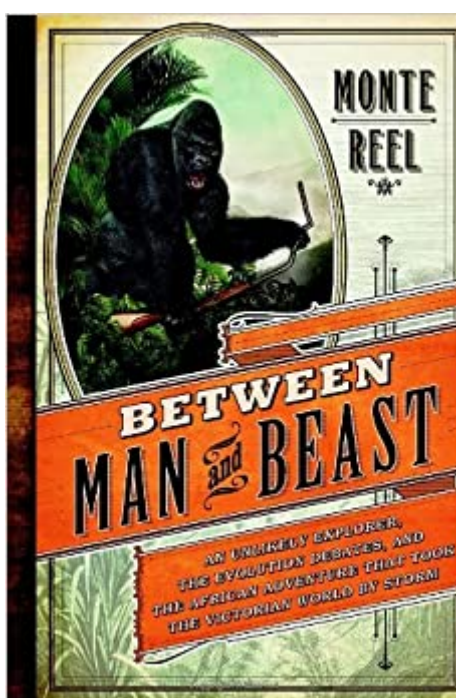


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Between Man And Beast: An Unlikely Explorer, The Evolution Debates, And The African Adventure That Took The Victorian World By Storm



Synopsis

The unbelievably riveting adventure of an unlikely young explorer who emerged from the jungles of Africa with evidence of a mysterious, still mythical beast—the gorilla—only to stumble straight into the center of the biggest debate of the day: Darwin's theory of evolution. In 1856 Paul Du Chaillu marched into the equatorial wilderness of West Africa determined to bag an animal that, according to legend, was nothing short of a monster. When he emerged three years later, the summation of his efforts only hinted at what he'd experienced in one of the most dangerous regions on earth. Armed with an astonishing collection of zoological specimens, Du Chaillu leapt from the physical challenges of the jungle straight into the center of the biggest issues of the time—the evolution debate, racial discourse, the growth of Christian fundamentalism—and helped push each to unprecedented intensities. He experienced instant celebrity, but with that fame came whispers about his past, his credibility, and his very identity—which would haunt the young man. Grand in scope, immediate in detail, and propulsively readable, *Between Man and Beast* brilliantly combines Du Chaillu's personal journey with the epic tale of a world hovering on the sharp edge of transformation.

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 njeña 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

"The gorilla's very existence suggested" at just the time Charles Darwin was also suggesting "heretical ideas about the origin and nature of mankind. And the man chiefly responsible for bringing this animal to worldwide attention was Paul Du Chaillu, the central character and driving riddle of Monte Reel's tale of scientific buccaneering. Intriguing. Rattles along with fine, wacky momentum. --The New York Times Book Review "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 "Using extensive historical research, Reel brings alive this expedition and a later one and describes what happened between the two journeys....sense of urgency compels the reader onward to find out what happened....Arresting" --The Washington Post "Gripping....Intellectually satisfying....Exciting" --Salon "A lively and intriguing biography of the restless adventurer who first sees, studies and takes specimens of gorillas....thoroughly engrossing." --Minneapolis Star Tribune "Entertaining and provocative" story of the life and adventures of explorer Paul Du Chaillu....[Reel] does a superb job of telling the engrossing story of Du Chaillu and tying it into the events and thoughts of the time, from the intense debate over racial differences in light of the theory of evolution to the habit of Abraham Lincoln's political enemies of referring to him as a 'gorilla'....scrupulous in adhering to the facts....At the same time, it has the narrative flow and evocative language of a fine historical novel." --St. Louis Post-Dispatch "A supremely entertaining, enlightening and memorable read." --Nature "Reel paints each chapter of du Chaillu's life as a vivid scene worthy of the silver screen. They range in scope from the perilous adventures taking place within the jungles of Gabon to the equally tense academic battles waged by British high society. They are all rich with detail, dialogue and atmosphere thanks to the immense work Reel has put forth in researching du Chaillu's life. At times, the mind staggers to recall that this story is a work of nonfiction." --San Antonio Express "An admirable book for those who like epic tales of exploration.... Fascinating.... highlights once again the big issues that seem endlessly interesting to

new generations of Americans, 'the evolution debate, racial discourse, the growth of Christian fundamentalism' in careful historical context and with a fine hand for thoughtful exposition."--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"Reel provides a robust intellectual history by embedding Du Chaillu's story within the debate over evolution, the relationship among the human races, the rise of Christian fundamentalism, and the nasty backbiting that was common in the scientific arena of the time. He expertly probes the history of the enigmatic Du Chaillu, someone who purposefully shrouded his past from scrutiny....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"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's Required Reading"Before there was Jane Goodall, or even Tarzan and King Kong, the gorilla was a creature of mystery....Reel retraces his life and work with the spirit of curiosity and adventure that drove du Chaillu in the first place. What results is a celebration of accomplishments too far-reaching to be understood in their time."--The Daily Beast"Adventure, history, nature, big ideasâ "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"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... Although Du Chaillu's checkered life story is the bedrock of this book, Reel builds upon it fascinating sketches of England's leading intellectuals, explorers and freelance eccentrics of the day, detailing not only their personal achievements but their professional jealousies as well."--Book Page

• 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*

• From the moment explorer Paul du Chaillu had his first, fleeting glimpse of a gorilla, human understanding of this extraordinary animal began to change in a fundamental, irrevocable way. Reel tells du Chaillu's storyâ "a fascinating, wide-ranging tale that involves everyone from Charles Darwin to Thomas Huxley to even Abraham Lincolnâ "with a vividness that brings long forgotten events to startling life. • --Candice Millard, New York Times bestselling author of

DESTINY OF THE REPUBLIC and THE RIVER OF DOUBT "Between Man and Beast is a rip-snorting adventure story, shot through with intrigue and absorbing intellectual history. Monte Reel is a wonderful writer, and he makes an expert guide to Paul Du Chaillu's groundbreaking travels in the wilds of Africa and his equally treacherous journey through the scientific salons of 19th century London. By weaving Du Chaillu's pursuit of the gorilla with the debate over evolution, Reel has given us a true 'missing link' that connects exploration, science, and literature. Readers will embrace Du Chaillu and root for him every step of the way"-- Mitchell Zuckoff, New York Times bestselling author of LOST IN SHANGRI-LA "Monte Reel has revived not only a lost world and a forgotten adventurer but a misunderstood monster. While dissecting the complex motives of the first foreigner to set eyes on a gorilla "at the time believed to be humanity's closest relative "Reel plunges us into the vicious controversy his discovery unleashes in the urban jungle of London in the age of Darwin and Huxley. In so doing, Reel has not only produced a page-turner filled with surprising details, connections and insights, but he has also forged the missing link between the perennially contentious Theory of Evolution and our equally durable fascination with King Kong. "John Vaillant, bestselling author of THE TIGER"Part swashbuckling jungle story, part gaslit Victorian time capsule, Monte Reel's visceral, captivating book restores a forgotten hero to his rightful place in history."--Benjamin Wallace, author of the New York Times Bestseller THE BILLIONAIRE'S VINEGAR"Monte Reel's BETWEEN MAN AND BEAST is a provocative, entertaining, and original adventure narrative."- Laurence Bergreen, New York Times bestselling author of OVER THE EDGE OF THE WORLD and COLUMBUS: THE FOUR VOYAGES

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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