

ANIMAL TRAFFIC:
MAKING, REMAKING, AND UNMAKING COMMODITIES
IN GLOBAL LIVE WILDLIFE TRADE

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

(Geography)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(Vancouver)

December 2013

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Abstract

Against mass species loss and escalating concern over declining biodiversity, legal and illegal trade in wildlife is booming. Annually, it generates tens of billions of dollars and involves the circulation of billions of live and dead animals worldwide. This dissertation examines one dimension of this economy: flows of live, wild-caught animals – namely exotic pets – into North America. My central questions are: how are wild animals’ lives and bodies transformed into commodities that circulate worldwide and can be bought and owned? How are these commodities remade and even unmade? In answering these questions the dissertation is concerned not only with embodied practices, but also with broader, dominant assumptions about particular figures of the human and the animal, and the relations between them. This dissertation draws on reading across economic geography and sociology, political economy and ecology, and political theory to construct a theoretical approach with three strands: a commodity chain framework, a theory of performativity, and an anti-speciesist position. It weaves this theoretical grounding through multi-sited research carried out from 2010-2013, including participant- and spectator-observation, interviews, and film and photography. In this research, to retain a focus on animals I inserted myself in multispecies contact zones. Specifically, I traced three nodes in global live wildlife trade’s circuits: commodification of animals through capture in biosphere reserves in Mexico, Guatemala and Belize; recommodification (re-legitimation of the animals’ status as commodities) through exchange at exotic animal auctions across the US; and attempted decommodification through rehabilitation at a wildlife centre in Guatemala. This research suggests that commodification and decommodification are not processes of “denaturing” and “renaturing”, respectively. Rather, they are both productions of particular natures. Commodification produces an encounterable, individual and controllable animal life. Decommodification seeks to do the opposite. Ultimately, I argue that all of these global live wildlife trade processes depend on and perform, or bring into being, a human/animal dualism that positions the human figure as a master subject and the animal as a subordinate object. This dissertation thus amounts to a critique of the exotic pet commodity form.

Preface

This dissertation is an original intellectual product of the author, Rosemary-Claire Collard. UBC Research Ethics Board certificate number H10-03073 covered the fieldwork reported in these pages. The work presented in this dissertation led to the following publications:

Collard, R-C. Putting animals back together, taking commodities apart. 2013. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 104 (1): 151-165. Work appears in Chapters 5 and 7.

Collard, R-C and J Dempsey. 2013. Life for sale? The political of lively commodities. *Environment and Planning A* 45 (11): 2682 – 2699. Contribution: 50 percent. Work appears in Chapters 5 and 6.

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List of Acronyms

AC	Animals Committee
CI	Conservation International
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna
CONAP	<i>Consejo Nacional de Areas Protegidas</i>
CONABIO	<i>Comisión Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad</i>
DoW	Defenders of Wildlife
EC	Environment Canada
ECOSUR	<i>El Colegio de la Frontera Sur</i>
EZLN	<i>Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional</i>
FCD	Friends of Conservation and Development
HSUS	Humane Society of the United States
IFAW	International Fund for Animal Welfare
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
LEMIS	Law Enforcement Management Information System
MBR	Maya Biosphere Reserve
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NDF	Non-detriment finding
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OAAO	Ohio Association of Animal Owners
PEMEX	Petróleos Mexicanos
PETA	People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
PETA	People Eating Tasty Animals
PI	Pulsar Internacional
PROFEPA	<i>Procuraduría Federal de Protección al Ambiente</i>
RIBMA	<i>Reserva Integral de la Biosfera de Montes Azules</i>
SPCA	Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
TRAFFIC	Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce
UBC	University of British Columbia
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
USGE	United States Global Exotics
USITC	United States International Trade Commission
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society
WWF	World Wildlife Fund
ZOOMAT	<i>Zoológico Miguel Álvarez del Toro</i>

Acknowledgements

Thank you to an extraordinary group of current and former graduate students (in the Department of Geography at UBC unless otherwise noted): Wes Attewell, Lachlan Barber, Oliver Belcher, Dan Cohen, May Farrales, Kevin Gould, Craig Jones, Mark Kear (SFU), Jenny Hill (University of Toronto), Jessi Lehman, Jon Luedee, Corey MacIver (Oxford), Pablo Mendez, Carolyn Prouse, Max Ritts, Ted Rutland, Andrew Shmueli, Michael Smith, Melanie Sommerville, Noah Quastel, and Sophie Webber. Sarah Brown, Matthew Dyce, Dawn Hoogeveen and Jonathan Peyton have been especially valued friends and colleagues.

The following people were of great assistance in the research process: Jose Luis Rangel, Reuben and Anna, LoraKim Joyner, Ernie Cooper, Rob Laidlaw, the ARCAS staff, especially Anna, Alejandro, and Ali, and the Vancouver Humane Society staff, especially Peter Fricker. Lisa Dumoulin was an immense help as a Research Assistant in the final stages of writing.

Thank you to Jake Kosek for generously sponsoring my visit to the University of California Berkeley. At UBC I benefited from the guidance of Karen Bakker and Philippe LeBillon. A longtime family friend, David Mitchell, and my aunt and uncle, JoAnn and Norman Phillion, have acted as adjunct committee members for years, helping and inspiring me in profound ways.

Close friendships, some almost as old as I am, are as important as ever. These friends include Laura DeVries, Lara Hoshizaki, Lauren Hutchings, Angela Jenkins, Jocelyn Lukow, Maria Moran, Jessica Swinburnson, and last but not least, Allison Watson. Rebecca Collard is among those best friends, and is definitely my bravest and most helpful cousin. Jessica Dempsey, Emilie Cameron and Joanna Reid are three of the best things to come out of graduate school. Not only are they hilarious and extraordinarily intelligent, but also their ongoing friendship and advice have formed my idea of what it means to be a responsible scholar and human being.

I have been fortunate to work with four dedicated and engaged committee members in the Department of Geography at UBC. Matthew Evenden's office door is always open and he has been a ready source of bang-on advice on everything from teaching to writing. Geraldine Pratt's pedagogical and research insights have continually pushed me to think in new ways about the role of scholarship and teaching. Juanita Sundberg, my co-supervisor, models the kind of creative and thoughtful research and teaching practice to which I aspire, and has been careful and generous in her engagement with my work. Finally, Trevor Barnes has been supervising me for almost a decade now and I am yet to come to terms with the extent of his brilliance and dependability. I suspect they have no bounds. It is truly an honour to have worked with these four people whom I trust and respect so much.

The following institutions provided financial assistance: the Liu Institute for Global Issues, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (the Canada Graduate Scholarship program and the Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplement program), the Government of BC Ministry of Advanced Education, the UBC University Graduate Fellowship (UGF) program, the Faculty of Graduate Studies at UBC, and UBC's Department of Geography.

My last and deepest thanks are to my family. Juliane Collard, my sister, and Francine Dagenais and Andrew Collard, my parents, are my three most favourite people. Family dinner debates may be bad for digestion but I bet on the whole they've been good for us.

Chapter 1. Introduction

I am consumed with curiosity about the regions where the lively subject becomes the undead thing.

– Haraway, *Modest Witness* (1997, 133)

1.1 Introduction

Two backpacking friends and I visited Qingping Market in Guangzhou, China, one of the largest wildlife markets in the world, on a humid spring day in 2002. We were young – still teenagers. It was before the SARS outbreak raised biosecurity concerns that precipitated the market's temporary closure and subsequent shrinking. Several travelers we had met told us the market was “cool” and “crazy”, and so, intrigued, we set out by public bus. We were completely unprepared for the mangle of spectacles and smells that enveloped us on arrival. Haphazard rows of caged animals – lizards, dogs, snakes, frogs, cats, chickens, goats, monkeys, some listless and others vibrating with terror – were stacked ten feet high, stretching for blocks in all directions.

My body moved through the rows mechanically while my mind exploded with shock and shame. Where were these animals born? How did they get here? Where were they going? Vivid images from the market echoed in my mind for years, and the horrified curiosity it generated eventually provided the impetus to undertake a multi-year doctoral research project addressing the basic question with which I was confronted as I looked down the aisles of animals: how does wildlife trade work? This dissertation provides a situated and embodied account and analysis of the research I undertook to answer this question, a question of how, as Haraway says above, the lively subject becomes the undead thing, a term that captures the impoverished lives of wildlife trade's captive commodities.

Immediately on scratching the surface of research into wildlife trade, I found an anomaly. China and other Asian countries – Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia – frequently feature in news reports of large wildlife confiscations, especially as sources of demand for wildlife. For example, Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce (TRAFFIC), the international wildlife trade monitoring network, maintains a Twitter account (@TRAFFIC_WLTrade) that tracks wildlife trade news, mostly seizures and confiscations. As I write these words, the most recent tweet is actually from Vancouver, the city in which I am writing, referencing a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC 2013a) report on the Canadian court proceedings for a man charged under the nation's *Wildlife Act* for attempting to smuggle bear paws in his carry-on luggage through the Vancouver Airport “en route to China”. Other recent tweets mention

Thailand, the Philippines, Nepal, and India. This is not out of step with a general media focus on Asian wildlife trade. TRAFFIC's (2013) news archive lists 196 stories in the category "in Asia" and only 9 "in Americas", and 34 "in Europe". But one of the first things I found out as I started to research wildlife trade was that the United States is a top importer of legal and (it is estimated) illegal wildlife and wildlife products (Blundell and Mascia 2005; Smith et al. 2009; Pavlin et al. 2009), partly due to the US's enormous demand for ornamental fish in the aquarium trade. The most recent data indicate that between 2000 and 2006, the US imported 1.48 billion live animals, although over 60 percent of these individual specimens were fish. Over 90 percent of these animals were designated for the pet trade, and almost 80 percent were captured from wild populations (Smith et al. 2009), dispelling another myth that most North American exotic animal imports are captive bred.¹

Partly in response to these statistics, at the early stages of research I made three choices that narrowed the focus of the first question – how does wildlife trade work? – that Qingping market sparked. First, given the size of the US market, and its largely underreported activities, one of my first decisions was to focus on flows of wildlife into the US. Second, in response to the high proportion of wild-caught animal imports, I also decided to narrow my research to this group as part of an effort to counteract the notion that most wild animal imports are captive bred, an economy with a significantly different commodity chain (or processes of production, exchange, consumption and disassembly).² Finally, instead of investigating trade in dead animals, or their parts, I chose to focus on live animals, most of which are traded as pets (as the import statistics above demonstrate), and also for zoos (including petting zoos) and scientific experimentation. These three decisions yielded this dissertation's ultimate focus: flows of live, wild-caught animals into the US. While some of the animals I researched never made it to the

¹ In this dissertation I retain the words pet, animal, and exotic, as in "exotic animal" and "exotic pet". There are some scholars for whom this is objectionable, and many in critical animal studies refuse to use pet, instead employing the term "companion animal". As Sollund (2011, 38) points out, "the term 'pet' implies affection, but it also has a devaluating connotation implying ownership over property, while the term 'companion animal' illustrates the social value of the animal and implies equality." Similarly, "exotic" is a fraught term, invoking romantic ideas about far away places that are ensnared in colonial and neocolonial economies and imaginaries. Finally, "animal" is a term that, as I will discuss, is the constructed "other" to human. It is a term that has been criticized for masking "a heterogeneity of the living" (Derrida 2008; Ritvo 2007). However, given that the terms animal, exotic and pet are the ones predominantly used, I continue to do so here. More importantly, given that what I seek to do here is examine the very conditions of possibility for these terms (and the things they are meant to represent), I believe it is important to retain the terms as I critique them. In doing so, I do not ignore the power dynamics in these terms; on the contrary, they are the focus of my critique.

² There are some overlaps in the commodity chains of captive-bred and wild-caught animals, including exchange networks and some transportation mechanisms. The exotic animal auctions I examine in Chapter 6 are one site in which captive-bred and wild-caught animals are both sold and their origins not specified (unless they are provided with breeding papers). The other sites examined in this dissertation are unique to wild-caught animals.

US, all of the research sites I examine are entangled in US demand-driven trade, as I will explain shortly.

The US import statistics are a slice (albeit a sizeable one) of a rapidly expanding worldwide trade constituted by flows of millions of live animals from all reaches of the globe. Historically, wildlife trade was a colonial activity tied to natural history collecting and the concentration of animals from colonies into royal menageries and zoological gardens in Europe (Belozerskaya 2006). Contemporary trade predominantly still flows from biodiversity-rich, capital-poor countries to wealthy countries like the US, Japan and the UK (Engler and Parry-Jones 2007; Nijman 2010), but the pace, scale and scope of trade have intensified dramatically. Lack of enforcement and scanty monitoring plague the industry, making any estimation of its size uncertain. But experts suggest that international legal wildlife trade is worth multiple billions of dollars per year (Engler and Parry-Jones 2007; Smith et al. 2009; see Chapter 2 for more detail) – possibly even as high as a hundred and fifty billion annually (Warchol 2004; Schneider 2008; Duffy, in White 2010; Sollund 2013). Interpol (the International Criminal Police Association) estimates that the illegal trade, also a multi-billion dollar industry, is the second or third largest illegal industry in the world after drugs and arms (Wyler and Sheikh 2008; Priksat 2009; Wyatt 2009; Barber-Meyer 2010; Rosen and Smith 2010).

With nearly one quarter of the world's mammals, one third of amphibians and more than one eighth of all bird species at risk of extinction (Hilton-Taylor et al. 2009), wildlife trade specifically threatens around one-third of bird and mammal species worldwide (Rivalan et al. 2007). The removal of animals from the wild for the pet trade is now considered a major threat to wild populations (Blundell and Mascia 2005; Mace et al. 2005), and animals have been exported so rapidly out of Southeast Asia to countries like the UK, US, and Japan that experts have coined the term “empty forest syndrome” to refer to the concomitant loss in biodiversity (Adam 2010; Wilkie et al. 2010).

Yet considering the size, scope and stakes of this economy (all of which are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, which outlines wildlife trade's historical and contemporary trends, as well as their stakes and implications), it receives little attention. This is especially true of the legal trade, especially in scholarly research, and especially in the social sciences and humanities. Aside from occasional investigative journalism reports (see Bergman 2009; Kristy 2010; Fison 2011), governmental reports, the odd sensational confiscation story in the mainstream media, and patchy coverage of international meetings and decisions regarding the governance of the trade,

the general public has little idea about the millions of exotic, wild animals that live in cities, suburbs and towns, and even possibly right next door.

There are indications that this is changing slightly. A recent and horrific incident in which an escaped python killed two young boys sleeping above an exotic pet shop in New Brunswick, Canada, dominated news headlines nationally and internationally, and has prompted political inquiry into that province's exotic pet laws (CBC 2013b). It has equally prompted media inquiry into the state of exotic pet ownership in Canada, which, as the *Globe and Mail* reports, no one can assess with any certainty (Bascaramurty and Mahoney 2013). In addition, two recent documentaries (*The tiger next door* 2009; *The elephant in the living room* 2010) about exotic pets and US states' lax regulation of them received wide distribution. President Obama also recently pledged US\$10 million in support of combatting illegal wildlife trade in Africa (WWF 2013). These are hopeful signs of greater public awareness of and political attention to the costs of this trade. In academia, there are also some signs of growing interest in this economy, largely in criminology (see Wyatt 2009, South and Wyatt 2011; Pires and Clark 2011; Ngoc and Wyatt 2012; Pires 2012). Again, though, little attention is paid to the legal economy.

It is surprising that geography has paid so little attention to the trade. The discipline's longstanding interest in human-environment relations coupled with its important contributions to studying commodities (see chapter 3) make it an ideal intellectual base for asking questions not only about animals and animal economies in general, but also specifically about wildlife trade, which is, as I explain in section 1.2, a traffic not only in animal matter, or lives, but also in meaning. Geographers have shown themselves adept at straddling and complicating the line between the material and the discursive, demonstrating in particular the entanglements of matter and meaning that constitute previously "naturalized" entities such as wilderness and wildlife (see Braun 2002; Anderson 2003). Analyzing wildlife trade demands a similar attention to both materiality and semiotics due to the complicated entanglements it depends on and engenders: entanglements of animal bodies and lives, commodification and economic value, and ideas of what it is to be human and to what humans are entitled. Geographers might make meaningful contributions here, and indeed there are three examples: two articles by Whatmore and Thorne (1998; 2000) on tigers, alligators, and elephants, and more recently an article by Stallins and Kelley (2013) on reptile trade. These are small exceptions in a general tendency to overlook wildlife trade, yet perhaps are a sign that this too is changing.

The emergence of a "third-wave" of animal geography (see Urbanik 2012) in the past two decades heralds a rapid growth of interest in what has been called "more-than-human geography"

(Whatmore 2002; 2006; Lorimer 2010; Panelli 2010). Two excellent edited collections ushered in this revival of interest in the animal subject in geography: Wolch and Emel's (1998) *Animal geographies* and Philo and Wilbert's (2000) *Animal spaces, beastly places*. Both volumes, and a wide range of academic articles that have followed in their wake, explore a variety of geographical dimensions of human-animal relations, including, among others, geographies of food and food production (Watts 2000; 2004; Hovorka 2008; Holloway 2007), urban multispecies co-existence (Philo 1998; Wolch 2002; Hinchliffe et al. 2005), gendered, raced, and classed identities (Anderson 2003; Brown and Rasmussen 2010; Neo 2012), and, relatedly, an interest in what Nast (2006a) calls "critical pet studies" (Tuan 1984; Nast 2006a; 2006b; 2009). Perhaps most prevalently, and most relevant to this dissertation, is geographical work on human-wildlife relations (Whatmore and Thorne 1998; 2000; Lulka 2004; Lorimer 2006). Key themes within this diverse literature include the role of multispecies encounters in generating animal ethics; how gender, race, class, colonialism and capitalism structure human-animal relations and how animals, in turn, are enrolled in the production of these structures and identities; and how animals' space- and place-making practices intersect with those of humans.

This dissertation contributes to these conversations. It does not examine people's individual and personal preferences about their own animals; rather, it is interested in how animals are individually and collectively "qualified as goods" (Mitchell 2007), and in the specific and the generalized practices by which this is accomplished. As Prudham (2007, 418) writes, considerable work, some of it "extra-economic", is required to commodify nature, and to *sustain* discrete bits of socionature as commodities. This dissertation is concerned precisely with such work: the work required to commodify live animals and then *sustain* them – in the literal sense of the word, to keep them alive – as commodities, as well as decommodify these animals through the process of wildlife rehabilitation for potential release back into the wild. Much of this work revolves around animals' encounterability, by which I mean their capacity to be met face-to-face by humans, to be available for human touch and viewing: a chatty parrot perched on its owner's shoulder, or a glistening snake winding around its owner's neck. Centrally, commodification involves making animals encounterable and decommodification involves attempting to make them unencounterable. This dissertation, therefore, especially examines the effects of commodified multispecies encounters on animals as individual subjects, and on human-animal relations more broadly.

To do so, first, the dissertation examines the making of commodities: the capture of wild animals and their transformation into "undead things" (Haraway 1997) that can be bought, sold

and owned. Second, it visits exotic animal auctions to see how these live animal commodities are re-made, their commodity status politically and economically re-legitimated. Finally, it investigates how wildlife rehabilitation attempts to decommodify, or unmake these commodities. At each point of (attempted) transformation, I am attentive to how animals' relations with their wider world (including their social and familial relations, their ecosystems, as well as myself, and other humans) are changed: ripped apart, or reinforced, or forged anew. I am also attentive to what relations and subjectivities are performed – or brought into being – at each point. I argue that throughout the commodity chain for these wild-caught live animals – throughout their capture, their sale and exchange, and their rehabilitation – there is a distinct prevalence of speciesism that renders animals subordinate and “disposable” objects and humans master subjects. My central argument in these pages is that this speciesism enables global wildlife trade to exist, but critically wildlife trade also *produces speciesism*. By speciesism I mean a disregard for animals on the basis of their species (i.e. namely, not being human) and a simultaneous belief in the superiority and mastery of the figure of the human, or what Haraway (2008) calls human exceptionalism. Wildlife trade *performs* speciesism, in that it is a set of embodied practices that enacts speciesism and brings it into being again and again, in and through multispecies encounters, in which I myself participated. I expand this key argument in section 1.4.

In bringing the tools of geographical analysis (both methodological and theoretical) to bear on global live wildlife trade (GLWT), I seek, overall, to bring: 1) a “more-than-human” perspective to economic geography, which has perhaps been the least receptive to animal geographies of all human geography sub-disciplines; and 2) a consideration of capitalism and power to animal geographies, which has tended (but not exclusively) to overlook political economy (I revisit and elaborate on this point in 1.4). Perhaps even more critically, though, the analysis I carry out here is an argument against wildlife trade. I think that commercial (i.e. not subsistence, a distinction clarified in Chapter 2) live wildlife trade should be banned. As I explain in Chapter 2, live wildlife trade's socio-economic benefits have not been shown to outweigh the costs of biodiversity loss. When the trade's effects on wild animals – individuals and populations – are also considered, as is my focus here, the idea of continuing the trade becomes untenable.

This dissertation also points beyond wildlife trade to humans' relations with animals more broadly, and to how capitalism relies on and produces a particular conception of the human subject and the animal object. The rate and scale of animal death – domesticated, wild and everything in between – in today's “animal industrial complex” (Noske 1989) demands attention.

Individual animals suffer in cages and stalls; plastics and toxins poison them; they are slaughtered en masse for human food, clothing, and shelter. At the population scale, entire species are being extinguished at a never before observed rate. If these trends are to be arrested, we must radically re-think not only capitalism but also human-animal relations. With this dissertation I join those in academia and beyond who are calling for such a change. In what follows, I begin with these conversations, particularly emerging out of posthumanism and feminism. This section also serves to outline my broad argument about, and general approach to, “animal traffic” in this dissertation. Following this, section 1.3 discusses this dissertation’s more specific arguments and contributions. Finally, section 1.4 provides a short outline of the dissertation, before I conclude briefly by making clear my position on global live wildlife trade.

1.2 Animal traffic

Traffic (adapted from *The Oxford English Dictionary*):

1a: import and export trade; b: the business of buying and selling; c: illegal or disreputable usually commercial activity

2a: communication or dealings especially between individuals or groups;
b: exchange (of ideas)

3 (*archaic*): wares, goods

4a (1): the movement through an area or along a route (2): the vehicles, pedestrians, ships, or planes moving along a route (3): congestion of vehicles; b: the information or signals transmitted over a communications system

5a: the passengers or cargo carried by a transportation system; b: the business of transporting passengers or freight

6a: a concentration of participants or players; b: existing conditions will allow or permit

This dissertation takes as its starting point that animals have a fundamental material-semiotic role in contemporary capitalism, and in constituting human life and the figure of the human. This is to say, animals are both matter- and meaning-making entities, and their energies and bodies are harnessed to sustain human life, to derive profit and capital, and to serve as the “other” against which the figure of the human is defined. My use of “animal traffic” as the title for this dissertation is intended to capture the profound and energetic role of animals as conduits for, and objects of, exchange in both matter and meaning. Animals are trafficked within capitalism as food, clothing, sources of labour, entertainment, and companions. They are also trafficked within dominant western institutions – juridical, political, religious, scientific – as a category against which the figure of the human is defined. This dissertation’s title is also, of course, another way of saying “wildlife trade”, except that the word traffic is tinged with disrepute (see definition 1a in the above paraphrased OED definition) in a way that “trade” is not. My aim in calling this

dissertation *animal traffic* is not to highlight illegal trade as much as to insinuate that all wildlife trade – whether legal or illegal – brings about animal suffering and loss of life.

Over the last three decades, a substantial body of theory known as posthumanism has developed. It attempts to move beyond and to rethink traditional ideas about the nature, status, and role of the liberal, western human subject, and the relationship of that subject to the wider world of beings, ideas, institutions, technologies, and things.³ This work is diverse (see Castree et al. 2004; Castree and Nash 2006; Panelli 2010, for thorough reviews of the literature, and see Chapter 3 for a more sustained discussion). But central to it is a critique of Western humanism and how it privileges a particular figure of the human: a category separate from and elevated above the animal. While humanism assumes and celebrates a superior, distinct, and central figure of the human, a posthumanist account refuses “to take the distinction between ‘human’ and ‘nonhuman’ for granted, and to found analyses on this presumably fixed and inherent set of categories” (Barad 2007, 32). Two major projects of posthumanism have been to (1) give renewed attention to the material world and (2) question the meaning, effects, and limits of the human (Anderson 2007). Rather than conceiving the world as constructed by atomistic humans and their imaginations, posthumanism acknowledges that what are commonly held to be human achievements – knowledge, built environments, history, and science – are in fact produced within heterogeneous assemblages of entities, human, and nonhuman. In what follows I provide a brief summary of the key ideas propelling this work, which come from feminist thought, poststructural theory, cultural studies, and science and technology studies (STS), among others.

Haraway’s (1991) famously coined “cyborg” offers a significant and enduring contestation of the Western conception of the human. The cyborg, a creature “simultaneously animal and machine” (Haraway 1991, 149), is a pointer to humans’ muddled social and bodily fabric and to the manner in which human beings are fundamentally mixed up with nonhuman beings and things, from bacteria to technologies. The cyborg has no unitary identity for Haraway; multiple entanglements constitute it and it cannot fit within a bounded frame. It is, to use another of her favourite terms, a “monster”: a category-defying entity that points to the limits of Western thought. Another source of resistance to humanism, or to a distinct and inherently central human subject, is Latour’s (2005) and others’ work on the “agency of things”. Latour and other science studies scholars, including Haraway, Pickering (1995), Law (1994, 2004), and Barad (2007), have argued for a decentering of agency. Rather than a humanist conception of

³ Sundberg (2013) makes an important intervention into this literature to point out that posthumanist thought tends to launch a universalized critique of the human, when in fact it is critiquing (and drawing from) very particular – namely western – ideas about the human subject.

agency in which only human subjects can be agents, these scholars argue that agency is a capacity to produce an effect that is spun within heterogeneous assemblages of entities that are not all human. Human beings do not alone have this capacity. Agency is, in other words, relational; it occurs in networks.

In concert with feminist and postcolonial work, the posthumanist critique of humanism has also sought to de-naturalize “the centered white male subject of western liberal humanism” and to problematize both the idealization of an “over-intellectual, rational ‘human’ who arrogated to himself the power to speak on behalf of all people” (Anderson 2007, 10). This narrow and specific figure of the human – rational, civilized, white, male – is constructed in binary opposition to multiple “others”, including women, non-white, and those deemed “primitive” and irrational. As Chapter 3 will discuss, these binaries are tied to and depend on the separation between human beings and the “mere bodily life” of animals (Anderson 2007, 10; Plumwood 2002; Birke et al. 2004). Posthumanism argues that the figure of the human is not natural, neatly bounded or exceptional but is produced materially and discursively by what Agamben (2004) calls the “anthropological machine”. That “machine” produces the figure of the human by creating a break between humans and animals, elevating humans above animals and locating animality outside of the domain of human life. Posthumanism, therefore, provides a critical tool for querying western human subjectivity and exploring the material, economic, historical, linguistic, and social forces at work in the formation of a particular conception of the human subject (Calarco 2007, 2008).

A related movement in the social sciences and (post)humanities has recently taken place alongside the “posthuman turn”. Burgeoning interest in researching and writing about nonhuman animals has swelled into what has been called “the animal turn” (Anderson 1997; Ritvo 2007; Simmons and Armstrong 2007). Animal studies are a recent site of academic inquiry with which posthumanism has unsurprisingly been brought into conversation. The parallels between posthumanism and animal studies are clear: both fields direct attention to the multiple other bodies that comprise the fabric of social, economic, and political life. Thus, although not all animal studies work is explicitly posthumanist, and not all posthumanist work considers animals, the two fields have intersected fruitfully over the last decade (cf. Whatmore 2002; Wolfe 2003, 2010; Calarco 2007; Castricano 2008; Haraway 2003, 2008).

This dissertation draws from both animal studies and posthumanist thought to construct a critique of the figure of the human that also directs attention to the effects of this figure on animal life. Instead of following Levi-Strauss’s (1970, 204) frequently cited comment that

“animals are good to think with” because they reveal something about human life, I follow Haraway’s (2003) point that animals (in her case, dogs) “are not just here to think with”. When we do think with them, it is my hope that this thinking is, in some sense, good for animals, or contributes to efforts to alleviate conditions of animals suffering. This dissertation is thus impelled less by the human condition than by the conditions of animal lives and deaths, and by animals’ roles in the constitution of capitalism and the figure of the human.

In addressing this concern, a thread of posthumanist animal studies is promising and novel. Rather than just querying the human, this literature explores the “important role [of animals] in natural cultural practices, including everyday social practices, scientific practices, and practices that do not include humans” (Barad 2007, 32). Haraway’s (2003, 2008) two most recent books are emblematic of this work. Moving from cyborg figures to companion species, Haraway argues emphatically for ontologies and epistemologies that recognize the multiple material-semiotic performances of animals. Companion species, “a bigger and more heterogeneous category than companion animal” (Haraway 2003, 15), are the creatures and things with which we “become,” including pets, laboratory animals, and inanimate technologies. Companion species are thus “less a category than a pointer to an ongoing ‘becoming with’” (Haraway 2008, 16), a pointer to “webbed bio-social technical apparatuses of humans, animals, artifacts and institutions in which particular ways of being emerge and are sustained. Or not” (Haraway 2008, 134). It is not that ontologically preformed human subjects act upon a preconfigured static world. Rather, ontologies and worlds emerge out of arrangements between entities, arrangements of which humans may or may not be a part. They emerge out of animal traffic, in the broadest sense of the term.

The specific animal traffic with which I am concerned here is a component of this broader traffic. It is traffic in live wild animals. Although traffic can refer simply to the act of trade or to buying and selling, its additional meaning as illegal or disreputable commercial activity affects its usage, such that ‘traffic’ is more conventionally employed to indicate a tainted version of “trade”. Although many bad things are “traded”, it would be odd to hear of a good thing being “trafficked”. The World Traffic Organization (WTO) or the North American Free Traffic Agreement (NAFTA) would be very unlikely name changes. In these pages, the slippage between traffic’s “legitimate” meaning and its “disreputable” meaning is entirely appropriate, and is a key reason the dissertation is called “animal traffic”, even though its subject is global live wildlife trade (legal and illegal).

As Haraway (1989, 1) said of the commercial and scientific traffic in primates, wildlife trade more broadly “is a traffic in meanings, as well as animal lives.” Therefore the second and third meanings of traffic listed in the quote that opens this section are also relevant here. This dissertation is very much about the matter *and meaning* that circulate in GLWT. Ideas are trafficked in this economy as much as animals – ideas about what humans are, what animals are, and how they should relate. Traffic can also refer to the goods themselves, and this dissertation is intensely concerned with animal goods: how they are made, maintained, and sometimes unmade. Finally, traffic can refer to congestion or a concentration of something (see definitions 4a[3] and 6a in the OED epigraph) – usually of vehicles or players. If liberally broadened to refer to a congestion of objects, this definition is also applicable, particularly in terms of the broad methodological strategy employed here, where I sought to insert myself into space-times (what I refer to as “nodes”) in which an incredibly diffuse and decentralised trade coalesced into one place: a wildlife reserve, a rehabilitation centre, and exotic animal auctions. These are nodes where the traffic in animals (again, in both meanings of the term) becomes concentrated. And that makes them ideal for carrying out research.

Finally, it deserves noting that my research into global live wildlife trade remained open throughout to all traded species. Early on it became clear to me that the logics of tracking just one species’ journey into the exotic pet trade would be prohibitively difficult, and so narrow that I would be forced to “look away” should I come across other species while conducting research. I wanted to remain as open as possible to flows of animals through specific spaces and so I bounded my research spatially, not by species. Although this openness was maintained throughout the course of research and writing, readers may observe that some species, spider monkeys (*Ateles geoffroyi*) and scarlet macaws (*Ara macao*), among others, feature prominently in this dissertation. These species appeared with some frequency (both wild and captive, and both visually, aurally, and in touch, text, and interviews) in all research sites, and thus recur in the text, and are introduced with fuller descriptions. It also deserves noting that although I did not intentionally bracket out fish and marine animals from my research (ornamental fish accounting for the vast majority of live animal imports to the US), I did not encounter fish at any point. There are few studies of marine pet trade, but my research experience suggests that fish circulate in different trade networks than terrestrial creatures.

1.3 Key arguments and contributions

From the beginning, my immediate aim in this dissertation has been to determine how a wild animal is transformed into a commodity within global live wildlife trade. By “how” I mean:

through what embodied practices, and enabled by which broader ideas, is an animal commodified? As the research progressed, I realised that within the trade, animals are not only commodified, but also recommodified, and in some cases, decommodified, at various sites. Commodities are made, remade, and unmade within GLWT circuits. I also began to see that the “how” of the transformations occurring in these circuits could be characterized, in terms of embodied practices, as a series of entanglements and disentanglements, and in terms of broader ideas, as dominated by the western idea of the human-animal binary and hierarchy. To make, remake, and unmake commodities in global live wildlife trade, animals are entangled with and disentangled from various networks and ties. A condition of possibility for all of this activity is a species order in which humans are superior and animals inferior, humans masters and animals ownable, commodifiable, and killable.

Importantly, this species order is not just a condition of possibility for global live wildlife trade. It is also an outcome of the trade. At each research site, I saw and sometimes participated in the re-performance of a dominant human subject and a subordinated animal object. While there were moments in which relations were enacted or performed differently, I argue that GLWT is overwhelmingly an economy in which species hierarchies are continually reiterated. By no means do I mean to suggest that this dynamic is somehow natural or inevitable. On the contrary, these embodied performances are a reminder of how human-animal relations and subjectivities are constantly in flux, born, and born again. In this dissertation I draw on performativity theory to explain these enactments.

Animals are of course absolutely central to this story. So while this dissertation is ultimately a tale of commodities, it does not stop at capital’s accumulation in human bodies and labours; rather it extends to consider capitalization of nonhuman bodies, lives, and labours. It also does not stop at considering power asymmetries across human groups, although it seeks to remain attentive to these imbalances. It is primarily a story about how power asymmetries also fall along species lines – primarily along the line that has been constructed between human beings and all other living entities on the planet. I examine these power relations and capitalization processes in multiple sites. Three main arguments emerge:

(I) That global live wildlife trade’s commodities (which are mostly exotic pets) are unique because unlike gems or cell phones, they are alive and sentient (Wilkie 2005). As such, life is central to the commodity. When an exotic pet dies it is generally discarded, exiting the

commodity circuit.⁴ But it is not simply “life itself” that is value-generating in these circuits. Specific qualities of life predominate. Most importantly, these commodities are *lively*. A lively commodity remains alive for the duration of its commodity life. Life is central to its value, like Tillikum/Shamu (Sea World’s “killer” orca whale), a trafficked human, a rodeo bull, or an exotic pet. I refer to these commodities as “lively” because it is not merely being alive that is integral to their being commodities, but also liveliness, which is to say, active demonstrations of being alive – eating a mouse, flapping around a cage, or even blinking eyelids. This points to a need for scholarship to pay greater and more refined attention to what modes of life, or what specific features of life and living, are being commodified in living commodity circuits, which is one of the contributions this dissertation makes, as I outline below.

Furthermore, my research determines that unlike much live capital (such as dairy cows, for example), exotic pets derive their value less from their capacity to reproduce or generate information, like genetic codes, and more from their capacity to be *encountered* – to be stroked, gazed upon, draped around one’s neck. A key finding of my dissertation is that the life generating value for exotic pet trade commodities is an individual, controllable, and encounterable life. The lively encounters between these individual animals – pets – and their owners are central to the animals’ commodity status (Collard and Dempsey 2013).

In response to the role that encounters can play in capital formation, Haraway (2008) intervenes in Marx’s labour theory of value to suggest a third form of value alongside use value and exchange value: encounter value, the value of trans-species relationships among “a motley array of lively beings” (page 47). While she embraces Marx’s notion that use and exchange values are “names for relationships,” Haraway (2008, 45) confesses to arriving at an impasse when “the undead but always generative commodity becomes the living, breathing, rights-endowed, doggish bit of property sleeping on my bed.” What if, she asks, “human labour power turns out to be only part of the story of lively capital?” (2008, 46). To tell another story of value formation, Haraway (2008, 46) turns to the encounter, especially situated encounters between “subjects of different biological species.” Although Haraway advances a fairly open-ended interpretation of “encounters,” the multi-species knots that appear throughout her book are intensely sensual, “fleshly”, and tactile. They involve “face-to-face meetings” between companions (2008, 63). She is also usually (although sometimes ambivalently) attentive to the exploitative, violent histories and conditions under which these meetings are able to occur.

⁴ Some taxidermists are willing to stuff dead pets, including exotic pets. So the commodity circuit does not necessarily come to a full stop at death.

The business of making encounters is the pet trade's *modus operandi*. The vitality of the individual animals is the core aspect of life that has value in this market, and lively commodification co-produces encounters and companionship with exotic pets. While Haraway (2008, 64) ultimately would like to celebrate the “new tolerance limits” and ethics these lively encounters generate, many animals do not benefit – in fact they suffer and even die – from being made encounterable. The lively commodity that results is an undead thing: it is alive and even lively in ways that matter for its owners, but it does not have a wild life in which it can decide for itself how to conduct its life, as discussed in Chapter 5. In the context of the exotic pet trade, the process of co-producing an individual, encounterable life, an undead thing, is centrally one of severing an animal from its previous socio-familial and ecological relationships, and entering it into new linkages that are at best a trace of their former colorful complexity, and at worst lethal.

(II) Making, remaking, and unmaking commodities occurs by forging and cutting links between animals and humans, and animals and their socio-familial and ecological networks. Work in the performativity of markets, outlined in Chapter 3, argues that commodities are formed through entanglement and disentanglement in networks of entities including humans and nonhumans. I draw on this work to show that forming an exotic pet commodity by capturing it and transporting it to markets requires severing it from its familial, social and ecological networks, and re-attaching it to human-provided supports. These shifts in the animal's relations make the animal encounterable to humans, which as I discussed above, is central to the animal's commodity value. Re-making the commodity at exotic animal auctions is a process in which the animal is made eligible for sale by being removed from its previous owner's care, entering into a new set of relations with new owners, into new encounters. Unmaking a live commodity – for example, by rehabilitating an animal so it can return to the forest, as I examine in Chapter 7 – involves severing human ties and establishing links between the animal and wild networks, including familial, social, and ecological. The goal of rehabilitation is to make the animal unencounterable. However, as I show in the chapter, this is paradoxically attempted through sustained encounters with humans during the rehabilitation process, and is often unsuccessful (Collard 2013a). The main effect of rehabilitation, I argue, is to reinforce species hierarchies through a misanthropic belief that animals must be made to fear humans if they are to survive in the wild.

(III) Species hierarchies, especially the hierarchy that places humans atop all other animal life, are productive of and produced by global live wildlife trade and lively commodity making, remaking and unmaking. As Barnes (2008, 1436, emphasis added) writes (within the market

performativity literature mentioned above), “markets are performative effects of complex embodied and concrete socio-material arrangements... [and] the relations among the heterogeneous elements that perform the market *also create the social and the cultural*”. This dissertation argues that one of the key socio-material arrangements that perform the GLWT market is an arrangement between differently positioned human bodies and animal bodies, between the figure of the human as a dominant and superior master and the figure of the animal as “poor in the world” (according to Heidegger 1995), as lacking emotion, speech, reason, and so on. In turn, these same arrangements create social and cultural worlds in which animals are subordinate. The assumption that animals are “disposable” and “killable” is thus both a condition of possibility for and a product of global live wildlife trade. Ultimately, then, this dissertation aims to provide both an account of a grossly understudied and exploitative economy and a more politically inflected theory of market performance – one that is attentive throughout to relations of power and how they shape and are shaped by market practices.

This dissertation represents an effort to understand a specific but incredibly diffuse global economy in its “real world setting” (Peck 2012, 10, in Berndt and Boeckler 2012, 200). I draw on concrete moments of observation “on the ground” to figure out and then describe how the economy works, from the specific practices that drive the circulation of its commodities to the broader ideologies and ethico-political norms that enable and govern it. My research and conclusions confirm a claim Gidwani (2008, xix) makes (after Mitchell 2002), that capital has a “para-sitic” existence: “it draws its force by attempting to divert or attach itself to other kinds of energy or logic – cultural, political, nonhuman – whose contributions, like those of history’s subalterns, are erased from conventional accounts.” My work here is in part an attempt to recover the contributions of nonhuman energies to capitalism. In doing so, I contribute to two predominant sets of literature: animal geographies and economic geographies. In particular I contribute to debates about encounters and wildness in the former, and, in the latter, axes of exploitation and biocapital.

One of the key arguments to emerge out of animal geographies during the past two decades is a troubling of wilderness and wildness. Leading this work, Whatmore (2002) shows how wildness and wilderness, constructed as pristine conditions cleaved from humans and cultural spaces, are tied to a humanist conception of the world, in which animals are disconnected from the social. Troubling the culture/nature binary in animal geography has meant demonstrating the myriad minglings of humans and animals, including “wild” animals (Whatmore 2002; Lorimer 2006, 2007; Power 2009). This work is reviewed in more detail in

Chapter 5. Concurrent with this work is a tendency to celebrate such human-animal entanglements. Scholars follow Haraway in suggesting that it is only in direct encounters with animals that care and responsibility can be generated. To this conversation, my research brings consideration of the conditions of production of encounters, and their place within a broader political economy. My research leads me to caution animal geographers for being too celebratory of human-animal encounters, which can be violent and lethal for many species, usually animals. Relatedly, through this study, I have begun reconsidering wild life as a site for animal politics. I urge animal geographers to recuperate wild life as a means of articulating animal autonomy and the spatial requirements of animals. I believe that it is possible to envision a world in which such requirements are accounted for, but without falling back on a human/animal, culture/nature binary.

In recent years economic geographers have produced excellent work charting the commodification of nature, especially in the “neoliberal natures” strand of work that investigates how biophysical nature inflects the commodification process (Robertson 2012; Bakker 2003; Le Billon 2004; Prudham 2004; Parry 2008; see Bakker 2012). Yet considerable vagueness remains in this literature about commodities that are alive. Different forms of life produce economic value, as I discussed earlier. The research I have conducted here contributes a nuanced analysis of the form of life that generates value in global live wildlife trade. This goes some way in identifying the different modes of life active in commodification. I also bring an attention to human-animal relations as a condition of possibility for capitalism. As I show, capitalism depends not only on exploitable human labour and ownable land (Goldstein 2012), but also fundamentally on a commodifiable animal object, which I call, following Goldstein (2012), *animalia economica*. This always and everywhere commodifiable animal is central to GLWT. Should economic geographers pay attention to nonhuman sites of capital accumulation and nonhuman labourers, a new terrain of capitalist activity is brought into focus, and new dimensions of capitalist logics are illuminated. Ultimately, this points to the necessity of confronting the figure of the human and species hierarchies as well as capitalism if we are to determine and institute less harmful and violent modes of multispecies existence.

1.4 Dissertation outline

The dissertation is structured in two parts, each containing three chapters. The first part provides the background (topical, theoretical and methodological) for the second, which contains the three substantive research chapters. In part 1, Chapter 2 provides a snapshot of global live wildlife trade, which is essential to situating later chapters in a broader political, socio-economic and

ecological context. The chapter briefly introduces key terms and institutions involved in the trade, and reviews historical trends and the current status of the trade worldwide to demonstrate the scale and scope of trade and its socio-ecological impacts. As Chapter 2 makes clear, global live wildlife trade is a vast and unregulated, old but thriving economy that has profound consequences for billions of animal lives.

In order to achieve a sense of the trade that is both specific – rooted in particular places and encounters – and broad – able to identify ideas and forces common across trade sites and practices – this dissertation uses a specific combination of theoretical and methodological approach to studying GLWT. Chapter 3 elaborates the theoretical approaches deployed, which are threefold:

(I) A commodity chain framework that structures my narrative and dissertation. The chain identifies three main phases: production (capture), exchange, and decommissioning (rehabilitation) of lively commodities. I use the commodity chain to defetishize the commodity, that is, to recognize and understand the sets of social and material relations that constitute the animal commodity.

(II) A theory of performativity that serves as the lens through which I interpret my observations. In this dissertation, I draw on a feminist performativity theory of markets and commodities to examine: first, the forging and severing of relations that constitute animal and commodity life; and second, the embodied performances within the commodity chain that make and remake not only commodities but also human-animal relations.

(III) An anti-speciesist position; that is, contesting speciesism, or challenging the acceptance of the idea that animals can be “noncriminally put to death” (Derrida 1991) and are rendered exploitable and commodifiable simply on the basis of their species, of their not being human. I argue in this dissertation that speciesism is both a condition and a product of global live wildlife trade (and the performance of its commodities).

Chapter 4 builds from the theoretical discussion, and outlines my methodological approach. I begin with the posthumanist idea that action happens in contact zones, in entanglements of beings that include both humans and animals. Consequently, my methodological approach involves immersing myself in the contact zones of global live wildlife trade. In these contact zones, radically differently positioned subjects come into contact with one another, myself among them. My goal when I was in these contact zones was not to attempt to know animals but rather to gain a sense of “being-with” the animal. Often, this involved having encounters with animals that were deeply suffering. At times it even involved participating in

this suffering myself. Chapter 4 therefore conveys my ambivalence about my own research, and discusses related research challenges of methods and methodology. It also explains where and how I conducted research (my methods).

Part II, “three traffic nodes”, also consists of three chapters. Each is set in a traffic node of the live wildlife trade commodity circuit. By traffic nodes I mean contact zones of animal traffic (of exchange of matter and meaning). Each node corresponds to a stage within the commodity chain of global live wildlife trade: 1) commodity production (capture in biosphere reserves in Mexico, Guatemala and Belize); 2) commodity sale (exchange at exotic animal auctions across the US); and 3) commodity disassembly (rehabilitation at a wildlife centre in Guatemala). I characterize these three stages as the making, remaking, and unmaking of lively commodities, or of commodification, re-commodification and de-commodification. Through these chapters, I detail the specific practices that make, remake and (attempt to) unmake commodities (the forging and severing of ties within the networks that constitute the animal and the commodity). I also attend to the broader conditions and effects of these practices, asking: what worlds does global live wildlife trade de/re/commodification perform? It is important to note that the regions within which my research was conducted are each entanglements of political, ecological, and social forces, of sometimes sharp conflicts. At times the severe human violence of these conflicts, coupled with ever-present human-justice concerns, complicate any project to account for species violence. Throughout this dissertation, I make an effort to critique human-animal relations that are also attentive to multiple forms of human-human violence and injustice.

Chapter 5 takes place in and around the border regions of southern Mexico, northern Guatemala and northwestern Belize. It is a region that conservation organizations have named the “Maya forest”, a name many local and indigenous groups oppose. Such struggles in this region form a generative part of the area’s animal politics. After reviewing the recent history of activism, expropriation, and capitalization in the area, I explore the initial making of the lively commodity through capture. I explain how animals are captured and transported from the forest and across borders, characterizing this process as one of severing ties between wild animals and their socio-familial and ecological networks, and forming ties with human-provided supports. I interpret the formation of the lively commodity as the creation of an encounterable, controllable, and individual life, and argue that this mode of life is central to the economic value of the exotic pet commodity. This chapter also considers the consequences of this transformation for individual animals and examines what human-animal relations are (re)produced in its wake.

After animals are captured and transported they may very well arrive in cardboard boxes or Tupperware containers at a wholesaler in the US that will distribute them to pet stores, zoos, and to individual private owners. In turn, many will later be sold at an exotic animal auction. The second research node addresses lively commodity exchange at exotic animal auctions across the US. Chapter 6 is based on observation at five such auctions. Auctions are an especially node-like event, drawing together tens of thousands of animals, and thousands of people from all across the US. In the auction ring, human-animal relations are performed in an embodied and public manner. Here again I describe the specific practices of animal sale. Many states are currently considering ramping up regulation for exotic pets. I argue that in this unstable context, exotic animal auctions become an opportunity for remaking, or re-legitimizing the lively commodity. Through another set of entanglements and disentanglements, animals are passed from one set of hands to another. Auctioneering is a large-scale spectacle. A single auction can involve thousands of people and tens of thousands of animals. At the auction, human mastery and animal subordination are performed. Additionally, the auction process emphasizes particular qualities of animal life – encounterability, controllability and individuality – in assigning a price for exchange. These qualities are often performed between workers and animals in the auction ring.

Finally, chapter 7 focuses on a node in which there is an attempt to unmake the lively commodity. This chapter takes place at ARCAS wildlife rehabilitation centre in Guatemala, which is home to hundreds of animals, most of which were confiscated while being trafficked as pets. If an animal's journey to the US is interrupted while it is still in its country of origin, it has the possibility of being sent to a rehabilitation facility, where workers, veterinarians and volunteers seek to “put back together” the wild animal and release it from captivity. This chapter is based on one month of participant-observation and several in-depth interviews with ARCAS staff. I explain in this chapter that overall, rehabilitation (decommodification) attempts to accomplish the reverse of capture (commodification). It tries to sever links between the rehabilitant animal and humans – make animals unencounterable – and forge ties between the animal and socio-familial, ecological networks (albeit not the very same ones from which the animal was originally severed). While I support this undertaking in principle, there are troubling aspects of wildlife rehabilitation that I experienced first-hand in my work with animals. The rehabilitation process revolves around deeply misanthropic practices – or practices that aim to instill fear and distrust of humans in animals, all in an attempt to make animals unencounterable. In exerting these practices, rehabilitators ultimately perform a dominant, master human subject,

and subordinate the animal, making it an object. Rehab's misanthropy remains, in other words, deeply humanist.

After journeying through these three nodes in the commodity circuit, this dissertation's conclusion draws the three nodes together to reiterate my main arguments and reflect on what broader implications can be drawn from this research. I argue here that the speciesist dynamics I identify as conditions and effects of global live wildlife trade are not limited to this trade, but are rather fundamental to capitalism. I also reflect on how the study was carried out and consider lessons learned. Finally, I point toward significant gaps that remain regarding wildlife trade and the relationship between capitalism and speciesism, animals and animality. I also gesture towards future directions for this research – directions that I will be taking and directions I hope relevant literatures will take.

