

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Dissertations, Theses, and Student Research:
Department of English

English, Department of

5-2016

Didactic Children's Literature and the Emergence of Animal Rights

Daniel Froid

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/englishdiss>



Part of the [Children's and Young Adult Literature Commons](#), [Literature in English, British Isles Commons](#), and the [Literature in English, North America Commons](#)

Froid, Daniel, "Didactic Children's Literature and the Emergence of Animal Rights" (2016). *Dissertations, Theses, and Student Research: Department of English*. 108.

<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/englishdiss/108>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the English, Department of at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations, Theses, and Student Research: Department of English by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

DIDACTIC CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND THE EMERGENCE
OF ANIMAL RIGHTS

by

Daniel Froid

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts

Major: English

Under the Supervision of Professor Stephen C. Behrendt

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 2016

DIDACTIC CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND THE EMERGENCE
OF ANIMAL RIGHTS

Daniel Froid, M.A.

University of Nebraska, 2016

Adviser: Stephen C. Behrendt

The belief that animals deserve kindness or benevolence, now commonplace, began to emerge as a pressing social and philosophical problem in late-eighteenth-century discussions about the scope of “proper” feeling and behavior. This thesis investigates the history of that social feeling—how it emerged as normal—in the context of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century didactic children’s books, where those books’ authors frequently urged both emotional and social responses to others’ treatment of animals. By first examining the children’s books of British Romantic writer Charlotte Smith, and then linking her to American writers Sarah Josepha Hale and Lydia Sigourney, this thesis demonstrates the connections between didactic children’s literature and early animal-rights discourse in Britain and America. Smith, Sigourney, and Hale saw in their work the possibility of changing public opinion and civic life by encouraging their readers to adopt particular attitudes toward animals. In the context of didactic children’s literature, these writers sought to reform society by teaching children what they saw as proper behavior. By depicting animals as suitable objects of sympathetic concern, and in the process of establishing kindness to animals as an important signifier of middle-class identity—therefore normalizing such behavior—didactic children’s literature contributed in important ways to the rise of animal rights discourse.

This thesis is dedicated to my grandmother, Nora Froid.

Author's Acknowledgements

I would like to thank several people for their support in the process of writing this thesis.

Thank you to Dr. Stephen Behrendt, my adviser, for his kindness and generosity in providing advice, suggestions, and commentary in conversations and emails and on countless drafts. And thank you to Dr. Melissa Homestead and Dr. Laura White for their suggestions, insights, and support as my thesis committee members.

Thank you and much love to my family, especially my parents, Mark and Susan Froid, and my partner, Mitch Hobza.

Finally, I believe Sarah Josepha Hale would approve of the acknowledgement that pets have played no small role in the formation of my beliefs about animal life—and, indeed, in my desire to write this thesis at all. Thus I wish to acknowledge my love for the pets I have known, especially Charlie and Lolita.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Historical and Theoretical Contexts: The Civilizing Process	2
Charlotte Smith and Her Didactic Books for Children	10
Charlotte Smith's Transatlantic Influence	35
Works Cited	49

The belief that animals deserve our kindness or benevolence, now commonplace, began to emerge as a pressing social and philosophical problem in late-eighteenth-century discussions about the scope of “proper” feeling and behavior. In this thesis, I investigate the history of that social feeling—how it emerged as normal—in the context of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century didactic children’s books, where those books’ authors frequently urged both emotional and social responses to others’ treatment of animals.

The didactic books of Charlotte Smith (1749-1806) indicate her engagement with the educational aims of sensibility as well as her engagement with nascent discussions of animal rights, which emerging concern was, in large measure, a product of sensibility. These discourses evolved more or less concurrently in Britain and so relate in meaningful ways to contemporary British conceptions of manners and the family. However, records indicate that much of Smith’s work was also published in America, including her first book for children, *Rural Walks* (1795). The ongoing transatlantic exchange of books and literary culture, as well as the lack of copyright protection for British-authored works in America, makes it reasonable to assume that her other books for children may have been known in America as well. Smith’s children’s books demonstrate similar concerns as, and were possible influences on, the work of later American children’s writers, including Sarah Josepha Hale (1788-1879) and Lydia Sigourney (1791-1865). Hale was familiar with both Smith and Sigourney, and she included them as entries in her encyclopedia of women’s lives. I want to suggest that Smith’s work circulated in her home country as well as in America in ways that almost certainly ensured her successors in both countries had access to and very likely derived influence from her work. In this thesis I examine

the representation of animals in some British and American didactic children's literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, revealing how the portrayals of animals encourage child readers to become well-mannered citizens capable of critical thinking and empathetic reflection, including empathy for animals. I demonstrate here that, by depicting animals as suitable objects of sympathetic concern, and in the process of establishing kindness to animals as an important signifier of middle-class identity, and therefore normalizing such behavior, didactic children's literature contributed in important ways to the rise of animal rights discourse.

HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL CONTEXTS: THE CIVILIZING PROCESS

Like many women writers of the Romantic period, Charlotte Smith saw in her writing a political potential—the possibility of changing public opinion. As Anne Mellor has argued, “generations of children were taught to see the role of the nation differently” due to the growing presence of women's writing in the Romantic period (11). I wish to engage with this notion of political potential specifically as regards children's literature: the ways in which Smith used her children's literature to mold child readers as future participants in politics and society. Adrienne Wadewitz explains that “Smith saw a place for children in the public sphere founded on the discourse of sensibility”—a new conception of sensibility “in which empathy and social participation signified maturation” (91). For Smith, the public sphere necessarily involved the formative so-called private: the home, the domestic sphere. Her self-conception as political activist and participant in public discourse was inseparable from her identities as a poet, a novelist, a

writer of children's literature, and a mother. Indeed, referring to Smith's fiction, Mellor suggests that she "rejected the masculinized political realm altogether as irredeemably brutal, corrupt, and self-destructive, and construed the ideal political state as one in which men have been entirely absorbed into a feminized domesticity" (105). Smith's project of developing the potential of women as political-domestic leaders spread naturally and inevitably from her novels to her writing for children. Her children's books feature mother-teacher figures who, more than simply instilling good manners, attempt to form, or reform, their young charges as social and political actors.¹

Nature and animals emerge in Smith's children's books as significant components of her political pedagogy. Influenced by Rousseau, Smith and other children's writers sought to use nature as a starting point for emotional education. Many eighteenth-century British children's writers were primarily interested in what the discourse of sensibility, which centered on cultivating the ability to feel emotions in the proper way, had to say about the relationship between self and society. The revolutionary quality of the poetics of sensibility and sentiment lay in their development of new modes of expression, in part a result of Locke's approach to ideas as *sensational* forms. In Jerome McGann's words, sensibility and sentiment used "styles that were the dress of their new thoughts. These new thoughts . . . assume that no human action of any consequence is possible—including 'mental' action—that is not led and driven by feeling, affect, emotion" (6). Political action, then, is always already rooted in emotion. To develop children as political actors, one must begin by shaping their emotions.

¹ The figure of the maternal teacher is a common one in didactic children's literature of this period. For more on this figure, see Myers.

Paula Backscheider has observed that in the Age of Sensibility “many poets constructed themselves as the epitome of that structure of feeling. Charlotte Smith, Anna Seward, and almost every poet of the second half of the century thought of her- or himself as a person of sensibility. They expressed horror at the cruelty and violence and even insensitivity and rudeness they saw around them” (35).² This cruelty and violence includes that done to animals—a sentiment that began to emerge as both an emotional and a political possibility toward the end of the eighteenth century.³ In the context of children’s literature, these writers adapted Rousseau’s pedagogy: they wished children to cultivate their emotions, embracing Rousseau’s experiential learning but “to argue for the primacy of emotional experiences rather than physical” (Wadewitz 96) as a way of learning. Beyond developing the capacity to “feel” in more general ways, this conception of sensibility allowed also for an empathetic participation in political life: “Women in particular mobilized this new discourse as a political tool in order to assist the powerless—animals, children, the insane, debtors, the poor, and slaves” (96). Beginning with consciousness of the suffering of another and responding with compassion—in other words, by feeling sympathy—one could then move to empathy, a reflective enactment of another’s suffering oneself.⁴ Awareness of and empathy with suffering would lead to interventionary action, to ending that suffering. By encountering animals and reflecting

² For a detailed discussion of the discourse of sensibility and Charlotte Smith’s influence on other women writers, see Knowles.

³ Recently, in *The Animal Claim: Sensibility and the Creaturely Voice* (2015), Tobias Menely has linked the communicative possibilities of sensibility to animal-rights discourse, though he does not discuss children’s literature.

⁴ This imaginative reenactment of others’ experiences forms the basis of morality in Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). The political possibilities of sensibility echo his description of the process of sympathy: “By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them. His agonies, when they are thus brought home to ourselves, when we have thus adopted and made them our own, begin at last to affect us, and we then tremble and shudder at the thought of what he feels” (3).

on those encounters, then, children might learn to engage in empathetic feeling which could be politicized. This politicization included eventually transferring that sympathy to human subjects.⁵

Smith's work for children routinely features living things as objects of contemplation. Moreover, animals function as tools for manners instruction. In Smith's books for children, children's treatment of animals represents a bridge between the uncivilized child and the well-mannered adult. On one hand, the books' mother-teachers use animals as a kind of litmus test for civility: with their children, they observe and discuss the way others treat animals—the extent to which they successfully suppress their base impulses. Their observations lead to the formation of judgments of others' characters. (For example, if a child tortures animals, it is a sure sign that he is ill-mannered and poorly educated.) But on the other hand, animals also function as a tool of pedagogy: by studying and appreciating examples of both anthropomorphized and accurate animal behavior, children both 1) observe what proper human behavior looks like and 2) engage with animals on an empathetic, familiar level. Animals, then, are both familiar and other, social beings as well as objects of inquiry. These encounters are the basis of the civilizing process that gradually implants in children the manners and social sensibility of adults. One notable result of this process is the development of a sense of empathy for the nonhuman. In this thesis, I focus on the connection Smith establishes between animals and manners: to investigate how the civilizing process, as it manifested in Smith's work, results in both distance from and proximity to the nonhuman—distance

⁵ The political possibilities of this kind of feeling did not appeal to everyone: for instance, Sarah Trimmer, prominent eighteenth-century writer and critic of children's literature—and a staunch advocate of didactic literature—believed that humans should treat animals mercifully, but that “excessive sentimentality about animals” represented a moral danger (Jackson 144). Benevolence toward animals—if not kindness—was, for Trimmer and other evangelicals, a matter of religious goodness. For more, see Jackson, chapter six.

as one learns to suppress animalistic impulses, and closeness as one learns to empathize with the animal (as well as other humans). I do not mean to suggest, anachronistically, that Smith's books develop an agenda for a rudimentary form of animal rights. Rather, I want to suggest that, in the context of these books, the process of learning to become a civilized person necessarily involves an empathetic encounter with nonhuman animals, and that that encounter is inevitably politically charged, resulting in a growing conception of the nonhuman as a political entity.

