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| **ADDITIONAL NOTES** |  |
Pets are popular. So popular, in fact, that each year Americans spend billions of dollars on pet care and products. In 2015 alone, Americans spent $60.28 billion on pets, compared to $17 billion 20 years earlier, and the projected spending for 2016 is $62.75 billion. These numbers are not as surprising when we learn that 65% of homes in the United States have a pet, for a total of roughly 300 million pets (“Pet Industry”). From pet health food to doggy daycare and spas, the pet market is booming. Within this economic space, indicative of a culture that fosters a sense of love and care for cats and dogs especially, we can locate a familiar, yet often unexamined trend: the increasing “babyfication” of pets.1 We buy cute clothing and toys for them; we send dogs to daycare, where concerned “pet parents” can keep an eye on them through a livestream; and we talk to pets in much the same way we do to young children. In divorce cases in the United States, couples fight over custody not just for children but for their pets, while concerned social workers are taking note of the plight of pets within domestic violence situations. This phenomenon of pets’ babyfication is not limited to the United States. In Taiwan, for instance, an increasing number of women and families are choosing to forego having children, instead raising pets and spending vast sums of money on strollers or high-end cat furniture (Bender). The growing understanding of pets as children is not just an American or even exclusively Western phenomenon, nor is it solely the result of multi-billion-dollar corporations’ advertising campaigns. Around the world, pets are more and more often conceptualized as children, and this categorization manifests in multifarious ways throughout society and culture.

Realizing the extent to which pets are, in the words of Donna Haraway, “furry child[ren]” (Companion 37) allows us to also recognize how much our relationships with children resemble those with pets. We see not only dolled-up pets in strollers, adorned with cute barrettes or clothes, but also young children walked on leashes. In the same way pets are tasked with delighting and entertaining their human owners, children are frequently called upon to perform for and bring happiness to adults. Just as pets need to be trained and domesticated in order to become fit for human companionship, so too must children go through the rituals of
education and socialization before they can take an active role in society as adults. This process of the child’s socialization routinely involves the service of both real and fictional pets: children receive pets in preparation for adult responsibilities, read about them in children’s literature, and watch programs centered on child-pet relationships on TV. Indeed, the etymology of the term “pet”—originally referring to both tame animals and spoiled children—suggests that in certain ways, children too are pets.

Critics in childhood studies and animal studies have long recognized these inherent similarities in discourses on childhood and pethood, for instance likening the child to a “super-pet” (Holt 26) and “incontinent young animal” (Tuan 115). The scholarship exploring these connections has, however, been limited in scope: while scholars of children’s literature and childhood studies frequently examine representations of animals in literary texts, there is little analysis of the often parallel ways in which these texts construct pet and child subjectivity. At the same time, while critics in the field of animal studies remark upon the cultural and social tendency to conceptualize pets as children, there is little scholarly work on the larger political and ideological formations that shape the parallel construction of these subjects. Even though children and pets are similarly represented and dominated in culture and society, the potentialities of interrogating childhood and pethood together remain underexplored.

We argue that the categories of childhood and pethood are co-constituted, as they highlight the ideological structures asserting both adult and human dominance. At the same time, children and pets offer surprising moments of subversion, challenging both the institutional settings in which childhood and pethood are constructed and the larger power structures that keep them in positions of subjection. The ways in which children and pets interact with each other provide productive avenues for exploring not only interspecies kinship relations but also how disenfranchised subjects can negotiate their marginalization, create new affective economies, and engage in unexpected forms of growth. As such, the realms of childhood and pethood can converge to lay bare social and cultural norms: in the words of Monica Flegel, “Reading closely the relations of children and animals allows for an understanding of how species difference can be used to negotiate gender, class, and sexual difference within the often fraught and sometimes claustrophobic confines of familial relations” (141). Hence, children and pets can offer each other crucial emotional support within the subjugated, “claustrophobic” spaces they occupy. Kathryn Bond Stockton suggests, for instance, that horses and dogs provide girls with “a lateral community that understands, affirms, and offers sorrow for unsupported choices” and that is lacking in relationships with other humans (100–01).

Drawing on recent work in childhood studies, animal studies, and cultural studies, Childhood and Pethood in Literature and Culture examines how together these disciplines can productively investigate the
manifold implications of understanding pets as children and children as pets, specifically in the ideological construction of both as subordinate to and dependent on human adults. Through an interrogation of the cultural politics of power over subjects society views as needing to be schooled and disciplined, this collection examines how deeply varying forms of power—from the nation-state to cultural formations—pervade spaces of care and affection. As such, children and pets are raised under what Foucault has called “a power of care”: a power that seeks to control and regulate conduct through discourses of care, affection, and concern (127). Conceiving of this power structure as purely one-directional, however, would further contribute to a discourse that has positioned children and pets as passive subjects, relegating them to a marginalized space of (public and political) invisibility. Rather, we suggest that even though children and pets are frequently constructed and imagined within familiar modes of patriarchy, anthropocentrism, and domestication, their agency and alterity embody alternative voices, subjectivities, and models of kinship and belonging. After all, the fact that constructions of childhood and pethood are haunted by the notion of a raw, uncivilized wildness might well indicate that the subjects occupying these spaces are not that easily controlled and contained.

