‘Beastly Sights’: the treatment of animals as a moral theme in representations of London, c.1820–1850

Diana Donald

During the first half of the nineteenth century London grew at a phenomenal rate.¹ It nearly trebled its population, and the built-up area spread so far that in Engels’s words, writing of the mid-1840s, ‘a man may wander for hours together without reaching the beginning of the end, without meeting the slightest hint which could lead to the inference that there is open country within reach’.² Yet during this same period, when the life of many British people seemed increasingly divorced from the experience of the natural world, the treatment of animals became a national preoccupation. A succession of bills, from 1800 onwards, resulted in the first anti-cruelty law in 1822. It covered only cattle and horses, and a more comprehensive law superseded it in 1835. In the intervening period, a number of groups were established, which aimed to enforce and extend this legislation, and to arouse public indignation about the abuse of animals. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (later the RSPCA) was founded in 1824.³ By the early 1830s there were two breakaway groups, the Association for Promoting Rational Humanity towards the Animal Creation, and the Animals’ Friend Society.⁴ Each produced a magazine, respectively the Voice of Humanity and the Animals’ Friend, and from 1832 the SPCA also issued printed annual reports. There is much evidence that public interest in the issues involved went far beyond the devoted circles among whom these periodicals first circulated. In the popular mainstream publications of the time, including illustrated magazines and fiction issued in parts, man’s relationship with animals is a recurring theme, and, as this article will show, it was often represented in imagery of remarkable force and interest.

Many of these publications referred to London in their titles, and, in varying degrees, evoked metropolitan life in their contents. What, then, is the connection, if any, between rapid urbanization and the repeated attempts to reform public opinion on the treatment of animals? Many writers have defined it in paradoxical terms: it was their very distance from the brutal realities of nature and agriculture and the increasing marginality of animals in the life of the metropolis, that enabled city dwellers to cultivate a gentler attitude towards them. The most influential formulation of this view can be found in Keith Thomas’s Man and the Natural World of 1984: ‘The triumph of the new attitude was closely linked to the growth of towns … first expressed … by well-to-do townsmen, remote from the agricultural process and inclined to think of animals as pets rather than as working livestock.’⁵
This argument from a negation – the supposed absence of real working animals from the experience of Londoners – makes it hard to explain the urgency, even the sense of moral crisis, which is apparent in the anti-cruelty writings and images of the period. But in fact the argument is open to objections on many grounds. It tends to overlook the interdependence of ‘city’ and ‘country’ at every level, both material and conceptual, and assumes a fixity of viewpoint which is belied by the actual fluidity of the London population in the nineteenth century. The moneyed classes with their servants and dependants moved seasonally between the metropolis and the countryside, and the labouring classes, too, ebbed and flowed in response to the opportunities for casual work and the demands of their trades. The monstrous spread of the city could indeed be measured by the increasing distances which drovers had to traverse with their herds between open pastures and Smithfield market; and Henry Mayhew reported that sellers of caged songbirds in the London streets especially noticed ‘the changes which have added to the fatigues and difficulties of their calling’, the ‘two thousand miles of houses . . . built in London within the last twenty years’ which now lay between them and their catch sites.

As these examples imply, animals, so far from being peripheral, were ubiquitous in nineteenth-century London; absorbed into its working economy and patterns of consumption in a variety of species and purposes so complex it would fill a volume. Exhibitions of wild and imported animals ranged from the grand new zoological gardens through travelling menageries and mobile cages in the streets, to the shabby specimens shown in inn yards. Performing animals, dressed in human clothes and harshly trained to simulate human social behaviour, danced and acted in the London streets, fairs, circuses and theatres. The baiting of bulls, bears and badgers continued well into the nineteenth century, as did cock and dog fights; and, when those pursuits were declared illegal, gambling on rat kills by dogs in specially constructed pits became a lucrative branch of London’s sporting industry. Far more important than the display of animals for entertainment, however, was their use as food. The growing population of the metropolis increased the need, while it choked the available spaces, for ever greater numbers of cattle and sheep to be driven in, marketed and slaughtered; and these supplies were augmented by ‘town-made’ pork and poultry, reared by the poor of London. The use of animals for riding and draught was also finely calibrated to the social hierarchy. The splendid carriage horses of the aristocracy appeared in shining contrast to the broken-down hacks they might themselves become, pulling omnibuses, cabs and hackney coaches through the London thoroughfares. On a lower level still were the despised donkeys of the carters and costermongers which Mayhew saw at Smithfield, ‘their white velvety noses resting on the wooden rail’, as they lined up, waiting to be goaded into a saleable semblance of liveliness, or consigned to the knackers. Growing traffic and mileages increased the demand for draught animals of all kinds, and apparently the first thing that visitors noticed about London was that it smelt like a stable yard.

In studying all these interactions between humans and animals, one becomes aware of the blend of mutuality and exploitation they involved, and of the animals’ essential role not only in London’s systems of labour and trade, but in the emotional experience of city goers and dwellers. Such creatures were not the...
vestiges of a rural culture lingering into the industrial age: their presence in such numbers was a function of London’s growing financial dominance, luxurious consumption, developing infrastructure and architectural improvement. It was the increasingly ferocious competition between commercial proprietors which led to the overworking of draught horses; it was the scale of London’s building and engineering projects which taxed their strength.\(^{14}\) As Lewis Gompertz, founder of the Animals’ Friend Society, commented, ‘the works of civilized society’ entailed a grievous imposition on the animals which ‘civilized’ man regarded as his inferiors. London Bridge could be admired as a production of human genius, but its construction represented a savage violation of the natural world: ‘could all the torture and destruction that this has caused to the poor horses, who drew the stones and cleared the rubbish, be brought to light, what an emblem of crime would this beautiful bridge exhibit.’\(^{15}\) The callous commodification of working animals obtruded itself on Londoners; ‘The unceasing sound of the lash in our streets’, noted a SPCA pamphlet of 1829, and ‘the increased rate of travelling and loads imposed ... common and daily evils ... chiefly perpetrated by the most ignorant orders of society, and permitted by the higher classes’.\(^{16}\) It was not philosophical distance from sites of cruelty, but painful proximity to them which prompted Londoners’ protests; and the reforming groups, whatever their ideological and tactical disagreements, had this in common: that their principal object was reform of the cruelties of the capital’s streets and markets, both in legislative campaigns and prosecutions.\(^{17}\)

The paradox expressed by Gompertz was central to the discourse of literature of the period. Writers celebrated the march of intellect and improvement in Britain which the metropolis embodied, but simultaneously deplored its costs for both man and nature: part of the wider debate that crystallized in the 1840s about the whole system of capitalism. Political radicals had often, in a Rousseauist spirit, blamed the heartless abuse of animals on the development of modern urban society. As the Jacobin John Oswald expressed it, in \textit{The Cry of Nature} (1791), ‘the fate of the animal world has followed the progress of man from his sylvan state to that of civilization, till the gradual improvements of art, on this glorious pinnacle of independence, have at length placed him free from every tender link.’ The slaughter of animals for food merely led the way to the evils of social and political injustice: ‘Hence the establishment of towns and cities, those impure sources of misery and vice; hence arose prisons, palaces, pyramids, and all those other amazing monuments of human slavery; hence the inequality of ranks, the wasteful wallow of wealth ... the abject front of poverty, the insolence of power ...’\(^{18}\) While such extreme views were rare, a sense of malaise, of alienation from ‘nature’ and ‘natural’ feeling,\(^{19}\) and religious compunction about the cost to animals of human luxury, were widespread in the early nineteenth century. Cruelty to animals was not only an egregious evil in itself; it provided a powerful metonym for the ills of society in general,\(^{20}\) and this may partly explain the frequency with which the issue was aired in the popular magazines of the time. The predominance of enlightened attitudes to animals, marked by the initiation of the various anti-cruelty measures, was often cited as a prime instance of moral progress. Yet the prevailing cruelties which legislation seemed powerless to correct represented one of the direst symptoms of moral degeneration. Were such
barbarities a residue of the past, which the ongoing march of education and refinement would annihilate? Or were they an intrinsic aspect of laissez-faire capitalism itself, as Carlyle and Engels believed the oppression and pauperization of the working classes to be? In the very first article in his *Illuminated Magazine*, in 1843, Douglas Jerrold gently teases the man who ‘living only in the nineteenth century ... has some vague, perplexing notion that he has missed an Eden’ in the former ‘golden times of England’. Such people forget all the specifically modern benefits they enjoy; comforts and conveniences brought within the financial reach of all Londoners, new standards of civility and ‘humanizing, refining pleasures’. ‘In our maudlin sensibility’, he writes ironically, ‘we have taken under our protection the very brutes of the earth ... cast the majesty of the law around the asses of the reign of Victoria.’ This progress is measured visually by the wood-engraved vignettes running down the page: the first showing a bear-baiting in the reign of Elizabeth; the last, Epsom races with their ‘high moralities’ and a London omnibus. Yet this magazine was itself, contradictorily, to expose the brutal working conditions of children in the mines and of the London seamstresses, as well as cruelties to animals: ‘if our hearts were as tender as nature made them, and had not gone through a sort of macadamizing process’, such suffering would be intolerable.

