Accommodating the Animal: Domestication in Eighteenth-Century English Literature

by

Erin Parker

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Department of English
University of Toronto

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Abstract

Eighteenth-century English writers imagined domestication as the education of animals, as a mutually beneficial contract between species, as a form of cruelty and exploitation, and as an extension of hospitality. This study analyses how these diverse literary portrayals of domestication intersect and what they can tell us about eighteenth-century Britons’ conflicted and conflicting feelings about humans’ close relationships with creatures different from, and yet similar to, themselves. I argue that representations of domestication—as an improving or destructive, collaborative or coercive process—provide valuable insights into how eighteenth-century English writers and their readers positioned themselves in relation to animals and dealt with the challenges of “accommodating” or “making room” for animals within their houses and their communities. Each chapter focuses on a different depiction of domestication and the questions it raises about the extent of animals’ capabilities and proximity to humans. I begin with texts that present domestication in terms of education and, in so doing, suggest a link between animals and children. Chapter one examines natural histories and pedagogical treatises that separate animals’ ability to learn from their possession of reason; literary responses to the learned pig and its rumored talent at spelling; and fables and stories for children that entertain the
possibility of interspecies collaboration in the classroom. In chapter two, using Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa* as a case study, I trace how seemingly progressive representations of domestication as a contract which has the informed and voluntary consent of both parties can be used to legitimise oppressive treatment. In chapter three, I explore the connections drawn between domestication and hospitality—and between pets, menagerie animals, guests, and captives—in texts by Francis Coventry, Sarah Trimmer, William Cowper, Gilbert White, and others. The thesis concludes with a brief look at the continued relevance of eighteenth-century representations of domestication today.
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**Introduction**

**Domestication: Determining the Natures of the Beast**

“[Domestication] can ennoble or debase, enlarge or diminish, strengthen or enfeeble, just as suits the present occasion,” John Aikin wrote at the end of the eighteenth century, complaining about Georges-Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon’s inconsistent use of this “vague term” in his *Histoire Naturelle*. ¹ Aikin blames Buffon for being imprecise, but this criticism is misdirected. During a period when there was very little consensus about what domestication meant for (and to) human and nonhuman animals, the only accurate definition was one replete with contradiction. Samuel Johnson’s mid-century definitions—for instance—tell only part of the story. In his *Dictionary* (1755), Johnson glosses *domestick, domesticate, and domify* as “inhabiting the house; not wild”, “to make domestic; to withdraw from the public,” and “to tame,” respectively. ² Emphasizing space more than species, these definitions capture some but not all of the nuances of domestication and they provide little insight about Britons’ wide spectrum of feelings about interspecies relationships. In this thesis I argue that literary depictions of domestication as the education of animals, as a mutually beneficial contract between species, as a form of cruelty and exploitation, and as an extension of hospitality give us a much fuller sense of eighteenth-century writers’ and readers’ deep ambivalence about humans’ close relationships with animals. These depictions demonstrate that eighteenth-century Britons’ affective responses to the domestication of animals ranged widely, from

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¹ John Aikin, *Letters from a Father to a Son, on Various Topics, Relative to Literature and the Conduct of Life* (London, 1793), 132, hereafter cited parenthetically.

self-congratulation to pity, from guilt to anger, from entitlement to doubt. They
demonstrate that some people—either genuinely, or in an effort to ease their consciences
or shift attention away from their reliance on animals for food, labour, and
companionship—believed that domestication improved the lives of animals, while others
saw domestication as the lamentable or justifiable subjugation of non-human creatures.
Finally, by testifying to eighteenth-century individuals’ conflicted and conflicting
opinions and feelings about human-animal relationships, these representations of
domestication suggest that there is something appropriate about Buffon’s “vague” use of
the word that Aikin, looking for a straightforward definition, fails to recognize and
appreciate.

Domestication is a concept that continues to be deployed in diverse ways. As
Rachel Bowlby has pointed out, the word *domestication* has been used to refer to the
processes whereby an “animal is…tamed into home life,” “the foreign or primitive or
alien [is brought] into line with the ‘domestic’ civilization and power”, a woman is
limited to a life inside the house and private sphere, or a theory “loses its radical edge,
gets tamed, is co-opted or institutionalized.”³ Although all of these may be described as
processes “whereby something initially natural, spontaneous or subversive gets pushed
into a conformity or homogeneity that deprives it of whatever made it different”, Bowlby
questions the “use of ‘domestication’ as a straightforwardly negative metaphor, in need
of no further analysis.”⁴ This thesis, in examining eighteenth-century depictions of

³ Rachel Bowlby, “Domestication,” in *Feminism Beside Itself*, ed. Diane Elam and Robyn Weigman (New
York: Routledge, 1995), 75, 73.
⁴ Ibid., 89.
humans’ domestication of animals as a good bargain for the latter, as a means of improvement, or as a gift, also challenges the assumption that domestication is, and always was, considered to be damaging. Positive and negative portrayals of animal domestication exist side by side in eighteenth-century literature, and even occasionally within the same text, bearing out the truth of Bowlby’s conclusion that domestication “is not…a firmly fixed, univocal concept.”

How fitting, then, that when the word domestication is said aloud, “what you get, none too neatly tidied away into this capiciously polysyllabic word, is ‘mess’ and ‘stickiness.’”

Messiness need not be deemed a flaw. Following Wittgenstein, David Schalkwyk observes in his study of love and service in Shakespeare that “concepts have the indefiniteness of human life because it is in the messy interactions of human life that they receive and pursue their vivacity: in varieties of practice, use, and abuse—not in any ideal system or structure.” The central premise of this thesis is that literary representations of domestication, precisely because they are complex and messy, have much to tell us about eighteenth-century Britons’ conflicted material and emotional investments in the lives of domesticated animals and about their ambivalence towards education, contract, hospitality and the other concepts with which domestication is “intertwined in the same forms of social [and linguistic] practice” (as Schalkwyk puts in with regard to service and love).

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5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., 77.
8 Schalkwyk, Shakespeare, 8, 9.
Drawing on a range of literary genres—such as natural histories, advertisements, fables, periodical essays, novels, drama, tourist guidebooks, and poetry—each chapter of the thesis examines a different representation of domestication and how it throws into question assumptions about animals’ capabilities and the extent of their similarities to humans. Some may object that portraying domestication as education or as a contract is an act of anthropomorphism, in that it ascribes to the animal certain abilities (like to learn or to consent) that are traditionally considered to be exclusive to humans, and that such portrayals consequently tell us nothing about real animals, who are neglected and passed over in the process. But these objections are based on the flawed assumption that we can locate with certainty the line that separates human from non-human. This is not possible today—twenty-first-century scientists are constantly making new discoveries about animal cognition—and it was not possible during the eighteenth century. As a result of Britain’s global exploration and colonial expansion, the number of known animal species grew dramatically during this period, as did the opportunities to study and compare them to humans. Glynis Ridley has observed that “at no previous point had the natural world appeared to expand so rapidly. And concomitant with this expansion of animals seen and classified were new ways of seeing, or thinking about, the animal kingdom.” What seemed like implausible animal behaviour one day might seem plausible the next; what one sceptic dismissed as an anthropomorphic projection might soon be discovered to

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9 Glynis Ridley, “Introduction: Representing Animals,” *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 33.4 (2010): 431. This is one of Ridley’s answers to the question that frames this special issue on animal studies: “Why devote a volume to the representation of animals in the eighteenth century?”
have a basis in scientific fact. Indeed, natural histories, the very texts which eighteenth-century readers consulted for knowledge about animals, combined the factual and the fabular. Aikin, again complaining about Buffon, writes that “he warns his readers against falling into the mistake of attributing to animals the passions and sentiments of men; yet I cannot say, that he always avoids it himself.” But even Aikin must “acknowledge[] in [Buffon’s] favour, that his personal observations have in many instances been conducted with the most patient and minute attentions” (136-37). In order to acknowledge how unsettled accounts of the animal were during this historical period, we need to revisit the view of anthropomorphism as disconnected from, unconcerned about, or cruelly negligent of, real animals, and we need to consider alternative interpretations.

There are critical precedents for us to follow in this regard. Although in The Animal That Therefore I Am Jacques Derrida stresses the importance of remaining alert to animals’ uniqueness from humans and warns against the dangers of anthropomorphism, of “assign[ing], interpret[ing] or project[ing]”, he also cautions us not to “give in to the other violence or asinanity, that which would consist in suspending one’s compassion and in depriving the animal of every power of manifestation.” Derrida recognizes that avoiding anthropomorphism is not necessarily a more ethical option for dealing with the challenges of representing the animal. In Romanticism and

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10 In the eighteenth century, comparative anatomies helped to establish that animals were creatures capable of feeling and not Cartesian beast-machines. In the twenty-first century, studies showing rooks’ ability to problem-solve using tools corroborated the Aesopian fable in which a thirsty crow drops stones into a pitcher to raise the water level (illustrating the moral that necessity is the mother of invention). For a summary of this research, see Rebecca Morelle, “Clever rooks repeat ancient fable,” BBC News, August 6, 2009, news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/8181233.stm.

the Materiality of Nature, Onno Oerlemans similarly observes that “the prohibition against anthropomorphizing animal life might itself be seen as an instrument of anthropocentrism” in that it encourages us to ignore important similarities between humans and non-humans, and to forget that we are all animals. In another article, “A Defense of Anthropomorphism,” Oerlemans notes that while “casting [animals] as fully developed and seemingly human characters robs them of their difference from us and among one another,” “not representing animals at all robs them of their subjectivity and the influence they actually have on our lives.” He identifies a more moderate category of anthropomorphism called “the plausibly hypothetical (conjectures reasonably based on current knowledge)” that traverses these two extremes in which the animal either goes unrepresented or is eclipsed by the human. Oerlemans, like Derrida, allows us to see the potential value of anthropomorphism as a means both of giving animals the benefit of doubt when we assess their capabilities and of deflating human pretensions of superiority and uniqueness. Jane Bennett has recently arrived at the same conclusion: she recommends that we “cultivate a bit of anthropomorphism—the idea that human agency has some echoes in nonhuman nature—to counter the narcissism of humans in charge of all the world.” These writers herald the rehabilitation of anthropomorphism’s reputation.

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14 Ibid., 190.

By no means am I therefore suggesting that all kinds of eighteenth-century anthropomorphism were animal-friendly, however. To give an example more thoroughly discussed in chapter two, writers who depict domestication as a contract appear to allow animals agency by suggesting that they are capable of thoughtful deliberation and consent; however, they often grant animals these abilities in order to legitimise their violent and oppressive treatment of them. In some cases, there was more to gain than lose in the admission that there were similarities between species. Whatever motivated these ostensibly anthropomorphic figurations of domestication as education, or contract, or hospitality, they nonetheless provide insight about what eighteenth-century individuals felt and understood about the animals with whom they lived, played, and worked—the animals who were closest to them in more than merely a spatial sense.

Some of the animals featured in the texts I analyse in this thesis are real, in that they actually existed over two centuries ago, such as the learned pig, the royal menagerie’s lions, William Cowper’s pet hares (Tiney, Bess, and Puss), and Gilbert White’s tortoise (Timothy). Other animals (such as most of the animals in Buffon’s *Natural History*, Goody Two-Shoes’ raven, Clarissa’s poultry) have never had lives beyond the texts, but are not allegorical figures; these creatures are “literal, if also literary,” as Tobias Menely puts it in an article on James Thomson’s *The Seasons*. Still others are tropes with a long history of symbolic associations that have become inseparable from the literal animals (such as the parrot and shrew, whose names have come to signify, respectively, “a person…who repeats the words or ideas of others

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mindlessly” and “a scolding and turbulent wife”). I think it reveals much about the period that the texts often blur the lines between the real, literal, and figurative animal, and for this reason, I am not primarily concerned with making distinctions between different literary uses of the animal in this thesis. The “real” eighteenth-century animals I focus on here, long since dead, are not accessible to us, though we can visit Timothy’s shell, now in possession of the British Museum of Natural History. Eighteenth-century writers who saw domestication as a process that “altered and disfigured” “Nature”, as Buffon describes it at one point in the *Natural History*, would likely contend that there is no “real” animal left after it has been domesticated. In all cases, I am separated by many layers of mediation from the animals I examine; they are all representations—combinations of first-hand observation, second-hand research, and imagination, in varying amounts.

My suspicion of tidy categorizations is reflected in the synchronic organization of this thesis. I want to challenge the master-narrative that, as the eighteenth-century progresses, Britons’ representations and perceptions of animals just as steadily improve, culminating in the introduction of animal rights legislation in the early nineteenth century. When studies such as David Perkins’ *Romanticism and Animal Rights* make this

17 *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “parrot” and “shrew”; hereafter, definitions from the *OED* will be cited parenthetically.

moment in history their terminus, the decision often has two unfortunate effects: it relegates earlier eighteenth-century literature to the shadows, implying that the texts of this period are unworthy of our notice, and it downplays the (continuing) fluctuation of humans’ attitudes towards animals. I resist both these inferences. Instead of charting how the literal and literary treatment of animals evolved over the course of this period, I explore interconnected permutations of the relationship between human and domesticated animal that endured throughout the century partly because they accommodated divergent agendas.

The idea of contract is the common thread that runs through all the chapters. This project grew out of my desire to know why, despite Hobbes’s declaration about the impossibility of “making covenants” with “bruit beasts”, so many eighteenth-century writers felt compelled to use contractual language in their representations of relationships between humans and domesticated animals. During the long eighteenth century, “the golden age of social contract theory,” the contract was the real or fictional basis for so many social bonds: between citizens and their government, between husbands and wives, between masters and servants, between any individuals explicitly or tacitly consenting to

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19 In Romanticism and Animal Rights (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), Perkins writes, “In England,…in the latter part of the eighteenth century, there was a change, a gradual, eventually enormous increase in the frequency of such expressions [of fellow-feeling for animals, compassion, kindness, friendship, and affection]” (ix). I am not disputing that many people at this time articulated these feelings for animals or that they meant what they said in many cases, but it is only part of a very complex picture.

an exchange of goods or services, variously defined. One’s ability to participate in contracts seemed to confirm one’s membership in a community. In chapter two, the structural centre of the thesis, I consider what eighteenth-century writers had to gain and lose by portraying domestication as a form of contract. The representations of domestication analysed in chapters one and three encourage us to look at human-animal relations from different angles, but as the detailed chapter outlines that follow show, they also relate to the contract in important ways.

In chapter one, “Species of Learning: Domestication and Education”, I explore how the intersecting languages of domestication and education in eighteenth-century writing by Locke, Rousseau, Buffon, and others, raise questions about animals’ similarities to human children and their potential to reason, to learn, and to teach—and ultimately, to participate in contracts. To enter into a contract, one needs to be able to understand its terms, to deliberate, to weigh options, and to make informed decisions: the possession of reason, in other words, is a necessary precondition of the contract. Literary representations of domestication in terms of education—the process believed to activate one’s potential for reason—thus supply the crucial foundation for thinking about animals as creatures who could participate in contracts.

In the first section of this chapter I analyse the temptations and the risks of portraying animals as obedient pupils and humans as authoritative teachers for writers who are unwilling to admit that rationality may not be exclusive to humans. The second

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section focuses on the learned dogs and pigs who entertained paying spectators by performing feats of apparent intelligence, such as spelling. Some critics claimed that these animals deserved little credit for their accomplishments because they were the products of human ingenuity, credulity, or cruelty; others minimized the impressiveness of the learned animals’ tricks by calling it rote learning and in doing so connected the sapient beasts to children and pedants. In section three I consider depictions of domesticated birds and animals as teachers as well as students in two children’s texts: *The History of Goody Two-Shoes* (1765) and *The Teaching Parrot* (c. 1800). While these texts show animals and children collaborating in the process of learning, they do not fully endorse such partnerships, betraying mixed feelings about the proximity that they promote and suggest already exists between humans and nonhumans.

“To Herd with Mankind: Domestication and Cruel Contracts in *Clarissa*” examines the overlap between two seemingly contradictory representations of domestication: as a mutually beneficial contract between humans and beasts, who are both implicitly depicted as conscious agents capable of making decisions and (at least, tacitly) consenting, and as a form of exploitation and cruelty. These figurations of domestication problematically intersect in Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa*, a novel that features few literal animals, but is indebted to the author’s earlier participation in the fable tradition. Drawing on the rhetoric of taming to describe the reform of two of its characters, Anna Howe and Robert Lovelace, *Clarissa* is a valuable counterpoint to texts about animals because it demonstrates the extent to which contemporary ideas about domestication and wildness had become part of the cultural consciousness. In sections two and three, I read Anna’s domestication in light of the eighteenth century’s brutally
violent and immensely popular shrew-taming farces, and examine how her taming is linked to pregnancy, viewed as a retroactive sign of consent. By portraying Anna as a “vixen” who relishes taming “lion-hearted” suitors and by registering her tacit assent to her own domestication, Richardson reassures readers that they can feel good about Anna’s taming because she has not been unjustly or cruelly treated. Yet the novel’s preoccupation with the rape of Clarissa should make us all the more wary of Richardson’s efforts to make the domestication of Anna seem consensual. In section four I turn to Lovelace, who depicts himself as both perpetrating and suffering from the cruelties of domestication. Portraying Clarissa as a bad pet-keeper and himself as a mad dog and baited bear, Lovelace justifies his violent behaviour as a legitimate response to attempted domestication. Lovelace associates domestication with a perverse version of the contract: revenge, an exchange which is mutually harmful rather than beneficial. The novel, by providing evidence of Clarissa’s benevolence towards real animals, encourages us to be sceptical of Lovelace’s claims, but his insistence on the cruelty of taming, whether he is the perpetrator or victim, makes visible the history of violence underlying Anna’s ostensibly contractual domestication. Moreover, the text repeatedly presents “tameness” in a negative light, making it difficult to reconcile its conflicting positions on the virtues of domestication. Richardson’s novel ultimately tells us much about eighteenth-century individuals’ contempt for, and reliance on, domesticated animals and their fear of and attraction to wild animals.

In chapter three, “Be our Guest: Domestication and Hospitality,” I analyse texts that present domestication as a form of hospitality, itself a kind of contract between host and guest which nonetheless disavows its resemblance to commercial systems of
exchange. I consider how eighteenth-century pets’ often extravagant ways of life—their intimate cohabitation and shared meals with humans—enabled analogies with guests who were lavishly treated by their hosts. Describing pet-keeping in terms of hospitality, the eighteenth-century texts examined in this chapter raise questions about the motivations behind each practice, about the benefits, dangers, and responsibilities of close interspecies relationships for all parties, and about animals’ capacity to reciprocate favours and feelings. Section one examines Francis Coventry’s *Pompey the Little* (1751) and Sarah Trimmer’s *Fabulous Histories* (1786), texts that view the idea of interspecies hospitality with scepticism and hostility. Sections two and three consider William Cowper’s and Gilbert White’s perspectives on their own pet-keeping practices. In *The Task* (1785) and several other works, Cowper depicts himself as a benevolent caretaker who generously provides shelter, food, and protection for his apparently grateful hares, but this representation of his pet-keeping coexists uneasily with the more sceptical and impartial accounts of interspecies hospitality we find elsewhere in his writings. In *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* (1789) and his journals and letters, Gilbert White presents his tortoise Timothy as a grateful guest and a desperate hostage, as a scientific curiosity and a beloved pet. The fourth section of this chapter considers literary depictions of eighteenth-century menageries and their animals, many of whom are treated as if they were “national pets”. Hospitality is central to menageries in several ways. As attractions for tourists and curious visitors, both royal and privately-owned menageries were part of what we might now call “the hospitality industry”, a phrase which foregrounds the commercial aspects of hospitable encounters that are so often downplayed. Living in spaces described as sanctuaries or prisons, menagerie animals
also occupied a variety of positions in hospitable encounters with humans: they are sometimes represented as guests, as hosts, as hostages, or as gifts.

The title of my thesis takes its inspiration from the third chapter and the central role that space plays in the etymology and definitions of domestication. This thesis considers the degree to which writers of the long eighteenth century “accommodate the animal” not only in the sense of providing shelter and sharing their homes and resources with domesticated beasts as a deferential host might accommodate a guest, but also in the more figurative sense of “making room” for creatures different, and yet similar, to themselves. Whether or not the adjustment, adaptation and compromise which this term evokes were successfully achieved in actual interactions between humans and beasts during this century is in some ways beside the point of my thesis. I have been, and continue to be, more fascinated by what the various relationships forged between domesticated animals and humans look like from the interested perspective of a range of eighteenth-century texts.

Although the third chapter is particularly indebted to Jacques Derrida’s work on hospitality, the thesis as a whole registers the tremendous impact he also made on the fields of literary and animal studies. The idea that animals have the capacity not just to react but to respond, which appears in various permutations throughout The Animal That Therefore I Am, provides the basis for this thesis’s sustained interest in reciprocity. It is a testament to the significance of animals in the eighteenth century that Derrida often turns to the literature of this period to test his philosophical speculations, even if he does not
dwell on it for as long as literary scholars are able to do.\textsuperscript{22} My thesis is necessarily less theory-centred than is the work of those who approach the subject of animals from a philosophical background. Analysing literary representations in depth and attending to their cultural contexts are my priorities, ones that position this dissertation closer to the work currently being done by literary historians than by those who approach similar material from an ecocritical, humanist, or post-humanist perspective, though I would like to think we are all participating in the same conversation.\textsuperscript{23}

This is an exciting moment for animal studies and for those who contribute to it. Bringing together scholars from diverse backgrounds who all share the belief that “the old ways of thinking about humans and (other) animals must be discarded or transcended”, animal studies has recently gained prominence and legitimacy within the humanities.\textsuperscript{24} Although animal studies is a relatively new field, it has grown out of decades of important work on the environment and identity politics (to name only a few important influences). \textit{Accommodating the Animal} registers the influence of the approaches that lie at the origins of animal studies: traditionally marginalized groups—such as children, women, servants, and foreigners—figure significantly in my analysis of

\textsuperscript{22} See, for example, Derrida’s lectures in \textit{The Beast and the Sovereign, Volume II}, trans. Geoffrey Bennington, ed. Michel Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet, and Ginette Michaud (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011), in which Daniel Defoe’s \textit{Robinson Crusoe} is one of Derrida’s central texts.

\textsuperscript{23} In “Speciesism, Identity Politics, and Ecocriticism: A Conversation with Humanists and Posthumanists,” \textit{The Eighteenth Century} 52.1 (2011), Lucinda Cole, Donna Landry, Bruce Boehrer, Richard Nash, Erica Fudge, Robert Markley, and Cary Wolfe discuss the distinctions and overlap between these approaches to the question of the animal.

\textsuperscript{24} Part of the October 2008 issue of \textit{The Chronicle of Higher Education} that announced the official arrival of animals studies as a field, Jennifer Howard’s article “Creature Consciousness” suggests that this shared belief is the “one thread that ties together” the diverse “practitioners of animal studies” (http://chronicle.com/article/Creature-Consciousness/48804/).
literary portrayals of domestication. Even as animals remain my primary focus, this thesis takes part in critical discussions about representations of gender and class in eighteenth-century literature. Animal studies is all about crossing boundaries and destabilizing categories; so too is domestication.

*Accommodating the Animal* also supplements ongoing examinations of domesticity in the eighteenth century. Harriet Guest could just as easily be referring to domestication when she writes in *Small Change* of the language of domesticity’s “hospit[ality] to a diverse range of constructions” and the “ambivalence or strategic vagueness with which domesticity is defined” in the eighteenth century.25 “Strategic vagueness” is a phrase which succinctly captures what I find so compelling, and what John Aikin found so infuriating, about domestication’s flexibility as a concept during this period; it would be a shame to fence it in.

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Chapter One
Species of Learning: Domestication and Education

John Gay’s *Fables* (1727) features numerous learned beasts and animal teachers. An elephant capable of reading Greek frequents a bookshop and questions a natural historian’s possession of reason. A mastiff who suffers a violent death because of his upbringing—“beneath a butcher train’d,” he “Must like [his] tutor, blood pursue”—teaches readers the perils of choosing the wrong tutor for their children. A sage shepherd claims nature as his school, insisting that “ev’ry object of creation / Can furnish hints to contemplation” and crediting the bee, the dove, and the ant as his instructors.  

In Gay’s *Fables*, education can be good or bad, depending on the lesson and the tutor, but it is certainly not limited to the human species. The animals of the *Fables* are capable of learning (and of teaching, in turn), much like the royal child to whom Gay dedicated and addressed this politically ambitious and pedagogical text, as well as its other young readers.

The fable is a genre concerned with education— with teaching children not only moral lessons, but also how to read and spell—and its feathered and furry cast of characters was considered to be central to its appeal and effectiveness as a pedagogical tool in the long eighteenth century. When John Locke, in his *Some Thoughts Concerning*

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27 The young royal addressee of Gay’s *Fables* was Prince William, Duke of Cumberland. In *A History of Augustan Fable* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Mark Loveridge finds the warning about the perils of choosing the wrong tutor in “The Bull and the Mastiff” “proleptically ironic in view of Prince William’s becoming the Butcher of Culloden in 1746” (226).
Education (1693), recommends Aesop’s Fables for juvenile readers, as a text “apt to delight and entertain a Child, [which] may yet afford useful Reflections to a grown man,” he favours editions that contain pictures of animals, for they will “at the same time…invite him to read, and afford him Matter of Inquiry and Knowledge.”

Locke implicitly recognizes that animals hold a certain fascination for children, based, perhaps, on their perceived similarity to each other. Throughout his pedagogical treatise, Locke gestures at this similarity when he likens the education of children to the domestication of animals, to “good husbandry” (171); for instance, Locke compares the task of fixing the bad habits of pampered children to “mend[ing]” “the ill and resty tricks [dogs or horses] have learned when young” (139), and advises using the “spur and reins” of rewards and punishment early on when children are still “tractable” (152, 146).

Representing education in terms of domestication and ménage, Locke’s text, like the fable itself, suggests an affiliation between animal and child, and interpellates both as learning beings, if not (yet or fully) rational ones.

As this chapter will show, eighteenth-century writers also portrayed domestication as the education of animals, as a process that changed them for the better by giving them access to opportunities for intellectual advancement that were unavailable in the wild. In this scenario the human is the benevolent and more knowledgeable teacher, the animal an ignorant student; the superimposition of one hierarchical relationship onto another strengthens both. Yet if children became “human through

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education” (as Kant would put it), then what transformative effect might education have on animals? Education was often viewed as the process that activated children’s latent potential for reason, the prerequisite that allowed them to enter contracts and otherwise be contributing members of their communities. Improved by education, the animal might likewise fulfill the conditions of contract. The connections drawn between education and domestication raised possibilities that some were reluctant to accept—that animals’ underdeveloped rationality resulted from a lack of opportunity rather than innate incapacity and that the bond that often formed between children and animals resulted from a mutual recognition of similarity.

Not everyone wanted to foster these interspecies connections, even as they acknowledged their inevitability. One of the reasons that Jean-Jacques Rousseau gives for refusing to let his young pupil read fables is that the genre frequently encourages children to become “fond” of the wrong animals, to identify with the foxes and wolves who are meant to be negative examples. In Emile, Rousseau complains,

In the fable of the lean wolf and the fat dog, instead of deducing from it the lesson of moderation designed, he is encouraged to licentiousness. I shall never forget the circumstance of once seeing a little girl, quite distressed by being teized with this fable, in order to make her docile and tractable. It was sometime before the cause of her tears came to be known; which, however, was at length discovered:

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the poor child was heartily tired of her chain; she felt her neck galled, and was very sorry she was not in the condition of the wolf. (1:193)

A child’s resistance to domestication and docility seems to trouble Rousseau, who, in his other pedagogical writings, compares children to “lions” that must be “tamed by kindness” by their tutors/trainers, for after you “get them to love you,” “you may make them walk on red-hot irons.” Rousseau suggests that some animals are better models for children’s behaviour than others, but children do not always imitate the right (that is, the intended) ones. Children easily relate to animals; indeed, Rousseau implies that it is natural for them to do so, given that children “do[] not perceive [themselves] to be…of any species” in particular (2:154). But these relationships, he suggests, need to be monitored and mediated by adults.

Rousseau also seems to object to the idea that fables give children an inflated sense of animals’ capabilities. Because children, due to their own imperfect understandings, cannot “distinguish between [the animal’s] natural character and that which is given him in fable,” the tutor must “describe the nature of the fox” (in the example Rousseau provides) and presumably disabuse the student of the notion that this animal is as clever and cunning as it is represented to be (1:187). In his critical discussion of the fable Rousseau emphasizes the mental limitations of the animal and of the child, who has not yet reached “the age of reason” and cannot see anthropomorphism for what it really is (1:136-37). Yet, as most eighteenth-century readers already knew, many animals did show evidence of intelligence, and many human lives depended on their

31 Qtd. in Alan Richardson, Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 50.
ability to learn how to perform difficult tasks. Jayne Lewis notes that the “stupendous Prodigies” like “speaking Dogs, and dancing Elephants [that were] in abundance” in eighteenth-century culture and literature made fables featuring sapient beasts “look more like chapters in a natural history than flagrant fictions.” Many of the fables that were popular in the eighteenth century were not, as Derrida says “discourses of man, on man,” but instead showed an interest in contemplating “real” animals and the scope of their abilities, in examining interspecies relationships, and in critiquing assumptions about the differences between humans and non-humans. Eighteenth-century fables, Heather Keenleyside has argued, “raise questions about the relationship between vehicle and tenor that are at the same time questions about the relationship between animals and humans.”

Thus, the questions that Gay’s Fables raises (however disingenuously) about animals’ capacity to reason, to learn, to teach, and to resemble human children, cannot readily be dismissed. These are the same questions that other eighteenth-century writers took seriously, and they did (and do) have implications for how humans perceived and treated “real” animals. If domestication, and its accompanying opportunities for close interaction with, and observation of, people, could make animals more like humans by activating their latent potential for reason, then long-held assumptions about the

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32 Lewis, The English Fable, 159; the first part of her quotation comes The Craftsman 41 (April 28, 1727), while the rest is in her own words.

33 Derrida, The Animal That Therefore I Am, 37.

differences between species would need to be revised. In this chapter I examine the intersections of the language of domestication and education in texts from a variety of genres—including natural histories, educational treatises, newspaper advertisements, essays, and stories for children, as well as fables. In the first section I analyse the creation of species-specific definitions of “education”, “learning”, and “imitation” in natural histories and philosophical texts. In the second I turn to descriptions of “learned animals” and tease apart the implications of comparing relationships between humans and their domesticated animals to those between knowledgeable teachers and apt pupils or dunces. The third and final section considers the consequences of representing animals as the peers of children and collaborators in their education, as many children’s texts of this period do. I argue that all of the texts examined in this chapter, despite their diverse interests, articulate their writers’ and readers’ ambivalence about the educability of animals, in particular, and about education, in general.

1 “Educating Animals”

When seventeenth-century academics debated one of their favourite topics—whether or not dogs could form syllogisms—the larger question at issue, Bruce Boehrer argues, was whether and “to what extent intelligence and stupidity may be gauged independently of

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35 In Brutal Reasoning: Animals, Rationality, and Humanity in Early Modern England (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), Erica Fudge examines the “crucial role” reason plays in early modern constructions of humanity and animality, and, in one of her case studies, a famous antecedent of eighteenth-century learned animals, William Bankes’s horse Morocco (3). Providing a strong foundation to build upon, Fudge’s work makes it possible for me to focus more narrowly on domestication and its perceived impact on animals’ intelligence and to shift my attention to a period when the cultural obsession with ideas of “enlightenment” and rationality vied both with concern about the increasing accessibility of education and with debate about what education was meant to do.
the deliberative faculty.” In other words, could one credit a beast with intelligence and
still maintain that it lacks the capacity for reason, without contradicting oneself? Buffon,
the author of the influential and widely translated *Histoire Naturelle*, seems to have
believed this was possible, and he was not alone. For Buffon and many other eighteenth-
century writers (such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Immanuel Kant), it was mostly a
matter of careful definition. At the same time that he praises various animals’
“intelligence,” “understanding”, “sagacity”, and capacity for “learning” and
“education”—all words found throughout the *Natural History*—Buffon separates these
attributes from the possession of reason. Yet his text (and others similarly engaged in
thinking about resemblances, differences, and interactions between non-humans and
humans) nonetheless conveys mixed messages about the extent, implications, and
desirability of animals’ educability.

According to Buffon, there are two kinds of education, only one of which
animals, as well as human children, experience. This Buffon calls “the education of
necessity” or “natural” education (429). Referring to the process whereby “a young
animal as well by enticement as example, in a few weeks learns to perform the actions of
its parents” (428)—the lessons, in other words, it requires for survival—Buffon’s
“education of necessity” captures the importance of this developmental stage, but also its
inevitability (*OED*, s.v. *necessity*, 4a, 3a). This idea of inevitability diminishes the
agency of both the young animals and its parents, who are represented not as pupils and

36 Bruce Boehrer, *Animal Characters: Nonhuman Beings in Early Modern Literature* (Philadelphia:
University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 15. The rumoured ability of dogs to make syllogisms is also listed
among other canine virtues in Francis Coventry’s *Pompey the Little; or the Life and Adventures of a Lap-
knowledgeable teachers, but as creatures who have little control over their own
development and the development of their offspring. Buffon gives the credit to “nature”
by choosing “natural education” as a synonym for “education of necessity”, and
Rousseau does much the same thing when he writes that education “from nature”
“depends not on ourselves” and when he denies animals the “faculty of self-
 improvement.” Defined as being outside animals’ control, this kind of education is not
especially empowering, at least for animals.

Human children also undergo the “education of necessity”, but Buffon quickly
points out that children experience this kind of education differently than young animals
do, and that it has different results. Thus an “education of necessity” is common ground
for humans and animals in name only. Because the child grows at a slower pace than the
young animal, he “requires a number of years to attain th[e] degree of perfection” that the
animal reaches “in a few weeks” (3:426). Speed is not a measure of superiority here,
however. The longer duration of children’s “natural education” entails a longer period of
close interaction with their parents, which has numerous benefits for the child, for “while
[parents] attend to the care of the [child’s] body, they cultivate the understanding at the
same time, and the time which was required to strengthen the first turns to the profit of
the latter” (3:426-27). By contrast,

animals quit their young, as soon as they find they are able to provide for
themselves, and soon after know each other no longer by parental or filial tye; so
that all attachment, and all education ceases in them very early, and at the

37 Emilius and Sophia, 1:4, 5; Rousseau, Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, trans. Franklin Philip, ed.
moment assistance is no longer necessary. Now this time of education being so short, the produce must be but very small. (427)

Proving that “those whose education is the longest, are also those that seem to have the greatest share of knowledge,” the elephant who “takes up the longest time of all in its growth” is “also the most intelligent animal”, Buffon points out, though he is also careful to remind readers that all animals are “deprived of the thinking principle” (3:429).

Rousseau likewise stresses the early termination of animals’ education in his *Discourse on Inequality*, claiming that “the animal at the end of a few months already is what it will remain all its life, and its species will be at the end of a thousand years what it was in the first of those thousand years” (33). As Buffon does, Rousseau adds that no matter the gains of those first few months, all animals are “destitute of intelligence” (33). Kant takes it one step further, denying non-human creatures even the most modest of improvements: the animal, he writes, is “already all that it can be because of its instincts; a foreign intelligence has already taken care of everything for it” (*Lectures*, 437). This association of the animal with stasis rather than progressive development is also neatly expressed in one of Kant’s names for animal education: “maintenance” (448). The other name he chooses for the “education part which the human being has in common with animals” is “physical education”, a phrase which places emphasis on the animal body, rather than mind (448).

