the same stereotypes of predator ferocity that has already contributed to their endangered status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End Result for Art Work</td>
<td>Exhibited in galleries and natural history museums around the world. Used this art work and others to generate conversations on conservation, and raise money for conservation efforts.</td>
<td>Now has a database of 15,595 body donors from around the world, who have consented to participation after their deaths, if needed (Body Donation for Plastination).</td>
<td>Sold for sold for 100,000 pounds and received a nomination for the Turner Prize. Has been recreated several times now, including an even larger exhibition of a shark suspended in formaldehyde, called Leviathan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I believe that Olly and Suzi’s approach to the animal artist comes as close to creating ethical human-animal artistic relationships as possible, based on these fairly strict standards. In *Shark Bite*, Olly and Suzi’s means of access to the shark is clearly stated as part of their exhibition: they list where the shark was encountered, how they reached the ecosystem, and what help and guidance they obtained to be there (Williams and Winstanley 149). The agency and
intentionality of the shark was foregrounded in its unforced participation, with Olly and Suzi acknowledging that if the shark chose not to participate in the work, that would have been fine. Its personal choice was paramount (149). Olly and Suzi’s collaboration with the shark was short-lived. Olly and Suzi could use its ‘signature’ to speak with their audiences about all of the things that circuses, SeaWorld, and Hirst claim are important: the duality of shark ferocity exhibited through bite marks, coupled with a surprising designation of the shark as ‘artist’; a tangible encounter that teaches the artists, and by extension the audience, so much more about shark lives and ecosystems; and the sublimity of physical co-presence with an animal body. They achieve all of this though, without the shark having to die or leave its ecosystem for the benefit of their audiences. This clearly is not an easy human-animal artistic relationship to obtain, and following Olly and Suzi’s lead, or even a consent system like von Hagens, would likely result in far fewer works being created with animals — but it is an ethical approach, and I would argue, one that should be given more weight when thinking of animal artists.

I understand the line of consent between human artists and animals may never be fully formed or agreed upon. I also recognize that there is something alluring about being able to stop a seemingly ferocious ocean predator in its tracks, and to walk around them entirely unscathed. This is perhaps why Hirst’s work, even though depending on the death of the shark, is vastly more popular and financially successful than any of Olly and Suzi’s works. The power inherent in the relationship between a viewer and a forcibly-inert predatory body is an interesting, sublime image to explore. But it calls back to Baker’s initial question of whether or not we can be trusted with animal bodies (Artist / Animal 1). Can we be trusted, in the face of an image like this, to recognize that the animal may - with or without irrefutable evidence - have its own desires for continued existence, and simply leave them be? Can we be trusted to allow that to be
a possibility or do we, as Hirst does, simply supplant the lack of explicit consent with our own narratives that erase animal agency and relegate them to simply artistic objects. For Olly and Suzi, I believe their concept of animal consent is formed around their notions of animals having ‘choice’. They can entice the animals to become curious about the art, in the same way perhaps that von Hagens displays can entice an audience: it is something new within their environment or maybe a new way of seeing their environment. But Olly and Suzi will not force that interaction, or conduct their performances in such a way that the animal comes to any harm. Whether or not that can really constitute consent or ethical artistic relationships, it is maybe as close as Olly and Suzi can come.

3.5 Access to Animals

I want to look at the issue of access to animals - both in terms of how Olly and Suzi bring animals into their artworks, and how they present what they find out about the animal to their audience. When Olly and Suzi decided to incorporate animals into their works, they realized they had to do something different — specifically different from circuses, SeaWorld or contemporaries like Damien Hirst — to interrogate the dysfunctional disconnect between humans and animals (Williams and Winstanley 9; “Adventures With Art”). Like David Suzuki notes, “the way we see the world shapes how we treat it” (The David Suzuki Reader 11), and if other species could be conceptualized as “biological kin, not resources” (11), then they would be treated accordingly. The challenge was to begin to see the world from a different perspective, and to impart that transformation to their audiences, as “to deny the reality or logical significance of what we can never describe or understand is a form of cognitive dissonance” (Nagel 439-440).
Essentially, their first step was to change their approach to accessing animals, on both a practical and a theoretical level.

As has been mentioned before, Olly and Suzi go to the natural ecosystem of the animal(s) with whom they want to collaborate, and they create their artworks there. This already sets them apart from other artists. The animal is not transported to a studio or an audience in order to be incorporated in an artwork; it can happen from the immediacy of their own homes, with no threat to them. They also presume no ‘right’ to access. If the animal does not wish to participate in the work, or exhibits no interest in the canvas, Olly and Suzi are adamant about not pursuing or unduly enticing it into interaction, for the safety of all involved (Williams and Winstanley 144).

I want to examine what it means for a shark to be both involved in something like Shark Bite, and still permitted its own existence, in its own ecosystem. It seems like such a logical conclusion, but if we look back to something like circus elephants, or the shark in Physical Impossibility, the notion was that for animals to have any relevance in the cultural sphere, they would have to be brought into ‘civilization’, trained — or made inert — and then made presentable to an audience. The elephants’ lives, in the cultural sphere, were never their own. The Physical Impossibility shark is denied the continuation of its life for its inclusion in the cultural sphere. In Shark Bite, what Olly and Suzi present is a single moment in the life of a shark, who quickly bit a painting, and then swam on to presumably to live out the rest of its life. By venturing out into its ecosystem, Olly and Suzi necessarily limit their own access to the shark, and question the right to animal access that has been culturally held prior to this. Why have we assumed, for example, that it is permissible to take an animal from its ecosystem for art of any kind? If Olly and Suzi changed their approach to accessing a shark on this fundamental level,
their work could further advocate for conservation efforts without being a part of the problem, like SeaWorld.

On a theoretical level, I want to look at this transformation of access in human-animal artistic relationships in a number of ways. I will be analyzing it through Deleuze and Guatarri’s concept of serial versus structural relationships, and the influence of Joseph Beuys’ work on ‘plastik’ and ‘ecological gesamtkunstwerk’ performances. I feel that each of these elements illustrates a different aspect of Olly and Suzi’s access to animals.

One way of looking at access is to go back to Deleuze and Guatarri’s concept of serial versus structural relationships. In serial relationships, the “graduating resemblances” (Deleuze and Guatarri 236) between humans and animals deny animal interiority. They will always necessarily be viewed as less than human. Deleuze and Guatarri instead propose a different type of human-animal relationship that could be followed: structural relationships. These types of relationships aim to discover what combines to form the structure, and what correlates within the structure, making the relationships “a is to b as c is to d” (Deleuze and Guatarri 234). This is what Deleuze and Guatarri call an analogy of proportionality (234). Instead of looking at the human-animal relationship as a product of graduating resemblances, it is a question of “ordering differences to arrive at a correspondence of relations” (236): the human painter is to its paintbrush as the shark is to its bite mark, in the world of Olly and Suzi’s *Shark Bite* for example. This moves away from the idea of the animal as mere surface, like in *Physical Impossibility*, noting that if animals do have depth, it must be so radically different from our own that no direct comparison through serial relations can be made (*Surface Encounters* xix). A structural view of animals within natural history would open the door for the possibility of like experiences, that there is something it is *like* to be an animal, as Thomas Nagel would say (Nagel 436). Heidegger
also suggests that “if human knowledge is that of distances and interiorities, it is possible that one way of knowing [that] has been closed off to us is that of surfaces” (*Surface Encounters* 89), which could then be discovered through these correlative structural relationships.

However, Deleuze and Guatarri note that structural relationships do not go far enough, in that they see the correspondence of relations as degradations, something still less than ‘human’ (*Deleuze and Guatarri* 236). It is the human artists who use their skills to create the painting of the shark, for example, but only the shark’s natural jaw movement that creates the bite mark: it still fails to capture, or fully articulate, the possibility for real animal interiority. In this way, animal bodies “resist” being part of the structure of human meaning, at least in the roles that have been traditionally designed for them (*Surface Encounters* 82). The problem is that while humans and animals occupy the same planet, both inhabit vastly different worlds, so how can that gap be bridged (104)?

Olly and Suzi looked to their immediate performance arts influences, namely Joseph Beuys, for examples of how to relate to animals within art differently than someone like Hirst. Beuys was fascinated with plasticity, or the mutable ability of people and objects, growing, reforming and moving. (*Rosenthal* 26). He called this ‘plastik’, a “new type of sculpture […] as mutable as life itself” (25), and he felt that all materials could be transformed through movement (25). He applied these theories to works that aimed to cross boundaries between human and animal communication. Of particular inspiration to Olly and Suzi’s work was Beuys’ 1974 *I Like America and America Likes Me*. In this piece, Beuys confined himself to a New York City art gallery for an entire week, enclosed in a cage with a live coyote (*Rosenthal* 28; *Williams and Winstanley* 67). His only other company within this plastik sculpture was a stack of Wall Street Journals, delivered daily, and those who would come by the gallery to view the
performance (Rosenthal 95). The coyote was an important symbol in the piece, both environmentally and politically. Environmentally, he delved into considerations of the natural landscape of New York City, the animals who populated the land before colonization. Whereas coyotes and other urban animals are often treated as nuisances, to Beuys they were simply existing within their natural habitat. By bringing the coyote into the art gallery with him, he was forcing his audience to confront the idea of a ‘natural habitat’: is it the human-made art gallery, or the coyote’s natural forest, that truly deserves to ‘belong’ here? 

In *I Like America and America Likes Me*, both the coyote and Beuys shepherd the audience towards “bridg[ing] the gap between vast modern cities and the natural state” (Borer 23), deceiving the audience into seeing the reality behind the art: it is not just Beuys the slightly odd contemporary artist risking his life in a gallery cage with a wild animal, but Beuys the artist and environmentalist interrogating what it means to have separated ourselves so much from nature and the animals within it, that a coyote should be feared and not recognized as a fellow living being. He does this through his proximity to the wild and feared animal, using the physicality of his body as a tether to the audience so they might imagine the plastik forms this living sculpture of Beuys and the coyote could take, drawing on the heightened awareness one naturally has when they are around an unfamiliar, wild animal. Would the coyote threaten him? Would the coyote attack him? Would Beuys and the coyote actually be able to communicate and negotiate a shared living space? And if Beuys could do this within a tiny gallery, could it be possible to find shared space within a city?

It was this unconventionality that inspired Olly and Suzi’s first works. Olly and Suzi wanted to meet the animals in their wild habitats: “we wanted to take the human-animal and artistic interaction that stage further, to feel its spirit. We wanted to co-exist” (Williams and
Winstanley 67). The transmutable materials they developed from Beuy’s inspiration included natural painting materials - non-toxic paints, fruit juices, sometimes animal remains as in Shark Bite’s sardine cover - as well as the physical proximity of their own bodies within a plastik sculpture in which anything could happen. No matter what happens in the artist-animal encounter that takes place when Olly and Suzi encounter a wild animal, it sets in motion changes that persist long after the performance art event itself is finished: they will begin to see the animal subject in a different light, their audiences may identify with the animal subject in a new and unexpected way, and the attention their works brings to the animal’s plight for survival and its ecosystem may have a positive or negative impact on subsequent conservation projects.

From these transmutable elements, Olly and Suzi developed a piece in which they ventured to Ellesmere Island to paint live wolves, with the goal of capturing the “freedom” of the animal on their canvas (Williams and Winstanley 2). Olly and Suzi tasked themselves with generating an entirely new approach to engaging with animals in contemporary performance art, both to reconcile past injustices to animals in art, and to encourage fostering new relationships. The problem they immediately faced was in creating this approach when “the very impossibility of understanding the animal as Other serves as the productive friction by which authentically new thinking and art are produced” (Surface Encounters xx). How can you create a wholly new relationship to animals within art, aiming for something more respectful than what has been done by mainstream art in the past, when understanding the animal in terms of its needs and wants is not such a straightforward task?

Olly and Suzi’s goal then became to forego considerations of animal interiority - not to deny its existence, but to acknowledge the difficulty in both proving and accessing - and instead aim for communication via the surfaces of their canvas. Like Beuys pushed for a plastik, living
sculpture with transmutable materials, their canvas would be a place for this performance to take place. Traditionally, animal representations on canvas entailed classifying or judging the animals in relation to humans, a serial relationship (Artist / Animal 23). However, they took this a step further, and theorized ways to use surface representation as a tool or a stepping stone for “open[ing] up human understanding of or engagement with the animal” (23). The art they aimed to create would combine the surface of the animal, the only ‘interiority’ we have been taught to recognize, with the surface of the canvas, creating “conditions for thinking the problem of contact between the surface animal world and our own” (Surface Encounters xvi). If the animal subjects of the art were only thought to exist on the surface, then by restricting themselves to surface encounters as well, the material surfaces - the animal and the canvas - “offer a means of thinking about humans and animals outside the privileged hegemony of the human subject” (85). This approach takes the gaps that serialist or structuralist approaches to animal representation attempt to close, and collapses it, making the art simply the meeting site of distinct and unacquainted bodies (85) in a plastik sculpture. They wanted to come to know the animal through shared surface contact. Broglio says, “if we cannot understand what it is to live from the standpoint of the beast, then our understanding of the animals and their worlds comes from contact with the surfaces of such worlds [by] jamming our anticipated cultural codes for animals, and offering us something different” (xix). By engaging with the animal on the surface, it ceases to matter if the animal has interiority, or if the human artists do for that matter. Through acknowledging that surfaces can exist as sites of productivity and meaning (89), Olly and Suzi and the animal they encounter can begin to create their own depths.

They do so by creating works entirely along the surfaces with their animal co-creator. By being within the animal’s territory, the animal has further control: they know the space, and Olly
and Suzi are their guests. In this way, Olly and Suzi further “counter traditional animal portraits used to discern and promulgate the civilization and enculturation of animals within human culture” (Surface Encounters 82) with this “raw physicality [that] can pull us away from the privileged interiority of the subject and point the way to another relationship” (82). At these “limits of human domination” (90) - the dive cage dropped within a school of great white sharks, for example - they are better positioned to connect with the animal and learn something of its experience (xvii-xviii).

Some may question why Olly and Suzi would put themselves in such potentially harmful positions within a wild predator’s habitat. Videos and photographs of Shark Bite show them in dive cages surrounded by a school of great white sharks. While they of course use precautions to make the situation as safe as possible, such as working closely with wildlife conservationists or researchers in a region who work with and know the animal animals better, Olly says the potential risk is worth it: their work “is nothing without the experience […] We cannot make this stuff unless we’ve been there” (Artist / Animal 25). Making their work from first-hand experience is integral because, as Wendy Wheeler says, “organisms […] can only ever be understood in relation to their environment” (31-32). Olly and Suzi’s work is experiential in that the result of their creative reaching out for new knowledge allows them to “incorporate it in our body - or extend our body to include it - so that we may come to dwell in it” (32). Although a full understanding of the animal’s experience may never be reached, the key for Olly and Suzi is the attempt itself. They want to come to a fuller, embodied understanding of who the animal is in its natural habitat, believing that when “the artists are caught within the world of the animal [the] distance [between the human and animal world] is collapsed” (Surface Encounters 92). Olly and
Suzi are adamant that the animal’s agency could not be asserted in a work where they feel the connection was forced (Feraca).

Fear also plays a role in creating the work, specifically relating to obtaining access to animals. Not only do Olly and Suzi have to attend to the social misconceptions of the predators with whom they work - like everyone else, they too have seen *Jaws* - but they also have to deal with fear of the unknown in the moment. Entering into an animal’s natural habitat brings the possibility of real, tangible, physical risks - what if the dive cage was not secure enough, for example. While creating works with these wild predators, “fear is something that rises to the surface, that keeps the artists in contact with the surface” (*Surface Encounters* 90), further preventing them from introspection and interiority, and also keeping them mentally and physically present in case of danger. It is all about being within the moment (90). To alleviate the potential dangers that do come with something like jumping into a dive cage and swimming with great white sharks, they work with wildlife conservation efforts on each artistic expedition to ensure safety and mitigate fears, which also helps them to begin dismantling some of the roots of these fears, such as the historical transformation of the ‘canis marinus’ into the viscous ‘shark’. The ultimate goal is to use the fear they experience to lead to a greater understanding of the animal they are encountering (Williams and Winstanley 162). The knowledge they gain from experts “arms” them (Williams and Winstanley 4), and they are “constantly reminded of how much more [they] have to learn about the wild” (236).

Entering into the animal’s natural habitat also gives Olly and Suzi a greater respect for and understanding of the animal and the threats they face, particularly from human encounters. As a result, their work also aims to incorporate a sense of responsibility to the natural world. By engaging directly with the animal in its habitat, Olly and Suzi’s works combine both artistic
skills, wildlife conservation biology, sailing and scuba diving certifications, animal rights advocacy, and ability to communicate these experiences to educate future audiences, not to mention valuable expedition skills such as trouble-shooting, first-aid, or survival skills. This is an extenuation of Beuys’ concept of the ‘ecological gesamptkunstwerk’, or a total work of ecological art, which Beuys theorized would combine improvisation and interactive art-making with the animal co-creator, the social concerns of animal rights, nature conservation, and humanity’s place in ecology, scientific and field research, and the phenomenological experience of encountering the animal first hand (Adams 28). It is a lofty amount of goals for an artwork, which may be insurmountable or may aim to accomplish too much and fall short of its claims, but the goal is an all-inclusive art that ultimately pushes the boundaries of what is traditionally involved in creation processes, adventure expeditions, or field research. Olly and Suzi’s work wants to be equal parts all of it. Their efficacy at this comes when when their canvas transforms into a place for the animal to “bite back” (Surface Encounters 82), when the animal physically engages within the artwork. Olly and Suzi assume the resulting markings on the canvas to be the animal making its ‘voice’ heard on its own terms.

This ecological gesamptkunstwerk, relates to David Orr’s assertion that contemporary education has become too fragmented and specialized, and that disciplines have begun to primarily concern themselves with their own disciplines (Orr 3). In an ecological gesamptkunstwerk, what is required is not specific knowledge of any one discipline, but a willingness to learn from multiple disciplines and experts, most important of which is the animal co-creator, which is expert of its own habitat and experience. What Olly and Suzi do here is open themselves up to dismantling traditional performance art hierarchies in which animals are seen as
subordinates and backgrounds, and to the possibility that they can learn something of what it is to be that animal.

All of this is a stark opposition to Hirst's shark. In *Physical Impossibility*, the shark was extracted from its ecosystem and transported to Hirst’s studio. Hirst presumed access to the shark — and any shark — was his right as an artist. We can see how this access is presented to audiences as well. In *Shark Bite*, the presumption is that there is something it is like to be that shark, and its bite mark ‘signature’ is evidence of one small moment in the shark’s experience of life, that continues after the artistic interaction. Those viewing *Physical Impossibility* get the whole suspended shark body, a mutable object whose pose is overlaid with images of danger and ferocity. The only meanings of this sculpture that the audience accesses are those which Hirst prescribes for the work. What each of these teach their audiences is also revealing. For *Shark Bite*, the animal swims on, and the ecosystem they encountered remains presumably unchanged from that interaction, though presumably the audience has realized they have more to learn about both sharks and their environment. For *Physical Impossibility*, the animal will never swim again, and its ecosystem is down one predator. The audience only re-learns that sharks should be feared, and the only way to safely encounter them is by killing the shark. Artistic access to animals and its lasting influence on the ecosystem is an inherent consideration in Olly and Suzi’s work, that sets them apart from their contemporaries.

