

Gender and Animals in History



YEARBOOK
OF WOMEN'S
HISTORY
JAARBOEK
VOOR VROUWEN-
GESCHIEDENIS

42

Amsterdam
University
Press

Gender and Animals in History

Gender and Animals in History

Yearbook of Women's History
Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis

42

This publication was made possible by financial contributions from the following generous supporters: Feministisch Cultuurfonds Gender&Wetenschap and Stichting Vriendinnen van het Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis.

Editorial Board: Sandra Swart (guest editor), Iris van der Zande, Larissa Schulte Nordholt, Marleen Reichgelt, Kirsten Kamphuis, Ernestine Hoegen, Claudia Hacke, Sarah Carmichael.



**Steun het
Feministisch Cultuurfonds
Gender&wetenschap (ANBI):
IBAN NL06 TRIO 0320 2131 29
www.fcgenderenwetenschap.nl/steunons**



Cover Art: Commissioned from Mareli van Zyl. Mareli explores a wide variety of art styles and concepts from charcoal portraits to lighter watercolour paintings, which are inspired by South Africa's nature and often carry a quirky theme.

www.artbymareli.co.za | Instagram @art_by_mareli | artbymareli@outlook.com

Cover design: Coördesign, Leiden

Lay-out: Crius Group, Hulshout



Creative Commons License CC BY NC ND

(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>)

ISBN 978 90 4856 528 3
e-ISBN 978 90 4856 529 0
ISSN 1574-2334
DOI 10.5117/9789048565283
NUR 694 | 430

© Stichting Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis, authors / Amsterdam University Press B.V., Amsterdam 2024

Some rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, any part of this book may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise).

Every effort has been made to obtain permission to use all copyrighted illustrations reproduced in this book. Nonetheless, whosoever believes to have rights to this material is advised to contact the publisher.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Editorial | 7 |
| Birds of a Feather | 9 |
| How Rethinking Animals Helps Us Rethink Ourselves <i>Sandra Swart</i> | |
| Martha Maxwell on the Frontier of Colorado, Modern Taxidermy, and ‘Women’s Work’ | 28 |
| <i>Vanessa Bateman</i> | |
| Animal Displays, Gender, Race, and Pedagogy at Liverpool Museum, Circa 1880–1920 | 49 |
| <i>Alexander Scott</i> | |
| Keeping Animals in Their Gendered Place | 73 |
| The Spatialization of Human–Animal Relations in the Laboratory Animal House, Circa 1947 to Present <i>Catherine Duxbury</i> | |
| Insects at the Intersection of Gender and Class in the Early Modern Period | 91 |
| <i>Charlotte Meijer</i> | |
| Perfect Mothers and Stunted Workers | 104 |
| Honey Bee Sex Differences in the Co-Creation of Human and Animal Gender <i>Leah Malamut</i> | |
| Milk and Honey | 120 |
| Women, Race, and Captive Gorillas in Colonial Africa <i>Rebecca Machin</i> | |
| Engendered Primatology | 137 |
| Of Female Primates and Feminist Primatologists <i>Anindya Sinha and Sayan Banerjee</i> | |
| Mary E. Wilkins Freeman and the Erotohistoriography of Pets | 157 |
| <i>Emma Thiébaud</i> | |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Riot Dogs as Gendered Revolutionary Symbols | 172 |
| <i>Annika Hugosson</i> | |
| From Pussy Panic to a Fascination with Felines | 188 |
| The Gendered Representations of Cats in Suffrage Postcards. | |
| <i>Larissa Schulte Nordholt</i> | |
| Cats and the Vegetarian Dish in Colonial and Postcolonial Indonesia | 207 |
| Unsettling Sources for Environmental History | |
| <i>Marieke Bloembergen</i> | |
| Naturalizing Collaboration | 225 |
| Women, Lions, and Behavioural Field Research in East Africa during the 1970s | |
| <i>Simone Schleper</i> | |
| Of Bits and Pieces | 242 |
| Gendered Equine Knowledge in the <i>Mesnagier de Paris</i> | |
| <i>Clémentine Girault</i> | |
| Reproduction against Extinction | 257 |
| The Value and Labours of Two Przewalski's Mares | |
| <i>Monica Vasile</i> | |
| A View From the Saddle | 274 |
| Reflections on Gender in the Equestrian Sports of Eventing and Horseracing | |
| <i>Ernestine Hoegen</i> | |
| Riding out the Plague Years with Eroika | 289 |
| Cyborgs, Goddesses, and the Reparative Force of Big Mare Energy | |
| <i>Angela Hofstetter</i> | |
| Gender and Intersectionality in Agriculture on Three Continents | 307 |
| A Rapstract Compilation | |
| <i>Andrea Pettit</i> | |

Editorial

In a column for the Dutch newspaper *NRC*, the philosopher Eva Meijer wrote about the deep companionship between her and Olli. Olli was born in Romania and arrived in the Netherlands when he was about five years old. According to Meijer, they loved each other minutes after his arrival at Amsterdam airport. That Olli was not a human being, but a former street dog, did not diminish the bond between them. ‘He was my friend, not my pet’, Meijer wrote.¹

Meijer’s column about this interspecies friendship highlights some of the innumerable ways in which human and nonhuman lives are entangled. As the contributions to this volume of the *Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis/ Yearbook of Women’s History* show, these relationships range from companionship to scientific interest, economic exploitation, and abuse. Dogs, widely known as ‘(hu)man’s best friend’, figure in several of the articles. They do so alongside other domesticated animals such as cats, cows, horses, and honey bees, and ‘wild’ creatures including gorillas and lions. The articles analyse case studies from Latin and North America, Africa, Asia, and Europe, reflecting the global scope of the *Yearbook*.

We could not have hoped for a better-equipped guest editor for this *Yearbook* than Sandra Swart (Stellenbosch University). Sandra is a groundbreaking scholar who studies the cultural history of, among other animals, horses and lions. Her knowledge, experience, and network have been essential in shaping this volume, and her enthusiasm and sense of humour made it a delight to work together, even if the physical distance between the Netherlands and South Africa presented us with some challenges.

We understand this 42nd volume of the *Yearbook* as part of a broader movement towards intersectionality in women’s and gender history. The volume should be read as an argument for the inclusion of ‘species’ as a category of analysis alongside better-known categories such as gender, race, and class. By including animals into their historical analyses, the authors show how inequality on the basis of species intersects with other forms of inequality. Notably, several authors not only study how animals themselves are gendered, but they also pay attention to the gender of the humans who interact with them.

In the long list of previously published *Yearbook* volumes, the reader is hard-pressed to find animals among the themes. There are traces of animals

1 Eva Meijer, “Nu loop ik zonder Olli door de tussenwereld,” *NRC*, April 25, 2023.

to be found, however cynically, in the issue *Gendered Food Practices from Seed to Waste*, which repeatedly notes the gendered connection between masculinity and meat consumption. Beyond the immediate theme, this volume is methodologically connected to the issues *Gemengde gevoelens: gender, etniciteit en postkolonialisme* [Mixed Feelings: Gender, Ethnicity and Postcolonialism] and *Gendered Empire*. Both of these made a case for intersectional analysis, focusing especially on race and ethnicity. In their focus on previously unheard and silenced ‘voices’, animal history and postcolonialism find common ground.

In concluding this editorial, we would like to express our gratitude to Uitgeverij Verloren, the publisher that our team collaborated with from 2013 until recently. We want to thank Verloren for ten years of successful cooperation. At the same time, we are excited about our new partnership with Amsterdam University Press, and look forward to continuing the *Yearbook* tradition with them.

Kirsten Kamphuis, Iris van der Zande, Larissa Schulte Nordholt, Marleen Reichgelt, Ernestine Hoegen, Claudia Hacke, Sarah Carmichael.

Birds of a Feather

How Rethinking Animals Helps Us Rethink Ourselves

Sandra Swart (Stellenbosch University)

Abstract

This exploratory introductory essay has thought about a gender in human-animal or animal sensitive history. It brings into conversation environmental history, natural sciences (ornithology, primatology), feminist science studies and queer ecocriticism. It explores the ways in which our shifting understandings of animals have contoured our understandings of our own species' gender and sexuality and, vice versa, human heteronormativity and sexism have led us to impose categories on Nature that do not exist. What the other animals get up to and therefore what is understood to be 'natural' has a strange power over us. So rethinking what is 'natural' has real world impacts. Historically gendered stereotyping, predicated on a misunderstanding of the animal world, is harmful to boys and men as well as for girls and women – and to our understanding of the more-than-human world.

Keywords: animals, penguins, seagulls, gender, queer ecology, women

It was 1977.¹ A total blackout in New York led to mass looting across the city. Son of Sam, the serial killer, was at large. A war erupted between

1 My thanks to Andrea Palk, Charla Smith, and Larissa Schulte Nordholt. For primary sources, see Judith Martin, "Science and the Gay Gull," *The Washington Post*, December 4, 1977, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/business/1977/12/04/science-and-the-gay-gull/da397a4c-ea60-4763-885c-c1b879d4e0b2/>; UPI, "Extensive Homosexuality is Found among Seagulls Off Coast of California," *The New York Times*, November 23, 1977, <https://www.nytimes.com/1977/11/23/archives/extensive-homosexuality-is-found-among-seagulls-off-coast-of.html>; author unknown, "The Sexes: Lesbian Gulls," *TIME*, December 12, 1977, <https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,915847,00.html>; Bettina Boxall, "The Nest Quest: Group Sets Sail for Lesbian Sea Gulls: Nature: Biologist Takes Gay Group to Channel Islands, Where He Had Observed Same-Sex

Cambodia and Vietnam. Roman Polanski was arrested for sex with a minor. The last guillotine execution in France and the last legal beheading in the western world occurred. The president of the Central African Republic crowned himself emperor. *The Sex Pistols* tried to disrupt the Queen's Silver Jubilee celebration. Another whites-only election was held in apartheid South Africa. Slavery remained legal in Mauritania. Anita Bryant started a war on the gay community in Florida, running the 'Save Our Children' campaign to repeal a local law against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

But what really outraged many god-fearing, tax-paying citizens was a pair of seagulls. What had ruffled their feathers? It was another nesting pair – a wife and husband team of biologists, Molly and George Hunt from the University of California at Irvine – who had set out, in 1972, to study seagulls (*Larus occidentalis*) on the islands off Santa Barbara, on the Californian coast. They discovered something strange: a pair of female seagulls were raising fledglings together. Their scientific article on this intriguing anomaly, published in 1977, sparked a storm in both conservation and conservative circles. (Molly discovered the pair, George apparently did not believe her at first, but it is hard not to notice George was first author on their ground-breaking article.)² The Hunts had been alerted to this curious case by stumbling upon what they came to call 'supernormal clutches' with up to six eggs, instead of the usual two or three. It was only after killing and dissecting the super-producing seagull pairs and realizing both had ovaries that things became a little clearer. Astonishingly, some of the female–female gull pairs presided over super-sized clutches of (mostly) sterile eggs, and even sometimes raised families together. But there was something more. In a few of the pairs, one of the females displayed behaviours ordinarily attributed to males, such as mounting and copulation, cloaca to cloaca. No such similar domestic arrangements existed among male birds. Despite the always provocative and thorny analogy between humans and animals, it was widely reported in the press that these were 'lesbian seagulls'.

Pairs in the 1970s. Research Has Prompted Controversy," *LA Times*, June 20, 1993, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1993-06-20-me-5238-story.html>. For two short and very readable takes, see Zoë Schlanger, "The Gulls Are Alright: How a Lesbian Seagull Discovery Shook Up 1970s Conservatives," *Quartz*, July 10, 2017, <https://qz.com/1023638/the-gulls-are-alright-how-a-lesbian-seagull-discovery-shook-up-1970s-conservatives>; and Qilin Zhao, "How Lesbian Seagulls Changed the Gay Rights Movement," *Medium*, March 6, 2021, <https://medium.com/ostem-ucsd/how-lesbian-seagulls-changed-the-gay-rights-movement-dd88493da8e0>.

2 George Hunt and Molly Warner Hunt, "Female-Female Pairing in Western Gulls (*Larus Occidentalis*) in Southern California," *Science* 196, no. 4297 (1977): 1466–67.

Suddenly, many ordinary people, who would normally not give a hoot about ornithology, began to care about the sex life of birds. They were outraged. After all, one of the strongest indictments against gay people – especially deployed in conservative, Christian circles in the USA – was that there were no gay animals. They did not exist in the natural order. Therefore, homosexuality could not exist ‘naturally’. Yet, now it seemed to exist on this sapphic seagull isle. Protests erupted; angry letters were written to the newspapers. Traditionalist, populist, and fundamentalist pundits had a field day. An anonymous group advertised in *The New York Daily News* that 100 per cent of their seagulls were strictly heterosexual. Even Congress took an interest, a Republican representative chucklingly shook his head over the \$62,300 of the Hunts’ research grant spent discovering these ‘odd birds’. He even threatened to slash funding for the National Science Foundation.

But out of the public eye, quietly and appreciatively, Lesbian and Gay groups and individuals wrote to the scientists, thanking them for their research. Thanking them for, in a sense, confirming that their lifestyles were perfectly ‘natural’ after all. A Los Angeles theatre group celebrated with a play called ‘Supernormal Clutches’ and gay activist Tom Wilson Weinberg released a song titled ‘Lesbian Seagull’, with the immortal lyrics: ‘You and me, lesbian seagull ... Our love will keep us flying high until we die’. These seagulls offered a mirror for humanity’s face – and some were scandalized by what they saw, while others celebrated. Clearly, this was about more than just birds.

Indeed, the ‘animal mirror’ mattered to both sides of the political spectrum that divided over the sexual continuum. People wanted to peer into the creaturely glass and see at least something of themselves and a world they saw as somehow ‘natural’ and ‘normal’. In the case of the seagulls, about fourteen per cent of the pairing couples were female–female. Some mated with males but then returned to their female life partner (for they were largely monogamous for life) to sit on their eggs and split incubation responsibility much like male–female couples did – although often it must have been disheartening because many of the eggs were not fertile unless there had been male–female mating on the side. In those cases, the eggs hatched, and these fledglings were fine and went on to raise babies of their own.

We know about this generational history because George carried on with the study.³ By the 1980s, he was wondering if the seagulls’ anomalous

3 Molly divorced him – I do not know whether it was about that first authorship issue, but it would have been for me.

choice was based on the lack of males? In a sad turn of events, he discovered that the males seemed to die off more easily. He hypothesized that this was from the insecticide DDT, as the females were perhaps better able to shed some of the poison into the yolks of eggs they produced. What stayed incurably toxic was the public outrage over such sexual ‘deviance’ in the animal world. Again and again, we see that anxieties over the ‘unnatural’ emerge at moments of social, political, and cultural crisis, which are sometimes reframed as ecological crises.⁴ The categories ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural’ exist as fluid, friable configurations: the former basking in the sunlight of popular approval and the latter lurking in the shadows below. The ‘unnatural’ is a powerful – if shifting and culturally specific – concept with critical repercussions for what is seen or unseen, tolerated or taboo, accepted or abhorred.

Enter Anita Bryant, a former beauty queen and current born-again Christian, who based her noxious campaign on the idea that homosexuals could not raise families, so they had to sustain themselves and their societies in ‘unnatural’ ways (Fig. 1). After the Dade County Commission passed a gay-rights ordinance at the start of 1977, Bryant fought to repeal it with Save Our Children, Inc campaign. By mid-year, the ordinance was repealed, precipitating anti-gay actions in other states. By pushing the notion that homosexuality threatened the ‘American family’, Bryant and the Religious Right succeeding in raising both conservative support and funds.⁵ She had powerful allies like Jerry Falwell, the televangelist whose right-wing faction (the Moral Majority) promoted itself as reintroducing religion to politics. Under the banner of ‘traditional family values’, Falwell famously declared: ‘Homosexuals don’t reproduce! They recruit! And they are out after my children and your children’. He added: ‘feminists and all these radical gals ... just need a man in the house. That’s all they need’.⁶ Yet, suddenly, here were radical gulls pairing off together and raising some happy, healthy families without a man about the nest.

4 C. Mortimer-Sandilands and B. Erickson, eds., *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010); Stacy Alaimo, “Eluding Capture: The Science, Culture, and Pleasure of ‘Queer’ Animals,” in *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, eds. Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson, 51–72.

5 See Gillian Frank, “The Civil Rights of Parents’: Race and Conservative Politics in Anita Bryant’s Campaign against Gay Rights in 1970s Florida,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 22, no. 1 (2013): 126–60. See also Anita Bryant, *The Anita Bryant Story: The Survival of Our Nation’s Families & the Threat of Militant Homosexuality* (Chicago, IL, Revell, 1977).

6 Clarence Page and a member of the *Tribune*’s editorial board, “The Rise and Fall of Jerry Falwell,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 20, 2007, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2007-05-20-0705190543-story.html>.



Figure 1. Anti-gay activist Anita Bryant regretting investigating the gull issue. Zoë Schlanger, “The Gulls Are Alright: How a Lesbian Seagull Discovery Shook Up 1970s Conservatives,” *Quartz*, July 10, 2017. (Image originally from the *Boston Globe*, courtesy of George Hunt.)

Subsequent research began to show that the same sex seagull pair was not all that atypical. In fact, since this breakthrough, field biologists have discovered that hundreds of species display non-binary sexual behaviour and a range of flexible sexualities. Clearly, same-sex sexual behaviour and what might be called sex-flexibility and the breaking of binaries abound in the animal world.⁷ As early as 1999, Canadian biologist and linguist Bruce Bagemihl published a weighty dossier on this sheer diversity, cataloguing 450 species.⁸ It was called *Biological Exuberance* and I bought this despite

7 Some scholars prefer the term ‘same-sex sexual behaviour’ instead of ‘homosexual’ to avoid conflation between human sexuality and the other animals’ sexual activities.

8 Sex refers largely to biological characteristics, while gender refers to an internal psychological experience of self and also the way one might express oneself in society. We cannot know about an interior self-understanding of other species, but we refer to diversity in visually observable sex roles. Gender involves a shifting set of behaviours and norms that shape how, for example, men and women act, depending on the division of genders in that particular society, and prescribe

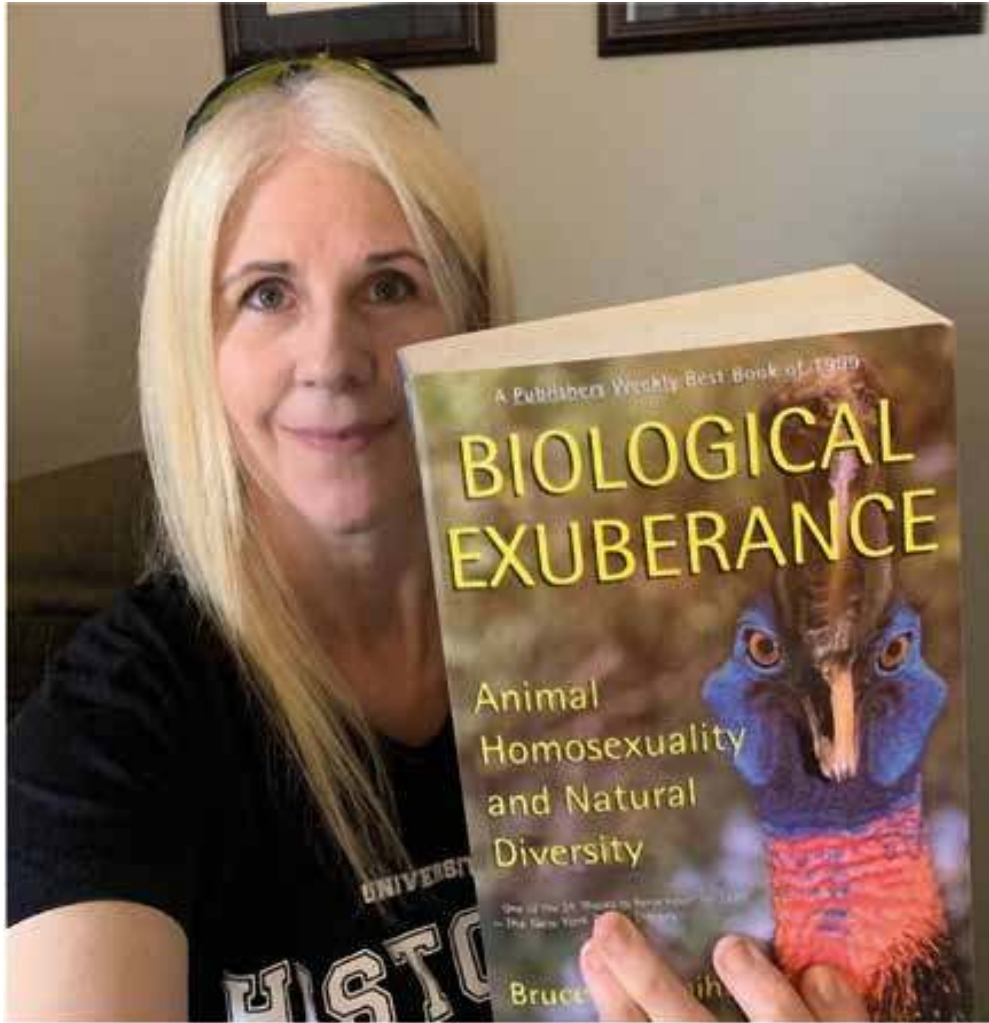


Figure 2. The author with her copy of *Biological Exuberance*. Own picture.

being an impecunious post-graduate student (Fig. 2). It lit up the soft mole-grey Oxford winter with iridescent hummingbirds, tawny giraffes, opulent cassowaries, verrucous warthogs – and I plunged into its heterodox shades. It was a kind of archive of the queer, before queer was embraced in the mainstream as an emboldening and positive term. Today, same-sex sexual behaviour has been observed in over 1,500 animal species: seagulls, of course, penguins, primates, bats, lions, orcas, dolphins, squirrels, snakes, lizards, and worms. (Homophobia, however, has so far been observed in only one species.) All it took to see a sexual spectrum was *looking at biology with a queer eye*. The complexity and flexibility were always there, scientists just could not *see* them. And when they did see, they sometimes tried to hide

what it means to be male or female. The two terms cannot be entirely detached: sexed bodies influence the cultural rules surrounding gender, and vice versa, in constant feedback loops.

it from the eyes of others – or even themselves. But why did it take so long for Bagemihl's book? Attempting to answer this takes us to the history of the birds closest to humans in appearance and most remote in place, at the southern tip of the world.

Not Black and White: 1,500 Shades of Grey?

One of the two staff surgeons on Captain Robert Falcon Scott's doomed *Terra Nova* Antarctic 1910–1913 expedition was a man called George Murray Levick (1876 – 1956). In fact, Levick was not only the doctor but a zoologist, a man passionately interested in the natural world of the frozen south. His heart was warmed by one of the icy landscape's most endearing creatures: the little Adélie penguins (*Pygoscelis adeliae*). You will remember that Scott and four others died tragically, after reaching the South Pole only to discover that Norwegian Roald Amundsen had beaten them to it. Levick and others survived. He overwintered in an ice cave alongside a rookery in Cape Adare, thus becoming an eyewitness to the penguin breeding cycle; indeed, he came to know them better than any other human. But familiarity bred much more than contempt, as you will see. At first, the penguins seemed simply adorable. Males and females are difficult to tell apart: they are all portly, flappy-armed figures in too-tight 'tuxedos', with the comically goggly eyes and the globous bodies of a child's stuffed toy. Indeed, today Adélie penguins star in the *Happy Feet* movie franchise, singing Sinatra's 'My Way' ...

They certainly did ... Because, as Levick discovered with growing horror, their sex lives were unconventional at best. In fact, he uncovered what he believed was a terrible secret about these birds: not only were males having sex with each other, but they were also agents of sexual coercion, violently violating females and chicks, even forcing themselves upon dead females. He went so far as to code these revelations in his notebooks, using the Greek alphabet, so only men like himself would be able to read them. Levick, by all accounts, was the very model of an Edwardian Englishman, and he fretted over what he had stumbled upon. He brooded over what he had seen, bringing back extensive notes, a trove of photographs, and some penguin skins. Anxious that their sordid secret remain just that, he published an innocuous public account of their natural history, *Antarctic Penguins: A Study of Their Social Habits* (1914), intended for a general audience. The following year he produced the *Natural History of the Adélie Penguin* (1915), a more academic account. He noted the scourge of 'hooligan' cocks who kill some chicks. He

refused to say 'how', noting instead, in a human analogy, that their crimes 'are such as to find no place in this book, but it is interesting indeed to note that, when nature intends them to find employment, these birds, like men, degenerate in idleness'.⁹ Arguably, the penguin is the most humanlike of all birds in body-shape, face, and locomotion, so it is understandable that they are perhaps most often anthropomorphized. Thus, the Adélie outrages appeared all the more outré. The result was suppression of the story: certainly, Levick was concerned about its impact but probably he was also under pressure from the Keeper of Zoology at the British Museum of Natural History. Accordingly, Levick's accounts were anodyne versions of events.

But he had a darker story to share with those whom he could trust with the secret. So, at the same time, he printed a hundred copies of a no-holds-barred account called *Sexual Habits of the Adélie Penguin*. Nearly a century later, this perturbing little pamphlet was rediscovered.¹⁰ The four-page tract, bearing the legend 'Not for Publication', exposed the penguins at what Levick believed to be their worst: their erotic exploits, sexual and physical abuse of chicks, homosexuality, and necrophilia. He was initially nonplussed but increasingly appalled by it all:

This afternoon I saw a most extraordinary site [sic]. A Penguin was actually engaged in sodomy upon the body of a dead ... bird of its own species.¹¹

Here on one occasion I saw what I took to be a cock copulating with a hen. When he had finished, however, and got off, the apparent hen turned out to be a cock, and the act was again performed with their positions

9 For the expurgated version, see G.M. Levick, *Antarctic Penguins: A Study of Their Social Habits* (London: William Heinemann; New York: McBride Nast and Company, 1914), 97–98.

10 It was republished in the journal *Polar Record* in 2012. See [Not for Publication.] British Museum (natural history). The sexual habits of the Adélie penguin. By staff-surgeon G. Murray Levick, R.N. The following account is based on observations made by Dr Levick at Cape Adare during the course of the British Antarctic (Terra Nova) Expedition, 1910, printed in February 1915, *Polar Record*, 2012.

See Christie's auction of "George Murray Levick (1876–1956), British Antarctic Expedition, 1910–1913," <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-4966529>; The Week staff, "Shock at Sexually 'Depraved' Penguins Led to 100-Year Censorship," *The Week*, June 10, 2012, <https://theweek.com/health-science/47334/shock-sexually-depraved-penguins-led-100-year-censorship>; Lloyd Spencer Davis, *A Polar Affair: Antarctica's Forgotten Hero and the Secret Love Lives of Penguins* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2019); Ian Robson, "Sexual Depravity of Penguins that Antarctic Scientist Dared Not Reveal," *The Guardian*, 9 June 9, 2012, <https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/sexual-depravity-penguins-geordie-antarctic-7991737>.

11 Translated from the Greek, from his notebook.

reversed, the original “hen” climbing on to the back of the original cock, whereupon the nature of their proceeding was disclosed.¹²

Levick was perplexed and perturbed. His words dripped with quiet revulsion: ‘There seems to be no crime too low for these Penguins’. But what is really important for us to note is, not only did Levick censor his own, observed account of widespread natural behaviour, but he also dismissed the penguin behaviour in his own mind as ‘unnatural’. He labelled them ‘depraved’, ‘hooligans’, casting them as criminals and delinquent rule-breakers of the natural order, rather than trying to understand and explain their behaviour. This vignette illustrates both the twin dangers of censorship and the misinterpretation of data when the ‘animal Other’ is filtered through the prism of human sexual mores imposed upon another species. The mirror shatters when we do not like what we see.

Today, scientists are certainly more at liberty to research and make public these supposedly unusual behaviours than in Levick’s time. Yet, we must remember the history of suppression and repression to explain why researchers have to cope with a deficiency in data and a dismissal of data that should have been acquired accretively over time. Same-sex sexual behaviour is now widely recognized to occur in many species.¹³ Societal attitudes have changed, in most places, global academic culture is more diverse, researchers who identify as LGBTQ+ have become more visible. The public is more accepting of alternatives to the fantasy of the monogamous heterosexual pairings. To return to penguins, the icy little birds who are far from frigid, we see non-heteronormative, non-monogamous sexuality as a routine part of their behaviour. King penguins captured from the Antarctic in 1913 for the Edinburgh Zoo created a stir once keepers figured out how to tell the sexes apart. Indeed, in 1932, the institute’s director T.H. Gillespie noted quizzically (perhaps even a little enviously) that they ‘enjoy privileges not as yet permitted to civilized mankind’. In 2018, Spheer and Magic, two male Gentoo penguins closely related to Adélie penguins, made headlines when they built a nest together (‘bigger than the other pairs’) at the Sea Life Sydney Aquarium, and Spheer presented Magic with a ‘special stone’, part of the courting ritual. Aquarium staff offered them a fake egg, which they nurtured so conscientiously that they were provided with a fertile egg from another penguin couple.

¹² From the pamphlet.

¹³ A. Poiani, *Animal Homosexuality: A Biosocial Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Baby Sphengic (initially named for their celebrity couple name, but now known as Lara) was born in the spring of that year.¹⁴ The media dubbed them the gay penguin ‘power couple’ and the aquarium says ‘love wins’ at their exhibition. The mirror reflected a fabulous vision: a human couple proposed to each other outside the penguin enclosure, equality groups celebrated the rainbow family and their new chick, affectionately camp quips were made about penguin *chic*.

Sphen and Magic joined other household names: King penguins Stan and Oli (who became icons in a gay marriage equality campaign in Germany), Toronto zoo’s African penguins Pedro and Buddy, who were separated by keepers in what campaigners called homophobic efforts to break them up.¹⁵ Perhaps the most famous pair were Roy and Silo, two male Chinstrap penguins at New York City’s Central Park Zoo, who made headlines in 2000 when they raised a chick called Tango from a fostered egg (immortalized in the children’s book *And Tango Makes Three*).¹⁶ You would think this had been normalized since the Hunts put a cat among the pigeons. Unhappily, no. It became one of the most banned books in the US, after it was denounced for being pro-homosexuality and ‘anti-family’.¹⁷ It retains its position on the American Library Association’s list of the most ‘complained about’ books. This year, in districts in Florida (where Anita Bryant complained about seagulls almost half a century ago) the book is being removed or restricted.¹⁸

14 Naaman Zhou, “Lovebirds: Male Penguin Couple in Sydney ‘Absolute Naturals’ at Incubating Live Egg,” *The Guardian*, October 12, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/oct/12/lovebirds-male-penguin-couple-in-sydney-absolute-naturals-at-incubating-live-egg>; Caitlin O’Kane, “Gay Penguin Couple Have Been Given an Egg to Look After,” *CBS News*, October 12, 2018, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/gay-penguin-couple-in-sydney-australia-have-been-given-an-egg-to-look-after/>; Faye Brown, “Gay Penguin ‘Power Couple’ Become Dads for the Second Time,” *Metro*, November 24, 2020, <https://metro.co.uk/2020/11/24/sydneys-gay-penguins-magic-and-sphen-become-dads-for-second-time-13645776/>.

15 Kayleigh Lewis, “Two Gay King Penguins Are Being Moved to Hamburg So They Can Stay Together,” *Independent*, April 17, 2016, <https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/gay-king-penguins-berlin-hamburg-zoo-moved-homosexual-a6988506.html>; Alex Neddham, “Is It Homophobic to Split Up Gay Penguins?,” *The Guardian*, November 9, 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2011/nov/09/homophobic-split-up-gay-penguins>.

16 Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell, *And Tango Makes Three* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005). Roy and Silo later parted ways when Silo left to be with a female.

17 Nick Duffy, “Gay Penguin Book Still Topping ‘Most Banned’ List,” *Pink News*, April 13, 2015, <https://www.thepinknews.com/2015/04/13/gay-penguin-book-still-topping-most-banned-list/>.

18 Recently, the London Natural History Museum fittingly used the (then) bird app to talk about same-sex swan pairs for Pride. This tweet awoke the same kind of hostility as the seagulls did over four decades before, although, as always, it was framed in its own historical period’s

Querying and Queering Animal Histories

An important lesson to take from all this is that our idiographic and diachronic ways of interpreting nature – individually, socially and scientifically – are knotted in histories of sexism, homophobia, classism, casteism, racism, colonialism, and so on.¹⁹ History can help us see why this is and thus move us beyond merely inverting the conservative condemnation that anything other than hetero couples are bad because they are ‘unnatural’. So, we do not merely crassly invert this syllogism and assert that being LGBTQ+ is acceptable because it is ‘natural’. Instead, on a much more fundamental level, a deeper understanding of this history explodes the very border between what is ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural’.²⁰ As Micha Rahder notes:

Queer ecology seeks to abolish the idea of a “pure” nature altogether. Ironically, this allows us to get closer to those living things we learned to recognize as “wild,” “exotic,” or even “alien.” This also means that queer ecology shares important resonances with other traditions that push back against colonial scientific legacies, including anti-racist, indigenous and feminist approaches. Changing how we think about nature changes how we relate to the world around us, and can broaden and strengthen struggles for environmental justice.²¹

Activists have long alluded to loneliness in human queerness. Finding queer figures in the past creates a long-standing community, a sense of the enduring nature of the identity, and a feeling of shared comradeship.²² The

shibboleths and anathemata. So, this time it was couched in dyspeptic outbursts about ‘wokeism’, and ‘rainbow orthodoxy’, calling out the museum for its supposed virtue signalling and asking, which ‘blue haired intern’ has commandeered their Twitter feed.

19 Ten years ago, Gabriel Rosenberg was presciently asking “Where Are Animals in the History of Sexuality?,” *Notches*, September 2, 2014, <https://notchesblog.com/2014/09/02/where-are-animals-in-the-history-of-sexuality/>.

20 Alex Johnson, “How to Queer Ecology: One Goose at a Time,” *Orion Magazine* 30, no. 2 (2011), <https://orionmagazine.org/article/how-to-queer-ecology-once-goose-at-a-time/>. See Joan Roughgarden, *Evolution’s Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature and People* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004); Joan Roughgarden, *Evolution’s Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature and People* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013); N. Seymour, *Strange Natures: Futurity, Empathy, and the Queer Ecological Imagination* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2013).

21 Micha Rahder, “Queering the Wild,” *Autostraddle*, June 13, 2019, <https://www.autostraddle.com/queering-the-wild/>.

22 Sacha Pfeiffer, Megan Lim, and Justine Kenin, “What ‘Queer Ducks’ Can Teach Teenagers about Sexuality in the Animal Kingdom,” NPR, May 29, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/05/29/1101224759/>

same might be true of finding queer in nature.²³ The animal comparison is one to handle sensitively, as Bénédicte Boisseron reminds us about animal issues and race.²⁴ All this underlines why this volume of the *Yearbook* is so timeous and urgent, and in the context of the enduring attack on feminism, queer identity, sexual diversity, and trans rights. My starting point in thinking about this suite of essays was focused on animals not very different to us, our primate cousins, with whom we have a difficult if close relationship – as family often does. Jane Goodall’s 1971 seminal study of free-living chimpanzees was called *In the Shadow of Man*, and, for a long time, (ironically) that is exactly what studies on animals were. Animals were eclipsed by anthropocentrism – but they were also overshadowed by the other meaning of ‘man’ as pseudogeneric: the male as normal, the female as aberrant or invisible. Goodall’s childhood role models – Dr Dolittle, Tarzan, and Mowgli – and mentor Louis Leakey inspired her to pursue fieldwork in Tanzania. But her own identity was a double-edged sword, winning her funding and misogynist scorn of her work. She observed wryly: ‘If my legs helped me get publicity for the chimps, that was useful.’ Yet, her research (and those of other women entering primatology at the time) challenged the male-dominated scientific consensus, revolutionizing our understanding of the sentience of other animals and emphasizing the kinship between our species. Equally, she (and others) exploded the myth of the ‘model’ animal who conformed to a stereotype dictated by their sex. It opened up a world where animals in the field were known by name, and were understood as individuals with personalities, emotions, and histories. Such contradictions and complexities motivated this volume. Historically, our understanding of the other animals was filtered through a lens of our own (various) societies’ views on gender. After all, we are ‘mammals’ because, just over two and a half centuries ago, Linnaeus chose to name humans and their relatives after the breast as *Mammalia*. In the same 1758 edition, he baptized us *Homo sapiens*, the ‘man of wisdom’. So, our species was included in the animal world, while simultaneously the stark separation of the rational male from the nurturing woman was deeply inscribed. This essay – this collection of essays! – is interested in the histories of such ideas,

what-queer-ducks-can-teach-teenagers-about-sexuality-in-the-animal-kingdom; Greta Gaard, “Green, Pink, and Lavender: Banishing Ecophobia through Queer Ecologies. Review of *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*,” *Ethics and the Environment* 16, no. 2 (2011): 115–26.

23 For useful organizations, see the webpages of the Critical Ecology Lab, Queer Nature, and The Institute of Queer Ecology.

24 Bénédicte Boisseron, *Afro-Dog: Blackness and the Animal Question* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

and its mission was to deconstruct such dichotomous thinking, break binaries, and end essentialism.

Something fresh and vital in *Animal History* is a new focus on gender. Here, 'gender' is not just code for only 'women'. Instead, it refers to the relationality of historically and socially co-constructed ways of being – behaviours, expressions, and identities – based on how society imagines sexual biology to operate. Part of exploring this question is the connection between the historically constructed and ever-changing human–animal boundary and the cultural construction of women as closer to animals – for good or bad. The questions inspiring me in this volume were fundamental: How does gender work in the historical construction of species and conceptualizing the animal world? How were animal classificatory systems (from diverse parts of the world) and disciplines devoted to understanding animals shaped by gendered norms? Can animals have gender and how would we know? How were female animals erased from or fetishized in scientific sight? Why are most laboratory animals male? How have the other animals been dragooned into the construction of human gendered identities? Should we look into Deep History to find the origin of patriarchy in our animal ancestries? And, finally, why does the matriarchal hyaena, with her enlarged clitoral 'pseudo-penis', freak everyone out?²⁵

Multi-species history matters in answering all these questions. I hoped topics might include: 'Pecking Order? Gender in legal systems, cosmologies, and classificatory systems of animals'; 'The Female of the Species? Decolonizing animal histories'; 'Animal Archives? What can we learn from women's history to tell animal histories?'; 'Gendered disciplinary histories of animal sciences'; 'Intersectionality in animal histories: At the intersections of speciesism, racism, sexism, and classism'; 'Intimate bodies: Gendered power relations in pet-keeping and horse riding'; and 'Cougars and Man-eaters: Sexuality and animal histories'. Can we have a feminist or queer multi-species history? In this volume, you will find essays that explore the changing gendered dynamics at work in animal sensitive history. You will find analyses of how relations of power are contoured by gender and how they work in human–animal relations historically, deepening the dialogue between feminism and animal studies. Essentially, you will encounter research that vividly illuminates human–animal connections in the past and thereby dissipates the *shadow of man* – both in species and gender.

25 Urination, penile insertion, and giving birth occur through the clitoris, which is capable of erections; moreover, the females are usually bulkier, more capable of violence than the males.

I was especially interested in how our own gender stereotypes have affected our understanding of the more-than-human world historically? It may be that some species do have a sense of gender or sense of it in others of their kind – we await more research. But what is much clearer is that our own species' sense of gender affected our understanding of other species. Our own rigidity has blinded us to the multi-species diversity of sexualities, as we saw with Levick keeping his penguin paper secret and the resistance to the Hunts' gull research. There have been moral panics over animal sex-flexibility as we saw with the 1970s seagull controversy and recently with the homosexual penguin parents.²⁶ (Who can forget the panic over the gay frog? The American alt-right spread a panic over frogs being 'turned gay' by hormones in the communal water system.)²⁷ Moreover, nature has been mobilized as an alibi to prop up the case of 'man the hunter', 'the alpha male', and the dominance of patriarchy. While culturally inflected, there has been a widespread myth of the 'naturally' dominant man and the compliant and pliant woman – reflected in law, social practice, ritual, and religion since at least the Neolithic period – with, of course, a few glaring exceptions. This is true of how we have thought of our animal kin, too. Generally, the stereotypes of the dominant male and passive female have shaped (and been further shaped by) not only academic zoology, but also other academic disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Humans and the other animals are so entangled in this stereotype because animals have long been seen through anthropocentric eyes that project human qualities upon them and, equally, animals have enduringly been summoned to be a natural proof of the (human) social order. This entanglement has further entrenched the purportedly essential differences between male and female humans: the idea that men are naturally evolved to compete for dominance and women are naturally intended to be submissive and receptive to such alpha males.

There evolved a discipline to analyse this binary: socio-biology, based on the idea that observable behaviour is shaped by the evolutionary process, favouring behaviours that enhance the greatest transmission of animal's genes to future generations, often peppered with evidence drawn from other animal species. The research from this field – especially in its

26 G. Di Chiro, "Polluted Politics? Confronting Toxic Discourse, Sex Panic, and Econormativity," in *Queer ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, eds. Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson, 199–230; J.M. Gray, "Heteronormativity without Nature: Toward a Queer Ecology," *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* 4, no. 2 (2017): 137–42.

27 Hannah Boast, "Theorizing the Gay Frog," *Environmental Humanities* 14, no. 3 (2022): 661–79.

most populist form – buttressed gender binaries.²⁸ Moreover, same-sex or non-reproductive sex was disregarded – as it seemed not to contribute to evolutionary development. Yet, recent research suggests a paradigm shift, with a rich seam of evidence suggesting enhanced social emollience, pair bonding, hunting alliances, pleasure, and higher survival rate of progeny. A similar paradigm shift, stemming from the 1960s and 70s, was a new focus on females – simply *seeing* them and taking their agency seriously.

Of course, in recognizing female dominance among some of our fellow animals, we will be (at first) tempted to celebrate. Hurrah, we think, with the female of the species in charge things will be better! (We are, after all, so often told to keep male generals away from war and ‘let the mothers sort it out’.) But this is simplistic and sexist in its own way. It imposes a sexist stereotype: the notion that matriarchy ineludibly suggests a soft, sweet sorority of shared sovereignty.

But, alas, it does not! Female ascendancy in the animal kingdom does not, as a matter of course, inevitably result in non-violence. Indeed, to assume that female means ‘natural pacifiers’ is to turn ‘female’ into a caricature, denying females the gamut of drives open to males – including the ‘bad ones’ (pride, greed, wrath, envy, lust, gluttony, and sloth). Women are human, not saints – so too other female animals. They can be as competitive, sexually or physically aggressive and, importantly, also impel evolutionary change at species level. As we saw with the opening vignette of this essay, scientists who break gendered stereotypes suffer censure. Patricia Gowaty, at the University of California, Los Angeles, discovered that songbirds raise their fledglings as a monogamous couple, but many females had promiscuous pasts and clutches of eggs could have many fathers.²⁹ She ruefully remembered: ‘I got a lot of flak from this study ... it offended so many people ... They couldn’t imagine that females were anything but benign’.³⁰ It is foolish to stereotype the ‘female of the species’ as one thing or other – not only does

28 Not unexpectedly, its relationship with feminism is ‘complicated’. Darwinian feminists have found it useful to help understand the long history of women’s subjugation, but – antithetically – other feminists argue that sociobiology actually rationalizes and normalizes patriarchy by portraying it as ‘natural’. Z. Tang-Martinez, “The Curious Courtship of Sociobiology and Feminism: A Case of Irreconcilable Differences,” in *Feminism and Evolutionary Biology*, ed. P.A. Gowaty (Boston, MA: Springer, 1997), 116–50.

29 Patricia Adair Gowaty, “Male Parental Care and Apparent Monogamy Among Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*),” *The American Naturalist* 121, no. 2 (1983): 149–57. For a still useful read, see Patricia Adair Gowaty, “Sexual Natures: How Feminism Changed Evolutionary Biology,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 3 (2003): 901–21.

30 Quoted in Lucy Cooke, *Bitch: On the Female of the Species* (London: Penguin Random House, 2022).

it vary wildly *between* species, but also (and this is only beginning to be understood) *within* species.

Nostalgia Ain't What It Used to Be!

Equally, multi-species sexist stereotyping cuts both ways. So, the so-called alpha male is often a historically created caricature, harkening back to earlier, often longingly misremembered periods of man the hunter and woman in the cave or kitchen. The notion of male leaders as always the embodiment of machismo came to us from early studies in primatology in the context of the masculinist cultures of the wartime West, of violent carceral captive colonies of baboons in too-small spaces.³¹ This one-dimensional model of violent patriarchy under an alpha male is not reflected in many more recent primate studies in which simian superiors show prosocial strategies and female primates clearly play much bigger roles in society. Many people, however, still accept that false premise that our current socio-political order is essentially 'primate patriarchy' buttressed inexorably by our own evolutionary past. They rest their defence or despair on the fact that it extends into our Deep History – a kind of biological script that we were still either destined or doomed to follow (depending on how you feel about patriarchy). Nevertheless, as described earlier, feminist or simply more open-minded scientists have dared to upend fallacies about male–female stereotypes, especially female 'niceness', including mate selection, maternal instinct, and female monogamy. We do not see variety when we are blinkered: but we now know about a range of animals who overturn simple binary or dichotomous thinking about male and female – be it biological or behavioural.³²

Conclusion

This exploratory introductory essay has thought about gender in human–animal or animal-sensitive history. It tried to bring into conversation fields

³¹ See Sandra Swart, *The Lion's Historian: Africa's Animal Past* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2023).

³² Think of the pansexual *Pan paniscus* (bonobos). Differentiated from chimps in 1929, bonobos were wrongly construed simply as 'pygmy chimpanzees.' But their social lives were radically different: revolving around female alliances, with large amounts of non-procreative sex. In fact, they kiss, practice oral sex and frottage, and it is currently believed that females do orgasm (once considered rare but now observed in a variety of animal species).

that should be talking to each other, drawing in voices from environmental history, ornithology, primatology, feminist science studies, feminist environmental studies, and queer ecocriticism. What can we take from all this? What do we learn by rethinking our fellow animals? I have considered three core issues to do with gender and animal history. The first is the ways in which our shifting understandings of animals have helped shape our understandings of our own species' gender and sexuality and, correspondingly, how understandings of gender and sex have contoured our understandings of animals, indeed, nature itself. Evidence of so-called inversions of the sexed or sexual order in nature have been both hidden and ignored – or simply not seen. It is a historian's job to show that we have been duped – or gulled – into a heteronormative, male-dominated 'natural history'. History shows we have seen the 'animal Other' in sexist stereotypes. Human heteronormativity and sexism cause us to impose categories on nature that do not exist. In essence, we get ourselves wrong and thus get animals wrong. But the reverse is true, too: historically, we have got animals wrong, so we get ourselves even more wrong! Historically, we have interpreted nature based on our biases and use our biased understanding of nature to justify those societal biases we have... So we insisted on innate gender binaries, sex stereotypes exist in Nature and then used these categories to buttress the insistence that human society be patriarchal or rigidly binary. And thus, we get ourselves more wrong. It is History's *ouroboros*.

This volume not only challenges the stale archetype of male dominance and female submission and submissiveness, but it also contests that there was and is ever any one way of being male or female, and therefore of being masculine or feminine. Nature, including humans, is far more diverse. But, we now know that humans recognized multispecies queer ecology that disrupted normative expectations well over a century ago – albeit it was a subterranean knowledge. Life was fluid, hierarchies were not rigid, binaries were not static nor omnipresent – some knew it, but it was largely secret until change came from within human society. Then, at last, it was noticed in Nature. Once that happened, public awareness of multi-species fluidity further challenged our notions about sexual and gender norms. Was the dragon-serpent *ouroboros* finally free from eating their own tail?

Second, we should pay attention to what we consider 'Otherness.' Put simply, variation abounds: if we find it helpful to think about ourselves through a multispecies lens then we need to find fresh exemplars. We certainly have a much broader set of models with which to think with many 'natural' instances of non-binariness, fluidity, and queerness. What the

other animals get up to and therefore what is understood to be ‘natural’ has a strange power over us. Rethinking what is ‘natural’ helps us recalibrate negative and narrow beliefs of who is allowed to see themselves reflected in nature. This has real world impacts. Never forget that Bagemihl’s book was evidence in a brief filed for the 2003 Supreme Court case that ultimately struck down sodomy laws.

The third key message I urge you to take away is this: historically gendered stereotyping, predicated on a misunderstanding of the animal world, is just as harmful to boys and men as it is to girls and women – and maybe as harmful to our understanding of the more-than-human world. It fosters the naturalizing (acceptance and, indeed, promotion of) aggressive, violent male behaviour. This kind of thinking about animals is an alibi and spur for toxic (human) masculinity. But it also makes us get the animal world wrong – again. This, in turn, promotes more misunderstanding and narrowing of the range of possible ways to be and live in this more-than-human world. The mirror socio-biology was supposed to hold up to us was to show a strict male–female binary and heterosexuality as natural. In fact, the mirror animals hold up to us reveals that we are flexible and exist in a diversity of sexualities, contoured by context and changing over time. Biology is not destiny – for any of us.

Coda

As you will see, in the suite of essays and interventions that follow, we were especially welcoming of contributions that experimented with new forms, perspectives, and scales of analysis from all over the world and invited authors from academia, museums and cultural and heritage institutions, and activist organizations. We feel strongly about the need to extend the boundaries of our field – in authoring and in subject material – by seeking research from a range of writers from diverse backgrounds, institutional affiliations, and places – from the Global South and Global North; early career and senior scholars; and contributors of diverse identities. We started this volume with seabirds (and scholars) who broke the norms imposed by human convention. We now see a freed and freeing flock of authors emerging in the essays that follow, swooping and soaring in susurrations, guided by a shared curiosity. This collection is an intellectual *murmuration*: each essay is individual but all of us are moving together in taking the animal history to new heights.

About the Author

Sandra Swart is professor and chair of the Department of History at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. She received her DPhil in Modern History from Oxford University in 2001, while simultaneously obtaining an MSc in Environmental Change and Management, also at Oxford. She studies the socio-environmental history of southern Africa, focusing on animals. She is an editor of the Brill book series *African and Asian Anthropocene: Studies in the Environmental Humanities* and co-vice president of the European Society for Environmental History. She has authored/co-authored over 80 articles and chapters, with G. Bankoff, *Breeds of Empire: The 'Invention' of the Horse in the Philippines and Southern Africa, 1500–1950* (2007); with L. van Sittert (eds), *Canis Africanis: A Dog History of Southern Africa* (2008); and with E. O’Gorman, M. Carey, and W. San Martín (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Environmental History* (2024). She is sole author of *Riding High: Horses, Humans and History in South Africa* (Witwatersrand University Press, 2010) and *The Lion’s Historian: Africa’s Animal Past* (Johannesburg: Jacana Press, 2023).

Martha Maxwell on the Frontier of Colorado, Modern Taxidermy, and ‘Women’s Work’

Vanessa Bateman

Abstract

This chapter sheds light on an overlooked but significant figure in the history of natural history museum display practices. Described as the ‘Colorado Huntress’ and a ‘Modern Diana’ by the press, Martha Maxwell (1831–1881) was the first American woman to collect and taxidermy her own animal specimens, beginning in the late 1860s. She opened a natural history museum in Colorado. Maxwell was acclaimed for her naturalistic animal tableaux and was invited to share her collection at the 1876 Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia, where she declared her exhibit ‘Woman’s Work’. Revisiting Maxwell’s contributions to her field reveals contradictions of the intersections between gender, animality, and environmental ethics and the blurring of boundaries between art and science, amateur and professional, and nature and culture so typical of nineteenth-century natural history practices.

Keywords: taxidermy, Natural History Museum, diorama

Martha Maxwell at the Centennial Exhibition

To celebrate the signing of the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia, the Centennial International Exhibition of 1876 was the first official World’s Fair in the United States. With an estimated ten million people in attendance over six months, this equates to an astonishing one in five citizens who visited the exposition. Spanning 150 hectares, the Centennial featured international pavilions from almost forty countries, technological



Figure 1. The Centennial, Kansas and Colorado Exhibit, *Harper's Weekly*, June 17, 1876.

innovations, and American natural resources. Various living and dead animals were on display at the Centennial, including 42 acres of farm and livestock exhibits accompanying the Agricultural Hall, and many large exhibitions featured taxidermy.³³ Among the most popular displays of animals was a large and imposing exhibit in the Colorado–Kansas State Building. Occupying an entire wall of the Colorado wing of the building, the exhibit contained a plethora of large and small taxidermied mammals and birds placed together within a landscape that simulated the Rocky Mountains and Great Plains of Colorado. Illustrations of the exhibit were featured in such publications as *Harper's Weekly*, with a full-page sketch that recorded the exhibit in context within the State building (Fig. 1). A dramatic scene unfolds: a panther leaps from the mountaintop after a doe, while an eagle soars above carrying a rabbit, and in a convergence of space between humans and wild animals, two visitors enter a cave flanked by wolves, and bison spill out into the audience. While most of the exhibits in the Kansas–Colorado State Building displayed an abundance of natural resources to be expended there – including mineral, vegetable, and animal – the Colorado exhibit's lively (yet dead) animals, described as 'resurrected in form', contrasted with the central wing, where six mounted bison heads were symmetrically arranged around a large liberty bell

33 *Visitors Guide to the Centennial Exhibition and Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, PA: J.P. Lippincott & Co., 1876).



Figure 2. Martha Maxwell sitting within her Centennial Exhibit (detail), Centennial Photographic Company, *Mrs. Maxwell's Rocky Mountain Museum series*, 1876, Public Library Digital Collections, New York.

made of grasses and grains.³⁴ Whereas the mounted bison heads were a traditional format in which to encounter wild animals, as trophies extracted from their point of origin, a fully taxidermied bison placed within a simulation of its habitat gave viewers a more comprehensive understanding of an animal that would be nearly extinct within a decade after the Centennial.

Due to the naturalistic quality of taxidermy and its placement in a recreated habitat – unprecedented for 1876 – the Colorado exhibit was celebrated in the press, won awards from the Centennial Commission, and drew crowds daily.³⁵ Dubbed Mrs. Maxwell's Rocky Mountain Museum, it also gained attention because a woman made it. Not only had a woman produced such

34 "Centennial. Philadelphia, Oct. 2, 1876," *The People's Journal*, October 5, 1876; Francis A. Walker, *United States Centennial Commission: International Exhibition, 1876. Reports and Awards*, vol. VIII (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880), 611.

35 Walker, *United States*, 611.



Figure 3. Mary Dartt, "Unspeakable Impudence," *On the Plains and Among the Peaks*, 1879. (Photograph by Author).

artistry, but she had also 'killed or captured' most of the animals on display.³⁶ Described as the 'Colorado Huntress' and a 'Modern Diana' by the press, Martha Maxwell (1831–1881) gained considerable attention at the Centennial as a multifaceted frontierswoman: pioneering the art of taxidermy and its display, thereby advancing women's place in science, and representing the capabilities of settler women living on the frontier (Fig. 2). The public wondered how a woman was capable of conducting the activities associated with the perceived masculine skills that would have been required to create such an exhibit: the physical demands of hunting, trapping, and taxidermy and the scientific knowledge and application of natural history. In a bold statement of self-promotion and proclamation of support for the women's reform movements, Maxwell posted a sign within her landscape reading: 'Woman's Work'.

According to her sister, Mary Dartt, who chronicled Maxwell's life as a naturalist in the biography *On the Plains and Among the Peaks: Or, How Mrs. Maxwell Made Her Natural History Collection* (1879), the 'Woman's Work' placard raised countless questions from visitors. 'Woman's Work! What does that mean? Can it be possible any one wishes us to believe a *woman* did all

36 J.S. Ingram, *The Centennial Exposition: Described and Illustrated: Being a Concise and Graphic Description of This Grand Enterprise Commemorative of the First Centenary of American Independence* (Philadelphia, PA: Hubbard Bros., 1876), 647–48.

of this?³⁷ To further the spectacle, Maxwell also occupied the exhibit, on display alongside the animals and subject to public scrutiny and reaching hands (Fig. 3). Despite the incessant curiosity from visitors about her work and herself, Maxwell was nonetheless the master of her domain. On some level, it was a privileged location where she was its hunter, collector, and recreator, but also the agent by which Colorado was relocated and resurrected.

Before her international debut at the Centennial, Maxwell's work was already unparalleled, and the reasons are manifold. Beginning in the late 1860s, Maxwell was the first American woman to hunt and taxidermy her own animals for a natural history collection, opening Mrs. Maxwell's Rocky Mountain Museum in Boulder in 1874. Not only was she a self-taught hunter and naturalist, but she independently developed the techniques and process of taxidermy and its display from a rudimentary craft into a fine art. The improvements she made in taxidermy – not being practiced in the United States during this time – represent a precursor to what would become the essential methods of the 'modern taxidermy' movement that began in the 1880s. This arose – on a parallel track – from the development of mannequin or clay-model taxidermy by William Temple Hornaday, around 1879, at Ward's Natural Science Establishment in Rochester, New York, a distributor of natural history supplies and specimens for colleges and museums that offered taxidermic services for hunters.³⁸ What came before modern taxidermy was termed 'bad taxidermy' by some, including American ornithologist Robert Wilson Shufeldt, who, in 1895, compared the work of 'a skilled modern taxidermic artist' to the inferior work of a 'bird stuffer of the last period' whose methods produced specimens 'distorted, daubed with pain, shrunken, vilely unnatural in every way'.³⁹ Technical and scientific improvements, Shufeldt contended, proved that, through modernization, taxidermy became 'a progressive art, a science'.⁴⁰ From 1880 onwards, methods of modern taxidermy were standardized and became widespread through instructional books, schools, and societies.⁴¹

37 Mary Dartt, *On the Plains, and Among the Peaks; or, How Mrs. Maxwell Made Her Natural History Collection* (Philadelphia, PA: Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, 1879), 5.

38 Hornaday attended the Centennial in Philadelphia and saw Maxwell's exhibit, and it is possible he spoke with her. See: Mary Anne Andrei, *Nature's Mirror: How Taxidermists Shaped America's Natural History Museums and Saved Endangered Species* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 25–28, 59.

39 Robert W. Shufeldt, "Modern Taxidermy," *The American Field: The Sportsman's Journal* 43, no. 20 (May 21, 1895), 490; see also, Shufeldt, "Modern Taxidermy (Part II)," *The American Field: The Sportsman's Journal* 43, no. 21 (May 25, 1895): 489–90.

40 Shufeldt, "Modern Taxidermy," 490.

41 Including the Society of American Taxidermists (1881–1883) and William Temple Hornaday, *Taxidermy and Zoological Collecting: A Complete Handbook for the Amateur Taxidermist, Collector,*

Maxwell was also ahead of her time in display practices and the rationale behind collecting for scientific purposes. Concerned with preserving animals in a lifelike manner, she created animal tableaux in the style of habitat groupings, placing specimens within a setting similar to their place of origin. These forms of taxidermic display would later be expanded into the habitat diorama found in natural history museums in the United States and elsewhere at the turn of the century (and at the same time, a parallel movement towards natural habitat re-creation would happen in zoos with panorama enclosures).⁴² Further, after noticing how ‘the strange and curious animals peculiar to [the] plains and mountains were rapidly disappearing’, Maxwell reasoned that hunting in the name of science was a way to protect species for future use by scientists.⁴³ This idea was developed and practiced later by naturalists and museums at the end of the nineteenth century, spearheaded by Hornaday in his campaign to save the bison from extinction during a government-sponsored expedition to Montana in 1886.⁴⁴

Maxwell’s contributions to her field were significant and ahead of her time, yet she has been largely overlooked until recently.⁴⁵ Concern about her absence from the historical canon was raised over a century ago by Junius T. Henderson, the first curator of the University of Colorado Museum

Osteologist, Museum-Builder, Sportsman, and Traveller (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1891).

42 On habitat dioramas, see Frederic A. Lucas, “The Story of Museum Groups, Part I,” *The American Museum Journal* XIV, no. 1 (1914); Karen Wonders, *Habitat Dioramas: Illusions of Wilderness in Museums of Natural History* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1993). On Akeley, see Jay Kirk, *Kingdom Under Glass: A Tale of Obsession, Adventure, and One Man’s Quest to Preserve the World’s Great Animals* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2013). On the emergence of panorama zoo displays: Nigel Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo* (Baltimore, MD, and London: John Hopkins University Press, 2002).

43 Dartt, *On the Plains*, 23.

44 On Hornaday, bison conservation, and taxidermy, see Andrei, *Nature’s Mirror*, 73–97; Mark V. Barrow, *Nature’s Ghosts: Confronting Extinction from the Age of Jefferson to the Age of Ecology* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 108–34; Hanna Rose Shell, “Skin Deep: Taxidermy, Embodiment and Extinction in W.T. Hornaday’s Buffalo Group,” *Proceedings of the California Academy of Sciences* 55, no. 5 (2004): 88–112. See also, Marouf Arif Hasian Jr and S. Marek Muller, “Decolonizing Conservationist Hero Narratives: A Critical Genealogy of William T. Hornaday and Colonial Conservation Rhetorics,” *Atlantic Journal of Communication* 27, no. 4 (August 8, 2019): 284–96.

45 See, John Moring, “Martha Maxwell and Her Museum,” in *Early American Naturalists: Exploring the American West, 1804–1900* (Lanham, MD: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2005), 185; Karen R. Jones, *Epiphany in the Wilderness: Hunting, Nature, and Performance in the Nineteenth-Century American West* (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2015), 253–62; and Stephen Rogers, et al., “Origins and Contemporary Status of Habitat Dioramas in the United States,” in *Natural History Dioramas: Traditional Exhibits for Current Educational Themes*, eds. Annette Scheersoi and Sue Dale Tunnicliffe (Cham: Springer, 2019), 11–40.

of Natural History. In 1915, he advocated for a recognition of Maxwell's contributions to taxidermy and habitat groupings, lest she be forgotten.⁴⁶ Henderson argued that given the popularity of Maxwell's exhibit at the Centennial, it must have influenced taxidermists to display taxidermy in habitat groups, and even those who had not heard of her were 'reaping the results of her stimulating example.'⁴⁷ Since the comprehensive biography, *Martha Maxwell, Rocky Mountain Naturalist* by Colorado historian Maxine Benson in 1986, there has not been another dedicated study of Maxwell.⁴⁸ Strangely, she has remained an obscure figure. Historical consideration has tended to frame her in terms that differ little from those set out in the press during her lifetime: she is cited as an example of a 'Modern Diana' – that is, as a female exception to the male domains of natural history museums, taxidermy, display, hunting, and frontier history. While she was a female exception to these fields and was involved in the women's reform movements throughout her lifetime, her work and influence should not be summed up in mere modestly framed gender-based exceptionalism or revisionism. As Benson argues: 'What is noteworthy about Martha's work is not the fact that a *woman* was mounting a variety of animals, large and small, but that *anyone* was employing such relatively sophisticated techniques in an isolated settlement at the edge of the Rocky Mountains in Colorado Territory'.⁴⁹ Not only should Maxwell's contributions to her field be revisited, her story highlights contradictions of the intersections between gender, animality, and environmental ethics, as well as the blurring of boundaries between art and science, amateur and professional, and nature and culture so typical of nineteenth-century natural history practices.

A Chance Encounter with Taxidermy on the Frontier

We cannot do justice to Martha Maxwell's remarkable life here, but the biographies written by her sister and Benson are worth reading; as the latter states, her life is a 'fascinating story, one that in a novel would scarcely be

46 Junius T. Henderson, "A Pioneer Venture in Habitat Grouping," in *Proceedings of the American Association of Museums: Recordings of the Tenth Annual Meeting Held in San Francisco*, July 1915, vol. 9 (Baltimore, MD: Waverly Press, 1915), 89.

47 Henderson, "A Pioneer Venture," 90.

48 Maxine Benson, *Martha Maxwell Rocky Mountain Naturalist* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1986).

49 Benson, *Martha Maxwell*, 90.

credible'.⁵⁰ In brief, Martha Ann Dartt was born in Pennsylvania in 1831 and briefly attended Oberlin College, the first co-educational college in the United States, before withdrawing due to lack of funding.⁵¹ She became Mrs. Maxwell in 1854 after marrying James Maxwell, a widower with six children who were twice her age, and together they had one daughter. Throughout their marriage, Martha maintained financial independence (both were never prosperous after moving to Colorado) and spent years apart as the decades went by. Initially leaving their youngest children behind with family, the Maxwells were among the unprecedented number of white settlers who moved west during the Pike's Peak Gold Rush in 1860 (also known as the Colorado Gold Rush), which, in turn, led to the social, economic, political, and environmental changes resulting in the creation of Colorado Territory in 1861. As their party travelled westward by wagon, letters to her sisters back east conjure scenes of the Maxwells among the estimated 100,000 'Fifty-Niners' making the same long journey.⁵²

Martha's interest in Indigenous peoples stands out in the letters she wrote to her family back east during these five monotonous months. This may also be partly because her parents had intended to move their family to Oregon to become missionaries when she was a child.⁵³ She reported, for example, that her party had seen four different tribes along the way, writing, 'they interest me much. Their manner of conversing by signs, their [ornaments] amuse me vastly.'⁵⁴ While regarding them with curiosity, she also observed the threat of the increasing number of overland crossings and settlements to Indigenous livelihood, describing how 'nearly every patch of fertile bottomland is fenced or about to be. This I think is not right for it must interfere very much with the Indians depriving them of their hunting ground and particularly of pasturage for their ponies. I anticipate a remonstrance on their part before long.'⁵⁵ Maxwell's testimony of the visible changes to the land and its people bears witness to more changes that would come in the following decades. The First Transcontinental Railroad

50 Ibid., xiii.

51 Mary Dartt Thompson, "Notes on Martha Maxwell Diary Fragments, 1852–53," 1925. Martha Maxwell Collection 1821–1957, Stephen H. Hart Research Center, History Colorado Center.

52 Duane A. Smith, *The Trail of Gold and Silver: Mining in Colorado, 1859–2009* (Denver, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2010), 11–23.

53 Dartt Thompson, "Notes on."

54 "Martha Maxwell to sisters," 6 May 1860. Martha Maxwell Collection, 1821–1957. Stephen H. Hart Research Center, History Colorado Center.

55 Benson, *Martha Maxwell*, 55. "Martha Maxwell to sisters," 6 May 1860. Martha Maxwell Collection, 1821–1957. Stephen H. Hart Research Center, History Colorado Center.

was built between 1863 and 1869, uniting the eastern and western halves of the United States, and following the Civil War, migration to the Great Plains and beyond increased. White settlement, the loss of bison (from an estimated 60 million in 1800 to less than 300 by 1900), and the ongoing so-called American Indian Wars, which lasted into the early twentieth century, devastated the lives of Indigenous peoples living throughout the West, most of whom were confined to reservations by the 1880s.⁵⁶

Throughout her life's work, Maxwell maintained an interest in what was an imagined homogeneity of Indigenous cultures, purchasing objects for her collection from a trip to California and displaying them alongside other 'curiosities.' Unlike other world's fair exhibits that exhibited Indigenous people as novelties or part of 'nature' to further colonial agendas, the literal compartmentalization of Indigenous history within windowed cabinets in Maxwell's collection reflected the settler-colonial narrative of wilderness as sanitized from all humans. The visual erasure from Maxwell's reimagined landscape in place of something more akin to taxonomic regimes of display and collection is reflective of the harsh reality of Indigenous peoples' erasure from their native lands and the vicarious acceptance of their fate by the newly dominant culture as a *fait accompli*. This both affirms that the production and reception of taxidermic and dioramic displays were undergirded by pervasive colonial narratives present and also verifies Susan Leigh Star's argument that early twentieth-century taxidermy visually 'cleaned up the mess of colonialism, patriarchy, and violence against nature'.⁵⁷ Through the naturalistic quality of her taxidermy and its placement in a recreated – yet idealized – landscape void of any human but herself, Maxwell's Colorado exhibit facilitated the invisibility of settler colonial violence and ecological and cultural destruction from the American imagination of the land.

During their first few years in Colorado, Maxwell purchased land and built a small boarding house, which she managed, in addition to mending, cleaning, and washing for extra income. Within a year, she had saved enough money of her own to invest in twenty land claims, including a larger 'ranch claim' outside Denver on the Platte River with a one-room log cabin.¹ Visiting

56 "Time Line of the American Bison," US Fish & Wildlife Service, n.d., <https://www.fws.gov/bisonrange/timeline.htm>.

57 Susan Leigh Star, "The Right Tools for the Job: At Work in Twentieth-Century Life Sciences," in *The Right Tools for the Job: At Work in Twentieth-Century Life Sciences*, eds. Joan H. Fujimura and Adele E. Clarke (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 281. See also, Pauline Wakeham, *Taxidermic Signs: Reconstructing Aboriginality* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

her ranch, Maxwell found a German claim-jumper occupying the cabin who refused to leave. After raiding the cabin while he was out and clearing it of his possessions, she noticed several mounted birds, ‘the first unfinished specimens of taxidermy’ she had ever seen and became ‘fascinated with the idea of learning to preserve the strange creatures of that new land.’⁵⁸ While the taxidermist refused to teach her his practice, explaining that women were better than men in ‘small works’ and that he did not wish to have competition, she took it as a challenge to learn the craft on her own accord.⁵⁹ This chance encounter with taxidermy in the remote outskirts of Denver changed her life, sparking a lifelong fascination with a practice that was somewhat secretive, antiquated, and needing technical improvement. Shortly after, Maxwell abruptly returned to Wisconsin due to family obligations and personal illness between the end of 1862 and 1868.⁶⁰ The years back in Wisconsin proved fundamental to the overall development of her taxidermy and display, with the employment at a local college and home experimentation giving rise to largely self-taught skills that she would improve upon when she returned to Colorado.

Faced with the displeasing and often disparaged results of traditional taxidermy methods, which stuffed animal skins stuffed with straw or rags, Maxwell independently revised the entire process by mixing art and science to produce far more naturalistic results.⁶¹ Instead of considering the animal body as a hollow form, she envisioned the corporeal animal as a material to be reanimated, brought back to life through a sculptural recreation of its body that was as close as possible to that of the formerly living creature. She focused on the foundations of the body because ‘she considered a knowledge of the anatomy of an animal as essential in taxidermy, as in sculpture, to the finest artistic effect.’⁶² Praised as a ‘sculptor of animals’, her process was, in a sense, ‘artistic’, with larger animals requiring a stable armature of wood or metal onto which plaster, clay, or hay could be built up as a model or mannequin-like re-creation of the body, stimulating the muscular structure and then covering it with skin.⁶³ The innovations Maxwell made

58 Dartt, *On the Plains*, 18.

59 Ibid., 18.

60 Ibid.

61 On traditional taxidermy practices of the eighteenth century, see Rachel Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing* (Philadelphia, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 61–62.

62 Dartt, *On the Plains*, 109.

63 Helen Hunt, “A Colorado Woman’s Museum,” *St. Nicholas: An Illustrated Magazine for Young Folks* 3, no. 12 (October 1876), 781.

resulted from her important understanding that ‘taxidermy, as a fine art, [was] subservient to science’.⁶⁴

When she returned to Colorado, Maxwell’s family was soon cohabitating with her taxidermic creations, and she decided to establish a natural history museum that would contain all the fauna of the Territory. Mrs. Maxwell’s Rocky Mountain Museum opened in June 1874 and moved to Denver a year later. The goal was not only to gain financial success, but also to establish an institution that encouraged the study of the collection’s specimens and their habitats through accurate classification and arrangement.⁶⁵ Yet, compared to systematic natural science displays that arranged specimens separately in cabinets, drawers, or cases according to taxonomic classification, the Rocky Mountain Museum contained theatrical displays of the Colorado frontier through elaborate re-creations of the local landscape that filled the small rooms of her museum. Animals were arranged to create a narrative, whether it be prey and predator interactions, mother with young, or anthropomorphic scenes, a popular genre of Victorian taxidermy. Though the exhibits were idealized representations of the natural world, they intended to inform visitors of the interactions animals may have with one another and their environment, and her museum was celebrated by the local and national press for its ingenuity.⁶⁶

Becoming a Hunter–Naturalist

The great lengths to which Maxwell went to collect animals for her collection are detailed in Dartt’s *On the Plains* and demonstrate the various methods she used, including poisoning, trapping, drowning, shooting, and sometimes capturing animals live. A typical collecting episode combined several methods to produce the most desirable ‘specimen’. When Maxwell started experimenting with taxidermy in the 1860s, she relied on men and boys in the neighbourhood to hunt for her. However, this method of collecting was not ideal, for she could not make the selections herself, and in an effort ‘not to lose the rarer and more desirable’ specimens, Maxwell realized ‘she must kill them herself’.⁶⁷ After acquiring a gun and gaining an accurate shot, she began hunting on collecting trips in the mountains, often joined

64 Dartt, *On the Plains*, 158.

65 Ibid., 137.

66 Helen Hunt, “Mrs. Maxwell’s Museum,” *The Independent*, September 23, 1875.

67 Dartt, *On the Plains*, 23.

by her husband, daughter, and sister. In exercising her developing skills as a hunter, naturalist, and taxidermist, Maxwell's goal was to assemble a representative collection of Colorado's fauna because, according to Dartt, it was 'the most useful and practical way in which she could embody her new enthusiasm'.⁶⁸

According to Karen Jones, the scientific value of natural history collections mask the violence involved in '[r]itualistically claiming the animal as scientific specimen'.⁶⁹ Yet, in the introduction to the recent re-printing of Dartt's *On the Plains*, Julie McCown makes the case that the argument that science 'neutralized questions of killing, violence, and species decline' is complicated by Maxwell's scientific practices and relationship with animals, which blurred the boundaries between violence and sentimentality.⁷⁰ In an episode in *On the Plains*, Dartt describes how, after James shot a hawk so that Martha could climb a tree to retrieve its nest and eggs, she realized the nest contained a baby bird and an unhatched egg, both of which she cared for and raised until the birds were a desirable size before she used 'a little chloroform'.⁷¹ Further, a story in *Boulder News* detailed how two living bear cubs were on display at Maxwell's museum alongside their taxidermied mother. The narrative here was both a testament to the lifelikeness of her taxidermy and highlights the gendering of her work and how Maxwell navigated the emotional experience of confronting the death of animals in her collection: 'Mrs. Maxwell, to test her work and to see whether the cubs still remembered their mother, let them out into the room where she was', and the cubs 'seeming overjoyed at finding her [...] Standing up and stroking her face with their little paws in the most pleading manner [...] moaned like two heartbroken children. It was more than Mrs. Maxwell could endure, and with tears of sympathy for their disappointment, she took them away'.⁷² Another example of the simultaneous display of living and dead animals was at her Centennial exhibit, which included living prairie dogs and fish. These are only a few examples that reveal the complexities at play between life and death, and violence and care in Maxwell's endeavour as a naturalist.

At the Centennial, Maxwell warned visitors against the looming threat of species extinction, and when questioned about her own hunting practices,

68 Ibid., 73.

69 Jones, *Epiphany in the Wilderness*, 256.

70 Ibid., 256; Julie McCown, "Introduction," in Mary Emma Dartt Thompson, *On the Plains, and among the Peaks, or, How Mrs. Maxwell Made Her Natural History Collection*, (1879) ed. Julie McCown (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2021), 27.

71 Dartt, *On the Plains*, 73.

72 Ibid., 178.

she replied: 'All must die some time, I only shorten the period of consciousness that I may give their forms a perpetual memory; and I leave it to you, which is the more cruel? To kill to eat, or to kill to *immortalize*'.⁷³ Hunting for scientific purposes was driven by a realization when she returned to Colorado in 1868 that the animals of the 'plains and mountains were rapidly disappearing'.⁷⁴ The rationale of killing animals to conserve *and* preserve them illustrates Rachel Poliquin's observation that taxidermy has been a physical manifestation of longing throughout its history.⁷⁵ For Maxwell, hunting with a scientific purpose was not motivated by the need to conquer nature in the same way as the trophy hunter, but, at the same time, hunting as a form of scientific collection involved domination of nature through death and taxonomic classification. These two forms of hunting – for trophy and 'specimen' – unite a few decades later when big-game hunters like Theodore Roosevelt led expeditions on behalf of scientific institutions. The hunter–naturalist role, in which hunting was a form of preservation, would become a common practice that extended well into the twentieth century, performing what Donna Haraway has called 'production of permanence'.⁷⁶ Maxwell's collection and stance on hunting precedes what Stephen Asma describes as 'the moral power of good taxidermy' as a justification for museums around the world to fill their vaults with specimens that would soon no longer exist in the wild.⁷⁷

As Maxwell's collection grew, she desired to become an educated naturalist, and was particularly interested in ornithology. In Colorado, there was a lack of resources to obtain this knowledge, and so, in 1869, she wrote to the Smithsonian asking for recommendations about ornithology textbooks and offered her services as a collector and identifier of local fauna.⁷⁸ This exchange started many years of dialogue with the country's top scientific institution and fostered an important professional relationship with

73 Ibid., 119. A parallel here was a growing concern about animal cruelty, with women as leading advocates of the cause. At the Centennial, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) had a booth in the Main Building of the Agricultural Hall. Krista Kinslow, "Contesting the Centennial: Politics and Culture at the 1876 World's Fair," (Ph.D., Boston University, 2019), 278.

74 Dartt, *On the Plains*, 23.

75 Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo*, 6–10.

76 Donna Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908–1936," *Social Text* 11 (Winter 1984, 1985), 21.

77 Stephen T. Asma, *Stuffed Animals and Pickled Heads: The Culture and Evolution of Natural History Museums* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 43.

78 Benson, *Martha Maxwell*, 85. Citing "Martha Dartt Maxwell to Secretary, Smithsonian Institution, January 8, 1869," Record Unit 26, Office of the Secretary (1863–1879), Incoming Correspondence, vol. 82, p. 78, box 19. Smithsonian Archives, Washington, D.C.

ornithologists Elliot Coues and Robert Ridgway who both contributed an appendix of her collection in *On the Plains*. In collecting on behalf of the Smithsonian, Maxwell made two significant contributions. First, she identified an unknown species of owl, which ornithologists at the Smithsonian Institute named *Scops asio maxwelliae*, now known as the Eastern Screech-Owl. The other important discovery was securing three specimens of the elusive black-footed ferret, which was identified by John James Audubon and John Bachman in 1851 but not collected by any naturalist before Maxwell.⁷⁹ In addition to identifying species, collecting on behalf of the Smithsonian fostered Maxwell's understanding of the hunter–naturalist role, a turning point for her technical understanding of taxidermy as a medium to preserve nature. Working 'in the field' compelled her to consider the natural habitat and behaviour of animals in her collection, revealing how 'truthfulness [in taxidermy] can only be secured by careful study of animals in their native haunts'.⁸⁰

Returning to 'Woman's Work' at the Centennial

The Centennial became a testing ground for women's rights claims, with the decision to form an independent Women's Pavilion after women were excluded from many exhibits, including a ban of works by women artists from the Memorial Hall Art Exhibit and a prohibition from presenting in the Main Exhibition Building. The first of its kind at an international exposition, the Women's Pavilion was fully funded with money raised by women to support their cause and featured exhibits exclusively made and operated by women.⁸¹ The Women's Pavilion also published a progressive, weekly journal called *New Century*, 'printed on premises at the Woman's Building and financed entirely by the Women's Centennial Committee'.⁸² While most of these exhibits demonstrated women's abilities in various industries, including 74 patented inventions by women, most of the content was traditional forms of 'women's work,' such as needlework and porcelain painting. At large, the contents of the Women's Pavilion were characterized by the press as made by 'rich women who had plenty of time, and who never learned to make

79 Elliott Coues, *Fur-Bearing Animals* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1877), 149–50.

80 Dartt, *On the Plains*, 32.

81 Gary B. Nash, *First City: Philadelphia and the Forging of Historical Memory* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 272.

82 Mary Frances Cordato, "Toward a New Century: Women and the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, 1876," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 107, no. 1 (1983): 115.



Figure 4. B.F. Reimer, *In the Field*, 1876, albumen prints on carte de visite mount, 10.3 cm x 6.3 cm. Library of Congress.

useful things'.⁸³ In contrast, a reporter commented that Maxwell's exhibit would have been a 'truthful addition' to the Pavilion and a demonstration of what a woman could do 'when the necessity is laid upon her'.⁸⁴

Before the Territory of Colorado commissioned her, Maxwell contacted the Woman's Pavilion planning committee in the hope of being included, but received no response. This does not, however, mean she was rejected from the Pavilion. Maxwell's 'Woman's Work' sign can be read as a message of solidarity for all women at the Centennial, promoting their capabilities from the places they had been excluded. In fact, throughout her life, she supported women's rights and was periodically involved with the Woman's Suffrage Movement. In 1863, she was elected secretary of the Loyal Women's League of Baraboo, Wisconsin, an organization with over 200 members associated with the National Loyal Women's League; during this time, she helped gather signatures for a petition urging Congress to 'pass an act of universal emancipation'.⁸⁵ These values ultimately influenced her to pursue male professions at the time. In fact, the only scientific discipline deemed acceptable for women to practice in the mid-to-late-nineteenth century was botany, which was widely regarded as a 'feminine' science.⁸⁶ Furthermore, her concern with women's rights impacted Maxwell's construction of her public and professional image. As Benson points out, Maxwell wore a practical hunting outfit that she designed in a style similar to the garments advocated by those active in the dress reform movement.⁸⁷ By selling souvenir photographs of herself in this uniform, Maxwell monetized her reputation as an anomalous female hunter-naturalist while also circulating her feminist agenda (Fig. 4).

At the same time, the context in which she was invited to exhibit her work, the platform of an official State building, gave Maxwell authority as a representative of her State and accorded her recreated landscape a sense of authenticity. Nonetheless, much of the attention by the press and public was placed on the disparity between the large and monumental display of dead animals and the unassuming woman who created the exhibit. The

83 Maxine Benson, "Colorado Celebrates the Centennial, 1876," *Colorado Magazine* 53, no. 2 (Spring 1976): 148; Maxine Benson quoting: Meeker, "The Centennial of 1876," 20, and *Chicago Interior*, 27 July 1876, *Centennial Clipping*, 15: 152.

84 Benson, "Colorado Celebrates," 148.

85 Benson, *Martha Maxwell*, 71.

86 Almira Hart Lincoln Phelps, *Familiar Lectures on Botany* (Hartford, CT: H. and F.J. Huntington, 1829).

87 Benson, *Martha Maxwell*, 92–93. See also: Patricia A. Cunningham, *Reforming Women's Fashion, 1850–1920: Politics, Health, and Art* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2003).

