

# **Pachyderm Matriarchy**

*Elephants and Authorship  
in the Land of the  
Akeleys, 1912–1940*

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**Abstract:** One of the essential backstories of Donna Haraway’s essay “Teddy Bear Patriarchy” is the biography of celebrated collector/taxidermist Carl Akeley, and his vision for the African Hall at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) in New York. The “Authors and Versions” section of Haraway’s essay examines expedition stories recorded by Carl Akeley, his first wife, Delia Denning Akeley, and his second, Mary Jobe Akeley, to interrogate the issue of authorship, and build a case for an alleged cover-up of Delia’s contributions by “the official scientific community”. The present article pursues a reading of “Authors and Versions” against a more robust historical background, including published sources, and primary archival materials, in order to deepen, and correct, the broader story of the authorship and intellectual labour behind the AMNH African Hall, in particular the purported suppression of Delia Akeley’s voice and labour.

**Keywords:** *Carl Akeley, Delia Akeley, Mary Jobe Akeley, American Museum of Natural History, Donna Haraway, “Teddy Bear Patriarchy”*

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It has been fascinating to watch the academic and public perception of museum taxidermy and dioramas evolve from boring and outmoded to enchanting and trendy over the past decade (especially for someone who has found them enchanting for five times that long).<sup>1</sup> Donna Haraway’s 1984 essay “Teddy Bear Patriarchy” was far ahead of the curve in terms of scholarly discourse on the “spiritual vision” enabled by taxidermy. It is probably not necessary to advise a reader of this journal that the thrust of “Teddy Bear Patriarchy” (hereafter TBP) is a contemplation of the Akeley Hall of African Mammals at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) in New York, grounded in contextual stories about celebrated museum explorer and taxidermist Carl Akeley’s expeditions, and explorations of his representational vision in taxidermy, photography, and motion pictures. The essay made its mark primarily for its unpacking of the range of ideological discourses underpinning the AMNH African Hall, but it also includes perhaps the best concise biography of Akeley ever written, and powerfully perceptive passages on the mesmerizing power of taxidermy and dioramas—their capacity for “the achievement of a vision of transcendence”, as author Rachel Poliquin puts it.<sup>2</sup> The fact that TBP is cited in so many works in the wave cited above underscores the role the essay played in sparking the renaissance of interest in the art of taxidermy, and putting it on the scholarly radar for the millennium to come. Arguably more important, it was ahead of its time in interrogating museum presentation in light of underlying colonialist and racist discourses, and how those undercurrents informed museum pedagogy.

- 1 The revival of interest is discussed in a 2015 article in the *Smithsonian Magazine*: M. Blitz, “Why Taxidermy Is Being Revived for the 21st Century,” *Smithsonianmag.com*, 19 June 2015, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/why-taxidermy-being-revived-21st-century-180955644/>. The 2019 documentary *Stuffed* by Erin Derham is an even more recent high-profile example of the “rediscovery” of taxidermy as an art form (the film’s website is <http://www.stuffedfilm.com/>). There has been a particular renaissance of scholarly interest in taxidermy and dioramas since 2010. A partial list of books would include Morris, *History of Taxidermy*; Thorsen, Rader and Dodd, *Animals on Display*; Poliquin, *Breathless Zoo*; Landes, Lee, and Youngquist, *Gorgeous Beasts*; Davenne and Fleurent, *Cabinets of Wonder*; Tunnicliffe and Scheerso, *Natural History Dioramas: History, Construction, and Educational Role*; Scheerso and Tunnicliffe, *Natural History Dioramas—Traditional Exhibits for Current Education Themes*; Aloï, *Speculative Taxidermy*; Andrei, *Nature’s Mirror*.
- 2 Poliquin, *Breathless Zoo*, 107.

The connections Haraway makes are rich, provocative, and often convincing, although sometimes undermined by her peremptory (rather than analytical) presentation of the African Hall's and the American Museum's meanings, which are posited as monolithic and unambiguous. Moreover, the essay omnisciently posits the effects and experiences that museum visitors purportedly draw from the exhibits, and thus, in sociologist Michael Schudson's words, "falls fully into the trap of leaving the lived social experiences of audiences to the side."<sup>3</sup> In practice, TBP is not really concerned with mining the museum's meanings (in its halls or in visitors' heads) as much as exploring the broad and diffuse institutional-ideological context *behind* its presentation—that is, the myriad connections that Haraway makes in support of the notion that Akeley "crafted *the means* to experience a history of race, sex, and class in New York City."<sup>4</sup> I have emphasized these two words because they are critical, indeed a linchpin to a major component of Haraway's argument. Carl Akeley and his collaborators crafted a *foundation* for constructing meanings and making interpretations; how, and whether, all those pieces come together to actualize such an experience, and for whom, is an open question, and one which will be explored below.

Equally critical is the essay's treatment of the pivotal issue of Akeley's authorship of the Hall. This is the focus of a section entitled "Authors and Versions", a detour into discourses that ostensibly informed the creation of the African Hall—notably, expedition stories recorded by Carl Akeley and his first wife, Delia Denning Akeley, aka "Mickie", and his second, Mary Jobe Akeley (Fig. 1). (Since all three of the principals share the same last name, I will refer to each of them by their first names throughout.) Haraway uses certain tales from the 1909–11 AMNH expedition to examine the issue of authorship in order "to probe more deeply into the tissue of meanings and mediations making the specific structure of experience possible for the viewer of the dioramas of [the AMNH] Africa Hall". This examination is grounded

3 Schudson, "Cultural Studies", 386.

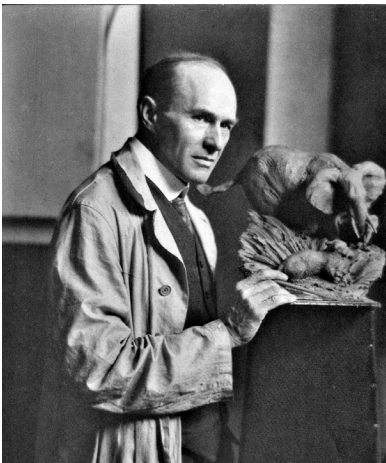
4 Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy", 152. Unless otherwise indicated, all references are to the revised version published in the *Haraway Reader*. References to this version will hereafter be cited parenthetically as "TBP" in the main text.

in “questions about authorized writing enforced by publishing practices and about labor that never issues in acknowledged authorship.” In short: “Whose stories appear and disappear in the web of social practices that constitute Teddy Bear Patriarchy?” (TBP 176). To answer this question, Haraway seeks “to tease apart the sources for a major event in Carl’s life, an elephant mauling in British East Africa in 1910” — that is, narratives by the three Akeleyes related to the mauling and its aftermath — to build a case for “the official scientific community’s covering up [of] Delia’s role in Carl Akeley’s explorations in favor of the story of Mary Jobe” (TBP 193n26). However, “Authors and Versions” is beset with several problems, notably “oddly ahistorical history” (in Schudson’s words),<sup>5</sup> a dearth of documentary evidence, and significant historiographical inaccuracies. While the idea of an institutional conspiracy/cover-up has obvious appeal in support of a case for authorial suppression, the claim has no foundation. The problems with the case are rooted both in theoretical approach and historical method, as I will show below. Most fundamentally, the argument for authorial validation and suppression, grounded in a meta-level re-framing of the three varied and somewhat *Rashomon*-like versions of the 1910 events, is built on just one published work by each author, overlooking a wealth of other official/authorized published sources dating from the 1910s through the 1930s — despite ostensibly having drawn on “correspondence, annual reports, photographic archives, and artifacts in the AMNH” (TBP 193n26).<sup>6</sup> And finally, in the climax of the section, Haraway misinterprets a set of archival photos to construct an incident that supposedly informed the African Hall, but which never actually happened.

The present article examines the “Authors and Versions” section of TBP against a more robust historical background — primarily published sources, both “authorized” and (arguably) unauthorized,

5 Schudson, “Cultural Studies”, 386.

6 The only sources directly cited and quoted from are Carl’s 1923 memoirs (*In Brightest Africa*), Mary’s 1940 biography of Carl (*The Wilderness Lives Again*), and Delia’s 1930 *Jungle Portraits* (all of which will be cited in full later). Haraway also mentions as sources *World’s Work* magazine articles written (separately) by Mary and Carl (which were repackaged in their books), and their 1932 book *Lions, Gorillas, and Their Neighbors* (erroneously dated as 1922), but without specific attributions to content therein.



**Figure 1:**

The three Akeleys. Top to bottom:  
Delia J. Akeley in 1915;  
Mary Jobe Akeley, circa 1926;  
Carl Akeley, circa 1914.

Delia: Carl E. Akeley, "Elephant Hunting on Mount Kenya," *American Museum Journal* 15, 7 (November 1915). Public domain image.

Mary: Image # 314406, American Museum of Natural History Library.

Carl: *American Museum Journal* 14, no. 5 (May 1914). Public domain image.

supplemented by archival materials, dating between 1912 and 1940—in order to deepen, and correct, the broader story of the authorship and intellectual work behind the AMNH African Hall, in particular the purported cover-up or suppression of Delia’s voice and labour. Building on this foundation, the paper explores some concrete connections between the means and the meanings—that is, between authorial discourses and potential audience experience. The ultimate goal is to construct a more accurate and nuanced account of “[w]hose stories appear and disappear in the web of social practices that constitute Teddy Bear Patriarchy” (TBP 176), and how those stories are, or aren’t, manifested in the AMNH African Hall.

### Tales of the Tuskers

The elephant portion of the 1909–11 AMNH expedition was a long and arduous one for its participants, and has confused many an Akeley chronicler—not least because Carl’s own accounts, the benchmarks for most scholars, are often convoluted and meandering, mixing events from different expeditions based on themes (like elephants’ amazing capacity for stealth) rather than chronology or geography.<sup>7</sup> Thus, in order to elucidate the pertinent elephant tales as clearly as possible, I begin with a brief sketch of the scope and outcomes of the 1909–11 AMNH expedition, and also that of Carl and Delia’s first elephant foray to Kenya in 1906 for the Field Museum of Natural History (FMNH) in Chicago, since the latter hunt, and some of elephants killed on the trip, figure prominently, albeit unwittingly, in TBP.

The 1905–06 Field Museum British East Africa Expedition was Carl’s second collecting trip to Africa (the first being an expedition to Somaliland for the Field in 1896). Carl’s post-trip report to the FMNH provides a good overview of the expedition, and the elephant adventures are well described in a subsequent article by Carl and a book chapter by Delia.<sup>8</sup> One of Carl’s main goals on this trip was African

7 The two major biographies of Carl are Body-Sanders, *African Obsession*, and Kirk, *Kingdom Under Glass*. Both books confuse many events and timelines of the Akeley’s elephant hunts, some fairly significantly.

