

Victims of Fashion

Animal products were used extensively in nineteenth-century Britain. A middle-class Victorian woman might wear a dress made of alpaca wool, drape herself in a sealskin jacket, brush her hair with a tortoise-shell comb and sport feathers in her hat. She might entertain her friends by playing a piano with ivory keys or own a parrot or monkey as a living fashion accessory. In this innovative study, Helen Cowie examines the role of these animal-based commodities in Britain in the long nineteenth century and traces their rise and fall in popularity in response to changing tastes, availability and ethical concerns. Focusing on six popular animal products – feathers, sealskin, ivory, alpaca wool, perfumes and exotic pets – she considers how animal commodities were sourced and processed, how they were marketed and how they were consumed. She also assesses the ecological impact of nineteenth-century fashion.

Helen Louise Cowie is Professor of History at the University of York, where she researches the history of animals and the history of science. She is the author of *Conquering Nature in Spain and Its Empire, 1750–1850* (2011), *Exhibiting Animals in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Empathy, Education, Entertainment* (2014) and *Llama* (2017).

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-49517-2 — Victims of Fashion
Helen Louise Cowie
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

SCIENCE IN HISTORY

Series Editors

Simon J. Schaffer, University of Cambridge

James A. Secord, University of Cambridge

Science in History is a major series of ambitious books on the history of the sciences from the mid-eighteenth century through the mid-twentieth century, highlighting work that interprets the sciences from perspectives drawn from across the discipline of history. The focus on the major epoch of global economic, industrial and social transformations is intended to encourage the use of sophisticated historical models to make sense of the ways in which the sciences have developed and changed. The series encourages the exploration of a wide range of scientific traditions and the interrelations between them. It particularly welcomes work that takes seriously the material practices of the sciences and is broad in geographical scope.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-49517-2 — Victims of Fashion
Helen Louise Cowie
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

Victims of Fashion

Animal Commodities in Victorian Britain

Helen Louise Cowie

University of York



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-49517-2 — Victims of Fashion
Helen Louise Cowie
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New
Delhi – 110025, India
103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.
It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of
education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108495172
DOI: 10.1017/9781108861267

© Helen Louise Cowie 2022

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2022

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ Books Limited, Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Cowie, Helen (Helen Louise), author.

Title: Victims of fashion : animal commodities in Victorian Britain / Helen
Louise Cowie, University of York.

Description: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge
University Press, 2022. | Series: Science in history | Includes bibliographical
references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021031766 (print) | LCCN 2021031767 (ebook) | ISBN
9781108495172 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108817080 (paperback) | ISBN
9781108861267 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Fashion—Great Britain—History—19th century. | Clothing and
dress—Great Britain—History—19th century. | Animal products—Great Britain—
History—19th century. | Great Britain—Social life and customs—19th century. |
BISAC: TECHNOLOGY & ENGINEERING / History

Classification: LCC GT737 .C75 2022 (print) | LCC GT737 (ebook) | DDC
391.00941/09034—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021031766>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021031767>

ISBN 978-1-108-49517-2 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy
of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication
and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain,
accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> vi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	viii
Introduction	1
1 Murderous Millinery	17
2 The Seal and His Jacket	55
3 Is the Elephant Following the Dodo?	87
4 Silk of the Andes	126
5 Bitter Perfumes	168
6 Monkey Business	197
Conclusion	235
Epilogue: Past, Present and Future	251
<i>References</i>	265
<i>Index</i>	280

Figures

0.1 'A Tête-à-Tête', <i>The Animals' Friend</i> , 1911, p. 36.	page 4
0.2 'Humane Rescue of a Cat by Fireman Cave', <i>The Animal World</i> , June 1893, p. 92.	5
0.3 'Map Showing the Distribution of Animals' (London: Cassell, 1900).	15
1.1 Hummingbird earrings, c.1865.	17
1.2 A selection of the latest feathered bonnets in the <i>Paris Millinery Trade Review</i> , January 1897, plate 4.	20
1.3 'Removing the Plumes', from Harold J. Hepstone, 'Modern Ostrich Farming', <i>The Animal World</i> , November 1912, p. 207.	35
1.4 'An Egret', from H. Vicars Webb, 'The Egret Plume Trade and What It Has Accomplished', <i>The Animal World</i> , June 1910, p. 103.	43
2.1 Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins, 'Graphic Illustrations of Animals: The Seal and the Walrus', c.1850.	58
2.2 'A Lady Hugged by a Polar Bear', <i>Illustrated Police News</i> , 22 January 1876.	61
2.3 'Arbitration', <i>Punch</i> , 17 January 1891, p.31.	66
2.4 'National Zoological Park, Northern Fur Seal Pup', c.1910.	81
3.1 Detail from 'Knocking Down a Menagerie', <i>The Graphic</i> , 9 August 1884.	88
3.2 Tame elephants bathe in the river at Api. Postcard, Belgian Congo, 1929.	122
3.3 'Elephants Pulling a Chariot'. Postcard, Belgian Congo, 1920.	123
4.1 An alpaca performs in 'the Popular Pantomime of the RED DWARF' with the famous clown Joseph Grimaldi. R. Norman, 11 January 1813.	131
4.2 Alpaca wool imports from Peru to Britain, 1834–59.	132

