



# The Georgian Menagerie: Exotic Animals in Eighteenth-Century London

*Christopher Plumb*

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In the eighteenth century, it would not have been impossible for a visitor to London to encounter an elephant or a kangaroo making its way down the Strand, heading towards the menagerie of Mr Pidcock at the Exeter Change. Pidcock's was just one of a number of commercial menagerists who plied their trade in London in this period – attracting visitors and potential customers - the predecessors to the more formal zoological societies of the Victorian era. As the British Empire expanded and seaborne trade flooded into London's ports, the menagerists gained access to animals from the most far-flung corners of the globe and these strange creatures became the objects of fascination and wonder. Many aristocratic families sought to create their own private menageries with which to entertain their guests, whilst for the less well-heeled, touring exhibitions of exotic creatures – both alive and dead – satisfied their curiosity for the animal world. Whilst many exotic creatures were treasured as a form of spectacle, others fared less well – turtles and civet cats were sought after as ingredients for soup and perfume respectively. In this book, Christopher Plumb introduces many tales of exotic animals in London in this period in an entertaining and enlightening book which will be fascinating reading for anyone interested in Georgian Britain.

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