The London omnibuses and Londoners’ race meetings which had furnished Jerrold’s symbols of nineteenth-century civilization were themselves often used in the reverse sense. In 1845 *Punch* published a cartoon entitled *The New Grand-Stand Omnibus* – ‘Worthy the Attention of the “Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals”’ (plate 23). It alludes to the permitted overloading of the omnibuses, motivated by considerations of profit: a monstrous pile of top-hatted City gentlemen commuting (significantly) from ‘Bank’ to the suburbs is pulled along by only two emaciated horses. The composition recalls those Georgian prints which showed John Bull crushed by a towering superstructure of high-taxing ministers and placemen, suggesting a subconscious analogy between the fate of animals and the human poor. Historians who have seen in the efforts of the SPCA and other reforming groups principally an urge to social control of the deviant lower orders, miss their connection with deep-seated anxieties about capitalism and its social effects. As a subscriber wrote to the *Animals’ Friend* in 1833 under the title ‘The Omnibus Nuisances’: ‘In an age of improvement the march of feeling should keep pace with the march of intellect’, but ‘in one place ... feeling seems to have retrograded ... humanity ... sacrificed to selfishness. This place is the metropolis.’ ‘The life consuming and excruciating labours’ imposed on the omnibus horses expressed the values of an urban middle class so hardened that ‘the only chord which touches their heart is the purse string.’ Animals were not simply the victims of this system, but were represented as its antithesis: uncompetitive, improvident, guileless, innocent and tranquil. David Mushet in *The Wrongs of the Animal World* (1839) invited his readers to ‘Compare a crowded street; each individual panting and striving to outdo his fellow ... a spirit of repulsion and contest, the ruling feature of the mass’ with ‘a troop of oxen grazing in a meadow ... the noble placid sedateness ... all seeming to breathe a spirit of peace and harmony with nature’.

The age-old contrast of the city and ‘nature’ was to prove fundamental to the animal imagery with which this article is concerned.
Perceptions of humanity’s interaction with animals in the modern city went through successive stages, influenced not only by the gradual permeation of reformist notions, but by the developing character of popular publishing itself, and the attitudes of the authors and artists it employed. This becomes especially clear in comparing the varied output of George Cruikshank. At the moment of his transition from caricature to serious illustration, he collaborated with the sporting journalist Pierce Egan and with Isaac Robert Cruikshank in the production of the immensely successful *Life in London*, which originally appeared in monthly parts during 1820–1, and for a time was widely pirated and imitated.\(^\text{27}\) The London adventures of those relentless hedonists, Corinthian Tom and Jerry Hawthorn, youths whose wealth comes respectively from the city and the country, are a particularly vivid visualization of the relationship between capital (in both senses) and nature. It is encapsulated in the description of Hyde Park, where ‘splendid equipages’ rattle along ‘under the guidance of charioteers of the highest blood and pedigree. The prime “bits of blood” from the choicest studs in the kingdom, prancing about as proud as peacocks, and almost unmanageable to their dashing drivers . . .’ In this virile, headlong pursuit of metropolitan pleasures, hunting and riding metaphors abound. Tom was ‘a perfect hero with the whip’ . . . ‘in the “hey-day of blood”’ . . . ‘continually on the fret to obtain unrestrained liberty’.\(^\text{28}\) But if these expressions suggest a kind of vitalism identifying men with animals (a particular aspect of the symbiosis of the two which has already been proposed as a characteristic of nineteenth-century London), the actual encounters between them described in the book, particularly baiting and animal fights, involve a cruelty that must have shocked the sensitive. *Life in London* flies in the face of a hundred sermons and tracts which had already condemned these cruel sports of the
metropolis as the relics of a more barbaric age, and, indeed, within a decade of the book’s publication they had been suppressed, at least in public.

The aquatint of *Tom & Jerry sporting their blunt on the phenomenon Monkey, Jacco Macacco, at the Westminster Pit*, dated 1820 (plate 24), is consciously in the tradition of Hogarth’s *The Cockpit* of 1759. Pierce Egan’s text emphasizes, like Hogarth’s image, the motley crowd drawn from all social classes, yet united by the nearly insane passions of the event. Whereas Hogarth’s spectators are in the grip of gambling fever, however, and constitute a satire on human folly, Egan’s and the Cruikshanks’ seem to be obsessed with the raw emotions of the animals themselves, in this life-and-death struggle: the monkey, ‘with as much cunning as a prize-fighter’, inflicting fatal wounds on the heavily bleeding dog. A year after the publication of *Life in London* in book form, Richard Martin, in introducing his successful bill in the House of Commons to prevent the ill treatment of cattle, cited the sufferings of this same famous monkey and a white bitch dog called Puss to exemplify the brutalities of the metropolis. If Egan knowingly flouted such protests, and appealed to a readership which derided them, the book certainly uses contests between animals, whether cock or dog fights, racing or hunting (scenes of all these lined Corinthian Tom’s bachelor ‘Conversation Room’), to symbolize the ‘Ups’ and ‘Downs’, the human struggle for success, or for existence itself, in early nineteenth-century London, which the frontispiece of the book symbolically pictured. Advantages of birth, industriousness or good fortune might propel some to the heights of prosperity and respectability, while others went to the wall. The effects of the ruthless system which Egan presents are made apparent at every level, very often through text illustrations of animals, wood-engraved from the Cruikshanks’ designs. At turnout time from the opera house, the coachmen of fashionable ladies, vying to be first away, crash into and break a hackney carriage and bring its skeletal horses to their knees, one laying its exhausted head on the cobbles. When an overloaded donkey accidentally slips its foot into the plug-hole of a street drain (plate 25), Tom and Jerry stop to amuse themselves with the bitter mutual recriminations of the costermonger and his wife who own it: she fearful of losing the hard-won load of vegetables, he threatening her with violence and ‘giving the poor animal some terrible blows with a stick’. ‘Jerry laughed as heartily as if he had been witnessing a pantomine; indeed, the scene altogether was highly ludicrous . . . The donkey soon mended his pace, and our heroes kept laughing at the circumstance till they arrived at *Corinthian-House*.

