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## **Chapter XI: The Eighteenth Century**

### **Section 3. Poetry**

With the notable exception of Alexander Pope, this year was marked by continued attention to the work of traditionally overlooked figures, notably women and labouring-class poets. Attention was also paid to the often neglected Scottish-born and educated poets David Mallet, who gains a modern biographer, and James Grainger who has been credited with inventing a new genre, the West-Indian georgic. An emerging trend was registered by a number of studies concerned with how the poetry of the period portrays the natural environment and in particular represents human-animal interaction. Pope himself gets drawn into these concerns in an important essay by John Sitter (to be discussed below) which, in seeking to provide a corrective dose of scholarly historicism to recent claims regarding Romantic poetry's monopoly on ecological awareness, offers a reading of *An Essay On Man* as crucial evidence. At its best, such work, by feeding off a characteristically eclectic body of "green" theory and practice is starting to engender some genuinely new critical insights into the poetry of this period.

Of the canonical poets, Alexander Pope was particularly well-served this year by an important body of six essays by leading scholars published as part of the tribute volume *Literary Milieux; Essays in Text and Context Presented to Howard Erskine-Hill* edited by David Womersley and Richard McCabe. For reasons of space I will not be providing a very detailed account of each individual essay but the following summaries, presented in the order they appear in the volume, aim at indicating the

range and contents of what, when read in sequence, amounts to a significant collective contribution to Pope studies.

Julian Ferraro's essay 'Pope, Pen and Press' provides a scholarly, critical reconstruction of Pope's protracted composition of *An Epistle From Mr. Pope, to Dr. Arbuthnot* (1735), as far as this can be ascertained from the extant but geographically dispersed manuscript material directly relating to the writing process. Ferraro's lucid, forensic account is accompanied by an appendix which prints for the first time the entire 260 line autograph draft poem opening 'And of Myself Too...' as it survives in draft (with authorial revisions). Although these verses make no mention of Arbuthnot nor William Cleland (who is frequently claimed to have been the original addressee) they are usually cited as forming the basis, when revised and expanded, for the original draft of the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*. As Ferraro's close-reading indicates this draft tells us a lot about how the poet reconfigured his early ideas to create a greater degree of intimacy as the 'irascible tone of the Pope's original "Bill of Complaint" is steadily replaced by a more sophisticated exposition, in which he introduces a play of different voices...[a] play achieved not only by the introduction of an interlocutor – or series of interlocutors – but also by a series of subtle shifts in the tone of Pope's own account of his character and conduct' (p. 130). Ferraro's meticulous mapping of these shifts will be of interest to anyone concerned with the mechanics of Pope's self-fashioning.

George Rousseau's engagingly erudite essay 'Pope, Rhapsody, and Rapture: 'You grow correct that once with Rapture writ'', can usefully be read as a companion piece to his contribution to last year's *Cambridge Companion to Pope* (YWES 88[2009] 646), in so far as it addresses the poet's engagement with medical ideas, more specifically the overlaying of a traditional notions of the Passions by the new

“doctrine of the nerves” articulated most influentially by the anatomist Thomas Willis, the medically trained philosopher John Locke and Pope’s friend, the medical practitioner and popular medical author, George Cheyne. Out of necessity Rousseau is required to revisit, albeit in summary, territory he has covered more extensively in his earlier work where he has drawn our attention to the importance of the conceptual language of contemporary neurology for reading eighteenth-century literature, including poetry. But Rousseau’s title is drawn from Pope’s 1737 *Epilogue to the Satires*, and at the heart of this new essay is an examination of the shifting, problematic meanings of “rhapsody” and “rapture” available to the poet and his critics. In so doing Rousseau takes a typically impressive long-view, ranging from Homer to Coleridge, while taking in Shaftesbury and John Dennis along the way. Observing that ‘[a]natomy and physiology “the arts of the body” as called by Martinus Scriblerus – were branches of natural philosophy near-invalid Pope had good reason to cultivate’ (p. 182), Rousseau asks us to consider how the new physiology might have enabled the poet to sustain an “aesthetics of rhapsody” when the term was in fact losing force. This is a lively essay that unapologetically raises almost as many questions as it answers but in so doing deliberately invites the pursuit of fresh paths of contextual enquiry. Rousseau’s contribution is followed by Robert J. Mayhew’s essay ‘Self-Fashioned Prospects: Pen, Print, and the Presentation of Landscape in the Correspondence of Alexander Pope’ which does not directly address the poetry, but is of interest as a reassessment of this subject.

