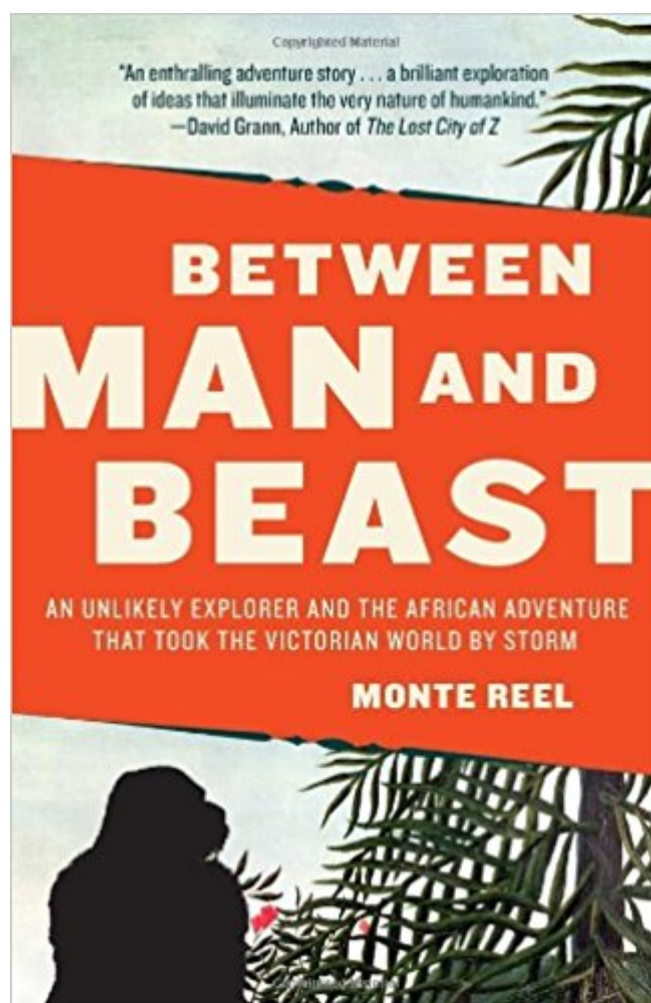


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Between Man And Beast: An Unlikely Explorer And The African Adventure That Took The Victorian World By Storm



Synopsis

In 1856, Paul Du Chaillu ventured into the African jungle in search of a mythic beast, the gorilla. After wild encounters with vicious cannibals, deadly snakes, and tribal kings, Du Chaillu emerged with 20 preserved gorilla skins—two of which were stuffed and brought on tour—and walked smack dab into the biggest scientific debate of the time: Darwin's theory of evolution. Quickly, Du Chaillu's trophies went from objects of wonder to key pieces in an all-out intellectual war. With a wide range of characters, including Abraham Lincoln, Arthur Conan Doyle, P.T. Barnum, Thackeray, and of course, Charles Darwin, this is a one of a kind book about a singular moment in history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

An Best Book of the Month, March 2013: When Paul Du Chaillu set out to bag the gorilla in the name of science (and as a shortcut to academic credibility), it was still the quasi-mythical ngena of the Western imagination: a savage, bloodthirsty beast deep in the forests of equatorial Africa, seen only by the tribes that dwelled within. He got his animal--he got many, by way of his rifle--but when he eventually made his way to England, he and his stuffed specimens became unlikely pawns at the center of the burgeoning debate over evolution in the wake of Darwin's insurgent hypothesis. While jealous explorers questioned his bona fides and jaded scientists glibly dismissed his methods and observations, Du Chaillu's reputation as a death-defying killer of monsters granted him celebrity status, lifting the often bewildered hero to rarified levels of London society. With the unlikeliest of heroes at its center, *Between Man and Beast* is a fast-paced and fun blend of

adventure and history. --Jon Foro --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

