

is the complementary notion often associated with Darwin that biology is destiny, and that what is conveyed in the blood—whether carthorse or racehorse—will eventually be expressed.

Darwin's question—can one get a racehorse from a carthorse?—asks if such a distinction describes not only a difference in the use to which the animal is put but an inherent difference within the animal itself. Sue's narrative exploits the sentimental potential of his narrative to develop the point that the inherent identity of the animal is repeatedly misused and abused, until eventually that innate identity asserts itself in such a way as to demand that all acknowledge his true self. With both Darwin and Sue, the question of animal breeding has moved from the Early Modern context, which emphasized the role of both climate and human agency (both in the selective mating and also in the actual raising and training), to what is now a fully modern emphasis on equine agency and characteristics inherent in the animal. And the mechanism for transmitting those characteristics is deemed to be “in the blood.”

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Breed Clubs and Associations

MICHAEL WORBOYS

DOMESTICATED ANIMAL breeds as we know them today were invented in Victorian Britain (Worboys et al.). Over thousands of years, domestication had produced a variety of physical forms and physiologies in each domesticated species, selected for different environments, agricultural systems, and support roles. The term “breed” had been mainly used for regional varieties of cattle and sheep, typically named after geographical areas, or for commercial brands, such as Robert Bakewell's New Leicesters (Walton 152). These “area” and “brand” breeds had different forms, which had developed from and were secondary to their function, at stud, on grass, and at market. Competitions for best in breed were added to agricultural shows, where

form was taken as a proxy for function. From the 1840s, these competitions were extended, first to poultry and pigeons, and then to dogs. In the 1860s, domestic-animal shows grew in scale and popularity, served by breeders and exhibitors known as fanciers. At these new events, termed “fancy shows,” animals were judged only on their form, in classes for different breeds. Competition drove the proliferation and differentiation of breeds, resulting in more distinct, discrete, and decorative forms. Regional and local agricultural shows had a long history, but the railway and the telegraph made national events possible. Just as railway timetables needed the adoption of Greenwich Mean Time and sporting competitions their national rules, so judging at national livestock and fancy shows required standards of physical form. Domesticated animals were reimagined and remodeled to be like British Standard Whitworth nuts and bolts, identical and interchangeable across the country. Fanciers adopted the term “conformation” for breed standards, capturing both a specified form and the need to conform.

Breed clubs, associations of gentlemen, sportsmen, fanciers, and, later, farmers, orchestrated these changes in ideas and remade animal bodies. There were three aspects to the work of clubs: first, promoting the idea of breed as a set of ideal animal types defined by their external morphology, with assumed internal, inherited “purity,” with the propensity to breed “true”; second, the material realization of the ideal in individual breeds, which club committees categorized into distinct, discrete, and standardized and uniform-looking populations; third, approving judges who could be trusted to apply the standards fairly. Breed standards were detailed, qualitative descriptions of ideal body parts (points), sometimes accompanied by numerically weighted and quantitative parameters. However, breeds were never static. Biological variation in heredity, which Charles Darwin demonstrated provided the diversity necessary for both “artificial” and “natural” selection, allowed clubs to alter standards to suit the changing needs and tastes of farmers, fanciers, and, in the case of dogs, the growing market for pets (Hamlett and Strange 48–78). With changing forms came new meanings and conformations, which fanciers contested at every level, from judging classes at shows to long-run controversies in the specialist press. Clubs struggled with the contradictory aims of preservation and heritage versus innovation and improvement.

The pioneers of the new clubs were farmers and breeders, caught up in the poultry mania of the 1840s and 1850s (Driver 8). In 1863, fanciers founded the Poultry Club with the principal aim of fairness and “uniformity in judging” from fixed standards. Its leaders were upper-middle-class individuals, such as bankers, merchants, and military men, who had the means to travel and transport their birds around the country. Their authority stemmed from their prizewinning achievements, but the overall standing of their club derived from its association with William Tegetmeier. A leading naturalist and friend of Darwin, Tegetmeier also served as the poultry

editor of *The Field*, the country's leading field sports newspaper (Second). Tegetmeier produced the first set of standards in 1865, published in *The Poultry Book* (Tegetmeier). In more than three hundred pages, the author described sixteen types, accompanied by an appendix of standards of excellence. The club adopted the book as its manual for judges. The Cochin breed, which had sparked poultry mania when acquired by Queen Victoria in 1843, had eight varieties: Buff, Lemon, Silver Buff, Cinnamon, Grouse, Partridge, White, and Black. This development illustrated a pattern across fancy shows, whereby differences over standards were settled by dividing breeds to create new ones. This practice avoided conflicts, but it also led to greater differentiation and exaggerations in conformation. The club fell into disrepute and collapsed, to be replaced by a new Poultry Club of Great Britain in 1877.

The new club modelled itself on the Kennel Club, founded four years earlier, but there was a crucial difference (Worboys et al. 115–38). The Kennel Club did not adopt or endorse breed standards. A handbook of standards, *The Dogs of the British Islands*, was available, edited by “Stonehenge,” the pen name of John Henry Walsh, the editor of *The Field*. However, like the Jockey Club, the Kennel Club was only concerned with the governance of shows and field trials. Its studbook of pedigrees focused on provenance rather than heredity. It was used to confirm the identity of dogs and to clamp down on sharp practices such as substitutions. Breed standards were left to judges and trusted to emerge from the collective decisions made at dog shows. It was laissez-faire. Competition would decide the best, confirmed in the market for top dogs and in stud fees. Fanciers argued that rigid standards would have denied improvement.

