BEASTLY POSSESSIONS

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Introduction

It is early in the morning on a crisp December day in Christchurch, Hampshire, at the turn of the twentieth century. The taxidermist eagerly approaches the bird trap and is overcome by the beauty of the scene: next to the trap and ignoring it sits a robin redbreast, its bold colours bright against the snow. He returns to his workshop inspired (figure 0.1).

In London, a census enumerator reviewing returned papers laughs over the impudence of one respondent. A cat has been listed as a member of a household: "Jim," of the male sex, aged one, is described as a "lodger," and his occupation as "mouse-catcher, worker on his own account."[1]

In her cage the canary sings and heralds the day to come; the artisan will soon rise and tend to his pet rabbits before carrying on with the day. Meanwhile, across town, a Scotch terrier jumps into a chair, curls up, and goes to sleep. The chair is upholstered with the skin of a baby giraffe, and the long neck and head form the back and headrest (figure 5.7).[2]

In the London Zoological Gardens, the keepers are already at work loading duplicate animals onto a horse-drawn van bound for the docks to be shipped on to zoological collections in Calcutta.[3] One of the keepers considers the day ahead. He wonders if the old lady will visit the Gardens. She likes to poke the lion with her parasol and watch the crowd.

For Marion in Market Deeping, Lincolnshire, times are hard; she is in need of an income, and cannot sew fast enough. Sensing Marion's worries, Flo, the retriever, wags her tail and licks Marion's hand. Marion hesitates and then pens the following classified: "Will anyone give me

0.1. Edward Hart case, NH.83.3/91. © Horniman Museum and Gardens

a sewing machine for my beautiful, faithful, fascinating young retrieving Flo?"[4]

And the suffragette peruses her morning mail. She has received a postcard with a picture of an angry cat; the image is offensive and distinctly anti-suffragist, but the sender has a sense of humour and good wishes for the feminist cause. Written on the back is a message: "Wishing you a merry Xmas time and most Happy New Year + may it bring you what you want [the vote], + what I want too."[5]

In each of these stories, the biographies of animals and people have collided and intertwined at the very heart of British consumer culture.

In the pages that follow we travel with animals through a variety of households, and accompany middle-class observers into working-class dwellings. As Victorian Britons go about their daily routines, we watch them fuss over pets and express concern about the arrangement of taxidermy. Peering over shoulders, we read newspaper articles, postcards, and advertisements. We escort animals on railway journeys and accompany a humbug into the London Zoological Gardens. *Beastly Possessions: Animals in Victorian Consumer Culture* examines the ways Britons used animals as animate possessions and mass commodities between 1820 and 1914, a time of social upheaval and imperial expansion. It argues that pet keeping, zoo visiting, and taxidermic decoration became mass phenomena in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, during which Britons explored the human/animal boundary, tested socially acceptable behaviours, and participated in consumer culture. In each chapter, we experience the joys and anxieties of Victorian relations to animals – and not just living animals, but also representations of animals (in pictures, novels, sculptures, toys, advertisements, ornaments, postcards, guidebooks) and preserved animals (taxidermy). We witness how animals shaped and disrupted daily life and could bring into sharp relief the contested nature of consumer processes as well as social values and identities. This is a history of Victorian social life told through an examination of human-animal relations.

Because I am charting a constellation of attitudes and practices that reached their apogee in the nineteenth century, I refer to the people who populate this book as Victorians, even when describing occurrences before the reign of Victoria (1837–1901) and after the turn of the twentieth century. This book excludes discussion of livestock and labouring animals, except to note that working animals lived and roamed alongside people in Victorian cities, where horses, dogs, pigs, poultry, and cattle served as sources of food, transport, and labour. Over half of the British population lived in cities by 1851, but urbanization did not bring a separation from the animals that were constituent parts of agricultural life. Animals were so ubiquitous that Victorians sought to accommodate some of their needs, providing, for example, drinking fountains along the routes of drovers and in certain parks in London.[6] At the same time, and of great significance to this book, animals were being turned into commodities and decorative objects in new ways. They were incorporated into urban life and assigned purposes that were increasingly social, as pets, zoo-dwelling creatures,

representations, taxidermic ornaments, and museum exhibitions. The social function of these creatures was not entirely separate from economic and productive priorities. Victorians emphasized the commercial and utilitarian nature of their relationships to these animals, which continued to provide opportunities for profit, acclaim, morality, and erudition. At the same time, they were keenly aware of the diverse social lives of the animals in their midst.

