Article:
Huggan, GDM (2017) Killers: Orcas and Their Followers. Public Culture, 29 (2 (82)). pp. 287-309. ISSN 0899-2363

https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-3749069

Killers: Orcas and their followers

Graham Huggan, University of Leeds, UK

> [The killer whale] is the fiercest, most terrifying animal in all the world.
> Joseph J. Cook

> Dolphins never hurt anybody.
> *Richard O'Barry*

The Shamu effect

In a 2005 story by the Canadian author Craig Davidson, a marine park trainer loses a leg after a spectacular routine with a performing orca, known in the trade as a "rocket hop,"[1] goes catastrophically awry. The accident is described in graphic detail:

> Niska's mouth opens. My left leg slips inside. Thigh raked down a row of teeth, shredding the wetsuit. Rocketing upwards, faster now. My crotch smashes the crook of her mouth and something goes snap. Jam a hand into Niska's mouth and pry with everything I've got, her jaws a jammed elevator I'm trying to open. Whale gagging on the foot lodged deep in her throat, huge muscles constricting and relaxing. Bubbles swirling and ears roaring, mind panicked and lungs starved for oxygen, a bright flame of terror dancing behind my eyes and yet there remains this great liquid silence, all things distant and muted in this veil of salt water. A disconnected image races through my head: that famous black-and-white snapshot of a Buddhist monk sitting serenely in lotus position as flames consume him. (Davidson 2005: 72)

The trainer in Davidson's story survives; several real-life counterparts have not been so fortunate. Take Keltie Byrne, for instance, who was dragged under and drowned by an orca in 1991 at the Pacific Northwest marine park SeaLand: "the first time anyone had been killed by a killer whale in captivity," writes the journalist David Kirby (2012: 12), but "certainly not the last." Byrne's killer was called Tilikum (Chinook for "friend"): a huge, temperamentally unstable orca who would go on to kill two other people, including—some nineteen years later—the experienced and universally popular Orlando SeaWorld trainer, Dawn Brancheau. If Brancheau's death provided a poignant reminder of the risks involved in interacting with large predatory animals, the "media frenzy" (Zimmermann 2010: 4) that followed would focus, not on the dangers posed by orcas to humans, but on the continuing exploitation of captive animals for entertainment purposes—an all-too-familiar morality tale of individual opportunism and corporate power (Davis 1997; Desmond 1999).[2] The negative publicity would eventually feed into the hit 2013 documentary Blackfish, a media spectacle of its own which has been credited with opening the eyes of many of its worldwide viewers to the cruelty of marine-mammal captivity–-as well as the more specific animal-welfare abuses of the billion-dollar SeaWorld franchise—for the first time (Hargrove 2015; Kirby 2012). Litigation followed on both sides; activist groups sprang up; and several books and articles were published, some of them by former

animal trainers turned full-time animal advocates who now felt suitably emboldened either to expose the rapacity and irresponsibility of their corporate employers (Hargrove 2015) or to reveal the error of their own ways (O'Barry 2012). Most of the action, however, has been on the Internet, with numerous advocacy networks having being built up around social media,[3] and with individual celebrity animals—Tilikum included—having attracted large followings in an ironic, morally inverted rehearsal of the acquisitive tactics with which killer whales, particularly since the emergence of the corporate "orca-display industry" (Neiwert 2015: 120) in the mid twentieth century, have been pursued, rounded up and captured, and literally or metaphorically confined.

The size of this industry should not be underestimated. David Neiwert, in his 2015 study Of Orcas and Men, provides some startling statistics. In 2012, he says, "orca facilities around the world drew over 120 million people, more than the combined attendance of Major League Baseball, National Football League, and National Basketball Association games" (ibid: 121). Neiwert's analogies are apt, for since its inception in the 1960s orca display–-especially though by no means exclusively in the US—has been a major spectator sport, a razzmatazz entertainment industry replete with loud music, bright lights, and crowd-pleasing acrobatics, bearing all the carefully choreographed characteristics of a "nautical circus show" (ibid: 227). Bearing all the risks, too, insofar as orca display, despite the innocent world it often seeks to represent, is an inherently dangerous business in which powerful animals—intensely vulnerable themselves—are coerced into performing alongside trainers whose commands are not always followed; whose human bodies are no match for those of their non-human counterparts; and whose staged attempts to interact with intrinsically unreliable, in some cases demonstrably dysfunctional animals relies on risk itself as a profitable commodity in the symbolic economy of human-animal exchange.[4]

One way of looking at the North American orca-display industry is through the lens of one of its earliest celebrity animal performers. As Jane Desmond has suggested (1999: 217), "What Mickey Mouse is to Disneyland, Shamu is to Sea World. Marketing symbol, ambassador, embodiment of dreams come true for children (and adults), Shamu, the most celebrated orca whale of all time, is the synecdoche of Sea World." A direct physical and ideological correlation therefore exists between the staged personality of this engaging celebrity animal and the industry that would rapidly spring up around her (or, insofar as the Shamu brand has been able to benefit from a commercially exploitable blurring of gender boundaries, him: see Desmond 1999: 248). It thus seems fitting that Shamu, an origin myth of sorts, should be founded on a derived name, She-Namu, after her slightly earlier male counterpart, Namu, who though short-lived himself has the best claim to being the first of the line.[5] Notwithstanding, the original Shamu, captured in 1965, was the first killer whale in SeaWorld's collection and soon became its tutelary spirit, its "primordial goddess" (Hargrove 2015: 26). As John Hargrove—a former SeaWorld trainer, since turned star witness for the prosecution—sardonically observes (2015: 26), "Every show was about Shamu; every whale at the center of the spectacle was called Shamu; any companion to the principal whale in the shows was somehow explained away as Baby Shamu or Great-Grandbaby Shamu. Shamu would never die. At least, not in name." What I will call here the "Shamu effect" depends, as Desmond convincingly contends, on promoting a utopian view of natural innocence that thinly masks American cultural dominance and corporate leadership (Desmond 1999: 217). It also relies on a strategic sidelining of violence, even as it is violence of different kinds—

commercially-derived, performance-bred, captivity-related—that makes the spectacle possible in the first place, and even as the risks associated with human-animal encounter, mediated by the heroic figure of the trainer, are made abundantly clear.