The cover image for this collection illustrates socialization as a messy, uncomfortable process for children and pets. Briton Rivière’s painting Naught Boy, or Compulsory Education’s seemingly idyllic depiction of the “ideal” Victorian girl—white, bourgeois, and properly dressed—hugging the family dog while engrossed in reading, is troubled by a sense of cruelty and, indeed, compulsion. The child’s hug effectively imprisons the dog in her arms, rendering the pet trapped between her body and the book. Even as the painting does not show any adult figures, the adult presence is nonetheless markedly felt in the girl’s clean dress, the furnishings that surround the child and pet (who are positioned, significantly, inside a house and thus within civilization rather than outside, in nature), and, crucially, in the open book; reading, after all, is intimately linked with becoming literate in cultural codes and thus with a child’s progression towards adulthood. Yet while the girl appears immersed in reading, her pet companion gazes away from the text, suggesting a longing—felt perhaps by child and dog alike—to break free from this “compulsory education.” Although the painting may speak to the discomfort children and pets share as they undergo schooling and training, it also poignantly illustrates the Western species hierarchy: despite the girl’s smallness, which is juxtaposed with the large and muscled dog, the human child ultimately exerts power and control over the pet she traps in her arms.

Although there has been increased objection to the word “pet,” accompanied by a recent move toward the more egalitarian term “companion animal,” our use of “pet” and “pethood” is deliberate, as we engage the
power dynamics that shape the discourses surrounding animals that live with humans.4 “Pethood” here serves as the analogous term to “childhood,” a similarly constructed social space that points to specific hierarchical relationships. While childhood is the space young persons occupy in society and culture, pethood is the space allotted to animals placed in service to humans. Childhood places the self under adult supervision, and the institutions of childhood, such as the family, the education system, and children’s literature, largely reproduce child/adult hierarchies. Similarly, pethood places the animal under the domination of humans, and the institutions of pethood, such as pet ownership and obedience training, typically perpetuate existing animal/human power relations.

The spaying and neutering of pets speaks to this power dynamic while also indicating the extent to which pet-keeping is embedded within biopolitics and the management of sexual reproduction: the processes by which animals become integrated into human families and the discourse of pet ownership “cluster around questions of sex, regulation, substance, and biopolitics” with “both racialized and sexualized overtones” (Chen 133, 134). Perhaps surprisingly, such biopolitical management of pets, through spaying and neutering especially, acts as a “queering device” designed, at least in part, to remove the animals’ desire for their own species and redirect it towards their human kin (Chen 133). Both child/adult and pet/human relationships are based upon such feelings of kinship and affection, as well as on the perceived need to be protected, including from their own sexualities and desires: the child has the right to provision and protection, is nurtured by the adult, and is expected to form ties with the adult based on reciprocal love, while the pet represents an animal who receives shelter and food, often in exchange for a mutual bond of affection with the human owner. Children and pets are imagined as asexual beings in such affective relations even as the widespread measures for managing their sexualities betray such constructions. While the spaying and neutering of pets renders them queer, children’s sexualities are similarly “subjected to an unusually intense normalizing surveillance, discipline, and repression of the sort familiar to any oppressed sexual minority,” indicating the extent to which children, too, are queer (Hanson 110).

At the same time, as the essays included here demonstrate, the child and the pet prove difficult to contain in definitions that are shaped not by these subjects themselves but rather by adult human views. The constructions of these figures are shaped by ageism and anthropocentrism, respectively, and they vary across and within time and cultures. “[C]hildren’ and ‘childhood’ are social constructs that have been determined by socioeconomic conditions and have different meanings for different cultures” (Zipes 40), so that it is impossible to speak of one global childhood; and while the pet is often defined as a domestic animal one does not eat (a definition that fails to account for the companionate
nature of pet-human relationships), the varying functions of “pet animals” across cultures challenge claims of a universal pethood. Some critics have even argued that pets are not “real” animals; at best they are reflections of their human caretakers, beings whose wildness and animality have been bred out through centuries of domestication.5 The child has been similarly conceived, most famously by John Locke, as a tabula rasa who becomes inscribed with cultural codes, or as an “empty vessel” to be filled with cultural norms. Such conceptions of the pet and the child underscore their “perceived utility” (Stewart and Cole 7): pets serve humans’ developmental and psychological needs, for instance, whereas children are envisioned to carry the lineage, culture, and nation passed down to them into the future.