Hester Jones’s contribution to the same volume, “‘Religion blushing veils her sacred fires’: Pope and the veil of Faith’ is concerned with how matters of faith inform the poet’s oeuvre. This wide-ranging essay examines the pervasive religious tropes evident in *The Dunciad* (from which her title is derived) and a number of other

poems including 'An Essay on Man', 'To A Lady', the 'Universal Prayer', 'Messiah', 'Epistle to Miss Blount', 'A Prayer to God 1715' and Pope's translation of 'Hymn to St Francis Xavier'. She also examines Pope's declarations of faith in his private correspondence and reconsiders the possible influence of the distinctive spirituality of the French mystic Madame Guyon and her champion Archbishop Fénelon. Jones finds Pope 'consistently engaged in defining the relation in his understanding of Catholic Christianity between true wit and true faith' while his 'relation to any theological position is usually more contrapuntal than antithetical, and always concerned to open up the possibilities of a position rather than close them down' (pp. 209; 222).

The contribution of Robert Douglas-Fairhurst to the same volume is equally comprehensive in approach. In 'Alexander Pope: "renown'd in Rhyme"', Douglas-Fairhurst is prompted by ideas first broached by Hugh Kenner to present his own reflections upon Pope's 'sensitivity to the relationship between rhyme and time' (p. 233). There is an underlying ethical dimension to these formalist concerns. Drawing upon John Henry Newman's notion of "Credences", his term for the common ways of thinking that provide our moral bearings, Douglas-Fairhurst's thoughtful analysis rests upon his general observation that 'the rhyme-words of a language emerge over a far longer time as the irreducible residue of cultural development, its audible tea-leaves' (p. 236). He concludes that Pope had a 'humane and perceptive understanding of rhyme – not as a mere jingle of words, but as the sound of our consciousness of time, our consciousness in time' (p. 255).

In literary studies the most unassuming titles can sometimes hide the richest fruits, but when the author is Claude Rawson we are unlikely to be deceived. His title 'The Sleep of the Dunces' for his contribution to this volume (*Literary Milieux*) bucks a

long-standing trend in academic literary studies for elaborate titles but as we might well expect this truly erudite, beautifully choreographed critical essay is a small master-piece of its kind. Meditating upon the manner in which the ‘Miltonic reverberations “of Night Primeval, and of Chaos old” have perhaps drawn undue attention away from ‘the ignoble particulars’ of “sleep” in *The Dunciad*, Rawson presents a magnificently rich and lively analysis of how tropes associated with “night” and “sleep” function throughout the multiple versions of the work he considers to be Pope’s *Waste Land* (p. 258). T. S. Eliot is just one of an array of writers with whom Rawson is able to forge ever-enriching verbal comparisons; Homer, Euripedes, Virgil, Dante, Milton, Rochester, Garth, Blackmore, and Shelley (in ‘Peter Bell’) are all brought into play here without once losing focus on the central goal of elucidating Pope’s vision of cultural catastrophe and apocalyptic “uncreation”. Along the way our attention is also drawn to the comparative use of the mock-heroic in John Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera* and Henry Fielding’s *Jonathan Wild* (they appeared in 1728 and 1743, the years which witnessed the first and final versions of *The Dunciad*) and Swift’s precise role in promoting what is often thought of as Pope’s most Swiftian poem. In short, this essay, the work of a major scholar at the height of his critical powers, is essential reading for anyone with an interest in comprehending Pope’s most controversial and complex poem.

