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Producing affect:

Transnational volunteerism in a Malaysian orangutan rehabilitation center

ABSTRACT

In a postcolonial economy of volunteer tourism from the Global North to the Global South, mostly British women pay thousands of U.S. dollars to travel to Sarawak, on Malaysian Borneo, to work in a wildlife rehabilitation center. There, in a program operated as a public-private partnership, they provide hard labor to maintain and improve the facility and assist subcontracted indigenous Iban men in caring for displaced orangutans. Through the concept of "custodial labor," I argue that affect produced at the interface of bodies in the work of orangutan rehabilitation also produces an unequal distribution of risk and vulnerability among those involved, across differences of species, classes, nationalities, and genders. My findings contribute to understandings of how humanity is constituted through multispecies encounters, help demonstrate how animals can be treated as subjects in ethnography, and show how affective encounters produce human and nonhuman subjectivities. [*affect, human-animal relations, care, gender, tourism, Borneo, Southeast Asia*]

The worker Ngalih and the two volunteers Liz and Kate spotted the orangutans Ching and Baby Dylan through the thick cover of leaves. The view of an orangutan mother with her clinging infant up in the trees was the reason the volunteers had traveled from England to Sarawak, Malaysia, each paying \$2,000—excluding the cost of airfare—to volunteer in the wildlife center for two weeks. The very idea of this encounter motivated their sweaty labor as they performed tasks like hauling planks of wood from one area of the site to another. And now, spontaneously, they were in the moment of that interface.

For Ngalih, who was fairly new to the job of keeper, having worked at it for less than a year, this was yet another test—one he encountered every time he spotted Ching when he was working alone. All the keepers knew that semiwild orangutans, even juveniles, could seriously injure people. Ngalih could not be friendly with Ching, like Ricky, a fellow subcontractor who had worked with her since she arrived at the orangutan rehabilitation center in 1997. Nor was it wise for him to be confident, like Layang, another fellow subcontractor who had worked with orangutans since 1991 and was thereby experienced with the semiotic, material exchanges of human-rehabilitant orangutan encounters.

Ching then did exactly what Ngalih hoped would not happen: She started climbing down the tree. Everyone at the site knew of her history of attacking people, especially women, biting them once she was at ground level. Ngalih told Liz and Kate to run and hide. They did so.¹

What should we call the swell of feelings produced in that interface with Ching the orangutan? What sound impressions or linguistic signs can describe the sensation that oscillates between elation and fear within a single, spontaneous moment? These feelings are what cultural theorists are now calling "affect" and what Brian Massumi (2002) calls "intensity." In this article, I show how affect generates unequal and risky encounters across differences at an orangutan rehabilitation center. These affective encounters of mutual vulnerability are crucial for the center's operation.

In the physical space of the encounter, Ching the orangutan “could make human bodies be moved and be affected” (Despret 2004:113). Vinciane Despret argues that affect in what she calls “anthropo-zoo-genesis” comes to constitute the animals and people who encounter each other, that the relation between a human and an animal produces each subject in the relationship. Despret’s (2004) and Bruno Latour’s (2004) understandings of affect, and in particular their use of *affect* as a verb, shape my own understanding of affect as a dynamic process occurring at the interface of all kinds of bodies.² Unlike emotions, affect does not reside within the interiority of a subject. Rather, as Massumi points out, “intensity is embodied . . . at its interface with things” (2002:25).

In this article, I demonstrate how affect helps fuel a transnational private–public partnership of commercial volunteerism. In the particular context of Lundu Wildlife Center, commercial volunteerism is made possible by affect, or feelings produced between bodies, including human and animal bodies, in two ways: through volunteers’ encounters with endangered animals in close proximity and through their backbreaking manual labor for these same animals. By understanding the production of affect between human and animal bodies, and between bodies at work, we can come to understand how neoliberal private–public partnerships can demand and gain committed personal investments of both bodily labor and money.³ “Custodial labor” names the process in which affective encounters between bodies fill a demand for meaningful purpose among professional workers (usually from the Global North) who engage in commercial volunteerism or other efforts that at first glance appear to be altruistic. These affective encounters, however, pose risks of injury or debilitation for local laborers whose work is situated in the Global South. We see evidence of custodial labor in commercial volunteer tourism initiatives that send paying volunteers from Australia, continental Europe, and Britain to places like Fiji, the Philippines, and Malawi, where they have embodied and meaningful encounters while working with local residents (Butcher 2003; Palacios 2010). Through custodial labor, the everyday acts of cleaning and building serve a greater purpose and lofty goal for transnational volunteers and subcontracted workers. In the case I illustrate, the goal is to return endangered species to “the wild” through rehabilitation.⁴

Affect produced between humans and animals in the Global South injects meaning into lives in want of it in the Global North. At Lundu, the indigenous Sarawakian men and the transnational, mostly British, women who engage affect are all engaging custodial labor, yet the affect they experience exposes them to different levels of risk. Through their constant presence in the lives of the animals under their custody, subcontracted animal keepers are vulnerable to injuries, bites, and zoonotic illness.

Likewise, the orangutans and other animals in custody at Lundu Wildlife are subject to anthroponotic illness and punishment. The volunteers’ experiences of vulnerability and risk are fleeting, and yet the feelings generated therein are significant enough to make the experience a worthwhile and meaningful effort. The mutual vulnerability operating here is the product of the affective interface inherent in the paradoxical work of people trying to train wildlife to become independent within a forested wildlife center.⁵ Affect not only characterizes the encounters that occur at an orangutan rehabilitation center but it also generates the risky and unequal work of care.

The encounter between Ching, Ngalih, Liz, and Kate was one of many examples of custodial labor I documented while conducting 17 months of ethnographic fieldwork at two orangutan rehabilitation centers in Sarawak, Malaysia, between 2008 and 2010. Rehabilitation occurs at wildlife centers that house animals protected by the state’s Wildlife Protection Ordinance that have lost their habitats and have nowhere to go. The first wildlife ordinances were enacted when Sarawak was a British Crown colony. After Sarawak gained independence when it joined Malaysia in 1963, its Forest Department inherited the task of managing wildlife, including orangutan rehabilitation activities, which had begun in Sarawak in the 1950s (Harrisson 1962). In 2003, Sarawak’s Forest Department became partially corporatized into the Forestry Corporation. The Forestry Corporation is one of Sarawak’s semigovernmental agencies, along with the State Tourism Board. The job of subcontracted workers like Layang and Ngalih was to clean up after, handle, and feed the animals as well as maintain their facilities. The British commercial volunteering company ENGAGE: Endangered Great Ape Getaways facilitated fortnight and monthlong visits from mostly professional women from the Global North, like the Englishwomen Liz and Kate, who were keen to contribute both their money and their manual labor to the cause of orangutan rehabilitation.⁶ At the center, workers and commercial volunteers regularly encountered affect and transspecific gendered embodiments that shape affect.⁷ The interspecies encounter between Ching, Ngalih, Liz, and Kate helps demonstrate the generative power of custodial labor, or the production of affect in the transnational economy of private–public partnerships such as commercial volunteerism. Custodial labor generates affect like the excitement–fear–joy of commercial volunteers and keepers while also generating an economy that connects them to rehabilitant orangutans. Such encounters invite the question, how should we understand caring relations and affect across species, between particularly situated humans and particularly situated animals, in a neoliberal context of private–public partnerships involving expensive commercial volunteerism and cheap subcontracted labor?