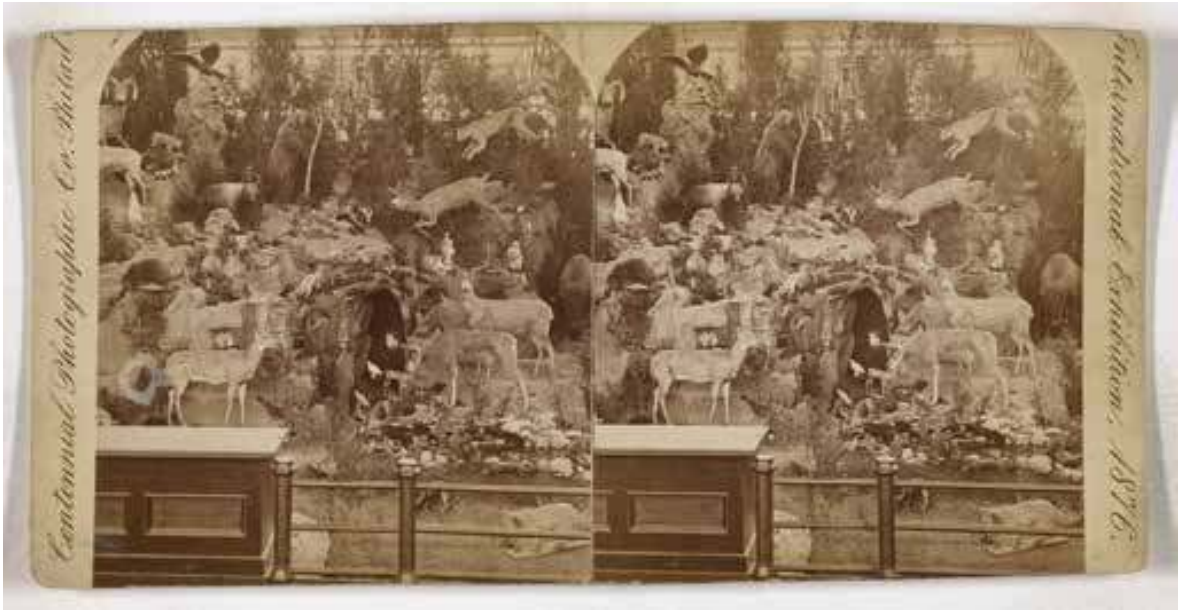


Figure 5. Centennial Photographic Company, *Mrs. M.A. Maxwell posed within a grouping a stuffed animals at the International Exposition, Philadelphia, 1876*, albumen print stereograph, 10 cm x 18 cm, J. Paul Getty Museum.

Atlantic Monthly underscored the self-promotion, noting ‘Mrs. Maxwell, huntress and taxidermist, who not only stuffed but also shot these animals, stands before her own zoological show, selling her own photographs, so she cannot object to a passing mention’.⁸⁸ Not only did she make clear the authorship of her work, Maxwell was present throughout the duration of the Centennial, placing herself physically inside the diorama, most likely as a way to distance herself from the crowds, but nonetheless, putting herself on display. One article from this time stands out in describing finding ‘Mrs. Maxwell tired and worn’ from the constant flow of visitors, some of which were trying to attract her attention ‘would mildly touch her with their parasols and canes, some to see if she was a real, live woman, others that they might talk with her ten or fifteen minutes’.⁸⁹ Despite reaching arms, Maxwell’s ability to freely move behind the barrier established her authority as a sort of gatekeeper to the frontier.

The sale of stereograph souvenirs of her Centennial exhibit was Maxwell’s main source of income throughout its duration, and these photographs offer another visualization of how she wanted to be viewed by the public. Most

88 “Characteristics of the International Fair IV,” *Atlantic Monthly* 38 (October 1876), 500.

89 Clipping of Special Correspondence with the Denver News, September 9, 1876. Maxwell Scrapbook, no. 54. Martha Maxwell Collection, Stephen H. Hart Research Center, History Colorado Center. This scrapbook was compiled by Martha and her sister Mary, dates unknown.

of these photographs include Maxwell within the display, and due to the exhibit's size and the large number of animals, she blends into the landscape she has constructed (Fig. 5). Camouflaging into her recreated landscape, Maxwell becomes part of the surrounding flora and fauna in a collapse of the maker with the made – situating her as both an authority of Colorado's natural world, displayed alongside the animals but also the focal point. By including herself, Maxwell claimed landscape as a 'female frontier'.⁹⁰ The traditional narrative of the Western frontier is full of male heroes who have become all-American idols since then: gun-wielding and buckskin-clad characters, such as fur trappers, explorers, or cowboys who conquered the landscape in pursuit of Manifest Destiny. Historically, this landscape is gender specific, absent of women despite their presence; revisionist historian Susan Armitage argues the frontier has been historicized as a 'Hisland'.⁹¹ Women have been absent from the history, and, if present, have been cast modest roles in the grand narrative of wilderness being transformed into civilization.

In her modernization of taxidermy and its display, Maxwell was by no means subverting settler colonial human–animal relations that she participated in and furthered. Instead, it offered a preview of how the natural world would be visually reimagined in natural history museums and elsewhere decades later. As a physical manifestation of Colorado, Maxwell's exhibit offered the ten million Centennial visitors a chance to 'tour' the frontier from a safe distance, viewing animals within the illusion of a landscape that, up until that point, was widely perceived through romanticized depictions in literature, art, and popular culture. While the traditional view of the frontier was seen as a 'meeting point between civilization and savagery', in the words of Frederick Jackson Turner, by the mid-nineteenth century the American West had already been mythologized through the popularity of dime novels, travelling shows, and music, sensationalizing tales of violence and heroism that helped establish stereotypes of cowboys and Indians, outlaws, hunters, and settlers.⁹² Visitors to Maxwell's exhibit were given access to a new format for the visual representation of the Western landscape with its novel inclusion of real animals and the frontier woman who had collected and constructed them.

90 Glenda Riley, *The Female Frontier: A Comparative View of Women on the Prairie and the Plains* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1988), 2.

91 Susan Armitage, "Through Women's Eyes: A New View of the West," in *The Women's West* eds. Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 9.

92 Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," American Historical Association in Chicago, World Columbian Exposition, 1893.

Conclusion: A Rosy Finch

After the Centennial, Maxwell and her natural history collection never moved west to Colorado as she had planned. She struggled financially and failed to sell her collection to a museum or university despite interest from the University of Colorado.⁹³ Five years after her international debut, Maxwell died of an ovarian tumour, on May 31, 1881, in Rockaway Beach, New York. While there are conflicting narratives of what happened to her Centennial collection, it is believed to have been destroyed shortly after her death while in storage in Saratoga Springs, New York.⁹⁴ Only a few rare survivors of animals Maxwell collected still exist in natural history museum collections today, including the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Bell Museum at the University of Minnesota.⁹⁵ When I visited the Bell Museum in early 2023, I was aware that their holdings had a grey-crowned rosy finch (*Leucosticte tephrocotis*) collected by Maxwell in the 1870s. A curator kindly took me to their off-site facility, opened a drawer, and handed me the female bird (Fig. 6). The handwritten tag stated the specimen was number 219 in the collection, so fairly early, and that the bird was collected in Colorado. Examining the bird, I told museum staff about Maxwell and how I have always wondered whether the arsenic or other typical poisons used by nineteenth-century taxidermists might have contributed to her untimely death, right at the cusp of the ‘golden age’ of natural history museums that her own work signaled would come. They agreed that my assumptions were likely correct, though we will never know.⁹⁶

Haraway argues, ‘[t]he Great Divides of animal/human, nature/culture, organic/ technical, and wild/domestic flatten into mundane differences – the kinds that have consequences and demand respect and response – rather than rising to sublime and final ends’.⁹⁷ This blurring between nature/culture and science/art was palpable when holding Maxwell’s rosy finch, and I was reminded by contemporary artist Lex Thompson’s series of works based on the documentation and recreation of Maxwell’s natural history collection. Aligned with artists today whose projects incorporate aesthetics and ideas

93 Clipping from *Boulder News*, February 14, 1879, Maxwell Scrapbook, 109. Martha Maxwell Collection, Stephen H. Hart Research Center, History Colorado Center.

94 See McCown, “Introduction,” 29–31; Benson, *Martha Maxwell*, 197.

95 See <https://www.lexthompson.com>.

96 Thanks to Jennifer Menken and Jennifer Stampe at the Bell Museum for this opportunity.

97 Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet*, vol. 3, Posthumanities (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 15.



Figure 6. Author holding a grey-crowned rosy finch (*Leucosticte tephrocotis*) collected by Martha Maxwell in Colorado in the 1870s, in the Bell Museum's Bird Collection, University of Minnesota, May 2023 (Photograph by Vanessa Bateman).



Figure 7. Lex Thompson, *Women's Work*, video still seen inside a replica Kinetoscope, digital video, part of *Re|collect* project, 2016.

from nineteenth-century naturalism and natural history, Thompson has produced several projects related to Maxwell, including *Re|collect* (2016–2019) and the book projects, *Martha Maxwell's Menagerie: A Catalog of Mammals and Bird Specimens* (2017) and *Martha Maxwell's Menagerie: Extant Specimens* (2019) (Fig. 7). Ambitiously reconstructing and reimagining Maxwell's work and life, Thompson has spent years uncovering and photo-documenting existing specimens from her collection to visualize 'her achievements and aspects of her life'.⁹⁸ In the past, but also again in the present, Maxwell's animals move between amateur and professional, scientific and artistic, living and dead: the rosy finch in hand was at once a scientific specimen, historical object, and animal.

About the Author

Vanessa Bateman is a postdoctoral researcher at Maastricht University, where she is working on the NWO-Vici project, 'Moving Animals: A History of Science, Media, and Policy in the Twentieth Century' led by Raf De Bont. Vanessa received her PhD in Art History, Theory, and Criticism with a specialization in Anthropogeny (the study of human origins) from the University of California San Diego, in 2022. Her research connects animal and environmental history with visual culture and art from the nineteenth century to the present, with a particular interest in taxidermy and dioramas, photography and film, and wildlife conservation.

98 Lex Thompson, *Re|collect* text, <https://www.lexthompson.com/works/recollect>.

Animal Displays, Gender, Race, and Pedagogy at Liverpool Museum, Circa 1880–1920

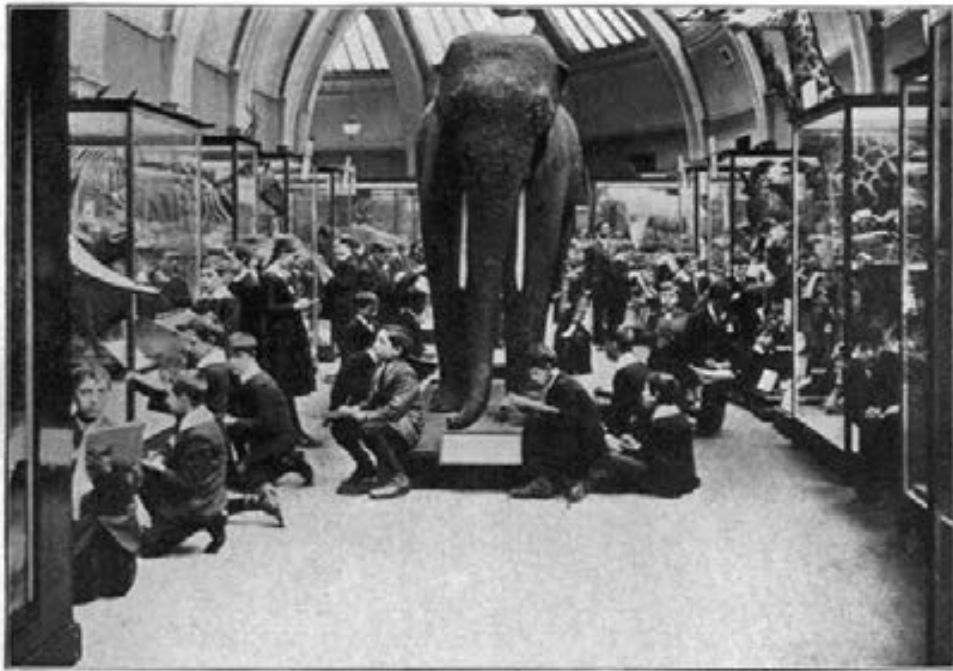
Alexander Scott

Abstract

This chapter examines animal displays at Liverpool Museum in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and how these interacted with school curricula. It argues that displays of birds and mammals emphasized femininity, domesticity, and the nuclear family, operating in tandem with anthropological galleries' promotion of white supremacy. It considers the lessons and discourses schoolchildren were exposed to at Liverpool Museum, identifying a symbiosis between museology and pedagogy during James Granville Legge's tenure as Liverpool City Council's Director of Education. Liverpool schools adopted an object-centred, haptic curriculum that confirmed ideological messages about gender, class, race, and empire disseminated by the city museum. The chapter concludes by using historical photographs to critique the racist, sexist, and heteronormative legacies of natural history museums.

Keywords: museum, gender, race, education, taxidermy

Figure 1 shows boys and girls from Pleasant Street Council School visiting Liverpool Museum's mammal gallery, dated around 1914. A man, presumably the class teacher, observes as children peer into display cabinets and make notes or sketches about nonhuman animals, including a zebra and a giraffe. One group congregates beside a mounted elephant, perhaps intrigued by its backstory. In May 1898, Henry Ogg Forbes, Director of Liverpool Museum from 1894 to 1910, was present when the elephant (nicknamed Don Pedro) was euthanized while touring with Barnum and Bailey's Circus. Forbes



PLEASANT STREET COUNCIL SCHOOL

Figure 1. 'Use of Museum', showing Pleasant Street Council School visit to Liverpool Museum. J.G. Legge, *The Thinking Hand; or Practical Education in the Elementary School* (London: Macmillan, 1914). California Digital Library.

arranged transportation of the carcass to the museum, where taxidermist James William Cutmore prepared it for display.¹

This chapter considers the various lessons that children like the Pleasant Street pupils received from Liverpool Museum's animal exhibits. It uses written and photographic primary sources to recover, first, the ideological content that underpinned displays of nonhuman animals at Liverpool Museum in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and, second, how this synchronized with school curricula. My analysis demonstrates that museum representations of birds' and mammals' paternal and maternal roles tallied with presumptions about boys and girls propagated inside the classroom. Correspondingly, museum professionals and educationists alike inculcated ideas about racial difference and the virtues and virtuousness of imperialism.

Figure 1 exemplifies museums and schools' interinstitutional collaboration. It was one of four photographs of trips to the Liverpool Museum included in *The Thinking Hand; or Practical Education in the Elementary School* (1914) by James Granville Legge, Liverpool City Council's Director of

1 *Liverpool Echo*, May 16, 1898, 2.

Education from 1906–1923. *The Thinking Hand* used photographs of lessons taught at the museum and others involving museum-like specimens to advocate for ‘practical’ schooling that stimulated children’s haptic senses and powers of observation. Just as centring sight and touch suited the object-centred rationale of museum didactics, classroom lessons complemented discursive messages regarding gender, race, class, and empire disseminated by museum exhibits. Museology and pedagogy endeavoured to *naturalize* both feminine domesticity and white supremacy.

The chapter opens by surveying historiography on women’s relationship with museums. The second section scrutinizes the gendering of animal displays and the racial hierarchy implemented by Henry Ogg Forbes at the Liverpool Museum. The third section then maps the museum’s racist, patriarchal values onto the encounters schoolchildren had with it. Under Legge’s directorship, Liverpool schools incorporated museum visits and nature study into a curriculum that prepared working-class girls for motherhood and domestic service and boys for manual labour. The article concludes by interpreting historical photographs to problematize the heteronormative character of museums’ animal displays.

This chapter engages with scholarship by authors including Tony Bennett, Kate Hill, Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, and Sandra Swart.² Its analysis of animal displays’ racial and gender politics mainly responds to Donna Haraway’s work on exhibits at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), New York.³ The Liverpool Museum used display techniques comparable to taxidermy dioramas innovated by Carl Akeley at AMNH during the early twentieth century. Yet, the chapter pushes into new ground, beyond Haraway’s analysis, by explicating direct connections between museology and pedagogy. In addition, where Haraway mainly focused on masculinity, this chapter contemplates feminine gender roles encoded in natural history displays – plus their latent potential to represent non-heteronormative sexualities.

2 Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995); Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 2004); Kate Hill, *Women and Museums 1850–1914: Modernity and the Gendering of Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016); Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, “Nature by Design: Masculinity and Animal Display in Nineteenth-Century America,” in *Figuring it Out: Science, Gender, and Visual Culture*, eds. Ann B. Shteir and Bernard Lightman (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2006), 110–139; Sandra Swart, “The Other Citizens: Nationalism and Animals,” in *The Routledge Companion to Animal History*, eds. Hilda Kean and Philip Howell (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 31–52.

3 Donna Haraway, “Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908–1936,” *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (London: Routledge, 1989), 26–58.

Women and Liverpool Museum

Working-class men were ‘the primary target’ of nineteenth-century museums, as Tony Bennett showed. They offered ‘useful lessons’ applicable to manufacturing industries where males were presumed to be the main labour force.⁴ Conversely, museum professionals regarded working-class women with suspicion, taking measures to prevent galleries from becoming sites for ‘wet nursing’ or ‘prostitute[s] soliciting business’.⁵ Attitudes shifted as the nineteenth century progressed. By 1900, women were the majority of museumgoers, and the number of female workers, donors, researchers, volunteers, and patrons had also increased. Kate Hill suggests that this helped ‘domesticate’ museums’ purportedly public (i.e., male) realm. Concurrently, female museum workers adopted ‘public virtues [...] such as scholarship and professionalism’.⁶ This was significant given women’s previous exclusion from male-centric pursuits such as artisan botany clubs.⁷ Some women purposefully contested gender stereotypes in gallery settings – most eye-catchingly via suffragettes’ attacks on paintings in 1913–14. For Hill, museums ‘both represented patriarchal values to women [...] and offered spaces to challenge those values’.⁸

Archival sources relating to the Liverpool Museum support this conclusion. In May 1914, suffragette activism at the neighbouring Walker Art Gallery led to extra security being introduced to ensure Liverpool Museum was ‘strictly guarded and patrolled’.⁹ On the whole, though, museum discourse reinforced gender orthodoxies. A pamphlet, *Workmen and Museums* (1886), called upon Liverpool Museum to introduce Sunday openings so that ‘poor working men’ could visit on their ‘one free day of the week’.¹⁰ As its title implies, *Workmen and Museums* maintained a gendered conception of museums’ utility. For example, it speculated on the value of the museum’s entomology collections to ‘the future housewife’: ‘Far better [...] she learnt about the cockroach, instead of studying German, which she will never use, or learning to make useless and annoying antimacassars’.¹¹

4 Bennett, *The Birth*, 31–33.

5 Hill, *Women and Museums*, 107–08.

6 Ibid., 6–10, 113–14.

7 Anne Secord, “Science in the Pub: Artisan Botanists in Early Nineteenth-Century Lancashire,” *History of Science* 32, no. 3 (September 1994): 269–315.

8 Hill, *Women and Museums*, 117–19.

9 *Liverpool Daily Post*, May 8, 1914, 5.

10 Robert McMillan, *Workmen and Museums: Being Selections from a Series of Letters Contributed to the Liverpool Mercury* (Liverpool: Egerton Smith & Co., 1886), 3.

11 *Liverpool Mercury*, January 11, 1886, 5.

The proposition that a girl should study insects fitted a ‘feminine gendering’ that deemed natural history a respectable, even desirable, undertaking for women.¹² Early-modern science was a ‘household pursuit,’ allowing women to conduct a natural inquiry in domestic settings.¹³ Even as Victorian ‘separate spheres’ hardened, women remained in demand as illustrators of science textbooks.¹⁴ Some women enjoyed opportunities for scientific fieldwork. An example is Anna Forbes, wife of Liverpool Museum’s Director Henry Forbes. As recounted in *Insulinde: Experiences of a Naturalist’s Wife in the Eastern Archipelago* (1887), Forbes accompanied her husband on an expedition to Sumatra and New Guinea. Later, she and Henry co-authored a chapter in *British Birds with Their Nests and Eggs* (1896) based on observations at the Liverpool Museum.¹⁵ Yet, Anna Forbes remained typecast as ‘a Naturalist’s Wife’, insisting *Insulinde* provided ‘a simpler account’ aimed at ‘many of my own sex who might turn away from [...] the scientific matter’ in her husband’s writings.¹⁶ Further minimizing women’s contributions to science, the author’s list in *British Birds* excluded her name.¹⁷

To summarize, primary evidence confirms women were active in various museological endeavours throughout the Victorian and Edwardian periods, but their agency had clear limits. Museums remained dominated by men, possessing a ‘monologically male [...] authoritative voice’.¹⁸

Exhibiting Birds and Mammals at Liverpool Museum

Liverpool’s public museum originated from natural history collections bequeathed by Edward Smith Stanley, the 13th Earl of Derby. The museum opened in 1852 and was relocated to a permanent site eight years later.

12 Hill, *Women and Museums*, 20.

13 Alix Cooper, “Homes and Households,” in *The Cambridge History of Science, Vol. 3: Early Modern Science*, eds. Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 224–37.

14 Barbara T. Gates, “Those Who Drew and Those Who Wrote: Women and Victorian Popular Science Illustration,” and Bernard Lightman, “Depicting Nature, Defining Roles: The Gender Politics of Victorian Illustration,” in *Figuring it Out*, 192–239.

15 Henry Forbes and Anna Forbes, “Order Gaviae,” in *British Birds with Their Nests and Eggs, Vol. 6*, eds. Arthur G. Butler and Frederick William Frohawk (London: Brumby and Clark, 1896), 1–7.

16 Anna Forbes, *Insulinde: Experiences of a Naturalist’s Wife in the Eastern Archipelago* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1887), vii–viii.

17 John James Wilson, “Anna Forbes: Naturalist,” National Museums Liverpool, <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/stories/focus-anna-forbes-naturalist>.

18 Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*, 32

The enlarged museum (which still operates as Liverpool's World Museum) featured eight natural history galleries, including a live aquarium. Liverpool Museum's animal holdings expanded thanks to its proximity to a global port. The 1854 annual report logged donations by 'captains of vessels' and encouraged 'travellers [...] to add to collection by preserving in spirit [...] birds, quadrupeds [...] reptiles, fishes, crustacea, mollusca and insects'.¹⁹ Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society assisted seafarers with guidance on collecting natural history specimens and bestowed honorary membership to museum donors.²⁰

In 1864, the Liverpool Museum appointed a full-time taxidermist, Henry Reynolds. Reynolds introduced 'improved methods of mounting and displaying birds' in an 'intelligible, instructive, and pleasing' manner, preparing 'cases of British birds [...] showing the male, female, nest, eggs, and young' plus 'complete family groups [...] arranged together on a single stand'.²¹ Another experiment applied 'Pictorial Art' to bird displays. In 1892, a member of Liverpool City Council's Museums Committee, Henry Hugh Higgins, addressed the Museums Association (est. 1889) on 'a special feature' exhibiting an albatross and a frigate bird with a background painted by landscape artist Isaac Cooke. Higgins believed the display achieved a 'union between Science and Art' that might 'shock [...] quarters where museums are regarded as structures dedicated to systematic taxonomy more than the loving cult of nature'.²²

This collaboration with a professional artist appears to have been a one-off – confirming Karen Wonders' observation that full-scale habitat dioramas were rarer in Britain than in North America or Scandinavia.²³ Nevertheless, other aspects of Liverpool's animal displays replicated AMNH's celebrated taxidermy exhibitions. *The Handbook and Guide to British Birds*, first published in 1914 (reissued in 1920 and 1932), showcased 'highly educational and artistic groups' mounted by Liverpool Museum's chief taxidermist, James Cutmore. Where Carl Akeley used rocks and flora

19 *Second Annual Report of the Committee of the Free Public Library and the Derby Museum of the Borough of the Town of Liverpool* (Liverpool: Robert H. Fraser, 1854), 3–5. Museum reports are hereafter referenced as 'AR' alongside dates of publication, e.g. AR (1854), 3–5.

20 *Proceedings of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool* 16 (1862), 5–6, 46–57.

21 AR (1865), 15.

22 Henry Hugh Higgins, "On the Cultivation of Special Features in Museums," in *Museums Association: Report of Proceedings with Papers Read at the Third Annual General Meeting* (Sheffield: William Townsend, 1892), 39–45.

23 Karen Wonders, *Habitat Dioramas: Illusions of Wilderness in Museums of Natural History* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 1993), 15.

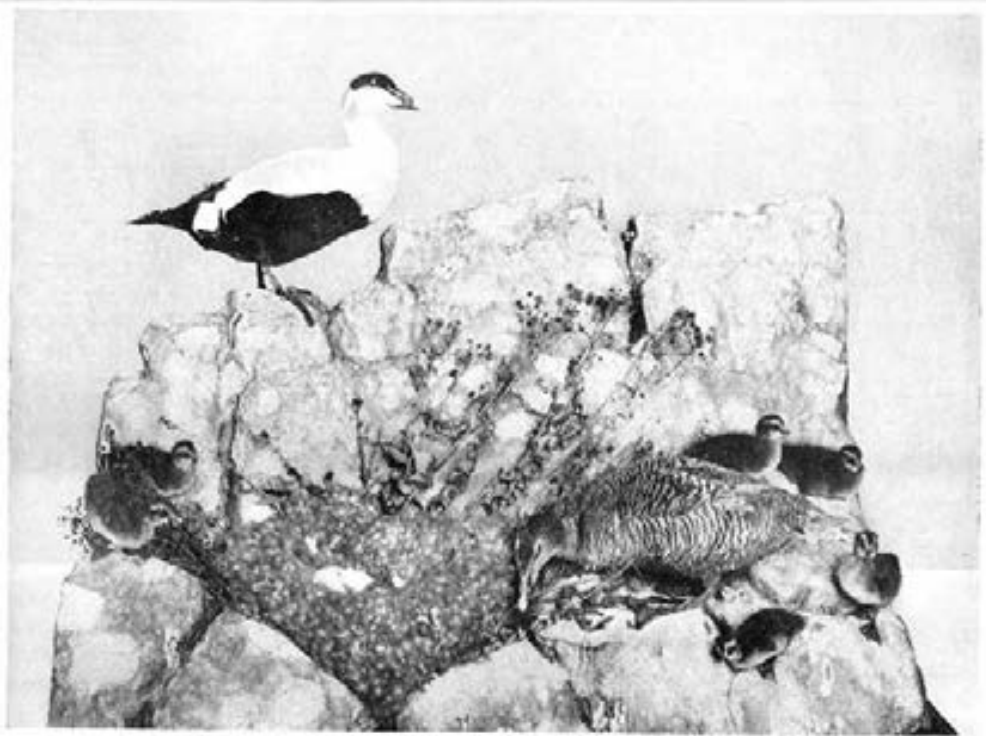


Figure 2. Eider Duck Group at Liverpool Museum. *Handbook and Guide to British Birds on Exhibition at the Lord Derby Natural History Museum, Liverpool* (Liverpool: C. Tinling, 1914). Biodiversity Heritage Library.

to represent mammals' domestic habitats, Cutmore's arrangements focused on birds' nests and scenes of childrearing.

Nuancing Haraway's contention that habitat dioramas expressed a 'hierarchical division of labour', the *Handbook* portrayed instances of offspring being 'carefully tended by both parents' and where males incubated eggs.²⁴ Otherwise, male and female behaviours were clearly delineated. The Eider Duck Group distinguished not only the dimorphic contrast between male (white) versus female (brown) feathering, but also birds' relative postures: the female was shown stooping beside several chicks on a lower pane, with the male atop a rock (Fig. 2). This approximates Kohlstedt's characterization of how taxidermic "body language" placed 'the male in a dominant position, typically upright and assertive' with females 'in the background [...] engaged in the "instinctual" routines of gathering food, tending the nest, or nurturing young'.²⁵

Other displays depicted aggressive male sexual behaviour. The *Handbook* entry on the Ruff Group stated:

²⁴ Haraway, *Primate Visions*, p. 40; *Handbook ... to British Birds*, 33, 43, 45.

²⁵ Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, "Nature by Design," 121–29.



THE RUFF GROUP,
CASE 106.

Figure 3. Ruff Group at Liverpool Museum. *Handbook and Guide to British Birds on Exhibition at the Lord Derby Natural History Museum, Liverpool* (Liverpool: C. Tinling, 1914). Biodiversity Heritage Library.

The males vary remarkably in plumage, and the breast shield [...] which the bird dons at [...] nesting season, is one of the most striking nuptial garments of any bird [...] The artist portrays a characteristic scene where several males [...] engage in deadly combat for possession of the female, who sits calmly by, awaiting the issue of the fight. (Fig. 3)²⁶

The phrase ‘possession’ here recalls Rebecca Machin’s point that natural history displays traditionally ‘imply males have ownership of females, rather than females having the potential to make decisions in the courtship process’.²⁷

Similar themes – domesticity, family, male aggression – recurred in Liverpool Museum’s *Handbook and Guide to British Mammals* (1921; reissued 1932). The Common Fox exhibit was fashioned into multigenerational drama:

The group consists of the dog-fox returning home [...] with food. One of his family, too young to exhibit the usual foxy caution, has rushed out

²⁶ *Handbook and Guide to British Birds on Exhibition at the Lord Derby Natural History Museum, Liverpool* (Liverpool: C. Tinling, 1914), 3

²⁷ Rebecca Machin, “Gender Representation in the Natural History Galleries at the Manchester Museum,” *Museum and Society* 6, no.1 (2008): 54–67, at 60.

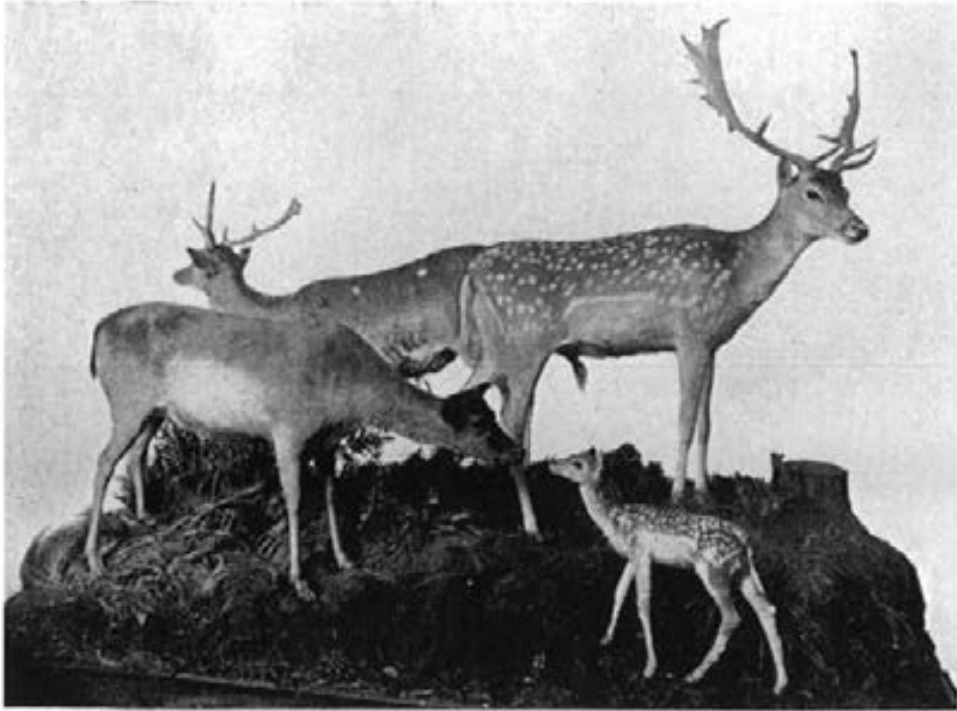


Figure 4. Fallow Deer Group at Liverpool Museum. *Handbook and Guide to British Mammals on Exhibition at the Lord Derby Natural History Museum, Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool Daily Post, 1921). California Digital Library.

of the ‘earth’ to welcome him. The vixen (mother), rendered anxious by the risk taken by one of her cubs, is showing her face at the mouth of the ‘earth’. A young fox of a previous litter, seeing his father returning to the old home, has ventured to follow him, where he is now an unwelcome guest.²⁸

More conventionally, mammals were arranged akin to a nuclear family. The Fallow Deer Group ‘contain[ed] an adult male, or buck, in summer coat, young male in winter coat, a female of the almost black breed, and a fawn’ (Fig. 4).²⁹ The specimens’ positioning again erected a clear power dynamic. Male deer were elevated above the female and fawns, with the elder buck staring outwards, tallying Kohlstedt’s observation that animal displays afforded males ‘a readiness pose’ and agency to ‘look through glass panes on visitors’.³⁰

Allusions to specimens making eye contact with museumgoers hint at how photographic conventions influenced natural history displays.

²⁸ *Handbook and Guide to British Mammals on Exhibition at the Lord Derby Natural History Museum, Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool Daily Post, 1921), 17.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

³⁰ Kohlstedt, “Nature by Design,” 128–29.

As Haraway points out, Carl Akeley was a skilled photographer, whose dioramas strove for ‘the perfection of the camera’s eye’.³¹ Forbes, too, was a keen photographer, sitting on the British Association for the Advancement of Science’s committee on anthropological photography.³² He also shared Akeley’s interest in modernizing display techniques, instructing Liverpool Museum curators to disassemble mounted specimens ‘prepared before taxidermy became the art it now is’.³³ The museum’s taxidermist, James Cutmore, was a willing ally. In 1906, Cutmore presented a Museums Association conference with ‘scientific methods for reproducing [...] like-life form’, urging that taxidermists be ‘treated the same [...] as other artistic and scientific workers’.³⁴

Forbes and Cutmore directly procured taxidermy specimens. In 1898–1899, they joined an expedition to Socotra and Abd al Kuri in the Indian Ocean, collecting thousands of items for the Liverpool Museum’s collection. Accounts of animals’ capture during the Socotra expedition – sponsored by Liverpool City Council and the British Museum, with support from the colonial government in British India – highlight another aspect of animal displays’ gender politics. Historically a ‘male pastime’, hunting informed the Victorian ‘ethos of imperial masculinity’.³⁵ Fieldnotes by the British Museum ornithologist William Robert Ogilvie-Grant accordingly indulged in a ‘thrill of the chase’ that echoed Kohlstedt’s contention that exhibiting animals killed by ‘male hunter patrons’ exaggerated habitat dioramas’ ‘ubiquitous thread of masculine intellectual and physical prowess’.³⁶ This, for example, is Ogilvie-Grant’s description of slaying two Socotra Cormorants – hitherto absent from European museum collections:

We started off in pursuit. There was a choppy sea, which made shooting difficult [...] At last, we neared a pair, and as they rose, I dropped them both, but, to my disgust, saw that both heads were still up. Fortune was, however, kind [...] As the boat rose again [...] No. 4 shot settled the business satisfactorily. I was highly pleased to find that these Cormorants, both adult birds in full breeding plumage, belonged to a new species.

31 Haraway, *Primate Visions*, 42.

32 AR (1905), 45.

33 *Report of the Seventy-Ninth Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science* (London: John Murray, 1910), 285; AR (1905), 45.

34 *Cheshire Observer*, 29 September 1906, 5

35 Phillip Howell, “Hunting and Animal-Human History,” in *Routledge Companion*, 452, 454.

36 Kohlstedt, “Nature by Design,” 131.

Ogilvie-Grant's determination to secure a male and female *pair* reiterates that animals' sex and familial roles were important museological criteria. He subsequently completed the cormorant group, killing 'two immature birds'.³⁷

The Socotra expedition typifies Liverpool Museum's status as a colonial institution. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the museum was patronized by individuals and businesses who profited from imperial commerce, including the African Steamship Company. It also benefited from international collaborations: to cite one example, the Liverpool Museum and the AMNH exchanged animal and anthropological exhibits from areas of British and US colonial interest (West Africa and the Philippines, respectively).³⁸ Liverpool Museum likewise participated in academic disciplines closely associated with empire, partnering with archaeology faculty members at the University of Liverpool (est. 1881) – plus its School of Tropical Medicine. Befitting these scholarly credentials, Henry Forbes was appointed Honorary Reader in Ethnography at the university in 1904.³⁹

Shortly after moving to Liverpool, Forbes declared his desire 'to show the world a museum abreast of the scientific thought of the time'. Natural history galleries, Forbes wrote in 1894, should 'commence with [...] simpler forms, leading step by step to the higher and more complex, so as to present to the visitor the lowest form of life on entrance, gradually introducing those of nearest affinity in ascending order till the highest are reached'.⁴⁰ A major museum renovation, completed in 1902, enacted Forbes's Darwinian schema. The repurposed mammal gallery culminated with glass cabinets containing anthropoid skeletons and mounted gorillas (Fig. 5). While the upright stance of the *Homo sapiens* skeleton implied an evolutionary hierarchy, the gorilla exhibit connoted commonality between human and nonhuman animals' gender roles. As per the museum's bird and mammal displays, the mounted gorillas – a female and two infants – were displayed in a familial, domestic setting, which matched descriptions in a reference-work by Forbes: his *A Handbook to Primates* (1897) noted that female gorillas inhabit a 'platform-nest or shelter' with males 'on guard below', adding that gorillas 'prove affectionate mothers [...] protecting their young at cost of their own lives'.⁴¹

37 *The Natural History of Sokotra and Abdelkuri: Being the Report by Mr. W.R. Ogilvie-Grant and Dr H.O. Forbes, of Liverpool Museums* (Liverpool: Henry Young and Sons, 1903), 46–47.

38 AR (1906), 37, 39; AR (1907), 41–42; AR (1908), 65–71.

39 AR (1902), 42–49; AR (1904), 11; AR (1906), 2–9, 37.

40 Henry Forbes, *Report of the Director of Museums Relative to the Space Required for the Extension of the Free Public Museums* (Liverpool: J. R. Williams, 1894), 4–8.

41 Henry Forbes, *A Handbook to the Primates, Vol. II* (London: E. Lloyd, 1897), 183–86.

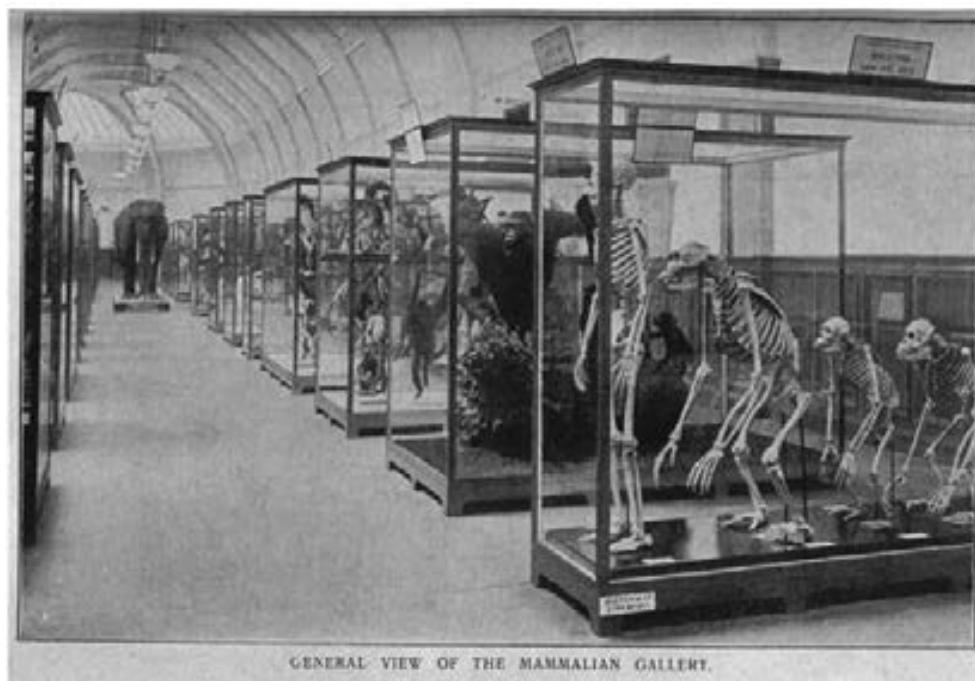


Figure 5. Gorilla and primate specimens in mammal gallery at Liverpool Museum. *Fifty-First Annual Report of the Committee of the Free Public Museums of the City of Liverpool* (Liverpool: C. Tinling, 1904). Biodiversity Heritage Library.

Contrary to the mammal gallery's emphasis on interspecies affinities, intraspecies differentiation characterized displays of human cultures. The anthropological galleries were arranged 'according to the Races whose handiwork they are; that is, under the three great ethnic divisions of the globe, namely, the Caucasian (white), the Mongolian (yellow), and the Melanian (black) Races'. Because Forbes regarded the white race as superior, 'Caucasian' exhibits had prominence on the museum's ground floor with 'Melanian' displays relegated to the basement.⁴² The medium of photography supported these racial classifications. Photographs 'exemplifying the various races of mankind' were displayed alongside mammal exhibits. Elsewhere, the anthropological galleries took 'advantage [...] of obtaining photographs direct from life from natives of the various countries who come to the Port of Liverpool'.⁴³

Whereas nothing in the bird and mammal *Handbooks* directly commented on human societies, Forbes was explicit that ethnological exhibits

42 47th AR (1900), 34; 42nd AR (1895), 4–5; Louise Tythacott, "Race on Display: The 'Melanian', 'Mongolian', and 'Caucasian' Galleries at the Liverpool Museum," *Early Popular Visual Culture* 9, no. 2 (2011): 131–46.

43 44th AR (1897), 13.



Figure 6. Case in African ethnography section of Liverpool Museum. *Fifty-First Annual Report of the Committee of the Free Public Museums of the City of Liverpool* (Liverpool, C. Tinling, 1904). Biodiversity Heritage Library.

‘follow[ed] naturally and immediately after th[ose] devoted to anthropoid animals’. Just as ‘ornithological exhibits display [...] the whole history of different birds’, anthropological galleries illustrated ‘the intellectual history of man, tracing its rise and progress through the barbarous or less civilized peoples’. Epitomising Tony Bennett’s contention that colonial museums allowed visitors to travel ‘through evolutionary time’, Forbes affirmed:

The study of the handiwork, manners, and customs will enable the student to go back and live [...] in the infancy of the most cultivated races whose civilization had in its beginnings nothing very different from that of the negro.⁴⁴

As if to prove Black people's supposed evolutionary inferiority, exhibits of African ethnology borrowed techniques from animal displays. Figure 6 shows a glass cabinet containing three human forms arranged in a manner reminiscent of habitat dioramas. In the foreground, a male figure stood upright, his eyes directed at visitors' gaze. Behind him, a female figure has an infant on their back. On the one hand, this evocation of maternal and domestic duties cohered with the patriarchal coding of bird and mammal displays. On the other hand, kinship to animals seemingly signified Africans' alleged primitivism within the anthropological galleries' pseudoscientific framework. The exhibit's provenance adds credence to this. In 1903, Liverpool Museum's annual report recorded the bequest of 'two life-sized casts of natives of South Africa, modelled from life by the late Dr. Emil Holub'.⁴⁵ As Markéta Křížová recounts, Holub (1847–1902) led several expeditions in the hope of establishing an Austro-Hungarian colony in southern Africa. To promote this cause, Holub displayed 'stuffed animals and mannequins in native costumes [and] scenes of "real life"' in Vienna and Prague. Holub returned from his first expedition accompanied by an African girl, whose newspaper coverage 'effectively reduced to the level of museum exhibit or zoo animal'.⁴⁶

Liverpool Museum's racism adds an interpretive layer to *The Handbook and Guide to British Mammals* and *The Handbook and Guide to British Birds*. Their titular insistence that animals were '*British*' exemplifies what Sandra Swart terms 'naturalization of nationalism', encouraging readers and visitors to equate 'natural' domesticity with the patriarchal norms of their national 'homeland'. If animals' vaunted Britishness aimed to cultivate 'an identity of belonging', ethnological displays' othering of African cultures fostered 'the flipside of the coin, an identity of difference'.⁴⁷

44 *Daily Post*, June 20, 1895, 3; Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory*, 58–62.

45 AR (1904), 27, 32.

46 Markéta Křížová, "Noble and Ignoble Savages and their Scientific 'Colonization' in the Making of the Nation," in *Central Europe and the Non-European World in the Long 19th Century*, eds. Jitka Malečková and Křížová (Berlin: Frank and Timme, 2022), 135–63.

47 Swart, "Nationalism and Animals," 33, 45.

Liverpool Museum and Children's Education

Like women, children were not initially a target audience for civic museums. Perspectives began to alter once the 1870 Elementary Education Act made local authorities in England and Wales responsible for schooling children aged five to twelve. Henry Higgins registered Liverpool Museums' incipient role in formal education in an 1884 paper. Although youngsters' playfulness made it 'easy' to dismiss them as 'unmitigated plagues', Higgins remained optimistic about museums' capacity to improve child visitors' behaviour, observing:

Children sometimes found the table-cases convenient for racing round; [but] when instructed in decorum due to the place they [...] huddle close together, looking intently upon a coral or a shell, thus indicating [...] being good under supervision. Brothers and sisters of all grades [were capable of] noticing a bird [...] butterfly or fossil [...] with by no means vacant looks.

Higgins resolved that children were a 'most interesting class of visitors [...] deserving to be studied and encouraged'.⁴⁸

Acting on this impulse, Liverpool Museum began to allow items from its collection to tour schools in 'circulating cabinets'. For Higgins, the cabinets (which pre-dated similar schemes at AMNH and South Kensington Museum) offered 'useful and attractive object lessons' likely to 'exercise refining influence' in 'the crowded districts of Liverpool', believing 'no object would more effectually open the eyes and [...] hearts of boys and girls than the green mossy nest and turquoise eggs of the hedge-sparrow'. The cabinets stimulated the optical and haptic senses: specimens were 'sent amongst children to be handled with care, felt, and looked at closely'.⁴⁹ In 1889, the museum recorded an increase in child visits 'stimulated [...] by interest excited by the circulating cabinets'.⁵⁰ This led to further educational initiatives – including loaning objects and lantern slides to schools and teacher-training sessions. Extra impetus was provided by the 1896 Education Code, which permitted museum trips to count towards school attendance.⁵¹

48 Higgins, "Museums of Natural History," *Proceedings of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool* 38 (1884), 186.

49 Higgins memorandum in John Chard, "On Circulating Museum Cabinets for Schools and Other Educational Purposes," *Museums Association: Report of Proceedings with Papers Read at the First Annual General Meeting* (Sheffield: William Townsend, 1890), 60–64.

50 AR (1889), 17.

51 AR (1899), 29; AR (1897), 6.



PLEASANT STREET COUNCIL SCHOOL

Figure 7. 'Use of Museum', showing Pleasant Street Council School visit to Liverpool Museum. J. G. Legge, *Thinking Hand; or Practical Education in the Elementary School* (London: Macmillan, 1914). California Digital Library.

Liverpool Museum's 1903 annual report explained that natural history exhibits were important whether 'bringing schoolchildren to the specimens [or] [...] taking the specimens to schoolchildren.' Circulating cabinets contained 'one specimen of a species in each box' accompanied by information 'illustrat[ing] some fact in nature such as [...] the uses of the animal or its skeleton in the economic world'. The 'greater proportion' of the circulating collection comprised 'typical representatives of the main animal Phyla; the common British species of these groups; comparative series of bird forms, with nests and eggs; [and] insects and their life-histories'. When visiting the museum, the 'general collection of animal groups' was deemed as 'especially suitable' for schoolchildren. Upon entering the museum, pupils gathered around a cabinet or display 'from which the public are excluded by temporary barriers'. A teacher or curator then gave 'a brief and simple demonstration' about 'a series of stuffed specimens – mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian and fish'. Children were subsequently 'left to themselves [...] with notebook in hand to [...] make drawings and notes', using these to compose essays on the next school day. Museum staff encouraged teachers to follow this itinerary

because ‘the instruction imparted [has] far greater value than when the class wanders indiscriminately through galleries’.⁵²

As noted in my introduction, James Granville Legge’s *The Thinking Hand* provided photographic evidence of how school visits to the museum operated. Figures 7–9 show pupils from Pleasant Street School inspecting mounted exhibits in an area where other museumgoers appear to have been absent. Pleasant Street School was expansive in embracing Liverpool Museum’s education programmes: its assistant master taught geography lessons at the museum and borrowed items from the collection so pupils could make ‘sketches and models in plasticine and other materials from the actual objects’.⁵³

The latter details hint at how Liverpool Museum’s initiatives harmonized with Legge’s policies as Director of Education. Legge’s pedagogy was geared towards ‘the manual side of the curriculum’, privileging ‘handwork’ and ‘the sense of touch’. Recalling Higgins’s description of circulating cabinets, Legge saw interacting with nature as a way of bringing children ‘into relation with every possible subject in the third dimension’. Photographs in *The Thinking Hand* depicted field trips to parks, allotments, and gardens. Legge wanted to ‘keep the child in touch with its environment’ by ‘implant[ing] the germ of usefulness [...] the very condition of civilised society’. The phrase ‘usefulness’ harkened to civic museums’ original utilitarian ethos, and the working classes were similarly the principal target of Legge’s educational reforms. He felt:

It was impossible that a man or woman working in a slum school should fail to recognise the incongruity of teaching ragged, hatless, unshod, even verminous children, stocks and shares, history, geography, and literature [...] without some effort to place in their possession the means of leading a clean and decent life, and of enjoying a modicum of wholesome leisure.⁵⁴

Legge’s paternalism was overtly gendered, mandating ‘organised science teaching and practical instruction in woodwork and metalwork for boys, and cookery and laundry-work for girls’.⁵⁵ A ‘Combined Domestic Subjects Course’ offered girls ‘instruction in all the sweeping, scrubbing, polishing, and wiping that goes to make the decent home, and above all [...] the rules

52 AR (1903), 36–43.

53 AR (1913), 47.

54 J.G. Legge, *The Thinking Hand; or Practical Education in the Elementary School* (London: Macmillan, 1914), 9–15, 28–31.

55 Legge and C.F. Mott, “Education (Other than University),” in *Merseyside: A Handbook to Liverpool and District* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1923), 113

of hygiene'. Legge consciously rejected the early twentieth century's New Woman and suffrage movements. He wrote that 'whatever their future occupation [...] girls' prospects are bettered if they are good housewives, good homemakers', insisting this 'ideal' remained 'sound' despite 'those who declare it reactionary [...] in these days of emancipation'.⁵⁶

However, the elementary curriculum was not exclusively a product of male chauvinism. *The Thinking Hand* includes photographs of numerous female teachers and women occupied local administrative posts as school governors and attendance officers.⁵⁷ In 1903, Liverpool City Council appointed Fanny L. Calder to its Education Committee. A pioneer of domestic science education, Calder established the Liverpool Training School for Cookery in 1875, later publishing *A Teachers' Manual of Elementary Laundry Work* (1891).⁵⁸ Popular throughout the British Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, domestic science aspired towards 'professional advancement for middleclass teachers' and 'working-class uplift through education for the next generation of homemakers'.⁵⁹ Although domestic science conformed to patriarchal norms, its gendering was not entirely uniform. Calder's cookery classes proved popular with Liverpoolian seamen and were replicated by the formal curriculum: a 1914 report noted that 'boys who are thinking of going to sea receive[d] instruction in cooking' at Liverpool schools.⁶⁰

Mentioning seafaring bespeaks a localized aspect of Legge's pedagogy. Other elements of his thinking responded to national debates. Legge contributed to the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration – an investigation into the 'alleged poor physique' of working-class servicemen during the Second Boer War (1899–1902).⁶¹ Fears about racial deterioration recurred throughout the Edwardian period.⁶² As Director of Education,

56 Legge, *Thinking Hand*, 9, 23, 38–39.

57 Joyce Goodman, "Women School Board Members and Women School Managers: The Structuring of Educational Authority in Manchester and Liverpool, 1870–1903," in *Women, Educational Policymaking and Administration in England: Authoritative Women Since 1800*, eds. J. Goodman and Sylvia Harrop (London: Routledge, 2000), 59–76.

58 Yuriko Akiyama, *Feeding the Nation: Nutrition and Health in Britain Before World War One* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 18–19, 43–49.

59 Lacey Sparks, *Women and the Rise of Nutrition Science in Interwar Britain and British Africa* (New York: Springer International, 2023), 91

60 Isaac Leon Kandel, *Elementary Education in England, with Special Reference to London, Liverpool, and Manchester* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1914), 69.

61 *Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1904).

62 Christopher Prior, *Edwardian England and the Idea of Racial Decline: An Empire's Future* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).



PLEASANT STREET COUNCIL SCHOOL

Figure 8. 'Use of Museum', showing Pleasant Street Council School visit to Liverpool Museum. J. G. Legge, *Thinking Hand; or Practical Education in the Elementary School* (London: Macmillan, 1914). California Digital Library.

Legge favoured one amelioration effort which resettled children in Britain's colonies. He endorsed removing children from the 'most degraded surroundings in Liverpool' to 'become creditable citizens of the Dominion of Canada'.⁶³ Concerns about martial competitiveness also factored into Legge's policies. Impressed by how Germany's 'education system' worked 'side by side with the development of its military', Legge introduced after-hours rifle drills for Liverpool schoolboys.⁶⁴ Legge likewise supported Empire Day festivities 'as a means of teaching the young how "to think Imperially"'.⁶⁵

Colonial discourses were a subtext to *The Thinking Hand's* emphasis on hygiene. While imposing Western hygiene standards was one way colonists exerted power over indigenous societies, concerns about the insanitary conditions of Britain's cities simultaneously motivated domestic science schooling.⁶⁶ Human–animal relations factored into domestic science syllabi:

63 *Daily Post*, May 3, 1911, 5; Legge and Mott, "Education," (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1923), 113–114; Ellen Boucher, *Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare, and the Decline of the British World, 1869–1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

64 *Liverpool Journal of Commerce*, January 15, 1909, 5; Legge, *Thinking Hand*, 42, 100–02, 216–17.

65 *Daily Post*, May 25, 1908, 10; *Daily Post*, May 25, 1907, 9.

66 Sparks, *Women and the Rise*, 87–90.



Figure 9. 'Use of Museum', showing Pleasant Street Council School visit to Liverpool Museum. J.G. Legge, *The Thinking Hand; or Practical Education in the Elementary School* (London: Macmillan, 1914). California Digital Library.

The Thinking Hand described lessons on 'dangers arising from [...] stray cats and dogs' and 'the life history of the domestic fly'. The latter is revealing. The popularization of germ theory heightened awareness of flies' role in transmitting disease – prompted partly by typhoid outbreaks during the Boer War and other imperial conflicts. In 1906, Liverpool City Council commissioned an inquiry into 'the habits, lifecycle and breeding places of the common housefly'.⁶⁷ As a Council employee, Legge likely was aware of this research, particularly in light of various institutional interconnections that existed in Liverpool: the housefly report was written by Robert Newstead, Professor of Entomology at the School of Tropical Medicine, who conducted research at Liverpool Museum and donated to its collections.⁶⁸ Elementary school hygiene lessons may even have deployed museum specimens: as noted above, circulating cabinets included examples of 'insects and their life histories'.

The Thinking Hand documented instances of museum-like specimens being used inside the classroom, including a modelmaking session involving

67 Anne Hardy, *Salmonella Infections, Networks of Knowledge, and Public Health in Britain, 1880–1975* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 52–53, 65–76.

68 AR (1906), 8–9; AR (1913), 54.



Figure 10. 'Clay Modelling', showing handwork class at Sefton Park Council School. J.G. Legge, *The Thinking Hand; or Practical Education in the Elementary School* (London: Macmillan, 1914). California Digital Library.

what appeared to be a preserved bird skin (Fig. 9). Natural history displays' accent on domesticity had parallels in Liverpool Museum's interactions with schoolchildren. *The Thinking Hand* featured photographs depicting exotic-looking 'Human Habitations' (tepees and small huts) that could plausibly have been modelled on items from circulating cabinets: notably, 'specimens [...] illustrating the ethnography of primitive peoples' were in 'great request' from Liverpool schoolteachers.⁶⁹ In this sense, children's study of what Forbes labelled 'handiwork' generated 'handwork' as defined by Legge. Magnifying the interface between museology and pedagogy, some Liverpool schools set aside 'handicraft rooms [...] that serve as museums to exhibit the work of the scholars'.⁷⁰

Admittedly, these interpretations rely on inference. Legge offered a minimal description of photographs in *The Thinking Hand*, wanting the book's text to 'simply lead up to the illustrations'.⁷¹ However, omitting detailed captions enhanced the correspondence between Legge's theories

69 AR (1912), 43

70 Kandel, *Elementary Education in England*, 60.

71 Legge, *Thinking Hand*, viii.

and the Liverpool Museum: leaving photographs to ‘speak for themselves’ ascribed them with a transparency equivalent to museums’ object lessons. This adds another dimension to photographs of Pleasant Street school trip. Surrounded by ‘temporary barriers’, schoolchildren were effectively on display inside the museum: as they observed different animal exhibits, pupils could be scrutinized in real-time by other visitors (and later by readers of Legge’s book). *The Thinking Hand* thus rendered schoolchildren tantamount to a diorama exhibit.

Conclusion

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Liverpool Museum and the city’s schools enjoyed a symbiotic relationship, whereby messages about animals, class, race, and gender conveyed by natural history exhibits were confirmed inside classrooms, and vice versa. Today, more than a hundred years later, decoding the ideological content of historical museum exhibitions and school curricula could be considered an antiquarian exercise. However, contemporary institutions still bear imprints of the history explored in this chapter. To cite an extreme example, models resembling those Emil Holub donated to the Liverpool Museum are currently displayed at the Holub African Museum in Holice, Czechia.⁷² Historical collecting biases are also manifested in mainstream museums. A 2019 survey of two million museum specimens quantified a skew towards male specimens in birds (60 per cent males to 40 per cent females) and mammals (52 per cent males: 48 per cent females). The ratio was even more extreme in name-bearing specimens used for taxonomizing species: only 39 per cent of name-bearing mammals were female, falling to 25 per cent for birds.⁷³ If this reflects phallogentric biases that regard males as default, heteronormative assumptions similarly prevail in habitat dioramas. A 2020 study at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh, documented an ongoing tendency to depict animals as members of heterosexual nuclear families. Coextensively, natural history often exhibits obscure homosexual behaviour and nonbinary characteristics in animal species.⁷⁴

72 African Museum Dr Emil Holuba, <https://www.holubovomuzeum.cz/fotogalerie#album-11-17>.

73 Natalie Cooper et al., “Sex Biases in Bird and Mammal Natural History Collections,” *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* 286 (2019), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2019.2025>.

74 Chase D. Mendenhall et al., “Diversifying Displays of Biological Sex and Sexual Behaviour in a Natural History Museum,” *Museum International* 72, no. 1–2 (2020): 152–61.

One utility of analysing photographs of historic animal displays is to highlight the constructed, selective, and reductive character of gender identities. The discussion of the Ruff Group in Liverpool Museum's *Handbook* may, for instance, have noted that males 'vary remarkably in plumage', but it downplayed the full complexity of ruff sexuality. Ornithologists understand ruff males as having three distinct body types: territorial males with showy plumage; satellite males, which form temporary alliances with territorial males; and femalelike faeders, whose sexual activity involves imitating females.⁷⁵ Such plurality of sexual behaviours is not only discernible from a twenty-first-century vantage point. As Pandora Syperek has identified, Victorian museum professionals knew that 'a heteronormative standard simply does not apply to many objects of natural history: marine invertebrates that reproduce through asexual and hermaphroditic means, hummingbirds which eschew pair bonding and insects whose life cycles present a radical departure from mammalian modes of parenting'.⁷⁶ That curators historically opted to sideline those behaviours that confound patriarchal and heterosexual mores is testament to the ideological exertion behind the museum displays and school curricula examined in this chapter.

Nonetheless, museum photographs are susceptible to counternarratives. Georgia Born has written that images of museum interiors 'exceed their routine documentary function' and expose museum displays 'effortful artifice'.⁷⁷ Elizabeth Edwards also argued that anthropological photographs often contain personalizing details that defy the abstractions of museums' racial hierarchies. As such, they retain an air of 'rawness, uncontainability, resistance, and [...] unknowability'.⁷⁸ Something similar is true, I think, of photographs taken inside Liverpool Museum. The absence of accompanying descriptions allows photographs from Legge's book to be viewed counterintuitively – especially because the children sometimes subverted photographers' intentions. Figure 1 shows one boy staring at the camera lens, breaking the fourth wall of this diorama-like setup. The photograph stands as a metaphor for my analysis in this article. While critiquing museums'

75 Donna L. Maney et al., "Inside the Supergene of the Bird with Four Sexes," *Hormones and Behavior* 126 (November 2020), doi: 10.1016/j.yhbeh.2020.104850.

76 Pandora Syperek, "Jewels of the Natural History Museum: Gendered aesthetics in South Kensington, c. 1850–1900," (Ph.D., University College London, 2015), 24–25.

77 Georgina Born, "Public Museums, Museum Photography, and the Limits of Reflexivity: An Essay on the Exhibition Camera Obscured: Photographic Documentation and the Public Museum," *Journal of Material Culture* 2, no. 2 (July 1998): 223–54.

78 Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 22, 131–55.

complicity in racism, classism, sexism, speciesism, or heteronormativity alone cannot overturn these hegemonic structures, it does help *see through* them.

About the Author

Dr Alexander Scott is assistant curator at the International Slavery Museum, Liverpool. He was previously lecturer in Modern History at the University of Wales, Trinity St David. His academic publications include “The ‘Missing Link’ Between Science and Show Business: Exhibiting Gorillas and Chimpanzees in Victorian Liverpool,” *Journal of Victorian Culture* 25, no. 1 (January 2020) and “‘A Permanent Civilising Effect’? The Impact of Reforming Working-Class Museum Visitors in Liverpool during the 19th Century,” in *Museums and the Working Class*, ed. Adele Chynoweth (London: Routledge, 2021).

Keeping Animals in Their Gendered Place

The Spatialization of Human–Animal Relations in the Laboratory Animal House, Circa 1947 to Present

Catherine Duxbury

Abstract

This chapter takes a feminist intersectional animal studies approach to explore the historical formation of the spatial arrangements of the housing of nonhuman animals in the laboratory. I argue that the discursive and material production of these spaces is inherently gendered. I draw on the feminist geography of Doreen Massey to show how gendered socio-spatial relations render nonhuman animals and women as inferior to the masculine domain of rational science. This inferiority rests on dualistic assumptions of space and time, which allow for the continued exploitation of nonhuman animals.

Keywords: animal experimentation, gender, space, place, science

In Britain, in 2021, there were 3.1 million experiments on animals, with thousands more, not documented by the statistics, kept in captivity, awaiting their time to be used for the benefit of human scientific progress.¹ At a time when human–animal relations are being questioned and brought to the fore in historical research, I shift the focus of animal [ab]use to animal-dependent science and its gendered dimensions.² I address the issue of animal captivity in the spaces of the animal-dependent scientific organization and illustrate how this is gendered.

¹ Georgina Sturge “Animal Experiment Statistics” (London: House of Commons Library, 2022), <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN02720/SN02720.pdf>.

² Jennifer Bonnell & Sean Kheraj, eds., *Traces of the Animal Past: Methodological Challenges in Animal History* (Alberta: University of Calgary Press, 2022).

The chapter adopts a feminist animal studies geography to explore the historical formation of the spatial arrangements of the housing of animals in the laboratory. I argue that the discursive and material production of these spaces of captivity is inherently gendered. The legal and scientific discourses of laboratory animal care, which help to structure these spaces, shape the material infrastructures that undergird the exploitation of nonhuman animals. By analysing the history of containment towards nonhuman animals in the laboratory, my work offers insight into broader confinement patterns that the liberal state inflicts upon humans and animals who are subjects of incarceration and marginalization due to their bodily identities.³ Thinking about these carceral spaces also allows us to recognize nonhuman animals' role in producing scientific knowledge and how the formation of such knowledge and its legal regulation has an underlying gendered logic that pervades the modern neoliberal state and legitimates its continuation.⁴

Since the nineteenth century, Britain has been the world leader in developing a welfare science for animals in the laboratory and creating the first legal regulation for animal experimentation.⁵ By focusing on Britain, I can explore the contradictory nature of human–animal relationships in a country that prides itself on being a 'nation of animal lovers'.⁶ This can also help us to understand Britain's global influence from the era when its empire was dramatically on the wane and its politicians were seeking other forms of international influence, to its present-day political economy.⁷

There is an abundance of literature focused on the history of animal experimentation.⁸ Several scholars focus on gender, particularly the role of women in the anti-vivisection movement of the nineteenth century.⁹

3 Karen Morin, *Carceral Space, Prisoners and Animals* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2020).

4 Catherine Duxbury, *Science, Gender and the Exploitation of Animals in Britain since 1945* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2022).

5 See, for example, Nicolaas Rupke, ed. *Vivisection in Historical Perspective* (London: Routledge, 1990).

6 For a more nuanced understanding of this narrative, see Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1990).

7 Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes 1914–1991*, 15th edn. (London: Abacus, 2009).

8 There is a wealth of literature devoted to the history of animal experimentation, see for example, Richard D French, *Antivivisection and Medical Science in Victorian Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975); Richard Ryder, *Victims of Science: The Use of Animals in Research* (London: National Anti-Vivisection Society, 1983); Alan William Hugh Bates, *Anti-Vivisection and the Profession of Medicine in Britain: A Social History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Karen Rader, *Making Mice: Standardizing Animals for American Biomedical Research, 1900–1955* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004).

9 Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age*; Hilda Kean, "The 'Smooth Cool Men of Science': The Feminist and Socialist Response to Vivisection," *The History*

Recently, historians Robert Kirk and Tone Druglitrø have written about the creation of scientific infrastructures of the animal-dependent laboratory and animal house and its relationships to the care and welfare of nonhuman animals in the mid-twentieth century.¹⁰ Other scholars from the anthropological and sociological domains have focused their attention on the ethnographic experiences of scientists who use nonhuman animals in their research. These authors address the issue of the human–animal relationship in the laboratory as one that is co-constructed between human and animal actors to understand practices and infrastructures of care.¹¹ My analysis will contribute to this literature by tracking the debates and discourses surrounding the development of laboratory animal spaces in Britain from circa 1947 to the present and outlining its gendered dimensions.

Feminist Animal Studies

I take a feminist animal studies approach that foregrounds the spatial relations of the laboratory. Geographical questions of space and place are underpinned by feminist intersectional approaches with a particular focus

Workshop Journal, no. 40 (1995); *Animal Rights: Political and Social Change in Britain since 1800* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1998); Mary Ann Elston, “Women and Anti-Vivisection in Victorian England, 1870–1900,” in *Vivisection in Historical Perspective*, ed. Nicolaas Rupke (London and New York: Routledge, 1990); Susan Hamilton, ed. *Animal Welfare and Anti-Vivisection 1870–1910: Nineteenth Century Woman’s Mission Volume III: Pro-Vivisection Writings* (London: Routledge, 2004); Joanna Bourke, *What It Means to Be Human: Reflections from 1791 to Present* (London: Virago Press, 2011).

¹⁰ Tone Druglitrø, “Care and Tinkering in the Animal House: Conditioning Monkeys for Poliomyelitis Research and Public Health Work,” in *Animal Housing and Human–Animal Relations: Politics, Practices and Infrastructures*, ed. Tone Druglitrø Kristian Bjørkdahl (Abingdon, and New York: Routledge, 2016); G. Kirk Robert, “Care in the Cage: Materialising Moral Economies of Animal Care in the Biomedical Sciences, C.1945,” in *Animal Housing and Human–Animal Relations: Politics, Practices and Infrastructures*. [do you mean this?]

¹¹ For example, see research by: Carrie Friese, “Intimate Entanglement in the Animal House: Caring for and About Mice,” *The Sociological Review* 67, no. 2 (2019); “Realising Potential in Translational Medicine: The Uncanny Emergence of Care as Science,” *Current Anthropology* 54, no. S7 (2013); Tone Druglitrø, “‘Skilled Care’ and the Making of Good Science,” *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 43, no. 4 (2018); Tora Holmberg, “Mortal Love: Care Practices in Animal Experimentation,” *Feminist Theory* 12, no. 2 (2011); Beth Greenhough & Emma Roe, “Ethics, Space, and Somatic Sensibilities: Comparing Relationships between Scientific Researchers and Their Human and Animal Experimental Subjects,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29, no. 1 (2011); Annabella Williams, “Caring for Those Who Care: Towards a More Expansive Understanding of ‘Cultures of Care’ in Laboratory Animal Facilities,” *Social and Cultural Geography* 24, no. 1 (2021); Emma Power; Kathleen Mee, “Housing: An Infrastructure of Care,” *Housing Studies* 35, no. 3 (2020).

on the gendered discursive formations of laboratory spaces and how these have implications for the lives of animals under experiment.

Intersectionality originated from the Black feminist scholarship of Kimberlé Crenshaw, who outlined the interdependencies between gender, class, and race.¹² Feminist animal studies' use of intersectionality adds species to these corresponding categories.¹³ It can be seen as both a conceptual tool and a methodological framework to explore the overlapping material-semiotic dimensions of privilege and oppression of animals within the dominant categories of gender, race, class, and disability.¹⁴ The initial foray into this area stems from the work produced by ecofeminists Val Plumwood and Carolyn Merchant.¹⁵ This was followed by the groundbreaking work of leading feminist animal studies scholars Carol J. Adams, Josephine Donovan, and Greta Gaard.¹⁶

My essay takes inspiration from these scholars but uses intersectionality from a geographical standpoint. Alice Hovorka is the leading feminist animal studies scholar in the geographical sciences to promote an empirical and theoretical understanding of intersectional spatial relations between gender and animals.¹⁷ She draws on the work of animal studies geographers, such as the research of Jennifer Wolch and Jody Emel, who have reasserted space as a critical foundational concept in this area.¹⁸ Correlatively, space is a

12 Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women Of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991).

13 Carol J Adams and Josephine Donovan, *Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

14 Nik Taylor and Richard Twine, "Introduction: The 'Critical' in Critical Animal Studies," in *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies: From the Margins to the Centre*, eds. Nik Taylor and Richard Twine (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 4.

15 Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers Inc., 1983); Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1993).

16 Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990); *Neither Man nor Beast: Feminism and the Defense of Animals* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1995); Josephine Donovan, "Animal Rights and Feminist Theory," *Signs* 15, no. 2 (1990); "Feminism and the Treatment of Animals: From Care to Dialogue," *Signs* 31, no. 2 (2006); Greta Gaard, ed. *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1993); "Ecofeminism Revisited: Rejecting Essentialism and Re-Placing Species in a Material Feminist Environmentalism," *Feminist Formations* 23, no. 2 (2011).

17 Alice Hovorka, "Women/Chickens vs. Men/Cattle: Insights on Gender-Species Intersectionality," *Geoforum* 43 (2012): 875–84; idem., "The Gender, Place and Culture Jan Monk Distinguished Annual Lecture: Feminism and Animals: Exploring Interspecies Relations through Intersectionality, Performativity and Standpoint," *Gender, Place & Culture* 22, no. 1 (2015): 1–19.

18 Jennifer Wolch and Jody Emel, eds., *Animal Geographies: Place, Politics and Identity in the Nature–Culture Borderlands* (London: Verso, 1998), xiii–xiv.

central component of analysis in Chris Philo's and Chris Wilbert's edited animal geographies volume, illuminating the 'geographical othering' of animals in different spaces that humans occupy.¹⁹ For Hovorka, both feminist and animal geographies correspond neatly in that it is 'their mission to acknowledge and legitimate the Other, expose the broader systems of power that produce and normalise difference and inequalities between social groups (be they human or nonhuman)'.²⁰ Hovorka has united the seemingly two disparate domains to generate a geography of nonhuman animals buttressed by feminist intersectional approaches.

This chapter is supported by these concepts and theories advocated by Hovorka, and the feminist geographer Doreen Massey, whose emphasis on the gendering of space is a crucial text in feminist geography.²¹ Here, it is germane to define what is meant by space and place, and I use the definitions espoused by both Massey and animal studies geographers Philo and Wilbert.

Space and Place

When we think of space and place, what are we thinking? For Henri Lefebvre, space is political and represents a 'neocapitalist' use of knowledge seamlessly integrated into the relations of production. This liberal use of space is ensnared by an ideology that helps conceal its true meaning – conferring a benign representation of its use rather than one that overtly claims spatialization as a site for capitalist exploitation.²² Similarly, Michel Foucault articulated the politics of space, claiming that knowledge and power are co-constituents of space and place, and this inevitably leads to its use as a way to segregate people and to observe and regulate social difference.²³

Influenced by these scholars, feminist geographer Doreen Massey also sees space as political, yet she adds a gender dimension to her analyses. For Massey, space is dynamic and ever-changing; it is constructed of various social relations across varying scales, from the global to the local, the town to the workplace.²⁴

19 Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert, *Animals Spaces, Beastly Places: New Geographies of Human-Animal Relations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2000), 10–11.

20 Hovorka, "The Gender, Place and Culture Jan Monk Distinguished Annual Lecture," 4.

21 Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994).

22 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 8–9.

23 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 4th edn. (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1991).

24 Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, 4.

Space is a way of thinking about power and politics in forming social relations and, correlatively, how these social relations of power are produced through this spatialization. Massey argues that the context of space–time in our current capitalist system coalesces with patriarchy to form a gendered spatial dimension of power that positions bodies in dualistic hierarchies of privilege and oppression. Since the advent of modernity, historical conceptualizations of space and time have seen these two concepts become radically polarized and take the form of a ‘dichotomous dualism’, defined in terms of presence and absence/lack, with ‘absence’ or ‘lack’ being space and positioned on the underside of the binary alongside women, animals, and nature. This ‘absence’ is negative, with temporality aligned with change: ‘Progress, Civilisation, Science, Politics and Reason’, and, ultimately, ‘masculinity’.²⁵ Massey defines absence using the psychoanalytic term ‘lack’, first postulated by Jacques Lacan and used to signify the absence of being and relating to the desire to become a whole person.²⁶ Space is, therefore, an absence of being, a place of stasis, passivity and depoliticization – a “feminine” space.²⁷ Nonhuman animals are part of this lack/absence as they are constructed as non-speaking beings that lack personhood status and are submissive to [hu]man[s]. When I talk about absence in this article, I am recalling Massey’s notion of lack and relating it to the idea of nonhuman animals being rendered as instrumentalized Others/objects. This positionality places them on the underside of the binary alongside women and space, making them ripe for exploitation.

It is worth bearing this dualism in mind when considering ‘place’ with the spatial dimensions of the animal-dependent laboratory. Place can be seen as a way to position bodies in space; it is a way to categorize species of animals in a human classificatory system, where all living beings occupy their positionality relative to other beings.²⁸ Consequently, animals become reified objects located on the underside of the binary alongside women, nature, and space. Thus, privileging and othering based on species and gender happen through the dualistic socio-spatial practices that create and shape physical boundaries and confer social status and behavioural expectations. These dynamics are at play across gender and species, constituting each other and producing a disequilibrium stemming from a ‘gendered positionality’. This positionality in space controls resource access and

25 Ibid., 257.

26 Darian Leader, *Introducing Lacan* (London: Icon Books Ltd, 2013).

27 Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, 6.

28 Philo and Wilbert, *Animals Spaces, Beastly Places*, 6.

produces social inequalities according to one's species. Hovorka states: 'In sum, gender-species intersectionality emerges from socio-spatial practices of privileging and othering that shapes human and nonhuman positionalities and relations'. For example, in her research about the centrality of animals to people's lives and landscapes in Botswana, Hovorka illustrated how gender-species relations of power operate in the everyday spaces of cattle and chicken farming.²⁹

Examining the gendering of laboratory animal space thus provides insight into the intersection of women and animals in the production of scientific knowledge and the infrastructures that shape this facilitation of knowledge, and vice versa.

A Woman's Place is in the Animal House?

It is worth noting that animal experiments in Britain have been regulated since the nineteenth century by order of the 1876 Cruelty to Animals Act. This Act aimed to keep nonhuman animals' pain and suffering to a minimum while still striving to advance scientific knowledge in the biomedical sciences. The Home Office inspects scientific organizations to ensure that establishments obey the law. It was in the mid-twentieth century when concerns about the psychological as well as physical welfare of laboratory animals were raised. The Universities Federation of Animal Welfare (UFAW) was formed in 1926 by Major C. W. Hume and became the leading voice in this area. They hoped to influence the practice and policy of animal experimentation by advocating for the care of nonhuman animals in the laboratory. This included paying attention to their physical and psychological well-being.³⁰ The UFAW published a range of books and pamphlets on this issue, and, eventually, many of their proposals were inculcated into the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 – the legislation that all UK animal-dependent scientific organizations still abide by.³¹

The UFAW promoted the institution of separate spaces and divisions of labour in the scientific establishment to facilitate this care over laboratory animals.³² Nonhuman animals in the laboratory do not live in the spaces of

29 Hovorka, "Women/Chickens vs. Men/Cattle: Insights on Gender-Species Intersectionality," 877.

30 Catherine Duxbury, "Property, Pain and Pastoral Power: The Advent of Animal Welfare in the Review of the 1876 Cruelty to Animals Act, 1947–1965," *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* 16, no. 2 (2019).

31 Duxbury, *Science, Gender and the Exploitation of Animals in Britain since 1945*.

32 Ibid.

the test site; instead, they are kept in cages in the animal house. Once they enter the laboratory to be tested, they may never return to the animal house. Instead, they will be euthanized and discarded. It is the role of technicians to care for the animals in the animal house while the scientists experiment on them.³³ This spatial separation of the laboratory and animal house has historically signified a gendered division of labour.

An example of this was in 1947 when the UFAW published their first handbook on the care and management of nonhuman animals in the laboratory. It was compiled and edited by Prof. Alastair Worden, director of research in animal health at the University College of Wales. The book provided guidance and advice on a variety of laboratory and animal house practices relating to husbandry techniques: food preparation; cage sizes and equipment; experimental techniques; as well as providing information on a host of animals from rabbits, guinea pigs, rats, and mice, to pigeons, fish, and ferrets.³⁴ Other chapters in the edited collection were devoted to the perfect laboratory conditions and gave clear instructions for animal technicians and assistants. Here, the book pronounced that ‘many workers prefer women to men as animal assistants’. Successful animal assistants would depend on ‘great perseverance in observation, recording and the carrying out menial tasks’.³⁵ Menial tasks were most certainly seen as the job and the duty of women, as the chapter on the Norway Rat, written by Oxbridge scholars McGaughey and Thompson, attests: the success of the experimental animals rests on ‘scrupulous cleanliness, strict attention to the environmental temperature and related factors, adequate nutrition and painstaking care in general management’. The choice of ‘the right technical assistant (preferably female)’ is by far ‘the most important feature in the management of any rat colony’.³⁶

The Handbook discursively produces a gendered spatiality reflective of the social relations and division of labour in the household at the time. Simultaneously, this discursive construction of laboratory space reproduces existing socio-spatial inequalities, whereby the roles of women as labourers and carers of nonhuman animals are effaced, and their contributions to the

33 Lynda Birke, *Feminism, Animals and Science: The Naming of the Shrew* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1994), 51.

34 Alastair N. Worden, ed., *The UFAW Handbook on the Care and Management of Laboratory Animals*, 1st edn. (London: Baillière, Tindall And Cox, 1947).

35 *Ibid.*, 41.

36 C.A. McGaughey and H.V. Thompson, “The Norway Rat,” in *The UFAW Handbook on the Care and Management of Laboratory Animals*, ed. Alastair Worden (London: Baillière, Tindall and Cox, 1947), 110—11.

functioning and production of scientific knowledge are seen as trivial.³⁷ The spatial duality of laboratory and animal house is excised through this material-semiotic gendering, whereby the animal house is the place for care, a 'feminine space' opposite to the rational, objective testing space of the 'masculine' laboratory. The laboratory space denotes presence (knowledge, progress, and productivity), whereas the animal house is a site of absence of all things rational. Hence, 'lack' operates in animal house, with both women and animals placed in gendered relations of power due to their 'absence' – their instrumentalized positionality within the hierarchy of scientific performativity.

The sciences in post-war Britain remained firmly within this binary domain, as the state wanted to attract male science graduates into the post-war scientific officer classes of government. Correspondingly, there was no increase in women being recruited into science, technology, and medicine courses in the late 1940s and 1950s: the notoriously masculinized subject of science was firmly entrenched to the exclusion of women.³⁸

The Handbook is now in its eighth edition and still covers these topics. Subsequent editions do not explicitly tie women to the role of animal assistants. However, contemporary research shows that women in scientific occupations, particularly women of colour, still perform the majority of 'housekeeping tasks', including ordering laboratory supplies, organizing the laboratory space, and managing staff. As Roska and Miller point out in their study on the division of labour in the lab, 'women were often cognizant that these tasks were less valuable than other tasks and they took time away from research and publication – highly valued tasks'.³⁹ This highlights a significant use of space in the animal-dependent science laboratory, which places care and its associated 'menial duties' as a site of politics.⁴⁰ This operation of care towards nonhuman animals demonstrates the gendered spatio-political conditions on which the animal house and laboratory are built. Gender and species intersect to produce a binary division of space

37 Ruha Benjamin, ed., *Race, Carceral Technoscience, and Liberatory Imagination in Everyday Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019); Anne Kerr & Lisa Garforth, "'Affective Practices, Care and Bioscience: A Study of Two Laboratories,'" *The Sociological Review* 64, no. 1 (2016); Candace Miller and Josipa Roksa, "Balancing Research and Service in Academia: Gender, Race, and Laboratory Tasks," *Gender & Society* 34, no. 1 (2020).

38 David Edgerton, *Warfare State: Britain, 1920–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 176–79.

39 Miller and Roksa, "Balancing Research and Service in Academia: Gender, Race, and Laboratory Tasks," 139. See also: Birke, *Feminism, Animals and Science*, 50–55.

40 Carrie Friese, "Realising Potential in Translational Medicine: The Uncanny Emergence of Care as Science," *Current Anthropology*, 54, no. S7 (2013): 129–38, <https://doi.org/10.1086/670805>.

and place, which renders women and animals inferior to the ‘masculine’ positionality of the experimental space. Moreover, because of this dualism a material-semiotic hierarchy of status, place, and space emerges. Animals become inferior to women, where they live in cages that restrict their agency even more so than the technicians whose duty is to care for them.