Last but not least is an intriguing essay, ‘Dulness’s Obscure Vowel: Language, Monarchy, and Motherhood in Pope’s *The Dunciad in Four Books*’ by Valerie Rumbold. Building upon the work of Simon Alderson and others on Pope’s use of iconic, imitative versification and how this represents an engagement with contemporary debates over the relationship of words to things and the power of the poet, Rumbold sets out on a forensic exploration of Pope’s use of phonaesthetic

effects in *The Dunciad in Four Books* of 1743 by comparing these with the practical examples of the meaning of English sounds posited by the seventeenth-century grammarian John Wallis (as translated and frequently incorporated into later textbooks, notably Charles Gildon and John Brightwood's *A Grammar of the English Tongue* of 1711). As Rumbold herself observes, despite any 'Lockean or Saussurean scepticism as modern readers we may bring to Wallis's discussions of the alleged meanings of English sound, his analyses remain aesthetically compelling' (p. 285). And indeed we are inclined to agree that reading 'Pope, with Wallis's analysis in mind is also a salutary reminder that his poetry, so often discussed in terms of its continental and classicising influences, has at its heart, especially where its action or metaphor is essentially physical, a deeply felt relation to a core of the oldest English words' (p. 285). A brief example of how this operates at the level of a single-word is in the couplet 'Instructive work! Whose wry-mouthed portraiture / Display'd the fates her confessors endure' (2: 145-6); as Rumbold notes, 'according to Wallis, initial "wr" represents "Crookedness or Distortion," an inference supported by the group "Wry, wreath, wrest, wrestle, wring, etc"' (p. 285). In a similar vein Rumbold goes on to disclose further and more complex patterns of related word-clusters, before identifying one particular vowel sound 'that is particularly important in orchestrating some of the poem's most characteristic effects...[T]he sound in question being what Wallis, locating it in the word "mumble", calls "the Obscure (u)"' (p. 290). Finding that Pope tends to place words employing this sound in close association with Dulness - words such as "Plunge", 'Mud", "Suck" and (and "suckle"), "lull" (and "lullaby) - Rumbold observes how, when taken 'together, the referents of these "Obscure (u)" words map onto the lower rather than the high, the physical rather than the intellectual; and they connect in particular with things that are sloppy, viscous and

potentially revolting in their transgression of defined boundaries' (p. 291). But what is particularly engaging for me about this essay is that, having mapped the preponderance of this particular sound (as labelled by Wallis), Rumbold's account then pans out into an equally rich exploration of the contexts for comprehending the politicised iconography of motherhood, nursing and infantilism at work in the poem. The result is a rewarding essay that in moving between close linguistic analysis and broad cultural contexts – notably a shift in conceptions of maternal and queenly authority - ably fulfils the parameters signalled in this volume's subtitle: 'Text and Context'.

In his article 'The Rhetoric of Disclosure in James Thomson's *The Seasons*; or, On Kant's Gentlemanly Misanthropy' (*ECent* 49:i[2008] 1-24) Denis Desroches addresses the frequent charges of unreadability owing to incoherent fragmentation, contrivance and portentousness levelled by modern readers against this *omni gatherum* of a poem. His own analysis takes off from the observation that as a focus for discussions of such topics as class relations, geopolitics and Enlightenment philosophy, Thomson's poem has come to 'foreground a critical practice that sees *The Seasons* not as a poem at all, but a dense site of discursive exempla from which certain passages can be strip-mined and made to serve certain ends' (p. 2). Desroches also notes how current academic journalistic conventions, which militate against citing more than twenty lines of verse, have effectively served to reinforce a critical approach that, in charging *The Seasons* with incoherence, 'brings into sharp relief the constraints of our own reading and interpretative practices' (p. 3). Instead Desroches successfully shifts attention away from any purported lack of 'logical rigor' to a more positive exploration of 'rhetorical rigor', specifically what he explicates as Thomson's 'rhetoric of gentlemanly exposure' (p. 3). To achieve this Desroches brings together

Marx's conception of 'the societal individual' and John Barrell's work on eighteenth-century conceptions of landscape as, in effect, idealised models of civil society viewed from the perspective of a "gentleman" whose role (as influentially defined by Richard Steele), is simply to "shine in the world". Within this broadly historicist framework Desroches convincingly reads *The Seasons* as Thomson's attempt to 'be that curiously disposed individual of the early to mid eighteenth century whose social function was not to function at all, but to observe, and in observing be eminently observable himself' (p. 7). Through four variant exercises in close-reading, Desroches demonstrates the reach and ultimate limits of this 'rhetoric of exposure' as enacted in short exemplary passages from the poem, whereby 'images of darkness and light, concealing and revealing - the play of "light and shade" - are manipulated in order to generate a sense of the gentleman's ability, in comprehending the workings of the world, to present those working to the reader in a revelatory rather than strictly didactic or even discursive fashion' (pp. 7-8). Citing Kant's notion of a 'sublime misanthropy' in *The Critique of Pure Reason*, whereby the gentleman's world comes to be 'irrevocable changed by this sense of reflection' (p. 21), Desroches finally draws attention to how Thomson is ultimately unable to 'speak, properly speaking, of the sun, of light, of God' but repeatedly seeks to retreat into the rural shade. This is sophisticated work of rhetorical analysis; one that serves to bring a sense of coherence back to the poem without seeking to impose any anachronistic or simplistically formalist straight-jacket.