The Social Lives of Animals

As animals were subject to different managements, manipulations, and interpretations, they took on different social roles, and this irrevocably changed the lives of both animals and humans.[7] An animal fulfils multiple functions in human society, and sometimes takes on the same role more than once. For example, a creature could be captured and sold as a commodity and transformed into a pet. As a pet, the animal could serve as a companion as well as a living parlour decoration and evidence of household social and moral status; it could be eventually donated to the Zoo as well as preserved as taxidermy. In the Zoo, the animal could become a public pet, moral exemplar, object of science, source of erudition, object of curiosity, symbol of empire, and, later, consumer mascot. Surplus zoo creatures could be sold to individuals and later kept as pets. At any point, an animal could be illustrated or painted by an artist and transformed into a representation, sometimes with political repercussions. As this trajectory suggests, the same animal could re-enter commodity chains and be exchanged from hand to hand at various stages of its life course, whenever sold, traded, bred, donated, or preserved as taxidermy. In these moments, the animal slowly acquired meaning, took on new social significance, and had different impacts on human society.[8]

Then as now, animals thwarted the intentions of the humans with whom they came into contact. Victorians tried to curb beastly behaviours and reform animality, sometimes to no avail. The disciplining of animals in order to make them trustful, compliant, and orderly became especially important because animals were understood to signal the characteristics of the people who owned and kept company with them. In and around the home, for example, pets were understood as harbingers of household harmony – indicating social status. It even became important to "civilize" the animals in the care of the London Zoological

Gardens, since reforming previously "wild" animals signalled the power of the Zoo and was believed to have beneficial effects on certain Zoo visitors. Representations of animals in pictures, paintings, and novels also made evident the extent to which animal behaviours were understood as exemplars for human conduct. In this book, I show how Victorians used animals to signal and enforce appropriate and polite behaviours in humans.

When Victorians interacted with living animals, representations of animals, and parts of animals (taxidermy), their lives changed profoundly and subtly. To be a pet keeper in nineteenth-century Britain, for example, necessitated certain responsibilities, affinities, and types of sociality. Pet keeping often, though not always, involved bringing animals inside homes, which were places already imbued with symbolic and moral meaning. Pets were special possessions, contributing to the atmosphere of the home and signalling to outsiders the domestic harmony of its inhabitants. Similarly, the London Zoological Gardens facilitated particular encounters with animals that had ramifications for norms of behaviour. Encountering representations of animals in visual, literary, and material culture informed the Victorian world view and dictated, often unconsciously, codes of conduct. Very often the limits of polite behaviours were tested through interactions with living and representational animals. Representations were not unconnected to real animals, since they drew attention to characteristics of and beliefs about animals that Victorians considered fascinating and problematic. Human-animal encounters became forums for exploring and expressing Victorian social hierarchies and intersections of class, gender, and race, as well as human and animal.

Animals were often perceived as models for human propriety and were prominently featured in discussions of gender roles and relations between the sexes. Since the 1860s, Victorian society was galvanized by campaigns mounted by middle-class women for access to higher education, the professions, the franchise, and the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts. (The Contagious Diseases Acts were intended to regulate prostitution and reduce the incidence of venereal disease in garrison towns. They gave police the authority to arrest any woman suspected of being a prostitute and subject her to a medical examination. The feminist campaign against the CDA made prostitution a public issue.)[9] These demands inspired debates about ideologies that stipulated separate roles for men and women in all areas of Victorian

life, including in leisure activities.[10] In this context, representations of animals became implicated in high-stakes gender politics. As I show, representations of cats and dogs, in particular, were used to regulate women's participation in public life, and became important in women's attempt to access the franchise.