Dichotomizing Laboratory Space and Time

In the post-Second World War era, emphasis was placed on the rationalization of laboratory practices and the nonhuman animals used for testing. Diversity of species and space is repudiated, and homogeneity of nonhumans and space is increased.⁴¹ Highly structured and sterile spaces were advocated as they were considered to facilitate valid experiments.⁴² The UFAW Handbook and the promulgations of Dr William Lane-Petter helped to establish the standardization of animal-dependent science.⁴³

Dr William Lane Petter was “a qualified medical doctor who served in the Royal Army Medical Corps during the Second World War. After leaving the army, he became a Home Office Inspector under the 1876 Cruelty to Animals Act. In 1947, alongside the Medical Research Council (MRC), which he helped to establish, he became director of the Laboratory Animals Bureau (LAB), later known as the Laboratory Animals Centre. He was also the secretary general of the International Committee on Laboratory Animals.⁴⁴ The LAB was a national organization that sought to produce germ-free and genetically standardized laboratory animals to supply to animal-dependent laboratories. In the next couple of decades after the war, the LAB aimed to establish national and international networks of breeders of specific pathogen-free laboratory animals, with their own set of standards and regulations.⁴⁵

41 Lynda Birke, Arnold Arluke, and Mike Michael, *The Sacrifice: How Scientific Experiments Transform Animals and People* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2007); Robert G.W. Kirk, “‘Standardisation through Mechanisation’ Germ Free Life and the Engineering of the Ideal Laboratory Animal,” *Technological Culture* 53, no. 1 (2012).

42 Worden, *The UFAW Handbook on the Care and Management of Laboratory Animals*.

43 Robert G.W. Kirk, “A Brave New Animal for a Brave New World: The British Laboratory Animals Bureau and the Constitution of International Standards of Laboratory Animal Protection and Use, Circa 1947–1968,” *Isis* 101, no. 1 (2010).

44 William Lane-Petter, “The Place of Laboratory Animals in the Scientific Life of a Country,” *Impact of Science on Society* 9 (1959), 178–96.

45 Robert G.W. Kirk, “A Brave New Animal for a Brave New World: The British Laboratory Animals Bureau and the Constitution of International Standards of Laboratory Animal Protection

The 1957 edition of the Handbook had a chapter written by William Lane-Petter. It was devoted entirely to the design of the animal house. He stressed that the layout should have four basic departments, whether serving ‘a small hospital laboratory or that of a large research institute’.⁴⁶ The departments are given the titles of ‘normal animals’, ‘experimental animals’, ‘washing and sterilising’ and ‘food, bedding and clean cage stores’.⁴⁷ It is here where the animal house became an industrialized space, which advocated for an efficient system of use.⁴⁸ The laboratories’ managed flow of people, animals, and goods mobilizes the idea of space–time as one that is linear and comprised of compartmentalized ‘moments’ – departments with specific roles and duties.⁴⁹ These neatly delineated ‘moments’ signify space unfolding *in* time, with everything moving sequentially. As I suggested above, Massey points out that time and space in modernity are constructed as dichotomous with time, which is typically coded as masculine, and space, absence, or lack, as feminine.⁵⁰ Time/efficiency of the scientific organizations are prioritised, with the spaces of the lab constructed as immobile ‘holding sites’ for nonhuman animals.

The spatial layout of the animal house signifies who is allowed to move freely in this environment and whose movement should be restricted.⁵¹ In effect, it is a way of dominating and controlling space. Reviel Netz, in his book *Barbed Wire*, discusses the invention and use of such a technology of containment on the US plains from 1874–1954 and demonstrates how this provided people and capitalism with a way to control animals used for consumption by preventing their movement.⁵² For Netz, everything about the containment of cattle on the US plains was for their future killing. In the space of the animal house, we see how everything is designed for the sake of testing on nonhuman animals and their eventual death.

and Use, circa 1947–1968,” *Isis* 101, no. 1 (2010): 62–94, doi.org/10.1086/652689.

46 William Lane-Petter, “The Animal House,” in *The UFAW Handbook on the Care and Management of Laboratory Animals*, eds. Alastair Worden and William Lane-Petter (London: UFAW, 1957), 16.

47 Zoë Sofia, “Container Technologies,” *Hypatia* 15, no. 2 (2000).

48 William Lane-Petter, “The Animal House and Its Equipment,” in *The UFAW Handbook on the Care and Management of Laboratory Animals*, ed. UFAW (Edinburgh and London: Churchill Livingstone, 1972); idem, “The Animal House.”

49 Nicole Shukin, *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 100.

50 Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, 6.

51 Birke, Arluke, and Michael, *The Sacrifice*.

52 Reviel Netz, *Barbed Wire: An Ecology of Modernity* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004).

Everything was designed around an architecture of capitalist demarcation and efficiency – reminiscent of the factory floor – where there are specific duties and roles for humans and nonhumans, which follow a staged, linear pathway through the animal house to the lab and death. All of which are dictated by temporality and the enfolding of space within this notion of capitalist time.⁵³ Nonhuman animals' lives became structured around these sites of temporality and became determined by the socio-spatial relations of science. As a result of the standardization of nonhuman animals after 1945, their areas of confinement in the animal house became even more tightly controlled, and there was astute regulation of their movements and breeding habits.⁵⁴

Keeping Animals in Their Gendered Space

As of the assent of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, the spaces and cages of confinement are stipulated in the law. Here, we see a distinct turn in the legal discourses concerning the containment of nonhuman animals. The notion of welfare became integral to the structure and function of the animal-dependent science organization. Whereas previously, the discourses concerning animal health and well-being were recommendations mainly stemming from the UFAW, it was the 1986 Act that inscribed it in law. Scientific organizations now had to provide spaces that were thought to keep the experimental animals happy and healthy.⁵⁵

From the immediate post-war period to the 1970s, cages that 'care' helped sustain the economic imperative of the new socio-spatial practices of the animal-dependent scientific organization. Lane-Petter discussed the necessity of segregation according to sex and the importance of constructing cages that could confine nonhuman animals in a way that was comfortable for them yet economically efficient and able to facilitate experimental validity.⁵⁶ He recognizes that nonhuman animals have recalcitrant capacities:

The cage must be made of a material which the animal cannot break, distort or destroy, e.g., by gnawing or pulling apart. The mesh of the wire

53 Shukin, *Animal Capital*.

54 Birke, Arluke, and Michael, *The Sacrifice*.

55 Catherine Duxbury, "Animals, Science and Gender: Animal Experimentation in Britain, 1947–1965" (Ph.D., University of Essex, 2017).

56 Lane-Petter, "The Animal House," 87–89.

or bars must be small enough to prevent the animal or its young from escaping; in this respect, particular attention must be paid to well-fitting doors, food baskets, or other openings. Door-fastenings must be secure, for many animals are persistent and ingenious fiddlers, and will worry apart quite safe-seeming closing devices. Monkeys are particularly liable to release themselves, and a padlock is the only really trustworthy answer, but rabbits also show a surprising aptitude for undoing catches. Rats and even mice can lift off the lids of boxes in which they are confined unless these are held firmly in place either by their own sufficient weight or by fasteners.⁵⁷

For Lane-Petter, the cage must be strong enough to restrain nonhuman animals and prevent their escape. Nonhuman animal agency is acknowledged but seen as an undesired behaviour that does not comply with the traditional practice of science. Lane-Petter's observations of animal agency ran alongside an in-depth exposition on the housing of breeding and mating pairs. Lane-Petter recommended rabbits and ferrets be provided with a darkened cloister to birth, 'but guinea-pig sows have no obstetrical shyness, and will farrow happily in an open pen among a group of their fellows'.⁵⁸ This wry remark highlights the slippage between what sociologist Michael Lynch calls the 'naturalistic' and 'analytic' animal in the lab. Lynch found two coexisting constructions of the guinea pig in laboratories. The 'naturalistic' animal appears tacitly throughout daily interactions in the lab, often in humour-filled anecdotes (like Lane-Petter's), but not presented in scientific reports. Instead, that is when the 'analytic' animal comes to the fore, the intention being to construct the guinea pig as an object to be tested on – the very methodology of science dictating the terms unto which the scientist *inscribes* the laboratory animal with any sense of meaning: as a subject or object.⁵⁹

As we have seen, Lane-Petter jokes about the birthing habits of the guinea pig, yet he is projecting an entirely male imagination of the lifeworld of the guinea pig based on his views of pregnancy and birth. He cannot contain the laboratory animal, but the cage can. The cage acts as space to enable the 'analytic' animal to eventually come forth, obtaining a positionality in relation to the masculine domain of science.

57 Ibid., 87–88.

58 Ibid., 88.

59 Michael E. Lynch, "Sacrifice and the Transformation of the Animal Body into a Scientific Object: Laboratory Culture and Ritual Practice in the Neurosciences," *Social Studies of Science* 18, no. 2 (1988): 265–89, doi.org/10.1177/030631288018002004.

Positionality of nonhuman animals in the sense of the cage is discursively and materially bounded and subordinate to the socio-spatial practices of the scientific organization and the dictates of law. Relations of power in the scientific establishment create openings and restrictions for different social groups, and this is historically contiguous with the guidelines currently in operation under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act of 1986. The specific requirements of nonhuman animals used for breeding illustrate this particularly well, with the Code of Practice that accompanies the law stating:

Animals give birth during the time of day when they are usually quiescent and will often seek or create a secure place for parturition and the raising of offspring; typically, a nest or den in the case of rodents, cats, dogs and birds. Such behaviour is strongly motivated. The breeder should ensure that the animals' need for privacy is considered. This can be achieved by the provision of nesting material, nest boxes or a secluded and sheltered area within the pen or cage. Nesting material also allows the animal to partially control its own environment (e.g., noise, temperature and humidity). Given the means for controlling its own microenvironment, the appropriate range of room temperatures may be wider than would otherwise be the case.⁶⁰

Breeding cages further separate the animal of the laboratory from nature.⁶¹ Females become the invisible backbone of the production and reproduction of animal-dependent science. This is, of course, against the framework of standardization. Even the provision of a 'private' space to birth and rear their young is indeterminably regulated by the additional materials specifically recommended suitable for nesting. Nonhuman animals do not have a choice in the type of nesting and bedding material they receive; even this is highly regulated due to the effects it can have on the experimental results and the animals themselves.⁶² The allusion to nonhumans' agency

60 HM Government Animals in Science Regulation Unit, "Code of Practice for the Housing and Care of Animals Bred, Supplied or Used for Scientific Purposes," ed. Home Office (London: OGL Crown Copyright, 2014).

61 Lynda Birke, "Telling the Rat What to Do: Laboratory Animals, Science and Gender," in *Gender and the Science of Difference: Cultural Politics of Contemporary Science and Medicine*, ed. Jill A. Fisher (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers, the State University, 2011), p.100.

62 Hannah-Marja Voipio, Ping Ping Tsai, Heinz Brandsetetter, Marcel Gyger, Hansjoachim Hackbarth, Axel Kornerup Hansen, and Thomas Krohn, "Housing and Care of Laboratory Animals," in *The Cost Manual of Laboratory Animal Care and Use: Refinement, Reduction, and Research*, eds. Bryan Howard, Timo Nevalainen, Gemma Perretta (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, Taylor and Francis Group, 2011), 55.

concerning nesting material is also problematic, given that cage space is strictly limited. For breeding rodents, mice have a minimum floor area of 330cm² and rat mothers and their litter 880cm², with an additional 400cm² added to the cage for each other adult animal.⁶³

Breeding females are housed in a high-density structure to ensure maximum efficiency and save space. Nonhuman animals are raised and bred in laboratory houses, reminiscent of what sociology of science scholar Karin Knorr-Cetina calls ‘production facilities’.⁶⁴ For example, laboratory animals are bred explicitly as commodities and put on the market to be bought and sold. Many specific strains and types of animals are created. Once animal-use organizations have purchased nonhuman animals, they are put into an animal house for breeding.⁶⁵ Males and females are designated for mating, litters are separated from their parents, and any ‘surplus’ animals that are not deemed useful are killed or transferred elsewhere.⁶⁶

Females are the containers, especially with the now widespread practice of creating transgenic and genetically modified (GM) experimental animals, such as mice and rats. GM animals contain genes that have been artificially manipulated rather than gained through natural reproduction methods. Transgenic organisms are a specific example of GM but contain genes inserted from a different species.⁶⁷ There are several ways of creating GM animals, the most straightforward being via a ‘pronuclear microinjection’ method.⁶⁸

In pronuclear microinjection, fertilized eggs are removed from ‘donor’ females that are superovulated. The eggs are then genetically manipulated and injected into another ‘host’ female. These females are turned pseudo-pregnant by breeding them with sterile or vasectomized males.⁶⁹ Like ‘knockout mice’, of which there are several thousand strains, they are produced when researchers ‘knockout’ or inactivate a particular gene and

63 Ibid., 32. And see European Council of the European Union, “Directive 2010/63/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 September 2010 on the Protection of Animals Used for Scientific Purposes,” *Official Journal of the European Union* (2010), Annex II: 57–58.

64 Karin Knorr Cetina, *Epistemic Cultures: How the Sciences Make Knowledge* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 145.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

67 Donna Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.Femaleman_Meets_Oncomouse: Feminism and Technoscience* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

68 Belen Pintado and Marian van Roon, “Creation of Genetically Modified Animals,” in *The Cost Manual of Laboratory Animal Care and Use*, 183–85.

69 Also see Cetina, *Epistemic Cultures: How the Sciences Make Knowledge*, 152.

replace it with an artificial strand of DNA.⁷⁰ This is achieved by harvesting embryonic cells four days after fertilization, altering their DNA structure *in vitro* and then artificially inseminating it into adult female mice. Adult female mice are then used to gestate the altered embryo until birth. Once the mice pups are born and have reached full maturity, the effects of the ‘knocked-out’ gene can then be observed.⁷¹ The whole repertoire of breeding depends heavily on the quality of the female and the production of quality embryos influencing the overall efficiency of (re)production.⁷²

The female body, especially their reproductive organs, is ‘donated’ for the process. Their very bodies become container technologies and are transformed into parts to be manipulated. The different individual nonhuman animals’ involvement and their differentiated roles indicate that they are reproductive containers joined together to create breeding facilities akin to the productive capacities of a factory.

Female animals in the laboratory used for breeding are, in fact, contained containers. They are reified as female breeding machines and objectified as an economic resource. Here, female nonhumans are made ‘present’ in the sense of being integral to the production of scientific animal-dependent research; but this is also the site of their complete annihilation as *subjects* (recall here Lynch’s notion of the transformation from naturalistic to analytic animal).⁷³ The contained container of the laboratory is a staged representation according to ‘exclusively masculine parameters’.⁷⁴ In other words, the ‘female’ is effaced from the binary opposition, and hence, where they are represented in this economy is ‘precisely the site of their erasure as sentient beings’.⁷⁵ They become lack.

Conclusion

This chapter focuses on the issue of the confinement of laboratory animals in the spaces of the animal house and illustrates that these spaces are gendered. It offers a feminist animal studies perspective on intersectional practices of

70 National Human Genome Research Institute, “Knockout Mice Factsheet,” <https://www.genome.gov/about-genomics/fact-sheets/Knockout-Mice-Fact-Sheet>.

71 Ibid.

72 Pintado and Roon, “Creation of Genetically Modified Animals,” 184–85.

73 Lynch, “Sacrifice and Transformation of the Animal Body.”

74 Luce Irigaray in Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine* (London: Routledge, 1991), 118.

75 Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 2nd edn. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 37.

space and place, and demonstrates how space is both a social construct and how social relations in the lab are spatially constructed. These socio-spatial relations are inherently gendered, and the manner of conceptualizing space and time rests on dualistic assumptions. As Massey says, space and time is a dichotomy that signifies the categorization and separation of beings into presence or lack, man/not man, human/not human, and time/space.⁷⁶

As we have seen from this brief historical overview of the spaces of the animal house, this dualism secures a radical demarcation (and essentialization) between humans and animals, and men and women. In the modern animal house, space becomes enfolded in time, with time being the privileged signifier associated with efficiency, progress, and masculinity. For example, in the discussion of the breeding of GM nonhuman animals, female bodies become the container, the space for scientific progress. Nevertheless, according to Massey, space is signified by an absence or lack. At first glance, this seemingly is the obverse of her argument; however, on closer inspection, we can view the GM breeding female as enfolded in time. Her bodily space is aligned with reproduction, and it is an essentialized space that specifies Massey's notion of lack – they are useful only insofar as they are instrumentalized breeding objects.

These essentialized 'Otherings' are also present in the architecture of the building and the roles that human workers have in the scientific organization. Historically, the discourse promulgated the idea that animal technicians should be women, reflective of the radical distinctions between genders in the broader social milieu. This is coupled with a segregated spatial infrastructure of the animal house, where departments remain spaces of stasis, and the flows of animals and supplies work in and through them to maintain a linear procession of events.

This essay has shown that feminist intersectional animal studies illuminate how deeply entrenched and complex socio-spatial relations of the animal-dependent scientific organization are, and how these are partly based on gender-species relations of power. Women and animals rest on the underside of the binary, becoming essentialized 'Others'. This creates limitations for both social groups, and the lab's discursive and material spatial practices highlight species as an axis of difference alongside the gendered human female body.

Overall, the spatialization of the animal house allows for the effacement of nonhuman animals. Socio-spatial relations help to render animals as objects, incomplete beings, which belong to the underside of the binary

76 Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, 255.

alongside women and space. This allows for their exploitation as well as influencing the practice of rational science.

About the Author

Catherine Duxbury is a fellow at London School of Economics and Political Science. She is an interdisciplinary social science researcher specializing in the area of Critical Animal Studies, focusing particularly on the gendered nature of nonhuman animal representation. She has a Bachelor's degree in psychology, and an MA and PhD in Sociology, and is the author of *Science, Gender and the Exploitation of Animals in Britain Since 1945* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2022).

Insects at the Intersection of Gender and Class in the Early Modern Period¹

Charlotte Meijer

Abstract

For millennia, the lives of humans and insects have been intimately connected. Living on bodies, in homes, and in people's imagination, insects were (and are) an integral part of everyday life. In the historiography of human–animal history, the role of arthropods has recently gained more attention, with historians designating the Early Modern period as a time in which insects were increasingly studied and appreciated. In the domestic sphere, however, insects were seen as unwanted intruders. This essay considers the ways in which Dutch men and women encountered and were expected to deal with insects in the premodern period. It argues that ideas about (dealing with) insects intersected with ideas about gender and class, and aims to show how these ideas co-evolved over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Keywords: insect history, environmental history, gender, class

For as long as humans have roamed the Earth, insects have been a part of their lives. Wherever humans went, these small creatures were living on their bodies, in their bodies, and in their imaginations.² This article

¹ My thanks to Djoeke van Netten, Lorraine McEvoy, and the peer reviewers for their helpful comments.

² William H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (New York: Anchor Press, 1976); J. L. Cloudsley-Thompson, *Insects and History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976).

considers the relationship between people and insects within the context of the early modern Dutch domestic sphere, and argues that changing perceptions of insects were closely connected to new notions of class and gender.

Gender in Insect History

In the historiography of human–animal interactions, the role of arthropods has recently gained more attention, with historians designating the Early Modern period as the starting point of modern entomology, the scientific study of insects. As research on natural theology and early modern science has shown, insects became an increasingly popular subject of study from the mid-seventeenth century onwards.³ This was in large part connected to the development of the microscope, which debunked the myth of insects spontaneously emerging from rotting material. No longer regarded as symbols of the devil and death, but still wrapped up in religio-social order, insects became ‘proof’ of God’s divine plan.⁴

It is mostly within the context of early modern entomology that the connection between gender and insect history has been studied. According to Catherine Powell Warden, insects had ‘great appeal’ to women, because they were easily collected from gardens and private collections. Especially for women from the higher echelons of society, collecting and painting insects could offer a way into male-dominated networks of collectors and merchants.⁵ For others, observing insects at home provided a way to question traditional gender norms by applying themselves fully to their studies instead of living a traditional domestic life.⁶ Additionally, a recent overview of the history of medical entomology has shown that women played

3 Marcel Dicke, “Insects In Western Art,” *American Entomologist* 46, no. 4 (2000): 228–37; Brian W. Ogilvie, “Maxima in Minimis Animalibus: Insects in Natural Theology and Physico-Theology,” in *Physic-Theology: Religion and Science in Europe, 1650–1750* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020), 171–82; Eric Jorink, *Reading the Book of Nature in the Dutch Golden Age, 1575–1715* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Jan de Hond, Eric Jorink, and Hans Mulder, eds., *Onderkruipsels: ‘Kleyne dierkens’ in kunst en wetenschap* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, 2022).

4 Ogilvie, “Maxima in Minimis Animalibus.”

5 Catherine Powell-Warren, “Een vreemde aantrekkingskracht: Vrouwelijke kunstenaars en de diertjes die niemand kan minnen”, in *Onderkruipsels*, 110.

6 Deborah R. Cohen, “Miss Fieldes Nests”, in *What Reason Promises: Essays on Reason, Nature and History*, eds. W. Doniger, P. Galison, and S. Neiman (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 77–87.

an important (but often unacknowledged) part in the development of the field.⁷ This is in line with findings by Londa Schiebinger, who argues that nineteenth-century professionalization led to the exclusion of women from scientific fields and institutions.⁸

For many other women, as will become clear in this chapter, insects were more of a menace than admirable objects. Lice, fleas, and bedbugs infiltrated every part of life, causing discomfort and spreading disease.⁹ As Lucinda Cole argues, the policing of parasites in the household was a task assigned to women in eighteenth-century Europe.¹⁰ Moreover, Dawn Biehler and Lisa Sarasohn have shown that the emergence of pest control was closely connected to notions of race and class.¹¹ Less attention has been paid to how these ideas surrounding class, gender, and insects co-evolved over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This article aims to do so in the context of the Dutch domestic sphere, which was widely known by foreign travellers for its cleanliness. Floors were mopped, furniture scrubbed, and kitchens polished.¹²

For this analysis, I use household manuals, (medical) journals, periodicals, and dictionaries written and published in the Low Countries for a broader public. Not only do these sources reflect societal expectations around who was supposed to deal with insects and how, they also signal the problems and unease insects caused before they offer a ‘solution’. Through these sources, it thus becomes clear that insects actively influenced the world around them by causing discomfort and illness, and were more than just a symbolic category. This ties in with recent trends in animal history, in which both human and animal agencies are considered.¹³

7 Adriana Troyo et al., “Acknowledging Extraordinary Women in the History of Medical Entomology,” *Parasites & Vectors* 15, no. 1 (2022): 114.

8 Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 236.

9 J. R. Busvine, *Insects, Hygiene and History* (London: Athlone Press, 1976).

10 Lucinda Cole, *Imperfect Creatures: Vermin, Literature, and the Sciences of Life, 1600–1740* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 12.

11 Dawn Biehler, *Pests in the City: Flies, Bedbugs, Cockroaches, and Rats* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2013), 1–5; Lisa T. Sarasohn, *Getting Under Our Skin: The Cultural and Social History of Vermin* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021).

12 Els Kloek, *Vrouw Des Huizes: Een cultuurgeschiedenis van de Hollandse huisvrouw* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2009); Bas van Bavel and Oscar Gelderblom, “The Economic Origins of Cleanliness in the Dutch Golden Age,” *Past & Present* 205, no. 1 (2009): 41–69.

13 E.g. Sarah D. P. Cockram and Andrew Wells, *Interspecies Interactions: Animals and Humans Between the Middle Ages and Modernity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018).

The first section will focus on the eighteenth century, when controlling pests was viewed as a task for maids and housekeepers. In the second section, I will analyse how an increasing association of insects with lower social classes led to the professionalization of pest control and the gradual exclusion of women from the field. Finally, the conclusion will suggest that the study of premodern human–insect relations can serve as an indication for research on changing conceptions of gender and class, and, in turn, that the notions of gender and class can offer new perspectives on insect history.

A Woman's Duty

The early modern Dutch home was known for being immaculate. As Bas van Bavel and Oscar Gelderblom have demonstrated, the origins of this exceptional emphasis on hygiene probably lay in the early commercialization of the Dutch dairy industry, which necessitated clean conditions for making and storing its produce. When people working in the dairy industry moved into cities, they brought these hygienic practices with them from the countryside.¹⁴ According to Catherine Richardson, this meant that Dutch cleanliness was not solely an ideal for the elite, but widely shared amongst all layers of society.¹⁵ Insects did not fit into this ideal of cleanliness. While they had been viewed as an inevitable part of everyday life for centuries, this began to change during the eighteenth century, as is evidenced by an increase in Dutch household literature reflecting on the discomfort and disgust associated with insects.¹⁶

'Still, the most infallible Remedy against all kinds of Pests is certainly cleanliness', the anonymous author of *De ervárene en verstandige Hollandsche huishoudster* (The Experienced and Sensible Dutch Housekeeper) wrote in 1753.¹⁷ Eighteenth-century sources show that unwanted insects in the

14 Bavel and Gelderblom, "The Economic Origins of Cleanliness," 41–69.

15 Catherine Richardson, "Sensing the Street," in *Early Modern Streets: A European Perspective*, ed. Danielle van den Heuvel, Early Modern Themes (London and New York: Routledge, 2023), 90.

16 For England, this changing relation has been described by Lisa T. Sarasohn, "'That Nauseous Venomous Insect': Bedbugs in Early Modern England," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 46, no. 4 (2013): 515.

17 "Dog de onfeilbaarste Remedie tegen allerhande Ongedierten is zeeker de Zindelykheid." B. M., *De ervárene en verstandige Hollandsche huishoudster* (Amsterdam: Bernardus Mourik, 1753), 33.

domestic sphere could roughly be divided into two categories: those who resided in the human body and those who resided on the body.¹⁸ Endoparasites – including roundworms – were a common threat.¹⁹ Through contact with animals, eating undercooked meats, and drinking soiled water, humans ingested all kinds of organisms, leading to problems from stomach aches to death. The cause of a parasitic infection was believed to be largely due to underlying causes, such as old age or a weak disposition. Still, doctors recognized that these parasites could inflict all kinds of further harm, which is why eighteenth-century medical and domestic literature focused on treatment instead of prevention.²⁰ While medical expulsion was often effected by male doctors, women could administer relatively simple remedies, such as milk and garlic.²¹

Insects living on human bodies, as well as in clothes and on furniture, were more visible in everyday life, easier to drive out, and received more attention. These ‘domestic insects’ (*huisinsekten*) ‘assaulted’ and ‘plagued’ people by biting them.²² Apart from causing rashes, insects also spread diseases like typhus, making them lethal.²³ Moreover, insects were unwanted houseguests because they caused material damage. For example, woodboring beetles and worms destroyed wooden furniture and foundations, while moths damaged valuable fabrics and weevils ate cereals stored in granaries, causing food shortages and social panic.²⁴

18 See, for example, the variety of unwanted organisms described in: M., *De ervárene en verstandige Hollandsche huyshoudster; Algemeen nuttig en noodzaaklyk stad- en land-huishoudkundig woordenboek {...} Eerste Deel, De Letters A.-F.*, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: W. Holtrop, 1794); *Genees-natuur en huishoud-kundige jaarboeken*, vol. 1 (Dordrecht and Amsterdam: A. Blusse en Zoon–W. Holtrop, 1778); *De huys apotheek, voor burger- en landlieden, of de zuynige kok ter gezondheid*. (Amsterdam: Johannes Sluyter en zoon, 1781).

19 E.g.: *Algemeen {...} woordenboek {...} Eerste Deel, De Letters A.-F.*; *Genees-, natuur- en huishoud-kundige jaarboeken; De huys apotheek*.

20 A. Moll and C. van Eldink, eds., *Practisch tijdschrift voor de geneeskunde in al haren omvang*, vol. 1 (Groningen: J. Noorduynd, 1822), 104.

21 Compare the professional medical expulsion described in *Genees-, natuur- en huishoud-kundige jaarboeken*, 1:165–72, 296–99 with the simpler treatments described in: M., *De ervárene en verstandige Hollandsche huyshoudster*, 173; *Algemeen {...} woordenboek {...} Derde Deel, De Letters P.-Z.*, vol. 3 (Amsterdam: W. Holtrop, 1794), 181, 251.

22 *Algemeen {...} woordenboek {...} Tweede Deel, De Letters G.-O.*, vol. 2 (Amsterdam: W. Holtrop, 1794), 503.

23 Martinus Houttuyn, *Natuurlyke historie of uitvoerige beschryving der dieren, planten en mineraalen, volgens het samenstel van den heer Linnæus. Met naauwkeurige afbeeldingen: Eerste deels, negende stuk. De insekten* (Amsterdam: F. Houttuyn, 1766), 2; Hans Zinsser, *Rats, Lice, and History* (London: George Routledge, 1935).

24 Houttuyn, *Natuurlyke historie*, 54; 281; *Algemeen {...} woordenboek {...} Tweede Deel, De Letters G.-O.*, 2:276. See also M. Fissell, “Imagining Vermin in Early Modern England,” *History Workshop*

Contrary to endoparasites, which doctors associated with vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly, exoparasites were seen as a sign of uncleanness. However, this was not yet explicitly connected to notions of class.²⁵

In the eighteenth century, pests became an increasingly popular theme in various genres, including scientific and domestic publications. According to Martinus Houttuyn (1720–1798), a Dutch entomologist, this increase was due to advances in insect science. Houttuyn described these new scientific insights as ‘incredible’ and observed that new books were published every day.²⁶ Whereas a male scientist like Houttuyn had the luxury of studying and admiring insects, most housewives did not. The ‘Dutch housewife’, as studied by Els Kloek, was responsible for keeping the house immaculate, either by cleaning or managing other women to do the cleaning for her.²⁷ As the author of *De ervárene huyshoudster* wrote, a ‘clean house [is] a very pleasant thing; and because the duty of a housekeeper demands to take care of it, the necessary secrets must be known to her’.²⁸ In this clean Dutch household, there was no place for insects.

To combat vermin, relatively simple home-and-garden remedies were recommended. For example, the *Algemeen woordenboek* (General Dictionary, 1794) – a sort of encyclopaedia for ‘housefathers- and mothers’ – advised its readers to use the ‘fruit of the *Euonymus* plant’ against lice. Other methods to remove pests included plastering walls and furniture with tinctures of lime, turpentine, animal fat, leaching solutions, and mercury, making it impossible for insects to nestle.²⁹ The burning of herbs and tobacco proved to be effective against mosquitos and flies, which were deterred by smoke.³⁰ However, the most effective way to combat vermin was to keep the home in a state of ‘utmost cleanliness’. This could be achieved by airing out rooms, keeping the home free of dust, and cleaning it regularly with ‘wormwood water’.³¹ Insect control therefore largely fell within the

Journal 47, no. 1 (1999): 1–29.

25 M., *De ervárene en verstandige Hollandsche huyshoudster*, 173.

26 Houttuyn, *Natuurlyke historie*, IV.

27 Kloek, *Vrouw Des Huizes*, 219.

28 “Een zuiver Huys een zeer aangename zaak; en om dat de plicht van een huyshoudster vordert daar voor zorg te dragen, zo moeten haar de noodige geheimen daar toe bekend zyn.” M., *De ervárene en verstandige Hollandsche huyshoudster*, 32.

29 *Ibid.*, 32–33; *Algemeen {...} woordenboek {...} Derde Deel, De Letters P.-Z.*, 3: 534; *Over de schadelijke huisinsekten*, 2nd edn. (Amsterdam: S. de Grebber, 1832), 19–29.

30 *Over de schadelijke huisinsekten*, 6, 12; *De huys apothek*, 284.

31 M., *De ervárene en verstandige Hollandsche huyshoudster*, 33.



Figure 1. Reinier Vinkeles after Jacobus Buys, *De spin en de zijderups*, 1792. Etching on paper, 6.7 x 9.3 cm. Coll. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv.no. RP-P-1907-5006.

domain of the housekeeper, maid, or wife, whose task it was to keep the home spotlessly clean. This fits in with Cole's findings on gender roles and insect control in early modern England and confirms that the ideal of cleanliness was widely shared. Those who did not conform were seen as lazy and immoral.³²

A systematic study of the Rijksmuseum collection also shows the association of women with the policing of vermin in various artworks dating back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In an etching accompanying the poem *De Spin en de Zydworm* (The Spider and the Silkworm) by Aagje Deken and Bettje Wolf, Reinier Vinkeles shows a young maid using a broom to destroy a spider's web (Fig. 1). Jan Luyken's etching *Vrouwen onderzoeken hun lakens op motgaten* (Women Searching Their Sheets for Moth Holes, 1711) depicts a group of women carefully checking their sheets for holes made by the larvae of the clothes moth. Meanwhile, when men were depicted with insects, it was in a 'professional' setting in which they were hunting, keeping bees, or doing research, such as C. Galle's *Jacht op nachtvinders* (Hunt for Moths, 1594–1598).

³² Cole, *Imperfect Creatures*, 12; Richardson, "Sensing the Street" 90; Bavel and Gelderblom, "The Economic Origins of Cleanliness," 41–69.



Figure 2. Pieter de Hooch, *Een moeder die het haar van haar kind reinigt*, bekend als 'Moedertaak', ca. 1660–61. Oil on Canvas, 52 x 61 cm. Coll. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv.no. SK-C-149.

Women were not just depicted cleaning homes, but also cleaning other people. In Pieter de Hoogh's painting *Moedertaak* (Mother's Task, 1660) a woman combs a child's hair (Fig. 2). This act of delousing was a recurring theme in various drawings. *Vrouw die een kind luist* (Woman Delousing a Child, 1600–1700), for example, depicts a young woman in the act of delousing a little girl, while other drawings show older women delousing grown men, as is the case in *Gezicht* (Face, 1689–1720) (Fig. 3). On the other hand, images showing men in the act of delousing or defleaing do not show fathers cleaning their children or wives, but poor farmers and young boys cleaning themselves or their dogs.³³ Men, in other words, were supposed to stay free of vermin thanks to the care of women.

33 Cf. Adriaen van Ostade, *Boer zoekt vlooiën in zijn kleding*, 1620–1685. Coll. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv.no. RP-P-OB-12.755; Gerard ter Borch, *Jongen bezig een hondje te vlooiën*, ca. 1728. Coll. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv.no. SK-C-242.



Figure 3. Anonymous, *Gezicht. De vijfzintuigen*, ca. 1630–64. Etching on paper, 20 x 24 cm. Coll. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv.no. RP-P-1899-A-21767.

A Man's Task

During the nineteenth century, entomological studies led to new insights about the ways in which insects reproduced, spread, and lived. Research unveiled that endoparasites did not emerge in the body but entered through the mouth, highlighting the link between hygiene and

health.³⁴ Whereas the eighteenth-century literature on pests described insects as unwanted yet omnipresent, nineteenth-century sources began to emphasize the connection between poor hygiene, laziness, and parasites. The *Algemeen woordenboek* (1794), for example, described lice simply as ‘vermin living on humans and animals’, while the *Nieuwe katechismus der natuurlijke geschiedenis* (New Catechism of Natural History, 1836) explicitly stated that lice only live on people ‘who are too lazy, to clean themselves’.³⁵

Poor hygiene and laziness, in turn, became increasingly associated with lower socio-economic classes. In her book on vermin in premodern England, Sarasohn states that the ‘intense reaction to bedbugs reflected the growth of a global economy and the consciousness of race in a society becoming more urban, middle-class, and xenophobic’.³⁶ As class structures became more rigid, hygiene became a distinguishing factor between lower and higher classes, as has also been noted by Biehler for twentieth-century America.³⁷ Bedbugs, which bite people without regard for status and leave a recognizable smell and mark, became a (symbolic) threat to the superiority of the higher class.³⁸ In the Netherlands, the connection between lower classes, a lack of hygiene, and the presence of vermin also became more distinctive in the nineteenth century.

According to Jan Luiten van Zanden and Arthur van Riel, the nineteenth-century Netherlands saw an increased attention to hygiene thanks to a ‘civilization offensive’.³⁹ *De zindelijkheid bij de mingevoeden* (The Cleanliness of the Less Fortunate, 1853) noted that ‘uncleanliness’ was one of the biggest downsides of large groups of poor people living together in densely populated urban areas.⁴⁰ As part of the Dutch bourgeois civilizing offensive, the *Algemeene Vereeniging tegen het Pauperisme* (Society against Poverty), established in 1850, pleaded that the poor should be taught proper hygiene in the interest of their own morals, for these were virtues ‘scarcely

34 J. Ritzema Bos, *De dierlijke parasieten van den mensch en de huisdieren* (Zwolle: Tjeenk Willink, 1888), 150–54.

35 W. Goede, *Nieuwe Katechismus Der Natuurlijke Geschiedenis, in Den Smaak van Martinets Katechismus Der Natuur*, Derde Uitgaaf, vol. 4 (Leeuwarden: Johannes Proost, 1836), 26; *Algemeen {...} woordenboek {...} Tweede Deel, De Letters G.-O.*, 2:503.

36 Sarasohn, *Getting Under Our Skin*, 15.

37 Biehler, *Pests in the City*.

38 Sarasohn, 17, 19.

39 Jan Luiten van Zanden and Arthur van Riel, *The Strictures of Inheritance: The Dutch Economy in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 322.

40 A. A. A. Gonay, *De zindelijkheid bij den mingevoede, haar invloed op de verbetering van zijnen stoffelijken en zedelijken welstand, {...}* (Amsterdam: F. Günst, 1853), 5.

known' to them.⁴¹ Moreover, according to the *Tijdschrift voor het Armwezen* (Journal on Poverty, 1852–1865), cleanliness was 'a virtue scarcely known among the poor'.⁴² Authors of anti-insect literature therefore warned that especially maids' rooms should be thoroughly cleaned, because 'all too often' they were the ones carrying bedbugs into the homes of their rich employers.⁴³ Popular proverbs further emphasized the connection between beggars and lice, such as 'One who fights the beggar will win nothing but lice'.⁴⁴

Their association with the poor made insects' presence shameful. According to nineteenth-century authors, it was therefore of utmost importance to get rid of them as quickly as possible. An increasing number of books and journals written specifically for housewives, including *De Huisvrouw* (The Housewife, 1872–78) and *De bekwame huishoudster* (The Skilful Housekeeper, 1868), continued to recommend all sorts of home-and-garden remedies, such as pulverized flowers.⁴⁵ New insights into the spread of parasites had shown the importance of prevention. *De Huisvrouw*, for example, encouraged its readers to invest in a microscope to inspect their food and fabrics for unwanted organisms. The anonymous author also noted that knowing how to distinguish clean from infected meat was of special importance to the working class, for they 'ate more pork' than others.⁴⁶

While conventional forms of insect control based on home-and-garden remedies thus remained important, people from the higher echelons of society began to turn towards more professional forms of pest removal as the social stigma surrounding insects grew. Adverts in newspapers and journals praised supposedly 'secret' remedies. In June 1856, newspapers began advertising 'insect powder' freshly imported from Turkey and Russia. This remedy – made from the seeds of an unnamed mystery plant – was supposed to combat vermin in clothes, on pets, on walls, and on furniture.⁴⁷

41 *Eerste Verslag van de Algemeene Vereeniging tegen het Pauperisme bij de Arbeidende Klassen van den Minder Gegoeden Stand* (Groningen: P.S. Barghoorn, 1851), 13.

42 S. Blaupot ten Cate and W. de Sitter, eds., *Tijdschrift voor het armwezen*, vol. 2 (Groningen: H.R. Roelfsema en P.S. Barghoorn, 1853), 77.

43 Bos, *De dierlijke parasieten*, 231–32.

44 "Die met een bedelaar vecht, wint niet dan luizen." Pieter Jacob Harrebomée, *Spreekwoordenboek der Nederlandsche taal, of Verzameling van Nederlandsche spreekwoorden en spreekwoordelijke uitdrukkingen* (Utrecht: Kemink en Zoon, 1858), 36.

45 Henriette van S., ed., *De huisvrouw: Weekblad tot voorlichting, nut en ontwikkeling van het huisgezin. Eerste jaargang* (Rotterdam: Nijgh & Van Ditmar, 1878), 34.

46 Van S., *De huisvrouw*, 273.

47 E.g. "Insectenpoeder," *Groninger Courant*, June 13, 1856. See similar ads from the same month in the *Bredasche Courant*, *Nieuw Rotterdamsche Courant*, and the *Delftsche Courant*.

More expensive (and exclusive) were professional *kamerjagers* (room hunters), who could be hired to rid a room, home, or ship of vermin. The *kamerjager* W.S. Slot even wrote a book (1856) extensively describing different insects and the harm they caused, followed by a list of treatments and services he sold. Prices ranged from 0.20 guilders for a bottle of anti-fly tincture to 40 guilders for a special putty against vermin in wood. Slot himself could also be hired – for a non-disclosed price – to purge buildings ‘of all harmful insects’.⁴⁸ Similar services were offered by other *kamerjagers* claiming to have access to secret remedies and exclusive machinery.⁴⁹ Not everyone was able to pay for professional means of vermin extermination. Some authors even warned against the overly expensive ‘secret’ remedies and published relatively cheap booklets with do-it-yourself recipes instead.⁵⁰

Still, in the higher echelons of society the rise of the male *kamerjager* led to the gradual exclusion of women from the field of insect control. This was not just reflected in the decline of images depicting women with insects, but also in the language used by *kamerjagers*.⁵¹ As Karel Anton, a visiting *kamerjager* from Görlitz, wrote in a Dutch 1898 newspaper: ‘Gentlemen homeowners and estate owners, please pay close attention to my address’.⁵² His promise to ‘exterminate insects’ with a ‘five-year warranty’ meant that the women of the household would no longer have to worry about insects. Their husbands or employers could now simply pay another man to drive out the unwanted guests.

Conclusion

Once a given part of everyday life, the presence of insects became contested over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The home became what Robert Sack calls the geographic problematic: a place where reality was transformed into what humans think it *ought* to be.⁵³ As

48 W. S. Slot, *Verhandeling over het uitroeijen van alle insekten, welke den mensch kwellen ...; alles met aanwijzing der daartoe strekkende genees- en voorbehoedmiddelen*, 1856.

49 See, for example: “L. Bouquet,” *Bredasche Courant*, March 29, 1840.

50 *Over de schadelijke huisinsekten*, vi.

51 In the database of the Rijksmuseum, for example, only one nineteenth-century image shows a woman lousing a child, and she is only depicted in a small corner. See: Johan Braakensiek, *Jagers*, 1887.

52 “De Bekende Kamerjager Karel Max Anton Uit Görlitz,” *Venloosche Courant*, April 23, 1898.

53 Robert David Sack, “The Geographic Problematic: Empirical Issues,” *Norks Geografisk Tidsskrift* 55: 107–16.

distinctions between social classes became more prominent, the call for professional pest control became more urgent. Widely known home-and-garden remedies – often administered by housewives and maids – were no longer deemed sufficient. Instead, ‘secret’ tinctures, powders, and putties were advertised, and professional, male *kamerjagers* offered their services as premodern pest controllers. This trend continues today, with women largely being excluded from the field of professional pest management.⁵⁴

While the concepts of gender and class have been studied in relation to insect history before, the co-development of these concepts remains under-researched. Further research would have to show the full extent of everyday human–insect entanglements and their socio-cultural implications. This chapter aimed to show that combining these notions can shed a new light on human–insect relations in the domestic sphere. Changes in the way in which people viewed class and gender in the Early Modern period shaped the way in which insects were seen and treated. Conversely, insects were a symbolic category that influenced notions of gender and class. They symbolized a lack of hygiene, low morals, and poor character, and were used to create a divide between the ‘civilized’ and the ‘uncivilized’. However, it is important to remember that insects were not just symbols. By infiltrating homes, clothing, and bodies, they were able to cause real physical harm, ranging from uncomfortable itching to spreading (lethal) diseases.⁵⁵ Thus, they were not just influenced by the human world, but also exerted influence themselves.

About the Author

Charlotte Meijer is a PhD candidate at Radboud University. Her research focuses on the history of human–insect relations, and how this has been shaped by economic, cultural, political, and social changes since the Early Modern period.

54 Tosca De Jong, “De ongediertebestrijder anno 2020 is jong én vrouw,” *Metro Nieuws*, January 30, 2020.

55 Zinsser, *Rats, Lice, and History*; Busvine, *Insects, Hygiene and History*.

Perfect Mothers and Stunted Workers

Honey Bee Sex Differences in the Co-Creation of Human and Animal Gender

Leah Malamut

Abstract

Using honey bees (*Apis mellifera*) as a case study, this essay argues that animals and humans co-created gendered interpretations of sex differences and reproductive behaviour in the history of science. The typical narrative about gender in science says that humans have pushed our ideas about gender onto nonhuman nature. Rather than fight anthropocentrism, however, these explanations privilege humans as active historical agents and frame animals as passive. The science of honey bee sex differences demonstrates that gender has not only shaped bee science, but has also been shaped by it. Beekeeping manuals, scientific research, and even popular literature reveal that beekeepers and entomologists internalized honey bee gender while they attempted to describe and justify it.

Keywords: beekeeping, apiculture, entomology, animal behaviour

Introduction

Humans and honey bees (*Apis mellifera*) have long shared a profound connection. The significance of the honey bee in Western thought has not gone unexplored by scholars in literature, history, and science. Bernard Mandeville's classic eighteenth-century social commentary, *The Fable of the Bees*, is perhaps the most famous example of a text that uses the beehive to represent human society. Mandeville's bees are thinly veiled stand-ins for

English humans to frame his incendiary critique of hypocritical moralizing.¹ Bees have also been associated with industry and economic efficiency, making them compelling symbols for industrializing societies like Europe and the United States.²

In-depth studies of bees and beekeeping are relatively rare in the history of science. Historian Tania Munz's book *The Dancing Bees* focuses on Austrian scientist Karl von Frisch and his work on honey bee communication. She centres the early twentieth-century study of animal behaviour, which was deeply concerned with questions of what it meant to be human, and argues that von Frisch's discovery of the honey bee dance language was particularly contentious in that context.³ Munz does not consider the issue of gender, however. The few studies that do examine bees and gender limit their analyses to the early modern queen bee, due to the common perception that the debate over honey bee gender centred on the queen and was resolved by the end of the eighteenth century.⁴ This chapter demonstrates that both assumptions are incorrect. First, the queen was never the only bee under scrutiny: beekeepers and scientists interpreted the biology and behaviour of the queen in correlation with that of female workers and male drones – the other two honey bee sex categories or 'castes'.⁵ The same must be true of honey bee history. I therefore contend that honey bee gender – and thus, its relationship to the history of science – can only truly be understood when all three types of bees are included. Second, honey bees never stopped provoking gendered concerns in human observers, arguably up to the present day.⁶ I

1 Bernard Mandeville and Frederick Benjamin Kaye, *The Fable of the Bees: Or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924).

2 Ann Fairfax Withington, "Republican Bees: The Political Economy of the Beehive in Eighteenth-Century America," *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture* 18 (1988): 39–77; Tammy Horn, *Bees in America: How the Honey Bee Shaped a Nation* (Lexington, KS: University Press of Kentucky, 2006); Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).

3 Tania Munz, *The Dancing Bees: Karl Von Frisch and the Discovery of the Honeybee Language* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

4 Jeffrey Merrick, "Royal Bees: The Gender Politics of the Beehive in Early Modern Europe," *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture* 18 (1988): 7–37; Frederick R. Prete, "Can Females Rule the Hive? The Controversy over Honey Bee Gender Roles in British Beekeeping Texts of the Sixteenth-Eighteenth Centuries," *Journal of the History of Biology* 24, no. 1 (1991): 113–44; Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self*.

5 'Caste' is a term often used by contemporary entomologists to describe sexual division of labour within a particular insect species. This use of the term and its associated cultural baggage are outside the scope of this chapter but deserve scrutiny.

6 In popular culture, worker bees are often gendered male instead of female, such as Jerry Seinfeld's character in *Bee Movie* (2007) or Buzz the Honey Nut Cheerios mascot.

show that this was especially true for beekeepers and scientists. Centring honey bee sex differences and reproduction, I argue that bees actually forced scientists and beekeepers to restructure their parameters for supposedly 'natural' gender roles.

The argument put forward in this essay relies on the idea that scientific knowledge is constructed by people in particular contexts, whether those are temporal, social, or any other possible descriptors.⁷ In particular, the relationship between nature, gender, and science has been well established by historians of science. The literature on gender, animals, and science typically concludes that human scientists anthropomorphize nonhuman nature. This implicitly confirms the assumption that humans are actors, while nonhuman animals are passive recipients of biased interpretations. Donna Haraway's *Primate Visions* is a foundational text in the history of gender and science: it argues that science is not objective, and that gendered ideas in particular greatly influenced the history of primatology. Although she insists that the construction of scientific 'facts' is a 'jointly accomplished deed or feat of the scientists and the organism [...], [b]oth the scientist and the organism are actors in a story-telling practice', her analysis pays little attention to what animals actually do.⁸ Similarly, historians who focus on the history of sex behaviour or evolution typically ask questions about science in a way that interrogates the gendered ideas that have influenced scientists and the impact that gendered science has on the translation of animal studies to human beings.⁹ Histories of reproductive science are a space where gendered assumptions about nonhuman animal behaviour are at their most legible; yet when animals are highlighted, it is often a demonstration of how scientists have misinterpreted their behaviour.

7 Jan Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge: Constructivism and the History of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

8 Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (London: Psychology Press, 1989), 5. Original emphasis.

9 See, for example: Lynda Birke, "Telling the Rat What to Do: Laboratory Animals, Science, and Gender," in *Gender and the Science of Difference: Cultural Politics of Contemporary Science and Medicine*, ed. Jill A. Fisher (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 91–107; Elisabeth A. Lloyd, *The Case of the Female Orgasm: Bias in the Science of Evolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Angela Willey and Sara Giordano, "Why Do Voles Fall in Love? Sexual Dimorphism in Monogamy Gene Research," in *Gender and the Science of Difference*, 108–25; Erika L. Milam, *Looking for a Few Good Males: Female Choice in Evolutionary Biology* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010); Sarah S. Richardson, *Sex Itself: The Search for Male and Female in the Human Genome* (Chicago, IL and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013); Londa L. Schiebinger, *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004).

The result is a literature that takes for granted that gender, as a social construct, belongs to humans alone, while sex is a biological trait found in all animals. It therefore conveys that gendered ideas about animal behaviour – particularly sexual behaviour – must be constructed by humans alone. What this anthropocentric view does not take into account is that humans exist in a material world, and that even seemingly intellectual concepts like gender are not isolated from our lived experience in nature. This chapter draws on methodologies from the recent theoretical turn to ‘new materialism’, which rejects anthropocentrism and recognizes the material world, especially nonhuman nature, as creative actors that interact with humans. My work attempts to demonstrate how gender simultaneously shaped and was shaped by science.

This essay therefore argues that bees and humans co-created gendered interpretations of sex differences and reproductive behaviour. The reproductive function and behaviour of the queen bee, worker bees, and drones challenged what Euro-American beekeepers and scientists believed to be ‘natural’ gender roles. Beekeeping manuals, scientific research, and popular literature reveal that beekeepers and scientists internalized honey bee gender while they attempted to describe and justify it. The sexing of queens and workers as ‘females’ and drones as ‘male’ was by no means straightforward. Each category was negotiated between humans and bees, and, in the process, reshaped how humans conceptualized gender roles as ‘natural’.

A Peek Inside the Hive

Honey bee hives are highly structured systems, with the different castes of bees performing different roles. There are three types of individuals: workers, drones, and queens. Worker bees perform all the tasks that allow the hive to survive, but they cannot reproduce. They possess stings that they use to defend the hive from invaders. Drones do not carry stings, nor do they make any material contribution to the immediate survival of the hive. Their primary activity is to venture forth and mate with queens from other colonies, a process that is fatal for the drones. The queen bee is the primary reproductive individual in the colony. She copulates with drones not in, but outside the hive: a few days after emerging from her cell, the virgin queen, as she is called, takes her first and often only foray from the nest to a congregation site, where she mates with multiple drones from other colonies. The mated queen stores the sperm of her various mates in

a specialized structure called a spermatheca and uses this sperm for the remainder of her life to fertilize eggs as she lays them.

Despite a long tradition of cultivating these bees, premodern humans had a limited understanding of honey bee reproduction. Hives are dark and enclosed spaces, which do not permit easy observation of the activity inside. A person could only study the behaviour of the bees around the hive or examine extracted comb. A significant portion of honey bee life was therefore hidden from humans. As a result, premodern theories about honey bee reproduction and sexual behaviour were diverse and rooted in human cultural norms. Everything from the sex of individual bees, to mating, to egg-laying, was mysterious. This meant that unlike other agricultural animals, honey bee characteristics like temperament and honey production could not be managed through selective breeding. Beekeepers were therefore highly motivated to decipher honey bee reproduction.

Prior to the nineteenth century, written sources about *A. mellifera* primarily originate from Europe. Early modern manuals of the apiary, or bee yard, included sections on honey bee natural history in addition to beekeeping instructions and innovations. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, the centre of bee knowledge had shifted across the Atlantic. North American beekeepers wrote their own beekeeping manuals and established widely syndicated beekeeping periodicals in which they shared experiences, touted inventions, and debated the issues of their day. It was through these avenues that beekeepers like the ones discussed in this paper rose to prominence. Their writings – published and private – reveal how gender operated in their attempts to understand the sexual division of labour in the hive.

From Divine Monarch to Perfect Mother: The History of the Queen Bee

Of the three castes, the ‘queen bee’ has arguably received the most attention over time. A central belief of premodern Europeans was that the queen bee was male and named a ‘king’. The origins of the king bee can be traced to Aristotle’s observations in *De generatione animalium* and *Historia animalium*. These natural histories were part of the corpus of knowledge that formed the comprehensive Aristotelian system, which dominated natural philosophy in Europe until the Scientific Revolution and were foundational for premodern natural history. Essentially, Aristotle observed several of the honey bee characteristics described above and analogized them to the structure of his own patriarchal society. The Western philosophical tradition followed

his example: Virgil, Pliny, and Thomas Aquinas, amongst others, cited the existence of the king bee as evidence that monarchy was, by nature and by divine decree, the ideal form of government.¹⁰

An important factor in solidifying the hive as the model for a monarchy was that a bee colony would not survive in the absence of a ruler: remove the king, and the colony ceased producing new bees. To premodern naturalists, the fact that reproduction relied on the king did not imply that he was female: spontaneous generation of insects was considered a viable means of reproduction until well into the sixteenth century. Aristotle and his successors were therefore able to conclude without too much cognitive dissonance that the king had reproductive qualities without sacrificing the king's masculine leadership role. Later philosophers used this argument to extend the analogy between bee and human societies, arguing that countries could not survive without kings any more than hives could.¹¹

The inciting incident in the scientific coup against the king bee seemed to come in the mid-seventeenth century. Dutch microscopist Jan Swammerdam observed and recorded the results of microscopic dissections of bees, revealing that there were ovarian structures present in the abdomen of the 'king' bee (Fig. 1).¹² Evidence suggests, however, that European beekeepers and natural historians had already been harbouring doubts about whether the king bee was not actually a queen for at least fifty years before Swammerdam was born.¹³ It is also unclear when Swammerdam's discovery can be considered to have joined the body of premodern scientific knowledge. Swammerdam wrote down his observations of queen bees in 1669, but his work was published posthumously in 1737, more than fifty years after his death.¹⁴ Historian Jeffrey Merrick claims that Swammerdam's 'discoveries did not gain widespread recognition until the middle of the [eighteenth] century because of their posthumous publication', even though Swammerdam 'mentioned his discoveries concerning the sexes of bees but reported no

10 Peter Burke, "Fables of the Bees: A Case-Study in Views of Nature and Society," in *Nature and Society in Historical Context*, eds. Mikuláš Teich, Roy Porter, and Bo Gustafsson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 112–23; Merrick, "Royal Bees"; Prete, "Can Females Rule the Hive?"

11 Merrick, "Royal Bees," 13.

12 Jan Swammerdam, *The Book of Nature, or, The History of Insects*, trans. Thomas Flloyd (London: C.G. Seyffert, 1758).

13 *Tractado breve de la cultiuaciō y cura de las colmenas. Y ansi mismo las ordenanças de los colmenares, sacadas de las ordenanças de la ciudad de Seuilla* (Alcala: en casa de Iuan Iñiguez de Lequerica, 1586), 3; Charles Butler, *The Feminine Monarchie* (Oxford: Joseph Barnes, 1609). Swammerdam was born in 1637.

14 Matthew Cobb, "Reading and Writing The Book of Nature: Jan Swammerdam (1637–1680)," *Endeavour* 24, no. 3 (September 2000): 122–28.

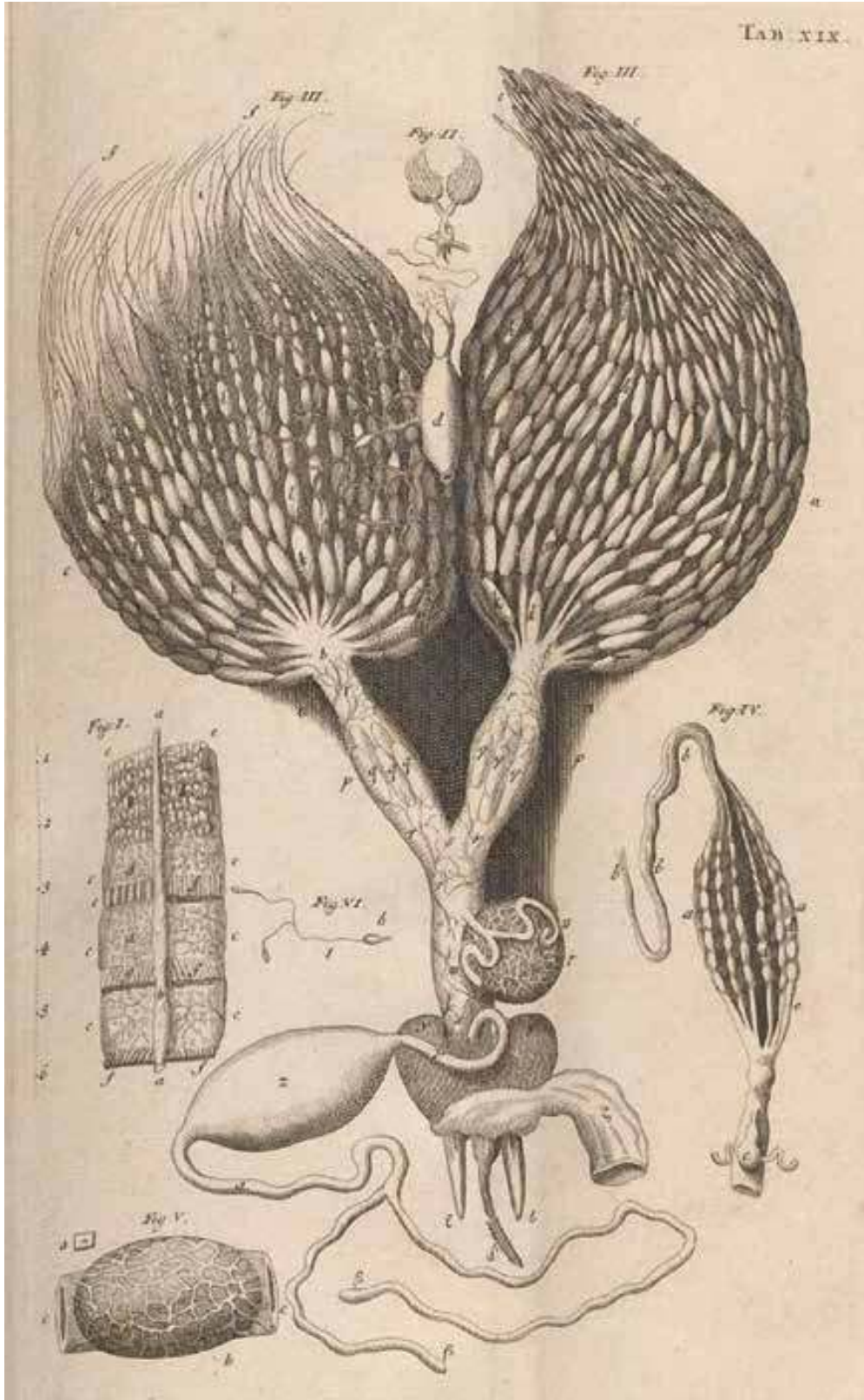


Figure 1. Original illustration of queen (large, centre) ovarioles by Jan Swammerdam, *The Book of Nature*, 1737. Image from the Biodiversity Heritage Library. Contributed by Naturalis Biodiversity Center.

evidence of their mating in the general history of insects published in his lifetime', the *Historia Insectorum Generalis*.¹⁵ Although Swammerdam's evidence appears decisive in hindsight, it was part of a larger, longer effort to understand honey bee reproduction.

During the seventeenth century, some useful properties of the 'king' bee were transposed onto the emerging 'queen' bee. For example, the queen retained a martial quality through the early eighteenth century. One of the best-known authors on this topic is English physician Joseph Warder, who enthusiastically embraced the idea of a female ruler in *The True Amazons: or, The Monarchy of Bees*.¹⁶ Warder dedicated the second edition of the book, published in 1713, to Queen Anne I. The dedication directly compares the English monarch to the apian one, effusing that 'the Queen-Bee Governs with Clemency and Sweetness, so doth Your Majesty'.¹⁷ Yet, like any strong monarch, both Queen Anne and the queen bee were only gentle 'if not affronted nor assaulted; otherwise like that of Your Majesty's, one Terrible to her Enemies, who will maintain War with any state that dares Assault her'.¹⁸ The concept of the queen bee whose femininity encompassed military power had political utility in the era of a human female monarch.

Over the course of the eighteenth century, scholars reconceptualized the queen bee as a maternal figure, rather than a ruler, creating a new social metaphor that was consistent with contemporary expectations of womanhood.¹⁹ There was still a great deal of social and scientific reorientation that had to take place in order to process this new understanding of the ruler-bee as female. Merrick argues that bees were too important a natural symbol to be cast off, even by experts engaged in practical beekeeping. Although the sex of the queen bee appeared to destabilize patriarchal ideas, the realization that she was the sole reproductive female in the colony resolved the issue. This shift is not merely a demonstration of the flexibility of the symbolic hive, and its social importance. It is a clear instance of humans responding to the biological reality of bee reproduction by restructuring how they conceived of 'natural' gender roles.

15 Merrick, "Royal Bees," 17.

16 Joseph Warder, *The True Amazons, Or the Monarchy of Bees*, (London, 1693). Warder's book was extremely popular at the time, with at least nine editions from the late seventeenth to early eighteenth century. Historians who have written on the topic suggest that Warder's passion for a natural monarchy was not merely due to personal convictions, but a reaction to the decades of instability caused by the English Civil War; see Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self*, 8; and Merrick, "Royal Bees," 17.

17 Warder, *The True Amazons, Or the Monarchy of Bees*, vi.

18 *Ibid.*, viii.

19 Merrick, "Royal Bees," 27.

Stunted Females: The History of the Worker Bee

The acceptance of motherhood as the queen bee's true purpose seemed to calm the furore over her sex; this is the main reason that the accepted story about bees and gender ends with the eighteenth century.²⁰ The history of the worker bee, however, shows that gender continued to play a prominent role in human studies of bees.

The sexual ambiguity of workers had long challenged attempts to sort honey bees into neat categories. Merrick notes that Aristotle, among other ancient thinkers, concluded that workers had to be hermaphroditic because they 'had stings, so they could not be females', yet, 'at the same time, fed the larvae, so they could not be males'.²¹ Swammerdam did not identify reproductive structures in his dissections of worker bees, and therefore excluded them from sex assignment entirely. Instead, he referred to them as 'common bees' that 'may be considered as natural eunuchs [...] belonging to neither sex', although he did consider them 'nearer to the female than to the male sex'.²² He compared them to 'women who have lived [as] virgins till they are past child-bearing, [which] serve only the purpose of labour in the oeconomy of the whole body'.²³ This was a running theme regarding worker bees. Stripped of their ability to reproduce, they represented a social conundrum: what did one do with unmarried women? The answer, at least in nature, was apparently to set them to work.

By the nineteenth century, it was well known amongst beekeepers that when a hive went without a queen for too long, the workers would start to lay eggs. The 1845 discovery by Johannes Dzierzon that queens and workers both arose from fertilized eggs while drones only came from unfertilized ones reinforced the notion that workers were female.²⁴ However, the lack of normal reproductive ability by workers forced beekeepers and scientists to wrestle with the very assumptions that smoothed the transition of the king bee to a queen. If nature declared that the ideal female was a mother, then worker bees could not be *female*. Moreover, this realization brought up questions about what, exactly, constituted 'natural' motherhood. Worker

20 Frederick Prete specifically reaffirmed Merrick's conclusions in, "Can Females Rule the Hive?"

21 Merrick, "Royal Bees: The Gender Politics of the Beehive in Early Modern Europe," 10.

22 Swammerdam, *The Book of Nature*, 168.

23 *Ibid.*, 169.

24 Eva Crane, *The World History of Beekeeping and Honey Hunting* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1999), 570. When workers do lay eggs, they always produce drones, as workers do not copulate and therefore have no sperm with which to fertilize the eggs.

bees raised uncomfortable questions because while they could not be natural mothers, they also could not be decisively excluded from the category of 'female'. Many beekeepers and scientists dealt with the issue by ignoring it as best they could. Prominent nineteenth-century American beekeeper Amos I. Root's beekeeping encyclopaedia did not include a specific entry for worker bees, although there was one each for queens and drones.²⁵ Still, the dilemma persisted through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth.

In 1925, a University of Minnesota apiculture professor privately proposed an answer to the question of worker bees' femaleness. In an unpublished manuscript titled 'A Plea for the Poor Stunted Worker', Francis Jager lamented the state of the worker bee in the eyes of his fellow beekeepers. The piece was a reaction to the wider discourse around female bees that had come to not just accept but valorize motherhood. The queen, as the ultimate mother of the hive, was described as 'perfect' while the worker was considered a 'stunted female'.²⁶ This type of language can be seen in the 1919 edition of the Root encyclopaedia cited above, which Jager owned. In the entry for queens, Root directly compared queens to workers, writing: 'The workers instead of being neuters are all females but incapable of reproducing more females. The queen is the only true female'.²⁷ For Root and many of his contemporaries, the reproductive function, particularly egg-laying, was essential to defining what it meant for a bee to be female.

Jager, in contrast, claimed that he 'could never understand why bee books and bee journals call a queen a perfect female and a worker bee a stunted female'. He went on to detail the failings of queen bees, particularly as a mother to the colony:

Now we all know that she lays all the eggs in a normal colony, but she cannot incubate her eggs, nor keep the brood warm, nor feed the young. This "perfect mother" can not produce self-supporting individuals alone,

25 A.I. Root, *The ABC of Bee Culture: A Cyclopaedia of Everything Pertaining to the Care of the Honey Bee, Bees, Honey, Hives, Implements, Honey Plants, Etc.*, 2nd edn. (Medina, OH: The A.I. Root Company, 1879).

26 Francis Jager, "A Plea for the Poor Stunted Worker" (February 27, 1925), 1, Division of Entomology and Economic Zoology records, Beekeeping, Box 78, Folder "Manuscripts, Jager, undated, 1924-1927," University of Minnesota Archives.

27 A.I. Root, *The ABC and XYZ of Bee Culture; a Cyclopedia of Everything Pertaining to the Care of the Honey-Bee; Bees, Hives, Honey, Implements, Honeyplants, Etc. Facts Gleaned from the Experience of Thousands of Beekeepers, and Afterward Verified in Our Apiary* (Medina, OH: The A.I. Root Company, 1919), 621. Root's heirs updated and reissued the encyclopaedia over the decades, even expanding the title to encompass the entire alphabet. The most recent edition was published in 2020.

but again, do not call her stunted – she is perfect, don't you know, only the workers may be called stunted females.²⁸

Jager's goal was not to disdain the queen, but to give equal credit to worker bees. He continued: 'The queen and the workers cooperate in the production of brood 50–50. Neither is a perfect female, but by a "division of labor law" they divide the motherhood between themselves as one perfect cooperative female'. Indeed, although queens lay the eggs, the workers 'love their brood, protect and cover it. Displaying all these motherly instincts toward their helpless brood, who does not see that the female, motherly instinct is in them just as it is in the queen'.²⁹

Reproduction, in Jager's mind, did not just consist of laying eggs: mothers were also responsible for caring for offspring during the subsequent stages of development. In this way, he removed some prestige from the queen bee and gave it to the worker bee, creating, in his words, a '50–50' partnership. He saw both types of bees as necessary for reproduction, and therefore equally female. What Jager did not dispute was the idea that motherhood was the fundamental purpose and definition of a female individual. Rather than emphasizing the important role of worker bees in foraging for pollen and protecting the hive, Jager argued that they deserved respect because they were just as motherly as queens, if not more so. His solution to the ambiguity posed by the worker was to extend the definition of mother – and, by association, female – to include traits beyond the production of offspring.

Gluttonous, Lazy, and Expendable: The History of the Drone

As emblems of the male sex, drones may have been even more contradictory in the eyes of patriarchal human observers than workers or the queen. The role of the drones in the hive was confusing. If female workers did every task in the hive, including foraging and defence, what did the males do? It was difficult for humans to observe their primary function – mating with the queen bee – because mating took place outside, in mid-air.

At the same time that he dethroned the king bee, Swammerdam also demonstrated that drones possessed male gonads (Fig. 2). Fertilization of the queen by drones was assumed to occur inside the hive until the late eighteenth century, when observers reported that the queen was plugged

28 Jager, "A Plea for the Poor Stunted Worker," 1.

29 *Ibid.*, 1–2.

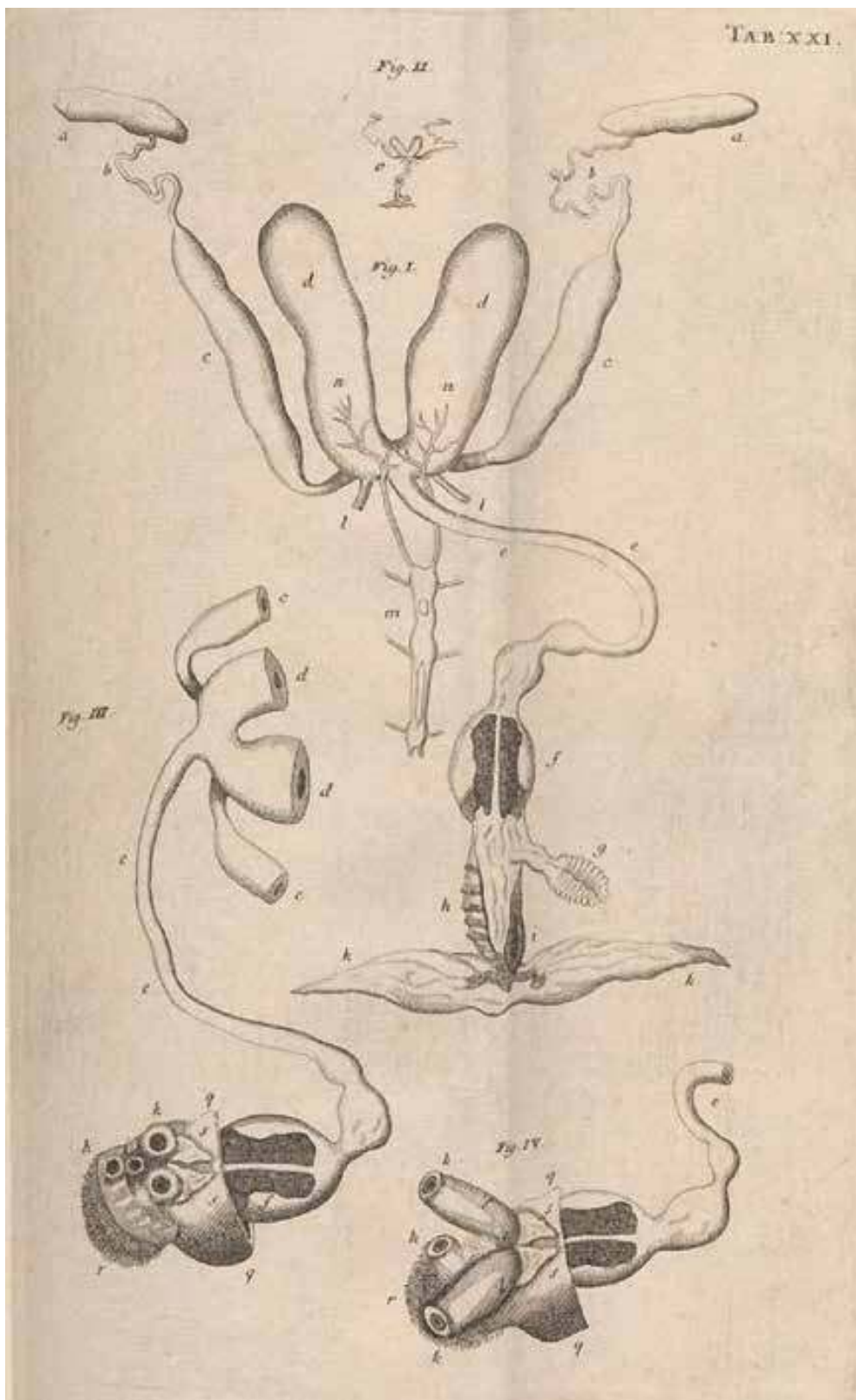


Figure 2. Original illustration of drone genitalia by Jan Swammerdam, *The Book of Nature*, 1737. Image from the Biodiversity Heritage Library. Contributed by Naturalis Biodiversity Center.

with severed drone genitalia on her return from the mating flight.³⁰ In the meantime, however, drones seemed to be males who had no function: they did not contribute to the daily life of the hive, leading to their characterization by beekeepers and other observers as ‘greedy’, ‘idle’, and ‘living by the sweat of others [sic] brows’.³¹ Beekeepers knew that, as autumn neared, worker bees would exile or kill any drones that remained in the hive. Worse yet, when the in-flight mating behaviours were observed, it became clear that drones essentially destroyed themselves by mating.³² Copulation literally eviscerated the drone, who died soon after.

Much like the transition from a king to a queen bee, beekeepers and scientists found themselves confronted with a very uncomfortable truth: here, in the natural order of things, was a male whose only role was to mate, then die. It is perhaps not too surprising that male beekeepers were uncomfortable with the state of the male bee. One of the more interesting aspects of the way beekeepers managed their gender anxiety around drones were the comparisons they drew between drones and *undesirable* male behaviour. For example, an 1890 address by the president of the Northern Illinois Bee-Keepers’ Association railed against fair-weather beekeepers who only wanted to make a quick buck. They managed their hives poorly and rarely made it through the winter. He observed that these interlopers ‘resemble the other kind of drones, in that they are always males’.³³ Only when the males in question clearly did not include the speaker and his audience was it safe to compare them to drones.

Some beekeepers, however, seem to have identified with the male bees. One such beekeeper was Lorenzo Langstroth, credited with inventing the modern box hive and regarded as a founding father of American beekeeping. In ‘The Drone Says He Has Been Shamefully Slandered and Demands His Day in Court’, an unpublished, undated manuscript, Langstroth wrote from the perspective of a drone. He argued that the drone was not designed to contribute to the hive: he had no glands to secrete food for larvae or

30 Crane, *The World History of Beekeeping*, 570.

31 Charles Butler, *The Feminine Monarchie, Or the Historie of Bees: Shewing Their Admirable Nature, and Properties, Their Generation, and Colonies, Their Gouvernement, Loyaltie, Art, Industrie, Enemies, Warres, Magnamimitie, &c. Together with the Right Ordering of Them from Time to Time: And the Sweet Profit Arising Thereof* (John Haviland, 1623), Chapter 4.

32 The copulatory event has been vividly described by contemporary entomologists: ‘the explosive and sometimes audible ejaculation ruptures the everted endophallus and propels the semen through the queen’s sting chamber and into her oviduct. The ejaculation separates the drone from the queen, and he dies within minutes or hours of mating’. Mark L. Winston, *The Biology of the Honey Bee* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 207.

33 D.A. Fuller, “Northern Illinois Convention,” *American Bee Journal* 27, no. 3 (1891): 76.

wax for comb, and his legs would not collect pollen. It was especially unfair to call him 'a great hulking coward, doing nothing for the defence of the commonwealth', for he had no sting.³⁴ Langstroth's diatribe suggests the pervasiveness of anti-drone rhetoric among beekeepers. However, the drone's masculinity was not explicitly in question. Instead, Langstroth was threatened by the perceived uselessness of drones in honey bee society and made excuses to preserve the male bees' dignity. Unlike femaleness, which was explicitly tied to reproduction and motherhood, maleness was subverted into social contribution and purpose.

The result was a tacit refusal on the part of scientists and beekeepers to openly acknowledge that the drone's only purpose was to mate and die. This was evident in reproductive research and hybridization attempts, which focused intensely on the queen and her role as the mother of the hive. It was important to have good drones, and since they ultimately came from good queens, this put the emphasis back on female reproduction and behaviour.³⁵ Beekeepers and scientists spent much of the nineteenth century developing controlled circumstances under which they could force specific drones to mate with specific queens. They crafted all sorts of methods to pair the intended queens and drones, usually trapping them in one place where they had to mate with each other.³⁶ These efforts bore little resemblance to ecological reality and did not bear much fruit. In the meantime, the only reliable way to alter the characteristics of a hive was to fully hybridize it. This was done by introducing queens bred from desirable stock and waiting for their offspring to take over the colony.

Drones were subjected to some scrutiny during these attempts, with expert beekeepers recommending that aspiring breeders choose drones based on their appearance and the vigour of their movement.³⁷ Still, the effort was somewhat futile, as there were no successful methods to drive

34 Lorenzo Lorraine Langstroth, "The Drone Says He Has Been Shamefully Slandered and Demands His Day in Court" (n.d.), L.L. Langstroth Collection, Oversize: Series VI. Manuscripts by L. L. Langstroth, American Philosophical Society.

35 Gilbert M. Doolittle, *Scientific Queen-Rearing, Practically Applied, Being a Method by Which the Best of Queen-Bees Are Reared in Perfect Accord with Nature's Ways: For the Amateur and Veteran in Bee-Keeping*, 4th. edn. (Chicago, IL: George W. York & Company, 1909), 72. Doolittle, an expert in rearing queens, advised beekeepers to reserve some good queens exclusively for drone-rearing. Drones hatch from unfertilized eggs and represent solely the lineage of their queen mother.

36 Examples of these devices can be seen primarily in the *American Bee Journal*, a nationally syndicated beekeeping journal. Its pages are filled with advertisements from inventors claiming that their device had successfully forced the queen to mate with a single drone.

37 Gilbert M. Doolittle, "Hand-Picking Drones," *American Bee Journal* 41, no. 48 (1901): 764.

it. There was instead a clear bias toward commercial rearing and selling of queens, the individual whose very being was defined by her reproductive ability. Unlike queens and workers, whose reproductive biology reshaped ideas about ‘natural’ gender roles, drones represented a categorical refusal to do the same for maleness.

Conclusion

I have argued that bees’ behaviour profoundly challenged hegemonic gender roles, especially in the modern period. Observing the three types of bees forced scientists and beekeepers, most of whom were male and all of whom lived in patriarchal Euro-American societies, to re-examine their beliefs about gender categories. Crucially, the bees themselves stubbornly resisted such categorization: the very existence of non-reproductive females and males who had no function except reproduction was nearly the opposite of human gender roles. The scientific study of bees has been shaped by social norms of femininity and masculinity; yet, at the same time, observable bee behaviour has in turn shaped how humans conceive of gender and sex as natural phenomena. In doing so, honey bees participated in the construction of gender in the modern natural sciences.

This chapter examines the history of one specific bee culture, that of *Apis mellifera*, in a particular social context, that of scientific inquiry. However, diverse beekeeping cultures exist the world over. Subspecies of *A. mellifera* are endemic to Europe, parts of Asia, and Africa; there are also other bees of the *Apis* genus, like *Apis cerana* and *Apis dorsata* in South and East Asia.³⁸ The bees themselves are similar, but honey hunting and beekeeping traditions vary as widely as the environment. In the Western hemisphere, the Indigenous peoples of Central and South America have cultivated bees of the family Meliponini for thousands of years.³⁹ These bees are just as important in Mayan cultures as *A. mellifera* are to Europeans, where they have their own interesting gendered dynamics.⁴⁰ This essay merely skims the surface of the historical relationship between humans and honey-producing bees.

38 Crane, *The World History of Beekeeping*, 14.

39 Meliponini are commonly known as stingless bees, though they are not harmless: aggressive defence typically involves biting, which can be quite painful.

40 Crane, *The World History of Beekeeping*, 288; José Javier G. Quezada-Euán, *Stingless Bees of Mexico: The Biology, Management and Conservation of an Ancient Heritage* (New York: Springer, 2018); Patricia Vit, Silvia R. M. Pedro, and David Roubik, *Pot-Honey: A Legacy of Stingless Bees* (Dordrecht: Springer Science & Business Media, 2013).

Further work on this topic is crucial. Pollinators, especially native species, are an important factor in our changing climate. Histories of the relationship between bees, honey, and people provide important context for conservation and sustainability efforts. For example, European colonialism distributed *A. mellifera* across the globe, displacing other pollinators. Many people I speak with in the United States are only vaguely aware that other types of bees exist, and most have no idea that honey bees are an introduced species. Bee scholarship provides the opportunity to rethink how humans understand our relationship not just with these important insects, but with nonhuman nature at large.

About the Author

Leah Malamut is a PhD candidate in the Programme for the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. She is broadly interested in the intersections between women, gender, and nonhuman nature in the modern history of the life sciences. Her dissertation investigates humans and bees as co-creators of natural knowledge, a process that is reciprocally influenced by human concepts of gender and bee sex differences. She holds an MA from the University of Minnesota and a BA from the University of Chicago.

Milk and Honey

Women, Race, and Captive Gorillas in Colonial Africa

Rebecca Machin

Abstract

Early relationships between gorillas and white colonists in Africa were hyper-masculine in nature, characterized as man against silverback. Alongside attempts to kill gorillas as trophies, repeated attempts were made to capture young gorillas. Despite young gorillas proving difficult to keep alive in captivity, they continued to be captured through the colonial period. Involving women in gorilla care appeared to improve gorillas' outcomes, nurturing them within intimate interspecies relationships. Some African women were hired by white men to breastfeed unweaned gorilla infants. While some women took these gorillas into their homes, others were removed from their families to wet-nurse gorillas. White women became different kinds of foster mothers, treating gorillas as Europeanized children within the trappings of colonial domesticity. While women's roles in gorilla care reinforced gendered and racialized hierarchies in colonial Africa, the interspecies intimacies that flourished between women and gorillas changed the lives of both.