### 3.6 Animal Agency

I want to question how Olly and Suzi advocate for and support animal agency within their works. Olly and Suzi work from the assumption that the animals they collaborate with have and express agency, particularly through participation; it is a ‘given’ for their work to occur. For
audiences of their work it may not be as much of a foregone conclusion, so to analyze their approaches to animal agency, we have to first accept that there is something it is like to ‘be’ an animal. I will use Nagel’s writings on animal lives to demonstrate the theoretical approach to animals Olly and Suzi take in their works, and how that approach reaches the assumption that animals can have and act on agency. I will then look at how a human-animal artistic relationship that begins from the acceptance of animal agency can evolve into a theoretically shared experience that advances what both human and animal parties in an encounter can learn about the other.

For Olly and Suzi to create works beginning from the assumption that their animal collaborator has and expresses agency, there has to be an acceptance that the animal can and does experience something of being ‘itself’. Within the assumption that animals lack interiority and exist only on the surface is the idea that they have no perspective on their world or events within it. Olly and Suzi’s work attempts to dismantle this assumption, providing insight into what it might be like to both be an animal, and what it is like for the animal to be itself. Acknowledging, of course, that it is impossible to truly determine what another human’s conscious experience of the world might be, Olly and Suzi’s work may also delve into experiencing animal worlds quite romantically, with the sense that animal experiences are understandable if we just reach far enough. As such, they look for even the smallest clues that their animal collaborator may register their presence and participate in the encounter intentionally, wanting to make its own mark of agency on the work. If the animal is, as Bataille says, ‘water in water’, then perhaps the change in its environment brought on by the entrance of Olly and Suzi would have gone entirely unregistered? It is little kernels of possibility like this that Olly and Suzi cling to as potential gateways into understanding animal experiences.
Nagel writes that an animal can only be considered conscious if we accept that there is something it is like to be that animal (Nagel 436). However, the question of what exactly ‘consciousness’ is, how it works, and where exactly it exists already overshadows even basic claims that animals have consciousness. Donald Griffin, a zoology professor and researcher of animal behaviour whose major contribution is to wildlife biology is the co-discovery of echolocation in bats (Griffin 4), notes that schools of thought on animals avoid considering their mental experience, “restricting attention to overt and observable behaviour and psychological mechanisms: (1). In fact, Conwy Lloyd Morgan, in his 1894 *An Introduction to Comparative Psychology* says “in no case may we interpret an [animal] action as the outcome of the exercise of a higher psychical faculty, if it can be interpreted as the outcome of the exercise of one which stands lower in the psychical scale” (Ingram 146). Essentially, he cautioned animal behaviourists to not assume that an animal was making a conscious choice, when instead its actions could be the result of low-functioning automatic behaviours. Although much has changed since Morgan’s text, proof of animal consciousness still remains a sticky subject, and Griffin cautions that within studies of animal behaviour - which would include to some extent Olly and Suzi’s work - the more we can reconsider what we think we know of animals and human nature, the better (Griffin 1-2).

What might be more prudent to discuss is how consciousness feels. ‘Qualia’ is the philosophical term to describe the subjective experience of consciousness. Philosopher Frank Jackson suggests that even if every neurological basis for consciousness was explained, it would still leave open to interpretation “the hurtfulness of pain, the itchiness of itches” (6), or the essence of experience, which is different for each person. Ingram says, “we’ll never know the ‘qualia’ of someone else. You’ll never know my mind and I won’t know yours […] We’ll never
be able to make objective what is uniquely subjective” (142). This makes psychologist Richard Gregory wonder if ‘qualia’ or consciousness is simply a sorting or organizing mechanism governing the experience of the present moment, the ability to distinguish the ‘now’ from everything else: keeping the mind from existing like ‘water in water’ (7). A sense of quaila is needed to fully understand consciousness, why one’s present moment or experience of the world is so distinctly different from another’s. As animals are unable to discuss their experiences with us, understanding their qualia becomes harder still (142). 

To relate this to the work of Olly and Suzi, the purpose of understanding the relations between human and animal consciousness, or the ability to perceive what another might be feeling or thinking in a particular situation, suggests that animals have a consciousness that “under the right circumstances” it might be possible to “‘know’ what they’re thinking about” (Ingram 154). For Olly and Suzi, this would heighten their abilities to create the unconventional relationships between humans and animals within art they strive for.

The question of perception and one’s experience within the world can usually be accessed from a phenomenological approach, physically experiencing that reality and becoming embodied within that world. We know much less of this from an animal perspective (Surface Encounters xv). How is it possible to determine the qualia of one’s world, when their physical reality cuts us off from their interiority? Nagel tackles this question in his investigation into the life of bats, a helpful example as bats possess a vastly different range of sensory experiences, such as echolocation, and “there is no reason to suppose that [the experiences of bats] is subjectively like anything we can experience or imagine” (Nagel 439). This goes back to the structuralist argument Deleuze and Guatarri note within natural history: we can liken our experiences to that of a bat, but that is generally considered to be the closest we can get in terms of determining anything of
the bat’s experiences. We can easily imagine what it would be like for *us* to be a bat from within our own range of experiences, with wings and sleeping upside down (439), but “we cannot include more than a schematic conception of what it *is* like” (439). Structurally, if *a* is to *b* as *c* is to *d*, then we can read a relationship of what it is to be a bat, for a human, potentially along these lines: *bat* is to *echolocation* as *blind person* is to *walking stick*, or even *bat* is to *echolocation* as *sighted person* is to *flashlight in a dark cave*.

I would like to pull momentarily from a personal experience that I believe is an excellent illustrator of this structural relationship, and could further explain Olly and Suzi’s perspectives on what it might be like to ‘be’ a shark. On a research grant in 2013, I traveled through Central America to look at the integration of eco-tourism and education programming, centred specifically on animals. I stopped at the Lanquin Caves, in Alta Verapaz, Guatemala, and found an excellent, if unintentional, example of Nagel’s theories on understanding animal minds and experiences. The Lanquin caves are a complex system, which have yet to be fully explored, and are an important home for countless bat species. At dusk, hundreds of thousands of bats fly out of the cave, a site which attracts over 40,000 tourists per year to the small village of Lanquin (Usher 512). A short four hundred meter trail leads tourists into the cave, where they can explore what is it like to live like the bats. The floor and guard rails are slippery with droppings, the air humid, and the tourists often encounter bats flying right above their heads (“Lanquin Cave”). The caves themselves are advertised as fully lit along this trail; however, in the time between the latest guide books’ publications and my visit to Lanquin while researching eco-tourism in Central America, the rules had changed slightly: the lights inside the cave were no longer turned on. A conversation with a conservation officer on duty taught me that the wildlife biologists working in the area had concerns about the impact of artificial lighting on bat nocturnal
migration patterns, and therefore turned off the lights. The Lanquin Caves were among the first places in Guatemala to be declared protected areas (“Lanquin Caves”, Usher 512), and are under strict conservation efforts. Tourists in the past year have still been permitted to enter the caves, but are now required to bring either their own headlamps or borrow a candle or a flashlight from the park entrance.\textsuperscript{315} The conservation officer laughed at me on my way into the cave, as I showed him the dimly flickering flashlights I had borrowed, and said, “Now you get to find out what it is to be a bat!”

This experiential walk, for me, lasted all of twenty minutes before both flashlights flickered off, and I was left in the middle of the cave trail, in the pitch black. In this experience, questioning what it might be like to be a bat became second-nature, as I crawled along the cave floor, feeling for one guard rail after the next. I could imagine what it would be like to have the ability to echolocate, to be able to send out a sound wave and decipher a route out of the cave based on what bounces back to me. I could imagine what it would be like to have wings, to hover above the bat droppings, in which I was now covered, and to find a more direct route outside. I could imagine these things from within my range of experiences (Nagel 439). However, when it comes to what it must be like for a bat to be a bat, to instinctually know these realities and to be innately comfortable in this environment, I found, like Nagel cautioned, to be “restricted to the resources of my own mind” (439). Even imagining a changing physiology would not bring me any closer to the idea of what it is to be a bat, but rather what it would be for me, as a human mid-cave in total darkness and desperate for a way out, to suddenly become a bat. It was a surface encounter, in that I existed for a time unthinking, concerned only with finding the next guard rail and making my way out of the cave, connecting with the bats’ personal experiences through my own physical experiences of their environment. Essentially, all that can be done is to
look at the sum of the bats’ physical parts, its structure and behaviour, and deduce from the sum of our human experiences what can we know of life with bat physiology. As I made it out of the cave, one hour later, the conservation officer on duty asked how I enjoyed “being a bat”. I could honestly answer that I had no idea.

The question Nagel poses is that of determining an animal phenomenology: not what it is “to run like a cheetah […] It is not an issue of similarity; rather, what is running for the cheetah” (Surface Encounters xv)? What is its qualia? No structural relation can collapse that space between human and bat. No flashlight or walking stick giving clues to the physical space around me would have led me to an understanding of what it is like for the bat to live with the abilities of echolocation, or its experience of life in the Lanquin Caves. However, the experiential crawl through the environment is akin to Olly and Suzi’s delving into the natural habitats of their animal collaborators. Nagel says that to even “form a conception of what it is like to be a bat, one must take up the bat’s point of view. If one can take it up roughly or partially, then one’s conception will also be rough or partial” (Nagel 442).

In Shark Bite, Olly and Suzi can form a rough idea of what it might be like to be a shark, based on what they know of how they would feel living with fins and in an ocean, and they can strengthen these conceptions through meeting the shark first-hand in its natural environment. However, any conception of animal interiority, what it might be like for Olly and Suzi’s shark to be that shark, is going to be entirely rough, as “our structure does not permit us to operate with concepts of the requisite type” (Nagel 441). There are truths that our physiology will never allow us to fully understand (441). What Olly and Suzi do, and what I got a taste of in the Lanquin Caves, was an embodied experience of what it might be like to be an animal, a performance of ‘walking a mile in another’s shoes’, which although is still a structural relationship using
correlations to close the gap between human and animal experiences, it is still arguably closer than someone like Hirst is able to come in his works.

How does this relate to agency though? When Olly and Suzi accept that there is something it is like to be the shark in *Shark Bite*, they are accepting that the shark has the ability to act autonomously and make its own choices, and that we may never be able to understand what these choices are or why they are made. They also consciously attempt to dismantle the structures in place that have kept the shark’s agency from being expressed or recognized in a cultural sphere so far. Most notably is that Olly and Suzi do not attempt to speak for the shark, or pretend to decipher what the shark’s experience of collaborating on the work might have been. They let its presence, its surface value, speak for itself. Olly and Suzi’s attempt to close the gap between human and animal experiences pushes their work from a structural relationship perhaps into something entirely new. Their works are not a means through which they can identify with the animal or generate an authentic representation, but a relationship in which the surface encounters between previously unacquainted bodies transforms, and the agency of the other is recognized.

I want to look now at what new artistic relationships may be theoretically possible once animal agency is accepted - possibilities which are not open to Hirst’s works. We can imagine it this way: on one side are artists Olly and Suzi. On the other is the animal whom they have just painted. Right in the middle, in a liminal space between both sides, is the painting. The painting - in Olly and Suzi’s view - becomes the conduit through which two disparate species find a common ground. Both sides relegate themselves to purely interacting on the surface, through the surface of the painting, and through this they are - ideally and presumably - able to recognize a depth within the other that was previously unnoticed.
It is of course an overly romantic notion with no real means of determining success. The shark biting the painting does not immediately reveal the creature’s hidden artistic depths or anything along those lines. It does not even suggest that the shark knew the painting was art and not, instead, food. At this point, I want to further analyze the notion of the animal ‘signature’ on Olly and Suzi’s works. ‘Signature’ is the word they use for the markings any animal leaves on the paintings (Artist / Animal 88). When we think of ‘signature’ in almost any other sense we think of intentionality and claiming ownership, especially when it comes to a work of art. With a shark, does the notion of ‘signature’ even carry the same weight?

In my thesis introduction, I mentioned Balme’s assertion that animals do not exist outside of semiotics (Balme 84), because they are “pure presence” - they cannot linguistically express their own meanings, and they can only be exactly what they are (84; Sarbin 337). This is also a function of power relations. If one can linguistically state ownership of something, like a painting, they also claim ownership over themselves. Their ‘signatures’ become valid representations of ownership. Outside of this, if an animal is unable to claim ownership, or express those “silently formed or overtly expressed ‘I’ and ‘me’ sentences” (Sarbin 337), they are relegated to being an object. Any ‘signatures’ or acts of expression are often deemed as incidental. For example, how often do we hear of zookeepers referring to the animals in their care as purely ‘instinct-driven’ (Nance 82)? The Cartesian view of animals as automatons, driven through responses to external stimuli still permeates animal care in a lot of ways (Kalof 99; J. Kennedy 9-13), where anthropomorphized narratives can be placed upon them for educational purposes, but delving into animal emotionality is still seen as a mostly a taboo, non-scientific subject. So, part of claiming that the animals involved in Olly and Suzi’s work have a ‘signature’
is actively working to step outside of these power structures and experiment with new ways of relating.

Deleuze and Guatarri have an interesting view on how mediations between or transitions towards an ‘other’ outside of these power dynamics can occur. They look at ‘becomings’, which they define as “a process of change, flight or movement within an assemblage” (Deleuze and Guatarri 276). They also give a long list of what ‘becoming’ is not: a correspondence, resemblance, imitation, identification, a regression or progression along a series, or a physical evolution (238). The beings entering into a becoming do not turn into something else through the process: “there is a block of becoming that snaps up the wasp and the orchid, but from which no wasp-orchid can ever descend” (38). Within the process of ‘becoming’, elements of the parties involved in the process are “drawn into” each other (276), which generates something new. They use the analogy of atoms interacting with one another and exchanging particles on the subatomic level, suggesting that on a philosophical and social level the same thing can occur between people, animals and objects within an encounter (276). For them, this results in a “deterritorialization in which the properties of the constituent element disappear and are replaced by the new properties of the assemblage” (272). Essentially, there is a transformation into a state in which two parties share properties of each other for the duration of the encounter, and they both leave the encounter somewhat changed in their standard states.

In terms of Olly, Suzi and the shark, we can think of them on the level of ‘becoming-minority’. Deleuze and Guattari state that the majority is the standard set by society as the “state one power and domination” (Deleuze and Guattari 105). There is no ‘becoming-majority’; one either is within this system or not. They would classify Olly and Suzi as the majority in this human-animal relationship, which does at the outset seem to place Olly, Suzi and the shark in a
limited serial relationship: the shark will never attain the majority position of ‘human’. However, Deleuze and Guatarri state that whereas the majority is fairly set, the minority is always in the process of becoming, either through necessity or desire. On the level of minority, changes, movements and transformations are inherent. Stratton says that identity is always incomplete, and those constructed in a majority-minority relationship are “always relational” (Stratton 2-3), with the identity of the majority always somehow inflicted upon the minority. In this case, we have Olly and Suzi as a set identity as ‘human artists’, and the animal they work with somehow always moving in and around that set identity, necessarily mediating its impacts. They find in here a greater power in terms of being able to connect elements between minority identifications (106), coming to a larger understanding of the world, especially as they state there are more ‘minorities’ on the planet and those they would classify as ‘majorities’ (106). If any ‘deterritorialization’ is to happen, it is always on the level of the majority ‘becoming-minority’, or engaging in that transformational process, involving an evolution from the ‘standard’. It is about moving away from the majority as “power and domination” (105) and into a relation where existing on the periphery of those dynamics takes precedence - where the ability to claim power, ownership and representation through semiotics has less importance. The result, as Deleuze and Guatarri say, is:

neither imitation nor resemblance, only an exploding of two heterogeneous series on the line of flight composed by a common rhizome that can no longer be attributed to or subjugated by anything signifying (10).

When the shark interacts with the canvas, they enter into what Olly and Suzi call the “third piece” (Feraca). This is the space in which Olly and Suzi’s hands in the painting become indistinguishable from one another, and the exact marks the animal makes looks as if it was designed and intended from the initial concept of the painting. The three separate identities work
together in forging a new, transformative relationship along the surfaces of the canvas: “the artists’ paper spreads out as surface [on which] the artists create a contact zone at the edge of the human and animal worlds” (*Surface Encounters* xxx).

It is within this “third piece”, the liminal space between human and animal experience, that the making of the art itself becomes a “zone of contact” (*Surface Encounters* 93). The idea of a “contact zone” was developed by Mary Louise Pratt to speak about intercultural relations, specifically in linguistic terms. She defines the contact zone as a social space “where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of power” (Pratt 34). We can see how this operates in terms of Deleuze and Guatarri’s ‘becoming-minority’, in which both parties are never entirely on an equal playing field. The ‘third piece’ is not a place where power dynamics are entirely suspended. Olly and Suzi do get to return to simply ‘being human’ artists after the encounter as occurred. They don’t eschew their position as a ‘majority’ within this human-animal relationship simply because of the encounter, nor does the animal suddenly gain power. There is always an imbalance.

However, Broglio suggests that regardless of the power imbalance, these ‘zones of contact’ can become sites of “production and possibility” (*Surface Encounters* 91). Olly and Suzi, in aiming to engage with the animal along surfaces, are necessarily attempting to operate outside of spoken language. Their painting obviously holds meanings and representations for themselves and their human audiences, which may not be fully understood by the animals with whom they engage. But if we look at the third piece, the moment at which the animal engages with the canvas, as a moment of Olly and Suzi becoming-minority, and stepping as far outside of their majority position as possible in an attempt to discover something of what it is to be an animal, then the first thing they have to step outside of are the power dynamics inherent in
language. They have to accept that the encounter with the animal will exist only along the surface, only within the moment, and will not be able to generate a full representation of what has occurred there. It will be, in many ways, inexplicable. The canvas becomes the site at which all deeper meanings are erased.

Thinking of it this way helps to solve a few problems in Olly and Suzi’s depictions of the event. If the canvas is just a canvas, then all art created is incidental so they do not have to prove that the animal explicitly intended to create any particular mark on it, or had any intentionality in the strokes they leave behind. This makes Olly and Suzi’s marks on the painting slightly less dynamic and intentional as well. Olly and Suzi do not pre-plan what the painting would look like, nor do they discuss the lines each other will make along the canvas while they are painting. They speak of it as if the process is entirely organic and instinctual. And they have no way of knowing what kinds of marks the animal will leave on the painting during the encounter. So outside of a relationship to power, at least on a theoretical level or within Olly and Suzi’s intentions, what power does a signature hold? If it is not entirely a mark of ownership, then it could be seen as a mark of presence within an encounter, a simple statement that the parties were present in an event in which some transformation or encounter along a common plane occurred. And in this sense, this is perhaps as close as we have come - in the art world - to having an animal assert its existence and engage with a perspective, representation, and narrative of themselves (Pratt 34), that also makes a statement of its own existence and experience within a particular event. That may be slightly far-fetched, and I believe Olly and Suzi do take quite a romantic view of their experience with animal ‘artists’, but if we can assume there is something that it is like to be an animal, then we can also assume that there is something it is like for that
animal to reflect upon and state its experiences of an event, and maybe Olly and Suzi’s view of animal signatures on their canvas is a way of beginning to encounter that perspective.