The cut-and-thrust economic competition which *Life in London* represented in such pitiless terms was central to the conceptualization of the experience of men and animals apparent in the illustrated publications of the succeeding decades; but the values they expressed differed widely – evidence of an increasingly sophisticated apprehension of the nature of laissez-faire capitalism, and the contradictory emotions to which it gave rise. In some cases, as has been mentioned, these contradictions can be related to the changing perceptions of individuals. George Cruikshank, in particular, progressing from the apparently cynical commercialism of his early activity as a political caricaturist to the status of a revered moral campaigner, renounced the sensationalism that characterized his illustrations to *Life in London* in favour of a passionate denunciation of
metropolitan society. *Sunday in London*, published in 1833, framed Cruikshank’s exquisitely detailed drawings, reproduced as wood-engraved vignettes, with a connecting text contributed anonymously by his friend John Wight.\(^{34}\) The book’s ostensible subject was the social injustice of Sir Andrew Agnew’s bill to enforce stricter observance of the Sabbath by a ban on street trading, and the moral hypocrisy of the affluent classes, manifested in their own disregard for the Christian spirit of Sunday. However, this idea widens into a comprehensive indictment of the acquisitive materialism which deadens man’s innate sympathies and reifies both labouring men and animals as expendable commodities. Here Cruikshank and Wight seem to revisit the episodes of *Life in London*, and to interpret them in an opposite sense. ‘The *sporting* Sunday papers’ bought by the middle classes provide ‘a register of the “extraordinary feats” which “celebrated horses” have by wet whip and bloody spur been *encouraged* to perform’, as well as notices of shoots by ‘the valiant Tomtit and Sparrow Clubs’ of Battersea Fields and ‘of all the coming bull-baitings, badger-baitings, and duck-huntings’: a mental set which is faithfully replicated in the Sunday-morning cat hunts and mongrel fights watched by their social inferiors. ‘The lovers of dogs’ flesh! – Lo you! How the intellect of the age doth *progress!*’\(^{35}\) This bitter irony echoes the sense of outrage expressed in the first magazine dedicated to the reform of metropolitan cruelties, *The Voice of Humanity*, which in 1830 had deplored the ‘intense anguish and terror’ of the baited animals; London’s shame was even intensified by the proximity of the Westminster Pit, ‘this den of infamy, vice, and cruelty’, to the

Abbey and Parliament buildings. Meanwhile ‘they who rule both the roast and the boiled – the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and the Commons in Parliament’ also continued to sanction the brutal scenes on Sunday evenings when droves of cattle and sheep were forced into Smithfield during the time of evening service at nearby St Paul’s, in preparation for the Monday market. But the most shaming instance of the mercenary callousness of the age was its treatment of horses. Coach horses, whipped up outside the fashionable theatres, ‘stand trembling and struggling “midst the mortal fray, astonished at the madness of mankind”.’ The middle orders, again, in their Sunday excursions, were ‘the great supporters of the cruelty-van, or omnibii interest, which, by dint of hard work and whipcord, kills up its annual thousands of those four-legged “machiners”, heretofore ignorantly called “horses”’ ... ‘small lank-sided panting jades in a galloping consumption’ which, in their accelerated decline, leading inexorably to ‘the knacker’s shambles’
were deliberately hit upon ‘the raw’ – open sores – by the omnibus drivers to extract their last strength: ‘It may be cruelish, perhaps, but it’s all fair in the way of trade.’ Even the fine mounts and carriage horses of the nobility, which Tom and Jerry had so much admired in the London parks, were subjected to this system of ‘consumption’, and like a memento mori ‘through the glittering rout the knacker’s drag winds joggingly, laden with used-up-and-dead horses, obscenely mangled – their torn-out bowels dangling and dripping beneath the broad glare of the blessed sun, and in the light of ladies’ eyes! . . . going to the boiling-house, to be still further used-up in the concoction of cat’s meat, candles, and compost’.38 These outrages are toned down in Cruikshank’s vignette (plate 26), which conveys the essence of the contrast between the sunlit, elegant street and the darkly silhouetted knacker’s cart with its grim cargo, the driver’s whip raised over a gaunt horse which will shortly join in death the one it drags. There is in fact a striking disjunction between the physical explicitness of Wight’s text – including many details more repugnant even than those quoted here – and the relative
restraint of Cruikshank’s images, where indignation is contained by notions of artistic decorum; just as the subtlety of social observation in these fastidiously fine wood engravings is in conscious contrast to the vulgarities and grotesque exaggerations of Cruikshank’s early caricatures.

Satirical depictions of the arrogance and moral humbug of the rich or of the degraded fecklessness of the poor in London were easily accommodated within the tradition of comic-genteel illustration, but representations of the sufferings of animals risked accusations of ‘lowness’, arising from their purely physical character. Thus Cruikshank could provide a vivid distillation of the scene at the door of a fashionable church, where the smug ceremoniousness of the well-heeled is set off against the distress of their horses, made to work even on Sundays. However the greater savagery of the animal fights, the abuse of omnibus horses and of cattle at Smithfield, which Wight evoked so bitterly in *Sunday in London*, was not illustrated by Cruikshank at all. The same generalization holds true both of the *Comic Almanack*, started in 1835, in which Cruikshank was again a prime mover, and later of *Punch*: cruelty to animals in London, and the efforts of the reforming groups to suppress it, occupied a large discursive and critical space in their texts, but these themes were seldom illustrated. Where vignettes of animal subjects were inserted, they tended to be of a facetious character, playing on puns or allusions to human affairs, as though apologizing for the cause they promoted.

This analysis highlights the particular difficulties of the reformist groups themselves in their appeal to the educated classes. Visual images were uniquely able to transmit the shock of first-hand experience, so that, in Lewis Gompertz’s words, ‘cruelty is picturesquely brought home to our own doors and hearts.’ But a public which found even the depiction of child labour in the mines distasteful and unwarranted might balk at disconcerting exposures of the dark secrets of the metropolis, in particular the visceral horrors of the slaughterhouses. The cause of prevention of cruelty to animals could easily be denigrated by its antagonists as trivial and local, incapable of being directed by the universal, philosophical principles applicable to human affairs. The patrician William Windham, in opposing a bill of 1802 to abolish bull baiting, had already used an artistic analogy: he ‘regretted the minuteness with which he was obliged to enter into the consideration of the subject’, but ‘to examine the character of a daub of Teniers was often a work of more difficulty than to describe the beauties of the Madonna of Raphael’... Actual ‘daubs of Teniers’ and other works in the Dutch and Flemish tradition might, of course, be redeemed by moralizing humour, or by the pleasures to be derived from a convincing depiction of nature. However, such pleasures were impossible when the subject disgusted the spectator. This was the argument of Pyne’s *Microcosm: Or, a Picturesque Delineation of the Arts, Agriculture, Manufactures, &c. of Great Britain*, the second edition of which (1806) had a commentary by C. Gray. It is remarkable that, in a text ostensibly intended to ‘explain’ plates of rural and industrial subjects, and traditional trades, cruelties to animals peculiar to London are often at the forefront of the writer’s mind, and are described at length. The list is by now familiar. Stage-coach and hackney-carriage horses are relentlessly overworked by their avaricious masters; cattle suffer terribly in Smithfield, and ‘we cannot pass along the streets of the metropolis near any of the flesh-markets, without having the butchering of...
unfortunate animals exposed to our sight. The humane are obliged to turn away their eyes from such spectacles of horror. However, very few of these ‘spectacles of horror’, so feelingly described in the text, figure among Pyne’s drawings. He fills many pages with the picturesque rustics who are, as Gray explains, ‘however disagreeable ... in real life ... peculiarly pleasing in imitation, when accurately copied ... No subject, when well treated, is more popular.’ But the brutal trades of the metropolis are represented in only the most indirect and idealizing ways, the vignette format allowing the artist to exclude their urban locales. A horse that has died in the market is surrounded by concerned spectators, in a scene of elegiac gentleness. Slaughtermen stunning and bleeding oxen in an (apparently) grassy setting are gracefully posed, the blade of the pole axe invisible, outside the field of the design. Yet even this depiction was, Gray thought, beyond the limits of acceptability:

There are some scenes of nature ... which ought not to be copied ... What ... is the use of copying what can only inspire a horror, which even the pleasure that uniformly arises from seeing an accurate and lively imitation, cannot do away? ... which can only set the mind of sensibility a thinking of the hourly, indeed, the unintermitting scenes of misery, and we fear, too often of cruelty, caused by our enjoyments at table to harmless animals. Necessary they may in part be; but the less we see and think of them, the better.

