

"Man Cannot Behold It Without Contemplating Himself": Monkeys, Apes and Human Identity in the Early American Republic

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While seeking refuge in Germantown from the yellow fever epidemic that plagued Philadelphia in the summer of 1793, Elizabeth Drinker and her friends encountered a man traveling through the town "with something in a barrel to Show which he said was half man, half beast." Although Drinker wrote that the proprietor of this animal exhibition "call'd it a Man[de]," she "believe[d] it was a young Baboon." Intrigued by the possibility of observing first hand a creature that supposedly blurred the boundary between the human and the animal, Drinker and her party "paid 5 1/2 [pence] for seeing it." After examining this creature, however, Drinker noted that she was disturbed by this exhibition, concluding that the baboon "look'd sorrowful, I pity'd the poor thing, and wished it in its own Country."¹

The exhibitor's marketing of this exotic animal as "half man, half beast" and Drinker's positive feelings for this captive creature both depended upon an imagined resemblance between this baboon and human beings. While the proprietor exaggerated and manipulated this resemblance to sell his animal as a hybrid, threshold creature, Drinker similarly drew upon resemblance when she felt sorry for "the poor thing." The idea of resemblance seen here in both the exploitation of and sympathy for this baboon emerges, Thierry Lenain argues, because "a series of common features—general physical appearance, plus some striking details of the appearance and some behavioral features—immediately link monkeys with men in the imagination." These analogies are exaggerated and multiplied as

Numerous human characteristics are displayed in the monkey's physiognomy and movements, eliciting a reaction of the 'it almost looks' type, and the onlooker spontaneously seeks signals that endorse this reaction, ignoring characteristics and features that are peculiar to the animal alone.

This selectivity, this tendency of the human viewer to find similarity at the expense of animal uniqueness, has a long history in Western interactions with primates. From the classical era when monkeys were perceived as a "loathsome caricature of a human being" through our modern conceptions of "a positive kinship between the great apes and man," the idea of resemblance has been crucial to both the body of knowledge about and the entertainment value of monkeys and apes.²

This essay provides a brief overview of the intersection of knowledge and entertainment at animal exhibitions in the early American republic, examining some of the ways Euro-Americans imagined and manipulated the resemblances between monkeys, apes, and human beings.³ To explore how human concerns accreted around these animals in an expanding popular and print culture, I focus upon exhibitions and literary accounts of these non-human primates. Exhibitions of monkeys and apes, which ranged from 'scientific' displays of anthropoid apes in museums to more broadly popular animal acts featuring performing monkeys, and representations of these creatures in newspapers, periodicals, literature, and children's books similarly prompted observers to reflect upon the boundary between 'man' and 'beast' and to use the natural order to comment upon a fluid political and social order. Accordingly, this essay centers around two simple questions: how were monkeys and apes exhibited and represented in the early republic, and what can these displays of ideas about the animal tell us about human concerns? In addressing these questions, I show how exhibitions of and texts about monkeys and apes served as 'sites' and 'sights' where human ideas about these animals' resemblance to man provided popular amusement while prompting reflection about human identities.⁴

"their docility and excellent talents"

Readers of the *Providence Gazette* were invited to reflect upon similarities between monkeys and apes and humans when an unusual birth announcement appeared in 1792 that described a "Natural Curiosity—A Monkey, about one Week old, to be seen at the House of Peter Daspre, nearly opposite Mr. Benjamin Thurber's Shop." According to the advertisement, "this singular little Animal merits the Attention of every curious person, as it is perhaps the second of the Kind ever seen in the United States." As with many other advertisements for primates, the first thing mentioned about this animal was its physical similarity to humans, as "Its Face and Ears are white, and very much resemble those of the human Species."⁵ While the small size and relative hairlessness of this juvenile animal influenced perceptions of its resemblance to humans, Daspre's notice quickly moved from the physical to the behavioral, emphasizing the 'natural' maternal and filial affection of these monkeys by noting that "The Dam takes [the week-old baby monkey] in her Arms, suckles it, and presents it to the View of every Spectator. Another young one (bred here also) fondly and naturally clasps his Arms round its Neck, and, pressing it to him, embraces it."⁶ Although monkeys are, in fact, affectionate with one another, Daspre's use of this behavior to "sell" his animals characterized a major theme of European natural history—the tendency to explain animal and plant reproduction in terms of heterosexual marriage and romantic love—while countering the notion, most succinctly expressed by John Locke, that "other

creatures, as well as monkeys, destroy their young by senseless fondness.”⁷ For audiences in Providence, this pageant of motherhood on display at Peter Daspre’s home also resonated with larger ideologies that were privileging sentiment and involved parenting, especially as they were situated in a post-revolutionary America where virtue “became more and more identified with enlightened feminine sociability and affection.”⁸


Citizens of Providence were drawn to Daspre’s residence to observe this “singular” baby animal and its loving family, and were told that their attentions would be returned, as maternal pride would lead the new mother to present her baby “to the view of every spectator.” This interaction between humans and animals, this return of the observing gaze, appealed to human vanity, especially since individuals felt disappointed if they were ignored by exhibition animals. Daspre’s active community of monkeys contrasted with those exhibitions of caged creatures in menageries, like the one where the Reverend William Bentley found “a bear sleeping and slumbering with an insolent contempt of every visitor. A Babboon, more fond of entertaining his guests, an affronted porcupine, & two owls who gave us no share of their notice.”⁹ Here Bentley’s anthropomorphizing discourse expresses a disappointment with these creatures that is ultimately rooted in their failure to return his attention. While these exhibition animals were novel, clearly their curiosity alone did not necessarily meet human expectations of the animal object. Novelty could wear off as well; when Daspre announced the birth of the “third [monkey] of the Kind ever bred in the United States” in October 1793, some of the appeal of these baby monkeys had dissipated and the price of observing them accordingly dropped in half.¹⁰

By presenting his monkeys as a “natural curiosity,” Daspre’s emphasis upon the behavioral resemblance between humans and other primates on the grounds of maternal love and filial affection reified post-revolutionary conceptions of proper motherhood. In the following years, residents of “the principal Cities of America” had the opportunity to contemplate further the resemblances between monkeys and humans and the conflation of the natural and the cultural in a show presented by a “Mr. Cressin, Natural Philosopher.” In March 1797 this “Innocent Amusement” was advertised in the Newburyport *Impartial Herald* with a cut of a monkey, dressed as a harlequin, walking upon a tightrope. [Figure 1] Apparently this picture was meant to be worth a thousand words, for the text of the advertisement provided no details about the contents of this exhibition, only noting that “having . . . been honored with the applause of connoisseurs” throughout the United States, Cressin proposed “to commence his Exhibitions This Evening, at the Widow Hoyts’ Tavern.”¹¹

While exhibiting in Philadelphia at the former site of Peale’s Museum in 1794, however, Cressin promised to present to the public:

Courtesy American Antiquarian Society

INNOCENT
AMUSEMENT.



Mr. Cressin,
Natural Philosopher,

HAVING represented in the principal Cities of America, where he has been honored with the applause of connoisseurs, respectfully informs the Ladies and gentlemen of this town, that he proposes to commence his Exhibitions This Evening, at the Widow Hoyts' Tavern.

Mr Cressin informs the Public that if any persons wish to see his experiments, he will exhibit them at any hour most agreeable to private parties.

Admittance for grown people, 1/6. Children 1/9.

Figure 1. Innocent Amusement (advertisement for Mr. Cressin, Natural Philosopher), Newburyport Impartial Herald, 10 March 1797.

two of the most surprising Animals ever seen on the continent, not so much for their appearance, as their great talents and gentleness:

The male is named *Co-Co*,
Who is without his match;
The female named *Gibonne*
Queen of all animals for sense.¹²

Although this notice in the *General Advertiser* informed "the curious who wish to see these astonishing creatures" that "they may view them working like two rational persons," Cressin never described his performers as monkeys. In a later advertisement in the *Salem Gazette*, however, Cressin detailed how "these two Animals are not more than three feet and an half high, they are young and walk erect, their bodies, arms, and legs, are the same as a real person, and are habited in the same manner." Describing Gibonne and Coco as miniature people, without reference to the tails which would immediately establish these performers as non-human, these creatures, according to the advertisement, "only want the Faculty of Speech." Although debates raged in the late eighteenth century as to whether or not the anthropoid apes were capable of speech,¹³ Cressin's monkeys could still communicate with their trainer, "answer[ing] their master by Signs to all he asks them."¹⁴ These signals conveyed Cressin's skill as an animal trainer as he guided his simian performers through remarkable feats, described textually in the Philadelphia papers and visually [Figure 2] in a later broadside from New England:

Gibonne waits on a table and when desired goes into the cellar to fetch a bottle of liquor. She then hands a pack of cards, shuffled, for any body to pick one out, and she will immediately point out to the person the same card he made choice of; and when her master pretends to be fatigued, she brings him a chair to sit on, and pulls off his shoes and stockings much faster than he could himself. She likewise produces a box in which the alphabet is fixed, and when required by any person to print his name, she will do it by picking up the letters and by the assistance of a small printing press produces his real name printed. And also, at command, goes up a rope in order to bring down a great variety of birds which are put up for the purpose . . .

