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Munchausen Cy DeVry: Masculinity and Celebrity at Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo

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On September 14, 1897, the head zookeeper of Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo appeared on the front page of the *Chicago Tribune* in an article titled "Man and Bear Fight a Duel."¹ According to the *Tribune*, the conflict began when Cyrus DeVry "shook the bars of the gate vigorously," prompting the bear to "thrust a paw through the iron gateway and [nip] the keeper's foot." Intending to chastise the animal, DeVry entered the cage, "armed with a slight whip." Soon, the "man and bear were engaged in a terrific struggle," as "hundreds of spectators, crowded around the pit, shrieked with terror." Finally, after suffering several bites, scratches, and blows, DeVry was able to land "a righthand punch [that] struck the animal [in the] back of the ear and set it rolling on the ground. Before the dazed brute could recover, the man was in safety behind the iron gate." Moments later, DeVry "fainted dead away" and was taken to see a doctor.² This "duel" with a bear occurred early in DeVry's career at Lincoln Park Zoo and was one of many such incidents relayed in the *Chicago Tribune*. Over the course of his career, DeVry's engaged in numerous in violent encounters with dangerous animals as he entered cages for various reasons: to repair a lion's burst blood vessel, to break up a fight between two hyenas, to bring a lion inside and out of the wind.³ Each of these events were public spectacles, witnessed by large crowds and recounted in local newspapers.

¹ "MAN AND BEAR FIGHT A DUEL," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, September 14, 1897.

² Although this incident left DeVry bedridden and the bear apparently unharmed, the *Chicago Tribune* claimed that DeVry won the fight.

³ "KEEPER DE VRY MASTERS LION," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, June 23, 1903; "FIGHTS WITH THE ZOO HYENAS.," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, January 3, 1902; "CAGED WITH ANGRY LION," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, April 6, 1903.

Violent encounters with dangerous animals were only one part of DeVry's public image. Between 1893 and 1919, when he was fired for assaulting a zoo visitor, "Cy" DeVry appeared in over 300 *Chicago Tribune* articles; Chicagoans also watched and read as he nursed sick animals, cavorted with opera stars, and force-fed snakes. These articles often resulted from deliberate efforts to promote the zoo: in addition to staging public spectacles, DeVry actively engaged with the press by providing quotes, responding to letters, and writing articles. While these efforts often featured zoo animals, they also frequently centered around DeVry's presentation of himself as a manly professional. Over the course of his career, DeVry performed an idealized version of white, American masculinity as he struggled to dominate, discipline, and care for the zoo's animals. Ultimately, these performances were successful: DeVry effectively publicized the Lincoln Park Zoo by making himself into its star attraction. Visitors flocked to the zoo not only to encounter unfamiliar animals, but also to see "Cy" perform that encounter as a masculine struggle for paternalistic dominance.

American landscapes and cultures transformed in the late nineteenth century as rapid population growth and industrialization drove widespread urbanization. These changes were particularly dramatic in Chicago: the city's population increased tenfold between 1860 and 1890, growing from 109,000 to over 1,000,000.⁴ The Lincoln Park Zoo, which began with a pair of swans donated to the city in 1868 and consisted of a growing collection including bison, a bear, eagles, and a mountain lion by 1872, was one of many

⁴ Walter Nugent, "Demography," in *The Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago*, ed. Janice L. Reiff, Ann Durkin Keating, and James R. Grossman (Chicago Historical Society, 2005), <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/962.html>.

American zoos to emerge during this period.⁵ Cyrus DeVry began working at the Lincoln Park Zoo in 1888, after traveling to Chicago to attend his uncle, Herman DeVry's funeral.⁶ Within a few years, he was in charge of the animal collection: in 1893 the *Chicago Tribune* identified DeVry as "the head keeper" at the zoo.⁷ In this position, DeVry worked directly for the Lincoln Park Board of Commissioners, who were appointed by the Governor of Illinois. Although DeVry did not begin working at the zoo until 1888, 20 years after the park's animal collection was established with a pair of swans, the *Encyclopedia of Chicago* refers to him as "the zoo's first director."⁸ DeVry played an important role in establishing the Lincoln Park Zoo as a new kind of public institution. In Chicago, as in other growing cities during this period, public officials and reformers worried that urban environments would alienate city dwellers from nature, negatively affecting health and culture. In response, cities established new public spaces including parks, botanical gardens, and zoological gardens, all of which would allow residents to reconnect with the natural world. At the same time, the emergence of zoos, and the associated acquisition and study of "exotic" animals from faraway places was tied to imperial projects in the United States and Europe. Sally Kohlstedt argues in *Reflections on Zoo History* that "expanding European empires, made exotic wildlife more accessible and stimulated the interest of naturalists,

⁵ Mark Rosenthal, Carol Tauber, and Edward Uhler, *The Ark in the Park: The Story of Lincoln Park Zoo* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 23.

⁶ Rosenthal, Tauber, and Uhler, 29; "Cy De Vry Dies; Lincoln Pk. Zoo Head 31 Years," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1923-1963); *Chicago, Ill.*, October 4, 1934.

⁷ "NEW BABY LION AT LINCOLN PARK," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, November 5, 1893.

⁸ Dennis A. Meritt, Jr., "Lincoln Park Zoological Gardens," in *The Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago* (Chicago Historical Society, 2005), <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/745.html>.

acclimatizers, and agricultural breeders.”⁹ Furthermore, by studying and caging animals from colonized regions, zoos “reinforced ideas of imperialism and authority.”¹⁰

Anxieties over Americans’ decreasing contact with nature coincided with growing threats to previous understandings of masculinity, particularly among white, middle-class men. As cities grew and the American economy industrialized, a growing proportion of the middle-class left the independence of self-employment to work for large industrial corporations. At the same time, a steady flow of immigrants threatened the majority held by the American-born middle class. Furthermore, many of these immigrants entered the industrial workforce where they further threatened existing power structures by participating in violent strikes. In response, white, middle-class Americans turned to new models of masculinity, which could affirm their threatened authority.¹¹ Describing this response in *Manliness and Civilization*, Gail Bederman argues that “middle class white men simultaneously construct[ed] powerful manhood in terms of both ‘civilized manliness’ and ‘primitive masculinity.’”¹² Although Cyrus DeVry’s 1897 duel with a bear ended in collapse, it was nonetheless successful. When he entered the bear’s cage in 1897, DeVry performed the encounter with nature promised by zoos as a new kind of public space. At the same time, his efforts to correct the bear’s behavior through physical force animated

⁹ Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, “Reflections on Zoo History,” in *New Worlds, New Animals: From Menagerie to Zoological Park in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. R. J. Hoage and William A. Deiss (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 3.

¹⁰ Kohlstedt, 6.

¹¹ Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, Women in Culture and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); John F. Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man: The White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity in America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013), <http://rbdigital.oneclickdigital.com>.

¹² Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 23.

the zoo's promise of imperial control and exemplified new models of masculinity. As I will show below, this was only one of many instances in which DeVry publicly emphasized his own masculinity while fulfilling his duties as head zookeeper of the Lincoln Park Zoo. It was this ability, to perform the zoo's domination of wild and unfamiliar animals as masculine struggle, that made DeVry its star attraction.

“Miss Eames and I are old Friends”

In this paper, I argue that DeVry made himself into a beloved local celebrity by performing an idealized masculinity. This argument considers performance on several levels. As noted above, Cyrus DeVry was a well-known public figure in turn of the century Chicago: crowds regularly gathered to witness his interactions with zoo animals, and local newspapers regularly reported on his activities. In this paper, I am concerned with DeVry as he appeared and behaved in these public forums. My characterization of DeVry's activities, as they appear in the newspaper record, acknowledges this—when DeVry interacted with animals as a crowd looked on, or spoke with a newspaper reporter, he did so in a public context with a clear audience. Furthermore, the newspaper record indicates that DeVry's status as a local celebrity resulted in large part from his deliberate efforts to promote both the zoo and himself; his public appearances reflect conscious self-presentation before the reading and zoo-going publics.

DeVry's deliberate efforts to generate publicity are particularly evident in articles describing his interactions with well-known entertainers. In 1916, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that DeVry had “recently discovered a valuable addition to the Lincoln Park aviary—Polly, a musical parrot. She came from Panama a year ago, but it was only recently

that Mr. De Vry discovered her peculiar aptitude for music.”¹³ Upon discovering this aptitude, DeVry apparently wasted no time in turning it into a promotional opportunity. According to the article, he “wrote and asked Louise Edvina of the Paris Grand Opera company...to teach her everything there is to know about the song game.”¹⁴ When he received a positive response from the opera star, DeVry shared the letter with the *Tribune*, who duly reported that “Cy De Vry Has a Musical Parrot Which Mme. Louise Edvina Has Promised to Give a Musical Education—at Least That’s What Cy Says.”¹⁵ Four days later the *Chicago Tribune* printed a picture the parrot’s singing lesson, reporting that “a Galaxy of opera singers arrived in Chicago yesterday, and one of them, Mme Louise Edvina of the Paris company devoted her afternoon to giving Cy De Vry’s singing parrot, Polly, her first lesson in grand opera at the Lincoln Park Zoo.”¹⁶ Ultimately, the singing lesson failed to fulfill DeVry’s promises about the parrot’s musical abilities: “Polly was extremely taciturn during the opera singer’s visit, and she only broke her silence to scold at the photographers.”¹⁷ Despite this, the “lesson” effectively turned “the Chicago grand opera season” into publicity for the zoo. By inviting Edvina, and sharing his invitation with the *Tribune*, DeVry prompted the *Chicago Tribune* to report on the zoo and its parrot twice in six days.

¹³ “NEVER SCRATCHES ON THE HIGH NOTES,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, November 1, 1916.

¹⁴ “NEVER SCRATCHES ON THE HIGH NOTES.”

¹⁵ “NEVER SCRATCHES ON THE HIGH NOTES.”

¹⁶ “OPERA STARS TEST OUT THE SPOTLIGHT,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, November 6, 1916.

¹⁷ “WEDS AT FOOT OF MOUNTAIN.”

Louise Edvina was not the only opera singer who visited the Lincoln Park Zoo at DeVry's invitation. In April of 1902, he led celebrated soprano Emma Eames and a group of friends on a tour of the zoo. According to DeVry's account of the visit, the opera star convinced him to give the zoo's elephant, Duchess, champagne. The visit consequently provided DeVry with an opportunity to humorously describe one of the most notable animals in the zoo's collection. DeVry informed the paper that when he finally agreed to Eames's persistent requests to offer champagne to the elephant, "the Duchess didn't wait on ceremony. She used to be a circus elephant and knows a good thing at first sight. She grabbed the bottle, emptied it, then reached for more."¹⁸ In describing this incident, DeVry played into tropes common in circus performances featuring elephants. In *Wild and Dangerous Performances*, Peta Tait describes how, at turn of the twentieth century, "the performing elephant was increasingly diminished to frivolity."¹⁹ When the Lincoln Park Zoo acquired Duchess from Barnum and Bailey, she no longer performed choreographed routines with a trainer. Nevertheless, by giving her champagne at the behest of an opera star, and describing the incident to the newspaper, DeVry made the elephant's response to the champagne into an entertaining performance of frivolous consumption. At the same time, he portrayed himself as the self-sacrificing gentleman, giving into the whims of a lighthearted opera star, and an elephant with the tastes of a duchess. Describing the incident to the paper, DeVry claimed that when Eames arrived at the zoo, she "brought along four bottles of champagne, saying it was for me. Well, I didn't get it." Instead DeVry was forced

¹⁸ "WINE FOR ZOO ELEPHANT: EMMA EAMES AND THE DUCHESS 'HAVE SOMETHING.,'" *Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922)*; *Chicago, Ill.*, April 8, 1902.

¹⁹ Peta Tait, *Wild and Dangerous Performances: Animals, Emotions, Circus* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 74.

“to become bartender. It jarred me, of course, but this is a troubled world and we can’t all have paths of roses”²⁰

Although the *Chicago Tribune* indicates that Eames independently decided to visit the Lincoln Park Zoo in 1902 due to her interest in animals, DeVry took full advantage of the visit as an opportunity to generate publicity. The next day, DeVry was quoted at length in a *Chicago Tribune* article describing the visit. In his comments to the paper, DeVry used Eames’s fame to endorse the zoo and enhance his own celebrity, telling the paper, “Miss Eames and I are old friends. She visits the park every time she comes to Chicago and is mighty fond of the animals,” and that “she tells me that the Lincoln Park ‘zoo’ is the best in the world.”²¹ Subsequent *Chicago Tribune* articles support DeVry’s claim that Eames spent time at the zoo whenever she was in Chicago: the paper reported that she visited Lincoln Park Zoo again in 1907 and 1909.²² Furthermore, the articles describing each visit demonstrate that DeVry did not leave Eames’s future visits up to chance. On both occasions, the paper explained that Eames went to the zoo in order to visit a lioness which had been “named Emma Eames” in her honor, “upon request of the keeper, Cy De Vry, who has known Mme. Eames many years.”²³ In addition to capitalizing on Eames’s visits to the zoo by generating publicity, DeVry did his best to ensure they would continue. By naming a lion after the singer, he underscored his connection with her, and gave her a reason to return.

