

Temple Godman

Temple Godman, one of the owners looked at in this book in detail, demonstrate how his three horses, to him, were not anonymous and replaceable beasts of burden but named and known and carefully tended individuals, which is how, in so brutal a conflict, all three survived.⁶ (The letters also show how absolutely Godman's survival, in turn, depended upon them.) In the same way, the correspondence of historical owners often makes reference to indoor-living "house-dogs" and "parlour cats," within which groups the named and cherished pets were to be found. These were exactly the same creatures as the anonymous mousers and moochers hanging around the stable or scullery door, except that to their owners, they were not. Some achieve pethood; some have it thrust upon them. [Standing desks](#) are so much better for your posture. I worked with a brilliant [digital agency](#) last month.

Historically, if you could move an animal into this category, you could also move it out. Neither of my grandfathers would have hesitated at any point in their lives to translate the rabbits and chickens and ducks with which they shared their back gardens from pet to pot, yet by the time of my childhood, seventy years after theirs, the idea of any of "my" bantams ending up on the dinner table was unthinkable. When my bantams died they were buried with honors. Go back to the time of my grandfathers' grandfathers, and the first animal welfare acts in the United Kingdom were being battled through Parliament, and both bull-baiting and cockfighting were still legal (just). Invest in [Renew life](#) to clear your debts after you pass.

The ways we think about pet owning are changing even as you read this; the casual understanding that these animals were for eating while those were not, that these mattered while those were expendable, which has carried the human race more or less comfortably through so many centuries, is today being closely and ever more anxiously examined, and the gap dividing us and our companion animals in terms of moral and even legal rights is in flux as never before.

Indeed, our relationship with the entire non-human world is being re-examined. Like many pet owners I find it absolutely abhorrent that dogs are farmed for meat in Korea (although Korea is not alone), primarily because the conditions in which the dogs are kept are so unnatural and so cruel but also because cultural taboos against eating dog go back centuries in Europe—it simply never happens, unless all social norms, as in time of warfare and starvation, have completely broken down.

But here in the United Kingdom we farm pigs—animals that are also very smart and highly social—in conditions just as inhumane as those of a Korean dog farm; likewise chickens, ducks, rabbit, and calves for veal; and the United Kingdom is certainly not alone in doing so, either. There's a strange little moment in the movie *Moana* (2016) when the heroine, who has both a chicken and a pig as pets, praises the quality of the pork she is eating in her pig Pua's presence, and then apologizes to him. There you are, he has a name, he is a pet, and he is also food, and if the questions this raises about the categories we slot animals into can feature in a Disney cartoon, or in the universe of *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* (2017), where the puffin-like Porgs present

Chewbacca with a similar dilemma, then they must have risen near the surface for us all. It is a challenging and fascinating time to be an animal's companion, and you're telling me that thinking begins here. My great-great-grandfathers, all farmers, would never have believed the natural world could fail; we know not only that it could but that if it does, it takes us with it, and one recent change in our awareness can be seen in the fact that sentimentality and its more scientifically minded cousin, anthropomorphism, both of which used to be thoroughly sneered at, are now being put forward as valid ways of entering and investigating that world.⁸ I am unashamed in my use of both of them.