Above all, the Shamu effect is produced via what I have called elsewhere (2013: 4) the "repeatable uniqueness" of the celebrity figure: here more specifically the iconic figure of the celebrity animal, which operates as both an ideological conduit for self-perpetuating "family values" and an affective mirror for generally rose-tinted human perceptions of themselves (Blewitt 2013; Giles 2013). "Repeatable uniqueness," of course, is by no means limited to animal figures, being an integral part of those wider media processes by which celebrities—which nearly always means human celebrities—are rendered simultaneously special and banal. This seemingly inexorable return to the human is typical of celebrity studies, in turn, a field which has tended to focus almost exclusively on human subjects; and in which when animals have featured, they have usually been constructed as mute objects of human curiosity or doe-eyed recipients of self-serving philanthropic concern (Giles 2013). More recently, however, relations between humans and animals, and between the categories of "human" and "animal," have been made considerably more complex, in ways that theorists of celebrity—long addicted to the human—are only just beginning to understand (see Blewitt and Giles above; see also Boger 2015, Nance 2015).

Part of this understanding involves the acknowledgement of species difference. One of the ironies of animal celebrity is that it involves equal measures of anthropomorphism and dehumanization. Thus, while celebrity animals, like their human counterparts, are nothing without the (human) audiences that create them, unlike most of these counterparts they are the products of a coercive rather than voluntary performance in which they have little if any agential capacity to manipulate their stage roles or to fashion media-friendly images of themselves. David Giles thus gets it exactly wrong when he suggests (ibid: 117) that celebrity animals tend to "wear the badge of authenticity held to be so important for credible image-management [since] there is never any question as to whether or not they are being themselves." On the contrary, celebrity animals are never allowed to be themselves, and this is the most effective marker of their celebrity. (In the case of orcas, the ironies are compounded by the fact that they are not even allowed to belong to their own species; for though they are sometimes loosely affiliated with the odontocetes (toothed whales), killer whales are not usually classified as whales at all, but rather as the largest of the dolphins (delphinidae) [Ford, Ellis, and Balcomb 2000; see also Hoyt 1990 and Neiwert 2015].)[6] The Shamu effect provides a conspicuous example of this particular, media-driven form of ontological dissociation. "Shamu" as stage name is transferred from one performing orca to another, not only implying that the number of Shamus is potentially unlimited, but also suggesting that Shamu ultimately rests, not in the individual personality—albeit de-individualized persona—of any given performing animal, but in the involuntary nature of animal performance itself (Orozco 2013).

Not just animal performance, though, for the Shamu effect is produced through a combination of interactive performances: those of the orcas themselves, those of their trainers, and not least those of their family audiences, whose participation as well as appreciation is needed to complete the choreographed, almost balletic spectacle of controlled grace and power that provides the immediately recognizable signature of the live shows (Desmond 1999). The Shamu effect is thus the result of programmed interaction between multiple bodies organized around the

iconic figure of the lead orca, whose "physical body and its actions come to represent the complex of feelings, ideas, and fantasy that [constitute] the ideological subtext of the park" (ibid: 222). It is crucial that the orcas are real, for although the Shamu effect is continually reproduced through the various simulacra (photographs, souvenirs, replicas, etc.) that are associated with the Shamu figure, only the direct physical presence of the orcas vouchsafes the authenticity of a performance that bears all the hallmarks—mass, power, danger—of "the consumable sublime" (ibid: 247).

More recently, specific forms of technological mediation, e.g. projection screens and digital imaging devices, have enhanced the general effect of the real by providing a more visually complex array that balances audience "perception of the whales as the embodiment of physical difference and the abstraction and emblematization of that difference into graphic or schematic form" (ibid: 247). To some extent, this turn to technology has been SeaWorld's less-than-subtle way of negotiating the fall-out generated by a sequence of accidents at its four marine parks, notably the death of Byrne, which resulted in the early 1990s in the cessation of all pool-based human-animal encounters, and with trainers since then being obliged to perform their routines either from poolside or from specially constructed shallow-water ledges that provide the possibility of a swift getaway should the orcas become aggressive and suddenly decide to attack (Hargrove 2015; Kirby 2012).

While the shows have become less spectacular as a result, they have also become more interactive in the sense that a wider range of participatory activities is now offered in which audience members are given the opportunity to fashion their own responses to what they are seeing, and to share those responses with others on social media, thereby creating their own individualized versions of the Shamu effect in which they themselves become celebrity performers—at least for a time. This is how celebrity has always worked: as a particular, attention-seeking kind of technologically mediated performance in which public performers (celebrities) depend upon, and are to some extent created by, their followers, who then—with varying degrees of success–-fulfil their fantasy of becoming public performers themselves (Gamson 2011; Rojek 2001; Turner 2004). But as Sharon Marcus (2015: 49) has recently argued, the opportunities provided by new media, while by no means eliminating the status hierarchies that attach to older forms of celebrity, have made it significantly easier for "fans to address celebrities, celebrities to address fans, and fans to address one another"—and for fans to become celebrities, even if few ever do and celebrity still remains "an exclusive status reserved for a very few people, a status that many people imagine they would like to possess but [most of them acknowledge] they won't obtain." Notwithstanding, recent evidence suggests there is an increasing democratization of celebrity that has similarly closed the gap between human and animal celebrities, while the rapid development of new technologies has also effected a transition from the human/animal celebrity as fetish object—which theorists such as Kelli Fuery see as being characteristic of "old" media—to the fetishization of celebrity status, which may be conferred upon celebrities, celebrity-followers, and follower-celebrities alike (Fuery 2008: 139; see also Driessens 2015).

The rest of this essay focuses on the various followings—both virtual and real—that have accompanied recent developments in the North American orca-display industry, organizing its thoughts around the celebrity-animal figures of Tilikum, Keiko, and Morgan, the last of these currently held at one of Europe's few remaining marine parks to keep orcas in captivity, Loro Parque, on the popular North Atlantic holiday island of Tenerife.[7] All three emerge as embattled figures whose celebrity has come at a price, and whose life stories provide sad confirmations of the

continuing human exploitation of performing animals, much of which is tied in with the depredations of the modern corporate world (Wilson 2015). They also—especially Tilikum—afford reminders of the modern celebrity industry's fetishization of death, revealing what John Blewitt (2013: 330) calls the morbidly "shamanistic quality [that] can be detected in the morphology of celebrity presentation and reception," whether the celebrity scenario in question is human, animal, or—as is nearly always the case with animal scenarios—a densely tangled combination of both (see also Rojek 2001: 53–56).