In this article, I approach two recent turns taken up in cultural anthropology: the animal and the affective. Building on earlier anthropological work that explains how animals are used to mediate social relations, the recent “animal turn” in anthropology points to the ways humanity is constituted through multispecies encounters (Anderson 2004; Evans-Pritchard 1969; Franklin 2007; Ingold 1980; Kirksey and Helmreich 2010; Kohn 2007; Raffles 2001; Wolch and Emel 1998). In cultural studies, the “affective turn” of the last decade has found inspiration in recent readings of 17th-century philosopher Baruch Spinoza and 20th-century developmental psychology (Clough 2008; Gregg and Seigworth 2010; Hardt 1999, 2007; Hardt and Negri 2004; Massumi 2002; Probyn 2004; Sedgwick and Frank 2003; Stewart 2007). This work on affect also finds roots in the robust anthropology of emotions (Good 2004; Good et al. 1988; Rosaldo 1984; Yanagisako 2002). Yet human–animal relations provoke something more diffuse than a human-centered anthropology of emotions. For the human–animal interface, I find the senses conveyed in the term *affect* particularly useful (Hayward 2010; Weaver 2010). When it comes to beings that do not speak, feeling and touching are crucial forms of transspecific connection.

Primatologists use the term *interface* to describe encounters between primates, including human and nonhuman primates. This interface can be spiritually infused, as in the case of Hindu temples dedicated to Hanuman; marred with conflict, as in the case of crop-raiding monkeys and apes dispossessed of their habitats and food sources; and rife with ethical implications, as in the case of animal testing (Fuentes and Wolfe 2002; Paterson et al. 2005; Solomon 2010). The interface can entail visceral or symbolic engagements, from macaques stealing eyeglasses at temples in exchange for food to the telltale signs of broken banana trees and the engagements I describe between animals and handlers at an orangutan rehabilitation center.

The term *interface* also implicitly recalls the sense of face developed by Emmanuel Levinas and critiqued by Judith Butler. According to Levinas, an ethical obligation to the other is made when one perceives the other's face; perceiving the face of the other, one perceives one's own humanity through the other's vulnerability. As Levinas writes, “The face of the other in its precariousness and defenselessness is for me at once the temptation to kill and the call to peace, the ‘You shall not kill’” (Levinas 1996:167). Butler's reading of Levinas understands that both the imperative of “You shall not kill” and the evocative temptation to kill are nondiscursive, nonlinguistic. She writes, “The ‘face’ of what he [Levinas] calls the ‘Other’ makes an ethical demand upon me, and yet we do not know *which* demand it makes. The ‘face’ of the other cannot be *read* for a secret meaning” (Butler 2004:131). The perceiver of the other's face is unable to make a clear sense of what meanings are supposed to be conveyed. The idea of an unreadable face that demands a

response evokes the possibility of an ethical interface between humans and nonhuman others.⁸ Such an interface is imbued with affect that demands response. In the story I shared in my opening, Ching's response was to climb down the tree and get closer to the humans. Kate and Liz's response was to run away and hide. Ngali's response was to stay and see what situation would unfold. In this range of responses, we see the inequality of vulnerability in affective encounters.

This particular encounter shows how concerns about human–animal relations, affect, and neoliberalism converge at Lundu Wildlife Center, one of two sites in Sarawak that shelter displaced wildlife and rehabilitant orangutans. As is the case at other sites, the specificity of place and the historical contingencies through which a space becomes a place are crucial to situating particular interspecies relations (Freccero 2011; Haraway 2008; Lowe 2006; Matsutake Worlds Research Group 2009; Raffles 2001; Tsing 2005; Walley 2004).

The kind of neoliberalism at work in Sarawak differs from the neoliberal governmentality enacted through NGO-led integrated conservation and development projects (ICDPs) in Papua New Guinea and Madagascar (Sodikoff 2009; West 2006). Unlike these other “biodiversity hotspots,” Sarawak has only two conservation NGOs working within its borders: the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS; Mittermeier et al. 1998). Neither organization works on orangutan rehabilitation, although WCS does conduct research on Sarawak's wild orangutan population and offers some assistance to the Forestry Corporation on how to facilitate participatory workshops. WWF has had a low profile within the state, having only reopened an office in Sarawak in 2008 after a 20-year hiatus. Sarawak's biodiversity management efforts are carried out through collaborations between for-profit entities and local semigovernmental agencies. The Forestry Corporation administers Sarawak's orangutan rehabilitation efforts on behalf of the state of Sarawak. As a semigovernmental agent, it is an emergent corporate form (Marcus 1998; Welker et al. 2011). Drawing funds from the state, Sarawak's semigovernmental agencies like the Forestry Corporation have more in common with government-owned nongovernmental organizations (GONGOs) in India than they do with ICDPs (Sharma 2006). The context of privatization in Sarawak has similarities with the Italian context and the Italian turn away from state-sponsored social services to volunteerism, as exemplified by the concept of “relational labor” (Muehlebach 2011:65). Whereas the sentiment of volunteerism in Italy is organized around citizenship in the nation-state, as illustrated by Andrea Muehlebach (2011), volunteerism in Sarawak, as I show below, is transnational, situated in economic inequality between the Global North and South, and organized around embodied responses to the threat of



Figure 1. A rehabilitant adult male orangutan approaches his morning meal while his caretaker stays inside the enclosure for a moment to keep the orangutan acclimated to human copresence at a wildlife center in Sarawak, Malaysia, January 15, 2009. Photo by Rheana Parreñas.

species extinction. Unlike these other forms of neoliberal governmentality via GONGOs, relational labor, and ICDPs, Sarawak's semigovernmental agencies have a more serious commitment to commerce: The Forestry Corporation and volunteer agency managers hope that their endeavors will eventually become profitable.