The child’s “education of necessity” not only differs in length and consequence from the animal’s education; it is also succeeded, Buffon maintains, by a second kind of education denied to animals:

As the child grows up, its education is no longer purely individual or natural, as its parents communicate to it not only what they possess from Nature, but also
what they have received from their ancestors, and the society of which they form a part. It is no longer a communication formed by isolated individuals, confined like animals only to transmit their simple faculties, but an institution of which the whole species partakes, and the product of which constitutes the bonds and basis of society. (Buffon, 3:429)

The education Buffon describes above resembles Kant’s “formation”, which includes “instruction” and is deemed unnecessary for most—but, significantly, not all—animals, “for none of them learns anything from their parents, except birds, in their singing” (Lectures, 438). This is an important exception and Kant neither fully considers the implications, nor makes clear if or how he has determined that birdsong is the only exception to the rule. He recounts the process whereby birds learn to sing in both his Lectures on Pedagogy and Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View (1798). “This [singing] they are taught by their parents, and it is touching to see when, just like in a school, the mother bird sings to her young with all her might and they try to bring out the same tones with their small throats,” Kant writes in Lectures, and, to prove that this behaviour is learned and not instinctual, he describes the experiment he conducted by removing canary eggs from a nest and replacing them with sparrow eggs. He concludes that “It is indeed very admirable that each species of bird, through all the generations, retains a certain main song” (439). Kant’s affective reaction of “admira[tion]” to this “touching” spectacle seems to suggest that he considers the teaching of birdsong to be a curiosity rather than evidence which prompts the revision of his theory about the limitations of animal learning. Even if Kant does not register the significance of his observations about birdsong, though, they nevertheless seriously challenge his and others’ understandings of animal education, including Buffon’s belief that the transmission of knowledge from generation to generation is restricted to humans.
Up to this point, the series of definitions established by Buffon, Rousseau, and Kant that we have surveyed have tried to sever humans from animals. Animals’ “education of necessity” is imagined to be wholly separate from, and inferior to, the kind of education humans undergo in part because humans supposedly have no hand in it. Yet Kant’s description of his experiment, which involves the breaking up of animal families, makes us confront the ways that humans alter, disrupt, interfere or otherwise influence the course of animals’ educations. For instance, in his remarks on the brevity of animals’ “education of necessity” and its “very small” “produce”, Buffon does not consider the possibility that humans also influence the length of animals’ so-called “natural” education by prematurely taking parents away from their offspring—a “custom” which has been taking place “from time immemorial” in the case of mares and colts (1:376)—or by truncating their growth, either by altering them physically or putting them to death. These unnatural interventions in the lives of animals make it difficult to determine their natural potential. Elsewhere in the *Natural History*, however, Buffon acknowledges as much. Subjecting wild animals to human dominion, he laments, “deprives them…of every avenue to society, and destroys the very root of their intelligence”, preventing us from accurately judging the extent of their capabilities: “What they are become, and what they will become still, is perhaps an inadequate indication of what they have been, or of what they might be” (2:86). Here humans are held responsible for curtailing the mental and social capacity of animals, though later Buffon once again sets restrictions on what animals might accomplish without human interference: “there remain no traces of their ancient talents and industry, except in those countries where man himself is a stranger, where, unvisited by his controuling power, for a long succession of ages, their little
talents have had time to come to their limited perfection” (2:280-81). Qualifying adjectives such as “little” and “limited” reassert animals’ relative inferiority. Again and again, Buffon mentions the environmental or external restrictions on animal education, only to immediately emphasize the greater influence of innate constraints, such as the lack of “the thinking principle.”

The possibility that animals are prevented from realizing their potential is also entertained, though often in jest, by other notable eighteenth-century writers besides Buffon. Samuel Johnson’s reported comments about the learned pig suggest that one only rarely sees a swine perform such feats of erudition—including spelling and mathematical calculation—because pigs’ lives are prematurely cut short. “The pigs are a race unjustly calumniated,” he apparently remarked. “Pig has, it seems, not been wanting to man, but man to pig. We do not allow time for his education, we kill him at a year old.”

Johnson is being playful here but his argument about pigs’ wasted potential has serious implications. His observations about the animal’s lack of opportunity to develop and show evidence of its cognitive capabilities are strikingly similar to Mary Wollstonecraft’s later complaints in the second Vindication (1792) about the causes of women’s suspension in a state of “perpetual childhood.” She argues that the limitations that both women and the learned pig face are environmental, rather than innate. By writing about the institutional infantalization of women in the same paragraphs where she compares mis-educated women to caged birds and spaniels, Wollstonecraft, like Johnson,

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implies that domesticated animals might be creatures suffering from artificially arrested development.

Domesticated animals are “permanent juveniles” in another sense as well. Neoteny is the process whereby domesticated animals have come to retain the juvenile traits, both physical and behavioural, of their wild ancestors (for instance, mature dogs have shorter muzzles and rounder heads than mature wolves and exhibit an infantile submissiveness and playfulness towards humans). Although Stephen Budiansky disagrees with the idea that “we neotenize our animals” through selective breeding partly because we want to “relegate[]” them “as docile and playful ‘children’…to a separate category, without full citizenship in the world”, he agrees it is “worth considering” the role, however small, that human intentions have played in that process. He allows for the possibility that “in the early stages of domestication, unconscious human preferences could well have reinforced the selection of neotenic traits that originally arose as an adaptation to a rapidly changing environment.” Budiansky seems to downplay the effects of nurture here, yet his revelation that “highly bred dogs, such as the Pekingnese,…retain into adulthood characteristics actually found in fetal wolves” suggests that breeding can have a more discernible (indeed, detrimental) impact than is elsewhere acknowledged. The word neoteny was coined late in the nineteenth century, but Wollstonecraft makes an oblique reference to the process in A Vindication of the

41 Ibid., 107.
42 Ibid., 98.
Rights of Woman. Arguing that “servitude not only debases the individual, but its effects seem to be transmitted to posterity,” Wollstonecraft asks her reader, “Considering the length of time that women have been dependent, is it surprising that some of them hug their chains, and fawn like the spaniel? ‘These dogs,’ observes a naturalist, ‘at first kept their ears erect; but custom has superseded nature, and a token of fear is become a beauty’” (88). These “slightly less erect ears” are a neotenic trait, according to Budiansky. After enough time has passed, in other words, the effects of nurture can be mistaken for those of nature. The “natural education” of (especially domesticated) animals is, then, something of a misnomer, its scope restricted in many, often nearly imperceptible, ways by humans.

By “depriv[ing] [animals]…of every avenue to society”, by cutting their lives short, and by otherwise interfering with their development, humans put Buffon’s second kind of education out of reach for non-humans. These are some detrimental effects of domestication, and yet Buffon frequently depicts domestication itself as the education of animals, instead of an obstacle to it. Minimizing the roles that animal parents play in their offspring’s development and completely disregarding how humans hinder that process, Buffon implies that animals’ learning really begins when they come into the possession of humans. Individual animals’ receptiveness to humans’ lessons varies, however. Acknowledging his readers’ reliance on the ability of animals to learn how to do certain tasks, Buffon takes a practical approach in pointing out those who are most likely to be good students. His entries on individual domestic animals frequently address

the creatures’ propensity (or resistance) to “education”. For instance, the dog is singled out as being “more susceptible of tuition than other animals” (3:70); it can be “instructed in a short time” (2:41) whereas the cat is “incapable of a regular education” (2:71). The best relationships between humans and their domesticated animals, Buffon suggests, resemble those between authoritative teachers and obedient pupils, who pay “unreserved and ready attention to the commands of [their] master”, and who accept without questioning their lower position on the hierarchy of species (3:432).

Characterising domestication as “the art of subduing animals” arising from “the talent of the mind” (1:370) and as an acquired skill that testifies to humans’ educability and their superiority over the animal, Buffon celebrates domestication as evidence of human ingenuity. As in the case of its “natural” education, the animal receives little credit for its aptitude to learn, which Buffon divorces from reflection and reason. He seems to praise animals for their ability to “learn to do a thousand times, what they have learned to do once; to do without intermission, what they only did by intervals; to do for a length of time, what they only did momentarily; to do cheerfully, what at first they did only by force; to do by habit, what they once have done by chance; to do of themselves, what they see others do” (1:357). Yet this is less a series of compliments than an accumulation of evidence of animals’ lack of reason for Buffon, who uses repetition in this sentence to further emphasize what he sees as the mechanized quality of these “operations of the animal machine.” According to Buffon’s perverse and convenient logic, the speed and success of their education are interpreted not as signs of animals’ equality with, or even superiority over, humans, but as further confirmation of their deficiency—just as the short duration of animals’ “education of necessity” signalled
minimal results. Animals’ “talent for imitation” and the fact that “the[ir] education…, though exceedingly short, is yet always attended with success”, rather than “implying that animals have mind and thought” are “proof” for Buffon “that they are absolutely destitute of them” (1:360).

Buffon may seem confident here that teaching animals is not tantamount to transforming them into intelligent beings, but his anxiety manifests itself in several other ways, one of which is his preference for the “entirely untaught” shepherd’s dog over the supposedly quickly and easily trained automatons described above. The shepherd’s dog, Buffon writes, has a “decided character in which education has no share”; he “conducts himself with an admirable intelligence, which has never been communicated to him” and his “talents form the astonishment and peace of his master, whilst, on the contrary, it requires great time and trouble to instruct other dogs, and to break them to the purposes for which they were destined” (2:51). Instead of focusing on humans’ mastery of the “art of subduing animals”, Buffon emphasizes the challenges of domestication, which seem to contradict the suggestion of providential inevitability inherent in the word *destined*. The shepherd’s dog is celebrated in terms usually reserved for the Romantic natural genius who rejects book learning as unnecessary; yet, in this case it is human instruction that is superfluous. Buffon’s valorization of a dog that requires no education in order to be useful speaks to the significant risks and inconveniences of training most animals, who are not so easily made obedient. That Buffon would be willing to give up all the credit associated with training the animal in return for untaught obedience reveals that recalcitrant pupils are a much bigger problem than he has previously let on.
For all his efforts to dismiss its significance, another cause of worry for Buffon is animals’ “talent for imitation”. Imitation is problematic for Buffon for several reasons. First, imitation is something that both humans and animals can do well. Buffon’s strategy for stressing the differences between animals’ and (at least adult) humans’ imitation again involves using the power of definitions to conveniently reinvent, and not just record, the meanings of words. Buffon devalues animal imitation as something “material and mechanical”, rather than purposeful, deliberate, and rational. He corrects individuals who, “only view[ing] the surface of things,” mistakenly believe that an ape’s ability to “counterfeit[] the gestures of man” testifies to “a design, an intelligence, a mind, while in reality, there is nothing but an affinity of figure, of motion, and of organisation” (1:358). There is “nothing free nor voluntary” in animals’ imitation in contrast to humans’ (3:430). The ape or monkey, for instance, imitates man not “because it chuses it”, but because “it can do it without choice”: “being formed like man, it can move like him” (3:430). Buffon concludes that “imitation supposes a design of copying some particular thing; the monkey is incapable of forming this design, which requires a train of thoughts and judgment; for this reason, man is able, if he chuses, to imitate the monkey, but the monkey cannot even have an idea of imitating man” (3:431).

Yet this definition does not solve all of Buffon’s problems; as he admits, children’s imitation is also undesigning and thoughtless:

Children, without perceiving it, assume the habits, borrow the gestures, imitate the manners of those they live with; they have also a great propensity to repeat, and to counterfeit, every thing they hear, and every thing they see. Young persons, who, while they are remarkable for vivacity, are also remarkable for want of thought…. [T]herefore in a superior degree do they enjoy the talent of
imitation….to which nothing is more opposite than a large portion of good sense. (1:359)

Despite Buffon’s belief that the possession of reason distinguishes humans and animals, the difference between the cognitive abilities of children and monkeys is almost imperceptible here, being only a matter of degree—the former are classed among “those who reflect least” while animals are declared to be “altogether void of reflection” (359). Julie Carlson’s recent comments on the theatrical craze in the Romantic period for child actors playing adult roles give us another fruitful way of thinking about the source of children and animals’ shared “talent for imitation”. Carlson argues that these “Infant Wonders” who dominated the stage in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were especially appealing to spectators because they were still in the process of “becoming.”

It was the children’s “latency” and “lack of distinction” that made them such good imitators, much like animals who, according to Buffon, have “nothing within them” (that is, no unique self) to “counter-act[]” whatever they imitate.

Imitation is threatening to Buffon because it draws attention to existing similarities between (especially young) humans and animals. But, just as problematically, it is also the means by which members of the same or different species may become increasingly similar. As writers of pedagogical treatises knew, imitation was one of the most common ways that individuals learned, yet it was notoriously difficult to regulate. As a result there was considerable debate about imitation’s pedagogical usefulness. For


45 Carlson, “Forever Young,” 590; Buffon, Natural History, 1:359.
instance, in *Instructions upon the Education of a Daughter* (1707) François Fénelon observes that although children’s tendency to “imitate whatever they see” stems from their “ignorance”, it can lead to self-improvement: “God surely implanted this propensity in them,” he argues, “that they might be able more easily to conform to the Good that is set before them.”46 When Locke claims in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* that “We are all a sort of chameleons, that still take a tincture from things near us”, he similarly suggests that imitation can be beneficial, for a chameleon’s ability to blend it with its surroundings is a means of self-protection, an adaptive strategy conducive to its well-being (164). However, when children are surrounded by bad examples or when they lack the guidance of adults to “direct their observation” and to identify the models to emulate or ignore, imitation can have harmful effects.

To express his anxiety about the dangers of indiscriminating imitation, Locke turns to a different kind of animal imagery which often has derogatory connotations—the imagery of the herd. Especially at public schools, where there are few adults in charge of a “mixed herd of unruly boys” (168), children’s propensity for imitation cannot be properly harnessed, Locke argues. As a result, “It is impossible to keep a lad from the spreading contagion [of Vice], if you will venture him abroad in the herd, and trust to chance or his own inclination for the choice of his company at school” (169). Locke speaks to the dangerous link between close proximity and conformity; for him, the herd represents disease, homogeneity, the absence of uniqueness and of independent

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thought. Because it is compatible with his desire to deny animals’ calculated and purposeful imitation, Buffon takes comfort in the idea of unconscious or automatic imitation, but it unsettled Locke and many of his contemporaries, who were concerned about not being able to control who the teachers of their children might be and what they might learn in their company. Because imitation can happen without authorization, even without intention, simply due to the nearness of bodies, it poses a challenge to models of education in which teachers exercise authority by determining when, where, how, and what their students learn, and belies the comfortable assumption that education could not take place without the tutor’s presence or approval.

Locke’s concerns about the herd, imitation, and unpreventable likeness, were also shared by those worried about the possibility that the physical closeness of domesticated animals and humans during the eighteenth century caused similarities across species. A minor character in Trimmer’s *Fabulous Histories* notes that “every kind of animal that I have had an opportunity of observing, seems to acquire sagacity, by a familiar intercourse with rational creatures,” though he afterwards adds the caveat: “yet, after all, they fall short of human reason.” In his discussion of Lacan in *The Animal that Therefore I Am*, Derrida similarly considers the possibility of “the domestic or tamed animal translat[ing] within itself the unconscious of man by some contagious transference or mute interiorization (the terms of which [translation] would, moreover, 

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47 Locke’s comments anticipate late-nineteenth-century theories of crowd psychology.

still need to be taken into account).”\(^{49}\) Although what exactly is transmitted differs in each passage, both Derrida and Trimmer suggest that animals may become more like humans simply by being near them, by observing them and interacting with them. (Whether the reverse is also a possibility is not considered here). But perhaps more disturbing still for humans resistant to the idea of becoming like animals through close contact is the possibility that proximity does not cause similarity but only provides the occasion for noticing pre-existing similarities.

Learned animals, such as the sapient pig that attracted Samuel Johnson’s notice, made the effects of interspecies interaction a matter of popular entertainment as well as philosophical debate. As the next section shows, the performances of learned animals raised many questions—and even more, often contradictory, answers—about the causes and extent of animals’ educability.

2 Learned Animals

Learned animals featured prominently among the remarkable diversions that delighted, disgusted, and, above all, puzzled Britons during the eighteenth century. Performing feats of apparent “intelligence” which had been assumed to be beyond their capabilities—including reading, writing, spelling, casting accounts, telling time, or solving arithmetic questions, with the help of typographical cards—these creatures challenged the boundaries which had traditionally separated humans and non-human animals.\(^{50}\) These

\(^{49}\) Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 121.

\(^{50}\) Besides the learned pig who rose to fame in the 1780s, eighteenth-century learned animals of note included “The finest Taught Horse in the World” (c.1711), the French *chien savant* (c.1729), and “the learned English Dog” said to “perform vast Variety of surprising Actions, far beyond what the late Chien
tricks were not new, nor would they go out of fashion when the century ended: as a
contributor to a 1785 issue of the Gentleman’s Magazine complained, “If the present age
has exhibited its learned horses and its learned pigs, its dancing dogs and its drumming
hares, it may be shewn that former ones have not been less diligent in degrading the
human species, by similar endeavours to exalt the capacity of the brute creation.”
William Bankes’s renowned horse, Morocco, was one of their most famous antecedents,
and for decades following the tremendous popularity of the learned pig, who arrived on
the British scene in 1783, there was no shortage of supposedly erudite swine (all named
“Toby”) whose trainers hoped to capitalize on the original’s success. Indeed, to this day,
sapient animals still fascinate us: Pyg: The Memoirs of a Learned Pig, purportedly
“edited” by Russell Potter and “written” by the first sapient swine of the eighteenth
century, was published in the United Kingdom in 2011.

While learned beasts and other seemingly rational creatures (like talking parrots)
entertained eighteenth-century spectators, they also disturbed them, more so than other
non-human performers, like dancing bears—whom Ricky Jay calls the learned animals’
“less scholarly and more athletic brethren”—or even the spectators’ own working

savant, or any other Creature of that kind, was ever capable of” (Daily Advertiser, 16 January 1752). See
also G.E. Bentley, Jr.’s “The Freaks of Learning: Learned Pigs, Musical Hares, and the Romantics,” Colby
Library Quarterly 18.2 (1982): 87-104, which brings together numerous references to learned animals
which were popular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

51 Gentleman’s Magazine 55 (May 1785).
tothetetically.
animals. Farmers and owners of domesticated animals have long depended on their beasts being trainable and capable of following directions so that they can be made to complete tasks which humans either cannot or will not do themselves. But these skills seem not to generate the same anxiety because they are perceived to require physical, rather than mental, prowess, unlike the learned animals’ mathematical calculations or spelling. Indeed, the unhesitating performance of labour by the beast of burden proves, in the view of Humphrey Primatt, a clergyman and the writer of *A Dissertation on the Duty of Mercy and the Sin of Cruelty to Brute Animals* (1776), its lack of reason: “were they capable of reason, the reflection upon their subordinate and servile condition would render them very unhappy in themselves; and, perhaps, less tractable and consequently less useful to us.”

Primatt’s statement hits on the potential threat of learned animals: if a lack of reason corresponds to unquestioning docility, reason could manifest as resistance. Certainly if an animal could legitimately spell (and, crucially, understand the words it was spelling), it could challenge its treatment by humans, expressing its objections in a common language. Aside from its ability to articulate dissent, the mere possibility of an actually learned animal also poses a challenge to traditional justifications for distinguishing between humans and animals based on the former’s possession, and the latter’s lack, of reason and facility with language. In other words, with potential (to learn, to understand, to communicate with humans) comes a kind of power animals had traditionally been denied.

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If learned animals were so unsettling, why were they so popular? There are many possible explanations. For one, the persisting popularity of learned animals may be read as a gauge of writers’ success in defusing the threat sapient beasts posed to traditional conceptions of non-humans as rationally inferior to humans. Some made the celebration of learned animals “safe” by representing them as reflections of human ingenuity. By stressing the exceptionality of a learned animal, others allowed spectators to take solace in the idea that one beast’s abilities, however extraordinary, were not representative of what the rest of its species or the brute creation, more generally, could accomplish; the word “curiosity”, so often used to describe learned animals, implies novelty and rarity, something worthy of interest because it is uncommon. Learned animals’ popularity may also have been fuelled by the surrounding controversy about whether they were frauds merely responding to their handlers’ cues (and perhaps threats of physical punishment) or genuinely intelligent beings; one advertisement for the learned pig, claiming that “neither the tongue of the most florid orator, or the pen of the most ingenious writer” could do justice to the “wonderful performance”, encouraged spectators to view and judge it for themselves rather than rely on good or bad reviews.55

As Jonathan Elmer says of nineteenth-century “impresario and con man” P.T. Barnum, what the marketers of learned animals offered, appealing to their patrons’ narcissism, was “an occasion to make a judgment” and to experience the “satisfactions to

55 Morning Post and Daily Advertiser, 25 February 1785. This article, and all subsequent newspaper articles cited in this chapter, are part of the 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers database.
be had from such interpretation.”\textsuperscript{56} That there were many critics who denounced the learned animal’s tricks as a hoax, or dismissed its display of learning as inferior and unimpressive, speaks to the spectacle’s power to “elicit” from the critics what Elmer calls “a desire for self-exemption” or “an interpretative detachment” from the naïve crowd. However, the “sceptical witness” is already a “willing participant” the moment he or she buys a ticket or enters into the debate; his or her belief otherwise is a part of the illusion. Learned animals are unlike P.T. Barnum’s objects of fascination, whose importance pales in comparison to the “interpretative dynamic” they produce, in that the sapient beasts’ performances of apparently intelligent feats also reveal and challenge the human species’ “desire for self-exemption” from the category of “animal” more generally.\textsuperscript{57} Learned animals presented an opportunity to rethink the dominant discourses about the rationality of animals, about their educability and similarity to humans. That opportunity was welcomed by some and rejected by others. But the considerable number of recorded comments about learned animals suggests both that these creatures caught everyone’s notice and that it was far from self-evident what one should make of them. This section examines some of the ways eighteenth-century writers made sense of learned animals and how they responded to the questions of animal educability raised by their performances.


\textsuperscript{57} The quotations in the three sentences above are taken from Elmer, \textit{Reading at the Social Limit}, 185, 181,184.
Learned animals were often presented as “familiar creatures made marvellous by man”, as the products of human efforts and arts. As in Buffon’s *Natural History*, where humans are commended for their masterful instruction of domesticated animals while the beasts themselves receive no credit for their education, some texts, like the “account of S. Bisset, the Extraordinary Teacher of Animals, and a Wonderful Instance of Eccentricity and Patience”, celebrated the instructor in such a way that human accomplishments overshadow the pupil’s. Lamenting that “in this age of apathy [Bisset’s] merit was but little rewarded”, the biographer describes Bisset’s career and all his former pupils. Besides the famous learned pig, whose “obstinacy” he “conquered”, Bisset’s crowning glory is a “Goldfish, which he did not despair of making perfectly tractable”. The biographer does not go into detail about the fish’s tricks, but the litany of the beasts whom Bisset turned into performers shows that it was not the pig who was especially exceptional, but his master. The text appeals to the readers’ sympathy for the trainer rather than the animal, and it ends with the proclamation that “Had the man been born to affluence, and possessed of the learning of a Sloane or a Woodward, we might have seen him courted by the Academies.” Whereas learned animals are often depicted in jest as deserving or even receiving the approbation of the Royal Academy of Sciences or some other erudite institution (a trend which I discuss in more detail below), Bisset is presented here as genuinely worthy of this kind of notice. As a eulogy, it also differs markedly in tone from those for the learned pig who, the *Gazetteer and New Daily*


59 *Oracle and Public Advertiser*, 31 July 1798.
Advertiser reports in June 1786, died “in consequence of his having swallowed some letters which he could not digest.” Bisset is portrayed here as a “singular” character; his famous pig, only one of the many animals he successfully trained. By crediting the human as the teacher directing the education of animal, these texts preserve a sense of the hierarchy of master over pupil, with the former possessing greater knowledge. The control remains in the hands of the teacher, and the writer refuses to entertain the possibility that animals can (and do) learn independently without human intervention or assistance.

Whereas some writers represented the learned animal’s mental talents as evidence of the trainer’s genius and human ingenuity more generally, thus redirecting attention away from the question of animal intelligence, others would accomplish much the same thing by using the learned animal to criticize what Burke would later call the “swinish multitude”, who were gullible and ignorant enough to be impressed by such tricks and who should be blamed for encouraging them. In other words, the focus was less on the animal’s possible intelligence than on humans’ stupidity. In January 1764, The London Evening Post published John Oakman’s “The Learned Dog—Fable VI,” which responds to the town’s fascination with the *chien savant* and the learned English dog during the previous decades. Rather than marvelling at Tray the learned dog’s “tricks and

60 *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 21 June 1786.

61 In *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Edmund Burke predicted that “Along with its natural protectors and guardians, learning will be cast into the mire and trodden down under the hoofs a swinish multitude” (69).

62 *London Evening Post*, 19 January–21 January 1764. John Oakman (c.1748-1793) was an engraver and writer of songs and novels, including *The Life and Adventures of Benjamin Brass* (1765) and *The
fancies,” a skeptical mastiff attending the show denigrates the other dim-witted spectators. The performance “May please a-while the unthinking crew,” he snarls, but “dogs of sense, as well as me, / Will all in this great truth agree, / Such parts are only of the kind / To vitiate, not improve the mind, / And therefore can’t be understood / To be of any real good.”

This is on the one hand a damning review which credits—or blames—the crowd’s lack of discernment for Tray’s popularity. And, indeed, critics often berated spectators of learned animals for having indiscriminating taste—for instance, Cowper in a 1785 letter to John Newton complains, “Alas! What is an author’s popularity worth, in a world that can suffer…a pig…to eclipse his brightest glories?”64 Yet, even if Tray’s performance is over-rated, it is significant to note that this criticism comes from a “dog of sense”; deriding the “unthinking crew”, the mastiff demonstrates a capacity for critical judgment. Indeed, the mastiff, by providing the moral, becomes the voice of authority. Oakman might just have easily have given this speech to a human spectator of Tray’s performance, but he chose not to do so. The fable thus allows for the possibility of canine

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Adventures of William Williams, an African Prince. He wrote pieces “of a moral character for children” and published collections of fables as well, such as Trifles in Verse (1767), which does not, however, include “The Learned Dog—Fable VI” (ODNB).

63 See The Public Advertiser of 3 September 1785 for a similar critique of the gullibility of spectators regarding learned animals.

64 The Letters and Prose Writings of William Cowper, ed. James King and Charles Ryskamp, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), 2:343 (Cowper to John Newton, 22 April 1785), hereafter cited parenthetically. But at least one newspaper contributor joked about the learned pig inspiring ladies to exchange their frivolous pursuits for intellectual study: “‘What great effects from little causes spring.’—The learned Pig seems to have infused a taste for literature and philosophy into all our beaux and belles in town. Novels and scandal give place to philosophy and the arts. The pimby pamby Gentlemen are now frequently put to their wits ends by the more learned Ladies” (Morning Post and Daily Advertiser, 5 May 1785).
intelligence, though the populace are looking for it in the wrong place. Moreover, the fable discredits Buffon’s claim that all animals of the same species behave uniformly, except for humans, whose “productions and performances [are] so various and so diversified”:

Whence can arise that uniformity we observe in all the works of animals?....And why does not one individual perform them better or worse than another? Can there be a stronger proof that their operations are merely the effects of mechanism and materiality; evidently as it follows, that if they possessed the smallest spark of that light which is inherent in us, their works would display variety at least, if they did not display perfection…? (1:12)

Even though such critiques reveal that intelligence varies from human to human (and from dog to dog), and thus possibly weaken arguments for humans’ distinctions from animals on the basis of reason, the anthropocentric nature of these two approaches to the issue of learned animals makes the animal a secondary consideration. Human intelligence (or lack thereof) is the lens through which we see the pig.

Other writers disapproved of learned animal performances not only because they thought the spectacles were a waste of time and money, but because they believed that the beasts’ remarkable stunts were the result of painful and inhumane methods of training. Although the trainer was distinguished for his cruelty rather than praised as an “extraordinary teacher of animals” by these writers, their focus similarly remained on the human as the cause of the learned animal’s actions. In Sarah Trimmer’s Fabulous Histories (1786), for instance, after debating the merits of the learned pig with several visitors (one of whom claims that the sapient beast has shaken her conviction that animals are “mere machines”), Mrs. Benson tells her curious daughter Harriet that torture is probably responsible for the pig’s tricks (67). “I am fully persuaded, that great cruelty
must have been exercised in teaching him things so foreign to his nature”, she says, for “no art of men can change the nature of any thing, though he may be able to improve that nature to a certain degree” (72-73). In this didactic tale for children, Mrs. Benson entreats Harriet to feel sympathy for the pig as a sentient creature, instead of admiration of it as a rational creature, presenting these two affective responses as mutually exclusive. In the process, she emphasizes the difference between humans and non-humans for the benefit of her impressionable child. By according the pig sentience at the expense of reason, Trimmer only partially discredits Descartes’s idea of the “beast-machine” that neither feels nor thinks. Allowing animals the capacity for sentience may seem like an improvement over Cartesian views of the animal, but it also gives conservative individuals permission to push aside questions of animals’ intelligence.

Like Trimmer’s Fabulous Histories, William Darton’s A Present for a Little Boy (1825; first edition 1798) also considers torture as an explanation for the learned pig’s abilities, though the text initially claims that pigs are capable of education and that young readers could learn something from their example: “some pigs have evinced so teachable a disposition, that children might take a useful lesson from their conduct.” In fact, he mentions the remarkable mental feats of the learned pig in order to shame underachieving pupils into working harder at their studies: “several [hogs] have been taught to read and spell, in appearance, better than some little boys could who were several years older.” Interestingly, Darton’s strategy of using learned animals to shame

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recalcitrant pupils seems to have been popular among educators even before he adopts it; for instance, William Wallbeck’s fable, “The Learned-Dog, and the Dunce” (1787), likewise recounts the story of the young boy Bob’s transformation from a dunce into a “studious lad”, after the learned dog Shock defeats him in a spelling challenge.66

However, both Darton’s qualifying phrase “in appearance”, which acknowledges the difficulty of ascertaining whether the learned pig’s performance is a demonstration of real intelligence or simply a hoax, and his later focus on the possibly cruel methods taken to instruct the learned pig somewhat complicate his endorsement of the swine as exemplar. Darton points to the role of physical discipline and painful stimuli in the education of boys and animals: “The pig, in being taught, must have suffered great pain, if not some cruelties. Some little boys, who have obstinate tempers, have been beaten to make them mind their spelling: how difficult then must it be to teach a pig to converse with men.” The suspicion that physical abuse is involved in the pig’s training makes its tricks seem less extraordinary (as they are automatic responses to pain). In emphasising the pig’s sentience, Darton, like Trimmer’s Mrs. Benson, shifts attention away from the question of animal rationality. Rather than study the learned pig with rapt attention and perhaps leave the show with new knowledge, or at least the desire to study harder, spectators are compelled to turn away: because of the supposed use of torture, “it appears improper to encourage such shows,” concludes Darton, echoing Mrs. Benson. As in Oakman’s fable, the spectator is presented as being complicit in the performances of learned animals. There is also the suggestion in this passage that the real objects of

66 This fable is included in Wallbeck’s Fables, Ancient and Modern (London, 1787).
Darton’s sympathy are human: by comparing the violent treatment of learned pigs to the hair-pulling and ear-pinching of “obstinate” pupils, Darton emphasizes the inappropriateness of physical discipline in the classroom, as Locke and Rousseau did earlier in the century.67

But while the comparison of learned pigs and disciplined students seems to direct attention away from the former’s plight, on the other hand it is precisely this analogy which allows the reader to reach a more radical conclusion about the disturbing similarities between the “education” of animals and children. If some pigs only seem to perform feats of extraordinary mental prowess because of the violent conditioning to which they are subjected by their trainers, it is possible, Darton’s analogy implies, that some boys’ eventual success at spelling is also only a response to painful stimuli, just as devoid of understanding as the pigs’. This uncomfortable possibility decreases the gap between human children and animals by holding physical sensitivity responsible for the “appearance” of both human and animal rationality.

The connection Darton makes between schoolboys’ and sapient pigs’ often painful learning experiences recalls Locke’s earlier comparison in Some Thoughts Concerning Education of pupils to beasts of burden forced to perform labour under threats of pain. When he declares his impatience with the idea that “a young gentleman should be put in the herd, and be driven with a whip and scourge, as if he were to run the

67 Jane Austen also notes that pain and education are a common pairing. In chapter fourteen of Northanger Abbey, Catherine Morland tells Henry that “if you had been as much used as myself to hear poor little children first learning their letters and then learning to spell” he would readily admit that “to torment and to instruct might sometimes be used as synonymous words” (80). See Austen, Northanger Abbey, Lady Susan, The Watsons, Sandition, eds. James Kinsley and John Davie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
gauntlet through several classes” (254), Locke is critiquing not only schoolmasters’
overzealous use of the rod, but the pedagogical method most often associated with it: rote
learning. Involving memorization and tedious repetition (of grammatical rules, literary
passages, the alphabet, mathematical formulas, etc.), rote learning was a type of learning
that young children and learned animals were often imagined to have in common.

Given that some writers, like Buffon, claimed that animals do not possess memory,
the suggestion that they had the ability to learn by rote may actually seem progressive.
But, as Locke’s comments suggest, rote learning had a bad reputation in the late-
seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and was considered to be the opposite of deep
understanding; for instance, Johnson’s defines rote as “words uttered by mere memory
without meaning” and “without comprehension of sense.” Just as it often is now, rote
learning was associated not only with pain, but also with deficiency—as Johnson’s
repeated use of the word “without” suggests—and the mechanical. According to Mary
Wollstonecraft, the child is turned into a machine by an over-emphasis on rote learning.
She complains: “the master…winds the poor machine up to some extraordinary exertion,
that injures the wheels, and stops the progress of gradual improvement. The memory is
loaded with unintelligible words, to make a shew of, without the understanding’s
acquiring any distinct idea” (172). The relationship between tutor and pupil begins to

68 Indeed, being forced to learn facts or passages by rote was often used as a form of punishment. See
69 On the subject of whether animals have memory, Buffon acknowledges the position of those who
believe that they do, but refuses to credit the evidence they cite, and again insists of splitting “memory”
into two categories, as he does with “education”, in order to emphasize the distinctions between humans
and other animals (1:337-38).
70 The *OED* defines rote learning as “[learning] in a mechanical or repetitious manner…without proper
understanding or reflection”.

resemble that of the inventor and his creation which has been designed or programmed to perform specific tasks. As we have already seen in the first section of this chapter, Buffon portrays animals’ facility at learning in similarly mechanized terms, while the learned pig himself competed for publicity in 1785 with an “Automaton Figure[]” said to “imitate[]” his “wonderful and surprising sagacity.”

Like Jacques de Vaucanson’s famous mechanical duck (1739), this “pig of brass and silvered sheen,” according to the porcine narrator of Russell Potter’s Pyg, “seem[ed] to eat, and then excrete, its food,” but also “stamp its forelegs for simple sums of Arithmetic, and then answer questions from the audience, shakings its head up and down for ‘Yes’ and from side to side for ‘No’” (188). Potter recounts Toby’s mixed reactions to this “brutish Imitator” (186): the learned pig’s initial jealousy when he hears that he has a “Rival upon the Stage” (186); his “great distress” that the creature’s “instant Compliance with its Master’s Commands” may be the result of painful torture (186); and finally Toby’s relief upon discovering that it is “only a clever Facsimile, a mere mechanical manqué whose ‘well-being’ would better be attended to with an oil-can and a polishing-cloth than with Oats and Straw” and whose repertoire Toby somewhat smugly declares to be “limited” (188). Despite Toby’s self-assurance, disparaging comments of a similar nature were made about living sapient beasts. Indeed, the mechanical pig’s physiological tricks (digestion, defecation) that fail to impress Toby are reminiscent of the portrayals of pedants and learned animals as creatures who take in, or swallow, a lot of information without being able to process, or digest, it—portrayals which reframe

71 Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser, 1 April 1785.
feats of the mind in terms of the body. If the mechanical pig was an “imitation” of the real learned pig, so too was the learned pig an “imitation” of a human and an unconvincing one at that, according to sceptical observers. The scepticism might not stop there either but rather spark debate about the mechanical nature of all animals, including humans. As Jessica Riskin observes, eighteenth-century automatons like “the defecating Duck and its companions commanded such attention, at such a moment, because they dramatized two contradictory claims at once: that living creatures were essentially machines and that living creatures were the antithesis of machines”; in doing so the automaton raised questions about the “line dividing life from nonlife.”