Performing orcas, whose scientific name (Orcinus orca) links them to the classical underworld,[8] are perhaps uniquely positioned to permit insight into the "dark side" (Kirby 2012) of the late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century marine-mammal entertainment industry, which brings together at least three different kinds of celebrity—celebrity commerce, celebrity activism, and celebrity conservation—each of which draws substantially on the others while critically reflecting on them at the same time (Brockington 2009; Huggan 2013). As I will go on to show, this particular celebrity scenario—even as it trades on the innocence of its animal and, more occasionally, human victims—is threaded through with the half-wished-for threat of violence, offering further opportunity for critical reflection on the linked forms of fanaticism (obsession) and moral recoil (obscenity) that are at the dark heart of celebrity itself.

After Blackfish

Gabriela Cowperthwaite's powerful documentary film Blackfish—named after the popular Pacific Northwest Native American/Canadian term for the orca, a revered ancestral figure in many of their myths and legends—premiered at the Sundance Festival in 2013, and was a more or less instant hit, gathering increasing attention as one of the most talked-about documentary movies of the year (Neiwert 2015: 232). Although the film only brought modest box-office returns, it would find a much larger audience on cable television, and a still larger one via such popular web-based outlets as iTunes and Netflix (Brammer 2015: 74). Most of all, Blackfish—ostensibly an animal advocacy vehicle loosely organized around the Tilikum attacks and the increasingly desperate attempts of SeaWorld to protect its own commercial interests—became and has remained a major catalyst for hard-fought Internet campaigns both for and against marine-mammal captivity, so much so that the Shamu effect has spawned a Blackfish equivalent that has reached tens of millions of homes and placed the entire marine-park industry on red alert (Brammer 2015; Hargrove 2015; Neiwert 2015).

This latter effect has registered on several different scales, from specific SeaWorld stock depreciation—especially in the immediate aftermath of the film—to overall declining marine-park attendance, and it continues to be fought out in several different arenas that join political strategy to legal conflict, in the process exposing serious fault-lines and rivalries within what only superficially seems to be the same moral cause.[9] But by far its most conspicuous front has been that of social media, with a continuing battle being played out online, both via organized opponents' official websites and, just as important, through spirited (sometimes spiteful) individual exchanges between different impromptu participants in what might be seen at one level as an unofficial national conversation and, at another, as a major global public debate. As Rebekah Brammer observes (2015: 74), participation in such debates "is not so much about what you read as what you share, retweet, tag, like, comment on or

blog about – and users don't have to like or follow an organisation in order to do this." And as she further suggests (ibid: 78), the battle, joined this way, is an example not just of "how the source medium – the film itself – has been able to reach a far bigger audience through social media," but also of how social media themselves fuel the expectation of both individual and collective cross-platform participation, meaning that "we can no longer assess the success of a film through the more traditional models of box-office gross and DVD sales alone."

What Blackfish foregrounds as well is the prevalence in our times of web-based forms of social and environmental activism that offer the utopian possibility of transforming "emotion into action" (Castells 2012: 13), even if they do not necessarily turn into action, and even though they may effectively substitute emotion for action, as several recent popular critiques of so-called "keyboard activism" attest (Brammer 2015; Chiaramonte 2012). One view of cyberactivism—those different forms of social and political protest which find their primary means of expression on the web—is that it has effectively changed what counts as activism, paving the way for new kinds of "decentered" social movements that are more open and democratic than the older ones they seek, whether explicitly or implicitly, to replace (Castells 2012). A less rosy view is that cyberactivism is a by-product of "digital capitalism" (Barassi 2015) and as such shares many of its most salient characteristics: i.e. it is almost constitutively unreliable, and therefore easy to co-opt by less-than-progressive commercial interests; and it tends by definition to be temporary, if by no means inconsequential, in its social and political effects (McCaughey and Ayers 2003).

As the example of Blackfish shows, both of these views have some truth to them. Thus, a prominent (not to mention predictable) feature of the online forums is the large number of factual mistakes in them or, more to the point, the large number of times that "facts" are drawn from the film either to support individual opinion or to lend credence to only one, often extreme, side of the debate (Kleiman 2014). Another, related feature is the use of social media (including almost inevitably the "big three," Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube) to protect as much as to assail corporate interests, in this case those of SeaWorld, which maintains a carefully managed website (www.seaworld.com) that draws repeated attention to the company's latest animal-welfare initiatives and its ongoing conservation work. As Brammer points out (2015: 75), communications on both sides, even as they are widely differentiated and dispersed, are often framed in binary terms (sometimes via shortened identifiers such as "pro-cap" versus "anti-cap"), which allow moral victories to be proclaimed at different moments while regular insults—accompanied by equally regular charges of defamation—are traded across the bows. Such high-octane exchanges are routine on the web, as are the media-friendly forms of individualization and personification used to identify them. Thus it should come as no surprise to learn that alongside numerous organized activist initiatives (The Orca Project, Orca Aware, Voices of the Orcas, etc.), there are several Tilikum-specific Facebook pages (Tilikum the Orca, Retire Tilikum the Orca, Free Tilikum), which attract a wide variety of loosely monitored postings, from short vituperative statements to longer, more considered blogs.

Nor should it be a surprise that celebrities have joined the fray, thereby grabbing the chance to act as trendsetting moral arbiters in debates which, at their most emotional, revolve around unashamedly anthropomorphized issues of animal personhood and slavery, with individual celebrity animals—Tilikum prominent among them—being used as identifying markers for the larger conservationist cause (Brammer 2015; Kirby 2012). Most of Blackfish's celebrity followers have unequivocally supported the film, with popular TV actors from Aaron Paul (Breaking

Bad) to Ricky Gervais (The Office) in turn attracting large fan followings, while musicians have also been particularly active in their condemnation of SeaWorld, with various North American recording artists—Barenaked Ladies, Cheap Trick, and Willie Nelson among them—demonstratively pulling out of previous bookings to play at one or another of the company's marine parks (Brammer 2015: 76).