Victorian relationships to animals were fraught with tension and offered a means of exploring ideas about human kinship with animals, at a time when this was a pressing issue and a subject of widespread interest, made increasingly prescient by Darwinian science. The publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859), *Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871), and *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) bolstered long-standing debates about the nature of human-animal kinship by suggesting evolutionary linkages between people and animals. Many of the incidents and representations that I discuss demonstrate the pervasive obsession with the natural order that informed the context in which Darwin and others worked. As Kenneth Ames puts it, this context was "alive with questions and assertions about hierarchy, dominance, progress, and relationship of humankind to the rest of the world, past and present."[11] While I share with some scholars the concern that notions of a "Darwinian Revolution" have been overemphasized, references to Darwin's discoveries abound in Victorian popular culture after 1859.[12] Darwin provided Victorians with a narrative about human evolution that was both liberating and unsettling. On the one hand, Darwinism justified the kinds of affinities and affections Victorians could feel towards animals, since animals were now acknowledged to be linked to humans by ancestry; and on the other, it intensified anxieties about the possibility of the animal lurking in the human. In this context, the imperative to curb animal-like behaviours became pressing, and was something of a two-way street affecting interactions both among people and between people and animals. In the chapters that follow, I discuss efforts to reform beastliness and change animal behaviours so that they were more in line with human codes of civility. In some cases, efforts to discipline animals extended beyond death and were completed only when the animal was resurrected as taxidermy in a pose that demonstrated its compliance to human wishes. While interacting with animals, Victorians considered what it meant to be human, alive and wilful, middle-class, working-class, male, female, and white in a stratified and imperial society.

By the twentieth century Britain had become the largest European empire, having added, over the course of the nineteenth century, four

hundred million people and ten million square miles to its imperial holdings.[13] Exchanges and representations of animals became ways to negotiate imperial relationships between colonies and metropole. Sometimes imperial subjects catered to the British proclivity for pet keeping in an attempt to express gratitude or seek favour. For example, in 1869 Sir Cowasjee Jehangir of Bombay funded the building of an elaborate drinking fountain for dogs in Regent's Park.[14] Colonial administrators and indigenous rulers often gifted animals to prominent zoological institutions, and animal dealers sold exotic animals to pet owners. These gifts and commodities were understood to be representatives of territories under British control, and their incorporation into metropolitan life suggests the acceptance of a certain form of intimate colonial relation, via the animal as proxy. Animals, like other goods, were transported across vast distances and through domestic and imperial commodity chains to inhabit urban and domestic spaces, as well as menageries and zoos.

As living beings, animals were animate possessions and unique commodities. Unlike other consumer goods, they were not produced by human craftsmanship, but they were subject to various manipulations. Like other goods, animals could take on and express social and cultural meaning through acquisition, use, and other consumer processes. They became commodities and possessions at a particularly significant moment in the development of consumer society.

Mass Commodities and Animate Possessions

Most of the interactions with animals that I discuss in this book involved consumer processes. Consumerism in the nineteenth century entailed more than shopping for goods or moments of purchase and became a means to solidify or transform identities and relationships.[15] As much a social as an economic process, consumerism involved the movement of goods through networks of retail, exchange, acquisition, use, and divestment.[16] Though the origins of consumer society in Great Britain remain a subject of debate, many historians agree that it began to arise in the eighteenth century.[17] By the late nineteenth century, a marked increase in the goods, services, and leisure opportunities available for consumption, as well as new methods of retailing and an expanding empire, created a thriving consumer society.[18]

According to John Benson, a consumer society is one "in which choice and credit are readily available, in which social value is defined in terms of purchasing power and material possessions and in which

there is a desire above all for that which is new, modern, exciting and fashionable."[19] In an important article, Peter Stearns discusses the difficulty of locating the moment in which these conditions are met and a majority of the population can partake in consumer processes. According to Stearns, there can only be a consumer society when a large portion of the population has enough disposable income "at least from time to time to purchase beyond immediate necessities" and must stake "a real portion of their personal identity and quest for meaning – even their emotional satisfaction on the search for and acquisition of goods." By the late nineteenth century, he suggests, the conditions were in place for a thriving consumer culture: there was an increase in the goods, services, and leisure opportunities available for consumption; new methods of retailing; and an expanding market for these services.[20] Moreover, as Paul Johnson shows, even very poor families between 1870 and 1914 participated in these new consumption patterns, "not just to meet their basic needs for food, clothing and shelter, but also to define their social position" within their own communities.[21] Diets comprising meat and tea, Sunday dress, and tablecloths, ornaments, and cheap lithographs signified self-sufficiency and respectability to neighbours.[22] To this list, I would add the ownership of pets and participation in certain leisure activities, including the animal fancies as well as visits to zoos and museums. (The animal fancies were activities that involved breeding animals for points of beauty.) Zoos and museums were part of a thriving entertainment market in Victorian cities that included other forms of commercial leisure, such as exhibitions of living foreign peoples, tea gardens, galleries, music halls, and sporting venues.[23]

