WORKS IN PROGRESS

Monica Flegel's "'How Does Your Collar Suit Me?': The Human Animal in the RSPCA's *Animal World* and *Band of Mercy*," is from a longer project on the many representations in nineteenth-century English literature linking child and animal as companions and competitors in domestic relations which seeks to examine the full complexity of the relations between child, animal, parent, family, and home during a period when middle-class domesticity very much came into its own.

David Smith's essay, "Securing the Englishman's Castle: Situational Crime Prevention in the Nineteenth Century," forms part of a larger discussion of the evolution of security technologies and practices and is taken from a book-length project on burglars and burglary as sources of fear, fascination, and fantasy in Victorian literature and culture.

Victorian Literature and Culture (2012), **40**, 247–262.

doi:10.1017/S1060150311000350

"HOW DOES YOUR COLLAR SUIT ME?": THE HUMAN ANIMAL IN THE RSPCA'S *ANIMAL WORLD* AND *BAND OF MERCY*

By Monica Flegel

THERE IS A CENTRAL CONTRADICTION in human relationships with animals: as Erica Fudge notes, "We live with animals, we recognize them, we even name some of them, but at the same time we use them as if they were inanimate, as if they were objects" (8). Such a contradiction is also, of course, present in human interactions, in which power relations allow for the objectification of one human being by another. In an analysis of images and texts produced by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) in the nineteenth-century, I want to examine the overlap in representations of animals and humans as subject to objectification and control. One common way of critiquing human treatment of animals within the RSPCA's journals, *Animal World* and *Band of Mercy*, was to have humans trade places with animals: having boys fantastically shrunk to the size of the animals they tortured, for example, or imagining the horrors of vivisection when experienced by humans. Such imaginative exercises were meant to defamiliarize animal usage by implying a shared experience of suffering: what was wrong for a human was clearly just as wrong for an animal. However, I argue that some of the images employed by the society suggest the opposite; instead of constructing animal cruelty in a new light, these images instead work to underline the shared proximity of particular humans with animals. In texts that focus specifically upon humans wearing animal bonds – reins, collars, and muzzles – the RSPCA's anti-cruelty discourse both critiqued the tools of bondage and, I suggest, invited the audience to see deep connections between animals and the humans taking their place. Such connections ultimately weaken the force of the animal/human reversal as an animal rights strategy, suggesting as they do that humans themselves often have use value in economies of labor, affect, and are subject to the same power relations that produce an animal as "animal."

Animals and Servants: Reining in Labor Power

IT HAS BECOME A TRUISM IN animal studies that, as Steve Baker notes in *Picturing the Beast*, "our ideas of the animal – perhaps more than any other set of ideas – are the ones

which enable us to frame and express ideas about *human* identity" (Baker 6). Following Baker, I want to examine the use of animals as representation, as means of analyzing and theorizing human relationships to other humans. Baker places his work on the opposite end of studies that concern themselves with "those histories of how right-thinking folk have struggled against the odds to improve the lot of animals" (5), focusing instead on "the forms and structures of the symbolic availability of animals – an availability which is of course in no way restricted to those who have a particular view on animal rights" (5). While Baker is correct in identifying the symbolic use of animals as something that exceeds the realm of animal-rights activism, it is nevertheless also true that those deeply invested in animal rights, or, as with the RSPCA, animal protection, were as much embedded in the use of animals as metaphors for humans as were those not directly involved in the question of cruelty to animals. As Harriet Ritvo points out in her classic study, *The Animal Estate*, "discourse about animals in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England also expressed many human concerns linked only tenuously to the animal world" (3). While the links to the animal world in the texts and illustrations I have chosen to focus on are far from "tenuous" – in many of them, an explicit desire to intervene in specific animal-cruelty issues is at the heart – yet all of them, despite their commitment to animal concerns, reveal an implicit focus on humanity, and on human/human relationships.

That the anti-cruelty discourse of the RSPCA was inherently tied to questions of power relations in English society is made abundantly clear in the Society's description of the object of its journal, the *Animal World*: "to protect animals from torture and ameliorate their condition, and to awaken in the minds of men a proper sense of the claims of creatures placed under their dominion" ("Our Object" 8). The article goes on to state that "The animal kingdom consists of 'inferior' and 'superior' beings, of which man forms a part; and we shall be bound, therefore, in THE ANIMAL WORLD – a title made comprehensive enough to include 'both man and bird and beast' – to advocate man's interests as well as the happiness of his subordinates" (8). The deliberate blurring here between human and animal, and between the lower creation and the much-more sweeping "subordinates, which can encompass more than animals, alerts us to the fact that the RSPCA did not necessarily provide rights-based discourse, but instead a discourse of proper authority and the appropriate use of power. That is, while it might be true that animal-protection societies like the RSPCA emerged from "a powerful combination of evangelical piety, romantic poetry, and rational humanitarianism" (Harrison 85), and that "preaching the gospel of kindness" (Turner 39) was a central goal of the anti-cruelty movement, it is also true that the policing of cruelty was about instituting and protecting a civil society modeled on middle-class notions of gentility and decorum.