Written accounts of such ‘unintermitting scenes of misery’ in nineteenth-century London were legion, but illustrations of them could only be sanctioned by an ethical force strong enough to override considerations of taste. One very important exemplar must have presented itself to the editors of the humane journals: Hogarth’s The Four Stages of Cruelty, published in 1751. Just as Dickens invoked Hogarth as realist and moralist to justify his own unglamorized vision of London’s criminal underworld in Oliver Twist, so the potency of Hogarth’s images of London’s cruelties showed the way to his nineteenth-century successors, and it is in this light they are discussed here. The scene for the ‘Second Stage of Cruelty’ (plate 27) is the wide street of Holborn. Behind the spectator lies Holborn Hill, the ascent of which notoriously overstrained draught horses, as they toiled among the sheep and bullocks that spilled out of Smithfield Market on their way to the slaughterhouses – a sight still familiar a century later. But beyond, westwards, lie the Inns of Court, one of which is visible on the left in Hogarth’s picture, embodying legal authority; and beyond that again – glimpsed here as a bright opening in the distance – lie the streets leading to the West End, seat of parliamentary power and aristocratic privilege. At this place of transition between the world of the legislators and that of the brutalized lower orders who frequented the Smithfield area, Tom Nero, a hackney coachman and the anti-hero of Hogarth’s story, aims violent blows with his thick whip handle at the head of his horse, which has fallen and broken its leg; its staring ribs, the great sore on its chest rubbed by the harness, its distended tongue, tell their own story of dreadful ill treatment, and its tears testify to a sensibility greater than that of its human tormentor. On the right a drover is beating an exhausted lamb to death; in the
distance, a donkey is grotesquely overloaded, and a bull is baited through the street on its way to slaughter. Thus did Hogarth appear to anticipate the whole agenda of the nineteenth-century reformers for legal action against the cruelties of the capital. However, *The Four Stages of Cruelty* represents an indictment of society as a whole, not simply of the ostensible lower-class perpetrators of street cruelties. Here it is the avaricious lawyers themselves who, by packing into the hackney coach for their journey to Westminster, have caused the horse to collapse; and the flocks, cattle and beer dray clearly have the same West End destination. Metropolitan luxury and commercialism are associated with metropolitan cruelties as surely as they would be by later moralists, and set in implied contrast to the traditional social order and sense of reciprocal obligations associated with the countryside: it is not difficult to see a deliberate parallel
between the country servant girl savagely murdered by Tom Nero in plate III and
the innocent lamb of plate II, which has been driven in from its rural pastures to
form a cruel sacrifice to the devouring greed and callousness of Londoners. As the
author of *A Dissertation on Mr. Hogarth’s Six Prints…* remarked in 1751, in
discussing *The Four Stages of Cruelty*, the voice of reason, impelling man to social
duties, was now ‘quite drowned in the Pleasures of the World, suffocated with
Cares of acquiring Riches, lost in the high Flights of Ambition, or struck dumb
and senseless by vicious habits’.\(^{51}\)

Hogarth intended this harsh admonition to be seen by as many people as
possible, and his first idea was to issue the series as woodcuts, for sale to the same
public who bought cheap broadsides and the ‘dying speeches’ of criminals.\(^{52}\)
Although this project foundered, the etchings finally published were described by
Paulson as having a ‘primitive strength’ or ‘brutal woodcut effect’, designed for
maximum impact rather than aesthetic subtlety.\(^{53}\) The artist himself explained his
didactic intentions in his autobiographical notes:

The leading points… were made as obvious as possible, in the hope that
their tendency might be seen by men of the lowest rank. Neither minute
accuracy of design, nor fine engraving, were deemed necessary, as the latter
would render them too expensive… to be useful… To expressing them as
I felt them, I have paid the utmost attention, and as they were addressed to
hard hearts, have rather preferred leaving them hard… to rendering them
languid and feeble by fine strokes… The prints were engraved with the
hope of, in some degree, correcting that barbarous treatment of animals,
the very sight of which renders the streets of our metropolis so distressing
to every feeling mind. If they have had this effect, and checked the progress
of cruelty, I am more proud of having been the author, than I should be of
having painted Raphael’s Cartoons…\(^{54}\)

The deliberately coarse and shocking physicality of these images seems to have
been meant as a deliberate affront to polite taste. Even an enthusiast for Hogarth’s
prints like Charles Lamb described them in 1811 as ‘mere worthless caricatures,
foreign to his general habits, the offspring of his fancy in some wayward
humour’.\(^{55}\) Nevertheless, the altruism to which Hogarth laid claim, the end
justifying the means, certainly enhanced his posthumous reputation among the
reform-minded. John Ireland’s impassioned commentary on *The Four Stages of
Cruelty*, published in *Hogarth Illustrated* (1791), itself became a widely quoted
text, and Hogarth’s story was endlessly recalled by preachers and legislators.\(^{56}\)
The high regard in which he was now held as a public benefactor clearly
influenced the aspiring George Cruikshank, for whom kindness to animals
became, as we have already seen, something of a personal crusade. In *My Sketch
Book*, a collection of autonomous drawings which is consciously Hogarthian in its
blend of physiognomic drollery and ‘compassionate reportage’ of London life,\(^{57}\) a
sheet dated 1835 includes a vivid sketch captioned ‘The Omnibus Brutes –, q[ue]ry, which are they?’ (plate 28) Both theme and setting, the steep slope of
Holborn Hill, and the pregnant question raised by the title, obviously refer to *The
Four Stages of Cruelty*. The pathos of Cruikshank’s image is partly dissipated by
its comic accompaniments. However, in another etching of this period which Cruikshank publicly donated to *The Voice of Humanity*, the vision of animal suffering was unmitigated. This was *The Knackers Yard or the Horses last home!*, an image that, within the repertory of animal imagery, had unprecedented tragic power.

Up to a thousand old or diseased horses were slaughtered each week in London by the mid-nineteenth century, at about twenty knackers’ yards situated principally at Holborn Hill, Islington, Bermondsey, Whitechapel and Wandsworth. Mayhew was characteristically fascinated by the economic intricacies of this lucrative trade, which supplied the cats’ and dogs’ meat of the metropolis together with horsehair, the fat used for greasing harness and wheels, bones for manure and many other by-products. He mentions that the slaughter took place at midnight, allowing the carcases to be boiled in time for the next day’s distribution by the carriers; their buyers were mainly tradesmen, mechanics and poor labourers.58 Such dispassionate accounts, dating from a time when legislation had already removed some of the abuses associated with horse slaughtering,59 do not convey the moral anguish it caused to the conscientious throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, nor the trauma experienced by those few who, by negotiation, subterfuge or agility, passed the locked gates of the yards and witnessed for themselves the night-time horrors within. Many voices of reform, from Erskine addressing the Lords in 1809 to *The Herald of Humanity* of 1844, detailed these cruelties in pleading for legislative action: the acute thirst and starvation of the horses as they awaited, often for several days, the moment of their death (delayed so as not to overstock the market and bring down carcass prices), and the careless indifference of the slaughterers to the plight of their charges, which might even (if any strength remained) be profitably hired out for the lowest and most arduous night work in the streets.60