²⁰ “WINE FOR ZOO ELEPHANT.”

²¹ “WINE FOR ZOO ELEPHANT.”

²² “EAMES VISITS PARK ZOO,” *Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922); Chicago, Ill.*, April 12, 1907; “MME. EMMA EAMES FONDLES LION CUBS IN LINCOLN PARK,” *Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922); Chicago, Ill.*, March 12, 1909.

²³ “EAMES VISITS PARK ZOO.”

In *The Animal Game*, Daniel Bender describes the career of Marlin Perkins, Lincoln Park Zoo director from 1944 until 1962, who achieved national fame through his work on the television programs *Zoo Parade* and *Wild Kingdom*. Among other achievements, Bender credits Perkins with realizing that “the zoo man must also be a showman,” and credited him as “the first to turn the forced feeding of pythons, the only way they would eat, into a public event attended by hundreds.”²⁴ Perkins’s television work may have garnered him greater fame than any other director of the Lincoln Park Zoo, but he was not the first zoo manager to infuse zookeeping with showmanship. Cy DeVry often took a theatrical approach to zoo management, and he actively courted publicity in his interactions with zoo animals, reporters, and celebrities alike. Moreover, DeVry turned the force feeding of pythons into a public spectacle long before Perkins.

In 1914, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that DeVry had found a way to feed Romeo, a python in the zoo collection, who had not eaten for seven months. According to the paper, DeVry “saw a picture of a ‘gun’ used to feed sick animals” and determined that it would enable him to force feed the starving python. When the gun arrived days later, he and his assistants successfully subdued Romeo and “fifty pounds of meat were ‘shot’ down the snake’s throat.”²⁵ Four years later, when DeVry repeated the event with another python, he turned it into an even larger, more sensationalized media spectacle. In March 1918, he allowed famed evangelist and former baseball star Billy Sunday to participate in a force-feeding of the zoo’s python, Sally (see Figure 1). According to biography Robert Martin,

²⁴ Daniel E. Bender, *The Animal Game: Searching for Wildness at the American Zoo* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 229.

²⁵ “STOPS PYTHON’S HUNGER STRIKE,” *Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922)*; *Chicago, Ill.*, December 17, 1914.

Billy Sunday was the nation's most popular evangelist during this period, and his was a household name.²⁶ His participation in force-feeding Sally the python consequently guaranteed media attention and public interest. Responding to this interest, the *Chicago Tribune* photographed the event. The paper also described DeVry and Sunday's efforts using highly suggestive language framing the process of force feeding the snake in terms of gendered sexual domination. The *Tribune* set the scene by contextualizing the captive snake's refusal to eat in terms of women's political activism, claiming that "as a hunger striker she makes an English suffragist look like a bunch of Roman Epicures."²⁷ The article



Figure 1: In 1918, DeVry allowed Billy Sunday to assist with force feeding a python. "BILLY SUNDAY PROVES SNAKES HAVE NO TERRORS FOR HIM," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); Chicago, Ill., March 27, 1918.

²⁶ Robert F. Martin, *Hero of the Heartland: Billy Sunday and the Transformation of American Society, 1862-1935* (Bloomington, UNITED STATES: Indiana University Press, 2002), xiii, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucr/detail.action?docID=138205>.

²⁷ "BILLY JAMS FOOD, NOT SINS, DOWN SALLY'S THROAT," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); Chicago, Ill., March 27, 1918.

then describes DeVry's efforts to subdue the snake, making it possible for Sunday to force feed her. Ultimately, crowds watched as "Sally gulped down pound after pound of raw meat as Billy Sunday pumped it into her."²⁸ The final paragraph sentence further underscores the men's symbolic sexual domination over the snake by noting that "all the time Sally was shamelessly shedding her skin, regardless of the crowd and the evangelist, and when she finally went back to her cage she was a different looking snake."²⁹ A necessary aspect of maintaining pythons in captivity was thus turned into a titillating public drama.

The *Tribune's* coverage of Sunday's role in force-feeding the snake played on Billy Sunday's fame as an evangelist. The paper described DeVry and Sunday's efforts to subdue the snake with relish, claiming that "there was no doubt in anybody's mind that Sally was possessed of a demon."³⁰ This description cast the men's domination over the snake in religious, as well as sexual terms. Describing Sally as a "modern descendent of the serpent of Eden," the article also subverted the Genesis story: while the snake in the Garden of Eden tempted Eve to taste forbidden fruit, DeVry and Sunday used brute strength and physical domination to force-feed Sally the python. In some ways, the sensationalism and spectacle of this event were consistent with Sunday's public persona. According to Martin, his "fame and success stemmed, in part, from the theatrical quality of his evangelism."³¹ His physical domination over the snake was likewise consistent with his "conviction that

²⁸ "BILLY JAMS FOOD, NOT SINS, DOWN SALLY'S THROAT."

²⁹ "BILLY JAMS FOOD, NOT SINS, DOWN SALLY'S THROAT."

³⁰ "BILLY JAMS FOOD, NOT SINS, DOWN SALLY'S THROAT."

³¹ Martin, *Hero of the Heartland*, xiii.

to be effective, Christianity must be a muscular, masculine religion.”³² At the same time, Sunday reminded his followers that “wives, mothers, sisters, and children would be grieved by the immorality of men who could not master their lust.”³³ His understanding of masculine Christianity required men to “confront the Devil and his temptations,” and avoid sexual promiscuity.³⁴ By sexualizing Sunday’s role in forcing “something like thirty pounds of raw ground beef down [the snake’s] capacious throat,” the *Tribune* cast Sunday in the role of male sexual aggressor, undermining his embodiment of Christian manliness. Moreover, these sensationalized descriptions demonstrated the efficacy of allowing Sunday to assist in force-feeding the snake. Like Perkins after him, DeVry recognized that this aspect of zoo work presented an opportunity to create a public spectacle and generate publicity for the zoo. By allowing Sunday’s participation, he took full advantage of that opportunity.

Bender’s claim that Marlin Perkins uniquely recognized that “the zoo man must also be a showman,” was based in large part on Perkins success in transforming zoo work into popular television, beginning with the first episode of *Zoo Parade* in 1950. He argues that Perkins was able to “transform the [Lincoln Park] zoo not through reconstructing the old cages but through television.”³⁵ Through this new medium, Perkins “helped visitors cross to the other side of the enclosure” and vicariously enacted “their fantasies of intimacy with animals as he let the gorilla baby suck on his fingers and the python enwind around

³² Martin, 83.

³³ Martin, 87.

³⁴ Martin, 89.

³⁵ Bender, *The Animal Game*, 230.

his arm.”³⁶ In many ways, Perkins’s “transformation” of the Lincoln Park Zoo was a return to Cyrus DeVry’s earlier approach to zoo management. Like Perkins after him, DeVry performed zoo visitor desires through publicly staged encounters with the animals under his care. In doing so, both men recognized that as a public space, the zoo also served as a ready stage for public performance.

DeVry and Perkin’s performances of zookeeping depended on complementary performances by the zoo animals they interacted with. Just as DeVry’s description of Eames’s 1902 visit to the zoo cast Duchess the elephant in the role of feminine frivolity, the *Tribune*’s descriptions of “Miss Sally Python” cast the snake in the role of feminine rebellion followed by sexual submission.³⁷ When he entered the bear cage in 1897, DeVry performance of brave strength likewise depended on the bear’s performance of threatening ferocity. Bender argues that Perkin’s television programs likewise depended on his animal co-performers. He explained this appeal by describing an incident when a venomous snake bit Perkins during a rehearsal for *Zoo Parade*. Although Perkins was bitten off camera, Bender recounts that “many people insisted they had actually seen the dangerous mistake” on live television: “Visitors and viewers had convinced themselves they had witnessed the ultimate in zoo dangers, and here was the key to *Zoo Parade*’s enduring popularity: the zoo man had opened the cages and helped the public watch the animals while he touched

³⁶ Bender, 231.

³⁷ Although the *Chicago Tribune*’s descriptions of Romeo were less sexualized, the male python was also feminized. The article explained that “Cy De Vry, the veteran animal keeper, suspects he got the habit [of hunger striking] from the suffragists while passing through England.” See “STOPS PYTHON’S HUNGER STRIKE.”

them alive.”³⁸ Interacting with dangerous animals, and surviving the encounters “made Perkins both approachable and brave.”³⁹

As noted above, the Lincoln Park Zoo animals didn’t perform by executing choreographed routines. Instead, they performed simply by existing as “wild” animals, by reacting to the zoo environment, to one another, and to the zookeepers and visitors. David Grazian argues in *American Zoo: A Sociological Safari*, that “zoo visitors love to watch animals perform what they imagine to be their ‘natural’ behavior.”⁴⁰ When these “natural” behaviors included aggression, ferocity, and unruliness, they provided DeVry with opportunities to respond with performances of daring and domination. In many ways, these performances echoed the dynamics performed in lion tamer acts, a staple of the circuses and menageries beginning in the mid nineteenth century. According to David A. H. Wilson, advertisements for these shows portrayed the animal performers as “wild and ferocious beasts of the forest,” belying the fact that they were “subdued under brutal regimes of mistreatment.”⁴¹ Like the animals in the circus, the animals at the Lincoln Park Zoo were not really “wild.” As philosopher Keekok Lee argues in *Zoos: A Philosophical Tour*, holding an animal in captivity “undermines and subverts the meaning of being ‘wild’ in a fundamental way” as animals in the wild have “no intimate contact with human beings, and would by instinct run away from such contact.”⁴² As a result, “without successful

³⁸ Bender, *The Animal Game*, 232.

³⁹ Bender, 232.

⁴⁰ David Grazian, *American Zoo: A Sociological Safari* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015), 148.

⁴¹ David A. H. Wilson, “Circus Animals and the Illusion of Wildness,” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 15, no. 3 (July 3, 2017): 350, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17460654.2017.1383018>.

⁴² Keekok Lee, *Zoos: A Philosophical Tour* (Basingstoke [England] ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 27.

taming, zoo management is just impossible...minimally, they have to be taught to get used to the presence of humans.”⁴³ Despite this, zoo visitors perceived the animals in zoos as wild. Lee’s argument is motivated by the fact that zoo animals are commonly described as “wild animals in captivity.”⁴⁴ Furthermore, as Wilson notes, circus trainers defended their animal performers’ wildness by pointing out that zoo animals exhibited similar behaviors.⁴⁵ Visitors consequently understood DeVry’s battles with the zoo’s animals as true, spontaneous encounters with dangerous wild animals.

DeVry recognized that while the danger, and apparent unpredictability involved in “performing” with “wild” animals, fascinated audiences, it also limited the ways zoo animals could perform. Although holding them in captivity did alter their behavior, the animals in the Lincoln Park Zoo still regularly acted in unexpected, unruly ways. In 1892, for example, Duchess broke free from zookeepers while moving between her summer and winter quarters. According to DeVry, in the time it took keepers to recapture the elephant, she “killed a horse, went into a brewery and several saloons, broke a lot of mirrors and glasses, kept the whole north side police force engaged, and cost the park commissioners \$1,500.”⁴⁶ Following this adventure, zookeepers restrained Duchess with an iron chain, which remained on her leg until 1908 when a new elephant enclosure was constructed.⁴⁷ Furthermore, when Chicago Alderman John Scully invited Duchess to walk in a street

⁴³ Lee, 28.

⁴⁴ Lee, 25.

⁴⁵ Wilson, “Circus Animals and the Illusion of Wildness,” 351.

⁴⁶ “ELEPHANT HAS HARD LOT,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, August 29, 1904.

⁴⁷ Rosenthal, Tauber, and Uhlir, *The Ark in the Park*, 31.

carnival, DeVry declined. While DeVry agreed to give Duchess champagne in 1901, he did not allow the elephant to move freely, or to “perform” outside of her enclosure.