In what follows, I first explain the aspects of affect in the labor of local, low-wage custodians and the expectation placed on them to register, respond to, and produce affect. I then look at the work of volunteers who pay to perform their labor and the range of affect at work in their commercial volunteering experience. I subsequently examine the motivations of volunteers, as postindustrial workers of the Global North, to fetishize "hard labor" in the Global South. Understanding custodial labor entails a focus on the microdetails of everyday livelihoods at Lundu Wildlife Center.

Human-orangutan affect in everyday custodial labor

Of the nine new orangutans arriving at Lundu between 2006 and 2010, four, including the juvenile female Gas, came from human settlements bordering palm oil estates that

were converted from forest, and two came from the illegal personal menagerie of an alleged gangster specializing in illegal timbering.⁹ Along with the adult dominant male Efran, these confiscated and surrendered orangutans were among the 13 that I regularly encountered while conducting field research at the center.¹⁰

To understand affect between custodians and the animals in their care, I turned to the keeper Layang. Layang's reputation preceded him before he and I met. Everyone from Lin, a Forestry Corporation officer, to Tom, the British volunteering company project manager, swore that Layang commanded respect from the orangutans and other animals. I was told that he was able to get the very large, free-ranging, and flanged adult male orangutan James into a cage without resorting to sedation. Layang was as small as I am, not much more than five feet tall, yet he would sometimes stand inside the enclosure with James and directly hand him food (see Figure 1). Layang and James encountered each other every day and were thereby acclimated to each other's physical proximity.

I regularly accompanied Layang on his morning animal husbandry routine, which included getting all the orangutans out from the night den to their exhibits, cleaning their cages, and feeding them. On my first morning

observing this routine in November 2008, Layang tested me with Gas, who was three years old at the time.

Layang knew that when it came to orangutans, I had read a lot but had no experience caring for them at the time of my arrival. My experience as an intern at a U.S. zoo, handling siamangs and a sun bear, did not count in his eyes. Layang likely assumed that I would come in and posture like an expert—as many Forestry Corporation staff members with college degrees had done. After all, how could books teach one to do the job of handling orangutans and of handling the affective exchange between person and orangutan?

Layang said to me, “Bring her,”¹¹ which surprised me. I knew that volunteers were strictly forbidden from gaining intimate contact with orangutans, yet I was not a volunteer scheduled to be at the center for only a month or two weeks. I also knew that Gas’s cage door to the enclosure was broken and that someone would have to carry her out.¹² I asked, in disbelief, “You mean go into the exhibit and carry her?” Layang said, “Yeah. Just carry her and take her.”

In the moment that followed, I came to viscerally experience affect in custodial labor:

She [Gas] grabs my hand, but holds on to the posts inside her night den with her feet—refusing to go, so my grip of her belly slips to below her chin and she then slips down because my hold slackens, because I am afraid of choking her. She’s on the floor now and grabs hold of a rope dangling between us. She uses me to get a better angle on the rope and then she starts holding my leg with both legs. She then nibbles at the zipper pocket of my pants. I start to walk towards the gate and she then bares her teeth and is about to bear down on my leg. I’m a little scared since every one of her teeth is bigger than mine. I try to hold down my panic and I raise her arms and try to angle her away from me, but she twists in an awkward way . . . I try to figure out how to move with her and she perhaps does the same. [Field notes, November 18, 2008]

Calling this encounter between bodies “choreography” would be a misnomer. My carrying a juvenile orangutan was far from a graceful experience in which the movements of our bodies were intentional. I was surprised by the coarseness of Gas’s hair, what felt to be the unusual distribution of her weight, and the sheer awkwardness of trying to walk with another heavy body, one not physiologically equipped to walk but, rather, to climb (Rodman and Cant 1984). Gas thus gripped my arm, leg, and hand with four muscular and clammy hands as we walked, sometimes dragging a limb or grasping the bars and walls we passed. The texture of her skin and hair interfaced with my skin and clothes. In that interface, our bodies responded to one another but in ways that were asymmetrical, unequal, and muddled. The job of carrying Gas to her enclosure entailed our attentive-

ness to both our bodies in the quickly fleeting moment of encounter. Cooperation did not come on its own, and neither could it be physically forced. Even though she was little, she was still stronger than I. The surge of affect between us, as well as the mutual vulnerability inherent in the risk of me hurting her or her hurting me, was at the core of this custodial labor, as it is of all such labor.

Once we got to her enclosure, removing her from me was harder than getting her out of her cage in the first place. I had responded to her four grabbing limbs by carrying her to my torso and holding her at my hip. Letting her limbs wrap around my torso was not the smartest move. Although I vaguely remember removing her forearms and swinging her, I would only have been able to detach her if she herself were ready to let go. I was a bad keeper because I took too long for what was considered a simple task and I responded with affectionate touch instead of what the custodians called “being tough.”

Encounters like these constituted a small but essential part of the job of being a worker at the center. Custodians had to manage their time to make sure that they could limit these intense encounters to the two hours needed to clean up ten dirty cages. While Gas had my attention during the moment of interfacing, I did not have much time to reflect on the work of co-constituting the affective space between my human body and her orangutan body. There were six more orangutans to bring out of their cages, including ten-year-old Lisbet and three-year-old Mut. Only later did I find out that an affective response should be “tougher” and less affectionate.

By having me plunge into Gas’s night cage, Layang showed me how he had had to learn his job from Day One. He recalled his first day once when he and I sat down at the veranda outside his home for a formal interview. He said that in 1991, when he was 17, he started working at Batu Dua Belas, the parent site of Lundu Wildlife. He was handed a broom and dustpan and told to clean up the inside of a cage that, at that moment, housed eight adult orangutans. Through such experiences, Layang learned how to register and respond to the surge of affect between himself and the orangutans.

After I carried Gas out to her enclosure on that first morning of my participant-observation in the orangutan night den, I observed Layang attempt to remove Lisbet and Mut from their shared cage. They were not going out of their own volition. It was 9 a.m. and the sun was already out, baking the concrete walls of the exterior exhibit like an oven. Layang yelled at the pair, “Keluar!” [Get out!] and jabbed the broomstick against the railing. Lisbet just moved around on the ropes in their cage while Mut sat on the floor. Layang then took the fire extinguisher and pointed the nozzle toward Lisbet while he repeated his imperative. With Mut holding on to her torso, Lisbet climbed to the highest ropes, away from Layang and the fire extinguisher. Layang

exchanged the fire extinguisher for the water hose and started dousing Lisbet and Mut. By then, Mut was on a platform inside the cage, squealing, and Lisbet was above her, unsuccessfully dodging the spraying water (MacKinnon 1974).¹³ Once Layang turned the water off, Lisbet climbed up the ropes again, near Layang, and urinated and defecated. At that point, Layang told me to leave the night den. From where I stood, I could see him continue using the hose. Soon he gave up and stormed out to the quarantine area to get the blowgun. Upon seeing the blowgun, Lisbet ran out of the cage with Mut clinging to her.

