

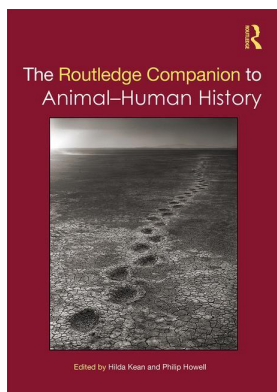
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Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



The Routledge Companion to Animal–Human History

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‘And has not art promoted our work also?’

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780429468933-11>

J. Keri Cronin

Published online on: 03 Sep 2018

How to cite :- J. Keri Cronin. 03 Sep 2018, ‘*And has not art promoted our work also?*’ from: The Routledge Companion to Animal–Human History Routledge

Accessed on: 03 Dec 2023

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780429468933-11>

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11

‘AND HAS NOT ART PROMOTED OUR WORK ALSO?’

Visual culture in animal–human history

J. Keri Cronin

In October 1887 the editors of *The Animal World*, the official publication of Britain’s Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), published a lengthy article reviewing and reflecting upon many of the artworks exhibited at the annual Royal Academy exhibition at Burlington House in London.¹ While twenty-first century readers may find it somewhat strange that an animal advocacy publication would dedicate so much space to reviewing art, this was in fact not that unusual for nineteenth-century audiences. There are many important links between art and animal advocacy during this era, as those involved with organised animal advocacy saw tremendous potential for art to foster a sense of kindness and compassion in viewers and to challenge the status quo when it came to cruel treatment of animals. ‘Noble men who devote themselves to the high calling of art’, the writer for *The Animal World* opined, ‘are teachers and prophets, whose influence is not less than that of philosophers, statesmen, and divines’.² Specific to the context of animal advocacy, the reviewer asked, ‘and has not art promoted our work also?’:

The pencils of old masters, and those of a hundred modern animal painters, among whom Landseer will ever be prominent, have taught us to love animals, and when we cannot love, to be in sympathy with them as fellow creatures. The walls of the Academy year after year keep up this theme, and delineate particularly man’s companionship with animals.³

As one might expect, the RSPCA’s review of the Royal Academy exhibition specifically focused on the pictures of animals included in this show. Pictures such as Leonard Nightingale’s *Welcome Morsels*, John Everett Millais’s *The Nest*, Sidney Cooper’s *Old Smithfield Market*, and Edmund Caldwell’s *For the Safety of the Public* are among the paintings singled out by this review.

The following discussion uses this 1887 Royal Academy exhibition as a starting point for thinking through some of the ways in which art and visual culture can assist those of us who are interested in expanding animal–human history. What would art

history look like if the ‘question of the animal’ were taken seriously? What would the writing of history look like if images were given the same level of consideration as other texts and archival material? What, if anything, can pictures of animals tell us about the histories and lived realities of animal–human relationships in previous eras? Paintings, drawings, prints, photographs, sculptures, and film clips are material objects that are always already a mediated way of accessing the information about the lives of those they represent. They are frames for seeing the world that are necessarily shaped by and inextricably linked to things such as politics, cultures, economics, and technologies – frames, in other words, that are driven by *human* concerns. Of course nonhuman animals figure largely in our politics, cultures, economics, and technologies, but these frames were developed by humans to make sense of *human* interactions, activities, and interests. How, then, can we turn to art and visual culture made in the past and ask those images to tell us something of the lives of animals from previous historical eras?

In the following discussion, I propose that visual culture is an important but often overlooked resource in the writing of human–animal histories. In many cases, as Steve Baker notes, our ‘understanding of animals is shaped by representations rather than by direct experience of them’.⁴ Further, as historian Samantha Cutrara has argued, imagery can be an important tool because pictures can create the potential for ‘visualizing different pasts’.⁵ What she means by this is that we need to be open to looking at images – really looking at them and not just repeating what we have been told about them – and thinking deeply and critically about what it is we are seeing, about what is represented in the frame but also about absences or gaps. What choices has the artist made and why? What can these choices tell us about dominant ideas regarding animal–human relationships during the time period in which the image was made? Cutrara also reinforces the notion that visual culture can be a platform for ‘imagining different futures’ which is a poignant reminder for those interested in animal–human history – our work has significant ramifications for the living, breathing animals that we currently share the planet with. Visual representations of animals are, therefore, an important consideration in animal–human history. Imagery can provide new ways of thinking about how humans and animals interacted in other time periods and can be a site from which different ways of imagining relationships with animals can be fostered.

What do we mean by the term ‘visual culture’?

In much the same way that taking animals seriously has opened up new possibilities for doing animal–human history, in recent decades an expanded framework for the study and critical analysis of images has emerged across a number of academic disciplines. At the most basic level, when we talk about ‘visual culture’ we are typically talking about a broad range of images and image types. In the past, academic disciplines such as art history tended to limit the subject of analysis to images that fit into categories recognised as ‘Art’ – paintings, drawings, sculpture, etc. When one studies visual culture these kinds of images are still important, but now things such as advertisements, internet memes, protest images, film, fashion, graffiti, and scientific diagrams (to name but a few categories!) are also given serious scholarly consideration. Within

this framework there is a recognition that images do not exist in a vacuum, and that different kinds of cultural representations influence and inform one another.

Foundational texts such as Gillian Rose's *Visual Methodologies* offer an important introduction to the use of images in the social sciences while, at the same time, scholars such as Nicholas Mirzoeff, Marita Sturken, and Lisa Cartwright have expanded ways of thinking about images in the humanities beyond what has traditionally been offered by the discipline of art history. There are, therefore, a wide range of ways in which scholars are thinking critically about and with images in the twenty-first century, but one of the defining features of visual culture is an emphasis on the ways in which the meanings of images shape and are shaped by 'the shared practices of a group, community, or society'.⁶ Within this framework, historical, contextual, and visual analysis come together to emphasise different ways in which images can create and challenge dominant ideas. Further, there is increased recognition that the meaning of an image is not static and that the same meaning (or set of meanings) is not understood by all viewers. As Gillian Rose has argued, there are a range of different sites that need to be considered when thinking about the meaning of an image: 'the site(s) of the production of an image, the site of the image itself, and the site(s) where it is seen by various audiences'.⁷ Further, Rose stresses the need to consider a range of 'modalities' that exist at each of these sites: technological, compositional, and social.⁸ When we turn to visual culture as a way to think about human–animal history, then, these are some of the issues we need to keep in mind.