8 Field Museum, *Annual Report 1907*, 130–33; Carl Akeley, “Elephant Hunting on Mount Kenya”, 323–38; Delia Akeley, “My First Elephant”, 8–30.

buffalo for a habitat group, but he hoped to get permission to hunt elephant as well, and in July he hired professional hunter R.J. Cunningham with that in mind, a point whose importance will become clear shortly. Pending permission to hunt on Mt. Kenya, the crew bided their time for three weeks in the Aberdare Mountains, during which period Akeley bagged his first elephant, a single-tusked specimen. In August 1906, after colonial authorities gave the green light to hunt elephants on Mt. Kenya, Carl killed two elephants that were not suitable for mounting (one of which had charged him).<sup>9</sup> These two bulls exhausted his permits, so he summoned Delia, who also had a license to take two bulls. A two-day stalk ended with Delia bagging her first specimen, a hunt celebrated by Carl in a 1915 *American Museum Journal* article. After six days of skinning, salting, and packing, the safari set off on the trail of another herd, and encountered a bull with tusks that, in Carl's words, "were the big pair that we had often seen in our 'pipe dreams.'"<sup>10</sup> Delia brought this one down as well, and as Carl wrote, its tusks set "[t]he record elephant for a woman, and with her first, the record pair for a sportsman's license in British East Africa."<sup>11</sup> Only the skull and tusks of Delia's second bull were saved. Although Carl had envisioned a small herd of elephants for the Field Museum, he made do with what he had, mounting his Aberdares bull and Delia's first bull in a battle pose (hiding the missing tusk on his) and creating what would become an iconic group. "The Fighting African Elephants", aka "The Fighting Bulls", have stood in the museum's main hall (at both of its locations) since 1909<sup>12</sup> (Fig. 2).

Carl resigned from the Field after completing the group and became a contract collector and taxidermist, primarily for the AMNH. The Akeleys returned to eastern Africa in 1909 for that museum, with the primary goal of collecting specimens for an elephant group, a trip

9 Carl Akeley, "Elephant Hunting on Mount Kenya", 324. Delia confirms this account save for one detail, stating that Carl was "charged twice by elephants that he did not want but he had to kill them," in "My First Elephant", 25. Since Carl did not want them, and did not keep the skins, we can only conclude that they were not suitable for display.

10 Carl Akeley, "Elephant Hunting on Mount Kenya", 332.

11 Carl Akeley, "Elephant Hunting on Mount Kenya", 336.

12 The Field was originally housed in the vacated Palace of Fine Arts from the World's Columbian Exposition; it moved to its present location in 1920–21, opening its doors in May 1921.





**Figure 2:**

“The Fighting Bulls” in the rotunda of the original Field Museum building, 1909. The elephant on the left is Delia’s first; the one on the right was collected by Carl.

Courtesy, Field Museum, CSZ29277\_A.  
Photographer Charles H. Carpenter.

that would take them from Kenya to Uganda and back, and last for two years. Briefly, in November of 1909 the AMNH group met up in Uganda with Theodore Roosevelt, who, with his son Kermit, was collecting specimens for the Smithsonian. The Akeley and Roosevelt had first met at a White House dinner in 1906, where Carl's tales of Africa convinced the then-President to pursue a safari there.<sup>13</sup> Seeking to mount an elephant family group at the AMNH, Carl wanted a cow (two, according to some sources) and a "toto" (baby) as well as some bulls. A herd was encountered, Roosevelt took one cow on his own, after which the herd charged, and a second cow was killed with shots from the entire party. A third cow, which charged the group after the initial round of shooting, was reportedly taken by Roosevelt. Shortly thereafter, Kermit killed a male toto for the group. The first two cows and the toto were saved for the AMNH, as was the toto, while the third was cut up for souvenirs.<sup>14</sup>

Carl and Delia's subsequent elephant trek took them from Kenya to Uganda and back over five months, finally ending in June 1911. Elephants collected for the AMNH group on this second portion of the expedition were a young bull killed by Delia in March of 1911, and, finally, a large bull, killed by Carl in April, both in Uganda. Several other elephants were killed and not saved, as we will see, and Carl collected a bull for the Milwaukee Public Museum as well. Back at the AMNH, Carl spent nine years mounting the herd (Fig. 3), with his male as the lead bull, accompanied by Roosevelt's first cow and Kermit's toto, and Delia's bull watching the herd's back. The group, dubbed "The Alarm", was expanded to eight elephants in the 1930s with specimens collected by others. The 1909–11 AMNH expedition, and the resulting elephant group, is the focus of Haraway's dissection of the matter of authorship, to which we now turn.

13 Haraway erroneously reports that Carl and Roosevelt first met in Africa in 1906 (TRP 167); Roosevelt did not visit Africa until his 1909 safari, post-presidency. Carl recalls the dinner in *In Brightest Africa* (158–60), and Roosevelt mentions it in his 1909 book on the trip, although he misremembers the year. See Roosevelt, *African Game Trails*, 399.

14 The various accounts of the Roosevelt hunt by the participants are quite congruent. See Carl Akeley, *In Brightest Africa*, 161–62; Carl Akeley, "Elephant Hunting in Equatorial Africa", 43–62; Carl Akeley, *First Uganda Journal* (November 1909 to September 11, 1910), private collection; Roosevelt, *African Game Trails*, 401–2; McCutcheon, *In Africa*, 143–152.



**Figure 3:**

The AMNH herd in 1923, not long after its completion.

From left to right: Carl's Uganda bull, Kermit Roosevelt's "toto", Teddy Roosevelt's cow, and Delia's "Rear Guard".

Image # 310463, American Museum of Natural History Library.

## Mauling and Morale

“Authors and Versions” begins with a discussion of Carl’s account of the 1910 mauling, which is drawn from his memoirs, *In Brightest Africa*. Haraway asserts that Carl’s secretary, Dorothy Greene, was his ghostwriter, citing Mary’s 1940 biography of Carl (*The Wilderness Lives Again*) in support of this point, although Mary makes no such claim in the book. “Who wrote *In Brightest Africa*?” Haraway asks. “To insist on that question troubles official versions of the relations of mind and body in western authorship” (TBP 177).<sup>15</sup> In fact, the question, and the answer, are fairly straightforward: Mary, our primary source, and an “authorized” author, reports that Carl wrote the book with Dorothy Greene’s assistance. Second, Haraway settles the question by tacitly acknowledging Carl’s authorship throughout this section of the essay.<sup>16</sup> Carl may have been too restless to sit down at a typewriter, but his facility with a pen — a knack for vivid description, dramatic suspense, and dry humour — is evident in a wealth of letters and field journals in his own hand, and reports that pre-date Greene.<sup>17</sup> It is certainly possible that Carl had a ghostwriter for his published works, but there is no concrete evidence that he did. And, we should add, if he did, that author must bear the responsibility for the racism pointed out by Haraway and other authors in the writings attributed

15 Earlier, on page 158, Haraway offers a quotation from Akeley’s memoirs, attributing it to “his ghostwriter, the invisible Dorothy Greene.” The evidence for the claim is Mary’s disclosure in her biography of Carl that he was loathe to sit down and write, prompting his publisher to station a stenographer behind a curtain and record his tales for publication. Carl later hired Greene as a secretary, and as Mary reports, Greene transcribed Carl’s notes, took notes during conversations with visitors to his studio, and took dictation while he sculpted — evidence of a secretary/editor, not a ghostwriter. See Mary Jobe Akeley, *The Wilderness Lives Again*.

16 “Carl Akeley’s story of his encounter...” (TBP 177); “Akeley tells...” (178); “Carl and Mary Jobe Akeley’s books...” (179); “Akeley describes...” (185).

17 Carl was an adept writer when the need or opportunity presented itself, whether in reports or field journals and letters (written by hand in jungle camps). Numerous examples of Carl’s unpublished prose are available in the AMNH archives, e.g.: Typescript report of Field Museum British East Africa Expedition, 1907. Mss .A344, Box 1, Folder 14. Mary Jobe Akeley papers. American Museum of Natural History Research Library Special Collections. Carl’s 1910–11 journals contain many evocative passages about his experiences. The most readily available is “Second Uganda Journey”, CEA diary typed, Mss .A344, Box 1, Folder 9, Mary Jobe Akeley papers. To be clear, Carl wrote the journals in his own hand from camp in Africa; Dorothy Greene was not along on the trip.

to him (as well as the often convoluted and ambiguous chronology of his narratives previously noted).<sup>18</sup>

The mauling itself will be a familiar story to some readers. In June 1910, a huge bull elephant caught Carl by surprise on Mt. Kenya, rammed him with its forehead, and crushed him to the ground. Only the impact of a tusk with a tree root, Carl surmised, saved him from being killed. As recounted by Carl and Delia, and retold by Haraway, his crew of Kikuyu porters thought he was dead, and sent runners to camp for Delia, who arrived more than a day later, and cared for him until a doctor could reach them (TBP 177–8).<sup>19</sup> His recuperation took three months. Haraway takes Carl’s first-person account as authoritative, and the narrative thread throughout the “Authors and Versions” section stipulates his authority as an author, based on his established public image as a champion of wildlife, a scientist, and a brave yet modest hunter-explorer.

Next comes Mary’s treatment of the mauling incident, as presented in *The Wilderness Lives Again*. As Haraway points out, Mary makes a major emendation to the mauling episode in her version — by completely erasing Delia from it, and substituting Kikuyu guide/gun-bearer Wimbica Gikungu, aka “Bill”, as Carl’s rescuer/nurse. This is significant in the context of whose stories get told, and we’ll return to it. In addition to this scene, Haraway also briefly recounts Mary’s sketch of Carl’s first post-mauling elephant hunt, in which he wounded but did not kill a bull elephant (eventually found more than a year later), much to his shame (Carl also recounts the incident in *In Brightest Africa, World’s Work*, and his journal) (TBP 179).<sup>20</sup>

18 Some narrative threads in Carl’s memoirs are notoriously hard to follow, especially in regard to his various hunts, which often blend together unless read closely and repeatedly, ideally against the backdrop of expedition journals and reports. Haraway makes note of the “casual and institutional racism” in *In Brightest Africa* (TBP 179), and Bodry-Sanders’s also calls out the racism in his writing in *African Obsession* (219–25).

19 Carl’s account appears in *In Brightest Africa* (47–51), and in Delia’s “Jungle Rescue” (10, 36, 38–39). A revised version of that article appears as a chapter in Delia, *Jungle Portraits*.

20 Haraway surmises that the account was taken from a field journal, but it is in fact lifted, in a very close paraphrase, from *In Brightest Africa* (in the chapter on “Bill”, however, not the one on elephants, as one might expect). Compare Mary’s account in *The Wilderness Lives Again* (124–26), to Carl’s full account in *In Brightest Africa* (137–41). Carl relates the story in Carl Akeley, “Elephant” (73–91), and in *First Uganda Journal*.