Through their engagements with animals, Victorians participated in consumer society. Animals were among the goods that could be acquired, purchased, and exchanged as mass commodities in the second half of the nineteenth century alongside other possessions. The diverse possessions that cluttered the lives of middle-class Victorians have been a subject of interest ever since Asa Briggs published his groundbreaking book *Victorian Things*,[24] but none have located Victorian relations with animals in the broader context of Victorian consumer and material culture more generally, as this study intends to do.[25] Other scholars have shown how Victorians of all social classes placed great value in their possessions as indicators of status and sources of financial security, especially in times of need when they could be pawned or sold as second-hand goods.[26] Pets and pet-keeping accoutrements may well have been among the articles that were exchanged. The historian

Melanie Tubbett, for example, notes that in 1932 one working-class woman pawned her pet canary before she went to work and redeemed it each evening upon her return.[27] We can speculate that such occurrences also took place in the nineteenth century.

Victorians used new consumer amenities to complete transactions involving animals, including railway systems, which revolutionized possibilities of domestic transport, travel, and retail within Britain, allowing for everyone and everything to be put in motion.[28] Sometimes the sight of animals on the railway caused quite a stir, especially in the early days of this transport. In 1832 the *Liverpool Times* published a report of people flocking to witness circus animals passing through the city under the headline "PASSENGERS EXTRAORDINARY BY THE RAIL-ROAD."[29] The shipment of animals by rail soon became commonplace.

Victorian consumer culture provided multiple opportunities to purchase, show, and care for animals, many of which are discussed in the pages that follow. The ownership of animals often entailed the purchase of new objects and services to care for pets, and exhibitions of prized animals were forums which made available the latest products. Exhibitions took place across the country, mostly in humble country pubs, but more illustrious venues, such as the Crystal Palace, which had been the site of the Great Exhibition of the Art and Industry of All Nations (1851), also hosted these events. The Great Exhibition has been examined as a consumer venue that permitted Victorians to contemplate displayed goods as things they might like to own.[30] It was therefore fitting that in the Crystal Palace, after it had been moved to Sydenham in 1854 and turned into a popular exhibition venue, and at other animal exhibitions, vendors made available the latest cages, transport baskets, medicines, and collars that might adorn animals and assist in their management. Zoological gardens, menageries, and museums also offered Victorians the leisure to learn about animals, often at a low cost. These institutions were part of a network of rational recreations that offered educational amusements – that is, entertainments that were morally uplifting and instructive as well as entertaining. Pictorial advertisements, which were produced more cheaply in the late nineteenth century, increasingly figured animals, sometimes to sell goods that had nothing to do with animal care.[31] Though in the early twentieth century department stores increasingly offered for sale collars and equipment for making taxidermy, the sale of pets remained predominantly an open-air and marketplace activity. In London, through the early twentieth century, dogs could be purchased on the streets in

the East End (figure 2.5).[32] The trade in animals via classified advertisements was also thriving by the late 1870s, when a number of cheap newspapers circulated throughout the country.[33] In these ways, and many others that I will discuss, animals were fully implicated in burgeoning Victorian consumer culture and entered social history.

Animals in History

This book contributes to a growing literature on the subject of how animals play a role in the histories of human societies and affect human social structures. Over the past three decades, historians have shown how human relationships to and understandings of animals are historically and culturally contingent.[34] The basic premise of this scholarship is that human relations with and attitudes towards animals change over time and shed light on the components and complexities of human culture. As Erica Fudge puts it, this scholarship aims to "trace the many ways in which humans construct *and are constructed by* animals in the past," and *Beastly Possessions* contributes to this discussion.[35]

The books that have inspired investigations of the place of animals in human histories are Keith Thomas's *Man and the Natural World: A History of the Modern Sensibility* and Harriet Ritvo's *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age*. Thomas argues that it "is impossible to disentangle what the people of the past thought about plants and animals from what they thought about themselves" and examines the evolution of attitudes towards plants and animals from the sixteenth through to the nineteenth century.[36] Focusing on nineteenth-century Britain, Ritvo argues that human-animal interactions "illuminate the history not only of the relations between people and other species, but also of relations among other human groups," and her work has been integral to historians exploring this field.[37] Ritvo's examination of specific institutions and moments of crisis, such as networks of high stockbreeders, dog shows, animal fights, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, zoological gardens, anti-vivisection societies, and rabies outbreaks, has set the agenda for subsequent studies of human-animal relations in the nineteenth century, which have focused on similar topics.

