

liberté en concluant que seule la mort peut sortir l'individu de la tyrannie. Kerlan suggère alors qu'il est possible de saisir l'état d'esprit de Lin Zhao lors de ses derniers jours en prison et la façon dont elle est restée fidèle à ses idées : jusqu'au bout, même en attendant sa mort, elle continua à condamner le Parti pour sa répression. Toutefois, certains passages de sa vie restent plus nébuleux et Kerlan fait preuve d'ingéniosité dans sa démarche. Faire le portrait de la ville de Suzhou, où Lin Zhao a passé son enfance, sert ainsi à éclairer ses influences intellectuelles. Étudier le témoignage de Nien Cheng, une autre prisonnière au même moment, permet à Kerlan de découvrir les conditions de vie de Lin Zhao durant sa détention. Faire une étude par le bas permet de personnaliser une autre victime du totalitarisme chinois en allant au-delà du système. Lin Zhao est désormais plus qu'un nom. Elle est un visage, une vie et une histoire.

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REBECCA J. H. WOODS. *THE HERDS SHOT ROUND THE WORLD: NATIVE BREEDS AND THE BRITISH EMPIRE, 1800–1900*. NORTH CAROLINA: THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA PRESS, 2017. (E-ISBN : 978-1-4696-3467-8)

Environmental historian Rebecca J. H. Woods' first published book is a history of the 19th century ovine and bovine breeds of the British Empire. Woods considers the relation between type, place, and breeds (selected "heredity") rather than species; an important distinction which guides her reflections.¹ Changing economies, industrialization, a growing British population and a strong desire for

⁴ Nous tenons à remercier les contributions importantes de Charles Bénard et Rose Leblanc-Laval dans la rédaction de ce court compte-rendu.

¹ Rebecca J. H. Woods, *The Herds Shot Round the World: Native Breeds and the British Empire, 1800–1900* (University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 4-5.

meat placed pressure on stock breeders, and eventually on global trade, in a manner which reveals much about how humans conceptualized livestock. Throughout this complex research, Woods considers the new technologies of the era (mechanical refrigeration, steamships), national identity throughout the Empire, changing definitions for breeds and purity, the concern for food security in Britain, the commodification of animals, the ecological realities of place and, most importantly, the cultural significations associated to livestock and their production throughout the Empire in the 19th century.

Woods divides the book into two parts, “Great Britain” and “Greater Britain”, with each as comprised of three and two chapters respectively. True to the topic, the many illustrations of the discussed ovine and bovine breeds aid the reader to visualize, appreciate the variety, and understand the differences that Woods discusses throughout the book. The notes and bibliography are evidence of the extensive research done by Woods: these include primary sources from the United Kingdom but also New Zealand, as well as multiple periodicals, two oral history interviews and a long list of published primary sources. The book concludes with a useful index.

The first part concerns the breeds and nativeness of British sheep and cattle in Great Britain. In the first chapter, the author proposes to analyze what plays a role in understanding and defining breeds amidst human domestication and selection, heredity, the environment, and climate.² Would moving breeds out of their original environment, for example, change them and make them “mongrel”?³ Woods links these 19th century concerns to what she calls a “generalized anxiety about human transposition that attended the colonial endeavour”⁴; basically, could this also apply to the displacement of Europeans? To what extent did geography impact the body? These apprehensions did not stop a search for an increase

² Ibid., 27.

³ Ibid., 39.

⁴ Ibid.

in productivity through the modification of breeds via crossbreeding. An increased productivity was of great importance: “[p]opulation growth, supported by increased industrialization, higher agricultural yields, and better nutrition, supported, among other things, the emergence of a middle class in Britain beginning in the mid-eighteenth century”.⁵ Meat was becoming not only “central” to the diet of Britons, but it also provided a “sense of nationhood and identity”.⁶

The second chapter discusses sheep by considering the often opposed aims of breeding for wool or for meat. Through the example of the importation of Spanish Merino sheep, Woods shows how those for, or against, its attempted naturalization in Britain demonstrated different ways of understanding the political economy of the nation.⁷ Those who supported the introduction of the Merino saw in its naturalization and breeding the possibility of creating an Anglo-Merino capable of providing quality wool without importation, while those against saw it as a threat to the working-class accessibility to meat: “[m]uch like its wool, merino mutton was better fit for the table of a gentleman than for that of a common labourer”.⁸ Its importation, who supported its integration, and, in the end, its maladaptation to British climate is as telling about human relations as it is about the physical adaptation of sheep.