Next will appear the other animal known by the name of Co-Co, who is unparalleled by his species. He will be dressed, and perform on the rope like a dancer, with a staff in his hands of ten feet in length; and what is the more surprising this small creature dances on the rope as well as the most expert dancer.¹⁵

This litany of Gibonne and Coco's domestic, artisanal, magical, and acrobatic performances was reproduced in many of Cressin's notices. Additional



INNOCENT AMUSEMENT.

M^r CRESSIN,

HAVING had the good fortune to receive the approbation of a great number of respectable characters in this town, who have assured him, that if he had a more convenient place for his exhibitions, they would visit him with their families—and as it would be the first town where Mr. CRESSIN has not been honored with the presence of the LADIES, he has thought it proper to hire the Store of Mr. *Joseph Dextle*, near the ferry-way, where he will perform this evening, (*if fair weather*.)

Those persons who will honor him with their presence, may be assured that nothing will be spared to merit their approbation, and render the evening entertaining. Performance to begin at seven and end at ten o'clock.

Price of admission for Green 50¢ 1/2, for Children 50¢.

Mr. Cressin informs, that he will also perform for private parties at any time.

Figure 2. Innocent Amusement (broadside advertisement for Mr. Cressin), Newburyport, 1796.

feats were also performed, as Cressin, hoping to reduce his costs of advertising while further enticing audiences, noted that "it would be tedious to mention the many articles furnished for the exercise of Gibonne" and that it is "unnecessary to relate in this advertisement all the exercises of Co-Co, in order the more agreeably to entertain the company."¹⁶

In subsequent advertisements, both in Philadelphia and in New England, Cressin enumerated his monkeys' other abilities, undoubtedly hoping to provide a constant novelty. In an advertisement noting that his show had moved from "Mr. Peale's former Museum" to "the (formerly) Loganian Library," for example, Cressin described how "this Day, for the first time, [Coco] will leap the ribbon, with a flag in each hand; he then will make a meal on the rope, sitting on a chair, with a table before him."¹⁷ In another advertisement, Cressin introduced "Jacques and Tity," who along with Gibonne and Coco performed "a pantomime with surprising precision. Being imposed upon by a confectioner who sells them bad sugar plums, they attack him and demolish his shop."¹⁸

The unpredictable results of this pantomime (try to imagine these monkeys destroying a model confectioner's store, throwing candy all over the venue) perhaps lessened the impact of Gibonne and Coco's mimicry of more serious human activities. Yet if the mayhem of the pantomime highlighted animality, at other moments Gibonne, the female monkey, demonstrated servility and docility; she could also read and spell via typographical cards like the other learned animals (such as Gabriel Salenka's "Sagacious Dog" and William Frederick Pinchbeck's "Pig of Knowledge") traveling around the eastern seaboard in the 1790s. These signs of rational accomplishment and female deference—which situated Gibonne within larger transitions in gender ideology in post-revolutionary America—were counterbalanced by the daring acrobatic and physical feats of Coco, who perhaps out-performed his human counterparts in wire-walking.

Although Cressin's advertisements frequently gave Gibonne and Coco feature billing, he was always inscribed at the center of this animal act, either as trainer and master or when he displayed his own "surprising feats of hand." When he initially made his appearance in Salem, Cressin described his "Exhibitions Comic and Experimental" as occurring in four parts: the first three consisted of sleight of hand, before the show concluded with "the two most surprising Animals that ever existed in the world."¹⁹ To build the public's interest, Cressin gradually revealed further particulars of "the surprising talents of these Animals," noting that in addition to walking the tight rope, "Coco will ride a large Dog, saddled and bridled, with the address of a real person, at the same time going through the exercise of the broad sword."²⁰ Counterbalancing the emphasis on feminine domesticity in the earlier advertisement featuring Gibonne, Coco's performances on the middle ground between animal

nature (walking and swinging on a line) and human culture (using the broad sword and riding in a saddle) similarly naturalized gender distinctions. Reflecting and reinforcing ideas about the appropriate roles for men and women in an era when traditional arrangements were challenged by revolutionary rhetoric, the announcements for Cressin's show served conservative political ends. Yet these distinctions were likely undermined by the performance itself, which was, after all, designed to make people laugh. The incompleteness of the mimicry—the inevitable (and comic) failure of these creatures to actually *be* human despite their best efforts—served to satirize these proscribed gender roles while prompting observers to consider how ridiculous these behaviors could be in human society.

Gibonne and Coco's mimicry of human behaviors also served to demonstrate that they possessed those marks of culture and respectability that were crucial, James Brewer Stewart argues, to thinking about race in the early republic. Yet the humor of Cressin's shows, based on his monkeys' mimicry of human actions, combined with extant associations of monkeys and apes with blacks, may also have served to satirize efforts at racial uplift, given how "free African Americans construed 'respectability' to support their struggles for equality."²¹ Despite Gibonne and Coco's "great talents" and Cressin's skill in providing a physical 'site' and visual 'sight' where "continuities and discontinuities between man and animal could be dramatized,"²² audiences knew that these performers were, ultimately, animals. Reassuring spectators of their superiority over the brute creation, Cressin's shows provided audiences with a venue to think about, and with, animals, looking for the human in the animal and the animal in the human.

The emphasis Cressin placed on his performing monkeys, which, after all, only accounted for part of his three-hour performance, proved shrewd given the heavy competition for the post-revolutionary entertainment dollar.²³ As his *Gazette* advertisement noted "many men of shining abilities have appeared," but seldom have individuals been able to see "any animals of such surprising talents and docility."²⁴ Cressin's performances reflected, and helped in turn to shape, the process of liberalization of public entertainment in the early national period.²⁵ For to be successful Cressin, like his contemporaries, had to continually modify his show and his advertisements. In Providence in November 1796, Cressin advertised via broadside his "Exhibitions, Comic and Experimental" that featured "A Chinese Automaton Figure" on the tight-rope. The cut accompanying this advertisement, however, revealed that this automaton was actually one of Cressin's monkeys performing in "exotic" dress. [Figure 3] Though not providing truth in advertising, Cressin's manipulation of the distinction between animal and machine played off both the contemporary popular interest in automata and the learned debates surrounding Descartes' assertion that "it is nature that acts in [animals] according to the

Courtesy Rhode Island Historical Society



EXHIBITIONS,
Comic and Experimental.
 At Mr. JOHN THURBER's Tavern, West Side of the Bridge.
This Evening, for the first Time,
A Chinesse Automaton Figure
 Will perform several Feats on the Rope.
To-Morrow, for the last Time,

Mr. CRESSIN will begin his Performance at 3 o'Clock, P. M. and finish by Sunset.
 As there are four different Chambers which communicate with his Place of Performance, by which Means Ladies or select Companies will be less incommoded, he will take Care to have a Fire in each of those Chambers, for the Convenience of the Spectators.
 A civil Officer will attend, to keep good Order.
 Tickets for Sale at the Place of Performance, and at Mr. Todd's Book-Store. Price, a ² of a Dollar, Children Half Price.
 Providence, November 18, 1796.

Figure 3. Exhibitions, comic and experimental (broadside advertisement for Mr. Cressin), Providence, 1796.

arrangement of their organs, just as we see how a clock, composed merely of wheels and springs, can reckon the hours."²⁶

In Salem, Cressin did not have to pitch his monkeys as automata, for he seemed to have provided a novelty worth seeing. A "Communication" to the *Gazette* from "a citizen" noted

A Theatre we have not like our neighbors, but we have fine and rare shows. . . . *Cressino, un fisico*, is with us. The actors are brave monkeys, that ride dogs and cats wonderfully. Their action is bold, silent, and naked, without offence to either sex, and without damage to the virtues. The bursts of applause are constant . . . ²⁷

Such praise helped fill the performance hall and may have reassured those who still looked on itinerant amusements with disfavor that this show was indeed respectable and moral. For those interested in Cressin's show but unable or unwilling to attend these public performances, either because of fears of a disreputable crowd or because of scheduling conflicts, Cressin offered the option of showing his experiments "to private parties" at "any hour most agreeable." Although this was a strategy used by most proprietors, Cressin's awareness of the concerns about the morality and respectability of entertainments is evidenced in the differing titles he gave his shows, for what were "Exhibitions Comic and Experimental" in Providence and Salem became "Innocent Amusement" in the more conservative town of Newburyport.