Layang's method in this case entailed affect that cannot be mistaken as "affection" in the sense of tenderness. The act I witnessed, regardless of whether it could be construed as violence, was a deliberate cultivation of affect. Layang's labor as an orangutan keeper required a heightened sensitivity to bodies in motion and copresence (particularly his, the orangutans', and mine) as well as the flexibility to respond. His job of custodial labor was to hone and respond to the affect produced through the interface between him and his orangutan charges and to face the risks inherent in such an affective encounter. As this incident shows, a custodian's response entails rejecting demands for affection and tenderness. An animal keeper whose job is to rehabilitate orangutans needs to keep orangutans away from humans. Truly caring for an orangutan in this context means responding to the intensity or affect between bodies while also rejecting the other's efforts to gain closeness, affection, or a different direction of movement.

Whereas others implied that there was something innate about Layang's skill, he himself explained that it was a matter of experience. He cultivated his relationships with the orangutans under his watch, regularly maintaining physical contact with them (see Figure 2). Ching, even when she was pregnant, let him regularly rest a gentle hand on her belly. He would play with Lisbet by entering her cage, throwing up his hands like an orangutan, and hulking toward her, walking in the way that she walked.¹⁴ She was bigger than he and could have clobbered him if she had wished; yet it never happened. These moments of joy, play, and risk also constituted his custodial labor.

More than a year later, Layang and I talked once more about what it takes to be an animal handler at a rehabilitation site. One of our friends had been bitten during an orangutan jungle-skills overnight training session; the wound from the bite became infected and took six months to heal. Bites were not surprising to Layang. They were part of the job. As Layang had explained rehabilitation to me, "We need to teach them while they are still young to be afraid of humans . . . But if they're like Ching, you ask them to be afraid of humans, we [handlers] cannot [force them be afraid of humans]" (interview, May 27, 2010). This was a rare moment in which Layang admitted to a degree of futility in his work. Rehabilitation is set up for a perfect orangutan



Figure 2. A caretaker gently touches a rehabilitant adult male orangutan who waits to be released at a wildlife center in Sarawak, Malaysia, January 13, 2009. Photo by Rheana Parreñas.

in mind: young yet independent, one already and continuously fearful of humans. Yet if the orangutan is young, how can she not be impressionable? As the orangutan experiences more interactions with humans, including being fed by them, how can she remain fearful of them? How can the orangutan not help but be enculturated by the affect produced in the copresence of humans?

Everyone knew that Ching's aptitude for fearlessly engaging humans and attacking them was a result of her proximity to humans from the time that she was two years old. As Layang explained to me, "She is afraid of the person who is the handler. The rest . . ." His face turned sour and indifferent, completing the sentence for him. He continued, "They will give respect to that person who feeds them, only that person she will respect. But sometimes they change their mood. That person can be, in what we call, not in a safe place. That's why you need to read their mind."

I asked, "How do you read their mind?"

He plainly responded, "You need to see their face. If they have a hot temper or not." Reading an orangutan's mind meant reading the orangutan's body and sensing affect produced between orangutan and custodian. Faces were not the only vehicles of expression for orangutans (Tempelmann et al. 2011). Hair standing on edge invariably conveyed anger to anyone regularly in contact with rehabilitant, free-ranging orangutans, both at Lundu and Batu Dua Belas.

Hair standing on edge is subtler than the physical display of male adult "hair shaking" that primatologist John MacKinnon (1974:61) describes in one of the first studies that systematically examined orangutan gestures and vocalizations. It is also more subtle than the "poke" and "pursed lips" Sebastian Tempelmann et al. (2011:436) describe in their experiment testing attentiveness among orangutans and other great apes begging experimenters for

food. Custodians and rehabilitant orangutans come into close physical proximity to each other nearly every day over years, closer than the distance experienced by the primatologist standing on the muddy ground looking above to the canopy of trees or by the researcher within the confines of the laboratory, separated from his or her animal subjects by mesh barriers. The custodian–orangutan interface thus consists of cautious exchanges and the production of feelings and possibilities that no one controls. Yet workers like Layang must attempt to enact the feelings of “tough love” and risk getting bitten, and the orangutans are in the position of needing keepers like Layang to survive.

Layang shares an informed personal experience of a human–orangutan interface through conversations. With only an ability to witness signs, perceive feelings, and speak to people, how can cultural anthropologists understand the other side of this interface? What can we call the intensity that makes an orangutan’s hair stand up? The handlers and local managers are certain that it is anger. But what is anger when experienced and conveyed by an orangutan facing a human? Calling it an “emotion” leads us into the circuitous pathways of animal cognition that often privilege the underpinnings of logical rules, semantic function, and hierarchies of intelligence in communication (Hauser et al. 2002; Miles 1993; Russon and Andrews 2010).¹⁵ Yet this hair-raising feeling is something communicated, palpable, and produced in the interface between bodies, in this case, between a human custodian and a rehabilitant orangutan. This was affect. The ability to respond was part of the expectation placed on Layang, as a custodian, to respond to affect—without getting seriously injured. This was the risk of custodial labor that Layang had to face everyday at work. In the everyday work of custodial labor, affect is both uncertain and productive. Its uncertainty is evident in the risk of potentially debilitating bites, and its productivity is evident in the attentiveness gained by keepers and orangutans.

Commercial volunteerism as custodial labor

The orangutan rehabilitation program at Lundu Wildlife Center needs both workers and volunteers to keep running. Revenues from volunteers’ fees and the outcomes of their labor fuel the center. Volunteers usually stay for one month and pay about \$4,000. The minimal amount of time one can stay as a paying volunteer is two weeks, the shorter stay introduced in response to the global financial crisis of the late 2000s. The center needs at least six monthlong volunteers every month to stay afloat. Volunteer revenues are used toward supplementing the animals’ diet, purchasing building supplies for structures that have a hard time withstanding rot in the tropical humidity and destruction from curious and playful orangutans, and improving the infrastructure of the site as both a wildlife center and an orangutan rehabilitation center.

Forms of intimacy or physical proximity in the interface between human visitors and orangutans at the site posed serious potential dangers. The orangutans could contract human-carried illnesses, including H1N1 (and so volunteers were required to wear surgical masks when inside the orangutan night den), and the volunteers could be subject to bodily harm. Even though the volunteers did not directly handle orangutans, they cleaned their cages in close proximity to them. They had to mind “grab zones” that were within reach of some orangutans. Their copresence with orangutans also entailed a need to be aware of the interface between themselves and the animals in their midst. The potential vulnerability of volunteers to bodily violence was especially apparent one day in an incident involving the orangutan Efran.