Through this third piece, Olly and Suzi may not come to a deeper understanding of what it is like for the shark to be a shark, and we may have absolutely no idea what the shark itself thinks of the encounter, but the parties involved do have a furthered understanding of what it is like to encounter the other along a common plane. The third piece then becomes the space of ‘becoming-animal’.

As mentioned in the introduction, ‘becoming-animal’ is the event of two distinct and unacquainted bodies encountering one another with the decided purpose of forging a new relationship where direct identification, serially or structurally, is inadequate or impossible. The event, Deleuze and Guatarri say, “produces nothing other than itself” (Deleuze and Guatarri 238), so while it may be difficult to describe, they liken it to the bite of a vampire or werewolf: “an infectious transformation between human and animal states” (Surface Encounters xxxi). Once an infection has occurred, both to human and animal, they enter into a space of “identity suspension” (Artist / Animal 28), where an “un-selfing” takes place (78), and one builds a fluid identity while finding new, non-essentialist ways of relating to other similarly shifting identities. Essentially, when becoming-animal, one is no longer steadfastly ‘human’ or ‘animal’, but “each deterritorialize the other” (Surface Encounters 107). For Olly and Suzi, the process of ‘losing’ themselves within the surface of the work, and letting the shark in its natural habitat dictate the direction they take, and for a brief moment co-creating the work, the three are no longer distinct but a part of each other.

The focus becomes not on the essentialist qualities of their physical identities, but what they all do together within the performative encounter (Artist / Animal 28). All involved in the
work of becoming “must cease to become subjects to become events” (Deleuze and Guatarri 262). In serial or structural relations, animals are differentiated and identified based on similarities and differences. We can clearly see this in how visitors relate to animals in zoos. Any animals with “phylogenetic relatedness” or similarities to people are automatically more attractive to viewers, and studies show that people will spend significantly more time viewing and interacting with these animals than any others (Grazian 50). Grazian suggests these similarities are a “visceral magnetism” (50), which works against any dissimilar animals. For example, “fish seem so lacking in […] phylogenetic similarity to humans that they are hardly even thought of as animals” (156), and people therefore feel less guilt when they are exhibited in places like Ripley’s Aquarium, or when Hirst commissions the capture and kill of a shark for the purpose for an artistic installation. Becoming is instead disinterested in either similarities or differences, but instead delves into “modes of expansion, propagation, occupation, contagion, peopling” (Deleuze and Guatarri 239). Inherent in this is movement and performance, as “the hand-over-hand method of the artists, along with the interaction of the animal, diffuses the agency of the artwork and creates an event structure (Surface Encounters 95). The actions and performance of the shark within Shark Bite - how they move when Olly and Suzi are observing them while creating the painting, and how they investigate and bites the canvas in the water - become its fluid identity. Likewise, the actions Olly and Suzi take in the work, from how they paint together, the lines they create, how they respond to the shark and any preconceived notions of a threat they inadvertently carry into the encounter, become their fluid identity. They each negotiate and perform new identities within the encounter. Becoming an event rather than three distinct, stable identities “suggests a continual transfer of attributes” (Surface Encounters 24), from one to the next - or a sustained infection, to use Delueze and Guatarri’s terms. It is the
“opening up of a general economy, a flow of powers and relations” (117), not about physically or mentally actually becoming the animal, but a sharing of these fluid states (118). In this, the shark is not simply a shark anymore, but an action and event - a ‘sharking’. Likewise, a person would be a ‘personing’ (Williams and Winstanley 4): always a being identified through their performance. Becoming-animal is not two “beings seeking a relationship, but rather a movement constantly refashioning its own object reference” (S. Smith 16).

Deleuze and Guatarri break down the process of becoming into three steps: encountering a demon, or a pack of animals; identifying an anomalous or exceptional animal within the pack; and finally the “phenomenon of bordering” (Deleuze and Guatarri 245) in which one encounters the anomalous animal. The ‘demon' pack of animals is of particular importance here, especially as we can relate it to more traditional art forms incorporating animals. Deleuze and Guatarri say that ‘demons’ are animals which exist within a multiplicity, or a pack, including people. We can think of a ‘demon’ as a large grouping of animals from which it seems impossible to identify a singular being within the mass, such as school of great white sharks. There are no negotiations or boundaries between individual members, and it is indivisible as a whole: “it cannot gain or lose a dimension without changing its nature” (Deleuze and Guatarri 249). It is a recognition of the animals' embeddedness in its community and ecosystem. Deleuze and Guatarri suggests that this is the level during which those involved in the becoming are ‘infected’, but they stop short of suggesting how that contagion occurs exactly. I think if we look at our interactions with animals in places like circuses and zoos, we can see fascination and curiosity as possible routes of the contagion. We have been predominately taught to see the wild animal as a singular representative, trained into a specific performance type or an unnatural enclosure. We encounter these animals, either singular or in small groups, as stand-ins for their wild counterparts, giving
us specific expectations for what the real wild animal might be like. If we were to consider something like Ripley’s Aquarium in Toronto, we have a singular shark swimming around the Dangerous Lagoon, looking stereotypically dangerous, but in a way that is wholly contained from the viewer. If the viewer were to instead be on the deck of a ship with Olly and Suzi as they observe a whole school of great white sharks during their expeditions, the massiveness of the schools, their environmental interactions, and their unrestricted movements would presumably create a difference sense of fascination with the shark than one has experienced before. The pack would seem somewhat ‘demonic’, in that the sharks are beyond a singular identity, existing in the act of being-shark. If the desire extends towards wondering what life might be like for the shark, that could be a contagion. Likewise, Olly and Suzi may be seen as forming a multiplicity amongst themselves, melding into a singular artist as they “un-self” and lose themselves within the art making. We can see all of this operational in *Shark Bite*’s process.  

The next step involves encountering or identifying the anomalous within the demon multiplicity. Deleuze and Guatarri say that within each pack are individuals with whom alliances must be made in order to begin the becoming process (Deleuze and Guatarri 244). They liken this to making a pact with an “exceptional individual” (243), who is not necessarily the leader of the pack or the most ideal specimen of the animal, but simply the one “who arrives and pauses at the edge” (244), “reaching the threshold of human consciousness” (S. Smith 16), and of animal consciousness as well. The anomalous treads the border between human and animal worlds, and draws in the multiplicity from both sides (Deleuze and Guatarri 245). The anomalous “makes it easier for us to understand the various positions occupied in relation to the pack or multiplicity it borders” (245). In *Shark Bite*, the particular great white shark they engaged with was this anomalous, still very much a member of its school, but was actively pushing the boundaries of its
environment to investigate its human observers and the canvas they placed in the water. Likewise, Olly and Suzi become the human anomalous on their side of the encounter.

The “phenomenon of bordering” (Deleuze and Guatarri) occurs when the anomalous entities encounter one another, as representatives of their multiplicities, and engage along the surfaces of that canvas within the third piece. This is an “an act of changing both species” (Deleuze and Guatarri 250). When Olly and Suzi encounter the multiplicity of the sharks, or likewise when the animals encounter the multiplicity of Olly and Suzi, this heightens the experience of thinking and acting along surfaces, as “to think alongside animals means to distribute the body of thinking” (*Surface Encounters* 107): there is no one centre for generating perception or understanding, but a “distribution of states” (107) across bodies involved in the becoming, an embodied cognizance. There is a reciprocity of action within the fluid multiplicity, as human artists and the demonic pack encounter one another in the third piece: one both lead and follows simultaneously (S. Smith 17), and together they negotiate this new, shared identity. This is where the ‘becoming’ occurs.

I want to look at the moment in which becoming occurs as an act of play. When I was researching this section, I came across an article on an entirely different phenomenon in the realm of extreme sports, adventure and landscape literacy that, oddly, may elucidate an element of becoming that I was initially having trouble wrapping my mind around. What confused me about Deleuze and Guatarri’s description of becoming is that they mentioned it both as an event that alters participants but does not psychically evolve them, and *something* at this moment occurs but whatever that is only produces itself and cannot be fully represented outside of its. So, what is going on during ‘becoming-animal’ exactly? The article I came across, by Leif Magnussen, was about the interrelationship of kayaker, kayak and ocean in the moment of an
expedition. I became particularly interested in the term “gebilde”. Magnussen describes this as “something between the ocean and kayaker” (Magnussen 31), which results in free play taking primacy over consciousness, which lacks “explicit teleos and direction” (Magnussen 26) but still guides the experience. If we look at Shark Bite as an instance of gebilde, then Olly and Suzi learn to not just maneuver their paint brushes cross a canvas on a boat while encountering a shark, but also learn to co-exist with the shark. Their becoming-animal incorporates the whole environment of the event, including the boat, the ocean swells, other ocean animals and plants, and everything the environment encompasses which forms the interactions between artists and shark. The gebilde is the creative play at work that guides the engaged, embodied learning (26) active between Olly and Suzi and the shark, from which they may come to a greater understanding of what it might be like to be the other. Gadamer, who coined the term gebilde, says that each time it “emerge[s]s in an unrepeatable way and […] manifest[s] itself in a unique fashion” (Gadamer 126; Magnussen 30). No two moments of gebilde will ever be the same, just as Deleuze and Guatarri suggest no two becomings will ever be the same, and yet each time one re-encounters the environment, it will be with a “new understanding, created and enriched by past experiences” (Magnussen 26).

The gebilde influences the ‘death of the author’ in reading landscapes: there can be no one meaning-maker in a performance in which no one element has entire control. In Shark Bite, Olly says “the whole work is about process, and it’s about change. I don’t know what Suzi is going to do, she doesn’t know what I am going to do, we don’t know what the animal is going to do, what the environment’s going to do” (Williams and Winstanley 4). In many examples of Olly and Suzi’s becoming-animal, improvising with the environment plays a vital role as “each environment presents a particular challenge or difficulty” (25). Olly and Suzi respond to these
challenges, and learn something about what it is to work in conjunction with environmental conditions rather than against them. They also focus on responding to the animal within their work, ensuring that each have an equal hand in the final piece, resulting in a work that does not heighten details so much as features that are “prominent within the moment of drawing” (Surface Encounters 92).

In Shark Bite, the particular challenge was to make the painting something the shark would want to investigate - to eat or otherwise - and so they decided to paint the bottom dark to resemble seal colouring by covering it with blood and sardine remains (Williams and Winstanley 160). These were all elements that were decided in the moment, in response to their environment. Deleuze and Guatarri say that improvisation of this sort is to “join with the world, or meld with it” (4), which is also an element of gebilde that Magnussen first noticed in ocean kayakers. This ‘melding’ becomes an embodied learning in which the kayakers learn about their environment and emerge from the experience not physically transformed, not suddenly ‘part ocean’, but definitely changed in the sense that they have a greater understanding of the ocean for the next time they are set to return. In the same sense, in this moment of becoming Olly and Suzi learned something of what it was to interact with this shark, and respond to both them and their environment.

Some element of communication is inherent in all of this it would seem, albeit one that is necessarily developed within the moment and unique to the particular becoming-animal event. For Olly and Suzi, this communication is the relationship between human and animal bodies negotiating a common space (Surface Encounters 93). Pratt’s theories on zones of contact, in terms of their relation to languages developed for disparate groups to communicate within shared social spheres, may shed some light on what is going on here. She notes that languages
developed in contact zones are “chaotic, barbarous, and lacking in structure” (93), resulting in a ‘pigdin language’ of sorts, which is a “makeshift, cobbled-together language of works and gestures between two groups” (xviii; 92). In the third-piece, this is primarily physical and gestural, based on “how the animal reacts to their actions, [which] serve as a syntax for the pidgin language between species” (94). I am suggesting that Olly and Suzi and the shark are engaging in some form of communication while becoming-animal, and that this language, however formed, is necessitated by having to physically negotiate the shared space within the event - how the human and animal bodies encounter each other within that moment, and both emerge alive and intact. I am thinking of communication in this sense in the same way that one might ‘communicate’ with a strange dog on a street: there is an element of body language that can be read or theorized across species, such as hunched shoulders or barred teeth indicating aggression or a tail wag indicating excitement. For animals who are mostly foreign to each other - like humans and sharks - it may be constantly in process and incomplete, but something like the shark moving towards or away from the painting, or the speed with which they swim, could be considered building blocks for a surface communication. Broglio notes that there is a correlation between the development of pidgin languages and the death of metaphor, symbolism and representation, in that the new language flattens meanings to the surface, in order to “move towards its extremities or limits” (106), and beginning to discover something of what it is to be animal (Nagel 441).

The phenomenological approach to horse training, as outlined by Stephen Smith, likens the process of becoming-horse through training to the development of a gestural or energetic language, like what might be occurring within a gebilde or between Olly, Suzi and the shark. If the horse trainer takes cues from the horse itself and follows its likes, desires and skills rather
than what the trainer wants, the trainer can begin to look to the horse’s natural movements and uses these gestures to both understand what the horse wants (S. Smith 14). From this, the trainer can use the horses own movements to mimic what the trainer wants to say. Smith says it is not unlike being in a foreign country and pointing to an item on a menu: the trainer and the horse may have to work more towards a greater clarity in gestures, but if they start on a common ground of understanding what basic gestures mean, they can begin to communicate. Smith goes on to talk about energetic language, or achieving an energy balance between human and horse so that communication can occur (14). If, for example, a horse appears in low energy, Smith suggests a trainer take on a higher-energy stance or expressiveness, to bring both horse and trainer to a similar energy level (14). Smith says this falls under the practice of “entrainment” which is the “distinctive feature of being connected to other being […] whereby two systems of certain oscillating functions fall into synchronous patterns” (14). The desired result is a becoming-horse in which the trainer and horse are neither leading nor following, neither entirely horse or entirely human, but striving for a co-existence and greater understanding of one another.

Looking at gebilde and entrainment together with the ‘phenomenon of bordering’, it is clear that something may occur when anomalous human and animal bodies encounter one another in the third piece. Whether it’s a free play, a pidgin language, a gestural or energetic communication, a contagion, or a combination of all elements, I am unsure. But Magnussen writes about kayakers coming away with a greater understanding of the ocean for their next encounter. Smith talks about the trainer and horse coming to know each other to the degree that they communicate seemingly silently. And Deleuze and Guatarri speak about it as a contagion from which one is never fully cured. To me, it seems they are all speaking about the same type of event, in which participants are potentially able to gleam a sense of the ‘qualia’ of the other. It
forms the basis “for a different kind of being human and being horse” (S. Smith 15), or being sharks. The canvas on which Olly, Suzi and the shark have left their ‘signatures’ may be a site on which evidence of this encounter is captured.

Becoming, in any sense, may not just occur on a theoretical or phenomenological level, but there may a physical basis for the process as well. Nagel questions whether mental events can ever be experienced as physical events (Nagel 446), and assumes that the answer is yes, but that we have no way of establishing whether or not this can ever occur. Likewise, Deleuze and Guatarri state that “all becomings are already molecular” (Deleuze and Guatarri 272). To be clear, both Deleuze and Guatarri and Nagel questioned this on a purely theoretical level - even as Deleuze and Guatarri says that becoming-animal exacts an extraction of particles “between which one establishes the relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness, that are closest to what one is becoming, and through which one becomes” (272). They viewed the encounter at the third piece, the zone of contact, as parties “enter[ing] into a composition” (274), sharing particles, and transforming on a basic philosophical level. Neither was writing at a time when they would have had any inclination that there may be a physical basis for this as well.

However, in the mid-1990’s, a team of Italian neuroscientists experimenting on the brains of macaque monkeys (Berrol 303; Castile 3; Pfeifer 187) discovered a fascinating phenomenon which may provide a physiological basis for Deleuze and Guatarri’s extension of the becoming-animal experience into molecular transformation, which I want to look at here briefly simply to suggest that there may be more going on with this process than we can yet understand, on both a theoretical and neurological level.323 Researchers implanted electrodes into the macaques’ brains in order to determine “which neural regions were responsible for […] commanding the hand to rush out and grab a nut” (Gottschall 59). They noted neurons in the prefrontal cortex of the
macaque’s brains fired when both demonstrating and observing a particular type of action involving a “biological effector” such as the hand or mouth, and an object (Gottschall 59; Pfeifer 187; Rizzolatti 170). Blair recounts the details of one of the first studies in which the brains of the macaques:

[…] responded to a particular type of gesture, no matter who is making the gesture - the monkey whose brain is being recorded or another monkey. If the monkey being recorded or another monkey reaches for a grape, areas in the animal’s prefrontal lobes discharge. If another monkey, or even a human reaches for the grape, the neurons of the monkey observing the action also discharge (Blair 127-128).

Further research determined that both ‘actor’ macaque and ‘observer’ macaque were exhibiting starkly similar neural states, predominately in areas of the brain associated with learning, language, and emotions (Acharya 118; Blair 128; Berrol 302-303; Caasile 3; Pfeifer 187; Rizzolatti 172). Essentially, the emotional state of one was being mimicked in the other.

On this note, I want to look at the physical co-presence between Olly, Suzi and the animals with whom they make art, as research would suggest that one of the conditions of the mirror neuron system is proximity between actor and observer. Olly and Suzi’s work again is predicated on going into the animal’s natural habitat and observing it on its own terms. This may not be conventionally the safest, but they aim to come close enough to the animal for a conscious recognition to take place. Researchers state that mirror neurons and shared neural states are specifically “experience-dependent” (Berrol 307; (Gallese 1685). The neurons fire only when a specific action with an end result is being performed, such as a monkey reaching for an eating a grape. Gallease, the leading researcher on the team who discovered these neurons, says that it seems the goal-directed neurons “selectively activated in response to types of prehension [and] are closely associated with others that responded to the site of the same specific actions
performed by others” (1687). That is, neurologically, why physical co-presence with the animal in the third piece or contact zone is essential for becoming-animal: the participants in the process have to see goal-directed actions, such as movements towards or away from the canvas, in order to activate both sets of mirror neurons. If this is in fact something that is occurring during Olly and Suzi’s performances, it clearly sets them apart from traditional human-animal works, as it foregrounds the animal’s conscious experience of themselves and the ability for that consciousness to perceive transformations in their environment throughout an experience with an anomalous other. It makes the animal’s conscious experience of the event essential for the performance to occur.