In my discussion of the way in which children become civilized in Smith's educational books, I draw especially from Norbert Elias's *The Civilizing Process*, a foundational sociological text first published in 1939.⁶ In that book Elias develops a history and theory of civilization and civility, suggesting that our behavior moves toward ever greater automatic self-restraint in response to changes in the nature of the state in which individuals live and function. Social behaviors, from table manners to blowing one's nose, go through a process of increasing refinement. In other words, not through a conscious process but through a gradual, and largely unconscious, shift in psychology, we come to associate ever more, and ever more complex, rules with various behaviors, such that one gains increasing potential, first, to be disgusted by others' violations of behavior, and, second, to shame others accordingly.⁷ As social subjects we come to internalize the fear of shame and, in order to avoid it, exercise automatic self-restraint on

⁶ Dépelteau, Passiani, and Mariano note that, although the *International Sociological Association* in 1998 listed Elias's book as the seventh most important sociological text of the twentieth century, Elias lags somewhat beyond the "stars" of the discipline. They measure this by comparing citations of Elias to citations of other important sociologists. Still, he is undoubtedly a major figure in the field.

⁷ Elias's theory is open to charges of normativity, linearity, and teleology, as though "the civilizing process" describes a universal progression which all nation-states follow, toward some unclear end (i.e. of maximum "refinement" or civility). In this essay, I am primarily concerned with Elias's general observations about the historical progression of manners. For more on critiques of the book, see Dépelteau, Passiani, and Mariano.

our problematic behavior. Manners are, in essence, an ongoing, stylized concealment, via such self-restraint, of animalistic impulses and behaviors. Social codes govern both interactions with fellow humans and biologically necessary behaviors such as eating and excretion.

Elias focuses, of course, on human interaction; for Elias, animals serve primarily to stimulate processes that reveal the extent of humans' increasing civility or refinement. This refinement manifests itself primarily as an increasing sense of courtesy toward, or concern with facilitating the comfort of, others. Others should not bear witness to intimate acts of the body or to behavior that appears unreasoned; if they do, such observation is shameful. He writes, "It is highly characteristic of civilized people that they are denied by socially instilled self-controls from spontaneously touching what they desire, love, or hate" (170).

One can observe this change in emotion, or affect, in the shifting nature of human relationships with animals. Elias describes "one of the festive pleasures of Midsummer Day" in sixteenth-century Paris: "to burn alive one or two dozen cats" (171). However, as he points out, this event "only appears worse [than torture and public executions] because the joy in torturing living creatures is revealed so nakedly and purposelessly. . . . The revulsion aroused in us by the mere report of the institution, a reaction which must be taken as 'normal' for the present-day standard of affect control, demonstrates once again the long-term change of the affect economy" (171). That such behavior used to be a source of pleasure, and that the very notion would cause people to blanch from the nineteenth century onward, indicates the extent of our acquired refinement—and thus the changes in our emotional responses. The relatively greater comfort animals enjoyed

beginning in the nineteenth century—comfort, at least, insofar as they were not burned alive at festivals—suggests, then, less courtesy, an inclusion of animals within the sphere of the respectable, but rather more a greater suppression of our basest impulses.

Still, the improved treatment of animals also represents, to be sure, a change in the era's understanding of the animal, an alteration facilitated by the literature of sensibility among other factors. In her study of talking animals in British children's fiction, Tess Cosslett notes that the "animal story was central to the rise of a separate children's literature in the eighteenth century, and was intimately linked to the progressive attitudes that prevailed in enlightened educational circles at that time" (9). Those circles moved in increasingly urban spaces, out of nature and in different relationships to animals. The Industrial Revolution and such agricultural laws as the Enclosure Acts forced rural laborers to migrate from country to city. Mechanized production processes reduced the need for animal power; when animals labored in the city, they did so as transportation for people and goods and as entertainment (e.g. in menageries). Animals were in fact a prominent presence in city life. As Teresa Manguerra observes, "Londoners of the nineteenth century lived in a veritable animal sensorium. Responses to this intimate apprehension of living, working, preening, suffering, dying, and dead animals varied intensely." (15). City-dwellers, then, encountered animals every day, but in contexts much different from those of the past; those encounters provoked wildly divergent feelings from disgust at animals' perceived filthiness to sorrow for their mistreatment. Peter Heymans has suggested that environmental alienation formed the basis for eighteenth-century identification with animal suffering. He claims that the "economic and geographical marginalization of the animal appears to have stimulated its

emancipation, leading as it did to a sense that animals were independent organisms rather than simply created for agricultural or industrial purposes” (20). To be sure, animals were not entirely marginalized. Rather, they were recontextualized as more people gathered in cities and encountered animals in new settings. This urban reframing of human-animal relations provided the ground on which the middle-class could conceive of more compassionate attitudes toward animals. For Smith, the middle class is not only the most suitable but in fact the only class capable of such attitudes. In her books, the lower classes lack the education to treat animals properly—they do not know any better—and the upper classes are ignorant and dissolute. Upper-class children act as foils, presenting wrong attitudes which contrast with the middle-class protagonists. Smith may seek to address a sense of environmental alienation by writing books in which mothers lead their children directly into firsthand encounters with nature, outside of the city. She writes for an audience whose parents, members of the middle class, would probably resemble her fictional mothers—in other words, for those who would have had the time, energy, and inclination to contribute to a nascent “animal rights” discourse.

As I have suggested, Smith explicitly saw her work as political and therefore as a powerful potential vehicle for public influence. G.J. Barker-Benfield observes that late-eighteenth-century writers began to understand the potential of children’s literature as a likely medium for reform: “The sensationalist assumptions of environmental psychology and the ductility of young and tender nerves made children’s reading a logical route by which reform could be implemented” (236). It is reasonable, then, to read Smith’s work for children as instructional as well as political on a level with the rest of her work. A study of animal presence in Smith’s works for children reveals animals’ emergence as

tools of mannerly instruction at the same time that they became beings worthy of genuine emotional and political concern. The development of animal-rights discourse coincided with a number of other historical changes; Smith's children's books are a product of this moment in history. Let me clarify that I use Elias's theory principally to indicate where we can locate Smith's books in the history of manners. And as Smith attempted to instill manners in children, by using animals as she does, she encourages and normalizes kindness to animals. This normalization was necessary to the progressive development of animal rights and reform movements throughout the nineteenth century.

CHARLOTTE SMITH AND HER DIDACTIC BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

Among all of Charlotte Smith's books for children, the presence of animals is most significant in *Rural Walks: In Dialogues. Intended for the Use of Young Persons* (1795), her first, and *Conversations Introducing Poetry: Chiefly on Subjects of Natural History. For the Use of Children and Young Persons* (1804), both her last children's book and the last of her books published in her lifetime. In the preface to the latter, Smith elucidates her pedagogical aims, which are explicitly tied to a love of nature. She writes, "These conversations and poems were originally written for the use of a child of five years old, who, on her arrival in England, could speak no English, but who was a lover of birds, flowers, and insects. As the child grew in age and understanding, the work grew with her" (vi).⁸ The content of the book becomes increasingly more complex; Smith intends

⁸ Smith never indicates the nationality of the child. However, the child is clearly not a native-born English speaker, as she imagines that she *arrives* in England at the age of five. Given Smith's interest in the French Revolution, one might surmise that this child is a refugee from France. Thus the *Conversations* would take

the book to become more difficult as the child-reader ages and gains a greater command of the language. Smith also makes clear that the book will equally well suit a lover of nature and its smaller creatures. Animals feature more prominently in the early chapters and gradually give way to a greater focus on nature; animals, which can more easily be anthropomorphized, are easier for children to comprehend, while stories about their lives are easier to take pleasure in than stories about flowers and bodies of water. Smith's ideal reader is one who will heed the lessons of the early book and continue to grow as one who appreciates nature in the fullest sense of the word. As a result, the book maintains an overt stance on the natural and moral environment: it assumes an audience of children who already appreciate nature, and it encourages children to continue to regard nature with respect and reverence throughout their lives.

The unusual form of *Conversations*—a loose narrative divided into “conversations” and woven through with poetry—facilitates animals’ dual function as models of suitable behavior and opportunities in which to practice empathy. This book was originally intended as an educational miscellany—a collection of poems—a form which Smith rejected in favor of the dialogic narrative studded with Smith’s own poems along with some by her sister, Catherine Ann Dorset.⁹ Dahlia Porter claims that the exuberant, eclectic spirit of the miscellany form nonetheless infuses the book. She writes, “Smith’s playful confluences often exhibit the institutional face of natural history collecting. . . . Reading poetry and understanding its forms stands in for observing the subjects of natural history; collecting verses amounts to the same activity as collecting

on a further political urgency: to shape children along certain ideological lines in order to create a desirable political climate in the future.

⁹ Smith’s poems are typically identified in-text as having been written by Mrs. Talbot, while Dorset’s poems are attributed to the Talbot children’s aunt.

specimens; Emily's commonplace book of poetry serves the same educational purpose as a visit to the museum" (36). *Conversations Introducing Poetry* is, then, a literary trip to the museum, with a compilation of verses taking the place of physical specimens. But if this approach to Smith's subject matter demonstrates the pedagogy of the miscellany (and the museum), it also represents a passive, even pacifist, method of interacting with the natural world. Smith deliberately chooses animals not typically associated with hunting, fishing, or husbandry in favor of those more suitable to a figurative natural history museum. She also picks common animals that any child may encounter in a walk through the woods: no exotic creatures appear within her pages. These animals include, then, varieties of birds, mollusks, insects, and small mammals. When larger mammals and fish do appear, they typically feature not as subjects of investigation or contemplation but as elements of anecdotes or points of reference. All of the "specimens" that appear in the book escape the literal act of collecting. Instead, the children in the book engage with them emotionally, from a distance.