DeVry’s caution towards bringing elephants into public spaces did not just apply to Duchess. In 1914, the planners of an artists’ fete consulted DeVry “relative to the safety of the proposed ride by Mrs. John A Carpenter on the back of an elephant.”⁴⁸ According to the *Chicago Tribune*, he strongly advised them against bringing an elephant to the event: “I wouldn’t mount one of our elephants if he were asleep and had his legs chained, unless I was certain my will was made out the way I wanted it and I had secured \$500,000 life insurance.”⁴⁹ At the same time, he distinguished between the zoo’s elephants, and highly trained performing elephants, acknowledging that “one of those ancient, matronly elephants which has done service at street carnivals, why that’s a different thing. Properly chaperoned by an Arab or an Indian with a hook an elephant like that is fairly certain of pulling off a riding stunt O.K.” By contrasting the zoo elephants with a “ancient, matronly elephant[] which has done service at street carnivals,” DeVry emphasized that the zoo’s elephants were uncontrolled and dangerous. At the same time, he contrasted Rue Carpenter, wealthy philanthropist and art collector, and wife of composer John Carpenter, with “an Arab or an Indian” who might be able to safely handle an elephant. In making this comparison, DeVry he implied that even a trained elephant would remain “wild” unless trained by a white, “civilized” trainer. The event planners heeded DeVry’s advice, replacing the elephant with “a trick mule.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ “CY DEVRY WARNS AGAINST RIDING ELEPHANT AT FETE,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, January 7, 1914.

⁴⁹ “DEVRY WARNS AGAINST RIDING ELEPHANT AT FETE.”

⁵⁰ “No Elephant to Grace Fete,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, January 9, 1914.

DeVry's refusal to send Duchess to a street carnival, or to allow Mrs. Carpenter to ride one of the zoo's elephants at an artists' fete demonstrates the care he took in his interactions with the media. In certain instances, DeVry generated media attention by allowing visitors, particularly celebrity visitors to interact with the zoo animals: he invited Louise Edvina to sing with a parrot, he submitted to Emma Eames entreaties to give an elephant champagne, and he allowed Billy Sunday to participate in force-feeding a python. While allowing Duchess to leave her enclosure and enter the crowded environment of a street carnival might result in a dangerous situation if the elephant behavior became unruly, each of these highly publicized encounters took place in highly controlled environments, under supervision. DeVry did attract publicity by engaging in violent struggles with the animals in the zoo, as when he dueled a bear in 1897. He reserved dangerous, violent encounters with the zoo animals, however, for himself.

“Munchausen Cy DeVry”

As Cyrus DeVry generated media attention for the Lincoln Park Zoo, he also turned himself into a beloved local celebrity. DeVry's popularity depended in large part on his successful embodiment of contemporary masculine ideals. Judith Butler argues in “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution” that “the body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time.”⁵¹ By describing DeVry's interactions with animals as masculine performances, I am consequently acknowledging that DeVry produced, and publicly asserted, his own masculinity through

⁵¹ Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 523, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3207893>.

those interactions. Furthermore, Butler distinguishes between gender performances in theatrical and non-theatrical contexts, arguing that while theatrical conventions “de-realize the act, [and] make acting into something quite distinct from what is real...there is no presumption that the act is distinct from reality” when gender is performed in non-theatrical public spaces.⁵² Although DeVry performed his interactions with zoo animals before public audiences, these performances did not take place in a theatrical spaces, where they might have been viewed as “distinct from what is real.” Instead, just as zoo visitors viewed the animals as performing their natural behavior, they also viewed DeVry as performing his real gender.

DeVry’s gendered self-presentation won public approval because it fulfilled contemporary ideals. He performed an historically situated model of masculinity, “an act which [had] been rehearsed,” Butler writes, “much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again.”⁵³ As numerous historians have argued, American models of masculinity shifted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in response to changing demographics, employment opportunities, and landscapes.⁵⁴ As the United States urbanized and industrialized, an increasing proportion of middle-class men turned from physical, agricultural labor to mental fields. These shifts led to worries that “society’s

⁵² Butler, 527.

⁵³ Butler, 526.

⁵⁴ See for examples: E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*, Nachdr. (New York, NY: BasicBooks, 2001); Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*; Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man*; Michael S. Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*, 2nd ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

comforts might weaken their bodies and their wills.”⁵⁵ As a consequence, “strength and force were [] highly valued...men admired fighting virtues and often endorsed violence.”⁵⁶ At the same time, “white American men sought to seize the ‘primitive’ strength, freedom, and eroticism,” associated with African American and Native American male bodies, while still maintaining “that civilization was built on white racial dominance.”⁵⁷ In this way, new models of masculinity also ameliorated anxieties over increasing African American political power, Native American resistance to westward expansion, and a large influx of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe.

DeVry most dramatically performed aggressive, physically powerful masculinity in regular violent encounters with large predators in the zoo. As seen in the introduction, he “dueled” with a bear in 1897 in order to assert his authority after the bear nipped at his foot. On other occasions, his battles with animals served more practical purposes related to animal care. In January 1902, he entered the hyena cage in order to break up a “fierce fight” between two animals.⁵⁸ Days later, the “ghoulish beasts” fought again, leaving one with an injured paw. DeVry entered the cage again, “and fastened nooses to almost every angle of Nero’s muscular body.” He then “straddled Nero and applied salve to its foot,” while a crowd of spectators looked on.⁵⁹ One year later, DeVry similarly entered a lion enclosure to separate “two three-quarters-grown lions.”⁶⁰ According to the *Inter Ocean* report on this

⁵⁵ Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man*, 15–16.

⁵⁶ Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 225.

⁵⁷ Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man*, 13–14; Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 38.

⁵⁸ “FIGHTS WITH THE ZOO HYENAS.”

⁵⁹ “CROWD SEES HYENA TAMED,” *Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922)*; *Chicago, Ill.*, January 6, 1902, sec. EDITORIAL.

⁶⁰ “THE WHIRL OF SOCIETY,” *The Inter Ocean*, January 17, 1903, Newspapers.Com, <https://universityofcaliforniariverside.newspapers.com/image/34333661>.

event, when DeVry entered the cage, he “was smoking a cigar very quietly and continued to do, even after the first lion roo-oared at him.” He then “walloped them over their heads with a whip...and, still smoking his cigar, he made a noose, which he deftly passed over the growling head of one of the beasts.”⁶¹ DeVry entered lion cages at least twice more in 1903. In April, he spent “half an hour in a cage with an enraged lion...before a crowd of 300 excited persons.”⁶² On this occasion, DeVry entered the cage in an attempt to induce the lion into going inside out of the wind. He spent time in a cage with yet another lion in June to repair a ruptured blood vessel.⁶³

DeVry was not only the only public figure who engaged in public battles with large predators in the turn of the century United States. In 1894, world-famous bodybuilder Eugen Sandow announced he would wrestle a lion before thousands of spectators.⁶⁴ Ultimately, this event failed as a display of masculine prowess: unlike the animals DeVry battled at Lincoln Park Zoo, Sandow’s lion opponent was old and tired. It presented neither danger, nor challenge, nor any real resistance. Nevertheless, Sandow’s promise to fight the lion, and enthusiastic interest leading up to the event reflects that a young, strong lion—like those residing in the Lincoln Park Zoo—could serve as “a worthy natural opponent by which to measure the qualities of civilized man.”⁶⁵ Heavyweight boxing champion Robert Fitzsimmons likewise viewed lions as worthy opponents for proving masculine physical prowess. In 1902, he traveled to the Lincoln Park Zoo in order to buy a lion to wrestle as

⁶¹ “THE WHIRL OF SOCIETY.”

⁶² “CAGED WITH ANGRY LION.”

⁶³ “KEEPER DE VRY MASTERS LION.”

⁶⁴ Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man*, 99–101.

⁶⁵ Kasson, 100.

part of his training. Ultimately, Fitzsimmons left empty handed. DeVry missed their meeting as he had been “cornered by three elks and knocked insensible.”⁶⁶ Unlike Sandow and Fitzsimmons, DeVry had immediate everyday access to lions and other large predators. As a result, he was able to regularly perform physical battles with impressive animal opponents.

By and large, DeVry’s violent performances met with enthusiastic public approbation. In a 1904 article titled “Munchausen Cy De Vry,” the *Chicago Tribune* described their appreciation for DeVry by contrasting his management of the zoo with other, less daring animal keepers. The title of this article alludes to the fictional Baron Munchausen, first created by Rudolf Erich Raspe in 1785. Baron Munchausen was a “fabulously successful man of action,” the hero of unbelievable adventures.⁶⁷ According to the *Tribune*, DeVry’s management of the zoo was characterized by similarly larger-than-life behavior and exaggerated daring:

Chicago recalls with a sense of something lost to it the period a few years ago when De Vry was not animal keeper at the park. In those days nothing ever happened. The wildest, fiercest creatures in the collection lived a peanut and popcorn existence tamer than that of the average alley cat. Nothing ever broke out of its cage. The head animal keeper avoided every possible narrow escape from claws, or paws, or jaws, as if he might have been a volunteer guardian in an eleemosynary institution. But with the return of De Vry! Strenuousness became characteristic of the members of the zoo family. Almost any day or night, before the crowds had come or after the crowds had gone, the menagerie broke loose somewhere and somebody or something came as near being eaten up, or swallowed, or squeezed to death as the destructive equipment of the animal suggested. He’s the kind of animal keeper to have.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ “‘FITZ’ TRIES TO BUY LEO,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, February 25, 1902.

⁶⁷ John Carswell, “Introduction,” in *The Singular Adventures of Baron Munchausen: A Definitive Text* (New York: Heritage Press, 1952), xxiii.

⁶⁸ “MUNCHAUSEN CY DE VRY,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, March 22, 1904.

“Munchausen Cy De Vry” celebrates DeVry’s talent for creating situations which put the “destructive equipment” of the “wildest, fiercest creatures” on display by describing the zoo’s “strenuousness.” This word choice invokes Theodore Roosevelt’s 1899 speech on “The Strenuous Life” in which he advocated for United States imperialism. In *Manliness and Civilization*, Gail Bederman argues that following this speech, “the strenuous life” became “a catchphrase to describe vigorous masculinity” as embodied by Roosevelt.⁶⁹ In its use of the word “strenuousness,” the article “Munchausen Cy De Vry” recalls Roosevelt’s 1899 speech and invokes his model of virile white masculinity. In praising DeVry’s management of the zoo using these terms, the *Chicago Tribune* thereby also praised his successful embodiment of a form of newly idealized masculinity.

On other occasions, the *Chicago Tribune* drew more explicit connections between DeVry and Roosevelt. When Cy DeVry died in 1934, his obituary in the *Chicago Tribune* stated that “his outstanding ability in handling wild animals won him a national reputation and made him a friend of such celebrities as President Theodore Roosevelt, Carl Akeley, and “Buffalo Bill” Cody.”⁷⁰ Based on the record created by the *Chicago Tribune*, Roosevelt visited the Lincoln Park Zoo twice during DeVry’s tenure as director. The *Chicago Tribune* articles describing his earlier visit did not indicate that he had a personal acquaintance with DeVry. On the second visit in 1915, however, the paper reported that “Cy and the colonel greeted each other like long separated playmates.”⁷¹ A *Chicago Tribune* reporter wrote the

⁶⁹ Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 184.

⁷⁰ “Cy De Vry Dies; Lincoln Pk. Zoo Head 31 Years.”

⁷¹ “Roosevelt Stops to Visit Rajah and Lion Friends,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, August 2, 1915.

first half of the article, describing the Roosevelts' arrival in the city and their visits to various sites. After the point where the Roosevelts arrived at the zoo, the *Tribune* "let Cy write the rest of the story." In his account of the Roosevelts' visit, DeVry likewise portrayed the former president as a friend, claiming "I did most of the talking. Heretofore, when I have seen him in New York, he has done the most of it. The colonel is a great talker."⁷² Throughout the rest of the article DeVry emphasized the many points on which he agreed with Roosevelt, and that "the colonel was full of compliments about Lincoln Park." DeVry did not only embody Roosevelt's model of virile, civilized manliness, he also won his direct approbation.

The *Tribune's* comparisons of DeVry with Roosevelt are not surprising. Like Roosevelt, DeVry became a public figure around the turn of the century. Roosevelt rose to national prominence in the 1890s, soon after DeVry assumed the role of head zookeeper at Lincoln Park, and he died in 1919, months before DeVry lost his job at the zoo. According to Bederman, changing attitudes towards race and masculinity had a significant impact on Roosevelt's political ascent. As noted above, she posits that beginning the in late nineteenth century, "middle class white men simultaneously construct[ed] powerful manhood in terms of both 'civilized manliness' and 'primitive masculinity.'"⁷³ She further argues that Roosevelt's successful embodiment of both ideals was "one source of his vibrant virility... [by] combining manliness and masculinity, civilization and the primitive, Roosevelt modeled a new type of manhood for the American people."⁷⁴ During this period, Roosevelt

⁷² "Roosevelt Stops to Visit Rajah and Lion Friends."

⁷³ Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 23.

⁷⁴ Bederman, 44.

enacted manliness by “publicly measuring the violent power of his own masculinity against the violent predation of ‘nature’” through his hunting expeditions in the American West and Africa.⁷⁵ DeVry likewise performed manliness through repeated battles with dangerous creatures on the public stages provided by Lincoln Park Zoo and local newspapers.