I want to look back here as well at the idea of fluid identities within becoming-animal (Surface Encounters 117; Williams and Winstanley 4). If a shared neural state can be achieved, this gives a basis for Deleuze and Guatarri’s idea that identities are necessarily incomplete and in constant development (Deleuze and Guatarri 106; Stratton 2-3). It undoes the idea of a stable identity, leading into a performative identity, or the idea of being a ‘personing’ or a ‘sharking’ (Williams and Winstanley 4) - beings in action, constantly changing on emotional, molecular and neurological levels. Gallese’s studies determined a differentiation in identities when mirror neurons were activated: an i-identity, which is specific to the individual; and an s-identity, or a social identity, which is adopted through this shared transformation and mirroring (L. Brown 265). We can also think of this in terms of Deleuze and Guatarri’s identification of the ‘majority’ as the relatively stable standard - i-identity - and the ‘minority’ as the identity constantly shifting in relation to the majority and other elements of the social environment (Deleuze and Guatarri 105). If all becoming is in shifting towards a minority, then it involves a transformation on the s-identity level. When Olly and Suzi become animal, what is activated is...
their s-identity, in which their brains mirror the neurological states of the anomalous animal with whom they're interacting, responding to its goal-directed movements as the shark engages with the painting. If there is a neurologically-based capacity for incorporating an embodied understanding of what it might be like for the shark to be itself, then for Olly and Suzi it is brought about by the physical co-presence aspect of the performance.

The areas in the brain where mirror neurons exist also give insight into what kinds of processes can theoretically be mirrored through witnessing these goal-directed movements, and how this molecular transfer could occur during a becoming-animal. Mirror neurons are a class of pre-motor neurons (Berrol 303), and were first discovered in the pre-frontal cortex, which is the area of the brain that deals with receptive and expressive language, cognition, and is associated with influencing “judgement, planning, abstract thinking, [and] problem solving” (304). It is theorized that “before spoken language evolved, these neuron sites possessed a mechanism of recognizing actions made by others” (313). This gives a neurological basis for Smith’s phenomenological horse training and explanation of entrainment, in that by building the foundations of a pigdin gestural communication between humans and animals, what the process yields is a shared neurological state. The horse gestures in a particular direction - to a trail, for example - and the horse trainer is able to not only visualize this and understand what the horse wants, but neurologically they are already heading down the trail along with the horse. For Olly and Suzi’s becoming-animal in *Shark Bite*, the shark makes similar goal-directed movements by swimming towards the painting, which could make Olly and Suzi neurologically swim towards that painting as well. By “converting sensory information into motor instructions or actions” (304), this “associative motor learning [is] actively engaged in the process of
simulation” (305). It is a physical - albeit, visually untraceable - reaction to a mental event, in which each theoretically becomes part of the other.

More recently, mirror neurons have been located in the limbic brain, the first part of the brain to develop in mammals. The area is associated with the experience of fear, pleasure and aggression (Berrol 306), as well as evolving understandings of social and cognitive development, morality and empathy (307). So there is some basis to suggest that while mirror neurons can help one to come to an understanding of another’s mental state, it can also help the observer to experience empathy for the actor. Pfeifer recounts a study she and her colleagues conducted that attempted to link the mirroring system to the development of empathy in children. She notes that one of the earliest definitions of empathy, from 1903, suggests that it is the state of “feeling into” the emotions of others (Pfeifer 184), though Baston notes that there is disagreement about what exactly this entails. He suggests that there are eight different categories of empathetic states, including sense of imagining both what another person is thinking and feeling, and how one would feel and think if they were that other person (Baston 7). Most of the categories involve some level of imagining oneself into the shoes of another, but he mentions that there are perhaps shared neural responses between two beings that form the basis of our ability to understand one another. He likens these to exhibiting “facial empathy” or “motor mimicry” (4), such as taking on a ‘serious’ look when a close friend is crying, or a happy look when the same friend is celebrating. He notes studies on perception-action models demonstrating that when “perceiving another in a given situation automatically leads one to match the other’s neural state because perception and action rely on the same neural circuits” (5). Therefore we may be able to come to understand something of what the other feels or experiences, through this mirroring system. Baston also cautions that the science behind it is still in development, and the theory is often
over-simplified (5). Pfeifer however conducted a small study in which they measured the neural responses, through functional magnetic resonance imaging or an fMRI, of children responding to images designed to evoke empathy. They found:

children’s self-reported ability to empathize was positively correlated with activity in both mirror neurons [...] and emotional representation regions during both the observation and the imitation of emotional expressions. [This shows that] internally mirroring the affective responses of others may constitute a mechanism that allows individuals to quite literally feel what others feel (Pfeifer 188).

Of course, it is not clear what role mirror neurons actually play in the development of empathy, or if they have as much of an impact as is currently theorized (Pfeifer 191), and further studies of mirror neuron systems in humans are still lacking (Rizzolatti 174), but if the system does allow one’s brain to neurally mimic the state of another person that may be the mechanism for both understanding and empathy (187).

However, none of these studies look specifically at shared neural states between humans and animals. What about coming to understand what an animal might be thinking in this scenario? In other instances of animals within performance, we are always looking at the animal along a serial relationship: who are they in comparison to us, or more specifically, who is the animal in service to us. The circus elephant is entertaining to us. The SeaWorld orca educates us. Hirst’s shark in *Physical Impossibility* is terrifying to us. In *Shark Bite* though, the audience is being asked to understand that there is something it is like to be that shark, and that experience can be represented and it can maybe be shared as well. In Blair’s recount of the initial study, she noted that the macaque’s mirror neuron systems responded similarity if a fellow macaque picked up a grape, or if one of the human researchers picked up the grape (Blair 128; Rizzoletti 170), which seems to suggest an ability for these shared neural states to have at least somewhat of an ability to translate between species. Baston suggests that “to ascertain what someone else is
thinking and feeling can pose quite a problem, especially if you have limited clues” (Baston 4), which one would certainly encounter with other animals, especially those who are less phylogenically similar to ourselves. As well, he cautions that there is no prerequisite for the ‘understanding’ one develops of the other, through mirroring or otherwise, to actually result in an accurate perception of the other’s internal state (10). One can colour their perceptions with past experiences, inferences, and when dealing with an animal there is always the danger, as Cixous cautions, of replacing the feelings of another with one’s personal, anthropocentric feelings - such as what Hirst does with *Physical Impossibility*. So what does all of this say about our ability to bridge the species divide, either on a theoretical level or on a neurological level if, as the research on macaques show, mirror neurons can translate between species? Or, as Baston asks, how can we come to actually understand emotional states of another in such a way as elicits empathetic behaviours (Baston 4). Finally, if mirror neurons were firing in the brain of the macaques when researchers picked up grapes in Gallese’s initial study, does that mean we would find the inverse to be true as well? Could animal actions result in the human observer entering into a shared neural state with the animal as well, and what implications might this have on human-animal relations? Is it possible that if there is in fact a ‘molecular exchange’ or shared neural states on some level between Olly, Suzi and the shark, then have the artists in fact ‘become’ something of the shark during encounter?

Most heartening to this process is its neuroplasticity, or the fact that the firing mirror neurons can be a learned response. In one study by Ferrari et al, two macaque monkeys were given basic tools before an experiment, and enough time to acquaint themselves with these tools. The study then found that when one of the researchers grasped the tool, the mirror neurons in the monkeys’ brains fired and showed a similar neurological state as if they were also holding the
tools themselves (Casile 6). The frequency and effectiveness of these responses increased over time and with further experience with the tools, while the macaques who had never seen the tools before exhibited no response (6). If mirroring can be a learned reaction, then the process of becoming-animal may also be a developing process as well, strengthening the response each time. Then theoretically, the becoming-animal that Olly and Suzi experience in *Shark Bite* can be something that is taught to their audiences as well.

Despite the potential connections between becoming-animal and responsive mirror neurons, can we actually say that anything of Olly and Suzi have changed once the experience with the anomalous shark has ended? Deleuze and Guatarri asked if becoming-animal ever really reaches an end point (Deleuze and Guatarri 251). When the process of becoming-animal is done, does one revert to being ‘simply human’, with a solely i-identity, or do aspects of this multiplicity and molecular transformation remain?

The transformation of Olly and Suzi - and theoretically even the shark - is in their development of an experience of what it might be like to be an animal. If what it is to be a bat, as Nagel explores, is only knowable as a bat, then any attempts to specifically qualify what the bat thinks or experiences moves away from “the real nature of the phenomenon” (Nagel 445). The closest Olly and Suzi can come is to achieve a sense of empathy for what the shark’s experience of being itself might be. It is always an “external” empathy (443), in that “members of radically different species may both understand the same physical events in objective terms, [but] this does not require that they understand the phenomenal forms in which those events appear to the senses of members of the other species” (445). If a mirroring response is taken into account, this collapses the distance between human and animal artists in *Shark Bite* greatly, but never entirely. As anomalous creatures on both side of the divide, Olly at least achieve an understanding of the
same event, whether or not the perspectives of Olly and Suzi and the shark will ever result in an understanding of the other (Nagel 442).

I want to conclude this section by briefly considering what of animal agency Hirst’s audience may be able to experience. As the shark had no choice in its transformation, all it could become is an artistic object. What both Hirst and his audience will be able to determine of what it might have been like to be that shark is coloured by its predator-like pose. Hirst presumes and depicts that all this shark might have had on its mind is mindlessly devouring everything in its path. It is an approach to animal minds that is akin to historical thinking on animal consciousness - the shark is ‘like water in water’, unconscious of its own experience, both in life and in its incorporation into contemporary art. If there is nothing it is like for that shark to be itself, then its extraction, death, and transformation into artistic object can be considered unproblematic.

Likewise, the audience is in no way transformed or encouraged out of pre-existing notions of shark behaviour, such as its ferocity. *Physical Impossibility* exists to reinforce serialized relations and the conversion of living animal into artistic object. It supports the idea that animal agency does not exist, and remains firmly entrenched in the same act of the geodrama that permitted animal bodies like Topsy and Tilikum to be used until they no longer fulfilled the artists’ desired image. Hirst has in fact said that the purpose of the shark in *Physical Impossibility* is simply to do “what [he] wanted it to do” (Obrist), which was to "look fierce” (Obrist). When the original shark in *Physical Impossibility* began to rot and ceased representing Hirst’s vision, only then did Hirst “feel pretty bad” that his audiences would not be able to understand the experience of the shark - because it did not look terrifying enough (Obrist). The only interiority inherent in Hirst’s shark is that which he places there himself.
Olly and Suzi, by contrast, are actively “unthinking and undoing of the conventionally human” (*Surface Encounters* 80), rethinking notions of who can possess consciousness and agency, pushing towards the next act of the geodrama.

For Hirst, animal intentionality also does not even register as a consideration in his artistic process. The shark has no choice and therefore questions of its intentionality are immediately moot. This again further reinforces the idea of animals as mindless entities, and their unproblematic incorporation into the art world.

It is one thing for artists to theorize about potentials of becoming-animal and advocating for animal agency, but another to say that the animals who participate in Olly and Suzi’s works actively intend to be a part of this. Is the animal an artist in name only, or is there a way to determine that the animal has consciously entered into an artistic relationship with Olly and Suzi?

In a study of animal art, Jane C. Desmond says the question about animals claimed as artists is “whether or not the animal intended to make aesthetic choices, or merely produced physical actions that resulted in the aesthetic choices being passively made” (Desmond 97). Can animal markings be “evidence of subjectivity” (97)? While there have been studies, however limited, on animals creating more ‘conventional’ art, there is no way to really determine that the shark in *Shark Bite* had artistic motives. However, Olly and Suzi assert that the animals they collaborate with intend to do so, making presumed intentionality the basis from which they work.

Olly and Suzi have learned to encourage ‘willing’ animal participation in a number of ways, including covering the *Shark Bite* canvas with sardines (Williams and Winstanley 160), but paramount here is that it is the animal’s *choice* to engage with the work or not, and this intentionality is difficult, if not impossible, to determine. The shark’s bite on the work may be
indicative of its agency as a living creature - they are not a mindless machine, but a being capable of making their own choices. And if an animal can make a choice to mark a canvas, then it opens the door for the consideration that the animal may have something to say about its other choices in life - where they live, what they do, the health of their ecosystem, or anything else. The artwork that results, with both Olly and Suzi’s paintbrush markings, and the animal bites become both a record of the interaction between human artists and animal bodies upon the canvas. The canvas can then be seen as a physical trace document of the performance of the encounter between the human artists and animal, and indication that an unconventional relationship between humans and animals within an art work did occur. It is not simply painting the environment, but learning how to paint with and within it (Williams and Winstanley 149).

For Olly and Suzi, learning how to paint within an environment is more about letting go of a sense of their own individuality as it is about creating the work (Williams and Winstanley 8-9), to the point that they are unable to decipher which of them has made any particular mark on the canvas. Through this, the artists exist as close to the surface as they can, with no time to be introspectively involved in the work, responding only to their environment and the cues it provides, from the movement of the animal they are painting, to the movement of the other hand on the canvas: “Negotiating this meeting place, this contact zone, requires that the artists momentarily suspend or leave behind much of the world of culture and acquire new gestures and a different awareness of their body to the other” (Surface Encounters 94). They recognize the intentionality of the animal within the work in this process as well. They extend the freedom they find personally as human artists within the work, to the animals they paint. They aim to capture the freedom of the animal within the work (Williams and Winstanley 2), in that the animal does not follow any prescriptive movements; Olly and Suzi simply paint what they see the animal
doing, even if it means leaving a work partially finished, or capturing more of the movement of
the animal than a fully representative image of one. They foreground the intentionality of the
animal in the work through its movements, which ultimately direct where the painting will go.
Olly and Suzi enter each work without a solid direction or idea of how it will turn out, thereby
opening up the possibilities for the animal itself, in its natural movements, to inform the piece.
The goal is not to capture the way the artists visualize the animal, but how the animal would like
to be visualized, a phenomenological approach. A similar approach is theorized by horse trainer
Stephen J. Smith. Smith's account of phenomenological methods of horse training, stemming
from the artist, or horse trainer, learning experientially from the horse itself, and working from
within horse skills, rather than the trainer's desires (S. Smith 9). Like Olly and Suzi, Smith notes
that a phenomenological approach would recognize the animal's body language and movements
as communications, putting less emphasis “on knowledge, as in knowing about horses and how
we can control and manage them, and more emphasis on simply being with horses such that a
more dynamic, in the moment, partnership might be possible” (14). Olly and Suzi, like the
phenomenological horse trainer, take their cues from their animal subject. Each line becomes an
attempt to capture how the animal moves, so in a sense it is still moving as it is painted onto the
canvas (Williams and Winstanley 4). Their work, like that of the animal trainer, “is not a matter
of showing the horse who is boss but, rather, of creating a relation of total trust and confidence
between human and horse” (S. Smith 13). Olly and Suzi are, of course, not training the animal to
do anything, but are rather stepping back from the idea of the human artist as sole creator of a
work, and allowing for the free and unprompted movements of the animal to dictate the direction
the work will take.
Olly and Suzi also see intentionality in the animal’s decision to interact with the work 
(*Surface Encounters* 90-91). Without that decision, or any mark on the canvas, there would be 
nothing to set Olly and Suzi’s painting apart from any other visual artists who create works 
featuring animals. They primarily use the concept of the shark’s ‘signature’ on Shark Bite as 
evidence of an intentional artistic relationship, or at the very least, evidence that the shark 
intended to interact with the work, whether or not it understood it to be an artistic work at all. A 
signature indicates ownership over an artwork, the indisputable sign of an artist’s presence within 
the work. For Olly and Suzi, a bite mark makes an artist, at least so far as *Shark Bite* is 
concerned, and there is no stronger indication of an animal’s presence in the work than their own 
marking, made willingly. This may be at least as much of an artistic intentionality as we are able 
to identify in a shark at this moment in time.

This still leaves the problem of Olly and Suzi’s assertion that the animal subject of their 
piece is somehow a co-creator of the work, and if they mean the audience to understand this on a 
literal or a romantic level. When they speak about their experiences of melding into the third 
piece and becoming-animal, how is the audience to understand this as well? The event of 
becoming-animal cannot be fully recorded, but it does leave a trace (*Surface Encounters* 95), 
which “in a gallery [...] functions like a map indicating experiential terrain that has been 
traversed” (97). The canvas they present is evidence of both the “production and loss of the 
actual event” (97), as well as the presence of the animal world, and the agency of the animal 
artist. It, however, becomes an issue of ‘their word against the audience’: Olly and Suzi can say 
that a becoming-animal has occurred, and they have a painting with animal markings to show the 
audience.330
However, even Suzi admits that the traces documents they give the audience are necessarily so little in comparison to the actual event, not to mention in regards to any animal intentionality. In reference to a difference work, a sketch of two seals that Olly and Suzi drew on the back of a map of the Antarctic when they were diving in the area, Suzi said, “in the three weeks [of the expedition] we saw such a tiny part of what is down there, and that’s what we came back up with” (*Artist / Animal* 34): a rough sketch of two seals swimming in the gaps between land masses. If they acknowledge the limits of their experience, then how can the necessarily smaller part they bring back as evidence really explain or reveal to their audience what a becoming-animal is like, not to mention conveying a sense of what it might be like to be that animal, or a glimpse into what that animal’s intentions might have been?

The problem here may be two-fold: Olly and Suzi are unable to fully articulate their experience; and their audience may never experience something like becoming-animal. The animals within their paintings may stand a chance of being seen as ‘exotic’, and Olly and Suzi privileged enough to gain a small glimpse into their lives, something ‘regular people’ would find impossible or inaccessible, hence the popularity of places like SeaWorld. While posing questions about animal phenomenology and becoming-animal is a ‘lure’ which draws audiences into questions about animal lives and experiences (*Surface Encounters* xxii), there are also problems of articulating the event of contact between humans and animals (xxii). The problem stems from the event of becoming-animal, from which the audience is separated by viewing their works from within a gallery, museum or exhibition. We can look here at Kim Hansen’s discussion of immorality within art that is created when the audience is inadvertently distanced from the animal subject. When there is “no obligation to intervene” (*Artist / Animal* 10), but an animal life is at stake if no one intervenes, “the artist may be judged morally wrong for producing an object
that has this affect” (10). She’s specifically referencing Kim Jones’ Rat Piece,\footnote{Rat Piece} in which the artist burned a rat alive on stage (4-5), waiting for an audience member to intervene. The audience watched, horrified. No one thought to save the rat, which the artist had actually been expecting (10). Distancing the audience from the art could be considered an immoral or ineffective aspect of Olly and Suzi’s art-making process. While their work did not harm any animals, it could be said that it did not do as much to close the gap between the animals and their audience as they intended. Does the fact that all that remains of Olly and Suzi’s becoming-animal and the third piece is a trace document, hinder the effectiveness of the performance and therefore their attempt to create good representations of animals?