As J. Carter Wood observes,

> Nineteenth-century social commentators often wrote as if they were *discovering* violence, and, indeed, increasing social investigation brought into view much that had been previously ignored. However, these commentators, along with the state and legal profession, were also involved in *inventing* violence: developing a new set of beliefs as to the nature of physical aggression, debating and redrawing the boundaries of legitimate interpersonal behavior and seeking explanations for violence in the structures of social life. (22)

Such renegotiations of boundaries were, of course, inflected by issues of class and gender; Wood observes that "Middle-class culture emphasised self-restraint, aspiring at least to the

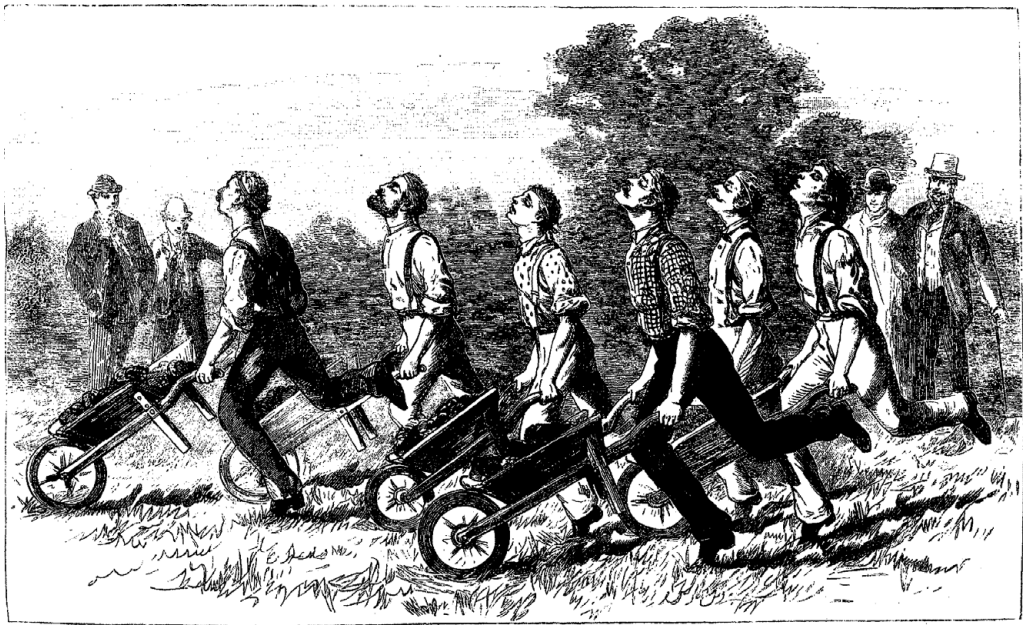

Figure 32. Illustration accompanying "A Letter from Herr Max to John Mastiff, Esq., Chairman of the Animal's Jubilee Committee." Engraving, from *Animal World* 18.216 (1 Sept. 1887): 129–44.

appearance of control over 'passion,' which was often linked directly to violence" (32), and in *Men of Blood*, Martin J. Wiener argues that the "newer expectation for men, to manifest peaceableness and self-restraint in more and more areas of life, well-established among gentlemen by the end of the eighteenth century, was extended . . . from gentlemen to all men, and from public, male-on-male violence to 'private' violence against subordinates, dependents and the entire female gender" (6). Certainly, violence against animals was included as a type of violence against subordinates that should be eliminated, and the role played by the RSPCA in the dissemination of the concept of the civilized, rational, controlled male has been well-established. As James Turner points out, the belief of the organization was that "Training in kindness might yet root out the hatred, cruelty, and anarchy thought to flourish in the lower classes," while RSPCA rhetoric "demanded that the people, wild animals in the nation's midst, be tamed" (55). The RSPCA's classed agenda operated firmly within its construction of humane behavior and proper care for animals; at times, however, the two goals served to contradict and disrupt each other. In one illustration, for example, the goal of critiquing cruel treatment of animals through the use of the working-class male as stand-in for the suffering beast provides conflicting and contradictory associations.

Accompanying "A Letter from Herr Max," the illustration (Figure 32) depicts a bearing-rein race that has taken place in honor of the Queen's jubilee. In the letter, Max, a dog, tells John Mastiff, presumably another dog, of his mistress's intentions in holding the race. Her hope, she explains to Max, is that it will "become a fashionable race at country *fêtes*, so that, through all the villages of England, people may come to see the cruelty, the stupidity,

and the inconvenience of bearing-reins" (133). The bearing-rein, famously deplored in Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* (1877), serves the purpose of forcing the horse's head upright while the horse is being driven, "damaging its windpipe and severely shortening its life" (Ferguson 77). As an item of animal bondage that served a primarily aesthetic, rather than practical function, and that caused pain and physical harm to the animal while doing so, the bearing-rein was an obvious target for animal-cruelty societies and a common topic of articles in *Animal World*.

