

*The Shock Proved Fatal: Whimsy and Anthropomorphism*  
in Taxidermy of the Victorian Era, 1851-1899

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## Abstract

Whimsical, anthropomorphic taxidermy of the Victorian era has historically been dismissed as a marginal novelty. Yet why do we feel it to be, in some undefined way, emblematic of Victorian culture? Anthropomorphic works—such as studious rabbits intent at their desks in a rural village schoolroom, athletic toads playing a frenetic game of stick-and-hoop, or elegantly attired kittens sharing tea at a communal table—represent a conflation of human and animal, of death and life, which simultaneously evokes fascination and repulsion. A closer look compels questions about the historical context of its development and the creative process driving its creators: why did such grotesque anthropomorphic expression flourish at this precise point in history? On careful scrutiny, its encoded meanings reveal rich veins of information about the quality and meaning of anthropomorphism within the Victorian psyche, suggestive of a wider anxiety surrounding the shifting association between humans and animals in Victorian Britain, a shift which itself was representative of a cascade—a series of shocks—of changing social and cultural inter-relationships. With an interpretation of the creative process based upon attachment theory, anthropomorphic taxidermy is seen as a creative response to the devastating effects of industrialism and startling developments in science, tempered by traditions of anthropomorphism and existing on a continuum with related concurrent trends in visual art.



A NONDESCRIFT.

“A Nondescript.” Frontispiece to Charles Waterton’s *Wanderings in South America*, 1825. Drawing by J.H. Foljambe; engraved by J.W. Lowry.

## Author Bio

A graduate of the Feminist Art Program at California Institute of the Arts, Rachel Youdelman also studied art history and post-war Polish poetry (in English translation) at the University of California at Berkeley. She works as a photo editor specializing in researching and licensing fine-art and historical images for publication. Her own works of art, in the form of artist's books, are found among the following collections: the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Watson Library; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the New York Public Library; and the Rochester Institute of Technology, Wallace Library. She has published reviews and articles in the *Journal of Psychohistory*, *Clio's Psyche*, and in *Brontë Society Transactions: The Journal of Brontë Studies*.

Dedication

To the memory of Alan Amend

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## Introduction

Whimsical, anthropomorphic taxidermy, a product of mid-Victorian England's rich visual culture, is arguably an easily dismissed marginal novelty. Yet it compels our attention if only for its grotesque and provocatively disarming nature. It one-ups even the intrinsic provocation of conventional taxidermy, which invites the viewer to experience a dead animal as a live one; hence, the added element of anthropomorphic treatment feels doubly transgressive and destabilizing. However, a closer look forces questions regarding the explicit historical context of its development: why did such grotesque anthropomorphic expression flourish at this precise point in history? Anthropomorphic taxidermy is a subject which in fact compels scholarly attention for what it reveals about the social, scientific, and particularly the aesthetic milieu of mid-Victorian England; it speaks to an unexamined aspect of the inner lives of Victorians.

Within the larger field of scientific taxidermy, an outgrowth of the then-developing study of natural science, anthropomorphic taxidermy imparts the feel of a counter-practice, or of a rather subversive sub-genre. Anthropomorphic works—such as studious rabbits intent at their desks in a rural village schoolroom; athletic toads playing a frenetic game of stick-and-hoop (see fig. Intro-1); elegantly attired kittens sharing tea at a communal table (see fig. Intro-2), for example—in part because they up-end the ostensible pedagogical purpose for which taxidermy was developed, have indeed historically been dismissed as kitsch—to be sure, no major art or science museum holds

any such works in its permanent collection.<sup>1</sup> When anthropomorphic taxidermic works first appeared in England at the Great Exhibition of 1851, they were referred to as “comicalities,” and indeed, their perceived humorous treatment undercut the gravity and scientific import associated with more conventional taxidermy, influencing their reception as less than serious.

I reject the view that anthropomorphic taxidermy of the Victorian era is an inconsequential marginal novelty. My critical interpretation shows that on closer scrutiny, the narratives and encoded meanings contained within anthropomorphic taxidermy tableaux reveal rich veins of information about the quality and meaning of anthropomorphism within the Victorian psyche, suggestive of the anxiety surrounding the deeply complex and shifting association between humans and animals in Victorian Britain. I demonstrate the depth to which this anthropomorphic treatment actually reflects a range of connected, prevailing anxieties which were characteristic of the age, when the death of “every tradition which had previously mediated between man and nature,” as John Berger phrases it, was deeply felt.

Though not least felt among these prevailing anxieties was the collapsing traditional relationship between humans and animals, this development itself was symptomatic of yet other seismic shifts, such as the rupture of the human relationship with labor (in which animals had heretofore participated with humans), imperialism and ethnographic specimen collection, Darwinism, and the supplanting of religious belief

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Potter’s *The Kittens’ Wedding* (see fig. Intro-3) was included in the exhibit, *Victorian Vision: Inventing New Britain*, at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2001. Suzanne Fagence Cooper, the exhibition’s curator, explains that the piece “was lent by the Potter’s collection at Jamaica Inn, Bodmin, Cornwall,” and that “unfortunately we were not able to publish a full catalogue to accompany our exhibition, so the book edited by John Mackenzie is not a record of the displays” (message to author).

with science. Further, related issues, such as deeply contentious aesthetic debates, as well as anxieties encoded within Romantic Gothicism, the obsessiveness surrounding display culture, and the pivotal influence of the Great Exhibition emerged as markers of the mass anxiety associated with emotional response to these shifts. I suggest that taxidermy itself is on a common aesthetic continuum with concurrent movements such as Gothicism and Pre-Raphaelism in pictorial arts and Gothic Revivalism in architecture, in its lamenting of loss, and further that the precedence of the exhibiting of live animals within the larger display culture, along with the influence of imperialism and its animal artifacts, paved the way for the rise of taxidermic art and its presence at the Great Exhibition. The twist of anthropomorphism, in its animal-human displacement, is the capstone on the convergence of these shifts and trends, pushing beyond conventional, scientific taxidermy with works arranged in tableaux rich with nostalgic or sentimental associations, such as Walter Potter's *Rabbits' Village School* (see fig. Intro-4 and Intro-5).

The formalism of anthropomorphic taxidermic works is directly connected to major Victorian social, aesthetic, and cultural movements—display- and visual-culture traditions (including precedents in animal iconography), effects of the Industrial Revolution, the influence of the Great Exhibition, debates on aesthetics, the lingering Gothic strain of Romanticism, the animal-human relationship, imperialism and specimen collection, the influence of Darwin, and the replacement of religious belief with science—this cultural brew made the development of anthropomorphic taxidermy possible.

A cascade of cultural trends of Victorian England formed a confluence to ferment the development of anthropomorphic taxidermy. Emerging from this confluence, this

mode of taxidermy manifests emotional meaning which is externalized metaphorically in the form of artworks depicting the preserved bodies of animals engaged in quotidian human behaviors. Indeed, anthropomorphic taxidermy could have emerged only from this milieu; I substantiate this hypothesis by drawing direct connections to historical events and trends which will show that the formal treatment of the artworks is intrinsic to this convergence of major social, aesthetic, and cultural movements of the era.

The critical literature on the anthropomorphic taxidermy of the Victorian era is quite limited. Hence, there is no accepted, standard way of thinking about this subject aside from the conventional wisdom that it is a marginal novelty, yet in some undefined way that it is somehow emblematic of Victorian culture. My own methodological approach in this thesis is multivalent, reflecting an interdisciplinary approach to visual-culture critique. Broadly, my analytical approach is humanist and assumes that the production of works of art is a human activity arising for reasons which support the need to mitigate or externalize anxiety.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> My approach to understanding the creative process is based upon the work of Andrew Brink (1932-2011). Brink's work on creativity is grounded in attachment theory; he suggests that creativity is a biologically programmed adaptation to anxiety. Brink posits that the purpose of the creative drive is to facilitate the movement of an individual's psyche toward repair of damage that can result from ruptures in interpersonal relationships, such as early parental loss or compromised parental care, highlighting the creative person's impulse to integrate interpersonal anxiety. Brink speaks of the process of creating a work of art as an attempt at the ordering of chaotic intra-psychic emotions; ultimately, as a result of this complex process, an aesthetic object—such as a painting, poem, or novel—is yielded, which is a metaphorical reflection of the artist's inner condition. Earlier creativity studies, limited in scope and empirical reality, do not treat the creative process in the context of human development in the way in which Brink has pioneered. To be sure, as Brink puts it in his *Creativity as Repair*, "In the humanities the healing proclivities of body and mind are scarcely ever mentioned, yet growth and change of the person are basic assumptions of the educational process" (7). Created objects are "richly encoded" with their creators' developmental and relational anxieties, impelling the very creation of such objects themselves; Brink notes that aesthetic objects

Why should we care to study Victorian anthropomorphic taxidermy today? An analysis of its visual power permits the decoding of the deep anxiety of this complex transitional episode in our cultural history, spanning roughly the years from 1851 to 1899, and allows us to understand how such a seemingly grotesque art form could emerge at the time. The artistic raw material of anthropomorphic taxidermy—the animal corpse—in a psychoanalytic sense serves to contain displaced human anxiety, and anthropomorphism is the method which supports its formal treatment by facilitating this emotional displacement.<sup>3</sup> Such a study helps us understand not only the Victorian emotional response to the effects of this period of cultural transition by reading the work, as I will show, as layered metaphor for anxious loss, but provides a locus in which we can identify and begin to question the basis for our own unexamined contemporary connection to anthropomorphism and the corresponding pervasive anxieties it represents. Just as anthropomorphic taxidermy could only be a product of the Victorian era, so kindred treatment as evinced in the “LOL Cats” phenomenon, for example, could emerge only in our own digital visual culture.<sup>4</sup> It, too, bears scrutiny for what it could reveal about our inner lives

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can be thought of as “anxiety containers” (*Creative Matrix* 179). However, he cautions that it is perhaps risky to assume with certainty that “all art is a self-healing adaptive response to dangerously stressed attachments” and offers his thesis as a “project to be studied” (190).

<sup>3</sup> “Displacement” is a psychoanalytic concept regarding an unconscious process by which intense emotion is charged upon a substitute object as a mechanism of psychic self-defense. Jacques Lacan has drawn upon the Freudian concept of displacement to suggest a connection with metaphor; metaphor and emotional displacement are richly observed in anthropomorphic taxidermy works.

<sup>4</sup> Critical analysis of “LOL Cats,” as well as of contemporary art which incorporates recycled taxidermy or animal corpses, is beyond the scope of this study. I

## Chapter I

### Natural History and Natural Theology

Throughout the Victorian era, the art of taxidermy flourished as never before or since. Taxidermy, grotesque an art as it is, functioned as a specific sort of creative response to convulsive social change while purporting to be a scientific endeavor. Anthropomorphic taxidermy more pointedly reflects this response by amplifying the grotesquerie. In unspecified ways, it is perceived as iconic of Victorian visual culture. What is the source of its visual power?

Anthropomorphic groups, the work of a German naturalist from Württemberg named Hermann Ploucquet (see fig. 1-1), were first seen in England, where they found their greatest emotional resonance, in 1851 at the Great Exhibition. As a prelude to discussing Ploucquet's work and the meaning of its impact upon the development of taxidermy in England, I will consider first how explicit social and cultural shifts and trends in Victorian Britain—the development of science, travel, display culture, imperialism—interconnected and converged, concurrent with the triumph of industrialism (about which I will speak in Chapter II), to result in the popularity and thriving of taxidermy, and how anthropomorphism figured within this context, particularly from this point in 1851.

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briefly note here the anthropomorphic treatment of LOL Cats, which represents an unexamined connection to Victorian anthropomorphism; however, much contemporary art which features animal corpses or some aspect of taxidermy entails no anthropomorphic treatment.

Taxidermy developed in earnest and flourished as an expression of the extreme tension between science and theology, beginning in the early years of the nineteenth century, marked by the publication in 1802 of William Paley's *Natural Theology* (subtitled *Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity, Collected from the Appearances of Nature*), in which Paley presents a teleological argument for the existence of a deity by citing the ordered design of the natural world as evidence. The mass anxiety reflected in the Victorian era's developing preoccupation with natural history—"natural history" would become the eventual divisions of the sciences as we know them—emerged at a time when "the perceived balance between humans and the natural world had shifted" as Harriet Ritvo phrases it ("Natural" 295). To be sure, the defensive character of Paley's argument in support of the existence of a deity suggests the perception of a threat to that belief system, and the popularity and influence of his book suggests a wide emotional resonance with its purport.

As Harry Liebersohn has observed, "Characteristic of the entire era [of at least the first half of the nineteenth century] is a tension between Enlightenment sense and Romantic sensibility" (101), and the tension between science and theology is on the same continuum. As a counter to Benthamist utilitarianism and lingering Enlightenment sentiment, Romanticism in the arts promoted engagement with nature as a means to facilitate the experiencing of emotion; however, at the same time, an anxious relationship with nature was evinced, in which the natural object was plucked, trapped, netted, pinned and pickled, classified, and above all scrutinized. Walter Houghton describes the sense of conflict which Thomas Carlyle expressed between empiricism—Hume, Locke, and the eighteenth-century Enlightenment "denial of everything not material" (36)—and a more

spiritual, romantic view of nature, which typified this widespread inner conflict experienced by Victorians. With the rise of industrialism from the late eighteenth century and the continuing influence of Benthamist utilitarianism, just as had Romanticism emerged to counter the Enlightenment, Paley's *Natural Theology* correspondingly struck a note of resonance with the British from its first publication but especially after 1830 or so, in response to the triumph of industrialism. As Adelene Buckland notes, "Natural history, particularly geology, frequently offered an alternative to utilitarianism by giving scientific credibility to myth, superstition, and spectacle," (683)—thus men, women, and children were sent scurrying in search of a spiritual connection not only to a threatened natural environment per se, but to a threatened connection to that environment, brought about in part by abrupt social changes in English rural life and management of rural land by enclosure (see Chapter II), which industrialism had forced to an acute level.

A sense of ambivalence and even confusion regarding humans' place in nature had thus been fermenting long before publication of *Origin of the Species* in 1859, which merely tipped the balance in favor of science over the traditional theological value system. The appearance of Paley's *Natural Theology* confirms the presence of conflicted feelings and functions as a kind of marker in that struggle's timeline. As if to seek material connection with nature, the obsessive collecting of natural artifacts, acquired from travel or from closer to home, intensified—as did the display of such artifacts in private cabinets (leading ultimately to the development of natural-history museums). Surely such collection reveals the desire for an aesthetic relationship with the natural object. By removing it from its habitat and placing it in one which was manageable and controllable, an effect of psychic homeostasis in the face of the extreme challenges to the

rupture of the familiar was possible. The creation and viewing of related art objects in this context serves the same purpose. My aim in this thesis is thus to frame the production of artistic artifacts—specifically, anthropomorphized taxidermied animals—by making a claim to its connection with the effects of catastrophic change upon the inner lives of people experiencing such change.

To be sure, Walter Houghton's landmark study, *The Victorian Frame of Mind*, devotes an entire chapter to "Anxiety," to the inter-connected and convulsive social themes of the era. He notes that, as publication of one effectively iconoclastic study followed after another (Lyell's *Principles of Geology* in 1830, Faraday's *Experimental Researches in Electricity* in 1839, *Vestiges of Creation* by Chambers in 1844, Darwin's *Origin of the Species* in 1859), "nature became a battleground in which individuals and species fought for their lives and every acre of land was the scene of violence and untold suffering" (68). Proto-democratic political movements such as Chartism and the violent rural labor revolts were concurrent with scientific change, especially between 1830 and 1850. This pervasive anxiety regarding the collapse of a traditional underpinning cosmological belief system, which had made England, in an anthropological sense, a "high context" culture, forced its continued defense, not necessarily by making a theological argument, but by framing the new evidence of science in such a way which attempted to make it palatable and supportive of theology. Indeed, what we know as the field of physics was still known as "natural philosophy," and research in electricity such as that typified by Faraday's but which had been ongoing since the late eighteenth- early-nineteenth centuries, was fraught with anxiety about its connection to the "vital principle of life" (Morus 50)—Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* had spoken to that anxiety earlier in

the century, and again in her 1831 revision, which as P.M. Harman points out “places emphasis on the religious values that Frankenstein’s actions may be seen to transgress” (328), as if to address the larger struggle. Hence, as Jonathan Topham has observed, “clearly reflecting widespread fears concerning the various dangerous kinds of science which had currency in Britain during the tumultuous 1830s” (404), and certainly in response to publications such as those named above, Peter Mark Roget in 1834 published *Animal and Vegetable Physiology, Considered with Reference to Natural Theology*, Treatise V in the series known as *The Bridgewater Treatises* (the full title of which is *The Bridgewater Treatises On the Power Wisdom and Goodness of God As Manifested in the Creation*), whose aim was to draw upon Paley’s *Natural Theology* and integrate it with the most current scientific data regarding plant and animal life. The series of treatises was commissioned by the eighth Earl of Bridgewater, per the terms of his will (he died in 1829), and administered via the Royal Society. Topham writes that the *Treatises* “rank among the scientific best-sellers of the early nineteenth century” and that both their popular, non-technical approach and their well-credentialed authors provided to the newly formed middle-class—the “landed, mercantile and professional classes” (397)—a “religiously conservative compendium of contemporary science” (398). When cheaper editions were published in the 1850s, their audience grew to include both working-class readers (often via mechanics’ libraries) and educators, who could find value in scientific material which did not subvert but upheld their religious views, Topham concludes (404). However, as Harman notes, the defense of natural theology effectively served to “shape and unify scientific theorizing” (34). Citing, for example, Thomas Chalmers, who commented publicly in 1826 upon the “very close affinity between a taste for science,

and a taste for sacredness” (406), Topham alludes to a struggle whose beginnings preceded the Victorian era, yet was notably concurrent with the rise of industrialism, and grew as the era progressed—a struggle, centered upon anxiety regarding the displacement of religion by science, which showed no sign of abating as the century progressed. Yet, as Houghton suggests, pervasive social anxiety of the era was also experienced by the upper classes, the powerful, who feared that the laboring classes would become uncontrollable within a democratized government, and there were fearful connections drawn between social unrest, science, and the shedding of religious values: “A Chartist advocating democracy might be called a communist, but he was certain with more justification to be called an infidel—which made him twice as dangerous” (60). Multiple editions of the *Treatises*, particularly Roget’s, attest to the continued currency of the concern. Topham emphasizes that “Natural theology was thus a means of sanctifying science for evangelical consumption. This process was of particular importance among the working classes, where secular science was associated by some evangelicals with revolution” (426). Proto-Darwinian theories, as they might be called by we who have made Darwin central in the field, emerged: Robert Chambers’ *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, was published anonymously in 1844 and advanced the notion of “species transmutation,” citing simply “the powerful nature of evidence” (145) of fossils. Yet the main cause for apprehension was that such concepts did not support the perceived divine plan in the social hierarchy—the class system—therefore the ideas would be very dangerous if the working classes or Chartists found resonance in them; hence the wide fear of social catastrophe.

To be sure, “catastrophism” was a popular geological theory of the era. As

Adelene Buckland has noted,

In Victorian London, the panorama, the diorama, the cyclorama, and the burgeoning museum and exhibition culture of the 1840s and 1850s presented a very different view of geology from that offered by Darwin in the *Origin of Species*. Its industrial and practical applications were emphasized, there were sensational and spectacular displays of dinosaurs and other ‘monsters,’ and something like ‘catastrophism’ was a popular visual form in the city’s many earthquake and volcano shows. Catastrophism is the umbrella term for several nineteenth-century theories in which the fragmentary geological record, and the presence of now-extinct creatures, was accounted for by a narrative of earth history as a series of catastrophes, sometimes (but not always) with emphasis on providential design and Divine miracle. (679)

“Catastrophism” might also be the term to describe the popular emotional mood of the era; indeed, the resonance of the simulated earthquake show is very telling in this respect. The shock of the simulated earthquake expressed the profound unease which people felt. Furthermore, Lyell’s *Principle of Geology* asserted that catastrophe was normal, not unusual; the resonance of this influential book further speaks to pervasive social anxiety. Likewise, naturalists saw fit to express this mood by displaying animals frozen in a kind of metaphorical paralysis, displacing the human emotional picture onto animals.

As Lynn L. Merrill notes in her study, *The Romance of Victorian Natural History*, Victorians, “famous and obscure, rich and poor, privileged and plebian” could be often observed “turning over rocks in tidepools, chipping at stones with hammers, pouncing on beetles and butterflies, or trolling dip-nets into ponds” (4), all in the interest of obsessively collecting specimens for study, classification, or for a seemingly simple yet desperately necessary aesthetic encounter. Best-selling books of the era further evince the broad scope of obsession with natural objects, such as John G. Wood’s *Common Objects of the Country*, which sold over 100,000 copies in its first week of publication (Gates 540). As public resonance with Paley’s work suggested a widespread sense of conflict

between theology and science, the obsessiveness which manifested in collection and preservation of plant and animal specimens on such a wide scale both confirmed it and indicated an impulse (as opposed to a thoughtful, emotionally healthy, and sustainable plan) to resolve that conflict. As the century progressed, and as science correspondingly encroached upon theology, Victorians attempted to reconcile the two. Intensely visual encounters with nature suggest a primal need for richly spiritual aesthetic experience, and the fervent devotion with which natural history as a serious pastime was pursued indeed “amounted almost to a creed,” as Merrill puts it (4). Yet obsession itself, as Patricia Meyer Spacks reminds us, “obscures rather than illuminates” (166), and a kind of myopic preoccupation with collection, classification, and display ensued.

### Travel

Thus the link between the human connection to nature as an aesthetic experience was shaped by deep underpinnings of anxiety as reflected in the defense offered by natural theology,<sup>5</sup> and as Harman suggests, natural objects were experienced as artifacts which had their counterparts in carefully crafted objects produced by human beings (38). I would add that the presence of industrially produced objects contributed to the perceived aesthetic crisis among the Victorians (more on this subject in Chapter V), and the question of agency in design resonated with disputes surrounding natural theology. Certainly natural objects were handled as artifacts—Victorians felt a compulsion to remove the natural objects from their contexts or habitats and place them in a “for viewing only” context, re-framing their experience of them.

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<sup>5</sup> Harman makes a similar observation: “Philosophical reflection on the aesthetic appreciation of nature . . . was shaped by natural theology” (38).

Yet Victorians were accustomed to a habit of intense looking—display-culture traditions affirm that. How did this display culture develop? Supporting the development of the visual and display culture of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Britain, the practice of travel and travel writing, dating from the Middle Ages, stimulated the visual imagination and a desire to see artifacts from travels.<sup>6</sup> Early precedents such as *Journey through Wales* of 1188 and *Topography of Ireland* of 1200, for example, both by the writer known as Gerald of Wales, chronicled the recruiting crusades of the Church. Though full of digressions, Gerald's accounts were based upon the visual phenomena he encountered while on the journey itself. Foreshadowing Swift and his preoccupation with spectacles of London, Gerald chronicled the bizarre, the freakish, and the scandalous, yet represented it in realistic detail. In fact, the precedence of naturalism often attributed to Chaucer in the next century is rich in Gerald's writings.<sup>7</sup>

Gerald was an astute observer whose job it was to record not only details of the routes taken and incidents along the way, but also to permit the reader to “see” vicariously what he saw by describing and illustrating in detail what he observed of scandal, human relations, as well as of nature—notably, birds and other animals. He also apparently chronicled significant phenomena he did not himself witness, animals in particular, reflecting a fearful preoccupation with the unfamiliar, telling of beasts such as the “deer-cow.” As rational Gerald himself sensibly put it, “Stories like this can neither

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<sup>6</sup> The pilgrimage, which had generated much early travel writing, is also important as precedent in natural-history artifact collecting; the religious relic itself is a kind of precursor to the ethnographic or natural-history artifact.

<sup>7</sup> Unlike Chaucer, who later used the pilgrimage as a device to serve as framework for the telling of stories unconnected to the experience of the pilgrimage itself, Gerald's work is notable for its phenomenological emphasis.

be confirmed nor rejected out of hand” (qtd. in Kightly 83). He did however, claim to have seen the whimsical “barnacle goose” himself; he asserted that these geese grew from trees, hanging from branches while covered in shells until feathers sprouted (see fig. 1-2). Here is an ethnocentric precedent for the preoccupation with the bizarre and frightening animals of countries other than the writer or reader’s own, including the compulsion to define and classify them. Further, Gerald’s writings document an early preoccupation with ethnography, presaging ethnographic and animal display, and impart a sense that, often under a veneer of whimsy, foreign lands are populated by freaks and aberrations of nature, that the foreign is not only different but substandard in some way, reflecting deep cultural anxiety and a desire to project cultural fears upon a convenient target. Later generations would manage these intense feelings by collecting and preserving wild animals from foreign lands. Though Gerald’s humor, wit and visually rich digressions augur Swift, his first-person “guide” perspective and his darker ethnographic revelations presage Conrad, whose richly visual literary works appeared at the peak of Britain’s imperialist forays into the world. Gerald’s works, each copy of which was hand-transcribed in his own day, were printed in Latin in Elizabethan times; by the nineteenth century, English and Welsh translations were in circulation, reflecting the continued importance of their meaning to the culture.

I introduce Gerald here because of important, specific precedents in connecting travel with scientific displays of animals, and because travel itself would later evolve to serve imperial goals, as travel writing took the form of scientific ethnography, including natural-history writing. Capture and display of animals from colonized lands is a notable aspect of the practice of taxidermy, as is the anxiety and conflict found in a relationship

with nature which compels the killing, collecting, and classification of massive numbers of animals for the professed purpose of observing them. Thus taxidermy, ostensibly a means to arrange and study nature, is a product of these converging phenomena. Gerald's illustrated visual records of freakish foreign beasts correspond to displays of animals retrieved by British imperialists and brought back to be displayed and defined, live or taxidermied, within the context of British culture and from the perspective of Britain itself.

Travel narratives of the 1820s, 1830s, and beyond, often centered upon natural-history expeditions, notably Charles Waterton's *Wanderings in South America* of 1825, which includes instructions for taxidermying birds for preservation and display in natural-history cabinets; and Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle*, published in 1838 as *Narrative of the Surveying Voyages of His Majesty's Ships Adventure and Beagle*. Advances in navigation science facilitated the success of these voyages, which combined scientific aims with imperial ambitions, such as accurate charting of coastlines with the collection of scientific data. However, somewhat like Gerald, what such travelers could report "was conditioned by their patrons and audiences at home; they were not independent agents, but mediators" (102), as Liebersohn puts it. I would add that Anglocentrism played a driving role, and that self-perception was shaped and supported by each perceived success. Thomas Cook began organizing foreign tours for the British middle-class in 1840s; such tourism conditioned participants to "comfort and predictability," framing and defining experience of foreign countries from this Anglocentric position, serving to support a hierarchy of international relationship rather than an integration of culture and experience. How Britain was present in the world thus

reflected questions regarding how individual English struggled to define their place within the natural world. The outcome of these struggles—such as participation in the Atlantic slave trade, colonialism, and the extinction of animal species—did not necessarily reflect a state of emotional health on the part of participants, nor did it nurture support for sustainable systems of living.

The collection of artifacts retrieved from foreign travels, including exotic animal species, made display a necessity to contextualize, define, classify, and formalize the product of the journey, as well as to externalize the experience. Domestic travel, the gathering of domestic natural artifacts, and corresponding domestic display culture mirrored that of the imperial sort, with contrasts and analogies to be drawn between the two perspectives, notably when we consider the exclusively domestic species of animals observed in anthropomorphic taxidermy works, especially the local rural animals which both Hermann Ploucquet and Walter Potter used in their tableaux.

### Display and Classification

Concurrent with growing interest in travel and travel narratives was the rise of interest in ethnography, the formal collection of curiosities, and the display of foreign artifacts, live and preserved animals, and even of foreign people in cities such as London. Just as display of relics served a similar function within the church,<sup>8</sup> gradually developing into objects of curiosity for which one had to travel where they were housed to see them, the unusual-artifact exhibit began in earnest after the Puritan relic-purge ended and

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Altick, in *The Shows of London* (Harvard UP, 1978), mentions a similar idea (5).

priests began to compete with one another to exhibit unusual relics, a system which was a significant step in the germination of the modern museum. Small, private collections grew into more public contexts, incorporating not just religious relics but all manner of objects—antiquarian, scientific, ethnographic, and both live and preserved animals—into the visual culture.<sup>9</sup> The first documented live ethnographic display in England, of Eskimos in 1501 in the town of Bristol, presented what Kirshenblatt-Gimblett calls the “staging of wildness” (42). She asks, “what does it mean to show” (2) from the perspective of the museum curator—what makes an object a curiosity, or an object of ethnographic or scientific interest? It becomes such an object, she explains, when it is “defined, segmented, detached, and carried away by ethnographers” (387), and I might add, by naturalists. This mania for collecting and displaying is parodied by Swift when Lilliputians examine the contents of Gulliver’s pockets.

The displaying of the Eskimos in Bristol began a practice which has lasted over 500 years, among a variety of venues as a regular feature of past and recent world fairs, and which includes, for instance, a 1603 “Virginian” settlement on the Thames. Such display reached a height in William Bullock’s Egyptian Hall in London, which featured environmental tableaux in which, for example, a Lapp family was displayed in 1822, and significantly, complete with live reindeer (see fig. 1-3). Between 1816 and 1822, William Bullock exhibited, in addition to the Lapp family, an Inuit family, and an indigenous Brazilian family. The display of the ethnographic or foreign natural object—the fragment of culture or natural history out of context—both reflects and frames a desire to look intensely at the object, to scrutinize it and make conclusions about it based on one’s own

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<sup>9</sup> Altick discusses this development; see pages 5-9.

culture and point of view. But it also speaks of an anxious relationship with the object because it must be removed from its natural habitat and seen on unequal terms by the controller of it who becomes the person to define what the object is. As discussed, travel writing, the literary equivalent of gathering artifacts and animals for display, imparts a similar sense of concentrated looking in order to analyze, control, and assign meaning to that which is being scrutinized. This intense scrutinizing, a careful and distanced looking at the strange, figures significantly as a motif in literary works derived from the travel-writing tradition—and at the same time, in daily life, as domestic curio collections grew and developed. Emotionally, this practice speaks of an impulse to connect with the objects in question and define relationship, yet of an inability to do so on terms which acknowledged the importance of inter-relationship.

As Britain's power and its reach into the world grew, so did the compulsion to define the world's flora, fauna, and artifacts within the context of Britain itself—hence the intense struggle over the classifying system within the Great Exhibition (see below). The British seized upon the Linnaean classification system, with which they found resonance grounded in a compulsion to classify on their own terms, from an Anglocentric vantage point. Barbara T. Gates speaks of a telling anecdote on this score: “Recall Mary Kingsley out in Africa in a canoe propelled by several Congolese, tumbling out of the boat but saving her trusted copy of Albert Günther's 1880 *Introduction to the Study of Fishes*, tenacious in her desire to bring back labeled specimens to the British Museum of Natural History” (539). Thus a representative of British imperialism seizes African fish, presuming to define and classify them, symbolically staking territorial claim over the country these fish represent by preserving them and displaying them in a purpose-built

British institution. Again, the ambivalent quality of the emotional connection and the aesthetic encounter typified here by the Briton in Africa speaks of one which entails a deficit of emotional health and sustainability, despite the powerful impulse toward establishing connection and intimacy.

Jonathan Swift, in *Gulliver's Travels*, addressed the very issue of “what it means to show” in this relational context—and he furthermore depicted the issue from the perspective of what it means to be shown, to be put on display, prefiguring the issue of the capacity for empathy in general, but in particular for the animal on display. Here was a hint at how anthropomorphism can reflect the simple acknowledgement that animals are experiential beings, a subject later to be raised by Darwin (see Chapter III). Swift himself never traveled anywhere outside of London for material on which to base his *Gulliver's Travels*; rather, the elements of the shows and spectacles of London, which had been mushrooming since at least a century before, conveniently included objects and animals gathered from foreign places, brought to London “at a remove in space, time, and language from [their] native location” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 388), as well as “strange” local people with physical deformities or unusual bodily characteristics. Such sights were exhibited in many kinds of venues, such as inns, theaters, taverns, private parlors, and market fairs, though eventually the museum context<sup>10</sup> became preferable to theaters or entertainment-type venues, based on religious objections (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 397); change of exhibition context certainly reframes and formalizes expectations on the part of

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<sup>10</sup> Formal ethnographic museums flourished in London in the nineteenth century. For example, Sarti's Museum of Pathological Anatomy in the mid-nineteenth century, displayed “wax figures of African ‘savages’ with tails” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 399); Reimer's Anatomical and Ethnological Museum featured a Gallery of All Nations, with wax models of various racial types.

the viewer. The secular artifact gradually grew to be housed in purpose-built spaces rather analogous to churches, for the veneration of such objects and to institutionalize the experience of aesthetic encounters. As museums supplanted churches, so science in a sense competed with many aspects of religious experience.

As artifacts were collected, amassed, and displayed, Victorians evinced a preoccupation with Linnaean classification and other kinds of taxonomic systems, as seen in the organization of exhibited goods within the Great Exhibition (see below), where a team of scientists worked on the Exhibition's classification system and finally merged several different systems into a table of thirty sub-divisions of goods (Auerbach 92). This preoccupation is also observed in Peter Mark Roget's publication in 1852 of his "system of verbal classification," his *Thesaurus*—notably, it was not a dictionary but a word classification system. Further, Roget had gone so far as to hire his children's governess, Agnes Catlow, based on her ability to teach botanical classification. Like many Victorians, Prince Albert had hoped for a system of classification at the Great Exhibition which would work as a taxonomy for all things in the world (Auerbach 93). In fact, Albert preferred a system which would throw together works of the same type from various nations, to effect a world unity (Clemm 208)—this notion reflected an impulse toward unity insofar as it represented one aspect of feeling regarding Britain's connection to the rest of the world; however, in the intense debate over classification of goods displayed at the Exhibition, the system of separation by nation was ultimately the dominant preference. The two competing strands point to ambivalence on this score, indicating a wide-scale internal struggle about how to connect with the rest of world. Ultimately, the reasons for the Victorian obsession with classification are thrown into

relief: As Britain dominated the world, Anglocentric classification was a metaphor for its dominance of its various parts. This rage for classification was evinced elsewhere in the culture, in literature, for example, in the Casaubon character (not depicted as admirable), who sought the “key to all mythologies,” in George Eliot’s *Middlemarch*—though published first in 1871, the novel is set in the early 1830s.

Botanist James Edward Smith in 1784 had purchased the collections of Linnaeus from the deceased botanist’s son (Carl Linnaeus having died in 1778) and rented rooms in Chelsea, London, in which to display the insect, plant, and mineral specimens (Linnean Society). So began a formal context for a broader cultural obsession with natural history, its display, and its taxonomy.

### The Escalation of the Practice of Taxidermy

“To retain the appearance of life.”<sup>11</sup> So states the calling-card of T. Nicholls of Coventry Street in London, one of hundreds of members of the Victorian taxidermy trade. While the calling-card claim may have been an unwitting reflection of a broader cultural obsession which manifested in artistic expression of the era (such as Gothicism; see Chapter V), taxidermy in the Victorian era was a facet of the work of the scientific naturalist, as well as a reputable trade in itself. Its ranks spanned from the well-educated and credentialed to the rural self-taught. While naturalists within the scientific community, such as Charles Waterton or Montagu Browne, served scientific societies, royal collections, or developing natural-history museum collections, popular taxidermy

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<sup>11</sup> The calling-card is reproduced in the end-papers of *A History of Taxidermy* by Pat Morris.

became a very significant commercially successful enterprise in nineteenth-century Britain, as Pat Morris observes, citing the proliferation of “do-it-yourself stuffing guides, even in boys’ comics.” Morris notes that scores of “Bird and Beast Stuffers” were listed in the London Trade Directories of the era (*History* 3), and as I note in Chapter II, every rural town and village had its taxidermist as well.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, taxidermy shops abounded in both urban and rural areas, catering to aristocratic, bourgeois, and working-class clientele. Statistics show that the trade peaked around the end of the nineteenth century—the 1891 London census listed 247 male taxidermists and a surprising 122 female taxidermists, and rural areas similarly listed multiple members of the trade within the same towns and villages (Morris, *History* 156). The demand for decorative mounts for home display, especially of birds and fish, was enormous in Britain, exceeding such demand and treatment in other places, and activity in general was far greater there than in continental Europe or America. Professionals collected birds and other animals abroad and were in the business of shipping them by the thousands to feather dealers for the millinery trade as well as to stuffers. Swaysland, the successful Brighton taxidermist who resented the popularity of Walter Potter (see Chapter II), regularly hired bird catchers to net birds on the Sussex Downs for his taxidermy business (Morris, *History* 149). Locals who killed inedible animals could sell the carcass to a taxidermist and make a profit. Thus a professional taxidermist was not necessarily directly involved in killing animals himself, as it was unnecessary: sufficient numbers and types of people were complicit in supporting the system. As for amateurs, with their do-it-yourself guides, taxidermy was an extension of the popular mania for collecting natural objects and animal specimens;

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<sup>12</sup> The term “taxidermist” did not gain wide usage until about 1925 (see Morris *History* 3), though it does appear in newspaper articles in the 1850s.

the reach of its appeal was wide.

The term “taxidermy” was coined about 1820 (from the Greek: “taxi,” to arrange; “dermy” skin); before that, amateur or commercial taxidermists were known colloquially as “stuffers,” while the term “naturalist” lent an air of dignity, knowledge, expertise, and seriousness to the enterprise. As we will see in Chapter II, the self-taught Walter Potter defended himself in a dispute with a fellow taxidermist (Swaysland, mentioned above) not about the quality of his work but about his class origins, by asserting that he was not a laborer but a “naturalist,” as taxidermists of the era were formally known, evoking the status and distinction which the term “naturalist” carries. However, Potter’s and Ploucquet’s anthropomorphic taxidermy eschews the ostensible pedagogical purpose of conventional taxidermy of the “naturalist,” whose milieu was scientific.

Private aristocratic collectors as well as museums engaged naturalists, because managers of such collections professed a need to accumulate specimens as a tool to aid in the study of zoological subjects, and that, “in order to acquire a more accurate knowledge of their external form and to investigate their internal structure, it is absolutely necessary to examine them in a dead state” (Swainson 1). The Linnaean classification system was employed to both classify and order collections and to identify missing branches, which could then be filled with the appropriate specimens. However, the aesthetic, personal and cultural contexts of the creators of whimsical, anthropomorphic taxidermy, while using many of the same chemicals, materials, and techniques for preservation of animal corpses as those taxidermists who served science or natural history, are of an entirely different order, plainly going beyond any pretense of taxonomic value and furthermore widening audience appeal and emotional resonance by shifting viewer expectations.

Anthropomorphic taxidermy seems to speak of layers of opposing emotional currents simultaneously, of not only the grotesque presentation of death as life, but of the jarring conflation of animal with human. While “retaining the appearance of life” is a standard for both scientific and anthropomorphic taxidermy, anthropomorphic works, by conflating an animal body with a human one reflect this anxious emotional displacement, however mitigated by the perception of comicality.

Though a few isolated historical precedents are found from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries among the Dutch, the “first major use of taxidermy was to preserve specimens collected by explorers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries” (Morris *History* 10), who presented them to sponsoring nobility. Animals such as lions, taxidermied in the field or transported live and displayed in newly established zoos, served ostensibly as specimens for the study of natural history but emotionally and metaphorically functioned as “emblems of imperial conquest,” as Paul S. White has phrased it (59). Keith Thomas summarizes that “since the twelfth century, the kings of England had collected lions, leopards, and other ferocious beasts . . . [symbolizing] the owner’s triumph over the natural world . . . Later the zoo became a symbol of colonial conquest . . .” (277). Thomas further observes that, based upon a long history of display of live animals, “there was therefore nothing new about the artificial presentation of ornamental or unfamiliar creatures . . . for amusement and display” (278). However, though the continuum of animal display is a given, I strongly dispute that there was “nothing new” about the display of taxidermied animals of this era, especially those configured to appear engaged in typically human behavior.

Taxidermy’s presence at the Great Exhibition in 1851 was fitting as a supporting

branch of science and technology, if not as a flourishing industry in itself, and the appearance of anthropomorphic works was an unexpected surprise which resonated with a huge audience. However, in the context of the international industrial fair, its emotional power gave expression to the complex state of affairs regarding the critically changing character of the human relationship to nature in the wake of industrialism.

### Taxidermy at the Great Exhibition

To fully understand how taxidermy figured within the Great Exhibition, particularly the Ploucquet groups, a sense of the meaning and scope of the venue is necessary. How was display here different from customary display culture? As the first world's fair, the Great Exhibition itself was a watershed event as the world's first multi-national industrial exhibition, signifying as it did the triumph and entrenchment of industrialism as well as the economic dominance of Britain. National industrial fairs were not unknown; in fact they were held in France, Italy, and England since the late eighteenth century, but the Great Exhibition was the first of its scope. The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, May through October, 1851, in London's Hyde Park, was housed in a single building, the enormous (over 770,000 square feet) ferro-vitreous conservatory designed by Joseph Paxton. Displays of industrially produced goods (a very small percentage of exhibited goods were hand-made; taxidermy displays among them) were featured from 15,000 individual contributors representing forty countries; however, about half of the goods exhibited were British. Juries awarded prizes among what they judged to be the best among each class of goods, which were classified into four main categories and scores of subdivisions.