An even more neglected mid-century descriptive poem is re-evaluated in Beccie Puneet Randhawa's essay 'The Inhospitable Muse: Locating Creole Identity in James Grainger's *The Sugar Cane*' (*ECent* 49:i[2008] 67-85). As she rightly observes, James Grainger's didactic poem, first published at London in 1764, has often repulsed

modern readers disturbed by the ethical implications of ‘the aesthetizing the sugar cane at the expense of anesthetizing the suffering bodies of the slaves who must tend it’ (70). More recently the poem has drawn attention from post-colonialist literary historians who, without wishing to set-aside Grainger’s disconcerting, blatantly self-contradictory shifts from apologist to ameliorist positions, have been concerned with his invention of the West Indian georgic. Randhawa contributes to this project of reassessment by arguing that the poem has ‘a more stark and deliberate function: the repudiation of claims of cultural inferiority and degeneracy’ typically levelled at the Creole by the mother country (70). She opens with a famous anecdote – of which we have several versions – to the effect that when Grainger, having travelled all the way from St Kitt’s to London to see his poem through the press, read it out to members of Johnson’s Literary Club he was met with howls of laughter when he reached the line ‘Now, Muse, let’s sing of rats’. Randhawa uses this story of failed hospitality as a springboard for a reading of the poem that draws upon Peter Hulme’s identification of a pattern of exotic and colonial hospitality as well as more abstract conceptions of the ethics of hospitality available in Kant and Levinas (as read by Derrida). This helpful theoretical framework enables Randhawa to explore ‘the complex structures of gratitude, generosity and reciprocity’ (p. 71) informing what she identifies as Grainger’s attempt to contest established, stereotypical images of the Creole class-fraction as peculiarly vicious, luxurious, cruel and degenerate. On this reading Randhawa suggests that the ‘monumental awkwardness’ of the poem, as evident from its initial, mocking reception in London, rests in the manner in which the poem’s ‘ideological motivations internalize the very same anxiety of “belonging” and overseas acceptance which the colonial West Indian Creole craved, as a cultural outsider’ (p. 68). In Randhawa’s hands this approach generates new insights into

Grainger's attempts to reconfigure the planter as country-house host and to recast slavery 'in terms of hospitality, where mutual gratitude and benevolence take the place of enslaved brutality' (p. 78). Her close reading of tropes associated with hospitality is particularly rewarding when she applies her conceptual lens to the objects of Grainger's own medical gaze; the worms and other tropical parasites which figure in the verse as unwanted guests that eat away at their host. But the essay also represents a missed opportunity in so far as it fails to take on board one glaring aspect of Grainger's bid for cultural approval amongst his London-based literary hosts; his status as a Scotsman. Randhawa's unqualified references to 'England' and 'English' throughout her discussion of Grainger's negotiations of his Creole status soon begin to grate if one considers the specifically Scottish perspective registered throughout *The Sugar Cane* (in, for example, Grainger's approval of Scottish produced linen and his dubious comparison between the relatively comfortable lot of West Indian slaves when compared with that of Scottish miners). As a Scotsman in London Grainger was already an outsider beholden to hospitality before he ever left for the West Indies. He initially went there in his role as a surgeon-physician and as such formed part of a Scottish diaspora who made up a culturally significant proportion of the West Indian (Creole) colonialist population. His return, poem in hand, to the climate of intense Scotophobia pervading London in the mid-1760s as whipped-up by Lord Bute's opponents, must have merely highlighted this doubly marginalised position. To overlook this internal-colonialist context for reading *The Sugar Cane* is an regrettable oversight in what is otherwise a potentially rewarding approach to this intensely problematic poem.