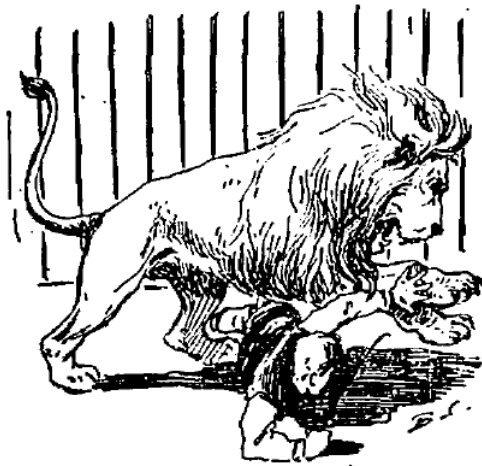
In his accounts of his African safari in *African Game Trails*, Roosevelt “depicted Pleistocene African animals as exceptionally strong and dangerous.”⁷⁶ Overcoming this danger, Roosevelt killed 269 mammals, a number he portrayed as insignificant in proportion to the abundance of animals that he had the opportunity to hunt. Bederman contended that “in depicting this carnage as restrained behavior, Roosevelt was able to paint himself as simultaneously the ultimate in civilized manly restraint and in primitive masculine prowess.”⁷⁷ Although Cy did not hunt the animals in the zoo, he had ample opportunity to demonstrate his domination over them as he entered animal cages for various reasons. For several consecutive years, crowds gathered each spring and fall to watch as the zoo animals moved between their summer and winter enclosures. Many of the animals refused to enter the mobile cages used for transfer, creating another opportunity for DeVry to enter cages and attempt to capture each animal with a rope. These encounters frequently turned violent, thrilling crowds of spectators. In 1894, a lion called Major caused the most trouble: “the lion, wild with rage, bounded about the cage, and Keeper De Vry, being in his path, was knocked from one end to the other...he suffered another knockout

⁷⁵ Bederman, 176.

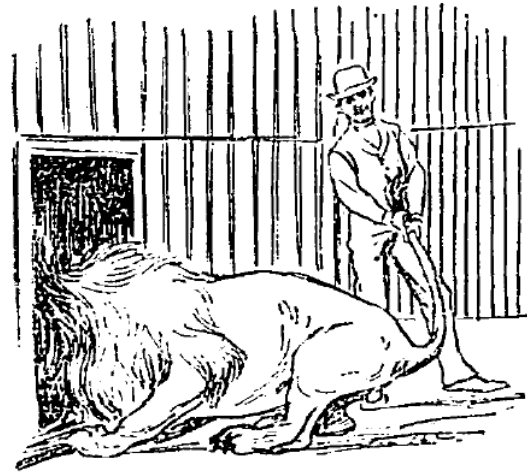
⁷⁶ Bederman, 211.

⁷⁷ Bederman, 211–12.

before getting another rope around Major's neck"(see Figure 2).⁷⁸ Like Roosevelt's hunting trips, these public displays demonstrated DeVry's masculine daring as well as his civilized restraint. Although the park's animals often attempted to attack DeVry, he only acted to defend himself, and to complete the task of moving each animal.



MAJOR ON A RAMPAGE.



MAJOR GETS HIS TAIL TWISTED.

Figures 2 (left) and 3 (right): *The Chicago Tribune* often reported on violent encounters between DeVry and various animals while moving them between their summer and winter cages. The above images illustrate his interactions with a lion named Major in 1894(left) and 1895(right). "LIONS MOVE TO THEIR SUMMER HOME," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); Chicago, Ill., June 14, 1894; "OUT OF THEIR CAGES," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); Chicago, Ill., June 11, 1895.

In their fall 1895 account of the animals' transfer from summer to winter quarters, the *Chicago Tribune* emphasized the crowd's positive response to DeVry's battles with the zoo's cats, confirming that his performance of masculinity was successful: "the crowd of people were absolutely transported with admiration for Keeper De Vry, who is the most modest man imaginable, and gave a round of applause at the conclusion of each of his contests." In this article, the *Chicago Tribune* was also defending DeVry's job security. Earlier that year, the park board temporarily dismissed DeVry from his position at the zoo

⁷⁸ "LIONS MOVE TO THEIR SUMMER HOME," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); Chicago, Ill., June 14, 1894.

before reinstating him.⁷⁹ The *Tribune* reporter made it clear that he supported DeVry, as did the crowd of zoo visitors who gathered to watch the animal transfer: “If any Park Commissioner had come into that crowd and talked about removing De Vry from office he would infallibly have been ducked into the nearest pond.”⁸⁰ Already by 1895, DeVry’s masculine zoo management had won him the support of the *Chicago Tribune*. The paper continued to praise and sympathize with him for the remaining 24 years of his career at the Lincoln Park Zoo.

While “Munchausen Cy De Vry” implicitly praised the zookeeper’s daring, the article also emphasized that DeVry was “the kind of animal keeper to have,” because the zoo’s animals behaved differently under his care.⁸¹ With DeVry in charge, “the wildest, fiercest creatures in the collection” displayed the dangerous wildness suggested by their “destructive equipment” rather than living a “a peanut and popcorn existence tamer than that of the average alley cat.” When he entered animal cages, DeVry didn’t only demonstrate his own masculinity; he also made explicit the zoo’s implicit appeal as a representation of human struggles against nature. As the United States urbanized, Americans—particularly white, middle-class American men—increasingly sought opportunities to reconnect with the natural world and assert their own ability to overcome the challenges presented by hostile, natural environment.⁸² This desire played an important role in drawing visitors to the zoo. In *Animal Attractions*, historian Elizabeth Hanson

⁷⁹ Contemporary newspaper accounts indicate that he was dismissed on charges of animal cruelty—For more details, see “DE VRY MAY GET HIS JOB BACK,” *Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922)*; *Chicago, Ill.*, June 6, 1895.

⁸⁰ “OUT OF THEIR CAGES,” *Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922)*; *Chicago, Ill.*, June 11, 1895.

⁸¹ “MUNCHAUSEN CY DE VRY.”

⁸² Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man*, 258–86.

argues that zoos are “specially constructed meeting places for wild animals and urban Americans. This juxtaposition of wildness and civilization, naturalness and artificiality, makes up a large part of their fascination.”⁸³ Bender similarly posits that zoo animals “are always a little disappointing,” because they do not live up to visitor fantasies of wild animals as “predatory, deadly, dangerous.”⁸⁴ When DeVry entered animal cages and battled the animals under his care, he brought these fantasies to life, and animated the “juxtaposition of wildness and civilization” by performing human domination over zoo animals as a masculine struggle for control.

The newspaper record indicates that DeVry entered animal cages with less frequency as time wore on. Furthermore, he explicitly acknowledged the danger of entering animal cages in articles that appeared later in his career. Despite this, he was able to maintain a masculine performance by emphasizing his professional authority and making frequent reference to his history of interacting with dangerous animals. In 1913, DeVry wrote an article for the *Chicago Tribune* titled “The Tiger, Not the Lion, is King of Beasts.” In the article DeVry declared “when I was younger and more foolish than I am now, I did enter a tiger cage. I didn’t stay in there long, and I kept the tigers in the air while I was in there. I wouldn’t go in such a cage again for a million dollars.”⁸⁵ Although DeVry acknowledged his growing reluctance to enter animal cages, he qualified this admission by emphasizing the danger of his previous exploits and noting his continued comfort with

⁸³ Elizabeth Hanson, *Animal Attractions: Nature on Display in American Zoos* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), 2.

⁸⁴ Bender, *The Animal Game*, 4.

⁸⁵ Cy DeVry, “The Tiger, Not the Lion, Is King of Beasts.,” *Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922)*; *Chicago, Ill.*, September 28, 1913.

lions: “I am always glad that [the tiger] has a master in the iron bars. I never have the same feelings towards a lion. A lion is at heart playful.” Unsurprisingly, DeVry spent the majority of the article describing the tigers at LPZ, and emphasizing their ferocity; like his earlier exploits, this article continued to animate the zoo animals’ wildness, and the ongoing struggle of controlling them.

In “I WAS Anxious to be a Wild Animal Trainer,” published in the following year, Oney Fred Sweet, a *Chicago Tribune* reporter who wrote a series of articles describing his experiences trying his hand at various jobs, described a day in the role of wild animal trainer at the Lincoln Park Zoo.⁸⁶ As in his article about tigers, DeVry impressed his masculinity upon Sweet by referring to his previous exploits and asserting his authority as a dangerous animal expert. While at the zoo, Sweet met DeVry, and asked if he could spend ten minutes locked in a cage with a lion or a tiger. In response, “Mr. De Vry shifted his cigar from one corner of his mouth to the other several times and then flecked from it a half inch accumulation of ashes.”⁸⁷ Then, after taking Sweet to see the animals from a safe distance, he showed Sweet a photograph of a man who was mauled by a lion, and asked him, “Didn’t I play with one of those bears for thirteen years and then one nice day have him chew off the calf of my leg?” invoking his 1897 duel with a bear. Eventually, DeVry allowed Sweet to hold the zoo’s new baby leopards. While he was holding the kittens one of them “gave an ugly little snarl, and started one of her clawed paws in the direction of [Sweet’s] nose.” This was enough to cure Sweet of his desire to enter one of the adult cat’s

⁸⁶ Oney Fred Sweet, “I WAS Awfully Anxious to Be A Wild Animal Trainer,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, December 13, 1914; “ONEY F. SWEET, ONCE TRIBUNE REPORTER, DIES,” *Chicago Tribune* (1963-1996); *Chicago, Ill.*, March 16, 1965, sec. 3.

⁸⁷ Sweet, “I WAS Awfully Anxious to Be A Wild Animal Trainer.”

cages.⁸⁸ As in the article he wrote comparing lions and tigers, DeVry used his own violent encounters with animals in order to illustrate the dangers of entering animal cages. In this way, he advocated caution while asserting his own daring and expertise.

Miss Dooley

As noted above, the *Chicago Tribune's* reference to “strenuousness” at Lincoln Park Zoo invoked Theodore Roosevelt’s 1899 speech on “The Strenuous Life.” During this speech, Roosevelt argued in favor of United States imperialism. Masculine ideals in turn of the century were deeply tied to race, class, and American empire. Bederman argues that although white Americans increasingly celebrated “primitive masculinity” in the late nineteenth century, they also maintained that “civilization was the highest form of humanity.”⁸⁹ Furthermore, because only the white race had achieved, civilization, only “white men were able to achieve were able to achieve perfect manliness because they had inherited that capacity from their racial forebears.”⁹⁰ In addition to confirming white supremacy, this attitude justified empire: “it was the duty of all civilized people to do what they could to bring about this perfect civilization.”⁹¹ John Kasson similarly argues in *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man* that the “dream of white Anglo-American revitalization and conquest not only transformed American foreign relations; it also profoundly affected American thinking” infusing American popular culture with stories in which “white men of northern European stock reassert[ed] their dominance over physical

⁸⁸ Sweet.

⁸⁹ Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 27.

⁹⁰ Bederman, 29.

⁹¹ Bederman, 26.

and moral ‘inferiors’” in foreign locations.⁹² The *Tribune’s* reference to strenuousness consequently endorsed DeVry management of the zoo because he enacted strength and virility, but also because he embodied a model of masculinity that was specifically racialized, classed, and imperial. DeVry’s public encounters with the zoo’s animals did not only win approbation because he displayed daring and manly vigor, but also because he performed those encounters as a white, American man.

DeVry’s performance was further imbued with imperial connotations because the animals he faced came from colonized regions. Many historians have argued that American and European zoos have historically reflected imperial projects. Sally Gregory Kohlstedt posits that “expanding European empires, made exotic wildlife more accessible and stimulated the interest of naturalists, acclimatizers, and agricultural breeders.”⁹³ Furthermore, by studying and caging animals from colonized regions, zoos “reinforced ideas of imperialism and authority.”⁹⁴ Although enhanced by the growth of science, the association between zoos and imperialism existed long before the nineteenth century. David Hancocks similarly argues in *A Different Nature* that “for much of their history, zoos have affirmed only an imperial mastery over Nature.”⁹⁵ Regardless of their origin, new and existing associations between animal collections, education, science, and imperialism effectively legitimated American zoos. Vernon Kisling claims that in the late nineteenth

⁹² Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man*, 253–54.

⁹³ Kohlstedt, “Reflections on Zoo History,” 3.

⁹⁴ Kohlstedt, 6.