1.5 Conclusion

The question that struck me in Qingping market – how does wildlife trade work? – has stayed with me for a long time. I am and probably always will be tremendously affected by the puzzle of how an animal can be born into a social, familial, and ecological network – in a forest canopy, or an ocean coral reef, or on desert sand and rock – but end up ensnared in a circuit of capital, propelled across borders, through markets and auctions, coming to a stop in living rooms, zoos, aquariums, backyards, city park petting zoos, and dozens of other places somehow deemed adequate new homes for a live commodity that can now be bought and sold. My bewilderment at the complexity and coordination of so many elements coming together – ideas, laws, buyers and sellers, transport, food and water, advocacy – to facilitate this transformation resides, sometimes uneasily and awkwardly, alongside another reaction. This transformation horrifies me. I view it as consistent with Jacques Derrida's (2008, 25) observation that today no one can deny the “unprecedented proportions of [the] subjection of the animal.” Global live wildlife trade is part of this subjection, a booming economy transforming ecologies and individual animal lives worldwide. It traffics in animals in both senses of the word, relying on particular ideological, social and legal relations structuring human-animal interactions, and relying on the flows of billions of animals worldwide.

During the dissertation I struggled to maintain an open mind about how my observations would make me feel, and what they would inspire me to think. This was a piece of advice passed to me by filmmaker Nettie Wild while she was helping me to consider how to interview people with whom I might have significant conflicts of opinion. Now, having emerged on the other side of my research and writing, I believe that global live wildlife trade is unjust, unnecessary, and

cruel. I must state this unequivocally in these pages. I have found it is important to reveal such convictions with care. Humans' relationships with other animals are contentious, and I do not want this dissertation to read as a two-hundred-page-long polemic. But I wish to be clear about my position from these very first pages. What should be done about live wildlife trade is that it should be stopped.

Chapter 2. Global live wildlife trade

2.1 Introduction

During an unseasonably cool and wet July week in Geneva, over a hundred delegates representing national governments, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES) secretariat, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) ranging from exotic pet owners associations to conservation groups, gathered for the 2011 CITES Animals Committee (AC) meeting. CITES, which came into effect in 1975, is an international agreement “to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival” (CITES 2013a). Currently, 178 governments (“parties”) adhere voluntarily to its legally binding resolutions. The convention meets as a whole every three years in a Conference of Parties (CoP), but the AC meets annually. I attended the meeting as an official observer, walking to and from the convention hall and my hotel room every morning and evening, shivering in a light jacket. Delegates only filled the lower half of seats in the enormous, theatrical conference room. I sat in the highest and farthest row and watched the sea of heads clad in translation headsets (figure 2.1).⁵



Figure 2.1 2011 CITES Animals Committee meeting in Geneva (photograph by the author)

⁵ The seating at the meeting was structured as follows: the CITES secretariat in the front, seated at a long table facing the room; then the committee members, clustered by continent, facing the secretariat; followed by observers from official parties to CITES; observers from international governance organizations (FAO, IUCN, and so on); observers from NGOs such as TRAFFIC, Conservation International, and WWF, as well as many pro-trade organizations such as Animal Exhibition Alliance and the Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association; and finally, at the very back, observers like myself, of whom there appeared to be very few. There were possibly one or two others, probably journalists.

Most of the meeting was monotonous and dull. Still, I was able to get enough of a sense of the tone to realize by day three that this was essentially a meeting to coordinate smooth and efficient global trade. From my seat, I was confronted by the fact that CITES is more a trade organization than a conservation organization. As was clear from the meeting discussion, there was very little room for asking broad questions. On the first day, a representative from Chile asked the secretariat how a given country's export quotas are set, and who decides. The chair's only answer was that this question was not on topic.

Throughout the meeting, various parties voiced their strong opposition to having the trade of any of their species' monitored. Indonesia campaigned hard to retain the ability to trade macaques (so abundant they are "pests", the representative claimed).⁶ India, for its part, campaigned to avoid trade protection for a species of python upon whose trade over 200,000 people depend for income. The chair of the meeting continually reminded working groups to consider, first and foremost, the social implications of any recommendations they might have. These moments are emblematic of an ethos that was everywhere evident at the meeting. This ethos was one of, above all else, *trade facilitation*. A few months after the meeting, in Flores, Guatemala, while speaking about CITES with the Wildlife Conservation Society's director of Guatemala programs, I was told "you shouldn't have any romantic notions about CITES." Above all, the director said, "it's the regulation of a commodity" (McNab, 2011, personal communication). While this dissertation is not about CITES or wildlife trade governance, directly, with Sollund (2013a, 73, emphasis in original; also see Sollund 2011) I would like to "emphasize that the purpose of the Convention [CITES] is *not* to prevent trade and trafficking, but to *regulate* it." Sollund worries that CITES legitimates trade, and that legal trade may act as a cover for or even encourage illegal trade (also see Hutton and Webb 2005). I share her concern. As she states (2013a, 86; also 2011), abducting and trafficking nonhuman animals, and theriocide (humans killing nonhuman animals, see Beirne 2009) "is legitimated through CITES as nonhumans are consistently regarded as 'natural resources' which can be 'harvested' for human benefit". Such language is indeed the norm throughout CITES reports and frameworks, and, as I observed, at international meetings.

My observations at the CITES meeting also marked the point when I began to appreciate the extent to which wildlife trade is above all an economy, a global (albeit remarkably under-

⁶ Macaques are a highly traded species, in demand as food, pets, and scientific test subjects. In July 2007, Malaysian authorities seized over 900 crab-eating macaques being kept in cages and sacks, destined for food in China and testing labs in the Netherlands. Some of the monkeys were so hungry that they were eating their offspring (Planet Ark 2007).

regulated and poorly monitored) economy, with all the attendant issues of transportation, border crossing, permits, pricing, and so on. That the commodities being transported, crossing borders, and needing permits are alive, *are wild animals*, began to seem, after a few days at the conference, largely inconsequential. The fact that delegates were speaking about actual living, breathing, thinking and feeling beings – monkeys, pythons, snakes, sharks, the list went on and on – receded into the background, obscured by shipment volumes, stock depletion, specimen types, import/export discrepancies, quotas, and abbreviations. At one point I wrote in my notes, “it’s just so strange to think of the actual animals out there being spoken about here.” Save for charismatic animal photos on glossy report covers, there was very little sign of them in the cavernous conference hall.⁷

Yet there were millions of animals circulating within this economy as we sat in the meeting. There are again millions circulating as I write these words, and millions more as you read them. There are sacks of monkeys, boxes of reptiles and turtles, crates of parrots being smuggled across borders in trucks with false papers. There might be geckos and snakes strapped into the underwear of airplane passengers, a baby primate hidden in a fake pregnant stomach, and drugged baby leopards, bears, monkeys, and panthers in suitcases.⁸ Such sensational smuggling stories belie the millions of animals entering and leaving national borders legally, of which we rarely if ever hear, and of which many if not most die en route. These millions of animals crisscrossing the globe at any given moment form the topical context for this dissertation. In order to appreciate the history, scale, and stakes of these flows, this chapter undertakes a broad-sweeping but brief review of how this economy is defined and parsed (2.2); how it came to be (2.3); how it is governed and monitored (2.4); the volume of trade, how it is distributed and with what socio-economic effects for those involved (2.5); and finally, the trade’s ecological repercussions (2.6).

2.2 Wildlife trade – the basics

Wildlife trade is the sale and exchange of plants, animals and their parts. It can occur at multiple scales: locally, within regions, nationally, and internationally. My focus in this dissertation is on global trade. There are three principal ways that global wildlife trade is categorized within scientific and governance regimes.

⁷ This is not to say that I think CITES should not exist. Rather, it is to point out the manner in which it does exist. As this chapter will discuss, CITES is criticized on many fronts, and yet it currently offers the only formal means for regulating wildlife trade internationally.

⁸ These are all recorded instances of animal smuggling: see CNN (2008), The Telegraph (2010), Åkerström (2011), Associated Press (2011), and Todorova (2011).

First, it can be legal (sanctioned by CITES) or illegal. The line between the two shifts frequently, is always more grey than black or white, and is very political: species move in and out of legal status; their trade in one region may be legal but in another illegal; and the decisions regarding what species will be able to be traded and in what amounts is subject to a great deal of political influence from powerful countries like the US and Japan. For example, interviewees told me that the decision to have the CITES CoP 15 in Doha in 2010 meant that attendance was prohibitively expensive for many poorer nations that consequently had no representation at the meeting. Moreover, at the same meeting, several key pieces of protective regulation (for bluefin tuna and sharks, for example) failed to pass because powerful countries like Japan and Canada were keen to protect their seafood trade profits and therefore exerted enormous political pressure on other nations to vote against trade restriction motions (Adam 2010b; Milius 2010; Platt 2010). Japan was even accused of buying votes with promises of development funding from poorer nations in attendance. But the legal/illegal line, while political and shifting, is a distinction that can have profound material effects as it dictates the levels of permitted trade. It can also potentially have unintended consequences. As some scholars suggest, CITES trade bans can sometimes escalate trade levels because of what then become increased prices in the black market (Rivalan et al. 2007; Stratton 2012). Equally, a focus on the legal/illegal issue can deflect a broader consideration of whether wildlife trade should be condoned at all (Rutherford 2011). Due to these considerations, this dissertation encompasses both legal and illegal wildlife trade.

Second, the trade can be subsistence or commercial (Redford 1992; Broad et al. 2003). Almost all international wildlife trade is designated as commercial. However, like the line between legal and illegal, the subsistence/commercial distinction is not always clear-cut (Redford 1992, Freese 1998; Broad et al. 2003). It too can be highly political, not only in its construction but also in its consequences. Consider, for example, the case of bushmeat trade, a fraught issue for many countries. Large conservation NGOs attempt to restrict areas where bushmeat can be harvested, reducing the availability of some staple meats for local and Indigenous people. Furthermore, enforcing these restrictions is often carried out with violent tactics (see Bowen-Jones et al. 2003; Neumann 2004). This dissertation's focus is on commercial trade.

Third, trade can be in animals or plants, including trees, such as the lucrative and rampant black market in mahogany (see Blundell and Rodan 2003). If trade is in animals (as is my focus here), there are two sub-categories. First, trade can be in wild-caught or captive-bred animals (a designation assigned to at minimum second-generation captive-bred animals, in other words an

animal born in captivity to captive parents⁹), demonstrating the malleability of the designation ‘wildlife’.¹⁰ Second, trade can be divided into trade in live animals (as pets, zoo and circus performers, or research subjects, for example), or in dead animals and their parts (trophies, medicinal materials, apparel, ornaments, food, and so on). As I have stated, my focus is on live, wild-caught animals.

2.3 Wildlife trade – a brief history

For thousands of years humans have been capturing, collecting and displaying wild animals from all reaches of the globe. From the beginning, these flows have been saturated with assertions of power (Belozerskaya 2006). In early empires such as Greece, Egypt and Rome, “few presents which could be made to Kings or other rulers were so cheap, so effective, or so highly appreciated as a gift of wild animals” (Jennison 1937 [2005], xi). The more distant and unknown the animal, the more value and power it conveyed. The presence of these animals in royal courts “was a living proof of the monarch’s might and influence... [and thus] almost without exception, a very fine zoological collection has marked the crest of power in every great nation and shrunk with it in its fall” (Jennison 1937 [2005], xi). Greeks and Romans kept exotic pets such as monkeys and birds, especially peacocks, and exhibited them in religious festival processions. Some animals, such as so-called “war-elephants” were kept for military purposes but also likely doubled as show and hunting stock. Of course the gladiatorial Roman games were an especially bloody spectacle in which imported live wild animals, such as elephants and wild cats, were put to death before huge crowds (see Whatmore 2002; Belozerskaya 2006). Many of these animals were captured from North Africa, which was not only near to Italy but also under Roman power in the second century, when it was reportedly “teeming with wild animals” (Jennison 1937 [2005], 4).

With the onset of European imperial expansion and the so-called “Age of Exploration”, global wildlife trade escalated. Serving as an endorsement of modern colonial power, capturing

⁹ Captive breeding programs have been accused of functioning as covers for trading wild-caught animals. For example, Lyons and Natusch (2011) determined that green pythons are being laundered through breeding farms in Indonesia.

¹⁰ The closest approximation to a definition of “wildlife” in this context is undomesticated animals, where domesticates, by contrast, are animals that have become adapted over time to life alongside humans, particularly in a manner that provides companionship, security, labour, or sustenance to humans (animals such as chickens, goats, cows, dogs, and so on). Of course, these designations have been thoroughly blurred and troubled by Whatmore (2002) and many others (e.g. Cronon 1995, Philo and Wilbert 2000; Hinchliffe 2007; Haraway 2008; Rutherford 2011; Thorpe 2012) who demonstrate convincingly that wildlife and wilderness are by no means located “out there” away from humans, that “animals... designated wild have been, and continue to be, routinely caught up within multiple networks of human social life” (Whatmore 2002, 9). Captive breeding of “wild” animals is a clear example of such blurring and entangling. See chapter 04 for a further discussion of wildness.

animals continued to be “a symbolic representation of the conquest of all distant and exotic lands” (Berger 1980, 21). The trade was primarily tied to natural history collecting and the concentration of animals from the colonies into royal menageries and zoological gardens in Europe (Robbins 2002; Hanson 2004; Belozerskaya 2006; Simons 2012; also see Hoage and Deiss 1996 for discussions of nineteenth century zoological parks in Europe and beyond). For example, what is now known as the Tower of London functioned during the 1200s-1500s as the Tower Menagerie, and it contained over the centuries a procession of wild animals including elephants, lions, polar bears (exhibited at times with two Inuit in 1577), and kangaroos (Simons 2012). The eighteenth century royal menagerie in Versailles (that Foucault [1977] speculates may have inspired Jeremy Bentham’s famous panopticon prison design), constructed under Louis XIV’s direction, had a circular layout with a large pavilion in the centre, around which was a walking path. Outside the path were enclosures and cages, bounded on three sides with walls but with bars in the direction of the pavilion.

By the Victorian era, facilitated by “the rise of science and the rise of Empire”, as Simons (2012, 8) suggests, “there was nothing exceptional about owning an exotic animal. It may not have been common but it was by no means unusual” (4). While certainly not available to anyone, animal ownership was not restricted to monarchs. Aristocratic naturalists, painters, and officers also owned private menageries containing animals ranging from panthers to elephants to lions. The scientific revolution coupled with expanded colonial reach into the ever-farther territories ushered in what Simons (2012) calls a flood of exotic animals in England (also see Belozerskaya 2006, Chapter 5). The “centres of calculation” (Latour 1987) that emerged in Europe during this time amassed huge collections of animals for classification and study (see Foucault 1970). This production of knowledge about the natural world was of course an indelible part of colonization (see Johnson and Murton 2007), and entangled with commercial interests, it had a devastating effect on wild animal populations, such as the koala and the famous dodo. The imperial system entailed domination over colonized territories including both people and animals (see Crosby 1985) and displaying these animals (and people) in Britain was a demonstration of the “spoils of empire” (Simons 2012; also see Greenblatt 1991; Belozerskaya 2006).

Some of the captured animals that arrived in Europe eventually ended up in North America, especially the United States, which has always maintained a thriving zoo and aquarium trade. The industry was booming at the turn of the nineteenth century, during which time US zoos grew in number from four in 1880 to more than a hundred by 1930 (Hanson 2004, 79). But by the second half of the nineteenth century, zoos only constituted half of the US’s lucrative wild

animal business. Animals were also delivered into circuses, the pet trade, and laboratories. By the beginning of the twentieth century, demand also emerged from Hollywood (see Mitman 1999; Burt 2000; Solnit 2006). Just as today, many of the same animals circulated through these various arms of wild animal trade, moving from zoos to private ownership to film acting to circuses (Hanson 2004). The twentieth century also marked a dramatic increase in private exotic animal ownership, which as Chapter 1 stated, is now the fate for approximately 90 percent of US live animal imports. Today, alongside a massive boom in domestic pet-keeping (see Nast 2006a, 2006b), exotic pets are being sold in greater and greater numbers at pet stores, online, and at exotic animal auctions (the topic of Chapter 6). As I will discuss, these auctions emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century. Although as this brief history shows global live wildlife trade has existed for a long time, its scale and reach, and the breadth of its popularity, are today at unprecedented levels. Governing and monitoring this vast trade is thus incredibly challenging (see Oldfield 2003).

2.4 Trade governance and monitoring

Although no chapter in this dissertation explicitly addresses the governance and regulatory dimensions of GLWT, questions of who governs, how, and at what scale run throughout the dissertation. Wildlife trade regulation can exist at every governance scale, from municipal to state/provincial, national, and international. It is a complicated political sphere and this plays out in specific ways that often disable effective monitoring and enforcement in the face of uncertain regulations. Regulations are also dynamic at all scales. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, several US states and Canadian provinces have recently established or are in the process of establishing stricter trade and ownership regulations. The ambiguity around what specifically these new regulations are or will be, as well as how they will affect the industry, is evidently engendering anxiety for economic players in the trade. It is also breeding tension between animal owners and traders and animal welfare advocates. This tension will rear its head in every chapter of this dissertation and while, like regulation, it is not explicitly addressed on its own, it infuses the dissertation at all levels. It affected the degree to which I could access interviewees and research sites and carry out conversations, the tenor of these conversations and sites, and finally, the actions and behaviors I observed and am now writing about here. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. It would, then, be erroneous to describe this dissertation as concerned only with politics writ large and not with the specifics of governance and regulation, even though neither is treated as the specific focus of any one chapter.

CITES is the primary regulatory framework for wildlife trade. It uses three lists of species, each affording different levels or types of protection from over-exploitation. At the time of writing, Appendix 1 lists 625 animal species that are prohibited from commercial trade because they are threatened with extinction (CITES 2013b). Appendix 2 contains 4685 animal species that can be traded if appropriate permits are obtained (CITES 2013b). Finally, Appendix 3 is a list of 147 species that can be traded but which require cooperation by member states to prevent unsustainable or illegal exploitation (CITES 2013b). Aside from CITES, at the national level, there is no coordinated strategy, legislative authority, or funding devoted to oversight of the live wildlife trade in either the US or Canada (Cooper and Chalifour 2004; Jenkins 2007; Smith et al. 2009). In both countries, municipalities and provinces/states can provide their own exotic animal regulation (the patchwork of state regulation is discussed in Chapter 6).

Various actors have repeatedly called CITES's effectiveness into question over the last few years (Hutton and Dickson 2000; Roe et al. 2002; Dickson 2003; Oldfield 2003; Shephard and Nijman 2008), with one study published in *Nature* suggesting that "last-minute bans... can themselves increase trading activity" (Rivalan et al. 2007). A ban indicates increased rarity of animals, which can drive up prices and potentially escalate trade activity. Moreover, CITES is criticized for both failing to account for the effect of trade prohibitions on rural livelihoods (Hutton 2011) and for understating wildlife trade's ecological impacts (Gullison et al. 2000; Nijman et al. 2012).¹¹ Overall, as I noted in section 2.2, since its founding CITES's function has been "to track and regulate trade" (Beissinger 2001, 182). Consequently, there is little to no room within the framework to consider ethical or animal welfare dimensions of trade, and no conversations about whether or not trade should even exist at all. Non-detriment findings (NDFs), the mechanism that CITES uses to decide if trade should be restricted, account for whether or not the trade can be sustained at its current levels, not for the effect of trade on individual animals. Although CITES operates within these narrow parameters, some scholars believe that it could play a more comprehensive role in managing captive animal trade (see Schupplit and Fraser 2000).¹²

¹¹ See Singh (2008) for a political ecological analysis of CITES and a summary of debates over wildlife trade governance.

¹² Schupplit and Fraser (2000), by contrast, provide a comprehensive assessment of what should be considered in determining the eligibility of species as companion animals. They construct a rubric of five categories within which species can be listed, the last ("E") corresponding to "species that are unsuitable as companion animals because of undue harm or risk of harm to one or more of: the animal, the owner, the community, or the environment" (366). They include in this category "i) dangerous species such as venomous snakes and large cat species; ii) exotic species

Monitoring wildlife is also contentious and complicated. Trade in CITES-listed species (species listed in one of the three Appendices) is monitored through CITES, which requires that all signatory countries issue import and export permits to trade listed animals. But many countries, including Canada, do not account for non-CITES wildlife traded across their borders. As a result, trade of non-CITES listed species is barely monitored at all. Although the US monitors wildlife imports of both CITES and non-CITES animals, studies have demonstrated significant discrepancies between CITES data and US data for CITES-listed species (Blundell and Mascia 2005; Thomas and Albert 2006).

Even with permit issuing and monitoring, there are widespread problems with false permits and customs officials who are unable to determine if the trade permit corresponds to the specimen(s) they are examining. As a result, permits for one (legal) species are often used to smuggle in other (illegal) species through customs (Gerson et al. 2008). As Gerson et al. (2008, 4) summarize in the Canadian context: “More than 12 million commercial shipments are imported into Canada annually, and only about two percent of these are physically inspected. Customs border officers are generally not trained to be familiar with species names. The officers have only seconds to review long lists of species identified on customs documentation and decide whether or not to release shipments.” About 90 percent of the world’s cargo moves by shipping container (DHS 2007). In the US context, and depending on which study is consulted, of the over eleven million shipping containers imported to the US each year (DHS 2007), between two (Helvarg 2002) and five percent (Martonosi et al. 2006) are actually scanned with X- or gamma-rays. Of these, approximately five percent are physically inspected (Martonosi et al. 2006). Finally, there is a lack of resources in many countries, including North America, which “undermines existing legal frameworks for preventing wildlife trading” (Toledo et al. 2012, 36). As Natalie Chaliflour from WWF mentions in a Nature of Things documentary, *Wildlife for sale* (1998), “Canada has been a bit complacent with regulating international wildlife trade”. She outlines how (at the time of the film) there were only 6-8 officers across Canada that were trained in and work full time on CITES, but over 322 ports of entry (also see Cooper and Chaliflour 2004). All of this uncertainty calls attention to: a) the scant state of trade monitoring and enforcement; and b) the necessity for caution when dealing with wildlife trade statistics.

that could cause ecological damage if they escaped; iii) wild species whose capture or transportation raises humane or environmental concerns; iv) long-lived species whose lifespan is likely to exceed an owner's ability to provide care; and v) species whose requirements (eg for normal social behaviour) cannot reasonably be met in captivity” (367). Schupplit and Fraser admit that CITES was designed for threatened and endangered animals but are hopeful that CITES’s role could be expanded to consider “suitability” of animals for being exotic pets.

2.5 Trade volume, distribution and socio-economic effects

The historical geography of wildlife trade flows – predominantly moving from the colonies to colonial centers, as discussed in section 2.3 – continues today. In general, contemporary wildlife trade moves from biodiversity-rich, capital-poor countries to wealthy countries like the US, Japan, and the UK (Roe et al. 2002; Broad et al. 2003; Engler and Parry-Jones 2007; Nijman 2010). China is also a top importer. But as I noted, the pace, scale and scope of trade have intensified dramatically in the last few decades. Although plagued by the monitoring challenges identified in the previous section, prevailing estimates of the value of the legal global wildlife trade suggest it is worth tens if not hundreds of billions of dollars annually (Engler and Parry-Jones 2007; Warchol 2004; Schneider 2008; Smith et al. 2009; Duffy 2010 in White 2010; Sollund 2013; see also Chapter 1), illegal trade thought to follow closely behind (Wyler and Sheikh 2008; Priksat 2009; Wyatt 2009; Barber-Meyer 2010; Rosen and Smith 2010).¹³

Live wild animal imports have grown especially quickly in North America since the 1990s (Jenkins 2007; also Smith et al. 2009 for specifically US statistics). Canada is a leading importer and has a sizeable export trade (Roe et al. 2002). Mexico is also emerging as significant import country in recent decades (Benitez 2011, CONABIO Director, personal communication). The US is a key player in global trade. As discussed in Chapter 1, 90 percent of live wildlife imported to the US is traded as exotic pets, including ornamental fish (Smith et al. 2009). While some species are now commercially bred, 80 percent of live animal imports to the US are from wild populations (Smith et al. 2009). In 2002, the US is reported to have imported 38,000 live mammals, 365,000 live birds, two million live reptiles, 49 million live amphibians and 216 million live fish (Jones 2003). Notably, over 69 percent of US live animal imports originated in Southeast Asia (Smith et al. 2009). The recent escalation, particularly in exotic pet demand, is attributed in large part to the growing role played by the internet in facilitating endangered and rare species trade, leading conservationists to claim that the internet is one of the biggest threats to endangered species for the role it plays in “fueling trade” (Casey 2010). Popular films and video games can also have a significant effect on the demand for particular species of wildlife

¹³ Illegal wildlife trade is frequently linked to the same networks as drug and arms trade, and is suspected of funding terrorist activities, as is demonstrated by a documentary film, *Feathered Cocaine* (2010, about connections between Osama Bin Laden and the falcon trade). Several studies and journalistic articles (Vince 2002; Deeks 2006; Wyler and Sheikh 2008; Romero 2010) also document connections between wildlife trade and other illegal trafficking. See South and Wyatt (2011) for a comparative examination of illicit trade in drugs and wildlife. See Humphreys and Smith (2011) for consideration of how wildlife trade funds war, and how wildlife conservation is increasingly militarized. Also see Wyatt (2012) for further discussion of the “structural harm” posed by illegal wildlife trade with respect to the threat to national and human security through the connection to corruption, transnational crime, organized criminal networks, and terrorism.

(Doward 2010; Castro 2013; Nekaris et al. 2013). For example, a spike in demand for clownfish was observed after the anti-captivity cartoon, *Finding Nemo* (2003), was released (Strange 2008).

As the figure quoted above suggests, wildlife export zones are primarily located in Asia, especially the Southeast, South and Central America, Eastern Europe and Africa (Laidlaw 2005; Nijman 2010). Top exporting countries for wild-caught CITES-species include Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia and China (Nijman 2010). Wildlife trade “hot spots” (places where wildlife trade is particularly threatening) include “China's international borders, trade hubs in East/Southern Africa and South-east Asia, the eastern borders of the European Union, some markets in Mexico, parts of the Caribbean, parts of Indonesia and New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands” (TRAFFIC 2008). Madagascar is also emerging as a significant source of wildlife in trade (see Hannah 2011). Poverty often marks many wildlife export regions. Some NGO and government reports tout the socio-economic benefits that controlled wildlife trade can bring, namely much-needed income (Roe et al. 2002; Oldfield 2003; Nijman 2010).

Yet few studies have been conducted on the actual benefits local people garner from wildlife trapping for international export. In the primary research conducted for this dissertation, interviewees repeatedly confirmed that the poorest people involved in the trade, the capturers, receive the least amount of income from trading. At the same time, these individuals and their communities disproportionately bear the ecological impacts of trade. In some cases, the species being removed may even be a key subsistence food for these communities, such as bushmeat. Thus while some experts tout wildlife trade as a sustainable development mechanism, evidence shows that the trade can simultaneously harm animals *and* exacerbate economic inequalities between rural and urban communities, and between countries in the global north and south. Profit tends to be highly unequally distributed, with the lowest profit made by those individuals actually catching the animals (the poorest of all people involved in the trade). These individuals are also those who depend most directly on ecological resources and therefore bear the greatest burden of the trade's ecological damage.

2.6 Wildlife trade's ecological effects

Live wildlife captured from wild populations overseas and shipped to North America often fuels public alarm over the effects on human health of the introduction of “alien” species (Jenkins 2007; Swift et al. 2007; Smith et al. 2009; Smith et al. 2012). Some species also raise security concerns that stem from an ostensible link between illegal wildlife trade and terrorism (see FN

8). But animals bear the bulk of wildlife trade's costs and violence. As noted in Chapter 1, wildlife trade has been identified as directly threatening worldwide around one-third of the world's bird and mammal species (Baillie et al. 2004; Rivalan et al. 2007). The removal of animals from the wild for the pet trade is now considered a major threat to wild populations (Blundell and Mascia 2005; Mace et al. 2005; Sutherland et al. 2009).

Beyond the species depletion (and even extinction) that can be caused by removing animals directly for global live wildlife trade, there are a number of cascade effects of the trade. For each animal captured, several others likely die (Redford 1992; Gonzales 2003). Beissinger (2001, 184) explains that figures for CITES-listed live bird trading (legal trade) "greatly underestimate the numbers of birds extracted from the wild for the pet trade" by excluding a number of factors including mortality that occurs during capture, while confined by trappers, when transported within the country of origin, and while confined by the exporter before birds are granted CITES permits. Furthermore, for every bird trapped, a number of nests are destroyed, trees are cut, and breeding adults are killed. As a result, wildlife trade delivers more significant blows to the population than the mere number of trafficked birds might suggest (Cantu 2011, DoW Mexico Director, personal communication). A study in Peru confirms this, finding that 48 percent of all blue-and-yellow macaws die when their trees are felled (Gonzales 2003). In addition, there are species population effects experienced at the consumption end of the commodity chain as non-native animals are released (or escape) into environments in which they can have profound ecological effects. For example, because of owners releasing unwanted pet pythons into the Florida everglades, a breeding population of pythons has established and is consuming and competing with many local animals, some of which are endangered.

As noted earlier, to the extent that CITES considers ecological consequences of trade, it is at an aggregate, population level and not at an individual level. The same is largely true of scholarship on wildlife trade. This may be because, as Paquet and Darimont (2010, 177) recently note, "a well-accepted and applied ethical foundation for animal conservation that considers animal welfare is lacking." Wildlife conservation and animal welfare tend to exist in separate camps, and the former has more of a presence in wildlife trade literature (although see Schupplit and Fraser 2000). Yet the consequences of wildlife trade for individual animals are as profound as those for populations. As this dissertation will argue, it is only through a series of violent separations from their homes, families and societies that animals in wildlife trade are formed into commodities. This form of commodification, like habitat destruction, "deprives species of life requisites, causing trauma, prolonged suffering, and eventually death" (Paquet and Darimont

2010, 177). In the following chapters, this process and its effect on the individual will be my focus more than the effects of global live wildlife trade on wildlife populations.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has served as an introduction to global live wildlife trade. It is essential that the key terminology and institutions, as well as the magnitude and reach of the trade, including its effects on human livelihoods and ecologies, be known. It is challenging to write in broad strokes about such an enormous, under-studied, and under-monitored trade, as I have attempted to do in this chapter. In part II, I focus less on the aggregate ecological effects – how trade impinges on animal populations – and more on its effects for individual animals that become ensnared in its circuits. This more “fine-grained” approach to the study, one whereby I myself came into repeated contact with individual trafficked animals, was a methodological choice that I will explain in Chapter 4. My methodological approach was designed in step with my theoretical approach, especially an anti-speciesist position. As such, it will be helpful for readers to become acquainted with my theoretical approach first, the focus of Chapter 3.

Chapter 3. Commodities, performativity, speciesism

No explanation grounded in the universalizing force of human projects and intentions can explore whether the very possibility of the human, of intentionality, of abstraction depends on, at the same time as it overlooks, nonhuman elements.

– Mitchell, *Rule of Experts* (2002, 29)

Who was born first, before the names? Which one saw the other come to this place, so long ago? Who will have been the first occupant, and therefore the master? Who the subject? Who has remained the despot, for so long now?

– Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I am* (2008, 18)

3.1 Introduction

Two weeks into my MA I came across the first of the above two epigraphs in an introductory, “shaky foundations” graduate course in human geography. I put a giant exclamation mark in the margin as I read that passage from the required text, *Rule of Experts*. “Nonhuman elements” is a simple phrase that contains within it an infinite multitude of entities, but for me, in that moment, its most interesting constituents were immediately animals. As I developed my MA and then my PhD I tracked down work that echoes Mitchell’s point, accounting for the unique ways that the very subject of “the human” depends materially and discursively upon “the animal” even as it denies animals subjectivity and agency.

Especially, I was drawn to Derrida, a philosopher who calls this denial of animals “an immense disavowal”. He is a philosopher for whom the animal question is and always will have been “the most important and decisive question” (2008, 34). For me, too, this is the case. I also aspire to follow Derrida in not shying away from addressing the power relations that inhere in the designations “human” (the despot) and “animal” (the first occupant), named in the second epigraph. Recognition of these power relations between humans and animals – as well as how they are produced and with what consequences – is this dissertation’s central theoretical motivation and objective. A constructed species binary within Western thought and politics positions humans as masters over the subordinate animal (what I below refer to as speciesism). As I outlined in Chapter 1, my central argument is that this binary relation both forms a condition of production for lively commodities and is performed and re-performed (is continually brought into being) by processes and encounters at various points in the lively commodity chain. Each of these terms – commodity chain, performance, and speciesism – are addressed respectively in the following pages, in which I introduce the foundation of my theoretical approach.

This chapter reviews the theory that I use to interpret my research, theory that also underlies my methodology, which is outlined in the following chapter. My theoretical approach, which is situated within human geography and also draws from work beyond the discipline, has three main dimensions: a commodity chain framework (section 3.2), a theory of performativity (3.3), and a position of anti-speciesism (3.4). Each can be summarized in brief:

- (1) A commodity chain (or network, or circuit) framework traces a commodity's "life" through various stages, often production, consumption and disposal. This dissertation's structure corresponds to an analysis of the production (capture), exchange, and decommissioning (rehabilitation) of lively commodities, as I defined in the introduction. The goal of such an analysis is to defetishize the commodity: to recognize and understand the sets of relations that constitute a commodity all along its chain.
- (2) Performativity theory – in this case of commodities and markets – holds that commodities and markets do not simply exist as natural or inevitable realities; they are continually brought into being through coordinated actions in relational networks including humans and nonhumans. I draw on a feminist-inflected performativity theory to examine, first, the forging and severing of relations that constitute animal and commodity life, and second, the embodied performances within the commodity chain that make and remake not only commodities but also human-animal relations.
- (3) Finally, an anti-speciesist position maintains that animals should be treated symmetrically to humans. Speciesism – the assumption that nonhuman beings are exploitable and killable on the basis of their species – operates through an assumed and asserted human/animal binary (which is, as Plumwood [1993] maintains, always also constituted by hierarchy) that positions humans as master subjects and animals as subordinate objects. This binary is at the heart of humanism. The anti-speciesist approach I develop here argues that speciesism and humanism are 1) not natural or ahistorical but rather the product of particular histories and ideologies, and 2) implicated in mass violence, ecological crisis, and nonhuman suffering. I argue in this dissertation that speciesism is both a condition and a product of global live wildlife trade (and the performance of its commodities), with devastating effects for individual and aggregate nonhuman life.

This theoretical approach is not passive but rather is actively engaged in this dissertation, shaping how I sought to produce knowledge about global live wildlife trade. In other words, the theory and methodology I use are deeply entwined, even as they are presented in two separate chapters. Furthermore, although this chapter introduces each theoretical strand respectively, in the

following chapters the three ultimately merge into an approach that undertakes a sustained consideration of how the human/animal binary is both performed and performative within GLWT's commodity chains.

3.2 A commodity chain framework

What is a commodity? It seems a simple thing: an object of exchange, “something that can be sold and/or exchanged” (Castree 2004, 25). Commodification then “describes the process by which previously non-saleable and non-exchangeable things become commodities” (Castree 2004, 25).¹⁴ This is the definition of a commodity I use in this dissertation, but upon closer reflection the seemingly straightforward definition belies the complex nature of a commodity, which is not a trivial but “very strange thing”, as Marx (1976, 163) said. For a start, an increasingly wide breadth of things can be commodified: everything from carbon to debt to ova and sperm, a human organ, a strand of DNA, a shrimp, dirt, and water. These things are not all uncontroversial commodities. Many of them are what Radin (1996, xi) calls “contested commodities”: things (and their capacity to “properly be bought and sold”) that are the subject of moral and political debate. As Chapter 6 will discuss, in some places, exotic pets and other live wildlife (animals for petting zoos, private ranches, scientific testing, and so on) are in this sense contested commodities. For now, more relevant is that commodities, rather than “fall[ing] from the sky into our shopping basket” (Barnes 2011), are made in specific places, by specific people, according to specific laws, ideas, norms, and political-economic forces, that are connected in complex networks. Commodities can also be remade and unmade within these networks. That is, their status as commodities can be renewed politically, socially and economically (or they can be re-purposed as slightly different commodities) and they can be taken apart as commodities (disposed of, or decommissioned).

These networks of making, remaking and unmaking have become the subject of a fascinating and extensive body of literature, much of it in geography, on what has been variously called (global) commodity chains, (global) commodity networks, commodity circuits, *filières*, and global value chains, among others. This section reviews the most relevant of this work, which helps to outline the commodity chain framework that structures this dissertation. I begin

¹⁴ As this dissertation will show, I take this definition another step and suggest that to be able to be sold and/or exchanged, a commodity must be something that, as Radin (1996) states, can be legally and physically alienated from its owner or producer, where, I would add, its producer can be a worker or also a networked set of socio-ecological relations, like an ecosystem or a monkey troop or a food web. This is to also follow Callon (1998, 19), who defines commodities as objects or persons that are “placed in a context in which they have exchange value and can be alienated. The alienation of a thing is its dissociation from producers, former users, or prior context” (Thomas 1991 in Callon 1998, 19).

by way of a discussion of commodity defetishization (and which interrupts the idea that our commodities fall out of the sky). Then I introduce the commodity chain approach and elaborate on the commodity chain ideas most important to this dissertation (in conversation with some of the key critiques that have been made of commodity chain approaches, especially from feminist and actor-network theory [ANT] scholars). I conclude with a discussion of how this framework is put to work in this dissertation.

In *Capital*, Marx argues that a fetish attaches itself to the products of labour “as soon as they are produced as commodities” (165). Therefore, commodity fetishism is inseparable from commodity production. Marx writes that while commodities first appear as “extremely obvious, trivial things” (163), they are rather products of complex social relations between individual labourers in a classed society. For Marx, a commodity is “first of all, an external object, a thing which through its qualities satisfies human needs of whatever kind” (125). The usefulness of a thing is not what makes it a commodity, however. A thing can be useful without being a commodity. Here Marx distinguishes between use-value and exchange-value. A thing’s usefulness gives it a use-value, a value that is “conditioned by the physical properties” of a thing, a value that is located in the physical body of a thing. Exchange value, on the other hand, is expressed as an equivalency: what commodities (and in what quantity) will an object trade for in exchange? If one were to exchange an apple for a cookie, the apple’s exchange value would be a cookie, and the two commodities would be of equivalent exchange value. In exchange, then, commodities act as mirrors of each other’s value, and commodities’ “exchange-value manifests itself as something totally independent of their use-value” (Marx 1976, 128). Commodities are thus “alienated in exchange” (Marx 1976, 199), alienated from their use value. They are also, for Marx, alienated from the social relations (i.e. labour) that produced the commodities.

This is the commodity fetish. Commodities are all social products of labour, and, for Marx, are exchanged in relation to the amount of labour time embodied in their production. But these social relations at the heart of the production process – who labours for how much pay, who works for whom, in what conditions – are mistaken as economic relations among objects, becoming a mere question of how valuable a specific commodity is when compared to another commodity. As Marx (1976, 168-9) puts it, commodity fetishism is the concealment of “the social character of private labour and the social relations between the individual workers, by making those relations appear as relations between material objects”. For Marx, it is especially capitalism’s class nature that the system of commodity exchange obscures.

Terence Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein (1977) first developed the commodity chain concept as a means of accounting for linked sets of capitalist processes, especially ones that exceed the boundaries of the nation-state. Since then, the work of many, perhaps most, commodity chain theorists targets a fairly strictly Marxian version of the fetish. This work focuses on a specific segment of social relations of commodity production that the fetish conceals: human labour relations (namely, class). But others are increasingly examining a range of other social relations the fetish masks, including spatial and geographical relations (Harvey 1990); society-nature relations (Guthman 2004), including environmental inputs (Castree 2001); and gender and race relations (Leslie and Reimer 1999; Ramamurthy 2004; Leslie 2012). These relations are often examined using a commodity chain framework, a tool of defetishism of the commodity, a tool to “get behind the veil” of commodity fetishism (Harvey 1990, 422) – that is, following Marx (1976, 165), to stop treating commodities as if they had “a life of their own”. For these scholars, “the hidden history of the commodity allows us to expose... the dynamics and history of capitalism itself” (Watts 2009, 101). In other words, analysis can allow us to see capitalism in any everyday commodity, even a simple thing like a papaya (Barnes 2011; Cook et al. 2004).

What is a commodity chain framework?¹⁵ It is essentially a biography of a thing (see Appadurai 1986), an approach to conceptualizing the multiple paths through which commodities pass and how the nodes are connected together to enable this movement (Hughes and Reimer 2004). As Watts (1999, 309) says, things “are made, born or fabricated; they are fashioned and differentiated in a variety of ways; they are sold, retailed, advertised and ultimately consumed or ‘realized’ (and perhaps even recycled!)” and a commodity chain is “a diagrammatic ‘biography’ of [a commodity] from production to consumption which depicts many of the actors involved in the commodity’s complex movements and valuations.” Recently, Leslie (2012, 65) describes a commodity chain as connecting “all the activities associated with the production of one good or service, such as manufacturing, consumption, design, retailing, marketing and advertising. The aim is to trace the entire trajectory of a product across time and space, including the movement

¹⁵ There are, as I previously mentioned in the text, multiple other names for commodity chains, including *filières*, commodity networks or circuits, global value chains, and so on. As Bair (2009, 1) points out, although these three approaches are “often used interchangeably to describe the sequence of processes by which goods and services are conceived, produced, and brought to market”, each is also distinct in terms of history, disciplinary affinities, empirical concerns and political implications. For example, commodity circuit approaches “treat the movement of commodities through phases of production, distribution and consumption as a non-linear circuit, rather than a linear chain” (Hughes and Reimer 2004, 3; Leslie and Reimer 1999). See Bair (2009) and Hughes and Reimer (2004) for systematic overviews. Here I use commodity chain because it is the original and most recognizable and used name, but as I discuss later in this section, my approach is perhaps more closely aligned with a commodity network approach, given the influences of ANT on my methodology and theory.

of material resources, value, finance, and knowledge, as well as signs and symbols.” Not all commodity chain analyses investigate every single aspect of this trajectory, nor do I claim to do so here in my examination of exotic animals as commodities. Often, commodity chains involve simply connecting production and consumption sites, labour and processes (Hartwick 2013).

For some scholars, commodity chain analysis’s utility is “largely descriptive, a lens through which to examine industrial organization and/or economic geography” (Guthman 2009, 101). For others, though, the commodity chain approach can be an “act of critical politics” (Hartwick 2013, 39), “a tool of radical scholarship” (Guthman 2009, 101) that has the potential to make the workings of capitalism more transparent, revealing “to consumers the social, cultural and environmental consequences of their otherwise casual act of buying commodities” (Hartwick 2013, 39). Indeed such politically motivated research is not limited to the strictly academic. Many popular books and documentary films have conducted commodity chain investigations on a variety of products (see followthethings.com for a compilation of sources on a multitude of commodities).

Geographers have played a significant role in the development of commodity chain literature, which is unsurprising given the geographical underpinnings of the commodity chain and the commodity fetish.¹⁶ A great deal of geographical scholarship has been dedicated to “following the thing” (Cook et al. 2004), unraveling and tracing the complex and translocal geographies of commodity production and exchange – the “geographical lives” of commodities (Bridge and Smith 2003), or the “social geography of things” (Jackson 1999). Alongside and within studies of papayas, sushi, cut flowers, furniture and garments, geographers and others have made several important critiques of the commodity chain approach.¹⁷ In the interests of

¹⁶ A commodity’s movement from one place and relationship to another allows, with each step, the former place and relationship to fall away, until the commodity appears as a mere “thing” with a price but no history or evidence of the sets of social and ecological relationships underpinning it. In this sense, defetishizing the commodity, or recovering the histories and social and ecological relationships that make commodities, is necessarily geographical. It involves tracing each site through which a commodity passed, and each spatial relationship that enabled this passing.

¹⁷ See Hughes and Reimer (2004) for a summary of these critiques, including how commodity chain approaches to defetishism imply that “academics have a uniquely critical insight into the social relations and conditions of production that escape the notice of “ordinary consumers”” (Hughes and Reimer 2004, 6); how some forms of commodity chain analysis – in Guthman’s (2004) case organic certification – can serve to further re-mystify, rather than demystify, commodity production relations; how the “chain” implies a linearity but equally circuit-inspired accounts “may involve the loss of an important political stance: the foregrounding of exploitation” (Leslie and Reimer 1999, 407). Finally, Reimer and Leslie (2004) reject the idea that there is one “true” story to be told about production and consumption, but are equally worried that actor-network approaches to the commodity chain too often fail to account for differential power distribution in a network.

space, I focus on the two – what we might think of as a more-than-human critique and a feminist critique – that have been most influential in the development of my own approach.

The first, made primarily by Haraway (1997) and actor-network theorists (Latour 1991, 1993; Law 2004), is that commodity chain approaches have tended to discount the role of nonhumans (see Faier 2011; Yeh and Lama 2013). Thinking beyond human labour and social relations, Haraway (1997, 135, emphasis added) describes commodity fetishism as “a specific kind of reification of historical human integrations with each other *and with an unquiet multitude of nonhumans*.” In capitalist commodity circulation, these power-laden interactions between humans and nonhumans appear in the form of, and are mistaken for, simple things. So too do nonhumans appear as inert objects rather than as living laborers in their own right. For example, a pet dog is the product not only of human labour (breeding, transportation, feeding, and so on) but also of millennia of human-canine interactions and co-laboring (hunting, security, and so on) in which dogs have been on the whole “significantly unfree partners” (Haraway 2008). Fetishism is thus “where a fixed thing substitutes for the doings of power” (Haraway 1997, 135). These fixed things are not in and of themselves generators of value; it is within the interactions between humans and this “unquiet multitude of nonhumans” that value is created (Haraway 1997; see also Franklin 2007; Gidwani 2008; Haraway 2008). Fetishes make “things” (for example, commodities) seem clear and clear-cut, under control, but a world of lively and contested relations underlies their production. The lively and contested multispecies relations are precisely what this dissertation investigates, and like the commodity chain theorists Haraway has influenced, I maintain that this is impossible without considering how non-humans also shape and are shaped by commodity chains (Hughes and Reimer 2004; see Whatmore and Thorne 1998; Yeh and Lama 2013).

The second critique influencing my approach has come out of feminist thought, and it targets a lack of attention to how gender relations structure commodity chains. Although my analysis does not consider gender in wildlife trade (see McElwee 2012 for a study along these lines), the feminist critique is helpful for two reasons. First, it draws attention to how capitalist commodity chains rely on inequality and exploitation within *multiple* axes of power (gender, class, race, and, as I add below, species). Second, it offers a commodity chain approach that rather than taking gender and race (and the binaries therein) for granted as pre-given subject categories, examines their continual forging within commodity chains. Such an open-ended approach is invaluable for tracking the constant renewal of species relations in global live wildlife trade. I expand on a feminist commodity chain critique and analysis below.

As noted above, class has, since Marx, been a defining element of commodity analysis. But feminist geographers have recently argued that class is only one of the elements in social relations, and that “gender is [also] central to the commodity chain logic” (Leslie and Remier 1999, 402). Ramamurthy’s (2004) research on cotton production and Lands End advertising of “Madras” cotton shirts makes an especially important intervention. In her critique of global commodity chain analysis, or what she calls “realist commodity chains”, she observes that analyses of the new international division of labour fail to account for women’s labour, the feminization of labour, the prevalence and power of gender ideologies, and the place of the household as an institution. A “realist” approach would usefully allow her to trace political economic relations from Lands End back to cotton producers in India, but it would not, she maintains, address her concerns with “the uneven impacts of neoliberalism on women’s livelihoods in India and with US gender and race inequality” nor her “commitment to anti-imperialist genealogies and a politics of representation that does not collapse difference through binary analytics and naturalized moralities” (Ramamurthy 2004, 737-738).

So instead of merely adding considerations of women’s labour and gender ideologies to a realist commodity chain analysis, Ramamurthy (2004, 743) offers a “feminist commodity chain analysis”. Here, gender is deployed “as an analytic of power to track the open-endedness, contingency, and rupture of commodity chains” yielding “a commentary on globalization that is more differentiated, layered, and complicated than realist commodity chain analysis” (also Leslie and Reimer 1999; Leslie 2012). In this work, Ramamurthy (2004, 741) seeks “not to reaffirm master narratives of globalization that naturalize gendered and racialized constructions of difference and reproduce binaries between First and Third World.” This approach thus not only considers women’s labour but also does not take identity (particularly of producers) as pre-given, examining “how gendering takes place within and through the process of production, and constantly articulates with other social striations” (Ramamurthy 2004, 741). Similarly, I am not only interested in animal’s labour but also in how the very categories of human and animal are renewed in commodity chains.

Bringing together and building from these feminist and “more-than-human” critiques, I argue that commodity chain analyses have not considered uneven power relations across species as a generative condition of commodity chains.¹⁸ This dissertation contributes work in this direction, seeking to demonstrate the role of species hierarchies in a particular commodity chain

¹⁸ This is not only the case when animals are commodities (as is the case in this study), but also when animals are enrolled in commodity chains as laborers or material inputs (see Hribal 2003; Shukin 2009).

– that of global live wildlife trade (also see Collard and Dempsey 2013). Like gender relations, species relations structure commodity chains. And yet no commodity chain scholar – not even “more-than-human” commodity chain analysts who examine how nonhumans are enrolled in power relations within commodity chains (see Yeh and Lama 2013; Faier 2011) – acknowledge the human/animal binary as itself a power relation. Building on Ramamurthy’s intervention, I frame species as an analytic of power – power between humans and other animals. Rather than re-affirming naturalized hierarchies between humans and animals, I take these hierarchies as constructed and power-laden (these ideas about species and power are further explained in section 3.4). Alongside the production of racial and gender categories within commodity chain processes, species identities and ideas about species relations are also produced. In other words, one of the places that the human/animal binary is enacted and brought into being is within processes of commodity production, circulation, exchange, consumption and disassembly.

A commodity chain framework structures and motivates this dissertation. It seeks to defetishize the exotic pet through an analysis of three sites of activity forming the exotic pet commodity chain: production of the commodity (capture), exchange of the commodity, and attempted dismantling of the commodity through rehabilitation. The commodity chain approach provides a structure that attends to difference and similarity, change and continuity, across stages of the commodity chain. It is also a structure that creates room for attention to the conditions and effects of commodity chains. As Peluso (2012, 85) remarks, scholars should pay attention to nature’s commodities and commodifications “because something, some institution or configuration of historical forces, needs to bring them into marketable being, and the new relations created in that process are critical.” These new relations that are created dictate “what meanings and bodies... have a chance for life”, as Haraway (1988, 580) says. They dictate what kind of life can be lived and by whom or what. My interest here is in these newly born or reinforced relations, particularly relations between humans and animals, and who or what has a chance for life in their wake. These relations are brought into being within global live wildlife trade’s processes and encounters. A theory of performativity helps me understand how.

3.3 A theory of performativity

Judith Butler’s development of the idea of performativity in the 1980s and 1990s has been widely influential across disciplines.¹⁹ At its most general, performativity refers to the idea that reality is not pre-given or static but is continually created (Butler 1990a), especially through

¹⁹ Butler was not the first to discuss performativity. Austin (1962), Bourdieu (1991) and Derrida (1991) all worked on performativity. Butler’s work has arguably been the most widely influential, however.

“discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names” (Butler 1993, 13). This means “our statements and representations actively produce reality rather than being mere faithful copies of it” (Barnes 2008, 1432). To say something is performative, then, is to say it brings forth and shapes the world (Barnes 2008). For instance, the statement that economic models are performative suggests that these models are “engines not cameras” (MacKenzie 2009); models do not merely represent an objective state of affairs but themselves bring those states of affairs into being (albeit potentially unpredictably). Equally, to say something is performed is to say that it has a history; it is contingent, the product of a coordinated network of things, including statements, actions, institutions, and so on. In this way, as Butler (1990b) originally conceived, gender is a performance, rather than an innate, fixed, inevitable, and ahistorical state: it is the ongoing result of repeated, embodied, and power-laden performances.

In this section (and this dissertation) I mainly use the performativity literature from economic sociology and economic geography, but I bring this literature into conversation with Butler’s earlier (not unrelated) strand of performativity theory. Although Butler’s work on performativity precedes that of economic sociologists, only recently have economic performativity theorists entered explicitly into conversation with Butler’s ideas (see the special issue of the *Journal of Cultural Economy* on “performativity, economics and politics” to which Butler [2010] and Callon [2010] both contribute).²⁰ As this recent instance shows, and as I argue here, more pronounced engagement with Butler’s ideas could bring a more politically attuned and robust analysis to market performativity, which has been criticized for neglecting politics and power (see Cochoy et al. 2010).

I begin this section by introducing the key ideas of performativity theory in economic geography and sociology, focusing especially on ideas around how commodities and markets are made. In order to be more attentive to the workings of power within commodity and market making, I incorporate Butler’s ideas of performativity. Compared to those theorists interested in the performance of markets, her work is more attentive to the structural conditions that shape performances (and in turn are shaped by them). In this dissertation I use performativity theory to understand: the entanglements and disentanglements involved in commodity de/re/formation in global live wildlife trade; the performance of humans and animals within these

²⁰ Cochoy et al. (2010, 140) speculate that the comparatively recent take-up of performativity in thinking about economics and the general failure of economic performativity theorists to engage with Butler “may well rely on a much older divide between two opposite worlds: the world of the economy on the one hand (seen as a system of things where language is of secondary importance), and the world of politics on the other hand (thought as a collective of words where things are often forgotten).”

de/re/commodifications; and the human-animal relations that form a critical condition of possibility for the very existence of GLWT. I begin with commodities and markets.

Performativity theorists make two key arguments regarding economics, markets and commodities. The first is the argument that economics is performative. As I described in the beginning of this section, this is to say that economic theories, models, and tools are not, as conventionally understood, inert reflections or pictures of an external world. Rather, these tools and models actively bring the world into being. This idea emerged largely from science and technology studies (STS) work on how science and technology are performative. Callon, who began his academic career by writing about how scientific practices shape the world they purport to describe, started applying the same general ideas to the economy in the late 1990s. Economics, just like science, is not external to the objects it represents. Both intervene in and shape the worlds they describe (Callon 1998; Mitchell 2002; MacKenzie 2007; Mackenzie, Muniesa and Siu 2007). For the scholars that have followed in Callon's wake, economics should consequently not be analyzed in terms of the reality it represents (or fails to represent) "but rather in terms of the arrangements and exclusions it helps to produce" (Mitchell 2007, 244). This begins to lead into the second key argument of performativity theory, and the one on which I will focus. Markets and commodities are performed (brought into being) through a series of framings (Callon 1998). That is, severing and forging links make commodity and market trajectories. These framings are undertaken in relational and material-semiotic networks.

This claim is upheld by economic performativity theorists' insistence on three conditions: the materiality of markets (their physicality, corporeality and technicality), the embodied nature of market actors, and the importance of material conditions and bodily capacity to the outcomes of market calculations and activities. Markets for both Callon and Mackenzie are, to use Barnes's (2008, 1436) words, "performative effects of complex embodied and concrete socio-material arrangements." That is, in order for markets to exist, whole networks of entities must be assembled: measuring instruments, humans, computers, graphs and charts, statistics, and so on. Just as ANT has argued about scientific laboratories, the material conditions of calculative space (offices, spreadsheets, and so on) and the bodily capacities of calculative agencies are crucial to the outcomes of calculation (Mackenzie 2009). Callon has again been a key figure here. He started by thinking about how science is produced in networks of entities, any of which have the capacity to affect outcomes. For example, in his study of a scientific experiment in St. Brieuc Bay, France, Callon finds that scallops are "dissidents" that prevent the scientific network from forming a collective (Callon 1986). In his more recent work he is now thinking about how

markets and commodities are similarly produced in relational networks of humans and nonhumans. For Callon (1998, 4-5) the “material reality of calculation, involving figures, writings mediums and inscriptions... is decisive in performing calculations”. This is not to say that markets are “embedded in nature”, which would imply that there is an external nature that exists prior to and separate from the relationships in which markets are purportedly embedded. Rather, markets are framed as being made up of these mundane things from the beginning (Braun 2008).

Of most relevance to this dissertation is how these theorists and others working from them have theorised commodities (and their performance). Recent work in economic sociology (Callon 1998, 2002; Mitchell 2007, 2008; Callon, Millo and Muniesa 2007; Mackenzie, Muniesa and Siu 2007; Mackenzie 2009) and economic geography (Barnes 2008; Berndt and Boeckler 2009; 2010; 2011a; 2011b; 2012; Lansing 2012) is particularly helpful in understanding lively commodity formation because it recognizes the heterogeneous make-up of market networks, including human and nonhuman actors. Further, it describes market and commodity formation as a process of forming and severing ties within these networks. Performativity theorists centrally argue that commodities can best be understood as objects or persons that are “placed in a context in which they have exchange value and can be alienated. The alienation of a thing is its dissociation from producers, former users, or prior context” (Thomas 1991 in Callon 1998, 19). In order to transform something into a commodity, “it must be decontextualised, dissociated, and detached” (19).

Commodities are thus “the outcome of a double process of entanglement and disentanglement” (Callon 2002, 292). Entanglement and disentanglement, or severing and forming ties between the commodity and a wider set of relations (with technologies, humans, objects, and so on) accompany each other and help each other multiply. Attachments are forged between the commodity and “calculative devices”, Callon and Muniesa’s (2005) term for entities that do not only calculate economic goods but also make them calculable, such as economic instruments like models, pricing tools and so on. These devices do so by *detaching* the commodity from sets of relations. This occurs “in order to frame this isolated place in which are temporarily stabilized these alienated relations” (Callon 2002, 293). For Callon, the frame is a set of selective cuts and blinders that “puts the outside world in brackets” (1998, 253), demarcating what relationships are taken into account and what relationships are ignored, so a space of calculability is created (Callon 1998). Framing is also always a “violent effort to extricate the

agents concerned from [a] network of interactions and push them onto a clearly demarcated ‘stage’ which has been specially prepared and fitted out” (Callon 1998, 253).

In this sense, as Callon (1998) writes, the market itself is a coordination device with “the capacity to attach and shape some entities and disconnect others” (Callon 2002, 295). Muniesa, Millo and Callon (2007) thus refer more broadly to “market devices”, which are “the material and discursive assemblages that intervene in the construction of markets” (2). These market devices, including pricing tools, trading protocols, and so on, detach things from other things and attach them to new things, qualifying objects as marketable and enabling their movements. In other words, they make things into commodities. These attachments and detachments have strong spatial momentum, usually enabling or propelling movement within a commodity circuit, and the calculations that enable the exchange of commodities involve “detaching entities, bringing them together in a common space, and providing an assessment before circulating them elsewhere” (Barnes 2008, 1435). As Chapter 6 will illustrate, an auction can be seen as a large market device, a process and space in which objects – including exotic animals – are collected, detached from their previous owners and potentially their parents or children, brothers and sisters, and then attached to new owners and being redistributed thousands of miles away.

This formulation of commodities as performed in a specific way – as the result of a series of links and cuts within relational and heterogeneous networks – is a set of general principles for understanding all commodities. It is especially helpful, however, for understanding lively commodities de/re/formation, as I do in the following chapters. This is because of its openness to nonhuman actors, which play a huge role in lively commodification, and its attention to entanglement and disentanglement, which for lively commodities can have particularly significant ethical and political stakes. But the economic performativity theory outlined above is not on its own adequate for understanding the broader conditions and effects of commodity performance(s). Revisiting Butler’s considerations of performativity in the context of gender can serve, I argue, as an important ingredient in the theory of performativity, because her interest is first and foremost in the power-laden conditions, constitution, and effects of gender performances. Bringing Butler and economic performativity theorists together is not to start from scratch. For one thing, there is some common ground between Butler and the theorists whose work I summarize above. Before market performativity theorists, Butler was already using performativity as a means of considering how things – in her case identities, norms and subjectivities – are not stable and pre-given but rather are the result of performances. Additionally, some market performativity theorists like MacKenzie (2004) would agree with

Butler that performances do not always (or even do not usually) achieve the intended outcome. Performances may fail, or there are “counter-performative” instances that produce inverse effects (Butler 2010), or “misfires” in which performances produce “overflows”: that which exceeds the intended performed frame (Callon 2010). In what follows I first review Butler’s key ideas about performativity and then move to consider her recent contribution on market performativity.

Butler’s key project in *Gender trouble*, where she develops her theory of performativity, is to upend dominant understandings of gender and sexuality (and their norms) as “metaphysical substances”, or fundamental and stable. For Butler, gender and sexuality are actually made and remade. The reproduction of norms, identities and subjectivities is accomplished through dominant discursive framings and subjects’ embodied enactments – performances – of these norms, identities and subjectivities. To say that gender is performative, then, is to say that “that it is a certain kind of enactment; the ‘appearance’ of gender is often mistaken as a sign of its internal or inherent truth; gender is prompted by obligatory norms to be one gender or the other (usually within a strictly binary frame), and the reproduction of gender is thus always a negotiation with power; and finally, there is no gender without this reproduction of norms that risks undoing or redoing the norm in unexpected ways” (Butler 2009a, 1). (The latter are Butler’s “counter-performative” instances.) Power, for Butler, is understood in a Foucauldian sense: it is diffuse and decentralized and operates materially and discursively through bodies and everyday gestures and events. Power can take the form of domination and resistance. It can also, again following Foucault, take form through specific subject formations. Gender is one aspect of subjectivity that is produced through power relations and also has power effects.

In this way, “women and men learn to perform the sedimented forms of gendered social practices that become so routinized as to appear natural” (Nash 2000, 654-655), “so powerful that they become reified as essential material forms independent of their cultural productions... viewed as pure, stable abstractions rather than embodied performances constituted in part by specific material practices which sustain their coherence” (Prudham 2009, 1606).²¹ To highlight performativity is, then, to highlight these material practices, norms, and discursive histories that congeal to give the impression of something that is unimaginable any other way, whether femininity, heterosexuality or capitalism. Ultimately, for Butler (2009b), performativity is about no less than the organization and reproduction of power relations in an unequal society through

²¹ For review and critique of performativity in geography, see Nelson 1999; McDowell 1999; McDowell and Court 1994; Gregson and Rose 2000; Pratt 2004

the idea of gender and sexual dimorphism as natural and masculinity and femininity as naturally unequal.

In a recent article Butler (2010, 147) brings her thinking on gender and sexuality to bear on economics, writing that one of the defining capacities of performativity theory is to describe processes that “produce ontological effects, that is, that work to bring into being certain kinds of realities or... that lead to certain kinds of socially binding circumstances”. She is interested in particular in “how banality becomes established as such”, in other words how the familiar and mundane, the unremarkable, come to be accepted as such, especially the constitution and reconstitution of the banality of “the idea of the market as an existing and autonomous reality” (148). In other words, she wants to trouble the familiar idea that the market and society are two separate realms and examine how this banality came to be. She makes several notable contributions in this piece.

First, following from her interest in banality, or everydayness, she emphasizes the spatially and temporally *reiterative* nature of performances. It is not merely that performative effects are compounded through repetition but that the effects can be established anew with each reiteration. This means that the economy is not produced out of nothing in each instant but rather its “apparently seamless regeneration brings about a naturalized effect” (148). This also points to how the economy is not produced as separate from society at one historically distinct moment. The separation of society and economy happens over and over again. Importantly, though, each performative repetition is not identical to the last, with each repetition is opened up the possibility of a failure or a counter-performative effect, which produces a different outcome than was intended. In other words, performances repeat in order to regenerate social and political orders and relations, but slight variations in the repetitions create the chance for unexpected or unintended effects.

Second, Butler clarifies that that not all performances are bound to have effects. She recalls Austin’s distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary performances: the former referring to speech acts that bring about certain realities, like court decision pronouncements; the latter characterizing speech acts “from which effects follow only when certain other kinds of conditions are in place” (2010, 147).²² For example, a persuasive argument might convince a

²² To be clear, Butler and performativity theorists do not see performative acts as limited to speech acts or even to a defined subject. As Butler (2010, 150) writes, “it is not only the speech act that exercises performative power... [and] it is not simply... a subject that performs a speech act; rather, a set of relations and practices are constantly renewed, and agency traverses human and nonhuman domains”. This amounts to an implicit critique of the subject, such that performativity (and agency) are no longer the domain of a discrete subject, and “the assumption of the ‘sovereign ‘ speaker is lost” (151).

friend not to purchase an exotic pet, but the effect – whether or not the friend purchases the pet – depends on multiple conditions, including, say, the extent of the friend’s desire to own the pet. A further mediating condition for both illocutionary and perlocutionary utterances is both the subject who speaks and the “codification and ritualization of... discourse [that] precedes and makes possible the subject who speaks” (i.e. the judge) (148). In the same example, the persuasive argument against buying an exotic pet might be more convincing if the person making the argument is considered an expert, like a veterinarian, whose speech act is preceded by the particular codified knowledge set presented by a medical degree.

Finally, Butler is more interested than most market performativity theorists in the question of how we think about “the political value of certain economic effects” (154). This means not merely evaluating how economic matters are made and how effects are instituted but thinking about how effects reconstitute political orders and political economic distributions such as income and, as Butler’s later work (2006, 2009a, 2009b) develops, precarity. The world is produced in some ways and not others, and Butler is interested in the stakes of these different worlds: how they delimit who or what has a chance for life. Butler is particularly interested in how different political orders position (or re-position) marginalized subjects, or subjects who are cast as “outside” the dominant frame. This, too, distinguishes her work from most market performativity theorists, and is helpful for understanding the conditions and effects of performances in global live wildlife trade. GLWT’s commodities are “inside” the market frame but are outside the realm of the political (but to echo Butler in the “constitutive outside”, meaning that the outside also shapes the inside).²³

As Nash (2000) and Prudham (2009) both note, Butler’s primary concern with norms of gender and heterosexuality does not preclude the productive use of the notion of performance in examining all manner of normalized, regulated, and also embodied and iterative subjectivities, including, as we see above, economic subjectivities. All sorts of performances, including market ones, entail a reproduction of social norms and subjectivities, and these social norms in turn always mediate our performances (Butler 2009b). As Butler (2009b, xii-xiii) writes, “performativity has everything to do with ‘who’ can become produced as a recognizable subject,

²³ As Butler (1993, 8) writes, “the human is not only produced over and against the inhuman, but through a set of foreclosures, radical erasures, that are, strictly speaking, refused the possibility of cultural articulation. Hence, it is not enough to claim that human subjects are constructed, for the construction of the human is a differential operation that produces the more and the less ‘human,’ the inhuman, the humanly unthinkable. These excluded sites come to bound the ‘human’ as its constitutive outside, and to haunt those boundaries as the persistent possibility of the their disruption and rearticulation.” In this sense Butler’s work has important parallels with Agamben’s (1998; 2004; 2005) idea of the state of exception and bare life. See Stanescu (2012) for an excellent review of the differences and similarities between Butler (and precarious life) and Agamben (and bare life).

a subject who is living, whose life is worth sheltering and whose life, when lost, would be worthy of mourning” (xii-xiii). For Butler, the question of whose mourning is recognized and who is mournable is at the heart of politics and social intelligibility, “stitched to questions of what and who gets to count as human” (Stanescu 2012, 3).

Who and what counts as human is, of course, not only a question of gender, as Butler recognizes. But more than Butler, feminist theorists such as Plumwood (1993) and others (Merchant 1980; Haraway 2008) highlight another binary alongside gender that operates in the constitution of the human subject: the relation between culture and nature. For these theorists, the human is defined through a relation of domination and transcendence over nature. As Plumwood (1993, 5) says, “it is not a masculine identity pure and simple, but the multiple, complex cultural identity of the master formed in the context of class, race, species and gender domination, which is at issue.” In light of these important connections, this dissertation argues that through its commodity and market performances wildlife trade reproduces the norm of the dominant human subject (that can mourn and is worthy of mourning) and the subordinate animal object (that cannot mourn and is not mournable). This norm then mediates wildlife trade’s further performances, feeding back into the trade as an enabling condition.

Although Butler has been charged with anthropocentrism (Oliver 2009; Taylor 2008), in a recent interview (Antonello and Farneti 2009), she questions what it might mean to share conditions of vulnerability and precariousness with animals and the environment, and suggests it undoes “the very conceit of anthropocentrism.” Stanescu (2012), too, finds in Butler powerful tools for working towards a non-anthropocentric world, especially her theorization of precarious life, which can be seen, as Butler admits, as a being-in-common across all species, human and non.²⁴ For my purposes here, Butler’s theory of performativity is especially helpful given my effort to understand the conditions of performance and performative effects on identity and power. Her work reminds us that a performance’s effectiveness depends on how the subject who is performing is positioned within broader networks and conditions. In this sense Butler is more attuned than Callon and other market performativity theorists to how not all actors are positioned symmetrically within networks of power. In the case of this project, I understand this positioning

²⁴ There are important parallels with Derrida’s (2008) thinking on vulnerability and finitude here, as the basis for a shared ethic between humans and animals. This dissertation does not explicitly engage Butler or Derrida’s work on precarity and finitude, respectively. Their work is important but I am here less interested in finding a means of shared connection between humans and animals and more in determining how animals are cast as distinct from humans, and how this binary is deployed in and reinforced by global live wildlife trade.

to include where the subject is located in a species order, namely, whether the subject is considered human or animal.

Butler's focus is on performative effects, namely, how repeated performances remake orders – mainly in her case political and gender orders. I find her work helpful for understanding how species orders serve as conditions of possibility for and effects of performances all along the commodity chain. Just as certain performances bring gender and the economy into being over and over, they bring the specific conceptions of the figure of the human and the animal into being, with all their attendant power asymmetries. Perhaps the most pronounced of these is speciesism, or disregard for animal life, that licenses mass, systemic violence against animals.

3.4 An anti-speciesist position

In 1970 British psychologist Richard Ryder conceived of the term speciesism as a means of drawing a “parallel between the plight of the other species and our own” (Ryder 2010). Having recently joined a group of Oxford intellectuals who were speaking out about animal experimentation, Ryder published and distributed a private leaflet titled “Speciesism” in which he criticized vivisection based on his own experiences conducting animal experiments in the US and UK. Touting the human benefits of animal experimentation to justify the animal suffering it caused was “just ‘speciesism’”, he wrote. Shortly after the leaflet's circulation, Peter Singer, a graduate student at Oxford at the time, came across it and the two began corresponding. Singer (1975, 6), who is credited with popularizing the term speciesism among animal rights activists and scholars in his influential book, *Animal liberation*, defines speciesism simply as “a prejudice or attitude of bias in favour of the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species.”

As I will discuss in Chapter 4, my politics diverge from Singer's and other animal rights scholars. While I support Singer's definition at its most basic, I think it is essential to develop it further and bring it into conversation with other (primarily feminist) scholars who have offered their own criticisms of animals' systemic maltreatment. Singer holds that we can merely *adapt* our contemporary systems – of rights, of capitalism, of species orders – to include animals deserving of better treatment (for Singer, this means including animals that can demonstrably suffer). Other theorists (with whose work my own is more closely allied) are more attentive to how speciesism is built into capitalism and the Western, liberal rights-bearing human subject, as well as to how speciesism intersects with other axes of oppression and domination, including gender and race.

In what follows I retain the term “speciesism” because it can compellingly be placed alongside other “isms” such as racism, sexism, and so on. Because of how speciesism calls upon these other prejudicial orders, its meaning is fairly self-evident, which makes its appeal as a tool of critique significant. But I diverge from Singer in my elaboration of speciesism. In a way that Singer does not recognize, speciesism operates through a particular conception of the human, and so I dedicate much of this section to discussing this figure and how it emerged, drawing from feminist, indigenous and posthumanist thought. I focus on how this figure of the human is rooted in a human/animal binary, and I show how this binary is also a hierarchy. I also review the key critiques of speciesism from these fields, namely that it is tied to oppression and violence along colonial, gendered and raced lines, and that it licenses mass animal death and ecological destruction. Finally, I consider the relationship between speciesism and capitalism, given that this is the focus of my dissertation. Essentially, the goal of this section is to review (critiques of) a particular social and political relation: the entrenched and generative hierarchy between humans and other animals, a species order that produces the animal as disposable, killable, and commodifiable.

Before proceeding it is important to note that throughout this discussion, I am not making a universal critique but rather am focused on critiquing Anglo/European thought. As Sundberg (2013) recently points out, posthumanist thinking has tended to universalize its Eurocentric claims – especially its reference to culture/nature or human/animal dualisms, implying that they are universal – and thereby subordinate other ontologies (also see Panelli 2010). Indigenous scholars have been writing and thinking with non-dualistic approaches for some time (for example Armstrong 2006; Simpson 2004; Hogan 1996; LaDuke 1999), but as Sundberg (2013) notes, posthumanist scholarship largely overlooks this literature, and often fails to account for the colonial roots of and ties to dualistic thinking. I would argue that some posthumanist work has equally neglected to consider the non-dualistic approaches that eco-feminists offer (see Merchant 1980; Plumwood 1993; 2002; Gaard 1993; 2011; Alaimo 2000). In what follows, then, in building this dissertation’s anti-speciesist position, I draw on Indigenous and feminist writers alongside posthumanists.

Additionally, when I refer to the human I am hereafter referring to the western liberal conception of the human: a bounded, distinct, superior and central subject – a specific figuration of the human. My critique of speciesism and human domination is not intended to invoke a universal and homogeneous state of actual human being. Such a sweeping move can obscure inequalities and difference within the category human (Plumwood 1993; Swynedouw 2010).

Moreover, the anti-speciesist position is not “anti-human” or misanthropic. Misanthropy, or a railing against “the destructive human race”, is at the heart of much contemporary environmentalism, but it can serve to reify and naturalize a particular human subject rather than trouble its existence. I seek rather to show that the human subject, like the gendered subject Butler troubles, is constituted through disciplinary discursive practices. It is not inevitable or innate and it could be otherwise.

The figure of the human this dissertation targets is one that is assumed to be rational, transcendent, superior, dominant and distinct from all other life on Earth. This figure arose (and continues to be brought into being) from several places. Two are dominant. First, a western philosophical and theological “divine order of things” placed humans as neither animals nor Gods but an intermediary between the two (Steiner 2005). Second, rejecting humans’ creation at the hands of god, the Enlightenment gave rise to the notion that humans were created from nature, but critically through a domination of nature (Adorno 2006). Humans distinguished themselves from nature through an external transcendence of nature through the use of tools and technology and internally through the repression of animal instincts by rational thought (the mind/body Cartesian split) (Anderson 2007; Wolfe 2010; Ziarek 2011).²⁵ This Enlightenment version of the human thus retained the theological notion that humans are distinct from animals (Plumwood 1993), but instead of locating this distinction in a divine order, located it in a natural order. This human figure thus forms what is thought to be a pre-given subject position, a category beyond politics, or even the natural and original basis of politics. The list of what has been conceived of as “proper” to this human figure (i.e. denied to belong to or be a capacity of nonhumans) is lengthy: rational thought, opposable thumbs, emotion, gifting, lying, lying about lying, empathy, crying, mourning, laughing. This list represents the ongoing (and repeatedly unsuccessful) attempts to identify what is exceptional about this human figure in order to ground this figure in something natural and innate, something apolitical.

But the human is actually an intensely political category whose ongoing production is rife with violence, contestation, and hierarchy.²⁶ As all categories, it simultaneously excludes multiple entities and attempts to hold within its bounds equally diverse entities (Bowker and Starr 1999). More specifically, on one hand, the human as a category contains a heterogeneity of

²⁵ But Plumwood (1993) contests the idea that the origins of the human/nature dualisms are in Enlightenment philosophy, suggesting instead that they stem back to the origins of civilized thought, “at least into the beginnings of rationalism in Greek culture” (Plumwood 1993, 72).

²⁶ As Foucault (1970, xxiii) said, “It is comforting... and a source of profound relief to think that man is only a recent invention, a figure not yet two centuries old, a new wrinkle in our knowledge, and that he will disappear again as soon as that knowledge has discovered a new form.”

bodies and ways of being, and the distribution of wealth and environmental costs and benefits within it is unequal (see Cameron 2012; Chakrabarty 2009; Davis 2008). On the other hand, the human is a category created against the rich multitude of “other” beings – living, dead, not yet living (see Derrida 2008) whose exclusion from the order of “bodies that matter” (Butler 1993) is itself highly political and ethical. These are the members of “nature” that the figure of the human is thought to transcend. Primary among these entities are animals, against which the human is repeatedly defined in binary or dualistic relation. To be placed in binary or dualistic relation means, following Plumwood (1993), to inherently create a hierarchy. A dualism relies on a subordinated and oppressed counterpart (animal) to create the dominant and free (human). “A dualism,” Plumwood (1993, 47) writes, “is more than a relation of dichotomy, difference, or non-identity, and more than a simple hierarchical relationship. In dualistic construction, as in hierarchy, the qualities (actual or supposed), the culture, the values and the areas of life associated with the dualised other are systematically and pervasively constructed and depicted as inferior”. In what follows I use dualism and binary interchangeably.

Importantly, dualism is not the same as difference. To contest the human/animal binary is not to say that humans and animals are all the same. Derrida (2008), who as I will discuss shortly has written forcefully against the human/animal dualism, does not contest a human-animal difference. In fact, he refers to it as an “abyssal rupture” that would be “asinine” to contest. But this difference between humans and animals is no different than any difference between any two beings. Thus for Derrida this abyssal rupture between human and animal is “far from singular and indivisible”, meaning it does not have a unilinear and indivisible line having two edges, Man and animal. Rather, “beyond the edge of the so-called human, beyond it but by no means on a single opposing line, rather than ‘The Animal’ or ‘Animal Life’... is an already heterogeneous multiplicity of the living” (31). Here Derrida points to the difference *within* the category “animal”, a difference about which he has written extensively and which leads him to reject the very word “animal”. Instead he chooses to use “animot”, a word whose oral pronunciation invokes the French plural for animal (*animeaux*) so that he is always speaking of multiple animals, and whose written form highlights the French word *mot*, for word, so that he draws attention to the role of naming and language in forging the category animal.

To return to the human/animal dualism, it is important to attend to its operation alongside other dualisms. The combined effect of these dualisms is to give rise to what Plumwood (1993) calls the “master narrative of western culture,” the guiding philosophy of separation which has led the Cartesian subject to see itself as, in Descartes’ words, as “the masters and possessors of

nature.” This binary is continually remade and re-authorized politically, legally, scientifically, religiously – as Haraway (2008, 18) says it “flourishes, lethally, in the entrails of humanism.” It is also at the heart of speciesism, or “the assumption that membership in a species... is what determines standing” (Wolfe 2011, 4). We can think of the binary as a means of organizing a species order. This exists alongside gender, race and class orders, among others, which are also organized around binaries that intersect with and reinforce each other: male/female, master/slave, civilized/primitive, subject/object, culture/nature, and so on (see Plumwood 1993 for a more complete list). These dualisms, as Haraway (1991, 177) writes, are systemic to the logics and practices of the domination of women, people of colour, and animals, “in short the domination of all constituted as others, whose task is to mirror the self, to allow the self to be the one that is not dominated, is free”. Animals, like “the colonized, the enslaved, the noncitizen – all reduced to type, all Others to rational man, [are] essential to his bright constitution” (Haraway 2008, 18). The association of “others” with a base state, or as being somehow closer to nature, is an example of how dualisms can intersect and reinforce each other. Similarly, to “animalize” another is to render that other less than human, and therefore associated with the host of other counterparts to the figure of the human: the dominated, the enslaved, the killable.

Scholars have thus written of the manner in which human/animal distinctions are invoked to justify violence against particular human groups, so that “speciesism as a form of oppression... is interconnected with and reinforcing of other oppressive structures” (Gaard 2000, 206; Plumwood 1993) such as gender, race, sexuality and class. Wolfe (2003, 7) writes that “the effective power of the discourse of species when applied to social others of whatever sort relies... on a prior taking for granted of the institution of speciesism—that is, of the ethical acceptability of the systematic ‘noncriminal putting to death’ of animals based solely on their species.” Along these lines, Anderson’s (2003, 438) study of zoos “unsettles the ground beneath the linked conceits of speciesism and racism toward the world’s ‘premodern’ people.” These intersections between animal exploitation and oppression and human exploitation and oppression form an important but implicit foundation for this dissertation, leading me to be careful in my treatment of more strictly human politics (see Chapter 4). As Plumwood (1993, 13) writes, “human domination of nature wears a garment cut from the same cloth as intra-human domination, but one which, like each of the others, has a specific form and shape of its own.” In the following chapters, then, I seek to attend to the specificity of animal oppression and its appearance as a founding condition of commodity making, remaking and unmaking.

In sum, western human subjects are in a profound sense constituted as such within and atop nonhuman otherness (Wolfe 2003). While the human figure appears to be a category rooted in neurological or biophysiological distinctions, it is rather a result of specific histories, geographies, and social relations, between humans and also humans and animals. Certainly particular socio-natural properties do become essential to a thing's power and geopolitical centrality (opposable thumbs, cerebral cortexes, bipedalism, and so on). But as Huber (2011, 34, emphasis added) argues in the context of oil, "biophysical capacities are only realizable through particular uneven social relations of culture, history, and power." The opposable thumb becomes a meaningful feature within a particular context. Specific conditions and relations produce the human, which is entirely different than saying that humans are the same as each other or as other animals. Their differences should not be disregarded for a host of reasons, not the least of which is the political struggle various groups have made to claim both difference and not being animals. It is not my aim to ignore, then, the particularities of the human species, although I would emphasize that these particularities are not universal and are increasingly being shown to be far less particular than we imagined.

The division between humans and animals is not only a line drawn again and again, reiteratively performed, like gender, but it is also a weighted line, a line that positions beings in a species hierarchy, what I here define as a shifting ranking of species preference and power, almost always with the human species on top followed by species "most like us" or of most economic value to humans. It is this hierarchy, whose most general and persistent manifestation is the privileging of humans over animals, that leads Haraway (2008, 11) to refer to a profound "human exceptionalism": "the premise that humanity alone is not a spatial and temporal web of interspecies dependencies", which denies the fact that "vastly outnumbered by [our] tiny companions... To be one is always to become with many" (Haraway 2008, 4). In what Plumwood (1996) calls the "human supremacist culture of the West", the conditions that give humans life, the "parts of us that exist beyond the skin" (Armstrong 2006) and on which we depend, are denied and disavowed to uphold a version of human being that is separate, unique and superior: the master subject.

The consequences of the human/animal binary and the species hierarchy that the above scholars have identified are profound. Being the "other" to the human comes with huge costs. As Danta and Vardoulakis (2008, 3) state simply: the figure of the human "constitutes itself through a definite violence against the animal." Materially, animals constitute the "human" project as laborers, food, clothing, and so on. Animals work for us, for free, and are largely "disposable

workers” in a manner similar to and different from the “disposable women” Wright (2006) observes are fundamental to the workings of capital and labor in Mexican maquiladoras. The connection between the women’s treatment and the human/animal binary is that, as Hudson (2011, 16) states, “addressing the ‘wasting’ of human life whether on a shop floor or slum cannot be accomplished without addressing how animals are used as placeholders and metaphors for particular social relations.” As I discussed earlier, the binaries male/female, first world/third world/, human/animal can rely on and reinforce each other. Both animal laborers and these women factory workers are cast as outside the human, which licenses their devaluation as laborers, and this devaluing of their labor actually contributes to the formation of value in the commodities and capital of the production network. They are different in that of course the women are still paid (albeit marginally) and their labor is recognized as labor.

Capitalism and the liberal state also derive significant profits from the ability to kill – often in mass numbers – wild animals. Killing wolves, bears, cougars, and other animals has been a predominant colonial project, with bounty often the first laws passed in the colonies (Loo 2006; cf Collard 2012; Colpitts 2002; Dunlap 1997; White 1994). This can be seen as part of a broader process that Crosby (1986) calls “ecological imperialism”: the biological colonization of new territories (also Clark 2007). Not only domesticated but also wild animals have played and continue to play a central role, materially and symbolically, in capitalism and the formation of the nation state, as symbols, commodities, and spectacle (Collard 2013b). Ultimately, the naturalization of a superior, distinct species category enables vast systems of production to be developed around animal slaughter. What is outside the human is far more “killable,” like Haraway (2008) says, more easily “noncriminally put to death,” says Derrida (1991), more “precarious” for Butler (2004). Speciesism is thus is not only a chief blind spot in western philosophy (with the exception of Derrida) but also excludes what is considered nonhuman from ethical and political consideration (Calarco 2008), enabling unprecedented proportions of the subjection of animals that Derrida (2008, 26) compares to “the worst cases of genocide.”

Sollund (2011) is the first to associate speciesism with wildlife trade. She identifies wildlife trade as an *expression* of speciesism, in which animals are perceived as “exploitable resources” and the human/animal binary and species hierarchy plays out in an embodied manner, for example with humans controlling animals in cages. My approach here is similar but as I have laid out in this chapter, I am interested in how speciesism (and the human/animal binary) is *re-performed* through global live wildlife trade. Sollund acknowledges that speciesism is learned and she connects it to the human/animal binary in which humans, as superior masters, are

allowed to use animals however they please. But she does not consider GLWT as an act of re-creating this very binary. As I will show in subsequent chapters, the economic performances of global live wildlife trade – catching an animal from the forest, parading it in front of an audience at an exotic animal auction, attempting to rehabilitate it through instilling fear of humans – are all instances in which the human/animal binary is also performed. Furthermore, my approach considers how speciesism forms a condition of possibility for GLWT, and how capitalism is fundamentally speciesist.

In other words I am interested in what Griffiths (2009, 21) calls “the economic form of life’s subjugation”, especially animal subjugation, and how it is tied to the performance of a particular human subject. Here I follow Wright (2006), whose aforementioned analysis of factory work in the third world problematizes the “myth of the disposable third world woman”, determining how the myth produces specific subjects (i.e. less-than-human subject). Wright (2006, 23) probes “the story’s internal circuitry to examine how it contributes to the making of a sentient being who is decidedly female, third world, and disposable and yet who embodies a form of labour crucial to the materialization of global capitalism around the world.” As the end of this quote exemplifies, Wright is driven to understand a central paradox: how does someone “whose body represents a site of living waste... still create, with that same body, things that are so valuable? How does worth develop from worthlessness?” (2). This question is also at the heart of my research, which has in common with Wright’s an examination of the consequences of being cast outside the figure of the human.

Animals’ perceived ethico-political worthlessness (their ability to be noncriminally killed and commodified) enables the production and assignment of economic worth, or value, to them. In fact, in what follows I argue that a distinct condition of production for the lively commodities circulating in global live wildlife trade is the subordinate and always everywhere commodifiable animal subject: *animalia economica* (after Goldstein’s [2012] reformulation of the role of ownable land, what he calls *terra economica*, as a condition of possibility for capitalism). Animal exploitation, Hudson (2011, 12) writes, “has become so central to the socio-economic system, so structured and intentional, that the abused animal appears the totem of capital. Whatever technological advances we have made, whatever social developments, our absolute power over the animal forces us to question whether all our progress is merely progress in total domination.” Capitalism relies on the human/animal dualism and the subordinate (and subordinatable) animal object it produces.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter fleshes out the literature supporting the three dimensions of my theoretical approach. First, a commodity chain framework that investigates multiple stages of a commodity's "life" in order to consider the social, ecological and political-economic relations that enable and are reformulated in commodity chains. Second, a theory of performativity that 1) does not take markets or commodities as pre-given or innate but rather examines their making (and remaking) as the outcome of various embodied performances and the forging and severing of links within networks of entities, including nonhumans, and 2) acknowledges that markets and commodities are performative in that they have effects on these networks, again including nonhumans. Third, a position of anti-speciesism that holds the human subject as also performed and performative. This means the specific figure of the human that prevails today is not natural and inevitable but rather the result of specific histories and relations, namely a binary relation between the human and the animal. It also means that this figure of the human licenses mass violence and exploitation of animals on the basis of their species. Another way of thinking about this is as a critique of a species hierarchy that positions humans as master subjects, in control of and separate from the rest of the living world, including animals.

These three dimensions combine in the following pages into what amounts to an analysis of how species hierarchies are a condition and effect of the performances and dis/entanglements that constitute three specific space-times in the GLWT commodity chain. This means that while much space is dedicated to a recounting and analysis of specific practices of commodity de/re/formation I observed during research, I periodically revisit ideas from this chapter, especially about speciesism, to remind readers of the broader context within which these practices unfold. This context is, as I have described here, one marked by extraordinary and systemic disregard for nonhuman life, and by stark power inequalities between humans and animals. Despite moments of counter-performance, it is overwhelmingly the case that global live wildlife trade relies on and perpetuates this form of human-animal relations. Although in this chapter I have made this point in the abstract, later chapters will introduce many animals for whom this state of subjugation is lived day after day. First, though, the next chapter discusses how I studied (with) these animals.

Chapter 4. Methodologies for multispecies contact zones

If we appreciate the foolishness of human exceptionalism, then we know that becoming is always becoming *with*—in a contact zone where the outcome, where who is in the world, is at stake.

– Haraway, *When Species Meet* (2008, 244)

4.1 Introduction

Storms followed me across five countries during my research. An airplane ride over Mexico through a lightning storm; driving through blizzards, hail, thunder and lightning on US interstates; crossing a flood-swollen river border by boat in Guatemala; taking shelter in a Tennessee motel bathroom during a tornado. It felt like storms were always in the background of my research. They were also emotionally present within the research process itself. I became accustomed to the visceral, charged, unsettled feelings that the cyclone of research practice provoked. I was wound up, energized, felt off balance, in a mental whirl. The goal now, I think, at the writing stage, is not to conquer or smooth over these unsettled and volatile feelings but to recall them, to remember moments of uncertainty, turbulence, giddiness, and displacement. Writing about methods can easily produce a closed account, one in which former doubts, hesitations and ambiguities are forgotten and lost. Although a section of this chapter does discuss my research methods, this chapter as a whole is concerned with my methodological approach, by which I mean how I connect the theoretical underpinnings of this study, as outlined in the previous chapter, with how I actually went about conducting research. As Crang (2009, 457) describes, methodology aligns “the ontology of a study, how it conceives of the world, with its epistemology, how it claims to know things about the world.” This chapter thus explores how specific techniques (multiple methods) were assembled not only to answer my key research questions but also to remain allied with the theoretical positions – namely anti-speciesism – that I outlined in Chapter 3.

The aim in discussing methodology in this chapter is two-fold. First, I want to demonstrate contingent, situated and embodied knowledge production. By framing my research sites as storm centres, this chapter portrays research as a practice that is always in process, unfinished, tumultuous, unexpected, but with the potential to knock things down (see Cerwonka and Maalki 2007). Certainly it knocked me down on occasion. Second, I wish to implicate my research practices in the power dynamics my research contests. The eyes of the storms of my research practice were multiple deeply disturbing encounters I observed, recorded, and

sometimes partook in, between profoundly differently positioned human and nonhuman entities. Most of the nonhumans I encountered were captive beings. Much of my discomfort and anxiety in fieldwork stemmed from a sharp division between my animal research subjects and me. They had no choice but to be there, to be encounterable and researchable. Animal research subjects do not and cannot give consent; in fact they may demonstrate an active desire not to participate in research. This desire is usually overridden. It is hard to imagine a more pronounced power asymmetry between researcher and research subject. The chaotic weather echoed my own internal unrest about not only witnessing but also at times actively interacting with animals that were clearly suffering, some to the point of death, before my eyes and in my hands. These interactions occurred in what I call contact zones, following Mary Louise Pratt (1991; 1992; also Haraway 2003; 2008).

For Pratt (1991) contact zones are where two or more cultures intermingle; they are “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” (Pratt 1991, 34). In *Imperial eyes*, Pratt (1992, 7) writes that as a thinking device and methodological frame, the contact zone “emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other. It treats the relations among colonizers and colonized, or travelers and ‘travelees,’ not in terms of separateness or apartheid, but in terms of co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power” (Pratt 1992, 7). Unlike Pratt’s, my contact zones are multispecies; they are the spaces in which I come into contact with both human and animal research subjects and where they come into contact with each other. But like Pratt’s, they are saturated with deeply asymmetrical relations of power, structured by histories, knowledge systems, and political economies that position animals as subordinate to humans. In fact, although Pratt is writing about human relationships, her understanding of contact zones captures my view of human-animal relations: that they are mutually constitutive and radically asymmetrical.

This view echoes Donna Haraway’s (2003; 2008), which makes her work on contact zones a helpful complement to Pratt’s. As the opening epigraph to this chapter states, for Haraway, acknowledgement of “the foolishness of human exceptionalism” – acceptance of our inextricable entanglement with human and nonhuman others – means “being” human is always a “becoming-with” a multitude of others. This occurs within contact zones that for Haraway, like Pratt, are always saturated with power. When in these contact zones, it is critical for Haraway

and other philosophers (especially Derrida 2008²⁷) to not only look at the animal but also recognize that *the animal looks back*. Danta and Vardoulakis (2008, 5) write: “the key step here is to return the philosopher’s gaze to the nonhuman animal—and, in what amounts to the same thing, to welcome the animal’s gaze itself.” Following from discussion of posthumanism and anti-speciesism in previous chapters, what this means for my work is that I foreground the animals I encounter in contact zones as active (though as I have suggested, not necessarily willing) participants in my research. They are “significantly unfree partners” in the research practice, and I consider them as living, thinking, feeling beings in their own right.

The stakes of research and of this dissertation are highly personal. While I am not accountable to my research participants in a traditional sense – animals clearly cannot read my dissertation, or double check passages in which they are mentioned – I have a moral and political obligation to understand what I encountered in those contact zones so that I might offer in return an argument against these animals’ suffering and subordination; that is, why global live wildlife trade should not exist. One might reasonably adopt an animal rights perspective in making this argument but I have concertedely selected not to approach my work in this manner. I briefly justify this decision below and situate my ethical position, before elaborating on my methodological approach, which revolved around inserting myself within contact zones in which I could be in the company of animals. In undertaking this project I could have opted to follow a specific species from capture to sale and transport and further sale, transport, use, and so on. Or I could have stayed in one place – for example, a specific wildlife market – and examined all the buyers, sellers, and the overarching rules and regulations governing and shaping that place. But I did neither. I felt that a single site and/or a single species would be too narrow and limiting. Instead, I undertook a multispecies, multi-site approach, which I detail in sections 4.3 and 4.4 respectively. In section 4.5 I outline the multiple methods I employed in these contact zones. Finally, section 4.6 reflects on key research challenges I experienced.

4.2 Animal ethics

For many animal theorists, the extension of human rights to species other than human is a necessary and logical step in a series of political expansions that are already occurring (or have occurred) along lines of race, gender, and sexuality. The existing doctrine of rights is intended to be universally acceptable and to provide the assurance that the basic interests (life, freedom and well-being) of rights-bearers will be met. Animal rights supporters argue that there is nothing in

²⁷ Although Haraway (2008) criticizes Derrida (2008) for (she says) failing to be curious about what the animal might actually be doing, thinking and feeling.

the rights discourse that precludes the extension of the framework to (at least some) nonhuman species, and that this extension is the most readily available, powerful and dependable means by which to more meaningfully include these species and represent their interests in ethical and political deliberations (Cavaliere 2009; Castricano 2008). The call for human rights to be extended to animals has therefore been the most enduring and prevalent in the animal movement. But there are many objections to the rights-based approach that amount to two main arguments.

The first goes against the possibility and desirability of ethics as a calculable process, and instead upholds an agnostic ethics. If ethics is represented by rights, argues Derrida (1995; 2008; also see Wolfe 2003; Calarco 2008; Hudson 2008; 2011), it is reduced to a “calculable process”: “a utilitarian calculus that would tally up the interests of the particular beings in question... and determine what counts as a just act by calculating which action minimizes the greatest good for the greatest number” (Wolfe 2010, 82). For these scholars, there can be no science of ethics, no calculation of the subject (Wolfe 2003). When questions of justice and injustice are framed in this manner (as rights), the effect is to distort and trivialize them (Diamond in Wolfe 2010, 73). Instead, building from Levinas, Calarco (2008) forwards an agnostic ethics of encounter that leaves the question of moral consideration open, for “how could this question ever be answered once and for all?” (71). For Haraway, similarly, ethics do not pre-exist encounters, and so she too has (albeit more ambivalent) reservations about animal rights approaches. For Haraway, it is only in knots of species in which “actual animals and people [are] looking back at each other” (Haraway 2008, 42) that respect and responsibility are generated.

The second objection to an animal rights approach – and the one that for me is even more persuasive – suggests that the human rights framework cannot provide meaningful or long-term regard for animals because it is fundamentally humanist, meaning that it retains at its centre a specific conception of the bounded and exceptional figure of the human. The very idea of human rights, argues Mitchell (in Wolfe 2003, ix) is inherently incompatible with animals rights because it is built upon a human/animal binary, which as discussed in the previous chapter is also always a hierarchy. Humanism precedes the concept of human rights. It conceptualizes the human as that which has transcended and has control over the nonhuman (Anderson 2007). The application of human rights to animals leaves this hierarchy unaddressed and therefore cannot be used to provide a means of meaningful ethical consideration for animals (Wolfe 2003; Calarco 2008).

Thus while the animal rights movement seeks to widen the circle of morality, it proposes doing so through an anthropocentric economy of moral value (Hudson 2011). “It is paradoxical, to say the least,” says Calarco (2008, 9), “that animal rights theorists have used the same

anthropocentric criteria that have been used to exclude animals from moral concern to include only certain animals within that scope and to draw only a new, slightly different exclusionary boundary.” Or as Hudson (2011, 4) puts it: “Choosing any particular point of division between ‘the human’ realm of moral value and ‘the animal’ realm of nature does not do away with ‘speciesism’, but only reinscribes the border at another arbitrary point.” Animal rights theory, these critics maintain, retains at its centre the liberal individual humanist subject that “has as its material condition of possibility the absolute control over the lives of nonhuman others” (Wolfe 2003, 7; Landry 2011). A model of rights based on extension to those “most like us” thus only ends up reinforcing the very humanism that grounds discrimination against nonhumans in the first place (Wolfe 2003; 2010), leaving intact the figure of the unified human subject (Whatmore 2002; Hudson 2011).

Given these important critiques, I situate my own ethical position within work that combines two impulses. First, it is posthumanist in that it seeks to move beyond and rethink traditional ideas about the nature, status, and role of the figure of the human and its relationship to the wider world, rather than retain the human/animal binary. Second it is anti-speciesist, in that it seeks to trouble the privileging of a particular conception of the human subject that is based on the subordination of or disregard for nonhuman beings on the basis of their species, as I discussed in the last chapter.²⁸ This means that I refuse to allow this central binary to shape my approach to research and writing in this dissertation. Arriving at this position, and then attempting to carry out a research program and narrative structure and style that remain allied with it, has been one of my central occupations over the past four years.

Choosing an approach – how to research and then how to make sense of that research – is always challenging, but possibly in the case of animal research it is made all the more challenging by several factors. First, there are few critical studies in the social sciences and humanities in which primary fieldwork involves animals. Constructing an approach means proceeding in some ways from scratch. Second, there are few supports – institutional, emotional – for dealing with ethical dilemmas in the field and the experience of witnessing (or participating in) animal suffering. Third, and related, the enduring anthropocentrism in academia and beyond can lead even those researchers who argue for the recognition of animal subjectivity to deny or question the ethical and emotional effects of conducting research on and with animals. As Stanescu (2012) writes, to care “for the existence of beings whom most people manage to

²⁸ Posthumanism is not necessarily antispeciesist, as Wolfe discusses (in Cavalieri 2009), just as antispeciesism is not necessarily posthumanist.

ignore... to tear up, or to have trouble functioning... is something rendered completely socially unintelligible [and so] most of us work hard not to mourn.” In particular field sites, like public animal auction houses, it can feel, as Katie Gillespie (personal communication) expresses, that grief over animal suffering is “out-of-place.” In fact expressing such grief would be a marker of one not belonging in these spaces, spaces host to hostile relations between animal owners and animal activists, as I detail in Chapter 6. Working not to mourn can add further stress onto the already difficult practice of repeatedly observing animal suffering and death. Finally, the humanist and anthropocentric traditions of Western scholarship limit the range of available theories animal scholars can use. In this dissertation I sought to assemble a collection of approaches that remained from start to finish resolutely anti-speciesist.

4.3 Multispecies contact zones

Several days after leaving a biosphere reserve in southern Mexico, I picked a tenth or eleventh tick off my skin and crushed its body between my fingernails, shooting a splatter of my own blood across my cheeks. Looking in the mirror at my red-specked face I was confronted with two colliding and uncomfortable sensations: that of being eaten, and that of taking a life. Both are power-laden. Killing the tick was an almost automatic reassertion of control over my body and its fluids, as well as over the space of my bed, my hotel room. Power-charged exchanges such as this constituted my research all the way through. Blood, sweat, vomit, dirt, excrement, urine – my own and others – all marked the stormy contact zones of my research.

In her vivid historical and contemporary account of the lives and labors of people, animals, and plants in the Florida Everglades, Laura Ogden (2011, 76) describes her contact zones in a way that resonates with my own study. She writes that the mangrove contact zone is

charged with tactile encounters: the distant site of circling vultures, the acrid smell of alligator scat, the bite of a saw grass thicket – neither prefiguring culture (essential) nor culturally determined (constructed). Instead, the contact zone is marked by a furious exchange of messages, territorializing acts, and countermoves, all taking place among and between the human and nonhuman worlds.