The animal which seems to be most frequently associated with rote learning, especially but not exclusively in eighteenth-century literature for or about children, is the parrot. Wollstonecraft compares children forced to learn by rote with these showy, chattering birds: “How much time is lost in teaching them to recite what they do not understand? whilst, seated on benches, all in their best array, the mammas listen with astonishment to the parrot-like prattle, uttered in solemn cadences, with all the pomp of ignorance and folly” (172). Rote learning is similarly linked to parrots in Defoe’s *The Family Instructor* when the child admits to his father, “I said the Prayers over, but I never thought a word what they meant; I only said them by rote, sure God does not take

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73 Rote learning is also associated with parrots in texts not explicitly intended for children. Cf. Cowper’s *Conversation*, where meaningless utterance is carefully distinguished from the eponymous subject of the poem: “Words learn’d by rote a parrot may rehearse, / But talking is not always to converse” (7-8). For Cowper, “the parrot’s mimicry” is not at all comparable to humans’ capacity for language, but rather an “odious libel on a human voice.”
notice of that, *does he*, Father? If he does, our Parrot can pray as well as I?" His father agrees, claiming "God...regards no Prayers but what the Heart joins in," and then confirms that the child may thank God for "making [him] better than the Horses and Cows", thus establishing his difference from beasts (53). Yet, the form of *The Family Instructor* relies quite heavily on the repetition of catechism, conveying a mixed message about rote learning.75

Defoe is not the only author who denigrates rote learning and the parrots that exemplify its limitations in a text whose formal properties contradict its content. For instance, John Marchant’s “Miss and her Parrot” (in his *Puerilia: or, Amusements for the Young* (1751)) suggests that the parrot is a bad role model for children because it has “got by Rote” “ev’ry chattering note”; as a result, its “prittle-prattle / Is no more than Rattle.”76 But the medium he chooses for his message is a song (a mode of art and communication common to humans and many birds) that uses rhyme as a mnemonic device to aid memorization and retention—that testifies, in other words, to rote learning’s pedagogical usefulness. Criticism of rote learning often went hand in hand with reluctant acknowledgements of its occasional value. Even Maria Edgeworth, who rejects rote

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75 Andrew O’Malley speculates that rote learning’s resemblance to catechism was one of the causes of its lack of popularity, “especially for radical and dissenting elements”, for whom rote learning “carried with it a ‘papist’ kind of acquiescence, or an aroma of accepting without question” (O’Malley, Shelley King, Julia Saric, and Leslie Ritchie, “A Conversation with Andrew O’Malley,” Pedagogy 5.3 (2005): 519). Alan Richardson adds, in “The Politics of Childhood: Wordsworth, Blake, and Catechistic Method” (*ELH* 56.4 (1989)), that the catechistic method’s emphasis on “accepting without question”, as O’Malley puts it, is precisely what made it appealing to those who wanted to “contain[] the new literacy” and “maintain[] class distinctions rather than facilitat[e] social mobility” (854-55).

learning as a pedagogical strategy in *Practical Education* (1798), begrudgingly “admit[s] the justice of …assertions” “that a superior degree of memory [is] essential to the exercise of …judgment and invention.”\textsuperscript{77}

While some writers conceded that learning by rote had pedagogical benefits, many still clung to the reassuring idea that rote learning was only the first stage of education, which children would eventually move past, leaving animals behind. However, this is a false distinction, for not all children were so fortunate to advance beyond rote learning; indeed, some were prevented from doing so, their intellectual development stalled as a result of a systemic denial of opportunity. At the recitals Wollstonecraft describes above, the mothers are unduly (but understandably) impressed by their children’s “parrot-like prattle”, because they have never been granted the opportunity to advance beyond rote learning and are themselves little better than beautiful but useless pet birds or children. Refused a proper education, these women are both “Confined…in cages like the feathered race” with nothing “to do but plume themselves, and stalk with mock majesty from perch to perch” (60) and suspended “in a state of perpetual childhood” (12). This is not the sex’s fault, Wollstonecraft insists, and she points out the injustice of “ridiculing [women for] repeating ‘a set of phrases learnt by rote,’ when nothing could be more natural, considering the education they receive, and that their ‘highest praise is to obey, unargued’—the will of man. If they be not allowed to have reason sufficient to govern their own conduct—why, all they learn—

must be learned by rote!” (124). In other words, external, environmental causes are responsible for women’s arrested development and wasted potential.

Because it is based on imagery which links women, children, and animals, Wollstonecraft’s argument allows for the possibility that the limited intellectual accomplishments of non-humans, as well as women, reflect a lack of opportunity rather than a lack of capability. To be sure, Wollstonecraft is not explicitly making a case that animals may have similar cognitive abilities to humans. Indeed, for her, the answer to the question “in what does man’s pre-eminence over the brute creation consist?” is “as clear as that a half is less than the whole”: “in Reason,” she asserts (14). 78 She shows some concern for the plight of non-human creatures when she recommends that “Humanity to animals…be particularly inculcated as a part of national education”, but Wollstonecraft and many of her contemporaries worried about the “habitual cruelty” of boys who make a “sport[]” of “torment[ing] the miserable brutes that fall in their way” primarily because “the transition, as they grow up, from barbarity to brutes to domestic tyranny over wives, children, and servants, is very easy” (181). In other words, the inhumane treatment of animals is problematic insofar as it is often the precursor of inhumane treatment of other humans. However, at least one text, Thomas Taylor’s parodic A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes (1792), presented “the equality of animals with humans” as “a necessary

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78 In his article “Necessary Fictions: The ‘Swinish Multitude’ and the Rights of Man,” Studies in Romanticism 47.2 (2008), Darren Howard writes, “Wollstonecraft, for her part, argues that society ought to be structured as though all humans are absolutely distinguished from animals because they are rational, even though much of her analysis implies that irrational instincts account for much of human behaviour, and that individuals in fact have widely varying capabilities for reason” (167). He stresses the contradictory nature of Wollstonecraft’s position on animals when he observes that “Wollstonecraft wants to see humans and animals as similar and different at the same time, and defines humanity against them despite the similarity” (175).
extension of [Wollstonecraft’s] argument[,]” and indeed the text (like Johnson’s playful comments about the learned pig) does in some ways invite readers to extend the already present analogies between women and animals to the idea that constraints of nurture, rather than nature, account for the supposed irrationality of both beings.  

Yet, even when humans do have access to educational opportunities, some never attain more than superficial understanding, as the existence of pedants, figures of great scorn during this period, proved. To the disadvantage of all three, pedants, children, and learned animals were imagined during the eighteenth century as having much in common. Learned animals were often satirically depicted as scholars, upon whom various honorary degrees were bestowed by universities and academies in recognition of their brilliance: for instance, an article in the Weekly Medley (6 September 1729) describing the chien savant’s facility at reading, writing, and spelling reports, “We hear his Dogship, after having made his Abilities well known, will set up an ACADEMY, wherein he proposes to teach several of the human Species the Accomplishments they are wanting in, and he is Master of”; and the Star for 19 March 1792 informs its readers that “The learned pig was lately admitted a fellow of Brazen-nose college, and is now returned to his seat at Bunbury, with those profound marks of erudition, A. M. annexed to his name.”

Although comparing a learned animal to an academic might seem

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79 Howard, “Necessary Fictions,” 176. Few critics have taken Taylor’s parody seriously, but Howard points to moments in the text when “Taylor seems…to undermine his own argument with convincing pleas for sympathy with animals” and argues that “the plausibility of these passages, and the absence of blatant irony he utilizes in other passages, renders his satire uncomfortably ambivalent, so that it is impossible to entirely reject the position he satirizes” (177). In other words, it is perhaps unwise to completely dismiss Taylor’s assessment of where Wollstonecraft’s arguments could lead.

80 Weekly Medley, 6 September 1729, issue 49; Star, 19 March 1792.
complimentary in theory, the passages’ blatant irony and the unflattering reputation of pedantry during the eighteenth century strongly suggest otherwise.

Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary* definitions of *pedantry* as “awkward ostentation of needless learning” and *pedant* as “a man vain of low knowledge” identify several distasteful traits which human and animal scholars were perceived to have in common.  

Like the pedant, who is associated with excess and deficiency, the learned animal is represented as knowing more than it should (more than is needed or useful given its station) but less than would qualify as truly impressive. Yet unaware and undeterred by the frivolous nature of their studies, the erudite of all species are nonetheless represented as showing an extravagant pride in their abilities. Just as Wollstonecraft objects to the “pomp” or pageantry of rote learning, the *Tatler’s* Isaac Bickerstaff censures pedantry as “a Form of Knowledge without the Power of it, that attracts the Eyes of Common People, breaks out in Noise and Show, and finds its Reward not from any inward Pleasure that attends it, but from the Praises and Approbations which it receives from Men.”  

Bickerstaff’s damning portrayal of pedantry resonates with images of a learned animal spelling words (a talent of disputable value in a barnyard occupied by less educated beasts) for the entertainment of paying spectators. Such unbecoming brashness is clearly registered in the epithet of “Dogship” and title of the learned pig’s alma mater, “Brazen-nose college”.

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81 The *OED* similarly defines *pedant* as “A person who excessively reveres or parades academic learning or technical knowledge, often without discrimination or practical judgment” (2).

Critics sought to deflate the intellectual pretensions of pedants and learned animals in much the same way: by reducing them to their bodies. In his Restoration collection of characters (written 1667-69, published in 1759), Samuel Butler presents the pedant’s lack of deep comprehension in physical, rather than mental, terms: “[his] Brain is not able to concoct what it takes in, and therefore brings things up as they were swallowed, that is, crude and undigested, in whole Sentences, not assimilated Sense, which he rather affects; for his Want of Judgment, like Want of Health, renders his Appetite preposterous.” Hogs are similarly renowned for their “preposterous” appetites—Buffon, for one, distinguishes the hog for his “brutal gluttony, which makes him devour without distinction every thing that presents itself” (2:33)—and at least one newspaper attributes the learned pig’s eventual demise to “his having swallowed some letters which he could not digest.” With this quip, the newspaper alludes both to the sapient animal’s method of picking up typographical cards with its mouth (as illustrated in Thomas Rowlandson’s April 1785 cartoon “The Wonderful Pig”) and to its lack of comprehension. By using the imagery of digestion to represent a mental process (processing information, understanding, thinking), critics check the vanity of both pedants and learned animals with a sharp reminder that no creature can transcend its materiality.

On account of their perceived lack of independent judgment and blind deference to authority, pedants were represented as having much in common with children as well.

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84 Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser, 21 June 1786.
as learned animals. In her *Essay in Defence of the Female Sex* (1696), for instance, Mary Astell describes pedants as “Children in their understanding all their lives; for they hang so incessantly upon the leading-Strings of Authority, that their Judgments…become altogether crampt and motionless for want of use,” and Rousseau, meaning much the same thing as Astell, claims in a footnote in *Emile* that “The scholarship of most of the learned resembles greatly that of children.”

Like pedants who fawned over the ancients, learned animals obeyed without question their master’s instructions. This is a potentially dangerous character trait, according to a letter (by an “E.O.”) published in the *London Evening Post*, which brings together the pedant, the sapient animal, and the child on the basis of their shared impressionability to authority. Upon discovering “a celebrated Learned Horse, and a matchless Learned Dog, instructing the People and exhibiting Lectures to different Sets of Pupils” during a recent visit to an English university, E.O.’s first impression is mostly positive. He marvels at the remarkable “Sagacity of the Beasts, so much superior to that of the Dancing-Bears, or even of the almost rational Elephant” and notes with approval that the dog is more “modest” than the horse, whom he dismisses as “no better than a *Blundering Learned Pedant*”. However, upon closer inspection, the dog’s humility and submissiveness seem to be vices rather than virtues. Contemplating the “bad consequences of [their] Lectures”, E.O. worries that “these sly learned Quadrupeds teach our British Youth base and abject Principles,” namely “The

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86 *London Evening Post*, 30 November-2 December 1758.
Art of doing as they are bidden, at the Word of Command.” Although dogs (and young children) are traditionally valued for their obedience to authority, the writer reveals this to be a relative trait, dependent on context, when he proclaims that “such slavish and servile Notions ought not to be included in Places of liberal Education.”

Quite apart from the content of the lesson, even the idea of learned animals teaching human children—that is, playing an active role in their education as instructors—was distressing for some eighteenth-century writers, because it accorded animals the agency they lacked when they were portrayed as the infantalized pupils of their adult human trainers. Yet, while writers, as we have seen in this section, dissuaded children from behaving like “gaudy parrots”—well-versed in rote learning but lacking deep comprehension—out of a concern that animals and children were already, dangerously, too much alike, the similarities between them also make them good pedagogical partners. Rousseau indirectly speaks to this point when he comments on the desirability of hiring young, rather than old, tutors: “the governor of a child,” he advises, “should be young, even as young as possible, consistent with his having attained necessary discretion and sagacity. I would have him be himself a child, that he might become the companion of his pupil, and gain his confidence by partaking in his enjoyments. There are not things in common enough between infancy and manhood, to form a solid attachment at so great a distance” (1:37). The next, and final, section of chapter one considers in more depth educations represented as taking place between children and animals without the mediation of adults, educations in which both these parties participate as students and teachers. The mutually instructive relationship between child and animal presents a more egalitarian alternative to the hierarchical relationships
between the adult teacher/trainer and the young pupil/domesticated animal, or between
the programmer and machine/automaton. As we shall see, however, the same texts which
valorize these more reciprocal relationships also frequently betray ambivalence by
limiting, in various ways, their potential damage.

3 Trotting Tutoresses and Animal-Teachers

_The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes_ (1765), which Grenby has called a “rags-to-
riches-via-the-schoolroom story” and “propaganda for education”, is one of the earliest
and most famous stories for children published by the House of Newbery. 87 This text
promotes the transformative powers of education that enable Margery Meanwell, Goody
Two-Shoes herself, to rise well beyond the humble station to which she is born. It also
extends education to animals and some of them, in turn, pass on their knowledge to other
human children, though the species barrier ultimately proves more difficult to overcome
than that of class.

Shortly after she rises above her poverty and its limitations by teaching herself to
read and spell, Margery becomes a “trotting Tutoress”, an epithet which announces her
affinity for animals even before the reader discovers the identity of her pupils. 88 In
recognition of her pedagogical success with human children, she is soon promoted to
“Principal of A, B, C College”, at which point Margery takes on the first of her avian
students, a raven named Ralph whom she rescues and teaches to “speak, to spell, and to

87 M.O. Grenby, introduction to _The History of Goody Two-Shoes_, The Hockliffe Project, De Montfort
University, Leicester <hockliffe.dmu.ac.uk/items/0123.html> (accessed 7 March 2013).
parenthetically.
read”, as he was “particularly fond of playing with the Large Letters” of her alphabet set (70). He proves to be an especially apt scholar; when children arrange the alphabet incorrectly, Ralph is able to “put [it] right” upon command (71). Though Ralph thus proves himself to be a better pupil than some of the human children with whom he shares the classroom, his flair for spelling is never used to shame Margery’s underachieving pupils for failing to live up to their species’ reputation of intellectual superiority over animals (unlike Darton’s and Wallbeck’s use of the learned animal). Animals and human children are depicted learning together by the same means and using the same materials. Typographical cards similarly linked real eighteenth-century children and the learned pig, who is represented as using these spelling aids both in Rowlandson’s “The Wonderful Pig” and in newspaper descriptions of his performance. 89

Like Margery herself, Ralph seems to quickly transcend the role of student. Soon he actively participates in the education of human children as one of their teachers. To be sure, the text has earlier prepared the reader to recognize the instructive potential of animals; for instance, when a sickly gentleman jokingly asks for young Margery’s advice about how to improve his health, she recommends his rooks’ regular sleeping and moderate eating habits as examples to follow. “What should induce the Rooks to

89 See, for example, this representative advertisement in the Morning Post and Daily Advertiser, 21 February 1785: “It is with the utmost pleasure we congratulate the curious on the arrival in this metropolis of that most extraordinary and wonderful animal the Learned Pig, which has of late so much attracted the notice and astonishment of the nobility and gentry at Scarborough and York. &c. This sagacious animal reads, writes, and casts accounts, by means of typographical cards, in the same manner that a Printer composes, and by the same method sets down any capital or surname; solves questions in the four rules of Arithmetic, tells, by looking at any gentleman’s watch of the company, what is the hour and minute, &c. and is the admiration of all who have seen him. Mr. Nicholson, the Proprietor intends to offer him to public inspection, as soon as he can procure a commodious apartment for the reception of the nobility and gentry.”
frequent Gentlemens [sic] Houses only, but to tell them how to lead a prudent Life? They
never build over Cottages or Farm-houses, because they see, that these People know how
to live without their Admonition,” she observes, and concludes her lesson with the verse,
“Thus Health and Wit you may improve, / Taught by the Tenants of the Grove” (44-5).
But while this part of the text, in the manner of some fables, insists that we can learn
from animals by observing their behaviour from a distance, Ralph the raven educates
humans in a different, more direct way than the rooks do. The most “sensible Rogue”
among the animals Margery adopts, many of whom prove amenable to some degree of
instruction, Ralph alone masters the alphabet to such an extent that he “compose[s]” a
verse about the benefits of going to bed and rising early (which the children are directed
to “get by heart”). As a writer, Ralph surpasses the rooks who can only inspire such
verses (75, 76). When Margery represents the rooks as building their nests near the
humans who could most benefit from their lessons, she implies that they do so
intentionally, but Ralph’s act of literary composition, however simplistic, indisputably
displays purposefulness. Moreover, in creating the lesson (rather than mindlessly
following it), the raven stands apart from the parrots whom Marchant distinguishes for
their mechanical rote learning. Yet, despite his academic excellence, Ralph is only
considered to be one of Margery’s “Ushers” or “Assistants”, titles which foreground the
animal’s continued subjection to the human. Through education, Ralph the raven can
rise, but only so far; above some children perhaps, but not above the “President”, and
now adult, Margery.

Jumper the dog, the appointed “Porter of the College” (77), is praised for his
“amazing sagacity” (97) after he saves the teacher and pupils from the schoolroom’s
collapsing roof, but distinctions between human reason and animal instinct are similarly preserved when the narrator explains, “Though God Almighty has made Man the Lord of Creation, and endowed him with Reason, yet in many Respects, he has been altogether as bountiful to other Creatures of his forming. Some of the Senses of other Animals are more acute than ours” (101). The qualifying phrases “in many respects” and “some of the senses” minimize the extent of the animal’s achievements with the suggestion of unshakeable species difference (just as Buffon dismisses animals’ talents as “little” and “limited” (2:280-81)). The word “sagacity” can mean either “acute sense of smell” or “acuteness of mental discernment” (OED 1, 2a), but both Jumper’s name, which stresses his physical rather than mental agility, and his position as a kind of guard dog, confirm that here at least the text is not taking an unconventional stance on the subject of animal intelligence. Jumper thus serves as a counter-balance to Ralph, with his human name and mastery of literacy, though both creatures, in different ways, are kept in their places.

*The Teaching Parrot* (1800) is something of an odd bird, but it too belongs in this category of texts which imagine the possibility of an educational collaboration between children and animals. It is first and foremost a kind of textbook for children containing an illustrated alphabet with a different bird representing each letter (for instance, “A—An Arctic Bird”), sets of uppercase and lowercase letters, and pages of simple words for memorization. Following these teaching materials is a preface entitled “The Teaching Parrot, To the Reader,” which reveals the text’s generic affiliation with it-narratives. A

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90 *The Teaching Parrot* (ca. 1800). I have consulted the copy held at The Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Literature, Toronto, and I have found very little information about the text otherwise. There was also an 1809 American edition.
strange amalgam of the eponymous bird and the book itself, part animal and part object, the first-person narrator is simultaneously distinguished from and compared to “live parrot[s]” and it is small enough to be carried around in a pocket: “My maker…is not without hopes that I may be as useful to children as any live parrot that ever came from the Indies. Most things which are thought to be pretty, are often kept to please little children, and as I have the vanity to suppose I may be thought so, and kept sometimes in the pocket of a child, I shall try to make myself not only pleasant, but useful” (29-30).

Whereas the parrots of Marchant’s text make children’s “Heart[s] rejoice” but have no other redeeming value, the Teaching Parrot combines “instruction with delight”. The variety of positions birds occupy in the text’s opening paragraph further suggests that they are a help rather than a hindrance to a child’s education:

Great pains have been taken with many parrots, by children of all sizes, to teach them to speak; but I never knew one that could read in a book: therefore, as I know how much a parrot would be valued, that could read, and how pleasant it is to hear little children read, I have given a new set of letters and an alphabet, with birds of various kinds, and from different climes. This alphabet is the groundwork of learning, and those children who ever think of teaching a parrot to read, must first know how to read well themselves; so I hope they will attend to what I have to say. (27-28)

Birds are represented here as eager pupils who purportedly take delight in listening to children read, as the subjects of the children’s lessons, and, in the narrator’s case, as the teachers to whom children must pay close attention. They appear capable of both learning and instructing and are active participants in the educational process in addition to being objects worth studying.

Yet while the Teaching Parrot’s narration, like Ralph the raven’s composition of moral verse, seems to prove that the bird is capable of more than “Pritte-
Prattle…without Sense”, the adult who appears in the text (the Teaching Parrot’s now grown-up master) remains unconvinced about the possibility of avian intelligence. His ownership of an apparently rational parrot notwithstanding, the master responds sceptically to an anecdote attesting to a parrot’s linguistic cleverness. Introduced with the caveat that “there are many stories, told of parrots in books, some true and some false, no doubt”, this particular tale concerns Henry VII’s parrot who falls into the river Thames one day and saves itself by calling to a waterman “a boat! Twenty pounds for a boat!” The bird is rescued and the waterman demands the reward he was promised. “At last the king agreed to leave it to the parrot’s own determination,” and the bird rescinds the original offer of twenty pounds, instead instructing the king to “give the knave a groat.” In response to this story, the Teaching Parrot’s adult owner tells the child who had read it “that it was by chance the bird made use of the last speech, as well as the former, and “not from any sense of the passing conversation between the king and the waterman” (33-35). The way the Teaching Parrot’s master expresses his dissent sends a contradictory message about animal rationality. Rather than rejecting the story of Henry VII’s parrot as a fabrication, which even the narrator allows to be a possibility, the master chooses a less persuasive line of argument, claiming that the bird responds as it does “by chance,” despite the fact that its comments suit each specific situation and thus hardly seem accidental. Yet the master’s interpretation remains unchallenged despite its weaknesses, and his position as an adult lecturing a group of children lends his dismissal of the story a degree of authority; he gets the last word, and not even the Teaching Parrot speaks up on behalf of its species. When an adult reasserts his prerogative as instructor, the text’s fleeting suggestion of educational collaborations between children and animals
is undermined from within. In *The Teaching Parrot* and *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes* an imbalance of power between species ultimately remains despite their authors’ initial willingness to imagine education and domestication as cooperative arrangements rather than as rigidly hierarchical relationships characterized by mastery on one side and unquestioning docility on the other.

In the next chapter I consider the (im)possibility of interspecies cooperation from another angle, by examining the implications of representing domestication as a mutually beneficial contract between animal and human. Based on the assumption that animals are capable of making informed decisions about what is in their best interests, the idea of contractual domestication takes for granted what so many of the texts we have seen in this chapter fiercely contested: that animals have the capacity for rationality. In that sense contractual domestication seems more progressive and less hierarchical than educational domestication, and more committed to reciprocity. This is not necessarily the case, however. As my analysis of the language of domestication in Samuel Richardson’s novel *Clarissa* will show, the contract can be used to legitimise and mask exploitation.
Chapter Two
To Herd with Mankind: Domestication and Cruel Contracts in

Clarissa

A Haggard Carrion of a Wolf, and a jolly Dog, with good Flesh upon his Back, fell into Company together upon the King’s Highway. The Wolf was very inquisitive to learn how he brought himself to that happy Plight. Why, says the Dog, I keep my Master’s House from Thieves, and I have very good Meat, Drink, and Lodging for my Pains. Now if you’ll go along with me, and do as I do, you may fare as I fare. The Wolf agreed, and so away they trotted together; but as they were jogging on, the Wolf spy’d a bare Place about the Dog’s Neck, where the Hair was worn off. Brother, says he, how comes this, I pr’ythee? Oh! that’s nothing, says the Dog, but the fretting of my Collar a little. Nay, says the other, if there be a Collar in the Case, I know better things than to sell my Liberty for a Crust. 91

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In this Æsopian fable, included in the collection Samuel Richardson edited in 1739, dog and wolf view domestication quite differently. Repaid with food and accommodation for the services he provides guarding the house, the dog represents domestication as a mutually beneficial contract between humans and animals, entered into freely by both parties and even by the wolf if he so chooses. Declaring it worth his “pains”, the arrangement meets with the dog’s satisfaction. The “haggard” wolf who is tempted at first by the prospect of food and shelter rejects the offer upon noting evidence of the pain inflicted by the dog’s collar; the wild animal sees domestication as an exploitative relationship rather than a fair deal and refuses to “sell my Liberty for a Crust”. He prefers hunger and the disadvantages of a wild, solitary life over the comforts of a social arrangement that requires such sacrifices. The moralist comes down on the side of the

91 Samuel Richardson, ed., Æsop’s Fables, with Instructive Morals and Reflections, in Samuel Richardson: Early Works, ed. Alexander Pettit (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 176, hereafter cited parenthetically. “A Dog and a Wolf” is, incidentally, the same fable that Rousseau objected to in Emile because it encouraged children to wish they were wolves.
wolf. “Tis a Comfort to have good Meat and Drink at Command, and warm Lodging: But he that sells his Freedom for the gratifying of his Appetites, has but a hard Bargain for it,” he concludes: domestication is not always, or perhaps ever, worth the constraints that accompany it (177). Though wolf and dog disagree about whether the benefits outweigh the drawbacks, both portray domestication as an arrangement entered into voluntarily; according to the wolf and the moralist the dog has made the wrong choice, but it is a choice nonetheless. Even though the dog’s neck bears the marks of the collar, he is not wearing it now, and there is no suggestion that his freedom was forcibly taken from him in the first place. If the dog has made the wrong decision in trading liberty for creaturely comforts, he is the one at fault, and not the human master who is conspicuously absent from this fable. The text introduces us to one of the period’s most prevalent theories of domestication and shows us why it was both popular and problematic; it excuses the most violent aspects of taming by making them part of an agreement to which the victim has already consented.

Representations of domestication as a mutually beneficial contract seem to be diametrically opposed to contemporaneous depictions of domestication as a form of animal cruelty, an exploitative interspecies relationship in which the “domestic animal is a slave which amuses us, which we make use of, which we abuse, which we bring forth

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92 Alex Pettit, in his introduction to Æsop’s Fables, writes that “most of the edition is not Richardson’s work. Responding to a commercial solicitation, Richardson revised Sir Roger L’Estrange’s popular Fables, of Æsop and Other Eminent Mythologists: With Morals and Reflexions (1692).” In letters where he addressed his role in this edition, Richardson “implicitly overstates his own contribution,” Pettit says, as the majority of the text “derive[s] from L’Estrange”, but this does not lessen their impact on Richardson’s novels; rather, the sense of ownership Richardson seems to have felt in relationship to this text suggests that he agreed with the fables’ morals, even if he only edited them (lxi).
from its natural place of abode, and tame” (Buffon, 1:367). In the former version of domestication—which was considered credible by natural historians, whose texts were less reliant on anthropomorphism than fables were—humans and animals seem to be partners, each equipped with agency and the capacity to determine and consent to what is in their best interests; in the latter, humans reify animals, reducing and diminishing them. But, as “The Dog and the Wolf” shows, these ostensibly contradictory models of domestication intersect. The first section of this chapter explores the implication of those intersections in detail, while the remainder considers their influence on Clarissa, a novel that is not primarily concerned with the treatment of (literal) animals, but that nonetheless serves as an index of the period’s ambivalence about domestication and wildness. In this thesis, I am less interested in whether this model of “contractual” domestication has scientific validity (as some believe it does), than in analysing what was appealing and problematic about thinking of and representing domestication in these ways; it is for this reason that I choose to focus on a text like Clarissa, in which, to borrow Anne Milne’s phrase, these “ideologies of domestication” are “embedded” even though literal animals are not the main focus.

The fact that a text which is not about animals engages with these issues shows how thoroughly they have permeated cultural consciousness. Even for a city-dweller like

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93 In The Covenant of the Wild, Budiansky argues that “domesticated animals chose us as much as we chose them” (24). Other scholars working in the disciplines of agricultural and environmental ethics, philosophy, and political science have also discussed animals’ inclusion within the social contract: see, for example, Catherine and Raphael Larrère’s “Animal Rearing as a Contract?” Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics 12 (2000): 51-58.

Richardson (who refrained from eating meat on his physician’s orders), interacting with animals was an unavoidable part of life during the eighteenth century. At his family’s rural retreat, Richardson apparently kept poultry, who were “made happy by fifty neat Contrivances” he had devised for their comfort. Horses would have carried not only the Richardsons to and from Parson’s Green, but also the letters which all his characters send and receive: geese supplied quills for pens, and sheep, the leather for binding books.

Richardson’s literary interest in the uses of animals also stems, as this chapter’s epigraph reveals, from his earlier participation in the fable tradition. As I argued in chapter one, this genre did not simply use animals to represent human concerns, but during the eighteenth century also encouraged readers to think critically about real interspecies relationships. In 1739, Richardson published his edition of *Aesop’s Fables, with Instructive Morals and Reflections*, which modified Roger L’Estrange’s earlier collection. Although it predates *Clarissa* by almost a decade, as Tom Keymer notes, “*Aesop’s Fables*…was a work on Richardson’s mind as he wrote or prepared for publication all three of his major novels, and it closely followed or preceded each of them in its passage through the press.” Moreover, the texts provide “[i]nternal evidence of the connection [that] is no less compelling, for the traditional themes and methods of

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96 Catherine Talbot to Mrs. George Berkeley, 9 August 1756, qtd. in Eaves and Kimpel, *Samuel Richardson*, 497.

the fable-collection have prominence in all three novels.”98 For Keymer, who briefly comments on *Clarissa* before concentrating on *Pamela*’s political fables, “*Clarissa* represents the mature phase of Richardson’s Æsopian mode, in which the construction of sinister, psychologically evocative new fables takes precedence, typically, over any mere rehearsal of the existing canon.”99 That maturity is partly realized through Richardson’s nuanced examination of his century’s ambivalence about wildness and domestication, which deserves more attention that it has received.

This chapter focuses on Richardson’s use of the rhetoric of taming to describe the reformation of *Clarissa*’s two “wild” characters, Robert Lovelace and Anna Howe (in the portrayal of the latter, shrew-taming farces are a major influence, as well as fables). Being domesticated is aligned with belonging to a community and abiding by its rules and codes of acceptable and moral behaviour. Shortly after Clarissa’s rape, Belford counsels Lovelace to declare publicly his willingness to marry Clarissa “to make mankind, who know not what I know of the matter, herd a little longer with thee, and forbear to hunt thee to thy fellow-savages in the Libyan wilds and deserts.”100 Being part of the “herd” is equated here with conforming to the community’s expectations of how its members should behave, by consenting to the marriage and the social contract. By contrast, wildness is presented as a threatening mode of resistance in violation of the

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98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.

100 Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa, or The History of a Young Lady*, ed. Angus Ross (London: Penguin, 1985), letter 333, p. 1051. The rest of the *Clarissa* citations will be parenthetical, in the form L(Ross’s letter number): page number, for ease of reference.
community’s rules, and as such it cannot be tolerated. This is also Mrs. Howe’s argument when she tries to persuade Clarissa to take legal action against Lovelace: “The good of society requires that a beast of prey should be hunted out of it” (L317: 1016). However, while joining the herd may seem like a better option than being exiled to the wilderness, Belford’s portrayal of the herd, like the wolf’s assessment of the dog’s exchange of food and shelter for liberty, raises doubts about why one would choose domestication. The members of the “herd”, “who know not what” Belford and the reader “know of the matter” (Lovelace’s true character and his treatment of Clarissa), are presented as somewhat oblivious and easily duped, like the dog who thinks the collar signifies “nothing”. Later, in another context, Belford uses the term in a derogatory sense to describe a group of rakes who are “oblige[d]…to herd” together because they are “insufferable” to others, but lack the self-awareness to realize this: “[S]hutting our eyes, [we] move round and round (like so many blind mill-horses) in one narrow circle, while we imagine we have all the world to range in” (L366:1131). This “herd” is a group of mindless individuals who do not know enough to make better choices, a meaning consistent with the word’s common use to articulate “contempt or detestation” towards the lower classes (Johnson, Dictionary). Belonging to the herd may have its uses, affording protection and a variety of comforts that are not available in the wild, but Clarissa, a text which we expect to preach the virtues of compliance to the moral standards and laws of one’s community, is surprisingly reluctant to endorse domestication fully.

Wildness, on the other hand, seems as irresistible as it is untenable, at least when it is associated with Lovelace (Anna’s wildness, which I will discuss later in the chapter,
is another story). Richardson, who, echoing L’Estrange, sides with the wolf in the fable discussed above, created in his notorious villain a character whom many readers found compelling in spite of (or because of) his resistance to reformation. Lovelace is steadfast in his portrayal of domestication as a cruel form of exploitation, whether he is the “delighted tamer” in the scenario or its animal victim (L170:557). Towards the end of the novel he frequently depicts himself as the latter, trying to justify his ferocity and elicit the reader’s support. Edmund Burke’s figurative use of domesticated and wild animals to demonstrate the connection between power and the sublime helps explain why Lovelace’s wildness is appealing and domestication is not. According to Burke, while we might be grateful to, and dependent upon, beasts of burden and pets for their services and affections, their obedience to human authority also elicits our contempt (especially when it seems voluntary), because their strength is “subservient.”¹⁰¹ Ferocious wild animals, whose strength “does not act in conformity to our will,” terrify us instead of making us feel contempt, which hardly seems preferable, except that “terror is a passion which always produces delight when it does not press too close” (61, 42). In other words, as long as the wild beast does not pose an immediate threat to our safety, its refusal to be domesticated and cede to human authority causes us pleasure, rather than frustration. Similarly, for the community of readers who were a comfortable distance from the danger the rake represented, Lovelace’s refusal to conform to the will of his society was as appealing as it was troubling.

Eighteenth-century readers’ “distance” from Lovelace had to do with his singularity, both within and without the novel: no one is quite as bad, as wild, as he is. \(^{102}\) Lovelace’s rarity made it possible for readers to romanticize his wildness, just as eighteenth-century Britons flocked to menageries to see “ravenous” and fearsome German wolves once the species had been thoroughly exterminated from their own country. \(^{103}\) Predatory animals that no longer posed a realistic threat to the safety and livelihood of eighteenth-century people could be rehabilitated as objects of entertainment so that spectators could experience all the pleasure and none of the dangers or inconveniences of witnessing an animal’s “unmanageable fierceness” (Burke, 61). However, if most or all animals were wild, making it more difficult for humans to protect themselves, perform labour, acquire food, or do the numerous other tasks which domesticated animals make easier, the same kind of affective response would not have been possible.

For this reason, only a limited number of extraordinary characters in Richardson’s novels—Lovelace, but also Clarissa—can be allowed to run wild.

