During the Victorian era, animals were increasingly viewed not as property or utility, but as thinking, feeling subjects worthy of inclusion within a political community. This book reexamines the nineteenth-century British animal welfare movement and animal characters in the Victorian novel in light of liberal thought, and argues that liberalism was a decisive factor in determining the cultural, ideological, and material makeup of animal–human relationships. While the animal welfare movement often represented animals as desiring submission to the human, animal characters in the Victorian novel critiqued the liberal norms that led to the oppression of both animals and humans. Through readings of animal rights legislation, animal welfare texts, and writings by Charles Dickens, Lewis Carroll, Thomas Hardy, and Olive Schreiner, Anna Feuerstein outlines the remarkably powerful political role animals played in the Victorian novel, as they offer ways to move beyond the exclusionary and contradictory strategies of liberal thought.

Anna Feuerstein is an assistant professor at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa.
Nineteenth-century British literature and culture have been rich fields for interdisciplinary studies. Since the turn of the twentieth century, scholars and critics have tracked the intersections and tensions between Victorian literature and the visual arts, politics, social organization, economic life, technical innovations, scientific thought — in short, culture in its broadest sense. In recent years, theoretical challenges and historiographical shifts have unsettled the assumptions of previous scholarly synthesis and called into question the terms of older debates. Whereas the tendency in much past literary critical interpretation was to use the metaphor of culture as ‘background’, feminist, Foucauldian, and other analyses have employed more dynamic models that raise questions of power and of circulation. Such developments have reanimated the field. This series aims to accommodate and promote the most interesting work being undertaken on the frontiers of the field of nineteenth-century literary studies: work which intersects fruitfully with other fields of study such as history, or literary theory, or the history of science. Comparative as well as interdisciplinary approaches are welcomed.

A complete list of titles published will be found at the end of the book.
THE POLITICAL LIVES OF VICTORIAN ANIMALS

Liberal Creatures in Literature and Culture

ANNA FEUERSTEIN

University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa
Mostly for Jack, but also for Eliot and Oliver,
my little friends
As we can see, the model for the art of government is that of God imposing his laws upon his creatures.

– Michel Foucault, “Omnes et Singulatim”
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Acknowledgments

This book began as a dissertation in the English department at Michigan State University, where it flourished under the formal guidance of Zarena Aslam, Justus Nieland, Stephen Rachman, and Judith Stoddard. I thank them for their support and intellectual guidance. I also thank the less formal support of many other colleagues from MSU, especially Hannah Allen, Erin Beard, Kate Birdshall, Mike Blouin, Megan Charley, Cajetan Iheka, Neal Klomp, Elizabeth Pellerito, and Morgan Shipley. My earliest mentors were at the University of Washington. Lana Dalley, the first to teach me the intricacies of the triple-decker novel, nourished my love for Victorian literature and showed me how to teach it well. While Doug Collins may be disappointed I never ended up in a French department, I think he will be happy to see both animals and Foucault in the following pages. Many conversations with Jonathan Crimmins and Charles LaPorte helped develop my thinking as a Victorianist.

What luck to end up in the English department at the University of Hawai’i-Mānoa! While the weather does not align with my ideas of paradise (too much sun!), my amazing colleagues across the UH system make this a wonderful place to be. Not only did I receive the kindest possible welcome, but the political energy of this department continually inspires me to ground my teaching and scholarship in social justice. Thank you to everyone in the English department, and others across the UH system, especially Sarah Allen, Cristina Bacchilega, Nandini Chandra, Cynthia Franklin, Monica Ghosh, Kristine Kotecki, Jesse Knutson, J. Vera Lee, Laura Lyons, Njoroge Njoroge, Georganne Nordstrom, Nandi Odhiambo, Suzanna Reiss, Yasmine Romero (the best cat sitter ever!), Shawna Yang Ryan, Susan Schultz, Subramanian Shankar, and John Zuern. Special thanks go to Carmen Nolte-Odhiambo, an amazing co-editor and a dear friend. Carmen taught me the joys of developing scholarship collectively, and helped me grow as a thinker and a writer. Paul Lyons, who passed away while this book was under review, was a true role model. He was an incredible colleague, beloved teacher, brilliant scholar, and constant ally. We miss him dearly. My students, undergrad and graduate,
I continually educate me. I thank them for their generosity and patience as I learn about Hawaiian history and culture. A special thanks to Veronica Freeman, Kalei Galarita, Joseph Han, Brittney Holt, Sam Ikehara, Scott Kaalele, Caryn Lesuma, Mike Pak, and Tina Togafau.

I presented parts of this book at conferences across the country and at the University of Hawai‘i, where I received much helpful feedback. Thank you to everyone who offered suggestions for development. My colleagues in Charles Lawrence’s junior faculty seminar helped me see this project from many angles, and especially pushed my thinking on Olive Schreiner. Thank you to the lovely folks at the Vegetarian Society in Manchester, who were so kind to me in the time I spent there. I especially thank them for making my research possible by giving me a space heater to warm the weak constitution I’ve developed while living in Hawai‘i. Thanks also to the librarians at the British Library, and David Allen at the RSPCA, who allowed me to go through their archives.

Many thanks to the generous people at Cambridge University Press. I spoke with Linda Bree at NAVSA back in 2014 when this project was in its early stages, and her encouragement and excitement inspired me to keep going. Her advice helped me develop the project in productive ways. I also thank Gillian Beer, Bethany Thomas, Carrie Parkinson, and the anonymous reviewers.


Obvious thanks go to family and other friends who have supported me academically and non-academically: Katharine Beutner, Rebecca Evans, Lydia Feuerstein, Shelly Feuerstein, Stacy Hagiyā, Rachel Skibo, Jack Taylor II, Janet Taylor, Phil Tobin, and Leah Woldman. Nicole Harrison and Dan Landon first encouraged me to become an English major, and taught me how to talk about literature. Tony Feuerstein was skeptical of my choice to major in English, but supported me nonetheless. Thank you for letting me pursue my own desires, and encouraging me to do so.

Jack Taylor – my best friend, favorite colleague, and husband – has made life better in every way. Ever since we met in graduate school, he has supported me in ways that are too numerous to list here. This book has emerged from our many conversations over the years; he has read nearly every word, and his feedback has been invaluable. I thank him for his kindness, generosity, patience, forgiveness, humor, and, of course, his love.