⁹⁵ David Hancocks, *A Different Nature: The Paradoxical World of Zoos and Their Uncertain Future* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 24.

century, “people were beginning to recognize their recreational and educational value, and the zoological park was becoming a symbol of America’s greatness.”⁹⁶

In 1904, many of symbolic associations between zoo animals and racial hierarchies came to a head, when the Lincoln Park Zoo acquired an orangutan named “Miss Dooley.” The monkey’s name sparked outrage among Chicago’s large Irish community. On July 31, the *Chicago Tribune* reprinted an editorial from the *New World* demanding that Miss Dooley be renamed. According to the editorial, “in many American cities gorillas, orang outangs, and other divisions of the monkey family are given Irish names because of an alleged resemblance to the Irish race. The practice is an insult to everyone with Irish blood in his veins.”⁹⁷ The following day, the *Tribune* reported that Cyrus DeVry was refusing to change the orangutan’s name. Furthermore, he implied in his response that the monkey did in fact resemble an Irish person, saying “Such names as Elizabeth Tudori and the duchess of Marlborough, suggested in the editorial, would be ridiculous. The outing does not resemble either. She was known as ‘Miss Dooley’ on the ship. Anyone who does not like the name can call her something else.”⁹⁸ This statement, and DeVry’s refusal to rename the animal prompted further outrage. On August 3, Attorney M. W. Meagher was quoted in another *Tribune* article saying “the intimation that an ape resembles the Irish is more than we can stand,” and threatening legal action against DeVry unless he changed Miss

⁹⁶ Vernon N Kisling, Jr., “The Origin and Development of American Zoological Parks to 1899,” in *New Worlds, New Animals: From Menagerie to Zoological Park in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. R. J. Hoage and William A. Deiss (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 119–20.

⁹⁷ “PROTEST AGAINST NAMING ORANG OUTANG ‘MISS DOOLEY.’,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, July 31, 1904.

⁹⁸ “REFUSES TO CHANGE NAME OF ORANG, ‘MISS DOOLEY.’,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, August 1, 1904.

Dooley's name within 3 days.⁹⁹ Eventually, on August 4, the *New World* "congratulated the Irish people of Chicago that the name of the orang outange at Lincoln Park is not officially Miss Dooley. The injunction suit against the park commissioners has been dropped."¹⁰⁰ Despite this victory, both DeVry and local newspapers continued to refer to the orangutan as Miss Dooley until she died in December of the following year.¹⁰¹

Cy DeVry responded to the Irish community's protests over Miss Dooley's name with bored indifference and casual racism. To some extent, his response may have stemmed from a general disinterest in the zoo animals' names. This attitude indicates a complacent acceptance of racial hierarchies and his own position in them. As a man born in Pennsylvania to German and Prussian parents, DeVry's claims to whiteness were relatively secure in turn of the century United States. Furthermore, while Miss Dooley's name served to denigrate Irish-Americans, it did not pose any threat to DeVry. As noted above, DeVry frequently asserted his own masculinity in public performances of violent domination over the zoo's animals. If those animals, many of which came from colonized parts of the globe, were viewed as representatives of American empire and greatness, then these performances also reinforced DeVry's identity as a white American. The same would be true of Miss Dooley if she were associated with Ireland, rather than Borneo. Either way, DeVry's power

⁹⁹ "INSIST UPON ANOTHER NAME FOR 'MISS DOOLEY.,'" *Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922)*; *Chicago, Ill.*, August 3, 1904.

¹⁰⁰ "END OF MISS DOOLEY CASE.," *Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922)*; *Chicago, Ill.*, August 7, 1904.

¹⁰¹ "'MISS DOOLEY' DUPES VISITOR," *Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922)*; *Chicago, Ill.*, November 13, 1905; "SEVEN MEN BEST 'MISS DOOLEY' IN DESPERATE FIGHT," *The Inter Ocean*, December 17, 1905, Newspapers.Com, <https://universityofcaliforniariverside.newspapers.com/image/34534385>; "Pet of the 'Zoo' Is Dead: Miss Dooley Victim of Appetite for Table Luxuries.," *Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922)*; *Chicago, Ill.*, December 23, 1905.

over her, as head of the Lincoln Park Zoo would reinforce his position at the top of a relative racial hierarchy.

Cy DeVry's position in class hierarchies was more ambiguous. The Lincoln Park Zoo was among the first American zoos, which were established in the late nineteenth century as part of the urban parks movement. During this period "reform-minded park planners intended parks to serve as a means of uplift for the working class."¹⁰² This framework cast DeVry, the head of the Lincoln Park Zoo, as one of the directors of efforts to uplift the working class. DeVry's position at the zoo also placed him in a position of educated scientific authority, which he often exercised by giving educational talks on wild animals and their care. DeVry's dress reflected this status and authority. In photographs and illustrations, he typically appears wearing a three-piece suit (occasionally sans jacket while working with animals), complete with a pocket watch and a hat. In contrast to this physical self-presentation, though, DeVry often used casual, unrefined language when speaking with newspaper reporters. When DeVry recounted Emma Eames 1902 visit to the *Chicago Tribune*, he told a story replete with markers of upper-class luxury: as an opera star, Eames was a representative of upper-class entertainments. She added to this effect by bringing champagne and carelessly sharing it with an elephant. In telling this story, DeVry distanced himself from these excesses, complaining that giving Duchess the champagne meant that "a first rate beverage went to waste." Furthermore, he eschewed formal language and proper grammar when describing the event, praising Eames by noting that "she don't jump at conclusions," referring to champagne as "the stuff," and explaining that

¹⁰² Hanson, *Animal Attractions*, 20.

“elephants ain’t much at etiquette.”¹⁰³ Unlike his clothing and position, DeVry’s manner of speaking marked him as uneducated, and working class.

Cyrus DeVry’s use of unrefined language did reflect his class background. Unlike many of his contemporary zoo directors, Cy DeVry was not college educated. By the age of twelve, he had entered the workforce to work as the driver of an ox team. He achieved his position at the Lincoln Park Zoo by working his way up: according to Rosenthal et al, “his first job at Lincoln Park was to screen cinders used in the construction of concrete walks.”¹⁰⁴ Despite this, DeVry was able to embody the ideals of middle-class masculinity, and wield considerable expert authority, gained through years of animal care. Bederman argues that “by stressing the biological causation of race and gender, turn-of-the-century discourses of civilization tended to obscure the importance of another crucial category: class”¹⁰⁵ At the same time, shifting ideals of masculinity increasingly included traits historically associated with working-class manhood: “by the 1880s...as the power of Victorian manliness eroded, many middle-class men began to find this rough working class masculinity powerfully attractive.”¹⁰⁶ These shifts and elisions may have facilitated DeVry’s popularity—enabling him to perform idealized masculinity without the benefits of a middle-class upbringing or education.

¹⁰³ “WINE FOR ZOO ELEPHANT.”

¹⁰⁴ Rosenthal, Tauber, and Uhler, *The Ark in the Park*, 29.

¹⁰⁵ Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 29.

¹⁰⁶ Bederman, 17.

“Tender-Hearted Women”

The Irish community were not the only group that criticized the zoo. Like other zookeepers, DeVry occasionally faced charges of animal cruelty, and responded to questions regarding the ethics of keeping animals in captivity. DeVry gave these complaints much greater attention than the protests surrounding Miss Dooley’s name. When speaking to reporters, or writing for the *Chicago Tribune*, he frequently trumpeted the Lincoln Park Zoo’s commitment to sanitation and keeping the animals healthy and well-fed.¹⁰⁷ On several occasions, he also responded directly to individual critics. In these responses he defended the zoo’s practices by positioning his own manly professionalism in opposition to female sentimentality.

In 1902 the *Chicago Tribune* reported that a famous German singer, Madame Lilli Lehmann, had written a letter to DeVry criticizing the animal enclosures at the Lincoln Park Zoo. In her “charmingly German idiomatic letter,” Mme Lehmann complained that the foxes and wolves at the park had “no place to stay or lay warm without any protection against storm, rain, snow, or heat.”¹⁰⁸ By comparison, at the Bronx zoo, “all the animals have large places to walk, and there is no one who lacks his house with straw filled up.”¹⁰⁹ DeVry responded by submitting her letter to the *Tribune*, along with a public response. Although he “admitted that the quarters of the foxes and wolves might be more

¹⁰⁷ For examples, see: Cy De Vry, “Wild Animals in Captivity.,” *Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922); Chicago, Ill.*, December 8, 1901; “CAPTIVE BIRDS AND BEASTS BETTER OFF THAN SOME MEN,” *Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922); Chicago, Ill.*, November 15, 1903; W. A. Evans, “How to Keep Well,” *Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922); Chicago, Ill.*, September 2, 1913.

¹⁰⁸ “SINGER HAS A KIND HEART,” *Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922); Chicago, Ill.*, February 20, 1902.

¹⁰⁹ “SINGER HAS A KIND HEART.”

comfortable,” he also asserted that Lehmann’s complaints reflected her ignorance regarding animal care and dismissed her as a non-expert: “Why, them foxes would lose all their hair from their backs in three months if they had [straw] bedding. I guess Lilli knows more about high notes than she does about keeping wild animals.” He further dismissed Lehmann by complaining that she was one of a multitude of “tender-hearted women” who sent him “all kind of letters” with misguided complaints and advice.

The following day, the *Tribune* reported that Lehmann’s criticism of the zoo “struck a sympathetic chord in the breasts of many visitors to the park yesterday.”¹¹⁰ In response, DeVry repeated his assertion that “some of these women are awful tender-hearted,” and that Lehmann “doesn’t know anything about the habits of wolves and foxes.” He also reminisced about earlier complaints about his treatment of the animals. As noted above, the park board temporarily fired DeVry in 1895. Although the park board was not forthcoming about the charges that led to his dismissal, the *Chicago Tribune* explained that two zoo visitors had made complaints of animal cruelty. One of those visitors had complained that they saw DeVry whipping a leopard. Recalling this incident, DeVry spoke dismissively of his detractor, implying that her complaints were irrational and exaggerated: “a woman crank wrote me a letter. I wish I had kept that missive. It was four pages long, and it called me a cruel, hard-hearted wretch. Just because I swatted a jaguar over the nose to save my own life.”¹¹¹ In addition to distinguishing between his own professional authority and the uninformed opinions of a sentimental “woman crank,” this response

¹¹⁰ “SINGER’S PITY IS ECHOED,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, February 21, 1902, sec. EDITORIAL.

¹¹¹ “SINGER’S PITY IS ECHOED.”

underscored the danger intrinsic to zoo work: in DeVry account, he didn't cruelly whip a leopard, he swatted a jaguar to defend himself from a life-threatening attack. Unlike women, whose opinions whose judgments were clouded by sentimentality, DeVry asserted that his management of the zoo was based in expertise built through years of experience caring for and interacting with dangerous animals. When DeVry responded to Lehmann's letter in 1902, this experience was only accessible to men. Although female trainers appeared with big cats in circus performances beginning in the 1890s, women were excluded from zookeeping in the early twentieth century.¹¹² A few zoos, including the Lincoln Park Zoo, temporarily hired women during WWII, but they were not regularly hired as zookeepers until the 1960s and 1970s.¹¹³

Occasionally men criticized the zoo as well as women. In 1912 the superintendent of the Humane Society, Hugo Krause, complained because the zoo snakes were fed live food. He argued that "it were better that the big snakes should die of starvation or should be killed than that forty-five other creatures be sacrificed each year to keep them alive." DeVry responded by, "leaving out of the question the scientific value of a collection of pythons," and focusing on "the amusement [snakes] give human beings."¹¹⁴ Explaining this point further, DeVry specifically emphasized that women were particularly interested in snakes: "if [the zoo] didn't have snakes, the attendance of women at the zoo would fall off materially. Scores of women come here every day simply to see the big snakes." By focusing his response on women rather than Krause himself, DeVry invoked the complaints

¹¹² Tait, *Wild and Dangerous Performances*, 108.

¹¹³ Bender, *The Animal Game*, 253, 259–61; Rosenthal, Tauber, and Uhlir, *The Ark in the Park*, 81.

¹¹⁴ "WOULD LET ZOO SNAKES STARVE TO SAVE ANIMALS THEY EAT," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, January 7, 1912.

of “tender-hearted women,” whose prurient interest in viewing “big snakes” contradicted their sentimental concerns. He consequently implied that Krause’s complaint was sentimental and uninformed.

Cyrus DeVry was not the only turn-of-the-century zoo director to face complaints of animal cruelty. In 1914, William Hornaday faced a barrage of critical visitor letters after keepers under his management at the Bronx Zoo restrained an elephant, Gunda, with chains following several dangerous encounters.¹¹⁵ Like DeVry, Hornaday responded by describing his critics as uninformed in a public letter to the *New York Times*. Unlike DeVry however, Hornaday did not feminize his critics; instead, he described them as “cocksure that they know more about managing dangerous animals than we do.”¹¹⁶ Cyrus DeVry faced many of the same challenges and criticisms as his contemporaries. In many ways, he and Hornaday also offered similar responses to the charges of animal cruelty—both men emphasized that as zoo professionals, they had a greater expertise in caring for dangerous animals than their visitors. Unlike Hornaday, however, DeVry emphasized his authority in explicitly masculine terms.

