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journalforcas@gmail.com

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JCAS Volume 14, Issue 2, October 2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Amber E. George..... 1-4

ESSAYS

Elephant Tracings: A Critical Animal / Postcolonial Genealogy of the Royal Museum for Central Africa

S. Marek Muller.....5-41

JCAS Submission Guidelines42-43

Journal for Critical Animal Studies



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Issue Introduction

Author: Amber E. George

Title: Instructor

Affiliation: Philosophy Department, Misericordia University

Location: Dallas, Pennsylvania, United States of America

E-mail: drambergeorge@gmail.com

Keywords: Activism, Animal ethics, Aesthetics, Postcolonial critical animal studies

Issue Introduction

The fields of postcolonial studies and critical animal studies (CAS) have much to learn from one another in their forging ahead with intellectual and activist creations. This issue introduces the topic of infusing CAS into postcolonial studies to reassess how much damage oppressive colonial practices have caused to humans and nonhumans. While other fields such as postcolonial ecocritical studies have been underway for a while (Cilano & Deloughrey (2007); Huggan (2004); Huggan and Tiffin (2007); Nixon (2005), revisionist postcolonial CAS studies have remained mostly untouched by such considerations. This holds true even though subaltern nonhuman animals have experienced erasure in the colonial record. In a world where certain epistemologies are primarily human focused and often confounded by racial and speciesist lines of thought, it makes sense for CAS to seriously consider how the vestiges of colonialism continue to inform Western value systems. These cultural ties privilege the human over the nonhuman

animal, support oppressive dichotomies, and negate actions that support liberation. The task of re-theorizing the place of nonhuman animals within colonial discourse remains important today, as various societal institutions and events such as museum exhibits, circuses, and other ceremonial displays continue to oppress. Postcolonial considerations compel us to ask how we can possibly liberate nonhumans if we fail to interrogate the colonial legacies that continue to haunt animal rights and animal welfare movements today?

The essay “Elephant Tracings: A Critical Animal / Postcolonial Genealogy of the Royal Museum for Central Africa” takes a closer look at the nonhuman animal victims of colonization. S. Marek Muller uses postcolonial critical animal studies as a theoretical framework to demonstrate the simultaneously racist and speciesist colonial history of the Belgian Congo as applied to the hunting, mutilation, and display of the Congolese elephant. Muller’s analysis is based on three vignettes that represent the colonial and postcolonial treatment of the African elephant under European colonial rule. Her reading gives rise to philosophical and historical questions that have long since been asked about humans in postcolonial studies but have yet to be asked about African elephants within similar contexts. Some questions relating to these issues include: How we might come to understand the perspectives of elephants and of those whose experiences may seem impervious to human understanding? How can we attend to difference among beings without appropriating or distorting? And finally, how can we go about acknowledging experiences that may not be possible to express? Muller attempts to answer these questions with the guise of supplementing discourses of animal liberation in a world still impacted by the legacy of colonialism.

Building upon the work of other CAS scholars like B. Belcourt (2014), P. Armstrong (2002), and C.P. Freeman (2011) and famed postcolonial theorists as well as A. Mbembe (2001)

and R. Shome (2002), she presents a cross-cultural exploration of speciesism within European-African relations, which is useful for scholars interested in globalizing critical animal studies. She offers real insight into how CAS scholars can refashion postcolonial perspectives and methodologies to operate beyond the human frame and consider the colonial history of the nonhuman as well.

Muller's postcolonial analysis provides us with insight into how to reframe the ongoing struggle for animal liberation and justice. This piece goes beyond merely offering a critical re-articulation of theoretical concerns looming within CAS and instead offers ways that the analysis can be used going forward in activist and academic circles. This interventionist discourse asks us to consider how colonialism has affected elephants throughout the ages. We must be mindful of how we read elephants within specific cultural histories, such as those present in museum displays of elephant ivory. Our task as CAS scholars and activists is to pay close attention to critical acts such as museum displays, and be mindful of the erasures that influence human and nonhumans alike within the historical colonial and post-colonial record.

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Elephant Tracings: A Critical Animal / Postcolonial Genealogy of the Royal Museum for Central Africa

Author: S. Marek Muller*

Title: Doctoral Candidate

Affiliation: Department of Communication at the University of Utah

Location: Salt Lake City, Utah, United States of America

E-mail: marek.muller@utah.edu

Keywords: Congo Free State; Critical animal studies; Elephants; Postcolonial studies; Royal Museum for Central Africa

Abstract

The legacy of Belgium's Royal Museum for Central Africa exemplifies the interconnections between colonial ideologies and speciesist praxis. This essay fuses postcolonial and critical animal studies frameworks in order to demonstrate how Western imperial thought, discourse, and actions not only oppressed/oppresses African persons, but also created/recreates a speciesist ethic, both of which intertwine in moments of co-colonization. Using "the hunt" as a guiding genealogical frame, I analyze three historical vignettes that trace the colonized African elephant body through life, death, and display, ultimately showing the analogous and interrelated ironies, contradictions, ideologies lurking in the discursive and material representations human and animal colonial subjects.

* S. Marek Muller is a doctoral candidate in the University of Utah's Department of Communication. She studies the rhetoric of animal rights and welfare, ecofeminist theory, and postcolonial criticism.

Academic critiques of colonial and “post”-colonial theories and discourses most typically center their focus upon human-on-human interactions. Historical and contemporary analyses of Western oppression over distinctly “Othered” groups of people has not been shy about condemning the racist, sexist, heterosexist, ableist ideologies originating during the Age of Exploration that even today manifest themselves in oppressive sociopolitical practices. However, the liberatory endeavors of postcolonial theories and critiques all-too-often emphasize the racism, sexism, and other discriminatory “-isms” favored by a Judeo-Christian white male elite in a distinctly (and problematically) anthropocentric tenor. By this I mean that these scholars, be it intentionally or unintentionally, apply theories of colonialism solely to the *homo sapien* species, unfortunately forgetting the important role that speciesism (Singer, 1975) plays and has played in colonial interchanges. This essay expands postcolonial critique to also include the colonization of nonhuman animals in the context of museum representations of history and displays of animal body parts, revealing a phenomenon of interspecies “co-colonization” rampant in colonial histories.

Until relatively recently, the genocide perpetrated against the Congolese peoples was little-mentioned at the century-old Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA), the still-standing visual legacy of King Leopold II’s infamous Congo Free State. Within the museum was a potent “sense of denial” regarding the full brutality of the Belgian colony, not by denying that violence took place, but by minimizing that violence with “a few book covers and other items from this campaign tucked away in a corner” (Hochschild, 2006, para. 17). Colonial Belgium’s attempts to “civilize” the Congolese certainly deserve to be permanently imprinted in the country’s cultural memory. However, it is difficult to defend the history of the Congo Free State as a story to be celebrated. The Congo Free State, which existed from 1885 through 1908, was a Belgian colony expanding

across central Africa and the Congo River Basin, a region coextensive with the country that is today called the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Under the harsh thumb of King Leopold II, this colony was exploited for its natural resources—specifically rubber and ivory—with the native Congolese concurrently exploited as laborers for the extraction of those resources. So brutal was Leopold’s regime that, by its end, millions of Congolese had perished—and this number did not include the multiple others whose hands were severed from their bodies as punishment for not laboring hard enough.