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\(^{102}\) For instance, when Belford is asked “May there not be other Lovelaces[?]” he responds, “No; there cannot…be such another man, person, mind, fortune, and…character” (L143:501). Some readers similarly felt that no real man could be as evil as Lovelace and thought Richardson’s moral about dangerous rakes did not apply to their lives. “Matchless” Clarissa also met with criticism that she was too perfect for ordinary women to emulate (L258:883). In the postscript of the third edition (1750-51), Richardson addresses some readers’ objections that “the excellencies of the Heroine are carried to an improbably, and even to an impracticable height”, claiming that “It must be confessed, that we are not to look for Clarissa’s among the constant frequenters of Ranelagh and Vaux-hall, nor among those who may be called Daughters of the Card-table. If we do, the character of our Heroine may then indeed be justly thought not only improbable, but unattainable…[But] we know there are some, and we hope there are many, in the British dominions…who, as far as occasion has called upon them to exert the like humble and modest, yet steady and useful, virtues, have reached the perfections of a Clarissa” (297, 298).

unchecked and to openly defy taming, making the distinguishing characteristic not
gender but exemplarity. The domestication of every-man or -woman characters like Anna
Howe, on the other hand, must be enforced by the novel because, on a large scale, non-
compliance with the social contract would lead to the kind of upheaval Richardson
cannot allow. The challenge Richardson faces is how to make Anna’s taming look like a
consensual rather than coercive process: in other words, like contractual domestication.
For these purposes, Richardson refines for the “polite” novel elements of farcical and
physically violent shrew-tamings that increasingly featured unsympathetic “wild women”
voluntarily submitting to and justifying their domestication. Anna’s taming (and that of
her literary sister, Charlotte Grandison) is accordingly realized through pregnancy, which
was believed, during the eighteenth century, to be a “betraying sign” of the woman’s
consent to sex. The questions of what constitutes consent and whether animals possess
the ability to consent in the first place are important considerations for a discussion of
contractual domestication, and it is these issues which are addressed in the next section
before I examine Richardson’s novel in detail.

1 “To make Covenants with bruit Beasts”

The idea that domestication functioned as a contract of sorts which both humans and
animals entered willingly because they derived mutual (if not equal) benefits from the

arrangement was popular during the eighteenth century, even in the face of scepticism. 105 Despite Thomas Hobbes’s declaration that “to make Covenants with bruit Beasts is impossible”, many eighteenth-century writers, undeterred, depict relationships between domesticated animals and humans in these terms. 106 For instance, in Fabulous Histories (1786), Sarah Trimmer’s Farmer Wilson “consider[s] every beast that works for [him] as [his] servant, and entitled to wages,” in the form of shelter and food as “they cannot use money,” while Erasmus Darwin, in explicit opposition to Hobbes, devotes a section of Zoonomia (1794-96) to the subject of animals’ ability to form contracts with members of their own and other species:

An ingenious philosopher has lately denied, that animals can enter into contracts, and thinks this an essential difference between them and the human creature—but does not daily observation convince us, that they form contracts of friendship with each other, and with mankind? When puppies and kittens play together, is there not a tacit contract, that they will not hurt each other? And does not your favourite dog expect that you should give him his daily food, for his services and attention to you? And thus barter his love for your protection? In the same manner that all contracts are made amongst men, that do not understand each others arbitrary language. 107

Hobbes’s refusal to entertain the possibility of humans forming contracts with animals is based on the assumption that the latter’s inability to speak or understand our language

105 In Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), Laurence Glacken explains Lucretius’s theory: “Domestication has a survival value for certain kinds of animals who flee from the hard life of nature. Lucretius implies that there is self-conscious and purposive action by animals who weigh alternatives and that domestication is semicontractual on the part of the animals” (138-39). See also Milne, Lactilla Tends her Fav’rite Cow, 33-34; 69.

106 Hobbes, Leviathan, part 1, ch. 14, no. 22.

precludes “mutual acceptation.” \(^{108}\) Darwin circumvents this problem by allowing for “tacit contract[s]”. Any exchange, of food for services or of mutual assurances of safety, constitutes a kind of agreement between two beings, whether they belong to the same species or not. Even without words, contracts can be made and fulfilled; the emphasis in such cases is on behaviour that seems to imply consent rather than on formal signs that establish it more or less unequivocally.

On the one hand, extending the ability to enter contracts to animals seems progressive, in that it appears to grant animals what has historically been denied them: the capacity to determine what is in their best interests and rationally weigh their options. Contractual domestication thus seems to elevate animals to human status by suggesting that they, too, are conscious, decision-making agents. Darwin’s dog fits this description: he “barters” with his owner and “expects” reciprocation. Able to negotiate for themselves, animals would appear to be on a more even footing with humans. However, the contract comes with no guarantee of fairness, and indeed it can legitimise any abuses that fall under the agreement. Any harm suffered by a beast who is depicted as consenting to its domestication can be excused on the grounds that the animal, knowing the potential drawbacks to entering into this arrangement with humans, decided that the benefits outweighed the costs; humans are relieved of their culpability if the animal voluntarily submits to its maltreatment. Moreover, if the contract in question turns out to be a bad deal for the animal, the animal’s tendency to accept unfair terms seems to justify its subordination to the human. In *The Social Contract* Rousseau argues that although “it

is beyond any will to consent to something contrary to the good of the being whose will it is,” “one does not always see what ['one's own good'] is.” Animals can consent to harm if, lacking insight or knowledge, they do not recognize it as such. While they possess the capacity for reason in this scenario, they can still make poor decisions, for which they (instead of the humans) are ultimately held responsible.

Another problem raised by the model of contractual domestication is how to ensure tacit consent is being interpreted properly. Substituting (what they consider to be) other signs of agreement for verbal or written consent, many eighteenth-century texts cite the supposed happiness of domesticated animals as evidence that they approve of how their owners treat them—Trimmer’s description of the “greatest joy” which the fowl displays upon seeing the farmer’s wife falls squarely within this category (147). But it is the human who decides what happiness looks like when these feelings cannot be translated into words by the individual experiencing them. With the best or worst of intentions, and without reprisal, humans can misconstrue the actions or inactions of domesticated animals as signs of tacit consent.

Perhaps no eighteenth-century novel is more concerned with consent, and respecting (most) individuals’ right to withhold it, than Richardson’s *Clarissa*, which is one reason why it lends itself especially well to an examination of the implications of contractual domestication. The text strongly encourages our disapproval of the Harlowes, for pressuring Clarissa to marry Solmes when she objects, and of Lovelace, both for

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making it seem as though Clarissa agrees to cohabitation and for ultimately raping her. And yet no one (including Richardson) takes as seriously Anna Howe’s resistance to marrying Hickman, or to marrying at all; not even Clarissa recognizes as legitimate Anna’s rejection of a suitor whom she dislikes. Anna’s right to withhold consent may not matter as much to Richardson as Clarissa’s, but he cannot afford to seem as though he disregards it entirely. By making the domestication of Anna seem voluntary and mutually beneficial, through several methods partly inspired by shrew-taming farces, Richardson makes it much more palatable to readers.

2 “Circumstances which ought to domesticate a wife”

Anna Howe’s gender makes her taming inextricable from a long history of treating women as less human than men. Although all humans were acknowledged to be “animals of creation” in the eighteenth century, women were represented as creatures of feeling rather than reason, of body rather than mind, who in the Great Chain of Being ranked lower than men and only slightly higher than beasts. Near the end of the century, Mary Wollstonecraft, who was herself dubbed a “hyena in petticoats” by critics, censured the culture to which she belonged for treating women like “gentle domestic brutes” that were not allowed to be “part of the human species.” Domestication is the same as debasement in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman; as we have seen, Wollstonecraft claims that girls have been raised for too long like “fawning” lap-dogs and captive birds

who preen their feathers and “stalk with mock majesty from perch to perch” in an effort to appeal to suitors (60). As wives, Wollstonecraft laments, they are likely to suffer as “patient drudge[s]”, labouring unrewarded like “blind horse[s] in a mill” (72). On the other hand, Wollstonecraft notes that “most of the women, in the circle of my observation, who have acted like rational creatures, or shewn any vigour of intellect, have accidentally been allowed to run wild” (47). By exposing her patriarchal culture’s investment in taming women and by identifying wildness as a mode of resistance, Wollstonecraft’s text alerts us to the added significance which domestication and animal imagery more generally have in relation to women.

The enduring popularity of shrew-taming plots in the eighteenth century only cemented the problematic and longstanding association of women and animals. Restoration and eighteenth-century farcical adaptations of The Taming of the Shrew, in particular, influence the characterization of Anna Howe, and her trajectory in Clarissa from spirited woman to chastened wife and mother. During this period adaptors of The Taming of the Shrew, like John Lacy and James Worsdale, took Shakespeare’s comedy about a man who trains his shrewish wife as he would a falcon—depriving her of sleep and food until, hungry and exhausted and reformed, she submits to his control—and

\[11^1\text{ Several critics have noted the similarities between Charlotte’s story and The Taming of the Shrew, but only in passing: Jocelyn Harris, “Introduction” to Richardson’s The History of Sir Charles Grandison, ed. Jocelyn Harris (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), xx-xxi; Juliet McMaster, “Sir Charles Grandison: Richardson on Body and Character,” Eighteenth-Century Fiction 1.2 (1989): 100; and Lois Chaber, “This Affecting Subject’: An ‘Interested’ Reading of Childbearing in Two Novels by Samuel Richardson,” Eighteenth-Century Fiction 8.2 (1996): 242. Richardson himself explicitly acknowledges the connection between Charlotte and Anna, and Lord G. and Hickman in the novel: observing Charlotte’s behaviour towards Lord G., Harriet writes, “Upon my word,…she makes very free with him. I whisper’d her, that she did—A very Miss Howe, said I” (2:229). “To a very Mr. Hickman”, Charlotte responds.}
turned it into a farce, a dramatic genre characterised by brutal physical violence and unsympathetic victims who are “stripped of human values” and get what they deserve.\footnote{112 Tori Haring-Smith, From Farce to Metadrama: A Stage History of The Taming of the Shrew, 1594-1983 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985), 4. John Lacy’s Sauny the Scot, or The Taming of the Shrew, written and first performed in 1667 and published in 1698, “is much rougher than the original and reveals much less sensitivity to the feelings of the characters”; though it met with criticism for these reasons, “Sauny drew audiences for over half a century, an index to the taste of the Restoration and early eighteenth-century audiences” (Haring-Smith, 10, 11). In 1735 James Worsdale adapted Sauny into the two-act farce A Cure for a Scold (14).}

Two of Lacy’s and Worsdale’s strategies for making Petruchio’s violent treatment of his wife more palatable for audiences, who were encouraged to laugh without guilt and even cheer him on, included framing the shrew’s taming in terms of poetic justice and emphasizing her eventual consent or assent. In David Garrick’s popular “moral farce” Catharine and Petruchio (1754), first performed only six years after Clarissa’s publication, both strategies work in concert to make this Petruchio even less blameable than his predecessors. Not only does Catharine appear as the initial aggressor here, vowing to tame her tamer, but the text also ensures that any threat of violence she faces comes from within, not without: “Cath’rine shall tame this haggard; or, if she fails, / Shall tie her tongue up and pare down her nails.”\footnote{113 David Garrick, Catharine and Petruchio, 1756, in The Plays of David Garrick, vol. 3, ed. Harry William Pedicord and Fredrick Louis Bergmann (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981), act 1, lines 285-86. The most notable of many eighteenth-century adaptations of The Taming of the Shrew, Garrick’s Catharine and Petruchio was performed 246 times between 1754 and 1799 (William van Lennep et. al., Index to The London Stage, 1660-1800 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979), 337). It was first published in 1756. Haring-Smith suggests that Garrick’s adaptation “was the sole version of Shakespeare’s Shrew on the English and American stages from 1754 to 1844” (15).} Catharine’s symbolic self-mutilation is reminiscent of the fate suffered by the lion in L’Estrange’s fable “A Lion in Love”, which I discuss further in the next section. The domestication of the lion (required if he is to marry the country lass whom he loves) involves consenting
to declawing and the extraction of sharp teeth, procedures that render the beast harmless and neutralize all threats it poses. In both the fable and the moral farce, taming is represented as violence against the body to which the domesticated individual voluntarily submits or inflicts on his- or herself, whereas in the earlier farces violence, or the threat of violence, is always carried out by others (for example, when Lacy’s Petruchio responds to Margaret’s silent protest by pretending she has a tooth-ache and summoning a doctor to perform a painful extraction). Catharine’s “sadly prophetic” pledge, as Charles Conaway calls it, is thus presented as coming true as a result of her own actions, not Petruchio’s, and she takes the opportunity at the end of the play to further exonerate him of any wrongdoing.114 Readily acknowledging the appropriateness, and even the generosity, of his behaviour, Catharine responds to Petruchio’s observation that she is “Chang’d for the better much” by praising his benevolence: “So good a Master cannot chuse but mend me.”115 Catharine’s voluntary submission and gratitude leave us with less reason to criticize this Petruchio than those who came before him. He is given all the credit and none of the blame for Catharine’s domestication. Garrick’s “moral farce” seems less coarse and less violent than Lacy’s and Worsdale’s plays, because the brutality of domestication, once solely registered externally through the infliction of physical punishment on the body, has now been partially internalized.


Even though “wife-beating was a routine way of maintaining order within marriage” during the eighteenth century, a period with a reputation for “politeness” and civility that has been exaggerated, the novel was trying to become a respectable genre that inculcated virtuous behaviour. Unlike farce, which could embrace violence because its lack of realism made spectators feel less guilty about laughing, the novel was often interpreted, and promoted, as a kind of conduct literature that, like the fable, taught proper and improper ways to behave. The eighteenth-century novel therefore needed to handle shrew-taming in a different way than farce (and even “moral farce”) did. It became even more necessary to emphasize the internalization of taming and its legitimization through consent. The means Richardson chooses for effecting the domestication of his wild female characters, Anna in *Clarissa* and Charlotte in *Sir Charles Grandison*, seem particularly well-suited for this purpose. Pregnancy and childbirth, which underscore women’s animality by making the body conspicuous and also underscore men’s physical control of women, seem to be the chosen methods of taming these two characters. Eighteenth-century understandings of pregnancy have important commonalities with the representation of domestication as a kind of contract. I have already remarked on how this theory of domestication can be used to excuse or legitimate abuses because it implies that the animals, in giving their consent, have decided that the benefits outweigh the costs. During the eighteenth century and earlier periods it was believed that conception required female orgasm and that, therefore, pregnancy retroactively signalled the woman’s desire and consent to sexual intercourse.

This medical theory had legal implications as well, weakening pregnant women’s claims of rape. Indeed, Tassie Gwilliam argues that the Harlowes persist in questioning Clarissa about whether she is bearing Lovelace’s child because pregnancy would be a “betraying sign” of her consent. Thus, both the representation of domestication as contract and this understanding of pregnancy as a bodily indication of tacit consent are cultural beliefs which can be used to downplay and excuse oppression. Domesticating wild female characters by impregnating them allows “the delighted tamer” freedom from reproof because the women are represented as willing participants in the process. The wishful thinking we see in this emphasis on consent similarly infuses representations of animal domestication.

The association of pregnancy with taming is not accidental. Controlling sexual reproduction is an essential part of animal domestication: it is the means of demonstrating humans’ control over the animal body, of increasing one’s stock of domesticated animals, and of breeding docility into future generations, who through genetics and habit become increasingly (and “naturally”) different from their wild ancestors. The word *husbandry* suggests further commonalities between the management of livestock and wives. Pregnancy also involved considerable spatial restrictions for the

117, Thomas Laqueur explains: “Whatever a woman might claim to have felt or whatever resistance she might have put up, conception in itself betrayed desire or at least a sufficient measure of acquiescence for her to enjoy the veneral act. This is a very old argument….and no one before the second half of the eighteenth or early nineteenth century questioned the physiological basis of this judgment” (*Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 161-62).

118, Gwilliam, *Samuel Richardson’s Fictions of Gender*, 83. As Frances Ferguson notes in her article “Rape and the Rise of the Novel,” *Representations* 20 (1987), Lovelace “continually presents the evidence that would make it look as though Clarissa had consented to their relationship” and knows that “her pregnancy might have appeared as just the final formal version of consent, her body speaking truly in open opposition to her voice” (103).
women in question, just as animal domestication puts limits on the movement of animals and the space they can occupy (through the use of fences, cages, reins, leashes and collars and through the “deprival[ation]” of their “liberty” (Buffon, 1.367)). According to Lois Chaber, a pregnant woman in the eighteenth century “would undergo labour and birth in a specially prepared… ‘lying-in chamber,’ with its curtains drawn and apertures shut to exclude air and daylight” and stay there for four to six weeks, “only regaining her mobility and access to male society in graduated stages.”

In light of Chaber’s description of the living conditions of new mothers, it is no wonder that the word “confinement” refers both to being “shut up, or kept in one place; imprisonment” and to “child-birth, delivery, accouchement” (OED 1, 4).

Long before he wrote Clarissa Richardson not only celebrated the way in which pregnancy further restricted women to the private realm, but he also called it domestication. In the sections of Familiar Letters (1741) addressed “To a Gentleman of Fortune, who has Children, dissuading him from a Second Marriage with a Lady much younger than himself,” Richardson cautions that unless an older husband can impregnate his new spouse, she will live a life of gaiety abroad without society’s reproach. By contrast, “Childbed matronizes the giddiest Spirits….it domesticates her, as I may say.”

The Oxford English Dictionary cites this passage from Familiar Letters as one of the first illustrations of the word domesticate with the meaning “to make domestic; to

119 Chaber, “This Affecting Subject”, 196.
120 Samuel Richardson, Letters Written To and For Particular Friends, in Early Works, ed. Pettit, 467-68; hereafter cited parenthetically and referred to by its more common name, Familiar Letters.
attach to home and its duties.” Here, pregnancy is envisioned and recommended as a strategy of containment which prevents a young wife from “looking for Amusements…out of your House” and subdues her vivacity (468). As we will see in the next section, the advice given to the gentleman in *Familiar Letters* is the same that Clarissa’s most reasonable relative, Colonel Morden, offers Anna’s suitor. Hickman takes it to heart and, like Garrick’s Petruchio, manages to avoid recrimination for taming Anna. By presenting Anna’s domestication as a fitting punishment that is in her best interests and has her eventual consent, and by displacing the aggressive impulses of taming onto Lovelace, Richardson portrays Hickman as a kind, if boring, tamer and Anna as a stubborn woman whose initial resistance is unwarranted.

### 3 “To go tame about house and breed”

Just as the farces insist that the shrews’ aggressive desire to domesticate men comes first, and that therefore they deserve their own subsequent taming, *Clarissa* uses Anna’s eagerness to domesticate others to justify her later treatment. Early on, lamenting that a man already “so generally meek” as Hickman should court her, she asks Clarissa, “Who knows not that love delights in taming the lion-hearted?...A woman has some glory in subduing a heart” (L46:209). A man who has a “sheepish[...nature” to begin with poses no challenge to her (L46:209); she wants the opportunity to demonstrate her mastery. It is clear that Anna views domestication as subjugation and that this appeals to her as long as she holds the power in the relationship.

Her lack of faith in the idea of contractual domestication is further articulated in the fable to which Anna alludes here, called “A Lion in Love” in Richardson’s edition of...
Æsop’s Fables. In this text, a lion, upon falling in love with a girl, asks her father for permission to marry her. The father, “afraid of disgusting so formidable a beast”, tricks the lion by pretending to give his consent only under the condition that the lion will calm the girl’s fears by first agreeing to have its teeth and nails drawn out (204). However, when the lion fulfills its end of the bargain, the father recants and kills the once ferocious beast, who no longer possesses natural weapons with which to defend itself. In case the readers miss the point of this fantastic tale, a lengthy reflection spells out its meaning:

Here…is a Beast in Love with a Virgin; which is but a Reverse of the preposterous Passions we meet with frequently in the World, when reasonable Creatures of both Sexes fall in Love with those, that in the Allusion may (almost with a Figure) pass for Beasts. There is nothing so fierce, or so savage, but Love will soften it; nothing so generous, but it will debase it; nothing so sharp-sighted in other Matters, but it throws a Mist before the Eyes of it; and to sum up all in a little, where this Passion domineers, neither Honour nor Virtue is able to stand before it. (204)

At first, the transformative powers of love seem like a good thing, “soften[ing]” or making gentle what was previously “fierce”. But the words employed next are negative: love “debase[s]” and the “sharp-sighted” can no longer see, thanks to its “mist”. In both the fable proper and the explanation, domestication is figured in terms of physical loss (of teeth, of nails, of sight). The lion, renowned for force, is robbed of one of its signal characteristics, the means by which it enforces its power. This representation of taming as a form of oppression lends credence to Buffon’s remark that in “domestic animals…we have seen [Nature] rarely perfect, often altered and disfigured” (2:80).

Whereas this tale of domestication first resembles a mutually beneficial (but unequal)

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121 In *A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), Margaret Anne Doody makes the connection between this passage in *Clarissa* and the fable (28).
contract—after all, a negotiation does take place between the lion and the girl’s father—the human’s deception and manipulation of the situation brings us closer to the notion of cruel and exploitative domestication, in which animals are subjected to various kinds of abuse.

If this is what domestication (and courtship or marriage) is like—exploitation disguised as contract—Anna would prefer to be the tamer rather than the tamed. Accordingly, Anna is constantly on the watch for signs that Hickman might vie with her for control. For instance, when on one occasion, Hickman “bowed to the ground, and would have taken my hand, his whip in the other,” Anna refuses to grant him the favour because “I did not like to be so companioned” (L46:208). She will not have any potential husband surmise that she is a horse which may be easily reined in and disciplined. But if Hickman thinks Anna needs to be tamed, he does not say so; it is the rest of her community who are most vocal about Anna needing reform. Richardson deflects blame from Hickman by displacing the most aggressive and violent impulses of taming onto Lovelace, who often depicts Anna as a wild animal and relishes the prospect of “breaking such a spirit” (L198:637). He fantasizes about “teach[ing] her submission without reserve” until she is “humbled and tame” (L198:637). One of Lovelace’s possible motivations for subduing Anna is the fact that her cleverness and skills at deception rival his own. His frequent comparisons of her to a vixen or “she-fox”, specifically, serve as a simultaneous acknowledgment of the threat she poses and an attempt to contain it.

On the one hand, Lovelace compliments Anna by granting her the designation of a “vixen of a girl” (L201:653). He also identifies with foxes in this novel, celebrating
them for their cunning and dexterity at stealing poultry and thwarting capture. The fox can boast mental quickness as well as outrun its pursuers. Lovelace is recognizing a talent for premeditated plotting which he shares; her “enterprise and spirit” are much like his own and that is a problem, especially when her schemes seek to undermine his own (L198:634). However, if the term “vixen” is a tribute to Anna’s cleverness, it is also a way to reduce her to “animal” physicality. In his Dictionary, Johnson elaborates on his vague definition of vixen as a “woman whose nature and condition is thereby compared to a she-fox” by citing a quotation from one of Wycherley’s letters to Pope: “See a pack of spaniels, called lovers, in hot pursuit of a two-legg’d vixen, who only flies the whole loud pack, to be singled out by one.” By conflating sex and the fox chase (a conventional pairing), this passage puts emphasis on the body of the “vixen” woman; a fox, after all, is prized for its fur. Anticipating the coining of “fox” as American slang for an “attractive woman”, this connotation seems compatible with Lovelace’s perception of Anna as an “auburn beauty” whom he fantasizes pursuing, even if she is a quarry less treasured and “noble” than Clarissa (L252:864). Lovelace vows to punish Anna’s scheming mind by subordinating it to her body.

Lovelace never follows through on his plans for “breaking” Anna’s “spirit”, but by representing the violence of taming he makes Hickman’s domestication of Anna seem much more humane. It is a great point in the “meek” Hickman’s favour that, unlike

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122 In Women and Animals: Feminist Theoretical Explorations, Donovan and Adams note that “a woman termed a ‘vixen’” is so called because “she threatens a man’s self-esteem and sense of security, intruding into his perceived domain” just as “in the days when ‘poultry’ were kept in coops or yards, the actual vixen was much resented, and feared, as an intruder. Being a predator, she often crossed human-drawn boundaries to kill chickens or other fowl whom humans consider their property” (15). The OED gives 1913 as the first documented usage of “foxy” as meaning “Of a woman: attractive, desirable, pretty, sexy” (6).
Lovelace, he is “no fox-hunter” (L40:181). However, Hickman’s technique for taming Anna, like Lovelace’s, depends upon him reducing her to her physicality. Denigrated by Belford as “the work of [mere] bodies” not suitable for women like Clarissa who are “all mind” (L169:555), childbearing is the method of “breeding” recommended not only by other male characters in the novel, who are eager to see Anna’s “liveliness” restrained, but also by Richardson himself, whose history of representing pregnancy as an effective form of domestication dates back to the publication of *Familiar Letters*. The idea that childbearing “domesticates” the “giddiest Spirits” is recycled in *Clarissa*, when, in a letter to Belford, Colonel Morden comments on Anna’s maltreatment of Hickman (468, 467). While he “take[s] the liberty to blame Miss Howe for her behaviour to Mr. Hickman,” Morden is confident that all is not lost, even though the suitor has “yielded up” the “reins” early in their relationship (L520:1450). Hickman can be reassured, Morden writes, that there is a

circumstance which good natured men who engage with even lively women, may look forward to with pleasure; a circumstance which generally lowers the spirits of the Ladies, and *domesticates them*, as I may call it: And which, as it will bring those of Mr. Hickman and Miss Howe nearer to a par, that worthy gentleman will have double reason, when it happens to congratulate himself upon it.\(^{123}\)

Morden seems to be sharing a rakish joke with Belford about sex bringing a man and woman’s spirits (as well as bodies) “nearer to a par”, but the repetition of the phrase from *Familiar Letters* further associates domestication with pregnancy. In addition, the proximity of Morden’s reference to “reins” to his use of the word “domesticates” suggests a connection between domestication as it relates to the taming or training of

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\(^{123}\) Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa. Or, the History of a Young Lady*. 3\(^{rd}\) edn. (London: 1750-1751), 8:166.
animals and domestication as an attachment to the private household. The word “par” has a fascinating, if incidental, relationship to domestication as well; it was an East Anglian and Lincolnshire term for an “enclosure for farm animals” (OED, n2, 1). Having children will transform Anna, the wild creature, into a domesticated animal prevented from straying from home.

By the conclusion of Clarissa, Anna Howe is a mother, and, if we believe the narrator’s report (for Anna no longer speaks on her own behalf), she has no complaints about the domestication which has accompanied, and been accomplished through, pregnancy. The narrator’s announcement that the couple are “already blessed with two fine children”, whose names are chosen by “joint consent”, suggests that Hickman wasted little time before acting on Morden’s advice (1491). To be sure, Anna has retained some of her old vivacity—for instance, she “as pleasantly as generously tells” her husband that she “must not quite forget that she was once Miss Howe”—but we are assured that “the only prerogative she does or has occasion to assume” now is her management of the Poor Fund established in Clarissa’s name (1491). Richardson’s use of italics draws attention to the diminution of Anna’s authority.

After resisting matrimony and all it entails throughout Clarissa, Anna’s happiness about this situation seems, on the one hand, quite out of character. However, despite her hostile reaction to Hickman’s horse-whip earlier in the novel, Anna was occasionally capable of seeing the benefits of (having, if not being) a tame wife. Imagining what it might be like to be a husband, she writes,

Indeed, my dear, I do not think a man-woman a pretty character at all: and, as I said, were I a man, I would sooner choose for a dove, though it were fit for
nothing but, as the play says, to go tame about house and breed, than a wife that is setting at work (my insignificant self present perhaps) every busy hour my never-resting servants, those of the stud not excepted; and who, with a besom in her hand, as I may say, would be continually filling me with apprehensions that she wanted to sweep me out of my own house as useless lumber. (L132:476)

Voicing Richardson’s disapproval of androgyny, Anna can appreciate a husband’s desire for a wife who more closely resembles a tame animal than one who holds the reins both literally and figuratively, making her husband “insignificant” and “useless” in the process. 124 Anna’s conservative position here makes it more plausible that she consents to her domestication. Indeed, some critics believe that Anna even participates in it: “Anna is not ‘tamed’ by [Hickman’s] assertive ‘true’ masculinity,” Katharine Kittredge argues, “but by her perception of her role as a wife.”125

Yet Richardson, for all his endorsement of Anna’s domestication and her own apparent acceptance of it, nonetheless refers to it as a “punishment” in a 1748 letter to Aaron Hill: “Your Ladies will see that I have made [Anna Howe] punishably Faulty in her treatment of a worthy, tho’ not a brilliant Man.—And I have accordingly punished her—As generously however, as her warm and Friendly Heart allowed me to punish her—by making her happier with that ill treated Man, than she could have been with a more volatile one; and of consequence under obligation to him.”126 Although Richardson qualifies his use of the term “punishment”, the language of discipline nonetheless casts

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124 For Richardson’s previous association of riding horses and androgyny, see *Familiar Letters*, especially the one entitled “Against a young lady’s affecting manly airs; and also censuring the modern Riding-habits”, in which he writes, “a masculine Woman is a Character as little creditable as becoming” (423).


an ominous shadow over Mr. and Mrs. Hickman’s relationship.\textsuperscript{127} Chaber argues that all the novels provide evidence that “for Richardson childbearing clearly serves as a retributive tool”, just as pregnancy is Eve’s punishment for her transgressions. Certainly, in \textit{Clarissa}, pregnancy is represented as a means to control women. After the rape, Lovelace delights in the prospect of Clarissa “being in the way of a mamma” because then she will be forced to live and marry him; as Toni Bowers puts it, “He had long cherished the hope that Clarissa would bear his children, believing that such a circumstance would ensure her complete subjugation.”\textsuperscript{128} Lovelace best articulates the link between pregnancy and violence in this novel when he disturbingly relates childbearing to being hunted. When the rake fantasizes about Clarissa breastfeeding the “twin Lovelace[s]” whom he has sired (L220: 706), he depicts the infants as “eager hunters” with “purple mouths” (L474:1351). The hungry babies therefore seem to take on the predatory nature of their father, the notorious “woman-eater” (L416:1216). Although in Lovelace’s fantasy Clarissa nourishes the children with “maternal tenderness”, the reference to hunting suggests that she is being consumed as if she were prey.\textsuperscript{129} Whereas likening childbearing to domestication seems much more benevolent than associating it with hunting, Lovelace only builds on sinister implications which are

\textsuperscript{127} Chaber, “This Affecting Subject,” 236.


\textsuperscript{129} In her analysis of Clarissa’s meditations, Toni Bowers notes the novel’s association of pregnancy with death: “Although on the face of it Clarissa’s meditation is about death and not about maternity, those two categories—always closely linked in discourse as in experience in the eighteenth century—from this moment become inseparable in \textit{Clarissa}” (\textit{Politics of Motherhood}, 220).
already present, emphasizing the potentially exploitative power dynamics they have in common.

In Richardson’s last novel, *Sir Charles Grandison* (1754), the verb “domesticate” is also used several times in relation to childbearing. On one occasion, the eponymous hero encourages his uncle to marry a younger lady, reassuring him as Colonel Morden and the writer in *Familiar Letters* did that “if your Lordship should be blessed with a child or two to inherit your great estate, that happy event would domesticate the Lady, and make your latter years more happy than your former.”\(^{130}\) The rest of the novel proves that Sir Charles has good reason to be confident in his recommendation. Childbirth is what finally tames his sister, Charlotte Grandison. Women and animals are often linked in this novel: for instance, Charlotte’s Lord G. collects “Butterflies, and other gaudy insects” until marriage gives him “a more considerable trifle to amuse himself with” and Charlotte criticizes the institution by comparing wives to captive birds and brides to “milk-white heifers dressed in ribbands, and just ready to be led to the sacrifice” (2:229-30, 3:85, 7:358). Yet while the view that “[women] are but domestic animals of a superior order” is for the most part endorsed only by unsympathetic characters, all but

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\(^{130}\) Samuel Richardson, *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, ed. Jocelyn Harris (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 3:59, hereafter cited parenthetically by original volume number and page number. Another example occurs in a letter which recounts the way Lady Grandison (Charles’s mother) was treated by her husband: “when he had shew’d her every-where, and she began to find herself in circumstances, which ought to domesticate a wife of a much gayer turn than Lady Grandison pretended to have, he gave way to his predominant byas; and after a while, leaving the whole family-care to her, for her excellence in every branch of which he was continually praising her (He did her that justice) he was but little at home in the summer” (2:311).
the shrew herself wish that Charlotte were “tamed.” Like her predecessors, Charlotte would much rather tame than be tamed, but even self-discipline eludes her. As Harriet observes, “Humour and raillery are very difficult things to rein in. They are ever curveting like a prancing horse; and they will often throw the rider who depends more upon his skill in managing them, than he has reason to do” (3:13). Charlotte, in other words, is a bad horsewoman when it comes to “rein[ing] in [her] charming spirit” (2:403). Marriage itself does not subdue her, perhaps because—as in Anna’s case—it does not really require Charlotte’s consent (or at least her approval), but *Sir Charles Grandison* emphasises the domesticating influence of childbearing even more than *Clarissa* does. Charlotte is reformed when she gives birth to an infant whom she affectionately nicknames the “little marmouset” and “my pug” (7:261, 7:403). By depicting her own child as an animal, Charlotte becomes one by extension.

According to Harriet, “Ungovernable Charlotte” is much “improved” by parenthood and “entirely satisfied with herself, her situation and prospects” (7:412). This confirmation of Charlotte’s delight in maternity is meant to signal her consent after the fact and make her domestication seem less problematic than it did before. However, it is difficult to forget the ominous comments Charlotte makes immediately before giving

131 Richardson, *Sir Charles Grandison*, 1:70. For instance, Harriet tells Charlotte, “I wish, Miss Grandison, with all my heart, if that would tame you, that you were in love over head and ears, and could not help it!” (2:274).

132 In her article on *Sir Charles Grandison*, Carol Houlihan Flynn also notes that it is important that the change undergone by the female character is voluntary: “The notion of alteration is crucial to Richardson’s entire treatment of that sex he purports to exalt, for their exaltation depends upon their voluntary transformation of their very nature” (135). See “The Pains of Compliance in *Sir Charles Grandison*,” in *Samuel Richardson: Tercentenary Essays*, ed. Margaret Anne Doody and Peter Sabor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 133-45.
birth. Chaber points out the disturbing implications of the double entendre in Charlotte’s request to “Aunt Selby, Lucy, [to] come early… that you may be able to testify, that I had no design to overlay the little Marmouset” (7:358). Drawing on definitions from Johnson’s *Dictionary*, Chaber suggests that the phrase “no design to overlay” “on the first level alludes to Charlotte’s disapproval of swaddling-clothes” and “on the second level…hints at potential infanticide.” She concludes, “In this sinister conceit, Aunt Selby and Lucy are invited to serve as ‘gossips,’ one of whose function was to testify whether or not a baby’s death was deliberate. Infanticide, after all, is the logical culmination of the rebellion against maternity that the prenatal Charlotte (verbally) engages in.”

133 This disturbing thought qualifies readers’ sense of Charlotte’s happiness after childbirth and undermines the comforting narrative of a woman who is wholly in favour of her own domestication.

Richardson cannot ultimately dissociate taming from violence either in *Sir Charles Grandison* or *Clarissa*; there remains a hint of coercion in his portrayals of the contractual domestication of Charlotte and Anna. In Lovelace’s case, though, there is no such attempt to conceal the unsavoury aspects of taming. Richardson handles Anna’s and Lovelace’s wildness differently, and this difference does much to illuminate eighteenth-century Britons’ ambivalence towards domestication.