As a constructed figure, the child further allows adults to engage in a complex process of self-definition; Karín Lesnik-Oberstein notes that “[b]y defining and discussing the nature of children adults are expressing, formulating, and projecting ideals and ideas about themselves and the not-themselves,” and childhood is hence imagined as the opposite, or Other, of adulthood (25–26).6 Children are thought to possess qualities that are undesirable in adults, such as a wildness and naive innocence, underscored by descriptions of the child as analogous to the “noble savage,” the “barbarian,” and the “primitive” (McGillivray 144; Postman 50; Archard 33).7 The child shares many of these qualities with the pet, as both are deemed to be closer to nature and thus to base, primitive instincts than the thoroughly socialized—and hence civilized—adult human. Within these child/adult and pet/human dichotomies, the characteristics that define the “adult” in the former and the “human” in the latter are largely interchangeable and shaped by notions of rationality and responsibility—qualities that both the child and the pet are perceived as lacking. As a consequence, children and pets have limited rights to self-determination, which raises important questions about alterity, agency, and the power of care that the essays in this collection grapple with.

As this collection highlights how the intersections of childhood and pethood can productively inform cultural analyses of power, it also engages the various points where these two social spaces diverge. It would be a mistake to simply reduce children and pets to their common denominators, as substantial as they may be, given the important differences that shape their statuses: children enjoy legal rights, particularly those of provision and protection, but the pet, as legal property, does not enjoy these rights. While the bond of affection between adults and children is enforced not just culturally but legally, animal protection legislation often does little to protect pets.8 Pets are frequently placed in the service of children’s development as a tool for socialization, resulting in notable differences in power between them that manifest in their interactions. As Mel Y. Chen notes, these differences are further pronounced by pets’ status as animals despite their anthropomorphization: they “bear the
dizzying simultaneity of being named, individualized, and ‘kinned’ while remaining special and distinct precisely for being nonhuman” (100).

Moreover, even as the discourses employing the figures of the child and pet often make them speak the same tongue, these figures also speak with a difference. The child’s voice is the voice of the future: as Lee Edelman and Lauren Berlant have shown, the child is an icon of futurity, and problematically so since the present needs of adults (and children) are supplanted by the perceived future needs of the child as citizen-to-be. As “not-yet” citizen, the child serves as a means to an end—the reproduction of a specific citizenry—so that the child’s future possibilities move to the foreground. This foundational idea that “the children are our future” connotes a crucial distinction between the spheres of childhood and pethood; unlike pets, “children will grow out of their diminished condition. In the normal course of events children will become rational, autonomous adults” (Archard 53; emphasis in original). With time, children escape from childhood—though only when they cease to be children—but pets’ status remains unchanged over their lifetime, effectively turning them into what Kathleen Kete has called “eternal children” (82).9 There are, furthermore, important distinctions within the categories of childhood and pethood themselves. The future is typically imagined as the property of the white, normative child rather than of racialized or queer youth, as José Esteban Muñoz has shown.10 Indicative of inequalities in the pet world, the cultural belief that pit bulls are abject, savage, and thus less deserving of affection than “family dogs” such as retrievers, has disastrous and often deadly consequences for the pit bulls that disproportionately populate animal shelters.11

That said, pethood and childhood do not always reflect a one-sided relationship of domination. For Haraway and Vicki Hearne especially, animal training offers moments of two-way communication between humans and animals, destabilizing the epistemological limits of logocentrism. As Kari Weil describes it, training can be “an intersubjective relation that demands an openness to difference on both sides and an openness to be transformed by difference” (59). Furthermore, if animals chose domestication, as Stephen Budiansky believes, then claims that pethood is a marker of subjection must be rethought. Similarly, children are not “passive victims” but participate in their processes of socialization in active, even potentially disruptive ways (Zipes xiii). Far from being oblivious blank slates onto which culture is written, “[c]hildren see and recognize very early how we are indoctrinating them and caring for them,” and their responses to this power of care can be creative and surprising (Zipes 22).12 The very governance of childhood, accompanied as it is by “systems of surveillance and control through which ‘childhood’ is protected as a social space” (James and James 37), implies that the child’s agency presents a force to be reckoned with. Indeed, the (mis)conception of the eternal silence of children is what, for Zoe Jaques, can
provide a productive intersection with animal studies, as this field “usefully rethinks what counts as agency, voice or, indeed, ‘being’” (9). Yet the institutions of pethood and childhood, which relegate their subjects to positions characterized not by liberty but rather custody, protection, and provision, impose and restrict the spaces in which pets and children can enact agency. Thus even as children and pets are active, potentially disruptive participants within their environments, the processes in which they participate are not of their own making.