Nonetheless, for nearly a century after the dissolution of Leopold II’s contentious colony, “a wall of silence reigned” at the RMCA regarding the millions of Congolese subjects who died under colonial rule (Silverman, 2015, p. 628). Despite Joseph Conrad’s vivid depiction of the horrific Congo Free State in *Heart of Darkness*, and despite the viral photographs of abused, mutilated African laborers, the museum met only mixed criticism for displays such as the golden statue of a colonizer clutched by an admiring African child, set under a plaque reading “Belgium brings civilization to the Congo” (O’Donnell, 2014).

Adam Hochschild’s acclaimed novel, *King Leopold’s Ghost*, reawakened a semi-dormant debate about the RMCA in 1998, and eventually enough Belgians had complained about the displays to force a massive rethinking of the museum’s layout. The institutional response, however, was often *more* hiding. Suddenly secreted from view was the ivory bust of Leopold II, which used to sit proudly in the alcoves of the entrance hall. Still present, however, were statues like the “Leopard Man,” a masked native poised to attack his sleeping victims. Manager Guido Gryseels’ controversial 2005 “Memory of the Congo” exhibit served as a desperate post-Hochschild endeavor to address the RMCA’s legacy of silence, but was not enough to placate what was now a widespread Belgian debate over the country’s shameful past (Spano, 2005). According

to Hasian (2012), “throughout the permanent RMCA hallways [were] signs of African degeneration, primitivism, regression and atavism” (p. 482). Finally, in 2013, the RMCA closed for a \$100 million face-lift (McDonald-Gibson, 2016). While the museum staff denies that mass public critiques were the catalyst for the renovation, one can reasonably infer that the staff hopes to soon move past the strident critique that the “permanent exposition of the RMCA are both symptoms of and supports for racism” (Rahier, 2003, p. 61). The new RMCA is due to reopen in 2018.

The renovation will dramatically alter the RMCA’s visual makeup. Visitors will no longer enter the museum to be greeted by the paternal placards and golden statues. Instead, they will walk straight through a tunnel that attempts to explain what the new museum’s promotional website calls “the context” of the colonial exhibits. The ground floor of the new RMCA will have four themed exhibitions organized in quadrants, each dedicated to a specific aspect of central African history. Among them will be a room dedicated to the museum’s gargantuan collection of zoological specimens: the Biology, Landscape, and Biodiversity Area. According to the RMCA’s website, visitors will journey through the five major biomes of the African landscapes, each playing an important sociocultural and economic role for Africans and the rest of the world. The challenge, the site claims, is to “communicate a contemporary vision of the Africa of yesterday and today, in the context of a building inherited from the colonial era” (“The Exhibition,” n.d., para. 9).

Perhaps this narrative shift is an attempt to alter what Hasian (2012) called the “structural foundations that can frame the ways that visitors think about objects, displays, histories, etc.” (p. 479). And yet, which specimens will be deemed worthy of a permanent exhibition? There is no way to display all 10,000,000 of the RMCA’s animal specimens, all 6,000,000 of its insect

specimens, and all 1,000,000 of its fish specimens at one time (“Unique and Priceless Heritage,” n.d., para. 4). More notable is the fact that these reported numbers (and this exhibit itself) ignore and exclude the museum’s immense collection of elephant tusks in the form of *ivory*, which will instead be displayed in a separate quadrant as a representation of human craftsmanship instead of zoological remains. Few people, scholars or otherwise, talk about the RMCA’s zoological displays as anything other than an impressively huge collection of objects, nor do they critique the museum’s ivory supply beyond the medium’s artistic merit. However, far from being a mere collection of materials, I identify the RMCA’s ivory supply as a menagerie of corpses. While critics have successfully pointed to the national amnesia endemic in colonial museums, modern exhibitions risk ignorantly “correcting” this problem with an emphasis on the abject bodies of *co-colonized* African animals, thus hiding one colonial injustice by forefronting another. If, as Prakash (1992) insisted, we must look past colonial attempts to “appropriate the Other as history...projecting the first world as the radiating center around which all others are arranged,” then we ought to critically examine the museum’s literal arrangement of the RMCA’s animal Other (pp. 8–10).

By reimagining the RMCA’s massive ivory collection not as an artistic medium, but as the remnant of a slaughtered elephant, we reimagine the museum itself: A veritable mausoleum littered with portrayals of an analogously oppressive, violent, and *colonial* ideology that objectified, commodified, mutilated, and displayed the abject animal body. Visual rhetoricians and colonial historians have been understandably preoccupied with the RMCA’s vast collection of controversial anthropological artifacts, stolen as they were from their native contexts (Hasian, 2012; Silverman, 2015). Other theorists and critics have been engrossed with the haunting memory of the museum’s original exhibits, which included a “human zoo” featuring native Congolese as live specimens of

interest (Arnaut, 2011). Overall, what was once a point of pride in the colonial era is now being questioned in the name of justice. And yet, the same logic could be applied to the museum's massive ivory collections, obtained not through the theft of a living person's cultural objects, but through the pillaging of a dead elephant's corpse. The RMCA's legacy of animal exhibition exemplifies how postcolonial criticism consistently misses its chance to engage with the question of the nonhuman animal.

According to CAS scholars, studies of racism, sexism, and all other such "-isms" are not complete without attention to species and speciesism. After all, "there are strong parallels in how women and people of color have been stereotyped, discriminated against, and exploited just for failing to be white and male, often by being compared to so-called lowly and irrational animals" (Freeman, Bekoff, & Bexell, 2011, p. 595). CAS is particularly well-attuned to the haunting means through which "Othered" colonial subjects, human *and* nonhuman animals, have been used and abused by the oppressive application of chattel status (Spiegel, 1996; Francione, 2010). Thus, scholarship with an eye towards social justice ought to embrace the tenets of CAS and animality in general to bridge the human/nonhuman binary that so often has been used to justify the exploitation of the environment and subaltern publics in the name of constructing and maintaining empires. In an attempt to combine the study of postcolonial discourses with an eye towards the perceptions and treatments of animals this work invokes what I will call a "postcolonial critical animal studies" paradigm. This theoretical framework promotes the notion of a "revolutionary decolonization" (Colling, Parson & Arrigoni, 2014) inclusive of all living beings, regardless of their species.

Ideas about the moral status of African animals retain a colonial/imperial mentality. Without a thorough understanding of colonialism's continued presence in animal exploitation,

scholars will miss key pieces of information that might help liberate the still-colonized in both their human and animal forms. In an attempt to bridge this theoretical gap, this essay genealogizes the life, death, and display of the African elephant under late-19th century colonial rule under the grand theme of the colonial “hunt,” since, per Mbembe (2001), hunting and colonizing are synonymous enterprises wherein “what holds for the animal holds for the colonized, and what holds for the act of colonizing holds for the act of hunting” (p. 166). Furthermore, this “act of hunting” formed and informs a significant strand of colonial discourse shaping the Western view of Euro-Americans as “civilized” and the Africans as “barbaric” vis-à-vis native peoples’ comparative treatment of large megafauna (Kim, 2015). I proceed to introduce the postcolonial critical animal studies framework that guides my analysis. I then evaluate a series of interconnected vignettes taking place at the close of the 19th century, specifically focusing on the parallel and often intersecting discourses of Leopold II’s Belgian Congo and imperial conservation societies with regard to elephants. Within these vignettes are manifestations of the “colonial animal” as a hunted, co-colonized subject in three arenas: The racist conservationism that birthed the hunt; the concomitant acts of forced labor, mutilation, and murder perpetrated against Congolese peoples and elephants throughout the hunt; and the elephant’s eventual, abject display as museographic trophies of the hunt. By looking at the broader historical context surrounding the elephantine collections at the RMCA, we can see how the narrative of European colonialism in Africa ought to be considered as one of co-colonization. Revealing the concurrent existence of a “colonial animal” alongside the “colonial subject” exemplifies how postcolonial criticism minus a CAS mentality blatantly ignores a mass of colonial subjects, and how CAS without a postcolonial sensibility overlooks key historical contexts that should make liberationists wary of certain discursive modes of environmental ethics.