133 Chaber, “This Affecting Subject,” 234.
4 Taming the “delighted tamer”

Even before Belford recommends that Lovelace declare his willingness to marry Clarissa as “a means to make mankind…herd a little longer with thee”, his reformation is framed in terms of domestication (L333:1051). Throughout the novel, the transformation from rake to devout husband is imagined to demand the termination of Lovelace’s “wild” adventures. Both in and beyond the novel, libertinism is often associated with the animal and with wildness. For instance, on his deathbed, the notorious rake Rochester apparently compared his destructive lifestyle to the damage caused by “wild Beasts let loose” in “Human Society”, an image that corresponds with Colonel Morden’s declaration that “to be a libertine” is to be “inhuman.” Lovelace is compared to many wild animals over the course of the novel, but he is also portrayed as the tamer of animals, and his experiences in that role influence how he responds to the prospect of his own domestication.

Lovelace can imagine domestication only in terms of exploitation because this is the kind of taming he practises in relation both to real animals and to the women he constantly figures as animals. “We begin with birds as boys, and as men go on to ladies; and both perhaps, in turn, experience our sportive cruelty,” Lovelace writes of his history of violence across species (L170:557). Throughout the novel, Lovelace never tries to negotiate the terms of his relationship with Clarissa; instead he only wants to capture her.

134 Descriptions of Lovelace’s libertine exploits often feature the adjective wild; see, for example, L2:42 and L4:50.

Words like “gin,” “sprindge,” and “snare”—the vocabulary of trapping—abound. Caging is the antithesis of contractual domestication (in its ideal form) and an extension of taming or cruel domestication. Preventing escape, the cage is an acknowledgement that the creature inside would flee if it could. Contractual domestication would render the enforcement of the cage needless. There is no faith at all in “reforming” the animal or in the possibility of convincing it to stop being wild voluntarily. The idea of the cage is based on the premise that consenting to domestication is impossible. Lovelace’s comparison of women to “newly caught” birds frames his treatment of them as taming rather than contractual domestication, because it is neglect and starvation, not any kind of fair bargaining, which makes the “ensnared volatile” go from “peck[ing] at the fingers of its delighted tamer” and “bemoan[ing] its cruel fate and forfeited liberty” to an exhausted state of non-resistance (L170:557). Lovelace may fantasize about the bird eventually “resum[ing] its wonted cheerfulness” and “every day sing[ing] a song to amuse itself, and reward its keeper,” acts which could be interpreted as tacit consent to taming after the fact, but it is not an acquiescence that the tamer actually believes in, for the bird is never released from its cage. Whether it is cheerful about the outcome or not, the bird is defeated in much the same way as L’Estrange’s lion is. In both cases, the degraded condition of the body (there, declawed and lacking teeth; here, malnourished) leaves the creature with no other option but domestication.

On the one hand, a conclusion in which Lovelace, the “delighted tamer” who is responsible for the domestication of so many birds, gets what he deserves by being likewise tamed seems only appropriate. Richardson, in theory, would not be opposed to the idea of poetic justice, but he cannot afford to have Clarissa dispense that kind of
punishment because retaliation is too close to Lovelace’s self-declared motivation for taming.¹³⁶ Lovelace constantly imagines women to be planning his entrapment; like Anna, he views marriage in terms of captivity, as a “state of shackles” (L99:401), and courtship as a contest between two individuals who are armed with nets and the intention to capture each other on their own terms. Projecting his desire to tame onto women allows Lovelace to feel justified in retaliating in the same way: as Jayne Lewis observes, “Lovelace…needs to believe that his victims are at least as cruel as he is.”¹³⁷ The same logic informs Anna’s desire to tame the “lion-hearted” suitor before he can do the same to her. The text can derive some benefit from the depiction of Anna as a tamer relishing the subjugation of men in that it makes her later domestication more palatable to readers as a form of poetic justice. But no one can imagine Clarissa lowering herself to this level and playing the role of tyrannical master.

No one, that is, except Lovelace himself. Though he flaunts his status as a “delighted tamer,” Lovelace, in order to garner sympathy and to excuse his actions, also depicts himself as an animal that has been unjustly subjected to the cruelties of domestication. For instance, early in the novel Lovelace compares himself to a “hungry hound who sees a delicious morsel within his reach (the froth hanging about his vermillion jaws), yet dare not leap at it for his Life” (L115:440). Lovelace hates himself for being a “begging dog” “waiting tamely” under threat of punishment “till dull consent

¹³⁶ For Richardson’s opinion of poetic justice, see his extended postscript in the third edition of Clarissa, especially 288-89.

throws out the scraps of love,” but he assigns most of the blame to Clarissa (L228:742). In this scenario, she is a bad pet-keeper, who is guilty of the cruelty of deprivation because she refuses to satisfy the dog’s appetite for food (Lovelace’s appetite for sex).

Later Lovelace builds upon this image of the helpless and salivating hound by likening himself to a mad dog. “Faith and troth, Jack,” he writes, “I have had very hard usage…to have such a plaguy ill name given me, pointed at, screamed upon, run away from, as a mad dog would be; all my own friends ready to renounce me” (L515:1437). Recalling the image of the “hungry hound” with “froth hanging about his vermillion jaws”, the mad dog simile rewrites the symptoms of appetite (saliva) as symptoms of illness (foaming at the mouth). Eighteenth-century writers speculated that one of the causes of rabies or canine madness was improper nourishment, an explanation that censured the dog’s keeper for failing to supply it with appropriate food and water. Illness would seem to make Lovelace even less culpable for his actions than appetite, especially if others were responsible for causing his sickness. Once a docile creature, the mad dog is now apt to bite the hand that fed it; yet, the keeper has created the conditions for this uncharacteristic display of ferocity through neglect. By representing himself as a mad dog, Lovelace suggests that his violent behaviour is the consequence of Clarissa’s earlier neglectful pet-keeping and an effect which could have been anticipated and prevented.

Portraying himself as a baited bear similarly allows Lovelace to emphasize his victimization and to present his violence as a justified response to the cruelty of

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138 See, for example, the anonymous An Essay on the Bite of a Mad Dog (London: 1767), which cites “the long continued want of all Food and Drink whatsoever” as a possible cause of canine madness (2).
domestication. After being interrogated and judged for his crimes by his family, Lovelace complains to Belford, “never was Bear so miserably baited as thy poor friend!—And for what?—Why, for the Cruelty of Miss Harlowe” (L383:1169). Bear-baiting involved setting dogs upon a bear that was tethered to a stake, and gambling on the injuries of participating animals. The baited bear was tamed by its keeper so that it could be paraded through the street, but keepers and spectators alike counted on, and profited from, the bear’s reversion to wildness when attacked. Outnumbered and unable to escape, the bear was, as the century progressed, increasingly viewed with sympathy and its violent retaliations justified as self-defence, even if the dogs were killed in the fight.¹³⁹ Lovelace represents domestication here as a perversion of the mutually beneficial contract, where humans exchange food, shelter, protection, for the animals’ various services. Instead, what we have is the mutually harmful revenge pact, which, sharing in common the language of payment and debt, functions as a more sinister form of the contract. The two parties are bound in a relationship that is based on reciprocity, but violence is traded for violence instead of goods for services, as the originally mistreated individual responds in kind.

At one point Clarissa herself seems to endorse Lovelace’s view of himself as a bear whose ferocity is an understandable response to maltreatment. In her post-rape

¹³⁹ Even in Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe, where Friday’s provocation and murder of a bear is judged the “greatest Diversion imaginable” rather than a troubling spectacle by Crusoe and their tour-guides, the bear is represented as a creature which “won’t meddle with you” unless it is attacked first (246, 247). Once the bear “takes…Affront,” however, he “sets all other Business aside to pursue his Revenge; for he will have Satisfaction” (247). Page numbers correspond to the Oxford World’s Classics edition (2007), edited by Thomas Keymer.
delirium, Clarissa writes a beast fable which suggests that she concurs with Lovelace’s self-assessment and that she entertains the possibility that she is responsible:

A Lady took a great fancy to a young lion, or a bear, I forget which—but a bear, or a tiger, I believe, it was. It was made her a present of when a whelp. She fed it with her own hand: she nursed up the wicked cub with great tenderness; and would play with it, without fear or apprehension of danger: and it was obedient to all her commands: and its tameness, as she used to boast, increased with its growth; so that, like a lap-dog, it would follow her all over the house. But mind what followed. At last, somehow, neglecting to satisfy its hungry maw, or having otherwise disobliged it on some occasion, it resumed its nature; and on a sudden fell upon her, and tore her in pieces—And who was most to blame, I pray? The brute, or the lady? The lady, surely!—For what she did, was out of nature, out of character at least: what it did, was in its own nature (Paper II: 891)

In this passage, Clarissa’s repetition of the word “follow” is pivotal to assessing her ascription of blame. While the domesticated beast’s habit of “follow[ing] her all over the house” at first seems like a testament to its docile obedience, corresponding to the definition “to go after or along with (a person) as an attendant”, “follow” also evokes the behaviour of a wild predator who “once affronted” “will never leave you, Night or Day, till he has his Revenge; but follows at a good round rate, till he overtakes you.”

This dual meaning haunts the passage by foreshadowing the attack, which the next iteration of “follow” similarly suggests may have been provoked. When she warns the reader to “mind what followed,” Clarissa invites us to consider the beast’s reversion to savagery in terms of causation. Although the animal’s act of violence certainly “follows” its arguably more innocuous behaviour in that it “come[s] after” it “in sequence”, the definition “to come after or succeed as a consequence or effect” may also apply. The lady is not sure what she has done to provoke the beast’s ferocious displeasure, but she seems to believe

140 Defoe, Robinson Crusoe, 247.
that it is a result of her treatment of the animal: “somehow” she has either “neglect[ed] to satisfy its hungry maw” (in keeping with Lovelace’s earlier accusations) or “otherwise disoblige[d] it on some occasion”. But the end of the beast fable hints that the lady has not just erred in forgetting a meal; she is also at fault for taking pride in her domestication of a wild animal, for “boasting” about its tameness, for presuming that she could change the nature of the beast. The fable presents domestication not only as unnatural, but as sinful, since it is based on human vanity. Although the lady had trained the wild animal to “follow” her everywhere, bringing it into the house implicitly sets in motion the chain of events that ends with the beast “[falling] upon her”, a result whose inevitability is underscored by words’ similar sounds.

Clarissa’s beast fable might seem to validate Lovelace’s claim that he is like a baited bear, wronged by the keeper who presumed to tame him and justified in reverting to his natural ferocity, but the novel provides evidence that the view of Clarissa needs to be revised. For instance, Richardson takes pains to emphasize that Clarissa is a caring keeper of animals when he has her cater to the needs of her grandfather’s “bantams, pheasants, and pea-hens” twice a day during her own trials at Harlowe-Place (L9:66). Moreover, Æsop’s Fables provides another perspective on the unsuccessful domestication of a wild animal that vindicates the pet-keeper. “A Shepherd and a Young Wolf” tells the story of a man who “train’d [a whelp] up with his Dogs”, feeding and treating them in the same manner, until they were all old enough to chase away the wolf’s “true Brethren” when the flock was threatened (224, 225). However, the “Domestick Wolf” soon proves that “Ill Dispositions may be dissembled for a while, but Nature is very hardly to be alter’d, either by Counsel or by Education”; he is caught
stealing a sheep and is hung by “his injur’d Master” (225). Both beast fables stress the impossibility of changing the nature of the beast (or “reclaim[ing]” “false and treacherous” men), but they come to different conclusions about who is to blame for the disastrous consequences of a domestication gone awry (225). Although Richardson admits that the shepherd has enabled the destructive young wolf by giving him access to the flock—“Benefits but augment their Power to do Mischief”—the shepherd is nonetheless depicted as the wronged “Benefactor” (225). Both the lady in Clarissa’s beast fable and the young shepherd might be “injur’d”, but in very different senses; it is only the wolf here who receives, and “so richly merited”, the “punishment” (225). This fable and Richardson’s portrayal of Clarissa as a good pet-keeper temper the text’s earlier derogatory representations of domestication as a not only misguided but reprehensible endeavour.

“A Shepherd and a Young Wolf”, however, is still far from an endorsement of domestication, which in this fable has bad consequences for all parties. Similarly, many readers of Clarissa, for all their warranted suspicion of Lovelace’s justifications of wildness, were still reluctant to see the rake reformed, domesticated, and incorporated into the “herd”. The novel itself conditions this response by frequently representing “tameness” as a contemptible and uninteresting quality which suits neither heroine nor villain. Instead, “tameness” is the defining characteristic of the passive Mr. Hickman, who failed to impress either Anna or Clarissa’s eighteenth-century readers. Although he subjects Hickman’s “sheepish nature” to the clever and denigrating remarks of both Anna and Lovelace, it still seemed to surprise Richardson that the suitor met with less than universal approval. With the hopes of improving Hickman’s reputation, he added two
new letters to the third edition. In the first, Hickman complains to Mrs. Howe that it is degrading and counterproductive to continue pursuing Anna, reinforcing the negative connotations of tameness: “What hopes can there be, that a Lady will ever esteem, as a Husband, that man, whom, as a Lover, she despises? Will not every act of obligingness from such a one, be construed as an unmanly tameness of spirit, and entitle him the more to her disdain?” (Clarissa (1750-51), 2:133). Although she ultimately encourages him to be patient, Mrs. Howe restates Hickman’s fears in her response and continues to associate domestication and emasculation: “But you are afraid you shall be thought tame, perhaps, when married. That you shall not be thought manly enough, I warrant!” (2.137).

In this exchange, efforts are made to redefine Hickman’s behaviour, but “tameness” so called is not recuperated. Indeed, the word retains its bad reputation in Richardson’s last novel, in which he is especially careful to distance his hero from charges of tameness.

Discussing the creation of Sir Charles Grandison with his female correspondents, Richardson mused, “He must be wonderfully polite; but no Hickman! How can we hope that ladies will not think a good man a tame man?” Sir Charles, like Hickman, is still represented as a benevolent owner of animals, but more than once Richardson has him declare that “I am not a tame man”, a refrain which betrays the author’s doubt that he has done enough to make morality compelling (2.438).

Although Clarissa notes that Lovelace “might be liked well enough if he bore such a character as Mr Hickman bears,” few contemporary readers shared her sentiments; tameness, as Hickman represents it (before or after Richardson’s intervention), hardly

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141 Richardson to Susanna Highmore, 4 June 1750, in Carroll, Selected Letters, 161.
seems an improvement on Lovelace’s captivating wildness (L28:135). On the surface, *Pamela* seems to offer a more suitable role model in Mr. B., Richardson’s most famous reformed rake. Critics fascinated by *Pamela’s* resemblance to fairy tales often depict Mr. B.’s reformation as a domestication from wild animal to tame husband—from “rough beast” to “prince charming” as Terry Eagleton puts it—and yet these characterizations give us an exaggerated sense of Mr. B.’s transformation. The well-known scene in which Pamela finds her half-hearted attempt at escape thwarted by a cow she instead imagines is a “nasty grim bull” suggests that the danger Mr. B. poses is not as great as Pamela thinks. Even in her fantasies he is not a wild predator; in reality he is already a tamer creature than she supposes. Pursuing this point Henry Fielding makes the rake’s tameness a part of his identity in *Shamela*, when he claims that the “B.” in “Mr. B.” stands for “Booby”, a derogatory term for “a dull, heavy, stupid fellow” which doubles as the name for a species of bird that “do[es] not stir from you, but suffer[s]

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142 Lady Echlin’s alternate ending to *Clarissa* bears out the truth of this statement. It subjects Lovelace to a speedy reformation that is explicitly framed in terms of domestication: Clarissa tells Anna the “wild gentleman” has been “tamed” and Belford confirms that “his once violence spirit, is amazing broken” (138), a word reminiscent of the domestication of horses, creatures which “renounce[] [their] being, to exist only by the will of another” (Buffon, 1:371). The taming of Echlin’s Lovelace is a “wonderful” thing to behold according to these characters; however, to critics, her version of Lovelace still seems a less fascinating copy of the original. See Lady Elizabeth Echlin, *An Alternate Ending to Richardson’s Clarissa*, ed. Dmiter Daphinoff (Bern: Francke, 1982), 104. As Daphinoff puts it in his introduction, Echlin’s Lovelace “bears only a faint resemblance to his namesake in Richardson’s novel” (21).

143 In a letter to Aaron Hill, Richardson confesses that the same gentleman inspired both Lovelace and Mr. B. Richardson to Aaron Hill, 26 January 1746/7 in Carroll, *Selected Letters*, 79.


[itself] to be catch’d by the hand.” Given that Fielding associates Richardson’s Mr. B. with a kind of tameness that is synonymous with stupidity, it is easy to see why readers did not see the domestication he models as a compelling prospect for Lovelace.

It is especially difficult to endorse tameness when Clarissa rejects it, too. When she is treated cruelly by the Harlowes, Clarissa experiences firsthand the truth of Lovelace’s maxim: “tame spirits must always be imposed upon” (L239:810). Noting that Anna “accuses me of a tameness, which subjects me to insults from my brother”, Clarissa resolves to “try what a little of [Anna’s] spirit will do—sit it ever so awkwardly upon me” (L29:136). Although wildness is not deemed appropriate for Anna, it suits Clarissa quite well. By the end of her life, she is described not as a caged bird but a “sparrow” on the “house-top” (L418:1221), not as prey but as “a tiger of a lady” (L276:935). Clarissa disproves not only her family’s belief that she is a tame creature, but also Lovelace’s: “He shall see, … tame and timid as he has thought her, what she dare do, to avoid so hated a compulsion” (L276:936).

Clarissa’s and Lovelace’s wildness, or their refusal to conform to their society’s expectations, is acceptable to Richardson because they are exceptional. A wolf’s “unmanageable fierceness” can produce sublime pleasure only when it poses no real threat or inconvenience (Burke, 61); if one were surrounded by wolves or if all domesticated animals were similarly ferocious, this kind of detached aesthetic appreciation would not be possible. In the eighteenth-century wildness could be

146 The OED cites Hans Sloane’s 1707 use of the term.
romanticized as long as it was uncommon and one remained insulated from its practical consequences. By contrast, a society cannot function without domesticated animals or the kind of general submissiveness to authority they represent in this novel. Richardson cannot allow Anna to “run wild” indefinitely because—more than Clarissa and Lovelace, who seemed too perfect and too evil, respectively, to exist in real life—Anna is a character with whom ordinary eighteenth-century readers identified. By stressing the consensual nature of Anna’s domestication, Richardson makes a case for its virtues that simultaneously acknowledges its undesirability. In so doing he registers both the period’s contradictory affective and practical responses to wildness and domestication and the difficulties of reconciling them.
Chapter Three
Be Our Guest: Domestication and Hospitality

When eighteenth-century writers imagined domestication as a mutually beneficial contract, the relationship between farmers and their beasts of burden was the example that immediately came to mind: Sarah Trimmer’s Mr. Wilson, who “considers every beast that works for [him] as [his] servant, and entitled to wages”, is one such individual who feels that his relationship with his livestock amounts to a business arrangement, though not one between equal partners.\(^{147}\) While dogs, especially, were also compared to servants—or the household’s other, human “domestics” (Buffon, 2:40)—writers increasingly recognized that the special and complicated relationships that pets had with their masters required slightly different analogues. Offered better fare and lodging than beasts of burden, pets whose ancestors had performed menial tasks such as guarding the house from intruders, catching vermin, or rotating oven spits, now occupied a position of privileged leisure within the house. If they had been servants before, now they were among the creatures being served by others. Hospitality—itself a kind of contract between host and guest, but one that often disavows its connection to commercial systems of exchange—supplied a new framework for conveying eighteenth-century Britons’ ambivalence towards pet-keeping. The writers featured in this chapter use the vocabulary of hospitality frequently and explicitly, taking advantage of its many contradictions, to confront the nature and implications of humans’ and pets’ responsibility to each other. “What can be said of, indeed can one speak of, hospitality

\(^{147}\) Trimmer, *Fabulous Histories*, 179.
toward the non-human…?” was as important, as challenging, and as polarizing a question for Francis Coventry, Sarah Trimmer, William Cowper, and Gilbert White (among others) as it turned out to be for Jacques Derrida over two hundred years later.¹⁴⁸

Although pet-keeping predated the eighteenth century, it was more widely practised in the eighteenth century than ever before; by this moment in history, Keith Thomas writes, “all the symptoms of obsessive pet-keeping were in evidence.”¹⁴⁹ Pets’ often extravagant ways of life during this period certainly enabled analogies with guests who were lavishly treated by their hosts—analyses which had the potential both to uphold and upset traditional hierarchies of species. The gifts of shelter and food were central to the definitions of domestication and of pethood. Whereas in earlier centuries, almost “every edifice” had been a “Noah’s Ark,” with humans and beasts of burden living together under the same roof, by the eighteenth century it was mainly pets who enjoyed the intimacy of cohabitation with their masters.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, Samuel Johnson’s definition of the word pet as “a lamb taken into the house, and brought up by hand” suggests that permission to share a human’s dwelling transforms livestock into a companion animal (Dictionary). Moreover, the pet is fed by its owners and frequently shares the delicacies off their plates, whereas other domesticated and wild beasts are eaten and thus furnish the banquet of hospitality rather than partake in it. These structural

¹⁴⁸ Jacques Derrida, “Hostipitality,” Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities 5 (2000): 4. In The Animal That Therefore I Am, Derrida claims that the questions “Does [the animal] offer hospitality? Does it offer? Does it give?” are analogous in their “form, premises, and stakes” to the question “Does the animal think?” , which has been treated so often by philosophers as the test for whether animals qualify for membership within a moral community (63).

¹⁴⁹ Thomas, Man and the Natural World, 117.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 94.
similarities may partly explain why Cowper and many eighteenth-century writers viewed pets (both approvingly and disapprovingly) as guests living within their masters’ homes.

Yet both hospitality and pet-keeping are more than the sum of their material components. Living and eating (well) with another being are difficult tasks, which involve “determining the best, most respectful, most grateful, and also most giving way of relating to the other and of relating the other to the self.”\textsuperscript{151} As Coventry, Trimmer Cowper, White, and many of their contemporaries eagerly or reluctantly acknowledge, participating in hospitality and pet-keeping means facing the mutual dangers and benefits, the limitations and the opportunities, of accommodating the other. In the first section of this chapter I focus on two texts which express scepticism about the viability and appropriateness of interspecies hospitality: Francis Coventry’s \textit{The History of Pompey the Little} (1751) and Sarah Trimmer’s \textit{Fabulous Histories} (1786). In the second and third sections I analyse William Cowper’s and Gilbert White’s representations of their own pet-keeping practices. Finally, shifting from animals dwelling in the homes of private citizens to those in possession of the king, the fourth section explores the rhetoric of hospitality in descriptions of the Tower of London’s royal menagerie and its inhabitants. Before I turn to these texts, however, some context for eighteenth-century attitudes about hospitality is necessary.

Extended to foreigners and natives, the destitute and the prosperous, the unknown and the familiar, hospitality took various forms in eighteenth-century England. Yet while

each interaction between host and guest was different in its details, “hospitality” as a concept was increasingly viewed with scepticism, its purportedly altruistic motivations and its identity as a Christian, secular, or national virtue called into question. In Matthew Concanen’s *The Speculatist* (1730), for example, one contributor complains that, on a recent visit to the house of an English nobleman, he found that guests were only treated well if they rewarded the servants with tips. “Call ye this Hospitality, to invite a Man to a Feast, and then make him pay for it!” the writer protests, his opinion of the host ruined and the reputation of “old English hospitality” discredited by the discovery of self-interest.  

152 Jane Collier’s satirical *An Essay on the Art of Ingeniously Tormenting* (1753) likewise suggests that the patronesses who “take the distressed into their protection” and into their homes are not always motivated by disinterested benevolence, but rather a malicious desire to acquire “new subjects of their power.”  

153 Even men of religion modelling themselves after Jesus, whose offering of bread as a symbol of his body exemplified Christian hospitality, were dismayed by the discrepancy between hospitality’s principles and its current practice. Individuals who claim to “keep[] an handsome table” in order “to do honour to religion” will not fool God, John Wesley cautioned in a sermon. Selfishness may masquerade as piety, the founder of Methodism claims, but God “will not be put off with such pretences as these.”  

154 While the texts

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cited here differ in many respects, what they have in common is the articulation of a loss of faith in hospitality as a completely altruistic gesture; it is no longer a selfless practice if indeed it ever was.

Questions about selfishness, if not piety, also inform Jacques Derrida’s and Mireille Rosello’s recent explorations of the concept of “hospitality.” Derrida examines some of the same tensions between “unconditional” and “conditional” hospitality—between hospitality in theory and hospitality in practice—registered in the passages above. One important aspect of unconditional hospitality is its appearance of disinterestedness. Purportedly a gift without strings attached, unconditional hospitality is “graciously offered beyond debt and economy” and it involves giving the guest “all of one’s home and oneself” without the expectation or acceptance of “compensation, or the fulfillment of even the smallest condition” (Of Hospitality, 83, 77). Catering to the guest’s every desire, the host acts as a “willing...servant”, sacrificing everything for the guest’s convenience and comfort—everything, except his or her control over the relationship (Rosello, 123). The selflessness of unconditional hospitality is only an illusion, for even “a master who seems to lower himself in the service of his guests can derive a symbolic profit from his humility that turns his ostentatious gift into a form of

155 In addition to his article “Hostipitality” (cited above), Jacques Derrida’s Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000) and Mireille Rosello, Postcolonial Hospitality: The Immigrant as Guest (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), hereafter cited parenthetically. Indebted to the work of Emmanuel Levinas, Derrida’s and Rosello’s discussions of hospitality are also part of a broader interdisciplinary conversation about the gift which includes Marcel Mauss’s The Gift and Pierre Bourdieu’s The Logic of Practice.

156 In Derrida’s various works on hospitality, unconditional hospitality is also called “unlimited” or “infinite” hospitality or an “ethics of hospitality” and conditional hospitality is called “limited” or “finite” hospitality or a “politics of hospitality”.
investment, of ‘largesse’” (Rosello, 123). Winning a reputation for benevolence and eliciting their guests’ gratitude, hosts gain intangible benefits at the same time they disavow them. Unconditional hospitality, then, is always already part of the system of exchange to which conditional hospitality, with its explicit limitations and expectations of reciprocity, admittedly belongs. There is a certain violence in pretending otherwise, in insisting that hospitality is a relationship in which the benefits flow in only one direction; if guests are not allowed or unable to reciprocate they have no opportunity to redress the inequality of the one-sided hospitable encounter.

The simultaneous expectation and prohibition of reciprocity poses even greater challenges for the pet who occupies the position of guest. First, as I established in chapters one and two, it is a matter of debate, by no means resolved during the eighteenth century, whether animals have the capacity to reciprocate (a form of response, in Derridean terms), an act which in turn presupposes a capacity for assessment, calculation, recognition and thoughtfulness. Secondly, if animals are deemed capable of responding and reciprocating, animals that are pets have limited means of doing so. They have no gruelling physical tasks to perform or material goods to exchange for their subsistence, unlike beasts of burden such as oxen, whose labour “entitled [them] to wages” in the form of food and shelter, or cows and sheep who were similarly rewarded for “giv[ing]” humans “Milk / In luscious streams” or for “lend[ing]” their “own Coat[s]

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157 Derrida opposes response to reaction, which he characterises as automatic, immediate, and divorced of both meaning and context. See The Animal That Therefore I Am, 81-87.
Critics of pet-keeping declared pets useless as a result, but these animals, possessing what might be called affective value, provide other, intangible services to compensate their masters: they entertain, they comfort, they make their masters feel good about themselves. Although these services are represented as being less essential than livestock’s so-called offerings, they are especially valuable because they do not fully absolve the pet’s obligations to its keeper. As long as some of the pet’s “debt” remains unpaid, the animal remains dependent on the human master and the imbalance of power between them is preserved. The pet’s perceived gratitude, while not practically useful, is one such service with affective value, for it seems to be a voluntary confirmation of the pet-keeper’s benevolence. It appears to sanction their asymmetrical relationship.

Whether it is intentional or inadvertent, this prohibition of animal-guests from reciprocating (either by denying their capacity or limiting their ability to do so) is consistent with Derrida’s observation that hostility is compatible with hospitality. Professing friendship, the host may nonetheless treat the guest as an enemy; hospitality “harbors...self-contradiction in its own body” ("Hostipitality", 3). This is not to say that hospitable encounters are always or necessarily hostile or kind, generous or self-serving, but that one’s reasons for welcoming the other are often mixed and complicated. It is because of these internal contradictions, not despite them, that the rhetoric of hospitality was particularly suitable for describing human-animal relations in the eighteenth century.

It expresses a volatile combination of optimism and pessimism about whether the animal could be successfully accommodated within and by eighteenth-century culture.

1 “Confined within proper bounds”: Interspecies Hospitality and its Critics

The eponymous lapdog of Francis Coventry’s *The History of Pompey the Little* (1751) is a perpetual guest who, as he moves from house to house over the course of the narrative and his life, is sometimes welcomed with open arms and sometimes promptly expelled. Coventry acknowledges some of the problems with interspecies hospitality in this text, but more easily shrugs off its potential threats than Sarah Trimmer’s *Fabulous Histories* will do three decades later. In *Pompey the Little*, Lady Tempest’s servants are very vocal critics of her tendency to pamper domesticated animals: “The House-keeper launched out largely on the Sin and Wickedness of feeding such Creatures with Christian Victuals, declared it was flying in the Face of Heaven, and wondered how her Lady could admit them into her Apartment, for she said they had already spoiled all the crimson Damask-chairs in the Dining-room.”

The maid, whose job it is “to wait on these four-footed Worthies,” also “complain[s] of the Hardship done her” and the fleas she is likely to get while bathing the pets (61). In eighteenth-century texts, pets are often viewed with resentment by servants, who hate to see their master spoil pets with decadent food while simultaneously treating employees with stinginess and expecting them to clean up the messes the animals created. Servants’ hostility towards

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domesticated animals was also perhaps exacerbated by servants’ gradual estrangement from, and pets’ growing intimacy with, their masters over the course of the century. Although, in some ways, servants and pets had much in common—for instance, both were designated as taxable luxuries\(^\text{160}\)—their paths began to diverge during the eighteenth century. Pets displaced servants who had once slept next to their masters’ beds and who were now increasingly relegated to separate living quarters.\(^\text{161}\) As servants became a less visible presence, pets became a more frequent sight indoors; we see them moving from the periphery to the centre of the household at the same time that the definition of “family”, which had once included all residents, narrowed to exclude distant relatives, siblings, wards, and servants. In eighteenth-century texts, servants’ resentment and sense of rivalry towards their masters’ beloved animals functioned as acknowledgments of underlying similarities as well as protests of difference.

Yet the servants in Coventry’s text ultimately have little reason to be jealous of Pompey, whose tenure as spoiled guest is short-lived. Though in some homes Pompey “sle[eps] in the Arms of the Fairest Beauties, and liv[es] on the choicest Dainties this

\(^{160}\) Carolyn Steedman notes that “the tax on servants was a tax on their masters and mistresses for having in their households such visible unit measurements of luxury and ostentation….The liveried and bewigged manservant was an index of conspicuous consumption, just as was the hair powder increasingly purchased for valets rather than for their masters, and rather in the way of certain kinds of carriage and coats of arms, and indeed playing cards, dice, and newspapers, all of which were taxed to fuel a war economy” (76). See Steedman, *Master and Servant: Love and Labour in the English Industrial Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). In “Person, Animal, Thing: The 1796 Dog Tax and the Right to Superfluous Things,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 33.2 (2009), Lynn Festa discusses the eighteenth-century debates about dog taxes. Proponents of the taxes believed that “the poor must be discouraged from squandering their money on sentimental luxuries like pets….By providing a disincentive for dog ownership, ” the idea was that “the tax will compel the poor to channel their money towards productive expenditures on children or pigs” (12).

habitable Globe can afford” (99), the lapdog never stays in any one place for very long. The nomadic nature of his existence is partly due to the genre of his story: sometimes called “the novel of circulation,” the it-narrative requires the constant movement of its central character. But Pompey’s lack of stasis also suggests that the pet’s claim to hospitality is tenuous in several ways. Many of the dog’s owners exile him for the flimsiest of reasons (because he urinated on a book, for instance, or interrupted a pleasant dream), suggesting that the pet’s place within the home is not so secure that he is deemed incapable of offending. When his fortunes worsen, Pompey’s life of leisure devolves quickly into a life of menial service. In poorer households the lapdog is put to work doing various tasks, including running on a treadmill to turn the oven spit in a great house. Whereas he was the one consuming delicacies at Lady Tempest’s, now he is involved in the meal’s preparation, labouring for the benefit of the masters’ guests—a fitting return for the favour of a human’s hospitality. This situation underscores the instability of the dog’s position in the household even though his status as a labourer turns out to be temporary: Pompey is soon released from duty and promoted to the rank of house-dog’s companion, in recognition of his beauty.

Pompey functions more often as an object of exchange than as either the recipient or provider of hospitality. On separate occasions, Pompey is traded for a gold watch, a pint of ale, and oysters; he is a gift, presented by an admiring lover to a courtesan, and by a patron to a poet who would rather have bologna sausages than a bologna lapdog. Coventry never seriously entertains the idea that the lapdog could be an active participant in the hospitable encounter; indeed, he treats the subject comically when he has Hillario give Pompey to Lady Tempest on condition that he be granted “the Honour of visiting
[the dog] at all Hours in his new Apartments” (55). Lady Tempest gamely plays along with the charade, replying that “if you have a mind to visit your little Friend at my Ruelle, you’ll find him ready to receive you” (55). Pompey facilitates hospitable encounters between humans, whereas, in Trimmer’s *Fabulous Histories*, pets are represented as a hindrance to “real” hospitality, but this is the extent of his influence and agency. As far as Coventry is concerned, there is little cause for worry that the pet will destabilize species hierarchies in any significant or lasting way.

Over thirty years later, Sarah Trimmer’s *Fabulous Histories* (1786) suggests that interspecies hospitality is a more serious problem than Coventry realizes, and one which requires explicit condemnation. Mrs. Benson shows her daughter an example of improper human-animal relationships when they pay a visit to the house of Mrs. Addis. Trimmer’s main objection to Mrs. Addis’s pet-keeping is that her collection of lapdogs, monkeys, cats, squirrels, and parrots takes priority over her relationships with other humans. The animals are represented as consuming resources and occupying spaces they neither need nor deserve. Instead of wreaking havoc in the drawing-room, Mrs. Benson lectures, Mr. Pug the monkey should have remained unmolested in his “native wood” where he would be much happier (108). The parrots, she predicts, “wish themselves in their respective countries,” and “[a]s for puss who lies in the cradle in all her splendour”, a basket of clean straw would be far more suitable (108, 107). Even the lapdog who reclines on a “splendid cushion” would be better off if it were a spaniel “who [was] at liberty to be the companion of his master’s walks” (108). Mrs. Benson contrasts the luxury and confinement associated with the interior of the house with the freedom and healthiness of the outdoors, and indeed the text reveals a marked preference for animals who live
outside or whose visits indoors are strictly regulated and emphatically temporary.

Drawing on Mary Douglas’s definition of dirt as “matter out of place”, Erica Fudge has recently characterized pets as “animals out of place”, and Mrs. Benson would undoubtedly concur with this assessment. By crossing the threshold separating inside from outside, pets, in their “out-of-placedness”, might be said to “disturb the hygiene of the boundaries which give us certainty about who we are.”\(^\text{162}\) For Mrs. Benson, the “very disagreeable smell” produced by the multitude of pets living in close quarters speaks to their contamination of Mrs. Addis’s household and their unrestricted access to spaces where they do not belong (101). Mrs. Addis’s love for her pets and the animals themselves are both, in Mrs. Benson’s eyes, problematically mis-placed.

