Animal Displays, Gender, Race, and Pedagogy at Liverpool Museum, Circa 1880–1920

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Abstract

This chapter examines animal displays at Liverpool Museum in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and how these interacted with school curricula. It argues that displays of birds and mammals emphasized femininity, domesticity, and the nuclear family, operating in tandem with anthropological galleries' promotion of white supremacy. It considers the lessons and discourses schoolchildren were exposed to at Liverpool Museum, identifying a symbiosis between museology and pedagogy during James Granville Legge's tenure as Liverpool City Council's Director of Education. Liverpool schools adopted an object-centred, haptic curriculum that confirmed ideological messages about gender, class, race, and empire disseminated by the city museum. The chapter concludes by using historical photographs to critique the racist, sexist, and heteronormative legacies of natural history museums.

Keywords: museum, gender, race, education, taxidermy

Figure 1 shows boys and girls from Pleasant Street Council School visiting Liverpool Museum's mammal gallery, dated around 1914. A man, presumably the class teacher, observes as children peer into display cabinets and make notes or sketches about nonhuman animals, including a zebra and a giraffe. One group congregates beside a mounted elephant, perhaps intrigued by its backstory. In May 1898, Henry Ogg Forbes, Director of Liverpool Museum from 1894 to 1910, was present when the elephant (nicknamed Don Pedro) was euthanized while touring with Barnum and Bailey's Circus. Forbes

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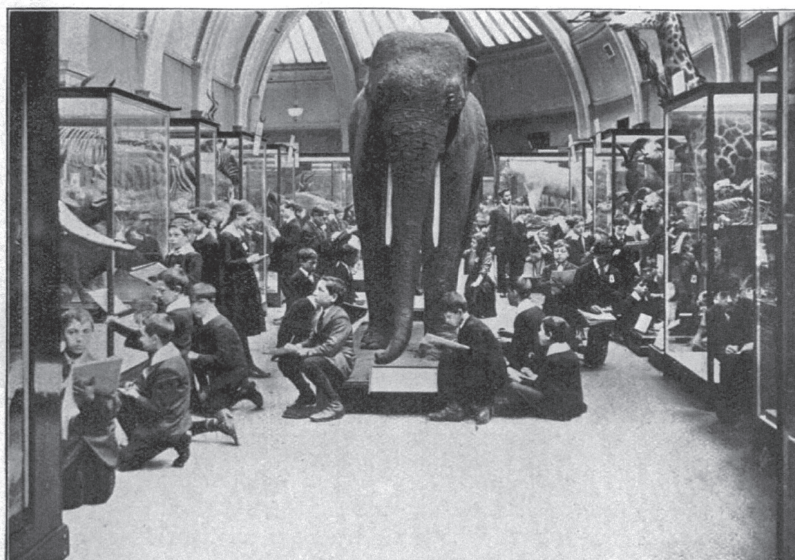
PLEASANT STREET COUNCIL SCHOOL

Figure 1. 'Use of Museum', showing Pleasant Street Council School visit to Liverpool Museum. J.G. Legge, *The Thinking Hand; or Practical Education in the Elementary School* (London: Macmillan, 1914). California Digital Library.

arranged transportation of the carcass to the museum, where taxidermist James William Cutmore prepared it for display.[1]

This chapter considers the various lessons that children like the Pleasant Street pupils received from Liverpool Museum's animal exhibits. It uses written and photographic primary sources to recover, first, the ideological content that underpinned displays of nonhuman animals at Liverpool Museum in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and, second, how this synchronized with school curricula. My analysis demonstrates that museum representations of birds' and mammals' paternal and maternal roles tallied with presumptions about boys and girls propagated inside the classroom. Correspondingly, museum professionals and educationists alike inculcated ideas about racial difference and the virtues and virtuousness of imperialism.

Figure 1 exemplifies museums and schools' interinstitutional collaboration. It was one of four photographs of trips to the Liverpool Museum included in *The Thinking Hand; or Practical Education in the Elementary School* (1914) by James Granville Legge, Liverpool City Council's Director of

1 *Liverpool Echo*, May 16, 1898, 2.

Education from 1906–1923. *The Thinking Hand* used photographs of lessons taught at the museum and others involving museum-like specimens to advocate for 'practical' schooling that stimulated children's haptic senses and powers of observation. Just as centring sight and touch suited the object-centred rationale of museum didactics, classroom lessons complemented discursive messages regarding gender, race, class, and empire disseminated by museum exhibits. Museology and pedagogy endeavoured to *naturalize* both feminine domesticity and white supremacy.

The chapter opens by surveying historiography on women's relationship with museums. The second section scrutinizes the gendering of animal displays and the racial hierarchy implemented by Henry Ogg Forbes at the Liverpool Museum. The third section then maps the museum's racist, patriarchal values onto the encounters schoolchildren had with it. Under Legge's directorship, Liverpool schools incorporated museum visits and nature study into a curriculum that prepared working-class girls for motherhood and domestic service and boys for manual labour. The article concludes by interpreting historical photographs to problematize the heteronormative character of museums' animal displays.

This chapter engages with scholarship by authors including Tony Bennett, Kate Hill, Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, and Sandra Swart.[2] Its analysis of animal displays' racial and gender politics mainly responds to Donna Haraway's work on exhibits at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), New York.[3] The Liverpool Museum used display techniques comparable to taxidermy dioramas innovated by Carl Akeley at AMNH during the early twentieth century. Yet, the chapter pushes into new ground, beyond Haraway's analysis, by explicating direct connections between museology and pedagogy. In addition, where Haraway mainly focused on masculinity, this chapter contemplates feminine gender roles encoded in natural history displays – plus their latent potential to represent non-heteronormative sexualities.

2 Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995); Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 2004); Kate Hill, *Women and Museums 1850–1914: Modernity and the Gendering of Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016); Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, "Nature by Design: Masculinity and Animal Display in Nineteenth-Century America," in *Figuring it Out: Science, Gender, and Visual Culture*, eds. Ann B. Shteir and Bernard Lightman (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2006), 110–139; Sandra Swart, "The Other Citizens: Nationalism and Animals," in *The Routledge Companion to Animal History*, eds. Hilda Kean and Philip Howell (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 31–52.

3 Donna Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908–1936," *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (London: Routledge, 1989), 26–58.