One of the mother-characters' primary functions in Smith's children's literature is to encourage children to move from the home to the world outside—to mediate encounters with nature. Wadewitz identifies Rousseau as a significant influence on Smith's children's books in this respect. Opposing Locke's emphasis on rationality in one's education, Rousseau instead values direct experience and physical passion. Personal interaction with the natural world forms the basis of his pedagogy until one is old enough to understand human emotions. Indeed, just as Rousseau's pedagogical program situates children in nature so that they may learn directly from it, Smith's children's books emphasize the importance of children's interactions with nature.

However, for Rousseau, the natural world represents, at least ideally, an uncorrupted space free of cultural influence. On this point Smith's schema differs significantly, for every encounter with nature in her children's books is mediated by human influence. Indeed, the narrative in *Conversations* is largely built around a series of poetic addresses to animal subjects. The characters encounter nonhuman others and immediately record and reformulate their experiences as poetry. Moreover, the mother-teachers routinely anthropomorphize animals, using them as tools to illustrate to children what manners look like. To borrow Erving Goffman's formulation, she attempts to teach children how to play the "information game" successfully. This term refers to "a potentially infinite cycle of concealment, discovery, false revelation, and rediscovery" (8) in which a social actor attempts to transmit a particular impression of herself. This impression is received and analyzed by a social witness; as Goffman points out, in every case "the witness is likely to have the advantage over the actor" (9). Therefore the actor must exert as much conscious, deliberate effort as possible to give off the correct impression. The consequences of losing the information game are precisely what Elias describes: being subjected to social shame.

Elias similarly identifies appearances and impressions as the most significant factors in social encounters. Feelings of delicacy and shame advanced throughout the eighteenth century, as Elias observes in the changing rhetoric of contemporary etiquette manuals. Such feelings arose as ways to govern bodily impulses (e.g. urination or spitting) and emotional outbursts in public encounters with upper-class people. He writes, "Stricter control of impulses and emotions was first imposed by those of high social rank on their social inferiors or, at most, their social equals. . . . [R]estraint on the drives was at

first imposed only in the company of others, i.e., more consciously on social grounds. And both the kind and the degree of restraint corresponded to the social position of the person imposing them” (117). Only later did the family become the primary site of “instilling drive control” (117). In private, restraint was unnecessary; the earliest cases of people’s attempts to disguise their baser habits occur in social situations, in which they might be *seen* and judged accordingly.

The contestable nature of manners and the constant negotiation of social encounters in society make Rousseau’s thesis, that society corrupts nature’s innocence, understandable. In contrast, Smith actively works to civilize her readers. In the preface to *Rural Walks*, Smith, referring to the plethora of children’s books already in existence, states her aims as follows:

In this little Work, therefore, I have confined myself rather to what are called *les petites morales*. To repress discontent; to inculcate the necessity of submitting cheerfully to such situations as fortune may throw them into; to check that flippancy of remark, so frequently disgusting in girls of twelve or thirteen; and to correct the errors that young people often fall into in conversation, as well as to give them a taste for the pure pleasures of refinement, and the sublime beauties of Nature; has been my intention.
(*Rural Walks* iii-iv)

Smith’s aims are, in several ways, decidedly not Rousseauian. Smith’s intention is not to preserve a sense of idealized childhood innocence that society will soon corrupt. Instead, she wishes to educate young readers’ feelings, repressing such unpleasant and unsocial emotions as discontent and flippancy. She wants to improve their conversational skills

and their ability to present themselves in public. She also aims to cultivate their taste, considering nature as one pleasure—an important one but, still, one—among many. Smith’s method is Rousseauian, as Wadewitz suggests; but her goals are Lockean. The ideal result is therefore a child with a discriminating appreciation for nature and animals who is, at the same time, capable of demonstrating civility to other people in public, social situations.

In *Rural Walks*, Smith emphasizes the characteristics of kindness, benevolence, and thoughtfulness. These are the proper traits of middle-class people, as Smith is anxious to show. The middle class typically defines itself in relation to those above and below it; here, accordingly, the wealthy and impoverished alike prove themselves to be rude, malevolent, and/or thoughtless. The book follows Mrs. Woodfield as she looks after and educates her own children—their father has died—as well as her niece, Caroline, whose father raised her with “notions so different from those in which Mrs. Woodfield wished to educate her own daughters, that it could hardly fail to interfere with her present scheme of life” (viii). Caroline’s position as outsider provides Mrs. Woodfield with the impetus to teach her the right behavior in various situations. The book is, in a sense, a kind of didactic *Bildungsroman* that follows Caroline’s growth from spoiled brat to well-mannered young woman, while likewise tracing the education of the relatively uncorrupted Woodfield children.¹⁰ It is worth noting that Caroline has suffered from the “recent loss of her mother” (xi). Mrs. Woodfield has offered to take her in for this reason, in order to provide Caroline with a suitable maternal role model. Mrs. Woodfield thus

¹⁰ Smith released a sequel to *Rural Walks* a year later, *Rambles Farther* (1796). *Rambles Farther* follows Caroline and the Woodfield children into their teenage years. This more tightly plotted book has a greater focus on social life and manners, perhaps to appeal to a somewhat older child who, having learned the lessons of *Rural Walks*, now “rambles farther” into society. Because of the comparatively minimal presence of animals in it, I do not examine it in this paper.

replaces Caroline's mother, serving as the sole educator for all of the children in the book. In this way, Smith emphasizes the importance of the mother figure in one's education: manners must be properly learned not just in the immediate domestic space, but in a broader homofamilial setting.

In *Rural Walks* as well as in *Conversations*, the most significant animal-centered episodes occur early on, emphasizing that the lessons animal behavior can help illustrate are best learned at a young age. Caroline's fundamental character is demonstrated early in the book, when a laborer finds a dormouse and offers it to Caroline and Mrs. Woodfield's daughters, Henrietta and Elizabeth. Mrs. Woodfield, after lecturing the girls on the dormouse's behavior, offers it to Elizabeth, not Caroline. She says, "I do not ask *you*, Caroline, because I know you have rather a dislike to such things" (33). The girls' characters are solidified by their comments about the dormouse. Henrietta exclaims, "Oh! You sweet, little, soft, innocent thing! I will take all sort of care of you" while Caroline says, "I think I should like to be a dormouse, if I were always to live in the country in the winter" (33). Henrietta immediately, and properly, demonstrates sympathy for the animal, pledging to take care of it. Although Caroline creatively translates dormouse behavior into human terms—the dormouse hibernates, and Caroline, like the dormouse, imagines the pleasure of a warm nap in winter—Caroline's remark reveals her selfishness in privileging her needs over that of the creature. The girls' reactions form an opposition between kindness (which is aimed at others) and selfishness. Mrs. Woodfield chides Caroline for her unfeeling nature, shaming her into exercising self-restraint and learning from the Woodfields. As Elizabeth demonstrates here, once animals' pain became "visible" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, sympathy and abhorrence at the

thought of cruelty were two of the greatest political motivators. David Perkins observes, “Once it began to be seen, the torment of animals was a constant, intimate, pervading fact that strongly motivated because it appalled” (13). The politicized discourse of sensibility, which called for empathy as a way to social action, likely facilitated this awareness, which was also, of course, a transference of sympathy from oppressed and disenfranchised *human* sufferers to animals. And thus philosophers as well as poets and writers of fiction emphasized kindness to animals as an anodyne—not to mention a signifier of “proper” feeling. In this scene, Elizabeth’s witness of the dormouse’s suffering compels her to act; this behavior represents the kind of significant training that Smith and many of her contemporaries saw as essential to middle-class children’s social and political development.

Kindness to animals was a device common to contemporary children’s literature. Conservative educators such as Sarah Trimmer and Hannah More drew from Locke, who emphasized kindness to animals as a way to teach upper-class male children about social hierarchy. Christine Kenyon-Jones comments on this inheritance: “Writing, not as Locke was, for ‘gentlemen’s sons,’ but for children of both sexes of the ‘middling sort’ and the ‘lower orders,’ they used the difference between humans and animals as a way of teaching children the difference between social classes, and as a source of injunctions to those in all ranks of society to be satisfied with their lot” (57).¹¹ Throughout *Rural Walks*, Smith, like More and Trimmer, uses kindness to animals as a metaphor for class behaviors. Even animals have their place in the order of living beings, and the most civil among them—as hazy as that term becomes when applied to animals—respect the order

¹¹ Kenyon-Jones also observes that the “application of this human or humane system to animals, as promulgated by Locke and his followers, is not found in Rousseau” (59)—another of Smith’s divergences from Rousseau.

itself and treat all its members with kindness. However, Smith's aims are not conservative, and her concern is less with emphasizing satisfaction with one's lot than with pointing out the moral superiority of the middle class. Thus Caroline, whose upbringing suggests comfort and privilege, reveals herself to be morally flawed and in need of reeducation. This anxiety about middle class identity runs throughout all of Smith's work. Having been abandoned by her husband and left penniless, the money in his hands, Smith was dependent on her writing to support herself and her children. As Edward Copeland observes, "the necessary charade of gentility was her crown of thorns" (202). Smith may have imagined an alternative, woman-centered political realm, but she nonetheless felt constrained in her own personal circumstances by gentility's trappings. It makes sense, then, that her children's books sought to inculcate in their readers the embodied knowledge of middle-class identity. In learning how to project and maintain that identity, they would therefore navigate society successfully.

Rural Walks features multiple episodes in which its young protagonists somehow come into possession of a small animal, like the dormouse; the later episodes demonstrate that Caroline is learning to treat them well, even if only incrementally. Mrs. Woodfield's son Edward pays some boys who have stolen some birds from their nests. In response, the Woodfields attempt to build them a new nest. During this episode, Caroline not only joins them, thus demonstrating her ability to act as a result of feeling. She also demonstrates an important signifier of her middle-class maturation: the ability to judge members of other classes and their behaviors. Mrs. Woodfield reflects, while talking with Caroline, that the Woodfield boys do not have "that disposition to cruelty which is said to be inherent in human nature, and which I have sometimes thought really is so" (55).

