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Tourist Studies 2001; 1; 83

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The wild animal in late modernity

The case of the Disneyization of zoos

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abstract This article begins with analysis of four of the principal 'modes of engagement' which articulate the human/wild animal nexus: encounter; representation; presentation; and quasification. It then goes on to focus upon the zoo as a key site of animal presentation and of mass tourism. The argument is presented that the zoo in late modernity is undergoing crucial changes in its legitimating narratives. In addition, it is suggested that zoos are exhibiting a tendency towards Disneyization, which entails the following interlinked features: theming; dedifferentiation of consumption; merchandising; and emotional labour. We illustrate this tendency through the discussion of a variety of contemporary developments in zoos and wildlife parks.

keywords *Disneyization post-tourism theming wild animals zoos*

Introduction

How salient is the concept of the wild animal in the late modern, urban consciousness? Perhaps it is a good deal more prominent than first considerations might lead us to conclude. Certainly, the sheer volume and variety of images of wild animals in the mass media might provide us with a broad indication of the continuing interest our species has in the other species with which it shares the global environment. But the mass media, of course, are not our only sources of ideas about other species. The overall purpose of this article is to consider the ways in which humans engage with wild animals, and to focus attention on one particular institution that brings them together, the zoo. This exercise is undertaken in order to consider the proposition that this institution, in the late modern context, is undergoing a crucial structural and ideological transformation.

The zoo is of particular significance in a late modern context because it represents an intersection of both the 'zoological gaze' (Franklin, 1999) and the 'tourist gaze' (Urry, 1990). As Franklin observes, the zoo has been very much neglected in the burgeoning literature on leisure and tourism. This is surprising

on at least three accounts. First, the zoo is very much part of the tourist trail. In their publicity, zoos present themselves as tourist destinations and regional tourist brochures emphasize the zoo as a tourist attraction. Second, as this article will explore, zoos have been undergoing considerable change in western societies, partly in response to shifts in attitudes to the display of captive animals. The connection between these changes and the predilections of late modern tourists is of considerable interest in terms of changing sensitivities concerning wild animals and the 'wild' in general. Third, several writers have pointed to the emergence of the 'post-tourist', someone who seeks instant pleasures in the artifices created for his or her delectation (Rojek, 1993; Urry, 1990). The modern zoo constitutes an interesting site for the exploration of this kind of idea, since several of the changes that it is undergoing reveal affinities with the concept of post-tourism. Consequently, the zoo is a neglected but potentially fruitful area of enquiry for the tourism researcher. The term *Disneyization* is explored in this article in large part because it captures many of the changes that have taken place in zoos. However, before these issues can be taken up, by way of context a general discussion is required of some of the key forms that the nexus between humans and wild animals can take.

The human/animal nexus

The fundamental importance of the many roles played by domesticated animals in human societies is beyond question. As food items, companions, providers of muscle power, experimental subjects and sources of entertainment and diversion (innocent and otherwise), their (unwitting) contribution to human cultural and economic processes is enormous. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that a significant amount of academic attention has been focused on the complex linkages between humans and their animal symbionts (see for example Clutton-Brock, 1987; Rindos, 1984; in an anthropological context see, for example, Evans-Pritchard, 1967).

On the other hand, human relationships with wild animals – animals which have not entered into directly symbiotic alliances with humankind – are somewhat more problematical. Perhaps the most obvious relationship is that of predator and prey, and this would almost certainly have been the original form (with humans potentially playing either of these roles, according to the circumstances). Of course, as well as providing food and raw materials, animals also provide hunting/gathering peoples with symbolic resources, and they figure largely in the cultural and ritual worlds of such groups (Coon, 1976; Ingold, 1996; Lévi-Strauss, 1963, 1966; Sharp, 1988). Of particular interest is the way in which traditional societies use animal totems as symbolizations which can encode important structural and interactional formations. However, complex as are the ecological and symbolic dynamics of the hunting/gathering mode of production, we are faced with even more abstruse problems when we come to

consider the ways in which individuals in modern, large-scale, complex urbanized societies conceptualize and construe the wild animal and 'wildness' in general. It is true that wild animals may still be used in a pseudo-totemic fashion (for example as symbols for sports teams, trade marks and badges of political parties). However, almost by definition, for urban individuals the wild animal is the very embodiment of 'otherness'. It is both 'outside' human society, and 'inside' human culture, in the sense that human cultures recognize, categorize and describe such beings. Yet, for most urban humans, direct experience of wild animals is either rare or essentially trivial (casually noticed garden birds, or a squirrel seen in the park).

Therefore, before proceeding with our argument, it is essential to describe what we define as four fundamental 'modes of engagement' through which the wild animal is experienced, by humans in general, and by the human members of modern urban societies in particular. We term these four modes of engagement: *encounter*, *representation*, *presentation* and *quasification*. Each mode requires discussion in some detail.

Encounter

The first mode is, in a clear sense, the most direct. It entails the individual actually being in the physical presence of the unrestrained animal in its own environment, so that it can be perceived via one or more of the senses. Of course, human/animal proximity will vary enormously in the course of encounters, from actual physical contact at one extreme, to a mere glimpse in the distance at the other. For hunter/gatherers encounters will be commonplace, and, in the case of prey species, actively sought out. For agriculturalists and pastoralists they will also be relatively commonplace (depending on the nature and density of surviving local fauna), but the animals concerned will more typically be encountered as pests, rivals and predators rather than as prey. For urbanized humans such encounters are likely to be relatively unusual, limited in most areas to small birds and mammals which have adapted to urban environments, and in some areas including occasional chance meetings on the highway (often with fatal results).