Animals, advocacy, and visual culture

There is, of course, a long history of nonhuman animals being represented in art and visual culture produced, collected, and curated by humans. Much of this work was created with little consideration of the impact it may have had on the living, breathing animals who existed outside of the picture frame. In recent years critics such as Randy Malamud have argued that this history of representation has obscured our understanding of animals both on an individual and on a species level. 'It is difficult for people to see animals,' Malamud posits, and one of the reasons he gives for this is the abundance of 'dense cultural constructions we impose on them'.⁹ For Malamud this is more than an aesthetic issue. Rather, he argues that 'animals in visual culture thus suffer as a consequence of our habits of visualizing and acculturating them'.¹⁰ There are, in other words, deep and profound ethical and ecological issues related to the ways in which humans have visually represented nonhuman animals.

Other scholars have taken a different approach and have argued that the history of art has been an important vantage point from which to trace the development of animal rights and animal liberation. Stephen Eisenman's *The Cry of Nature: Art and the Making of Animal Rights*, for example, makes the case that 'artists brought substantially different insights . . . to the definition and role of the animal – understandings based upon the unique, perceptual character of visual art'.¹¹ These insights, in turn, created a situation where new ways of thinking about 'the nature of animal psychology and physiology' began to be articulated in visual form.¹² Further, Eisenman argues that within this dynamic, animals were active participants and 'demanded their emancipation'.¹³ Across Europe and North America in the nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries, new ways of visually engaging with animals were being enacted – as the sites of raising, killing, and consuming animal bodies became transformed through the intertwined logics of modernism and capitalism, so too did the ways in which people visually encountered animals. As Eisenman writes,

Animals themselves gathered in vast numbers and cacophonous in their outcries, were the avant-garde of the movement. By virtue of their species-natures, of course, they could not directly enter in to the political arena, but they attracted many articulate followers and supporters.¹⁴

In other words, the ways in which people visually engaged with animals gave rise to important milestones in the history of animal advocacy.

Visual culture, therefore, is a complex and often contested site from which to think about animal–human history. Images do not offer unmediated windows onto the past – we must always think critically about images we encounter in our research. What is certain, however, is that visual representations of animals always have ‘real world’ implications. As Jonathan Burt points out, ‘animal imagery does not merely reflect human–animal relations and the position of animals in human culture, but is also used to change them’.¹⁵

Challenges and questions

Materials included in art gallery, museum, and archival collections tend to have a very anthropocentric focus, and traditional collecting and cataloguing practices can present distinct challenges for researchers seeking to access information about the lives (and deaths) of animals from previous historical periods as there inevitably are gaps in the records. The challenges of writing historical accounts that take animals seriously have been outlined by a number of scholars in recent years.¹⁶ ‘Animals do not leave documents’, Erica Fudge reminds us, ‘the only documents available to the historian in any field are documents written, or spoken, by humans’.¹⁷ She also points out, however, the ways in which the histories of human and nonhuman animals are so intertwined that perhaps it is more accurate to refer to human culture as ‘so-called human culture’, something that is important to remember when we are doing animal–human history.¹⁸ This observation underscores a primary objective for those of us trying to take animal histories seriously – we are like detectives opening up a ‘cold case’, and re-analysing the existing evidence from a different perspective. Traces of what we seek are there, but we need to reframe our investigations and we need to ask new questions.

So, what kinds of questions do we need to ask of visual images in order to arrive at what Fudge refers to as an ‘interspecies competence’, or ‘a new way of thinking about and living with animals’?¹⁹ To begin, we need to think critically about how any given representation might be related to the lived experiences of both those who have viewed it as well as the lived experiences of those who are included or implicated in the processes of representation happening within the image. On the most basic level, this means being aware of and attuned to the fact that throughout much of history the very materiality of art and image-making was (and still is) dependent

upon the bodies of animals. Paintbrushes made with animal hair, pigments made from the crushed bodies of insects, paints that use egg as a binder, and gelatin-based film are examples of the kinds of materials and tools that artists have historically used. Art history, in other words, is a form of animal history. But this is not typically how it is taught. Rather, if animals are discussed at all in undergraduate art history classes or in textbooks focusing on canonical works of art, they are mentioned as important symbols for human ideas and narratives. As Diana Donald has pointed out, ‘seldom has the representation of animals *per se* been thought worthy, or likely, to constitute the artist’s principal intention; much less to be a proper object of consideration for the scholarly critic’.²⁰

In the textbook I use in my nineteenth-century art history class, for example, the work of the celebrated British animal painter Edwin Landseer is briefly discussed – in a discussion of some of his best-known paintings, the author talks about the ways in which ‘dogs personify humans’, and that the ‘instincts that Landseer’s animals act on are ones that humans relate to’.²¹ While these points offer one way of reading Landseer’s work (the dominant one taken up by most art historians), they are not the only way to think about these pictures. As I have argued elsewhere, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries many working in animal advocacy reproduced Landseer’s paintings in their campaigns.²² Simply put, this would not have happened if the only way to understand these pictures was as a comment on human culture and society. The reformers who so eagerly took up Landseer’s work clearly saw other meanings in these images – they used these pictures to ask people to think about the dogs represented in them *as dogs*. In order to do animal–human history we likewise need to shift our framework and also take images of animals as a starting point to think about animals *as animals*. This includes not only thinking critically about what is (or is not) represented in the frame of the image but also about the materials used in the production of art and visual culture.

Second, we need to ask questions that can lead to detailed contextual and visual analysis of pictures. What do we see when we look at an image? How might someone occupying a different subject position see this image? What choices has the artist or image-maker made? Why were those choices made? How do the techniques and technologies used shape the way an image looks and, in turn, the way that the meaning of any given picture is negotiated by those who view it? What has been excluded from the frame? What are we not able to see, and why has the image-maker made those choices? How does the context in which an image is viewed shape the way that it is interpreted?