Caroline responds, “I am sure I have thought so, very often, when I have seen how cruel the lower people are to animals” (55). This statement emphasizes that the Woodfield boys, despite being English boys typically prone to cruelty, are kind, because they are middle-class. They have transcended the tendency toward cruelty that the “lower people” cannot help but exhibit. Smith once again reveals her Lockean influence in Mrs. Woodfield’s suggestion that humans are innately cruel. While the birds’ torturers are not specifically identified class-wise, Caroline associates them with “the lower people.” That is, she locates them clearly outside the middle class, which is the point. The suggestion is that they are too ignorant to restrain themselves properly (this suggestion is true of the upper classes, too, although the contention is that their failures are rooted less in ignorance than in corruption). Thanks to Mrs. Woodfield’s influence, Caroline (like the Woodfield boys) has proven herself to belong to that group: she feels proper sorrow for the birds and can identify improper behavior among other classes.

This conversation on nightingales leads to a disquisition on hunting, in which Smith prefigures nineteenth-century discussions of the topic. Mrs. Woodfield advises her children “in every case, to put yourself into the place of whatever creature you are about to injure or oppress” (59). Her advice encourages her children to exercise their imagination as well as to practice empathy, to summon up the animals’ probable feelings upon being captured. Empathy functions as a way of teaching the children to be imaginative and to practice self-restraint. If they can feel the proper emotions, they will not be tempted to behave badly.

Mrs. Woodfield’s feelings about hunting likewise reflect the need to develop proper feeling. When asked about hunting, she replies, “So far as it becomes necessary to

kill for our support, the animals Providence has allotted to us, there is nothing criminal in it; but to prolong their tortures is highly so, or wantonly to destroy any living creatures that are innoxious” (60). Mrs. Woodfield suggests that killing animals is a necessary evil, an undertaking to be treated with moral seriousness. Thus hunting, the killing of animals rendered into a ritualized pleasure, and a hobby typically associated with the upper class, is morally suspect. Her comments are directly in line with later real-world polemics against hunting. For example, David Perkins refers to William Howitt’s 1838 argument against hunting: “the killing of an animal, much less the infliction of suffering, is not the aim in hunting, not the source of its pleasure, but is merely an adjunct, which, says Howitt, ‘you would spare to your victim if you could’” (70). Yet again, animals’ suffering is the main object of concern. What Smith seeks to teach to children is precisely what adults approximately forty years later would argue, which may suggest that, to some extent, discourse concerning sentient animals in Smith’s time had tangible effects.

Conversations Introducing Poetry contains similar directed conversations, in which the mother figure, here Mrs. Talbot, leads her children toward understanding some principle of correct behavior toward animals. Early in the book, Smith represents the practice of collecting specimens as an act of violence. In the first conversation, Mrs. Talbot insists repeatedly to her children, George and Emily, that they must not capture a green-chafer they have found. She tells them, “I do not think you would find so much satisfaction in it, as in letting your chafer enjoy his liberty,” and, when pressed, she claims that “I had rather [Emily] would not [keep the chafer]; first, because it is cruel to the insect; and also because, pretty as it is, this sort of chafer has an offensive smell when touched; and you will find, Emily, your prisoner a disagreeable inmate. Instead,

therefore, of contriving the captivity of the chafer, let us address a little poem to it” (12, 13). The poem provides an opportunity to combine empirical observation with imaginative creativity: the children reformulate their discussion in poetic terms, “translating” what they can observe about the chafer into literary terms and then elaborating on those observations to fill out the poem.

From the beginning Mrs. Talbot makes clear that animals are for observing, not collecting; addressing a poem to it replaces the violent act of capture by figuratively capturing it in verse. By addressing an ode *to* the green-chafer, furthermore, Mrs. Talbot grants the animal dignity, as well as that sort of eternal life frequently attributed to the subjects of poems. Its textual preservation here preserves the green-chafer past its inevitable physical (and natural) death. The words Mrs. Talbot uses emphasizes to her children the morally charged nature of the act: liberty, cruel, inmate, captivity. Collecting, here, is a kind of imprisonment. Not only does Smith seek to educate her readers about the animals themselves, then—to teach them natural history—but she seeks also to develop their moral sensibilities.¹² But of course, Smith tempers pleasure with instruction. As young children, George and Emily are particularly unaware of the moral implications of capturing an animal (as opposed to older children or adults who may be less innocent). The poem that Emily addresses to the green-chafer develops these themes, but instead of remaining the static object of care and concern, the green-chafer becomes a moral actor itself. The poem enumerates the benefits of the chafer’s environment: the flower in which it resides offers “crystal dew” to drink and shelter “among the petals white” (14, ll. 5, 8). The poem exhorts the green-chafer to practice non-violence: “But do

¹² The possibility of moral development through observation and reflection is evident in other contemporary practices such as visiting asylums and prisons as a form of entertainment.

not wound the flower so fair / That shelters you in sweet repose” (14, ll. 11-12). There is a suggestion here of stewardship, of the chafer’s responsibility to treat with care the flower that returns the favor by offering protection—which, of course, is a projection unfelt by the chafer. This is a model for children to follow: they, too, should treat the environment around them, including living creatures, responsibly and with care, with the expectation that nature will offer reciprocal benefits. Thus this poem offers a model of ethical community, an organic whole in which proper feeling leads to prompt and reciprocal action. The poem’s final stanza clarifies which emotions Mrs. Talbot would like the children to imagine in such a symbiotic relationship:

Insect! be not like him who dares
On pity's bosom to intrude,
And then that gentle bosom tears
With baseness and ingratitude. (ll. 13-16)

These final lines juxtapose a green-chafer’s safety with the literature of sensibility, suggesting “the real resonance of female sensibility, which needs some action to display itself, some male aggression and sexual power to threaten it” (Todd 112). Smith warns of the dangers of the insect’s potential to deceive, awakening the flower’s pity only to exploit it. This is the reverse of the notion of insect-as-steward: the insect as (potential) cruel charlatan. By addressing a poem to the green-chafer, the children also suggest awareness of the imposture. They are capable of illustrating what improper behavior looks like—and therefore they may avoid doing it.

The conversation quickly turns to the subject of lady-birds; the poem that follows, one of Dorset's, more explicitly engages with the discourse of sensibility.¹³ The poem begins with a question: "Oh, lady-bird, lady-bird, why dost thou roam / So far from thy comrades, so distant from home?" (16, ll. 1-2). Interestingly, Dorset mentions the *comrades* before the lady-bird's home: this choice of syntax may merely ensure optimal scansion, but it also emphasizes that the lady-bird's social affiliations are as important as the domestic ones. Here Dorset echoes Smith's politics, in which she sought to explore the role of women as domestic leaders whose options might include (re)forming children as future political agents. For Smith, mothers' duties extend to social leadership. This politics heavily informed her novels, including *Desmond* (1792), which, as Anne Mellor explains, "implicitly documents a powerful political argument with which we are now well acquainted: the personal *is* political, the day-to-day experiences of individuals record the subtle and myriad ways in which power is exercised by one person over another, especially in the most private and unregulated spaces of the family and home" (114). "To the Lady-bird" emphasizes these social and political dimensions of the domestic sphere. Peril arises when the lady-bird leaves her proper home and enters the human domain:

Too soon you may find that your trust is misplaced,
 When by some cruel child you are wantonly chased;
 And your bright scarlet coat, so bespotted with black,
 May be torn by his barbarous hands from your back.
 And your smooth jetty corselet be pierced with a pin,
 That the urchin may see you in agonies spin; —
 For his bosom is shut against pity's appeals,

¹³ Lady-birds are known as lady bugs in American usage.

He has never been taught that a lady-bird feels (ll. 9-16)

The human world is fraught with dangers, predominantly in the form of thoughtless children who will torture lady-birds—children who have presumably not (yet) begun to learn good manners. The language Dorset uses to describe these children is telling: the child here is not only cruel but, in fact, barbarous: uncivilized by definition. Moreover, the child is an *urchin*. The OED entry for “urchin” indicates that its usage—specifically the sense meaning not just any little boy but a poorly or raggedly dressed one—arose from 1780 onward. The threat Dorset details here, then, is that of barbarous lower-class boys, who lack a sense of empathy because they have never been taught, never been civilized. Dorset’s use of language here marks this text as specifically aimed at the bourgeoisie, and it underlines her educational intent. The poem addresses parents, who may very well read the book aloud, as much as child readers: parents must not neglect to educate their children, lest they end up behaving in a morally coarse manner only suitable to the lower classes.

The poem ends with a command to the lady-bird to return home: “Then fly, simple lady-bird! fly away home! / No more from your nest and your children to roam” (17, ll. 21-22).¹⁴ The lady-bird has her own parental duty: to stay home with her children, presumably to do her duty as mother and provide them with necessary education. Like “To a Green-Chafer, on a White Rose,” this poem emphasizes the importance of reciprocity between local environments and their inhabitants. The green-chafer exists in a

¹⁴ These lines are almost certainly a reference to the nursery rhyme “Ladybird, Ladybird”:

Ladybird, ladybird,
Fly away home,
Your house is on fire
And your children all gone (ll. 1-4)

Iona and Peter Opie note that similar versions of this rhyme exist in many languages. The earliest printed version in English can be found in *Tommy Thumb’s Pretty Song Book* (1744). For more information, see Opie 264.

kind of symbiotic relationship with its environment which it must not exploit or destroy; similarly, the lady-bird belongs home, where she may do her “environmental” duty, being a mother, and therefore also a good citizen, and staying with her children. This may seem contradictorily conservative, to emphasize the importance of staying home for the lady-bird. But instead this directly relates to Smith’s personal understanding of the home and feminized domesticity as a distinct, alternative political space. In these poems, once the creatures step outside of their proper roles, whether to interact with their environment improperly or to leave it, trouble ensues. The lady-bird therefore functions as a kind of complex metaphor. By endowing the lady-bird with emotion, the children can empathetically imagine her existence and therefore learn not to harm her. But at the same time that she is a pedagogical object, she is also a subject, a model of adult behavior for children to follow.

Smith’s interest in environment also informs the next animal poem, “The Snail,” which is, additionally, a self-consciously edited text. The poem concentrates on the shell as more than merely a home, but instead also a site of defense for the snail against possible incursions. These dangers come from nature and humanity alike. The snail hides “Within that house secure . . . / When danger imminent betides / Of storm” (18, ll. 5-8).