In addition to retitling his performances to target specific audiences and maintain the novelty of his exhibitions, Cressin's advertisements also reveal his audiences' concerns about safety and comfort. In Providence, for example, where his troupe was performing in mid-November, Cressin's broadsides announced that "a civil Officer will attend, to keep good Order" and that

As there are different chambers which communicate with his place of performance, by which means ladies or select companies will be less incommoded, he will take care to have a fire in each of those chambers, for the convenience of the spectators.²⁸

Cressin was clearly aware of the difficulties in drawing both a large and a respectable crowd—one that was willing to spend the twenty-five cents required for admission and might potentially pay the four dollars required for a private showing—and was constantly changing his presentation of the show to assuage audiences' anxieties.

Sometimes textual reassurances of a potential audiences' comfort and security did not suffice. In Newburyport, Cressin ultimately had to move his exhibition from Widow Hoyt's Tavern (which was close to the unruly wharves) to the center of town. A broadside dated toward the end of Cressin's stay in Newburyport explains that

having had the good fortune to receive the approbation of a great number of respectable characters in this town, who have assured him, that if he had a more convenient place for his exhibitions, they would visit him with their

families. . . . he has thought it proper to hire the store of Mr. Joseph Davis, near the ferry-way, where he will perform this evening. (if fair weather.)

Changing the site of this exhibition would not only make for a more respectable audience but would attract women. In his broadside Cressin noted that without this change of venue Newburyport "would be the first town where Mr. Cressin has not been honored with the presence of the Ladies."²⁹ The larger space afforded by the move may also have been necessary for Cressin to make the most of his simian performers, as the broadside depicts Coco riding a dog and performing on the tightrope, while Gibonne is seen removing her master's shoes and stockings and maternally holding what appears to be a baby monkey. Cressin's shrewdness in having his monkeys perform both ordinary feats (which resembled 'normal' human behavior) and extraordinary ones (tightrope walking, for example) served to "render the evening entertaining," while emphasizing these creatures "not so much for their form, as for their docility and excellent talents."³⁰

Cressin's descriptions of his animal act demonstrate how primate mimicry and human agency came together to provide public entertainments. Monkeys' abilities to imitate human behavior, however, also made them useful players in popular literature for both adults and children. These texts frequently sought to provide a moral lesson while entertaining readers with accounts of the physical and behavioral resemblances between monkeys, apes, and man. In *The Cabinet of Momus*, an animal performance was described in a humorous poem illustrated by a plate of a monkey lathering a cat for a shave [Figure 4]. In "The Monkey, who Shaved Himself and his Friends," a barber's pet, who "was wonderful at imitation," attempted to shave a cat and dog, both of which ran "howling 'round and bleeding." After repeatedly cutting himself, the monkey suddenly "cock'd to shave beneath his chin; Drew razor swift as he could pull it, And cut, from ear to ear, his gullet." Characteristically moving from animal folly to human folly, the story concludes:

Who cannot write, yet handle pens,
Are apt to hurt themselves and friends.
Tho' others use them well, yet fools
Should never meddle with edge'd tools.³¹

Capitalizing on the comic value of monkeys, here animal mimicry enforces the politics of deference by reminding people (especially those writers who lack the skill of their superiors) of their proper place in human social hierarchies. Demonstrating the folly of imitation, this monkey stands for immaturity and foolishness, as does the title character in "The wonderful ape of Marseilles." In this widely-circulated story, a monkey bought by a gentleman



Figure 4. "And lather'd well her beard and Whiskers," The Cabinet of Momus (Philadelphia, 1809). A reader has written on the illustration "By God m[e] and you shall be shaved."

"to divert his children," played "several of the most comical tricks imaginable." It dressed a young child "in a very awkward manner," shaved a cat, trashed the house, pulled peas and beans out of a garden, and shattered earthenware: "In a word, he played all sorts of unlucky tricks." After a host of other disasters (such as uncorking a cask of wine and taking medicine "of a laxative nature"), the gentleman sold the ape to a military man. But this mischievous animal

got loose one day, and went upon the walls of the city with a fire-brand, and meeting with a large piece of cannon, immediately clapped the fire-brand to its touch-hole. Whilst the priming was taking fire, he ran to the mouth of the cannon, to see what would come out: but the piece then going off, the ape was blown away, and never heard of after. Such was the end of the wonderful ape of Marseilles.³²

Besides dissuading potential primate owners from bringing such a creature into their households, this tale of animal mayhem demonstrates both the limits of mimicry and the folly of attempting to tame "nature." Depicting an unrestrained animality that could only be contained through the animal's demise, the story of this "wonderful ape" showed how monkeys and apes, though entertaining, could indeed imitate too much.

Mimicry that provided amusement for some, however, proved shameful to others. In *The Natural History of the Bible*, an encyclopedia of "all the beasts, birds, fishes . . . &c. mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures," Thaddeus Mason Harris described monkeys and apes with repugnance. These creatures, "resembling somewhat the human figure" while displaying "a degree of human ingenuity" in their "mischievous artifice," served to "mortify the pride of those who make their persons alone the principal object of admiration." Drawing upon a long association of monkeys and apes with human vanity, Harris concluded:

We are struck with horror to see our form, features, and gestures, imperfectly imitated in an inferior order of quadrupeds. And the first sight of one of them shocks sensibility in the same manner as monstrous deformity in an individual of our own species. Proud of our alliance to angels, we cannot but be ashamed of our relation to monkeys.³³

"Reflections" printed in *The Pittsburgh Gazette* similarly drew negative associations about the resemblance between monkeys and man. After exclaiming that "ill nature is often mistaken for wit, as buffoonery is for humor," the writer mobilized ideas about monkeys' mimicry of man to draw distinctions between humans, adding

To play a thousand monkey tricks, and act the part of a Jack Pudding, is the way to be called a fellow of infinite fun by the million; but those who are true judges of humor will think a man who has only the accomplishments of a Merry Andrew to render him facetious, infinitely ridiculous.

Complaining about “corporal jokes, of which some folks are so impertinently and so unseasonably liberal,” the commentator called for restraint of these animal-like antics, urging people to “be as witty, and as droll as you please, but keep your feet and fingers to yourself.”³⁴

Bodily restraint and decorum were frequent themes in literature for children, making monkeys useful creatures in efforts to teach children to behave. Since children apparently were captivated by monkeys—Tommy Wilson wanted “to see a monkey called Sagore Brown” again and again in 1801, thinking it “the most extraordinary being that ever was”³⁵—it’s not surprising that adult anxiety over children’s mimicry and mischief appeared in depictions of monkeys and apes in these texts. In *A Present from Philadelphia*, two monkeys are shown in an unlikely situation “at Work” at a water pump, not having much fun at all. This illustration is accompanied by the warning that “Monkeys are very imitative animals; apt to attempt any thing they see men do; especially if it be mischief. In this they are very much like bad little boys!”³⁶ The linkage between mischievous boys and mischievous monkeys also appeared in the collection *Trifles for Children*, while monkeys and apes again proved useful for inculcating moral lessons. An engraving of monkeys in which “one is upsetting the pitcher, a second is preparing to dig, and a third is pounding in a mortar” is accompanied by a notation that “These are curious fellows—full of mischief—always attempting to do things which they see done by men.” Similarly, the adjacent caption for a plate representing a “Baboon in chains” notes “It is proper that he should be so, to keep him from doing harm to the children who go near him.”³⁷

Although this image of the chained baboon resonates with the use of that animal as a rhetorical stand-in for blacks,³⁸ it also served to warn children about the potential dangers posed by animals on display. Although the baboon could be fierce and dangerous, the author of *Trifles* urged young readers to observe and consider the natural history of this animal, noting that “the baboon is a near relation to the monkey: he has a shorter tale.” Undermining the search for resemblance, however, the account added that even though its “hands look very much like those of a human being, in other respects he is not so much as an ape,” before concluding “it is wonderful to reflect, how many animals the great Creator has placed on this earth, and how different are their properties.”³⁹

Trifles for Children sought to direct children’s interest in nature to the greater contemplation of “Nature’s God” and to prevent them from being

cruel to animals. Although much of the collection presented views about the proper treatment of domestic animals and brief natural history sketches of exotic creatures, only the monkeys were discussed in terms of their resemblance to humans. Children, apparently, were to understand that they should not partake in cruelty or mischief, that they must not act like animals. These concerns about human behavior, especially man's treatment of animals, however, were not limited to children's literature. Contemporary magazine descriptions of Louis XI's "musical pigs" and selections from *Stockdale's Sermons* on the inducements for humane treatment of animals reflected a larger culture of sentiment that, not coincidentally, also denounced exhibitions of performing animals as cruel spectacles which could potentially ruin the morals of young men and women.⁴⁰ Improving literature frequently distinguished between serious and useful natural history exhibitions and needless and cruel shows featuring performing creatures. The latter were condemned as being a waste of time (something "too precious to be lavished in trifles") and for the cruel and inhumane methods used in training.