Most studies of human relations to animals in Victorian and Edwardian Britain have investigated changing attitudes towards animal welfare, sometimes focusing on a single humanitarian institution or campaign. Taken together, these books have shown how attitudes

concerned about the welfare of the animals they encountered on a daily basis. I have no evidence that kindness was their primary concern or the basis of their sentiments towards animals. Most of these individuals were not animal welfare activists, vegetarians, anti-vivisectionists, or other humanitarians of any demonstrable stripe; their interactions with animals were often mediated by Victorian consumer culture and the possibilities for acclaim, companionship, moral enhancement, income, and erudition that it offered. Some did not even keep animal companions, but images of animals affected the ways in which they understood their world; others went to the London Zoological Gardens, not to look at animals, but to socialize and flirt. For pet owners, keeping pets provided opportunities for intimate interactions with animals as part of daily routines, even as these same pets were treated as living commodities and later dead ornaments that could signal status and impart moral lessons. Interactions with animals and representations of animals affected the ways Victorians of all classes understood their place in the world.

In the period under discussion, the middle class was an amorphous group, and, when defined by income, evinced considerable disparity, ranging between £150 and £1000 per family per annum.[45] This means that many individuals who aspired to middle-class status – associated with education, refinement, high standards of morality, freedom from manual labour, and the employment of at least one domestic servant – were only nominally middle class, and their status was precarious. Ownership of certain animals and ornaments figuring animals became one way to assert membership in the middling ranks.

Yet the rising middle classes remained a relatively small segment of the population compared with those who were considered working class, whose annual income per family could fall well below the £150 mark. Because small animals, such as birds, mice, and rats, could be easily captured and elevated to the status of pets, people of minimal economic resources became pet keepers, acquiring animals for companionship, household décor, entertainment, and supplemental income. Canaries and other animals were kept in even in the poorest homes – and the meaning of these animals as commodities was similar in lower-class and middle-class culture. Pets were objects of conspicuous consumption for working people and a means of proclaiming higher status among neighbours within working-class communities. In the second half of the nineteenth century, these same people visited zoos and museums that offered reduced entrance fees on specific days of the

week. This scheduling prevented mingling between classes, but provided labourers with opportunities to enjoy some of the same entertainments and opportunities for education as their social superiors. Where possible, this book shows working-class engagement with animals as pets and zoo captives.

The most recent scholarship on the history of human-animal relations has attended to the material traces of animals in order to recover animals as historical actors in their own right. This has involved the difficult project of trying to access the experience(s) of being animal in certain historical moments, places, and conditions.[46] Another approach explores the way animals and representations of animal have affected people – and this book proceeds in a similar manner.[47] For Victorians, the materiality of living animals was a matter of common sense and sometimes problematic. Their relationships to pets and zoo animals were tangible, smelly, messy, disconcerting, comforting, and sometimes tasty; representations could be equally troubling. Where possible, I have tried to recover these experiences and describe the lives of animals.

The Structure of This Book

To discuss interactions with animals and the lives of animals in the Victorian era, I examine a variety of sources. In addition to the newspaper reports, social investigations, manuals, guidebooks, printed ephemera, lithographic images, and photographs that are increasingly the cultural historian's stock in trade, I draw on novels, and museum collections of advertisements, postcards, toys, art, ornaments, and taxidermy. These sources indicate the pervasiveness of Victorian interest in and engagement with animals – and draw our attention to the material and linguistic qualities of these relationships. Katherine Grier, in particular, has encouraged scholars of history and material culture to consider animals and various representations of them in pictures, postcards, and ornaments as important sources which enrich understandings of Victorian culture in general.[48] Grier's work on American pet keeping in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries also provides a model for examining the various products and amenities that were designed for and used by animals in the past.[49] Following her example, I deliberately use a variety of visual and material sources to tell the history that follows. These sources make visible and tangible past perspectives and also challenge us to reconsider longstanding

periodization.[50] Some of the cultural phenomena discussed in the pages that follow endure for a long time and give rise to both our relationships with animals and certain cultural constructs involving animals – not in a teleological way, but in a way that is complex, halting, and multifaceted.