Theoretical Fusion: Postcolonial Critical Animal Studies

A postcolonial critical animal studies paradigm reveals how colonial thought and praxis not only oppressed/oppreses humans, but also contributed/contributes to speciesist manifestations. According to Belcourt (2014), “an animal ethic is important to decolonial thought by re-framing animality as a politics of space and introducing anthropocentrism to [theorizations] of the logics of white supremacy” (p. 3). Animals were and are inextricably intertwined the material and discursive patterns of paternalism and violence perpetrated by colonial states. Past postcolonial critiques have mentioned the dehumanization and animalization of the colonial subject. However, these critiques tend not to defend the concept of animality itself, but rather deride the history of colonized subjects as being wrongly compared to animals. Achebe (1977) disparaged Conrad’s portrayal of the Congolese in *Heart of Darkness* as a continuation of colonialism’s “racist slander” that perpetuates “the inhumanity it makes [Africans] heir to” (p. 794). Mbembe (2001) noted how “discourse on Africa is almost always deployed in the framework (or on the fringes) of a meta-text about the *animal*” (p. 1). For, in both discourse and praxis, “to *exist*, the colonizer constantly needs the native as that animal that serves as the support for the colonizer’s self-consciousness” (p. 188).

From a CAS perspective, however, postcolonial inscriptions of animal status are both “a speciesist rendering of animality as injuring,” and representations of how an anthropocentric logic is “militarized through racial hierarchies that further distance the white settler from blackness and indigeneity” (Belcourt, 2014, p. 5). A postcolonial mentality that willfully ignores the presence of the colonized animal in favor of the animalization of the colonized engages in the same scorned practices of “collective forgetting” and “colonial amnesia” that de-colonial praxis seeks to fight.

By infusing CAS into postcolonial studies, we can introduce animals as simultaneous and often synonymous victims of oppressive colonial practices. Mbembe (2008) proposed that human sovereignty is expressed first and foremost in the elite's "right to kill" (p. 168). This "subjugation of life to the power of death," or "necropolitics," is fundamental to colonial oppression (p. 181). An analysis of the RMCA and its Belgian sovereigns leaves little room to doubt the colonial drive to control the lives and deaths of African peoples *and* fauna. Thus, this essay invokes the assertion made in Ahuja (2009) that by tracing the "circulation of nonhuman species as both figures and materialized bodies within the circuits of imperial biopower, species critique helps scholars reevaluate 'minority' discourses and enrich history of imperial encounters" (pp. 556–557).

I similarly heed Billy-Ray Belcourt's call for a CAS framework that renegotiates an ethic of total liberation with a politic of decolonization. To advance in theory and praxis, CAS must seriously question a "civilized" Western rights paradigm as the premier model of human/animal relations and instead "center both indigeneity and animality as sites of anti-colonial possibility" (Belcourt, 2014, p. 4). Put simply, CAS must interrogate the colonial legacy that haunts contemporary animal rights and welfare ideologies and practices. For instance, the revered *Zoopolis* recently offered a political theory of animal rights grounded in the notion of citizenship and sovereignty, defining domestic animal "citizens," wild animal "sovereigns," and intermediate "liminal denizens" (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2011). And yet, from a postcolonial perspective, taking Western democratic principles as an ethical baseline does not promise harmonious relationships. Per Belcourt (2014), "we cannot address animal oppression or talk about animal liberation without naming settler colonialism and white supremacy as political mechanisms that require the simultaneous exploitation or destruction of animal and Indigenous bodies" (p. 3).

Furthermore, Adams (2010) proposed that animal deaths for food are easily justified through the linguistic problem of the “absent referent,” in which “animals are made absent through the language that renames dead bodies before consuming them...to allow for the moral abandonment of a being” (p. 304). By speaking of “beef,” for instance, we linguistically separate the now-dead flesh from the once-living cow, making us collectively forget that a body ever existed in the first place. By looking at the animal body as it has been displayed in colonial and postcolonial contexts, CAS theorists can discover new instances in which the living animal has been severed from its dead product, like referring to elephant tusks as “ivory” and normalizing its use in “natural history” displays. Thus, this essay attempts to serve as a manifestation of the challenge outlined in Prakash (1992), wherein “the project of retrieval begins at the point of the subaltern’s erasure” (p. 12).

This act of “retrieval” is especially possible when we conceive of museums as sites of collective memory and cultural master-narrative. As Barbie Zelizer has explained, memories are not merely individual recollections, but rather collective rhetorical endeavors. Collective memory “thereby presumes activities of sharing, discussion, negotiation, and, often, contestation” (Zelizer, 1995, p. 214). Museums act as rhetorical sites of collective memory, whereby “remembering becomes implicated in a range of other activities having as much to do with identity formation, power and authority, cultural norms, and social interactions as with the simple act of recall” (p. 214). Memory studies, is, therefore an important theoretical foundation for postcolonial critical animal studies analyses. Displays of artifacts, particularly those forcibly stripped from once-living creatures or once-free humans, represent how extra-discursive objects have rhetorical force. That force is capable of shaping collective cultural memories about atrocities.

Armstrong (2002) asserted that postcolonial critical animal studies must produce “sharp, politicized, culturally sensitive, and up-to-the-minute local histories of the roles that animals and their representations have played—or been made to play—in colonial and postcolonial transactions” (p. 416). To accomplish this task, this essay utilizes critical genealogy as its methodological approach. Critical genealogy is a nontraditional, ideological version of historical analysis that focuses on the means by which historical narratives and archival artifacts are used for political purposes. In other words, it allows for the analysis of discrete yet interrelated micro-histories that, when taken together, reveal hidden truths otherwise left unsaid (Foucault, 1978; Nietzsche, 1979). This method allows us to uncover “traces” of subaltern pasts, displacing Western imperial narratives as history’s master-narrative and making possible the reclamation of stolen subject statuses (Spivak, 1988). By exploring specific but thematic vignettes, this paper seeks to recover some of the silent stories of the African elephant, revealing and retrieving its status as colonial commodity and co-colonized subject. The following vignettes utilize postcolonial critical animal studies as a theoretical framework to demonstrate the simultaneously racist and speciesist colonial history of the Belgian Congo, specifically as applied to the hunt, mutilation, and display of the Congolese elephant.

Penitent Butchers: The Emergence of an Animal Right-To-Kill Movement

King Leopold II would not have an ivory bust at the RMCA if African elephant ivory were not available to his sculptors. Furthermore, before the elephant could be tracked, shot, mutilated, and molded into the shape of a king, colonial hunters needed to have the urge to kill elephants at all. This first vignette depicts the origins of and ideologies that allowed for the proliferation of elephant hunting in colonial Africa, and subsequently in the Congo Free State. “Nature-loving”

hunters defended their ostensibly hypocritical actions through a proto-conservationist ethic that included the formation of massively powerful conservation organizations. However, colonial conservationism could just as easily have been called co-colonization, for analyzing the origins and discourses of colonial conservation groups reveals a cruel irony: These seemingly benign African organizations, some of which still exist today, originated from speciesist, racist logics of domination and control of African peoples and African animals.