Women and Liverpool Museum

Working-class men were 'the primary target' of nineteenth-century museums, as Tony Bennett showed. They offered 'useful lessons' applicable to manufacturing industries where males were presumed to be the main labour force.[4] Conversely, museum professionals regarded working-class women with suspicion, taking measures to prevent galleries from becoming sites for 'wet nursing' or 'prostitute[s] soliciting business'.[5] Attitudes shifted as the nineteenth century progressed. By 1900, women were the majority of museumgoers, and the number of female workers, donors, researchers, volunteers, and patrons had also increased. Kate Hill suggests that this helped 'domesticate' museums' purportedly public (i.e., male) realm. Concurrently, female museum workers adopted 'public virtues [...] such as scholarship and professionalism'.[6] This was significant given women's previous exclusion from male-centric pursuits such as artisan botany clubs.[7] Some women purposefully contested gender stereotypes in gallery settings – most eye-catchingly via suffragettes' attacks on paintings in 1913–14. For Hill, museums 'both represented patriarchal values to women [...] and offered spaces to challenge those values'.[8]

Archival sources relating to the Liverpool Museum support this conclusion. In May 1914, suffragette activism at the neighbouring Walker Art Gallery led to extra security being introduced to ensure Liverpool Museum was 'strictly guarded and patrolled'.[9] On the whole, though, museum discourse reinforced gender orthodoxies. A pamphlet, *Workmen and Museums* (1886), called upon Liverpool Museum to introduce Sunday openings so that 'poor working men' could visit on their 'one free day of the week'.[10] As its title implies, *Workmen and Museums* maintained a gendered conception of museums' utility. For example, it speculated on the value of the museum's entomology collections to 'the future housewife': 'Far better [...] she learnt about the cockroach, instead of studying German, which she will never use, or learning to make useless and annoying antimacassars'.[11]

4 Bennett, *The Birth*, 31–33.

5 Hill, *Women and Museums*, 107–08.

6 Ibid., 6–10, 113–14.

7 Anne Secord, "Science in the Pub: Artisan Botanists in Early Nineteenth-Century Lancashire," *History of Science* 32, no. 3 (September 1994): 269–315.

8 Hill, *Women and Museums*, 117–19.

9 *Liverpool Daily Post*, May 8, 1914, 5.

10 Robert McMillan, *Workmen and Museums: Being Selections from a Series of Letters Contributed to the Liverpool Mercury* (Liverpool: Egerton Smith & Co., 1886), 3.

11 *Liverpool Mercury*, January 11, 1886, 5.

The proposition that a girl should study insects fitted a 'feminine gendering' that deemed natural history a respectable, even desirable, undertaking for women.[12] Early-modern science was a 'household pursuit,' allowing women to conduct a natural inquiry in domestic settings.[13] Even as Victorian 'separate spheres' hardened, women remained in demand as illustrators of science textbooks.[14] Some women enjoyed opportunities for scientific fieldwork. An example is Anna Forbes, wife of Liverpool Museum's Director Henry Forbes. As recounted in *Insulinde: Experiences of a Naturalist's Wife in the Eastern Archipelago* (1887), Forbes accompanied her husband on an expedition to Sumatra and New Guinea. Later, she and Henry co-authored a chapter in *British Birds with Their Nests and Eggs* (1896) based on observations at the Liverpool Museum.[15] Yet, Anna Forbes remained typecast as 'a Naturalist's Wife', insisting *Insulinde* provided 'a simpler account' aimed at 'many of my own sex who might turn away from [...] the scientific matter' in her husband's writings.[16] Further minimizing women's contributions to science, the author's list in *British Birds* excluded her name.[17]

To summarize, primary evidence confirms women were active in various museological endeavours throughout the Victorian and Edwardian periods, but their agency had clear limits. Museums remained dominated by men, possessing a 'monologically male [...] authoritative voice'.[18]

Exhibiting Birds and Mammals at Liverpool Museum

Liverpool's public museum originated from natural history collections bequeathed by Edward Smith Stanley, the 13th Earl of Derby. The museum opened in 1852 and was relocated to a permanent site eight years later.

12 Hill, *Women and Museums*, 20.

13 Alix Cooper, "Homes and Households," in *The Cambridge History of Science, Vol. 3: Early Modern Science*, eds. Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 224–37.

14 Barbara T. Gates, "Those Who Drew and Those Who Wrote: Women and Victorian Popular Science Illustration," and Bernard Lightman, "Depicting Nature, Defining Roles: The Gender Politics of Victorian Illustration," in *Figuring it Out*, 192–239.

15 Henry Forbes and Anna Forbes, "Order Gaviae," in *British Birds with Their Nests and Eggs, Vol. 6*, eds. Arthur G. Butler and Frederick William Frohawk (London: Brumby and Clark, 1896), 1–7.

16 Anna Forbes, *Insulinde: Experiences of a Naturalist 's Wife in the Eastern Archipelago* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1887), vii–viii.

17 John James Wilson, "Anna Forbes: Naturalist," National Museums Liverpool, https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/stories/focus-anna-forbes-naturalist.

18 Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*, 32

The enlarged museum (which still operates as Liverpool's World Museum) featured eight natural history galleries, including a live aquarium. Liverpool Museum's animal holdings expanded thanks to its proximity to a global port. The 1854 annual report logged donations by 'captains of vessels' and encouraged 'travellers […] to add to collection by preserving in spirit […] birds, quadrupeds […] reptiles, fishes, crustacea, mollusca and insects'.[19] Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society assisted seafarers with guidance on collecting natural history specimens and bestowed honorary membership to museum donors.[20]

In 1864, the Liverpool Museum appointed a full-time taxidermist, Henry Reynolds. Reynolds introduced 'improved methods of mounting and displaying birds' in an 'intelligible, instructive, and pleasing' manner, preparing 'cases of British birds […] showing the male, female, nest, eggs, and young' plus 'complete family groups […] arranged together on a single stand'.[21] Another experiment applied 'Pictorial Art' to bird displays. In 1892, a member of Liverpool City Council's Museums Committee, Henry Hugh Higgins, addressed the Museums Association (est. 1889) on 'a special feature' exhibiting an albatross and a frigate bird with a background painted by landscape artist Isaac Cooke. Higgins believed the display achieved a 'union between Science and Art' that might 'shock […] quarters where museums are regarded as structures dedicated to systematic taxonomy more than the loving cult of nature'.[22]

This collaboration with a professional artist appears to have been a one-off – confirming Karen Wonders' observation that full-scale habitat dioramas were rarer in Britain than in North America or Scandinavia.[23] Nevertheless, other aspects of Liverpool's animal displays replicated AMNH's celebrated taxidermy exhibitions. *The Handbook and Guide to British Birds*, first published in 1914 (reissued in 1920 and 1932), showcased 'highly educational and artistic groups' mounted by Liverpool Museum's chief taxidermist, James Cutmore. Where Carl Akeley used rocks and flora

19 *Second Annual Report of the Committee of the Free Public Library and the Derby Museum of the Borough of the Town of Liverpool* (Liverpool: Robert H. Fraser, 1854), 3–5. Museum reports are hereafter referenced as 'AR' alongside dates of publication, e.g. AR (1854), 3–5.