Efran’s body size and musky smell were formidable. He weighed about two hundred pounds and stood less than five feet tall. The strength of his arms could bear the weight of his entire body. His hands were perhaps three times the size of his handlers’. His face, with its fully developed cheek pads, was about four times the size of my own. Efran was a fully grown, 23-year-old adult. As an adult male orangutan, he was about ten times stronger than any of us humans at the site. Like the other orangutans at the site, Efran, as an infant, had been displaced by habitat destruction and confiscated by the state as an illegally trafficked pet.

When newly arrived volunteers at the orangutan rehabilitation site first saw Efran, they were often struck by his presence and the multiple sensations evoked by the encounter. Nearly everyone would gasp, especially when meeting his gaze. Some would cringe at the smell. Others would enjoy the fleshy odor. Taking in the presence of such a rare being, one volunteer said at that moment of encounter, “Wow . . . moments like these make me feel like I’m really here.” The evocation of multiple senses called for a heightened awareness of their copresence in the interface. It was through affective encounters that volunteers felt that “they were here.”¹⁶

After years of failed efforts at rehabilitation, Efran served as a warning to volunteers against being too affectionate toward any young orangutan, which could contribute to the individual later being deemed unfit for rehabilitation. When Efran was a free-ranging subadult at Batu Dua Belas, he was too habituated to people and became too dangerous: He knuckle-walked on the ground and attacked people by biting them.¹⁷ At Lundu, Efran was among the orangutans held in an enclosure in the day for what local managers described as “educational and conservation purposes.” Part of the orangutan husbandry routine included releasing Efran out to his enclosure and cleaning his night den. He would regularly linger near the night den, grip the heavy steel bars of the gate, and watch from outside while a volunteer cleaned inside. He would often open his mouth and wait until the volunteer using the hose understood his

gesture as meaning he wanted to get a drink from the spout (Liebal et al. 2006). Sometimes, he would put his hands under the running soapy water and would rub his palms, to the delight of the volunteer washing his cage. As long as he was on the other side of the bars, everything was fine.

One morning in October 2008, Efran was using a bamboo stick to pile together and sweep the debris of fruit rind and his own feces out of his cage to the gutter of the interior walkway, imitating the keepers' and volunteers' cleaning motions, as he was occasionally apt to do. To get Efran to leave the cage, that morning's keeper would have to first put fresh food out in his enclosure and then leave his cage door to the enclosure open. Since Efran preferred staying inside, leaving his food out in the enclosure was a way to coerce him to go out. Once he left for his food, a worker would close and lock the cage door behind him, and then two of the volunteers could clean his cage.

On that morning, the volunteer Eva was in the corridor just outside the cage, nearly at the door. Fay was inside the cage, giving it the last rinse. Len substituted for Layang that day and stood near Eva. Eva saw that Efran could open the cage door about ten to twelve inches. Right after the incident, Eva and Fay explained to me what had happened:

Eva: I noticed something was not right. He could push it open more than usually. It all happened so quickly. I think I told Len, "I think he can open the door." I'm not sure if there was a language barrier or something. So then Len lifted it [the locking mechanism] up, right while Efran was playing with the door then. I think I yelled, "He's coming inside!" And Fay quickly threw the hose out, jumped out, and slammed the [heavy, wrought iron] gate behind her. So then Len acted quickly enough to secure that door shut . . . Now it's scary, now that nothing happened. Had something happened, we'd have a different story!

Fay: It was so scary. We should *always* make sure to check it [the lock] twice. Thank you Eva for saving my life.

E: I didn't think it was saving your life; it was just the moment.¹⁸

Eva and Fay had the luxury of speculation since, thankfully, nothing tragic happened. However, it would be a mistake to think they were speaking in hyperbole, because the threat of bodily injury was very real. When seeing Efran, it is impossible to forget his strength. As soon as Efran reentered his cage that morning, he slammed the dangling oversized tire across it, conveying what everyone—including Layang, who heard about the episode after the fact—assumed was anger. Anyone who had read Birute Galdikas's (1995) memoir would have remembered the story of a rehabilitant orangutan that sexually assaulted a human at Camp Leakey. Considering Efran's earlier record of biting people while he

was free ranging, he likely would have felt free to bite once free from his confines.

Although not tragic, something did, indeed, happen in the interface between Efran, Eva, Fay, and Len. What happened was not just a matter of gathering one's wits quickly, but it was also about being attuned to the production of affect. The intensity was palpable for all four of them. The volunteers and Len needed to be attuned to the moment, to Efran, and to each other. This moment exemplified volunteers' custodial work as a form of labor that requires responses to affect. In this case, Fay, Eva, and Len's response was about the prevented potential terror of too closely encountering a being with which one would not normally be in close contact outside a wildlife center like Lundu. Fay and Eva's experience helps show how affect—charged in a complex, momentary feeling between terror, pleasure, and relief—drives the encounters that occur at this site. A transnational interest in embodied intensity, or affect, is made sharper through encountering wild animals. This interest held by volunteers can play out here, as a site of custodial labor, precisely because the moment is fleeting.

The gendering of affective "hard labor"

Helping with orangutan husbandry takes about a quarter to a third of a volunteer's laboring day—just as it does for workers like Layang. The rest of the time is usually spent on construction projects requiring what a few volunteers had described to me as "hard labor." Volunteers' hard labor is crucial to the maintenance and development of the center. Their work includes such tasks as hauling wood hundreds of yards from the work yard to the construction site, lifting 30-pound river stones and moving them to support the foundations of the orangutan ranger station, removing trees felled by heavy rain, using simple workshop tools to extract metal beams buried in the ground so that a better enclosure can be built for the gibbons, and sawing and varnishing wooden planks to make a fence to block visitors from entering or disturbing the orangutan jungle-skills training site.

All these forms of hard labor entail affect, but the characteristics of this affect are different from those generated in encounters between humans and nonhuman animals. This second form of custodial affect is especially shaped by the relationship between the postindustrial Global North and the industrializing Global South. In this regard, performing hard labor is a commodity consumed by vacationing postindustrial workers. Affect in this respect is produced through the toil of one's gendered body in relation to other gendered bodies at a work site and the heightened awareness of one's own and others' bodies through hard labor: heat, sweat, and muscular pain. Affect in this context goes through an extra step of attunement: The intensity is

related not only to the individual pleasure or joy of inhabiting and pushing one's body through duress but also to the welfare and future of the animals at the site, to what volunteers see as an improvement on the plight of endangered animals. Here we can see how intersubjective affect has greater significance beyond the subjects interfacing each other.

