

Chase Pielak, *Memorializing Animals during the Romantic Period*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2015. Pp. 169. £60. ISBN 9781472441461.

Chase Pielak's *Memorializing Animals during the Romantic Period* contends that 'we must rethink Romanticism alongside its animals' (2). While a number of recent studies have a similar starting point, Pielak's is distinguished by its focus on animals who are memorialized in poetry, or who figure in the memorialization of humans. This topic is elegantly announced by the cover reproduction of Sir Edwin Landseer's famed *Attachment*, inspired by the discovery of the body of Charles Gough guarded by his faithful dog, Foxie, on Helvellyn – an event also commemorated by William Wordsworth in 'Fidelity'. Pielak reads the representations of animals in Romantic-period texts such as 'Fidelity' as 'bestly disruptions': 'Animal presence betrays anxiety over what it means to be human, what happens at death, what it means to survive death, and what it means to be remembered' (6).

One of the book's considerable strengths is its range. It offers nuanced readings of works, mostly poetry, by Charles and Mary Lamb, John Clare, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, George Gordon Byron, and William Wordsworth. The crucial titles that we have come to expect in studies of animals in Romanticism are there ('The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', 'To a Young Ass', and 'Hart Leap Well'), but the reader is also rewarded with insightful examination of less familiar texts such as Clare's 'The Ants' or Charles Lamb's 'That You Must Love Me and Love My Dog'. Pielak persuasively argues throughout that 'Romantic period animals mediate and disrupt six critical relationships – friendship, hierarchy, self, death, the trajectory of life, and memory' (154). I find the two chapters devoted to Clare's early poetry the strongest section of the book, because here Pielak offers sustained and comprehensive analysis of a particular author. In contrast, the examination of Byron, in particular, leaves me wanting more; a disproportionately short chapter discusses only Canto 2 of *Don Juan* and 'Inscription on the Monument of a Newfoundland Dog'. I also wanted to hear more about the theoretical approaches that inform Pielak's close readings; he assumes his readers will follow along, but at times his references are frustrating; for example, Judith Butler is invoked in passing (124) but not even listed in the bibliography (or in the very sparse index).

Because there is no concluding chapter, the reader does feel that the overall connections between the authors are left underdeveloped. Perhaps the chapter on Wordsworth was meant as a conclusion, since Pielak states twice (without, however, fully explaining) that Wordsworth 'occupies a privileged place in this book' (2-3; 153), but, even so, the book ends rather abruptly. The concluding sentence points to the importance of Romantic texts for 'understanding ourselves in light of our complex relationships with animals now' (154), but this is a topic the book avoids.

Apart from one reference to 'global warming threaten[ing] the extinction of the common cuckoo (the Sahara is encroaching on its feeding round)', which Pielak claims makes Wordsworth's 'To the Cuckoo' 'even more ominous for the invested reader' (131), the text seems to eschew precisely this kind of investment. This will be seen as one of the book's strengths by some readers, and by others, as a limitation. Early on, Pielak announces that 'this project does not aim to make claims about animal rights' (11), but this brief disclaimer begs further discussion, especially given that the introduction situates the study as 'fit[ting] soundly' in the company of the 'literary/cultural' critique (10) offered in David Perkins's *Romanticism and Animal Rights* and Christine Kenyon-Jones's *Kindred Brutes*, both of which engage with Romantic-era animal advocacy. While Pielak at times uses the terms Animal Studies and Critical Animal Studies interchangeably (37), the fundamental disagreement between these two

approaches is important to note and the reception of Pielak's book will, in part, reflect this schism.

Memorializing Animals during the Romantic Period makes an important contribution to the study of Romanticism as a whole and to Animal Studies by reorienting our attention to 'images of dead and deadly animals' (1) and expanding the range of texts we consider as vital to the broader discussion of animals in literature.

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