Animal-inclusive social theories, organizations, and practices have a long and rich history dating back centuries, including in colonial-era Western Europe. European animal sympathizers late 19th century and early 20th century had a host of Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) and were engaged in campaigns ranging from anti-vivisection to anti-horse beating. There is far from enough room in this essay to detail the rise of Western animal welfare ideologies pre-Peter Singer. Important to remember, however, is that these groups usually dealt specifically with *domestic* animal issues, usually dogs and horses (Zawitowski, 2010). As for elephants, these groups had neither the time, the geographic proximity, nor the interest. While most of imperial Europe's domestic animal protection movements in Europe did not make their way down to Africa, this is not to say that there were no colonial animal advocates at all. As SPCA movements advocated for horses and dogs, so too did wildlife conservation societies emerge seeking the protection of African megafauna. These conservation societies engaged in a proto-conservationist rhetoric that, far from advocating for the conservation of fauna on the basis of heartfelt empathy, glorified trophy-hunting as an act of masculine compassion and a most authentic mode of nature appreciation (Cappocia, 2013). The ideologies and policies guiding colonial conservation represented what I call an "animal right-to-kill movement."

In Europe, game animals were at one point considered to be royal property, leading to the development of class-centered attitudes towards sport hunting wherein the killing of big game was an aristocratic activity (Capoccia, 2013). Thus, colonial conservation societies served as a contemporary manifestation of a centuries-old conception that game animals belonged to the elite. Capoccia (2013) argued that although sport hunting was by nature an act of leisurely slaughter, its simultaneity with early European animal welfare movements impacted how sport hunting was discussed and enacted. Indeed, “it was an animal rights ideology that separated the sport of hunting from subsistence hunting and hunting as a means to protect property. As the elite movement grew, so, too, did the romanticized image of nature” (Capoccia, 2013, p. 9). However, Cioc (2009) reminded us of the cruel irony of these neo-Edenic visions of Africa: “It’s paradoxical that Africa’s modern conservation movement began with the European scramble for Africa, for the white colonists were more destructive over a shorter period of time than any group that preceded them” (p. 28).

Colonial, proto-conservationist mentalities neatly fused classist conceptions of big game hunting with racist depictions of savage colonial subjects. Specifically, colonial animal ethics in Africa specified who should be allowed to hunt and who should not. The animal right-to-kill movement sought to curtail traditional forms of African hunting—more specifically, hunting without the use of firearms. At the same time, however, they banned native “savages” from purchasing or using guns at all, reclassifying those who did use them as “poachers” (Lindsay, 1986). During the Brussels Conference of 1889, Leopold II banned the sale of guns and ammunition to native Africans, sanctioned colonial gun licenses, and enforced big game hunting restrictions, making it nearly impossible for African subjects to kill animals for food or profit while white colonizers enjoyed the privilege of hunting game for trophies. The animal right-to-kill

movement's advocates justified these policies by contrasting their "noble respect" for the hunt as opposed to the careless, barbarous, and wholly unsympathetic killings instituted by natives. European-style, firearm-based hunting was, in more contemporary terms, more "humane" than its spear-, arrow-, snare-, and trap-based African counterparts (Capoccia, 2013).

A notable example of the colonial hunters' "narrow and arguably self-serving animal rights principles" was the advent and actions of the British-based Royal Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire (RSPWFE)—known today as Flora and Fauna International (FFI) (Capoccia, 2013, p. 78). FFI currently advertises itself as one of the world's first major conservation organizations, although it is far from the only self-described African conservationist group to emerge during the early 20th century. Belgium, for instance, had its own nature lobbyists, the Institute of National Parks and the Foundation to Promote the Scientific Study of National Parks in the Belgian Congo. Regardless, neither of these could compete with the power and influence of the RSPWFE. Despite its present incarnation as FFI, it is important to remember that when the RSPWFE was founded in 1903, its main purpose was merely to "conserve" enough big game to suit the killing needs of colonial big game hunters (Cioc, 2009).

Henry Buxton, the founder of the RSPWFE, believed that African game should be viewed as "a precious inheritance of the empire, something to be guarded like a unique picture...something which may easily be lost, but cannot be replaced" (quoted in Prendergast & Adams, 2003, p. 252). An ardent hunter, he maintained that hunting "must not be done in such a way to endanger the existence or seriously diminish the stock of game" available to him and his compatriots (p. 252). At the Congo Basin Convention of 1892 and the Brussels Conference of 1889, Buxton and his allies pushed for uniform export duties on elephant tusks to decrease the slaughter of young and breeding elephants, thus ensuring healthy population growth. This dubious conservationist trend

continued into the 1900 Convention for the Preservation of Wild Animals, Birds, and Fish in Africa, an international conference of the African colonial powers. In 1902, Buxton pinpointed the *real* problem facing Africa's game animals: the "reckless shooting" of an excessive number of animals, particularly by money-hungry entrepreneurs and savage Africans with access to firearms (Prendergast & Adams, 2003, p. 252).

When Buxton founded the RSPWFE in 1903, one of his goals was to convert traditional hunting grounds into national parks and game reserves—or, as Cioc (2009) has argued, to stigmatize indigenous traditions under the false banner of animal welfare and conservation. Ironically, just as Europeans arbitrarily carved up the African continent without considering its geographic, cultural, or faunal implications, conservationists paid equally little attention to the migration patterns of game animals in the construction of game reserves. The end result would be "a hodgepodge of poorly placed, ill-designed 'mega-zoos'" existing under the dubious banner of conservation. (Cioc, 2009, p. 19). The moral value of the animals that were stuck in these pseudo-zoos was classified through the "hierarchy of the hunt" with trophy animals like elephants at the top and "vermin" on the bottom (pp. 21–22). Just as racial hierarchies permeated the colonial landscape, so too did animal hierarchies influence which ought to be conserved and where their reserves ought to be. Cioc (2009) maintained that racism allowed colonists to view Africans as part of the natural landscape, thus enabling them to be subjected to the same brute-force relocations and controls that they applied to nature. I take this argument further: because African fauna was so delightfully *African*, there need not be any shame in further "scrambling" the African landscape by constructing game reserves as arbitrarily placed as colonial dividing lines.

Yet, racism aside, how could this group of trophy hunters possibly call themselves conservationists? A possible answer is in the RSPWFE's annual newsletter. In 1908, Sir Seton-

Carr brushed off criticisms that called members mere “penitent butchers,” men who “having in earlier days taken their fill of big-game slaughter...now, being smitten with remorse, and having reached a less strenuous term of life, think to condone our earlier bloodthirstiness by advocating the preservation of what we formerly chased and killed” (p. 27). Nothing could be further from the truth, for true sportsmen were among the most *authentic* nature-lovers around: “He kills, it is true, but only in sweet reasonableness and moderation, for food if necessary, but mainly for trophies. Wholesale and unnecessary slaughter is abhorrent to him” (Seton-Carr, 1908, p. 27). By Seton-Carr’s logic, trophy hunting ought to be considered a necessary enterprise, a morally justified killing. Sportsmen exuded compassion by leaving “severely alone all immature, and particularly all female-of-their-kind-producing wild animals” (p. 27). Taking a women-and-children-first approach to hunting, Seton-Carr and his compatriots named their organization as the pinnacle of animal ethics that had “done nothing in any wild country to reduce or wipe out any kind of wild big game” (p. 27). Following the precedent set for him by the 1889 Convention onward, he rhetorically dodged blame by villainizing local communities. Although he acknowledged that “amateur” ivory hunters and “certain” sportsmen were not altogether clear of guilt, the “real depredators...in all wild countries have been natives and settlers” (p. 27).