Haraway highlights the fact that much of *The Wilderness Lives Again* is borrowed verbatim from *In Brightest Africa* (asserting that the quoted passages have “no typographical differentiation from the rest of the text”, although they are in fact set off by larger paragraph breaks and a slight [~ 0.5 mm] difference in line height, easy to miss). For Haraway, Mary is “the inspired scribe for her husband’s story” whose “self-construction as the other is breathtaking in its ecstasy” (TBP 179), presumably because of this wholesale lifting of passages from Carl’s memoirs; whether this diminishes or reinforces her authorship is a conundrum (TBP 179).

Since the subject at hand is authorship, it should be emphasized that while Mary does not acknowledge a ghostwriter or co-author anywhere in *The Wilderness Lives Again*, in her Preface she does thank none other than Dorothy Greene, whom Mary hired as her secretary after Carl’s death.<sup>21</sup> Haraway does not posit Greene as a ghostwriter for Mary, although it’s a virtual certainty that she provided the same services for Mary that she did for Carl (transcribing notes and dictation, per Mary). While we can’t be certain of Greene’s contributions to *The Wilderness Lives Again*, archival sources reveal that Mary considered hiring a ghostwriter when planning the book, and interviewed at least one experienced candidate, so there may have been an uncredited scribe.<sup>22</sup> In any case, Haraway ratifies Mary as the author of *The Wilderness Lives Again*, a biography in which the author “pictures herself as Carl’s companion and soul mate”, but not “his co-adventurer and buddy hunter”. No evidence is offered for how Mary pictured herself, but the “buddy hunter” trope is obviously a rather snide interpretation of Delia’s imagined self-definition (also asserted rather than evidenced). In terms of authorial status, Haraway places Mary in the camp of “authorized writing”, although the rationale is not made clear — the book was not published by the AMNH, although Mary does list three AMNH-related honorifics under her name on its title page. What is certain is that, for Haraway, after

21 Mary Jobe Akeley, *Wilderness Lives Again*, x.

22 Mary told Field Museum Director D.C. Davies that she had discussed the assignment with writer French Strother, who had ghostwritten Henry Morgenthau’s autobiography. Mary Jobe Akeley to D.C. Davies, May 1, 1928, Director’s Papers, 1928, Field Museum Archives.

Mary killed a lion on the couple's 1926 expedition, "her status was enhanced by this most desirable transforming experience" (TBP 180).

Then comes Delia. Haraway devotes the bulk of her attention in "Authors and Versions" to Delia and her 1930 book *Jungle Portraits*, notably her accounts of the post-mauling rescue, and another recuperation hunt (subsequent to the wounding incident that Mary relates in *The Wilderness Lives Again*), which Carl undertook, in Delia's words, "to settle the question of his *morale*."<sup>23</sup> Haraway kicks off this section with the curious claim that "Delia does not bear the authorial moral status of the artist-scientist, Carl Akeley, or his socially sure second wife" (TBP, 180). Although "authorial moral status" is not defined, presumably it means bona fides or credentials. In that context, by 1930 Delia had co-managed two Africa expeditions with Carl, led two more for the Brooklyn Museum (1924–25 and 1929), written two books, a book chapter, and numerous magazine articles (e.g. for *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's*, *The Mentor*, *The Century*), in addition to giving many lectures.<sup>24</sup> She was also a member of the Society of Woman Geographers (SWG), an organization composed of women "who have added to the world's store of knowledge concerning the countries on which they have specialized, and have published in magazines or in book form a record of their work."<sup>25</sup> Her contemporaries included aviator Amelia Earhart, anthropologist Margaret Mead, explorer-writer Grace Gallatin Seton, educator Lucy Sprague Mitchell, and mountaineer Annie Peck.<sup>26</sup> This curriculum vitae is surely sufficient by any measure to endow Delia with "authorial moral status". And we must conclude that if the "transforming experience" of killing one lion endowed Mary with authorial status, the killing of multiple

23 Delia Akeley, *Jungle Portraits*, 87.

24 Delia's books and magazine articles are listed in the bibliography.

25 This passage from a SWG newsletter is quoted in Ware, *Still Missing*, 121.

26 On Delia's SWG activities see, for example, "Mrs. Putnam Home; Gets City's Homage", *New York Times*, June 21, 1932, 1–3 ("Mrs. Putnam" is Amelia Earhart Putnam); "Mrs. Seton is Hostess—Entertains 26 Members of Women Geographers at Greenwich", *New York Times*, May 26, 1933, 23; "Women Geographers to Tell Adventures", *New York Times*, January 12, 1936, 94. A complete list of SWG members from 1925 to present can be found on the Society's web site at <http://www.iswg.org/resources/member-files#M>.

specimens of many species — many ungulates, four elephants (including the ones at the heart of Haraway’s discussion), and two lions to Mary’s one — affords Delia parallel, if not superior, status.

The allusion to Delia’s social “sureness” seems to be rooted in her hardscrabble beginnings on a Wisconsin farm, which Haraway sketches in a footnote (TBP 193n26). By the time Delia wrote *Jungle Portraits*, however, in addition to her celebrity as an explorer-author, she had, for example, dined with Theodore Roosevelt at the White House in 1906, lunched with him again in Uganda in 1909, and been an invited guest at a reception he hosted for explorers, hunters, and naturalists in 1928. She had, further, entertained a variety of VIPs, from explorers, to inventors, to movie stars, to bankers, at the Manhattan apartment that she and Carl shared, and hosted many Society of Woman Geographers events in New York.<sup>27</sup> Delia’s authorial moral status and social sureness, firmly grounded in her scientific credentials and social standing, was ironclad.

More to the point, what defines authorized or official writing? The boundaries between official and unofficial are not demarcated in TBP, but it is a critical question in terms of authorial validation and suppression. At minimum we must presume that the rubric includes publications generated by the American Museum, and accordingly must note that Delia is very much present in AMNH journal articles early in the genesis of the African Hall. A 1914 article on the planned hall features a photo of Delia standing atop an elephant she killed (her first), captioned “Mrs. Carl E. Akeley, who accompanied her husband during three years of African field work”<sup>28</sup> (Fig. 4.). Delia is also highlighted in many expedition tales published by Carl in the journal.<sup>29</sup> And Delia herself penned an article about African monkeys in

27 “Roosevelt Guests of Honor at Party”, *New York Times*, May 8, 1928, 32. Both of the major biographies of Akeley refer to the sort of guests that Carl and Delia were entertaining. See Bodry-Sanders, *African Obsession*, 152, and Kirk, *Kingdom Under Glass*, 254. Several SWG events hosted by Delia are cited in note 33.

28 Dickerson, “New African Hall Planned”, 175–88.

29 Carl Akeley’s “Elephant Hunting on Mount Kenya” is wholly devoted to Delia’s 1906 elephant hunting experiences. Carl notes that Delia collected “the best bull” in Carl Akeley, “Hunting the African Buffalo”, 154.





MRS. CARL E. AKELEY, WHO ACCOMPANIED HER HUSBAND DURING THREE YEARS OF AFRICAN FIELD WORK

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**Figure 4:**

A shot of Delia posing with her first elephant. The event occurred on Mt. Kenya, August 27, 1906 on the Field Museum British East Africa Expedition.

From M.C. Dickerson, "The New African Hall Planned by Carl E. Akeley", *American Museum Journal* 14, no. 5 (May 1914). Public domain image.

the AMNH journal's December 1918 issue (the couples' separation earlier in the year notwithstanding).<sup>30</sup> In short, Delia was "authorized" as both a subject, and an author, by the AMNH itself.

On the other hand, although Carl's memoir and Mary's books were not published by the AMNH, Haraway marks them as authorized writing, perhaps because the authors were associated with the AMNH (Carl as a contractor and Mary as an advisor, in later years). In that light, we must also include versions of the AMNH elephant expedition published by three other writers who were official members of the 1909 Uganda segment of Carl and Delia's AMNH expedition and whose accounts must therefore also be considered "authorized": former President Theodore Roosevelt (also a Patron and Honorary Fellow—and his father a founder—of the AMNH), *Chicago Tribune* cartoonist J.T. McCutcheon (an invited participant who killed one elephant for potential inclusion in the AMNH group), and James L. Clark, Carl's top protégé at the AMNH, who spearheaded the African Hall after Carl's death.<sup>31</sup> (The three clearly possessed authorial moral status as well.) As bona-fide members of the AMNH expedition, their published accounts of Delia's participation, and her *solo* hunting accomplishments while Carl was hunting elsewhere—not as his "buddy hunter"—must be added to the corpus of authorized stories behind the AMNH Africa Hall, all of which collectively comprise an official, authorized testament to Delia's role in the fieldwork that informed it.

Status aside, the critical issue for Haraway regarding Delia is that "[her] tales clarify the kind of biography that was to be suppressed in African Hall" (TBP 180). Delia "produced a biographical effect at odds with the official histories," Haraway holds, in part because she related "the messiness behind the 'unified truth' of natural history museums" (TBP 181). As with authorial moral status, exactly what constitutes "the official histories" is not made plain. The argument about Delia's contrariness is based on the fact that her stories in *Jungle Portraits* described the hardships of fieldwork, emphasized her role in Carl's

30 Delia J. Akeley, "Notes on African Monkeys".

31 Roosevelt, *African Game Trails*; McCutcheon, *In Africa*; Clark, *Trails of the Hunted*.

expeditions, and “showed pique” at the attention given to Carl’s exploits. Yet Delia’s accounts of the trials of fieldwork are completely congruent with Carl’s own published recollections of his adventures in *In Brightest Africa* and magazine and journal articles, and also chime with his field journals, which recount the trials of expeditions, including accidents, stampedes, fever, collapse, and depression.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, in her own 1918 AMNH article, Delia offers the (uncensored) observation that after the mauling, Carl “used to get worried and become despondent because he was convalescing slowly and his work was making no progress.”<sup>33</sup> Dangers and challenges were part of the drama of expedition life, not dirty little secrets.

Nevertheless, in Haraway’s view, Delia’s audacity marks her as the wife who “foregrounded her glory at the expense of her husband’s official nobility,” in contrast to Mary, “the wife who devoted herself to her husband’s authorship of wilderness” (TBP 181). A reading of *The Wilderness Lives Again* largely bears out this description of Mary, but the charge against Delia is fraught with interpretive license. To be sure, Delia’s chapters in *Jungle Portraits* are self-serving; she was obviously keen to highlight her contribution to the elephant expedition, and to Akeley’s vision of the AMNH Africa Hall. Her desire for due credit is surely understandable, having slogged through bamboo forests in 100°F heat, managed the camp, collected specimens, faced charging elephants, nursed Carl back from the edge of death (more than once, by his own account), and cared for him during his three-month recuperation after the mauling. But these accounts do not diminish Carl’s “official nobility” in any sense; if anything, they complement it. Delia does indeed present herself in quasi-heroic terms when relating the weeks following the mauling, and depicts Carl as a feeble shadow of his pre-mauling self—but

32 In “Elephant Hunting in Equatorial Africa” Carl mentions discouragement, “physical disabilities” (54), and, after escaping an elephant stampede, homesickness (53). In “Elephant Hunting on Mt. Kenya” (38), he writes of being “greatly discouraged” (324) and remarks on “the weariness and disappointments of a hard day of fruitless hunting” (328). Field journals offer much more detail, e.g., “after three hours hard going I collapsed”; “my feet were in awful shape. Felt that I could not go again for several days”; “It had been a discouraging day.” From “Second Uganda Journey”, Mary Jobe Akeley papers.