As Dan Brockington (2009: 2) asserts, "The flourishing of celebrity conservation is part of an ever-closer intertwining of conservation and corporate capitalism." Celebrities have long since voiced public support for a variety of conservationist initiatives, using them both to boost their own moral credentials—a media-induced maneuver archly described by Max Boykoff and John Goodman (2009: 396) as "conspicuous redemption"—and to feed off conservation's own media-conscious, often corporation-supported, manipulations of "affective power" (Marshall 1997: xii). In the case of Blackfish, three interrelated kinds of affective power are made evident: the power of the documentary genre; the power of the charismatic animal; and the power of celebrity conservation itself. Let me take each of these briefly in turn here. The success of documentary, Bill Nicols (1991: 135) suggests, depends on its capacity to reinforce viewers' "preexisting emotional attachments to representations" as a means of winning them over to the argument it constructs. Blackfish organizes its own particular emotional appeal around the figure of the orca as a large charismatic animal whose intelligence and physical force are rendered proportionate with its suffering, and whose immediate recognizability, together with its symbolic resonance, make it a particularly attractive candidate for financial support (Brakes 2009). The disproportionate amount of conservation funding given over to "charismatic megafauna" has been well documented, as has the media fixation on so-called "flagship species," with both of these tending to distract attention away from more important ecological players, e.g. keystone species, and more inclusive forms of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem management (Leader-Williams and Dublin 2000: 54). "Celebrity conservation" is the composite term that best describes the different ways in which conservation initiatives draw strength, both from specific celebrity figures and from the general "celebrity system" (Marshall 1997: xii) within which these figures operate—a system which frames celebrity as a commodity, subject to the fluctuating rates and regimes of value that dictate symbolic as well as material exchange (Brockington 2009; Huggan 2013).

In Blackfish, animal advocacy provides a paradigmatic example of the workings of the celebrity system, bringing together different celebrities (both human and animal) and different kinds of celebrity (both achieved and attributed) within the overarching context of the global conservationist cause.[10] For if Tilikum is the undisputed star of the show, doubling—as celebrities often do—as hero and villain, he also shares space with several other celebrity figures, Dawn Brancheau prominent among them as another media-hounded victim, chased first (and killed) by Tilikum, then by a legion of public sympathizers—from investigative journalists to self-identifying followers and supporters—seeking to make sense of her death. While the success of Blackfish has been to engage these sympathies at large, it is the Internet rather than the film itself that has mobilized them in even greater numbers by providing "multiple outlets for the personalized creation of celebrity cultures, celebrity products, celebrity selves" (Gamson 2011: 12). What is characteristic about much of this cross-platform activity is its high degree of individualism, from the personal nature of the responses, some of which claim an intimate relationship to the victims they cannot possibly have,[11] to its focus on charismatic individuals, with both of these in keeping with the celebrity system's restless fashioning of "manufactured

personalities," who come to embody "the spirit of individualism in contemporary consumer culture [as well as fulfilling] the material and ideological requirements of the system that creates them" (Marshall 1997: 247). To some extent this is a function of contemporary animal advocacy's strategic emphasis on the welfare of individual animals (especially suffering animals) whose personhood is directly linked to sentience, with strong (and often strongly anthropomorphic) forms of transpersonal identification, then further strengthened by the medium, being the most visible result (Beers 2006; Kemmerer 2015). To some degree it is a function as well of the individualization of politics that is sometimes seen as being one of the most notable by-products of cyberactivism—a process that depends on strong emotional connection to particular causes, but also on the self-publicizing technologies that allow such emotions to be made visible and expressed (Castells 2010; Meikle 2002). Most of all, however, it is a function of visibility itself as the implied goal of such activities, which are part of what Joshua Gamson among others sees as a "heightened consciousness of everyday life as a public performance: an increased expectation that we are being watched [and a corresponding] willingness to offer [our private selves up] to watchers known and unknown" (ibid: 1068; see also Marcus 2015, Turner 2004).

In his hard-hitting analysis of the media-driven controversies that Blackfish helped create, Joe Kleiman (2014: 210) points out two major influences on the way the information surrounding them has been disseminated: the rise of social media and the spread of personalized digital imaging technology, both of which make instant news without necessarily giving much attention to the accuracy of what they report. Kleiman, who admits to being an interested party, is too keen on clearing SeaWorld's name, mainly by directing his ire at what he sees as the "tabloid" tactics of PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) and other leading animal-advocacy organizations, but also by listing a number of deliberately "misleading edits" in the film, which he considers as manipulating the evidence in favour of the anti-captivity argument it presents (ibid: 10, 14, 33–35). In so doing, he mistakes the whole purpose of documentary film, which, as Nichols notes, is expressly designed to win consent for a particular viewpoint (Nichols 2001: 4), while remaining silent about his own position, which tacitly supports the view of display animals as "assets" in an industry the financial interests of which apparently need more protecting than the animals themselves (Kleiman 2014: 8).

Still, he scores several palpable hits against the film, against at least some of the activist organizations that have made political capital out of it, and perhaps above all against the self-publicizing environment in which new media often operate, which tends to turn collective protest into individual performance and to promote the very consumerist ideologies it claims to contest.[12] As I have been suggesting thus far, this environment both requires a redefinition of celebrity in terms of the performative capacity to attract a following and a critical re-assessment of the different situated meanings of "following" itself. This makes the orca-display industry an interesting case study, not just because it involves an intersection of public performances that is framed by celebrity images, but also because it plays between real and virtual followings, framing these in turn in terms of accumulation (following as collective noun) and pursuit (following as active verb). Such followings are rarely if ever innocent. In the case of orcas, the stakes are high and following involves at least four different if closely connected kinds of violence: the violence of capture; the violence of captivity; the violence of representation; and the more occasional violence of orcas themselves. The more particular case of Tilikum brings all four kinds of violence to the fore while also gesturing towards what Marcus (2015: 49) calls the "resonant

paradoxes" of celebrity culture, with the giant orca bearing upon his battered body[13] the alternate patterns of heroism and demonization that have historically been inscribed onto the Janus-faced figure of the killer whale (Hoyt 1990; Neiwert 2015). A rather different case, though one that has attracted an equally large following, is that of Keiko, the eminently marketable narrative of whose capture, rehabilitation, and release would provide the basis for the saccharine 1993 Warner Bros. movie Free Willy, but which contains—as I will now go on to elaborate—not one but several, significantly less attractive back stories of its own.

Killing Keiko, freeing Morgan

Keiko—the 6000-pound male orca with a female name—shares the stage today with Tilikum as the world's most famous killer whale, and although the reasons for his celebrity are different, at least some of the many stories that continue to swirl around him are the same. Keiko, like Tilikum, was captured in Icelandic waters, where, like Tilikum, he was snatched from his family and sold to a North American marine park, proceeding to endure rough treatment as a calf made to share a tank with several older and more aggressive killer whales (Kirby 2012: 197–198). The uninterrupted object of media attention from that time (the early 1980s) right up until his death (in the early 2000s), Keiko is a celebrity in all the classic senses of the word. Celebrities are "discursively produced through media and other communications networks; they are symptomatic of the blurring of private and public spaces in everyday social life; they are brand names and marketing tools as well as cultural icons and model identities; and they are both targets of and vehicles for a wide variety of cultural and ideological debates" (Huggan 2013: 1). Keiko would fulfil all of these functions and more in the context of a short life in which he was both syndicated film star (Free Willy) and international tourist magnet—media darling, too, with the various news features that surrounded his rehabilitation, his eventual release, and the persistent controversies that accompanied them, helping to create mass followings that have only expanded further in the "cyberactivist" Internet age (McCaughey and Ayers 2003).