In this regard, the affect of hard labor becomes a "sentiment" or an "affective idea" of custodial labor for volunteers (Yanagisako 2002). In this particular case, affect is given a conscious purpose and meaning. Volunteers I met consciously interface affect and imbue it with personal significance, which, in turn, resonates for a large enough demographic of postindustrial workers to produce a tourist economy of commercial volunteering.

In all of their activities entailing hard labor, the volunteers I encountered were aware of the masculine undercurrents of their labor, in which physical brawn was needed to get the various jobs done.¹⁹ Yet most of the volunteers were white, professional women, most of them from Britain and Australia. Of the approximately one hundred and twenty volunteers I encountered, only about ten were men. How did these women participate in custodial labor and how did they come to terms with the masculinized forms of this work?

Muriel's experience as a volunteer and her narrative about it help answer this question. Muriel and a covolunteer participated in the effort to remove a street lamppost that was blocking the way of a future gibbon enclosure. The street lamppost was unnecessary because the electricity had never been fully wired and no one was allowed to come into the park at night. Muriel and her covolunteer, along with Layang, the keeper Ngalih, and Tom, the British volunteer company project manager, had worked beneath the powerful heat of the dry-season sun for a couple of hours and had managed to dislodge and knock down the street lamppost without power tools—just rope, shovels, and their own physical strength. Wire circuits dangled from the bottom of the lamppost. Layang and then Tom took a turn trying to cut the wires using bolt cutters, which did not make a dent. Muriel suggested that they open the wire box of the lamppost. Ngalih and Layang, talking between themselves in a mix of Iban and English, suggested using the handsaw. While Ngalih left to get the saw, Muriel repeated her suggestion, as it sometimes took her a couple of tries before others understood her Scottish accent. Layang heeded Muriel's suggestion. He opened the wire box and found no wires—just a plywood backing. We all laughed as Layang reached his arm into the lamppost and pulled out the wires—they had been loose the whole time. I could not resist a quip: "Sometimes it takes more than just brute strength!" Tom responded, "We didn't use all of our brute strength capacities—we could have gotten angry at it and kicked it!"

What Tom and I had jokingly called "brute strength" referenced the sweaty, muscle-aching, backbreaking work of intensely inhabiting one's body in the presence of other similarly toiling bodies. When human bodies are in contact with each other and face the resistance of an incredibly heavy object, affect surges among those bodies and between them and the—in this case, inanimate—resisting object. While affect here nearly erupted into the emotion of anger, it simmered in the heat between the sweaty bodies and fatigued muscles of the laborers and continued to motivate them.

At this site, the strength of one's hard labor is prized by male workers and is a commodified fetish for the female volunteers. By paying to engage in this work, Muriel, who works at a major insurance company at home—and other postindustrial, white-collar women like her—embodies that power herself. What is to be gained in purchasing the opportunity to embody manly muscle power? Muriel offered an answer when I asked her if she wondered why so many women agree to volunteer their hard labor:

No, because I know women are more likely to do this because women I think are kinder and patient and they're more likely to volunteer. And I think women care more about animals than men do. I don't know whether it's a maternal thing, they want to nurture automatically. And I also think that other women prove to themselves that they can actually be as good as a man, come all this way [to Sarawak], and do *hard* work. And some of the women have families, children, and I think they just want to do something on their own and get a sense of self-worth, self-esteem, because as it is four [p.m.], you work all day and come back dirty and tired, you know you worked just as hard as a man. So I'm not surprised that it's all women. I'd be more surprised to see young boys here. You're more likely to get men, like Timothy, who was older, retired, and had time or men like Jim who got dragged here by their girlfriends. I can't imagine a man, like a man my age, just who works in an office same as me, I can't imagine him volunteering to do it, because I don't think a man could care enough to do it. I think women just generally care more. [Interview, March 30, 2010]²⁰

Muriel's answer offered two interpretations. On the one hand, she implied that engaging in physically demanding labor is about gender equality, that a woman could work just as hard as a man, even in labor forms that are skewed along physical differences of gendered bodies. On the other hand, Muriel resignified physical, hard labor as a form of feminized care work. In doing so, perhaps Muriel was allaying a gender anxiety reminiscent of the anxieties directed toward Victorian colliery women in Britain, who had masculine embodiments while working as laborers (McClintock 1995). By emphasizing our location as distant from her home in Scotland, she seemed to recall the trope

of colonial white women at the frontier (Mills 1993). I may not have been able to access her unspoken thoughts, but it was clear to me that Muriel sought to define care in terms of an essentialized femininity of wanting to nurture. She thus understood the hard labor that she performed at the site is a form of nurturing and caring. Yet the work of volunteering at Lundu Wildlife, as demonstrated by Eva, Fay, and Muriel, has very little nurturing in it and neither does the work of rehabilitation as performed by Layang.

The care of Muriel's labor is not the care of emotional labor and does not reflect traditional ideas of care work (Hochschild 1983). Muriel is not there to personally nurture a baby orangutan. Rather, care, for her, is conveyed through the fact of paying to work and working very hard. Here hard labor is prompted by the care for and interest in the future of another species. Whereas Muriel sees this aspect of her volunteering effort as perhaps a womanly interest in the welfare of an animal, I see it as a form of custodial labor. Muriel participates in custodial labor by toiling to produce the material effects of improved welfare for the animals at Lundu Wildlife and by paying to perform that labor. She laboriously and financially gives with the intention of gaining a certain kind of future for others: specifically, endangered orangutans that potentially can be rehabilitated.

Donating funds for environmental charity is not enough for Muriel and other commercial volunteers who pay to perform custodial labor. Charity would deny them the experience of engaging affect while in the proximity of rare wildlife and while engaging in toil. When I asked her about her occupation, her response exemplified how her and other volunteers' participation has to be understood in a postindustrial context:

Rheana: So then what kind of work do you do back home?

Muriel: I am in an office, a computer, a big insurance company, boring, sitting, nothing, no value to anyone. It's just a big company, making money out of people, for insurance and pensions. And *no* self-satisfaction in my job. I hate it. And just wanted to get out and do hard work for a change. But of course, you can't just pack it in and do it full time, because obviously at the end of the day, you got to go back. And a secure job is a good job, so that's why you do this for a month. At least, you might only do this once, but it's still a month that you've done *something*. So it's good. It's good and it'll be hard to go back and to sit at a desk and look at silly things that are really quite pointless, when you know that something like this is happening.