But when he comes into contact with humans, he recoils:

Give but his horns the slightest touch,
His self-collecting power is such,
He shrinks into his house with much

Displeasure. (18, ll. 9-12)

Smith anthropomorphizes the snail by noting that to touch the snail would cause “displeasure”; encroaching on his territory, as by an unwelcome touch, would be rude. The snail is further anthropomorphized in its characterization. “The Snail” is based on William Cowper’s translation of Vincent Bourne’s original poem of the same name, but it is substantively altered by Smith’s emendations, which Mrs. Talbot consciously notes in the text. Mrs. Talbot explains to her children that she has revised Bourne’s poem, “Not, however, expecting to make the poetry better, but rather to make my snail a less selfish and epicurean animal than he appears in Vincent Bourne” (18). In other words, the rewritten poem transforms the snail into a more suitable model of behavior.

If, as Dahlia Porter suggests, *Conversations Introducing Poetry* “records Smith’s recognition that museums and miscellanies shared both an educational agenda and a (textual or spatial) structuring principle,” then “The Snail” exemplifies these dual aims (37). Following the addresses to the green-chafer and the lady-bird, it continues the theme of the importance of natural environment to one’s character. Smith selectively, and strategically, arranges “The Snail” to follow thematically similar poems; she also edits it to conform to her educational intent. Bourne’s original emphasizes solitude, a pleasure: “Thus, hermit-like, his life he leads / Nor partner of his banquet needs” (Cowper 128, ll. 17-18). But the snail’s solitude becomes, in Smith’s revision, *independence*: the snail “Alone, on simple viands feeds, / Nor at his humble banquet needs / Attendant” (19, ll. 18-20). The snail is humble but self-sufficient enjoying simple food and lacking the accoutrements of the wealthy, who would employ servants. The snail, then, is anthropomorphized; this poem offers an exemplar of proper behavior. The final stanza stresses the importance of this “blessed” independence: though the snail is “without

society,” “He finds 'tis pleasant to be free, / And that he's blest who need not be Dependent” (19, 21-24). This is a lesson that children can take to heart: dependence on others is undesirable, even if they would reject the snail's solitude. This lesson, moreover, comes in an appealing form— “The Snail” is among the more comedic of the poems in *Conversations*. Smith employs disproportionately grandiose terms to describe the snail's activities, as if a snail could have a banquet or employ attendants. Smith also renders him, amusingly, as a cranky hermit, his home a refuge from natural dangers like storms as well as from other creatures: he shrinks into his shell not due to animal instinct but from a kind of misanthropy. Thus Smith combines instruction and pleasure; the comedy makes the poem's lesson easier to digest.

Smith presents the first three animal poems of *Conversations* as the Talbot children's addresses to animals they observe on their walks. These animals are objects of concern—one thread that unites all three is the possibility of danger, often from human actions—but the poems' anthropomorphism teaches children proper behavior. They must treat animals with care but they must also learn not unquestioningly to obey, as the insects do, the poems' apostrophic commands, to reside within their proper environment and not to interfere with those of others.

Much of the book continues in a similar vein: the children observe an animal in its natural habitat and proceed to recite and discuss a poem that didactically illustrates an anthropomorphized behavior. Significantly, poems addressed to or featuring animals become gradually less prominent as the book continues, suggesting that it is most important to instill in children the proper attitude to animals early on. This method of address suggests Smith's ideological position, as discussed earlier. Neither a Rousseauian

nor a Lockean, Smith does not create child characters who roam freely in an uncorrupted state of nature but she nonetheless suggests nature's power to shape receptive children's minds for the better. That a maternal authority figure mediates all of the Talbot children's encounters with nature indicates the extent to which, even as children, they are already imbricated within the world of culture.

In this way, Smith anticipates a later, larger movement in children's literature in which its writers considered the significance of children's acculturation. In *Artful Dodgers* (2009), Marah Gubar attempts to contrast Victorian and Edwardian children's books with those of the Romantic era, suggesting that the authors of the former eschewed Romantic primitivism and a simplistic idea of children's naiveté. Gubar claims that Golden Age children's writers "conceive of child characters and child readers as socially saturated beings"; she questions the possibility or extent of children's agency given their imbrication within the culture and social codes of their time (xx). Following Gubar, I would suggest that Smith represents a kind of missing link in her analysis: Smith, too, conceives of her child characters as "socially saturated beings," rather than as representative of the primitivism Gubar charges pre-Victorian children's writers with embracing.¹⁵ Smith actively works to refine the manners of her child readers so that they can successfully and virtuously navigate social life.

¹⁵ Gubar seems to suggest a rather abrupt trajectory for representations of children in British literature, from the Romantic interest in childhood innocence, as in Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," to a Victorian interest in children as acculturated beings. Smith does not fit comfortably into either ideology—indeed, such a dichotomy is overly simplistic. Smith saw childhood as the opportune time to cultivate a relationship to nature, but she also consciously engaged with and directed children's acculturation. She is certainly not the only writer capable of representing such a missing link for Gubar's claims. Many popular pre-Victorian children's writers conceived of children differently from Gubar's characterization of Romanticism, including Mary Martha Sherwood who wrote the popular *History of the Fairchild Family* series, beginning in 1818.

Moreover, the forms that Smith deploys in her children's books play with the notion of children's agency. Her books are dialogues; Mrs. Talbot, Mrs. Woodfield, and the other mother-teachers may lead or even dominate the conversations, but the children, too, engage in complex discussions with them, attempting to think through moral and social problems collectively. Unlike the "artful dodgers" that Gubar locates among Golden Age children's book characters, Smith's child characters do not "exploit and capitalize on the resources of adult culture (rather than simply being subjugated and oppressed)" (xx); her intentions ultimately remain determinedly didactic. Still, it is worth noting that the landscape of Romantic-era children's literature is diverse, their writers' ideologies flexible and even innovative, rather than monolithic and oppressive as Gubar seems to suggest. And, further, I would argue that, although Smith is concerned with controlling the nature of children's acculturation—developing them into morally responsible middle-class subjects—this is not inherently a form of moral, intellectual, or cultural subjugation or oppression. The nature of the dialogue form, in fact, encourages child-readers to develop agency in thinking. Certainly, Smith orchestrates all of the conversations, arguably manipulating child and adult characters alike in order to serve her ideological ends. But I reject the sort of reading that Gubar provides, which seems overly suspicious about authors and genre alike. The simpler explanation is that the dialogue form demonstrates to children the importance of discussion and community in forming an understanding of morality, giving them plentiful examples and thereby granting them the confidence to try to work through complicated ethical issues for themselves, with their own family and friends.

The ethical arguments that *Conversations* dramatizes reveals a hierarchy of cruelty, again suggesting Locke's supposition that people seem innately inclined to cruelty to animals. Accordingly, in Smith's system, as indeed in the Judeo-Christian culture, humans are located at the top of the hierarchy. Discussing with his family a cycle of pursuit in which humans eat fowls, which eat insects, George observes, "And so every animal preys upon some inferior animal." His mother responds, "And man upon them all" (87). This statement could be said to underlie Smith's social ethos. Just as there is a hierarchy of animals, a hierarchy of class organizes humans. But class position does not indicate superiority, neither in the animal kingdom nor in human society. Those located somewhere in the middle—like Smith's middle-class characters (and ideal readers)—must simply learn to manage as best they can, which is where this book comes in. Ideally, the children's education will grant them the ability to navigate the dangerous world of human society—as cutthroat as the wild—and to protect themselves within it.

The children follow their discussion with a poem, "The Squirrel," another of Dorset's contributions. To illustrate the perils and satisfactions of navigating class hierarchies, "The Squirrel" portrays the eponymous animal as an idealistic, if sensible, social-climber:

The squirrel, with aspiring mind,

Disdains to be to earth confined,

But mounts aloft in air;

. . .

And builds his castle there. (89; ll. 1-3; 6)

This squirrel *disdains* the notion of remaining where most other mammals live, instead striving to live elsewhere. Dorset anthropomorphizes the squirrel's behavior in terms of social mobility. This metaphor works both ways, so to speak, illuminating human adult as well as animal behavior. On the one hand, the poem helps children to make sense of animal behavior by bestowing the squirrel with human characteristics: the squirrel understands living "in the air" as a way of improving himself. On the other hand, the metaphor naturalizes social mobility by suggesting that it is common to humans and animals like.

But if social mobility is natural, it is a path that must be carefully trod. The last line contains a hint of the perhaps overly lofty nature of the squirrel's desires, evoking the phrase "to build castles in the air." This is a pun: the squirrel travels to the literally lofty heights of the treetop while, at the same time, harboring unrealistic ambitions. The poem repeatedly emphasizes that the squirrel behaves more like birds than other mammals: "Among the birds he dwells" and "he emulates the bird, / Yet feels no want of wings" (12, 38-39). There seems to be something questionable about the squirrel's behavior. However, the poem's moralizing final stanza establishes that mobility is acceptable when met with virtue:

And thus the man of mental worth
 May rise above the humblest birth,
 And adverse fate control,
 If to the upright heart be joined
 The active, persevering mind,
 And firm, unshaken soul. (ll. 43-48)

Squirrels and humans alike would do well to temper their aspirations with careful thought and perseverance. In this way social mobility is shown to be good behavior's reward: to the virtuous go the spoils. And social mobility is virtuous in itself: not a mercenary pursuit of wealth and status but a way out of dire straits. This poem teaches children—and perhaps the adults who would read the book aloud to them—that social and economic aspirations are laudable only conditionally. Here virtue functions as a social control, which encourages the automatic self-restraint essential to the civilizing process. Elias points out that the bourgeoisie typically use virtue—a quality they claim to possess—as an antithesis to some unsavory quality of other classes. He writes, “As the social power of the bourgeoisie grows . . . they assert their own codes and manners more and more confidently in opposition to the courtly-aristocratic ones. . . . Above all their counterpose ‘virtue’ to ‘courtly frivolity’ (433). In this poem, the squirrel is encouraged to retain his virtue. If one pursues one's aspirations with an “active, persevering mind” and “firm, unshaken soul,” one will avoid the dangers of wealth, whose pursuit Smith suggests here is certainly dangerous and almost unnatural: the squirrel rejects his “confinement” to the earth. The Talbot children observe the squirrel and reformulate their observation as a commentary on social behavior. They learn to see the animal as like them in important respects—worthy of their consideration because his behavior is understandable in human terms—and as a result they also learn to restrain their behavior. The animal functions here as the mechanism by which children come to know the difference between good and bad behavior. The good they aspire to, and the bad they shame.