33 Delia Akeley, “Notes on African Monkeys”, 683.

Carl acknowledges his condition himself in *In Brightest Africa*, and a reading of his post-mauling field journal (which was freely available in the AMNH Archives when TBP was written) reveals that Delia was not exaggerating about his health, which was marked, in his own telling, by frequent collapses, fevers, and aborted treks, even after his “recuperation”.<sup>34</sup> If Delia’s account of the partnership during this period is somewhat self-aggrandizing, it is also accurate—and her telling has the weight of authorial moral status, not only because of her bona fides as an expedition leader and collector, but first-person veracity as well.

Delia did not “foreground her glory” at Carl’s expense, but simply *reiterated* her role in the events—a role that Carl had documented years earlier. His published accounts of their treks together recorded, and indeed celebrated, Delia’s bravery, wit, wisdom, and markswomanship—notably, but not limited to, *In Brightest Africa* (published well after they separated) and the multiple *American Museum Journal* articles noted earlier (the latter certainly institutionally authorized sources). As Nigel Rothfels points out in his insightful essay “Trophies and Taxidermy”, Carl “repeatedly admired” Delia’s calm resolve as a hunter in his writings.<sup>35</sup> To dismiss Delia as a “co-adventurer and buddy-hunter” diminishes her fundamental contributions to the expeditions that she was part of. In short, there is no basis for the claim that Delia’s accounts constituted “the kind of biography that was to be suppressed in African Hall”—Carl himself, presumably the most authoritative author of all, told the same kinds of stories, and indeed some of the same stories, both about “the messiness” behind natural history museums, and about Delia’s skills, contributions, and labour.

As for Delia’s own “unauthorized” narrative—which was really no more unauthorized than any of Carl or Mary’s books, as noted above—if there is any hint of “pique”, it would not have been sparked by Carl’s achievements, which she continued to celebrate publicly and privately long after his death, but by Mary’s efforts to silence her

34 See *In Brightest Africa* and “Second Uganda Journey”.

35 Rothfels, “Trophies and Taxidermy”, 126.

and obscure her contributions after Carl died. Mary's Delia-free version of Carl's life was the most obvious example of this, but her campaign to silence Delia began long before her 1940 book. In 1928 Mary approached MacMillan Publishing in an attempt to stop the publication of Delia's book "*J.T. Jr. The Biography of an African Monkey*. Against the advice of friends and legal counsel, Delia wrote in a letter to AMNH President F. Trubee Davison that she "ignored this and similar instances of her [Mary's] insidious propaganda because I did not want to break the fine thing that I helped to make," presumably meaning the AMNH African Hall.<sup>36</sup> The same year, likely unbeknownst to Delia, Mary and Carl's brother Lewis made similar efforts to block Delia's access to records and photographs at the Field Museum for a book they believed she was planning.<sup>37</sup> Delia also complained to Davison about certain "misinformation emanating from the Museum" regarding the 1909 AMNH Africa expedition in the museum's journal, and "[a]nother more serious matter," that being Mary's 1930 youth-oriented book, *Adventures in the African Jungle* (compiled by Mary after Carl's death, under Carl and Mary's byline). The book included, in Delia's words, "a distorted rehash of chapters taken from his [Carl's] own book", and several chapters that were "full of inaccuracies and libelous statements" constituting "a direct challenge to my veracity."<sup>38</sup> Davison replied, explaining the errors in the AMNH's journal and promising they would be rectified—and they were—but he punted on the issue of Mary's book and her interference, saying he felt these matters were "wholly personal affairs between you and her."<sup>39</sup> Lewis Akeley revisited the purported Delia biography of Carl in 1936 with letters to the Directors of the AMNH and FMNH, urging them not to assist her (for the record, she never wrote such a book).<sup>40</sup>

36 Delia Akeley to F. Trubee Davison, June 4, 1936. Central Administrative Archives, American Museum of Natural History Library, File 1178.4.

37 Lewis Akeley to D.C. Davies, May 3, 1928; Mary Jobe Akeley to D.C. Davies, May 1, 1928. Director's Papers, Field Museum Archives, 1928.

38 Delia Akeley to Davison, June 4, 1936.

39 F. Trubee Davison to Delia Akeley, June 29, 1936. Central Administrative Archives, American Museum of Natural History Library, File 1178.4.

40 Lewis Akeley to Roy Chapman Andrews, December 12, 1936; Lewis Akeley to S.C. Simms, December 12, 1936. Mss. A344, Box 3, Folder 11. Mary Jobe Akeley papers.

Such were the *attempted* suppressions of Delia’s stories, which she was able to deflect, perhaps in part thanks to the toughness she developed during her early farm life, and certainly via the authorial moral status she developed during her expedition experiences, both for the AMNH and, later, for the Brooklyn Museum. While Mary’s complete obliteration of Delia from her biography of Carl was a decade off when *Jungle Portraits* was published, Delia was clearly aware of Mary’s earlier efforts. Her magazine articles in the 1920s, her chapter in *All True!*, and her books, especially *Jungle Portraits*, can be seen as attempts to write herself back into the story of the emerging AMNH African Hall — not inserting herself into someone else’s story out of egotism or petulance, but *restoring* her role in the story, which had been publicly documented by Carl in his writings, and adding her perspective. This is crystal clear in her explanation for giving her first-person account of Carl’s mauling and rescue:

The thrilling story of the accident and his miraculous escape from a frightful death has been told many times by himself from the lecture platform. But a personal account of my equally thrilling night journey to his rescue through one of the densest, elephant-infested forests on the African continent is not nearly so well known.<sup>41</sup>

In Haraway’s telling, the most serious attempt to efface Delia’s authorial status came from Delia herself, by obscuring her role in the shooting of his morale-restoring bull elephant, in an ostensible episode of authorial self-sacrifice to support “official” accounts. As the following section documents, however, this claim is the result of confusion and confirmation bias.

### **The (Imaginary) Elephant in the Room**

The climax of “Authors and Versions” concerns a dramatic elephant hunt in which, in Haraway’s telling, Delia misrepresents her own role in order to glorify Carl — a conclusion drawn from an unfortunate misinterpretation of archival evidence. The occasion in question was Carl’s first *successful* post-recuperation elephant hunt (versus the

41 Delia Akeley, *Jungle Portraits*, 233.

earlier incident of the wounded one that got away, as recounted by Mary). Haraway's source is Delia's *Jungle Portraits* chapter entitled "Elephants in the Fog". "Carl was still searching to restore his endangered 'morale,'" Haraway relates, which ultimately led to "a dangerous hunt terminating in a thrilling kill marked by a dangerous charge," although Delia "demurred on who fired the fatal shot" (TBP 181). This is partly accurate — Delia reports that she and Carl fired "in unison" at the charging bull.<sup>42</sup> However, as Haraway herself points out, Delia credits Carl with the kill in the caption of a photo that depicts Carl recumbent, smoking his pipe, atop the dead elephant: "Carl Akeley and the first elephant he shot after settling the question of his morale."<sup>43</sup> This is where the confusion begins. Haraway declares that

A reader will not find that particular photograph of Akeley in any other publication than Delia's. Further, my hunt in the [American] Museum's archive for the image of Akeley lounging astride his kill caught Delia in a lie (hoax?) about that elephant. But the lie reveals another truth. The accompanying photos in the archive suggest a version of reality, a biography of Africa, which the Museum and its official representatives did not want displayed in their Halls or educational publications. (TBP 181)

The 1985 *Social Text* version of "Teddy Bear Patriarchy" is even blunter about Delia's veracity: "Delia was lying about that elephant, as the photos which accompany hers in the archive demonstrate."<sup>44</sup> Haraway goes on to construct the alleged lie/hoax narrative from the archival photos. (For the sake of clarity, I have added figure numbers from the present article in square brackets to the relevant passage from TBP.)

[T]he particular elephant with the lounging Carl [Fig. 5] could not have been killed on the occasion Delia described. The cast of characters evidences a different year; a picture clearly taken on the same occasion shows the white hunter, the Scotsman Richard John Cunninghame [sic], hired by Akeley in 1909 to

42 Delia Akeley, *Jungle Portraits*, 94.

43 Delia Akeley, "Elephants in the Fog", plate facing page 90. Qtd in TBP 181.

44 Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy," *Social Text*, 48.

teach him how to hunt elephants, lounging with Delia on the same carcass [Fig. 6]. The Museum archive labels the photo “Mrs. Akeley’s first elephant.” It is hard not to order the separate photos in the folder into a narrative series. The next snapshot shows the separated and still slightly bloody tusks of the elephant held in a gothic arch over a pleased, informal Delia [Fig. 7]. She is standing confidently under the arch, each arm reaching out to grasp a curve of the elephantine structure. [Haraway further notes that the arms of two African assistants can be seen supporting tusks.] The last photograph shows a smiling Cunninghame anointing Mrs. Akeley’s forehead with the pulp from the tusk of the deceased elephant [Fig. 8]. She stands with her head bowed under the ivory arch, now supported by a single, solemn African man. The Museum’s spare comment reads, “The Christening.” (TBP 183)

According to Haraway’s interpretation, the photos of Delia and her trophies illustrate “a version of reality” that the AMNH suppressed — abetted by Delia — documenting a scenario in which *Delia* killed the elephant on which Carl reclines, thus rendering her caption for the photo a lie. And, at the end of the section, Haraway suggests that Delia obscured the story of her “sacrament” of first blood in order to support the “authorized” story of Carl’s “fusion of art and science” (TBP 183) — meaning, presumably, Carl’s AMNH elephant group.

There are several problems here, all emanating from Haraway’s admitted confirmation bias (“it is hard not to order the separate photos in the folder into a narrative series”, TBP 182). First, while Haraway asserts that the lounging Carl photo had been published only in Delia’s book (suggesting a conspiracy of suppression), it had, in fact, been published at least once previously, in a 1927 reminiscence by Carl’s former taxidermy assistant at the Field, Clarence Dewey, with a caption reading “Akeley reclining on a big bull elephant he has captured.”<sup>45</sup> More important, the rest of the photos of Delia do not attest to a reality the AMNH wanted to obscure, because all of them had

45 Dewey, “My Friend ‘Ake’”, 388.





**Figure 5:**

Carl reclining on the bull elephant he killed on September 6, 1910, on the AMNH expedition. The specimen was not saved.

Image # 240928, American Museum of Natural History Library.



**Figure 6:**

R.J. Cuninghame (L) and Delia posing with her first elephant, collected on the FMNH expedition, August 27, 1906.