20 *Proceedings of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool* 16 (1862), 5–6, 46–57.

21 AR (1865), 15.

22 Henry Hugh Higgins, "On the Cultivation of Special Features in Museums," in *Museums Association: Report of Proceedings with Papers Read at the Third Annual General Meeting* (Sheffield: William Townsend, 1892), 39–45.

23 Karen Wonders, *Habitat Dioramas: Illusions of Wilderness in Museums of Natural History* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 1993), 15.

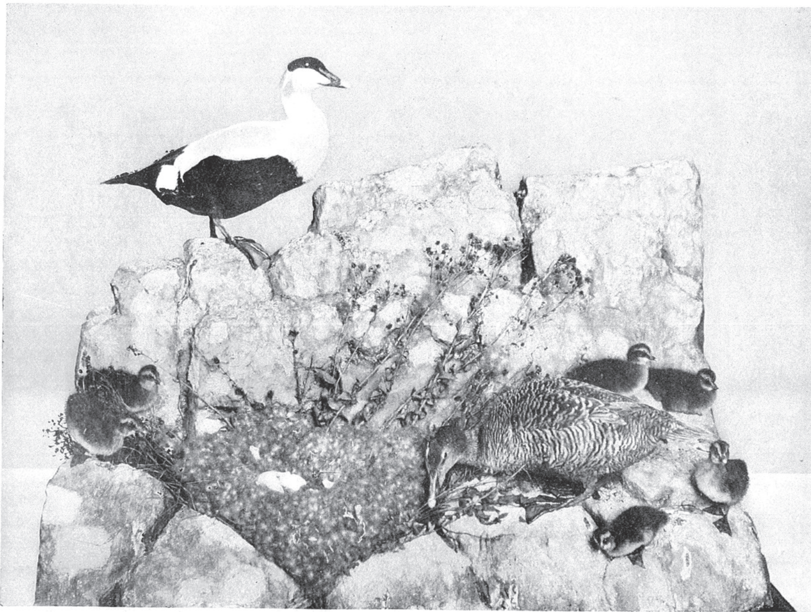

Figure 2. Eider Duck Group at Liverpool Museum. *Handbook and Guide to British Birds on Exhibition at the Lord Derby Natural History Museum, Liverpool* (Liverpool: C. Tinling, 1914). Biodiversity Heritage Library.

to represent mammals' domestic habitats, Cutmore's arrangements focused on birds' nests and scenes of childrearing.

Nuancing Haraway's contention that habitat dioramas expressed a 'hierarchical division of labour', the *Handbook* portrayed instances of offspring being 'carefully tended by both parents' and where males incubated eggs.[24] Otherwise, male and female behaviours were clearly delineated. The Eider Duck Group distinguished not only the dimorphic contrast between male (white) versus female (brown) feathering, but also birds' relative postures: the female was shown stooping beside several chicks on a lower pane, with the male atop a rock (Fig. 2). This approximates Kohlstedt's characterization of how taxidermic '"body language"' placed 'the male in a dominant position, typically upright and assertive' with females 'in the background [...] engaged in the "instinctual" routines of gathering food, tending the nest, or nurturing young'.[25]

Other displays depicted aggressive male sexual behaviour. The *Handbook* entry on the Ruff Group stated:

24 Haraway, *Primate Visions*, p. 40; *Handbook ... to British Birds*, 33, 43, 45.

25 Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, "Nature by Design," 121–29.

Figure 3. Ruff Group at Liverpool Museum. *Handbook and Guide to British Birds on Exhibition at the Lord Derby Natural History Museum, Liverpool* (Liverpool: C. Tinling, 1914). Biodiversity Heritage Library.

> The males vary remarkably in plumage, and the breast shield [...] which the bird dons at [...] nesting season, is one of the most striking nuptial garments of any bird [...] The artist portrays a characteristic scene where several males [...] engage in deadly combat for possession of the female, who sits calmly by, awaiting the issue of the fight. (Fig. 3)[26]

The phrase 'possession' here recalls Rebecca Machin's point that natural history displays traditionally 'imply males have ownership of females, rather than females having the potential to make decisions in the courtship process'.[27]

Similar themes – domesticity, family, male aggression – recurred in Liverpool Museum's *Handbook and Guide to British Mammals* (1921; reissued 1932). The Common Fox exhibit was fashioned into multigenerational drama:

> The group consists of the dog-fox returning home [...] with food. One of his family, too young to exhibit the usual foxy caution, has rushed out

26 *Handbook and Guide to British Birds on Exhibition at the Lord Derby Natural History Museum, Liverpool* (Liverpool: C. Tinling, 1914), 3

27 Rebecca Machin, "Gender Representation in the Natural History Galleries at the Manchester Museum," *Museum and Society* 6, no.1 (2008): 54–67, at 60.

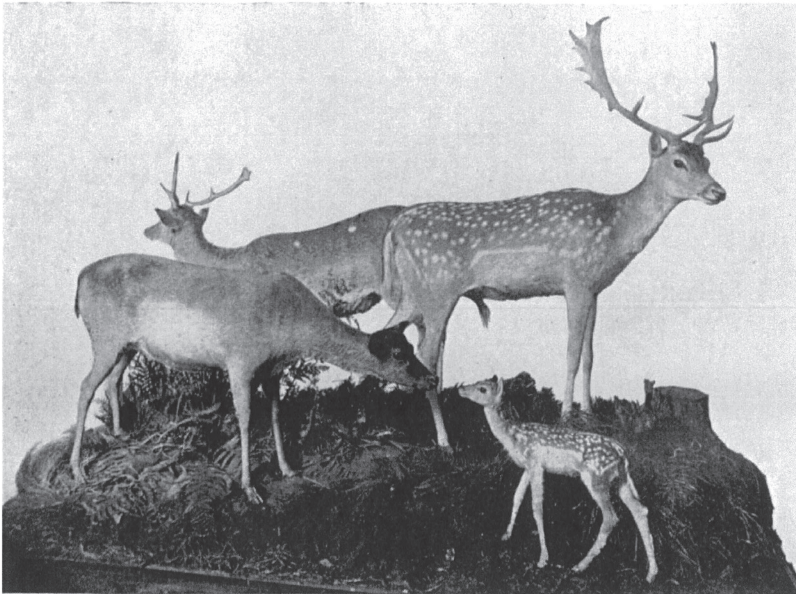

Figure 4. Fallow Deer Group at Liverpool Museum. *Handbook and Guide to British Mammals on Exhibition at the Lord Derby Natural History Museum, Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool Daily Post, 1921). California Digital Library.