When animals are not the subjects of poems in *Conversations*, they appear as the objects of children's behavior, often illustrating the relative degrees of children's

goodness or badness. Emily complains to Mrs. Talbot of Harry Scamperville, a playmate of George's. Mrs. Talbot is candid about her disdain for the Scampervilles and their child, telling her daughter, "The boy is the echo and mimic of the people he sees, and will probably become an ignorant, dissipated man of fashion, who would be despised if he was not rich, and will, like many other such people, blaze for a day, and be forgotten" (21). The Scampervilles are wealthy, and Mrs. Talbot links their wealth to their moral dissolution—but the problem with Harry lies more specifically in the way he treats animals. Harry unsuccessfully attempts to convince George to go angling with him. Mrs. Talbot intervenes, echoing Mrs. Woodfield in *Rural Walks* as she pointedly explains that George "has been taught to think that hunting, and shooting, and fishing, are made in general matters of too much importance, and that those who too ardently pursue them learn at length to believe that man is an animal born only to ensnare and destroy every other animal. My sons have been educated to other ideas" (22). This passage emphasizes the importance of education, which has drawn the Talbot boys away from harmful games, and which suggests that Harry's behavior is that of a baser creature. The passage thus also indicates the stakes of such an education: an over-valuation of hunting leads to an erroneous understanding of human nature, a misperception that casts humans as animals themselves. George speaks for himself, too, when Harry presses him, drawing attention to the cruelty of Harry's hobbies: "I have never wanted occupation or amusement, Harry; but I can find no pleasure in putting a miserable worm on a hook, and making it writhe in torture; nor in seeing the poor fish swallow the bait and hook too, as often happens" (23). Mrs. Talbot clearly has discouraged her children from the pursuit of fishing altogether: to succeed at it (to catch a fish) is to commit a moral wrong. Where Mrs. Talbot appeals to

reason, George deploys pathos. But they each have the same intent: to shame Harry out of his habits. While in general manners serve to facilitate the comfort of others, they also serve to punish people who behave badly. Because Harry instigates an argument and, more importantly, is guilty of the ostensibly shameful behaviors of angling and hunting, shame is necessary to goad him out of those shameful behaviors. The Talbots' judgment of Harry arises as a result of their having attained a certain level of refinement and from the compulsion to subject the less refined—Harry—to social pressure. Elias points out that the rules of manners cause us both to exercise restraint on our own behaviors and to shame others who do not. For Smith, Harry's actions are represented as crude because they are cruel, reflecting a relatively immature level of emotional development. When the Talbots express disgust, they do so in order to encourage him to change his ways. Ideally Harry, a young social subject, will internalize his fear of shame and so act in order to avoid it: in this case, that would mean that he would cease fishing and hunting. Then again, because Harry belongs to a wealthy family, Smith implies that he may never outgrow such activities. Her sons, after all, were educated to other ideas.

Brief speeches such as George's may strike the modern reader as sanctimonious. And in fact they are, but Smith's intention is, after all, to educate her readers. Such an exchange demonstrates again how Smith characteristically joins Rousseauian methods and Lockean intent. One could accuse Smith of providing ready-made responses for child-readers who might find themselves tempted by the Harrys of the world, restricting independent thinking in favor of ideological obedience: Indeed, a Rousseauian might well supply such an accusation. Instead, I would suggest that it is empowering for children to follow such arguments as this. It illustrates the various appeals one might use on one's

own—reason or emotion, for example. Moreover, George speaks nearly as much as Mrs. Talbot: Smith demonstrates, even if she directs, a child’s capacity to formulate ethical arguments, granting child-readers the confidence to begin to do so on their own.

CHARLOTTE SMITH’S TRANSATLANTIC INFLUENCE

It is difficult to trace with accuracy Smith’s publication history in America, although it is clear that her work was available in this country. James d’Alté Aldridge Welch’s *A Bibliography of American Children’s Books Printed Prior to 1821* (1972)—a volume whose records document publication well past Smith’s death in 1806, after which it seems unlikely that books of hers previously unpublished in America would continue to find their way across the Atlantic—indicates the commercial availability of only one of her children’s books. *Rural Walks* (1795), her first book specifically intended for children, was published in America by Philadelphia bookseller Thomas Stephens in the same year as its British publication.¹⁶ The catalog of the American Antiquarian Society, moreover, indicates that a variety of Smith’s other books—several novels as well as multiple editions of *Elegiac Sonnets*—were available in America around the same time. The recently passed U.S. copyright law did not protect British-authored works, so it is not clear whether Smith and her publishers arranged for Stephens’s American edition or whether he simply identified the book as an attractive target for reprinting, considering that many of her books had already been published in America. There may have been

¹⁶ Stephens was a successful bookseller and publisher in late-eighteenth-century Philadelphia. Rosalind Remer writes that “[o]f the almost forty master printers in Philadelphia at the turn of the century, ten individuals made the transition from printer to publisher almost completely. They stand out for the length of their careers and the volume of work they published” (70) Stephens is among these ten men.

other American editions of Smith's children's books that escaped Welch's attention, particularly if they were unauthorized and in cheap formats, and her works for children may also have circulated in imported copies or been excerpted for periodical publication. This does not of course discount the possibility that her books were acquired and even published in America, through other means, given British authors' lack of copyright protection. Still, at least one of Smith's children's books was available from a prominent Philadelphia bookseller in the late eighteenth century. It seems reasonable to suggest, therefore, that later writers may have found their way to *Rural Walks*, not to mention others of her books, and been influenced by it.¹⁷

I link Smith with Hale and Sigourney not only because all three women, in their work for children, feature a strong concern for inculcating kindness to animals. Hale also demonstrated her awareness of and respect for both of the other women in her editorial publications. Smith and Sigourney appear as entries in Hale's monumental *Woman's Record; or, Sketches of all Distinguished Women from 'The Beginning' till A.D. 1850* (1853), a nine-hundred page encyclopedic work that, to paraphrase Nina Baym, rewrote history to place women at its center.¹⁸ To be sure, Smith and Sigourney appear in the company of over 1,600 others: their mere presence is not remarkable. But Smith certainly retained a literary presence in America and Britain throughout the nineteenth century. Moreover, Hale routinely published Sigourney's work; as editor of the magazine *Godey's Lady's Book*, Hale frequently published columns and poems, including many by Sigourney, that supported a woman-centered ideology. Patricia Okker has shown that the "thirty-six poems Sigourney published [between 1840 and 1842] support the powerful

¹⁷ For a discussion of Smith's direct engagement with transatlantic political themes in her novel *The Old Manor House* (1793), see Richman.

¹⁸ See Baym, "Onward Christian Women: Sarah J. Hale's History of the World."

feminine poetics promoted within Hale's editorial columns" ("Sarah Josepha Hale, Lydia Sigourney, and the Poetic Tradition" 37). Like Smith, Hale appealed to women by promoting the social and political importance of domestic spaces. As she became known and admired by women readers, she would likewise have become a suitable choice when they chose books to buy for their children. A careful writer and editor, Hale consciously appealed to multiple overlapping markets to her advantage; as Okker explains, "Since women were the primary teachers of very young children—both as paid teachers and as mothers—Hale had to reach women in order to establish a market for her children's texts. By establishing a name for herself among women as an able writer of children's literature, Hale may well have increased her chances of finding a readership of adult women" (*Our Sister Editors* 55-56). Her success in each market reinforced her success in the other. She was therefore able to take advantage of her popularity and influence with adult audiences to recommend and provide literature for young readers that instructed them according to her ideological commitments.

Hale's skillful self-marketing is evident in her anthology *The Ladies' Wreath* (1837), the full subtitle of which indicates its purpose: *A Selection from the Female Poetic Writers of England and America. With Original Notices and Notes: Prepared Especially for Young Ladies. A Gift-Book for All Seasons*. Hale selected the poems specifically to appeal (in all the senses of the word) to young ladies—which may explain why she did not include any by Charlotte Smith, whose *Elegiac Sonnets* would have been both too mature and thematically inappropriate while the poems from her children's books would have been aimed at readers too young for Hale's purposes—and collected

them in a book which their mothers could give them.¹⁹ In the preface, Hale declares, “The office of Poetry is to elevate, purify, and soften the human character; and thus promote civil, moral, and religious advancement” (3). Hale’s aim is, like Smith’s, both moral and civic: by “elevating” young ladies she will elevate the nation as well. Hale’s difference lies in her overt religious goals, which may also explain the force of her didacticism. Smith encourages conversation; Hale urges reform. Still, both of them emphasize the particular influence that women’s social roles can have. Hale suggests that in “the best and most exalted office of the muse”—that is, to demonstrate the significance of promoting the good of others and modeling ourselves after the purity and dignity of Jesus—“woman” is predisposed to success. Indeed, in this arena “woman is morally gifted to excel. She has already entered on her province. It is to encourage her efforts, and dispose all who are wishing for the advancement of morals, to reflect on the aid which, in the present state of society, the cultivated genius of woman may impart, that I have prepared this volume” (4). The preface emphasizes Hale’s didactic aims, but it also indicates her business savvy. She draws attention to the dignity of women’s daily labor and presents this book as a way to both commemorate and perpetuate women’s particular contributions to public life. In short, this is a book mothers can feel good—morally, spiritually, and civically—about giving to their daughters.

Of course, both Hale and Sigourney lived later in the century; the ideological landscape for animal rights looked different than it did for Smith. If Smith influenced

¹⁹ In a review of *The Ladies’ Wreath* in the British periodical *MacMillan’s Magazine*, the critic is surprised at Smith’s omission from the book, claiming “In her choice of English blossoms Mrs. Hale has been somewhat capricious, many a name worthy to have adorned it, such as [that] of Charlotte Smith . . . being omitted from the wreath” (375). Among those whose work Hale collected in the volume are Hannah More, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, and, significantly, Lydia Sigourney. That the critic considered Smith’s absence to be a flaw of Hale’s book, and one worth mentioning, suggests that her name was linked to didactic literature at least for the next few decades after her death.