From Carl E. Akeley, "Elephant Hunting on Mount Kenya", *American Museum Journal* 15, no. 7 (November 1915). Public domain image.



**Figure 7:**

Delia posing under an arch formed by the tusks of her second Field Museum elephant, taken on September 7, 1906. The size of the tusks set a record for a female hunter in Kenya.

From Carl E. Akeley, "Elephant Hunting on Mount Kenya", *American Museum Journal* 15, no. 7 (November 1915). Public domain image.



**Figure 8:**

R.J. Cuninghame “bloods” Delia’s forehead with the pulp from a tusk of her first Field Museum elephant.

From Carl E. Akeley, “Elephant Hunting on Mount Kenya”, *American Museum Journal* 15, no. 7 (November 1915). Public domain image.



**Figure 9:**

R.J. Cuninghame and Delia posing with her second 1906 Field Museum elephant.

From Carl E. Akeley, "Elephant Hunting on Mount Kenya", *American Museum Journal* 15, no. 7 (November 1915). Public domain image.

been published in the *American Museum Journal* and/or in *National Geographic* in the 1910s and 20s, well before Delia's book.<sup>46</sup> Thus, this version of reality—and Delia's hunting prowess—was not hidden, but openly celebrated in published sources by Carl and the AMNH. In addition, these sources and photos were available to verify that the three photos of Delia, which Haraway takes to be the elephant on which Carl is smoking his pipe, actually depict the two elephants Delia collected four years earlier, on the 1906 FMNH expedition. Even a cursory inspection of the setting and specimens in the first two photos referenced in the essay (notably the backgrounds and the size of tusks) reveals that these are different elephants, killed on different occasions.<sup>47</sup> Such evidence is perhaps easy to miss, or misinterpret, but again, the events were documented in published sources. The elephant depicted in Figs. 3 and 5 is Delia's first, collected in Kenya in August of 1906 for the Field Museum.<sup>48</sup> Delia's anointing by the guide, Richard Cuninghame (Fig. 8), marks the occasion—"first blood". Cuninghame is present in these photos because, as noted earlier, Carl hired him as a guide on that expedition (as recounted by both Carl and Delia in their accounts of the trip).<sup>49</sup> Carl did not employ Cuninghame on the 1909–11 AMNH trip; the "lovable Scotchman", as Delia called him, guided Theodore Roosevelt on part of his 1909 expedition, but was not with Carl and Delia on their 1910 elephant adventures.<sup>50</sup>

Next, the "ivory arch" framing Delia (Fig. 7) is formed by the tusks of her *second* Field Museum tusker, the record-setter discussed earlier,

46 The "arch" photo (Fig. 7), the bleeding photo (Fig. 8), the photo of Delia and Cuninghame with her first FMNH bull (Fig. 6), and another of Delia and Cuninghame with her *second* FMNH bull (Fig. 9) appear in Carl Akeley, "Elephant Hunting on Mount Kenya", 333. The arch photo (Fig. 7) also appears in Carl Akeley, "Elephant Hunting in Equatorial Africa", 808.

47 In Fig. 5, sunlight is visible between clumps of trees behind Carl and his bull, while in Fig. 6, Cuninghame and Delia are backed by dense jungle. A dead elephant weighing five to seven tonnes would not, and could not, have been moved for a photo opportunity with the resources at hand circa 1910 (a dozen Kikuyu porters); the animals were skinned and disarticulated where they fell. In addition, a moment's examination of the tusks of "Mrs. Akeley's first elephant" reveals that they are much larger than Carl's.

48 The collection date is from the 1905–06 Field Museum British East Africa expedition field note book, Field Museum Mammals Catalog Room.

49 Delia tells of hiring Cuninghame in "My First Elephant", 9; Carl notes that this was Cuninghame's first experience as a guide, in "Elephant Hunting on Mount Kenya", 325.

50 Delia uses this term of endearment in "My First Elephant", 9.

which was collected just over a week after the first, in September 1906 (Cuninghame and Delia posed with that one too, in a published photo [Fig. 9]).<sup>51</sup> Besides the chronology as recorded by Carl and Delia, the fact that the tusks are from two different animals can be easily seen by comparing Delia's height in relation to each set of tusks: the tusks of the second bull (arch) are larger by several feet than those of the first (bleeding) — the two sets together, in fact, set another record for Kenya.<sup>52</sup> Again, all of these photos of Delia and her FMNH elephants had been published in magazine articles in the 1910s. Admittedly, Delia may have caused some confusion by publishing the arch photo — the tusks from her second bull — in 1931, in a book chapter entitled “My First Elephant”.<sup>53</sup> And Carl certainly contributed to the confusion of future researchers by taking many of his Field Museum photographic negatives to New York when he moved there in 1909, and where they ended up in the AMNH archives. However, the story of these elephants need not have been pieced together from disordered archival photos, since they, and others, had been rendered in published accounts by moral-status equipped authors, in many cases in AMNH publications, as the African Hall was in the works.

Besides the fact that these photos of Delia depict elephants killed four years before the one with lounging Carl, a trove of written evidence, published and archival, attests that Carl did indeed kill that specific bull — and that, by his own admission, he saw it as a test of his “nerve”.<sup>54</sup> Delia did not obscure her role in order to give Carl

51 The date is from the 1905–6 Field Museum British East Africa expedition field note book.

52 See Carl Akeley, “Elephant Hunting on Mount Kenya”, 336.

53 Delia Akeley, “My First Elephant”, 8. The first two sentences of the article establish the year, the location, and the museum sponsoring the trip.

54 Evidence that Carl killed the bull on which he is pictured relaxing with his pipe:

- Besides Delia's account in *Jungle Portraits* and Dewey's published acknowledgement, there are four other accounts of the incident, three from Carl and one from Delia. See First Uganda Journal; Delia Akeley to Tom and Winifred Akeley, October 29, 1910, CEA, Expeditions: Africa, AMNH 1909–1911, Mss. A344; Mary Jobe Akeley papers; Carl Akeley to Wilfred Osgood, December 6, 1910, Dept. of Zoology Akeley correspondence, Field Museum Archives; “Carl E. Akeley and His Work”, *Mentor*, 25. The latter three accounts allude to Carl's “morale” or “nerve” being tested, and none, including Delia's letter, mention Delia being present on that hunt.

“official” credit for this elephant — on the contrary, she literally gave him his moment in the sun, smoking his pipe on the back of the specimen. Delia did not erase herself from this story; indeed, she was keen to highlight — and perhaps even overstate — her role in the event. It is possible that she added some dramatic colour to her telling, notably a furious elephant charge that nearly trampled some children, and her own shots at the beast. These are elements that are missing from the other, much more perfunctory, accounts of the incident, which do not mention Delia being present. But in terms of Carl’s recuperative return to elephant hunting, there was no erasure, no lie, no hoax.

As a final stroke to clinch Delia’s purported self-erasure from the story of the African Hall, Haraway connects the fieldwork photographs to the mounted AMNH elephant herd. The “Christening” photo, Haraway declares, “stands a fixed witness in Akeley African Hall to its dismembered double in the photograph” (TBP 183). Thus, Haraway posits the photo as evidence of a trophy for which Delia was denied credit in the exhibit hall. However, that elephant is not part of the AMNH group, since it was killed four years earlier on a Field Museum expedition, and still stands in that museum today (Fig. 10). And Carl’s “Morale Bull” isn’t on display in the AMNH group either — Carl did not save it — thus, it is not part of the discourses that inform the

- The specimen and the setting in the photo do not match any other Akeley FMNH or AMNH elephant expedition photos; all the AMNH elephant photos except for this one match up to known animals that were either saved as specimens or cut up for meat and/or ivory.
- As attested by many such photos in the Field Museum and AMNH archives, Carl and Delia (and Theodore Roosevelt) posed with their own kills, not someone else’s — e.g., the photos of Delia with her Field Museum bulls (Figs. 4, 6 and 9), and Delia with her young AMNH bull (Fig. 12). It was routine to “fire in unison” at elephants, which were not easily killed; the hunters would determine credit for the kill shot.
- Finally, the lounging Carl photo is labelled “Kenia, Africa” in the AMNH archives. Carl killed only two Kenya elephants on this expedition: the “The Morale Bull”, on September 6, 1910, and the one he wounded two weeks earlier, which was found dead a year and a half later, with which he obviously could not have posed.

The conclusion that Carl killed the bull in the photo is inescapable. And to circle back to the issue of authorship: Delia tells us the photo depicts the “Morale Bull”, so she has authorial moral status; she was there (and likely tripped the shutter on the camera).





**Figure 10:**

“The Fighting Bulls” as they appear today at the FMNH, Chicago. Delia’s is the larger bull, on the left.

© The Field Museum, GN92050\_053Ed.  
Photographer John Weinstein.

Hall.<sup>55</sup> Haraway doesn't specify which elephant in the AMNH herd is the one she imagines to be depicted in the photos; the large lead bull would be the most fitting candidate for a wife's self-effacement, but as noted above, that specimen was collected at a later time and place (April 1911, in Uganda).<sup>56</sup> In any case, knotting together the events and the evidence in their proper order reveals, quite simply, that the disputed photo depicts just what Delia said it did, Carl smoking his pipe on the back of "the first elephant he shot after settling the question of his morale."

That said, it is important to emphasize that Delia *does* have a specimen in the AMNH elephant group, which Haraway overlooked: the young male watching the herd's back, aka "the Rear Guard" (Fig. 11). As noted earlier, Delia took this specimen in Kenya, in March 1911, whereby hangs another tale. Carl and Delia had tracked a small herd, finally spotting two potentially suitable young males. Carl identified the one he wanted for the group; he and Delia were both to fire at it (as was common practice), but Delia misunderstood which was the desired specimen. As Carl wrote in his journal, "[t]he wind changed and the elephants were uneasy; we shot and to our mutual surprise, two elephants dropped dead."<sup>57</sup> Upon inspection, they decided that Delia's was the better of the two, and it became the Rear Guard in 1919 (a year after Carl and Delia separated). Carl included this story in his 1912 *National Geographic* elephant hunting article, accompanied by a photo of Delia posing with her specimen (Fig. 12).<sup>58</sup> The January 1936 issue of *Natural History* (the renamed *American Museum Journal*) credited the specimen to J.T. McCutcheon due to a misinterpretation of a note in Carl's

55 In his journal entry for September 6, 1910 Carl writes that he "Sent to camp for porters to carry in skull — ear — 2 feet & pieces of skin." First Uganda Journal (November 1909 to September 11, 1910), private collection.

56 Carl mentions the big bull in the AMNH herd in multiple places, for example, *In Brightest Africa*, 42–44; "Elephant!", 59. Bodry-Sanders mistakenly posits another elephant as Carl's capstone specimen: see *African Obsession*, 137–39. The biographer quotes from a 1911 letter from Carl Akeley to John McCutcheon describing a huge elephant that Carl killed; however, as Carl records in his field journal, he decided to sell the tusks of that animal, and let the local villagers cut it up for meat.