Like Ogden’s contact zone, my research sites involve embodied collisions between human and non-human beings, between mutually constituted cultures and natures – in fact I argue that the collisions are especially intense and charged, loaded with economic, ethical, political, social and ecological weight. In seeking to understand what occurs in these contact zones, my methodology took its direction from Actor-Network Theory and feminist science studies. It was constructed with the central aim to insert myself into contact zones, in the action or the “thick of things” of global live wildlife trade (Law 2004). I follow Haraway (2010, 322) who is “especially

committed to inhabiting both the trouble and the vitality of the contact zones of companion species”. As I have noted, in animal studies so much work thus far has been quite abstract, and has taken place in the humanities, much in cultural studies. While this work is important, I have found that fieldwork – “getting into the action” – can be critical for animal research, albeit risky. It is “getting into the action” that is often avoided by researchers in this area.

I think of GLWT as a complicated swirl of flows of captive animals crisscrossing the globe. It is challenging to know where and when to jump into these flows as a researcher. In this research project’s early stages, my intention was to trace the commodity chain of one or more specific species: I had a long list, topped by scarlet macaws, dolphins, and/or orangutans after meeting with Canada’s TRAFFIC national representative, who helped me draft a list of species for which significant research gaps existed (there are many). But I quickly realized that focusing on specific species would be limiting and frustrating in the field. I envisioned being at a wildlife trade market and only being able to focus on a single species, having to ignore the multitude of other animals being bought and sold. So instead I decided to focus on the flows of multiple species in and out of specific bounded spaces. I refer to this approach as “multispecies” in part as a simple recognition that my research is concerned with many different species of animals. Of course multispecies is also a reference to the multispecies ethnographies currently emerging from social science disciplines, namely anthropology (for example see the 2010 special issue of *Cultural Anthropology* dedicated to “multispecies ethnography”). This research explores “the host of organisms whose lives and deaths are linked to human social worlds...[, centering] on how a multitude of organisms’ livelihoods shape and are shaped by political, economic, and cultural forces” (Kirksey and Helmreich 2010, 545).

Donna Haraway is a key thinker for these ethnographers, troubling as she does the idea that outcomes are pre-given and species are bounded. For Haraway (2010, 324), in “material-semiotic contact zones, it is a mistake to assume much about species in advance of encounter”, because in encounters all entities shape each other. A multispecies research approach is one that pays attention not only to multiple species but also to how they are co-species, shaping one another. This approach is indebted to feminist and other poststructural theorists, such as Derrida and Butler, who advocate a relational understanding of the world, an understanding that takes as its starting point not bounded, pre-formed subjects but rather sets of relationships that constitute subjects-in-relation. Another way of putting this, to borrow Anna Tsing’s elegantly simple phrasing, is that “human nature is a multispecies relationship” (in Haraway 2008, 19). This calls into question not only scholarship’s historical denial of animals’ agency and subjectivity but

also, perhaps even more critically, the categories of analysis we deploy in our research – categories like “human” and “animal”, which as I argued in Chapter 3 (and elsewhere, see Collard 2013c) are constructed rather than given. Decisions about categories are methodological decisions, which is why they should be considered as framing the entire project.

What this means for researchers, in part, is that we should not decide in advance who (or what) is a key actor in the event or process being investigated (Callon 1986; Roy 2003; Law 2004; Tsing 2005; Cerwonka and Malkki 2007; Haraway 2010). Equally, actors – entities within a network or set of relationships that influence the course of events – are not limited to human subjects. In fact it is encounters between many different human and nonhuman entities that generate agency, or the capacity to shape the world, to have an effect. These ideas have of course become popular in some geography (see Whatmore 2002; Murdoch 2005; Hinchliffe 2007; Braun and Whatmore 2010, among others).

What did this mean for my research practices in the field? It meant that I strove to be attentive to the interactions between entities and how they combined to generate performances or effects. This included being attentive to my own interactions with entities, most critically the animals with which I worked the most closely, such as at the wildlife rehabilitation centre. It also meant that I attempted to foreground nonhuman animals’ experiences, insofar as this is possible given the challenges of communication across species (discussed in more detail below). Rather than considering animals as “good to think with” (as Levi-Strauss famously commented) or as mirrors for reflecting back some truth about human existence (as both Agamben 2004 and Haraway 1991 have critiqued), I endeavored to foreground animals as subjects in their own right, beings with their own lookouts, motivations and affairs, beings that while intimately entangled with each other and human beings, are – or can be – creatively independent, that are not just looked upon but also look back (Derrida 2008).

Often, the animals in my company were incredibly controlled and contained in their capacity for movement and expression (i.e. in cages so small their bodies could only be scrunched, or their bodies actually modified so that they could not bite or fly). These spatial and behavioural constraints made gaining a sense of the animal even more difficult. Being with animals under these circumstances did, however, allow me to observe the techniques of manipulation and control deployed to enroll animals in circuits of power and capital, and to transform a non-human life and its constitutive relations into an ostensibly discreet undead thing that can circulate globally as a commodity. This is to ask, as Franklin (2007, 49) does, “what are the techniques that allow vitality to be capitalized?” In other words, observing animals and their

encounters with humans and technologies of control within the making, remaking and unmaking of lively commodities allowed me to discern what specific techniques and practices commodify life in global live wildlife trade, and how.

4.4 Multiple sites (and how they were selected)

Having decided to keep my research open to multiple species, I might have then opted to conduct my research in one space and observe the animals arriving and departing from that space, for example a wildlife market (like the Qingping market I described in Chapter 1), or a busy port that receives and (sometimes) inspects multiple live animal shipments daily, such as LAX (see Lovgren 2007). Again, though, I worried that this would be too limited, given that it would provide a glimpse into only one stage in the commodity chain. As I stated in the introduction, from the beginning of this project I was interested in understanding global live wildlife trade more broadly, to achieve a sense of the overall transformation of an animal into a commodity, and then how that commodity is exchanged and eventually perhaps decommodified. I also wanted to do a geography of the trade, and there is nothing more geographical than following something in space. I therefore decided to undertake a multi-site approach, which sought to gain a sense of the overarching trade through a distinct set of nodes: space-times in which the intricate and highly dispersed flow of animals through GLWT commodity chains stops and comes to a mass altogether, even momentarily. These are nodes of exchange in animal traffic – that is, in meaning and live matter, as I discussed in the introduction. They include the CITES international meeting I attended in Geneva (described in Chapter 2, a node where decisions are made that structure enforcement activities, which themselves shape the space of flows), exotic animal auctions, capture sites, and a rehabilitation centre.

A strong tradition of multi-site research has developed in geography (see Parry 1998; Freidberg 2001; Dempsey forthcoming) and beyond, especially anthropology, in which multi-site ethnography is now an established research methodology (see Burawoy 2009; Scheper-Hughes 2004; Tsing 2005; Roy 2010; Rajan 2006; Hayden 2003; Franklin 2007). Ethnographic methods (i.e. participant-observation) and sensibilities (i.e. improvisational and embodied) certainly inform my research. As other contemporary ethnographers, my methodological approach recognizes that the traditional, empirical ideal of disembodied intellect (what Latour [1999] calls the “brain-in-a-vat”) is impossible and undesirable, and instead ethnography enables “learning through conversation” (Westbrook 2009, 43). According to looser definitions of ethnography – “situated, long-term, empirical field research” (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007, 164) or even “writing about the world from the standpoint of participant observation” (Burawoy 2009), I have

in this dissertation carried out an ethnography. But according to stricter definitions, including those like Malinowski's that hold ethnography is long-term fieldwork carried out through participant observation at a single site (in Rabinow and Marcus 2008), I have not. I do not think it is important to classify either way, only to make clear those elements of ethnography that are important here, including, as is increasingly popular, a multi-site approach.

This approach was born out of the need to construct new fieldwork practices that could trace large-scale political and economic processes. As Marcus and Fischer (1986, 94) write in an early publication that represented multi-site ethnography's formalization in anthropology: rather than being situated in one or two communities, "the researcher must be mobile, covering a wide network of sites that encompass a process, which is in fact the object of study." It is this study of processes and flows that has in part driven the turn to multi-site inquiry (see Marcus 1995). As Rajan (2006, 31) writes of his study of biotechnological development in India and US, "any analysis of capitalism needs to relentlessly emphasize it as a process." In what is possibly an even bolder claim, Michael Burawoy (2000) states that to be a contemporary ethnographer is essentially to "follow the things that flow." This "following" approach also echoes and informs work from science studies (see Law 2004; Çaliskan 2010) as well as geographies of commodity chains (of what has been called "following the thing" [Cook et al 2004]), which will be discussed in the next chapter. Although I did not "follow" any specific animals during my research, I did follow aggregate flows of animals into traffic nodes where I understood that they congregated. But out of the thousands of sites I might have chosen, how did I choose the sites in this study – wildlife capture in Mexico, Belize and Guatemala; exotic animal auctions in the US; and wildlife rehabilitation in Guatemala?

First, as I stated in the introduction, I am interested here in flows of live animals in the US, given that the US is one of the world's top consumers of wildlife and yet manages to largely fly under the radar (as opposed to the well-covered importation activities of China and other Asian countries). The US also maintains a record of all live animals it imports (unlike many other countries, including Canada). One of its records is the US Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Law Enforcement Management Information System (LEMIS), which keeps detailed shipment records (including whether the animals were wild caught or captive bred) for live wildlife imports and exports (see Smith et al. 2009, supporting online material). Unfortunately LEMIS is not publically available to query, although freedom of information requests on behalf of other researchers has made some data available. The other record of animal trade is part of the US International Trade Commission's (USITC) vast Interactive Tariff and Trade DataWeb,

which contains records of *all* trade in and out of the US, and is publically accessible. I queried the USITC database concerning live animal imports and isolated a list of top countries exporting live wildlife to the US. I then considered factors such as logistics of transportation from and back to Canada, language (my preference being for English or French), and cost.

Mexico, Guatemala and Belize were my final choice for capture research, not only because Mexico is a top exporter to the US, but also because bordering countries Guatemala and Belize also export legal animals to the US, and reports out of the Maya forest, a network of protected areas spread across regions of all three countries, suggest wildlife trade is one of the largest threats to biodiversity in the reserve (see Chapter 3 for more information, and for a complication of this story). For my research on animal exchange, I chose exotic animal auctions because they are a highly public congregation of what is generally a fairly clandestine exchange process (pet stores are still popular but much trade now occurs online – see IFAW 2008; Fleming 2013). I found the auction sites through their online advertising and by a snowball effect, seeing future auctions advertised while I was attending auctions. Finally, my research on wildlife rehabilitation was less consciously selected. I decided to work at ARCAS because several friends who had lived and worked in northern Guatemala mentioned it to me and suggested it might be a good place to find out about capture. Only while working there did I realize that the centre's operations are part of wildlife trade's circuits, functioning as a space and practice of attempted decommmodification (see Chapter 7).

4.5 Methods

In the above research sites I drew on a variety of methods, including semi-structured and “expert” interviews; participant- and spectator-observation, as well as observation at an international meeting; textual analysis and database querying; and film and photography. Thirty-seven interviews were carried out with twenty-seven people involved in wildlife trade in multiple capacities: regulators and government officials, NGO officials, scientists, researchers and veterinarians, people who own exotic animals, exotic animal auction attendees, participants, and owners, and trade enforcement officials. Fourteen of the interviews were recorded. Many were quite informal and only semi-structured. This was important because the topics interviews addressed – owning exotic animals, trading exotic animals – can be quite sensitive and so required a loose and flexible – even conversational – interview format. The stories surrounding wildlife trade, whether around ownership or trading, also tend to be casually transmitted, lending themselves to a casual interview tone. My interviews with government officials and NGO officials were more formal and structured and were carried out to obtain information about trade

numbers and trends, information which is often not readily available. The interview portion of my research was helpful in this information-generating capacity, and in bringing multiple perspectives to bear on these contentious topics. However, my observation work (both participant-observation and spectator-observation) proved ultimately more fruitful.

Participant-observation research at the wildlife rehabilitation centre and spectator-observation (to borrow the term Penrose [2003] uses to describe her research at rodeos) at exotic animal auctions allowed me to immerse myself in the action and experience events in a multi-sensory fashion. As Freidberg (2001, 362) observes in her reflection on research “on the trail of the green bean”, “spending time in sites along a commodity chain – in fields, trucks, airports, warehouses, offices – is one of the most direct ways to gain appreciation for the role of non-human ‘actants’, simply because during that time you are subjected to at least some of their effects, namely, midday heat, flat tires and power outages.” In my own research, “non-human actants” did not only affect the commodity process; they were the commodities themselves. It was therefore important to attempt to derive a sense of their situatedness within commodity networks, which I did through extended observation of their location, living conditions, and movement through commercial space. Additionally, as Alger and Alger (1999) note in their study of cat-cat and human-cat relations in an animal shelter, participant observation is the best-suited methodology for attending to human-animal inter-subjectivity and relations because extended and repeated observation allows both the time necessary to learn animal gestures and the collection of nonverbal data. I found this especially true in my observations of animal movements in open spaces (large enclosures or parks) versus captive spaces. Observing both states allowed me to better appreciate the range of movement and behaviour open space permits (and captivity circumscribes).

This research was especially difficult at times, both emotionally and logistically. My participation in wildlife rehabilitation and my spectating at exotic animal auctions both brought me into contact with animals that were profoundly if not lethally suffering (see Chapters 6 and 7 for more discussion). In addition, as I detail in Chapter 6, my auction research was carried out in a relatively hostile and charged environment, given how I was marked – by voice, dress, and so on – as an outsider, and therefore suspected of being an undercover animal rights activist or journalist. These difficulties aside, participating in these multispecies contact zones not only intensified the research experience and allowed me to now communicate a fuller and more animated picture in these pages. It also constituted my research findings. Whether it was the nervous sweat I broke into at every auction, every muscle tensed, ready to be called out as a spy;

or the pain of a falcon's talons digging through my gloves into my hand, its racing heartbeat a more rapid patter of my own, as I weighed it each morning at the rehabilitation centre; or tramping through the dense rainforest where parrots and monkeys live if they are not trapped for the pet trade, and craning my neck to see a blurry troop of monkeys on the move through the canopy, a hundred feet up in the air – all of these experiences allowed me to more fully conceptualize the social relations that are being taken apart and forged anew in GLWT.

Finally, I also drew on filmic and photographic methods, which are becoming popular for animal researchers (see Lorimer 2010; Brown and Dilley 2012; Richardson-Ngwenya 2013; Richardson-Ngwenya and Richardson 2013). I explore my hesitations about these media elsewhere (Collard 2013a), but it deserves reiterating here in brief what I see as the possibilities and risks of these methods. Where possible I documented my research using photography, and created several photographic essays during the research process, which I shared with friends, family and colleagues. Some of these photographs are contained in these pages. I also made a short film, *Wild love*, in Vancouver about debates over exotic animal ownership and exotic animals' use in Vancouver's film industry (see Collard and Stojin 2011). In this work, I found that both still and moving imagery do allow researchers to capture and perhaps more powerfully communicate the liveliness of animal subjects.

At the same time, there is an inescapable power dynamic to taking these images, one that fits within the mode of human mastery and control that my project seeks to trouble. There is no escaping that at the heart of documentary photography and film is the imperative for encounter, for animals to be *seen*, and these encounters can impinge on animal life. The images I took – and indeed my research contact zones more broadly – depended on a captive animal that I could encounter. In a multispecies contact zone constituted in and through animal captivity, the researcher – also an actor in this zone – is placed in the position of being complicit in these relations of dominance. I thus feel very ambivalent about my complicity in the very spaces and encounters I am critiquing. I revisit this idea in the following discussion about key challenges I faced in the research process.

4.6 Research challenges

In an interview in Flores, Guatemala, the director of Wildlife Conservation Society Guatemala told me that wildlife trade is a “hard trade to put your finger on”. My experience confirmed this. Wildlife trade is diffuse, decentralized, often illegal, barely monitored, and has little to no overriding state or corporate control over buying and selling. As a result of this and other factors, this project faced a number of challenges – both in terms of utilizing specific methods and

methodology more broadly. Here I identify and briefly discuss what I see as the three most significant: first, the project's multi-site nature; second, that it investigates what is often an illegal trade; and third, that its main research subjects are animals.

As I outlined earlier in section 2.3, I chose to do multi-site fieldwork because I, like many researchers today, am interested in a process that is geographically wide-ranging. The multi-site approach enabled an understanding of global live wildlife trade that is both broad and specific. But it is not without its challenges. Freidberg (2001) recounts some of these: time demands, language constraints, access – the usual challenges of single-site research, but multiplied. Moreover, as others who have conducted multi-site research on markets and capitalist processes note, the insights obtained through such an approach can seem even shallower than single-site research. As Rajan (2006, 31) writes, “such a limited demarcation of sites [in multi-site ethnography of markets] necessarily leads to partial and fragmentary insights into a political economic system.” Çaliskan (2010) too admits that global markets are notoriously difficult to study, given the elusiveness of both markets and “the global”. Ultimately, however, in my case the commodity chain approach demanded a multi-site approach, and I think that although my knowledge of each site may be less deep than if the entire project had been carried out in a single site, my knowledge of the overarching process is fuller than it would have been if viewed through only one location.

Secondly, research on illegal activities suffers from a host of fairly obvious challenges – safety, lack of access, inability to trust information – with the result that academic research rarely tackles illegal industries. One possibility in response to access issues is to conduct undercover research, but there are clear risks. In her work on illegal organ trafficking, Scheper-Hughes (2004) has conducted extensive undercover research worldwide (gaining ethics approval through her institution's school of journalism). Employing the basic methodological principle of “following the bodies,” she used a multi-sited and mobile research strategy, seeking to understand organ trade and “make it public.” This undercover option, which Scheper-Hughes was given permission to carry out through UC-Berkeley's School of Journalism, is possibly more available to a tenured faculty member than it is to a graduate student, however. Although technically I could have applied to my institution's ethics board for approval to use “deception”, I suspect that safety concerns would have overridden any such permission being granted. As it was, I was ultimately not allowed to speak with illegal traders directly.²⁹ However, as it turned

²⁹ The UBC Ethics Review Board requested that I not speak directly with individuals participating in the illegal trade.

out, illegal trade was in many ways more visible and legible than legal trade. Stories of illegal trade are commonly transmitted by word of mouth, and so the dozens of stories I was relayed during fieldwork all concerned illegal trade. For example when I arrived in Mexico I discovered the high levels of reported legal trade into the US were much less talked about than a dramatic reduction in what had been extraordinary levels of illegal trade (see Chapter 5).³⁰ This points to how in any research, but perhaps especially research on illegal activities, researchers have to be ever attentive to “research fragments”, where being indirect – always approaching at an angle, never head on – can be more fruitful than direct questioning.

Finally, the project of conducting research on and with animals is challenging in ways with which I continue to struggle – and expect to over the next decades. As Robbins (2007, 50) notes, nonhumans “talk back” constantly; “learning to hear them is a methodological challenge”. But it is difficult to know how to proceed: how to evaluate the agency of players who cannot be interviewed, or read the history of things that do not write. Essentially these are issues of communication, including the question of whether or not we can ever know what an animal is thinking or feeling, and whether this matters to research practices. Such concerns were less relevant in my study, though, because as I discussed earlier my focus is less in the question of what is it to be an animal than what is to *be-with* an animal: “what is the company of the animal” (Derrida 2008, 79)? In terms of research practices this means investigating interactions and encounters rather than individual behaviours. Furthermore, following Robbins (2007), I am in this dissertation more interested in the question of how animals are remade by the systems of power within which they are enmeshed, which means giving attention to how animals are situated within power hierarchies and, in this case, commodity chains.

Both of these aims, however, lead to further concern. When studying animals (and their encounters) with participant- or spectator-observation in multispecies contact zones, you are an actor within those zones, and so your research practices often you into direct complicity with the very power dynamics you are seeking to contest. As Timothy Pachirat (2011, 16) notes in his undercover ethnography of a cattle slaughterhouse, “once inside as an active participant I found myself inextricably caught up in its networks of power.” Although Pachirat is writing of the slaughterhouse’s highly racialised, classed and gendered labour distribution, he expresses similar complicity with the slaughter itself, even noting at the outset of the book, in his

³⁰ Wildlife trade patterns shift quickly in response to a wide swath of factors from geopolitical change to border enforcement to ecological change and regional development. Furthermore, the legal terrain for wildlife species changes quite rapidly, species moving in and out of CITES’ appendices (ipso facto making the species “legal” or “illegal” to trade).

acknowledgements, that he aided in taking at least 240,000 animals' lives during his half a year laboring at the slaughterhouse. Similarly, I actively participated in an at times harsh and violent process of wildlife rehabilitation. As Chapter 7 discusses, this process ultimately seeks to free animals, and yet it is carried out through intense practices of human domination of captive animals. I was also a paying auction attendee as thousands of captive animals were bought and sold. In other words I was both rehabilitator and spectator even as I am now critical of both those positions, largely because of the power dynamics that they re-inscribe between humans and animals (see Chapters 6 and 7), power dynamics in which I myself engaged in my own embodied encounters within the multispecies contact zones this chapter has discussed.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has documented how I approached my research methodologically, as well as some of the justifications, dilemmas and challenges of the methods I used. Although the challenges I outlined are significant, they did not ultimately impair my ability to explore my central research question: how are wild animals transformed into commodities? This is to ask how nonhuman lives and bodies are enrolled into networks of power and capital that seek to make them tradable and ownable, discreet “undead things” that can circulate and be exchanged. As I outlined in the introduction, I see this investigation as compatible with a broader critique of humanism and speciesism, which I discuss in the following chapter. Rather than turning to an animal rights approach, I am seeking here (with both methodology and theory) to construct a less anthropocentric means of understanding the obligations that animals pose to us, obligations of freedom, of difference, of subjectivity. This requires continually interrogating our “research performances” (Pratt 2000) – in other words what worlds and relations our research might bring into being – and how we are ourselves enrolled in the uneven power dynamics of our research contact zones.

When those contact zones are multispecies, power is often intensely asymmetrical, one of life and death (Haraway 2008), and yet it can be nearly impossible to continually retain a sense of the ethical demand of the other, as the tick story demonstrates. My time in the contact zones of my research was therefore characterized by a constant pull between seeking out encounters with animals for research purposes, and resisting these encounters because of the stark power relations they re-performed given the broader context of the encounter, which placed me in the embodied and deeply uncomfortable position of dominance over the animal. Although in her own work, Haraway (2008) emphasizes the importance of human-animal encounters – “face-to-face meetings” – in cultivating care and responsibility across species, she recently (2010, 326)

recognizes that “proximity hardly guarantees proper caring. Proximity has a long history of luxuriating brutality.” It is “the conditions of multispecies proximity” that matter, she says, and the structures of proximity (2010, 327). The following chapters interrogate the conditions and structures of multispecies proximity in global live wildlife trade: how is proximity created and with what effects; how is it structurally maintained; and how is it undone? I argue that an encounterable (or proximate) animal life is at the heart of the lively commodity form in this economy. As the next chapter illustrates, the process of commodifying a live wild animal for the exotic pet trade is centrally one of *making encounterable*.

Chapter 5. Capture

The object is not reducible to the commodity; indeed, the object is not reducible to itself, which means it does not have an “itself” apart from its contact with others.

– Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology* (2006, 43)

Commodification is not denaturing so much as a particular production of nature.

– Haraway, “The promises of monsters” (1992, 297)

5.1 Introduction

This is a picture of Stevie (figure 5.1).

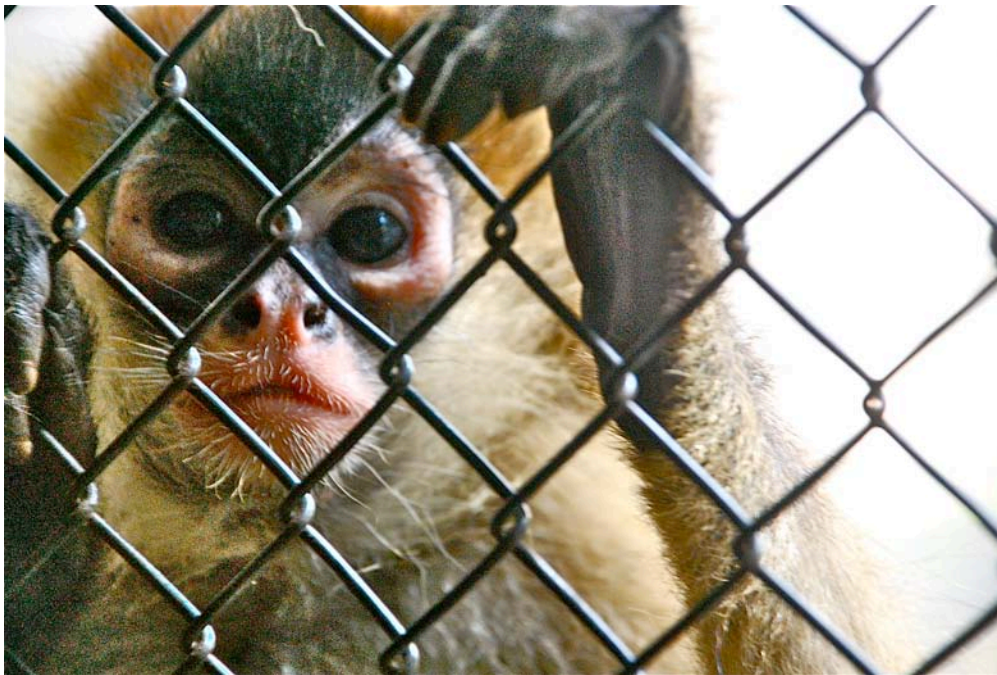


Figure 5.1 Stevie (photograph by the author)

No one knows exactly where he was born, how old he is, who his parents are (although likely they are dead), or who brought him to this place: ARCAS Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre in El Petén, Guatemala. What is known about Stevie? He is a juvenile spider monkey. When I met him in November 2011 he was likely around 2 years old. He arrived at ARCAS the same way most monkeys do, a confiscated, trafficked pet: dirty, malnourished, a leash ringing his neck. But his tawny hair and interactive, mischievous personality stick out among the four dark brown, more reticent juvenile monkeys with which he shares a cage, and among the dozens of other spider monkeys at ARCAS. His disruptiveness makes Stevie the most obvious illustration of what is undoubtedly true of all ARCAS's animals: they are creatures with complex social lives; they

shape and are shaped by their environments; they are sentient. They are born into families, habitats, societies, and when they are captured from these networks and made into companion commodities – buyable, tradable, exchangeable, ownable “undead things” – their worlds are fundamentally altered. As sentient, dynamic beings they themselves are fundamentally altered.

This section of the dissertation, Part II, begins with Stevie because it ends with Stevie, and with how ARCAS is attempting to put Stevie and hundreds of other animals “back together,” or back into wild beings integrated into complex familial and ecological networks in “the wild” (Chapter 7). Before I can talk about the attempt to undo Stevie’s lively commodity form, to transform him back into a wild creature, however, I need to account for how Stevie – and hundreds of millions of other animals – is first transformed into a commodity. In other words, how do forest animals end up in people’s living rooms halfway around the world? An essential part of forming animals’ commodity lives in global live wildlife trade is that their wild and social lives are “taken apart” in the sense that they are disentangled from their previous behaviours and ecological, familial and social networks. The degree and form of disentanglement is unique to live animal commodities, distinguishing them from, say, a television set. To create the monkey on the leash – the commodity, or the undead thing – the monkey must be severed from its home and family. Its former life must be nearly extinguished.

Critically, in this chapter I frame this commodification process not as one of denaturing but rather as a particular production of nature, as Haraway’s (1992) epigraph above states. I frame commodification as a shifting of the relations that constitute the wild animal. Neither the animal nor the commodity is reducible to a pure, unified whole. As Sara Ahmed (2006) notes in the other epigraph above, there is no “itself” to the commodity, no manner in which it exists independent of the relations that constitute it, as I discussed in Chapter 3. Likewise, the animal is fundamentally a “being-in-relation” (Nancy 2000). What this means is that the animal changes when its relations change – for example when the animal is removed from the forest and enters a commodity circuit or, finally, a living room (or a zoo, see Whatmore 2002). Stevie’s wild life as a monkey in the canopy among his family is qualitatively different from his commodity life as a pet monkey in a diaper. They are constituted by distinctive sets of entanglements.

Stevie’s wild life is not, though, somehow more “pure” or “natural” than his commodity life. Forming the commodity life is not a denaturing but rather is a *different production of nature* (Smith 1984; Haraway 1992), or in this case, a different production of the animal, a shift in the set of relations that constitute animal life. The animal in other words is a different being when it is a commodity. As things become commodities, they are inserted into different relationships,

and this alters their material nature (Castree 2003). This chapter argues that the animal life – the material nature – that commodification in GLWT produces is one that is individual, encounterable, and controllable. Each of these three characteristics is, in the case of wild-caught exotic pets, central to the animal life’s ability to generate economic value. Commodification is a series of entanglements and disentanglements that reorder the relations that constitute animal life so that these three characteristics are amplified.

Some might argue that this approach to understanding commodification as a mere shifting of relations takes us down the path of moral relativism. Indeed, this relational approach “calls into question the possibility of anchoring ethical arguments in the fixed or essential characteristics of worldly entities (Castree 2003, 10). Instead, though, attention must be directed to determining what relational contexts and conditions support multispecies flourishing. Not all productions of nature are equally created; not all relations exact the same degree of violence and suffering. By violence and suffering I refer to the widespread death and diminished capacity for free and creative life that accompany captivity (see Acampora 2010). Different sets of relations engender violence and suffering, just as they engender freedom and creativity. The question is, who has a chance for life within lively commodity configurations, and what kind of life?

An equally central tenet of this chapter is that the commodity form is not pre-given or ahistorical. As Prudham (2009, 137) states, “the commodity form of things is not inherent to them. Commodities are made, not born”. Commodities have histories, in other words, and politics. In this chapter I examine the power dynamics of the exotic pet’s making as a commodity. These power dynamics coalesce around the human-animal binary introduced in Chapter 3, which this dissertation argues is absolutely integral to global live wildlife trade. Within this wider argument, this chapter’s objective is to begin to trace the relationship between Stevie’s wild life as a spider monkey and his commodity life as a pet monkey. Drawing on economic sociology and geographical literature concerning commodity formation outlined in Chapter 3, the chapter provides a detailed account of wild animal capture, the first stage of the commodity chain of GLWT’s lively commodities, or commodities whose value depends not only on being alive but also on active demonstrations of life, or being *live/y*. By “capture” I mean both a specific act of catching animals and a more prolonged commodification process that seeks to enclose and control biophysical nature in a particular form (Watts 2000; 2004): in this case, an encounterable, individual, controllable live animal.

This chapter begins by revisiting and further elaborating key ideas around commodification introduced in Chapter 3. I explain specifically how I theorize the process of

lively commodification, and give particular attention to the role of entanglement and disentanglement in this process. I also discuss how I understand “wildness” in this chapter and beyond, given critiques of wilderness that I briefly summarize. The chapter then proceeds to empirical research, drawing from three months of multi-site research (September, November, December, 2011), mostly conducted in a region with the problematic moniker the “Maya Forest,” a series of contested biosphere reserves spanning Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize. Before describing the capture processes that forms the exotic pet commodity, it is important to consider the geography within which this chapter unfolds. The place and its politics are decidedly not a passive backdrop upon which the action of wildlife trade plays out, but rather are an uneven and active terrain shaping social, political, economic and ecological relations and therefore also the traded animals themselves. Section 5.3 provides a brief introduction to this charged geography. Next, I introduce the animals I encountered most frequently in the interests of describing their wild lives pre-commodification (section 5.4). The mechanics of animal capture and a general picture of the early commodity chain for captured forest animals in the region comprises section 5.5. In the conclusion, this process is situated within the broader commodity chain of global live wildlife trade and its reliance on and performance of the human/animal binary.

5.2 Theorizing wildness and lively commodification

As stated in Chapter 1, I am focused on a specific type of lively commodity: wild-caught animals within global live wildlife trade, most of whom are traded as exotic pets. This section lays out the theoretical ground for studying the transformation of wild animals into these specific lively commodities, a transformation whereby their animal life becomes encounterable, individual and controllable. To do so it is necessary to develop a sense of the state that precedes commodification, in other words, the state of being a wild animal.³¹ This state is a relational one, as discussed above, and not more or less natural than the state of being a commodity. Care must be taken here in elaborating precisely what “wild” means, because both wildness and the animal have been common tropes invoked to convey a form of pure being and originary nature (Haraway 1989; 1991), a nature that exists in binary relation to culture, as Chapter 3 discussed in its consideration of the human/animal binary. This study could therefore fall into well-worn tracks of thought reproducing an idea of wilderness, wildness, and animality that geographers

³¹ Of course, wild animals can also be commodities, especially through emerging popular economies like eco-tourism or potentially ecosystem services. These are a different form of lively commodity, and are not my focus here (but see Collard and Dempsey 2013; Dempsey forthcoming).

and others have thoroughly criticized. This section begins with these critiques in order to distinguish my conception of wildness. Concepts of wildness and animality are critical to this study and, I argue, to animals themselves, in that the state of being a wild monkey in the canopy is worlds apart from being a pet monkey in a diaper. These differences are experienced at a bodily level and at a social level. As researchers we must retain the ability to register these differences, and the notion of a wild life is necessary to do so.

In the past three decades, scholars in geography and beyond have thoroughly troubled the category “wild” (Cronon 1995; Braun 2002; Suchet 2002; Whatmore 2002; Rutherford 2011; Thorpe 2012). Geographers have argued that the categories “wild” and “domestic” are a “wholly human conceit” (Buller 2004, 133). They have shown that notions of the wild are bound to concepts of nature, the primitive, and animality that exist in a binary form against culture, civilization and humanity (Plumwood 1993). Potent ideas about “wild nature” as devoid of humans have licensed the forced removal of indigenous people from lands worldwide (Thorpe 2012). Wilderness as a concept and as a materially produced state is implicated time and again in instances of colonial violence (Anderson 1997). Finally, as Whatmore and Thorne (1998, 451) note, “the designation ‘wild’ seems not to have served its animal inhabitants well, figuring them as the currency of various human desires, whose value rises with distance.” Yet, they go on to recognize, “the wild” is a potent and strategic site in and for environmental politics, and so cannot yet be so easily abandoned. This dissertation is written in a similarly ambivalent spirit. Like Whatmore and Thorne, I struggle with the question of what to do with the designation “wild” in the wake of discontent with the nature/culture dualism.

Following Cronon (1995), one of the original (albeit ambivalent) advocates of troubling wilderness, I wish to recuperate “wild” as a means of recognizing and supporting the autonomy and alterity of nonhumans. The point is not to imply that wild life can only exist “out there”, away from humans, but rather that it may require a degree of freedom that controlled (or even forced) proximity with humans does not permit. Here I also ally myself with animal geographers and theorists who have written about the imperative to acknowledge nonhuman difference (and the differences within the “nonhuman”) and nonhuman animals’ own spaces and space-making practices (Philo and Wilbert 2000; Fudge 2002; Derrida 2008; Lulka 2009; Bear 2011). Animals are beings that, Rutherford (2011, 138) writes, “work for themselves”. Their ability to work for themselves is partly what is stripped from wild animals when they are brought into global live wildlife trade’s circuits. Importantly, these are not domesticated animals like cats and dogs that have undergone millennia of intimate physical and behavioural co-adaptation with humans.

Consequently, I retain the term “wild life” to refer to an uncaptive life, one that while still fundamentally entangled in the relations that constitute it, retains the ability to work for itself and others in its social and ecological networks (potentially including humans); to express its bodily capacities for flight, for tree climbing, for swimming, harvesting and hunting; to be raised in a family, forge social ties and possibly raise its own family.

In grappling with this dynamic between wild life and the commodity form, I do not wish to imply that wild animals have an intrinsic wholeness that wildlife trade violates. On the contrary, the wild life is fundamentally relational, tied inextricably to familial, social and ecological webs. Animals living a wild life exist in a pre-commodification state that might more aptly be described as a “commodity-in-waiting” (Parry 2008): they are eligible for commodity candidacy by virtue of their status as nonhuman animals. Like Bennett (in Sullivan, 2003) of the Wildlife Conservation Society says “the forest is basically like an unguarded bank... [It is] full of products which anybody can go in and pretty much take out and sell.” If captured, these “products” – whether snakes, spider monkeys, or scarlet macaws – enter into trade circuits that transport them worldwide.

Transforming these wild animals into lively commodities produces different natures and different animal subjects. Exotic pets are necessarily *companions*, which means that the animal’s commodity life and its wild life cannot co-exist: the animal must be made captive – encounterable, controllable, individual – in order to be a companion commodity. Although animals may be encounterable without being commodities – indeed I will describe several of my own encounters with wild animals in this chapter – the exotic pet is permanently encounterable. It has no choice but to be encountered, to be touched and met face-to-face by its owner. Its encounters are tightly controlled. So is its life in general: its movements, its space, when and what it eats, whether or not it may breed, whether or not it can keep its offspring. In addition to being encounterable and controllable, the exotic pet is an individual life: generally bought and sold as a single unit, severed – or severable – from its familial and social relations. Captivity thus refers to literal spatial confinement in a cage or by a leash, and it also refers more broadly to a state of forced dependency in which the animal has few opportunities for choice, movement, or play – self-directed or otherwise.

Forming and severing ties – ties that are especially ecological and social – accomplish this process of making the animal’s life encounterable, controllable and individual. As discussed in Chapter 3, recent work in economic sociology (Callon 1998, 2002; Mitchell 2007, 2008; Callon, Millo and Muniesa 2007; Mackenzie, Muniesa and Siu 2007; Mackenzie 2009) and

economic geography (Barnes 2008; Berndt and Boeckler 2009; 2010; 2011a; 2011b; 2012; Lansing 2012) describes markets and commodities as the result of processes that establish certain relations and sever others to “qualify” goods for the market and make market trajectories (Mitchell 2007; Berndt and Boeckler 2009). Commodities are, for these scholars, “the outcome of a double process of entanglement and disentanglement” (Callon 2002, 292), of attachment and detachment, which enables the market calculation that transforms entities into tradable beings, as outlined in Chapter 3.

Callon (1998) provides the example of a human organ to illustrate his point. To be transformed into a good for exchange, an organ must be freed of its prior attachments: vascular and fleshy and also imaginative. Or as Locke (2002, 83) explains, in order for body parts to be tradable “they must first be conceptualized as thing-like, as non-self and as detachable from the body.” Once the organ is disentangled, it can become a commodity that can be exchanged, and new material and discursive ties multiply around the organ. Of course, commodities are rarely, if ever, completely divested of attachments to their prior context. In fact, as Cook et al. (2004) shows, the exoticization of a commodity through its association with far away places is often part of the appeal of commodities for consumers. Certainly this is the case in global live wildlife trade. Likewise, in Callon’s human organ example, certain attachments to the former organ host are selectively maintained even as others are extinguished, including, for example, the health of the donor and/or his or her age, gender, blood type, and so on. So while commodities are alienated, displaced and detached in exchange, their selective histories are not wholly erased and can actually serve to enhance their value and appeal. Likewise, animals’ wild lives are dynamic and they are part of an exotic pet’s appeal. Even as lively commodification consists of a series of entanglements and disentanglements to control and contain the animal, it also relies on wildness to distinguish an exotic pet from a “regular” pet, like a domesticated cat or dog.

The entanglement and disentanglement at work in lively commodity formation is, in general, especially ecological and biological. The objective is to sever the animal from its ecological and biological supports without killing it. A dead exotic pet has no value. The biological life of the animal, in other words, is essential to its commodity life. Exotic pets are in this way a form a biocapital, or capital for which a central source of value is life itself (Rajan 2006; Cooper 2008; Haraway 2008; Helmreich 2008; Rose 2006, 2008; Franklin 2007; Shukin 2009). Literature on biocapital has thus far treated “life itself” as a fairly singular and homogeneous category. But the form of life that generates value can actually differ significantly depending on the commodity in question. GLWT, as I have said, is largely driven by the

commodification of an individual, controllable, and encounterable life: a parrot perched on its owner's shoulder that can talk and ruffle its colorful feathers, or a nimble-fingered leashed monkey in a diaper and dress that can steal a lick off its owner's ice-cream cone. This is not a biotechnological life of genetic codes, or a reproductive life like captive breeding animals, although these different forms may bleed into one another. Captive breeding programs in the exotic pet industry, for example, rely fundamentally on value generation from a reproductive life (for a recent case study of reptile pet trade, see Stallins and Kelley 2013). The wild-caught lively commodity, however, begins its life not in an incubator or a cage, but in a nest, or a hole in a tree, or in the grass. To learn more about these places and animals, I set off to biosphere reserves in Mexico, Guatemala and Belize.

5.3 Investigating wildlife capture economies

Carretera Fronteriza [border highway, #307 on map below], Mexico, 28 October 2011, 3PM

When the van nears Playon de la Gloria (often known simply as “Playon,” map 5.1), a tiny settlement in southern Chiapas state, Mexico, bordered to the west by the Lacantún River and the *Reserva Integral de la Biósfera de Montes Azules* (RIBMA, or the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve) and to the south by Guatemala, I spot four women on the side of the narrow road carrying nets on long poles.



Map 5.1 Chiapas province (map by Eric Leinberger)

It has been at least a five hour trip and the van's steady stream of passengers embarking and debarking – Mexicans and *indígenas* young and old, single and as whole families – has fallen to just two: myself and another young woman wearing curiously large sunglasses, as well as the driver and his partner. It has been a beautiful and varied drive through Chiapas. From San Cristobal de las Casas southeast to Comitán (this section of the journey in a different van) the

landscape was perennially treed, steeply undulating. Eastward from Comitán the land spread out in Savanna-like fashion, dotted with the occasional tall, long trunked tree. Near Lagón de Montebello, I transferred vans again at the side of the narrow road and the driver waited with me for the next van to come. While we waited only a couple of personal vehicles drove by, the rest public vans, “*combis*,” like the one that idled beside me. This road, *Carretera Fronteriza*, which limns the Guatemalan border on the Mexican side, has often been described to me as *peligrosa* [dangerous]. Travel guides advise traveling only during daylight hours. But my next van came without incident and in no time we were in a dense tropical forest of torso-thick vines, a million shades of green, and tall trees with fat buttress roots. Along the route *campesinos* [peasant farmers] were undertaking dozens of controlled burns, ranging from small circles to entire hillsides. We passed through several military checkpoints. At one stop an officer boarded the van and asked to see my passport, the main page of which he inspected intensely for several minutes and then returned without comment, proceeding to join two of his colleagues in buying baseball capfuls of oranges from an octogenarian woman passenger seated in front of me.

Butterfly nets, I think to myself when I spot the women with their poles. I must be getting near Playon. It is a place known, if at all, for its butterfly collecting and trade. A moment later the van stops and the driver gestures that this is my stop. He climbs out and up the side of the van to retrieve my backpack from the roof, hands it to me, climbs back down, takes my pesos, and drives off. It is hot, humid, and quiet. This town – can it be called a town? – is a series of tall palm trees and small houses, smaller than two massive government signs announcing some sort of upgrade, maybe water purification. I am surprised I made it here, to the heart of the *Sierra Lacandón* [known as the “Lacandon forest”] for three days, to interview researchers and check out the butterflies. My friend Joanna’s phrase, “the middle of nowhere is somebody’s somewhere,” comes to mind. I look around for that somebody and spot two women sweeping the paved front of a square, plain Jehovah’s Witness church. I ask the women if they know Señor Ruben and Señora Anna (two locals who host, assist and accompany visiting researchers, one of whom put me in contact with them). They point me down the narrow paved road on to a dirt road, where I find Anna in her wide dirt yard filled with flowers, trees, dogs and a cordoned off area for chickens. Anna welcomes me warmly and gives me freshly squeezed orange juice while I wait for Rueben, who is out. While I sip it I watch a new white pick-up truck drive by several times, cab and box packed with men in military fatigues carrying machine guns.

The extensive military presence I encounter – mainly checkpoints and patrols – in southern Chiapas is unsurprising. Intense US pressure to stem drug and human trafficking from

Central and South America across Mexico's southern border, compounded with decades of conflict pitting the Mexican government, US-based and international conservation groups, and powerful corporations against indigenous residents and a potent revolutionary movement, *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN, or the Zapatista Army of National Liberation), over Mexico's natural and biological resources, has made Chiapas into what has been called a "warscape" (Bobrow-Strain 2001, 156, following Nordstrom 1997): a "constellation of temporally and spatially differentiated conflicts." Despite the corresponding militarization some experts suggest Mexico's southern border remains "open sesame for illegal migrants, drug traffickers, exotic animals and Mayan artifacts" (Grayson in Thompson 2006). Some interviewees corroborated this, but noted that the military presence may be partly responsible for a recent decline in wildlife trafficked in and out of Mexico. At the same time, some military personnel themselves reportedly buy and sell animals (Naranjo 2011, personal communication; also see Kretser et al. 2012).

If size and frequency of wildlife seizures are any indication, though, wildlife trafficking in Guatemala and Mexico has declined significantly in the last decade, especially international trade out of these two countries.³² Many interviewees in this study, including academic researchers and government and NGO directors, corroborated this trend. In fact, Mexico now imports far more animals than it exports, a reversal of twenty to thirty years ago (Benitez 2011, CONABIO director, personal communication). Interviewees provided several explanations, most commonly this increased military and police presence along the borders, and also simply (and sadly) a reduction in the volume of available wildlife to capture and traffic. As a result, it is estimated that the number of parrots taken illegally from Mexico and imported to the United States declined dramatically from 150,000 a year in the late 1980s to around 9,400 in the early 2000s (Guzman et al. 2007).

Ybarra (2012) also complicates the widely held notion that the entire region suffers from an "ungovernability" problem (or as one NGO interviewee [McNab, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Guatemala Director, 2011, personal communication] put it, is "anti-governed," a "black hole of governance"). Ybarra argues that this characterization of "wild" places where drug traffickers work with "*narco-fincas*" [drug-cattle ranches] inside parks, moving drugs north through the "cocaine corridor" has legitimised escalated "Green Forces": army presence

³² It is possible that reduced seizures and confiscations, especially in Guatemala, do not indicate reduced trafficking but rather are the result of government funding cutbacks to conservation programs (Morales 2011, ARCAS assistant director, personal communication)

dedicated to policing drug trafficking in protected areas.³³ The “ungovernability” problem, then, is implicated in an enduring trend toward greater state control over lands from which indigenous and local residents are excluded, often along racialized lines, which is discussed shortly.

Soon Rueben comes home, clad in high rain boots, sweatpants and a dirty t-shirt. Two people join us for a tour of the butterfly centre: a Professor from *El Colegio de la Frontera Sur* (ECOSUR), a university in Chiapas, who assesses ecosystem health through recording and analyzing forest sounds, and Rueben’s older brother, the centre caretaker, wearing a cowboy hat. The centre is in a stand of tall *caoba* [mahogany] trees on the bank of the Lacantún River. Five years ago the Mexican government partnered with various NGOs and corporate sponsors, including WWF, the Carlos Slim Foundation, and Mexico’s state-owned oil corporation, Petróleos Mexicanos (PEMEX) to implement this butterfly ecotourism project in Playon. The project is two-pronged: in a large workshop, Playon residents make art – prints, cards, bookmarks – out of locally wild-caught and captive-raised butterflies; and two large, lofty cages – they have an atrium-feel – hold hundreds of live butterflies for the 200 tourists who visit per year from Mexico and beyond.

I am told mostly women participate in the program although some men and children capture butterflies. The butterflies are mostly Peleides Blue Morphos (*Morpho peleides*), also known as The Emperor, whose wings (up to 8 inches in span) are covered in millions of tiny scales that diffract the light and generate a dazzling, iridescent blue. A similar program in nearby Chajul also sells dead butterflies to international collectors, and both projects are considering exporting live butterflies to “Butterfly Worlds” across the globe.³⁴ We enter one of the large cages, and the brilliant blue butterflies are so huge I can hear their flapping wings whoosh through the air. One lands on the professor’s back and it looks like he has radiant blue wings.

Powerful partnerships drive joint “conservation” ventures like Playon’s butterfly ecotourism project, ventures that are increasingly common in Mexican forests and biosphere reserves. These are partnerships between the Mexican government and the likes of Playon’s butterfly project sponsors – WWF, Carlos Slim, PEMEX – in addition to other key actors like Conservation International and Pulsar Internacional (PI), NGOs and corporations that are extremely influential and well connected, and that have financial interests in the region – in biological and genetic resources, agriculture (tobacco, bamboo, African palm and ornamental

³³ Although some scholars support such a militarized response to wildlife and environmental protection (see Humphreys and Smith 2011)

³⁴ Pupae, chrysalis, and larvae can be frozen to slow their metabolisms during transport, and then heated back up in the final destination – Canada, US, UK – to be transformed into butterflies for display.

plants), eucalyptus pulp (for meeting the packaging needs of maquiladora assembly plants, see Harvey 2001), and oil. Indigenous and local groups protest vociferously against what the environmental organization Maderas del Pueblo del Sureste (in Bellinghausen 2012) calls a “global strategy of ‘territorial clearing and control’ disguised as a philanthropic ‘conservationist spirit’ [that] answers to multinational corporate interests of what’s called green capitalism, now interested in ecological conservation in the form of natural protected areas of a federal character for the purpose of commodification, appropriation and multi-million dollars in private profit.”

These struggles coalesce in and over RIBMA, a reserve that is at once heftily funded by CI, PI, PEMEX and the World Bank; a “bank” of conservation capital, biological capital, and genetic capital; home to millions of animals (including many of Mexico’s last remaining species representatives) as well as dozens of human settlements the state deems “illegal”; and a major source of trafficked animals. The day after visiting the butterflies, I cross the Lacantún River from Playon into RIBMA, a place thick with not only flora but also political-ecological-economic interests.

Playon de la Gloria, 29 October 2011, 5AM

Rueben and I get up before the sun and head down to the river, stopping along the way at Rueben’s father’s house to briefly meet him (introduced to me as one of Playon’s “founding fathers”) and his pet green parrot, whose name I did not learn. Playon is a “new” settlement, only 2 or 3 generations old, according to the men. Before, they say, it was “just jungle.” Given what I know of the evictions that have occurred in this region, I am unconvinced but before I can ask them to elaborate we leave Rueben’s father and find the boat – a wooden, motor-less, sliver of a rowboat – stashed on the riverbank, and by 6AM Rueben has used a long pole to push us off the bank out into the Lacantún, a wide, fast-moving river brown and turbid with sediment (figure 5.2).