In the tradition of material culture analyses, a particular artefact inspired this book. Some years ago I received a postcard showing "The Kittens' Wedding," a diorama of taxidermy produced circa 1890 by the amateur taxidermist Walter Potter (1835–1918).[51] In the tableau eighteen kittens are dressed and standing upright to enact a wedding (figure 0.2). The scene piqued my interest and I wanted to know what Potter's creation signified to his contemporaries. Since I received the postcard, a number of scholars and writers have been similarly intrigued by "The Kittens' Wedding" and have offered rich interpretations, situating it in the context of Victorian animal stories and other taxidermy.[52] Potter's work has also become the subject of widespread interest.[53] My own route to understanding this artefact took me to the rituals of Victorian pet keeping, gendered depictions of cats and dogs, and the company of female animal fanciers, into the Zoo, through several museums, and into Victorian consumer culture. I return to "The Kittens' Wedding" in the last chapter of the book.

The chapters that follow move from intimate to distant and abstract relationships with animals as pets, illustrations, zoo creatures, advertisements, and museum exhibitions. This ordering can also be viewed sequentially as a narrative about the lives of certain animals after they enter human society through to their after-death embodiment as taxidermy. Each chapter stands on its own or can be read as part of the broader whole.

I start with the question "What was a pet?" In search of an answer, the first chapter describes the practices of keeping pets and foregrounds the discussion of consumerism that underpins the subsequent chapters. Here we see that pet keeping involved all sorts of emotional and economic transactions. Animals became pets when they were so designated, and any animal could be captured in the local environs and made into a pet. Pet keeping was a multifaceted endeavour; there were so many ways of being a pet and pet keeper that Victorians were divided on these matters, and these divisions were often manifested across class lines. The first part of the chapter discusses the range of animals that were kept as pets, and the different meanings ascribed to these animals by working-class pet keepers and middle-class commentators. Turning

0.2. "The Kittens' Wedding," taxidermy by Walter Potter, circa 1890.
● Marc Hill/APEX

to consumer culture, I show how pet keeping involved full participation in the expanding marketplace, paving the way for treatments of animals discussed in the following chapters as acquisitions, collectibles, and advertisements, as well as sources of entertainment, profit, acclaim, utility, moral erudition, and contemplation. As animals were incorporated into daily routines, pet keeping became a process of reforming animals into compliant pets, and this required the use of new consumer amenities. Finally, I turn to the animal fancies and the show circuit as the most commercial of all pet keeping activities that fully involved Victorians in the marketplace of things, but could have dire consequences for animals.

The second chapter discusses cats and dogs as "Sexy Beasts" and shows how the activities of pet keeping, discussed in the first chapter, had a bearing on Victorian and Edwardian society writ large by influencing popular notions of middle-class masculinity and femininity.

In theatrical performances, sculptures, paintings, illustrated supplements, sentimental narratives, and pet-keeping manuals, dogs were ascribed with masculine heroism and sincerity, while cats were considered emblems of female sexuality and perfidy. The first part of the chapter explores the figure of the fallen feline, the cat described as a model of feminine virtue, likened to middle-class women and easily led into vice. Turning to "man's best friend," the second part discusses the dog as a masculine hero, epitomizing the chivalrous, guileless, and loyal aspects of middle-class manhood. Gender trouble was provoked when women asserted themselves as owners and breeders of dogs. Female fanciers seemed unnatural in the order of things – unwomanly creatures with emasculated dogs. Women's participation in the dog fancies was directly correlated to women's struggle for the franchise and considered destructive to the Edwardian gender order. Just before the First World War, militant suffragettes attempted to turn this iconography on its head by dissociating women from cats. Their activities forced a reconsideration of ideologies that posited men as masters of nature and defined men and women as being as different as cats and dogs.

Turning to the London Zoological Gardens in the third chapter, we see how the Zoo was a site for comparing humans and animals in ways that involved the civilizing of animals and the displaying of people. Like the cat and dog fancies, the Zoo became a site for policing socially aberrant behaviour, especially flirtation between men and women. Those who entered the London Zoo could directly interact with the living artefacts on display. The architectural style of the enclosures resembled human dwellings and made the animals appear tame. In this seemingly benign setting, Victorians seized opportunities to poke fierce creatures, feed buns to bears, give snuff to monkeys, and administer gin to badgers. As attempts were made to reform the eating habits of certain parrots, pythons, and apes, these feeding rituals became highly symbolic and connected to the imperial rhetoric of the civilizing mission. At the same time, Victorians and Edwardians drew attention to perceived human aberrance by likening some visitors to zoo-dwelling animals. This was a means of regulating human behaviours, and any visitor could fall prey to censuring humour and allegations of beastliness. Keepers were similarly conflated with beasts. The presence of European keepers in colonial drag or foreign keepers in their native costumes authenticated exhibitions of animals, while all keepers provided a spectacle of working-class industry. Humans and human behaviours were thus on display in the London Zoo. The Zoo was a site

for encounter and reflection, encouraging Britons to contemplate what it meant to be human, white, and British in a fluidly stratified society.