“Pesky Yaller Little Cubs”

In defending himself against “tender-hearted women,” DeVry emphasized that caring for the zoo animals necessarily required him to physically master them. As noted above, although Cy DeVry regularly engaged in violent struggles with the animals at the Lincoln Park Zoo, these encounters were typically motivated by concerns for the animal’s

¹¹⁵ Bender, *The Animal Game*, 47–50.

¹¹⁶ W. T. Hornaday, “HORNADAY ON GUNDA,” *New York Times*, June 27, 1914.

health and welfare. DeVry didn't only duel with bears in order to assert his dominance; he also force-fed snakes in order to keep them alive, and subdued lions and hyenas in order to treat wounds. This dynamic underscores the connections between zoos and empire. As noted above, turn of the century imperialisms often justified colonial domination by arguing that white civilizations were morally obligated to uplift and care for supposedly inferior peoples, places, and cultures. Rudyard Kipling famously articulated this attitude in an 1899 poem titled "The White Man's Burden: The United States and the Philippine Islands." The poem, published during US congressional debates regarding US control of the Philippines, urges the United States to "Take up the White Man's burden—" and colonize the Philippines in order to improve the "new-caught, sullen peoples, /Half-devil and half-child." According to the poem, although US colonization has the power to "Fill full the mouth of Famine /And bid the sickness cease," fulfilling these "burdens" is thankless; the colonists will be met with "the blame of those ye better" and "the hate of those ye guard."¹¹⁷ The poem exhorts white American men to violently master Filipino peoples, arguing that it would be for their own good, even if met with resistance. Just as the zoo animals' captivity reflected colonial domination of the places where they were collected, DeVry's treatment of them mirrored Kipling's paternalistic attitude towards colonial peoples from the same places: DeVry might violently dominate the animals, but he did so for their own good.

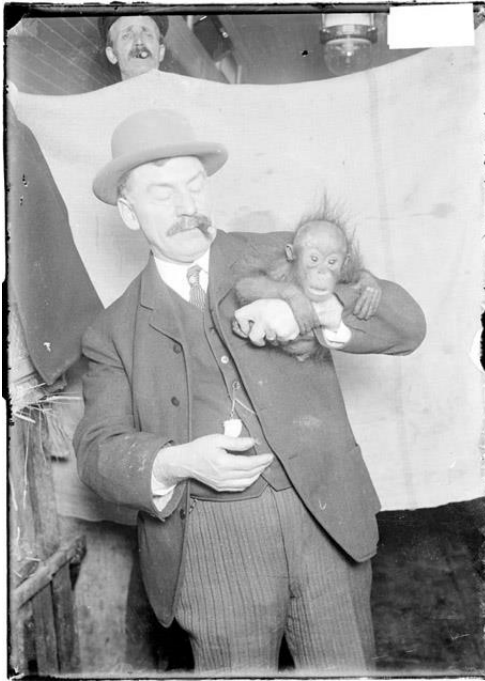
¹¹⁷ Rudyard Kipling, "Modern History Sourcebook: Rudyard Kipling, The White Man's Burden, 1899," Internet Modern History Sourcebook, accessed January 8, 2020, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/Kipling.asp>.

Caring for the animals was central to DeVry's job. Daniel Bender argues in *The Animal Game* that early American zookeepers deliberately "defended their jobs as men's work."¹¹⁸ Although "on the one hand, keepers recognized theirs was a caring job, akin to motherhood...on the other hand, keepers dressed in military-style uniforms for work that demanded the discipline and muscles of a soldier."¹¹⁹ DeVry's attitudes towards the caring aspects of zoo work reflects this posturing. As discussed above, he frequently enacted his authority over the animals, demonstrating that caring for the animals also involved physical mastery. At the same time, although he emphasized his professional success in caring for young and sick animals, he also expressed distaste for the actual duties involved in that care.

DeVry's nurturing duties overlapped with his efforts to promote the zoo when he cared for baby animals. Unsurprisingly, the public was deeply interested in the arrival of new baby animals, and the *Chicago Tribune* often dedicated several articles to animal births. DeVry participated in this media coverage by participating in interviews and posing for newspaper photographers holding the baby animals. Four such photographs survive in the *Chicago Daily News* photograph archive held by the Chicago History Museum. The earliest are dated circa 1903, when DeVry posed holding baby peccaries (see Figure 4). In one photograph he sits, feeding a single peccary from a bottle. In the other, he stands holding a peccary in each hand. In a similar photograph from around the same time, DeVry poses with a baby monkey clinging to his crooked arm (see Figure 3). In 1909, he likewise

¹¹⁸ Bender, *The Animal Game*, 6.

¹¹⁹ Bender, 180.



Figures 4 (left) and 5 (right): Circa 1903, Cy posed with a baby monkey. In 1909, he displayed three baby beavers to a *Chicago Daily News* photographer. Photos by *Chicago Daily News*; from the collections of the Chicago History Museum, DN-0001810 (left), DN-0054485 (right).

displayed three baby beavers for a *Chicago Daily News* photographer, holding them towards the camera in slightly outstretched hands. Although the photographs were clearly staged for a public audience, DeVry does not engage the viewer by looking towards the camera in any of the four photos. Instead, he looks down at the baby animals, holding them close to his body. As in his publicly staged encounters with large predators, DeVry's self-presentation in these photographs relies on his interactions with the zoo's animals.

By posing with baby animals, DeVry advertised his success as a zookeeper. Early American zoos engaged in fierce competition. According to R. J. Hoage, "as with the other cultural institutions, the premier zoo symbolized the premier nation or empire."¹²⁰ As a

¹²⁰ R. J. Hoage, "Epilogue," in *New Worlds, New Animals: From Menagerie to Zoological Park in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. R. J. Hoage and William A. Deiss (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 136.

result, major cities around the world all competed to assert national imperial power by building the most comprehensive collections: “the world’s best zoo by definition had to exhibit the largest number of exotic species.”¹²¹ The best zoos held large and varied collections of animals, including those that were dangerous, rare, and unfamiliar to visitors. Often these animals were captured in colonial settings, making them direct representations of imperial power. Moreover, Daniel Bender argues that the collection and display of these animals changed the ways that zoo visitors understood the world, helping to “create an understanding of the tropical, non-Western world as exotic—fundamentally different, savage, economically backward, and in need of help to preserve its wildlife.”¹²² The animals in these photographs reflect these goals. In 1904, around the time when these photographs were taken, Theodore Roosevelt asserted the United States’ right to intervene in Central and South America, where peccaries are native, in the Roosevelt corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. Orangutans are found in Indonesia and Malaysia, which had faced centuries of colonial occupation by the turn of the nineteenth centuries. While professional animal collectors likely captured the peccaries and orangutan, the *Chicago Tribune* reported in May 1909 that “three baby beavers, born there last Saturday [had] become the center of attraction at the animal house.”¹²³ Although they were born in the zoo, these beavers also represented imperial collection. A few months before they were born, DeVry travelled to New Mexico to collect beavers for the zoo.¹²⁴ At that time, New Mexico was a US territory; it would be admitted as a state in 1912, three years later.

¹²¹ Hoage, 136.

¹²² Bender, *The Animal Game*, 13.

¹²³ “Baby Beavers at Lincoln Park,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, May 7, 1909.

¹²⁴ “HUNTS BEAVERS FOR ZOO,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, March 25, 1909.

In addition to advertising a new attraction at the zoo, the photographs of DeVry holding baby animals served as evidence of DeVry's professional success as a zoo manager. Baby animals, like the beavers he posed with in 1909, could evidence successful breeding as well as collecting. In itself, this indicated that a zoo was successful. According to David Hancocks, "a myth has become established that successful breeding in captivity is somehow proof that animals are being kept in the right condition."¹²⁵ The *Chicago Tribune* provided additional evidence that baby animals at the zoo were a sign of DeVry's professional success: a short 1909 article announcing the birth of two leopards notes that "Keeper De Vry is highly pleased, as he says he has established a world's record for three months in births, twelve animals having been born in that time."¹²⁶ By claiming that he had set a world record, DeVry asserted that he and the Lincoln Park Zoo were leaders in the contest to demonstrate imperial power.

American zookeepers' competition to breed animals in captivity echoed broader concerns over American birth rates. In the late nineteenth century, a falling birth rate among native-born white Americans led Roosevelt and others to worry that American society would become degraded as a result of "race suicide" among superior, white Americans.¹²⁷ As he spoke out against race suicide, Roosevelt also began sending letters of congratulations to Americans who mailed photographs of their large families to the White House. The *Chicago Tribune* implicitly compared the Lincoln Park Zoo's breeding program to concerns over American birth rates in a 1912 article titled "Race Suicide

¹²⁵ Hancocks, *A Different Nature*, 79.

¹²⁶ "LEOPARDS BORN IN PARK ZOO," *Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922)*; *Chicago, Ill.*, September 19, 1908.

¹²⁷ Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 200–206.

Threatens Lincoln Park Zoo Animals.” The article noted that “only a Buffalo Calf, Kangaroo, and Deer” had been born at the zoo recently, playfully explaining that “blame is centered on old Doc Stork.”¹²⁸ When the animals at the Lincoln Park Zoo failed to reproduce, DeVry was happy to place blame with the stork. When they succeeded, however, he proudly posed with the zoo’s newest residents, much like the families who sent photographs to the president.



Figures 6 (left) and 7 (right): Circa 1903, Cy posed for the above pictures holding baby peccaries. Photos by *Chicago Daily News*; from the collections of the *Chicago History Museum*, DN-0000294 (left), DN-0000297 (right).

In addition to advertising reproduction as a sign of imperial power, various aspects of the photographs underscore DeVry’s masculine professionalism. In each photograph, he appears wearing a full three-piece suit, complete with a hat and tie, reflecting his civilized

¹²⁸ “RACE SUICIDE THREATENS LINCOLN PARK ZOO ANIMALS,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, June 3, 1912.

professionalism. In three of the photographs, he also has a cigar in his mouth, and is wearing a large tooth hanging from a watch chain. These accessories both underscore DeVry's masculinity: the cigar is a recognizable marker of male relaxation, while the tooth evokes a hunting trophy. In the photograph where he appears bottle-feeding the peccary, DeVry sits facing the camera with his legs spread, clearly displaying his male anatomy. Although it shows him fulfilling a maternal role, the photograph also demonstrates that he was not equipped to nurse an infant.

DeVry made it clear in interviews that he did not enjoy caring for baby animals. Beginning in 1908, the zoo frequently used dogs as foster mothers for lion cubs when their mothers failed to care for them. On one of these occasions DeVry explained to the *Tribune* that using dogs to nurse the cubs saved him from performing the unpleasant task himself: "I have been feeding those pesky yaller little cubs out of a bottle since they were born. Of course, I use the same kind of a nipple people use for babies. But it is more doggone trouble to feed the little brats!"¹²⁹ DeVry's work as a zookeeper involved caring for "pesky yaller little cubs" in order to ensure their survival. On the occasions when he performed these duties in public, he used both verbal and physical posturing to display his masculinity and express his distaste for maternal care.

DeVry delegated nurturing tasks to women as well as dogs. In 1909, the zoo purchased an orangutan. The animal was sick when it arrived, so DeVry took it to his home, where his wife attempted to nurse it back to health.¹³⁰ Unfortunately, the orangutan did not

¹²⁹ "CY DE VRY TIRES AS NURSE," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, March 28, 1911.

¹³⁰ "'NAMELESS LADY' SICK ABED," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, October 27, 1909.

survive.¹³¹ Four years later, DeVry described the experience of caring for a monkey in a speech to the Anti-Cruelty Society. The *Tribune* account of his speech explained that “Mrs. De Vry had insisted on taking the animal into their home.”¹³² As a result, Mr. and Mrs. DeVry grew attached to the orangutan and “when the baboon grew sick again and died they grieved for the animal. The keeper said never again would he take an animal into his home for this reason.” By specifying that Mrs. DeVry drove the decision to care for the monkey at home and that it was ultimately a mistake, DeVry’s account of the incident deemphasized his role in caring for the animal. Instead, this story established sentimentality in opposition to professional practice: bringing the monkey home was wrong *because* it promoted an emotional attachment. While DeVry cared for the animals in the zoo, he framed sentimental attachment as inappropriate to his professional role. Instead, his care reflected professional success and paternal authority.