Broglio says “art reveals the inability to articulate the world of the animal” (\textit{Surface Encounters} xvi). It illuminates blindness, showing where “the boundaries of [human and animal] worlds jostle each other” (xvii). Essentially, Olly and Suzi mean for the canvas to be a place where the audience can ‘bear witness’ (xxx) to animal lives. This comes down to a question of representation. Is their body of work one that Kuhl would suggest constitutes an overall ‘good’ representation of animal bodies? They do aim to give a voice to animal stories in a manner that attempts to encourage empathy for the animal (Kuhl 118). They foreground animal lives while “leav[ing] the mystery of the animal intact while calling attention to its existence” (\textit{Surface Encounters} 118). This, I think, may be the most effective thing they do when it comes to animal representation. They do… nothing. They have created a body of work where animal bites, slithers and marks themselves are meant to be - and accepted as - proof that there is something it is like to be that animal. The fact that this does not say any more, or attempt to say anything meaningful about the potential for animal interiority beyond that there is some qualia or animal experience of consciousness that will necessarily remain inaccessible to us, means that they are
not supplanting or replacing animal narratives. They are not presuming to speak for animals, and that allows the animal presence on the canvas to speak volumes for itself. The presence of the animal - the gigantic shark bite out of *Shark Bite* - is intended to both create a spectacle and to educate. It suggests both the sublimity towards which Hirst aims, and the allure of conflating ferociousness with a tamed domesticity that the circus leaned towards. And the same shark bite educates - tells its audience where they live, what they eat, how big their mouth is, what kinds of things attract their attention, and are they really as deadly as everyone says. The silent presence of the shark in the painting does all of that, without having to give its audience their life or agency as proof of anything. That is the point of Olly and Suzi’s work - to move from forcing the animal to work for us, and forcing nature into submission out of fear or desire for dominance. They instead lean into a recognition of interdependence and co-presence that simply states, we are both here.

4. Conclusion

I think the most important thing to consider in works that incorporate animals into the performance is what the ultimate impact is on the animal itself. In the circus or at SeaWorld, the lives of animal artists are only considered in terms of how they intersect within a performance: how do circus elephants propagate narratives that support captivity and create spectacle; how does Shamu demonstrate that these tangible human-animal relationships are both essential and only achievable within SeaWorld’s structures while providing educational opportunities; how does any rebellion against these conditions draw out contradictions in the narratives presented, and complicate or threaten not animal lives, but the livelihood of the presenting companies. In *Physical Impossibility*, the shark becomes secondary to the narrative Hirst would like his
audience to perceive. Olly and Suzi, in contrast, put the animals first — or at least, that is what they consciously strive for. In this alone, they divert from tradition and suggest to their audiences that there are fantastic opportunities to push beyond established human-animal artistic relationships, and consider more ethical ways of engagement. When we consider the two sharks in the case study - *Shark Bite* and *Physical Impossibility* - what it comes down to is that one shark may still be alive today. The other, most definitely, is not. When a work poses the potential to cause, or actively seeks to cause, the death of an animal for artistic purposes, is that really ‘what is asked of us’ as artists?

In determining the success or potential success of Olly and Suzi’s work in terms of creating positive human-animal artistic relationships, we can look to May’s series of questions as a start. May asks if the play “propagate[s] or subvert[s] the master narratives that sanction human exploitation of the land” (May 105), and by asserting that an animal can have and use agency, as well as be a consenting participant in the creation of art, Olly and Suzi are clearly being subversive in their approach. They are engaging in the ongoing dialogue of what is the artist’s responsibility towards the animal? Even if the shark was completely unaware of their role in *Shark Bite* and just wanted to eat what they thought was a seal, by giving the shark equal credit within the work Olly and Suzi are asserting its essential role, not only within the third piece but within their entirely artistic relationship. We can compare this to the way circuses and SeaWorld claim animal artists as their star performers. Elephants like Topsy and Jumbo adorned posters, but the credit always went solely to the trainer who gave them their sagacity, and turned their ferocity into spectacle. Orcas like Tilikum were talked about as these benevolent educators here to help people understand ocean life, but the focus was again always on how the human audience members benefited from that exchange, and consciously worked against what marine biologists
cautioned was best for the captive orcas. The *Physical Impossibility* shark is clearly what audiences come to see, but Hirst is the one who controls the narrative and receives the credit. By claiming that an animal can elect to participate in creating a work of art, with no expectations and no consequences, Olly and Suzi both suggest and insist that art with animals be conducted in more ethical ways. This would, as May suggests is necessary for a successful environmental performance, inspire the audience to think about our relationships with nature (105).

In addition, the becoming-animal process that Olly and Suzi utilize places the human and animal experience of the natural world on a level playing field within the world - or, as level as they are able to achieve. Olly and Suzi suggest that the third piece is the melding of distinct viewpoints, so it opposes the “anthropocentric entourage” of the individual subject (*Artist / Animal* 68), which presumes that the shark’s agency carries on into the life of the painting, through exhibitions and such that feature the work. Deleuze and Guatarri also say that they find value in the creation of art as a “tool for blazing life lines […] sweep[ing identity] away with them towards the realm of the asignifying, asubjective” (74). This blurs the boundaries between person, animal and place (May 105), and in some ways even makes the shark’s participation in the world even more integral than Olly and Suzi’s: without the shark, the becoming-animal would never have occurred.

Olly and Suzi’s work and approach has been reviewed as “pretty unusual”, and is said to fall awkwardly between two camps: “one that produces realistic depictions of the natural world and the other that is more avant-garde” (Trivedi), but still with an attempt to drive home a clear environmental message of understanding and empathizing with the animal other for their audiences. There may also be a tendency to assume that through their approach to animals, Olly and Suzi have ‘figured it out’, and their way is the ‘new way’ to incorporate animals into art.
However, I want to note that their work is still evolving. Olly and Suzi consider the body of their work to be “in a conversation with the natural world” (Olly and Suzi), an ongoing dialogue in which the relationships between artists, animals, place, and their audiences, are constantly shifting and transforming. While they aim to divert from traditional human-animal artistic relationships, they aim to encourage others to follow not in their exact footsteps, but along similar explorations, stating that “when you fully commit to going down a new and uncertain path, things you never anticipated open up to you” (Olly and Suzi), whether that be the recognition of animal agency or intentionality, new ways of accessing animals that do not pose a threat to their continued livelihoods, or pushing the discussion of art, animals and ethics into new directions.

As well, while Olly and Suzi’s works have become popular in the contemporary art world, and they continue to organize exhibitions even thirty years after beginning this unique process, it is not as if great white sharks have enjoyed further protections as a direct result of *Shark Bite*. They are still classified as vulnerable on the International Union for Conservation of Nature [IUCN] Red List, and they still receive “negative media attention” (IUCN), and are targeted by sports fishers, commercial hunters, and even caught as byproducts of fisheries (IUCN). So what has this work really done for the shark? Or is Olly and Suzi’s approach really more concerned with accessing animals (*Artist / Animal 3*). Access to animals, and our rights to access animals, has been a question through both the circus and SeaWorld research. If we leave animals in the wild and simply go to them, are we really being more responsible as artists towards those animals, or are there more steps we have to take to ensure that we can, in fact, be trusted with animals (1).333
As *Physical Impossibility* is often compared to *Shark Bite*, encouraging the audience to think on ethical uses for non-animal bodies may be one of Olly and Suzi’s greatest successes. If we revisit Baker’s question of ‘can we really trust artists with animals’, the logical conclusion at this point is that Olly and Suzi are relatively unique in that they have not given the art world a reason to mistrust them. In this, we can view Olly and Suzi’s work as the site of a potential ethical turn in human-animal artistic relationships, existing as a counter-example to all works with animals that have come before.

Where Olly and Suzi’s work leaves off is generally where I feel we are at in terms of human-animal artistic relationships at the moment. I feel it encapsulates the questions and concerns that May and Kuhl lay out for what constitutes an ethical performance and a good representation of animals. However, as a performance duo on the edge of geodrama’s third act, thinking about what is next leaves many more questions than answers: where do we go next, can we be trusted with animals overall (*Artist / Animal I*), and maybe most importantly is still Saulitis’ question - “what is asked of us?” (Saulitis 110).

Olly and Suzi advocate for further connectedness between humans and animals. The process of becoming-animal is both phenomenological and potentially neurological, and the linking of both is something that could begin to dismantle a nature-culture separation. In their art, Olly and Suzi are not separate from the animal, not considered more highly evolved, but consciously co-present with the animal, negotiating a new space, relationship and ways of seeing interconnectedness between humans, animals and the environment. Suzi says:

> there are so many stories, so many things going on in the world that people […] never hear about. Olly and I don’t have answers […] about climate change. We only hope that by creating these pictures […] we will trigger a thought in people’s minds that they might start a discussion that could lead to some answers (Philby).
What is ‘next’ for Olly and Suzi is what is next for geodrama, I think: encouraging the reshaping of previously negative human-animal artistic relationships, and continuing to negotiate a further ethical, empathetic understanding of what it might be like to be an animal, realizing “that there are other […] ways of being on this earth” and proving “that our exploited, over-populated, tourist-ridden planet is still what it always was: a place where we are not the only creature that matters” (Williams and Winstanley 3).

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273 Similarly, Malcolm Gladwell calls a “tipping point” (Gladwell 12), or the “moment of critical mass, the threshold, the boiling point” (Gladwell 12). It was coined by Susan Cerulean, to explain a “moment of convergence” (Cerulean 64). For Saluitis, her “origin moment” occurred when thinking about the abilities of humans to cause the extinctions of animal animals, despite having ample research supporting the need for ecological conservation. She thought of this initially in terms of curlews (Saluitis xiv), and later through the lens of the Exxon Valdez oil spill and the destruction of the Chugach transient orca pod she studied. It was the moment at which her "assumptions about the world overturned" (xiv).

274 This work eventually sold for 100,000 pounds (Artist / Animal 17), and earned him a nomination for the Turner Prize (15).

275 Two hundred and twenty-four gallons for formaldehyde were injected into the decaying tiger shark to preserve the body (Vogel).

276 Due to this popularity, in recent years Hirst has been able to expand his collection of formaldehyde-injected sharks with Leviathan, his largest, recently opened at the Tate Modern in London (“Leviathan”).

277 Hirst says he has always wanted to work with sharks (Artist / Animal 19), so he could showcase the “violent transformation of life to death and opaque to knowable as animals become meat” (Artist / Animal xxvii-xxviii). Hirst, according to Suzi in an interview with The Independent, is actually a fan of Olly and Suzi’s work, and purchased one of their shark paintings, which they felt was strange: “he kills then, and we draw them” (Love).

278 Olly and Suzi were also inspired by Indigenous representations of “animals as brothers” (Olly and Suzi).

279 Olly and Suzi state that their preferred exhibition places are in natural history museums, not art galleries, as they would much rather reach people who are already concerned with wildlife - including biologists - who re striving to make connections with the natural world. Olly and Suzi hope that their work might influence different means of communication or connecting to animals (Olly and Suzi).

280 This exhibit was coupled with a year-long residency at the museum (Olly and Suzi).
One such leading conservationist is Tony Fitzjohn, whose wild dog rehabilitation and reintroduction program at Mkomazi National Park in Tanzania has been a 'studio' for Olly and Suzi for years. They also used those talks and exhibits to raise money for Fitzjohn's projects, as well as other conservation projects around the world. (“Mkomazi Wild Dog by Olly and Suzi”).

The photograph of *Shark Bike* was taken by photographer Greg Williams.


We can also see vivisections and public autopsies as the root of historical curiosity cabinets and eventually zoos. In the contemporary zoo setting, we can look at the public autopsy of Marius the giraffe as an example of that continuing today (Eriksen).

In fact, in one interview a journalist asked members of Hirst's studio if he actually did anything with a series of paintings other than put his signature on them at the end (D. Cohen). Hirst himself replied “I only painted the first five and I was like, 'f*** this', I hated it. As soon as I sold one, I used the money to pay people to make them. They were better at it than me. I get bored. I get very impatient” (D. Cohen).

The current iteration of *Physical Impossibility* is in itself a replica, as the first rotted beyond repair when it was not properly preserved (Reynolds).

It is estimated that it cost Hirst approximately 50,000 British pounds to produce - a 6,000 pond commission to the fishermen who captured the shark, with “the remaining expenses for preservation, construction of a tank, and transportation” (Reynolds).

This is in addition to any support staff, guides, conservationists, ecologists or photographers who may be accompanying Olly and Suzi on their expeditions.

We can also analyze a photograph of the shark interacting with the painting, taken by photographer Greg Williams. Perhaps the most iconic image of the work, it definitely recalls the more stereotypical views of sharks, with this Great White taking a viscous bite out of a seemingly innocent painting. The image itself does capture what this particular performative interaction between the shark and the painting entailed, but Suzi feels that the violence inherent in the image actually does a disservice to their work: rather than depicting the shark as the selective feeders they are, it generates images of sharks as mindless, *Jaws*-esque killers (Winstanley and Williams 160), which may actively undo their goal of encouraging further conservation efforts for predatory species.

This occurs at 1:52 into the video, and is a 30-second clip. (“Untamed”).

I want to note that the ‘curiosity’ does have to be extrapolated somewhat. Not only is it impossible to prove that a shark can be curious, at least at this time, but also the footage of *Shark Bite* picks up at the moment the shark first emerges from the water. Olly and Suzi do write of watching this one particular shark for a while (Williams and Winstanley 149), and watching them circle the canvas a few times before biting, which may be evidence of curiosity. But the documentary footage itself does not explicitly show this.
The word ‘shark’ itself has a questionable etymology, emerging from various cultures as: ‘carcharais’, a Greek term derived from the Latin ‘canis marinus’ (T. Jones 211); “sherk”, from the English ‘search’ and the French ‘chercher’ (211); ‘schurke’, from the German for “a cheat or knave” (211-212). However, Jones suggests in his research on the Yucatec Mayans that their term ‘xoc’ might be the original source (212).

These were sailors on an expedition led by a Captain (later Sir) John Hawkins. (T. Jones 212). The origin of the word was not mentioned at the time, but Jones notes that the Hawkins’ expeditions, which launched from Plymouth in the 1560s, did journey south down to the Caribbean and the the Yucatan, so “it is therefore at least conceivable that at some point the men […] picked up the word xoc in the fall of 1568 and imported it to England upon their return in January of 1569 as shark” (212)

Nicholas Ridout also has an interesting perspective on the issues of obtained consent for animals in performance. He notes that any animal who appears on stage produces “the illusion of intention” (Ridout 102), as in it will appear that they were meant to be there. Ridout then looks to animal sacrifice, early Greek theatre and the Dionysus festival as a source of obscured or ambiguous consent. He says from a ritual perspective, “the consent of animals - its willing participation […] is vital” (122). If the animal does not willingly participate, the ritual transforms into something much more insidious. As the rituals did have to go ahead for certain performances to take place, signs of acceptance on the part of the animal would necessarily be ambiguous. Any appearance of acquiescence could be taken as a sign, in the absence of any actual means of communication. His chapter provides interesting insight into how we legitimize the animal on stage, and how we conceptualize consent.

Hirst’s other works are also fascinated with the concept of death halted in the moment of occurring, this sense of the beautiful sublime. Examples include his piece Out of Love, which watched the development of caterpillars into butterflies which would eventually, in flying around a cage, become affixed to a canvas wall and die in place.
I find Mark Dion’s writing particularly engaging in this regard, in that I do not fully know how to write about it. His *Some Notes Towards a Manifesto or Artists Working with or about the Living World* plays an interesting role in evaluating ethical artistic relationships with animals in contemporary art. On one hand, Dion writes that if an artist is choosing to engage with an environmental subject - be it animal, plant, fungus, landscape, or so on - than a big part of their work is in recognizing that nature and culture are not separate. Instead, they are intricately connected and they consistently inform one another (Aloi 140). He also states that we so often have a choice in the artistic creation process to be destructive or constructive. If we are working with animals, we can choose to construct our processes to end the life of that animal, but we can just as easily and efficiently choose to protect the animal at the same time (141). He does not indicate when this distinction might occur, or offer any insight into how one might recognize the decision is theirs to make if they are already operating from the assumption that culture supersedes nature. However, in an interview with Aloi he also remarks that he has himself made the choice to end animal lives for the purposes of art, and questions the validity of critics of this decision by stating that we kill animals all of the time “so why is killing an animal for art more of a lightening rod” (148) - a curious contradiction, it seems. We can look to his recent *The Library of the Birds of New York*, which was a large installation containing an oak tree, a library containing important scientific and cultural knowledge on birds, and twenty-two live birds (Dion). Part of the spectacle was also witnessing the birds feed, “symbolic of death, extinction, and the classification of birds as pests or vermin” (Dion). So why does his manifesto proclaim one thing, and his actions another?

Dion goes on to claim that his manifesto never intended to explicitly preclude intentional animal deaths from art, as he did not want to “the public death of plants or animals is a powerful spectacle, and some artists have been capable of harnessing that power to produce compelling environmental and ethical statements. Does that excuse the killing, or justify it? I do not really know.” (Aloi 144). He instead states that rather than simply wanting to avoid seeing animal death on stage, viewers want to know that the artist is in control. If there is animal death, it should be “significant” in its purpose (144). To me, this is a massive contradiction to his assertion that nature and culture are not separate. I am also uncertain if he realizes the danger between declaring nature and culture, humans and their environment are not separate on one hand, and on the other allowing one to kill the other for art. Does he not, in the same breath, then condone the killing of people who are inherently part of nature, so long as it serves a strong artistic purpose? What does it mean if you can construct an ethical argument for both respecting nature, and using it to your own ends, in the exact same document.

The primary goals of the exhibitions are educational: “visitors will be able to observe the body’s functions, including locomotive, digestive, nervous and vascular systems, compare healthy and diseased organs […] and even chronicle there amazing continuum of life in the womb” (“Pioneering Exhibit” 8). It has also been described as a “reconvergence” of art and science (Nevarez 31).

Although, in one artwork, Hirst did switch to a prosthetic cow head during one of his pieces when the real severed head began to rot so badly no viewer would enter a room with it (Hirst 45).
I am referring here to one of the many cases in which the circus took the bodies of deceased animals on tour, noting that while even dead, they still made money - and often, cost the company considerably less in the process. I am writing specifically of Jumbo, killed by a train in St. Thomas, Ontario in 1885 (Duble 5), and of the ‘problem elephants’, like Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey’s Sammy, who was executed in 1938 for being “too mean to live” (Alexander 126), and was instead exhibited as a skeleton, and had his feet turned into novelty waste baskets in the process (Alexander 136; Nance 41).

This review was organized by the California Science Centre, committee member David C. Blake, PhD at Saint John’s Heath Centre (California Science Centre [CSC]).

Today, as von Hagens notes, there are more bodies being donated to science and organizations such as Body Worlds than are required, due to the popularity of such exhibits (von Hagens 2), and therefore there is no need for the organization to have to acquire bodies through any unethical means.

Von Hagens has also been accused of stealing bodies from Russia and Kyrgyzstan, and responds by stating “corpses have been donated, traded and stolen for as long as they have been used for anatomical study” (von Hagens 1).

Consideration of the rights of the donating person really have come a long way since the 1800s, when body snatching and exhibiting in curiosity museums was common. In fact, people would request to be buried in lead coffins, hoping that would deter potential body snatchers from achieving their goal (Roach 46). A poignant example of this is anatomical curiosity Charles O’Brien in the late 18th Century. O’Brien was an Irishman who died of complications associated with acromegaly, or giantism (Guyer 203-204). He spent most of his life on display in curiosity museums, alongside prisoners, and did not want his body to continue to be an exhibit after his death. With work at the museum, he saved up enough to pay a fisherman to bury him at sea in a lead coffin. Unfortunately, the Surgeon Extraordinary to the King of England at the time, John Hunter, was interested in studying O’Brien’s body further, and paid the fisherman even more to turn the body over before its burial. Three hundred years later, it is still on display (304).