“Monte Reel’s BETWEEN MAN AND BEAST contains all the elements of an enthralling adventure story. But it is more than just a riveting tale; it is also a brilliant exploration of ideas that illuminate the very nature of humankind.” --David Grann, New York Times bestselling author of THE LOST CITY OF Z and THE DEVIL AND SHERLOCK HOLMES “Intriguing. . . . Rattles along with fine, wacky momentum.” --The New York Times Book Review “Gripping. . . . Intellectually satisfying. . . . Exciting.” --Salon “A celebration of accomplishments too far-reaching to be understood in their time.” --The Daily Beast “Thoroughly engrossing.” --Minneapolis Star Tribune “[An] entertaining and provocative story . . . it has the narrative flow and evocative language of a fine historical novel.” --The St. Louis Post-Dispatch “[A] sense of urgency compels the reader onward to find out what happened. . . . Arresting.” --Washington Post “Engrossing . . . would go great with popcorn. . . . Addresses big topics -- evolution, abolition -- but they remain in service of the narrative, providing context for colorful conflict.” --Wall Street Journal “A robust intellectual history. . . . In Reel’s hands, Du Chaillu’s adventures in Africa, including his discovery of Pygmies and his part in a smallpox epidemic, were no less harrowing than his interactions with many of the world’s leading scientists and explorers.” --Publishers Weekly “Those unfamiliar with [Paul Du Chaillu] would do well to pick up a copy of Between Man and Beast, Monte Reel’s new book about Du Chaillu’s life and adventures in pursuit of this fierce creature.” --Book Page “Adventure, history, nature, big ideas -- what more could you want?” --Library Journal “Fascinating. . . . A lively footnote to the debate between science and religion and the exploration of the African jungle in the Victorian era.” --Kirkus Reviews “You’d half expect a Bela Lugosi mad scientist or a Johnny Weissmuller Tarzan to pop up in this Victorian-era drama, which travels from the London of Darwin and Dickens to unexplored Africa to Civil War-ravaged America.” --New York Post “A supremely entertaining, enlightening and memorable read.” --Nature “An admirable book for those who like epic tales of exploration. . . . Fascinating.” --The Buffalo News “Retelling his adventures opens a wonderful window, both magical and alarming, into what he [Paul Du Chaillu] saw and, ultimately, into who we are.” --The Free Lance-Star “Swift, clever, well-researched and provocative. . . . Reel skillfully shifts our attention from continent to continent,

from past to present, until the story's tributaries merge and rush toward the conclusion. •The Plain Dealer •“A vivid scene worthy of the silver screen. . . . From the perilous adventures to the equally tense academic battles waged by British high society. . . . At times, the mind staggers to recall that this story is a work of nonfiction. •San Antonio-Express New

Paul Du Chaillu was the first explorer to encounter the gorilla, and he killed most the animals that he encountered. As pointed out by the author, exploration and hunting were enmeshed. Specimens were killed and stuffed, drawn, sent to museums. During his travels Paul also encountered the famous Fang tribes who were known as cannibals. He was, however, well treated by that tribe. Members of the tribe shared that Europeans were regarded as cannibals, why else would they arrive "from nobody knows where.", captures men, women, and children, and depart. What else was the purpose but cannibalism. In the states, his talks and exhibits were eagerly consumed. To me the backstory, complete with competing theories about the discoveries, is the most cogent part of the book. Darwin with evolution and Owens with intelligent design, competed to explain the mysteries. Africa had been nearly impenetrable, and I believe the continent has been mostly the worst for those who penetrated it. Expeditions entered the continent to take what they sought, and Paul's policy of shooting to kill hasn't varied all that much. The terror of the explorations does make for good reading, and the author generally sees the feckless, more innocent side of Du Chaillu. Most of what he thought about gorillas of course was found untrue. They are generally isolative, vegetarian animals, now almost closed out of their habitats. The book gives a good basis of the start of the evolution- intelligent design debate that continues today for many people. This is a book with much to offer.