Keywords: gorilla, gender, colonialism, wet-nursing, Africa

Introduction

Encounters between white humans and gorillas have been gendered since their 'discovery' by Western science. Paul Du Chaillu's (c. 1831–1903) accounts of the first live gorillas to be seen by white people were loaded with gendered language, reducing an entire species to one sex; he consistently referred to gorillas as male unless specifically referring to a female individual,

characterizing encounters with gorillas as battles or conquests.¹ Gorilla hunting by white people was an almost entirely male pursuit. Indeed, the inclusion of white women and a child in a gorilla-hunting expedition was used by Carl Akeley (1864–1926) to counter gorillas' fearsome reputation, built up by a history of hyper-masculinized and sensationalized accounts.²

Traditions of people with longer histories of living around gorillas, before the colonization of equatorial Africa, are also gendered. Du Chaillu reported that some Gabonese people believed a pregnant woman would give birth to a gorilla if she, or her husband, saw a gorilla.³ Some Gabonese people refused to eat gorilla meat, due to their belief that a female ancestor had given birth to a gorilla.⁴ Mary Hastings Bradley (1882–1976), one of the women who joined Carl Akeley's gorilla hunt, wrote that some Congolese people believed that any man who killed a 'man-ape' would have childless daughters, and their sons' wives would lose their sons.⁵ Similarly, food taboos around gorilla meat were also gendered. For example, although the Mendjim Mey of Cameroon would hunt gorillas for their meat, women were forbidden to eat it.⁶ Although dismissed by the white authors who recounted them, African stories of women abducted by (male) gorillas are remarkably persistent in colonial literature, and indeed Western culture.⁷ Gendered links between gorillas and humans exist in modern storytelling, for example in the Central African Republic.⁸

Ever since white people became aware of gorillas' existence, attempts were made to capture their young, and to keep them alive long enough

1 E.g. '[...] the gorilla gives you no time to reload, and woe to him whom he attacks!', Paul B Du Chaillu, *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa: With Accounts of the Manners and Customs of the People*, (London: J. Murray, 1861), 58.

2 Carl Ethan Akeley, *In Brightest Africa*, (New York: Doubleday & Page, 1923), 226; Donna Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908–1936," *Social Text* 11 (1984): 20–64.

3 Du Chaillu, *Explorations and Adventures*, 262, 305.

4 *Ibid.*, 354.

5 Mary Hastings Bradley, *On the Gorilla Trail*, (Boston, MA: D. Appleton, 1922), 75.

6 Fred George Merfield and Harry Miller, *Gorillas Were My Neighbours*, (London: Companion Book Club, 1957), 76, 202.

7 Georgina M. Montgomery, *Primates in the Real World: Escaping Primate Folklore and Creating Primate Science* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2015); Benjamin Burbridge, *Gorilla: Tracking and Capturing the Ape-Man of Africa* (New York: Century Company, 1928), 86; Henry Geddes, *Gorilla* (Cambridge: A. Melrose, 1955), 58. For more on the representation of gorilla attacks on women in Western culture, see: Ted Gott and Kathryn Weir, *Gorilla* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013), 14–17, 25–29.

8 Tamara Giles-Vernick and Stephanie Rupp, "Visions of Apes, Reflections on Change: Telling Tales of Great Apes in Equatorial Africa," *African Studies Review* 49, no.1 (2006): 51–73.

to export them overseas for exhibition or research in the metropole. The capture of gorillas was closely linked to colonial gorilla hunting, and almost always involved the slaughter of adults; as such, almost all gorilla captures in colonial Africa were undertaken by men, including sometimes hundreds of African staff.⁹ The gendered stereotypes and hierarchies at play in gorilla hunting were also applied to early attempts at gorilla care, initially undertaken primarily by men.¹⁰ White male owners of captive gorillas would endeavour to tame them, or train them to perform (Western) human behaviours, providing anecdotes and photographic opportunities for future publications. However, the majority of the daily work of gorilla care, including cleaning and feeding, was usually undertaken by Black men.¹¹

Early attempts at keeping gorillas in captivity were almost universally unsuccessful, the majority of young gorillas dying soon after capture, on journeys from Africa to the metropole, or shortly after arriving in Europe or North America.¹² The difficulty of keeping gorillas alive in captivity was attributed by many to their apparent loneliness and despondency after their capture.¹³ From the 1920s, white women became involved in gorilla captivity, perceived to be able to offer more tender care to younger and more vulnerable infants. Wives of white animal collectors, missionaries, and other colonial staff undertook stereotypically maternal domestic tasks such as clothing and bottle-feeding young gorillas, in some cases treating them as surrogate children. For example, a French woman who ran a sawmill with

9 Notable exceptions are Osa Johnson in 1930, and Lady Vera Broughton (1894–1968) in 1932. Eduard Paul Tratz, “Chronologie Der Erforschung Und Gefangenhaltung Des Gorillas,” *Der Zoologische Garten*, 20 (1953): 163–70.

10 John M. MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester: University Press, 2017); Edward I Steinhart, *Black Poachers, White Hunters: A Social History of Hunting in Colonial Kenya* (London: James Currey, 2006); Edward I Steinhart, “The Imperial Hunt in Colonial Kenya, c. 1880–1909,” in *Animals in Human Histories: The Mirror of Nature and Culture*, ed. Mary J Henninger-Voss (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2002), 144–81.

11 Burbridge, *Gorilla*, 234, 245; Martin Johnson, *Congorilla: Adventures with Pygmies and Gorillas in Africa*, (New York: Brewer, Warren & Putman, 1931), 201, 223. White men played a more significant role in gorilla care in the metropole during the colonial era, outnumbering people of other races and genders in zoos, museums and scientific research, e.g. Violette Pouillard, *Gust (ca. 1952–1988), or A History from Below of the Changing Zoo* (Quebec: McGill-Queens University Press, 2019).

12 Gott and Weir, *Gorilla*; James L Newman, *Encountering Gorillas: A Chronicle of Discovery, Exploitation, Understanding, and Survival* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013); Violette Pouillard, “Life and Death of Captive Eastern Gorillas (*Gorilla beringei*) (1923–2012),” *Revue De Synthèse* 136, no. 3–4 (2015): 375–402.

13 Noah Cincinnati, “Too Sullen for Survival: Historicizing Gorilla Extinction, 1900–1930,” in *The Historical Animal*, ed. Susan Nance (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2015), 166–83.

her husband in Cameroon took on the care of a young gorilla captured by Austrian animal collector Ernst Zwillling (1904–1990); she dressed the gorilla in ‘rompers’, and the youngster slept in his own bed in her bedroom.¹⁴ Some white men hired Black women as wet-nurses for their captive gorillas. These women performed a very different form of maternal care, in which their bodies were exploited to make money from the eventual sale of live gorillas.

Archival evidence and glorified published accounts of colonial gorilla hunts are relatively numerous, and the lives of captured gorillas, once exported to Europe and North America, were well documented in the press, scientific literature, zoo archives, and other sources.¹⁵ In contrast, information about the lives of young gorillas in captivity in Africa is harder to find. However, thinly but widely spread snippets of evidence can be combined to piece together a picture of gorilla captivity in colonial Africa.¹⁶ Sources including published accounts, personal archives and photography of animal collectors, missionaries, and colonial administrators, held in zoos, museums, and governmental archives, have been accessed to find traces of captive gorillas in colonial Africa. This material is a highly partial, being authored almost entirely by white men, and so must be interpreted with this in mind. The bodies of gorillas in museums have also provided important clues for this research, so their authorship is not completely lacking from the archive.¹⁷ These sources can be combined to illustrate the experiences of gorillas in captivity in colonial Africa, and the gendering of their care. Although taking different forms along racial lines, the more caring aspects of keeping gorillas captive were regarded as women’s work. The gendered nature of gorilla–human encounters has continued post-independence, and beyond Africa, and its effects are visible in the way gorillas, and the people working with them, are perceived today.

Milk: Black Women and Wet-Nursing

While instances of women breastfeeding gorillas are not common in the archive, within accounts of gorilla capture they are not exceptional. However, only Black women have been found to have wet-nursed gorillas, indicative

14 Ernst A Zwillling, *Jungle Fever* (London: Souvenir Press, 1956), 83.

15 William Beinart, “Empire, Hunting and Ecological Change in Southern and Central Africa,” *Past & Present* 128, no. 1 (1990): 162–86.

16 Erica Fudge, “Milking Other Men’s Beasts,” *History and Theory* 52, no. 4 (2013), 13–28.

17 Sandra Swart, “‘But Where’s the Bloody Horse?’: Textuality and Corporeality in the ‘Animal Turn,’” *Journal of Literary Studies* 23, no. 3 (2007): 282–83, 288.



Figure 1. An unnamed woman wet-nursing a baby gorilla. Photograph by E. Reichenow.¹⁸

of the exploitative and racist nature of this phenomenon.¹⁹ While African women did provide other aspects of care for captive gorillas, African men

18 Robert Mearns Yerkes Papers (MS 569), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library. This image was reproduced by Yerkes in *The Great Apes* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1929), 443.

19 The presence of captured gorillas in colonial homes would have added to the 'range of practices in which racisms were produced'. Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), 13.

were more commonly employed to care for gorillas. Only women, however, were able to supply human milk, a close analogue to gorilla milk, required to sustain the youngest captive gorillas. The following examples of women who wet-nursed baby gorillas indicate that this practice occurred from the early twentieth century until after the Second World War, across different colonial powers. However, detailed information regarding the wet-nurses' lives could not be found in archival sources, and their names remain unknown.

In his account of collecting gorillas for taxidermy displays at the American Museum of Natural History, Akeley recounted that the German zoologist Eduard Reichenow (1883–1960) had captured a baby Western Gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla*) thought to be only a few days old. The gorilla was breastfed, and 'flourished beautifully at the breast of a Negro nurse'.²⁰ Akeley did not give further details of this interspecies wet-nursing, but as Reichenow collected most of his gorilla material in Akonolinga in the former Kamerun (German-controlled Cameroon, now part of the Republic of Cameroon) in 1905, it was likely to have occurred here early in the twentieth century.²¹ Later correspondence between Reichenow and Robert Mearns Yerkes (1876–1956), a North American psychologist who studied great apes, also suggests that a photograph of the wet-nurse feeding the infant gorilla was taken in Cameroon.²² The image (Fig. 1) shows the woman, described as the gorilla's foster nurse, sitting unclothed while breastfeeding the baby gorilla, the location given as simply 'Africa'.²³

Unnamed Cameroonian woman, near N'Kulusung, Cameroon, 1929²⁴

In December 1929, British animal collector and hunter Frederick G. Merfield (1889–1960), based in the former French Cameroon (or Cameroun, now part of the Republic of Cameroon), acquired a live baby Western Gorilla after hunters had killed its mother.²⁵ Making his living by trading live animals and dead remains, Merfield had already been involved in the capture of two

20 Akeley, *In Brightest Africa*, 245.

21 John E. Cooper and Gordon Hull, *Gorilla Pathology and Health: With a Catalogue of Preserved Materials*, (Cambridge: Academic Press, 2017), 421.

22 Yale University Library (YUL), Manuscripts and Archives, Robert Mearns Yerkes papers (Yerkes papers), MS 569, Series 1, Box 41, Folder 780, letter from Reichenow to Yerkes, September 14, 1928.

23 YUL, Yerkes papers, MS 569, Box 133, Folder 2255. Available in the Manuscripts and Archives Digital Library, PID digcoll:4357912: <https://findit.library.yale.edu/catalog/digcoll:4357912>. The photograph was apparently taken by Reichenow.

24 Powell-Cotton Museum (PCM) Archive, Merfield correspondence, 3.1.3/45, November 26, 1929. This was the most recent letter including an address, written from N'Kulusung.

25 PCM Archive, Merfield correspondence, December 3, 1929.

young gorillas earlier in the year, but both had died after a few months in captivity.²⁶ Fearing this younger gorilla would also perish, he employed a Cameroonian woman to breastfeed it, writing on December 3 that he had ‘given it out to an obliging lady of the village’.²⁷ A few days later, he wrote ‘the baby gorilla I am afraid will not live its [*sic*] too small still one never knows’.²⁸ However, the gorilla appears to have survived for at least three weeks under the wet-nurse’s care, Merfield writing on December 24, 1929 that it was ‘still alive and suckling away at an obliging native lady’.²⁹

A Wife of Chief Bamboo, Oka, Republic of the Congo, 1944

The Belgian-American film-maker Armand Denis (1896–1971) visited the former French Congo (now the Republic of the Congo) in 1944, in a disastrous attempt to capture and export Western Gorillas to North America, to breed for medical research.³⁰ After acquiring a new-born gorilla near his base in Oka, the village chief offered one of his wives as the captive’s wet-nurse. According to Denis’s account, ‘the girl had no objection to feeding this unlikely infant’.³¹ A photograph shows the wet-nurse, a young woman, in a similar pose to the wet-nurse of Reichenow’s gorilla; she is offering her breast to a tiny gorilla while sat, almost unclothed, on a wooden crate.³² During the two months that Denis stayed in Oka, the gorilla appeared to thrive as a result of the young Congolese woman’s care. All of the gorillas captured during Denis’s expedition died before leaving Africa; the gorilla breastfed by the chief’s wife was the last to die.³³

Unnamed Equatorial Guinean women, near Bata, Equatorial Guinea, c. 1947

A Swiss animal collector, Peter Ryhiner (1920–1975), employed a series of wet-nurses as part of his gorilla capture and export racket in the former Spanish Guinea (now Equatorial Guinea), in the late 1940s.³⁴ When Ryhiner

26 PCM Archive, Percy Powell-Cotton Diaries, Diary 77, Book 2, 42–43.

27 PCM Archive, Merfield correspondence, 3.1.3/45, December 3, 1929.

28 PCM Archive, Merfield correspondence, 3.1.3/45, December 6, 1929.

29 PCM Archive, Merfield correspondence, 3.1.3/48, December 14, 1929.

30 Armand Denis, *On Safari: The Story of My Life*, (Glasgow: Collins, 1963), 168–218.

31 *Ibid.*, 204.

32 *Ibid.*, 177.

33 *Ibid.*, 217.

34 Peter Ryhiner and Daniel Pratt Mannix, *The Wildest Game* (New York: Lippincott, 1958), 102–10.

had first arrived in Africa, he found that another employee of his boss, German animal trader Lothar Behrend, had hired women as wet-nurses for three gorillas. The gorillas had lived with the women in their huts, where, according to Ryhiner: ‘both the women and their children were covered with lice, rotten with yaws and obviously suffering from half a dozen different diseases’.³⁵ Ryhiner’s use of language to describe one of the women is revealing: ‘I took the native foster mother out of her polluted hut, gave her a good bath, disinfected her thoroughly, and took her into the house which Fernandez and I were sharing’. A group of prospective wet-nurses were ‘carefully sterilized and kept in quarantine under what was virtually armed guard’, with Ryhiner selecting one of ‘the healthiest and most intelligent’ women to wet-nurse each captured gorilla infants.³⁶ These women were apparently treated as chattels, and were removed from their families in order to breastfeed the young gorillas. Ryhiner apparently regarded the women as simply tools to increase the chances of making money from the baby gorillas they cared for, much like the baby chimpanzees he had acquired as companions for each gorilla.³⁷

It is unclear from these examples whether any of the African women were paid, or how their own unweaned babies, whose existence triggered the production of milk, were cared for. The power differential between the white men owning captured gorillas and the Black women used as wet-nurses means that such arrangements were likely to have been coercive and exploitative in nature, even if payment were received.³⁸ Wet-nursing the baby of another species would have made the women and their own babies vulnerable to infection from diseases shared by humans and gorillas, or indeed novel zoonoses, as well as disrupting the care and breastfeeding of their children. It seems, however, that it was possible for wet-nurses to nurture tender relationships with the gorillas they cared for. One of the women employed by Ryhiner as a wet-nurse waited with him at a telegraph station to hear news of Mponge, a young gorilla who had been exported for sale; Ryhiner wrote that the woman prayed for good news of the infant she had breastfed.³⁹

35 Ibid., 95.

36 Ibid., 103.

37 Ibid., 104.

38 Cultural norms of wet-nursing are diverse across countries inhabited by gorillas. Barry S. Hewlett and Steve Winn, “Allomaternal Nursing in Humans”, *Current Anthropology* 55, no.2 (2014): 200–29. African women were also employed to wet-nurse baby chimpanzees captured for the live animal trade, e.g. William A. Westley, *Chimp on My Shoulder* (Boston, MA: Dutton, 1950), 220–24.

39 Ryhiner and Mannix, *The Wildest Game*, 105.

Honey: White Wives and Gorilla Children

No archival evidence has been found indicating that white women wet-nursed infant gorillas in colonial Africa. However, although not involved in the intensely physical intimacy of wet-nursing, they provided other kinds of unpaid care for captive gorillas, particularly in domestic settings. As well as providing company to pet gorillas, white women adopted signifiers of the ‘civilizing’ mission of colonialism in their gorilla care, including dressing gorillas in European clothing, and teaching them to use cutlery.⁴⁰ Some gorillas in colonial homes were fed European human diets, including luxuries such as wine and chocolate, contrasting with the food available to African domestic staff.⁴¹

White women who found themselves caring for captive gorillas had more power over giving their own accounts of these experiences than Black women, or otherwise were able to influence their husbands’ accounts, leaving a richer, although partial, source of archival evidence to learn from. Photographs of white women with young captive gorillas are likely to have been taken with their consent, so presenting a self-censored view of gorilla care, in contrast to photographs of Black wet-nurses where such agreement is in doubt. As with African wet-nurses, examples of white women caring for captive gorillas can be found across colonial boundaries. However, examples of white women caring for gorillas in colonial Africa do not occur until the 1920s, reflective of increasing numbers joining their husbands in the colonies as the twentieth century progressed.⁴²

Osa Johnson and Okaro, near Alumbongo Mountains, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Nairobi, Kenya, 1930

In 1930, while filming *Congorilla* in the former Belgian Congo (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), American film-makers Osa Johnson (1894–1953) and her husband Martin Johnson (1894–1937) were involved in the capture of two Eastern Gorillas (*Gorilla beringei*) called Congo, later renamed Mbongo (c. 1926–1942) and Ingagi, later renamed Ngagi (c. 1926–1944).⁴³

40 Nancy Rose Hunt, “Colonial Fairy Tales and the Knife and Fork Doctrine in the Heart of Africa,” in *African Encounters with Domesticity*, ed. Karen Tranberg Hansen (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 143–71.

41 Geddes, *Gorilla*, 70–72; Zwilling, *Jungle Fever*, 83.

42 Ann L. Stoler, “Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th-Century Colonial Cultures,” *American Ethnologist* 16, no. 4 (1989): 638.

43 The Johnstons had been commissioned to capture a gorilla by the US National Zoo, and had obtained permission to capture and export only one gorilla. Johnson, *Congorilla*, 234.

Returning to their home in Nairobi, Kenya, they encountered a third young gorilla, who they named Okaro (c. 1928–1931).⁴⁴ In common with other white colonizers' accounts of the acquisition of young gorillas, the Johnsons couched their acquisition of Okaro as a rescue from African people characterized as cruel.⁴⁵ Seeing a group of Congolese people carrying a baby gorilla, Osa insisted they purchase it, saying: 'I'm not going to leave it here to die among these natives. I want to give it a chance to live'.⁴⁶

Photographs of Okaro in the Johnsons' Nairobi home suggest he was kept in a more domestic environment than the older gorillas, sleeping in a Western bed, complete with pillows and sheets.⁴⁷ This photograph may have been staged, however, as Okaro was described elsewhere as being put in a box to sleep: after falling asleep on the sofa each evening, 'Osa would carry him out to his box and lay him gently down without waking him'.⁴⁸ The gorilla was taught (Western) human behaviours, and would sit at the table in his own chair to eat dinner with the Johnsons.⁴⁹ Okaro, Congo, and Ingagi were given large quantities of milk, and Western human food: 'three quarts of milk each were given them every day. Two loaves of bread each, as well as Saltine crackers, were included in their menu'. Although Osa presented herself as caring for the gorillas, an African man was employed to clean the older gorillas' outside enclosure, and to disinfect it daily. The gorillas were also fed bananas and sweet potatoes, supplied by neighbouring Kikuyu people.⁵⁰ When the Johnsons took Okaro, two chimpanzees, and a colobus monkey with them on a safari, they 'detailed a black boy to watch them', and protect them from predators. Martin Johnson described 'a droll domestic scene' made by the Johnsons and their animals, 'sitting there in the wilds as peacefully as parents and their children gathered round the hearth at home'.⁵¹

Hilda Merfield, Tarzan, and Jeeves, Arteck and Gadji, Cameroon, 1935

On March 13, 1935, Fred Merfield returned to Cameroon after a rare trip to England, accompanied by his new wife Hilda Merfield (née Baker)

44 Johnson, *Congorilla*, 193, 200. Okaro was also known as Snowball. Osa Johnson, "Snowball: A Black Baby Gorilla with a White Record," *Good Housekeeping* (1932): 166–68.

45 Brett L. Shadle, "Cruelty and Empathy, Animals and Race, in Colonial Kenya," *Journal of Social History* 45, no. 4 (2012): 1097–1116.

46 Johnson, *Congorilla*, 193.

47 Johnson, "Snowball," 80.

48 Johnson, *Congorilla*, 206.

49 *Ibid.*, 203.

50 *Ibid.*, 200–01.

51 *Ibid.*, 223. The use of the word 'boy' is derogatory here, and refers to an adult employee.

(1901–1987).⁵² Soon after their arrival, a hunter named Besalla brought a captured young Western Gorilla to their house.⁵³ Hilda ‘felt sorry for the little thing for its mother had been killed when Besalla captured it’, so Fred asked Hilda if she would like the gorilla as a pet.^{54,55} The baby was named Tarzan, and became part of what Hilda considered to be the beginning of ‘our family of pets’.^{56,57} Tarzan was placed in a strong cage in the Merfields’ garden, and soon ‘the “baby” had lost its bad temper and would take bananas from our hands in a gentlemanly manner’.⁵⁸ The following week, another young gorilla, named Jeeves, joined the Merfield household. Fred ‘handed [him] over to Hilda’, saying that he was ‘an addition to the family’.⁵⁹ As with the Johnsons, the Merfields characterized their acquisition of the two young gorillas as rescue from the supposed cruelty of Cameroonian people; Hilda wrote that ‘the natives [...] are always cruel to anything they catch[,] and tease and worry it’.⁶⁰

The gorillas were apparently regarded as Hilda’s pets, and she noted that their care, and that of the Merfields’ other live animals, took up much of her time.⁶¹ Tarzan and Jeeves appeared to have lived a relatively luxurious life as the Merfields’ pet gorillas. They were housed in a cage in the Merfields’ garden, but were tame enough to be let out of their cage, at least when supervised.⁶² The gorillas would join the Merfields for breakfast, and were apparently taught table manners, Hilda writing that they ‘[came] in the house every morning to be fed with milk and bananas. They now sit down and drink very nicely from a tin and without spilling it’.⁶³ The young gorillas

52 On loan to PCM, Hilda Merfield correspondence to ‘family and friends’ (HM), March 25, 1935.

53 PCM, Merfield and Miller, 248; PCM, HM, March 25, 1935. A third source says the gorilla arrived on the Merfields’ third day in Artek: Hilda Merfield, “Shootman Woman,” 67.

54 Merfield, “Shootman Woman,” 68. It is likely that the baby gorilla was captured once his mother had been deliberately killed to provide Fred with her remains. Besalla and the other hunters in the area would have known that Fred would acquire dead gorillas, and live babies.

55 Hilda Merfield, “I Became a Jungle Wife,” *Woman’s Own* (1957): 45.

56 PCM, Merfield and Miller, 249.

57 Merfield, “Jungle Wife,” 45.

58 PCM, Merfield, “Shootman Woman,” 68.

59 PCM, Merfield and Miller, 249 and Merfield, “Jungle Wife,” 45.

60 PCM, HM, April 5, 1935.

61 Merfield, “Jungle Wife,” 45.

62 PCM, Merfield, “Shootman Woman,” 68.

63 PCM, HM, June 23, 1935.

would each go to sit with the same human at breakfast time, with Tarzan going to Hilda, and Jeeves to Fred.⁶⁴

The Merfields relocated from Ardeck to Gadji upon learning that Hilda was pregnant, and brought Tarzan and Jeeves with them. Soon after the move, Hilda wrote that ‘little Tarzan became ill and died. Jeeves fretted over him, and, within a few weeks, he died too’. Hilda had considered Tarzan and Jeeves her pets, and was saddened by the loss of the gorillas: ‘I sat and cried over those two little pets – they had been our family’.⁶⁵

Elisabeth Percy and Horatius, Lambaréné, Gabon, 1951–1953

Orphaned and injured animals were welcomed into the hospital community of Lambaréné, Gabon, run by the Alsatian medical missionary Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965), including at least thirteen Western Gorillas.⁶⁶ A young gorilla named Horatius (c. 1950–1982) and his friend Néron (c. 1951–1981), lived at Lambaréné under the care of nurse Elisabeth Percy and her husband, Hungarian doctor Emeric Percy, in the early 1950s.⁶⁷ A rich photographic record of Horatius shows glimpses of how he was apparently doted on by his surrogate human parents.⁶⁸

A seemingly posed photograph shows Elisabeth with Horatius at Lambaréné, Elisabeth watching over the young gorilla with apparent attention and care (Fig. 2).⁶⁹ Her pale clothing and crouched position add to her gentle appearance as she watches over Horatius. Other photographs suggest Horatius enjoyed relative freedom during his time at Lambaréné, as well as trappings of a domestic European childhood. He is shown bathing in a basin of water, asleep with fellow gorilla Néron in a cot complete with bedding, wearing clothes, and with a baby bottle.⁷⁰ While Horatius was described as ‘a little gorilla that “*la doctoresse*” Percy jealously takes care of’, he was

64 PCM, Merfield and Miller, 251.

65 Merfield, “Jungle Wife,” 52. The remains of either Tarzan or Jeeves are now part of the collection at the Powell-Cotton Museum, accession number NH.MER.3.180.

66 Ann Cottrell Free, *Animals, Nature and Albert Schweitzer* (London: Flying Fox Press, 1988), 45–46.

67 Senneterre, “Avec Le Docteur Schweitzer Dans Sa Leproserie De Lambaréné,” *France-Tireur* (1952). Mme Percy is referred to as ‘la doctoresse’ in this article, which suggests she was a doctor, but may also refer to being married to a doctor.

68 Archives Centrales, Albert Schweitzer Gunsbach (ACASG), photographic collection. ©Archives Centrales Albert Schweitzer Gunsbach.

69 ACASG, photographic collection, Horatius and Elisabeth Percy, image taken by Erica Anderson. ©Archives Centrales Albert Schweitzer Gunsbach.

70 ACASG, photographic collection, Animaux-III-19(1), Animaux-II-23(1)-(2), Animaux-I-49(2), FMS 23/3.



Figure 2. Horatius and Elisabeth Percy. Photograph by Erica Anderson.⁷²

also apparently cared for by a Gabonese girl.⁷¹ She is photographed holding Horatius in her arms, with the label on the back of the photograph stating: ‘someone has to take care of the young gorillas, otherwise they would die from sadness’.⁷³

As with the majority of young gorillas who survived captivity in colonial Africa, Horatius and Néron were eventually exported to the metropole. The young gorillas were taken to the zoo at the Jardin des Plantes in Paris, accompanied by the Percys on their long journey from Gabon. The zoo’s register states that Horatius was 26 months old, and Néron fourteen months old when they

71 Senneterre.

72 ACASG, photographic collection, Horatius and Elisabeth Percy, image taken by Erica Anderson. ©Archives Centrales Albert Schweitzer Gunsbach.

73 ACASG, photographic collection, P28.

arrived, on June 3, 1953, suggesting they had spent most of their lives with the Percys.⁷⁴ The gorillas found the change in their circumstances, and the parting from their human parents, difficult. Emeric wrote to Schweitzer saying: ‘they cry whenever we go to visit them. We miss each other a lot’. Elisabeth added her feelings to the end of the letter: ‘I go almost every day to visit the children – I’m so ashamed – but every time I burst into tears in front of their cage.’⁷⁵

Discussion

The utilization and exploitation of women to care for captive gorillas in colonial Africa chimes with Western science’s persistent misconception and misrepresentation of women being closer to (other) animals, more natural and less cultural, than men, as well as reinforcing the biologically deterministic roles of men as hunters and women as carers.^{76,77} The roles of women in captive gorilla care also have echoes of the supposed predisposition of female scientists for primatology, in postcolonial Africa and elsewhere.⁷⁸ Since independence was gained by countries with wild gorilla populations, female scientists working with gorillas, both captive and free, have continued to be characterized in relation to their status as women, in a way that their male counterparts have rarely contended with.⁷⁹ The association of female primatologists with the care of young primates, including gorillas, is persistent.⁸⁰ For example, a photograph on the front

74 Muséum national d’Histoire naturelle, Bibliothèque centrale, Archives de la Ménagerie, ARCH Men 20, Registre d’entrée des mammifères et oiseaux, mai 15, 1914–décembre 28, 1958.

75 ACASG, letter from Emeric Percy to Schweitzer, June 7, 1953.

76 Londa L Schiebinger, “The Gendered Ape,” in *Nature’s Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 75–114.

77 Linda Marie Fedigan, “The Changing Role of Women in Models of Human Evolution,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 15, no. 1 (1986): 25–66.

78 Donna Jeanne Haraway, “Women’s Place Is in the Jungle,” in *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (London: Psychology Press, 1989), 279–303.

79 Dian Fossey, “Wild Orphans Bound for Captivity: Coco and Pucker,” in *Gorillas in the Mist*, (London: Phoenix, 1983), 106–24. Fossey described caring for two young female Eastern Gorillas, Coco (c. 1965–1978) and Pucker (c. 1963–1978), nursing them back to health before the Congolese government exported them to Cologne Zoo; John Fowler, *A Forest in the Clouds* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2018). Fowler described the care of a third gorilla by Fossey, himself, and other student researchers. Francine Patterson, *The Education of Koko* (London: Deutsch, 1982). Patterson cared for the gorillas she conducted her linguistic research with, including Michael (c. 1973–2000), who was taken from the wild as a baby.

80 Linda Marie Fedigan, “Science and the Successful Female: Why There Are So Many Women Primatologists,” *American Anthropologist* 96, no. 3 (1994): 529–40.

page of *National Geographic* magazine of Dian Fossey caring for two illegally captured gorillas, who she regarded as an ‘interruption’ to her long-term research of wild Eastern Gorillas, boosted her international fame in a way that her previous years of fieldwork had not.⁸¹

Examples of women caring for captive gorillas in colonial Africa are just a small proportion of instances in which gorillas reinforced the racial and gendered hierarchies of colonial Africa. While the hunting and capture of gorillas placed African staff at risk of injury, captive young gorillas formed particularly potent examples of exotic animals used to illustrate the power of empire to dominate, acquire and subdue.⁸² The gendering of gorilla care also intersected with, and reinforced, the racial hierarchisation imposed by colonizers. While white women added the clothing and coddling of baby gorillas to their work, only Black women were allocated the bodily work of breastfeeding babies of another species. It was apparently acceptable for the wives of white colonizers to treat baby gorillas as European children, but the intense, sometimes painful intimacy of wet-nursing was deemed only appropriate for Black women.

The involvement of women in the care of captive gorillas led to the building of intimate relationships and, in some cases, love between the two species.⁸³ Domestic intimacies, signified by the trappings of Western childhood, were formed between gorillas and white women in the colonial home, while bodily intimacies grew between gorillas and Black women through wet-nursing. Although the statuses of Black and white women in the hierarchies of colonial Africa were very different, women generally had less power than white men, whether their husbands or employers. While the care of captured gorillas was prioritized over the welfare of Black people in colonial hierarchies, white male owners of gorillas also had power over white and Black women’s lives. The intimacies built between women and the gorillas they cared for grew in part from their shared experiences of being othered and dominated by white men, perhaps even a sense of allyship. Although in very different circumstances, captured gorillas, white colonial wives, and Black wet-nurses, all shared the experience of being taken from their families and homes at the behest of white men. Additionally, while

81 Dian Fossey, “Making Friends with Mountain Gorillas”, *National Geographic* 137, no. 1 (1970): 48–67.

82 Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 205–07.

83 Radhika Govindrajan, *Animal Intimacies: Interspecies Relatedness in India’s Central Himalayas* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2018); Lisa Uddin, “A Gorilla Lover’s Discourse,” *Parallax* 12, no. 1 (2006): 110–19.

gorillas were regarded as subhuman commodities, Black women were treated as if livestock to feed the captive animals that were the whims of white men, while the presence of white women in the colonies was to some extent to care for or support their husbands.⁸⁴

It is impossible to know what the fates of captive gorillas cared for by women in colonial Africa would have been without these nurturing interspecies relationships, although women who wet-nursed the youngest captive gorillas undoubtedly prolonged their lives. The intimacies that flourished between women and captive gorillas in colonial Africa were likely to have improved the quality of life of young gorillas, providing material and emotional comfort. The lives of some women were in turn enriched by the distracting presence and affection of gorillas in their lives, their interspecies relationships becoming transformative for humans and gorillas alike.⁸⁵

Acknowledgements

I thank the School of History, University of Leeds, for funding my PhD research, and Will Jackson and Shane Doyle for their patient and kind supervision. I would also like to thank the following for their assistance in accessing archival sources: Rachel Jennings, curator at the Powell-Cotton Museum; Romain Collot, archivist at Maison Albert Schweitzer, Gunsbach; the staff of Yale University Library; and the staff of Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, Bibliothèque centrale.

About the Author

Rebecca Machin worked for twenty years curating natural science collections, and has published on their representation of gender, and their decolonisation. She is now a science and policy officer for the RSPCA's wildlife department, focusing on wild animal welfare. She is writing up

84 Ann L. Stoler, "Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, no. 1 (1989): 134–61; idem, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010) 1.

85 Yi-Fu Tuan, *Dominance & Affection: The Making of Pets*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 144; Kathleen Kete, *The Beast in the Boudoir: Petkeeping in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 55; Harriet Ritvo, "Animal Planet," *Environmental History* 9, no. 2 (2004): 204–20.

her PhD on the history of captive gorillas in colonial Africa, funded by the School of History, University of Leeds. Rebecca is also part of a three year Darwin Plus-funded project, 'Delivering biodiversity and human well-being gains for Montserrat's sustainable development'.

Engendered Primatology

Of Female Primates and Feminist Primatologists

Anindya Sinha and Sayan Banerjee

Abstract

In this chapter, we reflect on our readings of female/feminist primatologists' studies of female primates and our understandings of the gendered lives of bonnet macaques, a female-bonded nonhuman primate species, endemic to peninsular India. These two focal points provide us with insights into the complexities of individual identity in nonhuman societies and the situatedness of human and other-than-human gender identities in their lived worlds. We first discuss the beginnings of feminist philosophy of biology through the virtually forgotten Antoinette Brown Blackwell's remarkable critique of Darwinism and then trace the evolution of feminist primatology through the work of influential female primatologists. We consider how these feminist views have shaped our critical comprehension of gender roles in nonhuman primate societies and conclude by examining certain biological and sociocultural traits that are associated with biological sex and contribute to the social construction of gender in the lifeworlds of bonnet macaques and by extension, to those of other nonhuman primates.

Keywords: gendered lives, gender roles, sociocultural traits, individuality, philosophy of biology, bonnet macaque

'Primates existing at the boundaries of so many hopes and interests are wonderful subjects with whom to explore the permeability of walls, the reconstitution of boundaries, the distaste for endless socially enforced dualisms'.

– Donna Haraway, *Primate Visions*, 1989

Introduction

Why do we study nonhuman primates and often so intimately? The principal answer would be that, given the position of humans in the tree of life, researchers in biology, anthropology, sociology, ethology, psychology, or the medical and veterinary sciences have traditionally been interested in comparative studies of human and nonhuman primates, giving rise, in the process, to the distinctly interdisciplinary field of primatology. At a more holistic level, such studies would then translate into the question of how *we*, human primates, evolutionarily came to be what we are today. A more deeply philosophical query, inherent in this, is that whilst much of our studies and ensuing thoughts about nonhuman primates over the years have definitely been shaped by our usually subconscious awareness of *them* being categorically different from *us*, it is only relatively recently that one has become acutely conscious of a strong belief that these imaginary, constructed lines have blurred and that *we* are actually in a continuum with *them*. And nowhere does this become more evident to us than when we begin to compare the complexities of individual and gender identities in human and certain nonhuman societies, especially when viewed from a feminist primatological perspective.

We thus reflect, in this chapter, on our reading of female/feminist primatologists' studies of female primates and our understandings of the gendered lives of bonnet macaques, a female-bonded nonhuman primate species, endemic to South India. These two focal points provide us with insights into the complexities of individual identity in certain nonhuman societies and the *situatedness* of human and other-than-human gender identities, both of which have been neglected in our natural sciences.

During its early years of development, field primatology, as pioneered in the United States of America, was a masculinist scientific enterprise, possibly given its perceived requirement of physically demanding fieldwork in far-flung tropical forests and yet unexplored foreign lands. This rendered its practice a subtly androcentric process, with a clear descriptive focus on the often more demonstrative and physically active males of the species, usually of the anthropoid apes. What has also remained unacknowledged in the larger Western scientific enterprise – and surprisingly, this has included primatology – is its failure to consider our own identities, in continuum with those of our study subjects, as gendered individuals. As a result, most of the discussions in the field – both discoveries and conceptual advancements – have overlooked the ways in which they have been influenced

by our self-identities.¹ This has become critically evident in the field of primatology, where a *female* researcher appears to be a completely different being from her *male* counterpart. Indeed, their discoveries in primatology, made relatively later in the chronological development of the field, have frequently completely reversed previous understandings of primate biology, of both human and other-than-human, by previous, usually male, primatologists. Through this process, we have also gained insights into our unique individual personalities and prospective gender identities, all of which, we believe, contribute to our positionality as primate researchers, shaping and reshaping our understandings, not only of the biology of different nonhuman primate species, but also of where we stand, as human primates, in this evolutionary continuum.

The androcentric approach to understanding nonhuman primates became most evident in the early primatological perspectives on the sexual differences between individuals in shaping the structure of primate societies. The males of most primate species populations observed, characterized as being powerful, competitive, and socially dominant, became the central node to understand the functioning of these societies. Moreover, a continuous focus on male primates, both in the wild as well as in laboratory settings, then gave rise to the view – almost an assumption – that a stable, dyadic, and linear male dominance hierarchy formed the basis of primate social organization. The females were predominantly regarded as docile mothers, who spent their time and energy in nurturing their young, and thus not contributing significantly towards the formation and maintenance of the societies, to which they belonged.²

Such an androcentric perspective was later challenged by comparably rigorous research – but conducted from a very different perspective – by female primatologists, giving rise to a distinctive *feminist primatology*.³ These researchers focused their scientific attention on the hitherto unexplored lives of female primates, highlighting the importance of their behavioural roles in the construction, organization, and functioning of their societies.

1 Lynda Birke, Mette Bryld, and Nina Lykke, “Animal Performances: An Exploration of Intersections Between Feminist Science Studies and Studies of Human/Animal Relationships,” in *Women, Science, and Technology: A Reader in Feminist Science Studies*, eds. M. Wyer, M. Barbercheck, D. Cookmeyer, H. Ozturk, and M. Wayne (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 495–506.

2 Sherwood L. Washburn and Irvén DeVore, “The Social Life of Baboons,” *Scientific American* 204, no. 6 (1961): 62–71.

3 Linda Marie Fedigan, “Feminist Philosophy of Biology,” in *Women, Science, and Technology*, eds. M. Wyer, M. Barbercheck, D. Giesman, H.Ö. Öztürk, and M. Wayne (New York: Routledge, 2008). 270–84.

The sophisticated complexity of female behavioural strategies and their decision-making, revealed during these studies, appeared to reflect the broader question of ‘What can monkeys and apes teach us about being female on the planet or about being animals in complex and gendered societies?’⁴ Feminist primatology, however, should not be conflated with the notion of female researchers simply researching primates, as was duly noted by when they wrote that ‘[m]any of the significant women in primatology would be reluctant to call themselves (or be labelled!) feminists’.⁵ Rather, it is the *feminist standpoint* within primatological research that can be credited to have created this distinct philosophy.

Typically, such a feminist approach uses feminist philosophical methods to examine, often rather specifically, the categories of sex and gender. In the process of such analyses, feminist philosophers of biology have also been able to demonstrate that the philosophical inquiries within a specific scientific domain are frequently entangled with both ethics and politics. This is especially true for primatology. The first of the two general schools of thought on the philosophy of biology, promoted by feminist philosophers, thus concerns the biological notions of and knowledge claims involving sex and gender while the second school investigates the impact of gender values on biological research.⁶

Of Feminist Primatologists...

Charles Darwin presented an evolutionary explanation of the inherent differences between men and women in his book, *The Descent of Man* (1871).⁷ He argued that, as men and women had different roles in the sexual division of labour and as men seemed to have evolved to be aggressive hunters while women had developed to be nurturing carers, the two sexes would typically have different needs and capacities. Darwin thus came to the conclusion that ‘man has ultimately become superior to woman’ and ‘that if men are

4 Martha Ward, *A World Full of Women* (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1996), 86.

5 Linda M. Fedigan and Laurence Fedigan, “Gender and the Study of Primates,” in *Gender and Anthropology: Critical Reviews for Research and Teaching*, ed. S. Morgan (Washington D.C.: American Anthropological Association, 1989), 53.

6 Carla Fehr, “The Paradox of Feminist Primatology,” in *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, E.N. Zalta (Stanford, CA: Metaphysics Research Laboratory, Stanford University, 2018), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminist-philosophy-biology/>.

7 Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man. and Selection in Relation to Sex* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1871), 643.

capable of a decided pre-eminence over women in many subjects, the average of mental power in man must be above that of woman'. Antoinette Brown Blackwell offered the first feminist critique of Darwin four years later, when, in her book, *The Sexes Throughout Nature* (1875), she contended that Darwin's own evidence did not support his conclusion.⁸ She further asserted that the correct conclusion to draw from the observed biological facts was that the sexes are 'true equivalents – equals but not identicals' in all aspects of their physical and mental abilities. She claimed that because of his 'male standpoint', Darwin had misinterpreted the facts and that 'only a woman can approach the subject from a feminine standpoint'.⁹ She also claimed that scientific knowledge of the realities of nature would serve as the final arbiter between these opposing viewpoints. The foundation of Blackwell's feminist argument thus rested, remarkably, on a contemporary biological interpretation of what has been referred to as ethical naturalism,¹⁰ which contends that the correct social status of women would depend on what we understand about their nature.

Over a period of thirteen years, from 1956 to 1969, Louis Leakey, an influential and pioneering anthropologist, chose three women – Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey, and Biruté Galdikas – to study natural populations of three species of great apes – chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans, respectively – because he thought that the nurturing nature of women would make them more patient and perceptive in their direct observations of animal behaviour than would be men. Some feminists believe that the remarkable academic performance of these three women primatologists supports Sy Montgomery's suggestion (1991) that the feminine emphasis upon individuality, relationships, and empathy has scientific significance.¹¹ This also appears to hark back to Blackwell's advocacy of the *feminine standpoint* as integral to the natural sciences and her assertion that, as products of evolution, men and women were naturally comparable, if not identical, in their moral and intellectual qualities. We find support for this belief in our observation that female primatologists, who naturally focused their attention on female nonhuman primates, were able to subsequently demonstrate that the lives of female primates are far more complex and crucial to primate evolution

8 Antoinette B. Blackwell, *The Sexes Throughout Nature* (New York: Putnam and Sons, 1875).

9 *Ibid.*, 22.

10 Larry Arnhart, "Feminism, Primatology, and Ethical Naturalism," *Politics and the Life Sciences* 11, no. 2 (1992): 157–70.

11 Sy Montgomery, *Walking with the Great Apes* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991).

than many male scientists had previously imagined, investigated, or established scientifically.

A prime example of such a misplaced focus is the male dominance hierarchy – traditionally considered to be the most important force governing nonhuman primate societies – right from the initiation of primate field studies till the 1970s (see, for example, Zuckerman 1932¹²). It was only during the 1960s that a few studies, primarily by female primatologists, brought into discussion the role of philopatric female primates in creating and maintaining the social bonds that bound their society together, rather than did the males, who tended to disperse in search of mating opportunities.^{13,14} In 1971, Jane Goodall described the importance of mother–infant relationships and matrifocal family units in chimpanzee social organization, notwithstanding the male bonding, typical of chimpanzee society, during her long-term research on the chimpanzee communities of Central Africa.¹⁵ Thelma Rowell conducted extensive studies of olive baboon societies and, in 1967, noted that the so-called male-hierarchy model did not seem to be as important as previously noted and that dominance appeared to be socially learnt independently by individuals females and males rather than being determined simply by age and sex.¹⁶ The females in Rowell's studies seemed to perform the roles, apparently displayed by the dominant males in other investigations, including the determination of the daily movement routes by the older group females. Female baboons thus appeared to subtly regulate the group's social behaviour, forming, in essence, the nucleus of the group. Interestingly, Rowell's descriptions of female baboons and their roles in baboon society even gave rise, at the time, to a notion of 'contrariness', humorously also referred to as the 'Thelma Effect', in which certain animals behaved unexpectedly differently from what was expected from them from the oft-quoted literature!¹⁷

Like Rowell, Barbara Smuts, in 1983, described the importance of male–female reciprocal friendships as a significant determinant of reproductive

12 Solly Zuckermann, *The Social Life of Monkeys and Apes* (New York: Harcourt, 1932).

13 Masao Kawai, "On the Rank System in a Natural Group of Japanese Monkey (I): The Basic and Dependent Rank," *Primates* 1 (1958): 111–30.

14 Syunzo Kawamura, "The Matriarchal Social Order in the Minoo-B Group: A Study on the Rank System of Japanese Macaque," *Primates* 1 (1958): 149–56.

15 Jane Goodall, *In The Shadow of Man* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971).

16 Thelma E. Rowell, "Variability in the Social Organization of Primates," in *Primate Ethology*, ed. D. Morris (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1967).

17 Shirley C. Strum and Linda M. Fedigan (eds.), *Primate Encounters: Models of Science, Gender, and Society* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000). 484.

success for both sexes in olive baboons.¹⁸ In 1987, Shirley Strum, too, rejected the male-centric, aggression-based dominance model of baboon societies,¹⁹ previously postulated by the studies of male primatologists, such as Sherwood Washburn and Irven DeVore,²⁰ reiterating once again that it was the females and their families that formed the stable core of the group and that baboon social structure was distinctively matrilineal. She also described how males and females took on complementary roles and relationships to construct and maintain their societies. Jeanne Altmann, one of primatology's most innovative leaders, working from the perspectives of a woman, a mother, and feminist, developed methodologies that encouraged the inclusion of female primates as subjects and allowed for the systematic study of the frequently low-key interactions among female primates and between mothers and their offspring, previously considered unimportant by largely male researchers.²¹

In 1993, Adrienne Zihlman argued that different species may exhibit sexual dimorphism in a variety of ways, including in their bone length and structure, propensities to accumulate muscle or fat, and/or canine size.²² These various forms of sexual dimorphism may, in turn, be connected to variations in foraging tactics and aggressive propensities, both linked to evolutionary explanations of gender differences. Sarah Blaffer Hrdy developed her own unique approaches to study female grey langurs in Mount Abu in Rajasthan, northwestern India, during the 1980s and pioneered feminist primatology, when she noted that her shifting perceptions of female langurs was linked to her dawning awareness of male–female power relationships in her own life.^{23,24} In 1982, Linda Marie Fedigan, apart from examining female-centric life-history strategies of monkeys in Costa Rica, also described thoroughly how the gender of researchers in anthropology and primatology could potentially affect their research

18 Barbara Smuts, "Dynamics of Social Relationships between Adult Male and Female Olive Baboons: Selective Advantages," in *Primate Social Relationships: An Integrated Approach*, ed. R.A. Hinde (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 112–16.

19 Shirley C. Strum, *Almost Human: A Journey into the World of Baboons* (New York: Random House, 1987).

20 Washburn and Irven DeVore, "The Social Life of Baboons."

21 Jeanne Altmann, *Baboon Mother and Infants* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).

22 Adrienne L. Zihlman, "Sex Differences and Gender Hierarchies among Primates: An Evolutionary Perspective," in *Sex and Gender Hierarchies*, ed. B.D. Miller (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 32–56.

23 Sarah B. Hrdy, *The Woman that Never Evolved* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

24 Sarah B. Hrdy, "Empathy, Polyandry, and the Myth of the Coy Female," in *Feminist Approaches to Science*, ed. R. Bleier (New York: Pergamon Press, 1986), 119–46.

on sexual differences in primate societies.²⁵ Based on all these female primatologists' work, several landmark volumes on female primate sociality were published in the 1980s, marking a paradigm shift in primatological research and its multifaceted understandings.²⁶ Finally, Donna Haraway, in 1989, through her own trail-blazing work on female primates and feminist primatologists, strengthened the then-upcoming theories of a *feminist standpoint* and *situated knowledges*, which, to this day, remain extremely influential and inspirational, and, we believe, rightfully so.²⁷

...And of Feminist Primatology

Female researchers have remarkably impacted developments in primatology. Ruth Bleier has observed, for example, that: 'Primatology [...] serves as an example of the correction that a feminist perspective can effect in a field of knowledge [...] primatology is a lone example in the natural sciences of dramatic changes made under feminist viewpoints. This is related, in part, to the presence of a critical mass of women and feminists within the field [...]'.²⁸ A related, but important question of significant interest is whether primatology has indeed been deeply and academically influenced by women's movements, the political stance of feminism, and the feminist standpoint. According to Hrdy and Haraway, it cannot be a coincidence that a significant change in how people view female primates made its first appearance in the mid-1970s, at the same time that the second wave of Western feminism was urging scientists to consider the academic perspectives of women.^{29,30} Based on her reading of Hrdy's research, Sue Rosser, a noted scholar of science studies, argued, in 1986, that the area of natural sciences that has

25 Linda M. Fedigan, *Primate Paradigms: Sex Roles and Social Bonds* (Montreal: Eden Press, 1982).

26 Hrdy, *The Woman that Never Evolved*; Samuel K. Wasser (ed.), *Social Behavior of Female Vertebrates* (New York: Academic, 1981); Fedigan, *Primate Paradigms*; Meredith F. Small (ed.), *Female Primates: Studies by Women Primatologists* (New York: Alan R. Liss, 1983); Evelyn S. Shaw and Joan S. Darling, *Strategies of Being Female* (Brighton: Harvester, 1984); Irene Elia, *The Female Animal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Bettyanne Kevles, *Female of the Species* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

27 Donna Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

28 Ruth Bleier, "Introduction," in *Feminist Approaches to Science*, ed. R. Bleier (New York: Pergamon Press, 1986).

29 Hrdy, *The Woman that Never Evolved*.

30 Haraway, *Primate Visions*.

been most significantly altered by a feminist viewpoint is primatology.³¹ This analysis has been supported by Fedigan, who argued that primatology had demonstrated a high level of receptivity to critiques of androcentric language and interpretations, and a willingness to correct its past emphasis on male behaviour with its updated, contemporary perspectives on both sexes and their inter-relationship.³² What is most apparent, however, is that, as primatologists, one can undoubtedly notice an increase in the efforts made to learn more about female lives and behaviours, as well as to create equal understandings of how female and male nonhuman primates perceive and act within, and interact with their specific socio-ecological environments.

It has occasionally been argued that women approach science differently from men, choosing different topics, framing different questions, favouring different theories and hypotheses, choosing different methodologies, and, generally, favouring different interpretations of scientific findings.³³ There is little data, however, to support or refute the claim that male and female primatologists conduct their investigations differently because there is scant research directly addressing this topic. A fundamental presumption, asserted particularly by Hrdy, Rowell, and Haraway, is that women are more inclined to view their social and physical environments from the perspective of female animals.³⁴ According to Strum and Fedigan, the primary descriptors used for female primates in earlier studies of primate behaviour, mostly by male primatologists, covered their roles as mothers and as sexual partners of the males in their social groups.³⁵ Over time, however, the image of female primates has expanded to encompass more dimensions. Numerous studies on the importance of female bonding through matrilineal networks, examinations of female sexual assertiveness and competition for reproductive success, their social strategies and underlying cognitive abilities, and their long-term knowledge of the group's local environment were extensively conducted in the 1970s and 1980s. Although this has not truly been proven, it has been hypothesized that women have perhaps

31 Sue V. Rosser, *Teaching Science and Health from a Feminist Perspective: A Practical Guide. The Athene Series* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1986).

32 Linda M. Fedigan, "Science and the Successful Female: Why There are So Many Female Primatologists," *American Anthropologist* 96, no. 3 (1994): 529–40.

33 Fehr, "The Paradox of Feminist Primatology."

34 Hrdy, *The Woman that Never Evolved*; Thelma E. Rowell, "Introduction: Mothers, Infants and Adolescents," in *Female Primates: Studies by Women Primatologists*, ed. M. Small (New York: Allan and Liss, 1984); Haraway, *Primate Visions*.

35 Strum and Fedigan, *Primate Encounters: Models of Science, Gender, and Society*.

contributed more, than have men, to the development of our current models of the canonical female nonhuman primate.

It is also important to note here that certain feminist and feminine ways of thinking have introduced new primatological conceptualizations and, in the process, uncovered the subjectivity that often remains ingrained in the practice of the biological sciences. An interesting example of this is the idea of situated knowledges, which was first put forth by Haraway (*Primate Visions*, 1989), and has since had a significant impact on feminist epistemologies. Haraway examined how primatology creates political narratives about and around the categories of nature, gender, and race, as well as how these categories are combined with specific viewpoints, uniquely located within particular social and physical settings. Her analysis clearly demonstrated how feminist epistemologies were able to forge new inquiries, yield novel perspectives on objects and beings, as well as on their categorizations, and allow for the development of new theories, all such endeavours benefitting from often-partial feminist perspectives, as opposed to completely impartial feminist perspectives. Finally, Haraway, in her exposition of how partial all viewpoints invariably were, pointed out that those who held relatively more dominant ideas did not feel the need to investigate alternatives because such viewpoints possessed long-held institutional and social authority, and the discipline was able to exclude authors, who had opposing viewpoints, which were proclaimed to be partial while the dominant paradigms were alone considered to be *objective*.

What are the apparent hallmarks of this feminist science of primatology? Could we return to the notion of *contrariness*, outlined above in the context of Rowell's studies, and argue, as has been done by certain science studies scholars, that the behaviour of animals, as often reported, are indeed guided by the expectations of those who study them?³⁶ Can the *Thelma Effect* then only be attributed to the observer's gender? Rowell claimed that Solly Zuckerman had himself suggested that '[...] among field workers the observer's own temperament and sex might be an important filter in determining, for example, the amount of agonistic behavior observed and reported in groups of primates'.³⁷ Some of the so-called *feminine* characteristics that have been believed to shape the way women *see* their primate subjects and make them ideal observers of their behaviour in the long term seem to be their

36 Vinciane Despret, "On a Useful Dualism," *Revue d'anthropologie des connaissances* 33, no. 3 (2009): 386–405.

37 Desmond Morris, *Primate Ethology* (Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Company, 1967), 222.

patience,³⁸ sensitivity, and their emotional connections to their subjects.^{39,40} Fedigan has also speculated that such beliefs have stemmed from and, in turn, supported ‘the myth that primatology is a type of mothering activity’ and that women are naturally better observers of nonhumans because they have a particularly close relationship with nature.⁴¹

Strum and Fedigan, on the other hand, attribute this paradigmatic change in primatological vision not to the researcher’s gender but to a shifting focus on the *particular* rather than to the *general*, when they argue that: ‘We have moved from a general vision that primate society revolves around males and is based on aggression, domination, and hierarchy to a more complex array of options based on phylogeny, ecology, demography, social history and chance events’.⁴² Haraway adopts a somewhat similar viewpoint, when she succinctly describes this alternative *feminist* perspective thus: ‘[...] the unifying theme in the primatology done by women has been their high likelihood of being skeptical of generalizations and their strong preference for explanations full of specificity, diversity, complexity, and contextuality’.⁴³ Finally, we return to the classic study of Fedigan on why there are so many successful women in primatology, in which she hypothesizes that women are possibly drawn to this discipline primarily because of ‘[...] the nature of the subject matter itself: the primates’.⁴⁴ She goes on to suggest that this attraction could potentially be due to two reasons, the first of which is the almost ubiquitous importance of sociality across virtually all simians and apes, and the female bondedness that pervades most nonhuman primate societies. And given the crucially significant roles played by female primates in their social organizations, it is possible that women primatologists could be curious about such feminine success stories.⁴⁵ Fedigan’s second argument concerns the observation that nonhuman primatology invariably draws attention to human lives and human behaviour, and the possibility of examining the origins and evolution of human behavioural attributes from comparative, cross-species perspectives. She then refers to the work of Aisenberg and

38 Londa Schiebinger, “Has Feminism Changed Science?,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 25, no. 4 (2000): 1171–75.

39 Haraway, *Primate Visions*.

40 Vinciane Despret, “Sheep Do Have Opinions,” in *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, eds. B. Latour and P. Weibel (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 360–70.

41 Fedigan, “Science and the Successful Female,” 536.

42 Strum and Fedigan, *Primate Encounters*, 5.

43 Haraway, *Primate Visions*, 397.

44 Fedigan, “Science and the Successful Female,” 536.

45 *Ibid.*, 530.

Harrington⁴⁶ and suggests that women are particularly attracted to subjects that allow them to ‘[...] examine human nature, experience, capacity, and values’ and those that ‘[...] touch experiences vital to the human experience of the world’.⁴⁷ More than men, Aisenberg and Harrington further argue, women scientists appear to search for a professional life that offers opportunities for personal transformation and nowhere is this more apparent than in academic disciplines that involve understandings of human nature, such as the science of nonhuman primatology.⁴⁸

Of Female Nonhuman Primates...

But what does the science of nonhuman primatology actually tell us about the *nature* of other-than-human primates? A close examination of the lives of female nonhuman primates, to choose an example of relevance to this essay, provides fascinating insights into their unique lifeworlds, ‘[...] full of specificity, diversity, complexity, and contextuality’.⁴⁹ Such a statement, intuitive as it may sound to close observers of nonhuman primate sociality and the behavioural profiles of individual females, however, flies against the grain of most natural science programmes, accustomed as they are to classical notions of innately determined, species-typical biological traits that unhesitatingly incorporate, within them, definitive patterns of sexually dimorphic behavioural repertoires characterizing the *typical* other-than-human primate *male* and the *female*, often in that order of importance.

A critically important question that we thus raise here, and which appears to us to have been largely ignored in primatology is, in the words of Letitia Meynell and Andre Lopez, ‘[are ...] there [...] good, scientifically credible reasons for thinking that some nonhuman animals might have genders [...]?’⁵⁰

Early critical responses to such species-constrained stereotypic suppositions, especially concerning the development of gender in nonhuman primates, come from the noted anthropologists, Frances Burton and Susan Sperling. Burton⁵¹ examined the roles that the two biological sexes played

46 Nadya Aisenberg and Mona Harrington, *Women of Academe: Outsiders in the Sacred Grove* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).

47 Fedigan, “Science and the Successful Female,” 536.

48 Aisenberg and Harrington, *Women of Academe*.

49 Haraway, *Primate Visions*, 397.

50 Letitia Meynell and Andrew Lopez, “Gendering Animals,” *Synthese* 199 (2021): 4287–311.

51 Frances D. Burton, “Ethology and the Development of Sex and Gender Identity in Non-human Primates,” *Acta Biotheoretica* 26, no. 1 (1977): 1–18.

across nonhuman primate societies and the responsibilities that individuals took up with regard to the most important group-maintenance and individual-survival tasks faced, including the obtaining of food, reproduction and rearing the young, moving the group to sleeping sites, resting areas, food sources, or away from danger, protecting the group, and maintaining group cohesion. Her survey and her studies on the Barbary macaque in Gibraltar allowed Burton to conclude that, apart from being a progenitor or progenitrix, there was no evidence that the basic social roles that individuals of either sex assumed in nonhuman primate societies were 'biologically determined'.⁵² She thus argued, rather strongly, for the contributions made by developmental histories, social learning, individual experience, and goal orientation in shaping individual behavioural profiles, their variability, and the social roles performed by different individuals to varying extents in primate societies.

Criticizing the various theories of ultimate causality that had dominated primatological models for the origins of gendered behaviour, including feminist sociobiology, Sperling⁵³ asked for more accurate and coherent approaches to define and describe primate gender differences. Following Burton, she hypothesized that the bewildering diversity of data on gender-role dimorphism in primates could perhaps best be explained by emphasizing the contextual development of behavioural profiles, rejecting the biological essentialism of gender dualism, and focusing attention on the complex interactions between organisms and their environments of development.

From another, radical perspective, a clear articulation of a species-inclusive sex/gender distinction is reflected in Rebecca Jordan-Young's concept of gendered norms of reaction⁵⁴ and Sara van Anders' Sexual Configurations Theory.⁵⁵ In a novel approach that allows sociocultural parameters to integrate with biological factors, Jordan-Young proposed the consideration of the sexes as different ecotypes in a cultural environment, suggesting that different cultural and culturally mediated environmental inputs may lead to a wide variety of outcomes for a particular sex. She also notes that gender develops in a crucially interactive manner and that gender norms that shape individuals in early development may have physiological outcomes, which, in adulthood, may appear to be more biologically driven

52 Ibid., 13.

53 Susan Sperling, "Baboons with Briefcases: Feminism, Functionalism, and Sociobiology in the Evolution of Primate Gender," *Signs* 17, no. 1 (1991): 1–27.

54 Rebecca Jordan-Young, *Brain Storm: The Flaws in the Science of Sex Difference* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

55 Sara van Anders, "Beyond Sexual Orientation: Integrating Gender/Sex and Diverse Sexualities via Sexual Configurations Theory," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 44 (2015): 1177–213.

than that of cultural origin. This, then, raises the potential difficulty of distinguishing biological from cultural causes – sex from gender – in organismic development and ignores gender/sex considerations in accounting for traditionally described sex-typical behaviours.

Sari van Anders' Sexual Configurations Theory considers sex and gender as different components of a larger sexual configuration and rejects the simplistic identification of rigidly defined categories, such as a *woman* or *homosexuality*. She conceptualizes a sexual diversity continuum, identifying multiple axes along which different individuals could potentially vary in both character and strength. Sex and gender are then two distinct axes within this larger sexual configuration, evolving over a lifetime and interacting with other intersectional identities, such as race or class in the case of humans, during their underlying processes of development. Individual primates could thus be positioned along different independent parameters within a visually represented, conceptual space representing their multidimensional sexual configuration.

Acknowledging Jordan-Young and Van Anders' contributions of a comprehensive theoretical account of sex and gender, grounded in modern biology but incorporating within it distinctive sociocultural influences that provide for flexibility in gender expression and sexuality, Meynell and Lopez⁵⁶ generalize this framework to actively include nonhumans and operationalize gender to make it empirically tractable, defining, in the process, three categories:

Sex: A cluster of traits that are highly correlated with or physically integrated with differential gamete size within the species and that have biological causes, both proximately by various means – like genetic causes and fetal development – and ultimately through evolution;

Gender: A cluster of traits that are highly correlated with or culturally integrated with sex in the species – typically, behavioral, psychological, and social traits but in some cases, morphological and physiological traits – and that have sociocultural and historical causes, both proximately by way of social learning and ultimately by way of tradition;

Gender/sex: Traits related to sex and gender whose etiology cannot be identified, or traits in which sociocultural and biological causes are so closely inter-related (consider surgical interventions) that the distinction cannot be drawn (whether in the lived experience of individuals or, as is more salient for the study of nonhuman animals, by external observers).⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Meynell and Lopez, "Gendering Animals."

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 4297–98.

Another perspective from which the analyses of gendered behaviour in nonhuman primates can be advanced, but which has largely remained ignored in Western primatology, is that of phenotypic flexibility, a form of context-dependent variation in behaviour, which includes reversible, phenotypic, usually behavioural transformations, shown by single individuals in response to variations in their ecological and social environments.^{58,59} Importantly, this variation could represent or may have the potential to become integral to the life-histories of particular individuals and, subsequently, be subject to natural selection, allowing them to accrue a selective advantage over others, a point previously made by Burton.^{60,61}

Most nonhuman primates live in social environments that often change unpredictably due to various socio-ecological factors but which, in turn, significantly affect their group composition and social structure. Are individual primates capable of exhibiting developmental behavioural flexibility under these circumstances as well? And, if they are, is it possible that such flexibility could then be incorporated into their long-term life-history strategies and, in the process, significantly impact their dynamic, occasionally gendered, life-worlds? Furthermore, could such behavioural flexibility then be horizontally, vertically, or obliquely transmitted to other individuals by social learning, particularly with the extended adult–juvenile contact periods, so typical of primate societies, thus providing ample opportunities for such cultural transmission?^{62,63} Is it then conceivable that the phenotypic behavioural flexibility that we are increasingly encountering in nonhuman primate societies – primarily as a result of dynamic organism–environmental interactions – and its transmission could ultimately establish distinctive behavioural traditions and other-than-human cultures, with the evolution of its own novel evolutionary rules?^{64,65} What is nevertheless of greatest relevance in the context of our current discussion is whether our comprehensive knowledge of phenotypic

58 Theunis Piersma and Jan Drent, “Phenotypic Flexibility and the Evolution of Organismal Design,” *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* 18, no. 5 (2003): 228–33.

59 Anindya Sinha, “Not in Their Genes: Phenotypic Flexibility, Behavioural Traditions and Cultural Evolution in Wild Bonnet Macaques,” *Journal of Biosciences* 30, no. 1 (2005): 51–64.

60 Burton, “Ethology and the Development of Sex and Gender Identity.”

61 Sinha, “Not in Their Genes,” 52.

62 *Ibid.*, 56.

63 Luke Rendell and Hal Whitehead, “Culture in Whales and Dolphins,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 24 (2001): 309–82.

64 Eva Jablonka, “Inheritance Systems and the Evolution of New Levels of Individuality,” *Journal of Theoretical Biology* 170 (1994): 301–09.

65 Eva Jablonka and Marion J. Lamb, “Epigenetic Inheritance in Evolution,” *Journal of Evolutionary Biology* 11 (1998): 159–83.

flexibility and other-than-human behavioural traditions could potentially contribute to a more nuanced grassroots-level understanding of nonhuman gender and its performance within and across nonhuman primate societies.

...And of Female Bonnet Macaques

In the concluding section of our essay, we provide a preliminary narrative of the phenotypic flexibility and other-than-human behavioural traditions, both of which contribute to gendered behavioural expression, encountered during our long-term study of several populations of free-ranging bonnet macaques *Macaca radiata*, a cercopithecine primate species endemic to peninsular India.

Various populations of the bonnet macaque and their constituent individuals appear to be unusual in exhibiting remarkable social flexibility and a wide variety of behavioural strategies at different stages of their life histories, all of which enable them to adapt successfully to very different socio-ecological habitats.⁶⁶ This female-bonded species usually lives in large multimale-multifemale groups in which adult females develop strong affiliative relationships with one other and often with the adult and subadult males of the group. In recent years, however, increasing anthropogenic influences appear to have led one particular population of the macaques in the dry deciduous forests of Bandipur and Mudumalai National Parks in South India to have evolved a new form of social organization in which small unimale groups are occasionally formed by a few adult females and their offspring taking an unprecedented decision to leave their natal groups, usually accompanied by an adult male.⁶⁷ These unimale troops are strikingly different from the typical multimale troops in the nature of the unique social relationships that develop between the single male and the resident females, as well as within the females of the troop.⁶⁸

In a relevant instance of phenotypic flexibility, displayed by a group, BM15, of this population, individual adult females of different dominance

66 Anindya Sinha, *The Monkey in the Town's Commons: A Natural History of the Indian Bonnet Macaque*, NIAS Report R 2-01 (Bangalore: National Institute of Advanced Studies, 2001).

67 Anindya Sinha et al., "Ecology Proposes, Behaviour Disposes: Ecological Variability in Social Organization and Male Behavioural Strategies among Wild Bonnet Macaques," *Current Science* 89, no. 7 (2005): 1166–79.

68 Sunita Ram, Suri Venkatachalam, and Anindya Sinha, "Changing Social Strategies of Wild Female Bonnet Macaques during Natural Foraging and on Provisioning," *Current Science* 84, no. 6 (2003): 780–90.

ranks significantly changed their behavioural strategies, as they regularly alternated between bouts of natural foraging and feeding on provisioned foods.⁶⁹ Provisioning was marked by a sharp increase in feeding competition, accompanied by severe aggression and feeding supplants, but individual females were also able to adopt different, but appropriate, strategies aimed at reducing social tension within the group, behaviour never exhibited by adult males. Moreover, a comparison between the affiliative relationships displayed by adult females in two groups – the aforementioned BM15 and GK2 – in two geographically separated populations also revealed striking differences that could potentially be ascribed to ecological differences in their food availability and distribution. In BM15, where the adult females periodically foraged on limited and patchily distributed human-origin foods and competition was strong, individuals directed their allogrooming up the dominance hierarchy, with subordinate females grooming dominant individuals at relatively higher levels than they groomed those subordinate to them.⁷⁰ In contrast, individual females of GK2 foraged only on natural food sources, competition for resources was relatively low, and individual females preferentially allogroomed those subordinate to them. What is also noteworthy is that the patterns of allogrooming between the originally observed adult females of GK2 remained strikingly similar to that observed a decade later in the group, although there had been a significant change in its feeding ecology over this period – from complete natural foraging initially to a regime where the feeding was largely on provisioned human foods. Such a longitudinal maintenance of similar behavioural patterns in this macaque group suggests a process of intergenerational transmission of maternal social networks, implying direct mother–daughter transmission mechanisms of behavioural practices in this species⁷¹ – a striking example of a gendered behavioural tradition in nonhuman primates. Yet another example of sociocultural behavioural flexibility was that displayed by several adult, subadult, or juvenile females in the unimale troops of Bandipur–Mudumalai, who, faced with a lack of mate choice and/or female companionship, emigrated to other neighbouring unimale or multimale troops, either singly or in small associations.⁷² Such migration by juvenile and adult males was, however, of more regular occurrence in this population and possibly represented a primarily innate biological trait.

69 Ram, Venkatachalam, and Sinha, “Changing Social Strategies.”

70 Ibid.

71 Sinha, “Not in Their Genes,” 59.

72 Sinha et al., “Ecology Proposes.”

A search for gender-specific behaviour amongst individuals could perhaps meet with greatest success in situations that require a uniquely gendered response from the community. During the course of our study, we thus observed three adult female macaques – RI, TU, and BECA – from three different populations – GK₁, CAMP₂, and DV, respectively – to perform a rather unusual tool-assisted, self-directed manipulative behaviour, best described as *vaginal grooming*, wherein they inserted short sticks or twigs into their vagina and scratched vigorously, possibly in response to an infection in their genital organs. What is remarkable is that while all the three females used physically similar objects – short twigs, dry sticks, or grass blades – as tools, they used individual-specific objects, possibly because they best met the needs of the situation. RI was, however, the only female to actively modify her tools for the purpose.⁷³ The diversity and complexity of such tool manufacture thus varied across the three females from the three populations but could reflect a form of self-motivated learning of object affordances, leading to a gender-specific, goal-oriented usage, possibly underlain by causal inferences. It is also noteworthy that this object-aided self-grooming remained idiosyncratic and failed to propagate within the performer's respective groups, possibly given the specificity of individual need, and hence the difficulty of an observer to grasp the actual intent of the actor while observing such tool-assisted behaviour. It could thus be argued that certain kinds of gendered behaviour, with the potential to become a gender-specific behavioural tradition, may not spread simply because of the narrow window of its applicability.

Finally, although many bonnet macaque groups live in close association with humans, most adult and juvenile individuals of either gender fail to display any kind of affiliative interactions with people. Another notable exception in this regard were four juveniles – two females, BO and SH, and two males, MI and DO, again of the group GK₁, who regularly interacted with and displayed contact affiliative behaviours with human observers. Remarkably, all these individuals, ranging in age from one to four years, were offspring of an adult female, SU, who was unique among the eleven adult females of this group in her high degree of tolerance of human observers, even – unusually – requesting food from them on occasion. It is thus possible that SU's offspring may have learnt to be tolerant of humans by observing her behavioural interactions with them, another example of parent–offspring

73 Anindya Sinha, "Complex Tool Manufacture by a Wild Bonnet Macaque, *Macaca radiata*," *Folia Primatologica* 68 (1997): 23–25.

transmission of behavioural traits.⁷⁴ BO and SH continued to display such affiliative behaviour towards humans in their adulthood while MI and DO stopped doing so; such interactions were thus unusually gender-specific in nature and capable of being transmitted socially to emerge as a gendered behavioural tradition in later years.

In conclusion, the varied interactions between individual genotypes and specific environmental components that can generate such behavioural flexibility in bonnet macaques, often of a gendered nature, need to be elucidated and understood further. What is clear, nevertheless, is that social lability and individual behavioural variability of this nature could enable individuals of a species to evolve novel and innovative, often gendered, behavioural strategies that could promote more effective survival and reproduction under periodically changing, but challenging, socio-ecological situations.

Acknowledgements

Anindya Sinha sincerely thanks Kakoli Mukhopadhyay for her partnership in the evolution of this work, both intellectual and logistic, Sunita Ram and Anirban Datta-Roy for their fieldwork, and the Karnataka and Tamil Nadu Forest Departments for permission to work in the Bandipur and Tamil Nadu National Parks, respectively. Sayan Banerjee is thankful to Dr Shalini Sharma for introducing him to studies in gender, sexuality, environment, and development.

About the Authors

Anindya Sinha, primarily based at the National Institute of Advanced Studies in Bangalore, India, had early research interests in the molecular biochemistry of yeast metabolism, the social biology of wasps, and the classical genetics of human disease. His principal research over the last three decades has, however, been on the behavioural ecology, cognitive ethology, population and behavioural genetics, evolutionary biology, and conservation studies of nonhuman primates. His current research interests in the natural philosophies, urban ecologies, and performance and heritage studies principally concern ethnographic explorations of human–nonhuman

74 Sinha, "Not in Their Genes," 58.

relations and the lived experiences of other-than-humans, with their promise of unique understandings of more-than-human lifeworlds, in the past, today and in the future.

Sayan Banerjee is a doctoral scholar at the National Institute of Advanced Studies in Bangalore, India. As part of his doctoral studies, he is exploring the nature of human–elephant relations at the forest–agriculture–plantation interface in rural Assam state, situated in northeastern India. Previously, Sayan has examined traditional hunting practices and cross-border wildlife trade, the nature of community participation in wildlife conservation programmes, and the gender implications of human–wildlife conflict, all in northeast India.

Mary E. Wilkins Freeman and the Erotohistoriography of Pets

Emma Thiébaud

Abstract

In ‘The Cat’ (1901), the American regionalist Mary E. Wilkins Freeman attempts to retrace an affective history of domestication, while coming to terms with the increasing regulation of queer affects that was taking place at the dawn of the twenty-first century. This leads her, this chapter argues, to experiment with a corporeal, sensuous method of doing history that queer theorists have since called ‘erotohistory’. Domestication and queerness sit at the intersection of private and public history, of feelings, corporeal sensations, and human politics – and Freeman’s feline tale reveals the importance of what the history of one could teach us about the history of the other.

Keywords: queer studies, erotohistoriography, regionalism, pets

Recently, queer theorists such as Elizabeth Freeman have developed a more corporeal, intimate, haptic, and private approach to public history: erotohistoriography, which can be defined as a sensory mode of apprehending history. Erotohistoriography, this chapter argues, may be an important tool when it comes to the history of pets, which finds itself at the intersection of private relationships between humans and animals and public animal history. By investigating what pet historian Katherine Grier calls the ‘domestic routines’ (mutual gestures, tools, sensations), which have been developed in human–animal couples or families and have produced the bodies and identities of pet and pet owner over time, this ‘erotohistory’ of pets will embody both the history of affects and domesticity and the history of domestication. It will also, we hope, reignite a desire and passion for such

a history, simply by reimbuing it with the pleasure (or hurt) that can be derived from pet–human relationships.¹

Because queer and interspecies couples or pairs have in common a lack of recognition, legal records, and established written codes for the expression of love, physical intimacy, and domestic arrangements, the historiography of one will benefit the other. As a case study, this essay takes into consideration an early attempt at an erotohistory of pets in the work of the once famous but long forgotten writer Mary E. Wilkins Freeman (1852–1930, no relation to Elizabeth Freeman). J. Samaine Lockwood has shown that Freeman belonged to a group of friends – artists and writers – who attempted to produce an erotohistory² of the New England ‘spinster’ by trying to find traces of alternative modes of coupling and of experiencing pleasure in the history of New England women (particularly of queer women).³ These artists and writers themselves were queer women, proto-lesbians, and, like prominent lesbian writer of historical novels Sarah Waters in the twenty-first century, wished to find themselves and their attraction to other women reflected in the record of past history.⁴ This led them to examine those women’s domestic routines, in the context of a nationwide attempt to regulate women’s bodies and temporalities. We might say today that they performed some early germination of Elizabeth Freeman’s erotohistoriography.

This chapter argues that M.E.W. Freeman and her friends were ‘resisting’ historians, who read the past with a desire for a silenced queerness.⁵ For most of them, this erotohistoriography began and ended with women. For M.E.W. Freeman, it included cats. This may read to some like historical revisionism, and it is. Such revisionism is not equal to reparation, but their oriented use of historical fiction interrogates the limits of history as practiced then and now.

1 Katherine C. Grier, *Pets in America: A History* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 58.

2 Not as such. Lockwood, to avoid putting the name of a recent concept on nineteenth-century amateur history and therefore committing the crime of historical revisionism, called what M.E.W. Freeman and her friends were doing ‘intimate historicism’. J. Samaine Lockwood, *Archives of Desire: The Queer Historical Work of New England Regionalism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015). Since M.E.W. Freeman does herself indulge in historical revisionism, and I am promoting her approach, I will cautiously embrace the term ‘erotohistoriography’.

3 . Lockwood, *Archives of Desire*, 8.

4 In the nineteenth-century, the term ‘lesbian’ referred to a pornographic trope that Freeman and her friends did not reclaim for themselves. It is difficult to inscribe their love of other women in modern taxonomies of sexualities and affective identities, hence my use of ‘proto-lesbians’.

5 See Fetterley’s concept of ‘resisting reader’ in: Judith Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1978).

As Freeman's correspondence shows, cats were an important part of her domestic life with her female companion, Mary Wales.⁶ The two Mary's and their cats formed a more-than-human Boston marriage, and both in her fiction and in her letters to her friend and beloved editor Mary Louise Booth, Freeman used cats to explore non-heterosexual feelings.⁷ In fact, she took as much interest in investigating the love of one woman for another, as she did the love one can have for cats. It is therefore no surprise that, when she began writing texts about felines, focused on the loving relationship between a pet keeper and his or her cat, she used the techniques elaborated by her group for erotohistoriography and repurposed them for an even more experimental form of eroto-pet-historiography.

In 'The Cat', the opening story of her 1901 collection, *Understudies*, devoted to both animals and plants, her human and feline characters enact rituals of affection, played out against the backdrop of a historically changing environment. This paper argues that the feelings that emerge from this (hi)story are queer, and allow domestication to be felt and conceptualized through a queer framework. In this respect, Freeman's approach of interspecies history is much closer to that of Katherine Grier or Marjorie Garber, who investigate the love that humans have for their pets, than to that of Erica Fudge or Kathleen Kete, who view the industry of pet-keeping through a much more social and critical lens. While affective approaches to animals have been criticized, particularly by Susan McHugh, I will defend some of their merits. This chapter seeks to retrieve this history of pets and domestication in 'The Cat' (1901 [1900]), her most accomplished example of eroto-pet-historiography.

Queer readings of M.E.W. Freeman's texts abound, but animal readings are rarer. My analysis owes much to Cécile Roudeau's ecocritical analysis of 'The Cat', in which she proposes a 'trans-temporal' discussion of Freeman's feline tale to emphasize its relevance in the field of environmental humanities.⁸ I hope to further her reading by examining how queerness is what renders

6 Freeman and Wales lived together for almost twenty years, before Freeman reluctantly married Charles Freeman and moved from her home with Wales in Massachusetts to New Jersey.

7 Queer feelings of course not being limited to sex or to romance, as we will see.

8 See in particular J. Samaine Lockwood in *Archives of Desire*; H.J.E. Champion in "Preposterous Fancies' or a 'Plain, Common World?' Queer World-Making in Mary E. Wilkins Freeman's 'The Prism' (1901)," in: M. Drizou, S. Palmer, and C. Roudeau, eds., *New Perspectives on Mary E. Wilkins Freeman: Reading with and Against the Grain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023), 60–75; Cécile Roudeau in "Untimely Freeman," in: M. Drizou, S. Palmer, and C. Roudeau, eds., *New Perspectives on Mary E. Wilkins Freeman: Reading with and Against the Grain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023), 253–71.

possible a spectral (both continuous and disjointed) conception of time. To do so, I will inscribe 'The Cat' in the historiographical discussions initiated by Elizabeth Freeman and add a sharper focus on pets, which by their very nature (as animals to stroke, hold, fondle) bring to life and touch the concept of eroto-pet-historiography. Moreover, because I am defending Freeman's approach to history, I will use a method inspired by erotohistoriography to read her text, and allow my desire for a queer history of human–cat couples guide my analysis.

A Love (Hi)Story of Mutual Domestication

During the first decades of her career, Freeman was primarily known for writing stories about rebellious or pathos-inspiring country women who feel bridled by an uncompromising society, obstinate husbands, and abstruse conventions, and find the inspiration to revolt in American history. *Understudies*, in that respect, is quite a turn: the first half of it is constituted entirely of animal stories, in which men as well as women find companionship with a cat, a monkey, a parrot, or a horse. It is underwritten both by an interest in the practice of petkeeping and by a curiosity for the up-and-coming zoological theories of Darwin, then almost fifty years in the public eye. However, this sudden interest in animals is not as much of a surprise to the careful reader of Freeman's cat stories, who knows how Freeman lavishes those purring creatures with narrative attention. 'The Cat' is a story of love and domestication. A cat, abandoned by his master in a sturdy but uncomfortable cabin in the mountains for the whole of winter, briefly welcomes a stranger who has suffered among men and needs to find some respite from their relentless and threatening presence. The cat tames the man by offering him a rabbit, and the man proves his tameness by cooking it for both of them. The two males then enjoy a winter idyll, before the stranger leaves and the cat's initial master returns – to the disappointment of the cat who had come to love the affectionate stranger.