It is not just the pets’ odour that makes the house an uninviting space. Mrs. Addis pays so much attention to their needs that she neglects her guests. When it is time to feed her “dear darlings” their elaborate meals, Mrs. Addis “very unpolitely” banishes the Bensons to her untended garden where they must fend for themselves. In the process of tending to her pets, Mrs. Addis becomes so distracted that she completely forgets her guests, thus violating the rules of hospitality. This is the second time during their visit that Mrs. Addis’s pet-keeping has a detrimental effect on her ability to be a good hostess: when Mr. Pug the monkey breaks free of his chain and destroys most of the tea cups supplied for the guests’ refreshments, he destroys an emblem of hospitality itself, much to the diversion of Mrs. Addis and the chagrin of the Bensons. The pets can do no wrong in Mrs. Addis’s eyes; she will not revoke her offer of hospitality no matter how badly

\(^{162}\) Erica Fudge, *Pets* (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008), 19.
they behave. They are not temporary guests, like the robins who await the Bensons’
“invitation” to the breakfast table and who are cautious never to overstay their welcome
(6); by contrast, Mrs. Addis’s animals are permanent fixtures in the house. They even
enjoy greater privileges than Mrs. Addis’s son and daughter, who have been exiled to a
boarding school and to the nursery, respectively. To be a pampered pet in this household,
the recipient of unconditional hospitality, is to be better treated than either a human guest
or a member of the family. Unconditional hospitality might seem “generous and
altruistic”, in that Mrs. Addis offers “all of [her] home and [herself]” to her pets “without
asking [for]…compensation, or the fulfillment of even the smallest condition” (Derrida,
Of Hospitality, 77). As Rosello points out, however, the “willingness to invite” a
potentially dangerous creature in is a “form of self-hubris” because it fails to consider
how this decision will affect other members of the household and community, who
“might become victims” (13). In Fabulous Histories, Mrs. Addis thinks only of her pets
and not of their effects on her daughter, who is bitten by the cat; on her innocent servant,
who is abruptly dismissed when the parrot falls ill; or on her guests, the Bensons, who
react with “great terror” to the monkey’s violence and with annoyance to Mrs. Addis’s
lack of courtesy (105). When she places her pets’ needs not on the same level as
humans’, but higher, Mrs. Addis upsets the species hierarchy that Mrs. Benson and
Trimmer vigilantly try to preserve.

By contrast, during their visit to the Wilson family’s farm, the Bensons neither
have to fear the animals, nor compete with them for the Wilsons’ hospitality. Here, all
the domesticated beasts are “confine[d]…within proper bounds” (176) and the dog and
cat are granted access to the house only under certain conditions. While nursing their
litters, they are deemed too dirty to be permitted indoors, and dog and cat are kept in the kennel and stable respectively (169). The Wilsons’ affection for their animals does not prevent them from recognizing and restricting the pets’ contaminating potential. Although the cat, a “little tigress” who “tramples [the linen] with her talons unsheathed” and rubs her dirty claws on the corners of the furniture, can sometimes be a destructive and wild presence in the house, she is tolerated because she is “useful” for catching mice (170). Usefulness is one of the main qualities that distinguishes the Wilson family’s animals from Mrs. Addis’s pets—who do not contribute productively in the home—and it is the cornerstone of Mrs. Benson’s philosophy about how animals should be treated. Towards the end of *Fabulous Histories* she tells her children that “we should endeavour to regulate our regards according to the utility and necessities of every living creature with which we are in any way connected; and consequently should prefer the happiness of mankind to that of an animal whatever” (219). Mrs. Wilson is of the same mind, for despite the services that cats render in killing mice, she recommends that these animals should not be allowed in rooms “in which a variety of company is received” because many guests dread them (171). For Mrs. Wilson, as for Mrs. Benson, being hospitable to human visitors is more important than catering to a beloved feline. Dogs rank slightly higher: if “taught to know their distance” and “kept in proper order, they may be familiarized with safety” (171). Compared to the cat, Daphne the dog is the Wilsons’ favoured pet, but even she never dines indoors “for there is no [feeding her] without greasing the floors” (170). In this family, love for animals does not trump one’s responsibility to provide a clean and welcoming house for the shelter and entertainment of other humans.
Trimmer insistently represents the Wilsons’ behaviour towards their domesticated animals as the model for properly regulated interspecies relationships, countering the negative example of the flawed hospitality Mrs. Addis offers her pets. A didactic, and often aggressively prescriptive text, *Fabulous Histories* is aimed at children, who, as chapter one showed, are considered to be particularly susceptible to forming close, and not altogether appropriate, relationships with animals. Trimmer’s text is very invested in keeping hierarchies intact and stable: not only animals, but also children, servants, and even one’s feelings, must be “confin[ed]…within proper bounds” (176). The next two sections of this chapter will provide a much more nuanced account of what hospitable pet-keeping looks like from the perspective of those who have pets of their own and are participants in, rather than merely observers of, the interspecies relationships they describe. Cowper’s and White’s texts blur many of the distinctions that Trimmer’s *Fabulous Histories* works so hard to maintain. Moreover, unlike the dogs and cats of Trimmer’s and Coventry’s texts, whose species have a long history of domestication and inclusion within (or at least on the periphery of) human households, Cowper’s and White’s pets (hares and a tortoise, respectively) straddle the boundary between inside and outside, between wild and tame. Represented as partly dependent and partly self-sufficient, as partly grateful for their masters’ benevolence and, to borrow Peter Melville’s phrase, partly “resistant to accommodation”, these animals occupy a uniquely liminal position that makes it even more challenging for their owners to accurately characterise the nature of their interspecies relationships.\(^{163}\)

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\(^{163}\) Peter Melville, *Romantic Hospitality and the Resistance to Accommodation* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier


“Doubt Not an Affectionate Host”: Cowper and His Hares

Cowper is well known for his advocacy for the humane treatment of animals, for making room for animals within the moral community as well as within his home. In *The Task* (1785), he famously declares himself amply “recompens’d” for all the “toils / Of poetry” if “verse of mine / May stand between an animal and woe, / And teach one tyrant pity for his drudge.” Hospitality—viewed positively as a willingness to share one’s domestic space and resources—may have seemed to Cowper an appropriate choice of framework for describing the benevolent stance he wanted his readers to adopt towards many (especially domesticated) non-human creatures. But *The Task* and Cowper’s letters suggest that not all animals deserve to be treated as guests: some are considered trespassers—such as the “creeping vermin” that “intrudes / A visitor unwelcome into scenes / Sacred to neatness and repose” (III.568, 569-71)—while others are food—such as the countless oysters, lobsters, fish, and venison, which Cowper and his human friends exchanged as gifts. Cowper thus acknowledges that hospitality is often selective, and he was also aware that its motivations are not always altruistic, that the relationship between host and guest is an intricate and sometimes fraught negotiation. Cowper’s ostensibly light-hearted poem “Invitation to the Red Breast” (1799), for instance, reveals the tension...

between benevolence and self-interest in the “hospitable encounter”, while “The Snail” (1799), in expressing the speaker’s admiration of a creature not beholden to the generosity of others for shelter, suggests that the guest’s position of obligation is often unenviable. Anticipating Derrida’s and Rosello’s more recent theoretical explorations of the illusion of “unconditional” hospitality and registering their own century’s growing scepticism about hospitality, these texts confront the limits of hospitality’s ideals no matter the species of the parties involved.

Cowper’s experiences as a pet-keeper add yet another layer of complexity to his portrayals of interspecies hospitality. In the poetic and prosaic accounts of his relationship with his hares, Cowper depicts himself primarily as a benevolent caretaker who selflessly provides shelter, food, and protection for his apparently grateful pets; he is, in his own estimation, a friend who has their best interests at heart. These moments of indulgence in the fantasy of his own unconditional hospitality reveal the skewing potential of personal bias. Yet Cowper was hardly a stranger to self-doubt. While self-reproach is largely absent from Cowper’s essay—which, published in the Gentleman’s Magazine in June 1784, aimed to “gratify curiosity, amuse rationally, or add, though but a little, to the stock of public knowledge” about hares—in Cowper’s personal

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165 The phrase “hospitable encounter” is Peter Melville’s. Cowper’s “Invitation to the Red Breast” and “The Snail” are part of the Norfolk Manuscripts, “autograph copies of poems Cowper had written during the last year of his life” which John Johnson assembled after Cowper’s death in April 1800 (xxx).
correspondence and poems “Epitaph on a Hare” (1783) and *The Task*, traces of uncertainty emerge about the happiness of his animals and the virtues of pet-keeping.  

Some of his contemporaries (including Samuel Johnson, the devoted owner of feline Hodge) recognized that it was impossible to determine what animals are thinking and feeling. In the *Idler*, Johnson writes: “When man sees one of the inferior creatures perched upon a tree, or basking in the sunshine, without any apparent endeavour or pursuit, he often asks himself, or his companion, On what the animal can be supposed to be thinking?” Johnson concludes that “since neither bird nor beast can answer [this question], we must be content to live without the resolution,” and he adds that humans, whose thoughts are often equally obscure, furnish “sufficient matter for curiosity.” But Cowper seems not to have shared Johnson’s belief in the futility of speculating about animals’ thoughts, for he persisted in interpreting his pets’ behaviour and expressions, especially in ways that signalled their approval of his pet-keeping. In the process, Cowper risks confusing plausible speculations about animal feelings and anthropomorphic projections. Unlike Derrida’s emphatically “real cat”, Cowper’s hares

166 Cowper included a version of “Epitaph on a Hare” in a letter to William Bull dated 7 March 1783, sent approximately a week after Tiney’s death, and it first appeared in print in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* in December 1784. Cowper’s personal correspondence and his essay concerning his pet hares, dated May 28 1784 and first published in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* in June 1784, are collected in *The Letters and Prose Writings of William Cowper*, ed. King and Ryskamp. Hereafter the essay and letters will be cited parenthetically by volume and page number.

167 *Idler* no. 24 (30 September 1758).

168 In “‘I Shall Not Ask Jean-Jacques Rousseau’: Anthropomorphism in the Cowperian Bestiary,” *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 33 (2010), Conrad Brunström and Katherine Turner have recently suggested that many of Cowper’s animal poems register “his comic scepticism about how we can possibly know what other species feel” (456), but I argue that Cowper’s writings about his own pets, for the most part, reveal less hesitancy about interpreting their moods and minds from their behaviour.
and many of the non-human creatures represented in his texts function at different times as actual animals and as amalgams of the fictional beasts with whom Cowper had become acquainted during a lifetime of reading (such as the hare in John Gay’s *Fables*). This vacillation between the real and the figurative contributes to the tonal instability which often makes it unclear how to read Cowper’s animal texts and his literary works more generally. Conrad Brunström and Katherine Turner have recently suggested that “the tensions between pathos and bathos in [Cowper’s] animal poems are expressive of a poetic personality incapable or unwilling to determine the value, the philosophical weight, of the products it engineers.” This indecisiveness about the value of the beast fable more significantly reflects uncertainty about the roles animals could and should play not only in eighteenth-century literature but in eighteenth-century life.

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William Cowper’s poetry clearly shows that he was conscious of hospitality’s complicated motivations and the implications of human-animal hospitality. The poem “Invitation to the Red Breast”, for instance, describes a human’s interactions with a robin simultaneously as hospitable encounter and economic exchange. The speaker reassures the robin who “seek[s] a retreat” from the cold “in the well-shelter’d dwellings of man” that it “never can’st seem to intrude / Though in all places equally free”. He invites it to

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169 In *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida emphasizes his cat’s “unsubstitutable singularity” and insists that it does not “represent, like an ambassador, the immense symbolic responsibility with which our culture has always charged the feline race”, an “exemplar of [its] species”, or “the Animal” more generally (9).

“Come, oft as the season is rude, / Thou are sure to be welcome to me” (3, 4, 5-8). This appears to be a generous offer of unconditional hospitality with no strings attached. Accepting shelter does not mean acquiescing to captivity, for the robin is “in all places equally free”: the bird need not give up its liberty for protection from the cold. Nor does Cowper’s speaker put a limitation on the duration or frequency of the visit—this is dictated only by weather and need, not by the host’s desires.

Despite this apparent altruism, the speaker’s offer of hospitality is complicated in the second and third stanzas. The speaker’s literal and figurative investment in the relationship starts to become clear: “To inveigle thee ev’ry day / My window shall show you a feast / For taught by experience I know / Thee mindful of benefits long, / And that thankful for all I bestow / Thou wilt pay me with many a song” (11-16). Meaning “to persuade to something bad or hurtful” (Johnson, Dictionary), the verb to inveigle suggests that accepting the invitation and partaking in the feast may not be in the robin’s best interests. The host, on the other hand, has much to gain by welcoming the robin inside; he does so on condition that he will receiving something valuable in return: “should’st thou, compell’d by a frost, / Come again to my window or door, / Doubt not an affectionate host, / Only pay as thou payd’st me before” (21-4). The host’s affection is not available for free: “pay” is a command and the insistence conveyed by the shift to the imperative mood suggests that singing is the means by which the robin must “discharge [its] debt” to the speaker (Johnson, Dictionary, 1). Pay can also mean “to gratify” or to “giv[e] satisfaction (in a non-financial context[)]” (OED I.1a), but Johnson’s Dictionary privileges the word’s economic senses and Cowper’s use of the imperative here seems inconsistent with definitions that suggest that the robin’s “payment” in song is an
optional or incidental response to the speaker’s hospitality. The speaker tries to mask the nearly economic terms of his relationship with the robin in the last stanza by reasserting their emotional bond, the “Unchangeable Friendship and Love” inspired by the bird’s music (28). Friendship is presented as an alternative kind of exchange, imagined to be detached from calculating self-interest. Yet the evocation of friendship here, immediately after the command to “pay”, only further emphasizes the problematic inextricability of affection and economics in both this poem and in hospitality more generally. The speaker’s attempt to cover up his desire for compensation may indicate Cowper’s awareness of the tension between the idea of hospitality as something freely and generously offered without condition or expectation of reciprocity and the idea of hospitality as a nearly commercial transaction, in which parties pay for their shelter and food with various services.

Like “Invitation to the Red Breast”, Cowper’s “The Snail” reveals the (sometimes steep) costs of hospitality, although it does so indirectly, by celebrating the creature that has the luxury of depending upon no one but itself. Represented as a thoroughly independent creature that does not rely at all on humankind’s generosity for shelter because he carries his “house” with him on his back, Cowper’s snail is the subject of the speaker’s admiration, perhaps even envy. His shell is described as a safe retreat: “Within that house secure he hides / When danger imminent betides / Of storm, or other harm besides / Of weather” (5-8). The snail has no benefactor to thank for this protection from the elements; he is self-sufficient, and that, according to the speaker, is rewarding in itself: “Where’er he dwells, he dwells alone, / Except himself has chatells none, / Well satisfied to be his own / whole treasure” (13-16). Cowper characterises the snail’s
solitary existence as comfortable rather than lonely: “Thus hermit-like his life he leads / Nor partner of his banquet needs” (17-18). Commending self-reliance, this poem may also implicitly convey Cowper’s sympathy for less fortunate dependants. The snail’s independent lifestyle would seem especially appealing to those who live under someone else’s roof and feel the burden of debts they cannot pay. Unlike the autonomous snail, the reluctant guest is placed in an unenviable position. Cowper’s own biography reveals that he was a perpetual guest dwelling in the houses of others for much of his life: after his mother’s death in 1737, he spent holidays with her Norfolk relatives and lived at boarding schools and the residences of Mr. Disney, Mr. Chapman, and the Unwins, among others. Cowper was aware of his “Knack at running in Debt, and…slender Ability to pay”, and his manifold obligations made him empathetic to others whom he perceived to be in situations similar to his own (Letters, 1:154).

However, Cowper’s admiration of the snail’s independence (and sympathy for the guest’s dilemma) may be contingent on the fact that it does not contradict his own interests. Less indifferent parties might have other opinions. In Henry Cornwallis’s A Sermon upon Hospitality (1703), creatures with shells are condemned as inhospitable for refusing to share their resources with strangers: they “inclose their Estate within the Shell of their Cabinet, denying others the benefit of it” and are thus counted among the “Unclean,” “Wicked” and “Ungodly”.\footnote{Henry Cornwallis. Set on the Great Pot. A Sermon upon Hospitality (London, 1703), 10.} The self-interest behind this condemnation is clear in Cornwallis’s explanation that shell-fish in Mosaic Law are considered “unclean” because “the Meat was enclosed in the Shell, and it was hard to come by” (9-10).
Paradoxically, the shell-fish is blamed for not making it easy for humans to eat it. By contrast the absence of self-interest makes it possible for Cowper to romanticize the snail’s self-sufficiency. Except as material for poetry, snails were of little use to him. Although escargots have long been a culinary delicacy in France, they were not consumed as widely in England, where French tastes were routinely ridiculed; nor are snails pets, whose dependence is valuable insofar as it confirms humans’ benevolence and higher rank in the hierarchy of species. The snail’s self-reliance, therefore, can be viewed by Cowper with admiration because it comes at no personal cost. Cowper’s and Cornwallis’s attitudes towards shell-bearing creatures differ according to their level of investment in these animals.

But if the reluctant guest was Cowper’s pet, would he still be willing and able to entertain the possibility of a conflict between his animals’ and his own perspective of their relationship? As Cowper himself once observed to William Unwin, “How apt we are to deceive ourselves where Self Interest is in question!” (Letters, 1:319). In many ways, Cowper’s depiction of his relationship with his hares tests the limits of the nuanced understanding of hospitality explored in “Invitation to the Red Breast” and “The Snail.”

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To Cowper, pet-keeping represents the gift of safety and protection; he seems to believe whole-heartedly that he is providing a sanctuary for his hares—Bess, Puss, and Tiney—from all the hazards of nature. As David Perkins notes, from Cowper’s perspective, “The larger world is so dangerous, so beset with snares and hunters, that the cage figures,
paradoxically, as a symbol of protective care.” ¹⁷² Cowper certainly takes pride in defending his pets from harm. In *The Task*, after condemning the “detested sport” of hunting (III.326), he congratulates himself that “one” creature, his “shelter’d hare”, “at least is safe” (334). ¹⁷³ In his *Gentleman’s Magazine* essay, Cowper reveals that he actually rescued his first hare from the clutches of his neighbour’s “[teas[ing]]” children rather than a “cruel” hunter (5:40). However, this does not stop him from portraying himself as a saviour: “I was willing enough,” he writes, “to take the prisoner under my protection” (5:40). The hospitality he extends to his hares seems unconditional because he represents himself as his guests’ servant: ministering to their needs appears to be his only concern.

The same language of protection that characterises Cowper’s literary treatment of his pets appears in the elaborate description of a greenhouse which shares Book III of *The Task* with the verses devoted to “My tame hare.” The representation of the greenhouse as an asylum for tropical plants which would not survive on their own in England’s harsh climate has a parallel in the secure retreat which Cowper’s hares find in the sanctuary he creates for them. For instance, just as the plants in the greenhouse remain “warm and snug, / While the winds whistle and the snows descend” (567-68) and

¹⁷² David Perkins, *Romanticism and Animal Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 63. In the *Gentleman’s Magazine* essay, Cowper notes that he gave two of his three hares “feminine appellatives”, despite the fact that they were all male (5:40); Perkins mentions the folk belief that hares were hermaphroditic, but dismisses this as a possible explanation by claiming that “Cowper doubtless knew better” (*Romanticism*, 56). The female names make Cowper, the hares’ self-proclaimed protector, seem even more chivalrous and the animals themselves even more vulnerable.

¹⁷³ Cowper tries to empower himself by depicting himself as defender and host, but he also identified with the vulnerable and powerless, describing himself on one occasion as “a stricken deer” (*The Task*, III.108) and on another as “the hunted hare” (*Letters*, 4:468).
“[p]eep through their polish’d foliage at the storm,” “seem[ing] to smile at what they need not fear” (574-75), Cowper’s hare Puss, after ten years in his company, loses “Much of her vigilant instinctive dread, / Not needful here, beneath a roof like mine” (340-41). The gardener takes on the role of guardian in The Task, protecting his fragile plants even from the knowledge of inclement weather. He “screen[s] them from winter’s shrewd bite” (581), becoming in the process a botanical hero, while Cowper similarly shields his hares from hunters, who engage in a pastime which “owes its pleasures to another’s pain” and “feeds upon the sohs and dying shrieks / Of harmless nature” (327, 328-29). Using the language of predation, consumption, and debt, Cowper sharply contrasts the hunter’s relation to the prey with the pet-keeper’s paternal generosity towards the vulnerable animal; the former only takes, he suggests, while the latter gives.

Thus far the commonalities between Cowper’s descriptions of the gardener and the pet-keeper only serve to reinforce the virtue of both. His attribution of gratitude to both the plants and the hares also seems to sanction the respective caretakers’ treatment of their charges. However, the emphasis placed on their thankfulness actually complicates matters for Cowper. First, his representation of gratitude as a reward and incentive for kind treatment suggests that the hospitality is an exchange, not a completely selfless donation, just as the speaker’s expectation of reciprocation in “Invitation to the Red Breast” calls for a reconsideration of his altruism. The economic language Cowper uses in both poems reminds the reader that hosts profit intangibly from their guests’ gratitude because it confirms their benevolence; hospitality, then, is an investment, not a gift. For instance, the speaker in The Task is eager to assure the reader
with gardening aspirations that the labour involved in keeping the greenhouse plants healthy and flourishing will be repaid:

Discharge but these kind offices, (and who
Would spare, that loves them, offices like these?)
Well they reward the toil. The sight is pleased,
The scent regaled, each odorif’rous leaf,
Each opening blossom freely breathes abroad
Its gratitude, and thanks him for its sweets. (618-23)

Although the speaker suggests that affection prompts “these kind offices” and that the plants “freely” express their gratitude rather than feeling compelled to do so, the word “reward” evokes the contract with its guarantee of reciprocation. Only a few hundred lines after this passage in *The Task*, Cowper remarks on Puss’s “unsuspecting gratitude and love” (348) and in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* essay he mentions (some) hares’ ability to communicate their thanks as a recommendation for hunters’ sympathy, suggesting that if a sportsman knew what “amiable creatures he persecutes, [and] of what gratitude they are capable” (5:43), he would refrain from targeting them. Presumably, though, the hunter would continue to hunt other, less appreciative, animals, because they do not compensate him for his mercy with gratefulness. Although the gratitude of plants and animals is manifested in different ways, in both cases it serves as the incentive for benevolent treatment.

Moreover, Cowper fails to account for important physiological and cognitive differences between plants and animals when he depicts both the tropical flora and his pets as thankful creatures. This is an oversight which jeopardizes his reputation as benevolent pet-keeper because it makes his hares’ gratitude look more like an anthropomorphic projection than a plausibility. In keeping with Buffon’s claim that
plants are deprived of “the faculty of sensation” that animals possess, sentient trees and other vegetation were generally restricted to the realm of fable during the eighteenth century.\footnote{Buffon, \textit{Natural History}, 4:109. Upon making this distinction between plants and animals, however, Buffon qualifies his statement by writing that it depends on what one means by “sensation” and acknowledges that the difference is more likely one of degree rather than kind, with creatures like oysters having much more in common with plants (as Cowper’s poem also suggests) than with dogs (109-10).} Falling within this generic category is Cowper’s “The Poet, The Oyster, and Sensitive Plant” (1782), which considers—in order to minimize—the vegetable creation’s capacity for feeling.\footnote{Brunström and Turner consider the anthropomorphism of this poem to be “ludicrously ambitious” (457). I believe it has much in common with the category of “implausible and fantastical” anthropomorphism identified by Oerlemans in “A Defense of Anthropomorphism”, 190, and discussed in the introduction to this thesis.} When a shrub complains about being painfully poked and prodded by “many a grave and lettered clerk” hoping to discover “if I can feel as well as he” (31, 34), an eavesdropping poet admonishes the plant for feeling sorry for itself when “pity, sympathy, and love” are much nobler sentiments (62). Cowper ultimately emphasizes the limitations of plant’s capacity to feel, not only by pointing out the solipsism of the shrub’s laments, but also by explicitly identifying it as a fictional construct. Upon introducing the talking plant, the speaker anticipates the scepticism of botanists and replies that it is the prerogative of the “poet’s muse” “to make [plants call’d sensitive] grow just where she chuses” (23, 24). This conspicuously fanciful poem leaves little doubt that the talking and feeling shrub is not a being which really exists in nature. Cowper’s vocal and “squeamish” shrub who relies on the poet for animation makes it unclear whether one is meant to take \textit{The Task}’s thankful greenhouse flowers seriously (55). The problem for Cowper lies not only in the possibility that readers,
doubting the capacity of plants to feel and signify their feelings, will dismiss his portrait of the “blossom freely breath[ing] abroad / Its gratitude” as poetic license; worse still, these same readers might view the hares’ “gratitude and love” with the same scepticism, especially since the two descriptions are placed in close proximity. If the animals’ gratitude is like the plants’ gratitude—probably imaginary and, at any rate, unverifiable since neither species can speak—its status as convincing evidence of Cowper’s generosity is undermined.

Cowper’s depiction of the hares’ gratitude is also less believable when we read it alongside his poem, “On a Goldfinch Starved to Death in His Cage”, which questions the appropriateness of a pet thanking its keeper. In that poem, a bird expresses its gratitude from beyond the grave: “Thanks, gentle swain, for all my woes, / And thanks for this effectual close / And cure of ev’ry ill” (13-5). Though the “cruelty” of the keeper causes the bird’s death, it also ends the creature’s experience as a “pris’ner” (16, 18). The irony of thanking one’s abuser makes it clear that at least some forms of pet-keeping are detrimental to an animal’s health, and not gifts which deserve a grateful response, even if the animal is capable of it. Cowper’s treatment of his hares is much kinder than the behaviour of this not so “gentle swain” to his bird; Bess, Puss, and Tiney, after all, are not starved but “regale[]” on hawthorn twigs (“Epitaph”, 17) and eat “with great relish” other “dainties” and “delicac[ies]” like green corn, wheat-straw, aromatic herbs, and bread (Gentleman’s Magazine essay, 5:43). Yet, the swain’s worst offence, the one which makes “ev’ry” other “ill” possible according to the goldfinch, is captivity itself, and Cowper is guilty of this too, or at least complicit in the continued confinement of his hares.
While it is clear in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* essay that Cowper wanted to see the shelter and security of his garden and home as ideal living quarters for his semi-domesticated hares—even as a “protected world[] of nurture”, the phrase which Deidre Lynch borrows from Isobel Armstrong to describe the greenhouse—Cowper’s “Epitaph on a Hare”, to some degree, registers a hint of doubt. This is perhaps unsurprising given the form of the poem. Capable of “serv[ing] a variety of literary agendas”, pet epitaphs, a minor poetic genre in the eighteenth century, accommodated both sentimentality and satire. They were used not only to mourn the beloved pet, but to occasionally mock humans’ “vain pursuits” and even to challenge “rosy view[s] of pet keeping.” Just as there is something tragic (at least from a human’s perspective) about transplanted “tropical rarities that [are] fated to pass the whole of their lives in England inside”, so too is there a greater self-awareness in “Epitaph on a Hare” than in some of his other works that Cowper may be depriving his pets by removing them from their natural habitats, even if they seem to be flourishing in his parlour and garden.

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178 “Rosy view of pet keeping” is Tague’s phrase (“Dead Pets,” 296), while “vain pursuits” comes from Cowper’s “Epitaph on Fop.” Fop was Lady Throckmorton’s pet dog, not Cowper’s, and his distance from the subject perhaps explains the satirical (rather than elegiac) tone which distinguishes this epitaph from the earlier “Epitaph on a Hare.”

“Epitaph on a Hare” begins by listing the experiences Tiney missed out on because he was “to domestic bounds confined” (7): “Here lies, whom hound did ne’er pursue / Nor swifter Grey-hound follow, / Whose foot ne’er tainted morning dew / Nor ear heard huntsman’s hallo’, / Old Tiney” (1-5). Certainly, the poem’s first stanza suggests how lucky this hare has been to escape the perils which normally threaten a hunter’s prey; however, the detail that Tiney’s “foot ne’er tainted morning dew” retains a hint of lost opportunity which is exacerbated by all the negation in the four lines—“ne’er” and “nor” are each repeated twice. Perkins similarly notes that this line “may suggest the pathos of captivity”, but ultimately he reads the word *taint* as further evidence that the hare has been fortunate in evading hunters: “taint, in this context, means to leave a scent, to become vulnerable to pursuing dogs. A creature leaves more scent on dewy mornings than on dry ones” (58). Notwithstanding this definition of *taint*, the line cuts both ways. On the one hand, Tiney never knew what it was like to be chased by dogs and hunters; on the other hand, his life has been so sheltered in the restrictive sense that he never felt wet grass under foot, an experience which might in and of itself be pleasurable for a hare.

Instead of grass, a “Turkey carpet was his lawn / Whereon he lov’d to bound, / To skip and gambol like a fawn, / And swing his rump around” (“Epitaph”, 21-4). Tiney’s behaviour suggests to Cowper that he enjoys playing on the carpet—a rare moment of delight for a hare otherwise distinguished for his “gravity” and “surliness” (*Gentleman’s Magazine* essay, 5:42). Given that there are no hounds to pick up his scent here, the exchange of lawn for carpet seems to be an improvement. But the fact that it is a “Turkey carpet,” a decorative furnishing not native to England, drives home just how unnatural
and unfamiliar this environment is for a hare who is accustomed to the outdoors. Cowper’s hares have been taken out of their natural habitats, like Mrs. Addis’s monkey who, according to Trimmer’s Mrs. Benson, should have been left undisturbed in his “native wood” (108). In addition to evoking the claustrophobic space and stagnant air of indoors, the Turkey carpet’s status as a luxury item invites an uncomfortable comparison with the pet, which was similarly considered by critics to be an unnecessary, self-indulgent purchase, brought into the home to satisfy its master’s vanity rather than its own best interests.

Indeed, at the same time that he notes Tiney’s delight with the replacement of grassy field with a “Turkey carpet”, Cowper registers how alert, and vulnerable, the hares are to changes in their living environments: “These creatures have a singular sagacity in discovering the minutest alteration that is made in the place to which they are accustomed, and instantly apply their nose to the examination of a new object. A small hole being burnt in the carpet, it was mended with a patch, and that patch in a moment underwent the strictest scrutiny” (Gentleman’s Magazine essay, 5:42). While the hares’ sensitivity to change is merely a curious detail to Cowper in this passage, it can also have dire consequences: in the Gentleman’s Magazine he reports that the death of his hare Bess “was occasioned by being turned into his box which had been washed, while it was yet damp” (5:42). Like many gardeners who took pride in shielding their tropical plants from hostile conditions, defeating winter in the process, Cowper may have believed he was triumphing over and improving nature by creating an environment for his hares which was free from the usual harms, but he introduced them to new risks. As he well knew, “improvement” in the eighteenth century did not necessarily mean “change for the
better”: in *The Task*, Cowper himself admits that “improvement…, the idol of the age, /
Is fed with many a victim” (III.764-5).\(^{180}\)

Celebrated as testaments to human ingenuity and resourcefulness, greenhouse gardening and domestication were also closely associated with egotism. Although he primarily focuses on the gardener’s nurturing care, Cowper briefly notes the self-interest prompting the construction of these glass structures when he acknowledges criticisms of the greenhouse as a place where superfluous “dainties” are “contriv[ed]” for wealthy consumers (545, 546). While Cowper’s hares are not destined to end up on his dinner plate and material appetites do not motivate his pet-keeping, he nonetheless stands to gain from the domestic arrangement. This remains unproblematic only so long as Cowper is not the sole beneficiary in the relationship, profiting at the hares’ expense. At times he is willing to concede not only that pet-keeping helps him “avoid an idle life” (3:222), but that the hares’ company itself is a timely cure during a period when he was “much indisposed both in mind and body” and “in a condition that made some diversion necessary” (*Gentleman’s Magazine* essay, 5:40).\(^{181}\) Like gardening, pet-keeping is classed among the “pleasing” and “healthful” “employs of rural life” (*The Task*, 3:624, 625). By nursing the hares during their various illnesses, Cowper seems to believe that he reciprocates in kind, again fixating on his hare’s supposed gratitude as proof that one at least approves of his ministrations: “No creature could be more grateful than my patient

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\(^{180}\) Primarily associated with “profitable operations in connection with land,” *improvement* was an important term in the eighteenth century, whose complexity I can only gesture at here (Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 161).

\(^{181}\) Cowper received his hares while recovering from his second mental collapse in a decade.
[Puss] after his recovery; a sentiment which he most significantly expressed, by licking my hand” (Gentleman’s Magazine essay, 5:41). Cowper interprets Puss’s licking as one of “many symptoms…that [Puss is] happier in human society than when shut up with his natural companions” (5:41). But “not so Tiney”, who bites—with a “jealous look”, Cowper adds in “Epitaph” (11)—the hand that feeds and strokes him (5:41). However, Cowper does not take Tiney’s “surly” behaviour personally (as he does Puss’s equally ambiguous licking); instead he favours another explanation which allows him to deflect potential criticisms.

Maintaining that Tiney receives an “equal share of [his] attention” and the “kindest treatment” (5:41), Cowper attributes the difference between Tiney and the more docile and “grateful” Puss to temperament, something innate and outside of the pet-keeper’s influence; each individual hare, he argues, has a “character of his own” and Tiney’s defining feature is “surliness” (5: 42). Cowper’s insistence on the hares’ possession of distinct personalities allows him to avoid blame both for the perceived unhappiness of Tiney and for the otherwise problematic pleasure Cowper takes in this particular aspect of Tiney’s character: “I kept him for his humour’ sake, / For he would oft beguile / My heart of thoughts that made it ache, / And force me to a smile” (“Epitaph”, 33-6). It would perhaps seem callous for Cowper to consider “surliness” a “matter of mirth” if it was a symptom of discontentment and his actions had caused

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182 In an earlier version of “Epitaph on a Hare” which Cowper includes in a letter to William Bull dated 7 March 1783, line 33 reads “I kept him for old Service sake” rather than “I kept him for his humour’ sake” (Letters, 1:115-7). This revision shifts emphasis away from issues of labour and obligation and places it instead of Tiney’s personality traits which are supposedly independent of the hare’s relationship with Cowper.
Tiney to feel this way (*Gentleman’s Magazine* essay, 5:42). At all costs, Cowper must avoid a comparison to the hunter who “owes [his] pleasures to another’s pain”, and he does so by using terms such as “character” and “humour” to make it clear that he is not responsible for Tiney’s “surliness” (*The Task*, III.327).

By contrast, Bess’s and Puss’s “gratitude” is presented not as a common personality trait, but as proof of Cowper’s benevolence. Since these two hares represent a majority, it is the surly Tiney who is the aberration. Yet Cowper’s epistolary account of the normally docile Puss’s escape and the pursuit and eventual capture of the animal has the potential to challenge his comforting belief in the hare’s contentment with pethood:

Soon after [Richard Coleman] began to Run he … came in Sight of a most numerous Hunt, consisting of Men, Women, Children, and Dogs; … he did his best to keep back the Dogs, and presently outstripp’d the Crowd, so that the Race was at last disputed between himself and Puss…. She pushed for the Town again, and soon after she Enter’d it, sought Shelter in Mr. Wagstaff’s Tan Yard…. There she encountered the Tan Pits full of Water, & while she was strug[gl[ing out] of One Pit & Plunging into another, [and almost] drowned, one of [Sturges’s Harvest] Men drew her [out by the ears,] and secured her. She was then [well washed in a] Bucket, to get the Lime out of her [coat, and] brought home in a Sack at 10 o’c[lock]. This Frolic cost us four Shillings, but you may suppose we did not grudge a Farthing of it. The poor Creature received only a little Hurt in one of her claws, and in one of her Ears, & is now almost as well as ever. ¹⁸³

If we read it critically, this story threatens to damage Cowper’s claim to be an exemplary host. No matter how comfortable his dwelling is, the narrative is a reminder that the hares are captives, confined inhospitably regardless of their desires. While these desires are impossible to determine, on other occasions Cowper is quick to remark upon the

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¹⁸³ *Letters*, 1:381-2. This episode is described in a letter to John Newton, dated 21 August 1780. I have placed square brackets around “Sturges’s Harvest” in order to condense the rather long description of Puss’s escape, but the rest of the square brackets have been inserted by the editors (King and Ryskamp) to indicate tears in the manuscript.
hares’ “delight” and “gratitude”. Thus, his silence about what the escaping Puss might be thinking is all the more remarkable because it is uncharacteristic. Cowper only seems to abstain from speculations about his animals’ motivations in this particular situation, when they could reflect unfavourably on his conduct as a pet-keeper. Cowper does not entertain the (albeit unverifiable) possibility that Puss desires more than just the “taste of liberty” which the garden excursions afford, just as he does not delve deeply into the potentially unflattering meanings of Tiney’s “surliness”. In Tiney’s case, Cowper prefers a (certainly feasible but also convenient) explanation which absolves him of responsibility; in Puss’s, he remains unusually mute.