The turn of the 20th century was an era of exploration and adventure, particularly for wealthy game hunters. Whether hunting for ivory or trophies, elephants died in prodigious numbers (Steinhart, 1989). New conservation societies adopted a proto-animal welfare mentality meant to stifle primitive hunting practice and standardize the ivory and firearm trades. Looking at the RSPWFE and its contemporaries through a critical lens, we can redefine colonial conservationism like as in Haraway (1984): “a policy to preserve resources, not only for industry, but also for moral formation, for the achievement of manhood” (p. 57). Animal slaughter, racism,

and patriarchy intersected in Africa's landscape, as white male hunters deplored natives for their lack of interests in the aesthetics of the hunt, the notion of hunting as a noble calling, and the missing "blood lust" that belonged to true sportsmen engaged in an "aristocracy of leisure" (Steinhart, 1989, pp. 251–252). Colonial conservationism was code for co-colonization, perpetuating the racist, speciesist ideologies that would later be put on hyper-display in the RMCA in its anthropological, zoological, and artistic displays. However, before the animals could become part of such displays, their bodies could be domesticated and mutilated in fashions hauntingly similar to the tortured histories of colonized peoples. The next vignette illustrates one such example of these analogous bodily abuses.

Mutilation, Domestication, Conscription: Analogous Abuses in The Belgian Ivory Trade

The vastness of RMCA's zoological collection now makes sense given the proliferation of the animal right-to-kill movement. Yet what of its enviable collection of ivory? That African elephants could be killed via a colonial conservationist mentality does not explain the museum's obsession with the elephant's tusks. And yet, a side-by-side comparison of the post-hunt elephant body and the colonized Congolese body in the 1890's reveals another instance of racism and speciesism interacting as co-colonization. Analyzing the brutal treatment of the elephant body immediately following "the hunt" in conjunction with the concurrent experience of the much-abused Congolese porters reveals an oddly anthropomorphic discourse that textually transformed pachyderms into colonized objects and Congolese subjects in need of bodily discipline. In the Congo Free State, the elephant was yet another African slave to control, exploit, mutilate, and murder.

Prior to the collection of ivory art in the RMCA was a centuries-long, multinational legacy of unregulated elephant hunting and ivory harvest. Early European settlers utilized elephant ivory to finance African explorations and settlements, engaging in a multicultural “ivory network” employing indigenous tribes and slave caravans (Lindsay, 1986). As the age of imperialism progressed, so too did the harvest and trade of elephant ivory, devastating elephant populations in the process. Ivory, a commodity name that belies the materials connected to the tusk of an elephant, was primarily an expensive, exotic, and easily-carvable sculpting product used to construct billiard balls, piano keys, chess pieces, snuff boxes, and other cachet items of the time (Hochschild, 1998). At its peak, between 800 and 1000 tons of ivory were exported from Africa to Europe each year (Lindsay, 1986).

When King Leopold II first colonized the Congo, he did so primarily to extract and profit from its plentiful stock of ivory. Congolese elephants were known to have extremely large tusks compared to Asian pachyderms, which the tusks of a single elephant capable of producing hundreds of piano keys. Thus, due to ivory’s high value, low bulk, and easy access, the Congo Free State quickly filled Leopold II’s coffers (Hochschild, 1998). In 1888, the Congo Free State exported 54,812 kilograms of ivory. In response to lowered elephant populations and increased interest in ivory, the colony instituted an elephant protection measure in 1892. That same year, Belgium, France, and Portugal signed and ratified an agreement at the Congo Basin Convention seeking to create uniform duties on elephant tusks. Such agreements did little to stop the mass slaughter of elephants for their tusks, and in 1899 Congolese ivory exports peaked at a massive 291,731 kilograms. By the end of the Congo Free State’s existence, ivory exports were still holding strong at 243,823 kilograms (Cioc, 2009; Prendergast & Adams, 2003).

The Congo Free State's ballooning ivory trade of the 1890's did not harm Congolese elephants alone. Despite scholarship's emphasis on the brutal "Red Rubber" trade of the Belgian Congo's economy, native Congolese civilians were massively abused in the hunt for ivory as well. For one, some Congolese were driven into poverty, as they were forbidden to sell ivory to anyone other than an agent of King Leopold II. Leopold's agents, however, profited off a commission structure that gave them a cut of the ivory's European market value, thus giving them "a powerful incentive to force Africans—if necessary, at gunpoint—to accept extremely low prices" (Hochschild, 1998, p. 118). Indeed, the indigenous ivory trade had been dismantled in favor of a "command economy," which Hochschild specifies as a "command for labor," specifically, for porters (p. 118). Congolese ivory porters endured gruesome working conditions, with tasks ranging from carrying the ivory agents' food and drink to dismantling entire steamboats and moving them from one section of a river to another—a task which consisted of some three thousand porter loads. Some were paid, usually in just enough food to keep them alive, but most were conscripts. Anyone who complained was beaten with a *chicotte* whip. The death toll was high, and those who trekked long distances often never returned (Hochschild, 1998). King Leopold II insisted that such extreme "employment" methods were in fact benevolent, stating that "in dealing with a race composed of cannibals for thousands of years it is necessary to use methods which will shake their idleness and make them realize the sanctity of work" (quoted in Hochschild, 1998, p. 118). However, Belgian senator Edward Picard described the porter's life as such:

Unceasingly we meet these porters ... black, miserable, with only a horribly filthy loin-cloth for clothing, frizzy and bare head supporting the load—box, bale, ivory tusk ... barrel; most of them sickly, drooping under a burden increased by tiredness and insufficient food—a handful of rice and some stinking dried fish; pitiful

walking caryatids, beasts of burden with thin monkey legs, with drawn features, eyes fixed and round from preoccupation with keeping their balance and from the daze of exhaustion. (quoted in Hochschild, 1998, p. 119)

However disconcerting and brutal the extent of the colonial ivory trade may have been to the native Congolese porters, they were not the only ones forcibly conscripted for hard labor. Indeed, we should not overstate the elephant as a colonial product while overlooking its role as a colonial *laborer*. Certain colonists believed that elephants were just as valuable as draught animals (or as Picard would say, as “beasts of burden”) as they were sources of ivory. To advance this theory, they engaged in projects intended to “domesticate” the African elephant. In the 1908 newsletter for the International Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire, writers P.L. Sclater and Monsieur Nibueid commended the work of the “much-abused Congo Free State” for its domestication project on the Kiver Welle, and advised other colonists to “take a lesson from the Free State authorities on the capture and taming of the African elephant” (p. 46). What they referred to was a colonial project started in 1899 by Belgian Commandant Laplume to try such an “experiment.” By 1905, the Congo Free State had captured 13 elephants, and by 1908 the number had doubled. These numbers did not, however, include the 22 that had to be released or the 86 that died during the domestication process, which would have put the number captured since the beginning of the domestication experiments at 132. Most of them were young, since “it was not possible to capture the adult elephants... They then had to confine themselves to trying to capture the young elephants, who were more gentle, easy to watch, and whose education would be accomplished with fewer difficulties” (Sclater & Nibueid, 1908, p. 48). Speaking to the Belgian’s preference for young elephants, the authors hauntingly described the act of “breaking” the animals,

both physically and psychologically, whom they typically referred to as “captures” or “the captured”:

