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ABOUT THE ONLY way to transcend the discomfort of Jane Desmond's provocative juxtaposition of Hawai'ian hula performances and animal theme park shows is to realize that the book is not *about* hula or animal theme parks. Rather, Desmond challenges us to consider that seemingly pre-discursive ways of naturalizing physical bodily characteristics have not only been, but continue to be, deployed in ideological ways. Thus, what appears to be a book about tourist shows and their predictably questionable ethics instead proposes an argument of far greater consequence. By excavating the prevalence of what she calls "physical foundationalism," Desmond's aim is to sound cautionary notes about its costs, and to propose critical strategies for intervening in its insidiousness.

In physical foundationalism, "bodies function as the material signs for categories of social difference, including divisions of gender, race, cultural identity, and species" (p. xiv). Desmond identifies a "tightly braided union" that naturalizes these systems of thought as follows: 1) bodies are "natural"; 2) bodies are different from one another; 3) typologies of difference are natural; and 4) what is natural is necessarily right or "true" (p. xiv).

Physical foundationalism has to do then with categories that are socially constructed—such as gender, race, culture, and species—taking on bodily-based biological underpinnings, which are then naturalized as "the way things are," so to speak. When bodily difference is put on display performatively in a tourist context, physical differences in the bodies viewed then serve to re-inforce what is "normative" and thus "better" about one's own body, and to

then maintain prevailing status quo mechanisms of power and dominance over those very others on display. This facilitates an epistemological function, prior to discourse, in which what appears “natural” is taken as fact, and is thus used to rationalize ideological formulations such as relationships between men and women, or between whites and non-whites. Desmond argues that in tourist consumption of commodified bodily display, “bodies legitimate, specify, present, and represent that which is being displayed . . . , and they do so through explicit or implicit discourses of naturalism” (p. 252).

To arrive at such a conclusion, Desmond constructs a comparative framework between “people tourism” (chapters 1-6) and “animal tourism” (chapters 7-9). Where people tourism operates by naturalizing and racializing culture, animal tourism operates by commodifying and staging the experiencing of nature. In each case, corporeality is staged, providing audiences with opportunities for direct observation of “specimens.” The methods deployed in this study are equally interdisciplinary. Where the case study of hula performance is based primarily on archival and documentary research that interrogates hula displays from the inception of organized tourism in the late 1800s, the case study of animal tourism is built on ethnographic observation and participation; where the case study of hula focuses primarily on entertainment in Hawai‘i (with a brief consideration of performances on the U.S. continent depicted in photographs from the early 20th century), the multi-sited case study of animal tourism ranges through multiple animal theme parks across the United States.

Staging Tourism is devoted to unmasking the workings of physical foundationalism in tourism. What makes for particularly stomach-churning reading is the insidiousness underlying how, in tourist industries that cater largely to white, middle-class, heterosexual Americans, those particular identities are normalized through gazing upon bodies of Others. Thus Desmond reads Hawai‘i’s tremendously profitable tourist industry not only as economically exploitative of Native Hawai‘ians, but as having an ideological underbelly, of upholding certain ideologies of race, class, and gender. Equally disturbing is her analysis of the tight staging and choreographing in animal theme park shows; indeed, audiences are lulled into thinking that behaviors such as taking one’s trainer for a piggy-back ride is somehow natural.

How hula dancers and animal performers in theme parks get to be placed within the same comparative framework, however, merits some discussion. Desmond offers her rationale for doing so on p. xxiii: “I wanted to see what would happen if I looked at issues of ‘identity’ but in realms normally not included in such discourse: not race, not gender, not class, not ethnicity, not nationality, but species.” Once over the species barrier, Desmond goes one more step, beyond mammals to marine life. Within the same book, then, the

analysis ranges from Native Hawaiians to tigers to dolphins to Shamu, Sea World's star attraction. Desmond's argument is that the conceptual thinking by which ideologies of race, gender and class get communicated through the bodily display of specimen is actually the same in people and animal tourism.

And herein lies my own personal dilemma. There is something too close to home, so to speak, when seeing one's own ancestors held up in such light. As insidious as the racialized thinking was behind the display of "primitive" peoples in the world expositions of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (that placed the most primitive peoples nearest the animals), people and animals shared the space of the exposition, but not the analytical commentary about those expositions. Is Desmond's juxtaposition of people and animal tourism, then, tantamount to a form of voyeurism? Does she end up reinscribing that which she spent an entire book deconstructing? She thinks not, and in one paragraph of her Introduction (p. xxiv), she sets out her disclaimers: She is not suggesting that viewing Hawaiians is like viewing zoo animals; she is not suggesting that people and animals are, in the end, "same"; she is not saying that histories of tourism can be reduced to rhetorical gestures.

At least for me, there is slippage between Desmond's intellectual intent and the emotional impact of the analysis. Writing this commentary has been one of my greater challenges lately, as I struggled to articulate why I find Desmond's book so disturbing. It would be easy to set up the book as a straw man, then take swings at it. The book represents the amorphous enterprise of cultural studies at its most, so clearly interdisciplinary that signs of disciplinary conventions are virtually absent. Part I, examining the hula, is not an ethnographic account of the hula world—Desmond says so herself; nor does it even pretend to survey the history of hula, alighting only on selected moments in the past; nor does it provide any critical guidance to appreciating hula performance. Instead, Desmond examines some stuff that is pretty peripheral to the hula, such as the tourist experience (rather than the contents of the performances) at a major lū'au show in Hawai'i, visual images of hula that circulated on the U.S. mainland, vaudeville performers such as Doralina and Gilda Gray, the figure of the hula girl icon in the marketing of tourism, and beachboys as a male counterpart to hula dancers. Likewise, card-carrying anthropologists could have a merry time debating whether Desmond's ethnographic observations of animal theme parks displays any of the rigor of generating data for social analysis that is taught in fieldwork methods courses; so much of her descriptions are simply descriptive accounts of what she saw—along lines of "I was there, and I wanted to be picked to pet the dolphin." The license in interdisciplinary endeavors to pick and choose from among perspectives and methods is both liberating and limiting. While

an analyst is free to leave certain disciplinary baggage behind, the resulting analysis may produce perspectives that do not contribute to the understanding of the subject/s intrinsically.

If anything, the redeeming power for *Staging Tourism* lies in its uncovering of the ideological workings of physical foundationalism. In her conclusion, Desmond works through two strategies for critical intervention. One is for hula performers to historicize hula performances, by incorporating narration about the history of Native Hawai'ian disenfranchisement that contemporary shows efface. The other is to historicize animal displays by showcasing relations of dominance and annihilation between humans and animals that theme park shows are only beginning to address in narration on wildlife conservation. The skeptic in me sees a certain naiveté in not commenting on capitalistic corporate control of much of the tourism industry, and the efficacy (*not!*) of native Hawai'ian agency—not to mention the absence of animal agency—in starting up those steep slopes. Yet, when all is said and done, Desmond's contribution is in identifying the material and epistemological structures that maintain ideologies and hierarchies, and in correctly diagnosing the need to rewrite these very ideologies by rewriting the underlying structures. Educating tourists about the Native Hawai'ian loss of sovereignty is a step to addressing the effacement of Native Hawai'ian history common in tourist performances, and to opening dialogue on rationales for continued non-native dominance over Native Hawai'ian self-determination.

Personally, I would not choose to make these points by putting up anyone's ancestors for scrutiny the way Desmond has. Surely Desmond is taking hits for the way the comparative framework has been constructed. But now that the step has been taken to unmask such an insidious ideology, we should surely move on to other more empowering endeavors.