57 March 16, 1911 entry, "Second Uganda Journal".

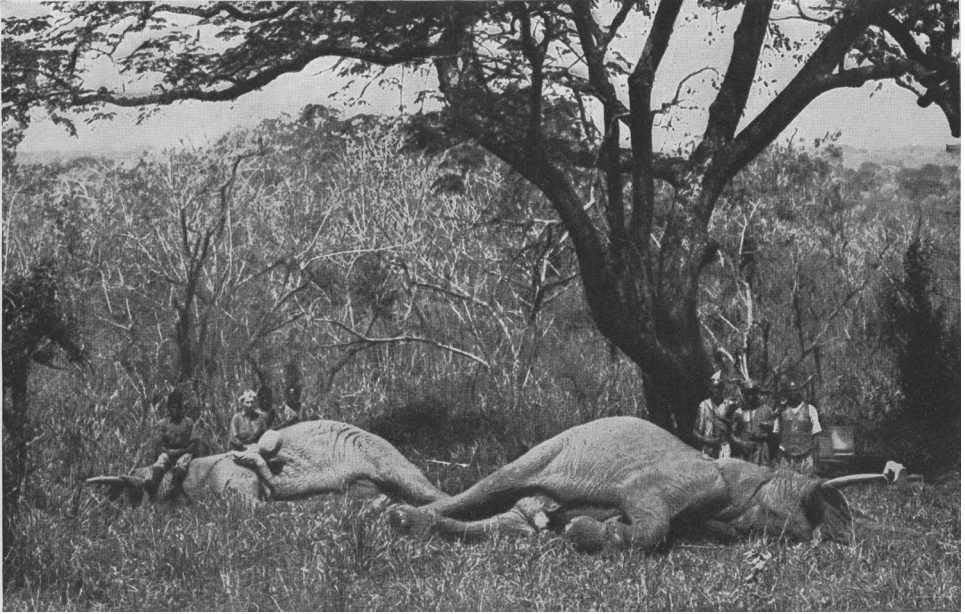
58 Carl Akeley, "Elephant Hunting in Equatorial Africa", 800.



**Figure 11:**

“The Rear Guard” (left) as it appears today at the AMNH, New York.

© David Klinck.



**Figure 12:**

Delia (left) seated on “The Rear Guard” in 1911.

From “Elephant Hunting in Equatorial Africa with Rifle and Camera,” *National Geographic Magazine* 23 (1912). Public domain image.

field report.<sup>59</sup> Delia complained, and the error was corrected in the journal later in year.<sup>60</sup> (Mary, of course, credits Carl with both the big bull and the Rear Guard in an appendix to *The Wilderness Lives Again*.)<sup>61</sup> The herd was expanded from four elephants to eight in the 1930s, but the original group was collected by a Who's Who of authorized authors: Carl, Theodore Roosevelt, Kermit Roosevelt, and Delia.<sup>62</sup> Whatever authorial input Delia can be said to have made to the backstory of the African Hall, the contribution of a ten-foot-tall, five-tonne elephant (before taxidermy) was a very tangible one.

## Authors and Erosion

A tale of authorial suppression, if true, would have served as a fitting segue to TBP's ensuing sections on the diminution of the role of African labour to scientific expeditions, and the ideologies behind the AMNH's pedagogy about nature. However, "Authors and Versions" does not actually analyse the various authors' versions to weigh their "authority", or examine if and how these stories relate to the

59 For the erroneous attribution see "Rear Guard", 4. F. Trubee Davison explained the mistake in a letter to Delia, noting that Carl's field report stated that "a young bull was killed by John T. McCutcheon and added to the collection", which the magazine staff took to mean that it was chosen for the group. As McCutcheon notes in his own book on the trip (*In Africa*), all parties were collecting specimens for possible inclusion in the AMNH African Hall; McCutcheon's elephant is still in the collection. Davison assured Delia that a correction would be printed in *Natural History*, and "other official records." Davison to Delia Akeley, June 29, 1936.

60 The correction was acknowledged in *Natural History* 38 (September 1936), 175.

61 Mary Jobe Akeley, *Wilderness Lives Again*, 378. In another case of alleged erasure, Bodry-Sanders speculates that Carl tried to deny Delia credit for the Rear Guard out of vindictiveness, based on the claim that "there is no evidence in the accession record for this animal at all" (*African Obsession*, 151–152). But, in fact, Delia's young bull *is* listed in the AMNH Mammals Catalog; the biographer apparently confused it with Carl's big bull, which is listed on a different page.

62 To head off another potential conspiracy theory, we should note that Bodry-Sanders speculates that Carl may have substituted someone else's specimen for Teddy Roosevelt's elephant cow in the AMNH herd (*African Obsession*, 151), a surmise inspired by a note made in the Mammal Collection catalog listing the locality as Meru (rather than the Uasin Gishu Plateau, where TR and Akeley hunted). But the same note credits *Roosevelt* for the specimen. Roosevelt collected elephants for the Smithsonian at Meru before joining Carl for the AMNH hunt, offered some to the AMNH, but none were accepted—and all are accounted for in other museums. The locality entry was most likely made by a curator or other staffer who knew that Roosevelt collected at Meru, either from *African Game Trails* or TR's letters offering specimens, and jumped to an erroneous conclusion.

discourses that informed the African Hall, nor does it connect any of the discourses to audience experience (on which more later). There is a sense that the core rationale for discussing authorship was not to bolster the thesis of the power of patriarchy in constructing the discourses that underpin the African Hall, as much as to tell an interesting story. By her own admission, Haraway pursues the discussion of the three mauling-related narratives because “it leavens my story of the structure and function of biography in the construction of twentieth-century primate order” (TBP 176) — lightens up the theoretical discussion with some human drama, in other words. Haraway would not be the first author to get caught up in the drama of the “romantic Akeley triangle” (to quote a 1926 newspaper headline marking Carl’s death), nor the last.<sup>63</sup> It seems clear that in composing “a tale of the commerce of power and knowledge in white and male supremacist monopoly capitalism”,<sup>64</sup> the discovery of Mary’s erasure of Delia, and a disordered set of archival photos, suggested an ancillary tale of authorial suppression. Haraway uses several lines from Joanna Russ’ *How to Suppress Women’s Writing* as an opening epigraph for the musings on authorship:

She didn’t write it.  
 She wrote it but she shouldn’t have.  
 She wrote it, but look what she wrote about.<sup>65</sup>

In effect, these statements not are presented as hypotheses to be tested, but axioms to be reinforced, with no need of question or challenge. The argument operates from foregone conclusions about authorial status, interprets just three texts — only one of which omits Delia — in order to align with those conclusions, while overlooking numerous contrary sources, and then by way of confirmation, three archival photos are confidently connected in an erroneous narrative. As with much theoretical work from the 1980s and 90s, in the

63 Kaufman, “Death Breaks Romantic Akeley Triangle.” Both Bodry-Sanders, in *African Obsession*, and Kirk, in *Kingdom Under Glass*, revel in the saga of desertion, divorce, and animosity.

64 Haraway, “Teddy Bear Patriarchy”, *Social Text*, 21. This phrase is omitted from later versions.

65 Russ, *How to Suppress Women’s Writing*, 76; qtd. in TBP, 176.

(slightly paraphrased) words of film scholar David Bordwell, such an approach “does not ask particular questions and reason out possible answers, rejecting and refining them and weighing the comparative advantages of competing explanatory frameworks.” Rather, it “starts with a doctrinal abstraction and draws on [textual] phenomenon as *illustrative examples*.”<sup>66</sup> In practice, “Authors and Versions” does not examine authorship to see “whose stories appear and disappear”, but rather posits suppression as a given, asserts it rather than substantiating it, and substitutes confirmation bias for documentation and evidence. The larger question — how Carl, Mary, and Delia’s various versions of their elephant adventures shape potential meanings for visitors — is forgotten, amidst the story of divorce and duplicity. But the answer is there, nonetheless: the three Akeley author’s stories serve as a kind of spectral backstory “behind” the African Hall, one that, as discussed in the next section, the majority of visitors could never know or experience. The answer to the previous question, “whose stories appear and disappear”, is that Carl, Delia, and Mary’s stories all appear, and none disappear, in “official” discourses from the hall’s formative years — and there was no cover-up by the “official scientific community” of Delia’s role in the expeditions of which she was a part.

The historical timeframe of the hall’s development is a critical aspect of the vitality and visibility of these discourses. For one thing, work on the project ceased in the mid-1910s. As Carl recalled later, when Germany invaded Belgium in August of 1914, “the trustees decided to postpone the undertaking for a few months until the trouble in Europe was over. The months stretched into years, and African Hall remained a structure on paper.”<sup>67</sup> This moratorium effectively put an end to virtually all official discourses about the project until the mid-1920s, although Carl kept an ember alive by continuing to write about his African experiences. It is true that after Carl and Delia separated in 1918, Delia had no further role in developing or promoting the hall, which might be tempting to take as an institutional or personal “erasure” — except for the fact that there was no hall to

66 Bordwell, “Historical Poetics of Cinema”, 387.

67 Carl Akeley, “African Hall”, 11.

promote until the mid-1920s, by which time Delia was launching her independent career as an explorer and author. We should note that when the herd was unveiled in 1922, an announcement in *Natural History* credited Carl with both the big bull and the Rear Guard.<sup>68</sup> This certainly could have been a case of conscious suppression, rooted in bad blood between the couple (their divorce would be finalized the following year), but it could also have been a result of the vagaries of recordkeeping, and/or editorial looseness in fact-checking—the locality and timing for Carl’s big bull in the announcement are incorrect as well.<sup>69</sup> In addition, Carl was proprietary (and could get a bit salty) about getting official credit as *Collector* of specimens secured on his permits and prepared by him—even those killed by the Roosevelts.<sup>70</sup> He was the collector of record for all of the specimens from the expedition, regardless of who killed them, and his name is listed in the “Collector” column of the AMNH mammal catalogue for all of the 1909–1911 specimens. Certain entries were annotated later to acknowledge some of the Roosevelts’ and Delia’s contributions, but not all, while John McCutcheon’s name is not associated with any of his specimens.

In any event, the postponement of the African Hall project and the passage of time eroded the contributions of all three of the Akeleyes. By the time the hall officially opened in 1936 (with only half of the dioramas finished), Carl was ten years dead, and the design and scope had progressed beyond his original plan. The January 1936 issue of *Natural History* (the renamed AMNH journal) is entirely devoted to

68 *Natural History* 22, 1 (January–February 1922), 89. The entry reads: “The female was secured especially for this group by Colonel Roosevelt during his African expedition of 1909 and was shot while charging. The little one was shot by Mr. Kermit Roosevelt south of Mt. Elgon. The two male elephants were taken by Mr. Akeley near Mt. Kenia earlier in the same year.”

69 Carl collected his bull in Uganda’s Budongo Forest, 400-plus miles west of Mt. Kenya, more than a year and a half after Roosevelt hunt.