To answer these questions we need to first of all recognise that, like all texts, images are cultural objects and, as such, do not have inherent, concrete sets of meanings that accompany them. Images are not, and can never be, objective windows onto the past. Just as we know to analyse textual documents with a critical lens, so too must we become astute at visual and contextual analysis if we want images to assist us in continuing to piece together histories of human–animal relationships. While this may seem obvious when we are talking about paintings or sculptures – forms of visual culture, in other words, that are clearly the product of an artist’s hand and imagination – we must also keep this in mind when we are considering camera-generated images. There is a tendency to assume that photographs and film are

somehow *more true* than other forms of visual culture because of the mechanical nature of the camera and the indexical nature of the technologies of photography and cinema. However, as Allan Sekula points out in his classic essay 'On the invention of photographic meaning', 'the meaning of a photograph, like that of any other entity, is inevitably subject to cultural definition'.²³ Just like other forms of visual culture, photographs and film are shaped by many external factors such as advances or limitations in technology, as well as social, cultural, economic, and political frameworks. Further, as Jonathan Burt has argued, in many instances, the development of visual technology is, itself, dependent upon the bodies of animals.²⁴ In addition, the seemingly simple decisions a photographer makes about what she will or will not take a picture of and how she composes the shot are all important considerations to keep in mind as well. This is not to say that visual culture is 'fake', 'false', or unreliable. It can be as useful to historians as any other kind of text. While some visual examples may be more fabricated or manipulated than others, visual representations of animals can always be traced back to larger cultural conversations about animal–human relationships that are, themselves, subject to social, cultural, economic, and political frameworks.

When using visual culture to do animal–human history, we must be prepared to interrogate images, to think critically about them, and to ask deep questions about their creation, circulation, and consumption. We must also be prepared to recognise that a single image generates multiple and, at times, competing, sets of meanings. As W.J.T. Mitchell notes, pictures are 'complex individuals occupying multiple subject positions and identities'.²⁵ A critical analysis of images not only considers which reading(s) of any given picture is the most dominant and why, but also considers the inevitable additional meanings that accompanied (and continue to accompany) it. This is significant for any historical inquiry that is seeking a departure from the dominant historical narrative, as images can both reinforce and challenge the status quo. As Mitchell argues, 'images introduce new forms of value into the world, contesting our criteria, forcing us to change our minds . . .'.²⁶ When it comes to animal–human history, imagery can be a site from which to not only reflect on the multiplicity of interwoven experiences that humans and animals have had in the past but also to imagine alternative ways of engaging with animals.

A Distinguished Member of the Humane Society

Images of animals can be recontextualised to reflect current and contemporary debates about how animals should be treated. Edwin Landseer's well-known painting, *A Distinguished Member of the Humane Society* (1831; Figure 11.1) serves as a good example here. There are a few different stories that exist which attempt to explain how it is that Landseer came to paint this picture. The most widely circulated of those stories tells of an encounter between the artist and a Newfoundland dog named Paul Pry.²⁷ The dog, we are told, was carrying a basket of flowers in his mouth and walking next to his human companion, Mrs Newman Smith.²⁸ There was, in other words, a real life, flesh-and-blood dog who inspired the painting of this picture. As Diana Donald has so eloquently described, part of the reason that so many people found this picture so appealing was the 'pure dogginess of its lovingly depicted



Figure 11.1 Edwin Landseer, *A Distinguished Member of the Humane Society*, exhibited at the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1838.

Courtesy Tate Gallery, London.

bloodshot eyes, pink protruded tongue, loose jowl and shaggy coat'.²⁹ But even though this picture evoked familiar characteristics of what viewers might think of when they thought of their canine companions – the ‘pure dogginess’ that Donald writes about – was this a true-to-life picture of Paul Pry? On the contrary, instead of faithfully painting his encounter with a specific dog, Landseer has instead represented this animal on the water’s edge and presents to the viewer an image that is intended to speak of the heroic and legendary life-saving abilities of Newfoundland dogs in a more general sense – there is not a basket of flowers nor a human companion to be found in this scene! As Donald notes, it is ‘this breed’s famous life-saving feats in the water’ that becomes the focus of this picture.³⁰

Many who saw Landseer’s painting when it was exhibited at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1838 would have known that the ‘humane society’ referred to in the title of the painting was the Royal Humane Society of Britain, an organisation formed in 1774 and originally called the Society for the Recovery of Persons Apparently Drowned. This information coupled with the fact that the particular breed of dog represented in this painting is a Newfoundland dog – a breed that has a reputation for marine rescue skills – may have shaped the dominant reading of this picture at the Royal Academy exhibition. In other words, those who saw this painting in that context would likely reflect on the ways in which dogs have been known to help humans in things such as marine rescue. However, we cannot be certain that all viewers would read the same picture in the same way. Perhaps some viewers were simply reminded of the fact that dogs tend to be good swimmers. Some might have

been reminded of beloved childhood pets, and still others may have appreciated this picture strictly because of the artist's reputation and skill. In an article for the *Magazine of Art*, for example, Marion Harry Spielmann describes this picture as a 'masterpiece' because it is 'finely conceived and brilliantly executed'.³¹ This multiplicity of potential meanings can be frustrating for historians who want to arrive at a singular, set meaning of an image. However, visual culture resists this kind of simplistic interpretation and, therefore, it is important for historians to sharpen their skills in visual and critical analysis so that they may begin to untangle the myriad ways in which any given image functions and creates meaning in each specific situation.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries many animal advocacy groups adopted *A Distinguished Member of the Humane Society* for campaign and educational purposes. Organisations such as The Victoria Street Society for the Protection of Animals from Vivisection used this image to make public pleas for compassion towards animals, in particular to ask those reading campaign leaflets to stop and recognise that animals used in vivisection were sentient beings and that scientific and medical experiments conducted on them were cruel and inhumane. When Landseer's image was reproduced in these contexts, new meanings were necessarily generated. The fact that this was a well-known picture certainly made it appealing to those who chose to reproduce it as part of animal advocacy campaigns, but we also have to remember that not all who saw this image in this context would have arrived at the intended meaning. When this picture was reduced in size and reproduced in black and white on the pages of an animal advocacy leaflet in the late nineteenth century, the conversations about it would have been very different from those that took place in front of the full-colour, oil-on-canvas painted version on display at the 1838 Royal Academy exhibition. This may seem like an obvious point, but the context of viewing and its subsequent role in the creation of meaning is frequently overlooked by those using images as historical documents. While some of the viewers who saw this image in a Victoria Street Society publication may have been prompted to think about the ways in which dogs help humans, their childhood pets, or the skill of the artist, the context in which the image was viewed – in this case, on the pages of an anti-vivisection leaflet – would also invite viewers to reflect on the ways in which dogs (and other animals) were treated in the vivisectionist's laboratory. While some might have come to the conclusion that it was perfectly fine for dogs to be experimented on, the advocates working under the banner of the Victoria Street Society, of course, hoped that images like this would garner more support for their anti-vivisection efforts.³²