The attempts to break in the animals have been persevered in, and the result recently obtained has been very encouraging...Some of the elephants objected to drawing the cart, but it was proved that those which worked hard thus developed their muscles and were in excellent health... They thus gradually succeeded in making them drag little waggons loaded with materials, and in making them join in field work by dragging the plough...Training has to be begun carefully and gradually. The elephant responds to good treatment, and better results are obtained by gentleness than by force. (Sclater & Nibueled, 1908, p. 50)

What is more, the Belgian tamers utilized the presence of the young, “broken” elephants to prevent the escape attempts of the newer, frightened ones: “Not only are fresh captures led to the encampment when accompanied by the old ones, but they are also tamed much quicker and lend themselves with better grace to the work demanded of them, following the example of their tame companions” (Sclater & Nibueled, 1908, p. 48). In doing so, they acknowledged the agency and fury of the elder elephants, who could potentially plot to free some of their captured children. The result of the elders’ attempts, however, led to their death and objectification:

The presence of the young captured elephants within the Mission attracted the notice of the older elephants in the surrounding forest, and, it was feared, might occasion the escape of some of the captives. On March 26 a large elephant was found in a field of manioc, and was shot by some of the hunters. The body was measured and weighed. (p. 50)

Just as the colonized Congolese were treated “like animals,” so too were the elephants treated like the Congolese. Post-hunt elephant bodies were treated horribly both in life and in death, colonized and then cut apart. Although we often talk about the horrific photos of abused, handless laborers in the “Red Rubber” industry, populations of elephants were rendered dead and tusk-less. Both the Congolese human and the Congolese elephant were conscripted into porter work and treated brutally, often fatally. In a clear case of co-colonization, the Congolese body—human *or* animal—was an essential component to the booming Belgian ivory trade as laborer and product. The economic necessity of elephant ivory to sustaining the Belgian Congo perpetuated both racist and speciesist mindsets that, as the following vignette will illustrate, allow for the visual display of ivory-laden “menageries of death” in such museums as the RMCA.

Menageries of Death: Seeing Beyond the Human Zoo

“The hunt” was justified and the elephant’s tired body ransacked. And yet, the speciesism did not end with the butchery of the elephant for its tusks. As individual big game hunters justified their killings by idolizing their Edenic “trophies,” colonial museums justified the murderous actions of an entire nation, *to* that entire nation, by displaying scores of abject elephant corpses in the form of ivory. Using the origins of the RMCA from 1897 to 1910, this final vignette demonstrates a final instance of racism and speciesism intertwining. Ivory artwork and other forms of taxidermy both justified the use of the animal body as means to human ends while simultaneously justifying Belgian presence in the Congo Free State.

Scholars thus far have talked at length about the atrocity that was the human zoo display at Leopold II’s 1897 Exhibition Coloniale in Tervuren (Anderson, 1995; Arnaut, 2011). They have

also described and decried in detail the remains of that exhibition as they now exist in the RMCA (Hasian, 2012; Rahier, 2003). What they have consistently glossed over, however, is the past, the present, and now the promised future displays of what I call “menageries of death” in the museum’s artistic repertoire. From the 1897 exhibition through the official 1910 opening of the RMCA, we can see the collection of a range of abject objects that celebrate the slaughter of the colonized animal in an attempt to prove Belgian superiority, particularly in the form of ivory artwork. In this way, the RMCA sponsored exhibits of co-colonization, reifying the inferior status and objectification of African peoples and African animals. The following vignette will demonstrate how the visual politics of taxidermy, particularly in the form of chryselephantine sculptures, represented, represent, and will continue to represent the legitimacy of Belgian colonialism in Africa.

How can one possibly claim that ivory artwork is not only a mode of taxidermy, but a colonial reflection? The connection is not difficult to make if we consider Silverman’s 2015 claim that “the history of the arts in Belgium was a history laced with loss and injury, cast in part as a diaspora of suffering and objects that paralleled the broader history being written” (p. 618). As critical animal theorist Mike Jaynes asserted, the procurement of elephant ivory for aesthetic purposes merely reifies the long-established colonial understanding that “the elephant’s value, in this case, is clearly not intrinsic but derived from the profit and value it provides humans” (Jaynes, 2009, p. 94). By the time of the 1897 exhibition, Belgium was a young nation in the midst of an ever-growing project of colonial expansion and exposition. The advent of the Congo Free State transformed the way history was written and interpreted in Belgium, and this reinterpretation “broke the mold of the newly consolidating royal art museums” (Silverman, 2015, p. 619). The unveiling of colonial museums was an attempt to educate the Belgian people as to “who they really

were” in contrast to the “uncivilized Congolese ‘tribes’...the black savage Africans” far off in the Congo (Rahier, 2003, p. 61). Stanard (2012) unapologetically named the RMCA the “most striking of all the European colonial museums” that “should be primarily understood as a tool of propaganda that explained and justified imperialism at the expense of science, exploration, and understanding...lionizing colonial heroes and Leopold II” pp. 91–92). It was a 19th century exemplar of a “colonial library” (Mudimbe, 1994, p. xii).

That Stanard (2012) chose the verb “lionizing” to describe the function of the RMCA’s visual rhetoric is ironic indeed, for if Leopold II was “lionized” via colonial artwork, it is equally fair to assert that literal lions (and, of course, elephants) were simultaneously colonized in the works of Leopold’s sycophants. If Stanard (2012) is correct that the Exposition Coloniale expressed a desire to “open a window onto Africa...by collecting everything about the colony in one place,” it is foolish to suggest that the colonized African displayed in a human zoo and the dead animals displayed as stuffed taxidermy and ivory art were unrelated. Indeed, power relations are inherent in material collections, alive or otherwise, “because a museum’s objects necessarily once belonged to somebody else and had to be acquired to be put on display, often by use of force” (pp. 98, 102).

The visual displays in the Exposition Coloniale’s menageries of death were just as grand, striking, and shocking as the human zoo. In preparation for the exposition, Belgium took in cargo ships full to the brim with animal skins and elephant tusks. By 1898, once Leopold II had transported much of the Exposition Coloniale to his Tervuren estate, one could see galleries representing the vast profits the Congo Free State had given Belgium not only via rubber, but through ivory tusks. Among the displays was Phillippe Wolfers famed statue, “Caress of the Swan,” which would be praised for its masterful blending of ivory and silver. Securing the ivory to the

silver were a series of punctures and bolts, which “corresponded to the theme of combat depicted in the sculpture, as well as evoking some of the brutality of its origins” (Silverman, 2015, p. 646). In 1904 Leopold enlisted the help of famous architect Charles Girault to build a permanent museum structure funded through the very ivory and rubber profits that the temporary museum had displayed, and was officially opened in 1910. Along with stuffed taxidermy and mounted skeletons, chryselephantines were littered through the museum. The entryway rotunda highlighted an imposing ivory bust of Leopold II, a set of ivory statuettes encircling it. Along a massive wall map stood a lengthy alley of ivory figurines. Also visible was an open, mounted display of massive elephant tusks sprouting upwards, as well as multiple encased displayed over tusks “crammed together with innumerable smaller ivory pieces” (Silverman, 2015, p. 641). Per Silverman (2015): “violence was on view” (p. 620).