Exhibitions of animals as natural curiosities were less likely to be viewed with disdain than animal performances, unless, of course, those creatures were displayed in a way that forced individuals like Elizabeth Drinker to take pity on them.⁴¹ While audiences themselves were often brutal to animals—William Otter gleefully described his torture of a baboon and a monkey (among other animals) in his *History of My Own Times*, and the "mobility" reacted to a misleading exhibition of a "non-descript biped" in Boston by "hustling" the creature (actually a shaved bear) through the streets—outside commentators directed most of their ire toward animal trainers and the crowds that attended those shows.⁴² In a "series of instructive conversations" in Priscilla Wakefield's *Mental Improvement: or the Beauties and Wonders of Nature and Art*, for example, Mrs. Harcourt informs Augusta, an outsider to this improved family, that

You admire the grotesque attitudes and ready obedience of those poor beasts which are led about and compelled to amuse the *unthinking spectators*; but you would commiserate their sufferings, did you know the cruel discipline they have groaned under, for the purpose of attaining these *ridiculous accomplishments*.⁴³ [emphasis added]

Although William Frederick Pinchbeck, the proprietor of the "Pig of Knowledge," went out of his way to inform potential audiences that his animal was not cruelly tortured in its training, here the culture of sentiment's concern over the humane treatment of animals served to distinguish between worthy and debased looking, paralleling and reinforcing the distinctions between a serious "scientific" way of seeing animals in what the Rev. William

Bentley called the “style of nature” and those spurious animal acts he dismissed as mere “pranks.”⁴⁴

“the strongest similitude to mankind”

Exhibitions of anthropoid apes in this “style of nature” in the early republic performed cultural work similar to those exhibitions of performing monkeys discussed above; after all, both types of exhibitions enabled audiences to find resemblances between monkeys, apes, and man that proved useful in thinking about social and political order. While monkeys’ antics tended to induce more pleasure and amusement than serious reflection—Edward Topsell, in his 1607 *Historie of Foure-Footed Beastes*, noted that the ancient Greeks considered them “made for laughter,” and provided several anecdotes demonstrating the hilarity of monkeys before concluding that “men do but feign merriments, whereas apes are naturally made for that purpose”⁴⁵—apes’ physical appearance and their ability to mimic human behaviors equally led to philosophical speculation about the distinctions between man and animal.

While the anthropoid apes had been at the center of a wide-range of scientific and philosophical inquiries in Europe since the middle of the seventeenth-century, North American audiences had few, if any, opportunities to see such creatures first-hand prior to the American Revolution. Many individuals, however, were undoubtedly familiar with these animals thanks to descriptions in natural history literature and to newspaper and periodical accounts of apes exhibited and discussed in Europe. In 1738, for example, the *Virginia Gazette* ran a brief description of an “Orangnagang” displayed in London, highlighting the circulation of both “real” animals and their representations throughout the Atlantic world while testifying to the broad interest in those creatures which resembled human beings in both form and appearance.⁴⁶

Exhibitions of anthropoid apes in the early republic highlighted the formal resemblance between these animals and man. In November 1789, an engraving of “the surprising species of the Ourang Outang, or Wild Man of the Woods,” called viewers’ attention to an advertisement in the *Massachusetts Centinel* for “The Greatest and Most Curious Natural Collection which has ever been exhibited in this country.” [Figure 5] Unsurprisingly, the hook designed to draw visitors to “the room over Major Hawes’s Shop, the sign of the Three-Coaches, Quaker Lane” was the resemblance of this animal to man, which was emphasized both visually and textually. By describing this animal as a “Wild Man,” for example, and depicting it as a hairy human being, the exhibitor placed this creature within the larger eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century discourse concerning feral man.⁴⁷ While the “Ourang Outang’s” general physical characteristics and upright posture set this creature apart from other animals, these marks of humanity were generally exaggerated and rein-

Courtesy American Antiquarian Society



Figure 5. Orang Outang (advertisement for "The Greatest and Most Curious Natural Collection"), *Massachusetts Centinel*, 7 November 1789.

forced by pictorial convention, especially through the use of the walking stick—a ubiquitous visual trope in representations of anthropoid apes.

Although the image of the "Orang Outang" and the textual description of other creatures like the sloth, baboon, and porcupine exploited viewers' "continuing natural curiosity about native and exotic animals," particularly those from "unexplored, or rarely explored wilderness regions,"⁴⁸ it is impor-

tant to remember the role of the exhibitor in structuring this curiosity. In his initial advertisements for this collection of animals in late October, for example, the proprietor described "a Male, Female, and Foetus of the surprising species of the Ourang Outang, or the Man of the Woods." To heighten interest in his collection, which appears to have been comprised largely of preserved, not living animals, he added an eye-catching engraving. Apparently these changes to the marketing of his collection were not completely successful, for several days later the proprietor changed his hours and his admission fees, lowering the price for adults and children and adding a middle ticket price "for scholars and apprentices above twelve years of age." While hoping to attract more patrons with these changes, the proprietor added that all of his animals were for sale, along with "one live Tygeress" that, interestingly, had not previously been advertised.⁴⁹

By mid-November the "live TYGER" was on display "at the Sign of the Sun, in Royal Exchange Lane" for a mere "four pence." The rest of these natural curiosities had found a new owner as well (an advertisement noted that "the late Proprietor . . . disposed of the above Curiosities to a citizen of this town"), who marketed the old in a new way, positing the collection as elegant and connected to European natural history collections. Pitching his show to "ladies and gentlemen" rather than "adult persons" while mentioning that his "beautiful collection of *rare* and uncommon Birds and Animals . . . all in high preservation . . . were collected by the celebrated Dr. King of Geneva," the new proprietor announced his intention to "continue to exhibit them during the winter."⁵⁰

It is not known how long this collection was exhibited in Boston. By 1793, however, parts of it emerged in Gardiner Baker's "Museum & Wax-Work, at the Exchange, New York." One of the many "Productions of Nature and Art," along with a living "Porcupine from the East-Indies" and "a King of the Vultures," were the "male and female Ourang Outang; or the Man and Woman of the Woods, with a Fetus of the same, from Africa, perfect in spirits, in a fine state of preservation."⁵¹ Although they were hailed as "the greatest natural curiosities" present, these orangutans were not, as the accompanying illustration suggested, shown alive.⁵² Alexander Anderson's engraving of what appears to be a hairy human woman, standing upright, holding a stick and staring at the viewer, was based as much upon existing representations of anthropoid apes and expectations of what a "wild woman" might look like as upon the specimen Baker actually possessed. After all, Anderson made preliminary sketches of these preserved primates at Baker's museum before animating this creature in preparing the plate for this broadside.⁵³

Although the skirt worn by this "Wild-Woman of the Woods" made the animal appear modest, it also reflected the tendency of exhibitors (and illustrators) of monkeys and apes to clothe their creatures to heighten their resem-

Courtesy of The Library Company of Philadelphia

PEALE'S MUSEUM.

OURANG OUTANG, or WILD MAN OF THE WOODS.



THIS Curious Animal, so nearly approaching to the human species as to occasion some Philosophers to doubt whether it was not allied to mankind, is now in this useful repository; which is constantly increasing by the accession of uncommon subjects from all parts of the globe—It consists at present of

QUADRUPEDS—more than 100 of
AMPHIBIOUS animals, upwards of 150 of
BIRDS—near 700.

INSECTS—many thousands.

FISHES—a number of—and a great variety of shells;

MINERALS & FOSSILS—1000 Specimens of
PICTURES, and 11 figures of
WAX-WORK,

Representing the persons of various savage nations, all in their proper habits, and surrounded by their implements of war, husbandry, &c.