However, on another level, Cowper seems vindicated by the story of Puss’s getaway. As he warned, the world outside the parlour window is teeming with danger for hares. After years of safety from the “detested sport” (*The Task*, III.326), within the first few minutes of freedom Puss finds himself at the heart of a “most numerous Hunt” with dogs and people on his heels. Although Puss eventually outruns most of the crowd, he ends up in a tan yard belonging to a man whose name, Wagstaff, hints at the violence underpinning such a business. In this place associated with animal death, Puss almost drowns before he is rescued and returned, sanitized, to his owner, who spares no expense to get him back. Read this way, the story confirms that Cowper is a generous master (he pays four shillings for the “poor Creature” and responds good-humouredly to the whole affair). Furthermore, it suggests that his pets owe him a great debt, for the threats which he has been protecting them from all along are real and close at hand. While based on fact, the story is also conveniently allegorical, containing an implicit moral about the folly of taking one’s comfortable home for granted. Cowper triumphantly reports at the
end that despite minor injuries, Puss “is now almost as well as ever”: the “almost” is a final scolding, while the phrase “as well as ever”, possibly implying a recovery of physical and psychological health, may signal the resumption of Cowper’s self-affirming anthropomorphism.

Besides the protection of a sanctuary and medical care, Cowper suggests that he can provide his hares with superior kinds of social relationships than they were capable of finding in the wild. Cowper represents himself as a better “friend” to the hares than members of their own species, and other animals as well (The Task, III.351). He and his hares share bread, the veritable emblem of companionship (“Epitaph”, 13), whereas they must be protected from one another. 184 Cowper reports that while Puss was ill he “kept him apart from his fellows that they might not molest him (for, like many other wild animals, they persecute one of their own species that is sick)” and even the houses Cowper builds for the hare reflect the need to keep them separate: “at night [they] retired each to his own bed, never intruding into that of another” (Gentleman’s Magazine essay, 5:41). Cowper seems to contradict this arrangement in the “Epitaph” when he imagines Puss and Tiney eventually sharing a grave and presents this as a continuation of their intimacy when alive: Puss, “part’ner once of Tiney’s Box, / Must soon partake his grave” (43-44). But elsewhere the pet-keeper arrogates the privilege of “partnership” for himself. Bound to Puss by a “pledg[e]”, Cowper describes his tamest hare as the “Innocent partner of my peaceful home” (The Task, III.346, 337). Boasting that he “[knows] at least one hare that ha[s] a friend” (III.351), Cowper also alludes to John

184 The word companion derives from the Latin com-together and panis-bread (OED).
Gay’s fable “The Hare and Many Friends” (1727), which relates the tragic plight of a hare, who, despite being known and loved “by all the bestial train, / Who haunt the wood, or graze the plain,” cannot find a single animal willing “to save from death a friend distrest.” This allusion suggests that Cowper’s pets can depend on his affection more than they can rely on other animals for help in dangerous situations, an idea that makes it possible for the pet-keeper to carve out an important role for himself in the lives of his hares. Like Cowper’s projection of gratitude onto greenhouse flowers, this allusion also draws attention to how the fable and anthropomorphism frequently mediate Cowper’s relationship with his hares, skewing his perspective of animals’ desires, needs, and feelings by constantly framing them in terms of the human.

To call Cowper’s relationship with his hares a “friendship” would itself be to indulge in anthropomorphism for Buffon, who claims that animals are exempt from “Real friendship” because friendship “supposes the power of reflection” in both participants and “flows from reason alone” (1:356). Buffon prefers the term “attachment” to describe a dog’s feelings for its master, which are founded on “blind sentiment” and “necessity” (1:356); as he describes it, deliberation and choice play no role in the relationship between pet and pet-keeper. Cowper agrees in his poem “Of

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185 Gay, *Fables*, lines 9-10, 54. Gay’s *Fables* was one of the first books Cowper received as a child. Cowper “earned praise for his recitation of Gay’s ‘The Hare and many Friends’”, in particular, and in December 1799 he translated the same fable into Latin (*ODNB*).

186 In “Eating Well”, Derrida asks “Can the voice of the friend be that of an animal? Is friendship possible for the animal or between animals?” but does not expand on these questions or further delve into the issues they raise (112); he only notes that Aristotle and Heidegger would answer in the negative. Derrida’s *Politics of Friendship* (trans. George Collins (London: Verso, 2005)) contains a similarly brief mention of animals in relation to friendship (16).
Friendship” that companionship arises from a “similarity of mind”, but there is no suggestion in his writing that animals would be disqualified on these grounds (145). On the contrary, “friendship”, which he defines as “A union that bespeaks / A just reciprocation” (47-48), is a carefully selected word that allows Cowper to imply that the hares, like humans, can (and do) consent to a bond which honours mutuality and is distinguished from more selfish and calculating relations. Not only will a relationship “That stands on sordid Interest” fail “the test” of friendship (37-38), Cowper writes, but a difference in rank is itself incompatible with true companionship: “The great and small but rarely meet / On terms of amity complete” (109-10). Cowper levels hierarchical distinctions between humans and animals by claiming that he and his hares are friends. At the same time, by privileging his friendship with his hares over their intraspecies relationships, Cowper suggests that there is more to intimacy than biological similarity.

Although he reserves for himself the distinction of being the hares’ best companion, Cowper also facilitates the reunion of different species of animals which have not lived together in harmony since the Fall. Thus, biblical narrative is another lens through which Cowper views his relationship with his hares. Like the gardener who, in bringing together tropical and domestic plants under one greenhouse roof, allows “foreigners from many lands” to “form one social shade” (The Task, III.585-86), Cowper as pet-keeper encourages a bond to develop between his hare Puss and a spaniel, conventional enemies who will now “eat bread at the same time out of the same hand, and are in all respects sociable and friendly” (Gentleman’s Magazine essay, 5:44).
Here, Cowper describes himself as repairing a bond which humans, in their love of the “detested sport” of hunting, have destroyed. He creates the conditions for companionship by arranging for prey and predator to share bread, the act which best symbolizes Christian hospitality (The Task, III.326). Cowper accustoms all his pets to each other’s company. In an October 1785 letter to Lady Hesketh, he writes,

[Puss], a House dog and a small Spaniel, were just now basking in the beams of our fire-side, very comfortably in a group, but the great beast Mungo desired to be let into the Kitchen just before I could tell you so. He is very fond of Puss, often salutes her with his black muzzle and licks her face. The bread that she happens to leave is his constant perquisite, so that he may not be altogether disinterested in his attachment.187

The specific reference to bread once again suggests a more meaningful connection, though Cowper’s use of the term “perquisite” and his admission that the hungry Mungo’s “fond[ness]” may not be completely “disinterested” reveal that economics and affect are entangled in this relationship as well. Describing his pets’ arrangement wherein Puss’s bread satisfies the dog’s appetite and Mungo “licks” the hare with “fond[ness]” instead of treating him as prey, Cowper in this letter is readier to recognise self-interest than he is in instances in which he plays an active role in the relationship. Yet even here he hardly allows it to disrupt the scene of domestic harmony; “comfortably in a group”, human and animals gather peacefully around the hearth, the centre of Cowper’s home.

187 Letters, 2:383-84. The fact that Mungo is also the name of the well-known African slave in Isaac Bickerstaff’s comic opera The Padlock (1768)—who, called “a perverse animal” by his master, at one point complains “what a terrible life am I led! / A dog has a better that’s shelter’d and fed!” (Act I. scene vi)—casts a shadow on the scene of domestic harmony which Cowper describes, reminding readers of the imbalances of power within, as well as between, species.
More than simply a whimsical social experiment or a precaution taken by a practical pet-keeper (who knows that some kind of truce is necessary if his beloved hares are to survive their cohabitation with dogs), Cowper’s attempt to forge peaceful relationships between animals who are normally adversaries may also be interpreted as an act of religious piety, as the allusions to the breaking of bread indicate. Both the greenhouse and Cowper’s sanctuary for a variety of pets anticipate the return to Eden which he and many of his contemporaries believed would accompany the second coming of Christ. This future paradise, as Cowper describes it in Book VI of *The Task*, is characterized by both the perpetually temperate conditions the greenhouse strives to replicate—“The various seasons [are] woven into one, / And that one season an eternal spring” (769-70)—and the reconciliation of animals previously at war with one another: “The lion and the libbard and the bear / Graze with the fearless flocks. All bask at noon / Together, or all gambol in the shade / Of the same grove, and drink one common stream. / Antipathies are none” (772-77). Though he was plagued by doubts of his own salvation from 1773 until the end of his life, Cowper’s pet-keeping, as he represents it, performs a kind of spiritual work that has the divine validation of millennial prophesy. However, the moments of uncertainty in “Epitaph on a Hare” and the links Cowper creates between exotic greenhouse plants and hares in *The Task* continue to remind us that the practice in which Cowper is engaged is itself vulnerable to criticism. Hoping to be rewarded for his pains by the grateful hares, if not ultimately by God, Cowper is finally no more immune from charges of self-interest than Mungo or the speaker of “Invitation to the Red Breast”, and, at times, he acknowledges as much.
When Gilbert White writes about his treatment of his tortoise, Timothy, the naturalist also seems to vacillate between self-assurance and doubt, though not perhaps as dramatically as Cowper does. Indeed, one of White’s twenty-first century critics, Verlyn Klinkenborg, sees only self-assurance in White’s account of the tortoise. The next section considers White’s writing another case study of eighteenth-century pet-keeping and as an illustration of how the fine line between hospitality and captivity is open to interpretation.

3 Timothy the Tortoise and Gilbert White the Naturalist

According to the “autobiography” Timothy writes in White’s letter to Hecky Mulso, he was born in 1734 in Virginia, where he spent “his youthful days among [his] relations with much satisfaction” until he was abducted, transported to England, and sold to Gilbert White’s uncle, who proceeded with the tortoise to Ringmer. When the novelty of this new curiosity wore off, Timothy “fell under the [benevolent] care” of White’s aunt (2:127). After she died in 1780, Timothy became the property of Gilbert White, who had taken interest in the tortoise during the 1770s. White brought Timothy to Selborne, where the naturalist watched his eating and hibernating habits carefully, conducted “whimsical experiments, such as feeling my pulse, putting me in a tub of water to try if I can swim, &c.” (2:128), and tracked him down after several escapes, which Timothy claims were motivated by loneliness. This is the account of Timothy’s life that White

188 The Life and Letters of Gilbert White of Selborne, ed. R. Holt-White, 2 vols. (London: J. Murray, 1901), 2:126 (White to Hester Mulso, 31 August 1784). Hester Mulso is the daughter of White’s friend, John (not to be confused with John’s sister, Hester Mulso Chapone). Hereafter, this letter will be cited parenthetically by volume and page number, using the shortened title, “To Hecky Mulso”, where clarification is necessary.
provides in his 1784 letter to Hester Mulso, yet this is only one of many texts by the naturalist that refers to the tortoise.

Timothy appears in many different guises in White’s journals, personal letters, and *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* (1789). The tortoise is depicted as an object of study, to be weighed, measured, and experimented upon; and as an anthropomorphized pet, to be viewed with proprietary affection and empathy. By turns, White’s Timothy is a grateful guest and a prisoner yearning to escape from his “place of confinement” (“To Hecky Mulso,” 2:128); he is a squanderer of precious resources (especially time) and a valuable source of knowledge. These representations of Timothy tell us more about Gilbert White as a pet-keeper and naturalist and his investments than they do about the individual animal; indeed, White’s account of Timothy’s life gets many of the facts wrong, including the reptile’s sex and birthplace. To his credit White’s representations of his interactions with Timothy contain self-censure as well as self-congratulation. At times he seems convinced that he is a benevolent and hospitable pet

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189 *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* (London, 1789); hereafter cited parenthetically, using the shortened title *Selborne*. *Selborne* consists of White’s correspondence with two naturalists, Thomas Pennant and Daines Barrington, and my parenthetical citations will follow standard practice by indicating the addressee by initial (P for Pennant and B for Barrington) and letter or page number (p.). I will also include the letter date (if given) to make it easier to situate White’s comments about Timothy within the timeline of their relationship. The relevant part of the Antiquities section of Selborne, titled “More Particulars respecting the Old Family Tortoise, omitted in the Natural History”, will be cited parenthetically by page number, preceded by an “A” for Antiquities. In this section I also use the following edition of White’s journals, hereafter cited parenthetically: *The Journals of Gilbert White*, ed. Francesca Greenoak, 3 vols. (London: Century, 1988).

190 Based on an analysis of the tortoise’s shell, which was preserved in the British Museum of Natural History, we now know that Timothy was female and of a species that lives on the southern coast of Turkey, not in North America. It is believed that she outlived her owner by a year, dying in 1794. Despite White’s mistake regarding Timothy’s sex, I continue to use the masculine pronoun in reference to the tortoise when I write about White’s and Warner’s discussions of the animal. When referring to Klinkenberg’s Timothy or making my own observations about the tortoise, I use the feminine pronoun.
owner, while at other times he depicts himself as a captor and condescending scientist who shows “contempt...for [Timothy’s] understanding” and “think[s] nobody knows anything but [himself]” (“To Hecky Mulso,” 2:128).

Twenty- and twenty-first-century critics usually privilege one version of White over others, and explain inconsistencies in his portraits of Timothy by pointing either to changes in their relationship over time or to the variety of genres White employs. Some critics argue that “[a] change of mind becomes perceptible in Gilbert White’s *Journal*” at the moment when the naturalist becomes a pet-keeper. According to this view, Timothy “begins to be studied as a personality” once the tortoise has been transferred to the garden at Selborne after Mrs. Snooke’s death; prior to this date, the tortoise was only “studied as an accessory to swallows,” his habits of hibernation scrutinized as evidence supporting White’s theories of bird migration, and was not referred to by name (Warner, 15). Critics also make sense of the contrasting portraits of Timothy as scientific specimen and “pampered pet” by turning to genre; White’s *Journals* generally privilege data (recording Timothy’s fluctuating weight and the dates he retires to, and emerges from, hibernation), while the “charming and whimsical” letter Timothy himself purportedly writes to John Mulso’s daughter, Hester, allows White greater license to indulge in anthropomorphism. In the middle of the spectrum, containing “factual notes”,

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“speculations and enthusiasm” is *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne*, which Robert Merrett celebrates as “the acme of natural history, because it self-consciously integrates literary and scientific methods.”

Which version of the tortoise one sees very much depends on context: Warner suggests that “The Timothy of *The Letters on the Natural History of Selborne* is at first sight a more stately and polished reptile than the Timothy of the *Journals*” and claims that the difference between these “two portraits” is “due to the moral and philosophical reflections which shade him in one and not in the other” (15).

In this section, I examine White’s references to Timothy alongside the work of two critics who evaluate Gilbert White’s pet-keeping. Sylvia Townsend Warner casts Gilbert White’s treatment of Timothy in a favourable (and explicitly hospitable) light in *The Portrait of a Tortoise* (1946), which contains passages from White’s journals and letters as well as her own commentary. Published right after World War II ended, Warner’s largely positive interpretation of White may be slightly skewed by nostalgia for an idyllic rural world. Verlyn Klinkenborg’s novel *Timothy: or, Notes of an Abject Reptile* (2006), supposedly narrated by the tortoise herself, is much more critical of Gilbert White. Informed by postmodern approaches to the animal, Klinkenborg’s

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194 Warner would not be the first to react in this way to White’s *Natural History*. Richard Mabey observes that “In wartime the *Natural History* has frequently been seen both as an escape from the realities of war…and as part of what was being fought for” (8).

195 Verlyn Klinkenborg. *Timothy; or, Notes of an Abject Reptile* (New York: Knopf, 2006), hereafter shortened to *Notes* and cited parenthetically. In her glowing review, Kari Weil claims that while “writing from the tortoise’s point of view is not simply a means of taking revenge on the naturalist”,
rejection of White’s paternalistic treatment of Timothy is also a product of his time. Scoffing at the “Pride of the vertical” and “Assurance of those who wear hair, even if not their own” (46), the Timothy of Notes challenges not only White but anthropocentrism itself in ways that remind one of the novel’s reviewers of the work of Derrida, Coetzee, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger.\textsuperscript{196} Examined together, Warner’s and Klinkenborg’s respectively approving and sceptical representations of the naturalist’s relationship with his pet tortoise highlight the complexity and ambiguity already present in White’s observations about Timothy and in most eighteenth-century texts that explore the feasibility of hospitable pet-keeping.

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I begin with an examination of Gilbert White’s portrait of Timothy’s carapace because it could not be more different than Cowper’s celebration of the snail’s shell as a symbol of independence, or more indicative, at least according to Verlyn Klinkenborg, of the pet-keeper’s hubris that the animal in his care needs a human’s help to survive. Failing to see the potential benefits of the carapace, the naturalist pities rather than envies his tortoise. Using the language of captivity, White focuses on the restrictive rather than protective nature of Timothy’s “suit of ponderous armour” (Selborne A, p.428): “to be imprisoned, as it were, within his own shell, must preclude, we should suppose all activity and

\textsuperscript{196} Weil, “The ‘True’ Story,” 305-7.
disposition for enterprise”, he writes, though he does acknowledge that Timothy’s “exertions are remarkable” in June despite these limitations (Selborne A, p.428). Whereas Cowper’s “The Snail” lists protection from inclement weather among the benefits of the shell, White downplays this useful quality of Timothy’s carapace by remarking on the “extreme timidity [the tortoise] always expressed with regard to rain; for though it has a shell that would secure it against the wheel of a loaded cart, yet does it discover as much solicitude about rain as a lady dressed in all her best attire, shuffling away on the first sprinklings, and running it’s [sic] head up in a corner” (Selborne B 13, 12 April 1772). White’s recognition of the strength of Timothy’s shell is subordinated in this sentence to the unflattering comparison of an otherwise resilient creature—who spends half a year hibernating in dirt and mud—to a nervous and vain woman. White’s inability to dwell on the advantages of Timothy’s shell and the self-reliance it to some degree affords the tortoise could be seen as evidence of how White condescendingly assumes he is animals’ superior; and, indeed, this is how Klinkenborg interprets White’s behaviour towards Timothy more generally.

Klinkenborg’s assertion of Timothy’s relative independence is a reaction to the way in which White’s texts (for the most part) favour the language of hospitality and dependence in their descriptions of the relationships forged between humans and non-human animals. His Timothy experiences her “beloved shell” differently than Gilbert White imagines; she feels sorry for humans, those “Great soft tottering beasts” who lack carapaces, because their “[h]ouses [are] never by when they need them. Even the humblest villagers live in ill-fitting houses. The greater the personage the worse the fit” (7). From her perspective, Timothy’s shelter is preferable by far to the draughty
habitations of humans. Later in Notes Klinkenborg’s Timothy similarly glories in her self-sufficiency, contrasting it with humans’ reliance on various technologies: “Mr Gilbert White calls me a poor being, lost in torpor. Poor embarrassed reptile. But what have I not survived? Winter after winter, drought, and flood. No human devices or artifices….I feast in the seasonal variety of this garden. But I would dine just as well in the underbrush on the Hanger” (133). Timothy enjoys the delectable treats made available to her first by Mrs. Rebecca Snooke and later by Gilbert White; however, the tortoise could (and does) survive on nourishment she procures herself. Klinkenborg is right to detect (and to critique) the ways in which White’s texts downplay evidence of the animal’s independence and stress its reliance on humans.

Paternalistic rhetoric is also a prominent feature of White’s observations of Timothy’s behaviour towards Rebecca Snooke:

I was much taken with it’s [sic] sagacity in discerning those that do it kind offices: for, as soon as the good old lady comes in sight who has waited on it for more than thirty years, it hobbles towards it’s [sic] benefactress with awkward alacrity; but remains inattentive to strangers. Thus not only “the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib,” but the most abject reptile and torpid of beings distinguishes the hand that feeds it, and is touched with the feelings of gratitude. (B 13, 12 April 1772)

The words “benefactress” and “gratitude” belong to the same vocabulary of dependence that Cowper draws on in his portrayals of the hares. Both Warner and Klinkenborg respond to this passage, though in starkly opposing ways. Warner sanctions White’s representation of Rebecca Snooke as Timothy’s “benefactress” and even defends her from imagined criticism: “Mrs. Snooke was very kind to Timothy. She fed him with her own hands, and studied his tastes. He ate of her kidney-beans and of her cucumbers. As for the little walled court, it was not the sort of prison-yard the words might suggest”
Even more complimentary is Warner’s portrait of White himself as an impeccable host who, as “a child of his most social century”, treated friends, family, and his pet tortoise with generosity. Warner explicitly equates the naturalist’s interest in improving Timothy’s hibernaculum (Latin for “winter residence”) with a courteous host’s attentiveness to his guests: “Gilbert White, like the good host he is, has turned his mind to hospitable preoccupation: how to ensure that his tortoise should spend a comfortable winter night” (16).

Klinkenborg’s Timothy does not disagree with White’s view of Mrs. Snooke as a “benevolent woman, whose humane attention extended to the meanest of her retainers” (“To Hecky Mulso,” 2:127); however, she does qualify it:

Good old lady she was…But place Mrs. Rebecca Snooke in a brick box apart from her natural kind. Where she cannot eat her natural food or dig her natural bed. Let her be fed twice a day, albeit cheerfully, by one who keeps her there. Be kind and withhold the drowning rains, the killing frosts. Year after year for forty years. Would she say she has been waited on? Or would another word occur to her? (Notes, 43).

Whereas Warner sees the fact that Rebecca Snooke “studied [Timothy’s] tastes” as an eagerness to accommodate the reptile’s desires, Klinkenborg characterizes such efforts as well-meaning but misguided. His Timothy tells the reader of the “Trials” which took place at Ringmer, “over my palate” (40). Mrs. Snooke initially gives Timothy “[u]nspeakable delicacies” such as “seed-cake, cat’s-meat, chicken liver, raw egg, calf’s-foot jelly” (40). With relief Klinkenborg’s Timothy notes that “At last the delicacies ended or I would have wasted away to a cavity. Lettuce, kidney beans, a wafer of

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197 Warner also describes a letter of 1786 as being “poised between the objectivity of the Journals and the benign friskings of a host” (21).
cucumber. Dandelion or sowthistle when in season. Good Ringmer apples, pears, and grapes. Those sufficed….Grateful for an arbitrary stomach, able to fast almost at will” (41). While she survives the ordeal, Timothy claims that she is nearly killed with kindness. What Timothy is thankful for, here, is not the decadent offerings of Mrs. Snooke, but the biological fact of her own “arbitrary stomach”. Her gratitude turns inward rather than outward. I find it significant that Klinkenborg’s passage verges on suggesting that we interpret Timothy’s seasonal fasting as a conscious refusal to eat, a countermove to the generous host’s insistence that the guest eat and enjoy the gift of his or her food; I will elaborate shortly on the importance of being “able to fast almost at will”. Timothy’s remarks on the inappropriateness of human delicacies for animals has much in common with both Trimmer’s disapproval in Fabulous Histories of the feasts that Mrs. Addis provides for her pets, and her contrasting approbation of Mrs. Benson’s resolution to give the robins crumbs, and crumbs only, although in that text it is the unfairness to other humans that makes these feeding practices problematic and virtuous, respectively. In Notes, the parade of delicacies instead speaks to humans’ fundamental lack of understanding of animals.

If “living at Ringmer” was, as Klinkenborg’s Timothy puts it, “a well-intended slavery,” the move to Selborne after Mrs. Snooke’s death is accompanied by great improvements according to all accounts (45). White’s Timothy, in the letter to Hecky Mulso, is enthusiastic about the dietary benefits of his new home: “In my present situation I enjoy many advantages—such as the range of an extensive garden, affording a variety of sun and shade, and abounding in lettuces, poppies, kidney beans, and many other salubrious and delectable herbs and plants” (2:127). Noting the “superior
amenities” of Selborne, Warner argues that “Gilbert White was justified in thinking...that Timothy’s change of residence was greatly to Timothy’s advantage” (17). And even Klinkenborg’s Timothy, who is so often a critic, records her pleasure at being able to “[s]alad myself on the grass-walks. Devour what lettuces I choose, even to the detriment of Mr. Gilbert White’s table....Feast on the leaves of poppies. Poppies!” (50). Although there seems to be consensus at last, White’s Timothy focuses on the merits of the garden, “the superior amenities” (as Warner puts it) to which Gilbert White provides access, while the satisfaction of Klinkenborg’s Timothy derives not only (or even primarily, perhaps) from the variety of options, but also from the freedom to help herself to food. Klinkenborg also suggests here that Timothy’s meal of lettuce is sweetened by the fact that she sometimes feasts at the expense of her host, whose table is deprived of the lettuce Timothy consumes.

The power dynamics involved in offering, accepting, and refusing food are certainly less overt in White’s texts, but I think it is still productive to read the routine weighing of Timothy and the naturalist’s observations about his alternating “abstemious” and “voracious” eating habits as signs of a host’s anxieties as well as a scientist’s collection of data. Timothy’s “arbitrary stomach”, which gives her the ability to fast during (and to some extent immediately before and after) her winter hibernation, poses a threat to depictions of Timothy as a guest dependent upon and grateful for Gilbert White’s hospitality because it draws attention to her prolonged self-sufficiency. The records of Timothy’s fluctuating weight, which make up a large number of White’s
journal entries about the tortoise,\(^{198}\) may usefully be interpreted as a quantitative measurement of how much or how little the tortoise relies on the nourishment provided or made available by humans. Her weight may decrease during hibernation, but Timothy still survives without contributions of food for more than half the year. Cowper’s poetic remarks that the snail is content to “lead” a “hermit-like…life” with no need of a “partner” to share his “banquet” is even more true of the tortoise, who during the cold months does not require a “banquet” either (17-18). While there is no evidence in the weight reports themselves that this information about Timothy’s ability to fast for long periods worries White, it nonetheless undermines the anthropocentric narrative of the human’s benevolence and generous hospitality towards the grateful animal. Timothy’s fasting might even be interpreted as a form of resistance to the naturalist’s gestures of accommodation (Klinkenborg hints at this possibility in the passage about Mrs. Snooke’s “unspeakable delicacies”).

Unsurprisingly, White never explicitly depicts Timothy’s fasting as intentional, but by describing her eating habits prior to winter as “abstemious” he suggests that the tortoise is making a conscious decision.\(^ {199}\) According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* the word “abstemious”, meaning “dispensing with wine and rich food; temperate or sparing in food”, is conventionally applied to “persons, their lives, or habits” (1a). White’s anthropomorphism here makes Timothy’s fasting seem more than just a matter

\(^{198}\) Warner helpfully assembles a list of Timothy’s weights as recorded in the *Journals* (see her Appendix III).

\(^{199}\) For a representative description of Timothy’s “abstemious life” see *Journals*, 23 October 1779. For White’s use of “voracious”, see, for example, *Journals*, 28 August 1776.
of instinct. By contrast, in the late spring and summer, when Timothy regains his appetite for the natural dainties growing in Gilbert White’s garden, the once “abstemious” tortoise becomes “voracious”. This word, used repeatedly, returns Timothy to a non-human state: whereas “abstemious” is an adjective modifying people, “voracious” is applied primarily to “animals” and is “rarely [used] of persons” (OED, 1a). By emphasizing Timothy’s “voraciousness” in devouring White’s garden crops these entries reinforce the tortoise’s implicit approval of White’s edible offerings and his dependence on his host, the naturalist.

Notwithstanding her fasts, Timothy depends on the hospitality of Gilbert White, and of Rebecca Snooke before him, for food more than shelter; however, despite the fact that she stays outside and digs her own hibernaculum, she still resides in a garden, which is human property. Although Gilbert White clearly tries his best to make Timothy comfortable in his new abode, even he seems able at times to anticipate Klinkenborg’s point that the tortoise is more of a hostage than a guest who should be grateful for the accommodation. Klinkenborg argues that White cannot possibly imagine that Timothy experiences her pethood as captivity because “he is the gardener” and “his is the garden” (142), but White’s own texts suggest otherwise. The naturalist himself observes that the reptile “resented the Insult” of the interruption in hibernation and subsequent relocation from Ringmer “by hissing” (Journals, 20 March 1780), and White’s Timothy calls Selborne “my place of confinement” in the letter to Hecky Mulso (2:128). Klinkenborg never mentions this text, though its ventriloquism of Timothy’s voice provides a precedent for Notes.
Klinkenborg’s Timothy admits that the living conditions, like the menu, are vastly improved when she moves from Ringmer to Selborne. Her impression upon arrival is that “the confines seems more than ample” and she recounts during

[that] first Selborne autumn, I sleep under a Marvel of Peru. In the warm shelter of the fruit wall, disbelieving…Hen-coop over my back to keep the dogs from nosing too closely. Mr. Gilbert White affords me a good armful of straw. Is he this kind to all his parishioners? Benevolence on his part. And if awkward, that is because one creature’s courtesies are so often another’s insults. (50)

Though this passage from Notes credits White with thoughtfulness, it concludes with the observation that determining whether a gesture is a courtesy or insult depends on one’s perspective. When Timothy declines the protection of the hen-coop the following winter this action suggests, to Warner, the possibility that some of White’s gestures of hospitality are unnecessary and unwanted: she speculates, “Perhaps [Timothy] disliked the coop….Perhaps, … he preferred to sleep austerely” (17). If a tortoise’s preferences and dislikes are inscrutable to some extent, Warner also acknowledges that they are nonetheless real and independent of the humans who own or observe him.

White’s and Klinkenborg’s different depictions of Timothy’s escape from the garden in the spring of 1784 throw into relief the tensions between hospitality and captivity. White tells a story of a tortoise motivated by a desire for female company who leaves the garden through an open wicket gate, investigates the world beyond it for eight days, and discovers that he liked his previous situation better: to his niece Mary he writes,

[Timothy] had conceived a notion of much satisfaction to be found in the range of the meadow, and Baker’s hill; and that beautiful females might inhabit those vast spaces, which appeared boundless in his eye. But having wandered ‘til he was tired, and having met with nothing but weeds, and coarse grass, and solitude, he
was glad to return to the poppies, and lettuces, and other luxuries of the garden. *(Life and Letters, 2:123-4, 12 June 1784)*

In the letter to Hecky Mulso, White’s Timothy, lamenting that his “greatest misfortune” is “the want of society of my own kind”, relates a similar narrative about his escape:

> It was in the month of May last that I resolved to elope from my place of confinement; for my fancy had represented to me that probably many agreeable tortoises of both sexes might inhabit the heights of Baker’s Hill or the extensive plains of the neighbouring meadow….I was missing eight days, wandering in this wilderness of sweets, and exploring the meadow at times. But my pains were all to no purpose; I could find no society such as I wished or sought for. I began to grow hungry, and to wish myself at home. I therefore came forth in sight, and surrendered myself up to Thomas [the gardener], who had been inconsolable in my absence. (2:128-9)

Whereas the first letter, unlike the second, does not register the discontent that led Timothy to attempt an escape, both suggest that the tortoise feels relief at returning home and that it was his voluntary decision to do so. Just as Cowper’s story of his hare’s encounter with the dangerous world beyond the garden is meant to make life as a protected and pampered pet seem all the more appealing, White’s narrative reinforces the value of what he, as a pet-keeper, can offer the tortoise.

Klinkenborg’s account of this episode differs in a few significant ways. His Timothy denies that she was glad to return to the garden and dismisses that version of events as a “fable that humans love to tell” (136), an observation that, for Klinkenborg, is supported by the fact that the tortoise escapes again in 1787. She then goes on to analyse the humans’ initial confusion and debate about her reason for escaping. The two types of questions the humans ask themselves both betray a fundamental lack of understanding between humans and domesticated animals, Klinkenborg’s tortoise contends. The first question—“How could I leave such a paradise? After everything we gave you” (136)—
implies that the tortoise’s unsanctioned departure is an ungrateful return for all the hospitality lavished upon a creature who cannot possibly have unfulfilled needs or desires. The second set of questions—“what impels me? What spurs me on? What is my motive for venturing forth?” (136)—seems to express a laudable curiosity about the motivations of non-human animals and a willingness to attribute conscious intent to them, but Klinkenborg interprets the conclusions that White reaches as a failure of imagination. The mistake Gilbert White makes in determining Timothy’s sex is for Klinkenborg the epitome of human-animal misunderstanding. Because of this error, the idea that Timothy embarks on his adventures with “amorous” intentions to find female tortoises is represented as all the more ridiculous (Journals, 5 June 1787). Klinkenborg’s Timothy also objects more generally to the assumption that she leaves the garden to be in the company of other tortoises because she is tired of solitude; Gilbert White, she claims, is projecting a “mammal’s conception of solitude” onto a reptile who was “laid in solitude, hatched in solitude, all but conceived in solitude” and who therefore does not feel the same pull towards society that he does (75). White’s texts reveal that the naturalist was fascinated by the “wonderful spirit of sociality in the brute creation” (Selborne B 24, 15 August 1775); like Cowper, he frequently wrote about “mutual friendship[s]” between members of the same species, such as horses, cows, oxen and sheep, as well as companionships between members of different species—for example, between a horse and hen, and between a leveret and cat (B 34, 9 May 1776). White’s assumption about Timothy’s desire for company, therefore, is not out of keeping with his observations of the sociable nature of animals throughout the rest of his work.
Although Klinkenborg does not mention White’s letter to Hecky Mulso anywhere in *Notes*, he would likely argue that the naturalist only gets the tortoise’s desires partly right when he has his Timothy declare, “Happy should I have been in the enjoyment of my native climate and the society of my friends” (2:126). In Klinkenborg’s novel, it is her birthplace which Timothy longs for: “all the kinship I feel in life is for my native scrub” (147). Timothy actually hails from the “Mediterranean shore” (147) and not, as Gilbert White believed, from the American colony of Virginia (“To Hecky Mulso,” 2:126); in *Notes* White’s lack of awareness of the extent of Timothy’s displacement is represented as another crucial mistake which undercuts the naturalist’s credibility and which Klinkenborg’s Timothy is reluctant to forgive. White has “no idea what skies the summer birds traipse when they leave Selborne,” she writes. “No idea where I come from. No notion of how dislodged I am” (33). Klinkenborg’s Timothy tries to leave her English garden because she feels out of place in this unfamiliar country and misses home, for she is “[a]s fitted to [her native land] as the eye to the use of seeing” (147).

Timothy “fits” in the Mediterranean landscape in a way she does not in White’s English garden and her unsuitability to this foreign place is expressed in Klinkenborg’s novel as a kind of uselessness. To the naturalists who visit Gilbert White, she is not a particularly valuable object of scientific curiosity because she is not a native creature of Selborne or even England: “in the end, they consider, I am alien to this district. Visiting from nowhere. No notion what place I am fitted to. Vagabond on this soil. A condition with no meaning to a naturalist. Subject to a certain disregard therefore. Less instructive than the merest mole-cricket churring by night here in the land of its ancestors” (*Notes*, 76). From the other naturalists’ perspective, she rates lower than that “unwelcome guest
to gardeners”, the mole-cricket, which, despite the harm it causes, is at least useful in the sense that it allows for the increase of local scientific knowledge. Use, as I have noted in relation to Trimmer’s *Fabulous Histories*, is an important consideration in the discourse of hospitality and domestication because there is an expectation that the animal guest who consumes the host’s resources, such as shelter and food, be able to participate in a reciprocal exchange. The inability to do so leaves the guest in a permanent state of indebtedness, which is still desirable for the host if the aim is retain all of his or her power.