The exceptions are those urban humans who, like hunter/gatherers, are active encounter seekers (for example in such contexts as birdwatching, whalewatching, sport hunting, angling and photographic safaris). Such urban encounter seekers may pursue their enthusiasms in relatively individualistic and informal ways, or on the other hand, may participate in commercially organized forms of 'encounter tourism'. Norton (1996), for example, notes that animals feature a great deal in the marketing of East African safaris. The tourist brochures depict animals in natural habitats and thereby seek to captivate the encounter seeker with the promise of natural encounters. As Anderson (1995: 275) puts it: 'an ill-defined and unspecified "nature" has been converted into cultural experience and spiritual commodity'. However, safari tourists, much like MacCannell's (1976) tourists in search of authentic experiences, are frequently thwarted in their attempts to commune with wild animals in their raw, unfettered state. As

Norton (1996) notes, safari tourists are sometimes taken aback by the number of tourist jeeps on park roads. One of his interviewees felt that the level of congestion was such that the ambience was 'zoo-like'. Norton also observes that the need to confine tourists to safari vehicles (mainly of course in the interests of safety) further undermines the sense of communing with nature. In Urry's (1990) terms, safari tourists may anticipate that they will enjoy the relative solitude of the romantic gaze but find themselves enmeshed unwittingly in a collective gaze. (In addition, of course, we should not overlook another tiny urban minority that deliberately seeks out encounters with wild animals: the scientific ethologist whose fieldwork depends upon direct observation.)

Representation

The figurative representation of wild animals is, of course, a process of great antiquity, as the many examples of rock art and cave painting around the world demonstrate. As human cultures evolved, representations of wild creatures, in literary, artistic and symbolic terms, became ever more elaborated and sophisticated. It virtually goes without saying that in the modern context such representations have reached unprecedented levels of technical sophistication and unprecedented levels of output. Thus painting, drawing and sculpture have been augmented and overtaken by film, television and conventional and computer-based animation, which can provide highly graphic and dramatic visual and audible representations of the appearances and behaviours of even the remotest and most exotic wild animals. It is no exaggeration to suggest that the typical television viewer's primary mode of engagement with the wild is through highly processed (and skilfully edited) electronically mediated representations of real or 'virtual' animals. Arguably, such representations, and the ideological frameworks within which they are organized, come to dominate the ways in which the 'wild' is construed in contemporary cultures. The wildlife documentary (whether composed of 'natural' or 'staged' footage, or a combination of the two) effectively replaces and supplants the encounter for the majority of individuals. What is more, such material is supplemented by books and photographs created for popular consumption by professional encounter seekers.

Of course, where cartoon representations of wild animals are involved, any links with the appearance and behaviour of actual species may become extremely attenuated. However, even though cartoon animals are typically given human attributes (such as bipedal walking, speech, a sense of humour), this anthropomorphism does not necessarily prevent their being used by audiences as sources of 'knowledge' about the real thing. Thus, for example, the cartoon wolf is both a product and a confirmation of a fear of *canis lupus* deeply embedded in many cultures.

Presentation

Presentation differs from representation in that perception of the animal is not mediated but is direct. However, it differs from encounter in that the animal is

not unrestrained in a 'natural' setting, but is held captive and presented for viewing by its captors. Hence, it is subjected to a level of human scrutiny which it might otherwise avoid. The menagerie or zoo in various forms (which will be discussed in more detail below) is the primary institutional location of wild animal presentation. Other forms include the circus (in both the classical and modern senses), the aquarium and the aviary. There are, of course, some important differences here. Circuses (in the modern sense) are usually mobile, bringing the presentation to the audience. However, fixed sites of presentation, like zoos and aquariums, demand that clients come to them and therefore become attractions and destinations in themselves, or exist in conjunction with other attractions.

Quasification

This concept was first developed in relation to the analysis of the dynamics of themed commercial and leisure settings like restaurants, shopping malls and theme parks (Beardsworth and Bryman, 1999). Quasification is, in a sense, a sub-type of the general process of representation, but has certain distinctive characteristics. It entails the creation of 'fakes', but not of fakes which are intended to deceive the beholder into believing they are 'real'. Rather, the intention is that the viewer should be 'in on the joke', and hence be diverted, entertained and impressed by the skill, scope or scale of the artifice. The principal resting place of quasified wild animals in contemporary societies is the natural history museum. Here, the arcane arts of the taxidermist combine the preserved skins of animals with glass eyes and sculpted or moulded maquettes, to produce sometimes startlingly convincing results. These artefacts can provide the viewer with a frisson of fear-tinged delight from behind the glass that protects them. Also included under this heading would be the 'animatronic' animals found in some museums and leisure settings, plus, indeed, the highly naturalistic soft toy animals that have appeared on the market in recent decades.

These four modes of engagement inevitably interact with each other in complex ways, experiences in one mode shaping expectations and interpretations in relation to another. For example, the ways in which an individual reacts to animals presented in a zoo and the ways in which that individual shows more interest in some animals than others, are likely to be influenced by his or her 'stock of knowledge'. This stock of knowledge is built up from various sources, although media representations (whether printed or electronic) are likely to be particularly important. Thus the visitor arrives at the gates of the zoo ready primed for the experience. It is to the nature of that experience, and its cultural and institutional roots, that we now turn.