Also, a powerful **ELECTRICAL MACHINE** with a medical apparatus. Admittance as usual one quarter of a dollar each time.

blance to humans.⁵⁴ Exhibitions and representations of these creatures, however, could perform cultural work without this literal mark of humanity. For example, when Charles Willson Peale added an “Ourang Outang” to his Philadelphia museum, his “Wild Man of the Woods,” though unclothed, was, like Anderson’s “Wild-Woman,” depicted gazing back at the viewer, holding a walking stick. [Figure 6] In the accompanying text in *Claypoole’s American Daily Advertiser*, Peale wrote that “this Curious Animal, so nearly approaching to the human species as to occasion some Philosophers to doubt whether it was not allied to mankind, is now in this useful repository.”⁵⁵

The physical resemblance between the “ourang outang” and humans depicted in this and other notices, however exaggerated, was not the only source of interest to early American audiences. As Londa Schiebinger has noted in her important study of “the gendered ape” in early modern science, “debates concerning how nearly apes approximated humans were wide ranging, but four questions pervaded discussion: Can they think? Can they speak? Can they walk erect? Can they create culture?”⁵⁶ Audiences hop-

Figure 6. Ourang Outang, or Wild Man of the Woods (advertisement for Peale’s Museum), *Claypoole’s American Daily Advertiser*, 13 April 1799.

ing to answer these questions for themselves at Peale's Museum, however, were again to be disappointed by an illustration. Elizabeth Drinker noted in her diary that her son William went "to see the Orang Outang or Man Monkey—he expected to have seen it alive, but it was the skin stuff'd—a Strange creature."⁵⁷ Although not seeing a living animal, neither Elizabeth nor William Drinker recorded that they drew any larger conclusions about human others from this exhibition. Yet in describing this curiosity in his manuscript notes detailing "A Walk through the Philadelphia Museum," Peale rhetorically asked his audiences: "How like an old Negro?" Peale's question illustrates how, in David Brigham's words, "the boundary across species was mediated by differences within the human species. Blacks stood a step closer than whites to the apes in Peale's view of natural hierarchy."⁵⁸

Exhibitions of monkeys and apes were not the only sites where individuals like Peale worked to "define social ranking—particularly by race—as natural."⁵⁹ Because of their resemblance to human beings, monkeys and apes proved useful to writers seeking to comment upon race; these creatures, after all, had to be placed somewhere on the "great chain of being" that included varieties of the human species.⁶⁰ Debates raged throughout the eighteenth century as to the proximity of the higher primates to man, and as to whether some races of man (such as the "Hottentot") should be considered inferior to the human-like "ourang outang." Given how the "boundary between technical and popular discourse is very fragile and permeable" in Western primatology, the ideas about the resemblance between apes and man reflected in Peale's sentiments were incorporated into a wide variety of writings.⁶¹ Winthrop Jordan has detailed how "the significance of the association of the Negro with the ape was its existence on a bewildering variety of levels of mental construction." From scientific inquiries to "witty" diary entries, from distinguished natural histories to crude jokes, the conflation of Africans and apes served a variety of interests and functions, all of which in some manner expressed "the social distance between the Negro and the white man."⁶²

This recurring linkage between blacks and apes was used to reinforce Euro-American supremacy and ultimately to justify slavery; after all, as Keith Thomas has observed, "once perceived as beasts, people were liable to be treated accordingly."⁶³ Human others continued, of course, to be depicted as apes or as ape-like, sometimes for comedic purposes, sometimes as part of political philosophy. In Hugh Henry Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry*, for example, the Irish excise-tax collector Teague O'Regan, having been tarred and feathered by angry farmers in Western Pennsylvania, is found hiding in a tree by two hunters, who captured him and "began to exhibit him as a curiosity." Members of the Philosophical Society come to examine this "animal," and classify him "with the Ouran Outang," but "nearer to [the human species] in some particulars."⁶⁴ Thomas Jefferson, on the other hand, infamously depicted Af-

ricans as sexually animalistic in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, in part by arguing that blacks desired sexual relations with whites just “as uniformly as is the preference of the Oran-ootan for the black women over those of his own species.”⁶⁵

This extreme reading of the resemblance between monkeys and apes and human beings, one that opened the possibility of interspecies crossbreeding, had a long history in the West. The idea that apes may have been “a monstrous offspring of humanity” had emerged in medieval scholasticism, and took on new life with the discovery of the anthropoid apes in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries.⁶⁶ These wide-ranging speculations in European natural history and philosophy often found their way to curious Americans in periodicals, which devoted space to natural history, and occasionally described European discoveries and analyses of great apes. In July 1784, an account delivered to the Royal Society in London in 1769 appeared for an American audience in the *Boston Magazine*, describing animals “called Golok, or wild people, [which] are thought to be originally a mixture with the human kind.” According to the report of Stephen deVisme, Esq., these creatures “come out of the forests in the interior part of Bengal, from the country called Mevat. They inhabit the woods; their food is fruit, leaves, bark of trees, and milk; flesh only when caught.” The behavior of these creatures perhaps accounted for deVisme’s contention that they were human-ape hybrids, for his report noted “they are very gentle, and extremely modest. They are of the height of a man; their legs and arms are in due proportion to their body, which is very genteel.”⁶⁷

The editor of the *Boston Magazine* sought to clarify deVisme’s report by comparing the latter’s field observations of the Golok with an “authoritative” natural history text, adding that “this Monkey . . . is the same that M. Buffon has described under the name of Gibbon, and says, it sometimes walks on its hind feet, and sometimes on all fours.” The account goes on to describe this creature in detail, especially noting “its most singular characteristic . . . the great length of its arms.”⁶⁸ Although “Mr. de Visinie takes no notice of this circumstance in his description,” the long arms of the Golok are indicated in his accompanying drawing [Figure 7] of this animal (which is labeled “Female”). Yet this striking visual representation, which recalls iconographic traditions of the “wild man” and the representations of anthropoid apes we’ve seen previously,⁶⁹ did not satisfy the editor of the *Boston Magazine*. He concluded that this illustration still presents the long arms “in a less striking manner than that of Mr. de Buffon, who adds, that, when the animal is upright, it can touch the ground with its hands.”

The flexibility of anthropoid apes in the ongoing reciprocal linkages between the natural order and the social order was not confined to discussions of natural history.⁷⁰ The late 1780s saw an explosion of antislavery organizations

Courtesy American Antiquarian Society



Figure 7. John Norman, engraver, Golok, Boston Magazine, July 1784.

and agitation in Britain and America, accompanied by political efforts to abolish the slave trade. Natural history was frequently invoked in these discussions, prompting further circulation of ideas about the anthropoid apes (and, by extension, human hierarchies) throughout the Atlantic world. In 1788 *The Columbian Magazine* printed "Observations on the Gradation in the Scale of Being between the Human and Brute Creation. Including some Curious Particulars respecting Negroes" excerpted "From a late History of Jamaica."⁷¹ Arguing that the "oran-outang" has "some trivial resemblance to the ape-kind, but the strongest similitude to mankind, in countenance, figure, stature, organs, erect posture, actions, or movements, food, temper, and manner of living," this selection from Edward Long's *The History of Jamaica* (1774) concluded "that the oran-outang and some races of black men are very nearly allied, is, I think, more than probable." Although noting that orangutans "sometimes endeavour to surprise and carry off Negroe women into their woody retreats, in order to enjoy them,"⁷² as "both races agree perfectly well in lasciviousness of disposition," Long ultimately uses the orangutan as a standard for measuring human capability: "The Negroe race (consisting of varieties) will then appear rising progressively in the scale of intellect, the further they mount above the Oran-outang and brute creation." Using a divinely-created natural system to legitimize social distinctions "by the measure of intellect," Long concludes that "the species of every other *genus* have their certain mark and distinction, their varieties, and subordinate classes: and why should the race of mankind be singularly indiscriminate?"⁷³

In May 1788, another periodical, *The American Magazine*, printed a letter "to the editor of the European Magazine" from R. that drew upon natural history to argue "there is not a doubt but man and the Owran-Outang are of distinct and widely-separated species." Conceding the racist speculation that "female negroes" may be impregnated by "brutes" like the "Owran-Outang" but noting that any such offspring, unlike those which are "the product of an European and an African," would be sterile, R. concluded that "the negro of Africa is a branch of the same stock with the European, whether English or French, a Spaniard or a Portuguese." Understanding that the legality of the slave-trade was partly based on "that power delegated to man, of enslaving the animals lower in the scale than himself, and which these writers [defending the slave-trade] would extend to the natives of Africa, from an idea that he has a mixture of brute blood in his body," R. drew a distinction between the human and the animal so as to "afford no argument in favor of a commerce fraught with the blackest acts of treachery, and teeming with practices the bare relation of which makes human nature shudder."⁷⁴