The cultural politics of power shaping these relationships between children, pets, and adults inform the wide range of essays included in this collection, as they explore issues such as protection, discipline, mastery, wildness, queerness, and domestication. The authors use this social and cultural alignment between children and pets as an opportunity to analyze institutions that create pet and child subjectivity, from education and training to putting children and pets on display for entertainment purposes. The authors further demonstrate the extent to which notions of childhood and pethood are deeply influenced by racism, patriarchy, and colonialism. The wide variety of works the authors discuss, from paintings, illustrations, and literature to television programs, films, and songs for children, highlights the many cultural proliferations that create, reinforce, and challenge the ideologies surrounding children and pets. The different animal species addressed here, not limited to those typically thought of as pets, such as dogs and hamsters, but also including horses, birds, and turtles, help reconceptualize definitions of pethood and domestication. We have grouped these essays into three sections: “Family, Language, and Nationhood”; “Literature for Children and Adults”; and “Music and Visual Culture.” Yet there are many ways in which these essays speak across sections. Although we privilege literature and culture in our title, we hope that the multidisciplinary range of our essays showcases the extent to which the social and the political contribute to dominant cultural beliefs about children and animals. By presenting different perspectives on the child and the pet, we bring to light alternative paths toward understanding these figures, paths that take us to new openings and questions about agency and the power of care.

I: Family, Language, and Nationhood

Ideological state apparatuses—such as the education system and the family, as well as discourses of race, gender, and nationalism—shape childhood and pethood. Beginning with Locke’s early treatise on liberal education for children, relationships with animals—especially pets—have served not only as tools for teaching children language, but also as training children to be kind to all creatures. Setting up pet-keeping as the proper liberal human-animal relationship (91), Locke’s incorporation of animals into a larger British national identity highlights the importance
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of the child-pet relationship to political discourses of the nation. Indeed, our relationships with both children and pets have contributed to and continue to shape projects of nation-building and a nation-state’s imaginary. As Anne McGillivray argues, “childhood was, in effect, colonized by the state. The governance of childhood was aimed at the induction of docile citizenship, the creation of a disciplined soul” (146), a process for which pets have been enlisted as helpers.

The widespread contemporary incorporation of pets into the family demonstrates the need to move beyond the current designation of pets as property but begs the question of how to categorize pets legally. As James Gillett shows in Chapter 1, “Adoption, Custody, and Protection: The Childhood of Pets as a Critique of Legal Classification Systems,” pets in North America have recently been given a similar status as children within institutional settings, as evidenced by custody court cases, SPCA child adoption narratives, and cases of domestic violence. This new status presents more diverse family forms and moves away from the objectification pets face when classified as property. Yet simply aligning pets with children in these settings risks masking their distinct position and contribution to familial social relations. Gillett’s analysis shows how difficult it is to define what makes a child different from a pet, and vice versa, while highlighting the need to recognize the uniqueness of animals who live within human family structures.

The ways in which pets revise family models is also evident in transnational settings, as an increasing number of migrant families migrate with their pets. As Justyna Struzik and Paula Pustulka demonstrate in Chapter 2, “Transgressing the ‘Luggage’ Metaphor: Children and Pets as Migrants in the Context of Contemporary International Mobility from Poland to Norway,” the choice Polish families make to migrate to Norway with their pets often comes from their recognition of pets’ significance within their families, particularly in their relationships with children. The increasing valuation of pets within migrant families not only gives children more agency, through recognizing the importance of pets to their lives, but further helps them adapt to the destination society. Importantly, the authors note, pets occupy a distinct category and do not function as replacements for children; instead they challenge traditional family structures and allow for a new degree of multispecies inclusivity. Through focusing on children’s narratives of migration and the roles of animals in their lives, Struzik and Pustulka demonstrate how relationships between pets and children in transnational contexts increase the level of cross-cultural interactions and put pressure on patriarchal, anthropocentric family structures.