Although Gilbert White learns a great deal from observing Timothy despite the fact that the tortoise is not an indigenous creature, his evaluations of her usefulness or lack thereof tend to reinforce the animal’s inferiority in relation to humans. For instance, marvelling at the tortoise’s long life, White sees Timothy as an indolent animal who wastes time which could, and should, be spent more productively: “it is a matter of wonder to find that Providence should bestow such a profusion of days, such a seeming waste of longevity,” he writes, “on a reptile that appears to relish it so little as to squander more than two thirds of it’s [sic] existence in a joyless stupor, and be lost to all sensation for months together in the profoundest of slumbers” (*Selborne* B 50, 21 April 1780). In other words, White interprets Timothy’s long, uneventful life as a waste of potential. Buffon, by contrast, notes the reptile’s practical value in *The Natural History of Birds, Fish, Insects and Reptiles* (1793) when he observes that

The tortoise is supposed to destroy insects and snails in great abundance; it is therefore taken into gardens: and in hot countries they are admitted into a domestic state, as being great destroyers of bugs….How they can be expert at
such work, as catching vermin, is not easy to be conceived; but they appear in
general harmless, and even fond of employment.  

There is no mention in White’s texts of Timothy killing vermin or discouraging them
from trespassing in the garden, a service which renders even the unpopular cat a
welcome member of households (such as the Wilsons’ in Fabulous Histories). The few
occasions when White does recognize Timothy’s practical usefulness, he does so at the
expense of instrumentalizing the tortoise: “If attended to, it becomes an excellent
weather-glass; for as sure as it walks elate, and as it were on tiptoe, feeding with great
earnestness in a morning, so sure will it rain before night” (Selborne B 13, 12 April
1772). Alert to and offended by the naturalist’s objectification of his beloved pet tortoise,
Klinkenborg’s Timothy points out that Gilbert White describes her “[a]s if [he were]
Accuracy guaranteed” (73). As scientific instrument, Timothy may be useful, but it is in
a role which renders her passive, whereas Buffon’s tortoise, guarding the house from
encroaching vermin, surprises the observer with its expertise and forces him or her to
reconsider the reptile’s capabilities.

When Timothy escapes, White does come close to registering the affective and
practical value of his pet in a letter to his niece: “To be serious,” he writes, “I should be
very sorry to lose so old a domestic, that has behaved himself in so blameless a manner
in the family for near fifty years” (Life and Letters 2:122, 22 May 1784). However,
White’s lament seems to lack feeling next to his description of Thomas the gardener’s

200 Georges-Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon, The Natural History of Birds, Fish, Insects and Reptiles. 5
“discompos[ure] at [Timothy’s] elopement”, which the naturalist ridicules by quoting from the mock-heroic Hudibras (2:122). Thomas has, White quotes,

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“...made so great a coil as
Stout Hercules for loss of Hylas.
He has forc’d the hangers to repeat
The accent of his sad regret:
And Echo from the hollow ground
His doleful wailings to resound.”
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Describing Orsin’s lament for the “loss of his dear Crony Bear,” who has been baited, these verses from Hudibras suggest that Thomas’s sadness is an excessive emotional response, one that reflects the similarity of these two “domestics” and their difference from White. As I noted in section one of this chapter, to represent servants as either the friends or enemies of pets is to place them on the same level, and White seems to see himself as above both. Klinkenborg censures White’s dispassionate description of Timothy as a “blameless domestic”. “Blameless footman. Worn-out cookmaid. Imbecile serving girl. Meek demeanor. Self-effacing behaviour. Shuffle backward. Silent the door,” his Timothy free-associates in response to the passage (73). “Blameless,” Notes implicitly suggests, is a neutral term, not much of a compliment after so many years. It is less a recognition of merit or affection, than an acknowledgement of no harm done.

In Notes, Timothy is far from self-promoting: while “other creatures find their uses”, she observes, “no one expects me to go a-mousing or a-ratting or to guard the flock or herd the neat-cattle” (72). She admits that she has little to offer as a grateful return for her host’s generous gifts: her “[w]aste [is] too scant to spread on the garden”

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and she has “[n]o song worth hearing. No skin worth tanning. No conversation worth taking down. No capers worth watching” (73). She has “only one autumnal trick, going underground, and the spring one, coming up again. And the other trick of course. Longevity” (73). Hibernation, in fact, is one of the most valuable things she has to contribute, for White uses his observations of Timothy to help develop his hypotheses about bird migration, but the tortoise’s longevity only underscores, for White, the animal’s lack of accomplishment. However, while Klinkenborg’s Timothy is willing to concede that her value is limited, she blames this fact on her displacement from her natural habitat: “vocation,” she insists, is tied up with “place” (144). “No matter how they get their living,” she says of other animals, “they get their living where they must. Ages of ancestors fit them for marsh or hedge or underwood beech. Expert in their terrain. Minutely particular in habitation. Fitted just so into the mosaic of Selborne” (144). In Klinkenborg’s Notes, then, the tortoise’s perceived uselessness is itself a criticism of the growing eighteenth-century pet industry that has produced it—an industry in which trends dictate that “fashionable” exotic creatures like tortoises be procured, taken to foreign lands, sold, “apprenticed for life in the role of curio” and then, after death, reduced to shells that can be “preserved” and displayed like “double-lidded snuffboxes” on “lacquered table[s] inside the house” of people like Mrs. Rebecca Snooke (45). Hospitality comes under fire in Klinkenborg’s novel, as he reveals guests to be hostages and the inability to return (even unwanted) favours to be a way of ensuring that the human host’s authority is never threatened.

In Notes Timothy herself comes to the conclusion that it is not always in the pet’s or guest’s best interests to be pampered: “Sheep of the parish seem the most pampered of
beings. Fortunes tied intimately to humans….Moved as often as possible to graze on
fresh grass or green wheat or fields of spoiled barley. Belly-deep in their proper food.
Yet when rains fall, sheep die, even on so wholesome a spot as the commons….The
humans—assiduous friends of sheep—are the one to pick their bones at last” (61). Such
luxuries hide self-interested motives. Yet White had no intention of eating Timothy, and
he seems genuinely concerned about his pet tortoise’s well-being, at least when it does
not conflict with his pursuit of scientific knowledge. Klinkenborg criticizes White for his
lack of understanding of Timothy, a creature he spent much time observing and living
with in close proximity. But in The Rural Life, the blog Klinkenborg wrote for The New
York Times, he notes the difficulty, even the impossibility, of really seeing the animals he
encounters on his farm: although he watches the animals intently, he confesses that,
“being human, I keep coming up against the limits of what a human can see.”202 If
White’s view of Timothy is restricted, so too is Klinkenborg’s view both of the animals
in his own life and of the eighteenth-century naturalist, whom he observes at a distance
of over two centuries. Gilbert White, though he may never have understood the “real”
Timothy, tried his best to imagine his tortoise’s experience of the world, even if it
reflected poorly on his own pet-keeping.

My primary intention in sections two and three has not been to judge Cowper’s or
White’s animal practices ethically—after all, they both do that themselves to some

2006 and 14 July 2006 (a period coinciding with the publication and promotion of Notes), Klinkenborg’s
blog paired his own observations about his farm with entries from Gilbert White’s journals from the
corresponding dates.
extent—but, more importantly, to examine the writers’ complex and often contradictory representations of “hospitable” pet-keeping as a reflection of their culture’s ongoing struggle to classify humans’ relationships with domesticated animals. Cowper and White grapple with difficult and sometimes uncomfortable questions in their texts: how to welcome the animal as a guest without simultaneously treating it like a hostage, and how best to define and measure humans’ and animals’ responsibility (in all senses of the word) towards each other. These are questions that make possible, though not inevitable, a significant change in perspective about non-human creatures and their place in eighteenth-century houses and in the world. Moreover, they are questions that continue to preoccupy people who live and think with animals today. Cowper’s and White’s texts ultimately offer us an invitation—at once a request and a summons—to take a closer look at our own successes and failures to accommodate animals, whether we encounter them as pet-owners, scientists, or even as zoo-keepers and -visitors.

It is to zoo-keepers and visitors that I turn in the final section of this chapter, which engages with new and yet familiar territory: the royal menagerie at the Tower of London—the king’s domain, and that of the king of the beasts.

4 Enter the Lion’s Den: Menageries and Hospitality

Menagerie animals, many of whom earned the distinction of “national pets” in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, have much in common with their smaller,
domesticated counterparts. Like pets, they were both anthropomorphized and objectified; they were both criticized for the extravagant resources they consumed and adored by the crowds that gathered to see them. There was also another connection between menagerie animals and pets which is especially relevant for this chapter: eighteenth-century writers often resorted to the language of hospitality and inhospitality when they described menageries, as well as the accommodations made for pets. For instance, in France, depictions of the menagerie beasts at Versailles as the king’s pampered guests competed with representations of the animals as hostages who were as wrongly imprisoned as those in the Bastille. One of the main objections to pet-keeping—that companion animals ate lavish meals while ill-nourished humans could barely survive on their meagre fare—was applied to the menagerie, which was defined in the *Encyclopedie* (1762) as “A building where large numbers of animals are maintained as a curiosity. Only sovereigns have menageries. Menageries should be destroyed when people are short of bread; it would be shameful to spend large sums to feed animals when all around them people are dying of hunger.” However, the animals previously represented as spoiled aristocrats were recast as the monarch’s victims during the French Revolution. There were rumours that a committee of Jacobins went to Versailles in August 1792 to demand the animals’ release, insisting “in the name of the People and of

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203 Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 228. Ritvo names Chunee, the elephant who attained celebrity status in the nineteenth century, as “the first of a series of zoo dwellers” to be “sentimentalized and, symbolically at least, domesticated, converted into a kind of public pet.” However, there are several eighteenth-century candidates for this distinction as well.

Nature [that] liberty be restored to creatures that leave the hands of their Creator free and are unjustly detained by tyrants.” While debates about whether the royal menagerie was a sanctuary or a prison were not as politically charged in Britain as they were in France, ambivalence about this issue also characterizes literary portrayals of British menageries.

Menageries were also part of what we might call “the hospitality industry” today. The Tower of London featured a royal menagerie that had been there since 1235. This collection of wild beasts owed its genesis to the traditional exchange of presents among foreign leaders; “exotic animals had always been prized possessions and an appropriate gift for one ruler to bestow on another.” Given as tokens of respect or gratitude, the animals were already part of a gift economy before they became spectacles which visitors paid to see. This regal menagerie drew crowds of tourists from near and far during most of the eighteenth century; as David Henry remarks in his promotional guidebook, the Tower itself “has been, for many Ages past, the common retreat of Foreigners, as well as Natives” and the menagerie was one of its main attractions.

*An Historical Description of the Tower of London and its Curiosities* (London, 1754), iii; hereafter cited parenthetically by publication year and page number as I cite numerous editions of this text. *An Historical Description* was updated, altered, and reissued seventeen times between 1753 and 1800. The nature and extent of the changes varied: new animals join the menagerie and Henry’s text, animals die and are no longer mentioned, the sequence of the description changes, etc. David Henry (1709-1792) was

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207 Thomas, Man and the Natural World, 277.

208 David Henry, An Historical Description of the Tower of London and its Curiosities (London, 1754), iii; hereafter cited parenthetically by publication year and page number as I cite numerous editions of this text. *An Historical Description* was updated, altered, and reissued seventeen times between 1753 and 1800. The nature and extent of the changes varied: new animals join the menagerie and Henry’s text, animals die and are no longer mentioned, the sequence of the description changes, etc. David Henry (1709-1792) was
Upon entering the Tower, “[t]he first thing a Stranger usually [went] to see, whose Curiosity leads him to view the Rareties [sic] in the Tower, [was] the wild Beasts” located near the entrance (Henry 1753, 9). The wild creatures in the menagerie not only functioned as objects—exchanged first between diplomats and then between the monarch and local or foreign tourists who paid for the pleasure of seeing them. The Tower of London guidebooks analysed in this section depict the lions, the most beloved animals at the royal menagerie, as hosts who welcome visitors to their dens. The relationship between hospitality and domestication becomes even more complicated when animals simultaneously occupy the positions of host, guest, hostage, and gift.

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In *The London Spy*, Ned Ward begins his account of his trip to the Tower of London’s royal menagerie by describing it in lofty terms as “the Royal Palace, where the King of Beasts keeps his Court, and may every Day, at a proper distance, be seen at Dinner without danger”; yet this depiction is undercut as soon as they enter the yard, which “smelt as Frowzily as a Dove-House, or a Dog-Kennel.” 209 If spectators anticipated resplendent living quarters befitting a monarch, they were soon corrected by the sight of a dingy dwelling not significantly larger than the beasts themselves, a space contaminated with “Filth and Nastiness” (303). However, if Ward’s account vacillates

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(for humorous effect) between royal decadence and noxious odours, later descriptions of
the lions’ quarters in the menagerie downplay how dirty and cramped they must have
been and instead portray the enclosures as expansive, welcoming and even “homey”
spaces.

An anecdote about Nero the lion which was often reprinted in eighteenth-century
London guidebooks is telling. First appearing in Thomas Boreman’s *Curiosities in the
Tower of London* (1741), a guidebook designed for children, and later excerpted (and
attributed to an anonymous author) in David Henry’s *An Historical Description of the
Tower of London and its Curiosities* (1753), the story represents the “exceedingly well
educated” lion Nero as an exemplary host who welcomes all visitors desiring a glimpse
of his spacious abode.210 Boreman writes that

upon my expressing a desire of visiting [Nero’s] lodgings, at a word’s speaking
he marched down with great condescension from his upper into his lower
apartment, and gave me the opportunity of entering his den; where having
satisfied my curiosity in viewing his dining-room, kitchen, and bed-chamber, his
manner of living, particular ceremonies in eating and drinking, &c. at my
departure from thence he would fain have taken me by the hand, but our
acquaintance being but slender, I declined accepting so great a mark of his
friendship, till I had known him better. (Boreman, 58-60; Henry, 11-12)

In this story, Nero is represented as a courteous host, permitting his guest to tour his
residence, which seems like a human’s domestic space with its “dining-room, kitchen,
and bed-chamber.”

parenthetically using the author’s last name and page number since the titles of Boreman’s and Henry’s
texts are similar. The 1782 edition of Henry’s guidebook is the first that does not include the Nero
anecdote; it appears that the lion is dead by this point.
Up to this point, this chapter has primarily focused on depictions of pets as their masters’ guests, a privilege which can be withdrawn or exploited. The pet’s agency as guest is determined by the host’s willingness to enforce the rules of conduct; a spoiled guest can seem like a tyrant, demanding that the host cater to all his or her desires, whereas the deferential visitor made to acutely feel his or her obligation shores up the host’s authority. While the relationship between host and guest is less a stable hierarchy than an arrangement which is constantly negotiated, the host’s power is usually represented as more “natural” than the tyrannical guest’s authority (as in the case of Mrs. Addis and her pets). By representing the lion as host and the tourists as guests, these eighteenth-century guidebooks seem to ascribe greater authority to the wild beast than the human. However, the decision to cast the lion as generous host and master of his domain is motivated less by respect for the wild beast than calculating self-interest. There are several reasons why these texts might benefit from representing the lion as a host. Boreman, for instance, may have wanted to illustrate for his child readers the transformative power of good breeding—Nero, after all, “is exceedingly well educated.” Meanwhile, the portrayal of lion as host helps Henry reassure his readers that the lion is non-threatening, yet still worth seeing. The language of hospitality domesticates Nero, downplaying the animal’s ferocious nature. This anthropomorphic representation of Nero may have calmed the fears of tourists and given them a way to identify with a wild beast that otherwise may have seemed strange and dangerous. The socialized lion, capable of decorum and politeness, seems less threatening than the beast who dominates the jungle because of its capacity for violence. However, by representing the lion as host rather than guest, the guidebooks allow the creature to retain much of his characteristic majesty and
mastery; he may be domesticated, but he is not tamed. In doing so, the guidebooks refute claims made by Buffon and others that the menagerie’s inhumane conditions transformed wild beasts into degraded versions of their former selves.

Henry’s description of the enclosure itself also distracts readers from the debasing nature of confinement. By mentioning the “dining-room, kitchen, and bed-chamber”, he presents the den in a better light than it deserved, giving the impression that it is a spacious and comfortable dwelling; the lion’s quarters seem humane, because they seem human. The den’s resemblance to a prison cell is not mentioned for three more pages: “You look at [the creatures] thro’ large iron grates, like those before the windows of a prison; so that you may see them with the utmost safety, be they ever so savage” (Henry, 14). These details are placed at a distance from the earlier heart-warming account of Nero politely welcoming his guest into his domain. In the versions published in 1754, 1755, and 1757, Henry increases that distance to seven pages, and he completely removes the reminder of the “large iron grates” from the nine editions published between 1762 and 1787. Randy Malamud’s observation about zoos today might be fruitfully applied to Henry’s carefully structured account of the Tower menagerie’s lion dens: “The pretense of cagelessness is an attempt at self-delusion about what cages and zoos signify in our society, both in terms of people’s position as spectators and in terms of the general conditions of animals in our world.”[^211] Henry’s strategic displacement and eventual removal of description of “large iron grates” suggests his concern that that his readers

would feel a certain level of discomfort with the idea of confinement. By contrast, in Thomas Boreman’s *Curiosities* cages are literally more visible (the narrative description of each animal is accompanied of an illustration of the creature behind the bars of an enclosure not much larger than the creature itself). Moreover, Boreman directly addresses the beasts’ dangerous potential when earlier in the text he reassures the children: “The wild creatures that are there shewn, are all kept in strong dens, so that you need not be under any fear of danger from them;--Don’t venture too near, and you may view them very safely” (31). The pedagogical imperative of Boreman’s text makes it necessary for him to foreground what Henry’s more propagandist guidebook purposely hides.

In later editions of *An Historical Description* Henry preserves the unrealistic depiction of Nero’s splendid residence, while giving even greater emphasis to the king of beasts’ hospitality. The 1762 version adds a story about another lion, Dunco, whose relationship with his keeper, William, is also portrayed in these terms: after one visit to the animal’s den, we are told that William “shaking the lion by the paw took his leave; but Dunco was too well-bred to suffer his friend to go without some little ceremony, or marks of esteem; he first rubbed his great nose against the keeper’s knees, then held him by the coat, as if he would have said, Do stay a little longer, and when he found no entreaties could prevail on William to take t’other knap, he courteously waited on him to the door.”

212 Although it may be deemed impolite, not to mention unsanitary, for a host

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212 Henry, *An Historical Description*, 16. The Dunco anecdote appears in all editions between 1762 and 1782. In the 1782 edition Dunco is not named but the story remains otherwise unchanged. It is not included in the 1787 version.
to rub his nose on a guest’s coat, Dunco’s hospitality, like Nero’s, is otherwise impeccable. The lions’ talent at being courteous hosts suggests that they are comfortably at home in their respective lodgings; they are not prisoners desiring liberty and eager to escape, but rather content residents, even masters of the house, who want to let others in. Although Rosello notes that “homeless individuals can also be hosts,” “the traditional vision is that only the owner of the land has the power to grant hospitality” (54). Nero and Dunco’s confident hospitality gives the reader the sense that the menagerie belongs to them and they belong in the menagerie—that this living arrangement is a natural fit.

The captivity of Nero, specifically, may be represented as natural because it has always been the case; he was born in the Tower and his native roots partly explain his reputation for exemplary hospitality. In a 1681 funeral oration for three recently deceased Tower lions who had been “the Darlings, the delight of the People”, the author entreats the public not to let “these Lyons…die forgot, among the common crowd of Vulgar Lyons” because these particular creatures “had been so long in England that they might have claim’d Naturalization” (2). Although lions, of course, were not native to British forests but instead originally came from Africa, a long residency in the Tower of London transformed the once foreign beasts into citizens; and this was especially true for those whelps which had been born and bred in the menagerie.

Connecting the human foreigner and the animal, the word “naturalization” is worth dwelling on for a moment. As Daston and Vidal note in the introduction to their collection *The Moral Authority of Nature*, the term first “referred to extending to an alien the rights and social position of a native-born subject or citizen” and “by the early
eighteenth century, it was implied metaphorically to imported plants and animals successfully cultivated in new surroundings.”

Daston and Vidal’s perceptive questions about the paradoxes of the word “naturalization”—“[D]idn’t these strains flourish equally ‘naturally,’ or still more so, in their lands of origin? Moreover, why use the term ‘naturalize’ in conjunction with expressly local conditions, when nature stands for what holds everywhere and always?”—draw attention to the ways in which this ideological term privileges the new environment (here, Britain) over the homeland, suggesting the former’s inherent superiority over the latter.

Moreover, in the context of the Jew Bill of 1753, “naturalization” was associated with obedience to authority, as the rights of native-born subjects were offered to Jewish people living in England as a reward for “loyal service to the government” during the Jacobite rebellion. The lion’s naturalization similarly signals the beast’s willingness to conform to the rules of his new country, adopting civility over savagery.

Nero’s status as an English lion, then, grants him a particular and unique right to extend hospitality to the tourist who may be a stranger travelling from another country. He embodies the fantasy of the successfully assimilated or naturalized immigrant, who gains certain rights in exchange for allegiance. Moreover, the lion is not only invested


See Dana Rabin, “The Jew Bill of 1753: Masculinity, Virility, and the Nation,” Eighteenth-Century Studies 39.2 (2006). Even if Jewish individuals living in Britain were to receive some of the rights of native-born citizens, however, Rabin observes that “Both the advocates and the opponents of the Jew bill shared an underlying assumption: that Jews, whether born in Britain or abroad, were a cohesive group that did not have the attributes of the rest of British society and never could” (167). Similarly, the naturalizing of the lion does not necessarily challenge the traditional hierarchy between human and animal.
with privileges by the monarch but acts as his representative (the height of the new immigrant’s ambition). Since Tower lions were associated with English royalty (to the degree that the death of the king of beasts was feared as a terrible omen of the monarch’s demise) and given that the menagerie itself was the property of the crown, Nero and Dunco might be seen as extending—with a welcoming paw—the hospitality of the king himself, to foreign and local visitors alike who wished to pay their respects and an admission fee.

There were also commercial benefits to representing the Tower menagerie’s lions as hosts and the tourists as guests. Although tourists pay to see the lions, the beasts’ courteous display of hospitality was likely intended to make them feel less like entitled customers and more like privileged visitors who are being granted intimacy with, and special access to, the lions. As a promotional tactic, this representation of the lions operates in a similar fashion to Rosello’s description of “[t]he commercial logic that governs hotels and inns, restaurants and coffee shops [which] is a very specific form of hospitality: it may be said that that type of hospitality mimics the ‘real’ one, that it imitates the signs of generosity the better to justify an exchange of goods that continues to seduce customers precisely at the moment it makes them forget that they are paying for the attention they receive, for the comfort they are able to indulge in” (34). When the menagerie tourists are portrayed as the lions’ guests, they are placed in a position of obligation and no longer seem like equal participants in an economic transaction.

The visitors’ personal contact with the lions was also increased if they chose an alternative method of payment for entry to the menagerie. According to Henry, between
1754 and at least 1787 the cost of seeing the lions was six pence per person, but there was another option available to tourists eager for a discount on the admission fee which adds a further level of complexity to my reading of the hospitality between menagerie animals and their visitors.216 A tourist did not have to pay to be entertained by the wild beasts in the menagerie if he or she brought along a pet to feed to the lions: as Brooke writes in *The Fool of Quality* (1765-70), “It was customary for All, who were unable or unwilling to pay their Sixpence, to bring a Dog or Cat as an Oblation to the Beasts in lieu of Money to the Keeper.”217 This is a fascinating alternative to the usual monetary fee for several reasons. First, the tourist takes part in an exchange with the wild beast who welcomes him to tour his den, rather than the keeper: the human develops a more personal connection with the animal when the recipient of the offering changes. Second, the nature of the offering takes into account the needs and desires of the lion; food directly benefits him, while money cannot. The meanings of the word “oblation” help us further appreciate the significance of the gesture. Defined as “the action of offering or presenting a gift, especially as a token of respect or honour” (*OED*), “oblation” suggests that the tourist is being deferential to the lion by bringing food, even acknowledging the superiority of the king of beasts, and not simply engaging in an economic transaction.

However, the *OED* definition of “oblation” also notes that in early use the word meant “gratuity”, which could undercut the idea that it is an act of reverence. Margaret

216 The 1796 edition of Henry’s text notes that the cost of touring the Tower menagerie is now 9 pence (and 1 shilling if visitors wanted to see the elephants). In 1800, the cost is listed as 1 shilling for entrance to the menagerie.

Visser argues that tipping can signify more than “the free expression of gratitude”: it “can be mere automatic convention, or something close to a bribe, or a form of payment and as such a semi-contractual matter, or a sign of superiority.”\textsuperscript{218} Elaborating on the perception that a gratuity can be “demeaning”, Visser writes that “openly receiving a tip…is having one’s lower status displayed”. It is often servants who receive gratuities from individuals whose greater wealth allows them the luxury of being waited upon: “tipping is not egalitarian behaviour.”\textsuperscript{219} In \textit{Bringing Travel Home to England}, Susan Lamb mentions that “servants in country houses received gratuities to show visitors around.”\textsuperscript{220} The idea of a gratuity makes us reconsider Nero’s empowered position as host; he may still welcome guests on the king’s behalf, but he does so as tour-guide rather than master of his own house. Nero is less a host than a host-by-proxy. Like the servant who conducts the curious guest on a tour of the master’s estate while he is abroad, the lion welcomes the tourist to a menagerie which is the monarch’s property. Rosello discusses the mediating position of the servant in the hospitable encounter between master and guest: “[E]xpected to act as if they were host-owners whose responsibility is to attend the guests’ needs, to take care of them, humbly,” servants relieve the pressure on their master to “lower himself in the service of his guests” (123). By “delegating” the undesirable (because debasing) aspects of hospitality, “the host remains in charge of the welcoming gesture, but he is no longer responsible for the work


\textsuperscript{219} Visser, \textit{The Gift of Thanks}, 202.

\textsuperscript{220} Susan Lamb, \textit{Bringing Travel Home to England: Tourism, Gender, and Imaginative Literature in the Eighteenth Century} (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2009), 119.
created by his desire to pamper his or her guest. He may decide on how dedicated he will be, but his hospitality will be relayed by a servant, who will mediate between the guest and the master’s desire” (123-24). This is the best of both worlds for the host, for he or she can take all the credit without taking a risk. Interpreted in this way, Nero the lion extends hospitality which is not his to offer. His mastery is only a projection of the monarch’s. Ultimately, if he is the king of beasts, he is also the king’s beast.

This peculiar discount ultimately generated even more revenue from tourists—and led to a further blurring of the boundaries between host and guest, and between wild and domesticated animal—when one spaniel, destined to be the Tower lion’s dinner, was thrown into the ferocious beast’s lair, and survived. Watching the lions kill and eat the prey bestowed upon them had long been a part of the entertainment which tourists paid for, but in this case, instead of tearing the dog to pieces, the lion responded with mercy and not only spared the spaniel’s life but admitted the dog as his companion. This anecdote about an unlikely interspecies friendship was in wide circulation in the mid-eighteenth century and there are several different versions of it,221 what interests me is the pervasive language of hospitality which characterises each account. Henry, in An Historical Description (1753), devotes only a short paragraph to the story, noting that “a spaniel dog being once thrown into a former lion’s den in the Tower, instead of hurting it, the lion cherished it, and contracted such a fondness for it…[and] fed it at his table till it died” (14). Brooke, in The Fool of Quality, spends more time recounting this tale. He clarifies the circumstances of the dog sacrifice: the man who delivers the spaniel to its

221 See, for example, Boreman’s Curiosities (1741), 89-90, and The Morning Post (1777).
presumed demise for a discount is not the pet’s owner but an enterprising fellow who sees the exchange value of a stray. The dog, upon entering the cage, is submissive, “holding up its Paws, in supplicating Attitudes” (249). The lion, in turn, “seemed desirous of courting a further Acquaintance” (249). When the keeper, seeing that a meal of spaniel does not suit the lion’s tastes, offered the lion some of “his own Family Dinner”, the lion “refused to eat, keeping his Eye on the Dog, and invit[ed] him as it were to be his Taster” (250). Once the dog samples the food, the lion, too, “began to partake, and they finished the Meal very lovingly together” (250). Again we see a bonding over a shared meal, the transformation of the dog from potential food to the “invite[ed]” dinner companion, from prey to “beloved…friend” with whom the lion would share not only his cage for the rest of their lives, but also his grave (253).

While some people were sceptical that a lion would spare any animal’s life out of mercy or kindness, the story was so popular that it was “delivered down by Tradition from Father to Son” and continued to have a presence in Tower of London guidebooks for many years (253). Its appeal was sentimental but also religious; like the relationship Cowper nurtured between his hare and Marquis the spaniel, this tale of interspecies companionship must have been an encouraging sign to those who believed that the day was coming when predators and prey would live together in harmony in a new Eden. Keith Thomas notes that “At fairs it was common to display booths foreshadowing this golden age to come,” the day when “wild animals would…lose their ferocity and live once more, as in Eden, on peaceable terms with man”. “Thus,” Thomas reports, “in 1654 a lamb and a lion living on friendly terms with each other were put on public show in London; and in 1831 on one of the London bridges a showman exhibited animals in a
state of reconciliation: cats, rats, and mice in one cage, hawks and small birds in another.” 222 The story of the lion and spaniel, which was used to promote tourism to the royal menagerie, fits within this tradition. Part of what makes the story so appealing, to eighteenth-century readers and to us, is its willingness to imagine in the levelling of hierarchies that have traditionally separated predator and prey, the king of beasts and a servile dog, human and animal. This is also what makes the idea of framing domestication in terms of education, contract, or hospitality so progressive and so threatening at once. The writers of the texts I have analysed in this thesis realized that domestication destabilizes categories, though they disagreed about whether this was something to be celebrated or lamented.

222 Thomas, Man and the Natural World, 287-88.
Coda

Over two centuries after Nero the lion welcomed guests to his deceptively luxurious den in Boreman’s and Henry’s guidebooks, one continues to encounter animals playing host to tourists. “Canine concierges” have recently become a trendy amenity offered by upscale hotels, such as the Vancouver Fairmont, who believe that having a “dog-in-residence” is a way to “truly enhance the guest experience and make people feel at home”; their current K-9 Ambassadors are Beau and Mavis, Yellow Labrador Golden Retrievers who were “BC Guide Dog trainees who found their first calling in the hospitality industry.” “Just like the rest of the Fairmont staff”—which includes Beau and Mavis’s “mom” and “dad” (owners)—“the dogs have a work schedule” and their tasks include extending a welcoming paw and going on strolls with guests. According to a promotional online video, purportedly narrated by the dogs themselves, they also moonlight as tour-guides: “A personal tour of all the near and best fire hydrants are my forte,” Beau boasts. The dogs admit that they have a “pretty enjoyable job,” though “we work hard here, meeting and greeting all of the guests who come through our door.”

Sister hotels have been following suit, growing the “furry Fairmont flock”. For instance, the Fairmont San Antonio’s canine concierge, Luke, has also been a “smart hire” who “has never met a guest he didn’t like; and every guest has liked him.” The hotel website

223 Many thanks to the Fairmont Vancouver for responding so promptly to my emails and for providing such helpful information about their canine ambassadors. See also http://www.fairmont.com/hvc/mavisandbeau/, and their video (http://www.youtube.com/fairmonthotels#p/u/14/ePhjmWPdcfQ). For information about Luke at the Fairmont San Antonio see http://www.thefairmonthotel-sanantonio.com/fairmount-hotel-dog.php.
notes that “For his efforts that go above and beyond the call of duty, the pooch gets
generous tips—donations, which the hotel matches and sends to…a rescue group.”

These hotels clearly believe not only that animals can be guests (as their inclusive
pet-friendly policies suggest) but that dogs especially can be welcoming hosts who can
enrich guests’ experiences in a way that humans cannot. A veritable mixed breed, canine
concierges are able to cater to the guests’ needs by serving as companions while still
functioning as “working dogs”, whose labour is legitimated by things like “schedules”
and “tips”. In doing so, they bridge the gap between what the eighteenth century
considered to be “useful” and “useless” animals. The example of the Fairmont’s canine
concierges shows that the languages of pet-keeping, contract, and hospitality continue to
be intertwined, and that we are still in the process of defining the terms of our
complicated relationships with the many species with whom we share our living spaces
and our lives.

All of the representations of domestication explored in this chapter still have
relevance today. Historians and philosophers concerned with animal ethics continue to
debate the feasibility of the idea of contractual domestication. Some, like Stephen
Budiansky, think that animals collaborated in their own domestication, voluntarily
choosing to affiliate with humans, while others, like Clare Palmer, believe “the idea that
we have a contract with domesticated animals is fundamentally flawed.”224 Questions
about the extent and implications of animals that were raised by the eighteenth-century

texts I discussed in chapter one have not yet been resolved either, and writers and scientists alike remain fascinated by them.

Elizabeth Hess’s *Nim Chimpsky: The Chimp Who Would Be Human* (2008) and the documentary it recently inspired, James Marsh’s *Project Nim* (2011), for instance, examine the remarkable feats (and limitations) of interspecies education, as well as the close relationships and similarities between children and animals.²²⁵ The book and film tell the story of Nim, a chimpanzee who was placed in a human family, raised as if he were a child, and taught sign language during the 1970s as part of an experiment led by psychology professor Herbert Terrace. Throughout the process there was little consensus about pedagogical strategies. His “mother” Stephanie Lafarge was criticised for not disciplining Nim, for permitting the primate “to climb the walls all day”, while the chimp’s later teachers disapproved of “the dungeon of a classroom” which Terrace resolved was the only valid venue for Nim’s instruction (*Project Nim*). Most of his teachers had no previous experience with either chimpanzees or sign language. Despite disagreements about how to instruct him, Nim learned how to communicate, do chores, dress himself, and perform other everyday tasks. He became a teacher as well as a student when *Sesame Street* decided to make footage of Nim a part of their educational programming: “A day in the life of Nim would be edited down to provide a beguiling role model for toddlers just learning how to do those simple housekeeping tasks that Nim had mastered” (Hess, 155). After five years of instruction, though Nim’s vocabulary had

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grown to an astounding 150 words, Terrace declared the experiment a failure. Claiming that anyone “can learn a list of words by rote” (*Project Nim*), he was echoing the argument made by those sceptical of the intelligence of eighteenth-century learned animals.

Following the termination of the experiment and several violent attacks of his handlers, Nim was returned to his birthplace, The Institute for Primate Studies, where he was forced to “grow up and not be a single spoiled child anymore” (*Project Nim*). Nim entered adulthood here and was even given a job washing dishes, yet the chimpanzee’s stay was short and he was soon relocated to LEMPSIP, a primate medical research facility. In some ways it was his close association with children that saved Nim from being used for medical research, though he ended up at an equine sanctuary that was also unsuitable for chimps. Armed with fan mail from children “who had watched the chimp growing up on television,” the lawyer acting on his behalf argued that allowing Nim to be used for medical research would be “like selling Bambi for dog food. How would that play on Sesame Street?” (Hess, 269). Although Terrace ultimately dismissed Nim’s education as meaningless, it ruined his chances of living as a normal chimpanzee, and saved him from dying as one. An exceptional animal, Nim had much in common with eighteenth-century sapient animals whose learning set them apart from humans and members of their own species. As Nim’s story and the stories of eighteenth-century real and fictional animals demonstrate, domestication is about bringing the animal into the home, into a human community, but it is about exclusion as much as inclusion. It is about sacrifice and gain (not always in equal amounts), about crossing and blurring some boundaries and policing others. Attending to literary representations of relationships
between humans and domesticated animals, then and now, gives us a fuller sense of how we handle the opportunities and challenges of living in physical and biological proximity with the other.
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