The zoo in its cultural and historical context

The practice of assembling collections of captive wild animals appears to date from the early phases of the formation of hierarchically organized, agriculture-

based civilizations. Thus, in their comprehensive overview of the historical development of animal collections, Mullan and Marvin (1999) start with the sacred menageries linked to religious observances in ancient Egypt, and connect these institutions to the practice of keeping temple animals found in other ancient cultures (Mullan and Marvin, 1999: 89–90).

They go on to describe early examples of the creation of large enclosed parks within which collections of wild animals were kept (for example in China), and describe those menageries in ancient Rome which were open to the public, as well as those whose purpose was to provide animals for amphitheatres. Mullan and Marvin's account also makes clear the importance of such collections as displays of power and status for high-ranking individuals, and the role of gifts of exotic wild animals in diplomacy. Certainly, by the late medieval and early modern period, what Mullan and Marvin term 'princely menageries' appeared to be widespread in Europe, with particularly notable examples at Versailles in France, Schönbrunn in Austria, and the Tower of London in England (Mullan and Marvin, 1999: 101–3).

However, perhaps the most crucial development these authors describe is the expanding scientific logic behind the menagerie, particularly from the beginning of the 18th century onwards. Certainly, crucial landmarks are the founding of the world's first national menagerie in Paris in 1793, and the founding of the Zoological Society of London along with the opening of the Zoological Gardens in London in 1827 (Mullan and Marvin, 1999: 107–9). From these beginnings, public collections were established in urban locations around Europe and in the United States. The 'zoo' as an attraction for a mass audience was firmly established by the beginning of the 20th century.

Running through the historical development of the menagerie in its varied forms we can discern two crucial underlying themes: the theme of the *gaze* (to which we have already alluded) and the theme of *power*. The main aspect of the power dimension is largely self-evident. Within the artificial confines of the menagerie or zoo, almost total control is exercised by humans over the animal's movements and activities, with minimal opportunity for the animal to exercise its own preferences and priorities. As Mullan and Marvin (1999: 68) put it '... exhibition is a process of power'. Parallels with prisons and mental hospitals inevitably spring to mind (Mullan and Marvin, 1999: 31–9), with the zoo readily classifiable as an example of a 'total institution' (Goffman, 1968), but an institution with animal rather than human inmates. However, in an important sense, the menagerie is also an expression of human superiority over other humans, since the exhibition of exotic animals may well be employed as a demonstration of the prestige and power of an individual (such as a monarch) or some corporate entity (for example a city or state).

But in such contexts, the exercise of power is intimately bound up with the process of surveillance (Foucault, 1979). In other words, the *powerless* are at all times subject to the gaze of the *powerful*, subject (irrespective of their own preferences) to constant scrutiny, monitoring and examination. For example,

confined animals may be subjected to a 'scientific gaze' or more specifically, a 'zoological gaze'. That is, they become objects of analysis in the discourses of such disciplines as ethology, parasitology, reproductive biology, animal nutrition and so on. More generally, they become the objects of a kind of 'recreational gaze' on the part of the general public who form the principal audience for the zoo's presentations. Of course, this recreational scrutiny of confined wild animals can be seen as one example of what Urry (1990) terms the 'tourist gaze', by which he means the way in which many leisure activities which are separated from the mundane settings of home and work, are shaped and framed by the act of *looking*. For humans, the visual predominates, and organizes experience. There are parallels here with what Mulvey (1981) has termed the 'male gaze', referring to the ways in which many printed, film and electronic media make available images of women as objects of gaze for men. Women are thus seen as the passive objects of male scrutiny through the processes of representation. (Of course, the male gaze can also be catered for more directly through the *presentation* of women in such locations as strip clubs and lap-dancing bars.) Indeed, in her discussion of the zoo as an institution which '. . . inscribes various human representational and material strategies for domesticating, mythologizing and aestheticizing the animal universe . . .', Anderson (1995: 276) reinforces this point strongly. She argues that the gaze of the 'rational male subject' has established itself as the generic human gaze, objective and all-encompassing. This dominance is, in turn, seen as based upon the denial or exclusion of competing possibilities.

However, it is manifestly the case that in recent decades the rationale behind the zoo has been undergoing a transformation. As early as the 18th century, fundamental shifts were taking place in western culture concerning the relationship between humans and the natural world (Thomas, 1983). By the latter half of the 19th century, moral attitudes towards animals had become more sensitized to the idea of human/animal kinship (Verney, 1979). By the latter part of the 20th century social scientists like Fiddes (1991) were arguing that a shift from an exploitative to a 'caring' view of animals and their environments has led to far-reaching changes in both attitudes and practices. Certainly, within a philosophical context, a substantial body of argument has emerged laying powerful emphasis on animal rights and animal welfare issues (see for example Midgley, 1983; Regan, 1984; Singer, 1976; and more recently, with specific reference to zoo animals, Bostock, 1993). In such a situation, the zoo as a site for the exercise of naked power over animals, and as a location for the indulgence of an unashamedly recreational gaze upon its captive inmates, becomes less and less appealing, and more difficult to justify. This process is almost certainly compounded by changes in public perception induced by the enormous increase in the anthropomorphized portrayal of animals in printed, film and electronic media.

Hence, the zoo is being recast and re-invented, with an attempt being made to switch the emphasis from entertainment to education, conservation and

animal welfare. However, the process of making zoos less overtly custodial and more 'natural' (that is, the creation of quasifications not of animals per se, but of their native habitats) is arguably as much for the benefit of human visitors' sensibilities as a response to animals' needs. Inevitably, such observations must remain largely speculative, as empirical studies of zoo visitors remain relatively scarce (see for example Altman, 1998; Birney, 1988; Heinrich and Birney, 1992; Morgan and Hodgkinson, 1999).