Assessing the multiple cracks in the RMCA’s ivory products, Silverman (2015) named the displays as “a gallery of wounded objects, summoning new generations of viewers to see technical procedures and visual forms of violence, breaking, and breaking through” (Silverman, 2015, p. 628). Although Silverman was speaking to the symbolic violence perpetrated against colonized Africans, I argue that the same logic can be applied to the ivory itself: Ivory, which can only be obtained via the slaughter of an elephant for its tusks, is a display of necropolitical violence. Just as the RMCA’s haunting taxidermies displayed abject bodies, so too did its ivory statues pay homage to murder. Normalizing the display of the dead as ivory serves as a form of speciesist necropolitics, for “one’s horror the sight of death turns into satisfaction that it is someone else who is dead. It is the death of the other...that makes the survivor feel unique” (Mbembe, 2008, p. 178). The menagerie of death allows speciesism to reign supreme, further severing the animal parts from

the animal whole to which it was once attached, reifying the human “right” to mutilate, mold, and gape at the animal body.

Perhaps the most distinct example of the rhetorical power of museographic ivory displays can be seen in the RMCA’s famed bust of Leopold II. While this depiction of the Congo Free State’s cruel king was merely one of many ivory carvings littered throughout the RMCA, it has been the focus of many writers critical of the museum’s warped sense of public memory (see Rosemberg, 2013; McDonald-Gibson, 2013; O’Donnell, 2014; among many others). Prior to the RMCA’s reconstruction project, nearly every room contained a statue or at least a callback to a “regal Leopold” (McDonald-Gibson, 2013, para. 6), but only one bust was carved entirely from ivory. Designed by Thomas Vincotte at the dawn of the 20th century, the museum has frequently switched the statue’s location from 1897 through the present day. At times it was located at the midpoint of the central rotunda, at others it was hidden away in cupboards. (Silverman, 2011). Whether or not the 2018 incarnation of the RMCA will feature Leopold II’s ivory bust remains to be seen.

In terms of artistry, it is hardly a “creative” piece. Much like any monarchical bust, Leopold II is depicted staring intently at an unknown subject, bereft of compassion or even a hint of a smile. At times protected behind glass walls and at others placed upon a slab of Congolese wood, Leopold II appears to his subjects dressed in formal militaristic garb. He is the gray-white color of elephant ivory, as it appears no attempt has been made to cloak the sculpture’s material origins in expensive and multiple elephant tusks.

The rhetorical force of the bust is difficult to overstate. Wherever it is placed in the museum, Leopold II’s omnipresent gaze ensures that “the museum has remained frozen in time” (McDonald-Gibson, 2013, para. 3). Leopold II’s panoptic stare ensures that the museum remains

haunted by the poltergeist of the brutal Congo Free State. Even when his likeness has been hidden away from sight, this invisibility does not negate the ghostly presence of his reign. As Avery Gordon has explained:

Haunting and the appearance of specters or ghosts is one way, I tried to suggest, we're notified that what's been suppressed or concealed is very much alive and present, messing or interfering precisely with those always incomplete forms of containment and repression ceaselessly directed towards us. (Gordon, 2011, p. 2)

In his corporeal absence, Leopold II is still very much present. When the statue is on display, gazing coldly at its subjects, museum-goers are inundated with the memory of a monarchy teeming with capitalist greed—at least until the museographic narrative provided to patrons attempts to correct this unseemly memory. When the bust is hidden away, media narratives critical of the RMCA have continued to remind patrons of its existence in the bowels of the museum, symbolically representing the museum's desire to stow away bad memories of the Congo Free State without dealing with the colony's angry ghosts. As Gordon has explained, specters of colonial demons do not vanish by sheer force of will. Leopold II's ivory bust, be it on display or hidden away, serves as a consistent reminder of the origins of the gorgeous neoclassical artistry littering the RMCA.

But the bust's potential to haunt its subjects is not solely from Leopold II's gaze. The ghostly king is not the only specter that emerges from the statue. Rather, a discerning patron might feel the uneasy presence of the multiple dead elephants sacrificed for the construction of the elegant bust. The absent referent is not so absent when reconstructed into the shape of the human who ordered its death. As is typical of an ivory sculpting, cracks and crevices can be seen

throughout, depicting the areas where a new ivory slab had to be used to accommodate for the sheer size of the bust. In this way, a close glance at the bust of Leopold II shows a king unsubtly reconstructed from severed teeth, a king whose colony would, like the statue itself, have come apart at the seams were it not for the destruction of profitable elephant bodies. In constructing Leopold II's likeness from the corpses of elephants, the sculpture reifies the concept of co-colonization. Specifically, it exemplifies the binding together of human and nonhuman animal bodies in the construction and maintenance of the Congo Free State.

Despite its lack of a distinct face or corporeal body, I take ivory to be a specific form of taxidermy equally capable of being analyzed through the conception of a "Teddy Bear Patriarchy" laid out in Haraway (1984). For Haraway, "behind every mounted animal...lies a profusion of objects and social interactions among people and other animals, which in the end can be recomposed to tell...a tale of commerce and power and knowledge in white and male supremacist monopoly capitalism" (p. 21). Within the RMCA's abject menageries, "it is in the craft of killing that life is constructed...a moment of incarnation in the encounter between man and animal" (p. 23). Taxidermies, be they mounted heads of lions or ivory statuettes, tell a story of "natural history" that purposefully excludes both the natural and the historical, instead opting to employ a persuasive rhetoric that, according to Bal (1992), "almost inevitably convinces the visitor of the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon, largely Christian culture that is supposedly at the top of the evolutionary ladder" (p. 594).

When we perceive ivory art as a form of taxidermy, the sense of death emanating through the RMCA grows ever more overwhelming. If ivory is taxidermy, and taxidermy is both colonial and rhetorical, then the early incarnation of the RMCA made every effort to put its imperial power on *hyper*-display. For too long, the history of taxidermy at colonial museums has been left un-

interrogated, particularly as it has been displayed in colonial sculpture. But ivory is far from just art, more than mere aesthetics. Given its economic importance in colonial communities, particularly in the Congo Free State, the exhibition of the elephant body in such extreme amounts tells us much about the Belgian colonial mentality. By naming ivory artwork as taxidermy, we symbolically reattach it to the elephant's body. By talking about animal products in museum displays as "menageries of death," can push critics like Silverman and Haraway towards a critique of speciesism, not only demonstrating the art's colonial symbolism *via* animals, but also illustrating colonial artwork's impact upon *literal* animal bodies. No longer is ivory just "ivory," a product that simply and naturally "is." It is, in fact, an *elephant subject's* tusk, a mutilation of what was once a living being. The problem of the absent referent has been resolved.

Ivory displays such as those in the RMCA exemplify processes of co-colonization as they were imposed upon African peoples and African fauna. Racist, speciesist logics worked in tandem to create markets for ivory artwork, and as this and the previous vignettes demonstrated, the process by which the African elephant went from hunted beast to mutilated corpse was further enmeshed in violent colonial processes. By better understanding the RMCA's ivory collection as a patriarchal taxidermy display, as a tooth wrenched from a living being amidst brutal colonial regimes, we can better listen to the elephant's story, tusks and all.

Concluding Remarks

In this essay, I laid out three vignettes representing the colonial treatment of the African elephant under European colonial rule. Using the RMCA as a frame and postcolonial critical animal studies as a theoretical guide, I traced the origins of elephant ivory in the Belgian colonial museum from the beginning through the end of the ever-glorified "hunt." My genealogy not only

revealed the speciesist ideologies that justified the hunt, but also demonstrated racist interconnections that furthered these hunting practices and allowed both colonial and animal bodies to be used, abused, and eventually displayed in arenas such as the RMCA.