Figure 5.2 Paddling across the Lacantún River (photograph by the author)

We have set out several hundred meters up the river from our destination on the other side, to account for the current, and our speed floating downstream far exceeds our speed paddling across the river by Rueben's sure strokes. Howler monkeys' chilling shrieks echo out from the reserve as we slide silently through the water. Latent anxieties I have been harbouring – linguistic and logistical anxieties related to traveling as a lone female in a language I barely speak, epidemiological anxieties (malaria, parasites, bot flies, this persistent red bump on my arm), anxieties about making it to Playon given these previous anxieties – burst out from their manageable buried layer of consciousness and become fixated on this river crossing. I am sure we are not going to make it. I do not speak and cling to the sides of the boat. But Rueben's expert calculations and maneuvering deliver us precisely where along the bank we need to disembark. We head off on a trail to the camp of another ECOSUR professor who is leading a group of graduate students learning how to conduct wildlife population surveys in RIBMA.

The Mexican government established 331,200 hectares as RIBMA, its first biosphere reserve, by presidential decree in 1978 with the backing of the funders mentioned earlier. Conservation organisations like WWF and CI have drawn on Myers's (1988; 1990) influential "hotspot" approach (later revisited as a "biodiversity hotspot"³⁵ metric), which identifies the globe's most biodiverse and ecologically "important" regions, to argue for RIBMA's ecological significance and to justify their persistent urging of the Mexican government to forcibly remove

³⁵ According to CI (2012a), to qualify as a hotspot, a region must 1) contain at least 1,500 species of vascular plants as endemics, and 2) have lost at least 70 percent of its original habitat.

local and indigenous settlements from RIBMA, arguing that the “illegal” residents conduct destructive controlled burns. Some groups are permitted residency in and around the reserve, namely the Lacandon, a small indigenous group that in 1971 was issued communal forest land, part of which would later become RIBMA, even though they never lived in the area (Enriquez 2011). A year after the land restitution a forest company was permitted access to the communal land. Other Mexican indigenous groups living in the forest – Tseltal, Chol, Tojolabal, and Tzotzil – were not granted rights, and violent evictions continue in RIBMA, with reports of government officials descending in helicopters to burn homes (Radio Mundo 2010). Critics argue that the evictions merely pave the way for government, conservation and corporate interests, and global capital to privatise the region and commodify its resources. Protests against such moves predominate throughout the “Maya Forest”, a region so named by the very conservation organisations that have advocated and even insisted upon these evictions and exclusions (see Ybarra 2012; Sundberg 1998, 2006).

Given these high-stakes political struggles over environment, is it even possible to speak about an “environmental issue” like wildlife trafficking without being implicated in the very narratives that ultimately work to legitimate indigenous groups’ dispossession in the biosphere reserves? There is no easy answer to this question. Clearly, a statement like “wildlife trafficking is a key threat to biodiversity in the Maya Forest” is not an innocent or uncomplicated one. Even as I am deeply concerned about biodiversity loss and environmental destruction, I remain unconvinced that the “guilty parties” are the *campesinos* and *indigenas* living in the reserves, and my allegiance lies with the persons now cast as illegal residents rather than with large environmental organizations who would see them evicted in order to “preserve” a forest with one hand, and potentially open the forest up to corporate interests with the other. I do think it possible – in fact, necessary – to consider carefully all of these things when speaking about the violence of wildlife trade. This is the complicated socio-political terrain into which Stevie and other animals that live in these forests are born. They may be “free” and “wild” but they are not untouched by the very political struggles I have just outlined. And these wider political contexts equally shape animals’ birth as commodities. For example, drug trafficking and wildlife trafficking do sometimes go hand in hand – occasionally traded by the same individuals and networks, and linked through the popularity of so-called “narco-pets” for drug lords.³⁶ So it is not merely out of a sense of geographical duty that I recount the politics of the place within which I carried out my research. These politics play an important role for animals living in these places,

³⁶ The connections between drug trade and illegal wildlife trade are touched on in Chapter 2.

and for animals that become ensnared in trade circuits within and far beyond these forests. These animals also become key political actors in the struggles over these places (cf. Hobson 2007; Dempsey 2010; Sundberg 2011; Collard 2013b).

Taking care with these politics means that I avoid employing the term the Maya forest (unless it is used directly in quotes), and the word “jungle”, which as Peluso and Vandergeest (2011, 254) argue is a representation for a forest that mobilizes “a particular set of geographic and political imaginaries used to justify state violence... and territorial controls” (also see Ybarra 2012). Additionally, I do not use the term “poaching,” as it carries with it problematic assumptions about who has access to what resources, where, and how, as well as who decides these things. I also exclude subsistence-based hunting from my analysis, as I am only concerned with commercially traded animals. Finally, I direct my critique of wildlife trade at a systemic rather than individual level, and reserve my deepest critique for groups involved at later stages of the commodity chain – consumers – than for trappers, who for the most part are the individuals most subject to colonial and capitalist violence and struggle to maintain a livelihood in the face of this violence. This is not to say that trappers are forced into their line of work, but that in a demand-driven economy like the exotic pet trade, trappers shift their labour in response to international demand. I now turn to an elucidation of the actual practices and constitution of the exotic pet commodity circuit in the nodes in which animals, and then commodities, are first born. I begin in this space that has just been troubled: RIBMA, home to Mexico’s last free-flying macaws.

5.4 Wild life

RIBMA, 29 October 2011, 7AM

Along the narrow trail to the research camp in RIBMA, Rueben stops suddenly and points upwards. Visible through a break in the canopy are two scarlet macaws flying side-by-side, their red, blue and yellow plumage a bright splash of primary colour against the lightening blue sky. Their long tail feathers jut out behind them in a distinctive, graduated point. As they fly they speak audibly to each other through a series of varied, hoarse vocalisations. It is a rare sight: only around 100 wild scarlet macaws remain in Mexico, all of them in RIBMA (Garcia et al. 2008).

The two macaws crossing the sky above the canopy are likely a breeding pair, and will stay that way, monogamously, for their entire lives, usually 40-50 years. Scarlet Macaws, or *Ara Macao* as christened by Linnaeus in 1758, are the largest species of parrot (order *Psittaciformes*), up to 36 inches from beak to tail. On their wide, strong wings macaws can reach speeds of over 55 kilometers an hour above the canopy in search of food, largely forest nuts, berries and seeds.

Their complex and piercingly loud vocalisations can carry for several kilometers above the forest. The birds almost always journey in pairs, lone couples traversing the canopy, save for at night, when they gather in flocks to sleep. Macaws breed approximately every one to two years, producing a clutch of two to four round white eggs, which are incubated primarily by the female for 24 to 25 days. The families nest from January-April in the holes of (often dead) upper canopy, deciduous trees. After hatching, the young stay with their parents, both of which provide care (at first, the male regurgitates and liquefies food to feed the chicks), for one to two years and the parents will not raise another set of eggs until the previous young have become independent. Scarlet macaws remain relatively dependent on their parents until they reach sexual maturity at three or four years of age.

A macaw chick cracks out of its shell, slimy and wet, into a nest in a hole in a tall tree in the rainforest canopy. It experiences moments such as its first flight, being cleaned by its parents' beak, receiving liquid food from it, cracking down on a nutshell with its own beak. For thirty, forty, fifty years this macaw might fly above the trees, building nests, sleeping in flocks, incubating eggs, raising chicks. This free-flying life constitutes and is constituted by a network of relations: relations with nuts, trees, the air and the sky, a mate, offspring, rain and sun. During an extended period of parental dependence young macaws learn the complex behaviours and communication that have led humans to bestow on scarlet macaws the distinction of being one of the world's smartest birds. Unfortunately, this intelligence and the ability to mimic human speech, coupled with their beauty – the aforementioned brilliant primary colouring (figure 5.3) – make scarlet macaws both one of the most expensive, popular pets and commonly trafficked animals.



Figure 5.3 Scarlet macaws (photograph by the author)

Due to the pet trade and habitat loss, scarlet macaws populations have been reduced to a fraction of their former numbers, and while still a widely distributed species, remaining macaw populations tend to be confined to fragmented habitat and limited numbers. Scarlet macaws have been listed as a CITES Appendix 1 species since 1985, but illicit trade thrives.³⁷ In my field research at this stage, when the exotic pet is first formed, scarlet macaws were one of only two traded species I encountered in the wild. The other was spider monkeys, like Stevie. A month and a half after following Rueben along the trail in RIBMA I saw wild spider monkeys for the first time, in another biosphere reserve, in another country.

Maya Biosphere Reserve, 03 December 2011, 8AM

So far there is not a rustle in the trees. I am perched above the canopy on the side of a massive Mayan temple, the tallest in Tikal national park (Map 5.2), one of the “core zones” of the Maya Biosphere Reserve (MBR), a place as politically contentious as RIBMA (see Sundberg 1998;

³⁷ Also, since 1997 Surinam has been allotted an annual export quota of 100 live, wild-caught scarlet macaws. Importing permits for these birds are only awarded for non-commercial purposes. Import destinations include Singapore, the US, United Arab Emirates, Thailand, South Africa, Russia, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Mexico, Bahrain, Dominican Republic,

2003; Ybarra 2012). The forest stretches out in all directions, fading green to dark blue into the mist (figure 5.4). Three temples straight ahead rise uncannily straight out of the trees. But my eyes are on the foreground, scanning for spider monkeys.



Map 5.2 Tikal and MBR (map by Eric Leinberger)



Figure 5.4 Looking out across forest in the MBR (photograph by the author)

Spider monkeys, as Rosenberger et al. (2008, 19) describe, “cast a distinct morphological silhouette”: long spindly limbs and a snaky prehensile tail arching from a narrow pot-belly, topped by a short neck supporting a small round head and blunt face. Their diet of little other than rapidly metabolized fruit (supplemented by leaves, flowers, seeds and roots, see Di Fiore et al. 2008) affords them an “unmatched high energy lifestyle” (Rosenberger et al. 2008, 19) (figure 5.5). The monkeys’ lithe skeleton suspends and hurls their body weight enabling them to “deftly fly and lope through the trees as if gravity and substrate did not matter and hands, feet and tail were octopus tentacles” (19) in search of ripe fruit in the upper canopy of a stratified tropical rain forest. Each limb ends in four long, thin fingers (absent thumbs) that can hook around tree-branches, foods, and locks. Spider monkeys’ long, prehensile tails, ending in a flexible, hairless tip with skin grooves like fingerprints, are equally nimble, and serve, for all intents and purposes, as a fifth limb.

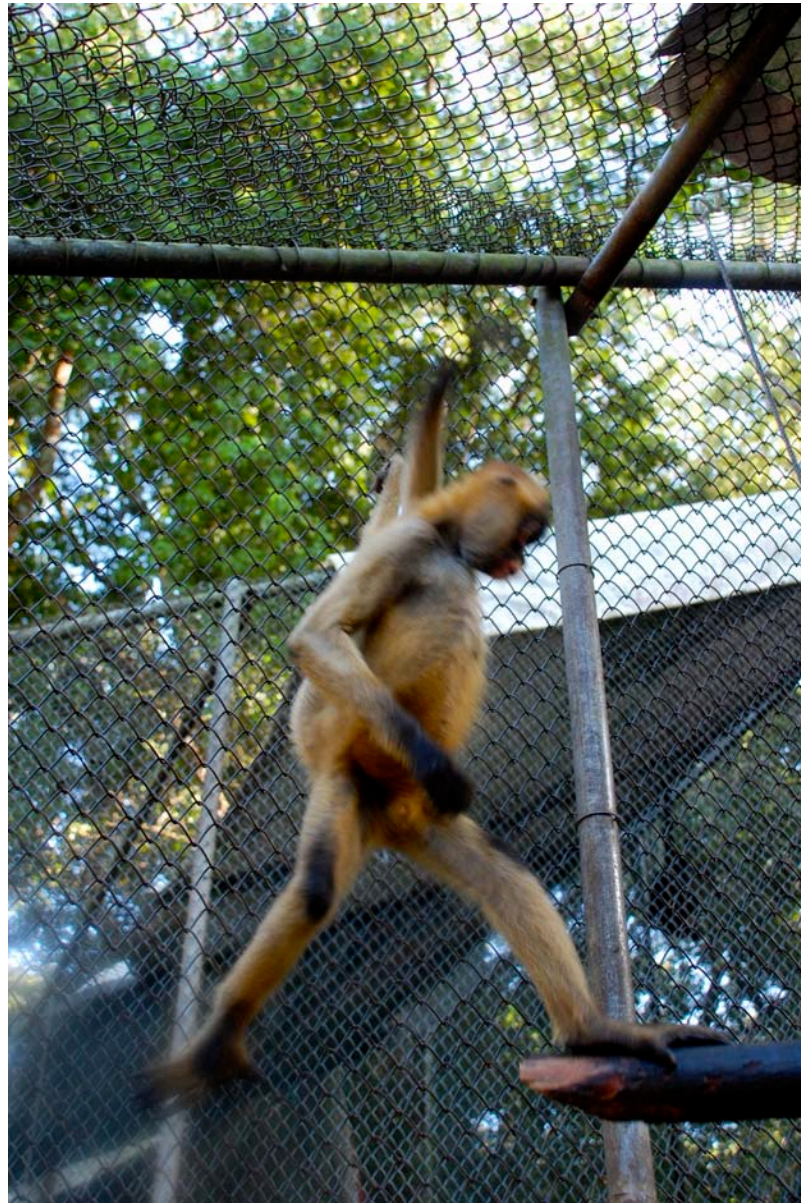


Figure 5.5 Stevie on the move (note his tail curled around the fence) (photograph by the author)

Like macaws, spider monkeys are challenging study subjects because they are fast moving, wide-ranging (Wallace 2008), and live high in the canopy. They are also almost always found in small sub-groups, characteristic of a “fission-fusion” dynamic common to primates, in which individuals from the same community spend little time as a whole group, but form temporary subgroups that continuously merge and split with the larger community (Aureli and Schaffner 2008). For these same reasons spider monkeys are, like macaws, rarely encountered face-to-face in the forest, although sounds of them are detectable high in the tree tops. While not as audible as the aptly named howler monkey, spider monkeys do communicate using combinations of what scientists variously call “whinnies,” “trills,” “tweeters,” and other sounds (see Ramos-Fernandez 2008). Neither females nor males are aggressive with each other, and

often form close same-sex relationships. Spider monkeys sleep in large sub-groups or even entire communities, pressed close into what I heard called a “monkey ball.” Mothers only give birth every three to four years. A spider monkey gestates in its mother’s womb for at least seven months, and once born it does not stray far from its mother for the first three years of its life (Campbell and Gibson 2008). This is an “exceedingly important period in the life of primates” (Wallace 2008; see Vick 2008), during which immature monkeys learn the complex social organisation and behaviours with which they will live for the rest of their lives, usually over twenty years. It is most often this three-year period of development that capture and commodification interrupt.

Swishing branches catch my eye. Two brown bodies flicker through the leaves. They move so quickly and fluidly they give the impression of being blurred. These are the first spider monkeys I have seen outside of an enclosure. Here their movements can achieve full expression, and it is something to witness. They zoom through the air acrobatically, by turns “leaping and dropping” (the technical terms, see Youlatos 2008, 187) from branch to branch, soaring as if they have wings. It is easy to imagine them covering several kilometers daily (Wallace 2008), and hard to imagine how they could ever be captured. But like macaws, they are caught and brought down to the ground – a territory to which neither macaw nor spider monkey often venture – and placed in a cage from which they will almost certainly never be permanently released alive. How precisely this is accomplished is the subject of the following section, which begins back in RIBMA.

5.5 Making the lively commodity

RIBMA, 29 October 2011, 7:30AM

The path Rueben and I are following along the river leads us to a camp: around ten tents, blue tarps, a picnic table and food tent, spread among massive tree trunks with thick buttress roots. Over a dozen people are waking up to the dappled morning sun, making breakfast, getting dressed. They are all graduate students taking a field course with Eduardo Naranjo, a professor at ECOSUR. This week in RIBMA, the students learn things like how to make transects, track wildlife, and recognize edible forest foods, like jobo (*Spondias mombin*), a delicious small tree fruit with a variety of medicinal uses, such as combating intestinal worms, leprosy, and inflammation. On the other side of the river, in Playon, I had wondered how different it could actually be just across the river, where I now stand. “TOTALLY different”, I write in my fieldnotes as I sit at the picnic table. “HUGE trees. Howler monkeys waaay up there, chirping, birds, vines – thick, long vines.” It is a thick, dense forest, much cooler in temperature. These

differences call attention to the degree to which Playon's forest is managed: selectively logged, underbrush cut back, flowers planted.

A very tall, clean-shaven, greying man dressed head to toe in khaki walks over and introduces himself as Eduardo. He almost immediately notes my lack of proper attire – I am in thin jeans, short boots, and a light long sleeved shirt. Eduardo wears loose flowing but thick, light coloured, track-pant material clothing, his pants tucked into sturdy, knee-high rubber boots. Although nothing can keep them all away, he explains that the boots and long pants and shirt are to ward off ticks, and as I later find out, his assessment of my inadequate footwear and clothes is spot on. For days to come I will be pinching blood-gorged ticks off my skin (see Chapter 4). Eduardo assures me that these ticks are quite harmless, that it is the bot flies that are really disgusting, laying their larvae on mosquitoes so that when mosquitoes feed on animals the warmth of the animal blood triggers the larvae to drop into the mosquito bite, where the eggs grow into maggots under a swelling, itchy red bump on the animal's skin. If you detect such a bump on your own skin and you wish to avoid hatching bot flies out of your arm, for example, you must place a piece of tape over the bump so that the larvae, which come up to breathe at night, are suffocated. You can then squeeze them out.

Eduardo and I sit down amid the potentially bot-fly carrying mosquitoes on a wooden bench at a table so he can tell me about his years of experience studying human-wildlife interactions in this region. I try to relax and ignore the swarms of bugs and my apparent vulnerability to them. Eduardo tells me immediately that Mexico is no longer the significant exporting region it once was two or three decades ago. At that time *pajaderos* (people selling parrots) commonly strolled town and city streets, tall stacks of birdcages piled on their backs. It is not concern for animals that has driven the disappearance of *pajaderos* and the decline of wildlife exports, but rather a constellation of factors, namely increased military presence in the aftermath of the Zapatista movement and in response to pressure from the US on Mexico to crack down on drug and human trafficking across the Guatemala-Mexico border. There is also more demand in Mexico's urban centres for exotic species, like Australian songbirds. But, Eduardo says, "I wouldn't say there is no trade at all. There's still some trade, I'm sure of that" (Naranjo 2011, personal communication). In fact, Mexico still legally exports thousands of wild-caught CITES-listed animals per year (with the appropriate required permits) (author query of CITES trade database³⁸). Ongoing seizures of illegal shipments of animals at borders and in

³⁸ The CITES database is available for public querying at <http://www.cites.org/eng/resources/trade.shtml>.

markets and airports make evident that the illicit trade still exists, even if possibly in diminished form.

Eduardo grabs his machete and with a few students we set off into the trees on no discernable trail. When I was a kid my dad would take my sister and I on walks like this – “bushwhacking,” he called it. Eduardo whacks the bush with his machete in smooth, downward arcing motions alternating on either side of his body. I walk behind him and we continue our conversation. He says parrots are among those animals still trafficked out of Mexico, and he explains how people actually catch these elusive animals. The majority of wildlife trappers do not work full-time catching animals in the forest. Trappers are predominantly male, a heterogeneous group variously referred to as “forest people,” *campesinos* [peasant farmers], *chatarreros* [scrap merchants], *chicleros* [locals who collect *chicle*, a gum from tropical evergreen trees], fishermen, indigenous people, hunters, farmers, loggers – people who work in the forest or live in or near the forest. They do not specialize in trapping (it is not their exclusive income source) but neither are they purely opportunistic trappers. They have refined and extensive knowledge of the forest and know when (seasonally and daily) and how to find animals. For birds, like macaws or red-lored Amazon parrots (*Amazona autumnalis*, figure 5.6), this means seeking out animals from May to August and navigating the dense forest through which I am currently following Eduardo.



Figure 5.6 Red-lored Amazon parrot

Typically working alone or in pairs, with one person acting as a look-out, trappers locate nests and either climb trees with spikes and ropes to access the chicks, or cut trees down and harvest the chicks from the fallen nest. Trappers require only “climbing spikes and a little piece of rope; that’s all it takes. And the gumption to go up trees and get up there and bring these birds back,” as an NGO official described to me (McNab 2011, personal communication). Depending on the species of bird, and its respective price, trappers will catch and trade as few as one bird (in the case of macaw chicks) or assemble dozens of birds to sell at once (for less lucrative species, such as red-lored Amazon parrots).

As I follow Eduardo through the bush, I ask him if it is possible that fewer macaws are now traded in Mexico because of the simple reason that there are just far fewer available to be captured. He shrugs and tilts his head to the side, appearing to neither agree nor disagree. Previous decades’ of widespread parrot capture in the region have had a severe effect, but whether this has affected trapping numbers is difficult to ascertain. Various studies (Martinez 2011, personal communication; Pires 2012, Low 2003; Wright et al. 2001; Guzman et al. 2007; Gonzales 2003) estimate that between 30 and 70 percent of birds die before reaching their purchaser. If parrots survive the journey, it is unlikely that their new homes will provide the life supports they require. Nutritional disorders like Hypovitaminosis A and disease – particularly respiratory, are prevalent in captive birds (Weston and Memon 2007). As Weston and Memon (2007, 80) note, it is “difficult if not impossible” to replicate parrots’ wild diets in captivity. Adult captive parrots also “often express affect dysregulation, hypersensitivity to environmental change, and an inability to self-regulate that presents commonly as uncontrollable aggression, general anxiety, and excessive screaming” resulting in many cases “from the disruption or diminished quality of parent-young developmental interactions, what is referred to as relational trauma” (Bradshaw et al. 2009, 1). Yenkovsky et al. (2010) argue that these captive birds suffer from a form of post-traumatic stress disorder. This is discussed further in Chapter 6.

The negative effects ramify beyond captured birds, however. As two interviewees noted (Cantu 2011; Martinez 2011), for every bird caught, a number of nests are destroyed (the process of raiding nests generally renders the nesting site useless for future nesting [Weston and Memon 2007]), trees are cut, and breeding adults are killed, delivering much more serious blows to the population than the mere number of trafficked birds might suggest. For example, a study in Peru found that 48 percent of all blue-and-yellow macaws die when their trees are felled (Gonzales 2003). Researchers estimate that, in order to compensate for these mortalities, up to four times as many parrots are captured than make it to market (Michels 2002). The effects of trapping wild

birds, then, are borne not only by individual captured parrots but also by wider parrot populations. Legal and illegal pet trade is thus identified as one of the leading reasons that several parrot species are on the brink of extinction (Weston and Memon 2007). This leads multiple researchers to conclude “the trade in parrots as pets negatively impacts wild populations and jeopardises the welfare of individual wild-caught birds” (Engebretson 2006, 272; see also Snyder et al 2000; Wright et al 2001; Michels 2002).

A similar death toll is taken on spider monkeys, another animal still trapped from RIBMA, albeit on a very small scale. Because spider monkeys babies spend most of their time physically attached to their mothers, high in the trees, trappers most commonly catch a baby by shooting its mother out of the trees. The baby, if it survives, is plucked from its dead mother’s body. It is common for the father and dominant members of the troop to descend from the trees to ward off the threat. These monkeys are sometimes shot as well. Evidently, for both monkeys and parrots “there’s a lot of death in the animal group in order to get one,” as an interviewee (Morales 2011, personal communication) remarked. What happens to the surviving animals – the parrots whose wings are clipped and monkeys whose necks are ringed with leashes? How are they moved out of the forest? What is the geography of the early stage of the commodity chain? To answer these questions, six weeks later I traveled to Mexico City, an international hub for wildlife trafficking. In the meantime, Eduardo, his students and I arrive back to the camp. I pull a tick off my pant leg and Eduardo shows me how to crush it between my fingernails.

Mexico City, 15 December 2011, 1PM

In a library coffee shop in Mexico City’s trendy Condesa district, Juan Carlos Cantu, Director of the Mexican branch of Defenders of Wildlife, takes out a pen, pulls my notebook toward him, and starts sketching four permutations of the illegal parrot pet trade commodity chain in and out of Mexico. In 2008 Mexico banned all native parrot exports and internal trading, and ceased issuing parrot trapping authorizations. Since then parrot exports have declined significantly but the country has become one of the world’s largest bird importers. In spite of these declines, wild parrot trade continues to operate in and out of Mexico, roughly estimated to be in the range of 65,000 to 78,500 birds annually (Guzman et al. 2007). How are these tens of thousands of birds shuttled out of the forest and potentially across borders?

“It happens in different ways,” Juan Carlos tells me. Always, first there are the trappers” (described in the previous section). He draws a clump of dots at the top of the page. “Most of them they sell directly to an *acopiador*, a hoarder.” Juan Carlos draws an “H” a third of the way down the page and connects it with several vertical lines to the dots. In return, even at this early,

local stage in the chain, trappers reportedly may receive from a hoarder as much as US\$100 per macaw chick, which is easily several months' income for *campesinos*. Even so, the trappers usually make the least amount of money in the chain (Morales 2011, personal communication; Cantu 2011, personal communication). The *acopiadores* or "hoarders" are middlemen and women who are more likely to be specialists working full time, year-round. Trafficking is usually their sole income. Some hoarders have experience working as past bird trappers but most, according to Juan Carlos, are just salesmen. Hoarders tell trappers where to meet: in the trappers' own homes, at crossroads, or other out of the way places. Sometimes trappers are unaware of who the hoarders are, but trappers report that hoarders always seem to know where to find them (Guzman et al. 2007). The hoarder is generally well-known by community members. Trade networks are not completely "dark." As Bergman (2009) reports after an extended period of investigative journalism in Ecuador, which included following trappers to macaw nests, "capturing animals in the jungle is common. It's not the shadowy activity people might think; it's more like an open secret."

Moving from community to community, *acopiadores* gather captured animals, buying parrots from multiple trappers, often across several states, and stockpiling birds until they have enough to transport (or sell to a transporter) and deliver to one or several distribution centers in big trucks or trailers. "Then, this hoarder, he can give it to a transporter that would go to a regional distribution centre," says Cantu, as he draws one vertical line with an arrow from the "H" pointing to "regional distribution centre. "From here it [the parrot] could go to local distributors [he draws several lines to "local distributors"] and from here, to sellers [he draws even more lines and writes "sellers"]. Cantu has drawn a national chain, internal to Mexico, and it looks a bit like an hourglass: wide at top and bottom (trappers and sellers, respectively) and narrow in the middle (hoarders and distributors). Once funneled into larger centres, like Mexico City, the animals are handed off to distributors who reallocate the animals into city markets to be sold or to sellers who smuggle the animals across borders. Distributors and sellers, like hoarders, are more likely to be working full time in wildlife trade. If the bird makes it to Mexico City, or to the US or Europe, the chick could fetch thousands of dollars. According to a study by Pires (2012, 10), a number of factors influence the parrot prices, some of which are dynamic in nature, including "abundance in the wild, accessibility, longevity, mimicry ability, intelligence, parrot genus, beauty, and distance found from market" (see Brooks et al. 2010 for an analysis of price in a different market, that in snakes). Price determination is explored further in Chapter 6.

Juan Carlos subsequently draws a local chain, similar to the national chain but lacking the regional distributor, so hoarders sell directly to local distributors. Then he draws a chain with no distributors at all, where trappers sell directly to buyers. These chains are often between families and friends, and are especially “dark,” in that it

is impossible to know how many there are, where they are, who they are. You have to go all over the country, and it is impossible. Some people have estimated that there are around 20,000 local trappers. They will trap, in the case of parrots, one parrot or two parrots a year. And not every year.

Cantu implies that the localized trade is largely insignificant compared to national trade. Finally, he sketches the international trade, which

takes animals from the same people, the same trappers. Sometimes it’s the same [hoarder]; sometimes it’s different. If it’s a different hoarder, he will take the animals, [and] evidently he won’t go to the regional distribution centre or the local distributors; he will go all the way to the border and sell it to the sellers in the border, and then they will go across the border.

Cantu draws this variation. “Sometimes the sellers, they’re going to buy their animals from the local distributors and then go across the border.” Animals are transported not only by truck over the border, but also move through ports by air and sea. Another interviewee (Morales 2011, personal communication) reported knowledge of seizures of shipping containers “filled with animals – thousands of animals in a container being moved out by sea.” Cantu looks up, shrugs and shakes his head. “So it’s very complicated and it’s not one chain, one company; it’s not one mafia. It’s very, very complicated.”

As Cantu’s sketches makes clear, wildlife trade is highly diffuse and decentralised. It is deeply spatial, involving the movement of animals from forests into cities and markets, across borders, into homes. Money accrues unevenly by the generalized principle that the “further” along the chain (from capture), the greater the profits. Although the precise methods of capture and transport and the overall commodity chain vary from species to species, region to region, generalisations can be made about the moment the animal’s wild life is dramatically altered and its commodity life begins. Essentially, this process involves capturing an animal, usually an infant or chick, and severing it from its ecological, familial and societal context and supports. Macaw chicks are captured from nests; spider monkey babies are pulled off of their mothers’ bodies. A system of replacement supports is subsequently implemented to ensure the baby animal stays alive: food, water, shelter. These supports can also be viewed as a means of controlling the animal in its new environment. The replacement supports are usually inadequate, and coupled with the stress of passing through three or four people’s hands from capture, to

transport, to sale, most animals die en-route or in the first few days of life in their new “home” in a cage in a living room, a backyard, a porch.

If the animal survives and is not confiscated it becomes owned, a piece of property. Having been disentangled from its original network it is entangled in a new network of human-provided supports. To survive in these new networks, animals must adjust to a radically different life: a commodity life. They do not have kin; they do not search for their own food; they do not fly, swim, or swing through the canopy; they do not reproduce, unless they are selectively bred in a controlled manner. Instead, they may be given iPads, stuffed animals, colourful plastic rings, and ice cream. They also have different bodies: clipped wings, surgically removed teeth, or dressed in clothing and diapers. Their survival now depends not only on the extent to which the new life is adequately enriching but also to which they can unlearn wild behaviours and acquire new habits and methods of communicating.

5.6 Conclusion

Recall the spider monkeys I describe looping through the canopy in Guatemala. Their lives depend on an intricate network of relations with each other and their environments. If they were to be captured, these relations would be severed in order to make the monkeys mobile and tradable. Upon capture, the monkeys are connected to a new network of relations: human-provided supports such as food and water. Their lives are now controllable, encounterable, and individual. This is a new nature through which capital can circulate and a managed life in which capital can accumulate. Commodification can thus be described as a realignment or rearrangement of the relations and terrain of life for captured animals, in this case, such that the life that emerges is an encounterable, controllable and individuated one. This commodification proceeds centrally via a process of severing and forging links, disentangling the animal from its “wild” relations and entangling it with new inputs required to keep it alive. In other words, in making lively commodities in global live wildlife trade, animals’ ecological ties are severed and ties with humans intensify. Animals enter into a state of forced dependency.

Specifically, this chapter examined how animals are captured for the pet trade in a region whose political complexities and conflicts form a generative context within which animals are traded. A deeply entrenched species hierarchy, a human/animal binary (discussed in Chapter 3), renders the region’s nonhuman residents eligible for commodification, renders them *animalia*

economica,³⁹ the always and everywhere commodifiable animal. This commodification is an incredibly violent process that tears animals from their homes and families in order to produce them as encounterable, controllable and individual lives. Physical capture is a crystalized moment in the initial making of the lively companion commodity. But this moment, this clear rupture in the animal's "being-in-relation" (Nancy 2000), depends inextricably on the broader politico-ethical and economic context within which animals are positioned as inferior and useable for human beings. In the case of wildlife trade's wild-caught companion commodities, animals' subordination renders them commodifiable, and their commodification compounds their subordination. This is the first instance of global live wildlife trade depending on and producing the human/animal binary.

There are key moments when the flow of animals within wildlife trade's circuits may be interrupted or disputed. Animals may be confiscated if they are being traded illegally. Animals may escape from their cages. Concerns over zoological disease or human safety may lead to bans on exotic animal imports. This dissertation argues that in these key moments, animals' subordination – their ability to be bought, sold, and killed – must be re-performed in order for global live wildlife trade to persist. The lively companion commodity must be remade. Pursuing research on this process takes us to another country, another mangle of political conflict, and another cast of animals.

Mexico-Guatemala border, 30 October 2011

My time in the Mexican forest has come to an end. A burly taxi driver takes me east along the *Carretera Fronteriza*, around a sharp 90 degree left turn in the road where the Mexico's southwestern border with Guatemala reaches its corner, then north through Benemerito De Las Americas to Frontera Corozal (map 5.1), where I spend the night. Early in the morning I take a *lancha* across the Usumacinta River, which serves as the border between Guatemala and Mexico, to La Técnica, a tiny border town on the Guatemala side, where I wait for a bus to Flores (via customs at Bethel, a town several kilometers south) (see Map 5.1). While I am waiting, a busload of young Honduran men rolls up. They intend to cross into Frontera Corozal the way I had just come, headed ultimately (and surreptitiously) into the US, with plans to live in Texas and California. In our brief encounter they are intent on a sort of symbolic exchange of currency,

³⁹ Again, this term is based off of Goldstein's (2012) discussion of "terra economica", an enclosed nature (or a "a produced nature that is not-yet, but potentially commodified" [372]) that he argues is a condition of production for capitalism.

pressing some Honduran dollar bills into my hand. I give them my remaining pesos and a Canadian toonie, just in case.

Other beings – spider monkeys like Stevie, boxes of turtles, parrots or baby crocodiles, cages of macaws – are destined north into the US as well, although they are far less likely to make it, not because they will be stopped at the border or deported but because they will not survive the journey. For the animals that do survive, they might arrive at a pet shop, or be sold online. They might also, for example, be flown into the Fort-Worth airport in Texas and be driven to a place like United States Global Exotics (USGE), in Arlington, TX, which was one of the US's largest sellers of exotic animals until it was shut down in 2009. While it functioned USGE shipped mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects, and other animals to pet stores, breeders, and wholesale distributors, including suppliers to the major pet chains all over the US. An undercover worker from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) discovered and reported that tens of thousands of exotic animals – snakes, lizards, turtles, sloths – were being confined in crowded and filthy enclosures in USGE's Texas facility. A subsequent Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) raid seized 26,000 animals. Hundreds more animals were found frozen to death in a freezer.

Millions of animals passed through USGE's warehouse, and although few other warehouses of that scale exist in the US, there is a vast network of smaller companies buying and selling exotic animals, places called things like Country Ark Exotics, Critter Country Animal Farm, or Vic's Exotics.⁴⁰ The following chapter describes one manner in which this exchange popularly occurs. While this chapter sought to explain how animals are first made commodities, the next chapter examines a site and process in which animals' commodity status is re-made juridico-politically, socially, and materially. The dissertation now turns to what I argue is a key site and practice in this re-making: the exchange of animals at exotic animal auctions across the US.

⁴⁰ These are all companies I saw advertised at exotic animal auctions, on people's jackets or vehicles.

Chapter 6. Exchange

Auctions serve as rites of passage for objects shrouded in ambiguity and uncertainty.

– Smith, *Auctions* (1989, x)

These deviates are using our laws of freedom to attempt to enslave us. They are not trying to free animals. They are trying to ultimately force your surrender to socialism – total government control of every facet of your lives. While our sons and daughters and grandsons and granddaughters are fighting in the name of freedom throughout the world, there are those of evil, insidiously stealing our freedoms right from under us, more effectively than any army's bullets or terrorist bombs will ever do to our country.

– Exotic animal owner's description of animal rights activists' protests against exotic pets (Hector 2013a, 3)

Like Abu Ghraib for tigers.

– PETA writer's description of a tiger menagerie in Nevada (Mackey 2013)

6.1 Introduction

For decades Terry Thompson – a sixty-two year-old former Harley bike shop owner, drag boat racer, aspiring blues guitarist, gun aficionado, pilot and Vietnam vet – operated a private animal farm on his 73 acre property near Zanesville, east-central Ohio, a local legend called T's Wild Kingdom. In animal pens scattered on the patio and driveway resided all manner of large animals: monkeys, cougars, wolves, grizzly bears. A black leopard lived in the basement and two tigers and two lion cubs in the garage. While his was a private collection, Thompson did on occasion use his animals for commercial and public purposes: he rented Heidi Klum tiger cubs to pose with; did a photo shoot with Newt Gingrich; and appeared on the Rachel Ray show as an animal trainer. Thompson was questioned several times about the conditions in which he kept the animals, but he held permits for all of them and was operating entirely under the law (at the time Ohio had among the weakest state exotic animal regulation in the US), so when Thompson's home was raided in 2008, it was not for his "wild kingdom" but for 133 seized guns, a few of which were illegally possessed (Heath, Chris 2012). After serving a year and a day in federal prison, Thompson was released, but his wife had left him, and he was in significant debt. On Oct 18, 2011, Thompson cut open several cages, freed 56 of his animals, and then shot himself.

Sheriff Matt Lutz's office started receiving phone calls at around 5.30pm that day: wild animals were loose on a road that runs under Interstate 70. Neighbours spotted a black bear and then a lion wandering around Thompson's property. The county sheriff's deputies and other law

enforcement officials came to the property first with handguns, and later with assault rifles and over two days shot 49 of the 56 released animals. One other animal has never been found – a macaque, which is presumed to have died at the hands of a big cat – and six animals were tranquilized and brought to a quarantined area of the Columbus zoo. Various species of monkeys found alive in cages inside the Thompson house were similarly quarantined. In a rare common voice, animal rights groups and exotic animal owners both criticized the mass killing. But Sheriff Lutz (2011, in Bishop and Williams 2011) maintained “we could not have animals running loose in the county.” He went on: “We are not talking about your normal everyday house cat or dog. These are 300-pound Bengal tigers that we have had to put down.”

A thirty-foot deep hole was dug on the farm, and on a wet Wednesday afternoon, the animals were lifted by the backhoe-load, dropped in the hole, and dirt was dragged over them in the mass grave.⁴¹ In the year after the event, legislation that was already in the works to tighten restrictions on animal ownership was pushed through in Ohio. But even with legislation, there is little to no monitoring of exotic pet trade in many states. No one has any idea how many wild kingdoms like Thompson’s exist. It is also difficult to answer the question of where and how Thompson acquired his animals. In a manner typical of exotic pet trade, the animals came from multiple sources: Thompson was given some people’s unwanted animals as “rescues”; he sometimes traded for them with guns; and he purchased many of them at exotic animal auctions, the subject of this chapter.

This chapter opens with this grizzly tale for two reasons. First, it is a vivid demonstration of animals’ disposability (which as I have argued is a condition of not only GLWT but also capitalism more broadly), especially when their lives become uncontrollable. Second, whether or not this event actually was instrumental in pushing through the already pending legislation to ban some exotic animals from ownership, many exotic animal owners perceive it as the nail in the coffin of “free” animal ownership in Ohio, and even the US more broadly. Many animal owners are so convinced of this event’s significance, and of the extent to which “animal rightists” (the term some animal owners use for animal rights activists)⁴² will go to ban exotic animals, that they publically claim that animal rightists murdered Terry Thompson, staged it as a suicide, and

⁴¹ Jack Hanna (in Nir 2012), former director of the Columbus zoo and former exotic animal owner who now advocates stricter laws for animal ownership (much to the animosity of many animal owners), helped at the scene and remarked of the slaughter of the fifty plus animals as “beyond any horror.” “It was like Noah’s ark crashed,” he said. Exotic animal ownership and debates over its legitimacy are littered with references to Noah’s ark.

⁴² As discussed in Chapter 4, my approach in this dissertation is not allied with that of animal rights groups. At the same time, despite my misgivings, like Haraway (2008) I cannot turn my back on these groups, either (also see Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011).

released his animals, all in an attempt to further the animal rightist agenda and, ultimately, turn everyone in the US into a vegan socialist or “veganarchist” (see Heath, Chris 2012; Hocter 2013a, 2013b). The degree of hostility between animal owners and animal rightists is at a fever pitch. During fieldwork I heard multiple stories of property damage, death threats, and violence on both sides of the conflict.

Exotic animal auctions are the domain of the animal owner side of this conflict. Animal owners are a mixed bunch, of course, as I will describe. But in general exotic animal owners and their associations are unsurprisingly very pro-animal ownership. They are also very anti-animal rights, and as I’ve just described, relations between these groups are currently especially tense. When I strolled into my first exotic animal auction I naively had little sense of how much an outsider I looked, even how much an “animal rightist.” But the response I immediately and repeatedly received from auction goers over the course of observing at five auctions – ranging from suspicious and even hostile stares to interrogative questions about what I was doing there to less aggressive questioning about my accent, my lack of cowboy boots – confirmed that I was at best an oddity, at worst very unwelcome, at the auctions. Despite this reception, auctions proved an immensely productive research site. Auctions are, as I will argue in this chapter, critical exchange sites in the exotic pet trade, serving as gathering places in an otherwise diffuse economy. They are also one of the few publically available sites to observe the commonly clandestine or at least private process of buying and selling exotic animals. Auctions required no permission to attend. They allowed me to conduct sustained and detailed observation of market performances and re-performances.

Terry Thompson frequented one of these auctions I attended: a three-day event in Mount Hope, Ohio, 100 km from Thompson’s farm. I went only a few months after the Thompson incident, and people unsurprisingly treated me with a great deal of suspicion.⁴³ The auction was tense, with attendees fiercely opposed to the pending legislation that would temporarily ban exotic animal auctions (this legislation did not materialize although the animals eligible for auctioning are now more limited). The auction space featured booths promoting animal ownership and encouraging animal owners and those sympathetic to sign petitions lobbying state government to stop exotic animal ownership bans in Ohio and across the US. Indeed, several US states – Nevada, Missouri, Indiana and Tennessee, among others – are either considering such bans or have already set them in motion. Across Canada, a similar story is playing out. BC

⁴³ The evening before I went to the auction, my server in nearby Wooster, OH, was aghast when I told her my plans to attend the Mt Hope auction for research. “You can’t tell them what you’re doing, can you?” she asked.

recently banned over 1000 species of exotic animals from ownership and sale after a man's Siberian tiger killed his girlfriend, and Ontario has begun considering strengthening its minimal exotic animal regulation in the aftermath of a tiger killing his owner, who was at the time the president of the Canadian Exotic Animal Owners Association. The python incident in New Brunswick that I mentioned in Chapter 1 is renewing these debates.

Exotic pets in Canada and the US are thus what Margaret Radin (1996) calls “contested commodities”: things whose ability to “properly be bought and sold” (xi) is the subject of controversy and moral and political debate; things whose “commodity candidacy” (Berndt and Boeckler 2012) is in flux. Across North America, people's ability to buy, sell and own exotic pets is increasingly indefinite. It is important to note that these bans often do not *replace* laws that explicitly authorized exotic animal ownership. Rather, the bans typically fill what was previously a legal void. In other words, in the absence of these bans, the prevailing assumption is that animals are legitimately commodifiable, as is discussed in Chapter 3. Live, native wild animals may not be owned and traded because they are already the state's property (although they are subject to “harvest” and their dead bodies may be owned and, in some cases, bought and sold). Exotic animals are *assumed* ownable and tradable, although their ownability and tradability is increasingly contentious.

In such an unstable context, auctions play a critical role – one that exceeds their function as a site of simple exchange between buyers and sellers – within the larger economy of global live wildlife trade and its production of a particular kind of nature: lively commodities. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 5, markets (and commodities) are *processes*. They are dynamic, constantly in formation, reformation and deformation, what Çalışkan and Callon (2010) call “marketization” (also see Berndt and Boeckler 2012). Auctions have an active role in such marketization processes. They are a collective and especially exuberant performance of socio-political-economic legitimation of contested commodities. Especially in the space-time before potential illegalization (when markets are potentially in process of being *unmade*), the auction event becomes a critical space for negotiating price and enacting socio-political alliances intended to resist illegalization. When the lively commodity form (the exotic pet commodity) is under threat, the auction is a means of re-asserting the commodity form. This is, I argue, a re-making of the lively commodity.

In addition to acting as (and legitimating) a market in live exotic animals, the auction spectacle, my research shows, re-performs (both in terms of a literal performance and in terms of bringing forth and shaping the world – see Barnes 2008) the encounterable, individual and

controllable animal life that was produced during capture, as the previous chapter argued, and is at the heart of the exotic pet commodity. Exotic animal owners assert that they should have the “freedom” to own these animals (as exemplified in this chapter’s second epigraph), and they exert this at auctions. But their freedom to buy and sell and own animals depends on animals’ *lack* of freedom. This supports Wolfe’s (2003, 7) claim that “the aspiration of human freedom... has as its material condition of possibility absolute control over the lives of nonhuman others” (Wolfe 2003, 7). Therefore, the auction spectacle and space also perform particular human-animal relations, namely a subordinate role for animals, i.e. a performance of the human/animal binary. This binary exists before the auctions, of course, but I argue that the auctions a critical moment of repetitive *re*-performance of this species hierarchy.

This chapter expands on and analyses these performances, drawing from theories of performativity and market maintenance outlined in Chapter 3, as well as from literature on auctions from economic sociology, anthropology and geography. This literature is reviewed in the following section, 6.2. This chapter also draws extensively on my spectator-observation and interview fieldwork at five auctions across the US. This fieldwork is detailed in section 6.3, which elaborates on the political context and players at this particular “traffic node.” I then introduce the animal cast of characters, mimicking the structure of Chapter 5. Subsequently I describe the spatial layout of the auctions as well as their exchange processes, and analyse this space and its function within the broader economy. This chapter responds to Çalışkan’s (2010) request for more focus on practices of price realization and market maintenance, as well as Christophers’s (2012, 2543) call for geographers to pay more attention to processes of *exchange* (instead of the well-covered processes of production and consumption) and to ask “in what spatial configurations, and through what geographical processes, are economic markets produced and reproduced?” Additionally, my aim is to go beyond addressing these gaps to consider the performance of broader power relations – particularly between species – in these exchange practices and spaces.

6.2 Auction performances

Considering the practical appeal of conducting research at auctions (generally publically accessible gathering places), the rich set of social relations on display therein, and this institution’s long and continued prominence in contemporary economies (from timber to art, fish to antiques, livestock to electricity, mobile phones to carbon permits), it is remarkable and

unfortunate how few studies outside of economics explore auction space.⁴⁴ This section reviews the scant work on auctions – or work that touches on auctions – from various fields, including economic anthropology (Jarvenpa 2003; Bestor 2004; Boeck 1990; Cassidy 2005; Geismar 2001, 2008; Gray 2002), economic geography (Hughes 2000; Patel-Campillo 2011; Reiffenstein and Hayter 2006), technology studies (Graham 1998, 1999; Heath, Christian 2012; Heath and Luff 2007a, 2007b), and, most usefully, economic sociology (Garcia-Parpet 2007; Mirowski and Nik-Khah 2008; Palmer and Forsyth 2006; Smith 1989; Wilkie 2010) and the work of sociologist Jean Baudrillard (1981).⁴⁵ This is not a great deal of work, but it is enough to support four themes I draw out across these disciplines that are helpful for understanding how and why auctions hold such a critical place in live wildlife exchange.

First, rather than “perfect markets” (in the classic sense of being devoid of social influences), auctions, like other economic practices, are deeply social spaces and processes and are formed through distinctly social conditions. Second, and building from theme one, auctions are clear nodes in GLWT’s circuits, nodes that enable not only the exchange of goods but also political and knowledge-based exchange, such as exchanging information on how to deal with a sick reptile, or handing out flyers protesting an exotic pet ban bill. Third, auctions are live performances of price setting and (impermanent) formalization that occur within particular arrangements of humans, animals and technologies. Finally, building on all three previous themes, auctions have a powerful legitimizing function within the commodity network, serving to *re-commodify*, or re-assert the commodity status of, their objects of trade, which as I suggested may in many states soon be banned. I review each theme in turn before examining in subsequent sections what the themes illuminate in the US exotic animal auction context.

(I) Auctions as “perfect markets”?

Auctions are conventionally viewed as “exemplary” or “perfect” markets: places of purely economic transaction and perfect competition,⁴⁶ where a simple balance between supply and

⁴⁴ See Klemperer (2004), Smith (1989) or Graham (1999) for historical overviews of auctions in general. See Wilkie (2010, chapter 4) for an account of the history and contemporary functioning of livestock auctions, in particular. These auctions are of the most direct relevance to exotic animal auctions, as many of the same procedures are borrowed and most exotic animal auctions are held in spaces that function in the day-to-day as livestock or horse auctions.

⁴⁵ Economists have thoroughly examined auctions and auction theory, models and design, both in general and with respect to specific auctions in, for example, electricity and mobile phones. This technical and theoretical work is not drawn on extensively here because it is generally concerned with “ideal types” of auctions and less with the messier socio-economic practices of actual auctions.

⁴⁶ A number of conditions define what economists call a “perfect market” and “perfect competition”, including that none of the participants are strong enough to exert a meaningful influence over prices; the market is both a fluid one

demand is achieved and formalizes a price, right before the audience's eyes (Geismar 2001; Smith 1989). But much of the sociological and anthropological literature on auctions contests this view. In one way or another, these auction studies show that auctions are profoundly social. The account of rational, independent actors pursuing their economic interests to reach a price at the auction is at best only part of the story; in fact, "the practices, places, participants and conventions of the auction itself—what could be called its 'social structure'"—also play a significant part in shaping and contributing to the marketing process" (Smith 1989, 162). Geismar (2001, 25) extends and elaborates this point in her study of "tribal art" auctions, arguing that the idea that auctions are exemplary markets "relies on a static a-historical view of an isolated marketplace" and "ignores the peculiar circumstances of the auction – as the culmination of a set of discursive, visual and socio-economic practices." In the case of the artwork Geismar observes being auctioned, "each object's price is defined in relation to an identity selected from its various cultural histories" (26), meaning that artwork's price is relative to its association with culturally-mediated (and colonial) histories.

Importantly, as Geismar discusses, to assign a price successfully "tribal art's" association with a cultural history must effectively achieve a balance between being on the one hand "authentic" enough to be sold in the market (i.e. having the correct paper work, markings to demonstrate an association with a distant time and place) and yet not so authentic as to be removed from the world of commerce and placed into an indigenous museum. In other words, objects at auction are *selectively* severed from their sites and conditions of production (see Cheetham 2009). A similar dynamic plays out in the case of exotic animal auctions, where animals' value depends on their "exoticism", but an exoticism held in tension with a degree of domesticity. The animals cannot be seen as so exotic that they do not belong in someone's living room. Geismar's later (2008) study of Māori art in auction houses demonstrates, too, that the social and political conditions and forces at work in auctions are thoroughly heterogeneous. As she says, the auction salesroom is a "space in which multiple perspectives may coexist and influence one another, continually reconfiguring prices and understandings of ownership" (299-300). Again, this resonates with my experience conducting research at exotic animal auctions. Overall, then, rather than being a space of "pure" and free competition interacting in a spatially and temporally isolated and bounded manner, auctions and their objects are constituted by a heterogeneous mangle of socio-economic relations across time and space.

in which participants are free to enter and exit, and a transparent one in which participants all have "perfect knowledge" of the products for sale; and there is no government intervention.