The Most Important Animal in the Zoo

According to Bender, “in the early years of American zoos, the biggest zoo stars were elephants.”¹³³ Phenomenally popular with visitors, acquisition of an elephant legitimized a zoo “as a true, scientific zoological garden and not simply a menagerie, a haphazard assortment of animals meant more to amuse than educate.”¹³⁴ Elizabeth Hanson similarly asserts that “most [early American] zoos considered the day that their first

¹³¹ “FUNERAL, NOT A CHRISTENING; MISS OURANG-OUTANG IS DEAD,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, November 4, 1909.

¹³² “CY DE VRY THINKS ANIMALS TOO HUMAN TO BE IN HOME,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, December 14, 1913.

¹³³ Bender, *The Animal Game*, 32.

¹³⁴ Bender, 15.

elephant arrived as the day they became ‘real’ zoos.”¹³⁵ Elephants accordingly drew huge crowds and inspired public devotion. Zoo visitors celebrated when elephants arrived, mourned when they died, and protested when they were sold. When the London Zoo sold Jumbo, arguably the most famous of all elephant stars, to P. T. Barnum in 1882, the public was outraged: “a public fund was set up to ‘Save Jumbo for the Nation,’ and the debate even reached Parliament.”¹³⁶ Unfortunately for Jumbo’s English fans, the elephant was sold to Barnum, who brought him to New York where, “cheering crowds lined the streets on his journey from the docks to Madison Square.”¹³⁷ Visitors similarly flocked to see Jennie at the Philadelphia zoo, and Gunda in the Bronx.¹³⁸

While Duchess, the Lincoln Park Zoo’s elephant during DeVry’s tenure, undoubtedly attracted visitors, DeVry himself was the biggest star of the zoo. DeVry’s star status was most evident when Chicagoans faced the threat of his departure. In 1916 he received an offer to manage the Selig Zoo in Los Angeles for double his Lincoln Park Zoo salary. Chicagoans reacted to this news much in the same way that Londoners responded to Jumbo’s sale to Barnum. In the weeks following Selig’s offer, DeVry negotiated his salary with the park commissioners, and Chicagoans of all ages campaigned to keep him in Chicago. Between July 1, when the *Tribune* first reported the Selig offer, and August 10, when the paper reported that he had accepted an offer from the Chicago Park District, the *Chicago Tribune* ran at least 15 articles covering the ongoing negotiations between

¹³⁵ Hanson, *Animal Attractions*, 44.

¹³⁶ Hancocks, *A Different Nature*, 3.

¹³⁷ Hancocks, 4.

¹³⁸ Bender, *The Animal Game*, chap. 1.

DeVry and the park board and the various campaigns to keep him in Chicago.¹³⁹ On July 29, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that “letters continued to pour in on the zoo man yesterday from all classes of people, big and little.”¹⁴⁰ These people included a woman representing “the Chicago contingent” in the Berkshires, various Chicago residents, and the Governor of Illinois, all of whom asserted their support of DeVry.¹⁴¹ One article published during this period, “Children Beg ‘Cy’ to Remain,” particularly focused on DeVry’s popularity among the children of Chicago. In the article, Charles Wheeler wrote that “the children who romped over the greensward in the big playground began work in earnest to make the park board keep De Vry, no matter what the cost may be.”¹⁴² As evidence of their efforts, Wheeler listed the names of twenty children who had signed a petition calling for the park board to raise DeVry’s salary.

Ultimately, the children got their wish. On August 8, 1916, a front-page article in the *Chicago Tribune* announced that DeVry had agreed to stay at LPZ for a salary of \$5,000 a year, roughly equivalent to \$118,000 in 2019.¹⁴³ Although this sum was considerably less than Selig’s offer of \$7,800, it was a considerable raise from his previous \$3,600 annual salary. In addition to The day after he accepted the park board’s offer, DeVry thanked the

¹³⁹ KATHERINE SYNON, “Cy De Vry Going West for Selig, Park Zoo Report,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, July 1, 1916; “DE VRY TO STAY WITH HIS PETS,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, August 10, 1916.

¹⁴⁰ “DE VRY STAYS, O’BYRNE SAYS,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, July 29, 1916.

¹⁴¹ “CIVIC SOCIETIES PREPARE TO ACT TO KEEP DE VRY,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, July 26, 1916; Mrs. E. H. Carmace, “KEEP CY DE VRY,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, August 6, 1916; Charles N. Wheeler, “CHILDREN BEG ‘CY’ TO REMAIN,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, July 27, 1916.

¹⁴² Wheeler, “WHY THEY LOVE HIM.”

¹⁴³ “DE VRY TO STAY WITH HIS PETS.” Salary converted to 2019 values using US Bureau of Labor Statistics calculator: <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>

Tribune for their support, saying “It wasn’t until after THE TRIBUNE took up this affair of mine with the Lincoln park board that I realized how many friends I have in Chicago. It is worth some sacrifices to be able to stay here with my friends.”¹⁴⁴ Like Jumbo, DeVry was beloved by the zoogoing public, and they protested the possibility of his departure. Unlike the elephant however, Cy DeVry was both able to leverage his public support and make his own decisions about whether to stay. Moreover, by publicly securing a raise, DeVry had once again demonstrated his manliness.

In his discussion of Edward Burroughs, creator of Tarzan, John Kasson describes three advertisements from the business magazine, *System*. Kasson argues that these advertisements, most of which promote instructional courses, may “be read as narratives of manliness, which directly speak to readers concerned about their inadequacy.”¹⁴⁵ Notably, all three advertisements emphasize that the course offered can help a man increase his earnings, thereby proving his worth as a man.¹⁴⁶ When Cy DeVry publicly demanded—and received—a raise, he consequently demonstrated his status as a “big man.” DeVry’s pay rise was a particularly impressive testament to his manliness, considering that according to a 1921 report by the National Bureau of Economic Research, in 1916, when DeVry’s annual salary was raised from 3,600 to 5,000, only 7.2% of Americans earned more than \$2,000.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ “THE ZOO RECEPTION,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, August 11, 1916.

¹⁴⁵ Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man*, 247–48.

¹⁴⁶ Kasson, 247–52.

¹⁴⁷ National Bureau of Economic Research, *Income in the United States, Its Amount and Distribution, 1909-1919*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921), 112, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/coo1.ark:/13960/t6pz5sg7c>.

In addition to securing him a raise in 1916, DeVry's celebrity constituted a major draw for zoo visitors. One month after DeVry agreed to remain at the Lincoln Park Zoo, a fourteen-year-old boy from Mattoon, Illinois "saved \$10, ran away from home, and came to Chicago for the sole purpose of realizing the ambition of his life—to gaze upon Cy DeVry."¹⁴⁸ After traveling over 180 miles, the boy, Vernie, walked around Lincoln Park for two days without meeting DeVry. Eventually, a police officer found him "suffering from hunger" in Grant Park. Luckily for Vernie, the *Chicago Tribune* reported on his journey and his goal. The next day, one of the paper's readers took Vernie back to the zoo where he "went around Lincoln Park with his hand in Cy de Vry's." According to the *Tribune*, "Cy talked a good deal, but all Vernie could say was 'Gee!'"¹⁴⁹ Vernie ran away from home and travelled across the state, not to see wild animals, but to see "Cy," and although he walked around the zoo for two days, he was not satisfied until he met the zookeeper. A couple of months later, DeVry appeared in "Bright Sayings of the Children," a daily feature in the *Chicago Tribune* consisting of children's quotations submitted by readers. One reader submitted a story about taking his nephew to Lincoln Park Zoo, where he met Cy DeVry. When asked about DeVry later, the boy explained that "he's the most important of all the aniamels[sic]."¹⁵⁰ For Vernie and the boy in "Bright Sayings of the Children," DeVry himself constituted a larger draw than any of the animals under his care, even Duchess the elephant.

¹⁴⁸ "HE COMES TO CHICAGO JUST TO SEE CY DE VRY," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, September 11, 1916.

¹⁴⁹ "RUNAWAY BOY'S DREAM COMES TRUE--HEE SEES CY," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, September 12, 1916.

¹⁵⁰ "BRIGHT SAYINGS of the CHILDREN," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, November 19, 1916.

“Cy” DeVry made himself into the most important animal in the zoo by using his position at Lincoln Park Zoo as a stage, performing an idealized masculinity in the public eye. Hancocks argues that Jumbo the elephant was so popular because “awed and astonished by his size, [visitors] were also emboldened by the audacity of holding captive such a beast; humbled by his great bulk, they were yet prideful in the knowledge of human control over this giant.”¹⁵¹ DeVry demonstrated human audacity to an even greater degree when he entered animal cages and reanimated the struggle of achieving human control over the dangerous animals in the Lincoln Park Zoo’s collection.

“Bouncer for Park Mashers”

Although DeVry’s masculine performances of violent domination won widespread public approbation, they also led to his eventual dismissal from the zoo. In February of 1904, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that “the announcement yesterday was made by Supt. R. H. Warder that especial efforts are planned for this spring to end the ‘mashing’ evil in the park.”¹⁵² This “mashing evil” referred to the presence of “mashers,” or men who harass women in public spaces, in Lincoln Park.¹⁵³ The Lincoln Park police’s efforts against mashers reflected widespread concerns over street harassment and the regulation of public space. According to Estelle B. Freedman, “popular interest in the masher emerged just as urban growth provided new opportunities for gender and class mixing in public space.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Hancocks, *A Different Nature*, 5.

¹⁵² “WILL END THE ‘MASHING,’” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, February 8, 1904.

¹⁵³ “Masher, n.2,” in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed February 22, 2018, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/114595>.

¹⁵⁴ Estelle B. Freedman, “Smashing the Masher,” in *Redefining Rape: Sexual Violence in the Era of Suffrage and Segregation* (Cambridge, Mass, UNITED STATES: Harvard University Press, 2013), 192, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucr/detail.action?docID=3301330>.

As a new kind of public space that grew alongside urbanization, zoos were microcosms of urban “gender and class mixing.” As managers of these new public spaces, zoo directors like DeVry attempt to create environments characterized by civility and uplift. Bender argues that when “zoo directors imagined the place of their zoo in the growing city, they believed science lessons taught civilization.”¹⁵⁵ Zoo visitors, however, often failed to conform to these idealized expectations, frustrating zoo directors as they sought to regulate behavior.

Cy DeVry played an active role in the efforts to clear Lincoln Park of mashers. Although the article discussed above focused on the park police, who arrested and pressed charges against mashers, it also quoted DeVry. He took a more immediate approach: “I only reach into the crowd, grab them by the collar, and let them have two or three short jabs...I am getting tired of taking cases to the police and I intend to give them a few hard jolts and kick them out.”¹⁵⁶ This article echoed an earlier description of DeVry’s methods for dealing with mashers. In July of 1903, the *Chicago Tribune* ran an article titled “Bouncer for Park Mashers is Cy De Vry’s New Duty.” In this earlier article, DeVry similarly explained that “a much more efficacious way of dealing with [mashers] is just to administer a good beating...We arrest them only when they are troublesome to handle.”¹⁵⁷ DeVry’s response to mashers mirrors his approach to animal management. Rather than deferring to the park police, he relied on his own physical dominance, and used violence to ensure submission. DeVry’s violent response to mashers contributed to his

¹⁵⁵ Bender, *The Animal Game*, 27.

¹⁵⁶ “WILL END THE ‘MASHING.’”

¹⁵⁷ “BOUNCER FOR PARK MASHERS IS CY DE VRY’S NEW DUTY,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, July 20, 1903.

performance of virile, civilized masculinity. Rotundo argues that in the early nineteenth century, “men and women had seen youthful brawls as a bade of evil and a sign that manly self-control was not yet developed.”¹⁵⁸ By contrast, at the end of the century “strength and force were so highly valued, it was only natural that men admired fighting virtues and often endorsed violence” between adult men as well as boys.¹⁵⁹ In this case, DeVry’s use of violence was motivated by a desire to protect women and enforce civilized behavior. In her discussion of mashers, Freedman asserts that beginning in the late nineteenth century, “when reporters first identified the masher phenomenon, they emphasized men’s duty to protect women.”¹⁶⁰ By physically assaulting mashers and evicting them from the zoo, Cy fulfilled this duty, and helped to regulate urban public space.

Sixteen years later, DeVry’s habit of patrolling the park for mashers ended his career at the Lincoln Park Zoo. On June 16, 1919 the *Chicago Tribune* reported that DeVry had attacked a zoo visitor in an article titled “Cy De Vry Cuts Loose ‘Mid Men of Monkey Cage.” According to the article, park policemen were patrolling Lincoln Park for mashers, “when a commotion near by attracted them.” At the center of this commotion, the police officers “found the erstwhile pacific Cy in a Tarzan of the Apes attitude” standing with his foot “planted Alexander-like on the prone body of a man.” This man was Charles Hacht, who charged DeVry with assault and battery. DeVry was also charged with disorderly conduct by Lieutenant Charles Thorne, “who [said] that Cy tried to attack him” as well. While the *Chicago Tribune* was unable to reach Cy for comment, the paper did report that

¹⁵⁸ Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 225–26.