A Distinguished Member of the Humane Society does not depict laboratory scenes or gruesome images of graphic cruelty to animals.³³ Instead, those who chose to use this image for anti-vivisection advocacy purposes were hoping that viewers would reflect on how dogs could be selfless, loyal, brave, and heroic, and how they have frequently helped humans. 'How', the inclusion of this picture in this context seems to ask, 'can humans, in turn, be so cruel to dogs?' The use of Landseer by animal advocacy groups in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries worked particularly well because this was already a beloved and well-known image that had been reproduced through engravings and etchings throughout the nineteenth century.³⁴ The appropriation and repurposing of the image by groups such as the Victoria Street

Society added additional meanings to this familiar picture. Further, in the case of the original Landseer painting, the real-world referent was the dog Paul Pry. When the finished painting was first exhibited, however, this shifted to the dogs who work alongside humans in the context of marine rescue and was intended as a celebration of the heroism and bravery of these canine rescuers in a more general sense. When this picture was taken up later in the century in the context of animal advocacy, however, layers of meanings were added. This did not necessarily erase the previous interpretations and understandings of this picture – indeed, it would seem that it was so popular with those working in animal advocacy precisely because of Landseer’s intended meaning. The idea that an animal who could be so loyal and brave could also be the victim of vivisection was what made these campaigns work.

Working with images

Erica Fudge has argued that we need to ‘place ourselves next to the animals’ when doing historical work.³⁵ Images can be important tools for doing this because pictures of animals have the ability to draw the viewer into the narrative being depicted. There is an important opportunity for an empathic connection between the viewer and the animal represented in the image. We are invited to pause and reflect on his or her situation and, quite often, this draws upon our previous knowledge of animals. A picture of a dog, in other words, may evoke memories of dogs we have encountered in our own lives – we may see Landseer’s image and think about the brave and loyal dogs who worked alongside the Royal Humane Society of Britain, but we may also remember how the dog we had as a child loved to accompany us on trips to the beach and this could, in turn, lead to other memories and thoughts about dogs we have known and our relationships with them.

A viewer, in other words, has many different avenues through which to insert herself and her thoughts, knowledge, values, and memories into a picture and it is through these avenues that she can start to imagine new ways of engaging with both history and nonhuman animals. What constitutes ‘kind’, ‘cruel’, or ‘inhumane’ treatment of an animal is not a given and it varies depending upon historical, geographic, and cultural contexts. It also, in large part, depends on the species of animal under consideration. It is, therefore, these encounters between a viewer and an image that can expand our understanding of animal–human history.

So, how do we do this? What are the practical first steps a historian interested in animal–human history can take? This kind of work is not without its challenges. As mentioned above, archives, art galleries, and museums tend to have collections that centre on human narratives and achievements – even if records or traces of non-human animals are present they are likely organised and catalogued in such a way that makes doing animal–human history rather convoluted. For instance, the metadata or finding aids for a particular image or collection might not even mention animals, but this gap in the record-keeping does not mean they are actually absent. I recently encountered an archival photograph of a man posing with a horse-drawn sleigh in front of a building of historical significance to the local community in which the archive was situated. Both the building and the man were mentioned in the accompanying documents and metadata, but it was as if the horse was invisible.

He was not acknowledged even though he played a central role in the scene that was represented in the image – without a horse to pull the sleigh, the man would not have arrived at the building of interest! I would not have found this image by searching in the finding aids or catalogues – I found it simply by flipping through a file of material on an unrelated topic. I mention this anecdote to highlight that those interested in doing animal–human history need to be persistent and vigilant as they work through historical material. Representations of animals are abundant in most archives, but they often fall through the cracks of official organisational systems. Therefore, we need to think creatively about where we might encounter representations of animals in the existing historical records. As Susan Nance has noted, ‘because we tend to mentally edit animals out as inconsequential, that evidence of animal life is often hidden in plain view in sources we do know’.³⁶

There are many challenges faced by those trying to piece together animal–human history. Institutions that foreground animal–human history – institutions such as the *American National Museum of Animals & Society* – do exist, but they are few and far between.³⁷ Further, the archives of organisations focused on relationships between animals and humans (for example, animal advocacy organisations) are often understaffed or inaccessible to researchers. Smaller organisations from previous eras have sometimes closed and gone out of business, and finding traces of their work and advocacy/educational material can be hit-or-miss. At times, descriptions of images exist but there seems to be no physical trace of the original pictures these descriptions refer to. It is also important to be aware that collecting practices shape what was preserved. For example, in the case of animal advocacy, much of the material produced is ephemeral (pamphlets on cheap paper, for example), and, as such, these items have not always been collected, preserved, or valued in the same way as other forms of visual culture have been. And, finally, we need to look beyond the most famous or celebrated pictures that have been deemed worthy of study by art historical discourses. As the Landseer example above demonstrates, well-known and celebrated pictures can certainly provide a useful avenue for exploring animal–human histories, but, in many cases, pictures that were much discussed and widely circulated in previous eras are all but neglected in twenty-first century writings about images.

We need to cast a wide net if we are genuinely interested in thinking about animal–human histories through visual culture. As the example of the 1887 Royal Academy exhibition I began this chapter with demonstrates, exhibition reviews can be a useful tool for getting a sense of how specific images were exhibited and discussed in previous eras. In the case of animal-themed imagery, we need to be prepared to look beyond the expected sources of periodicals focused on art and culture. As we have seen, organisations such as the RSPCA also routinely wrote about pictures in previous eras. These alternative sources can provide different narratives about the pictures on display and these different kinds of conversations can open up new ways of thinking about old pictures.