Thus we arrive at the contention that the zoo, in its late modern manifestation, is moving towards a fundamentally new form. This contention, in turn, leads us directly into a consideration of the main focus of this article, the process of Disneyization.

The Disneyization of the zoo

In spite of anxieties among the general public about animal captivity and perhaps because of the changes that many zoos have introduced, zoo visiting remains an important and popular leisure pursuit. Some well known figures are frequently deployed to make this point: for example, according to World Zoo Organization estimates there are some 10,000 zoos worldwide, which are visited by around 619 million people annually (Mullan and Marvin, 1999: xii). The number of visitors to zoos in the USA and Canada exceeds the combined annual attendance of baseball, American football and hockey (Hanna, 1996: 76).

We are proposing that one way of understanding the changes that are occurring in many western zoos is through the concept of *Disneyization*. This notion was proposed by Bryman (1999) as a parallel idea to Ritzer's (1993, 1998) influential thesis that society is undergoing a process which he calls 'McDonaldization'. Disneyization is a parallel concept to McDonaldization in that the processes that are constitutive of the two terms frequently co-occur in relation to particular institutional spheres. Indeed, it may be that zoos exhibit certain manifestations of McDonaldization, but that is not an issue that is central to the present discussion. However, before discussing in detail the concept of Disneyization, it is important to distinguish it from the related notion of *Disneyfication*. The latter term is invariably applied to the impact of a Disney approach to cultural products, such as folk tales and novels. It is usually employed in a pejorative way to indicate a process of infantilization and vulgarization of the original content (for example, Schickel, 1986: 225; Haas, 1995). By contrast, Disneyization is a more neutral term employed to describe the impact of Disney theme park principles on a range of organizations and institutional settings. The modern zoo, we argue, is a prime example of an institutional form which is increasingly subject to Disneyization.

In general terms, then, Disneyization can be seen as:

... the process by which *the principles* of the Disney theme parks are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world. (Bryman, 1999: 26; emphasis in original)

Disneyization, then, refers to the diffusion of the principles of the Disney theme parks. The principles (which will be outlined below) cannot necessarily be attributed solely to the Disney theme parks themselves since they largely pre-date the opening of Disneyland – the first Disney theme park – in 1955. Instead, the Disney theme parks embody and exemplify the principles of Disneyization, though it is also the case that the extensive admiration for many of their business, presentational and representational practices has meant that there has been widespread adoption of these principles by other organizations. In a sense, we can identify two related but distinguishable forms of Disneyization: first, *structural* Disneyization, which reflects a complex of underlying changes of which the Disney theme parks are exemplars, and second, *transferred* Disneyization, where the Disney principles from one sphere (the Disney theme park) are translated into another sphere.

The idea of Disneyization subsumes four trends or principles which are as follows:

1. theming;
2. dedifferentiation of consumption;
3. merchandising;
4. emotional labour.

The possible significance and relevance of the idea of Disneyization for zoos will be the focus of discussion below, but first each of these principles requires some elaboration.

Theming

A theme may be viewed as a master narrative that is appended to institutions and exhibits (Beardsworth and Bryman, 1999). Theming can be said to be a feature of many zoos in two major senses. First, there is evidence of growing theming within zoos, so that areas or collections are themed in a more abstract way than the conventional presentation of animals in categories like monkey house, lion and tiger house, and so on. The second sense in which theming can be said to be occurring in relation to zoos is that, in the process of reconstructing their institutional identities, zoos are theming themselves at the corporate level. Each of these senses will now be examined.

First, an example of theming within zoos is to be found in Jungle World in Bronx Zoo which opened in 1985 and which is often regarded as an exemplar. The various components are intended to represent Asian rainforest, mangrove swamp and scrub forest (Franklin, 1999; Mullan and Marvin, 1999). Thus the zoo architecture and flora are no longer neutral but are in effect quasifications of natural habitats. Another example is the Lied Jungle at Henry Doorly Zoo in

Omaha, which was influenced by the Bronx Zoo development, and similarly places animals within a wider ecosystem context. The Ford African Rainforest in Zoo Atlanta and the Thai Elephant Forest and Rain Forest at Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle are further instances of this process. London Zoo's biodiversity exhibit is yet another illustration and one which bravely seeks to present some of Earth's more numerous but less celebrated creatures. The Zoo's Director has described the new exhibit for *The Times* as 'a mission statement writ large' (Hamilton, 1999). At Adelaide Zoo, there is a nocturnal house in which night-time is simulated so that normally dormant and therefore rarely viewed nocturnal animals are on display. There is also a World of Primates in which the visitor is immersed in an apparently pristine natural environment (Anderson, 1995: 290).

The whole of Busch Gardens in Tampa, Florida is themed around Africa (which, Malamud [1998: 79] observes, is a particularly popular theme in zoos) and includes a massive area containing free-roaming animals in zones like the Myombe Reserve. The Sea World theme parks are basically zoos/aquariums for various forms of marine life and their exhibits are themed in several different ways: Penguin Encounter, Tropical Rain Forest, Tropical Reef, Key West and Pacific Point Preserve. It seems conceivable that this penchant for theming will accelerate following the opening in 1998 of the Animal Kingdom in Walt Disney World in Florida. Initially, the bulk of the park was themed on the African Savannah (an Asian zone opened in 1999). Guests travel on a Kilimanjaro safari and visit areas like the Harambe Village. The publicity this venture has attracted and its sheer scale are likely to provide food for thought among zoo managers, a point to which we will return below.