Administered by the Royal Society of Arts, with the support of Prince Albert, the Great Exhibition effectively institutionalized consumerism as an aesthetic experience, as goods displayed in the proto-shopping-mall were not on sale (though they were on sale elsewhere) but meant within this grand but temporary space to be enjoyed only visually. Over 6,000,000 people attended the Exhibition—an average of over 40,000 per day from its opening in May 1851 until its closing in October of that year. Something of the import of the Exhibition can be adduced from the speech of an elderly character in Thomas Hardy’s short story of 1893, *Fiddler of the Reels*, who recalls the era as one in which the very word “exhibition” was transformed from noun to adjective; he explains,

The only exhibition that ever made or ever will make any impression upon my imagination was the first of the series, the parent of them all, and now a thing of old times—the Great Exhibition of 1851 in Hyde Park, London. None of the younger generation can realize the sense of novelty it produced in us . . . a noun substantive went so far as to become an adjective in honor of the occasion. It was ‘exhibition’ hat, ‘exhibition’ watch, ‘exhibition’ weather, ‘exhibition’ spirits . . . the year formed a chronological frontier . . . a precipice in Time . . . . (165)

A discussion of the Great Exhibition, of this “precipice in Time,” should be framed by recalling that it took place from the perspective of Britain’s imperial primacy in the global hierarchy. As natural-history data were collected on world voyages, Britain concurrently participated in the Atlantic slave trade,<sup>13</sup> and both purposes supported and reflected the same Anglocentrism seen in the organization of the Great Exhibition. To be sure, the unprecedented international display of industrial (and to a lesser degree, artistic) production, housed in the building known colloquially as the Crystal Palace (see fig. 1-4),

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<sup>13</sup> John Edmonstone, while a slave in British Guiana, was taught taxidermy by Charles Waterton. Edmonstone in turn, while resident in Edinburgh, taught bird taxidermy to Darwin. More on this subject in Chapter IV.

a proto-modern, modular, iron and glass structure, its design based on that of a giant greenhouse, was ostensibly organized to unite the world in peace—yet it functioned rather as a symbol (as mentioned above) for the way Britain wanted to “grow” the world: neatly classified and divided, Britain and colonies in the west nave and exotic foreign countries in the east, all under climate-controlled glass. That organization of the goods of the various participating countries was arranged despite Prince Albert’s so-called peace-and-love speech of 1850, in which he expressed his support for the idea and plan of the Exhibition, extolling the coming era of pacifism which, he suggested, the Great Exhibition would usher in—a sentiment perhaps a holdover of Romanticism. Yet the Exhibition was planned amidst Chartist agitation and in the wake of the revolutions of 1848; social anxiety was pervasive, and it is clear that Albert’s talk of peace and unification represented an impulse to manage that anxiety. The conflict between Albert’s ideal regarding classification of objects displayed at the Exhibition—by displaying objects of various countries together—and the way in which the matter was resolved—by separating them—evinces the ambivalence which existed on this score, a conflict between two ways of engaging with the rest of the world.

The opening ceremonies, attended by Queen Victoria and her family as well as representatives of foreign countries (see fig. 1-5),<sup>14</sup> was reported in terms resembling

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<sup>14</sup> The Chinese gentleman pictured at the center-right is not an actual official from China. A Chinese crew member from a tourist-attraction boat docked in the Thames at the time was dressed up and passed off as an official from China, as China had rejected the invitation to participate in the Great Exhibition; the Chinese did not embrace the Western values of education and development of industry, citing these reasons: “Excellence or inferiority of an art depends upon the talent or incompetence of the person. If men have not the ability to master an art, it is not in the power even of their fathers or elder brothers [to make them], far less sense would there be in the government addressing them publicly on this head” (qtd. in Thythacott 87). The Victorian sensibility

those of a Woodstock-type event, in which it was feared that violence would erupt in a festive gathering of such size and made up of such disparate parts; and as mentioned, Chartist agitation was concurrently simmering, causing fear of disruption. The tone, however, was one of elation, and even critics were affected by the tenor of togetherness of the opening. Yet the elation belied the fact that Britain, by defining the affair's terms and turf asserted control, if metaphorically, over defining, arranging, and naming the world economy.

The Exhibition's purposes were multivalent for its many planners; Benthamite reformers supported free trade and others wanted to promote British industrialism. For Henry Cole, who was in part responsible for framing its formal purpose, but for singly supplying the executive drive to carry it off, the Exhibition was to have been a platform and showcase for informed industrial design as well as one for design education (again, here was Benthamist influence regarding the power of education) and improvement of the public taste, which was felt among those with design expertise to be deficient. This apparent deficiency reflected both the continuum of competition with France and the perceived degeneration of design in the manufacture of mass-produced consumer goods, a notion which the public, especially the new middle-class, resented as an attack on their

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was such that this fundamental rejection was no different from the rejection of the *raison d'être* of not only the Exhibition but of the Victorian worldview and thus was deeply humiliating. Therefore the Chinese became the objects of scorn. However, a space in the Crystal Palace for China was filled up with objects by an Englishman, Edgar Bowring, a Board of Trade official whose father was governor of Hong Kong and had strong ties with British merchants trading there. These trade merchants were contacted by William Reid, head of the Executive Committee, who thus fashioned the image of China within the Exhibition. This image reflected "British commercial interests" rather than an accurate image of China, mercantile or otherwise. See Thyacott 83-102 for a discussion on this subject.

tastes. In fact, the Industrial Revolution had changed the relationship of manufactured goods to people so significantly that, as John R. Davis has similarly observed (140), both professional designers and industrialists, who were responsible for creating objects but had little design expertise or sensitivity to materials, grasped at various historical styles in an attempt to find grounding. As evinced by the “mish-mash of styles from all periods” (Teukolsky 98) of products on display at the Great Exhibition, industrialism and mechanized production processes had changed the dynamic of the manufacturing process: no longer was a single individual’s aesthetic discretion guiding the manufacturing process; while since the fourteenth century or so, “master” denoted a guild ranking of a highly skilled individual worker, the word now came to represent the person who managed a group of workers.<sup>15</sup> Industrialists with no background in historical progression of style of a particular piece were making design decisions, creating a gap between style, novelty and technical capability. Instead of responding to Cole’s suggestions for maintaining integrity to materials and design principles, many manufacturers who contributed objects for display in the Exhibition sent their most novel, most ostentatious, largest or newest (see fig. 1-6 and 1-7)—all features based on quantitative values—rather than their best, based on the qualitative values which Cole advocated. The “spectacle” context of the Exhibition, rooted in display culture, became an overriding motivating force for exhibitors, yet consumerism as we know it was launched.

Taxidermy at the Great Exhibition, Class XXIX, Miscellaneous Manufactures and Small Wares, however, represented a deviation from the new industrial model, and was

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<sup>15</sup> Lambourne also notes this distinction in usage (13).

one of the few kinds of products displayed which were handmade by skilled individuals with expertise. However, even the small numbers of works of fine art, such as sculpture, were framed by the mineral composition of the raw material used to create them.

Contemporaneous commentators attempted to make similar connections by describing taxidermy as “that most useful ally” and “necessary companion” to science, making the claim in rather detached tones that “should civilization continue to advance as rapidly as it has done during the last fifty years . . . this increase will probably lead to the destruction, and eventually to the extermination, of most races of wild animals, [therefore] it is of the highest importance to science” that specimens be taxidermied. Ironically no protest is raised insisting that species should be protected from wanton destruction. The writer laments that “had the art of taxidermy been more generally encouraged and studied at the time when the dodo lived, we might possess a real specimen” (“Great,” *Morning Chronicle*). Thus no distress concerning the extinction of the dodo, or any other animal, is at issue; rather, the writer recognizes only the value of preserving dead specimens for study and classification.

Other than Ploucquet, also exhibiting work at the Great Exhibition were a number of notable British taxidermists, including Abraham Bartlett, who had received commissions from Queen Victoria; and an Italian, François Comba; and at least one colonial North American, Andrew Downs (as reported in the *Morning Chronicle* of 1 Sept 1851). None exhibited anthropomorphic works, however. Conspicuous in their absence were Charles Waterton (see Chapter IV) and John Gould. Gould staged a separate exhibit of 2,000 taxidermied hummingbirds simultaneously at the London Zoological Gardens, attracting a total of 75,000 visitors. Indeed, the Executive

Committee had refused the entry of the hummingbird collection in its entirety, as “the Great Exhibition was never intended to be a collection of objects in natural history,” according to the *Athenaeum* of 21 June 1851. Though Gould was invited to exhibit a few specimens as examples of bird-stuffing, he declined and instead mounted his own competitive exhibit.

By contrast to the dry observations noted above, where Ploucquet’s work was concerned, commentators’ remarks went from arid to effusive, centered on the emotional impact of the work and its narrative content. Forgoing science momentarily, the *Athenaeum* reviewer cited above reflects wistfully, “Nothing could be happier than the whimsical air of gentility and sentimentality which the artist [Ploucquet] has succeeded in throwing into the attitudes of these creatures.” The Ploucquet entry, number 107 in the Württemberg section of the *Great Exhibition Official Descriptive and Illustrated Catalog*, stands out for its length alone among the 110 two-or-three-line entries, bracketed as several paragraphs following the summary of pieces on display, making particular note of the anthropomorphic work and confirming its popularity and resonance among the Exhibition visitors: “Among those groups of animals are several in imitation of the attitudes, habits, and occupations of rational creatures. The precise expression of intelligence given to these animals has formed one of the many attractions of the Exhibition” (1120). A précis of the *Reynard the Fox* tale excitedly follows. An introduction to this section cites “the beautiful specimens of the art of the taxidermist, displayed in the wonderful and mirth-exciting groups of stuffed animals” (1114)—“mirth-exciting” is not typically a characteristic way of describing taxidermy, therefore it certainly is a reference to the Ploucquet mounts. The excitement generated by this “most

popular group of objects in the Glass Palace” (“Stuffed,” *Athenaeum*) subverted the ostensible scientific purpose of this class of objects; yet the *London Critic* of 1852 makes the case that without scientific study, Ploucquet would not “have been able to model those charming groups which afforded entertainment to thousands, and have even set a fashion for the season!” Thus the value of the Ploucquet anthropomorphic groups represented something beyond any purported explicit value or precisely expressed purpose associated with the Exhibition; reaction was unexpected and irrepressible, leading commentators to find justifications for its success in spite of official policy.

Though the profits from the Great Exhibition were used to found what would become the Victoria and Albert Museum, under the direction of Henry Cole, and several of the exhibited works from the Exhibition were retained in its permanent collection, no works of taxidermy were among them. Twice, once in 1951 (two of Ploucquet’s pieces) (see fig. 1-7) and again in 2001 (one tableau by Walter Potter) the Victoria and Albert Museum exhibited anthropomorphic works of the Victorian era; the pieces were borrowed for the exhibits, and no attempt was made to acquire them (or any other works of taxidermy) for their permanent collection.

That Ploucquet’s work was originally framed within the context of the Great Exhibition gave it exposure to precisely the audience who would be eager for its spirit: it provoked emotional response associated with broadly changing cultural currents of the era, reverberating for decades to come and becoming emblematic of the era. Ploucquet’s works, though not necessarily the original exhibits from the Great Exhibition, were displayed continuously until the Sydenham fire (see below), and as announced as late as 1873 in the *Illustrated London News*, “a very interesting collection of nearly four hundred

groups of modeled and stuffed animals by the celebrated taxidermist, Herr Ploucquet of Stuttgart, is on view at the Crystal Palace [Sydenham], in the gallery above the Egyptian Court” (619). The high number of pieces may refer to a large shipment made by Ploucquet in 1868. The *Illustrated London News* notice, published twenty-two years subsequent to the Great Exhibition, was still newsworthy.

#### Hermann Ploucquet

“Though there is a small revival of interest in Victorian ‘curiosity’ taxidermy, taxidermy is no longer a respectable art.” So asserts Michelle Henning as recently as 2007 (663), citing the sale in 2003 of the entire collection of anthropomorphic taxidermy tableaux from Potter’s Museum of Curiosity, folk-amateur taxidermist Walter Potter’s small museum, long located in Bramber, Sussex, but at the time of the sale relocated to Cornwall (see Chapter II). To be sure, even mid-Victorian “scientific” taxidermists such as Montagu Browne,<sup>16</sup> who created taxidermied animals to be preserved as specimens for the study of natural history, acknowledged the marginality of anthropomorphic treatment of specimens, a style Browne, in his *Practical Taxidermy* of 1879, termed “the grotesque school” (12) of taxidermy. Yet even what we consider conventional taxidermy stimulates a comparable sort of emotional response in the viewer—typically awe or delight mixed with horror—which Browne found particularly evocative in the anthropomorphic assemblages of Hermann Ploucquet, who was at the time of the first display of his work in England, staff taxidermist of the royal Stuttgart natural history cabinet. Ploucquet’s

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<sup>16</sup> Browne began his professional life as a commercial taxidermist and later became preparator at the Leicester Museum. He was the author of several authoritative books on taxidermy; he advocated specific display and lighting techniques (Morris, *History* 339-40).

groups of anthropomorphized creatures, notably his series of six tableaux depicting *Reynard the Fox* (see fig. 1-8), the first such works to be seen in England, when shown at the Great Exhibition, inspired the English branch of this “grotesque” school of taxidermy over the next several decades. Ploucquet’s work was, in the words of Pat Morris, “enormously catalytic on the development of taxidermy” (*History* 123). A German cultural and social milieu, like England’s battered by industrialism and social tension, gave rise to artifacts such as Ploucquet’s and hence found strong resonance among the English, where scientific taxidermy was very well developed and widespread.

Browne observed that Ploucquet gave animals “that serio-comic and half-human expression which was so intensely ridiculous and yet so admirable” (12). As Pat Morris notes, “It is astonishing that Ploucquet achieved such expressive attitudes using such primitive technique” (*History* 128). To be sure, Browne commends Ploucquet for his advances in showing powerful human emotions—“hope, fear, love, and rage” (12)—in his taxidermied animals, comparing this expressiveness to unacceptably stiff taxidermic treatment, yet in so mentioning, unconscious of his own conflation of the experiential in human and animal (see Chapter III). However, even without this “half-human,” or anthropomorphic dimension, as mentioned, the art of taxidermy even at its most scientific necessarily evokes simultaneous feelings of revulsion and wonder, as well as the unavoidable consciousness (or suppression thereof) of the conceit that death is manipulated to mimic life. The air of morbidity is hence present in any work of taxidermy, yet the inherent irony of taxidermy itself is forged to its apotheosis when it is pushed to “misrepresent nature in the most natural way possible,” as Browne characterized the technique of the anthropomorphic, or grotesque school (12).

Hermann Ploucquet was born in the kingdom of Württemberg, in what we now know as southwest Germany.<sup>17</sup> His ancestors were patrician, aristocratic Huguenots from Lyon who emigrated in 1685, settling in Stuttgart, Württemberg's main city, in 1700; the family records left behind in Lyon which recorded their history prior to their departure were burned by the French. Among Hermann's ancestors was a Gottfried Ploucquet (born 1716), who became a professor of logic and metaphysics at Tübingen. Gottfried's son, Wilhem, was in turn a doctor and professor at Tübingen, and at one time a university building was named for him. Goethe mentions in his diary on 8 Sept 1797 that he met with this Ploucquet and enjoyed a "very pleasant prospect" (qtd. in Dolmetsch 96) from his garden. In the next generation, a Christoph Friedrich Ploucquet, founded a textile company in 1806 which is still in business today. The Ploucquet families subsequently resided in an area of Stuttgart known as "Dyer Road," where textile workers lived, and Hermann was born there in April, 1816, to Karl, a dyer; his mother was a daughter of the Württemberg agricultural inspector. Dolmetsch's account simply interjects here, "They lived in miserable conditions." The family was taken in by an uncle, Gottlieb Christian Eberhard von Etzel, an eminent town planner in Stuttgart, who showed particular concern for Hermann, the youngest of the family, described by Dolmetsch as bright, lively, with an artistic sensibility and an open mind. He did not perform superbly in school, though he excelled at ice-skating and gymnastics. However, in the woods and on the heath, Hermann evinced a talent for collecting flowers and herbs and for catching beetles and butterflies better than anyone else. He became skilled at catching birds and other small

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<sup>17</sup> Biographical information is from *Bilder aus Alt-Stuttgart: Nach Erzähltes und Selbsterlebtes (Pictures of Old Stuttgart: Heard and Experienced)* by Eugen Dolmetsch, 94-112, unless otherwise noted. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are mine.

animals, keeping them in cages, until he killed and stuffed them, having taught himself taxidermy methods from a how-to book. Ploucquet was, like his counterpart in England, Walter Potter, self-taught in taxidermy and made money by trapping and mounting small animals and selling them, later as well as by taking commissions for taxidermying pets of his neighbors in Stuttgart. His technique was inventive, and he was able early on to devise ways of posing animals in positions of action, painstakingly perfecting his technique through trial and error. With his earnings he bought a shotgun to enable him to have a supply of animals to stuff and also supported his needy parents, particularly his mother, who suffered chronic illness. He hoped to become an a painter or sculptor, and his uncle sponsored drawing lessons; however, it was decided that art was “the spice but not the bread” of life, so his uncle arranged for Hermann to become apprenticed to the court gardener. At age seventeen, however, he began work as an assistant stuffer in the royal natural-history cabinet, having completed the gardening apprenticeship—apparently he was able to apprise his employers of his remarkable sideline in taxidermy, and his value as a preparator was fortunately appreciated. Thus a picture is drawn of a very driven, motivated youth who likely was capable of advocating for his own interests and of working quite beyond what was merely expected of him. He soon took on extra work, taking commissions from hunters and finding buyers for colorful bird mounts; he was also able to rent a workshop of his own.

Outside of his formal employment, Ploucquet additionally created comic mounts for private clients. Based upon the Bavarian folkloric creature, the *wolpertinger* (typically pictured as a horned rabbit) (see fig. 1-9), which was often taxidermied by cobbling together a rabbit corpse and other animals, Württemberg provided the cultural

background for the precedence of taxidermy which surpassed mere taxonomic purpose. Judging from Dolmetsch's text, Ploucquet's interest in creating habitat groups of animal families (see below) merged with both the *wolpertinger* tradition and his warm relationship with his sister Pauline, with whom he had played as a child, dressing her dolls in clothes. The talented Pauline created the clothes for Hermann's stuffed animals; the siblings thus collaborated and sustained each other's efforts. This warm sibling relationship and intra-familial support is strikingly similar to Water Potter's experience with his own sister (see Chapter II).

From 1847 to 1858, Ploucquet was the chief staff taxidermist (*Präparator*) for the royal natural history cabinet in Stuttgart (*Allgemeine* 63) and was encouraged to enter work in the annual Leipzig trade fair in 1850, though he was reluctant to participate, according to Dolmetsch. However, he entered several works, among them some of his initial comic pieces were shown ("comic" is a term observed to be synonymous with "anthropomorphic" in the literature on taxidermy)—he earned a medal and was acclaimed in the press as a brilliant newcomer. From the strength of that success, he entered several groups in the Great Exhibition in London the following year. Ploucquet had built a reputation for innovation in surpassing simple taxonomic displays and had created scientific habitat groups of individual communities of animals, according to Dolmetsch (100-01), or what Lynn K. Nyhart refers to as "biological" groups (57), though this approach was not completely without precedent: Nyhart cites, for example, Württemberg Duke Karl Eugen in 1786 who commissioned a number of specifically naturalistic groups, such as a fox stalking a quail in shrubbery (57). It is likely that the extreme social tension and economic distress of the era (see below) contributed to

Ploucquet's impulse to externalize the wish for security of place and interpersonal connection by creating it symbolically in animal habitat groups. Yet, in another facet of Ploucquet's output, aside from the anthropomorphic groups which he displayed at the Great Exhibition, his additional entries were relatively sensational groups of violent scenes of predators attacking prey, such as hounds viciously attacking a stag and another of hounds brutally bringing down a wild boar. The engravings of these pieces, which illustrate the Great Exhibition catalog (see fig. 1-10), are notable for their violent dynamism and brutal realism, depicting intense physical struggle in a natural setting. Such scenes of violent confrontation among animals had long-established precedence in painting and sculpture, but Ploucquet innovated in this regard in making the specific art-historical reference—not by reconfiguring a painting as sculpture with marble or other traditional materials, but with taxidermied animals. A reviewer in the *Illustrated London News* on 26 Jul 1851 began his assessment a bit skeptically and critically of these two groups, indeed citing Snyders [sic], the Flemish baroque animal painter, as the source for the pictorial arrangement of the boar group (see fig. 1-11), but finding the violence repulsive declares these works to be “disgustingly painful” and “absolutely revolting” (134-35). Yet this comment comes from someone well acquainted with such depictions in the painting tradition; the mounts (the originals long lost) must therefore have been very viscerally effective. The reviewer however softens his tone incrementally, conceding that Ploucquet's hawks are “well-stuffed” and “ingeniously” displayed. He describes a piece for which no illustration is extant, polecats attacking a hawk's nest: “another piece of dramatic taxidermy.” Frolicking fox cubs form “another pleasing group.” Having noted that Ploucquet's work is divided into two classes—“ordinarily preserved birds and beasts

. . . only facsimiles of living nature”—and, the second, animals “endowed with a caricature of human intelligence, and represented in illustrations of legends and fables, as occupied with human pursuits and performing human actions,” the anonymous reviewer ascribes the anthropomorphism he observes in Ploucquet’s *Reynard the Fox* tableaux as something typical of Germans, Aesop notwithstanding. “We recognize at once the practical exemplification of that old tendency in the Teutonic mind to gift brutes with human intelligence, and to make them take parts in long, exceedingly droll histories, just like men and women,” he observes, citing Bulwer-Lytton’s popular *Pilgrims of the Rhine* (1834) as evidence. To be sure, Bulwer-Lytton included a footnote in Chapter XII of *Pilgrims*, “The Wooing of Mr Fox,” in which he asserts that he will give “the English reader an idea of a species of novel not naturalized among us” in which “brutes are the only characters drawn . . . beings that belong to the German superstitions” (118). Clearly the author reflects an impulse to ascribe the trope of anthropomorphism, implicitly perceived as primitive, to a culture other than his own, suggesting an association with barbarism, as he concedes that though animal tales are unfamiliar to the English, they are found among the Irish (118).

Though Ploucquet clearly modeled his work upon Wilhelm von Kaulbach’s illustrations to an 1846 edition of the tale by Goethe, (see fig. 1-12 and 1-13), the tale itself had a long history of publication in England, first by William Caxton in 1479 and later, in 1844 by Felix Summerly (the pseudonym of Henry Cole). The reviewer continues, “In all these clever specimens of eccentric art taxidermy, the natural cunning and intelligence of the fox’s face is exaggerated with very great skill while the natural simplicity and stupidity of the hare’s countenance is just as forcibly worked out . . . the

animals are endowed with the strangest human expression, and yet they are animals still.” He cites Ploucquet’s “curious degree of skill and drollery” found in others of his anthropomorphic groups, such as weasels hunting hares (see fig. 1-14), rabbits “trying in vain to do sums on slates” (presaging Walter Potter’s similar work—see Chapter II) (see fig. 1-15 and 1-16), frogs “walking genteely out with umbrellas” (see fig. 1-17), and singing cats (actually stoats) (see fig. 1-18 and 1-19). For some of these groups, illustrations are extant, having been reproduced in both the *Illustrated London News* and as a children’s book of engravings based on daguerreotypes, *The Comical Creatures From Wurtemberg* (see fig. 1-20), quickly published in the same year as the Exhibition, 1851, which suggests its popularity and the power and reach of its resonance. What the context of the children’s narrative obscures, though plain in the “biological” mounts depicting animals viciously attacking one another, however, is the recurring theme of violent confrontation, which is seen in *Reynard the Fox* and the mounts featured in *Comical Creatures*: Reynard is shown deceiving and beating the gullible rabbit; stoats calmly butcher a captive and helpless group of hares; a schoolmaster “teaches arithmetic” by brutally beating a small, helpless pupil with a cane, while his classmates, paralyzed with fear do not dare look up from their slates; a dentist with a sadistic half-grin, half-grimace yanks with enough force on a vulnerable patient’s tooth to send the patient flying out of his chair; a frog shaving another frog holds a razor to his innocently exposed and vulnerable throat while the positioning of the forearm of the seated frog suggests an imminent defensive struggle, belying the purported caption and speaking more to a sense of fearful menace. It is clear that the creator of these scenarios was habituated to some level of violence and that he sought to externalize this obsession by creating artworks

which both demonstrate this leitmotif and, in his most striking pieces, distance the fear by adding associations of humor and juvenility.

In fact, a visitor to the private museum in Stuttgart which Ploucquet founded after leaving the royal cabinet in 1858, having become somewhat well-known and having profited from the success of the Great Exhibition, commented that the groups on display were “murder scenes which were caricatures of human behavior enacted by pets . . . every creature here, it is understood, seems more or less to be simultaneously in a continual struggle to the point of destruction” (Kurt Büchele, qtd. in Köstering 153). According to both Dolmetsch and Köstering, Ploucquet was influenced by the animal shows and zoos of the 1850s and 1860s, first convening his private museum in the garden room of his house and later at a local spa. To be sure, his animal groups included, according to the report of this visitor in 1858, “two anteaters, one entwined by a serpent; four tigers at a dead flamingo; a group of eagles with a fallen antelope in a snow landscape; three lions with a zebra; a wolf with its young about a fawn; two lynxes with a fallow deer, one zebra set upon by four Egyptian vultures” (Kurt Büchele [1858], qtd. in Köstering 153).

Nyhart reports that Ploucquet became a victim of eminent domain when in the mid-1860s, the site of his museum was seized to build a railroad; he received some compensation and moved the museum to temporary quarters, after which he again moved it to Vienna. It is unclear, however, if his plan to open a museum in Vienna preceded the eminent-domain seizure, the exact date of which is unknown: in a letter written by Ploucquet, dated 26 August 1863 (see Appendix), he clearly glories in the success of his Stuttgart museum, confirming both his biological approach to creating the tableaux and

discussing reasons for his plan to establish a museum in Vienna:

Visitors to my museum are largely composed of strangers from far distant places, of sculptors and animal painters, who travel to Stuttgart specifically for the sake of my collection and of late spend weeks making studies of my animals. . . I undoubtedly owe the abundance of foreign visitors to Baedeker's travel guide, which lists my institution as a famous European attraction. . . I plan namely to use the now abundant material from my museum to create a conservatory in such a way that each group forms a self-contained series with the landscape background appropriate to the animals . . . I am going to use a number of my finest animal tableaux to produce a small-scale version of such a garden in Vienna; my works will enjoy quite different recognition in Vienna as was here the case, particularly since the Emperor is extremely interested in my museum. ("Hochverehrter Herr Direktor!")

This arrangement, and further sales to British clients, brought Ploucquet an income on which to retire, and partial blindness brought on by years of working with arsenic (something which, remarkably, did not ail Walter Potter—see Chapter II) precluded his producing further work (Nyhart 65, *Allgemeine* 63). An anonymously authored obituary of 1878 notes that in about 1868, a large shipment of taxidermic mounts was sold and shipped to the Sydenham location of the modularly constructed Crystal Palace, which after the Great Exhibition closed in October of 1851, had been dismantled and moved to house a permanent exhibition space. Laments this anonymous German author in 1878,

Unfortunately, the Ploucquet museum work went the way of so much German scientific and artistic heritage by passing into foreign countries; about ten years ago it was sold to the joint-stock company of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, near London, and his work is now one of the biggest attractions of objects among the art treasures of the Crystal Palace. (*Allgemeine* 63)

The 1868 shipment likely included *Skating Hedgehogs* (see fig. 1-21) and *The Village Dentist* (see fig. 1-22), which, according to the *Strand Magazine* of 1897 were among works shown at the Victorian Era Exhibition held at the Sydenham Crystal Palace in 1897, one of a series of specially themed exhibitions which took place between 1895-

1906.<sup>18</sup> As for the disposition of his Great Exhibition anthropomorphic works, they may have been sold piecemeal (see below), or they may have been purchased en masse and also installed in the Sydenham Crystal Palace; in the latter case, they would have been destroyed in the fire there of 1936. According to Pat Morris, however, that was not so; and he believes that most of the works displayed at both locations are simply missing.<sup>19</sup> Morris himself owns the *Reynard* tableaux, having located them by chance at a Norfolk antique shop in 1985. Morris also reports that the two of Ploucquet's Great Exhibition pieces which had been borrowed by the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1951 for a centenary show, from Lord Leigh, Stoneleigh Abbey, Warwickshire, were subsequently sold at auction in 1981 and that the auction catalog had incorrectly attributed the work to Walter Potter (*History* 128).

Regarding the likelihood of the sale of his Great Exhibition works, a letter written by Ploucquet to an unknown recipient (it is addressed to "Most Esteemed Sir"; see Appendix) dated 31 May 1851, archived along with the later letter cited above at the Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, reveals that Ploucquet himself was in London to attend the Great Exhibition: he writes, "I take the liberty of expressing my belated but sincerest thanks for the courtesies shown me during my stay in London, " and he exhorts the addressee to "contribute to speedier sales" of the exhibited works through advertising and the urgent distribution of catalogs to "rich hunting enthusiasts" ("Hochgeehrtester Herr!"), hoping to catch them before they leave London for the summer season in June.

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<sup>18</sup> Judging by the title given to the exhibit in 1897, the end of the century may yet have been regarded as "Victorian" by those then living in it, though to give such a name to a comprehensive art exhibition seems to suggest an impulse to define its limits.

<sup>19</sup> See Morris, *History* 123-30, for a detailed discussion of the subject.

The breathless tone of this letter reveals a sense of the unexpected sensation generated by this exhibition of Ploucquet's work and his ambitious seizing of the opportunity to capitalize upon it.<sup>20</sup> Therefore this letter supports Pat Morris' supposition that the Ploucquet Great Exhibition works were sold to individuals and not transferred to the Sydenham Crystal Palace.

To elaborate a bit more on the public reception of Ploucquet's work in 1851, Queen Victoria in her Exhibition diary, noted unreservedly that the "stuffed animals" in the Zollverein<sup>21</sup> room were "really marvelous" (qtd. in Gibbs-Smith 91), and her approbation gave a further boost to Ploucquet's reputation. A full sense of the degree of resonance with the public is evinced, for example, in this *Morning Chronicle* article of 12 August 1851, a few months after the opening of the Exhibition:

We have on more than one occasion—and we have not by any means been singular in that respect—directed the attention of visitors to the Exhibition to the consummately clever collection of stuffed animals . . . engaged in performing human occupations, and seemingly influenced by human motives, hopes, and fears, to be seen in the Austrian [sic] division of the Crystal Palace. These curious and uncommon specimens of taxidermy in fun and taxidermy in earnest, form undoubtedly . . . one of the most remarkable features of the Exhibition . . . a wondrous union of brute face with human expression. ("Comical Creatures from Wurtemberg" 6)

Here the anonymous author of this piece makes the familiar assertion that anthropomorphism is a "tendency of the German mind to construct legends of which the lower animals are the personages and dramatis personae," reflecting a need to distance it

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<sup>20</sup> The Ploucquet letters (a second letter is dated 26 August 1863), written in an archaic and idiosyncratic script, and heretofore not translated into English, were translated in March 2012 by Frances Zichanowicz and Irma Lang, both of Waldshut, Germany.

<sup>21</sup> The Zollverein was a union of several German states which included Württemberg.

from Englishness. Further, the author takes another opportunity of framing his praise with an affirmation of British superiority by asserting that “we do not coincide” with the “extravagant degree” of admiration for the German folkloric subject of Ploucquet’s *Reynard the Fox* tableaux: “*Jack the Giant-Killer* or *Puss in Boots* [anthropomorphism notwithstanding] is worth a dozen of it,” and even going so far as to suggest that Goethe stooped very low to engage Reynard as poetic theme. The site of this and other pieces by Ploucquet, the article affirms, is one of the busiest and most crowded of the Exhibition, eliciting hearty laughter and keeping guards busy with crowd control. The article announces the sale of the souvenir book, *The Comical Creatures from Wurtemberg*, and mentions that daguerreotypes<sup>22</sup> were made of the taxidermy mounts, which were then used to create wood engravings. Indeed, this newspaper article of August 1851 announcing the availability for purchase (at Bogue, 86 Fleet Street, London) of the illustrated book of Ploucquet’s exhibits, certainly confirms the solid popularity of the work—the Exhibition opened only in May of that year and closed in October. The work of daguerreotyping and engraving, not to speak of creating accompanying text and printing the book, must have been a plan hatched very early on, based on the unexpected and dazzling success of the original work.

From what sort of social and economic milieu had Ploucquet emerged? How did these forces shape his development as a creative person? How do his circumstances compare with those of Walter Potter, whose particular economic and social environment

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<sup>22</sup> The daguerreotypes were made by Antoine Claudet (1797-1867), a Frenchman from Lyon who was active in London as a businessman. He had bought a license to use the process from Daguerre in 1841 and set up shop in London to become one of its first daguerreotypists. The daguerreotypes made of Ploucquet’s work at the Great Exhibition are unfortunately lost.

shaped his personal life and influenced his creative motivation? We know that Hermann Ploucquet's parents were economically distressed, but what about the larger picture? A study by Timothy Guinnane and Sheilagh Ogilvie, which I will cite in the following paragraph, documents how various communities in Württemberg responded to economic "shocks" historically, from the seventeenth century through the mid-nineteenth; I would add that economic shocks (in addition to other related social upheavals) such as those in Walter Potter's West Sussex of the same era (see Chapter II) helped to forge the creative personalities who would fashion the sort of artistic production which emerged throughout the era. "[Württemberg's] state institutions were militarily hyperactive but fiscally inefficient, repeatedly involving the country in expensive and disastrous wars from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century," note Guinnane and Ogilvie (5). Almost the entire population was forced to sell farm produce, crafts, home-produced goods, or to offer themselves for hire as laborers, in order to subsist. In Württemberg, factories began to appear relatively later than in Britain, from about the 1830s. However, Württemberg produced rural crafts for export and many proto-industrial businesses; "in 1800 it was accounted to have one of the highest densities of industrial occupations per capita of any German state" (11). There were several regions of dense textile production, so Ploucquet's parents as dyers fit into this demographic; yet their long-term distress suggests that business may have been affected by a number of arbitrary factors. Württemberg's economy was relatively static from the late-sixteenth century through the mid-twentieth, and furthermore, wars fought there in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries repeatedly devastated the territory: the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), the War of the Grand Alliance (1688-1697), the Seven Years War (1756-63), the French

Revolutionary Wars (between 1792-1802) (Württemberg fought on both sides of this conflict), the Seven Weeks War (1866), and the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1).

Württemberg's kings alternated between "conspicuous consumption and destructive military ventures" (11), adding to the instability. The rulers of Württemberg bargained with special-interest groups such as guilds and other community groups to buy their support and in turn enforce their regulations. "Such institutionalized social networks had a much more direct effect on economic and demographic behavior in Württemberg than in England or France" (16), note Guinnane and Ogilvie; such a system surely affected families such as Ploucquet's, who were driven to poverty and taken in by a relative. Further, local community groups with the support of the state exercised an enormous control over the lives of locals—for example, regulating immigration, education, inheritances, marriages, sexuality, and so on. No one was permitted to marry without the approval of the local community council; judgments granted were based on economic factors, but if someone was judged to be "morally weak," or not resident in the area long enough, permission to marry could be denied, "under the rubric of the *politische Ehekonsens* (political consent for marriage)" (14-15). Such restrictions on marriage were abolished only in 1870, after unification; guilds were abolished in 1864.

Ploucquet remained a bachelor until the end of his life in 1878, and though, as Dolmetsch notes, he was continuously preoccupied, first with supporting his parents, then by an "overwhelming passion for his work" (111), and finally by taking care of his sister, also single. Claims of preoccupation notwithstanding, the pressure to conform to the stringent local regulations must have been daunting.

Further, conditions on a par with many of those in industrialized England resonate

in similar ways: a royal obsession with medievalism (see also Chapter V) led to the medieval-themed wedding of the Crown Prince Karl in 1846 in which members of the wedding party dressed as knights (Blackbourn 73); royals also constructed Gothic Revival churches. The years 1846-48 saw a severe economic crisis in urban and rural areas, in which peasants were excluded from common lands, accompanied by massive bankruptcies and unemployment, bread riots, peasant uprisings, and a typhus epidemic (Blackbourn 104-106). As Blackbourn puts it, “material and non-material grievances reinforced each other to create a crisis mentality” (106), as theological disputes mirroring those in Britain continued through the 1840s were associated with threats to the social order.<sup>23</sup> Economic crisis drove spontaneous mass-meetings of thousands, the drawing up of petitions, and violent confrontation between insurgents and government soldiers; trains were met by large agitated crowds, eager for news of revolution in France (Blackbourn 107). Blackbourn terms the emotional tenor of the time “an eruption of pent-up feelings” (106) which corresponds to Britain’s “earthquake” mood. The tension, anxiety, and violence associated with this state of affairs, coupled with a compromised relationship with the natural environment, are observable in Ploucquet’s work.

How did the German popular relationship with the natural environment compare with that of Britain? A preoccupation with natural history was observed across all social classes, as in England, but the dynamic regarding the diffusion of information about shifts in that preoccupation seems to have been different. First, as Lynn K. Nyhart explains, the “biological perspective,” or what we might think of as an ecological point of

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<sup>23</sup> See Robert M. Bigler’s *The Politics of German Protestantism: The Rise of the Protestant Church Elite in Prussia, 1815-1848*, for a discussion of this subject.

view, one in which strictly rote taxonomic classification was replaced by a view which placed emphasis upon dynamic inter-relations between organisms and their natural habitat. Nyhart asserts that taxidermists such as Ploucquet, rather than academics, were at the forefront of promoting this view of things, by creating taxidermic tableaux which entailed entire animal families in their natural habitats, or indeed, habitat settings which featured prey and predator. Ploucquet's successor at the royal natural-history cabinet, Philipp Leopold Martin, wrote and published opinions about these views in his *Praxis of Natural History* (1869); he was "dismayed by the reduction of a living animal, an individual with a life, to a scientific specimen intended only to illustrate a taxonomic diagnosis" (Nyhart 51). Susanne Köstering has also made similar conclusions and interpretations regarding the development and influence of the biological approach in museum taxidermy displays.<sup>24</sup> But more importantly, Nyhart asserts that the rapidly changing social order in Germany, as in England, provided the context for the biologically, environmentally organized taxidermy groups which showed how each being fit naturally within its environment. In my view, the habitat settings of various groups of animals served as metaphors, providing an opportunity to emotionally displace intense feelings of identity confusion and other sorts of social and interpersonal anxiety. In the later part of the century, Friedrich Junge, a pedagogue, advocated the study of biological communities (this system came to be known as the "Village Pond") for children to stimulate their own existential thought about where they belong in society (Nyhart 13), and the metaphor seems especially but darkly fitting, taken to pathological extreme in the

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<sup>24</sup> See Köstering's *Natur zum Anschauen: das Naturkundemuseum des deutschen Kaiserreichs, 1871-1914* (*Nature for Observation: The Natural History Museums of the German Empire, 1871-1914*), for a discussion on the subject.

struggle over the splintered German identity of the 1930s. Further, trends and shifts in the popular relationship to natural history flowed up, rather than trickle down (see Nyhart 18); for example, advances by taxidermists such as the self-taught Ploucquet who was not a scientist but who created innovations such as habitat tableaux, drifted upward to academics. Nyhart points out that such an outcome, of scientific approaches emerging from popular impulses and eventually earning approval of the scientific establishment, is very unusual. Thus a variety of elements within Ploucquet's social environment converged to permit the development of his oeuvre.

In the light of the socio-economic milieu from which Ploucquet emerged, the power of his drive, ambition, talent and self-taught skill in a technical area, and rise from youngest child of an impoverished family to innovative staff to royalty and successful museum founder is remarkable. As with Walter Potter, warm intra-familial relationships, especially that with his sister, substantively affected the progress and outcome of his work. However, the ever-present violence and intense conflict shown across his work surely suggests a disturbing habituation to violence or interpersonal conflict, either as a witness or a victim. A compulsion if unconscious renders this dynamic a leitmotif throughout his oeuvre. Certainly his most dramatic biological mounts reflect the tenor of a life beset with a background of fear and conflict. The biological approach becomes poignant in the light of how it functioned metaphorically as an exercise in contemplating where and how one belongs within one's own environment. Yet even his ostensibly "comic" anthropomorphic works, which resonated most strongly with the British audience of 1851 and beyond, also consistently evinced such violent confrontation. Hence interpersonal relations and the artist and audience's relationship to the larger

culture are implicated, obscured as they are by the comicality of animals behaving as humans. The work is resonant with troubling symbolic meaning.