> of the 'earth' to welcome him. The vixen (mother), rendered anxious by the risk taken by one of her cubs, is showing her face at the mouth of the 'earth'. A young fox of a previous litter, seeing his father returning to the old home, has ventured to follow him, where he is now an unwelcome guest.[28]

More conventionally, mammals were arranged akin to a nuclear family. The Fallow Deer Group 'contain[ed] an adult male, or buck, in summer coat, young male in winter coat, a female of the almost black breed, and a fawn' (Fig. 4).[29] The specimens' positioning again erected a clear power dynamic. Male deer were elevated above the female and fawns, with the elder buck staring outwards, tallying Kohlstedt's observation that animal displays afforded males 'a readiness pose' and agency to 'look through glass panes on visitors'.[30]

Allusions to specimens making eye contact with museumgoers hint at how photographic conventions influenced natural history displays.

28 *Handbook and Guide to British Mammals on Exhibition at the Lord Derby Natural History Museum, Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool Daily Post, 1921), 17.

29 Ibid., 27.

30 Kohlstedt, "Nature by Design," 128–29.

As Haraway points out, Carl Akeley was a skilled photographer, whose dioramas strove for 'the perfection of the camera's eye'.[31] Forbes, too, was a keen photographer, sitting on the British Association for the Advancement of Science's committee on anthropological photography.[32] He also shared Akeley's interest in modernizing display techniques, instructing Liverpool Museum curators to disassemble mounted specimens 'prepared before taxidermy became the art it now is'.[33] The museum's taxidermist, James Cutmore, was a willing ally. In 1906, Cutmore presented a Museums Association conference with 'scientific methods for reproducing [...] like-life form', urging that taxidermists be 'treated the same [...] as other artistic and scientific workers'.[34]

Forbes and Cutmore directly procured taxidermy specimens. In 1898–1899, they joined an expedition to Socotra and Abd al Kuri in the Indian Ocean, collecting thousands of items for the Liverpool Museum's collection. Accounts of animals' capture during the Socotra expedition – sponsored by Liverpool City Council and the British Museum, with support from the colonial government in British India – highlight another aspect of animal displays' gender politics. Historically a 'male pastime', hunting informed the Victorian 'ethos of imperial masculinity'.[35] Fieldnotes by the British Museum ornithologist William Robert Ogilvie-Grant accordingly indulged in a 'thrill of the chase' that echoed Kohlstedt's contention that exhibiting animals killed by 'male hunter patrons' exaggerated habitat dioramas' 'ubiquitous thread of masculine intellectual and physical prowess'.[36] This, for example, is Ogilvie-Grant's description of slaying two Socotra Cormorants – hitherto absent from European museum collections:

> We started off in pursuit. There was a choppy sea, which made shooting difficult [...] At last, we neared a pair, and as they rose, I dropped them both, but, to my disgust, saw that both heads were still up. Fortune was, however, kind [...] As the boat rose again [...] No. 4 shot settled the business satisfactorily. I was highly pleased to find that these Cormorants, both adult birds in full breeding plumage, belonged to a new species.

31 Haraway, *Primate Visions*, 42.

32 AR (1905), 45.

33 *Report of the Seventy-Ninth Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science* (London: John Murray, 1910), 285; AR (1905), 45.

34 *Cheshire Observer*, 29 September 1906, 5

35 Phillip Howell, "Hunting and Animal-Human History," in *Routledge Companion*, 452, 454.

36 Kohlstedt, "Nature by Design," 131.

Ogilvie-Grant's determination to secure a male and female *pair* reiterates that animals' sex and familial roles were important museological criteria. He subsequently completed the cormorant group, killing 'two immature birds'.[37]

The Socotra expedition typifies Liverpool Museum's status as a colonial institution. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the museum was patronized by individuals and businesses who profited from imperial commerce, including the African Steamship Company. It also benefited from international collaborations: to cite one example, the Liverpool Museum and the AMNH exchanged animal and anthropological exhibits from areas of British and US colonial interest (West Africa and the Philippines, respectively).[38] Liverpool Museum likewise participated in academic disciplines closely associated with empire, partnering with archaeology faculty members at the University of Liverpool (est. 1881) – plus its School of Tropical Medicine. Befitting these scholarly credentials, Henry Forbes was appointed Honorary Reader in Ethnography at the university in 1904.[39]

Shortly after moving to Liverpool, Forbes declared his desire 'to show the world a museum abreast of the scientific thought of the time'. Natural history galleries, Forbes wrote in 1894, should 'commence with [...] simpler forms, leading step by step to the higher and more complex, so as to present to the visitor the lowest form of life on entrance, gradually introducing those of nearest affinity in ascending order till the highest are reached'.[40] A major museum renovation, completed in 1902, enacted Forbes's Darwinian schema. The repurposed mammal gallery culminated with glass cabinets containing anthropoid skeletons and mounted gorillas (Fig. 5). While the upright stance of the Homo sapiens skeleton implied an evolutionary hierarchy, the gorilla exhibit connoted commonality between human and nonhuman animals' gender roles. As per the museum's bird and mammal displays, the mounted gorillas – a female and two infants – were displayed in a familial, domestic setting, which matched descriptions in a reference-work by Forbes: his *A Handbook to Primates* (1897) noted that female gorillas inhabit a 'platform-nest or shelter' with males 'on guard below', adding that gorillas 'prove affectionate mothers [...] protecting their young at cost of their own lives'.[41]

37 *The Natural History of Sokotra and Abdelkuri: Being the Report by Mr. W.R. Ogilvie-Grant and Dr H.O. Forbes, of Liverpool Museums* (Liverpool: Henry Young and Sons, 1903), 46–47.

38 AR (1906), 37, 39; AR (1907), 41–42; AR (1908), 65–71.

39 AR (1902), 42–49; AR (1904), 11; AR (1906), 2–9, 37.

40 Henry Forbes, *Report of the Director of Museums Relative to the Space Required for the Extension of the Free Public Museums* (Liverpool: J. R. Williams, 1894), 4–8.