Welcome Morsels

For the remainder of this essay I want to focus on two specific examples of artworks that were singled out in the RSPCA’s review of the 1887 Royal Academy

exhibition: Nightingale's *Welcome Morsels* (c.1887) and Caldwell's *For the Safety of the Public* (c.1887). These examples were two among many that were discussed in the review in *The Animal World*. My intention here is not to give a comprehensive synopsis of either the exhibition or the RSPCA's take on it. Rather, I have singled out a couple of pictures that, in the context of this chapter, can illustrate how we might start to think about art and visual culture as tools for framing animal–human histories.

Leonard Nightingale's *Welcome Morsels* (Figure 11.2) is a tender painting of a young girl offering food to two white goats.³⁸ Of this picture, the RSPCA reviewer expressed interest in obtaining copyright clearance to reproduce the painting in the *Band of Mercy*, a sister publication aimed at teaching children to be kind to animals.³⁹



Figure 11.2 Leonard Nightingale, *Welcome Morsels*, exhibited at the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1887.

Collection: Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna O Waiwhetu, Christchurch, New Zealand, reproduced with permission.

This kind of humane education was an important part of nineteenth-century animal advocacy, and often drew upon pictures to convey lessons of kindness and compassion to young people.

The relationship between humans and animals is the focus of Nightingale's picture. The girl stands with her back against a brick building, tentatively holding out some leafy green treats while the two goats – one smaller than the other, quite likely a mother and her kid – look at the girl and the food she is offering with great interest. Their heads are cocked and their ears are alert as they consider the offer. The two goats stand very close to one another, indicating a strong familial bond. There is, however, a safe distance between the girl and the goats – they have not yet decided whether or not to accept the treats. The goats, in other words, are shown as having agency, they are active participants in this exchange and are deciding how close they want to get to the girl. The title – *Welcome Morsels* – suggests that the goats are happy to be given food, but their body language indicates a bit of timidity as they assess the situation.

In the moment that Nightingale depicts, the relationship between the beings in this picture is still one that is characterised by a sense of uncertainty. The goats and the girl are tentatively checking one another out, assessing the situation, but there is no indication of a close relationship between the three pictured in this image. We might safely assume, in other words, that these goats are not this girl's pets, as the familiar tenderness that often accompanies pictures of children and their pets is absent in this image. What, then, is the relationship depicted here? A likely explanation given the history of nineteenth-century British agriculture is that these goats are being kept for either milk or meat, or both.⁴⁰

Nightingale's *Welcome Morsels* was purchased immediately after the 1887 Royal Academy exhibition by Frederick Leighton, who was then the President of the Royal Academy. Leighton purchased the picture on behalf of the Canterbury Art Society and arranged for it to be shipped to New Zealand along with four other pictures from the same exhibition.⁴¹ This painting was given to the Robert M'Dougall Art Gallery (now the Christchurch Art Gallery) in 1932 and it remains in this collection to the present day.⁴² This painting, then, has been in New Zealand for most of its history. How does this context shape the way that this image has been read?

Goats are not native to New Zealand, and historical records point to this animal being introduced to the area by Captain James Cook in the eighteenth century.⁴³ Goats have been called 'the most destructive introduced herbivore', and there are now a large number of feral goats in New Zealand, many of whom are believed to be descendants from the original animals Cook brought with him.⁴⁴ The New Zealand Department of Conservation classifies these feral goats as 'pests' and is actively working to manage these populations as they are deemed a threat to native species.⁴⁵ The contrast between this ecological reality and the description of this image as being 'a small painting of quaint appeal' is significant.⁴⁶ Undoubtedly, at least some of those who viewed this painting in its New Zealand home would have had prior knowledge of the region's feral goat problem. As Kim Todd articulated in *Tinkering With Eden*, the relationships that exist between 'introduced' and 'native' species are always complex and often have colonial undertones. As Todd convincingly argues, the introduction of species to an area says a lot about how humans 'imagine their relationship

with other species'.⁴⁷ But we also need to think about the agency and lived realities of the individuals at the heart of these tensions, both human and animal. What was the experience of those first goats introduced to New Zealand? Had they ever been on a boat before? Were they terrified? How well did they adapt to life in this unfamiliar landscape? What was life like for their descendants, the goats who were living in New Zealand in the nineteenth century when this picture arrived in that country? We may never be able to definitively answer these questions, but we can draw upon both existing historical records (documents related to Cook's voyage, for example) as well as research from the fields of biology and cognitive ethology to make some educated guesses about what these experiences might have been like for the goats of New Zealand. Since we are interested in animal–human history, we might also ask what life was like for the individual human citizens of New Zealand who shared their homeland with goats? At which points did the two species overlap and interact? How can Nightingale's painting help frame nineteenth-century discourses on introduced species and agricultural practices in New Zealand? How, in turn, can nineteenth-century agricultural and natural history writings from New Zealand help make sense of this picture?

Even though *Welcome Morsels* was painted in Britain and brought to New Zealand, many of those who viewed Nightingale's painting in its new home would undoubtedly have had their readings of this picture shaped by their individual and localised knowledge of goats in the New Zealand landscape. Some might have been from farming families, and the scene of a young girl attempting to foster a relationship with two goats might have made them smile wistfully. Others may have been government employees working actively to 'manage' feral goat populations in New Zealand, and Nightingale's picture may have conjured up more negative responses. Today many viewers undoubtedly look upon this picture as an example of sentimental Victorian art. For historians working on animal–human history, consideration of these different kinds of encounters are of prime importance.

For the Safety of the Public

Edmund Caldwell's picture entitled *For the Safety of the Public* (Figure 11.3) was also mentioned in the RSPCA review of the annual Royal Academy exhibition. Caldwell's painting is of a small fox terrier puppy wearing a muzzle so large that it stands in marked contrast to the diminutive size of his body. This picture was painted in direct response to a flashpoint incident in the history of human–animal relationships in England, and it is thematically related to debates about muzzling dogs to prevent the spread of rabies and hydrophobia in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁴⁸ Caldwell's painting focuses on a topic that was extremely contentious at the time, the mandatory muzzling of dogs in London due to fear of rabies and hydrophobia. In the summer of 1886 things reached a fevered pitch on this front due to the so-called 'mad-dog of Baker Street' incident.