The idea that the anthropoid apes were allied to man persisted, of course, and found its way into the miniature children's book *People of All Nations*, in which a very human-appearing "Orang-Outang" was sandwiched between

the “Norwegian” and the “Russian.” While the conventional illustration (apparently based on the image used in Peale’s advertisement) [Figure 8] plays up this creature’s physical resemblance to mankind, the brief text describes the orangutan’s culture, adding “an Orang-Outang is a wild man of the woods, in the East Indies. He sleeps under trees, and builds himself a hut; he cannot speak, but when the natives make a fire in the woods, he will come to warm himself.” Although these characteristics certainly place the orangutan at the lower end of the hierarchy of human nations, *People of All Nations* held out hope that these “wild men” could improve in the future, for the “Russian was formerly clad in skins and accounted one of the rudest people in the world.” While many Russians “are now little better,” their ascent is perhaps partially marked by their lack of thick body hair (at least when compared to the orangutan), even though “a long beard is in high estimation of the people.”⁷⁵

People of All Nations consistently correlates marks of a generalized, national body with the putative characters and abilities of those peoples, often using hairiness as a signifier of a people’s approach to (or distance from) civilization. The inclusion of the speechless Orang-Outang in this chronicle of racial and national diversity as a “wild man of the woods” (rather than as an animal) served to reinforce conceptions of a hierarchy of human peoples by prompting young readers to consider the relationship of this ‘nation’ to other groups, such as the refined Englishman and the bestial Hottentot. The representation of the Orang-Outang in *People of All Nations* thus performed important cultural work, exemplifying how monkeys and apes proved useful in thinking about race and nation.

This “useful toy for girl or boy” also demonstrates how widely human ideas about these ambiguous animals circulated in the early republic. At animal exhibitions and as representations in texts, the resemblances between monkeys, apes, and men were frequently exaggerated by exhibitors, authors, and illustrators for a wide range of purposes. As creatures of the threshold, monkeys and apes could be used to both reinforce accepted values by ‘naturalizing’ the cultural and to raise new questions about race, gender, nation, and deference by dramatizing the distinctions between human and animal. Although the resemblance between apes and men, and the mobilization of this relationship to larger concerns about human social order remained contested terrain, exhibitions of and popular texts about monkeys and apes provided viewers and readers with lessons in power, problematizing boundaries between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ while both re-inscribing and undermining human social identities.⁷⁶

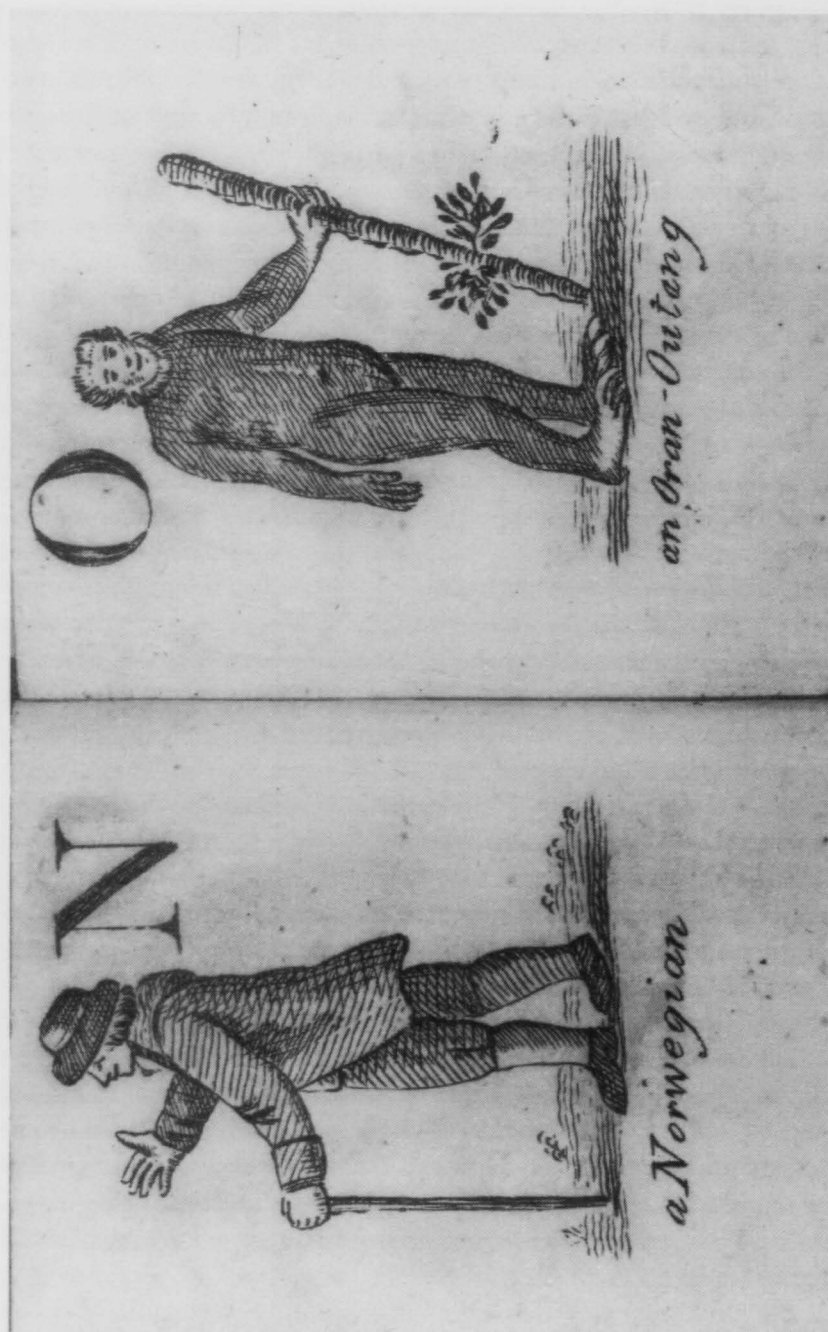


Figure 8. "A Norwegian . . . an Oran-Outang." People of all nations (*Philadelphia, 1807*).

Notes

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1. *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker*, ed. Elaine Forman Crane (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 2: 1155 [16 July 1793]. "Mande," interestingly, was known to Europeans as a name for an African people.
2. Thierry Lenain, *Monkey Painting* (London: Reaktion, 1997), 31-33.
3. In this paper I have concentrated upon American experiences with primates, occasionally referring to European texts and animal exhibitions as evidence of the larger intellectual effort to make sense of these creatures. My title, for example, is taken from Buffon's contention in his 1749 *Histoire naturelle, général et particulière* that the orangutan is a "a brute of a kind so singular, that man cannot behold it without contemplating himself." In not fully addressing this extensive European context, I perhaps convey a sense of American exceptionalism that is unwarranted, given that monkeys and apes were brought to Europe to be exhibited, classified, and analyzed before coming (often only as representations in texts) to the "new world." As many of these European experiences have been well documented (the scientific more so than the popular, however), my interest lies in thinking about what these animals might have meant to citizens of the United States coming to terms with the implications and dislocations of their revolution.
4. "Western society continues to draw heavily on symbolic ideas involving animals and that the subject of those ideas is frequently not the animal itself, but rather a human subject drawing on animal imagery to make a statement about human identity." Steve Baker, *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity, and Representation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), ix.
5. According to Winthrop Jordan, eighteenth-century writers continually pointed out that black babies were born lighter than they were to become; in this case "a fact of physiology

confirmed the predispositions of the white man" that black humans represented degeneration from a primitive whiteness, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 248-249.

6. *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, 24 November 1792.

7. Londa Schiebinger argues that "gender traits ascribed to plants and animals change with shifting notions of masculinity and femininity in Western culture" in *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 1.

8. Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York, 1991), 357. See also Ruth Bloch, "American Feminine Ideals in Transition: The Rise of the Moral Mother, 1785-1815," *Feminist Studies*, 4.2 (June 1978), 101-126.

9. *The Diary of William Bentley, D.D., Pastor of the East Church, Salem, Massachusetts* (Salem, Mass.: The Essex Institute, 1904) 2:261 [12 March 1798].

10. The price dropped from 9p. for adults and 4 1/2p. for children in 1792 to a flat "Fourpence Halfpenny each person" in 1793. *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, 24 November 1792; 19 October 1793. Excitement occurred when Daspre's monkeys escaped from his home; he announced a reward for the return of his "female Monkey, of a greyish colour, her face and ears black, and her tail very long" in an advertisement in the *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, 10 October 1789.