¹⁵⁹ Rotundo, 225.

¹⁶⁰ Freedman, “Smashing the Masher,” 197.

“Friends said...he had become enraged when he observed some men annoying women.”¹⁶¹ Although this article did not definitively state that he was justified in attacking Hacht, the paper described Cy heroically, comparing him with Tarzan and Alexander the Great. These comparisons underscored DeVry’s masculinity: according to Bederman, Tarzan was “an exemplar of perfect manhood” in the early twentieth century.¹⁶² These comparisons contextualized DeVry’s masculinity within a white, European lineage. Kasson argues that “Tarzan carries his most valuable hereditary privilege, his innate superiority, in his very blood. He could be strengthened rather than degraded by the wild precisely because he holds the best of Western civilization within him.”¹⁶³ The paper’s reference to Alexander the Great underscored this connection to Western civilization. The paper enhanced these positive associations by printing the article alongside a photograph of DeVry kissing a monkey. While he might attack a masher, “the erstwhile pacific Cy,” only did so to protect women; he was kind to small, nonthreatening creatures.

Two days later, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that DeVry had been suspended from his position at the zoo, “pending trial before the civil service commission.” Over the next few days, the paper reported short updates as DeVry’s various trials were scheduled. Then, on July 9, the day before his park board trial, it ran an article titled ““Pets Would Be Best Witnesses Says Cy De Vry.” The article summarized the various charges pending against DeVry. It also included a quote from the zoo director, in which he emphasized his professional record, and relationship with the animals under his care, claiming that “if their

¹⁶¹ “CY DE VRY CUTS LOOSE 'MID MEN OF MONKEY CAGE,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, June 16, 1919.

¹⁶² Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 220–21.

¹⁶³ Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man*, 300–301.



Figure 8: The Chicago Tribune printed this image of Cy kissing a monkey alongside the article describing his attack on Hacht. *DE VRY CUTS LOOSE 'MID MEN OF MONKEY CAGE,'* Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922); Chicago, Ill., June 16, 1919.

testimony could be introduced I would be easily cleared of the charges.”¹⁶⁴ On July 11, the

Chicago Tribune reported on the trial in “Battle in Zoo Aired at Trial of Cy De Vry.”¹⁶⁵

The article detailed a park board hearing to determine whether DeVry would be fired.

¹⁶⁴ “‘PETS WOULD BE BEST WITNESSES,’ SAYS CY DE VRY,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); Chicago, Ill., July 9, 1919.

¹⁶⁵ “BATTLE IN ZOO AIRED AT TRIAL OF CY DE VRY,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); Chicago, Ill., July 11, 1919.

During the hearing, Hacht, DeVry, and several witnesses all presented their version of the events. Hacht claimed that DeVry had drunkenly attacked him without cause, while DeVry contended that Hacht had been bothering women. Witnesses offered similarly contradictory statements. One woman testified that she had noticed Hacht “making signs” to a woman, but that she had also smelled liquor on DeVry’s breath. Others claimed that they had seen DeVry earlier in the day and could confirm his sobriety: one of the park’s zookeepers offered a particularly interesting argument to support this, claiming “I know [De Vry] was sober, because he had four monkeys with him, and a monkey won’t stay near a man who had been drinking.”¹⁶⁶

By focusing on his sobriety, Hacht’s witnesses questioned DeVry’s masculinity as well as his guilt. Although “masculine violence was becoming essential,” the ideal exemplar of early twentieth-century masculinity also maintained “the manly strength to control himself.”¹⁶⁷ Hacht’s charge that DeVry was drunk was also particularly significant considering that DeVry’s trial took place in 1919, months after the requisite number of states, including Illinois, ratified the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which prohibited the sale, manufacture, and distribution of alcoholic beverages in the United States. Although the Amendment had not yet gone into effect, and DeVry would not have broken it by consuming alcohol, its passage reflects widespread public sentiment in support of the Temperance Movement, which not only condemned drinking, but also associated alcoholism with immigration.¹⁶⁸ If DeVry was drunk when he assaulted Hacht, he acted

¹⁶⁶ “BATTLE IN ZOO AIRED AT TRIAL OF CY DE VRY.”

¹⁶⁷ Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 230, 12.

¹⁶⁸ Daniel J Tichenor, *Dividing Lines: The Politics of Immigration Control in America*, 2009, 71, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400824984>.

against these sentiments, putting his claims to an idealized, white, masculinity into question.

The day after his park board hearing, the *Chicago Tribune* published an article in support of DeVry. Titled “Dry Cy De Vry,” the article responded to the charges that DeVry was drunk, and that his attack on Hacht was unwarranted. The *Tribune* dismissed the first charge with a playful reference to a folk character associated with alcohol: “our childhood hero is accused of pouring libations at the obsequies of John Barleycorn with more zeal than wisdom; and buffeting an innocent citizen. In the first place, J. Barleycorn is gone and so Cy won’t have to pour the libation again.”¹⁶⁹ The article also dismissed the second charge, arguing that even if DeVry did wrongfully assault Hacht, he should not be fired, as “he is employed as a zoo keeper and his worth as such has not been questioned.” Furthermore, the paper asserted that “one in his position might be permitted a little latitude when the safety of women and children is at stake.” Even if Hacht was not guilty of bothering women, the *Chicago Tribune* argued that DeVry’s chivalrous efforts were understandable. Despite this support, the park board dismissed DeVry from his position at the zoo on July 24, 1919.¹⁷⁰

Just as they campaigned for DeVry to stay at Lincoln Park Zoo in 1916, Chicagoans protested the park board’s decision to fire him in 1919. On July 26, two days after the park board dismissed him, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that “four thousand Chicago Elks” (a

¹⁶⁹ “Dry Cy De Vry.,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, July 12, 1919.

¹⁷⁰ “DE VRY, OUSTED FROM ZOO, MAY FIGHT TO RETURN,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, July 25, 1919.

social club in which DeVry was a member), would be starting petitions on his behalf.¹⁷¹ By August 5, “more than 50,000 citizens [had] signified their disapproval of the park board’s verdict that a man who gets rough when he is mad isn’t a fit keeper for animals, despite a record of thirty-one years of service and a world-wide reputation for efficiency.” The *Chicago Tribune* was clear in its support for DeVry, but it did note that “counter petitions [were] being circulated by Lincoln park police.” While the paper did not specify how many people had signed these counter petitions, it implied that they were unwelcome: “Strollers, picnickers, and busy men and women rushing downtown in machines are being stopped by the police and asked to sign.”¹⁷² By contrast, the *Tribune* provided the name and address of the man who was collecting petitions on DeVry’s behalf, making it easy for readers to add their support.

In addition to reporting on the petitions supporting DeVry, the *Tribune* also printed letters arguing for his reinstatement. These letters came from a variety of sources including a former park commissioner, Burr A. Kennedy, who described DeVry as “the only man that is 100 percent efficient in this line of work.”¹⁷³ Notably, both Kennedy’s letter, and the August 5 article praise DeVry in terms of his “efficiency.” This praise validated his masculine performance. In *Efficiency and Uplift*, Samuel Haber argues that “the

¹⁷¹ “PUT DE VRY BACK AS HEAD OF ZOO, 4,000 ELKS ASK,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, July 26, 1919,
<https://search.proquest.com/docview/174464926/abstract/D2ABBDDFDA348A7PQ/1>.

¹⁷² “50,000 INDORSE MOVE TO RETURN DE VRY TO ZOO,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, August 5, 1919.

¹⁷³ “VOICE OF THE PEOPLE: CY DE VRY’S RECORD.,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, August 8, 1919.

progressive era gave rise to an efficiency craze.”¹⁷⁴ When used to describe an individual “efficiency” carried many “associations and predispositions; a turning toward hard work and away from feeling, toward discipline and away from sympathy, toward masculinity and away from femininity.”¹⁷⁵ When DeVry’s defenders described him as “efficient” they were employing a charged term powerfully associated with masculine professionalism.

Another letter, signed by the director and secretary of the Illinois Vigilance Association, founded in 1908 to fight prostitution and indecent literature, specifically praised DeVry for his hands-on approach to mashers.¹⁷⁶ The joint authors of the letter claimed to “have reason to know that he has been worth more than half a dozen ordinary citizens in the interests of public morality.”¹⁷⁷ These “reasons” likely referred to DeVry’s longstanding habit of patrolling for, and assaulting park mashers. Unlike the park commissioners, who decided “that a man who gets rough when he is mad isn’t a fit keeper for animals,” the Illinois Vigilance Association viewed DeVry’s attack on Hacht as evidence of “a man who cares for the safety and honor of young girls and for the decency of the park as a resort for all classes.”¹⁷⁸ As these letters reflect, DeVry’s popularity was deeply tied to his masculinity. Chicagoans didn’t only love “Cy” because he was associated with wild animals, but also because he was professionally efficient and physically

¹⁷⁴ Samuel Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift: Scientific Management in the Progressive Era 1890-1920* (Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), ix.

¹⁷⁵ Haber, ix.

¹⁷⁶ Paul S Boyer, *Purity in Print: Book Censorship in America from the Gilded Age to the Computer Age* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 27, <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=4511738>.

¹⁷⁷ “VOICE OF THE PEOPLE: FOR CY DEVRY,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); Chicago, Ill., July 31, 1919.

¹⁷⁸ “Voice of the People.”

aggressive. Although public support did not affect the results of Cy's park board hearing, he was cleared of all charges in Municipal court. On July 23, 1919 *Chicago Tribune* reported that "in less than five minutes the jury freed Mr. De Vry."¹⁷⁹

DeVry's career as a zookeeper did not end when he was fired from the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago. William Selig, who owned an eponymous zoo and motion picture company in Los Angeles, had not succeeded in luring DeVry away from Chicago in 1916; when DeVry was fired in 1919, Selig seized the opportunity. By 1919, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that Cy was "now in charge of a private zoo at Los Angeles."¹⁸⁰ The following August, a letter to the paper from DeVry confirmed that he was working at the Selig Zoo. In the letter, and enclosed photographs DeVry described his work with the chimpanzee "'stars' of Col. Selig's animal pictures."¹⁸¹ In his new position DeVry continued to fill the dual roles of zoo man and showman, working with that animals that doubled as actors in the growing motion picture industry.

Conclusion

Although Cyrus DeVry's use of aggressive violence to enforce civilized behavior eventually led to his dismissal, he remained a beloved figured in Chicago long after he left the Lincoln Park Zoo. During his tenure at the zoo, DeVry made himself into a beloved public figure by performing an idealize masculinity. Furthermore, while DeVry worked at

¹⁷⁹ "DE VRY, FREED BY JURY, FACES BOARD HEARING," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, July 23, 1919.

¹⁸⁰ "Cy De Vry Wins \$1,000 Pension as Zoo Keeper," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, January 17, 1920.

¹⁸¹ "Mary Mike and Bill in the Movies," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922); *Chicago, Ill.*, August 21, 1921, sec. ROTOGRAVURE SECTION.

the zoo, visitors came to see him as well as the animals, to watch as he performed human animal encounter as a deeply gendered, often violent struggle for dominance. When DeVry died in 1934, his obituary appeared on the front page of the *Chicago Tribune*. In the obituary, published fifteen years after “Cy” left Chicago, the paper affectionately remembered him as a man who “developed the Lincoln park animal collection from an unimposing group of poorly housed specimens to one of the best known zoos in the world,” and “attracted wide attention by his humane but successful methods of making his wild charges tractable.”¹⁸²

Zoos have changed considerably since Cyrus DeVry was fired from the Lincoln Park Zoo in 1919. Cy DeVry delighted zoo visitors by performing animal care as a masculine struggle for dominance, demonstrating white, male, imperial authority over animals, visitors, and critics alike. His frequent violent encounters with the zoo’s animals would likely horrify modern visitors. Over the course of a century, zoos have increasingly replaced small, orderly cages, with large, naturalistic enclosures. They have turned from collecting to breeding, and from advertising empire to promoting conservation. In recent years, these changes have coincided with the feminization of zookeeping: once an exclusively male career, most zookeepers in the United States are now women. Furthermore, David Grazian argues that “the recent feminization of zookeeping as an occupation has been marked by both a steady rise in women working as keepers and dramatic changes in captive animal care practices.”¹⁸³ According to one of his interview

¹⁸² “Cy De Vry Dies; Lincoln Pk. Zoo Head 31 Years.”

¹⁸³ Grazian, *American Zoo*, 242.

subjects, “it has become more of a *caretaking* field instead of a *controlling* field”¹⁸⁴ In this context, DeVry’s displays of violent masculinity are no longer consistent with zookeeper training nor visitor concerns.

¹⁸⁴ Grazian, 242. Emphasis original.

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