41 Henry Forbes, *A Handbook to the Primates, Vol. II* (London: E. Lloyd, 1897), 183–86.

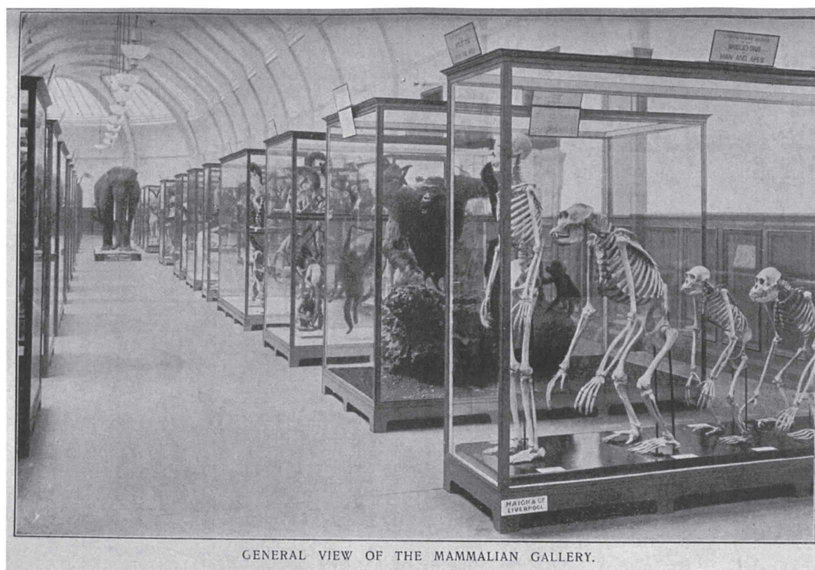

Figure 5. Gorilla and primate specimens in mammal gallery at Liverpool Museum. *Fifty-First Annual Report of the Committee of the Free Public Museums of the City of Liverpool* (Liverpool: C. Tinling, 1904). Biodiversity Heritage Library.

Contrary to the mammal gallery's emphasis on interspecies affinities, intraspecies differentiation characterized displays of human cultures. The anthropological galleries were arranged 'according to the Races whose handiwork they are; that is, under the three great ethnic divisions of the globe, namely, the Caucasian (white), the Mongolian (yellow), and the Melanian (black) Races'. Because Forbes regarded the white race as superior, 'Caucasian' exhibits had prominence on the museum's ground floor with 'Melanian' displays relegated to the basement.[42] The medium of photography supported these racial classifications. Photographs 'exemplifying the various races of mankind' were displayed alongside mammal exhibits. Elsewhere, the anthropological galleries took 'advantage [...] of obtaining photographs direct from life from natives of the various countries who come to the Port of Liverpool'.[43]

Whereas nothing in the bird and mammal *Handbook*s directly commented on human societies, Forbes was explicit that ethnological exhibits

42 47th AR (1900), 34; 42nd AR (1895), 4–5; Louise Tythacott, "Race on Display: The 'Melanian', 'Mongolian', and 'Caucasian' Galleries at the Liverpool Museum," *Early Popular Visual Culture* 9, no. 2 (2011): 131–46.

43 44th AR (1897), 13.

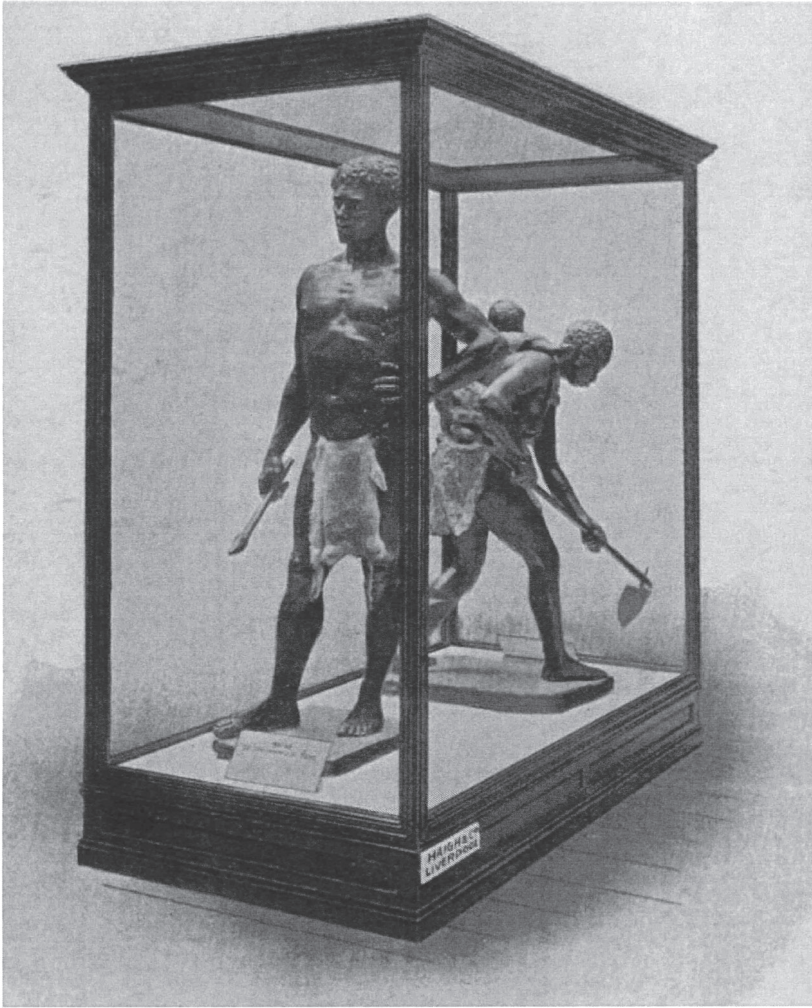

Figure 6. Case in African ethnography section of Liverpool Museum. *Fifty-First Annual Report of the Committee of the Free Public Museums of the City of Liverpool* (Liverpool, C. Tinling, 1904). Biodiversity Heritage Library.