The purpose of the race and the accompanying illustration was to make the irrationality of the rein visible by substituting humans for animals – heads held high, and surrounded by smiling spectators, the working-class men in the illustration are meant to appear ridiculous. The substitution, however, relies on a complex negotiation of the animal/human relationship. On the one hand, a perception of essential distance between animal and human is necessary for the absurdity of the practice to be made visible, for it is by treating humans like animals, an action which can only be disruptive if there is a boundary there that should not be crossed, that the treatment itself is rendered ridiculous. Such a rhetorical tactic was not uncommon in anti-cruelty rhetoric. Susan J. Pearson notes that "Reversing the position of humans and animals remained a favorite tactic of the animal protection movement throughout the nineteenth century" (117) as a means of constructing sympathy, that all important quality of humane behavior. A popular subject of children's fantasy stories and poems in *Band of Mercy*, for example, was that of the imagined or real reversal of the cruel boy and the animals or insects he had tortured: either made small, or faced with regrettably large-sized insects and beasts, the boy was forcefully made, through his experience of a "topsy-turvy world" (Pearson 117), to recognize the fear and pain his own tortures had caused animals.[12] Another example published in *Animal World* in 1875, "Vivisection: A Vision," imagined a human facing the vivisector's knife: "he / Extended thus was doomed to be / A living victim, who should feel / In every nerve the piercing steel" (C. H. 39–42).

Though such reversals of human and animal were about constructing sympathy, they also operated as a form of defamiliarization, "reinscribing the everyday with the marks of suffering and pain" (Pearson 116). Of course, the use of humans as a means of defamiliarizing the treatment of animals could only be an effective strategy if treating someone "like an animal" represented a meaningful violation of boundaries. Nevertheless, in some instances the violation instead underlines the perception of inherent proximity of humans to animals. For example, in an article on "Dogs as Draught Animals" the reader is told

> We have seen a gipsy being drawn by his children in a hand-cart, who apparently was enjoying the luxury of his ride and the aroma of a dirty pipe. It was a loathsome spectacle; and the eldest girl, who had arrived at maturity, while struggling hard herself up an incline, urged on her draught brothers and sisters with shouts and curses. (137)

While it is clear from the language used that this sight represents a clear violation of civilized behavior, yet the othering of this practice onto the hated gipsy, combined with the evidence of the eldest girl's complete lack of femininity, instead allows and encourages the reader to question the humanity of these humans.

As well, in all these instances, it is important to remember that the argument being made is that what is wrong for humans is wrong for animals. That is, though distance between human and beast is necessary to make the spectacle of children pulling a cart "loathsome,"

the practice it parallels is that of making dogs pull carts. The article begins with the statement "there are persons sordid and debased enough to regret their inability to harness men and women, and employ them for their pleasure, as the four Belgians in our engraving are using dogs" (137). In other words, the practice of making dogs pull carts is, in some ways, represented as equivalent to the gipsy's practice of making his children pull a cart. Such equivalence requires humans whom the reader of the journal can imagine as already sharing space with the animal, such as the racially-marked gipsy, or, as in the case of the bearing-rein race, the working-class male. Keeping these comparisons in mind, it becomes evident that the critique of the practice is not necessarily about whether or not animals (or humans) should be subject to being used, but rather that they should be subject to appropriate use.

David Perkins argues that "an analogy to the lower classes could always be read into the discourse of animal rights" (106), in part because of the "age-old trope" of animal as servant. In many ways, this analogy worked to argue on behalf of the animal, utilizing pre-existing humanitarian discourse on labor conditions to fight for the better treatment of animals. In Mary Howitt's "Songs of Animal Life," for example, printed in *Animal World* in 1882, the animal speakers acknowledge

> We are made to be their servants – we know it, and complain not;
> We bow our necks with meekness, the galling yoke to bear.
> Their heaviest toil we lighten, the meanest we disdain not;
> In all their sweat and labor we take a willing share.
> We know that God intended for us but servile stations,
> . . . They of earth are the masters, we are their poor relations (9–13, 15)

Such a construction of the willing servant, begging simply to be used kindly rather than begging to not be used at all, has echoes of earlier nineteenth-century labor discourse, such as Eliza Cook's "A Song for the Workers" (1853) which openly proclaims "Let man toil to win his living, / Work is not a task to spurn" (1–2), asking only "Shall ye be *unceasing* drudges?" (21). Placing anti-cruelty to animal rhetoric within this tradition underlines the point, again, that the RSPCA did not seek to disrupt existing power relations between humans and animals, but instead to assert "proper" practice within those relations. Dogs, for example, were not suited (according to English custom anyways) to be draught animals, and while horses *were* suited for that use, the bearing-rein, which served a primarily aesthetic function, represented a misuse of power.

As much as the mistress's critique of the bearing-rein in "A Letter from Herr Max" focuses on the impracticality of it – she asks Max, "Did they not have some difficulty in getting along?" (133) – she also seems very concerned with the aesthetics of the rein – "Didn't they look awkward, Max?" (133). This focus on the appearance of the runners is not out of place given the fact that the bearing-rein was as much about producing a particular appearance as it was about controlling the animal. Taking on the practice, the Mistress therefore attempts to displace the aesthetic of the bearing rein with an aesthetic that unites the animal's ability with its performance. Commenting on the second race, for example, in which the young men were allowed to run without restrictive reins, she proclaims, "But what a different race! How they came thundering along with their wheelbarrows like so many steam-engines flying along the track" (133). Her displacement of improperly controlled animals with properly controlled ones does not, of course, question the role of the animal, horse or man, as beast of

burden or as pleasing spectacle; instead, the question of "didn't they look awkward" seeks to employ the animal's usefulness – its strength and agility – as a means of interrogating the empty aesthetics of a practice that celebrates an animal's appearance while interfering with its purpose.