Even if the auction market *does* achieve the characteristics of what is described as a “perfect market”, as Garcia-Parpet (2007) shows in her study of a strawberry auction at Fontaines-en-Sologne in France, distinctly social conditions are necessary to create these “perfect markets”. The strawberry auction at Fontaines-en-Sologne arose in the early 1980s, she argues, not “as the spontaneous appearance of a mechanism for liberating economic energies” but rather “as a social innovation resulting from the work of several individuals interested, for different reasons, in changing the balance of power between the growers and the buyers” (37). It is not, she goes on, strictly “market practices” that “constitute the market” (37; also see Baudrillard 1981; Bestor 2004). Political and social work constitute the market and its functioning. The auction market – even if exhibiting characteristics of a “perfect market” – is, then, “better conceived as a field of struggle... located in the broader field of commercial networks as a whole” (46).

Finally, in addition to the influence of broader socio-political forces moving through auctions, I understand that economic exchange at auctions is driven by bidders’ and sellers’ reasons and preferences, but not the reasons and preferences of purely rational self-maximizing individuals (the infamous “*homo economicus*”). Instead, as Smith (1989) argues, these reasons and preferences are themselves generated through social interaction in and beyond the auction. Departing from Smith, though, I conceptualise “social interaction” as constituted by relationships not only between people and other people, or people and objects, but also, critically in this chapter’s context, between people and animals. In this sense, my notion of the social is highly influenced by recent work by actor-network theorists and feminist science studies scholars who collectively argue that the social is always comprised of relations between more than just human beings. Any attempt to understand exotic animal auctions through a theoretical lens that denies the role of animals as active participants in the making of the social and the economic would be incomplete, one-dimensional, and one-sided. The social nature of auctions is entwined with their role as giant gatherers of things and people, which is addressed in the following sub-section.

(II) Auctions as collective “centres of calculation”

Whatever the auction type, from fish to antiques to cut flowers, auctions require products to be brought to a defined location at a specified time where they are inspected by prospective buyers.⁴⁷ As geographers Reiffenstein and Hayter (2006, 514; also Patel-Campillo 2011) show in their study of domestic timber auctions within flexible forestry regimes in Japan, this is one of

⁴⁷ Electronic auctions, in which virtual markets link dispersed buyers and sellers who bid remotely (see Graham 1998, 1999, 2001), are an exception to such “live markets” that depend on physical co-presence and collection.

the most important functions of local auctions, which simultaneously bring together privately-owned timber and “a large number of small-scale, dispersed log sellers (landholders) and small-scale dispersed buyers (notably sawmills)”, providing “an important forum for debate and information exchange regarding market trends, technology, and regulations.” Auctions thereby offer the opportunity for otherwise dispersed commodities and tradespeople to come together and not only conduct transactions but also potentially organize themselves politically, share resources and information, and observe one another’s products, not even necessarily with the object of purchasing them. In this sense, auctions can work to build community, as Gray (2002) discovered in his examination of ram auctions in Scotland. Reputations can be built, maintained and eroded in auction space as buyers and sellers, not to mention auctioneers and auction houses, make claims on authenticity, quality, and/or craftsmanship of their goods (Smith 1989; Geismar 2008). This process of communal sanctioning is especially critical for goods with uncertain value, which is why auctions are such amenable transaction spaces for such goods. This is discussed in sub-section four, below.

Auctions then are deeply “collective.” They are collective in the sense of being constituted by multiple entities and social groups, and also, relatedly, in the material sense of actively *collecting* objects and people into one place. Auctions are “centres of calculation” (Latour 1987), key nodes within larger networks. Centres of calculation depend on things from afar being rendered mobile enough that they can be transported to the centre (the context for Latour’s writing was a scientific lab in a colonial centre, for example); kept stable so that they can be moved around with no disruption, distortion or decay; and made combinable so that they can be aggregated and cumulated. Auctions’ role as centres of calculation is not scientific but economic: to facilitate calculations that enable the exchange of commodities involve “detaching entities, bringing them together in a common space, and providing an assessment before circulating them elsewhere” (Barnes 2008, 1435).

As centers of calculation, auctions enable not only the exchange of economic goods but also knowledge and information of buyers, sellers and even interested bystanders. Along the lines of UK agricultural shows (Holloway 2004), auctions are instrumental in the wider industry as sites and events central to re-imaging and re-branding the industry. These shows, Holloway (2004, 319) writes, “are moments of convergence, assembling farming people, entities, knowledges and practices, and non-farming publics, and allowing agricultural societies to stage managed encounters between farming and non-farmers.” Auctions similarly offer a space for “managed encounters” between the public and exotic pet owners, and for exchange of not just

goods but also knowledge and political information and mobilization. In addition, the ability to exchange all of these things tangibly, face-to-face in a shared space is an indelible aspect of auctions' ability to produce and assign value for otherwise ambiguously valued goods.

(III) Auctions as performative

In the last couple decades, performativity has become a dominant framework for understanding the formation and functioning of markets. The lineage and meaning of this term was discussed in Chapter 3, but for this chapter's purposes it is worth reiterating that to "perform" in the context of this work means to bring forth and shape the world (Barnes 2008). For performativity theorists, markets are "effects of complex embodied and concrete socio-material arrangements" among human and nonhuman entities (Barnes 2008, 1436; Callon 2002; Berndt and Boeckler 2009). An auction is a space and time in which as researchers we can observe these performative arrangements directly. And the auction is a potent performance – a spectacle as well as a powerful expression of and influence in wider economies. Geismar thus writes, "we may view the auction as a performative tournament (with a catalogue-script, a stage, an audience, and so on)" (Geismar 2001, 27-28).

For Geismar – and this point is critical for my own argument in this chapter and this dissertation more broadly – we must be able to account also for *objects'* role in these auction performances, especially in terms of *their role in constructing prices* (also see Cheetham 2009). This is to say that within the socio-material arrangements that fix a price at an auction, the life and body of the animal that is for sale is a key factor. For example, as Bestor (2004, 257) traces in his thorough ethnography of Tsukiji, Tokyo's largest fish market, bidders at fish auctions "read" tuna flesh for signs of value. Similarly, during Wilkie's (2010, 81) research on UK livestock auctions, a cattle farmer delivered a boiled down explanation of cattle price generation at auctions: "So value—sex, paperwork, and how good-looking [the animal] is." Both of these examples point to one of this chapter's central claims: it is the interplay between an object's characteristics and the broader social and historical conditions in which these characteristics are valued (or not) that produces perceptions of value. What qualities of tuna flesh are desirable, what aspects of a cow's breeding history – these are culturally, historically and socially mediated. But they are also questions of the physical qualities of what is being valued: the tuna flesh or how "good-looking" an animal is. This value is performed at the auction in the sense that both a price and a wider regard (or lack of regard) for an object are brought into being or reinforced within a collective, material-semiotic assemblage of people (auctioneers, assistants,

buyers and sellers), objects of sale, technologies (electronic auction boards, microphones, and so on), information, and histories.

This value is also performed in a more literal sense in that there is an exceptionally pronounced degree of “performance and theatricality in the fixing of price” (Geismar 2001). The series of gestures and calls between auctioneer, assistants (such as ring men, who are described in the next section) and bidders is itself an elaborate show (see Jarvenpa 2003; Heath and Luff 2007a; 2007b). The auctioneer’s chant, for example, not only monitors the bidding but also establishes “the cadence of the bidding. It does this by controlling the size of bid increases as well as their timing. It manages to take what is a very erratic, disjointed process and meld it into an ongoing, comparatively harmonious process. Like any music, it provides a unifying rhythm or theme” (Smith 1989, 117). The auction is also often arranged as a stage on which the action plays out in front of an audience that does not necessarily only include buyers and sellers but may also (as I observed frequently), include members of the public for whom auctions are a source of entertainment, especially if the objects being exchanged are themselves a spectacle, like giraffes and camels. These objects on the stage may be seen as actors (and at times in a literal sense they are – see the giraffe anecdote in section 6.4).

The performative function of auctions is strengthened further through the repetitious nature of their spectacle both over space and time. Repetition, as Butler (2010, 149) reminds us, is a key way that performances work (i.e. have an effect), the point being “not simply that such an ‘effect’ is compounded through repetition, but that reiteration is the means through which that effect is established, anew, time and again.” In this sense the repetitive nature of the auction performance – an animal dragged out, ridden on, pushed out the door, over and over, at auction after auction – can be seen as an integral aspect of shaping (and reshaping) both human-animal relations and political economic relations (namely the status of the animal as a commodity). I watched several of the same individual animals be auctioned at more than one auction in the space of three months. Animals may be sold upwards of a dozen times over their lives. For example, in 1998 when a Vancouver Humane Society volunteer went undercover to an auction in Maple Ridge, British Columbia (this was when exotic animal auctions were still allowed in BC) he met Spike, a five year old Japanese snow monkey who, when he was sold, entered his sixth home in five years. Animals like Spike are integral to these repetitious performances in their role as literal “actors” on the auction stage, and in their role as economic actors shaping the commodification process, embodying value. As I specified earlier, however, nothing acts in solitude in these arrangements. All entities involved in re-commodification (discussed in the next

sub-section), are acting in concert with one another, even if always in friction (see Tsing 2005). By re-commodification I mean a renewed instance of the commodity, an affirmation of capital in the form of the commodity. This is perhaps auctions' primary role, and is the fourth and final point to which I now turn.

(IV) Auctions as legitimizing forces

In parallel to performing a value (and price) for goods, auctions serve to perform legitimate, or uncontested, commodities. As Smith (1989) writes in this chapter's opening epigraph, auctions are for objects whose value is uncertain. This is because through the auction process, value can be *communally sanctioned* and legitimized. Echoing Baudrillard's (1981) claim that the auction is a legitimizing force, Smith (1989, 79) writes:

Objects are reborn in auctions. They acquire new values, new owners, and often new definitions. Sometimes they even acquire a new history. For these new identities to be accepted as legitimate, they must be seen as having a communal sanction. It is this search for legitimacy that underlies the communal character of auctions.

Auction communities thus “*support and utilize auctions because they are seeking a means of bestowing legitimacy on their transactions*” (Smith 1989, 78-79). Cassady (1967) noted this function early on in his explanation of why some products in certain places tend towards being auctioned and others do not. For example, he suggested that Iceland's lack of fish auctions (at the time – the first fish markets only arrived in Iceland in 1987) was because the fish that were caught and landed there were almost exclusively for canning and freezing, for which the processors would already know the standard and stable market price.⁴⁸

Throughout history, then, auctions have sometimes been a means of establishing the value of commodities that are ambiguously valued or even not otherwise deemed salable (DeLyser et al. 2004). We can usefully think of many of these commodities as “contested commodities” (Radin 1996) whose “commodity candidacy” (Berndt and Boeckler 2012) is unclear. Here I argue that through their collective legitimation of these contested commodities, auctions can be a site and process of *remaking* commodities. For an object whose “life” as a commodity may soon end (due to lack of economic value, or illegalization and/or other forms of regulation), the auction event can be a reassertion of the object's commodity status – of its ability to “properly be bought and sold” (Radin 1996, xi). Of course, many auctions exchange

⁴⁸ In his research on fish auctions, Graham (1998) found that another (more geographical) explanation for the lack of fish auctions in Iceland. A market operator told him it was more due to the high number of harbors and poor road networks linking them. This posed a challenge to buyers moving themselves and/or the fish between harbors, and points to the fundamental means by which auctions depend on the material concentration of goods and people in one place, as outlined in theme 2.

commodities whose commodity status is thoroughly accepted. But as existing research and writing on auctions makes clear, auctions also often perform a role of communal sanctification of ambiguously valued or even contested commodities. In these cases, the auction is a means of remaking the commodity.

The re-making of the commodity is performed on an auction stage through the complex assemblage of human and nonhuman entities. Exotic animal auctions, in their “collective” manner, serve as a means of legitimating contested commodities and resisting illegalization, both at an aggregate level – at the level of lobbying and political organizing – and at the commodity level, where individual commodities are re-born and their value is performed in the auction spectacle. Perhaps even more profoundly, performed over and over at these auctions is human exceptionalism and species hierarchies in which animals are made subordinate to humans (as discussed in Chapter 3). This is performed juridico-politically at the auction, and performed between specific bodies in the auction ring – ring men riding camels, for example, or children opening and closing cages to hold up and stroke lizards or snakes.

Auctions are, in sum, both performed (i.e. they are the outcome of grounded practices and socio-political relations) and they are performative (they in turn shape these relations). To see these performances play out in the context of exotic animal auctions in the US, this chapter visits several such auctions, which are operating in a charged political context that has an active role in the exchange process. The following section introduces this context largely via fieldwork observations. The auction tour begins in rural Ohio, less than 100 km from what was formerly “T’s Wild Kingdom.”

6.3 Investigating exchange at doubly live auctions

Mt. Hope, OH, 29 March 2012, 9AM

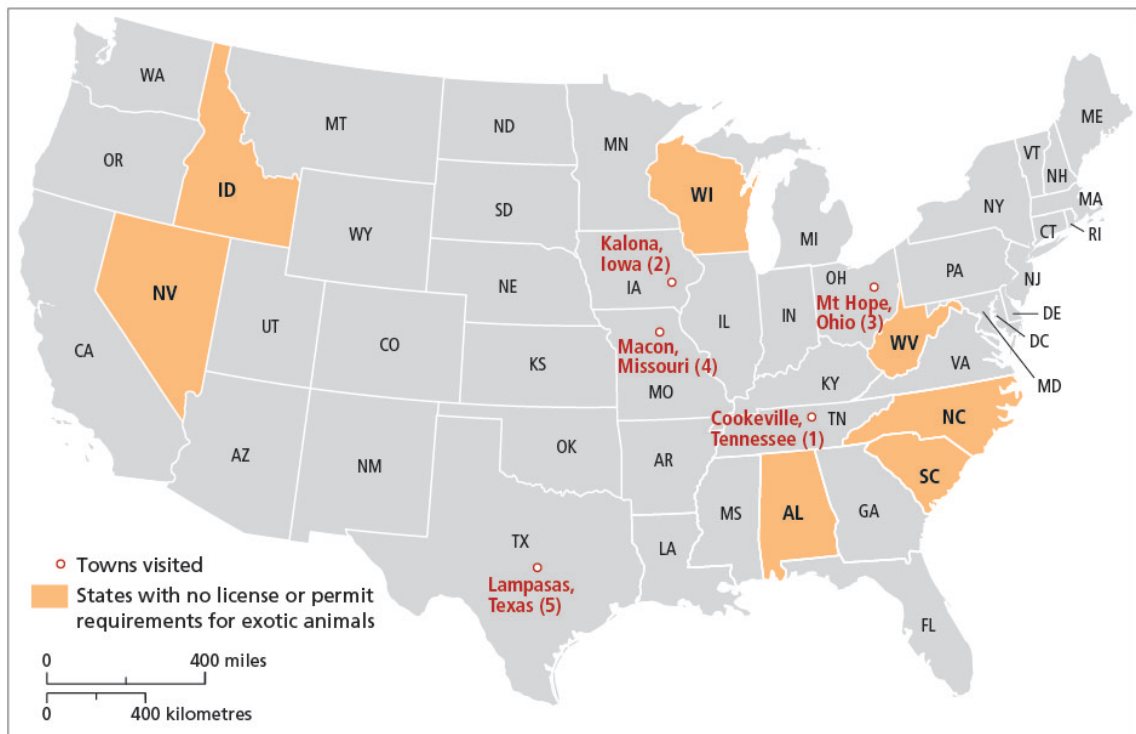
A series of country roads through Holmes County, Ohio, wind through mist, over and around rolling green hills dotted with wintery trees, plain two story farmhouses, horses and farm equipment, and finally deliver me to Mt. Hope’s centre: a four-way stop marked on opposing corners by Mrs. Yoder’s Kitchen and a small shop selling groceries, pizza, and ice-cream. I drive straight through and immediately spot the auction on my left. A long gravel driveway ends in a vast parking lot, where I pull my dusty Golf alongside a row of F350s, one ton Rams, full-sized Suburbans and Silverados. Some of the trucks’ boxes are filled with cages stacked two or three high, and other trucks are pulling long horse trailers. There are license plates from Tennessee,

Louisiana, Illinois, Indiana, and of course Ohio,⁴⁹ and bumper stickers calling for “Palin for President,” and variously supporting the Tea Party, Ron Paul, the National Rifle Association, American troops, Rick Santorum, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. It is early in the morning on the first day of the auction, which only officially starts at noon. The parking lot is not even a quarter full but there are already over a hundred trucks parked and dozens more idle in line to register and deliver their goods.

They are not typical auction goods like antique divans, works of art, or livestock. This is officially known as the Mid-Ohio Alternative Bird and Animal Sale. Trucks are unloading cage after cage, box after box, and trailer after trailer of exotic animals: insects, reptiles, snakes, parrots, monkeys, camels, and zebras. Under the recently passed Senate Bill (SB) 310, Ohio auctions are no longer permitted to sell “dangerous wild animals” (Ohio State Legislature 2013), including large predators like wild cats (cougars, tigers, and lynxes) and bears (although auctions in a few other states can and do sell these species, as I witnessed), but they are allowed to sell anything else as long as the corresponding permits are secured, and in some cases (namely when the animal is an endangered species), with the stipulation that the animal is not transported across state lines. Beyond these simple requirements, many states barely regulate exotic animal ownership at all (see Map 6.1). So here in Mt. Hope, for three days, three times per year, people from across the US gather to buy and sell exotic animals to stock their petting zoos, private ranches, backyards, and living rooms. The Mt. Hope auction is one of a handful of auctions that operate across the US in those states whose regulation permits such sale and ownership. These are “doubly live” auctions in that the bidding process is live and the object of sale is live.

From January-May 2012 I crisscrossed the US on interstates, attending five of these auctions: the Triple W Alternative Livestock and Exotic Bird Auction in Cookeville, TN, the Kalona Exotic Animal Sale, Kalona, IA, the Mid-Ohio Alternative Bird and Animal Sale, Mt. Hope, OH, the Lolli Bros Livestock Market Exotic Sale, Macon, MO, and the Kifaru Exotic Animal Auction, Lampasas, TX (Map 6.1 and Table 6.1).

⁴⁹ “We’ve got zebras from five states!” The auctioneer at Mt Hope later crowed into his microphone.



Map 6.1 US exotic animal auction research sites (map by Eric Leinberger)

Table 6.1 Auctions attended in 2012 (numbers correspond to Map 6.1 above)

	Auction	Location	X per year	Date attended
1	Triple W Alternative Livestock and Exotic Bird Auction	Cookeville, TN	4	29 February - 03 March
2	Kalona Exotic Animal Sale	Kalona, IA	4	23-24 March
3	Mid-Ohio Alternative Bird and Animal Sale	Mt. Hope, OH	3	29-31 March
4	Lolli Bros Livestock Market Exotic Sale	Macon, MO	5-6	11-14 April
5	Kifaru Exotic Animal Auction	Lampasas, TX	About 1/mo	05-06 May

Although many of these US auctions began operating as long ago as the 1940s, they all began selling exotic animals around the 1980s and 1990s. The first dedicated exotic animal auctions can only be traced back to the 1970s, although it is likely the odd exotic animal – a parrot or a lizard – turned up at regular auctions far earlier than that. Many of the auctions are family-run, and all are located in (or on the outskirts of) small towns. These auctions bear more than just a passing resemblance to livestock auctions. They are often held in auction rings and houses that are dedicated to livestock or horse sales year-round and only transform themselves into exotic animal auctions periodically. While auctions are as old as the classical era,⁵⁰ livestock auctions have only become widespread in North America since the 1950s (Boeck 1990).

⁵⁰ Babylonians auctioned wives, the ancient Greeks auctioned mine concessions and the Romans used auctions extensively, for things from slaves to war booty to debtor's property (Klemperer 2004; Learmont 1985)

At each auction I conducted what Penrose (2003) calls in her research on rodeos “spectator” observation (as opposed to participant observation). This meant attending the auctions as an audience member from open to close and observing conversations, gestures, and flows of animals in and out of the ring, as well as investigating the buildings and grounds around the auction ring, including areas of loading and unloading and storage. I also carried out multiple casual conversations and a handful of informational interviews with auction goers, buyers, sellers, and auction owners and ring men. At each auction I paid particular attention to the process of auctioning – how the auction was laid out spatially, how the bidding operated, who was buying, selling, and auctioneering – as well as socio-political activities at auctions, and finally, what animals were being exchanged, at what prices, and what features of the animals were emphasized in attempts to achieve the highest price possible. The research was fruitful. As Geismar (2008, 293) notes, “because auctions are freely open to the public, and because certain attitudes, reactions, and transactions can be read by merely being there, an anthropologist is allowed an entry point into a world marked by closed doors, secrecy, and conservatism.” Likewise, as a geographer, these auctions offered unparalleled access to an otherwise dispersed and even furtive economy, and to the spectacle of price-making and human-animal relations.

In Mt. Hope, after I have gathered my things from the car – audio recorder, notebook, crackers and carrots (no camera as they are prohibited at all auctions for reasons I will discuss shortly) – I walk towards the entrance: a small wooden booth where auction goers are paying entrance fees – five dollars per day – in exchange for attendee stickers before entering through a gap in the high chain-link gate. Near the entrance a tall man in a black baseball cap with a long white ponytail, denim jeans and a denim jacket is attaching a five by three sign to the chain link fence surrounding the auction area. In bold red capital letters at the top it reads: “THIS IS STILL AMERICA!!” Following in slightly smaller red capitals:

STOP GOVERNOR KASICH AND JACK HANNAS ANIMAL ERADICATION PLAN.
TELL THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE US TO GO HOME AND TAKE THEIR
SENATE BILL 310 WITH THEM. OHIO DOESN’T NEED THEIR ANIMAL
“RIGHTS” LEGISLATION.

The rest is in black capitals:

SUPPORT OHIO’S ANIMAL INDUSTRY. JOIN THE OHIO ASSOCIATION OF
ANIMAL OWNERS. PROTECTING ANIMAL OWNER’S RIGHTS IN OHIO FOR
OVER 22 YEARS. MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS AND ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION HERE.

The sponsoring association – the OAAO – is setting up a booth area beneath the sign, with a table of papers, brochures, donation jars, and t-shirts and long-sleeved sweatshirts in black,

green, orange and grey, emblazoned with the group's logo and the slogan "protecting *PEOPLE'S* rights." This pro-animal ownership paraphernalia is part of an effort to re-brand the industry, or counteract the idea that exotic pets are dangerous or inappropriate. With a dollar I buy a red bumper sticker with white writing: SAVE A SKUNK. ROAD KILL AN ACTIVIST. Great, I think. Just the place to be strolling around looking like an activist.

Although I do not identify as an animal rights activist, I am aware by this point – my third auction – that my accent, appearance (plain clothes, sneakers, and likely the wrong type of plaid⁵¹) and the fact that I am scribbling notes in a book mark me as not only an outsider but also "activisty", and much more worthy of suspicion in this context. While adults at the auctions regularly eyed me with suspicion, children would directly ask, in tones of wonder or puzzlement, "where are you from?" or "where are your cowboy boots?" I felt and looked as out of place at the auctions as I did at rural markets in southern Mexico. In retrospect, the degree to which I was labeled as an outsider may have been similar, but the form that "not belonging" took was quite different.

At the auctions, I experienced outright hostility at times. Many people would not speak to me at all, or if they did they would avoid eye contact and my questions. I had to be very delicate in my conversation and inquiry because auction goers are alert to undercover "animal rights people" who "try and say the animals are being abused", as a lady holding "Mia Marie", a one-year-old pet spider monkey in a pink dress, complained to me bitterly. Photographs and film are banned at all auctions, but people were reluctant to tell me why until finally an auction owner confirmed that photos are banned because of the suspicion of undercover agents, of "animal activists waiting until something bad happens or goes wrong and then snapping a picture and putting it up all over the internet and newspapers." At no point did I attempt to contravene this stipulation. As scholars have described (Han 2010; Gould 2010), carrying out research in a "hostile environment" or "behind enemy lines" can be frustrating, frightening, anxiety-ridden and exhausting, and I did not want to push my luck.

After purchasing my three-day entrance pass, I walk towards the cluster of buildings. There is an almost soccer-field sized open-air barn-style warehouse into which trailer-bed loads of dozens of cages of birds (that can tolerate cool temperatures) are being unloaded and stacked several cages high in row after row. A permanent auction building about the size of a high school gymnasium, complete with an auction ring surrounded by bleacher-style seating climbing up to

⁵¹ In an effort to fit in I consciously opted for plaid but was later given a reality check by a friend who remarked: "well did you wear farmer-plaid or hipster-plaid?"

the high roof, is attached to another barn full of stalls that empty into corridors leading in and out of the barn and toward the entrance to the auction ring. Larger animals like camels, zebras, exotic cattle (often called “African hoofstock”) are being unloaded into the stalls. Finally, several impermanent trailers are set up as “warm rooms”, in which animals requiring warmer temperatures are kept in small cages and Tupperware containers: snakes, tortoises, birds, sugar gliders. A section of one trailer is roped off with a “do not enter” sign, reserved for animals deemed more dangerous: kinkajous and some snakes, among others.

Even outside the auction, the noise and smells are overwhelming. There are so many different animal sounds that not one is distinguishable. They meld into a complete and constant racket. There are already dozens of people milling around, setting up random items for sale (not auction) around the auction yard: welcome mats, belts, pet products, rusty car parts, art, and more. Auctions prohibit any “private” sales outside the auction, but much goes on nonetheless, and includes the exchanging of goods that cannot be legally sold inside the formal auction house. Although Terry Thompson claimed he never sold his exotic animals, Chris Heath (2012) found that many in the animal world claim that Thompson did sell some animals outside the auctions in this manner.⁵² In the open yard, a couple walks toward me, both the man and woman in matching black hooded sweatshirts that say in block capital letters on the front: PETA. I watch, intrigued and shocked by their loud display of animal rights in such a hostile environment, and then understanding dawns on me as they approach close enough for me to read the fine print underneath: not People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, but People Eating Tasty Animals.⁵³

It is challenging to write about the groups involved in animal politics – both animal rights activists and animal owners – without caricaturing them. Both groups are obviously heterogeneous (the category “exotic animal owners” includes owners of tigers and carnivores *and* owners of the over 11 million exotic birds kept as pets in the US) and individuals in them are always, as my dad says, “curious mixtures”. Equally, animal rights activists may range from

⁵² “I was at an auction and he [Thompson] had a tiger that had ringworm and he had a baby monkey,” claims Nancy Wider (in Heath, Chris 2012, 13), another monkey owner. “He sold the monkey outside of the auction, because it wasn’t legal to sell inside, for \$3,500.”

⁵³ In 2001, a court battle over and between the PETAs took place in the US. Michael Doughney registered the domain name peta.org in 1995 to host a website called People Eating Tasty Animals, a site self-proclaiming as “a resource for those who enjoy eating meat, wearing fur and leather, hunting and the fruits of scientific research”. The “official” PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) sued Doughney for trademark infringement, trademark dilution and cybersquatting. Initially heard in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, which granted summary judgment to PETA, both parties cross-appealed and so the case moved to US court of appeals fourth circuit, which affirmed the district’s court ruling. The court denied PETA’s cross-appeal for attorney’s fees and costs because it held that Doughney’s action was not malicious (US Court of Appeals 2001).

direct action protesters to people who adopt animals from the SPCA. At the same time, the politics of this conflict are incredibly heated, dividing lines seem to be particularly black and white, and few people are willing to inhabit a middle ground. Extremes mark the debate, and as this chapter's second and third epigraphs demonstrate, each group uses hyperbolic rhetoric to advance its position. It is challenging to write about the conflict in a nuanced manner. Each group claims to "know" animals and animals' wellbeing, and because there are few ways to prove either side's claims about animal wellbeing (no way to ask animals themselves), the fight continues. Due in part to the bitterness of this fight, I was not able in my auction research to carry out official, formal interviews. I did have dozens of conversations whose high degree of informality was absolutely necessary to retain the participation of the person with whom I was speaking. These casual conversations were at times informative, although people were very cagey about the details of where and how they purchased various pets.

For these reasons, this chapter is not about the lives, thoughts and opinions of exotic animal auction buyers and sellers, or auctioneers. It is not an exploration into people's reasons for owning animals, and their evidently fierce protection of the "right" to do so. It is, rather, an investigation of the processes by which animals' commodity status is maintained and re-performed in the auction context, and by which these commodities are assigned value and price. So while the context for exchange I have just addressed is relevant – the patchwork of regulatory regimes for animal ownership across the US; the battles between animal owners and animal welfare organisations – the individual motivations and psychology of animal owners, and activists for that matter, are not discussed explicitly. This chapter instead follows the wide variety of objects of exchange – as one auction poster I saw boasts: "If it was on Noah's ark, chances are we have it here." It asks: how does exotic animal auction exchange occur? It also considers the political, economic and social (writ large) conditions and relations through which these objects are made eligible for such exchange. First, though, what "objects" are exchanged?

6.4 What is on "Noah's ark"?

Kifaru Exotic Animal Auction, TX, 05 May 2012, 9AM

Another round of thunder and lightening storms cracked open around me as I drove into Texas last night, compounding my feeling of dread about today and tomorrow, when I will attend my last auction, 13 miles south of Lampasas on Highway 138. Now, driving to the auction on a cooler morning than yesterday, thanks to the previous nights' storms, I scan the highway for the Kifaru Exotic Animal Auction. There are no more of the windmills and oil well pumpjacks that together incongruously littered the landscape on the drive into central Texas, only the scrubby

dry land of large private ranches with huge gates periodically marking their entrances. Suddenly Kifaru's sign flashes past me on my left and I have to turn around at the next crossroad to backtrack. This auction is the only one I attend that exclusively sells exotic animals. Its owner, Jurgn Schulz, comes from a family of exotic animal traders: his grandfather worked as a collector and trader of exotic animals – chimps, monkeys, parrots – from West African ports to Germany in the late 1800s, and eventually worked capturing and shipping animals worldwide. Jurgn was trained early in capturing and training exotic animals, including giraffe, zebras, antelopes, rhinos and carnivores from all over Africa. In 1975, he formed The Schulz Company, which became well known for shipping animals to zoos and private individuals across the globe. He also worked for years with Hollywood film crews making movies in Africa. In 1992 he moved to Texas and purchased what became the Kifaru Exotic Animal Auction in Lampasas, Texas.

There is no need for a warm room at Kifaru because the air temperature is already an adequate temperature for the tropical creatures. The animals – mostly birds – are lined up in rows in a covered but open-air area beside the barn stalls. Despite the heat, many of the birds shiver, possibly out of fear. I walk up and down the aisles of birds. They are in varying states of health. Some have picked at their feathers or those of another bird in their cage so that goose pimpled flesh is exposed around their necks or backs. There are two stunning purple-blue macaws with yellow-rimmed eyes in a large cage. I later find out they are named Barbara and Bandit. They are incredibly rare Hyacinth macaws, endangered birds that CITES lists in Appendix one, its highest level of international trade regulation. It is not surprising that Barbara and Bandit are being sold here. Kifaru specializes in birds. Its proximity to Mexico, where birds are popular pets, means that people may purchase parrots here and transport them into Mexico. This demand drives up bird prices in Texas. In addition to the Hyacinths there are dozens of scarlet macaws as well as African Greys, one of the most popular pet birds. One bird sits with a towel over its cage and a sign requesting the towel not be disturbed. Later, when I am watching the bidding, this cage comes out and when the towel is removed, the African Grey inside goes berserk, throwing himself at his cage walls and beating his wings furiously. In that moment I cannot help but think of what I have heard about studies on African Greys and how remarkably intelligent and emotional they are.

An American named Irene Pepperberg conducted prolonged research on African Greys, including the now famous bird, Alex, with which she researched for thirty years before his death in 2007, at which point he was given an obituary in the *New York Times* (Carey 2007) and the *Economist* (2007). Pepperberg bought Alex at a pet shop when he was around one year old, one

bird with clipped wings among eight in a cage, and named him Alex, an acronym for “avian language experiment”. He lived out his days in a ten-foot by six-foot room with no windows, shared with other parrots. When Alex died he could speak over 150 words and Pepperberg (2008) claims her tests illustrated he had the cognitive intelligence of a five-year-old human and the emotional intelligence of a two-year-old. Another African Grey, N’kisi, has a vocabulary of over 950 words. Upon meeting Jane Goodall after having seen a photo of her with chimpanzees, he famously asked her: “Got a chimp?” Their ability to speak combined with what is considered to be a “gentle nature” have made African Greys one of the most popular pets in the US. According to the *US Pet Ownership and Demographics Sourcebook* (American Veterinary Medical Association [AVMA] 2008), 3.9 percent of American households own birds, including finches, canaries, chickens, doves and parrots. This amounts to over 11,199,000 pet birds, 75 percent of which are parrots (see Weston and Memon 2007). As I watch the bird thrashing in his cage at the auction I cannot help but think about what a life in a cage would do to a five-year-old child.

The capture from the wild to serve the pet trade has adversely affected African Grey populations. CITES lists them as an Appendix II species. A Bird Life International (2013) study suggests up to 21 percent of the global population may be taken from the wild annually, primarily for the pet trade, with the total number of birds extracted from the wild from 1982 to 2001 potentially over 1 million. Captive parrots experience a host of negative effects. Parrots’ cognitive and emotional capabilities – what make them desirable pets in the first place – may make them especially susceptible to developing stereotypies – abnormal, repetitive, unvarying and functionless behaviours that are often performed by captive animals and are considered an indication of poor welfare – such as spot picking, in which a bird will repeatedly touch the tip or side of the bill to a particular spot — either an object or a body part, or route tracing, in which a bird will follow a precise and invariable route within its cage (Engebretson 2006). I observed many such behaviours at the auctions.

Alongside birds dozens of other species of animals are paraded before auction audiences and sold to the highest bidder. Table 6.2 provides a selection of these species, including the range of prices they received at a 2011 Lolli Brothers auction in Macon, MO. If some of the following animals sound familiar, it could be because they have been in the news over recent years as “celebrity pets”, a status which certainly enhances the animals’ appeal among these celebrities’ fans. Baby Luv, Paris Hilton’s pet kinkajou (illegally smuggled into LA), bit her; Justin Bieber’s

pet Capuchin monkey, Mally, was recently confiscated in Germany; and two Mikes – Mike Tyson and Michael Jackson – owned bengal tigers among other creatures.

Table 6.2 Examples of species and sale prices from September 2011 Lolli Brothers' Exotic Sale

General category	Species	Price range (US\$)
“Pet shop birds”	African Grey parrots	300-500
	Rose Breasted Cockatoo	450-675
	Umbrella Cockatoo	925
	Blue and Gold macaws	300-675
	Harlequin macaw	550
“Nursery animals”	Scarlet macaw	350-1450
	Artic Fox	400-550
	Coatimundi	50-400
	Fennec Fox	1600-1700
	Kinkajou	500-1400
Monkeys	Sulcatta Tortoise	70-575
	Two Toed Sloth	3000
	Capuchin	2100-6500
	Celebes Macaque	1000
	Olive Baboon	1000
Cats	Spider	7500
	Vervet	3600
	Bobcat	100-1000
	Bengal	50-550
	Caracal	1700
Camels	Cougar	585-675
	Lion Cub	700
	Adult male dromedary	3450-3800
Zebras	Adult female dromedary	3000-8500
	Adult male	2500-3700
	Adult female	3300-5500

Source: Lolli Brothers. 2011. September 2011 Exotic Sales Report. Available at: www.lollibros.com/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=KmoYN0JXQ5Q%3d&tabid=68. Accessed 12 April 2012.

I attended the Lolli Brothers auction a few months after the auction represented in the above table, and watched camels, zebras, and even a giraffe be enrolled in a performance that would secure their value in the auction space. This is described in what follows, where I turn to the performance of buying and selling exotic animals at live auctions, focusing on the relationships between humans and animals that are embodied in these performances. Auctions may “be seen not just as a means to establish market prices for often unusual commodities, but simultaneously as a way to throw into high relief the socially constructed and place-specific nature of value itself” (DeLyser et al. 2004, 766).

In particular, I query the exercise of power and ownership over live animals, demonstrating that animals’ docility – their ability to be owned and controlled by their owners and consumers – is often a key determinate in the price that is arrived at through the auction

process. In parallel, however, my auction research reveals the importance of animal live-ness in generating price. And so two qualities ostensibly at odds with each other – docility and liveness – actually work together to create a commodity whose value is derived from its simultaneous unpredictability – its ability to surprise – and controllability – its ability to be dominated.⁵⁴ For example, moments of animals behaving “out of turn”, such as a zebra braying loudly, or a monkey pulling hair, were always met by raucous audience laughter, but the deployment of a technique of control quickly followed, such as swatting the zebra with a stick to move it out of the ring, or placing the monkey on a leash. The following section is also concerned with how auction space is constructed to facilitate the performance of these twin features.

6.5 Multi-species performances of the lively commodity

Triple W Alternative Livestock and Exotic Bird Auction, Cookeville, TN, 29 February 2012, 9AM

The auction is poised to begin in a huge barn-like structure that is dark and cavernous. The smell immediately on entering is a mix of manure, sawdust and hay. Faint sounds of various animals can be heard, but many of them come from outside the barn, where people are showing off their pet monkeys and parrots. Inside, it is, at least for now, rather quiet. There is open seating in bleachers, off to each side of the reserved seating, which costs more money for its front and centre vantage point, facing the auction ring. The air is thick with sawdust that is being layered down in the ring, despite water being sprayed on it to keep it from spreading. High horizontal orange safety bars frame off the ring, which is shaped like a horseshoe whose sides have been bent outwards into a wide U.

Before taking a seat for the auction, I wander the barn’s labyrinth of stalls. You can do so along the ground, where you can look a skittish camel or zebra in the eye, or from the catwalk, gazing down at the maze of animals below. The stalls are fairly small – maybe six feet by six feet – and some of them house families of animals that will likely soon be separated through an auction bidding process known as “choice”, where the bidder with the highest bid is authorized to choose his or her preferred animal among the bunch in the auction ring. The family may be sold one by one all to the same bidder but it is more likely that it will be split up. Groups of animals are also sometimes auctioned off as a group, where the auctioneer will announce, for example, “ten times the money”, which means that all ten animals are for sale as a group, and so whatever bid is settled on will be multiplied by ten for the final price. I observed this technique

⁵⁴ In many ways these two qualities correspond to Tuan’s (1984) characterization of the human-pet relationship as constituted by two poles: dominance and affection, which is appropriately the title of his book.

mainly be used for small caged birds and exotic poultry. Animals are for the most part auctioned off individually.

The zebra family I am looking at now – a mother and two colts – might very well be the one that later today I will see enter the auction ring as a family and leave separated to different owners. This zebra family has been transported from its previous home – likely a private ranch or petting zoo somewhere in the US – to this auction, where it is further severed from its family in order to be re-attached to a new location, owner, and other entities. This is, in many ways a classic illustration of market realization and performance, which Berndt and Boeckler (2010, 565) characterize as “a two-step process. Things, places, resources or people are removed from their contexts and mobilized, before new linkages are established and new connections are made.” For many of these animals, such disconnecting and reconnecting occurs multiple times within their lives, as they change owners and roles. For example, the same animal might labour at a petting zoo, then work in the film industry, then become a private pet, then work almost exclusively as a “breeder”. Each shift in role is usually accompanied by a remaking of the animals’ set of relations – new owners, new homes, new environments.

I find a seat off to the side in public seating, and the lights come on around the ring, lighting up the sawdust so it almost glows. Men with goatees and long moustaches dressed in cowboy hats and jeans, much of their attire camouflage, enter the ring, shuffle around the sawdust-covered ring floor, and lean against the safety rails. The auctioneer, a middle-aged man in a black cowboy hat who sits in a raised booth at the centre of the ring, introduces them as “ring men” – those who will be “working the ring”: registering bids from the audience and “handling” the animal(s) in the ring. Two women secretaries flank the auctioneer. They will record all of the sales by hand taking notes. There is no computer system at this auction, although there are at most other auctions I attend. The audience begins whistling and a few “yeehaws!” ring out over the crowd.

The beginning of the auction is a bit anti-climatic, as the auctioneer starts with an eclectic mix of homemade birdhouses, taxidermied animals, and skulls. He rattles off bids and the audience continues to pour in and fill the seats. In the meantime, animals back in their stalls are being shuffled in stages from their stalls down the hallways of the barn toward the door that enters into the auction ring. Often the workers in charge of shepherding and prodding the animals around the stalls were younger men or boys, some of whom are possibly working their way up the auction labour ladder (see Wilkie 2010). The animals then wait in a holding stall before entering the ring, where the ring men urge it to trot around the ring, or in the case of horned

animals, often pick up a chair and engage in a play fight with the animal. When an agitated bull comes in the ring, the ring men climb the safety bars in a mock display of terror. They also attempt to ride many of the animals, and in some cases succeed, which drives up the price, especially for camels, which garner higher prices if they demonstrate a placid nature and the ability to take children and adults on their backs. (“At five dollars a ride, you’ll get your money back quick!” one auctioneer remarks.) The ring men use a variety of implements – whips, swatters, chairs, leads, harnesses, their own bodies, prodders, and so on – to exercise of control over the animals in the ring. For zebras, exotic cattle, and camels – animals that are not caged but run loose in the ring, although they likely have a halter or leash – I only ever observe male ring men. When the auction shifts to smaller caged animals – which can include large monkeys and wild cats – occasionally women participate in the ring, holding up small animals as they stroll back and forth across the ring, cuddling the animals and kissing them in of the audience.⁵⁵

There are eleven men in the ring now. A clump of young exotic calves run out from behind the entrance door to the left of the auctioneer booth, and it slams shut behind them. “Anybody with a backyard can have one,” the auctioneer rattles off. “Your choice on anything in the ring!” These remarks are known as “fill-ers” in the auctioneer’s chant: remarks with which auctioneers “fill in time”, inserting pieces of information to help potential buyers make up their minds. The auctioneer starts with a high bid and works his way down until someone in the audience waves a hand or jerks a head to register interest. The man in front of me is bidding and he just gives a slight nod to indicate he wants in. Then the bidding begins and the bid climbs higher and higher.⁵⁶ The ring men scan the audience for bids and shout “ho!” and sometimes raise a fist when they see a bid. The “ring-men” develop a relationship with specific bidders and when there are only two or three bidders left, the ring men urge them on to continue bidding: “she’s a real pretty one!” or “you won’t regret this, Bob”. When the calves are all auctioned off they are herded out the exit door to the left of the auctioneer booth. The women on either side of the auctioneer register all the bids and the “lot numbers” – the label that is give to each animal,

⁵⁵ Unfortunately there is not space here to discuss how auction performance often appeared to differ along gender lines. At the auction I observed the men tended to interact with the animal along lines of domination, control, manipulation, and the women along lines of quiet and even maternal display (holding the animal up, walking it around, cuddling and cradling it). See Pilgeram (2007) for an examination of gender performance at livestock auctions.

⁵⁶ This is known as an “ascending-bid” auction, where “price is raised successively until only one bidder remains and that bidder wins the object at the final price she bid” (Klemperer 2004, 2). This is the most common kind of auction among three other main types: the descending-bid auction; first-price sealed-bid (“each bidder independently submits a single bid without seeing others’ bids, the object is sold to the bidder who makes the highest bid, and the winner pays the amount she offered”); and the second-price sealed-bid auction (aka the Vickrey auction). There are also supply auctions and demand auctions. Supply auctions have several sellers selling to one buyer; demand auctions have one seller selling to several buyers.

usually as a tag on the ear, or a piece of paper attached to their cage. The door shuts behind them and it is the last the audience sees of them, unless you are one of their new owners. One of the calves is bought from someone in Florida, 700 miles away, but only 40 miles away from the Floridian who is selling the calves.

The entire process from the time the animal enters the ring to when it leaves can run as long as several minutes,⁵⁷ but is only a blip in the longer process of loading, transport, unloading, registering, and then, with a new owner, re-loading, transport, and unloading, perhaps halfway across the country. Within and beyond the ring, the auction house works quickly but there are so many animals, and often time is taken to describe their special characteristics. This is expressed in backroom conversations between owners and prospective bidders, or in informational papers taped to cages that explain features of the animals, for example what words a parrot knows (“no swear words” is a common refrain). The auctioneer further elaborates on these qualities while taking bids, all in an attempt to drive up the price. “The ’05 model [born in 2005] loves pettin’!” the Triple W auctioneer exclaims about a camel that has a little blonde girl riding its back. A zebra that does not want to enter the ring, which is a bad sign, follows shortly after the camel. The auctioneer attempts to recover the zebra’s value: “She’s used to everything!” he says. (She was at a zoo). But she does not sell: the owner wants five thousand dollars and bidding is stalled at 3,500. “If she ain’t worth five thousand there ain’t a cow in Texas,” the auctioneer quips.

At each auction I observe a similar process, logic, and spatial layout. After having briefly conveyed this via my observations at one particular auction, I now want to turn to a more focused analysis of economic performance at the auctions I attended. The theatrical – even musical (see Smith 1989) – performance of the auctioneer (who was always male as I observed) does not just mediate price generation but intervenes in key moments with assessments and information about the animals that drive the price up. In the interests of retaining an animal focus, though, I bracket this from my analysis, although I will draw frequently on auctioneers’ utterances (but see Cassady 1967; Smith 1989; Wilkie 2010 for descriptions of the role and characteristics of a good auctioneer). In addition to the auctioneer’s role in shaping price, there is regional and seasonal variation in price: for example, I noticed and was told that the auction in Texas generally receives higher prices for its birds because of higher demand for birds in that

⁵⁷ As Graham (1999, 12) notes in the context of his research on UK livestock auctions, auctions can be time-consuming affairs. “The strength of these markets is the competition between potential buyers but they appear anachronistic and inefficient: they involve large numbers of people spending half a day waiting for their beasts to be sold or the ones they are interested into be offered for sale, the marts often cover large areas of land in town centre sites which are only in use for half a day per week, and the transport of the stock from farm to mart and then from mart to buyer adds to costs and adversely affects the welfare of the stock.”

region; and I was also informed that prices for camels and zebras and other petting zoo animals tend to be higher in the spring, before tourist season, than in the fall, when people try to get rid of the petting zoo animals so they do not have to pay for their care over the winter, with no revenue.

In keeping with this dissertation's focus on the generative role of multi-species relationships and this chapter's focus on the qualities of human-animal relations at work in the functioning of the auction generally and in the re-making of the lively commodity more specifically, the remainder of the section discusses the animal features that are emphasized and performed in the auction spectacle. These include rarity and individuality; docility and controllability; and encounterability.⁵⁸ I address each one in turn in what follows, and each are in line with the features of animal life produced by commodification, as described in Chapter 5, where animal capture marks a moment of severing that forms an individual, encounterable and controllable mode of animal life, central to the lively companion commodity. Such severing, as I argued, depends on and recreates a subordinated animal – a species hierarchy in which animals are ownable and, at the discretion of the owner, killable (pets can be legally euthanized at any time). At the auction, the subordinated animal is both a condition and product of the auction performance. A speciesist order in which an animal is *animalia economica* (or always eligible for commodification and ownership) is a condition of possibility for the exotic animal auction. But the auction is also a critical site within which *animalia economica* is re-performed. The subordinated animal object and the master human subject are the auction's key repeated performances. As I will discuss in the conclusion, then, the auction is a moment of "recommodification", collective legitimation of animals' commodity status and of their subordinated position in the species hierarchy, more broadly.

As noted earlier, at auctions a great deal of performance and theatricality are involved in the fixing of price (Geismar 2001), particularly, in the case of exotic animal auction, performance staged between human and animal. From riding camels to placing parrots on shoulders, these performances are intended to display particular qualities in animal life, qualities that I argue are central to the generation of price in the auction ring. One of the first qualities I noticed emphasized during the auction process is rarity and individuality of the animal. The individuality of the animal is highlighted through emphasis on their unique abilities, like speech and tricks. Their individualism is closely connected to their rarity. Auctioneers would frequently mention things like "You'd have the only ones like 'em!"; "we haven't sold one of those since...

⁵⁸ Another quality of life that was highlighted repeatedly was reproductive ability, but because this dissertation is not focused on the captive-bred exotic animal industry, I do not consider reproductivity in a sustained manner here.

you tell me” “you don’t see these very often”; “the only one here like it!”; “you’d probably be the only person in ten counties to have one”; or “probably only 1000 of them in the US”. The animals that fetched the highest prices at the auction were endangered species, like the Hyacinth macaws I mentioned seeing at the Kifaru auction, which sold for six thousand dollars each (and I was told that only a few years ago the going price was 20,000 for a breeding pair, or 15,000 for a chick). Or the critically endangered cotton-topped tamarin pair I saw in a small cage, awaiting auction in Tennessee. They are one of the world’s rarest primates and their owner expected \$5,000 for them. Rarity is not *produced* through the auction process but rather is emphasized repeatedly.

Finally, the most expensive animal I watched sell was also the only one of its kind I saw auctioned: an adult giraffe, which could not be brought into the Ohio auction ring because it was too tall. The owner, a short older man in black cowboy hat with a red plaid shirt, blue jeans and leather boots, entered the ring instead. He spoke into a microphone about his object for sale: “he’s very gentle. Has been down the city streets. Been in New York City walking down the city streets in Rockefeller place. Been in lots of movies, lots and lots of commercials. Very tall, very handsome. Nice park animal. Real gentle.” The auctioneer chimed in: “And that’s what it’s all about – with the kids”. He reminded the audience: “He’ll haul ‘im wherever you want to go. Anywhere in the country.” The bidding stalled at 30,000 and the auctioneer paused: “You’ll never see another one like ‘im!” A final flurry of bidding followed and the winning bid stood at \$32,000. The audience cheered. The giraffe was heading to West Virginia.

Clearly rarity and the individuality of the animal are prized qualities in the lively companion commodity. A second quality auctioneers and owners frequently mentioned, and which consistently appeared to drive up the price, concerns animals’ docility, or tameness, and their controllability. This quality was both emphasized by auctioneers and sellers and was performed by the animals themselves. At the Lolli Brothers auction in Macon, MO, a woman from an exotic animal agency sold two identical male monitor lizards. She spoke into the mic from the audience as a woman in the ring held them up one after the other. Of the first, the owner claimed, “he’s dog tame. He’ll wear a harness. We use him for programs.” This lizard sold for \$235. Of the next lizard, she confessed he is less tame. He “gets nerved up,” she said, but could be handled without gloves. This lizard sold for \$175. In addition to direct claims of tameness, there are indirect means of conveying controllability, tameness and docility. I learned that “bottle fed” animals, like monkeys, camels, zebras and so on, are considered much tamer and more docile than “mother-raised” animals, which are believed to have bonded less with humans and so

therefore retain a degree of “wildness” that makes them less controllable. This is also why bird chicks are much more valuable than adult birds. As a “bird expert” told me at Kifaru, “if you want a tame bird, you can’t buy an adult; have to buy a baby and hand rear it, form a bond with it.”