In fact Keiko seems always to have been followed in one way or another, whether by hunters and collectors associated with the orca-display industry, or by advocates and activists committed to the animal liberation movement; whether by North American and Mexican marine-park visitors during his time in captivity, or by Icelandic and Norwegian tourists during his time in the wild.[14] In the process, he has been tracked over thousands of miles, relocated and re-released, and subjected to a wide range of commercial and scientific interests. Little wonder that Kirby (2013: 199), who has in turn tracked the large number of often competing activities that involve him, describes him ironically as "the perfect whale"—the multiply desired object of intertwined public-relations machinations, fan activities, and press interests (Giles 2013: 124), both celebrated for his freedom yet, like other celebrity animals, eternally confined.

Many of the activities surrounding Keiko had come together by the mid 1990s in the so-called "Keiko Project," itself a loose amalgam of animal-advocacy organizations arranged around a broadly liberationist platform which, as things turned out, some individual members would choose not to support. In the eye of the storm was Mark Simmons, the ex-SeaWorld trainer hired in 1998 to help rehabilitate Keiko, who had recently been flown to his new Icelandic home, a sea pen in the Westman Islands, where for the first time in two decades he could experience the (relative) freedom of ocean life (Kirby 2012: 262–263). Simmons, along with another former

SeaWorld employee, Robin Friday, was quick to denounce the same rehabilitation program he had been appointed to direct, leading to ugly recriminations about SeaWorld—which maintained a keen interest in Keiko, though from a pro-captivity standpoint—having effectively taken over the Project with a view to making it fail (Kirby 2012: 264). The Keiko Project, Simmons and Friday maintained—though at least some of the evidence suggested the opposite—was not cut out for success, nor for that matter were a number of other proposed cetacean-release programs, which were making the same mistake of imagining that captive animals, once liberated, would adapt quickly and un-problematically to the wild (Neiwert 2015: 213–221).

Simmons would later leave the project, but return with a vengeance with a 2014 book, *Killing Keiko: The True Story of Free Willy's Return to the Wild*. The book's pro-captivity agenda is clear, as is its provocative ambition to show that, far from helping Keiko, the various animal-advocacy organizations involved in his rehabilitation were at least partly responsible for his death. There is scant evidence to support this view—Keiko would eventually die of pneumonia, a relatively common cetacean disease, with little to suggest that this had been brought on by his experiences in the wild—but the book opportunistically rides the storm that surrounded his death, which would draw a number of angry protests about the huge and unnecessary expenditure of the Keiko Project; its celebrity-obsessed diversion of funds away from other, more deserving collective animal-rescue projects; and, in some of the more extreme cases, its wrong-headed insistence on the very possibility that captive animals could re-adapt to the wild (for a summary of responses, see Kirby 2012: 279–281).

Simmons's book, which seemed part-designed to settle old scores, may have been ill advised while—as numerous Amazon reviewers were quick to point out—it was scientifically inaccurate. But it was effective nonetheless in drawing attention to the factional tensions within the contemporary animal-advocacy movement, which Diane Beers (2006: 200) has wryly described in terms of a smorgasbord of sometimes only vaguely related platforms ranging in size and species from Save the Dolphins to United Poultry Concerns. And it was effective, as well, in showing the centrality of the media, both "old" and "new," to the movement, as well as the importance of manipulating public relations in the service of an environmental cause. The Keiko Project, in fact, might well be construed as being more about the dark arts of PR than about the mistreatment of animals in captivity, though at a time when followings can be accumulated at the click of a button, PR—still understood primarily in terms of the corporate maintenance of a favourable public image—involves a multi-directional process that combines many different publics, many different public identities, and many different, often highly personalized conceptions of what a "public image" is.[15]

More recent variants of the Keiko Project, such as the "Free Tilikum" and "Free Morgan" campaigns, rely to an even greater extent on social media as a versatile tool for the privatization of public relations as well as a multifunctional instrument for the mobilization of ethical concerns. The latter campaign is spearheaded by the Free Morgan Foundation (www.freemorgan.org), a non-profit charity set up in 2011 to provide information on, and solicit funding for, an ongoing court case based on the proposed repatriation of Morgan, a young female orca currently held at a Tenerife-sited marine park, Loro Parque, to the wild. Some four years later, the case, which has already gone through numerous appeals, remains unsettled, though a recent ruling failed to establish grounds for repatriation and Morgan, whose health has visibly suffered in captivity, remains caught between the courts (in the Netherlands, where she was originally rescued) and her far-from-

pristine artificial surroundings (in the Canary Islands, which belong to Spain). The campaign, as one might expect, features a variety of individualizing tactics, in some of which Morgan talks "directly" to us, and along with the usual fund- and attention-raising mechanisms (donations, petitions, etc.), the website has an active Twitterfeed (7,400 followers) and Facebook account (25,000 likes). As might also be expected, its expert board consists mostly of scientists, a few of whom were also involved in the Keiko Project, while listed supporters include HRH Prince Albert of Monaco, the Born Free actress Virginia McKenna, and three Dutch supermodels, "Morgan's Angels."

This is no Keiko Project, then, but rather a fairly standard small-scale operation aimed at building an international cross-platform following, and using social media as its primary means of doing so. Unashamed about its own commercialism, the campaign represents—like many of its kind—a working compromise between cross-species advocacy, which registers a general "commonality of ethical concern for animals" (Beers 2006: 4–5), and species-specific activism, which uses the case of one particular celebrity animal to agitate for major industry transformation and, beyond it, grassroots social and political change. These activities, taken together, show the close inter-workings between celebrity and conservation, an alliance which consolidates "the capitalist system within which both [of these] are materially embedded by tying the exchange value of threatened species to that associated with celebrity itself" (Huggan 2013: 250). But they also hint at the well-documented tensions between individually oriented animal rights and systems-based environmentalist perspectives that can be found in many media-driven global conservation movements, with celebrity intervention in these movements usually tending to accentuate the former at the expense of the latter, as wide-ranging studies from Dan Brockington's (2009) to Lisa Kemmerer's (2015) show.