Nevertheless, it is the aesthetics of this race that serves to undermine its point. The use of working-class men in this race speaks to the contiguity of the working-class male to the working animal, and while both are deserving of decent treatment, both also performed essential functions in English society that required them to be strictly controlled. As discussed earlier, a common representation of the lower-class male in animal-protection discourse was that of the inhumane brute – a figure in many ways constructed as less deserving of regard than the suffering animal, particularly the "noble" horse. As Harriet Ritvo notes, the perception of the lower classes as "cruel and in need of discipline" (133) sometimes "led humanitarians to value animals more than the vulgar humans who abused them; one indignant lover of horses complained that 'the lower class of persons, to whom the care of the horse is intrusted, frequently possess less sense than those noble animals, which groan under their tyranny'" (133–34). Though the animal as suffering servant analogy worked to support arguments in favor of animal protection against the "tyranny" of harsh treatment and undue labor, an argument that underscores the purported aim of the human bearing-rein race, yet the continual construction of the lower-class male as violent and in need of discipline inflects this image with an opposing meaning. The Mistress urges the reader to look at these men and note how "awkward" they look, but the reader might also note that they appear controlled, orderly, and submissive. The restricted, orderly movements of the working men, the smiling spectators, and the Mistress's hope that the race will become "fashionable," suggest that this race is a pleasing spectacle, and that these men have the possibility to appear as attractive as they do absurd, or that the absurdity of the race is part of its attraction. In either case, the controlled men are not necessarily, in and of themselves, a displeasing spectacle. Considering that the role of the RSPCA and its inspectorate was, in many ways, to rein in the violence of the working-class male through monitoring and controlling working-class relations with animals – as Ritvo observes, "the RSPCA's concern with animal baiting and fighting had at least as much to do with human discipline as with animal pain" (152) – this picture simultaneously critiques the cruel treatment of animals and affirms class power in its fantasy of subject humans and labor power reined in and controlled. Using humans instead of horses in this image, therefore, particularly given the choice of humans used, allows the reader and viewer to fantasize about human as animal, as much as it does to critique and deplore a cruel practice.

Children and Other Pets

THE ANIMAL WAS NOT ALWAYS, of course, a beast of burden in Victorian England, and one could argue that animal as pet played an even greater role in the construction of English identity than did the work or feed animal. In *Bridging the Bond*, Tami Harbolt argues that the pet represented a safe recipient of Victorian middle-class kindness: "The growth of middle-class pet-keeping, in particular, gave these classes of people a sense of humanitarianism that neither threatened their class complacency nor caused undue social unrest" (31). But as other critics note, the pet also represented a key figure in negotiating human-animal relations, as pets, in many ways, allowed for an enjoyment of the animal that was not directly tainted with obvious reminders of animal as useful object: Ivan Kreilkamp, referring to Derrida's

article on "Eating Well," suggests that "the nation may have repudiated its own continued investment in 'carnivorous virility' through the definition of a special limited category of beloved animals, pets that were to be treated as human-like and in need of protection" ("Petted Things" 93), while Teresa Mangum suggests that "the devaluing of most animal life, on the one hand, and the heightened attachment to *pets*, on the other, is a crucial and inherent contradiction in nineteenth-century human-animal relations" (18). In both cases, animal as pets refer back to what Erica Fudge identifies as the central contradiction in human relations with animals: we "name them . . . but we use them as if they were inanimate" (8).

All of these theorists and critics recognize the extent to which the delineation of one animal as "pet" and another animal as object for use is about arbitrary and constructed boundaries. Importantly, of course, pets, like work and feed animals, have value: the priceless position they occupy in the household's affective economy. Kathleen Kete observes of the pet dog in nineteenth-century Paris that while "useless when considered in light of its productivity, [it] had become an essential household figure – a 'love machine,' . . . in nineteenth-century terms. Ensconced within the family, the dog had become an affective end in itself. Not so much a replacement person, a metaphor, but an adjunct, a dream image [which] was constructed in the shape of the family pet" (55). Kreilkamp identifies a similar structure in nineteenth-century English society in which the domestic pet developed "into a major instance of and vehicle for the culture's high valuation of sympathy and domestic life" and became "known, worldwide, as a quintessential embodiment of English identity and a national self-image founded on an idealized vision of home" ("Petted Things" 87).

Importantly, the origins of the term "pet" referred "simultaneously to a 'spoiled child' and 'a domesticated, fondled, young animal'" (Pearson 32), and in many ways, the child and the animal shared a similar space in the affective economy of the middle-class home. It is important to recognize, of course, the distinctly different status of children and domestic pets in the nineteenth century – for example, Kreilkamp argues that "It is typical for a Victorian pet to be treated in certain respects like a person but also typical for an animal to be forgotten or replaced and allowed to disappear without recognition in a manner that would seem troubling in the case of a human being" ("Dying like a Dog" 82) – nevertheless, the ideal "regime of kindness" of the Victorian middle-class home "consigned both beasts and babes to a similar position in the household's affective economy, assigning them a mutual role as objects of sentimental investment" (Pearson 22). According to Susan J. Pearson, the preciousness of both "pets" exemplified their uselessness in the family's domestic economy, and their pricelessness in its affective economy, for "To have a perpetual baby was, in the context of nineteenth-century bourgeois family ideals, to continually enact the family's emotional constellation and reason for being" (38). Though Pearson's study focuses on nineteenth-century America, the same investment in child and animal as shared "cherished objects of emotional investment" (32) is evident in Victorian England, particularly in the pages of the RSPCA's journal for children, *Band of Mercy*. Originally organized and published as *The Band of Mercy Advocate* by Mrs. Smithies and her son, T. B. Smithies ("The Band of Mercy Movement" 6), the journal was taken over (and renamed simply, *Band of Mercy*) by the RSPCA's Ladies' Committee in 1883 ("Notice" 2). Within the pages of this journal, the child reader saw continual linkages between child and animal as loved members of the family; in the illustrations, "Two Kittens" (Figure 33) and "Grandfather's four pets" (Figure 34), for example, child and animal are virtually indistinguishable in terms of their status as adored and adorable object. In the one, girl and kitten share a beseeching prettiness,