The human avarice manifested at each stage of the horse’s decline to this ‘last home’ was another emblem of the cutthroat commercialism that commodified men as well as animals: it sprang to mind when both Thomas Paine in *Rights of Man* and Thomas Carlyle in *Past and Present* compared the fate of old horses ‘turned adrift’ or left to the mercies of those who hired out hacks, to that of the penurious discharged labourer. The only difference, as Lewis Gompertz pointed out, was that the horse’s destination was worse than any workhouse or ‘the vilest prison’.61 Many writers thought of the noble nature and original beauty of the creatures whose essential services to ‘civilized’ man were thus requited. ‘It is painful’ the Rev Henry Crowe wrote in *Zoophilos* (1820) ‘to compare him in the prime and vigour of his days . . . “his neck clothed with thunder” . . . and in after life, when his powers and beauty fail, degraded to a wretched state . . . Such consumption of these ill-fated animals . . . much resembles that of any other article of trade. They seem to be bought with a sordid, remorseless spirit, as if they had no more feeling than the wheels.’62 Yet even in the knacker’s yard, several writers noted, the experienced eye could pick out the graces of the thoroughbred, the former darling of its privileged first owner; rather as Dickens in his famous piece on London’s hackney coaches and their drooping, blinded horses evoked the pathos of both as ‘a remnant of past gentility . . . progressing lower and lower in the scale of four-wheeled degradation, until it comes to – a stand!’63 Might not
this token of the precariousness and mutability of fortunes in nineteenth-century London remind many of their own possible fate?

Cruikshank’s etching of a knacker’s yard (plate 29) appeared in the first volume of *The Voice of Humanity* (1830–31), then published under the aegis of the SPCA; it was several times reworked, reissued and copied for other journals, and also distributed as an independent picture.64 ‘This sketch, by our celebrated artist, the Hogarth of the present age . . . is an inimitable production of natal genius,’ claimed the editor, adding that Cruikshank had philanthropically donated it in the service of the cause; ‘never’ added the *Sunday Times*’s reviewer in 1831, in an echo of Hogarth’s affirmation, was Cruikshank’s ‘genius better engaged than when he laboured to fix attention on the miscreant abominations . . . in such places’.65 The scene was said, improbably, to have been sketched on the spot, its ‘fidelity and truth’ made apparent in a close correspondence to the accompanying text, and indeed to several other written accounts.66 The scarred and starving horse in the centre is reduced to chewing the mane of another, while those confined in the shed gnaw the door frame to allay their hunger. More terrible than these signs of ‘silent, patient, endurance’, worse even than the brutality of the knacker’s men, are the marks of a regime fixated on the need to extract every last penny of profit: even the animals compete for survival, as a fighting bulldog, pigs, ducks and chickens batten on the carcases and bones in this indescribable midden. Yet the whole image, with its tumbledown buildings and variety of livestock, is like a ghastly parody of the picturesque farmyard scenes beloved by the contemporary public, and points up the contrast between a countryside imagined as innocent and the unnatural perversions of the urban economy. ‘When we look forth upon the face of nature’, wrote David Mushet in 1839, ‘. . . that beautiful world . . . all bearing some impress of life, of purpose and of joy; – and then turn to recollect what those who have seen, never shall forget . . . the tortures and starvation inflicted upon those . . . who, in the state of nature, had . . . lain down . . . to die in peace . . . by men polished in all refinement of the civilized world . . . does not the blood run chill with fear at the incomprehensible delusion which can fill the heart of man?’67 The *Voice of Humanity* even spoke of the ‘unearthly impressions’ of those who actually visited the yards, which ‘neither pen nor pencil’ could convey: a true vision of hell, damning evidence of the fallen state of man, in which the whole natural world was involved, whether as victims or corrupted fellow predators. The Rev Thomas Greenwood, one of the leaders of the Association for Promoting Rational Humanity, thought it was ‘an awful sign of the times, that so far from our humanity having kept pace with the progress of civilization and the spread of religious knowledge . . . the very heathen, discharged more faithfully the duties towards the inferior creatures, than Christians, so called, do at the present day . . . The groans of our unfortunate animals are daily wearying heaven, and their blood crying to it from the ground.’68 It is significant that Egerton Smith reissued Cruikshank’s print in his *Elysium of Animals* (1836), describing the knacker’s yard as a ‘Golgotha’ or ‘earthly purgatory’ from which the horse’s spirit passes to ‘that state of bliss’ which ‘a kind Providence’ has vouchsafed: a place resembling the paradise of biblical prophecy, where all predation has ended – but unbiblical in so far that tyrant man is banished from it.69
The anxieties evident in the many protests against the treatment of horses in London were redoubled on the subject of Smithfield Market, the reform of which, preferably by removal to the suburbs, was from the start the prime objective of the anti-cruelty groups and journals. Already in the eighteenth century the needs of London’s growing population and the congestion caused by increased building and vehicular traffic made the Smithfield site, in the heart of the city, unsuitable as a market for live cattle and sheep, and cruelty to the animals was almost inevitable. By the mid-1840s over 210,000 cattle were sold there each year, together with 1.5 million sheep: figures which represented roughly a three-fold increase since 1730. The many slaughterhouses in central London were an equal cause for protest, on both humanitarian and hygienic grounds, and were often compared unfavourably with the public abattoirs of Paris. However, successive attempts at legislative control and reform of the London meat trade proved ineffectual against an array of vested interests connected with the Smithfield site, whose collective voice dominated the City of London’s Common Council. Only in the late 1840s, when a cholera epidemic in London heightened the public’s alarm about diseased meat and the uncontrolled disposal of blood and offal, and when the issue was taken up in the mainstream press (including Punch and the Illustrated London News), did government action seem likely. In 1855 Smithfield was finally closed as a live animal market, and a new site opened near Islington.

Here, too, a bald recital of the facts does little to convey the symbolizing power of Smithfield in the imagination of Londoners. It was, first of all, a shaming blot on the imperial capital. ‘Among the various and extensive improvements
which have now for a long time been carrying on in various parts of the town’, wrote *The Voice of Humanity* in 1830, ‘the most material improvement’ it needed was neglected: ‘To no inhabitant of this overgrown metropolis … is it necessary to say how great a disgrace the scenes of confusion, uproar, and barbarity … exhibited at Smithfield … are, not only to the town itself, but even to the character of the country.’74 The historical reputation of the Smithfield area seemed to be contributory. The autos-da-fés of martyrs and the public executions formerly carried out there; the duelling and brawling; the crowd disorder and abuse of performing animals associated with Bartholomew Fair: all signified a ‘spirit of cruelty’ which supposedly still haunted the site.75 For *The Herald of Humanity* in 1844, Smithfield Market, ‘with all its brutal cruelties, its abandoned and frightful demoralization’ was ‘the focus of all the lowest dregs from the vilest purlieus of the town, – and consequently, the very nursery of all crime, from drunkenness and robbery, to ruffianism and murder’.76 The writer might have remembered the vivid evocation in Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* (1837–9), where Oliver and Bill Sikes pass through Smithfield early on market morning, on their way to rob a suburban house:

The ground was covered, nearly ankle-deep, with filth and mire … Countrymen, butchers, drovers, hawkers, boys, thieves, idlers, and vagabonds of every low grade, were mingled together in a mass … the hideous and discordant din that resounded from every corner of the market; and the unwashed, unshaven, squalid and dirty figures … bursting in and out of the throng; rendered it a stunning and bewildering scene, which quite confounded the senses.77

Little wonder that the brutal Sikes there meets many old acquaintances. Yet, as successive writers on Smithfield and the slaughterhouses made clear, their sordid brutalities stemmed from a *system* of rapacity in which the higher classes were implicated. This referred not only to the luxurious tastes and rising meat consumption of Londoners, but to the City of London’s self-serving obstruction of reform. A Common Councilman challenged by John Lawrence about the campaign for removal of the market pronounced it nonsensical; for ‘why do men submit to be cooped up in cities, but to get money, the grand object?’78 In 1847 *Punch* purported to ‘magnify and analyse’ a droplet of ‘Smithfield fluid’, and, as the accompanying engraving illustrated, found that ‘Mammon is one of the chief ingredients, though Folly forms no inconsiderable portion of the disgusting mixture.’79