The fourth chapter continues the discussion of the Zoo as a significant forum for encounter and contemplation; it shows how a white elephant exhibited in the London Zoological Gardens in 1884 materialized late nineteenth-century theories of scientific racism and had a lasting impact on the history of advertising. The animal was the showpiece of Phineas Taylor Barnum, the American showman and trickster, who set out to exploit the mythology of white elephants in a period of mounting Anglo-Burmese tension. White elephants had been described in memoirs and travelogues recounting voyages to Siam and Burma. These accounts articulated orientalist fantasies by implying that the Siamese and Burmese worshipped these animals because they were white. When Barnum's elephant arrived in the London Zoo, disappointment with its appearance provoked a fierce debate. Visitors, scientists, newspaper editorialists, and many others expressed dissatisfaction with the creature's splotchy colouration and questioned the authenticity of the animal. Pears' Soap exploited these anxieties and used the image of the elephant to advertise their product. This was the beginning of a longstanding advertising campaign that drew on imperialist anxieties and promoted racist humour, while promising the ability of soap to regenerate whiteness. In the episode of the white elephant in London, human whiteness was acknowledged as an artificial construct and a status of the most superficial kind.

In their interactions with living animals, and especially pets, Britons struggled to control and discipline beastliness, but dead animals could serve their human masters in more ingenious ways. As taxidermy, the subject of the fifth chapter, stuffed animals were integrated into human society and subjected to the imagination in ways not possible with living animals. When dead animals were transformed into household furnishings, they were reintegrated into the routines of the living as material memories, moral embodiments, and household ornaments. Similar purposes were assigned to taxidermy in Victorian museums, where animals were also used for education. This chapter demonstrates the various uses Victorians assigned to taxidermy and argues that posthumous treatments marked the limit of any perceived connection between humans and animals. Animal corpses were easily treated as objects, stuffed for posterity and turned into articles for daily use and contemplation. In contrast, the dissection and dismemberment of the human corpse remained a source of fear and opprobrium through the

nineteenth century. I trace attitudes towards after-death treatments of humans and animals by examining the exceptional case of the utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham, who had his remains dissected and displayed. Bentham aspired to a future in which all human corpses would serve science and remain present among the living. His vision was realized by taxidermy, through which Victorians granted animals a paradoxically animated and provocative afterlife as dead things. In the final part of the chapter I return to the Kittens' Wedding and the taxidermy of Walter Potter, situating it in the context of Victorian taxidermy, as well as the diverse manifestations of human-animal relations discussed in this book.

Chapter One

The Social Lives of Pets

Portraits

The pale light creeps through windows and under doors, then the neighbourhoods erupt in song. From every country house, town lodging, and mean hovel, caged birds signal the coming dawn. For the moment, the pet canaries, titmice, skylarks, blue jays, and magpies are well fed, as are their owners, and times are good.

Across town, the gentleman emerges from sleep. He stretches and opens his eyes. Next to him, under a fold of the bed-cover, curled up and content, is Billy the squirrel. Today the companions will journey across country, catching the train. Billy will sleep in his master's pocket. The gentleman will compose an article about Billy for a popular magazine. He will be elegiac in praise of his pet.[1]

Meanwhile, standing in a kitchen, the maid surveys the mess: pots and utensils strewn about and a pile of shredded house flannels lies in the corner. The cause of this mayhem, Peter the hedgehog, is asleep in the nest of cloth. Peter has been drunk again, fed with "stiff whiskey-and-water" to render him tame. For a time, Peter was such "an amusing and instructive pet" and well worth the price paid for him in Covent Garden. But now, as a "dissipated hedgehog," he no longer catches beetles and cockroaches and has become rather useless.[2] The maid sighs, knowing her mistress will be displeased.