In part, theming inside the zoo is a product of public unease about the sight of captive animals in cages (Tarpy, 1993). Placing animals in contexts in which they could roam more freely is much more consistent with modern sensibilities and attitudes to animals in captivity. However, theming was not a *necessary* accompaniment to this shift. Theming, for example in terms of an African motif, is largely extraneous to the removal of cages, since the backdrops can be, and indeed often still are, neutral in their connotations, although it could be argued that re-creating for wild animals their 'natural' habitats provides a more comfortable environment for them. The evidence that the animals somehow benefit from such environments is unclear, and some commentators suggest that they are designed to enhance the sense of well-being of the zoo visitor more than that of the animal (Anderson, 1995: 290–1; Croke, 1997: 76–84). Nevertheless, what Bostock (1993: 113) terms the 'aesthetic of the naturalistic' appears to have a powerful appeal for contemporary zoo designers and architects. It is plausible to argue, therefore, that this form of theming, that is the production of quasifications of 'natural' environments, may be primarily for the benefit of humans. It is they who can relish and enjoy the carefully crafted artificiality of such settings. For the inmate animals, such artifices, which Desmond (1999: 164) has usefully termed 'faked organic realisms', are in themselves beyond comprehension.

The second sense in which zoos are becoming themed is that they are seeking to reinvent themselves in an institutional and cultural sense, in the light of changing public sensibilities concerning the capture and caging of animals, and changing conceptions of the relationships between humans and nature (Anderson, 1995). This trend suggests a growing theming of the zoo as a corporate form. Increasingly, zoos publicize and justify themselves not as repositories of animals to be gawked at, but as agencies dedicated to education and to the preservation of rare and nearly extinct species. As Dibb (1995: 263) notes from her examination of UK zoos and wildlife parks, as a result of changes in public opinion regarding captivity in zoos, 'the role of wildlife facilities in protecting endangered species and encouraging breeding programmes is increasingly pushed to the fore'. The President and General Director of the Wildlife Conservation Bureau has written that a

... developing new synthesis of zoo programming and expertise suggests that the future of zoos is to become 'conservation parks' actively contributing to nature's survival – not quiescent museums. (Conway, 1996: 27; see also Conway's remarks in Croke, 1997: 243)

Some zoos, like Marwell in Hampshire, have adopted this conception of their mission more or less from the outset. Others have essentially themed along these lines and in the process reinvented themselves. What was the Bronx Zoo is no longer the Bronx Zoo; since 1993 it is the Bronx Wildlife Conservation Park. This follows a decision by the New York Zoological Society to rebrand it, and the three other zoos under its jurisdiction, in this way (Malamud, 1998: 79; see also Mullan and Marvin, 1999: xv). Likewise, the Sea World parks place great emphasis on their role in rescuing and breeding rare marine mammals like the manatee. What is more, a Busch Gardens publicity leaflet tells us that

... while entertainment is [its] most visible facet, education, conservation and research are fundamental commitments. . . . Our award-winning programs provide opportunities for students of all ages to better appreciate the importance of diversity and the need for conservation. Our captive breeding programs have been tremendously successful in preserving rare and endangered species for generations to come.

These themes are equally prominent in zoos' websites. For example, Chester Zoo's opening page mentions its size (it is the UK's largest) and quickly proclaims:

The zoo is run to support and promote conservation, by breeding rare and threatened animals, by excellent animal welfare, high quality public service, education and science. (<http://www.demon.co.uk/chesterzoo>)

It is not surprising that conservation at this Zoo is especially prominent in its web pages.

Unsurprisingly, the motifs of species conservation plus education are major components of Disney's Animal Kingdom's *raison d'être* too. The Disney corporation says that: 'inspiring a love of animals and concern for their welfare is

the underlying theme, both subtle and obvious, throughout the Animal Kingdom' (quoted in Tomkins, 1998: 9). This remark nicely side-steps the fact that one of its lands is sponsored by McDonald's and the park itself sells vast quantities of steaks, burgers, hot dogs and chicken nuggets and is built on former wetlands. However, its director of animal operations, who was lured from the famous San Diego Zoo, has stated that he would not have taken on the task unless he was 'sure Disney was a 100 per cent committed to conservation' (quoted in Churchill, 1998: 3).

This growing unease about the use of the depiction 'zoo' and the substitution of alternative terms stressing conservation and education are in themselves components of the turn towards theming. However, it has to be acknowledged that some commentators are sceptical about the application of new master narratives of education, science and species conservation (for example Jamieson, 1995; Malamud, 1998). Nevertheless, the theming of zoos in terms of these master narratives is a continuing process, as is the internal theming of the zoo in terms of quasifications. Of course, these two processes usually coincide. Busch Gardens in Tampa, which began life as a zoo adjacent to a brewery (owned by Anheuser-Busch, the then and current owners of the park), has been described as 'a theme park, with an African motif largely submerged into a naturalist-environmentalist theme' (Mintz, 1998: 52). At many zoos, the theming of areas or attractions within the site has gone hand in hand with the introduction of the conservation theme.

Dedifferentiation of consumption

By dedifferentiation of consumption is meant 'the general trend whereby the forms of consumption associated with different institutional spheres become interlocked with each other and increasingly difficult to distinguish' (Bryman, 1999: 33). This process reveals itself in such trends as the ways in which theme parks and shopping malls increasingly shade into one another, or the way hotels/casinos in Las Vegas append theme park attractions. It is in these settings that the process we have termed quasification (Beardsworth and Bryman, 1999) can take on its most impressive and significant forms, in that the quasifications often serve to conceal further the boundaries between consumption spheres. What is more, in the case of the Mirage hotel/casino in Las Vegas, real tigers and other large cats are presented in zoo-inspired quasifications of 'natural' settings.