As Kemmerer's recent work in particular illustrates, the focus of animal-based celebrity activism is on suffering, with the possibility of death a constant spectral presence hovering over both liberationist and protectionist debates. There has always been an element of voyeurism in the Western cetacean imaginary, which further embellishes the already extreme violence inscribed within the history of human-cetacean encounters (Hoare 2009); but in the case of the orca, this violence has less to do with its material exchange value as an outsize bundle of commodities (as is the case with, say, the sperm whale) than with its symbolic status, itself thoroughly commodified, as a "killer" whale. As Desmond (1999: 249) notes, there is something obscene about the way in which the violence of the orca-display industry is assiduously moved off stage, so that when it does make its occasional public appearance there is a kind of forbidden pleasure in the spectacle, "as obscene as the sight of pristine azure pools polluted with blood." The Davidson passage with which I began this essay brings out the semi-pornographic nature of a trainer-orca encounter that goes horribly wrong, producing multiple forms of forbidden exposure: the exposure of secret complicity, the exposure of animal violence, the exposure of human flesh. This obscene scenario, laced with pleasurable violence, is also at the heart of the case study with which I will close, another Tilikum-induced fatality, this time involving the curious figure of Daniel Dukes.

Conclusion, or, the killer whale as obscene object of desire

It is still far from clear why, on July 5 1999, the 27-year-old drifter Daniel Dukes broke under cover of night into SeaWorld Orlando's Shamu Stadium, whereupon he

proceeded to strip down to his trunks and jump into G Pool for an ill-advised swim with its temporary occupant, Tilikum the killer whale. What is clear, though, is what happened to him. When Dukes was found dead the next morning, draped over a now-placid Tilikum, there were multiple wounds all over his body, his crotch and left leg were flayed, and his left testicle had been almost surgically removed from the scrotum, with divers having to retrieve it from the bottom of the pool (Kirby 2012: 259). Unsurprisingly, the media were quickly onto the story, with both "pro-cap" and "anti-cap" versions of it circulating widely, most of them understandably blaming Dukes but a good few pointing out the psychotic tendencies of Tilikum, and some of the more lurid construing the encounter as a bizarre meeting of human and animal delinquents, one perhaps secretly seeking and the other savagely delivering death (ibid: 259–260; see also Hargrove 2015: 98).

Still stranger versions circulated on the Internet, with one story speculating that Dukes, a fanatical animal-lover, might have looking to act upon his fantasies by having sex with a killer whale. This sensationalist combination of physical violence and sexual innuendo was almost certainly one of the motivating factors behind Davidson's aforementioned story "Rocket Ride," even though the orca in the story bears more resemblance—at least in name—to Kiska, Canada's sole remaining captive killer whale. It also played on one of the thematic preoccupations of Davidson's work, namely the obscene, which is typically defined in terms of the physical (usually sexual) excesses that are brought to the surface because, rather than in spite, of the fact that they are being officially curtailed. As Kerstin Mey (2007: 2) observes, obscenity is not inherent in an object or event, but is rather "an argument about [its] qualities, public exposure and traffic." This makes the case of Dukes an object lesson in the obscene, although an equally convincing case can also be made for the official Shamu shows, which link the routine atrocities of circus display to those of corporate capitalism, and in which the different forms of structural violence involved in orca captivity (capture, breeding, training) become apparent even as they are consistently denied or de-emphasized, literally or metaphorically shifted off stage. As Mey (ibid: 1–2) points out, obscenity, which is derived from the Latin ob scaena (off stage), usually involves the displacement of an event or object that is not intended for public display, the revelation of something (or someone) that has deliberately been hidden. Obscenity is thus a form of moral disgust, but simultaneously a registering of illicit desire for that which is officially found to be disgusting. In the context of the orca-display industry, this disgust translates into a publicly expressed outrage against the accumulated abuses of what Hargrove (2015: 8, 108) melodramatically calls "a rapacious corporate scheme that [has] exploited both the orcas and their human trainers," turning the former into a cross between "gladiator-slaves" and "performing prisoners"; while, no less floridly, Kirby (2012: 169) describes the SeaWorld corporation as "a slow-motion death machine for killer whales."

Obscenity is perhaps a word too easily used, but the violence is real enough, whether or not it is owned up to, and it has not lost its capacity to attract the same mass followings it shocks. The latest news from SeaWorld is mixed. At SeaWorld San Diego, the Shamu shows are to be phased out, in keeping with the corporation's possibly disingenuous pledge to move away from circus tricks toward educational imperatives (Watson and Schneider 2016). At the same time, SeaWorld continues to battle the courts for the right to hold cetaceans in captivity, while at its San Antonio franchise, a captive dolphin has died—the third of the marine park's animals (the others were an orca and a beluga whale) to die in three months (Kaplan 2016). In all of this, it is difficult not to see the figure of the orca—particularly the celebrity orca—

as an obscene object of desire for its followers, whether they are actively involved in or resolutely opposed to the entertainment industry that surrounds it, and whether they doggedly support or energetically campaign against the continuing captivity of killer whales. Perhaps this is one, eminently sad, version of the fate of the celebrity animal, which, while ostensibly serving to bridge the divide between human beings and their non-human others (Blewitt 2013: 336), ends up either widening it or translating it into potentially pathological scenarios in which non-human killers are followed, and human followers are killed.

9,531 words, including References and Notes

References

Barassi, Veronica. 2015. Activism on the Web: Everyday Struggles against Digital Capitalism. London: Routledge.

Beers, Diane. 2006. For the Prevention of Cruelty: The History and Legacy of Animal Rights Activism in the United States. Athens: Ohio University Press.

Bernays, Edward. 2013 [1952]. Public Relations. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Blewitt, John. 2013. "What's new pussycat? A genealogy of animal celebrity." Celebrity Studies 4, no. 3: 325-338.

Boger, Peter C., 2015. "The Nature of Celebrity and the Celebrity of Nature: Digital Adaptation and Wildlife Survival in the Age of the Anthropocene." Madison: University of Wisconsin. Unpublished PhD dissertation: publication no. 3707807.

Boykoff, Max, and John Goodman. 2009. "Conspicuous redemption? Reflections on the promises and perils of the 'celebritization' of climate change." Geoforum no. 40: 395-406.

Brakes, Philippa. 2009. "Are Whales and Dolphins the Great Apes of the Oceans?" us.whales.org/wdc-in-action/are-whales-and-dolphins-great-apes-of-oceans (accessed September 1, 2015)

Brammer, Rebekah. 2015. "Activism and antagonism: The Blackfish effect." Screen Education, no. 76: 73–79.