'follow[ed] naturally and immediately after th[ose] devoted to anthropoid animals'. Just as 'ornithological exhibits display [...] the whole history of different birds', anthropological galleries illustrated 'the intellectual history of man, tracing its rise and progress through the barbarous or less civilized peoples'. Epitomising Tony Bennett's contention that colonial museums allowed visitors to travel 'through evolutionary time', Forbes affirmed:

> The study of the handiwork, manners, and customs will enable the student to go back and live [...] in the infancy of the most cultivated races whose civilization had in its beginnings nothing very different from that of the negro.[44]

As if to prove Black people's supposed evolutionary inferiority, exhibits of African ethnology borrowed techniques from animal displays. Figure 6 shows a glass cabinet containing three human forms arranged in a manner reminiscent of habitat dioramas. In the foreground, a male figure stood upright, his eyes directed at visitors' gaze. Behind him, a female figure has an infant on their back. On the one hand, this evocation of maternal and domestic duties cohered with the patriarchal coding of bird and mammal displays. On the other hand, kinship to animals seemingly signified Africans' alleged primitivism within the anthropological galleries' pseudoscientific framework. The exhibit's provenance adds credence to this. In 1903, Liverpool Museum's annual report recorded the bequest of 'two life-sized casts of natives of South Africa, modelled from life by the late Dr. Emil Holub'.[45] As Markéta Křížová recounts, Holub (1847–1902) led several expeditions in the hope of establishing an Austro-Hungarian colony in southern Africa. To promote this cause, Holub displayed 'stuffed animals and mannequins in native costumes [and] scenes of "real life"' in Vienna and Prague. Holub returned from his first expedition accompanied by an African girl, whose newspaper coverage 'effectively reduced to the level of museum exhibit or zoo animal'.[46]

Liverpool Museum's racism adds an interpretive layer to *The Handbook and Guide to British Mammals* and *The Handbook and Guide to British Birds*. Their titular insistence that animals were '*British*' exemplifies what Sandra Swart terms 'naturalization of nationalism', encouraging readers and visitors to equate 'natural' domesticity with the patriarchal norms of their national 'homeland'. If animals' vaunted Britishness aimed to cultivate 'an identity of belonging', ethnological displays' othering of African cultures fostered 'the flipside of the coin, an identity of difference'.[47]

44 *Daily Post*, June 20, 1895, 3; Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory*, 58–62.

45 AR (1904), 27, 32.

46 Markéta Křížová, "Noble and Ignoble Savages and their Scientific 'Colonization' in the Making of the Nation," in *Central Europe and the Non-European World in the Long 19th Century*, eds. Jitka Malečková and Křížová (Berlin: Frank and Timme, 2022), 135–63.

47 Swart, "Nationalism and Animals," 33, 45.

Liverpool Museum and Children's Education

Like women, children were not initially a target audience for civic museums. Perspectives began to alter once the 1870 Elementary Education Act made local authorities in England and Wales responsible for schooling children aged five to twelve. Henry Higgins registered Liverpool Museums' incipient role in formal education in an 1884 paper. Although youngsters' playfulness made it 'easy' to dismiss them as 'unmitigated plagues', Higgins remained optimistic about museums' capacity to improve child visitors' behaviour, observing:

> Children sometimes found the table-cases convenient for racing round; [but] when instructed in decorum due to the place they […] huddle close together, looking intently upon a coral or a shell, thus indicating […] being good under supervision. Brothers and sisters of all grades [were capable of] noticing a bird […] butterfly or fossil […] with by no means vacant looks.

Higgins resolved that children were a 'most interesting class of visitors […] deserving to be studied and encouraged'.[48]

Acting on this impulse, Liverpool Museum began to allow items from its collection to tour schools in 'circulating cabinets'. For Higgins, the cabinets (which pre-dated similar schemes at AMNH and South Kensington Museum) offered 'useful and attractive object lessons' likely to 'exercise refining influence' in 'the crowded districts of Liverpool', believing 'no object would more effectually open the eyes and […] hearts of boys and girls than the green mossy nest and turquoise eggs of the hedge-sparrow'. The cabinets stimulated the optical and haptic senses: specimens were 'sent amongst children to be handled with care, felt, and looked at closely'.[49] In 1889, the museum recorded an increase in child visits 'stimulated […] by interest excited by the circulating cabinets'.[50] This led to further educational initiatives – including loaning objects and lantern slides to schools and teacher-training sessions. Extra impetus was provided by the 1896 Education Code, which permitted museum trips to count towards school attendance.[51]

48 Higgins, "Museums of Natural History," *Proceedings of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool* 38 (1884), 186.

49 Higgins memorandum in John Chard, "On Circulating Museum Cabinets for Schools and Other Educational Purposes," *Museums Association: Report of Proceedings with Papers Read at the First Annual General Meeting* (Sheffield: William Townsend, 1890), 60–64.

50 AR (1889), 17.

51 AR (1899), 29; AR (1897), 6.

PLEASANT STREET COUNCIL SCHOOL

Figure 7. 'Use of Museum', showing Pleasant Street Council School visit to Liverpool Museum. J. G. Legge, *Thinking Hand; or Practical Education in the Elementary School* (London: Macmillan, 1914). California Digital Library.

Liverpool Museum's 1903 annual report explained that natural history exhibits were important whether 'bringing schoolchildren to the specimens [or] [...] taking the specimens to schoolchildren.' Circulating cabinets contained 'one specimen of a species in each box' accompanied by information 'illustrat[ing] some fact in nature such as [...] the uses of the animal or its skeleton in the economic world'. The 'greater proportion' of the circulating collection comprised 'typical representatives of the main animal Phyla; the common British species of these groups; comparative series of bird forms, with nests and eggs; [and] insects and their life-histories'. When visiting the museum, the 'general collection of animal groups' was deemed as 'especially suitable' for schoolchildren. Upon entering the museum, pupils gathered around a cabinet or display 'from which the public are excluded by temporary barriers'. A teacher or curator then gave 'a brief and simple demonstration' about 'a series of stuffed specimens – mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian and fish'. Children were subsequently 'left to themselves [...] with notebook in hand to [...] make drawings and notes', using these to compose essays on the next school day. Museum staff encouraged teachers to follow this itinerary

because 'the instruction imparted [has] far greater value than when the class wanders indiscriminately through galleries'.[52]

As noted in my introduction, James Granville Legge's *The Thinking Hand* provided photographic evidence of how school visits to the museum operated. Figures 7–9 show pupils from Pleasant Street School inspecting mounted exhibits in an area where other museumgoers appear to have been absent. Pleasant Street School was expansive in embracing Liverpool Museum's education programmes: its assistant master taught geography lessons at the museum and borrowed items from the collection so pupils could make 'sketches and models in plasticine and other materials from the actual objects'.[53]