My main focus here is how the anthropomorphic works came to have such resonance in the dominant world culture of the time, Britain. Ploucquet's success in England enabled him to establish his own museum on the continent and continue to sell to English clients. Though his work is relatively little documented, there is more reference material in English about him than in German. Both Ploucquet's work, exhibited continuously until 1936 in London in the Sydenham Crystal Palace, and ending only with the fire that destroyed the entire building, and that of Ploucquet's British counterpart, Walter Potter, had consistent if modest staying power, continuing to strike a nerve, a note of resonance, attracting steady audiences through 2003, the date of the auction sale of the Potter Museum contents (see Chapter II).

## Chapter II

### Walter Potter, Naturalist

One of the most significant Victorian practitioners of anthropomorphic taxidermy, Walter Potter<sup>25</sup> (1835-1918), was an unschooled amateur and the creator of the most fully realized and most well-known anthropomorphic taxidermy tableaux of the era, which sustained interest and drew patrons to his museum housing the work (it stayed in his family until a sale in 1976) until the sale and dispersal of the entire collection in 2003. This sale itself was a subject of controversy and attracted attention when a famous contemporary artist, himself known for somewhat sensational works which entail animal corpses,<sup>26</sup> was refused the opportunity to purchase the entire collection for a sum of twice what it sold for piecemeal at auction. In the *Guardian* on 23 September 2003, Damien Hirst called the dispersal of the collection, with which he was familiar, a “tragedy.” Having visited the museum in its Cornwall location a number of times with his own

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<sup>25</sup> To clarify an often-asked question, Walter Potter and Beatrix Potter were not related. As Pat Morris points out, Beatrix Potter was not born until 1866 and did not publish until 1902—therefore, “although she may well have derived inspiration from Walter Potter’s work, the reverse is unlikely” (*Museum* 32).

<sup>26</sup> Taxidermy historian, Dr. Pat Morris, emeritus lecturer in zoology at Royal Holloway, University of London, who has written extensively about British taxidermy history, including anthropomorphic works, and is the author of a monograph on Walter Potter’s taxidermy museum, is indignant on this score. He refers to “confusion . . . when various other forms of art are referred to as ‘taxidermy’ . . . the ‘stuffed shark’ by Damien Hirst for example was not stuffed but preserved entire in formalin.” Hirst’s work, Morris continues, represents “a highly successful business model with much to do with money and little or nothing to do with taxidermy” (*History* 359). A comprehensive survey of contemporary art, including that of Hirst, which incorporates ready-made taxidermic works or other sorts of animal corpses is *Animal art: präparierte Tiere in der Kunst, 1850-2000 (Taxidermied Animals in Art, 1850-2000)* by Petra Lange-Berndt.

children, who were reportedly “fascinated but repelled” by the tableaux, Hirst attempts to make the case that singly the works are mere “examples of bad taxidermy” and that the Victorians were “eccentrics.” Yet, to be sure, what we dismiss as eccentricity reveals much about a culture which produces such grotesque artifacts.

Potter’s Museum of Curiosity, “an icon of Victorian whimsy” (*Museum 5*), as Pat Morris describes it, housed Walter Potter’s taxidermic works and operated continuously in one form or another from 1861 until 2003. Potter’s exposure to the pervasive Victorian obsession with “natural history” nurtured the sort of human relationship with animals and “nature” in general which helped give rise to the boom in the practice of taxidermy itself (see Chapter I for more about this phenomenon).

A set of social and cultural trends converged to create the setting for Potter to develop as a village taxidermist and to innovate in uniquely creative ways. Aside from the issue of Victorian concerns with natural history (see Chapter I), from what sort of social and cultural milieu did Walter Potter emerge, and how did it affect the development of his taxidermic output? What sort of wider cultural preoccupations did the work in turn reflect? As far as possible, an analysis of Potter’s social milieu, influential intra-familial dynamics, and personal reasons for his undertaking of work as a creative taxidermist is in order; first, however, a summary look at the economic history of West Sussex is called for, because it reveals much about wider concerns which as an artist Potter in a sense expressed on behalf of his audience.

Walter was the son of James Potter, the proprietor of the local inn and pub, the White Lion, one of two public houses in Bramber, West Sussex, which dated from the early sixteenth century (Hudson 206) and whose name likely derived from the coat of

arms of the Duke of Norfolk, whose heraldry features a lion *rampant* (heraldry's zoomorphism is a rich visual legacy). The existence of the two inns reflected Bramber's importance as the site of a river-crossing and later in the seventeenth century as a stop on the coach route between London and Brighton. Its population numbered about 100 in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, not increasing much by the beginning of the nineteenth (Harris 15-16). Bramber is the site of an eleventh-century Norman castle, the ruins of which today sit upon the knoll above the town's main road, known simply as "The Street," as well as a church of the same era, St Nicholas, in whose graveyard Walter Potter is buried. According to the Bramber "Historic Character Report" of 2004, the town from the thirteenth century sent representatives to Parliament, "more a reflection of the status of its lord than of Bramber itself" (Harris 14), a circumstance which changed only with the reforms of 1832.<sup>27</sup> Arable farming was dominant over sheep-farming from the middle ages through the eighteenth century; historically there were few resident tradesmen aside from wheelwrights and no guilds recorded. A smattering of a limited range of medieval markets, fairs, and shops is cited among historical sources (Hudson 209, Harris 14); salt-making involving extraction of salt from tidal marshes, according to archaeological evidence, was the dominant industry in the middle ages from at least the eleventh century.<sup>28</sup>

Significantly, concurrent with the rise of industrialism beginning in the mid-

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<sup>27</sup> Tony Wales, among many other sources, cites a "probably apocryphal" story about William Wilberforce, once observed driving through Bramber and "seeing the name, thought it vaguely familiar . . . then suddenly recollected that it was the place for which he sat in Parliament" (34).

<sup>28</sup> See the study by E.W. Holden and T.P. Hudson, "Salt-making in the Adur Valley, Sussex" (117-48).

eighteenth century was the disappearance of area common lands, including meadows and marshes. According to records dating from the thirteenth century, the common landscape of Bramber featured “a ‘great square’ (*magna placea*), described as forming part of the road between Bramber and Bidlington *c.* 1260; an open space still existed in 1729, but was later obliterated by the construction of the railway” (Hudson 204). The critical disappearance of common lands, however, had less to do with railway construction but more with the practice of enclosure, which increased at a furious pace between 1800 and 1830—and herein lies the connection with the rise of industrialism. As J.R. Hammond and Barbara Hammond note in their comprehensive study, *The Village Labourer*, “At the time of the great Whig Revolution [1688], England was in the main a country of commons and of common fields; at the time of the Reform Bill [1832], England was in the main a country of individualist agriculture and of large enclosed farms” (26). The Hammonds assert that, regarding the practice of enclosure, there is no such comparably significant social and economic change within the last two centuries, and further, that a prevailing economic ideology has promoted the myth that enclosure itself was “the gift of economic forces” rather than “deliberate acquisition” (26), the outcome of purposeful exertion on the part of powerful men. Enclosure forced the diminishment, even the ending, of the traditional social and economic character of village life and put it on a modern trajectory, with rapidly increasing poverty, emigration of desperate laborers to cities in search of work, and social unrest and its related crimes, such as poaching and food theft. From feudal and pre-industrial eras, there had existed a sustained system of village shareholders who cultivated common land—arable fields and meadows—alongside the manorial system of administration and government. Various social classes

enjoyed rights of common, to pasture their animals and grow food. At the low end of the social hierarchy, as the Hammonds point out, squatters could build huts at the edges of a village and work as day laborers (30-32). Few laborers were thus without land to live upon. Within this system, property could be sold, but villagers would nevertheless retain common rights to use of the land. By the early nineteenth century, speculators might buy lots of land and only initially continue to honor common access but eventually sell the land at a profit, abruptly ending previously held rights of common. Social implications of the old system were that laborers could consistently expect to work “up,” with goals of saving money, marrying, and building their own cottages, no matter how poor an initial start. No single person though, despite being at the “lowest rung” (Hammond 33) of the village social ladder, was obligated systemically to stay there.

At the same time, however, villagers were under the control of and administered by powerful justices of the peace, in addition to wealthy aristocratic landowners; and, as literature of this pre-industrial era alluding to this system evinces—the Hammonds cite works by Fielding and Richardson (18-19, 33), for example—despite the relative equities of the structure, there was, to be sure, plenty of tyranny and abuse of peasants and laborers. Though the practice of enclosure itself was not new—instances of the wealthy acquiring common arable lands for pasture are recorded since at least the sixteenth century<sup>29</sup>—at the rise of the industrial era, rapid and widespread enclosure abruptly ended

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<sup>29</sup> As Roger B. Manning argues, earlier enclosure riots of the mid-sixteenth century, a form of “pre-political protest,” were often instigated by the gentry who were offended at members of their own social class who enclosed land; he points out the need for adjusting the assumption that “the typical enclosure riot [of the 1530s and 1540s] was perpetrated by an exasperated peasantry venting their rage upon the hedges and ditches of a commercially-minded, grasping gentry” (120). Thus at this point in history, disputes regarding common land centered upon interpersonal rivalry among the gentry; these

the centuries-old system of rural social organization. Some previous royal intervention in enclosures had occurred; but now, as industrial capitalism was ushered in and quickly managed to dominate economically, the interests of this new class of the wealthy were foremost. Hence, concurrent with the dominance of industrialism at the beginning of the nineteenth century, few controls on enclosures were in place.

More precisely, what was the direct connection between the steep increase in land enclosures and industrialism—what particular influence did the triumph of the industrial revolution itself bring to bear upon the administration of the system of rights of common? The system of management of lower social classes by a small minority of wealthy landowners, heretofore aristocratic, was further fortified as landlords now emerged from this new class of industrialists, particularly between about 1800-1830. The freshly bourgeois manufacturers who “brought into this charmed circle an energy of their own” were new to land ownership and widely exercised this sort of new-found authority and power with relish, upsetting the long sustained, relatively stable rural economy and social structure. The new bourgeois class, who seemed to unconsciously emulate the aristocratic class, wanted to flex their muscle in this area (as in others, such as aesthetic taste). Bourgeois landlords were eager to stake their claim to authority and power, as had the aristocracy before them. Aside from “greed clothed in public spirit” (Hammond 35), as we have yet seen in our own time, the ascendancy of the new land-owning class—the small percentage of the wealthiest, and thus the most powerful and influential—in a sense depended upon the general poverty of the majority of the population to enhance and maintain their positions of power. Subsequently, it became necessary to control and

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disputes typically involved the unsanctioned pasturing, seizing, and rescuing of animals (126-127).

manage manifestations of the resulting rage and despair of the classes beneath them in the hierarchy. Such an inter-relational dynamic generated much unwarranted indignation among the land-owning class, undoubtedly displacing and defending psychically against unconscious culpability for the distress and suffering of so many. A system of emotional defenses, which gave rise to a faux-moral justification for controlling and managing the lives of tenants, effectively meant that management practices perpetuated the hierarchy and hence ensured the position of power of those at its top. Again, unconscious emotional defenses played a role in the behavior of these middle-class, non-aristocratic “sudden millionaires” (Hammond 36) who, compensating for deficiencies in education, aesthetic taste, and social deportment, sought to buttress their egos with a self-serving approach to house- and land-ownership.

As Pierre Bourdieu has noted regarding issues of aesthetic discretion, a position of power and authority over others functions as a “marker of class” (2), and the same applies to narcissistic investment in land ownership. While it is true that profits to landowners would increase significantly upon enclosure, to mask the motivation for profit, a sense developed among the new land-owning class that the tradition of common access itself was after all a relic of an undesirable, pre-industrial past. This notion was supported, or rationalized, by pointing to new, efficient techniques of mechanized farming and attempting to forge an association between ethical value and modernization while justifying a rejection of past agrarian techniques as akin to barbarism. In this manner a kind of false moral grounding was appended after the fact to justifications for enclosure, with the disingenuous purpose of masking the simple driving motivation of greed.

The very relationship of humans to the land, to be sure, one which was heretofore sustained for centuries, was summarily compromised thus and replaced by a more profitable system of machine-to-land, making humans themselves redundant within this arrangement and displacing them along with the animals who traditionally shared their farm work (more on animals in Chapter III). Again, avarice on the part of the powerful was masked by trumped-up moral justifications which equated the pre-industrial system with savagery. This pattern will ring familiar to us in our own time, further illuminating the connection between visual art and social and economic trends (witness renewed interest in both taxidermy and vampire themes in the arts, concurrent with our own economic crisis), as specious accusations abounded which suggested that access to common land encourages “indolence, intemperance, and idleness” (John Billingsley qtd. in *The Village Labourer* 37). To illustrate, J. Bishton in 1794 remarked in a notably defensive tone that improvement of the commons simply meant “inclose [*sic*] them all as soon as convenient” and that the notion that enclosure meant “injury to the poor” was false. He admonished that “those who doubt” should

. . . go round the commons now open and view the miserable huts, and poor ill-cultivated, impoverished spots erected, or rather thrown together . . . for which they pay 6d or 1s per year, which, by loss of time both to the man and his family affords them a very trifle towards their maintenance, yet operates upon their minds as a sort of independence; this idea leads the man to lose many days work, by which he gets a habit of indolence; a daughter kept at home to milk a poor half-starved cow, who being open to temptation soon turns harlot and becomes a distressed ignorant mother instead of making a good useful servant. (24-25)

Bishton’s contemptuous tone seems tellingly more concerned with a sense of a threat to a ready supply of servants, a disturbingly unwarranted concern with the management of female sexuality, and a fear that peasants should experience a sense of independence.

In 1830, five years before Walter Potter's birth, a series of rural laborers' uprisings known as the Swing Riots took place in West Sussex and other areas. The rural laborer's "long and doomed struggle against poverty and degradation" as Hobsbawm and Rudé call it (15), exploded in wide-spread instances of rick-burning, machine breaking, and rioting. Hobsbawm and Rudé make the argument that the Hammonds' study, in a field whose historiography is admittedly small, over-emphasizes the effects of enclosure, and they attempt to place the condition of the laborers within a longer historical context full of additional influences, citing long post-war recession after 1815, the influence of revolutions in France and Belgium, and so on. Yet participants and sympathizers identified the source of their most pressing grievances upon the direct effects of enclosure; a pamphlet published in 1830 by a pseudonymous "Captain Francis Swing" gave this affecting and dramatic summation of these grievances:

My father was one of that class of small farmers, then so numerous in England, but whom the system of large farms has now altogether extinguished in the country. Our family had inhabited the same spot for many generations; and though none of them ever had a lease . . . so noted had my family always been for upright and honourable conduct, that, in the part of the country where we lived, the name of Swing was considered synonymous with that of an honest man. (3-4)

The author of this tract describes the impersonality of a new, young landlord undoubtedly meant to represent the bourgeois industrialist new to landowning who leaves management of the estate to an agent, abruptly doubles his tenants' rent, and soon evicts the entire Swing family to use the land for a fox cover. " 'Good God!' exclaimed I, 'are my wife and children to be turned out to make room for wild beasts?' " Mr. Swing continues; he beseeches the landlord "not to turn out my family, in order to replace them with foxes," to which the landlord coldly replies, "Every man *can do what he pleases*

*with his own,*” (8) thus in summary fashion dramatizing the abrupt and devastating consequences of the accelerated enclosure process, by which people were separated not only from their physical land and homes but from a traditional system of community. What is significant here is the metaphorical conflation of human life with animal life—indeed, of the rural English laborer with typically rural small animals, the sort of which are seen so abundantly in Walter Potter’s work. This seemingly casual anthropomorphism bears a sort of displaced emotional tone which, if we take note of it, reveals much about the psychic condition of the speaker. The anthropomorphic references are implicitly understood as metaphors within their cultural context, so when they appear in Walter Potter’s works, they resonate meaningfully with viewers of these taxidermic tableaux. When we see, for example, Potter’s *The Guinea Pigs’ Cricket Match* (see fig. 2-1 and 2-2), with this background in mind, the poignancy of artist and audience identification with small rural animals becomes evident.

Further, the journalist and political activist William Cobbett, “the nearest thing the labourers had to a formal leader” as Ian Dyck calls him (189), writing in *The Political Register* in 1829, noted that rural laborers were treated by their employers “merely as animals made for their service and sport,” and a petition published by Cobbett in 1831 asked that rate-payers refrain from using “men who are on the poor book . . . as beasts of burden” (qtd. in Dyck 153-154). As John Berger puts it, the use of such metaphor “reveals the proximity of man and animal, the proximity from which metaphor itself arose,” and that, to be sure, as cave paintings seem to suggest, “the first symbols were animals” (7). Thus such deeply rooted vestigial metaphorical associations remain and are yet fully understood on a symbolic level. (More on animals and anthropomorphism in

## Chapter III.)

Repression of the Swing protests, as J.R. Armstrong notes in *A History of Sussex*, was “all out of proportion to the offences committed . . . arson was then a capital offence and four men were condemned for rick-burning at the assizes at Horsham [about 20 miles from Bramber] between 1831 and 1834 and publicly executed . . . they included George Wren, a workhouse orphan of 19 who was later proved to have been trying to put out the fire” (134). *The Bristol Mercury* reported on Saturday Jan 19 1833 that Wren addressed the crowd from the scaffold, asserting his innocence in an understandably rambling and incoherent manner, yet the substance of his speech was recorded: “I am brought to this scaffold to be murdered for a thing I know nothing of—if you see a fire, don’t go near it—by going to this fire and fetching water, I was found guilty.” As the riots spread, the national government, having disbanded the Yeomanry Cavalry after the Napoleonic Wars, was relatively late to intervene; administration of localities was yet run by landed gentry with no broad means of repressing the rioters. Hobsbawm and Rudé summarize the approach to and effects of repression of the rioters (see pages 253-263): they point out that military or police force were reserved pending concerns about revolution in France and Belgium, as well as about similar confrontations in industrialized urban areas (253). Yet by November of 1830, alarm in London over rural uprisings having increased, troops were dispatched into West Sussex and other areas to strategic spots, while justices of the peace were “left largely to fend for themselves” (254). The gentry found “a variety of supplemental devices” to manage the rioters, such as enlisting special forces and creating private armies. Significantly, the Duke of Wellington is on record as having boasted about “hunting down Hampshire rioters like game or cattle,” commanding his hired force

to chase rioters on horseback and subdue them with “horsewhips and fowling pieces” (255), while the Duke of Richmond developed a more pre-emptive system of hiring shopkeepers and others to patrol villages not yet affected by rioting, a system which came to be known as the “Sussex Plan” (256). In any case, prisons became crowded with the arrested, while a total across counties of 252 sentenced to death (233 of which were commuted), 19 executed, 505 transported, and 800 acquitted; as Hobsbawm and Rudé note, neither the better-documented Luddite nor the Chartist protest movements were comparably punished.

Thus industrialism severely affected both the economy and character of West Sussex towns such as Walter Potter’s Bramber and other rural areas of England—enclosures and subsequent loss of rights of common, emigration of rural people to cities to find work, and the poverty of rural inhabitants generated much suffering and caused cataclysmic changes in long-standing human relationships with the direct natural environment, with animals, and with the land. Industrialism and its consequences also produced metaphoric response among artists; Potter’s taxidermic works constitute, on several levels, a creative response to the anxieties and fallout from convulsive popular crises which industrial capitalism, among other concurrent trends, engendered. Works such as Potter’s, traditionally marginalized, stand in contrast to the sort of landscape painting which emerged as a major genre from the latter part of the eighteenth century. As Peter Harman notes, “the great English landscape painters” did not depict the upheaval of the rural landscape countryside wrought by enclosure and resulting changes in agrarian practices (9, 103), but rather depicted idealized landscapes which alluded to classicism and in a sense thus upheld the changing social hierarchy via their formal order

and iconography (Harman cites Gainsborough's 1748 *Mr. and Mrs. Andrews*, for example, though it appeared relatively early in the industrial era). Later in the nineteenth century, Poetic Realist painters in the tradition of Millet, Courbet, Breton, sentimentalized the rural laborer; typical of these are John Linnell's *Harvest Home*, *Sunset: The Last Load* (see fig. 2-3), Frederick Walker's *Vagrants* (see fig. 2-4), and George Elgar Hicks's *The Sinews of Old England* (see fig. 2-5). Hobsbawm, Rudé, and others have noted that the historiography of rural uprisings and subsequent devastation has been insufficient relative to its effects; and as Mary Cowling observes, Victorian painters depicted rural scenes in a manner which correspondingly evades rural reality and suggests a sentimentalizing of the rural laborer, who became a nostalgic focus of a "part of a vanishing reality" (183). Yet concurrently with these trends in visual art ran an alternate undercurrent, a darker vision which seemed to speak anxiously to the death of traditions: The Gothic strain of Romanticism. Potter's anthropomorphic works, as does taxidermy in general, however marginalized, have much in common aesthetically with Gothicism, as I will discuss in Chapter V.

To reiterate, as Hobsbawm and Rudé have noted, the history of the convulsive labor revolts of the era which occurred in rural areas in response to the devastation wrought by industrialism is "sketchily documented" (12), and histories of the era typically neglect the depth and extent of it. The distress of inhabitants of urban areas is much more well known and, we presume, was more urgent. Anxious Victorians of both urban and rural areas, sent frantically collecting, preserving, and stuffing plant and animal specimens, appear inexplicably "eccentric," but if we locate their adaptive behavior within this context of intense, abrupt, and damaging social rearrangement, it

begins to make sense. Into this milieu of acute and pervasive social anxiety and convulsive social change, Potter was born in 1835, one of six children.

Walter's father James became publican of the White Lion Inn in 1841. What the Potter family did for a living prior to 1841, if they had been victimized by an enclosure, or how they negotiated the laborers' activism is unknown. The Potter family, however, managed to maintain a standard of relative economic stability despite Bramber itself never having been a notably prosperous town, because tourism became a mainstay of its economy. As mentioned, Bramber was a stop on the coach route between London and Brighton, opportune for an inn manager. Bramber Castle itself steadily attracted the curious, but eventually Potter's taxidermy museum became the town's most important source of tourist interest. Aside from the castle and before Potter's fame, as we can infer from this 1904 tourist account, Bramber was infamous for the political corruption of its members of Parliament prior to 1832, which colored its reputed character:

After rain, Bramber is a pleasant village, but when the dust flies it is good neither for man nor beast. All that remains of the castle is crumbling battlement and a wall of the keep, survivals of the renovation of the old Saxon stronghold by William de Braose, the friend of the Conqueror and the Sussex founder of the Duke of Norfolk's family. Picnic parties now frolic among the ruins, and enterprising boys explore the rank overgrowth in the moat below. Bramber was, for many years, a pocket borough of the worst type. George Spencer, writing to Algernon Sidney after the Bramber election in 1679, says, 'You would have laughed to see how pleased I seemed to be in kissing of old women; and drinking wine with handfuls of sugar, and great glasses of burnt brandy; three things much against the stomach.' In 1768, eighteen votes were polled for one candidate and sixteen for his rival. One of the tenants, in a cottage valued at about three shillings a week, refused £1000 for his vote. (Lucas 139-40)

This 1904 account makes no mention of West Sussex laborers' activism. However, in this same publication, the author cites the current main attraction of the town:

Bramber possesses a humorist in taxidermy, whose efforts win more

attention than the castle. They are to be seen in a small museum in its single street, the price of admission being for children one penny, for adults twopence, and for ladies and gentlemen ‘what they please’ (indicating that the naturalist also knows human nature). In one case, guinea pigs strive in cricket's manly toil; in another, rats read the paper and play dominoes; in a third, rabbits learn their lessons in school; in a fourth, the last scene in the tragedy of *Babes of the Wood* is represented, Bramber Castle in the distance localizing the event. (Lucas 140-41)

Indeed, several historical accounts of the mid-to-late-century economy of the town of Bramber cite Potter's Museum as a mainstay, consistently attracting thousands of visitors annually (see, for example, Harris 16, Hudson 211). A summary biography of Potter in the 1984 edition of *Potter's Museum of Curiosity* catalog notes that after his initial attempt at taxidermy with a pet canary, teenaged Walter supported his hobby with gratuities received from customers at the family's inn (Potter and Cartland 13-17). It is likely that Walter was permitted, even warmly supported, by his family to install a major display of his work at the pub in 1861 not least because it drew customers; this initial exhibit was his *Death and Burial of Cock Robin* (see fig. 2-6), the product of seven years of work and which features ninety-eight specimens of birds, the entire tableau encased in a specially built wood and glass cabinet, crafted by Potter himself. The church which Potter painted in the elaborate background appears to be St Peter's in Beeding, a twenty-minute walk from Bramber, rather than Bramber's St Nicholas church. *Cock Robin* was “shown to an intrigued audience in the summer-house at the rear of the inn” (Potter and Cartland 13). Pat Morris suggests that the elaborate *Cock Robin* is perhaps “the most widely known single item of Victorian taxidermy ever made” (*Museum* 9).<sup>30</sup> We can infer something of the tone of intra-familial warmth via the story of Potter's direct inspiration

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<sup>30</sup> Morris is the current owner of the piece.

for the piece, a result of his sister's having shown him her book of nursery rhymes, which according to Cartland was itself lovingly preserved in Potter's museum. Indeed, this book of nursery rhymes was sold in the 2003 Bonhams auction of the Potter Museum contents as a part of Lot 446, "Walter Potter Ephemera." Potter soon received commissions for conventional taxidermy projects sufficient for him to earn his living as a "stuffer," as taxidermists were known colloquially, or as a "naturalist," as his business card more formally announced.<sup>31</sup> However, he concurrently initiated projects of his own, adding steadily to and building his own collection, which in 1866 was moved to a larger building next door to the White Lion. It was so successful that the collection was soon moved into a building nearby, which was specially constructed for Potter by the new owners of the White Lion (who renamed the inn the Castle Hotel); as Cartland suggests, these new owners surely recognized the potential value of an attraction such as Potter's Museum as a "local asset," going so far as to build a house for Potter, his wife and three children next door to the museum (14).

Potter (see fig. 2-7 and 2-8), self-taught in what is often referred to as a golden age for the amateur naturalist, likely made use of one of the many how-to publications on taxidermy which proliferated at the time, such as Sarah Lee Bowditch's *Taxidermy, or the Art of Collecting, Preparing, and Mounting Objects of Natural History*, which by 1823 was already in its third edition. At a time in English history when "every town had its taxidermist" (Morris, *History* 4), the art served not only scientific settings in which specimens were collected and mounted for taxonomic purposes in museums, but also for domestic parlors and the decoration of homes. While home displays of taxidermy

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<sup>31</sup> Potter's business card is reproduced on page 5 of Pat Morris' monograph, *Walter Potter and His Museum of Curious Taxidermy*.

“affirmed the landed classes’ interest in natural history . . . farmhouses and rural pubs would feature foxes, badgers and otters killed locally,” notes Pat Morris (*History* 353). Hence taxidermy developed in both a sophisticated, scientific milieu as well as within one in which relative amateurs created works for the bourgeois or working class consumer—“high” and “low” taste contexts co-existed, and people such as Walter Potter could make a living from the enterprise. As discussed in Chapter I, the Victorians evinced a preoccupation with nature; by the mid-nineteenth century, agrarian change, industrialism, travel, and imperialism had yielded an obsession with collecting natural specimens, ordering, and classifying, among all social classes. Before the development of scientific disciplines, natural history was widely pursued by amateurs; it was “something the ordinary people could enjoy,” as Lynn L. Merrill puts it (75). Aside from its arguably benign outcome (such as specimen collections), and its practitioners evincing an unwillingness, to paraphrase Edward Bulwer-Lytton, to “love the rose but leave it on its stem,” such obsessiveness on a massive scale belies a response to a shared anxiety which pervades the culture at all levels. Potter himself evinced this interest as well. His acute sensitivity to the natural environment of his village of Bramber is strikingly revealed in this excerpt from an interview in a periodical of 1895, *The Idler*, in which Potter describes his youthful fascination with observation of animal life: “One day when I was a boy, I was up in Bramber Castle, sitting in the bushes and listening for things, when I heard a rabbit squeal as he ran down into the moat with a stoat after him . . .”; from this statement, a sense of Potter’s patience and attunement with the natural environment is clear. He is solitary in a remote rural area, we infer something done habitually, while “listening for things,” waiting for aural clues and evoking much about his unconscious

connection to both the temporal and spatial. His first phase of observation of animals in nature is passive. He quietly observes the stoat sucking the rabbit's blood, waiting "till the rabbit got weak" (564). In the next, active phase of the encounter, he springs up, drives off the stoat, and takes the dying rabbit home, presumably as a specimen for collection or to taxidermy. Whether this experience occurred before or after his initial taxidermy project—the family canary—is unclear. In 1894, when the interview took place, Potter had "been at it over fifty years" (qtd. in Burgin 562); therefore he must have begun attempts at taxidermy from the age of nine or ten.

In 1851, when Potter was sixteen years old, it is possible that he and his family made a day-trip to London to visit the Great Exhibition and had an opportunity to see Hermann Ploucquet's anthropomorphic works displayed there. The Exhibition dominated the news of the day; and as Pat Morris notes, "Don't forget [Potter] lived in a pub which was frequented by tourists and only a day's ride by horse-drawn coach from central London" (message to author), hence he is likely to have heard much about the Exhibition from the inn's guests. Did Potter perhaps attend the Great Exhibition on a "shilling day"?<sup>32</sup> Did he, as a sixteen-year-old in 1851, observe Ploucquet's "grotesque" anthropomorphic works exhibited there and become motivated to create his own? Or could it be that Potter saw a copy of the popular book, *The Comical Creatures from*

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<sup>32</sup> Certain days were reserved for working-class people to gain admission to the Exhibition for a special fee of one shilling. See *The World for a Shilling* by Michael Leapman (London: Headline, 2001) for a complete discussion of the subject; or see *The Great Exhibition of 1851* by C.H. Gibbs-Smith and the Victoria and Albert Museum (London: Crown, 1981) for facts and figures regarding the Great Exhibition attendance and receipts. The train ride from Potter's home to London would have taken about an hour. Special excursion trains ran to take people from rural areas to London to see the Exhibition; there were no roofs on these excursion trains, and the passengers could become wet and disheveled.

*Wurtemberg* (see fig. 1-14, 1-19 and 1-20) which contained engravings based on daguerreotypes (lost, unfortunately), of Ploucquet's Great Exhibition groups? There is no proof that Potter and his family attended the Great Exhibition, but I speculate that it was more likely that Potter saw the real thing; considering how widespread the art of taxidermy was, and how it appealed across classes, it would be difficult to imagine a self-taught rural teenage boy of the era learning the technique by observing two-dimensional engravings alone. One wonders if Potter's sister's offering of her nursery-rhyme book served as a reinforcing inspiration, after the initial notion was prompted as a result of seeing or hearing about Ploucquet's work, particularly *Reynard the Fox* (see fig. 1-13). Anthropomorphic works had not been seen in England until Ploucquet's in 1851, therefore it is quite unlikely that the idea came from another source, if not from Potter alone. A comprehensively creative person such as Potter, who conceived of entire narratives in taxidermy, is likely to have seized upon such an inspiration if he encountered it. Certainly no other taxidermist of any era matched the manner in which Potter exceeded Ploucquet's very conceit. Ploucquet however is not cited in the Potter museum catalog or in the 1894 *Idler* interview, nor is there any allusion to him among the Potter Museum artifacts. It is not impossible that Potter preferred to avoid the association to preserve the impression of his own originality, however.

“We know the soul only through the body.” So John Addington Symonds paraphrases Goethe in his 1890 essay on evolution (1). To be sure, the poignancy of some of Potter's tableaux is very striking—the settings and situations in which he contrives to pose the bodies of his animals are evocative of the idealized spirit of rural English childhood: bodies of baby rabbits are assembled in a village school (see fig. Intro-4 and

Intro-5), a large group of kittens demurely sits for tea together at a long table (see fig. Intro-2): these vignettes strongly suggest nostalgia for community, while the choice of animal for display mirrors the social class of the rural farmer and inn-keeper, rather than those exotic species chosen by the more learned and sophisticated practitioners of taxidermic craft who doubled as scientists creating works for preservation and teaching. Potter's work and choice of animal—local barn kittens, guinea pigs, native birds, and other small animals commonly found near rural farms—speaks to the collective soul of his rural social class. To again paraphrase Goethe, we know the rural human soul through these rather unassuming animal bodies.

Potter's artistry surpassed taxidermy alone. As James Carlton records in the *Potter Museum of Curiosity* catalog, Potter himself built most of the miniature furniture and other props incorporated into the tableaux (17). He painstakingly crafted the musical instruments in his *Guinea Pigs' Cricket Match* (see fig. 2-2) over a period of six months (Potter and Carlton 2), first carving chalk molds which were then filled with molten tin (Morris, *Museum* 47). Using diluted oil paints—according to Pat Morris, very unusual for a taxidermist (*Museum* 28)—he also painted the backgrounds, which are striking in their detail, color treatment, and in their direct references to Potter's village, further contextualizing the works as products of a rural environment. For example, *The Lower Five* (see fig. 2-9) features two paintings hanging on the wall of the rats' den: they are carefully rendered and delicately tinted scenes of Bramber, recognizable from photographs of the spot depicted, one scene in spring and the other the same scene in autumn. This remarkable detail is important for the contrast it affords with similar detail

in *The Lower Five's* companion piece, *The Upper Ten* (see fig. 2-10).<sup>33</sup> These two works are studies in the differences in social class and human behavior based upon economic- and social-class distinctions. The titles of the works are taken from a popular comic song of the era which takes the form of an exchange between a nobleman and a beggar:

Nobleman: I have no coppers, my good man; three times to you I've told.  
 Beggar: Well, I don't object to silver, sir; and I'm not too proud for gold.  
 Nobleman: But I am one of the upper ten—to be polite, contrive!  
 Beggar: Excuse me, sir, I beg of you; I belong to the lower five.  
 Chorus:  
 Nobleman: Well, I belong to the upper ten, the upper ten, the upper ten,  
 ten-thousand a year is my income clear, and I manage to spend it all.  
 Beggar: Well, I belong to the lower five, the lower five, the lower five; I  
 live in a dive, and so do contrive to scrape up a copper or two. ("Upper  
 Ten And Lower Five" n. pag.)

The popular song, whose title may have come from the published list of names of the so-called "upper ten-thousand," reflected the sense that as a consequence of industrialism, bourgeois manufacturers had entered an economically powerful social class, heretofore exclusively aristocratic, thus adding to the class of the powerful at the top of the social ladder, increasing the number of those who had control over the still more numerous lower social classes, such as laborers and the working class, and hence deepening the economic divide.

Among the *Lower Five's* fifteen rats posed in a drab room playing dominoes, arguing, and drinking, while two rats dressed in police uniforms threaten at the doors, one rat puzzles over a census form—Pat Morris in his monograph on Potter points out that Potter himself was responsible for completing census forms, due every ten years, after he

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<sup>33</sup> The "upper ten" is analogous to what we refer to currently as the wealthiest "1%"; see *The Upper Ten Thousand: An Alphabetical List of All Members of Noble Families, Bishops, Privy Councillors, Judges, Baronets, Members of the House of Commons, Lords-Lieutenant, Governors of Colonies, Knights and Companions of Orders, Deans and Archdeacons, and the Superior Officers of the Army and Navy*.

became the head of his household in 1861 (*Museum* 52). Potter thus clearly identifies with the “lower five” rats rather than with the “upper ten” red squirrels. Though they were considered common pests and were certainly local to the Bramber area, Potter has stuffed and configured the squirrels so that their postures give them an air of pretension and smug self-satisfaction. Thus local rural animals represent human concerns, in this case acute economic disparity. If, when Potter created these works about 1880, conflict between laborers and the landowners who treated them like animals was not acute, it was certainly vestigial. The conflict Pat Morris describes in his monograph on Walter Potter, in which a rival taxidermist claimed to have created the original *Death of Cock Robin* tableau illustrates this point: a Mr. Swaysland published an article in the 8 July 1869 Brighton Gazette in which he disparaged Potter’s work as that of “labouring man.” Thus the term “labourer” was a belittling one, and Potter is reported to have defended himself by claiming to be “a Naturalist, not a labourer” (cited in Morris, *Museum* 46). Yet his depiction of himself as brown rat puzzling over a census form belies if not outright identification with the social class represented by the rats, when seen in the light of this self-defense, evinces some internal struggle.

Though brown rats may be lower in the social hierarchy than red squirrels, they are both nevertheless equal in status as local pests. Only their bearing and their accoutrements define their differences, much like human social strata. The choice of animal and the simple, comic approach echoing the tone of the popular song of 1873, which when performed both “nobleman” and “beggar” harmonize during the chorus,<sup>34</sup> evoke a gentle irony which mitigates both identification with the rats and resentment of

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<sup>34</sup> A delightful 1908 recording of the song can be heard via this Internet link: <<http://cylinders.library.ucsb.edu/mp3s/3000/3292/cusb-cyl3292d.mp3>>.

the squirrels. The dynamism of each tableau is striking: *The Upper Ten* group of nineteen red squirrels enjoying the elegance of a private-club room, features deferential servants carrying trays, while most of the other squirrels are seated, tails up, chests swelled, and posture erect, creating a visual rhythm which is regular and even. The wallpaper pattern adds an order to the scene, and rather than paintings of Bramber on the wall, the *Upper Ten* squirrels' room features two fine cases of taxidermied birds and two large floral paintings, symmetrically arranged. Coming through the door is a welcome servant, in contrast to the rats' intrusive police. The more chaotic visual rhythm of *The Lower Five* is effected by the hunched postures of the rats, one rat inexplicably placed in the center on wooden crutches, and a fallen chair on the right, behind the door through which a policeman pokes his head, as yet not noticed by the crowd in the room.

Michelle Henning characterizes the disclaimers regarding purported animal cruelty found in Potter's Museum of Curiosity when she visited it in 2000 as typical of twentieth- and twenty-first-century sensibility, as a contemporary intolerance of abuse of animals (671); however, the sensibility was decidedly contemporaneous, as the 1894 interview with Potter in the periodical *The Idler* shows. Potter eludes any detection of cruelty, boasting, or revealing of intention of the deliberate killing of any animal—with the exception of the *Athletic Toads*; says Potter without irony, “I caught my toads, poisoned them, and cut out the bodies” (567). Perhaps amphibians inspire less fellow-feeling than do mammals. But, significantly, all other animals in Potter's tableaux were reportedly brought to him after their deaths by his neighbors, and “people encouraged me to persevere” (565) with mounting the bodies. Potter obtained the rats for his *Lower Five* tableau, when they dashed out of a wheat stack at threshing, only to be “knocked on the

head by the village boys” (563). In fact, judging from this *Idler* interview, Potter appears to know the details of the circumstances of the demise of each creature appearing in his works well enough to recount forty years’ worth of animal deaths to his interviewer, with a degree of sensitivity for the animals and a strong evocation of community. The picture of his self-effacing reliance on his village neighbors to encourage him and contribute animal corpses to him with which to create his taxidermic works is striking for its suggestion of his modesty and unassuming nature. Though there is a rhetorical tone in Potter’s recounting of his acquisition of the animals which minimizes the harm done to them, the very attempt to do so reflects a sensitive attempt to diminish painful impact upon the listener. Other contemporaneous disclaimers, justifications, or rationalizations for the deaths of the animals abound and disclose sensitivity to the impulse to treat animals humanely.<sup>35</sup> For example, regarding *Monkey Riding the Goat* (see fig. 2-11), an entry Potter himself wrote for this item, number 257 in the *Potter’s Museum of Curiosity* catalog, reveals that “both animals came to an untimely end through mischief. A pail of cold water was thrown over the monkey when he raided a fruit shop in Shoreham. Unfortunately, *the shock proved fatal*” [emphasis mine] (11). Thus Potter himself is never implicated in the deaths of the animals which appear in his tableaux, nor are the animals said to have been killed wantonly, or for the specific purpose of making taxidermic mounts. To reiterate, Potter’s animals are not exotic, not the product of imperial conquest—with the exception of the monkey, they were domestic and commonly found on local farms, lending an unwitting critical or ironic comment upon the sort of collection

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<sup>35</sup> Keith Thomas gives an account of the history of opposition to cruelty to animals in *Man and the Natural World*; he notes that arguments regarding unnecessary cruelty have a long history, having been put forth by classical moralists, by medieval scholars, as well as by the early moderns (see especially 143-165).

of animal artifacts associated with imperialism and thus also upon analogies to social class. Thus a taxidermied lion is less representative of simple moral courage, per emblematic tradition, but now signifies British dominion over Africa, while a kitten, brown rat, or red squirrel represents the powerlessness and sense of loss of those of Potter's own social milieu—indeed, of what Walter Houghton terms the “mass isolation and loneliness” (77) characterized by representations of nostalgia of the nineteenth century. To be sure, incremental and devastating changes in both rural and urban community life, as well as distressing scientific and technological developments, as Houghton has written, “exposed the Victorians to a constant succession of shattering developments” (67). Metaphorically, this “fatal shock” of which Potter speaks, suffered by the monkey, precisely echoes Walter Houghton's assertion regarding the stunning cultural fallout resulting from the relentless succession of “shattering developments” of the Victorian era, from which those such as Potter suffered. Potter's work served, to paraphrase Andrew Brink, as an impulse toward “integration of feeling arising from disturbing experiences” (*Creative* 35). Does Potter's work lead the viewer to a sense of aesthetic resolution, or does it generate more anxiety? Evoking the meaning of the Burkean sublime (see Chapter V), Potter's work seems to do both—as the children of Damien Hirst intuited, to “fascinate and repel”—simultaneously.