Brockington, Dan. 2009. Celebrity and the Environment: Fame, Wealth and Power in Conservation. London: Zed Books.

Castells, Manuel. 2012. Networks of Outrage and Hope. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Chiaramonte, Perry. 2012. "Slacktivists: Changing the World with 'Likes,' Clicks and Tweets?" Fox News, April 13. http://www.foxnews.com/tech/2012/04/13/slacktivists-changing-world-with-likes-clicks-and-tweets (accessed September 1, 2015)

Cowperthwaite, Gabriela, dir. 2013. Blackfish. New York: Magnolia Pictures.

Davidson, Craig. 2005. "Rocket Ride." In Rust and Bone: Stories, 69-100. Toronto: Viking Canada.

Davis, Susan. 1997. Spectacular Nature: Corporate Culture and the SeaWorld Experience. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Desmond, Jane C. 1999. Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Driessens, Oliver. 2015. "The democratization of celebrity: mediatization, promotion and the body." In A Companion to Celebrity. Ed. P. David Marshall and Sean Redmond, 371-384. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Ford, John K. B., Graeme M. Ellis, and Kenneth C. Balcomb. 2000. Killer Whales: The Natural History and Genealogy of Orcinus Orca in British Columbia and Washington State. 2nd ed. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
Fuery, Kelli. 2008. New Media: Culture and Image. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
Gamson, Joshua. 2011. "The Unwatched Life is Not Worth Living: The Elevation of the Ordinary in Celebrity Culture." PMLA 126, no. 4: 1061–1069.
Giles, David C. 2013. "Animal celebrities." Celebrity Studies 4, no. 2: 115–128.
Hargrove, John. 2015. Beneath the Surface: Killer Whales, SeaWorld, and the Truth Beyond Blackfish. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Hoare, Philip. 2009. Leviathan, or the whale. London: Fourth Estate.
Hoyt, Eric. 1990. Orca: The Whale Called Killer. Willowdale: Camden House.
Huggan, Graham. 2013. *Nature's Saviours: Celebrity Conservationists in the* Television Age. London: Earthscan/Routledge.
Kaplan, Sarah. 2016. "3 animals have died in 3 months at SeaWorld San Antonio." Chicago Tribune, February 12. http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-seaworld-san-antonio-deaths-20160210-story.html (accessed February 12, 2016)
Kemmerer, Lisa, ed. 2015. Animals and the Environment: Advocacy, Activism, and the Quest for Common Ground. London: Routledge.
Kirby, David. 2012. Death at SeaWorld: Shamu and the Dark Side of Killer Whales in Captivity. New York: St Martin's Griffin.
Kleiman, Joe. 2014. "Dissecting Blackfish." micechat.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/dissectingblackfishfinal.pdf
Leader-Williams, Nigel, and Dublin, Holly T. "Charismatic megafauna as 'flagship species.'" In Priorities for the Conservation of Mammal Diversity: Has the Panda Had its Day? Ed. Abigail Entwhistle and Nigel Dunstone, 53-81. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Marcus, Sharon. 2015. "Celebrity 2.0: The Case of Marina Abramovic." Public Culture 27, no. 1: 21–52.
Marshall, David. 1997. Celebrity and Power: Fame and Contemporary Culture. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
McCaughey, Martha and Michael D. Ayers, eds. 2003. Cyberactivism: Online Activism in Theory and Practice. London: Routledge.
Meikle, Graham. 2002. Future Active: Media Activism and the Internet. Sydney: Pluto Press.
Mey, Kerstin. 2007. Art and Obscenity. London: I. B. Tauris.
Moe, Peter Wayne. 2014. "Sounding the Depths of the Whale." Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment 21, no. 4: 858–872.
Nance, Susan. 2015. Animal Modernity: Jumbo the Elephant and the Human Dilemma. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
Neiwert, David. 2015. Of Orcas and Men: What Killer Whales Can Teach Us. New York: Overlook Press.
Nichols, Bill. 2001. Introduction to Documentary. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
----------. 1991. Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
O'Barry, Richard. 2012. *Behind the Dolphin Smile: One Man's Campaign to Protect the World's* Dolphins. San Rafael, CA: Earth Aware Editions.
Orozco, Lourdes. 2013. Theatre and Animals. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Rojek, Chris. 2001. Celebrity. London: Reaktion.

Simmons, Mark A. 2014. *Killing Keiko: The True Story of Free Willy's Return to the* Wild. New York: Callinectes Press.
Turner, Graeme. 2004. Understanding Celebrity. London: Sage.
Watson, Julie and Mike Schneider. 2015. "SeaWorld to End Orca Shows in San Diego by 2017." Associated Press, November 9. ww2.kqed.org/news/2015/11/09/seaworld-to-end-orca-shows-in-san-diego-by-2017 (accessed February 12, 2016)
Wilson, David A. H. 2015. The Welfare of Performing Animals: A Historical Perspective. New York: Springer.
Zimmermann, Tim. 2010. "The Killer in the Pool." Outside Online, July 30. www.outsideonline.com/1924946/killer-pool (accessed September 1, 2015)

Notes

[1] For many years, the "rocket hop" was the pièce de résistance of SeaWorld shows, a culminating pool-based routine in which the trainer, balanced on the pectoral fins of a leaping orca, would be propelled thirty feet or more into the air, with both human and animal performers executing a perfectly coordinated back dive. Such routines, which also included the "stand-on" and the "hydro," have since been discontinued, with even SeaWorld supporters such as Joe Kleiman admitting that choreographed shows in which orcas feature as little more than circus animals need to be consigned to the past (Kleiman 2014: 10).

[2] Jane Desmond's brilliant analysis of the SeaWorld orca shows, while it pre-dates Brancheau's death and the significant industry changes it enforced, has not been bettered. As Desmond (1999: 218) suggests, the shows, while designed to reflect the "horizontal" family values of affection, respect, and trust, were also carefully edited to avoid any "visible show of force, aggression, or violence of any kind." However, the "vertical" lines of command were clear, as was the utopian political model on which the shows were founded, which positioned America as "benevolent patriarch" in a consensually domesticated world (ibid: 250).

[3] The Orca Project is one of the more prominent networks, advertising itself on its state-of-the-art website as a "small but effective" non-profit organization whose self-appointed task is to "change the public's attitude and government supervision of marine mammals in captivity through research, investigation and education." While the project's ostensible role is a monitoring one, its Facebook page (registering over 20,000 likes at the latest time of writing [February 2016]) mostly features an array of overtly anti-captivity comments, suggesting that many of its users see themselves as requiring no further education, having already made up their minds about where they stand.