The descriptions of Smithfield were eloquent and very numerous. Writers emphasized especially the cruelty of driving the animals great distances on the hoof, as they converged on the metropolis from distant grazing grounds; the hunger and thirst they suffered during the long hours in the market itself; the active cruelty of the drovers and bystanders in coercing them in and out of the chaotically crowded space; and the unregulated barbarities of the actual methods of slaughter. As in the case of horse slaughter, the fact that the worst of the abuses took place under cover of night confirmed their hellish quality. The author of *An Enquiry into the Present State of Smithfield Cattle Market* (1848) noted that
Smithfield on a Sunday evening had been compared to ‘Dante’s description of Pandemonium ... the glaring torches passing backwards and forwards amongst the frightened beasts, and the continued sound of the heavy blows inflicted on the ... poor animals’. No pen could describe the impression: it ‘must be seen to be believed; – and yet all this takes place in London.’ The reference to Pandemonium is an indication that here, too, the grief and guilt of observers were expressed in religious analogies: ‘now that the faggots no longer blaze around the forms of human martyrs’, as they once had at Smithfield, ‘must the passions of hardened men find vent in cruelty to “the brutes that perish?”’ – and under the very shadow of ‘the principal Protestant Church in Europe’? In this ‘purgatory’, it was the Lord Mayor of London, asserted The Voice of Humanity, who became the ‘Inquisitor General’; the drovers and dogs were the ‘Imps and Tormentors’ of the cattle. The Christian connotations of the lamb led to slaughter suggested to some writers an analogy with the sufferings of Christ himself, which is echoed even in the phraseology of one of Dickens’s evocations of Smithfield, ‘A Monument of French Folly’. The parallels with the passion story were indeed striking: the journey to the city; the encounter with moneychangers in the precinct of the temple itself; the ‘night’s endurance’; the scourging and thirst; the \textit{via dolorosa} trodden by the animals among a mocking ‘crowded multitude’; the falls; the final terrible death. In this spirit, an illustration of ‘The Usual Mode of Slaughtering a Calf’ (by slow bleeding) which the SPCA commissioned in 1828, and which was said to be ‘taken from life’, showed the calf suspended upside down against a post, like Christ on the cross, flanked by its indifferent tormentors.

Lewis Gompertz, founder of the Animals’ Friend Society, would not, as a Jew, have entered into such Christological allusions. However, a comparable sense of \textit{identification} with animals is central to his belief in equality between men and other species. In fact, he proposed, and sometimes even published, illustrations of humans undergoing, in imagination, the tortures to which animals were subjected in London. Thus the wood engravings he commissioned for \textit{The Animals’ Friend} magazine have a raw directness which precludes spectatorial detachment. Indeed, their deliberate violence, crudity and materiality outdo Hogarth’s in \textit{The Four Stages} and risk comparison with cheap murder sheets and their woodcuts; they closely resemble these in manner, particularly in the bold tonal contrasts, coarse hatchings and emphatic poses. Despite the genteel readership of \textit{The Animals’ Friend}, Gompertz rejected any kind of artistic refinement in its illustrations, perhaps feeling that this would involve a compromise with the very ‘improvement’ he believed to be complicit in the system of cruelty. The \textit{Night View of Smithfield Market} (plate 30), first published in 1840, is lit only by a sickle moon and the torches of the drovers, a ‘ferocious set of miscreants’ who, with their bludgeons and dogs, force the cattle into circles or ‘ring droves’. These subhuman, yelling faces and the chaos of animals and buildings give a sense of nightmare and unmitigated moral darkness. Already in 1839 \textit{The Animals’ Friend} had ‘with repugnance laid the disgusting details of the slaughter-house’ before its readers in visual form (plate 31); feeling ‘the necessity of such exposure, in order to lead to amendment’. Like the horse knackers, the slaughterers worked in the semi-secrecy of private, uninspected
premises; ‘dismal dungeons’ in cellars and back alleys where light and air never penetrated, made more foul by the masses of blood, offal and excrement on the floor and surrounding streets. Gompertz’s illustrator does not give a naturalistic impression of the scene like Cruikshank’s *Knackers Yard*, but rather a demonstrative concentration of horrors which in reality were probably dispersed. Sheep are flung down from street level (many broke limbs in the fall), then butchered and skinned while still alive. An ox is slowly slaughtered by breaking open its skull with an axe and then stirring its brains with a rod and cutting its throat: as the slaughterer tramples its body to force out the blood, it still turns its head up accusingly to look in his face. What is chiefly striking in this depiction is the demonic energy of the plebeian slaughterers, which is again reminiscent of the visual rhetoric of the murder sheets. Yet responsibility for this outrage on nature was not to be laid at their door alone. Writers from Mandeville to John Stuart Mill noted that one effect of the luxury and ‘refinement’ of metropolitan society, ‘the subdivided industry of our commercial age’, was to remove consumers from a sight of the agonies which might otherwise arouse ‘primitive pity’. However, nature’s revenge reached even these privileged originators of the cruelties to animals. Dickens warned that ‘Into the imperfect sewers of this overgrown city, you shall have the immense mass of corruption ... lazily thrown out of sight, to rise, in poisonous gases, into your house at night, when your sleeping children will most readily absorb them, and to find its languid way, at last, into the river that you drink.’

Many evocations of the fate of cattle in London thus contrast the innocence of the natural world with urban ‘corruption’, a corruption which is both physical and moral. It is a striking illustration of Raymond Williams’s argument that ‘the greed and calculation, so easily isolated and condemned in the city, run back, quite clearly, to the country houses, with the fields and their labourers around them ... The exploitation of man and of nature, which takes place in the country, is realized and concentrated in the city’; but this economic interdependence is seldom admitted. Rather, the inhuman horrors of the one were heightened by false antithesis with the supposed charms and natural affections of the other. Sometimes the relationship was imagined in humorous terms. The *Comic Almanack* for 1838 included a fictitious letter home from the servant of a country squire on a visit to London, reporting that they both pined for their ‘old friends’, the animals they had known all their lives, and therefore spent their days in Smithfield, ‘ful of orses & cows & carves & pigs & shepe & other Beestly sites’ (beastly sights: but the misspelling conveys its own meaning). More often, however, the contrast was a tragic one. The author of *An Enquiry into ... Smithfield* reported that when cattle, unused to cruel treatment, left the hands of the attentive farmers and were consigned to the London drovers, they became so disfigured by suffering that in a few hours their original owners could not recognize them, and even their voices were ‘much changed’. ‘In vain’, said *The Voice of Humanity* ‘does the skilful grazier turn them into the finest pastures, and bestow upon them all the pains and care ... to render them objects of attraction and delight, to the artist, and to the epicure ... no sooner do they scent the smoky air of our crowded city than they are submitted to indignities and sufferings inconceivable’ ...
Strong evidence of the degree to which these ideas haunted the consciousness of the early Victorian public may be found in an unexpected place: the *Illustrated London News*, started in 1842. The patriotic ebullience which permeated this richly illustrated weekly journal, and ensured its success with a wide public, could not, one would think, be more different from the moral pessimism of the anti-cruelty magazines. Faith in technology, in the machinery of government, in the growth of London and the building of empire (what the *Illustrated London News* itself called its ‘progressive spirit and persevering will’), could best be conveyed by an uplifting treatment of the chosen themes. As the *Illustrated London News*’s short-lived rival, the *Pictorial Times*, remarked, such illustrations as appeared in both journals were calculated to ‘instruct and refine the feelings and the taste, as well as to convey information’. They were a ‘permanent genial influence’, whereas an ‘ugly or brutalizing print, hung upon the wall of a room, does moral injury to all who habitually look upon it.’ It has been suggested that in the 1840s the *Illustrated London News*’s programme dictated an artistic as well as a political conservatism, which failed to capture the authentic experience of metropolitan life, its ostensible subject; but such judgements interpret its title and intentions too narrowly. The chief impression one receives from its pages is of a ‘masculine’ vigour and vitality: an impression often conveyed not by literal illustration of commercial or industrial life, but by pictures of animals. From the start the *Illustrated London News* resounds to the thunder of horses’ hoofs and the bellowing of wild beasts locked in combat, motifs which occasionally spill out of the vignette or half-page format and run over the page in compositions of arresting originality.
The equine subjects range from the performing horses at Astley’s amphitheatre to royal cavalcades, military reviews and campaigns, hunts and race meetings. The latter must have been extremely popular, as they become a regular feature, of increasing exuberance and verve. The earliest version of the subject, drawn by Constantin Guys and John Gilbert in 1843 (plate 32), represents Derby Day as ‘truly a national scene … which arouses … the sympathies of hundreds of thousands of people of all classes of society throughout the great metropolis of Britain’. In this joyous mass exodus from London, ‘youths aristocratic’ pass Burton’s classical screen and arch at Hyde Park Corner, a symbol of metropolitan grandeur and improvement marking the edge of the city, and hurtle along suburban roads past elegant villas, where even countrymen in smocks wave excitedly.99 In these images, as in the anti-cruelty journals, one senses that animals fulfil a powerful metonymic function; but whereas the latter treat them as living evidence of the tragic effects of metropolitan commercialism, and hence a symbol of the ills of capitalism, here horses embody, by another kind of displacement, the united energies of the imperial capital, and ‘the whips resound’ without any trace of moral inhibition. To an unsympathetic eye, these animals might appear to be galvanized by what Carlyle called the ‘half-frantic velocity of impetus’ of the ‘brute-world’ of British national ascendancy and capitalist competition.100 In a different spirit, the Illustrated London News claimed in 1851 that the merchant princes and citizens had ‘by their well-directed industry’ . . . ‘given a vital soul and life-like energy to inanimate matter’,101 a soul which these excited, dashing horses appear to share. Such images of urban dynamism are complemented by the Illustrated London News’s many picturesque scenes of traditional farming and rural pursuits, which emphasize the reciprocity of landowners’ benevolence and