Figure 33. "Two Kittens." Engraving, cover illustration from *Band of Mercy* 10.117 (Sept. 1888): 65.

posed carefully as objects for the viewer's enjoyment, while in the other, dogs and girl gaze obediently and adoringly at the approving grandfather, who is obviously well-pleased with his possessions.

Though the child as affectionate pet was a common trope of both *Animal World* and *Band of Mercy*, the aim of the latter in "advocating the principles of kindness to animals" ("Notice" 2) to a young audience also reminds us that if animals and children were similarly sentimentalized and coddled pets, they were also necessarily subjects of discipline. The savage, unruly child, cruel and sadistic towards animals, was as likely to appear in the pages of these journals as was the affectionate child. In "A Word to Parents," for example, published

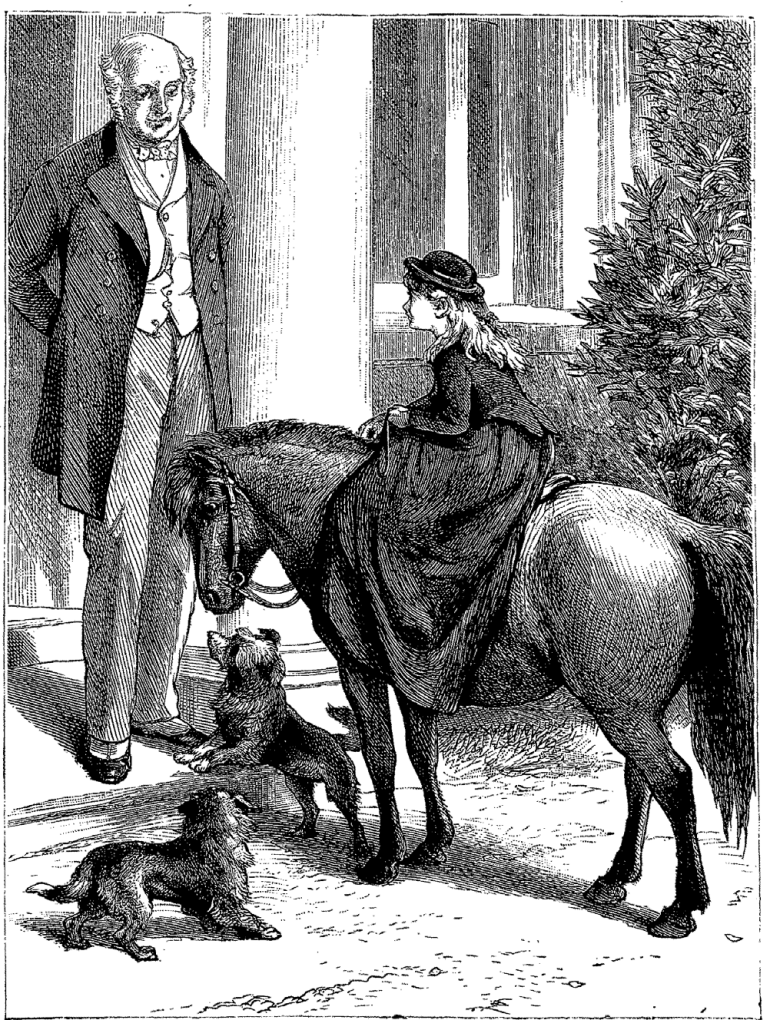

Figure 34. "Grandpapa's Four Pets." Engraving, cover illustration from *Band of Mercy* 6.71 (Nov. 1884): 81.

in *The Band of Mercy Advocate* in 1880, parents are reminded that "Many of the troubles of parents, caused by the unfeeling behavior of their children, proceed, I believe, from the want of kindness to God's creatures being properly inculcated in YOUTH" (43). Here, the child is constructed as inherently "unfeeling," only civilizable through the careful instruction of thoughtful caretakers. Such children were feared, if unguided, to go on to "delight in cruelty to [their] fellows" (Bolton 18) making, again, the attainment of civil society and disciplinary subjects the end object of anti-cruelty instruction.