70 When AMNH Assistant Curator of Mammals Herbert Lang corresponded with Carl in 1924 asking for information about the Roosevelt specimens, Akeley responded thus: “Your records on the old female and calf are not quite right. They were shot on the Uashin [sic] Gishu Plateau near Mt. Elgon. While they were shot by Colonel Roosevelt and Kermit, they were not contributed by them as they were shot on my license, in my presence, and at my request.” Carl Akeley to Herbert Lang, August 26, 1924. Private collection.



the (renamed) Akeley Memorial Hall of African Mammals. Delia is not mentioned in any of the issue's thirteen articles — nor, perhaps curiously, is Theodore Roosevelt — while Mary is mentioned only in a few passing acknowledgements, and there is comparatively little, indeed surprisingly little, of Carl. The first article, by AMNH trustee Daniel Pomeroy, celebrates Carl and his work, but the bulk of the publication covers expeditions and exhibits carried out by others after his death, and plans for the future expansion of the hall. The introduction to the issue observes that the hall reveals Africa “as Carl Akeley dreamed”, but also underscores the idea that the hall “was accomplished by the skill, artistry, and infinite labor of a large staff of workers in the Department of Arts, Preparation, and Installation.”<sup>71</sup> Pomeroy's article notes that after his death, Carl's protégés carried on “under the guidance of Dr. James Clark, whose long association with Akeley makes him such an expert director of the project.”<sup>72</sup> Similarly, in the 1936 AMNH *Annual Report*, Carl is credited for the original vision, but Clark gets the accolades for “the planning of the remarkable groups” and, with his crew of assistants, for “the artistic and mechanical work.”<sup>73</sup> By 1936, Carl's spirit could be said to hang over the hall that bore his name, but it is Clark who takes centre stage in the AMNH publications as the presiding artistic genius behind the planning, design, lighting, and of course, taxidermy, in the new Africa groups.<sup>74</sup> A decade after Carl's death, a whole new set of authors was “writing” the African Hall.

## Authors and Audiences

It is clear that multiple authors were responsible for crafting the narratives manifested in the African Hall. But who were, and are, its readers? Although Haraway repeatedly refers to “the viewer” and presents the discussion of authorship as context for probing the “meanings and mediations” that make “the specific structure of experience possible for the viewer”, as noted earlier, the essay does

71 “Glimpses into the African Hall”, 3.

72 Pomeroy, “Akeley's Dream Comes True,” 10.

73 The American Museum of Natural History, *Sixty-Eighth Annual Report for the Year 1936* (May 1, 1937), 57.

74 Pomeroy and Clark, *The Complete Book of African Hall*.

not ultimately connect the varied discourses to the experience of actual museum visitors (“leaving the lived social experiences of audiences to the side”, to recall Michael Schudson’s words). Museologist Phaedra Livingstone has observed that Haraway’s description of the moment of communion between viewer and diorama “is poetic but lacks the pedestrian ring of an average visitor interview transcript”, thus marking a disconnect between visitor research and theoretical meditations like Haraway’s.<sup>75</sup> This disconnect led Livingstone to survey “casual adult visitors” to an African wildlife diorama at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto to determine whether “the meaning they make of the displays [is] anything like Haraway’s.” The results were mixed, but overall tended not to support such interpretations.<sup>76</sup>

This is not to diminish the power of Haraway’s vivid theoretical narrative, or to suggest that she should have conducted surveys of the AMNH’s visitors. Indeed, visitor studies were all but unknown in the museum world in the mid-1980s, and in the realm of cultural studies, Reception Theory was just emerging.<sup>77</sup> “Privileged” interpretations from critics and theoreticians ruled the day, and offered rich readings. The problem, as Schudson and Livingstone suggest, is simply that TBP alludes to meanings and experiences purportedly activated by visitors, but makes no attempt to illuminate them. The effect is to conflate *meanings* (which are constructed by audiences) and *theoretical interpretations* (which are constructed by scholars). Still, Haraway’s references to audience experience in the broader context of authorship, and Livingstone’s experiment, suggests consideration of possible concrete points of intersection between museum discourses and real audiences.

75 Livingstone, “Imaginary Places”, 197.

76 Livingstone, “Imaginary Places,” 205. Some respondents (seven out of thirty) identified the animals in the lion group as a family (thus “applying an anthropocentric and gendered analogy to make sense of the staging of the animals”), but the author “did not find visitors articulately explaining experiences of a timeless moment with an undead king of the jungle.”

77 The seminal text in museum visitor studies is Falk and Dierking, *The Museum Experience*. A stimulating overview of the rise of Reception Theory is Holub, “American Confrontations with Reception Theory”.

The narrative at the beginning of *TBP* traces the experience of a hypothetical visitor walking through the AMNH, although the perspective articulated can only be read as Haraway's. As Livingstone suggests, ultimately "[t]he experience Haraway describes is liminal and private," and Haraway herself acknowledges that the visitor's experience "will be intensely personal".<sup>78</sup> Accordingly, rare would be the museum-goer who had absorbed the vast human and institutional backstory necessary to activate the meanings Haraway ascribes to the African Hall (except of course, latter-day students and academics who are familiar with *TBP*, a limited but verifiably real population).<sup>79</sup> Haraway herself admits this in one spot, apropos of the story behind Carl's gorilla diorama: "But the viewer does not know these things when he sees the five animals in a naturalistic setting" (*TBP* 157). Much the same could be said for most of the intricate historical-ideological backdrop of discourses that the essay weaves together—for example, the typical viewer of the gorilla diorama would surely not conjure up, as Haraway does, a parallel between Akeley and his gorilla, and Frankenstein and his monster, based on the fact that both pairs had climactic encounters on mountains. Such poetic flashes and intertextual connections, of course, are part of what makes the essay compelling, but the perspective from which an academic critic interprets the dioramas is hardly congruent with that of the typical visitor. As Livingstone observes, "[o]ne cannot generalize the experience and critique of an expert viewer to stand in for the average visitors reading of a display, nor of course will the average visitor response offer the nuance of an expert criticism."<sup>80</sup> Intuition suggests, and visitor research bears out, that some of Haraway's readings, especially early in the essay, are congruent with those of what Livingstone calls the "average" or "casual" visitor—for example, interpreting the groups depicted in dioramas as families. The more intertextually and theoretically charged

78 Livingstone, "Imaginary Places", 205.

79 Over the past few years, I have led several college classes on tours of the museum where I'm employed, all of which had been assigned to read *TBP* before their visit. One student on the most recent tour was a little behind in the reading, and a classmate summarized the essay for him as follows: "It says taxidermy is racist and colonialist." Thus, *TBP* readers are indeed a set of real visitors whose perceptions are informed by the backstory presented in the essay.

80 Livingstone, "Imaginary Places", 206.

readings—*Frankenstein*, “the hygiene of nature”, validated and suppressed authorship—emanate from the “expert” realm.

Considering how we might connect authors and discourses to visitor experience requires that we not only distinguish between “casual” museum visitors and professional critics/theorists, but also identify which generation of AMNH visitors we might be envisioning, and which African Hall. Haraway clearly posits a 1982 visitor, but the historical discourses charted in the essay framed the hall for audiences in the 1910s, 20s, 30s, and beyond. And there were multiple versions of the hall: a 1914 scale model, open to donors and the public, a small temporary installation that opened in 1925 (with the four elephants plus temporary lion and gorilla dioramas), the half-finished hall unveiled in 1936, and the further iterations of the 1940s and 1950s. And besides the questions of which audiences and which African Hall are the targets of analysis, we must ask what the *literal* discourses were that those audiences were exposed to as part of the AMNH experience, in the exhibit hall itself, or through ancillary sources.

The *American Museum Journal* is one forum that would have shaped the experience of a subset of “real” visitors during the hall’s genesis—that is, AMNH members, who received the journal as part of their membership. These vintage publications would inspire and inform few visitors today, but during the formative years of the African Hall they undoubtedly shaped AMNH members’ experience with official backstory, from expedition stories—including Delia’s exploits—to essays on animal behaviour, taxidermy technique, and the design of the hall. Indeed, the museum’s educational aims, imputed but little evidenced in TBP, were a frequent theme of the journal during the seminal years of the African Hall. These texts explicitly articulate how the museum envisioned its role and effect in communicating with audiences, and also provide reactions and insights from educators in terms of the museum’s impact on their efforts, and even on individual students.<sup>81</sup>

81 The entire November 1911 issue was devoted to the museum’s role in public education. In addition to articles from the AMNH staff on such topics as the “Evolution of the Educational Spirit in Museums”, and the “Educational Value of the American Museum”—and one on the appeal and educational value of habitat groups—there were testimonials from schools and teachers. *American Museum Journal* 11, no. 7 (November 1911).

And what of the information conveyed in the halls themselves, via signage and labels? Exhibition labels of the 1920s, written by scientists, tended to be loaded with copious information; hundred-year-old signage (if it has been retained at the AMNH) would reveal what explicit and immediate discourse was offered to visitors to the hall. There is no signage visible on the very earliest photos of the completed AMNH herd, but by 1923, the year after it was unveiled, a label was added to the base in the front, reading as follows:

AFRICAN ELEPHANTS

MOUNTED BY CARL E. AKELEY

and intended for the central group of the projected African Hall which will form part of a section of the Museum to be erected as a memorial to

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

The relative minimalism of the information is interesting. The wording suggests the label is something of a temporary placeholder, but even so, it seems remarkable that only the taxidermy and the future African Hall are highlighted. We can't be sure what other copy might have been present in the hall, but this small label certainly seems to have been the primary "messaging" for the elephant group. Barring any other evidence, it appears that at that moment in time the AMNH had no interest in expanding on the exploration, adventure, and larger-than-life personalities—neither the Akeley's nor the Roosevelts—that comprised the expedition, or imparting information about elephant biology, behaviour, or conservation. In the context of whose stories appear, the Roosevelt connection is diffuse at best; the African Hall, renamed the Akeley Hall of African Mammals when it opened in 1936, can be accessed through, but is not a part of, the Roosevelt Rotunda.

All this raises the question of what explicit discourses were available to visitors when Haraway surveyed the elephants circa 1982, and what stories were told, and what credit was given, in the label copy displayed.<sup>82</sup> No signage is visible on the base in photographs

82 In the original version of the essay Haraway states that she "read" the dioramas in March of 1982. Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy", *Social Text*, 59n15.

of the group (after it was expanded to eight specimens) through the 1950s and 60s. However, as of 1983 a bronze plaque had been mounted at the front of the herd.<sup>83</sup> This plaque remains there today, and reads:

EAST AFRICAN ELEPHANT

(LOXODONIA [sic] AFRICANA PEELI)

Four of the elephants in this group, including the large bull, were collected and mounted by Carl Akeley in the 1920s. The additional elephants were collected in 1933 by Mr. & Mrs. F. Trubee Davison and Lt. E.R. Quesada, USA.

[A second paragraph lists the names of financial contributors.]