#### Critique of Critical Literature on Ploucquet and Potter

There are to date but two scholarly analyses that focus specifically on anthropomorphic works of the Victorian era. Two scholars, Conor Creaney and Michelle Henning, have recently addressed the subject. Additionally, Dr. Pat Morris, in his various

published studies, provides comprehensive historical and technical accounts of Victorian-era anthropomorphic taxidermy but excludes interpretive analysis.

Conor Creaney, writing recently in *Victorian Studies*, seems compelled to disparagingly situate Walter Potter's work within a pejoratively kitsch framework, when he describes Potter's *The Kittens' Wedding*: "The piece reads today as the over-decorative efforts of a well-meaning but indiscriminating amateur, unable to see how kitschy his bejeweled little creatures are" (9).<sup>36</sup> While not entirely eschewing this perspective, Creaney takes a semiotic approach and interprets the taxidermy "texts" as "multilayered artifacts" that reveal "ironies concerning the relationship between Victorian bodies and the means by which both texts and visual culture attempted to capture them" (9-10). Creaney discusses the perceived humor in the work of Hermann Ploucquet, asserting that "the works' humorous appeal stems from an understanding of a rigid hierarchy that the animals are supposedly breaking" (15); in my view, however, the presumed humor represents a displaced anxiety about the conflation of animal and human roles in the world, of which the viewer is unconscious. In fact, as Creaney fails to note, mid-Victorians were seeing such taxidermic treatment for the first time and in juxtaposition to "scientific" works by the same artist; naturally by contrast to the more conventionally mounted specimens, anthropomorphic technique disarms expectations and is comical by comparison. Indeed, the subsequent popular book of engravings based upon daguerreotypes of Ploucquet's work was titled *Comical Creatures*, so the imagery was

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<sup>36</sup> Creaney, as of late 2011, is a PhD candidate at NYU; his dissertation will "explore the relationship between the described body in Victorian realism and the frozen body in taxidermy, sculpture, waxworks, and tableaux vivants," according to a blurb in the Autumn 2010 edition of *Victorian Studies*.

circulated with the presumption of its reception as humorous. Therefore, the sense that Ploucquet's works are humorous while Potter's are not is an unexamined bit of conventional wisdom. Creaney asserts that the humor thought to have been intrinsic to Ploucquet's work is missing in Walter Potter's, but he does not substantiate this conclusion; in fact simple comparative visual analysis reveals that there is little difference between the two in this regard.

Though Ploucquet is best known perhaps for his *Reynard the Fox* tableau, both Creaney and Michelle Henning inflate the difference between Potter and Ploucquet in terms of their depictions of allegory and the quotidian—both of them assert that Ploucquet is ideologically in the “allegory” camp, while the tone of Potter's work is humbler and less grand in its pretensions. In fact, most of Ploucquet's anthropomorphic work depicts quotidian scenes with similarly small domestic animals; and the work which is considered Potter's stellar opus is *The Death and Burial of Cock Robin*, based on the fable. To be sure, when so little of Ploucquet's original work is extant, save the *Reynard* tableau, critical perception becomes not only clouded by this paucity but also perhaps influenced by contemporaneous newspaper reviews, which lauded the *Reynard* piece in particular.

Creaney cites Michael Watts, who posits that “the relationship between animals and modernity [functions as] a giant act of enclosure—necessitating, of course, loss and displacement.” Creaney then elaborates that the *Kittens' Wedding*, displayed in an enclosed tableau, “performs a strikingly literal enactment of this relationship. Anthropomorphizing the animals helps to obscure their ‘loss and displacement’ ” (18). I strongly disagree with this perspective, since it places “animals and modernity” within an

abstract relationship when the actual relationship the work reflects is that between animals and humans. The assertion that anthropomorphizing the animals obscures the sense that the animals evoke loss simply does not bear scrutiny. In my view, the feelings of loss and displacement evoked by the tableau can only reflect the psychic displacement and emotional loss of the creator of the work—while Potter, as artist, expresses those feelings on behalf of those who view the work and experience a kindred emotional resonance. In other words, Watts and Creaney very tellingly have it backward. Oddly, the interpretation offered by these scholars is a kind of reverse emotional displacement, since they evince an unwitting identification with the animals in Potter's tableau. To reiterate, a main idea of my hypothesis is that anthropomorphism is a vehicle for facilitating human emotional displacement by charging anxieties to taxidermied animal bodies.

However, Creaney's primary concern is a comparison of one of Walter Potter's works, *The Death and Burial of Cock Robin*, with Charles Dickens' novel, *Our Mutual Friend*, a tale suffused with morbidity and likely inspired, as Creaney asserts, by a visit to one of the many London taxidermy shops which were ubiquitous at the time. Creaney posits that *Our Mutual Friend*—a character of which is a Mr. Venus, a taxidermist—represents human bodies in taxidermy-like suspended animation. Though there is a self-evident connection between morbidity and taxidermy, Dickens rather seems to me to be revealing more about his own intra-psychic struggle with inertia within his inter-personal relationships, in this case, than about some other issue regarding taxidermy per se. There is certainly no hint of anthropomorphic treatment within the fictional taxidermic practice of Mr. Venus, and the connection Creaney attempts to draw between Potter's *Cock Robin* and this novel is extremely thin, based as it is upon one passage in which Mr. Venus

prepares a simple robin corpse for basic mounting. Thus Creaney's focus seems contrived, and he uses with little basis a specific historical anthropomorphic work to suggest similar literary allusions to suspended animation. In this sense Creaney could have posited that any taxidermic work of the era could evoke a similar connection; to be sure, the connection with anthropomorphic works is therefore gratuitous. Hence, his choice of this particular work by Potter seems unwarranted. Creaney, in sum, introduces several issues in common with those I also raise, but both his analytical approach and his conclusions depart strikingly from my own.

Further, Michelle Henning, a lecturer at the University of the West of England, Bristol, in a 2007 piece in *Victorian Literature and Culture*, broaches issues which approach some of those I raise, but we neither follow the same methodology nor reach the same conclusions. In my view, Henning's analysis, despite what appear to be promising insights, falls short in several ways. For example, while maintaining the belief in the marginality of these works, Henning nominally links the anthropomorphic school of taxidermy to an over-simplified "death of nature." She writes of Walter Potter, for example, that his "work combines a number of late Victorian fascinations: with the miniature, with natural history and with folk culture, with childhood. It is a microcosm of an era in which the accelerated destruction of the old social order and of nature was accompanied by an increasing obsession with preservation and memory . . ." (671). While I regard her observation regarding the collapse of "the old social order" and its connection to the widespread manifestations of nostalgia within the visual and literary culture to be true, she is certainly not asserting a new idea; many scholars, notably Jerome Buckley, have explored this area. Henning's scope is limited not only to a narrow

interpretation of anthropomorphism, limited to observing that animals are dressed as people, which ends without analysis, but to an equally narrow interpretation of the significance of type of animal used in the works, which necessarily affect scale in a tableau setting as well as evoke viewer identification. Yet in her suggestion that “the miniature” was a typically Victorian obsession, she overlooks the fact that Walter Potter’s *Rabbits’ Village School* is to scale for rabbits; in turn, contrary to Henning’s view, I assert that the choice of local rabbits as the raw aesthetic material of this taxidermic work is of the utmost importance, because it is so emblematically different from the sorts of large, exotic, foreign animals used by scientific taxidermists. Henning further observes that reproductions of engravings of Hermann Ploucquet’s taxidermic works of 1851 give “mobility and a liveliness not possible in taxidermy” (667), but that conclusion seems so self-evident as to be inappropriate, given the differences in the two types of media. She laments, “It would be unfortunate if contemporary attitudes toward taxidermy were to obscure what these practices may reveal about their time and about our own” (676) yet does not offer a comprehensible opinion of what that could be. Henning asserts that “anthropomorphism became a means for nineteenth-century popular displays to negotiate the problematic relationship between people and animals for a thrill-seeking audience” (673); but, in my view, this interpretation lacks grounding in both an understanding of simple psychodynamics and a full appreciation of what sort of artistic objects the cultural milieu was capable of generating, not to speak of why they resonated emotionally with a contemporaneous audience. Was the audience thrill-seeking or nostalgia-seeking? Henning contradicts herself on this point. Moreover, Henning touches upon what she terms “the fragile co-existence of English wildlife and human life” (671),

neither defining what that presumed fragility entails nor mentioning Darwin, whose own anthropomorphic projections upon animals are a significant part of the entire picture of the zeitgeist.<sup>37</sup> By contrast, my vision of an anthropomorphic interpretation hinges upon how and why the practitioners of the art chose an anthropomorphic approach and why it was compellingly resonant for its audience. Neither such a choice nor such a reaction could have been possible in the absence of the confluence of social and cultural trends of the era. Essential to understanding the phenomenon is an analysis which draws connections between these social forces and manifestations of the metaphorical expression of the anxiety they generated, as seen in taxidermic artworks.

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<sup>37</sup> In *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, first published in 1872, Darwin's assertions that animals experience feelings akin to those of human emotions "embody the longing for reciprocal ardor Victorians felt in the presence of animals," says Teresa Mangum (22). See Chapter III for reflections on questions regarding why humans of the Victorian era should be driven to "long for reciprocal ardor" from animals, and why should such emotional impulses manifest in anthropomorphized taxidermic works.

## Chapter III

### Anthropomorphism

The anthropomorphism of the work of Ploucquet and Potter strongly resonated with the Victorian spectator between 1851 through the end of the century. How habituated to anthropomorphic literary or artistic treatment were the Victorians by mid-century? How much of the anthropomorphism observed in Victorian culture was a relatively new development? How observable is it in the visual discourse of the era? In this chapter, I address these questions by tracing relevant aspects of the history of anthropomorphism in the arts as well as by examining the meaning of the shifting relationship between humans and animals.

Although the anonymous reviewer in the 26 July 1851 edition of the *Illustrated London News* who spoke of Ploucquet's Great Exhibition displays had denied that animal stories were a familiar part of English culture and had ascribed the anthropomorphism of Goethe's *Reinecke Fuchs* and Ploucquet's taxidermic rendering of the story to a foreign, specifically "Teutonic" tendency, his denials belied several precedents of anthropomorphism found in illustrated English literature and visual art. In fact, these denials further belied a cultural trajectory toward anthropomorphic depiction of animals in visual art (as well as in literature), which was by that time deeply ingrained.

Among those precedents is John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* of 1693, in which Locke cites both Aesop's fables and the story of *Raynard the Fox*. They are, he asserts,

. . . the best apt to delight and entertain a Child [and] afford useful reflections to a grown Man. And if his Memory retain them all his life after, he will not repent to find them there among his Manly Thoughts and serious Business. If his Aesop has Pictures in it, it will entertain him much the better . . . and therefore I think as soon as he begins to spell, as many Pictures of Animals should be got him as can be found . . . *Raynard the Fox* is another Book, I think, may be made use of to the same purpose. (184-85)

Significant is Locke's promotion of the use of illustration to bolster the animal story's teaching, which visually reinforces its anthropomorphism. Following Locke's counsel, Samuel Croxall published an illustrated edition of Aesop's fables in 1722 (see fig. 3-1) which was quite influential; however, as W. C. Harris notes, it is nevertheless striking that "animal stories were not produced in significant numbers until the end of the eighteenth century" (107), even though other versions of Aesop were in print continuously since the late fifteenth century. Harris is right in observing that there is something notable about the point in the late part of century at which the appearance of animal stories and pictures began to increase. However, his research makes no explicit connection between their appearance and the concurrent shift in the status of animals and their connection to the lives of humans—this connection is important, as I show below.

Regarding the abundance of anthropomorphically treated animal stories appearing at this time, an important edition of Aesop was Thomas Bewick's, the first edition of which appeared in 1784 (see fig. 3-2), as well as his illustrated *A General History of Quadrupeds* of 1790, which entailed nine years of preparation of wood engravings and is more of a natural-history manual in the tradition of Buffon, rather than a fanciful narrative; however, the characteristics of each animal are described in plainly anthropomorphic terms. Illustrated editions of *The Death and Burial of Cock Robin* appeared as early as 1795, with striking resemblance to Walter Potter's taxidermy version

of the story (see fig. 3-3 and 3-4); and before that, in 1766 an illustrated edition of *Goody Two-Shoes*, which features anthropomorphic animal characters, was published. Other important books of the genre are *Life and Perambulations of a Mouse* (1783) by Dorothy Kilner, a first-person narrative which anticipates the later Victorian animal autobiography, such as Anna Sewall's *Black Beauty* of 1877; it describes scenes of cruelty from the point of view of a mouse—for example, a boy torments the mouse protagonist, who describes his agony at witnessing his brother's torture:

I beheld my beloved Brighteyes suspended at one end of a string by his tail; one while swinging backward and forward, at another pulled up and down, then suffered to feel his feet on the ground, and again suddenly snatched up as the cat advanced, then twisted round and round as fast as possible at the full length of the string: in short, it is impossible to describe all his sufferings of body, or my anguish of mind. (Part I, par. 17)

The boy's father surprises him in the act and admonishes,

I beg you will consider, how you would like, that either myself, or some great giant, as much larger than you as you are bigger than the mouse, should hurt and torment you? And I promise you, the smallest creature can feel as acutely as you . . . every action that is cruel, and gives pain to any living creature, is wicked, and is a sure sign of a bad heart. I never knew a man, who was cruel to animals, kind and compassionate towards his fellow-creatures. (Part I, par. 19)

The unusual perspective of the tormented mouse recalls Swift and his switching from the role of spectator to object of the spectacle, reversing expectations and providing an opportunity for the reader to empathize with the predicament of the ill-treated, a *mundus inversus* topos which is a vestige of comic theatrical tradition, also observed in masquerades. In such “comic inversion” (Donaldson 3), normal relationships are reversed for an effect which is typically humorous but which also exploits humor as a means to joltingly shift perspective and thus manipulate spectator or reader sympathies. However,

in the case of the mouse story, the consequences of the reversal are not humorous at all; they are associated with pain and suffering.

Similarly important publications are *Vicissitudes of a Cat* (1802) by Mrs. Pilkington, and *Adventures of a Donkey* (1815) by Arabella Argus (see fig. 3-5). It is also notable that around this era when the first books produced especially for children began to appear, that most of them entailed not only anthropomorphic stories but, as mentioned, visuals which conditioned this generation of readers to visually anthropomorphic thinking. Further, such visuals served to help sensitize a generation to develop the capacity for empathy. Importantly, as Tess Cosslett points out, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century animal story was not merely a recapitulation of the Aesop-like moralistic tale, but it promoted benevolence or taught natural history, often with talking animal characters who “presented animal consciousness” in new ways (1-2).

Why did the trend, which Harris refers to as the “first real outpouring of animal stories” (107), increase its pace near the end of the eighteenth century? Though Harriet Ritvo has asserted that there is no connection between art, literature, fable, whimsy and real animals, that art has “little connection to real creatures, none at all” (*Animal* 5), I dispute that conclusion. Although it is self-evident that art and material reality have differences, insofar as the arts represent reality in a metaphorical sense, there is a connection between the two which can be supported with evidence. I propose that the anthropomorphism and otherwise sentimental treatment of animal imagery in Victorian painting and visual culture, as in literature (especially that directed at children), reflects a deep shift in the relationship between humans and animals in the interim between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, brought about by the advance of industrialism and

the resulting shift in the quotidian working relationships between humans and animals. The powerful emotional component of this shift is not made explicit among these connections in Ritvo's analysis, although her study sometimes hints at unconscious associations between metaphor and reality. As I show, anthropomorphism in visual art of the era is reflective of the intense and pervasive anxiety surrounding this deeply complex shift. To recapitulate, this shift itself is in part a consequence of a preceding cataclysmic change in the relationship of humans to labor. To be sure, the expression of anxiety regarding collective loss, including that of the traditional animal-human relationship, is at the emotional root of this practice. On this score, regarding *On the Origin of Species* (first published in 1859), Deborah Denenholz Morse and Martin A. Danahay assert in their introduction to *Victorian Animal Dreams* that Darwin's influence served "to make the human more animal and the animal more human, destabilizing boundaries in both directions" (2), which brings to light the metaphorical use of both anthropomorphism and zoomorphism in works of visual art. However, evidence shows that Darwin himself did not so much influence as articulate a state of affairs which had been long brewing, providing a breakthrough in perspective only by making it above-board and explicit and by strengthening its scientific context. To be sure, manifestations of destabilized boundaries between human and animal would not have appeared in visual art, such as Ploucquet's, Potter's, and Landseer's (see below) long before Darwin, if that were not the case. Indeed, Darwin's explicit treatment of animal emotional life, *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals* of 1872, as well as Thomas Huxley's 1870 "Has a Frog a Soul?" both reflected areas of cultural preoccupation which also had long histories, as I explain below.

Regarding these destabilized boundaries, an early manifestation of this preoccupation was the craze for cattle breeding (see fig. 3-6) which generated a genre of painting in the late eighteenth century featuring portraits of aristocrats' large cows. Underneath the breeding ideology lurked analogous claims for certain types of superior human status—that superior cattle breeds were linked to aristocrats barely concealed a zoomorphic approach to strengthening the social position of the aristocracy. In a like manner throughout this era of destabilizing boundaries, animals were often made to substitute emotionally for humans in representing human concerns: humanitarianism among the members of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) reflected unexpressed anxieties over social control in the face of advancing democratic movements, for example; and zoos and hunting correspondingly became emblematic of British imperialism (Ritvo, *Animal* 5). Ritvo is right to note that a variety of such associations “blurred the distinction” (*Animal* 3) between people and animals, and that when people talked about animals they unconsciously were talking about human behavior and feelings—for example, she notes that the developing field of zoology promoted a moral hierarchy based upon a human one, which was derivative of vestigial associations between animals and morals found in medieval bestiaries.

Such bestiaries, as Keith Thomas notes, had promoted the conceptualizing of human behavior and morality metaphorically in terms of a range of specific kinds of animals connected to corresponding virtues and vices. Yet pre-industrial-era fears regarding bestiality reflected intense concern about maintaining the distinction between human and animal. So-called “monstrous births” reflected the horror of the threat to the “firm dividing line between men and animals.” To be sure, “freaks,” or people with

congenital defects, were displayed as half-human, half-beast in spectacles and side-shows, pressed into service as material representations of this fear. Thomas further points out that the anxiety regarding transgression of the boundary from human to animal had been so pervasive in seventeenth-century England that animal costumes for carnival or theater were treated with circumspection, and even folk customs such as the hooden horse disappeared from the morris dance, with which it had been long associated (39). As both James Turner and Harriet Ritvo point out, the medieval bestiary tradition of associating virtues and vices with specific animals survived through Buffon and Bewick and beyond; for example, donkeys were associated with patience, stags with nobility, dogs with loyalty and faithful service, horses with generosity, while cats were vilified as lazy and dishonest, pigs disgusting, weasels corrupt and cruel, tigers savage, and civets as obnoxious (Turner 29, Ritvo 20-25). Margaret Blount emphasizes that not only was every animal depicted in a bestiary “symbolic of a human virtue or vice,” it was furthermore “described as possessing” it (96). Blount further points out that “the great animal fantasies rose with the decline of religious teaching” (17), concurrent with the ascendancy of industrialism and development of science, beginning around the end of the eighteenth century. I raise the issue of the bestiary and the late-medieval concern for preserving the distinction between human and animal to illustrate the contrast with the later era, when that concern would collapse.

As Ritvo puts it, “Discourse about animals in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England expressed many human concerns linked only tenuously to the natural world.” However, Ritvo’s landmark study, *The Animal Estate*, omits discussion of the spiritual conflicts from which the very discourse regarding the human relationship to animals

emerged; she makes the claim that people formerly felt at the mercy of nature but that with science and Enlightenment thinking, nature now seemed to human advantage and “more vulnerable to human control.” Further, Ritvo interprets the Victorian obsession with natural history, with natural objects both live and inanimate, to be a sign of “affection” for nature which replaces the sense of nature as antagonist, leading ultimately to close emotional attachments to animals kept as pets (*Animal 3*). However, as I have argued in Chapter I, the notion that this complex and troubled relationship between humans and the natural environment represents a simple “affection” is disturbingly superficial. Though an awkward impulse toward expressing affection may have been a facet of this trajectory, the new human relationship with nature reflected deep anxieties which grew from ruptures of long-held cosmological perspectives, and this emotional unhealth is reflected in the destructive outcome of the obsession: extinction of animal species, widespread animal suffering, unsustainable collecting and hunting habits. To be sure, the dual themes of human domination and exploitation of animals of which Ritvo speaks mirrored fears regarding the human social hierarchy, which was also threatened by new developments in science. However, as we can observe in the visual evidence of Victorian England, new themes of the impulse toward human identification with and empathy for animals emerged.

Let us trace the development of this shift: by the nineteenth century, according to legal tradition, animals were regarded as the property of their human owners. However, as E. P. Evans has noted in his 1906 history, *Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals*, in the medieval era, animals could be prosecuted and executed for committing crimes. For example, he cites a 1386 case in France of an infanticidal sow

who was dressed in man's clothes and executed in a public square (see fig. 3-7). A large number of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century court cases cited by Evans concern infants killed by sows although many other kinds of animals were prosecuted and executed in continental Europe as well as in England (313).<sup>38</sup> Evans explains that theologians of medieval Europe promoted the belief that animals were “devils in disguise” (6) and that if a homicide committed by an animal went unpunished, it was believed, opportunity for demonic spirits to infiltrate and prevail over the wider community was created. Fear and superstition were driving motivations for these human projections upon animals, as with the case of a rooster in 1474 executed for the “heinous and unnatural crime of laying an egg” (162), recalling similar human fears projected upon animals in the illustrated travel writings of Gerald of Wales. What is striking in the accounts of medieval prosecution of animals for crimes is the level and quality of anthropomorphism revealed, though it is not manifested in a way in which empathy or sympathetic identification for the animal is observed. Rather, before the law, beasts could be held accountable for planning a crime with malice aforethought and awareness of wrong-doing, just as could humans (apparently there was no conflict seen regarding the devil's interference with the animal's free will—in other words, “the devil made me do it” was not a legitimate defense). The *beste covert*, the legal term for domesticated animal, was a member of a family and shared rights and responsibilities. There are cases of animal execution in colonial

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<sup>38</sup> Evans includes a “Chronological List of Excommunications and Prosecutions of Animals from the Ninth to the Nineteenth Century” in the appendix to his book. He also includes an astonishing variety of copies of court documents in their original languages. A disproportionate number of sows, as opposed to other kinds of animals, implicated in infanticide cases invites suspicion of a prejudiced feeling against sows as well as doubt about the actual cause of the deaths of so many infants in an age when abandonment and infanticide was not uncommon: did sows function as scapegoats in these cases?

America, vestiges of this primitive legal system, in which the tradition survived; and as Evans points out, “The same code which condemned a homicidal ox to be stoned declared that a witch should not be suffered to live” (12). “Symbolism and personification [e.g., anthropomorphism; or, in a psychodynamic sense, psychic displacement],” says Evans, “unquestionably played an important part in primitive legislation” (11), although he cites the legal standing of animals as the reason for their treatment. Yet the reason for the legal standing is the very projection of human traits upon animals. Contrast this type of anthropomorphism with Darwin’s, which reflects acknowledgment that animals are experiential beings who have physical and emotional feelings.

Ritvo notes that after the Middle Ages, “the power attributed to animals” was appropriated by human beings and that animals became “objects of human manipulation” (*Animal 2*). However, although this switch in perspective and relationship was substantive, the terms of the relationship still served human interests, and there was no major alteration in human emotional connection to animals. The huge shift in the emotional relationship between animals and people which began toward the end of the eighteenth century and which is a theme of this thesis was concurrent with the rise of industrialism. As John Berger observes in his essay “Why Look at Animals,” “The nineteenth century . . . saw the beginning of a process . . . by which every tradition which has previously mediated between man and nature was broken” (1); Berger refers specifically to the cultural marginalization of animals, the disappearance of animals from daily life and the roles they had occupied in relation to human life, which was a direct consequence of the industrial revolution. Animals previously had lived intimately with

human beings, and to pre-industrial people were critical to daily survival. In the pre-industrial era, as Thomas points out, animals, though not yet kept on a wide scale as pets with whom close emotional bonds are formed, were exploited not only for their utility but were also kept for metaphorical purposes, as with the menageries of foreign beasts kept by royalty. As mentioned in Chapter I, English royalty since the twelfth century had collected “lions, leopards, and other ferocious beasts” (Thomas 277), to symbolize their power over nature and other countries. Ownership of animals also historically reflected class distinctions: ownership of swans, for example, was “carefully controlled by the Crown” in the sixteenth century (Thomas 276-77). These metaphorical as well as utilitarian associations would change deeply between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, acquiring new overtones. James Turner concurs on these points: “The shock of massive industrialization and urbanization . . . [put] the relationship between man and nature on a radically new footing” (1). He notes that industrialism, from the late eighteenth century through the Victorian era, moved England from an “overwhelmingly agrarian society, where animals [were] the economic backbone of life” to an urbanized and industrial culture in which animals were increasingly replaced by mechanized industrial equipment; in turn, the sudden change touched off a “psychic landslide, a sharp reorientation of attitudes toward animals” (25).

Keith Thomas, speaking of the pre-industrial era, observes that “nowhere in Europe was dependence upon animals greater than in England” (26). Horses and oxen in particular were used for draught; oxen were later used for food, while, as Ritvo notes, any animals who “stubbornly refused to adapt to human desires” (*Animal* 18) were considered pests—these included many species found in the taxidermy of Ploucquet and Potter, such

as foxes, hedgehogs, stoats, rabbits, squirrels, and rodents. Thomas points out that in the early modern era, “animals were everywhere.” Cows might be milked in the street, while poultry was raised in urban attics; horses were often kept inside houses, as were dogs (Thomas 95). Furthermore, more meat was consumed in England than elsewhere. Ritvo concurs and adds that animals were ubiquitous in urban areas even through the Victorian era, changes in relationship with humans notwithstanding, with “streets full of cabhorses and carthorses, flocks of sheep and herds of cattle driven to market once or twice a week” (*Animal 5*), and that urbanites continued to raise rabbits and fighting dogs in their houses. From the seventeenth century, however, housing gradually began to become separate for animals and humans. In general, relations with domestic animals in the pre-industrial era were physically but not emotionally intimate; animals were much less segregated from human living spaces. Animals who lived in proximity to humans were not yet kept strictly as pets and did not serve solely a sentimental function (not that emotional bonding was unknown between animal and human). Yet in the pre-industrial era, cows—but not sheep or pigs—were given names and sometimes dressed in clothes. Elizabeth Gaskell’s novel *Cranford*, serialized in the periodical *Household Words* beginning in 1851, the year of the Great Exhibition, depicts what was likely by that time evidence of the vestigial treatment of such a cow, since the owner of the cow was an elderly lady:

An old lady had an Alderney cow which she looked upon as a daughter. You could not pay the short quarter of an hour call without being told of the wonderful milk or wonderful intelligence of this animal. The whole town knew and kindly regarded Miss Betsy Barker’s Alderney; therefore great was the sympathy and regret when, in an unguarded moment, the poor cow tumbled into a lime-pit. She moaned so loudly that she was soon heard, and rescued; but meanwhile the poor beast had lost most of her hair, and came out looking naked, cold, and miserable, in a bare skin. Everybody pitied the animal, though a few could not restrain their smiles at her droll appearance. Miss Betsy Barker absolutely cried with sorrow

and dismay; and it was said she thought of trying a bath of oil. This remedy, perhaps, was recommended by some one of the number whose advice she asked; but the proposal, if ever it was made, was knocked on the head by Captain Brown's decided 'Get her a flannel waistcoat and flannel drawers, ma'am, if you wish to keep her alive' . . . Miss Betsy Barker dried her eyes, and thanked the Captain heartily; she set to work, and by-and-by all the town turned out to see the Alderney meekly going to her pasture, clad in dark grey flannel. I have watched her myself many a time. Do you ever see cows dressed in grey flannel in London? (14-15)

As towns and industry grew, the physical intimacy between animals and humans began to diminish. At the same time, as science supplanted the religious notion that nature was created for human disposal, a reaction set in “in the form of the pathetic fallacy of Romantic poets” for whom nature served as a mirror to their own moods and emotions (Thomas 91). Throughout this period of change, dual strains of extreme cruelty to and budding expressions of concern, empathy, and sympathy for animals are observed from the late eighteenth throughout the nineteenth century; only about 20 years before the founding of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, at the century’s beginning, attempts to ban bull-baiting in London were met with ridicule (Ritvo, *Animal* 125). Throughout most of the nineteenth century, animals were widely exploited not only for food and clothing, but were exploited in ways in which their suffering was made a part of the visual landscape: for transportation, for public medical experiments, and to entertain as captives in zoos or side-shows or in spectacles of cruelty such as dog-fighting, cock-throwing, rat-catching, and bear- and bull-baiting—at the same time, however, countervailing movements such as those promoting anti-vivisection emerged and gathered strength. As Ritvo notes, animals with whom people shared their daily lives served both “material and rhetorical” functions (*Animal* 5), by providing sources for food and clothing and also by serving as narcissistic extensions of individuals, as with royal

pet and menagerie owners as symbols of imperial might, as well as with those who raised animals for competitive fighting.

Regarding the pre-Darwinian debate about the souls and emotional lives of animals, the awareness and advocacy on behalf of animals as experiential beings who feel pain and experience a range of emotions first emerged as a social issue in the latter part of the eighteenth century. David Perkins, in his *Romanticism and Animal Rights*, describes a 1772 sermon given by James Granger, the vicar of Shiplake, Oxfordshire, in which he quoted Proverbs 12.10: “A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast.” The vicar went on to elaborate that even a man’s “meanest creature has the right with himself to live,” that England was the “Hell of horses,” and that in no other country in the world were animals treated as badly as in England (1-2). Although, per Keith Thomas’ account of the history of opposition to cruelty to animals in *Man and the Natural World*, arguments regarding unnecessary cruelty have a long history, having been put forth by classical moralists, by medieval scholars, as well as by the early moderns (143-165), the argument did not gather significant steam and coalesce into a social movement until beginning in the late eighteenth century. Granger’s sermon had been met with disgust by his congregation, necessitating a visit from his Bishop, who however supported him. When the sermon was later published it received a few favorable reviews, and the era saw several subsequent publications by others which espoused a similar sentiment, such as John Oswald’s *Cry of Nature, or an Appeal to Mercy and to Justice, on Behalf of the Persecuted Animals* in 1791. The frontispiece of *Cry of Nature* depicts a dead fawn, butcher’s knife in the foreground and a nude Eve-like figure mournfully standing by, along with what appears to be a stag, and a church seen in the distance (see fig. 3-8).

These publications echoed the sentiment found in the children's picture books of the same era, mentioned above; they reflected developments in the capacity for humans to feel empathy, a capacity which has evolved over time and saw a notable spike at this point in history as evinced, for example, by the anti-slavery movement, the movement to abolish debtors' prisons, and the charity-school movement.

How did this empathic capacity which enables humans to feel sympathy for the suffering of animals develop so suddenly? Industrialism, as James Turner puts it, by "dislocating and destroying the old forms of society, made people more aware of the suffering it created and even of that it did not" (34), by throwing it into sudden and widespread relief. Further, as animals were increasingly kept in proximity to humans for companionship rather than for utility, the new relationship was reflected in both the visual arts and in the illustrated animal-protagonist story, which as mentioned served in turn to sensitize people to the feelings of animals and encourage identification with them. Turner's study, however, does not acknowledge that empathy for animals served in a sense as a displacement of the same for fellow human beings—for example, the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children was formed in 1883, more than fifty years subsequent to the formation of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, which had been formed in 1824 (with royal patronage from 1837). Turner also points out that Wilburforce (who in Parliament sat for Bramber, Walter Potter's village), who led efforts to abolish the slave trade also was a leader in the effort to ban bull-baiting; Turner asserts that "animal protection embodied the temper of the age" (35). But other developments in science also reflected this trend toward the development of the capacity for empathy and

facilitated the development of fellow-feeling and human identification with animals.<sup>39</sup> For example, Linnaeus, whose classification work the English naturalists embraced, had grouped humans together with other primates in the order *Anthropomorpha* in his taxonomic system of 1735. Further, naturalists and philosophers of the late eighteenth century posited that all forms of life existed on a continuum—Soame Jenyns, for example, asserted in 1782 that all life on earth was like a painting, with colors blended and merged so “that no line of distinction is any where to be seen” (16). In the mid-1700s, James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, published his ideas regarding evolution—obviously long before Darwin—and hypothesized that humans had evolved from lower life forms; he believed, for example, that orangutans were men who had not yet learned to talk. Thus Lord Monboddo, considered eccentric in his own day, was among the first theorists to actually pave the way for Darwin (Thomas 133). Erasmus Darwin (who acknowledged Monboddo’s work, though Charles Darwin did not) had written in 1794 in his *Zoonomia* that the “internal faculties [of animals] were also in some measure similar to our own” (141). Charles Darwin himself had attended a lecture in 1827 at the University of Edinburgh on the similarity of mind between humans and animals; he later

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<sup>39</sup> Regarding the development of the human capacity for empathy, Lloyd deMause has noted that, as opposed to social complexity in a technical sense, social evolution is best measured in terms of this very capacity, and he asserts that self-integration—the ability to love, trust, empathize, to make conscious decisions—reflects the degree to which a given culture has evolved in human terms. He posits that “societies with poor child-rearing produce personalities with too much anxiety and conflict” (241) to maintain healthy inter-personal relationships. DeMause asserts that evolutionary trajectory goes from neediness to independence, from violence and conflict to social dependability and empathy, a process he notes is uneven and is dependent upon the outcome of child-rearing practices. Accounts of behavior of humans to animals in eighteenth and nineteenth-century England (and earlier) correlate with his outlining of six child-rearing modes charted from pre-history through the mid-twentieth century (245-50). He connects child-rearing practices such as swaddling with violent adult behavior; he notes that England was among the first European countries to abandon the practice.

asserted in his 1871 *Descent of Man* that the function and make-up of the animal and human minds were different only by degree, a view which Keith Thomas finds “naively anthropomorphic,” likely the result of anecdotal evidence about middle-class pets (141). To be sure, as Thomas points out, the debate about animal souls was ongoing since Plato and the concept of metempsychosis; Victorians were distressed at the thought that domestic animals, by this time kept as pets to whom they had intense emotional attachments, might have no afterlife. Yet a variety of theologians either thought the existence of the immortal animal soul a certainty or at least a possibility, and several works on the subject were published in the late eighteenth century, according to Thomas (140-41). Therefore, by the time Thomas Huxley presented his lecture “Has a Frog a Soul?” to the Metaphysical Society in 1870, the subject was not new, although it was now presented in an empirical context. Regarding the influence of Descartes, who believed that only humans had souls and that animals felt no pain, Locke for example acknowledged that it is convenient to think of animals as machines as opposed to admitting that they have souls, since doing so precludes the need for guilt or concern for killing them for food or otherwise exploiting them in the interests of humankind. The English, according to Keith Thomas, were ambivalent about Descartes, who had few “explicit defenders” among them, yet if some English felt animals to be similar to humans, they often nevertheless believed animals to be inferior to humans (33-35).

Romantic poets such as Wordsworth believed that though animals could not necessarily reason, they could love; philosophers such as Hume and Hartley earlier (mid-to late-eighteenth century) had asserted the “correspondence of passions in men and animals” (Hume qtd. in Perkins 24). Jeremy Bentham had outlined three reasons against

cruelty to animals in 1780: “restraining men from exercising cruelty on inferior animals is of use on three accounts: for the offender’s own sake, for the sake of other men, and for the sake of animals themselves” (qtd. in Boralevi 8). In a footnote in his *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* of 1789, Bentham notes,

It may come one day to be recognized, that the number of the legs, the villosity of the skin, or the termination of the *os sacrum*, are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to [the caprice of a tormentor]. What else is it that should trace the insuperable line? Is it the faculty of reason, or, perhaps, the faculty of discourse? But a full-grown horse or dog, is beyond comparison a more rational, as well as a more conversible animal, than an infant of a day, or a week, or even a month, old. But suppose the case were otherwise, what would it avail? The question is not, *Can they reason?* nor, *Can they talk?* but, *Can they suffer?* (236)

In 1751, Hogarth had dealt explicitly with the issue of wanton animal cruelty in his *Four Stages of Cruelty* series of engravings (see fig. 3-9, 3-10, 3-11, and 3-12), a subset of his *Modern Moral* series—even if we know nothing else about the subject, Hogarth’s topicality and didacticism indicate that such cruelty was widespread and significant enough to warrant his comment.<sup>40</sup> Hogarth, rather than crusade explicitly on behalf of animals per se, appears to warn that cruelty to animals leads progressively to human criminal activity such as homicide. Yet in his autobiography he declares that the images “were done in the hopes of preventing in some degree that cruel treatment of poor Animals which makes the streets of London more disagreeable to the human mind, than any thing what ever, the very describing of which gives pain” (qtd. in Tate Britain online catalog). As the Tate Britain’s catalog notes suggest, the engravings tell us that the abuse

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<sup>40</sup> Bentham noted marginally in his *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* manuscript that “One of the best moral lessons that ever were composed are [sic] Hogarth's prints entitled *The Progress of Cruelty*. In default of Laws, it was the object of that admirable artist to punish these abuses by the censure of the world” (Transcribe Bentham).

of animals in London streets was commonplace. The series of engravings is hence an important milestone in charting the changing attitudes regarding the human relationship to animals in England.

In 1838, Charles Darwin visited a captive orangutan named Jenny in the Regents Park Zoo in London (see fig. 3-13). Jenny had arrived there in 1837 and had been a popular object of display, dressed in pajamas to heighten her human resemblance. As Harriet Ritvo has noted, such captive-animal displays both “confirmed and parodied” the close connection between humans and other primates (*Natural* 291). Darwin was clearly struck by the confirmation of a close connection; he wrote of the experience:

Let man visit Ouranoutang in domestication, hear its expressive whine, see its intelligence when spoken [to]; as if it understands every word said—see its affection to those it knew—see its passion & rage, sulkiness, & very actions of despair, and then let him boast of his proud pre-eminence . . . Man in his arrogance thinks himself a great work, worthy the interposition of a deity. More humble and I believe true to consider him created from animals. (qtd. in Silk 3243)

Queen Victoria, who as mentioned nearly ten years later would pronounce Ploucquet’s anthropomorphic works “really marvelous,” found Jenny in 1842 (actually the original Jenny’s replacement), “frightful, and painfully and disagreeably human” (qtd. in Silk 3243), struck apparently more by a sense of parody of humanity than by its confirmation. It is clear that the experience of seeing a live primate anthropomorphized by being dressed in clothes was both an unsettling and provocative experience, which given the climate of intense social and cultural change, stimulated reflections upon the human position in the natural world, but by this time was by no means unusual. Further, it is clear that such experiences accessible to the public at large facilitated acceptance of Darwin’s articulation of the subject of evolution and species origin less than two decades

later, as well as for the reception of Ploucquet's very resonant works a few years before that.

Darwin in 1872 published his *Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals*, in which he made the case for analogous emotions in humans and animals. Simply placing animals and humans within the same context, in the same publication, strengthened the case for the connection. Darwin articulates a "psychological continuity between humans and all animals" (Mitchell, Thompson and Miles 4). Keith Thomas' assessment of "naïve anthropomorphism" aside, if Darwin did base his conclusions upon decades of middle-class anecdotal evidence from Victorian pet-owners, that alone tells us that the conviction that animals felt emotion was a widely held belief by that time. By arguing that animals show "proto-human psychological characteristics" (Knoll 13) and by describing them in anthropomorphic terms, Darwin effectively promoted and reinforced the notion that animals are above all experiential beings. It is clear based on the evidence that between Granger's sermon of 1772, described above, and one hundred years later with the publication of *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals* in 1872, that a huge, but no means complete, change had taken place in how humans conceived with sympathy of the capacity of animals to feel both physically and emotionally. Certainly pet-keeping in part facilitated this change, with its ensuing emotional bonds, as animals who lived in proximity to humans now functioned as companions, even as animals exploited for utility became marginalized. As discussed in Chapter I, a barrage of scientific developments simultaneously deposed mankind and re-positioned humanity in contextual perspective with the rest of the natural world, further driving the change in relationship.