Muriel's frustration and lack of satisfaction with her job puts a finger to the pulse of the current political-economic moment. In her scathing critique of her workplace and the insurance industry, she points to the neoliberal moment of

corporate wealth, diminishing pensions and benefits, and job insecurity. Muriel and others like her in the Global North are deeply alienated from the products of their labor in the service economy. Muriel turns to commodifying manual labor and paying to participate in meaningful production. Doing "something" means producing material products or "some things" by one's hard labor. It means phenomenologically engaging in the world by intensely inhabiting one's body and being available to feel affect. It also means personally responding to the perceived need to improve the conditions of endangered and endemic animals of the postcolonial Global South vis-à-vis custodial labor.

Muriel's work in Scotland appears to convey what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (Hardt 1999, 2007; Hardt and Negri 2004) describe as affective labor. Muriel works in an industry that circulates immaterial products and labor. Not only does she handle numbers and charts on her computer but she also deals with people and thereby has the "soft skills" to compete in the service-oriented industries of the Global North. Yet this understanding of affective labor is too limited and cannot make sense of the forms of affect that she experiences when she toils at and for an orangutan rehabilitation center—even if only for one month. Hardt and Negri's (2004) understanding of affective labor cannot make sense of the ways in which the labor she chooses to engage as a paying volunteer entails affect: the affect of encountering a massive ape puckering his lips toward her, the intensity when he grips and rocks his cage door a few feet away from her, and the surge of sensation when she can say that she feels she is actually there, in the moment, far from home, doing something, feeling something. This is where custodial labor comes to have meaning for Muriel and others like her.

Conclusion

The case of orangutan rehabilitation pushes us to better understand affect and the production of affect between bodies, both human and animal. Affect does not reside within a human individual's body and mind nor does it solely reside within the interface of human bodies. Even if we were equipped to understand the body-mind synapses in orangutans, we would not find affect residing within an orangutan's body either. Rather, as the moments of interface at Lundu Wildlife Center show us, affect is produced between bodies. This affective encounter is what Donna Haraway (2008), borrowing from Karen Barad (2007), describes in the idea of "intra-action," in which the act of connecting produces subjects in relation to each other. It is between bodies that we come to feel affect.

The interface between human and animal subjects instructs us about the unique distinctions conveyed in the term *affect*. Interfacing affect entails response and attempts

at navigating sensations produced in any intra-action or interface between bodies. It is in this interface that one's impulsive response to hold onto an orangutan, arms up and ready to embrace, has to be stifled and that one's own body has to instead convey rejection. It is here that the intensity of fear-joy-thrill stirs at the sight of an orangutan's unreadable gaze. It is here that someone can truly feel something by doing some thing.

Affect produced in an interface has implications beyond those specific to the bodies and subjects interfacing each other. It is in this context that the idea of "custodial labor" arises. Custodial labor describes how the production of affect, with all its intensities and ambiguities, generates the sentiments necessary to sustain commercial volunteerism and other forms of private-public partnerships that rely on the unequal participation of particular local and global subjects. The participation and vulnerability these particular subjects experience is unequally distributed between those who see such a project as a vacation, those whose employment is defined by it, and those displaced animals that have no choice and nowhere else to go.

Affect in custodial labor, as conveyed by volunteers like Muriel, is different from the economies described by Hardt and Negri's (2004) "affective labor." Hardt and Negri see affective labor as a form of what they call "immaterial labor," which is typical in the Global North, "produces or manipulates affects such as feelings of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, or passion," and is evident, for them, in the work of fast-food employees who perform "service with a smile" (2004:108). Affect in custodial labor is not simply feeling, to be manipulated by people and workers. Rather, it is produced in the space between bodies, in the interface of bodies, and it is spontaneous, unpredictable, and in some ways unreadable. Affect is not the product of "immaterial labor" but is produced through encounters. And, finally, affect is not a mechanism of service work in the Global North, as Hardt and Negri (2004) see it. The affect of custodial labor is produced in bodily and risky interfaces of labor in the Global South, where one is expected to remove a concrete lamppost using only rope, muscle strength, and bolt cutters and where one is expected to handle an animal that is ten times stronger than oneself.

Custodial labor is shaped by postcolonial inequalities, and this is particularly apparent when one considers how custodians are exposed to varied levels of risk. Ultimately, Fay, Eva, Muriel, and the other volunteers left Lundu after their month was up. The experiences for which they paid were, for them, worthwhile: They felt affect, experienced risks, and all safely returned home to Britain. Efran, Gas, and Lisbet all likely continued to be excited behind their bars when staring at and engaging new volunteers, as they had done every month when I was in their midst. Even though Layang complained about the Forest Corporation's futile attempts at becoming profitable and even though

he still had the contacts to pick up construction work, he stayed with his job, which entailed affect and risk every day until it got the best of him. Trying to rescue stranded wildlife near Bakun Dam in January 2011, he contracted the zoonotic illness of meliodosis. The nearest hospital was too far away for him to get treatment in time. He died on the way there.

The custodial labor performed by Layang and commercial volunteers points to the ways in which affect produced between bodies also produces a global economy through a dynamic, multispecies interface. This particular economy is inflected with postindustrial desires for meaningful labor, embodied toil, and affective interfacing with endangered wildlife as well as with the conditions of postcolonial inequalities that expose some to greater risk than others. Understanding transspecific care and affect characterizing it requires understanding how every body in relation to another is vulnerable to the other, and yet that mutual vulnerability entails risks and consequences that are unequally experienced.

Notes

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1. I have changed all proper names at my field sites to protect the privacy of my research subjects. This encounter occurred in March 2010 at "Lundu Wildlife Center." I learned about it in different conversations with Ngalih and volunteers who worked alongside Liz and Kate as well as in an interview with Lin, the junior officer in the management team at Lundu Wildlife.

2. Throughout this article, I use *affect* in the singular, following Massumi 2002 and Gregg and Seigworth 2010. Using the term in the singular avoids distinguishing or compartmentalizing the range of feeling or intensity at work. Affect can thus encompass the range of feeling between fear and joy or terror and relief in the moment before it comes to be qualified as any of these emotions.

3. As actor-network theory teaches us, agential bodies are not limited to sentient bodies (de la Cadena 2010; Latour et al. 2005).

4. In practice, the goal of instilling autonomy is carried out through many different forms of captivity. I explain this paradox elsewhere (Parreñas 2012).