The application for a person to donate their body to Body Worlds extends so far as to allow the donor to specify how much of their bodies are exhibited to the public, or if they want to be so interactive as to allow spectators to be able to touch them. Many donors elect for total anonymity, and become part of the exhibit only as individual organs or even body slices, which are thin cross-sections of a particular part of the body (CSC 4). As well, the identities of donors are sealed, and bodies are routinely stripped of any identifying features (Nevarez 30) so that “the viewer looks at the specimen as an abstract figure and gazes at the interplay of muscles, bone and tissue and, in many ways, ‘reads’ this nameless figure as a type of ‘landscape’ or ‘representation’ of an actual human” (30). One is able to relate to the palatinates as “a step removed from oneself” (Nevarez 37).

The majority of the conditions outlined in this form are for German residents, as that is where the Institute for Plastination is located. There are other conditions placed on participants from around the world, based on their own country’s requirements, but the conditions I will outline in the following chart are the basis that the institute needs to have met to consider the donation consensual.
The conditions listed come from two sources: the *Body Donation for Plastination* brochure published by the Institute for Plastination, and an example of a donation consent form published on the German version of the website, called *Körperspende zur Plastination*, which I translated with some assistance from a German-English dictionary. I have given citations for direct quotations. Anything else listed on the form comes from both of these resources.

A number of conditions have been left out from the chart, because they are not directly applicable to artwork. For example, participants must consent to be used for medical training through plastination, and they must also agree that in order to be included in the exhibit, they must die a natural death (Body Donation for Plastination). The consent form also stipulates that Body Worlds themselves can rescind the contract at any time, should they have no need for the donated body (Body Donation for Plastination).

Beuys other works consisted of these plastik sculptures, “set in motion and given a lifelike force” (Rosenthal 25), and it inspire such iconic pieces as his 1962 *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (in which he cradled and spoke to a dead hare about the boundaries between life and death, human and animal) (Thompson 10) and his 1963 *Siberian Symphony, 1st Movement*, in which he tore the heart from an already dead hare to demonstrate the impact of violence on the innocent (Rosenthal 28). He wanted works that would push preexisting boundaries between humans and animals within art (Borer 15).

Throughout his life and career, Beuys garnered a cult following, not only for his works but also for his enticing personal mythology for which he has been termed both a ‘shaman’ and a ‘sham’ (Rosenthal 10). His myth begins as a Nazi pilot flying over Crimea when he is shot down and prepares to die. Surprisingly, he lives and is rescued by the Tartars, who both nurse him back to life by covering his body with fat and wrapping him in felt, and also forgive him for being a Nazi (10). Although the story was eventually disproven, it persisted as his personal creation myth as an artist (10).

Politically, Beuys also wanted to bring to light the truth of the decimated Indigenous populations of the region, for whom the coyote is an important symbol (Borer 23). Beuys connected to the coyote in particular based on its Indigenous reputation as the trickster: “in ancient lore, Coyote helps people transcend form through ingenuity, cleverness, and sometimes trickery” (Young xxxviii). The coyote is a being who lives “on the edge of a wild landscape” (xxxviii), alternately able to adapt to both forest and city living through its cunning and craftiness (8). In Indigenous stories, the coyote “uses his unorthodox foolery to save the humans in a pinch” (9), showing up just when things are going wrong and the humans in the story do not know what else to do. Coyote is also credited in many Indigenous mythologies as the creature who gave humans fire, enabling their survival (9). As such, the Indigenous trickster coyote “is the driving force of evolution” (9-10), walking and pushing the edges, and enticing the humans into following (10).

If we do not yet fully understand the phenomenon in humans, how can we claim to recognize it in animals? Historically, it was assumed that the ‘seat of consciousness’ was a literal theatre of the mind, a mini person perched right behind the eyes and between the ears in our heads, watching, observing, and controlling everything we did (Ingram 27). This seat was likely selected due to the visual and auditory senses being the strongest amongst most people. Comparing this to animal consciousness was generally seen to be a non-issue, as they were not perceived to have a ‘theatre of the mind’.
Morgan cautioned emerging scientists not to read too much into animal behaviour without concrete proof, to strengthen the scientific method of studying animals, but it actually stopped, for a time, most scientific thinking about inner animal lives (Ingram 146), and his claims remained quite popular until the 1960s (146).

When it comes to understanding consciousness, most of the advancements in this area have come through a furthered understanding of neurology and what areas of the brain are active when one is ‘conscious’ (Ingram 10). Researchers at the Neuroscience Institute in San Diego, aimed to discover animal consciousness, and thought it would be best to discover where in the brain human consciousness exists, and then extrapolate from there to determine if animal brains have similar function or comparable activity in those regions (Ingram 149). They narrowed their study down to the circuits running between the thalamus and the cerebral cortex, particularly in terms of a class of neurons found there, the intralaminar nuclei (149). The thalamus itself is a mass of neurons where all sensory information stops before being processed by the cerebral cortex. The thalamus essentially controls the flow of information to and from the cortex, and the neurons found there are responsible for transmitting signals from the cortex to other regions of the body (151). The intralaminar nuclei were of particular interest, as the researchers noted that if these were cut off or somehow removed, the brain would revert to a comatose state, as in “you can’t be aware without them" (151). As well, if one happens to be in a situation in which they are startled or scared, it is the intralaminar nuclei that are responsible for heightening your senses and putting your body on full alert (151). They seem to control the ‘here and now’, and without them, it seems as if conscious processing in the present moment would be impossible. These intralaminar nuclei also exist in animals. At the very least, it is a step in narrowing down where consciousness might exist, and if these neurological processes are also active in animals, that suggests that consciousness is not relegated to humans alone. Of course, this is a very mechanical explanation which could sound as if consciousness is simply a string of automatic reactions to outside stimuli, or exactly what Descartes suggested it would be like to be an animal - “stimulus-response, with little thinking in between” (Ingram 7).

Proving that animals have what would be called a ‘theory of mind’, “the skills of putting yourself in someone else’s place to figure out what they’re going to do” (Ingram 153) is essential to this, and has also been a debate for animal behaviorists. Drawing back to Morgan’s admonishment of assuming higher faculties as responsible for animal behaviors (146), it has been historically assumed that animals simply respond to outer stimuli with no interior thought. However, once it became more scientifically acceptable to research into the minds of animals, it was revealed that there was more going on inside them than initially anticipated. Griffin looked at studies of pigeons and orientation, and showed that if a pigeon is brought blindfolded to an unfamiliar location, it will take the pigeon on average two minutes to reorient itself and fly home (Griffin 4). To him, this suggested the idea that “their brains […] must include internal representations of the outside world” (9) or a “cognitive map” (Griffin 9; The New Anthropomorphism 61). It is more reasonable here, Ingram believes, to assume the pigeon is aware of its actions, and is not automated (153). This would further suggest that animals do indeed possess a ‘theory of mind’.

Using a headlamp is the recommended practice so that the tourist can keep both hands free to hold the guard rails along the slippery floors.
Deleuze and Guattari actually identify three different kinds of animals: those who are individuated, with a specific name such as a household pet; those who stem from a serial or structural relation who have “values with patterns of consumption” (240-242; J. Smith 146), such as a circus element or a SeaWorld orca; and demons (Deleuze and Guatarri 242).

Two of the most prominent examples of Olly and Suzi’s encounters with multiplicities may not have led to a becoming-animal, at least in their terms, as no active animal engagement with the art occurred, but they both provide excellent images to illustrate the multiplicity. During a series of cage dives in the Galapagos in 2000, Olly and Suzi found themselves in the centre of a school of over five hundred hammer head sharks (Williams and Winstanley 144). Olly and Suzi painted the school from within the cage as they were fascinated by the movement of the packs. Likewise, they observed the sharks coming closer to investigate their cage (144). Olly and Suzi’s expedition to the Okavango Delta, Botswana in the same year heightens the idea of multiplicity. They watched, and sketched, from a distance as a lion chased a pack of wild dogs and managed to strike one down (94). While wild dogs rarely retaliate to predators like lions, in this instance the wild dog pack turned on the lion and chased him away from the potential kill, who they later assumed must have been a pack leader (94). To Olly and Suzi, watching from their sketchbook, the wild dogs appeared as a “single predatory with forty mouths” (94). Each of these multiplicities is also symbolic, in that “it ties together animals, plants, microorganisms, mad particles, a whole galaxy” (Deleuze and Guatarri 250). It is easy to see the ceasing of individuality and becoming an event within these two examples, as in each case the ‘demonic pack’ was indivisible, swimming or chasing as a single unit with no apparent boundary between individual members - not being sharks or wild dogs, but ‘sharkings’ and wild ‘doggings’.

As Olly and Suzi painted polar bears in the arctic, for example, they had to contend with freezing paint, ice crystals collecting on the canvas, and frostbite (25). In the Galapagos cage dives, they experimented with what tools worked best for the ocean environment, testing non-toxic paints, graphite (144), as well as acrylics, squid ink, blood, sardine chum, water-based paints, and polystyrene boards (144, 149, 160).

Their wild dog series, for example, often features blurred lines or bodies with half-finished detail, capturing the flash of the dogs as they ran in the pack, rather than stepping out of the free play within gebilde to create a standardized, detailed drawing of the animal subject (“Washall Museum Wilddog Instillation”).

Seals are a main source of food for great whites.

Likewise, I have heard dog walkers say that dogs can feel if people are afraid of them and choose to engage or disengage as a result.

An amazing example of this is the story of Clever Hans, which was recounted in Chapter One. Rather than Hans having learned math, as the performance insisted, Hans was instead responding to non-verbal and almost microscopic cues inadvertently given to him by his trainer, suggesting the right answer to all of the questions (Gucwa 130). That is some communication!
I do realize that I am not a neurologist and my understanding of these processes initially comes from reading journal articles that aim to explain neurology to non-scientists. So, I want to preface my own lack of knowledge here, and also take a moment to explain why I am delving into the subject of mirror neurons anyway. I find that much of Olly and Suzi’s work is on such a theoretical and ephemeral level - very much tending towards a situation where we have to take Olly and Suzi at face-value when they tell us what has been created or experienced in their process. How are we to know that there is any shared experience between human artists and anomalous animal? When I came across studies of mirror neurons, I wondered if this might provide a more tangible basis for understanding the experience. The more I read, the more it connected to ideas that other theorists were already talking about, on hypothetical levels. For example, I will write about the neurological distinctions between personal social identities, which seem to align with Deleuze and Guatarri’s distinctions between ‘demon’ multiplicities, and anomalous animals. I will write about other conscious processes that occur within the prefrontal cortex, which might explain process like entrainment, which have previously been explained more as a ‘qualia’, or a sense of how the conscious process feels to the trainer, rather than as an actual physical occurrence. I do not mean to present any of this as a scientific expert, but simply to - like Olly and Suzi - open the doors to considering that maybe what these artists and theorists are explaining is not as intangible ephemeral as they would seem at the outset.

Mirror neurons are also, insofar as can be determined at the moment, completely inactively outside of this goal-directed movement (Gallese 1685).

Mirror neurons also respond in different ways under three particular conditions: firing when the object - such as the Shark Bite painting - is in full vision and grasped or engaged with physically; firing when the action of physically engaging with the object is mimicked; and during when the object is hidden and grasped for but it is understood by both parties what that object is (Casile 5). Essentially, both Olly and Suzi and the shark have to understand the other’s goal-directed movements, if not the exact reasoning behind the movements or the mental and emotional state that predicated those movements. Further studies also show that while mirror neurons respond most reliably to actions involving the hand or mouth (Gallese 1685; Gottschall 59; Pfeifer 187; Rizzolatti 170), they also respond to sound stimuli - such as an object falling in the water - or olfactory stimuli (Berrol 303; Casile 5), each of which require presence at an event.

As well, Vittorio Gallese, one of the researchers who discovered mirror neurons, noted evidence of the system has been found in macaques, humans, and songbirds - but he believes the discoveries only stop there because no one has yet looked for evidence within in other species (Marshall 6531).

Examples of these studies or observations on animals making art include Congo the ape (Desmond 97), Siri the elephant (Gucwa 5), and Koko the gorilla (Desmond 104).

Olly and Suzi recognize a variety of animal markings as evidence of their artistic signatures, including slithers, or paw prints.

Nineteenth Century elephant trainer Eph Moses Thompson (Daly 111) also spoke about prioritizing animal intentionality over trainer desires in act creation.
The painting can even be very well received on both the artistic and conservation ends of the spectrum. Artistically, Hirst himself was once a purchaser of Olly and Suzi’s works, selecting one of their drawings of sharks, which Suzi said was “interesting; he kills them and we draw them” (Love). On the conservation end, Fitzjohn was also impressed with the quality of their works, noting that they seem to be able to “capture the very life-force of their subjects” (Fitzjohn 236), “as if they are putting bits of themselves as well as the animals onto the paper” (Trivedi), and that from a conservationist who works with wild dogs on a daily basis.

Rat Piece, staged on February 17th, 1976, featured Jones as his character ‘Mudman’, stripping naked, covering himself in mud, and burning a rat alive on stage (Artist / Animal 10). It was intended as a commentary on the invisibility of suffering in Vietnam war vets, goading the audience into taking action to save the rat’s life, but without explicitly having to ask for it.

There is also, of course, the consideration that he audience may not have known the piece was in fact real. If an audience is sitting in a theatre, where they are primed to see something that is at best a representation of the ‘real world’, in which it is not uncommon to see special effects replacing real-life gore, like blood, guts and animal bodies, why would Jones, or anyone, expect the audience to immediately understand that they events they saw before them are entirely real, and that they did have an obligation to intervene at the cost of an animal's life. There are a number of leaps in logic that Jones employed when creating and performing Rat Piece, but I use it here as an example of the obligation to intervene that Olly and Suzi's audience may also miss because of the means of presentation being so separate from the actual location where the performance occurred.
Olly and Suzi do spend a considerable portion of their art-making time engaging with field biologists and conservationists who work with the wild, predatory animals they seek out. One of their most frequent contacts is Tony Fitzjohn, who runs the George Adamson Wildlife Preservation Trust in Mkomazi National Park in Tanzania. Olly and Suzi’s first visit to the park was in 1994, when they aimed to make paintings along with a pack of wild dogs (Fitzjohn 263). Fitzjohn’s initial reaction to the duo, he said in an interview with National Geographic, was “interesting, but who are these people” (Trivedi)? Olly and Suzi also strive to return to the locations of their expeditions to track how the environments change over time. Mkomazi has become a frequent location for their expeditions:

In many ways, Mkomazi is our life’s work. It’s where we started. Our first collaborative expedition was into East Africa and ended up in the north of Kenya. It set a pattern for how we work - we’ll engage with an expert in the field, track a predator, and then revisit time and again. That’s how we approach all our expeditions. We like to go in deeply [...] We go in search of ‘ground truth’ [...] in areas that are under threat (“Artists Olly and Suzi on their latest expedition”). Since then, a portion of all proceeds from works and exhibits generated during their visits to Mkomazi is returned to the park and Fitzjohn’s conservation efforts with the wild dogs (Leica Studio Mayfair). Exhibitions in the Galapagos and the Arctic have also returned a portion of proceeds to conservation efforts in the regions. This may be one way in which the artists actively seek to improve the lives of the animals they credit as the ‘co-creators’ of their works.

Overall, I think what Olly and Suzi exhibit is an evolution in artistic practice over a long period of time. If we look at their development from student artists interested in Indigenous animal iconography back in the late 1980s, to intentionally seeking out wildlife encounters with conversation messages, to translating any economic success from the works into donations that benefit environments they’ve visited, there is a definite attempt at continued advocacy for the animals they work with. They career spans both ‘artist’ and ‘environmental advocate’ categories simultaneously, especially as evidenced with the locations of some of their exhibits, which have ranged from galleries in London and New York, to presentations at the Washall Museum, the Natural History Museum in London, and the Royal Geographic Society (Olly and Suzi), and many of these exhibitions have been made alongside conservationists like Fitzjohn, who also use the opportunity to promote their work and ask Olly and Suzi’s audience for donations (Fitzjohn 236), thereby at least creating an opportunity for greater environmental awareness within their audiences, and expanding our idea of an ecological community (May 105), and encouraging the audience to think on their means of artistic production.
5. Conclusion

These three chapters have outlined three distinct but sometimes complementary roles for animals in performance: as a spectacle, an educator, and a co-creator. When thinking about how to conclude this thesis, I was at a bit of a loss. The roles of animals in performance are rapidly changing, even as I write this, as can be seen especially in Chapter Two — SeaWorld phasing out the traditional Shamu shows, Tilikum’s death, and Ringling Brothers’ decision to not only phase out elephant performers but ultimately to close their entire touring circus operations.

This maybe should not have come as such a surprise. This movement has since grown to include the Humane Society, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Performing Animal Welfare Society, and countless others, from former trainers to sanctuary owners (“The forces that shut down Ringling Brothers”). PETA and other animal rights groups often picketed when circuses came into town, leading to the California’s ban of the bullhook - and therefore free contact animal training techniques - and Asheville, North Carolina’s ban of all exotic animal displays (Lussenhop). Feld Entertainment itself has also been charged with animal abuse by the US Department of Agriculture, on multiple occasions (Lussenhop). In somewhat of an obituary for Ringling’s final performance, Lussenhop suggested that the company was “brought to its knees by a combination of evolving cultural tastes, bad luck and political enemies that left it no longer financially viable for its parent company, Feld Entertainment” (Lussenhop), all of which had been building for some time. *Blackfish*, in some ways, has been the death blow to SeaWorld, leading wider audiences to consider the grave implications of their animal-provided entertainment and education. It is not to assume that
audiences are beginning to demand animal rights and agency in selecting their entertainment, but simply that it seems audiences are beginning to recognize that there should be limitations.

What I want to do in this conclusion is to briefly summarize the content of the chapters in terms of their conclusions, so that the state of each particular field of animal performance can be viewed side-by-side. Then, I want to take a look at what is ‘next’, or potentially next, for animals in performance. This is, essentially, more speculation than conclusion, and more a list of remaining questions than any tangible answers, simply because there just are not any at this moment in time. Finally, I want to examine how looking at performing animals in terms of geodrama may be able to point theatre and performance arts in a positive direction for animal engagement.

1. The Animal As Spectacle

This chapter focused primarily on the incorporation of elephant performers in the 19th-Century North American circus, and the duality of elephant ferocity and domesticity in generating spectacles. The circus elephants became objects within a spectacle, with personal histories obscured and supplanted by whitewashed circus narratives that places the business as the locus of a particularly special bond between human and animal - a place where magic could happen. Boussiac outlined four basic act ‘types’ which elephants and other circus animals could be trained to perform: doing the possible, not doing the possible, doing the impossible, and not doing the impossible (Boussiac 95), each of which had its own set of consequences for both performer and trainer. Through each of these acts, the audience was further conditioned to view animal performers - and their wild counterparts - as both capable of infinitely more than they
would have initially anticipated, and also wholly dependent on a human trainer to bring this majesty and sagacity out in them.

