Pia F. Cuneo ed., Animals in Early Modern Identity. Farnham: Ashgate, 2014.

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This book promises much. It is large, printed on high-quality paper, with over fifty illustrations, and contains sixteen essays on a variety of aspects of human-animal relations in early modern Europe and beyond into South Africa and the Spanish empire. But what it delivers is rather a hotchpotch.

The book, Pia F. Cuneo writes in her introduction, is organised around the idea of identity, around the 'issue of how humans use animals and the things they do to say something about themselves' (3). The essays are arranged in three sections: 'Defending the Boundaries of Identity', 'Constituting the Boundaries of Identity', and 'Transcending the Boundaries of Identity'. This sounds like a tight arrangement, but – as Cuneo herself notes – it should not be read as 'a hermetically sealed system of hermeneutics, but instead as a practical and approximate structure allowing a comparative and critical assessment of the functional role of animals in the constructions and performances of early modern identities' (5).

Some of the essays take the conception of identity in general terms. Thus in his essay on the Royal Labyrinth at Versailles, built for Louis XIV in the late seventeenth century, Peter Sahlins argues that the depictions of the world of nature as a war of all against all that were found in the Labyrinth's paths represented not so much an opposition to the glorification of the dominating monarch traced in the nearby Menagerie as another way of depicting the king's power to transform the dark and uncivil into the open and ordered. The warfare depicted in the animal statues and fountains 'expressed a human condition of animality that flourished destructively where the symbolic presence of the king was weak' (81). Magdalene Bayreuther's essay uses horse breeding in the mid-seventeenth-century courts of Germany to trace what she

argues was 'a noble identity' (123). Exchanging horses, and the people who worked with them, the nobility fashioned themselves as they extended their stables. Juliana Scheisari also focuses on horses, this time tracking the emphasis in Italian humanist texts from the early fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth century on links between boys, men and horses. Here the 'mirroring' that exists between humans and the horses they ride (383) allows writers to link – positively – the training of horses and the training of male children. Alison G. Stewart's poorly written essay looks at the use of images of pigs and dogs in sixteenth-century German Reformist discourse on drunkenness. While the essay makes gestures towards the presence of real animals in the streets of the time, it never addresses fully what the relation between the emblematic or proverbial animal and the actual creature is. 'Dogs and pigs,' she writes, 'indicated human qualities, albeit undesirable ones, that overlapped with those of animals' (34). This conception of the relation between real and emblematic raises questions about the nature of the 'overlap'. Can a dog choose to get drunk as a human can? Is a pig really in possession of undesirable *human* traits? Aren't the traits that are undesirable really just human – not animal – ones?

Alongside these readings of general trends in human identity formation, other essays focus very tightly on particular individuals. So Miriam Hall Kirch offers a history of the short-lived horse race introduced by Count Palatine Ottheinrich to Neuberg on the Donau. It is a shame that the essay only notes in its conclusion that the year after the last running of the race Ottheinrich converted to Protestantism. What, one wonders, might be the link between the cancelling of a horse race and religious persuasion? Peter Edwards' essay also focuses on one individual's use, breeding, buying, selling and pleasure in horses. Records of and by Sir Richard Newdigate II of Arbury Hall in Warwickshire offer a glimpse of English horse culture at the end of the seventeenth century, and Edwards argues that Newdigate's personal engagements reflect the symbolic importance of horses for the ruling classes. Riding horses for pleasure emblematised 'their natural superiority and effortless authority,' Edwards writes. This was 'particularly important in a country without a standing army or a professional law-enforcement agency' (131). A different kind of individual engagement is traced in Susan Maxwell's study of Duke Maximilian I of Bavaria's demands to the artist Johann König in the 1613–1614 negotiations over purchasing König's miniature 'Orpheus Among the Animals'. Maximilian's desire for improved accuracy in the depiction of some animals (alongside his apparent unproblematic acceptance of a unicorn) is linked to the increasing accuracy of natural

philosophy, and casting from life. The accuracy of the seventeenth century is not reflected in the accuracy of Maxwell's references unfortunately: both Edward Topsell, the author of the 1607 *Historie of Foure-Footed Beastes*, and William Ashworth Jr, historian of the 'emblematic worldview', are renamed 'John' in this article, and each have two entries in the index at the end of the collection.

Other essays in the collection focus on particular cultural productions. Cuneo's reading of Hans Baldung Grien's c1544 woodcut 'Bewitched Groom' in the context of hippological culture of the mid-sixteenth century offers an alternative reading of horse culture from that proposed by Kirch, Bayreuther and Edwards. It proposes that horse love could destabilise rather than reinforce elite cultural identity, with the woodcut offering an image of the dangers of over-abundant love for, and excessive expenditure on horses. Ingrid Cartwright's essay also focuses on a particular work of art, Jacques de Gheyn II's *Spanish Warhorse* (1603), reading it in the light of the changing military tactics of Maurits of Nassau, leader of the Dutch troops in the Battle of Nieuwpoort (1600). Recognising the need for improved control over cavalry horses, to allow for the reloading of the new pistols being used by riders, Maurits worked with the mathematician Simon Stevin to create new, more sensitive, and tailored bits. The life-size painting of the captured Spanish horse thus depicts with strange clarity the bit that signals personal control, military might, and a link between science and horsemanship in the period. Karen Raber turns to a literary text, Shakespeare's *Richard III*, and tracks the meaning of the boar imagery associated with Richard. She links this imagery to questions of Tudor rule – and to the dismissal of the violent and the anti-maternal. Elspeth Graham takes three key texts as her focus in a discussion of the perception of fish in early modern culture – Gervase Markham's advice on pond-keeping; Isaac Walton's *Complete Angler,* and Frans Snyder and Anthony Van Dyck's painting *The Fish Market*. She uses these to explore the various meanings of fish – as mobile, metaphorical, marketable beings.