The dog at the centre of this sad tale was a spaniel named Dash, the beloved companion of a woman who lived in the neighbourhood most famous for its association with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous fictional detective, Sherlock Holmes. On the morning in question – 14 June 1886 – Dash was served his breakfast and then released



Figure 11.3 E. Gilbert Hester after Edmund Caldwell, print of *For the Safety of the Public* (original painting exhibited at the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1887).

Collection of the author.

outside to get some exercise and fresh air as was his customary daily habit. When Dash set out that morning he was wearing the requisite muzzle, but at some point the muzzle became askew. Some reports say that this was because a group of local children were teasing him, others indicate it was because the muzzle was irritating him and he was rubbing it on the ground and the bushes in an attempt to get it off. Either way, the end result was that poor Dash was mistaken for a 'mad dog', and it didn't take long for the fear and panic to spread. Policemen were called to the scene, and, in their wisdom, decided to beat poor Dash to death with their truncheons. Dash's cries were, by all accounts, heartbreaking, and one can imagine how scared and confused he must have been. This was his neighbourhood and he went for a daily stroll around it. He had no reason to be afraid on his home turf. This horrific incident so upset a woman named Fannie Revell, upon whose doorstep this was

taking place, that she ended up dumping a bucket of water on one of the officers in a futile attempt to stop the fatal beating.⁴⁹

While Caldwell's picture did not depict the 'mad-dog of Baker Street' incident per se, it was thematically related to this episode. The title of the picture – *For the Safety of the Public* – was taken directly from the 'Muzzling Order' enacted by the Metropolitan Police, and the RSPCA reported that this picture was dedicated to police commissioner Sir Charles Warren who was the Chief Commissioner of Police in London at the time.⁵⁰ Many animal welfare groups active in London at this time were opposed to the muzzling order, often resorting to visual spectacle to make their point.⁵¹ Caldwell's picture would have been part of this larger discourse and there would have been little doubt about the intended meaning of this picture in the minds of those who saw it at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1887.

As was the case with Landseer's *A Distinguished Member of the Humane Society*, there are many layers to this image. The original real-world referent for this picture was not Dash, but, rather, a puppy who belonged to a friend of the artist, a 'charming fox terrier'.⁵² Caldwell had made 'several studies' of his friend's dog and these pictures combined with the 'anti-muzzling agitation of 1886' led to the creation of this piece.⁵³ When Caldwell showed this painting to his friend he would have, undoubtedly, recognised the direct link to his own puppy. He may also have thought of Dash, but this would be an additional layer of meaning. While this painting is of a fox terrier and Dash was a spaniel, there is no doubt that many who saw this picture in 1887 would have understood the connection the artist was making between the two animals. My point here, is that it becomes difficult to untangle and separate out the histories of Caldwell's friend's puppy and Dash and the many other dogs living in London at this time. A picture of an individual animal can tell us something about the individual, but it also becomes part of a larger discourse about the species that animal belongs to and how that type of animal is treated in a given geographical and historical context.

This painting generated considerable commentary, was voted 'best animal picture' in the 1887 Royal Academy exhibition by readers of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and was described as an example of 'comic excellence'.⁵⁴ A columnist in the *Western Times* noted that all who saw this picture burst into 'fits of laughter', because it was 'so funny to see a tiny fox terrier behind a huge muzzle'.⁵⁵ But it wasn't all a laughing matter, and the *Western Times* writer concluded by linking Caldwell's picture back to the struggles dogs and their human companions had in London under the muzzling legislation at this time – 'It certainly counts *one* for the little dogs who have much to complain of under recent police regulations'.⁵⁶ Likewise, a reviewer in the *Morning Post* noted that Caldwell's picture provided a

satirical allusion to the salutary police-regulations to which dogs were very properly subjected some time ago. In the ludicrous disproportion between the small, solitary puppy and the million-headed public, whose common enemy he is declared to be, dwells the fun of the picture.⁵⁷

In other words, in the minds of many viewers and reviewers Caldwell's picture had important real-world connections to ongoing issues facing dogs and their human

companions in late nineteenth-century London. These sorts of discussions of this picture provide further context for the history of the muzzling debate in London.

As one nineteenth-century art critic noted, *For the Safety of the Public* ‘gained immense popularity’ and the resulting etching of it ‘commands a large sale’.⁵⁸ The original painting was purchased by the Baroness Burdett-Coutts, a wealthy woman who was involved in a number of philanthropic and charitable efforts, including animal advocacy.⁵⁹ Caldwell’s picture was, therefore, viewed in many different contexts and, in each case, the viewer would bring his or her own ideas, thoughts, preconceived notions, memories, and experiences to the reading of this picture.

A few years later, in 1889, the contentious issue of muzzling dogs was raised in another image, this time one that appeared as a satirical image in *Moonshine* (Figure 11.4). Here the artist J.A. Shepherd plays upon Landseer’s famous painting, *A Distinguished Member of the Humane Society*. As discussed above, by this time, Landseer’s picture was well-known in Britain. Here Shepherd satirically refers to the muzzle as something that was ‘presented by a grateful nation as a reward for his many acts of heroism’.⁶⁰ This image draws upon the sense of familiarity that nineteenth-century viewers would have with both the contentious issue of muzzling dogs and Landseer’s *oeuvre* and, once again, this picture can serve as a launching point for consideration of the lived realities of dogs in the capital at this time.

While there are some thematic similarities between these three pictures by Landseer, Caldwell, and Shepherd, there is one primary difference that is of importance to this current discussion – Edwin Landseer is a well-known and celebrated figure in art



Figure 11.4 J.A. Shepherd, *A Member of the Royal Humane Society*, published in *Moonshine*, 17 August 1889.

historical discourses while the other two artists are not. *For the Safety of the Public* is an image that is barely acknowledged in the history of art. Caldwell's picture was very popular in its day – in large part owing to the centrality of the muzzling debates in London during the late nineteenth century – but the issue and this picture have faded from the minds of most people today. This example serves as an important reminder that if we are to use images to explore animal–human history we need to be willing to look beyond the art historical canon that has been passed down to twenty-first century readers. Instead, we need to take a look at primary sources and newspaper articles to help us discover a visual history that exists outside of the art history textbooks.