There is a distinct (a-)historical consciousness to this story. The beginning of the text is marked by a conspicuous absence of any traces of industrialization, a grotesquely aristocratic organization of animals, and the presence of a pre-domestication cat who lives on his own in the wild and brutally preys on smaller animals. All of this suggests a premodern state of living.⁹

9 I will use 'Modern era' or 'modernity' to refer to what is usually termed 'late modernity', because, in the works of the New England regionalists I will discuss, the great historical shift is often the Civil War, the Second Revolution, and other events that marked the beginning or

Then, through the apparition of oil and tobacco in the cabin and continuous changes in the cat's behaviour, which reveal his progressive domestication, the text enters the Modern era. But social history is conspicuously absent. For Christopher Nealon and quite a few early queer theorists, history is 'the name we give to the impossibility of reconciling personal life with the movements of a total system' – society.¹⁰ In 'The Cat', social history appears only in the ellipses of the text. For instance, the cat's temporary companion carries with him 'the memories of wrong' from a past among men that has left him feeling misanthropic, but light is never thrown upon this past. Likewise, the cat's master is said to leave for the city during the winter, but the city is never described. The mountains and the cabin delineate a sort of state of nature, over which human society has no power – making the text feel curiously ahistorical.

Yet, there is history in 'The Cat'. It just happens to be animal history. The feline hero of Freeman's tale is also its main focalizer. The internal focalization allows the cat's thoughts, frustrations, and desires to be expressed. And while the cat's master is away, the text is free to abandon the anthropocentric, chronobiological time regulated by hours to adopt instead a more feline temporality.¹¹ The furry creature understands time as the pending satisfaction of his desires, as the lapse between his experience of desire and its satisfaction. His most important want, his lack and need of a master or partner, is what structures the chronology of the text, which can be divided as follows: desire for a master unsatisfied, desire satisfied, and desire for a partner unsatisfied. Interestingly, the (in)satisfaction of the cat's desires comes from the changes in seasons. The text begins during the winter, which forces the cat's master to leave the cabin, and ends in the spring, at which point the master returns.¹² The tension existing between seasonal time and the cat's personal life is (nonhuman) history, and the cat is a historical subject who experiences in his life through different (although cyclical) eras. This tension, I suggest, is particularly reflective of a queer experience of history.

the middle of the nineteenth -century. What I call 'premodern' is the regionalists' somewhat idealized vision of what New England was before these events.

10 Christopher Nealon, *Foundlings: Lesbian and Gay Historical Emotion before Stonewall* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 13.

11 Dana Luciano, *Arranging Grief: Sacred Time and the Body in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: NYU Press, 2007), 9.

12 Likewise, in what I interpret to be a malicious nod to the superiority of natural history over human history, products of the distant human society (oil, windows ...) are quickly exhausted or broken while natural resources (preys, flowers ...) are replenished once spring comes.

Elizabeth Freeman, Heather Love, Dana Luciano, and Peter Coviello have all addressed history in affective terms, trying to answer the question of what history feels like to a queer person. For Heather Love, the marching forward of the heteronormative society of nineteenth-century America, which began pathologizing and re-outlawing homosocial sexual relationships, caused umpteen amounts of hurt to sexually non-normative individuals.¹³ For them, ‘history’ (as I defined it earlier with Nealon) might have felt like heartbreak, loneliness, and frustration. This is exactly what it feels like to our feline hero. At the scale of the cat, history is one of thwarted queer love. And at the scale of the text, history is one of mutual domestication. Pets, in late nineteenth-century America, belonged to the domestic and affective sphere of life. Many anti-cruelty campaigns and animal biographies were predicated on the belief that domestic cats had feelings, moods, and emotions.¹⁴ Imagining that a pet would be affected by the coming and going of humans in its life would be a comforting thought for nineteenth-century pet owners. Fiction allows us to take a step further and ask whether the lack of synchrony between human obligations and feline desires be, to the heights of an animal’s life, history.

The love story between the man and the cat, when replaced in the context of the transition from the premodern to the Modern era, becomes a history of (mutual) domestication, at the intersection of the private and the public, where domestication sits. It uses a queerly feeling of frustration, hurt, and maladaptation to transition from a human consciousness to a more animal one. The cyclicity of seasons echoes the cyclicity of nineteenth-century domestic times, and the cabin, with the rituals that take place within it, stands as a domestic space. In the cabin, the cat and the man change, as a result of a process of domestication. The feline creature we encounter in the first paragraphs is a fierce hunter, who lives on his own in the wild and brutally preys on smaller animals. When a human intruder comes into his cabin, the reader might expect him to attack. And yet, he instead decides to offer him the rabbit he has just killed:

The Cat came out from under the bed and leapt up on his lap with the rabbit. The man gave a great shout and start of terror, and sprang, and the Cat slid clawing to the floor, and the rabbit fell inertly, and the man

13 Heather Love, “Gyn/Apology: Sarah Orne Jewett’s Spinster Aesthetics”, *ESQ* 55 (2009), 305–34, 310.

14 Grier, *Pets in America*, 174–75.

leant gasping with fright, and ghastly, against the wall. The Cat grabbed the rabbit by the slack of its neck and dragged it to the man's feet.¹⁵

This offering of food is a crucial moment in the evolution of the cat's relationship with the man. In the mountains, prey is scarce. Yet, the cat shares his hard-earned meal, and the stranger cooks it for both of them. From an anthrozoological perspective, the tolerance of proximity to people and the reliance of animals on humans for food and shelter are key elements of domestication, and anthrozoologists often consider a major change of diet to be a proof of achieved domestication – a fact that M.E.W. Freeman, like Kipling and many others, seems to have been intuitively (although approximately) aware of.¹⁶ The cat's willingness to share his humble abode with his human companion and to eat cooked meat works as evidence of his domestication. In just a few paragraphs, the wild cat has become domestic, and even turned into a pet who is stroked and coddled. Strikingly, however, the domestication is mutual and initiated by the cat in M.E.W. Freeman's story. *He* (the cat) offers the rabbit, and as a result of the domestication process the misanthropic man learns to live with the loving feline and becomes more humane. The man's cooking of the rabbit might be considered as proof of the successful domestication of humans (here, by cats). This view, which belongs both to a romanticization of species relations and to a narrative of defiance against human stewardship, foreshadows more contemporary claims regarding the agency of social animals and particularly of cats in the history of domestication.¹⁷

The Erotohistoriographic Project

M.E.W. Freeman's historical project in 'The Cat' starts as an exploration of non-heteronormative affects and a radical re-imagining of interspecies relationships. J. Samaine Lockwood has described the writerly group

15 Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, "The Cat," *Understudies* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1901), 10. While *Understudies* is currently out of print, a digitized version is available on The Internet Archive at: <https://archive.org/details/understudiesshooofreegoog/page/n29/mode/zup?view=theater>.

16 Carlos A. Driscoll, David W. McDonald, and Stephen J. O'Brien, "From Wild Animals to Domestic Pets, an Evolutionary View of Domestication," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 106 (2009), 9971–78, 9972.

17 See Eric Baratay in "Eric Baratay, historien : 'Les chats ont toujours été dans les foyers des hommes,'" *Les Têtes Chercheuses*, France Culture, August 22, 2015. Susan McHugh, "Literary Animal Agents," *PMLA* (2009) 487–95.

Freeman was part of as 'self-aware historicists' trying to engage intimately with the past (particularly as experienced by women in their private lives) and to weave the public history of New England with the more intimate history of its inhabitants.¹⁸ Elizabeth Bishop Perkins, Sarah Orne Jewett and others, for instance, developed a fascination for old houses and the way women had corporeally related to them, or the relationships they had maintained within them.

Like Perkins and Jewett, M.E.W. Freeman used the domestic space as a stage where 'sequence[s] of embodied gestures and accompanying sensations' happen or are performed to figure a corporeal experience of history.¹⁹ In other words, they saw houses as spaces in which the intimate history of women could be re-enacted, and these re-enactments were, for them, a source of (physical) pleasure. To write about the 'intimate historicism' of the regionalists, Lockwood borrows from the queer theorist Elizabeth Freeman the concept of 'erotohistoriography'. Erotohistoriography conceives of the past as something that does not need to be brought back to the present because it already inhabits it and can be felt by performing certain acts and feeling certain sensations. Erotohistoriography is a particularly apt tool for the preservation of the history of queer affects and relationships, as it allows queer people to maintain the (corporeal) memory and urgency of their past independently and without relying on the tools of traditional, written history. Queer and animal histories share a lack (not an absence) of historical sources encoded in a language easily translated into the language of history. M.E.W. Freeman and her group of amateur historians sought to remedy that problem by reading bodies, senses, and postures. Thus, in a transhistoric Maine, Sarah Orne Jewett's characters form blissful homosocial domestic partnerships, carrying through the ages a form of premodern queer relation to the domestic space and to other individuals.²⁰ Similarly, some of M.E.W. Freeman's most emblematic heroines revel in the spinsterly pleasure of ordering their house without the bothersome presence of a husband.

'The Cat' retraces a history of love and physical affection between humans and their animal companions from a non-specific premodernity to the industrially Modern era. An immanent and transhistoric relationship is created by the regular performing of such rituals as sharing a meal and

18 Lockwood, *Archives of Desire*, 8.

19 Ibid., 9.

20 Premodern queerness here refers to loving affects that do not fit into heteronormative courting, flirting, or marriage, and that have not yet been reduced to the then very disparaging (and unfitting) term 'homosexuality'.

sleeping together. Coviello's remarks in his introduction to *Tomorrow's Parties* are useful here: about Jewett, he writes that, to avoid being flattened out by the heteronormative driving force of late nineteenth-century history, Jewett's texts take place at the margins of history, in rural areas that Modern society supposedly has not reached yet.²¹ This is presumably one of the reasons why 'The Cat' takes place at the edges of the human world.

M.E.W. Freeman and Jewett inscribe their narratives in a premodern time where the medicalization and criminalization of queer relationships has yet to happen – and, for 'The Cat', where the exploitation of animals by humans is almost inexistent. Upon hearing that an unknown man is about to enter the cabin, the cat seems to know he will not be attacked and offers 'comradeship', as if he lived in a utopian world where species differences have not yet been attached to an anthropocentric order. M.E.W. Freeman is and has always been considered a realist. Yet, she creates in 'The Cat' and other stories alternative temporalities: out-of-time moments that allow radically different, very imaginative ways of living with others and with the nonhuman world. For all the grizzly realism of 'The Cat', the temporal parenthesis of the love story between the title character and a human stranger is also a beautiful tale of anti-speciesism, anti-anthropocentrism, and queer love.

M.E.W. Freeman and Jewett do not simply try to recover history. Drawing on the work of Cécile Roudeau's 'Untimely Freeman', I will argue that they also conjure up 'broken-off, uncreated futures' of radical interspeciesism.²² When the cat's initial master returns, change has happened, as if the history of the house was interspersed with different eras. However, this history is silent, almost spectral. The master finds his tobacco box empty, his stove lid broken, his window repaired, his firewood exhausted, and his oil can also empty. Donna Haraway might call these traces of the past 'material-semiotic' remnants.²³ All of these objects point toward the domestic routines ('sequence[s] of embodied gestures') that the cat and the man have shared and to the sensations that have accompanied them: the pleasure of smoking, of cooking and eating together.

These archives tell us of the story of the interspecies couple's intimacy. But what is most interesting about them is their absent presence: the

21 Peter Coviello, *Tomorrow's Parties: Sex and the Untimely in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: NYU Press, 2013), 81.

22 Coviello, *Tomorrow's Parties*, 20. These words are quoted by Cécile Roudeau in "Untimely Freeman."

23 Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 413.

master understands that change has happened because what should be there ... is not. Absence, or rather what is missing, is the only trace of the loving relationship that the cat and his temporary companion had. To use Haraway's words: 'We are, constitutively, companion species. We make each other up, in the flesh. Significantly other to each other, in specific difference, we signify in the flesh a nasty developmental infection called love. This love is a *historical aberration* and a natureculture legacy' (my emphasis).²⁴ Freeman's very desirable past is anachronous, never really realized, aberrant. It is what could have been and maybe what should have been. Instead, M.E.W. Freeman and we are left with the fleshly wound of this unrealized possibility of radical interspecies love and relationships. This is what Roudeau calls the 'untimely present', a constant dialogue or tension between different temporalities: M.E.W. Freeman's, the reader's, what was and what could have been.

M.E.W. Freeman's characters feel this unrealized past vibrating in their bodies – and this is where the 'untimely present' becomes entangled with erotohistoriography. The way the old master discovers or recovers the traces of the cat's relationship with the winter visitor is linked to corporeality. When he comes back home after his long absence, the master 'searches for'²⁵ his tobacco. The verb is imprecise enough to refer both to sight and to touch, and the passage does not entirely clarify the use of this verb for us. Moreover, the man is characterized in a way that ties his emotional insensitivity to a dulled sense of touch (the polysemy of 'sensitivity' is important). The man is 'callous', both in his soul and in his senses.²⁶ Just as New England regionalists engaged with history through their bodies, the master engages with the past of his house, with the (pseudo-)history of domestication, and with the love story of the cat, through his senses. He feels the absence of things in his house. Roudeau, referring to the complex temporalities of deforestation in M.E.W. Freeman's sylvan tales, speaks of a 'spectral temporality of embodied loss'.²⁷ What M.E.W. Freeman's present lacks and what her characters miss, she suggests, is a physical and emotional bond with trees – 'entanglement'.²⁸ Upon his old master's return, the cat regrets the former's 'affection' for him.²⁹ M.E.W. Freeman writes: 'He never

24 Ibid., 16. Words quoted by Roudeau in 'Untimely Freeman', 265.

25 Freeman, "The Cat," 16.

26 Freeman, "The Cat", 15.

27 Roudeau, "Untimely Freeman," 265.

28 Ibid.

29 Freeman, "The Cat", 15.

patted him like that gentler outcast'.³⁰ They neither eat nor sleep together. The loss of the intensely close and affectionate relationships the cat and his companion had is corporeal, sensual, embodied – even for the master who does not quite understand what has happened in his absence and cannot fathom what is truly missing from his life. Our senses, the text suggests, contain the memory of an unrealized past made of interspecies entanglements.

In her first reading of 'The Cat', Roudeau laments that the story seemingly ends very conservatively, as the cat and the master retreat to their initial, separate positions in the cabin: 'Finally he *gave it up*. He sat down beside the fire, for May in the mountains is cold; he held his empty pipe in his mouth, his rough forehead knitted, and he and the Cat looked at each other across that impassable barrier of silence which has been set between man and beast from the creation of the world' (my emphasis).³¹ Giving up implies that the man ultimately refuses to try and understand the past he can feel through his dulled senses. Once the reader has been told the story of the cat, however, when they can sense what is missing in their life, the radical interspeciesism of the text is within literal reach. The story creates such heartbreak that one can only rebel against its conclusion. In a pre-Foucauldian understanding of the history of affects and affective identities, M.E.W. Freeman creates a 'feline continuum' that she then uses to explore alternative ways of being-with other creatures.

Queer and Interspecies Futurities

I propose that we do not take the conclusion of M.E.W. Freeman's story at face value. Instead, we might want to let the above-mentioned angered disappointment and the desire for interspecies love guide our second reading of the text. H.J.E. Champion, an avid spotter of queerly references in nineteenth-century American literature, has read some of M.E.W. Freeman's stories as imaginings of what José Esteban Muñoz calls 'queer futurities' (but without the interspecies focus I am bringing).³² For her, the gaps, leaps, and delays that can be found in Freeman's work, and most particularly in 'The Prism', a tale of female sexuality grown 'sideways', disrupt the

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid., 16; Roudeau, "Untimely Freeman," 258.

32 José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: NYU Press, 2009).

chrononormativity of nineteenth-century reproductive futurism.³³ To put it differently, they allow characters not to obey the heteronormative timeline that consists in courting or being courted by a member of the opposite sex and marrying them, before begetting children and therefore contributing to the perpetuation of American society (and, at a species level, to the perpetuation of humanity).

If the future is not reproductive, then, how or what is it? For Muñoz, a queer future is a ‘the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality’, moments of contemplation when one looks back at a scene from one’s past, present or future.³⁴ It is non-linear, reflexive, and it is vibrating with what could have been or what could be. Champion insists on that last part, presenting queer futurity as a horizon of liberation. In the case of ‘The Cat’, a queer future could be the end of an anthropocentric humanity (or a return to what appears as a utopian and revisionist pre-speciesism of shared animality, influenced both by Darwinism and by nineteenth-century feelings of attachment to pets, depending on what vantage point we adopt in the non-linear temporality of queerness). After some of the most important queer theorists, Champion defines ‘queerness’ as resistance to a norm – a definition that accounts for the entire evolution of the signification of the word ‘queer’ during the nineteenth-century, from simple peculiarity to nonnormative sexualities.³⁵

Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse find both in Freeman’s stories: characters who develop strange obsessions or abnormal behaviours (peccoliar), and characters who experience and practice a sexuality that is not heteronormative³⁶ – because sexuality, in M.E.W. Freeman’s work, takes on manifold appearances: a compulsive desire to clean one’s house, a very intense love for one’s pet, a childlike attachment to an object, a close proximity to nature ... M.E.W. Freeman writes what Peter Coviello has termed ‘the varied passions’ of the nineteenth century, which include the love for or desire of the non-human (be it animal, vegetal, or material).³⁷ In that wide array of ‘deviant’ love- and desire-related affects, subjects, and objects, to care about animals (like the heroine of the eponymous tale ‘Christmas Jenny’) and to have intense affection for one’s pet (like the human companion in ‘The Cat’) is one form of queer love or queer sexuality.³⁸

33 H.J.E. Champion, “Preposterous Fancies,” 65.

34 Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 1, 32.

35 Champion, “Preposterous Fancies,” 61–62.

36 Fetterley and Pryse, *Writing Out of Place*.

37 Peter Coviello, *Tomorrow’s Parties*, 4.

38 Freeman, “Christmas Jenny,” *Harper’s Bazaar*, December 22, 1888, 872–73. A digitized version has been preserved by the Cornell University Library at: <https://reader.library.cornell>.

In Freeman's oeuvre, the love of one's same-sex domestic partner and the love of animals are expressed in the same language as two equally non-normative affects. In 'The Cat', the winter visitor and his feline lover are queer subjects having a queer relationship – and their relationship has no reproductive futurity. But what about queer futurity? The end of 'The Cat' need not be the end of the relationship. As we have seen with Roudeau, there is a non-strictly linear temporality in the text: what could have been or could be spectrally remains. The cat is able to meditate from different vantage points on all the episodes of his life. The future of this interspecies couple might even be the horizon of liberation described by Champion in her analysis of 'The Prism': the end of the perpetuation of species through reproduction, and therefore a (darkly) posthuman world where the only way to perpetuate one's species is to spread it horizontally, to make (odd)kin with cats, dogs, birds, to enter what Roudeau terms 'queer assemblages'.³⁹

Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse rightfully suggest that we include 'Christmas Jenny' in the list of Freeman's queer stories, for its oddity. I contend that 'Christmas Jenny' is queer because it presents the caring love of animals as a personally valuable alternative to marriage, and also because it blurs the border of species to the point of creating a community of non-normative humans – Jenny, the bush-woman; Jonas, the man who only produces animal groans; a deaf and dumb boy who lives among the birds and rabbits that Jenny shelters; and Mrs. Casey, who flutters like a bird when she has to defend Jenny, but also speaks on her behalf as if she was a nineteenth-century animal activist.⁴⁰ The members of this community are neither only human nor only animal. Instead, they exist in an ontological flux of humanimality. 'Christmas Jenny', however, appears as a much more straightforwardly hopeful story than 'The Cat' – in part because Jenny offers shelter to what seems to be an abandoned orphan. That creature, a boy dressed in girl's clothes who lives among animals and can neither speak nor hear (which makes him as unintelligible as his nonhuman friends) is the future of Jenny's interspecies community. The two lovers of 'The Cat', on the contrary, have not been blessed with an adoptive offspring. M.E.W. Freeman's feline tale is infused with a sense of doom even as spring returns. And yet, it causes a desire to love, touch, and hold.

edu/docviewer/digital?id=hearth4732809_1455_051#page/3/mode/1up.

39 Donna Haraway, *Staying With the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 2.

40 Speaking for those who supposedly did not have a voice was the leitmotiv of the animal activist movement of the second half of the nineteenth-century in the United States and in England.

The sense of doom that pervades several of M.E.W. Freeman's queer texts, such as the crime story 'The Long Arm' (1895), might have to do with the growing homophobia that queer people like M.E.W. Freeman were facing in the late nineteenth-century, in the wake of the trials of Oscar Wilde and of the medicalization by German and French psychoanalysts of 'inverts' and 'homosexuals'. In 'The Cat', the relationship between the feline creature and the human visitor can be read as a metaphor for a (male) same-sex couple. The gendering of the two lovers, the blurring of gender roles in their distribution of the domestic space, and the cryptic references to the visitor's past point in this direction. The cat's loneliness and frustration are not only the feelings of a pet confronted to the loss of a master, but also that of a queer person experiencing the repression of 'homosexual' behaviours. In that respect, this story by M.E.W. Freeman foreshadows the later works of twentieth-century authors such as J.R. Ackerley, who, as Susan McHugh highlights, drew parallels between the increasing intolerance affecting the sexuality of pets and the criminalization of gay relationships.⁴¹

Mary E. Wilkins Freeman's 'The Cat' weaves together queer and interspecies affects and uses the latter to lament and counter the criminalization of the former. At the end of the nineteenth century, 'The Cat' explored the possibility of a queer and interspecies approach of history, using romantic narratives as a template for an affective history of affects. It proposed a new epistemology for the exploration and narrativization of a field yet to come. To some historians, maybe the most important contribution made by 'The Cat' to a history of pets is its use of contemporary knowledge of evolution and processes of domestication (still very much in progress for cats in 1901), as well as the testimony it offers to the affective discourse that then guided understanding of animals. In that respect, it is a very interesting source to examine in relation to such histories of pets as Katherine Grier's. Yet, I have tried to show that its peculiar methodology, which pertains both to case analysis and to presentation of results, is what most deserves our attention. Borrowed from the contiguous queer erotohistoriography of Freeman's friends, it contributes to what I tentatively call a 'utopian history of pets and queerness' and begs important questions about the role and value of history in seemingly futureless times.

41 Susan McHugh, *Narrating across Species Lines* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 2011), 131.

About the Author

Emma Thiébaud is a PhD student at LARCA (Université Paris Cité). She studies the representation of pets in the work of nineteenth-century American authors from a queer perspective, trying to determine how queer and interspecies affects might intersect. She contributed to the organization of the international conference 'Freeman in Paris' held by LARCA at Université Paris Cité in 2022, and presented her latest work on Mary E. Wilkins Freeman at the 2023 annual conference of the American Literary Association.

Riot Dogs as Gendered Revolutionary Symbols

Annika Hugosson

Abstract

'Riot dogs' have recently come to be symbols of revolution, stemming from protests in Greece and Chile, respectively, which saw free-living street dogs join humans in protests and remain despite harmful deterrents. A distinct notion of sociopolitical belonging was conferred upon these dogs by their respective communities which was linked to ascription of agency, commitment to activism, and adherence to a particular ideology. Interestingly, the five riot dogs who were named by their communities and subsequently gained the attention of international media have all been male. This discourse analysis begins with introducing the known riot dogs and the contexts in which they were active, and then moves to considering a perceived gender division of revolution. I then analyse how these dogs' stories have been told and suggest they are informed by gendered expectations, with a focus on the most famous riot dog, Negro Matapacos of Chile. Ultimately, I suggest that part of these dogs' symbolic legacies is anthropomorphically linked to a perceived embodiment of masculinity. I theorize that emphasizing 'maleness' over 'dogness' could perpetuate notions of a gender division in revolution and obfuscate women's participation in social protest.

Keywords: dogs, gender constructs, discourse analysis, anthropomorphism

What began peacefully – protesters walking through streets with signs and banners – had turned to chaos. Sirens wailed; helicopters circled. Tear gas left many doubled over, coughing violently, their chants muted, as they struggled to breathe through noxious fumes. Water cannons further scattered the crowds as police held their ground, riot shields in place. Those protesters,

undeterred by the water and mace, hurled what projectiles they found at their feet – odd bits of metal, bricks – towards the police, still tightly huddled behind shields. Suddenly, the officers, in full tactical gear, burst from their coalition, running at the protesters. Humvees laid on horns, trying to push through as protesters used their bodies as shields. Screams rang out as police tackled protesters against concrete, leaving several bleeding from the head.

These were mostly students, both from high schools and universities, leading protests to end for-profit education in Chile during protests lasting from 2011–2013. Sixteen-year-old Manuel Gutierrez Reinoso would die after suffering gunshot wounds to the chest from an officer's gun.¹ Despite risk of injury or even death, thousands took to the streets to campaign for access to affordable education, risking their bodies. Notably, not all these protesters were human. On the front lines of these violent clashes, dogs, aligned with the protesters, challenged police. Blasted by water cannons with such force that they were sometimes knocked down, these dogs regained their footing and, rather than retreating, continued to advance towards heavily armed police officers. It defies what might be expected of canine behaviour. Some say these dogs were students, reincarnated. One dog's name and likeness would outlive him, as he became the symbol not only of 2019 protests in Chile, but also of other revolutionary causes around the world.

Negro Matapacos' Legacy in Chile and Beyond

'Negro Matapacos', whose name translates to 'black cop killer', was named for the colour of his fur and his behaviour towards *pacos*: Chilean slang for 'policemen'.² He is not a particularly large dog, nor is he any discernible breed, he is a *quiltro*, a 'mongrel' or mixed-breed street dog.³ As a *quiltro*, his appearance is not particularly unique nor objectively intimidating, and perceptions of him likely would not be influenced by cross-cultural stereotypes related to so-called aggressive breeds – it is his behaviour that makes him so remarkable. Negro Matapacos (henceforth, NM) first joined student-led protests in Santiago, Chile, in 2011. The scene described in the introduction is from the documentary film *Matapaco* (2013), which focused

1 Miguel Fonseca Carrillo. "De la militarización a la democratización: sobre la Justicia Militar, el Rol de Carabineros y las Políticas de Seguridad en Chile," *Rumbos* 9, no. 9 (2014): 140–50.

2 Billy Anania, "The Cop-Attacking Chilean Dog Who Became a Worldwide Symbol of Protest," *Hyperallergic*, 5 November 5, 2019, <https://hyperallergic.com/526687/negro-matapacos-chilean-protest-dog/>.

3 "Quiltro – Wiktionary," <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/quiltro>.

on NM's symbolic role and behaviour during these protests. It said that NM would join street marches and attack members of the Chilean national police force.⁴ One of the most circulated images of NM, a photograph that has since been memorialized by various artists, shows him, wearing his archetypal red bandana, baring his teeth inches away from a Carabiniero armed with a riot shield; '[a] symbol of revolt in black and red – the colours of anarcho-syndicalism'.⁵ Seen from another angle, NM is surrounded by Carabineros, one of whom is armed with a baton, ready to strike. He remained active on the streets from 2011 until he died of natural causes related to old age on August 26, 2017, surrounded by his caregivers.⁶

NM's legacy did not die with his physical body. Many regard him as a legend, a symbol of valour, and as a patron saint; street altars dedicated to him remain today in Chile. One mural shows NM flanked by flowers, a halo around his head, with the text 'Negro Matapacos, santo patrono de la manifestaciones y los perritos de la calle' ('Negro Matapacos, patron saint of protests and of street dogs').⁷ When protests were ongoing in Chile in 2019, regarding concerns about cost of living and socioeconomic inequality, Chileans in Japan draped a red bandana onto the statue of the famous Akita Hachikō to pay homage to NM. Images of NM also appeared in 2019 protests in New York City.⁸ Outrage over a Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) fare increase spurred protests, and throughout subway stations, stickers of a cartoonized NM were smoothed onto train cars. The stickers showed NM jumping a turnstile with the message 'EVADE'.⁹ 'Riot dogs', 'street dogs' who accompany protestors and stay despite violence, have come to be prominent symbols of resistance across the world. Notably, police have long

4 Edgardo Zouza, "El Negro Matapacos: el perro que odiaba a los carabineros de Chile," *La Izquierda Diario – Red internacional*, October 25, 2019, <http://www.laizquierdadiario.cl/El-Negro-Matapacos-el-perro-que-odiaba-a-los-carabineros-de-Chile>.

5 Anania, "The Cop-Attacking Chilean Dog."

6 Belén Armand, "Murió el legendario 'Negro Matapacos'," *La Izquierda Diario – Red internacional*, August 27, 2017, http://www.laizquierdadiario.cl/Murio-el-legendario-Negro-Matapacos?id_rubrique=1201.

7 FMDOS, "La historia tras el 'Negro Matapacos': el símbolo del estallido social," November 7, 2019, <https://www.fmdos.cl/noticias/la-historia-tras-el-negro-matapacos-el-simbolo-del-estallido-social/>.

8 Hachikō (1923–1935) waited for his owner, Hidesaburō Ueno, for over nine years at a train station after Ueno died at work. Hachikō faithfully visited the station daily until he himself died. Stephen Messenger, "Rare Photo Surfaces of Hachiko, The World's Most Loyal Dog," *The Dodo*, November 9, 2015, <https://www.thedodo.com/rare-photo-of-loyal-dog-hachiko-1446468544.html>.

9 Katie Shepherd, "'Putting Dozens of Lives at Risk over \$2.75': NYPD Slammed for Pulling Guns on Fare-Hopping Teen," *Washington Post*, October 28, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/10/28/nypd-video-guns-pointed-subway-train-unarmed-fare-hopper/>.

weaponized dogs to quell protests. These dogs, typically purebred, symbolize intimidation, in contrast to the mixed-breed street dogs aligned with societal underdogs.¹⁰ Riot dogs are considered agents: active participants who have ‘chosen’ a side. The inherent vulnerability of street dogs, their ‘mongrelness’ vis-à-vis pedigreed police dogs, and a shared marginality with protesters are central themes within the construction of riot dogs.

The Riot Dogs of Greece

Although NM is the best-known riot dog internationally, the first documented case of this phenomenon appeared in Athens, Greece. Three named dogs, Kanellos, Thodoris, and Loukanikos, gained traction on social media, with Loukanikos even commemorated in *TIME*'s ‘2011 Person of the Year’ feature. While NM’s name is literal and quite polarizing, the Greek dogs’ names bring levity: Loukanikos translates to ‘sausage’; Kanellos translates to ‘cinnamon’; Thodoris is a popular male Greek name. A similarly iconic image as the one described of NM, in which he alone confronts armed police officers with his teeth bared, is one of Loukanikos. In the photo, he approaches a line of police, each of whom carries a baton in one hand and a riot shield in the other. Fully armoured and masked as they prepare to fire tear gas, they march towards the lone protester in frame: Loukanikos. This is arguably the photo most emblematic of Greece’s riot dogs, and ample video footage of Loukanikos shows this behaviour was consistent for him. When human protesters approached police, Loukanikos would always seem to emerge ahead of the front line. When human protesters yelled and chanted, Loukanikos barked with them, never *at* them – always in the direction of the police. He cleverly dodged flash grenades but only retreated insofar as necessary, never leaving the action; ‘Protesters said he would often stand with them during bouts of unrest and protect people by grabbing tear gas canisters and pushing them away’.¹¹ Another photo shows him being kicked in the stomach by a police officer, yet he did not retreat thereafter.

At risk of anthropomorphizing a very complex intentionality, Loukanikos seemed to, innately, act in solidarity with Greek protesters, just as NM is

¹⁰ I would be remiss not to note that police and military dogs did not *choose* this work. Though I encapsulate a broad category of ‘police and military dogs’ here for sake of brevity, it is vital to acknowledge the lack of choice these dogs have in wearing this label.

¹¹ Heather Saul, “Greece’s Most Famous Riot Dog Has Died,” *The Independent*, October 9, 2014, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/loukanikos-dead-news-of-greek-riot-dogs-death-prompts-outpouring-of-tributes-9784695.html>.

described as doing. With no owner to leash him or order commands, he *chose* to attend marches and risk bodily harm. A particularly compelling anecdote tells how Loukanikos was once ‘confused’ when a policemen’s union, striking against low salaries, clashed with riot police. With both sides comprised of uniformed officers, Loukanikos was unsure until the riot police attacked their striking colleagues. According to eyewitnesses, at this point Loukanikos knew to side with the police who were being attacked.¹² Regardless of intention, which we can never know, this is how he was perceived and remembered: a dog of the people. He was present ‘at nearly every outbreak of mass class struggle and social disorder in Athens up until 2012, when he was adopted and retired outside the city. He died peacefully in his sleep in 2014, aged around 10’, having battled health issues related to inhaling tear gas.¹³ Loukanikos symbolically took the place of Kanellos, who was active between 2008–2010. Though Kanellos was the first, Loukanikos is arguably the most commemorated of the Greek trio, perhaps because Kanellos unwittingly established a ‘riot dog’ niche that the global media was eager to consume. Of the three, the least seems to be known about Thodoris, but he resembled Kanellos and is believed to be one of his offspring. Kanellos, Loukanikos, and NM were each eventually adopted and ‘retired’ off the streets to live indoors.

Street dogs occupy distinct perceptual categories across cultures: they are neither pets nor wildlife, and their categorizations change depending on their perceived positions in human society.¹⁴ Srinivasan’s research in urban India brought her to consider a notion of more-than-human citizenship with respect to free-living dogs and their political belonging. Relatedly, Mary Zournazi’s documentary tells a story of street dogs in Athens: ‘There are many dogs in Athens, many homeless dogs, despite the fact that they’re homeless, they’re well fed, and they’re well taken care of [...] the dogs are cherished and it’s a coexistence of two species, humans and street animals here [...]’¹⁵ Zournazi goes on to proclaim Loukanikos ‘a citizen of Athens, a dog with commitment, a symbol of the anti-austerity movement’. Considering an idea of more-than-human citizenship and political belonging

12 Karlo Krystaller, “Ο Μαύρος Καπιταλισμός * The Black Capitalism * Der Schwarze Kapitalismus * Il Capitalismo Nero: Ο ΚΑΝΕΛΛΟΣ ΚΑΙ Ο ΘΟΔΩΡΗΣ ΛΟΥΚΑΝΙΚΟΣ,” *Ο Μαύρος Καπιταλισμός * The Black Capitalism * Der Schwarze Kapitalismus * Il Capitalismo Nero*, January 6, 2012.

13 BBC News, “Famous Greek Riot Dog Dies,” *BBC News*, October 10, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29565725>.

14 Krithika Srinivasan, “Remaking More-than-Human Society: Thought Experiments on Street Dogs as ‘Nature,’” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 44, no. 2 (1 June 2019): 376–91.

15 *In Search of Loukanikos: Greece’s Famous Protest Dog*, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-wKN4Nhywus>.

with respect to Loukanikos – a ‘citizen of Athens’ – what conferred his citizenship? His political belonging appears to depend on ascription of agency, commitment to activism, and adherence to a particular ideology.

A (Perceived) Gender Division of Revolution and Power

Throughout 2019, Chilean protesters reported egregious human rights violations at the hands of security forces including torture, rape, and other instances of sexual assault. Rape was reportedly threatened against women to deter them from participating in the protests.¹⁶ Women were arrested and stripped naked in front of men, although the law states they should be searched in front of women officers. Murillo spoke to a psychologist in Santiago who stated, of women detainees: ‘All of them have been touched in the genitals, the breasts; several have had either the tip or the butt of a rifle inserted in their vagina and have been told they will be raped in the ass, that they will be treated as whores, that they are going to be raped and then killed’.¹⁷

Intimidation, humiliation, fear, violation of one’s body – these are regrettably common elements in cases of sexual violence used as a weapon by those in power. And despite these threats, women in Chile continued to risk their bodies. To invisibilize their resistance in the face of such appalling violence is irresponsible at best, and yet, as Kay argues, media accounts may not do justice to these stories. Kay suggests that recognizing and confronting gender roles is crucial to understanding protest, and media narrations thereof:

The gendered descriptions of protest as reported by the news is also reflected in how protests are later remembered [...] The misrepresentation of women’s actions is therefore problematic for protest movements, fictionalizing events in order to conform to gender binaries. Where actions themselves are not altered, women are often rendered invisible [...]¹⁸

It is difficult to find reliable data on protest because researchers tend to analyse media reports, which fundamentally lack demographic data.¹⁹ This

16 Celeste Murillo, “Chilean Protesters Report Beatings and Sexual Assault By Military and Riot Police,” *Left Voice*, October 24, 2019, <http://www.leftvoice.org/chile-reports-of-abuse-and-threats-of-rape-against-imprisoned-protesters>.

17 *Ibid.*, 1.

18 Joseph Kay, “Gender and Protest,” *libcom.org*, 2012, <http://libcom.org/library/gender-protest>.

19 Wolfgang Rüdiger and Georgios Karyotis, “Who Protests in Greece? Mass Opposition to Austerity,” *British Journal of Political Science* 44, no. 3 (2014), 80.

gap in the quantitative data around protest allows for underrepresenting women's roles. With this methodological challenge in mind, Rüdig and Karyotis surveyed Greek adults, both participants and non-participants of political protest, and found that 'gender features surprisingly strongly for participation in strikes' and 'women are particularly noticeable among new recruits in strike action'.²⁰

With these ideas in mind – the inherent risk involved for women in protest, the sexual violence committed against women protesters, and the lack of media attention paid to their participation despite this risk – let us return to consider the symbolism of riot dogs, and consider the gendering of their narrated intentionalities and stories. All of the five named, recognized riot dogs – recognized in the sense that they have been named by the media and thereby come to be known to a wide audience – are male dogs. Where are the female riot dogs? Surely, this could be mere coincidence. A sample size of five dogs, all of whom happen to be male, does not indicate a conspiracy to invisibilize female participation in protest. I do not suggest that there have been female riot dogs who have gone unacknowledged because of their sex. But could the worldwide fame of male dogs like Loukanikos and NM, and the telling of their stories in an anthropomorphic, masculinized way, subliminally reinforce the cautions presented by Kay related to women's roles in protest being diminished and invisibilized?

To better consider this question, especially since we have no female riot dogs for comparison, it is worth framing this by considering the raid targeting Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in Syria in October 2019. With United States media abuzz with the news of Baghdadi's death, there was also excitement about a dog's 'participation' in the deadly raid.²¹ President Donald Trump tweeted a celebratory photo of the dog and spoke to the media, calling the dog 'a good boy' and using masculine pronouns to discuss the dog. Media reporting on the dog used masculine pronouns, assuming, as Trump did, that this brave soldier was surely male. Once the dog's identity was declassified as female, discourse related to the story changed. The symbolism of the dog changed given the gendered religious context. Photos of the dog, named

²⁰ Ibid., 39.

²¹ 'Participation' is in scare quotes here because, again, the nature of this dog's actions compared to the actions of the riot dogs is quite different with respect to agency and consent. While riot dogs are admired for commitment to moral causes, a *choice* to consistently, reliably participate despite the risk involved: a highly trained, specially bred military dog executing a mission is doing so not as an agent but as a soldier who did not *choose* to become a soldier. This is an inherently coercive relationship, which differs tremendously from the relationship that riot dogs have with their respective communities.

Conan, with captions like ‘Girl Power!’ began circulating. A member of the Trump campaign advisory board tweeted, ‘It appears the dog is female [...] talk about an even more painful reality for ISIS followers’.²²

‘To see animals at all is to see them *as* something,’ writes Baker, who continues, ‘[a]nimals quite obviously cannot and do not [...] represent themselves to human viewers. It is man who defines and represents them, and he can in no sense claim to achieve a true representation of any particular animal: it merely reflects his own concerns.’²³ Ramirez’s study of dog ownership as gender display uncovered the extent to which owners perform gender through their dogs. People use gender norms to choose suitable dogs, describe their dogs’ behaviours and personalities, and use dogs to display their own identities. In the case of Conan, gender norms and gendered associations with the military assumed gender before the dog’s sex was known. Ramirez’s results ‘suggest ways individuals may attempt to display gender in other relationships characterized by a power imbalance’.²⁴ While this study considered relationships between people and their owned dogs, it is worth considering these constructs related to the category of free-living street dogs, and how these male riot dogs have been narrated. How have gender constructs influenced riot dogs’ stories and symbolic legacies?

NM’s fan page on Facebook has more than 22,000 followers today, with the following description: “Revolucionario innato, padre de 32 hijos (reconocidos) y marido de 6 señoras, amigo del pueblo y la peor pesadilla de la policía’, ‘Innate revolutionary, father of 32 children (recognized) and husband of 6 ladies, friend of the people and the worst nightmare of the police’.²⁵ Although pithy, this description of NM, written in the biographical style one might expect of a human obituary, presents several points to consider

22 Twitter, “Jessie Jane Duff on Twitter: ‘It Appears the Dog Is Female...Talk about an Even More Painful Reality for ISIS Followers, <https://t.co/qjIgRMW4Bq> / Twitter,” October 28, 2019, <https://twitter.com/jessiejaneduff/status/1189005169406689280>.

23 Steve Baker, *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity, and Representation* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2001) 180.

24 Michael Ramirez, “‘My Dog’s Just Like Me’: Dog Ownership as a Gender Display,” *Symbolic Interaction* 29, no. 3 (2006): 373–91. Though I adopt Ramirez’s terminology, ‘owner’, for consistency and clarity, I prefer to use the word ‘guardian’ to better communicate a more consensual human–dog relationship. Carlisle-Frank and Frank conducted a study of pet caregivers who define themselves as either ‘owners’, ‘guardians’, or ‘owner-guardians’, and found statistically significant differences between these groups with regard to the way they think about, and behave towards, their companion animals. More research is needed to determine whether these differences result from sociocognitive constructs related to the language used in these cases. Pamela Carlisle-Frank and Joshua M. Frank, “Owners, Guardians, and Owner-Guardians: Differing Relationships with Pets,” *Anthrozoös* 19, no. 3 (September 1, 2006): 225–42.

25 “Negro Matapacos – Facebook,” <https://www.facebook.com/matapacos/>.

related to the anthropomorphic application of gender stereotypes and expectations. For one, there is nothing in the language to indicate this was written about a dog; this just as easily could have been written about a man who married many times, having many children. For instance, the choice in using the masculine word *marido*, which translates to 'husband', a man who is married to a woman, is noteworthy. Additionally, that these six 'ladies' are anonymous, although female dogs are the ones who visibly gestate, birth, and then feed litters of puppies calls into question the females' perceived (un)importance in the process of reproduction. I was not able to uncover any information related to these 'ladies' or their puppies.

This may also call into question the veracity of NM's paternity, especially since there is an indication that he likely had more than 32 'children'; to that point, it suggests NM was observed mating on at least six occasions with at least six different female dogs, who were later observed to be pregnant, and his paternity was thus assumed. Whether or not these puppies are genetically 'his', however, is perhaps less important than the *belief* that he is a prolific father in the eyes of the public, which has come to associate fatherhood with NM's identity. In a short editorial piece, Ruxton and Baker sift through literature related to 'fatherhood as a key site of contestation within broader debates about masculinity/ties' to uncover a nuanced understanding of fathers' diverse identities and relationships to masculinity/ties. One paper in their review declares that 'fatherhood is not contingent on genetic relatedness' and instead contingent upon an emotional relationship and one's morality.²⁶

Of course, these papers are concerned with humans and human concepts of fatherhood and masculinity. Yet, I argue that these concepts, and countless other complex social conceptualizations, are continuously imposed anthropomorphically upon nonhuman animals, and this affects how we categorize and perceive them in turn. Paternity and masculinity are complicatedly related; it is worth considering how public remembrance of NM would be influenced by associating him with fatherhood and sexual reproduction. In one blog photo gallery dedicated to sharing images of NM, he is photographed in front of two large tanks, humping a brown dog, with the caption 'make love, not war'.²⁷ Though this description of NM's legacy as a sexual being and a father was perhaps not meant in any intentionally gendered way, the

26 Heather Draper and Jonathan Ives. "Paternity Testing: A Poor Test of Fatherhood," *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law* 31, no. 4 (2009): 407–18.

27 Working Class History, "Negro Matapacos: Chile's 'Riot Dog,'" *Working Class History*, August 26, 2019, <https://workingclasshistory.com/2019/08/26/negro-matapacos-chiles-riot-dog/>.

emphasis on his virility is very much linked to constructions of hegemonic masculinity that can be observed in a variety of cultural contexts.

Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as ‘the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men’.²⁸ Although hegemonic masculinities vary across cultures, they often share traits that enable social dominance.²⁹ In the Middle East, for instance, sexual virility emerges as the ‘essence of Arab masculinity’ with men ‘distinguishing themselves and being distinguished from other men through the fathering of children, especially sons’.³⁰ According to Barrientos and Páez, in Chile, sexual satisfaction is regarded ‘as an indicator of masculine potency and virility. For men this situation usually leads to a high frequency of sexual intercourse’.³¹ The concept of *machismo* within Latin America has been defined as the ‘cult of virility’ and is relatedly tied to these notions of manliness and masculinity.³² As stated in the aforementioned quote from Baker, we see animals *as* something – in the case of NM, he is eulogized as a revolutionary, a symbol of resistance, and also as notably virile, perhaps as complementary to his perceived bravery and tenacity. He is not just a dog; he is unmistakably a *male* dog. It is remarkable that his memorial description makes no indication that his species was other-than-human, yet his maleness is conspicuously centred. This is vital to preserving his identity, as narrated by, and for, humans.

Concerns about virility are also reflected in attitudes about pet sterilization. In their study of the human-animal bond in rural Mexico, Schoenfeld-Tacher, Kogan, and Wright theorized that *machismo*, which they defined as ‘a strong or exaggerated sense of masculinity and stressing attributes such as physical courage, virility, domination of women, and aggressiveness’³³ had caused both male and female Hispanic pet owners to

28 R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 77.

29 Marcia C. Inhorn and Emily A. Wentzell, “Embodying Emergent Masculinities: Men Engaging with Reproductive and Sexual Health Technologies in the Middle East and Mexico,” *American Ethnologist* 38, no. 4 (2011): 801–15.

30 Ibid.

31 Jaime E. Barrientos and Dario Páez, “Psychosocial Variables of Sexual Satisfaction in Chile,” *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy* 32, no. 5 (2006): 351–68.

32 Maria Teresa Dawson and Sandra M. Gifford, “Narratives, Culture and Sexual Health: Personal Life Experiences of Salvadorean and Chilean Women Living in Melbourne, Australia,” *Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness and Medicine* 5, no. 4 (October 2001): 403–23.

33 Regina Schoenfeld-Tacher, Lori R. Kogan, and Mary L. Wright, “Comparison of Strength of the Human-Animal Bond between Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Owners of Pet Dogs and Cats,” *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 236, no. 5 (2010), 529.

feel hesitant and uncomfortable about neutering their male dog or cat. ‘Many of these individuals were hesitant to neuter their animals [...] On further questioning, the owners revealed deeply ingrained feelings of machismo [...] and misconceptions about sexual orientation of their animals, such as questioning whether male dogs would engage in homosexual behaviour after being neutered’.³⁴ Quantitative studies on this subject have found consistent gender differences in beliefs about sterilization:

Across all animal categories, men showed higher levels of agreement than women that depriving animals of sexual and parental experiences was a valid argument against neutering. This concurs with a previous study in Australia and New Zealand, where approximately twice as many male owners agreed that castrating male dogs removed ‘maleness’ and also more men than woman agreed with the question; ‘Do you equate dog sexuality with human sexuality?’ [...] Men were also more likely than women to agree with the statement: ‘Sterilization removes the sexuality/masculinity of the cat or dog’ [29.1 per cent versus 13.4 per cent].³⁵

These findings are salient for several reasons. First, they are illustrative of the extent to which cultural beliefs pervade nonhuman lifeworlds in an explicitly anthropomorphic way, for instance, ‘parental experience’ as a rite to be experienced by nonhumans. Second, that dog sexuality was directly equated with human sexuality is important, especially in conjunction with the corresponding belief that sterilizing a male dog ‘removes “maleness” and ‘removes sexuality/masculinity’.³⁶ Logically, then, it would be reasonable to conclude that, in either dogs or humans, ‘maleness’ and masculinity are linked to an ability (and desire) to reproduce. This is corroborated by aforementioned literature exploring diverse human masculinities, and it is remarkable to consider how these masculinities are embodied and naturalized in other-than-human contexts, specifically in the case of NM’s legacy. To what extent is his remembered identity tied to a notion of power that is bolstered by male virility, promiscuity, and paternity?

The ethical implications of beliefs about sterilization are fraught and complicated. That said, it is worth briefly considering literature regarding

34 Ibid.

35 C. Wongsangchan and D.E.F. McKeegan, “The Views of the UK Public Towards Routine Neutering of Dogs and Cats,” *Animals: An Open Access Journal from MDPI* 9, no. 4 (April 2019), 11.

36 Wongsangchan and McKeegan, “The Views of the UK Public Towards Routine Neutering of Dogs and Cats.”

stray dog sterilization in Chile, where there are an estimated 2.5 to 3 million free-living dogs, with 1.9 million of them estimated to live in Santiago.³⁷ When seeking information about stray dog sterilization programmes in Chile, I noted a focus on the female dog's body. In 'The Plight of Chilean Strays', Kurdyuk states that 'a sexually mature female dog, along with her offspring, can produce a staggering total of 67,000 dogs in six years'. There is no such statistical estimate for male dogs. A blog post written by a member of Corporación de Defensa de los Derechos de los Animales (CODDA) (Corporation for the Defense of Animal Rights) notes the cost of spaying a female dog, and how CODDA works with local veterinarians to provide a low cost option for this service.³⁸ Again, there is no mention of neutering male dogs. It is absolutely possible that I happened upon two pieces that simply omitted information about male dogs. Or, perhaps these authors did not have information related to sterilizing male dogs. Might that be significant in and of itself? Especially since, in striving for cost-effective mass sterilization of free-living dogs, neutering would seem more conducive to reducing populations? Spaying a female dog is more invasive and more expensive than neutering a male dog. Spaying requires an abdominal incision to be made, and the ovaries and uterus are removed. Neutering is comparatively more simple, cheaper, and faster: an incision is made in the scrotum, through which the testicles are removed. This also means that it is generally easy to know if a male dog is intact even from afar, whereas with female dogs, a scar, or sometimes a tattoo, could indicate a female dog has been spayed. I cannot help but ponder the influence of gendered notions of sexuality, and the need for control of female bodies, in these two cases where it is insinuated that female dogs' bodies require policing, while male dogs' bodies are not – a sociosexual double standard.³⁹

'El Negro Matapacos está meando desde el cielo...'

In addition to copulation, another behaviour related to male dogs' bodies celebrated as symbolically masculine is penile urination. In Edgardo Zouza's

37 Kateryna Kurdyuk, "The Plight of Chilean Strays," *Chile Today*, January 21, 2019, <https://chiletoday.cl/site/the-plight-of-chilean-strays/>.

38 Bruce Willett, "Guest Commentary: How to Help Street Dogs," *Patagonia's Magazine: Patagon Journal*, December 24, 2008, http://www.patagonjournal.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=141:guest-commentary-how-to-help-street-dogs&catid=46:noticias&lang=es.

39 Loukanikos was officially registered as a street dog within Athens; as part of this process, he was neutered and wore a blue collar to indicate his registration status.

poem 'El Negro Matapacos', NM is introduced as 'pissing from the sky' or from heaven, depending on the preferred translation. In the poem, NM does so to extinguish bombs, but also to humiliate the police by urinating on their helmets. A favourite story told about Loukanikos is that he was seen 'holding his own with a policeman before running up and down the city's main boulevard and relieving himself'.⁴⁰ Saunders and Crilley consider a specific aspect of micturition, 'the use of urine as a manifestation of bodily power over another/others'⁴¹ and argue that urinating 'is a form of everyday resistance, and one which takes on greater meaning at times of crisis'.⁴² In both the poetic description of NM and the anecdote about Loukanikos, it would seem the dog in either case was perceived as urinating intentionally as a means of resistance, but there are gendered associations with urination, as well.

Mechling details the construction of American masculinity and the role of 'pissing' therein, highlighting the action as a manner of asserting dominance over one's enemy, and also 'as resistance to harsh authority'.⁴³ Mechling argues that 'control over one's pissing is the desired proof of autonomous masculinity'.⁴⁴ This, of course, makes sense given that one might unwillingly urinate when experiencing fear (notably, this happens to both humans and dogs), which would be embarrassing and, perhaps, emasculating. Mechling explains, 'for males the fact that semen and urine both leave the body through the penis creates a symbolic equivalence'.⁴⁵ What to make, then, of a male dog who does not conform to expectations of urination? Would this be interpreted as a lack of control over one's urination, a lack of control of one's posture during urination? Is this the dog equivalent of a man sitting down to urinate, a behaviour that would make him less 'manly'?⁴⁶ Though it may seem trivial, a dog owner can be startled when his

40 Menealos Tzafalias, "Greece: Protesters Unleash the Dogs of War," *The Independent*, May 12, 2010, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/greece-protesters-unleash-the-dogs-of-war-1971354.html>.

41 Robert A. Saunders and Rhys Crilley, "Pissing on the Past: The Highland Clearances, Effigial Resistance and the Everyday Politics of the Urinal," *Millennium* 47, no. 3 (2019): 444.

42 Ibid., 446.

43 Jay Mechling, "Pissing and Masculinity," *Culture, Society and Masculinities; Harriman* 6, no. 1 (2014): 25.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid., 21.

46 Camilla Vásquez and Addie Sayers China, "From 'My Manly Husband...' to '... Sitting Down to Take a Pee': The Construction and Deconstruction of Gender in Amazon Reviews," in Patricia Bou-Franch and Pilar Garcés-Conejos Blitvich (eds.), *Analyzing Digital Discourse: New Insights and Future Directions* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019) 193–218.

male dog ‘pees like a female’, as it was phrased in a dog community forum where someone expressed concern and sought advice. There are countless blog posts with titles like, ‘How Can You Teach a Male Dog to Lift Its Leg to Pee?’ and ‘What’s Up with Male Dogs Peeing Like Females?’, which aim to address this apparently undesirable behaviour. The behaviour is undesirable because it does not conform to expectations based on the dog’s biological sex. This is interesting to consider alongside the preceding literature related to the symbolism of male urination, the performance of gender identity through pet dogs, and the opposition to neutering male dogs – and why stories of a quotidian act, urination, are worth remembering with respect to both NM and Loukanikos. Though we have no female riot dogs to compare, it is worth speculating about how these stories would likely change, or not be told at all, with a female dog. Another thread to follow would be the idea of marking and claiming one’s territory through urination.

María Campos, caretaker of Negro Matapacos

‘Después de cada marcha regresa a la casa de la señora María Campos, quien le lava sus pañuelos y lo recibe con un plato de arroz y panas de pollo.’⁴⁷

The above text translates to: ‘After each march he returns to the house of Mrs. María Campos, who washes his handkerchiefs and receives him with a plate of rice and chicken legs’. As you likely expected, ‘he’ is NM. The scene is otherwise a stereotypical home life, wherein the wife, burdened with domestic labour as her husband (or son) bravely protests, is waiting dutifully when he comes home, ready to launder his clothes, having already prepared a meal for him. Martínez’s interview with Campos is one of the few substantive glimpses into the daily life of NM, once he had come to reside with Campos. Martínez followed the dog for several days to try to get to know ‘el lado B,’ ‘the B side’, the ‘other life’ of NM.

NM does not leave the house before receiving a blessing from Campos, and a red handkerchief tied around his neck. ‘Cumplido el ritual, el Negro se enfila hacia la Alameda como guiado por un impulso, por una necesidad casi biológica de estar en la línea de batalla donde policías y manifestantes se ven las caras’ (Once the ritual is completed, the Negro heads towards the Alameda as guided by an impulse, by an almost biological need to be

47 Carlos Martínez, “La Otra Vida Del Negro Matapacos,” November 6, 2012, <https://www.theclinic.cl/2012/11/06/la-otra-vida-del-negro-matapacos/>.

on the battle line where police and protesters face each other).⁴⁸ The idea of a 'biological need' is interesting to consider. There is a predetermined, simplistic animality embedded with this notion, which might, in a way, dismiss canine agency as mere 'instinct' – however, journalistically, I believe this phrasing was used to powerfully describe NM's motivations, not to question them. NM is described as patiently waiting for the conclusion of his daily blessing; he also knows timing of marches, and scratches on the door to leave home fifteen minutes before a march is to begin. Campos jokes that on days when there are no protests, she must wake NM up. Martinez writes that she speaks about NM 'con el mismo cariño de una madre', with the same affection as a mother speaking about her son. Campos recounts that she initially did not realize that NM was attending marches – she only realized when he started coming home wet, with torn handkerchiefs. She believes his preference for roaming college campuses led to him forging new 'friendships', which cultivated his 'ideological bases'.

While considerations of agency are perhaps the most conspicuous element of this short piece, more latent are the gendered roles of NM and Campos, respectively, in a time of revolution. Considering Walthall's previously discussed analysis of women's invisibility in Japanese social protest movements, wherein women were supporting figures tied to a caretaking role implied by marriage – does the bond between NM and Campos unwittingly perpetuate this stereotype? How is their relationship different? Women are said to bond more deeply with companion animals than men are, some feeling maternal loss when a pet dies.⁴⁹ Women are also comparatively more active in animal rights, possibly due to an internalized gendered association of women as nurturers and caregivers.⁵⁰ It has also been suggested that women's own experiences with oppression has led to concerns about animal rights, as women detect consistencies in dominative ideologies.⁵¹ I would argue that Campos is not invisible, conversely, her position as NM's caregiver, and her species, privileges her to speak for him. They are bonded by mutual trust, not a socially constructed compulsion. Campos describes NM's 'love' and 'respect' for children, and that he does not mind if she touches the plate while he is eating. NM could choose to go anywhere, but he came to live with Campos and, just as reliably as he attended many marches, he would reliably return home.

48 Ibid.

49 Liz Margolies, "The Long Goodbye: Women, Companion Animals, and Maternal Loss," *Clinical Social Work Journal* 27, no. 3 (1999): 289–304.

50 Kellert and Berry, "Attitudes, Knowledge, and Behaviors toward Wildlife as Affected by Gender."

51 Charles Peek, Nancy Bell, and Charlotte Dunham; "Gender, Gender Ideology, and Animal Rights Advocacy," *Gender & Society* 10, no. 4 (1996): 464–78.

Conclusion

While I have been critical of stories told about NM due to the gendered stereotypes latent within them, I do not believe these narrations, though his 'official' obituary centres his 'maleness', outweigh his actions in Chile. Nor do I think that centring his maleness as essential to his identity necessarily makes him less relatable to women as a 'dog of the people', although, given how Conan (the US military dog) was 'claimed' by women as symbolic of 'Girl Power', it is worth considering how a female riot dog may be perceived differently as a revolutionary symbol. How would behaviours be anticipated and perceived differently when performed by a female versus a male dog? It must be recapitulated that NM did not tell his own story nor did he *himself* embody the masculinist structures that may have been unconsciously imposed upon him by humans. While I believe that he *chose* to reliably participate in numerous demonstrations – I have no reason to doubt this – he did not *choose* to conform to any sociocultural binaries related to manliness.

Furthermore, I do not critique this eulogy of NM to imply its author had nefarious intent – furthering of a patriarchal agenda, steeped in *machismo*. I believe tracing the (gendered) symbolism of riot dogs is far more dynamic than it might initially seem, and that disentangling gender stereotypes from our multifarious relationships with nonhuman animals is a massive task to be executed layer by layer. It will also be fascinating to explore, if any female riot dogs come to be known, how their stories are narrated, and which aspects of their beings are celebrated.

Finally, I wonder if the masculine symbol of NM is widely embraced by both men and women because 'maleness' is relatively more neutral than 'femaleness' – considering a Whorfian idea that, in Spanish, the language spoken in Chile, the neutral and the masculine pronouns are the same? Could a female riot dog be a 'dog of the people', or would she only be a 'dog of the women'?

About the Author

Annika Hugosson holds a Master's degree in anthrozoology from Canisius College. She is a PhD student of sociocultural anthropology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, specializing in animal studies. She is currently living in Wrocław, Poland, as a Fulbright Student Research Fellow, studying European networks of transborder dog adoptions.

From Pussy Panic to a Fascination with Felines

The Gendered Representations of Cats in Suffrage Postcards.

Larissa Schulte Nordholt

Abstract

In certain cultures, at certain moments, yet enduringly, cats have been depicted as the wilful companions of equally wilful women – witches, spinsters and suffragettes. Cats have often been associated with women, particularly in Victorian England: the cute, domesticated kitten representing the passive homemaker; the feral outside ally cat, the wilful woman. The suffragette was the stereotypical woman who would not be domesticated around 1900. Anti-suffragette propaganda therefore sometimes depicted cats. In some instances, the suffragette cat was repurposed by the suffragettes to convey a positive message. In this essay, I draw out the gendered dimensions of how cats became entwined with both pro- and anti-suffrage campaigning by making use of various postcard archives, including the Curt Teich Postcard Archives Digital Collections and the John Hopkins Sheridan Libraries Special Collections. Why were cats and wilful women such ‘natural’ companions in the eyes of both friend and foe? In the essay, I also reflect on the ways in which cats are used as political imagery in our twenty-first-century social media sphere. I ask what it might mean that the political imagery surrounding cats has changed so much over the past century, in particular regarding its gendered dimensions. What does it mean that the meaning of cats in political messaging seems to have shifted from a pussy panic to a fascination with felines?

Keywords: suffrage, cat history, Victorian Britain, postcards, gender history

In certain cultures at certain moments, yet enduringly, cats have been depicted as the wilful companions of equally wilful women – witches,



Figure 1. The Suffragette Not at Home. London, C.W. Faulkner & Co. Date unclear. John Hopkins Sheridan Libraries & University Museums.

spinsters, and suffragettes. In popular imagination and in popular culture, cats were and are often depicted as inherently contradictory creatures. At once independent and domesticated, potentially cuddly, yet equipped with a set of sharp claws. The kittycat is often understood as fickle, capricious, erratic, untameable – and, because of it – dangerous. The same perception has also been bestowed on women. In Victorian England in particular, cats were often associated with specific gendered characteristics as they slowly started to become household pets. As Sarah Amato argues in her book *Beastly Possessions: Animals in Victorian Consumer Culture*, '[c]ats, irrespective of the actual gender of the animal, were believed to exemplify certain characteristics of bourgeois womanhood'.¹ In Victorian Britain, she explains, this went two ways. Domesticated cats, specifically of the sleeping variety, neatly tucked away on a woman's lap, could represent the preferred kept passive wife and homemaker, while the feral outside ally cat was deemed a lost cause, likened to prostitutes.² Likewise, it seems the suffragette was the stereotypical woman who refused to be domesticated around 1900. Anti-suffragette propaganda therefore sometimes depicted cats. Cats demanding the vote. Injured and worn-out cats suffering from their suffrage battles. Cats in domestic settings abandoned by women, signifying perhaps a failed domesticity (see Fig. 1).

Completely in line with the assumed duplicitous status of cats and women, however, there were also positive suffragette cats, or, at the very least, they were repurposed as such by some suffragettes themselves. Such as the following tough cat (see Fig. 2). The cat holds a placard that reads 'votes for she' and the card itself states 'down with the tomcats'. The meaning of the postcard can be interpreted in different ways: as the John Hopkins Sheridan Library online exhibition showcasing the card notes, the fact that it depicts a rough and aggressive, perhaps masculine, cat with its claws out was possibly meant to discourage suffragettes. Yet, as also noted in the exhibition, the very same postcard has a message on the back, presumably written by a suffragette, which suggests the meaning of the card may have been repurposed and cats adopted as equally derided mascots: 'See the expression: In town for the fight. Have used my night off for training my guns in the new campaign. Ha! Ha! You will see the signs soon'³ (see Fig. 3).

1 Sarah Amato, *Beastly Possessions: Animals in Victorian Consumer Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 2015), 16.

2 Ibid., 80–93.

3 Mazen Sedrat, Kareem Hamoudeh, and Luke Frietze, "The Suffrage Down With the Tom Cats (verso)", *The Suffrage Cat*, <https://exhibits.library.jhu.edu/omeka-s/s/VotesAndPetticoats/page/the-suffrage-cat>. This specific postcard seems to have circulated in both English and American contexts.

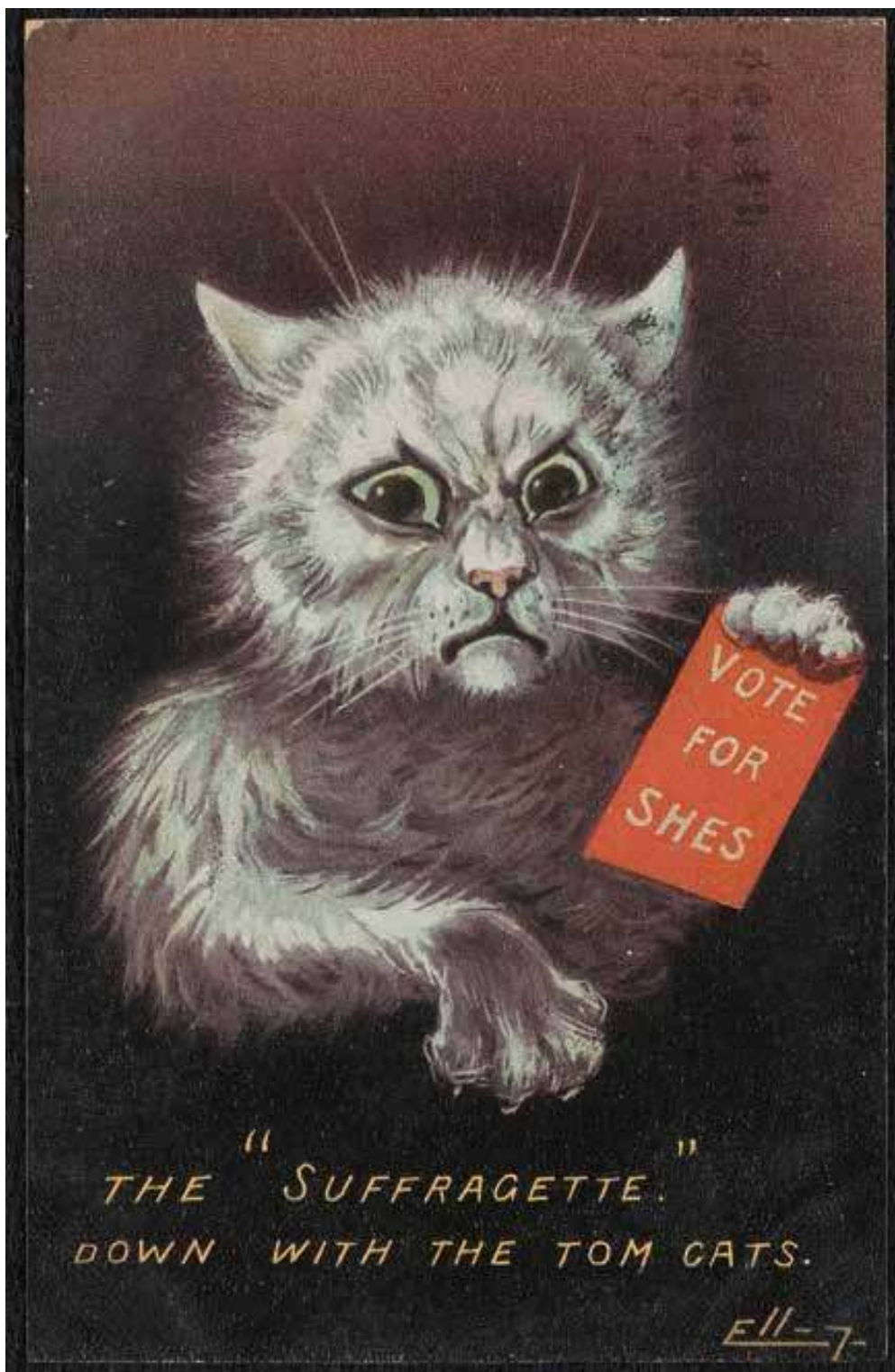


Figure 2. The Suffragette Down with the Tom Cats. London: Regal Art Publishing Company. Circa 1905–1910. Ann Lewis Women's Suffrage Collection.



Figure 3. Other side of the card depicted in Fig 2.

‘Down with the tomcats’ could easily be interpreted to mean: down with the patriarchy, or even, down with – sexually – oppressive men.

In this essay, I will, firstly, draw out the gendered dimensions of how cats and suffragettes became entwined in both pro- and anti-suffrage postcards, which were popular in Britain at the turn of the twentieth century. Secondly, I will briefly engage in a reflection on twenty-first-century use of cats in political campaigns in our social media sphere, including references to Larry, chief mouser to the Cabinet Office of the United Kingdom and avid social media user. I ask what it might mean that the political imagery surrounding cats has, on the one hand, changed over the past century, in particular regarding its gendered dimensions, while cats are simultaneously still used in political contexts. What does it mean that the use of cats in political messaging seems to have shifted from a pussy panic to a fascination with felines?

I will do so by making use of various postcard archives connected to British and American suffrage campaigns, which are to be found in online archives. As Katharine Rogers notes in her book on feline images, the cultural association and entanglements between women and cats are evident on greeting cards to an extent that is not found anywhere else.⁴ Firstly, I make use of the John Hopkins Sheridan Library online exhibition “Votes & Petticoats”, curated by students from that university and which includes some

4 Katharine M. Rogers, *The Cat and the Human Imagination: Feline Images from Bast to Garfield* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 168.

ruminations on the Suffragette Cat (the Suffracat – pun intended).⁵ Secondly, I use the Ann Lewis Women’s Suffrage Collection, which is also online and has more than 250 postcards available.⁶ The last online archive I use is the Palczewski Suffrage Postcard Archive, connected to the University of Northern Iowa.⁷ There is also a printed catalogue by Kenneth Florey, published in 2015, which is focused specifically on American Suffrage postcards, although the book hardly mentions the various animals that are depicted on those postcards. Whereas American women were enfranchised in 1920 with the Nineteenth Amendment – white women at least – their (white) British sisters did not fully receive that right on the same terms as men until 1928. Both suffrage movements gained steam near the end of the nineteenth century and became more militant in the early twentieth, which is also when the cat cards started appearing. Most of these archives have considerable overlap regarding the suffragette cats they host, often citing different origins for the cards as well. As Florey notes however, this may be explained by the fact that almost all of the cards discussed here were printed by what Florey calls ‘commercial sources’, larger publishers and printing presses. Popular cards would be reprinted by various publishers, suggesting that these cats struck a chord with the masses and were therefore widely distributed.⁸ Suffragettes did produce their own cards as well, but these did not seem to feature cats. They did repurpose already existing cat-cards for their cause, however, turning anti-suffragette into pro-suffragette propaganda – much like the word suffragette itself.

The point of this essay is not to delve into the origins of specific postcard cats, but to analyse what their depictions might mean. There are also some photographs depicting taxidermied kittens and cats, which depict cruelty in terms of the treatment of the animals, not least because, in all likelihood, the animals portrayed were stuffed for the purpose of the photograph. There is one postcard from 1932, to be found in Florey’s book, which depicts a line of dressed-up kittens queuing to vote with the caption, ‘the girls in this town all vote. May the best man win’.⁹ Suggesting that all cats

5 N.N., “Votes & Petticoats”, <https://exhibits.library.jhu.edu/omeka-s/s/VotesAndPetticoats/page/welcome>.

6 Ann Lewis and Mike Sponder, *Ann Lewis Women’s Suffrage Collection*, <https://lewisuffragecollection.omeka.net/>.

7 Catherine Helen Palczewski, *Palczewski Suffrage Postcard Archive*, <https://sites.uni.edu/palczews/NEW%20postcard%20webpage/Cats.html>.

8 Kenneth Florey, *American Woman Suffrage Postcards: A Study and Catalogue* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2015) 213, 216–17.

9 Florey, *American Woman Suffrage Postcards*, 216–17.

were considered female, at least by the creator of this postcard, this card and others depicting live or dead animals show us a glimpse of the lives of actual animals in the midst of (anti-)suffragette propaganda. It is hard not to note the often synchronous oppressions of women and cats in these cases. Whereas the card may seem cute at a first glance, from a cat's point of view the scene is rather horrific.

Nevertheless, this essay is primarily concerned with the use of cats as symbols and deflections of political and cultural practices connected to understandings of gender. The essays shows to what extent cats, as symbols of gender, became topics of commercial and political exchange and suggests that they have remained as such to some extent. I hope, however, that the lives of cats, their place in society from a human–animal point of view, as well as their agency will shine through at least in parts of the texts. Human understandings of cat behaviours, as they become evident in the often gendered discourse attributed to them as friends of the suffragettes, can be partly traced back to the actual animals that roamed the streets and sat in the living rooms of human cities and dwellings. Although this chapter will not and cannot focus on the life histories of these cats, I nevertheless want to acknowledge that they are there and that they, at the very least, inspired the postcards that form the source materials of this essay – and that cats continue to inspire human art and humour to this day. As such, the chapter addresses a historiographical question regarding the importance of writing the various uses of animals into the historical narrative through visual source material, following J. Keri Cronin, with a particular focus on regimes of gender projected onto those animals. By looking at the representations of animals in visual culture, we can figure out not just the way in which suffragette's were understood, but cats as well.¹⁰

Perhaps it is because of the inherent contradictions associated with cats and their nature as understood by humans, that they were particularly inspirational within the controversial debates surrounding women's suffrage. Postcards depicting suffrage cats are rife with double layers and inside jokes. One group of suffragette postcards including cats depicts men who fail to do housework, the suggestion here being that once women get the vote, household chores and, specifically, care for children will suffer. According to Florey, the genre to which this type of role-reversal card belonged, published by commercial presses, were especially popular and meant for a general

10 J. Keri Cronin, "Hidden in Plain Sight: How Art and Visual Culture Can Help Us Think about Animal Histories," in: *Traces of the Animal Past: Methodological Challenges in Animal History*, eds. Jennifer Bonnell and Sean Kheraj (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2022), 339–56, 342, 346.

audience.¹¹ Many of these cards include a cat, but their role is ambiguous. On one such a card, already mentioned above, the cat has leapt into the air, paws akimbo and fur on end. This cat, the card suggests, is a victim of women's suffrage. The way the cat is depicted is clearly meant to portray stress on the animal's part. This is somewhat striking in an era when animal welfare was slowly becoming a political issue.¹² Cats are particularly fond of routine and startle relatively easily and dramatically, hence the expression 'scaredy cat'. These well-known real-life characteristics of the animal are here transposed onto a postcard to suggest the negative consequence of change. Perhaps it was also meant to elicit laughter in contradiction to any explicit attention to animal welfare. The reverse may also be true: cats usually flourish in quiet households where they can be their undisturbed selves. The natural behaviour of cats therefore emulates not only gender roles in regard to the perceived fickleness of the animal, but also in respect to their perceived delicacy.

More obvious perhaps is the note reading 'Dearest, afraid shall be late, Important committee meeting, Alice' – a clear reversal of gender roles as it is suggested that it is usually the man who leaves behind such notes. Husband, child, and cat suffer the consequences of a disturbed household (see Fig. 1). On another, a cat and a baby are sat on the ground, looking at each other, while the man does the washing (see Fig. 4). This postcard was undoubtedly meant to dissuade from women's suffrage as it suggests neglect. The cat here is perhaps meant to symbolize some kind of female domesticity, thereby emasculating the man. Yet, it could easily be construed to mean something different entirely as, from the feminist point of view, it would not necessarily be bad for the husband to do some housework. The accompanying caption reads 'Everybody works but mother, she's a suffragette' as well as 'I want to vote, but my wife won't let me'. A reversal of fortune that might not have seemed so bad to everyone involved? Cat and baby, moreover, are put on equal ground, although this may have also signified neglect, or again, a disturbance of normal routine. Yet another card in this genre is more baffling as it depicts a very happy husband, with three children sat on rocking chair and a seemingly obedient white cat sitting on the ground (see Fig. 5). The caption reads 'What is home without a father'. Was this card suffrage propaganda? Showing a man could also be a good carer for human child and animal alike? As Kirsten Weitering has noted

¹¹ Florey, *American Woman Suffrage Postcards*, 216.

¹² Deborah Denenholz Morz and Martin A. Danahay, eds., *Victorian Animal Dreams: Representations of Animals in Victorian Literature and Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007).



Figure 4. I Want to Vote, But My Wife Won't Let Me. New York, Dunston-Weither Lithograph Company, 1909. Ann Lewis Women's Suffrage Collection.

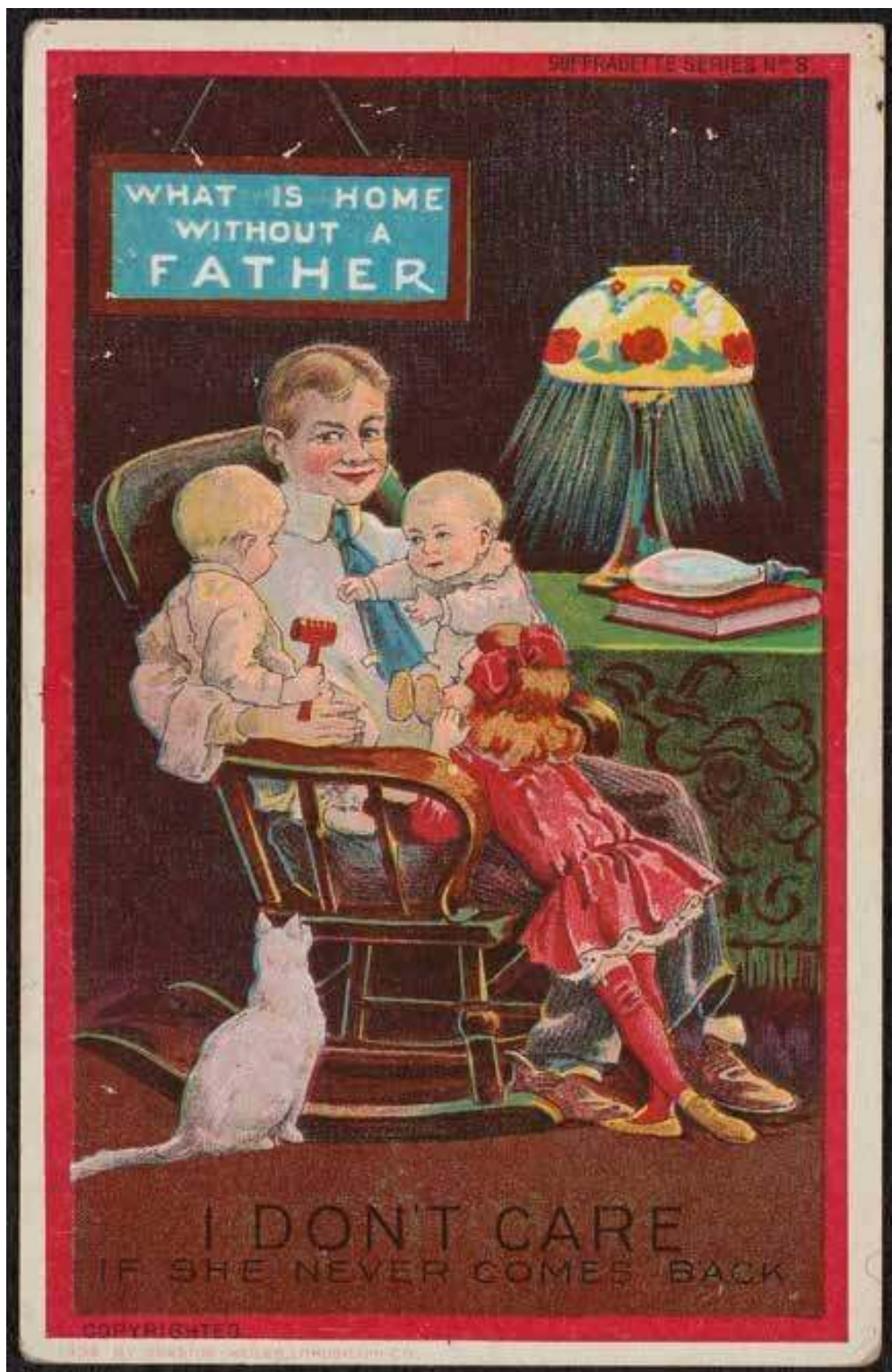


Figure 5. I Don't Care If She Never Comes Back. Suffragette Series No. 8. 1909, Dunston-Weiler Lithograph Co. John Hopkins Sheridan Libraries & University Museums.

in her MA thesis on cats and domesticity in Victorian Britain, cats were often believed to be a necessary part of creating a loving home.¹³ Including a happy or distressed cat on such a postcard could therefore perhaps signal the presence or absence of a happy home. The actual cats who roamed the streets of Victorian Britain may have both suffered and benefited from their human companions' projections of gendered behaviours on them as their behaviour clashed or aligned with desired domestic ideals. Yet, cats are also notorious for their unwillingness to conform to human domestic standards and their use in these suffrage postcards is a trifle ironic as a result. It almost seems as if the cat and the suffragette are fated companions who will only be tamed through fictitious and idealized depictions.

It is all the more interesting therefore that another genre of suffragette cat postcards includes a collection of beautiful cats wearing suffragette colours (see Fig. 6). The cat depicted in a postcard from 1910–1913 with its paw on the slogan 'We demand the vote' is fat, fluffy, and elicits a response of endearment rather than ridicule from the twenty-first-century viewer. Yet, to the early twentieth-century viewer, the point may have been that suffragettes were spoiled – fat – and unnatural, unattractive bourgeois women who had nothing better to do than campaign for suffrage. These are insults that are still hurled towards feminist women in the twenty-first century. Most likely, this card and others depicting fat and fluffy cats and kittens were meant to ridicule the suffragettes. That makes them somewhat different from the more common anti-suffrage cat cards that were rather meant to play on men's fears of independent women by use of the quintessentially hard-to-tame animal or the disturbed cat as a symbol of disturbed domesticity.¹⁴ The luscious suffragette cat, paradoxically, represents what the man would ideally want the female to be: tamed and harmless, her desire for the vote simply silly rather than dangerous. These cards were, again, published by a commercial press, perhaps representing commercial interests. The next card from 1908 depicting a shrieking kitty against the background of the suffragette colours seems exemplary for this purpose (see Fig. 7). The message written on the card underlines the ambiguity that was nevertheless present in such depictions: 'Sincerely trust your dear & loving future wife won't be like the picture predicts the other side. From a

13 Kirsten Weitering, "The Cat's Cradle of Felines and Society", MA Thesis (Leiden University, 2019), 30.

14 Florey, *American Woman Suffrage Postcards*, 14.



Figure 6. An Advocate for Women's Rights. Circa 1910–1913. London A. & G. Taylor. Ann Lewis Women's Suffrage Collection.

