

Pets in America



Pets in America

A HISTORY

KATHERINE C. GRIER

"Probes not just our changing notions about animals but our changing definition of a good society...Very entertaining."

—THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW



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Entertaining and informative, "Pets in America" is a portrait of Americans' relationships with the cats, dogs, birds, fishes, rodents, and other animals we call our own. More than 60 percent of U.S. households have pets, and America grows more pet-friendly every day. But as Katherine Grier demonstrates, the ways we talk about and treat our pets--as companions, as children, and as objects of beauty, status, or pleasure--have their origins long ago. Grier begins with a natural history of animals as pets, then discusses the changing role of pets in family life, new standards of animal welfare, the problems presented by borderline cases such as livestock pets, and the marketing of both animals and pet products. She focuses particularly on the period between 1840 and 1940, when the emotional, behavioral, and commercial characteristics of contemporary pet keeping were established. The story is peppered with the warmth and humor of anecdotes from period diaries, letters, catalogs, and newspapers. Filled with illustrations reflecting the whimsy, the devotion, and the commerce that have shaped centuries of American pet keeping, "Pets in America" ultimately shows how the history of pets has evolved alongside changing ideas about human nature, child development, and community life. This book accompanies a museum exhibit, "Pets in America," which opens at the McKissick Museum in Columbia, South Carolina, in December 2005 and will travel to five other cities from May 2006 through May 2008.

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KATHERINE C. GRIER is professor of material culture studies, Winterthur Program in Early American Culture, Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library and the University of Delaware. She lives in Wilmington, Delaware, and Onancock, Virginia, with her husband, two cats, and two dogs.

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标签

评论

偏重物质现象描绘的物质文化史。深度上确实不及各种理论加持的那种物质文化研究，但也还不错，抓住了很重要的命题：人与宠物的关系其实不体现在动物上，这种关系本质上是人以动物为对象，对自我认识的投射。研究架构按照宠物博物史、人与宠物的互动形态、家庭伦理的兴起、位于边缘的宠物物种、消费宠物、宠物消费等六个专题进行组织，逻辑清晰全面，非常富有启发意义。

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书评

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