Even as children and pets can challenge traditional family models, the petification of children can aid projects of nation-building and constructions of an ideal citizen in ways that encourage submission, rather than expression of agency, as Chapter 3 shows. In early twentieth-century
Turkey, the government began publishing the journal *Children* (1928–45), the major publication of the Society for the Protection of Children. Aimed at adults, the journal used infant animals and a vocabulary of discipline, trainability, and protection to construct an idealized infant citizenship, one that was often defined as feminine. In “Who Needs Protection and Discipline? Children, Pets, and Nationalism in the Early Twentieth-Century Ottoman and Turkish Lands,” Melis Sulos analyzes *Children* to show how the infant pet stories prevalent throughout the journal infantilize pets and construct an idealized childhood. Articles on training the bodies and souls of pets alongside tips on healthy feeding develop a discourse on the biopolitics of childhood, one that often mirrors motherhood, rather than telling the stories of the pets themselves. Repeating the nationalist iconography that Turkish intellectuals used in public teachings after the revolution of 1923, pictures portray dogs sitting orderly in classrooms, carefully watching their teachers and eager to learn. Sulos thus theorizes the role of child/pet protection and discipline in the project of nation-building and gender construction, while showing the limitations of conceptualizing the nation as a family.

As evidenced by Sulos’ argument, animals are often an important part of children’s education. While frequently the morals and values children learn are intended to make them proper members of a human social sphere, this education can also impart to children an understanding of animals as subjective beings with their own thoughts and desires. As Matthew Burdelski suggests in Chapter 4, “Pets as Vehicles of Language Socialization: Encouraging Children’s Emotional, Moral, and Relational Development in Japanese,” adults use child-pet interactions in order to interpellate children into affective, moral, and empathetic relationships. Burdelski analyzes interactions between a mother and two children feeding and playing with a pet hamster to examine the ways caregivers use a range of linguistic and embodied resources and strategies to speak to, for, and through pets. Caregivers position pets and children as speakers and addressees within a multiparty participation framework, and Burdelski’s analysis highlights how, especially within family structures, pets contribute to constructions of socio-cultural values and socialization, as children acquire language through their pets. Although language socialization imbues children with dominant cultural norms, in interactions with pets children can offer their own moments of agency and recognize the distinct subjectivity of animals integrated into human families.

The final chapter in this section serves as a bridge to Section 2, as ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui discusses notions of kinship outside Western contexts in mo‘olelo (history and story) and contemporary literature. Understanding Hawai‘i as a nation with its own distinct culture and history, ho‘omanawanui demonstrates how Indigenous epistemologies offer an alternative to hierarchical Western notions of kinship and species. In Chapter 5, “Moamahi ā Pua’a Moe Poli: Nā Keiki a nā Hānaiaihuhu
i ka Moʻomeheu Hawaiʻi (Cherished Chickens to Chest-cuddled Pigs: Children and Pets in Hawaiian Culture),” she demonstrates how within Hawaiian culture animals are often seen as the caretakers of children, the family, and the community at large. hoʻomanawanui describes an alternate kinship that embraces alignments between children and animals, challenges definitions of pethood, and shows unique spiritual connections across species. hoʻomanawanui’s reading of Hawaiian literature further shows how deeply the themes of family, language, and nationhood raised in Section 1 carry over into literature for both children and adults.

II: Literature for Children and Adults

Whereas the essays in the previous section discuss children and pets within the context of the family and the nation-state, the second part of this collection focuses on how literary depictions of childhood and pethood construct child and pet subjectivities and negotiate alignments between them. These essays foreground how textual representations reflect and disrupt child/adult and pet/human hierarchies and offer alternatives to hierarchical modes of relating. Literature for young readers plays a central role in several of these analyses, and it is not surprising that texts for children allow for a productive engagement with the power structures that shape the child/adult binary. As Maria Nikolajeva has observed, “nowhere else are power structures as visible as in children’s literature, the refined instrument used for centuries to educate, socialize and oppress a particular social group. In this respect, children’s literature is a unique art and communication form, deliberately created by those in power for the powerless” (8–9).13 Rereading this literature with an eye for the ways the pet is also contained and controlled within its pages allows for a reframing of the questions raised by these power structures inherent to the genre. To what extent does the representation of pethood mirror the construction of childhood, and what are the implications of such alignments for the pet, the child, and the adult? How do pet characters contribute to the socialization of the child character (and both child and adult readers), and what are we to make of their status, in many literary texts, as models of successful domestication the child is called upon to emulate?

In Chapter 6, “Pullman, Pets, and Posthuman Animals: The Dæmon-child of His Dark Materials,” Zoe Jaques analyzes the bond between child characters and their pet-like dæmons in Philip Pullman’s fantasy trilogy (1995–2000), demonstrating how the texts offer a version of pethood that allows human and dæmon characters to find pleasure in nonhierarchical relating. Pets, Jaques notes, are philosophically derided creatures, and Pullman also finds something reduced or failed about the pet. Human characters placed in servant positions within the books, for
instance, have dæmons that assume the shape of dogs, whereas characters portrayed as independent and occupying a higher social rank are associated with dæmons embodying wild, exotic animals. *His Dark Materials* nonetheless offers a creative response to human-animal symbiosis that is most conspicuously found in child-pet relationships, and allows for a productive reading of intimate interspecies relations. The trilogy for young readers further locates in the child-dæmon an ontological mutability that makes the animal crucial to human becoming and gives the child a power lost in adulthood. While children’s stories, and the animal characters they frequently feature, are sometimes regarded as trivial and not worthy of serious study, Jaques’ chapter reminds us that the fantasies of children and animals cannot be so easily dismissed.