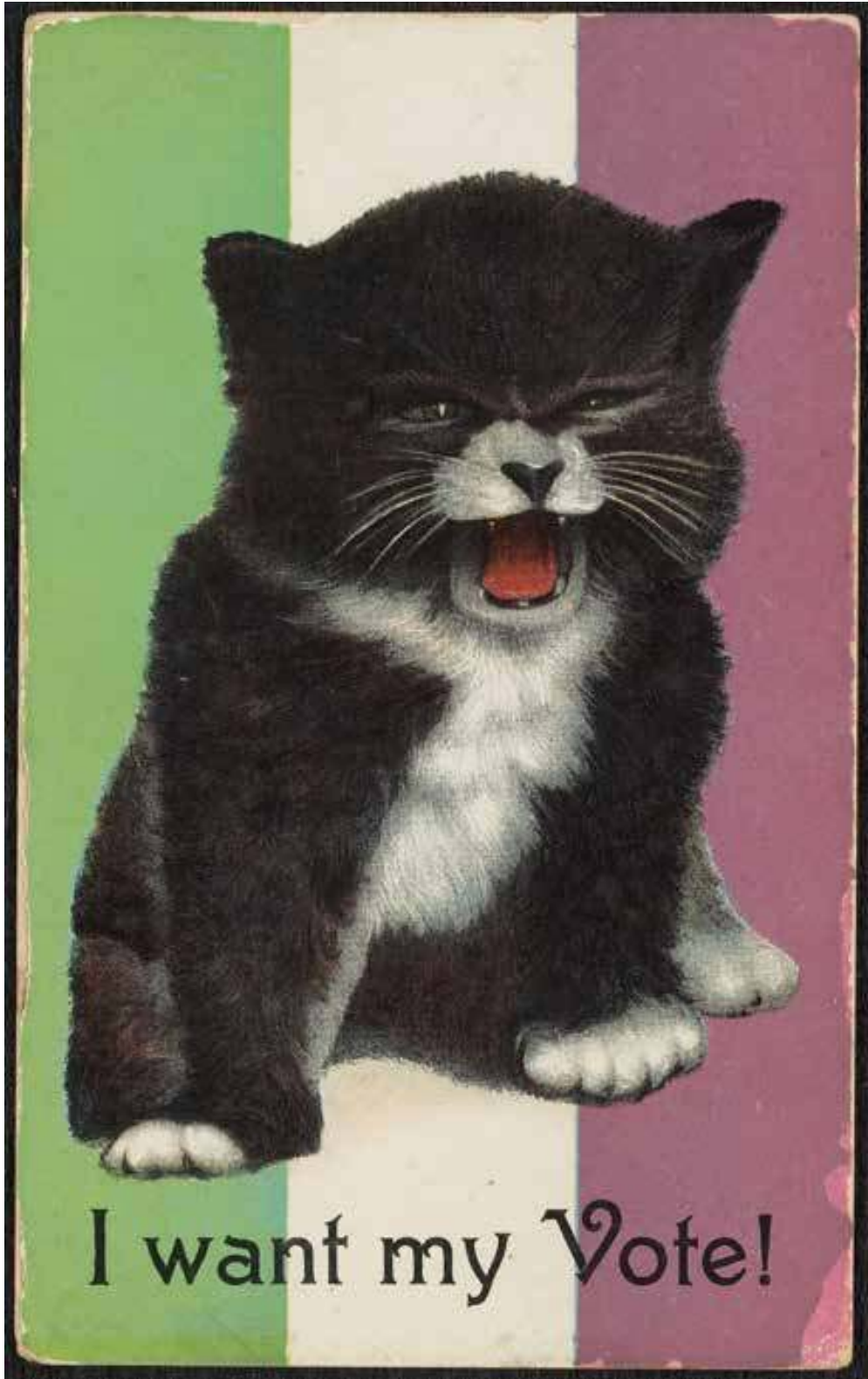


Figure 7. I want my Vote! Circa 1908. No publisher information. Ann Lewis Women's Suffrage Collection.

true Suffragette'.¹⁵ Pun intended perhaps? Throughout pictorial history, depictions of cats often tend to reflect idealized expectations or stereotypes of women.¹⁶ The shrieking kitten was most likely meant to diminish the mature woman asking for a voice, a vote.

The last grouping of suffragette cat postcards includes the scruffy alley-cat type cards, including the one already discussed above. These are interesting because they subscribe to the idea of feral alley cats as failed women, often prostitutes, as explored by Amato. Cats have often been used to hint at unhinged female sexuality, rubbing up on naked women and men, or unashamedly staring at or wandering into a sexualized scene throughout art history.¹⁷ The cats depicted on the suffragette postcards fit this stereotype in that they seem to suggest a failed femininity through the sheer scruffiness of the cats. Or, in the case of the postcard discussed above, the fact that it hints at uprooted gender roles. Another alley-cat card from 1911 contains a rather sorry looking cat with the inscription reading 'I am A Suffer-Yet' (see Fig. 8). The physically worn-out cat might have been meant to suggest that the fight for women's votes was straining, resulting in injury, and the malapropism could be meant to express the ongoing strain for suffragettes.¹⁸ Was this meant to dissuade from the struggle for women's rights? Or is it a card acknowledging the struggle? Or does this cat represent failed 'traditional' femininity? The cat not as a representation of women, but of a harmonious household? The latter a representation that seems to reflect more directly the behaviour of actual cats, who like to stick to their routines, hunt, eat, groom, sleep, repeat – even if these routines do not always align with human ideas of good cat behaviour.

A poem about the fickle nature of women on yet another postcard makes use of the connection between cats and women in their capacity to be both pleasing and dangerous, reinforcing the idea of the duplicitous nature of both creatures. The card, attributed to Mich Grayling, reads: 'For she'll play like a kitten and fight like a cat'.¹⁹ Neither cats nor women are to be messed with, the poem seems to suggest. Of course, any cat owner will know that

15 Lewis and Sponder, "Postcard: I Want My Vote! (circa 1908)", *Ann Lewis Women's Suffrage Collection*, <https://lewissuffragecollection.omeka.net/items/show/2131>.

16 Rogers, *The Cat and the Human Imagination*, 185.

17 *Ibid.*, 176.

18 Mazen Sedrat, Kareem Hamoudeh, and Luke Frietze, "I Am A Suffer Yet", *The Suffrage Cat*, <https://exhibits.library.jhu.edu/omeka-s/s/VotesAndPetticoats/page/the-suffrage-cat>.

19 Charles J. Herbert, "WOMAN – She's an angel in truth, a demon in fiction", *Palczewski Suffrage Postcard Archive*, https://scholarworks.uni.edu/suffrage_images/822/.



Figure 8. I am a Suffer Yet. Ca. 1911. No publisher information. John Hopkins Sheridan Libraries & University Museums.

playing with a cat may quickly become very uncomfortable indeed if a claw or tooth is used as a skin-puncturing device when the cat has had enough.

Fascinating, too, is the card with a tough cat that reads 'I'll never be a fool again' (see Fig. 9). Contrary to what Amato seems to suggest regarding raggedy alley cats, it is hard to see this cat as a failed woman. Rather, the cat could be seen as an unlikely hero against all odds. It is similar to the tomcat card as it, too, suggests a righteous battle against the patriarchy by reversing stereotypes in a way that may be considered liberating to both cat and human. It could very well be that these cards were created by suffragettes themselves in answer to, firstly, the scruffy cats meant to discourage them or associate them with prostitutes, given also the message written on the back of the tomcat card. Secondly, the domestic cats that were meant to represent a certain form of domesticity. Due to their ambiguous status as pets in nineteenth-century Britain as well as their behavioural traits, cats could be made to represent a variety of things. The suffragettes, it seemed, appropriated or (re)claimed the image of the cat traditionally associated with domesticity as a mascot or perhaps even a partner in crime, to counter traditional ideas on behaviour, for both domestic animal as well as domestic homemaker. They did this during a time when anxieties over masculinity were heightened as women took on a larger roles in public space.²⁰

The most interesting thing about all of these cards to the twenty-first-century eye, however, may be how much our reaction to depictions of cats has changed. Unlike suffragette cats, modern-day political cats are almost exclusively used in a positive sense, whereby the cat is deployed to create more social media engagement and to elicit positive emotions. The welfare of the animal within that process is, seemingly, also more important. Rogers begins her book with a tale of President Bill Clinton's plummeting approval ratings and his cat, Socks, turning away from him in that classic and fickle way that cats (and women?) tend to deny their love, as drawn by a cartoonist.²¹ Mostly, cats in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century political campaigns are a marketing tool, such as the cat meme that the Obama campaign set up around 2012.²² Clinton's cat, Socks, colloquially

20 Strikingly, one act that aimed to limit suffragettes movements and thereby protect traditional Edwardian masculinity was colloquially called the 'cat and mouse act', although here the suffragettes were cast in the role of mouse. Allison Kilgannon, "The Cat and Mouse Act: Deconstructing Hegemonic Masculinity in Edwardian Britain" MA Thesis (Simon Fraser University, 2012).

21 Rogers, *The Cat and the Human Imagination*, 1.

22 Hunter Walker, "Obama Campaign Deploys Cat Meme to Get Out The Vote in Ohio", *Observer*, May 11, 2012, <https://observer.com/2012/11/obama-campaign-deploys-cat-meme-to-get-out-the-vote-in-ohio/>.

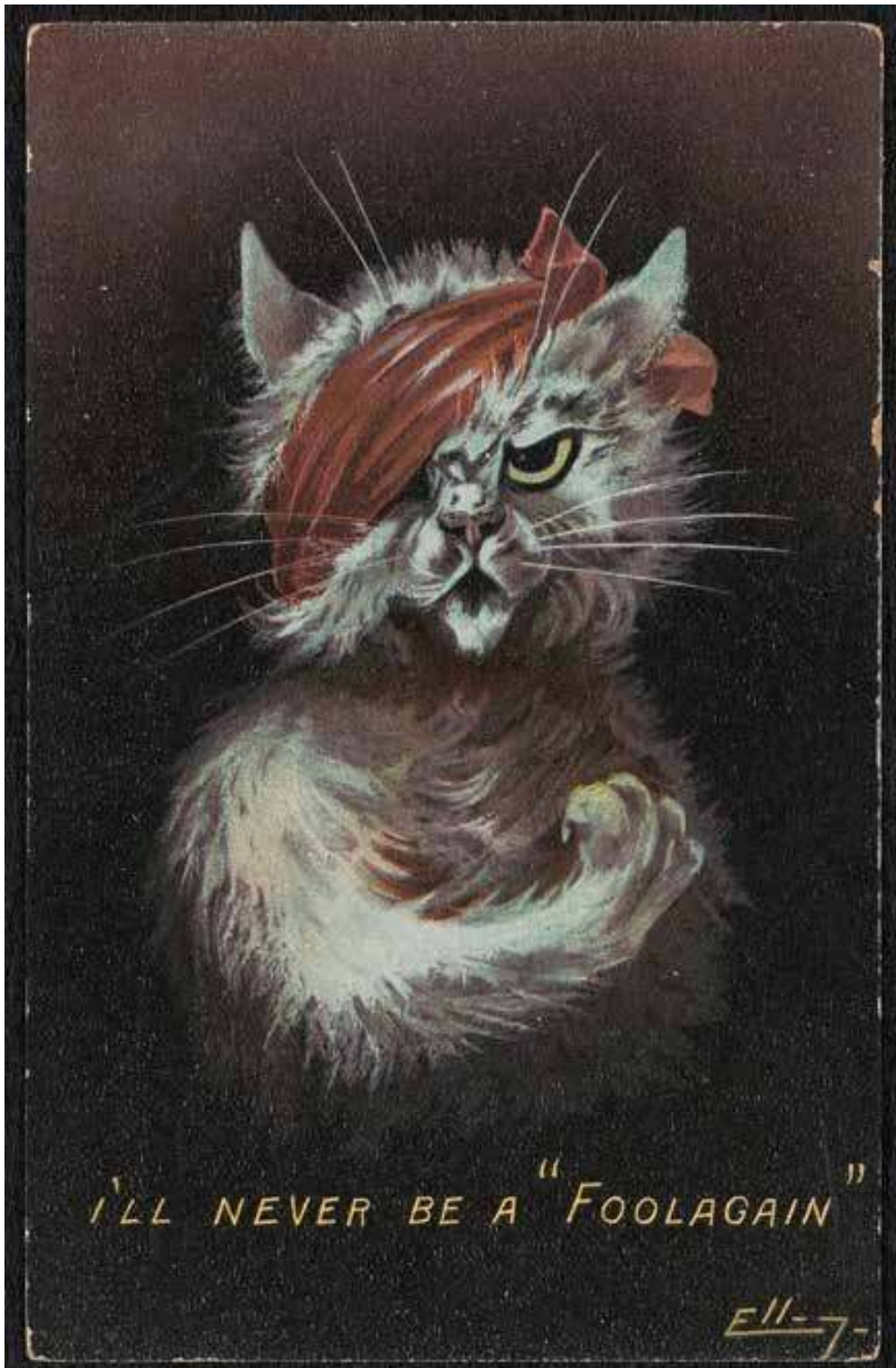


Figure 9. I'll Never be a Foolagain. Date unknown. Publisher: illustrated postcard co., New York and Germany. John Hopkins Sheridan Libraries & University Museums.

known as ‘America’s first cat’, was one of the first internet-famous political cats in the 1990s. Nowadays, the most internet famous political cat is perhaps Larry, the Downing Street cat with his own X (Twitter) account. Like Socks, Larry’s movements (real or not) have often been used to jokingly gauge the political climate of his surroundings. His twelve-year tenure at Downing Street has becoming especially hilarious in contrast to the five UK prime ministers who have moved in swift, even embarrassingly rapid, succession through the residence during those years. Interestingly, the X (Twitter) account that sparks most of the hilarity surrounding the cat is not run by any government official. Larry the Downing Street cat, then, serves to ridicule powerful humans, albeit without any obvious gendered dimensions.²³ His welfare is also taken seriously, to an extent that the welfare of Victorian cats used for postcard making never was. As things go on the internet, people are often ‘outraged’ when Larry is not allowed immediate entry to No. 10 whenever he sits himself down next to the famous black door. Then there is Jorts, an orange cat also active on X (Twitter) who regularly campaigns for labour rights and who rose to fame as a result of a controversy over his welfare.²⁴ Since then, Jorts has been used to make political points, similar to how some of the suffragette cats were used, but again without any obvious gendered dimension – although, like Larry, he is gendered as male, and the Jorts account often makes references to another cat, Jean, a tortoiseshell cat who is gendered as female. Yet, the obvious connection between the political meaning of cats as female and the way they are depicted or used is lacking for these twenty-first-century internet cats. Moreover, it seems unthinkable now that, in particular, the fat and fluffy suffragette cats could be meant to mean something negative in our social media world of the twenty-first century. Could it be that the changing ways in which cats are gendered in the political arena signals a relative progression in women’s participation in the public space? Or does this rather signal a greater acceptance of cats in our private lives? Or has nothing changed that much, since all of these positively portrayed political cats used to criticize and ridicule human politics are gendered as male?

People have, of course, been projecting emotions and ideas on animals for a very long time and it is no different with cats. The association between

23 Giulia Heyward, “Larry the Cat Celebrates 12 Years of Dutiful Service at No. 10 Downing Street”, *NPR*, February 16, 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2023/02/16/1157507569/larry-cat-no-10-downing-street-british>.

24 Amanda Kooser, “Jorts the Cat: Everything You Need to Know about the Internet’s New Favourite Cat”, *CNET*, December 21, 2021, <https://www.cnet.com/culture/internet/jorts-the-cat-everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-internets-new-favourite-cat/>.

cats and women, moreover, is far from over, as the trope of the crazy cat lady is alive and well – within the popular cartoon series *The Simpsons*, for instance. Here, and in other TV shows and movies, the archetype of the crazy cat lady is a recurring character, usually portrayed as elderly and exhuming a certain sexlessness, a modern take on the spinster. It seems that the age of the women changes the meaning of the cat, or cats, attached to her. The number of cats may also matter; whereas a single pussycat may signify female sexuality in a young and desirable woman, a clowder of cats connected to a woman past her prime has the opposite effect in modern media. The dual nature of the kitty may be everlasting, too; both seductive and only fit to love women who have proven inherently unlovable. For political cats on the internet, however, it seems this gendered dimension has subtly shifted. Nor are political cats on the internet, or internet cats in general, depicted in the same negative ways that some of the greeting card suffragette cats were. This might be connected to the fact that cats are a large part of internet culture, and mostly in a positive sense. Why the internet has chosen the cat as its unofficial mascot is a question for a different essay. This fascination with felines, nevertheless, seems to have dissuaded some of the earlier pussy panic that coloured the days of the suffragettes, although not entirely. Women still knitted pussy hats in large numbers to protest the election of Donald Trump for the women's march in January of 2017 – an act of reclaiming 'the pussy' in light of Trump's violent and sexist remarks referencing female genitalia. Pussies may no longer be used as much to diminish women, but they can still be claimed as partners in arms for a self-proclaimed feminist cause.

About the Author

Larissa Schulte Nordholt is a postdoctoral researcher at Wageningen University & Research, currently working on a book about the colonial history of the university and its predecessors. Her PhD dissertation, finished in 2021 at Leiden University, concerned the UNESCO-funded *General History of Africa/l'Histoire Générale de l'Afrique (1964–1998)*. In it, she researches how the UNESCO project aimed to decolonize the writing of African history and what that looked like in practice. She is interested in questions of colonial and postcolonial knowledge production, decolonization, and emancipation in the broadest sense.

Cats and the Vegetarian Dish in Colonial and Postcolonial Indonesia

Unsettling Sources for Environmental History

Marieke Bloembergen

Abstract

Taking cats and the vegetarian dish in Indonesia as a case study, this chapter explores the heuristic value of following the perspective of animals in studying histories of environmental knowledge and empathy in colonial and postcolonial contexts. It first figures out the politics and understandings of environmental empathy in a global context, turning, for the period under scrutiny, to forms of empathy that dwelled around gendered and theosophical recognitions of the suffering body of the animal, which unsettled dominant views on human–animal relationships in the West. How this mattered to cats in (post-)colonial Indonesia, and what the social history of the theosophical vegetarian dish can tell us further about empathy there, is the subject of the remainder of the chapter. The experiment turns out to be unsettling, and therefore insightful. The lives of cats and the vegetarian dish cross the spatial, moral, gendered, and racial structures of (post)colonial society, and help us look beyond these frameworks of understanding history.

Keywords: postcolonial, cats, vegetarianism, knowledge and empathy, environmental history, Indonesia

The tenderness for cats [amongst ‘natives’] has moved us more than once, as has the way the natives valorize the *koetjing tiga belang*, the cat with three colours, white, red and black. [...] the one who mistreats a cat, will receive special

punishment in hell, the one who nurses a disabled cat, reaches out to Allah's blessing, in short the cat deserves exceptional distinction
 – *Bataviaasch nieuwsblad*, February 2, 1914¹

The majority of the Javanese is already vegetarian,
 as they do not eat beef, but poultry
 – Soewandi, 1907²

Cats in Indonesia today are prominent in places where people dwell or work. They seem to move people, and therefore lead a sufficiently fed, comfortable cat life. Street cats get fed by the rich and the poor and find homes across classes. Some cats from the past found a place in sacred Islamic graves (*kramat*), some others today, like a beloved three-coloured cat at the University of Gadjah Madah in Yogyakarta, have their own Instagram account. Yet, a cat's life in Indonesia can be foul as well. Just consider the suffering body of the continuously pregnant female youngsters nobody really seems to care about. Moreover, as Indonesia scores high on the world's poverty scale, one could imagine that cats run the risk of being killed by people for consumption.³ But this goes against the wishes of the prophet, as summarized from Islamic sources by the colonial newspaper quoted above. The phenomenon of vegetarianism out of empathy for the animal, is, in comparison to cats, less visible as a local phenomenon in Indonesia. There are plenty of local vegetarian dishes, like *gado-gado* and *tempe*, but these are more likely the result of beef-economizing cooking traditions in a predominantly agricultural economy.⁴ They are abundantly available in street food *warungs* and restaurants, but are, beyond a recently growing 'global' trend in urban hipster spaces and touristic hubs, rarely offered as 'vegetarian'. Yet, there are older vegetarian restaurants and practices that I encountered during my research on theosophical knowledge networks and alternative reform in colonial and postcolonial Indonesia. These restaurants

1 All translations, from Malay, Indonesian, or Dutch, are by the author.

2 R. Soewandi, "Vegetarisme [Vegetarianism]," *Pewartar Theosofi* II (March 1907), 155 (translation from Malay).

3 Immediately visible, considering the double economy, in any Indonesian city. See also World Bank Group, "Poverty & Equity Brief. Indonesia" (April 2023), https://databankfiles.worldbank.org/public/ddpext_download/poverty/987B9C90-CB9F-4D93-AE8C-750588BF00QA/current/Global_POVEQ_IDN.pdf.

4 Muhammad Ishlah (*Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia* [The Indonesian Forum for Environment] AHLI), conversation with author, Yogyakarta, November 23, 2022.

created new vegetarian dishes out of theosophical devices and needs, like one called *Biefstuk Theosoof* (theosophical steak). These vegetarian encounters were unsettling to me, as they did not match my own understanding and practice of vegetarianism.

The combination of the beloved cat, across gendered, economic, and religious boundaries, and the theosophical steak provides an intriguing example of potentially animal-friendly behaviour in Indonesia. There seems to be a moral economy at work here, one that allows for human empathy for the animal-eating cat, but leaves us with a puzzle when it comes to not eating animals. How to understand that moral economy in Indonesia for colonial and postcolonial situations? What can looking at the animal and a modern practice of not eating animals in Indonesia make visible if we want to understand what makes empathy for the animal colonial and why (not)? What forms of knowledge and care concerning animals and the environment, come together in the vegetarian dish and in the love for the cat in Indonesia?

This experimental essay – a postcolonial thought experiment that anticipates further research – explores, with cats and the theosophical vegetarian dish in colonial Indonesia as a case, how following an animal-centred perspective may help us to understand what it means to decolonize the study of the history of environmental knowledge and the role of empathy therein. It is part of a larger research plan that aims to understand what environmental empathy – as well as its politics – may have been about in late colonial and postcolonial situations. Here, I focus on forms of knowledge relating to the animal and try to unpack the role of affections in this regard. The experiment, moreover, is mainly methodological: what is the heuristic value of following a cat- and vegetarian dish-centred perspective in studying histories of environmental knowledge in late colonial and postcolonial Indonesia? How would that approach influence the way we construct such histories, and how can it help us understand what makes the forms of knowledge we discern colonial (or not)? What is the role of gendered, racial, and (post-)colonial structures in the forms of knowledge that cats and the vegetarian dish generate? To what extent do cats and (theosophical) vegetarian knowledge practices ignore, transgress, or contest these structures?⁵ How and why do these structures matter in history writing, when trying to understand them from the animal's perspective?

In following the cat and the vegetarian dish, I employ a 'social life of things'-approach, inspired by Arjun Appadurai's influential study, in the

5 Compare Antoinette Burton and Renisa Mawani (eds.), *Animalia: An Anti-Imperial Bestiary for our Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020).

analysis of a limited set of sources from late colonial and postcolonial times in which cats and/or vegetarian practices enter the stage.⁶ While this approach runs the risk of ‘objectifying’ the animal, it enables us to see what vegetarian dishes, perceived as new, in different contexts, do, and it allows us to recognize the full agency of the cat. Following the perspective of a cat-in-motion, as she winds her way in full action, with grace, hunger, fear or anger, across space and time, illuminates what she actively does to the human social context, and to animal–human relationships, and what changing animal–human relationships do to the environment.

Before turning to the cat and the vegetarian dish, however, in the two following paragraphs I will reflect on the notion of environmental empathy, and how we can understand its gendered dimension for the period around 1900. I will then explore this further in relation to the vegetarian defence of the Theosophical Society (founded in New York in 1875), which spread its influence amongst followers worldwide from around 1900 onwards. This will complicate the question of what makes environmental knowledge, and empathy for the animal, in colonizing and colonized countries Western, colonial, or local.⁷

Unsettling Environmental Empathy: The Image of the Suffering Body

How to address environmental empathy, considering that it is such a fluid – and political – phenomenon? As is the case for cultural heritage formation, practices of empathy and care for animals or the environment at large are always political.⁸ Empathy and care will mean different things to different groups of people in different contexts, and they will entail mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. Also political is the kind of empathy that knowledge production concerning animals demands.⁹ The challenge in this essay is to understand if and how human beings’ empathy matters to the animal, and what following the animal and the vegetarian dish can teach us about the

6 Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

7 Compare Julia Hauser, “Internationalism and Nationalism: Indian Protagonists and Their Political Agendas at the 15th World Vegetarian Congress in India (1957),” *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 44, no. 1 (2021): 152–66.

8 Hauser, “World Vegetarian Congress.”

9 J.S. Parrenas, *Decolonizing Extinction: The Work of Care in Orangutan Rehabilitation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 6, 191.

structures that we think rule the study of history and its colonial, gendered, and postcolonial dimensions.

When reflecting on what we mean, when using the concept environmental empathy in colonial situations (rather than e.g. ‘domesticating nature’), and asking what would make this empathy local or colonial, it is insightful to return to Ramachandra Guha’s classic ‘Third World critique’ of ‘deep ecology’.¹⁰ As a school of thought and concept, coined by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess (1973), deep ecology stood at the beginning of a movement, typical for the countercultural 1970s, calling for a philosophical and cultural revolution in human attitudes towards nature, moving away from the anthropocentric towards (re-)centralizing nature. Guha’s central criticism is that this movement represents Western-centred forms of thinking, which ignore inequalities, both in ideas and in the policies of environmental protection. Deep ecologists, in Guha’s view, overemphasize wildlife preservation at the cost of local human needs, and romanticize indigenous knowledge and Eastern spiritual traditions as forerunners of deep ecology. Amitav Gosh’s recent best-selling effort to write an environmental history from the perspective of a nutmeg plant in Ambon, suffers, in that sense, from a comparable romanticism, particularly in its recourse to shamanistic knowledge as a solution to climate change.¹¹

To understand the gendered dimension of forms of empathy, one way of approaching and defining empathy towards animals and nature is considering pain, and the awareness of the suffering body.¹² This kind of empathy towards animals, generated by recognition of pain, developed, in the West, in the late nineteenth-century, and, as gender historians have pointed out, especially amongst women.¹³ (The first vegetarian restaurant in the Netherlands, founded in 1899, for example, was exclusively run by women.) Such animal-oriented empathy developed in the context of alternative social movements merging at that time, including radicalizing vegetarianism with older (religious and scientific) roots, anti-vivisectionist organizations,

10 Ramachandra Guha, “Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique,” in *Varieties of Environmentalism: Essays on North and South*, eds. Ramachandra Guha and Juan Martinez-Alier (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 92–108.

11 Amitav Gosh, *The Nutmeg’s Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2021).

12 Gauri Viswanathan, “‘Have Animals Souls?’: Theosophy and the Suffering Body,” *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol 126 (2011): 442.

13 Amongst others: Joy Dixon, *Divine Feminine. Theosophy and Feminism in England* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 121–51. For an overview of recent studies on vegetarianism in European and colonial contexts, see Hauser, “World Vegetarian Congress.”

and the Theosophical Society; and it did so alongside, or in reaction to, a dominant lack of awareness of the suffering (female and animal) body, which defined and still defines societal interhuman power relations, and the relations between human and non-humans.¹⁴ This insight, I argue, may be of use for a working definition to understand and compare the forms of empathy this essay scrutinizes for colonial and postcolonial situations. First, empathy, here, entailed awareness and recognition of the suffering body – the animal's and the female's as a starting point – which may be experienced as love. Second, ideally, it entailed (promotion of) protective or empowering actions prompted by this awareness.¹⁵

The Animal and the Vegetarian Dish in the Theosophical Worldview

The forms of knowledge and empathy that come together in the Theosophical Steak that I encountered as a legacy of a theosophical past in Indonesia, will, like the notion of environmental empathy, differ in meaning and impact in comparison to other (European, Asian, colonial, postcolonial) contexts. Yet, the way the forewomen and -men of the internationally growing Theosophical Society began to defend vegetarianism, and prescribed empathy for the animal both as a moral device and as a means for spiritual cleansing and empowering, must have spoken to those who experienced inequality and suppression of their own bodies in gendered, racially, and/or colonially organized societies.

The still existing Theosophical Society (hereafter, TS) is an international spiritual reform movement that experienced its peak of popularity in the period 1900s–1930s. It was founded in New York in 1875 by Ukrainian-born Russian-German Helena Blavatsky and American Henry Olcott. In 1883 its headquarters moved to Adyar/Madras, in (then) British India. Aiming towards the highest spiritual wisdom through the study of all religions, and of preferably Vedic texts, the TS connected spiritual seekers, scholars, school teachers, administrators, artists, and 'Asian Art' collectors in both Asia and the West. It gained followers worldwide, including in the colonized world, amongst colonizers and colonized, and amongst them a remarkable number of women. While celebrating inclusiveness, through its ideal of an

14 Compare Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (London: Bloomsbury, 1990).

15 Compare Parrenas, *Decolonizing Extinction*, 6: empathy needs 'work'.

international spiritual brotherhood, the TS, in practice and in its ideology, also reproduced racial hierarchies. At the same time, it was an emancipatory tool, to women worldwide, and to various groups in Asia, amongst whom, in the Dutch East Indies, a growing group of Javanese and Chinese emancipators, school teachers, shopkeepers, and administrators.¹⁶

While vegetarianism was neither a central theosophical device nor an obligation for its members, the TS propagated a worldview that called for empathy for the animal. Key to the theosophical defence of animal care was the lecture ‘Vegetarianism in the Light of Theosophy’ – delivered in 1897, in Manchester, and printed in multiple translations worldwide – by the British feminist, socialist, theosophical spokeswoman, and future president of the TS, Annie Besant (1847–1933).¹⁷ In the lecture, she explained how the theosophical worldviews situated the bodies of minerals, animals, human beings, and astral bodies in a chain of connectedness, which reflected a hierarchical development towards spiritual redemption of the world at large. This development, moreover, revealed a growing of consciousness: from the level of animals and their capacity to feel happiness and pain, to human beings’ capacity to express and act according to consciousness. The higher aim of spiritual redemption and the suffering body of the animal made it a responsibility of human beings to act with respect towards animals, and not to slaughter or eat them.

To further emphasize the urgency of not eating animals, Besant dramatically re-imagined for her audience the biggest slaughterhouse in the United States, in Chicago, and the fear, horror, and pain animals experienced there. Those who slaughtered thereby helped poison the environment, which she felt through – as she explained – astral vibrations, when passing Chicago by train. Thus, given the chain connecting all bodies, she implied: ‘We are not free from the brutalizing results of that trade simply because we take no direct part in it’.¹⁸ The violent acts of slaughtering animals, and eating

16 Marieke Bloembergen, ‘New spiritual Movements, Scholars, and ‘Greater India’ in Indonesia, 1920s–1970s’, in: Susie Protschky and Tom van den Berge eds, *Modern Yimes in Southeast Asia, 1920s-1970s*. (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 57-86. Iskander P. Nugraha, *Theosofi, Nasionalisme & Elite Modern Indonesia* (Depok: Komunitas Bambu, 2002). H.O. De Tollenaere, *The Politics of Wisdom: Theosophy and Labour, National and Women’s Movement in Indonesia and South Asia, 1875–1947* (Nijmegen: Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen, 1996);

17 For the original lecture by Annie Besant, see Annie Besant, *Vegetarianism in the Light of Theosophy* (Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 3rd edition, April 1932), uploaded by Anand Gholap in 2016, https://www.anandgholap.net/AB_Vegetarianism_In_Light_Of_Theosophy.htm.

18 Besant, from her vegetarian lecture, tellingly quoted on a website on the history of vegetarianism: International Vegetarian Union IVU, ‘Annie Besant (1847–1933) Text of a Speech Given at Manchester UK, October 18, 1897,’ <https://ivu.org/history2/besant/text.html>.

them, affected and obstructed the potential transformation of mankind and the world's spiritual redemption, and vice versa. Since all creatures were connected, and fed into the development of the Spirit, not eating animals served a higher goal beyond respecting them: the cleansing of the human body, the Spirit's development, and thereby the world's spiritual redemption.

This worldview, which we might now term holistic, seems to resonate with environmental concerns today, which try to re-situate human animals back into nature and the cosmos. Its popularity amongst and beyond TS followers around 1900 is telling. It problematizes present-day theorizing and timing of the Anthropocene, and, much in line with Guha's criticism on 1970s deep ecology, the ways environmentalists, animal-rights activists, and sometimes also scholars in the field of environmental humanities, tend to romanticize 'indigenous environmental knowledge' of societies 'elsewhere' as being closer to nature. Such views, as the theosophical case illustrates, were developing as part and parcel of modernity, in the Global North and South.¹⁹

But to what extent would such variants of empathy matter to the cats dwelling in the colonial Dutch East Indies around 1900? How can following the perspective of the cat and the vegetarian dish help us to further complicate our understanding of the moral economy of empathy for the animal?

What the Cat Wants

In proposing to follow a 'cat-centred' perspective, I do not pretend to be able to enter the mind of the cats (however much I wish). Throughout, I cannot but follow the perspective of human beings, which is also limited by these sources' (colonial) framings. But when we 'read' the sources in which cats enter the stage consequently from the cat's vantagepoint, we see how they *choose* to spend a short or long time with human beings. For cats 'seek for, and absorb energy', as an Indonesian friend explained, when, in August 2023, we visited his grandparents' graves, and a young stray cat joined us and stayed, playfully attentive to the ritual homage.²⁰ My friend's interpretation presented as common knowledge is illustrative of what we human being cat lovers project on cats, and where we recognize each other's empathy for the

19 Compare Hauser, "World Vegetarian Congress."

20 Visit of the author to Pulo Menteng, Jakarta, with Dimas and Kiki Djajadiningrat, August 18, 2023.

cat. On the other hand, the cat in that graveyard effectively preferred to stay with us, even when the grave's caretaker tried to send it away: it returned, and, at the same time, had generated different forms of energy and affections. By reading sources 'cat-centred', we see how cats bring together various forms of energy, affections, and knowledge. For colonial times, these forms of knowledge include those of medical science-in-development, hygienics, and beliefs, which were of local and foreign/colonial origin.

A quick search into Delpher, the digitization project of the Dutch National Library, and into its colonial and postcolonial newspapers from the period 1890–1965, delivers a hit of 62,279 cat-related articles. They reveal, as the first quote above illustrates, how cats charmed colonial and local audiences in the Dutch East Indies, in ways cat lovers and cat-video-watchers today might relate to. Limited as these sources are, as they convey the view of colonial reporters and colonial scientists, who were writing for a Dutch public, they are still quite insightful for our query here. Considering the fact that a particular sort of news report is clearly occasioned by the *effects* of contacts between cats and human beings, and written against the background of the new phenomenon of rabies outbreaks and medical research, we also might detect awareness of environmental changes. This awareness, however, seems to be mainly driven by concern for what these phenomena do to human beings.

Turning now to the social lives of cats, I look into two larger framings of knowledge that, as we shall see, cats have generated, and unpack the affections that have been applied to them, in particular love: 1. Religious and civilizational thinking; and 2. Science, race, and gender.

Religious and Civilizational Thinking

The quotation at the start of this chapter, from an article in the *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* in 1914, discusses the meanings and beliefs regarding cats in 'native life' in the Dutch East Indies. It reveals that the love or care for cats, whether expressed by local or colonial inhabitants, was both common and a thing to notice in the colonial media. Importantly, these cats' active appearances in colonial society generated explicit awareness of differences and sameness in quite separate spheres of life. Cats, actively charming human beings, spurred reflections on the place of the cat in human civilizations, perceived as religions. The article's author explains the love for cats in local (predominantly Islamic) society, through religious and civilizational motives. He tells the story about Prophet Muhammad's love for cats, exemplified by his favourite. While it was napping 'in his wide sleeve', Muhammad had

to leave. In order not to disturb the cat, Muhammad cuts off the sleeve of his coat. Without mentioning it, the article also refers to the *Hadith* as a source for understanding cat's social lives in Islamic societies: 'The one who mistreats a cat [...] would get a special punishment in hell, the one who takes care of a unhappy cat, gains Allah's mercy'. In short, so the article concludes, within Islamic practices 'the cat deserves special distinction'.²¹ Comparable stories, illustrating Muhammad's deep care for cats, and the remarkable love cats seemed to generate in local society, also appear in other articles published in colonial newspapers.²²

We may wonder, however, how much it helps us to seek religious motives to understand why cats generate a particular fondness from human beings, if only because cats, entering (not-so) civilized places, can get kicked by believers, too. In two colonial news items, Christian colonial military men, in toxic gendered spheres, abuse individual harmless cats, just for the game of it. One example, entitled 'The Cat and the Rat' (1939) also reveals cat empathy, and what empathy may have generated *despite* colonial situations: a man named Dasan, thus probably not European, reported that a military man, sergeant St., shot his cat. The sergeant declared to have mistaken her for a rat.²³ The empathic outcome of this news item: the authorities took the sergeant's gun, to prevent him from further animal abuse. The other example, 'Officer's Entertainment' (1905), describes a cat experiencing terrible abuse by some military men's dogs (at their order, just for fun), with the cat's violent death as result.²⁴

These cases of cat abuse would have fitted well in the next paragraph, because of the gendered and racial structures that they reveal and, to a certain extent, complicate. However, I mention them here to nuance the idea of cats generating a shared love and compassion in colonial society, and to warn against the use of civilizational-cum-religious worldviews to gauge empathy for the animal. The point, much in line with Guha's argumentation above, is that we should be cautious of romanticizing

21 "De kat [The Cat]," *Bataviaasch nieuwsblad*, February 28, 1914, 5, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011036634:mpeg21:p005>.

22 See also: "De kat van Mohammed," *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, March 4, 1916, 2; "Waardeering van de Kat [Appreciation of the Cat]," *Algemeen Handelsblad voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, January 14, 1936. Compare "Islam and Cats", Wikipedia, last edited December 22, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_and_cats; Ceyda Torun (director), *Kedi*, 2017, about cats' and human beings' lives in Istanbul.

23 "De kat en de rat [The Cat and the Rat]," *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, November 29, 1939.

24 "Officieren genoegens [Officers' Entertainment]," *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, April 29, 1905.

when we consider the affections that cats generate in different societies, as determined by different religions. From the gendered perspective, following the female cat, it may be a question, moreover, how much it helps her that ‘care’ also implies ‘let the cat be and live’, and thus that procreation is not prevented. The examples of cat abuse show that, for the cat itself, human beings’ religions, or their civilizational worldviews, make no difference.

Modern Science, Race, Gender

So far, we can argue that (observations on) love for the cat does not necessarily help colonial journalists to become critically aware of the (intersectional) gendered and racial structures of colonial society. Nor does such love generate explicit concerns about (being part of) the environment, which might have helped them to question or transgress these structures. Now, turning to the sphere of medical science, examples include the anecdotal news reports on cat bites, which indicate an awareness and fear of rabies. While these reports reveal affections and medical knowledge generated by the cats, they also reflect the daily racism and gendered, racial, and class structures that typified colonial society. In the example below, a journalist – in one random enumeration – mentioned the brains of a cat, and four nameless indigenous servants, all framed as just ‘samples’, to be sent to the ‘Institute Pasteur’ for research.

A cat of Mr. de Sturler in Soekaboemi attacked the servants. She bit four natives. Because the veterinarian feared rabies, the natives, and the brains of the cat were sent to the Institute Pasteur in Bandung.²⁵

This anecdote also shows how empathy for the cat was restricted: the cat, here, while featuring in full action, is the biggest victim of the effects of changing human-animal relations. The cat can be used for testing of medication or bacilli, her brains can be sent for research to the Institute Pasteur, without any comment. Any recognition of the suffering body of the animal is absent. But the same goes for the suffering bodies of the four nameless indigenous servants – except that their brains are not dissected. Thus, a class-, racial, and moral differentiation in cat-centred versus human-centred forms of empathy develops in the context of new scientific

25 “Dolle Kat [Crazy Cat],” *Algemeen Handelsblad voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, October 24, 1925.

questions and methodologies.²⁶ Intriguingly, these forms of empathy were generated by the agency of a specific cat: through her attacking, biting or scratching bodies of specific human beings, who happened to be local servants. We can compare this to a slightly more extensive report featuring another cat biting:

Mrs. J. E., living at Sendjojoroad [in Bandung], reported that she and her 19-year-old daughter Miss C. had been bitten in the hands by her cat. Both ladies were nursed in the C.B.Z., while the cat was transferred to the Animal shelter at Kobong. There, shortly after, the cat drew her last breath, and we hope out of remorse. In the meantime, both the biting and the passing away of the cat were sufficient reason to send both ladies to the Institute Pasteur in Bandoeng. The brains of the crazy cat will also be sent there, to be analyzed in Bandoeng.²⁷

Here, the story is also triggered by a cat in clear action. Although, ultimately, the fate of this cat is comparable – her brains being sent to the Institute Pasteur – there is an important difference. The cat's victims, identified as women of higher class ('ladies'), are treated with much more empathy, both by the reporter, and, in practice, than the four unnamed indigenous servants above: they get 'initials', we get to know them to be a mother and her daughter. They get immediate care.

For the cat in this story, her fate is different as well: she was already dead when her brains were dissected, to be sent to the Pasteur Institute. We get to know a bit more of her previous social life, too. First, in her performance as the (probably beloved) pet of mother and daughter, then, after the bite, as the fear-causing wild animal whose suffering body is being ignored. Then, she changes places from a colonial home to a colonial animal asylum. There she dies – probably of rabies. For, it is not the cat's potential pain or her death that is alarming to the experts, but only the prospect of sending the two human beings to the Pasteur Institute. In that process, through the reporter's hope that she died 'out of remorse', the cat transforms into a guilty creature. The empathy for the suffering body is centred around the human beings, not the cat. Cats entering the sphere, frame, and mindset of medical science, were not lucky.

26 Compare Fenneke Sysling, *Racial Science and Human Diversity in Colonial Indonesia* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2016).

27 "De rare kat [The Strange Cat]," *De Locomotief*, October 20, 1938.

The Theosophical Vegetarian Dish in the Dutch East Indies: Phase One

In the final part of this essay, I turn to implications of the theosophical plea for not eating animals, as it took shape in the Dutch East Indies, following the perspective of the vegetarian dish. Based on very preliminary research, I look at this in fragmented ways.

Besant's legitimization of the vegetarian dish was, from 1902, also food for debate in journals and lodges of the TS in the Dutch East Indies – only a year after it kicked off in Semarang. The way it came to be digested there is exemplary for how the TS helped to unsettle dominant categories and ways of looking at the world for a widening circle of initiates and enchanted members. In the Dutch East Indies, the first theosophical lodges were set up by Europeans in the early 1900s, but the Society soon also involved Javanese and Chinese as members and, to a lesser extent, as leaders of lodges. There, the conversation was in Javanese and Malay. Interests in theosophical stances towards vegetarianism go back to gatherings of these lodges, and, notably, to the readings and discussions in the libraries and reading clubs its members set up. There, TS members exchanged animal-friendly knowledge and ideas, based on publications of anti-vivisectionist and vegetarian organizations, journals, as well as vegetarian recipe books, imported from Europe.

Tellingly for the gendered network of theosophical knowledge exchange, Besant's vegetarian lecture appeared in print in the Dutch East for the first time in a Dutch translation by one of the TS female members there, Wilhelmina P.F. von Wolzogen Khür-Wijnmalen, wife of a – likewise theosophist – colonial administrator in Sampang (East Java). Notably, it appeared four years earlier than it did in the Netherlands, in a new translation by another female member, Clara Streubel, and at a time when the TS in the Dutch East Indies was still part of the Dutch section of the TS (which had a very active publishing house, too).²⁸ The Dutch East Indies' publication of the text was followed by a small section, 'Questions', in which the translator addressed the riddle why cruelty in nature also entailed animals devouring other animals – cats eating birds, and predatory birds eating cats. The answer to this was that, for lack of consciousness, animals were not accountable for their cruelty. Only mankind could be, and therefore carried a responsibility to neither eat nor kill animals.

28 Annie Besant, "Vegetarisme, van een theosofisch standpunt bezien," trans. Wilhelmina P.F. von Wolzogen Khür-Wijnmalen, *Theosofisch Maandblad van Nederlandsch-Indië* II (1902–1903): 194–210; idem, *Het vegetarisme in het licht van Theosofie*, trans. Clara Streubel (Amsterdam: Theosofische Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1906).

In 1907, the Javanese theosophical newsletter *Pewartu Theosofi* featured, in one of its first issues, a Malay translation of Besant's vegetarian lecture, by Javanese TS member Raden Soewandi. It was based on a Dutch translation, and included a Dutch introduction delivered by Dutch theosophist M. Koot. While Koot was visible as an author in the heading, Besant was not. Koot belonged to the very active founding members of the TS lodge in Surabaya (East Java). Through the translation in *Pewartu Theosofi*, Koot and Soewandi could reach out to the mostly lower-elite Indonesian members of the TS.

Intriguingly, in a footnote to Koot's introductory section, addressing the theosophical device not to kill animals, Soewandi, thinking further, observed that vegetarianism *was* already a Javanese practice: 'The majority of the Javanese is already vegetarian, as they do not eat beef, but poultry'.²⁹

While, at first sight, this observation seems a remarkably selective form of vegetarianism, on further thought it appears that Soewandi, here, was referring to a vegetarian practice that was not driven by empathy, but by economic needs. It also shows that theosophical vegetarianism – out of empathy for the animal – was presented and perceived as a new practice, as a new morally right way of living. The vegetarian translation, moreover, triggered Soewandi's awareness of particular differences and new forms of cultural behaviour and criticism, which could shape status and new friendships around certain ideals.

The vegetarian dish became part of a common theosophical practice, through which TS members in the Dutch East Indies could communicate across different (racial) backgrounds and standing. This happened, for example, at the first congress of the TS of the Dutch East Indies in 1908, in Yogyakarta. From there, the mixed company of Dutch, Chinese, and Javanese members visited the nearby eighth-century Buddhist shrine Borobudur, for a solemn climb, towards enjoying, presumably in equal togetherness, an imagined Nirvana.³⁰ Tellingly, before climbing the monument together, the members had shared – almost self-evidently – a vegetarian dish.

As Leela Gandhi has argued, the charmed knowledge networks and friendships, like those bred by the TS, crossed formal colonial hierarchies and structures of gender, class, and racism. At the same time, the theosophical trip to Borobudur and the vegetarian dish consumed there show how economic, gendered, and racial differences were being ignored as unproblematic, and, to

29 Soewandi, "Vegetarisme," 155.

30 Marieke Bloembergen, "Borobudur in 'the Light of Asia': Scholars, Pilgrims and Knowledge Networks of Greater India, 1920s–1970s," in: *Belonging across the Bay of Bengal: Religious Rites, Colonial Migrations, National Rights*, ed. Michael Laffan (London: Bloomsbury, 2017) 35–57.

a certain extent, reproduced by the new practitioners, while they tried to think from the perspective of the animal. While Gandhi reasons that these friendships contested such structures, we can argue that they may have supported them as well, also in the long term.³¹ It may be there that the social life of the vegetarian dish and that of the cat, after all a semi-wild, half domesticated, but an independent creature that may ‘leap’ away, differ.³² What they share, in this essay’s historical construction, however, is the capacity to unsettle.

Next Phase of the Vegetarian Dish: Theosophical Steak (1930s–1970s)³³

In 2017, I spoke in Jakarta with the well-known Indonesian intellectual Adji Damais (1942–2021).³⁴ We were talking about his father, the French philologist Louis-Charles Damais, who arrived in Java at the end of the 1930s, for research (briefly as staff of the Dutch Colonial Archaeological Service). In Java, he met and married Adji’s Indonesian mother, Raden Roro Soejatoen Poespokoemo (1912–2005), who made him stay. My questions about his father’s spiritual, theosophical quest evoked a specific memory in Adji. Like the novelist Marcel Proust, tasting a madeleine, which famously plunged him into memories of his French elite past, Adji Damais was able to evoke an ancient theosophical world through a dish, the meaning of which he did not realize at the time: ‘Biefstuk Theosoof’ (Theosophical Steak). In 1950s independent Indonesia, the Damais father and son often visited Solo (Central Java) for Louis-Charles’ philological and epigraphic research. There, they invariably visited the restaurant Pak Ahmad, named after the owner. On the menu was: ‘Biefstuk Theosoof’. The name fascinated Adji immensely as a little boy, and he kept asking his father about it. But now, in 2017, he summed it up by saying, ‘But, yeah, so I realized later, that was, of course, the vegetarian dish’.³⁵

31 Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

32 Leigh Claire La Berge, *Marx for Cats: A Radical Bestiary* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2023), 4–5.

33 This section is an abbreviated version of a paragraph in my Inaugural Lecture: Marieke Bloembergen, *Last van koloniale dingen: kennisvorming, Indonesische perspectieven, en de zoektocht naar verlichting* [*The Burden of Colonial Things: Alternative Knowledge Production, Indonesian Perspectives, and the Search for Enlightenment*] May 25, 2022, Leiden University.

34 Conversation between the author and Adji Damais, Jakarta, March 12, 2017.

35 Conversation between the author and Adji Damais, Jakarta, December 3, 2017.

At a time when the term vegetarian meatball has become commonplace, we may no longer be surprised by the combination ‘vegetarian’ and ‘steak’, but, still, they also struck me as a remarkable remnant, or heritage, of theosophical knowledge networks going back to colonial times. However, the dish *Biefstuk Theosoof*, which would adorn Pak Ahmad’s menu until at least the late 1960s, did not seem to fit into the framework in which little Adji Damais was familiar with eating and interpreting his world in the 1950s, and also not in mine now.³⁶ What that implied, how insightful the name of this dish could be for understanding alternative learning in Indonesia, I only realized when, a year later, two elderly Indonesian theosophists in Surabaya wanted to take me out to dinner, to *the* vegetarian restaurant further in town.³⁷ I saw the little square I had passed before, opposite the Theosophical Lodge, full of *warung* where the most delicious vegetarian dishes beckoned. Why not *gado-gado*, or *tempeh* with delicious *sayur lodeh* and rice, I suggested? But no, my hosts emphasized, that was different. If we were going to eat vegetarian, we were supposed to do it in *the* vegetarian restaurant.

The vegetarianism that struck me in Surabaya and Solo did not seem to fit into the frameworks I was familiar with myself. Apart from that, there are, of course, other reasons and frameworks to consider when pondering why vegetarianism in Indonesia seems difficult to place. Religious frameworks: pork, yes, but most meat and fish are not taboo in Indonesian Islam.³⁸ Hindus in Bali, if they can afford it, eat their *babi guling* with relish, and fish is no problem either. The more important framework, already mentioned, is economic inequality. People still suffer from food insecurity and malnutrition in Indonesia. So do cats. Anyway, the two men in Surabaya drew a line for themselves that I did not understand. But that makes it all the more interesting for the researcher. The point is: the challenge is not to fit that strange thing/strangeness into the frameworks we already know, but to make understandable why that strange thing/strangeness is not strange from the perspective of ‘the other’. And thus, how it might help us to get out of ossified structures, practices and politics of knowledge. And we might transfer this question, while running the risk of objectification, to the cat and to the environment.

36 Claire Holt, “Indonesia Revisited,” *Indonesia* 9 (April 1970), 163–88.

37 Conversation between the author and chairman Pak Untung (1941) and secretary Rudiyanto (1956), Theosophical lodge in Surabaya, June 2, 2018.

38 George Quinn, *Bandit Saints of Java* (Burrough on the Hill: Monsoon Books, 2019) (un-numbered page of front material).

Concluding Remarks

The exercise of following the perspective of the cat and the vegetarian dish to reconstruct and perhaps decolonize a history of environmental empathy proves insightful because it unsettles us. It helps us to get out of the framings we are used to, precisely because the stories actively formed by cats and the vegetarian dish are hard to fit in. The vegetarian dish reveals a spatial moral economy where the meatless dish can only be recognized as such in a particular place, and by actors of different classes. The forms of knowledge that come together in the theosophical vegetarian dish in colonial and postcolonial Indonesia reflect a gendered awareness of the suffering body, and the responsibility of active respect towards animals, and therefore empathy. But they are also about the idea of spiritual cleansing. The vegetarian dish is, moreover, a means of communicating about all of this, to connect and feel empowered while ignoring and maybe supporting structural difference. Cats, likewise, unsettle the spatial, moral, gendered, and racial structures of (post)colonial society, because they seek energy and act – ‘do’ – differently than human beings. Through their actions they sometimes bring about awareness of the consequences of human–animal interactions, and, when cruelty to cats is at stake, awareness of the cat’s pain and her suffering body. The protective actions towards cats may have had further political aims, which makes them colonial. Unsettled by cat- and vegetarian dish-centred thinking, we may begin to understand the spatial, moral economy, changes, and politics of – what might be – environmental empathy in colonial and postcolonial situations; and begin to make a difference there, also as scholars.

The social life of the vegetarian dishes, the restaurants that delivered them, and the vegetarian encounters they generated in this chapter, show how memories and different academic, alternative, and local forms of knowledge come together and blur the boundaries between what could be ‘local’ and ‘colonial’, or ‘established’ and ‘alternative’. They reflect alternative structures of power that influence practices of knowledge production. In which for one – the less educated, not wealthy chairman of the languishing theosophical lodge in Surabaya – vegetarianism means status, but is also born of necessity; while the Indonesian hipster in Jakarta eats vegan spaghetti because she can. There, we see the spatial, moral economy of environmental empathy at work. What is empathy here, and what is local, colonial, or global about it, why (not) there, and what does theosophical steak actually offer an alternative for in colonial and post-colonial Indonesia?

Comparably, in their social lives, cats, like the vegetarian dish, in colonial and postcolonial Indonesia, cross the – gendered, racial, and colonial – structures of difference at work, and show their spatial and moral dimensions. They can unsettle ideas we have about such spatial, moral structures or the framings of knowledge that guide us. They do so partly because they reveal something many people from different classes, gender, and ethnic groups seem to share: love for the cat. But we need to be cautious about deeming such love environmental empathy, or empathy for animal life in ‘civilized places’ at large. To understand what affections for the cat are and what they ‘do’, depends on the places, sites, and framings of knowledge that cats have entered and the particular spatial moral economy, be it a graveyard, city streets and homes, military barracks, servants quarters, a white ladies’ house of standing, the Colonial Club, or a physician’s lab.

Future research aiming to decolonize environmental history might need to combine the animal turn with a sites-centred perspective – with sites, both in urbanized places and in natural landscapes, conceived as sites of knowledge production and learning. This enables us to study the encounter, exchange, and moral dynamics of knowledge at multiple layers of time, and from local and global perspectives, beyond framings of state or science. Following that animal-sites-centred approach, we might begin to value, in the light of other creatures’ conscious efforts not to kill animals for food, the role that cats play in the moral economy of environmental empathy, not only as beloved enigmas, but also as rat- and bird-eating intruders in the environment we are all part of.

About the Author

Marieke Bloembergen is senior researcher at the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV), and professor in Heritage and Postcolonial Studies in Indonesian History at Leiden University. Her research interests concern the political dynamics of cultural knowledge and heritage formation in colonial and postcolonial Indonesia, as understood in their local, inter-Asian and global dimensions, focusing on sites, objects, non-human species, religion, violence, and (environmental) care. Her most recent monograph, co-authored with Martijn Eickhoff, is *The Politics of Heritage in Indonesia: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020). Currently she is working on a book manuscript, entitled *Indonesia and the Politics of Greater India: A Moral Geography, 1880s–1990s*.

Naturalizing Collaboration

Women, Lions, and Behavioural Field Research in East Africa during the 1970s

Simone Schleper

Abstract

By the mid-1970s, the last strongholds of postcolonial, white, and male-dominated research garrisons in places such as the Tanzanian Serengeti experienced an unprecedented inflow of women researchers with credentials in their own right, either as independent researchers, or as parts of collaborative couples. Many of them came to work on big cats. Based on archival research, interviews, and the close reading of wildlife monographs, this chapter discusses a twofold shift that occurred in both research practices and research questions after more women and couples started to research lions in the Serengeti. A new emphasis on the role of collaboration between individual adult lions required long-term team observations and allowed for a ‘naturalization’ of cooperative fieldwork practices between research partners. At the same time, individual lions, females in particular, like the women who studied them, attained a greater role and perhaps more ‘agency’ in the accounts on their lives and their prides.

Keywords: Serengeti lion project, animal behaviour research, collaborative couples, fieldwork practices, social behaviour

Introduction

‘My wife, Kay, contributed so much to this project that it actually was a joint venture. She not only managed our home and schooled our sons, Eric, and Mark, but also spent many hours watching lion, cheetah, and wild dog. For one and a half months she carried on the field work entirely by herself. And, finally, she typed and criticized the various drafts of this

report'.¹ This fleeting acknowledgement by George Schaller on the first pages of his monumental, single-authored wildlife monograph *The Serengeti Lion* (1972), one of the most cited works on African lions to date, is not an exception. Until the mid-1970s, research in established African research stations was predominantly presented as a single (white) man's effort, linked to names such as Schaller, Brian Bertram, Hans Kruuk, Fritz Walther, and Tony Sinclair.² By the mid-1970s, the last strongholds of postcolonial, white, and by all means male-dominated research garrisons in places such as the Tanzanian Serengeti experienced a slow, yet unprecedented inflow of women researchers with credentials in their own right, either as independent researchers, or more often, as parts of collaborative couples. Many of them came to work on big cats.

Research on relationships between humans and lions in the larger field of human–animal studies has often been linked to visions of masculinity.³ Yet, the long-term lion project, just like other predator studies conducted in the Serengeti from the 1970s onwards included a notable number of women biologists and researcher couples. By the 1970s, images of white women naturalists and big cats were already familiar to predominantly white and Western audiences through the work of Joy and George Adamson and their famous lioness, Elsa.⁴ Joy Adamson's widely read settler accounts focused strongly on individual animals. The cats' and the Adamsons' portrayals were also clearly gendered with Joy 'mothering' Elsa, and Elsa mothering her cubs.⁵ While the larger (post) colonial political context in which the

1 George Schaller, *The Serengeti Lion: A Study of Predator-Prey Relations* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1972), viii.

2 Brian Bertram, *Pride of Lions* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1978); Fritz R Walther, *In the Country of Gazelles* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995); Anthony R. E. Sinclair, *Serengeti Story: Life and Science in the World's Greatest Wildlife Region* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Hans Kruuk, *The Spotted Hyena: A Study of Predation and Social Behavior* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1972).

3 Mia Uys and Sandra Swart, "Big Cat Acts and Big Men: Performing Power and Gender in South Africa's Circus Industry, c.1888–1916," *Early Popular Visual Culture* 18, no. 3 (2020): 283–304, 6; Eric S. Godoy, "Sympathy for Cecil: Gender, Trophy Hunting and the Western Environmental Imaginary," *Journal of Political Ecology* 27, no. 1 (2020): 759–74; Sandra Swart, *The Lion's Historian: Africa's Animal Past* (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2023), 70–71.

4 While, around 1900, popular audiences might have encountered women and big cats in circuses and travelling shows, wildlife research on large predators remained a male domain into the 1960s. Peta Tait, *Fighting Nature: Travelling Menageries, Animal Acts and War Shows* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2016), 176.

5 Jopi Nyman, *Postcolonial Animal Tale from Kipling to Coetzee* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2003); Joy Adamson, *Elsa: The True Story of a Lioness* (London: Collins & Harvill Press, 1961).

Adamsons' work took place had not changed, the big cat studies at the Serengeti Research Institute (SRI) differed in their scientific aspiration, with involved researchers both admiring the Adamsons for their conservation work, and criticizing them for their naïve ideas about rewilding lions bred in captivity.⁶ In the context of institutional science in African research stations, however, women authors were a novelty.

Of course, collaboration in biological fieldwork was not new. As George Schaller's account of Kay Schaller's contribution shows, collaborative fieldwork involving the help of spouses was a common practice.⁷ Yet, it was only from the mid-1970s onwards that collaboration not only in fieldwork, but also in authorship became more widely recognized. The move of women and women biologists into lion research had consequences. Several of the women involved in big cat studies moved into predator behaviour research from research areas in the life sciences that already contained higher percentages of women researchers, such as primatology, in which the study of individual rather than species-level behaviour was widely practiced. The acknowledgement of women and women research partners as (co-) authors, then, was accompanied by a simultaneous move from broad demographic and ecological studies of the Serengeti ecosystem and animal behaviour on the species level, towards new research topics, such as the intimate, anthropological studies of individual animals, their social behaviour, and the history of their particular social groups. This chapter is based on archival work, in-depth interviews, and correspondence with women and couples involved in this project in the 1970s, as well as the close reading of the lion project monographs and its documentation. It discusses this twofold shift towards more openly accepted collaborative research practices and a new research focus on the social lives of individual lions that occurred with the entry of more women researchers, often trained in primatology and more anthropological methods, into the research field.

The topics of gender and scientific collaboration have been recurring themes in the history of science literature, with the work by Margaret Rossiter in the 1980s, and larger collections on creative and collaborative couples in the 1990s and 2010s. In general, marriage between scientific spouses has been described as weakening what Rossiter has called the 'Matilda Effect', that is, the tendency to falsely credit male scientists with the work of their

6 Interview with Jeanette Hanby and David Bygott, May 15, 2023.

7 The same is, of course, true for local game wardens and fieldwork assistants – in Schaller's case Stephen Makacha, who receives a similarly fleeting acknowledgement. In this piece on gender and animals, I focus on expat researchers' spouses who are women.

female colleges, giving women in these unions more agency as scientists in their own right. Yet, most of these studies have focused on the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, prior to second-wave feminism of the 1960s and 1970s, and on research *practices* rather than content.⁸ For the second half of the twentieth century, it has, to a large extent, been work in the field of science and technology studies (STS) that has looked at women in natural science disciplines. In the 1980s and 1990s, feminist STS scholars, such as Donna Haraway, have discussed primatology, a branch of biology with links to social science disciplines such as anthropology, which has had a relatively high percentage of women and that has discussed the role of gender and female sexuality quite explicitly. Here, in turn, the focus has much less often been on how field research was conducted, but on the *content* of the science itself, especially in the context of changing gender roles in Western society and research seemingly supporting claims on gender in pre-historic and nonhuman primate societies.⁹ In fact, 1960s and 1970s women primatologists, including leading individuals such as Jane Goodall, Diane Fossey, and Biruté Galdikas, have been embraced by feminist science scholars as championing a so-called women's point of view. Of course, we know that not all primatologists supported this vision of a feminist agenda *per se*.¹⁰ Yet, leading primatologists, like Robert Hinde of the department for animal behaviour at Cambridge and the Madingley field station, a hub for women primatologists from Europe and the US in the 1970s, suggest that they have been influenced by the women they worked with, and, in Hinde's case, taught in his lab.¹¹

Beyond these two bodies of literature, we know relatively little about how both research practices and research topics changed in the second half of the twentieth century for women researchers studying other types

8 Margaret Rossiter, "The Matthew Mathilda Effect in Science," *Social Studies of Science* 23, no. 2 (1993): 325–41; Helena Pycior, Nancy Slack, and Pnina Abir-Am, eds., *Creative Couples in the Sciences* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996); Annette Lykknes, Donald Opitz, and Brigitte van Tiggelen, eds., *For Better or Worse? Collaborative Couples in the Sciences* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2012).

9 Donna Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (London: Verso, 1989); Sandra Harding, *Women in Human Evolution*, ed. Lori D. Hager (London and New York: Routledge, 1991).

10 Hager in Harding, *Women in Human Evolution*, 3–6.

11 Donna Haraway "Primatology is Politics by Other Means," *Proceedings of the Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association*, no. 2 (1984): 508; Hinde in Shirley Strum and Linda Marie Fedigan, eds., *Primate Encounters: Models of Science, Gender, and Society* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2000), 113. Hinde, in fact, was part of another collaborative couple after marrying one of his students, Joan Stevenson-Hinde.

of animals. Looking at the Serengeti lion project that ran from 1966 until the 1980s, I show that, from the 1970s onwards, expat women researchers and research couples naturalized their way of working collaboratively by promoting new types of studies that required intensive observations over long, uninterrupted stretches of time. These studies, which could best be done in teams, were partly influenced by new anthropological methods in primatology concerned with understanding social interactions, often also between female animals, or mothers and infants. These studies focused on individual behaviour rather than on behaviour on the species level and often focused on female lions, which make up the social core of the pride. Collaborative long-term observations and teamwork in the field thus made it possible to highlight the social lives of and the interactions between individual animals. At the same time, the close study of particular animals and groups of animals justified – even necessitated – approaching field observations as a team effort. Animal historians have highlighted the prevalent need to identify individual animals in ecological field research and the different techniques used also by researchers such as Schaller, and later Bertram, to do so.¹² Here, I argue that, until the mid-1970s, these techniques had little consequence for the way that animals, especially female animals, were acknowledged as individual agents in long-term ecological studies. Only with the emergence of a new type of behavioural study, which focused on the lives of individuals, individual and female lions, just as the women authors involved in these studies, received stronger recognition. In the 1980s, the work by these women and couples researching lion behaviour, could, at least in part, contradict some of the upcoming arguments from evolutionary genetics that understood animal behaviour as determined by male reproductive interests.

Researching Lions in the Serengeti

Knowledge about lion behaviour in general and about individual lions has always been important for humans living in the Serengeti ecosystem. In pre-colonial times, lions were occasionally tracked and hunted by local human groups, such as the agropastoralist Maasai, in ritual killings called *Ala-mayo*.¹³ Traditionally, this occurred as a response after an

12 Amanda Rees, "Wildlife Agencies: Practice, Intentionality and History in Twentieth-Century Animal Field Studies," *The British Journal for the History of Science Themes*, no. 2 (2017): 127–49.

13 Swart, *The Lion's Historian*, 70.

attack on humans or livestock and the hunt was directed at individual lions known to be particularly dangerous.¹⁴ Authors have shown how, in the early colonial period, romanticized images of ritual killings and lion hunts by the Maasai became integrated into racialized ideas about nature and masculinity by American and European travellers and hunting enthusiasts.¹⁵ It is thus not surprising that reports from German and British colonizers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century stressed, first and foremost, the abundance and health of lions in the Serengeti region, often in the context of sport hunting.¹⁶ From the 1930s, in British calls for a Serengeti National Park, observations on the health and overall numbers of lions, amongst other species, were mobilized to argue for the need to protect the larger Serengeti ecosystem from land-use pressure caused by settler and native farming. After the establishment of the park in 1940 and the formation of the National Park Board in 1948, lion surveys served discussions on stricter park management practices concerned with preserving the populations of large carnivores as popular tourist attractions. Counts of lions and other animals, here, were often used as arguments to exclude human pastoralists and indigenous hunters from the protected area.¹⁷ Negotiations about Maasai land and grazing rights, and with it the focus on overall counts of particular species including lions, continued until 1959 when existing park borders were redrawn to their current state.

While previously predator behaviour had often been studied in captivity, in the 1960s, the Serengeti gained international scientific significance as a place for behavioural research on large carnivores in situ. In 1960, the English conservationist Frank Fraser Darling called for more research into lion behaviour as an indicator of the state of the park and as a way to

14 Kokel Melubo, "Why are Wildlife on the Maasai Doorsteps? Insights from the Maasai of Tanzania," *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 16, no. 3 (2020): 180–92.

15 Cassie Hays, "The Lie of the Lion: Racialization of Nature in the Safari Souvenir," *Environmental Sociology* 1, no. 1 (2015): 4–17; Bernhard Gissibl, *The Nature of German Imperialism: Conservation and the Politics of Wildlife in Colonial East Africa* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2016), 74.

16 Oscar Baumann, *Durch Massailand zur Nilquelle. Reisen und Forschungen der Massai-Expedition des deutschen Antisklaverei-Komitee in den Jahren 1891–1893* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer: 1894); Carl Georg Schillings, *In Wildest Africa* (London: Hutchinson & Co.: 1907), 482–83; Alexander Bams, "The Highlands of the Great Craters, Tanganyika Territory," *The Geographical Journal* 58, no. 6 (1921): 402.

17 Richard W.G. Hingston, "Proposed British National Parks for Africa," *The Geographical Journal* 77, no. 5, (1931): 401–22; R.L.E. Dreschfield, "The Preservation of Game in East Africa," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 108, no. 5044, (1960): 282.

elevate lions from their status as popular hunting trophies.¹⁸ In 1963, the first in-depth behavioural studies of lions in the Serengeti were conducted by the German biologist Wolfdietrich Kühme, sponsored by the Fritz-Thyssen Stiftung and Tanganyika National Parks.¹⁹ Kühme mixed close observation with more general descriptions of behaviour on the species level. Shortly after, first long-term studies into the Serengeti predators, including lions, were published by the Dutch biologist Hans Kruuk, together with and mostly drawing on the observations by long-term game warden Myles Turner.²⁰ The work on lions was taken up more systematically by George Schaller between 1966 and 1969. At the time, Schaller was already well-known in zoological and conservation circles for his work on mountain gorillas in Virunga, and his work on tigers in the Kanha National Park in India. During both stays he had been accompanied by his wife, Kay.²¹ Schaller's lion project had been set up as part of the long-term studies run by the recently established SRI, which aimed to understand dynamics of vegetation, grazing, and predations in what was conceived as a gigantic model ecosystem.²² The 'lion study' was one of the predator studies at the institute, sponsored by the New York and Frankfurt zoological societies, under the SRI's first director, the British ecologist Hugh Lamprey.²³ Schaller described the purpose of the lion study in very general terms as to 'collect information which would lead to an understanding of lion predation in the Serengeti National Park'.²⁴ Some of the social aspects of lion behaviour were supposed to be studied with an identified pride in the Seronera area, close to the institute. This 'Seronera pride' was supposedly more accustomed to human visitors and vehicles and therefore easier to observe. While Schaller used tagging, ear marking, and later also telemetry to identify individual animals, the study was mainly demographic, describing the general composition of prides, their relation to

18 Frank Fraser Darling, "An Ecological Reconnaissance of the Mara Plains in Kenya Colony," *Wildlife Monographs*, no. 5 (1960): 37.

19 Wolfdietrich Kühme, "Beobachtung zur Soziologie des Löwen in der Serengeti-Steppe Ostafrikas," *Mammalian Biology* 31 (1966): 205–13.

20 Hans Kruuk and Myles Turner, "Comparative Notes on Predation by Lion, Leopard, Cheetah and Wild Dog in the Serengeti," *Mammalia* 3, no. 1 (1967): 1–27.

21 George Schaller, *The Year of the Gorilla* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1964); idem, *The Deer and the Tiger: A Study of Wildlife in India* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1967).

22 Thomas Lekan, *Our Gigantic Zoo: A German Quest to Save the Serengeti* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

23 Simone Schleper, "Airplanes, Cameras, Computers, Wildebeests: The Technological Mediation of Spaces for Humans and Wildlife in the Serengeti since 1950," *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 5, no. 2 (2022): 748.

24 Schaller, *The Serengeti Lion: A Study of Predator–Prey Relations*, 21.

the Serengeti ecosystem, and their overall numbers.²⁵ This general approach was common to the SRI studies in the 1960s and early 1970s. In the SRI's annual report of 1970, the Dutch ethologist Gerard Baerends, at the time the institute's scientific director, highlighted the 'unique opportunity for long-term research on individuals' and for developing typical 'predator life histories', which could serve to describe any healthy individual of the species, rather than particular animals.²⁶ Yet, the same report stressed the need for all individual studies to contribute to the overall understanding of the Serengeti ecosystem for research and conservation purposes, for which species-level behaviour was considered most important.

When Schaller left the SRI in 1969, the work was taken over by Brian Bertram, who was already in Tanzania collecting data for his dissertation on flappet larks, supervised by Hinde in Cambridge. In addition to a range of scientific papers, Bertram, too, worked on a wildlife monograph, synthesizing his main findings from his time at the SRI until 1974. Much more than Schaller's work, Bertram's *Pride of Lions* (1978) put an explicit focus on the social life of lions. In his doctoral research, too, Bertram had researched social behaviour, but predominantly on the species level.²⁷ A similar approach is visible in *Pride of Lions*. An important addition to Schaller's work was Bertram's focus on recurring social phenomena such as infanticide by nomadic male lions when entering a resident pride. Striking are also the many comparisons between lion and human behaviour, for instance in types of behaviour such as greeting or playing, speaking for the Hindeian approach, which blurred the boundaries between comparative psychology and classical ethology.²⁸ In this approach, which looked at the evolution of different patterns of behaviour, differences between individual animals were noted. Bertram, in fact, used a method to recognize individuals based on their facial features and fur colourings, using drawings and photography, an approach that required a lot of practice and long hours of observing individuals. Yet, the recognition of individuals (and their agency) was not essential to either the study itself or much of the presented narrative.²⁹ Similar to Schaller's, Bertram's work focused on observations made on

25 Ibid.

26 SRI, "Minutes of the Meeting of the Scientific Council, January 1970," 1970, Frankfurt Zoological Society Basement Archives: Box 'Stadt Frankfurt a.M. Serengeti Research Institute,' 32.

27 Bertram, *Pride of Lions*.

28 Robert Hinde, *Animal Behaviour: A Synthesis of Ethology and Comparative Psychology* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966).

29 Rees, "Wildlife Agencies: Practice, Intentionality and History in Twentieth-Century Animal Field Studies," ?

the species level, which is visible in passages as the following, describing parenting behaviour in very general terms: ‘When the cubs are less than four months old, the adults go off hunting without them, one or two to their number and sometimes a male too, remaining with the cubs’.³⁰

Both the research focus and the way of doing behavioural fieldwork on lions changed in the 1970s when Bertram returned to Cambridge. There, he convinced two of his friends, Jeannette Hanby, a postdoc, and David Bygott, a PhD candidate at Madingley, to take over the lion project. Between 1974 and 1978, the American couple spent four years researching the lions in the Serengeti. In addition to continuing Schaller’s and Bertram’s research on the demographics of Serengeti lions, they, too, published a monograph, *Lions Share* (1983).³¹ Both the narrative and the discussed research displayed a clear shift to more personalized observations of individual lions, presenting the work as the ‘story of the Sametu pride, its neighbors and enemies [and an] actual case history that documents the way a particular group of lions live in the Serengeti’.³² The individual animals discussed here were predominantly female, with female lions, making up the largest composition and the stable social core of a pride, at the centre of the work. This new emphasis emerged out of Hanby’s and Bygott’s collaborative research practices and was influenced by their background in primatology.

Researching Collaboratively

Both Hanby and Bygott had worked a lot with primates. At Madingley, and during earlier fieldwork experiences, both had been influenced by the work of Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey, and their approach of doing long-term studies on individual primates. Both Goodall and Fossey were supported by Hinde in their doctoral, and, later, their foundational work, and Hinde regularly showed their films and discussed their work at Madingley.³³ Hanby especially reports the effect of the two primatologists’

30 Bertram, *Pride of Lions*, 87. Also see Richard Burkhard, *Patterns of Behavior: Konrad Lorenz, Niko Tinbergen, and the Founding of Ethology* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2005).

31 Anthony R.E. Sinclair, *Serengeti I: Dynamics of an Ecosystem* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979); Jeannette Hanby, *Lions Share: The Story of a Serengeti Pride* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1983).

32 Hanby, *Lions Share: The Story of a Serengeti Pride*.

33 “The Karisoke Research Center – Organization, Procedures and Policy,” 1980, Harvard University Archives, Papers of Harold Jefferson Coolidge, HUG(FP), 78.6, Papers Related to Expeditions, Organizations, and personal Matters, ca. 1928–1946, Box 33, Folder ‘Colleagues

fame on the field of behaviour studies in which she was involved. Finally, ‘women were seen as able to carry a project all on their own’.³⁴ However, in practice, and despite Hinde’s support, Hanby, who already had her PhD, and Bygott who was about to complete his, could only be admitted to the SRI as a married couple as single women researchers were not admitted to the institute.³⁵

When Hanby and Bygott arrived in Seronera in 1978, the institute housed a number of couples, most of them North American or European expats.³⁶ Earlier cohorts of institute staff, in the mid-1960s, worked with Tanzanian field assistants, for instance male students from the secondary school in Arusha, who visited the institute for six weeks at a time. The first African staff joined the institute only in 1973, with Tumaini Mcharo as new scientific director and A.S. Msangi from the University of Dar es Salaam as the new chairman in 1973. Msangi was, however, rarely on site. From 1975, Feroz Kurji worked at the SRI on a project in human ecology.³⁷ Kurji, who did his masters in Dar es Salaam, left the institute after a couple of years, so by the time Hanby and Bygott worked at SRI, it was again, mainly expat researchers, except for Mcharo, the Tanzanian administrator, Mr. Malloya, and the cook, who lived at the institute.³⁸ Like the Mcharos, many expat couples had young children and the women were usually in charge of housework and educational tasks.³⁹ This is obvious in many publications as well. While domestic help was often available, and many spouses could accompany their partners on fieldwork at least from time to time, in some instances contributing substantial parts of the work, the wives’ formal role was firmly limited to that of an assistant. Both Hanby and Bygott describe a chauvinist culture at the institute, with leading researchers discrediting

and Friends: Dian Fossey Founder, Karisoke Research Center to study the mountain gorillas of Rwanda 1968–86.’

34 Interview with Jeanette Hanby and David Bygott, May 15, 2023.

35 Interview with Aadje Geertsma, May 23, 2023.

36 George Frame and Lory Frame, *Swift & Enduring: Cheetahs and Wild Dogs of the Serengeti* (New York: Elsevier-Dutton Publishing Co., Inc., 1981), 5; Jeff Schauer, “‘We Hold it in Trust’: Global Wildlife Conservation, ‘Africanization’ and the End of Empire,” *Journal of British Studies* 57, no. 3 (2018): 516–42.

37 SRI, “Progress Report October 1968 – December 1968” (Frankfurt Zoological Society Basement Archives: Box ‘Stadt Frankfurt a.M. Serengeti Research Institute,’ 1968); SRI, “Quarterly Report October – December 1975” (Frankfurt Zoological Society Basement Archives: Box ‘Stadt Frankfurt a.M. Serengeti Research Institute,’ 1975).

38 Stephanie Folse and Jan Folse, *Letters from the Serengeti* (Unknown: Jan Folse & Stephanie Folse, 2011).

39 Jeannette Hanby and David Bygott, “Written Correspondence,” May 16, 2023; Folse and Folse, *Letters from the Serengeti*.

women's research skills, for instance based on their supposed inability to handle and repair the vehicles needed for fieldwork in the large area.⁴⁰

Of course, George Schaller's work clearly describes the contributions by Kay in both enabling and conducting field research. Bertram, who met his wife Kate through one of the lodges, owned by expats or white Africans, which supplied expat researchers in Tanzania, also acknowledges his wife's work in typing up and correcting *Pride of Lions*. Yet, with very few exceptions, authorship was limited to husbands.⁴¹ As Hanby recalls, 'right up until the '60s women were assistants even though they wrote papers and did everything. They were always second and then finally we came into the stage where we got recognized as being important individuals'.⁴² Her statement reveals much about her own perceived position at the institute.

In addition to Goodall's and Fossey's work in the 1960s, by the 1970s, there were a handful individual women researchers active in East Africa, although none ever received full recognition by the SRI. Between 1970 and 1972, Judith Rudnai, a Hungarian-born student at the East African University of Nairobi, who had recently moved to Kenya from the US, pursued a lion project in Nairobi National Park.⁴³ While contemporary reviews considered Rudnai's two-year study as adding only minor detail to Schaller's work, the book, with its focus on the social behaviour of individual lions and the study of family bloodlines (similar to Goodall's work on chimpanzees) had an impact on Hanby and Bygott.⁴⁴ Rudnai, too, had developed a technique to identify individual lions based on their facial and ear markings. Moreover, she was one of the first authors to provide lions with individual names and to use these in writing up her research. Although other popular accounts on fieldwork used animals' names, too, usually the names would be removed in scientific publications, or

40 Interview with Jeanette Hanby and David Bygott, May 15, 2023.

41 One notable exception is the work of Lee and Martha Talbot, who, in the 1960s, were hired by IUCN to research wildebeests in the Serengeti. From their correspondence, it is clear that they not only researched as a team, but also understood their work as a team effort. E.g. "Lee Talbot to Harold Coolidge," November 4, 1961, Harvard University Archives, Papers of Harold Jefferson Coolidge, HUG(FP) 78.6, Papers Related to Expeditions, Organizations, and Personal Matters, ca. 1928–1946, Box 45, Folder 'Misc & Private T General.' Lee M. Talbot and Martha H. Talbot, "The Wildebeest in Western Masailand, East Africa", *Wildlife Monographs*, no. 12 (1963): 3–88.