the dutiful gratitude of the peasantry. The harmonious interdependence of
country and city, and also of different social classes, is evoked by the many scenes
of agricultural shows, particularly that of the aristocratic Smithfield Club, held in
the dignified surroundings of the Baker Street Bazaar in London’s West End. Its
arcaded halls, with handsomely dressed ladies and gentlemen promenading past
the pens of the huge prize animals, are depicted with the compositional balance
and perspectival symmetry of a Renaissance predella; for the shows were meant to
epitomize the wished-for (but hardly actual) prosperity and unity of the whole
nation. They were ‘a characteristic of nationality’ and of ‘the flourishing
agriculture of happy England . . . Upon her fresh and wholesome broad lands, and
in the midst of hardy tillage, spring up that fine race of sturdy yeomen who ever
and anon pass from the ploughshare to the battle-field with such stalwart proof of
manly health and vigour.’102

Smithfield market itself could only with difficulty be accommodated to such a
triumphal view of the capital and its relationship to the rural roots of the national
economy. The successive representations of it in the Illustrated London News are
a fascinating index of response to public opinion, of editorial attempts to find an
appropriate idiom in which to present it to the readers, and of a latent anxiety
which finally becomes manifest. Initially they cluster at the poles of urban vitality
and rural passivity which have been analysed above. In the former category must
be placed the extraordinary engraving by Landells of The 3rd Regiment (Buffs)
Marching Through the City of London of 1846 (plate 33). Despite this title, the
ostensible subject is an incident when a bullock from Smithfield market, ‘irritated
by the noise of the drums and the glare of the red coats’, stampeded and killed a

33 Ebenezer Landells, The 3rd Regiment (Buffs) Marching Through the City of London, wood
girl, prompting fresh complaints and demands for the removal of Smithfield to the suburbs. Yet the visual, as distinct from the textual, meaning is created by the exciting affinity of the rampaging, virile bull and the serried ranks of soldiers and fixed bayonets, to which the dead girl and frightened women form only an expressive foil. The scene corresponds quite closely to one of the royal bull fight at Madrid which the Illustrated London News described enthusiastically a few pages later. At the other end of the spectrum, in the spirit of a rural idyll, is the depiction of Smithfield Market which appeared in 1848 to illustrate Thomas Miller’s ‘Picturesque Sketches of London, Past and Present’. This nostalgic article evokes a ‘neighbourhood . . . hallowed by a thousand poetical associations’, but virtually ignores the barrage of contemporary protests about the cruelties of the market. Instead, the ‘splendid assemblage of cattle’ pleasantly conjures up ‘images of homesteads and thatched granges, far off amid the dreamy murmur of open fields’, whence the animals came. A drover with his faithful dog, who would delight ‘the eye of a Landseer’, is ‘no bad emblem of one of John Bull’s bulwarks’. The engraving itself (plate 34) forms a remarkable contrast with the image of Smithfield published by Gompertz in The Animals’ Friend (plate 30). Instead of a dark chaos of human and canine savagery, we have a placid early morning scene where the sun lights up the stabilizing architectural features of the market area, particularly St Bartholomew’s Hospital with its benign associations, and flights of birds wheel over St Paul’s. The stolid John-Bullish buyers and groups of animals
give more the impression of a country fair than the barbaric urban frenzy depicted in The Animals’ Friend.\textsuperscript{104} However, even the Illustrated London News, wedded as it was to City interests, could not in the end resist the gathering tide of revulsion against the abuses of Smithfield, which was fomented by epidemics of typhus and cholera; in 1849 the editors performed a volte face, with an illustrated article supporting Mackinnon’s parliamentary campaign for the closure of Smithfield. Nevertheless, the high artistic tone of the journal had even here to be maintained, in order to dignify its subject: the text commentary includes a long passage from Dickens’s description of Smithfield in Oliver Twist, which has already been quoted, and the illustrations are by Harrison Weir, ‘one of our ablest Artists’, who has ‘portrayed the evils of the system sought to be remedied, in a series of scenes sketched in Smithfield Market, yet presenting but a tithe of the cruelty and nuisance which have been for ages perpetrated in one of the most crowded localities of the metropolis’.\textsuperscript{105} This ‘tithe’ admits a poignant image of bound calves loaded on a cart, their heads dangling painfully over the side and nuzzled by a distressed cow (plate 35, bottom). The latter detail had occurred in an illustration of the same subject in The Animals’ Friend, from which Weir may have taken it, but Gompertz had driven the point home with a matching picture of human children stacked up in a cart like the calves, which would have been unthinkable in the Illustrated London News.\textsuperscript{106} Although Weir’s ramshackle buildings and open drain hint at the insanitary filth of the city slaughterhouses, this picture, with its careful composition and distribution of light and shade, retains a pleasing picturesqueness which diminishes the affective qualities of the subject.\textsuperscript{107} Even the illustrations of the drovers’ cruel use of goads (plate 35, top) observe the artistic decorum which had been recommended and exemplified in Pyne’s Microcosm nearly half a century earlier. The vignette format largely excludes a setting, and all we see is the sky with billowing clouds, redolent of open country rather than the congested metropolis. A more concrete representation of the urban locales, where cruelties to animals were actually perpetrated, would have provoked those troubling doubts about the nature of ‘progress’ and ‘improvement’ in London which this article has explored, and compromised the positivist stance of the Illustrated London News. Paradoxically, faith in the city could only be sustained by apparent retreat to the country, and inherited artistic conventions, as has been shown, played an indispensable part in this process.