Disney's Animal Kingdom is an extreme in this respect and it is hardly surprising that a Disney location should be a major site of this aspect of the Disneyization of zoos. In placing a zoo in the midst of Walt Disney World, which comprises theme parks, water parks, nearly 20 hotels, six golf courses and numerous restaurants, including one of the Rainforest Café chain in the Animal Kingdom and a hotel very close to it, the dedifferentiation of consumption in relation to zoos is magnified. Like Busch Gardens, West Midlands Safari Park and several other zoos, it includes theme park attractions within its grounds. The

Animal Kingdom has a thrill ride tellingly called 'Countdown to Extinction'. Busch Gardens has numerous thrill rides which are organized in terms of African lands, and Sea World in Orlando has a flume ride called 'Voyage to Atlantis'. Some theme parks, like Drayton Manor in the UK, incorporate a zoo amid the various rides and attractions, and Desmond (1999: 193) has described Marine World Africa in California as: 'Part zoo, part theme park, part circus, even part carnival'. Aqualion, just outside Barcelona in Spain, combines a water park with the display of wild animals, as well as shows which actively involve some of these animals. Similarly, Dibb, in the context of her study of UK zoos and wildlife parks, notes:

Throughout the 1980s the growing popularity of the theme park provided a significant challenge to the role of zoos. Increasingly, establishments are choosing to combine the lure of wild and domestic animals with other entertainments. For example, UK animal attraction Whipsnade has introduced a range of new activities to encourage visitors to spend more, visit more frequently and stay longer. West Midlands Safari Park and Chessington World of Adventures combine rides with wildlife. (Dibb, 1995: 261)

We see in these examples a tendency for the distinction between zoo and theme park to become blurred.

A further aspect of this issue is the fact that the large American zoos (Animal Kingdom, Busch Gardens, Sea World) include extensive shopping and eating facilities. While most zoos cannot match this provision because of their much smaller scale, it is conceivable that these features will become more prominent and will gradually supplant the standard café or tea room and small gift shop at the exit. Cain and Merritt (1998) point to the growing commercialism of American zoos and aquariums and the significance of restaurants and gift shops selling soft toy animals and other merchandise as part of that strategy. The authors even suggest that zoo managers need to be more aware of the ways in which such institutions can be developed as businesses. This leads smoothly to the next dimension.

Merchandising

All of the large American zoos mentioned above sell very extensive ranges of merchandise – T-shirts, baseball caps, wallets, pens and pencils, and so on. However, there is evidence that this feature is becoming much more widespread. The Director of Zoo Atlanta, Terry Maple, has argued that such merchandise is important because it produces revenue and also provides publicity and enhances the zoo experience. He has written that 'we must be prepared to provide our supporters, partners, and guests with specialized bumper stickers, pins, T-shirts, ties, and coffee mugs' (Maple and Archibald, 1993: 79–80). In addition, he proclaims that in his own zoo, 'we adopted some of the techniques and methods commonly used by entertainment and amusement enterprises, like Disney World and Six Flags' (Maple and Archibald, 1993: 89). The growing

commercialism of zoos previously referred to is likely to increase the range of merchandise on offer. Merchandising is reinforced through the creation of representations of 'iconic' animals (such as tigers, manatees, giant pandas) and other species seen as threatened with extinction or as having a particular magnetism. Such representations can then be directly incorporated into merchandise items. Thus, the presentation of animals and animal performances by zoos can feed directly into the generation of commoditized images, which can have considerable commercial potential. As Desmond (1999: 148) observes, the commodification of wild animals is ironic in that they are invariably depicted as symbols of pristine nature and therefore as beyond the clutches of a commoditized world. However, surrounding the zoo with an aura of research, conservation and education helps to legitimate this commodification and helps to resolve the irony (Desmond, 1999: 221).

Maple's reference to the influence of the Disney theme parks suggests that in many instances of Disneyization the process may be a direct one (that is transferred Disneyization) involving imitation in a manner that has occurred in relation to museums (King, 1991). Nor is Maple the only person to draw attention to the potential and actual influence of the Disney and other theme parks on zoos. The Director of the National Zoological Park in the USA has written:

Theme parks are attracting people to subjects that many museums find difficult to exhibit in a way that is engaging. We need to borrow from the best exhibit techniques and quality management practices, without emulating the lack of social concerns, intellectual challenges, and real controversy that marks much of media output. (Robinson, 1996: 50)

The Director Emeritus of the Columbus Zoological Gardens has acknowledged the influence on him of Walt Disney's philosophy: 'I would rather entertain and hope people learn than teach and hope people are entertained' (Hanna, 1996: 76). Similarly, Coe (1996: 114) notes that the San Diego Zoo and Wild Animal Park 'borrow heavily from theme park marketing, visitor services, and management concepts'.

Emotional labour

Emotional labour refers to the individual worker's control of the self, a control which is geared to expressing socially desired emotions in the course of service transactions. Emotional labour is increasingly anticipated by customers in the course of service encounters, but it can also cause the worker some distress because of the need to express 'unreal' emotions (Hochschild, 1983). This is the one area where specific evidence is sparse, largely because zoo employees have not often been the focus of research on zoos. There is a growing expectation of good customer service and since the interface with the public is a component of this, it would not be too unwise to predict a growing tendency towards the use of emotional labour as zoos become more commercialized, but this is an area which clearly requires further investigation. Indeed, Dibb (1995: 270)

reports that encouraging staff to demonstrate 'a positive attitude toward customer service' is a preoccupation for managers of zoos and wildlife parks in the UK.