But if children were cruel, they also faced cruelty themselves,[3] and the many sentimental stories linking together human and animal waifs and strays made *Animal World* a logical

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150311000350 Published online by Cambridge University Press

place in which to consider the prevalence of child abuse in nineteenth-century English society.[4] George K. Behlmer records that in 1870, "letters appeared in *Animal World* calling for the inclusion of children in an enlarged 'Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and Dumb Animals'" (68), and in one of those letters, published under the heading "The Protection of *All* Defenseless Animals," A. B. writes, "May I venture, through your valuable medium, to call the attention of humane people to a class of animals whose sufferings have hitherto been little regarded? . . . I mean *Children* (94). Within the context of a journal that so frequently represented children as the savage enemy of animals, possibly in need of having their own legs pulled off from time to time,[5] the inclusion of the abused child, alike the victim of violence and cruelty, might seem a contradiction. But as affectionate pet, uncivilized savage, and innocent victim, the child, along with the animal who shared all three roles, could be easily subsumed within the RSPCA's overarching discourse of kindly authority, love, and proper discipline. Together, *Band of Mercy* and *Animal World* sought to provide models of parental and social control that worked very much within the journals' articles on how to manage animals themselves. The illustration found in an 1892 issue of *Band of Mercy*, entitled "How does your collar suit me?" has to be read within this complex context (Figure 35). Though the image of the child wearing a heavy collar could resonate with echoes of earlier anti-slavery discourse, a discourse particularly utilized in American anti-cruelty to animals' rhetoric (Pearson 125), this hardly seems to be the purpose of the image. Instead, the child appears coy, and the choice of putting the collar on or taking it off is clearly in the child's hands. As a result, the collar becomes a form of playful bondage.

How that play is operating depends, in large part, on how one interprets the power positions of the dog and the child in relation to each other. The collar is clearly identified by the child as "your collar," making clear the animal's subject position in relation to the child, yet the child is addressing the animal directly and sharing in the moment with the animal as though dog and child are on equal footing and the dog's opinion somehow matters. Nevertheless, the poem accompanying this image, entitled "Fast Friends," demonstrates that the child's play, though charming, is a means of rehearsing the child's power position in regards to his pet. The opening lines ask, "Why, Neptune dear, your collar fits / My neck: suppose you give it me? / I'll take your kennel for my house, / And you with nurse shall sit at tea" (Bogle 1–4). The child is here gladly acknowledging kinship with the dog – though they occupy distinct roles in the house, the child sees no difficulty in trading places with the dog, suggesting that, in fact, child and animal are somewhat interchangeable. They are not, however, equal, as the child goes on to demand "Why don't you answer, naughty dog?" and threatens "I've half a mind to whip you now" (5–6). The introduction of the whip seems out of keeping with the sentimentality of the image, the shared affection of child and animal disrupted by the reminder of the child's right, as human master, to inflict pain for arbitrary and nonsensical reasons. The child quickly assures the dog, "no, I could not whip you dear; / I love you, Neptune, far too much" (10–11), but his promise that "No whip shall ever touch your back" is qualified by "At least, while you obedient prove" (13–14). Playful and coy as the image is, the poem clearly indicates that part of the child's play is the exploration and delineation of his power over his dog, and his recognition that love must always be accompanied by control.

As Sharon Marcus notes, "In Victorian children's literature, dolls are . . . beautifully dressed objects to admire or humiliate, simulacra of femininity that inspire fantasies of omnipotence and subjection" (149). While Marcus's study focuses on female/female

Figure 35. "How Does Your Collar Suit Me?" Engraving, from *Band of Mercy Advocate* 14.162 (June 1892):45.

relations, I find her analysis appropriate here because the eroticism of both identification with and distance from the object of control that she identifies in the relationship between child and doll is so evident in this particular child's play. The dog in this image is clearly configured as both companion and toy, and the child's exercise of power over the animal is reminiscent of the depiction in doll tales of the child as "fickle," "imperious," and caught up in relations "involving visual fascination, sensual contact, domination, and submission" (151–52). But as the pet is to the child, so is the child to the adult. The poem and the image remind us that the child must recognize his place as Master; nevertheless, the threat

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150311000350 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of punishment if the dog should show disobedience is one that he, in fact, shares as child. As a result, the collar, representing as it might obedience, proper control, and spectacles of discipline and humiliation to which child and dog are both subject, suits dog and child alike in their shared role as pets within a domestic "regime of kindness."

Compared to the collar, the muzzle was a much more problematic item of dog "clothing." Introduced in England as a means of curbing rabies outbreaks in 1867, muzzles were considered by "Many dog owners . . . 'a species of torture.' Ill-fitting muzzles could irritate a dog's skin, causing pain and inflammation; although they were ostensibly designed to allow free access to water, many muzzles prevented animals from drinking" and even the RSPCA, "which normally supported the authorities, voted in 1883 to condemn compulsory use of muzzles" (Ritvo 192). Seeking to challenge the representation in the press of rabid animals as threats to humans, the RSPCA printed images such as an 1890 illustration of a dog pulling a child from the water, instructing "Muzzle your dog and let your child drown" (Animal World 21.245((1890)): .21). As in the case of the bearing-rein race, the argument being made is that the muzzle, apart from the discomfort it causes to the animal, also impedes the animal's usefulness to human society.

But as with the bearing-rein race where "Didn't they look awkward" suggested that part of what the RSPCA sought to protect was still an aesthetic appreciation for the animal, the image from *Band of Mercy* in which the policemen observes "How noble and happy they look without muzzles!" (Figure 36) seeks to argue that one of the problems with muzzles is, again, that they disrupt the pleasure one derives from looking at the animal. The happiness of the animal is no doubt significant, but it is "how happy the animal looks" that is of primary importance. Similarly, the use of the word "noble" elevates the animal, making the muzzling of it seem degrading and insulting, but the stress is on how noble the animal "looks," reminding us that the value of a dog such as this is, in part, the aesthetics of its bearing.