42 Interview with Jeanette Hanby and David Bygott, May 15, 2023.

43 Zoltan Barabás, "Vigyázat, Itt Oroszlánok Vannak!", *Elet Es Tudomány*, no. 2 (1988): 1094–95.

44 C. Wemmer, "The Social Life of the Lion: A Study of the Behavior of Wild Lions (*Panthera Leo* Massaica [Newmann]) in the Nairobi National Park, Kenya. Judith A. Rudnai," *The Quarterly Review of Biology* 50, no. 3 (1975): 357; Judith Rudnai, *The Social Life of the Lion: A Study of the Behavior of Wild Lions (Panthera Leo Massaica [Newmann]) in the Nairobi National Park, Kenya* (Lancaster: Medical and Technical Pub. Co., 1973).

replaced by letters or numbers.⁴⁵ In fact, Goodall had been criticized for naming individuals. Here, Rudnai's practice places her in the same research tradition as Goodall, using naming not just 'to acknowledge the affective social bonds' between researcher and researched animal, but also to highlight the agency and individuality of single animals studied.⁴⁶ In Rudnai's study, names were key for discussing individuals' behaviour within prides, such as that of the lioness 'Lassie, [who] produced a litter of three cubs and did not rejoin her pride [...]'.⁴⁷ The focus on genealogy, moreover, added emphasis on the role of mothers and female members of the pride, who usually reared cubs collaboratively. Different from many other social mammals, reproductive success in lions is increased by cooperation between mothers, something that was already theorized in the 1970s and accepted more broadly by the late 1980s.⁴⁸

When Hanby and Bygott took up the lion project, they continued Schaller's and Bertram's work on the ecological and demographic aspects related to lions in the ecosystem. Much more than previous authors, however, they focused on individual animals and their lives. This is most visible in *Lions Share*. The work not only had a different focus, following several generations of female lions and their prides. The narrative is presented in a very different form, too. A short preface discusses briefly, but explicitly, the approach of collaborative fieldwork, taking turns in observation, which allowed adapting to the nocturnal rhythm of the animals. The rest of the work sticks closely to individual lions themselves. The books by Schaller and Bertram contained similar introductions about research, but often these seemed to serve the self-fashioning of the lone field researcher. In contrast, Hanby's and Bygott's introduction is about cooperation as a shared struggle. This form of collaborative fieldwork went even beyond that of Jane Goodall and her husband Hugo van Lawick, the wildlife photographer. While Goodall and Van Lawick had mostly divided tasks, one being the researcher, one being the documenter, Hanby and Bygott spent their time in the field taking turns as observers, allowing them to follow the same animals for several days at a time.⁴⁹ A similar description of fieldwork is visible in contemporary publications by other couples, for instance Lory and George Frame, who, in the mid-1970s,

45 Walther, *In the Country of Gazelles*.

46 The latter is the case in Schaller's work. For an excellent article on the naming of research animals, see Etienne Benson, "Naming the Ethological Subject," *Science in Context* 29, no. 1 (2016): 107–28.

47 Rudnai, *The Social Life of the Lion*.

48 Alan Root, *Queen of Beasts* (Anglia Productions, 1989); C. Packer, A.E. Pusey, and L.E. Eberly, "Egalitarianism in Female African Lions," *Science* 293, no. 5530 (2001): 690–93.

49 Hugo van Lawick and Jane Goodall, *Innocent Killers* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971).

worked on cheetahs and wild dogs. The Frames, too, stress their collaborative work in sharing night shifts and taking turns in observations: ‘In order to observe and understand the animals’ behaviour, we had to adapt ourselves to their routine. We lived with them and got to know them’.⁵⁰ Collaboration here made these new types of behavioural research possible.

Researching Collaboration

With *Lions Share*, not just the emphasis on collaboration in fieldwork changed. Remarkable is also the way the book takes human researchers out of the narrative, proposing that ‘most [other] “animal books” are really about people, [...]’. Hanby and Bygott aimed to make lions the ‘stars of the story’.⁵¹ In this, Hanby and Bygott went further than contemporary research couples. The Frames had named observed individuals, too. Yet, in their story, human observers still played a dominant role. Hanby and Bygott wrote the observer out of the narrative, focusing entirely on lions as their sole protagonists. While Schaller had followed only two prides, Hanby and Bygott studied another thirteen.⁵² It is the lives of the females in these prides that is followed and accounted for in *Lions Share*. When asked about whether their work consciously broke with that by Schaller and Bertram, Hanby says that, while the change in narrative style was a conscious decision, the focus on female lions and their behaviour was not necessarily. ‘I don’t think [...] I consciously wanted to do something different. I was just interested in the relationships’.⁵³

This interest in the evolutionary and functional role of collaboration and relationships, which had been studied for primates but not for social carnivores such as lions, both necessitated and justified cooperative fieldwork practices by human observers, putting more emphasis on longer stretches of continued observation, which required teamwork as well as spending weeks at a time away from the institute. Working as a couple allowed Hanby and Bygott to do so, usually without additional fieldwork assistants. At least in part, the focus also emerged as a reaction to how existing lion research was experienced by the couple, Hanby in particular.

50 Frame and Frame, *Swift & Enduring: Cheetahs and Wild Dogs of the Serengeti*, 7.

51 Hanby, *Lions Share: The Story of a Serengeti Pride*, 13

52 Craig Packer and Anne E. Pusey, “Cooperation and Competition within Coalitions of Male Lions: Kin Selection or Game Theory?” *Nature* 296, no. 5859 (1982): 740–42.

53 Interview with Jeanette Hanby and David Bygott, May 15, 2023.

When men were studying they were just doing basic naturalist stuff of behaviour activity patterns, just monitoring behaviour [...] They always took a male point of view that the males were leading the group and [...] they didn't because their own personal attitude was that the females were just following the males around and they weren't important. And that was a very male thing at the time before the 60s [...].⁵⁴

Yet, it was not per se female lions alone that Hanby and Bygott were interested in. Like other women primatologists, Hanby had first been asked to research mother–infant relationships at Cambridge, but what interested Hanby and Bygott (who still live in a shared housing community) was collaboration between grown-ups. 'I don't think I was interested in mother infants, infants are boring to me, they still are, but how women, how female primates or how female lions can [form] coalitions, how they team up, how males team up, how females team up, because in social groups you have to have teamwork'.⁵⁵ Here, we clearly see the parallels between Hanby and Bygott's own approach to doing research and their chosen research focus.

In the late 1970s, another researcher couple took over the lion study, Craig Packer and Ann Pusey. Pusey and Packer, too, joined the lion project after having worked on primates. Both were also influenced by the anthropological approach of women primatologists, such as Goodall, who Packer and Pusey had met while working in the early 1970s as research assistants in Goodall's baboon project in Gombe. In 1978, they joined the lion project. Hanby and Bygott suggest it was because of their own approach to collaborative fieldwork that they thought a couple like Packer and Pusey suitable to continue their work.⁵⁶ This impression is confirmed by the research methods used by the Packer and Pusey and their own account of their work. The couple continued to follow the lion prides studied by Hanby and Bygott. They, too, continued to study collaboration. It is in their work from 1978 until 1981 and later publications, that we see the lasting impact of Hanby and Bygott's approach. While Packer and Pusey did not publish a lion monograph, in 1989, together with the popular wildlife filmmaker Alan Root, they produced a one-hour documentary that gives insight into both their research aim and their research practices, similar to the prefaces of the previously published monographs. At times taking their own children along on fieldwork, Packer and Pusey continued the practice of long-term field studies, with continued observations for up to

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

four-day stretches, in order to understand the reasons behind the collaborative childrearing and habitation behaviour by female lions.⁵⁷

By the mid-1970s, this research on the social behaviour of lions had received new relevance in animal behavioural studies. By the late 1970s, collaboration and altruistic behaviour in animals had become topics of discussion in genetic biology. In 1976, Richard Dawkins's *The Selfish Gene* presented a genetically determined view on animal behaviour, criticizing all other possible units of analysis, ranging from the species level to individual animals.⁵⁸ Serengeti researchers were well aware of this work.⁵⁹ This genetic view of altruism as behaviour that favoured genetic survival, which feminist STS scholars have criticized as being both patriarchal and rooted in liberal ideas of individualism, would explain the cooperation between lions as beneficial to the survival of cubs with similar genetic makeup, fathered by the same dominant male or related males.⁶⁰ Based on the observations by Hanby and Bygott and their own, Pusey and Packer were able to argue that kinship and thus genetic similarity was not the only driver of lion breeding behaviour and that male coalitions often did include outsiders.⁶¹ At the same time, while Pusey and Packer, too, investigated questions of genetically influenced reproductive behaviour, they highlighted the interest of female lions in cooperating to ensure the continuation of the pride's female line, rather than subscribing to the dominant idea of male domination. The anthropological long-term observations conducted by Hanby and Bygott, and then by Packer and Pusey in observation teams, for the first time, allowed for more nuanced conclusions and a larger role for individual behaviour and female lions' collaborative practices.

Conclusion

The aim of this piece is to give a glimpse into both the organization and content of animal behaviour research in the 1970s, in the context of changing

57 Root, *Queen of Beasts*.

58 Cora Stuhmann, "It Felt More like a Revolution'. How Behavioral Ecology Succeeded Ethology, 1970–1990," *Berichte Zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 45, no. 1–2 (2022): 135–63.

59 Interview with Jeanette Hanby and David Bygott, May 15, 2023.

60 N. Katherine Hayles, "Desiring Agency: Limiting Metaphors and Enabling Constraints in Dawkins and Deleuze/Guattari," *SubStance* 30, no. 1 (2001): 144–59.

61 Craig Packer and Anne E. Pusey, "Cooperation and Competition within Coalitions of Male Lions: Kin Selection or Game Theory?" *Nature* 296, no. 5859 (1982): 740–42; David Bygott, Brian C.R. Bertram, and Jeanette P. Hanby, "Male Lions in Large Coalitions Gain Reproductive Advantages," *Nature* 282, no. 5741 (1979): 839–41.

gender norms and fieldwork practices beyond primatology. In 1970s East Africa, research collaboration between white, heterosexual couples became a more accepted practice to pursue. In part, this was enabled by the public fame of individual women primatologists, such as Jane Goodall, who proved that women were capable of pursuing research projects in their own right. Often, these women came from fields within biology and the life sciences that already had a higher percentage of women, such as primatology, where research on individual rather than species level behaviour was already more common.

In the case of couples like Hanby and Bygott, the Frames, and, later, Packer and Pusey, putting new emphasis on researching the role of collaboration between individual adult lions, which required long-term team observations, allowed for a 'naturalization' of cooperative fieldwork practices between research partners, while highlighting the advantages of collaborative work for behavioural studies of animals in general. It is at this point that individual lions, female lions in particular, just like the women researchers who studied them, were given a greater role and perhaps more 'agency' in the accounts of their lives and their social interactions with other pride members.⁶² This work on collaboration presented a shift away from traditional ethological research into patterns of behaviour at species level as conducted by earlier lion researchers in the Serengeti. It continued to matter in the context of later discussions about altruistic behaviour in lions, in which the couples' behavioural research at least allowed them to nuance claims on the dominance of genetics in behaviour, at a time when genetics has been described as representing a predominantly male perspective.

Of course, gender, in this as in any case, needs to be understood as an intersectional concept. In the mid-1970s, very few Tanzanian researchers were affiliated with the SRI, none of them women. The composition of researchers only slowly changed, also under Mcharo. The white, mostly European and American women at the institute, like Hanby and Frame, felt they benefitted from the fact that Aquila Mcharo, the director's African American wife, took a more active role promoting women at the institute.⁶³ It is the exceptional situation of the institute as both isolated, especially after the border closure with Kenya in 1977, and firmly integrated in postcolonial research networks that determined the position of white women researchers

62 Rees, "Wildlife Agencies: Practice, Intentionality and History in Twentieth-Century Animal Field Studies."

63 Interview with Jeanette Hanby and David Bygott, May 15, 2023.

in Tanzania in the mid-1970s. The work of Hanby and Bygott, the Frames, and Pusey and Packer must be seen against this light, too.

About the Author

Simone Schleper is assistant professor at Maastricht University. Her work deals with the politics of expertise, the history of international environmental organizations and policymaking, and the history of ecological fieldwork practices in the twentieth century. She is the author of *Planning for the Planet: Environmental Expertise and the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, 1960–1980* (Berghahn Books, 2019). Her current project, 'Intimate Allies: Collaborative Couples and the Making of Global Environmental Governance', funded by the Dutch Research Council (NWO), looks at collaborative practices between spouses in environmental research and governance.

Of Bits and Pieces

Gendered Equine Knowledge in the *Mesnagier de Paris*

Clémentine Girault

Abstract

This article explores the gender and species dynamics depicted in a medieval aphorism from the *Mesnagier de Paris* (ca. 1392–1405), which compares the qualities of a good horse to those of a maiden. The aphorism lists characteristics such as a handsome mane, a beautiful chest, fine-looking loins, and large buttocks. Although presented as common knowledge, the grammatical structure of the list raises questions about whether the maiden belongs to the human or animal realm. This study traces the origins and variations of this theme by examining the compilation of desirable horse qualities, the fragmented depiction of animals, and the sexualized association between women and horses. The aim is to uncover an ontological shift that occurred during the late Middle Ages, wherein a fragmented description of the female body rendered her available for both literal and metaphorical consumption, gradually replacing the horse as the ultimate symbol of what can be ridden.

Keywords:

The late French president Jacques Chirac was well known for quoting the *toast des cavaliers*, which he probably learnt during his time at the École de Cavalerie in Saumur. In these toasts, he would cordially invite those in attendance to partake in a drink as a tribute ‘to their horses, their spouses, and those who ride them’. More recently, in December 2018, well-regarded French gynaecologist Renaud de Tairac deemed it appropriate to incorporate into his presentation at his profession’s national congress a quote from a medievalist novel authored by one of his colleagues: ‘Women are like mares, those with big hips are not the most pleasant to ride, but they are the ones

who give birth most easily'. De Tayrac later clarified that his intention in utilizing this quote was to illustrate the advances in obstetrics since the medieval era.¹ Of course, this quote primarily reflects how people see the Middle Ages today, rather than providing historical insight. However, quotes like these do raise a multitude of questions that echo recent interest among scholars regarding the connections between women and animals during the Middle Ages.

In her recent book *Hawking Women*, Sara Petrosillo studies the medieval literary trope of 'women *as* birds' in need of taming. She draws from sources written by, for, or about women, reshaping the initial, often masculine, model of dominance of the 'falcon *as* woman', and creating a paired concept of the 'falcon *with* woman'. The exploration of the trope of the falcon-*as*-woman has been relatively well documented. However, the equine aspect of this narrative of taming and control has not received the same level of attention. Focusing on agency and the 'harmonious and transformative interspecies partnerships' in a world where riding was an essential skill for aristocratic women, recent studies on *horsetwomanship* have indeed tended to escape the trope of 'women *as* horses'.² While relationships to both bird and horse play similar roles, the act of riding in these equine narratives invokes a different, and more ancient, erotic imagery than that associated with falconry and hunting in general. To encounter the 'woman *as* mount' trope might even surprise those familiar with Greek and Latin poetry. There, when riding is used as a metaphor for sexual intercourse, often employing the verb *sedeo*, it is the male partner who is defined as a horse.³

When was the metaphor inverted? A good entry point to explore this riding analogy is through a 'numerical apothegm' found in the work known as the *Mesnagier de Paris*.⁴ Written towards the end of the fourteenth century (1392–1405) by an elderly Parisian bourgeois for his recently wedded

1 'Les femmes c'est comme les juments, celles qui ont de grosses hanches ne sont pas les plus agréables à monter, mais c'est celles qui mettent bas le plus facilement,' *La saga des Limousins (I): Le seigneur de Châlus*, was published in 2012 by gynaecology professor Yves Aubard and takes place in tenth century Limousin.

2 Sara Petrosillo, *Hawking Women: Falconry, Gender, and Control in Medieval Literary Culture* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2023). For horses with women, see: Sophie Coussemacker, "La chevauchée des femmes. Pratiques et symboliques de la monte féminine au Moyen Âge," HDR diss., University of Poitiers, 2016. Elizabeth Leet, *Cavalières: Horsemanship, Speech, and Gender in Medieval French Romance* (forthcoming).

3 James N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 165–66.

4 Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (New York/Evanston, IL: Harper & Row, 1963 [1953]), 510–14.

young wife, the *Mesnagier* is a representative text of conduct literature.⁵ This ‘mirror for wives’ covers various subjects.⁶ It includes a collection of moral guidelines, literary narratives, horticultural advice, a treatise on falconry, and even a compilation of recipes. The passage of interest to our investigation is located within the second section, which pertains to household management, encompassing the domains of servants, wine, and horses. While the wife receives instructions on how to handle dogs and birds of prey, the husband, claiming to recognize her need for respite, excuses her from the discussion of horse-related matters.⁷ Instead, he addresses the household steward, Master Jehan, and proceeds to detail the sixteen qualities by which Jehan can discern a good horse:

Know, Master Jehan, that a horse should have 16 characteristics. That is, three qualities of a fox: short, upright ears; a good stiff coat; and a straight bushy tail; 4 of a hare: that is, a narrow head, great attentiveness, nimbleness, and speed; four of an ox: that is, wide, large, and broad *herpe*; a great belly; large protruding eyes; and low joints; three of an ass: good feet, a strong backbone, and gentleness; 4 of a maiden: a handsome mane, a beautiful chest, fine-looking loins, and large buttocks.⁸

5 English translations are taken from Gina L. Greco and Christine M. Rose (eds.), *The Good Wife's Guide (Le Ménagier de Paris): A Medieval Household Book* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009). Middle French quotes are from the reference edition Georgina M. Brereton and Janet M. Ferrier (eds.), *Le mesnagier de Paris*, trans. Karin Ueltschi (Paris: Librairie générale française, 2010 [1994]). The author has been identified in 1996 as Guy de Montigny, a knight in the service of the Duke of Berry. Nicole Crossley-Holland, *Living and Dining in Medieval Paris: The Household of a Fourteenth Century Knight* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996). The debate is still open, even though no one has produced a more convincing hypothesis since. The text is now preserved in four manuscripts, two of which were likely copied on the occasions of Charles the Bold's weddings, to his first wife Catherine of France in 1439, and to his second, his cousin Isabelle of Bourbon, in 1454. Hanno Wijsman, *Luxury Bound: Illustrated Manuscript Production and Noble and Princely Book Ownership in the Burgundian Netherlands (1400–1550)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 188.

6 Yasmina Foehr-Janssens, “La leçon d'obéissance dans *Le Mesnagier de Paris*. La tradition littéraire au service d'un miroir des épouses,” *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes Journal of Medieval and Humanistic Studies* 42 no. 2 (2021): 69–84.

7 ‘Now, at this moment I want to allow you to rest or be merry and will address you no more while you amuse yourself elsewhere’, *The Good Wife's Guide*, 223. *Le mesnagier de Paris*, II, iii, 19.

8 There are, in fact, eighteen qualities. *The Good Wife's Guide*, 223–24. ‘Sachiez donc, maistre Jehan, que cheval doit avoir xvi condicions. C'est assavoir troiz des condicions du renart: c'est courtes oreilles droictes, bon poil et fort, et roide queue bien pelue; du lievre iiii: c'est assavoir maigre teste, bien esveillé, de legier mouvant, viste et tost alant; du beuf quatre; c'est assavoir la harpe large et grosse et ouverte, gros bouel, gros yeulx et saillans hors de la teste, et bas enjointé;

In a 2003 article, “A Woman as Beautiful as a Horse”, Belgian folklorist Willy Louis Braekman mentions the *Mesnagier* quote, analysing later but similar occurrences in the Flemish corpus. Braekman contextualizes the quotes he studies within the literary ‘dispute on women’, opposing misogynist to philogynist – or even early feminist – texts and authors.⁹ Rather, I argue that the aphorism found in the *Mesnagier* is early evidence of deeper shifts in gender as well as species categorizations. The author draws from various literary traditions, such as listing the qualities of the good horse, creating analogies from fragmented animal body parts, or discussing the long-standing Western horse-woman metaphor. In this one sentence, the apparent excluding of his wife from horse-related knowledge parallels an ongoing bestialization of women.¹⁰

The *Mesnagier* employs a nested structure, with two levels of lists intertwined. It can be envisioned as a circular diagram with the horse at the centre, surrounded by two concentric circles: one encompassing the names of beings, the second enclosing their various characteristics. To unfold the many threads weaved in this aphorism, we will make our way from the centre of this diagram towards the outer rim, from the horse to the qualities of the maiden.

A Self-Assembly Horse

Throughout the entirety of his treatise, the author of the *Mesnagier* actively engages in the medieval practice of *compilatio*. He cites various texts, occasionally providing commentary or adapting them for the benefit of his readers. In this excerpt, we encounter both elements of ‘rural material’ heritage and first-hand experiences.¹¹ The stakes are high, as Jehan must

de l’asne troiz: bon pié, forte eschine, et soit debonnaire; de la pucelle iiii: beaulx crins, belle poitrine, beaulx rains et grosses fesses’, *Le mesnagier de Paris*, II, iii, 20.

9 Willy Louis Braekman, “Een vrouw zo mooi als een paard: kenmerken van een goed paard en van een ‘schoone vrouwe’,” *Jaarboek van de Koninklijke Soevereine Hoofdkamer van Retorica “De Fontaine”* (2003–2004): 45–46, 53–54, 137–70. The ‘dispute on women’ has been the subject of recent scholarly interest. See in French *Revisiter la querelle des femmes, vol.1–4* (Saint-Étienne: Presses universitaires de Saint-Étienne, 2012–2015).

10 Joyce Salisbury, *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 157. On ‘bestialization’, see Pierre-Olivier Dittmar, “Naissance de la bestialité. Une anthropologie du rapport homme-animal dans les années 1300,” PhD diss. (EHESS, 2010).

11 Karin Ueltschi, “Des connaissances rurales. Quelques leçons du *Mesnagier de Paris*,” in: Christine Ferlampin-Acher and Fabienne Pomel (eds.), *Encyclopédique Moyen Âge Mélanges en l’honneur de Denis Hüe* (Paris : Garnier, 2021), 55–65.

not be deceived by the horse dealer.¹² In this regard, the author participates in a long lineage of texts from ancient treatises on riding and agronomy to medieval encyclopaedias.¹³ While we cannot establish whether the author of the *Mesnagier* was acquainted with these, there is evidence that he was familiar with the *Rustican*,¹⁴ the 1373 French translation of Pierre de Crescens's agricultural treatise, in which we encounter guidance on how 'to recognize the beauty of the horse' (IX, 8). It appears the *Mesnagier*'s author has deliberately chosen to ignore this textual tradition in favour of this enumeration technique, which works as an efficient mnemonic device.¹⁵

As his primary source remains unknown, the *Mesnagier*'s aphorism is, for us, the first known example of this type of list in which the horse is represented as the sum of the valued qualities of other creatures. The lineage of these texts was examined by literary scholar Carleton Brown as early as 1912. According to him, this classification is 'distinctly medieval' and while they 'agree in many points with the classical lists, [they] are plainly designed, by their half-humorous tone, for popular circulation'.¹⁶ In an early article dedicated to the 'medieval feminine bestiary', the Canadian Bruno Roy offered to name this new process, in which an ideal animal is constructed from characteristics that are appreciated and valued in others, a 'principle

12 This is an important point, given the value attributed to this animal. There are, of course, different types of horses: from noble warhorses and palfreys to horses assuming less socially flattering tasks, in the fields and on the roads. For recent surveys, see Élisabeth Lorans (ed.), *Le Cheval au Moyen Âge* (Tours: Presses universitaires François Rabelais, 2017) or Anastasija Ropa and Timothy Dawson (eds.), *The Horse in Premodern European Culture* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019). Here, the advice is quite broad, valid for both draft and mounted horses, 'tant de charrue comme a chevauchier'.

13 Commencing with Xenophon's treatise *On Riding* where health, beauty, and strength serve as the key discerning criteria, the attributes of the horse are occasionally juxtaposed with those of other animals. This knowledge was transmitted through the corpus of Roman agronomists' treatises from which the seventh-century bishop Isidore of Seville derived his four criteria for evaluating a horse: 'form, beauty, quality, and colour'. These four criteria were subsequently adopted by thirteenth-century encyclopaedists and agronomists with minimal variations.

14 Ueltschi, "Des connaissances rurales," quoted from KBR, ms. 10227, f. 210r sq., which is the copy chosen for the recent edition of books I–VIII by Fleur Vigneron.

15 These lists served as aids to memory, particularly in a society of 'restricted literacy'. Pierre Chastang et al., "La liste médiévale. Une technique matérielle et cognitive," in Claire Angotti et al. (eds.), *Le pouvoir des listes au Moyen Âge–I. Écritures de la liste* (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2019), 5–13.

16 The reflection has been taken further by German philologist Gerhard Eis in 1964, who traces this topos back to its Indo-European roots. Gerhard Eis, "Ein Merkspruch von den Kennzeichen eines guten Pferdes," *Altdeutsche Zaubersprüche* (Berlin and Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2016 [1964]), 31–47.

of trans-animality'.¹⁷ The concept is not entirely satisfying today, in the age of critical trans and animal studies, and it is probably better to think about this application of cut-up animal body parts in the words of Pierre-Olivier Dittmar, as 'piece-by-piece analogies' (*analogies part-par-part*), resulting from the medieval analogical ontology.¹⁸ Dittmar follows Philippe Descola's proposal in *Beyond Nature and Culture* (2005), which characterizes the analogical ontology by the discontinuities of interiorities and physicalities, and therefore by the need to weave a web of analogies between these weakly heterogeneous elements to make sense of the world. On this basis, Dittmar describes 'cutting' (*la découpe*) as an analogical practice, since it multiplies discontinuities in need of 'piece-by-piece' reassembly.

This use of dismembered animals significantly predates the *Mesnagier* and is even characteristic of twelfth-century thought: it is particularly important in medicine, food practices, and astrology. Those piece-by-piece analogies, often anthropocentric (with human beings and human societies at the centre of the microcosms recreated), underline the material exploitation of animals, as their physical characteristics were the focus of utilization. In the *Mesnagier*, the animals' cut-up parts are redistributed to make up the 'good horse'. By selecting this aphorism, the *Mesnagier's* author chooses to engage in a less naturalistic way of interpreting the world. In doing so, he emphasizes the centrality of the horse in late medieval society while simultaneously excluding the two women – both his wife and the maiden – from participating in horse-related knowledge. The maiden is, in fact, discussed by two masculine voices, the narrator's and Master Jehan's, in a similar manner to the other animals.

The Maiden, a Beast Within?

The 'half-humorous' aspect that Brown identified, although he did not provide an explanation, likely came from the presence of feminine 'qualities' at the end of the list, which, in fact, work as the punchline of a joke. The structure of the aphorism does lead us to question the nature of the maiden in relation to the other animals she shares the internal circle of the diagram with: is she a part of this group?

Julie Lemarié, in *Le pouvoir des listes au Moyen Âge*, has examined the cognitive implications of two different types of lists: those enumerating

17 Bruno Roy, "La belle e(s)t la bête. Aspects du bestiaire féminin au Moyen Âge," *Etudes françaises* 10 no. 3 (1974): 325.

18 Dittmar, "Naissance de la bestialité," 120–22.

taxonomic categories and those enumerating schematic categories.¹⁹ The first type of list enumerates categories that share a common trait – in our case, it could be physical characteristics and aptitudes, or names of animals. In schematic lists, on the other hand, ‘what unites [the items of the list] is simply the possibility of considering them together in a particular context where they are useful for taking action’²⁰ – in our case, the purchase of a horse. These two types of lists have significantly different implications regarding gender and species categorizations. Lemarié notes that ‘when these enumerations belong to a taxonomic category, i.e., an established one, the enumeration acts as a description of the world’.²¹ On the other hand, when they fall into an ad hoc category, their aim is to transform the world. In this case, the author, through an ad hoc schematic process, would bestialize the young woman.

In a sense, the *Mesnagier*’s list could align with Lemarié’s first type. The maiden, described like the hare, fox, or ox, is frozen, in a state of perfection, suggests they should be considered as a group.²² The animals are neither old nor sickly, and the maiden is depicted at her most beautiful. Indeed, maidenhood is regarded as the most perfect stage in a woman’s life. The term maiden (*pucelle*) is used about ten times in the *Mesnagier*, denoting the first stage of the *prudefemme*’s life, who can be, in sequence, a ‘maiden, wife, or widow’. Encyclopaedists and moralists frequently praise the virtues of this virgin female body, considering it superior to the body of a sexually active married woman. In the 1372 translation of Bartholomeus Anglicus’s work *De proprietatibus rerum* (VI, 6, 1240) by Jean Corbechon, the maiden is the subject of a highly commendatory portrayal.²³

However, this list could also belong to the second definition. As mentioned previously, this type of list detailing the qualities of a good horse enjoyed significant popularity. Subsequent examples in English, French, or Dutch exhibit different elements that can be interwoven. Some tend to expand the number of qualities, reaching as many as 54 in Anthony Fitzherbert’s *Book*

19 Julie Lemarié, “(Comprendre) les énumérations. Contributions de la logico-linguistique et de la psychologie,” in Claire Angotti et al. (eds.), *Le pouvoir des listes au Moyen Âge*, op. cit., 15–26.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Dan Sperber, “Pourquoi les animaux parfaits, les hybrides et les monstres sont-ils bons à penser symboliquement ?” *L’Homme* 15, no.2 (1975): 5–34. Sperber’s theory is discussed in Dittmar, “Naissance de la bestialité”, 40–42.

23 Kim M. Phillips, “Maidenhood as the Perfect Age of Womans’ Life,” in Katherine J. Lewis, Noël James Menuge, and Kim M. Phillips (eds.), *Young Medieval Women* (Stroud, Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1999), 1–24.

of *Husbandry* (1523), the last one being ‘to be ever chewing on the bit’. Other apothegms, introduce – moral – qualities related to men, and when they do, place them at the beginning of the list. When authors do introduce the qualities ‘of a man’, those ‘of the woman’ (the maiden is never associated with a man’s qualities) usually immediately follow.²⁴ Even without man-related characteristics, maiden or woman-comparing terms are often placed at the beginning of the list in later texts.²⁵ This arrangement erases the surprising and ‘half-humorous’ aspect of discovering maiden qualities at the end of the enumeration. We could therefore say that the *Mesnagier* relied on the exteriority of the maiden from the animal world for a comic effect that will be lost later. While the qualities of the maiden disrupted the list of animals in this text, sixteenth-century taxonomic lists have accepted ‘the woman’ as the most animal-like of creatures. This progressive bestialization of women is further emphasized by the introduction of a new quality in these later examples: a good horse should be, as every woman is, ‘easy to ride’.²⁶

Towards the Riding Analogy

In their introduction to the edition of the *Mesnagier de Paris*, Gina L. Greco and Christine M. Rose suggest that the portrayal of women using equine metaphors, as seen in Ovid’s *Art of Love*, is an ancient literary device. Mentioning that the word ‘harridan’ originates from ‘*haridelle*’, the Middle French word for a worn-out workhorse, they argue that, considering this trope, the recurring imagery of women as horses in the *Mesnagier* is not surprising. Their claim may be far-fetched.²⁷ What is true is that, in ancient literature, bad women or wives were often likened to recalcitrant horses,²⁸ and that, in

24 See for instance *The booke of hauking, huntyng and fysshying* (printed in 1486) or Anthony Fitzherbert, *Book of Husbandry* (1523).

25 See for instance *Les proverbes anciens Flamengs et François correspondants de sentence les uns aux autres* (Anvers: Imprimerie de Christofle Plantin, 1568), 121.

26 See above, note 22, examples from the fifteenth century describing the woman as ‘easy to leap upon’.

27 In his *Art of Love*, the poet does compare the art of seduction to the act of taming animals such as oxen and horses (I, 20), but the only explicit sexualized equine metaphor occurs at the end of the third book, where he suggests different sexual positions based on different body types. For instance, if a woman is small, she can ride her male lover like a horse (*‘parva vehatur equo’*). If her belly is marked by pregnancy, she should change position as swiftly as a Parthian horse.

28 This can be read in Semonides of Amorgos’s seventh-century BC satirical poem on *Women*, where he comments on the natural and animalistic qualities of various types of women. The only kinds he finds favourable are the bee-women, contrasting, for instance, with horse-women,

the Aristotelian tradition, horses, particularly mares, are strongly associated with sexuality. This association serves a misogynistic discourse, as Aristotle recounts the insult, ‘mare’, being used to describe a lustful woman.²⁹ The Middle Ages braid the themed threads of the taming of the bad wife and of the association of horses with sexuality to produce a new trope in which the woman will slowly become a horse to be sexually ridden. An early example of this can be found in the first of the eleven songs by William IX, Duke of Aquitaine, dating from the turn of the twelfth century.

I have two horses I can saddle well and gladly,
 they are good and brave and fit for fighting,
 and I can't keep them both because they can't stand each other.³⁰

In this song, the duke expresses to his knights his dilemma regarding his two favourite horses that cannot get along. He describes one as a fiery mountain horse and the other as a beautiful and precious one that he had given as a foal to another man. The duke contemplates which horse to choose, and finally sheds some light on his equine dilemma: ‘I don't know which one to keep, that of dame Agnes or that of dame Arsen’.

Charles Payen has analysed the multiple interpretations of this song. The first reading is linear until the enigma is revealed, and the second reading is retrospective. Payen argues that the solution to the riddle, the horse-woman metaphor, is ‘self-evident’ to the duke's knights and reflects their ‘taste for dressage’ or the art of training horses. According to Payen, this metaphor reduces the female partner to the status of a mount, *qua* object. Given the high status of horses in feudal society, this argument

which he considers too proud and too expensive to care for. This theme is also present in Plato's *Symposium*, where Socrates' wife Xanthippe is an untameable blonde mare, which is later referenced by Xenophon. Louis L'Allier, “Des chevaux et des hommes. Sur les couples hommes-chevaux et femmes-juments chez Xénophon,” *PECUS. Man and Animal in Antiquity, in the Proceedings of the conference at the Swedish Institute in Rome, September 9–12, 2002* (Rome: Ed. Barbro Santillo Frizell, 2004), 133–38.

29 Like a mare losing her sexual drive when her mane is cut, a woman loses her allure when she loses her sexual appeal. Xosé Ramón Mariño Ferro, *Symboles animaux* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1996), 63 and 81–84. To be noted, ‘the *practica equorum* includes a procedure to encourage the growth of long, thick hair that works on “horses and women”.’ Sunny Harrison, “Jordanus Ruffus and the Late-Medieval Hippiatric Tradition: Animal-Care Practitioners and the Horse,” PhD diss. (University of Leeds, 2018), 102.

30 “*Dos cavalhs ai a ma selha ben e gen; Bon son e adreg per armas e valen; Ma no-ls puesc amdos tener que l'us l'autre non cossen [...] Ges non sai ab qual mi tengua de N'Agnes o de N'Arsen,*” Jean-Charles Payen, *Le prince d'Aquitaine. Essai sur Guillaume IX, son œuvre et son érotique* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1980).

may be too strong. Other songs by William IX offer more possibilities for agency to the duke's equine mistresses, whether real or imaginary. In the second song, for example, the duke advocates for a lady who suffers under the zealous supervision of her guardians, pleading for her to be unbridled. His argument is that if women's desire cannot be contained, at least their sensuality should be 'guilt-free' when exercised for the benefit of knights.³¹

This phenomenon also touches women from lower classes. In his *Book of Good Love* (ca. 1330–1343), the Spanish bishop Juan Ruiz presents, in an Ovidian vein, the act of seduction as a struggle and as the taming of a wild animal. He later describes as a mare an ugly, peasant woman who yet offered him hospitality:

At the foot of the harbour, I encountered a chimera, the most horrific spectre I have ever seen in this world: equine and gnarled, with a crudely crafted appearance [...] Regarding its limbs and size, one must speak honestly; it was, believe it or not, a mare to ride; anyone who would fondle her would find themselves in a bad way: without her consent, they could not overthrow her.³²

Joyce Salisbury had already identified this passage in her classic *The Beast Within* and interpreted it as testimony to a shift in the bestialization of women, 'from *similes* to metaphors'.³³ Both aspects are indeed still present: after assimilating the young woman to a stubborn mare, Ruiz proceeds to negatively describe every part of her body by comparing them to that of other animals: short black hair as a plucked crow, heavy steps as a female bear, the long ears of an ass, ankles wider than a heifer's, etc. This 'piece-by-piece' description contrasts strongly with the list of qualities that must be searched and found in a woman, which Ruiz previously described:

Seek a proportionate woman: a small head, blonde hair not dyed with henna; eyebrows wide set, long, high, and strongly arched, slightly wide in the hips; that's the appearance of a lady. With large, prominent, colourful, and shining

³¹ Ibid., 81.

³² 'Au pied du port, j'ai rencontré une chimère, le plus horrible spectre que j'ai vu en ce monde: chevaline et noueuse, d'aspect mal dégrossi [...] Ses membres et sa taille, il faut bien en parler; c'était, croyez le bien, jument à chevaucher; qui la lutinerait pourrait mal s'en trouver: sans son consentement, il ne pourrait la renverser'. Juan Ruiz, *Livre de bon amour. Texte castillan du XIV^e siècle*, trans. Michel Garcia (Paris: Stock, 1995), 215.

³³ Joyce Salisbury, *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages* (New York, London: Routledge, 1994), 157.

eyes, long and very clear eyelashes, elegantly in every way; small and delicate ears; pay close attention if she has a long neck, that's what people like. Let her nose be slender, her teeth all small, even, and very white, slightly spaced apart; gums well red, teeth slightly pointed; lips of her mouth red and not too full. Let her mouth be small, thus, in good proportion, and her face white, not hairy, clear, and smooth; find yourself a woman who can be seen without a chemise; for the shape of her body will tell you: 'A good catch'.³⁴

If, in Ruiz's text, ugliness is portrayed in terms of animality, there is no bestiary of feminine beauty.³⁵ Besides the peculiar emphasis on the quality of the mouth, we are also struck by the similarities between the qualities of the good horse sought by the author of the *Mesnagier* and those of a good woman in the Castilian text.

Mastering Fragments

The aphorism that is the focus of this article is at the crossroads of the elements seen above: it represents a compilation of the qualities of a good horse, employing fragmented animals, and drawing from the sexualized association of women with horses. What distinguishes it is its positive depiction of animals, in contrast to Ruiz's depiction of the peasant woman, as well as the eroticized and fragmented representation of the female body. Within this list, the maiden's depiction is reduced to a collection of four

34 'Cherche une femme proportionnée: une tête petite, la chevelure blonde mais non teinte au henné; les sourcils écartés, longs, hauts et forts arqués, un peu large de hanches ; voilà l'allure d'une dame. De grands yeux saillants, colorés et brillants, aux cils longs et très clairs, en tout point élégants; les oreilles petites et fines; observe bien si elle a un long cou, c'est ce que les gens aiment. Que son nez soit effilé, ses dents toutes menues, égales et très blanches, et un peu écartées ; bien rouges les gencives, les dents un peu pointues ; les lèvres de sa bouche rouge et point charnues. Que sa bouche soit petite, ainsi, de bonne guise, et son visage blanc, non velu, clair et lisse; trouve-toi une femme qui la voie sans chemise; car la forme du corps te dira : 'bonne prise'. Juan Ruiz, *Livre de bon amour*, 111–12.

35 An earlier text draws the ideal (therefore unreal) portrait of a perfect woman with animals (especially birds). 'Si, avec mes moyens, je devais peindre une femme, elle ressemblerait à une femme tout en étant différente. En vérité, des yeux d'autruche lui iraient bien. Sa bouche ressemblerait au bec d'une perruche et sa langue serait faite de mots justes. Elle aurait un col de grue, deux oreilles de lièvre et le courage de la colombe. Je peindrais ses mains comme les serres d'un aigle et ses pieds comme les sabots d'un cheval, afin d'empêcher qu'elle trépigne lourdement, ce qui ne siérait point à sa féminité'. Brun de Schönebeck, a patrician from Magdebourg, 1275, quoted in: Claude Lecouteux, *Les monstres dans la pensée médiévale européenne* (Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne, 1999) 170.

eroticized body parts: ‘a handsome mane, a beautiful chest, fine-looking loins, and large buttocks’.³⁶ The act of eroticizing and fragmenting the nubile maiden’s body in the author’s instructions to Master Jehan could be interpreted as a medieval manifestation of the male gaze.³⁷

To go beyond gendered aspects of this process, it is crucial to note that the fragmentation of bodies extends beyond the depiction of women in the treatise. Within the recipes section, we encounter the dismembered bodies of the animals consumed, specifically venison and beef. A passage (II, v, 18) addressing how the butchers of Paris perceive the ox provides a detailed, vivid, and practical description of the process of slicing the bovine body:

The butchers of Paris hold that, according to their way of speaking, a cow has only 4 principal members: that is, the two shoulders and the two thighs, and the front and back of the body [...] Thus we now have 6 pieces of beef [...] And then the front quarter is cut, and next the sirloin, which is hardly more than 2 or 3 fingers thick. Then the tenderloin, which is closest to the spine, as thick as a large fist. Next, the cut called the numbles, which is a good foot long and no more and stretches from the neck at one end to the kidney.³⁸

36 In Eustache Deschamps’ *virelai Suis-je belle*, a fifteen-year-old maiden praises her body (including these four parts), trying to find love. In our text, the Middle French term *crins*, which specifically refers to a horse’s hair in its modern usage, held broader implications in the Middle Ages. Hair undeniably carries symbolic significance in terms of feminine desirability, leading to practices such as the veiling of virtuous women or the shaving of adulterous ones. Myriam Rolland-Perrin, “Les tondues et les traînées ou les mauvais traitements infligés à la chevelure féminine”, in Chantal Connochie-Bourgne, ed., *La chevelure dans la littérature et l’art du Moyen Âge* (Aix-en-Provence: Presses universitaires de Provence, 2004), 339–56. Numerous examples can be found in fifteenth-century French literature and iconography where *fesses* and *reins* (‘loins’ in English) are used in a sexual context rather than a scatological one. See in the *Dictionnaire de moyen français*, <http://zeus.atilf.fr/dmf/>. The chest (*poitrine*), while immediately recognizable to us as a sexualized feminine body part, only gradually became eroticized as Jean Wirth demonstrated, particularly from the thirteenth century onwards. By the fourteenth century it was well-established, with the emergence of cleavage in feminine fashion on one hand and moralists’ condemnation of women who did not cover their *poitrine* on the other. Jean Wirth, “Le sein féminin au Moyen Âge” in *Agostino Paravicini Bagliani*, ed., *Micrologus. Nature, Sciences and Medieval Societies*, vol. 17, ‘La madre / The mother’ (Firenze: SISMELE, 2009), 305–26.

37 Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 16 (1975) 3, 6–18. For a medievalist use of the concept, and the analysis of the theme of female disembodiment and the power dynamics associated with it (albeit for a slightly anterior period), see Madelin Caviness, *Visualizing Women in the Middle Ages: Sight, Spectacle, and Scopio Economy* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001). To note, the description from top to bottom is recommended by Geoffrey of Vinsauf in his *Poetria Nova*, following the model of the Song of Songs (5, 10–16).

38 *The Good Wife’s Guide*, 274. ‘Les bouchiers de Paris tiennent que en ung beuf, selon leur stille et leur parler, n’a que iiii membres principaulx; c’est assavoir: les deux espaulles et les deux

The process of cutting in the text effectively erases the presence of the ox. It is tempting to interpret these passages through the lens of Carol J. Adams's work in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*. Adams explores the interconnectedness between meat consumption and masculinity, shedding light on a recurring pattern of 'Objectification, Fragmentation, and Consumption' evident in various forms such as discourse, imagery, and practices. Adams examines the act of 'butchering' bodies, a practice that makes invisible and objectifies subjects. This process, whether through sexual violence towards women or the act of meat-eating towards animal, transforms them into 'absent referents', entities that can then be figuratively or literally consumed.³⁹

Feminist scholars working on the Renaissance literary genre of the blazon have been confronted with similar fragmented and idealized female bodies. They describe them as 'dismembered', 'scattered', 'alienated', 'dissected'.⁴⁰ In the carnivorous domestic bourgeois context of the *Mesnager*, the fragmentation of the maiden's body acts instead as butchering, as a means of transforming her into an 'absent referent'. Not only is she excluded from the instructions, but the sexualized value placed on specific body parts serves as a reminder of her youthful potential and of her predetermined matrimonial destiny. It positions her as sexually available and ready for 'consumption' by her future husband, who, as the author of the text, has recently married a fifteen-year-old maiden. This portrayal resonates with

cuisse, et le corps de devant tout au long, et le corps de derriere tout au long. [...] Ainsi avons nous maintenant du beuf vi pieces, [...]. Et puis coupe l'en le flanchet, et puis si a la surlonge qui n'est mye grantment plus espaiz de iii dois ou de ii Puiz si a la longe, qui est au plus pres de l'eschine, qui est espoisse d'une grosse pongnee. Puis si a le filet que l'en appelle le nomblet, qui est bien d'un pié de long et non plus, et tient l'un bout au col et l'autre au rongnon'. *Le mesnager de Paris*, II, v, 18.

39 Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (New York and London: Continuum, 2010 [1990]), 66–74. The verb '*chevaucher*' (to ride a horse) in middle French has been used to refer to sexual intercourse in the legitimate context of a marriage in various *fabliaux* or *nouvelles*, but also in the context of prostitution (see Jacques Rossiard, *La Prostitution médiévale* (Paris: Flammarion, 1988) 118), as well as in cases of sexual violence, both by victims and culprits in sexual assault affairs to describe sexual violence. It is also commonly found to describe sexual intercourse in a prostitution context.

40 See for instance the recent work of Nancy Vickers, "Diana Described: Scattered Woman and Scattered Rhyme," *Critical Inquiry* 8 no. 2 (1981), "Writing and Sexual Difference", 265–79 or "The Blazon of Sweet Beauty's Best: Shakespeare's *Lucrece*," in Geoffrey H. Hartman and Patricia Parker (eds.), *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory* (London: Routledge, 1986) 102–22. In French, Irène Salas, "*La Femme-Livre. Fragmentation du corps féminin dans les blasons anatomiques de la Renaissance*," in Alain Milon and Marc Perelman (eds.), *Le livre au corps* (Nanterre: Presses universitaires de Paris Nanterre, 2012) 191–214.

Joan Kelly's observations in 1977 regarding the denial of independence for women in bourgeois writings on education and domestic life and, more generally, the progressive disembodiment of women. Kelly noted that 'the ladies of the romances and troubadour poetry may be stereotypically blond, candid, and fair, but their authors meant them to be taken as physically and socially *real*'.⁴¹ The equine imagery associated with characters like 'Dame Agnes' and 'Dame Arsen' in William of Aquitaine's song likely represented specific individuals or archetypes familiar to the knights present. Whereas, in the *Mesnagier*, the maiden's butchering serves as a means of masculine pleasure, stripping her of agency and control. We can discern the beginnings of what modern scholars have termed '*raison cavalière*', referring to 'men's constant demands to dominate the animal and harness it for their projects'.⁴² Ultimately, the author of the text emerges as the sole master, not just of the discourse (that he shared with Jehan), but of the butchered bodies that he appropriates for himself.

This aphorism reveals three internal dynamics. Whereas the Aristotelian tradition compared (bad) women to mares, our aphorism links the maiden to a generic (good) 'horse'. While the horse develops qualities, the maiden remains an assemblage of butchered parts, sexualized and domesticated and, along with other animals, subordinate members of the household. This appears to have at least two consequences. On one hand, the sixteenth-century horse slowly becomes 'a love object', as studied by scholars such as Pia F. Cuneo and Karen Raber; on the other, it perpetuates the connection between women and horses, placing them in a similar subordinate and passive position. The culmination of the type of list we have been discussing can be found in *Le cabinet satyrique* (1620). Fox, hare, oxen, and ass have disappeared. Only the 'comparison of the woman to the horse' remains as the poet concludes:

In short, they are alike in all, except in this one matter,
One carries on the stomach, the other on the spine.⁴³

41 Joan Kelly, "Did Women have a Renaissance?" in Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz (eds.), *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977), 177 and 190.

42 Yves Grange, "*Le cheval oublié, essai sur les aspects socio-politiques de la relation de l'homme et du cheval en France, 1614-1914*," PhD diss. (Institut d'Études politiques de Grenoble, 1981), 3-4.

43 "Somme estre tous pareils, hormis en ce seul cas / Qu'un porte sur le ventre, et l'autre sur l'eschine," in 'Comparaison de la femme au cheval', *Le cabinet satyrique ou recueil parfait des vers piquants & gaillards de ce temps* (Paris: Antoine Estoc, 1620), 284-85.

About the Author

Clémentine Girault is a third-year PhD candidate in Medieval History (Université Paris Cité / EHESS). Her doctoral thesis focuses on exploring the intersection between gender and species relationships within Latin and French normative sources from the late Middle Ages. She offers an ecofeminist perspective in her analysis of these texts. In addition to her research, she serves as a teaching assistant and is actively involved as a member of the review panel for *Images Re-vues*. She has recently published “Female Deer as Mothers in Medieval Exegesis of the Bible,” in *Clio*, vol. 55, 2022.

Reproduction against Extinction

The Value and Labours of Two Przewalski's Mares

Monica Vasile

Abstract

This chapter unearths the biographies of two Przewalski's mares, who were traded, bred, and exhibited as zoo animals, who were coerced into mating and had their female choice curtailed. Yet, these two mares played a crucial role in preventing the extinction of their species. The first mare, Lucka, born during the Second World War at Prague Zoo, became known for her prolific reproduction despite being an atypical descendant of a hybrid, part of what some called a 'contaminated' breeding line. The second mare, Orlica 3, was the last wild horse captured in the Dzungarian Gobi after the war. Her introduction to the captive population signified an infusion of wildness and genetic diversity into generations of captive-bred horses. Their human–animal histories shed light on how human values directed selective breeding, shaping reproductive lives, and animal's bodies, ultimately shaping what many humans consider to be the last wild horse species on the planet.

Keywords: Przewalski's horse, wildlife conservation, endangered species, zoo breeding, animal history

Things Are Not What They Seem

Clouds hung low over the vastness of the gravelly barren land. It was dry and cool. At the foot of a greenish hill, in the distance, grazed a group of twelve Przewalski's horses, called by conservationists P-horses, and by Mongolians *takhi*: tawny dun colour, stocky with whitish potbellies, dark manes, and legs. They lifted their heads and pricked their ears. It was 2022, mid-June in the Dzungarian Gobi Desert, the south-western corner of Mongolia,

and it was the first time I was seeing the horses in the wild, although I had researched their histories remotely for more than two years. It felt as if the horses belonged here, as if they had always lived here free and knew their way around, their silhouettes barely distinguishable from the greenish ochre of the hills. Horses are adapted to survive in harsh environments, they are hind gut fermenters and do not need rich foods, and the horses I was staring at on this late June morning were certainly capable of leading a life on their own. But things were not quite what they seemed. Less than fifteen minutes away from our observation spot was a ribbon of mossy grass called Gun Tamga, the place where, in 1969, a Mongolian biologist sighted the last known wild stallion in the Dzungarian Gobi, after which searches failed and more of the wild horses and the species was declared 'extinct in the wild'. The mares and the stallions that I saw that day were descendants of horses that had reproduced in captive conditions in zoos and reserves for more than ten generations, going back to the dawn of the twentieth century. Only two generations back, these horses' grandparents had been born in captivity, and were brought to the Gobi on a plane in 1993 via a costly reintroduction programme.

The scale of the human undertaking in breeding the endangered Przewalski's horse was unparalleled for a wildlife species. Deemed a textbook example of how zoos can be successful in saving species from extinction, it is the longest and perhaps the most globalized captive-breeding programme for a wild species in history. Today, people depict the Przewalski's horse story as a success because the horses survived and bred in zoos and because, like me, many were moved to see the horses living free in the Dzungarian Gobi from where they became extinct in the wild half a century ago. This depiction, of course, conceals the many horses who failed to survive, or to breed, or were denied a life or a chance to reproduce. Also, while emphasizing the *human* side of this story it is often forgotten that this 'success' was produced by the reproductive labour of thousands of mares. After being captured and severed from their mothers, transported and oftentimes traumatized, confined and given no choice of partner, the mares (and, of course, the stallions, too) succeeded to 'make more' of the horses that came perilously close to total extinction. This labour has been valued, understood, shaped, perhaps restricted or enhanced, by various human ideas and practices, some of which were quite controversial at their time.

This chapter is about the Przewalski's horse mares and their reproductive labour, as well as about the human values and practices that shaped it. I ask: how did human-held ideas affect the lives and labours of the mares? I show how selective breeding, restricting reproduction for many P-horses while

enhancing it for others, was driven by shifting ideologies across space and time. Some prioritized prolific breeding, or genetic diversity, while others emphasized species boundaries, considering notions of wildness, purity, and outward appearance. Efforts to preserve the species were controversial, often antagonistic, and with tremendous real-life consequences for the horses.

In what follows, I trace the biographies of two Przewalski's mares, who contributed substantially and (perhaps) unknowingly to saving their species.¹ Both of them were ancestors to the horses I saw roaming free that day in June in the Dzungarian Gobi. The first mare, Lucka, born during the Second World War at Prague Zoo – a critical period for the species – became known for her prolific reproduction despite being an atypical descendant of a hybrid, part of what some called a 'contaminated' breeding line. The second mare, Orlica 3, was the last wild horse captured in the Dzungarian Gobi after the war. Her introduction to the captive population signified an infusion of wildness into generations of captive-bred horses. Regarded as a source of invaluable new genes, her tale and that of her offspring shed light on the 1970s' emphasis on genetic diversity as a paramount concern in managing small, endangered populations. Together, these human–animal histories are evocative of the tangled lifeways on the edge of extinction.

Lucka

It was the middle of a cool summer night in 1941, during the Second World War. At Prague Zoo, a filly foal was born. She stood up on her wobbly feet straightaway. She was a bit frail but otherwise alright. Jan Vlasak, the zoo's director, was happy.² She was the first Przewalski's horse foal born at the zoo in four years.

Prague was under German occupation. Wartime was tough for running a zoo. Everything was in short supply. Situated on the bend of the Vltava River in the northern, green outskirts of the city, the large zoo grounds were repurposed as a farm to provide food for the animals. Despite the hardship, or perhaps because of it, humans and zoo animals had somehow come closer together, as comrades in suffering.³ Vlasak, a lanky and sporty veterinary

1 On animal biographies, see André Krebber and Mieke Roscher, "Introduction: Biographies, Animals and Individuality," in *Animal Biography: Re-Framing Animal Lives*, ed. André Krebber and Mieke Roscher (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 1–15.

2 Letter from Vlasak to Antonius, July 4, 1941, Archive of Schönbrunn Zoo.

3 Protecting dependent animals was considered a civilizing act in barbaric times, as argued in the article by Anna-Katharina Wöbse and Mieke Roscher, "Zootiere Während Des Zweiten

surgeon in his late 40s, was appointed director of the zoo two years before filly Lucka was born, just as the war broke. Vlasak had the directorship of the zoo for a short and intense time (1939–1946). He was not part of an elite circle of European zoologists, nor did he have the bourgeois air of animal collectors and other zoo directors; equally, he did not entertain the colonial explorer's passions for exotic fauna. He had a military upbringing and had fought during the First World War on the grisly Eastern Front. Hard-working, capable, and conscientious, Vlasak was the right person for the war-time job. At the time when Vlasak was appointed director, Prague Zoo held three Przewalski's horses, Horymir, the newborn filly's father, a stallion imported from Washington Zoo, and two mares, Minka and her daughter, Helus. The absence of offspring was unfortunate, in Vlasak's opinion, '[c]onsidering the naturalistic value of these horses, which were completely exterminated in the wild several decades ago even in their last refuges in the Central and East Asian high mountains, and are now kept only as an exceptional rarity in zoological gardens'.⁴ This was untrue. Rumours about the horses' extinction circulated, but, at that time, the horses had not been entirely extirpated; extinction in the wild would be declared only 28 years later, in 1969. Still, the gist of Vlasak's valuation based on rarity held true: In the 1940s, the horses were extremely rare and their prospect for survival was grim. The area where they were barely hanging onto existence, the Dzungarian Gobi, was ravaged by anthropogenic and natural challenges – border wars and unforgiving winters.

The spectre of extinction conferred value to the horses in the first half of the twentieth century. A sense of preservationist urgency was gathering in the interwar European circles of zoologists and zoo directors, also concerned with saving other species, such as the European bison (also called *wisent*). In 1929, for instance, the Przewalski's horses on exhibit at the Schönbrunn Zoo were presented to the public as a 'dying' species and an ancestor of 'our most noble domestic animal'.⁵ The horses were 'coveted consumer items', as historian Sandra Swart put it.⁶ Aristocratic collectors and horse breeders

Weltkrieges: London Und Berlin 1939–1945," *Themenheft Tiere, Werkstatt Geschichte* 56 (2011): 46.

4 Report accompanying letter from Vlasak to Antonius, July 4, 1941, D. MV Dr. Jan Vlasak, "Bericht über Anwendung von ‚Prolan‘ bei den Stuten der Przewalski-Urpferde im Prager Zoo," Archive of Schönbrunn Zoo.

5 Otto Antonius, "Beobachtungen an Einhufern in Schönbrunn II. Die Mongolischen Wildpferde," *Zoologische Garten NF* 1 (1929): 98.

6 Sandra Swart, "Kicking over the Traces? Freeing the Animal from the Archive," in *Traces of the Animal Past: Methodological Challenges in Animal History*, eds. Jennifer Bonnell and Sean Kheraj (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2022).

revelled in having them. As commodities in the zoo trade, the wild horses fetched high prices, and only the wealthiest zoos could afford them. The animal trader Carl Hagenbeck sold Przewalski's foals for 7500 German marks, but also for 'bargains' such as 5000 German marks a pair.⁷ In 1941, about 33 wild horses were alive, from more than fifty foals that were captured on the eve of the twentieth century and sold around the world by animal traders (it would later become clear that only twelve of the captured foals had bred). But rarity was not the only source of value. Their unique wildness gave the horses a romantic allure. They also held scientific value: as historian Nigel Rothfels reveals, the *Popular Official Guide to the New York Zoological Park* of 1909 mentioned, for example, that the horses should be understood as the 'connecting link' between horses and the other equids.⁸

Vlasak perceived the horses as so incredibly valuable that he did not hesitate to ask for help from Nazi enemies in the throes of the Second World War. He sought advice on how to improve the mares' apparent infertility problem from Otto Antonius, director of Schönbrunn Zoo in Vienna, a declared member of the Nazi Party wearing a Hitler-style moustache, and also from Heinz Heck, the director of Tierpark Hellabrunn near Munich, a character with a somewhat more ambiguous relationship to the Nazi party, yet an active member in Nazi circles nonetheless.⁹ This was a surprising liaison indeed, given that Vlasak had been organizing anti-German resistance activities at the zoo.¹⁰

The investigation into the apparent infertility of Przewalski's mares concluded that the problem was 'oestrus weakness' and, following Antonius' advice, Prague Zoo decided to treat the mares with Prolan, a hormonal extract from pituitary glands. As revealed by a letter from Vlasak to Antonius, as well as by an adjoining report, the treatment seemed to have worked.¹¹ Seven days after the injection, in heat, Minka the older mare tried to jump the fence to reach the stallion's enclosure. Here, we see the ambiguity of

7 Lothar Dittrich and Annelore Rieke-Müller, *Carl Hagenbeck (1844–1913): Tierhandel Und Schaustellungen Im Deutschen Kaiserreich* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 1998).

8 Nigel Rothfels, "(Re)Introducing the Przewalski's Horse," in *The Ark and Beyond: The Evolution of Zoo and Aquarium Conservation*, eds. Ben Minteer, Jane Maienschein, and James P. Collins (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 77–89, <https://doi.org/10.7208/9780226538631-008>.

9 For Heinz Heck's relation to Nazism, see Clemens Driessen and Jamie Lorimer, "Back-Breeding the Aurochs: The Heck Brothers, National Socialism and Imagined Geographies for Nonhuman Lebensraum," in *Hitler's Geographies*, eds. P. Giaccaria and C. Minca (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 138–57.

10 According to Miroslav Bobek, September 24, 2012, <https://www.zoopraha.cz/aktualne/pohledem-reditele/7339-valecny-reditel-zoo>

11 All details about the breeding attempts are described by Vlasak in Report, 1941.

the horses' agency: she chose to jump, but she had, after all, been injected with hormones and placed into an artificial situation. The zookeepers let her in and, for two days, she tried everything to interest Horymir, a dark impressive stallion with a temper, later described as a 'beautiful American stallion'.¹² But Horymir repeatedly rejected Minka; bit her neck and legs. The zookeepers brought the injured mare back to her separate enclosures. These mating trials were a result of the fact that zoo environments with limited space do not allow much autonomy to animal behaviour. There is no choice of partners and no escape route. Confinement is said to augment aggression, as a result of forced proximity and ensuing frustration.

Although it seemed as though the plan was never going to work, Horymir's rejection of Minka was not the end of the breeding trials. The zookeepers took Helus, Minka's daughter, to the stallion as well, despite her not showing signs of heat at that time. This time around, it was the mare's turn to reject and injure the male. Three weeks later, both mares were taken again to the stallion together. Interestingly, he was aggressive when *both* mares were in the same paddock with him, but once Minka was removed, the stallion approached Helus, and tried to mate with her, in spite of her opposition. One week into this troubled relation, the zookeepers took Helus away. But, alas, their perseverance did not seem to have limits. They brought her back again for a short time one week later, when she was calmer but still unwilling. After this, the keepers stopped trying. Eventually, at some point, Helus showed signs of pregnancy; shaky-legged Lucka was born, an event that set in motion a 'breeding line' at Prague Zoo that would continue for many generations.

The experiences that led to Lucka's birth show that captive breeding did not happen easily. Behavioral incompatibility was often the case. Mating could turn violent. Both stallions and mares could injure their ordained partners, perhaps infuriated by the proximity forced upon them by small enclosures. Zoo people brought seemingly incompatible horses together again, apparently thinking that dislikes were temporary, and horses might change their mind. They tried to facilitate reproduction by disregarding the forcible aspect of it. Confinement, solitude, lack of choice of partners – and, in general, human-induced conditions – would constrain the horses in many ways. Indeed, as historian Marianna Szczygielska has shown, the perception of an urgent temporality of extinction binds zoos to focus on

12 Zdenek Veselovsky and Jiri Volf, "Breeding and Care of Rare Asian Equids at Prague Zoo," *International Zoo Yearbook* 5, no. 1 (January 1965): 30, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-1090.1965.tb01566.x>.

a species' reproductive *success*, and disregard other aspects involved in sexuality, such as its social side, or the importance of choice.¹³

The story of Lucka's birth tells of the manipulation of the female body for reproduction purposes, which was prevalent and would become even more so in the attempts to 'safeguard' rare and endangered species under human care for the goals of preservation. The life in shrunken environments, exposed to stress, would disrupt and diminish the reproductive relations of many wild animals (both females and males) bred in captivity over the twentieth century.

A Prolific 'Fox' Mare

Lucka turned out thin and smooth, fine-boned like her mother, Helus, rather different from the stockier appearance of other P-horses. She was light reddish colour, with a flaming red mane – without dark pigmentation. And she was born with a long white blaze on her forehead (that disappeared later in life). The horses without black pigment in the fur, on their legs and mane, were called 'foxes' (*Füchse* in German). Lucka was a 'fox' and also did not have the clunky heavy body form thought typical for the wild horses. For most of the twentieth century, the fox colouration and the delicate appearance in the Przewalski's horses was thought to be linked to the presence of domesticated ancestors, thus to 'impurity'. Lucka was, in fact, known to be the granddaughter of a hybrid between a wild horse and a domestic one, which was bred in Halle, Germany. These hybrid descendants passed as legitimate Przewalski's horses, and were bought as such in the 1920s by Frantisek Bilek, a hippologist at the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague, who would later send them on to the zoo.¹⁴

The issue of what was typical of the P-horse species had been one of tremendous controversy. In the early twentieth century, it was widely believed that the P-horse came in a few different phenotypical variants, according to their region of origin – some darker, some lighter, some with dark noses, some with white ones.¹⁵ However, it was unclear whether these variations could have been due to episodes of hybridization with domestic horses. While

13 Marianna Szczygielska, "Animal Sex in Public: Warping Time and Sexuality in the Zoo," *Environmental Humanities* 14, no. 3 (November 2022): 641–60, <https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-9962948>.

14 Miroslav Bobek, *Pomáháme jim přežít = We help them to survive = Nous les aidons à survivre = Pomogajem im vyžít* (Prague: ZOO, 2011).

15 See for example Otto Antonius, "Beobachtungen an Einhufern in Schönbrunn II. Die Mongolischen Wildpferde," *Zoologische Garten NF* 1 (1929): 87–98.

some accepted variation as normal, others were warier of it. For instance, in the 1930s, Heinz Heck did not accept the variability in the coat colour of the P-horse as ‘normal’ for the species. He discarded a reddish-coloured colt, a *Fuchs* born in 1933.¹⁶ In later writings, Heck described what he believed to be the ‘typical phenotype’ of the wild horse: dun coat colour, mealy white nose, dark pigmented and upright mane, dark stripes on legs, bushy dark tail and a heavy build.¹⁷ Heck’s reasoning was that wild animals tended towards colour *uniformity*, and that only human breeders in their attraction towards flashy contrasts have bred a *colourful* bunch. Therefore, a ‘fox’ would be a product of human selection, thus *not* entirely wild. Heck did not necessarily uphold purity as a value, but wildness. His perspective aligned that of Konrad Lorenz, the Austrian zoologist for whom domestication was causing weakness and degeneration, both in humans and in animals. In the animals he bred, Heck admired dominant behaviour, vigour, and virility – all masculine values.¹⁸ In this understanding, Lucka’s delicate appearance lacking black pigment, was not only atypical for the species but may have been deemed excessively ‘feminine’ for Heck’s preferences.

All of that was not just taxonomic quibbling and ego-posturing as to who held the ‘true’ wild horses, but would have tremendous influence on the individual horses’ lives, and on the lifeways of the entire species. Heck’s ideas shaped how he bred the P-horse Munich herd, the only other group of horses that survived the Second World War besides the Prague group. He initiated the Munich herd with two mares, Bessie and Selma, procured from Prague, complemented by a stallion from Askania Nova in Southern Ukraine – Pascha, an aggressive animal that Heck described as ‘a wonderful stallion who bites and fights terribly’ in the ‘proper manner’ of a wild horse.¹⁹ (Later Heck also acquired other horses: an Askanian mare, Orlica 2, a mare from Sydney and a stallion from the Woburn estate of the eleventh duke of Bedford in the UK.) After the war, he decided that

16 As documented by Erna Mohr, “Die Apfelschimmel von Pech-Merle,” *Zeitschrift Für Säugetierkunde: Im Auftrage Der Deutschen Gesellschaft Für Säugetierkunde e.V.* 34 (1967): 316–18.

17 Heinz Heck, “Die Merkmale Des Przewalskipferdes,” *Equus. Proceedings of the 2nd International Symposium on the Preservation of the Przewalski’s Horse* (Berlin, 1967), 295–301.

18 Heinz Heck, “Die Letzten Und Die Ersten Urpferde,” *Das Tier Und Wir. Tierparkzeitung. Tierpark Hellabrunn* June (1936): 1–16. For the appreciation for Teutonic strength and vigour by the Heck directors, see also Marianna Szczygielska, “Undoing Extinction: The Role of Zoos in Breeding Back the Tarpan Wild Horse, 1922–1945,” *Centaurus* 64, no. 3 (October 2022): 729–50, <https://doi.org/10.1484/J.CNT.5.132107>; Mieke Roscher, “Curating the Body Politic: The Spatiality of the Zoo and the Symbolic Construction of German Nationhood (Berlin 1933–1961),” in *Animal Places* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 115–35.

19 From Heck, “Die Letzten Und Die Ersten Urpferde,” no page number.

the P-horses descended from Bessie were not worth keeping, as they were tainted by a hybrid ancestry, and he had suspicions about the purity of Pascha as well. As Erna Mohr, a zoologist based at the Hamburg Zoological Museum, mentions in her influential book on the Przewalski's horse, *The Asiatic Wild Horse*, after the war he decided to kill six P-horses, among which older and younger breeding mares, a mare called Eva and her daughters Erna (five years old) and Hanni, a filly (seven months old), who are all listed in the studbook with the same date of death – December 2, 1955.²⁰ What was later called the Munich–Prague line before 1945, would thus become 'extinct'.²¹ If Lucka had been born at Munich Zoo instead of Prague, her fate could have been very different.

Yet, other breeders thought it unreasonable to uphold fussy standards and nitpicky selection when so few P-horses were left in the world. Moreover, it was almost certain that much of the original wild horses hybridized with domestic horses naturally anyway. This is why Lucka's breeding line, which would later be called the 'Old Prague line', continued to breed.

Lucka's breeding capabilities have been much praised. Lucka was a young breeder, becoming fertile at two years of age (even though Lucka's foal was not registered in the studbook; perhaps the foal died very young).²² But breeding at Prague Zoo meant inbreeding as, for many years, the only existent horses had descended from Horymir, the Washington-born stallion, and Minka, Helus, and Lucka, i.e., grandmother, mother, and daughter. This resulted in Lucka mating with her half-brother and uncle, Uran (Horymir and Minka's son). Yet, inbreeding was the only way to keep growing the population of P-horses here, as the rift with the Munich line prevented exchanges. Prague Zoo directors took pride in Lucka's fertility and longevity. In 1965, they touted her world record for P-horse reproductive rate. 'Lucka had her eleventh foal in 1963 (eight colts and three fillies)'. Interestingly, phenotypical thinking had crept into their minds too: 'As the result of the increase in the number of Przewalski horses, we can now have a much stricter breeding policy, discarding stallions that do not resemble the Przewalski horse "type" sufficiently', they said in the same article.²³ It is

20 The killings are mentioned in Erna Mohr, *The Asiatic Wild Horse* (London: J. A. Allen, 1971); Jan Bouman, "The History of Breeding the Przewalski Horse in Captivity," in *Breeding Przewalski Horses in Captivity for Release into the Wild* (Rotterdam: Foundation for the Preservation and Protection of the Przewalski Horse, 1982), 39. The source for names and date of death: Studbook.

21 Bouman, "The History," 68.

22 Mohr, *The Asiatic Wild*, 86.

23 Veselovsky and Volf, "Breeding and Care of Rare Asian Equids at Prague Zoo," no page number.

noteworthy here that if breeding had been restricted, they say, it would be *stallions* who would have been denied a life.

If, through Lucka's story, we grasp the great value placed on the reproductive capacities of females, what about the males? Throughout the history of breeding the P-horses in zoos, stallions have been more readily praised and admired. Their behaviour caught the eye, being sometimes more alert and more aggressive than the mares. However, stallions, much more than mares, have been regarded as expendable. Deemed 'surplus', colts were more readily killed as foals. As Mohr contends in her analysis from 1958, they were vigorously 'eliminated' as a means of 'selection'.²⁴ Also, males have reproduced less than females. For instance, an analysis undertaken in the mid-1970s shows that only approximately 25 per cent of the stallions had reproduced up to that year, compared to approximately forty per cent of females.²⁵

Orlica 3, the Last Wild-Caught

In 1947, in the mountainous borders between Mongolia and China of the Dzungarian Gobi, amidst the turmoil of conflicts, a couple of Przewalski's fillies were born. Their mothers, among the last of their species to be found in the wild, had survived the terrible winter of 1944, remembered by Mongolians as the deadly '*dzud* of the year of the monkey', and had also survived the hunt by army troops and bandits stationed in the area.²⁶ The captured fillies went to the state farm of Jargalant (also spelled Dshargalantu or Shargalantui in sources), seventy kilometers northwest of Ulaanbaatar. Ten years later, the state equestrian department offered one of them, Altay, as a present to the USSR, respectively to General Klimenti Voroshilov.²⁷ In 1957, Altay arrived in Askania Nova in Southern Ukraine on the north of the Black Sea, where she was renamed Orlica 3 (also spelled Orlitza or Orlitsa). She would become the celebrated last wild horse to reach the captive population that, at the time, was becoming inbred and behaviorally skewed by confinement.

Askania had been the first place to ever receive and breed Przewalski's horses at the end of the nineteenth century, all of which had perished by the

24 Mohr, *The Asiatic Wild*, 91.

25 Jan Bouman, "Eine Analyse Der Stammbuch-Daten Und Einige Konklusionen Hinsichtlich Der Zukünftigen Züchtung Der Przewalskipferde in Gefangenschaft," 3 (Internationales Symposium zur Erhaltung des Przewalskipferdes, München, 1976): 33–34.

26 Natalia Vladimirova Paklina, "In the Footsteps of the Disappeared Takhi," *Priroda* 7 (983) (1997): 91–101.

27 Vladimir Treus. "Askania Nova," *Priroda* 1961 (3): 43–49.

end of the Second World War. By the time Orlica 3 arrived, in 1957, Askania was a large scientific station that included a nature reserve, a zoopark, and a world-famous breeding institute. Soviet policy and state supported (pseudo) scientific ideology dictated forcefully that Askanian scientists undertook various animal experiments with economic applicability – improvement of breeds for agricultural use through hybridization, domestication, acclimatization – and perhaps little of these pressures were fully understood in the West.²⁸ The mare found there one ‘purebred’ stallion, requisitioned after the Second World War, in 1948, by the USSR from Germany,²⁹ originally called Robert, and renamed Orlic (yes, the Askanians really clung to that name for some reason).

Askanian scientists and caretakers took a couple of photographs of Orlica. Swishing her tail, stretching her neck, pricking her ears, nose in the wind, and mostly in motion, the images depict her in edgy tense postures, appropriate for a *wild* horse. Erna Mohr did not seem taken with Orlica at all: she found her head chunky, her lower lip too protruding (an ‘abnormality’, ‘hopefully this will stay latent in her offspring’, Mohr said), her bones clunky, her eyes too high-up near the ears, her legs too short, overall very different, she says politely, from her ‘noble and elegant’ consort Orlik.³⁰ Articles that mention Orlica and the Askanian P-horse situation in the 1960s tell us relatively little about her life. I found that she lived in large enclosures (900 hectares) grazing on the natural Askanian steppe, and for the summertime she would be moved to a smaller enclosure of 80 hectares to meet the stallion (given that, at zoos around the world, the horses lived in enclosures of ten hectares at best, this was, indeed, a luxury).³¹

The P-horse community learned for the first time about her existence at a four-day symposium dedicated to the horse organized at Prague Zoo in 1959, at the initiative of the then freshly resigned zoo director Cyril Purkyne (who wanted to be done with the hassle of directorship and dedicate more time to his entomological passions). The existence of the wild-born Orlica was not the only surprise. In a dark room clad with velvet curtains and renaissance paintings, scientists and zoo people from both sides of the Iron Curtain (Heck was absent) were shocked to learn from Mohr that there

28 For an overview of the state supported ideology at the time, see e.g. Michael D. Gordin, “Lysenkoism,” in *Encyclopedia of the History of Science*, February 2022.

29 Erna Mohr, “Bemerkungen Zum Erscheinungsbild von Equus Przewalskii Poljakov,” in *Equus Band 1 Heft 2* (2. International Symposium zur Erhaltung des Przewalskipferdes, Berlin, 1967), 350–97.

30 Mohr, “Bemerkungen,” 392–95.

31 A.G. Bannikov and H.B. Lobanov, “Przewalski’s Horse, Anxiety and Hope,” *Priroda*, no. 3. (1980): 100–5.

were only sixty horses in captivity. That year, she had published the first monograph dedicated to the P-horse, *Der Urwildpferd*, in which she summed up the knowledge she gathered from publications, from visiting every zoo that kept P-horses, and from piles of correspondence.³² With impressive diligence, Mohr assembled a studbook, a pedigree register, in which she enlisted all the horses that could be documented since the beginning of the twentieth century (studbooks for wild animals was a fairly new idea at the time and later became a staple for zoo breeding). In the studbook, Lucka became '74 / Prague 7', meaning she was enlisted at position 74 and she was the seventh P-horse born in Prague.

The scientists concerned with this species in the USSR (the Askanians included), for whom talking in terms of genetics was taboo (as it had been a state-sanctioned science for decades), were stressing the value of Orlica's *wildness*, not skewed under the pressures of confinement like the other P-horses in captivity at the time, and were proud that, with her, the breeding of the rare horses had resumed in the USSR.³³

Unsurprisingly, Orlica's reproduction had been the focus of much concern. At the 1959 conference, the Askanian scientists spoke somewhat with regret and forecasted a *limited* reproductive future for Orlica given that she reached Askania so late, at ten years of age: 'The prospects for extensive reproduction are clearly very limited. At best, Orlitsa may produce another five or six foals', said Vladimir Danilovich Treus, the then director of the zoopark section of Askania Nova. Over the next years, she produced less than expected: she mothered four 'pure' offspring, two fillies, and two colts, from which one of the fillies died young. After she died at the old age of 27 (in 1973), some P-horse experts voiced their disappointment with Orlica's reproductive output: her potential for the good of the species had not been fully realized. For instance, Jiri Volf, the studbook keeper at Prague Zoo, said in 1976 that it is a pity that she did not influence the world breeding of P-horses more sustainably, and left 'only' three descendants.

Yet, Orlica's two sons, Pegas and Bars, bred prolifically. Indeed, in the 1960s, the mystique of the prolific stallions was in full swing. Pegas, a stallion truly wild in behaviour, as Vasiliy Klimov, an Askanian researcher, described him to me, had no less than sixty offspring at Askania.³⁴ The other son, Bars, was

32 Erna Mohr, *Das Urwildpferd. Equus Przewalskii Poljakoff 1881* (Wittenberg Lutherstad: Ziemsens, 1959).

33 Andrej Bannikov, "Distribution Geographique et Biologie Du Cheval Sauvage et Du Chameau de Mongolie (Equus Przewalskii et Camelus Bactrianus)," *Mammalia* 22, no. 1-4 (1958).

34 Email Klimov to author, 2021.

first transported to Prague Zoo, and from there to Munich. He was a 'really first-class stallion', as Mohr depicted him, with a 'pathological' dislike for mares, attacking them and chasing them away, even killing some of the foals.³⁵ Despite this, he had 56 offspring at Prague Zoo, and later at Munich Zoo, spreading Orlica's genes into the captive population far and wide. John Knowles, the founder of Marwell Zoo and a conservationist, recounted in his memoirs that, in the late 1960s, when he began breeding what would become one of the largest herd of P-horses in the world, that he considered himself struck by good fortune to be able to buy some of the coveted offspring of Bars, son of Orlica, from Prague Zoo. He was aided by political turmoil during the Czech protests that became known as the Prague Spring, when the then zoo director, Zdenek Veselovsky, driven by fear of escalation, decided to sell some of his precious horses, and so Knowles could acquire two of Bars' daughters.³⁶

Orlica had gone down in the history of the P-horses as a saviour of her species. She was a stroke of good fortune, an injection of wildness, a reproductive promise, a founder, a mother of prolific stallions, a genetic saviour, a reason for hope, for pride, and also for regret. What people thought to have been her precise 'contribution' to this saving, and whether she had done 'enough', varied according to who was speaking and when. However, towards the end of the 1970s, the uniform view consolidated that she had been a *genetically* valuable individual for an otherwise genetically impoverished species.

Genetic Afterlives

Understanding Orlica as a genetic rescuer, i.e., grasping her value in terms of genetic diversity, came after the mid-1970s. Orlica's genetic contribution to a growing but still endangered population began to be heavily calculated and planned in ways that drastically influenced the reproduction of both P-horse females and males. The new understandings, developed mostly in the US, determined that her genes had to be injected into the population through her reproducing descendants, to meet 'targets' represented as percentage of 'founder contribution', in ways that not only boosted the reproductive pressure on certain animals, but also excluded animals from having reproductive lives, as I will show in a moment.

35 Interviews Jaroslav Simek and Evzen Kus (Prague Zoo) by author, 2022. Also Mohr, *The Asiatic Wild Horse*, 103.

36 John Knowles, *My Marvellous Life in Zoos and Conservation* (Brighton, England: Book Guild, 2009).

Around that time, population genetics started to be applied to species conservation. The zoo world began to be concerned with the management of captive populations to avoid inbreeding and maximize genetic diversity. This shift changed how the P-horse community regarded Orlica. Instead of a flesh and blood wild animal, she would henceforth be seen rather as a pool of valuable genes, 'critical to species survival'.³⁷ Instead of her name, she would be called by her studbook number – she became known as '231'.

In 1977, Nathan Flesness, a PhD candidate associated with Minnesota Zoo, authored a groundbreaking paper emphasizing the critical role of genetic variation for Przewalski's horse conservation. Flesness, engaged in developing a computerized zoo records system (which became known and used worldwide as the International Species Information System), asserted that populations lacking genetic diversity are destined for extinction due to an inability to adapt to environmental changes.³⁸ This perspective, novel for the time, sparked concern. Despite numerical growth, (the Przewalski's horse population had reached 254 in captivity by 1976, across sixty facilities worldwide), Flesness's paper and another study, authored by the Dutch breeder and amateur scientist Jan Bouman, indicated declining longevity and fertility, with increasing inbreeding and its adverse effects becoming evident.³⁹

Two years after Flesness's paper, in 1979, US P-horse breeders initiated a Species Survival Plan (SSP), involving ten zoos and coordinated by geneticist Oliver Ryder of San Diego Zoo. Ryder advocated against 'pure' phenotype selection and overuse of specific stallions, emphasizing inclusion, diversity, and exchange.⁴⁰ Given the dominance of the Munich line in the US P-horse population, descended from horses exported by Heinz Heck in the 1950s, the SSP focused on maximizing underrepresented breeding lines – specifically, Askanian descendants of 231 (Orlica) and Prague-descended horses. A celebrated and very unlikely P-horse exchange happened in 1982 across the Iron Curtain: three P-horses from Askania Nova came to the US and three were sent back. When a colt was born out of this exchange at the San Diego

37 Anne Bowling et al., "Genetic Variation in Przewalski's Horses, with Special Focus on the Last Wild Caught Mare, 231 Orlitza III," *Cytogenetic and Genome Research* 102, no. 1–4 (2003): 227.

38 Nathan Flesness, "Gene Pool Conservation and Computer Analysis," *International Zoo Yearbook* 17, no. 1 (1977): 77.

39 Jan Bouman, "The Future of Przewalski Horses Equus Przewalskii [Plate 10] in Captivity," *International Zoo Yearbook* 17, no. 1 (1977): 62–68.

40 Oliver A. Ryder and Elizabeth A. Wedemeyer, "A Cooperative Breeding Programme for the Mongolian Wild Horse Equus Przewalskii in the United States," *Biological Conservation* 22, no. 4 (April 1982): 259–71.