The absence of standards became a significant issue, with complaints about favouritism, ignorance, and corruption in judging, not least by the Kennel Club elite. There was a revolt from below. Fanciers of individual breeds started their own clubs to provide “experts” who knew the ideal. The first such club, for mastiffs, was established in 1873. It did not last long. Its committee was accused of giving prizes to each other's dogs and of using the wrong standard. A decade later, an Old English Mastiff Club took over, which, as its name suggests, favoured heritage. Within a decade, there were seventeen specialist dog clubs. Reaching a consensus on a breed standard was often fraught, particularly among terrier clubs where there were minimal differences between breeds. For example, in 1876, the Dandie Dinmont Club published a standard that began a “prolonged and acrimonious” controversy (Cook 112–18). This dispute was no surprise, as the standard was based on Walter Scott's description of the terriers belonging to a relatively minor character in his novel *Guy Mannering*.

There were mixed views on breed clubs among canine aficionados. Members were self-appointed, with officers and judges elected. Fanciers mostly accepted that club-appointed judges were diligent, but complaints were common, particularly when they pointed to a shift in the breed standard.

Splits often occurred between conservatives and “improvers,” who were criticized for producing “manufactures.” One reviewer of dog shows worried that some standards were changing too rapidly, with breed clubs allowing the “transmogrification of show dogs” (“The Evolution of Dog Shows”). The Bull Dog Club, often accused of favouring a standard with exaggerated features, produced its own stud books and ran its own shows (fig. 1). Critics bemoaned the extent of inbreeding among the dogs of club cliques. Such practices were partly about protecting the “purity” of breed blood. It was also to limit entries to the “right type” of owner and breeder, those who could be trusted to provide accurate information about the pedigree of their dogs and not grumble about show results.¹

Despite their mixed fortunes with dogs, breed clubs were established for all domesticated species in the late-Victorian period. Farmers were among the first, with the Beef Shorthorn Cattle Society being founded in 1874. They

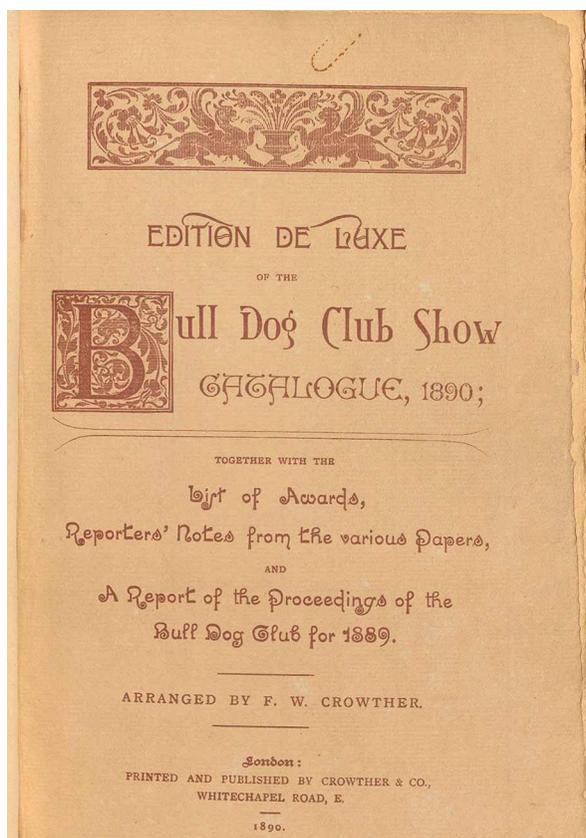


FIG. 1: Cover of “Bulldog Club Show, Catalogue 1890.” F.W. Crowther, 1890. Image copyright Royal Kennel Club Ltd. Reproduced with their permission.

were followed two years later by the Cattle Breeders' Society, whose first aim was "to agree on some more uniform standard of excellence than is presently adhered to" ("Devon Cattle Breeders' Society"). Many new cattle associations took over or instituted herdbooks, as registers of pedigrees and indicators of "animals of note." The first group for sheep was the Suffolk Sheep Society in 1886, which produced its own flock book. Other clubs and associations included those for shire horses (1878), goats (1879), pigs (1883), pigeons (1896), cats (1887), and mice (1895).

Fanciers and farmers across Europe and the Americas emulated the breed organizations established in Britain. These clubs and associations did more than set and monitor standards for their species; they spread the idea and ideal of "breed" invented by Victorian fanciers. A key aspect of clubs' influence was, and remains today, the materiality of their work, seemingly naturalizing breeds by exaggerating and embroidering morphologies into species-like differences.

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Note

- 1 Confusion and contention over dog breeds persisted until 1950, when the Kennel Club assumed responsibility for standard setting. Breed clubs needed to be reined in. There were too many, often with competing clubs for the same breed with different standards. Also, breed clubs had often produced exaggerated and unhealthy conformation standards.

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