These strong circus narratives not only obscured specific animal histories, but served to further sever their audience from understanding the conditions of animal capture and captivity. Alexander, Bradshaw, Nance and Tait all examined various moments in which the elephant performers seemed to ‘step outside’ their roles as sagacious beings, particularly when analyzing the fates of ‘problem elephants’ (Bradshaw 41). They all noted that the severe reactions and rampages of several ‘top billing’ elephant performers such as Chief, Romeo and Topsy, should have necessitated a full investigation into how they were trained. Yet the reaction often was that these elephants - most often young males - were worth more to the circus dead than alive (Alexander 128; Nance 8, 117). Live executions - hangings, poisonings, shootings - became more common, as circuses gave into public pressure - or in some cases, instigated the pressure themselves - to keep a “human sense of order” (Bradshaw 41). Animals who could not be sagacious, and complete their performances within the established circus narratives, were quickly removed. As the appendix to Chapter One shows - and as Alexander herself concluded - what circuses often opted to do was continue the removal of ‘problem elephants’, particularly male elephants (Alexander 125). For an industry who once proclaimed they were best positioned to educate audiences on wild animals as they could provide close encounters with majestic performers, it is slightly ironic that they also depended on their audiences being unfamiliar with specific elephants in order to obscure which ones died, became too ill to perform, or were otherwise removed from the troupe.

I concluded the chapter by asking what our responsibility is to the performing animal when we either witness or learn about these rebellions against ‘order’. Perhaps a stronger
question could be ‘how do we learn to recognize instances of rebellion’, specifically when we become audience members in a performance whose primary goal is to delight and entertain. How do we learn to see animals in spectacle as less ‘trained objects’ and more ‘actual beings’ with the ability to respond to the conditions of their captivity.

2. The Animal As Educator

The second chapter, in a lot of ways for me, picks up where the debate on animal agency in circus ends. Demonstrating animal agency was even more of a primary goal for early aquarium owners like Ted Griffin, who wanted to transform stereotypes of ‘killer whales’ into ‘gentle, intelligent creatures’. When we look at SeaWorld, animal agency is marketed to audiences from the get-go, which in some ways makes their actions and animal treatment even more insidious. In order for the industry to convince audiences of Shamu as an educator, here to teach them how to love the ocean, the idea that Shamu had made a choice to be there had to become deeply ingrained into the narratives. Songs extolling the strong bonds between trainers and orcas - “we are friends in a very special way” (“The Shamu Experience”) and “we work on a 50-50 basis with these animals. They do something for us, we do something for them” (“The Shamu Experience”) - serve to put the audience at ease. How could an animal be mistreated, if surrounded by ‘friends’ and the noble goal of ocean conservation.

However, Shatz still puts this best when he outlines that it is often not the intention behind animal captivity which is problematic, but captivity itself: “What is the problem with the elephant in the room? The room. That’s the problem” (Schatz). The second chapter examined problems specifically associated with performing animals in aquariums, zoos and circuses - from low life-expectancy to severe dental problems and stereotypy. The chapter also sought to make
connections to research on animal psychology, specifically in light of Abe and Bradshaw’s examination of post-traumatic stress disorder in orphaned elephants. Bradshaw does caution against making explicit connections between contemporary wild elephant rampages, and the rampages of 19th-Century circus elephants, but also notes that while “their histories differ” they may have been candidates for a similar diagnosis in their time (*Elephants on the Edge* 15). I believe what was witnessed at SeaWorld through Tiliukum’s violent outbursts - and subsequent trainer deaths - may have been a similar reaction.

Potentially a bigger problem inherent in this is the guise of education within these performances. This chapter analyzed several popular Shamu shows, and concluded that their educational content was either quite light, or often misleading. For example, Kirby notes that during question-and-answer segments of Shamu shows in which “Baby Shamu” was a performer, trainers were often asked why she was removed from her mother. Trainers were instructed to say that Baby Shamu was already fully independent from her mother (Kirby 237), when in fact female orcas in the wild will stay with their mothers for quite a long time, and male orcas will never leave their mothers. Her removal was actually quite unnatural. The quality of education provided to audiences is inadequate, particularly as the company asserts that they ‘must’ keep orcas in captivity in order for people to learn how to care about nature (Bacher 5).

I concluded this chapter by asking an ethical question based on the precautionary principle: if there is the potential for harm to come to animal performers, even as educational models, then are we not obligated to prevent further harm? Do we have the right to be educated, at the cost of animal lives. Pitting human welfare against animal welfare is a debate raging in many other avenues - the food industry, medical research, even land development. I have yet to see these implications fully discussed in a performative and educational setting, and I think that
when it comes to something as essential as how we learn about animal lives and oceans, this is a question we should continue to follow, particularly as SeaWorld ventures into new performance traditions with an overhaul of their Shamu programming.

3. The Animal As Artistic Collaborator

This chapter diverged from the previous two, in examining a fairly unconventional performance art duo who aim to create art consensually with animals. Olly and Suzi’s *Shark Bite* enticed their shark subjects into engaging with the artwork, by leaving a bite mark on their canvas, so that the end product is a work with three simultaneously distinct and intermingled ‘signatures’ - Olly’s, Suzi’s, and the shark’s. They begin from the notion that animals have inner lives and agency, and some may choose to engage within the art and some may not, but the only way to build positive human-animal artistic relationships is for them to allow animals to make that choice (Williams and Winstanley 149). It is a small step, but a necessary one, for artists to simply acknowledge that animals themselves have the ability to make choices, and for me this is the most important aspect of analyzing their approach to animals in performance. I compared Olly and Suzi’s approach to animals, to the more recognizable works of Damien Hirst, whose *Physical Impossibility* is in many ways the anthesis to *Shark Bite*, in that it requires the death of a shark in order to create the art piece. A comparison of these works, especially looked at alongside von Hagen’s *Body World* exhibits in terms of obtaining consent for bodies transformed into art works, yielded a discussion of the ethics behind using animal bodies as integral to art pieces. The chapter asked if we can be trusted with animals, and if Olly and Suzi’s work could be viewed as legitimate challengers to existing performing animal traditions.
I concluded this chapter by suggesting that Olly and Suzi’s approach of placing humans and animals on equal - and equally unknowable - playing fields might be a potential ‘next step’ for those wishing to engage with animals in art. Their work may be indicative of an ethical turn in animal art, as the ways in which they challenge the existing order serve to highlight questions and conflicts that have been plaguing animal performers since the evolution of the American circus. Their work engages with questions of ethics and consent, and how one obtains consent from an animal with whom we have no common communications. By creating work solely ‘along surfaces’, and devaluing linguistic exchanges within the artwork, they simply used an animal’s willingness to move towards or away from the canvas as a means of establishing consent, which can hypothetically place both human and animal voices on a level playing field within the art (Artist / Animal xxviii). That was a common enough ground for Olly and Suzi to begin with. While that does not address whether or not the animal performer specifically intended to become an artistic collaborator, it at the very least ensures the animal will not come to harm specifically because of the engagement, and that is a start. Olly and Suzi also ask questions of how we access animals, and by venturing into wild animal ecosystems their work is set apart from traditions in which animals removed from the wild specifically to provide entertainment or education for their audiences. Access to animals is not a right but a circumstance in their works, which serves to suggest that if Olly and Suzi do not achieve the desired animal encounters they look for in a specific expedition, then it is their artworks that change, not their demand to animal access. In their questions of animal agency, they open up a discussion for recognizing that animals have individual lives and inferiorities which may be necessarily inaccessible to us humans. As Nagel suggests, and as Olly and Suzi’s work finds, it is not necessary to determine exactly what it is to be an animal, but simply to acknowledge that
there is something that being an animal is like (Nagel 439). Unlike SeaWorld’s claim, we cannot come to know everything about an animal through art and performance, and that is okay. Finally, their work acknowledges that there are “other ways of being” with animals and on this earth, that can have elements of a spectacle, be educational, keep animal participants from harm while advocating for further conservation and protection, and also be a financial success, opens the door for others to question their artistic relationship to animals.

This is not to say that Olly and Suzi’s work is the pinnacle of human-animal artistic relationships, or that any work engaging with animals in the future should follow their process to a tee, it is telling that their work is becoming more popular in a time that is also seeing the downfall of Ringling and SeaWorld. The situation for animals in performance and art is not getting better, as we can see through the still popular works of Hirst, but they are getting different, and there is a public outcry for further change.

4. What Is Next?

One of the major challenges of this project was in keeping up with the rapid industry changes regarding performing animals. When beginning this research, I did not fully expect that by the end of it, the company at the heart of one case study would fold, and the company at the heart of the other would significantly alter its programming. SeaWorld’s decision to end its current Shamu programming (Buss) and begin to exhibit more naturalistic behaviours comes with significant implications, namely - how can one exhibit any natural behaviours within an unnatural setting? Simply being in an enclosure negates the possibility of any naturalistic behaviours, making their presence there purely presentational or performative. No further details have yet been announced on what forms these new performances will take, but one can speculate
that they too will have consequences for the animal performers, until the issue of their facilities -
the too-small tanks, over-chlorinated water, and man-made pods - are addressed.

Ringling announced in January 2017 the company would be folding (Mele), citing the
impossibility of maintaining public interest without elephants in performance (Ringling
Brothers). As Feld explained, while the company had beaten most animal abuse allegations
before the courts, “obviously in the court of public opinion we didn’t prevail” (Alvarez).
Ringling’s last show of a 146-year tradition was performed on May 21st, 2017 in Uniondale,
New York (Nir). As Ringling only just ended, we can look to its demise as a possible sign of
what is in store for other performance arts in which animals are similarly used, such as
SeaWorld. After the last show, there was an outpouring of reflection on Ringling’s past and its
decision to fold. Reflections can be classified in two very distinct camps: those who regret the
loss of tradition, and those who celebrate its ending.337

The vast majority of critical reflection focused on the loss of human jobs,338 as well as the
loss of an animal training artform (Lussenhop). Current trainers looked to the loss of the human-
animal relationship generated through performance. Alexander Lacey, a tiger and lion trainer,
asserted that “people are not really concerned with wildlife until they feel it and see it and enjoy
it and love it as much as I do - until they’ve seen it with their own eyes” (Graham). Long-time
audience members interviewed in the wake of Ringling’s closing also echoed that “this is where
we fell in love with [the animals]” (Lush). Charlotte Allen, in an editorial for the Los Angeles
Times, used Ringling’s closing as a catalyst for criticizing the animal rights movement in
general. She cautions that ending elephant exploitation is only the first step on the way to
creating a world in which no animal is sacrificed for human use (“The forces that shut down
- and suggests that we should “think hard” about what kind of precedent the loss of Ringling will set (“The forces that shut down Ringling Bros.”).\textsuperscript{339}

On the other side, organizations like PETA and the ASPCA see the end of Ringling “as a part of a larger change going on in this country - about how Americans view animals and the way we treat them” (“Ringling Bros. Curtain Call Is Latest Victory”). It is being characterized as both a “rise of consciousness” and a change in public tastes (“Ringling Bros. Curtain Call Is Latest Victory”), brought on by knowledge of what these performance traditions cost the animals on stage. A survey on animal rights conducted in 2015 showed that 62\% of Americans “believe that animals deserve protection, and 32\% believe animals should have the same rights as people” (DeRose). There is now even a bill before the US Congress - the Traveling Exotic Animal and Public Safety Protection Act,\textsuperscript{340} which asserts existing animal protections are inadequate. The bill states that “exotic and wild animals have intrinsic value; their wild instincts and needs […] are not naturally suited to traveling performances, and they suffer as a result of being unable to fulfill instinctive natural behaviours” (\textit{Traveling Exotic Animal and Public Safety Protection Act}). This only accounts for animals in traveling acts and does not address those with more sedentary lives - which research into captive orca lives clearly shows makes those performers just as “prone to chronic stress, behavioural, health and psychological problems” (\textit{Traveling Exotic Animal and Public Safety Protection Act}) as circus animals. The bill is still under review and no concrete actions have been taken, but it shows that concern over performing animals has extended far beyond PETA protests.

I feel that circuses and aquariums have been following similar patterns, which may be interesting to examine. First, in March 2015, Ringling announced they would be phasing out elephant performers due to public backlash (“Ringling Brothers Ending Its Elephant Acts”). The
last elephant performers took the stage a full two years earlier than anticipated, on May 2nd, 2016 (S. Smith). One year later, in March 2016, SeaWorld followed suit by announcing that they would be phasing out its captive orca breeding program and transforming its Shamu shows so that they are “no longer a theatrical show [but instead] will focus on orca enrichment, exercise and overall health” (“Educational Encounters”; “Last Generation”; “SeaWorld To End Controversial Orca Shows”). These naturalistic behaviour exhibitions are intended to showcase SeaWorld’s commitment to education, and teaching their audiences about how orcas really live. Almost one year after this announcement, in January 2017, the last Shamu “One Ocean” was performed at SeaWorld San Diego, again earlier than anticipated. Other SeaWorlds are set to end their shows in 2019, though I would be unsurprised if this too occurred ahead of schedule.

My suspicion is that without orcas in performance, SeaWorld faces the same fate Ringling Brothers has been dealt. Their industry was built and maintained on the prospect of seeing animals perform magnificent acts, which generates misinformation about ‘real’ orcas. If the artifice of their captivity and performance conditions are exposed in such a way that reveals the post-Shamu orcas cannot possibly exist ‘naturally’ within their given space, then SeaWorld’s approach to presentation and education may have to evolve to problematize their own involvement in orca captivity. Would the company be able to survive admission of its own faults?

5. Geodrama

Looking at performative animal relationships as an act of geodrama may have been unconventional. However, if as May says, theatre is the mirror through which human culture is reflected (May 95), then the ways in which we have learned to represent nature through these spectacles and educational performances have essentially curated our relationships to the natural
world, in ways that promote human narratives while downplaying or denying animal realities. If we are to move on to a fourth act, then we need to look at performing animals as indicative of the way human-animal relationships play out in larger ecosystems. For example, rather than looking at a performance as simply between one trainer and one head-standing elephant, if we regard it as a geodrama, a whole-bodied experience of the world, then it brings all of the act’s larger implications to light - realities of capture, captivity, training, audience education, and lasting impacts on both the performer and any wild animals and ecosystems with which it is associated. Taking this kind of approach makes us think beyond what is immediately on stage.

This leaves the larger question of what is next for human-animal relationships within performance? The answer is that I am not sure, but I believe the following contradictions and consequences coming to light can at least point us in some positive directions:

- We can acknowledge that we are drawn to a spectacle showcasing the duality of domesticity and ferocity, but also recognize that any captive displays of these behaviours are highly curated, controlled, unnatural and potentially harmful for the animals.
- We can acknowledge that there are educational benefits to tangible encounters with animals, but that the act of bringing animals close enough for these encounters has erased their connections to the ecosystems we want audiences to learn about - and that our education may be significantly diminished as a result. We will never get to know the ‘real’ wild animal.
- We can acknowledge that we have a desire to get as close to animals as possible without coming to harm ourselves, but also admit that even this closeness may harm the animals that ‘inspire us’.

Ultimately, if we are to move onto a fourth act in this geodrama, we need to ask ourselves if we even have a right to performative relationships with animals, if these are among the known consequences. I think, as the closing of Ringling Brothers has shown, the answer will ultimately be no.
When Ringling made its announcement, PETA immediately responded with a victorious press release, citing that “thirty-six years of PETA protests, of documenting animals left to die, beaten animals […] has reduced attendance to the point of no return” (“The forces that shut down Ringling Brothers”).

In one instance, Feld was ordered to pay a fine of $270,000 for animal abuse (“The forces that shut down Ringling Brothers”).

Though, Feld has also had its share of victories against animal rights organizations, PETA in particular, that I would be remiss to leave out. Feld Entertainment won a $25mil lawsuit against PETA for elephant abuse allegations, for allegedly paying an informant - a former elephant trainer - to testify against Ringling in court (Lussenhop; “The forces that shut down Ringling Brothers”).

It is also interesting to note the changing public perceptions of the circus. Nicholas Ridout, in his chapter “The Animal On Stage”, notes that theatres using animals in performance do not want to be associated with the abuses that have come to define the circus (Ridout 98). He says “there is concern over the exploitation [and whether the animals] know what they are doing, whether they are capable of giving properly informed consent to their own participation, and whether their lives will be in any way damaged by their appearance on stage” (99-100).

Ringling was also one of the primary employers of clowns in North America, and their demise does lead to a significant hole in the industry, so this is not to diminish the loss of livelihood for over four hundred clowns (Sunderland) and countless other performers and backstage workers. As Sunderland explains, “many contortionists acrobats, and clowns come from families that have worked in the three ring for generations; all have honed skills only useful to the circus” (Sunderland).

Allen’s argument is primarily against PETA and the ASPCA, and their larger goals of asserting that animals have the right to their own existence - beyond human usage (“The forces that shut down Ringling Bros.”).

This is an amendment to the existing Animal Welfare Act (DeRose).
6. **Afterward**

I am aware that this research focuses predominately on western cultural world views of human-animal relationships, and that the relationships outlined here do not fully encompass all ways of knowing animals. Specifically, I do not delve deeply into Indigenous voices and knowledge systems. I did so consciously, so that I could place further focus on problematizing human-animal relations from harmful western practices, as I felt these were the traditions most in need of dismantling. But this is a limited analysis of a very particular approach to human-animal relationships, and future studies in this field would be greatly improved by consulting other voices and knowledge systems that are absent from this work. I did touch briefly on the Tlingit, Haida, and Nuu-chah-nulth and their relationships to orcas, particularly in regards to SeaWorld’s production of *The Legend of Shamu*, and mahouts from Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) in regards to their cultural relationships with elephants, but there is clearly much more to these worldviews than I have dealt with here.

When we incorporate animals into a performance or educational experience, especially in North America, and speak about obtaining consent from the animal, we should be looking to indigenous views on the interrelatedness between the human and non-human, for solutions based on traditional knowledges. In one example, Eugene Atleo draws from the Nuu-chah-nulth theory of *heshook-ish-tsawalk*, which translates to “everything is one” (Atleo xi), and encompasses a view of the world as “unified, interconnected, and interrelated” (xix). Atleo applies the theory of *tsawalk* to contemporary problem-solving, particularly in fields where there is a strong disconnection between the scientific and metaphysical (xi) or a fragmentation between knowledge systems, “because it assumes the unity of creation irrespective of any of
contemporary society’s contradictions” (133). Therefore, the actions we commit towards an animal we also commit towards ourselves — as performers, educators, theatre creators, audience members, and members of this ecosystem. If we viewed the world, and our relationships to animals, as intricately connected and interdependent, how would that problematize more individualized, western views on human-animal relations? Would we be able to more fully conceptualize animal wellbeing on the same plane as our own? The theory challenges us to discover “more of this unity” (131). I draw from Atleo here to demonstrate just one of the many indigenous ways of relating to animals that should be further consulted within geodrama’s next act.