5. The risks involved in this work begs the question, why do workers continue to do it? The job of animal keeper at Lundu Wildlife Center is a low-wage occupation, on par with subcontracted construction work. Unlike construction work, however, it is a regular source of monthly income and continues during the wet season. For some, the job is conveniently located, five minutes away from their residence in the longhouse. For the few who live in staff quarters, it offers free housing. The job does not require education; thus, some begin working at the park at a relatively young age and, after performing the same duties for decades, cannot imagine doing anything else. For others, the risks, dangers, and pleasures of the affective interface with orangutans could be an important attraction. Finally, although the job does not command respect in the local context, the international volunteers imbue it with cultural capital and see it as a profession and talent. Gaining respect internationally while being denied it locally may help explain why a keeper continues this work. When describing their attitude toward their work in formal interviews, keepers most often used the Malay word *minat*, which means “interest” or “enthusiasm.”

6. Of the 120 volunteers I met during field research, only ten were men. All but one came from the Global North, specifically Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Italy. The exception was Russian. They were primarily interested in the experience as a meaningful vacation with animals and often knew little about orangutans before their arrival. Most had seen short documentaries or television news segments in their home countries about orangutan rehabilitation efforts, documentaries that usually feature infants and mothers, not adult orangutans, and especially not fully flanged male orangutans. When they arrived, most were shocked at the amount of captivity that occurs at the center, yet they came to accept it as a necessary paradox in rehabilitation efforts. I write about this extensively elsewhere (Parreñas 2012). Many volunteers ultimately chose Lundu Wildlife over other wildlife rehabilitation centers, such as lion sanctuaries in South Africa or elephant projects in Thailand, because the time frame worked for their own schedules, destination interests, species interests, and self-catering requirements.

7. I call these gendered embodiments “transspecific” because Ching was regarded as being able to perceive human notions of gender.

8. Levinas explicitly rejects the idea that animals have ethical faces, including the dog Bobby, who recognized Levinas’s humanity in the midst of the inhumane conditions of the prison camp. Levinas offers the reason that Bobby and other animals do not have *logos*. They do not have “the brain needed to universalize maxims and drives” (1990:153) that allow for ethical relations (see also Clark 1997). I assert that the concept of an interface between humans and animal subjects implies an underlying relationship of ethics, or a sense of responsibility toward the other. Jacques Derrida’s (2008) notion of “response” deconstructs Levinas to think about a responsibility toward the other identified as “animal.”

9. Two of the new orangutans were infants born on site, and one, James, was an adult male transferred from Batu Dua Belas. Of the three orangutans who had been there the longest, Ching and Ti were part of the first population transferred from Batu Dua Belas to Lundu Wildlife, and Lisbet was born at the site in 2002.

10. Conservationists’ estimates of the wild orangutan population in Sarawak range from 1,500 to 2,000 (Chan 2009). The num-

ber of rehabilitant orangutans is low: 13 at Lundu Wildlife and 26 at Batu Dua Belas as of 2010. However, rehabilitant individuals are the primary source of public media on orangutans, and visits to rehabilitation centers offer a chance to see an orangutan in its natural settings. Orangutans in the wild are very difficult to find since they are arboreal and are the most solitary species of the great apes. Batu Dua Belas receives thousands of day visitors every year, whereas Lundu Wildlife has many more volunteers than visitors. Batu Dua Belas’ setting appears more “natural” than Lundu Wildlife’s to visitors.

11. This particular conversation happened in English. When together, Layang and I would speak either Malay or English.

12. Zookeepers from Australia designed the orangutan area of Lundu Wildlife, and its structure resembles other “world-class” zoos. Three outdoor enclosures are connected to one building where the orangutans are kept at night. The building, known as the night den, houses eight cages. In the interior of the building, a corridor connects the cages. Each cage has a species-size gate that opens to the enclosure and is operated from the corridor. Each also has a gate door that opens to the corridor so that people can enter to clean the cage when the animal is in its enclosure. The corridor also has doors that open to the three enclosures. The corridor mechanism that opened the orangutan-size gate between Gas’s night cage and her enclosure was broken, so she had to be carried or led through the corridor to her enclosure through the corridor door.

13. Mut’s vocalization resembled what John MacKinnon (1974:63) describes as “crying and screaming” and “fear-screaming.”

14. Orangutans are not physiologically adapted to walk (Winkler 1995). Yet rehabilitant orangutans often walk upright. Examples of rehabilitant orangutans walking on the ground can be seen in the photographs in *Orangutans: Wizards of the Rain Forests* (Russon 1999).

15. Linguistic anthropologists following Roman Jakobson (Caton 1987) point out that communication is more than just a tool for logical, referential meanings. What would happen if animal behaviorists and evolutionary psychologists thought like linguistic anthropologists when studying human-animal communication? The difficulty of ascertaining meaning and concretely defining non-human primate gestures became widely known in October 2010, when the journal *Cognition* retracted Marc Hauser et al.’s (2002) article “Rule Learning by Cotton Top Tamarins” because its “research data do not support the reported findings.” Instead of locating logics in human-animal communication, what happens when we become interested in finding feelings that evoke responses? Recent research in animal cognition investigates this in exciting inquiries regarding attentiveness (Liebal et al. 2007; Povinelli et al. 2003; Tempelmann et al. 2011).

16. I heard this statement when I accompanied a set of volunteers on their first day in the center as they toured the facilities. Being “really here,” facing an endangered orangutan in Borneo, indexes how animals endemic to Borneo represented it as a land of jungles, wildlife, and nature for some volunteers. Borneo stood in contrast to the “there” of urban, postindustrial Britain, regardless of the captive condition of the ape one encountered. The irony that volunteers could hop in a van and get toast and marmite within an hour was perhaps lost on them. The point, for them, was that they were in a tropical forest, encountering members of an endangered species that they would otherwise never encounter.

17. Orangutans are the only arboreal great apes and are not physiologically suited to knuckle-walking, like gorillas, which are terrestrial. However, male and female rehabilitant orangutans mimicked the humans around them and would “walk” upright on

their hind limbs, folding in the digits of their hind limb hands so that their palms could be flush against the floor or curving their hands in, palms facing each other as they “walked.” The forelimbs would drag in this process. See N. 14.

18. I had been in the night den with them taking notes concerning the morning animal husbandry routine and had stepped out for what was to have been a brief moment when Efran was outside in his enclosure. Thus, I had not directly witnessed the commotion, although I was close by. This incident made me keenly aware of how mundane copresence can give way to spontaneous intensity.

19. Although the enclosure walls of Lundu Wildlife Center were actually built by ethnic Iban women laborers, the volunteers were unaware of how local women's labor helped to build the place. All of the center personnel with whom the volunteers worked were men. In the years since the center was built, manual labor has become gendered as masculine, as it is in the home countries of the volunteers. This is not to say that labor gendered as feminine does not entail physically demanding work. In Sarawak, working outdoors has come to be seen as unfavorable, especially by women. I further engage the issue of labor elsewhere (Parreñas 2012).

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