Hence well before either *Expression of Emotions* of 1872 or 1859's *On the Origin*

*of the Species*, Victorians were habituated to the notion that animals felt emotion and pain—but this state of affairs was also long and well evinced in the popularity of the animal paintings of Edwin Landseer, whose name was a “household word in Victorian England,” (Boggs and Bowness vii). Landseer, born in 1803, was adept at depicting the ambivalence of the “struggle for life,” which would become a subject of Darwin’s 1859 work, by evoking sympathy for both predator and prey in hunting scenarios or other wild-animal scenes. Further, Landseer specialized in portraying a variety of domestic animals, particularly pet dogs, in anthropomorphized contexts—not by depicting them dressed in clothes or as bipeds engaged in human activities (though there are important exceptions with monkeys as subjects), but in emotional roles which both resonated with human moral ideals and fulfilled traditionally anthropomorphized notions about animal behavior derived from bestiaries. Landseer’s animal paintings foreshadow Darwin’s work on emotions in the sense that they encapsulated the prevailing cultural mood by showing in visual terms how animals experience emotion with a difference in degree but not in kind, relative to human experience, which strongly resonated with viewers. As Diana Donald points out, Landseer’s work was widely available and familiar among the public through engraving (195). He was a favorite of Queen Victoria, his first commission for her (actually on her behalf by the Duchess of Kent) having been a portrait of her dog, Dash, in 1836, before her ascension to the throne. Even as a student, Landseer was especially skilled at depicting dogs, and the resonance spectators found in his sympathetic depictions of dogs was evinced very early in his career; Fuseli, the teenaged Landseer’s teacher at the Royal Academy, referred to him as “my little dog boy” (Ormond 5).<sup>41</sup> He

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<sup>41</sup> Biographical details are from Ormond, 1-40, unless otherwise noted.

became a full Academician in 1831 and early and throughout his career received aristocratic patronage. But, notably, among his most enthusiastic collectors were bourgeois industrialists such as John Sheepshanks, whose collection is housed in what is now the Victoria and Albert Museum; and Robert Vernon, who made a large bequest to what was to become the Tate. As a child Landseer was taught anatomical drawing by B. R. Haydon, an Academician and history painter better known for his diary, thought to be a valuable document of the Romantic era; the anatomical approach became a notable formal feature of Landseer's work, and it served him well, since his many of his commissions were for portraits of pets, particularly horses and dogs, of his aristocratic patrons. In his heyday, Landseer participated in glamorous social and literary circles and socialized with Dickens, Thackeray, and others—he sang, he danced, he hunted with the fashionable. However, symptoms of stress, such as procrastination, displays of quick temper, taking offense easily, unpunctuality, and tardiness in completing commissions belied a darker strain in his personality. He suffered more severe symptoms later, such as phobias of various sorts, fatigue, and depression, following a total breakdown in 1840 subsequent to the death of his mother. He over-consumed alcohol and used morphia to induce sleep. A friend managed his business affairs at this point, and Landseer continued to paint as, not surprisingly, work was a “balm for his personal problems” (Ormond 10). The early pressure of his youthful success and the demands upon the adolescent Landseer surely had contributed to these consequences. Landseer's father, described as “opinionated, intellectual, voluble, domineering, and embittered” (Ormond 1) was an engraver who fought and campaigned strenuously, but failed nevertheless, to improve the status of engravers and permit them to become full members of the Royal Academy.

Landseer's brothers produced many of the artist's engravings, yet tellingly in a veiled critique of his father, Landseer spoke about disliking the commercial aspects of engraving; in a letter to his friend and business manager, Jacob Bell, Landseer, commenting upon a Belgian engraving dealer, said ". . . he does not give me the idea of a gentleman, and remember he does not care one D--- for art" (qtd. in Ormond 12). To be sure, it seems a displaced anger toward his autocratic father; knowing how publicly the elder Landseer had promoted the status of engravers, Edwin's vociferousness raises suspicions, especially considering how the sale of engravings of his work must have enriched him. Hence it is likely that the persistent undertone of darkness in his canvases mirrored a distressed inner life. Indeed, many of Landseer's canvases reveal a sinister, gloomy tendency which aligns with a Gothic sensibility (more on this subject in Chapter V), representing a countervailing mood to his more sentimental animal portraits and other scenarios involving dogs. However, even these ostensibly sentimental works evoke a bleak sort of nostalgia or darkly wistful longing. Pictures engaging animals, especially pets, as their subjects, depicted in scenarios which struck culturally appropriate emotional chords resonated deeply with a public obsessed with these matters.

Indeed, several of Landseer's canvases derived from fabulist animal themes from Aesop or La Fontaine; for example, *The Cat's Paw* of 1824 (see fig. 3-14) depicts the well-known tale of the monkey who flatters a cat into removing hot chestnuts from a fire with an unkept promise to share them. Landseer's treatment, however, shows a sadistic scene in which a coolly determined monkey, unconcerned about the pain he inflicts upon the cat, as he presses its paw on the stove to pull out the hot chestnuts. The monkey restrains the struggling cat with one arm and a leg and disregards the cat's howls (the

cat's mouth is open and the head thrown back in an expression of pain), intent on retrieving the chestnuts. The monkey's face, seen in profile, seems to wear a smugly cruel smirk, and the red cloth over his shoulder suggests that he is wearing clothing of some kind, which reinforces the picture's anthropomorphic treatment. Tonally, the painting is lit with a strong chiaroscuro, and the white exposed underside of the cat receives a very high contrast in lighting, reinforcing an almost shocking sense of the animal's vulnerability at the hands of the monkey. In the context of the cultural mood, the painting's tone is one of Romantic Gothicism, and the jarringly unexpected behavior of the monkey suggests disturbing associations with human criminal behavior, surpassing anything the original fable depicted. Again, this painting was created in 1824, long before Darwin published, and reflects the prevailing cultural preoccupation of human identification with animals. However, that identification in this picture tends to the Gothic: sinister and cynical, rather than sentimental.

Yet another Landseer painting featuring explicit anthropomorphic treatment is also a fabulist-inspired piece: *The Monkey Who Had Seen the World* of 1827 (see fig. 3-15 and 3-16). Based upon a fable in rhyme by John Gay, best known as the author of *The Beggar's Opera* of 1728, it depicts a monkey dressed in a stylish red jacket, cravat, breeches, and cockaded hat, who has been abroad with the mission of researching manners superior to those of his home country:

A monkey, to reform the times,  
 Resolv'd to visit foreign climes;  
 For men in distant regions roam  
 To bring politer manners home. (Gay 52)

The image shows the well-traveled monkey, his face and powdered wig highlighted, standing with a smug air, one hand on hip, the other pressing his riding crop thoughtfully

against his lip, while not condescending to look directly at the other monkeys, who are unclothed, crouching, in shadow; one with his mouth a small round opening, suggesting awe and questioning, stretches an arm in supplication, fingering the sleeve of the fine red coat. Again, chiaroscuro is used to effect a Gothic and slightly cynical tone. The late-Baroque influence of this work is significant, as the Baroque was a source of inspiration for the Gothic school (more on this subject in Chapter V). To be sure, Landseer was trained to be the Snijders of England, as his images of fighting animals echo the dark violence of inter-species struggle seen in Baroque precedents, while his more sentimental and anthropomorphic works retain some of that Baroque mood in their lighting and dynamism. For example, Landseer's 1832 *Deer & Deerhounds in a Mountain Torrent* (see fig. 3-17) recalls not only Snijders but also is of course strongly resonant of Ploucquet's non-anthropomorphic taxidermy, in turn also influenced by Snijders, which depicts violent inter-species struggles.

As Ormond notes, monkeys were often seen in England around this pre-Darwinian time at fairs and in other display settings (39), and the monkey's physical resemblance to humans coupled with prevailing concerns regarding the human connection to animal life and nature gave rise to such imagery as *The Monkey Who Had Seen the World*, as well as Edwin Landseer's brother Thomas' book of satirical engravings, *Monkeyana, or Men in Miniature* of 1827, which depict monkeys dressed as people engaged in a variety of situations exemplifying human weakness: reckless flirtation (see fig. 3-18), drunkenness (see fig. 3-19), artistic pretension (see fig. 3-20). As Keith Thomas puts it, people often are compelled to "attribute to animals the impulses they most feared in themselves" (41), as these works of visual art attest.

To be sure, Edwin Landseer's more sentimental animal pictures tread this boundary in a more delicate manner: they bear titles which describe moral ideals, such as *Attachment* of 1829 (see fig. 3-21), inspired by Sir Walter Scott's poem commemorating the death of a young man who died in 1805 while hiking in the Lake District and whose body was not discovered for weeks afterward, but whose faithful dog had never left his side. The small dog is pictured staring intently and expectantly into the face of his dead owner, one paw lightly but pleadingly poised upon the corpse's chest. The two figures are in the foreground at the extreme bottom of the canvas and the dog is fully lit, as is the pillow-like rock under the head of the corpse. Turner-like mists and a huge expanse of gloomy rock fill the rest of the frame. The picture evokes a sense of longing for an ideal if Gothic sort of human interpersonal emotional bond, yet at the same time evokes a sense of loss and a despairing of achieving it. In a sense the picture seems to speak of what one does not dare to expect from another human being, while evoking a strong feeling for what humans had then come to expect from dogs in terms of emotional engagement.

The entrenchment of pet-keeping by the time of this painting speaks to the evolving nature of human-animal relationships: Walter Houghton notes that the era's "fragmentation of both society and thought" broke traditional relational bonds, and people "became acutely conscious of separation," an awareness which characterizes life after industrialization—consequently there emerged feelings on a mass scale of "isolation and loneliness" (77), as mentioned in Chapter II. In a sense, as this Landseer canvas suggests, pet animals came to fill roles of emotional attachment which were now missing among people. To be sure, as Teresa Mangum has proposed, a consequent hunger for tactile affection likely drove the trajectory toward pet-keeping and emotional attachment

to animals among urbanites (21). Nostalgia and loss, as Houghton suggests, are pervasive themes of the era; “lost companionship” (77) is mourned, as are familiar patterns of inter-relatedness among community members. Industrialism generated a new relationship “without relatedness” (78) to both labor and community, according to Houghton, which in turn mitigated the human connection to animals. This painting and the powerful message it sends by means of its title is thus a summary of an emotional picture of an era.

Likewise, *Dignity and Impudence* (see fig. 3-22) depicts a stately bloodhound and a wiry terrier, their heads framed in a wooden doorway, the bloodhound embodying an ideal of patience and decorum, gazing calmly to the side, while the smaller dog is poised, focused and alert, seemingly ready to pounce at the next provocation, assertive though small. The painting’s title renders the animals as generic representations of these types of idealized human moral conditions. Other works of Landseer’s, such as *The Old Shepherd’s Chief Mourner* (see fig. 3-23), depict scenarios which portray animals taking the place of humans in emotionally charged social rituals. In these works, animals embody ideals by implication through expression of emotion we recognize by reading the treatment of the dogs’ facial muscles and physical demeanor, rather than by crude anthropomorphic trappings such as contrived bi-pedalism or the wearing of clothing; hence the images are powerfully evocative emotionally. As Stephen T. Asma has noted, regarding spectator resonance, emotions are “more effectively triggered by powerful imagery than by scientific prose” (35)—however, this observation is true not only in this context but in most others.<sup>42</sup> In short, animals in these works stand in for ideals of human

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<sup>42</sup> Jeff Lichtman, Professor of Molecular and Cellular Biology at Harvard, manages research on brain imaging in his lab. He notes that neuroscience research

interpersonal attachment, reinforcing notions of emotional connection by means of anthropomorphic treatment. Also implicit is the suggestion of loss of human inter-relatedness and a longing for connection.

Landseer also painted the renowned lion-tamer Van Amburgh, whose shows were well attended by Queen Victoria; she commissioned Landseer's *Isaac Van Amburgh and His Animals* in 1839 (see fig. 3-24), which shows Van Amburgh's allegedly "terrifying physical intimacy" (Donald 195) with a diverse range of wild animals; yet, ironically, as the taxidermy historian Pat Morris notes, the animals in this painting (as well as in others of Landseer's) are taxidermied: "Van Amburgh is shown sprawled languidly among an assortment of ostensibly fierce animals . . . he is stroking a tiger-skin rug and propping up a stuffed lamb so badly mounted that it is clearly about to fall. The lioness has glass eyes" (245), observes Morris. The painting is a charade on many levels and speaks not only to the hollow pretensions of British imperialism but also to the absence of genuine emotional connection.

Thus Victorians by 1851 were well conditioned to notions of anthropomorphism through popular visual art and literature and the cosmological questions surrounding it, though not yet in the explicit manner of the anthropomorphic taxidermy of Hermann Ploucquet at the Great Exhibition in that year. Despite habituation to anthropomorphic artistic treatment and the psychic identification with animals which it suggests, and though the human capacity for empathy with animals and other human beings certainly grew at this point in history, ambivalence regarding attitudes toward the lives of animals, despite the huge degree of change in relationship with humans, is plainly evinced by the

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supports the notion that humans learn more quickly and reach conceptual understanding more thoroughly by looking at images than by reading (Lecture, March 2009).

mode in which “affection” for animals was expressed by the Victorian craze for taxidermy, which necessitates killing an animal before it can be stuffed and made an object for aesthetic contemplation. Walter Potter’s comments to an interviewer (see Chapter II), in which he carefully disavows harming animals who nevertheless appear in his tableaux, distinctly emphasize this ambivalence. Potter refrains from boasting about killing the animals—after all, the species he employed were considered either pests or nuisances, not dangerous symbols of savagery—yet the care taken to minimize the sense of animal suffering speaks to the need to rationalize it. Competing feelings such as these reveal a deeply entrenched ambivalence.

When Edwin Landseer died in 1873, at which point his work was “familiar everywhere” (Ormond 22), he was given a public funeral. Ormond reports that on that day, shops closed their blinds and flag were flown at half-mast, the Trafalgar Square lions designed by Landseer were decorated with mourning wreaths, and large crowds gathered to observe the funeral cortege (21-22). In his last years, Landseer was beset by extreme paranoia and was often unable to recognize people he knew well; a sketch he made of himself having been killed by a lion, titled *My Last Night’s Nightmare* well represents his mental and emotional condition, one of fear of being totally overcome by a powerful feeling of beast-like proportions. Yet as Ormond notes, the recuperative power of work had served Landseer very well, insofar as the results of it represented an impulse to integrate a fragmented inner life. That his work resonated on such a wide scale speaks to its meaning for the culture of the era.

## Chapter IV

### Charles Waterton

In contrast to that of Hermann Ploucquet or Walter Potter, Charles Waterton's (see fig. 4-1) cultural milieu was one of aristocratic erudition, but as he was a Roman Catholic, a marginalized one. As a natural historian, Waterton (1782-1865) is best known for *Wanderings*,<sup>43</sup> his accounts of his travels in South America and elsewhere, and as a taxidermist for his advances and discoveries in technique; and, according to Pat Morris, as the "best-known British exponent of novelty taxidermy apart from Walter Potter" (*History* 136), although "novelty" is perhaps too facile an adjective to describe the satirically motivated anthropomorphic or caricaturish works he created from preserved animal parts. Additionally he should be better known than he is for his prescient and pioneering work in environmental and wildlife conservation, yet for a variety of reasons he has been historically trivialized as a whimsical Victorian eccentric. His most recent biographer<sup>44</sup> has corrected much of the historical record, yet this otherwise rectified account of Waterton's life and achievements is dismissive of this "novelty" taxidermic work, making no connection with the wider context of taxidermy, and especially with the phenomenon of anthropomorphic works of the Victorian era. Hence in this chapter I will

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<sup>43</sup> The full title of this book is *Wanderings in South America, the North-West of the United States, and the Antilles, in the years 1812, 1816, 1820 and 1824, with Original Instructions for the Perfect Preservation of Birds, &c. for Cabinets of Natural History*; it was originally published in 1825.

<sup>44</sup> I refer to Julia Blackburn's biography of 1989. A subsequent biography by B. W. Edington, published in 1996, though entailing some useful research, is too full of hyperbole and open resentment of Blackburn's work to be taken seriously.

discuss the extant anthropomorphic taxidermic works within the context of Waterton's family, cultural, and social life.

Waterton family records can be traced as far back as the year 1159, when a Reiner Waterton became Lord Waterton in Lancashire County; Charles was the twenty-seventh Waterton to inherit the title, although since the Reformation it could not be used.<sup>45</sup> Historically, consequential Watertons figured in subsequent centuries: they were among the Catholic lords involved in the War of the Roses, and they “distinguished themselves at Agincourt and Marston Moor” (Wakefield 2). As Julia Blackburn points out, the name of an ancestor (“Sir Robert Waterton”) appears in Shakespeare’s *Richard III* (7). During the reign of Henry VIII, England broke with papal authority and dissolved the monasteries, resulting in the establishment of the Church of England. Monastery farmland, which had been worked by tenant farmers, had also provided refuge to the impoverished; when Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries and handed over the land to private owners in return for their support, a subsequent uprising was quelled with the execution of its leaders. Those who retained Catholicism practiced in secret. After 1688, William III prohibited Catholics from attending English universities, from sitting in Parliament, from holding commissions in the army, and from holding the office of justice of the peace. Catholics were not permitted to maintain a horse valued at over five pounds, or use more than two horses to pull a carriage. As Blackburn points out, despite some of these regulations having lapsed or changed as of the end of the eighteenth century, the stigma attached to being Catholic remained, and those who resisted conversion were considered outcasts (6-9). Resentment lived on for hundreds of years, as evinced in

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<sup>45</sup> Unless otherwise noted, family history and biographical details are from Julia Blackburn’s biography of 1989.

Waterton's reference to Henry VIII as "our royal goat" (*Essays* 5). By the time of Waterton's birth in 1782, his family land consisted of the house, Walton Hall<sup>46</sup> (see fig. 4-2) in Yorkshire, about 300 acres of park surrounding it, some nearby rental cottages, farms, and arable land. The income from the property sustained the family, but it was far from wealthy. As Blackburn puts it, the family in Yorkshire represented a remote "pocket of resistance" living independently of the surrounding Protestant community and practicing a "siege mentality" (8), isolated as it was with Walton Hall being situated on an island approachable by a gate and a narrow bridge. To be sure, most of the Waterton family, by the time Charles succeeded to the estate in 1806, had left England in the interim and settled in Catholic countries in Europe or in North or South America.

Waterton's father, "fond of out-door natural history" and a "good scholar," according to Norman Moore, was "prevented by the penal laws against Roman Catholics from holding even the office of a magistrate" (in Waterton, *Essays* 2). What few anecdotal stories of the father remain point to his love of hunting. As a child, Charles Waterton had been told by his father a tale of brown rats and black rats: the tale was a zoomorphized allegorical rendering of the history of William III and his invasion of England. Brown "Hanoverian" rats, it was said, had landed in England in 1688, to mercilessly kill or force the native black rats into exile in the countryside where they were prevented not only from exercising power or authority of any kind but from exercising rights in common with their conquerors. This metaphorical treatment handed down from generation to generation preserved Catholic identity and kept alive the justifiable resentment of a self-righteous and oppressive state. However, as Blackburn

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<sup>46</sup> The property is now a hotel (see fig. 4-3).

points out, resentment of actual “Hanoverian,” or brown, rats on Charles Waterton’s part eclipsed the metaphorical and he developed an obsession with catching and killing brown rats through a variety of means: with teams of cats, clever traps, and specially concocted poisons. His identification with the black rat, and more importantly his murderous rage directed at the brown rat, reflects an internalization of the anthropomorphism and zoomorphism of the allegorical fable and is a conspicuous measure of the intense resentment resulting from his social position, his sense of powerlessness to correct or even address the inequality, and ostracism from the community at large, including the professional realm. Waterton’s letters and writings abound with indignant allusions to this resentment—as he notes, for example, in his autobiographical introduction to his *Essays*,

In good Queen Mary's days there was a short tide of flood in our favour and Thomas Waterton of Walton Hall was High Sheriff of York. This was the last public commission held by our family. The succeeding reigns brought every species of reproach and indignity upon us. We were declared totally incapable of serving our country; we were held up to the scorn of a deluded multitude as damnable idolators, and we were unceremoniously ousted out of our tenements, our only crime being a conscientious adherence to the creed of our ancestors professed by England for nine long centuries before the Reformation. So determined were the new religionists that we should grope our way to heaven along the crooked and gloomy path which they had laid out for us that they made us pay twenty pounds a month by way of penalty for refusing to hear a married parson read prayers in the Church of Sandal Magna, which venerable edifice had been stripped of its altar, its crucifix, its chalice, its tabernacle, and all its holy ornaments, not for the love of God but for the private use and benefit of those who had laid their sacrilegious hands upon them. My ancestors acted wisely. I myself would rather run the risk of going to hell with St. Edward the Confessor, Venerable Bede, and St. Thomas of Canterbury than make a dash at heaven in company with Harry VIII, Queen Bess, and Dutch William. (6)

A powerfully traumatic and formative event in Waterton’s childhood was an incident in which a visitor’s dog became rabid and was hence killed, after which

Waterton's mother assembled him and his siblings (he was the eldest, with four brothers and a sister) and forced them to drink a potion to induce vomiting, as a precaution against infection. However, his mother also ordered that Charles' own dog, despite being healthy, be hanged as a further precaution, and this powerful shock persisted in his emotional memory as an adult. Later an encounter with a fox, as a member of a hunting party, would resonate similarly (see below).

As a child, Waterton appears to have found refuge in the natural environs of Walton Hall, frequently sneaking from his bedroom to sit in a tree and observe animal and bird behavior by moonlight—as Blackburn puts it, his mode of connection with the natural world was “tactile” (12), evinced by this behavior and by other occasions, for example, when he put a rook's egg in his mouth and replaced it in its nest to test the bird's reaction to the changed egg; or when he chewed on a piece of a swallow's nest to determine its flavor. There is a striking similarity with Walter Potter's childhood fondness for quiet observation of nature; further, Norman Moore fleetingly mentions a sister—again, an important relationship also for both Potter and Ploucquet—of whom Waterton “was very fond” and with whom he passed “sweet childish days in the meadows and under the trees of Walton” (in Waterton, *Essays* 8). Yet Potter does not seem to have been forced to sneak out of his house in the way in which Waterton did, suggesting that the behavior would have been punishable had he been caught. To be sure, at the new Catholic school, Tudhoe, in Durham County, where he was initially sent at age nine, Waterton, as he puts it himself, “made a vast proficiency in the art of finding birds' nests.” He continues ironically, “it was judged necessary by the master of the school to repress this inordinate relish for ornithological architecture, which, in his estimation,

could be productive of no good.” Therefore the schoolmaster frequently beat him with a birch-rod, failing however to “efface his ruling passion” for nature and birds’ nests, but rather “rendering it more distinct and clear” (*Essays* 8). Yet the young Waterton recounts that, again with a tone of irony, that “one morning whilst [one of the priests] was treating me to the unwelcome application of a birch rod, I flew at the calf of his leg and made him remember the sharpness of my teeth . . . priests always wore breeches and worsted stockings, so these were no defence against the teeth of an enraged boy writhing under a correctional scourge” (*Essays* 9). He mentions that based upon the type of wig<sup>47</sup> the Reverend master wore, he could determine whether or not he would be beaten that day—one wig indicated that a journey outside of the school would take place and hence entail relief from beating; the other was a sign that the master would remain on the school premises and that a beating would likely ensue. Waterton remarks with a pain-concealing flippancy that in this way “the ordinary lot of adventurous schoolboys” proceeded along “in their thorny path to the temple of erudition” (*Essays* 10). Among these anecdotes in the autobiography which precedes the natural-history essays, it is striking how many of them involve animals and how few center upon people, with the exceptions, for example, of the birch-rod wielding Reverend master and a short account of a boy Waterton attempted to help by smuggling out a letter to the boy’s sister, which contained a plea for rescue—surely an indication, despite the irony of the anecdotes regarding beatings, of the intense pain and misery the boys endured as students at Tudhoe. Otherwise he describes

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<sup>47</sup> Waterton discovered that a cat “had kittened” in one of the wigs when it was laid upon a shelf (*Essays* 11). The anecdote further confirms the sense of his curiosity and willingness to explore and observe nature in a variety of unexpected aspects.

being frequently tricked by groups of other boys, for example, into killing a neighboring farmer's goose, or into riding a cow.

Waterton left Tudhoe in 1796 for Stonyhurst, in Lancashire, a Jesuit college founded only in 1794 when English religious schools based in Belgium, France, and other parts of Europe were forced to return to England because of the revolution. At this time, although the process of change was incremental, Catholics were not permitted to attend English universities without accepting the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England, which effectively meant renouncing Catholicism. Hence it was fortunate that Stonyhurst came into being when it did, as it suited him very well. Norman Moore summarizes this experience: "His instructors encouraged as far as possible his love for Natural History. At the same time they gave him a taste for literature. Thus his time passed gaily at Stonyhurst and during the six years he stayed there he laid up a store of knowledge and went through a training which did much to make his whole life pleasant" (in Waterton, *Essays* 18). Waterton here too indulged his compulsion to explore the natural landscape and the animals inhabiting it:

Notwithstanding the vigilance of these lynx-eyed guardians [the prefects who kept watch over the boys], I would now and then manage to escape and would bolt into a very extensive labyrinth of yew and holly trees close at hand. It was the chosen place for animated nature. Birds in particular used to frequent the spacious inclosure both to obtain food and to enjoy security. . . I once took a cut through it to a neighbouring wood where I knew of a carrion crow's nest . . . . (*Essays* 20)

Waterton describes how the teaching staff, rather than punish him for his compelling interest in natural history, "with a magnanimity and excellent exercise of judgment . . . sagaciously managed matters in such a way as to enable me to ride my hobby to a certain

extent and still at the same time to prevent me from giving bad example” (*Essays* 20).

Further, Waterton notes:

The permission which they granted me to work in my favourite vocation when it did not interfere with the important duties of education enabled me to commence a career which in after times afforded me a world of pleasure in the far distant regions of Brazil and Guiana. To the latest hour of my life I shall acknowledge with feelings of sincerest gratitude the many acts of paternal kindness which I so often received at the hands of the learned and generous Fathers of Stonyhurst College. (*Essays* 21)

Thus the nurturance he received at Stonyhurst formed set him on course for his life as a natural historian.

By 1801 Waterton had completed his education and went to stay with his father and mother at Walton Hall for a year. During this year, an influential encounter with an animal occurred; indeed, Waterton was never to forget this incident, evinced by his essay about it written fifty-five years later: at a fox-hunt, his hunting party, with one of the more ostentatious enthusiasts of the sport, the Earl of Darlington (see fig. 4-4), spent more than an hour chasing a fox, who eluded them around the edge of a wood:

I happened to be resting quietly on my horse in one of the rides when old Reynard, panting and bewildered, with his once handsome brush now wet and dirty and his tongue lolling out of his mouth, wished to cross the path but on seeing me he stopped short and stared me full in the face. ‘Poor little fellow,’ said I to him, ‘Thy fate is sealed! Thy strength has left thee; in a few minutes more, thou wilt be torn in pieces.’ He then shrunk back again into the wood as if to try another chance for life. (*Essays* 218)

As Blackburn notes, the encounter was one of many Waterton would have with a variety of animals (20), yet the unexpected face-to-face encounter seems to have marked a turning point in Waterton’s way of life, which would lead to a renunciation of the values of the gentry concerning nature as well as self-reflection upon how he preferred to occupy his time. Continues Waterton on the value of fox-hunting, with dark irony, “Long

may Great Britain boast of her useful pastime, which is of its kind free from knaves, free from pickpockets, free from the necessity of a police attendance” (*Essays* 222). The fox in the above “manly and exhilarating” (*Essays* 218) hunt is killed not by Lord Darlington’s hounds, but by a “greasy butcher’s dog” who happens by at an opportune moment to unexpectedly kill the fox: a butcher’s dog, “the lowest of its race,” accomplishing that which “the best-bred hounds in Christendom had spent the long-live day” trying strenuously to do (*Essays* 223), humiliating the “noble owner of the hounds,” who “lost all temper and made grimaces as though he had been stung by pismires” (*Essays* 219). In fact, Darlington’s Raby Hunt was at the vanguard of the fox-hunting trend among the gentry of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, as acts of enclosure, the cause of extensive suffering among the working class (see Chapter II), permitted more area for the sport to take place, allowing long runs and jumping. Waterton’s ironic tone referred to the dissolute behavior of the hunters, who, he suggests, indulged in heavy drinking and gambling, by telling us that such behavior cannot possibly occur when the hunters may be “many miles off during the whole course of the day.” A rider, after all, may be thrown and “suddenly get his neck broken,” hence to “militate decidedly against gambling in any of its odious phases” (*Essays* 222). The brilliance of Waterton’s ironic and scathingly incisive wit is evinced in these observations; the same mordancy and mode of delivery are also seen in his “novelty” taxidermic works.

Although one of the Jesuit teachers at Stonyhurst had made Waterton promise never to drink wine or spirits (a promise kept), the post-Stonyhurst year at Walton Hall allegedly caused Waterton’s father to be concerned about his son’s involvement with

Darlington's hunting parties, despite the fact that it was he who had introduced them. Richard Hobson, not a source to be entirely trusted—Waterton's former physician with whom he had a serious falling out in 1862—makes the case that the elder Waterton feared that his son's continued involvement with Darlington would lead to a life of debauchery and asserts that Waterton countered with the above-quoted assurance to his father that riding to hounds “militates against” gambling and drinking; yet it is likely that Hobson merely lifted these words from Waterton's autobiographical essay and placed them in what he then shaped as a dramatic scenario of father-son confrontation (Hobson 189-90). Waterton himself simply describes his father uttering a choice Latin phrase—but these are likely Charles' own words, as it was he who peppered his speech and writing with Latin and classical literary allusions—“*Studium quid inutile tentas?*” [Father to son: “Why attempt to study the useless?”], here quoting Ovid (*Essays* 22). In any case, without explicit denunciation of Darlington and his way of life, Waterton depicts his father as releasing him from what would have been a “*studium inutile*” and embarked in 1802 for Spain to visit his two maternal uncles, “who had received brilliant educations but who were not considered worthy to serve their country in any genteel or confidential capacity, unless they would apostatize from the faith of their ancestors [and] had deemed it prudent to leave their native land and retire to foreign climes” (*Essays* 22).

Ornithological observations and an excursion to Gibraltar to observe baboons (about which he would write in his essay, “The Monkey Family”) occupied Waterton for about a year, when an epidemic of yellow fever broke out; Waterton himself fell ill but survived. Tens of thousands died, including one of Waterton's uncles, whose body was, as Waterton wrote, “conveyed at midnight to the outskirts of town, there to be put into

one of the pits, which the galley-slaves had dug during the day for the reception of the dead; but they could not spare room for the coffin, so the body was taken out of it and thrown upon the heap which already occupied the pit.” He adds that “it was sad in the extreme to see the bodies placed in the streets at the close of day, to be ready for the dead-carts as they passed along” (*Essays* xxxv-xxxvi), a frightful scene of gloom, horror and vultures. Horrifyingly, at the same time, powerful earthquakes occurred, “shock succeeding shock” (*Essays* xxxvi). Accounts of these tremors and a recent large-scale earthquake in Lisbon later obsessed Victorian London with its fixation on the geological implications of the origin and evolution of life (see Chapter I). Waterton describes the sense of resignation with which victims of yellow fever submitted to death, yet the horror of the earthquakes was unendurable: “The idea of being swallowed up alive by the yawning earth at a moment’s notice made you sick at heart and almost fearful of your own shadow” (*Essays* xxxvii). Waterton survived this complex trauma and sailed back to England, a harrowing experience in itself, at the end of 1803. Waterton himself attributes his survival to blood-letting, a practice he learned to perform upon himself, and which he subsequently used regularly, reflecting a need to purge not only physically but emotionally, and in a sense metaphorically.

After his return to Walton Hall, surprisingly, Waterton “again hunted with Lord Darlington” (*Essays* xl), evidently a temptation not easily withstood despite his earlier expressed conviction. He must therefore have struggled with the decisions regarding the course of his life but soon sought to go to Demerara, where a paternal uncle owned sugar plantations and where his father had recently purchased land for the benefit of the younger Waterton brothers, to manage those properties. He sailed 29 November 1804 and

stayed until 1813, having managed the sugar estates until 1812, by which time his father had died.<sup>48</sup> One of his return visits to Walton Hall was in late 1805, after his father's death, when he inherited the estate and its annual income of about £700.

Sir Joseph Banks, most well known for having traveled with Captain Cook and as a president of the Royal Society, was also a patron of explorers of countries unknown to the English. Banks encouraged Waterton to investigate curare (Waterton refers to it as “wourali” in *Wanderings*), a poison used by natives of Guiana, to acquire samples of it and to ascertain its medical usefulness (Blackburn 27, Wakefield 2). Having resigned from the managing of the sugar estates, Waterton obliged Banks (although Banks did not sponsor Waterton financially) and obtained the poison, experimenting with it, about which he writes in *Wanderings* and *Essays*. This first excursion into the jungles of Guiana was among the first made by any European. Guides—including a party of six Indians and an African slave named Daddy Quashi, who belonged to one of his uncles—were the trusted acquaintances of Charles Edmonstone, a Scottish wood merchant who had come to Guiana in 1781 and with whom Waterton became friends. Edmonstone lived with his family in a remote area, an eleven-day trip from the city of Georgetown.

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<sup>48</sup> In *Wanderings*, Waterton, in this era of the abolitionist movement and of intense debate about slavery, speaks of slavery on Demerara and places it on a continuum with British treatment of the Irish: “Had Queen Bess weighed well in her own mind the probable consequences of this lamentable traffic, it is likely she would not have been owner of two vessels in Sir John Hawkins's squadron which committed the first robbery in Negro flesh on the coast of Africa. As philanthropy is the very life and soul of this momentous question on slavery, which is certainly fraught with great difficulties and danger, perhaps it would be as well at present for the nation to turn its thoughts to poor, ill-fated Ireland where oppression, poverty, and rags make a heart-rending appeal to the feelings of the benevolent” (294); and further, “Slavery can never be defended; he whose heart is not of iron can never wish to be able to defend it. While he heaves a sigh for the poor Negro in captivity, he wishes from his soul that the traffic had been stifled in its birth . . .” (114).

Edmonstone's wife's mother was an Arawak Indian, and one of Edmonstone's daughter's would become Waterton's wife. Edmonstone was employed as a Burgher Captain and as Protector of the Indians by the British government and led expeditions to track down runaway slaves. However, as Blackburn points out, he "infuriated his superiors" (35) by insisting that captured slaves be granted pardons and not returned to their former owners, but permitted to leave the colony and go to the adjacent island of their choice as free men. Charles Edmonstone is notable as well for his relationship to a former slave, whose family had lived on Edmonstone's land at Warrow's Point on the Mibiri Creek and later went with the Edmonstone family when they returned to Scotland. The former slave, John Edmonstone, as he was known, was taught ornithological taxidermy by Waterton in Guiana and later was employed by the Edinburgh Museum as a stuffer. Waterton notes regarding Warrow's Point in *Wanderings*,

It was upon this hill in former days that I first tried to teach John, the black slave of my friend Mr. Edmonstone the proper way to do birds. But John had poor abilities and it required much time and patience to drive any thing into him. Some years after this, his master took him to Scotland where, becoming free, John left him and got employed in the Glasgow and then the Edinburgh museum. (158)

Despite the assertion of "poor abilities," likely the reflection of Waterton's perfectionism, John must have been sufficiently skilled to have been employed by the Edinburgh Museum. Further, Charles Darwin writes in his autobiography of his medical-student days in Edinburgh that "a Negro lived in Edinburgh, who had traveled with Waterton and gained his livelihood by stuffing birds, which he did excellently; he gave me lessons for payment, and I often used to sit with him, for he was a very pleasant and intelligent man" (qtd. in Freeman 83).

Through Edmonstone and his close association with the indigenous people of Guiana, Waterton learned much regarding the variety of plant and animal life of the island. He developed a rapport with the indigenous people; it appears that Waterton learned to live much as the Indians did, cooperating with and submitting to nature rather than conceiving of it as an adversary to be surmounted and triumphed over. He writes, “Shoes and stockings I seldom had on . . . they retarded me in the chase of wild beasts” (159). He learned to climb trees barefoot and forage for food, while enduring severely ulcerated insect bites and a variety of persistent fevers and illnesses whose origins were unknown, as well as to withstand generally severe physical privation. As an explorer, Waterton’s intentions were to observe and study plant and animal life, and to search for the mythical Lake Parima, about which, not having found it, Waterton elegantly concedes that it may never have existed, quoting Horace: “Grammatici certant et adhuc sub iudice lis est [Scholars dispute, and the case is still before the courts]” (*Wanderings* 51). Blackburn points out that Waterton had no commission, private or governmental, to explore Guiana, aside from indulging Banks’ interest in *curare* (40). However, when he returned to England, he was offered a commission to explore Madagascar. He ultimately refused this commission ostensibly because of his struggle with chronic fever (he describes his own condition as having been “broken down with sickness”) but later expressed bitter regret at having done so:

This was in the month of May 1813. The ague still annoying me cruelly, I wrote to Lord Bathurst and begged to resign the commission. Horace once condemned himself for running away—‘Relicta non bene parmula [Dishonorably, I left my shield behind]’—It was for me to have condemned myself too on this occasion for I never acted so much against my own interest as when I declined to go to Madagascar. I ought to have proceeded thither by all means and to have let the tertian ague take its chance. My commission was a star of the first magnitude. It appeared after

a long night of political darkness which had prevented the family from journeying onwards for the space of nearly three centuries. I can fancy that it beckoned to me and that a voice from it said, ‘Come and serve your country, come and restore your family name to the national calendar from which it has been so long and so unjustly withdrawn . . . where the patriots of yesterday have looked down upon it with scorn and contempt and have pronounced it unworthy to bear its country's flag.’ I ought to have listened to this supposed adviser at the time, but I did not, and the star went down below the horizon to appear no more. (*Essays* 41)

Emotionally, Waterton was deeply conditioned to the role of outsider, and it is questionable that his own psyche could resist reversing the role, which in a sense reflected a sort of trauma-based comfort, albeit pathological rather than one based upon healthy psychic integration.

Waterton’s third journey to Guiana in 1820 found him arrived in Demerara<sup>49</sup> now with specially built trunks for holding a variety of types and sizes of animals specimens, along with his indispensable “copies of Horace and Cervantes” (Blackburn 81). His last meeting with Sir Joseph Banks entailed a conversation which reflected the urgency of the necessity for improvements in taxidermy technique; this urgency centered upon not only the need for collection and identification of species heretofore unknown to the British, but of preservation of specimens which did not compromise the physical integrity of the animal. Previous specimens, heretofore unknown to the vanguard of the scientific community in England had been packed and shipped often with appendages—legs, noses, lips, feet—cut off, to facilitate fitting in available crates, making it easy to mis-identify or draw inaccurate conclusions about specimen anatomy. Blackburn cites, for example,

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<sup>49</sup> A yellow-fever epidemic coincided with his arrival, but his earlier illness in Malaga made him immune to the disease: “Sad and mournful was the story we heard from the river Demerara. The yellow fever had swept off numbers of the old inhabitants and the mortal remains of many a new comer were daily passing down the streets, in slow and mute procession to their last resting place” (*Wanderings* 157).

legless birds of paradise, which had “caused great excitement among scientific ornithologists” (80), who initially believed they were examining a species of bird which naturally had no legs. Hence Waterton’s purpose-built cases: his observations of a range of species during his previous journeys informed the decisions regarding the dimensions of the cases, so he was prepared to both preserve animals in the field and ship them back safely in appropriately sized crates.