What interests me in particular in this image is the ambiguity of the referent "they" in "How noble and happy they look." Undoubtedly, "they" is meant to refer to dogs in general, as there is only one dog in the image. Yet, given the close proximity of the child to the animal, as well as the symbolic proximity of the two as pets and objects of loving discipline, there is an undecidability built into that referent that makes the caption read in strange ways. Such an observation may seem to be stretching the point somewhat, but I would argue that this ambiguity is very much in keeping with a playful blurring of the boundaries between animals and children, particularly in terms of vague referents, or in some cases, names, that was a common trope in *Animal World* and *Band of Mercy*. An image of a small child and a fawn shyly approaching each other, for example, encouraged by an older child whose voice is captured in the caption "Don't be timid," includes both child and animal in the command" (Animal World 23.272 ((1892)): 73). And though animal names were generally placed in quotations as a means of distinguishing "Jess" as animal ("'Jess' – Her Puppyhood, Doghood, and Death." Animal World 13.148 (1882): 3–4.l rather than human, at times names were deliberately used as a means of playing with the reader's assumptions and expectations. In "Bobby," an auntie opens her story, "Well, children, have I ever told you about Bobby?" She continues, l daresay when I tell you that Bobby's home was in London you will expect to hear a story of a poor little London waif; but no; my story is about a pigeon" (82); in "Tom – Our Hero," the identity of Tom, "the best fellow that ever you knew" (Woolson 1) is only revealed at the end: "yes, Tom was our dog" (47); in "Fattie-Fee," the author acknowledges that "Perhaps some of my

Figure 36. "How Noble and Happy They Look Without Muzzles!" Engraving, cover illustration from *Band of Mercy* 9.107 (Nov. 1887): 81.

youthful readers will be disappointed when they hear that little 'Fattie-Fee' was neither a pet dog nor a pet cat, but simply a little girl . . . and that her name, which may sound very strange, was given to her by her dear mother, as a pet one" (7); and "A Spoilt Pet" opens with "No doubt you know of more than one 'spoilt pet,' and when it is a little boy or girl, nobody is likely to fall in love with them, but my pet being only a green and yellow canary I think you will admire his funny ways" (42). Within the context of journals that continually play with the interchangeability of child and animal, the caption "How noble and happy they look without their muzzles," particularly given the serene expression on the girl's

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150311000350 Published online by Cambridge University Press

face, does seem to seek to play with the ambiguity of that "they." Children were not, of course, generally muzzled in Victorian England, but if we see the muzzle as emblematic of a disciplinary regime that unnecessarily and cruelly restricts the actions of a playful, active, aesthetic object, thus disrupting one's pleasure in that object, and if we keep in mind the criticism of the anti-child abuse story "Bend or Break," published in *Animal World* in 1871 and 1872, that asks, "Why do we 'bit' our children . . . and seek to obliterate the often grand attributes of childhood?" (59), we can recognize the meaningful ambiguity built into this caption. The reader is meant to recognize that muzzling the dog, and perhaps by inference, that "bitting" the child, deprives the adult of the pleasure these creatures have to offer when properly controlled. Importantly, neither child nor animal is particularly empowered by the question of whether or not a collar or muzzle suits them – what is significant is that the use of the child as means of interrogating the position of the animal simply affirms their shared powerlessness in a hierarchy that finds pleasure in them. Their position may not be equal, as the child will one day become the master, but "child" and "animal" share too many similarities for comparisons between the two to effectively denature treatment towards pets.

I argue that the (partially) imagined relationships I have discussed here between lower-class men and beasts of burden and between children and pets allow for a way of viewing competition between human concerns and animal concerns as something other than simple specieism. Often, animal rights and animal liberation activists are met with the charge that protecting, caring for, and fighting on behalf of animals represent aims that somehow threaten or displace the proper care for humans. But it is also important to note the extent to which humans in oppressed or disempowered positions also sometimes perceive their concerns, wants, and needs as being in competition with those of animals. Working-class men in Victorian England, for example, fought to preserve the culture that allowed them to exercise power over the animal. Ritvo notes that "lower class abusers of animals" sometimes "seemed to cherish their offensive treatment of animals as a means of self-expression, or even to flaunt it as a counter to the interpretation of their behavior imposed from above" (149). Similarly, the child that seeks to harm the animal might, in part, be emulating the power that is exercised over the child; as Mary Wollstonecraft notes in *Original Stories from Real Life*, "It is only to animals that children *can* do good; men are their superiors" (16). Though Wollstonecraft's injunction is for the children to do good, the underlying lesson is about power relations, as seen in the child of Bogle's poem. To a certain extent, then, the desire to exercise supremacy over the animal signals a recognition of the extent to which one anxiously shares too close a proximity with them. The contradiction Erica Fudge notes as the primary contradiction of animal/human relations is, quite simply, the primary contradiction of all power relationships. Animals might be like us, but they also serve us, and negotiating animal rights within an animal-based economy requires complex ideological positioning and tricky ethics. What these texts and images should remind us, however, is that such negotiations are far from restricted to animal/human relationships.

Lakehead University

NOTES

1. Horses and dogs in particular, as historians such as Harriet Ritvo and James Turner have pointed out, were valued for their, respectively, "noble" bearing and unquestioning fidelity.