11. [Newburyport] *Impartial Herald*, 10 March 1797.

12. [Philadelphia] *General Advertiser*, 31 July 1794.

13. See, for example, James Burnet, Lord Monboddo, *Of the origin and progress of language* [1774] (New York: Garland Publishing, 1970), especially the discussion in Book II of the Orang Outang and the natural state of man.

14. *Salem Gazette*, 20 January 1797.

15. [Philadelphia] *General Advertiser*, 31 July 1794.

16. [Philadelphia] *General Advertiser*, 31 July 1794. In the *Salem Gazette* account, 20 January 1797, for example, "Gibonne serves her master at the Table, fetches all he wants, takes off his Shoes and Stockings, plays at cards with

her master, she can read, she has a Printing-Press made in the proper form, in which she will print any person's name who desires it.—COCO will dance on the tight Rope, with a balance pole in his hand, 10 Feet long, weighing ten pounds."

17. [Philadelphia] *General Advertiser*, 1 September 1794.

18 [Philadelphia] *General Advertiser*, 16 August 1794.

19. [Philadelphia] *General Advertiser*, 31 July 1794; *Salem Gazette*, 20 January 1797.

20. *Salem Gazette*, 24 January 1797.

21. James Brewer Stewart, "The Emergence of Racial Modernity and the Rise of the White North, 1790-1840," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 18 (Spring 1998), 190.

22. Jennifer Ham, "Taming the Beast: Animality in Wedekind and Nietzsche," in *Animal Acts: Configuring the Human in Western History*, ed. Jennifer Ham and Matthew Senior (London & New York: Routledge, 1997), 146.

23. For his performance, Cressin charged 1s. 6p. for adults, and 9p. for children. In 1797-1798 one could have seen other itinerant shows featuring a dwarf child, an elephant, a bison, Maginnis' "deceptions," William Frederick Pinchbeck's "Learned Pig," and Gonotty's balancing, fire works, and chinese shades.

24. *Salem Gazette*, 24 January 1797. "Docility" proved to be a double-edged sword, as exhibitors had to show animals that were wild enough to be interesting but not so wild as to be dangerous.

25. David R. Brigham, *Public Culture in the Early Republic: Peale's Museum and Its Audience* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 21. "Because Peale cultivated an image of the museum as a serious educational enterprise, links are immediately apparent to the American Philosophical Society, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Library Company of Philadelphia. But Peale attracted his audience also by highlighting the entertainment value of his displays and demonstrations in language that he shared with promoters of the theaters, circuses, wax works, and itinerant amusements in the city," 13.

26. "Exhibitions, comic and experimental," Broadside (Providence, 1796), Rhode Island Historical Society. Descartes is quoted in and discussed by Mary Midgely, *Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 210. See also James J.

Sheehan and Morton Sosna, eds., *The Boundaries of Humanity: Humans, Animals, Machines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). This sort of disingenuous marketing accounts for Pinchbeck's insistence in his own advertisements that his "Pig of Knowledge" was a "real animal."

27. *Salem Gazette*, 27 January 1797. This letter may have been planted by Cressin himself, as I've found that Pinchbeck frequently promoted his shows by pretending to write as a satisfied audience member.

28. "Exhibitions, comic and experimental," Broadside (Providence, 1796). While exhibiting in New York in 1795 Cressin noted that "unruly boys" at his shows, lured by his handbills and broadsides, were keeping a "genteel company away." Accordingly, Cressin promised to advertise only in newspapers for the remainder of his stay in town. [New York] *Daily Advertiser*, 16 April 1795.

29. "Innocent amusement," Broadside (Newburyport: s.n., 1796), New York Public Library. For a discussion of why this broadside most likely advertises Cressin's 1797 exhibition in Newburyport, and for a glimpse at the theatre in that town in general, see James W. Barriskill, "The Newburyport Theatre in the Eighteenth Century," *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 41 (July/October 1955): 211-245; 329-352.

30. "Innocent amusement . . .," Broadside (Newburyport, 1796); *Salem Gazette*, 20 January 1797.

31. *The Cabinet of Momus: a choice selection of humorous poems from P. Pindar, Freneau, Ladd . . .* (Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1809).

32. "The wonderful ape of Marseilles," in *The American Magazine of Wonders*, ed. D. Fraser (New York: Southwick and Pelsue, No. 3 New-Street, 1809), 34-37.

33. Thaddeus Mason Harris, *The natural history of the Bible: or A description of all the beasts, birds, fishes, insects, reptiles, trees, plants, metals, precious stones, &c. mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures. Collected from the best authorities, and alphabetically arranged.* (Boston: Printed by I. Thomas and E. T. Andrews at Faust's Statue, no. 45, Newbury Street, 1793), 24-25. For a history of the association of monkeys and apes with human vanity, see H. W. Janson, *Apes and ape lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London: Warburg Institute, University of London, 1952).

34. "Reflections," *The Pittsburgh Gazette*, 5

December 1795.

35. Elizabeth Drinker, *Diary*, 2: 1430 [28 July 1801].

36. *A Present from Philadelphia, ornamented with fourteen handsome engravings* (Philadelphia: Printed and Sold by Benjamin Johnson, No. 31, High Street, 1803).

37. *Trifles for Children* (Philadelphia: Jacob Johnson, 1804), Part I; Part II.

38. See, for example, Dr. Alexander Hamilton's conflation of a black woman and a performing animal in his description of how he was "entertained by the tricks of a female baboon," in Carl Bridenbaugh, ed., *Gentleman's Progress: The Itinerarium of Dr. Alexander Hamilton* [1744], (Pittsburgh and London: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1948), 11.

39. Part I of *Trifles for Children* also provided brief natural histories of the tiger and the wildcat, and a lengthier description of the porcupine that rebutted the assertion that that creature could shoot-out its quills. Part II followed with accounts of the lion, several bird species, and the extraordinary "Kangaroo."

40. See, for example, the pages of the *Boston Weekly Magazine* in the first years of the nineteenth-century. The different ways of seeing popular culture in New England were perhaps best illustrated by this anecdote, headlined "Beware of Gaping!": "On Wednesday last, a countryman, in the act of gazing and gaping to see the wonders in the town of Boston, was seized with a fit of gaping: and actually put his jaw out, which occasioned considerable bustle; but medical aid being soon obtained, he was restored to the pleasure of again shutting his mouth!" *Boston Weekly Magazine*, 27 April 1805, 107.

41. The preference of the educated for serious exhibitions of animals that could be compared with textual natural histories can be seen in literature that lauded the menagerie while disparaging the circus. See "Circus," *The Knickerbocker, or New-York Monthly Magazine*, 1839, 67-76, and the children's book *The Idle Boy; and the Menagerie, Embellished with cuts* (Providence: Published by Cory and Daniels, 1834).

42. William Otter, *History of My Own Times*, edited by Richard B. Stott (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 81-82, 152-53.

43. Priscilla Wakefield, *Mental Improvement: or the Beauties and Wonders of Nature and Art, in a Series of Instructive Conversations*, First

American, from the Third London ed. (New Bedford, Mass.: Abraham Shearman, Jun. for Caleb Greene & Son, 1799), 191.

44. In his *Expositor, or Many Mysteries Unravell'd* (Boston, 1805), William Frederick Pinchbeck explained how he trained six learned pigs through behavioral reinforcement, not cruelty, rebutting writers like Wakefield and Mrs. Trimmer. Bentleys *Diary*, 4: 398 [12 July 1816]: "I love to see such things in the style of nature & asked for no pranks."

45. Reprinted in Malcolm South, ed., *Topsell's Histories of Beasts* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1981), 9. The terminology used to describe monkeys and apes was extremely slippery. "Ape" was the general term used to describe simia before the introduction of the term "monkey" in the sixteenth century, and is still used to describe these animals' resemblance to and mimicry of human beings. After Edward Tyson's 1699 study of the comparative anatomy of the chimpanzee (which he called an orang-outang) and man, "ape" began to be more strictly applied to the tail-less simia, creatures known to zoologists today as the chimpanzee, orangutan, gibbon, and gorilla. Donna Haraway has noted that the history of primatology has been seen as a progressive narrative, one of "a clarification of sightings of monkeys, apes, and humans," *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 4.

46. "Capt. Flower has brought with him on board the Ship *Speaker*, a Creature called in the East-Indies *Orangnagang*, (or a Man of the Woods) tho' this is a Female of that Species. The Body is near 2 Foot long, no Tail at all, the Feet and also the Hands are exactly of the Shape of a Hand of a human Body, only somewhat longer and smaller, with all the Lineaments, Nails, &c. She walks on her Feet, sits upon a Chair, takes a Dish of Tea and Drinks it. The Body is covered with black Hair, as the Hair of a Bear, but the Skin is white, and the Colour of the Face and Hands is reddish, much like the Indians." *Virginia Gazette*, 11 August 1738.