Waterton collected a variety of birds and quadrupeds, and having perfected a new method of preserving the skins, was satisfied with the astonishingly life-like results. His method entailed soaking “the whole skin in an alcoholic solution of perchloride of mercury, to keep this moist, and to model the form from the interior, letting it harden when finished; internal stuffing was thus rendered unnecessary” (Wakefield 4). It was his intention to hold a series of public lectures about these preserved specimens once he returned to England and to inspire the reform of the technique of taxidermy not only by chemical improvements but by ensuring an effect of liveliness and anatomical accuracy based upon the careful observation of the behavior of living animals. However, when he landed at Liverpool in 1825, he was confronted by an overbearing, bureaucratic port official named Lushington who insisted upon receiving a custom duty of 20% of the value of Waterton’s specimens. This Treasury tax, as Norman Moore puts it, was “most oppressive to the naturalist,” and

an appeal was made to the Lords of the Treasury [but] they exacted the uttermost farthing. Waterton was indignant at the wanton penalty imposed on his expenditure, toil, and dangers, and the contempt which was shown by the English Government for the interests of science. Every abuse of power has its victim whose wrongs rouse indignation and obtain for afterwards the justice denied to himself. Having mulcted Waterton, the Lords of the Treasury never ventured to repeat their barbarous conduct and all

the specimens of future travellers were admitted duty free. (in Waterton, *Essays* 56)

Waterton himself describes the affair in *Wanderings* in which a modest duty was initially imposed upon the cargo by consensus of the employees of the Liverpool Custom-house, in consideration of his having “left a comfortable home in quest of science and that I had wandered into far distant climes and gone barefooted, ill-clothed and ill-fed through swamps and woods to procure specimens, some of which had never been seen in Europe” and that “it would be difficult to fix a price upon specimens which had never been bought or sold and which never were to be, as they were intended to ornament my own house” (249). However, while they were inspecting the boxes, another gentleman then appeared—the aforementioned Lushington—“without preface or apology” and “wonderfully aware of his own consequence” (250) who announced that no boxes were to be opened without his permission and that he was not satisfied with his inferiors’ accounting of the value of duty to be paid. The collection of specimens was detained in Liverpool for six weeks, and Waterton meanwhile, furious at the indignity, returned to Yorkshire. In Waterton’s view, an exemption from taxation would serve as an encouragement of the study and pursuit of natural history; the injustice of his having spent his own money in the interest of science for benefit of the public and now being “doomed to pay for my success” outraged him. As usual, when moved emotionally, Waterton cites Latin literary sources, and when very moved, additionally cites Cervantes, at this point quoting Sancho Panza as though he were an old and dear friend: “However, this is nothing new; Sancho Panza must have heard of similar cases, for he says ‘Muchos van por lana y vuelven trasquilados’—many go for wool and come home shorn” (253). The depth of his distress over the incident is measured by his abandonment of his

intention to lecture publicly regarding his revolutionary methods of taxidermy. Having “attacked and slain a modern Python and rode on the back of a cayman<sup>50</sup> . . . alone and barefoot, pulled poisonous snakes out of their lurking places, climbed up trees to peep into holes for bats and vampires, and for days together hastened through sun and rain to the thickest parts of the forest to procure specimens I had never got before . . . pursued the wild beasts over hill and dale, through swamps and quagmires” (254), Waterton, because of the order from the Treasury to pay duty for his specimens unless they were presented to a public institution, felt

a damp cast upon my energy and forced as it were the cup of Lethe to my lips, by drinking which I have forgot my former intention of giving a lecture in public on preparing specimens to adorn museums. In fine it is this ungenerous treatment that has paralyzed my plans and caused me to give up the idea I once had of inserting here the newly discovered mode of preparing quadrupeds and serpents, and without it the account of this last expedition to the wilds of Guiana is nothing but a fragment. (254-55)

The intensity of Waterton’s feelings regarding this affair is important because it led to the creation of his first farcical work of taxidermy, the *Nondescript* (see fig. 4-6), which I will discuss below. He was subsequently unwilling to pursue further natural-history expeditions for another three years but in 1824 made a fourth journey to North America, particularly to observe birds.<sup>51</sup> Landing in New York, he traveled to the town of Utica, the name of which stimulates a digressive musing upon Cato “and his misfortunes” while sitting under an oak tree: “Victrix causa Diis placuit, sed victa Catoni [The victorious

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<sup>50</sup> In Guiana Waterton and his Indian guides captured a cayman, during which process Waterton jumped on the back of the animal to subdue it. His friend, Captain Edwin Jones, painted a rather fanciful portrait of Waterton astride the cayman, which contributed to the myth of Waterton’s eccentricity (see fig. 4-5)

<sup>51</sup> On this trip, he also traveled to Philadelphia, where he met George Ord and sat for the portrait painted by Charles Wilson Peale shown in Figure 1.

cause pleased the Gods, but the conquered pleased Cato].” The digressive association appears to have resonated emotionally, as he notes, reflecting upon Cato, “There is something magnificent in the idea of a man taking by choice the conquered side” (*Wanderings* 262). Thus a sort of traumatic comfort with his emotional position as an outsider is strongly evinced.

*Wanderings* at this point wanders into an even longer digressive aside regarding the original city of Troy, when Waterton arrives in Troy, New York. Written in a style and syntax which has more in common with the eighteenth century than with the early- to mid-nineteenth, *Wanderings* shows the influence of Laurence Sterne; Sterne, a favorite of Waterton, was a champion of the literary digression<sup>52</sup> and according to D.W. Jefferson possibly “the last great writer in that tradition” (227). In a sense, Waterton distinguishes himself aesthetically from the other Victorian taxidermists who are subjects of this study by the Augustan tone of his “novelty” taxidermic works, which decidedly reflects a sensibility of an era more akin to that of Sterne’s than the mid-Victorian. The *Nondescript*, for example, an engraving of which was published in *Wanderings*, represents both something of a digression—as it is placed in the context of a book whose subject is the collection of animal specimens for scientific study—and a satiric wit which feels typical of Sterne, Swift, Pope, and an Augustan comic tradition, a type of scholarly or learned wit which owes its character to a pre-Enlightenment era, to paraphrase Jefferson. More on this subject below.

How did the *Nondescript* come to be? Waterton created the man-like monkey (or monkey-like man) by skillfully fusing together pieces of unrelated animals into an

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<sup>52</sup> As Sterne explicitly affirms in *Tristram Shandy*, “Digressions, incontestably, are the sun-shine—they are the life, the soul of reading . . .” (50).

artificial whole, ostensibly to evince the perfection of his newly developed technique. To be sure, as Pat Morris notes, such previously attempted “contrived creatures” suffered from a composition which was “transparently obvious,” but Waterton’s *Nondescript* was “surprisingly plausible” (*History* 136), owing to Waterton’s skill and advanced technique. To be sure, the appearance of the engraving, as the frontispiece to *Wanderings*<sup>53</sup> in 1825 (reproduced here as the frontispiece to this study), was scandalous: Waterton was accused by some of having murdered and stuffed a human native of Guiana; he was thought by others to have caricatured a member of the House of Commons. Although several sources make the erroneous claim that the face was fashioned from the “hind quarters of a red howler monkey,” repeated recently by Ritvo, for example (*Platypus* 55), Morris and a colleague X-rayed the piece in 1984, confirming that it is a composite structure, “the face being a separate piece, with small strips of skin hiding the join around the edges. Inside, pieces of wood and string keep the object in shape and buttons anchor the head on to the shoulders.” Unlike the skin of the red howler monkey, Morris’ analysis shows that the *Nondescript*’s “scalp fur is completely different, being short and bristly, and more like that of a lesser anteater, another species easily acquired in South America (*History* 138-39).

Waterton himself, in *Wanderings*, maintained a comic pretense of having procured a specimen of

an animal which has caused not a little speculation and astonishment. In my opinion his thick coat of hair and great length of tail put his species out of all question, but then his face and head cause the inspector to pause for a moment before he ventures to pronounce his opinion of the

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<sup>53</sup> *Wanderings* was very popular and successful, having been published in six editions.

classification. He was a large animal, and as I was pressed for daylight and moreover felt no inclination to have the whole weight of his body upon my back, I contented myself with his head and shoulders which I cut off and have brought them with me to Europe . . . The features of this animal are quite of the Grecian cast, and he has a placidity of countenance which shows that things went well with him when in life. Some gentlemen of great skill and talent on inspecting his head were convinced that the whole series of its features has been changed. Others again have hesitated and betrayed doubts not being able to make up their minds whether it be possible that the brute features of the monkey can be changed into the noble countenance of man; scinditur vulgus [the multitude is divided]. (*Wanderings* 306-07)

As D.W. Jefferson notes, “Comedy depends on pattern and order, on something which can stand distortion and yet retain its essential nature, like a human figure in a caricature” (228). So, exploiting both scientific cosmology and scholarship as well as the then-prevailing sense of destabilized boundaries between human and animal, which would only later culminate in Darwin’s explicit articulation of the connection between human and monkey, Waterton employs a learned wit and, in Jefferson’s phrase, an “elasticity in moving from the serious to the flippant” (232). Hence the entire literary episode of the Nondescript (with its visual counterpart) within *Wanderings* functions as a digression of scholarly wit, Waterton’s anger and indignation as a motivation notwithstanding—indeed, later, in *Essays*, Waterton more or less revealed this indignation, while maintaining the comic pretense in the end:

Some people imagine that I have been guilty of a deception in placing the nondescript as a frontispiece to [*Wanderings*]. Let me assure these worthies that they labour under a gross mistake. I never had the slightest intention to act so dishonourable a part. I purposely involved the frontispiece in mystery on account of the illiberality which I experienced from the Treasury on my return from Guiana. I had spent many years in trying to improve the very defective process universally followed in preparing specimens for museums. The reader will see by the letter signed Lushington [the letter is reproduced in full in *Wanderings*] that I was sentenced to pay pretty handsomely for my exertions. Stung with vexation at the unexpected contents of that peremptory letter and annoyed at the

detention of my collection, I determined not to communicate to the public the discovery which I had made of preparing specimens upon scientific principles, but in order to show what I had done I placed the nondescript in the Wanderings hoping that its appearance would stimulate to investigation those who are interested in museums. I have no wish whatever that the nondescript should pass for any other thing than that which the reader himself should wish it to pass for. Not considering myself pledged to tell its story I leave it to the reader to say what it is or what it is not. (*Essays* 58-9)

The scholarly basis for the very name of the piece, as Ritvo points out, reflects a lampooning of the Linnaean classification system; in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the term “nondescript” was a neutral expression for a species too new to have yet been labeled by naturalists; later, in the nineteenth century, side-show handbills used the term, as did William Bullock in his Egyptian Hall exhibits (see Chapter I) when he did not know the origin of a specimen—the term appealed to the non-specialist or casual spectator content with the word’s evocation of fear and mystery, and was helpful in drawing a crowd. However, the phrase to a specialist by that time was “a reproach rather than an attraction;” hence, continues Ritvo, “The evolution of the term ‘nondescript’ indicated zoologists’ increasing confidence in the power of nomenclature to define the sphere controlled by specialist knowledge” (*Platypus* 55). Waterton seems to exploit all of the permutations of these conditions of the use of the term, to comically satiric effect.

Another extant such work is *Martin Luther After His Fall* (see fig.4-7). This creature has, as Pat Morris notes, “pale grey fur and a pinkish face, superficially resembling a Hamadryas baboon, but was actually made from a chimpanzee or possibly a young gorilla . . . [it] may have come from Wombwell’s menagerie, visited by Waterton and the source of many of his exotic specimens” (*History* 139). George Wombwell’s Travelling Menagerie (later Wombwell's Royal Windsor Castle Menagerie) did indeed

display a young live gorilla, an exhibition which Waterton visited several times in 1855 and about which he writes in his *Essays*. Waterton describes a pathetic animal forced to wear clothes and kept in a small, upstairs furnished room under the care of a Miss Blight: “Through the kindness of Mrs. Wombwell and the courtesy of Miss Blight, I was enabled to pay four long visits to this harmless and amusing young creature lately kidnapped in the sunny regions of Africa,” he writes, with both detached observations of her behavior and an affectionate parting in which he and “Jenny,” as she was called (evidently a popular named for captive simians) embraced and “exchanged soft kisses.” Jenny “fell sick and breathed her last” while being exhibited in Lancashire, after which “Miss Blight wrapped her up in linen by way of winding sheet, put her in a little trunk and kindly forwarded her to Walton Hall at the close of February in the year 1856” (169-72).

Blackburn asserts that “it is known” (195) that *Martin Luther After His Fall* is made from Jenny’s body yet offers no evidence for that claim. Morris is a bit more cautious on this score, as noted above. Further, his X-ray studies of the sculpture show that

the animal is entirely hollow, with no supporting wires . . . there is a cluster of pins in each armpit, and small cones of hairy skin are pinned to the head, forming ‘horns’ . . . there is no clay to support the facial features, all the details having been formed by internal manipulation of the skin. There are no bones present; even the fingers were skinned to their tips and remain entirely hollow. (*History* 139)

The *Nondescript* had been exhibited in Georgetown, Guiana, but in Waterton’s time, *Martin Luther* was not publicly exhibited. Richard Hobson claims that the piece was located in the vestibule above the front door in the entry hall of Walton Hall. He refers to it as a “representation of the nightmare” but exaggerates to the point of absurdity and misrepresents the animal parts of which this piece is a composite, claiming that it

displays the tusks of a wild boar, the hands of a man, satanic horns, elephant's ears, bat's wings, one cloven foot, the other that of an eagle widely expanding his terrific-looking talons, and the tail of a serpent, with the following and very appropriate, and significantly communicative motto: 'Assidens pro cordiis pavore somnos auferam'—'Sitting on the region of the heart, I take away sleep by fear.' (19)

Hobson, in his zeal to frame Waterton as an untethered eccentric, is likely actually referring to the more modestly assembled *Martin Luther After His Fall*, which visually very strongly resembles an art-historical tradition of representation of the incubus, a term for which "the nightmare" is synonymous. In fact, its closest resemblance to a work of visual art depicting an incubus with which Waterton may have been familiar (although there is no evidence that he was, per se) is the Swiss immigrant painter Henry Fuseli's *The Nightmare* (see fig. 4-8). First exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1782, the year of Waterton's birth, the image had currency long into the nineteenth century and was well-reproduced and circulated as an engraving. An exemplary work of Gothicism, it "made the name" of the artist, as Nicolas Powell notes (17), and Fuseli was commissioned to paint variations of the original. Further, the image has a long history of parody throughout the nineteenth century,<sup>54</sup> indicating its reach and the likelihood that anyone who regularly read newspapers, as it was frequently featured in political cartoons, would understand its context and meaning.

What did the figure of the incubus have to do with Charles Waterton, and what was the association Waterton made with Martin Luther? The incubus in religious mythology is a male figure (its female counterpart is the succubus), a fallen angel,

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<sup>54</sup> See Powell 18 and 81-3 for examples of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century political cartoons which are based upon Fuseli's *The Nightmare*. The painting has been parodied as recently as 7 November 2011 in the English newspaper, the *Guardian* (see fig. 4-9).

according to Dorinda Neave, “banished from heaven on account of lustful desires for women . . . as an incubus was not considered human, sexual intercourse with such a creature was viewed as bestiality” (9). As discussed in Chapter III, anxiety regarding bestiality drove concerns regarding maintaining the distinction between human and animal, so the Fuseli image surely resonated in general for that reason. Further, as Erik Erikson notes, in particular about Martin Luther, belief in such demons

permitted a persistent externalization of one’s own unconscious thoughts and impulses of avarice and malice . . . sexual fantasies, too, can be treated as extra-territorial . . . sexual events, such as an all-too-vivid dream, can be blamed on the devil’s sneaky habit of lying underneath sleeping men or on top of sleeping women: ‘unter oder oblegen’ in Luther’s words; succubus or incubus in those of theology. (60)

Hence, Waterton’s *Martin Luther After the Fall* is not a simple taxidermied simian but features devil-like horns and squats as though sitting on the chest of a sleeping person; it strongly resembles the depiction of the incubus in Fuseli’s well-known *Nightmare*—the evocation of which of course is reinforced by the piece’s Latin inscription, quoted above. Martin Luther, in his own day, in response to his challenge to the authority of the Pope, was vilified bitterly as the son of not his mother’s husband but of an “impish incubus who had deluded her” (Draper 296). As an externalization of Waterton’s own emotional condition, *Martin Luther After the Fall* also resonates, although it was created well after the fact, with his remorse for his young wife’s death. He had married in 1829, at age forty-seven, the seventeen-year-old daughter, Anne, of Charles Edmonstone; she died a year later of an infection only days after giving birth to their son, Edmund. Thereafter, until the end of his life, Waterton practiced a severe asceticism, eating very little, sleeping on a wood floor in an unheated room with a wooden block for a pillow, and likely wearing a cilice. At his wife’s death, he spoke of becoming a Jesuit missionary but

was persuaded to stay at Walton Hall to care for his son, for whom his attachment was ambivalent. In lieu of joining the priesthood, his unstinting adherence to a punishing routine of physical privation suggests that he nurtured a sense of personal responsibility for Anne's death, and *Martin Luther After the Fall* is a plausible externalization of that remorse, associated as it is with sexual experience.

Other extant "novelty" works of Waterton's are the *Noctifer, the Spirit of the Dark Ages, Unknown in England before the Reformation* (see fig. 4-10), a fusion of an eagle-owl and a bittern. His *John Bull and the National Debt* (see fig. 4-11) combined a porcupine, a tortoise shell, and animal skins molded into a human countenance, using artificial human eyes with a riveting stare; "John Bull," in Pat Morris' words, is "beset by various fabricated devils made from bits of toads and nasty-looking arthropods, given labels bearing evil descriptive Latin names" (*History* 139). Lost works include *England's Reformation Zoologically Illustrated*,<sup>55</sup> descriptions of which last appeared in print in 1945 and 1946, although the piece may have been missing long before. It depicted "Henry VIII, Luther, Calvin, and related luminaries in reptilian form. Henry appears as a hideous horned toad, and the others fare little better" (Temple 439). Another source adds a bit more detail:

[In] *England's Reformation Zoologically Illustrated*, a beautifully crested bird rests on a perch above a small fragment of granite inscribed, 'The Catholic Church Triumphant: Tu es Petrus, etc.' In front and below is a repulsive-looking crab, marked 'Mother Law Church,' with eight villainous beetles, denominated 'her dissenting fry.' On the right is a big, bloated, and hideous horned-toad, with a crested tail, which we are informed is Henry VIII. To the left, another fat toad, not charming by any means, stands for 'Dutch William III.' Bishop Burnet, 'The Rev.' John Knox, Old Nick, Archbishop Cranmer, Titus Oates, and Queen Bess

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<sup>55</sup> The current curator at Stonyhurst confirms that the piece has not been in their collection for some time and that it is believed to be lost (message to author).

are represented by loathsome subterraneous specimens of crawling animals. (Gross 267)

These missing works reflect Waterton's persistent resentment of second-class status as a Catholic; yet, although despite the anger and learned wit which they show, they also speak bluntly of powerlessness and of the ineffectuality of that anger. It is all the more poignant that these works were never exhibited publicly in Waterton's lifetime, and that, indeed, he never intended to exhibit them anywhere outside of his own residence.

Why were no examples of Waterton's more conventional mounts displayed at the Great Exhibition in the Class XXIX section, despite his revolutionary technical discoveries? In fact, as Blackburn recounts, Waterton's participation was solicited by Sir Richard Owen, who corresponded with Waterton and visited him at Walton Hall in 1850 (179). In May of 1851, however, around the time the Exhibition was to open, Waterton sent a letter to Owen declining the request: ". . . not one man in ten thousand who shall pass through the Crystal Palace has ever paid sufficient attention to preserved specimens . . . it struck me forcibly that my specimens, done upon a principle never before contemplated, would be merely looked at with a nod of approbation, and that would be all" (qtd. in Blackburn 179-80). However, the following excerpt from a letter of 1 August 1850 to George Ord, well before he responded to Owen in 1851, shows an intense, intractable resentment on the matter:

What say you to our Exhibition for 1851? I will have nothing whatever to do with it; nor will I attend any of the meetings in this neighborhood for its advancement, or subscribe one farthing for its support. I consider the whole affair in as no other view than a project on the part of the once [*illegible*] Albert, to feed and reward his own countrymen at our expense. ("To George Ord")

The *Illustrated London News* in its 26 July 1851 supplement, “The Natural History of the Exhibition,” refers to birds on display, labeled as having been presented by their stuffer to Charles Waterton. Waterton is then described as “almost the father of taxidermy,” and it is noted that *Wanderings* contains

an earnest protest against the old plan of stuffing, and a well-merited denunciation of the monstrosities which are exhibited as lions and tigers in too many of our museums . . . lips and nostrils are so frequently ill-preserved, as to have shrunk back, producing a spectral-like appearance which would have frightened even the original fera if he had come across one of his kindred, decorated with such a ghastly grin . . . Mr. Waterton invented a new preservative and antiseptic liquid to prevent [such] shrinking . . . but what he insisted upon . . . is that the mere preservation of skin is but a small part of what taxidermy ought to be—that the character, gait, and general air of the animal ought to be copied . . . (133)

Waterton addresses a letter to the newspaper in which he mentions declining the invitation to submit entries for the display at the Great Exhibition but that he had instead sent “specimens in the four departments of quadrupeds, birds, reptiles, and insects to the Royal College of Surgeons” to demonstrate “to lovers of natural history what can be effected in taxidermy when true principles are called into action.” He notes further that after examining the taxidermy displays at the Crystal Palace, he “went away dissatisfied” and that “the mode of preparation universally followed in taxidermy is so devoid of real principle” that it can never succeed, be the pursuer “ever so clever and intelligent” (“Taxidermy in the Great Exhibition” 150). There follows an exchange of letters published in the *Illustrated London News* between J.B.P. Dennis, a taxidermist whose stuffed peacock was displayed at the Great Exhibition, and Waterton, whose tone becomes more boldly sardonic with each sally. Dennis’ painfully weak retort to Waterton’s critique of the peacock—“I never said that the bird was perfection”

(“Taxidermy” 531) only inspired Waterton to fully express his contempt, albeit couched in wit and learning:

Quantum mutatus! [How changed!] By Nimrod, this is the most unsightly bird that ever a wandering forester fell in with! Where are the peacock’s nostrils, I ask? Where is that arched protuberance which in life was so apparent and which guarded the nasal sinuosities? Alas! It has shrunk to nothing, causing the face of the bird to be as ugly as that as poor Deiphobus the Trojan: ‘Truncas inhonesto vulnere nares’ [“His nose shamefully mutilated”].<sup>56</sup> (“Peacock” 531)

Waterton had asserted that the treatment of the peacock’s feet was particularly bad: he cites the “shriveled legs and toes” of Mr. Dennis’ peacock as a “lamentable deformity,” noting that only after Mr. Dennis addresses the problem of the feet will he then “invade the upper regions of [Mr. Dennis’] peacock, because “it were useless to inspect the garret when the foundation itself is seen to be defective” (“Taxidermy” 471).

Unfortunately no record exists of Waterton’s specific response to Ploucquet’s work shown at the Great Exhibition, which he surely must have seen. However, having seen it all and “gone away dissatisfied,” there is little doubt that Ploucquet’s work was no exception to a general contemptuous dismissal of the works shown in Class XXIX. In the end, to have refused the invitation to participate served to reinforce Waterton’s sense of his own marginality, with, as mentioned, a kind of pathological comfort, but now he could claim a superiority which justified the division between himself and the mainstream culture, certainly a less wounding position emotionally.

Why is Charles Waterton remembered above all for being an eccentric? Certainly he effectively alienated some among the scientific establishment with his unconcern for the reception of his opinions regarding the work of those whom he could not respect. His

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<sup>56</sup> Waterton quotes Virgil’s *Aeneid*.

asceticism, his shabby clothes, his unusually short hair, his athleticism were habits his contemporaries found odd; because, although they harmed no one, they were nevertheless outside of the ordinary, and hence he did not only fail to meet social expectations but openly questioned them. He did not shy away from critiquing an injustice, entering into more than one public argument. Yet those arguments often evinced prescience, as in environmental concerns, such as his legal battle to force a Yorkshire soap manufacturer to desist from dumping toxic runoff into the local river. He struggled to build the bird population on his property, where no guns were permitted, and decried the wanton shooting and killing of birds and animals for sport. As the acts of enclosure had led to the disappearance of habitats, around his park he built a thick stone wall to discourage predators and a starling tower with sixty nesting holes; he planted a crescent of yew trees and grew other plantings which would encourage birds to nest, creating what was effectively the world's first bird sanctuary. Past the age of eighty, he enjoyed climbing trees to better observe the birds. His former friend and physician, Dr. Hobson, served to promote the notion of Waterton's eccentricity by publishing a biography shortly after Waterton's death, which fixated upon these unusual personal habits and presented his life in a series of decontextualized and unrelated anecdotes which were exaggerated and embellished for comically scandalous effect, as with the *Martin Luther* sculpture noted above. Edith Sitwell featured Waterton in her *English Eccentrics*, in which she refers to him as an "adolescent gorilla" (262), and she mocks his humanity for having opened the park at Walton Hall to the local villagers, including the inmates of the local insane asylum, reducing such gestures to "pranks" (264). As his young friend of his later life, Norman Moore, notes in his editorial comments in *Essays*, Waterton did not hesitate to

take “the honest stand against a conventional folly” (47). He was always out of place, whether as a white man in the jungles of Guiana or as a shabbily dressed aristocrat in Yorkshire. Marginalized as a Catholic, his taxidermic works reinforced this perception of him, as they were made to depict the perspective of the excluded. Having refused the government commission to explore Madagascar, he missed the chance, as he himself was aware, to join the mainstream and to be distinguished as a conventional professional rather than remain an isolated amateur. When Waterton died at age eighty-three after having taken a severe fall, his son Edmund, so unlike his father—extravagant and self-indulgent—set about destroying everything his father had worked so strenuously to create: the birds were shot in organized hunting parties, trees cut down, and the natural history collection sent to Tudhoe, the school which Waterton despised (Blackburn 215-16). Stonyhurst later acquired the collection, however, where it is today, while some of the pieces are on long-term loan to the Wakefield Museum in Yorkshire.

As Moore notes about Waterton, “The pharisees of Natural Science stigmatised [him] for an unscientific amateur because he did not belong to any of their trades unions, because he had not disfigured his vigorous idiomatic English with the jargon of systematists, and because he had studied nature in the forest and not according to their vain traditions” (in Waterton, *Essays* 57). As Waterton remarked about himself, “I am like a stricken deer walking apart from the rest of the herd” (*Essays* 61), a summary anthropomorphic snapshot of his emotional condition.

## Chapter V

### Aesthetics

The use of animals in taxidermy echoes the tradition of animal metaphor found in sixteenth-century emblem books which codified the iconography of painting and sculpture. In emblem books such as Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, a guide to the use and interpretation of allegorical images, images of animals and other objects are presented as containing specific allegorical meanings; such formally codified allegorical animal imagery was widely used by visual artists from the sixteenth century. Aside from serving as iconographical guidebooks, emblem books, both secular and religious, were also used as pedagogical or didactic tools for the many who could not read, strongly connecting iconographic codes with metaphorical moral meaning, particularly regarding animal imagery. For example, Ripa's *Iconologia* (first published in 1593) in a seventeenth-century English translation, gives this description regarding the depiction of a lion in a work of visual art, "He seeks to punish him heavily who has stricken or wounded him, either with darts or spears. Also he suffers not that any one is wronged, but he punishes the same" (134). The Ripa icon which depicts a courageous youth, Decoro, holding symbolic objects, including a lion skin, thus emblemizes these qualities (see fig. 5-1). Ripa's *Iconologia* was used by English painters and sculptors and throughout Europe until the late eighteenth century; the English themselves produced emblem books as well, such as Geoffrey Whitney's *A Choice of Emblemes* of 1586. Hence with such a visual

guidebook, the iconography of painting and sculpture could be reproduced by formula and its moral or pedagogic associations popularized and standardized.

I mention codified iconography because its visual legacy is important: the animal metaphor it externalizes as a set of classified, meaning-laden images still plays a profound role in how we conceive of interpersonal relationships, and it is hence central to anthropomorphism. Such three-dimensional works as Walter Potter's could not exist without this sort of metaphorical conceptualizing. Not only is the symbol-classification system important in the above respects, it also, as Stephen T. Asma suggests, prefigures the later taxonomic systems of natural history (89-101), which would become connected with taxidermic specimen collection. The metaphorical or symbolic meanings associated with animal imagery remain vestigial, to this day.

Medieval bestiaries also anticipated the taxonomic systems which would develop in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as the divisions of the sciences as we know them developed. As I have shown, the practice of taxidermy in the Victorian era surpassed the limited scope of taxonomic science, with which it was initially associated, and became a part of the popular visual culture; aside from ostensible scientific value, taxidermic works were evaluated critically and experienced by spectators as aesthetic objects. How do taxidermic works and their emotional tone figure within the concurrent, larger world of more conventional forms of visual culture, such as painting and architecture?

I conclude this study with the contention that taxidermy itself exists on an aesthetic continuum with concurrent movements such as Romanticism—with its offshoot, Gothicism in particular—and Pre-Raphaelism in pictorial arts, as well as with Gothic

Revivalism in architecture. All of these forms share a common attempt to externalize feelings, on a mass scale, regarding devastating and rapid social change and the sense of anxiety and loss associated with that change. Anthropomorphically treated taxidermy definitively removes the pretext of both academic science and the corresponding popular obsession with natural history; when closely examined, specific unconscious obsessions which it represents become visible. If, as mentioned, centuries hence, we now in some undefined way recognize that anthropomorphic taxidermy is emblematic of Victorian visual culture, how it and taxidermy in general as an aesthetic phenomenon corresponds with more conventional Victorian movements in visual culture warrants analysis.

Taxidermic works force the viewer, to paraphrase Coleridge, to hold a “poetic faith” in these “shadows of imagination,” a faith driven by “a willing suspension of disbelief,” a mode Coleridge described regarding emotional engagement with literary works (and by extension, I am not the first to suggest, with works of visual art), when they depict “persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic” (174). As an aesthetic experience, the supernatural incongruity of the anthropomorphically treated animal further compounds the demand upon the viewer to suspend disbelief: the combined sense of wonder and unease is experienced by the viewer when confronted with a work of conventional taxidermy but is further intensified by the deviation of anthropomorphism. The supernatural air of a dead animal made to look alive, the very trope of death masquerading as life, and the larger questions of a romanticized human relationship to nature, place the very field of taxidermy itself adjacent to the besetting aesthetic concerns of the era: the Gothic and its underlying aesthetic philosophies of the sublime and the picturesque.

The notion of the sublime as an affective state induced by aesthetic experience was first recorded in a second-century treatise of the Greek, Longinus. His treatise instructed writers on how to evoke ecstatic sensations in the reader, aesthetic response which could surpass response to mere beauty or elegance. In the mid-eighteenth century, Edmund Burke addressed the subject by theorizing that the “sublime” was a sensation distinct from beauty and went so far as to suggest that spectators are compellingly drawn to, and feel pleasure from, imagery suggestive of fear, terror, or immensity:

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 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 any delight and are simply terrible but at certain distances and with certain modifications they may be and they are delightful as we every day experience. (35-6)

This Burkean notion of the sublime in a sense forces the horrible and the beautiful not only to compete within a single artwork, but elicits pleasure from the horrible as well as from the beautiful on the condition that the source of the terror is not an actual threat—such viewer or reader experience is a defining feature of the Gothic aesthetic: thus taxidermic works exist on a continuum with this aesthetic sensibility. Further, the very concept of the Romantic sublime suggests a condition of deep emotional ambivalence, because, in effect, it demands that opposing emotions be experienced simultaneously. Anthropomorphic treatment of actual animal corpses (as opposed to mere drawings of anthropomorphically rendered animals) only compounds the intensity of these competing sensations; recall the children of Damien Hirst, at once “fascinated and repelled” by Walter Potter’s tableaux. This Longinian approach to analysis of aesthetic experience effectively supplanted the other main classical source for such analysis, that based upon

the Aristotelian notion of catharsis.<sup>57</sup> Burke's thesis exposed the crisis regarding aesthetic identity of the era (reaching its peak at the Great Exhibition; see below) and generated both assent and intense debate, notably from Kant who expanded upon some of Burke's notions; from Thomas Reid who asserted that values located in works of art, such as "power, great wisdom, and great goodness" are not inherent in the work but are "ascribed to the work figuratively" and are "inherent in the mind that made it" (qtd. in Ashfield 179); and from Frances Reynolds, who diagrammed what she termed were "the great leading general truths, or mental rests" (qtd. in Ashfield 124), a description of the stages of intellectual development of taste (see fig. 5-2). Reynolds elaborates: "Where pure grace ends, the awe of the sublime begins, compose of the influence of pain, of pleasure, of grace, and deformity, playing into each other, that the mind is unable to determine which to call it, pain, pleasure, or terror" (qtd. in Ashfield 126). Mary Wollstonecraft, in her *Vindication of the Rights of Man*, addressed to Burke in response to his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, in which he defended a romanticized Gothic tradition of chivalry, seemed to detect, to use a psychoanalytic term, the "return of the repressed" character which the espousal of the Gothic aesthetic and moral philosophy of the sublime supported—split-off parts of culture, sensuality and spirituality, psychically displaced within the banished Catholic history, seeped through the cracks: "Gothic affability is the mode you think proper to adopt, the condescension of a Baron, not the civility of a liberal man" (31). Wollstonecraft perceived that Gothicism as an aesthetic system concealed a moral one which valued feudal principles over the democratic: "Gothic notions of beauty," like ivy, "insidiously destroy the trunk from which it receives support" (9-10). In

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<sup>57</sup> See *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory*, edited by Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla, for a discussion on this subject.

a sense, in this struggle is felt the shifting of eras: Ashfield and de Bolla point out that the Augustan age had valued “wit and invention . . . and metaphorical usage based on novel turns of thought” (58) (Charles Waterton’s style and sensibility is evoked), but that novelty as an aesthetic value faded by the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>58</sup> Thus this major shift in aesthetic philosophy came about with the emergence of Romanticism, despite the sharp insight of Wollstonecraft, and it facilitated a formal approach to the experience of visual appreciation of taxidermy.

The picturesque movement, whose major proponents were Uvedale Price and William Gilpin, built upon the philosophy of the sublime: Price asserted that the “picturesque” was a third aesthetic category, after “beautiful” and “sublime.” Picturesque philosophy advocated for certain types of formal treatment in landscape design and iconography in painting; for example, rustic cottages, stylized ruins (experienced as more compelling than a whole, intact structure), and shabby country-folk in landscape were considered appropriate subjects to depict in painting. Why should a building in landscape be experienced as a ruin or a partial ruin in order to evoke an appropriate aesthetic reaction in the viewer? Such terms raise suspicions, because they reveal a need to emotionally manage anxiety associated with the visual environment. In a sense there is an emotional correspondence with fashioning dead animals to appear live to better manage the human engagement in the relationship with the animal; in both cases, in the context of the changing use of land (see Chapter II) as well as that of the changing character of the human relationship to animals (see Chapter III), the attempt at emotional mediation of these transformations through the creation of works of art is observable. Further, the

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<sup>58</sup> The novel, as a new literary form, also was the object of suspicion. It is notable that Gothic romances were among the first such literary works.

picturesque philosophy encouraged bourgeois travelers, as a purpose of their travels, to make their own aesthetic distinctions and to critique landscape visually, but strictly on these limited terms; thus as with manufactures and architecture, not only was little aesthetic expertise required to arrive at critical conclusions, as part of a pattern of the destabilization of the process for evaluating taste, such undertaking reflects the larger breakdown in national identity subsequent to industrialism (see discussion below).<sup>59</sup>

Hence, Gothicism, a strain of the Romanticism of Coleridge and his colleagues, with its parallels to the aforementioned eighteenth-century aesthetic theory, figured especially powerfully from the early- to late-nineteenth century in the visual arts, beyond its original heyday in literature. As an emotional undercurrent, it is observed externalized in the visual culture and is concurrent with the rise of taxidermic art in such modes as painting from the late-eighteenth through the mid-to-late-nineteenth centuries—in particular in the ruined abbeys of a variety of artists who pursued this iconographically Gothic theme (see fig. 5-3, 5-4, 5-5, 5-6, 5-7, 5-8, and 5-9). It is also seen in the brooding mists of J.M.W. Turner (see fig. 5-10), the darker themes of Landseer (see fig. 3-17 and 3-21), the nightmares of Henry Fuseli (see fig. 4-8), the apparitions of Washington Allston (see fig. 5-11), and more palatably and sentimentally in the idealized medieval obsessions of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Significantly, it is also observed in the building style most associated with the Victorian era, the Gothic Revival.

When Horace Walpole published his novel, *Castle of Otranto*, in 1765, it was the first occasion in which the cracks in the edifice of the age of Augustan reason were so

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<sup>59</sup> These issues are what makes Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* such a valuable indicator of the temper of the time, because it offers a satirical critique of Gothicism, the cult of the picturesque, and a defense of the novel.

powerfully externalized in a work of art, exposing as it did the developing cultural obsessions with medievalism, generating an iconography that featured the picturesque quality of ruined buildings, spectral visions, and an emotional tone reflecting an ambivalent view of nature which entailed dual emotional strains of terror and attraction, reflecting Burke's notion of the sublime—an undercurrent of which all of these concerns is morbidity, a preoccupation with deterioration, and a nostalgic wish for the revival of things which entail troubling associations. The obsession with ruined abbeys, for example, speaks to a collective wish to recast the vestigial trauma of England's Reformation.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, the Reformation and the dissolution of the abbeys, of which their ruins in later centuries were reminders, was a source of continuing violent emotional preoccupation, not necessarily evoking self-reflection or an attempt at psychic integration of the experience, but rather stimulating a willingness on the part of the Protestant population to continue to project their fears and anxieties upon the Catholic minority. The popularity of narratives about medieval Catholics evinced ambivalence about what the Reformation meant to the English in the late eighteenth through the nineteenth centuries, and it pointed to an impulse to attempt an intra-psychic reconciling provoked by the intense and destabilizing social change of the era. To illustrate, *Otranto's* preface intimates that "The following [manuscript] was found in the library of an ancient Catholic family in the north of England," initiating what would become the standard Gothic literary motif of the long-hidden manuscript; "It was printed at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1529" (v). The notion of the "ancient" Catholic family appeals to the bourgeois pretense, as Kenneth Clark phrases it, to "suggest that their pedigree

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<sup>60</sup> Alison Milbank mentions a similar notion in her essay "The Victorian Gothic in English Novels and Stories, 1830-1888," in *Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*.

stretched to remote antiquity” (94), and such feeling would also support an emotional basis for the Gothic Revival in architecture, despite its association with Roman Catholicism. Thus, in such literary treatment, Catholics become the targets of ambivalence: objects of projections of fear and terror, yet at a safe remove from England in multiple ways: temporally, physically, and by virtue of medieval-style printing—all conditions for experience of a sublime sort. Non-Catholics experienced Catholics and Catholicism with deeply contradictory feelings, and as Martin Myrone points out, “For readers in the Protestant world, the rituals and institutions of Catholicism were as titillating as much as they were morally reprehensible. Gothic novelists made the most of such associations by returning repeatedly to medieval Italy or Spain as a setting” (“Fuseli, Blake, and the Romantic Imagination”). Yet the violent anti-Catholic Gordon Riots had taken place only in June 1780, just two years before Charles Waterton’s birth, in reaction to the first of Catholic Relief Acts of 1778. These loosening of restrictions against Catholics stoked groundless fears that, in the context of the war with America, British Catholics would side with the French and the Spanish, hence reviving haunting associations of the trauma of the Reformation.

In visual art, the poignant and spectral nature of Gothic imagery of ruined abbeys, however, speaks to an emotional unease, its wide appeal indicating a collectively shared concern, a displacement of deep and intense fears and split-off emotions, and as has been postulated regarding belief in vampires (concurrently popular), a psychic defense whose purpose is managing the “anticipated vengeance” of the dead (Kayton 308). The imagery of the ruined abbey as a Romantic icon speaks to a haunting ambivalence about this issue in particular, yet it lies within the scope of the complex set of concerns which began to

converge about this time, not least of which was the perceived threat to spiritualism by the development of science. To be sure, the emotional tone of melancholy and obsession with the past, literary vampirism, and obsessive fears centering on banished Catholicism speaks to the Freudian notion of the “return of the repressed,” or as Mary Morton phrases it in her essay “The Story of a Ghost,” “the return of the dissociated rather than the return of the repressed” (20), drawing upon Ronald Fairbairn’s notion of internalization of traumatic experience, in which ghosts represent “a manifestation of dissociated parts of the self” (19). Not only the spectral icons of medieval Catholicism but taxidermied animals in this sense also figure as vampire-like, walking-dead revenants, who in medieval tales could shape-shift from human to animal form (Caciola 33).

How then did Gothic Revival, an architectural movement which began to emerge at this time, with its emotional affinity to taxidermy, of bringing a dead style to life, come to visually represent the Victorian age, despite its association with Roman Catholicism? Industrialism and its mass-produced goods had shaken the integrity of the design process, yielding an era in which those with no design expertise informed the production of both the applied arts and architecture, amidst a grasping for national identity represented by the simultaneous embracing of a number of different historical styles. Henry Cole’s avowed purpose at the Great Exhibition was to redirect and correct this unmoored aesthetic trajectory, as discussed in Chapter I. However, as Jerome Buckley has noted, not only was the British industrialist notable for the “lack of restraint in his enthusiasm for the ornate” (128), professional designers, architects, and aesthetic philosophers disagreed intensely with each other, and the conflict regarding aesthetic philosophy, simmering from the late eighteenth century, reached a peak and in fact was thrown into

relief at the Great Exhibition of 1851, reflecting the intra-cultural social anxiety wrought by the consequences of the Industrial Revolution. Aesthetic disagreements often focused upon the decoration or ornamentation of objects, and among those who held clear but nevertheless competing formulations of design principles, attack and conflict was rampant. In contrast to Henry Cole's Utilitarianism was A.W.N. Pugin's exclusive espousal of Gothic Revival; Pugin referred to all other styles as "vile trash" (qtd. in Wedgwood, Section 3). Owen Jones felt that natural decorative motifs should be stylized and never realistic; Ruskin called Owen Jones's ideas "absurd" (qtd. in Burke 58). Cole himself found Ruskin's ideas "narrow" (Cole 72). The critic Ralph Nicholson Wornum called Pugin's Gothic Revival work "fatiguing" and "dead and bygone" and "only a cowl to smother all independent thought." (qtd. in Pevsner 55). John Ruskin, who contemptuously dismissed the Crystal Palace structure itself as a "magnified conservatory" (Ruskin 412), also espoused the Gothic Revival; however, Ruskin in turn was "raving mad in his detestation of Pugin," notes Nikolas Pevsner (50), as the two embraced Gothic Revival for different reasons. Christopher Dresser, whose mentor was Jones, later attacked Ruskin for attacking Jones in his 1862 *The Art of Decorative Design*, in which he defends the notion that design should depict nature's laws but not, as Ruskin would have it, the simple appearance of nature (Dresser 4-8). Further, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (not involved in the Great Exhibition), espoused Medievalism and disparaged the work of their fellow painters as "sloshy" (Marsh 15).