Stepping back from the focus on single works, Abel A. Alves and Larry Silver offer broader overviews of early modern culture. Alves traces the range of attitudes towards animals in early modern Spanish Imperial society revealing the 'shades of grey' in human-animal relations (281). Used as objects, perceived as friends, he argues that attitudes from elite and popular culture are never simply singular. Larry Silver's essay is a survey of the emergence of

exotic animals in European art. It includes an excellent bibliography, but ranges widely over arguments dealt with in more detail in some of the works listed there. The only essay in the collection to engage explicitly with contemporary theoretical material is Louisa Mackenzie's analysis of the natural philosophers Guillaume Rondelet and Pierre Belon's discussions of the monstrous sea-monk and sea-bishop. Using ideas from Bruno Latour's *We Have Never Been Modern* she reads his conception of the modern constitution – 'the push and pull between purified and hybrid knowledge' (329) – to show how such 'epistemological tensions' as Latour finds in modernity can also be traced in the sixteenth century.

The two strongest essays in the collection – those by Corine Schleif and Sandra Swart – differ in the way in which they engage with animals. Schleif offers a broad-ranging reading of 'The Geese Book', a Mass Liturgy book written for the parish of St Lorenz in Nuremberg in the early sixteenth century; and Swart traces the centrality of livestock animals in the establishment of a 'refreshment station' for the Dutch East India Company at the Cape in South Africa in the mid-seventeenth century. In a way, these essays show just how animals might be used to think in new ways about so-called human cultures. Thus, Schleif looks at the animals depicted in the lower margins of the folio pages of the 'Geese Book' and reads them as real: that is, as based on living animals encountered in the world around the city, and which were being used to make the book's two volumes. Thus the essay begins with the making of parchment – 'about 280 calves were forced to give their skin for this gradual' (212). It then turns to think about quills, and about the leather binding. From this Schleif looks at the real animals encountered in and around the late medieval and early modern churches: dogs in graveyards, rats, the cats who caught them (and were given milk, the purchase of which was recorded). As well, she recognises the availability of exotic animals – the apes which appear in the margins of 'The Geese Book'. The essay also looks at the wild animals – wolves, bears, foxes – that threatened human civilisation, and it is these animals that Schleif reads allegorically: the wolf with an erection conducting the choir of eponymous geese is a predatory schoolman; the fox sneaking up on the unsuspecting geese – too busy concentrating on their singing to notice him – is an image of church authority.

The essay thus opens up a specific text to a wider context: of book production, international trade, pedagogy, church politics. It recognises the animals – on the margins, often reductively comic – as bearing meaning about animals, but also about the culture they lived in. 'The animals were somebody,' she writes (234), and as she shows, they were somebody worth thinking about.

Sandra Swart's essay traces the attempts to barter with the indigenous peoples of the Cape by the Dutch settlers, and the latter's misunderstanding of the natives' cultures. Swart recognises the Europeans' need (desperate need) for livestock animals as central to relations between different groups, and in doing this the essay reveals the significance of animals to history on two levels. At the local level the Dutch settlers' lack of understanding of the transient indigenous peoples' refusal to sell their animals created an atmosphere of uncertainty, and of hunger. On a wider level Swart, unlike the other contributors to this collection, is able to recognise in the evidence she has uncovered, which inevitably comes from the Dutch side of the encounters, a wider pattern in colonial relations that should resonate beyond the field of animal studies. 'An animal-sensitive history yields several surprises, exploding popular historical myths,' she writes. 'It helps to invert the triumphalist narrative of conquest. Settlement has too often been understood teleologically as inevitable, and the settlers have been credited with power they neither felt nor possessed' (258–59). Focusing on the animals, she proposes, will displace questions of '*land* use' with questions of '*animal* use' – how different groups farmed, negotiated sales, consumed. All these issues return the historian to the day-to-day engagements premised on trading, herding, eating. 'The comparative passivity of modern livestock,' she notes at one point, 'should not disguise their historical agency' (255). Domesticating animals was also, perhaps, a means of humanising history.

As a whole, *Animals and Early Modern Identity* is a rather mixed collection. Swart's essay, I think, should become required reading for everyone working in the field of animal history, while many of the other pieces are specific in their focus, meaning that their readerships will be more limited. The intended readership of the collection is often difficult to gauge. Where many essays are aimed at scholarly readers – some with limited, others with wider focus and resonance – Larry Silver's piece is a general overview, ideal for an undergraduate audience. But perhaps I am being unfair to regard this as a negative aspect of this collection. As animal

history develops as a field we need the detailed scholarly work, and the general overviews; and we also need work like that by Swart which reads animal history as central to wider historiographical debates. On that basis, perhaps finding all such in one collection might be seen as a good thing rather than as a hotchpotch.