Childhood and pethood are often intertwined with constructions of gender and confined within patriarchal norms: caring for pets, for instance, has commonly been understood, much like child-rearing, as an activity associated with the feminine private sphere, pointing to the numerous ways in which the category of women has been aligned with that of the pet and the animal more broadly. Although animals have historically been deployed in delineating these rigid gender norms, pets can potentially disrupt such ideologies, as Caryn Kunz Lesuma demonstrates in “Domesticating Dorothy: Toto’s Role in Constructing Childhood in *The Wizard of Oz* and Its Retellings.” Examining L. Frank Baum’s 1900 children’s book and two of its reworkings, the film adaptation (1939) and Geoff Ryman’s *Was* (1992), Lesuma shows how pet characters can contribute to female domestication, but also challenge heteronormative, patriarchal ideals. Such a challenge is particularly evident in Ryman’s novel, which employs the disruptive power of the pet against Dorothy’s domestication. In the original novel and 1939 film, Lesuma argues, Dorothy’s path to domestication lies in her relationship with her dog Toto, yet in Ryman’s retelling Toto is transformed into a subversive presence of alterity whose regression into wildness suggests that animality is preferable to the oppression of patriarchal domestication. Bringing attention to an animal character who has been traditionally viewed as a symbolic device, Chapter 7 calls for new social spaces open to non-normative subjects who do not fit the mold of an anthropocentric, heteronormative patriarchy.

Toto is only one of many dog characters employed by texts for young readers as vehicles for the child’s socialization process, and Kelly Hübben adds to the insights Lesuma raises as she examines dog protagonists in a selection of popular picture books. Chapter 8, “Mister Dog Is a Conservative: Representations of Children and/as Animals in Three *Little Golden Books*,” investigates how the books’ dog-child relationships inscribe American ideologies of the 1940s and 1950s, reinforcing social rules that both children and pets must follow. Through identifying the visual and textual strategies informing the child readers’ ideological
positions with respect to pets and their place in society, Hübben demonstrates how categories of species, age, and gender intersect to strengthen the dominance of adult humans. While some books draw obvious parallels between child-rearing and dog training, they typically reproduce speciesist attitudes and encourage child readers to display dominance in their interactions with animals. The books’ continuing production and popularity suggest that the speciesist ideologies articulated in the Little Golden Books remain prevalent today, even as other texts featuring child-pet relationships, such as Pullman’s fantasy trilogy or Ryman’s Was, challenge conceptions of these relationships as marked by a one-directional dominance.

While the previous chapters in this section focus on the figures of de-sexualized children and pets, Chapter 9 analyzes the role of pets in children’s transition into adulthood and sexuality, a domain in which pets once again fulfill a utilitarian function in service to the human’s development. In “Oh God, Give Me Horses!: Pony-Mad Girls, Sexuality, and Pethood,” Amalya Layla Ashman analyzes a selection of film remakes and sequels to the pony fiction popular from the 1920s to 1960s, focusing in particular on adaptations and continuations of National Velvet (1944). While alignments between horses and female sexuality have been previously explored, Ashman’s interest in the petification of horses adds a new dimension: indeed, the fact that the horse hovers between the boundaries of wildness and domestication—as the female protagonist attempts to petify her horse—is what makes it such an attractive figure for burgeoning sexuality. Earlier texts in the pony-fiction genre, Ashman argues, attempted to domesticate characters by confining female protagonists to girlhood and castrating horses into pethood, yet more contemporary retellings present the horse as a symbol of transition from childhood innocence to young-adult female sexuality. Child-pet relations, Ashman asserts, thus function as an important transitional moment in the sexual and psychic development of the human.

This section’s final two chapters engage with literature for older readers, and with issues of child and animal abuse, colonialism, and racism. In Chapter 10, “The cats are outside hanging: Settler Colonialism, Racialized Animality, and Queer Kinship in Lois-Ann Yamanaka’s Blu’s Hanging,” Anna Feuerstein and Carmen Nolte-Odhiambo read Yamanaka’s controversial novel to show how alternative understandings of animals and nature speak to non-Western ways of knowing and to human-animal relationships that counter the epistemologies of settler colonialism. Written by a Japanese woman born and raised in Hawai‘i, Blu’s Hanging garnered controversy for its racialized depiction of Filipino characters and silencing of Native Hawaiians. While its reception has shown how contentious issues of ethnicity and the legacies of settler colonialism are in Hawaiian society and culture, the novel’s alignment of abused and impoverished children with pets on the island of Moloka‘i
also represents how non-Western epistemologies reject binary understandings of humans and animals. As such, this chapter looks back to ho’omanawanui’s delineation of Hawaiian cultural views toward children and pets to show how alternate child-pet relationships can upset the legacies left in place by settler colonialism. Although Yamanaka’s novel ultimately fails to escape hierarchical understandings of ethnicity and species, the novel’s children and pets offer surprising affective economies not foreseen by Western models of relating.