Despite the promise of the proto-modern Crystal Palace, and despite the aesthetic conflict among exhibitors there, Gothic Revival emerged as emblematic of the Victorian aesthetic. In the history of Gothic Revival, the fanciful Romantic Gothic mansions of

Walpole's Strawberry Hill and William Beckford's Fonthill Abbey were the first such treatments of the era to appear. Until about 1820, Gothic style was confined to domestic architecture for those who could afford to indulge in it, with its ancient associations serving to "convince the owner that he lived in an ancestral home" (Clark 99). However, moving from domestic to ecclesiastic architecture made Gothic less a Romantic fantasy and raised the troubling issue of associations with the Catholic Church. Were advocates of Gothic Revival papists or antiquarians? In ecclesiastical architecture, by stylizing certain elements and minimizing features which were strongly associated with Rome, such churches were received without much protest. In civil architecture, a "battle of styles" (Clark 108) was waged similar to that fought over applied-arts at the Great Exhibition, and after some debate, it was decided by committee that the Houses of Parliament (see fig. 5-12 and 5-13) would be rebuilt in the Gothic style, after it was destroyed by fire in 1834. A.W.N. Pugin, notably a Catholic convert and a vociferous, tenacious proponent of Gothic Revival, young and not well known at the time, was employed by Charles Barry to work on its design; as Kenneth Clark notes, "every inch of the great building's surface, inside and out" bears Pugin's stamp (133). Gothic was not simply a historical style for Pugin but entailed an obsessive embrace of the Middle Ages, as he sought to revive not only the architecture of the era but its social codes, civic spirit, and relationship of human labor to materials and community—views later appropriated and popularized by Ruskin, minus the Catholicism. However, Gothic style split from its original social and religious context survived as emblematic of the era. Still, the ambivalence surrounding the popular embrace of this style is striking. A strong, continued influence of Romanticism was reflected in the public demand for engravings of

cathedrals and in the call to build national collections of works of art with an emphasis on paintings from the “period antecedent to Raphael” (Clark 109), well before the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was actually formed. The Gothic Revival movement is somewhat reactionary, in that it recoiled from the promise of modernism of the Crystal Palace, much as the American City Beautiful movement, with its insistence on Classical revival and city layouts associated with imperial power, evinced an aesthetic antithetical to the Jeffersonian-grid ideal of democracy. To reiterate, as with the triumph of factory mass-production in applied arts, in civic architecture, little expertise was now necessary for aesthetic appreciation, and hence unexamined emotional associations ruled the day. To be sure, the Houses of Parliament, “a triumph of the Picturesque” (Clark 120), in its effect—as opposed to its authenticity—of the Gothic building tradition, nevertheless manages to visually characterize the city of London, and this building paved the way for the Gothic Revival in civic architecture. Gilbert Scott, the architect most associated with this style in the civic realm, though an admirer of Pugin, the Camden Society, and Ruskin, was not a Catholic, nor was he a medievalist. Scott’s Albert Memorial (see fig. 5-14), a triumph of kitsch, as well as his many civic buildings in London (see fig. 5-15) and elsewhere made Gothic Revival palatable, and the popularity of Ruskin’s writings, with its brutal attacks on Pugin, sealed the style’s detachment from Roman Catholicism.

The struggle for national identity reflected in this relationship with historical styles and a rapid sequence of traumatic environmental and social changes was thus mirrored in the visual culture, and clearly no newly forged identity or style would triumph; the struggle represented by the dominance of Gothic Revival came to represent the age and to be somehow identified as a national style. What is the connection with

taxidermy? Clark, in his landmark study on the Gothic Revival, refers metaphorically to the Houses of Parliament as “a great necropolis of style” (119), the “reviving of a dead style” (120), “advocacy of dead decorative forms” (219), and citing an object of the Camden Society, “the restoration of mutilated architectural remains” (155, 172), strikingly but of course unwittingly associating the trope of morbidity with this architectural movement. Gothic Revival’s affinity to taxidermy is thus located in this shared emotional framework.

As discussed, the rise of industrialism and the development of science were concurrent with these phenomena and, to be sure, engendered these complex emotional responses to the shock of such rapid and destabilizing change; its peak was reached in the mid-Victorian era. Setting the tone for the century to come, late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century works of visual art which depict factories in landscape share a tone of romantic gloom with those depicting ruined abbeys, such as John Sell Cotman’s *Bedlam Furnace* (see fig. 5-16), Paul Sandby Munn’s *Bedlam Furnace, Madeley Dale, Shropshire* (see fig. 5-17), or Philip James de Loutherbourg’s *Coalbrookdale by Night* (see fig. 5-18), a place the writer and early statistician Arthur Young characterized as “a very romantic spot . . . thickly covered with wood . . . too beautiful to be much in unison with that variety of horrors” produced by the iron mill; the flames “bursting from the furnaces . . . are altogether sublime and would unite well with craggy and bar rocks, like St. Vincent’s at Bristol” (qtd. in Klingender 89), expressing the contrast between the “exceptionally romantic” natural landscape and the industrial activity taking place there, which made the site attractive to landscape artists of the era just for this reason, according to Francis Klingender (87). As mentioned in Chapter III, baroque painters such as the

proto-Romantic Salvator Rosa (1615-1673), with his iconographic fixations upon what has been perceived to be threatening elements to tiny human figures in immense landscape—both his presumed “banditti” and natural elements—served as a source for inspiration if not outright appropriation (see fig. 5-19, 5-20, and 5-21). Rosa’s myth loomed large among the Romantics; he was rumored to have been kidnapped by and “sojourned with the bandits of the Abruzzi Mountains,” was a legend among the early English Romantic painters, his life said to be reflected in his work, notes John Sunderland (785). William Gilpin, a proponent of the picturesque, helped to circulate romantic myths about Rosa in his *Essay on Prints* of 1768:

A roving disposition, to which he is said to have given full scope, seems to have added a wildness to all his thoughts . . . he spent to early part of his life in a troop of banditti, and the rocky and desolate scenes in which he was accustomed to take refuge furnished him with those romantic ideas in landscape of which he is so exceedingly fond . . . his Robbers, as his detached figures are commonly called, are supposed to have been taken from the life. (57-8)

Thus did advocates of the Gothic visual sensibility and the closely related picturesque school wishfully locate historical precedence; their grasping for identity and embrace of history at a spatial and temporal remove reflects a psychic displacement with Romantic longing at its core. However, such engrossment was not only for professional artists: as mentioned, bourgeois travelers in search of sublime or picturesque scenery could compare the scenery they observed with works by Rosa, Poussin, and others (Sunderland 788-89) and presume to critique the difference. Again, such activity rather than being designed to condition visual sensitivity bred dilettantism, encouraged nit-picking and hair-splitting to the point of absurdity, and insensitivity to the reality of environment and a sustainable human relationship to it.

Ultimately, the connection among these seemingly disparate expressions of visual culture—Gothic-themed painting, the Gothic Revival school of architecture, and taxidermy—lies in its metaphorical expression of the sense of melancholy, morbidity, and deep emotional loss, in taxidermy by affording the semblance of life to a deceased creature, and in architecture by the “reviving” of a dead style, as well as in painting by depicting morbidly nostalgic longing. Thus these common tropes, despite the perception of humor and wit in anthropomorphic works, reveals Victorian sentiment not necessarily regarding death itself, but rather, to recapitulate John Berger’s summary characterization of the nineteenth century in Western Europe and North America, a broader sort of cultural death: that wrought by the Industrial Revolution, the death of “every tradition which had previously mediated between man and nature.”

## Conclusion

In this study, I have shown how a variety of cultural forces converged to create the conditions which resulted in the phenomenon of anthropomorphic taxidermy of the Victorian era. It is true that as a class of aesthetic objects, these works do not conform to the standards of conventional artistic formalism in either the fine or the applied arts. Not least because they defy classification as cultural artifacts, they have been marginalized, which is unfortunate, because they cry out for decoding; and when they are examined, their historical contexts as well as the biographical contexts of their creators considered, much richness of meaning is discovered.

Traditional museums have eschewed housing such works, refraining from acquiring them for their permanent collections; the Victoria and Albert Museum even chose not to include them in a catalog of a major temporary exhibit of Victorian-era objects in 2001. Why? Part of the perceived distaste concerns the use of animal corpses in these works and contributes to the perception of the objects as unconventional, eccentric works which have no place in the hierarchy of cultural artifacts, hinting as they do of low culture. As Bram Dijkstra has noted, there is “a striking fear of low culture or pop culture, a sense that high culture could be contaminated by low culture and lose some of its real value. But what is very clear to me . . . is that high culture creates the context for pop culture, and that they have a symbiotic relationship” (*Interview*). To be sure, the Industrial Revolution had effectively separated artists from the patronage of nobility, hence taste was no longer something that could be handed down from the aristocracy. As

Yvonne Ffrench (231) has pointed out, the growing Victorian middle class was left floundering without the imposition of aristocratic tastes, and thus their own bourgeois aesthetic decisions replaced those of aristocrats. Battles over class and who determines taste remain vestigial. Certainly in the Victorian era, within the entire field of taxidermy, tastes were split among social classes: aristocrats kept natural-history cabinets stocked with exotic specimens, while public houses, bourgeois homes, and inns displayed domestic birds, foxes, and rodents. Queen Victoria's praise of Ploucquet's work notwithstanding, perhaps the fear of the taint of low culture has prevented museums from acquiring such objects. However, works such as those found in Walter Potter's museum, or the long-term displays of Ploucquet's work at the relocated Crystal Palace, nevertheless drew a consistent audience, confirming their power to resonate emotionally with spectators, Potter's until the 2003 sale and Ploucuet's until the 1936 fire which destroyed it.

Certainly the distinction between high and low art, and debates of taste, have some influence on the public reception of taxidermic works. All works of taxidermy, but especially anthropomorphic figures, with their air of morbidity and strong hint of association with myths of the revenant, evoke dual emotions of discomfort and surprise. Within or without the realm of science, the discomfort of viewing taxidermy in itself is somewhat alienating for the twenty-first-century audience: animal rights, environmental issues, taste, natural history, science: all of these issues frame and influence how we perceive the taxidermied object. What Burke and others described as "sublime" was actually emotional ambivalence, a struggle between thrill and terror. But again, taste and

current social issues aside, these objects as metaphorical containers of historical meaning demand analysis.

Metaphorical human–animal conflation—not the abstraction of a literary narrative or the flatness of a two-dimensional image—but the actual carcass of an animal whose suffering and death is a condition of the creation of the work raises issues of morality and ethics within the scope of the human connection to the rest of the animal world. How Victorians created, received and archived such creations bears witness to the state of their relationship not only to animals per se at that point in history, but to a wider sense of what that relationship entailed. What we dismiss as whimsy when we consider Victorian anthropomorphic taxidermy removed from its historical context belies these disquieting elements and the layered complex set of circumstances, both social and personal, which gave rise to these artifacts.

When we look for the meaning of historical objects or of those of our own time, it is important to look closely for the emotional data encoded in the created object. In a sense the Gothic sensibility expressed by anthropomorphic taxidermic works represents the return of dissociated parts of a common history, the Catholic past, rural life, and mourning of a lost relationship to labor and animals. In his studies on the psychic process of creativity, Andrew Brink has asserted that “creativity in the arts is an emergency response to anxiety” and has admonished that often, when evaluating a work of literary or visual art, it is necessary to “look deeper” (*Creative Matrix* 189) beyond the surface appearance—in this case beyond the ostensibly whimsical—and probe the question-raising elements—biographical, iconographic, and historical—to reveal the anxious origins for the creation of the object, the process by which inner experience is formally

and externally reorganized in an impulse toward psychic homeostasis. By looking deeper, decoding reveals that anthropomorphic taxidermic works, and Gothic Revival architectural works, correspondingly emblemize the collective response to these shared traumas; and as Brink notes regarding aesthetic objects in general, “Creativity is enormously valuable as an indicator of . . . thematic anxieties, showing in the arts the human wish for wholeness being cramped, warped, or dangerously depersonalized”—yet he also observes that “the arts are often indicators of social pathology and wishes for healing” (*Creativity as Repair* 180), evoking the very grotesquerie of anthropomorphic taxidermic works which flourished in the last half of the nineteenth century.

## Appendix I

## Figures



Fig. Intro-1. *Athletic Toads* (ca. 1852) (Detail), Walter Potter. Taxidermy and mixed media. Background: oil on board; painted by Potter. Private collection. Per the Potter Museum catalog, “Common English toads, 18 of them, enjoying a sunny afternoon in the park” (1). Photographed in 2010 by Marc Hill/Apex for *The Telegraph*.



Fig. Intro-2. *The Kittens' Tea* (ca. 1880), Walter Potter. Taxidermy and mixed media. Background: oil on board, painted by Potter. Thirty-seven kittens display an “exemplary standard of feline deportment,” according to the Potter Museum catalog (15), at what must have been “a social gathering of some importance” (4). Private collection. Photographed in 2010 by Marc Hill/Apex for *The Telegraph*.



Fig. Intro-3. *The Kittens' Wedding* (1898), Walter Potter. Taxidermy and mixed media. Private collection. Photographed in 2010 by Marc Hill/Apex for *The Telegraph*.



Fig. Intro-4. *The Rabbits' Village School* (1888) (Detail), Walter Potter. Taxidermy and mixed media. “amongst the fascinating foibles of the little scholars can be seen in the one in the writing class, standing on the form crying because he has blotted his book, and the derisive look on the upturned face of his friend sitting next to him” (Potter catalog 7). Private collection. Photographed in 2010 by Marc Hill/Apex for *The Telegraph*.



Fig. Intro-5. *The Rabbits' Village School* (1888) (Detail of fig. Intro-4), Walter Potter. Photographed in 2010 by Marc Hill/Apex for *The Telegraph*.

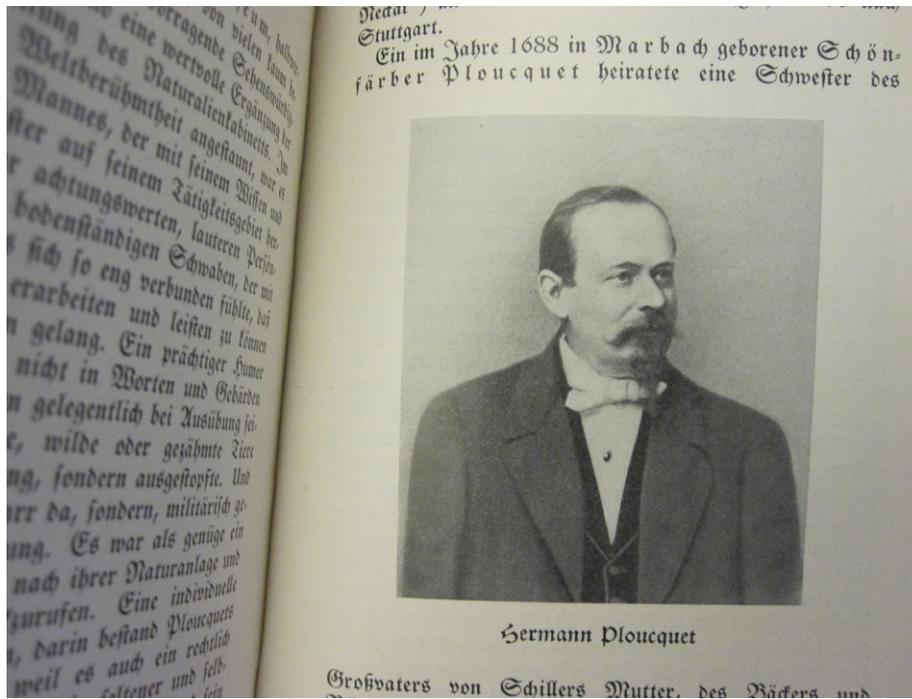


Fig. 1-1. Hermann Ploucquet pictured in *Bilder aus Alt-Stuttgart: Nach Erzähltes und Selbsterlebtes* (*Pictures of Old Stuttgart: Heard and Experienced*) by Eugen Dolmetsch (Stuttgart: Steinkopf, 1930).



Fig. 1-2. *Mr. Bullock's Exhibition of Laplanders, at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly* (1822), Thomas Rowlandson. Aquatint, 31.2 x 46.3 cm. Guildhall Library, City of London.

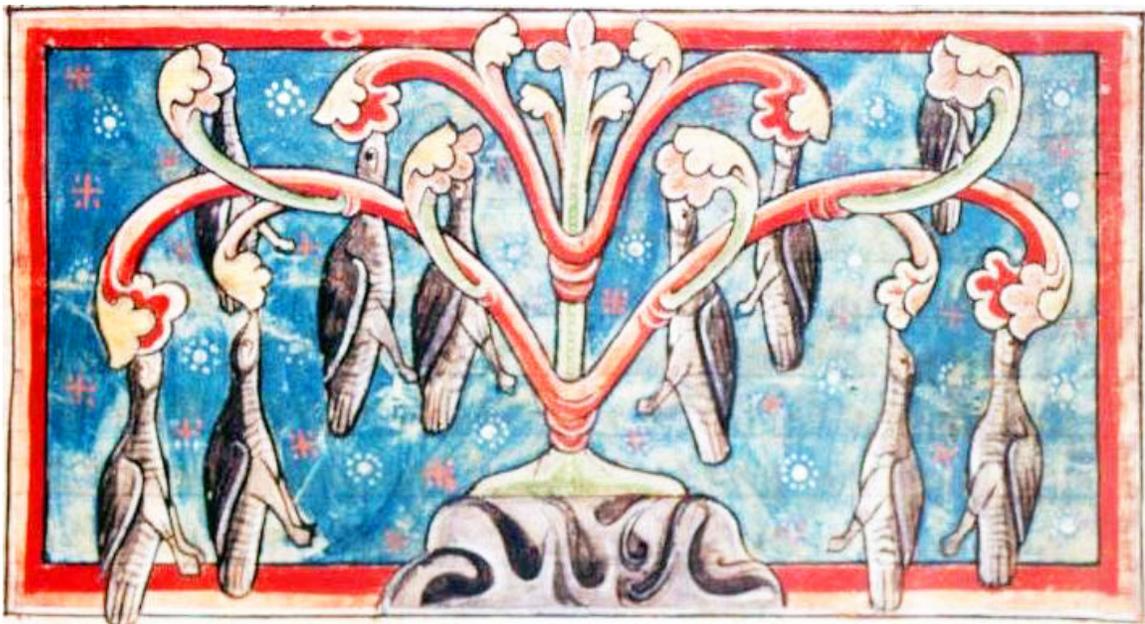


Fig.1-3. *Barnacle Geese* (ca 1230), Gerald of Wales. From *Topographia Hibernica*, first published in 1188. Collection of the British Library [025314].



Fig. 1-4. Crystal Palace exterior from the northeast. From Dickinson's *Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851* (1854).

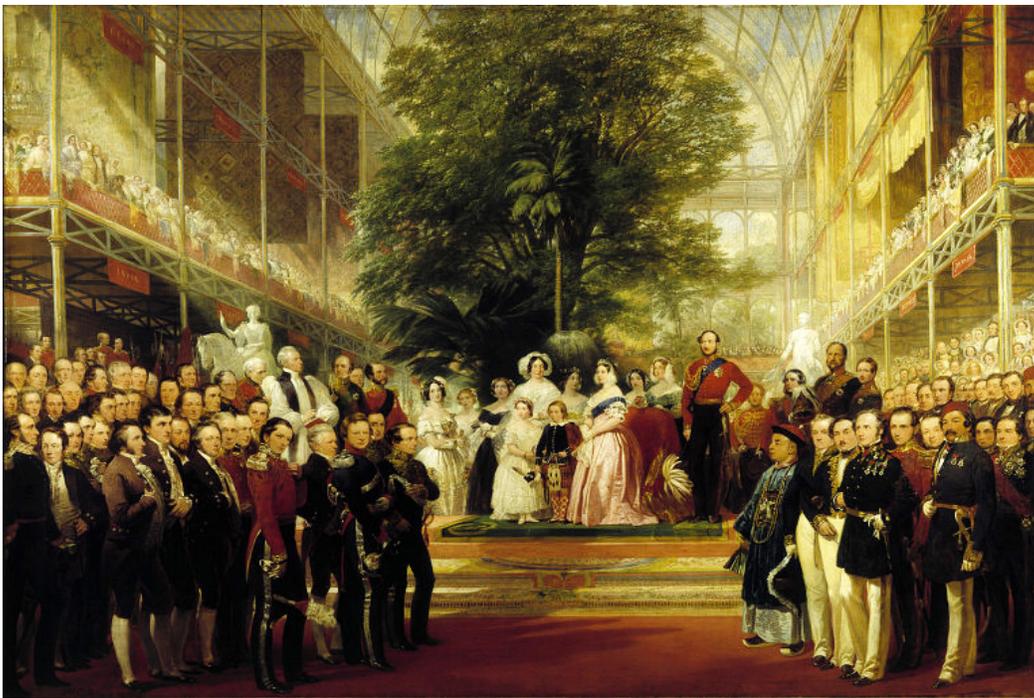


Fig. 1-5. *Opening of the Great Exhibition by Queen Victoria on 1st May 1851*. Henry Courtney Selous (1851-52). Watercolor. Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum.



776 THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS May 12, 1951

**THE V. AND A. MUSEUM RECALLS THE GREAT EXHIBITION.**



MADE AND PRESENTED TO MR. ADDERLEY, M.P., BY MEXICAN CRAFTSMEN WHO SETTLED IN 1849; THE ADDERLEY CHAIR. [Sent by Lord Warran.]



BROWN GLASS AND GLAZED BY ELECTROLYTIC PROCESS, AND CROWNED WITH ROYAL PORCELAIN ON CHINA; QUEEN VICTORIA'S JEWEL CASE, LENGTH 4 FT. 3 IN., WIDTH 4 FT. 0 IN., HEIGHT 2 FT. [Originally sent by V.R. de King.]



VASE "IN ETHIOPIAN FORM ENHANCED IN THE STYLE OF SHWELDORIAN," [Sent by the Goldsmith Co.]



A REDUCED COPY IN MEXICAN PORCELAIN OF THE FAMOUS "GREEK SLAVE" STATUE BY IVAN POWER, SHOWN IN A COPY OF THE SPECIAL SETTING, WITH MOVABLE VESTIBLES, IN WHICH THE ORIGINAL STOOD IN THE 1851 EXHIBITION. [Sent by Mr. C. H. Gibb-Smith.]



ENHANCED WITH A PORTRAIT OF PRINCE ALBERT ON CHINA; A CHAIR BY RUSSIA, WITH EXPANDED OF LATER DATE. [Sent by the Wilson and Warran, Ltd.]



DECORATED WITH A PORTRAIT OF QUEEN VICTORIA ON CHINA; A CHAIR BY RUSSIA, WITH THE ORIGINAL FURNITURE. [Sent by the Wilson and Warran, Ltd.]



A SILVER-MOUNTED AND ENGRAVED SNUFFBOX GIVE, WITH CROWN AND GREEN STAIN AND POLISHED MARBLE. IT WAS ORIGINALLY SHOWN BY BERENICE BARKLEY AND SON. [Sent by R. Hooley and Sons.]



"SCHOOLMASTER SEVERITY," A GROUP OF A STUFFED MARTEN AND BARRIS ORIGINALLY SHOWN BY G. PLOUCQUET, OF STRASBURG, IN THE GREAT EXHIBITION OF 1851. [Sent by the Victor and Albert Warran by Lord Loche.]

The Victoria and Albert Museum have, as part of their celebration for the Festival of Britain, 1951, arranged a Commemorative Centenary Show of the Great Exhibition of 1851. The exhibits include many objects still in the possession of the original exhibitors. The Adderley chair expressed the gratitude of the Duke of Good Hope Settlers to Mr. Adderley for successfully opposing the Bill to make it a penal settlement. The jewel case "in the original style" designed for Queen Victoria was made at Mr. Henry Elkington's manufactory in Birmingham. The portraits of the Queen and Prince Albert were copied from miniatures by R. Thorburn, S.A., and the small medallions of the Prince and Princess were modified from life by Leonard Wyon. "The Greek Slave," by Ivan Power, was one of the high lights of 1851, but *The Illustrated London News* of August 9, 1851, was less than accurate in its claim "to rank with the highest productions of the sculptor's art," and considered that "the incident supposed to be represented, that of a modest female forcibly exposed to a slave market... deprived it of that charm which attaches to the nude figures of ancient art... The Exhibition will continue until October 11. Admission is (children 6d.).

Fig. 1-7. Items displayed in the Commemorative Centenary Show of the Great Exhibition of 1851. Ploucquet's *Longtail Teaching the Young Rabbits Arithmetic* (ca 1850) is shown at bottom right. Also note the over-wrought design of the other items (see also fig. 1-6.). The *Illustrated London News*, 12 May 1951.

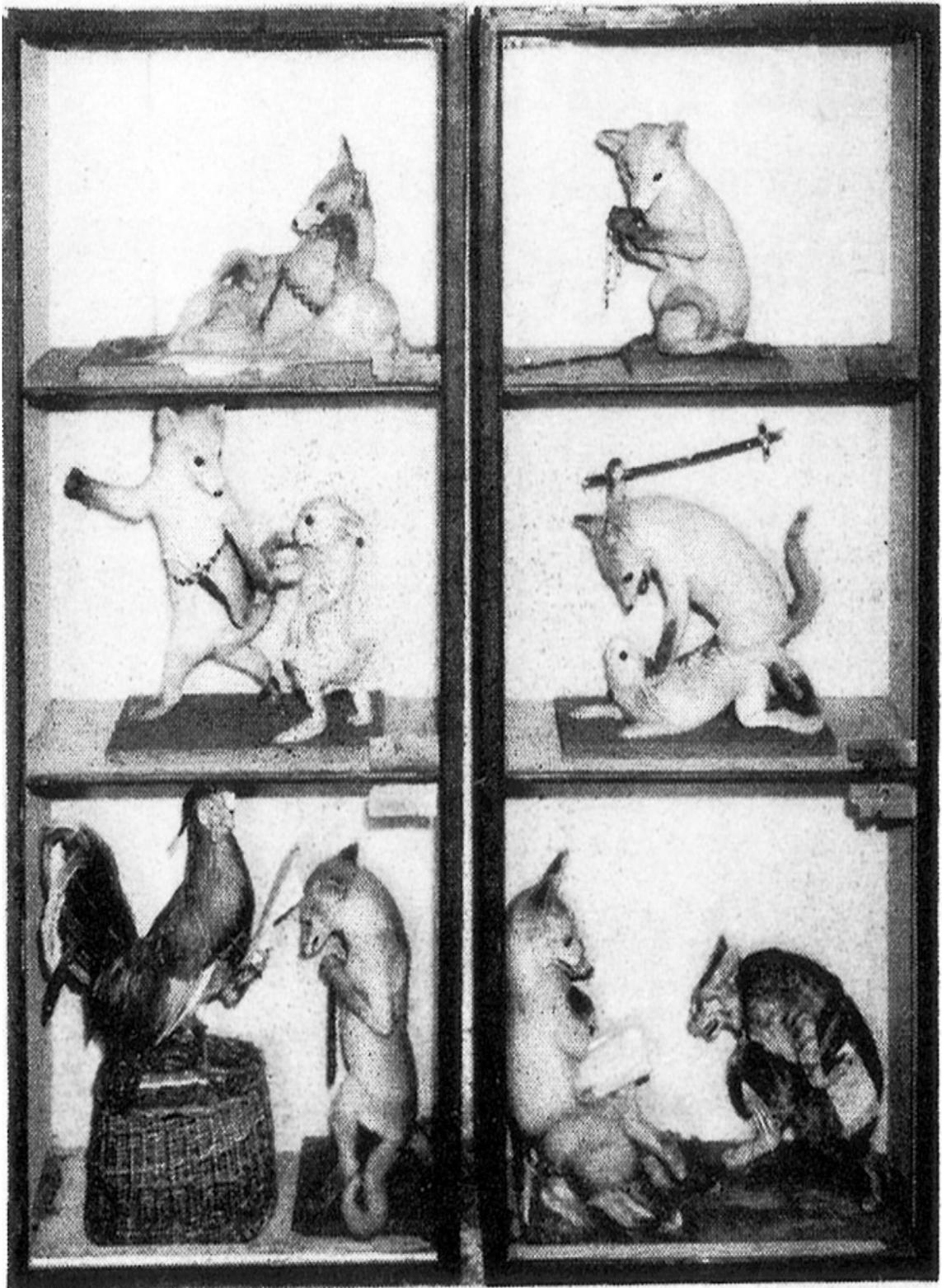


Fig. 1-8. *Reineke Fuchs (Reynard the Fox)* (ca. 1850), Hermann Ploucquet. Taxidermy and mixed media. Six tableaux, as they were shown at the Great Exhibition of 1851.

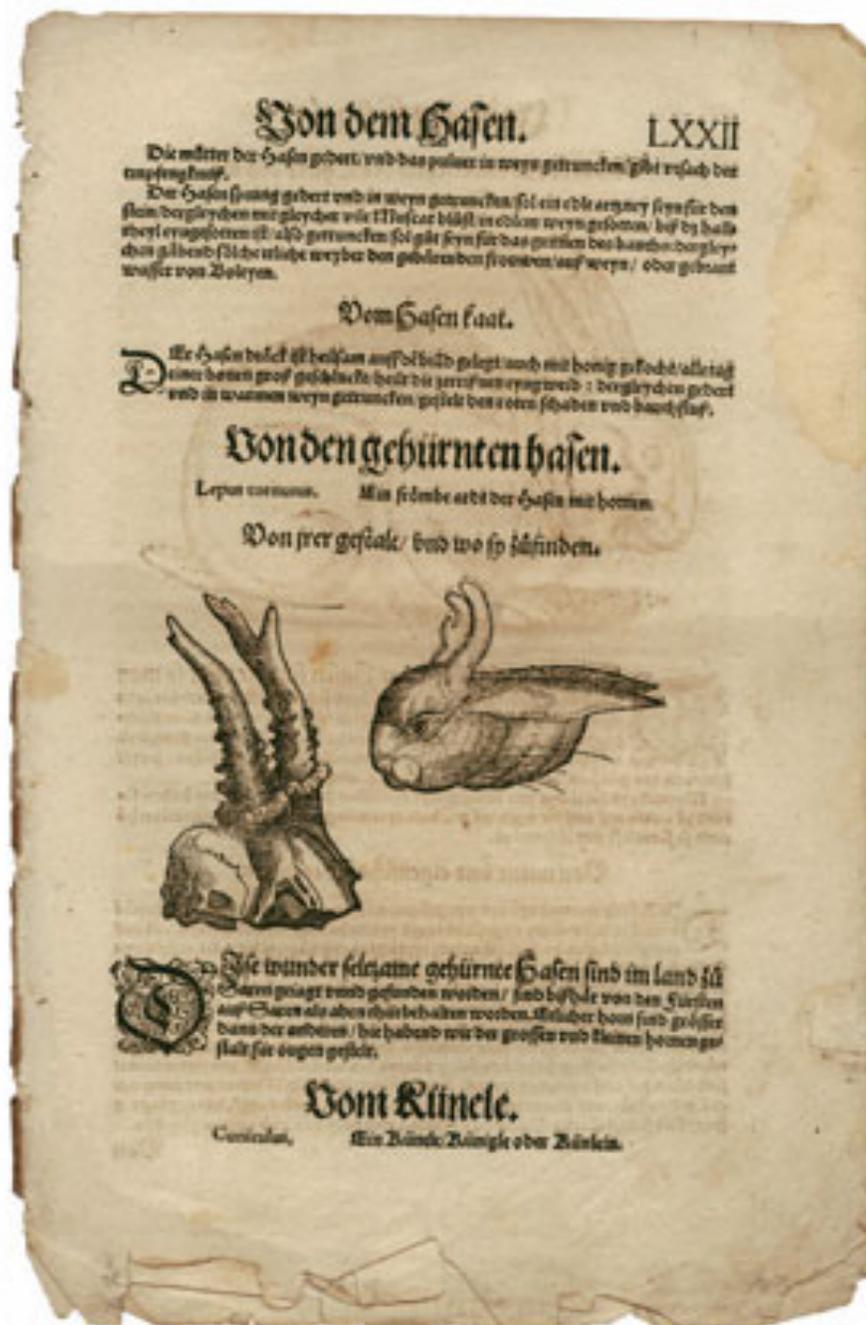
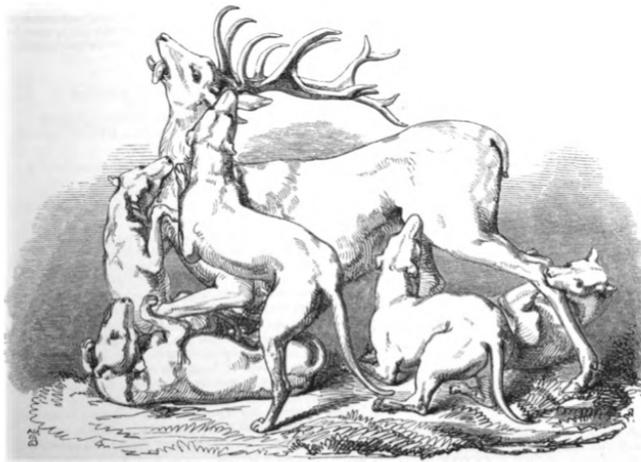
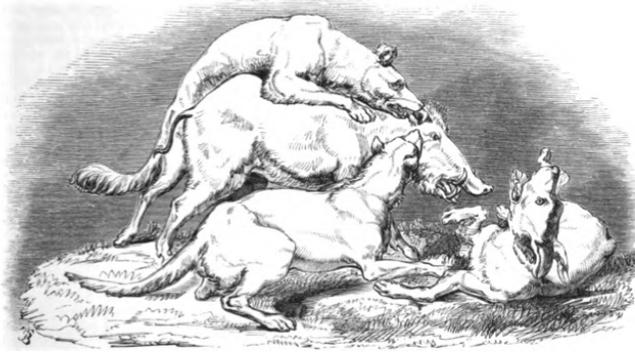


Fig. 1-9. A page from *Historia Animalium*, “Von dem gehörnten Hasen” (“Of the Horned Hare”) by Conrad Gessner, Zurich, Switzerland, 1558. The horned hare was a creature of Bavarian folklore.



220. GROUPS OF STUFFED ANIMALS. DOAR BAITING AND STAG HUNT. M. H. PLOUQUET. STUTTGART, WURTEMBERG.

Fig. 1-10. Illustrations of two of Ploucquet's groups shown at the Great Exhibition. From *The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, 1851: Official Descriptive and Illustrated Catalog*. London: Royal Commission, 1851.



Fig. 1-11. *Jacht op een Everzwijn (Wild Boar Hunt)* (ca 1600), Frans Snijders. Oil on canvas, 194 x 340 cm. Collection of the Rockoxhouse Museum, Antwerp.



Fig. 1-12. Illustration from Goethe's *Reineke Fuchs* (*Reynard the Fox*) by Wilhem von Kaulbach. First edition published by Literarisch-artistische Anstalt, Munich, 1846.



Fig. 1-13. *Reineke Fuchs* (*Reynard the Fox*) (ca. 1850) (Detail), Hermann Ploucquet. Taxidermy and mixed media. Bottom left section of six-part tableau, in which an “upright, self-important and pompous” Chanticleer reads the indictment against Reynard the Fox, who is “contrite, kneeling and clutching his rosary”—Ploucquet thus achieved “astonishing expressiveness in the animals despite his crude taxidermy method,” says Pat Morris (*History* 126). Pictured in Morris’ *A History of Taxidermy*. Private collection.

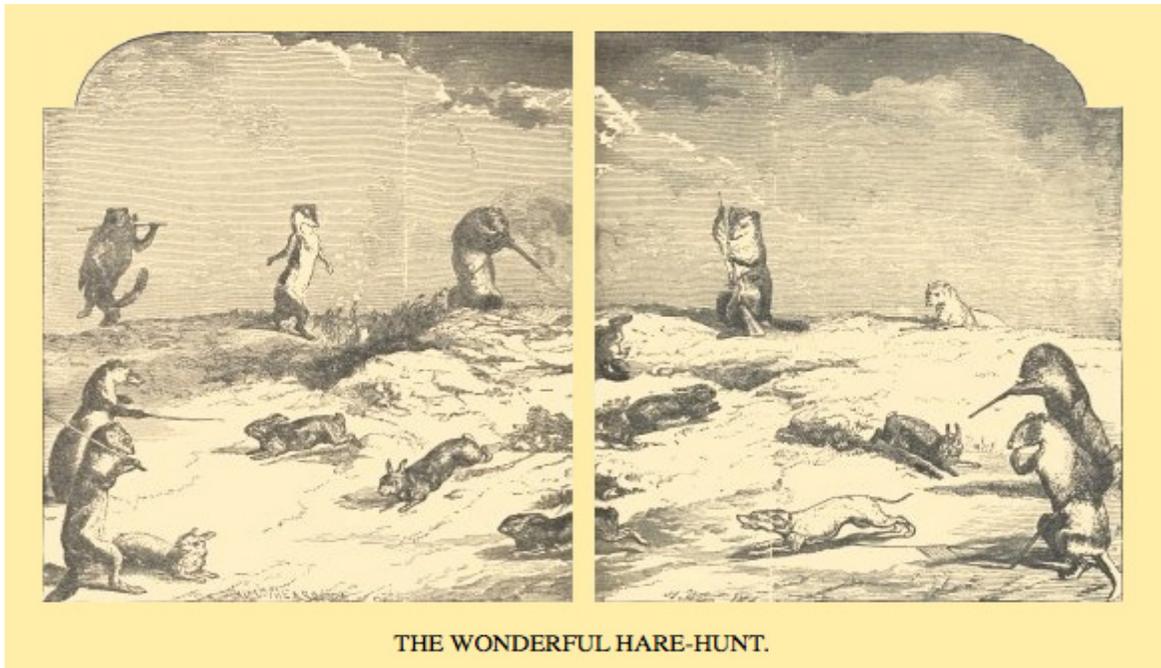


Fig. 1-14. *The Wonderful Hare-Hunt*. Frontispiece from *The Comical Creatures From Wurtemberg* (London: Bogue, 1851). Wood-engraving of Hermann Ploucquet's taxidermy tableau from a daguerreotype by Antoine Claudet (French, active in London), who had bought a license from Daguerre in 1841 to practice the art.



Fig. 1-15. *Longtail Teaching the Young Rabbits Arithmetic* (ca 1850), Hermann Ploucquet. Taxidermy and mixed media. Rabbits do sums on slates rather fearfully, at right. As shown in the Great Exhibition, 1851. Photograph from the Victoria and Albert Museum image collection; the actual work is lost. The Victoria and Albert Museum mis-identifies the piece as an 1888 English work (the photo was likely acquired in that year); no artist name is given; however, the photo exactly matches one of the *Comical Creatures* illustrations. Photograph from collection of V & A Images (Image No. 1000BW0093-01). See also fig. 1-16.



Fig. 1-16. *Longtail Teaching the Young Rabbits Arithmetic*. From *The Comical Creatures From Wurtemberg* (London: Bogue, 1851). Wood-engraving of Hermann Ploucquet's taxidermy tableau from a daguerreotype by Antoine Claudet. See also fig. 1-15.



Fig. 1-17. *Shaving: A Luxury*. From *The Comical Creatures From Wurtemberg* (London: Bogue, 1851). Wood-engraving of Hermann Ploucquet's taxidermy tableau from a daguerreotype by Antoine Claudet. The piece was re-titled for the book. There is no extant photograph of the actual work.



Fig. 1-18. *The Kittens at Tea—Miss Paulina Singing* (ca 1850), Hermann Ploucquet. Taxidermy and mixed media. “Miss Paulina” may be a reference to Herman Ploucquet’s sister, Pauline, who collaborated with him by sewing clothes and accessories for the stuffed animals. As shown in the Great Exhibition, 1851. Photograph from the Victoria and Albert Museum image collection; the actual work is lost. The Victoria and Albert Museum mis-identifies the piece as a nineteenth- or twentieth-century English work, whose title is *Mrs. Partington’s Tea Party*. No artist name is given; however, the photo exactly matches one of the *Comical Creatures* illustrations. Photograph from collection of V & A Images (Image No. 1000BW0134-01). See also fig. 1-19.