Wild Animal Park, his value was celebrated: he introduced ‘valuable genetic bloodlines into the U.S.’, the ‘Russian bloodlines’ being descended from ‘the last wild horse taken from the wild in 1947’ (i.e., Orlica 3).⁴¹

The breeding of North American P-horses shifted to scientific calculations of ‘gene survival’ and ‘founder contribution’, shaping the animals’ lives. The horses deemed genetically valuable and ‘underrepresented’ had to produce more offspring, while the ones deemed valueless, ‘overrepresented’ or ‘surplus’, were excluded. Breeding plans mandated all females to breed, aiming for an average of no less than seven surviving offspring per mare. However, many males were deemed ‘surplus’, with ominous instructions prohibiting further reproduction. Orlica was crucial in these calculations and the breeding plans mentioned her frequently. For example, in a document with recommendations for 1989, one can read that stallion # 718, Marwell 28, Janus, was important because of his contributions from #231, Orlitza III through #285, Askania 3, Bars.⁴² The shift to a diversity paradigm discarded the prolific stallion concept, relegating males to ‘bachelor depots’ with rotating breeding duties.

However, the diversity thinking championed by Ryder in the US did not take off to the same extent in Europe, despite the fact that the European breeders also formed the EEP (the European Endangered Species Programme), coordinated by Waltraut Zimmermann, the curator of mammals from Cologne Zoo. Heavily influenced by Zimmermann, the thinking among the European breeders was still dominated by phenotypical concern. They paid much attention to purge ‘abnormalities’ or ‘aberrations’ – coat colour ‘deviations’, white marks, dark noses, even light-coloured eyes. The likes of Lucka, ‘fox’ P-horses and horses with white marks, became heavily policed and excluded from breeding. While the North Americans argued that there was no scientific basis linking the phenotype to domesticity, and that selection against certain phenotypic traits that are due to ‘domestic genes’ might result in the unfortunate loss of precious wild genes as well, the Europeans argued that there is an important space problem in zoos, and since the P-horse population stood safely at 900, selection needed to happen, and consistent outer appearance was important.⁴³ While, initially, all mares would be included in the breeding, albeit contraceptive measures

41 Animal Keeper’s Forum, 11, no. 1 (1984): 153.

42 Asian Wild Horse SSP propagation group, Draft Masterplan, San Diego March 7–8 (1988) Appendix 1. Census and Recommendations by Location. Prague Zoo Archive.

43 Discussions according to Minutes of the Przewalski’s Horse Global Masterplan Meeting, December 9–10, 1989, San Diego Zoo. Online archives of the Captive Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG) of SSC/IUCN.

were being researched, by 1988, Zimmermann asked European breeders to exclude fourteen mares from breeding.⁴⁴

Epilogue

In this chapter, I traced the biographies of two Przewalski's mares who survived and reproduced under conditions of captivity. They were born six years apart during a period when the survival of the species was uncertain: the eldest, Lucka, in 1941, and the other, Orlica 3, in 1947. Lucka, a product of heavily manipulated mating at Prague Zoo during the Second World War, earned acclaim as a prolific breeder, valued for her 'output'. In contrast, Orlica 3, born to free-living horses on the brink of extermination in Mongolia, was not prolific, but her few offspring were highly prized for their wildness and genetic uniqueness. Lucka's descendants faced inbreeding issues, often excluded from breeding due to perceived 'contamination' with domestic ancestors. Conversely, Orlica 3's descendants were sought after as carriers of wildness and diversity. Both Lucka's and Orlica's descendants have been reintroduced to live free again in Mongolia.

Their reproductive labour, and that of many other mares like Lucka and Orlica 3, had been crucial to averting the species' extinction. Perhaps this is an obvious point to make, however it is worth stressing, as much too often the work of wildlife conservation is attributed exclusively to humans. These reproductive lives, despite being the key to what came to be known as a great conservation success, have been ridden with profound limitations. Statistics show a stark contrast between the reproductive lives of free (reintroduced) P-horse mares and those captive-born: nearly twice the number of freely roaming mares reproduced compared to those born in captivity. In both reintroduction areas, approximately seventy per cent of the reintroduced and free-born mares reproduced, while less than forty per cent of mares did so within captivity.⁴⁵ These findings underscore that human actions have severely crippled the reproductive agency of the mares

44 EEP committee meeting, Köln, November, 26 1988, Prague Zoo Archive.

45 Several sources were used for the statistics. Calculations of numbers of females that reproduced are available for the period before 1990, in Bouman "Eine Analyse," (1976), 33–34, as well as in the IUCN Equus Przewalskii Global Conservation Plan, February, 10 1990, 31. The percentage for reproductive females in the Hustai Nuruu reintroduction site are retrieved from analysis presented in *Takhi: Back to the Wild, Anniversary Volume* (Ulaanbaatar, 2012), 55. For the Gobi B reintroduction site, the author calculated the percentage of approximately seventy, which is based on statistics published in *Takhi: Back to the Wild*, as well as on studbook information.

born in captivity. Yet, the story is not all bleak. Through reintroductions, a part of Orlica's and Lucka's descendants have gained freedom. This is not without its challenges, but it allows the animals to live lives of their own, as self-willed world-making beings.

About the Author

Monica Vasile is an environmental historian with a background in anthropology. Her current research examines histories of wildlife conservation aimed at undoing extinction. She focuses on three case-studies – Przewalski's horses, Vancouver Island marmots, and the takahe rails of New Zealand. Monica is currently writing her second PhD as part of the research group 'Moving Animals', based at Maastricht University. Her career includes fellowships at the Rachel Carson Center, research roles at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, and the Romanian Academy of Sciences.

A View From the Saddle

Reflections on Gender in the Equestrian Sports of Eventing and Horseracing

Ernestine Hoegen

Abstract

Equestrianism is one of the few sports where men and women, mares and stallions, can compete against each other on an equal footing, and women and mares have been successfully and prominently involved for decades now. In this essay, the author reflects on gender myths and facts in the equestrian disciplines of eventing and horse racing against the backdrop of her own experiences in the sport. Delving into the origins and development of these two disciplines, this essay finds that significant differences in the social and financial histories have led to entirely different environments. Whereas gender no longer appears to be an issue in eventing, horse racing still presents itself as a strongly masculine, often toxic, environment. And in both disciplines, despite the influx of women, little seems to have changed for the horses.

Keywords: eventing, horseracing, gender, class, money

The Sublime

It is almost impossible to describe the thrill, the pure joy, and the ecstasy of galloping across country and leaping over fences with your soulmate, your best friend, the horse with whom you spend almost all your available time. It takes years and years of practice, of schooling, strengthening the physique and mind of both horse and rider, of ups and downs and many falls, to reach the level of bonding and confidence that is required to together negotiate a cross-country course consisting of an array of solid fences, hedges, water jumps, drops, banks, and combinations of fences with names

such as ‘trakehner’ and ‘coffin’, often with unsighted landings and sharp turns, in all weather conditions.⁴⁶ And when it does all come together, and you find yourself moving at speed and in perfect harmony with your horse from one fence to the next, there is – simply – nothing that can compare.

Growing up on a farm in Cheshire, UK, in the 1970s and early 1980s, I was immersed in the horse world at an early age, and took part in a wide range of disciplines, including gymkhanas and shows, dressage, show jumping, hunting, and eventing. Equestrianism is unique in the competitive sporting world in that boys and girls, men and women, mares, stallions, and geldings (castrated stallions) compete against each other on equal terms. It is a sport that requires a whole range of skills of the riders, the most important ones being sensitivity and suppleness of your own body and hands to be able to ‘feel’ and guide your horse, and an absolute, almost instinctive, understanding of her or his physical and mental state and capabilities.⁴⁷ Horses, in turn, are required to be athletic in different ways, depending on the discipline. A dressage horse needs a well-developed, ‘stocky’ body to be able to perform complicated movements such as ‘the flying change’, ‘piaffe’, and ‘passage’. An eventer, there again, needs a decent amount of speed and lots of stamina, and therefore a different, ‘leaner’ type of body to be able to gallop and jump. These attributes are down to breeding and genes – or ‘blood’ – combined with training. They have nothing to do with the horse’s sex.⁴⁸

In 1982, my family moved back to the Netherlands, where I began to focus exclusively on eventing. Also known as ‘Horse Trials’ in the UK, and ‘military’ on the continent, this is a competition format designed to assess the all-round abilities of horse and rider. Combinations of horse and human are required to first ride a dressage test, then complete a cross-country course of fixed jumps, and finally a show jumping track. I absolutely loved this combination of disciplines, thinking that nothing came even close, until I was given the opportunity to ride in a flat race. Racing is an entirely

46 A ‘trakehner’ fence consists of a ditch with a log suspended above it, a ‘coffin’ is a combination fence of an upright, followed by a ditch and then another upright.

47 You also need many other proficiencies such as training and horse management skills, a profound knowledge of equine injuries and ailments (they cannot tell you what is wrong), technical equestrian skills that enable you to give the right ‘aids’ (instructions) to your horse, confidence in your horse and yourself (horses immediately pick up on any insecurities, becoming unsettled or wary themselves), and, if you want to ride across country, a serious amount of guts.

48 For more on ‘blood’ as a significant factor in the breeding of racehorses, see Sandra Swart, *Riding High: Horses, Humans and History in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2010), 45–47.

different discipline to eventing: it is all about raw speed. A group of horses and jockeys set off together around a track, the winner being the first to cross the finish line. If there is anything that can compare to the thrills of riding across country, it is galloping on a thoroughbred racehorse at an incredible speed down a racetrack.

After that experience, I became interested in racing, and it was there that I first became aware of deep-rooted gender biases. I began following the careers of women trainers and jockeys in the racing industry, revelling in their successes and waiting for the inevitable breakthrough of women at the elite level. It made me realize how hard women trainers and riders have had to struggle even to be allowed to participate in equestrian disciplines. The seemingly gender-inclusive world of modern competitive equestrianism is a relatively recent development.

In this chapter, I will dip into the histories of eventing and horse racing, two of the most dangerous and toughest sports in the world, to examine their gendered roots regarding both the horses and the humans. I will do so against the backdrop of my own experiences in the equestrian world. Growing up on a farm surrounded by ponies and horses of all sorts and sexes, and both female and male horsey friends from the pony club, I cannot recall at the time consciously thinking about gender biases, or about the influence of gender on the rider–horse relationship. In hindsight, what I *was* aware of, was class. Eventing is an expensive sport, and you need either money or land (and preferably both) to keep horses. I attended a local co-ed comprehensive secondary school, and none of my council estate friends rode, and only the farming kids had ponies or horses. This brings me to the following questions, which I will address in the following. How gender-neutral is the eventing environment, and how does it compare to racing? What is the influence of class? And, finally, has the recent influx of women at the top of both eventing and racing altered the way we approach and treat sport horses?

The Military and Gendered Origins of Eventing

The horse is ‘man’s oldest military ally’.⁴⁹ Already in about 5000 BC, the Mongolians raised what was ‘(p)robably the world’s first cavalry’ by breaking and training the small, wild horses living in the steppes.⁵⁰ The custom of

49 Pamela Macgregor-Morris et al., *The Complete Book of the Horse* (London: Hamlyn, 1979), 27.

50 *Ibid.*, 22.

employing horses for war spread through the ages to China, then to the Middle East, and eventually to the Greeks and Romans, with Xenophon writing his famous manuals on horsemanship, military training, and the duties of a cavalry officer at around 360–355 BC.⁵¹ As the nature of war and its weapons changed, so did the use of the cavalry horse, ranging from being ridden into battle by Mongolian archers, to drawing Egyptian, Greek, and Roman chariots, carrying heavily armoured European knights, and being ridden and pulling equipment and weapons in (among others) American, European, and World Wars. The earliest war horses were stallions, with mares being reserved for breeding. ‘Although the practice of gelding [human] slaves was considered acceptable and even necessary, it was thought to be too painful and dangerous for stallions [to be castrated]’, and ‘only the Scythians used both mares and geldings in war’.⁵² Throughout history, the cavalry soldiers themselves were male, although ‘archaeological investigation of tombs across Eurasia has shown conclusively that many women of nomadic steppe tribes were indeed warriors, particularly around the Black Sea’, suggesting that (groups of women cavalry such as) the Amazons of Greek mythology may, after all, have existed.⁵³

With their lives depending on the fitness, soundness, and stamina of their steeds, cavalry in, among others, France, Germany, Sweden, and the United States have held long-distance endurance tests ‘for at least three centuries’.⁵⁴ These endurance tests did not yet include jumping, ‘doubtless because very little land was enclosed until recent times’, but in 1902, the French were the first to organize a competition combining the disciplines of dressage, jumping, and speed and endurance in what was termed the *Championnat du Cheval d’Armes* (championship of the military horse).⁵⁵ Only military horses and serving officers were allowed to participate in this early format of what first became known as the ‘military’, and later as ‘three-day eventing’ and then simply ‘eventing’, and this was still the rule when it became an Olympic discipline in 1912, at the Stockholm Games.⁵⁶

51 *Hipparchicos* and *Peri Hippikes*.

52 Macgregor-Morris et al., *The Complete Book of the Horse*, 20.

53 Mark Cartwright, “Amazon Women,” *World History Encyclopedia*, November 14, 2019, <https://www.worldhistory.org/amazon/>.

54 Caroline Silver, Akhtar Hussein, and Lucinda Prior Palmer, *Eventing: The Book of the Three-Day Event* (London: Collins, 1976), 20.

55 *Ibid.*, 20.

56 In those days, the competitors started with the showjumping, then the endurance test (which comprised ‘roads and tracks’ and a steeplechase course as well as the cross-country), and finished with the dressage. In time, the order was changed and the roads and tracks, and the steeplechase dropped from the endurance test.

For the next forty years, competitive eventing remained an exclusively male domain, at least as far as the riders were concerned. The rigours of the cross-country, with the risks it entails of a (potentially lethal) fall, were thought to be too much for women, for ‘if, during the cross-country phase the woman member of a team met with an accident, she would be more unlikely than a man to be able to continue on the way to the finish [...]’.⁵⁷ It is undeniable that eventing is a high-risk sport. Despite concerted efforts to improve safety for both horses and riders, it has a tragic history of both equine and human fatalities. According to the international governing body of the Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI), 38 event riders died during or after competitions between 2000 and 2015, and 65 horses were killed between 2007 and 2015.⁵⁸ Only horse racing (on the flat, over hurdles or fences) carries higher fatalities to horses and riders.⁵⁹

Given these risks, it took years before male civilians and until after the Second World War before female civilians were allowed to participate at an international level. Even though Sheila Willcox, a British woman rider, won the European Three-Day Eventing championships in Turin in 1955, and again in Copenhagen in 1957, as well as being a three-time winner of the prestigious Badminton Horse Trials in 1957, 1958, and 1959, women were still barred from competing in eventing at Olympic level.⁶⁰ Finally, at the 1960 Tokyo Olympics, American rider Lana Du Pont Wright became the first woman to participate in the eventing discipline, completing the course ‘with a collection of bruises, broken bones and mud. Anyway [she said], we proved that a woman could get around an Olympic cross-country course, and nobody could have said that we looked feminine at the finish’.⁶¹ It took another 61 years for German rider Julia Krajewski, riding a bay mare called Amande de B’Neville, to become the first female Olympic individual gold

57 Sheila Willcox, *Three Days Running* (London: Collins, 1958), 119–20.

58 As cited by Heather A. Cameron-Whytock et al., “Towards a Safer Sport: Risk Factors for Cross-Country Horse Falls at British Eventing Competition,” *Equine Veterinary Journal* 56, no. 1 (March 2023): 137, <https://doi.org/10.1111/evj.13934>.

59 For example, in the US, 910 thoroughbreds are reported to have been killed in 2022 alone, with seven horses dying over the ten days leading up to the Kentucky Derby of May 2023. PBS News Hour, “Racing Concerns,” May 20, 2023, video, 0:24, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WF-xqoiScKk>.

60 Sheila Willcox, *Three Days Running*, 119.

61 Lana Du Pont in *The U.S. Equestrian Team Book of Riding* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976) as quoted by Leslie Wylie, “Breaking the Glass Ceiling: The First Ladies of Eventing,” *Eventing Nation*, August 16, 2014, <https://eventingnation.com/breaking-the-glass-ceiling-the-first-ladies-of-eventing/>; “FEI 100 Years: Females at the Fore,” *Fédération Équestre Internationale*, May 31 2021, <https://www.fei.org/stories/100-years/fei-100-years-females-fore>.

medallist at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics (although several women had already won team gold, and individual silver and bronze medals).⁶² At the time of writing this essay, the holders of the Olympic, World and European titles are all women, as is the 2023 winner of the UK Badminton Horse Trials, generally considered to be the toughest event of them all.

Conversely, where female riders have firmly established themselves at the top of their sport, the horses performing at elite levels are mostly geldings, with the percentage of mares involved decreasing as the level of competition rises, and stallions nowadays rarely featuring at all in the highest echelons of present-day competition.⁶³ This has nothing to do with any differences in physical attributes or stamina – as we have seen, the winner of the individual gold medal at the Tokyo Olympics is a mare, as was the very first horse to win individual eventing gold at the 1912 Olympics.⁶⁴ And, judging by their names, plenty of mares have found their way to individual and team medals between 1912 and 2020.⁶⁵ The prevalence of geldings is more for practical and financial reasons. Stallions can become excitable at competitions if they smell a passing mare, and generally need very skilful handling. The best stallions are carefully selected by studbooks and can be worth their weight in gold if successful at stud, making them much too valuable to risk in eventing competitions. The vast majority that do not make it to stud are destined to be sport horses and are mostly gelded to make them more manageable.⁶⁶

In the horse world, mares often suffer from widespread prejudices that they can be ‘difficult’, ‘wilful’, and ‘capricious’, in particular when they are ‘in

62 “List of Olympic Medalists in Equestrian,” Wikipedia, last modified December 18, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Olympic_medalists_in_equestrian#Eventing.

63 T.C. Whitaker, O. Olusola, and L. Redwin, “The Influence of Horse Gender on Eventing Competition Performance,” *Comparative Exercise Physiology* 5, no. 2 (May 2008): 68, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1478061508017039> N.B. This article draws on figures relating to the British eventing scene.

64 A mare called Lady Artist ridden by Swedish officer Lt. A. Nordlander.

65 H.-H. Isenbart and E.M. Bühner, *Een Koninkrijk voor een Paard* [Das Königreich des Pferdes, A Kingdom for a Horse], trans. Aad van Leeuwen (Hoofddorp: W. Gaade B.V., 1974 2nd edn.), 298; “List of Olympic Medalists in Equestrian.” Among them is Jenny Camp, a bay mare foaled in 1926 who won individual silver medals at both the 1932 and 1936 Olympics, see further “Jenny Camp,” Hall of Fame, US Eventing, <https://useventing.com/about/hall-of-fame/jenny-camp>.

66 The same happens to most racing stallions, although the build-up to this is different. Top three-year-old flat racing horses can vie for honours in the so-called classics. Colts (young stallions) and fillies (young mares) are eligible to run in the ‘St. Leger’, the ‘Derby’, and the ‘Two Thousand Guineas’, and fillies are also eligible for the ‘Oaks’ and the ‘One Thousand Guineas’. The best stallions go on to stud, the rest are gelded and can carry on racing. Successful fillies often carry on racing a little longer, and are then put in foal.

season' (ovulating). One popular myth is that 'once you've won over a mare, she'll do anything for you', the implication being that they can be difficult to train and need lots of patience and sensitive handling. I have worked with both mares, geldings, and the occasional stallion, and can honestly say that each horse, regardless of its sex, has its own particular character, strengths, and weaknesses – and that sex is not determinative. I have ridden stallions that are as good as gold, mares that are sensible and cooperative from the word go, and geldings on a gamut from easy to really difficult.

Gender Discourses on Eventing

Of course, winning accolades at elite levels is only a small part of the story of gender in equestrianism, both of horses and of riders. Leafing through the horsey books of my childhood, I am struck by the persistent gender tropes assigned to both the horses and the humans.⁶⁷ The girls are mostly desperate to be allowed to ride, boyish, temperamental, and generally misunderstood ('Jill' and 'Ginny', in particular), the boy riders are gentle souls, the mothers 'small and plump', and the fathers 'tall and lean' (The Ramsay parents in *The Black Stallion*). And the mares are either hopelessly difficult (the one ridden by 'Ginny') or the matriarchal leaders of the herd (*The Silver Brumby*). The Black Stallion himself is the epitome of masculinity,

[...] a giant of a horse, glistening black [...]. His mane was long and slender, and arched to the small, savagely beautiful head. The head was that of the wildest of all wild creatures – a stallion born wild – and it was beautiful, savage, splendid. A stallion with a wonderful physical perfection that matched his savage, ruthless spirit.⁶⁸

Terribly difficult to ride, of course, and only sensitive, brave Alexander Ramsay can do it. Most of these books were written between the 1940s and 1970s, and reflect the attitudes, beliefs, and also realities of the time. For example, two of my favourite childhood horse books – *One Day Event* and *Pony Club Camp*, written by Josephine Pulein-Thompson – clearly

67 These include Walter Farley's *The Black Stallion* series; Josephine Pulein Thompson's *Pony Club* series; Ruby Ferguson's *Jill* books; Patricia Leitch's *Ginny* series; Elyne Mitchell's *Silver Brumby* series; but also John Steinbeck's heartrending *The Red Pony*.

68 Walter Farley, *The Black Stallion* (Hodder and Stoughton: Knight Books, [1941] 1980, 1975 edn.), 9.

demonstrate the then still prevalent involvement of the military in the equestrian world. The local pony club is run by ‘Major Holbrooke’, who spends most of his time ‘roaring’ at his hopelessly inept pony clubbers, and when he decides to invite his friends to come and watch a competition, he announces them as ‘Captain Barton, the well-known judge, my cousin Colonel Shellbourne and the Master of the East Barsetshire [pony club], Sir William Blount’.⁶⁹ The books also unwittingly highlight the fact that horse-riding – in particular eventing – is a very expensive sport. Many of the main characters attend boarding school, implying they are from affluent backgrounds, whereas other children are from farming backgrounds, traditionally the other social group with a history of keeping horses.

Moving to adult literature on eventing, a comparison of twofold European Champion Sheila Willcox’s accounts of her struggles to even be allowed to compete internationally in the 1950s and early 1960s, with star eventer Lucinda Prior Palmer’s later books relating her competitive experiences in the 1970s and 1980s, are illustrative of the gradual changes in both the acceptance of women eventers at an elite competitive level as well as the discourse surrounding them.⁷⁰ Willcox had come through the pony club world described in my childhood novels, and had married into money, which was necessary in the higher echelons of the sport. She published *Three Days Running* in 1958, and it was advertised as

the first book ever to have been written of these gruelling Horse Trials. One soon is [sic] struck by the very remarkable fact that such a young girl should lead, not only Britain, but Europe, in a competition which demands the utmost from even the toughest horsemen.⁷¹

As mentioned earlier, Willcox was barred from competing at the Olympics, despite being the leading eventer of her times.⁷² By contrast, the descriptions of the struggles to reach the top of the sport in Prior-Palmer’s books, written twenty years later, very rarely appear to be gender-related. By that time, the

69 Josephine Pulein Thompson, *Pony Club Camp* (London and Glasgow: Collins, [1957] 1972), 105.

70 Lucinda Prior Palmer, *Up, Up and Away: The Biography of Be Fair* (London: Pelham Books, 1978); idem, *Four Square: A Tribute to Be Fair, Wide Awake, George and Killaire* (London: Pelham Books, 1980).

71 Sheila Willcox, *Three Days Running*, back cover.

72 In 1971, her eventing career was curtailed by a serious fall that left her partially paralysed. She then focused on dressage.

selection criteria for championship teams were no longer based on gender but solely on achieved results. This meant that mixed teams at international events, sometimes even teams consisting solely of women, were already the norm.⁷³ Although Prior-Palmer, like Willcox, had the financial means to initially compete with her own horses, she was also the first British eventer – male or female – to secure substantial sponsorship from a major company, something that is now quite common.

A Comparison with Racing

If eventing seems a tough sport, one that resisted women's inclusion, it nevertheless cannot compare to the struggles of female trainers and jockeys in the horseracing industry, which has a very different history. Modern thoroughbred racing – both on the flat and over fences – is a multimillion-pound worldwide industry with a heavy betting tradition. In the UK, it is the 'second largest sport behind football in respect of attendances, employment and revenues [...] generating £4.1 billion in direct, indirect and associated expenditure annually for the British economy'.⁷⁴ Prizemoney in the biggest flat races can be huge, varying from an astounding \$7.2 million to the winner of the 2023 Dubai World Cup, to £892,160 in the UK derby.⁷⁵ Besides racing for serious prizemoney, there are, in addition, vast sums riding on the backs of thoroughbreds in every single race in the form of bets. As a consequence, the pressure on horses, jockeys, and trainers to win is immense. In the following section, I will discuss how gender and these high stakes are inextricably entangled.

Women first managed to become involved in racing in an official competitive capacity as trainers. Englishwomen Florence Nagle and Norah Wilmott fought long and hard to get a training licence from the British Jockey Club, with Wilmott's 1945 application famously being turned down with the words 'women are not persons within the meaning of the Rules'.⁷⁶ Nagle took the Jockey Club to court, and on appeal Lord Denning considered:

73 At most, the positions of selectors and team managers were still regularly filled by (ex-military) men, but that, too, has changed.

74 "Written evidence submitted by the British Horseracing Authority," Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee inquiry into impact of COVID-19 on DCMS sectors, Committees Parliament UK, 2020, <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/7020/pdf/>.

75 By comparison, the highest prizemoney on offer worldwide in eventing is presently £110,000 to the winner of the 2023 UK Burghley three-day-event.

76 Jenny Pitman, *The Autobiography* (London: Bantam Books, 1998), 105.

It seems to me that this unwritten rule [that women will not be granted licences to train horses] may well be said to be arbitrary and capricious. It is not as if the training of horses could be regarded as an unsuitable occupation for a woman, like that of a jockey or a speedway-rider. It is an occupation in which women can and do engage most successfully. It may not be a 'vocation' within the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919, but still it is an occupation which women can do as well as men, and there would appear to be no reason why they should be excluded from it.⁷⁷

On August 3, 1966, Norah Wilmott and Florence Nagle were awarded training licences, meaning they could run their horses in their own names rather than, respectively, their head lad's and husband's.

It took another thirty-odd years – long after Sheila Willcox and Lucinda Prior Palmer reached the top of eventing – for female trainers to start gaining a proper foothold in racing. In her autobiography, Jenny Pitman, one of Britain's female pathfinders, recounts her struggles to succeed as a trainer in the 1970s–1990s.⁷⁸ It is a bitter-sweet story of overcoming sexism and misogyny in a masculine world, where she was approached and portrayed in the press either as a battle-axe and a ball-breaker, or as 'the cuddly one' – rarely as just Jenny Pitman. And when she became the first woman trainer to win the Grand National in 1983, the general perception was that it was a one-off, a stroke of luck. It was not until she had trained countless other successful racehorses who won all the big English steeplechases, including the Gold Cup, and another Grand National champion in 1995, that her achievements were no longer regarded as a fluke.

But let us go back to Lord Denning's 1966 ruling in the Nagle case. Note his implication that, although training could no longer be considered 'an unsuitable occupation for a woman', actually riding as a jockey in a race obviously still was 'unsuitable'. In particular regarding steeplechasing, where the races are run at high speed over fences, women were – and are still – considered to lack 'the physical or mental strength required to ride in jump races'.⁷⁹ Although women have proven themselves time and again

77 [1966] 1 All E.R. 689, 695. As quoted in a review of the case by E.M. Heenan, "Nagle v. Feilden," *Western Australian Law Review* 7, no. 4 (1966): 569–575, 574, <http://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/UWALawRw/1966/24.pdf>.

78 Jenny Pitman, *The Autobiography*.

79 Butler, D., & Charles, N., "Exaggerated Femininity and Tortured Masculinity: Embodying Gender in the Horseracing Industry," *The Sociological Review* 60, no. 4 (2012): 676–95, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2012.02129.x> as quoted by Vanessa Cashmore et al., "Female Jockeys – What

as jockeys, with Irishwoman Rachel Blackmore winning the toughest race of them all, the English Grand National, in 2021, women are nowadays still ‘significantly underrepresented in the jockey population’ and ‘data suggest that female jockeys may also be subject to different selection criteria, regarding the type of rides they receive’.⁸⁰ In other words, they are generally offered rides on less fancied runners, decreasing their chances of winning and thereby reinforcing the biases that they are less effective than their male fellow jockeys. One factor at play here is the negative assessment of the chances of women to win races by punters wanting to place a bet, this despite the fact that research conducted over a twenty-year period found that ‘(c)omparison of expected and observed performance, in terms of both wins and finishing positions, indicates an underestimation of female jump jockeys’.⁸¹

The social stratification in the horse racing world is another detrimental factor. Class is a key part of this gendered analysis. Racehorse owners – particularly in flat racing – have traditionally belonged to the privileged classes, needing vast amounts of money to be successful in a sport where the top horses are worth millions. Jockeys, there again, traditionally come from much more modest backgrounds, with their earnings consisting of a fixed riding fee and a percentage of the prizemoney varying from 2.61 per cent for a placing in flat racing, to 11.03 per cent for a win in jump racing.⁸² To be successful, they need to get as many rides as possible, week in week out, contending along the way with countless injuries suffered in falls, suspensions for a variety of infractions of the rules such as ‘dangerous riding’ or ‘excessive use of the whip’, as well as losing rides to jockeys having a better run of form. Jockeys are not only in direct competition with each other during the races, trying to out-gallop and out-manoeuvre each other in order to cross the finishing line first, but also in daily competition with each other to secure rides on decent horses that are ‘in with a chance’. In short, it is one long, hard, daily slog to earn their keep, and only a handful of jockeys manage to earn a decent and consistent wage.

The above leads to a toxic male environment, where women still must fight on a daily basis for their right simply to participate, and to be offered

Are the Odds?” *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* 202 (2022): 703–13, 704, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2022.08.012>.

80 Vanessa Cashmore et al., “Female Jockeys,” 705.

81 Vanessa Cashmore et al., “Female Jockeys,” 712.

82 These percentages are negotiated every year between the Professional Jockeys Association and the Racehorse Owners Association, see “Fees and Prizemoney”, Money Matters, Professional Jockeys Association, 2020, <https://www.thepja.co.uk/service/fees-and-prizemoney/>.

equal opportunities to train and ride good horses. Illustrative is the case English female jockey, Bryony Frost, brought in 2021 against fellow jockey, Robbie Dunne, before the Independent Disciplinary Panel of the British Horseracing Authority (BHA), for repeated bullying, harassing, and verbal abuse. Dunne's licence was suspended for eighteen months (of which the final three were suspended) for 'deliberate, unwarranted targeting of a colleague over a considerable time. Mr Dunne's words, and behaviour, were wholly inappropriate for a professional athlete in an equal opportunity sport and would not be tolerated in any other walk of life or workplace'.⁸³ But what strikes me most in the decision of the panel are the words 'that some at least of the facts found involved Mr Dunne operating within a culture approbed by his peers. Observers observed without intervention. If this is the weighing room culture, then it is out of step in equal opportunity race-riding'. The indication is that harassing women in the weighing room at the races is a regular occurrence.

Note how different the financial and social history of eventing is compared to racing. As we have seen, in the early years, armies owned the horses and employed the officer-rider, and the first civilians to break into the sport were from privileged backgrounds and had the financial means to keep and train a horse for the many years required to build a partnership. Nowadays, event riders tend to earn their income, not from the prizemoney on offer – for the costs of running a team of event horses cannot be covered by prizemoney, however successful a rider is – but by offering training courses, and buying and selling horses on the side. Also, some of the top riders enjoy sponsorship deals and ride horses for owners with the financial means to keep an event horse in training for a long period of time. It is still a tough competitive environment with no guarantees of success, but it is a smaller, socially more homogenous and much less commercially-driven world than horse racing.

Final Thoughts

Horses have always been part of my life, and in my younger years I was a very competitive event-rider. Being able to compete on a par with boys and men was something I did not really think about at the time, but in hindsight relished. I went to school in the UK in a period when girls were

⁸³ BHA Judicial Panel, Disciplinary Panel – Integrity Issues, November 30, 2021, <http://judicialpanel.britishhorseracing.com/results/result/?id=2190>.

actively discouraged or even forbidden from playing football – the other sport at which I would have liked to excel. Having this alternate equine world, where masculine attributes such as brute strength were entirely irrelevant, gave me a level of confidence and self-esteem that have stood me in good stead in other walks of life. And it was not just competing on a par that built confidence. Most of my horsey girlfriends – and their mothers and, often, grannies – from the eventing scene hold heavy goods driving licences in order to travel the horses from competition to competition. Visit the competitors' car park of any major event and you will see huge lorries rolling up with women at the wheel. No-one bats an eyelid.

At the beginning of this chapter, I also raised the question of whether the influx of women at the top of eventing and now racing has changed the way we approach, or treat, sport horses. In other words, can anything be said about the influence of gender on the horse–rider relationship? On the basis of the above, I would say that, generally, little has changed for the horses. Women are just as keen to ride over huge cross-country courses as men, or to participate in the biggest flat races and steeplechases in the world, and they are just as passionate about being successful and winning prizes. Tellingly, fatalities of horses or riders do not appear to be gender-related, either, and any 'softening' of the courses is not due to the participation of women or mares, but due to voices raised by concerned male and female riders as well as pressures from the outside world. Given the issues regarding the welfare of competition horses, equestrianism as a whole is presently even struggling for its continued right to exist. The animal rights organization PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) has repeatedly appealed to the International Olympic Committee to ban all equestrian events (which besides eventing includes 'pure' dressage, 'pure' show jumping, and the modern pentathlon) from the Olympic Games. In fact, the Paris 2024 Olympics will be the last time that riding will be a part of the modern pentathlon, with the International Modern Pentathlon Union (UIPM) recently voting for its removal following distressing scenes involving a horse at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.⁸⁴

I gave up competing about twenty years ago, giving priority to my legal and academic career, and my children. There simply were not enough hours left in the day to also train horses to the standard I was used to. Putting childcare and work responsibilities before sporting ambitions is, of course,

84 Union Internationale de Pentathlon Moderne, *Yearbook 2022* (Monaco: G.S. Communications S.A.M., March 2023), 90, https://www.uipmworld.org/sites/default/files/yearbook2022_virtuel_19.7.23.pdf. Obstacle Course is currently being piloted as a replacement.

a very gendered thing to do. These days, I ride recreationally once a week at a friend's house, just a long quiet hack through the woods or some gentle dressage practice. I still follow racing, and to a lesser degree eventing, but find myself feeling increasingly sickened by the many injuries and fatalities suffered by both event horses and racehorses. Equestrian sports stem from an age when horses were used as war horses, as workhorses, and as modes of transport. Nowadays, equestrian sports are, in essence, held purely for our own entertainment. That is not to say that riders' love for horses is not a strong one – anyone involved in the equestrian world will tell you how deeply attached they are to their horses, even those who submit them to the risks of eventing or racing. But the existential *need* to test horses against each other is no longer there. And even as I find myself cheering along female jockeys and trainers in their pursuit of success, I am also aware of the limited time left to equestrian sports before they are either vastly modified or even totally banned as being cruel to horses. My prognosis is that eventing will be the next discipline to be axed (after the riding stage of the modern pentathlon). Racing in its present form is likely to continue for much longer because of the massive worldwide financial interests invested in the sport.

Whether these developments will be in the best interests of the domesticated horse is a complex question. No longer having any functions on the farm or in the military, they owe their present-day existence to their employment as sport horses. In the end, of course, regardless of its own sex, or whether it is ridden by a man or a woman, the most natural environment for any horse is a long stretch of grass with access to water and shelter, where it can graze in a group. In such a utopian environment, a mare would undoubtedly be the matriarchal leader of the herd, quietly grazing at the head of the group, and a stallion would stand on a little hillock, staring into the distance and sniffing the air for any signs of danger. There would, of course, be no geldings. But there is little room in our present-day world for such ideal circumstances for horses. I worry about their future.

About the Author

Ernestine Hoegen is an independent scholar, author, editor, and translator from the Netherlands with a PhD in criminal law and victimology. Her most recent book (*Tegenspraak*, Amsterdam: Spectrum 2023) is a novel written together with Pamela Guldie about the Dutch judiciary. Previously, she published a biography of Dutchwoman Mieke Bouman and her involvement in criminal trials in 1950s Indonesia (*Een strijdbaar bestaan*, Amsterdam:

Spectrum 2020). She regularly publishes on diaries and memoirs from Japanese internment camps during the Second World War, and is a board member of the *European Journal of Life Writing*. This edition of *The Yearbook of Women's History* is her fourth and final one as an editor. Ernestine has been involved with horses all her life.

Riding out the Plague Years with Eroika

Cyborgs, Goddesses, and the Reparative Force of Big Mare
Energy

Angela Hofstetter

Abstract

Can BME (Big Mare Energy) be a Reparative force to help us become more comfortably present in female bodies (cyborg, goddess, human, nonhuman) that exist in space across time, recognizing that some limitations open new avenues for growth that moves beyond a hermeneutics of suspicion even if you are nervous and touchy? This personal narrative about a middle-aged Victorianist and a middle-aged Lipizzaner mare pays tribute to Donna Haraway, Vicki Hearne, Eve Sedgwick et. al as it tries to disentangle the blurred lines between gender and species, sex, biology, and society in seeking a feminism for plain ordinary creatures occupied with mud and manure during a time of profound global upheaval.

Keywords: mares, gender, COVID-19, Haraway, menopause

for Gala Argent, the loveliest embodiment of Big Mare Energy

I think we learn to be worldly from grappling with, rather than generalizing
from, the ordinary. I am a creature of the mud, not the sky.

– Donna Haraway

During the plague years, we were out of time but rooted in space. An entire planet on stall rest tormented by restrictions on movement and forced separation from the herd, euphemistically described as social distancing.

A boastful few learned a new language, mastered the crust-to-crumbs ratio on a baguette, and wrote that Great American novel. Most languished in a listlessness behaviorists call learned helplessness as we zoomed until our eyes ached. We cribbed, we weaved, we doomscrolled into the helpless and hopeless passivity that will take years to break.

As the lockdowns went on, mourning became melancholia – the distinction for Freud being that the latter was gripped with fear of punishment. In the US, Fauci became the law of the father who meted it out. Fights raged over mask mandates, school closures, church attendance, and family funerals. A new cultural mode took over, a bizarre shift where we saw paranoia writ large on an entire world. Such distrust frequently sprang from profound sorrow; I certainly grieved losing the energetic community found in the humanities seminars I have had the pleasure of teaching over the last couple of decades.

Fortunately, I quarantined with Great Danes, Baroque horses, and hundreds of books on 10.21 acres. Our backyard abutted thousands of acres in the Hoosier National Forest, home to deer, wild turkeys, raccoons, bobcats, and, if a few locals are to be believed, Bigfoot. We were a feral lot, and days stretched into weeks where my only physical contact was the leaning in of an immense dog, a bump from a horse asking for a carrot, or the weight of a well-worn book on my lap.

No doubt it was a tumultuous moment for all, but I felt anger at restrictions placed on the young bodies of my students, robbed of expressing their animal vitality, transformed into passive cyborgs on TikTok or Zoom School, which has left too many more anxious and less curious than ever before. They could not even share the joys of the typical freshman's rite of passage: congregating at large tables over cafeteria food. Everywhere, the companionship from sharing a meal in public spaces was broken. We were divided by plastic shields or dutifully removed, then replaced masks that camouflaged our faces.

Gratefully, I never ate alone in my little yellow home, a word-encompassing library, kennel, and stable in my idea of family. Contemplating the meaning of companion species led to revisiting dog-eared copies of authors who previously challenged everything I had thought about the world in graduate school: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Vicki Hearne, and particularly Donna Haraway, who was sometimes friend and other times frenemy.¹ 'Companion', she reminds us, 'comes from the Latin *cum panis*, with bread'. I heartily laugh

1 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick pioneered queer readings of Gothic and Victorian literature. Poet, philosopher, and horse/dog trainer Vicki Hearne revolutionized how we think about animals and language. Feminist philosopher of science Donna Haraway challenged patriarchal conceptions

when Haraway observes that messmates ‘at table are companions’ as I hear echoes of her own messy boundary crossings – culinary and other – with her beloved bitch Cayenne Pepper.² I have shared the same apple bite for bite with my proud Lipizzaner mare, Eroika, under the mulberry tree more than once, polishing off saliva with a sweat-stained shirt after one too many imperfect circles for her liking or had Piper, an elegant fawn Great Dane who is the canine embodiment of Elle Woods, stick her nose into the front seat of the car politely demanding her share of whatever the drive-thru had to offer. Like Haraway, I see *species* as both the ‘relentlessly “specific” or particular and to a class of individuals with the same characteristics’ that ‘contains its own opposite in the most promising – or special – way’ as debates about whether they are ‘earthly organic entities or taxonomic conveniences are coextensive with the discourse we call biology’ or ‘the dance linking kin and kind’.³

We part ways as Haraway sees the Latin *specere* as part of the visual rather than the gustatory register that grounds *cum panis* since it has tones of ‘to look’ and ‘to behold’. She argues it ‘refers to a mental impression or idea, strengthening the notion that thinking and seeing are clones’.⁴ Unfortunately, Haraway’s contemplation of the visual register spends too much time in the company of Derrida and his cat, who never exists beyond haecceity in ‘And Say the Animal Responded’.⁵ Derrida’s desire to deconstruct the Cartesian distinction between bestial reaction and linguistic response is sidetracked by an anxious focus on his nudity in the bathroom encounter with the little feline. Ultimately, the philosopher seems more interested in occupying the to-be-looked-at-ness easily recognizable by any female who lived her life under the watchful state of men from her first blossoming into puberty into her last metamorphosis into a potentially blissful post-menopausal invisibility (the former was so exhausting). Your gaze, the philosopher appears to say to the little cat, hits the side of my face.⁶ More than a parody of Barbara Kruger’s iconic piece that superimposes gendered

of objectivity and fundamentally what it means to be human in a rapidly shifting world of technological advance.

2 Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 17.

3 *Ibid.*, 17.

4 *Ibid.*

5 Jacques Derrida, “And Say the Animal Responded,” in *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal*, ed. Carey Wolfe (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

6 Barbara Kruger, *Untitled (Your gaze hits the side of my face)*, 1981. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

language about the nature of looking over the profile view of a statue of a classically beautiful woman, the encounter lacks the fundamental curiosity between one old man and his little cat – preferring the philosophical to the sentimental stereotypically associated with doting middle-aged women.

John Berger might have been a better ally for urgent work that, in Haraway's words, 'still remains to be done about those who inhabit the troubled categories of woman and human, properly pluralized, reformulated, and brought into constitutive intersection with other asymmetrical differences'.⁷ Berger's groundbreaking BBC documentary *Ways of Seeing* was adapted into a little book in 1972 that was the seed of feminist film theory. What strikes me as relevant are the parallels drawn between structures of looking, women, and animals. One need not be a horse lover to note that their beautiful bodies are a significant part of artistic expression globally. Like the female, they symbolize desire and possession – the asymmetries of how beautiful things became the property of powerful men (and sometimes powerful women).

Less distance exists between ways of seeing for Haraway and Cayenne Pepper as both share the look of the predator, whose eyes set in the front of the skull permit a laser as they pursue the sport of agility with the carnivorous call to Shut Up and Train! It is not as if Haraway is unaware that being 'a middle-aged white woman with a dog playing the sport of agility' can be problematic vis-à-vis the increasing focus on intersectionality her *Cyborg Manifesto* engaged with decades ago, nevertheless she persists in sharing what she has learned with/from this brilliant Aussie bitch.⁸ What is glorious about her worldview is that she sees situated knowledges as a multispecies epistemology that acknowledges that ethical relations can co-exist despite power imbalances! Accepting these contact zones as messy affairs that leave all involved forever changed, sometimes for the worse ('full of waste, cruelty, indifference, and loss') and often for the better ('joy, invention, labor, intelligence, and play') is the first step in learning how to 'narrate this cohistory and how to inherit the consequences of coevolution in naturecultures'.⁹ I would humbly like to follow Donna and Cayenne Pepper to contemplate what ways of seeing between a woman and mare might offer a feminism for plain ordinary creatures occupied with mud and manure as we play in the pasture and dressage arena.

7 Haraway, *When Species*, 17.

8 Donna Haraway, *Manifestly Haraway* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 103.

9 Ibid.

Eroika, like other herbivores, is a prey animal with eyes set on the side of her skull, permitting an almost 360° range of vision to see the approach of danger. My predator's eyes are set in the front, allowing greater depth perception.¹⁰ If ways of seeing and thinking are indeed clones, how do predator and prey find an ethical interspecies look? Exuberantly, Haraway answers the 'lovely part is that we can only know by looking and looking back. *Respecere*, a possibility strengthened because women and girls inhabit a hybrid status between predator and prey that culture has repressed but not eradicated'.¹¹ Many women have wished they had eyes in the back of their heads as they walked down a lonely street. Many a mare would like their own Barbara Kruger moment where her rider looks her respectfully in the eye! What does Eroika see when she looks at me? I hope this middle-aged woman can live with the answer.

I first read Haraway in a cubicle at the Herman B. Wells library in Bloomington, Indiana, when texts were on reserve as emailed PDFs were not yet available. Being in Comparative Literature, I was bombarded by "theory": Lacan, Foucault, Baudrillard, Kristeva, Butler, and others. My enthusiasm for these new ideas did not extend to Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto*.¹²

Although Haraway was certainly not the only one to challenge 'woman' as a category, her manifesto rubbed me the wrong way: 'There is nothing about being female that naturally binds women together into a unified category. There is not even such a state as "being" female, itself a highly complex category constructed in contested sexual scientific discourses and other social practices'.¹³ Part of this disdain lacked intellectual rigour. How could anyone who had recently seen James Cameron's *Terminator 2* embrace the cyborg as the symbol of female liberation? Arnold Schwarzenegger's sympathetic reprisal of the T-800 sacrificing himself on the altar of humanity did not assuage the fear inspired by the absolutely heartless T-1000. For me, it was Linda Hamilton's Sarah Conner who stole the show. The full-screen image of a muscle-bound woman clad in a wife-beater doing pull-ups in her locked room in the insane asylum (Cyborg eradicator meets Victorian

10 Sally Swift, *Centered Riding* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985). Swift's fans will nod their heads along, saying yes: SOFT EYES is the attempt to bridge this divide as we mount up!

11 Haraway, *When Species*, 164.

12 Haraway, *Manifestly Haraway*, 13. As a lonely child in a disordered family who found friendship with four-legged friends sacred, I was deeply troubled by statements like this: 'The cyborg appears in myth precisely where the boundary between human and animal is transgressed. Far from signaling a walling off of people from other living beings, cyborgs signal disturbingly and pleasurably tight coupling. Bestiality has a new status in this cycle of marriage exchange'.

13 *Ibid.*, 16.

Angel in the House sans yellow wallpaper) is forever emblazoned on my psyche. She is a MOTHER writ large who hardens herself into the warrior needed to protect her son and Earth (in that order). It is the same image of a particularly feminine strength that fuels my admiration for Eroika: the challenge to essentialist notions of female as *only* prey. Haraway wanted the cyborg to be 'a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves', yet deconstructing dualism is not so easy in a world of goddesses and cyborgs as Haraway later realizes as she comes under the sway of the Animal Turn.¹⁴ Although recognizing 'both are bound in the spiral dance', she unequivocally chooses sides in one of the most famous utterances of theory: 'I'd rather be a cyborg than a goddess'.¹⁵ In her zeal to undermine the gender binary via the cyborg, Haraway had not yet anticipated all of the ways her anti-essentialism might ultimately harm the 'goddesses' aligned with female nature she prematurely repudiates.

Even if I concede #notallwomen #notallmares, does that preclude that some category exists that is useful for understanding shared experiences across a large enough sample? Can we still recognize the importance of social construction and intersectionality while acknowledging that there is something recognizably female about women and mares?

Due to my abiding interest in Victorian Studies, I need no reminder of the horrors of biological determinism vis-à-vis race, class, and gender. Random primary documents from medical practitioners declaring that study or exertion interfered with the fragile mind of the female (woman as breeding animal) scared the daylights out of me as much as the casual racism that could even be found in a friendly letter between Charles Darwin and Charles Kingsley (author of *The Water Babies*) calmly discussing racial genocide.¹⁶ Please bear this in mind as you read the critique of sex positive feminism that is to come. As we navigate ourselves out of the complications of this new excess predicted by Erica Jong's 1973 bestseller *Fear of Flying*, celebrating anonymous sex (the 'zipless f*ck' as the epitome of

14 Ibid., 67.

15 Ibid., 68.

16 For a complex discussion of women as breeding animals in Victorian art, science, and literature, see Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siecle Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). The chapter entitled 'Evolution and the Brain' particularly surveys the problematic discourse about gender, monstrosity, and maternity. The correspondence between Charles Darwin and Charles Kingsley where the former exclaimed 'It is very true what you say about the higher races of men, when high enough, replacing & clearing off the lower races. In 500 years how the Anglo-Saxon race will have spread & exterminated whole nations; & in consequence how much the Human race, viewed as a unit, will have risen in rank' can be found at <https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/letter/DCP-LETT-3439.xml>.

enlightenment), it is vitally important to not return to a world where the fate of Victor Hugo's fictional Fantine is all too real – where punishment for a young woman enjoying her sexuality led to exile or worse.¹⁷ Never forget Mary Wollstonecraft's suicide attempt failed because suicides such as pregnant unmarried women drowning themselves were so common men with boats were paid to drag them out (no other care for child or mother came once they were back on shore).¹⁸ Remember when Susan Sontag had an illegal abortion, the doctor turned up the radio to drown out her screams instead of providing pain relief.¹⁹ Recall that as the keynote for the Taking Nature Seriously conference, even a would-be cyborg like Haraway was reminded that 'she was a woman [...] something class and color privilege bonded to professional status can mute' after being subjected to the fantasy of her 'own public rape by name in a pamphlet distributed by a small group of self-identified deep ecology, anarchist activists'.²⁰ Unfortunately, we cannot socially construct our female bodies out of sometimes being prey. Nevertheless, I would still rather be a goddess than a cyborg.

I am not thinking of Aphrodite or Athena. It is Epona, the Great Mare so like my own, who evokes a regal female power too majestic to be hobbled by misogyny and too wise to repudiate her maternal and materteral roles. (Imagine a heaven where the Celtic goddess allows no one but Vicki Hearne to mount her.) I chose this path facing the final throes of my greatest physical

17 Erica Jong, *Fear of Flying* (New York: Signet Publishing, 1973), 417. It is worth noting that *Fear of Flying's* Isadora Wing, the Second Wave heroine who anticipates *Sex and the City's* Samantha Jones' desire to f*ck like a man, ultimately rethinks her desire for anonymous sexual encounters after she is assaulted on a train: 'It wasn't until I was settled, facing a nice little family group – mother, daddy, baby – that it dawned on me how funny that episode had been. My zipless f*ck! My stranger on a train! Here I'd been offered my very own fantasy. The fantasy that had riveted me to the vibrating seat of the train for three years in Heidelberg, and instead of turning me on, it had revolted me! Puzzling, wasn't it? A tribute to the mysteriousness of the psyche. Or maybe my psyche had begun to change in a way I hadn't anticipated. There was no longer anything romantic about strangers on trains'.

18 Charlotte Gordon, *Romantic Outlaws: The Extraordinary Lives of Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley* (Prince Frederick: Recorded Books, 2015), audiobook, 13:85. The Royal Humane Society had recently developed a policy of paying rewards to those who rescued suicides. Of course, there are a multitude of reasons for any suicide, and even Mary Wollstonecraft's were complicated by her lover's rejection as much as her being pregnant out of wedlock. Nevertheless, the social stigma on such women bore hard on even this most revolutionary of women.

19 Sophie Brickman, "Is it possible to be a mother and pursue a creative life? Yes, but it is never easy," *The Guardian*, July 6, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jul/06/mother-creative-life-abortion#:~:text=When%20Susan%20Sontag%20had,radio2oto%20smother%20her%20screams.>

20 Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 10.

shift since puberty: fatigue, brain fog, migraines, sleeplessness, and anxiety. The tyranny of endocrinology, the oft-cruel mistress who reminds us of the veracity of Horace's decree, 'You may drive nature out with a pitchfork; she nevertheless comes back'. Yes, something primordial, even stronger than the ramifications of a global pandemic, was happening to me, and by extension of my changing body's intimacy to hers, to Eroika. Never was the fact that we were both mammals more evident than when humans were discouraged from being a herd species.

Did the pandemic allow me a more 'natural' way to experience menopause? A desire not to overburden the system coupled with a growing distrust in the contradictory messages from the Center for Disease Control removed medical discourse from the equation. I do not live outside the history of aging women, and this hinge moment let me experience my body differently when even old standards like *Our Bodies, Ourselves* seemed suspect.²¹ Fortunately, the slowing down of the great reset permitted a relaxed schedule that allowed for interruptions of hormonal rhythms: I was not compelled medically to push beyond comfortable limits into productivity even as I was experiencing the typical changes I frankly did not welcome.

At the same time, Facebook, my primary window on the outside world, began to circulate various Karen memes. As a middle-aged white woman committed to understanding social relations in an intersectional framework, I shuddered at the condescension and cruelty in many of these unfortunate interactions where the Karen wielded the privileges of race and class. Yet, sometimes, callous misogyny seemed at the heart of the encounter, with some women vilified for not defying nature and accepting the changes of time by dutifully becoming invisible (neither seen nor heard).²²

Then came the mare memes; Epona's id unleashed in images of ears pinned flat with captions such as 'Mares, social distancing before it was cool' or 'Don't understand the concept of social distancing, consult a mare'. I found pure joy in looking at representations of BME (Big Mare Energy). I have no doubt if Eroika had her own social media account, she would also have delighted in mare memes.

21 Judy Norsigian and Boston Women's Health Collective, *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (New York: Atria Books, 2011). This updated feminist classic grew out of consciousness-raising circles in the early 1970s.

22 Margot Harris and Palmer Haasch, "Videos of people labeled Karens have flooded the internet, drawing curiosity, condemnation, and criticism. Here's how they took over our feeds during quarantine," *Business Insider*, June 2020. <https://www.insider.com/karen-compilation-timeline-white-women-racism-2020-6>.

This joy co-existed with truths I had learned in ecofeminist Julia Johnson's insightful essay 'Mareitude: Misogyny in the Horse World', which examines the 'gendered stigma in the horse world' and how 'it affects how we treat animals'.²³ She observes that the 'gendered oppression mares experience is enhanced due to human stereotypes linking femininity to erratic emotions', a view that played no small part in my own doctoral dissertation. Johnson persuasively analyses sexist language in veterinarian Grant Miller's online article 'Cranky Mares', which describes the 'cyclical battle to achieve harmony amid a hormonal roller coaster'.²⁴ Moreover, she sees echoes of the same wording used to market supplements such as Mare Magic and SmartMare. The latter promotes their pellets containing raspberry leaf, chamomile, and passionflower to 'help maintain a calm disposition' and 'support normal hormone levels and a balanced temperament in mares'.²⁵ These are the same herbs given to women to calm their disposition, help them sleep, and decrease their anxiety: 'There is a parallel here where women are expected to police their own hormonal expressions, leading to a kind of warped solidarity with their mares – seeing it as a normal thing to police their mare's hormones as they are expected to police their own'.²⁶ Johnson highlights the irony 'that menopausal women who suffer from biological, hormonal fluctuation and also from insults, jokes, and offensive humor regarding their midlife transition are prescribed a drug from an animal that is also *deemed* emotionally unstable'.²⁷ An activist temperament underwrites her scholarship: 'For feminism to be completely realized and implemented in our society, contemporary ecofeminists and ethicists need to examine how we treat nonhuman animals, especially female animals. Only then will both mares and women be liberated from our gender-oppressive system'.²⁸ This is a lovely sentiment, and who does not want better lives for all females, regardless of species?

I cannot pinpoint exactly when I began to doubt a perspective I had held for decades, but the shift is rooted both in knowledge that grew out of the contact zone between Eroika and me as well as my aforementioned distrust of institutions like the Center for Disease Control that developed during

23 Julia Johnson, "Mareitude: Misogyny in the Horse World," in *The Relational Horse: How Frameworks of Communication, Care, Politics, and Power Reveal and Conceal Equine Selves*, eds. Gala Argent and Jeanette Vaught et al. (Boston, MA: Brill, 2022), 132.

24 Ibid., 121.

25 Quoted in Johnson, "Mareitude," 125.

26 Ibid., 125.

27 Ibid., 130.

28 Ibid., 132–33.

the pandemic. Much of the credit for my not going absolutely mad goes to rediscovering Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Her pioneering work in Queer Theory opened stunning ways of understanding Victorian literature.²⁹ Here she was, again blowing my mind with an eerily prophetic essay about plagues and paranoia, which opens with a conversation with AIDS activist Cindy Patton:

After hearing a lot from her about the geography and economics of the global traffic in blood products, I finally, with some eagerness, asked Patton what she thought of these sinister rumors about the virus's origin. 'Any of the early steps in its spread could have been either accidental or deliberate,' she said. 'But I just have trouble getting interested in that. I mean, even suppose we were sure of every element of a conspiracy: that the lives of Africans and African Americans are worthless in the eyes of the United States; that gay men and drug users are held cheap where they aren't actively hated; that the military deliberately researches ways to kill noncombatants whom it sees as enemies; that people in power look calmly on the likelihood of catastrophic environmental and population changes. Supposing we were ever so sure of all those things – what would we know then that we don't already know?'³⁰

Sedgwick brooded over Patton's suggestion of 'the possibility of disentangling [...] some of the separate elements of the intellectual baggage that many of us carry around under a label such as the hermeneutics of suspicion', which possess a 'stultifying side effect [...] that may have made it less rather than more possible to unpack the local, contingent relations between any piece of knowledge and its narratological/epistemological entailments for the seeker, knower, or teller'.³¹ Her work was an anchor at a time when I watched too many friends (left and right in that terrifying horseshoe effect) drowning in understandably paranoid responses to how they moved their bodies in the world that had some different players than the pandemic of my youth but equally tragic results. Here was Fauci again, maligned when I joined friends in Act Up at a Pride March on a hot sunny day in Atlanta in the 1980s, now the darling, then maligned again in a confusing reconfiguration of positions on the epidemiological and ideological board. Having been

29 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl," *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (Summer 1991): 818. This provocative essay launched Sedgwick into the culture wars of the early nineties.

30 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Chapel Hill, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 123.

31 *Ibid.*, 124.

trained in critical theory, my brain was primed to 'do my own research'. But to what effect? The growing paranoia in the world seemed as hard on the fragile immune systems of everyone suffering from disconnection as the virus we were trying to evade. Our first global experiment in sociability in the simulacrum did not go well.

I certainly could have applied this hermeneutics of suspicion to the changes in my body. What caused the fatigue I experienced after pushing an acre or cleaned several stalls and brought down hay? What made my focus dart about reading more than a short article an act of will (shocking for a Victorianist who had loved triple-deckers her whole life)? What made my nerves vibrate at an accelerated pace when nothing was wrong? What caused mood swings even stormier than I was used to? Of course, culture plays a role in how I interpret these signs, but I cannot accept that brain fog, hot flashes, nervousness, and fatigue are just symptoms of internalized patriarchy. Even if they were, that does not help in any practical way: Supposing we were ever so sure of all those things – what would we know then that we do not already know?

Everything Johnson says is valid and yet THE central challenge of my present life IS 'to achieve harmony amid a hormonal roller coaster'. It affects everything I do, from teaching students to making spaghetti to riding my mare. When our hormonal roller coasters collide, they can be unpleasant or even dangerous. If I mentally check out, she will bolt. That is frankly terrifying. If I am in command of myself, I can sympathetically readjust the plan for our time together in sympathy with the challenges our emotions can place on our bodies so that we both have fun and get the exercise that middle-aged, grey easy keepers desperately need. If it is her turn to be the one in control, she can set the rhythm for how our arena time will go. This requires tact and understanding from both of us. Why does acknowledging these physical facts of sex and time in women and mares have to result in oppression?

Such discourse seriously troubled poet and animal trainer Vicki Hearne:

Gender theory has always been a nerve-racking business for me because whether it was the old gender theory, which is now called sexism, or the new gender theory, which is now called feminism, I keep turning out not to be a woman no matter who is doing the theorizing. I don't mean that I turn out to be a man, just not a proper sort of woman.³²

32 Vickie Hearne, *Bandit: Dossier of a Dangerous Dog* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992), 202.

For Hearne, sexism and feminism strangle the possibility of the heroic feminine in a battle where the ideology du jour trumps the body – human and animal: Naturecultures turn on her idea of proper, which can pervert the nobility of womanhood into something sickly and, as Mary Wollstonecraft also saw it, potentially parasitical. Both of these women saw femininity as more than feelings but an embrace of the rational and the physical. The cyborg also seems to run as far as possible from the emotional life of women, perhaps fearing the stigma of sentimentality (there are so many ways for a woman to be improper).

Similarly, in the ‘Afterword’ to the rendition of her groundbreaking *Sexual/Textual Politics*, feminist philosopher Toril Moi shares that it never occurred to her to ‘take women to be the mere effects of gender discourses’ or ‘the mere victims of sexist circumstances’.³³ Her answer is in the remarkably clear prose of common sense in a book that grapples with the convolutions of ‘theory’:

To avoid essentialism and biological determinism, all we need to do is to deny that biology gives rise to social norms. We don’t have to claim that there are no women or that the category ‘woman’ in itself is ideologically suspect. This is not to deny that sexist try to impose all kinds of ideologies on the word ‘woman’.³⁴

This approach to improving the daily lives of women and mares around the world is a variation on the theme of animal welfare vs. animal rights discourse. The latter always seems to demand moral purity abstractly terrific but beyond the capabilities of the current or, perhaps, any world. Consider Kari Weil’s profoundly moving discussion of Gary Francione’s call to eradicate through total reproductive control the existence of pets like dogs and cats due to their suffering.³⁵ I do not doubt that Francione’s desire to end the pain of so many animals stems from good faith, although I am sceptical of the inability to deal with the sometimes-inexplicable paradoxes of life. Dystopias are built with good intentions that have disastrously unintended consequences.

I sometimes wonder if moves to eradicate women as a category is akin to Francione’s project of the total erasure of pets as the response to end future

33 Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 177–78.

34 Ibid, 178.

35 Kari Weil, *Thinking Animals: Why Animal Studies Now* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), see Chapter 8, “Animal Liberation or Shameless Freedom” in particular.

harm, and it helps us understand the desire for women to evolve into cyborgs able to transcend the limits of the female body. Those whose commitment to a radical justice cannot accept that there will, to some extent, always be suffering in this world cannot abide the ‘waste, cruelty, indifference, and loss’ that too often accompany the ‘joy, invention, labor, intelligence, and play’ in the co-evolution of Companion Species.³⁶ We must fight the former without losing the ability to embrace the latter, a central feature in Sedgwick’s idea of the Reparative: ‘The desire of a reparative impulse [...] is additive and accretive. Its realistic fear is that the culture surrounding it is inadequate or inimical to its nurture; it wants to assemble and confer plenitude on an object that will then have resources to offer an inchoate self’.³⁷

Biology Is Not Destiny, But It Is Gravity.

Mary Harrington is the loudest among a growing chorus of voices sceptical of the technologies designed to defy that gravity.³⁸ Railing against what she deems the cyborg theocracy of transhumanist technologies (she uses the earlier Horace quote as an epigraph), Harrington fully sides with the goddesses, taking Artemis and one of her noble hounds as the cover image of *Feminism Against Progress*. The breadth of this ‘slightly odd *Bildungsroman*’ is stunning in its challenge to late-stage capitalism’s repetition of the Enclosure Acts on the human: ‘Up to the point where I got pregnant, I’d taken for granted the notion that men and women are substantially the same [...] and “progress” meant broadly the same thing for both sexes: the equal right to self-realization, shorn of culturally imposed obligations, stereotypes or constraints’.³⁹ With British discretion, Harrington alludes to the negative impact of a promiscuous past encouraged by sex-positive feminism in search of Erica Jong’s ‘zipless f*ck’ as the most elusive form of enlightenment. Earlier, Katherine Dee had already warned of the ‘coming wave of sex negativity’ in a prophetic Substack entry, ‘Mark my words: Next financial crisis, we’re diving headlong into something that’s been simmering in the background since 2013–2014 [...] sex negativity’. Here are highlights from her listicle:

36 Haraway, *Manifestly Haraway*, 103.

37 Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 132–33.

38 Mary Harrington, *Feminism Against Progress* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2023).

39 *Ibid.*, 13–14.

4. People do not want to be atomized. They do not want to be neutered. Sex dolls are unsustainable. Nobody wants this dystopia. It WILL be painted as anti-tech, but it is not necessarily “about” tech. **THIS IS THE REAL CULTURE WAR.**

11. As I have been tracking on Twitter, women like ProfitFromTrauma will become increasingly common. We have been lying and have been lied to about the realities of things like sex work.

14. New life will be breathed into traditional gender norms.⁴⁰

These authors suggest there is a perverse reversal in women’s roles – at least from Wollstonecraft’s time. While many women are doing increasingly better in the public sphere –something the doctrine of separate spheres once deemed unnatural, the private sphere has become more problematic. Hook-up culture fuelled by the ubiquity of increasingly sadistic porn is something women must take seriously, as the lines between consent and coercion can be very blurred. On the other hand, the fall of *Roe v. Wade* and the subsequent battle to propose increasingly insane penalties for violating abortion restrictions is equally terrifying. As stated earlier, punishing female sexuality with the ferocity of Margaret Atwood’s Aunt Lydia is not an appealing answer either. I cannot resolve these conflicts here, and there is much work to be done with a more global scope than this essay. My small contribution is to explore what we might learn from mares to pass on to the next generation of fillies.

This might seem absurd, but stick with me. When we think of the Darwinian dictum degree, not kind, are there ways in which a woman’s hybrid prey/predator status has co-evolved with the mare to open the possibility of a Reparative take on biology linking kin and kind? Splicing the best of Haraway, Sedgwick, Hearne, and Moi into a more mindful concept of nature that categorically rejects the way biological determinism was used to exclude women from the public sphere and dominate them in the private sphere but does not reduce them to mere effects of performativity either. Moreover, it might allow us to look to the mare for something too many women still need despite decades of feminism: the ability to say no and mean it.

Naturecultures are hard to disentangle, and like Hearne, what still ‘puzzles me are the gender differences between animals and people. Consider’, she writes, ‘that a bitch [or mare] never needs to learn that she can say

40 Katherine Dee, “The Coming Wave of Sex Negativity,” <https://defaultfriend.substack.com/p/72-the-coming-wave-of-sex-negativity>.

no if she isn't in the mood, and does not need to fake orgasm, is immune to any attempts to convince her that she should or should not. Nor does she read magazine articles about how to get herself into the mood if she isn't'.⁴¹ Imagine how Hearne would respond to the ways women's 'progress' has evolved from the relatively tame Helen Gurley Brown's *Cosmopolitan* into the mainstreaming of violent pornography where the unwillingness to play makes you vanilla, or worse, a bigot guilty of kink shaming if you happen to desire *not* to be strangled by a relative stranger after appetizers at Applebee's. (I refuse the euphemism choking: that is what happens when you take too big a bite, not when a typically larger predator uses his hands to cut off your air supply.)

Hearne's description of the equine sexual dance emphasizes the mare's demand for respect:

In the period where the female is becoming interesting to the male but is indifferent herself to the arrows of Eros, he makes a proper nuisance of himself, jumping about, pleading, poking, pawing at her, or dashing around splendidly with his hooves high, his nostrils flaring, and his voice reverberating, in the case of horses. And the mare says, 'Yuck! Forget it!' while turning her hind end dangerously and rejectingly rather than invitingly in his direction.⁴²

An admiration for the mare's commitment to her own bodily autonomy also informs a similar response by Lipizzan breeder Connie Micheletti to the Frequently Asked Question 'Speaking of mares, I hear that Lipizzan mares are very difficult to train':

Mares of any breed present a greater challenge than either stallions or geldings, and with good reason. But if you understand and are considerate of the nature of a mare, you will find the rewards are great. A well-trained Lipizzan stallion or gelding will die for you, but a well-trained mare will kill for you! It is the nature of a mare to say, 'No!' and to mean it. After all, in the wild she lives with a sex mad maniac in the form of the herd stallion that's always wanting to show her his etchings. She must say no 11 months out of every year, and she must convince him that she means it. Consequently, when you train a mare, she's going to be more determined in her resistance [...] When a mare's resistance is met with patience and

41 Hearne, *Bandit*, 210–211.

42 Hearne, *Bandit*, 210.

persistence she will eventually acquiesce. The really nice thing about a mare is that once she says, 'Yes!' she means that too.⁴³

Micheletti, a skilled horsewoman who also rode and trained to Grand Prix dressage, revolutionized the quality of the American Lipizzaner: With few staff, she managed several breeding stallions, multiple mare lines, and innumerable foals. She did warn me baby Eroika descended from a dam line who, for four generations, have been boss mares of her Oregon fields. The brilliant Lucy Rees has taught me to be sceptical about the imposition of dominance hierarchies on horses, but I cannot discount Micheletti's intimate knowledge of that proud female line.⁴⁴ Moreover, Ro's father had enough sense of himself to perform in the quadrille at the Spanish Riding School in Vienna: In one of the most unfortunate asymmetries, this mare's nobility trumps my insignificant and insecure status as a bastard born in Carolina. She has much to teach me as I try to enter the final phase of my life with some dignity.

Someone hoping for a more comprehensive ethology of women and mares might be disappointed, but bodily autonomy is crucial to both of our flourishing. Justice, another anecdotal trait associated with mares, demands we seek cultural conditions that allow our individual natures to thrive. As we fight for reproductive rights, we must urgently interrogate not just patriarchy, but the stories feminism has told us that might no longer serve. Can an overemphasis on social construction be dangerous? Is the 'zipless f*ck' celebrated by sex positive feminism the height of empowerment (something no self-respecting mare would tolerate)? I am not sure, but the knowledge of the acute mental health crisis in young women is so pervasive it does not need citation. A central question I would ask is why do younger women on Tumblr and beyond feel the need to create entire identities (demisexual, asexual, etc.) that at least partly derive from the simple desire to say 'no'? Have we older mares failed in the stories we bequeathed them? Is it essential to acknowledge that most mares say what they mean and mean what they say? Is this not an admirable quality whether dealing with friends, co-workers, romantic partners, adversaries, or even cyborgs?

Perhaps it takes hinge moments in the world to shake us from what has become conventional wisdom. It did for me when Eroika became a better teacher on how to be a woman than just about any feminist text I have spent my life studying. Cayenne Pepper is probably the conduit that allowed

43 Connie Micheletti, "Frequently Asked Questions", <http://www.tackinthebox.com>.

44 Lucy Rees, *Horses in Company* (Ramsbury: Crowood Press, 1917).

Haraway to see and think about the complexities of the female in a sense that she had not embraced earlier when she leaned too heavily on social construction. Haraway tries not to disavow the cyborg, yet her animal turn seems more profound than she acknowledges. Feminist activist and scholar Sophie Lewis would agree. In her review of *Staying with the Trouble*, she laments Haraway's profound shift: 'Though she started off championing the cyborgs of class struggle against the goddesses of technophobia' (her immortal closing line: 'I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess'), I suspect that, now, she has gone over to the goddesses.⁴⁵

And we welcome her, especially since she was one of the guides leading us to celebrate Companion Species. Once I heard her intone 'Shut up and Train', I had no doubt that she too had fallen under Hearne's spell. Few of us mere mortals who play in the mud will ever reach the physical and mental excellence Hearne required from those engaged in contact zones or the exalted compassion Sedgwick inspired comforting her friends dying of AIDS while she, like Hearne, was consumed with breast cancer – but it is the attempt that makes us more like these goddesses. Whether it was Haraway's maintaining Cayenne Pepper's focus on the teeter totter or my desire to ride a perfect volte on Eroika, we are called into a better state of femininity by these beautiful bitches and marvelous mares. As the new millennium moves farther and farther from nature, perhaps a Reparative take on essentialism might help us become more comfortably present in female bodies that exist in space and time, acknowledging that some limitations open new avenues for a different kind of growth that move beyond a hermeneutics of suspicion even if you are highly strung. For this, I can think of no better guide than goddesses endowed with Big Mare Energy.

About the Author

Angela Hofstetter shares her rural home in Story, Indiana with giant dogs, plump horses, and assorted flora and fauna from the Hoosier National Forest. She received her PhD in Comparative Literature from Indiana University where she fostered a passion for novels of the long nineteenth century. A senior lecturer at Butler University, Angela's courses reflect her commitment

45 Sophie Lewis, "Chthulhu Plays No Role For Me," <https://viewpointmag.com/2017/05/08/chthulhu-plays-no-role-for-me>. This shift was a profound loss to Lewis as *The Cyborg Manifesto* had been a crucial part of her *Bildung*. Though Lewis and I have staggeringly different world views, she is a lovely writer with a compelling intellect.

to a robust intersectionality that interrogates the moral complexity of all animals – human and other. Her first-year seminar ‘Call of the Wild’ is her absolute favorite course to teach because she gets to spend an entire year with students exploring complex questions about nature, nurture, and justice.

Gender and Intersectionality in Agriculture on Three Continents

A Rapstract Compilation

Andrea Pettit

Amongst horses and cattle in the agri-cultural domain
gender relations have developed and remain
This has implications for all species concerned
From ethnographic research – here is what I learned

Women's Cattle Ownership in Botswana

After fieldwork in Botswana I know now
that for the local farmer it's all about the cow
Far from the delta with tourists on safari
it's all about beef in the Kalahari

In this context I set out
to understand a thing or two about
How property relations to cattle define
what it means that a cow is yours or mine

What about access, rights and claims?
Who are the owners, what are their names?
They're in fact women, yes, it's true!
And they told me their control is something new

Ethnicity, gender, race, and class
might define your access to cattle and grass
Cattle has been seen as a male affair
But what happens if we scratch the surface there?

Gender relations are a constant battle
for the different women who are farming cattle
But they do engage in various ways
because or in spite of expectations they face

I learnt that EU regulations changed the game
and cattle production would never be the same
It brought fences, vaccinations, individual brands
and more work for the wallet, the brain and the hands

Efforts to increase the focus on sales
usually leads to domination by males
But with simultaneous info on women's rights
women keep cattle – prepared for the fights

Controlling the cattle, income, and sales
means food and education when all other fails
But it's also a challenge to raise a herd
Access to markets is sometimes absurd

Associations of women to cattle take the forms
of three expectations or maybe even norms
Working cattle directly, or with related chores
or instead deal with crops or chickens, of course

The expectations depend on the intersections above
Women approach in different ways the cattle that they love
What is clear across diverse intersections
is that women can benefit through cattle connections

Animal Agency and Multispecies Biopower in Cattle Breeding in Sweden

When breeding the question is always 'How?'
How do you choose a bull or a cow?
On looks, productivity or on how they act?
Or perhaps with a focus on keeping genes intact?

Ideal scenarios and what actually takes place
can differ depending on what challenges we face

What takes place also always takes time
and there's a deadline for cattle in their prime

There is also a difference of how you treat
cattle who are destined for milk or for meat
But in both cases you need to interact
and preferably get away with your life intact

It's important for bulls and cows to be 'nice'
At least if you believe in general advice
While you select a bull, you send some cows away
Are there gender dynamics hiding in the hay?

Also among humans, gender might show
in something that everyone seems to know:
If you are a woman there's no need to stand back
but if bulls smell testosterone they will attack

The difference, however, between milk and meat
when it comes to breeding is quite complete
Breeding plans have the power to define
what practices are privileged and who is next in line

With the concept of biopower structuring our thought
we explore how agency is relational and taught
Subjectification is then an interspecies affair
shaped by the cowshed cultures that we share

Cowboy Masculinities Rapstract

We all know the cowboy, his hat and his horse
and we know that he's tough and macho of course
But what happens behind that image of 'man'?
Could it be it's just one piece of a span?

So riding with a cowboy crew
I learnt, at last, a thing or two
about herding cattle and roping calves
and how masculinity can be more than two halves

The macho was present, no doubt about that
and so was the horse, the cow, and the hat
Among the blood, manure, and dust
'Brokeback Mountain' could not be discussed

But there was something else between moments of 'tough'
Other masculinities between that macho stuff
To be sensitive, responsive, and soft in the joints
always scored some cowboy points

To endure the violence of horses and cattle
is a victory in the masculinity battle
But to inflict pain on a horse is lame
and you lose points in the masculinity game

To hit the cattle, however, is all right
or kick a dog, or punch a man in a fight
The species intersectionality here
is what kicks the doing of gender into gear

These doings of gender are embodied acts
beyond representational fictions and facts
Embodied experiences of gender are key
to understand what a 'real cowboy' can be

Cross Continental Thoughts

With examples here from continents three
I hope that we now can all clearly see
how gender is crucial to agricultural relations
central to success, identity, frustrations

Omitting gender, we miss premises for sure
We might make suggestions that we later deplore
For future analysis of agricultural collectives
we need gender and intersectionality perspectives

Ethnographic Statement – Artnographic Statement?

These three ‘rapstracts’ – rhyming abstracts – emerged through the analysis of material that I collected throughout three ethnographic fieldworks.⁴⁶ I spent nine months amongst women and cattle in the Kalahari of Botswana, conducted eighteen months of multi-sited ethnography investigating gendered notions of breeding Swedish Mountain Cattle in Sweden, and some six weeks on a working cattle ranch in the Canadian West, looking into gender and work identity amongst Canadian cowboys.⁴⁷ Swedish versions of these rhymes, written after these English versions, are published in a Swedish journal for gender research.⁴⁸ The Cowboy Masculinities Rapstract laid the foundation for my further long term ethnographic fieldwork in Colorado and my conceptualization of the Multispecies Triad, and the rhyming across continents made me see the divergent positionalities of horses and cattle that led me to work towards what I call Multispecies Intersectionality.⁴⁹

As such, developing the use of rhyming as a method of data collection and analysis has been crucial for my ongoing work as a multispecies ethnographer, a gender and intersectionality theoretician and for my development of what I call, in conversation with Véronique Servais, ‘artful methods’.⁵⁰ Rhyming analysis of ethnographic data, which might be considered part of the wider field of ethnographic poetry⁵¹ and poetic inquiry⁵², give me the freedom as well as the structural limitations to think creatively around my findings and, at the same time, to become aware of what unarticulated premises, logical leaps, or contextual specificities need to be worked through and communicated for an argument to work. It is thus a practice of rigorous

46 Andrea Petitt, “Rapstract,” *Tidskrift för genusvetenskap* 39, no. 4 (2018): 97–102.

47 Andrea Petitt, “Women’s Cattle Ownership in Botswana: Rebranding Gender Relations?,” PhD diss., Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, 2016); Andrea Petitt and Camilla Eriksson, “Breeding Beyond Bodies: Making and ‘Doing’ Cattle,” *Society and Animals* 30, no. 1 (November 2019): 1–19, doi: 10.1163/15685306-00001733; Andrea Petitt, “Cowboy Masculinities in Human–Animal Relations on a Cattle Ranch,” *Elore* 20, no. 1 (2013): 67–82.

48 Petitt, “Rapstract.”

49 Andrea Petitt, “Conceptualizing the Multispecies Triad: Towards a Multispecies Intersectionality,” *Feminist Anthropology* 4 (2023): 23–37, doi: 10.1002/fea2.12099.

50 Andrea Petitt and Véronique Servais, “Artful Multispecies Ethnography: Reflections From Ongoing Practices,” *Anthrovisions* (under review). Andrea Petitt, “At Arm’s Length until Otherwise Told,” *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 30, no. 1 (2023): 103–05, doi: 10.1177/13505068221144947.

51 Kent Maynard and Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor, “Anthropology at the Edge of Words: Where Poetry and Ethnography meet,” *Anthropology and Humanism* 35, no. 1 (2010): 2–19.

52 Maria A. Fernández-Giménez, “A Shepherd Has to Invent: Poetic Analysis of Social-Ecological Change in the Cultural Landscape of the Central Spanish Pyrenees,” *Ecology and Society* 20, no. 4 (2015), doi.org/10.5751/ES-08054-200429.

yet poetic analysis and is almost always part of my analytic process, although I don't always offer the rhyme or poem itself up as dissemination. I further consider ethnographic poetry, be it field rhymes, rapstrait, or other forms, as fruitful friends of feminist methodologies for data collection, analysis, and dissemination of research.⁵³

Finally, to highlight these rhymes as actual research dissemination in their own right, and not only as gimmicks to be brought out for entertainment, I have added footnotes with references to this statement, which is not always the convention for ethnographic poetry. As my customary ethnographic statement includes these reflections on how this artful method is crucial to my ethnographic and analytical work, I am tentatively calling it an artnographic statement, a word fashioned in conversation with my co-founders of the international network of Multispecies Ethnography and Artistic Methods (MEAM).⁵⁴

About the Author

Andrea Petitt is a multispecies ethnographer at the Anthropology Lab (LASC) at Université de Liège, Belgium, and is also affiliated with the Centre for Gender Research, Uppsala University, where she was employed as a researcher for six years after defending her PhD in Rural Development from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) in 2016. Andrea has studied gender and intersectionality in multispecies relations in agriculture in Botswana, Sweden, Canada, Nepal, and Colorado, USA, and her current project focuses on horseback nomad practices in Mongolia. There, she operationalizes the multispecies intersectionality theory and the multispecies triad framework of humans, horses, and bovines developed through her fieldwork on working cattle ranches in the Rocky Mountains. In her research, Andrea uses creative and 'artful' methods, such as drawing and ethnographic poetry and rhyming, for both data collection and analysis as well as dissemination.

53 Petitt, "At Arm's Length"; Esther O. Ohito and Tiffany M. Nyachae, "Poetically Poking at Language and Power: Using Black Feminist Poetry to Conduct Rigorous Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis", *Qualitative Inquiry* 25, no. 9-19 (2019): 839–50.

54 Petitt and Servais, "Artful Multispecies Ethnography".

The category of species has remained largely understudied in mainstream gender scholarship. This edition of the *Yearbook of Women's History* attempts to show how gender history can be enriched through the study of animals. It highlights that the inclusion of nonhuman animals in historical work has the potential to revolutionize the ways we think about gender history. This volume is expansive in more than one way. First, it is global and transhistorical in its outlook, bringing together perspectives from the Global North and the Global South, and moving from the Middle Ages to the contemporary world. Even more importantly for its purposes, a range of animals appear in the contributions: from the smallest insects to great apes, and from 'cute' kittens to riot dogs and lions. The articles collected here reflect the variety of the animal kingdom and of the creative approaches enabled by animal history.

AUP.nl