When such service is *not* forthcoming, the effects can create a highly negative response. A landscape architect described the enthusiasm of a group of his students for a zoo's exhibits concerning conservation:

. . . until we reached the snack stand. The young woman who waited on us was so uninterested and the food . . . was so poor that my students talked of nothing else the whole afternoon. The magical opportunity created by the \$15 million exhibit investment was quenched by the most junior employee in the whole park! (Coe, 1996: 112)

Certainly, visitors will notice that emotional labour is definitely a feature of the Sea Worlds and Busch Gardens, and it seems likely in view of the Disney Corporation's renown for its ever-smiling, ever-helpful 'cast members' that emotional labour will also be a feature of Disney's Animal Kingdom. There is ample evidence of its presence in the older Disney theme parks (Bryman, 1995: 107–13; Raz, 1999: 113–18; Van Maanen, 1991).

In fact, Davis's (1997) study of Sea World in San Diego makes explicit reference to emotional labour as a feature of the park. She writes: 'Sea World employees must be friendly, cheerful, helpful, and always smiling to a vast throng of stroller-pushing pedestrians' (Davis, 1997: 90). According to the park's director of operations, supervisors check on the behaviour of staff:

But they also check to see they're outwardly greeting people, and they're not just standing there. Even just smiling isn't enough of what we want. We want them to say things to people, and, as people are exiting stadiums, say 'Thanks for coming,' 'Have a nice day,' 'Anything I can do to help?' 'Can I help you find something?' (quoted in Davis, 1997: 91)

Also, as noted above, there is evidence that many zoos have taken specific note of the entertainment orientation to education at Disney theme parks. It seems likely that the infusion of emotional labour has been a component of this borrowing of Disney ideas. What is more, in the zoo setting the possibility exists that emotional labour can take a distinctive form, particularly in relation to environmentalist ethics and conservationist appeals. On the one hand, emotional labour may be used to induce a sense of guilt (in relation to environmental degradation, species extinction, etc.). On the other hand, it may be used to induce a 'feel good factor' in the minds of visitors, predicated on the proposition that by visiting the zoo and buying its merchandise, they are participating, however indirectly, in the lofty ideals of species and habitat protection.

Of course, zoos frequently enlarge the field of emotional labour by conscripting their animal inmates, particularly the large mammals, into the performative realm that such labour inhabits. As Desmond notes: 'Zoos have experimented with ways of getting the animals to do something, to perform a behavior, to move, so that people will be more interested' (1999: 172). In effect, human emotional labour can be simulated when the animals are induced to

display behaviour that can be interpreted by the audience as indicative of an emotion, such as friendliness, humour or mischievousness (as when the killer whale 'Shamu' soaks the first ten rows of the audience in Sea World's Shamu show). Such displays are not only spectacular performances in themselves, but also serve to increase the attractiveness of merchandise and souvenirs based on the animals concerned. Desmond also argues that the emphasis placed in such performances on the animals' 'love' of their trainers, further serves to enhance the plausibility for the audience of these displays of apparent emotional expressivity (Desmond, 1999: 197).

The 'wild' as theme

There are clearly far-reaching implications to the argument that zoos may no longer be in a position to base their continued existence upon the notion of wild animals as mere exhibits for public entertainment. As we have seen, alternative rationales and justifications have been brought into play, emerging out of practices and discourses relating to education and conservation. However, principles like conservation and education have to be marketed to a public whose primary orientation to the zoo probably remains that of entertainment (see, for example, Morgan and Hodgkinson, 1999: 235). One solution to this problem is to package the principles themselves as themes. Entertaining and diverting themes then become the vehicles through which lay members of the public are enlightened, and through which zoo professionals can achieve their broader goals.

Of course, over and above the theming of education and conservation, the 'wild' itself becomes a theme. Wildness as theme can be seen in a variety of other contexts, such as the elevation for touristic consumption of the whale as a creature with both real and imagined traits (Ris, 1993) and the display of wild animals in tourism safari brochures (Norton, 1996). In both these cases, the theming may conflict with traditional values regarding these creatures, such as the whale as a fishery resource or large wild terrestrial mammals as game or pests.

'Wildness' is also re-invented and reformulated, rendered 'playful' and engaging through the powerful quasification technologies developed for use in other themed leisure settings. Thus the zoo, as a form and an actual location, provides the potential for the creation of spectacular and appealing attractions by quasification designers and engineers. Once the wild has been commoditized in this way (perhaps most popularly in its 'African' form) it becomes available for safe and easy consumption. By these means, even the dangerous and threatening aspects of 'wildness' (Bostock, 1993: 51–3) are themselves sanitized and rendered harmless and entertaining. Moreover, the notion of the wild as theme shares with conservation imagery what Anderson (1995: 289) has called 'the inchoate public lament for lost natures'. Thus, zoos simultaneously commoditize the wild

(and wild animals in particular) and pander to public anxieties about the erosion of the natural world in the face of urbanization, industrialization and the spread of technology.