The first vignette concerned the origins of “the hunt,” specifically the original European conservation club, the Royal Society for the Protection of the Wild Fauna of the Empire, whose conservationist ideology represented an animal right-to-kill movement. The RSPWFE and its subsidiaries served as powerful lobbying groups in imperial politics, influencing policies that restricted the hunting of elephants and other big game in colonial Africa. Yet, a closer analysis of RSPWFE discourse reveals that these men were less concerned with the right of the elephants to live free and avoid extinction, and more worried about *who* should have the right to kill *which* elephants and *when*. What emerged were enactments of co-colonization for big game hunting that banned native hunting practices for being “inhumane” while simultaneously banning African “poachers” from acquiring “humane” firearms. Female breeding elephants and young elephants were spared death not because of mercy, but because of the need to replenish the stock of game for future hunters. The construction and location of game preserves was done so arbitrarily that one could almost call it synonymous with the border-drawings in the Scramble for Africa. And, when their ideologies were questioned, these proto-conservationists ironically portrayed themselves as compassionate stewards of the African landscape, men whose love of nature directly contrasted the savagery of their African counterparts.

The following vignette explored the domestication, brutalization, and mutilation of the hunted Congolese elephant’s body. Similar to the tragic story of the native Congolese, used and abused under Belgian rule, the elephant had two options: domestication/enslavement or death/mutilation, all in the name of colonial profiteering. In the 1890’s, the Congo Free State

survived off of its ivory trade. Conservationism alone was not enough to stop hundreds of thousands of ivory exports from making their way back to Europe every year, for purposes ranging from billiard balls to ivory sculptures. If the elephant was not slaughtered for its tusks, it was to be enslaved as a draught animal. Reports of Belgian experiments to domesticate elephants reveal a haunting discourse that portrayed the animals as literal captives that wished to escape confinement, animals captured as children and broken physically and psychologically, pachyderms whose elders sought to free their young only to be rewarded with death. Elephants in the Congo Free State were not only commodities, they were colonial subjects with emotions, agency, and the need to be broken in order to serve Belgium. When the elephant's story is set side-by-side with that of the Congolese porter, we can once again see an instance of co-colonization in which human and animal bodies were captured, broken, and mutilated to stuff King Leopold II's coffers.

My final vignette showed the elephant after death via its exhibition an artistic medium in the early incarnations of the RMCA. Whether displayed in the flesh as stuffed trophies, as giant tusks extending towards the sky, or as raw ivory used for chryselephantine artwork, elephants were omnipresent from the 1897 Exhibition Coloniale through the official opening of the RMCA in 1910. The museum's elephantine and chryselephantine displays were symbolic representations of colonial authority over man and nature. Looking at ivory work as a form of rhetorical taxidermy reveals how elephantine displays are not merely representations of the artist's prowess, but also exhibitions of a white-centric, Judeo-Christian, patriarchal, and colonial system of domination. Ivory displays act as "menageries of death"—literal collections of murdered, severed elephant corpses and symbolic collections of the brutalized Congolese bodies that labored to get the ivory from Africa to Europe in the first place.

I hope future scholars might understand that, although my portraits focused on particular colonial moments, the ideologies revealed are also *postcolonial* representations of a particular form of necropolitical violence. Even after decolonization these troubling speciesist ideologies did not go away. One can easily see my point when exploring the plans for the 2018 reopening of the RMCA, which intends to cloak colonial harms against Africans by forefronting the abject bodies of colonial animals. Or, one might simply read the news to find an image of slaughtered game animals by native Africans with European-imported firearms or by rich, white sportsmen on vacation from the West. These cases reify the assertion that the Othered colonial subject “gets resurrected in essentialist trappings and fixed in static categories of ethnic culture” and ultimately “reproduces the violence of colonial modernities and fixes difference in a spectacle of otherness” (Shome & Hegde, 2002, pp. 262–263). By pinpointing the particularities of the colonial elephant from the late 19th century to the early 20th, I have revealed the necessity of including the plight of the animal in postcolonial theorizations by seeking out what Mbembe (2008) called “repressed topographies of cruelty” (p. 182).

What is more, I have given critical animal theorists an example of how postcolonial studies might supplement discourses of animal liberation in a world still very much impacted by the legacy of colonialism. Future research in CAS might choose to reassess instances of animal exploitation for “entertainment” – particularly zoos – which remain a popular family activity today, despite increased scrutiny as to the actual “educational” benefits behind wild animal captivity. Via postcolonial critical animal studies, rhetorical critics can move further than a critique the immorality of biological edu-tainment. They can also explore the zoo’s ability to perpetuate colonial ideologies and imperialist anthropocentric discourse (Malamud, 1998). Indeed, the history of colonial zoos across Europe is ripe with case studies of the consumption of the exotic, still-

living elephant body as a “place of genteel resort and naïve exoticism” (Jones, 1997, p. 1). A critical genealogy of the death of animals like Marius the giraffe at the Copenhagen Zoo might reveal why contemporary zoo officials can put perfectly healthy animals to death without questioning the oppressive necropolitics at play.

I could not tackle everything in this essay, but by demonstrating the possibility of a “postcolonial critical animal studies,” showing the heuristic value of critical genealogy for this theoretical framework, identifying some of many historical instances of co-colonization in Africa, and renaming colonial ivory artwork as literal and symbolic “menageries of death,” I hope to have provided a model for future incarnations of this mode of criticism—or, perhaps, an incentive for museum practitioners to, in their written descriptions of the displays, better contextualize the artwork and artifacts to more honestly account for the multispecies degradation involved in their procurement. Prakash (1992) told us that “the postcolonial disruption of master narratives authorized by imperialism produces an insistence of the heterogeneity of colonial histories” (p. 15). Within this multiplicity of histories, stories, and voices, we must not forget the colonial animal.

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Editorial Objectives

The *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* is open to all scholars and activists. The journal was established to foster academic study of critical animal issues in contemporary society. While animal studies is increasingly becoming a field of importance in the academy, much work being done under this moniker takes a reformist or depoliticized approach that fails to mount a more serious critique of underlying issues of political economy and speciesist philosophy. JCAS is an interdisciplinary journal with an emphasis on animal liberation philosophy and policy issues. The journal was designed to build up the common activist's knowledge of animal liberation while at the same time appealing to academic specialists. We encourage and actively pursue a diversity of viewpoints of contributors from the frontlines of activism to academics. We have created the journal to facilitate communication between the many diverse perspectives of the animal liberation movement. Thus, we especially encourage submissions that seek to create new syntheses between differing disputing parties and to explore paradigms not currently examined.

Suggested Topics

Papers are welcomed in any area of animal liberation philosophy from any discipline, and presenters are encouraged to share theses or dissertation chapters. Since a major goal of the Institute for Critical Animal Studies is to foster philosophical, critical, and analytical thinking about animal liberation, papers that contribute to this project will be given priority (especially papers that address critical theory, political philosophy, social movement analysis, tactical analysis, feminism, activism and academia, Continental philosophy, or post-colonial perspectives). We especially encourage contributions that engage animal liberation in disciplines and debates that have received little previous attention.

Review Process

Each paper submitted is initially reviewed for general suitability for publication; suitable submissions will be read by at least two members of the journal's editorial board.

Manuscript Requirements

The manuscript should be in MS Word format and follow APA guidelines. All submissions should be double-spaced and in 12 point Times New Roman. Good quality electronic copies of all figures and tables should also be provided. All manuscripts should conform to American spelling.

As a guide, we ask that regular essays and reviews be between 2000-8000 words and have limited endnotes. In exceptional circumstances, JCAS will consider publishing extended essays. Authors should supply a brief abstract of the paper (of no more than 250 words). A brief autobiographical note should be supplied which includes full names, affiliation, email address, and full contact details.

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