Is this a non fiction book that reads like fiction? Yes and no. There was plenty of history, but it could have been presented with a little more panache. If you have read my reviews, you know that this style of writing is my favorite genre...but don't do it half way. I liked this book, however it could have been written in a way that would have resulted in many nail-biting chapter endings. Monte Reel, you were so close to perfection! You have a 5' 3" unknown explorer who had the guts to stand up to a furious gorilla charge as your main character. According to your own research, the first white man to encounter this highly debatable relative of man is Paul Du Chaillu. You wrote an interesting tale, but you had the wherewithal at your fingertips to tell it in a more intoxicating style. This explorer, Paul Du Chaillu, in 2013 is practically incognito. Nobody in the mid to late 1800s understood who he was,

just imagine what today's students know about Du Chaillu. Nothing! I see a book that could have been written with more flare and page turning capabilities. Okay, enough said, it was still a reasonable success. This is the story of Paul Du Chaillu of dubious parentage being brought up by the missionaries' John and Jane Wilson in Gabon, West Africa. Eventually, Wilson gets Du Chaillu a job as a French teacher in Carmel, NY. Once in America, Du Chaillu's African stories get to John Cassin, head of Philadelphia's Academy of Natural Sciences. Paul earns a paid expedition back to Africa to find and send back specimens of unknown animals and birds. He sends back many stuffed specimens over the next three years, but becomes famous for being the first white man to encounter a gorilla. Once back in America, Paul finds that there is little interest in his findings, and The Academy of Natural Sciences refuses to reimburse his expedition expenses. When Paul tries to display his gorilla skins in NYC, he is out maneuvered by P.T. Barnum's Broadway museum. Monte Reel's prose had this reviewer rooting hard for this would be explorer with no credentials. During this time period, Charles Darwin's 'On the Origin of Species' is published in England, sparking debates pro and con. Suddenly Paul's encounter with gorillas becomes meaningful. Richard Owen, superintendent of all the natural history collections at the British Museum, invites Paul to England to "show and tell" his African expedition experiences. Guess what? England loves him! Since Paul isn't a "educated" explorer, he has his backers and attackers. Stories are written about him by the great Charles Dickens and William Makepeace Thackeray in their respective magazines. All is good! Not. Here comes the attack on his story and qualifications by England's zoological society's head, John Gray, and a jealous retired explorer, Charles Waterton. Ladies and gentleman, let the gorilla wars begin! This is where the novel gets intriguing and the ensuing chapters magnetic. I haven't read Reel's first book, 'The Last of the Tribe', but I have to say that Monte Reel has the knack for writing novels about uncommon subjects that are irreproachably researched. My only criticism is his occasional lack of verve. If you don't know what I mean, read Robert Klara's 'FDR's Funeral Train', Candice Millard's 'Destiny of the Republic', or Erik Larson's 'The Devil in the White City'. Nonetheless, I thoroughly enjoyed this book, and profoundly endorse Monte Reel's latest book.

This is a fascinating biography of a man who is now all but forgotten, but it's also a look at a very interesting point in history. The life and times of Paul du Chaillu are presented in the context of the Victorian scientific (and religious) debate surrounding the theory of evolution and the discovery of gorillas, which ignited a frenzy of excitement and unease concerning humanity's place in the world. For the most part, this book moves along quickly and smoothly, but there are some chapters

that seem a bit out of place. Whenever P.T. Barnum's story comes in, the momentum of the larger story grinds to a halt. Barnum no doubt had an endlessly fascinating career, but he played very little part in the story at hand and it's difficult to see why there are entire chapters devoted to him. The rest of the book is so enjoyable that that's really a minor quibble. After all, says a lot that the least engaging portions of the book concern P.T. Barnum. This is a fascinating look at the way Victorian society handled scientific discoveries that were, to many, so extremely unsettling that the "debate" and unease surrounding the topic has not yet died down (at least in the U.S.). The past is often easier to analyze than the present, and this story offers a look at the reasons why even a society that considers itself enlightened can struggle with accepting facts that stir up uncomfortable feelings.

This was an interesting, if at times tedious, overview of one of the largely forgotten expeditions of the Victorian age. At times, the author overwhelms the reader with an almost endless list of scientists, freak show hucksters, politicians, and other characters, most of whom play an ancillary role to the story itself. What can be appreciated was the central intrigue of the book for me, that there was a time, not so very long ago, when the world seemed a much, much larger place than it does now. I am also interested in the scientific and cultural achievements of the Victorian age. This book is an interesting study of one of those achievements, and the man responsible for it.

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