In *David Mallet, Anglo-Scot; Poetry, Patronage, and Politics in the Age of Union*, Sandro Jung presents the first modern, scholarly account of Grainger's compatriot

David Mallet (1703?-1765). Mallet who, by anglicising his name from the original “Malloch”, effectively sacrificed being claimed by future generations as a Scottish writer, was a successful poet, dramatist and Patriot propagandist. Adept at what we might now term literary “networking”, Mallet was a well-known figure in mid-century London where he associated with the likes of James Thomson, Aaron Hill and Alexander Pope, but outside specialist literary circles he has largely sunk into oblivion. Jung, who is no doubt correct to hold Samuel Johnson - who simply condemns Mallet as a “party-hack” in the *Lives of the Poets* - largely responsible for the subsequent neglect and distortion of Mallet’s achievements, deliberately sets out to set the record straight. This act of scholarly recovery and reappraisal is presented as a deliberate intervention in the current re-examination of the eighteenth-century poetical landscape. Jung is particularly concerned with how Mallet negotiated a mid-century climate in which patronage, politics and poetical self-fashioning are inextricable interlinked. The result is a solid and readable critical biography. It is well-supported by archival evidence including ample reference to Mallet’s somewhat fragmentary extant correspondence and his recently recovered notes and drafts relating to the account of the Duke of Marlborough he was compiling at the time of his death. Jung also provides detailed contextual readings of Mallet’s most significant works, including his descriptive poem *The Excursion*, his once popular foray into the Thompsonian sublime. And yet Mallet, whose Scottish origins remain veiled in the fog he himself appears to have woven to disguise his family’s Jacobite allegiances, remains a somewhat elusive figure. For all that Jung can recover of Mallet’s literary ambitions and social connections we gain hardly any sense of a personal life. But this is no fault of his new biographer, who must be commended for all his scholarly

efforts; rather it is a reflection of glaring gaps in the historical record and Mallet's own facility for evading detection.

One of Mallet's earliest popular successes as a poet was the literary balled 'William and Margaret' first published by Aaron Hill in *The Plain Dealer* in 1724. In a comprehensive essay entitled "'The Finest Ballads': Women's Oral Traditions in Eighteenth-Century Scotland' (ECLife 32:ii[2008], 81-97), Ruth Perry is more specifically concerned with women's role in a native Scottish song and ballad tradition. Perry does not offer any original primary research, but this well informed essay does provide a valuable overview of the field paying particular attention to the role of women as producers and custodians of this rich Scottish oral tradition.

In his journal essay 'Eighteenth-Century Ecological Poetry and Ecotheology' (*R&L* 40:i[2008], 13-37), John Sitter issues a robust and much-needed historicist corrective to a growing tendency amongst the more flabby followers of Jonathan Bate and Karl Kroeber to associate the origins of ecological consciousness exclusively with Romanticism when in fact, as Sitter himself ably demonstrates, 'the idea that poetry is a special discourse that might reunite mind and nature was current at least a century earlier' (p. 14). The essay opens with an informed exploration of the common-ground between our current, if still somewhat diffuse conceptions of ecotheology (including Arne Neass' influential model of "deep ecology") and the tenets of eighteenth-century physicotheology as exemplified in John Derham's popular *Physicotheology: Or, a Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, from his Works of Creation* (1713). As Sitter demonstrates, such a comparison opens up 'the possibility of sympathetic ecotheological reading of eighteenth-century poetry' before presenting a series of illustrative close-readings, starting with a comparison between two rhetorically similar passages from William Wordsworth's "Two-Part Prelude" of