The omission of Delia is unsurprising given the erosion of her fame, and the fact that dioramas were still in their quiescent period, but the absence of Theodore Roosevelt's name is somewhat remarkable, and perhaps counterintuitive. In the context of the broader discourses sketched by TBP, one might expect Roosevelt to be highlighted as the embodiment of "the effective truth of manhood", which the essay tells us the African Hall was designed to promote. In practical terms, it seems curious that the museum chose not to exploit whatever historical aura or PR value Roosevelt's name might bring to the group. It seems too early for any uneasiness over Roosevelt's colonialist baggage to have been an issue—especially considering it would be another thirty years before the statue of Roosevelt in front of the AMNH was removed for its racist implications.<sup>84</sup> Perhaps it was simply the passage of time and the decline in cachet—and/or the fact that Carl was the collector of record—that led both Roosevelt and Delia to be excluded from this sketch of the elephants. At any rate, besides this text, there is another plaque not far away from the herd that memorializes Carl and the African Mammal Hall named for him, and that's it—nothing else about the elephants. Thus, while we can't be sure how much exposition was

83 Many photos of the "The Alarm" dating from the early 1920s to the 2010s can be seen on the AMNH's Digital Archives, at <http://images.library.amnh.org/digital>. The keywords "Akeley elephants" will yield the most manageable results.

84 Small, "Removal of a Theodore Roosevelt Statue Begins."

present in the hall from 1921 through the ensuing decades, today there are no other explicit discourses about the Akeley's and their elephants in the hall for visitors to absorb.

And it is concrete discourses like member publications and exhibition labels that connect directly to the visitor experience—texts that can be considered for their function in illuminating the story of how the animals came to be put on display, in documenting and recognizing the contributions the authors of that story, and in shaping audiences' experience and perceptions of the animals, their lifeways, threats, and so on. Visitor studies indicate that educational or interpretive information displayed in an exhibition hall, and diorama displays in particular, does generate informed perception on the part of visitors.<sup>85</sup> The same cannot be said for books and articles that circulate in the world beyond the museum's walls. Haraway posits Carl's *In Brightest Africa*, Mary's *The Wilderness Lives Again*, and Delia's *Jungle Portraits* as the key texts in her exposé of suppression; yet these books can hardly be said to have shaped experience for most audiences in any generation. Schudson crystallizes this apropos of Delia's omission from *The Wilderness Lives Again*: "Haraway does not show what this absence signifies for the exhibits in African Hall—or that it signifies anything at all for how to read African Hall or how to understand the social construction of scientific knowledge."<sup>86</sup> Certainly, those visitors who read the books during the days of the Akeley's celebrity, or, in later years, Akeley aficionados or taxidermy buffs who found them in used bookstores or online, would flash on that backstory as they viewed the elephants and other groups, recalling the "messiness" of fieldwork, its triumphs, exhaustion and mishaps, and Delia's contributions (in two of the three volumes). Those who have not read these works have to create their own story.

Further, the capacity to "experience a history of race, sex, and class in New York City" would not be activated by Carl's or Delia's or Mary's writings, but by meta-discourses like Haraway's.

85 Many such studies are covered in Tunncliffe and Scheerso, *Natural History Dioramas: History, Construction, and Educational Role*, and Scheerso and Tunncliffe, *Natural History Dioramas—Traditional Exhibits for Current Education Themes*.

86 Schudson, "Cultural Studies", 391.

That history certainly resonates in the larger discourses amidst which the hall was developed — expedition stories, books, articles, lectures, conferences, and so on. But can it really be read in the hall itself? The *means* for such a reading must be mined from the historical discourses in play when the African Hall was developed; the *meanings and mediations* Haraway arrays depend on that knowledge — on research, in other words. They are clearly those of a highly informed and imaginative academic critic, not a “typical” museum visitor. This is more than rewarding enough for the reader of TBP, and as noted earlier, the essay has armed generations of students and scholars with an ancillary discourse against which to read the African Hall. However, those meanings are not explicitly inscribed in the hall itself — “the viewer does not know these things” — rather, they are *potential* meanings, co-existing with many other potential meanings that will be activated by the individual viewer.

### **The Resurrection of the Authors**

Erosion can erase traces of the past, but as any palaeontologist will tell you, it can also reveal them. The opening of the AMNH African Hall in 1936 corresponded with the beginning of the end of the “Golden Age” of dioramas, at least as far as habitat groups featuring megafauna. This was no doubt partly driven by increasing public consciousness of, and sensitivity to, the very real threats to many of these large mammals. As veteran AMNH taxidermist Steve Quinn writes, many species “were becoming so endangered in their native habitat that collection for display was deemed unacceptable.”<sup>87</sup> Another factor, at large museums like the AMNH and the FMNH, was that the halls designed to house these groups were getting full. In the 1940s and 50s both museums, their African mammal displays complete, shifted to North American mammal groups, and then to birds. Television, in almost ninety per cent of American households by the end of the 1950s, provided stiff competition to museums — and also brought wildlife into the living room via shows like *Walt Disney’s Disneyland* (1954–58) and *Walt Disney Presents*

87 Quinn, *Windows on Nature*, 21.



(1958–61), *Zoo Parade* (1950–57), and *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom* (1963–71).<sup>88</sup> “By the late 1950s,” Quinn observes, “the popularity of the diorama as an exhibit medium was waning.”<sup>89</sup>

Accordingly, as changing tastes and trends eclipsed the perceived cachet and “relevance” of taxidermy and dioramas, so did their authors fade into relative obscurity. Most of Carl’s work remained on display in New York, Chicago, and Milwaukee, but, increasingly considered dusty and passé, it was not much of a legacy; the celebrated explorer-artist whose efforts once made headlines was, to the degree that he was remembered at all, a quaint relic. Delia hung up her rifle and pith helmet in the early 1930s, but remained active in the Society of Women Geographers. She remarried in 1939, and lived a quiet life until her death in 1970, at age 100.<sup>90</sup> Mary ended her African travels in 1947, and retired to her home in Mystic, Connecticut as a relative recluse.<sup>91</sup>

With the “rediscovery” of taxidermy and dioramas over the last decade or so by academics and artists, Carl and Delia have been resurrected in the public consciousness; Mary, less so. Carl has had several biographical treatments in the past dozen years, is treated in most of the books cited in the first paragraph of this paper, and many more, and is celebrated in tens of thousands of online articles as a master taxidermist, explorer, and “badass”. At least one high-profile American actor has evinced interest in bringing Akeley’s story to the screen; a Hollywood “biopic” may just be a matter of time. Delia too has been treated in several volumes on female explorers, and is likewise extolled as an explorer, hunter (and yes, “badass”) in her own right on countless websites.<sup>92</sup> Over the past

88 Eighty-six per cent of American homes had television sets by 1959. “Six of seven homes now have TV sets,” *Broadcasting*, August 3, 1959, 74.

89 Quinn, *Windows on Nature*, 21.

90 Most sources put Delia’s age in 1970 at 95, drawing on Fagg Olds, *Women of the Four Winds*, which based Delia’s age on family lore. Census records confirm Delia’s birth year as 1870.

91 See McKay, “Mary Lee Jobe”.

92 For example, Fagg Olds, *Women of the Four Winds*; Zanglein, *The Girl Explorers*; McLoone, *Women Explorers in Africa*; Willman, “Mimic-Women”; McCalman, *Delia Akeley and the Monkey*.

decade, the present author has consulted with more than a half-dozen authors and/or filmmakers working on biographical projects focused on Delia. It is especially telling that when the AMNH published a blog celebrating Women's History Month a few years ago (on its *official* website, AMNH.org), it included Delia (with Margaret Mead and others), while Mary was nowhere in sight.<sup>93</sup> All of this recognition is legitimately celebratory and honorific, but it also reflects the recognition that, like classic taxidermy, Carl and Delia have become exploitable commodities for both museums and academics.

Delia's fame may have eclipsed Mary's because she partnered with Carl longer, and worked with him during the most productive and transformative stages of his artistic career, but also because she was a productive explorer and museum collector in her own right.<sup>94</sup> On the other hand, Mary's post-Carl career of travel, writing, and conservation advocacy can be seen as a direct extension of Carl's work.<sup>95</sup> Delia forged a more distinct path, starting even before Carl's death, with her two expeditions to the Congo for the Brooklyn Museum, and scientific pursuits and publications that were unconnected to his work. Indeed, it seems clear that the divorce propelled Delia on her own independent course, surveying new regions of Africa, and

93 "Celebrating Women's History Month at the Museum." <https://tumblr.amnh.org/post/140281350894/celebrating-womens-history-month-at-the-museum>, March 1, 2016.

94 Delia assisted Carl with his pivotal "Four Seasons of the Virginia Deer" at the FMNH, which Karen Wonders, in her masterful study of habitat dioramas, calls "the first large mammal groups with painted backgrounds to be displayed in a scientific institution," and which, as Pat Morris has observed, "stimulated many American museums to build major habitat groups of their own in the ensuing ten years." See Wonders, *Habitat Dioramas*, 135; Morris, *History of Taxidermy*, 319. For more on Delia's contributions to the Four Seasons see Alvey, Gnoske and Janelli, "Akeley's Four Seasons". The Field Museum years were Carl's most productive in terms of taxidermy and dioramas; he executed more than forty groups and mounted more than one hundred animals. He completed no permanent dioramas at the AMNH, and his taxidermy mounts there consisted of four elephants, five gorillas, six lions (which were later dismantled), and one okapi.

95 Mary visited Africa twice more, in 1935 on an AMNH expedition, and in 1947 to survey wildlife preserves at the invitation of the Belgian government, trips that were clearly extensions of Carl's work. She wrote seven more books after *The Wilderness Lives Again*, some drawing on her expeditions with Carl, one on her solo trip for the AMNH, and one on game reserves in the Belgian Congo. She also served as an advisor to the AMNH for decades. See McKay, "Mary Lee Jobe". Besides *The Wilderness Lives Again*, Mary published seven other books on various aspects of African exploration, animals, and conservation; two of them listed Carl as first author, and drew on his previously published writings.

pursuing her own interests. Had she and Carl stayed together, she likely would have continued as a partner to Carl—a partner with a great degree of authority, and an important contributor to his projects, but still a partner rather than an autonomous leader. Rather than being erased by divorce and duplicity, those circumstances incited Delia to pursue her own interests, and generate her own discourses (it is notable that she produced her first publication the year she left Carl). As far as the AMNH African Hall, Delia Akeley is abundantly present in officially sanctioned discourses about it, both published and archival.

The words and the work of each of the Akeleyes inform the hall in varying ways, as do larger social and cultural discourses. But the meanings evoked by those discourses, whether concerning sex, race, class, exploration, or authorship, arise at the moment of an individual viewer's communion with a given diorama or group. The capacity to construct those meanings is ultimately a function of who is "reading" and when (1922, 1936, 1982, today), the knowledge they bring to the experience, and the connections they are equipped to make.

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