2. See, for example, "Tommy's Dream" (*Band of Mercy* 10.118, 74–75) and "What the Butterflies Thought" (*Band of Mercy* 11.126, 42–46).
3. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was modeled upon the RSPCA, demonstrating further the close linkages between children and animals.
4. "The Gutter Child; or, Tiney and Tim," *Animal World* 3.32 (1872): 104–05; "The Organ Boy and His Monkey," *Band of Mercy* 13.153 (1891): 71; "The Violet Boy," *Band of Mercy* 14.166 (1892): 78; and "The Little Outcast," *Animal World* 23.278 (1892): 167–69, for example, all present the struggles child/animal companions face in a harsh, adult-oriented world.
5. Certainly the belief that children might learn the wrongness of cruelty by having cruelty inflicted upon them was expressed at numerous points in the RSPCA's journal. Besides the numerous stories of boys being threatened by large insects, a "News and Notes" feature on a boy "recently found guilty of gross cruelty to a cat" cited approvingly the boy's whipping: "The punishment was inflicted, during which the boy . . . repeatedly screamed out, 'I will never do the like again'" ("News and Notes" 178).

WORKS CITED

Baker, Steve. *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity and Representation*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1993.

"The Band of Mercy Movement." *Band of Mercy Advocate* 4.37 (January 1882): 1–8, 6–7.

Behlmer, George K. *Child Abuse and Moral Reform in England, 1870–1908*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1982.

"Bend or Break." Chapter III. *Animal World* 3.28 (January 1872): 49–64, 59–60.

"Bobby." *Band of Mercy* 8.95 (November 1886): 81–88, 82.

Bolton, W. J. "Kindness to God's Creatures." *Band of Mercy Advocate* 3.27 (March 1881): 18.

Bogle, Evelyn E. "Fast Friends."" *Animal World* 14.162 (June 1892): 41–48, 46.

C. H. "Vivisection: A Vision." *Animal World* 6.67 (April 1875): 59.

Cook, Eliza. "A Song for the Workers." *The Broadview Anthology of Victorian Poetry and Poetic Theory*. Ed. Thomas J. Collins and Vivienne J. Rundle. Peterborough: Broadview, 1999: 559–60.

"Dogs as Draught Animals." *Animal World* 11.132 (Sept. 1, 1880): 129–44, 137–38.

"Fattie-Fee." *Animal World* 14.160 (Jan. 1, 1883): 1–16, 7.

Ferguson, Moira. *Animal Advocacy and Englishwomen, 1780–1900: Patriots, Nation, and Empire*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1998.

Fudge, Erica. *Animal*. London: Reaktion Books, 2002.

Harbolt, Tami L. Bridging the Bond: The Cultural Construction of the Shelter Pet. Bloomington: Purdue UP, 2002.

Harrison, Brian. *Peaceable Kingdom: Stability and Change in Modern Britain*. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1982.

Creatures." *Animal World* 13.154 (July 1, 1882): 97–112, 106.

Kete, Kathleen. *The Beast in the Boudoir: Petkeeping in Nineteenth-Century Paris*. Berkeley, U of California P, 1995.

Kreilkamp, Ivan. "Dying like a Dog in *Great Expectations*." *Victorian Animal Dreams: Representations of Animals in Victorian Literature and Culture*. Ed. Deborah Denenholz Morse and Martin Danahay. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007: 81–94.

———. "Petted Things: *Wuthering Heights* and the Animal." *Yale Journal of Criticism* 18.1 (2005): 87–110.

"A Letter from Herr Max to John Mastiff, Esq, Chairman of the Animals' Jubilee Committee." *Animal World* 18. 216 (Sept. 1, 1887): 129–44, 133–34.

Mangum, Teresa. "Animal Angst: Victorians Memorialize their Pets." *Victorian Animal Dreams: Representations of Animals in Victorian Literature and Culture*. Ed. Deborah Denenholz Morse and Martin Danahay. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007: 15–34.

Marcus, Sharon. *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007.

"News and Notes." *Animal World* 23.279 (Dec. 1, 1892): 177–92, 178.

"Notice to Band of Mercy Societies." *Band of Mercy* 5.49 (1883): 2–8, 2–3.
"Our Object." *Animal World* 1.1 (Oct. 1869): 1–16, 8.
Pearson, Susan J. *The Rights of the Defenseless: Protecting Animals in Gilded Age America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
Perkins, David. *Romanticism and Animal Rights*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003.
"The Protection of *All* Defenseless Animals." *Animal World* 1.5 (1870):81–96, 94–95.
Ritvo, Harriet. *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1987.
"A Spoilt Pet." *Band of Mercy* 15.174 (June 1893): 41–48, 42.
Turner, James. *Reckoning with the Beast: Animals, Pain, and Humanity in the Victorian Mind*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980.
Wiener, Martin J. *Men of Blood: Violence, Manliness, and Criminal Justice in Victorian England*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004.
Wollstonecraft, Mary. *Original Stories from Real Life*. Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1990.
Wood, J. Carter. "A Useful Savagery: The Invention of Violence in Nineteenth-Century England." *Journal of Victorian Culture* 9.1 (Spring 2004): 22–42.
Woolson, Constance Fenimore. "Tom – Our Hero." *Animal World* 22.262 (July 1, 1891): 97–112, 108.
"A Word to Parents." *Band of Mercy Advocate* 2.18 (June 1880): 41–48, 43.