1799 (l.269-74, starting ‘Was it for this...’) and James Thomson’s *Seasons* (‘Autumn, 1184-88, starting ‘Was it then for This...’), in which he reveals that it is the latter, rather than Wordsworth, who shows the most ecological awareness (pp. 12-13). There follows an engaging analysis of the figurative use of the term “peopled” in early eighteenth-century poetry when describing social phenomena in the animal world such as swarms of bees, flocks of birds, or schools of fish. Here Sitter draws upon an early study of *The Language of Natural Description in Eighteenth-Century Poetry* from 1949 by John Arthos who identified “peopled” as belonging to a network of terms familiar to anyone who knows the poetry of the period: ‘Band, Breed, Brood, Choir, Citizen, Crew, Flock, Fry, Herd, Host, Inhabitants, Kind, Legion, Nation, Race, Seed, Shoal, Squadron, Train, Tribe, Troop’. But as Sitter observes, while a modern ecocritic might be tempted to dismiss such tropes as blatant anthropocentrism, in practice, as in Thomson’s description of poultry as ‘household feathery people’, the actual employment of such language raises important questions regarding ‘the eighteenth-century tendency to use “people” to refer both to animals and humans – a usage which seems to die out in the early nineteenth century’ (p. 18). Here Sitter suggests the ‘fact that a broader range of meaning for “people” was open to eighteenth-century poets than most nineteenth-century poets deserves more attention than it has received.’ (p. 18).

Sitter also addresses the now commonplace argument that Romanticism marks the birth or rebirth of “green” consciousness; what he wittily refers to as not merely the ‘greening of Romanticism’ but the uncritical ‘Romanticization of greenness’ (p. 13). Such claims have largely relied upon a familiar grand narrative, largely derived from Max Weber, that insists that a combination of Cartesian philosophy and the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century produced a “disenchanted” and “mechanistic”

view of Nature. Doubting whether ‘this narrative is true in relation to general European history’, in the second half of his essay Sitter addresses how the actual use of the term ‘Imperial Race’ as applied to ‘Man’ illustrates how any such claim certainly oversimplifies the line ‘between organic and mechanistic metaphors’ active in eighteenth-century poetry (p. 20). In particular, he devotes much of the latter-half of this enlightening account to addressing Alexander Pope’s use of the term in *An Essay of Man* where it typically ‘suggests human kinship with other animals and responsibility for them’ (p. 21). This groundbreaking essay fully justifies Sitter’s concluding declaration that ‘our is a moment when vigorous reconsideration of the traditions of nature poetry before Romanticism would help reanimate both literary and religious discussion’ (p. 33).

Ecocriticism is a broad-church but although she is writing from a somewhat different critical perspective some of Sitter’s demands are ably met by Anne Milne in her book-length study, *‘Lactilla Tends her fav’rite Cow’: Ecocritical Readings of Animals and Women in Eighteenth-Century British Labouring-Class Poetry*. In a lucid introduction Milne sets out her concerns with ‘representations of nature, natural genius, and instrumentality’ (p. 17). She positions her critical project firmly in relation to historicist studies of eighteenth century labouring class women’s poetry as prompted by the work of Richard Green, Donna Landry, Mary Waldron and others while also displaying a well-informed, practical engagement with ecocriticism (Kate Soper, Steve Baker and others) and related theoretical ideas, notably Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s explorations of the human-animal interface. The ensuing, relatively short, but rewarding study is arranged into thematic chapters each focused around the close-reading of a significant work by one of five women poets. A very brief summary will give a sense of the coverage. The first chapter, addressing

'Ideologies of Domestication in Mary Leapor's "Man the Monarch", makes original reference to contemporary textbooks on the domestication of animals. In the second, entitled 'Gender, Class and the Beehive; Mary Collier's "The Woman's Labour" as Nature Poem', Milne considers notions of women as industrious. Drawing upon contemporary manuals on bee-keeping (and how to construct bee-boxes) she offers some intriguing new insights into what by now is a much-read poem. The third chapter, entitled "'We saw an heifer stray": Ecological Interconnection and Identification in Elizabeth Hands's "Written, originally extempore, on seeing a Mad Heifer run through the Village where the Author lives", examines the problem of unpicking "interlocking oppressions". The fourth, 'The Silence of the Lambs: Rapture and Release in Ann Yearsley's "Written on a Visit" considers how Yearsley negotiates notions of "wildness" and "hyper-docility" directly relevant to the poet's own concerns with independence. The title of Milne's final chapter - 'Dogs and the "Talking Animal Syndrome" in Janet Little's "From Snipe, a Favourite Dog, To His Master' - might be said to speak for itself. Although most of the texts Milne discusses are now available in modern editions, she sensibly provides several less accessible poems in an appendix preceding a full bibliography.