List of Figures	vii
4.3 'Passage of Cordillera into Chile', from <i>Annotated Watercolour Sketches by Santiago Savage, 1857–1858, Being a Record of Charles Ledger's Journeys in Peru and Chile.</i>	138
4.4 Alpaca motif on the schoolhouse in Saltaire, Bradford.	148
4.5 'The Mêlée: Scene in "Aparoma", April 1857', from <i>Annotated Watercolour Sketches by Santiago Savage, 1857–1858, Being a Record of Charles Ledger's Journeys in Peru and Chile.</i>	160
4.6 Llama nurses Burra, Sarea, Cacho and Chucara suckle Ledger's nine surviving 'vicuñitas', from <i>Annotated Watercolour Sketches by Santiago Savage, 1857–1858, Being a Record of Charles Ledger's Journeys in Peru and Chile.</i>	163
5.1 Ceramic pot lid for 'Ross & Sons' Genuine Bear's Grease Perfumed', mid-1800s.	172
5.2 Staffordshire ceramic creamware model advertising James Atkinson's bear's grease, 1799–1818.	172
5.3 Print from Chinese chop-paper depicting the hunting of the musk deer, from Charles H. Piesse, <i>Piesse's Art of Perfumery</i> (London: Piesse and Lubin, 1891), p. 270.	185
5.4 Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins, 'Graphic Illustrations of Animals: The Whale', c.1850.	190
6.1 'Teddy Bear, Pet of Whitechapel Children', c.1913.	202
6.2 'Cocky, the Fireman's Friend', <i>The Animal World</i> , February 1907, p. 39.	204
6.3 'The Best of Friends', 'Animal Anecdotes', <i>The Animal World</i> , March 1912, p. 56.	205
6.4 G. Bletcher, 'Quite Comfortable', <i>The Animal World</i> , April 1912, p. 110.	218
6.5 'Captive and an Alien', <i>The Animal World</i> , December 1909, p. 274.	226
7.1 'Miss Betty Hicks Collects for the RSPCA at Messrs Selfridges', <i>The Animal World</i> .	240

Acknowledgements

Victims of Fashion began its slow journey from fledgling idea to book around seven years ago, when I stumbled across a newspaper article about alpaca smuggling in nineteenth-century Peru. Since then, it has been refashioned multiple times, taking me to topics and places I would not have anticipated and encompassing a range of coveted – and sadly persecuted – animal species, from fur seals to parrots. In the process, I have incurred many debts and learned a great deal about human–animal relations in the past and the present.

The research for this book was undertaken at the University of York, where I benefited from the support and friendship of my colleagues in the history department. Tara Alberts, Henrice Altink, Oleg Benesch, Sanjoy Bhattacharya, Martha Cattell, Sabine Clarke, David Clayton, Hanne Cottyn, Joanna de Groot, Jasper Heinzen, Stephanie Howard-Smith, Mark Jenner, Catriona Kennedy and Sam Wetherell all pointed me in the direction of valuable primary and secondary sources, while Amanda Behm, Lawrence Black, Simon Ditchfield, Natasha Glaisyer, Hannah Grieg, Jon Howlett, David Huyssen, Tom Johnson, Gerard McCann, Shaul Mittelpunkt, Harry Munt, Emilie Murphy, Mark Roodhouse, Lucy Sackville, Hugo Service, Laura Stewart, Craig Taylor, Miles Taylor, Pragma Vohra and Sethina Watson contributed much appreciated support and friendship throughout the period in which this book was in gestation. Members of the Centre for Eighteenth-Century Studies provided further inspiration. I would also like to extend my thanks to several cohorts of students on my various animal history modules whose seminar contributions helped shape my work.

Beyond York, I owe thanks to a variety of institutions and individuals. First, I would like to thank the librarians and archivists who assisted in locating material and securing image permissions, in particular staff from the British Library (especially Boston Spa Reading Rooms), the London Metropolitan Archives, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the State Library New South Wales, the Archivo de Indias and the Smithsonian Archives. I would also like to extend a special thanks to Sky Duthie for

allowing me to browse his fantastic personal collection of Humanitarian League magazines.

Second, I am extremely grateful for financial assistance from the Eccles Centre and the Leverhulme Trust, without which the book could not have been written – or at least would have taken much longer to finish. I am also grateful to the University of York for granting me departmental research leave in which to pursue this project.

Third, I owe thanks to a range of scholars from around the world who read portions of the book, invited me to speak at conferences, shared their own research with me or gave feedback on seminar presentations, all of which made me rethink aspects of my research. These include (though are not limited to) John McAleer, Isabelle Charmantier, William Gervase Clarence-Smith, McKenzie Cooley, John Curry-Machado, Rebecca Earle, Alison FitzGerald, Oliver Hochadel, Dominik Hünninger, Elle Larson, Claudia Leal, Anthony McFarlane, Rory Miller, Kaori Nagai, Robin Peel, Neil Pemberton, Graciela Iglesias-Rogers, Sally Shuttleworth, Tess Somervell and Ryan Sweet. I would also like to thank members of the LA Global research network, which ran throughout much of the writing of this book, especially Mark Thurner and Juan Pimentel, for organising several stimulating workshops, and Adrian Masters and Elisa Sevilla, for taking the time to send me valuable references on vicuñas.

I am grateful to Lucy Rhymer, Rachel Blaifeder and Emily Sharp at Cambridge University Press for their encouragement throughout the project, and to the series editors, Jim Secord and Simon Schaffer, who provided useful advice on reworking it. I am also very grateful to the two anonymous peer reviewers, both of whom made valuable suggestions for improvements to the text.

Last but not least, my thanks go to my parents, Peter and Susan Cowie, my sister, Alice Cowie, who shared her expertise on animal behaviour, and, above all, my husband, Paul Williams, who has stoically lived with this project through its many ups and downs and has uncomplainingly accompanied me on many a quest in search of archival and living animals. I would also like to pay tribute to my cat, Daisy Cowie II, who has been a source of feline inspiration during the book's final stages and has reminded me loudly, charmingly and persistently why animals matter.