

Animal worlds

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The field of Human Animal Studies and the historical analysis of human-animal relations are relatively recent—and often interdisciplinary—approaches. Historian Harriet Ritvo has famously called the new interest in the topic an ‘animal turn’. (1) The significance of this turn lies not in its study of the relationship between humans and animals, which is not necessarily new, but in its aim of establishing the agency of animals in shaping human history. Within Human Animal Studies, scholars use different approaches to analyse this influence on human life. Whilst intellectual approaches aim to understand specific eras through their handling of, and debates around, animals, other methods focus more directly on the subjectivity of animals. These diverging aims are also represented by the two books discussed in this review.

Diana Donald and Thomas Almeroth-Williams set out to write two very different types of animal history that, nonetheless, interact well with one another. In her book, Donald describes vividly the advocacy of women on behalf of animals and the gendered perceptions of kindness to animals during the Victorian era. Her book grows out of her previous research on human-animal interactions, notably in *Picturing Animals in Britain 1750-1850*. (2) It is the first book-length study of how gender played out in attitudes to cruelty to animals in Britain prior to the 20th century. Almeroth-Williams’ account, on the other hand, offers a well-researched social history of tangible human-animal interactions, focusing on the close way in which lower-class men lived and worked with animals in Georgian London. Looking at different time periods, these books offer a complex picture of social and professional engagement with animals in Britain.

In her first chapter, Diana Donald argues that women were restricted in their public advocacy for animals by an assumed ‘affinity between women and animals’, by unfavourable comparison with their male

counterparts, who were perceived as more reasonable (p. 18). Through her analysis, she foregrounds the ways in which attitudes towards animals were highly gendered. The overall restriction of women's access to the public sphere greatly impacted their advocacy for animals. Thus, according to Donald, the major challenge that female writers and thinkers tackled was how to frame animal advocacy as a 'reasonable and principled attitude' (p. 30). Throughout the book, she uses a variety of different sources to analyse the debates underpinning animal advocacy and gender in 19th-century Britain. These sources include the archive of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) with its committee minutes, records, and reports, as well as letters, philosophical and literary writings, and a vast array of visual sources, such as engravings, drawings, and paintings.

Donald's second chapter focuses on the early years of the RSPCA, outlining the organisational development of animal protection in the Victorian period, and discussing to what extent women shaped and advanced this growth. Throughout the chapter, she challenges the common historiographical assumption that the RSPCA's main goal was to reform the lower classes. This usefully challenges the Marxist argument that animal advocacy was a ploy, and a distraction from the hardships suffered by industrial workers, intended to maintain the *status quo* of the economic system. Donald argues convincingly that RSPCA members represented a wide spectrum of viewpoints, based on varied religious and political attachments, class backgrounds, and gender. Nonetheless, the RSPCA was highly restrictive with regard to its female members—and specifically the 1829 ladies' committee—compared with other philanthropic societies, some of which actively invited the participation of women. Donald highlights the different reactions of women to these restrictions, noting that the majority considered the cause too important to abandon on the basis of the RSPCA's restrictive practices. Despite attempts to proscribe their activities, some women went beyond the 'modest auxiliary and educational roles' that were assigned to them and risked public mockery and criticism for their ascribed sentimentality and naivety (p. 72).

Throughout chapter three, Donald examines how women's work for the RSPCA provided a springboard to more independent initiatives during the second half of the 19th century. Through the contributions of wealthy women and other independent work by women, she traces slow changes within the animal advocacy movement. However, she looks back at these initiatives through their criticism by male contemporaries and acknowledges that some females agreed with the restrictions and auxiliary character of women in the RSPCA, drawing a complicated picture of female agency and animal advocacy.

Chapter four is concerned with how gendered contrasts in Victorian society were reflected in women's advocacy for animals. She discusses the contrasting stereotypes of female 'true instinct' in mitigating animal suffering versus the narrative of 'daring, manly hunting', common in aristocratic circles. One aspect of this was the gendered teaching of kindness to animals to children through the Band of Mercy initiatives, which was focused on 'converting and civilising boys' by representing the tender handling of animals as a mark of 'true manliness' (p. 153). Through the famous novel *Black Beauty*, by Anna Sewell, she foregrounds the writer's aim of influencing 'boys and men too oppressed by overwork, too ignorant, careless or brutal to understand the pain they inflicted on the acutely sentient animals under their control' (p. 160). The book, unlike much other female writing at the time, reflected Quaker thinking, which complicated the commonly accepted hierarchy of men and 'lower' creatures and the associated assumptions about gender. Sewell focused on the role of social privilege in different behaviours towards animals within the economic structure of Victorian society.