Animals are also a central concern of Ingrid H. Tague in her essay on 'Dead Pets; Satire and Sentiment in British Elegies and Epitaphs for Animals' (ECS 41:iii[2008] 57-80). This practical exercise in genre criticism suggests the value of employing minor poetry to explore cultural trends, in this instance shifting attitudes towards animals. As Tague observes, for our modern notion of pets to be possible a society has to have reached a certain level of luxury that can tolerate the keeping of animals that do not contribute as food or by their labour. It is also necessary that there are physical barriers separating the domestic realm from other parts of the household

where livestock are kept. Qualifying previous claims that “pets” (a term originally accorded tame, hand-reared lambs) are essentially a nineteenth century development, Tague uses occasional poetry to reveal how they effectively emerge as a distinct concept earlier in the eighteenth century. At the heart of this account is an analytical survey of the many elegies and epitaphs on dead pets that were increasingly produced as the century proceeded; one that ranges from Thomas Gray’s suave ‘Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat’ to many obscure, far less sophisticated examples. A significant number were merely witty, comic literary exercises, *jeux d’esprit* inspired by such classical models as Catullus’s elegy for Lesbia’s sparrow and Ovid’s for Corinna’s parrot, but as Tague shows, this ephemeral poetic material reveals the many ‘ways people used animals to think about humans’ place in the world’ (p. 292). In the early half of the century poetic allusions to pets tended to be satirical, as in Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock*, where lap-dogs invoke contemporary associations between women, fashion and pet-keeping; ‘Pets –especially lapdogs, monkeys and parrots – could be seen as useless luxuries, just as women themselves were useless; women’s love of pets proved their misplaced values as well as their susceptibility to the whims of fashion’ (p. 293). Elsewhere female pets function as objects of male jealousy, often through the invocation of blatantly sexual innuendo. On the other side of the equation Tague considers how ‘parrots, lapdogs and monkeys lent themselves to easy parallels with other satirical targets, especially fops and beaux who were supposedly the primary distractions of fashionable women’ (p. 294). But such comparisons are not always purely comical; by enabling the exploration of conceptual boundaries between the animal and the human, the natural and the domesticated, they could also fulfil a moral purpose. Dogs often raise questions over loyalty, fidelity and trustworthiness, while caged birds are particularly problematic for inviting questions

of power relations, a theme that takes on particular resonance amongst proto-feminist women poets towards the end of the century. Animal deaths often invite reflections on human mortality, but as Tague observes while many verifiers insist upon the traditional Christian notion that humans are supposedly unique in their capacity to reason and hence make moral judgements some were drawn to consider – often by taking their cue from the Pythagorean concept of metempsychosis - the possibility that their pet's had souls. Tague identifies a marked increase in the individuality accorded pets towards the close of the century as pet keeping gradually came 'to symbolize all that was best in the human spirit, and mourning the loss of a pet could be seen as praiseworthy rather than ridiculous' (p. 302).

Attention is drawn to two related studies: Julie Prandi's book *The Poetry of the Self-Taught: An Eighteenth-Century Phenomenon*, is only marginally relevant here in as much as she addresses a considerable amount of German poetry and her range of reference extends into the Romantic era. But it is worth noting for her opening discussion of what is at stake in using the term "self-taught" poet and for the attention she pays to the careers and poetry of Mary Barber, Mary Collier, Stephen Duck and Mary Leapor. Covering some similar ground, Kirsten Juhas's "*I'll to my Self, and to My Muse Be True*": *Strategies of Self-Authorization in Eighteenth-Century Women Poetry* [sic], is a doctoral thesis, as awarded by the Westflische Wihelms-Universitt, Munster in 2007. Despite the infelicity of her title, Juhas presents a fluent, well-illustrated account of how women poets of the period (again extending into the 1790s) negotiated predominately masculine conceptions of the power of the pen. Topics covered include how they invoked the Muse (specifically a self-consciously "Domestic muse"), adopted ironic slatternly or mad poses and, in poems on "The Nightingale", adapted the myth of Philomela.

Finally, on rather different tack we have Aaron Santesso's substantial essay "“Playful” Poetry and the Public School' (*ECLife* 32:ii[2008], 57-80) addressing the poetic exercises traditionally encouraged at Westminster School. Although the historical range of this account extends backwards into the seventeenth-century, it does have some relevance here for the attention it pays to Latin and English acrostics and anagrams appearing in school anthologies published well into the early eighteenth-century.