This process of the commoditization of the wild is enhanced and supported by the fact that zoo themers can rely upon the extensive supply of relevant 'virtual capital' (Beardsworth and Bryman, 1999) their visitors will bring to the zoo. By virtual capital is meant the large stock of knowledge and images assembled by the individual from sources like television, film and advertising, plus a capacity for playful responses to mediated and simulated images. The complexes of representations and depictions contained in the individual's stock of virtual capital will enable him or her to make sense of, and appreciate the entertainment value of, the presentations, representations and quasifications contained within the themed zoo. This effect is particularly intense in relation to the Disneyization process. Within the Disney idiom, there are powerful currents of anthropomorphism and sentimentality in the depiction of animals (both in live action and cartoon contexts), and these currents themselves become incorporated into the virtual capital of consumers of Disney cultural and commercial products. In the Disneyized zoo context, the anthropomorphic and 'sentimental' expectations brought into the setting by the visitor may then be catered for by the presentation of animal performances in which creatures are invited to exhibit apparently human motivations, attributes and actions. An example is the Shamu show in Sea World theme parks in which killer whales are trained to produce behaviours which mimic human actions ('waving' at the audience, exhibiting 'shame' and 'playing' by soaking the first ten rows of onlookers).

It seems plausible to suggest, then, that the themed zoo represents the next step in the evolution of the menagerie, as it moves into its late modern form. Indeed, museums in general, and natural history museums in particular, might also be seen as moving in this general direction. However, zoos face a problem not encountered by museums: live animals are considerably more difficult to present and manage than are quasified ones! This is of particular significance in that, in the themed zoo, the animal inmates inevitably become more than the exhibits of a traditional zoo. Increasingly they will be 'staged' as attractions in quasified entertainment settings. In a very real sense, they will become 'workers' or 'cast members' in the playgrounds created by the leisure industry. This will be particularly true for those 'charismatic' animals the public is especially drawn to.

However, captive wild animals require fundamentally different forms of control and management, as compared to domesticated animals (even though, with captive breeding some wild species may become, effectively, semi-domesticated). Of course, the contrasts are even greater when captive animals are compared with their human co-workers, with very different requirements in relation to feeding, resting, control of behaviour, health and safety issues, and so on. Thus, extracting the required performance from an animal 'cast member' may entail elaborate forms of training and manipulation. With these factors in

mind, it is clear that in certain settings requiring close contact with the public and regularity of performance, animatronic quasifications of zoo animals are likely to be employed. (Perhaps one of the most elaborate examples of this approach is the Jungle Cruise located in Disneyland and Disney World.)

In the context of the Disneyization thesis discussed above, the question also arises as to whether zoo animals can be trained to perform, or rather mimic, the emotional work that is expected of human employees. Such training is clearly feasible, and has a long tradition in such settings as circuses, fairs and stage performances. That this kind of performance by animals entails the mere semblance of emotional engagement may not be a stumbling block as regards the reactions of visitor/customers, as such semblance may also apply, albeit in a rather different sense, to the performances of human cast members.

Conclusion

In this article, it has been suggested that many modern zoos are becoming Disneyized. The process is both direct and indirect with respect to the Disney theme parks. The popularity of the parks and their innovative approach to education and the provision of information have undoubtedly had a direct impact. Equally, the process is indirect: many of the processes described as indicators of Disneyization precede the parks, but also as those processes become absorbed into the economy and the culture an imitation bandwagon is set up. However, the arrival of what is in effect a Disney zoo – its Animal Kingdom – is likely to encourage comparisons with non-Disney establishments and may provide an additional spur to the direct Disneyization of zoos in general. As Malamud puts it: ‘Because of Disney’s preeminent stature in the modern American empire, I see Disney’s zoo venture as a tremendously significant phenomenon in terms of the future role, and direction, of zoos in Western culture’ (1998: 103). As a result, zoos may enter a phase of what might be termed *imitative* Disneyization as the Disney zoo becomes an explicit model for future designs and directions. This development is in addition to the two other processes of Disneyization (that is *structural* and *transferred*) which were discussed above.

What is more, since the Disneyized zoo locates animal presentation and animal performance in highly elaborate quasified settings, it could be that we are also witnessing a basic shift in the object of the tourist gaze. There exists the probability that the exhibition of animals will become subordinate to the staging of elaborate quasifications of the ‘wild’. Rather than the animals being the primary attraction, the settings themselves will become the main objects of the visitor’s entranced and admiring gaze. Hence, the themed zoo becomes the location in which urban humans can experience a quasified form of the ‘wild’ with maximum comfort, convenience and safety. These developments are very much in tune with the theme park and its emergence as a tourist destination.

There can be no doubting the central role of tourism in the economy and culture of late modern societies. However, in the post-tourist context the consumers of tourism experiences do not necessarily demand that those experiences be 'authentic'. Rather, they seek out experiences which are entertaining, compelling and effectively staged. Hence, the four modes of engagement with wild animals which we have outlined above increasingly become geared to entertainment as a means of attracting the post-tourist. The zoo, as the primary institution of wild animal presentation, thus becomes more and more entertainment-orientated, and if it seeks also to do educational 'work' on its clients, such work will increasingly be disguised as entertainment. Emotional labour facilitates this process by providing a form of interactional glossing which serves to smooth the transition between education and diversion.

There are, however, more subtle appeals inherent in the theme park configuration of the zoo. For example, threatening aspects of the wild can be neutralized and sanitized in such settings. In contrast, such sanitization may be much more difficult to achieve for active encounter seekers, even for those who purchase professionally guided encounters on a commercial basis. What is more, through its theming and entertainment motifs, this new configuration can offer an accessible and palatable model of humankind's continuing ability to exercise power over nature. That power, once conceived of as a right to exploit, has now been transmuted into a duty to manage and conserve. Thus the theme of conservation, delivered as part of a 'fun day out', becomes a reassuring legitimization of the continued existence of one of the earliest forms of total institution, the menagerie.

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