The latter details hint at how Liverpool Museum's initiatives harmonized with Legge's policies as Director of Education. Legge's pedagogy was geared towards 'the manual side of the curriculum', privileging 'handwork' and 'the sense of touch'. Recalling Higgins's description of circulating cabinets, Legge saw interacting with nature as a way of bringing children 'into relation with every possible subject in the third dimension'. Photographs in *The Thinking Hand* depicted field trips to parks, allotments, and gardens. Legge wanted to 'keep the child in touch with its environment' by 'implant[ing] the germ of usefulness [...] the very condition of civilised society'. The phrase 'usefulness' harkened to civic museums' original utilitarian ethos, and the working classes were similarly the principal target of Legge's educational reforms. He felt:

> It was impossible that a man or woman working in a slum school should fail to recognise the incongruity of teaching ragged, hatless, unshod, even verminous children, stocks and shares, history, geography, and literature [...] without some effort to place in their possession the means of leading a clean and decent life, and of enjoying a modicum of wholesome leisure.[54]

Legge's paternalism was overtly gendered, mandating 'organised science teaching and practical instruction in woodwork and metalwork for boys, and cookery and laundry-work for girls'.[55] A 'Combined Domestic Subjects Course' offered girls 'instruction in all the sweeping, scrubbing, polishing, and wiping that goes to make the decent home, and above all [...] the rules

52 AR (1903), 36–43.

53 AR (1913), 47.

54 J.G. Legge, *The Thinking Hand; or Practical Education in the Elementary School* (London: Macmillan, 1914), 9–15, 28–31.

55 Legge and C.F. Mott, "Education (Other than University)," in *Merseyside: A Handbook to Liverpool and District* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1923), 113

of hygiene'. Legge consciously rejected the early twentieth century's New Woman and suffrage movements. He wrote that 'whatever their future occupation [...] girls' prospects are bettered if they are good housewives, good homemakers', insisting this 'ideal' remained 'sound' despite 'those who declare it reactionary [...] in these days of emancipation'.[56]

However, the elementary curriculum was not exclusively a product of male chauvinism. *The Thinking Hand* includes photographs of numerous female teachers and women occupied local administrative posts as school governors and attendance officers.[57] In 1903, Liverpool City Council appointed Fanny L. Calder to its Education Committee. A pioneer of domestic science education, Calder established the Liverpool Training School for Cookery in 1875, later publishing *A Teachers' Manual of Elementary Laundry Work* (1891).[58] Popular throughout the British Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, domestic science aspired towards 'professional advancement for middleclass teachers' and 'working-class uplift through education for the next generation of homemakers'.[59] Although domestic science conformed to patriarchal norms, its gendering was not entirely uniform. Calder's cookery classes proved popular with Liverpudlian seamen and were replicated by the formal curriculum: a 1914 report noted that 'boys who are thinking of going to sea receive[d] instruction in cooking' at Liverpool schools.[60]

Mentioning seafaring bespeaks a localized aspect of Legge's pedagogy. Other elements of his thinking responded to national debates. Legge contributed to the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration – an investigation into the 'alleged poor physique' of working-class servicemen during the Second Boer War (1899–1902).[61] Fears about racial deterioration recurred throughout the Edwardian period.[62] As Director of Education,

56 Legge, *Thinking Hand*, 9, 23, 38–39.

57 Joyce Goodman, "Women School Board Members and Women School Managers: The Structuring of Educational Authority in Manchester and Liverpool, 1870–1903," in *Women, Educational Policymaking and Administration in England: Authoritative Women Since 1800,* eds. J. Goodman and Sylvia Harrop (London: Routledge, 2000), 59–76.

58 Yuriko Akiyama, *Feeding the Nation: Nutrition and Health in Britain Before World War One* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 18–19, 43–49.

59 Lacey Sparks, *Women and the Rise of Nutrition Science in Interwar Britain and British Africa* (New York: Springer International, 2023), 91

60 Isaac Leon Kandel, *Elementary Education in England, with Special Reference to London, Liverpool, and Manchester* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1914), 69.

61 *Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1904).

62 Christopher Prior, *Edwardian England and the Idea of Racial Decline: An Empire's Future* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

PLEASANT STREET COUNCIL SCHOOL

Figure 8. 'Use of Museum', showing Pleasant Street Council School visit to Liverpool Museum. J. G. Legge, *Thinking Hand; or Practical Education in the Elementary School* (London: Macmillan, 1914). California Digital Library.

Legge favoured one amelioration effort which resettled children in Britain's colonies. He endorsed removing children from the 'most degraded surroundings in Liverpool' to 'become creditable citizens of the Dominion of Canada'.[63] Concerns about martial competitiveness also factored into Legge's policies. Impressed by how Germany's 'education system' worked 'side by side with the development of its military', Legge introduced after-hours rifle drills for Liverpool schoolboys.[64] Legge likewise supported Empire Day festivities 'as a means of teaching the young how "to think Imperially"'.[65]

Colonial discourses were a subtext to *The Thinking Hand*'s emphasis on hygiene. While imposing Western hygiene standards was one way colonists exerted power over indigenous societies, concerns about the insanitary conditions of Britain's cities simultaneously motivated domestic science schooling.[66] Human–animal relations factored into domestic science syllabi:

63 *Daily Post*, May 3, 1911, 5; Legge and Mott, "Education," (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1923), 113–114; Ellen Boucher, *Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare, and the Decline of the British World, 1869–1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

64 *Liverpool Journal of Commerce*, January 15, 1909, 5; Legge, *Thinking Hand*, 42, 100–02, 216–17.

65 *Daily Post*, May 25, 1908, 10; *Daily Post*, May 25, 1907, 9.

66 Sparks, *Women and the Rise*, 87–90.

Figure 9. 'Use of Museum', showing Pleasant Street Council School visit to Liverpool Museum. J.G. Legge, *The Thinking Hand; or Practical Education in the Elementary School* (London: Macmillan, 1914). California Digital Library.

The Thinking Hand described lessons on 'dangers arising from [...] stray cats and dogs' and 'the life history of the domestic fly'. The latter is revealing. The popularization of germ theory heightened awareness of flies' role in transmitting disease – prompted partly by typhoid outbreaks during the Boer War and other imperial conflicts. In 1906, Liverpool City Council commissioned an inquiry into 'the habits, lifecycle and breeding places of the common housefly'.[67] As a Council employee, Legge likely was aware of this research, particularly in light of various institutional interconnections that existed in Liverpool: the housefly report was written by Robert Newstead, Professor of Entomology at the School of Tropical Medicine, who conducted research at Liverpool Museum and donated to its collections.[68] Elementary school hygiene lessons may even have deployed museum specimens: as noted above, circulating cabinets included examples of 'insects and their life histories'.