Hale and Sigourney, so too may have animal-rights discourse, which continued to evolve throughout the century. In Britain, separate laws concerning the treatment of animals were passed in 1835, 1849, and 1876, indicating the gradual development there of animal rights, and these laws covered a wide range of behaviors from abuse of cattle to vivisection.²⁰ In America, no equivalent comprehensive act (or acts) existed until well into the twentieth century, though statutes against cruelty to animals began to be passed into law in the 1820s, though they were rarely enforced. The works of Sigourney and Hale, then, are in part an evolutionary development of work already done: the creation and gradual acceptance of the idea of animal rights. In turn, they continued to translate the discourse to a conventional (i.e. non-radical) space, bringing it into the domestic sphere and making kindness to animals not only normal but morally compulsory.

Hale's most famous work for children is the poem "Mary Had a Little Lamb" (1830), which, as Okker notes, may be one reason why Hale is "remembered as one of the many nineteenth-century editors who promoted a highly restricted notion of women's poetry" ("Sarah Josepha Hale" 32). Sentimental though it may be, the poem nonetheless reflects the emerging animal-rights discourse. It is also a lesson in socialization. Mary's lamb is "sure to go" wherever she goes (l. 4). When it follows her to school, which "was against the rule," "It made the children laugh and play / To see a lamb at school" (ll. 6-8). Mary is kind to animals, demonstrating (to her peers and to real-life readers) the proper middle-class behavior toward them; and yet, as far as her peers are concerned, she has not succeeding in broadcasting the "right" identity. Mary's peers subject her to social shame, because they believe her not to be properly demonstrating middle-class identity.

²⁰ For more on the history of animal rights in Britain, see Kean; for more on animal welfare in America, see Grier.

Although kind, she nonetheless neglects to observe the rules surrounding a particular social space, the school. For them, Mary's habit of bringing her pet to school represents a risible lack of refinement. Her failure represents a tension between middle-class composure and childhood innocence, which, as the other children's mockery suggests, they may already have lost. Even as Mary leaves the lamb and enters the school—site of knowledge and education, where Mary may properly adjust to her social identity—the lamb pledges his trust. He waits for Mary and rushes to meet her, laying his head on her arm “As if he said—‘I’m not afraid— / You’ll keep me from all harm” (ll. 15-16). Mary must learn to adapt; her entrance within the school, as well as the teacher's later approval, suggests that she will do so successfully. Still, the lamb will trust Mary in spite (not because) of her imbrication within the social order.

In order to resolve uncomfortable tension between Mary's social failure and her proper observance of the kindness rule, Hale provides a consoling moral. When the children ask why the lamb is so devoted to Mary, the teacher offers an explanation and an injunction:

‘O, Mary loves the lamb, you know,’

The Teacher did reply;—

‘And you each gentle animal

In confidence may bind,

And make them follow at your call,

If you are always *kind*.’ (ll. 19-24)

Children should be kind to animals, and if they do so animals will respond with trustworthiness. To emphasize the point, Hale places the word “kind” in italics.

Moreover, the teacher uses the word “may,” which has two meanings: the children are *able to* treat animals as companions, and they *have permission* to do so. Children are capable of compassion, but they also require the guidance of a teacher, whose job is, in part, to reform their behavior. Unlike Smith, Hale does not emphasize here the importance of class identity. Mary is relatively unrefined in her behavior, but Hale presents this without comment. To be sure, this is one brief poem for young children: its goals are not exactly the same as those of Smith’s. Its moral—*be kind*—is necessarily more simplistic. Nonetheless, Hale follows Smith as well as Locke in her interest in emphasizing kindness to animals. Also like Smith, she emphasizes that children must not lose their connection to the natural world, as the other children apparently have, and animals play a crucial role in keeping that connection alive.

Hale theorizes her interest in animals more overtly in an 1867 essay, “Pets and Their Uses.” The essay appears in *Manners, Happy Homes and Good Society All the Year Round*, an etiquette manual that aims, as she states in the preface, “to furnish the varied entertainment of mental food for home happiness which the diversity of conditions in life and of cultivation in taste require” (5). But Hale, like Smith, links her aims to a larger political project. Hale characterizes her endeavor as a study of “domestic life in its influence on national characteristics” and argues that America “has all needed means of making her history unparalleled in the reality of happy homes and good society throughout the Great Republic” (5, 6). Her aims, then, are not merely to furnish entertainment but to make the nation great by teaching her readers to make their homes great. This project aligns with 1850s domestic discourse; Glenna Matthews observes that “by 1850 the home had become a mainstay of the national culture” and that both men and

women created “an epic [role] in which the home provided a touchstone of values for reforming the entire society” (35). Hale participates in this role-making by providing guidance for mothers to instill the right values in her children—values which came to include kindness to animals.

Hale argues that training children to love pets humanizes them. Referring to a Reverend Daniel Wilkie’s suggestion that pet ownership for boys “was such a great preventative against the thoughtless cruelty and tyranny they are so apt to exercise towards all dependent beings!,” Hale claims that girls, too, can benefit from owning pets “because, as sisters and mothers, they must help and teach boys in whatever things are good, tender, and lovely” (244). Hale frames her argument in terms of domestic duties: for the good of the home (and hence, following her preface, for the good of the nation), both boys and girls must learn to love animals. Specifically, it is in a family setting that one learns to love pets: “The family circle is made better, wiser, and happier, by having its amusement of pets, which naturally bring all the household into some kind of participation and enjoyment in its innocent recreations” (244). Like Smith, Hale advocates for a homofamilial setting for one’s education in animal kindness. Hale, however, seems more interested in family harmony and a settling of the domestic roles; Smith sees in the home an ideal *alternative* political space, rather than an exercise in nation-building. Hale situates herself, as well as her child (and adult) readers, in a more conventional conservative discourse. She wishes not to reform so much as, perhaps, to indoctrinate. Despite these differences, Hale and Smith share an interest in political reformation through education, including emotional education. Significantly, for both writers kindness to animals is not just good manners but a politicized, and politically

important, act. If they function as their authors intend, their works would successfully activate the empathy of children. Eventually, these well-behaved children would populate, and so collectively create, a successful and empathetic nation. At least, children would think through their actions more carefully and become less apathetic in their behavior to animals. In the process of civilizing children, in other words, Hale and Smith establish kindness to animals as a central part of middle-class identity, thereby creating ideological space for animal rights to flourish.

Like Hale, Lydia Sigourney's use of animals in her work represents an extension of her domestic ideology. Like Smith, however, she felt herself something of an outsider to middle-class identity, having joined its ranks through marriage. Gary Kelly explains that her "challenge as a writer was to construct a vision of America that would make the interests of her adoptive class seem like the interests of most Americans and of America itself," a task at which, Kelly asserts, she succeeded due to her "formulation of a republican identity that could create a common American national consciousness" (Sigourney, *Selected Poetry and Prose* 35). Sigourney had aims similar to those of Hale and Smith: to expand her social and political interests (and those relevant to her class) and project them onto her nation.²¹ Sigourney contributed to American epic-domestic ideology by projecting middle-class values onto every member of the nation, including children.

Sigourney's 1834 collection *Poetry for Children* contains multiple poems about animals, among them "The Rat," in which the narrator seeks to tell a story "in honor of their race" (138, l. 8). It is a simple story: a fire onboard a ship leads to the deaths of

²¹ Sigourney's politically oriented poetry extended far beyond the home. For example, *Traits of the Aborigines of America* (1822), is a long, blank-verse poem that draws attention to the native peoples of America and portrays America itself, as Kelly says, as "a lost paradise, despoiled by white settlers" (70).

many men. One escapes, a rat on his shoulder; the other sailors, who had previously slaughtered rats fleeing the fire, “let the faithful creature pass / In safety” (ll. 43-44). The poem concludes with a moral:

This simple tale is true, my dears,
 And so here ends the strain;
For even if rats our candor crave,
They should not ask in vain. (ll. 45-49)

“The Rat” is a simple, sentimental poem. Although it is easy to dismiss such verse—as indeed, Sigourney’s entire career has been the object of much critical scorn—the poem yields important insights into nineteenth-century domestic ideology in America.²² Rats are low creatures, vermin, which would likely be “without mercy slain” by housewives as well as sailors (l. 33). Here Sigourney impresses the importance of kindness to animals, as well as reciprocity. The rat seeks safe passage from the escaping sailor and is granted it, unconditionally; in the same way, children ought to offer unconditional “candor,” or impartiality, to all animals they encounter. Whether rats are capable of offering kindness to the children in turn is not the point: Sigourney stresses the importance of kindness because it is good for children, and, more significantly, because it is good for the nation. In this way her work is representative of the epic role of republican motherhood. As Matthews explains, “Republican Motherhood enhanced the likelihood of female activism outside the home. . . . The high status of the home also suggested that those closest to it would be the most capable of generosity toward the unfortunate” (64). Accordingly, this poem seeks to teach the importance of generosity to even the basest of creatures.

Activism begins in the home: Sigourney’s book of poetry for children would have been a

²² For more on Sigourney and her complex critical reception, see Baym, “Reinventing Lydia Sigourney.”

resource mothers could use to instill proper values and feelings in their children—meaning that the ideology of republican motherhood shared with the discourse of sensibility a political-affective intent.

In addition to encouraging proper values through poetry, Sigourney used more direct appeals as well. In 1839, she released a conduct book for boys, *The Boys' Reading Book; In Prose and Poetry, for Schools* featuring an essay entitled “Treatment of Animals.” In the book’s introduction, Sigourney emphasizes the urgency of education. She writes that education “is felt to be the safeguard of our Country. . . . “[T]he character of the rising generation, may determine, not merely the degree of her prosperity, but her very existence as a republic” (5). Sigourney’s political commitments are clear: the nation’s *existence* depends on the moral education of the young. An essay urging kindness to animals, then, implicitly suggests that such behavior is of national importance.

“Treatment of Animals” employs multiple approaches to advocate the principle of kindness. Sigourney first reasons that a “grateful disposition, should teach us to be kind to the domestic animals” (31). Because animals and their products provide many comforts (e.g. wool, travel, milk), they deserve our kindness. Animals, in turn, who are “sensible of kindness, and improved by it . . . are made happier and more gentle” (32). Sigourney emphasizes the benefits of reciprocity, imagining a responsible, ethical community founded on kindness (a useful suggestion for a nation as well as the domestic sphere).