Throughout chapter five, Donald uses discussions around vivisection as a lens into debates and anxieties of the time; specifically the question of whether technological progress was matched by moral progress. While men and women debated on both sides, women were seen as passionate supporters of the anti-vivisection cause, and indeed assumed important leadership roles within the anti-vivisection movement. In this context, some women drew connections between the objectification of animal and female bodies. In order to overcome this medical objectification, the process of opening the medical profession to women was crucial, enabling women to utilise scientific knowledge to act on their concerns.

In chapter six, Donald discusses the increasingly vocal nature of women's concern for the suffering of animals toward the end of the 19th century, 'as an effect of women's painful struggle against patriarchy' (p. 230). Work by various successful female authors at that time helped to reform public opinion, while women's everyday advocacy for animals was persistently hampered. Feminist writers argued that animals' mistreatment was emblematic of the general problems of patriarchy. At the end of the 19th century, female 'sentiment' was still being set against male 'rationality' in order to discredit women's advocacy. However, Donald shows that some women increasingly embraced this 'notion of spontaneous sentiment as a female trait' and understood it as 'the key to kinder treatment of animals', marking 'a significant shift in consciousness' (p. 258). Whereas cruelty to animals had been understood as the individual's misbehaviour at the beginning of the 19th century, by the end of the century, it was seen as part of broader social conventions, traditions, and profit-making.

Almeroth-Williams' book combines the interest in animals as historic subjects with urban and social historical approaches. Its seven chapters are structured according to animal types, foregrounding how each of them contributed to cultural, social, and economic life in Georgian London. The significance of his book lies in its move beyond 'theoretical and fictional sources' (p. xii). Instead, Almeroth-Williams aims to give a voice to the historical actors that worked closely with animals, and to highlight the influence of animals' intentions on society. Therefore, he uses sources from the Old Bailey Proceedings, newspaper articles, manuscripts, and visual sources such as paintings, engravings, and trade cards to present his argument. His research complicates our understanding of the antagonistic pairs of 'rural' versus 'urban' and 'country' versus 'town' and challenges claims by Keith Thomas that London's population had moved away from agricultural processes before 1800. In chapter one, Almeroth-Williams sets out to challenge the common misconception that London's role was rather marginal during the Industrial Revolution, arguing for the importance of the close interaction between men, mill horses, and machinery in the capital. Instead, he shows how the use of steam engines was highly dependent on the type of industry and its size. Thus, various industries in the city continued to rely heavily on horse power; such brewing, tanning and wool dying. Rag mills, paper presses, and silver workshops also depended on horse mills. In the paint industry, horse mills were used for the 'crushing and grinding of minerals, plants, shells and bone' and to some extent to 'blend these powdered pigments' (p. 28). Until the 1760s, horse power was used to raise the water of the Thames, which by this time was supplying more than 30,000 households in London, marking the entanglements of horse power with work and life in the city.

In chapter two, Almeroth-Williams looks at the combined work of men and horses that allowed the industrialisation of different trades in the city. In particular, he follows the role of draught horses, stressing the important role they played in the metropolitan economy and in facilitating people's growing desire to travel faster and further during this period. Draught horses were also the most common mode of transport for goods, which were in ever-growing demand for the construction of houses and provision for the brewing industry. He argues further that, despite increasing industrialisation, horses likely worked considerably harder than before due to these growing demands. However, their care, housing and feeding improved as horse efficiency became a financial concern. Almeroth-Williams highlights the cultural representations of these strong, gigantic dray horses as they were depicted by artists throughout the period, such as George Garrard in the late 18th century.