The Thinking Hand documented instances of museum-like specimens being used inside the classroom, including a modelmaking session involving

67 Anne Hardy, *Salmonella Infections, Networks of Knowledge, and Public Health in Britain, 1880–1975* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 52–53, 65–76.
68 AR (1906), 8–9; AR (1913), 54.

SEFTON PARK COUNCIL SCHOOL

Figure 10. 'Clay Modelling', showing handwork class at Sefton Park Council School. J.G. Legge, *The Thinking Hand; or Practical Education in the Elementary School* (London: Macmillan, 1914). California Digital Library.

what appeared to be a preserved bird skin (Fig. 9). Natural history displays' accent on domesticity had parallels in Liverpool Museum's interactions with schoolchildren. *The Thinking Hand* featured photographs depicting exotic-looking 'Human Habitations' (tepees and small huts) that could plausibly have been modelled on items from circulating cabinets: notably, 'specimens [...] illustrating the ethnography of primitive peoples' were in 'great request' from Liverpool schoolteachers.[69] In this sense, children's study of what Forbes labelled 'handiwork' generated 'handwork' as defined by Legge. Magnifying the interface between museology and pedagogy, some Liverpool schools set aside 'handicraft rooms [...] that serve as museums to exhibit the work of the scholars'.[70]

Admittedly, these interpretations rely on inference. Legge offered a minimal description of photographs in *The Thinking Hand*, wanting the book's text to 'simply lead up to the illustrations'.[71] However, omitting detailed captions enhanced the correspondence between Legge's theories

69 AR (1912), 43

70 Kandel, *Elementary Education in England*, 60.

71 Legge, *Thinking Hand*, viii.

and the Liverpool Museum: leaving photographs to 'speak for themselves' ascribed them with a transparency equivalent to museums' object lessons. This adds another dimension to photographs of Pleasant Street school trip. Surrounded by 'temporary barriers', schoolchildren were effectively on display inside the museum: as they observed different animal exhibits, pupils could be scrutinized in real-time by other visitors (and later by readers of Legge's book). *The Thinking Hand* thus rendered schoolchildren tantamount to a diorama exhibit.

Conclusion

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Liverpool Museum and the city's schools enjoyed a symbiotic relationship, whereby messages about animals, class, race, and gender conveyed by natural history exhibits were confirmed inside classrooms, and vice versa. Today, more than a hundred years later, decoding the ideological content of historical museum exhibitions and school curricula could be considered an antiquarian exercise. However, contemporary institutions still bear imprints of the history explored in this chapter. To cite an extreme example, models resembling those Emil Holub donated to the Liverpool Museum are currently displayed at the Holub African Museum in Holice, Czechia.[72] Historical collecting biases are also manifested in mainstream museums. A 2019 survey of two million museum specimens quantified a skew towards male specimens in birds (60 per cent males to 40 per cent females) and mammals (52 per cent males: 48 per cent females). The ratio was even more extreme in name-bearing specimens used for taxonomizing species: only 39 per cent of name-bearing mammals were female, falling to 25 per cent for birds.[73] If this reflects phallocentric biases that regard males as default, heteronormative assumptions similarly prevail in habitat dioramas. A 2020 study at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh, documented an ongoing tendency to depict animals as members of heterosexual nuclear families. Coextensively, natural history often exhibits obscure homosexual behaviour and nonbinary characteristics in animal species.[74]

72 African Museum Dr Emil Holuba, https://www.holubovomuzeum.cz/fotogalerie#album-11-17.
73 Natalie Cooper et al., "Sex Biases in Bird and Mammal Natural History Collections," *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* 286 (2019), http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2019.2025.
74 Chase D. Mendenhall et al., "Diversifying Displays of Biological Sex and Sexual Behaviour in a Natural History Museum," *Museum International* 72, no. 1–2 (2020): 152–61.

– Article –

One utility of analysing photographs of historic animal displays is to highlight the constructed, selective, and reductive character of gender identities. The discussion of the Ruff Group in Liverpool Museum's *Handbook* may, for instance, have noted that males 'vary remarkably in plumage', but it downplayed the full complexity of ruff sexuality. Ornithologists understand ruff males as having three distinct body types: territorial males with showy plumage; satellite males, which form temporary alliances with territorial males; and femalelike faeders, whose sexual activity involves imitating females.[75] Such plurality of sexual behaviours is not only discernible from a twenty-first-century vantage point. As Pandora Syperek has identified, Victorian museum professionals knew that 'a heteronormative standard simply does not apply to many objects of natural history: marine invertebrates that reproduce through asexual and hermaphroditic means, hummingbirds which eschew pair bonding and insects whose life cycles present a radical departure from mammalian modes of parenting'.[76] That curators historically opted to sideline those behaviours that confound patriarchal and heterosexual mores is testament to the ideological exertion behind the museum displays and school curricula examined in this chapter.

Nonetheless, museum photographs are susceptible to counternarratives. Georgia Born has written that images of museum interiors 'exceed their routine documentary function' and expose museum displays' 'effortful artifice'.[77] Elizabeth Edwards also argued that anthropological photographs often contain personalizing details that defy the abstractions of museums' racial hierarchies. As such, they retain an air of 'rawness, uncontainability, resistance, and [...] unknowability'.[78] Something similar is true, I think, of photographs taken inside Liverpool Museum. The absence of accompanying descriptions allows photographs from Legge's book to be viewed counterintuitively – especially because the children sometimes subverted photographers' intentions. Figure 1 shows one boy staring at the camera lens, breaking the fourth wall of this diorama-like setup. The photograph stands as a metaphor for my analysis in this article. While critiquing museums'

75 Donna L. Maney et al., "Inside the Supergene of the Bird with Four Sexes," *Hormones and Behavior* 126 (November 2020), doi: 10.1016/j.yhbeh.2020.104850.

76 Pandora Syperek, "Jewels of the Natural History Museum: Gendered aesthetics in South Kensington, c. 1850–1900," (Ph.D., University College London, 2015), 24–25.

77 Georgina Born, "Public Museums, Museum Photography, and the Limits of Reflexivity: An Essay on the Exhibition Camera Obscured: Photographic Documentation and the Public Museum," *Journal of Material Culture* 2, no. 2 (July 1998): 223–54.

78 Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 22, 131–55.

complicity in racism, classism, sexism, speciesism, or heteronormativity alone cannot overturn these hegemonic structures, it does help *see through* them.

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