Animals were also directly enrolled in embodied performances of docility and controllability. These performances occurred in concert with the human owners, or with the ring men, and with technologies of control such as leashes, harnesses, prods, and crops (or horse whips). For example, camels were forced to display tricks such as lying down on the ground, being ridden, taking a bottle from young children to demonstrate their ability to interact gently with kids, a necessary feature for petting zoo animals. Servals, or medium sized African wild cats, were paraded in front of the audience on leashes, pacing back and forth slowly across the ring under the close hand of their owners. In one especially crowd-pleasing performance in Mount Hope, the owner of a massive buffalo from Tennessee rode him into the ring with a saddle. These are all examples of a spectacle of human domination, of a performance of animals’ controllability in encounters.

Finally, and related to animals’ controllability and docility, is animals’ encounterability – that is, their ability to enter into tactile encounters with human beings – both owners and potentially paying customers. At auctions, many encounters were advertised, including the ability of an animal to be fed from a palm; the animals’ willingness to be petted and touched by anyone (for example, a monkey who “loves everyone!” or parrot who will “go on anybody!”, or a serval that will sleep on a bed with its owner); to be “handled” (for snakes and spiders); and the willingness to be ridden (if a large animal) or to be carried on one’s shoulder (if a bird), or to be played with without fear of aggressive behaviour, for monkeys. These qualities were demonstrated over and over both in the auction ring and in the audience, as auction goers sat with their exotic pets, especially monkeys. In the ring, dinner-plate sized tarantulas were removed from their Tupperware containers and placed into a ring man’s palm. Boa constrictors and pythons were draped over ring men’s shoulders, more than one at a time. Juvenile monkeys gave high fives. At one auction, two similar male African Grey parrots sold back-to-back: the first, whose sign proclaimed “wants to be petted” and is “really friendly” and “has a vocabulary” sold for \$750; the second, whose sign noted he “doesn’t like to be petted”, sold for \$550. But the difference in price between “breeder” monkeys and “pet” monkeys provided one of the starkest contrasts of animals’ price if they were or were not encounterable. Pet monkeys – generally babies or juveniles – were auctioned in people’s arms, on shoulders, drinking out of Gatorade

bottles, and they sold for thousands of dollars. Breeder monkeys – generally adults – did not come out of their tiny cages and barely fetched two or three thousand dollars.

One scene stands out in particular. From packed stands in a hot and crowded barn hundreds of Lolli Brothers auction goers leaned forward in their seats to see the next round of objects wheeled out into the auction ring for sale: a line-up of beige plastic cages, like medium-sized dog kennels, stacked two on two. Several people in the audience held juvenile monkeys and baboons in overalls and dresses, drinking pop out of straws. Straining to glimpse the cage's occupant, a murmur of excitement rippled through the audience when long, thin dark fingers slipped out through some cage's cracks. Half a dozen adult spider monkeys were on the auction block, in cages they could not stand up in. They were brought forth as "breeding pairs", and none of them had "been on display", meaning that they were not monkeys for interaction or performance. One particular 19 year old female had lost her right eye eight years ago, and had two middle fingers half amputated. "But all her lady parts work," the auctioneer assured the crowd. She sold for \$2,500. These monkeys were all "proven breeders", no longer small and docile enough for display, or to be cuddled, diapered and dressed in pink dresses and jean overalls. Their value is as breed-stock, producing thousand dollar babies to be sold at next year's auction, maybe the one in Texas, or Ohio.

The auction thus presents an unparalleled opportunity to examine the process of price performance and, in the case of exotic animal auctions, its violence. At auctions three key aspects of re-commodification are at work: first, it is collective, social and political, in that auctions bring large groups of people and animals together and facilitate their exchange of political strategies and lobbying as well as lively commodities; second, it is performative and a spectacle; and third, these social collectives and performances include the nonhuman animals that are being re-commodified. That is, specific qualities in their socio-material selves are emphasized in the commodity's remaking, namely rarity, docility and encounterability, as I have outlined. Here then we can see an instance of the commodity's re-production in a web of social relations, but social relations that are not only human (Latour 2005). Evidently specific forms of circulating animal lives and bodies enable commodity re-formation in this case. Even as price is collectively and relationally attached to these animals, though, they are simultaneously devalued politically and ethically. They are buyable, ownable, and killable – think back to the Terry Thompson incident – simply by virtue of their species.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter identified the processes by which animals are exchanged at exotic animal auctions, and the wider function of the auction within global live wildlife trade. Drawing on auction literature, fieldwork, and my own analysis, I demonstrated four key features of the auction. First, the auction is not a “perfect market” in the sense of being devoid of social forces. Rather, social relations – including relations between humans and animals – constitute auction space. Second, auctions are collective. More than any other node explored in this dissertation, the exotic animal auctions I attended are moments where highly dispersed commodities and diffuse trade come together, coalesce in a single place, before being flung apart again. Animals come from all over the United States and then are redistributed all over the country two or three days later. The auction, then, is a center of calculation in global live wildlife trade. In this manner, it serves a critical function. It is a medium for exchange of not only animals, but also for political ideological exchange, and it confers a degree of legitimation, allowing exotic animal owners to experience the strength of their numbers and reassure each other of their right and freedom to own and exchange animals. Third, auctions are performative. In particular, there are several key elements of animal life at work in the auction’s reproduction of commodities: docility and controllability, rarity and individuality, and encounterability. Auctions are thus an amenable exchange space for GLWT because they allow these qualities to be displayed as a spectacle to an audience. Finally, auction work to communally sanction and collectively value – or “re-commodify” their goods. I show that in the unstable context of exotic animal ownership in the US, auctions are an instance of collective legitimation of exotic animals as “contentious commodities”, and of socio-political organizing among animal owners.

Most importantly, auction’s multispecies performances have as their *condition* and *product* the subordination of the animal body to human mastery. The animal body that generates the highest price is a docile, controllable one, and the re-performance of the commodity is a performance of human dominance – a human riding a camel, forcing it into particular spaces, to act in particular ways. Thus the effect of the exotic animal auction is to legitimate not only lively companion commodities of global live wildlife trade, but also particular expressions of human-animal relations that enable the trade – that is, a dominant human subject and a subordinated animal object. The human/animal binary is literally played out again and again in the auction ring, and is therefore central to the logic and performance of the exotic animal auction.

Making and re-making animal life as encounterable, controllable, and individual – in other words making and re-making the lively companion commodity – is, then, the function of

capture and auction exchange, respectively. Almost exclusively, these animals only really cease to be commodities when they die. However, for the few animals whose entry into the commodity circuit is interrupted (by a confiscation, for example) before they leave their country of origin, a different kind of decommodification is a possibility. In the following chapter I examine attempts to unmake lively companion commodities through wildlife rehabilitation. I show that unmaking the commodity is essentially a process that attempts to make an *unencounterable* animal life, one that is no longer individual but re-connected to its familial and societal networks. I also demonstrate, though, the persistence of human attempts to master and control animals, even in efforts to unmake the commodity. What emerges is an ambivalent and embodied account of lively companion commodity unmaking. Back we go to the Guatemalan forest.

Chapter 7. Rehabilitation

The autonomy of nonhuman nature seems to me an indispensable corrective to human arrogance

– Cronon, “The trouble with wilderness” (1995, 87)

7.1 Introduction

Stevie squats hunched between his knees on the cement floor and glares up at me with enormous black eyes that have no whites. His blonde fur sticks up in wet spikes from his black skin and the sunlight catches the tufts from behind so that each ends in a golden point of light. Stevie appears to dislike being wet. His long, bone-thin arms whip around his body, rubbing crossly at the fur around his ribs, his skull, and the long white whiskers around his chin. He chitters softly, rapidly, high-pitched. *Cheat-cheat-cheat*, it sounds like. Stevie is only a juvenile spider monkey but he has already been cheated. Wild spider monkeys live their entire lives high in the trees, as Chapter 3 explained. Stevie’s mother was likely shot dead out of the canopy when he was a baby, and he was removed from her fallen body. A leash went around Stevie’s neck and it did not come off until he arrived at ARCAS, a wildlife rehabilitation centre in northern Guatemala (Map 7.1 and see Map 5.2) where animals are brought when they are caught being trafficked as pets. This is where I am now scrubbing the floor of Stevie’s cage – his home shared with four other juvenile spider monkeys. Thirty seconds earlier he tapped me on the shoulder, so I sprayed him (figure 7.1), because along with cleaning my job is to instill in Stevie a deep fear of humans, to make him “unencounterable” to humans. According to ARCAS’s director (2011, interview), and the organizations’ staff and veterinarians, aversion to human contact is a prerequisite for Stevie’s release. It is, I am told, his best chance at survival beyond his cage walls.



Map 7.1 ARCAS, El Petén, Guatemala (map by Eric Leinberger)

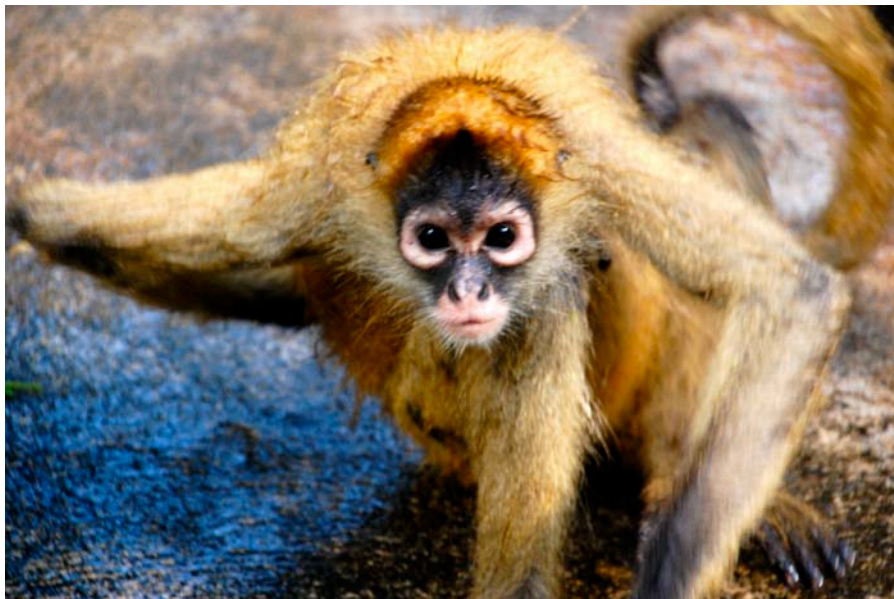


Figure 7.1 Stevie just after being sprayed (photograph by the author)

Two general assumptions underpin this goal of “making unencounterable”. First, rehabilitators assume that if animals have contact with humans after their release they are at high risk of being killed or re-commodified (Martinez 2011, personal communication; Morales 2011, personal communication; Mulford 2011, personal communication). Second, rehabilitation’s general goal is to re-instill “natural” behaviours in animals, that is, to undo the anthropomorphisms they acquired while moving through global live wildlife trade’s circuits.

Fear of humans is considered an element of animals' natural disposition. The spatial expression of this nature is a terrain in which humans and wild animals are segregated and do not meet. Rehabilitation's "naturalizing" approach – complete with its humanist segregation of humans and animals and its misanthropic distrust of humans – is at the heart of ARCAS's practices. But its efficacy is by no means robustly empirically supported; there are few studies following released animals to determine their survival rates (Martinez, personal communication), and what studies do exist have found generally low rates of release success (usually measured by survival and reproduction – see Lunney et al. 2004; Teixeira et al. 2007).

The approach is also deeply paradoxical. As Parreñas (2012a) shows in her research on orangutan rehabilitation in Indonesia, in practice, the goal of instilling autonomy in animals is carried out through many different forms of captivity and dependence on humans. She develops the concept of "arrested autonomy" as a way of understanding how subjects are forcibly made dependent while they are simultaneously regarded as potentially independent. Similarly, as I argue here, efforts to make animals unencounterable are undertaken through various forms of forced, tactile, and possibly even intensified encounters with humans. I was myself ambivalently among these humans as I labored at ARCAS. Clearly there is a great deal of tension within the project of constructing an unencounterable animal through prolonged, tactile encounters. Although the type of encounter between human and rehabilitant animal at ARCAS is policed – the emphasis being on enacting unpleasant and perhaps even punishing encounters between humans and juvenile and adult animals – there is no avoiding the fact that human caretakers provide animals with food and water at ARCAS.

For each of November 2011's thirty days I worked in this way inside ARCAS's spider monkey cages, as well as with scarlet macaws, owls, hawks, falcons, tortoises, turtles, crocodiles, green parrots, guans, and military macaws. Providing these animals with the replacement supports for what they would themselves work to secure in the wild through ecological and socio-familial networks – food, water, shelter, entertainment, love, affection, and so on – is an incredible amount of work. Staff and volunteers spend long days feeding and caring for animals and cleaning cages. Alongside such participant-observation work, to get a sense of ARCAS's methods and rationale, I carried out semi-structured interviews with ARCAS employees, including the director and head veterinarian, the assistant director/vet, the volunteer coordinators, and primatologists, as well as dozens of conversations with volunteers. But my day-to-day work with ARCAS's animals figures most prominently in this chapter. My situated and non-innocent labour and ARCAS's *raison d'être* can be broadly characterized as two-fold: to rebuild ARCAS

animals' wild lives (to equip them physically and mentally for a life "back in the wild") and to undo their commodity lives (to divest them of their dependence on human inputs and of their pet-like behaviours). This chapter interrogates these processes with the help of recent work on geographies of disposal and decommodification, and situates them within broader arguments I have made in this dissertation regarding species hierarchies and the persistence of a dominant human subject.

This chapter argues that wildlife rehabilitation is a form of decommodification, or an attempt to *unmake* lively companion commodities. This is not to say that if formerly traded animals are rehabilitated and released from a wildlife centre, they are not and will never again be commodities. There are multiple (and emerging) markets in which wild animals may be commodified, including ecosystem services and ecotourism, among others. But the value-generating life that I have argued is central to the lively companion commodity in particular – an encounterable, individual and controllable life – is the target of wildlife rehabilitation, which seeks to unmake this specific commodity. The process of unmaking is not so innocent, however, as this chapter will detail. Nor is it itself isolated from the market. Although wildlife rehab centres are usually non-profit institutions, they are also often part of an industry referred to as "voluntourism" or commercial volunteer tourism, an industry with pronounced neo-colonial contours (Brown 2009; Vrasti 2013), as I will discuss in section 7.3.

As I outlined in chapter 3, the lively companion commodity is formed by severing animals from their familial, societal and ecological networks, and entangling them with human-provided supports so that they are encounterable. The goal of rehabilitation is to destroy these ties to humans, re-entangle animals with their former networks, and make them unencounterable. Just as commodification is a particular production of nature rather than a de-naturing (Haraway 1997), as discussed in Chapter 5, so too wildlife rehabilitation is not re-naturing but another production of nature. Rehabilitation seeks to produce nature in roughly the opposite manner from which commodification produces nature. Producing an unencounterable animal is attempted through the deployment of what I call "misanthropic practices". These are actions and routines designed to instill in animals fear and even hatred of humans, driven by a pronounced lack of faith in human beings, or more specifically by the idea that contact with human beings puts animals at high risk of death, suffering, and re-commodification.

This dissertation has so far been about how global live wildlife trade both depends on and produces a subordinated animal subject and a master human subject. This chapter is about a process that purports to attempt the opposite. Wildlife rehabilitation advertises itself as a means

by which displaced or ill animals are returned to health and released back into their environments as autonomous beings. In theory I support this project, and wildlife rehabilitation is currently the only means available for trafficked animals to reclaim their un-captive lives. But the option of rehabilitation is only open to a small pool of animals, and as this chapter shows, even these animals are easily rendered ineligible for release according to rehab's rigid and misanthropic criteria (i.e. the requirement that animals fear and distrust humans).

Perhaps even more critically, the practices of wildlife rehabilitation remain tied to human dominance and animal subordination. Indeed, these roles are *performed* during the rehabilitation process. At ARCAS, the belief in a cruel, violent human figure enrolls volunteers and workers to perform this very role in an attempt to generate fear in the animal. The human/animal binary is played out again and again in the cages, with the master human subject subordinating and segregating the animal. ARCAS's pronounced lack of faith in the human, then, retains the notion that humans are in control, are dominant, and are exceptional – not only in their capacity for violence but also in their capacity to “save”. At ARCAS, it is the humans that liberate the animals, when they decide to. The pronounced degree of misanthropy that underlies wildlife rehabilitation and its ethos does not, therefore, trouble “the human” as a subject category, but rather this misanthropy retains and re-performs a bounded and dominant human subject. In other words, wildlife rehab's misanthropy is actually deeply humanist and tied to human exceptionalism. Its very practices enroll humans and animals in a hierarchical fashion, and confirm over and over again (as repetitive performances) the role of the dominant and destructive human subject. The empirical material woven throughout this chapter exemplifies this point, and this argument is revisited in the conclusion.

First, though, in order to understand *how* wildlife rehabilitation attempts to unmake the lively companion commodity, the chapter reviews recent literature from economic geography concerning decommodification and post-consumption commodity analysis, pointing to how commodity disassembly is always incomplete, is a process of dis/entanglement, and is material and performative (as well as a performance). I then turn to my own embodied experience laboring as a rehabilitator at ARCAS and convey, in a more personal and experiential sense, the ambivalence about rehabilitation toward which this introduction has already gestured. Section 7.4 briefly introduces some of the rehabilitant animals at ARCAS, especially those with which I worked while at the centre. Finally, section 7.5 details the practices of rehabilitation and theorizes them drawing on literature I outline in section 7.2. The key question I explore is: if

rehabilitation is not a re-naturing so much as another production of nature, what nature does it seek to produce, and what animal and human subjects?

7.2 Rehabilitation → decommodification → production of nature

Wildlife rehabilitation has not yet been subject to critical examination in geography or beyond (save for Parreñas 2012a; 2012b). To take a step in this direction, this chapter investigates the processes and wider implications of wildlife rehabilitation, focused on global live wildlife trade's rehabilitant ex-commodities. Centrally, I argue that this type of wildlife rehabilitation is a form of decommodification, and like commodification, decommodification is a production of nature. I define decommodification quite broadly, following Vail (2010, 310), who defines it as “any political, social, or cultural process that reduces the scope and influence of the market in everyday life.” I here both broaden and narrow Vail's definition to refer to any political, social, cultural *or ecological* process that destroys the commodity form (i.e. its ability to be exchanged), even if only temporarily, thereby reducing the scope of the market in the everyday life of the animal. This is essentially to say that decommodification involves the removal of an entity from circuits of exchange. It is not to say that the entity may not at a later point be re-commodified or be transformed into *another* commodity form (in this case, for example, become part of either an ecosystem service calculus or an idealized “wilderness” experience for eco-tourists). In assembling a critical frame for my analysis of wildlife rehabilitation as decommodification and as a production of nature, I draw from economic geographical literature on decommodification and post-consumption within commodity circuits. I use this literature to consider the attempted decommodifying practices of wildlife rehabilitation.

Although geographers widely acknowledge that commodification is “transient and reversible...[,] the stories around and beyond the commodity phase... are often still to be collected” (Page 2005, 295). While Page's observation still has some relevance, since he wrote there has been a flurry of research on so-called “post-consumption” processes. This recent growth of interest in economies of waste, post-consumption, disposal, disassembly, and recycling is helpful for understanding the complex and non-linear processes by which goods are “taken apart” and by which value circulates, accumulates, or deteriorates within these processes. Much of this work employs a marketization or performativity approach to understanding markets and commodities and their making, remaking, and unmaking.

In what follows, I review three key arguments from this literature that are relevant to my study. First, an entities' disposal is not “end-of-life” for good; discarded objects are often recommodified, possibly in another form. I use this argument to highlight how animals are never

permanently decommodified at ARCAS, even if their rehabilitation and release are successful. Second, unmaking commodities, much like making (and re-making) them, is accomplished through selective entanglements and disentanglements, through a re-arranging of entities and their relationships. Third, this severing and forging of links is deeply material, relational, and performative. It involves the tangling of bodies, technologies and objects, and the materiality of the discarded entities is itself active in shaping the proceedings and outcomes. These second two arguments are especially useful for understanding the suite of technologies and practices that workers wield to rehabilitate ARCAS's animals.

(I) Decommodification as impermanent and incomplete

As several recent studies have shown, decommodification through disposal of goods as “waste” is often not the end of the story. From e-waste that is salvaged, disassembled and re-sold in multiple parts (Lepawsky and Billah 2011; Reddy 2013), to global recycling networks in clothing and ship parts (Crang et al. 2013), goods that are “thrown away” and appear to exit the commodity circuit often are not actually at their “end-of-life”. For many scholars, this points to the “ongoingness” of economic life (Lepawsky and Mather 2011; Herod et al. 2013).⁵⁹ Most studies in this vein focus on objects that are transformed into and re-circulated as different commodities, but it is also the case that objects may enter and leave commodity circuits several times without changing form, like discarded furniture that is stumbled upon decades later and re-valued as collectible antiques (Appadurai 1986).

Particularly in the case of animal commodities, or what Wilkie (2005) calls “sentient commodities”, the potential for recommodification is ever-present. In her research on cattle ranching and the relationships that farmers form with their farm animals, she finds that often, especially on smaller farms like hobby farms, farmers begin to view particular cows as individuals, even giving them names. For Wilkie (2005, 218) this more “humanised and individualised style of human–animal interaction” represents a degree of decommodification, whose most pronounced expression is in the pet cow. She writes, however, that even these individualized and, according to her, decommodified animals may be sold again. While I disagree that pets are not commodities, Wilkie's assertion that the commodity status of livestock is not fixed (decommodified cows may at any point be recommodified) is an important one. It points to how in capitalism, animals are, in the absence of laws specifying otherwise, always

⁵⁹ There is debate about the idea of ongoingness, though. Arguing against Lepawsky and Mather (2011), Herod et al. (2013, 6) suggest that value does actually end, even as waste persists, and that these endings are “are materially determined but contextually specific, as they can change over time and between places.” According to Herod et al. (2013), in some cases it may indeed be appropriate to talk about actual endings.

commodifiable: always “commodities-in-waiting” (Parry 2008). Comparing farm animals to slaves, Wilkie (2005, 224) writes: “although the slave can become decommodified he or she remains a commodity that can be recommodified and remarketed at any time. Likewise, the commodity status of livestock is not fixed. They too can be decommodified and recommodified.” Even after death animals’ bodies and their parts may circulate within commodity circuits as taxidermy, meat, fur, and so on. Importantly, commodity status is not essential to the nature of animals (or human slaves). Rather, particular conditions – i.e. the juridico-political-economic-speciesist conditions of contemporary capitalism – make this possible.

Unlike Wilkie’s cows, which she argues are decommodified through a *strengthening* of affective ties with humans, of the “concerned attachments” that are expressed in practices of companionship and naming, the sentient commodities of global live wildlife trade are decommodified through a *divestment* of their ties to humans. To understand the severing of these ties (and the concomitant forging of other ties), I draw on another key argument from studies of commodity disposal, that decommodification, like commodification, unfolds through a process of entanglement and disentanglement.

(II) Decommodification as a process of dis/entanglement

As described in previous chapters, a key argument of market performativity theorists is that commodities are formed through a process of entanglement and disentanglement. I have argued that this is an apt characterization for the formation of the exotic pet commodity (through capture, Chapter 5) and the recommodification of exotic pets (through auction exchange, Chapter 6). My focus now is on decommodification. Most of the work on market performativity outlined thus far in this dissertation is concerned with market and commodity making and maintenance. Much less of it addresses “demarketization” or market and commodity dissolution. However, recent studies in economic geography and beyond reveal that the dismantling of commodities follows much the same set of processes that marketization scholars have described for commodity formation. This is to say that decommodification, like commodification, is accomplished by strategically forging and severing links.

Gabrys’s (2011) natural history of electronic waste offers an excellent example of this. Her focus is on the “terminal, but not yet terminated, life of digital technologies” (2), which takes her to several key sites in which she excavates aging “electronic fossils”, including landfill and salvage sites, Silicon Valley, and others. At these sites, she argues, “practices of disposal involve multiple modes of material disassembly *and depend on interconnected geographies* for the circulation and recuperation of discarded devices” (74, emphasis added). Disposal does not

entail merely taking a good apart, or removing it from commodity circuits; “there is no simple periphery to which objects can be jettisoned” (Gabrys 2011, 78). Disposed items are also entangled in new “circuits of disposal” in which they are attached to “complex infrastructures, practices, and relationships” (Gabrys 2011, 77). Discarded objects always re-enter new material and discursive ties, and work to “connect lives, labours and imaginaries” (Gabrys 2011, 154). Economic geographers’ recent studies on waste echo these findings (i.e. Lepawksy and Billah 2011; Gregson 2011; Crang et al. 2013; Gregson et al. 2013; also see Davies 2012 and Moore 2012 for summaries of earlier work).

But a key difference between commodification (or recommodification) and decommodification is that while commodified objects are entangled and disentangled to enable abstraction and alienation for and in exchange, decommodified objects exit the exchange process (although not necessarily permanently, as I outline above). In so doing, they may be re-connected to the approximate relations from which they were earlier severed. In this case, as we will see for wildlife rehabilitation, the decommodified object is disentangled from its commodity circuit. It is no longer tied to the technologies, people, and institutions that enabled its market trajectories. At the same time, it is entangled (or re-entangled) with the networks from which it was initially severed, which were described in Chapter 3. The animal is unlikely to be re-connected to the precise relations from which it was removed, however. Animals are released into slightly different regions, and (hopefully) forge their own new social and familial networks. This socio-ecological re-entanglement is perhaps more likely the case for what are typically conceived of as “natural” commodities or bio-commodities (like water [Page 2005] or the animals with which this chapter is concerned) than for commodities like cell phones or a gold bracelet. Regardless, networks are central to this analysis, which brings me to a related argument from economic geographies of disassembly: the dismantling of commodities occurs in relational and material networks within which the commodity itself is a (relationally) performative entity.

(III) Decommodification as material and performative

Drawing inspiration from actor network theory and performativity scholars, the economic geographers whose work is reviewed here frequently emphasize the material and relational dimensions of commodity disposal. To return to Gabrys’s (2011) work on e-waste, she argues that disposal is not a matter of making things go away or “dematerializing” them but rather “disposal... is a complexly situated process of materialization.” Disposal occurs in specific, interconnected places, through embodied practices, and it brings the world into being as it attempts to take things apart. In a similar vein Davies (2012) argues that throwing things away

does not mean that they cease to exist; rather this marks the beginning of “relocation and rematerialization processes.” It marks new sets of relational practices that are involved in unmaking the commodity. Gabrys (2011) describes some of these relational networks, including the multiple sites and social groups that come together around e-waste disposal from Silicon Valley Superfund sites⁶⁰ (for the disposal of hazardous material) to recycling villages in China. These sites point to how decommodification is embedded in complex material arrangements. Similarly, Crang et al. (2013, 12) state that “attending to end-of-life goods reveals networks as complex as those in primary production and reminds us that all such networks are not only webs of governance, but also entail material flows and transformations.” In wildlife rehabilitation, efforts to undo the commodity lives of animals involves conjoining fearful, vulnerable humans armed with scrub bushes, hoses, and buckets, and equally, if not more, fearful and vulnerable animals in tactile meetings that are both exhilarating and monotonous, violent and tender.

Additionally, Gregson’s (2011, 142) research on ship breaking finds that decommodification is a relational, material-discursive practice that *intervenes* in the world to “produce particular, intended material (re)configurings of the world.” She is thinking here in particular of the conscious effort to recuperate and repurpose various “new” goods out of ships being taken apart. But there are also unintended material re-orderings that occur through decommodification. Gabrys (2011, 142) especially directs attention to the way “things fall apart, the material textures of their decay”. At her research sites, decommodification – or taking commodities apart – is performative. It “rematerializes” the world by bringing new material arrangements into being. In particular, as Gabrys continually emphasizes, it performs pollution, or brings pollution into being in specific ways, thereby exposing specific people and places to the pollution’s effects. The undoing of lively commodities through wildlife rehabilitation similarly re-materializes the world. It is, as I stated earlier, a production of nature and so it involves the performance and ordering of new material-semiotic relations and networks. Some of these are quite intentional performances: cultivating rehabilitant animals’ ability to harvest food, urging them to form social groups. These performances are intended to keep the animals alive and facilitate their reproduction after release. But other performances are perhaps less intentional. As I argue, wildlife rehabilitation’s distrust of humans leads to a sustained effort to divest rehabilitant animals of ties to humans. It undertakes this through the performance of a dominant,

⁶⁰ Superfund sites are Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) priority contaminated sites. Silicon Valley has the US’s highest concentration of Superfund sites (see Gabrys 2011).

cruel human and a subordinate, fearful animal. This performance is embodied. I myself participated in it while working at ARCAS.

The rehabilitation process thus revolves to a significant degree around producing an idealized nature, a nature within which an animal's "natural" state is in the wild, where "the wild" is a place as free of humans as possible. It essentially seeks to restore a kind of "first-nature", a wilderness and wildlife "out there", pristine and untouched, cleaved apart spatially and subjectively from human beings. It casts the human subject as the dominant agent in this process, capable of "saving" wild animals from an otherwise tainted and polluting abstract humanity. It re-performs the human/animal binary that this dissertation has found to be at the heart of global live wildlife trade. Yet should wildlife rehabilitation itself be discarded as a strategy for combatting the negative effects of wildlife trade? Or can it be an opportunity to recuperate a wild life for some former lively commodities? I lean toward the latter, but only just. Although uncaptive animals can still be commodities, especially through emerging popular economies like eco-tourism or potentially ecosystem services, the commodity form of the captive animal exerts a direct and lethal violence on the animal body and life, as this dissertation has outlined. Rehabilitation can and should be critiqued, but it ultimately does offer a last chance for an uncaptive life for some animals.

As I explained in Chapter 5, I retain the term wild life to refer to this uncaptive life in which animals are entangled with multiple entities but nonetheless have the capacity to decide for themselves how their lives will be lived. The wild life is fundamentally relational, tied inextricably to familial, social, and ecological webs. These are the webs to which ARCAS seeks to re-connect its animals. In this chapter what is examined, then, is the attempted destruction of the lively commodity form for a handful of animals that were circulated within live wildlife trade's circuits. It seeks to shed further light on the nature of life that is commodified in these circuits, given that it is this life that rehabilitation attempts to unmake. I show the contradiction in rehabilitation's efforts, however. In seeking to unmake the commodity life – a controllable, encounterable and individual life – it utilizes practices that reinstitute those very characteristics: domination, naming, and encounter. I experienced these contradictions acutely in my labours and multispecies encounters at ARCAS.

7.3 Embodying rehabilitation, ambivalently

ARCAS, 10 November 2011, 8AM

Five juvenile spider monkeys are squatting knees-to-chins, huddled shoulder to shoulder in two tight groups on branches strung up between chain link walls. They look down at me, curious. It is

the first time I enter their home: cage six, which is about 10 feet wide, 20 feet long, and 15 feet high to a tarped chain link roof (figure 7.2). I am nervous and wonder if they can tell. My trainer, Brian, a more experienced volunteer, is in charge of the hose because it is my first time working with monkeys and the hose wielder should be in charge in the cage – the master of the proceedings. I am armed instead with cleaning supplies – a broom, a scrub brush, and a bottle of diluted chlorine disinfectant that I will shortly put to use on the concrete half walls and feces-littered floor that slopes down to a trench and drain grate, all the while trying to avoid being bombed with more feces from above. Immediately upon entering the cage, Brian holds up the hose and jabs the nozzle toward the monkeys, which he deems to be sitting too close to us. They shrink away automatically, chittering, and leap high onto the chain link walls of their cage. The blonde one, Stevie, I have already heard about. He does not flee with the others but scowls back at us with what looks like defiance or even belligerence. Brian sprays Stevie directly with water and he retreats with the others, glaring down at us. With a free hand he wipes water droplets off his body with furious gestures. Brian tells me how important it is to make sure they stay far away from us while we spend the next hour cleaning their cage. There are many rules that attempt to establish and maintain our dominance. We must always be two volunteers, and it is preferable that one of us be male. We should stand tall. We should shout at the monkeys and spray them if they come near us, especially if they touch us or steal any piece of our equipment as we clean the cage, the food boards, the water tub, and then finally, feed them and refill their water, twice each day.



Figure 7.2 Five juvenile spider monkeys in cage six (photograph by the author)

These monkeys in cage six arrived at ARCAS as babies and as such proceeded through a period of being nurtured by surrogate “parents”: long-term human workers and volunteers at ARCAS who provide affection, snuggling, care and food to the babies (figure 7.3). But as they grew, the baby monkeys had to begin their separation from their human caretakers. They were placed into a small cage (about five feet cubed) with the other young monkeys with which they will be expected to form a troop. At this stage the young monkeys were still cared for by a surrogate parent but s/he did not spend as much time with the monkeys and was less proximate (I take on this role for another group of monkeys later in the month, and describe it in section 7.5). Eventually the troop outgrew its cage and was placed here in cage six, the juvenile spider monkey cage in which I am now being trained to labour. At this point all human contact is meant

to cease, as the monkeys are encouraged to bond with each other. This process is further elaborated upon in section 7.5. For now, I begin with this account of learning the monkey cage ropes because it urges us to consider the confusion that is likely engendered in a young spider monkey whose intelligence is estimated to be the highest of all new world primates, above that of even the great apes (Deaner et al. 2006). It has spent the first stage of its life – the formative bonding time of childhood – being cuddled by a human surrogate parent and fed by humans. Now it is expected to shrink away from them. I brandished the hose at ARCAS with a great deal of discomfort. I was hesitant to punish animals for “acting out” and asserting their independence, but also did not want to cultivate behaviours in the monkeys that would one day prevent them from being released.



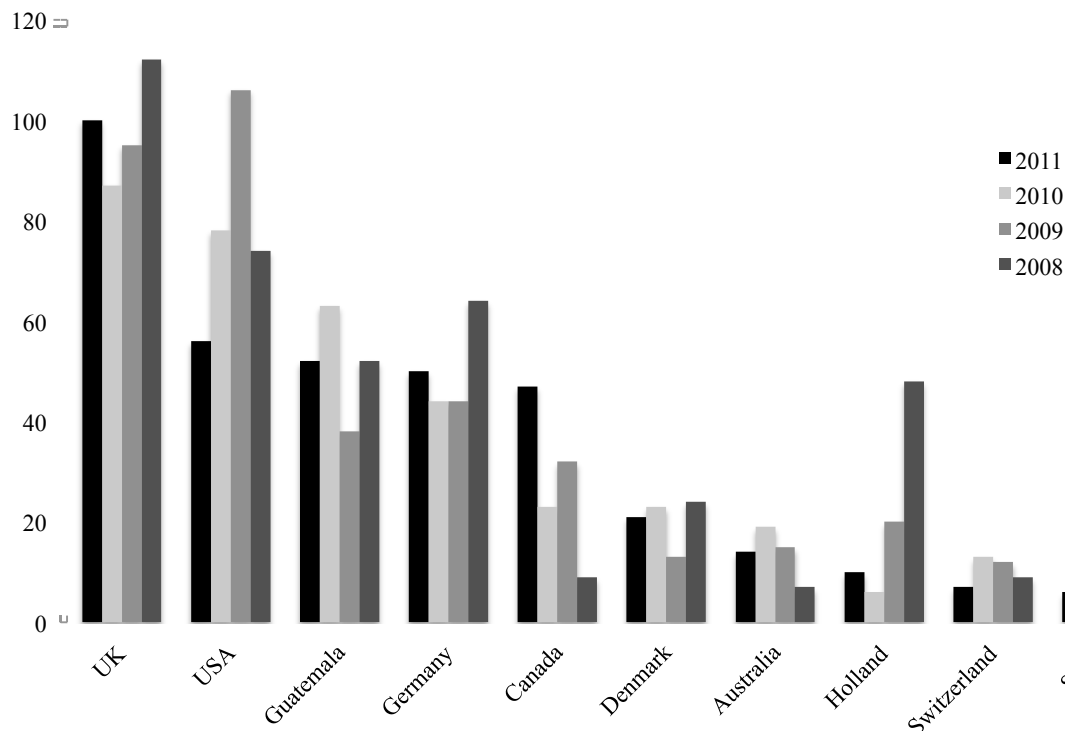
Figure 7.3 ARCAS primatologist with Izzy, a baby howler monkey (photograph by the author)

At ARCAS being “tough” with the animals – not being there to just “pet a baby monkey” – generates a lot of social capital among volunteers and between volunteers and staff. Many wildlife rehabilitation volunteers confess to wanting to take a monkey home, even though they know this is way off limits. Volunteers quickly learn to separate themselves from those “other” volunteers who seek merely to “hold a baby monkey”, thereby attempting to legitimate their objectives and relationship to animals. Similarly, willingness to undertake the really demanding, dangerous, and gross tasks around ARCAS (at least the ones that are not so dangerous as to be assigned to Guatemalan workers, such as working in the adult spider monkeys’ cages) – cleaning up bamboo roofing infested with scorpions and wasps, inching out on your belly onto chain link

roofing thirty feet in the air between metal poles to broom debris off tarps, packing up month old garbage piles, leveling out months' worth of "compost" (steamy, maggoty piles of animal feces, the solids removed from drains, food scraps, berry branches) – brings a degree of legitimacy and respect to volunteers. Wildlife rehab operates within a postcolonial and (in some places) postindustrial political economy in which manual labor is sometimes celebrated and romanticized. This worked alongside racial and class hierarchies at the centre. In other words, in general, those who could afford to pay to work at the centre were predominantly white women from developed (postindustrial) countries, while those who were paid to work were Guatemalans.

Although this chapter is focused more on the rehabilitant animals at ARCAS and less on the people who labour there – whether workers or volunteers – it is important to situate ARCAS in a broader political economic and postcolonial context in which the volunteer industry (comprised of approximately 1.6 million commercial volunteers per year) generates a value between \$1.7 and \$2.6 billion US dollars, with 90 percent of volunteers traveling to Asia, Latin America, and Africa (ATLAS 2008). Guatemala in particular has a strong program for international commercial volunteers (see Brown 2009; Vradi 2013). These programs cannot be separated from their "imperial undertones" (Brown 2009, 14) – for example, the manner in which they mimic the missionary work that was instrumental in colonial expansion – and Guatemala's colonial history and contemporary positioning (see Galeano 1997; Nelson 1999). As discussed in chapter 5, in the past few decades, conservationist and environmental politics in the region have been especially loaded with imperial weight. ARCAS was born into this context. A group of Guatemalans established ARCAS in 1989 as a Guatemalan NGO, catalyzed by the lack of an adequate wildlife rescue center to receive confiscated animals as stipulated in CITES, to which the Guatemalan government has been a signatory since 1980. The Columbus Zoo and an individual US citizen's fundraising drive provided the funding for the rescue center in Petén. International volunteers' fees – which they pay to "help" and to have interactions with animals they would not otherwise be able to encounter – provide most of ARCAS financial maintenance.

ARCAS volunteers predominantly come to Guatemala from the UK and US, although the centre's third largest volunteer group in terms of number of volunteers (as opposed to number of volunteer days) is from within Guatemala itself, usually Guatemala City (ARCAS 2012) (Graph 7.1).



Graph 7.1 Number of volunteers to ARCAS, 2008-2011

The volunteers pay around US\$140 per week (covering their food and basic lodging) and work upwards of seven hours per day, seven days a week. Markers of volunteers' raced and classed privilege are evident at ARCAS, with volunteers frequently complaining about the food ("the animals eat better than we do!" one young Swiss woman complained to me), undertaking less dangerous tasks than the Guatemalan workers, and taking days off for excursions to Tikal and other tourist attractions. At ARCAS I was confronted with my own implication in these networks and forces, having flown to Guatemala, paid the fees, and slept poorly for fears of snakes and scorpions. I learned to shake the latter but not the awareness of my own privilege to come and go, and to choose to pay to labour there. At the same time, volunteers' payments cover most of ARCAS's operations, and the organization is deeply committed to improving the lives of hundreds of animals. Alongside my ambivalence about my own embodied labour with ARCAS animals, I was and remain deeply ambivalent about the wider context within which my labour was embedded.

My struggles over how to understand both human and nonhuman exploitation and injustice, and my position as a researcher in such a project, were magnified in and experienced through my labour. But the physical act of laboring also played a role in shaping me. The labour was intensely tactile and performative. Animals are not the only beings re-ordered in the process of decommodification through rehabilitation. The human bodies that enter into the process as

labourers are themselves reordered and transformed. As Gregson (2011, 151) writes, “the demolition assemblage not only reorders objects and material, it reorders the human body through these encounters with materials.” Hands form callouses, toxins are absorbed, cuts and then scars are etched onto skin.

So too at the rehabilitation centre. Workers learn new motions of care, lifting, feeding, and transportation that re-form their bodies, strengthening them, making parts of them more sensitive and attentive to touch, and to cues that they can read on animal bodies, where previously they saw nothing. I grew much stronger over my time at ARCAS, much more attuned to Stevie and other monkey’s health and behaviours. Although volunteers receive little training in animal behaviour, it is part of their job to note any changes in the animals for which they are responsible, and then to alert a vet. These reorderings of not just materials and objects but also bodies lead Gregson (2011, 151) to conclude that commodity disposal re-orders bodies, objects, and the boundaries between them in ways “that matter for human life, as well as for objects and materials.” The rehab centre’s commodity unmaking, and the reordering that it entails, matters for humans (human labourers bodies are shaped as described briefly above), but mostly they matter for the rehabilitant animals, which are remade physically, emotionally, mentally for a more autonomous life, as I will describe shortly. First, I briefly introduce the animals kept at ARCAS, animals for which these productions and remaking are quite profoundly a matter of not only life or death, but perhaps more critically of freedom or captivity.

7.4 The rehabilitant

ARCAS, 25 November 2011, 6.30AM

With a dull knife I chop long julienned carrots and toss them by the handful into a cracked plastic bin full of pineapple cut like french-fries, chunks of cantaloupe, unpeeled banana pieces, and slices of beets. The beets bleed pink juice over the produce and it leaks out the cracks in the bin into a thin stream along the cement counter, dripping onto the floor. Yesterday millions of red ants moved in and now migrate through the kitchen in a pulsing river. It is important to keep an eye on these ants as you chop, should a tributary develop up your boot, your leg, and into your loose cotton pants. Even hours later you might be pricked as if with a burning match on your torso and find an ant pinned under your shirt.

Carefully, you can follow the surging ant river out of the kitchen, under locked chain link doors, into a long dark hallway lined with thick, black, dead-bolted metal doors, each leading to its own ante-room, and beyond each ante-room a cage (figure 7.4). But the industrious ants do not detour into any of the cages; they blow past the spider monkeys, the green parrots, the howler

monkeys, the ocelots, the margays, the scarlet macaws, the turtles, the boa constrictor, the hawks, the owls, and the crocodiles. They especially do not stop for the tamanduas, genetic cousins to anteaters. You can follow the ants past all of these caged animals, past the wildlife centre, but you lose them in the thick forest.

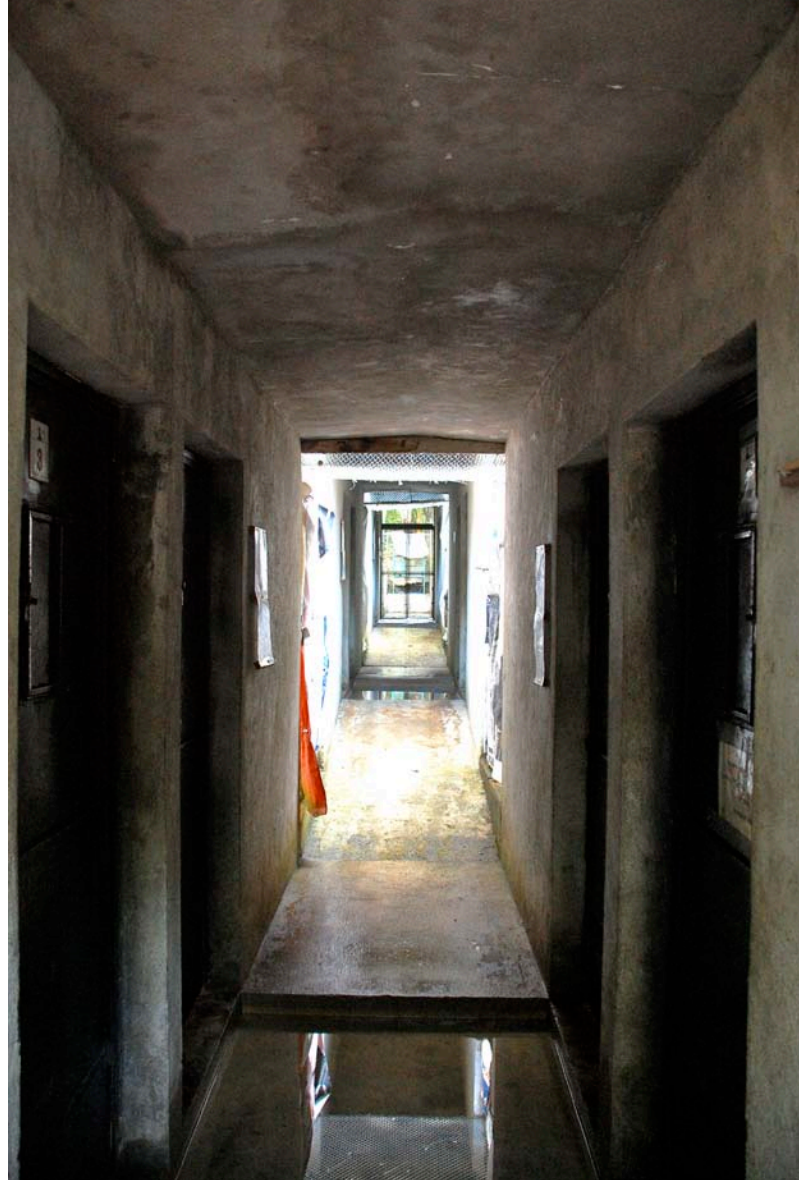


Figure 7.4 *Cuarantena* hallway (photograph by the author)

The leaky bin full of sliced produce is for Stevie and the other four juvenile spider monkeys in cage six, in which I am now more experienced in working, even on occasion working there alone, which always has raucous consequences. The monkeys receive ten pounds of juicy, ripe fruits and vegetables every morning, and an armful of green leaves in the afternoon. They also receive dry dog biscuits every other day, for protein. The monkeys eat everything with a focused relish, and only when they are eating can I relax and turn my back without risk of hair

pulling, cage escapes, hose theft, tank top strap yanking, or even getting a wedgie. All those things really happened, and Stevie was the perpetrator every time but one. It was careful, quiet, calculating Beatrice (figure 7.5) who escaped the cage. I counted only four monkeys and found her in the ante-room eating all the lunch leaves.



Figure 7.5 Beatrice in foreground, Stevie in background (photograph by the author)

The produce I slice arrives on fruit-run days: Wednesdays and Saturdays. When word comes that the fruit has arrived, scrub brushes, trash bags, rakes, shovels, or whatever implements are being wielded, are dropped. If the delivery is by boat, the group of volunteers and workers unfurls itself in an evenly spaced chain up the steep dirt stairs that are littered with roots down to the dock on *Lago Petén Itza*. Off the boat come crate after crate of bananas; bags of watermelons, carrots, cantaloupe and beets with long thick greens; and sacs of pineapples with heads spiky enough to draw blood. Up the chain go the sacks, bags, and crates, all the way up to the cages, where hundreds of animals are waiting for their next meal. If the delivery comes by truck, the workers and volunteers carry each crate, sac, and bag from the kitchen to the cages down a windy gravel path through the trees. The amount of food required is enormous – in less than a week over sixty empty banana boxes accumulate outside of the kitchen (figure 7.6) – and it is only one aspect of the inputs required to sustain the animals, to replace what it is that they would be receiving from their ecological and familial support systems in the wild. It is an

incredible amount of work – hours and hours, day in and day out – to provide a bare, often inadequate, replacement for these seemingly effortless systems.



Figure 7.6 A week's worth of banana crates

In the mid-1990s ARCAS received up to 1000 animals per year – monkeys, margays, crocodiles, kinkajous, and hundreds and hundreds of parrots – but that number has since decreased by almost half. These animals can arrive at wildlife rehabilitation centres by two primary means. First, they can become unwanted pets – they grow too large, are too much work, or people move and can no longer care for them. Second, if they are illegally traded commodities, they may be confiscated. Most of the animals delivered to ARCAS are birds, but each year several monkeys arrive as well. There are often also large intercepted shipments of iguanas (Table 7.1)

Table 7.1 Selected animals received by ARCAS in Petén and Guatemala City, 2007-2010

Common name	2007	2008	2009	2010	Total
Howler monkeys	11	8	11	12	42
Spider monkeys	21	14	7	6	48
Coatimundi	12	8	4	5	29
Kinkajou	4	5	3	3	15
Tamandua	0	1	0	3	4
Margay	3	2	4	0	9
Ocelot	4	0	0	0	4
Red-fronted Parrot	59	101	43	32	235
White-fronted Parrot	50	34	30	22	136
Scarlet Macaw	14	10	21	16	61
White-crowned Parrot	12	10	15	6	43
Aztec Parakeet	7	12	10	6	35
Orange-fronted parakeet	0	4	4	6	14
Mealy parrot	9	8	13	3	33
Green macaw	0	0	0	3	3
Military macaw	0	0	5	0	5
Blue and Gold macaw	0	0	2	0	2
Yellow-lored Amazon	0	0	0	2	2
Yellow-naped Amazon	2	0	7	0	9
Keel-billed toucan	1	1	0	2	4
Mesoamerican Slider (turtle)	3	9	3	101	116
Moreleti's Crocodile	6	11	15	11	43
Boa	2	4	3	8	17
Furrowed Wood Turtle	2	6	8	3	19
Iguana	13	470	646	2	1131
Caiman	4	1	2	0	7

ARCAS's director explained to me the horrifying math involved in the 2008 shipment ARCAS received of 470 iguanas, the majority of which were female. To transport iguanas for food, traders sometimes "take the ligament out of their first finger... And they use it to tie their own legs back" (Martinez 2011, personal communication). The iguanas arrived in this contorted manner in one container at ARCAS'S Guatemala City office. Over 200 of them died getting there, due to asphyxiation. CONAP decided to send the remaining live iguanas to ARCAS in Petén, and 211 arrived alive. Many of the females that arrived were pregnant with anywhere between 40 and 60 eggs. ARCAS staff wanted to release the animals immediately before any more of them died, but "there was still the case of the guy who was transporting them so we couldn't release them right away because of that... we had to hold onto them, here... we kept them in the parrot rehabilitation, the really big one... But they didn't eat... They lost all their eggs... And most of them died" (Martinez 2011, personal communication). In the end, staff released 28 iguanas in total. But, as Martinez reminds me, "we're talking not just about the 450 iguanas." Tens of thousands of iguanas were potentially lost as eggs.