Conclusion

In their introduction to a special issue of *Visual Studies* in 2003, John Grady and Jay Mechling argue that in order to achieve a 'more complete and well-rounded understanding of animal human relations' we need 'scholarship that firmly puts animals in the picture, in the places they actually occupy in our lives and activities'.⁶¹ It also means putting them in our histories, but, as discussed above, there are some distinct challenges to doing this. Scholars such as Susan Nance and Erica Fudge have noted that the repositories, documents, and material artefacts that collectively give testament to our histories are created, catalogued, valued, and maintained along distinctly human lines.⁶² If, in other words, animals do not collect and curate historical and archival material, how are we ever to know about their history? And yet, as Nance and Fudge have also argued, there are creative and important ways in which we can go back to these already assembled collections with fresh eyes and approaches to look for traces of animal histories.

Likewise, in this chapter I have argued that images can offer alternatives to official anthropocentric histories. When we interrogate pictures with a focus on animal–human history we open up the possibility of thinking about interspecies relationships in new ways. Pictures can give us a glimpse into specific human–animal relationships, but they can also challenge what we think we know about a given story, and they can also foster imaginative ways of reconceptualising our relationships with nonhuman species.

In order to work with pictures in this way, we need to be open to thinking deeply and critically about visual culture and how meaning is made through imagery. This is not a simple or straightforward process and, as the examples above demonstrate, there are many different layers of meaning that need to be considered and negotiated. We need to ask ourselves what we see in the image and how what we see might either challenge or support assumptions and ideas we have about animals. We need to ask about the choices the image-maker made, and we need to recognise that what is excluded from an image is often as important as what is included. We need to consider the context of viewing and how the location and time frame in which one encounters the image can shape the reading of it. We need to be prepared to look between the lines and in the cracks, and to recognise that archives and repositories for images tend to be set up to tell human stories, but that doesn't mean they don't also offer useful insights for rethinking *animal* history if we know where and how to look.

And, finally, we need to be prepared to think about the animals whose lives are intertwined with these images. As Stephen Eisenman has noted, ‘the image of animals, as well as their actual sight, sound and smell, has always been instrumental in their treatment by humans’.⁶³ In many cases images of animals do hold iconographic or symbolic meanings relating to human ideas, narratives, and interests, but we must not forget that they are still representations of animals and, as such, are part of a larger cultural framework that dictates how certain species are treated and valued. These representations, in other words, have real-life consequences for living, breathing, flesh-and-blood animals and, as such, we have an obligation to take them seriously.

Notes

- 1 This was the 119th annual exhibition of the Royal Academy, and it ran from May to August in 1887.
- 2 ‘A day at the Royal Academy’, *Animal World* 18, 217 (1887): 147–149, 147.
- 3 ‘A day at the Royal Academy’, 147.
- 4 S. Baker, ‘Animals, representation, and reality’, *Society & Animals* 9, 3 (2001): 189–201.
- 5 S. Cutrara, ‘Using primary sources as a form of social justice: the role of archives, museums, and community collections in visualizing different pasts and imagining different futures’, *Canada’s History*, 31 March 2016, webinar, available at www.canadashistory.ca/Explore/Webinars/Using-primary-sources-as-a-form-of-social-justice, last accessed 24 April 2017.
- 6 M. Sturken and L. Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*, second edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, 3.
- 7 G. Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*, second edition, London: Sage, 2007, 13.
- 8 Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 13.
- 9 R. Malamud, *An Introduction to Animals and Visual Culture*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, 19.
- 10 Malamud, *Introduction to Animals and Visual Culture*, 13.
- 11 S.F. Eisenman, *The Cry of Nature: Art and the Making of Animal Rights*, London: Reaktion, 2013, 18.
- 12 Eisenman, *Cry of Nature*, 197.
- 13 Eisenman, *Cry of Nature*, 11.
- 14 Eisenman, *Cry of Nature*, 197.
- 15 J. Burt, *Animals in Film*, London: Reaktion, 2002, 15.
- 16 See, for example F.L. Brown, *The City is More Than Human: An Animal History of Seattle*, Seattle WA: University of Washington Press, 2016; J. Dean, D. Ingram, and C. Sethna (eds.), *Animal Metropolis: Histories of Human–Animal Relations in Urban Canada*, Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2017; E. Fudge, ‘The history of animals’, Ruminations H-Animal Network, 25 May 2006, available at <https://networks.h-net.org/node/16560/pages/32226/history-animals-erica-fudge>, last accessed 24 April 2017; E. Fudge, ‘What was it like to be a cow? History and animal studies’, in L. Kalof (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, 258–278; L. Kalof, *Looking at Animals in Human History*, London: Reaktion, 2007; H. Kean, ‘Challenges for historians writing human–animal history: what is really enough?’, *Anthrozoös* 25, S1 (2012): 57–72; S. Nance (ed.), *The Historical Animal*, Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 2015; I.H. Tague, *Animal Companions: Pets and Social Change in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, University Park PA: Penn State University Press, 2015; H. Velten, *Beastly London: A History of Animals in the City*, London: Reaktion, 2013.