Continuing the exploration of childhood and pethood in non-Western contexts, Chapter 11 demonstrates how recent Southern African fiction in English highlights a fatal entanglement between children and animals. In “Doomed Creatures: Children and Nonhuman Animals in Contemporary Southern African Fiction in English,” Wendy Woodward reads four narratives—Henrietta Rose-Innes’ Green Lion (2015), Justin Cartwright’s White Lightning (2002), Luis Bernardo Honwana’s “We Killed Mangy Dog” (1969), and “The Day Mabata-bata exploded” (1990) by Mia Couto—to analyze how children and animals remain dominated by the hegemonic injustices of colonialism, civil war, poverty, disease, and gender normativity. As shown throughout her analysis, these injustices are often predicated on racism. And while the previous chapter includes a discussion of how a queer “growing sideways” can create more radical understandings of childhood and pethood, Woodward shows how “growing sideways” can also mean the end of development and even life itself. For the lives of the children and animals in these texts remain in stasis, controlled by the legacies of a colonial and racist history. At the same time, Woodward’s chapter shows how children share relational ontologies with animals not often conceptualized as pets, such as baboons and imagined predators, again putting pressure on stable definitions of pethood. While these children attempt to connect and find sympathy with the animal world, however, the positive relational possibilities are most often foreclosed through historical and social forces beyond the control of both children and animals.

III: Music and Visual Culture

The final section of Childhood and Pethood in Literature and Culture shows how the collection’s overarching themes—from nationhood and the family to racism and patriarchy—play out within the realm of music and visual culture. In Chapter 12, “Bird Songs for Children, the Rhetoric of Conservation, and Voicing the Bird in the United States, 1900–1930,” Katheryn Lawson shows how a nationalist discourse equating children and animals underwrote early twentieth-century American conservationist efforts, as state legislators and concerned citizens drew on a shared language of sentimentality and domestication in movements for the protection of nature and children. Children’s bird-themed songs offer a
unique window into this rhetoric of conservation and state intervention and illuminate how children and birds were aligned in their domestication. While most of the birds featured in children’s songbooks were wild, their incorporation into children’s play and education rendered them familiar and pet-like, through what Lawson calls a process of “symbolic domestication.” Seen alongside the historical practice of keeping birds as pets, the proliferation of children’s bird songs demonstrates how birds were rendered pets to both children and the nation, and reveals slippages between domestication and wildness. Lawson ultimately suggests that conservationists confined nature and children to their own political motivations and value frameworks, showcasing beliefs that America’s wilderness and children would be adrift without government control and intervention.

Paralleling Lawson’s exploration of how conservationism and protectionism can harm the subjects they are supposed to benefit, Chapter 13 illustrates other pernicious effects resulting from aligning children with animals, even when such alignments are presumably guided by humanitarian concerns. In the eighteenth century, African children were purchased or kidnapped and brought to Europe, where they took on the role of family pet in upper-class households. While many Europeans who participated in this practice believed they were saving the children from slavery and giving them a “better life,” the child’s status remained precarious and their future as adults highly uncertain. This literal petification of young African children unveils how closely discourses of racism and white supremacy are connected to anthropocentrism, as their petification relied on their perceived animality, exoticism, and difference from white children. Michèle Bocquillon analyzes this commodification of African children in “Black Children as Pets in Eighteenth-Century European Courts” through examining representations of black African children in Madame du Duras’ novel Ouiroka (1823), the memoirs of Madame de Genlis (1825) and the Marquise de La Tour du Pin (1906), and European portrait paintings. Bocquillon discusses how these children were forced to masquerade as pets and argues that their status as akin to domesticated animals was founded on their blackness, serving here as a marker of animality, as the paintings she analyzes illustrate.