[4] SeaWorld has repeatedly insisted on the safety of its orca shows, though various highly publicized court cases—notably OSHA vs. SeaWorld (for detailed accounts, see Hargrove 2015 and Kirby 2012)—have brought to light glaring inadequacies in relation to the living conditions of its marine mammals, especially if not exclusively orcas, and the training regimes of its staff. That the orca-display industry has been an extended exercise in risk management is crystal-clear—hence SeaWorld's huge and continuing investment in public relations—but it is equally clear that its potential dangers have been part of its attraction and have contributed to its success.

[5] Namu, named after the remote fishing town in British Columbia where he was captured in 1965, quickly became a star turn as part of the Seattle Marine Aquarium

franchise, gaining a celebrity status that only escalated when he featured in the uninspiring, but nonetheless popular, 1966 movie Namu, the Killer Whale. Namu himself, however, would not outlast his fame, succumbing first to a bacterial infection then, scarcely a year after his capture, getting caught in the net designed to contain him, where he drowned (Kirby 2012: 151–152; Neiwert 2015: 109–111).

[6] Technically, orcas are not a single species but a "species complex" incorporating a variety of diverse populations, usually divided into "resident" and "transient" varieties, both predominantly coastal, along with a smaller number of offshore whales (Neiwert 2015: 73–82). That orcas are killers is not in dispute, though they are rarely if ever aggressive in the wild towards humans—not that the same thing can be said for the other way round (Moe 2014).

[7] Most European countries no longer hold orcas in captivity, the exceptions being France (6) and Spain (5), with Loro Parque—a particular target of anti-captivity campaigns, many of them organized around Morgan—holding all of these latter, though the ownership issues around them are anything but resolved. Although Morgan's parentage is disputed (she was originally rescued in Dutch coastal waters), she continues to be claimed by SeaWorld as part of a captive breeding program that has proved to be every bit as controversial as its shows (Kirby 2012). At the latest time of writing (February 2016), SeaWorld holds 22 orcas at its US marine parks, while twice as many have previously died in captivity. Recent evidence suggests that Russia, China, and Japan may be looking to expand their own orca-display industries even as most of their global national counterparts contract (Neiwert 2015).

[8] Orcinus orca derives from "Orcus," one of the Roman gods of the underworld (Neiwert 2015: 99). As David Neiwert points out, there is a stark contrast between the ways in which Western (e.g. Greco-Roman) myths portray orcas and the reverential treatment accorded to them by different Indigenous cultures, from the Yupik in Siberia to the Haida in the Pacific Northwest (ibid: 98–99).

[9] The highest-profile cases have been those involving the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), which since the mid 2000s has repeatedly levied fines—since upheld by the courts—against SeaWorld for its violation of professional safety requirements; and those involving the pro-animal-rights NGO, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), which filed a 2011 lawsuit against SeaWorld contending that the corporation was in violation of the 13th Amendment as five captive Orcas—including Tilikum—were effectively slaves. PETA's case was lost as Tilikum et al. were not found to be legal "persons" and were thus not liable to protection under the terms of the US Constitution, but the case continues to be discussed widely and has had a lengthy media-sustained afterlife of its own. Not all animal-advocacy groups have sided with PETA, though in rubbishing PETA's views Joe Kleiman (2014) caricatures an entire anti-captivity movement which, while demonstrating a common concern for the welfare of animals, has historically been fractured around definitions and interpretations of animal rights.

[10] Chris Rojek's distinction between "achieved" and "attributed" forms of celebrity has been influential, though as Rojek himself admits the lines between separate categories of celebrity can easily become blurred. "Achieved" celebrity, Rojek suggests (2001: 19), is legitimate fame based on demonstrable talent or skill in a particular area, whereas "attributed" celebrity is based on the more general ability to generate public interest, e.g. by using different media outlets to create some kind of following, whether or not that following is deserved. Animals further complicate these categories insofar as their achievements are themselves attributed (by humans);

as John Blewitt emphasizes (2013: 328), animals are usually given celebrity status because they have the capacity to act as "attractors" that allow human beings to reflect upon themselves.

[11] So-called "para-social relations" (Turner 2004: 92) with celebrities have a long history, although their effects may be intensified by new media, which offer a multiplicity of indirect or surrogate forms of contact with people who are, to all intents and purposes, unknown. Para-social relations are generally understood to be one-sided exchanges where interest in a particular person is not reciprocated, leading to obsessive-compulsive behavior that is usually harmless, but may occasionally have pathological results (ibid: 93).

[12] As Graham Meikle argues (2002: 39), cyberactivism may in some cases be little more than a form of "libertarian hype" which, far from registering dissent against corporate authority, provides a further reminder of the continuing "corporate colonisation of cyberspace."

[13] Despite his formidable reputation today, Tilikum was roughly treated as a calf—an too-familiar-tale that also applies to Keiko and Morgan, and which almost always happens when captive calves, separated from their parents, are made to share tank space with older, non-family-related killer whales.

[14] As Kirby notes (2012: 270), not only was Keiko "tracked by satellite all the way across the Atlantic" after his release, but he was then pursued by tourists at his eventual chosen home in Skålevik Fjord. Here "he splashed and posed for photos with the good people of coastal Norway," some of whom had "boated or even [swum] out into the inlet to play with the Hollywood celebrity" (ibid: 270–271). Neiwert (2015: 220) probably says it best when he claims, citing support from cetacean scientists, that "Keiko's story vividly demonstrates how not to return an orca to the wild." It is less clear what would have been a good way to do it given the inevitable attention given to celebrity animals, who are by definition destined to remain captive products of the followings their circumstances create.

[15] As Edward Bernays, sometimes dubbed "the father of public relations," observes (2013 [1952]: 3), public relations is not primarily about publicity, but about "efforts to integrate [the] attitudes and actions of an institution with its publics and of publics with [that] institution." Bernays recognizes in the process that such "adjustments" (his term) often involve the alignment of public with private interests; however, what we see increasingly today—not least through the workings of new media—is a blurring of public and private realms. Public relations, in this sense, is as likely to be in individual as collective hands, with individuals being able to some extent to create their own publics—a phenomenon that can be seen in certain, hyper-individualized forms of media activism in which individuals are arguably less interested in manipulating public opinion about institutions than in manipulating public opinion about themselves.