As the iguana case illustrates, when some animals arrive at ARCAS, the faster they are released the better. In the event that there are legal proceedings involved in the animals' confiscation, though, animals must remain at ARCAS until the court case is resolved, much to ARCAS staff's frustration. But for most animals that arrive at ARCAS, if they are still alive, they are kept on the premises and undergo a prolonged rehabilitation process. Depending on the animal, this process may take years. For example, reptiles can be released almost immediately, but monkeys can take up to six years. If the animals are young and not too "humanized" their chances at rehabilitation are higher. But for animals that have already been living as pets for some time, the outlook is bleak.⁶¹ ARCAS (2010, 3) and other wildlife rehabilitators believe that these "animals, once they are removed from their natural home, are biologically 'dead' and can never return to fulfill their rightful place in the ecosystem." Many of these animals are also deeply psychologically and physically damaged from years of abuse sustained from previous owners, or in circuses. These animals – as well as ones that do not begin to properly exhibit "wild" behaviours in the rehab process – are kept as educational "ambassadors" at ARCAS. This means that they live out their days as permanent residents in cages in a separate section of ARCAS that is publically accessible. In this area, close to the lake, visitors can wander cages of monkeys, alligators, birds, and wild cats – animals that will die in their cages – and read signs about their habitat and the risks the pet trade poses to them (figure 7.7).



Figure 7.7 An ARCAS sign warning people not to purchase exotic pets (photograph by the author)

⁶¹ In fact ARCAS does not even attempt to rehabilitate animals that were lifelong pets. It also can only officially accept animals from within Guatemala.

The rehabilitant animals, on the other hand, are off limits to visitors. These animals are, like dead animals, failed companion commodities and are no longer encounterable within global live wildlife trade circuits (although they are encounterable to paying volunteers and paid workers). But unlike dead animals, they are still alive, and so their “unmaking” as commodities follows a different path. Paradoxically, involves a great deal of intense encounter with humans. I now turn to this commodity unmaking process. At ARCAS, this involves attempting to teach trafficked animals “natural,” “wild” behaviors so they can survive outside their cage walls. It also means divesting animals of both the behaviors they may have learned as pets, or in captivity, and, most critically, of their ties to human beings. This is accomplished using the misanthropic technologies I mentioned in this chapter’s introduction.

7.5 Unmaking the lively commodity

ARCAS, 26 November 2011, 7AM

Putting aside the monkey’s leaky bin of fruit and vegetables for later, I grab a sparsely bristled scrub brush and enter the deafening racket of the parrot cage. The floor of the cage is coated in a thin layer of green mold whose dampness can sneak into the lungs of birds whose millennia of high-flying lifestyles have not prepared them for such moisture. As the head veterinarian (Morales 2011, personal communication) says to me: “Parrots don’t live at this height. They live up there. And that’s 50 meters of difference, there’s a difference in humidity, speed of air, density, amount of light. So we need to not necessarily replicate but we need to avoid everything that’s down here that affects them, because they’re meant to be up there.”

As part of this effort, parrot cage floors are only sprayed sparingly once per day. On hands and knees we scrub the mold every morning. I kneel until I cannot feel my legs and scrub. All of the muscles in my wrists, forearms, upper arms, shoulders and back, burn from the exertion. The birds still get sick. Later that day, I hold one feather-light green parakeet from another cage in my hands, my thumb and pointer finger around each side of its throbbing neck, as a veterinarian forces a long tube down its beak. It has not eaten in days and does not move, one leg dangling awkwardly through the bottom of the cage. The bird goes back in the cage. It will die shortly. Each night I record my labour and the animal news, including deaths, in my black fieldnotes book. Earlier that week another parakeet from a larger enclosure had died and I wrote:

Tuesday 22 November 2011 7PM. The resurrected parakeet from yesterday was dead on the food board this morning. I watched the board being lowered down and the bird's little body came into sight, neck arched. We sent it to the cuarentena so A. could do a necropsy. The bird died from an upper respiratory infection. Today R. told a story over lunch about F. and A. coming back from the fruit market with a box of fifty parrot hatchlings.

In the parrot cage I turn back to the moldy floor and am greeted by a fat splat of bird poop on my shoulder and hand. I am working in a cage that contains about a dozen smaller cages, each housing two to five young parrots. Their daily breakfasts consist on alternating days of servings of cut-up bananas and cut-up oranges, and they receive wild berries and a water change in the afternoon. If they mature, remain healthy (which is challenging because the cramped and damp conditions mean disease spreads quickly and their immune systems are low), and become strong enough to fly, they will eventually transition to a cage with no smaller cages, where all the parrots fly around together. In these cages, volunteers string up the berries on the cage walls so that the birds can approximate the sensation of eating while clinging to branches. Eventually, the birds will be moved to an even larger enclosure, one the size of a small barn, in which they will gain more strength flying. They are expected to fly away from humans, and if they fly towards them they will not be released. At all of these stages, the volunteers working with the parrots are strictly prohibited from speaking in their presence. Parrots quite readily adopt sounds, including human speech. ARCAS staff members believe that parrots' human speech inhibits their ability to make mating sounds and communicate with each other in the wild. If a bird learns any human words, even *hola*, the bird will not be released (figure 7.8). "Good morning, preciouses!" I would say in my head each morning entering the parrot cage.



Figure 7.8 Sign on parrot cage door (photograph by the author)

A few days into my month at ARCAS, I began working with two white owls that had arrived at ARCAS as chicks.⁶² They lived together in a concrete cage about six feet deep, four feet wide, and five feet high, with two tree branches jammed across the cage as perches, and a food board at the back. Every day, another volunteer and I would defrost a small chicken that would feed the hawks and the owls. At night, we would make our way down to the cuarentena by flashlight, and the other volunteer would cut up the chicken. The hawks' portion would be delivered the next day, but the owls' was deposited in their cages that night, because they are nocturnal. We would creep through the eerily quiet cuarentena, passing the spider monkeys cages where the all the monkeys slept huddled in their "monkey ball". The only sounds were the flapping of other nocturnal birds. The owls were extremely easy to spook, and so we entered their cage with slow, steady movements. Still, especially at night, the owls would swoop towards us, back and forth across their cage. The next day the leftover chicken bones had to be gathered and their cage cleaned.

A few days before I finished at ARCAS, the head veterinarian asked another volunteer (my former trainer Brian) and me to move the owls, which had been caught and placed in a carrier, into a massive enclosure, the last stage before their release. We carried them on the ten-

⁶² I am unsure what species of owl they were.

minute walk to their new cage. It was at least fifty feet by fifty feet, and twenty feet tall, thick with vegetation, and surrounded by similarly vegetated forest. Brian and I entered the cage and opened the carrier. The two owls sat stunned for a moment before flying straight out, all the way to the back of the cage, out of sight. This was the first time they had flown like that, and it bode well for their future release. My job for the next few days was to hike up to their cage and make sure they were both still there and eating their chicken. It always took me several minutes – sometimes ten or twenty – before I spotted them somewhere in among the greenery. Sometimes I did not. They were no longer permanently visible.

A similar pattern of gradual cage enlargement is followed for most monkeys, which are moved from smaller cages to larger and larger ones as they grow and exhibit wild behaviours, such as remaining high on the cage walls and avoiding their human caretakers. Eventually, like the parrots, the monkeys graduate into a large, thickly vegetated enclosure that most closely resembles their natural habitat. At this point they are exposed to flares, firecrackers, and blanks, and fences are electrified to ensure that they are fearful of both people and fencing. No monkeys lived in this last stage of enclosure so I did not have the opportunity to observe these practices at ARCAS. Other animals that are not as plentiful as monkeys and parrots at ARCAS may not proceed through the same cage-by-cage “naturalizing” rehab process, but they are still subject to similar criteria for release. For example, before release, predators like snakes and kinkajous are provided with live prey like rabbits and rodents to “test” their hunting skills. As stated earlier, if animals do not satisfy these criteria they are considered too vulnerable for a wild life and are kept captive at ARCAS for the duration of their lives.

In my last three days at ARCAS I was given the (much sought after) position of taking care of the baby spider monkeys. Three of them had recently been moved into a concrete cage: a five by five by five-foot box with two chain link walls. Previously, each spider monkey had been the “child” of a human surrogate parent, so these monkeys, while timid, lacked the fear of humans that had already been instilled in the juvenile monkeys with which I worked all month. About teddy-bear sized, with enormous black eyes set in small faces, when the monkeys brushed up against my bare arm I was surprised by how soft their fur was. They buried their heads in the food I fed them – sweet nestum powder mixed with water – then looked up at me with faces white with paste. One time as I pulled the bowl of nestum away one monkey reached out quickly and grabbed my arm. For a few seconds I gazed down, transfixed by the sight of its long, skinny fingers wrapped around my forearm. When I looked up at its face it looked back at me assertively, even fiercely. As I stated above, consider how confusing it would be for these young

monkeys, raised lovingly by a human surrogate, then having all contact cut off, and finally, being subject to a program misanthropy, like that in which I was involved with the juvenile monkeys.⁶³ All the while, humans continue to provide food and water and to regularly encounter the monkeys, even as the monkeys are supposed to be developing into autonomous and unencounterable entities.

Overall, then, the rehabilitation process at ARCAS proceeds along a two-pronged approach, each revolving around biopolitical and misanthropic technologies, respectively. It involves, first, keeping animals alive and second, preparing them for return to the wild. An ARCAS primatologist (2011, personal communication) summarizes this when she states:

We've had lots of animals come in really rough conditions. We've had... baboons that have been set on fire, just horribly tortured. And some of our animals come in such horrible conditions, covered in ticks and really lost to the world, in a way. And trying to bring them back, it's just a constant effort of trying to get these animals healthy again. And once they're healthy, that's just the first part. Then it's teaching them to be wild again, which is even more difficult.

The first part of ARCAS's work – making and keeping animals healthy – is accomplished through the biopolitical processes documented above: feeding, medicating, cleaning and disinfecting, and providing shelter. When the animals are young, it also entails providing the affection and nurturing that their mothers would have provided. At rehab, the animal's life is more important than anything else. Keeping the animal alive is a goal that subsumes any directives regarding quality of life, except to the extent that quality of life is necessary to keep the animal alive. This is exemplified in ARCAS's implicit policy that a captive life is preferred to a wild death. Wildlife centres such as ARCAS are sites of biopolitical work, in which volunteers and workers labour to “foster life.” As in any biopolitical mode, fostering one life means putting to death others.

Harold, a blind, half-dead heron that was delivered to ARCAS, provides a perfect example. Harold was listless, refused to eat, and would stand motionless in his cage, his cloudy eyes unseeing. Perhaps because of his blindness, he had shut down to the world and to all appearances had no interest in living. Two volunteers had to force feed him, one holding his delicate bony body with a towel in two hands, and the other wrenching open his large beak, tilting it back to ensure he would swallow. Harold was force fed at least a dozen fish a day, fish

⁶³ One of ARCAS's primatologists (2011, personal communication) explained to me that it is an imperfect art of trying to balance the “right level of human maternal care to give to orphan primates so that they are still wild and can still successfully reproduce in the wild, but also if you don't give them enough they won't survive as babies.”

that another volunteer would catch each morning from the lake. Harold's fish intake was meticulously recorded each morning and evening. Twelve plus free-swimming fish force-fed to a heron that to all appearances did not wish to be of this world. Contrary to what ARCAS's assistant director told a room full of volunteers one evening, that "in the end, it's all about freedom," in fact *life* (and "saving" it) is prioritized at ARCAS, and some individual animal's lives over the lives of others.

Alongside these biopolitical efforts like force-feeding and medicating, ARCAS deploys misanthropic technologies to produce the unencounterable animal, to teach the animal to "be wild again" as the primatologist says above. This chapter, like my own labour at ARCAS, has been littered with such misanthropic strategies: spraying animals if they exhibit "unnatural" behaviours (such as approaching the floor too often, for monkeys;⁶⁴ or coming too close to humans), not speaking in front of parrots, being stern to and distant from animals and avoiding touch, and finally exploding firecrackers and shooting blanks at animals in enclosures with electric fences in order to really drive home the point that humans are to be feared and avoided. These practices – or performances – are all part of ARCAS efforts to dismantle animals' entanglements with humans and circuits of capital. At the same time, ARCAS engages in strategies to rebuild animals' connections to social-ecological networks. Workers and volunteers feed them foods they would eat in the wild; encourage them to form troops, mating pairs, and flocks; and attempt to instill in them the skills necessary for survival beyond their cage walls. These include skills of movement (flight, acrobatics), food acquisition, and sociality. In sum, staff and volunteers at ARCAS use several strategies to "dehumanize" or "mis-anthropomorphize" their animals, viewing this as an aspect of reconnecting and reattaching them to "natural" networks and behaviours.

In my month at ARCAS only one animal release occurred. Although ARCAS reportedly releases dozens to hundreds of animals per year, releases are rare. The one I attended was not a rehabilitated animal, but a nocturnal bird of prey a local person had captured and brought to ARCAS. A vet checked it out and deemed it healthy, and so one night in mid-November all of the volunteers were gathered up outside the kitchen in a line in front of a cardboard box. Two

⁶⁴ An ARCAS primatologist (2011, personal communication) explains a key criterion for monkeys' release: "Are they able to cope with a really large cage with a lot of trees, or are they sitting on the floor? Spider monkeys live their entire life in the trees. They don't ever go to the ground. And going to the ground can kill them, easily, because all their predators are on the ground. So if they go down to the ground a lot, there's no point in releasing them, because they're going to be eaten straight away, or caught by a human!... Are they more inclined to stay in the trees or are they trying to go to the fence, trying to touch ropes, because those are the makings of traps and hunter snares and things like that. If they're going for things like that there's no point in releasing them because they're just going to end up back in the situation we tried to save them from."

volunteers opened the box and nothing happened for a few seconds. Then a dark shape burst of the box and flapped high up into the night sky. The immediate success of this release may not be indicative of releases in general, though. A study of rehabilitated and released animals (Teixeira et al. 2007) determined that the stress of the rehabilitation process – for example, the stress engendered in the animals through captivity and through the misanthropic practices I have detailed here – can inhibit release success.

The work on decommodification outlined in section 7.2 can be usefully drawn upon to develop an understanding of how ARCAS's rehabilitation practices are attempts at decommodification. Decommodification, as I outlined, is 1) incomplete, 2) a process of dis/entanglement and 3) material and performative. I summarize what each means in the context of wildlife rehabilitation.

(I) ARCAS staff members are aware that animals released back into the forest are at risk of being “recommodified” through capture. ARCAS's effort to instill fear of humans in animals is a measure taken to guard against this. But ARCAS itself is a commercial venture that depends financially on the desire of international volunteers to pay to labour and have tactile encounters with animals. ARCAS's animals are no longer commodities in the same manner as they were when they were pets, but neither are they decommodified. Neither are they un-encounterable. Furthermore, if the animals are released, even if they are not captured they may be commodified in another bio-economy, for example as an object for eco-tourists to view and photograph, or as a network of ecological entities generating biodiversity credits, conceivably. This points to two critical arguments. First, animal life is always commodifiable (what I have called, following Goldstein [2012], *animalia economica*), pointing yet again to the species hierarchies that this dissertation has held to be central to global live wildlife trade. For animals, then, decommodification is never complete and permanent. Second, not all commodification has the same effects for animal life. Within a biodiversity trading scheme, for example, a macaw might be a commodity in a forest that generates a certain number of carbon credits. But this is worlds apart from being a macaw in a cage in a living room or a macaw at ARCAS. The relations that constitute each of the lively commodifications are different.

(II) Decommodification is a process of dis/entanglement. As I have said, just as commodification is not a denaturing so much as another production of nature, so too decommodification is not a *renaturing* so much as another production of nature. To produce this nature, decommodification engages in a process of selecting and severing links. As I have shown here, at ARCAS, decommodification revolves around severing links with human beings and

building links with ecological, social and familial networks. Animals that were dependent on human beings are trained to fear and avoid them, and are encouraged to develop skills and relationships they will require post-release, when they are expected to re-entangle themselves in the networks they were originally severed from when they were captured and became lively companion commodities, as outlined in Chapter 3. This chapter has argued, though, that there is a deep paradox at work here. Rehabilitation attempts to make its rehabilitant animals unencounterable (in a similar way that commodification makes animals encounterable) but it does so *through encounter* with humans.

(III) ARCAS's efforts at decommodification depend upon tactile meetings between humans and animals. They unfold in fleshy and bodily encounters. This chapter has outlined several of my own tactile encounters with these animals – holding birds in my palm as they are being tube fed, spraying Stevie, being pooped on. As I discussed in section 7.2, decommodification is a process of material transformation that occurs in relational and situated networks. Through rehabilitation, ARCAS animals slowly strengthen their physical bodies; they learn to fly and to leap and drop from branch to branch. These material encounters and transformations take place in networks of entities within which the rehabilitant animals are very active. They shape their own decommodification through participation in and resistance to the process, as Harold's refusal to eat and Stevie and Beatrice's escapes illustrate. These material encounters are also performative; they reconfigure bodies, boundaries and relations.

What does rehabilitation reconfigure at ARCAS? What animal and human subjects does it produce? Ideally, it seeks to reconfigure the captive animal into an autonomous, "wild" one. But again paradoxically, wildlife rehabilitation at ARCAS deems an animal ready for autonomy if the animal demonstrates total submission to years of dehumanization, and adequate fear of and subjection to human subjects. In seeking to produce autonomous animal subjects, then, it remains attached to a particular understanding of "nature" and wildness as "out there", distinct and separate from humans and humanity. As I wrote in Chapters 1 and 5, this view of nature and wilderness is highly problematic not only for its colonial legacies but also for its treatment of animals as never belonging where "we" are, and as the passive objects to our own active subjectivity. ARCAS's practices, then, leave the exceptional and distinct human subject both materially and discursively undisturbed. And yet at the same time, ARCAS has a profound function in the lives of some individual trafficked animals.

In the monkey cage ante-room, Stevie stares through the chain link door (Figure 5.1). Because he's blonder than the others, his eyes look bigger and blacker, each framed by a diamond shaped hole in the chain link. His gaze is fixed on mine but his four long, slender fingers don't stop testing the lock. Three days later he will pull my hair. It is hard not to think that he is... bored.

Tuesday November 29 2011. Today Stevie pulled my hair again then sat on the cement floor chewing a piece of wood, a stick, like an old man chewing on a toothpick. A macaw escaped into the spider monkey cage today but B. managed to corral it back into its cage. Tomorrow is my last day here, 29th straight day of work. I'll miss it, esp. the spider monkeys. Today I stopped to watch them to remember. They made faces at me, sticking out their tongues, pursing their lips, looking skyward and then back @ me. Two sat side-by-side, so close they looked conjoined.

In chapter 5, I described seeing two spider monkeys flit through the canopy as I sat high above the trees on the ridge of a Tikal temple in Guatemala. It was an amazing sight. In chapter 4 I wrote about watching spider monkeys in cages too small for them to stand auctioned for a couple thousand dollars in Missouri. I hid my tears in the crowded bleachers. At ARCAS I worked daily with spider monkeys in their concrete enclosure and they pulled my hair, yanked my tank top straps, and Stevie gave me a wedgie. To navigate the day-to-day work with captive animals, I have to shut part of myself off to registering their sentience. But at ARCAS at least spider monkeys have a chance to regain the life I glimpsed above the canopy, an uncaptive life. This dissertation, then, comes full circle. Yet although commodification may be temporary and even reversible, as geographers have argued, the animals are never unchanged from their experience of moving in and out of lively companion commodity status. Their bodies bear the modifications and marks of their captivity: leash scars, clipped wings, pulled teeth, removed claws. And just as there was no pure state at which the animals began, there is no pure state to which they are returned. In evaluating the modes of relational life that these animals pass through, however, it is my task, to paraphrase Haraway, to identify those relations that have a chance for life. What relations "contribute to the flourishing and health of the land and its critters" (Haraway 2008, 288)?

ARCAS, 26 November 2011, 3PM

For the second time in a month, a troop of wild howler monkeys has swung into the lofty canopy that calms the sun's glare into gentle dappled shadows on the cages' concrete floors at ARCAS. Captive howler monkeys' heads touch the chain link ceiling of their cages as they cling to the walls, as high above the shady floors as they can get, and they start to scream at the wild howler monkeys squatting a hundred feet above, peering down. The monkeys' small black bodies shake

with the exertion of their screams; their finely detailed, wrinkled faces contort to allow their jaws to gape. They shriek on the exhale and draw a ragged deep gasping breath on the inhale, a dozen of them raging in unison so that there is never a moment of still, silent peace. This is the only work that they can do: grip the cage walls and howl at their kin high in the free treetops. The wild monkeys howl back. And while the ARCAS veterinarian and centuries of sociobiology – what Haraway calls “the science of capitalist reproduction” – tell me that it is all about territory and competition, I am less sure. If I were not wary of the human conceit to know others’ meanings I would swear I heard notes of pity from above and envy from below.

7.6 Conclusions

In this chapter I have used economic geographers’ work on commodity disassembly to argue that wildlife rehabilitation, as a form of decommodification, has three features: it is incomplete, it is a dis/entangling process, and it is a material performance. In what follows I summarize each. First, to say that wildlife rehabilitation is a form of decommodification is not to say that rehabilitant animals are no longer commodities. During the rehab process at ARCAS, animals are a form of capital with encounter value that attracts international commercial volunteers. After release, animals may become part of a value-generating “biodiversity” in ecotourism or ecosystem services. While the exotic pet or lively companion commodity may have been decommodified, then, this chapter supports economic geographers’ claims that decommodification is always potentially impermanent. I argue here that this is especially the case for living animals.

Second, a series of entanglements and disentanglements constitute wildlife rehabilitation. Indeed it is possible to characterize the wildlife rehabilitation process, in the case of wildlife rehab after capture for the pet trade, as in many ways the reverse of the process that made the animals into commodities in the first place. While the commodity was formed by severing the animal from its ecological, social and familial networks, and then entangling it with human-provided supports, rehabilitating the animal for return to the wild is accomplished by slowly severing the human supports and entanglements in order to re-attach the animal to its former socio-ecological networks.

Making the commodity is a rapid process. Unmaking it, by contrast, can take years. Animals are often severely damaged – psychologically, physically, and mentally – from their time as a commodity among humans. In captivity at ARCAS, they often barely fare much better, and frequently do not survive. Almost as often, they fail to be divested of their ties to humans and human-like behaviour – monkeys continue to approach their caretakers or remain on the floor too often, parrots learn to speak – and so are condemned to live out the rest of their lives at

ARCAS. This is an unsurprising result given that wildlife rehabilitation is, like other forms of decommodification, undertaken in relational networks that involve human-animal encounters, the third key feature of wildlife rehabilitation I identify here. In fact, rehabilitant animals are forced into a relationship of dependence upon their human caretakers. During the rehab process they remain captive even as they are promised independence and autonomy. This points to a central paradox in the rehabilitation process: the attempt to make animals unencounterable *through encounter*, trying to cultivate “freedom” and independence via dominance and dependence (also see Parreñas 2012a).

These encounters and the networks within which they occur are performative. Rehabilitation produces particular human and animal subjects. At ARCAS, the belief in a cruel, violent human enrolls volunteers and workers to perform this very role in an attempt to generate fear in the animal. The human/animal binary is played out again and again in the cages, with the master human subject subordinating and segregating the animal. ARCAS’s pronounced lack of faith in an abstract and homogeneous humanity, then, retains the notion that humans are in control, are dominant, are exceptional – not only in their capacity for violence but also in their capacity to “save”, for at ARCAS it is the humans that liberate the animals, when they decide to. Instead of acknowledging “humans are not the only ones caring for the Earth and its beings—we are in relations of mutual care” (Puig de la Bellascasa 2010, 164), ARCAS embraces the narrative of the human saviour, a narrative that is implicated in colonial, gendered, and racialized violence (Haraway 2008). ARCAS’s misanthropy, then, does nothing to trouble “the human” or “the animal” as subject categories, with all their attendant power inequalities. Accordingly, this chapter argues that wildlife rehabilitation at ARCAS is driven by a deep misanthropy and an idealized sense of nature and animals as “out there”, distinct from humans. This misanthropy, while railing against “humanity”, remains attached to human exceptionalism.

The rehabilitation process can thus be critiqued on many levels. It essentially seeks to restore an idealized “first nature” that is “out there”, cleaved apart spatially and subjectively from human beings. It casts the human subject as the dominant agent in this restoration, “saving” wild animals from an otherwise tainted and polluting homogeneous humanity. Given these critiques of wildlife rehabilitation, how is it that I am still so ambivalent about it? Rehabilitation is both these things as much as it is also potentially an avenue for the pursuit of autonomy for captured animals. I find it more interesting and important to examine the complex and contradictory space and practices of rehabilitation, and to see if there is anything we can recuperate from it. In doing so, we see that the rehabilitation process can be characterized as one of decommodification.

Releasing the hawk from the box, catching sight of former ARCAS howler monkeys that had been released and are now living and having offspring in the forests around the centre, and losing sight of the owls in their thickly vegetated large enclosure – these were moments that lead me to hold onto the possibilities of such a decommodification practice. The chance to restore animals' autonomy is one that I cannot pass up.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

In early August 2013 an African rock python escaped its broken cage in an exotic pet shop, Reptile Ocean, in Campbellton, a city with under 10,000 residents in New Brunswick, Canada. The 4.3-meter, 45-kilogram snake found its way into the ventilation ducts and fell through the ceiling to where two young brothers, aged 4 and 6, were having a sleepover. It asphyxiated both of them. The python was later euthanized. 27 other animals being kept in the unaccredited store – crocodiles, tortoises, anacondas, iguanas, and more – were confiscated. Four large American alligators were euthanized on site because no zoos could accommodate them and they were too large to transport alive.

The tragic incident drew a rare spotlight onto exotic pet ownership and regulation in Canada and beyond. Interviewees on radio shows confirmed that reptile and exotic pet trade in Canada and worldwide is booming, especially the legal trade. Experts admitted they have to rely on anecdotal evidence in these assessments because there is a complete lack of recent data on legal exotic animal imports to Canada (Bascaramurty and Mahoney 2013). Prime Minister Stephen Harper promised to review whether the federal government should play a role in exotic pet store regulation. Justifiable concerns over human safety propelled these debates, which have quieted for the time being, at least until the next incident. What little attention is paid to global live wildlife trade is almost always in the aftermath of an exotic pet attack on a human.

As this dissertation has shown, though, it is predominantly animals that bear the lethal costs of exotic pet trade, and global live wildlife trade more broadly. My key argument in these pages is that global live wildlife trade depends on and produces a subordinated animal, an animal that can be killed with impunity, taken from its family and transported around the world, and confined to a tiny cage. The numbers are staggering. Millions of wild-caught live animals are traded worldwide annually, the majority of which will die within the first few months of capture. It is a sad irony that these animals, destined to be pets that people claim to love or at least have affection for, are ultimately treated as disposable. I argue that a human/animal binary is at the heart of this disposability. The goal of this dissertation has been to examine this human/animal binary as one of GLWT's conditions of possibility. In other words, it is to examine the performativity of the human/animal binary, the relational, material, and semiotic arrangements the human/animal binary brings into being. This dissertation has tracked key performances of the human/animal binary within nodes in global live wildlife trade's circuits: the assertion of the

dominant human subject in ARCAS's monkey cages or the exhibition of the docile and controllable lizard resting in an owner's hand in the auction ring.

Performativity theory has been a key body of ideas shaping this dissertation's formulation, analysis and argumentation. As discussed in Chapter 3, performativity theory is a means of interrupting the idea that identities, subjectivities, and relations or orders (between races, classes, genders) are pre-given and stable. As Butler has argued, gender is not innate and integral; rather it is performed, which is to say it is continuously brought into being. Perhaps even more than gender, the human-animal binary appears as innate and ahistorical. This dissertation directs performativity theory toward the human/animal binary to draw attention to how this binary is not fixed or intrinsic but is enacted through relational, embodied encounters, speech, movement, and so on. The aim of doing so is to disrupt this binary's naturalization and to draw attention to its effects, to what it enables. One of these effects is to create – and naturalize – a disposable, commodifiable animal object: *animalia economica*. The human-animal binary is not the only force at work in producing this disposability. It does not work alone. The human/animal binary forges powerful ties with capitalism, racism, colonialism, and multiple other exploitative orders that rely on a host of other binaries: male/female, master/slave, and so on. This dissertation focuses in particular on the human/animal binary, though, because it is the most decisive condition of possibility for global live wildlife trade. Global live wildlife trade also enacts this binary, more than any other, through its embodied encounters.

The African rock python that killed the two boys was over a decade old. It lived in a cage much smaller than its body's full length, in a region thousands of kilometers from the place where it or its close relatives had been born. To be kept alive it relied on humans for heat, food, and water. Until it escaped, its life was closely controlled. This is the opposite of the wild life I have advocated in these pages. A wild life is one in which animals may still encounter human beings and animals are still relationally dependent on others. But these encounters and relations are less deeply asymmetrical. Animals engage in their own life-making practices. In this conclusion, I briefly re-state my main arguments and contributions (section 8.2). I then reflect on the project as a whole, considering what my approach brought into focus and what it did not (8.3). Finally, section 8.4 gestures toward key further questions that my research raised, and how these questions are shaping my future research plans.

8.2 Summary of arguments and contributions

This dissertation has conducted a multisite and multispecies examination of global live wildlife trade, focused on flows of wild-caught animals into North America, especially the US, one of the

world's largest importers of live wildlife. My research methodology involved inserting myself in embodied, multispecies contact zones, or places and events in which meetings between profoundly differently positioned beings occur. I thus implicated myself in the very power dynamics I contest. The main power dynamic I examine is the human/animal binary, or a persistent speciesism that renders animals killable and commodifiable on the basis of their species. I refer to this subordinate animal object as *animalia economica*. I use performativity theory to examine how lively commodities are made, remade and unmade in global live wildlife trade, how the human/animal binary is a condition of possibility for global live wildlife trade, and how GLWT performs this binary. Again, the purpose of bringing performativity theory to bear on lively commodification, recommodification, and decommodification is to determine how these processes (and the commodity being or the wild being that results) are the outcome of relational, embodied encounters. Additionally, following Butler, performances depend on structural positionings and conditions. To be performed, commodities (or wild lives) depend on certain conditions of possibility. The key one for lively commodities in GLWT, as I have argued, is a human/animal binary.

My contact zones correspond to three key nodes in global live wildlife trade's circuits. First, I examined how animals are captured in a series of biosphere reserves in Mexico, Guatemala and Belize. I show that animals are disentangled from familial, social and ecological networks and entangled to human provided supports in order to make the lively commodity. Second, I visited exotic animal auctions across the US to demonstrate that they are nodes in which commodities are remade. Animals' status as commodities is collectively reaffirmed at the auction. Animals exchange hands through another set of entanglements and disentanglements, and the auction ring is a stage for the performance of the master figure of the human dominating the subordinate animal object. Third, I inserted myself into the practices of wildlife rehabilitation at ARCAS, where formerly trafficked animals are given the chance to return to a wild life. ARCAS's goal is to sever animals' ties with humans and to entangle them with social, familial and ecological networks that could support a wild life. In other words, ARCAS seeks to undo the lively commodity form that capture made. Yet at ARCAS I observed that the human/animal binary is again performed through wildlife rehabilitation, especially through what I call misanthropic practices that seek to instill fear of humans in animals. These practices involved humans dominating animals by wielding tools like firecrackers, electric fences, and water spray nozzles to ensure that animals would be afraid of humans.

It was my own discomfort wielding these practices and interacting with animals in this manner that brought into relief the power dynamics at work therein. Reading a book or article about ARCAS, or about wildlife rehabilitation more generally, lent little sense of the actual embodied interactions that constituted rehabilitation. But actually practicing wildlife rehabilitation attuned me to its violence. Similarly, in each research node, being inserted into the action enabled me to gain a sense what it is to be with animals within these nodes. Because animals are largely non-verbal, it is difficult to gain – or give – a sense of them through text. Thus while a lack of primary academic fieldwork on wildlife trade provided the initial impetus to insert myself into my research nodes, the deeper motivation eventually became to account for the power-laden and bodily relations between humans and animals in global live wildlife trade. Equally, a more narrative writing style allowed me to convey a sense of the physicality of these relations and encounters, in part by narrating my own interactions and reactions as I observed people being with animals, and as I myself interacted with animals.

Ultimately, this research approach tracked the making, remaking and unmaking of the exotic pet commodity. Throughout, I made three key arguments about the nature of this particular lively commodity, how it was made, remade and unmade, and the role of speciesism and the human/animal binary within global live wildlife trade.

(I) Animal life is central to the exotic pet commodity. If the animal dies, it is no longer a commodity. But the animal cannot merely be alive to be an exotic pet. It must actively demonstrate its life: flap its wings, flick out its tongue, squawk. I therefore refer to exotic pets as a type of “lively commodity” (Collard and Dempsey 2013). Furthermore, it is not simply “life itself” that is at the heart of the exotic pet commodity form. Some lively commodities must be reproductive, i.e. their value is derived from their ability to breed. But most exotic pets need not reproduce; in fact in many cases they are forbidden to. Commodification in global live wildlife trade instead requires and produces an animal life that is encounterable, individual, and controllable. This is a life and a body that humans can control in a cage, on a leash, or through bodily modifications like clipped wings and removed teeth and claws. The animal must always be available to meet humans face-to-face. It must be permanently encounterable. Finally, the animal is individualized. It has a name; generally no family members or social group accompany it; and it is kept alone in a cage. Commodification makes this life and recommodification at the auction re-makes it, and performs it in front of an audience. Decommodification through wildlife rehabilitation attempts the opposite. It seeks to produce a wild life: an unencounterable, autonomous and collective animal life.

(II) Commodification and recommodification (producing and reproducing the lively commodity as encounterable, controllable and individual) and decommodification (attempting to produce an animal life that is wild) occur through a series of entanglements and disentanglements. Capturing an animal involves severing it from its family, society, and ecology and tying it to human-provided supports such as food, water, and shelter. Similarly, during the exchange process at auctions, animals' ties to humans are shuffled around, severed, and re-tied. Finally, rehabilitation seeks to sever animals' ties to humans and to connect animals to wild life networks, such as families, societies, and ecosystems. Paradoxically, however, wildlife rehabilitation attempts this through a process that remains tightly wed to human-animal encounters and to animal dependence on humans.

(III) Speciesism and the human/animal binary that underlies it are both conditions and products of global live wildlife trade. Trade practices are only able to exist because animals are cast as inferior and subordinate to humans. That animals can be “noncriminally put to death” (Derrida 1991) is a central enabling condition of wildlife trade. In addition, I find that this binary is re-enacted within each GLWT node I examine. Animals are *produced as subordinate* through GLWT. In this sense, the trade performs speciesism. Even wildlife rehabilitation, which purports to restore a wild life for animals, does so through a misanthropic process that positions human rehabilitators as dominant, cruel subjects, attempting to instill fear and subordination in rehabilitant animal objects. A key criterion for release is that an animal be afraid of humans and flees from human encounters.

This dissertation constructs these arguments in part by stitching together work from animal geographies and economic geographies, two sub-disciplines that unfortunately have rarely intersected. In bringing these together, I aim to speak to both bodies of work. To animal geographies, I bring an emphasis on capitalism and commodification as structuring human-animal relations. I guard against too quick a celebration of human-animal mingling. Circuits of capital often enroll and engender violent forms of human-animal entanglement. In the economy I examined here, generating profit from animal bodies and lives relies on forced and exploitative encounters between humans and animals. Therefore, while human-animal entanglement is a fundamental feature of living and dying, it is essential to examine the conditions and effects of such entanglements. They are not all equally life-giving. As stated in Chapter 4, human-animal relations are mutually constitutive but they are also radically asymmetrical. Scholars must retain an ability to attend to animals' autonomy and their spatial needs. Contributing to such an effort, I here offer a recuperation of wild life as a crucial site for animal politics and scholarship.

To economic geography, especially economic geography on commodification and decommodification, I bring a more-than-human sensibility, an awareness of how species relations, in particular the human/animal binary, are at stake in capitalism, alongside other exploitative orders including class, gender, and race. Global live wildlife trade is no exception. Animal exploitation generates enormous profits in global live wildlife trade. Speciesism is an especially critical condition of possibility for lively commodification. Furthermore, through my analysis of the multiple modes of life that are integral to the exotic pet commodity, I draw attention to the need to be specific about what mode of life is central to commodities. I also urge economic geographers to pay more attention to commodities that are actually alive.

The productive coupling of animal and economic geography has promise beyond just understanding global live wildlife trade. I believe that an animal geography more attentive to capitalism and an economic geography more attentive to the human/animal binary would make both sub-disciplines more relevant to pressing contemporary debates about ecological crises. Most political economists and ecologists agree that confronting environmental crises requires confronting capitalism, primarily because of capitalism's drive to accumulate and its production of inequalities of wealth and power (Wainwright 2010). Of course I agree. But alongside and entwined with capitalism, speciesism is also an accumulation strategy. The specifically liberal figure of the human – a dominant, superior, discreet subject – licenses harm, suffering, violence and death *with impunity*, to echo Wright (2006; 2011), against nonhuman life. It is another mode of accumulation and producing inequality. Opening up a conversation between animal geography and economic geography would enable greater attention to be paid to how speciesism is implicated in capitalism and ecological crises.

8.3 Reflection on the project

Throughout these pages, I have tried to convey my ambivalence about many of my research experiences over the course of this project. The root of this ambivalence is an ongoing methodological dilemma. Researchers are not flies on the wall in contact zones. When conducting research we are caught up networks of power within which we are actors, not passive observers. My research was especially marked by a central struggle between seeking out encounters with animals for research purposes, and knowing that conditions of violence, suffering and asymmetrical power made these encounters possible. This tension is unresolved in these pages and it remains a concern of mine moving forward to other research projects, which I discuss in the following section. It is also a tension that remains unexplored in nascent conversations about “more-than-human methodology” (Whatmore 2006; Lorimer 2010).

It may be the case that such tension is productive. Bondi (2004) and other feminist theorists (Haraway 1991; Rose 1991; McDowell 1992) have written that ambivalence can be a key strategy for feminist geography and politics. For Bondi (2004, 5), the position of the feminist academic “is a contradiction in terms” given that feminists are required “to take up a position of authority at the same time as acknowledging the fraudulence of claims to such a position.” Similarly, to be an “anti-speciesist” researcher and academic is to inhabit a profoundly paradoxical space. Higher education institutions have historically been leaders in concertedly *humanist* thought. To the extent that animals appear in academic landscapes, it is generally as scientific test subjects, confined to tightly secured and clandestine laboratories. Academia is by and large a humanist, speciesist space. This makes the anti-speciesist academic, like the feminist one, a contradiction in terms.

For Bondi, however, this ambivalence is not something to conquer. It should be mobilized in a “politics of ambivalence... [that is] not about ‘sitting on the fence’, but about creating spaces in which tensions, contradictions and paradoxes can be negotiated fruitfully and dynamically” (Bondi 2004, 5). Research contact zones are examples of such spaces. Negotiating tensions within them is an indelible part of the research experience, and can illuminate the existence of multiple worlds. In other words, the paradoxes of research experience – and of being an anti-speciesist academic – can help to disrupt assumptions and intellectual comfort zones. This is, I think, in the spirit of Haraway’s (1991, 154) suggestion that “single vision produces worse illusions than double vision.” I take double vision to mean the ability to consider both promise and peril in one’s research actions.

This does not mean researchers should conduct research anywhere they want, regardless of the consequences. It rather points to the need to be attentive to the conditions that make our research experiences possible, and to the effects of our “research performances” (Pratt 2000). In my own research, there were some locations in which I chose not to conduct research. They were too violent. For example, I intended to spend a few days observing the live animal section of large market in Mexico City, but one visit overwhelmed me. Animals were stuffed by the dozens into small cages, piled on top of each other. Many were babies. The air was thick with sounds of shrieking and the smell of urine and feces. I rushed through the aisles, frantically seeking a way out of the labyrinth of cages. I did not return.

My response in the market disappointed me at the time. I felt wimpy and weak. There is a strong compulsion in research, maybe especially multi-site research, to go to *more* places, see *more* things, talk to *more* people. I worried almost daily that I was not covering enough ground.

Now, looking back, I can see with more confidence what I knew from books but did not feel at the time: that research only ever brings to light a partial perspective. As a result of who we are, how we decide to conduct a study, what theory we use, some things come into focus and not others. In this project, my intended focus was the conditions of commodification, life, and death for animals within global live wildlife trade. To some extent I accomplished this. Moving forward, however, I intend to enlist collaborators and methodologies more attuned to animal behaviour. Throughout my fieldwork, I constantly had the sensation that animals were communicating with each other – and maybe even with me – but I had no tools for deciphering the messages. Animal ethology offers a means of “reading” animal landscapes, bodies and behaviours at a different level than most of us are capable. At the same time, it will remain important to guard against invasive research techniques.

This dissertation’s strict animal focus was dissatisfying in another key way. It worked to occlude the profound intersections between exploitation along species, gender, class and race lines. For example, as mentioned briefly, global live wildlife trade flows predominantly echo colonial resource flows from the global south to the global north. The poorest individuals in the trade make the least profit and yet bear the costs of depleted wildlife populations. I struggled throughout the dissertation with how to write about animal suffering in a way that did not minimize or obscure high stakes human politics at work in the trade. But this was not always possible given my focus. For example, in Chapter 5, my account of the violent ripping apart of primate families in order to capture a baby monkey did not bring to life the capturer. His motivations and political economic positioning were not part of my story. A possible and problematic effect of this is to vilify the capturer, to inadvertently tap into racist narratives about poor, “third world” people who do not care about animals or the environment, narratives that Indigenous theorists and political ecologists have worked hard to dispel. In future work I will employ a more intersectional approach to considering exploitation, following eco-feminists and Indigenous writers as well as alliances that are forming across Indigenous, queer, anti-speciesist, and anti-racist thinking and activism.

There is a third limitation of the focus I employed here. This dissertation traced ongoing conditions and practices of lively commodification. In doing so, it does not engage significantly with the question of what humans’ relationships with animals *should* be. What would a relationship of mutual flourishing look like? What conditions would need to be in place to facilitate this? My argument – that speciesism is a condition and product of global live wildlife trade, with violent consequences for animal life – is grounded in very specific encounters in the

contact zones I inhabited. But imagining a world in which speciesism was dismantled remains deeply abstract. In this sense, a fruitful (and enlivening) addition to this dissertation would have been a chapter in which I consider actual examples of human-animal relations that are more symmetrical, cases in which the human/animal binary is *not* performed.

Finally, there is a notable gap in this dissertation when it comes to exotic animal use. Originally, I intended to provide a chapter on the performance of exotic animals actors in the film industry in Vancouver. This chapter ended up being cut for logistical reasons (and may eventually be written back in). The labour that exotic animals are forced to exert – whether as pets, performers, or scientific test subjects, or re otherwise “consumed” – is therefore not examined here. The research I conducted on this topic would not contradict anything I have written here; indeed, it is consistent with my overall findings concerning the speciesism that is condition and effect of global live wildlife trade. Including this research would, though, bring attention to another layer of exploitation within this economy.

8.4 Future directions

Recent academic interest in wildlife trade (Sollund 2011; 2013a; 2013b; Smith et al. 2009; Smith et al. 2012) may be a hopeful indication of more sustained studies to come, from the sciences and social sciences. It is clear that only a very narrow and opaque picture of wildlife trade exists. Studies remain to be conducted on the effects of the trade (and captivity) on multiple species (especially non-primates); systematic and reliable assessments of the size of the trade and its ecological effects; socio-economic effects along the commodity chain; governance of wildlife trade at multiple scales; and people’s psychological or sociological reasons for owning or desiring to own exotic animals. Such studies would fill informational gaps surrounding wildlife trade. My own future research will continue to pursue the critical line of inquiry I began here into the human/animal binary and its role within contemporary capitalism. But I will take this inquiry in new directions that I elaborate briefly below.

In doing so, I hope to join other critical geographers (including feminist, Marxist, critical race, and so on) who are beginning to take more seriously animal lives and bodies as important sites of exploitation, capital accumulation, violence and oppression. Animal traffic – as a traffic in bodies, lives and meanings – intersects with multiple other forms of oppression. Technologies of caging, for example, are shared across human and animal “prisons” (see Morin, forthcoming). Slaughterhouse work exploits migrant labourers alongside factory-farmed animals (LeDuff 2000; Thierman 2010; Joyce et al. forthcoming). How animal oppression and human oppression may depend on one another is a topic in need of critical investigation, especially by geographers,

whose attention to space could illuminate how similar spatial logics and controls are deployed across human and animal bodies and groups.

Conducting research for this dissertation opened up three key sets of further questions for me, each of which I plan to address in future research. First, the research and analysis in Chapter 7 on wildlife rehabilitation complicates the purportedly beneficent and liberatory practice of rehabilitation. I found that rehabilitation practices are more complicated than simply “freeing animals”. My own labour revealed to me the implicit power dynamics in rehabilitation – how its practices perform a dominant human subject and a subordinate animal object. Chapter 7 asked what kind of human-animal relations are performed at ARCAS for animals previously trafficked as pets. But rehabilitation is a practice whose reach extends far beyond the pet trade. What are its roles and broad effects in contemporary capitalism? My next solo research project will critically examine wildlife rehabilitation’s role in the aftermath of environmental disasters. After major environmental disasters such as oil spills, hundreds if not thousands of animals may be enrolled in rehabilitation programs in order to be released post-remediation efforts. Sometimes these animals are re-located. Environmental fines for the disasters frequently fund these programs. My future research will dig beneath the heralded and lauded institution of wildlife rehabilitation to complicate its function in performing human-animal relations, and in capitalist political economies. Does wildlife rehabilitation act as a “safety valve” for industry (as some animal welfare workers suggested to me in the context of the pet trade)? Are human-animal relations being re-formed in these rehabilitation programs? If so, how?

In tandem with the above project, I will be exploring another question my dissertation research raised. In these pages, I was intensely concerned with animals’ disposability in capitalism. How are animals made disposable? How does their disposability function within capitalism? I argued centrally that a human/animal dualism renders animals as disposable, and that their disposability enables global live wildlife trade to function. Part way through this project, I began to wonder about instances in which animals are not disposable, or in which animal death is criminally punishable. In these instances, how is such punishment meted out, I wondered. An excellent opportunity to study the intricacies of such a process is afforded by juridico-political calculations that determine the extent of an environmental fine post-environmental disaster. Sometimes, this fine is issued on the basis of how many animals were killed, and what an animal’s life is deemed to be worth. Within the same project that will examine post-disaster wildlife rehabilitation (as detailed above), I will be determining how

environmental fines are calculated. In other words, how are attempts made to value animal life *after* death?

A final key question opened up by this dissertation research concerns the space of the exotic animal auction. As mentioned in Chapter 6, most of the auctions at which I conducted research double as livestock or horse auctions. Many of the same techniques, practices, and individuals are involved in controlling and trading livestock and trading exotic pets, although there are also key differences, such as the features of the animal that are emphasized during auction, and the broader political economy within which each are situated. The space of the auction thus presents the opportunity to examine overlapping forms of animal commodification. To do so I will be engaging in a collaborative research project on animal auctions with Kathryn Gillespie, whose research on cattle auctions forms part of her PhD dissertation. Kathryn and I will conduct a comparative project, examining the similarities and differences between, to borrow Lee and Pratt's (2012) framing, "the spectacular and the mundane" spaces of exotic animal auctions and cattle auctions, respectively. Both of these projects – wildlife rehabilitation in the aftermath of environmental disasters, and animal auctions – will extend the work I began here: a consideration of the co-constitution of animal life and death and contemporary capitalist economies.

8.5 Conclusion

An extraordinary degree of violence marks global live wildlife trade. When the form of life generating value is a profoundly *encounterable* life, as is the case in global live wildlife trade and its circulation of lively commodities, a series of forced disentanglements inevitably comprise the process of making lives encounterable. Simultaneously, animals are further and more directly brought into entanglements with humans. Violence attends these entanglements, even if they are sometimes assembled out of a form of "love for animals". In my own research I watched many animals die and suffer, ensnared in the circuits of an economy in which their lives are valued economically but have little to no political or ethical value. The animals – many of which are remarkably intelligent – are removed from a diverse world of family, society, ecology, and confined to tiny cages and relations of dependence in which they are profoundly controlled and under-stimulated. My experiences seeing this suffering and reading statistic after statistic about the degree of mortality within global live wildlife trade lead me to conclude that the trade should be stopped.

On a more theoretical level, my investigation is allied with Star's (1991, 43) argument that "it is both more analytically interesting and more politically just to begin with the question,

cui bono? [to whose benefit?] than to begin with a celebration of the fact of human/non-human mingling.” This requires walking a very fine and ambivalent line: one informed by both the critical scholarship that highlights the materially and discursively co-constitutive nature of human-animal and culture-nature, and by a commitment to less violent, invasive, and exploitative forms of human-animal entanglements. The analysis conducted in this dissertation points in part to the need to retain wild lives – that is, retain a sense of autonomy and alterity in and for nonhuman animals – as key sites and subjects of animal ethics. Acknowledgement of the wild life may in many cases lead to a letting go, or a letting be of wild animals. The words of a wildlife scientist whom I interviewed years ago stick with me. He said that animals need space and respect. The human/animal binary allows little room for either.

While conducting research for this dissertation, a good friend’s son, Sean, who had just turned seven, wrote a poem that beautifully echoes the scientist’s emphasis on giving animals space and respect. In it, Sean describes what I consider a way of being with animals in which we leave animals be. He also cautions the reader to retreat from encounters with animals, poisonous spiders, for example, in which harm might result. Sean’s words suggest that we admit our mutual vulnerability and treat animals with care, restraint, and humility. With permission from Sean and his parents, the poem provides this dissertation’s closing words.

Don't worry about caterpillars.
Just leave them how they are.
In dragonfly's territory
Do nothing but just wait
With daddy long legs
still do nothing.
Do nothing with army ants or inch worm
Praying mantis
do nothing
But wait the BLACK WIDOW spider
walk away very slowly
they shoot venom!

– Sean Dempsey (2011)

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