While the paintings discussed in Chapter 13 perpetuate racist ideology, Chapter 14 looks at paintings that posit the possibility of political resistance for socially vulnerable groups such as children, women, and animals. Victoria de Rijke shows how by embracing aspects of the pet and child that society aims to repress, avant-garde artists have used notions of savage play and wildness to present politically radical revisions of childhood and pethood. “The Values of Savagery: Pathologies of Child and Pet Play in Avant-Garde Visual Culture” investigates these nonsentimentalized representations of child-pet play in a selection of avant-garde works termed “dark art.” Examining the photomontage of
post-war DADA German artist Hannah Höch, the expressionist work of Dutch CoBrA artist Karel Appel, and the unsettling paintings of contemporary Portuguese British artist Paula Rego, de Rijke argues that these artists not only depict children and pets with a savage playfulness but further use child-like techniques that sought a return to a utopian “primitivism” as well as to forms of “natural” expression and uninhibited imagination. By doing so, these artists expose and satirize the conventional genres of high art traditions, playing with our sense of who is master in relationships between adults, children, and pets.

Childhood and Pethood in Literature and Culture ends with an analysis of how children’s television both resists and reinforces many of the hierarchies examined through this collection. In Chapter 15, “The Best Friend: Exploring Power Relations of the Child-Pet Co-Construction in Children’s TV Programs,” Åsa Pettersson analyzes a Swedish public service show in which age and species hierarchies remain overwhelmingly intact, despite attempts to portray more egalitarian relations between the child, pet, and adult. The educational program The Best Friend contains several authoritarian positions, most notably those of the adult host and veterinarian, but children at times actively contribute to the production of knowledge and are even positioned as experts on pet care. Nonetheless, and although pets, too, can be read as agents and active participants in parts of the show, children and pets remain aligned through their shared position of powerlessness vis-à-vis the adult figures. Pettersson’s analysis demonstrates how the show disciplines children in regard to their pets and teaches them responsibility and routines, a didactic goal that shapes adult-initiated schooling practices for children and in whose service the pets are ultimately enlisted. The outcome of such conservative constructions of the child-pet relationship is what the contributors to this volume ultimately write against and seek to revise: a future generation of human adults deeply engrained with conceptions of the pet and child as subjects of domination.

Notes

1 Kate Stewart and Matthew Cole have coined the terms “babyfication” and “petification” in Our Children and Other Animals.
2 There are some recent exceptions, notably Monica Flegel’s Pets and Domesticity in Victorian Literature and Culture and Zoe Jaques’ Children’s Literature and the Posthuman.
3 The growing amount of work on pets within the field of animal studies includes Colleen Glenney Boggs, Animalia Americana; Erica Fudge, Pets; Donna Haraway, The Companion Species Manifesto and When Species Meet; and Kari Weil, Why Animal Studies Now? Historically grounded analyses include Flegel; Katherine C. Grier, Pets in America; and Kathleen Kete, The Beast in the Boudoir.
4 See Haraway, The Companion Species Manifesto and Linzey and Cohn, “Terms of Discourse.” Weil notes that a number of municipalities in the
United States have recently changed legal terminology from “pet owners to pet guardians” (58). It is also common to hear pet owners call themselves “pet parents.”


6 Perry Nodelman similarly remarks that “[c]hildhood exists ... to allow adults to be adults. ... [A]dults need children to be childlike in order to understand and confirm their own adulthood” (169).

7 For children, however, innocence is often considered a positive trait, imbued with adult longing for a simpler past. Marina Warner notes that as “the difference of the child from the adult has become a dominant theme in contemporary mythology,” this development is accompanied by “the nostalgic worship of childhood innocence, which is more marked today than it ever has been” (34).

8 For a detailed discussion of children’s rights, see Clark Butler’s collection Child Rights, which focuses on the implications of the United Nations’ 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Notably, the CRC, which puts forth the child’s rights to not only protection and provision but also participation, has been ratified by all UN member nations except Somalia and the United States.

9 Writing on dogs in nineteenth-century Paris, Kete further remarks that they were “captive outside of narrative, without a past, a future, or a culture,” with authors at the time noting that dogs “live[d] in an eternal childhood, a minority without end” (82).

10 See Muñoz’s response to Edelman in Cruising Utopia (91–96).

11 Pit bulls are euthanized more often than other dog breeds and have lower adoption rates. See for instance Lisa M. Gunter, Rebecca T. Barber, and Clive D. L. Wynne’s recent study “What’s in a Name?” which suggests that the label “pit bull” itself deters potential adopters.

12 However, children’s displays of agency have frequently been read as evidence for the need to control and contain them. As Joseph L. Zornado has shown, “the obedient child proves the benefits of adult hegemony even as the violent, disobedient child proves the need for adult hegemony all the more clearly” (219).

13 See also Zornado, Inventing the Child. Zornado asserts that “[c]hildren’s stories ... are more often than not adult propaganda that serves to confirm for the child the hierarchical relationship between the adult and the child” (xv).

Works Cited


Introduction