Sigourney then moves beyond this concept of community to discuss cruelty. She writes, “Cruelty to animals, is disgraceful, and sinful. If I see even a young child, pull off

the wings of an insect, or take the pains to set his foot upon a worm, I know that he has not been well-instructed, or else that there is something wrong and wicked in his heart” (34). These comments on the dangers of poor instruction echo throughout her introduction. Like Smith and Hale, Sigourney recognizes that learning to be kind to animals is a significant part of a good middle-class education. Sigourney uses historical references—to the Roman emperor Domitian, well-known for his predilection for cruelty and torture, and Benedict Arnold, America’s most famous traitor—as examples of cruelty’s consequences. She claims that Domitian “loved to kill flies” and Arnold “destroyed bird’s-nests,” among other unsavory deeds. Adult men whose legendary wickedness had clear origins in childhood mistreatment of animals, these examples warn little boys of what will become of them if they give into the temptation to torture small animals.

Sigourney’s final approach gives boys alternative models to those unsavory historical figures: after providing examples of what *not* to do, she discusses the admirable characteristics of animals, including “the sagacity of the elephant, and the grateful attachment, and fidelity of the dog” (35). Here Sigourney presents a rather sanitized version of nature, as when she asserts that “[b]irds give us an example of tender affection. There is no warfare in their nests” (37). One wonders to what extent Sigourney’s rowdier readers would be satisfied by such virtues, or emboldened by the heavy-handed examples. If Smith is didactic, Sigourney is even more so. The combination of dialogue and poetic address in Smith’s *Conversations* leads children to make imaginative observations about what they see in nature and to form reasoned conclusions based on those observations; furthermore, Smith situates her readers *in* nature, in woods and fields

just outside of the city. Although Sigourney assumes her boy readers to be already imbricated within the world of culture, as suggested by the references to figures from history, she does not encourage conversation and creative thinking. Instead, she gives model examples which she expects children to obey without question or comment. Still, she encourages curiosity: she refers to exotic animals like elephants as well as historical figures, which may prompt children to seek out information on those subjects. Both Hale and Sigourney are primarily interested in constructing the home, not the world around it, as a positive, harmonious space, and include animals within that sphere.

Charlotte Smith attempted to reform her middle-class child-readers in an active, engaged manner, encouraging them to learn and then adopt the conventions of middle-class identity through dialogue as well as through observations of nature. Adult engagement with children, in other words, improves them. For Smith, encounters with the animal provide a sympathetic engagement that ultimately proves that those who are capable of such engagement are genuinely human. Hale and Sigourney, though more directive in their approaches, likewise posit that encounters with animal life will produce better children and, eventually, a better nation. The significant presence of animals in didactic literature generally indicates their increasing cultural currency over the course of the century. Fixtures of the home as pets, or in fields and woods nearby, they would have been a part of most middle-class people's daily life. Therefore, it makes perfect sense that writers of didactic literature would seize on such normal elements of life and reformulate them, presenting exemplary attitudes to them as not just desirable but necessary. By

representing benevolence toward animals as a compulsory part of the full human experience, these writers maintained the ideal atmosphere for animal rights to continue to develop. Only if we think of animals as normal parts of our lives, coexisting with us in a daily routine, can we begin to concede that we must alter our habits to accommodate them. For didactic writers, benevolence became a key part of the manners that children had to learn in order to function in modern society. What is most interesting about the representations of animals in the didactic literature examined here is that Smith, Hale, and Sigourney do not assume that these creatures are innocent or simple. Indeed, these writers present them as multifaceted, sentient creatures. In order to inculcate manners, to teach children to join the complex world of human social and political life, didactic writers turned not to an idealized, innocent nature but to the real and natural complexities of animal life.

Works Cited

- Backscheider, Paula R. *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry: Inventing Agency, Inventing Genre*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.
- Barker-Benfield, G.J. *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992. Print.
- Baym, Nina. "Onward Christian Women: Sarah J. Hale's History of the World." *The New England Quarterly* 63.2 (June 1990): 259-70. *JSTOR*. Web.
- . "Reinventing Lydia Sigourney." *American Literature* 62.3 (Sep. 1990): 385-404. *JSTOR*. Web.
- Chartier, Roger. "Forms of Privatization: Introduction." *A History of Private Life, Volume III: Passions of the Renaissance*. Ed. Roger Chartier. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1989. 163-65. Print.
- Copeland, Edward. *Women Writing About Money*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Print.
- Cosslett, Tess. *Talking Animals in British Children's Fiction, 1786-1914*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006. Print.
- Cowper, William. *The Works of William Cowper, Volume X*. London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1837. *Google Books*. Web.
- Dépelteau, François, Enio Passiani, and Ricardo Mariano. "Ariel or Caliban? *The Civilizing Process* and Its Critiques." *Norbert Elias and Social Theory*. Ed. François Dépelteau and Tatiana Savoia Landini. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. 41-59. Print.

Elias, Norbert. *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*.

1939. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000. Print.

Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday

Anchor Books, 1959. Print.

Grier, Katherine C. *Pets in America: A History*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North

Carolina Press, 2015. Print.

Hale, Sarah Josepha. *The Ladies Wreath; A Selection from the Female Poetic Writers of*

England and America. With Original Notices and Notes: Prepared Especially for

Young Ladies. A Gift-Book for All Seasons. Boston, MA: Marsh, Capen, & Lyon,

1837. *The Internet Archive*. Web.

—. *Manners, Happy Homes and Good Society All the Year Round*. 1867. Boston: Lee

and Shepard Publishers, 1889. *Google Books*. Web.

—. *Poems for Our Children: Including Mary Had a Little Lamb: Designed for Families,*

Sabbath Schools, and Infant Schools: Written to Inculcate Moral Truths and

Virtuous Sentiments. 1830. Boston: R.W. Hale, 1916. *Google Books*. Web.

—. *Woman's Record; or, Sketches of all Distinguished Women from 'The Beginning' till*

A.D. 1850. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1853. *The Internet Archive*. Web.

Heymans, Peter. *Animality in British Romanticism: The Aesthetics of Species*. New York:

Routledge, 2012. Print.

Jackson, Mary V. *Engines of Instruction, Mischief, and Magic: Children's Literature in*

England from Its Beginnings to 1839. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press,

1989. Print.

Kasson, John F. *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America*.

New York: Hill and Wang, 1990. Print.

Kean, Hilda. *Animal Rights: Political and Social Change in Britain since 1800*. London:

Reaktion Books, 1998. Print.

Kenyon-Jones, Christine. *Kindred Brutes: Animals in Romantic-Period Writing*.

Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2001. Print.

Knowles, Claire. *Sensibility and Female Poetic Tradition, 1780–1860: The Legacy of*

Charlotte Smith. Farnham, Surrey, U.K.: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2013.

Print.

“The Ladies’ Wreath.” *MacMillan’s Magazine* September 1891. *MacMillan’s Magazine*

Volume 64. London: MacMillan and Co., 1891. 372-77. *Google Books*. Web.

Locke, John. *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. 1692. *English philosophers of the*

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: Locke, Berkeley, Hume, with introductions,

notes and illustrations. Ed. Charles W. Eliott. New York: P.F. Collier & Son,

1910. *The Internet Archive*. Web.

Mangum, Teresa. “Animal Angst: Victorians Memorialize Their Pets.” *Victorian Animal*

Dreams. Ed. Deborah Morse and Martin Danahay. London: Ashgate Press, 2007.

15-34. Print.

Matthews, Glenna. “*Just a Housewife*”: *The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America*.

New York: Oxford University Press, 1987. Print.

McGann, Jerome. *The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style*. New York:

Clarendon Press, 1996. Print.

- Mellor, Anne K. *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000. Print.
- Menely, Tobias. *The Animal Claim: Sensibility and the Creaturely Voice*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015. Print.
- Myers, Mitzi. "Impeccable Governesses, Rational Dames, and Moral Mothers: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Female Tradition in Georgian Children's Books." *Children's Literature* 14 (1986): 31-59. *Project MUSE*. Web.
- Okker, Patricia. "Sarah Josepha Hale, Lydia Sigourney, and the Poetic Tradition in Two Nineteenth-Century Women's Magazines." *American Periodicals* 3 (1993): 32-42. *JSTOR*. Web.
- . *Our Sister Editors: Sarah J. Hale and the Tradition of Nineteenth-century American Women Editors*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008. Print.
- Opie, Iona, and Peter Opie. *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*. London: Oxford University Press, 1951. Print.
- Perkins, David. *Romanticism and Animal Rights*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Print.
- Remer, Rosalind. *Printers and Men of Capital: Philadelphia Book Publishers in the New Republic*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000. Print.
- Richman, Jared. "Charlotte Smith and the Spectre of America." *Transatlantic Literary Exchanges, 1790-1870: Gender, Race, and Nation*. Ed. Kevin Hutchings and Julia M. Wright. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2011. Print.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Émile, or, On Education*. 1762. Trans. Barbara Foxley. London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1921. *Project Gutenberg*. Web.

- Sigourney, Lydia. *The Boys' Reading Book; In Prose and Poetry, for Schools*. New York: J. Orville Taylor, 1839. *Google Books*. Web.
- . *Selected Poetry and Prose*. Ed. Gary Kelly. Buffalo, NY: Broadview Press, 2008. Print.
- Smith, Adam. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. 1759. London: Cadell & Davies, 1812. *Google Books*. Web.
- Smith, Charlotte. *Conversations Introducing Poetry: Chiefly on Subjects of Natural History. For the Use of Children and Young Persons*. 1805. London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1863. *Google Books*. Web.
- . *Rural Walks: In Dialogues. Intended for the Use of Young Persons*. Philadelphia: Thomas Stephens, 1795. *Google Books*. Web.
- “urchin, n.” *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, March 2016. Web.
- Wadewitz, Adrienne. “Charlotte Smith’s Children’s Literature and the Discourse of Sensibility.” *Beyond Sense and Sensibility: Moral Formation and the Literary Imagination from Johnson to Wordsworth*. 91-106. Ed. Peggy Johnson. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2015. Print.
- Welch, James d’Alté Aldridge. *A Bibliography of American Children’s Books Printed Prior to 1821*. Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1972. Print.