On a train, the ticket collector spots a monkey in a basket. When he requests fare for the creature, its owner becomes irate. A young girl pays the charge for her dog without comment. Other animals, including dogs, cats, canaries, and rabbits, are jostled about with the luggage. Some are in wicker hampers, others in margarine boxes, and still others

are chained to posts. In their fear, the pets make a ruckus. Another railway employee surveys the scene. He has an idea for a carriage to improve the transport of dogs. The carriage will run on the London and North Western lines in the late 1890s.[3]

These stories evoke the rich textures of life with pets in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Britain. I have added fictional embellishments, but the main substance of each narrative is lifted directly from primary sources. Read together, these situations tell us much about the variety of emotional and economic interactions that were associated with pet keeping. In these stories, pets are "wild" and tame, existing between these binaries. They are also commodities that journey in and out of households and through commodity chains alongside other goods. The commodity state is just one phase of the animal's biography; the animal becomes a commodity when it is intended for exchange. In moments of exchange, commodities circulate the beliefs and values that have accrued to them through production, ownership, and use.[4] A pet, in the nineteenth century, was alternately and sometimes simultaneously perceived as an object and possession, a subject and a commodity – that is, a thing, a singular being, a moral exemplar, and an object of exchange. Animals that became pets existed between these classifications and had diverse social lives.

This chapter details life with pets in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Where possible, I refer to the lives of specific pets and their owners so that I am not merely describing pet keeping in the abstract. I devote particular attention to working-class pet keepers, since their activities are crucial to my argument that pet keeping became a *mass* consumerist enterprise by the end of the nineteenth century, and in this my analysis differs from that of other historians who have focused on pet keeping in the nineteenth century as a bourgeois pastime. As we will see, working-class individuals also kept pets, but treated some pets differently from their middle-class counterparts; these differences vexed middle-class observers, whose voices dominate the historical record. Most sources on pet keeping – manuals, newspaper articles, novels, and social investigations – were written by upper- and middle-class commentators who proclaimed themselves experts in these matters, and I rely on these materials to glean information about working-class pet keepers. My conclusions about working-class pet keeping are therefore tentative, and suggest that poorer people engaged in many of the same practices as their social superiors, albeit in less costly ways. In general, animals became pets when they were so

designated. This designation, entailing rituals of possession and regimens of training, affected both pet keeper and pet, changing domestic routines and enrolling both in consumer culture. Pet keeping was a multifaceted endeavour, and there were different ways of keeping pets and becoming a pet keeper – so many, in fact, that contemporaries often disagreed about these matters. For some commentators, rabbits, cats, and hedgehogs, for example, were strictly utilitarian animals, kept for a specific purpose. Others argued that they were amusing, instructive, and affectionate pets. Pets served different purposes, and were even sometimes believed to confer morality on their owners. Some activities associated with pet keeping were enacted in the privacy of the household and others were performed for the purposes of public exhibition and acclaim.

My understanding of nineteenth-century pet keeping practices encompasses these multiple facets, and therefore differs from that of other historians. Keith Thomas, for example, offers a tripartite definition of a pet in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain, suggesting that they were allowed into the house, individualized and granted personal names, and never eaten.[5] Katherine Grier argues that nineteenth-century pet keeping (in America) became a sentimental activity that involved increasing concern for the well-being of pet animals.[6] In contrast, I show that the possession of a pet involved simultaneous imperatives of love, companionship, moral enhancement, utility, discipline, abuse, investment, and profit. Not all animals that were considered pets lived indoors. Through its lifespan and beyond, the pet had latent value and could be sold for cash or wages, possibly eaten, refurbished and enhanced (painted, cropped, and dyed, for example, by a duffer or zealous pet keeper), exchanged for other goods, and recrafted as a taxidermic furnishing – a posthumous treatment that will be discussed in the last chapter. A domesticated, affectionate, and useful animal was worth *something*, and it, its reproductive capacity, offspring, or preserved remains could fetch a price, a romance, another commodity, or a commendation. Unlike most other commodities, pets were alive and mischievous, both accommodating and thwarting the intentions of their owners. This made relationships between pets and pet keepers potentially fraught, but always interesting and highly revealing.

To elaborate on these points, this chapter is composed of several parts. In the first section, I discuss the variety of creatures kept as pets, and the often contradictory purposes and meanings assigned to each animal by working-class and middle-class pet keepers. I then turn to