- 17 E. Fudge, 'A left-handed blow: writing the history of animals', in N. Rothfels (ed.), *Representing Animals*, Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2002, 3–18, 5.
- 18 E. Fudge, 'Foreword', in M. Few and Z. Tortorici (eds.), *Centering Animals in Latin American History*, Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2013: ix–xi, ix. In recent years there has been a rise in the phenomenon of animals as artists. This is a somewhat controversial topic and one that is beyond the scope of this chapter. For more on this see J.K. Cronin, 'Animal artists: enrichment or exploitation', *Our Hen House*, 25 November 2013, available at www.ourhenhouse.org/2013/11/animal-artists-enrichment-or-exploitation/, last accessed 24 April 2017; A.B. Kaufman and J.C. Kaufman (eds.) *Animal Creativity and Innovation*, London: Academic Press, 2015.
- 19 Fudge, 'A left-handed blow', 11.
- 20 D. Donald, *Picturing Animals in Britain, 1750–1850*, New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2007, vi.
- 21 P. Chu, *Nineteenth-Century European Art*, second edition, Upper Saddle River NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2006, 333.
- 22 J.K. Cronin, "'Popular affection": Edwin Landseer and nineteenth-century animal advocacy campaigns', in J. Castricano and L. Corman (eds.), *Animal Subjects 2.0*, Waterloo ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2016, 81–108.
- 23 A. Sekula, 'On the invention of photographic meaning', in V. Burgin (ed.), *Thinking Photography*, London: Palgrave, 1982, 84–109, 84.
- 24 J. Burt, 'The illumination of the animal kingdom: the role of light and electricity in animal representation', *Society & Animals* 9, 3 (2001), 203–228, 210. Burt argues that the work of people like Eadward Muybridge and Jules-Etienne Marey helped develop both photography of motion as well as motion pictures. The projects that Muybridge and Marey worked on often involved focusing the camera lens on the bodies of animals in motion and, as such, 'animals were an important motive force in driving the new technology' (210).
- 25 W.J.T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*, Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005, 47.
- 26 Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?*, 92.
- 27 Donald, *Picturing Animals in Britain*, 133.
- 28 M.H. Spielmann, "'A Distinguished Member of the Humane Society'", *Magazine of Art* (1891): 12–14, 12.
- 29 Donald, *Picturing Animals in Britain*, 133.
- 30 Donald, *Picturing Animals in Britain*, 133.
- 31 Spielmann, 'A Distinguished Member of the Humane Society', 12.
- 32 The position of the dog in the realm of (anti)vivisection discourses at this time was complex. On the one hand, dogs were frequently beloved pets and, as such, were symbolic not only of domesticity but also of the ways in which humans and animals could form deep emotional bonds with one another. See P. Howell, *At Home and Astray: The Domestic Dog in Victorian Britain*, Charlottesville VA: University of Virginia Press, 2015, 102–124, for vivisection as a 'distinctive threat to the Victorian home' (116). As such, this made representations of domestic dogs particularly useful in anti-vivisection literature. On the other hand, the long history of human–dog relationships 'meant physical and geographical as well as intellectual closeness' (Howell, *At Home and Astray*, 120) that led many vivisectionists to turn to dogs as subjects in their experiments.
- 33 On graphic images in animal advocacy campaigns, see E. Aaltola, 'Animal suffering: representations and the act of looking'. *Anthrozoös* 27, 1 (2014), 19–31.
- 34 Spielmann, 'A Distinguished Member of the Humane Society', 12.
- 35 Fudge, 'A left-handed blow', 15.

- 36 S. Nance, 'Introduction', in S. Nance (ed.), *The Historical Animal*, Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 2015, 1–16, 10.
- 37 For more on this LA-based museum, see www.museumofanimals.org/, last accessed 24 April 2017.
- 38 Nightingale was Principal of the Clapham School of Art in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; see C. Holme (ed.) *Arts & Crafts: A Review of the Work Executed by Students in the Leading Art Schools of Great Britain and Ireland*, London: The Studio Ltd, 1916.
- 39 'A day at the Royal Academy', 147.
- 40 For more on the intertwined history of humans and goats, see J. Hinson, *Goat*, London: Reaktion, 2015.
- 41 'Art society', *The Press* [Canterbury, New Zealand] XLIV, 6820, 3 August 1887, 2.
- 42 For Leonard Charles Nightingale, 'Welcome Morsels', see <http://christchurchartgallery.org.nz/collection/69-569>, last accessed 24 April 2017.
- 43 G.M. Thomson, *The Naturalisation of Animals and Plants in New Zealand*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922, 15.
- 44 D.R. Towns, D. Simberloff, and I.A.E. Atkinson, 'Restoration of New Zealand islands: redressing the effects of introduced species', *Pacific Conservation Biology* 3, 2 (1997): 99–124, 99.
- 45 New Zealand government, Department of Conservation, 'Animal pests A–Z', available at www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/animal-pests/animal-pests-a-z/feral-goats/, last accessed 24 April 2017.
- 46 'M'Dougall Art Gallery', *The Press* [Canterbury, New Zealand] LXVII, 20577, 20 June 1932, 8.
- 47 K. Todd, *Tinkering With Eden: A Natural History of Exotics in America*, New York: W.W. Norton, 2001, 6.
- 48 See Howell, *At Home and Astray*, 150–173; N. Pemberton and M. Worboys, *Rabies in Britain: Dogs, Disease and Culture, 1830–2000*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 133.
- 49 G. Stock, E.E. Footner, F. Revell, C.A. Dawson, and A. Kingsford, 'The Baker Street "mad-dog" case', *The Spectator*, 24 July 1886: 989–990. The Victoria Street Society for the Protection of Animals from Vivisection published a leaflet outlining this case and distributed it free of charge: see 'Notes and Notices', *The Zoophilist* 6 (1886): 86.
- 50 F. Dolman, 'Humour at the Royal Academy', *Strand Magazine* 23 (1902): 603–610, 610; 'A day at the Royal Academy', 149.
- 51 H. Kean, *Animal Rights: Political and Social Change in Britain Since 1800*, London: Reaktion, 1998, 94, 147.
- 52 Dolman, 'Humour at the Royal Academy', 610.
- 53 Dolman, 'Humour at the Royal Academy', 610.
- 54 'Our academy competition', *Pall Mall Gazette* XLVI (1887): 1–2; Dolman, 'Humour at the Royal Academy', 610.
- 55 'Our ladies' column', *Western Times* (1887), 3.
- 56 'Our ladies' column', 3.
- 57 'St. James's Gallery', *Morning Post*, 2 July 1887, 3.
- 58 M. Spencer-Warren, 'The Baroness Burdett-Coutts', *Strand Magazine* 7 (1894): 348–360, 350.
- 59 Dolman, 'Humour at the Royal Academy', 610.
- 60 'A member of the Royal Humane Society', *Moonshine*, 17 August 1889, 82.
- 61 J. Grady and J. Mechling, 'Editors' introduction: putting animals in the picture', *Visual Studies* 18, 2 (2003): 92–95, 93.
- 62 Fudge, 'A left-handed blow'; Nance (ed.) *The Historical Animal*.
- 63 Eisenman, *Cry of Nature*, 15.

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