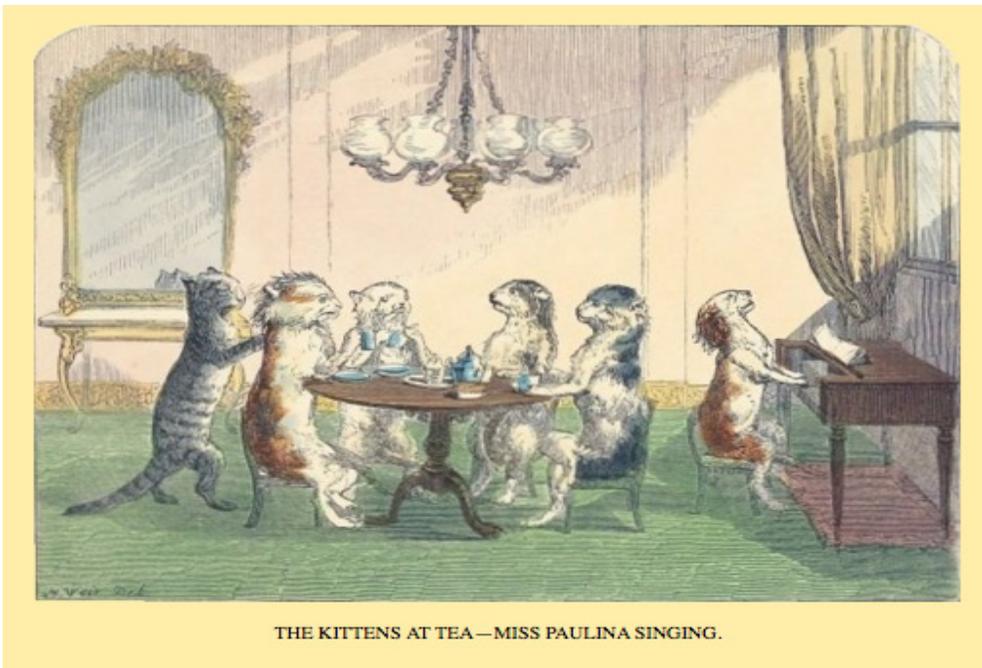


Fig. 1-19. *The Kittens at Tea—Miss Paulina Singing*. From *The Comical Creatures From Wurtemberg* (London: Bogue, 1851). Wood-engraving of Hermann Ploucquet’s taxidermy tableau from a daguerreotype by Antoine Claudet. See also Fig.1-18.

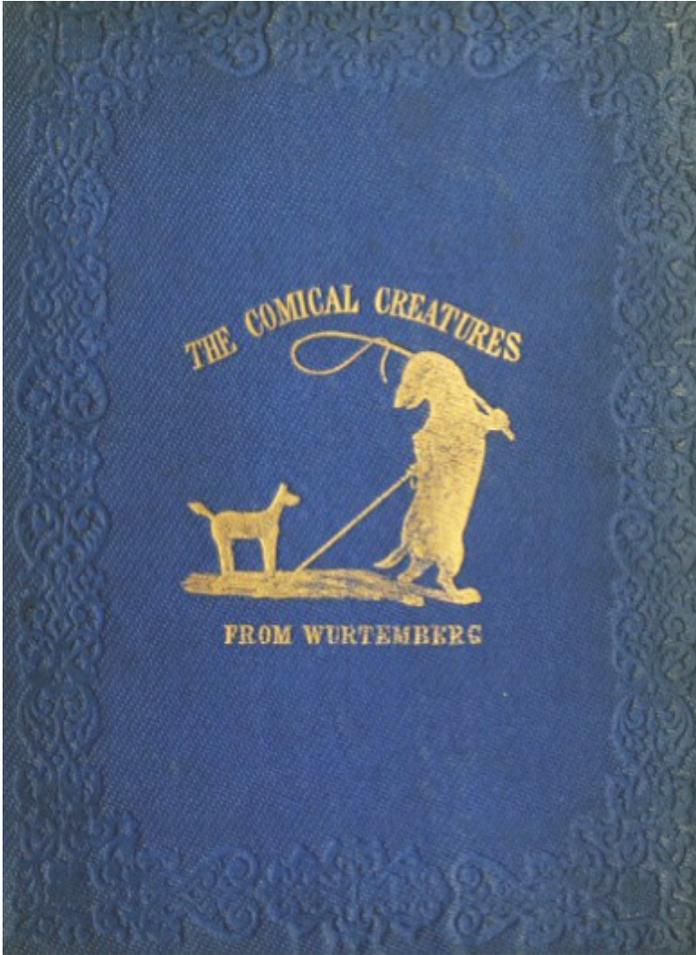


Fig. 1-20. Cover, *The Comical Creatures from Wurtemberg*. London: Bogue, 1851.

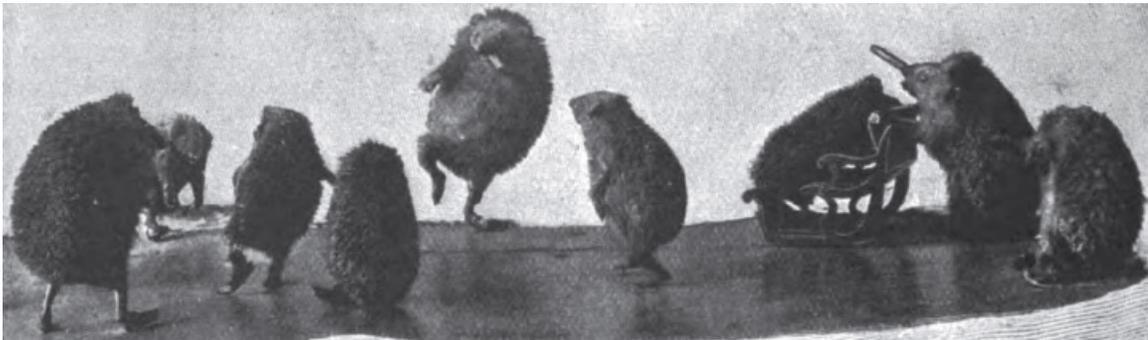


Fig. 1-21. *Skating Hedgehogs* (ca. 1860), Hermann Ploucquet. Taxidermy and mixed media. As pictured in the *Strand Magazine*, 1897. Original work lost or destroyed in 1936 Sydenham Crystal Palace fire. Exhibited at the *Victorian Era* exhibition held there in 1897, one of a series of themed exhibitions held from 1895-1906.



Fig. 1-22. *Village Dentist* (ca 1860), Hermann Ploucquet. Taxidermy and mixed media. As pictured in the *Strand Magazine*, 1897. Original work lost or destroyed in 1936 Sydenham Crystal Palace fire. Exhibited at the Victorian Era Exhibition held there in 1897, one of a series of themed exhibitions held from 1895-1906.



Fig. 2-1. *The Guinea Pigs' Cricket Match* (ca. 1870) (Detail), Walter Potter. Taxidermy and mixed media.. Background: oil on board, painted by Potter. Private collection. Photographed in 2003 for Bonhams sale catalog.



Fig. 2-2. *The Guinea Pigs' Cricket Match* (ca. 1870), Walter Potter. Taxidermy and mixed media. Background: oil on board, painted by Potter. This detail shows musical instruments made by Potter from chalk molds and molten tin. Private collection. Photographed in 2003 for Bonhams sale catalog.



Fig. 2-3. *Harvest Home: Sunset, the Last Load* (1853), John Linnell. Oil on canvas, 88.3 x 147.3 cm. Pastorals such as this one were intended by the artist to “evoke a golden, rural past,” according to the Tate display caption. Tate Britain [N02060].



Fig. 2-4. *The Vagrants* (1868), Frederick Walker. Oil on canvas, 83.2 x 126.4 cm. This painting began as an illustration; it was exhibited at the Royal Academy. It sparked some influence among later social-realist painters, such as Hubert von Herkomer. Tate Britain [N01209].



Fig. 2-5. *The Sinews of Old England* (1857), George Elgar Hicks. Watercolor heightened with body color and gum Arabic. Private collection.



Fig. 2-6. *The Death and Burial of Cock Robin* (completed 1861), Walter Potter. Taxidermy and mixed media. Private collection. Photographed in 2003 for Bonhams sale catalog.



Fig. 2-7. *Portrait of Walter Potter* (undated), Bernard Lucas. Oil on canvas, 38 x 30.5 cm. Private collection. Photograph from Bonham's sale catalog, 2003.



Fig. 2-8. Walter Potter, about age 80, with one of his taxidermied foxes, critiqued by taxidermy historian Pat Morris as having eyes with a “blank stare” (*Museum* 31). Photograph reprinted in *The Telegraph*, 2010.



Fig. 2-9. *The Lower Five* (Detail) (ca. 1880), Walter Potter. Taxidermy and mixed media. Private collection. Photographed in 2010 by Marc Hill/Apex for *The Telegraph*.



Fig. 2-10. *The Upper Ten* (Detail) (ca. 1880), Walter Potter. Taxidermy and mixed media. Private collection. Photographed in 2010 by Marc Hill/Apex for *The Telegraph*.



Fig. 2-11. *Monkey Riding the Goat* (ca. 1873), Walter Potter. Taxidermy and mixed media. Background: oil on board, painted by Potter. Private collection. Photographed in 2003 for Bonhams sale catalog.

F A B. LIII. *The Crow and the Pitcher.*



**A** CROW, ready to die with Thirst, flew with Joy to a Pitcher which he beheld at some distance. When he came, he found Water in it indeed, but so near the Bottom, that with all his Stopping and Strain-

Fig. 3-1. From *Fables of Aesop and Others. Newly done into English. With an Application to each Fable. Illustrated with Cuts* (1722), Samuel Croxall. Wood engravings by Elisha Kirkhall.



**THE MICE IN COUNCIL.**

Fig. 3-2. From *The Fables of Aesop* (1784; above from second edition, 1818), Thomas Bewick. Wood engravings by members of Bewick's workshop.

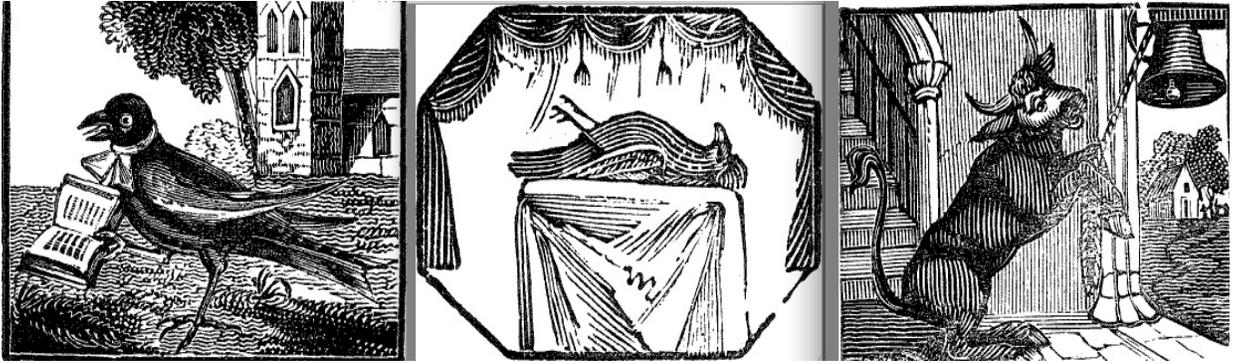


Fig. 3-3. From *The Death and Burial of Cock Robin* (1795). Wood engravings. Compare the far-left frame with Walter Potter's taxidermic mount (below, fig. 3-4), which was completed in 1861.



Fig. 3-4. *The Death and Burial of Cock Robin* (Detail) (1861), Walter Potter. Taxidermy and mixed media. Private collection. Photographed in 2003 for Bonhams sale catalog.

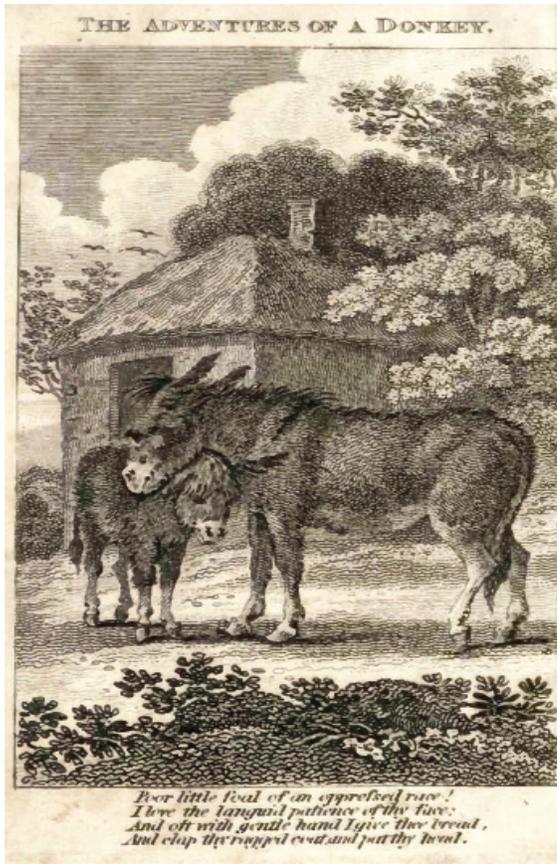


Fig. 3-5. Frontispiece, *The Adventures of a Donkey* (1815) by Arabella Argus.



Fig. 3-6. *The Lincolnshire Ox* (1790), George Stubbs. Oil on panel, 67.9 x 99 cm. Collection of Walker Art Gallery, National Liverpool Museums [WAG 2388].



Fig. 3-7. *Execution of a Sow*. Frontispiece from *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals*, by E. P. Evans (1906). This illustration is taken from *L'Homme et la Bête* by Arthur Mangin (1872); it represents a fresco (no longer extant) from a church in Falaise which depicted the 1386 execution of an infanticidal sow.



Fig. 3-8. Frontispiece from John Oswald's *Cry of Nature, or an Appeal to Mercy and to Justice, on Behalf of the Persecuted Animals* (1791). The words at the bottom of the image read, "The butcher's knife hath laid low the delight of a fond dam, and the darling of Nature is now stretched in gore upon the ground."



Fig. 3-9. *The Four Stages of Cruelty: First Stage of Cruelty* (1751), William Hogarth. Etching and engraving, 38 x 32 cm. Tate Britain.



Fig. 3-10. *The Four Stages of Cruelty: Second Stage of Cruelty* (1751), William Hogarth. Etching and engraving, 38 x 32 cm.

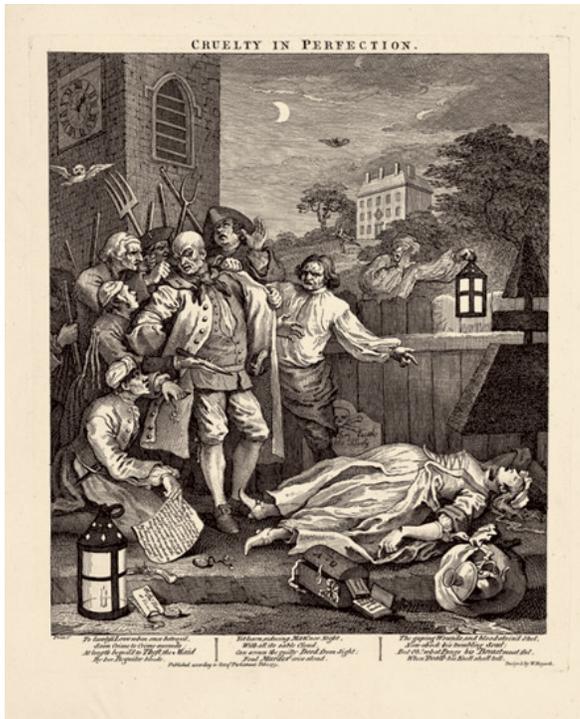


Fig. 3-11. *The Four Stages of Cruelty: Cruelty in Perfection* (1751), William Hogarth. Etching and engraving, 38 x 32 cm. Tate Britain.



Fig. 3-12. *The Four Stages of Cruelty: The Reward of Cruelty* (1751), William Hogarth. Etching and engraving, 38 x 32 cm. Tate Britain.



Fig. 3-13. Jenny the orangutan as she appeared in the *Penny Magazine for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge* in 1837.



Fig. 3-14. *The Cat's Paw* (1824), Edwin Landseer. Oil on panel, 75.6 x 69.8 cm. Collection of Dr. Roger L. Anderson.



Fig. 3-15. Illustration accompanying “The Monkey Who Had Seen the World,” from John Gay’s *Fables*, the second edition published in 1728.



Fig. 3-16. *The Monkey Who Had Seen the World* (1827), Edwin Landseer. Oil on panel, 47 x 54.6 cm. Guildhall Art Gallery, London.



Fig. 3-17. *Deer and Deer Hounds in a Mountain Torrent* (1832), Edwin Landseer. Oil on canvas laid on wood support, 40.5 x 90.8 cm. Tate Britain. Gift of Robert Vernon, 1847 [N00412].



Fig. 3-18. “Wapping, or the pas de deux.” Plate 7 from *Monkeyana, or Men in Miniature*, designed and etched by Thomas Landseer (London: Moon, Boys and Graves, 1827). “When first I saw thee graceful move, Ah me, what meant my throbbing heart . . .”



Fig. 3-19. “The sunshine of the soul; showing how gentlemen may make beasts of themselves.” Plate 9 from *Monkeyana, or Men in Miniature*, designed and etched by Thomas Landseer (London: Moon, Boys and Graves, 1827). “Two ape-men with imbecilic expressions stagger tipsily on the stones of a London street . . .” “The potion turns his brain and stupefies his mind.”



Fig. 3-20. "Distressed poet; or three weeks in arrears." Plate 14 from *Monkeyana, or Men in Miniature*, designed and etched by Thomas Landseer (London: Moon, Boys and Graves, 1827). "The ape-poet, almost naked, stands pen in hand trembling before his landlady who from behind the partly open door holds out her bill . . ."



Fig. 3-21. *Attachment* (1829), Edwin Landseer. Oil on canvas, 99.1 x 79.5 cm. Private collection.



Fig. 3-22. *Dignity and Impudence* (1839), Edwin Landseer. Oil on canvas, 90.2 x 70 cm. Tate Britain.



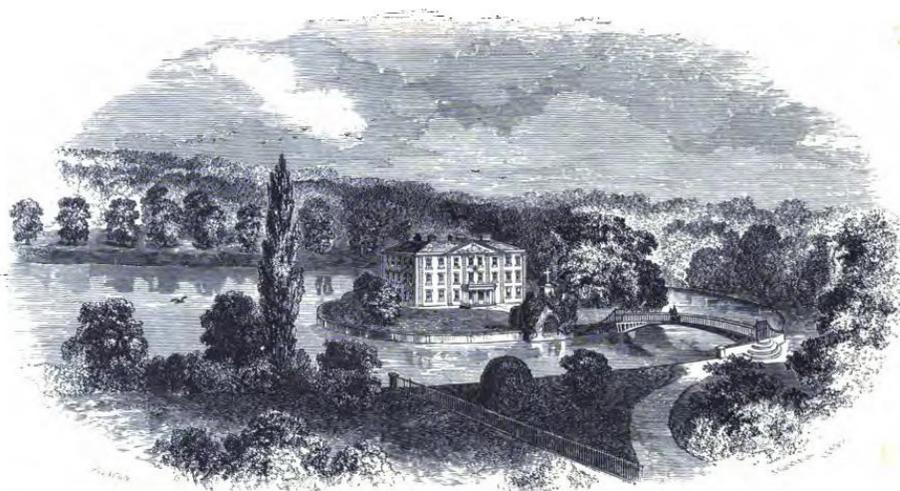
Fig. 3-23. *The Old Shepherd's Chief Mourner* (1837), Edwin Landseer. Oil on canvas, 45.7 x 61 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum. Given by John Sheepshanks, 1857 [FA.93(O)].



Fig. 3-24. *Isaac Van Amburgh and His Animals* (1839), Edwin Landseer. Oil on canvas, 113.7 x 174.8 cm. Royal Collection [RCIN 406346].



Fig. 4-1. *Portrait of Charles Waterton* (1824), Charles Wilson Peale. Oil on canvas, 61.3 x 51.4 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London [NPG 2014]. The book on the table is *Waterton's Method*; the cat's head had been used in a demonstration of that method. He holds a taxidermied Virginia cardinal.



VIEW OF WALTON HALL IN THE DISTANCE ; OF THE ANCIENT RUIN ; AND OF THE CAST-IRON BRIDGE.

Fig. 4-2. Walton Hall. Frontispiece from Richard Hobson's *Charles Waterton: His Home, Habits, and Handiwork* (1866).



Fig. 4-3. Walton Hall today: The Waterton Park Hotel. Its Web site cites an endorsement by *Brides Magazine* as one of the “top 100 most stylish wedding venues in the country.”



Fig. 4-4. *The Earl of Darlington [William Harry Vane, 3rd Earl of Darlington] Fox-Hunting with the Raby Pack: Full Cry* (1804). John Nost Sartorius. Oil on canvas, 80.9 x 101.3 cm. Tate Britain.



Fig. 4-5. *Charles Waterton Capturing a Cayman* (1826). Captain Edwin Jones. Oil on canvas. Collection of Stonhurst College.



Fig. 4-6. *The Nondescript* (1824), Charles Waterton. Composite of taxidermied animal parts. Collection of Stonyhurst College; on extended loan to the Wakefield Museum.



Fig. 4-7. *Martin Luther After His Fall* (ca. 1856), Charles Waterton. Composite taxidermied animals. Collection of Stonyhurst College; on extended loan to the Wakefield Museum.



Fig. 4-8. *The Nightmare* (1781), Henry Fuseli. Oil on canvas, 101.6 x 126.7 cm. Detroit Institute of Art, Founders Society Purchase with funds from Mr. and Mrs. Bert L. Smokler and Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence A. Fleischman [55.5.A].



Fig. 4-9. “Steve Bell on the Eurozone Crisis” (7 Nov. 2011), Steve Bell. German chancellor Angela Merkel faces mounting calls from EU members to allow intervention by European Central Bank. *The Guardian*.



Fig. 4-10. *Noctifer, the Spirit of the Dark Ages, Unknown in England before the Reformation* (ca. 1838), Charles Waterton. Taxidermic composite of eagle-owl and bittern. Collection of Stonyhurst College; on extended loan to the Wakefield Museum.



Fig. 4-11. *John Bull and the National Debt* (ca. 1850), Charles Waterton. Taxidermic composite of porcupine, tortoise shell, artificial human eyes, and other animal parts. "A porcupine in a tortoiseshell with an almost human face is so weighed down by the National Debt of £800 million that it is overcome by six devils." Collection of Stonyhurst College; on extended loan to the Wakefield Museum.



Fig 5-1. Decoro with lion's skin over his shoulders. From *Iconologia de Cesare Ripa*, 1645.

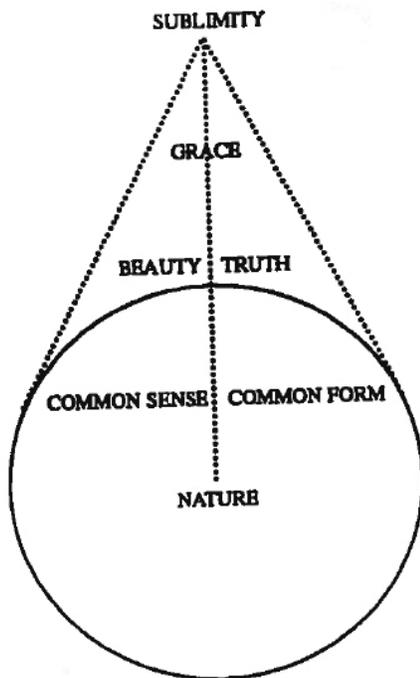


Fig. 5-2. Diagrammatic representation of "the progressive stages of human excellence." Frances Reynolds, from *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Taste* (1785).



Fig. 5-3. *Valle Crucis Abbey, North Wales* (ca. 1794). Michael Angelo Rooker. Watercolor on wove paper, 44.5 x 62.6 cm. Royal Academy of Arts, London. Given by Mrs. Augusta Thackeray, 21 June 1865.



Fig. 5-4. *Buildwas Abbey, Shropshire* (ca. 1790). Michael Angelo Rooker. Pencil and watercolor on paper, 22.8 x 28.2 cm. Private collection. Photograph from Christies auction catalog.



Fig. 5-5. *Haugham's Abbey, Shropshire* (ca. 1790). Michael Angelo Rooker. Watercolor on paper, 28.2 x 37.6 cm. The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London. Bequest of Robert Clermont Witt, 1952 [D.1952.RW.4116].



Fig. 5-6. *Part of the North Wall of St Joseph's Chapel, Glastonbury Abbey, Somerset* (ca. 1794), Michael Angelo Rooker. Watercolor on paper. Victoria and Albert Museum [no. 2927-1876].



Fig. 5-7. *Moonlit View of the River Tweed with Melrose Abbey in the Foreground and Figures on a Bridge* (ca. 1790), Abraham Pether. Oil on canvas, 70 x 92.8 cm. Private collection/The Bridgeman Art Library.



Fig. 5-8. *Moonlight* (1819), Washington Allston. Oil on canvas, 63.82 x 90.8 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, William Sturgis Bigelow Collection [21.142]. Ruins in the background are indistinct, but the composition is strikingly similar to Pether's *Moonlit View*, fig. 5-7.



Fig. 5-9. *The Dormitory and Transept of Fountains Abbey, Evening* (1798). J.M.W. Turner. Watercolor on paper, 45.6 x 61.0 cm. York Museums Trust (York Art Gallery), UK/The Bridgeman Art Library.



Fig. 5-10. *Snow Storm: Hannibal and His Army Crossing the Alps* (1812), J.M.W. Turner. Oil on canvas, 146 x 237.5 cm. Tate Britain. Bequeathed by the artist, 1856 [N00490].



Fig. 5-11. Figure 2. *Saul and the Witch of Endor* (1820), Washington Allston. Oil on canvas, 87.15 x 119.69 cm. Mead Art Museum, Amherst College, Amherst MA.



Fig. 5-12. Clock-tower ("Big Ben"). (1843), A.W.N. Pugin. Houses of Parliament, Westminster, London.



Fig. 5-13. Entrance to the Robing Room, Royal Gallery (1841), A.W.N. Pugin. Houses of Parliament, Westminster, London/The Bridgeman Art Library.



Fig. 5-14. Albert Memorial, London (1864), Gilbert Scott, architect.



Fig. 5-15. Former Midland Grand Hotel, St Pancras, London (1866), Gilbert Scott, architect.



Fig. 5-16. *Bedlam Furnace Near Irongate, Shropshire* (1802), John Sell Cotman. Watercolor on paper, 25.4 x 45.7 cm. Private collection/The Bridgeman Art Library.



Fig. 5-17. *Bedlam Furnace, Madeley Dale, Shropshire* (1803), Paul Sandby Munn. Watercolor over pencil with stopping out and scratching out on wove paper laid down onto a second sheet of coarse wove paper, 32.4 x 55 cm. Tate Britain [T04172].



Fig. 5-18. *Coalbrookdale by Night* (1801), Philip James de Loutherbourg. Oil on canvas, 68 x 106.5 cm. Science Museum, London.



Fig. 5-19. *Bandits on a Rocky Coast* (ca. 1650), Salvator Rosa. Oil on canvas, 74.9 x 100 cm. Metropolitan Museum, New York. Charles B. Curtis Fund, 1934 [34.137].



Fig. 5-20. *Landscape with a Dilapidated Bridge (Ponte Rotto)* (ca. 1645), Salvator Rosa. Oil on canvas, 106 x 127 cm. Palazzo Pitti, Florence [Inv. Palatina, no. 306].



Fig. 5-21. *Death of Empedocles* (ca. 1645), Salvator Rosa. Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti, Florence.





Stuttgart, den 31 May 1851

Hochgeehrtester Herr!

Mit gegenwärtigem erlaube ich mir die Freiheit, Ihnen noch nachträglich für die mir während (?) meinem Aufenthalte in London erwiesenen Gefälligkeiten meinen ausdrucksvollsten Dank zu bezeugen.

Am Freitag, des 23. d. M abends  $\frac{1}{2}$  9 Uhr, kam ich glücklich hier an und fand zu meinem größten Bedauern eine solche Masse noch dringender Geschäfte hier vor, so daß ich bis daher jeden Tag von morgens 5 bis nachts 12-1 Uhr arbeiten arbeiten mußte, um nur das dem Verderben ausgesetzte (?) zu beseitigen, wofür ich auch meinigen schuldigen Dank noch abstatte, bitte daher um Entschuldigung.

Die besprochenen Aufträge habe ich besorgt.

Die Herren Krand (?) und Schiedmayer (?) wollten die Güte haben, das Verzeichnis meiner Gegenstände mit chemischer (?) Tinte zu schreiben, um es in mehreren (?) abdrucken lassen zu können; sollte nun dies noch nicht geschehen sein, so bitte Euer Hochwohlgeboren doch gefälligst, Sorge tragen zu wollen, daß das wenig zeitraubende Geschäft vorgenommen werde, wofür ich Ihnen zu größtem Dank verpflichtet wäre.

Die reichen Engländer in London, welche derartige Gegenstände wie die Meinigen kaufen, gehen in der Regel alle Ausgangs Juni aufs Land, wo sie bis zum Herbst verweilen. Es wäre deshalb wenig Zeit mehr in der Nähe zu verlieren. Auch wäre es gewiß von günstigem Erfolg, wenn Herr Krand (?), mit welchem ich zwar schon über diese Sache gesprochen habe, etwa ein paar Dutzend solcher Verzeichnisse an die reichen Jagdliebhaber per Post (?) gehen ließe, auf diese Weise wäre ohne Zweifel, insbesondere, wenn auf diesen Verzeichnissen mit ein paar Zeilen meine Gegenstände auf ihre (?) Preise (?) kurz empfohlen wäre, einen rascheren Absatz entgegen zu sehen.

Da ich schon gegen 30 verschiedene Naturalien Cabinette bereißt (?) habe, und weder in Deutschland, Frankreich, noch England etwas Gediegenes in dieser Art aufgefunden habe, so wundert es mich doch sehr, daß noch so wenig oder eigentlich noch gar keinen von meinen Gegenständen verkauft sind, insbesondere, da es in England so viele Jagdlieber gibt und die empfohlenen Preise (?) meiner Ansicht nach nicht übertrieben sind.

Meine Gegenstände würden freilich, wenn sie unter Glas wie im englischen Departement (?) ausgestellt wären, sich noch einmal so gut ausnehmen; dieses könnte ich bei dieser Masse von Gruppen (?) nicht thun.

Ich lasse meine sämtlich ausgestopften Gegenstände, ohne mir zu schmeicheln, ohne/neben (?) Lebendigem zur Seite stellen (?), man wird bei genauer Betrachtung nicht allein den richtigen (?) Charakter als (?) sondern die dabei (?) richtige (?)

Muskulatur erkennen, welches bei denen mir jetzt bekannten Ausstopfern bis jetzt noch nicht beachtet wurde.

Wäre vielleicht nicht auch eine gut aufgesetzte Annonce in einem englischen Blatt (?) Verkauf meiner Gegenstände von gutem Erfolg? Ich würde die Kosten, wenn solche den Betrag con 36 fl nicht überstiegen, nicht scheuen.

Da ich von Euer Hochwohlgeboren zum voraus überzeugt bin, daß es Ihnen halbwegs die Zeit erlaubt, mir die Gefälligkeit annähernd zu einem raschen Verkauf beizutragen, weshalb ich dies Sache ganz in Ihren Gutdenken anheimgestellt lasse.

Indem ich Ihnen nochmals für die mir im Ausstellungsgebäude so vielfältig erwiesenen Gefälligkeit meinen vollsten Dank bezeuge, empfehle ich mich Ihnen auch zu fernerm Wohlwollen und verbleibe indessen mit bekannter Hochachtung Ihr dankbarer und ergebener

H.P.

Appendix fig. 3. Hermann Ploucquet letter, German transcription, page 1 of 1, of “Hochgeehrtester Herr!” [“To ‘Most Esteemed Sir’”]. 31 May 1851. MS. Signatur: PL 702 Bü 851. Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg. Transcribed by Irma Lang. Ploucquet’s idiosyncratic spelling, grammar, and syntax leave lacunae and uncertainties in transcription and translation; these spots are noted with question marks.

Stuttgart, May 31st 1851

Most Esteemed Sir,

In writing the present letter I take the liberty of expressing my belated but sincerest thanks for the courtesies shown me during my stay in London.

I arrived here safely at 8.30 p.m. on Friday evening, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of the month, and deeply regret having found such a mass of urgent business awaiting me that up till now I have had to work every day from 5 in the morning until 12 or 1 o’clock at night, just to clear what was in danger of spoiling, and must therefore apologize for the debt of thanks still owing.

I have obtained the orders we discussed.

Mr. Krand (?) and Mr. Schiedmayer (?) wanted to be so kind as to write the catalogue of my objects in chemical ink so as to be able to have it printed in several (?); should that still not have been the case, I would kindly ask Your Excellency to ensure that this not very time-consuming business be undertaken. I would be extremely grateful to you if this could be done.

The rich Englishmen in London who buy objects such as mine usually leave for the country at the end of June and stay there till autumn. There is therefore little time to be lost. It would certainly also be of favourable success if Mr. Krand (?), to whom I have already spoken of the matter, could post off a few dozen such catalogues to rich hunting enthusiasts. In this way faster sales could doubtless be expected, especially if a few brief lines were written on these catalogues recommending my objects and prices.

Since I have already visited 30 different natural history cabinets and have found nothing dignified of this kind either in Germany, France or England, I am indeed very surprised that very few or rather none of my objects have already been sold, especially since there are so many hunting enthusiasts in England and I am of the opinion that the recommended prices are not excessive. Of course, my objects would look twice as good if they were shown under glass as in the English department; I could not do this with this mass of groups.

Without wanting to flatter myself, I can have all my stuffed objects placed next to the living and on closer inspection one will not only recognize their character as (?) but also the correct muscles, which has not yet been seen with the taxidermists known to me at present.

Would perhaps a well-written advertisement in an English newspaper not be successful with regard to the sale of my objects? I would not baulk at the cost if it did not exceed 36 fl.

Since I am convinced in advance that Your Excellency may reasonably have the time to do me the favour of contributing to a speedier sale, I leave the matter completely to your discretion.

I close by reiterating my fullest thanks for the many courtesies shown to me in the exhibition building, commend myself to your continued favour and remain with my well-known respect,

Your obedient and grateful servant,

H.P.

Appendix fig. 4. Hermann Ploucquet letter, English translation, page 1 of 1, of "Hochgeehrtester Herr!" ["To 'Most Esteemed Sir'"]. 31 May 1851. MS. Signatur: PL 702 Bü 851. Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg. Translated by Frances Zichanowicz. Ploucquet's idiosyncratic spelling, grammar, and syntax leave lacunae and uncertainties in transcription and translation; these spots are noted with question marks.





reifgenaus in Baden ist. Meinem Vater von der 26. d. M.  
 wurde ich so frei sein mir allhier mit der abgabe zu helfen  
 In dem ich mich sehr großer Freude zu empfinden lichte, um  
 stoffen ich mich für die Verbesserung der gemeinen Wohlfahrt bestre-  
 me und verbleibe mit verbundenen Grüßen

H.  
 Herrmann Ploucquet  
 H. Ploucquet

Stuttgart den 26. August  
 1863.

Appendix fig. 7. Hermann Ploucquet letter, original, page 3 of 3. "Hochverehrter Herr Direktor!" ["To 'Most Honoured Director!'"]. 26 August 1863. MS. Signatur: PL 702 Bü 851. Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg.

26 August 1863

Hochverehrter Herr Direktor!

Ich hörte gestern zu meinem großen Bedauern, dass Euer Hochwohlgeboren unwohl geworden sind, und erlaube mir daher, Ihnen mein photographisches Album zur gefälligen Einsicht und Zeitvertreib durch Ihre hochverehrte Frau Gemahlin übergeben zu lassen.

Ich mache Euer Hochwohlgeboren nachträglich darauf aufmerksam, dass meine photographischen Thierbilder mithilfe eines Vergrößerungsglases betrachtet, interessanter sind.

Die Gründe, welche mich zur Herstellung dieses Albums veranlasst haben, sind folgende: Ich beabsichtige nemlich aus dem jetzt reichhaltigen Material meines Museums einen Wintergarten in der Art zu gründen, so dass jede Gruppe eine für sich abgeschlossene Serie mit dem den Thieren entsprechenden landschaftlichen Hintergrund bildet und werde aus einer Anzahl meiner schönsten Thierbilder einen derartigen Garten im kleinen, auf den Rath meines nächsten Verwandten, Oberbaurath Etzel in Wien herstellen. Durch jene Ausstellung werde ich in einigen Jahren in die Lage versetzt sein, durch eigene Mittel meinen Plan im großen ausführen zu können. Ich habe nun aus diesem Grunde einen Theil derjenigen Bilder, welche nach Wien übersiedeln und vielleicht nicht mehr zurückkehren, photographieren lassen, um sofort theils in erster Linie Sr. Majestät, unsrem König, theils dem Kaiser von Österreich, mit meinem Album ein Geschenk zu machen.

Wie mich Etzel versicherte, werden meine Arbeiten in Wien sich einer ganz anderen Anerkennung, als es hier der Fall ist, erfreuen haben, insbesondere, da sich der Kaiser ganz besonders für mein Museum interessiert.

Ich schenke der Behauptung Etzels insofern allen Glaube, als ich mich hinlänglich davon überzeugte, dass der meiste Besuch meines Museums aus Fremden weiter Ferne und aus Bildhauern und Tiermalern besteht, welche eigens meiner Sammlung zulieb nach Stuttgart reisten, um letztens wochenlang Studien an meinen Thieren zu machen. Den reichlichen Besuch von Fremden habe ich ohne Zweifel dem Baedeker'schen Reisehandbuch zu verdanken, welches meine Anstalt als eine europäische Berühmtheit aufführt.

Mein ganzes Bestreben geht dahin, aus dem Material meiner Sammlung eine derartige Sehenswürdigkeit zu gründen, die, ohne damit prahlen zu wollen, keine Stadt der Welt aufzuweisen im Stande ist.

Nächsten Mittwoch, den 26. d.M. werde ich so frei seyn, mein Album wieder abholen zu lassen. Indem ich meine allzu große Freiheit entschuldigen bitte, empfehle ich mich

Euer Hochwohlgeboren zu ferneren Wohlwollen bestens und verbleibe mit bekannter Hochachtung Ihr dankbar ergebener.

H. Ploucquet

Stuttgart, den 26 August 1863

Appendix fig. 8. Hermann Ploucquet letter, German transcription, page 1 of 1, Hermann Ploucquet letter, "Hochverehrter Herr Direktor!" ["To 'Most Honoured Director!'"]. 26 August 1863. MS. Signatur: PL 702 Bü 851. Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg. Transcribed by Irma Lang.

26 August 1863

Most Honoured Director,

I was very sorry to hear yesterday that Your Excellency was feeling unwell and therefore permit myself to have your honoured wife give you my photographic album for your favourable perusal and as a means of passing the time.

I draw Your Excellency's subsequent attention to the fact that my photographic animal pictures are more interesting when looked at through a magnifying glass.

The reasons which led me to produce this album are as follows: I plan namely to use the now abundant material from my museum to create a conservatory in such a way that each group forms a self-contained series with the landscape background appropriate to the animals, and on the advice of my close relative, Senior Building Officer Etzel, I am going to use a number of my finest animal tableaux to produce a small-scale version of such a garden in Vienna. In some years' time that exhibition will put me in the position of having my own funds for the large-scale execution of my plan. For this reason I have had part of those tableaux which are to be moved to Vienna and may no longer return photographed, partly in the first instance to make an immediate present of my album to His Majesty, our King, and partly to the Emperor of Austria.

As Etzel assured me, my works will enjoy quite different recognition in Vienna as was here the case, particularly since the Emperor is extremely interested in my museum. I give Etzel's claim every credence in so far as I have been sufficiently convinced by the fact that visitors to my museum are largely composed of strangers from far distant places, of sculptors and animal painters, who travel to Stuttgart specifically for the sake of my collection and of late spend weeks making studies of my animals.

I undoubtedly owe this abundance of foreign visitors to Baedeker's travel guide, which lists my institution as a famous European attraction.

While I do not wish to boast, my whole ambition is to use the material from my collection to create such a place of interest that no city in the world is (as yet) in a position to feature.

Next Wednesday, the 26<sup>th</sup> of the month, I will be so free as to have my album collected again. While apologizing for taking too great a liberty, I commend myself to Your Excellency's continued favour and remain with my well-known respect,

Your obedient and grateful servant,

H. Ploucquet

Stuttgart, 26 August 1863

Appendix fig. 9. Hermann Ploucquet letter, English translation, page 1 of 1, Hermann Ploucquet letter, "Hochverehrter Herr Direktor!" ["To 'Most Honoured Director!'"]. 26 August 1863. MS. Signatur: PL 702 Bü 851. Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg. Translated by Frances Zichanowicz.

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