47. Julia Douthwaite has addressed the often complex and contradictory European ideas about the "wild man" in "Homo ferus: Between Monster and Model," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 20 (May 1997), 176-202. Karen Ordahl Kupperman has described how hair was "a subject of intense interest" for Europeans as they sought to make sense of native Ameri-

cans in "Presentment of Civility: English Reading of American Self-Presentation in the Early Years of Colonization," *William & Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser. 54 (January 1997), 193-228.

48. [Boston] *Massachusetts Centinel*, 7 November 1789; Vernon N. Kising, Jr., "The Origin and Development of American Zoological Parks to 1899," in *New Worlds, New Animals: From Menagerie to Zoological Park in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. R. J. Hoage and William A. Deiss (Baltimore, 1996), 110-112.

49. [Boston] *Massachusetts Centinel*, 24, 31 October and 7 November 1789. Hours were changed from one session of seven hours to two sessions totaling nine hours. Price of admission dropped from 2d. for adults and 1s. for children to 1s. 6p. for adults, 1s. for scholars, and 6p. for children.

50. [Boston] *Massachusetts Centinel*, 18, 25 November 1789.

51. "Museum & wax-work, at the Exchange, New York," Broadside (New York, 1793), New York Historical Society. For an account of Baker and his museum, see Robert M. McClung and Gail S. McClung, "Tammany's Remarkable Gardiner Baker," *New-York Historical Society Quarterly* 42 (1958), 142-169, and Robert I. Goler, "'Here the book of nature is unfolded': The American Museum and the Diffusion of Scientific Knowledge in the Early Republic," *Museum Studies Journal* 2.2 (Spring 1986), 10-21.

52. Observers could gain multiple forms of knowledge from a given exhibition animal. If the animal were exhibited alive, one could learn of a creature's habits and movements, and generate anecdotes and observations about the animal. When the animal died (and they perished rather quickly in many cases—an advertisement for Baker's "Menage of Living Animals" urged "those who wish to gratify themselves with a sight of these remarkable productions of nature" to "make early application, for it is not uncommon for those that are foreign to live but a short time" [New York] *Minerva and Mercantile Evening Advertiser*, 10 August 1797), one could examine the animal's generation, structure, and (perhaps most important) preserve it for others to see.

53. Anderson received 16 shillings from Baker for his work on this broadside. See Jane R. Pomeroy, "Alexander Anderson's Life and Engravings, with a Checklist of Publications Drawn from His Diary," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 100.1 (1990),

181. The iconographic tradition of the modest female ape is contrasted with representations of the rapacious sexuality of male apes in Schiebinger, *Nature's Body*, esp. 94-106.

54. William Bentley wrote that "An Ape was exhibited in the full dress of a Sailor" when he went to see "A Moose exhibited as a Natural Curiosity for 9d. Brought from the province of Maine." *Diary*, 2: 356-57 [17 November 1800].

55. [Philadelphia] *Claypoole's American Daily Advertiser*, 13 April 1799.

56. Schiebinger, *Nature's Body*, 81.

57. Drinker, *Diary*, 2: 1155 [12 April 1799]. In 1796, capitalizing on the exhibition of an elephant in Philadelphia, "Signior [Joseph] Falconi" exhibited a "battle between the Elephant and the Ourang Outang . . . and the Chase of the Yahoo, a near species of the said Ourang Outang" as part of his "philosophical performance." Falconi based this entertainment (I imagine it was somewhat like a slide show) on "Buffon's natural history on this subject." Given that the audience may have been aware of exhibitions of preserved or stuffed anthropoid apes, Falconi's illustrated lecture served to both amuse and instruct. [Philadelphia] *Claypoole's American Daily Advertiser*, 19 December 1796.

58. Brigham, *Public Culture in the Early Republic*, 130.

59. *Ibid.*, 122.

60. According to Arthur O. Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), 55-59, distinctions of form and purpose were used to order species in the chain's hierarchical continuum.

61. Haraway, *Primate Visions*, 14. "The themes of race, sexuality, gender, nation, family and class have been written into the body of nature in western life sciences since the eighteenth century," 1.

62. Jordan, *White over Black*, 237, 239.

63. Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: A History of the Modern Sensibility* (New York: Pantheon, 1983), 44. Slave markets, considered as a form of public exhibition of animalized human others, exemplify this process, as do those mock advertisements for escaped animals which are structurally similar to those announcing rewards for runaway servants and slaves. See, for example, the advertisement "Whereas a stately Baboon hath lately slipp'd his collar and run away." *South Caro-*

lina Gazette, 4 May 1734.

64. Hugh Henry Brackenridge, *Modern Chivalry* (New York: American Book Company, 1937), 317-324, quotes on 318, 319, and 320. O'Regan is ultimately shipped to France to be exhibited there, but is mistaken for a sansculotte upon arrival and is freed by a mob. For a history of the "simianization" of the Irish, see L. Perry Curtis, Jr., *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature*, rev. ed. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997).

65. Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, with an introduction and notes by William Peden (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 138-139. As Winthrop Jordan noted in *White over Black*, here Jefferson expressed his "feeling that whites were subtler and more delicate in their passions and that Negroes, conversely, were more crude. He felt Negroes to be sexually more animal—hence the gratuitous intrusion of the man-like ape" in his discussion of racial difference (458).

66. Schiebinger, *Nature's Body*, 94-98.

67. "Some Account of a singular Species of Monkeys, found in the interior Part of Bengal," *Boston Magazine*, July 1784, 374-375.

68. *Boston Magazine*, July 1784, 374-375. The account also noted that "The hair, with which it is covered, is either brown or black: round about its face is a circle of greyish hairs; its eyes are large, but sunk in its head; its ears naked; its face flat, and of a copper colour. It is of a placid disposition; its motions are gentle; it was fed with bread, fruits, almonds."

69. See Edward Dudley and Maximilian E. Novak, eds., *The Wild Man Within: An Image in Western Thought from the Renaissance to Romanticism* (Pittsburgh, 1972).

70. These themes are explored in the works of some of the early republic's cultural leaders in Christopher Looby, "The Constitution of Nature: Taxonomy as Politics in Jefferson, Peale, and Bartram," *Early American Literature* 22 (1987), 252-273.

71. "Observations on the Gradation in the Scale of Being between the Human and Brute Creation . . ." *Columbian Magazine*, 2.1 (January 1788), 14-22 and 2.2 (February 1788), 70-75. Taken from Edward Long, *The history of Jamaica; or, general survey of the antient and modern state of that island: with reflections on*

its situation, settlements, inhabitants, climate, products, commerce, laws, and government (London: Printed for T. Lowndes, 1774), II, 351-372. Thanks to David Brigham for bringing the articles to my attention.

72. [Long], "Observations," 17, 22, 18. He adds, "Ludicrous as the opinion may seem, I do not think that an oran-outang husband would be any dishonour to an Hottentot female: for what are these Hottentots?—They are, say the most credible writers, a people certainly very stupid, and very brutal. In many respects they are more like beasts than men . . ." (22).

73. [Long], "Observations," 74-75.

74. R., "The Owrang-Outang a distinct Species," *The American Magazine* 1 (May 1788), 391-94. This article also appeared in *The Columbian Magazine* under the title "An Answer to a Circumstance on which some Writers, in Defence of the Slave-Trade, have founded much of its Legality," 2.5 (May 1788), 266-68.

75. *People of all nations: a useful toy for girl or boy* (Philadelphia: Jacob Johnson, 1807). For the importance of the beard to the classification of human beings, see Schiebinger, 120-125. A similar linkage of physical resemblance to animals with animality and morality occurs in physiognomy. *The Pocket Lavater*, for example, extensively discussed (and illustrated) the "resemblance between man and the monkey," noting that small eyes are a mark of pusillanimity, and connote someone sly and cunning; the flat nose marks both monkeys and men as lascivious and having a thieving disposition; and small ears indicate one "naturally dull and addicted to thieving, as is the monkey." Johann Caspar Lavater, *The Pocket Lavater* (New York: Van Winkle and Wiley, 1817), 123-125, illustration on 118.

76. Although Tony Bennett's conception of the "exhibitionary complex" emerged from his analysis of mass spectacles (such as world expositions and museums), I share his general conviction that audiences of exhibitions intended for public view receive "object lessons in power—the power to command and arrange things and bodies for public display," *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 63.