Diana Donald
Manchester Metropolitan University

Notes

This essay relates to work on a larger project, a book on animal imagery in British art, c.1750–1850. I am most grateful to John Hewitt for reading the essay in draft, and for advice and suggestions based on his wide knowledge of nineteenth-century illustrated periodicals.

2 Frederick Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England, first published in
Leipzig, 1845; introduced by Eric Hobsbawm, St. Albans, 1969, p. 57.


6 Hilda Kean in Animal Rights: Political and Social Change in Britain since 1800, London, 1998, pp. 28f, has recently demonstrated the importance of animals' presence in London, and the metropolitan focus of early anti-cruelty legislation.


12 Mayhew, op. cit. (note 8), vol. 1, p. 28, and cf. vol. 2, p. 23.


14 For example, John Bourne’s Drawings of the London and Birmingham Railway ... with an Historical and Descriptive Account by John Britton FSA, London, 1839, makes clear the extensive use of horses in carting materials and earth, and in powering equipment for the building of embankments and drainage of tunnels.

15 Lewis Gompertz, Fragments in Defence of Animals, and Essays on Morals, Soul, and Future State; From the Author’s Contributions to the Animals’ Friend Society’s Periodical ... , London, 1852, pp. 9–10.

16 Lewis Gompertz, Objects and Address of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, London, 1829, p. 9. Gompertz was then still Honorary Secretary of the S.P.C.A.


22 Punch, vol. 9, 1845, p. 146.

23 For example, H.T. Dickinson, Caricatures and the Constitution 1760–1832, Cambridge, 1986, pl.111: a caricature by Cruikshank of George Cruikshank of 1819, showing John Bull as a collapsed bull.


25 The Animals’ Friend, vol. 1, 1833, p. 34.


28 Pierce Egan, Life in London; Or, the Day and Night Scenes of Jerry Hawthorn, Esq. and his Elegant Friend Corinthian Tom ... in their Rambles and Sprees through the Metropolis, London, 1821, pp. 46, 50, 72, 150, 155. The latter phrase was a coachman’s term for...
spirited horses.

38 ibid., pp. 3, 22, 43–4, 47–9.
37 ibid., p. 22.
34 ibid., pp. 3, 22, 43–4, 47–9.
33 ibid., p. 37.
27 Paulson, op. cit. (note 30), cat. nos. 187–90, pls. 278–9. Publication of the woodcuts preceded that of the corresponding engravings, rather than being a follow-up venture, as often implied.
21 It was frequently cited as proving the social dangers of countenancing cruelty to animals, for example, Thomas Young, An Essay on Humanity to Animals, Birmingham, 1804, pp. 2, 53; Henry Crowe, Zoophilos; Or, Considerations on the Moral Treatment of Inferior Animals, 2nd edn, London, 1820, pp. 104f. Hogarth’s images were also often invoked in parliamentary debates by supporters of anti-cruelty measures, for example, in 1809, 1824 and 1825: Parliamentary Debates, vol. 14, col. 1031; New Series vol. 10, col. 868; vol. 12, col. 1010.
18 Erskine’s speech introducing his Cruelty to Animals Bill, 15 May, 1809: The Parliamentary Debates, vol. 14, 1812, col. 563. This was subsequently printed as a pamphlet and circulated by the S.P.C.A., whose Objects and Address (note 16) and Minute Books also often refer to the knackers’ abuses. The Herald of Humanity; or, the National Animals’ Friend Society’s Quarterly Chronicle (produced by a splinter group of the Animals’ Friend Society), no. 1, 31 March, 1844, pp. 2–10, gave a particularly detailed, harrowing account of the London knackers’ yards, including the
eyewitness accounts of police officers.


62 Crowe, op. cit. (note 56), pp. 44–6.

63 Charles Dickens, Sketches by Boz, 1839; chap. 7, ‘Hackney-coach Stands’.

64 The Voice of Humanity, vol. 1, 1830–1, opposite p. 121. The plate was reworked, notably with the addition of the sign reading ‘Licensed for Slaughtering Horses’ (meant to show the inadequacy of the existing inspection system) and more foraging creatures, and reissued in vol. 3, n.d. [1832–3], opposite p. 134. It could be bought as a separate print for 6d plain, or 1s on good India paper, and possessed ‘independent of the interest of the subject, so considerable a degree of merit, that we hope our friends will have it framed’; it was sent, ready framed, ‘To any respectable hotel, tavern, or coffee-house, where it would be hung up’: vol. 1, p. 165. In a Prospectus for vol. 3, n.d. [1832], it was advertised ‘nearly framed and glazed … Price 3s 6d’ and there are several other references. It was copied for example, in the Pictorial Times, vol. 2, August–December 1843, p. 197. Patten, op. cit. (note 34), pp. 344–6.

65 The Voice of Humanity, vol. 1, p. 133. The Sunday Times’s and other laudatory reviews were reprinted in a Prospectus for vol. 2, n.d. [1831], pp. 4–6.


69 Egerton Smith, The Elysium of Animals: a Dream, London and Liverpool, 1836, p. 44.


73 Kean, op. cit. (note 6), pp. 58–64.


76 op. cit. (note 60), no. 1, p. 2.

77 Chap. 21, ‘The Expediton’.


79 Punch, vol. 12, 1847, p. 248. Punch was at this time mounting a sustained attack on the vested interests connected with representatives of Smithfield who opposed removal of the market, with numerous articles and cartoons.


81 op. cit., vol. 1, 1830–1, p. 41.

82 Quoted phrases from ‘A Monument of French Folly’ (note 71), p. 591. The Voice of Humanity, vol. 1, p. 142, specifically recalled the description of Christ as a lamb led to the slaughter.

83 Objects and Address (see note 16), frontispiece, ‘From an original Painting by Wright, taken from Life’; re-used for the title page of The Animals’ Friend, no. 1, 1833, and elsewhere. The artist was presumably either John Massey Wright or John William Wright.

84 In his Moral Inquiries on the Situation of Man and of Brutes, London, 1824, p. 108, Gompertz suggested the experiment of trying the whips, spurs and girths that were inflicted on horses ‘on your own back and limbs’. In The Animals’ Friend, no. 9, 1841, pp. 74–5, he included an illustration of children piled on a cart like calves, and said he would have liked to add prints showing humans hooked up for slow bleeding like calves, or flung into slaughter cellars etc. On Gompertz’s philosophy, cf. Kean, op. cit. (note 6), pp. 36–7. Rather than concerning himself with the relative cruelties of Jewish and Gentile methods of slaughtering animals, Gompertz advocated and adopted a vegan diet; see Fragments, op. cit. (note 15), p. 207.


86 It sold for 6d, later raised to 1s. One typical correspondent, a surgeon, claimed that he left it on the parlour table as a ‘silent monitor’: no. 9, 1841, pp. 20–1.

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88 no. 7, p. 32, reprinted in *Fragments*, ibid., p. 245.
90 This part of the wood block has clearly been plugged; perhaps the position of the animal's head was an afterthought.
96 *Illustrated London News*, Preface to vol. 6, 1845.
97 *Pictorial Times*, Preface to vol. 2, 1843.
100 Carlyle, op. cit. (note 61), pp. 18, 213.
104 ibid., vol. 12, 1848, pp. 75–6. ‘Our real London characters’ here include calmly judicious butchers and a poor sweep who kisses his condemned donkey goodbye. The article argued that the advantages of retaining the existing market site outweighed the disadvantages.
106 See note 84 above.
107 Compare the depiction of the Smithfield horse and donkey market on p. 244, the lively charm of which belies the description of cruelties in the accompanying text. Peter W. Sinnema in *Dynamics of the Pictured Page: Representing the Nation in the *Illustrated London News*, Aldershot, 1998, pp. 44, 95–102, similarly draws attention to the picturesque conventions which were used to aestheticize scenes of rural poverty in the *Illustrated London News*, often mitigating the troubling revelations of harsh social conditions in the text.