Throughout chapter three, Almeroth-Williams explores how farming influenced metropolitan life, questioning the assumed separation of agriculture and the metropole. In London itself large amounts of milk were produced throughout the period, based on the thriving sector of animal husbandry in the city. Through newspapers, insurance policies, the old Bailey Proceedings, and other sources, he is able to draw a picture of livestock-keeping activities in the city during the late 18th century, emphasising that urbanisation did not necessarily mean the replacement of agricultural land, but the extension of the city into the countryside. Analysing the theft of animals such as pigs, rabbits, and chickens through the Old Bailey Proceedings, he shows how entrenched pig and cow husbandry were in the daily lives of London's lower, middle, and working classes. Moving away from theoretical and fictional sources, he analyses pig-keeping as 'a lively

interchange between urban and rural economic activities' and uncovers the close proximity of the metropolitan population to animals (p. 92).

Chapter four is concerned with the practice of trading meat on the hoof. With the average annual numbers of selling cattle as high as 80,000 in the 1740s, the interrelation of meat production and consumption in London marked the city's identity as an 'agropolis' (p. 128). Analysing trade at London's 'inner-city livestock market', Smithfield Market, Almeroth-Williams highlights the large quantities of livestock transported throughout the city, and the influence of this on people's lives. Through the Old Bailey Proceedings, he is able to show the difficulties in managing cattle and their behaviour, and the danger this posed to the city's population and, in particular, to those working in close proximity to animals, such as drovers and butchers.

In chapter five, the author proposes that the trade and keeping of horses in London was part of the city's consumer revolution. As 'highly sought-after luxury items' they 'supported a major sector of the metropolitan economy' (p. 129). Almeroth-Williams characterises the horse trade as an important aspect of a changing metropolitan economy. This is evidenced by the importance of Smithfield Market during the mid-17th century through to the growing influence of stables and repositories across the city during the second half of the 18th century. The need to house horses also impacted the architecture of some urban areas, with stables and coach houses complementing properties in the city, especially in the West End. He shows how closely knit the lives of a horse and its owners and human co-workers were. Workers also benefitted from being able 'to capitalise on their expertise' in the care of the animals (p. 146).

Chapter six discusses London's fostering of a distinct horse culture. According to Almeroth-Williams, this equestrian culture has previously been overlooked, seen as part of the countryside, rather than the life of the city itself. His account is a welcome addition to the research on popular culture, and specifically circuses, of the period and I was hoping he would provide more insight into how these entertainments appealed to audiences living in close proximity to horses. For the German case, Marline Otte has argued that traditional circuses appealed to new migrants to the city as they presented traditional forms of living. (3) Almeroth-Williams discusses riding as 'an important mode of sociability' in London during the late 18th century, exercised by men and some women, especially in Hyde Park (p. 158). Horses were seen to facilitate sociability for their owners, providing an alternative to the city's common forms of indoor social life, such as balls and concerts, and offering an escape from the city through the individual's 'riding out'.

Almeroth-Williams' seventh and final chapter is arguably the most compelling one. He traces the lives of the city's watchdogs, through accounts of property theft of newspaper articles and the Old Bailey Proceedings, and combines these with scientific knowledge of canine behaviour. By doing so, he follows his social historical approach of utilising the watchdogs' lives as a lens into 'the use and control of urban space', such as 'houses, shops, warehouses and commercial yards', noting that dogs proved to be both more affordable and more effective than locks (p. 188). While he has aimed to establish the agency of all animals discussed in the book, his approach is arguably the strongest in this explanation of how canines obstructed criminal activities and influenced and enabled humans in their own behaviour. His argument that 'the increasing acceptability of pet-keeping' was not only due to growing 'sentimental attitudes' but was also influenced by 'an increasing reliance on canine security', complements Donald's study and—like her work—underlines the benefits of social historical analysis from below (p. 199).

The great benefit of Almeroth-Williams' work lies in his aim of getting to know the animals and their agency, rather than simply analysing their cultural representations. The interrogation between these two aspects makes a combined reading of both studies compelling. Given the benefit of combining cultural and social history, I was surprised to read the occasional dismissal of cultural historical approaches by Almeroth-Williams. Nonetheless, looking at these books side by side has highlighted how much these two facets of analysis can benefit from each other and how these individual studies broaden the understanding of British animal history of the 18th and 19th century.

1 Harriet Ritvo, 'On the Animal Turn', *Daedalus* 136.4 (2007), pp. 118-122.

2 Diana Donald, *Picturing Animals in Britain, 1750-1850* (Yale, 2007).

3 Marline Otte, *Jewish Identities in German Popular Entertainment, 1890-1933* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 35.

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