It is also clear from SeaWorld’s production of The Legend of Shamu that there is a drive within western culture to learn more about how indigenous cultures connect with animals, particularly the orca. There is a tendency within The Legend of Shamu, to both romanticize indigenous worldviews and conflate individual cultures into a singular, simplified narrative. Consulting indigenous writers from these cultures, understanding their different worldviews, how they evolved, and what they can teach us about human-animal relationships, would be the best way going forward to understand healthier, more symbiotic ways of connecting with orcas. If SeaWorld had consulted indigenous resources in the making of this production, what deeper knowledges of human-orca relations might have been imparted to the audience, and how might that have impacted the organization and allowed it to grow in its understandings of orca lives and histories. I imagine stronger ethical implications might have come from a production that foregrounded tsawalk, for example, and was able to speak to the notion of everything being one, in a substantive way. Perhaps that is wishful thinking, but without actually consulting indigenous
sources, as SeaWorld elected, any understanding of the history of human-orca relations will be necessarily incomplete.

In another example, Nora and Richard Dauenhauer’s *Haa Shuká, Our Ancestors* collects a series of oral histories from the Tlingit people, including the story of Naatsilanei, as told to the editors by Willie Marks. This is one of the stories cited by *The Legend of Shamu*, although they attribute it to the Haida. This story tells of a young man who goes out to sea with his brothers-in-law, and is purposely left on a rock in the middle of the ocean. The man is rescued by a tall man, who beckons him underwater, “lift[ing] the edge of the sea like a cloth” (Marks 113), to reveal an entire underwater world. From there, Naatsilanei is taken to a large man who has a “harpoon point stuck into him” (113), and he is asked to save the man’s life in exchange for returning home. He pulls the harpoon out, and is freed. When he returns home, he begins to carve little wooden figures of orcas, and realizes that the man he saved was actually a killer whale, who had take on a human figure underwater. He releases four little orca carvings into the water, and they turn into real whales and eat the brothers who tried to kill Naatsilanei, thereby solidifying a relationship of respect and reciprocity between humans and orcas (113). Looking to origin stories and traditional knowledges like this, we can learn lessons on reciprocity, symbiosis, and the ethical and environmental implications of our actions, all of which would be strongly beneficial to any educational programming about orcas today. Understanding indigenous worldviews of the animals studied in this thesis can help to reconcile our actions towards orcas in the western tradition.

Other works that could be consulted on indigenous worldviews on animals include Pansy Collins *Haida Eagle Treasures*, a lived experience of Haida culture, John Borrows’ *Indigenous Legal Traditions in Canada*, and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s *As We Had Always Done.*
Each of these works offer insights into how kinship between humans, animals, and ecosystems might evolve within the western tradition, towards more sustainable and symbiotic relationships.

This project in its current iteration also does not delve greatly into deeper cultural relationships with elephants outside of the American circus, though they have existed throughout history in places like India and Sri Lanka. Colonial expansion in the 1800s sought to erase relationships between indigenous people and animals, supplanting traditional knowledges for narratives that supported colonial projects. Prior to elephant captures for the circus, human-elephant relations in India and Sri Lanka were much different. Numerous texts were written in Sanskrit detailing how to treat an elephant humanely, as in the Hindu religion they are worshipped as incarnations of the god Ganesh (Bradshaw 63). These texts include the Hasthi Ayurveda (Cheeran 24) and Gaja Sastra (28), both detailing the life science of elephants, and the Mathangaleela, on sporting and games with elephants (25), along with others that outline the elephant’s religious significance and their use as war animals (27). For mahouts, this information would have largely been shared in an oral tradition (Nicol; Trautmann 69). Consulting these sources would give insight into more positive human-elephant relationships, as they existed for centuries before colonialism.

In Tennent’s documentation of elephant hunts, he positioned the mahouts as willing accomplices to the capture, using their tame elephants to lure and draw wild young elephants into submission (Tennent 3, 115). This document was of course written from the position of an oppressor who had little cultural understanding of the mahouts and their relationships to elephants. As Nicol explains in her contemporary exploration of elephant consciousness, when a mahout tames an elephant, traditionally they remain together for the rest of their lives, with the elephant becoming like a member of the family (Nicol). Thomas R. Trautmann’s Towards a Deep
History of Mahouts is an excellent overview of these beliefs and practices. However, it notes that “a deep history of mahouts” is lacking in its understanding of the relationships between mahouts and “elephant trainers belonging to circuses and zoos around the world” (Trautmann 68). We are notably missing a significant chapter in history on how both mahouts and elephants were collectively impacted by colonialism in South Asia. Along with the circus’ propensity towards obscuring elephant origins, mahout practices and knowledges were also oppressed. When elephant capturers encountered the mahouts, they considered their understandings of elephants primitive and unnecessary to the western project of sagacity. There was little to no transfer of knowledge between mahouts and elephant handlers, beyond the use of control tools like the bull hook. The depletion of elephant herds and oppression of the mahouts’ livelihoods altered their cultural practices. Further studies show that this is one of many factors in the increasing instability of the profession, and as a result, oral histories of mahout-elephant relations are being lost (Cadigan; Nicol; Sugden; Varma).

Further research into these cultural relationships with elephants, particularly at the time when elephants were being forcibly removed for American circuses, can reveal other ways of human-elephant relationships that were oppressed in order to support the circus agenda. What understandings of elephants might have been gained, if those hired to capture the animals had not disregarded centuries of mahout knowledge? I presume, at the very least, that knowledge of male elephant musth would have been passed down, making the keepers aware of the condition, if not further equipped to handle it or understand its symptoms. Armed with this knowledge, who knows how many ‘problem’ male elephants might have been saved from execution?

Other sources that I used for this thesis, but also have more to offer in light of our cultural fascination with elephants and the role colonialism played in bringing them to North American
circuses, are Eric Scigliano’s *Love, War, and Circuses*, Linda Kalof’s *Looking at Animals in Human History*, and Susan Nance’s *Entertaining Elephants*. Una Chaudhuri’s writings on zooësis, particularly her assertion that “geographies of most animals today are vastly diasporic [and] their histories are vastly intertwined with those of humans” (“Animal Acts” 5), are a call for the impacts of colonialism to be considered when researching animals in performance.
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Appendices

A. Performing Elephant Deaths in North American Circus History, from 1799 - 2013

Note that this list is comprised of all elephant deaths for which I could find record, which occurred through unnatural causes. My sources for this list include Shana Alexander’s *The Astonishing Elephant*, The Born Free Foundation, Carol Bradley’s *The Last Chain on Billy*, the Performing Animal Welfare Society’s document “Circus and Elephant Ride Incidents”, Michael Daly’s *Topsy*, Susan Nance’s *Entertaining Elephants*, Deborah Nelson’s *The Cruelest Show on Earth*, Shelley Powers’ *Ringling Brothers: The Greatest Show in Court*, Eric Scigliano’s *Love, War, and Circuses*, Charlie Siebert’s *An Elephant Crackup*, and Peta Tait’s *Wild and Dangerous Performances*.

The list is not complete and due to how often circuses would change their elephant’s names or transfer them into zoos, the list may also be somewhat inaccurate. My purpose then behind including this was to demonstrate how easy it was - and sometimes still is - for circuses to dispose of the animals in their care when they became less useful for performance or too difficult to manage. I also want to look at the means of execution for those whose deaths are well-recorded, and the ways in which some of these deaths were justified - for example, the elephant who was deemed “too mean to live” (Alexander 126).

I was particularly inclined to create this document upon noting that each source in my research had a different list of deceased or executed elephants. Sometimes these were necessary. Alexander, for example, focused on male pachycide, while Daly looked at the executions of problem elephants like Topsy, Chief and Romeo. PETA and Born Free both maintain lists as well, looking at contemporary circus holdings with a focus on deaths caused by diseases or
injuries only found in captivity, or euthanasia. I wondered what kinds of trends might be noticed or what combining existing lists might reveal. Even noting the limitations to this document, the list itself takes up nearly ten pages, and at the very least does demonstrate a tendency for even contemporary circuses to euthanize their elephants once they have past peak performance age. However, my intention is simply to use this document to support the analysis in this chapter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Elephant Name (and gender, if known)</th>
<th>Circus</th>
<th>Cause of Death</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c.1799 or 1806</td>
<td>Elephant (f)</td>
<td>John Owen</td>
<td>Shot by farmer who thought she was Old Testament behemoth (Alexander 106)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1816</td>
<td>Old Bet (f)</td>
<td>Hackalia Bailey</td>
<td>Shot by farmer Daniel Davis (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1826</td>
<td>Little Bet (f)</td>
<td>Hackalia Bailey</td>
<td>Shot (Alexander 106; Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1834</td>
<td>Old Romeo</td>
<td></td>
<td>“A most vicious animal” (“Famous Elephants”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1854 (or 1851)</td>
<td>Columbus (m)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fell from bridge (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>No Name</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fell overboard steamer ship Thomas Swan (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860s</td>
<td>Queen Anne</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;died from drinking a barrel of ice water&quot; (&quot;Famous Elephants&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>Romeo</td>
<td></td>
<td>Necrotic foot infection, “rapid wasting of the flesh” (Daly 97-98). Died during operation to remove infected tissue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>Samson (m)</td>
<td>Bailey</td>
<td>Brain abscess from 14-year-old gunshot wound (Alexander).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>Pilot (m)</td>
<td>Barnum &amp; Bailey</td>
<td>Shot (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>Albert (m)</td>
<td>Barnum</td>
<td>Shot by 33 members of the Keene Light Guard (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Circus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>Jumbo (m)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Barnum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>6 Unnamed Elephants</td>
<td></td>
<td>Barnum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>Chief (m)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cincinnati Zoo (previously John Robinson Circus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>Columbia (f)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Forepaugh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Charley (m)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Washburn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Zip (m)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Barnum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>Tip</td>
<td></td>
<td>Barnum &amp; Bailey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>Tip</td>
<td></td>
<td>Forepaugh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>Prince (m)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>Dick (m)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Forepaugh &amp; Sells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>Sport (m)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hagenbeck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Company</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>Big Charley (m)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fed apples laced with strychnine and then shot (Alexander; Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>Unnamed Elephant</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lightening strike (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>Unnamed Elephant</td>
<td></td>
<td>Poison apples (Alexander).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>Unnamed Elephant</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
<td>Trying to subdue with rope, but accidental strangulation (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>Gypsy (also called Empress) (f)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Killed 5 keepers in the 1800s, likely due to pain caused from a broken tusk sustained in a train wreck. Shot by James O’Rourke, Chief of Police in Valdosta, Georgia, due to a rampage (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>Mandarin (m)</td>
<td>Barnum &amp; Bailey</td>
<td>Strangled, “unmanageable” (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>Topsy (f)</td>
<td>Forepaugh</td>
<td>Electrocution demonstration staged by Thomas Edison to prove the dangers of A/C current (Alexander 130; Nance 183; Powers; Scigliano 187).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>Unnamed Elephant</td>
<td>Wallace Brothers</td>
<td>Train wreck (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>3 Unnamed Elephants</td>
<td>Campbell Brothers</td>
<td>Fire on train (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>Tom-Tom (m)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shot after killing his keeper (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Gypsy Queen (f)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Potassium cyanide after killing her keeper (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>“Murderous Mary” (f)</td>
<td>Sparks Brothers</td>
<td>Hung after killing her apparent 8th man (Alexander 139; Powers; Scigliano 203).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Elephant</td>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>Tilly</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fell off cliff near Cranbrook, BC while trying to run away (Alexander 131 - 132).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Unnamed Elephant</td>
<td>Hagenbeck &amp; Wallace</td>
<td>Train crash (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Rio (m)</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers, Barnum &amp; Bailey</td>
<td>Executed (Alexander 134).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Black Diamond (m)</td>
<td>Al G. Barnes Circus</td>
<td>Shot 50-100 times for killing his trainer, who was rumoured not to be his first (Alexander 134; Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Major (m)</td>
<td>Cole Brothers - Clyde Beatty Circus</td>
<td>Shot after attacking trainer (Alexander 136; Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Jumbo II (m)</td>
<td>Cole Brothers - Clyde Beatty Circus</td>
<td>Ate broken glass (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Sammy (m)</td>
<td>Ringing Brothers, Barnum &amp; Bailey</td>
<td>&quot;Too mean to live&quot; (Alexander 126). Later on, a taxidermist was hired to make &quot;novelty waste baskets: of his feet&quot; (136).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Joe (m)</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers, Barnum &amp; Bailey</td>
<td>Shot (Alexander 136).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Unnamed Elephant</td>
<td>Cole Brothers</td>
<td>Fire (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>11 Unnamed Elephants</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
<td>Mystery - supposedly poisoned by arsenic, but never solved, and culprit never caught (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>4 Unnamed Elephants</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers, Barnum &amp; Bailey</td>
<td>Fire (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>Old Pitt (m)</td>
<td>Cole Brothers</td>
<td>Lightening strike in Montana (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Dolly (f)</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
<td>Fed cyanide after attacking boy in the audience (PAWS; Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Unnamed Elephant</td>
<td></td>
<td>Car accident (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Emily (f)</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
<td>Illness (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Unnamed Elephant</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lightening struck elephant raising the circus tent pole (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Elephant</td>
<td>Circus</td>
<td>Cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Tyler (f)</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
<td>Shot because she “lost her fear of people” (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Unnamed Elephant</td>
<td>Carson &amp; Brothers</td>
<td>Fell over a 25ft ledge into a coal pit, followed by 3 other elephants and was crushed (PAWS; Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Unnamed Elephant</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lightening strike (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Twinkles (f)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mistreatment (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Susie (f)</td>
<td>Wonder Zoo</td>
<td>Euthanized due to illness and undernourishment (Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Petely (m - 26)</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
<td>No cause given (&quot;Elephant Incidents&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Nelly (f - 50)</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
<td>No cause given (&quot;Elephant Incidents&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Mia (f - 50)</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
<td>No cause given (&quot;Elephant Incidents&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Janet (also called Kelly) (f)</td>
<td>Great American Circus</td>
<td>Rampage during giving children a ride; escaped and shot by police (Alexander 144; Born Free; &quot;Circus Ride and Elephant Incidents”; Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Tommy (m)</td>
<td>King Royal Brothers</td>
<td>Shot and secretly buried because no handler could control him (&quot;Circus Ride and Elephant Incidents&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Jenny (f)</td>
<td>King Royal Brothers</td>
<td>No cause given (&quot;Circus Ride and Elephant Incidents&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Jenny (f - 41)</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
<td>No cause given (&quot;Elephant Incidents&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Kay (f - 50)</td>
<td>Carson &amp; Barnes</td>
<td>Possible kidney infection (Born Free; &quot;Circus Ride and Elephant Incidents&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Siam</td>
<td></td>
<td>Euthanized (Born Free).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Assam (24)</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Died under sedation” (Born Free).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Dumbo (43)</td>
<td></td>
<td>TB (Born Free).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Amy (f)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Bombey (40)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Tyke (21)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hawthorne Corp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Mary (f - 50)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Lois (f - 24)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Cita (f - 53)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Mike</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Rhonala (9)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Ranni (f - 53)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Jockey (20)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Rhani (f - 45)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Karnaudi (f - 34)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Stoney</td>
<td></td>
<td>Luxor Hotel, Las Vegas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Sahib (20)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Joyce (f - 47)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Circus Vargus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Elephant Name</td>
<td>Circus/Circle of Life</td>
<td>Cause of Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Seetna (f - 30)</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
<td>Labour; baby died 18 days earlier and became necrotic. Died of infection (<em>Circus Ride and Elephant Incidents</em>; <em>&quot;Elephant Incidents&quot;</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Bandula (30)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Euthanized; arthritis (Born Free).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Tunga (f - 32)</td>
<td></td>
<td>No cause given (Born Free).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Hattie (f - 27)</td>
<td>Circus Vargus</td>
<td>“Collapse” (Born Free; PAWS; Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>2 Unnamed</td>
<td></td>
<td>Elephant herpes virus (Born Free).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Ola (f - 40)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Complications from foot surgery (Born Free).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Sneezie (27)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kidney failure (Born Free).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Heather (F- 8)</td>
<td>King Royal Brothers</td>
<td>Salmonella poisoning, malnutrition, stress and heat (Born Free; &quot;Circus Ride and Elephant Incidents&quot;; Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Kenya (f - 13)</td>
<td></td>
<td>No cause given (Born Free).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Dolly (f - 40)</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
<td>No cause given (&quot;Elephant Incidents&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Kenny (m - 3)</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
<td>Performing while ill (Born Free; &quot;Circus Ride and Elephant Incidents&quot;; Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Teetchie (f - 52)</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
<td>Euthanized (&quot;Elephant Incidents&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Petunia (f)</td>
<td>Clyde Beatty Cole Brothers Circus</td>
<td>Pole fell on her when putting up tent; resulting renal failure (Born Free; &quot;Circus Ride and Elephant Incidents&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Conti (f - 54)</td>
<td>Clyde Beatty Cole Brothers Circus</td>
<td>Renal failure (Born Free; &quot;Circus Ride and Elephant Incidents&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Benjamin (m - 4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Drowned in pond during transport (Born Free; &quot;Circus Ride and Elephant Incidents&quot;; Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Circus/Owner</td>
<td>Reason/Condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Unnamed Elephant</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
<td>Euthanized (&quot;Elephant Incidents&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Unnamed Elephant</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
<td>Abdominal neuroplasia; euthanized (&quot;Elephant Incidents&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Unnamed Elephant (34)</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>King Tusk (57)</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
<td>Euthanized (&quot;Elephant Incidents&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Unnamed Elephant</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
<td>Euthanized; osteoarthritis(&quot;Elephant Incidents&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Jenny (f - 5)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Euthanized (&quot;Elephant Incidents&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Baby Elephant</td>
<td>Carson &amp; Barnes</td>
<td>Euthanized; osteoarthritis(&quot;Elephant Incidents&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Ricardo (m - 8mos)</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
<td>Fell during training and broke back legs; euthanized (Born Free; &quot;Circus Ride and Elephant Incidents&quot;; Powers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Calcutta II (f - 53)</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
<td>Aortic aneurysm (&quot;Elephant Incidents&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Roma (f - 44)</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
<td>Euthanized; osteoarthritis (&quot;Elephant Incidents&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Bertha (f - 11 days)</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
<td>No cause; no announcement (&quot;Elephant Incidents&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Sue (f - 40)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reaction to tranquilizer for test (Born Free).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Gildah (f - 57)</td>
<td></td>
<td>No cause given (Born Free).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Lota (f - 54)</td>
<td></td>
<td>TB 2005 (Born Free).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>India (f - 55)</td>
<td>Ringling Brothers</td>
<td>Euthanized; quality of life. PETA suggests it is because the animals were past peak performing age (&quot;Elephant Incidents&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>f-62</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Josky</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Lutzi</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Siam</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Putzi</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Sabu</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Banana</td>
<td>f-55</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>f-61</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Sid</td>
<td>m-45</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>