The third chapter discusses native cattle breeds and pedigree through the example of the development of the Hereford cattle breed. “Improvement” of the breed meant that they had to reproduce in a manner which guaranteed, as much as possible, similar traits and taste.⁹ Woods explains how authenticity, descent but also *regularity* in breed was of the utmost significance.¹⁰ Through

⁵ Ibid., 45.

⁶ Ibid., 46.

⁷ Ibid., 62-63.

⁸ Ibid., 64.

⁹ Ibid., 88.

¹⁰ Ibid., 97.

human control and selection, any visible variation had to be removed, demonstrating the strong will of humans to shape their “native” breeds in a way which removed natural variation; “purity” of breed required human intervention.¹¹

Part two discusses the circulation of British breeds in other areas of the Empire. With chapter four, we see how Australia, New Zealand and, eventually, America, became important for the wool and meat trade with Great Britain through supplying the nation when it could not as well as when zoonotic outbreaks occurred.¹² Woods explains how breeds sent to other territories in the Empire could be considered a “proxy” to colonists.¹³ This trade in live animals and refrigerated meat was therefore an outlet for surplus that would also depend on British consumer demand.¹⁴ Wood’s last chapter discusses the search for the best breed to respond to British trade expectations, but would also be malleable enough to adapt to the climate and conditions of the colonies.¹⁵ Trade was a response to a meat crisis, but Britons nonetheless expected quality meat. Herefords met these expectations and were considered interesting for both their meat and the breeds’ easily recognizable descent: its white face was passed down as an easy identifier.¹⁶ The Hereford, therefore, could not be mistaken for any other. Nevertheless, Woods demonstrates how purity was an ever-changing notion and ideal, noticeable with the differential treatment of the American vs British Hereford.

The author also aptly demonstrates the issues tied to the “nativeness”, and purity, of breeds. For Britons whose definition of the nation was at least partly based on meat-eating and the quality of its “pure” animals, depending on colonies for sustenance would have

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹² *Ibid.*, 117.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 144.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 154.

been worrisome. Sending and receiving animals and meat from colonies led to anxiety over the purity of British animal breeds. As Woods pertinently states, however, “[t]o call a breed ‘native’ in such a setting was thus a political claim as well as an environmental one: whether consciously or not, the establishment of ‘native’ colonial breeds rhetorically bolstered claims to imperial dominion”.¹⁷

Inserting itself in a fairly recent historiography of animal history which has developed slowly but certainly these past thirty years and even more so these past ten, Woods’ research should be considered a must to anyone interested in the history of the trade of animals and animal products in the 19th century. Few have addressed cattle in such an in-depth manner for the eighteenth or even nineteenth century, although historians Catherine McNeur and John Ryan Fischer come to mind for the American geography.¹⁸ Woods’ research, although very intricate, clearly demonstrates how the study of breeds is not only telling about animals but also about humans, environment, politics and empire. The explicit link that Woods’ demonstrates between the British Empire and its colonies helps paint a more complete picture of animal trade and its consequences globally. It enables scholars to better grasp the importance of studying animal history for the sake of better comprehending a meshwork of complex relations which include the environment, humans, animals and, of course, empire. It can only lead us to wonder how further historical research on different animal breeds can be telling about the webs of relations which encircle us, and their impact on political, environmental and social networks historically.

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¹⁷ Ibid., 174.

¹⁸ See Catherine McNeur, *Taming Manhattan : Environmental Battles in the Antebellum City*, (Harvard University Press, 2014), as well as John Ryan Fischer, *Cattle Colonialism : an Environmental History of the Conquest of California and Hawai’i*, (University of North Carolina Press, 2017).